



Why Is Customer Experience So Darn Important? And How to Improve Your CX Efforts

This month's Best Practices installment features submissions from Neustar and NICE that do an excellent job of detailing the obstacles that impede the delivery of a high-quality customer experience (CX). Thankfully, they also offer the concise steps needed to take your CX to the next level.

Neustar tackles the problem of outbound calling in the current environment, where spoofing and robocalls are severely hampering the efforts of legitimate businesses to connect with customers. The outbound voice channel is only getting through to 30% of customers because people are reluctant to answer their phones due to unwanted calls from unscrupulous spammers. Neustar helpfully provides a six-step program for increasing your ability to cut through the noise and connect with your customers.

NICE also presents a compelling case for improving CX; its approach features a strong quality management program that incorporates AI-powered analytics to measure customer interactions and maximize the actions that drive better CSAT and NPS results. The case study cited by NICE describes the benefits that a very large call center outsourcer was able to achieve using the vendor's three-pronged approach to quality management.

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MANAGEMENT POWERED
BY AI ANALYTICS

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Six Steps to Combat Robocalls and Improve the Customer Experience

By Jonjie Sena

You really can't provide a positive customer experience if you can't connect with your customers. Despite the many digital options available, and regardless of age group, our research shows that consumers prefer the personal touch and reassurance the phone offers, especially when verifying highly personal or urgent information. But robocalls and call spoofing are eroding customer trust, and 70% of people no longer answer calls they don't recognize.¹

Legislation will help.

To combat this epidemic, in December 2019, Congress passed the Telephone Robocall Abuse Criminal Enforcement and Deterrence (TRACED) Act, which mandates voice service providers offer call-blocking services and call authentication at no cost to consumers.

In March 2020, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) jumped on board, adopting rules requiring providers to deploy [STIR/SHAKEN](#) call authentication by June 30, 2021. STIR/SHAKEN focuses on spoofing, or misrepresenting the originating phone number, but it's just one important tool in the fight against spam. Carriers are taking a multifaceted approach that also includes robocall mitigation, which uses data analytics to determine if a call is suspicious.

But this creates a problem for businesses.

Although the intent of new regulations like STIR/SHAKEN is commendable, one drawback is that legitimate calls from authentic businesses can be mistakenly mislabeled as spam or blocked, negatively impacting a brand's operations and reputation.

The result has been that contact center rates have plummeted, and industries that rely on the voice channel are suffering. Forward looking business leaders are putting tools in place to navigate this new telecommunications ecosystem. Technology has advanced, allowing businesses to mitigate erroneous call blocking while, adding richer identity and context to their calls. Those businesses that take proactive measures to ensure calls are being answered are seeing increased contact rates as customers are more willing to trust and engage with their brand.

So, what can your business do to get calls through?

Take the following six-steps to combat call blocking and scams, increase contact rates, and improve your customers' call experience.

1. Centralization - Inventory the call environment.

Having access to a centralized, up-to-date telephone number inventory is the first step in improving your outbound call results. You can:

- Verify your existing inventory of telephone number records
- Disconnect and stop paying for numbers you no longer use
- Centrally manage, monitor and update telephone numbers to eliminate inconsistent caller IDs and improve call answer rates

2. Consistency - Enable an accurate call display.

Business phone numbers often display inconsistent, inaccurate, or even blank caller ID names due to variations across internal systems and processes. But, when customers aren't sure who's calling, they aren't likely to answer the phone. It's important that you:

- Ensure the correct calling number is displayed
- Verify which names are assigned to each telephone number
- Measure the performance of caller names and adjust for greater answer rates

3. Connection - Ensure calls get through.

Often, businesses may not even realize their calls are being blocked or tagged until they receive negative feedback from their customers. Consider taking steps to:

- Understand your baseline call patterns to identify telephone numbers (TNs) wrongly blocked or tagged
- Register TNs across the caller ID ecosystem
- Monitor changes to the reputation of your registered TNs

4. Certainty - Protect brand from abuse by spoofers.

Monitoring the use of your brand across the caller ID ecosystem helps to protect your reputation and your customers and minimize your risk of liability. To do so, you can:

- Designate inbound, outbound, and bi-directional telephone numbers

- Register inbound only numbers as Do-Not-Originate
- Monitor third-party TN caller name registrations for similar caller names

5. Certification - Authenticate caller identity.

Take the following action to specify how your outbound calls are assessed through STIR/SHAKEN to make sure they're not blocked or marked as spam:

- Understand the impacts and limitations of STIR/SHAKEN standards
- Verify your STIR/SHAKEN attestation levels
- Integrate STIR/SHAKEN standards into your network and mobile apps and sign outbound calls, verify inbound calls, and secure end-to-end calls

6. Context - Enhance the mobile call display.

The more consumers feel they can trust an incoming call, the more likely they are to answer. Consider your device as valuable real estate to:

- Leverage the mobile screen with logos, images, and business cards
- Provide expanded name information, caller title, department, and location
- Add call context with targeted message for a personalized brand experience
- Display the call authentication / verification result

Taking these steps will definitely get you on the road to restoring confidence with your customers, achieving higher call answer rates, and increasing operational efficiency and revenues.

Visit www.trustedcall.neustar to learn more about our six-step outbound calling journey. You'll have access to valuable resources, tips, and elearning. ■

About Neustar.

Neustar is a pioneer in call authentication as the co-author of STIR standards and early contributor to the SHAKEN framework, and we play an ongoing leadership role in defining industry standards with ATIS, IETF and CRTC. We provide the industry's reference implementation of STIR/SHAKEN as the exclusive operator of the ATIS Robocalling Testbed, where real-world STIR/SHAKEN implementations are being tested for interoperability, and Neustar leads the industry in commercial call authentication deployments.

¹ Mad About Robocalls?, Consumer Reports nationally representative survey, December 2018.

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How to Improve Your CX Efforts with Quality Management Powered by AI Analytics

The nature of the relationship between customers and brands has changed irrevocably. In the past, purchase decisions were often driven by price or a customer's history with the brand, but today's buyers take more into consideration. Every interaction they have with an organization, be it on a customer service call or in an online interaction, affects whether they return to a brand – or choose a competitor. That's why so many businesses are now focusing on customer experience (CX). CX encapsulates every interaction a customer has with an organization, from discovery to sales to support, and it's an integral part of customer relationship management.

One of the most effective ways to uncover opportunities to improve CX and consistently meet customers' needs is with a contact center quality management program. At many organizations, customer service agents are on the front lines of a brand's interactions with customers. Quality management programs empower businesses to understand the behaviors, coaching and process improvements agents need to deliver a great customer experience. They pinpoint exactly how interactions between the agent and customer impact the view of the brand and how likely customers are to continue doing business with a company. Quality management programs that automate traditional manual processes and leverage the power of analytics can also help

companies make CX improvements with agility – and that's more critical than ever right now with customer expectations and needs upended by the pandemic.

Consider, for example, the case of a business process outsourcing company with 400-plus contact centers worldwide. By implementing quality management powered by artificial intelligence (AI) analytics, the company was able to analyze 100% of customer interactions and understand why customers were calling and how happy (or unhappy) the customer was with their service. The company reduced call silent time by 40% and decreased transfers between agents by 36%, ultimately ensuring that every customer has a better overall experience. In the process, the organization automated and optimized quality processes, saving a substantial amount of money through improved performance and more effective use of staff time.

So how can you get started or expand CX initiatives with quality management? The key is to first understand where your organization stands in terms of its quality maturity, then take a three-pronged approach to improvement.

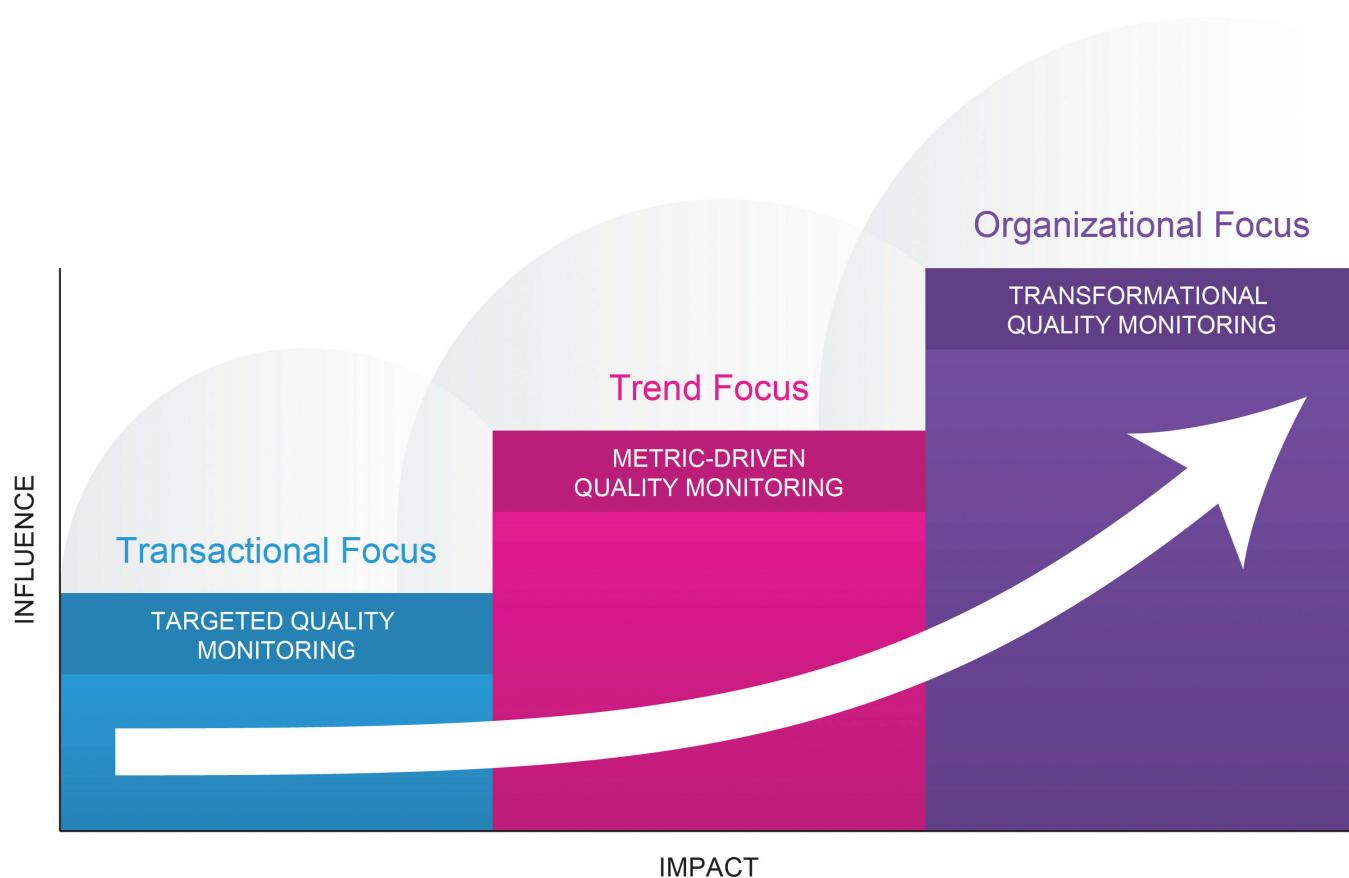
How mature is your organization's quality management program?

It is important to assess how mature your quality program is currently to envision and plan for the next steps,

which will help your organization be strategically strong and resilient to changes in the future. There are three primary stages:

Transactional focus: Businesses at this stage are focused on targeted quality monitoring. Contact centers can supplement the traditional random sample approach by identifying meaningful interactions to evaluate based on a specific metric. Often metadata such as CSAT surveys or speech analytics are leveraged to drive evaluation. Processes typically have some automation capabilities. Businesses at this stage must build a strategic plan for implementing and improving the impact of the quality program, including identifying all the stakeholders it will benefit. Organizations at this stage usually have supervisor dashboards to track quality program progress.

Trend focus: Organizations at the second stage of quality maturity are focused on metric-driven quality monitoring. Agent quality evaluations and coaching is prioritized based on how a metric is performing and which of those interactions caused the metric to trend down or up. The quality program relies more heavily on analytics to score all interactions automatically and create unbiased processes for evaluating agents. Comprehensive reporting is a must to understand how the quality program needs to be adjusted or expanded.



Organizational focus: At the third stage, businesses can truly transform their organization's CX through quality management. In addition to a metric-driven quality approach, AI is added to automate scoring of agent soft-skill behaviors and identify their impacts on customer satisfaction. In order to have a greater impact on the organization, the quality program vision and plans must have buy-in from leaders, and employees must trust the program. To achieve this, quality leaders

must articulate the ROI of the program to each stakeholder group and have infrastructure (such as a steering committee) in place to support constant improvements.

Pinpointing where your organization stands on the quality maturity scale helps determine the steps to improve and have a bigger impact on CX. Consider how your business compares to each of the levels identified above and whether the right tools and processes are in place to help it advance.

Why (and how) to take a three-pronged approach to quality management improvement

Armed with a better understanding of the current state of your organization's quality management progress, you can begin making strides to improve it. It's important to consider not only CX but employee experience as well – happy employees create a positive environment for customers and will go the extra mile to satisfy them.



Focus on three key areas to improve CX with quality management:

1. Automatically detecting discrete events with analytics. Certain elements of customer-agent interactions can have an outsized impact on CX, like opening with the right greeting, using the right sales pitch or following the correct compliance protocol. Making sure scripts and guidelines are followed, though, is extremely difficult at scale across hundreds or thousands of agents.

Many businesses evaluate only a targeted number of interactions per agent, but that produces insights with large blind spots. Organizations must analyze 100% of customer interactions to get a real-world picture of customer sentiment and fairly evaluate agent performance.

Automated speech analytics can detect whether specific requirements are followed by agents and analyze customers' experience based on what words or phrases are said or written during an interaction. Analytics empower organizations to pinpoint dissatisfied customers, complaints, positive interactions and customers who are likely to purchase a product/service again.

Insights gathered by analytics can then be used to inform supervisors on precisely what coaching their agents need with automated quality workflows. Contact centers will then more efficiently align with customer needs.

2. Using AI and machine learning models. Having a better understanding

of customer sentiment is the first step to improving CX. Sentiment scoring, such as CSAT or NPS, has proven to be an accurate predictor of customer satisfaction, but quality teams or supervisors must still pinpoint the exact behaviors that lead to poor customer sentiment. That is where AI and machine learning come in. Solutions using these technologies must have massive volumes of data for models that objectively score agent behaviors that directly impact sentiment scores. These CX models need to include a range of soft-skill behaviors, such as active listening, building rapport and demonstrating ownership.

AI-powered quality solutions such as NICE ENLIGHTEN with Quality Central can then accurately pinpoint agent interactions that are affecting customer satisfaction and automatically queue them with a supervisor for additional evaluation and agent coaching. This process used to take hours and was subject to human error and biases that can damage program effectiveness and employee experience; now, it can be done in mere minutes.

3. Operationalizing findings with automation. Having the data about where CX can be improved is not enough to make change a reality in contact centers. Once all of the insights from analytics and AI are in hand, you must put the findings to work.

Quality management solutions that automate work, such as evaluations, help drive targeted coaching and collaboration between supervisors and the quality team. They provide

insight into organizational trends and individual agents' progress towards KPIs to ensure that opportunities to improve CX are not missed. Look for solutions that pull these types of insights into easily accessible dashboards, auto-score different aspects of an interaction, make recommendations on coaching actions and measure quality's impact and the effectiveness of coaching. Embedding AI analytics in quality management enables you to make improvements to CX more efficiently on a day-to-day basis.

Having a great experience when interacting with a contact center is the currency modern customers demand from the brands they support. By understanding your organization's quality maturity and taking a three-pronged approach to improving the quality program, you can have an outsized impact on CX, ultimately delivering greater workforce efficiency, higher revenue and increased growth.

For more information on the NICE AI analytics enabled quality management solutions and best practice quality tips from our team of experts, watch the Quality Hot Topics series (work-from-home edition) at www.nice.com/quality-management-video-hub. ■

NICE Quality Central™ unifies fragmented, disconnected quality programs with different data sources into a single application that automates all omnichannel quality operations, from evaluation to feedback. It incorporates NICE ENLIGHTEN AI behavior models into the evaluation and coaching processes to improve agent engagement and performance and increase customer satisfaction. www.nice.com/engage/workforce-optimization/quality-management/