

# Agent empowerment: replacing CSat pressures with AI

Contact centres are reaching a crossroads: chatbots and automation have helped reduce demand but their impact is plateauing as remaining queries become more complex to automate. On the other hand, CSat and NPS have equally never been under so much pressure as human agents are left to handle evermore complex tasks in a market where customer expectations continue to rise.

This paper sets out the key issues affecting the use of CSat surveys in contact centres and suggests ways that customer agents can be empowered by, and more fairly measured by, the use of AI.

## The issues with CSat surveys in contact centres

The vast majority of contact centres keep track of this by using CSat surveys after each interaction with the agent. There are many issues with this: Firstly the surveys are rarely completed at all and when they are, they are completed very subjectively. One person's 8 is not the same as another's. More concerningly this just puts more pressure on agents to gamify the system to try to plead with customers directly or indirectly to give them a 10 (or whatever the top of the scale is).

So now you have a situation on the shop floor where agents receive a few CSat surveys per week, sometimes with comments, and their remuneration, let alone their morale and motivation, hangs off the back of this patchy data.

It is not surprising that attrition in the industry remains one of the highest of any job: according to research conducted by The Quality Assurance & Training Connection (QATC), the average annual turnover rate for agents in US contact centres ranges between 30-45 percent, which is more than double the average for all occupations in the US. The highest rates were for outsourced contact centres and the larger in house ones. This turnover means high costs for recruiting, training and lost productivity. Worse, the diminished morale of staff has a knock-on effect towards the interactions with customers, driving CSat lower.

The root causes are often cited as lack of recognition, dealing with negative or abusive calls and repetitive work. Imagine being shouted and sworn at for something that isn't your fault.

Ironically much of the processes and KPIs designed to improve productivity end up treating agents like machines rather than celebrating their human qualities. So how can this be fixed? Is this the best it can get?

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## The ideal: Analysing each conversation, in context



The answer to this conundrum is actually staring most contact centre managers in the face: if all the conversations themselves could be analysed accurately for detailed topic and sentiment, then it could be shown that in a particular context a particular agent did 'well' whatever the outcome. For example if the incoming topic was one that was always emotive for a customer, or the customer had tried three previous times to resolve it, then the agent is on a 'hiding-to-nothing' in terms of outcome and there may be very little that even the best agent can do to turn this situation around. In a different situation, there might be a few things that the agent can do to get the customer from 'Ow to Wow'. If agents were recognised and rewarded for how well they performed, rather than each call then instead of going home in tears to their partner after an abusive call, then they can gamify and be proud of their performance in the face of adversity. Sounds simple right? So what's holding things back. The central one is the data: measuring the detailed topics and sentiment automatically throughout an interaction is claimed by many but it is hard.

## How AI can make every call measurable

There is now a class of self-adapting machine learning available which is making every call, chat and email (and even every chatbot interaction) measurable in terms of how it went, as well as how well the agent did i.e. against the propensity of the particular issue and customer state at the beginning of the interaction. One such provider is Warwick Analytics which is used by enterprises in finance, gaming, telco, transportation and other sectors to provide detailed, actionable insights from each and every interaction, for the benefit of the contact centre and the agents too.

Duncan White is the CEO of Horizon2, a partner of Warwick Analytics. He explained:

*"We were working with a telco that had some processes that meant that certain calls and chats relied on external partners for resolution and so were never going to be resolved within the call. Advanced analytics helped us to measure the CSat propensity of each interaction and therefore to evaluate how the agent did against a benchmark. Significant additional credits could then be provided for taking hard calls and handling them well irrespective of the resolution. This meant that the agent could always gain recognition (as well as increased remuneration) and feel good about their work even when they were dealing with irate customers in difficult circumstances. It made a dramatic difference to staff behaviour and their approach to these contacts resulting in a huge improvement in overall NPS of the client and reduced staff attrition."*

## Contextual Success

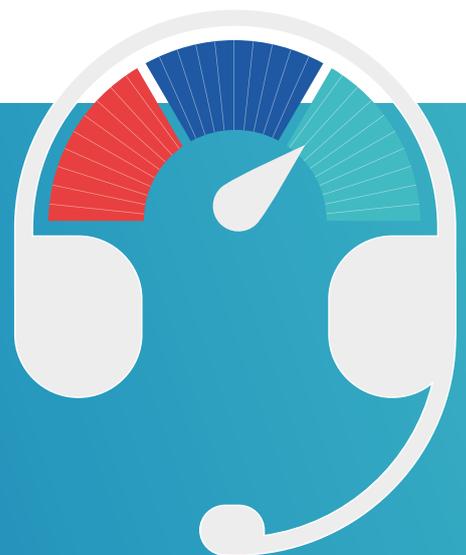
Warwick Analytics and others like them have pioneered this field as 'Contextual Success' and scoring metrics can easily be added to the agents' and coaches' dashboards.

Dan Somers, the CEO of Warwick Analytics explains:

*"Most humans turn up to work each day to do a good job. If you make it easy for them to feel that way then it will be a more fulfilling role for them, and by consequence the whole organisation. The agents are the front-line of the organisations' brand. It is surprising to see some companies spend vast sums of money on their brand whilst accepting the status quo of low agent morale and high turnover. We need to celebrate these heroes"*.

The Horizon2 case study mentioned in this paper was a result of the Warwick Analytics 'Agent Booster Pack'. Warwick Booster Packs are quick to install (think days, not months) and give you fast, easy wins from your customer data. Results are guaranteed and usually within 4 weeks from installing the pack. Other packs include NPS Booster Pack, RFT Booster Pack and AHT Booster Pack.

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