Survey shows effective call centres are key to winning and keeping Thai customers

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19 November 2007, BANGKOK â€" Seventy three percent of Thai customers are willing to do more business with a company if they had a great call centre experience and two thirds said they would stop dealing with a particular company if they had a bad call centre experience, according to a survey by global market research company Synovate.

Exploring consumer attitudes towards call centres, Synovate surveyed 1,007 Thais across all income levels living in greater Bangkok about their call centre experience and satisfaction levels.

Managing Director of Synovate Thailand, Mr. Steven Britton said that while more than half (63%) of respondents agreed that call centres have improved over the last two years, Thai companies will need to raise the bar and provide better, fast and more effective service when dealing with customers over the phone.

"With increased levels of competition and greater consumer demands, Thai companies will need to act quickly in order to stay ahead. It should be nothing short of ensuring that each customer gets off the phone feeling like they had a great experience," he said.

Call management
Over half (64%) of Thai consumers said they have been in contact with a call centre in the past twelve months while the most popular call centres consisted of telecommunication providers, food delivery companies and financial institutions.

Call waiting represents the biggest challenge for Thai call centres and reducing the call waiting time is paramount as it impacts customer satisfaction significantly.

More than half of respondents (67%) have stopped using a particular company due to a poor call centre experience while more than two thirds (78%) of respondents said they would put the phone down if they had to wait up to five minutes.

When asked if they would prefer to be put on hold or to be called back, more than half (58%) of respondents preferred to receive a return call instead of waiting on the other side of the line.

"Call centres need to hire knowledgeable staff that can answer queries directly without needing to refer to another call centre agent. But if that is not possible, nearly all respondents (94%) preferred to be transferred to someone more knowledgeable if the call centre agent could not assist with their query," he added.

Customer satisfaction
Thai companies rarely called existing and potential customers, with slightly over a third (37%) of respondents having said they received a courtesy call from a company.

"It turns out that courtesy calls from a call centre were actually well received, with respondents reacting positively instead of negatively (36% versus 17%), dispelling fears Thai companies may have had in the past when contacting customers," he said.

More than two thirds (88%) of respondents indicated that they were willing to participate in a customer satisfaction survey after contacting a call centre while more than half (68%) of respondents said they would feel better about a company after having participated in a customer satisfaction survey.

New ways to communicate
While voice calls may be the preferred choice for consumers when contacting a company, the survey also showed that there was a demand for the use of email (14%), particularly among teenagers and respondents in their twenties.

The use of Short-Message-Service or SMS to receive information about a company's products and services was popular among 51% of Thais while more than half (57%) of respondents said they were willing to provide feedback to a call centre via SMS.

Mr. Britton advised Thai companies with call centres to not limit their options when communicating and receiving feedback from their customers. He also encouraged companies to explore non-conventional forms of communication to reach out to customers.

"Using Instant Messaging or IM as it is commonly known is another viable option for companies, when communicating

and receiving feedback from customers. Our results show that 35% of Thai consumers are in favour of using IM to contact a call centre while 16% of respondents are already using IM to contact a call centre," he said.

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