



Keeping Universal Agents Universal

Effective time management for the multi-
channel environment

Like the call center itself, the role of the call center agent is evolving.

Often the “face” of the company, agents man the frontlines, interacting with customers and providing them with an experience that they will ultimately use to judge your organization and brand as a whole.

To further up the ante, customers today expect more from their agents and are more difficult to satisfy. They expect a single agent to be equipped to answer all of their questions and solve all of their issues. When customers call with a billing *and* technical support question, they prefer that the same agent be skilled enough to handle both – without having to transfer them to another department or put them on hold while they search for an answer.

This level of service and expertise requires a special kind of agent. They must be talented, motivated, and knowledgeable about your products, services and brand. They must resolve customer issues in a single call, drive customer loyalty, and have command of a wide range of technologies.

These super agents, or “universal agents,” are in hot demand. They are able to take on multiple responsibilities, and are a valuable resource to the call center both in terms of reducing costs and adding business value. But with these added responsibilities comes additional challenges.

Agents don’t typically walk in as “universal” on the first day. They have to be trained, coached and prepared, which can be expensive and time consuming.

Where do you find the time to effectively train agents so that they can handle all kinds of customer inquiries without breaking the budget or negatively effecting service levels? How do effectively manage their time so that they can shift back and forth between the multiple touch-points required for a unified customer experience?

The Universal Appeal of the Universal Agent

Universal agents are appealing because of their ability to perform multiple tasks. They take on many different duties – from tech support to sales – and communicate through many different avenues including phone, e-mail and chat. They may even fulfill some back-office duties as well.

They provide a valuable resource to the call center with their knowledge and efficiency; they’re also responsible for delivering an exceptional customer experience, which ultimately drives loyalty.

In short, universal agents add value. The overall customer experience is improved, and costs to the business are lowered, because agent utilization is increased. Everybody wins.

But because universal agents are tasked with responsibilities beyond those of traditional agents, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to make them “universal” requires them to be trained as experts in many areas. This takes time, patience, and most importantly, *money*.

More Responsibilities = More Training, Coaching and Communications

Universal agents contribute greatly to customer satisfaction when they are on the phones, solving customer issues and promoting your brand. But they aren't *always* on the phones.

Agents spend a large chunk of their day, typically around 25 percent, off the phones and involved in various shrinkage activities. Some of these activities – such as lunch, breaks and absenteeism – are out of your control and do not contribute to productivity. But the majority of activities are designed to keep agents well informed and up-to-date on the critical information about your products and services they need to better serve your customers.

Activities such as training, coaching, knowledge base reviews, team meetings, research, project work and one-on-one coaching make agents better. The more they know about your company, products, policies and brand, the better equipped they are to answer customer inquiries through a number of different communication channels. The best agents not only have product knowledge, they are

also skilled in various technologies and able to interact with customers both on the phones, as well as online. This is the very essence of what makes, and keeps, these universal agents “universal.”

Three Ways to Make Idle Time Work for Universal Agents

By dynamically responding to call volume and identifying natural idle times, agents can complete the activities that make them more productive without the need for more agents to cover calls.

Turn Idle Time into Active Wait Time

In order to handle multiple call types, universal agents must be experts in many different areas. This requires more efficiency for keeping agents informed, as well as training and coaching to ensure that they are knowledgeable and up-to-date on your company's products, services and processes.

Intradiem finds idle time in call volume for agents to read important internal communications or complete training and coaching between calls and directs them to the appropriate system to find the assigned activity.

Bundle Off-line Activities

Typically, agents have a few sporadic minutes between calls, but it's not enough time to complete off-phone work, resulting in the need to schedule these activities during shrinkage.

Intradiem bundles idle time into 5-20 minute chunks of time so that agents can

focus on assigned activities from training sessions to knowledge base reviews or even time to read and respond to e-mails or complete back-office processes.

Complete the Most Important Work First

When agents do find enough downtime to work on non-scheduled work, it's unlikely they would prioritize activities in the same manner as management would.

With Intradiem, supervisors or managers can prioritize assigned activities for individual agents to optimize their idle time.

Intradiem enables you to find the time to keep these universal agents up to date by leveraging the applications you already have in place. The information the universal agent needs to be effective already exists within your organization.

Intradiem simply finds time for agents to leverage such information by directing them to access the information and ensuring that they focus on the most important activities first.

Universal agents are able to complete the activities that make them "universal" while sitting at their desks, waiting for the next call.

About Intradiem

Intradiem, formerly Knowagent, 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.

Intradiem
3650 Mansell Road, Suite 500
Alpharetta, GA 30022
888.566.9457, phone
678.356.3551, fax
www.intradiem.com

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