5 Steps to "mystery Shopping" Your Contact Centre.

By CHARLIE COWAN

Have you ever wondered how good your contact centre is? Have you ever looked at others in your industry and thought -"I'd love to know how we compare?"

An increasing number of contact centres are using mystery shopping as a way of regularly monitoring their progress and using it to benchmark themselves against others.

This week I caught up with Demitris Edwards of Vocall Group who provide mystery shopping services to contact centres to understand how the process works.

Learn about your customers

Demitris Edwards of Vocall

Firstly the mystery shopper needs to understand your customers. Are they consumers, are they businesses, are they young or old, what type of calls to they make or emails to they send? "It's more important to learn about the customer than the actual business itself" says Demitris. "If you know too much about the business then you can start to make exceptions for certain behaviour when all that matters is the customer experience."

Learning about the customer usually means spending time listening to live agent calls, or a set of recorded calls so that the mystery shopper can get a feel for the customers.
Set up fake customers

To enable mystery shoppers to have a call that doesn't end with "I've nothing on my system" after 15 seconds, you will need to set up some fake customer accounts on your system. This might be some false holiday bookings, or a car on order, or some names on your membership list. You will need to tag these so that you are not counting them as real customers or orders, but in such a way that your agents and supervisors will treat them as if they were real customers.

"Your agents have got to believe this is a real customer, or the whole process fails" says Demitris.

Start mystery shopping

Now the calls and emails can start. Typically you should expect to receive 1 mystery call per FTE per month. So 100 FTE's in your contact centre should receive 100 calls. These won't be perfectly distributed across your contact centre, but over a year you would expect to speak to most of your agents.

The calls and emails will emulate the types of behaviour your actual customers are exhibiting - upgrades, cancellations, requests to speak to supervisors.

Get marked

It's important to mark each call on a range of metrics - not just "good or bad". Demitris uses 15 measurements ranging from telephone manner, to rapport and proactive listening skills.

Within telephone manner the mystery shopper will look at a range of skills:

- Enthusiasm
- Professionalism
- Politeness
- Positiveness
- Honesty

All of these are traits your callers can pick up on quickly when they call into your contact centre and they have a huge influence on their impression of your corporate brand.

We'll be going through through some of these measurements in more detail in future posts, but its important to remember that measuring this level of detail is key to improving your team's abilities.

Improve

The initial driver for a mystery shopping project can often be benchmarking against competitors "Let's see how we compare!" However Demitris sees this quickly transform once the first results are in (whatever they are) to "How can we do better?" Constant ongoing
evaluation and training helps agents and supervisors to deliver a better service to their customers.

What's changed?

We finished up our discussion by asking what Demitris has seen change over the nine years he's been involved with this process. Demitris believes that in the past the focus was very much about metrics and powering through the calls as quickly as possible. But now it's about "preempting a problem to prevent a call back."

Demitris states the example of the DVLA who used to receive a significant number of calls asking whether documents had been posted. By reinforcing on all calls how long a specific document might take (say 2 weeks) they could significantly reduce the number of calls within that time that were asking where the documents were. A simple change with dramatic results.

Our thanks to Demitris for taking the time to discuss contact centre mystery shopping with us. If you'd like more information about the Call Centre League of Excellence, or mystery shopping then have a look at the Vocall Group website.

Do you use mystery shopping in your contact centre? How have the results changed the way you work?

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1.844.324.0340