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10 Essentials For Your Call Center

Maximizing The Productivity Of Your Telecommunications
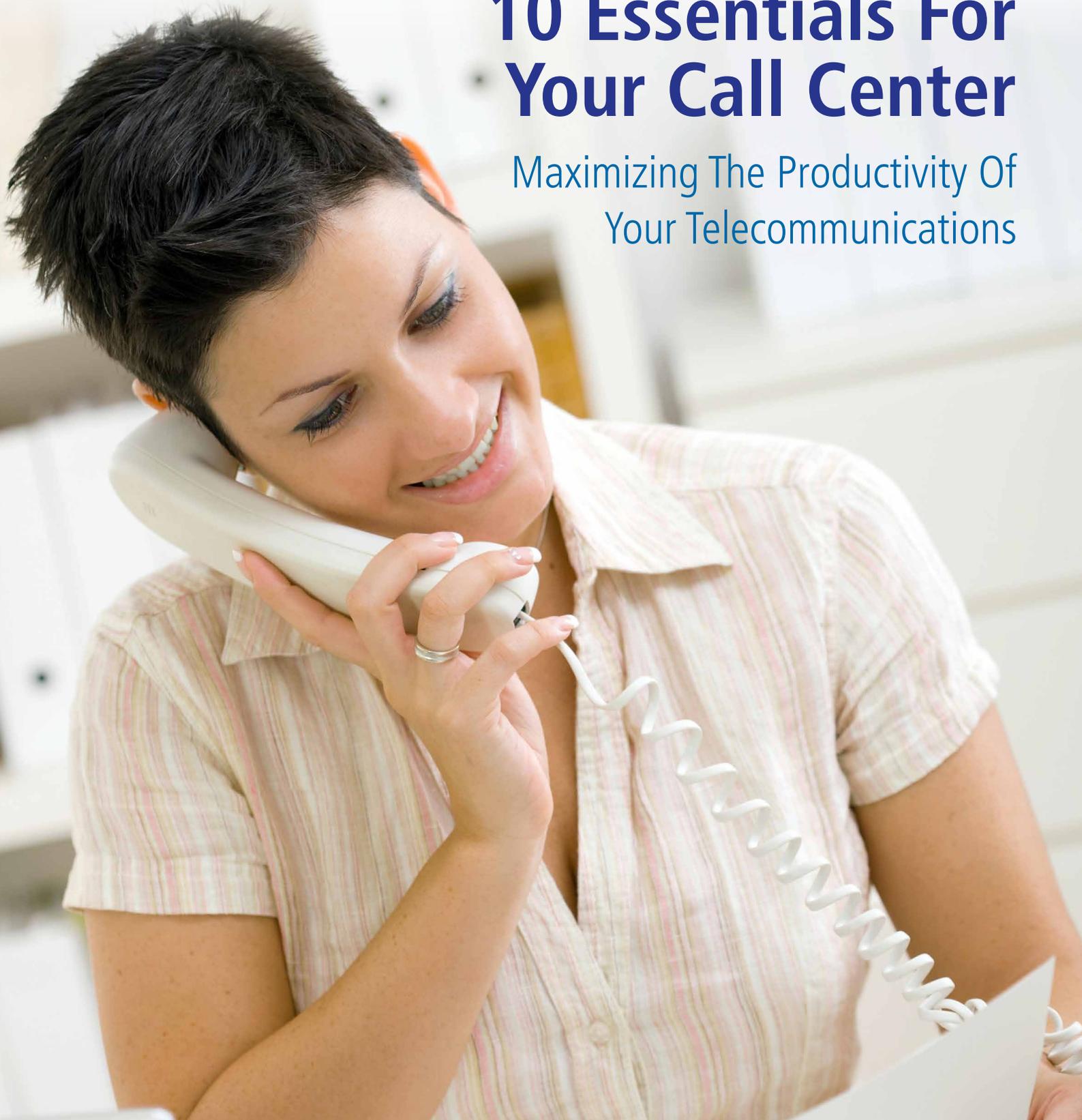
How effective is your company's call center? When customers call, are they getting the best telecommunications experience possible – one that promotes their continued business with and respect for your company?

There is more to a productive call center than the latest phone systems – although these are, of course, very important. Here are ten best practices to improve your customers' experiences with your call center:

Your Employees

Happiness speaks for itself.

Happy employees are more productive, plain and simple. Do a quick Google search and the studies will prove it. Happy employees work at higher levels, both in quantity and quality, because they *want* to. In other words, your company's environment, incentives and interrelations mold the productivity of your team.

Tone is contagious.

If your team isn't promoting positivity, it's going to come through in their voices. Tone of voice is highly detectable, even to the less observant customers. Even the smile or frown of an employee can be "heard" loud and clear. Disposition is contagious, even over the phone, so make sure your team is stimulating customers' buyer behavior with personable communication and positive temperament.

Living well at work.

It's not just about the inflection in an employee's voice that makes an impression on the customer. If an employee has been sitting in the same position all day, dehydrated and staring at a computer screen, this weariness is going to downgrade the call quality. Exhaustion, restlessness and frustration, just like a smile or frown, can be distinctly detected. Make sure your employees are comfortable, with an option to sit or stand and move freely with headsets. Encourage short bursts of exercise and stretching to revitalize their energy levels and unclutter their minds for clear communication.

Patience makes a difference.

Your call center can get very busy, with call-waiting lights flashing and customers waiting on the hold line. But you must make this clear to your team: Do not rush the customer! Answer every question with diligence. Show your customer that their call counts and their opinion matters. They may just be one of the many people a call center employee speaks to in one day, but they should never feel that way.

Promote flexibility.

A job may feel like a chore, or even a prison sentence on a particularly bad day. Don't give your employees *jobs*. Give them *livelihoods* – emphasis on the "live". Offer flexibility in scheduling and shift hours. Flextime and the option to work from home make all the difference in the world to an employee's happiness and well-being. For example, the employee who feels a bit under the weather but doesn't want to take a sick day would greatly benefit from the opportunity to work from home – maintaining productivity without spreading infection.

This Small Business Trends article makes a powerful argument for flextime and its correlation with improved productivity. Check out this TMCnet article for advice on implementing a flexible shift model with software solutions.

Need inspiration for improving your company culture? Check out the Zappos Family core values. This is an environment that puts employee happiness and well-being on a pedestal, right up there with productivity.

Your Connectivity

Calls that don't drop.

If your call center is riddled with dropped calls, static, delay, jitter, echo and background noise, your customers are going to lose respect for and faith in your business. So it's important to note that while happy employees and personable communication are crucial factors, they make up only *one* side of the equation. The other side is made up of the technical necessities, like a high-speed connection – made possible by a secure, hosted network and sufficient bandwidth – and a powerful phone system fortified by cutting-edge VoIP technology.

Forwarding calls for enhanced flexibility.

The ability to forward calls is crucial for that aforementioned employee flexibility, allowing them to maintain productivity if they need to run an errand or run home for something. But it's also crucial for the customer, who is automatically forwarded to a friendly voice instead of waiting on the hold line.

Monitor, report and improve.

Without efficient reporting, improvement is nearly impossible. The ability to record calls, accept caller ID and have the ability to stay logged into the system is a must-have for call center improvement and training. Monitoring calls for accuracy and efficiency is the foundation of a call center's productivity level.

Room for growth.

When partnering with a telecommunications company, make sure the provider has the resources to manage future expansion. Companies change over time and, hopefully, grow. If you are working with a telecommunications company and phone system that aren't able to grow *with* you, you're not only compromising the opportunity for growth, but you're also risking the cost of implementing a different system at the last minute.

Plan for bad weather.

Plan ahead – another plain and simple piece of advice. Your call center needs to be able to adapt to unfortunate circumstances and tackle hurdles with little hesitation or hiccup. The most renowned type of bad weather incident is a power outage, productivity's worst nightmare. Planning ahead can be as simple as transitioning to analog or transferring calls to mobile devices.

How productive is *your* call center?