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CALL CENTERS DOING THEIR PART TO MAKE EVERY DAY EARTH DAY

Article examines call center industry's opportunities to help reduce corporations' carbon footprint by reducing energy and materials usage, and vehicle miles traveled.

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO — April 8, 2010 — Contact Centers could be the key enabler in corporations' efforts to reduce the environmental impact of business, according to the International Customer Management Institute (ICMI), now in its 25th year.

No doubt, green is red hot. Unfortunately, all the noise that individuals and businesses are making about their half-hearted efforts to be environmentally friendly is its own form of pollution. Going green seems to be more about, "look at me" than, "look what we need to do." True, some individuals and corporations do a lot in the way of conserving resources and energy, and those efforts are deserving of some recognition; but the truth is, all the measures that people and businesses are now taking – or, in many cases, merely *say* they are taking – to reduce their carbon footprint are the sort of measures that we should have been taking (and have been advised to take by environmental experts) for decades.

Experts agree that it's time to move beyond the politics and PR of environmentalism, and get down to what can and needs to be done. As a contact center professional, you may be thinking that a green initiative should be led by C-level execs. Or perhaps you are thinking that since the contact center doesn't pump out pollution or consume energy like manufacturing plants do, going green doesn't really pertain to your area of the business. But going green is everybody's responsibility, and there are myriad things a contact center can do in that regard.

ICMI's Community Services Manager, Greg Levin, offers best practices in his latest article, "Going Green: Minimizing the Contact Center's Carbon Footprint" <http://www.icmi.com/knowledgecenter/details.aspx?id=2028>." Among those best practices, which some contact centers are already using, are:

- Implementing a home agent program.
- Embracing e-learning.
- Ramping up advanced self-service options.

"E-learning is green learning. First off, it's paperless, and when you are talking about large contact centers with upwards of 500-1,000 agents, eliminating the need to continually print and distribute paper-based training materials can save forests of trees, not to mention beaucoup bucks," writes Levin, a 15-year veteran of following and reporting on best practices in contact centers and customer service.

"E-learning also cuts down dramatically on the amount of travel that staff – particularly home agents – need to do to receive the training and development they need. For example, at World Travel Holdings (WTH), the contact center uses an internal e-learning site (WTHUniversity) and webcams for coaching and training with it home agents, who represent roughly 40 percent of the center's workforce."

Levin is also a long-time advocate of home agent programs. The benefits of remote agents are numerous, but here, he focuses on the environmental benefits of reducing vehicle miles traveled and real estate consumption. “This is one of the greenest things a contact center – especially a large one – can do. Enabling agents to telecommute reduces not only air pollution, greenhouse gases and gasoline consumption by cutting out the morning car or bus commute for home-based employees, it cuts down significantly on the power needed to heat, cool and light large buildings and operate IT equipment.”

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Greg Levin is available to comment on this story

Greg Levin has been researching and writing about call centers since he joined ICMI in 1994. Today, Greg's feature articles and case studies appear monthly on www.icmi.com. In addition, he has spoken on a diverse range of customer contact topics at numerous industry conferences and other events.

About ICMI

The International Customer Management Institute (ICMI), celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2010, is the leading global provider of comprehensive resources for customer management professionals – from frontline agents to executives – who wish to improve contact center operations, empower contact center employees, and enhance customer loyalty. ICMI's experienced and dedicated team of industry insiders, analysts, and consultants are committed to providing uncompromised objectivity and results-oriented vision through the organization's respected lineup of professional services including: Training and Certification, Consulting, Events, and Informational Resources. Founded in 1985, ICMI continues to serve as one of the most established and respected organizations in the call center industry.

ICMI is a part of UBM Live which provides leading integrated media solutions and professional services across 20 different markets. Operating across the globe, its events, training, publications, award programs, and websites offer professionals in Interiors, Security, Venues, Customer Management, Safety & Health and Facilities the ultimate experience in learning, networking, and business development.

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