

In *Customer Service Newsletter's* April 2006 issue, Trevor Spunt of IBM Business Consulting Services offers a blueprint for managing the change from service to service and sales in a customer service organization. Here, he cautions that one of the things that companies often overlook when implementing a change is to determine new metrics for the new performance goals and to align their staff compensation with those new performance measurements. He also provides a comparison of the skill sets that reps might need in a service versus a sales environment.

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Get your comp and metrics aligned to create meaningful change

“The biggest disconnect that I see in companies that want to create change in their organization is that they fail to align their job evaluation criteria and their compensation system with the changes they are trying to effect,” says Trevor Spunt, a senior consultant in the area of CRM strategy for IBM Business Consulting Services. As a result, there is no impetus for reps to change. Because they are measured on something else, that is where their priorities lie.

Bonuses and incentives, Spunt believes, are less important than the day-to-day management support and reinforcement of the change directive and goals. “So you have to first align job responsibilities and objectives to the new way of doing things, and then ensure that your incentives and bonuses are aligned. If you don’t, there will be some conflict.”

Performance metrics for the customer service center as a whole must also be aligned with the new way of doing things. “Service-oriented call centers are typically measured by call volume. Other metrics typically include average wait time, average talk time, percentage of calls answered in x seconds, and a host of others,” says Spunt. For a sales-oriented or hybrid call center, particularly one that is making outbound calls, profitability is the key factor, and metrics might include such things as outbound contacts per hour, average time spent per contact, average revenue per contact, number of call attempts, sales lead accuracy rate, and others.

For example, the following list of metrics might apply for a sales-oriented outbound contact center:

- Leads per hour
- Dials per hour
- Revenue per sale
- Percentage of good leads versus poor leads
- Conversion rate (expressed as a percentage) of leads converted to sales

- Bad numbers per hour
- Not interested per hour
- Percentage unreachable
- Percentage of bad numbers
- Close ratio (sales/contacts).

Without aligning your metrics, you’ll never know if the transition from service to sales and from cost center to profit center has succeeded.

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Service versus sales: What skills are needed?

How might the necessary job skills for service representatives change as a company moves more toward sales or a service/sales hybrid? Trevor Spunt of IBM Business Consulting Services offers the following rudimentary skills comparison.

	Customer service/order processing
<i>Personality profile</i>	Empathetic Able to work in a structured environment Can handle repetitive tasks Consistent Tenacious Good problem solver
<i>Skills</i>	Diffuses irate customers Logical thinker Clear communicator Keen listener
	Sales/opportunity generation
<i>Personality profile</i>	Assertive, fast-paced Can handle structure and repetitive tasks Event-oriented and goal driven Able to adapt to change daily Impervious to personal slurs
<i>Skills</i>	Articulate Persuasive Good listener

