WHITE PAPER

Building an Effective Quality Management Evaluation Form

One of the most challenging but essential components of a robust quality assurance process is building an effective quality management evaluation form. Don't underestimate its importance. It embodies the most important objectives of the contact center and is the gold standard against which agent behaviors are measured. In this article, we'll examine some best practices for creating great evaluation forms and give you a formula that really works.

Be Organized from the Start

Think through the entire process you will follow to create and refine your evaluation forms. In this article we have recommended the following sequence of activities, but you will likely have to tweak it a bit to fit your own organization:

Identify Important Goals

Contact centers are complex organisms with many stakeholders and objectives. Often goals compete with each other such as high productivity vs. great customer experience, and that makes the challenge of creating a good evaluation form all the more difficult.

To get a comprehensive understanding of your primary goals and their priorities, conduct a "focus group" of your stakeholders. Stakeholders might include key representatives from all relevant lines of business, senior contact center leadership, office of the CFO, leaders from major functional areas such as sales, marketing and customer service as well as agents, trainers, managers, quality analysts, supervisors and team leads. Document what each group is trying to achieve, and make it as consumable as possible for all. The reality is that each area will have its own priorities for the contact center (often competing), and this collective forum will allow you to get everything on the table in plain view to all. Typical goals include improving agent performance, understanding customer experience, measuring compliance, understanding the struggles of new hires, ensuring proper channel-specific behaviors, identifying best practices and evaluating market acceptance of a new product, to name a few. With the goals articulated for each group you will quickly see the commonalities and differences among groups, and you should be able to identify about how many evaluation forms you will need.

Map Goals to KPIs

Goals are a start, but they need to be converted into observable benchmarks for agents in order to effect consistency across the agent pool. KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) are the behaviors you are documenting in the form itself. In most contact centers, there will be a set of core benchmarks that capture universal expectations across the entire business as well as benchmarks that are customized to the particular line of business, vertical market, or communication channel. Common examples of core KPIs include:

- Did not interrupt the caller unnecessarily
- Made empathetic statements when appropriate
- Maintained control of the call
- Avoided the use of jargon/slang
- Adjusted pace to accommodate the caller
- Maintained a level of courtesy throughout the call
- Showed willingness to help through positive statements when necessary
- Asked appropriate questions to help fact find needs
- Used appropriate opening and closing statements based on company policy

And then there are unique behaviors in each channel, line of business, vertical market, etc., and some examples of custom KPIs include:

- Maintained appropriate sentence structure in responses (email)
- Provided timely response to inquiry (customer service)
- Consistently used all resource to service the customer (VIP desk)
- Maintained assumptive sales techniques throughout interaction (sales process)
- Proper recording disclosures given at the start of call (collections)
- Attempted to collect payment during conversation (collections)
- Verified appropriate security level details (financial)
- Communicated accurate pricing during interaction (order desk)

It is important to note that agents should be evaluated based on their behaviors, not on their attitudes. Although attitudes may be an indicator of likely performance, generally attitudes are too difficult to measure objectively. Specific behaviors, although sometimes arguable, make much more unambiguous KPIs than attitudes. Also, when it comes to coaching time, the evaluator can say specifically what the agent did that necessitated coaching.

Structure Your Form Template

Now that we have contacted the stakeholders, solicited their goals, chosen the number of evaluation forms to be created and identified KPIs (aka desired behaviors), we need to structure the evaluation forms so they are as easy to use as possible for the evaluators. The sequence of questions on each form should mirror the general call flow, so the evaluator does not have to jump around on the form or go back and listen to the recording multiple times. Each line of business should understand their own general call flow, so they should be able to help you structure the evaluation form applicable to them. Generally, you want to put behaviors relating to the entire call (like communication skills) at the end so the evaluator has the entire contents of the call available to make an assessment.

The following is an example of a typical selection of behaviors and ordering to use for evaluation.

- Opening
- Communication Skills
- Customer Interaction
- Product Knowledge
- Sales Techniques
- Compliance
- Closing

Assess Weights for Scoring

Refer back to your initial investigation of goals to help understand their relative importance. Obviously, you want to put more weight on the behaviors that are KPIs for more important goals. If these weights are not right, quality results will not map back to great customer experiences and you will not be able solve problems with coaching.

In addition to weighted scoring of KPIs, you might elect to include bonus questions to reward extraordinary behavior (usually included near the end of the evaluation form). You also might include "Auto Fail" questions, especially if monitoring for compliance issues with high fines. If you are using a form for the first time, you might not know how to weight a question. In such a case, pick a weight in the middle of your range to create a baseline. Then watch the outcome when you vary the weight higher or lower. If your results get better when you increase the weighting value, you are on the right track! An example of how weights might be used in the first two sections of the evaluation form structure shown above might be:

Opening: 10 points

- **Proper opening: 2**
- **Proper verification: 4**
- **Appropriate fact finding used to determine needs: 4**

Communication Skills: 20 points

- **Did not interrupt the caller unnecessarily: 7**
- **Maintained control of the call: 6**
- **Adjusted pace to accommodate the caller: 3.5**
- **Maintained courtesy throughout the call: 3.5**

Create Scoring Questions

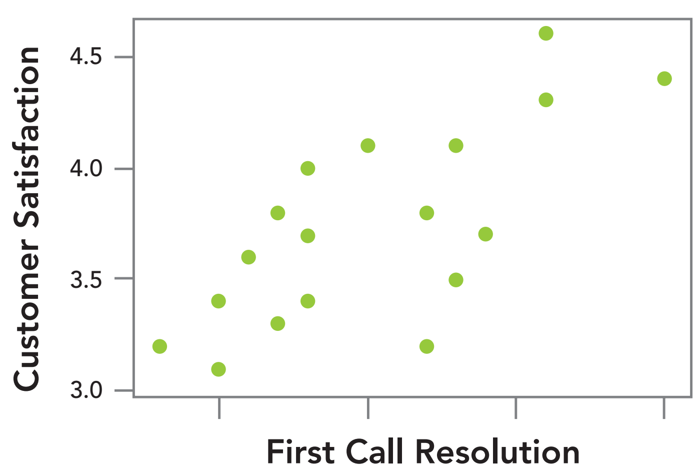
Next, we need to create the actual scoring questions and that are such an essential part of the entire QA process. Scoring questions can take many forms: custom, yes/no, true/false and excellent/good/fair/poor, among others. Questions can be subjective or objective, and certainly objective questions are preferable, but you have to look at each behavior and decide whether it is something that can be measured objectively, e.g., compliance is typically unambiguous, and a yes/no question will fit the bill.

You also must decide how to report the scores in a way that is most useful. Common displaying options include percentages, absolute point scores, defect rate, pass/fail or even no scoring. If too many numbers are used, agents can become focused on just changing the number itself rather than fixing the underlying issue.

When you have settled upon scoring questions and reporting preferences, be sure to create a Scoring Guide that explains every behavior and how it should be scored. Give clear examples so the intent is clear to agents, supervisors, analysts and others in the QA process. Then train management and agent regarding these guidelines so there's no confusion later that can lead to perceived unfairness.

Test Correlation

A final important step in the building of an effective quality management evaluation form is to determine the correlation between your quality data and the strategic goals of the company such as customer satisfaction, customer effort index and net promoter score. By doing a mathematical correlation between the strategic goal and the aggregate scores for various KPIs, you can identify the behaviors that really move the needle for the company and those that don't. Weight the important behaviors more heavily, and make sure agents know the key role they have in reaching company goals by emphasizing the behaviors that move the needle.



Putting It All Together

Effective quality management evaluation forms lie at the very heart of every well-oiled quality assurance process. We have provided you with a simple but powerful process for building evaluation forms that should ensure that you achieve your strategic goal. Get the people with a vested interest in contact center quality together. Identify key behaviors (probably between 15 and 30). Focus your efforts on fostering those behaviors. Develop weights to enforce their relative importance. Develop the specific questions you will use on the form, and make sure agents are involved in the process. Check the effectiveness of your form by correlating behavior achievement with achievement of strategic goals. Refine your quality forms with this new information. It's a process of continuous improvement. If you revisit your evaluation forms every 6 months or so, you are sure to see big improvements in your ability to reach those important customer satisfaction targets.

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