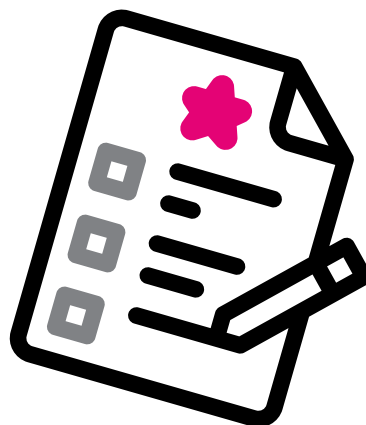


JOY TO THE WORLD... 10 WISHES FOR 2018!

Create an environment in which customer experience is paramount and those facilitating it can shine.

BY Kathleen M. Peterson, PowerHouse Consulting



Happy Holidays! I am taking some idiom liberties in this last month of 2017. “Joy to the World” isn’t exactly an idiom, but it will do to frame my year-end message of JOY and extend my wishes for the contact center world. For the holiday and beyond, I have 10 wishes for contact center professionals at all levels.



IMPROVE POSITIVE VISIBILITY

The ability to manage contact center visibility and deliberately, relentlessly self-promote without resorting to “metric” based productivity leads others across the enterprise to view the contact center with appreciation and partnership. Nobody outside the contact center cares much about classic contact center metrics unless they can be dressed up as a *benefit* to others. Dig into what is being learned about the customer. *What do we know now that we didn't know before?* This is what sparks an interest by other business units. Engage your teams all year to LEARN about your customers. Initiate an activity—What We Learned About Our Customers This Week—and watch the transformation of your teams as they begin to think differently about day-to-day activities. Capture this rich information and publish your findings.



REMAIN CURIOUS AND CHALLENGE EVERYTHING

Curiosity is a natural human instinct until it goes dormant from lack of use. Sadly,

many move quickly through difficulties to arrive at frustration; this never yields clarity. Frustration is an emotion that feeds on itself, on negativity, and on pessimism. Curiosity leads to clarity. Curiosity feeds on discovery, optimism and options which are more positive and yield a sense of possibility. Become curious about your ability to persuade and influence and how that direction brings out the best in others and in yourself. As part of being curious, challenge everything including your last best idea. Contact centers are a sea of change; navigating change means constantly evaluating operational conditions in the center. *What is working?* Even our most brilliant ideas won’t work forever.



COMMIT TO TRAINING

Take the pledge... this year we will NOT cancel training! This year we will tear our training curriculum apart (if we have one) and focus on designing and developing targeted learning materials that engage learners in realistic job and human scenarios. The result is empowered and efficient team members who are encouraged to report on training deficiencies and participate in program improvement.



HAVE SOME FUN!

Look for fun and creative ways to communicate and share information throughout the Contact center... posters, book exchanges, online bulletins, newsletters, etc. Contact center teams are often so busy they barely get to know their peers; encourage information exchanges. Try mixing things up with up team huddles, peer nominations for helping each other out, fund raisers for good causes, and lunch-learn sessions. Encourage engagement to boost morale and foster a sense of team spirit.



FOCUS ON SIMILARITIES OVER DIFFERENCES

This is particularly true for healthcare contact centers that serve a centralized scheduling function. Physician practices love to promote how different they all are, and of course they are in terms of their specialties. But when it comes to booking an appointment they all have access and patient experience goals in common as well as the vision, mission, and values of the organization. It is simply a matter of pointing these out and leveraging similarities to expand skill sets and agents available to fulfill patient needs.

LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF EXECUTIVES

Keep strategic objectives in mind when



6 reporting on performance, submitting budget, or requesting capital expenses. Executives think in strategic terms; reports and requests must be linked to growth and how the contact center supports that growth. Use the term “market share.” Make sure you know your company’s growth targets. *Will there be mergers or acquisitions? What about new products, services, or customers?* It is also important to know how the contact center contributes to efficiency—the ability to manage costs. This is articulated at the executive level as “margins.” I guarantee that you can improve your visibility at the executive level when you present findings that suggest poor processes, systems or technologies; these serve as evidence that margins are shrinking more than any other. Use language that executives understand and the contact center stands a better chance of getting what it needs!



TRANSFORM YOUR VOCABULARY

7 Understand that words have great power. Learn to use language first to communicate with yourself. Our internal dialogue is often loaded with fear, anxiety and untested limits—“they would never give me that job.” If thoughts such as this are going on inside your head you will be exactly correct and associated behaviors will follow. For some, even adopting exec-speak is uncomfortable. Pay very, very, very, close attention to what you tell yourself. Far too often, our internal dialogue uses language that stops rather than starts us on a new path. Vocabulary is transformational; it is the means by which we can de-escalate. When someone says they are “frustrated,” respond with something like “I understand your concern.” Changing the word “frustrated” to “concern” immediately de-escalates. You essentially just reduced the intensity of the situation and you did so deliberately! Transformational vocabulary means we use different words to reduce the intensity of a situation. But it does take practice! We must first gain insight into our internal dialogue and open up to the possibility that situations, especially professional ones, can be

managed by altering our own state of mind. If we are in a downward spiral our internal dialogue is the earliest indicator. Change what you say to yourself and it will open the door to being a most effective communicator and a happier person.



THINK “CONTRIBUTION TO CAPACITY”

8 Adherence is an important “word” factor in contact center management. Unfortunately, it is far too often wrapped up in punitive and near adolescent enforcement. That is why about 20 years ago I coined a term to replace it. “Contribution to Capacity” is how I measure adherence. Think about it. Contribution is a basic human need; people are prone to feel good about contribution. Capacity is, in fact, what we are attempting to manage in the contact center. This term forces leaders to actually explain the real purpose and meaning of adherence. Management is responsible for creating a resource plan for the center which essentially follows a demand and capacity model. Regardless of how accurate the forecast or how precise the scheduling routines... if the front line isn’t there, the capacity model will fail and the customer experience will suffer. There will also be a negative impact on those folks picking up the slack for the “no-shows.” With Contribution to Capacity, the message shifts the responsibility to the individual. The ACD system provides a logon report that shows the percentage of time the agent spends in each “state.” Use a bar chart to map the percentage of time spent in Talk, Work, Unavailable and Available. Line up all agents on the chart; you will see immediately how each individual spends their time. This is a more sophisticated approach and transforms the conversation from adherence (punitive) to contribution (positive).



ELEVATE SOMEONE THIS YEAR

9 Look around; people need a bump up. *What have you done to assure that those working in your contact center feel elevated, valued and inspired?* Use whatever words or actions work for you

and take steps to create an environment in which people’s efforts are celebrated. A simple post-it note “thank you” means that someone noticed. The contact center job can be isolated and stressful. Mitigate that by celebrating the smallest of successes. Be generous with your praise!



SHINE!

10 Polish yourself up every day so that you can shine. Think of work as a FUNdraiser. Not many of us would return to work if we suddenly won the lottery. So it follows that actually going to work has a clear purpose of raising funds for our real life! If you have ever been involved in fundraising it, it is typically as a volunteer and you do it because of a passion. Well, most of us have “volunteered” to take on this contact center job. When done with a passionate interest, the ability to raise more FUNds will yield more FUN on every level. It is FUN to learn, even when the situation seems insane. Being curious helps us to learn what makes people tick and what makes situations screwy. It beats being bummed out and consistently aggravated. When we lose the FUN factor, we just may start a downward spiral of dissatisfaction that for some can last a lifetime.

Fulfilling Wishes Will Bring Positive Outcomes

Fulfilling these wishes will certainly bring joy, fun and excitement to your contact center. The outcomes will be increased visibility within the enterprise, more positive language and dialogue, new and creative thinking, deeper interest and curiosity, and a higher status for your people. These combine to create an environment internally and externally in which the customer experience is paramount and those facilitating that experience shine on.

Joy to the World! May your holiday wishes come true! ♦



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