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A Sivox™ white paper

## **Application of Learning:** *Call Centers — the Power of Dynamic Simulation*

Sivox™ — the award-winning voice recognition-driven simulation training platform — provides a richly immersive learning experience that delivers increased information retention, significant financial savings, enhanced call quality and improved productivity.

**SIVOX™**

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**Call center employee attrition rates are now at an all-time high, averaging 50 percent per year — with some call centers reporting data as extreme as 70-90 percent.**

## Introduction

As the global economy emerges from recession, experts predict the call center industry is once again poised for exponential growth, at a promising annual rate of 11.5 percent through 2016. [1] Yet despite this forecast, call center employee attrition rates are now at an all-time high, averaging 50 percent per year — with some call centers reporting data as extreme as 70-90 percent. [2]

Agents' overall job satisfaction is a leading contributor to today's high turnover rate. In this white paper, we examine dynamic simulation training as a proven means to address the challenges call centers face, including customer satisfaction and attrition.

Within this framework, we introduce Sivox — immersive, voice-recognition-driven simulation training that delivers increased information retention, significant financial savings, enhanced call quality and improved productivity.

## Call Centers' Current State

Over 160,000 call centers are in operation worldwide. While the call center industry weathered the recession better than most, as a whole the industry is in a state of flux. Alarming high attrition rates are fueling an urgent need for call centers to re-evaluate the effectiveness of their employee retention strategies, as the demand for experienced agents is more prevalent than ever before.

**Industry experts suggest full-time call center agents will likely only remain in their roles from three to four years — and a conservative per-agent estimated replacement cost is \$10-15k.**

### *Customers' perspectives*

A recent survey by Accenture revealed consumers' attitudes about customer service. Nearly 75 percent of the consumers surveyed in the United States had ended their relationship with companies as a result of poor customer service. The most frequently cited reason for switching? According to respondents, "Dealing with customer service agents who cannot answer my questions." [3]

### *Job satisfaction*

Agents who are satisfied professionally translate into less turnover for call centers. And lower rates of attrition, in turn, impact the quality and overall level of experience of call center staff — a key customer satisfaction indicator revealed in a recent Accenture survey. [3] Further evidence of the agent- and customer-satisfaction connection came to light in a global study where over 57 percent of the respondents identified a strong link between employee engagement and a better customer experience. [4]

### *Retention*

Industry experts suggest full-time call center agents will likely only remain in their roles from three to four years; and a conservative per-agent estimated replacement cost is \$10-15k. [5] While the cost of replacing an agent is surely significant, the cost of losing business due to dissatisfied customers can severely affect a company's bottom line. In light of this, retaining talent is becoming a top priority as call centers assess their growth strategies.

In a consumer satisfaction survey conducted by Accenture, nearly 70 percent of the respondents indicated they expect the companies with which they do business to provide service by “more knowledgeable” representatives.

### *Knowledge transfer*

Each year in the United States, call centers train approximately 1.5 million new agents. In light of this attrition statistic, it's not surprising that nearly 70 percent of the respondents from a recent Accenture consumer satisfaction survey indicated they expect service from “more knowledgeable” representatives. [3]

As evidenced by the Accenture survey, knowledgeable agents are critical to call centers' survival — yet the alarming number of new agents trained each year suggests that experienced agents may be few and far between. To keep pace with rapidly changing markets, products and services, call centers must implement new training quickly to ensure agents have the background they need to properly serve customers. This, coupled with skyrocketing industry-wide attrition rates, directly supports the need for effective, easy-to-implement training.

### **Training**

Research indicates that agents retain more information when they interact with content. Classroom (passive) training, is inefficient, and least cost-effective in terms of hours, labor and facilities.

#### *Static*

By definition, **static** means “unchanging.” Most static agent software simulations use pre-recorded customer calls or scripted lessons, in which the trainee is expected to respond verbally at various points in the script. Upon completion of the static scenario, the agent is then scored and graded; no interaction occurs between the trainee and the simulated customer script. This type of training does not provide the agent with any qualitative feedback.

**Dynamic software simulations actually “hear” trainees’ verbal interactions and respond with appropriate suggestions, and guide trainees along optimal, best-practice paths during training, rather than simply letting session dialogue routinely play itself out.**

When training new agents, most call centers rely on role-play training with mentor-coaches and software system training before transitioning agents to actual customer calls. Even in the most advanced facilities where software simulations seek to recreate the agent-to-customer experience, the simulations are static, restricted to tight scripts that do not provide immediate feedback to trainees.

Static one-on-one training is costly, time-consuming and inefficient. Consider:

- How many hours does it take for a coach to role-play with each new trainee?
- Is a coach available to train one-on-one with existing agents as new products and services are adopted?
- Will a coach consistently deliver messages and quality mentoring throughout each new-hire’s training cycle?

### *Dynamic*

In contrast, **dynamic** simulation training adapts to changes during sessions. To closely mimic live one-on-one coaching, dynamic software simulations actually “hear” trainees’ verbal interactions, and respond with appropriate suggestions. Dynamic simulations guide trainees along optimal, best-practice paths during training, rather than simply letting session dialogue routinely play itself out. For meaningful evaluation to occur, simulation systems track trainees’ progress at key junctures throughout each session.

**Designed to mirror agents' desktops, Sivox simulations feature a realistic patented voice recognition-driven software coach that guides trainees through each session, for a richly immersive learning experience.**

## The Sivox Advantage

Sivox is award-winning simulation training that delivers proven value to call centers across a broad range of industries, including financial services, telecom, health care, benefits, pharmaceutical, collections and retail. Designed to mirror agents' desktops, Sivox simulations feature a realistic patented voice recognition-driven software coach that guides trainees through each session, for a richly immersive learning experience.

### *Dynamic simulation development*

Based on customer-specific best practices, simulation scripts are developed by inputting text into the Sivox system. The text, in turn, is processed into a "spoken" script from the customer voice generator. Key concept lists are derived from the scenario for the interactive portion of the simulation. Variables are then embedded into the script that instruct the voice-recognition engine to listen for specific phrases from the trainee such as, "My name is..." and "How can I help you?"

Next, key IT system data input screens are captured from the customer's in-house IT systems and replicated in the Sivox environment. This ensures that the screens the trainee sees during the simulation will behave exactly as the company's live data systems, including data entry forms and dialog boxes. Finally, the simulation is tagged with system checks — specific checkpoints in the simulation to track if the trainee has accomplished the IT system tasks during that particular portion of the simulation.

**With Sivox, call centers no longer need to rely exclusively on their IT departments to implement training. The platform's intuitive design allows anyone with the ability to use a keyboard and mouse to create a dynamic simulation.**

### *Easy, efficient implementation*

Easily modified by non-technical employees, with Sivox, call centers no longer need to rely exclusively on their IT departments to implement training. The platform's intuitive design allows anyone with the ability to use a keyboard and mouse to create a dynamic simulation.

Unlike other simulation products, Sivox does not require programming skills to create or update simulations. Highly scalable, Sivox leverages existing hardware for non-intrusive implementation into even the most complex call center environments. Create simulations quickly and easily ... Edit courses in-house, and redeploy simulations fast with user-friendly configuration tools.

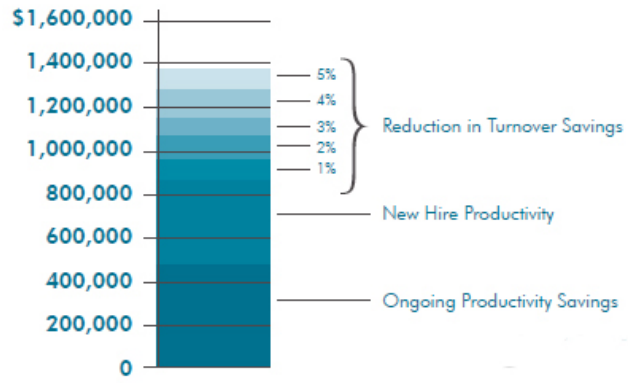
### **Results**

Agents who learn through dynamic simulation are more confident, have a better understanding of the products they support, and are more satisfied with their own performance. Sivox helps call centers realize higher levels of productivity, lower turnover and better call quality.

**A Fortune 100 Sivox customer reports projected savings of nearly \$1.4 million due to the significant impact Sivox has had on its call center's retention rate, and new- and projected productivity.**

### *Return on Investment*

A Fortune 100 Sivox customer reports projected savings of nearly \$1.4 million, due to the significant impact Sivox has had on its call center's retention rate.



Fortune 100 Sivox customer — projected savings

Additional productivity results realized include:

- **Attain a 30% lower average handling time (AHT)**  
Improve AHT dramatically in as little as three weeks.
- **Increase agents' information retention by 15-40%**  
Achieve 90% information retention via simulation-based training, as compared to only 50% via traditional methods.
- **Achieve performance goals 25-40% faster**  
Experience dramatically improved agent performance in only 30-90 days.
- **Reduce initial training time by 10-25%**  
Deliver coaching with context; view scores and report results immediately.

**Dynamic one-on-one simulation training dramatically improves key-concept retention; boosts agents' confidence and competence; and provides trainers and coaches with real-time feedback on agents' progress.**

## Summary

Dynamic one-on-one simulation training dramatically improves agents' key-concept retention; boosts agents' confidence and competence; and provides trainers and coaches with real-time feedback.

Among the many operational challenges call centers face today, recent research suggests these are most critical:

- Customers' increasingly high service expectations
- Waning agent job satisfaction
- Skyrocketing attrition rates

The Sivox training platform solves these challenges via an immersive learning environment in which dynamic simulations interwoven with instant feedback, scoring and real-time reporting are delivered.

## Resources

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3. Accenture. (November 11, 2011). "2009 Global Consumer Satisfaction Survey." [www.accenture.com](http://www.accenture.com)
4. ICMI. (February 2011). "2011 ICMI Balancing Call Center Efficiency and the Customer Experience Report" [www.icmi.com](http://www.icmi.com)
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