



How To Create A Call Center Culture of Excellence Right Now

Introduction:

The recent trend to bring call center jobs back to the U.S. points to the critical need for excellence in the call center environment. Call center jobs that have been returning to the U.S. typically involve big-ticket items and/or a high value to the customers involved. In addition, Call center work is also advancing from simply documenting and escalating customer complaints to resolving issues such as recalls and technical problems immediately with the first call.

Thus, the call center is now a critical “touch point” customer service opportunity. It is essential that organizations get this right. Depending on the customer experience you either grow your customer base or send them to the competition.

A “culture of excellence” in the call center is the catalyst that can take the entire organization to the next level through rapid increases in customer base.

Integrated Leadership Development leads to a culture of excellence.

This is a game-changing competitive advantage that will endure in the rapidly changing climate of business today.

Integrated Leadership Development consists of two areas of execution, individual and organizational.

1. The Individual:

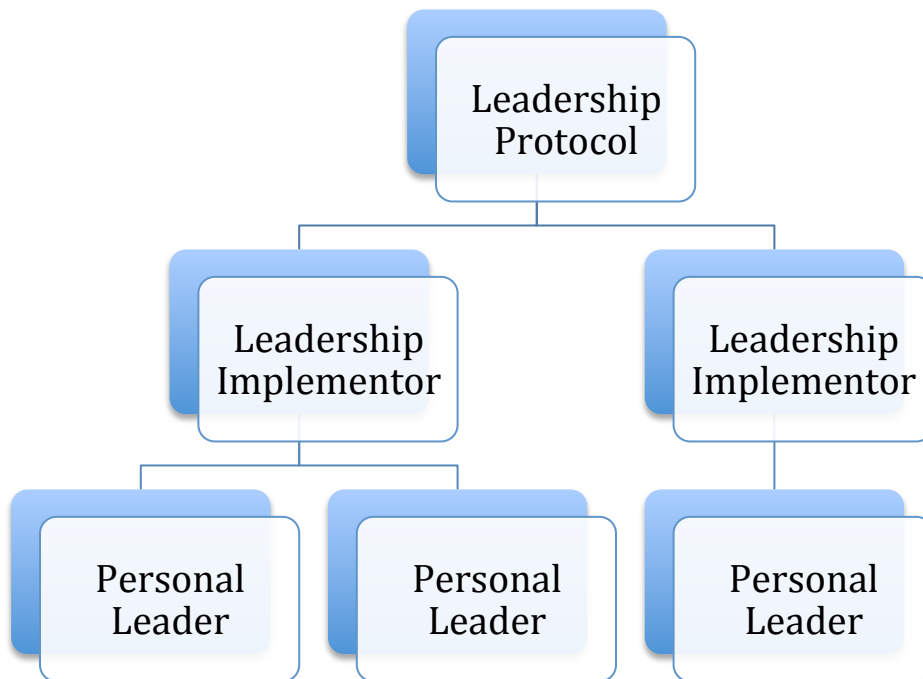
Training for call center agents is often incomplete and dispersed. Agents contribute their best when training is integrated and harnessed to their individual strengths. This seemingly subtle difference transforms simple training into development, a more meaningful experience for individual call center agents.

Agents carry themselves as professionals. They tactfully lead customer calls to resolution and excel in the areas of:

- *Human Effectiveness
- *Personal Empowerment
- *Leadership Skill

2. Organizational:

The initiation of call center excellence comes from the top. The “C” Suite must energetically implement the early effort. Managers and supervisors are linchpins in the execution process. They are entrenched where the change occurs, on the front lines of the call center. The protocol of call center excellence must be continually supported and reinforced from the top while mid-level management implement and drive results on the front lines.



From this vantage point it's easy to see the systemic nature of Integrated Leadership Development. Senior leaders empower managers to take risks, lead their team, and deliver results. Managers empower supervisors and supervisors empower the front line agents all the while providing direction and support. Everyone has a clear line-of-sight between roles, tasks and the priority organizational goals.

Hold everyone accountable:

People tend to drift off course. They put out fires that pull them away from the goal. Eventually they lose sight of the goal. Top leadership must put things in place to ensure course corrections.

One way to do this is to shift the “status meeting” to a weekly or daily meeting where agents, supervisors, managers and leaders interact around the highest priority.

- Begin the meeting with updates. Everyone reports successes, struggles, failures and barriers to the culture of excellence effort.
- The team then collectively focuses on solution finding for the issues that most hinder the goal and create alternatives that surmount barriers.

- Lastly individuals share “the best thing they learned.” They discuss what they intend to do to refocus and recommit to the goal and, the success they intend to bring to the next meeting.

These meetings give leadership a view into how things are progressing toward the organizations top priority. At the same time accountability is built in as a comfortable and expected part of the process rather than an anxiety-ridden demand.

When this kind of employee experience is blanketed over the entire call center, everyone will take notice and begin to talk. Word will spread like the message “free doughnuts in the break room.” Employees will begin telling stories of their experiences. These stories will be shared, repeated and echoed. The stories will create new feelings and new experiences that will cultivate a new culture. This is the most important work of leadership, creating a culture of excellence not by teaching but by helping people to learn.

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Brian collaborates with organizations and individuals, in areas such as leadership, communication, workforce relations and talent management.