FCR…Is Your Customer First or an Afterthought?

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First Contact Resolution (FCR) is the holy grail of contact centers. It's arguably the most powerful key performance indicator (KPI) for a center, and certainly the "hottest." Service level (SL) and customer satisfaction (cSat) are contenders – one focusing on efficiency and the other on effectiveness. But FCR addresses what your customers really want – *resolution* with the *first* interaction. And yet it can be hard to define, much less achieve.

Strategy, Strategy, Strategy

Without an FCR strategy, nothing else matters. Strategy focuses your attention on customers and their experiences. It directs your attention on *all* forms of contact – phone, email, web, and mobile. It covers *all* of the teams that contribute to sales and service excellence – e.g., contact center, marketing, product development, distribution, etc. *[There is no way to effectively address external customer issues if the internal teams aren't collaborating on resolution and continuous improvement!]* FCR strategy elevates visibility on end-to-end processes that create efficient interactions. And it establishes the roadmap that prompts the organization to do the right things for actionable results.

FCR strategy affects everything in a center. It demands that each channel be staffed with the optimal skills, headcount, and schedule. It has something to say about how you route contacts and to whom you route them. It guides your initial and ongoing training plans for interaction handling. It drives resource development to provide information enabling quick contact resolution. It motivates you to align your quality monitoring (QM) and voice of customer (VoC) data to ensure that your internal assessment of performance lines up with customers' perceptions.

Organizations that take FCR seriously set a place for the customer at their decision tables. We've seen a significant increase in executive titles that focus on measuring and improving interactions with customers – e.g., Chief Customer Officer, Chief Customer Advocate, Chief Conversation Officer, and Chief Interaction Executive. Customer champions are pervasive in the contact center as well. All of these folks focus on the customer experience rather than their company's internal hoops, hurdles or dysfunctions. FCR is driving this evolution.

The evolution doesn't stop there. Visibility has increased on the customers' Level of Effort (LOE) and how it influences their perception of FCR. A companion metric – Reduction in Customer Effort (RICE) – gives rise to initiatives that positively influence FCR.

Is FCR Really Worth Pursuing?

As you think about pursuing FCR, you may see dollar signs on top of the challenges in getting organizational collaboration and process changes. If you think you can't afford the time, money and resources to focus this much on your customer, *think again*. The investments you will make reap rewards in both cost savings and revenue increases – both of which contribute to making it a popular metric. Customers obviously benefit from the great service they'll receive. Study after study has shown that good service encourages loyalty, which of course adds to revenue. Technology is a key enabler for FCR and delivers tangible ROI. Streamlined desktops enhance operational efficiency, and knowledge tools elevate responsiveness and consistency. Training and access to subject matter experts are both investments that

can help resolve a contact quickly and close a sale. These are just a few examples of the benefits from the focus on and investments in FCR.

Start simple…but start now!

Where are you in your FCR quest? What's holding you back? They say the first step is the hardest, so start where you can have the greatest customer impact. Four steps and you'll be on your way:

1. Establish an FCR strategy – keep it simple, so you can get going
2. Start with your highest usage channel (likely calls) with an eye toward your next steps with other channels
3. Read up on ways to measure FCR and enabling technologies
4. Develop a plan to pursue FCR in your center, addressing people, process and technology

Your customers and staff will thank you!