Top 3 Lies in the Call Center

I need it faster. Work smarter. Do this cheaper.

The amount of pressure placed on contact centers to operate faster, smarter and cheaper has increased significantly within the past few years. "Do more with less" has ultimately become the contact center's new mantra despite unyielding service level objectives. Even with these unwavering goals and demands, there are fibs call centers tell themselves when they operate "business as usual." However, despite its intent, these untruths only hinder productivity and performance, resulting in slower, less efficient and more expensive operations.

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The top three tales that stand in the way of recognizing a call center's true potential of productivity and performance include:

LIE #1 – There's not enough time to do anything more.

Every day, in even the most tightly managed centers, agents spend 11 percent of their time sitting idle, waiting for the next call. And while they mostly occur in very small increments, (we're talking 90 seconds, even as small as 30 seconds) they can all add up to a staggering amount of lost time. Workforce management tools are essential for forecasting call volume based on historical data but aren't prepared to handle this lost time due to two factors: the data is not evaluated in real time, and it's not granular enough as these tools only look at call volume in 15 minute intervals (much longer than the typical instance of wait time). Technology that has the power to find and aggregate these small increments of time across all agents into usable segments creates active wait time.

LIE #2 – High shrinkage is just a fact of life in the call center.

Coincidentally, another 12 percent (curiously close to the percentage of time spent idle) of call center agents' daily activities are attributed to controllable shrinkage. These activities – i.e. "must-read" communications, after-call work, or training – fall within management's control, because they need to be scheduled.

Rather than scheduling agents off the phone to complete these shrinkage activities (i.e. "blocking"), you can shift these tasks to be completed during active wait time (i.e. "blending"). Not only will you reduce shrinkage, you'll also make better use of idle time, and thereby increase productivity.

LIE #3 – Taking away from downtime will make my agents unhappy and negatively impact customer satisfaction.

Is a 45-second breather really enough time for agents to sufficiently decompress between calls? Rather than letting agents "decompress," (or stare at a cubicle wall for 30 seconds frequently throughout the day), give agents an assignment that takes 10 to 15 minutes to complete. While it's not a break (nor is a 30 second interval between calls), it's an opportunity to do different work, learn something or complete a task that will make them better at their jobs. Really worried about your agents' job satisfaction? Take the hours saved and reinvest it in career advancement training. Try an incentive program tied to productivity. Or reward them with a real vacation day for performance.

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The Truth of the Matter

Today, being a productive and high-performance call center requires you to think differently. The ability to find and efficiently utilize idle time could mean the difference between meeting and failing with customers and agents alike. Intraday management technology not only helps contact centers find previously unproductive time, but also delivers off-phone activities essential to improving performance and productivity. When considering whether or not intraday management could benefit your contact center, simply ask yourself "how would I use an additional 49 minutes per agent every day?"

If you can see your way through these untruths, you have the power to improve operational efficiencies and increase profits. Tap into this vastly underused resource in your contact center to pull off the ultimate more-with-less success story.

About Intradiem

Intradiem, formerly Knowlagent, is the leading provider of intraday management solutions for contact centers. Its technology increases agent productivity and performance by delivering off-phone activities during agent idle time. Intradiem's solutions are on-demand, easy to use and require no capital expenditures. More than 375,000 agents and managers around the world use Intradiem's solutions every day. For more information, call 888-566-9457 or visit us online at www.intradiem.com.

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