

## What's the most important customer service performance standard?

**CSN's 2011 Standards and Benchmarking Survey participants talk about what metrics are most important in their organizations.**

As might be expected, when we asked participants in the 2011 *Customer Service Newsletter* Standards and Benchmarking Survey what was their “most important or unique” standard, many responded by reiterating that the basics were important — speed of answer, average talk time, first call resolution, and customer satisfaction.

In fact, all of these turned up as commonly used metrics in the survey results reported in the April issue of *Customer Service Newsletter*. But what's interesting is that what's most commonly used isn't always reported as being most important.

For instance, while first-call resolution comes in sixth in terms of most commonly used metrics, it is mentioned most often by participants as being the “most important” metric. It's closely followed by companies that report that tracking customer satisfaction is “most important.”

The lesson is that while many metrics are used because they are easily tracked and reported, these aren't always the most important or most valuable.

### **FCR and customer sat top the list**

Companies across a variety of industries — including retailing, manufacturing, non-profits, publishing, and financial services, among others, report that first call resolution is the “most important” performance standard in their organization. As one retailer puts it, “First contact resolution across all channels is the clear way to ensure the best customer experience for us.”

Metrics based on customer satisfaction surveys are also cited by many companies as being “most important.” But these surveys may be keyed to other, more basic metrics.

For instance, a software services firm reports, “The most important customer service performance standard we use is a customer satisfaction rating which is directly related to call quality and duration.” And a financial services company says that its “customer satisfaction score is closely tied to first-call resolution.”

A software services firm, on the other hand, reports that “we have had an overall 92 percent

customer satisfaction rate, and we use this as a performance standard for all reps.”

At least two companies see the “Net Promoter Score” as their most important standard. “We use the Net Promoter Score to track customer satisfaction with the company as a whole by asking how likely the customer would be to recommend us to a friend or colleague,” says one software publisher. A training company also asks “if service delivered met expectations and specifications,” and “if there was an intention to purchase our services again.”

### **Other “basic” measures cited**

A variation on the customer satisfaction survey, of course, is the “mystery caller.” And a legal services firm participating in our survey says that it has “test calls done by an outside source, and agents are evaluated on specific criteria during the test call.”

Companies, with different needs, deem other types of customer service metrics and standards as “most important.”

For instance, a manufacturing company reports that “order confir-

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**Customer Service Group**

712 Main Street — Suite 187B • Boonton, NJ 07005

Phone: (973) 265-2300 • Email [info@CustomerServiceGroup.com](mailto:info@CustomerServiceGroup.com)

mation time is our most important metric — with 24 hours as our goal.” A government agency, on the other hand, says that the key performance benchmarks that it relies on are “service level, abandonment rate, and speed of answer.”

A manufacturing company says that it most closely monitors “speed of answer, the percentage of calls at its target of 90 seconds, and the percentage of calls lasting for more than 120 seconds.” It also reports that it conducts event-driven surveys at the conclusion of calls.

An insurance company, on the other hand, reports that it relies on “the standard metrics of total calls, average talk time, call monitoring results, and customer questionnaire results” as its most important benchmarks.

## **Standards for greetings and product knowledge**

A number of companies have found their “most important” standards at an even more basic level. For instance, a high-tech retailer finds that its most important standard is to provide a quality greeting to the customer. “How we introduce the company and ask how we can help while portraying a friendly demeanor is our goal. We want to convey to the customer that they have called the right place and that we can address their needs.”

A third-party call center tests its reps regularly on “product knowledge,” which is especially important when handling calls for a range of client companies.

Another company, which repairs

communications equipment, finds that successfully handling escalated calls is its most important metric.

“Because of the nature of our business, our customers frequently have emergency or escalated needs, and we need to know that our staff is ready to handle those calls efficiently and effectively,” the company says.

Some of the “most important” metrics reported sound very noble, but also sound as if they might be difficult to measure accurately. For instance, a manufacturing company says that it looks for its reps to “show genuine care and passion for the customer while creating a consistent and identifiable experience.” And a financial services firm says, “We encourage reps to build relationships with our customers to promote a higher degree of loyalty.”