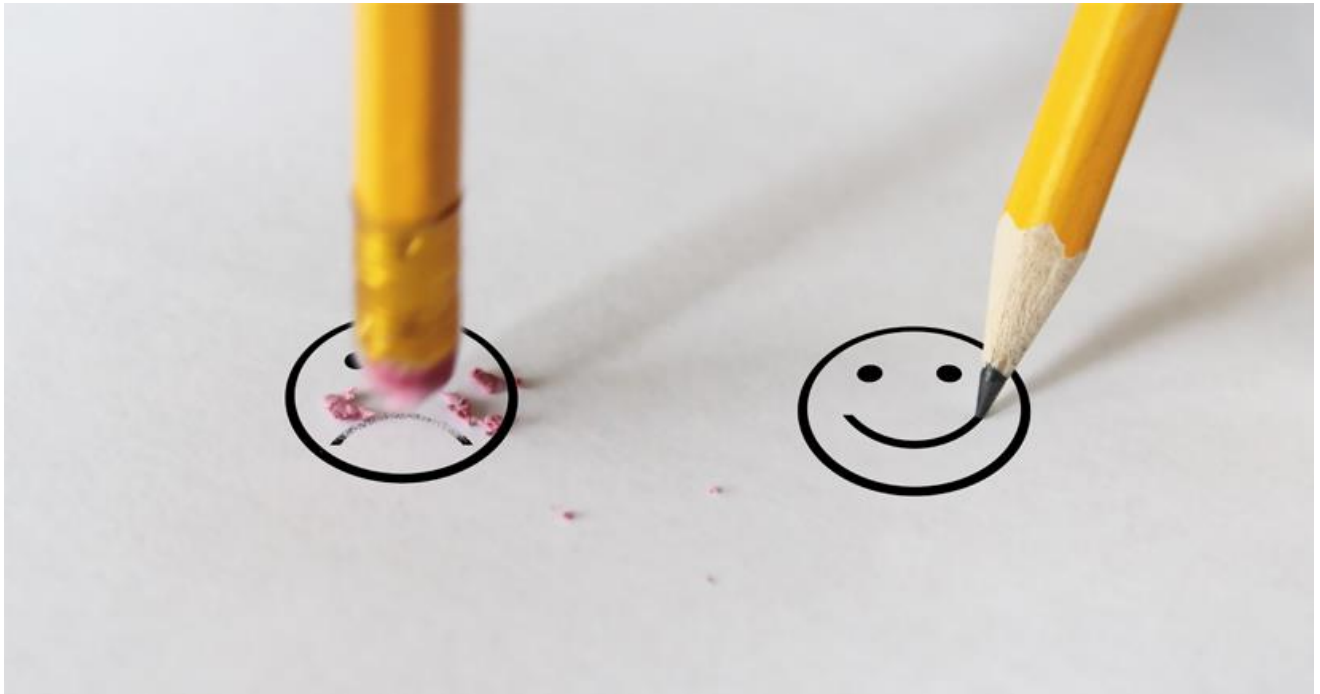


What is First Call Resolution?



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First call resolution has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. People value efficient service very highly in their rating of a company, and resolving a call on the first phone-in will go a long way to improving that rating as well as your company's brand and reputation.

By training your call center agents to get it right first time, customers are likely to keep coming back. First call resolution not only has an impact on customer satisfaction but on customer retention as well.

There are several ways you can improve first call resolution in your call center:

1. Promote Total Contact Ownership

Total contact ownership is a concept that requires sufficient training of your agents that makes them unlikely to reroute the call and pass the problem or query onto another agent. Having explained their issue to one agent, customers dislike being rerouted and having to explain it all again to someone else.

Total contact ownership encourages agents to take responsibility for resolving the initial call from start to finish. This may mean having to collaborate with more knowledgeable agents to get the correct answer, but the frontline agent stays in the picture and remains connected with the customer. Customers do not feel that they have been passed from pillar to post even though they are put on hold for a while, which increases your customer satisfaction.

2. Implement IVR and Skills-based Call Routing

An [Interactive Voice Response](#) (IVR) system is designed to gather enough information on a customer's needs right at the front-end of the call so that it can be routed to the sector of your call center that is best qualified to deal with that issue. This eliminates customer frustration at being transferred from one department to another.

Skills-based call routing works closely with your IVR system. Through a system of sub-menus, the nature of a call can be pinpointed even further and routed to an agent that is specifically qualified or trained to resolve it without the need for assistance.

3. Implement Broad-based Training for Call Center Agents

To increase the chances of your customers being assisted successfully on the first call, your agents should be trained to have a broad base of knowledge to be able to answer any query or resolve any issue. The more training the agent receives, the more knowledgeable and confident they become when dealing with customers.

Customers need to get the feeling that the information they're being given is correct. Any lack of confidence on the part of your agent will be picked up by the customer, which may result in them disbelieving the communication and going elsewhere to resolve their issue.

4. Reward Agent Performance

Foster a culture of first call resolution in your call center. Firstly, your agents should be trained in the importance of resolving an issue on the first call and how it impacts company reputation, customer satisfaction and ultimately job retention through company growth.

Implement an agent reward program for first call resolution. Most employees crave recognition for a job well done. A reward program will fulfill this need and instill an element of healthy competition among your call center agents.

5. Create an Online Knowledge Base

Another way in which you can improve your first call resolution is to identify common customer queries and concerns. By posting the answers to these in an online knowledge base, customers can be encouraged to access the internet to resolve their issues without having to wait in line on a phone call.

This action will reduce your call volumes and customer waiting time. Your agents can then be given broad-based training that will enable them to deal with most concerns at first call.

6. Encourage Feedback from Agents

Call center management can only be improved by knowing what's happening on the ground. Your agents should be encouraged to provide feedback on customer queries and concerns that keep recurring. This may enable you to identify issues that need to be included in your online knowledge base to assist customers without the need for a call.

Any call center management system should be flexible enough to facilitate changes in operation. Agents in one specialty sector of your call center may consistently be getting calls that are not within their ability to resolve. This results in unnecessary call rerouting and customer frustration. By encouraging agent feedback, you may highlight the need to change the routing configuration of your call management system software.

7. Conduct Call Analytics

Analysis of calls will help you to identify many issues that need to be resolved. These may involve a re-design of the call handling capabilities of your call center management system or highlight the need for further staff training.

Call analytics helps you to debug your system. Data can be derived from various sources, including agents, call logs, call recordings and customer survey responses. Ongoing data analysis will pick up any inefficiencies in your system, highlight knowledge gaps and identify training opportunities.

8. Install Sophisticated [Call Center Software](#)

- A call center management system is only as good as the software enables it to be. Install call center software that:
- Incorporates skills-based routing. This enables a call to be routed to the right department for resolution.
- Has the capability to automate ticket generation and the updating of information. Accurate, real-time information about callers will help your agents to resolve concerns the first time.
- Provides a history of a repeat caller that pops up on an agent's screen when the call is answered. This proactive step will help the agent to understand the historical issues that the customer has raised and facilitated a faster, more skillful and more professional response.

9. Configure Your Support Structure Correctly

If calls cannot be solved by your frontline agents, it is essential that you configure your support structure so that any escalated call is sent to the right department. It may not be cost-effective to train your frontline agents to deal adequately with every call that comes in off their own bat.

Your frontline call center agents may only be skilled enough to handle basic issues. It is important that you have a streamlined support structure in place that enables agents to communicate with other personnel who are more skilled at solving specific concerns.

The importance of first call resolution cannot be overemphasized. If customers have to repeatedly call in to resolve an issue they become increasingly frustrated. This leads to customer dissatisfaction, loss of business and potential damage to your company's reputation.