

Vol.7 Number 5
May 2007

Voice Communications and Customer Service: The Value of Connection

Smart Design, a prestigious design firm credited with designing innovative products for such industry leaders as OXO, Estée Lauder, Johnson & Johnson and Hewlett Packard, knows the value of creativity. But they also know how important is for their designers to stay connected. That's why the organization deployed a communications platform that enabled their designers to manage important client contacts, even when the designers are away from their desks over 50% of the time.

Clients can reach Smart Design's staff-directly-as though they were dialing a personal cell number. There is no need to be transferred or put on hold, and calling features such as conference calling and voicemail are accessed just like using a desk extension. Dedicated, dynamic customer service like this can be achieved when you make use of the latest communications technologies that are available.

Think you're too small...think again


Many companies tend to think of advance communications platforms as only benefiting large organizations with warehouse-sized call centers, but the fact is that there are many affordable communication technologies that can deliver real value to any business, regardless of size.

Take this example: Many small to medium businesses cannot afford a dedicated technical or customer support resource whose sole job is to sit by a phone. They rely on knowledge workers to take calls and provide support, while the same workers still try to accomplish their primary job function. The result is a sporadic taking of calls, with long hold times while a receptionist tries to connect a customer with the right resource to address their needs. Not to mention that you have to pay a salary to the receptionist.

Now add Automated Call Distribution (ACD) to the equation. This cost-effective technology can turn your knowledge workers into centers of opportunity. Now, callers can be directed straight to the knowledge resource that can help them as efficiently as possible. This gives workers the ability to assist customers, answer their needs and engage in selling new business just as effectively as if they were a full-time customer support representative.

Going mobile

ACD can turn your different departments into opportunity groups that address specific customer support requirements, with every customer being connected with the right group to foster overall satisfaction. But to realize the most benefit from this approach, your workforce needs to be mobile. When they are not chained to a desk, your employees are free to do their job, but they can still give your customers the support



they deserve. And there are many levels of mobile solutions that can accomplish this goal.

The most basic is simply a wireless headset that keeps an employee connected to their desk extension. They will be able to answer inbound calls, but cannot make outbound calls. And they cannot access any of the calling features present on the phone system.

The next level is to install an in-building wireless network that operates on the traditional 802.11 frequency that you'll find in your local coffee shop, or functions on a proprietary frequency. Now, mobile workers can make and receive calls as though they were sitting at their desk, from anywhere in the building. And they can access calling features such as call transfer, on-hold and conference calling.

But the ultimate enhancement in customer service comes through unified messaging. Through this latest technology, an employee can be anywhere in the building, anywhere in the city, anywhere in the state-and practically anywhere in the world-and an inbound caller can reach them directly through one number. The call will ring directly through to the worker's cell phone, with no noticeable lag in getting the customer connected.

What to look for

When you are considering the deployment of these technologies, always look for a phone system that has these capabilities already embedded into the platform. You don't want to try and add this functionality to a disparate system that was not designed with this technology in mind. If you do, you will end up with a complex, expensive, hard-to-maintain system that might be more trouble than it's worth.

But if you purchase a phone system that already has ACD functionality in place, and is designed to work with the latest wireless and unified messaging technology, what you'll get is a new customer service engine. An affordable engine that will empower your employees with the ability to build customer relationships stronger and more efficiently than ever before.