

ACTIVE LISTENING IN THE CONTACT CENTRE

TOP TIPS FOR OPTIMISING THE USE OF ACTIVE LISTENING IN THE CONTACT CENTRE

Active listening in the contact centre is about agents fully concentrating on what is really being said in any interaction with a customer or a prospect, rather than just passively 'hearing' the message of the caller. It's about remaining silent when the customer is speaking and not interrupting but then positively acknowledging what the customer has said. It avoids the pitfalls of advisors jumping to conclusions.

Active listening can improve job effectiveness for agents, ensure compliance with the latest industry regulations, increase customer satisfaction and significantly improve first contact resolution.

In this piece, we provide five top tips for optimising the benefits of active listening in the contact centre.

TIP 1. OPTIMISING THE QUALITY OF ANY CALL

Active listening can be used to make sure your customer interactions are always of the highest possible quality. Employ analytics to check the clarity and the rate of speech on any call, to help eliminate cross-talking and interruptions and achieve a balanced speech ratio between agent and customer. The stress levels displayed by agent and end customer can even be monitored and evaluated, in turn enabling supervisors to see how effectively agents are handling the mood of each customer.

TIP 2. USE ANALYTICS TO DRIVE UP CUSTOMER RETENTION RATES

Active listening can play an important role in helping to drive the efforts of any business to increase the 'save rate' in the contact centre and reduce overall levels of customer churn. In a best practice approach, agents can be trained to identify phrases that may indicate a desire on the part of the customer to leave and how to use retention toolkit components including promotional offers to keep them onside. Agent attempts to save the customer can then be measured using retention metrics and reported on daily to keep agents focused.

TIP 3. USE ACTIVE LISTENING TO IDENTIFY AGENT TRAINING NEEDS

Organisations can use real-time analytics software to measure whether agents are actively listening to what the customer says, not interrupting them, and ensuring they are acknowledging them to demonstrate their understanding. With a technology-driven active listening approach, any variation from agreed processes can be flagged up in real-time to agents and/or to their supervisors who can use the results to form the basis of future training programmes, personalised to each agent.

It is important to seek out technology that allows managers to take a queue-wide, hotline wide or indeed call centre wide view to identify agents that need more training and encouragement, together with those super-agents that can lead by example. An active listening approach helps pinpoint what the most successful agents do differently – and these learning points can then be shared across the contact centre teams.

TIP 4. FOCUS ON DRIVING UP SALES

Monitor the performance of your sales agents to ensure they present appropriate offers and never miss an opportunity to pitch. Proactively measure customer sales cues and the corresponding agent sales pitch rate to make certain agents are actively listening, maximising their sales activity and managing objections with ease. To successfully build on this approach, organisations should also encourage contact centre agents to actively listen for up-sell sales cues in the knowledge gathering part of the conversation.

TIP 5. CONCENTRATE ON COMPLIANCE

Ensure work with well-defined processes and a full check list of phrases to use and to avoid to make certain that they remain compliant at all times. Monitor calls continuously to eradicate weaknesses that threaten the organisation's reputation, or introduce regulatory risk. Put real time alerts in place when compliance is breached in order to prevent any possible recurrence.

REAPING THE REWARDS

Ultimately, any business with a sales through service objective, or any organisation with a subscription/ repeat business model, potentially stands to benefit from adopting an active listening strategy. That's because active listening when deployed efficiently and effectively can bring businesses such a broad array of benefits, typically ranging from improved sales performance to better customer retention and from enhanced agent training to a more watertight approach to compliance. Many businesses today use contact centres to reach out to customers and prospects to actively engage with them but in an increasingly customer-centric world, it is those organisations that actively listen to their customers that gain the knowledge and understanding that really allows them to stand out from the pack.

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Contact [Enghouse Interactive](https://www.enghouseinteractive.co.uk) for further insights into the tools for active listening and find out how quality management and real-time speech analytics can help you deliver a better service to your customers.