

## **E-Learning for Contact Centres**

Call Centres are changing. Increasingly sophisticated technology is enabling them to offer customers improved service, more flexibility, more choice and more control. Call Centres are now evolving into Contact Centres.

Contact Centres are about more than just telephone calls. They are communication centres offering customers a range of options, most notably e-mail as well as other methods such as fax, face-to-face and video contact. A contact centre is open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for customers to contact when and how they want.

Advances in technology are not just good news for customers – they are good news for the people in your contact centre too. But customers are unlikely to be impressed by your utilisation of WAP technology or your state-of-the-art automated response system unless you also have excellent, highly skilled people who work to defined service levels, whatever the mode of communication. This means that, more than ever, the people in your call contact centre need to be multi-skilled, highly qualified and highly motivated. You need to value and empower your contact centre people, give them access to information, encourage team working and develop communication skills.

Technology can help you achieve all of these things. In this extract we examine how.

Alongside the evolution of the call centre into the contact centre we are seeing the evolution of e-learning. You may have already invested in computer-based training (CBT) and CD-ROM technology and these can be useful for certain types of learning. CBT can be more fun and more interesting than reading from a training manual but ultimately it is a one-way transfer of information. In order for CBT to be really effective it should be only one part of your overall e-learning strategy.

Genuine e-learning is not just about having a one-to-one relationship with your computer screen. It's about learning in collaboration with colleagues in teams or learning sets. It's about learning at a time and in a place that suits the individual learner. It's about having help from an online coach or facilitator. It's about flexibility and choice.

You can achieve all of this with a computer and an Internet connection or a company intranet. To be really effective, e-learning should also be supported by an element of face-to-face learning. All of this adds up to a

comprehensive, multi-faceted learning environment – an environment where your people will flourish.

- ⌚ E-Learning allows effective and efficient scheduling of training within a contact centre environment.
- ⌚ E-Learning means immediate access.
- ⌚ It allows the contact team to train at any time.
- ⌚ It provides educational benefits of learning as a team.
- ⌚ It enables the sharing of best practice.
- ⌚ Group learning is perceived as big benefit.
- ⌚ E-Learning allows the student to work online away from their workstation, for example at home or in a learning centre.
- ⌚ Training is implemented more quickly.
- ⌚ It reduces training time for new inductees.
- ⌚ It allows the training team to focus on consolidating learning experience.

## **E-Learning technology**

E-Learning technology is becoming increasingly sophisticated; remember it is an enabler. You will need to define your e-learning strategy – what do you aim to achieve and what sort of learning content will you have? You can then look at which specific delivery systems will best meet your requirements.

## **Flexibility**

E-Learning offers immense flexibility. Increasingly sophisticated contact centres and the changing needs of customers mean that your people need to be more flexible and intuitive, capable of responding to changing circumstances in ways that maintain your values and service levels. There is a need to move onto a learning model based on:

- ⌚ Learning through experience.
- ⌚ Collaboration in learning sets or professional communities.
- ⌚ Dialogue and interpretation.
- ⌚ Building the ability to act appropriately in uncharted territory.

E-Learning can stimulate new thinking and new behaviours which in turn can support a more dynamic and responsive culture throughout your contact centre. This will help you become increasingly successful in today's competitive environment.

## **Consistency**

E-Learning solutions enable you to ensure that your training is consistent throughout the organisation. Learning programmes can be updated rapidly and cheaply, ensuring new information is made available instantly. This is extremely important for updating knowledge of your products and services, and will help your people to understand these better and be able to provide customers with up-to-date information.

## Professionally Accredited Qualifications

E-Learning is extremely useful for helping your people achieve professional qualifications. Professional bodies such as FEDMA (Federation of European Direct Marketing Associations), the Customer Contact Association, the Institute of Management and the Chartered Institute of Marketing have all invested in providing e-learning programmes. Individuals signing up for these programmes will be able to work in collaboration online with others at similar stages in their learning at contact centres all over the UK and the rest of Europe. This opens up learning possibilities previously unheard of.

## Creating your own E-Learning environment

A successful e-learning strategy requires the optimal balance of several factors:

- ⌚ The right environment in which people can learn effectively, some of the criteria being that it is:
  - Engaging – good design is vital
  - Relevant – learning must be timely and driven by business need.
  - Easy to use/User friendly – internet/intranet access, intuitive learner interface with readily available support.
  - Flexible – self-paced and team based.
  - Scalable – easy to expand the learning material and audience.
  - Open – open access to materials, web hosting and content linking providers to meet each contact centre's needs.
- ⌚ The right administration and management systems to organise and monitor learning.
- ⌚ The right media for delivering learning to each particular audience.
- ⌚ The right relationship between e-learning and more traditional forms of training and development.

## Key benefits

- ⌚ Learning becomes more relevant to the contact centre and your customers, leading to increased customer satisfaction and resulting in increased revenue.
- ⌚ Increased collaboration in learning teams.
- ⌚ Reduced costs – less time away from desk, less travelling costs and increased re-usability of materials.
- ⌚ A significant contribution to knowledge management through development of best practice.
- ⌚ Students take more responsibility for their own development.
- ⌚ Tracking learning and improvement through clear assessment and feedback gives a permanent live record of individual achievements.
- ⌚ Increased support for learning and implementation.

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