



PRIME INSIGHT + FOCUS

Vol. 1, 2009

MARK YOUR CALENDARS... RFC's 2009 EVENTS

... designed for telecom directors and their managers in product, market, sales and channel management.

REGISTER NOW!

Sales/Care Channels & Operations
April 1-3, 2009

BMMA 2009 Annual Meeting
(Broadband Multimedia Marketing Assn)
April 27-28, 2009

Broadband Services 2009
April 29–May 1, 2009

Alternate Channels Workshop
May 12-13, 2009

Most of our 2009 spring conferences will take place at the [Hilton Clearwater](#) in Clearwater Beach, Florida.
www.researchfirst.com

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Sales/Care Channels Conference

BY ANNA GIBSON

RFC's **Sales/Care Channels & Operations 2009** seminar will take place in beautiful Clearwater Beach, Florida, **April 1-3**. What a great opportunity to meet and interact with your peers from other Telcos in North America and overseas! It promises to be a casual, intimate and extremely informative 2 ½ days.

This year's agenda is great, as always. The seminar features presentations by the service providers themselves, talking about industry best practices and topics relevant to all companies in the industry. In addition, selected industry vendors will share new and creative ideas.

We'll hear about best practices of high performing reps, tips on motivating sales performance, how to manage sales effectiveness through speech mining and effective outbound telemarketing programs. We'll learn how one company is optimizing their leverage compensation plan and how another is improving channel effectiveness. We'll also hear

about e-learning from a "best in class" company. With today's economic situation, hearing about one company's operational improvements will definitely be of interest. We'll have a panel discussion on cost saving efforts giving everyone an opportunity to participate.

Research First will also share the results of a survey of service provider managers that highlights the current state of the telecommunication marketplace as well as their priorities and issues for 2009. It's guaranteed that participants will get great ideas, learn about the ever changing, network with industry peers and generally have a terrific time.

Visit our website at www.researchfirst.com for more information.

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The Connected Home

BY Stan Romero

As broadband connections to homes become more prevalent, more applications are being developed or improved to take advantage of the capabilities inherent in a high-speed connection to the Internet. And as the number of devices that interface with the broadband pipe increases in each home, wired and wireless networks within the home are becoming more common, too. This provides both opportunities and challenges for the Internet service providers and others that offer devices and services that utilize these networks.

Not only can a home network be used to connect home computers and Wi-Fi enabled cellphones to the Internet and to provide for sharing a printer among multi-

ple computers, it can also be used for a myriad of other device connections. The whole concept of a connected home envisions seamless interconnection and communications between devices and the Internet or other devices in order for them to perform more services, improve entertainment options or provide for monitoring and control.

Entertainment options include the ability to download movies or music to your TV or entertainment center to move them from a personal experience (on your personal computer) to a shared experience for the family or group or simply to change the

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"...THERE'S NO NEED TO FEAR, ELEARNING IS HERE!"

By Don Yager - Afni, Inc.

Ok, maybe there's no need for such an exclamation, but during these challenging economic times we all look for ways to cut costs, increase performance, and gain flexibility as we try to figure out what the future will hold. There is a LOT of buzz lately around eLearning and CBT (Computer Based Training) and, if you are responsible for a call center operation or training, you probably get bombarded with people trying to sell eLearning. The problem is that if the "solution" to a problem is not training, then throwing training at it will NOT fix the problem or increase performance. If the solution IS training, but you throw eLearning or CBT at it, then this also will not fix the problem. So, when is eLearning appropriate? Can lowering costs be predicted? Will this increase performance? What do you need to watch out for? Let's see if we can clear away some of the fog.

Know what you are fishing for...

You need to know how effective your training is today in operational and financial terms. It is great to know that you train an average of 150/month and your course feedback scores average 4.3; however, wouldn't it be better to know that it takes 12 weeks for your agents to reach an AHT (Average Handle Time) of 450 seconds and a quality score of 85%? What would it mean to your operation and your customers to reach these goals in 6 weeks and not only sustain this performance, but improve them? The point is that you need to know what your current training is capable of and, if you are considering eLearning, for what reason? Off-the-shelf eLearning for such things as "Basics of Supervision", "Communication Skills", etc. are fine, but require customization to make sure these skills are in alignment with your culture and can be practiced, inspected, and coached after training occurs. Remember, know the value of your current training in business terms; if you don't know that today, you still have some work to do.

Where are eLearning opportunities in your instructor-led training today?

Be careful. CBT or eLearning is not appropriate for every element of training. Sometimes, even when it is appropriate,

you need to make sure that it is properly "installed" and "delivered." There are some very specific types of learning where eLearning is assumed very appropriate and, if being delivered by an instructor today would warrant a change to the delivery approach, such as:

Memorization of terminology, facts, etc., where repetition is better suited for CBT vs. redundant practice sessions/activities with an instructor.

Static information or information that does not change frequently, such as Company Overview/Orientation, Policy, Coaching or Sales Model/Approach.

System orientation, where purpose and functionality of systems do not often change.

Simulation, in those cases where you do not have immediate access to a production system or if the system may be unstable and negatively impacting the learning experience.

Hands-on performance, where the ability to demonstrate and then let learners practice with immediate feedback is more effective than an instructor providing step-by-step instructions.

Why would you do this today? What benefits could you expect?

It's one thing to know where eLearning is applicable in your current training, but before deciding to unbolt the current machine, it still has to come down three things: results, results, and results. Additionally, even after reviewing the results this may be a make vs. buy decision for you, depending on the structure of your training organization and the cost structure of the business. Having said that, and assuming you have performed your due diligence and know where eLearning is most appropriate, you can enjoy the following benefits.

Convenience and portability, when learning must be accessible on a flexible schedule, self-paced, or unbound by time or location.

On-demand availability is critical in a call center, especially during times of fluctuating call volumes. If you know

specifically what task, competency, or skill that an agent is deficient in, eLearning provides ready delivery that can be targeted and re-used to reinforce your coaching.

Reduction in learning time can be impacted by an average 40 to 60 percent (Brandon Hall, *Web-based Training Cookbook*); to make sure you are taking advantage of these savings, make sure to re-read, "Know what you are fishing for..." above.

Increased retention of knowledge for eLearning, on average, will increase by 25% when compared to traditional instructor-led methodology (J.D. Fletcher, *Multimedia Review*).

Cost. Oh, did we forget to talk about the overall cost of training? Sorry about that. See the next section.

Everyone talks about the possibility of overall training cost reduction. Can you give me some examples?

Well, actually, we have indirectly talked about cost savings, especially when you consider that you can reduce a traditional training course by 40%-60% and increase the retention of skills and knowledge. Two specific cases show a direct cost improvement and decrease in training time at Afni, Inc., an outsourcer of Contact Center Solutions.

Case 1. The challenge was to train 1000 agents for a 10hr mandatory, instructor-led course. Oh, and to complete this in 3 weeks, across 4 centers, and with no impact to service level - "...gulp..." We were able to develop eLearning for the same course, proctored by trained SMEs (Subject-Matter Experts). Training for the proctor's also utilized CBT and course guides. The CBT course time was 4 hours - a 60% reduction in learning time. Seeing as we are paid differently for online time vs. training time we were able to save a total of \$62,700 for this effort. This does not include the savings of not using instructors and in a manner that did not necessarily need to tie up a training room (for the record, Instructor savings was \$15,680).

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Telco Managers Survey Highlights

By Ellis D Hill

In January, Research First polled its customer base of ILEC/RBOC marketing/product management as well as sales/customer care management to review their successes and challenges in 2008 and to take a glimpse at their focus for 2009.

The marketing/product management group was further segmented into general marketing/product managers and those primarily responsible for their broadband product portfolio. Complete results are being forwarded to the survey participants, and detailed highlights are being presented at our three spring seminars.

Over twenty-two companies responded to at least one of the three surveys. The responses are therefore indicative and not statistically valid.

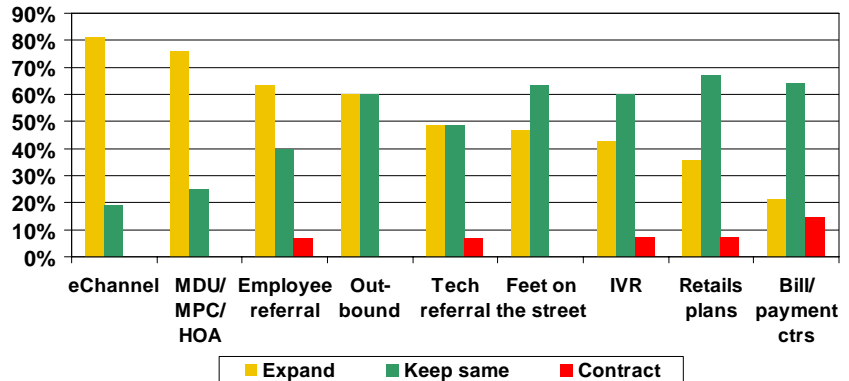
Marketing/Product Management

Three areas of greatest focus in 2008 for the general marketing/product group were customer retention, expansion of existing product lines and competitive response. They overwhelmingly indicated that customer retention will continue to be a focus for 2009. Successful programs last year included free services or price guarantees with qualified triple play bundles. Broadband, video services and bundles will be this year's top strategic products.

Broadband managers indicated that their

Alternate Channels in 2009

Sales/Care Mgrs



Will you look for alternate customer contact options?

marketing successes last year were all across the board, from adding/increasing tiered speeds to compete with cable, to new revenue opportunities, to changes in the marketing message (away from speed). ADSL2 is the current dominant technology and we'll see expansion of fiber (FTTH, FTTN) as well as WiMAX and other 3G wireless technologies. Reducing broadband churn, finding successful promotions and monetizing OTT services were indicated to be the most important broadband issues for 2009.

Sales/Care Management

Top areas of focus for this group in 2008

were increasing revenue, reducing costs, and customer retention, which will remain the same in 2009. Regarding compensation, around 50% of respondents indicated they will move more toward "at risk". Alternate channels will continue to expand in 2009, echannels in particular in addition to MDUs and employee referral programs (see chart above).

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BMMA 2009 Membership and Growing ...



4Q'08 Major Provider Broadband In Service

Broadband Service Provider	2008		
	4Q In Service	4Q Gain	4Q % Gain
Major Telco DSL			
AT&T	16,322,000	322,000	2.0%
Verizon	8,673,000	214,000	2.5%
Qwest	2,847,000	54,000	1.9%
Embarq	1,412,000	24,000	1.7%
Windstream	978,800	16,100	1.7%
Frontier	579,943	7,997	1.4%
CenturyTel	641,000	13,000	2.1%
FairPoint	295,360	1,226	0.4%
Cincinnati Bell	233,200	2,100	0.9%
TDS Telecom	178,000	7,000	4.1%
Total US	32,160,303	661,423	2.1%
Major Cable			
Bell Canada	2,054,000	8,000	0.4%
TELUS	1,096,000	18,600	1.7%
Bell Aliant	762,119	14,063	1.9%
SaskTel *	178,154	2,819	1.6%
MTS Allstream	176,637	2,057	1.2%
Total Canada	4,266,910	45,539	1.1%
Total Telco	36,427,213	706,962	2.0%
Major Cable			
Comcast	14,929,000	184,000	1.2%
Time Warner	8,727,000	93,000	1.1%
Cox *	4,075,762	58,724	1.5%
Charter	2,881,100	22,900	0.8%
Cablevision	2,455,000	28,000	1.2%
Bright House *	1,246,085	19,623	1.6%
Mediacom	737,000	11,000	1.5%
Insight	458,500	13,400	3.0%
Total US	35,509,447	430,647	1.2%
Shaw	1,597,114	31,152	2.0%
Rogers	1,582,000	19,000	1.2%
Videotron	1,064,000	33,000	3.2%
Cogeco	492,976	19,509	4.1%
Total Canada	4,736,090	102,661	2.2%
Total Cable	40,245,537	533,308	1.3%

Sources: Company reports and Research First Consulting Inc. research.

* Estimated

eLearning

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Case 2. Our current “ACM – Afni Coaching Model” course used to be delivered in two 8hr days. While we wanted to get as much role modeling and real life data into the 2-day course, we had the challenge that we needed to present a lot of foundational principles, such as communication, feedback, coaching session skills, etc., prior to getting to the meat. This took a lot of time and made an impact on the effectiveness of the coaching class. We re-designed the course, developing 12 CBT’s for the foundational pieces, and used the classroom time primarily for 3 hands-on, consultative-based workshops at 4hrs each. Each participant would have to complete only the CBT’s needed prior to the workshop and then practice the skills in their real environment before attending the next workshop. We were able to

decrease the training time by 25%, focusing on skills and performance in class, and have seen a dramatic increase in the effectiveness of our Coaches impacting both productivity and quality metrics.

All right, enough already...

Well we could go on to talk about the reduction in instructors needed to support the operation, the decreases in an agent’s ability to reach a higher level of proficiency sooner, and the now readily available resources for our employees, but that would belabor the point. Bottom line, there is a business case for using eLearning as a method of delivery in your training today. The reason courses take so long is to compensate for the fact that the current design approach of most training is not appropriate. When analyzing needs and requirements, the delivery method must match the competency you are trying to train. If not, you have to spend more time and deploy more resources in order to try

and achieve what will wind up being a minimum level of acceptable performance.

This guest article was written by Don Yager, Director of the Performance Development Group for Afni, Inc. located in Bloomington, IL. Don is responsible for training, quality, coaching, and performance systems/development. He has over 23 years of experience in training, development, quality improvement, leadership and project management with multiple industries including Defense Contracting, Computer Manufacturing, and In/Outsourced Call Center Operations. Prior to Afni, he was a performance consultant for multiple wireless providers, co-architect of Workforce Development Software, is a published author, and a frequent speaker addressing performance improvement through training and quality practices.

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Networking

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location or quality of the display or player. The same can be said for online gaming, digital photo sharing and viewing, etc. The speakers on our February BMMA conference call described several products that can be used to facilitate this experience.

But the Connected Home concept anticipates much more than this. Home security video monitoring, event triggers and alarm condition notifications are all available now. Smart appliances can be controlled remotely. VoIP and femtocells connected to the network can provide voice communications. Monitors for elderly care and children can notify of events such as falls, medication taken, etc. as well as provide heart monitoring and other services. The home’s energy management can be remotely controlled. All of these capabilities and many more to come are possible in a Connected Home.

One challenge is to make all of this work over the same network in a user-friendly manner. The other is to make the public aware of its availability and benefits without getting them involved with the technological

complications. This technology like many others is in desperate need of a user-friendly interface and installation methods based on a Plug-and-Play concept.

This is where the service providers and vendors in this space can work together to add value for the customer. If they can provide the behind-the-scenes technology to make it seem simple and straightforward to the end-users, telcos could market the total solution, support and maintain the services. If they can make it simple enough, self-install options would significantly increase take rates and reduce costs. However this requires telcos and vendors to produce very straight-forward and user-friendly installation processes and operational controls.

The team that develops and markets an inexpensive, simple to use, Plug-and-Play approach for all of these home networking devices can own the market. Customers want these capabilities but don’t want to have to figure them out or endure the hassle or expense of a professional install.

This same simple, intuitive design would help solve the second problem by making it much easier to market the solutions. When customers understand both the benefits and what it takes to achieve those benefits, demand is created. Then if the simplic-

ity also makes it seem achievable, affordable and hassle-free, sales are made.

Come to Research First’s Broadband Services 2009 seminar April 29 – May 1, 2009 to join the discussion on this and many other relevant topics. (Register at www.Researchfirst.com.) And join our monthly BMMA Hot Topic Calls to continue the discussion.

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