Call center management strategies

## **Learn the 10 best ways to improve call center agent job satisfaction in this chapter download from "Call Centers for Dummies."**

*Developing effective call center management strategies includes fostering a positive work environment, and this is necessary for improving employee satisfaction in the call center. This chapter explains how a proactive and understanding call center manager can have a huge impact on call center agents and their work.*

**Tell Them How They're Doing, Often**

Good or bad, people need feedback; it tells them whether they're getting closer to their goals. (I talk more about feedback in Chapter 11.)

In the absence of feedback, agents will be frustrated because they don't know how they're doing or may feel their contribution is unappreciated. Failing to provide sufficient feedback can spoil a lot of your planning and managing.

At a very minimum, feedback tells your agents that you notice them and appreciate what they're doing.

**Remove Roadblocks to Success**

Obstacles occur in almost every endeavor, and your agents are likely to run into lots of them. Obstacles aren't, in themselves, de-motivating for staff; if, however, management does little to help remove these roadblocks, they can become very de-motivating.

Examples of roadblocks might include processes and tools that don't work, customer-unfriendly policies, or unhelpful management.

It doesn't matter how controllable or uncontrollable the roadblock is, if it's not removed it will eventually frustrate your employees. You've got to do something about it — your employees need to see you're trying to improve the situation.

**Remove Fear**

W. Edwards Deming, the famed statistician and business consultant, said that the "Economic cost of fear is appalling...."

Call centers can easily become scary places for employees. The level of accountability is very high, and in an increasingly competitive world the drive for results is only increasing. Poorly trained or bad managers compound the problems of fear.

Fear makes people shut down. It dampens their enthusiasm and prevents innovation and improvement. A lot of good people leave call center jobs because of fear.

Your management team must step in to ensure that hard-working employees need not fear for their jobs. This implies a fair workplace with a strong culture governed by a strong set of values.

You need to adapt policies to ensure accountability goes both ways. Agents are accountable for doing their best and management is accountable for contributing to the agents' success.

Regular (at least monthly) employee opinion surveys are a tool you can implement to ensure that a fear-free culture is maintained. Management should be responsible for the job satisfaction of their staff. Also, exit interviews will help to determine how successfully management is driving out fear.

An appeals process is a very effective way of ensuring that employee rights are maintained and, done well, will go a long way to reducing fear. With an effective appeals process, the frontline agent can appeal any disciplinary action to a panel of peers. The appeals process needs to be well thought out and designed, and staff must be trained to use it.

**Don't Ask Them to Do Anything You Wouldn't Want to Do**

If you can't see yourself doing something, then don't ask your agents to do it — including handling angry customers or making cold calls.

Have your managers do the frontline job from time to time — it's a worthwhile exercise. Some of the very best managers that I've seen will sit down in an agent's seat and say, "Watch me." This is a very fast way to get the respect of your call center agents. It shows that you're willing to do the job and, if you're good, might even give them some tips on how to do the job better.