

Packet8 Complete Contact Center White Paper



The 3 Keys to Successful Customer Care Outsourcing in the New Era

By Peter Newell, CEO & Founder, WebConverse, Inc.

Advances in technology, access to global resources, and refined business practices have reshaped the way sophisticated service providers work with their customers. Long gone are the days of turning over complete control of customer support functions to a third-party and hoping for the best. Outsourcing buyers can now have the level and control, visibility and participation they desire and still meet their unique business requirements. This new era is opening up the benefits of outsourcing to a broader range of buyers than ever before.

The following guidelines are designed to help buyers understand not only what is available, but what to look for when evaluating an outsourced solution.

- 1. Make sure the Outsourcer views the business relationship as a partnership** - The typical customer-vendor relationship that makes up the bulk of business transactions is often times more competitive than collaborative. Buyers and sellers negotiating, each hoping to get the best deal, then moving on to the next transaction. When outsourcing customer support, help desk, or customer care functions, both the buyer and service provider need to enter into the relationship with a partnership mindset. Collaboration in both service delivery and business terms can help create a mutually beneficial relationship that will reward all parties involved, including the end-user receiving support. For example, a commitment on the buyer's side for a long-term contract will provide continued incentive for the service provider to perform well. The service provider should be aware that delivering quality service to the buyer's customers would improve the buyer's business. An increase in the buyer's business will likely lead to more resources required from the service provider.
- 2. Try to understand the level of flexibility provided by the Outsourcer** - Flexibility in the outsourcing world is a broad term that can apply to several facets of the relationship.
 - » **Scope of the Engagement** - Using a service provider does not always have to be an all or nothing proposition. Moving a specific product, function, or project to a service provider can be a relatively low risk means of beginning a relationship. Be cautious of service providers that insist on large-scale deployments without providing the option to start small and scale over time.
 - » **Ability to Right-size the Service Delivery** - Most technical support and customer care engagements require a level of training and commitment on the part of individual agents such that they are dedicated to a specific program. However, there may be certain low level functions that can be off-loaded to other resources in the event of a spike in volume or absenteeism. Try to identify these functions and work with your outsourcer to cross-train other resources to be used on demand.
 - » **Receptive to Changing Conditions** - Unexpected things happen in complex organizations. Is your outsourcer nimble enough to respond to changes that affect the support environment; changes in volume, product/service glitches, new information.

- » **Speed of Deployment** – In a perfect world, rapid deployment would not be necessary. We would all have enough time to plan for the perfect implementation. Try to gauge your service providers experience and ability to get up and running quickly. Even if you can plan for a smooth initial launch, you never know when conditions may dictate a fast deployment of a new team to handle a specific situation.
 - » **Scalability** - Business never grows on a perfect linear trajectory. One of the historical benefits of outsourcing is having a partner that helps your support organization keep pace with rapid or unexpected growth. Be sure you understand the capabilities and resources used by your service provider to meet your customer's support demands. Remember that scalability is as much a function of process as it is available resources. Your service provider may be able to provide personnel on a moments notice, but how will they be trained and integrated into the support program? Does the outsourcer have the technology and processes in place to ensure that smooth integration?
3. **Don't settle for an outdated technology infrastructure** - Modern contact centers will provide complete solutions that include the technology to address all of the complexities of today's outsourcing engagements. Internet-based tools are providing a level of functionality and flexibility previously enjoyed by only the largest organizations. These advances have helped open outsourcing options to companies of all sizes.
- a. **Distributed Environments** – An open, flexible support environment has tremendous advantages over support programs that restrict personnel by location. A service provider should have the ability to incorporate resources from multiple locations into the service environment. Personnel at the outsourcer's facility, your support team, agents at home and even offshore resources should be able to interact in a common environment. Escalations, extended (or 24/7) coverage and efficient incident routing are all improved by implementing a virtual support environment.
 - b. **Multi-Channel Communications** – Customers will contact your support team using multiple forms of communication. Not only should your service provider be able to handle phone, email, and web-chat, but they should have the ability to blend the communication channels such that it maximizes the efficiency of their agents. Utilizing one system that enables universal queuing for the various types of interactions, will allow agents to see the overall transaction environment and prioritize accordingly.
 - c. **Visibility & Collaboration** – One fear buyers have of using an outsourcing partner is losing access to real-time information. This no longer needs to be the case. Working with an outsourcer that provides a Web-based contact center infrastructure enables access to real-time information and also provides a means to actively participate in the delivery of support. For example, a front line agent in an outsourcer's facility can instantly escalate issues (both the live call and data) to your internal support personnel as needed. These systems also provide for access to historical reporting and quality assurance functionality through the same browser based interface.
 - d. **Existing Systems & Integration** – Your service provider should have the flexibility and experience to be able to integrate the outsourced operations with some of your existing systems and processes. This can help maintain the integrity of existing capital investments and reduce any process/system changes to areas of the organization that communicate with the support team.
4. **A good outsourcing partner can help you do more with less** - Technology, flexibility and a partnership approach can all be aligned to deliver a support program that provides true value without sacrificing quality. In a tenuous economic environment, exploring some of the new options in outsourcing may be the best decision you make all year.

About WebConverse, Inc.

WebConverse is a San Mateo, CA based company providing outsourced technical support and customer service solutions. Our turnkey solutions include inbound and outbound telephone support, email response and real-time Web-chat. WebConverse stresses the importance of human interaction in our support offerings and couples our motivated service professionals with leading third-party virtual contact center and CRM applications to ensure we are truly providing our customers with a best-of-breed solution. For more information, please visit the website at www.webconverse.com or call 650-655-3730.

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3151 Jay Street
Santa Clara, CA 95054
1.888.898.8733 Toll-Free
1.408.687.4120 Outside U.S.
1.408.980.0432 Fax
www.Packet8.net