

Customer Service NEWSLETTER

The authority on managing the customer contact center

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Learning to listen

The common thread in this month's issue of Customer Service Newsletter is the need to solicit feedback — from customers and from employees — about how things are working.

In the lead story, for instance, we look at Philadelphia Insurance Companies' Voice of the Customer program, and how it uses feedback obtained through surveys and follow-up calls to "understand our customer's experience."

The case study featuring DePaul University shows how student surveys led to significant changes in the way student inquiries were handled and in the creation of a one-stop call center.

And in the page two interview with Doug Lipp, author of *Disney U*, we learn how important it is for managers to "walk the park" to learn what's going on.

How Disney creates
engaged, customer-centric employees
Find the right balance for call center metrics 4
Training one-stop call center agents 6
B2B companies learn from the customer experience 7

Customer Feedback

Philadelphia Insurance Companies' VOC program builds bridges inside and outside the company

Philadelphia Insurance Companies (PHLY) is a leading property/ casualty and professional liability insurance company. Its contact center serves both agents and policy-holders with answers to questions about billing, changes to the policy, and other issues.

The company's 44-person contact center handles an average of 1,500 phone calls, 350 emails, and 30 chat messages per day. And that contact center must be doing something

right: Some 95.4 percent of PHLY policyholders said that they would recommend the company to perspective customers; the Better Business Bureau gave the company an A+service rating; and the contact center was recently awarded a 2012 Gold Stevie Contact Center of the Year Award for its outstanding efforts — and more specifically its "Voice of the Customer" program and Account Management Team.

(continued on page 4)

Case Study

DePaul University creates a one-stop call center to address a range of student needs

You might not think that customer service would be a high priority at most universities, but DePaul University in Chicago sees customer service as part of its mission.

"We are a very mission-driven school," says Susan Leigh, associate vice president of Enrollment Management & Marketing at DePaul. A very high percentage of its students are the first generation attending college, and it also has a very high percentage of minority students. As a result, in the contact center, "We have parents

calling who don't understand FAFSA and other jargon, who never went to college, and who don't understand the academic calendar," Leigh says. "So we train our agents to be very respectful and to be careful not to be condescending, and to avoid using academic jargon or to explain it."

As far back as 2005, the university saw that students could easily decide to go somewhere else for their education, "and one of the ways that we were going to keep them here was

(continued on page 6)

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712 Main Street — Suite 187B
Boonton, NJ 07005-1450
Phone: (973) 265-2300 • Fax: (973) 402-6056
Email: info@CustomerServiceGroup.com
Website: www.CustomerServiceGroup.com

Editor

William Keenan Jr. ext. 116 sgrant@CustomerServiceGroup.com

Customer Service

Mary Pagliaroli, ext. 101 mpagliaroli@CustomerServiceGroup.com

Reprints and Permissions

Michael DeWitt, ext. 107 mjdewitt@CustomerServiceGroup.com

Publisher

Margaret DeWitt, ext. 106 msdewitt@CustomerServiceGroup.com

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Employee Motivation

How Disney creates engaged, customer-centric employees

The Disney approach:

· Hire the right people

· Get executive support

· Get out and "walk the

park."

Doug Lipp, author of *Disney U:* How Disney University Develops the World's Most Engaged, Loyal, and Customer-Centric Employees, pretty much grew up in the Disney organization.

He interned with the Disney
Magic Kingdom Club — a marketing outreach program for small
companies — when he was in
college. And when he finished grad
school, he worked as a translator for
Disney execs involved in starting up
the Disney theme park
in Tokyo

Later, Lipp joined the leadership program of the Disney University at Disney headquarters, where he was mentored by Disney University founder Van

France and others at the University. Ultimately, he led the training team at Disney University.

In the course of that career, Lipp soaked up the lessons offered by the Walt Disney Company and in particular by Disney University — which was created to be "as creative designing the employee orientation and training process as the real architects had been with their landscapes and building designs." Disney University's goal was "to develop employees who could 'create happiness'" for guests — the Disney word for customers.

In *Disney U*, Lipp shares some of the lessons he learned during his tenure and from some of the mentors he worked under or learned from — including Walt Disney himself. Doug Lipp sat down to talk with *Customer Service Newsletter* and to share some of those lessons with our readers.

CSN: It sounds like a highlevel of enthusiasm is important for all Disney employees. It's equally important for frontline customer service and call center staff. How do you ensure that you have a motivated and enthusiastic workforce?

Doug Lipp: Well, that's the million dollar question, and it is one that I am asked constantly. You have to go back to basics — so first of all, get people that are right for the job. If you are putting an introverted per-

son in an extroverted role, he or she is going to have to style-switch massively, and they are going to burn out quickly. It doesn't matter how great the training is, or how wonderful and

supportive their boss is, they are just a round peg in a square hole.

So in the interview process, however you go about that — using behavioral-based techniques, peergroups, or role-plays — get the right people on board. And then start with the kind of training that will most definitely allow them success upon entering the work force.

One of the things we did at Disney is that before a team member, a cast member, is put in place with that service recipient, they have had multiple hours of training, and they have also been able to shadow a mentor or have had some other form of on-the-job training.

CSN: Your book mentions using peer groups as part of the hiring process — is that something that you think would work for customer service?

Doug Lipp: Yes, it would. What I envision is a peer interview with three people applying for the same job. You see how they interplay and interact. And based on their interaction, you see who is more aggressive, who is less aggressive, who is more creative. Some people dominate everything and they don't get the clue that it's time for them to sit back and relax. They are going to kill teamwork anywhere. Another person may be a bit of a wallflower, but if you can see that their questions are well thought out, maybe with a little bit of coaching in the right place they will shine.

Another thing that I see lacking in some orientation programs is that companies are battling the challenge that they have become so systems-oriented that they have forgotten to be human. They forget to introduce the human elements of the job that are important.

The metrics that people will be working with also have to be discussed. If I am in a call center and I see that queue light up above me, and I am supposed to hit an average of every 25 seconds per new guest, but I am dealing with somebody who is not happy right now — wow, am I in a tough place. This might go to 40 seconds — what's going to happen to me? I might have a happy guest, but an upset supervisor.

So, while you have to have metrics that allow you to make money with proper productivity, there should always be a balance of empathy and efficiency.

CSN: What are some first steps for readers who would like to try to develop and support a culture of continuous improvement and innovation? Where would you recommend they start?

Doug Lipp: I always look to the top. Who is at the top of any orga-

nization? Because what she or he supports is what is going to happen. You need to get out there and be proactive with the executive team.

I did a program just two weeks ago where the CEO of the company came in, introduced me, and then he stayed in the room for my 90-minute presentation. And he did that for six all-employee meetings. And the buzz afterwards was, "Wow, Rich sat in on all the meetings. He knows what is going on."

So yes, there has to be some symbolic gesture on the part of the leader to show that she or he has bought into the process, and they may or may not be an overt cheer-leader, because that may not be their style, but by their mere presence they are conveying the same support.

CSN: You suggest in your book that sharing examples of service failures can be a good training strategy. Is that something that you would suggest for other companies — and would you add any caveats to that approach?

Doug Lipp: Most definitely. In fact, some of our groups, like restaurants, will have daily huddles. They have both a pre- and post-shift huddle. So today, here's the reality of what kind of crowd we are looking at — we are going to get a group of senior citizens during the early period, and then we are going to have a bunch of young kids because there is a special promotion going on. And these are the typical kinds of things that are going to happen. That is not necessarily a problem, but it is a heads-up.

And at the end of a shift, you can have a quick five minute huddle and do a debrief. What you want to bring up, as any good leader would, is praise for those who are doing something right, but also to note the things that could be improved

upon. You don't want it to turn into a witch hunt. But it should become part of a daily or weekly process toward improvement.

In fact, I have seen a lot of executives over the years, who, when they unroll or unfold a new idea or a new approach during an all-employee meeting, would actually role-play something in front of their employees. And they would kind of screw it up on purpose — just to let the rank and file know, "OMG, he is having trouble with this, and he is OK with looking foolish in front of us." Being human is so important — even for leaders.

CSN: Your book talks about "the art and science of being Snow White," as a way to suggest that there are both technical and human elements to succeeding in that role, or any customer-oriented role. What would you say is the art and science of handling customer calls?

Doug Lipp: Well, again, the real point is that you don't want your systems to break down. So the science is the hardware. What I oftentimes say is, "Our rides don't break down, and Snow White never has a bad day."

You could have a well stocked or well staffed team — but if they are indifferent or nasty, then your net promoter scores are going to drop off, as we all know. Your customers are not going to be promoters. Instead, you are going to have detractors. So by having friendly,

Web Extras

For an excerpt from Doug Lipp's Disney U

offering more lessons from the Disney experience, go to CustomerServiceGroup.com and click on "Web Extras." engaged employees — and a system that is sustainable and reliable — you are going to have happier employees, because they are not always fighting fires, and that is going to translate to your customers however you come into contact with them.

CSN: How important is it for managers to "walk the park"? You describe Walt Disney and other Disney leaders doing that a great deal. Is that something managers at all levels should be doing — getting out there and talking to their people, and understanding what issues they are dealing with?

Doug Lipp: With all due respect to my clients, I will often ask, "What is your excuse for not walking the floor, walking the park, walking the property, whatever the case might be?"

There is a story I share in the book about Tom Eastman, who ultimately become the director of Disney University. When Tom was working the Skyway in Disneyland, Walt came up and asked him what he might do to improve the ride, and Tom basically answered that when people get on the ride, they tend to bump their heads on the low roof. Well, Disney had engineering take a look and they made the roofs higher on the ride. But over the years Tom has told that story many times, and he always adds, "Gosh, if Walt could run a multi-national corporation and still find time to chat with me, what excuse does anybody else have?"

Contact: Doug Lipp, www.doug-lipp.com, (916) 962-1231. Disney U: How Disney University Develops the World's Most Engaged, Loyal, and Customer-Centric Employees is published by McGraw-Hill, www.mhprofessional.com.

Philadelphia Insurance Companies' VOC program builds bridges inside and outside the company

(continued from page 1)

Listening for the Voice of the Customer

The Voice of the Customer program was one of the reasons that Philadelphia Insurance Companies felt confident about competing in the Stevie Awards this past year. "It's something that we wanted to focus on because it has been a huge focal point for us and we have gotten so much positive customer feedback as a result of it," says Seth Hall, vice president of customer service. (Hall received a Silver Stevie for Customer Service Executive of the Year.)

The Voice of the Customer program involves surveying customers about recent agent transactions as well as right after they have opened an account. "We are trying to understand what our customers' experience is with us from the minute they started working with

us through their latest transaction," says Hall.

As a result, "We are sending out hundreds of surveys per day on our reps," he says. "And any time those come back with a negative score, one of our Action Management Team members — a team of three people — is responsible for getting back to that survey responder with an email or a call on the same day or within 24 hours to try to resolve the issue that came up in the survey."

In addition, "if they just scored us low, but didn't give us a reason, we will enquire as to what happened and what we can do to improve things," Hall says. "If they give us a specific issue that is not yet resolved, we will fix that issue and then call them back to tell them what we have done."

The transactional surveys are used to some extent to help coach

Finding the right balance for call center metrics

There is a tendency in a lot of customer service centers and call centers to go crazy with what you can measure, and to end up creating metrics for everything. But many award-winning service centers, like that at Philadelphia Insurance Companies, look for a balance.

"There are a couple of measurements that we look at in the aggregate," says Seth Hall, vice president of customer service for Philadelphia Insurance Companies. "We want to make sure that people are answering the phones quickly, and we want to make sure that people are on the phone."

But Hall's call center does not measure call time or number of calls. "We don't want people to feel the pressure of having to get through a call quickly or to hit a certain number of calls per day," he says. "If they take only four calls one day, but if they were really good calls, the customer issues were resolved, and everyone got off the phone feeling really good about it — then I am happy with that. I don't want those reps punished because they didn't take 70 calls that day."

Hall adds: "I think we have done a good job of finding that balance of the right metrics so that we can determine if we are doing the right thing for the customer and being efficient. And if you talk to our reps, I think they will tell you that the most important thing for them is servicing that client and making sure that we are getting them what they need."

contact center rep performance. "There are several questions related to behavior issues like, 'Was the rep professional? Courteous? Did he or she listen intently?' and others. And on a monthly basis, supervisors go through all of a rep's scores with them to discuss what might need improvement," Hall says.

Customers appreciate the effort

The company was amazed by the responses this effort got from customers. "The amount of positive feedback we have gotten from this program is incredible," says Hall. "I think it is cathartic for people, really, to fill something like this out when they have had a bad experience. Whether they think someone is going to respond to their comments or not, it makes them feel better. So when we call them back to respond, and say, 'Listen, we are sorry. We take full responsibility for this. And here is what we are going to do to fix it' - and we actually fix it. Then they are a customer for life."

Customer response to the Action Management Team's initial calls was so positive, Hall says, that the company has since initiated a 90-day follow-up call on negative customer surveys. "What we do," Hall says, "is say, 'A couple of months ago you submitted this survey response that indicated you were having an issue in this area. This is what we did to correct the situation. Is there anything else we can help with, or were you satisfied overall with how everything was handled?""

Getting the attention of top management

Hall adds that the company tracks all of the survey responses that come in through the Voice of the Customer program and it

produces a "weekly resolution report." Those reports are aggregated regularly and distributed to other executives within the Philadelphia Insurance Companies organization.

So, besides making sure that customer issues are being taken care of, the process aggregates trends and, via a text analytics program, is able to determine: 'Is this a oneoff situation and we've handled it, so "It is cathartic for people to fill out a survey after

they have had a bad ex-

perience — whether they

think someone is going to

respond or not."

it's over? Or is this starting to look like a trend?""

The Voice of the Customer program and the text analytics data also give Hall

and the Customer Service Department a valuable tool for gaining the attention of top management about service-level issues.

For a number of years, PHLY's direct-bill system was generating complaints, and Hall tried to pitch a new billing system to upper management, but he wasn't getting much traction.

But after implementing the Voice of the Customer program, Hall had real numbers he could bring to top management. "I could take all of the issues and the trends that we had aggregated and present them with a real number — that 32 percent of all of the negative feedback that we were receiving was in some way, shape, or form related to billing," he says. "And I could argue, that while this is no small investment, it could eliminate at least half of all of the negative issues we were dealing with."

As a result, Hall says, "We are getting a new billing system, which will probably be rolled out in the second quarter of 2014. It is a big investment that never would have happened if I had not had all of

that trending data and all of that customer feedback."

Bridging organizational silos

The Voice of the Customer program at Philadelphia Insurance Companies has also helped the company to reach across organizational boundaries to create a more positive customer experience. VOC survey data and resolution reports from the

Action Management Team are reported both to the executive team and at a monthly Customer Experience Committee meeting, which includes representatives from different

PHLY departments companywide.

"In the past, we had always operated very independently in terms of various departments," says Hall. "But the Voice of the Customer program has helped us to bridge those organizational silos and to begin to view customers more horizontally, from an experience perspective."

He adds: "Customers don't care about all of the various departments when they are submitting a claim or a new business application, so we are trying to break that down."

The Customer Experience Committee goes over the latest Voice of the Customer program data, and it goes through the items customers are reporting to see if there are trends that go across organizational boundaries, and to discuss what can be done about those issues. "It really is the first time we have had a cross-departmental initiative like this to focus on the customer and on the customer experience," Hall says.

Contact: Seth Hall, Philadelphia Insurance Companies, www.phly.com, (800) 873-4552. For more information on the Stevie Awards, go to www. stevieawards.com. PSV

DePaul University creates one-stop call center to address a range of student needs (continued from page 1)

through excellent customer service," Leigh says.

And as a measure of its service success, Leigh adds, "Our enrollment continues to grow, compared to other schools in the Chicagoland area. And we had the largest class ever this past September."

Creating a centralized call center

Things weren't always so promising. In 2005, for instance, there was no centralized office or call center. "We had lines of students in some of our offices — there were lines of students in financial aid and student accounts. We had a 10-day turnaround with transcript requests. And there was a bit of grumbling here and there," Leigh says.

So the university brought in a consultant and did a survey of students. Three areas came to the top as problems — student records, financial aid, and student accounts. And what the students said was, "Individually, in the separate offices, you give us great service. But you need to talk to each other, because I have to stand in line in one office, and when I get to the head of the line, they say, 'No, that's not really us. That's another department," Leigh says. "And while they never said the word, what students were describing was integrated student services - or a one-stop shop."

Students wanted to go to one place to get their critical business done — and they didn't want to be placed on hold, to wait for service in person, or to be sent to a different office.

As a result of the survey, the university created DePaul Central — a one-stop shop that integrated

financial aid, student accounts, and student records. A year later it introduced Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) to reduce the telephone queues and allow reps from any location to answer calls.

Identifying informational calls

The next step was to create a two-tiered call-handling system in which all calls went first to an all-purpose call center and were then transferred to a specialized department only if necessary. But the individual departments didn't think that a non-specialist could or should be handling the bulk of their calls. As a result, "We had to set out to prove that the majority of the calls coming in were for information only, and that a team could be trained to handle those calls. I figured it was kind of an 80/20 type of situation," Leigh says.

To get the evidence it needed to support an integrated two-tier call-handling system, Leigh implemented call recording and set up a research team to listen to incoming

Training one-stop call center agents

Training is an important issue for DePaul Central service agents, says Susan Leigh, DePaul's associate vice president of Enrollment Management & Marketing, and the university doesn't take it lightly.

"We do six weeks of training for new call center agents, whether the agent is working full-time or part-time," Leigh says. "The first week they study the DePaul Central approach to service — and it's the same approach that we use in our walk-in centers."

Agents are taught about the university's service mission, how to deal with first-generation students or those from limited circumstances. They are also trained to ask questions without making assumptions or being too probing. "So if someone says, 'Is tuition due on Friday?' they know to say, 'Yes it is, but is that OK with you? Does that work? Because I can put you together with someone who can have a conversation with you about that,'" Leigh says.

After the first week, "where we show them how high the bar is," says Leigh, "they then spend a week with student records, a week in student accounts, and a week in financial aid, working directly with the supervisors and experts in those areas."

Then agents get a week of training in what Leigh calls "the life cycle of the student." "We give them training on what the different academic programs are demanding of students. And they study the academic calendar," she says. "So we take a real 360-degree kind of look at the way things work."

Agent-trainees are also assigned a mentor, so they are observing someone on the job right from the beginning. "They listen in on calls and then afterward they have time to ask their mentor about things that happened during the call," Leigh says. "And we also give them study time during the course of training days, because we want to make sure that they know it."

In the fifth week of training, agents start taking calls from students — at their supervisor's queue and desk, and with their supervisor plugged in to the call. And then in the sixth week they take calls in their own cubicle, but still under supervision. "So it's a really strenuous process, but it seems to work for us," Leigh says.

calls. "We weren't using it for QA, though if we did hear anybody giving blatantly bad information, we passed that information along to their manager," she says. "But we

"Student survey responses

were saying that they wanted

to go to one place to get crit-

ical business done — they

wanted a one-stop shop."

basically asked, 'Was this an information-only call?'"

The results proved them out, and Leigh was able to convince

the different department heads that a two-tiered system could work. "So basically we had all of those calls go into the DePaul Central call center and most of them — the informational calls — would be handled there. And those that were more difficult or complex would be transferred to the second tier — or the pertinent departmental specialists," she says.

Building in teamwork

Once the two-tier system was up and running, Leigh began to use call recording more specifically for QA purposes in the first tier call center, which now includes eight full-time employees, including a manger, and three part-time employees who can be shifted to full-time during peak call periods. The call center now handles some 10,000 calls in a typical month and as many as 140,000 calls over the course of a year. The call center agents also handle email and IM chat.

Leigh also eliminated the IVR from the phone system, as a result of comments from student surveys. "So now all you hear is, 'This call will be recorded for quality assurance purposes.' And then the next thing you hear is a human voice," she says.

Callers who need to talk to a second-tier specialist are connected via conference transfer. "The first-

tier agent identifies an available second-tier specialist and transfers the call with the student ID number — which is our identifier here — saying, 'Bill, I have Melanie on

the phone. She has appealed her financial aid for a second time and still hasn't heard back, and she is in kind of a difficult family situation. This is

her student ID, and I know you can probably direct her.' And then they say, 'Melanie, anything else I can do for you today? No? Well, then I leave you in good hands.' So they work as a team and our students and their families have indicated that they love it. They think it is firstclass service," Leigh says.

And it must be working. DePaul continues to survey its students and family members on customer service, and its customer satisfaction ratings presently hover regularly at around 98 percent.

Contact: Susan Leigh, DePaul
University, www.depaul.edu. Leigh will
be presenting a session on the DePaul
University call center at the International Customer Management Institute's
ACCE 2013 conference in Seattle, May
13-16, 2013. For information, go to
www.icmi.com/ACCE.

Customer Feedback

B2B companies can learn from the customer experience

"Consumer companies may get the bulk of media coverage when it comes to customer experience, but there is enormous opportunity for business-to-business (B2B) companies, as well, for using the customer experience to build stronger relationships with customers," says Aimee Lucas, customer experience analyst for the Temkin Group.

Temkin's research, in fact, suggests a number of B2B best practices for leveraging customer experience:

- Develop closed-loop Voice of the Client (VOC) programs. Having a steady and reliable flow of customer insights across the organization is critical to driving customer-centric actions.
- Use "journey maps" to better understand customer needs. Customer journey mapping, or customer experience mapping, can help you

to better understand how your customers view their experiences with your company.

- Tap into Virtual Client Advisory Boards. Customer advisory boards (CABs) and councils provide the opportunity to acquire more insight into customer needs and expectations.
- Frontline experience reporting. To acquire, retain, and grow B2B relationships, frontline agents and account managers need to understand and report on what's working and what's not working for each of their customers.
- Proactive intervention and support. B2B organizations need to use customer insights and feedback from the frontline to intervene in service experiences gone wrong as quickly as possible with robust and well-defined recovery procedures.

Service News & Notes

The rewards of great service

What are some of the results you can expect as a result of providing great customer service? A recent survey by Zendesk/Dimensional Research provided the following responses from customers:

- 81 percent will tell family and friends about it.
- 45 percent will broadcast their experience on social media.
- 35 percent will write about it on an online review site.
- 39 percent will choose your business over competitors for up to two years following a great service experience.

Motivator #1: Communication

Bob Nelson, author of 1501 Ways to Reward Employees, reports that, in his research, the number one motivator for today's employees is honest and direct communication from their manager. "Ninety-five percent of today's employees report that getting the information they need from their manager is either very or extremely important to them," Nelson says.

And what kind of information are they looking for? "Certainly they want the information they need to do their jobs and the answers to any questions that come up in the course of their work," says Nelson. "But that's just the starting point. They also

want to be part of a steady stream of ideas and conversations that make their time at work more interesting and fun. They want to know what opportunities they have to learn and grow."

Employees also want to know what is going on in other parts of the organization and what the organization's plans and strategies are for the future. In short, Nelson says, "Employees want to feel 'in on things' and giving them that information is the starting point for empowering them to act in a way that goes beyond just being an employee. Ample communication sets employees up to want to do their best job in striving to make a difference and a contribution at work."

Engage customers online, or via email

A recent survey by ClickFox, which provides customer-experience analytics, suggests that the best avenue for building loyalty is online. A recent study by the company found that in-store agents (29 percent) and phone-based customer service agents (36 percent) were rated below email (45 percent) and online sources (41 percent) as customers' preferred sources of information about new products and services.

The study also noted that customers strongly dislike unsolicited outreach from agents representing a brand.

Embrace mistakes to become a stronger leader

What's positive about mistakes? "We can't be successful without taking a leap, at times, even if there is a chance of failing," says psychotherapist and positive thinking expert Diane Lang. "Mistakes are teachable moments and much more. Mistakes should affect us positively and not be viewed as negative." Here are Lang's six reasons why people should embrace mistakes:

- We learn from our mistakes. "It's an old lesson, but a good one," Lang says. "The happiest people are always learning."
- Mistakes make us aware that we are not perfect. "When we realize that we're human, we can let go of the notion of being perfect all of the time," Lang says.
- Mistakes mean we are taking risks. "People who take risks are generally happy, more creative, and they don't grow stale or stagnate," Lang says. "With mistakes, they understand that it's about the journey and not about a particular outcome."
- Mistakes help us develop a sense of accomplishment. "We can have a sense of pride in the fact that we tried, we didn't procrastinate, and we didn't let fear run our lives," says Lang.
- Mistakes aren't the end of the world. If we learn from them, they make us stronger. "Making mistakes and trying again teaches us perseverance," says Lang.
 - Mistakes are a motivator. They make us work harder.

Some 66 percent said they do not want to be contacted over the phone for special offers, information, and upgrades. However, nearly 75 percent said they would prefer to be contacted via email or text messages by companies.

Mobile apps targeting consumers show promise

A new study developed by Point Inside, a developer of in-store shopping apps for retail companies, shows that companies incorporating location-based technology into their store apps can increase customer engagement five times more than those that don't.

Other highlights of the study:

- The fastest growing segment of shoppers were those who used the apps five or more times per month they now account for 30 percent of total users.
- The number of overall users of mobile in-store apps increased by 14 times throughout the year.
- The average number of items in the shopping list of those using mobile apps increased by 1.5 times.