

Call Center FCR Best Practice Award Winner

Gold Award for Quality Assurance:
407 ETR

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407 ETR

Company Description

407 ETR is the world's first all-electronic toll road of its kind, and from the day it was opened up to the present day it continues to fulfill its mission of relieving traffic on local highways and roads. Drivers take about 380,000 trips on the highway each workday. More than 114 million trips were taken in 2014.

Customers tell 407 ETR that the number one reason they use the highway is to save time. Customers also report that they feel they make a good choice in using 407 ETR.

407 ETR has no toll booths that can slow down traffic and cause lengthy delays. The highway is open-access, which allows the fast, safe and reliable movement of vehicles.

Vehicles travelling at a safe, consistent speed use less fuel than when travelling in stop-and-go traffic. As 407 ETR rarely has traffic congestion, drivers save money on gasoline and also reduce the environmental impact of driving by emitting less CO2 per kilometre than vehicles idling in traffic.

407 ETR operates the concession under a lease which makes it responsible for all maintenance, expansion and customer service operations.

407 Call Center Description

Locations

Woodbridge, Ontario, Canada

Call Types

Billing inquiries, Account management, Payments

Customer Types

Consumer and Corporate. Transponder and Video

CSR Headcount

70

Contact Channels

Phone, email, website, in-person

Hours of Operation

Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Contact Volume

2014 calls: 624,027

2014 emails: 48,130

2014 visits: 57,512

Background and Problem Statement

Long gone are the days when tape recorders were once used to record service interactions between CSRs and customers and when dozens of employees were required to assess calls. Today, sophisticated advancements in recording software enable 100% of calls to be recorded. Like many in the call centre industry, we have updated our call quality program over the years to what has evolved today into what we consider a best practice Call Quality Assurance (CQA) program.

407 ETR Customer Service has applied all its learning from other best in class companies and industry conferences to provide our employees and the company a CQA program which has enabled us to make great strides toward improving the customer experience. The key to lift any call quality program to a best in class program is to align the program to your objectives. Like many call centres, our desire was to revamp a CQA program to improve the customer experience, improve employee engagement and bring further success to the company at large.

Problem Statement

We recognized in order to elevate 407 ETR to a World Class Call Centre status, to reduce operating expenses and to implement independent evaluation on the quality of our customer service interactions, there was a necessity to implement what is today a best practice CQA program.

Over the past 11 years, SQM has offered us invaluable feedback, benchmarking and workshops which provided 407 ETR employees with the tools to continuously improve our VoC results. To raise our standards, we looked at where we were, where we desired to be and what action we would need to take to get there. From an efficiency and budget perspective, it was an easy decision to see why partnering with SQM would benefit us.

First and foremost, our mission was to increase Csat and improve FCR. It was also important that we balanced customer feedback with the work of our CSRs and provide an unbiased assessment of our work and compliance to our processes. To inspire employees on a daily basis to be committed to demonstrating company values, it is necessary to align your CQA program to your company values.

“Continuously Improve” is one of 407 ETR’s corporate team charter values. We took a close look at our existing process and rationale, reviewed our existing guidelines in place and identified areas for improvement to protect the business. This was done while keeping in mind customer protection and the reputation of our company. We compared the cost per survey being completed internally at 407 ETR versus the cost of evaluations conducted by SQM; a significant savings per evaluation. This budgetary saving allowed us to explore further how we would prepare such a big change in moving from what was an internal process to one which

was external while also impacting our CSRs, team managers, applications audits and administration, training, and more.

Best Practices Used

A call list of customers who have called the call centre is compiled and sent to SQM on a daily basis. Customers are surveyed within one day of their call to the call centre. The SQM call quality evaluator reviews customer survey ratings, listens to the customer feedback and to the recording of the interaction between CSR and customer, and reviews screen captures to assess call compliance. The CQA evaluation form embeds customer survey results, customer's audio feedback and call compliance results. The CSR has access to view voice of the customer feedback, call compliance metrics and links to the audio .Comments provided by the evaluator are very detailed. This is viewed positively both from a Team Manager's perspective as it helps them prepare for coaching sessions and for the CSR who views the evaluator comments in SQM's web portal.

A new evaluation form was created internally with Customer Service and SQM Group. With this new form has a scoring structure which allows CSRs to gain points when customers respond to their experience; for example whether they would continue to use our product (the highway) in future. 60 of the possible 100 points of the overall CQA score is based on 3 parts of the customer surveys conducted by SQM to generate the score (30 for call resolution, 15 for CSR Csat, 15 for customer Continue to Use) and the other 40 points are allocated for the call compliance metrics (broken down as 65% customer focus and 35% organization focus). For the first month, we ran the new program alongside the old program which provided valuable insight on the effectiveness of the new program. This also allowed us to determine the impact of the new program, to refine the form and guidelines developed and make any changes without negatively impacting our customers and employees.

The Customer Service Department, Applications Audits and Administration (previously responsible for call quality evaluations) and SQM's Development Team created an amalgamated program and form to further assist CSRs in achieving their goal of world class certification through the new Call Quality Assurance program. Teamwork and collaboration was imperative in the planning stages with SQM's team, the manager of our internal CQA team, manager of customer service, manager of our training department and manager of technical services. This teamwork and collaboration resulted in the development of the new CQA program, further cultivating CSR growth and continued fostering of CSR development. Our 407 ETR training facilitator travelled to SQM to conduct all necessary training for the SQM team of call quality evaluators, furthering our strength in a partnered endeavor. Ongoing calibration sessions were conducted to ensure consistency in scoring and still continue to take place today.

Supporting CSRs through the change was an absolute necessity and number one on our list of priorities. A communication plan was developed, providing small frequent updates about the new program to allow our employees the time to absorb the information, ask questions and begin to incorporate the change.

Our performance improvement plan was reviewed in order to establish an accurate three month rolling trend for the new call quality standards and CSR Csat. The new call quality three month trend began four months following the implementation of the new CQA program, providing employees with the opportunity to get fully acquainted and comfortable with the new program.

Fifty percent of a team manager's day is designated to coaching CSRs. We hold our CSRs accountable for the service provided to our customers and hold their team manager accountable in supporting them with quality coaching. "When I first heard we were changing the way our employees' calls were going to be audited for quality assurance, I instantly knew implementing this new CQA change would improve our overall results, as it truly quantifies the level of world class service provided by employees on a daily basis", says Shantell Edwards, 407ETR Team Manager. "The change would not be easy for our employees to accept as the weight system or percentage allotted was different; however this weight was aligned with my coaching and I was ready to sell this new concept or approach. There was a lot of discussion regarding the CQA evaluators and their abilities as well as the new weight of scoring. Through conversation, my employees were able to move forward through the change and appreciate the benefits of the new program for everyone involved."

There are critical components that comprise of the customer interaction which significantly impact our customers and organization, and in turn FCR, such as failure to adhere to policies and workflows. The new CQA process includes a critical components section and should a critical component be missed, the evaluation receives a score of zero. This integral piece of the evaluation provides us with common themes where opportunities for improvement have been successfully identified. This information has enabled us to continuously work toward implementing changes so that CSRs continue their drive to own the call and create a world class experience.

CSRs have online access to results immediately once a call quality evaluation is complete. The customer survey is conducted, then reviewed by a dedicated CQA evaluator. Once evaluated, it is available in the SQM web portal to be viewed by the CSR. Having the ability to view feedback right away provides the CSR understanding on what they are doing to create a positive customer experience; encourages the CSR to continue to their behaviour, and for the CSR to learn what they can do differently in future to create that memorable customer experience while following appropriate policies and procedures. Essentially it creates the desire to exceed the purpose of one's job and responsibilities.

It is very important that regular employee feedback is provided from the CSRs on the CQA program. Focus groups were conducted to learn how CSRs viewed the new CQA Program and their recommendations for continuously improving the program. When employees feel they have been listened to, have a say in the program and have contributed to improving the program, they believe in the program and its benefits to them. This keeps the CSR engaged and working to strive for world class results. Following the implementation of our CQA program, Rachael Mahon, a CSR, shared the following sentiments, "I like the fact that the interaction

surveyed by the customer is also evaluated for quality assurance as this provides a clear picture for the evaluator. A connection is made between what a customer is told and its completion. Previously a call could be scored 100% by the customer but in reality processes may not have been followed through. This current process ensures all calls are completed within recommended standards.” Hearing such feedback reaffirms the significant importance our CSRs place on the desire to own the call. “By giving the customer survey the weight of 60% of the CQA score, the new call quality program serves as an additional tool that emphasizes the importance of ensuring that our customers receive the best customer service that our CSRs can provide”, shared Lily Keen, a call centre team manager. This supports our desire for CSRs to create a world class experience.

FCR/Csat Outcome

There has been visible improvement in results since the implementation of the new CQA program. Results are positive with 84% of CQA evaluations exceeding and meeting expectations. “The results are truly indicative to the perception of the customer interaction with our employees as well as our employee’s ability to provide First Call Resolution! I recommend the CQA program that SQM offers!” says Shantell Edwards, a call center team manager.

After the implementation of the new CQA Program, our end of year VOC improved in the following areas: world class call results showed a 3 point improvement, call resolution improved from 93% to 95%, which increased the department’s FCR from 82% to 85%. This improvement was done all within 6 months. Most of the improvement was driven by the CSR top performers in the first and second quartile, improving by 7% points. The last quartile, as expected, showed a small decline. In addition to the improvements to our overall world class score, the CQA program further reinforced what we have been preaching all along to our agents: call resolution.

We have moved from monthly calibration sessions with the CQA Team to quarterly reviews. On a regular basis, key success indicators are reviewed to determine if any changes are required to the program. This review determines whether new performance ranges are required and the impact and effectiveness of the critical component scoring are evaluated regularly. Monthly communication to employees on the overall scores, area of opportunities and improvements helps employees see their contributions toward improving the customer experience and making us a world class call center.

Customer service knowledge assessment quizzes are the final step to ensuring the process does not break down and everyone keeps their skills sharp. Short knowledge quizzes will be conducted with SQM call quality assurance evaluators in future to measure their 407 ETR knowledge. These quizzes are the same as those that our own staff complete on a regular basis to ensure that everyone is aware of processes and procedures and have comprehensive knowledge of new job aids. This further strengthens the process while providing our staff with the reassurance that those who complete call quality evaluations have the comprehensive

knowledge and know how to effectively evaluate calls, leaving any uncertainty out of the equation.

For the future, a quality measurement score card is being developed to evaluate the quality of evaluations being conducted. This overview will capture the number of call quality evaluations disputed, calibration session discrepancies in score and customer service knowledge assessment tool quiz results. At a glance, this scorecard will assist both 407 ETR and SQM Group to know, in concrete, measurable terms, exactly how the partnership intends to succeed and continuously improve. With this enhancement and many more to come, we eagerly await to see how the program continues to evolve and bring great gains to our customers, our employees and our business at large.