



## Call Center Jargon Buster



Call Centers/Contact Centers are littered with buzzwords, jargon and abbreviations. We explain here all of the common buzzwords that will be found as soon as people start talking about call centers.

There are lots of three letter acronyms or TLAs used in call centers. So here is a jargon buster to help you out.

It can be very confusing to the novice, so we have started to build a glossary of all the call center buzz words. We have also built a definition of what they really mean in normal words. For example you could look up DPNSS and see the answer Digital Private Network Signaling System and be none the wiser. We hope to be able to put these terms into normal language.

### **3-2-1 (Idea Generation Technique)**

Used to gather information from several people in a short space of time. Focused on identifying immediate solutions to a specific issue.

### **ACW - After Call Work - (See also "Wrap Up Time")**

A period of time immediately after contact with the customer is completed and any supplementary work is undertaken by the Agent, in relation to that interaction.

### **AHT (Average Handling Time)**

The amount of time it takes an Agent to deal with all aspects of a call – includes talk time plus after call work

### **Agent**

The person who receives and makes customer telephone calls. An Agent may also deal with customer correspondence and customer e-mails. Also known as Customer Service Advisor or Customer Service Representative.



## **Agent Status**

The Agent status at a particular point in time e.g. wait, talk, wrap, idle, unavailable.

## **ACD Automatic Call Distributor**

The telephone system that takes all the calls either coming into (or going out) of a center and directs each call to the right person or team to answer, queuing the calls where necessary. The ACD system can handle multiple telephone numbers coming into the center, and produces a range of Management Information reports about the call traffic and the agents handling those calls.

## **ANI - Automatic Number Identification**

A feature of the telephony network to capture a callers identifying telephony number. - Known in the UK as Calling Line Identity (CLI).

## **Automated Speech Recognition**

A solution to automate some or all parts of a customer call. It allows the caller to interact with your call center, using their natural language, without the involvement of an Agent. Speech recognition can be applied to some or even all parts of a call, particularly where the information that you collect is in a standard form.

## **Automatic Call Distributor (ACD)**

The type of telephone system used in most call centers. Sometimes called a call center it is used to queue callers and distribute the calls to agents. It usually includes the ability to generate statistics. Manufacturers include Aspect, Avaya (used to be called Lucent), Cisco, Nortel and Rockwell. It may be a dedicated telephone system or part of an office telephone system.

## **Average Speed of Answer (ASA)**

The average time (typically in seconds) for calls to be answered in the call center. This needs to be treated carefully since it deals with the arithmetic mean. For example if 9 calls were answered immediately and at a very busy period one call waited for 10 minutes to be answered - it would treat the average speed of answer at one minute - even though 90% of calls were answered immediately.

## **Balanced Scorecard**

A scorecard that shows a range of measures - typically based around graphs or traffic lights - that shows on a single sheet of paper how a call center is performing.



## **B2B (Business to Business)**

B2B is a short version of Business to Business. In effect it generally involves one company trying to do business to another company- for example Dell selling to ICI. It could just as easy be shortened to Business - so "B2B Sales" could become "Business Sales"

## **B2C (Business to Consumer)**

B2C is a short version of Business to Consumer. In effect it generally involves one company trying to do business to the general public. It could just as easy be shortened to just "Consumer - so "B2C Sales" could become "Consumer Sales"

## **Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)**

Taking a business task and getting another company to deliver it. This term is typically used to mean moving call centers and other business functions to India and other lower cost countries.

## **Call Avoidance**

A proactive strategy to reduce the number of unwanted or low value calls-for example: failure avoidance by eliminating repeat calls; or call automation through self-service.

## **Call Blending**

A technique to mix Inbound and outbound calls for specific agents. Smooths out the peak nature of demand for inbound call patterns by feeding outbound calls of a similar call type to Agents during quiet periods.

## **Call Center Manager**

The person responsible for the management of the budget, operation and business performance of the call center

## **Call Handling Analysis**

An approach to monitor the effectiveness and quality of the handling of calls by the Agents.

## **CEM - Customer Experience Management**

The appliance of an over-riding theme, company ethos or approach, irrespective of the means of contact.

## **Coach**



The person who provides additional support and technical knowledge to Agents. (In addition to the Team Leader). Also known as a buddy.

## **CLI (Calling Line Identity)**

A telephone technology that displays the number where customer is calling from. This number can be used by CTI software to match up to a computer record for that caller.

## **Cloud computing**

A remote means of offering a system, service or solution utilizing a Wide Area Network (WAN) or more locally, across a Local Area Network (LAN).

## **CTI (Computer Telephony Integration)**

The ability to automatically combine voice and data (PC or legacy application) at the Agent desktop. Also known as screen pop, when a customer's details appear automatically on an Agent screen when the call is answered.

## **Call Recording**

A solution to implement an effective call handling quality process. Can involve the recording and storage of calls and data relating to financial or legal transactions. See the [Call Recording and Speech Analytics Reference Guide](#)

## **DMS (Document Management System)**

Many Call Centers handle large amounts of incoming mail, which is opened and scanned by DMS for electronic distribution as part of a workflow process for managing correspondence.

## **DNIS - Dialed Number Identification Service**

A feature of the telephony network to re-present a caller's telephony number to the called party. - Known in the UK as DDI.

## **Erlang B**

Developed by A K Erlang. Used to determine the number of trunks required to handle a known calling load during a one hour period

## **Erlang C**



Used to calculate waiting times, based on the number of Agents available, the number of callers and the average time it takes to handle a call.

## **Calling Line Identity (CLI or CLID)**

These days the telephone number of the caller travels ahead of most calls. This is known as Calling Line Identity (CLI) or by BT as Caller ID. You will probably most often see this when someone calls your mobile phone. This is also known in the USA as Automatic Number Identification or ANI.

## **Channel Agnostic**

Provision of a (centralized) process or interaction route, irrespective of the interaction channel.

## **CSR (Customer Service Representative)**

A person employed in a call center to answer the phone. Another name for this is Agent or Advisor. Care should be taken using this term as it also can be used as

## **CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)**

This term is widespread in business and means "The ethics of a company" e.g. do they pollute the environment etc. It is also confused with CSR describing and agent in the call center.

## **Computer Telephony Integration (CTI)**

A method of connecting your telephone system to your database. Most commonly this will allow you to pop your caller's details up on to the agent's screen when the call connects (Screen Pop). CTI can be used for a variety of applications such as call routing. Despite huge business advantages it often requires quite complex integration and its deployment has been limited. Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

A widely abused term that is about developing better relationships with customers. It has widely been high jacked by suppliers to mean a customer database, most frequently one that combines all customer data onto one database, giving a single view of the customer.

## **Digital Access Signaling System (DASS 2)**

It is a type of digital telephone line that connects between that call center and the telephone exchange in the UK.

It is sometimes called ISDN 30 and it allows 30 telephone calls to be carried on one set of lines.



## Empathy

The ability for an agent to put themselves into the customer's shoes. Many call centers lack empathy. The caller is just another caller and although the agent deals with the call as best as they can. With empathy the agent feels the same concerns as the caller "I know how you are feeling because I too...." would be a common phrase that perhaps shows empathy. It is also commonly confused with sympathy which is more of an "I hear what you are saying..." type of communication, but perhaps without the shared experience of what it is like to go through this condition. Empathy was a concept developed by the psychologist Carl Rogers (1902-1987)

This web post on <http://www.able2know.com/forums/about29102.html> is a good example of the difference between empathy and sympathy.

The difference between empathy and sympathy is perhaps demonstrated by the expression of pity or sorrow to the distress of another.

"I offered my sympathy when I learned that Jane's father died."

Empathy, on the other hand, is usually meant to indicate that the person who is empathizing, knows what the other person is going through, and can identify with the person.

"I can empathize with how Jane is grieving over her father's death. I know exactly how she felt, because I went through the same thing when my father died".

To me, the big difference between empathy and sympathy is that the person who empathizes can feel the distress on a personal level, whereas sympathy is less personal.

## ERP - Enterprise Resource Planning

The means of determining staffing and occupancy levels for Front- and Back-Office staff.

## FCR - First Call (Contact) Resolution

A measure of relative success for an individual interaction. Usually defined in terms of a single customer or account, a single issue or order and a predefined time range for a response to have taken place. Example: If a customer chooses a set of particular Options on an IVR or an Agent appends a particular Result Code to an Account and the customer contacts the supplier/provider regarding the same criteria within (7) days, then that interaction would have failed FCR. Usually expressed as a percentage of the overall interaction volume.

## IMS



IMS stands for IP Multimedia Subsystem.

IMS - enables the convergence of data, speech and network technology over an IP-based infrastructure. It is the operator choice of control and service logic for IP/packet based person-to-person communication.

For users, IMS-based services will enable communications in a variety of modes - including voice, text, pictures and video.

It is not quite clear how this could be used in a call center environment. Does anyone have any ideas? Interactive Voice Response (IVR)

A telephone system that lets callers interact with your company through either touch tone or speech recognition. While most systems are only programmed to give callers menus (press one for sales, two for support...) they can also be programmed to interact with a database to provide status information or to give you your account balance.

## **Invisible Queue**

The [Invisible Queue](#) is a call center queue where the caller does not have an indication of how the call is progressing.

## **ICR (Intelligent Call Router)**

The brand name for a specific intelligent telecommunications network service that takes real time information from the ACD's in the Call Centers, to provide details on queuing and agent availability across a virtual call center network.

## **Intra Day Statistics**

Reports that provide details of what is happening in the Call Center at particular times of the day – often broken down into thirty minute periods

## **INS (Intelligent Network Service)**

Facilitates the distribution of calls to multiple destinations across a virtual call center network.

## **ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network)**

A digital network providing 64kbit and 2 Mbit bandwidth voice and data circuits.

## **IVR (Interactive Voice Response)**



Asks customers to press a button on their telephone key pad to select which service they want. The technology then routes the call to the most appropriate agent to handle the enquiry! Or it can ask customers to use their own telephone keypad to key information that will help the agent to validate who they are e.g. account numbers.

## **Knowledge Management System**

A desktop application that Agents use as source of information to provide the answers to customer enquiries. As the range of enquiries that an agent may have to handle is large, or the responses may change regularly, then the Knowledge Management System acts as a single source of content for the center to use.

## **KPI - Key Performance Indicator**

A (percentage) measure of (work) volume versus success criteria, by which the relative performance of a work unit is measured.

## **LAN (Local Area Network)**

A network located in one building that links terminals, PCs and common equipment e.g. printers to that computers can share information and applications.

## **Legacy systems**

In order for the agent to transact business with the customer they may have to use 'old' computer systems that the company has had for many years. Typically these systems are not as user friendly as more modern ones as they may require the agent to remember codes, use lots of screens and do not have a logical flow about them.

## **KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)**

Defines the targets and measures against which the Center, the Teams and the Agents must perform. Usually based on a balanced scorecard of measures covering both efficiency and effectiveness.

## **MIS (Management Information Systems)**

Reports that enable the Call Center Manager to monitor the Call Centers performance through Wallboards, Real Time Displays, Reporting, Forecasting and Staff Allocation.

## **Multi-lingual Agents**

Agents who are skilled in handling calls in more than one language.



## **Multi Skilling**

An agent who can handle several different types of call, - different call types e.g. sales and service.

## **One and Done**

The ability for the customer transaction to be completed by the Agent in a single call. Also referred to as First Call Resolution (FCR)

## **Outsourcing**

The sharing of call center activities e.g. peak call loads or certain call types, with a third party specialist company who can manage the calls on your behalf. Outsourcers can provide both inbound response and outbound campaign services across a range of call types – telemarketing, customer service, technical helpdesk, debt management and many more.

## **PBX (Private Branch Exchange)**

An office telephone system located in one building that provides voice communications. Also known in the UK as a PABX (Private Automatic Branch Exchange).

## **Predictive Dialer**

Specialist telephony equipment for managing outbound calls. The term predictive means that the dialer will phone the telephone number of the customers you want to contact, and only when the phone is answered by a person, will the call then be directed to an agent to answer. Here an algorithm is used to predict when an agent is likely to become free and dials in anticipation of this so that the non productive time that an agent spends between calls is minimized. Such equipment can also be used in preview mode, where the system allocates the contact to an Agent for them to preview prior to physically dialing the number.

## **Queue**

The ability to prioritize and handle callers when there is no Agent available

## **SaaS - software as a service**

The (remote) delivery of an item of software or a system by a provider to a subscriber or user base.

## **Screen Pop**

Screen pop describes the ability for a screen to arrive on an agent desktop at the same time as a call



## **Session Initiated Protocol (SIP)**

SIP is a signaling system that enables a whole range of applications to be integrated. This includes voice, data, video, pictures and online games.

It allows the user to be able to switch between one mode and another. A good example would be online gaming through a mobile phone, where while playing you would be able to use a "push to talk" button.

## **Service Level Agreement**

A contractual agreement between a service provider and the organization specifying specific performance standards to be achieved.

## **Skill Based Routing**

Ensures that calls are directed to those agents that have the specific skills to answer that call type most effectively

## **Talk Time**

The amount of time an Agent spends handling a customer call - from start to finish.

## **Trunk, Trunks**

Not the storage area of a car, but a word to describe the telephone lines coming into a call center. The word "trunk" could easily and less confusing be replaced by the word "telephone line."

## **UC - Unified Communications**

Blending of interaction types; where initial contact was made by Voice, the response may be via email, etc.

## **Unified Desktop**

A Desktop Application which amalgamates other systems or interfaces and accepts both voice and electronic interactions. A Unified Desktop may also populate an underlying (CRM) system with interaction or customer data, in real-time.

## **Virtualization**

The means by which a series of disparate processes or systems is combined to provide a single service offering. See also SOA (Service Orientated Architecture).



## **Virtual Call Center/Contact Center**

A group of remote call center agents connected to a hosted dialer platform that acts as a single point for call handling and reporting processes.

## **VoIP - Voice over Internet Protocol**

The means by which a voice channel is delivered as Packets through Internet Protocols, using a pr-existing streaming (CODEC) format, such as H.225, H.323 (see also SIP). LINK: <http://www.protocols.com/pbook/VoIPFamily.htm>

## **WAN (Wide Area Network)**

An intra office data network used to connect terminals, computers and equipment across multiple sites.

## **WFO - Work Force Optimization**

The means of applying Schedules and Forecasts, based on previous and known future interaction and workflow volumes.

## **WFM - Work Force Management**

The means of determining and providing Schedules, Forecasting and Adherence for a work force, against historical interaction volumes and known future events.

## **Wrap Time**

Time taken by the Agent, following the call, to complete the transactions for that call – also known as After Call Work.

If you have any definitions please send them in to us. Thanks.

## **Further reading**

- [Introduction to call centers](#)
- [Outbound Dialing Reference Guide](#)
- [An A-Z of Speech Analytics Features](#)
- [A-Z of call recording features](#)
- [Call Recording and Speech Analytics Reference Guide](#)



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