A study of the opportunities and challenges in creating the right sound environment for contact center employees
CREATING THE RIGHT CONTACT CENTER WORK ENVIRONMENT

SUMMARY

Today’s contact center managers strive to provide a sound environment that increases employee productivity, reduces costs and helps ensure that customers receive consistently outstanding service. According to managers of both inbound and outbound contact centers, a high-quality headset ranks as the most important factor in creating this type of positive work environment. Having quality software and systems is the second most important factor, managers report.

In addition, contact center managers are concerned about the effect of sound disturbances on agent productivity. The solution, most have discovered, is quality headsets that feature noise-cancelation technologies to reduce background noise and increase the sound quality of calls. These headsets play a key role in improving the quality of conversation that contact center agents have with their customers, which results in improved customer retention and increased sales.

Large contact centers (those with 500 or more seats) lead their small and medium-size counterparts in adopting high-quality headsets and remotely deploying workers to reduce sound disturbances and create a positive work environment.

BACKGROUND

One of the most important factors that contribute to agent productivity and satisfaction is the sound environment. In crowded workplaces, such as contact centers, background noise acts as a distraction that can reduce productivity, increase the likelihood of errors and decrease employee job satisfaction.

In December 2011 Jabra and analysis institute Frost & Sullivan conducted a survey of 250 contact center managers in Great Britain, France, the U.S., China and India to investigate the connection between a good sound environment, employee satisfaction and increased productivity.
KEY FINDINGS

1. In general, today’s contact center managers are satisfied with the current sound environment found in their contact center.

- 98% of contact center managers surveyed expressed satisfaction with the existing sound environment in their contact center.
- 44% of contact center respondents deemed the existing sound environment “Very Satisfactory.”
- 53% of respondents said the existing sound environment was “Satisfactory.”

2. A quality headset ranks as the most important factor in creating a satisfactory work environment in the contact center, according to most contact center managers.

- 73% of contact center managers ranked having quality headsets as the most important factor in creating a satisfactory work environment.

3. Contact center managers rank quality headsets higher in creating a satisfactory work environment than other possible environmental influencers.

When contact center managers were asked to rank the top resources they use to create a satisfactory work environment...

- 73% chose quality headsets.
- 67% selected having quality software and system.
- 50% opted in favor of providing challenging and fulfilling tasks.
- 42% chose ergonomic seating.
- 34% selected providing private cubicles.
- 34% chose social activities.

“We firmly believe that contact centers of all sizes can realize the many benefits that a high-quality headset provides,” says Brendan Read, Industry Analyst, Frost & Sullivan. “As our survey shows, the noise cancelation features of a quality headset are top of mind with contact center managers across the world. The added values of call clarity and reduced sound disturbance will eventually lead to improved customer conversations, greater productivity, fewer distractions, and compliance with noise-at-work regulations.”

4. When it comes to the type of contact center, managers of both inbound and outbound contact centers agreed on the importance of quality headsets in creating a satisfactory work environment.

- 74% of inbound contact center managers chose quality headsets as their preferred method of creating a satisfactory work environment.
- 73% of outbound contact center managers chose quality headsets as their preferred method of creating a satisfactory work environment.

5. Inbound contact center managers ranked having quality software and system as slightly more important to creating a satisfactory work environment than their outbound counterparts.

- 69% of inbound contact center managers rank quality software and system as important to creating a satisfactory work environment.
- 64% of outbound contact center managers rank quality software and system as important to creating a satisfactory work environment.

Contact center managers – both inbound and outbound – agree that quality headsets and quality software and systems are the greatest contributors to creating a satisfactory work environment. The difference between inbound and outbound contact center managers’ views in this category may reflect the unique software and systems necessary to help inbound agents quickly and easily access vast amounts of information to respond to inbound inquiries.
6. Large contact centers are leaders in incorporating high-quality headsets into their operations to create a satisfactory work environment.

- 92% of large contact centers place a high priority on incorporating quality headsets into their operations.
- 69% of medium-sized contact centers place a high priority on incorporating quality headsets into their operations.
- 71% of small contact centers place a high priority on incorporating quality headsets into their operations.

By a wide margin, large contact centers have recognized the benefits that high-quality headsets provide and have made a priority of incorporating them into their business practices. Medium and small contact centers’ adoption of high-quality headsets has significantly lagged that of their larger counterparts.

7. Contact center managers are concerned about sound disturbances in the contact center and the effect these disturbances may have on agent productivity.

In crowded work environments such as contact centers, background noise can be a costly source of distraction. Sound disturbances in the contact center can significantly lengthen call times, result in incomplete or incorrect transactions or lead to potential lost sales opportunities.

8. Reducing background noise and improving the sound quality of calls are the top two methods contact center managers use to reduce sound disturbances in the workplace.

- 91% of contact center managers reduce sound disturbances by working to reduce background noise.
- 89% of contact center managers reduce sound disturbances by improving call sound quality.
- 85% reduce sound disturbances by increasing physical distance between agents.

Contact centers are notoriously noisy places to work. Headsets play a key role in reducing sound disturbances in contact centers by reducing background noise and improving sound quality. Today’s newest generation headsets provide advanced noise-canceling technologies that virtually eliminate background distractions and eliminate the embarrassing need for agents to ask callers to repeat themselves. This allows contact center agents to focus on the task at hand – without sacrificing call clarity, quality or comfort – thus improving productivity. Headsets also provide excellent sound quality for clearer conversations, which leads to less repetition of dialog, shorter call times and an improved customer experience.

9. Regardless of contact center size, managers are committed to reducing sound disturbances by reducing background noise.

- 92% of large contact center managers aim to reduce sound disturbances by reducing background noise.
- 91% of medium and small contact center managers aim to reduce sound disturbances by reducing background noise.

All contact centers that are not employing headsets as part of their strategy to reduce background noise are missing an opportunity. Headsets with advanced noise cancellation capabilities can be integral to reducing sound disturbances, which reduces call times, increases agent productivity and enhances the image of professionalism.

10. Large contact centers lead their small and medium-size counterparts in deploying remote agents as a way to reduce sound disturbances in the contact center.

- 54% of large contact center managers view deploying remote agents as an important way to reduce sound disturbances in the contact center.
- 31% of both small and medium-size contact center managers see deploying remote agents as an important way to reduce sound disturbances in the contact center.
For contact center managers, a “good quality of conversation” in the contact center is critical.

When contact center managers were asked what constitutes a “good quality of conversation”...

- 84% said it is one that improves customer retention.
- 84% said it improves sales.
- 83% said it increases conversation rate/allows agents to take more calls.
- 76% said it reduces call handling time.
- 56% said it is one that positively influences an agent’s spirit.

Quality headsets can play an important role in achieving the “good quality of conversation” that contact center managers seek to improve customer retention or increase sales. Headsets reduce distractions and background noise, allowing agents to focus on providing high-quality customer service and sales advice. They also allow agents to collaborate with fellow employees and handle calls more quickly, efficiently and with an improved outcome. Headsets are more comfortable than traditional telephones, which improves the work environment and helps increase agents’ spirits.

“Provide agents with quality headsets” ranked as managers’ second most preferred method of improving the quality of conversation in the contact center, after “Increase training.”

- 77% of contact center managers increase training to improve the quality of conversation.
- 65% of contact center managers provide agents with quality headsets to improve the quality of conversation.
- 48% improve scripts and background material to improve the quality of conversation.

“Along with high-quality training, headsets can play an important role in improving the quality of the conversation that contact center agents conduct with their customers,” says Holger Reisinger, Jabra Vice President of Marketing, Products and Alliances. “Headsets minimize distractions and allow agents to focus their attention on the needs of their customers, which helps increase agent productivity and improves the customer experience.”
**FIND OUT MORE**

Different working environments demand different headset solutions. The Jabra range of headsets for Contact Centers and offices offers a wide choice of hands-free communication technology covering virtually any requirement.

To find out more about which Jabra headset solutions are relevant for specific working environments, please contact Jabra at www.jabra.com/contact-center.

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