

Connections

Covering the people side of contact center management



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Preparing for the Turnover Wave

An increasingly hot topic at contact centers is how to retain reps as the economy improves. Many centers fear resurgent turnover and the resulting business challenges. After all, the success of call center operations lies in finding, developing, *and* retaining candidates who have the “right stuff.”

An improved job market will reveal any weaknesses in your human capital program, which can lead to increased voluntary turnover, strained recruiting and training budgets, and overburdened survivors.

While there is no magic formula to solving staffing issues, you can modify your hiring, training, compensation, supervision, and motivation practices to help prevent turnover.

Sourcing Talented Reps

Reduced turnover begins with hiring the right individuals for your center. Your best talent scouts are likely your current reps. As a client services director once put it, “There’s probably no more powerful recruiting pitch than that offered by a current rep to a prospective employee. Good reps know other good workers so the quality of the candidates is likely to be high.” To help your center succeed, we encourage you to develop and maintain [an effective employee referral program](#).

While personal sources bring in higher quality applicants, they typically don’t bring in enough of them. Nor do they produce applicants quickly, which can be a problem when your center has to quickly fill openings. Given these realities, you can supplement “personal” recruiting with “impersonal” recruiting such as job boards and help wanted ads that steer applicants to the career section of your corporate Web site. Here you can provide more information about the job, your call center, and your support programs — information that will encourage qualified candidates to apply.



The ROI of Screening Out Unqualified Candidates

The effectiveness of your candidate recruiting and selection process is crucial to your bottom line. The most immediate benefit of using effective employment tests is the reduced administrative time spent screening out unqualified candidates. Use the [ROI of Reducing Hiring Costs](#) calculator to estimate how much you can reduce administrative costs.

Looking for a Quick Read on Candidates?

Superior customer service starts with hiring people who enjoy fulfilling clients’ needs. [ServiceFirst](#) can help you do just that by providing you with both predictive *and* descriptive information about candidates. You’ll receive ratings of their potential on four crucial elements of service, as well as interview questions and coaching tips. Combined, this information will help you select and develop job applicants who will keep your customers happy and doing business with your company.

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Selecting

Recruiting quality candidates includes identifying those who possess the right skills and abilities for the job and your center. Pre-employment tests will definitely help you.

LIMRA research shows that the two predominant assessment techniques used to screen applicants are face-to-face interviews and phone interviews. Also very popular are **predictive** employment tests, such as skills tests and job simulations. These tests are based on special validation research that links test results to on-the-job performance. They predict important job outcomes — such as staff retention, service delivery, sales productivity, or schedule adherence and attendance — and are designed to help you make hiring decisions.

Purely **descriptive** tests, on the other hand, gather and report information about what candidates are like, such as their energy level, service style, sources of motivation, or preferred supervision style. Common examples include personality tests and tests based on a profile of your center's current top performers. These tests are for post-hire use, typically to help in training, team building, or effective supervision. Be clear about a test's uses!

Training and Management

Two key factors affecting rep turnover are training and management. If a rep is not properly trained, he or she will not feel comfortable performing the job and will ultimately move on to other opportunities. The same holds true with management. If reps do not get along with their supervisors or managers, or if supervisors do not have the time to train and assist new reps, then new reps will inevitably transfer to another area within the company or leave altogether.

What You Can Do

We encourage you to better understand your rep turnover by reviewing exit interview results (and perhaps adjusting the questions), assessing the competitiveness of your pay scale and bonus program, examining your managers' leadership skills, and reviewing the rep support programs you offer.

The next issue of *Connections* will provide you with specific practices that contact centers have implemented to reduce voluntary turnover.