Achieving Contact Center Excellence

A practical guide to unleashing the power of speech analytics for driving performance and compliance improvements

2nd Edition, July 2023

Sponsored by

callbi
Speech Analytics
made easy

Written by

ROD JONES

This booklet will guide you in leveraging speech analytics to transform your call center, driving significant improvements in customer experience, performance, and compliance.

© Copyright Strictly Reserved Rod Jones Consulting (Pty) Ltd
September 2023 / Edition 2

Contents

Introduction	2
Global Trends	3
Why Should You Integrate Speech Analytics Into Your Contact Centre Operations?	5
Good Reasons To Deploy Speech Analysis	6
Chapter 1: Improve Customer Experience	6
Chapter 2: Compliance & Risk Mitigation	8
Chapter 3: Quality Optimisation	10
Chapter 4: Agent Performance	12
Chapter 5: Operational KPIs	16
Chapter 6: Streamlining Business Processing	18
Chapter 7: Check And Mend Service Level	20
Chapter 8: Changing Contact Center Culture	22
Chapter 9: Fast Return On Investment (ROI)	25
Chapter 10: Operational Efficiencies	28
Chapter 11: Increasing & Improving Business Intelligence	30
Acknowledgements	32

About the author

Rod's positioning statement is:

"I help decision-makers to make good decisions about call centres and contact centres."

With over 45 years of experience exclusively in the call centre

and customer service industry, Rod Jones is recognised internationally as a thought leader and a trusted advisor to corporates, parastatals and government agencies in South Africa and many other African and Middle Eastern countries.

As a professional strategic advisor, consultant, industry analyst and speaker, Rod provides an extensive range of services concentrating on the strategic planning and operational issues of Call Centres, Contact Centres, Customer Experience and Business Process Outsourcing.

He was the founder and first Chairman of the Independent Contact Centre Consultants Association, former Chairman of the Direct Marketing Association TeleServices Council of SA and a Trustee of the Thought Leadership Foundation. Rod has also served as Chairman of the South African ISO Customer Service Standards Committee, as a judge for the 2019 and 2022 BPeSA industry awards, and as an auditor for the 2019 Dubai Government Contact Centre Standards.

Rod's 'World Class Contact Centres' MasterClass management knowledge development seminars have been attended by almost 5,000 delegates in 13 countries.

Email: rod@rodjones.co.za

Cell: +27 (0)82 568 9976

www.rodjones.co.za

callbi
Speech Analytics
made easy

Foreword

I have spent most of my business life living and breathing call centres or contact centres. It has been an adventure spanning almost 50 years.

Although many of the basic principles of contact centre operations have remained the basically same, the technologies have catalysed the most significant changes in our industry. For decades the phrase 'technology only enables the processes' has been the catchphrase. In many cases, the raft of often disparate technologies and how they were deployed in our contact centres were the source of great frustration to operators.

The advent of the single vendor all-in-one contact centre solution in the late 90s was the forerunner to what has now become the de facto platform for effective operations; the contemporary omnichannel solution.

It was in late 2019 when speech analytics technology captured my imagination. I was fascinated and enthralled by the ability to 'listen' to every syllable, every word in every conversation in or out of a contact centre, across all agents and all customer calls, all the time. I became enthralled by the idea of being able to identify automatically, alarm and escalate outlier calls based on specific words or phrases or combinations of words and phrases. And what's more, to be able to run deep analytics across many different languages, dialects, and accents to produce credible, quantifiable insights and accurate business intelligence.

But speech analytics is not something you buy, it's something you do. (Quoting my professional colleague and speech analytics specialist, Corey Springett).

During the past few years, I have written dozens of articles, white papers, blogs and eBooks on the subject. I want to think that these have raised awareness of the technology and, in some cases, triggered the uptake and deployment of speech analytics.

Contact centre professionals repeatedly ask the same question: "How do I use speech analytics to drive operational performance, meet compliance requirements and provide appropriate business intelligence to drive tactical and strategic changes." This book will answer these questions.

Introduction

Particularly in the last decade, for most organisations, the contact centre's role has become significantly more focused on providing customers with constantly improving levels of service and convenience whilst serving as the basis for implementing strategic and tactical experience orientated customer care and revenue-generating initiatives.

Although the evolution of contact centres into digital omnichannel customer engagement centres is beginning to manifest, for most organisations, the reality is that, depending on the geography, voicebased interactions still make up the majority, for example, in the UK1. Approximately 64% of customer interactions are by telephone, with email at 15.7%, web chat at 7%, social media at 4.6%, and selfservice at 6.4%.

Easy to deploy

Low-cost, highly effective solution to enable organisations to maximise revenue, improve efficiencies and effectiveness, to reduce costs and to mitigate business risks.

The digital migration journey

It is vital to recognise that the much-lauded 'digital migration' into low-cost self-service channels such as chat, apps, text and voice bots, AI-assisted FAQs, and similar advanced technologies relies heavily on initially gaining accurate and credible insights from large numbers of voice interactions. These are necessary to craft customer-friendly digital processes, procedures, and resources, unlock the massive potential from digital investments, and, finally, ensure a significant return on investment.

Listen to the voice of the customer

It is a reality for most contact centres that a mere 2% to 5% of all recorded calls are manually monitored and assessed for quality and compliance. While these figures may not be accurate in the case of certain interaction types such as telesales (mainly financial services products), the cost of having significantly increased numbers of quality assessors to increase the sample size to ensure compliance and viable sales is prohibitive.

What's more, the process of manual call assessments is lengthy. It often needs highly experienced assessors with specific skills to not only 'score' calls for essential quality and compliance but, of greater importance to the organisation, to identify particular insights on which to base appropriate interventions. These are designed to improve customer experience, productivity, and the provision of credible business intelligence to drive strategic and tactical decision-making.

Buried deep inside the potentially tens of thousands (if not millions) of hours of call recordings is the actual Voice of the Customer (VOC). The insights are in the verbatims, competitive product mentions, and many other quantifiable insights that indicate process or procedure failures, product failures, complaints, agent performance issues, and systems or technology challenges.

Also to be found are all manner of opportunities to cut or reduce costs, increase revenues, mitigate risks, and improve the overall customer experience.

According to Gartner2, by as early as 2025, up to 60% of organisations with voice of the customer programmes will supplement traditional manual surveys by analysing voice and text interactions with customers using speech analytics technologies.

Enter low-cost, easy-to-deploy speech analytics.

Global trends

When asked what technological advancements are most likely to impact contact centre operations in the near future, most CX professionals simply answer, "AI".

"Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings".

www.britannica.com

In the context of call centres or contact centres, myriad solutions and applications claim to use AI to address one or more of the key strategic drivers of the fully optimised customer contact centre. That said, the AI beast takes on many forms. One: Improve customer satisfaction and the customer experience. Two: Cut, cap, or reduce the cost to serve. Three: Drive down inefficiencies and increase operational efficiency. Four: Mitigate business risks (for example, financial losses, data security, brand and reputational damage). Five: Improve staff satisfaction.

One of the more apparent deployments of contact centre AI solutions is the ubiquitous chatbot. From its rather primitive origins a decade or so ago, AI-enabled chatbots are rapidly becoming a great deal more sophisticated and capable of handling an ever- increasing volume of relatively straightforward customer interactions. This technology is often cited as the start of ever more sophisticated customer self-service or human-assisted voice call deflection initiatives.

When coupled with now well-matured IVR solutions and various forms of Robotic Process Automation (RPA), together with speech recognition and speech analytics platforms, both text and voice-based bots are in the throes of having an exponential impact on the global CX industry. With few exceptions, most AI-enabled contact centre solutions rely to varying degrees on speech and data analytics as inputs to drive their primary functionality.

Whilst the impact of AI on virtually all contact centre technologies is starting to manifest, for the purposes of this book, the focus is on speech analytics.

Particularly in the matured contact centre sectors of the UK and US, the use of speech analytics to drive overall performance improvements based on large volumes of credible customer insights is growing significantly. It is of interest to note that of the US and UK contact centres surveyed by ContactBabel that are already implementing speech analytics, almost 70% implement post-call speech analytics as opposed to real-time speech analytics.

This take-up or 'acquisition demand' for speech analytics by leading contact centres is second only to that for AI and text-based chatbots.

The ContactBabel reports also highlight the predominant use case for speech analytics technologies in contact centres. It is not surprising to note that 'Monitoring script and regulatory compliance' is the highest-ranked use case, whilst 'Automating and speeding up quality monitoring' comes in a close second.

(See ContactBabel research table below.)

Usefulness of post-call analytics

Source: ContactBabel 2022 UK Decision-Makers' Guide www.contactbabel.com/research

Speech analytics is no longer only for large contact centres with massive budgets.

Until a few years ago, deploying a speech analytics solution needed massive investments in technologies, professional services, training, skills development, and ever- increasing (and primarily foreign exchange-based) long- term licencing and maintenance contracts. What's more, the predominantly US and UK-based speech analytics solutions tended to focus mainly on their native languages (US or UK English), dialects, and accents.

Easy to deploy

Modern cloud-based speech analytics solutions need neither costly on-premises technologies nor time-consuming and costly integration with other systems. Many recently developed speech analytics solutions are recorder agnostic, and most users are up and running within 10 to 14 days.

Easy to use

The ideal speech analytics solutions are designed and built to be used by contact centre operational staff; they need not be costly and challenging-to-find data analysts. Many users can become proficient within two to three short training sessions. They evolve rapidly to become skilled at building queries and identifying powerful insights and business intelligence.

Easy on the budgets

The ideal speech analytics solutions' business model is based on a low-cost, simple, and flexible month-to-month subscription (Software as a Service (SaaS)). Customers can ramp up and scale down according to fluctuating business needs.

About this handbook

It is not difficult to grasp how using speech analytics technology to automatically monitor 100% of all recorded calls into or out of your contact centre can significantly benefit any contact centre.

It is also easy to understand how technology can identify and report on critical words and phrases such as "I have a complaint", "I have called many times", or "I want to speak to your manager".

But speech analytics is not a simple software solution that miraculously produces insights. Speech analytics is something that you do, not something that you buy. Take the analogy of an Excel spreadsheet.

Whilst Excel is extremely powerful, initially, it is a blank sheet of columns, rows, and cells. It is how the user populates the contents of each of the cells and the formulas, processes, and powerful features that are invoked that unleash the full potential of Excel. The same goes for speech analytics. It's about how one uses it to achieve defined operational goals.

Top tip

Speech analytics is something that you do, not something that you buy.

Each of the sections of this booklet is written to focus on three main topics:

1. What specific **operational challenges** and problems speech analytics can address and help to resolve
2. How you can use speech analytics to drive identified **operational improvements**
3. **Practical examples** of how to build and use speech analytics queries to achieve fast, credible operational insights to drive performance improvements or to generate valuable, precious business intelligence

Why should you integrate speech analytics into your contact centre operations?

There are **six primary reasons** why many contact centres rapidly deploy speech analytics technologies.

1. Operational transformation

Using speech analytics technology to 'mine' tens of thousands of hours of call recordings for operational insights provides management with massive strategic and tactical advantages. These guide the transformation of the contact centre business unit to provide enhanced customer experiences whilst achieving desirable business outcomes.

2. Revenue generation

Use speech analytics to gain credible customer insights into what they want, need, or demand. What are agents saying or not saying? Close more sales faster or get more PTPs in collections environments.

3. Customer and agent experience

Identify customer pain points and high-effort processes quickly, and use this knowledge to build positive customer and agent experiences.

4. Compliance

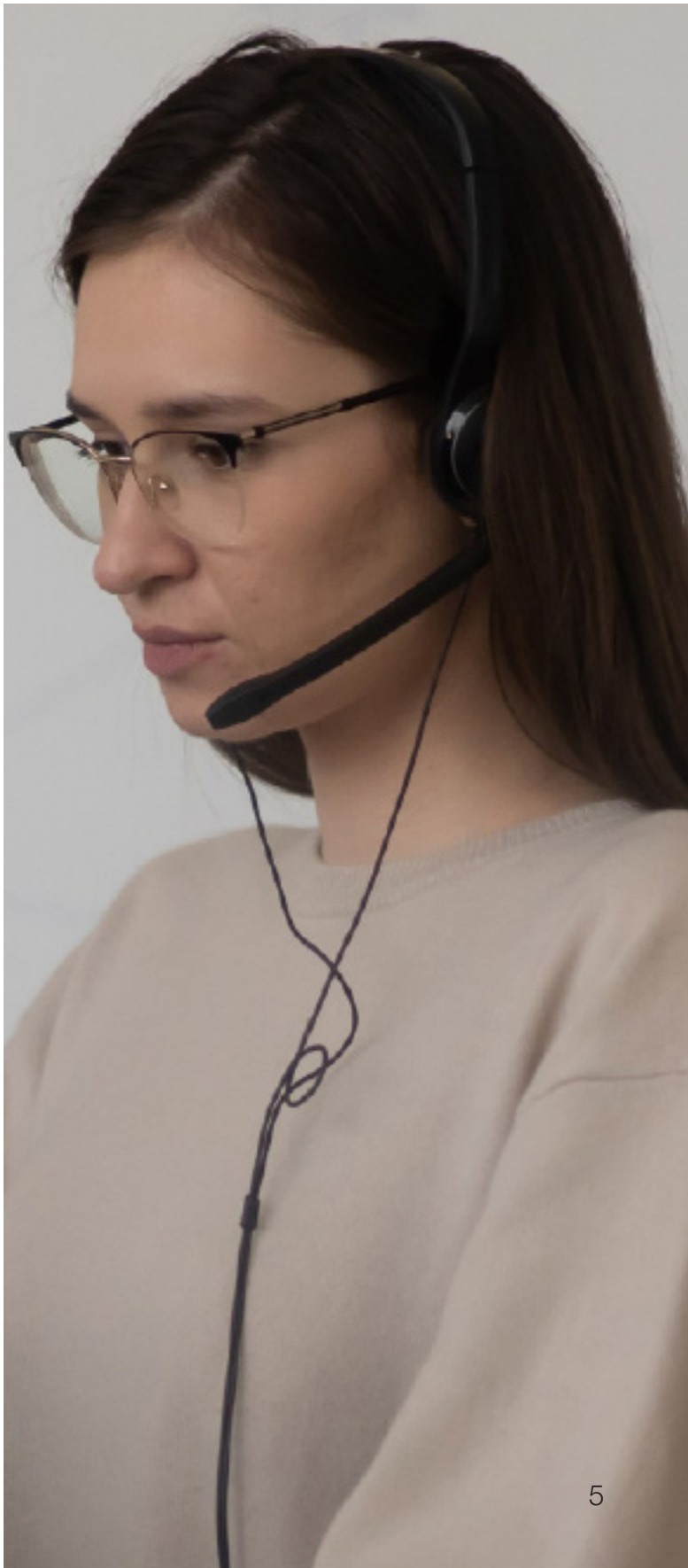
Have confidence that you are monitoring 100% of all calls for compliance and risk mitigation and generating automated quality and compliance scorecards.

5. Direct cost savings

Speech analytics highlights flaws and weaknesses in contact centre operations and points to cost savings and efficiency improvements.

6. Automated quality & compliance assurance

Speech analytics can help you automatically score 100% of calls against defined checks and process or compliance requirements. This technology enables you to identify key failure points across all calls much more quickly and more accurately than a human resource can. Human time investment can shift from listening and checking calls to focusing on fails and outliers, doing root-cause analysis and implementing corrective actions to drive change.



Good Reasons to deploy Speech Analysis Chapter 1: Improve customer experience

For any organisation demanding sustained growth in market share, revenues, and bottom-line profit, it is vital to ensure that customers are provided with a remarkable and consistent customer experience.

Positive customer experiences promote loyalty, drive customer retention, and stimulate brand advocacy. Customer experience is how customers perceive their interactions with the organisation and embody not only physical engagement but, of equal importance, the emotional elements, how customers feel during the engagement.

During any interaction with the organisation's contact centre, there are potentially dozens of 'moments of truth'.

Typical operational challenges & problems

- Customer satisfaction is low and trending downwards.
- The number of customer complaints is increasing.
- Many complaints report that dealing with the contact centre is complex and requires high effort.
- First Contact Resolution (FCR) is declining.
- There is a lack of insights into sources of customer friction points/process points of failure.
- High numbers of calls are escalated.

What speech analytics can do to improve customer experience

- Using speech analytics to monitor 100% of all calls, the management team can quickly identify why customers are dissatisfied with the contact centre's services.
- Speech analytics quickly reveals the root cause of customer complaints.
- By analysing insights from speech analytics, processes requiring high effort by customers are identified and can be streamlined.
- Speech analytics insights clearly show why agents are escalating large numbers of calls and why first contact resolution stats are low and declining.

EXAMPLES

Problem Statement:

- First contact resolution declined from 75% to 60% in six months.
- Registered customer complaints about the contact centre's services increased during the same six months from 2% to 7% of total calls.

SOLUTIONS

Build a speech analytics query stack to identify all repeat calls by locating calls containing words and phrases such as the following: "been following up" | "been patient long" | "call after" | "call afternoon" | "call again" | "call back" | "call later" | "call next" | "call tomorrow" | "called back" | "can't assist" | "cut off again" | "a few times already" | "haven't heard back" | "last week as well" | "nobody came back" | "not getting an update" | "phone after" | "phone afternoon" | "phone again" | "phone back" | "phone later" | "phone next" | "phone tomorrow" or "phoned back" or "phoning all time" | "several calls" | "several emails" | "several times" | "since last" | "still waiting" | "tried since"

Problem Statement:

To identify high-risk or negative sentiment calls (probable cause of complaints), build a query stack to identify calls containing any of the following words and phrases. When appropriate, these query stacks should include words and phrases in the languages commonly used in your contact centre conversations.

SOLUTIONS

"cut the call" | "explain yourself" | "not happy" | "angry" | "annoyed" | "better sort out" | "calm down" | "cannot tolerate" | "can't tolerate" | "challenge" | "be difficult" | "don't contact again" | "rude" | "interrupt" | "scream" | "shout" | "don't want to understand" | "dropped call" or "fighting" | "frustrated" | "frustrating" | "furious"

Problem Statement:

To provide management with insights and evidence of reasons for declining FCR due to call transfers and escalations, build a query stack to identify calls put on hold or transferred (and the basis for the transfer).

SOLUTIONS

"hold the line" | "give me a minute" | "give me second" | "hang line" | "hang on" | "hold line" | "just wait" | "mind holding" | "please hold" | "please wait" | "stay on the line" | "system not responding" | "system slow" | "waiting for system" | "with you shortly" | "thank holding" | "thanks holding" | "put you through" | "transfer the call" | "transfer you" | "please transfer" | "put your through" | "transfer call" | "transfer your" | "you going through" | "you're going through".

SUCCESS RESULTS

- The speech analytics solution dashboards and drill-down reports indicated that specific agents were not following prescribed and trained processes and procedures, unnecessarily escalating large numbers of calls, and simply terminating certain types of 'difficult' calls.
- The insights also highlighted that certain call types precluded agents from providing FCR due to organisational policies and procedures, exposed high-effort processes, and lacked agent empowerment.
- By reviewing processes and implementing appropriate coaching, re-training, and disciplinary procedures, management could reverse the declining FCR trend.

Drill down

Reports indicated that specific agents were not following processes and procedures.

callbi
Speech Analytics
made easy

Chapter 2: Compliance & Risk Mitigation

For any contact centre to maintain its integrity, reputation, and credibility with its customers and other appropriate regulatory or statutory bodies or organisational requirements, the operation must adhere strictly to defined regulations, policies, processes, and business rules.

- In many geographies, strict legislation or regulations impose stringent customer information and personal data requirements. In many cases, agents must carry out rigorous compliance routines, such as asking customers to 'opt in' to receive marketing or product information. Manual monitoring and scoring call recordings to ascertain agent adherence to processes and compliance is a massive and costly challenge.

- With growing frequency, customers are demanding to be taken off marketing and contact lists and opting out of being contacted. Agents must follow prescribed processes and scripting to appropriately handle all ''Do Not Contact' (DNC) requests. However, agents often need constant reminders to follow these compliance processes.

- Keeping tabs on which agents are or are not following procedures is a massive task; this critical compliance procedure is often neglected.

- In the financial services sector, agents must make several mandatory processes, procedures, and compliance statements during customer engagement. Manually monitoring agents for these critical requirements is extremely difficult and resource intensive.

- In outbound sales (telemarketing) and collections, agents must follow strict protocols and processes to ensure prospect qualification or Right Party Connect (RPC).

- Similarly, agents must conduct appropriate dialogue in the sales environment to confirm customer affordability before proceeding with specified call flows or scripts.

- In sales, collections, and customer service contact centres, management must identify and remedy misleading or inappropriate agent tactics or other undesirable or inappropriate behaviours.

- In sales and collections operations where 'best practice' processes and scripting are used, operational managers must ensure that agents adhere to these prescribed protocols.

What speech analytics can do to improve compliance & risk mitigation

- By automatically deploying speech analytics to monitor 100% of all inbound and outbound calls, contact centre managers can build queries and reporting dashboards to identify, quantify, and highlight positive and negative trends and many specific agent behaviour, performance, or compliance-related issues.

- Speech analytics can monitor and report on 100% of all calls to ensure compliance and risk mitigation by matching the presence or absence of keywords and phrases.

- Speech analytics can flag misleading or fraudulent interactions by agents or customers.

- Running queries to identify specific words and phrases indicating customers' requests to be removed from lists or databases and not to be contacted ensures that the operation complies with regulations relating to customers' 'do not contact' rights.

- Using speech analytics dashboards and reporting functions, managers (or team leaders or supervisors) can rapidly identify the presence or absence of specific keywords and phrases that indicate agent compliance (or non-compliance) with mandatory processes, procedures, and scripts or call guides.

- From the dashboards, managers can 'click down' into actual call recordings to the specific place in the call where defined keywords or phrases were used or not used and can flag or tag the interaction for further investigation or escalation.

EXAMPLES

Problem statement

- Management insists that to comply fully with data privacy regulations, during the currency of all calls, all agents must identify customers' specific requests to be removed from lists or databases and not to be contacted in future and to carry out the prescribed process for

- logging a 'do not contact' request.
- Agents do not always handle 'do not contact' requests and tend not to follow or avoid defined and mandatory processes.
- Randomly selected calls are being monitored by the Quality Assurance (QA) team to represent a sample size of under 4% and only represent a fraction of all customer interactions.
- The cost and associated logistics of increasing the sample size for manual monitoring by an expanded QA team are prohibitive.
- The organisation is at significant risk of being sanctioned by the regulator.

Solutions using speech analytics

- Build a speech analytics query stack that looks for some or all occurrences of the following example phrases. (It is important to build queries in all appropriate languages.)
- "Stop phoning me", "Stop calling me", "Where did you get my number?", "You are harassing me", "I'm listed with the DMA / Direct Marketing Association 'do not contact' list", or "Take my number off…"
- Build a dashboard report that lists all calls where the keywords or phrases from such a query are identified in customer conversations.
- Check the dashboard frequently (at least daily).
- Identify overall trends or individual agents' (or groups') trends or noncompliance.
- Click on specific calls and listen to the part of the call where keywords/phrases are identified.
- Where a 'do not contact' request is validated, tag the call with the appropriate tag and escalate following proper processes.
- Use the query dashboards and reports to identify specific agent behaviours and use targeted coaching, training, and other interventions to drive desirable behaviours and performance.

SUCCESS RESULTS

- 100% of all calls were effectively monitored and managed to ensure that agents complied with the 'do not contact' request. Non-compliant agents were identified, incident/s quantified, and the issue was escalated for coaching, training, or (in severe cases) disciplinary action.
- Risks to the company for breaches of data privacy regulations were mitigated.
- Query dashboards and reports drive improved agent performance and compliance.

Big Benefits

Risks to the company for breaches of data privacy regulations were mitigated

Chapter 3: Quality optimisation

'Quality' is defined as 'The degree of excellence of …'. In modern contact centres, achieving excellence is the over-arching goal across the three major areas of operations: people, processes, and technologies.

Genuine quality is achieved when faults or flaws in the operation are detected and appropriate interventions are introduced to mitigate these or to craft more efficient or more effective solutions.

Throughout the contact centre industry, manual monitoring and 'scoring' of recorded calls were the dominant methods of assessing the overall quality of the operation. That was until the introduction of affordable speech analytics solutions.

Typical operational challenges

- In most contact centres, random call sampling and monitoring are the norms. Depending on the operation, call sample sizes tend to be between 3% and 5% of the total call interaction volume.
- The cost and time required for a trained quality assessor to carry out a practical assessment make it impractical to increase the sample size for manual evaluation and scoring.
- It is virtually impossible to manually monitor and effectively evaluate all contact centre calls in any operation.
- Manual call assessments are prone to natural human limitations. Burnout, fatigue, and the repetitive nature of QA work lead to biases, errors, and omissions. It can take two to three times the length of any given recorded call for a quality assessor to conduct a thorough evaluation.
- Manual call monitoring focuses mainly on agent performance in script and process compliance, and findings or results can often be biased or lack objectivity.
- Few manual QA processes and procedures are designed to identify vital, actionable insights to drive improvements or address business intelligence issues.
- It is impractical and cost- prohibitive to carry out the potentially valuable process of retrospective quality assessment of recorded calls.
- High-calibre, experienced quality assessors are challenging to recruit, train and retain. They are also costly resources.

What speech analytics can do to improve quality assurance

- When deployed and correctly configured, speech analytics technology automatically monitors and assesses 100% of all calls regarding the operation's predetermined quality assurance criteria for quality, compliance, risk, and opportunities.
- The automated speech analytics process identifies keywords and phrases that highlight flaws in the overall engagement. These would include (amongst many others) the following:
- Identify the presence or absence of specified keywords or phrases throughout all conversations.
- Identify keywords and phrases that identify customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction.
- Identify all outliers based on call guides, scripts, and other defined QA criteria, policies, processes, or procedures.
- Identify agents' deviations from mandatory processes, specific statements, scripts, call guides, or adherence (or not) to thorough training.
- Use the speech analytics solution to fully automate quality assessment scorecards using specific queries (words and phrases) based on traditional (manual) QA scorecard line items.
- Build fully automated dashboard scorecards to assess and score all (100% of) calls against all defined queries or required checks.
- Rapidly highlight all outliers and tagging of escalation or referrals for manual assessment by a trained quality assurance specialist.
- Use the call transcripts, recordings, and call scoring to coach and take appropriate action with agents, teams, or groups.
- Significantly reduce the cost of quality assurance processes and procedures Enhance the skills of trained quality assessors to become extremely valuable insight analysts.

whilst dramatically improving the overall QA function.

EXAMPLES

Problem statement

- QA resources only listen to and monitor a small sample of calls (3% to 5% of total call volume).
- Internal QA processes (sample selection) tend to be biased and not a true reflection of customer sentiments or agent performance across all calls.
- Internal QA processes and scoring are not fully aligned with external customer satisfaction interventions and scoring methods such as CSAT, NPS, customer effort, and complaints. Manual quality scores do not concur with other customer satisfaction metrics.
- Manual quality assurance (small sample) methods put the organisation at high risk regarding various statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Manual quality assurance methods do not identify and reliably quantify actionable insights on which to base operational performance improvements.

Solutions using speech analytics

- Deploy and configure speech analytics across all agents (or groups).
- Extract all call recordings and associated metadata (for a given period) and upload them to the speech analytics platform.
- Automatically run pre-configured queries against all calls.
- Use queries to score and assess all calls against the defined QA criteria (scorecard).
- Utilise the speech analytics solution scorecards to identify outliers. Tag and escalate as appropriate.
- Quality assessor resources focus on outliers. Manage by exception.
- Drive appropriate coaching and disciplinary or other interventions designed to improve the delivery of desirable business outcomes.

SUCCESS RESULTS

- 100% of all calls were automatically monitored and assessed for quality and compliance across all specified statutory or regulatory requirements, risks, defined business processes, organisational policies, and specific agent training and mandatory behaviours.
- Qualifiable and reliable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were automatically displayed on fully configurable, automated dashboards.
- Quality assessor resources rapidly gained skills and experience to become valuable insights analysts.
- Insights obtained from the analysed queries were used to drive operational improvements relating to people, processes, and technologies.

Chapter 4: AGENT PERFORMANCE

It is widely recognised that 70% to 80% of most contact centres' operating costs are directly related to wages, salaries, and associated expenses. It stands to reason that agent performance, efficiency and productivity measures are critical to the organisation from a purely economic standpoint.

To ensure optimised performance, management must monitor many facets of agent performance, identify specific issues or traits, and implement interventions to drive continuous improvement.

Operational challenges

- It is irrefutable that agent performance deteriorates over time if regular assessment, feedback, and coaching are not actioned.
- In many contact centres, inappropriate agent behaviours are driven by placing considerable emphasis on productivity metrics, e.g. Average Handling Time (AHT), calls per hour, calls per day, PTPs, and other KPIs. For example, to achieve productivity goals, agents cut short conversations before achieving customers' complete satisfaction or probing for other matters such as data privacy opt-in or up-sell and cross-sell opportunities.
- Typically, the small sample size of randomly selected calls for quality assurance monitoring does not sufficiently identify inappropriate behaviours in specific agents or groups of agents. These small samples cannot provide deep insights on which to base meaningful strategic and tactical decisions.
- Random sampling makes it extremely difficult for management to identify specific problems experienced by individual agents accurately.
- Random sampling and quality assessments make it extremely difficult for management to track the impact of specific coaching or re-training interventions.
- Conventional QA methods tend to result in management treating all agents (or teams of agents) as a single group and, therefore, applying training or incentives with a 'blanket' approach.

What speech analytics can do to improve agent performance

- Speech analytics provides management with detailed, quantified, and credible reports and the ability to identify individual and group behavioural patterns across all calls.
- The technology allows managers to rapidly identify areas for performance improvement and coaching requirements at an individual agent or team level.
- Individual agent performance and behavioural analysis across defined criteria can be used to drive desirable behaviours and customer experience outcomes.
- Speech analytics can be used to identify the root cause or the source of performance failures, e.g., technology, systems, agent training, skills, and individual behaviour traits.
- Using speech analytics to identify and report productivity measures can provide insights that improve processes, procedures, and agent behaviours, for example, the reasons for long or above average AHT, or high volumes of short or dropped calls.
- Using the speech analytics solution, agent performance and productivity can be improved by isolating outliers and providing the basis for individual coaching or training.
- Most speech analytics solutions can be used to identify 'dead air' or 'silent time' and identify agents with a high percentage of instances of silent time. This aids in identifying root causes and designing appropriate interventions.
- Speech analytics queries can be used to identify whether agents are using or not using appropriate and mandatory words and phrases during customer interactions, which will help implement proper training, coaching, or other interventions.
- Speech analytics can create considerably enhanced customer experiences by eliminating agents expressing uncertainty or hesitation, e.g., "I'm not sure", "I don't know", or "I'll have to find out", by using word and phrase queries to identify agents with these specific problems.

- Speech analytics can track agent performance improvement or deterioration using the solution's dashboards to measure and show coaching effectiveness or training.

- Use speech analytics to promote enhanced customer experience or engagement by identifying and reporting on the use of specific words and phrases that indicate the presence or absence of empathy, politeness, attentive listening, etc. Use the technology to ascertain particular strengths or weaknesses in individual agent presentations or interactions and use credible and quantifiable data to enhance personal coaching or other interventions.

Engagement

Use speech analytics to promote enhanced customer experience

EXAMPLES

Problem statement

The contact centre has a large intake of new agents as part of a significant ramp-up on an important campaign.

Management Observations

- Significant increase in AHT

- The alarming decrease in CSAT and NPS

- Declining service level

- Increasing call volumes due to repeat calls

- Conventional QA methods monitor only a small percentage of calls (under 4%).

Therefore, it is difficult and slow to accurately identify the root cause driving declining KPIs and implement remedial interventions.

Solutions using speech analytics

- Set up appropriate queries to identify typical agent performance requirements (for example, QA scorecard line items, mandatory words and phrases, hesitancy, display of soft skills, empathy, politeness, compliance statements, data privacy processes, etc.).

- Set up dashboard cards displaying all new agents and showing instances of silent time on calls.

- Use the manual QA scorecard as a guide and build queries using keywords and phrases to identify the presence or absence of QA line items.

- Set up scorecards for all new agents incorporating all queries to score identified call attributes.

- Upload calls for new agents at regular intervals (e.g., hourly) for all calls to be scored and for automatic updating of dashboards across 100% of calls.

- Deploy suitably skilled resources (e.g., coaches, QAs, team leaders, or supervisors) to monitor dashboards for early- stage identification of agent performance failures closely.

- Use dashboards to identify agent outliers to enable feedback, coaching, or prioritisation of supplemental training.

- Set up the speech analytics solution's line graph report to track movement (improvement or deterioration) of individual agent performance following coaching, training, or other appropriate interventions.

SUCCESS RESULTS

Silent time

- The speech analytic solution's feature identified silent time across all calls. It calculated the percentage of silent time across all call recordings.

- Using dashboards, assessors could identify outlier agents and click through to the calls with high silent time, to listen and establish the root cause.

- The reason for high silences was attributed to three main causes: lack of confidence or access to information, agents manipulating the system, and technical and system issues.

Lack of confidence or access to information

- Despite training, many new agents were unsure of themselves. They tended to go silent (and possibly go on 'mute' whilst looking up information or conferring with colleagues).

- Using queries and the assessor's ability to click through and drill down into the actual call recordings and listen to the context (reason for silence) allowed team leaders and supervisors to intervene with focussed, one- on-one coaching with specific agents.

Agents manipulating the system

- Speech analytics helped assessors identify those agents deliberately manipulating the system, e.g., keeping the call open and not going 'on ready' after the caller has hung up. Appropriate coaching and disciplinary procedures were introduced to overcome the problem.

Technical and system issues

- Contact centre management used accurate, quantified reports and data to engage with IT to address the technical issues. When drilling down and listening to the context of high silent time calls, QAs and team leaders could determine that when responding to certain types of caller interactions, flaws in the technology were the source of inordinately long response times resulting in agent silent time. Team leaders coached agents to use the predictable slow technical response times to engage positively with callers. For example, "While the system calculates your monthly car insurance premium, please may I ask you a few questions about your pet care insurance requirements?"

High Average Handling Time (AHT)

- The abnormally high AHT was addressed by building specific queries to identify the existence or absence of particular keywords and phrases that indicated if agents were following the prescribed process or procedures as specified in the centre's call guides.

- The solution's dashboards quickly alerted team leaders to investigate why specific agents' calls were longer than the average AHT.

- Investigations pinpointed where specific agents were not following prescribed and well-proven sales closing techniques, whilst other agents were not practising appropriate call management. Nor were they encouraging specific callers to engage in conversation and banter unrelated to the purpose of the call. The rapid implementation of proper coaching and skills training quickly alleviated the problem.

Decreased customer satisfaction and NPS scores

- Speech analytics queries were built to address the decreasing customer satisfaction and Net Promoter Score (NPS) statistics and to be able to identify the caller's sentiments as expressed in specific words and statements, for example, phrases used by callers such as "I am not at all happy", "This is outrageous", "I demand to speak to a manager", or "This is ridiculous".

- Dashboards immediately alerted team leaders to high- risk calls and enabled them to ascertain the source of callers' dissatisfaction quickly. They simply clicked through to the exact spot in the conversation where a negative sentiment was expressed, listened to the call, and decided whether to either resolve the issue with the appropriate call-back or to identify the root cause and escalate the problem to suitable management structures. In addition, certain call types were identified in the manner used to coach new agents and empower them to address specific issues to satisfy callers' requirements entirely satisfactorily.

- Call volumes increased, and SL decreased.

- In this example, management was alerted that inbound call volumes increased significantly following the intake of the newly recruited agents. Increased call volumes placed significant pressure on resourcing, so the service level KPI was declining.

- Management suspected that large numbers of repeat calls were driving the spike in volume.

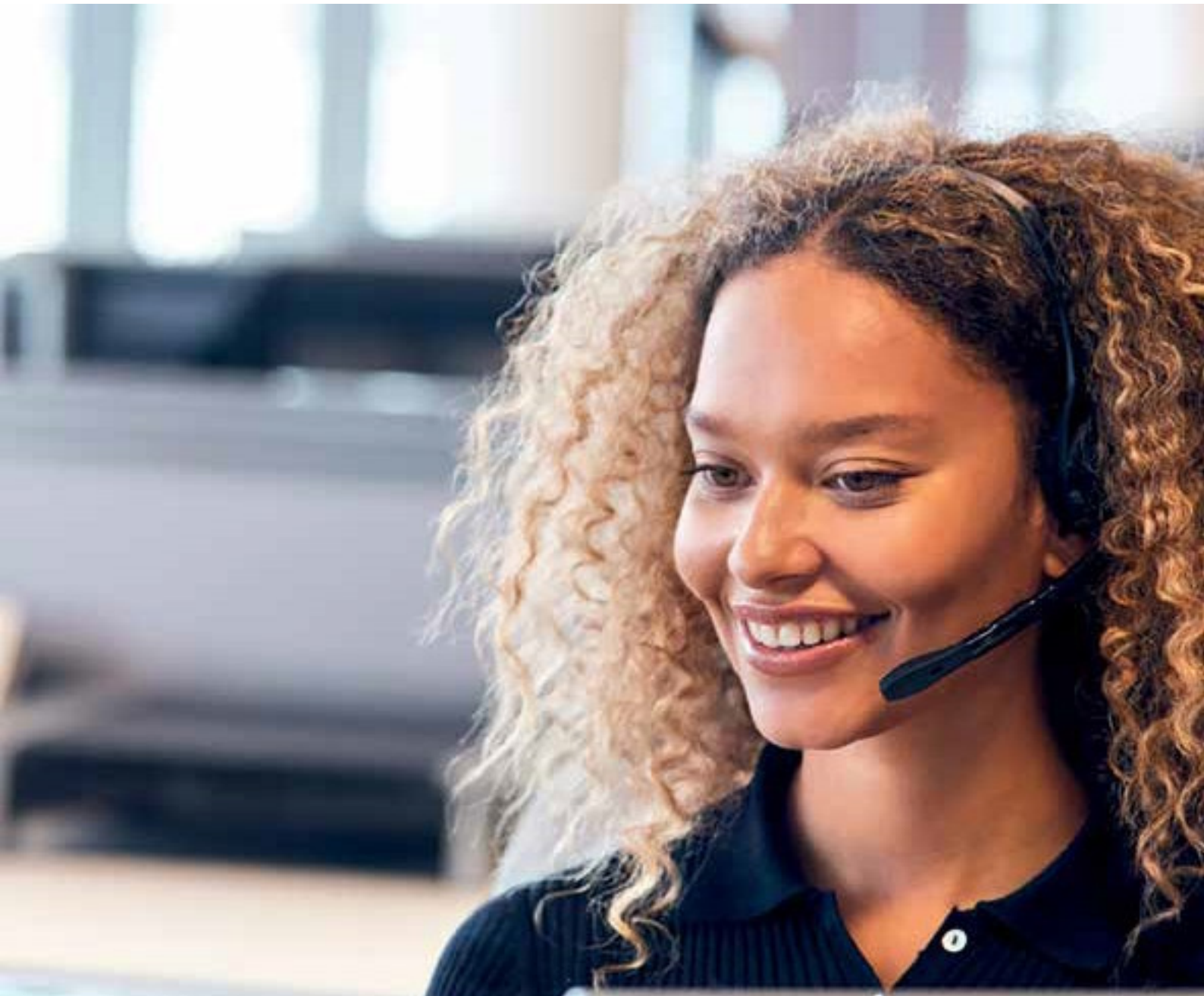
- A series of queries was built to allow managers to quickly identify all calls in which repeat call identifiers were used, e.g., "This is the second time I have called", "I am tired of calling about the same thing", or "How many times do I need to call to get this matter resolved?".

- Within mere hours after uploading batches of call recordings, management could quickly identify repeat calls, drill down into the context of the call, and ascertain the root cause, e.g., agent not logging or processing a promised call back or an issue perhaps correctly logged in the contact centre and passed to back office but not followed through from there.

- Once identified, management could pinpoint individual agents not following the procedure and provide quantifiable and specific information on which to base interventions with the back office or other business units responsible for process failure.

High risk calls

Dashboards immediately alerted team leaders to high-risk calls and enabled them to ascertain the source of callers' dissatisfaction quickly.



Chapter 5: Operational KPIS

To maintain management focus on operational efficiencies and productivity, it is vital that the organisation puts into place and closely monitors and interprets appropriate key performance indicators.

However, traditionally, most contact centre KPIs have been primarily based on productivity factors, with minimal emphasis on the agent behaviours that profoundly impact desirable business outcomes.

Whilst productivity and efficiencies are essential, changing and refining agent behaviours can dramatically increase contact centre performance regarding business outcomes and enhanced customer experience.

Speech analytics empowers contact centre management to redefine agent KPIs and performance measures based on the automatic assessment, evaluation, and scoring of 100% of all agents' calls.

Operational challenges

Management pressure to achieve and maintain productivity and efficiency- based KPIs tends to drive unacceptable agent behaviours. Examples include the following:

- The number of calls answered/handled
- The number of dials made
- The number of leads processed
- The number of right party connects
- The percentage of conversions from RPC to sales
- Strict adherence to average handling time and other productivity-based KPIs drives inappropriate agent behaviours, for example, agents cutting calls short, not ending calls appropriately, avoiding mandatory processes such as GDPR and other data privacy opt-in procedures, and avoiding engaging in up-sell or cross-sell conversations.
- The small sample of randomly selected calls to be monitored for quality and compliance is insufficient and not a reliable means to effectively assess agent performance. Neither is it a reliable means by which to identify undesirable behaviours, nor to be able to identify trends or the impact of coaching or other interventions.

What speech analytics can do to improve KPIs

- Speech analytics enables the operation to understand the content and context of 100% of all conversations in local languages, accents, and dialects, as well as in dozens of international languages.
- Using speech analytics is practical for the operation to introduce agent-focused continuous improvement methodologies (for example, the DMAIC method: define, measure, analyse, improve, control).
- Use speech analytics to establish behaviour-orientated, quantifiable, and measurable agent behavioural metrics and KPIs to drive improvement in operational performance.
- To drive behaviours and performance to increase the level of statutory, regulatory or organisational policy compliance, build behaviour-focused queries to identify and report specific words and phrases relating to call guides, scripts, processes, procedures, etc. (for example, compliance: regulatory, statutory, script, process, etc.).
- Use speech analytics to monitor 100% of all calls to produce accurate and credible insights and reporting to drive agent behaviour designed to improve specific business outcomes, operational efficiencies, and effectiveness.
- Use the speech analytics solution to identify silences and dead air in conversations and drill down to ascertain the cause of such occurrences. These include slow systems, agent hesitations and uncertainty, and blatant agent malpractice (keeping the call open and not going 'on ready' after the caller has hung up).
- Based on insights drawn from speech analytics, use root cause analysis to identify the actual source of successful and unsuccessful calls. Design appropriate interventions.

- Use queries to track trends following coaching or training interceptions.

EXAMPLES

Problem statement (Sales/Telesales)

- There is a high incidence of lead misuse, lead utilisation efficiencies, and lead wastage (severely impacts the cost of acquiring viable leads).

- Conversions regarding business targets, revenues and sales closes, collections, or defined up-sell or cross-sell campaigns are not realised.

Solutions using speech analytics

- By scanning 100% of all calls using specific queries, a user can check agent disposition or wrap code selected against the actual content of the conversation. The following are examples.

- Agent selected 'answering machine / voicemail'. Does the query show the actual presence of an answering machine or voicemail?

- The agent stated there was right party connect. How long was the actual conversation duration, or did a conversation actually take place?

- Where a call-back was requested, did the agent use the correct call- back disposition code?

- Use a query to identify where the customer raised an objection and if the agent attempted or did not attempt to handle such a complaint correctly.

SUCCESS RESULTS

- Speech analytics identified unacceptable agent behaviours (both erroneous and malicious). It provided the management team with accurate, credible, and quantifiable information necessary to implement appropriate training, coaching, and (where necessary) disciplinary procedures.

Chapter 6: Streamlining business processing

Accurate, up-to-date, and well-documented business processes (process maps and policy, process and procedural documentation) are the lifeblood of any effective and efficient contact centre. It is essential that all operational processes are frequently reviewed and, when appropriate, re-engineered to achieve improved performance or other defined business outcomes.

Typical operational challenges & problems

- Contact centre operational costs are constantly increasing due to inefficiencies, wastage, or the inappropriate utilisation of resources.
- The operation actively neglects to promote alternative (lower-cost) digital service channels.
- The operation fails to identify the root cause of specific call types.
- Poor agent attitudes and habits result in high levels of call classification inaccuracy.
- Deliberately undesirable agent behaviours result in statistics, reports, and KPIs being skewed.

What speech analytics can do to improve processes

- Using specific queries, identify flaws and faults in poorly designed processes that lead to inefficiencies, escalating and unnecessary costs, poor customer experiences, and agent frustrations.
- Use speech analytics to identify and report on in-call silent time by an individual agent, team, or group. Analyse and report trends or use insights to identify flaws or weaknesses in prescribed processes.
- Using queries, quickly identify which agents are (or are not) correctly communicating and promoting alternative channels to customers. Correct undesirable behaviours using targeted coaching, training, or other interventions.
- Use queries to identify accurately, track, and report on root cause and call or interaction type classification.
- Using queries can ensure that all agents adhere to defined call flows, processes, procedures, and structured presentations. Identify outliers and implement appropriate interventions.

EXAMPLES

Problem statement

- Customer experience is severely impacted if FCR is not achieved due to poorly defined business processes, for example, policies, escalations, etc.
- Prolonged average handling time leads to the need to increase agent headcount to maintain service level. This, in turn, leads to significantly increased operating costs.
- Many call transfers and escalations are due to agents not being enabled or empowered to handle specific queries.

Solutions using speech analytics

- Write a query to identify an expression of system latency or wait time on a call, for example, “Sorry, our system is slow today”.
- Write a query stack to identify the actual need to transfer or escalate calls. Examples: “put you through” | “transfer the call” | “transfer you” | “please transfer” | “put your through” | “transfer call” | “transfer your” | “you going through” \ “you’re going through”
- Build a set of dashboard cards, examine results, and analyse the drivers for call types showing high latency or the reasons for transfers or escalations.
- Build a query stack to identify non-resolution and caller’s indication of multiple previous calls. Examples: “been following up” | “been patient long” | “call after” | “call afternoon” | “call again” | “call back” | “call later” | “call next” | “call tomorrow” | “called back” | “can’t assist” | “cut off again” | “a few times already” | “haven’t heard back”
- Build a dashboard to highlight and provide insights into calls and call types where prescribed processes are identified as the source of low FCR, high customer effort, or high customer complaints. Re-engineer processes where appropriate.

SUCCESS RESULTS

- Using statistically supported reports, the source or root cause and the impact of slow system response or latency on customer satisfaction statistics were analysed and identified. Appropriate interventions were implemented.

- Using the speech analytics solution's reports, specific agents needing coaching, training, disciplinary actions, or interventions were identified to reduce unnecessary escalations and achieve greater FCR.

callbi
Speech Analytics
made easy

Chapter 7: Check and mend service level

'Service level' measures the percentage of incoming calls or interactions that agents answer live in an established time when used as a call centre metric. In the context of call centres or contact centres, service level describes, usually in measurable terms or as a specified KPI, the ability or the capacity of the centre to provide the specific services for which it was established. The widely accepted standard for service level in contact centres is "80% of calls answered within 20 seconds".

By maintaining its defined service level (which may not necessarily be 80/20), contact centres can plan staffing and infrastructural resources to meet customers' expectations. In other words, calls are answered reasonably promptly, and only a small percentage of callers are in the queue for longer than the target timeframe. Service level can deteriorate quickly unless monitored effectively, leading to diminished customer experience, inefficiencies, and increased operating costs.

Typical operational challenges & problems

- Long average handling time impacts service level as the operation will require more agents.
- Agents not following correct processes or procedures drives an increase in AHT.
- Measuring generic KPIs, such as talk time, can drive inappropriate agent behaviours. For example, agents are not promoting or steering customers towards less costly digital channels or using the call as an opportunity to up-sell or cross-sell.
- Management cannot identify and check if agents are correctly using disposition codes, wrap-up codes to indicate reason for call across all agent calls.
- Undesirable agent behaviours drive low first contact resolution, which causes high numbers of repeat calls that severely impact forecasted call volume and reduce service levels.
- The contact centre experiences sudden, unplanned, and unexplained spikes in inbound call volumes, which have a consequential effect on the deterioration of service level.

What speech analytics can do to improve service level

- Deep insights across all customer interactions will reveal the underlying reasons for inefficiencies, such as abnormally long average handling time.
- These speech analytics insights may indicate process flaws, individual or team performance issues, or harmful behaviours.
- Speech analytics will quickly and accurately help to highlight abnormally high escalations and establish the primary causes of these escalations on a peragent or per-team basis.
- Speech analytics tools will assist in clearly identifying any correlations between specific agents and how their performance or behaviours impact service level.
- Where low or diminished first contact resolution is the source of repeat calls, speech analytics will help to rapidly investigate and identify the root cause of non-resolution calls and the reasons for repeat calls.
- Where unexpected high volumes of calls occur, use speech analytics to quickly gain insights to understand the reasons or drivers for these calls.
- Where agents may need to educate and steer callers into defined self-service or digital channels, use speech analytics to identify agents not promoting or steering to these channels.
- Using speech analytics, management can closely track and monitor over time and measure improvement or deterioration of performance and the effectiveness of remedial interventions.

EXAMPLES

Problem statement

- Unexpected and unplanned spikes in call volume and drop in service level occur.
- There is a high volume of repeat calls as a consequence of low FCR and an increased number of complaints and repeat calls from customers.

Solutions using speech analytics

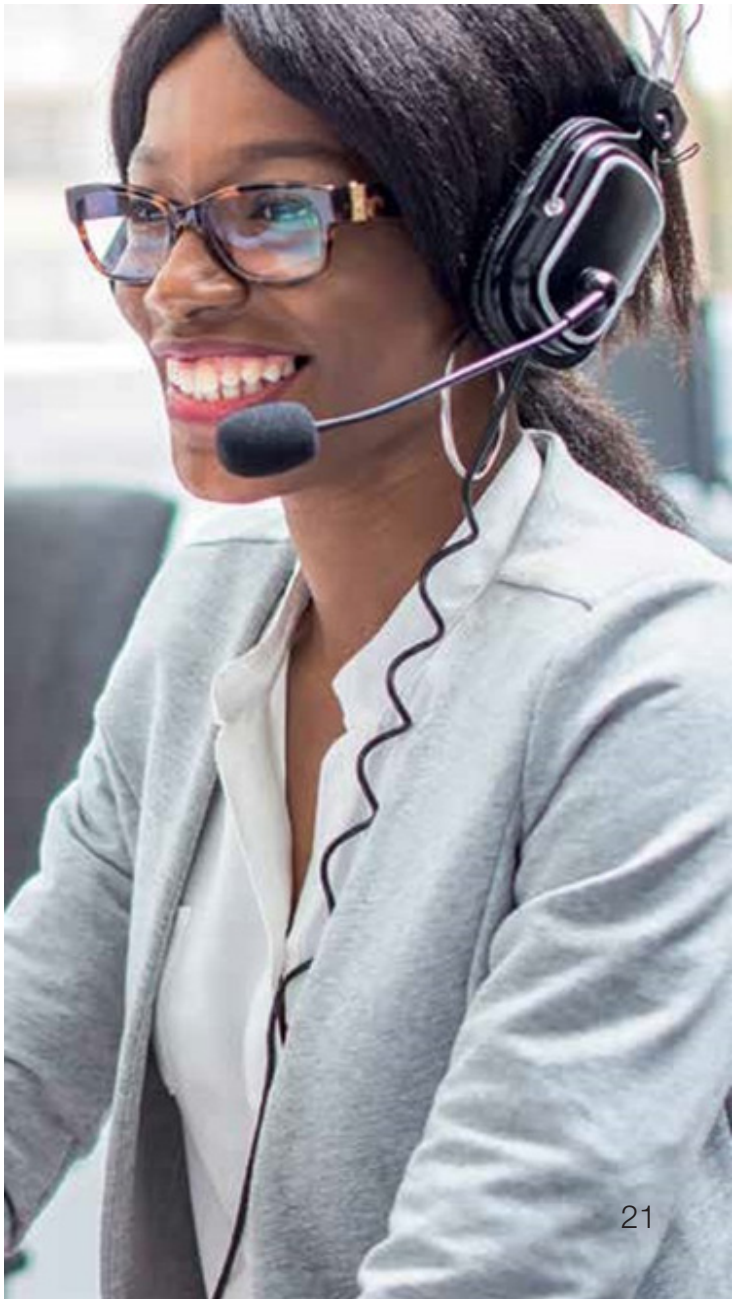
- Build a query stack to search for keywords and phrases to identify the reasons for the high volume of repeat calls.
- Examples: “This is the second time I have called”, “I am tired of calling about the same thing”, or “How many times do I need to call to get this matter resolved?”.
- Use the application’s word cloud to identify the root cause, using the incidence of keywords and phrases. Examples: “been following up” | “been patient long” | “call after” | “call afternoon” | “call again” | “call back” | “call later” | “call next” | “call tomorrow” | “called back” | “can’t assist” | “cut off again” | “a few times already” | “haven’t heard back” | “last week as well” | “nobody came back”, etc.
- Use this query to flag all calls that were not resolved proactively. Drill down from the dashboard to fast-track to the exact spot in the call where words are highlighted to investigate and identify the root cause, for example, systems, agent behaviours, lack of skills, inefficiencies, or process.

Pro Tip

Use a query stack to identify a ‘negative sentiment’. Customise the query to meet your specific contact centre requirements.

SUCCESS RESULTS

- Addressing policy, process, and procedural issues, this intervention identified specific call drivers and, consequently, reduced call volumes. Analysis of the query results provided management with deep and quantified insights to fully understand many of the root cause drivers of increased call volumes. As a consequence, service level returned to the specified 80/20 metric.



Chapter 8: Changing contact center culture

In the ideal world of contact centres, a positive culture would be to have a workplace where management and staff thrive; they are happy and proud to engage with customers and to take on and resolve all manner of queries and complaints (and even the occasional unreasonable or angry customer). A positive culture contact centre also operates effectively and efficiently.

Conversely, where a poor or toxic culture prevails, the quality of customer service that the organisation provides deteriorates rapidly, as do customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and revenues. Everincreasing operational costs, high staff turnover, poor schedule adherence, and a general lack of discipline are clear indicators of poor culture.

Typical operational challenges & problems

- Typical traits of a poor culture or toxic culture contact centre occur.
- There is a 'command and control' culture where the leadership style is dictatorial or dominating. This results in a fear-driven culture.
- The culture is strongly rules driven. Management demands that things are done 'by the book'.
- Management fundamentally doesn't trust the staff.
- All staff have not clearly defined and understood the contact centre culture.
- Agents lack appropriate soft skills.
- Required or acceptable use of language, phrases, terminology, and slang has not been clearly defined or trained.
- A high number of personal calls are being made in the contact centre as no clear policy exists.
- Agents take and make personal calls using cell phones, as no clear policy nor discipline is in place.
- Callers can hear a high level of background noise, agent conversations, or use of inappropriate language.
- Conventional call monitoring for quality assessment and agent performance is inadequate in sample size. QAs tend to be biased and show favouritism.
- QA processes are not conducive to positive feedback to agents with effective coaching.
- Random and infrequent call sampling and monitoring enable agents to develop undesirable behaviours.
- Inadequate QA processes and procedures do not provide a credible, quantifiable, or evidence-based basis for quality assurance and agent development.
- Poor leadership and management preclude agents from accessing support for difficult or complex calls. This leads to escalations, dropped calls (by agents), and low CSAT.
- The contact centre has a reputation for agents expressing prejudice and racism.

What speech analytics can do to improve contact centre culture

- In the hands of an astute contact centre management team, speech analytics can be used to drive positive changes in contact centre culture and overall performance.
- Use speech analytics to monitor and report insights and compliance issues on 100% of all calls.
- Automated call screening using keywords and phrases queries provides unbiased assessments and reflects individual, team, and centre performance and compliance.
- Speech analytics provides the technology for the centre to move away from a disciplinary approach and processes towards performance improvement and skills enhancement using focused training and positive coaching interventions.
- Based on insights gathered from queries, management can re- engineer processes and enhance and refine KPIs to drive positive and sustainable operational performance.

- Reports and dashboards can highlight all calls where agents needed support or coaching, specific training, or personal guidance.

- Queries will identify and highlight desirable agent behaviours such as using empathetic phrases or inappropriate language, phrases, or slang.

- Specifically written queries can quickly identify and report agents' personal calls.

- Silent time reporting highlights both in-call and post-call silent time. Post-call silences usually mean inappropriate agent behaviours (shenanigans!), whilst incall silences can identify and highlight occurrences such as slow systems, difficult-to-use systems, specific processes needing re-engineering, or a lack of agent skills or training.

EXAMPLES

Problem statements

- Poor overall contact centre performance regarding specific KPIs and desirable business outcomes prevails.

- There is a blurred understanding of acceptable and unacceptable agent behaviours, and use of language leads to inconsistent customer experience and erratic agent behaviours.

- The quality assurance team provides vague or inconclusive feedback to management.

- Specific operational problems are challenging to pinpoint.

- Small sample call monitoring results in many non-compliant customer interactions (in regulatory requirements and script or call-guide adherence).

- Agents make a large number of personal calls.

- There is a lack of support to agents; supervisors or team leaders are unavailable or unwilling to provide appropriate support.

Solutions using speech analytics

- Use queries across 100% of all calls to analyse and identify acceptable and unacceptable use of language and use of appropriate scripts or call guides.

- Using queries and silent time detection, identify agents and teams with inordinately high dead air. Use further root cause analysis to ascertain the source of such issues and implement appropriate remedial interventions.

- Build a dashboard showing dead air per team as an indicator of an agent's lack of ability to assist customers needing assistance.

- Queries and call type detention, as well as talk time, quickly identify and flag or tag agents' personal calls for further investigation and appropriate actions.

- Build a query to identify phrases typically found in personal conversations, not business conversations, for example, "I love you", "sexy", "my buddy", or "What's for dinner?".

- Build a dashboard to indicate where personal phrases have been used and implement appropriate interventions.

- Build a specific set of queries to identify (for example) slang, profanities, racial slurs, and all unacceptable use of language. Similarly, build a set of queries to identify desirable / preferred / acceptable use of language, for example, empathetic words, professional and polite words, friendliness, etc.

- Use the speech analytics solution to build dashboards to list and score calls (both positive and negative), and use insights to engage with agents in coaching or disciplinary interventions.

- Use queries to identify expressions of negative sentiment from the customer side.

- Build a dashboard to show negative sentiments expressed by customers on a per-team basis. Use data to identify outlier teams. Refer to supervisors or team leaders for future investigation and appropriate actions.

- Use speech analytics insights to create standardised 'best practice' customer interaction guidelines, quality assurance frameworks, and scorecards.

- Insights from queries provide specific and quantifiable input for coaching, training, and process redesign.

SUCCESS RESULTS

- Significantly improved quality assurance processes, procedures, and methods resulted in a fair and equitable assessment of agents' performance and enhanced skills through targeted training and coaching. This positively affected customer satisfaction and loyalty, and increased revenues.

- The contact centre experienced increased agent engagement, reduced attrition, and significantly improved schedule adherence.

- The culture moved away from a 'command and control' style towards a 'network-judgement culture', whereby agents rely on advice and guidance from colleagues, team leaders, or supervisors to inform their decisions.

Chapter 9: fast return on investment (ROI)

Virtually all contact centre management teams face five universal challenges:

- **Cap or reduce costs.**
- **Increase operational efficiencies.**
- **Increase revenues.**
- **Reduce risks.**
- **Improve customer satisfaction (including loyalty and related CX indices)**

When considering or evaluating new technologies, most astute organisations look for a credible and relatively fast return on investment. Some speech analytics solutions certainly fall into this assessment and evaluation process.

With minimal (± 3 hours) training, many users can utilise the application to rapidly gain insights across 100% of calls, on which to base easy-to- implement interventions to drive measurable operational improvements. Typically, quality assurance staff can quickly gain the skills to function as insights analysts.

These financially measurable improvement areas fall into the following five categories:

- Direct cost saving
- Efficiency gains using automated QA
- Revenue generation
- Customer & agent experience
- Compliance & quality assurance

Other ROI-related matters to consider

- Some cloud-based speech analytics solutions are easy to deploy, requiring no on-premises technologies or complex integration issues. Deployment is in days.
- Look for a solution that's easy to use and easy enough to achieve competencies after 3 to 4 hours of training and coaching.
- The ideal solution is one built for CX contact centre operational professionals, not data scientists or highly qualified business analysts.
- Look for a speech analytics solution that is provided as a Software as a Service (SaaS) and provided on a month-to-month subscription. It is easy to scale up or down or exit.
- ROI can be achieved within weeks!

Below are some examples of improvement areas an organisation can target where speech analytics can help with the realisation of return on investment.

1. Direct cost saving

For any contact centre, the cost of handling customer interactions can be calculated in terms of the cost per call minute. In some highly sophisticated contact centres with state-of-the-art technologies and highly skilled and highly paid agents, cost per minute can be considerably higher than others with basic or legacy technologies and significantly lower labour costs. It stands to reason that any astute and realistic reduction in call handling costs will positively impact ROI.

Reduce the average silent time from X to Y

Silent time (sometimes referred to as 'dead air') can often be attributed to specific agent behaviours, sometimes reflecting a lack of training or a skills deficit. It can also indicate particular system problems or lack of access to information. Both in- call and post-call silent time can clearly show undesirable agent behaviours, such as deliberately

not logging off from a call and not making themselves ready to take other calls.

Action Plan: Use speech analytics features (e.g., report on silent time) and queries to identify outliers and establish the root cause. Continue monitoring and use dashboards to show results and trends. Implement appropriate corrective actions. Measure the impact of interventions.

Reduce the number of calls with silent time above 40 seconds from X to Y

Action Plan: As above

Reduce average handling time from X to Y

Whilst it is essential to eliminate 'wastage' in the contact centre, maintaining high levels of positive customer experience is more important. The astute reduction of average handling time should be handled with great care.

Action Plan: Use speech analytics queries to identify the root causes of the main drivers of extended call handling times. The root cause may be specific processes, procedures, policies, or agent behaviours.

Track

Silences and conversation duration,

identify outliers, establish root causes, and implement corrective action.

Measure the impact of interventions. Continue monitoring and use dash- boards to show results & trends.

Reduce escalations or transfers from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement queries to identify the need for escalations or transfers and the underlying drivers for these actions. Measure the impact of interventions. Continue monitoring and use dashboards to show results and trends.

Reduce hold from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement specific queries to identify the need for hold and hold call drivers. Establish the root cause, and implement corrective action. Measure the impact of interventions. Continue monitoring and use dashboards to show results and trends.

2. Efficiency gains using automated QA

Increase the sample of calls assessed from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement specific queries to check if agents adhere to QA requirements. Set up scorecards to include that all calls are to be scored and assessed. Identify gaps in performance below the benchmark. Implement corrective actions. Measure the impact of interventions. Continue monitoring and use dashboards to show results and trends.

Reduce QA resource time spent listening and assessing calls from X hours per week to Y hours

Action Plan: Implement automated queries for QA checks against the checklist or existing scorecards. Set up processes to ensure that all calls are scored and assessed. Focus QA resource time on only listening to and assessing select calls or groups of calls (for example, where performance threshold is not met, or to investigate only specific identified target areas). Encourage QA assessors to adopt the 'insights analysts' role and seek out valuable business intelligence.

3. Revenue generation

Increase right party contact to sale contact from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement queries to check script and process adherence (for example, pitch phrases, compliance requirements, and benefit statements) and objection handling. Identify gaps and performance below the benchmark. Implement appropriate corrective action. Measure the impact of interventions. Continue monitoring and use dashboards to show results and trends.

Increase lead to sale rate from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement specific queries to check if agents use correct disposition or wrap codes, adhere to the script and process as trained and instructed (for example, using the right pitch phrases, meeting compliance requirements, and using benefit statements), and follow appropriate objection handling. Identify gaps and performance below the benchmark. Implement appropriate corrective action. Measure the impact of interventions. Continue monitoring and use dashboards to show results and trends.

Reduce sale cancellations from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement specific queries to check script and process adherence (for example, compliance requirements followed and correct premium benefits provided). Use specific queries to identify high-risk sales (for example, misleading, forced sales and client not providing a clear 'yes' to confirm the sale).

Identify performance gaps below the benchmark. Implement appropriate interventions and measure the impact. Continue monitoring and use dashboards to show results and trends.

Improve collection to PTP from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement specific queries to check if agents use correct disposition or wrap codes, adhering to script and processing (for example, negotiation pathway, creating payment urgency, promoting debit order, and aligning with salary date). Identify high-risk PTPs (for example, debtor indicated no income or commitment received). Identify performance gaps below the benchmark. Implement corrective actions. Measure the impact of interventions. Continue monitoring and use dashboards to show results and trends.

Improve PTP to RPC from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement specific queries to check if agents use correct disposition or wrap codes, adhering to the script and process (for example, negotiation pathway, probing, and providing benefits of payment and consequences of non-payment). Identify gaps in performance below the benchmark. Implement corrective actions. Measure the impact of interventions. Continue monitoring and measuring the impact of interventions. Use dashboards to show results and trends.

4. Customer & agent experience

Improve customer satisfaction and customer experience NPS Score from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement specific queries to identify negative impacts on customer experience (for example, non- resolution, negative sentiment, poor audio quality or phone line connection, dropped calls, unprofessional agent behaviour, need for hold or transfers, etc.). Establish root causes and implement appropriate corrective actions. Continue monitoring and measuring the impact of interventions. Use dashboards to show results and trends.

Decrease negative sentiment from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement queries to identify calls with negative sentiment. Establish root causes and implement appropriate corrective actions. Continue monitoring and measuring the impact of interventions. Use dashboards to show results and trends.

Improve first call resolution from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement queries to identify repeat calls or calls that will result in a repeat call (for example, the client needs to call back, indicating previous contact attempts, dropped calls, or bad line/phone connection). Establish root causes and implement appropriate corrective actions. Continue monitoring and measuring the impact of interventions. Use dashboards to show results and trends.

Reduce customer complaints from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement queries to identify calls with negative sentiment or customer threats of taking further action or specific 'complaints' calls. Investigate. Establish root causes and implement appropriate corrective actions. Continue monitoring and measuring the impact of interventions. Use dashboards to show results and trends.

5. Compliance & quality assurance

Improve compliance score from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement automated queries and scorecards to check if agents adhere to compliance- related scripts and process requirements. Identify gaps or where performance is below the benchmark. Establish root causes and implement appropriate corrective actions. Continue monitoring and measuring the impact of interventions. Use dashboards to show results and trends.

Improve QA score from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement specific queries and scorecards to check if agents adhere to QA requirements. Identify gaps or where performance is below the benchmark. Establish root causes and implement appropriate corrective actions. Continue monitoring and measuring the impact of interventions. Use dashboards to show results and trends.

Reduce regulatory compliance- related complaints escalations from X to Y

Action Plan: Implement queries to identify and flag high-risk calls with potential regulatory impact (for example: 'do not contact', 'threat of ombudsman', etc.). Investigate. Establish root causes and implement appropriate corrective actions. Continue monitoring and measuring the impact of interventions. Use dashboards to show results and trends.

Chapter 10: Operational efficiencies

Over time, most CX contact centres tend to develop inefficiencies. Much of this is directly attributable to the nature of contact centres. They tend to be a type of ecosystem comprised of issues relating to people, processes, and technologies and the ever- changing demands of customers.

It is a stressful environment, so staff turnover tends to be higher than in most industries. Recruitment, training, and reaching complete competence can be lengthy and costly. Therefore, identifying and resolving low- efficiency factors is critical to the management team.

Typical operational inefficiency problems

- Average handling time of calls tends to increase over time. Increased AHT reflects considerable additional staffing and other operating costs.
- Often, as a factor of AHT, in- call or post-call silent time is a clear indication of problems or failures with processes and systems or lack of agent skills. Some silent time can be directly attributable to inappropriate agent behaviours.
- Repeat calls can drive up overall call volume considerably. This manifests as unnecessarily increased call volumes with a knock-on effect of requiring additional staffing. Ascertaining the reasons for repeat calls (root cause) will clearly indicate the source of such inefficiencies.
- For many contact centres, high numbers of escalations and transfers are a clear indication of operational inefficiencies. A lack of understanding regarding this phenomenon often leads to latent inefficiencies and significantly increased costs.
- Both AHT and repeat calls significantly impact the contact centre's service level. Low or declining service levels directly impact customer satisfaction and lead to customer complaints and diminished customer loyalty and revenues.
- Often, the source of many operational inefficiencies is the contact centre operating with inappropriate staff. This may be due to a lack of skills or competencies, sheer boredom, or poor attitudes. Lack of supervisory skills can also be a significant contributing factor. Once again, these factors lead to operational inefficiencies.
- It is often possible to trace operational inefficiencies back to process and technology failures. It is sometimes challenging and time-consuming to pinpoint the root cause of these inefficiencies.
- Many contact centre operational managers know the potential for significant cost savings when deploying self-service or bots or bot-assisted services. It is often difficult for management to support the rationale for these developments. This is often due to a lack of quantifiable data relating to existing channels and, specifically, to customer channel and service preferences.

What speech analytics can do to improve efficiencies

In all of the typical problems cited above, by building appropriate speech analytics query stacks, management can quickly extract quantifiable insights to initiate interventions designed to isolate the source or root cause of inefficiencies and implement mitigating interventions.

Repeat calls

Can drive up overall call volume considerably. This manifests as unnecessarily increased call volumes with a knock-on effect of requiring additional staffing.

EXAMPLES

Problem statement

- Unenthusiastic, unmotivated contact centre agents
- High attrition with the associated high cost of recruitment and deployment of new staff
- The increasing number of customer complaints
- Increasing AHT with a knock-on effect of diminishing service level and consequential increase in headcount
- The high number of escalations and transfers

SOLUTIONS

- By building a query stack designed to measure staff satisfaction, use of appropriate language, and desirable levels of customer engagement, management quickly identifies specific 'problem' agents requiring strict disciplinary action or others needing specific coaching or re-training interventions. These processes address agent engagement issues, problems and costs associated with high attrition.

- Speech analytics queries designed to specifically identify customer complaints and the source or root cause of such complaints provide management with quantifiable data on which to base appropriate remedial actions and interventions.

- To accurately identify the reasons for escalations and transfers and to implement mitigating interventions, use appropriate query stacks in conjunction with detailed dashboard cards and other downstream analytics.

SUCCESS RESULTS

- In the hypothetical example above, insights identified by the speech analytics solution highlighted numerous agent issues driving inefficiencies and significant cost increases. Appropriate interventions reduced inefficiencies and attrition and resulted in considerable and measurable cost savings for the organisation.

- Insights provided management with quantified data relating to transfers and escalations. Analysis of these insights gave rise to targeted agent coaching and training and urgent revision to specific company policies, processes, and procedures hampering agents' ability to resolve specific customer issues.

- Speech analytics insights and downstream analysis revealed numerous serious causes for customer complaints. Appropriate interventions in the contact centre and other business units dealt with the root cause. This resulted in reduced repeat calls, reduced customer complaints, and overall operational cost reduction.

Query stack

Management quickly identifies specific 'problem' agents requiring strict disciplinary action or others needing specific coaching or re-training interventions.

Chapter 11: Increasing & Improving Business Intelligence

What is business intelligence?

Business intelligence and systems are concepts and methods created to improve strategic and tactical business decisions using fact-based support systems. Business intelligence allows for more effective operational insights and decision-making.

The appropriate utilisation of business intelligence can improve profits and performance by leveraging information assets within critical business units to achieve improved business performance. The primary focus of business is to increase revenues and reduce costs, thereby improving performance and increasing profits.

Typical operational challenges & problems

In typical customer contact centre business units, the following are examples of astute processes and methods required to provide managers and executives with appropriate business intelligence to enable sound decision-making.

- Little or no quantifiable evidence of competitive activities or offerings
- Quantification of complaints and accolades; identify source(s)
- Lack of quantifiable and evidence-based assessment of actual call drivers
- Poorly structured root cause analysis processes
- Lack of quantifiable insights into individual and group agent behaviours
- Lack of customer insights or poorly acquired insights from a small sample size of random monitoring – typically, less than 3% of calls are monitored; still, socalled insights drive far-reaching interventions, tactics, and strategies.

What speech analytics can do to improve business intelligence

"Data will talk to you if you're willing to listen."

Jim Bergerson, Division Vice President, Customer Engagement at BI Worldwide.

Voice of the Customer (VOC) is the component of customer experience that focuses on customer needs, wants, expectations, and preferences. In most businesses, the quality of customer experience is a key differentiating factor from competitors and ensures customer loyalty and sustainable revenue. Therefore, deploying a VOC program is essential to ensure that customer input is requested and valued by the organisation. The customer contact centre is one of the primary sources for gathering direct input from customers. It is here that the actual voice of the customer can be heard. Embedded in every call in or out of the contact centre are hundreds of thousands of words, phrases, expressions, and expressed and implied sentiments telling the organisation precisely what customers want, need, or expect. Sadly, before the advent of speech analytics, for most contact centres, only a mere fraction of calls were monitored and analysed for quality assurance and content. And in the majority of cases, QA assessors were concentrating on agent behaviours and seldom listening for customer insights. Speech analytics changes all that by using technology to 'listen' to every word, in every call, all the time. Specifically created queries scan 100% of all calls and identify and report on whatever customer insights the organisation needs to support astute decision making. By methodically using speech analytics across 100% of all calls, contact centres genuinely listen to the voice of the customer.

EXAMPLES

Typical problem statements

- Informal or anecdotal evidence suggests that a significant competitor is offering a financial product reputedly better and less expensive than the company's. Sales of the company's product offering have plummeted.
- The number of reports relating to customer complaints is snowballing. The senior management and executives need to know the extent of these complaints and the nature and root cause to support significant strategic and tactical changes that will affect the entire organisation.

- Management was made aware of a serious racial slur incident due to a stressful interaction between a customer and an unnamed contact centre agent. The incident found its way into social media and had the potential to go viral, with significant negative consequences for the organisation.

Solutions using speech analytics

- By building a query stack designed to identify specific competitive mentions, the QA team rapidly reviewed thousands of historical calls going back three months. Within hours, the resulting insights provided management with quantifiable data and robust business intelligence that enabled the organisation to re-engineer its product offering to be significantly more attractive and quickly re-brief and train agents appropriately.

- The critical customer complaints crisis was addressed by writing speech analytics queries to specifically identify customer complaints, together with the ability to categorise these by type and product or service and to apply a 'severity index' based on customers' sentiments expressed during the currency of each call. Complaint-based calls were tagged in the speech analytics solution and automatically escalated to the manager's dashboards using the solution's built-in workflow function.

- After being made aware of the racial slur incident, contact centre management and the QA team could use a set of queries to scan several months of recorded calls. Not only was the most recent culprit identified and immediately disciplined, but several other previously unreported.

SUCCESS RESULTS

- By re-engineering the product offering based on what customers mentioned about competitors in conversations with agents, the organisation successfully outsold the competition in the specific product category.

- Using speech analytics to identify customer complaints, accurately categorise these, and use insights to establish the root cause, the organisation significantly reduced the incidence of this type of call. This resulted in reduced call volume, increased customer satisfaction, and enhanced customer experience.

Acknowledgements

Writing this book has been an adventure of discovery. It is also more of a collective effort than the mere time I have spent ticking away at my keyboard. What you read between these covers I have extracted from the minds of some of the smartest people I have ever had the privilege of working with. Without their contributions, many of us would still be in the dark regarding how to use speech analytics to the best advantage.

Francois du Plessis. The visionary leader behind the development and refinement of Callbi Speech Analytics, whose knowledge and understanding of the technologies and the operating and business environment continue to astound me.

Corey Springett. Tapping into your decades of experience in the field of data and speech analytics has been an incredible source of valuable knowledge. It has helped me better understand the practical implications of deploying speech analytics and growing market share.

Henriette O'Riley Potgieter. The book would never have happened were it not for the countless hours I spent online with you on seemingly endless Zoom calls and your detailed responses to many emails. Your years of hands-on experience in contact centres and BPO operations and your skills and passion as a trainer and coach have inspired not only the many Callbi insights analysts you have trained but also inspired me to write this handbook.

Gert Fourie. Thank you for supporting me through this project and for your valuable comments and inputs during this book's critical peer review stage.

Sharon Melamed. Thank you for taking the time and the trouble to peer review the draft manuscript and for your valuable comments and suggestions.

Steve Morrell of ContactBabel. Thank you for reviewing an early draft of this booklet and for allowing me to quote freely from your various contact centre industry research reports.

My sincere thanks to Callbi Speech Analytics (Pty) Ltd., a member of the Alphawave Group, for sponsoring the publication of this booklet. www.callbi.io and www.alphawave.co.za

If you would like more information about speech analytics, please contact me rod@rodjones.co.za