An examination of the factors that influence agent satisfaction and retention in Contact Centers.
SUMMARY

Today’s Contact Centres are anything but the crowded, noisy and pressure-filled places they may have been in years past. In fact, working conditions rank far down the list of reasons why employees leave their Contact Centre jobs. Instead, the primary reasons for agent attrition generally mirror those of most organizations: limited career options and an inability to understand and meet personal and company goals and targets, according to managers at both inbound and outbound Contact Centres.

When it comes to job satisfaction, Contact Centre employees are clear that they want more than just good working conditions. They want to have input and influence on their working environment and the right equipment for the job. They also want jobs that are rewarding and challenging, opportunities for advancement within the organization and career fulfillment. They also appreciate public recognition for their contributions. In short, Contact Center employees want to be part of a dynamic, successful organization.

When Contact Center Agents are satisfied, they tend to be more productive and act as team players. At the same time, job satisfaction does not necessarily translate into improved employee retention.

For their part, Contact Center Managers are making efforts to improve the working environment and to increase employee satisfaction by providing quality equipment, career advancement opportunities and development plans and providing agents with influence over the work environment. The most widespread way Contact Centers influence employee satisfaction is through public recognition and bonuses.

BACKGROUND

As with all businesses, today’s Contact Centers need to run efficiently and profitably. Among the biggest limitations to achieving those goals is employee turnover, which can be as high as 50% annually in some environments. Mindful that it costs far less to retain an existing employee as it does to hire a new one, today’s Contact Centers are working to increase employee satisfaction. The benefits to this are two-fold: reduced costs associated with recruiting, hiring and training new employees and increased revenue due to increased productivity.

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 The chief attribute of satisfied Contact Center Agents is a desire to do their job well. A lesser, but still important, attribute of satisfied agents is that they act as team players and are highly aware of company goals and actively strive to meet them.

When inbound and outbound Contact Center Managers were asked to list the main characteristics of satisfied employees...

- 85% listed high productivity.
- 61% cited promoting teamwork and company targets/goals.
- 42% listed positive adoption of new hardware/software.
- 40% cited low call abandonment rate.
- 38% listed low number of sick days.

2 Interestingly, there is not a significant correlation between job satisfaction and agent retention.

Only 26% of Contact Center Managers said that satisfied employees were “less likely to quit their jobs.”

3 According to Contact Center Managers, working conditions are not the primary reason why agents leave their jobs.

- Just 12% of managers surveyed said that employees left because of “a noisy or stressful working environment” in the Contact Center.

4 The top reasons agents leave their jobs are because of limited career options or a lack of understanding of personal and company goals and targets, according to Contact Center Managers.

When Contact Center Managers were asked to list the primary reason for employee turnover...

- 32% listed limited career options.
- 31% cited lack of understanding of personal and company goals and targets.
- 20% listed unsuccessful training and inability to perform.
- 12% said noisy or stressful working environment.
- 3% cited lack of influence on work environment.
- 1% listed broken or substandard key equipment.

“Contact Centers have made great strides in eliminating the perception that they are noisy, crowded and stressful places to work – and for that they should be applauded,” says Brendan Read, Industry Analyst, Frost & Sullivan. “However, as we can see from the results of this survey, to address their continued high attrition rate they need to focus on providing additional career options and guidance to their employees on how to better achieve goals and targets.”

5 Employees in small contact centers (those with fewer than 100 seats) were most apt to leave because of limited career options.

- 39% of managers in small Contact Centers cited limited career options as a primary reason for employee turnover.
- 30% of managers in large Contact Centers (those with 500 or more seats) noted this as a primary reason for turnover.
- 27% of managers in medium-sized Contact Centers (those with 100-500 seats) cited it as a primary reason for turnover.

6 Employees in medium-sized contact centers were most apt to leave because of a lack of understanding of personal and company goals and targets.

- 37% of managers in medium-sized Contact Centers cited lack of understanding of personal and company goals and targets as a primary reason for employee turnover.
- 28% of managers in small Contact Centers noted this as a primary reason for turnover.
22% of managers in large contact centers cited it as a primary reason for turnover.

Contact Center Managers agree that several conditions must be present to create a satisfied workforce. The two most important are relevant and sufficient training and career opportunities.

When Contact Center Managers were asked to list the conditions that must be present to create satisfied employees...

- 67% said relevant and sufficient training.
- 62% noted career opportunities.
- 56% listed performance and quality of equipment.
- 47% said opportunity to influence work environment and equipment used.
- 44% noted public recognition.
- 23% listed social activities.

Providing public recognition and bonuses is the most popular method contact centers use to increase agent satisfaction.

- 74% of Contact Center Managers list public recognition and bonus as the top method they use to ensure agent satisfaction.

“I’m gratified to see that a significant percentage of Contact Centers are making an effort to recognize employees for a job well done,” says Jette Bajlum, Branch Manager, KELLY Services Contact Center Division. “It’s been well documented that employees place a high value on recognition they receive from their managers, peers and coworkers. Public recognition schemes are often an effective way for Contact Centers to build strong, long-lasting employee satisfaction.”

Providing equipment that improves agents’ work is the second-most popular method contact centers use to increase agent satisfaction.

- 66% of Contact Center Managers list providing equipment that improves agents’ work lives as the second-most popular method, after public recognition and bonus.

“Equipment and technologies that improve the employee work experience are a relatively low-cost way for today’s organizations to both increase employee satisfaction and potentially distinguish themselves from other potential
employers, says Holger Reisinger, Jabra’s Vice President of Marketing, Products and Alliances. “At Jabra, we’re seeing a growing gap between organizations that embrace technology to make their employees work lives easier and organizations that don’t. Those that don’t are at considerable risk of being left behind as potential employees seek out employers that provide a work environment that is more to their liking.”

10a Contact centers are increasingly allowing agents to provide influence on the work environment as a means of increasing agent satisfaction.

- 58% of Contact Center Managers indicate that they actively allow agents to influence the work environment.

10b Contact centers employ several other methods to increase agent satisfaction:

- 56% provide teambuilding and individual career development plans.
- 46% strive to provide challenging and fulfilling tasks.

11 Providing agents with challenging and fulfilling tasks appears to be more important for outbound contact centers than it is for inbound centers.

- 50% of outbound Contact Center Managers ranked providing challenging and fulfilling tasks as important to increasing agent satisfaction.
- 44% of inbound Contact Center Managers ranked providing challenging and fulfilling tasks as important.

12 Providing agents with influence on the work environment appears to be more important for inbound contact centers than it is for their outbound counterparts.

- 61% of inbound Contact Center Managers ranked providing influence on the work environment as important to increasing agent satisfaction.
- 53% of outbound Contact Center Managers ranked providing influence on the work environment as important to increasing agent satisfaction.
FIND OUT MORE

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