Project Report

Capturing the "Voice of the Customer" in Contact Centers: Technologies & Leading Practices

Project Sponsor
American Girl

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December 2007

PROJ-02-07

Executive Summary

American Girl is a direct marketer and retailer of dolls and books to young girls. As such, they place high value on their customer relations and what their customers are saying about their products or services, i.e., "voice" of the customer. The company has two call centers with as many as several hundred agents working during peak seasons. Unfortunately, there is not a system currently in place that adequately collects all the information the customers give to the agents through the phone calls, and makes possible insights to be derived and determine appropriate actions to be taken by the company. It is the goal of American Girl to find a call center solution that helps them turn this customer feedback into business intelligence.

To assist American Girl in this project, our team conducted two sets of activities. First, we interviewed member companies from the UW-Madison E-Business Consortium to learn about their practices related to gathering and using "voice of the customer" information from contact centers. Second, we performed a competitive analysis of leading software vendors.

For the company interviews, we had a series of questions regarding their current practices in three major areas: how they capture the voice of the customer, what applications they are using, and what is done after the call is completed. We also documented general best practices mentioned by the member companies during the interviews. Examples of these best practices are to consider the licensing model, compare web-based versus client-based solutions, and consider modular solutions. Keeping best practices in mind, we next gathered information about contact center solution software vendors.

Collecting this vendor information was done using a request for information (RFI) document. In the RFI document we requested vendors to provide a company business overview as well as information regarding their products and services. For products and services, there were seven main question categories each consisting of several sub-questions regarding features and capabilities of their product. We sent the RFI document to eight companies and received seven responses: OpinionLab Inc., Aspect Software, Autonomy eTalk, Nexidia Inc., Verint Systems Inc., Envision Telephony Inc., and NICE Systems. We also received live demonstrations from these companies. Once this information was gathered, it was analyzed based on American Girl's requirements and assessment criteria.

Software analysis was done using an evaluation tool constructed by the project team. This tool was comprised of nine major categories, each of which weighted in accordance with American Girl's requirements. Within each of the major categories were sub-questions where each vendor was evaluated on a one to five scale for that particular capability. Totaling the weighted sums from each major category provided an overall score for each vendor based on specific features and capabilities of the product. These scores, combined with our personal perceptions gained through vendor demonstrations, contributed greatly to our recommendations for American Girl.

After gathering data regarding best practices used by other companies and potential software solutions, we analyzed each vendor and came up with three recommendations. The top recommendation is NICE Systems, followed by Envision Telephony and Autonomy eTalk. These three solutions can offer American Girl the capabilities they need to capture the voice of their customers, and leverage that information into improved service and business intelligence.

Acknowledgements

The team would like to thank the following people for their support on this project:

Deedric Bauer,
Manager of Call Center and Operations Training of American Girl for providing us guidance and information.

Carol Hay,
Director of Call Centers and Operations Training of American Girl, for providing a learning opportunity for the project team

Jeffrey Freeman,
Senior Vice President of Corporate Operations of American Girl, for providing learning opportunity for the project team.

Professor **Raj Veeramani**, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, for providing support, advice and guidance for to us and also for giving us the opportunity to gain real world experience

Thank you for all of your help!!!

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