

Contact Center Leadership Series

When “Good” Performance Isn’t -- The peril of positive metrics

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We in the contact center industry measure *everything*. **Everything**. *Every. Thing.*

We measure everything that can be measured, at least around agent performance. Which would be spectacularly great if agents weren’t people *first*, agents *second*.

Sometimes we forget that. We forget that agents are just like us, only with different roles.

Not intentionally, mind you. We just sometimes get so wrapped up—so absorbed—in measuring, tracking and managing to those damned metrics that we forget that our agents are regular, normal people (well, *most* of them), with moods, emotions, desires and lives outside of the contact center.



They have challenges, problems, joys, successes and failures in their lives, not just at work but *everywhere*—with family, friends, at home, school, etc. We recruit them—actively—to participate in our business journey; to help us provide services that continue to provide solutions and grow our profitability. And we spend a lot of effort and resources on *retaining* them as well.

But how well do we *know* them?

Some are just “passing through,” using their agent experience as a stepping stone or a stopover on the path to something else, completely outside this industry or focus.

Others like the simplicity of learning a job, doing it well, and avoiding the pressures that can come with other industries and roles that experience frequent, structural changes. They just want to “be an agent.” They’ll do a good job for us, and expect reasonable rewards for that effort.



Finally, there are those agents who really want to grow and develop. Maybe with *you*, maybe *elsewhere*, but they'll put in the effort and put up with your crap to make sure their performance is solid; they are sponges for all your efforts to develop and mentor.

Regardless of which type of person each agent may be, they are still a *person* first and an *agent* second.

Which means that frequently, *metrics just don't matter*. Or at least those metrics don't matter *until agents know that **they** matter*.

Oh, I get it. We need those metrics—on aggregate—to successfully manage a contact center. And sometimes, one or two metrics make up our core value proposition. I get that. And I don't disagree.

But you don't necessarily need them to *lead people*. And leading people is precisely what creates discretionary effort (that effort *above and beyond* required), engagement and loyalty, to either a specific leader or the company at large.

Managing metrics can't do that.

So, to phrase a bit differently... you can have satisfactory metrics and still be a lousy leader getting mediocre *overall* results. The opposite, however, is seldom accurate: a positive, motivating leader almost always has successful, positive metrics.

Go figure.

Manage *metrics*, lead *people*. People don't want to be managed via metrics; they want to be led by an engaging leader. Think about it, as that applies to you as well. As a business manager, you don't want your sole feedback to be a 10-minute discourse from an income statement. Those metrics are important, but



they aren't the do-all, end-all for leadership success.

Lead well, and those agents will ensure you get those metrics you seek. And they'll

do it because they *want* to, not because you reminded me, coached me, counseled me, and QA-feedback'ed me into doing it against my will.

Agents aren't all that interested in your near-rabid pursuit of lower AHT, reduced Abandon Rates, First Call Resolution and better Occupancy.

They just want your empathy, your understanding, and your leadership direction through credibility and vision. They want you to communicate with them frequently and accurately.

They want to trust you, give and receive feedback, and learn how good a leader can be.

They want your *leadership*.

So, lead already. The metrics will still be there, and you'll be surprised at your success.

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