

International Associate of Reservation Executives
First Annual Southeast U.S. Regional Meeting
Continental Airlines Reservations Center, Tampa, Florida
Monday, October 21, 2002

Attending:

Anne Wright, Manager, Reservations Revenue Programs-Continental Airlines
Bard Chodera, Vice President, Sales & Marketing- Willow CSN Incorporated
Ben Brewster, Director American Communication Center-Trust International
Bertha Espinosa, Director-Reservation Sales Miami-Carnival Cruise Lines
Charmayne Periera, Manager of Training- Continental Airlines
Donna Meadows, Sales and Service Manager, Continental Airlines
Fred Cannon, Director of Reservations-AirTran Airways
Gini Hogenson, Manager of Reservation Services- SunStream Hotels & Resorts
Greg Sipe, Senior Analyst Staffing- Continental Airlines
Karla Reynolds, Vice President, Relationship Management-Willow CSN Incorporated
Keith Brender, Vice President, Customer Communications- ANC Rental Corp.
Luis Gerena, Director Business Development, South East-Willow CSN Incorporated
Mike Foster, Director-Boca Call Center-ANC Rental Corp.
Mitzi White, Director-Reservation Sales, Miramar- Carnival Cruise Lines
Vince Fulghum, Manager Planning & Finance, Reservations-AirTran Airways

Meeting Minutes:

Keith Brender opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. with the anti trust statement.

The goal of the meeting was to identify / discuss creative staffing solutions.

Continental Airlines hosted the meeting and provided a tour of their reservation facility.

Bard Chodera of Willow CSN provided an overview of their remote agent solution.

Anne Wright of Continental Airlines facilitated the ideas forum.

The discussion centered around the following:

TODAY....WE ARE HERE:

Contact centers in general face the following:

Turnover

Call spikes – resulting in massive hiring

Low to marginal morale

Not enough agents to handle calls daily

How to handle 2 different shifts without service levels falling

Not enough people available at the end of the day

Lack of Spanish agents who can articulate produce / service to customers

Cannot retain agents after training

What We Need To Do Is

IDENTIFY THE PROCESS.....

1. Identify why are we having this problem
2. Know what the problem is
3. Look for the root cause – why are we having this problem
4. Identify a solution

We Should Manage Our Opportunities / Problems By....

LOOKING FOR THE ROOT CAUSE

One suggestion was to look at the problem in 30 minute increments.....
not at the end of the day.

Challenge: How to manage abandon rates during the day?

Possible solution.... Focus only on the service level – not on the abandon rate

Some Options to Consider:

- Have agents take regularly scheduled breaks throughout the day
- Cross utilization of agents
- In source within departments
- Outsource support services
- Do not prompt all customers if agents are available
- Use call routers to define calls
- Use hold messages to direct customers to the internet
- Let agents run errands in between shifts
- Let agents listen to call pre /post training to eliminate concerns
- Contact people who left on good terms to offer employment
- Offer \$.25 - \$.50 raise during time when agents normally tender their resignation
- Started program with South Carolina For The Blind.
 - State pays for all accommodations, support & equipment.
- Find things that motivate your agents – ask them for feedback
- Use handicapped agents
- Contact local high schools that have summer programs for students (work 10 hours during the week & are evaluated in the summer). Some students become full time employees.
- During slow times, have agents do mailings and respond to email as a cost reduction measure.
 - Swap Board offers agents opportunity to get their shift filled on their own, without management's involvement
- Hire senior citizens – they make the best agents and have a great work ethic
- Willow CSN- great flexibility with no benefits or training costs
 - Virtual agents keep skill levels higher.

In Summary

Call centers in the future will have to tap many sources to find agents. At this time, Human Resource departments are not concerned with the labor pool. The next 10 years will bring the largest problem due to the baby boomers retiring. Employees will make their decisions on where to work, based on life style related decisions. The organization that offers “scheduling flexibility” will win.

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