

Editorial

Dear Reader,



welcome to the summer edition of ECCCO News.

Now it's time to relax and to refill your energy and so this ECCCO News are a little bit smaller than the previous ones.

But it's also the right time to read about possible future trends for call center organization. A very interesting round table talk with Philip Vanhoutte, Thomas Dehler and Hartmut Beyer about the virtualization of contact centers.

How to change waiting queues into great customer service is the topic of Jürgen Walther, Marketing Director of ECCCO's new silver sponsor CreaLog.

And last but not least some good arguments by Peter Jonas for a call center certification according to EN 15838.

After a hopefully beautiful summer we should be well prepared for one or more of these numerous events in autumn.

So I hope you will find some interesting and new information and you will enjoy it. Wish you a good time and beautiful holidays

Yours faithfully

Manfred Stockmann
Vice-President ECCCO

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Roundtable

Contact Center of the Future: Only a home office?

With Plantronics, VALUE5 and Sabienzia three companies have joined together to an alliance, which wants to move fundamentals in customer dialogue market - their objective: The virtualization of contact centers.

with other modules like CRM from the cloud does not always work. Plantronics is a partner in this Alliance, because they share our vision of Call Center of the future and is already lived. And because we also looked for a partner, with whom



f.l.: Philip Vanhoutte, Thomas Dehler, Hartmut Beyer, Kai-Werner Fajga

a technical cooperation is possible in the medium and long term. For example consider a fully certified home office, in which all technical equipment and software components are reviewed and coordinated - and are available almost as trusted and compliant shared service offer.



**Three companies—
one objective:
The virtualization of
contact centers.**

ECCCO: Why did you become an alliance together?

Dehler: Together with Sabienzia we developed a new platform in 2010, which enables up to a single working place spatially distributed operation of call centers including important factors such as presence- and quality management, output control or IT security management in one solution. Other providers limit here mainly on the use of a network-ACD to distribute calls, a coherent integration

ECCCO: Who provides the desktop PC in such a line-up?

Beyer: Here one has to adopt in principle a piece of the idea of conventional office staff:
A classic phone is now barely needed for the establishment of a decentralized workplace. It is now more important to make the employee's existing hardware available. This communication takes place via IP-based solutions with assured use of existing PC hardware.

Roundtable

Vanhoutte: The art of such solutions is no longer a problem. We have been working for seven years, with cloud-based technologies, since five years we use soft phones in conjunction with a wireless headset instead of conventional phones. So we are talking about call center with no phone and no cable connections, where people can move freely. Technically, almost anything is possible today. What one must realize however is that customers who calling the call center want to speak with a human. The requirements here today are other than two or three years ago. Callers have a question, a need or suffering. And they do not just want a competent answer. They expect a real person at the other end of the line, who understands them and responds to all inquiries as relaxed as possible. So a kind of "ideal concept" for us was: Why we do not allow our employees equipped with an iPad, softphone and headset to make calls from their own garden, while they are lying relaxed in their deck chair under a tree? Of course this is not the idea that we want to propagate as worth pursuing in any case. But it will help to shake up decision makers and to demonstrate that technology is no longer a problem today.

ECCCO: What do you exactly want to achieve with your alliance?

Vanhoutte: Our companies are working a long time with cloud technologies.

We live this every day in our organizations. And together we were so fascinating that we want to stimulate the way for other companies on "Smarter Working". Here we do not speak only in the area of contact centers about a new management philosophy that returns more freedom, space and time to the employees, but that generally provides the company an impulse to economize more sustainably, and to conserve our planet's resources considerably.

ECCCO: How got Plantronics the idea to implement "Smarter Working"?

Vanhoutte: Out of the call center practice. Some time ago we have started a six-month experiment in which one half of a call center team, including the management should work from the home office and only use a maximum of three days per week at his "normal" workplace. The result of this project was that with a new management philosophy, the appropriate staff training and technical equipment it was a complete success. The project was implemented in its entirety and without any problems. The most important finding of the project was: Is management ready for this step? Is it ready to open the door of the cage? It is only when management understands its control functions new and organizes the architecture of its call center newly, such a project can be successfully implemented. This simply outmoded ways of thinking



Philip Vanhoutte., Managing Director - Europe, Middle East and Africa at Plantronics www.plantronics.com

„Technically, almost anything is possible today.“

Philip Vanhoutte

plantronics
Simply Smarter Communications™

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must be given up and beaten path be left. Not for nothing call center operators have difficulties to get new staff. Old Style Call Center with hamster cages as workplaces have become obsolete. You can also put it more simply: Change the work environment, inspire your employees, then they will delight your customers!

ECCCO: Can the model as simple be transferred to other companies?

Dehler: We are already practicing this form of work for 8 years and have been able to gain rich experience in all aspects of remote workstations. Again and again I experience that the change in management is the biggest hurdle, because you have to give off competences and to rethink. The skeptics have to take their concerns. The usual normal mode of operation for project managers in the contact center is to put pressure by site optimization metrics to achieve goals with agents. In the decentralized call center it is more about an orchestration of independent working dialogue manager. Here the self-employed take a look in their own interest at their own personal economics, which seeks to turn the sum of the project cost. And our people cannot imagine it not at all more to work in a traditional call center.

ECCCO: Why only a few service providers pursue this model?

Dehler: That would be a question that should be asked to a conventional services provider. I guess on the one hand certainly, because they do not know it and because courage or base is missing to go a revolutionary way. On the other hand certainly quite simply from stubborn ignorance for new, when the resistance of conventions agrees to folk-thinking process: We have done so yesterday, so we keep up making it today. And because one does not dare to jump over the own location-shadow.

ECCCO: Where do you see a starting point that could spur a rethink?

Beyer: Apart from the necessary rethinking of the management, of course, quite clearly in the cost! Everywhere call center operators have a hard time finding new workers. And especially in structurally weak regions it's a fact that employees have to take long trips into account. It is obvious that both sides will win here, if they use "Smarter Work": The employer saves on operating costs for real estates and office workplaces. He also can offer shorter and more flexible working hours, which makes him more attractive. The employee especially saves costs for gasoline and car expenses. And in addition he gains more leisure and flexibility because routes to work may be omitted and work hours may be coordi-



Thomas Dehler, CEO
Value 5 GmbH
www.value5.com

„The skeptics have to take their concerns.“

Thomas Dehler



Roundtable

nated individually. This can be in terms of new working time models open up new opportunities.

ECCCO: You want to offer your employees more flexibility while as a contact center operator you quickly have to take countermeasures at times of overload and less workload. How much more flexible employees should be to work in this business model?

Dehler: I want to preface that I consider a hybrid solution, a mixture of stationary and distributed virtual call center for the best theoretical and practical of all possible solutions. In a pure virtual call center our staff let us know about their likely availability in advance, and then - and on demand - we are planning them. We look at each which employee may or should be scheduled in which project; where it makes sense to use him or her at all. Our staff are all thinking independently and entrepreneurially, which means that they will make on its own even 20 or more hours voluntarily in a project, in which they were probably booked for 10 hours, and in which now suddenly an overload, a peak alarm - and thus a direct, personal sales boost occurs. It's in their own interest. When a downturn alarm comes, employees can log out accordingly. The special in the cloud-solution is the fast response time in all respects, because we make it, with a setup time of 3 minutes,

to respond systematically and organizationally to unplanned call volume. So for incoming, unplanned order entries. Therefore, I like to say provocative "Planning replaces coincidence with error". The art in a high quality service is to provide companies a breathing and responsiveness to customer needs. Planning remains forecast. The reality indicates whether and how much capacity will be needed. We have chosen the approach of flexibility of the staff in the cloud even under flexibility aspects; rather this approach provides the advantage that you can find the relevant employees anywhere and basically better.



Hartmut Beyer, CEO
Sabienzia GmbH
www.sabienzia.com

The roundtable was part of this year's Call Center World hosted by Plantronics in Berlin. The panelists were Philip Vanhoutte, Managing Director - Europe, Middle East and Africa at Plantronics, Hartmut Beyer, CEO of Sabienzia and Thomas Dehler, CEO of VALUE5. The interviewer was Kai-Werner Fajga, chief editor of TeleTalk.

„It is now more important to make the employee's existing hardware available.“

Hartmut Beyer



This interview is reprinted with kindly permission of TeleTalk Magazine.

Interview

Transform paid waiting time into great Customer Service

4 hints for contact centers:

It's an open-and-shut case in Germany. Charging for the time while callers are waiting on-hold is now taboo. The appropriate regulations are set forth in the new Telecommunications Act, scheduled to go into effect September 1st, translating EU directives into national law. The transitional arrangements and exceptions set forth in this revised legislation will cause considerable headaches, especially for call center operators. Those are exactly the people for whom the following four hints are intended. They are provided by Jürgen Walther, marketing director at CreaLog, the Munich-based specialist for call center solutions.

ECCCO: What actions would you advise call center operators to take? How can they respond to the new regulations so that service quality does not suffer?

Jürgen Walther: First and foremost, it is primarily a matter of avoiding non-productive waiting periods for callers on the phone! That is why the effective and energetic use of **voice self services** is the starting point for my first hint. Our unequivocal opinion in this regard: interactive voice response systems, no matter offering partially or fully automated services, expand calling capacity! In contact centers serving a number of industries, CreaLog interactive voice response sys-

tems have long ensured that callers are "pre-segmented" to eliminate the waiting period. There are no annoying queues since the voice portal always has lines free and sufficient capacity to take inbound calls, even during peak load periods. That's something a call center can hardly do. It can not afford to deploy additional agents to absorb fluctuating call volumes. Using interactive voice response systems, by contrast, makes it possible to complete many kinds of transactions, in many fields, at any time day or night. This would include, for instance, placing orders, getting rail or bus schedules, an address change, reporting service interruptions to public utilities, and fully automated transfers in telephone banking. This is all without question more cost-effective and, at the same time, boosts service quality.

ECCCO: According to the new German law, personal service by an agent and an interactive voice response may be considered equivalent. What can a voice portal do in this context to absorb traffic peaks in call centers?

Jürgen Walther: I could title my answer: "call-back management". Here it is in fact a question of significantly reducing traffic peaks with intelligent control of call-backs! If during peak loads an agent is not available within a set time, then the voice portal spots and records



Jürgen Walther
Marketing Director
CreaLog

Article 8, Paragraph 5

Formal requirements for distance contracts

Without prejudice to paragraph 4, if the trader makes a telephone call to the consumer with a view to concluding a distance contract, he shall, at the beginning of the conversation with the consumer, disclose his identity and, where applicable, the identity of the person on whose behalf he makes that call, and the commercial purpose of the call.

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the caller's identification and what the caller needs. It is important here to ask, using speech recognition, exactly when the caller wishes the call to be returned, and to ask for the phone number and specifics of the request. The information is analyzed and forwarded to the agent in the appropriate skills group. This keeps the customer from having to wait, regardless of whether gratis or for a fee, and guarantees a reliable, punctual call-back at a later time.

ECCCO: Among the familiar functions typical for an IVR system are segmenting and identifying the caller – either by way of the Caller-ID or using a voice portal. Don't these functions offer call center operators even broader options, particularly with a view toward the gratis waiting queue?

Jürgen Walther: That's exactly right. And that's the basis for my third hint. It's called "**customer segmentation**". It also serves a clearly defined objective, namely to serve premium customers without delay! That is certainly feasible. If the customers are listed in the database together with certain categories, such as "A", "B" and "C" customers, then our voice portal can route and serve them accordingly. High-revenue customers, in particular, are connected immediately with their accustomed agent or with sales management. In the other segments, the

voice portal offers voice self services to the callers or informs on alternative means of communications, like e-mail. Or the system will ask if an agent may return the call, if all the operators are busy at the moment, as mentioned before.

ECCCO: You have emphasized again and again that CreaLog solutions make a considerable contribution to eliminating waiting queues. Can a call center also undertake "preventive" action?

Jürgen Walther: That's entirely possible. Here the call center takes the initiative, proactively, before the customer even thinks about calling. We refer to this as "**predictive outbound**". In practice it might look like this: The computer goes down in a retail chain's logistics center or a newspaper publisher's delivery trucks get stuck in the snow. The lines to the company's call center soon start sizzling. Those who react immediately and inform callers – automatically and via the voice portal – about the problem will avert potential bottlenecks. With the CreaLog concept such outbound actions can be set up quickly and easily. This is an example of foresighted customer service.

ECCCO: We want to thank you for these hints, Mr. Walther.



If you want to learn more about the CreaLog solutions described here, you can turn to Jürgen Walther: Simply call him up – under the number +49 / 89 / 324 656-32 – or send an e-mail to juergen.walther@crealog.com. He would be glad to be of assistance to the readers of ECCCO News.

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Interview

Cerification of Contact Centers. - Why?

What are the benefits of certifying a customer contact centre? An interview with Dr. Peter Jonas, Director Certification of Austrian Standards plus GmbH.

ECCCO: *Two years ago, the European Standard EN 15838 was adopted as a specialized standard on the services of costumer contact centres. How significant is it for the call centre industry?*

Peter Jonas: The objective is to raise employee qualifications and create a quality benchmark. Additionally, it also is to define a reference standard for good conduct. As a result, services become more reliable. And their transparency and comparability increases.

ECCCO: *In how far was the industry involved in the development of the specifications?*

Peter Jonas: In fact, the standard was initiated by business actors. Hence, representatives of the call centre industry were active in the relevant bodies and ensured that the standard is of high practical relevance.

ECCCO: *The key elements of the standard include harmonized terminology, contract management and management of services offered. Why is it important that these elements are “standardized”?*

Peter Jonas: The aim is not to standardize these elements in terms of substance. It is important to have these elements in place and to apply certain procedures, for example: How do you handle complaints? How often was the customer in contact with the call centre? What was discussed? And what was promised? Those are important items of information in customer contacts that need to be traceable. This is why they are laid down in the standard.

ECCCO: *Your company certifies call centres and awards the quality label “Contact Centre Certified EN 15838”. What does that mean?*

Peter Jonas: In qualified audits, we assess service quality and compliance with the standard. Our audits are carried out exclusively by industry experts. In this respect, co-operation between ECCCO and Austrian Standards plus Certification proved to be highly fruitful. It also gave rise to our joint certification brand “ECCCO Contact Centre Certification” – a quality label that the companies also use in their marketing activities.

ECCCO: *How does the market accept the standard?*

Peter Jonas: From our perspective, our offering is well received. The services provided by contact centres are increasingly seen as highly qualified services rather than a cost factor, which was frequently the case in the past. At present, we note major shifts in the



Dr. Peter Jonas
Director Certification
Austrian Standards plus GmbH



Interview

Cerification of Contact Centers. - Why?

market. In Germany, the big operators are in the process of obtaining certificates. And the clients also increasingly demand this proof of qualification.

ECCCO: How many companies already hold a certificate? And which actors are these?

Peter Jonas: To date, we have certified around 30 operators. They included both in-house call centres and external companies offering relevant services. The countries where the companies are based range from Belgium to Azerbaijan.

ECCCO: Which conditions do they need to meet for certification?

Peter Jonas: The applicant company must be a call or contact centre, it has to be sufficiently qualified, it should be familiar with the standard EN 15838 and should already have used it for a self-critical assessment.

ECCCO: How does the process work?

Peter Jonas: The company submits an application, which is followed by a meeting with the certification body at which the fundamental data — company description, basic facts and figures, locations, industries of the clients — are identified. The core activity is the audit, i.e. a visit on site during which expert auditors assess the company.

ECCCO: How high are the efforts to be expected?

Peter Jonas: The efforts depend on the operator's size. For a company with less than 50 employees, approximately three person-days will be needed in total. These include preparations, the audit and follow-up. EN 15838 has the advantage that it is specifically tailored to the services in question. As a rule, well-established companies consider education, qualification and training to be important anyway. This means that they do not have to create any special new structures for certification as they are already in place.

ECCCO: Where can persons interested obtain further information on the standard and the certification process?

Peter Jonas: From me personally (peter.jonas@as-plus.at), from Austrian Standards plus Certification at www.as-plus.at/certification.html and at the website www.cc-certification.org.

ECCCO: Dr. Jonas, thank you for this interview.

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“The objective is to raise employee qualifications and create a quality benchmark. As a result, services become more reliable.”

Advertorial

ECCCO Silver-Sponsor Profile: CreaLog GmbH

CreaLog is a leading provider of interactive multimedia solutions, next-generation contact center and interactive voice response systems in 30 countries in Europe, Africa and Asia.

They offer the fully web-administrable CreaLog Media Platform 6 as the next-generation platform for voice and video applications, as well as the CreaLog Application Server Framework.

In June 2012 CreaLog implements IVR hosting solutions in Kenya, Uganda and Ghana Providing numerous services in collaboration with African partners



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 **CreaLog is certified according to DIN EN ISO 9001:2008 and I 4001:2004**

The quality management system operated by CreaLog, has been certified since 2002 according to ISO 9001:2008 (Reg. No. 1210017937 TMS) for the Development, Production and Distribution of Voice Portals, Unified Communications and CTI-Solutions.

Since 2011 an Environmental Management System according to ISO 14001:2004 is included.

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Upcoming Dates and Events 2012

September

13/09 Swiss Contact Day, Bern

October

01/10 Palmes de la Relation Client,
Paris

02-03/10 Call Centre Expo, London

11/10 15th Call Center Convention,
Paris

18-19/10 CCVision, Berlin

30-31/10 Voice+IP, Frankfurt

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