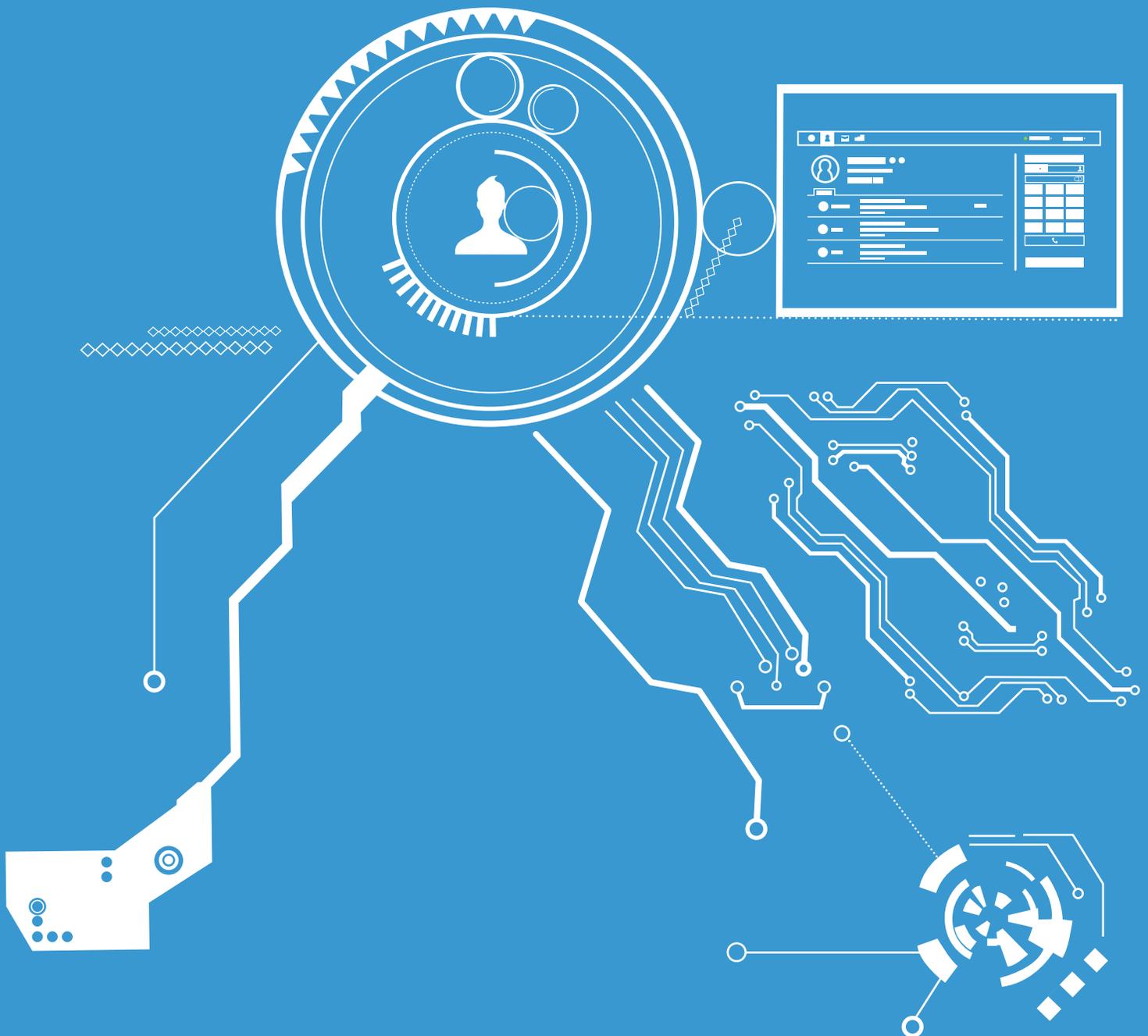# talkdesk

Create a Call Center in 5 Minutes
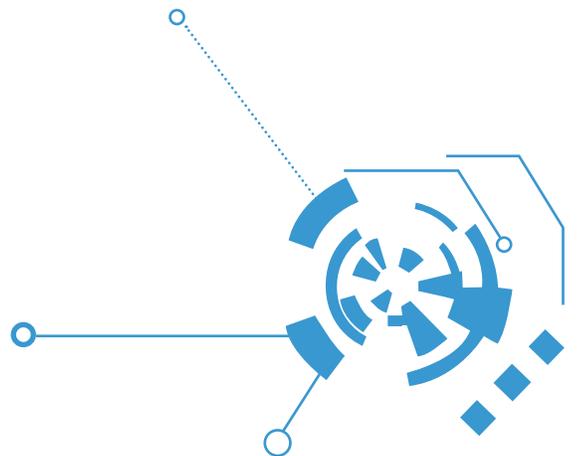
How to Increase Call Center Agent Productivity

Table of Contents

Introduction

Enhancing productivity within the call center is on the top of the to-do list for most call center managers and executives. At first glance, this may seem like a daunting task. But when armed with information, motivation and dedication, managers can significantly improve the productivity of their agents and call center as a whole with relative ease.

This e-book recommends tips, tools and practices to enhance agent productivity within the call center. It compiles information from call center industry leaders, workplace productivity best practices and psychological principles to provide you with everything you need to increase agent productivity within your call center.
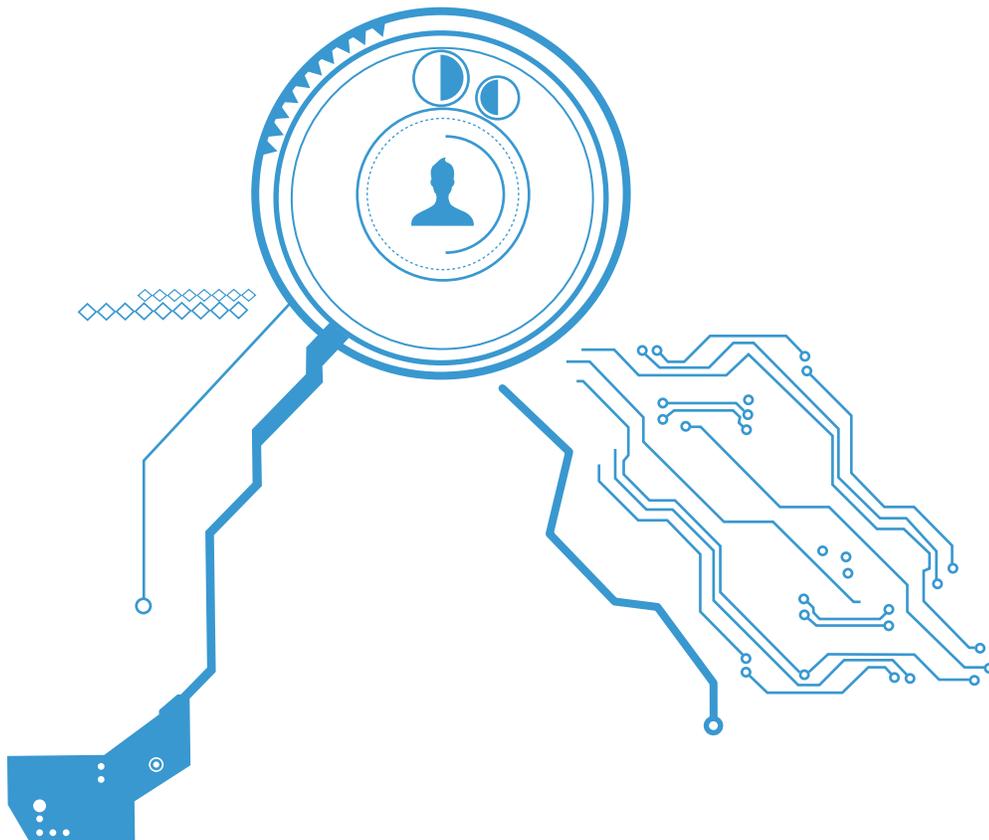
Improving Managerial Practices to Enhance Call Center Agent Productivity

Typically, boosting productivity within the call center starts with optimizing managerial practices. There are so many changes that managers can make to enhance productivity within their team and many are simple to execute and produce lasting results. Check out our top nine below and see how you can improve call center agent productivity in your call center:

1)   Enhance agent training

It is shocking how little training most call center agents receive. According to Colin Taylor, CEO of The Taylor Reach Group, "Many of today's contact centers train an agent just once; the remainder of his or her employment education comes from co-workers over the next six months — not exactly a reliable source of information."

If your goal is to increase your call center's productivity, the first place you should start is with adequately training your agents.

Providing top-notch training will decrease average handle time, increase first call resolution, reduce errors and improve overall call center productivity. Additionally, enhancing agent training will drive up customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Are you ready to start revamping your agent training processes? Here are some tips to help get you started:

- Orient new agents to the company culture
- Introduce agents to the key team members and departments
- Provide agents with information about company policy, procedures and work ethic guidelines
- Provide agents with a comprehensive overview of their job requirements
- Provide in-depth training on call center software and business tools — let agents get their hands dirty and provide in-the-moment feedback until they nail it
- Teach agents basic troubleshooting tips (i.e., what to do when your headset isn't working, software goes down or internet connection is weak)
- Inform agents of best practices
- Provide agents with detailed training manuals, recorded videos, recorded calls that demonstrate a specific point (i.e. how to handle a difficult customer, what to do when you don't know the answer, etc.), use cases, FAQs, etc.
- Role play common scenarios and provide agents with in-the-moment feedback
- Teach agents how to use the knowledge base
- Educate agents about your customer base and target market

- Train agents on proper call center etiquette
- Monitor agents throughout the training process and provide feedback (both quantitative and qualitative) along the way
- Buddy new agents up with a more experienced agentwho is trained in managing new agents – make this their go-to person for the first six months
- Have frequent 1:1 check ins with agents during their first six months
- Constantly refresh and revisit training throughout the agent's tenure – training should never stop

If your training protocol skips some of these basic steps, make sure you add them immediately. Skimping on call center agent training can be a huge productivity drain down the road.

2) Cross-train agents

Another way to boost agent productivity is to cross-train agents so they are proficient in more than one domain. For example, USAA started cross training their call center agents in 2007 so that they could answer both investment and insurance related calls. This increased productivity, decreased the number of transferred calls and eliminated the need to hire extra staff during times of increased call volume.

Cross training agents is also very effective for smaller call centers with lower call volumes that are hoping to reduce idle time in order to boost productivity. When agents are trained to handle different call types (i.e., sales and support), there will be less idle time and productivity will increase.

In sum, cross-training agents dramatically increases productivity within the call center by reducing transfers, increasing first call resolution, reducing agent idle time and decreasing the need to staff extra agents during periods of high call volume.

3) Enhance quality control and quality assurance practices
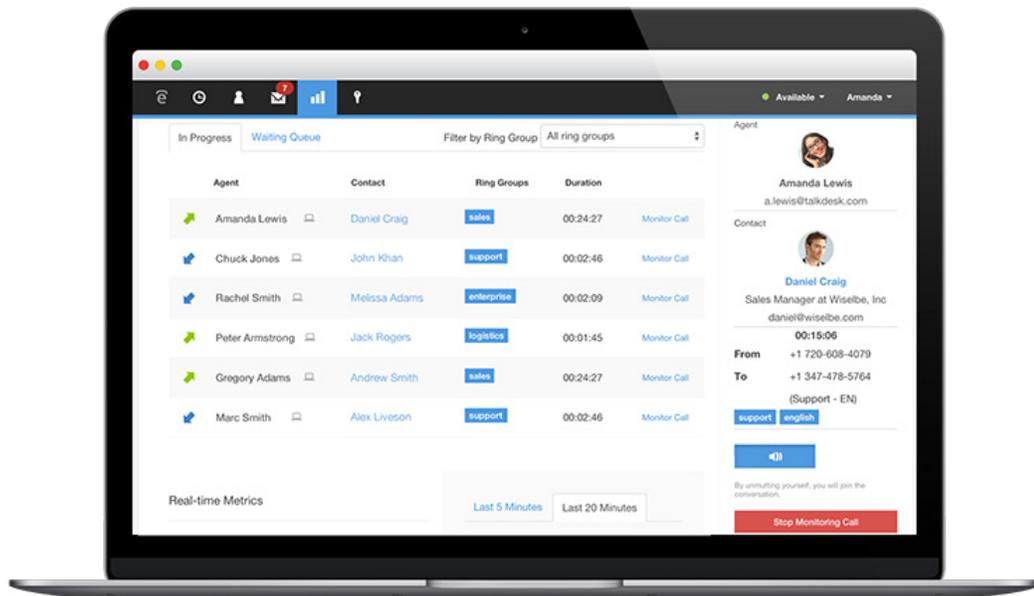
No call center manager should take a set-it-and-forget-it approach to managing their team. Once you've ensured that your agents are well-trained you have to monitor their performance. Listen in on live calls without the agent or customer knowing to evaluate the effectiveness of the agent. If you notice that the agent needs a little extra support, drop in on the live call and help them out. If during monitoring sessions you notice that certain agents struggle with specific questions or your team isn't efficient at resolving specific issues, go back to square one and conduct training on the issue. Eliminating extra steps or correcting ineffective processes can help improve call

center agent productivity by reducing average handle time and increasing the number of calls handled.

When monitoring, don't just stop at identifying areas for improvement. If you feel that an agent did a particularly excellent job at resolving a tough issue, defusing an angry customer or troubleshooting in an effective way, pull that call recording and use it to train agents. This can dramatically improve the training process and also give top agents the recognition that they deserve.

In addition to pulling call recordings when things go well, analyze the call recording when things don't go so well. Have a particularly frustrated customer? Dig deep into the call recording to find out what went wrong. Use this as a tool for training and feedback and your team will have concrete examples of what not to do. If your agents can become skilled at avoiding confrontation or de-escalating angry callers, their average handle time will significantly decrease. This will not only have a large impact on customer service quality but will also greatly improve productivity.

Enhancing your quality control and quality assurance practices starts with improving your call monitoring techniques. It is not enough to simply monitor live calls, you must be willing and able to drop in on those live calls, provide immediate feedback and use call recordings to help bolster team productivity and performance.

4)   Monitor and assess idle time

Do you know exactly how your agents are spending their idle time? Can you answer this without strolling the floor and taking a head count? If not, you can definitely stand to improve call center agent productivity by increasing your awareness of how your team spends their idle time and then correcting policies and procedures

to reduce inefficiencies and boost productivity.

To do this, invest in call center software that shows exactly what your agents are up to when they are idle and monitor this throughout the day. You can also take a look at detailed reports to pinpoint inefficiencies. Use this information to provide informed feedback and concrete instructions on how to improve their productivity.

For instance, if you notice that Sally takes 15 minute breaks after each call, check in with Sally to see what the root cause of this behavior is. If she says her back hurts and she needs to stretch it out, provide her with more ergonomically appropriate working space. Or if it is because she is overwhelmed with handling angry customers and she has to blow off steam after each call, provide her with more effective tools to handling angry customers. Once you have an understanding of how your agents are spending their idle time, do your best to troubleshoot and resolve any issues so they can be more productive.

5)   Consider outsourcing non-core competencies

Have you noticed that certain types of calls or tasks are productivity-zappers? Would you love to eliminate them from your core-team's designated tasks? If customer service, sales, marketing, or It isn't a high priority for your business, then outsourcing all or one of these non-core competencies to an off-site call center may make a lot of sense. You can then focus your team's energy onwhat is most important for your business and watch as productivity skyrockets.

6)   Employ remote agents

A recent study conducted by Stanford University found that allowing call center agents to work from home led to a 13% increase in performance and productivity, improved work satisfaction and decreased agent attrition by 50%. With benefits like these, most managers of call centers are onboard with the idea of employing

a remote workforce.

In fact, more progressive companies are already benefitting from increased productivity by allowing their agents to work from home. "We're open from six a.m. to ten p.m. [and] nobody wants to work until ten p.m. in office," says Mike Foster, manager of technology development at Tower Travel. "But if they're a home-office agent…[working from one p.m. to ten p.m.] is not as big a challenge as if they had to be physically in an office on a second shift." Mike Foster goes on to say that he found his team is not only able to cover more hours but is more productive as well. In fact, working from home is such a popular request and has such a great impact on productivity that they even use it as an incentive.

If you are interested in employing a remote call center workforce, or allowing your agents the option to work from home, check out these helpful resources:

- Employing At-Home Call Center Agents is a Win-Win-Win
- The Basics of Employing Remote Call Center Agents
- How to Hire and Manage At-Home Call Center Agents
- 11 Tools Required for Employing an At-Home Workforce of Call Center Agents
- 8 Must-Have Tools for Your Co-Sourced Call Center Workforce

## 7)   Reassess your metrics

Analyzing workplace and agent productivity accurately can be a complex endeavor. But it doesn't have to be. If you know which metrics to analyze and how to interpret them, you'll be well on your way to having a solid understanding of how productive each agent, team and your call center as a whole is at any given moment.

Colin Taylor, CEO of The Taylor Reach Group stated that, "Most call centers use the wrong metrics, and part of it is the fault of the center management, and part of it is center management not being willing
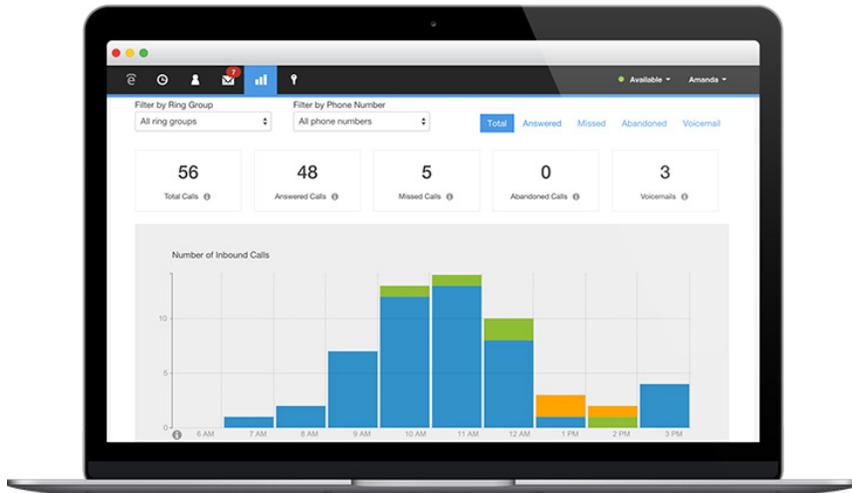
or able to educate senior management. Although the vast majority of centers are running almost exclusively on quantitative measures — like handle time and available time — a more accurate indication of productivity rests in qualitative metrics, like first-call resolution and customer satisfaction." By focusing on the metrics that matter, you can refine your approach to managing and provide more effective feedback to boost productivity.

8)   Solicit employee feedback

As a manager, in order for you to have your finger on the pulse on your customers, processes, and operations, you have to ask your frontline employees. They are the ones in the trenches, battling it out each day with your customers, employees, software and policies and procedures - so who better to ask what is working and what can be improved.

Ask agents for feedback on specific tools or processes (i.e. "Tell me one strength and one weakness of our call center software"). Solicit this information in confidential surveys, one-on-one meetings and focus groups. Once you collect the data, act on it. When your em-

ployees see changes being implemented based on their feedback, they will feel as if their opinions are valuable and that they are a vital member of the team. In addition to improving productivity within the call center, acting on this feedback will also boost agent productivity as they will be more motivated and engaged with their work.

9)   Solicit customer feedback

In order to improve call center agent productivity, you must go straight to the source to see what is working and what isn't. Ask your customers targeted questions about their experience, their level of satisfaction with your company and ideas for improvement. You might find that the policies and procedures you thought were sound are actually sources of customer dissatisfaction and frustration. Acting on customer feedback to streamline business processes and adjust the approach to addressing your customer's needs will not only improve average handle time, but increase the overall efficiency and productivity of your team.

Enhancing agent, team and call center productivity is often at the top of the to-do list of many managers. And it should be. Where managers can go wrong is putting the pressure on the agents and teams themselves to "work harder" in order to boost efficiency and productivity. Instead, managers should start by optimizing their own practices – revamp training, enhance quality control practices, outsource non-core competencies, allow agents to work from home and continually monitor and optimize these changes. Doing so can increase agent satisfaction, reduce agent turnover and streamline business processes - all of which enhance productivity.

Enhance Call Center Agent Productivity with the Right Tools

Looking to enhance call center agent productivity by leveraging the right tools? The best place to start is with your call center software. Call center software has made huge technological strides within the past few years. Now you have the luxury of picking a solution that has all of the features that your team requires at a price point that is surprisingly affordable. So whether you're in the market to pick a new call center software solution to increase your team's productivity or just want to see how your solution is stacking up – checking out the tools and features below is a great place to start.

1)   Cloud-based call center software

The call center environment is changing. Companies are increasingly reaping the benefits from employing an at-home, dispersed, mobile, and/or a global workforce and require a call center software solution that can keep up with their needs. Cloud-based call center software is the best solution that allows these companies to maintain a flexible workforce.

With cloud-based call center software, all agents need is a computer, Internet connection and a headset and they can make and receive calls from anywhere in the world. Managers can also keep track of how their dispersed team is performing with real-time metrics, call monitoring, call conferencing, call recording and historical reporting. Cloud-based call center software will ensure that your team remains connected, collaborative and highly productive, no matter where they are located.

Cloud-based call center software also brings significant advantages to teams located on-site. They are often more affordable, simple to deploy, simple to use and less costly to maintain. By eliminating

on-site hardware and software, cloud-based call center software also eliminates a lengthy setup process as well as any need for up-keep. Thus, your technical team will breathe a sigh of relief and can spend their time taking care of more pressing technical issues.

With benefits like these, if you had to make one change in order to increase the productivity of your team utilizing cloud-based call center software should be it!

2) Integrated call center software
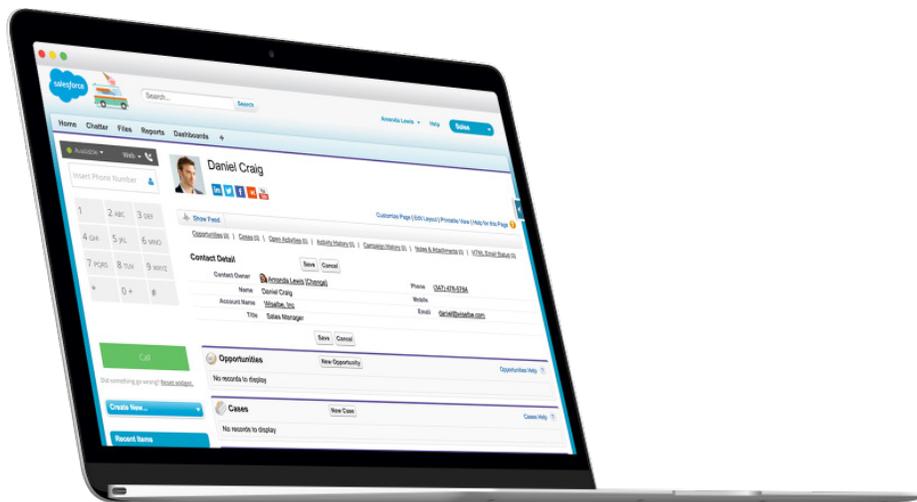
Do your agents utilize a helpdesk, CRM, back-office solution, a personal Excel worksheet, etc. - and none are integrated? Do they have to update each business tool with redundant information with each interaction? If so, this is a HUGE productivity zapper. It makes tasks unnecessarily complex, compromises agent productivity and impedes the quality of the customer service they provide.

"A big inhibitor to agent productivity is multiple desktops," Colin Taylor, CEO of The Taylor Reach Group, explains. "It is not uncom-mon in a number of centers for agents to have six different windows

open at any given point in time. The result is the constant rekeying of the same information into several disparate systems — a huge waste of time and money. Putting an incentive on reducing average handle time is going to be nowhere near as effective as eliminating one or two of those windows."

Utilize call center software that integrates all of your business tools into one unified desktop. They give the agents a comprehensive overview of the customer (i.e., call logs, tickets, cases, events, chat transcripts, social media interactions, etc.) and allow agents to complete tasks (i.e. close a ticket in Zendesk, update a contact in Salesforce) all from the call center software interface. These solutions increase agent productivity by streamlining workflow.

3)   IVR

Another call center software tool that will have a huge impact on agent and team productivity is an interactive voice response (IVR). IVRs are automated telephony systems that enable identification, segmentation and routing of callers to the most appropriate agent within your team. Some of the benefits of IVRs that will improve productivity are that they:

- Increase first call resolution — With IVRs, callers are always directed to the agent who is most capable of meeting their needs or the most appropriate department
- Increase agent and company efficiency - agents who are only assigned callers within their competency areas are more skilled at addressing specific issues, less likely to consult with colleagues or a manager and less likely to transfer the call to another agent
- Reduce operational costs — IVRs effectively replace a

receptionist or a customer service agent who answers calls and directs calls to agents, saving teams time and effort

Taken together, IVRs will significantly streamline business processes and allow your agents and teams to be more effective. The result? Increased agent and team productivity.

4)   Skills-based routing

Utilizing skills-based routing to direct calls to the most appropriate agent can have a huge impact on team and agent productivity. Skills-based routing systems will route calls based on agent department (e.g. support, sales, marketing, etc.), skills (e.g. training, area of expertise, etc.), knowledge (e.g. product knowledge, proficiency with specific software, etc.), language, geographic location, etc. as well as the phone number the customer called, the choices the customer selected in the IVR and the customer's previous interactions with the company. Greg Steiner, eHarmony COO says they use skills-based routing "to improve the productivity of our agents, the accuracy of response, and the timeliness of the response." Skills-based routing tools streamline business processes, enhance agent effectiveness, reduce transfers and increase first call resolution — all of which have an impact on call center agent productivity.

5)   Click-to-call
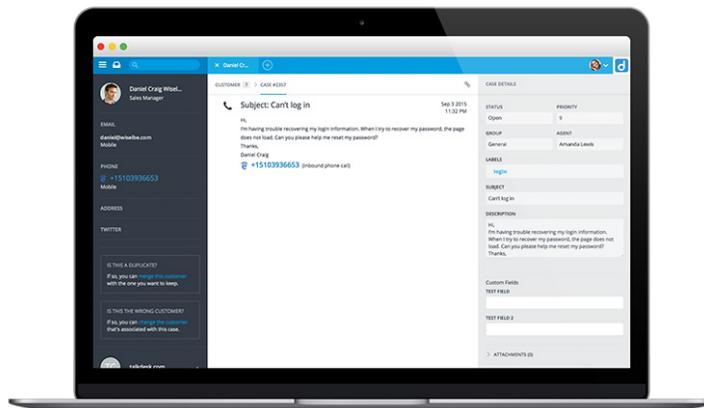
Utilizing call center software with a click-to-call feature will allow your agents to just click on the phone number in your CRM, help-desk, sales software or website, to make an outbound call. This feature eliminates the copy and paste method and will save your agents time and effort. It is a simple feature that has a big impact on productivity.

6) Power dialer

Power dialers automate the outbound calling process. Your agents can upload or compile lists, click "start" and the power dialer will automatically call contacts on the list, one after another, until someone answers. When a contact answers, the relevant information about the person will be displayed in the agent's interface. This makes the sales process more efficient, streamlined and effective.

It's a great tool to boost agent and team productivity. Enhancing call center agent productivity by upgrading or migrating to a new call center software solution doesn't have to be challenging. As a manager or executive, you should always have your finger on the pulse of the latest and greatest advances in call center software and be agile in your approach to adopting new technologies.

The call center software industry is just now going through an incredible shift – with the advent of cloud-based technologies – and this has made it easier than ever to customize a solution to fit your specific business needs. In selecting a call center software solution making sure that your call center software is enhancing your agent, team and call center productivity – rather than impeding it – should be your number one priority.

Enhancing Call Center Agent Productivity by Streamlining Processes

Streamlining business processes can have a huge impact on enhancing agent, team and call center productivity. There are many changes that you can make, with relative ease, that have great short-term and long-term benefits. Below are the top seven.

1)   Provide information on your IVR

A huge benefit of utilizing an IVR is that you can allow your customers to help themselves, thereby freeing up agents to answer more complex issues. Customers can receive answers to simple questions like "What are your business hours?", "Where are you located?", "What is your product return policy?" and "When is your Christmas Event?" by pressing the appropriate number in the IVR.

This system has increased productivity at Merrill Lynch, according to Judy Nelson, Vice President at Merrill Lynch's Global Private Client Services and Technology. "Opportunities to provide information up front to clients through prerecorded messaging often answers seasonal [or] event-driven inquiries and eliminates the need to speak to an associate. In one instance, scripting in our voice response system reduced representative call duration by 75 seconds." Having pre-recorded messages decreases the number of calls that are transferred to an agent and as a result increases agent and team productivity.
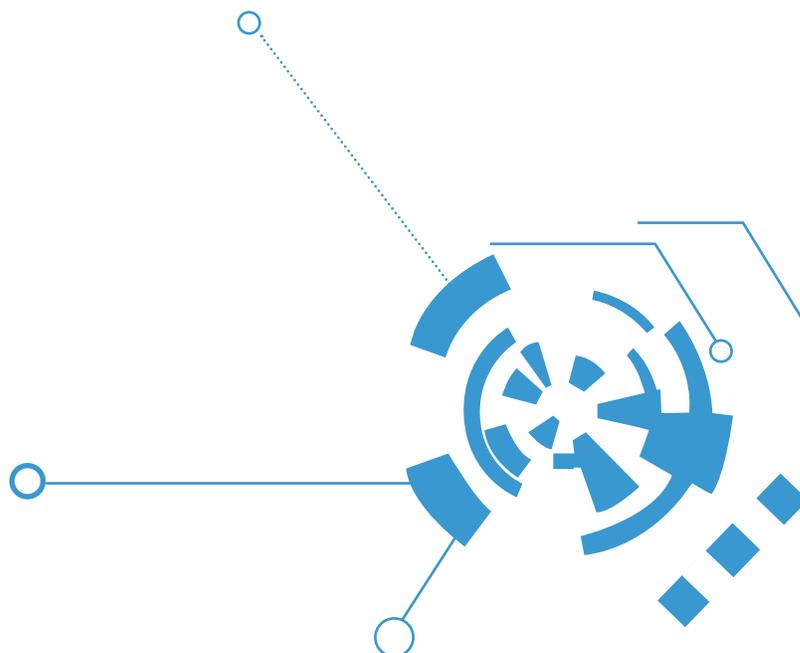
2)   Leverage other channels

One of the best ways to improve call center agent productivity is to divert callers to other channels. Utilize web self-service options, email, pre-recorded messages on IVRs, and live chat to

interact with customers and call volume will decrease. Judy Nel-
son, Vice President at Merrill Lynch's Global Private Client Services
and Technology says that "Since 2002 close to five percent of
associate-assisted volumes have shifted to self-service channels."
In addition to freeing up agents to handle more important issues,
agents can also interact with more than one customer at a time
(i.e. one on phone and one on chat) and respond to chats and
emails during idle time, thus maximizing productivity.

"One of the primary call center productivity initiatives has been
to give callers clear choices to use other channels to obtain their
answers," says Jon Anton, Ph.D., director of benchmark research
at Purdue University's Center for Customer-Driven Quality. "There
are many times when a customer does not need to talk 'live' to an
agent. The question is simple, the answer is easily found through
self-service, and the customer is happier with the speed and accu-
racy of these alternative channels."

3)   Automate repetitive manual tasks
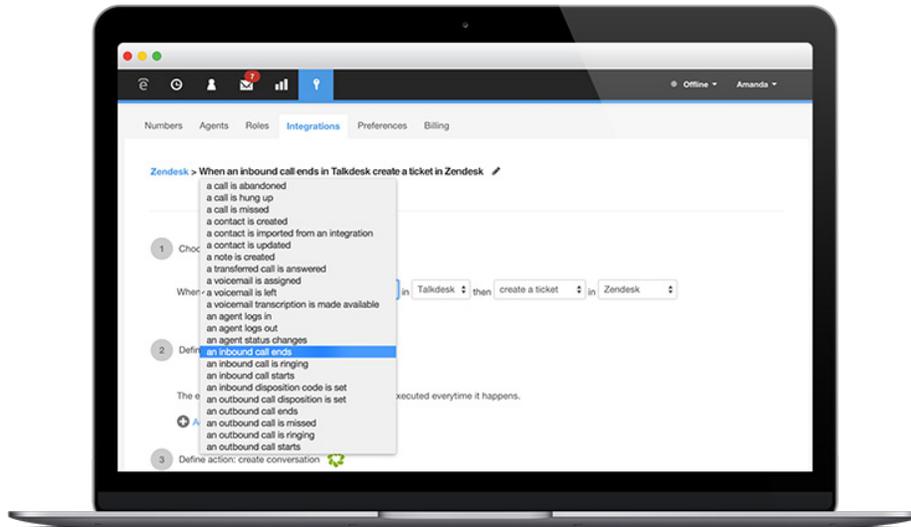
Agents have a lot to take care of. Why not automate some of the more repetitive manual tasks. Not only will this free up agents to take care of more important issues, it will significantly reduce errors and ensure that the information in your business tools is always up-to-date. Call center software that offers automated tasks like:

· When a call is missed, create a case in Salesforce
· When a call ends, add the call log, recording, and disposition code to Zoho
· When a new voicemail is received, add a new ticket in Zendesk
· When a new contact calls, create an opportunity in Salesforce

will help streamline business processes, enhance agent productivity and enhance team performance.

4)   Enhance first call resolution

First call resolution (FCR) means adequately addressing the customer's issues the first time they call. FCR has a large impact on agent and team productivity as callers whose issues are resolved on first contact are less likely to call back about the same issue (which decreases call volume – freeing up agents to handle more pressing issues) and are less likely to be transferred or escalated to a manager (so they will not tie up other team members on the same issue).

According to a study conducted by Dimension Data, the top issue that contributes to a decrease in FCR is lack of access to customer information and systems data. This occurs when software isn't integrated, when agents don't have access to the customer's history (i.e. support tickets, items purchased, cases and call logs), when agents forget to input information into the business tools (or it isn't an automated process), and when agents don't have access to accurate information about the product/service (via a knowledge base, training, or access to a manager). Agents in these situations are less likely to resolve customer's issue on the first attempt and more likely to have to transfer the call or call the customer back. If your team can identify with one or more of these practices that decrease FCR and you're looking to enhance productivity by enhancing FCR, here are some great resources to get you started:

- Why You Should Measure First Call Resolution
- How to Measure First Call Resolution
- 16 Factors Influencing First Call Resolution
- 11 Ways to Help You Improve First Call Resolution
- How to Improve First Call Resolution: A Guide for Agents

5)   Utilize workforce management software

Call volume fluctuations can be the Achilles Heel of call center productivity. Workforce management tools ensure that the right agents, with the right skills and training, are on shift exactly when you need them. Foremost Insurance Group has recently seen its call center productivity increase as a direct result of workforce optimization. "Foremost was experiencing rapid growth that was increasingly complicating our business," said Nancy Treul, Senior Vice President of Marketing. "Since implementing a workforce management strategy, Foremost has seen productivity increase 24 percent, service level improve more than 120 percent, average speed of answer drop to 18 seconds, abandon rate fall by 85 percent, and cost per call decrease 40 percent." This tool will significantly improve productivity in your call center.

6)   Utilize a knowledge base

There is no bigger productivity-zapper than constantly having to search through multiple systems, emailing engineering, calling in a manager, or asking a colleague to find an answer to a common question. To combat this, companies are utilizing a comprehensive knowledge base. For example, at Scotts when a customer calls with a question regarding weed control, "our representative would type in the word 'weed' in the reason code field and do a search, and instead of seeing 1,000 reason codes, they see five that are associated with weed control." This makes it simple to answer a customer's question without having to involve third-parties or searching through multiple databases.

7)   Utilize an internal communication system

Transferring calls can not only cause customer frustration, but decreases productivity on an agent and team level. Utilizing an internal communication system like HipChat or GChat can make it simple for frontline agents to ask the technical team, a manager or a colleague an answer to a question, so they don't have to transfer the call. Best Software, for example, uses their internal chat system as an add-on to its knowledge base. "[Instant messaging] allows us to do work…while we're online with a customer," says Ron Taylor, vice president of customer support. "We probably reduced transfers by five or ten percent."

The seven aforementioned tips and tools can streamline business processes and significantly improve call center productivity. Try them out and notice the impact they have on productivity within your team.
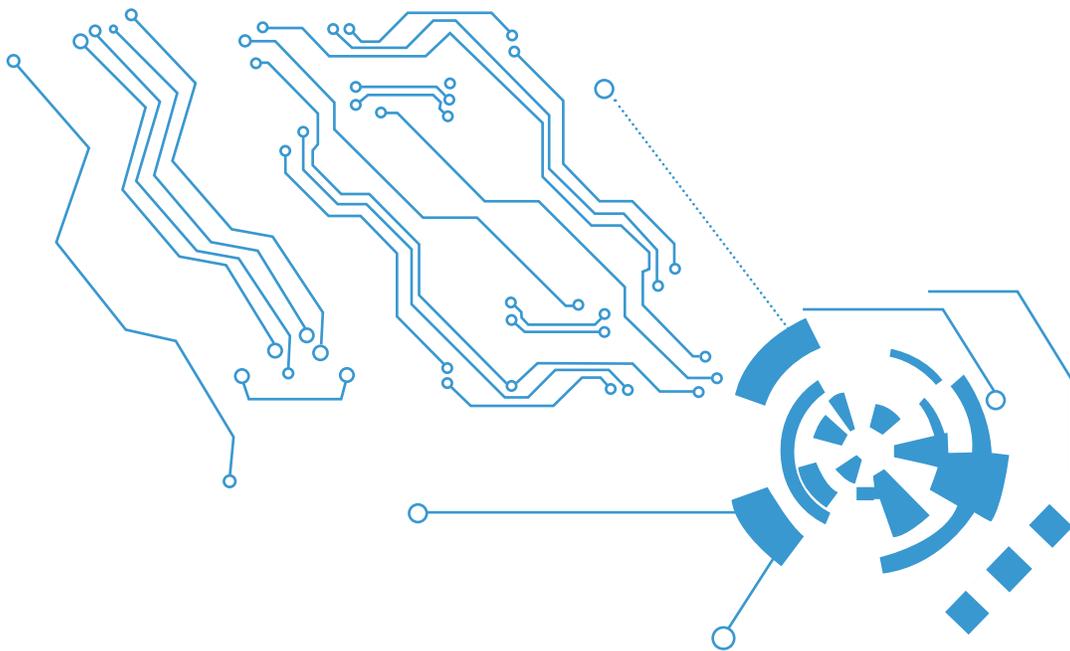
Enhancing Call Center Agent Productivity

Now that you have a solid understanding of how to increase agent productivity by optimizing managerial techniques, the tools agents use and call center processes, let's take a look at how you can increase agent productivity by going straight to the source. The 10 tips suggested below can all result in more productive agents – and a more productive call center!

1)   Enhance agent autonomy

Allowing call center agents a certain degree of autonomy can have a big impact on agent and call center productivity. Research has found that more autonomous agents are often more capable of effectively addressing customers' needs by being flexible, responsive and personal (Oldham, 1996). This decreases the likelihood that the agent will have to transfer the call to another department or request managerial input. This can have a huge impact on streamlining call center workflow and will free up managers to attend to more pressing issues. Additionally, allowing competent agents the freedom to be flexible in their response style and resolve issues creatively can bolster their morale, work engagement and productivity.

2)   Increase agent participation

Many call center managers have observed that agents that feel as if they are a valuable member of the team are more motivated, engaged with their work and effective - and as a result more productive. A recent study confirms this. This study found that increasing employee involvement in company decision making enhances workplace productivity (Wolf and Zwick, 2002).

Many companies are aware of this relationship and are including their call center agents in the decision making process alongside higher ups. For example, Andrew Harvey, Operational Solutions

Architect at RESPONSE stated that increasing call center agent participation in team meetings "has created a very positive environment in which our people understand their vital role in the success of our business. As a result, we have benefited from enhanced productivity in terms of schedule adherence, conformance and other productivity metrics as well as improvements in employee engagement and customer satisfaction." Make sure your agents feel as if they are a vital member of your team by increasing their participation in decision making and you will benefit from a huge boost in productivity.

3) Leverage Idle Time

A recent survey conducted by Knowlagent revealed that call center agents are idle an average of 49 minutes per day and 76 percent of survey respondents felt it was important for agents to make the best use of this idle time. Knowlagent CEO Matt McConnell recommends that managers allocate unproductive idle time to deploy "off-phone activities" to improve profitability and productivity. Importantly, these "off-phone tasks" should be completed in less than three minutes as that is the average duration of idle time. As a manager, break down larger tasks into smaller pieces so that agents can tackle them one at a time and watch as your agent and team productivity skyrockets!

4) Allow agents to take frequent short breaks

Stress within the call center can have a significant impact on the agent and call center. When stressors within the call center become significant, they result in decreased productivity, job satisfaction and health - all of which have a major impact on the call center. It is therefore important to allow agents to take frequent short breaks when their stress levels increase, when they need to get some air, eat a snack or use the restroom. Providing them

with this flexibility will empower them with a greater of a sense of control over their experience of stress and increase productivity.

## 5)	Provide agents with access to real-time metrics
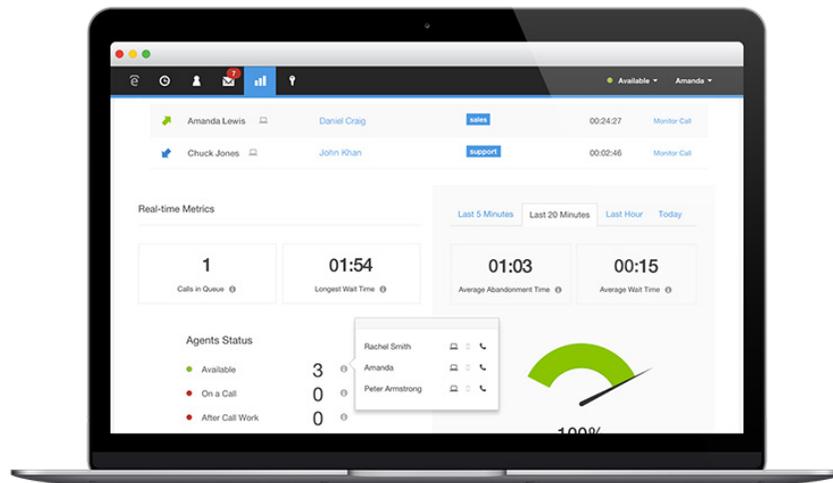
Agents that have access to real-time information like how many callers are in the queue, the status of other agents, longest waiting time in the queue, average abandonment time and average waiting time can better adapt to the call center's needs and make more informed decisions based on this information. For example, Scotts Company provides their call center agents with real-time metrics so they can see how well they are doing in comparison to their coworkers. "If we present this information to them, the vast majority want to do better," says Ed Billmaier, Director of Consumer Services.

"It's a natural incentive we found to get them motivated to say, 'Here's where I am. Look how much better everybody else is doing.' And they take action to boost their own performance." Knowledge is power and when you provide agents with the right information, their motivation and performance will improve as a result.

6) Provide agents with comprehensive information about the caller
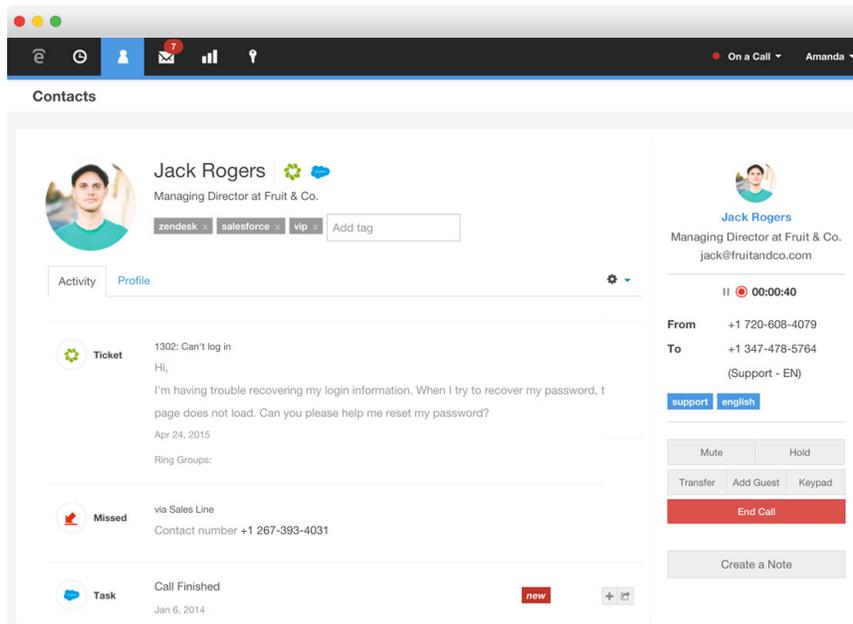
One of the biggest factors influencing handle time is how long it takes the agent to find relevant information to help the caller. Call center software that integrates with business tools and provides comprehensive information about the caller in a unified workspace can significantly decrease average handle time and increase agent productivity. When agents have all the information they need pop up in the browser in front of them as the phone rings, long gone will be the days of searching through multiple systems looking for the information they need to resolve the customer's issue.

7) Enhance the call center work environment

The work environment of a call center can significantly impact

agent productivity. Loop Customer Management claims that their call center floor layout directly impacts productivity. "There are no individual offices within Loop's sites and all staff, including the management and director teams, work within an open-plan environment. The benefits are clear, with Loop enjoying high retention, motivation, and empowerment resulting in performance improvements in our teams." So the next time you have the opportunity to change your call center layout, consider the impact that it can have on agent and team productivity.

8) Have a "genius hour"

One way to increase employee productivity is to make them more involved in creating improvements in processes and new workflow solutions. This will make agents feel their work has greater purpose. Best-selling author Daniel Pink suggests creating a "genius hour" every week has a positive impact on agent and call center productivity as agents are more invested in their work and feel as though they are an integral member of the team.

9) Increase awareness of the agent's impact on end-customers

Another strategy for enhancing agent productivity is to raise their awareness of their impact on end-customers. Dr. Adam Grant, a management professor at Wharton conducted a series of studies to evaluate call center agent productivity. He found that agents exposed to the end-customer face-to-face increased their weekly phone time by an average of 142 percent and they raised 171 percent more money whereas agent who did not meet the end-customer had no change in results. Dr. Grant suggests connecting agents directly with end-customers, showcasing customer photos, sharing customer stories and having agents describe their own posi-

tive experiences with customers as all can increase productivity.

10) Provide incentives and rewards

The goals of an incentives and rewards program should be to motivate employees to perform optimally, foster personal growth and development, increase employee satisfaction with their work and keep talented employees from leaving. If successful, all of these will have an impact on productivity within the call center. If you are interested in starting or revamping your employee rewards program check out these blog posts for helpful information.

- The Basics of a Successful Employee Reward Program
- What You Should Know About Employee Recognition and Rewards
- What Every Manager Should Know About Rewarding Employees
- 20 Ways to Increase Employee Motivation Using Rewards
- How to (and Not to) Shape Employee Behavior Using Rewards
- How to Measure the Impact of Employee Rewards on Performance
- The Top 8 Reasons Why Rewards Fail to Motivate

Increasing agent productivity isn't as simple as asking them to work longer hours, take fewer breaks, or work on the weekends. It requires enhancing their engagement with their work, their perception of being a valuable member of the team, rewarding performance, encouraging them to take appropriate breaks, optimizing the software they use and streamlining business processes. If you can take a careful approach to tackling these focus areas, you can reap huge rewards in employee productivity.

Conclusions

In order to be effective, enhancing call center productivity must occur on different levels. Management must work to revamp training, enhance quality control practices, outsource non-core competencies, and allow agents to work from home. They should optimize their current call center software solution or upgrade to a better solution that will streamline business processes and enhance agent productivity. They should also leverage business tools like a workforce management system, knowledge base and internal chat system (among others) to streamline business practices. Finally, they should work to increase agent productivity by enhancing their engagement with their work, their perception of being a valuable member of the team, rewarding performance, and encouraging them to take appropriate breaks. Taken together, all can have a huge impact on agent, team and call center productivity.

About Talkdesk

Talkdesk is easy-to-use cloud-based call center software that enables businesses to provide excellent customer service with phone support. The intuitive web-based interface and robust call center functionality including IVR, skills-based routing and comprehensive reporting make it possible for your agents to have real-time, personalized conversations with customers. With Talkdesk, you can create your call center in minutes and integrate it with a variety of top business tools, including Salesforce, Desk.com and Zendesk. Click the button below for your free trial of Talkdesk and explore the possibilities of our cloud-based call center software solution.

For more information, visit www.talkdesk.com.

TRY TALKDESK FOR FREE