

Don't Keep U.S. Waiting

Americans are more impatient than the rest of the world with CSRs; first call-resolution rates and personalizing experiences are important.

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Americans are the most impatient when dealing with a contact center and are quicker to abandon calls than consumers in the rest of the world, according to Dimension Data's latest report. "The Global Contact Center Benchmarking Report" is an annual report that surveys industry representatives from 369 contact centers located across 35 countries and five continents over the past five months.

Callers in North America were more likely to abandon calls more quickly, and Americans wait an average of 37 seconds for their calls to be answered. The rest of the world exhibits greater patience--consumers in EMEA are willing to wait 67 seconds before abandoning a call; people in Asia-Pacific are the most patient, at 72 seconds. The report also revealed that North American consumers like email interaction. Globally, one in 10 interactions handled in the contact center are via email. According to the report, North American centers have 150 percent more email interactions than other parts of the world. Additionally, wait time averages 11 hours for an email response in North America, which is the shortest worldwide; Europeans will wait 25 hours; consumers in Asia-Pacific will wait 28 hours.

Incidentally, impatience could play to a consumer's advantage as corporations work to pacify disgruntled consumers during the high volume holiday season, says Cara Diemont, editor of the study. With contact center agents better equipped to help consumers, many companies are allowing agents to make financial decisions on pricing, special deliveries, and refunds to help resolve a customer's problem. About three quarters, 73 percent, of North American companies are willing to let agents make decisions with financial consequences, according to the report. "As companies give contact center agents more autonomy and authority to win customers over to hit customer service goals, this holiday season may deliver the best-ever customer service levels," Diemont says.

According to Diemont, there are best practices companies should consider for their contact centers. Agents should attempt to improve first call resolution rates. The report revealed organizations can take three times as long (21.6 hours) to resolve calls that are handed off to functions outside of the contact center than if the problem is resolved within the contact center (6.5 hours). Second, about 30 percent of contact center personalization depends on what campaign the contact center is running and what value the customer represents to the organization. Seventeen percent of the contact centers surveyed personalize their approach for high-value customers. "In general, the more valuable a customer is to a company, the better the service," Diemont says. "Loyal customers can mean more loyal service."