Call Center Benchmarking Webinar Q&A

Question

What is the definition of a transfer? And how is the survey question typically asked?

Answer

I can answer both questions quite simply. The question asked is "Were you transferred to another person during your interaction?"

For us it is the movement of the caller from one agent to another agent regardless of whether or inter or intra departmental. That's the answer.

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Question

How in cost per call going down with all other metrics related going up?

Answer

I don't know if all other metrics are going up. The reality is that there are fewer calls to the call center, which can help with staffing. And so you have this interesting thing. It's dually noted that with top performers investments are being made, investments in people are being made.

However, as we all know those investments in people have many, many dividends. One is reduction in attrition. Depending on who you talk to I've seen highs of 30 and lows of 30,000 and lows of 6000 to bring somebody new on board. We tend to think that it's somewhere between 15 and 20.

So any percentage point that you can reduce attrition of any call center or any size, they're going to save a ton of money to your bottom line. So even though you're paying people more as a percentage like we mentioned I think it was somewhere upwards of 4%, near 5% increase. You can more than make up for that if you are reducing your attrition.

Additionally, given the fact that there are fewer calls generally to take people are making the most of those calls and first call resolution is going up. You could see the combination of all of those elements can support the fact that the cost per call for these top performers is actually going down.

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Question

What is the total amount of agents a company should have in order to be hitting these 5.64 calls per hour?

Answer

It depends is the answer. You know, the 5.64 is aggregate for these top performers within what I would say is I wouldn't focus so much on the 5.64. I would look - I would advise folks to look more at the trend that is saying that the best companies in the world at this are putting a burden on their reps from a calls per hour perspective that is lower than it used to be.

It's the acknowledgement that the environment is tougher now than it used to be. And that it's just not a realistic expectation to run people through the call mill to hit some service level goal. So the staffing is totally relative to the type of call, the length of call, etcetera, etcetera. So I would just advise folks to look at the overall macro trend there. And then do some good research around your particular environment. And then you can draw correlations to understand what the right staffing level would be.

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Question

How do I get my hands on the Benchmarking Tool Kit?

Answer

Yes. So, here's some contact information. You all can download this and it's in there. But Julia Levy can help, if you send her an email or give her a call that's one option. But when you - what we would advise is once you go online, you'll be able to enter some information. And the reason why that is important is that will route you to the right account director that can help you get your needs met as soon as possible.

Because all Julia will be is a conduit to get to the right person. So we're really recommending that, you know, you take the time to just jump online and express interest. And then the right account director will get back to you very, very quickly and share with you the details including pricing.

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Question

What suggestions do you have for interpreting the benchmark results and putting them in proper context? An example of a challenge we face is looking at cost per call metrics and not knowing if the better performers are using outsourcing or on-shoring. Whether they are performing well from well a quality or C-sat perspective? Or even as simple as if they have same burdens in their submissions?

Answer

Great question. So this is again where context is important. As I mentioned the Benchmarking Tool Kit is a fabulous resource. And it can definitely give you very specific information on aggregate insights. But the context is vital. We really believe in the networking aspect of our community.

When we enter into a relationship with you, you will be exposed to those folks and those brands that you all have heard of. Some people within your space or in a related space, some people across industry. And that is where we really recommend internal data sharing and alliances around those specific questions.

The notion of outsourcing is a great one. That obviously is going to have an impact on cost per call. And so one of the things that we do do is we do write the success of outsource interactions from a C-sat perspective. And we're able to isolate how outsources do in that regard. And you're also able to work with those folks who utilize outsources and get that very specific information just through consultation but it is nuanced.

It absolutely has - needs to be looked at in a context in order for you to get the most out of it. Otherwise this, you know, any benchmarking program is directional. Of course, the difference between ours and perhaps others is that the information that we give are at least you know are from top performing organizations from a customer satisfaction perspective.

So, all of these people are delivering excellent customer experience. And so that will at least give you one parameter that you will know that you won't have to worry about from a variable standpoint.

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Question

Can you tell more about what the predicative model for hiring is?

Answer

Yes. So there are several tools out there. And, you know, we don't at JD Power make formal recommendations like hey use this company or use that company. So what I'm about to share with you is not me saying use this company but we have had good experiences and our clients have good experiences with Furst Person.

In fact Jeff Furst spoke at one of our round table of champions and actually sponsored an event. So if you go on to his Web site and when you put in a Google search for hiring - predictive hiring models in the call center. You know, the first person will come up with many others. So there are many fine companies.

But at the end of the day the net-net there are for specific environments, specific traits that will yield a better customer experience than others. And your ability to identify those traits through a predictive hiring model i.e. giving folks an online test and understanding how they react in certain situations. Understanding their normal communication style, their personality style, etcetera, etcetera will allow you to put the right person in the right role.

You have a different profile for a home-based agent as an example then you do for a typical brick and mortar agent. You different profile for a customer service rep then you do for a technical support rep.

Companies like Jeff's have the database and insight to customize those specific tools to yield the best reps - or future reps. And it will save a lot of money.

That's one of those things that it's a good investment because you will see a reduction in attrition rate as you do a better job of picking the right people on the front end. So it will end up saving money. But that would be one perspective that folks can consider when thinking about predictive hiring models.

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Question

Are most companies putting everything they can in a cost per call number. Or do you see some specific items that are being used by most companies?

Answer

Yes. Well, cost per call is, you know, one of those metrics that is - I don't know - not necessarily abused but at the end of the day especially for benchmark marking you really have to make sure that everybody is using the exact same methodology.

Now the way that we ensure that that happens is that - for those of you who are interested in the

Benchmarking Tool Kit you'll get what we call an Operational Benchmarking Questionnaire. And that is an Excel spreadsheet which has the specific formulas that we require in order for you to get a like report – a comparative report on the backend.

So when - if you choose to work with us on a Benchmarking Tool Kit if you fill out the Operational Benchmarking Questionnaire correctly and submit that to us then you will get an aggregate report that will available in March of 2012 that will compare you to all of the certified clients for 2011.

In addition you will immediately get all of last year's data in a nice report. And you'll get some utility out of it immediately. But the point is that we ask people very specifically to give us the sum of all costs for the running the call center. And we have a detailed list I won't go into it because it's long. But we will ask you to go through all of those elements and support it with the data. And at the end of the day it's we think as effective as it can be in giving like numbers.

Because we kind of force the inputs then you guys will at least get a consistent relative output to know whether you all are in line or out of line regarding costs.

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Question

On Slide 19 of the benchmarking webinar you refer to hold time. Is it important to set expectation when the agent puts the client on hold? If it will be less than 30 seconds as an example?

Answer

Yes. I mean here's the deal especially for US consumers, this is less important in other parts of the world. But particularly consumers in the US incredibly impatient and generally speaking control freaks. And like all human beings there is a lack of information then most folks become impatient and assume the worst. And that in turn creates stress, right.

If we do not know how long I'm going to be on hold, who knows, I may time to go do X, Y, and Z or I might not. Or I just because I don't know that am creating higher degrees of stress. So as professionals and essentially as brand managers on the operations side it is our job to reduce stress. And that is the primary benefit that ends up yielding higher C-sat scores is that folks feel like, okay, now I know what to expect and now I can deal with it.

Now, any time you put somebody on hold for two minutes or more I recommend - we would recommend - that you intermittently come on the line, let folks know that you haven't forgotten about them and that you're going to continue to search and ask permission. Continually ask permission if it's okay to put them on hold and assure them that they are - that you'll be back with them in more than two minute increments to give them a status.

If you do that, that will, again, reduce the stress. People know where you're standing. And as a result they are going to be much more tolerant of this hold time. So it's absolutely imperative that you nail the hold time and if you aren't going to jump on proactively and let them know that the reason why is because you really want to take care of them and get them the information that they need and that will buy you some more time.

But it's always safer to estimate on the high end then the low end and then exceed those expectations.

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Question

How do you actually collect the benchmark data? Do you other companies actually share their metrics for you to know this or is it based on mystery shops to the company?

Answer

We collect all the C-sat, the customer satisfaction data, the customer drive diagnostic data which is inside your operational benchmarking - I mean which is inside the Benchmarking Tool Kit. We collect all of that. So through the survey JD Power goes out gets the data and then compares it to the high performer even by question. I mean I should've had a screen shot in here that actually showed a sample report.

For a question like courtesy as an example, we will plot your score. Let's say that it is an 8-1/2 so on a scale of 1 to 10 your customers that we talk to gave your group an 8-1/2. We would plot on there and you'd see relative to certified companies, so these are top performing companies, I actually score about average with them. But there is a high performer inside the certified company that actually scores like a 9-7.

And there is another company within the certified organizations that are scoring at a, you know, 8.2. so you'll be able to see literally question by question relative to the average high performer/low performer where you fit in against customer satisfaction, customer drive diagnostics like hold. Number of times on hold, hold time, was time estimated, was the hold time estimated, yes or no. Were you transferred yes or no, all of those diagnostic questions we ask and collect for you.

We also ask loyalty and advocacy questions. so that is one part of it. the other part is the Operational Benchmarking Questionnaire which by its definition it's design - is it customer provided. So customers will fill it in.

Now, obviously the incentive is that you don't get the operational benchmarks from the top performers unless you fill that in. and you fill that in correctly. So if we get incomplete data, we'll kick it back to you. If the data doesn't make sense we'll eventually kick back to you and ask you to put it in.

But the entire integrity of the program of course is contingent upon folks being truthful with that and because especially these top performers are wanting to know specifically where do I stand relative to others?

We've gotten very good participation and commitment from them to fill out the OBQ in an accurate way. But we'll catch the errors that come out if there's a misplaced decimal, something's not looking right.