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feature story

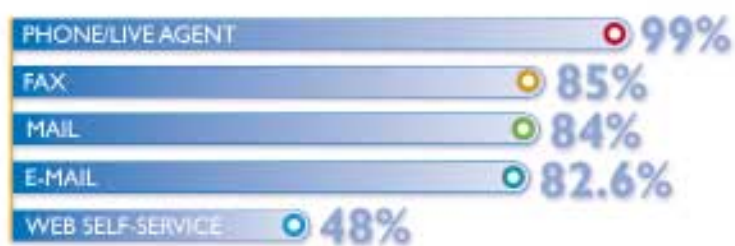
CUSTOMER SERVICE IS CHANGING... FOR THE BETTER

Remember the days when the only way to contact your favourite retail outlet was by phone? Of course, you could mail something out but who knows how long it would take to get a response. For an immediate response, it was an easy decision – pick up your phone. Hey, at least the call was toll free.

Thankfully, customer service has come a long way since those days. The bottom line is that customers today want choice. A multimedia contact solution means greater diversity and the opportunity to offer more customers what they want, when they want it.

According to a survey conducted by Incoming Calls Management Institute (ICMI), 99% of call centres still provide toll free telephone support. No surprise there. So it's obvious there's still a heavy demand for the personal touch.

Top Customer Access Methods Used By Call Centres



"Theoretically, toll free has always been about inviting your customers to contact you without being charged," says Kathie Swim, Senior Manager of Contact Centre Solutions at AT&T Canada. "It's the basic step of removing barriers to providing service to customers."

A recent Modalis Research Technologies survey revealed that while 90% of consumers have used the phone for customer service, only 46% were satisfied with the experience. However, 12% of consumers have used text chat for help and 62% were highly satisfied.

So what should this tell you? That customer service models are changing.

Before you can even attempt to acquire the right contact centre solution, you need to figure out what your customer base feels most comfortable with now and what they're looking for in the future.

Why Implement a Multimedia Contact Centre solution?

There are many benefits that your company can leverage with the implementation of a contact centre solution, such as:

Lower Cost – E-mail, Web chat and Voice over IP are inexpensive. The Gartner Group estimates that a telephone interaction costs approximately \$5. By contrast, a Web chat session costs an average of \$0.25 to \$3.50. This will fluctuate from client to client depending on a number of other internal factors, such as auto-response and complexity of written responses.

Increased Efficiency – Agents who use e-mail, text chat and web collaboration are able to provide faster response time because you have the ability to focus specifically on the query at hand.

Agent Productivity – Although not all people can be effectively cross-trained to be able to provide service across multiple platforms, acquiring agents who

can be cross-trained will likely increase your overall contact centre efficiency while decreasing overall idle time.

Presence – The addition of more communication channels boosts the image of a company, making the customer relationship strategy a key business differentiator.

Sales Opportunity – Offering additional channels of communication opens up-sell and cross-sell opportunities. Customers with queries who can conveniently choose their method of contact are much more likely to come away satisfied with your service model, which will result in increased customer loyalty and ultimately, increased sales.

When you're selecting a solution, the business case should really address corporate and operational objectives. Look at how the solution impacts other areas of your business because it's not just a customer service issue.

Instead of asking your prospective vendor questions to help you make the right decision, it's important that you ask a couple of key questions internally.

- What are the business problems that we want to solve?
- What do we want to accomplish with this solution?
- What does my customer base feel most comfortable with in terms of a contact solution?
- Is this solution for internal use as well? Are we implementing it to serve our external customer base or is it also for our employees?

One common mistake companies make is to let capital costs or operating expenses inhibit an implementation. The numbers clearly show that it's more beneficial to implement a solution than to procrastinate.

Remember, when you're selecting a solution, the business case should really address corporate and operational objectives. Look at how the solution impacts other areas of your business because it's not just a customer service issue.

The Numbers

- 70% of organizations that have implemented or web-enabled their contact centre (i.e. adding new forms of media like web collaboration, e-mail and/or text chat) improved their customer satisfaction level (Source: Customer Interface, 2001)
- 73% reported payback within a six-month period (Source: Customer Interface, 2001)

For information on Contact Centre solutions, please contact your AT&T Canada Sales Representative.

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Telecommunications Made Eeeeeasyyyyyyy...

Managed Services Increasingly Attractive

In today's business world, the term "outsourcing" has become the buzzword-du-jour. It's not new by any stretch, but organizations are truly beginning to realize the benefits of applying this proven model to many aspects of their business. Benefits such as increased ROI, reduced capital investment and the ability to dedicate a greater focus on core competencies.

Besides, you have more important things to do than deal with the headaches of managing your network and IT infrastructure.

When it comes to something as key as your network, you need to know that you have options in how to achieve optimal performance.

IDC forecasts the Canadian Network Infrastructure Management Services market to grow from \$715 million in 1999 to \$1.25 billion by 2004 – a compound annual growth rate of 14.76%.

What is Managed Services?

Managed Services is the central monitoring and management of objects – routers, hubs, servers, applications and desktops. By applying proactive monitoring and management methodologies, organizations benefit from optimized investments in crucial infrastructure and skilled resources.

For example, imagine you are running an Enterprise Resource Planning solution. How much stress would you be under if suddenly you ran out of disc space, or available memory? The mere thought of a situation like that arising sends shivers down the collective spines of IT specialists and supervisors everywhere. But it does happen. By outsourcing the management of your servers to a vendor, alarms like that, and many other potentially crippling situations, are prevented through 24/7 monitoring.

The bottom line is that you really need to protect your mission-critical applications by aligning yourself with professionals who use best practices.

"As the sophistication of networks and computers all blur together, clients are less and less inclined, or are just unable, to keep that kind of skillset on the payroll," says Lee LaRue, Vice President, Services & Solutions Marketing at AT&T Canada. "We're starting to see a tremendous demand for this kind of engineered solution."

38% of IT employee time is devoted to operations and management activities.

What's In It For You?

What are the benefits of implementing a Managed Services solution? Here are a few key business advantages of the model:

An Optimized Network – Outsourcing the management of any or all of your network components allows for a worry-free solution, from basic router monitoring to complete global solutions.

Reduced Capital Investment – Reduced capital outlay and the ability to keep IT costs and operating costs to a minimum.

Reduced Technology Risk – No need to concern yourself with constantly upgrading outdated technologies.

Focus on Core Competencies – Shifting the focus of internal teams from maintenance to core business activities.

Reliability & Support – Have professionals monitor your solution 24/7.

What Else Do I Need To Know?

You've finally decided that this is for you. Now all you need to do is find the right vendor. Here are some questions you might want to ask a prospective supplier to ensure that they can meet your needs.

- What industry training or certifications do your team members have?
- Do you have the ability to monitor and manage my particular solution on a 24/7 basis?
- Can you and will you provide me with consistent, quality service and support?
- What assurance do I have that you will continue to evolve my solution as technology evolves?
- What other services do you provide that complement your managed services?
- What can you offer me that other vendors cannot?

For more information on Managed Services, please contact your AT&T Canada Sales Representative.



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Just So You Know...

- According to a 2001 Gartner report, 34% of at-work Internet users in the U.S. check their e-mail at least six times per day. On average, users manage their e-mail accounts for 49 minutes per day. Business users receive an average of 22 e-mails per day, of which only 27% require immediate attention. 34% are business-related spam.
- The Old Chinese Telephone Exchange in San Francisco was completed in 1909. Operators were required to be proficient in English and five Chinese dialects. They also had to learn every phone number of every one of the company's 2,400 clients because the Chinese believed it was rude to refer to a person as a number.
- IBM has a "Virus Zoo" where over 50,000 computer viruses are being 'held captive' for research purposes. Only 12 people in the world have access to the Virus Zoo.
- Bill Gates formed a company to sell a computerized traffic counting system to cities, which made \$20,000 its first year. Business dropped sharply when customers learned Gates was only 14 years old.
- The profile of the average computer virus writer is age 14-24, talented, bright, and driven by a rebellious, adolescent need to call attention to himself.
- A recent Boston Consulting Group study revealed that online consumers will wait as long as 13.2 seconds before giving up on a slow home page download. The same study found that 20.6 percent of shoppers abandon the site before the page finishes downloading.
- According to a June 2001 study by Kinetic Strategies, there are 7.6 million broadband subscribers in the U.S. and 1.7 million in Canada. Kinetic says that these numbers represent a North American household penetration rate of 8.2%.



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Montage.DMC Helps DFO Implement Abacus Application

Financial and Information Management Systems Fully Integrated

The following case study is an example of how AT&T Canada continues to help companies achieve their communications goals. By employing a system of value added business practices, AT&T Canada continues to consistently illustrate its ability to deliver integrated, medium and large-scale web-based solutions for clients.

Background

Leading and facilitating federal policies and programs in support of Canada's economic, ecological and scientific interests in oceans and inland waters, Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) is in charge of ensuring safe, effective and environmentally sound marine services in response to the needs of Canadians in a global economy. This includes conserving and sustaining the utilization of Canada's fisheries resources in marine and inland waters.

Challenge

DFO needed to move to a single financial system to meet financial and material Information Management requirements from the merger with the Canadian Coastguard. (The implementation was also necessary to ensure that the DFO's financial systems were Year 2000 compliant.)

Solution

As one of the primary solutions providers for many aspects of DFO systems initiatives, MONTAGE.DMC* implemented the ABACUS application (based on Oracle Financials 10.5 architecture) in April 1997, and has since assisted on the technical side of the migration from 10.5 to 10.7.

Results

As a result of MONTAGE.DMC's services, there is now a high degree of integration among the DFO's financial systems, allowing users to easily access information from a single point-of-entry (i.e., the department's Intranet). In addition, the DFO's financial systems architecture is considered stable and fully in support mode, which has allowed the organization to use its resources on other initiatives such as introducing self-service technologies and Web-based applications, which have dramatically impacted the forecasts for future training and support requirements.

**Montage.DMC is a division of AT&T Canada.*

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Four Telco Trends to Watch

There's an interesting gap developing between technology and the telco sector. While many enabling technologies, like location-based cellular services, either exist or are close to prime-time, few have made it into common usage in business telephone services. While certainly the dot com crash hasn't helped up-and-coming companies find enough capital to bring their technologies to market, it's still surprising that we're not using what's possible.

I expect within three years, you'll see four major developments change the way you manage your business calls.

Handset Contact Data Integration

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) technology is proving very helpful in call centres and small businesses, where service reps can pull up a history of the relationship your company has with the person calling in. Now imagine moving that functionality directly to the screen of your cell phone. Here's what will happen: Your cell phone will ring. Your phone sends the number calling (pulled by Call Display) to your office CRM network. It, in turn, sends your phone relevant information on that customer: client name, details of last contact, any outstanding issues, last purchase, and so on. You then answer by saying "Hi Jim, did that shipment you ordered yesterday get to you okay?"

Single-Number Follow

This technology is already coming into the marketplace. You have one business phone number and any calls to it simultaneously ring both your desk phone and your cell phone. You will be able to manage this routing using your company's Intranet or by telling your office system, for instance, to ring your desk first, then your cell... or send all calls to voicemail except for a small group of known client/boss numbers.

Unified Messaging

Already, unified messaging is becoming a buzzword. But despite limited services like Onebox.com, the idea hasn't yet reached critical mass. I suspect it's because nothing yet is unified. True, you can receive faxes in your e-mail box, but I suspect the real killer app will be in (the comparatively less sexy) voicemail.

Today, you likely have voicemail at your desk, voicemail on your cell phone, and voicemail at home. Each one has its own number and passcode. We are just now starting to see the emergence of truly unified messaging. Soon, you'll

dial one number and it will log you in automatically without a password (perhaps using a biometric thumbprint scanner located on the back of your phones). The prompt would say "You have four business messages, and two personal messages. One of the personal messages, from Kim Holland, is marked urgent."

In time, you will be able to route your faxes and e-mails to this one source, which you will be able to access from a phone, wireless device, or web site.

Location-Based Routing

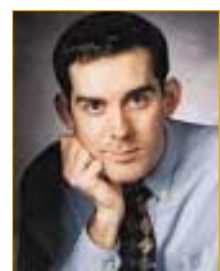
Cellular phones today have very good routing and forwarding features – if you don't pick up, most digital cell phones let you route calls to any number (usually set to your voicemail centre). As well, most phones have different "profile" modes: Meeting mode only vibrates, Outdoor mode rings extra loud, etc. Soon, using location-based technology, your phone will autosense your location and handle calls based on your location. For instance, when the phone senses you are in the boardroom, it would pop into vibrate mode and forward all calls from customers to your assistant. The second you leave the boardroom, it returns to normal mode.

Ideally, your phone should act as your personal assistant, with your office phone network making the task of managing your calls easier. We're halfway there. Stay tuned!

Tod Maffin is "one of Canada's most influential futurists" [Report on Business] and speaks to more than 50 conferences each year on the future of technology in small- and medium-sized business. He hosts "Future Now" on CBC Television, and is trying to cut down on coffee. His web site is www.todmaffin.com

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by Tod Maffin
Technology Futurist and Broadcaster





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<u>www.ebusinessforum.com</u>	e-Business Resource

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HELP US HELP YOU FEEDBACK

Here's your chance to tell us how you feel about Sphere.

What did you like?

What didn't you like?

What's missing that you would you like to see?

And most of all, what would you like to learn from Sphere and from AT&T Canada?

Please send your feedback to spherefeedback@attcanada.com

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