

Call Center Transforms Culture and Delivers Bottom-Line Results

Five Years of Sustained Progress

This client is one of the leading global diagnostics companies, providing diagnostic equipment and consumable supplies for the healthcare industry worldwide. Their Technical Assistance Center (TAC) is a call center with specialists who help clients in pathology labs with technical questions or problems related to use of their equipment and consumables. The TAC plays a key role in the company's success. After examining customer satisfaction results, the management team realized that this department was simply not meeting customers' needs. They decided to make some fundamental changes. The TAC's stated mission is: *to enhance people's lives by providing proactive and responsive solutions that drive excellence in the world of medical technology.* This is their story.

The Challenge: In 1998 and 1999, independent surveys rated the TAC as one of the worst in the industry in customer satisfaction. A new Vice President came in to lead the TAC with a vision that they would be: **NUMBER 1! ABSOLUTELY THE BEST! No Question —No Compromise!**

He shared his vision with his people: *"Our goal is to be perceived by our customers, our competition, and ourselves as the BEST Technical Assistance Center in our industry. We will be recognized by internal and external customers as superior to such a degree that the TAC is a competitive advantage in the selling process. Each of us will become empowered to do whatever it takes to totally delight the customer."* These words were used to announce the launch of a training process called **The Pursuit of Customer Excellence** to his team of 200 Technical Call Specialists, supervisors and managers who at that time comprised the frontline technical assistance for thousands of hospital and clinical laboratories worldwide. *"What we are really looking at here,"* the new VP explained during the planning process, *"is a culture change... creating a culture that focuses not only on technical excellence, but also on customer service excellence."* He continued by emphasizing the need for personal accountability within an empowered environment: *"True empowerment, even though we have talked that talk before, is also a culture change. And it will require that each and every one of us changes."*

So, the TAC began its journey. It was not without challenges and obstacles - 3 site consolidations, two reductions in workforce, continuous product upgrades, software releases and new equipment launches. Over the last 5 years, the number of phone calls fielded by the TAC has been on a steady increase, while the number of TAC Specialists has been on the decrease.

The Process: The management team realized from the beginning that this pursuit would indeed be a journey, and would require commitment to an on-going process of learning at all levels of the organization. It would not simply be about *skill-building*; it would also be about *attitude-building*.

A parallel training path was established. The Call Specialists engaged in a series of training modules focused on building personal excellence and accountability, driving the theme: *"if better is possible, then good is not enough!"* The management team also participated in the the training with the Call Specialists. However, they realized that the training endeavor would not be successful unless they became stronger leaders. In early 2000, Integro's leadership development process was launched to help the managers redefine their roles and began to focus on leading as well as managing. They learned that their role as leaders was to create an environment where people could make their own choices, drive their own success and share in the leadership of the vision. Gradually

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they began to build a culture of empowerment and shared leadership, driven by a common purpose and personal accountability.

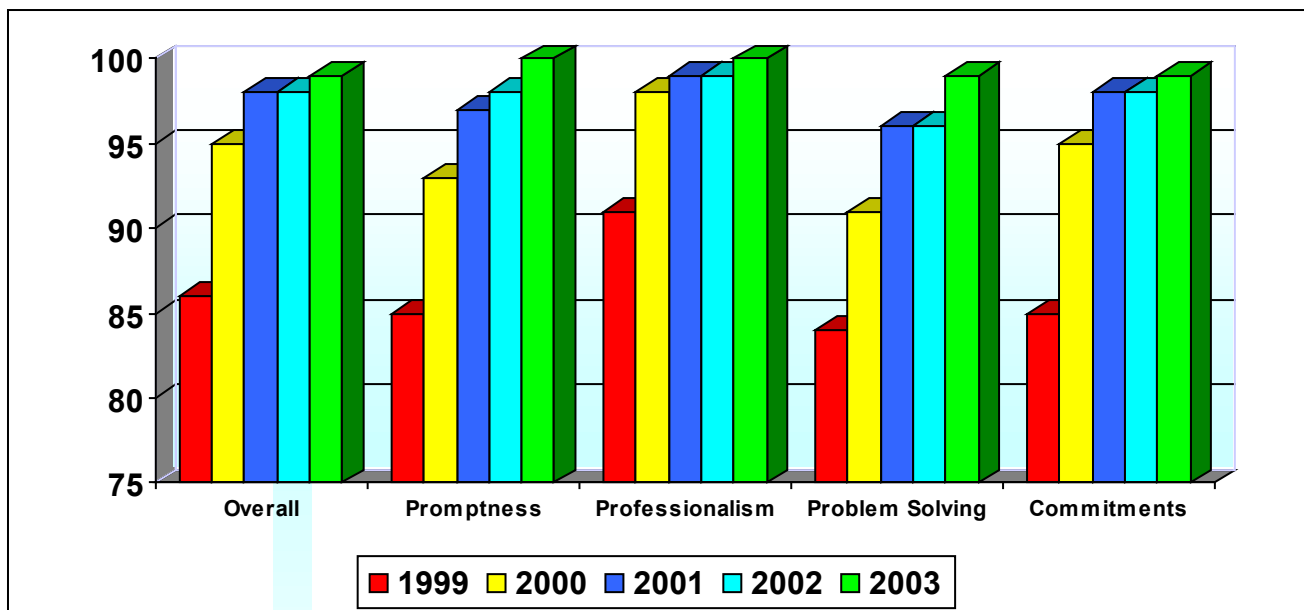
The Results:

The parallel training was extremely successful. Employees are committed to their purpose, share in the leadership, and enjoy increased job satisfaction. Individuals have literally and figuratively “raised their bar” of personal excellence. The cumulative impact of individual excellence has resulted in team excellence that consistently delivers positive results.

The bottomline is that the TAC is taking the highest number of phone calls ever, and solving a record number of customer problems. And they are doing it with the lowest number of employees ever.

They are more productive than ever, their cost of doing business is down, and customer satisfaction surveys document steady and sustained progress over the past 5 years. The TAC has indeed fulfilled the vision of being *number one, absolutely the best* in their industry! They went from last in the industry in customer satisfaction in 1999 to number 1 in 2002, and have continued to sustain the highest level of customer excellence. Take a look at the graph below... the results are apparent:

TAC Customer Satisfaction Survey Results



As you reflect on the TAC’s success in delivering customer service excellence, keep in mind that:

- Sales have increased
- The TAC is fielding the highest number of customer calls ever
- TAC staffing is lower than it has ever been
- Quality issues and product challenges have remained constant
- The overall cost of business in the TAC (total business cost divided by number of customer calls) has decreased and is at an all-time low

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Keys to Success: According to the new VP, *“The Integro process really pulled our management team together and helped us focus on our common goals of customer excellence.”* Keys to the sustained success of the TAC training endeavors:

- Commitment was from top-down and everyone at all levels were willing to change
- Management recognized the need for a culture change
- The approach was process-driven and included benchmarks along the way
- Shared leadership, empowerment and accountability were established at all levels
- Management was willing to change processes and metrics to align with the new culture
- On-going training, support, tools, and resources are provided at all levels of the organization
- The TAC celebrates success without becoming complacent
- Individuals have embraced the culture change and held themselves accountable to keep it alive
- Throughout changes and challenges, their purpose and passion has kept them centered and focused

Reflections: Looking back over the years, what has actually created the difference? What, exactly, has changed? The answers received when this question was asked of the managers echoed around two resounding themes-- change of *self* and change in the *environment*:

“I have changed. It is impossible to experience Integro’s leadership development process without changing. The self-awareness has been incredible and has impacted not just my work life, but life in general. I know I am a more effective manager... but it goes further than just that. The life skills I learned are invaluable... I am more confident in myself and my abilities. My attitude about work... and really about life in general is much more positive.”

“The work environment has done a complete turnaround from where it was in 1999...the negative atmosphere is gone. A new level of morale and positive attitude is evident; the TAC has developed a joy in the day-to-day job, and a genuine friendly and helpful attitude. The specialists feel appreciated and important. The TAC work environment is now fun and energetic. We have a common language and can laugh at our own idiosyncrasies. We have become a more cohesive organization... a new openness is evident in working with each other and with our customers.”

“The biggest surprise to me was when I saw the statistics documenting that, although the TAC is now having FUN and spending more money on recognition and rewards, the actual cost per call is down. I knew the TAC was now a better place to work and that we were delivering better service to our customers, but I assumed it was at a higher cost. I was stunned to learn that the TAC is achieving goals AND having fun-- and doing it for LESS COST than before. It must be true that an empowered and appreciated employee is also a more productive employee. The specialists truly feel empowered to do whatever it takes to delight the customer... and they take pride in going out of their way to make the TAC stand out from our competitors.”



It is our pleasure to provide this educational material to you!

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