



Transparency for Outsourcers

February 2016



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Summary

Does outsourcing your contact centre lead to a drop in quality for your customers? Sadly, the answer is usually “yes”. Even the best external operations can’t represent your brand as well as in-house staff. How can you influence the contractor to maintain a high level of customer experience?

Management of outsource vendors is tricky, in part because of a lack of suitable tools and processes. ServeMeBest offers an innovative solution, based on the positive force of Increased transparency.

A practical way to show transparency is the sharing of call recordings, such that callers are given the option to avail of their own copy of a recording. This not only sends a highly positive marketing message, but acts to ensure that telephone care standards are kept high: no long hold times, no getting passed around, no false promises or incorrect information.

Now, the technology exists to make this possible. **Trust+** by ServeMeBest is the world's first call recording platform designed specifically for recording sharing. What's more, it is backed by the **Customer Service Transparency Standard (CSTS)**, a certification programme that indicates compliance with the highest standards of openness in customer care. The (CSTS) is independently audited and certified by AJA Group.

As well as Trust+, the ServeMeBest platform includes **Survey+**, a mobile survey tool that enables short surveys to be dispatched by SMS immediately after a customer call. This provides valuable data on satisfaction levels, which enable an organisation to constantly monitor the outsource contractor performance.

By insisting that vendors implement the ServeMeBest transparency toolset – and get certification – organisations can proactively avert reputational damage, while continuing to avail of the benefits that outsourcing offers.

ServeMeBest cloud services are scalable and quick to deploy. The licensing model is based on usage. With benefits for both companies and outsourced service vendors, the costs can be justified by either party - or shared.

The Pros and Cons of Outsourcing a Contact Centre

There are compelling and valid reasons to outsource your contact centre. Cost, flexibility and scalability are a few of them. The risks are also well known, especially when the contact center is on the other side of the world, with staff unfamiliar with your marketplace and culture. How can you ensure quality of user experience is maintained at a high level?

Picking the right outsource partner is a good start. But even the best have a different set of priorities, and the staff will not be fully in tune with your company culture and business processes. They're not motivated to go the extra mile to really make customers feel valued.

Outsourcing can also lead to a disconnect with customers, especially if it is obvious to the caller that the agent is not a company employee. As well as weakening the customer relationship, it means there are missed opportunities to pick up on customer concerns, ideas for new products or services and other valuable feedback. In-house care staff are more likely to be familiar with company products, and be better prepared to upsell and cross-sell when the chance comes.

In the worst cases, service quality can suffer if staff are poorly trained, badly motivated or if turnover is high. Satisfaction levels fall, customers are lost, complaints stack up. It is not unusual to see organisations reverting to insourcing services, following such bad experiences.

A recent Deloitte report¹ describes how the market has changed: after a shift back to insourcing, outsourcing is growing again, but companies are learning from previous mistakes. Deloitte says companies must build "a strategic vendor management and governance capability". This goes beyond "Managing to the Contract" with enhanced performance management programmes. However, this is a reactive approach: reputational damage from poor service may have already happened. A better approach is to be proactive, and put in place the right tools that act to ensure service quality is consistently high.

¹ Deloitte's 2014 Global Outsourcing & Insourcing Survey

Transparency: A Positive Force in Vendor Management

The Deloitte report makes an interesting observation regarding managing outsourcers: “The market is currently underinvested in the area of vendor management, particularly when it comes to tools, methods, and processes.”

An innovative – and proactive – strategy in vendor management is to insist on a policy of transparency. Why? An organisation that is transparent with its customers is sending a strong message: We trust you, and you can trust us. Transparency shows respect for both customers and staff, and confidence in the quality of services. By insisting that vendors show a commitment to transparency, a company can avert lapses in standards, and protect their reputation.

A good example of practical transparency is chat session sharing. On-line chat is a growing channel for pre and post sales care, and it is common to be offered a transcript of the session afterwards. It's simply a useful feature, to review information, or for verification of a promise.

A logical extension of this is call recording sharing, but this has not so far been done – in part due to absence of suitable technology.

Yet, sharing call recordings is not just a positive marketing statement. It offers tangible benefits that lead to customer retention, enhanced brand value, reduced complaints and a positive financial return.

When contact services are outsourced, transparency in recording is doubly beneficial. As well bringing the above marketing pluses, it acts to ensure service quality is maintained. Knowing that callers have equal access to recordings, staff take care to respond quickly and provide accurate information in a friendly manner. First call resolution increases, customers are happier, and everyone wins.

The Time is Right for Call Transparency

Consumers love the idea of call recording sharing. Now, the technology is ready to make this happen, and new Customer Service Transparency Standard will help early adopters reap the benefits.

Transparency in call recording is more than an innovative marketing tactic. There are forces at work that will make it imperative. A convergence of consumer demand, government regulation and technology availability will bring shared call recording to the customer care sector.

The first force is the increasing assertion of consumer rights, and the response of legislators. Rules vary by State and Country, but the norm is that callers must be notified of call recording, in recognition that the recording will contain their personal data. However, once the recording exists, there is an imbalance of access – if there is a dispute, only the organization that holds the recording has access. EU data directives mandate that callers must be given a transcript of the call on request, but not necessarily the recording.

This does not sit well with consumers. When surveyed, consumers are overwhelming positive to the idea, and it's not just because of dispute resolution. They see practical benefits, with 61% saying they would need to call less often to get questions answered or problems solved. The key finding was the positive impact on perception of the company: 89% say they would have increased trust in a company that offered call recording access and Over 86% say that if a company offered call recording access, that they would recommend the company to friends and family.

Typically, today's call recording systems are not designed with recording sharing in mind. Now, that has changed, with ServeMeBest offering a cloud service specifically designed to make it easy for service providers to share the recording using mobile technology. This removes the technology barrier.

Transparency Brings Benefits for All

Organisations who outsource have a particular incentive to promote transparency in call recording. Shared call recording provides a means to maintain service quality in the service partner, and avert damage to brand reputation.

If an outsource partner pushes back on recording sharing, you should ask why. Is it a telltale sign that the outsourcer knows that their service is not up to standard?

Recording sharing is the enemy of poor quality performers: those who delay, who don't fulfil promises, give incorrect information or are discourteous.

While poor performers may see recording transparency as a threat, the good performers will see the opportunity. In fact, there are positive benefits for all parties, as listed in the table below.

Organisation	Outsource Vendor	Consumer
Maintain quality of customer care	Keep business and generate new business	Respects the right to equality of access
Reduce customer churn and the costs of customer acquisition	Reduce costs associated with repeat calls and disputes	Get a better standard of customer care
Promote innovative marketing message based on quality and trust	Improve quality of service delivery levels	Avail of useful new services
Revenue increase from customer retention	Introduce an innovative service t	Access call recordings to confirm information
Monitor and compare customer satisfaction level	Enhance performance by participation in transparency awards programme	Feel valued and respected as a customer
Enhance brand reputation		
Reduce customer care operational costs		
Develop personalized mobile engagement strategy		

The ServeMeBest Services

ServeMeBest is focused on innovation in services that bring transparency to customer care. The services can be deployed by any organization of any size that offers customer service by phone.

They are of particular benefit when the brand owner is one step removed from the customer, due to a franchise or outsource model.

What do you need?	Product		
	Trust+	Survey+	Promotion+
New service to support voice & IVR services	✓	✓	✓
Build personalized mobile engagement	✓	✓	✓
Increase trust in your brand	✓	✓	
Maintain quality of channel & outsourced contact services	✓	✓	
Gather instant feedback		✓	
Convert on-hold time to multi-media marketing			✓

In practical terms, transparency means showing respect for customers, and building trust. That's why the flagship ServeMeBest product is called **Trust+**. It's a ground-breaking call recording service with the unique ability to share recordings with the caller. As a standalone cloud service, it does not have any impact on current recording system. It uses IVR, SMS and the web to conveniently and securely offer callers the option to receive a link to a copy of a customer care call recording.

The call recording offer is included in the IVR welcome that callers hear when they call the contact centre. If the caller elects to receive a copy of the recording, their mobile number is captured. The call is then routed via the Trust+ recording service using standard telephony protocols. After the call, the caller receives an SMS with the link to the call recording, and can play or download the recording.

Service providers can access the Trust+ service via a secure web interface, and perform functions such as playing recordings and resending links to callers.

Built on the same platform, **Survey+** is also designed to enhance trust, by enabling concise mobile survey deployment immediately after an interaction. It is designed to offer concise post-contact surveys via SMS and the mobile web. It can be deployed as a standalone solution or as a plug-in to Trust+.

A third service, **Promotion+**, enables the service provider to show respect for callers by not subjecting them to endless and repetitive in-call marketing. Instead, it enables callers to take the option to receive offers as mobile marketing messages. Promotional messages can be easily and frequently changed, to keep the experience fresh.

To maximize the marketing potential of transparency, ServeMeBest has developed a **Customer Service Transparency Certification (CSTS)** programme, independently audited by AJA, a global registrar.



For the first time, organizations who implement transparent processes, such as call recording sharing, can attain independent third party certification, and display the Certified Transparent mark. The standard is administered by AJA, with offices in 34 countries worldwide. AJA is a member of Praxity, the world's largest Alliance of independent accountancy firms.

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