

Call CENTER

ACD Software & Phone System Reviews



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1 Abstract

The purpose of this resource is to discuss automatic call distribution systems (ACD). ACD systems help call centers handle their calls more effectively. How do they work? They are systems that route incoming calls to a specific agent or group of agents based on the subject of the call, making sure the most appropriate agent gets the call. Routing calls to the appropriate agent increases customer satisfaction and helps to properly utilize agent time. ACD software has some pretty robust reporting capabilities. Call center reports are an invaluable resource for analyzing call center metrics.

For our purposes, this resource looks at four top providers, gives general information about ACD software, and helps you decide if integrating ACD technology into your call center is the right move.

2 About ACD and Its Relationship with Call Centers

Before we learn about ACD systems, we need to talk about call centers. Without call centers, companies would miss calls. Missing calls leads to unhappy customers, which leads to a blemish on your reputation as a company that promotes great customer service. And customer relationship nuances aside, missing calls in the business world is a missed opportunity.

Call centers are great at building your brand and growing your business, but just receiving calls isn't the call center performing at its best. To get the most out of outsourcing, the call center needs to have the right agents on the call. It can be argued that every agent should be great at everything, but ACD software makes sure the best agents, or the agents with the proper skill set to handle certain calls, are the ones who get those calls. Customers can be lost when an agent is not knowledgeable or not helpful during the call. How can you make sure that all calls are directed to a knowledgeable agent? This is where ACD systems come in to play.

2.1 How ACD Software Routes Calls Based on Topic

In a call center using ACD software, calls are sorted based on the topic of the call. In the real world, a call topic can range from billing to customer service to product information. The system then sends the call to the appropriate agent. An appropriate agent is defined as an agent who is knowledgeable or skilled in the caller's specific area of concern.

With the use of skills-based routing, callers are matched up with an agent who can handle their call most effectively. For example, if a customer calls in and wants to dispute their bill, the call will be directed to an agent who was specifically trained on the billing processes of the company. If a caller wants to learn more about the product, they will be matched up with an agent who knows all the product details.

The system identifies call topics with the help of IVR technology in the form of automated menus. For example, when a call comes in the caller is greeted by an automated receptionist. The automation then prompts the caller to "Press 1 if you are experiencing problem with the product, Press 2 if you wish to purchase the product, Press 3 to discuss your bill" and so on. Now the call topic is clearly stated and the ACD system goes to work distributing the call to the most highly qualified agent. Go ACD system!

2.2 How ACD Reduces Operator Talk Time

Calls can be distributed to agents based on factors other than the call topic. Agent availability, time of day and language of the caller are also determining factors. Based on the settings of the ACD system, calls can be sent to a voicemail or automated receptionist instead of a live agent. For example, if a caller has questions that don't need live agent interaction, like 'what is my available balance', an automated receptionist can supply that information without the use of a live agent. Some advanced ACD systems can even direct calls to an email where the user sends an email or trouble ticket to a qualified agent. With the help of speech recognition technology, the caller can craft an email using their voice.

In the above scenarios, ACD software is used to economize a call, reduce overall call time, and free up live agents. This way, live agents are available to handle other calls. Agent availability is the key to happy customers because it means less hold time.

3 ACD and Call Reporting

ACD systems generate call reports, and call centers love reports. The system records important information like number of calls received, number of calls put on hold, percentage of hang-ups, number of first call resolutions, number of times a call is transferred, which times are busiest and which call topics are popular. This information is used to determine call patterns and create staffing models.

3.1 How to Choose the Right ACD Provider

Ask yourself these four questions to determine if ACD software is for you.

- Is my call center ever overwhelmed with calls?
- Do I value quantity of calls over quality of customer service?
- Do I need to try the system out before I purchase it?
- Do I need CRM integration?

The purpose of ACD systems is to sort through and handle calls more efficiently. If you find yourself overwhelmed with calls, then it could be time to purchase an ACD system. ACD systems help with customer service, which is a consistent concern among call center owners.

Some providers also offer CRM integration. This is important if you have many customers and do not want to transfer client profiles to a new system. Some providers can integrate any CRM system, while others only work with Salesforce. Most providers will offer a free trial or a demo of the system. It is always recommended to do a trial before signing the contract.

3.2 Standard Features of ACD Providers

Most ACD providers offer:

- CRM Integration
- Predictive Dialer
- Skills-Based Routing
- Ability to work with blended call centers
- Free Trial

3.3 Terms to Know When Learning About ACD

1. ACD (Automatic Call Distribution) – A system that routes incoming calls to specific call center agents based on the call topic or agent availability.
2. CTI (Computer Telephony Integration) – The technology that allows computers and telephones to work together to perform tasks.

3. Skills-Based Routing (SBR) – Sending calls to the most capable/knowledgeable agent for that specific call.
4. IVR (Interactive Voice Response) – The technology that enables communication between an automated receptionist and a live person.
5. CRM Integration – Caller profiles are incorporated into the ACD system. Caller info can pop up on the agents' screen while they are on a call.
6. Distributing Calls – The act of sending calls in a queue to an available agent.
7. Cloud Based – Programs that run completely over the internet that do not require any hardware installation.
8. Blended Call Center – A call center that handles both inbound and outbound calls.
9. Predictive Dialer – Automatically makes calls from a large list of phone numbers, if someone answers the call, the predictive dialer system then connects the call to an available agent.

4 Software

4.1 3CLogic

Pros

They offer a software demo, advanced skills based routing, predictive dialing and CRM integration.

Cons

They do not offer free set up.

Conclusion

3CLogic is a call center software company that's advertised as user-friendly and inexpensive (inquire for a quote). They offer 99.9% up time, but it is only available as cloud based. They can integrate any CRM into their ACD system. Most of their reviews are positive and they offer 24/7 live chat for customer support. They can work with inbound, outbound, and blended call centers. Their site also talks about advanced call center reporting, but fails to go into detail about why their reporting is superior to their competitors.

4.2 Safe Soft Solution

Pros

Offers predictive dialing, CRM integration, and a free trial.

Cons

ACD systems are not their specialty.

Conclusion

Safe Soft Solution offers many call center services like PBX (Private Branch Exchange) systems, toll-free numbers, automated receptionist, call recording, and ACD systems. Their ACD systems offer advanced skills-based routing, call reporting/analysis, CRM integration, and alerts. Alerts pop up on agents' screens to warn them when calls have been on hold for too long, or a call has been transferred too many times.

They offer a free trial, but do not give specifics about the trial on their site. Clients have to call for more information. They offer month-to-month contracts. Customers also have the option to sign on for annual contracts. Clients who sign on for annual contracts are eligible for discounts on the service. They also offer free set up and installation.

4.3 VocalCom

Pros

They can work with all types of call centers; they offer predictive dialing and pay as you go contracts.

Cons

They only support Salesforce.

Conclusion

VocalCom is cloud based. Their motto is: "No hardware. No headache. Lower Costs. Happier Customers. Better Business." They have serviced over 550,000 customers and are social media friendly. They have active Twitter, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and Youtube pages. This is a positive thing for two reasons: customers can always reach the company and feedback from other clients is easily available.

They work with Salesforce, but do not support all CRM systems. They offer call reporting, predictive dialing and advanced skills based routing. They have a thirty-day free trial, but do not list prices on their website. Inquire for pricing plans.

4.4 Five9

Pros

They offer CRM integration, predictive dialing, a free trial, and free consultations.

Cons

Not compatible with every CRM.

Conclusion

Five9 offers advanced skills based routing, call reporting and predictive dialing with the ACD system. Services beyond ACD, like VoIP technology, IVR technology, and PBX systems are also available from Five9. They work with inbound, outbound, virtual, and blended call centers. They also offer a specific demo that simulates how the system will work in your call center. On their site, they describe their ACD systems as "A seamless and consistent experience".

They offer a demo of the ACD software and a free trial. Perspective customers can also schedule a free consultation with a Five9 sales representative to learn about pricing options. Those interested can also download an ACD data sheet to learn more. Unfortunately, potential customers are required to register with the website before viewing that information. They work with Salesforce, NetSuite, RightNow, and Lead, so they cannot integrate every CRM system with their ACD.

5 ACD Matrix

	3CLogic	Safe Soft Solution	VocalCom	Five9
CRM Integration	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Works with Blended Call Centers	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Free Set Up	No	Yes	No	No
Pay As You Go	No	No	Yes	No
Advanced Skills Based Routing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Offers Predictive Dialer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Offers Trial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pricing	Inquire	Inquire	Inquire	Inquire