8 Crucial Contact Center Communication Skills for Agents

- Strong communication skills allow agents to **quickly resolve queries**, **leading to improved metrics**, **better CX**, and **higher customer satisfaction scores**.

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How to Train and Foster Strong Communication Skills

Consider Nature vs. Nurture

While soft skills are often regarded as inherent traits linked to personality, this isn't entirely true. Some people may be better suited to certain forms of communication, but everyone can become better at expressing themselves. The communication skills we will discuss in this article are relevant to introverts, extroverts, and everyone in between.

Assess Skill Gaps

To effectively coach your agents, you first need to evaluate their existing skills. Using tools like scorecards, you can determine where communication skills are lacking and deliver targeted training to address these gaps. Blanket approaches can be a waste of resources. It's better to provide agents with individually-tailored plans and address clearly identified skill gaps.

Develop Dedicated Training Programs

Targeted training gets quicker results, keeps agents more engaged, and ensures that you're using your time effectively. Updating learning materials on a regular basis keeps things fresh, and bringing in external speakers adds new knowledge to your organization. Be sure to regularly review these programs and analyze their effectiveness.

Use Role-Playing Exercises

Nothing beats hands-on experience, but role-playing exercises are the next best thing. Training methods that involve the use of common scenarios increase agent competency and equip them with extensive knowledge of the challenges they will face in the call center. Make sure to incorporate call center quality assurance software as part of these exercises, as this will best replicate real-life agent-customer interactions.

Support New Hires

By establishing the importance of strong communication skills in the onboarding process, you can encourage new hires to grow in the direction that will benefit them moving forward. Make soft skills training part of onboarding, encourage new hires to reach out for support, schedule regular one-on-ones to see how they're getting on, or even create a mentoring system that helps new recruits settle in.

Deliver Regular Feedback and Coaching

Regular feedback is a key aspect of any successful training program and needs to come from both directions, from supervisors to agents and vice versa. A back-and-forth feedback dynamic will encourage improvement on both sides, facilitating agent growth and helping to refine training approaches.

Run Communication Skills Workshops

Running workshops from time to time can break up the typical training flow and inject new energy. With workshops, you can quickly get your team up to speed on a specific skill. For example, a day-long crash course in handling difficult customers may see improvements in conflict resolution faster than a series of small sessions.

Essential Communication Skills for Contact Center Agents

Clarity

Clarity is all about communicating in a clear and concise manner, using easily understandable, conversational language.

Authenticity

Authenticity is about honest engagement. Customers want a real conversation; they don't want an agent reading from a script.

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Active Listening

The ability to really listen to customers is one of the most important communication skills you can develop in your agents.

Mirroring

Mirroring is about matching the tone and language of the customer and, in the case of video calls, their body language and expressions.

Probing Questions

Insightful questioning is important for gathering the necessary information and getting to a resolution in a swift, effective manner.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to step into another person's shoes and understand where they're coming from. In the people-focused call center environment, this is a vital communication skill.

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Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is about turning a negative situation into a positive one.

Adaptability

While there are common call center scenarios that you can prepare for, agents must always expect the unexpected.

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