

Discover Why Contact Center Quality Doesn't Measure Up — And What You Can Do About It

Optimize costs, improve customer satisfaction, and strengthen the contact center's strategic value by getting a proper perspective on your quality monitoring program.

In Brief:

- Learn how to optimize costs by focusing quality measures on factors you know will have positive results
- Identify steps to increase customer satisfaction by sharpening analysis of satisfiers and dissatisfiers
- Discover how to enhance your contact center's strategic value to the organization

Is your investment in quality monitoring paying off through higher levels of customer satisfaction? This whitepaper discusses how you can increase customer satisfaction — and the center's strategic value — by fine-tuning quality monitoring processes. It looks at how internally focused measures and metrics need to be adjusted so that organizations never lose sight of customers' preferences, and considers why it is important to analyze the correlation between quality measures and data sources that reveal customer satisfaction across all channels. The whitepaper closes with practical steps organizations can take to improve quality monitoring and increase customer satisfaction.



Discover Why Contact Center Quality Doesn't Measure Up — And What You Can Do About It

The Current Challenge

Contact centers are the linchpin in efforts to bind customers to your organization, whether to sales and marketing or to services and information. If you are not making the link between the frontline and the bottom line — and constantly seeking ways to further capitalize on and optimize that link — you are missing a crucial opportunity to add value to the contact center's role (and yours) within the organization.

One area where ICMI has identified a need to use and improve the contact center's contributions is quality monitoring and measurement. We find that while organizations devote a significant share of their budget and personnel to tools and processes for monitoring, they struggle with how to align measures with strategic objectives that have the most impact on the bottom line. As a result, when funding slows and executives look for places to trim spending, quality monitoring gets cut because the center cannot demonstrate that it is truly mission-critical.

So we ask: Do you know whether your contact center's quality program investments are giving you the return you need? Can your organization analyze the cost of quality monitoring and determine whether it is effectively

contributing to strategic objectives such as improved customer satisfaction? If not, your organization may be squandering resources and not getting full business value.

ICMI believes that organizations should be enjoying higher ROI from quality monitoring and measurement. We find that they gain the highest ROI when their contact centers are able to understand the cost of quality monitoring, align monitoring processes with objectives that are strategic to the organization and continuously improve quality monitoring to maintain that alignment.

In this brief, we will examine reasons why current approaches in many organizations are falling short. Critical to assessing the value of quality monitoring is gaining an understanding of the cost of quality; this brief will provide guidance to enable you to analyze and optimize costs. We will look at why increasing the contact center's strategic value hinges on choosing the right quality measures — and why correlating "voice of the customer" information with current quality measures can aid in choosing ones that are aligned with strategic objectives. Finally, this brief will provide leading practices to help you achieve goals for improving your quality monitoring and measurement.



ROI THAT MEANS SOMETHING

Organizations gain the highest ROI when their contact centers are able to understand the cost of quality monitoring and align monitoring processes with objectives that are strategic to the organization.

What Are You Spending on Quality?

Most organizations address performance by monitoring and measuring *quality*; that is, they record, review and score a sampling of calls and data about interactions to ensure that agents are complying with internal performance standards for things like first-call resolution (FCR), accurate following of scripts and adherence to regulations. Research suggests that even in medium-sized organizations, quality monitoring and management can account for up to 15 percent of the entire contact center budget. With growing pressure to manage costs, organizations need to understand what they are spending on quality and analyze how the costs correlate with quality monitoring measures and metrics. Only then can organizations determine if they are spending too much or too little.

In comparison with other business units, such as manufacturing, contact centers have been getting a pass when it comes to assessing the cost and ROI of quality processes. Historically, these other business units have implemented PAF (Prevention, Appraisal and Failure) modeling or similar methods to control and measure the cost of delivering quality products. Our view is that contact centers should be no different; they must undertake careful analysis of the cost of quality so that they can see, for example, what percentage of the cost per contact is devoted to quality monitoring. This type of analysis can help you determine the areas where money may be slipping through the contact center's fingers with little to show in customer satisfaction and loyalty — and where the intelligence of a focused quality program can be used to capture the value from the investment.

One approach is the Cost of Quality (CoQ) system. CoQ is most commonly used in manufacturing but, because of its usefulness, its adoption is growing across a variety of operating environments. This quality management methodology was pioneered in 1951 by Joseph Juran, a trail blazer in quality monitoring and discoverer of the Pareto principle. The primary objective of a CoQ measurement system is to find the level of quality that minimizes its total cost. By identifying the appropriate level of quality expenditure, operational leaders gain greater leverage in managing overall contact center cost and delivering an effective quality management program.

Figure 1 (next page) offers an example of CoQ analysis for a contact center with 101 FTEs. The example divides the analysis into the two basic CoQ components: detailed metrics and global metrics. CoQ is typically measured as a percentage of manufacturing or sales cost; in the contact center, the formula would call for measurement as a percentage of the cost per contact. Using PAF modeling, this figure takes us through how to analyze CoQ in a contact center.

In the example, the return on quality is purely based on profit or bottom-line impact. Arguably, many organizations may choose other CoQ models that factor in lost opportunity cost. Another useful key indicator for quality program effectiveness benchmarking is Quality Program Cost (QPC); this measure is a percentage of the total contact center budget, which in our example equals 15 percent. Some additional program costs not specified in this example might include the following:

- Facilities cost per sq. ft. for program personnel
- Systems maintenance cost
- Recruiting cost for supervisors and QS
- Management labor cost
- Training cost

Once armed with intelligence on the actual cost of your quality program in addition to CoQ and related metrics, service leaders are far better prepared to communicate the strategic value of contact center quality to senior executives. It will be easier to put numbers behind discussions of how the contact center contributes to profitability. On the other hand, without an analytical understanding of spending, it is hard, if not impossible, to determine ROI and the impact of quality monitoring on the bottom line. The contact center will not be able to grow in strategic value; it will be considered a tactical cost center that executives are motivated to run as cheaply as possible.

KNOW YOUR INVESTMENTS

It is extremely important to have an analytical understanding of contact center spending; it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine ROI and the impact of quality monitoring without it.

Figure 1
Sample Cost of Quality (CoQ) Analysis

	DETA	LILED METRICS					
	Cost	of Quality S ystems (S)	Example: 101 FTE concurrent center contact recording and analytics solution @ \$50 per agent per month = \$60,600 annually				
	Cost of P reventative Labor (P)		Live monitoring labor cost across all channels (assumes 7 supervisors; 1 for ever 15 agents). Example: 15% of supervisor time (combined 15% for each of 7 supervisors) = \$65,000 annually				
	*Cost of A ppraisal Labor (A)		Example: 2 Quality Monitoring Specialists (1 for every 50 agents) = \$110,000 annually (*does not include agent labor)				
֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֖֡֟֝֜֝֡֝֟֝֝֡֝֝֡֝֝֡֝֡֝֝֡	Failure Cost & Metrics (F)		Combines elements below = \$1,112,400* *For this example, combines Cost of Rework and # Escalations cost only				
		Cost of Rework	Example: 12% of total volume repeat contacts (assumes FCR of 88%) @ \$5.00 cost per contact = \$1,080,000 annually				
ا چ		# Complaints	Example: 1 per 10,000 contacts				
1		# Unresolved Complaints	Example: 0				
ו ו ו ו		Cost of Lost Customer	Example: Profit over customer life cycle = \$2,900* *Noted but not factored here because sample does not include lost customers				
- - - - - - - - - - - -		# Escalations	Example: 1 per 500 calls; total of 3,600 per year at a cost per of \$9.00 = \$32,400* *Not included in rework cost				
	Total C ost o f Q uality (CoQ)		S + P + A + F = Total CoQ This example: S (\$60,600) + P (\$65,000) + A (\$110,000) + F (\$1,112,400) = \$1,348,000/Contacts per year = \$0.75 per contact				

Assumptions: 1.8 million calls per year. (Note: Agent labor expense is not included in this total. This is a simplified example. Additional cost factors may apply.)

Expressed as a % of the cost per contact CoQ = 15% (Total CoQ divided by cost per contact)

GLOBAL METRICS	
Return on Quality (RoQ)	= Increase in profit
	Cost of quality management program
First-Contact Resolution	Example: 88% First-Contact Resolution: Increased FCR from 78% to 88% = \$900,000 in reduced rework labor cost
Quality / CSAT Correlation	Internal measurements of the quality of interaction attributes should correlate with opinions expressed by customers for the same attributes in post interaction satisfaction measurement.

RoQ = 178%

Basic RoQ assumptions for this example might include:

- Pre-program complaint levels of 1 per 10,000 calls
- Profit resulting from 80% decrease in complaint-driven customer churn = \$417,600
- 180 complaint-driven churn incidents pre-program, and 36 complaint-driven churn incidents post-program
- Assuming a total program cost of \$235,600 (combines totals for S + P + A only)

Managing People in the QA Process

The biggest cost — and asset — for a contact center is its people; agents, supervisors, managers, quality personnel and others account for up to three-quarters of a typical contact center's budget. Thus, it is critical that quality monitoring, measurement and management express the organization's goals and objectives so that the center's people can understand and apply them during interactions with customers. In the ICMI 2008 Contact Center Operations Report, we found that the overwhelming majority of contact centers surveyed do some form of quality monitoring of agents' performance. Nearly three quarters (71%) allow agents to monitor their own contacts and self-evaluate as part of the quality assurance (QA) process, which we find to be a sound practice that increases agent buy-in and reduces the "big brother" fear associated with monitoring.

Contact center supervisors and managers are often in charge of quality monitoring, but many suffer a common pitfall: Without calibration, monitoring can become too subjective and biased toward each team's performance goals. Additionally, managing the QA process can distract supervisors, who should be more focused on coaching and managing agents. Plus, given other responsibilities, they may not have adequate time and attention to devote to monitoring. In a center with 500 agents and a 15:1 ratio between agents and supervisors (this is typical but can vary by type of business), it would be impossible for supervisors to monitor quality effectively.

Thus, many organizations prefer to employ specialized internal QA managers and/or assistants whose compensation is not based on the performance of the agents or teams they monitor. In this way, objective

observers record the level of quality. However, while the separation may be beneficial, supervisors and managers need to work closely with QA personnel to ensure that scoring is standard and that a consistent methodology is used for interpretation. We find that supervisors often see it as important to have QA personnel on their own staff to work with the specialized QA teams and monitor their processes. In the best case, the two teams form a healthy check-and-balance relationship that reduces disputes about and variance between performance evaluations.

In the ICMI Report, we found that nearly two-thirds of contact centers surveyed use calibration sessions (a tool for minimizing variations in performance criteria and individual interpretations) with those who conduct the monitoring, and about half analyze call monitoring data to ensure consistency. The frequency of calibration sessions between the two teams varies, but most occur once a month and sometimes as often as once a week. These sessions are a hidden cost, and should be figured into the contact center's cost of quality analysis. But there's a caveat: The costs, both direct and indirect, of not having a calibrating program can be significant and, therefore, must also be weighed.

Why Quality Monitoring Falls Short

Too often, standard quality monitoring measures give organizations a limited view of the customers' experience and level of satisfaction and reduce the business value of the QA process. In many organizations, monitoring is myopically focused on voice calls at a time when customers interact through multiple channels, including IVR and email; if these channels are not monitored with the same intensity, organizations will only have a



PEOPLE MATTER

Up to 75% of a contact center's budget is spent on its people: agents, supervisors, managers, quality specialists, etc.

partial view. (Research by ICMI finds that 20 percent of organizations do not even monitor voice calls with regularity.)

Second, most organizations cannot monitor every call — at best, they are capable of monitoring one or two percent — and so they are dependent on somewhat unscientific random monitoring or sampling. Given that not all calls are of the same type, doing random monitoring and sampling can leave organizations with an inaccurate and imbalanced view of agent performance and its impact on customer satisfaction.

Organizations frequently use speech analytics software to scale analysis of captured calls beyond what is achievable through difficult and expensive manual processes. The software lets them arrive at a result closer to a statistically valid sample. Speech analytics systems can mine calls for specific phrases that the organization has deemed to be customer dissatisfiers, detect emotions or look for other important indicators. However, using speech analytics software will not improve quality monitoring if the measures themselves are not relevant to strategic objectives, such as higher customer satisfaction.

Figure 2 (below) offers an example of a standard

CSR monitoring form. The items in bold are representative of the types of measures often regarded as important internally for scoring and agent performance evaluation but not necessarily as important to customers, who research shows find information accuracy and quick problem resolution most critical. In addition, by focusing on these measures, the contact center may be blinding the organization to problems that are much more significant customer dissatisfiers—problems that the organization as a whole should be addressing immediately. Organizations that are developing QA processes and devoting a significant share of their budgets to monitoring and scoring performance based on such measures are falling short in providing strategic value in their contact centers.

Too Internal a Focus Leads to Wasted Investment

Research shows that service level objectives, handling time goals, and call control processes must evolve within the context of sound quality improvement practices. Otherwise, they will backfire, leading to customer dissatisfaction and higher long-term costs. This is not to say that service level should be sacrificed, but it should be put into perspective as it relates to quality. Service level requirements should be set intelligently

Figure 2

Typical Quality Monitoring Form

GREETING SKILLS			
Uses appropriate greeting			
Uses customer name (minimum 2 times)			
Answers courteously			
LISTENING SKILLS			
Focuses on the call			
Doesn't interrupt the customer			
Exhibits responsiveness toward the customer			
Clarifies customer issue			
SPEAKING SKILLS			
Uses proper grammar and diction			
Provides options to customer where helpful			
Speaks clearly and audibly			

The best approach to quality monitoring takes into account both the hard skills (the foundational yes/no, did you do it or didn't you skills) and the soft skills (or finesse skills, such as listening and empathy). Giving equal attention to both, when they are focused on strategic objectives, will make a more meaningful contribution to the organization's overall goals such as customer loyalty, revenue and market share. When fostered, scored and coached appropriately, these combined skill sets can help the organization gather valuable intelligence about the customer, the transaction and issues helpful to other business units.

to ensure that they do not become root cause contributors to quality problems. Agents motivated by handle time objectives might rush to conclude a call and leave customers without the information they need (or at least perceiving that they were underserved or under-informed). They then may increase costs by calling back or contacting the center through another channel — or worse, at a higher level.

Internally focused metrics associated with meeting service levels or regulations are certainly important, but they cannot alone give an accurate picture of whether customers have been satisfied with their interactions, much less with their experience in using the organization's products, services and business processes. Many organizations capture the voice of the customer only in ad hoc fashion from messages or other communication coming through one of the channels. Without a systematic approach, organizations could be blind to events occurring in their markets, such as problems with products and services or competitive developments that demand a time-sensitive response. Agents may be performing according to expected standards but the contact center is not delivering the desired result of customer satisfaction and better insight into changing customer preferences.

No organization wants to be perceived as unresponsive to the need for quality management: And so, they often find themselves in a vicious cycle of spending on quality monitoring applications and tools, experiencing disappointment in terms of little or no benefit in customer satisfaction, and then reluctantly choosing to

spend more on tools. Oftentimes, quality monitoring is focused on compliance-related activities at the expense of strategic value activities. Rather than limit quality monitoring to a checklist of discrete measures analyzed without context, it is better to identify and manage a process that aligns metrics with strategic objectives. The process should include steps that inform the process about the customer experience. Applications and metrics can then help processes become cycles of improvement.

Voice of the Customer: Are You Listening?

Which contact center practices satisfy customers and which dissatisfy them? Unfortunately, quality monitoring processes often leave out the one party that could best answer that question: the customer. Organizations that define "quality" performance before they make a serious effort to include input from customers are doomed to develop measures and metrics that are incomplete and potentially harmful. Without a fuller and more accurate understanding of customer preferences, monitoring will be based solely on internally focused indicators — as we showed in the sidebar example earlier — that may not reflect the kinds of agent practices, policies and processes that are important to customers. Those that are important may be ignored.

Some organizations have found that internal measures intended to drive process efficiency and cost reduction lead to unintended consequences when customer feedback is not taken into account. Frustrated customers choose less optimal ways of interacting with the organization, which can increase costs for other business



THE MISSING LINK

Quality monitoring processes often omit the one party that could best answer contact center questions and identify dissastisfiers: the customer.

processes or functions. They also seek out the competition. For this reason, it is particularly important when implementing automated technologies such as IVR that organizations analyze customer feedback and measure satisfaction.

Research by ICMI has discovered that a minority (38 percent) of organizations bring customer feedback into their development of quality monitoring measures and scoring of agent performance. And studies suggest that a third or more don't even measure customer satisfaction. The most common method of getting feedback and ascertaining the level of customer satisfaction is to use a survey; this is done through post-contact email, live phone calls and automated IVR calls. However, organizations should not overlook the insights and anecdotes that could be supplied by agents, who are in constant touch with customers. They hear the voice of the customer in the moment, when they may be most expressive about their level of satisfaction.

To integrate the voice of the customer (VOC) into the quality monitoring process, organizations must correlate information from multiple sources. This is done by designing processes within the QM program that gather and disseminate the VOC to the appropriate stakeholders across the organization. For example, a well-designed process would include the following components: A QM specialist who identifies valuable customer feedback about the quality and message of a specific promotional piece that they received via email; the ability for the QM specialist to save the recorded file to the VOC folder for, say, the Marketing department on a shared drive; and the ability to alert Marketing that the information is there (by sending a WAV recording and commentary to Marketing's inbox, for example). Software tools can help automate steps in such a process. The important thing to remember is that communication with other business units must be robust and ongoing; the information shared must be both actionable and acted upon.

Through correlation analysis, organizations can learn the impact on customer satisfaction of weighting different experience attributes a certain way. For example, did the agent provide appropriate information to satisfy the customer's information needs? If the QM process is measuring that, you can analyze the impact on customer satisfaction and report it. Correlation analysis can also look at multiple attributes and compare them; the contact center could review an agent's score for how well he or she met information needs, and then analyze that against customer feedback information, which might indicate that needs were not met. The analysis could reveal that the organization is not asking customers about the same attributes that are being used to measure agent performance.

Finally, through correlating quality and customer satisfaction information with data about costs, organizations can develop a critical understanding of the relationship between budgets, financial outlays, quality scores and customer satisfaction. Correlation analysis can thus reveal an "outcomes" view of the optimal balance between quality and cost.

Realizing the Customer-Centric Organization

By strengthening the voice of the customer in the quality monitoring process, organizations will take a significant step toward achieving the goal of becoming a customer-centric organization. A better understanding of what satisfies or dissatisfies customers enables organizations to orient their contact centers toward producing results that enhance the customer experience, not just meet internal standards or regulations. Analyzing feedback from customers and correlating it with quality scores can, for example, give organizations a more complete picture of whether first-call (or first-contact) resolution (FCR) processes are succeeding in lowering internal costs generated by errors and rework and increasing customer satisfaction. Customers appreciate FCR; industry research shows that the more times they have to contact an organization to get their issues resolved, the more likely they are to go to a competitor.

Studies indicate that customer issues that go unresolved after the first contact generate additional expenses (some hidden and difficult to track) for the contact center and the organization as a whole. FCR also greatly impacts customer satisfaction. There is

significant value in analyzing relative increases and decreases in FCR in response to changes in call center systems and customer requirements. processes, Consequently, FCR is appropriate in all environments as a high-level objective. Components that lead to FCR should also be built into specific quality objectives for agents — however, because not all aspects are within their control, these components must be selected carefully. FCR may be tracked through quality monitoring samples, a database (e.g., customer information system), call coding, customer surveys (asking customers whether the issues were resolved) or a combination of all of those.

As with FCR, there is significant value in analyzing increases and decreases in errors and rework in response to changes in processes, systems and other factors. Such errors and rework are often what actually undermine FCR. For example, a call may be handled perfectly and even scored highly by the QA specialist. But, if the fulfillment process is not fully vetted before the agent moves on to the next call and there is an error, it is likely that the customer will call back and the matter will require an escalation and rework. Then, the call will be far more expensive than the center's average cost per call. Thus, for FCR to fulfill objectives for customer satisfaction, errors and rework must be monitored.

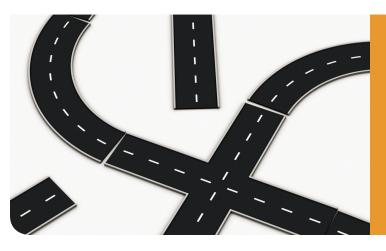
Measures of errors and rework are appropriate in all environments, and specific components of errors and rework are often built into quality objectives for agents (variables must be selected carefully because not all errors are within their control). Data may come from quality monitoring or recording, a database, call coding or other sources.

Increasing Collaboration with Other Business Functions

Organizations that aspire to be customer-centric must share customer satisfaction data and feedback with other business functions so that it is available for analysis from their perspectives. However, research by ICMI has found that only 55 percent of contact centers say they are sharing customer data and feedback gained from monitoring with other business functions. Even more worrying, only about 15 percent of contact centers surveyed find it "very important" to educate other departments about the customer, with another 29 percent saying it was "important."

Organizations need to increase their awareness of the importance of the contact center as a source of information relevant to other functions. In addition, analysis by those in corporate or other business functions is important to the contact center because other processes obviously have an impact on its overall performance. For example, business and marketing analysts might want to use the information to discover what business processes in marketing or other parts of the organization are undermining FCR so that the processes could be improved. Important customer trends could be discovered by analysts in finance, fulfillment, product development and more.

The next section outlines recommendations and leading practices that organizations can adopt that will help achieve goals for improving contact center performance and enabling greater customer satisfaction.



A BIG DISCONNECT

ICMI has found that only 55 percent of contact centers are sharing customer data and feedback gained from monitoring with other business functions.

Improvement through Leading Practices

ICMI recommends that organizations identify and adopt leading practices that will help them achieve goals for improving contact center performance and enabling greater customer satisfaction. We offer the following recommendations, which are derived from our research and work with clients across a range of industries.

Identify the strategic objective of the quality monitoring program.

What is the organization trying to achieve by monitoring quality? Without understanding the strategic objective, QM can only be tactical and will not enable the contact center to deliver business value. The cost of quality monitoring may be greater than the value it is providing unless QM is focused on factors that are most important to strategic objectives, such as increasing customer satisfaction and providing intelligence to the rest of the organization.

Determine and analyze the CoQ.

ICMI advises that organizations analyze their spending on quality, including thorough analysis of spending per call and other factors. We recommend as a leading practice that organizations do this by using PAF modeling or other accepted quality methods. With these insights, contact centers can begin to correlate spending with customer satisfaction. You will be able to assess where resources should be applied to gain the highest business value.

Assess whether your quality monitoring program captures and successfully employs customer feedback.

Do your existing quality monitoring measures and methods include the voice of the customer—and help you understand customer expectations? ICMI recommends that organizations review their key performance indicators to discover whether customer satisfaction information is included. Make sure that if you are taking a sampling of interactions for analysis that this includes information about all customer touch points.

Correlate quality monitoring measures with feedback on customer satisfaction.

Analyze how quality monitoring measures relate to what the organization is learning through customer feedback methods (such as surveys). This correlation analysis can help you see whether agents are being directed and incented to perform in ways that improve customer satisfaction.

Share monitoring information with other business departments.

Once enriched by the inclusion of customer feedback and correlation with customer satisfaction information, the QM processes will enable the contact center to become far more strategic. By sharing information, the contact center can, for example, help Marketing develop more effective campaigns, enable Manufacturing or other operational areas to identify and fix problems and give corporate executives early warning of potential legal or public relations problems.

Train agents and involve them in improving customer satisfaction.

Customer service representatives and agents need to be trained and educated about the organization's customer satisfaction objectives. Be sure to involve them in improving monitoring initiatives; they are in contact with customers on a daily basis and therefore will have important ideas, anecdotes and observations about what satisfies or dissatisfies customers.

Develop a cycle of continuous improvement.

Customer preferences change over time; if you set quality measures and methods in concrete, they will eventually become out-of-date. Develop a culture that encourages continuous improvement of quality monitoring processes, including the gathering of information about customer satisfaction. Make sure that models and processes are well documented so that they can be more easily changed.

Quality: Customers are the Judge

Contact centers have the potential to be the hub for nearly all interaction with customers across all channels. This means that what happens in the contact center cannot stay in the contact center; corporate and line-of-business functions have a vested interest in the center's performance and ability to satisfy customers. At the same time, business processes running throughout the organization will impact the contact center and agent performance; the center needs to understand what changes in those processes could lead to errors and rework.

By understanding through CoQ analysis where resources are being spent, contact centers can gain insight critical to directing quality monitoring processes toward achieving strategic business objectives. This CoQ perspective can help organizations identify where they need to spend more — or less — to achieve objectives such as customer satisfaction.

Customers are the ultimate judge of the contact center's quality performance. With smarter and more aligned quality monitoring, organizations can develop the contact center into a competitive advantage.



Improving Customer Experiences

Empowering organizations worldwide to provide the best customer experience possible through industry-leading professional services such as consulting, training, and information resources. Learn more at ICMI.com.

Improve Contact Center Operations

Empower Contact Center Employees

Enhance Customer Loyalty

