

A number of participants in *Customer Service Newsletter's* latest Salary and Benchmarking Survey indicate that they are trying to establish performance metrics for new service channels.

— **Editor**
Customer Service Newsletter
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CSN Survey Results

Some customer service centers are adding performance standards for new channels

Besides the traditional performance metrics, many service centers are developing new performance metrics to voicemail, email, and other options that customers have for contacting companies, according to participants in *Customer Service Newsletter's* most recent Salary and Benchmarking Survey.

Email is one example — a number of our survey respondents indicate that they have established standards for responding to customers' emails. These range from requiring staff to respond to emails in two hours to two days (the majority of these are set at 24 hours), but in most cases the required response time is the same as or faster than the response time required for fax and phone inquiries. Snail mail seems to have fallen to the end of the service queue in most organizations.

A credit-card processing company has set a standard of handling an hourly average of 10 emails per hour for its service reps. And one utility company has set a standard in which emails from customers must be responded to in 15 minutes and resolved in 24 hours. It further stipulates that escalated complaints be responded to within one hour and resolved within 24 hours.

A nonprofit organization in Pennsylvania uses the 80/20 rule as its benchmark standard. It requires that 80 percent of all customer inquiries be responded to within 4 hours, and the balance must be taken care of within two business days.

A number of service centers apply simple standards to outgoing communications. A number of our survey respondents say that they make it a rule to spell-check all outgoing emails. And one company requires that all mail to customers be approved by the marketing director, while email is reviewed quarterly for grammar and "consistency of message."

When asked to report on the most important or unique customer service standard in their organizations, many of our respondents wax philosophical. "Total customer satisfaction is a mantra in our organization," reports one, a container manufacturer. In fact, many of the companies responding to our survey put their customer service metrics in the context of total quality management or building customer loyalty. A building products manufacturer, for instance, reports, "Our quality philosophy is that we strive to meet and exceed our customers' expectations in order to gain their loyalty." The same company manages to ground its philosophical intent in some very specific metrics, however. It adds, "The metric most valued is service level. We strive to answer 92 percent or more of all incoming calls within 60 seconds."