

## MANAGING THE OPERATION OF CALL CENTER: AN ATTEMPT TO IMPROVE SERVICE QUALITY FOR CUSTOMER SATISFACTION STUDY CASE AT PT ASTRA INTERNATIONAL TBK-ASTRAWORLD

Hadi Mukhaiyar and Aries F. Firman  
School of Business and Management  
Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia  
hadi.mukhaiyar@sbm-itb.ac.id

**Abstract**—As CRM company for automotive industry, AstraWorld face so many challenges, especially in call center services. Almost every day, our end customers make interaction with call center agents 24 hours and 7 days. The activities are also different and depend on the customers needs, such as inquiries, booking, complaint, customer requests, emergency assistance, etc. But during that time, there is none survey to measure whether the customer feel satisfied or dissatisfied so the company able to set a strategic to improve the operational quality of service. Another fact found from our database analysis research that the customers will make interaction with the call center after 6 month – 12 month later. So looking at this condition, positive or negative services given will determine the customers level of satisfaction or event determine whether the customer want to use call center services again. This project will share about what is the real expectation that the customers bring while using call center and how to manage the operational call center with excellent services. Initial survey from all aspects that affect Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) Index is conducted to all customers who ever made interaction with call center, such as System Accessibility, Process & Procedures, and People. System accessibility related how easy the customers able to reach call center agent after dialing up the hotline number. Process & procedures related on how flexible information requested able to deliver to the customers. And people related to agents level of competencies and knowledge in delivering all customers needs. To be able to find the root cause then additional surveys are required both from internal agents perspective and customers perspective. The problem solution offered focus on quality internal improvement, include Developing People Competencies and Enhancing Knowledge Management Features. Through these strategies hopefully able to develop professional call center agents with excellent services standards. And of course able to improve company CSAT score.

*Keywords: Call Center, Customers, Service Quality, Call Center Agent, Customer Satisfaction*

### 1. Introduction

AstraWorld is a strategic unit business of PT Astra International Tbk, build strategic initiative to defend and grow Astra's automotive core business through Customer Relationship Management (CRM). There are 5 networks that belong to PT. Astra International Tbk as its Authorize Dealer (Sales Operation), such as:

- a) Auto2000
- b) Astra International Daihatsu
- c) Astra International Isuzu
- d) Astra International BMW
- e) Astra International Peugeot

Every car buyer of brand Toyota, Daihatsu, Isuzu, BMW & Peugeot in dealer of PT. Astra International Tbk, automatically will be AstraWorld's members. AstraWorld main-core competencies include: (i) Customer Database Analysis and Segmentation (ii) Periodic Market Analysis (iii) Contact Center Management. Further on the discussion is about Contact Center Management (Call Center). The operation of call center depends on three major factors, namely people, technology and process.

Hiring professional call center agent is not that easy, especially in Indonesia. That's why a call center has to attract their applicants by preparing agent's matrix development plan. A promise strategy that used to develop people from any background to become a professional call center agent. The phases start from recruiting, training, and developing them into future leaders. In technology, an effective and efficient technology must be provided in order to support operational call center. This technology must be user friendly and able to be continuously enhanced. And for process, a call center has to have standard operational procedures that guide the operational in doing their activities.

Positioning in the middle to connect the Internal Customer (Sales Operation) with End Customer, the call center has to be able to manage both customer satisfaction (CSAT). But what are main key element competencies that affect CSAT Index? and How to improve the customer satisfaction from call center internal point of view? And what should the call center do while itself has limited authorization due to management policy by the Sales Operation (SO). For example, when the call center do not have informations requested by end customer because of the SO do not give the data based on policy above. And of course, if call center do not prepare for alternative solution then customer would feel dissatisfied and the worst case could bring the negative impact to that products/services itself. In this project, the solution provided is only from the internal quality improvement (focus on people, technology to help the people, and process in the way to develop the people competencies), where external factors that involved sales operation will not be discussed more details.

## 2. Business Issue Exploration

Every customer is unique customer because they have to be treated personally. The performance is not only measured on how many call handled successfully but also how the agent able to give memorable experience to the customers. Hopefully the customer feel satisfied and want to use the call center services further on. To influence customer loyalty, organizations must understand the factors that contribute to service quality (Anderson and Zemke 1998; Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1996). Researchers have proposed key factors that can produce high-quality service interactions, including employees' willingness to help customers and their knowledge and courtesy (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1985; Schneider and White 2004). However, the key employee behaviors associated with service quality are still not precisely specified and hence, often prove difficult to manage effectively.

### A. Conceptual Framework

There are two things that need to be concerned to improve CSAT Index. The first how to manage the operational service activities. And the second how to implement flexibility and effectiveness in giving handling solution to customer. The process used to measure whether the service quality meet customer expectation could be seen in Figure 1. This framework will guides anyone to improve their service quality standard through empirical inquiries data support. If the operational does not meet the expected CSAT then internal review could be take start from internal quality monitoring to measure potential problem and root cause analysis. Define internal strategic that focus on people and system support to overcome the problem. Do periodical measurement to make sure solution effectiveness until the operational service quality is improved.



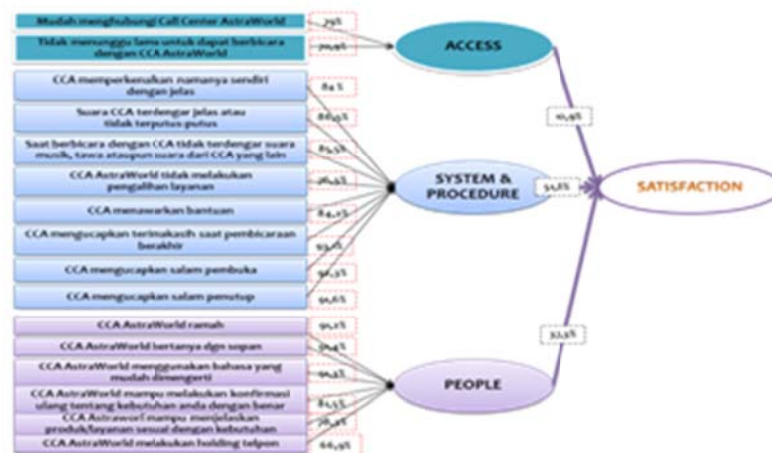
Figure 1. Call Center Conceptual Framework

### B. Method of Data Collection and Analysis

Data uses in this report are taken from operational data about which customers made an interaction with call center agents during period Oct-Nov and Dec 2012. From internal perspective, data collected by surveyd 11 agents who serve incoming call from customers in their day-to-day activities. In customer perspective survey activity is held to two-times. The first time survey is for 121 customers at Oct-Nov 2012 interaction period. This survey used to give a description about customer expectation when using call center services. The second survey is for 124 customers at Dec 2012 interaction period. All respondent information data are taken using random sampling methodology and the respondents are also coming from many different areas around Indonesia. All this survey activities are held by using CSAT result that evaluate all possibility aspects in delivering excellent services such as Accessibility, System & Procedures, and People as its references statistic data (see Figure 2).

### C. Analysis of Business Situation

Since one of the key success factors in managing call center is related to customer satisfaction index, then survey was conducted. The key elements criteria were defined statistically by Periodic Market Analysis Team. Customers who made interaction in Mar – May 2012 are surveyed (see Figure 2). All aspect that affect CSAT index such as access, system & procedures and also people were asked. The point for each key element are calculated based on customer satisfaction index score with range from 0%-100%. But for the number in the main three-keys were based on customer scale of priority that affect CSAT Index Level. The composition result of this surveyed are shown in this Figure 2. From the customers perspective, system & procedures are the most key that influence the CSAT.



### Figure 2. Key Elements that Affect CSAT Index

All data collected from Figure 2 are grouped into four key areas that related with agents competency skills: Telephone courtesy, listening/speaking, handling customer, and information accuracy. This data then will be compared with data collection taken both from internal quality perspective with customer perspective. The organization identified quality of service as a key goal, and routinely monitored customer service quality, for example, the representative “utilizes appropriate opening,” “utilizes appropriate voice tone and rate of speech,” “exhibits courtesy,” “demonstrates appropriate behavior,” “manages call efficiently,” and “utilizes proper hold/transfer technique.” These criteria were available to employees, but specific behaviors that should be associated with them were not formally specified (Rafaeli et al./ Customer Orientation Behaviors, 2008). From the first customers time survey, several key information are found (see figure below).

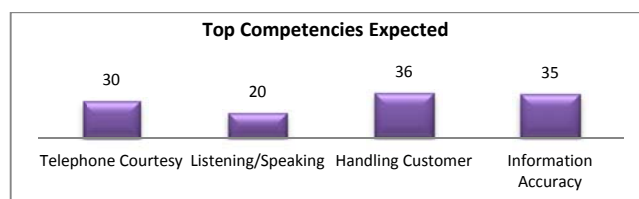


Figure 3. Top List of Competencies Need by the Customers (Oct-Nov 2012)

All these Voice of Customer (VOC) data become additional information to Figure 2. This is also strengthen the analysis that delivering an effective customer handling able to bring positive/negative impact to CSAT index. For example from Figure 2: "Agent take a hold during interaction with customer (handling customer skill), agent transfer the services requested by customer to other parties (handling customer skill), and agent have the ability to explain the product/services effectively (handling customer skill)" are the top-three key lowest elements score that affect CSAT index. From customers second time survey, a critical informations appeared (see Table 1). Index is the point of competencies level with scale 0%-100%. Where the more higher the numbers than the more customer feel "good" and "very good" to that skill competencies.

Table 1. Agents competencies score based on customer perspective (Dec 2012)

No	Skill Category	Index
1	Telephone Courtesy	80%
2	Handling Customer	77%
3	Listening/Speaking	83%
4	Information Accuracy	81%

In order to make sure that "Handling Customer Skill" is significantly impact Customer satisfaction index will be explained in more detail below:

#### Case 1- Table 2:

- From Table 2.a, Customer Satisfaction Level decrease because of the effect of low quality of handling skill agent
- From Table 2.b, different result happened because customer satisfaction level increase as the effect of improvement of agent's handling skill. Even though the increment just 0.9 point.

Table 2.a. The Effect of Handling Customer Skill Performance into Customer Satisfaction Level

Agent's Aniyah				CSAT		From Customer Point of View		
No	Skill Category	Oct-Nov	Dec	Oct-Nov	Dec	No	Skill Category	Index
1	Telephone Courtesy	18.0	18.5	89%	75%	1	Telephone Courtesy	88.5%
2	Handling Customer	21.0	21.0			2	Handling Customer	73.1%
3	Listening/Speaking	29.0	32.0			3	Listening/Speaking	88.5%
4	Information Accuracy	16.0	16.0			4	Information Accuracy	88.5%
		84	88					

Table 2.b. The Effect of Handling Customer Skill Performance into Customer Satisfaction Level

Agent's Rani				CSAT		From Customer Point of View		
No	Skill Category	Oct-Nov	Dec	Oct-Nov	Dec	No	Skill Category	Index
1	Telephone Courtesy	18.8	16.5	75%	100%	1	Telephone Courtesy	100%
2	Handling Customer	20.8	21.3			2	Handling Customer	100%
3	Listening/Speaking	30.8	32.0			3	Listening/Speaking	100%
4	Information Accuracy	16.0	16.0			4	Information Accuracy	100%
		86	86					

#### Case 2- Table 3:

In table 3, the result is different with table 2 but both shown the important of improving agents' handling skill competency.

- From Table 3.a, Customer Satisfaction Level increase but from quality service team handling customer is lower in Dec compare with Oct-Nov where from customer point of view the handling score index is higher comparing with other keys competency. But both internal

quality perspective and customer perspective agree that Handling Customer play an important role to improve satisfaction level.

- b. From Table 3.b, handling skill based on internal quality decrease 0.2 point and from customer point of view agent's handling skill is also not too good or just fair enough.

Table 3.a. The Effect of Handling Customer Skill Performance into Customer Satisfaction Level

Agent's Citra				CSAT		From Customer Point of View	
No	Skill Category	Oct-Nov	Dec	Oct-Nov	Dec	No	Skill Category
1	Telephone Courtesy	18.8	19.0	84%	74%	1	Telephone Courtesy
2	Handling Customer	21.8	19.7			2	Handling Customer
3	Listening Speaking	25.6	28.7			3	Listening Speaking
4	Information Accuracy	16.0	14.7			4	Information Accuracy

Table 3.b. The Effect of Handling Customer Skill Performance into Customer Satisfaction Level

Agent's Abri				CSAT		From Customer Point of View	
No	Skill Category	Oct-Nov	Dec	Oct-Nov	Dec	No	Skill Category
1	Telephone Courtesy	15.0	17.0	89%	75%	1	Telephone Courtesy
2	Handling Customer	22.2	22.0			2	Handling Customer
3	Listening Speaking	21.8	27.0			3	Listening Speaking
4	Information Accuracy	15.2	16.0			4	Information Accuracy

The important of Handling Customer Skill Level is not only effect the Customer Satisfaction Index but also effect the Net Promotor Score (NPS) Index. This result representing whether the customers want to promote AstraWorld call center to their relatives or not. See the figure below:

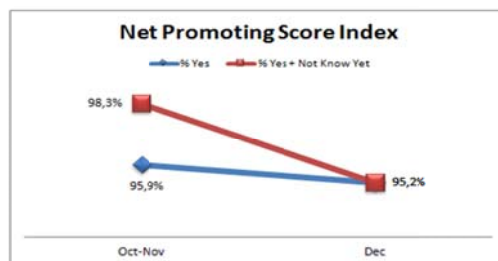


Figure 4. NPS Result – Will the customer promote the contact center to the others?

### 3. Business Solution

To overcoming the issues above, several alternative solutions are offered. Later on only the internal strategic factor that will be explained and analyzed as the optimal solution to improve internal service quality, as what been explained in the introduction above. .

#### D. Alternative of Business Solution

Based on data analysis above, AstraWorld have several key points that could be transform into operational strategy to improve the agent's competency skill especially Handling Customer skill that effect almost overall customer satisfaction (CSAT) index. The strategy are grouped into two alternative strategy plans: (i) Improve Internal Quality Standard that focus into three-main aspect: People, Technology, and Process (ii) Re-negotiate the uncontrollable factors, that focus to make sure all the informations are provided in call center as their first place. So agents have more confident in delivering all customers requests.

#### E. Analysis of Business Solution

From the alternative solutions above, internal quality improvement is the best strategy solution for call center management. The consideration is also based on call center conceptual framework that defined in Figure 1. More detail strategies to implement this solution are explained below.

##### a. People Development

While talking about people development, there are things need to be prepared to have professional call center agents. A Call center have to has Agents Development Plan (ADP) so the agents now their positioning in a company and their future roadmap as long as they keep on their top performances (see Figure 5).



Figure 5. Agents Development Plan Matrix

In order to make sure that ADP is running well, then training development plan is also required (see figure 6.a & 6.b). For any agent with an excellent performance will able to get all this matrix training based on their current Stage Level (Basic Agents or Senior Agents). in AstraWorld there are two type of activities : Inbound Agents and Outbound Agents. Inbound agents are people who are ready to receive any calls and ready to solve customers' problems or requests. Every caller have to be manage differently. Outbound agents are people who are doing campaign program such as Welcoming Campaign, Reminder Service Campaign, Lead Management Campaign, etc depend on their level of competency and working years experiences.



Figure 6.a. AstraWorld Call Center - Agents Training Development Plan



Figure 6.b. AstraWorld Call Center - Agents Training Development Plan

In this cases, the inbound agents are classified into Senior Agents Level. The considerations are because they have to have competencies to handle all 5-brands (Toyota, Daihatsu, Isuzu, BMW, & Peugeot) and have the competencies in handling different customers with certain expectation level. In this condition, experiences agents are the key to face such customers. And they also have to get all this matrix trainings in order to make sure the operational service excellence.

### **b. Coaching & Counselling (Cnc)**

Managing agents in their top performances is another difficult tasks to be accomplished. Because of people are uniquely different, each person merely responds individually to the behavior of others. In this project, the CnC methodology focuses on a person's social action. Exploring more about agent social styles will help the Team Leaders, Supervisor, Quality Service Team, etc to find the way to build positive environment and improve operational service performance. Everyone has had the experience of saying or doing something that was perfectly acceptable to a friend or coworker and then being surprised when the same behavior irritated someone else. But aside from admitting that this happens, most of us are unable to draw meaningful conclusions from these experiences to help us perform more effectively with people in the future.

Theory used in this project is taken from Merrill's technique, presented in *Personal Styles & Effective Performance*. Merrill's approach emphasizes the inter-relationships between behavior and social style. There are two types of behavior – “assertiveness” and “responsiveness.” A person's “assertiveness” is roughly the degree by which others see him as being forceful or directive. A person's “responsiveness” is how people express themselves and react to them. Those actions tend to be rooted in one of four primary social styles: Analytical, Amiable, Driving, and Expressive (see Figure 5). All people exhibit patterns of behavior that can be identified and responded to, and if the leaders can describe and adjust to these behaviors, then more satisfactory relationships could be achieved. In the end, the chances of success in any area of endeavor where the “people factor” is involved can be increased – without needing a deep understanding of people's inner selves.



Figure 5. Personal Styles and Effective Performance (Merrill D, and Reid, R (1999))

- 1) **Driver**  
Give the impression that they know what they want, where they are going, and how to get there quickly.
- 2) **Expressive**  
Appear communicative, warm approachable and competitive. They involve other people with their feelings and thoughts.
- 3) **Amiable**  
Place a high priority on friendships, close relationships, and cooperative behavior. They appear to get involved in feelings and relations between people.
- 4) **Analytical**  
Live life according to facts, principles, logic and consistency. Often viewed as cold and detached but appear to be cooperative in their actions as long as they can have some freedom to organize their own efforts.

By finding the informations about agents personal social quadrant will make the CnC between leaders and agents meet the objectives. In this strategy, CnC situation is not always at the end or the begining of agents contract evaluation not only when there are critical issues happened but also when there are good things happened in operational. For the agents who deliver excellent services could become the role model for the rest of the team. In this condition the agents need to be convinced the same as when there are agents need feedback after some mistakes made.

### ***c. Knowledge Management***

Knowledge management known as the source of all information related to operational call center, such as information update/news, test online session, and also media to see agents report performances. Every professional call center has their own knowledge management system. But the most popular platform system is Knowledge management using intranet based system. The reason are because it easy to manage and also easy to maintain it stability.

Several features that are provided by this knowledge management system, such as:

- a) Intranet Platform which is more stabile and easy to access
- b) User friendly and able to be customized
- c) Real time information display
- d) Able to used for surveys & voting
- e) Having certain level of authorization, such as agents, Team Leader, Supervisor or even administrator

- f) Could be access from any branches on nation wide in the same network domain but can not be accessed from public domain (external)
- g) Paper less because all information documented in system server



Figure 7. AstraWorld's Knowledge Management System

In order to utilize the system more, knowledge management could be developed and used as agents e-learning system (see Figure 7). Since the operational always face difficult situations and sometime there are agents who have best practices in handling the cases, so these strategies below could be used:

- a) For any best practices in handling booking services, inquiries and even complaints then the VR will be uploaded to system complete with it's Issues and Handling Solution given.
- b) Settle best practices forum sharing so the agents not only learnt through the e-learning system but also directly from the agents who handled the calls.

[illegible]

Figure 8. Sample Design for E-Learning System in AstraWorld's KMS

Since one of the strongest point of using this KMS platform is because this system is easy to be customized so the template design and features could continously enhanced upon user request (see Figure 8).

**(ii) Re-negotiate the uncontrollable factors**

Repair the uncontrollable factors will require extra time. Because parties involved have to get real and countable advantages through this plan. The detail will not be explained in this paper because it a part of external factors (Limitation of the study).

#### 4. Conclusion and Implementation Plan

Every call center managers has their own unique strategies and of course it depend on company industrial type. AstraWorld positioning as the biggest CRM in Automotive in Indonesia also play a different strategy. Especially since AstraWorld has to manage two-customers: Internal Customers (Sales Operation) and End Customers. Call Center nowadays used as Customer access strategy. An extention of company strategy to get closer to its customer through tangible and realistic system. Managing the operational of call center, end customer want to be connected with resources capable of delivering the desired information and services, without taking care about the issues that are happening internally. Because customer behavior evolving rapidly and growing increasingly more

savvy and well informed. Customer will not buy or use something that they do not get a comprehensive explanation about the products/services.

From this final project, the conclusions as below:

1. CSAT level will effect the customer behavior to use call center as their alternative channel next time. From Figure 3 customer put "Flexibility and Effectiveness" in handling the customer as their first priority competency expected. This is supported from the case-1 (Table 2 a&b) and also case-2 (Table 3 a&b) that share how big the impact of Customer Handling Skill into CSAT and the probaility of them to use our call center further on.
2. CSAT level also give an impact to NPS index. Where NPS level will used to determined whether the customer want to tell postivie word of mouth to the others.

Through the business solution offered by improving internal quality standard is the best strategic alternative to get excellent in call center services. Since the implementation required long-term evalution, especially all things related to people. The timeline that able to be used is given in Table 4. The timeline while finishing this final project could be seen from the table below (Table 4). Among these five-main keys, research framework expensed the longest time to accomplished. Because all the problems issues in the problem formulation have to be proven. Otherwise this final project hypothesis will not accurate. But with this timeline, this final project hopefully able to give postive contribution in improving call center service quality to all peoples who are interested in managing call center.

Table 4. Project's Timeline

No	Activity	2013								2014	
		Feb				Apr	May	Jun	Aug		Sep
		W1	W2	W3	W4						
1	People Development										
	a. Define Key Objective for Each Training Modul										
	b. Phases										
	a. Recognition Phase										
	b. Development Phase					6-12mth					
	c. Innovation Phase					24mth					
2	Coaching & Counseling										
	a. Mapping Agents Social Style										
	b. Prepare CnC Form Evaluation										
3	Knowledge Management										
	a. Define System Framework										
	b. Prepare Learning Procedures										
	c. System UAT										
	d. Socialization										
	e. Go Live										
4	Define KPI Measurement										
5	Define Monitoring & Controlling Mechanism										

To be able to implement the timeline above, there are some efforts needed.

- a) Budget allocated for training development program  
The cost expensed is relatively depends on certain aspects such as number of batch provided for each training, institution that deliver the program, numbers of participant attending the training program and others.
- b) System Development for Enhancing Knowledge Management Featurres  
Since AstraWorld used intranet system platform so the cost expensed could be reduced significantly. An IT engineer who has capability in using dot-net system platform is already enough to develop this system.
- c) Human Resources  
A few of peoples from any specialities are required such as people that have competency in HRD, people that have competencies in IT Development, and also people that have competencies in psychology knowledge.

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