

Best Practice Award Winner

Call Handling Real-Time CSR Support Queue:
C Spire Wireless

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The C Spire Customer Care organization understands that real time support for frontline representatives is a vital part of both employee and customer satisfaction. In keeping with the organization's vision of "being and becoming known as the best in our industry(s)", Customer Care leadership stakeholders are committed to ensuring that all employees have access to people, process, and technological methods to ensure customer satisfaction.

It is essential to define some of the organization's internal jargon and terms to understand how we manage the real-time needs of the Customer Care team.

- Spark: C Spire has partnered with Softonic International to offer each representative access to instant messaging software via Spark. Representatives are able to leverage this tool to request support from leaders and peers swiftly without ever placing customers on hold minimizing customer frustration due to wait times and/or transfers and ensures that customer issues are resolved during the initial call improving FCR.
- Knowledge Base (KB): C Spire employs the use of a web-based solution that houses all policy/procedure, sales promotion, trouble ticketing, and breaking news information. This tool is designed to be each employee's first line of defense for independently finding answers to obscure customer-facing matters. Leaders consistently hold representatives accountable to using the KB instead of verbally answering question in keeping with the "Teach 'em to Fish" philosophy fostering customer satisfaction and one call resolution.
- Nuasis: The ACD vendor C Spire currently uses to route and connect customer calls. Representatives are monitored closely in real time to ensure that customers' requests are handled efficiently and effectively.
- Floor Support: Each site has representatives who consistently demonstrate an ability to deliver above average performance results and above average familiarity with organizational policies and procedures. These resources are chosen quarterly based solely on their performance for the previous quarter with emphasis on leadership and subject matter expertise. These persons are also a part of the organization's leadership development program; they must demonstrate an ability to act as a next level leader. Additionally, to ensure they are fully utilized, floor support team members also own customer-impacting administrative tasks and customer follow-ups.

- **Team Captains:** Frontline representatives who have not yet developed to the point of being used as Floor Walkers, but they consistently demonstrate a high level of eagerness, positivity, energy, excitement, and customer advocacy. These persons are selected on a quarterly basis according to their performance and they support Coaches in creating excitement about business-specific initiatives, they encourage their peers by creating and sending out inspiring/encouraging emails, they make team wide audible announcements, they are the first to recognize peer successes, service anniversaries, etc. For all intents and purposes, Team Captains are cheerleaders. They spend all of their time on the phone with customers unless there is a need for support (i.e. we have a need for additional floor support). These persons help to drive enthusiasm and peer accountability.

Spark

In an effort to keep employees engaged with customers and to prevent heightened customer frustration resulting from exhaustive hold times, C Spire Customer Care Representatives are required to use Spark to solicit real-time support. We have also found that when representatives are on the phone with customers, instead of placing them on hold to walk to a Coach or floor support personnel's workstation, representatives demonstrate a heightened sense of urgency when they must stay online with customers; they feel the pressure of delays in issue resolution. The Spark queues are managed in several ways:

1. The representative's first line of support specific to executing the use of Spark is asking questions in the group chat. The group chat room is a virtual meeting place wherein all Customer Care employees are logged in and engaged. The group chat room is always monitored by either a Customer Care Coach, designated floor support personnel, and/or team captain. Additionally, we find that representatives often help each other when questions are asked in the group chat. Group chat is always the swiftest way to solicit real-time support. Floor support team members are required to go the representative's workstation to support him/her. Our experience is that resolution is delayed if a leader opts to engage in a text dialogue regarding a given issue. This also adversely affects both FCR and CSAT. Floor support team members also go to the representative's workstation to inspect the use of the knowledge base and other available tools and also to identify areas of inefficiency. All areas of opportunity are coached real-time as a peer coaching session and floor support team members report areas of opportunity to leaders for follow-up coaching.

2. The second, and less preferred, method of using Spark is sending a private direct message to their respective supervisor, manager, floor support, team captain to ask questions. This strategy is used only

when Spark indicates that the requested party is online and available. It is typical that leaders (floor support and higher) will respond within the first 30 seconds and go to the representative's workstation to help them to ensure swift resolution of the customer's issue. As previously stated, our experience is that resolution is delayed if a leader opts to engage in a text dialogue regarding a given issue. Not only is resolution delayed, but there is also significant and measurable negative impact to CSAT and FCR. Leaders go to the representative's workstation to inspect the use of the knowledge base and other available tools and also to identify areas of inefficiency. If leaders do not respond within the first 30 seconds, representatives consult the group chat for support.

Knowledge Base

Two of the four Heart of Service quality scoring guidelines are accuracy and efficiency. Our Knowledge Base is a good tool to find information to assist customers as well as decreases off phone time normally to ask questions of their Supervisors, floor support, etc. This tool has been such a value add that we are currently investing time and resources to enhance the functionality including but not limited to the following:

- Revamp the Knowledge Base into a SharePoint Site format.
- Separate lines of business info by tabs across the top of the site.
- Create step processes with hyperlinks that open up to HTML content.

These enhancements with the search feature should shorten the rep's resolution times and shore up their knowledge on how to assist the customers.

Nuasis

In conjunction with workforce personnel, floor walkers, coaches and managers also have a responsibility for real time production floor management. Support personnel often leverage the "Monitor" tool in Nuasis to listen to the call unbeknownst to the representative. The goal is to learn about what is happening on the call, and to take away coaching opportunities that are discussed immediately after the call is completed. Additionally, workforce personnel, floor support, and leaders often leverage the "Coach" functionality in Nuasis that allows them to verbally communicate with the representative without the customer hearing the voice of the coach. Representatives are able to receive real time support in resolving customer issues without the customer being impacted. The organization's workforce team handles the routine tasks of projecting call volume, aligning resources according to call projections, ensuring schedule adherence, and managing all other real-time events that may adversely impact service

level. In conjunction with the aforementioned, service level personnel also watch call queues real-time to ensure that representatives are not on long calls, extensive holds, etc. In the event a workforce team member notices that an employee is on a long call or extensive hold, the workforce employee either personally checks in on the representative or notifies floor support or management. Representatives are immediately supported to either return to the call or end it in a more expeditious and customer-centric manner.

Floor Support

This process was designed to create a real time customer escalation path to ensure customer impacting issues are resolved in a quick and timely manner. Floor walkers are selected based on all key performance indicators via the use of the Customer Care organization's standard SKEP score card. The SKEP scorecard provides a composite ranking of each rep's performance. In addition, the Floor Walker Process ensures that we offer developmental opportunities equally to each employee based on upon individual employee's performance success and business needs. All Floor Walkers are required to attend sessions led by Customer Care leaders designed to ensure calibration regarding the level of empowerment Floor Walker resources are provided:

- Discuss professional behavior while on the floor and interacting with various internal groups.
- Understand agent perception and how we impact these issues.
- Listen for opportunities to impact customer satisfaction, and provide feedback directly to the employee or Management.

Floor Walkers do not share the same empowerment as Coaches in the Customer Care organization. The chart below represents a limited view of the differentiation in responsibilities of Floor Walkers as compared to Coaches. In essence, Floor Walker have no empowerment to hold any CREW member accountable to any performance metric or behavior, rather Floor Walkers are solely empowered to provide advice to peer CREW members to create solutions to customer issues. New Floor Walkers are selected on a quarterly basis. 4 to 6 agents across Customer Care will be used in the floor walker rotation. Agents spend roughly 50% of their time floor walking and about 50% taking calls. Floor Walker responsibilities may be suspend or terminated at management's discretion. Suspensions and terminations will be solely based upon performance or behavior.

Team Captain

This process was designed to create leadership developmental opportunities equally to each employee based on upon individual CREW member's performance success and business needs. This will ensure success planning is in place as we strive to develop next level leaders within the organization. All Team captains are required to attend sessions led by Customer Care leaders designed to ensure calibration regarding the level of empowerment team captain resources are provided. In addition, Team captains take the lead on communication, creating competition, peer accountability, etc to drive team/peer performance.

Summary

The real-time floor management processes- all inclusive- at C Spire has been a catalyst for creating heightened morale and employee advocacy; employees feel they have the tools and real-time support they need to succeed. It is a well-known fact that employee advocacy most often is a prerequisite for enhanced customer advocacy. In addition to the fore-mentioned real time support methodologies, we also implemented the following in order to further support our employees:

15 minutes Team huddles (At the beginning of the Shift)- If needed. Time slotted at the start of each shift to address any immediate concerns for the day. Use them if needed - Sales promotions can change overnight.

Bi-Weekly hour long Team Meetings Designed to communicate information from Senior Leadership, Quality and/or Training to ensure consistency regarding: New/updated policies and procedure New/updated sales promotions, rate plans, features and devices.

BI-Monthly Continuous Learning Initiatives Designed to provide the staff with formal on-going training via: CSU Courses Instructor Led Courses Courses can be centered on new or existing initiatives, policies or procedures.

Why is this important?

- Increase daily, weekly & monthly satisfaction and resolution goals
- Communicate viable information of new initiatives & updates on existing processes
- Reduce inaccurate information & unknown sales promotions
- Have refresher training on missed opportunities to improve resolution and/or customer satisfaction

Our floor management processes have been a key contributor to our ability to realize favorable improvements in FCR and CSAT over the last two years resulting in significant annualized operational savings. Real-time floor support initiatives have also had a direct impact on employee retention because employees feel valued, supported, appreciated, empowered, and inspired.

About SQM

Since 1996, SQM has been a leading North American contact channel research firm VoC expert for measuring and improving organizations' FCR, operating costs, employee and customer satisfaction. We have done this by being operationally excellent at benchmarking, tracking, consulting and recognizing our clients' FCR, employee (Esat) and customer (Csat) satisfaction performance. Over 70% of our tracking clients improve their FCR and operating costs year over year. For the average call center SQM benchmarks, a 1% improvement in their FCR performance equals \$256,000 in annual operational savings. Our research also shows that when you improve your FCR, not only do you achieve operational savings, you also reduce customers at risk which is typically a 5-10 times greater savings opportunity than the operational FCR improvement savings.

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