

### **Company Losing Millions of Dollars Needs to Increase Employee Engagement to Drive Change and Employee Performance**

#### **Summary:**

A Fortune 100 company had contracted with a business processor organization (BPO) to answer customer support phone calls for the holiday season. The Fortune 100 client was threatening to cancel their contract with the BPO due to the customer service satisfaction scores (CSATs) being far below the required minimum. This BPO was plagued with an operation that not only wasn't meeting the client's expectations but was one where millions of dollars had been eroded off the bottom line because of operational inefficiencies and penalties due to low agent performance. Without a swift operational turnaround to keep this contract, there was no chance of recouping that loss off the bottom line. For the BPO, turning the situation around would mean renewed confidence from the Fortune 100 client and the potential for millions of dollars in new business.

#### **The Problem:**

**Customer Service Satisfaction Scores 20 points below expectations, agent utilization at 65%, employee attrition over 200% annualized, and daily employee absenteeism over 20%**

Senior-level leadership had no concept of the full extent of the specific challenges concerning low performance and utilization as well as crippling attrition and absenteeism. Further complicating matters, this BPO had very little experience in the 100% virtual/work-at-home environment, which is managed entirely different than traditional brick-and-mortar contact centers. There was a lack of honest communication between the business units and the executive team.

To be successful, the organization needed to be turned around and rebuilt. With millions of dollars already lost and millions of dollars on the line, this BPO needed to move fast if it were to stay in business and keep close to a thousand employees working. It would be like rebuilding a fast-moving train—while it was moving and with a team that didn't know how to properly operate it. The revenue for the entire division rested with the revenue of this one client.

#### **Putting things into perspective**

There was also the perception of this BPO that they could not meet expectations due to several factors. The Fortune 100 client's internal contact center teams had outstanding health insurance, stock options, and other corporate benefits and had an hourly wage that was 40% higher than the employees of the BPO. In addition, the BPO employees had no health insurance benefits, no 401K, and no stock options.

## **Solution:**

### **Strategic strategy takes center stage instead of a straight tactical strategy**

Instead of concentrating exclusively on specific customer service agent metrics, which would discourage employees and make them feel that their jobs were on the line, a “The Big Picture” communication strategy was developed. The organization had two *strategic* goals for the customer service organization: 1) achieve the number one placeholder in customer service satisfaction scores among twenty-five other vendors in the U.S. and 2) beat the client’s own internal customer support teams. If the organization drove toward hitting these two goals, it would cause a chain reaction of success throughout the organization and change the entire fabric of their culture, cultivating higher employee engagement and self-accountability. There would be tactical wins that included the right metrics being improved when the new strategic communication strategy was driven.

### **The key to driving performance: organically driven by employee engagement**

With this in mind a new comprehensive communication strategy was launched and the organization started to change the way leadership spoke throughout the organization. Every conversation started and ended with a “Big Picture” statement. Phrases like “We’re going to the TOP” and “We’re going to be number one” from leadership were prominent. Leadership emails started and ended with a “Big Picture” statement. To further communicate “The Big Picture,” three to five videos per week were completed by the National Director. Successes, though minimal at first, were capitalized on in the videos as the strategy was continually driven throughout the video series. These videos were forwarded to other divisions within this international company, sparking an international corporate rally behind this U.S. team.

During a **Virtual Weekly Learning Forum**, leaders at all levels learned and practiced with their teams, on different channels how to deliver inspirational “Third-Party Stories” with “Big Picture” phrases. This strategic communication plan cultivated authentic excitement throughout the organization. As agents saw the organization’s customer service satisfaction increase, it inspired more agents to be engaged and buy in to the belief of being number one within the enterprise of more than twenty-five other sites. Even though the customer service satisfaction scores started to climb, the organization was still nowhere near the goal of number one in customer service satisfaction scores (CSATs) within the enterprise. The Fortune 100 client was encouraged by the improvement, however, and the BPO’s contract was saved. The executive team of the BPO breathed a huge sigh of relief. Financially, however, the BPO was still in the red.

### **Helping employees toward their own goals for greater excitement**

Within **Virtual Weekly Learning Forums** new coaching plans were developed and practiced with agents who were offered career pathing that included the opportunity to develop a training round table, facilitate a round table, be a virtual floor walker, help with nesting, coach other agents for a specific time period once a week, and a wide variety of other activities that would help them cultivate leadership skills while helping others to be successful. These **Virtual Weekly Learning Forums** created excitement and gave the agents a stake in the success of the organization, which included being “number one” in the enterprise. This excitement could be seen and felt in team meetings and in chat rooms. Customer service agents got on board with career development process. “Big Picture” statements went viral across this 1,000-plus-seat customer service organization. Agents had “See you at the TOP” in their email signature lines.

## Taking the communication strategy to a new level

To engage new employees, virtual town halls were instituted with every group of new agents before they took customer calls. During these town halls, a short 20-minute presentation chock-full of “The Big Picture” statements took place. Afterward the virtual town hall was opened up for questions and comments from these new customer service agents. These new agents would routinely declare how excited they were to be with an organization that was “going to the top” and how great it was to be part of a team that was “going to be number one.”

The excitement was contagious as the leadership inside the Fortune 100 client’s organization could be heard on conference calls with some of their leadership declaring that they believed the BPO was going to be “number one.” Even the BPO Senior Vice President who was on a national call stated that the organization was “going to the top!”—which had become the organizational mantra.

### Outcomes:

**With breakthroughs that were reported weekly through video updates, sound and consistent strategy to engage employees and drive tactical wins were seen throughout the organization.**

Through multiple **Virtual Live Labs™**, there was a total mindset shift that changed the direction of this organization. In fewer than four months, this virtual/work-at-home national contact center hit number one in customer service satisfaction scores, during the busiest week of call volume for the year—between Christmas and New Year’s Day, hitting over 90% CSAT. The energy from the excitement of the agents and leadership in this virtual/work-at-home environment could be felt throughout the organization in the front-line agent and leadership chat rooms. The entire organization buzzed. Employees were more engaged because they felt part of the solution, so agent utilization rose almost 20 percentage points. Employee attrition had been cut in half while the customer service center agent base had grown by 25%.

In fewer than 16 months from the beginning of this new strategy launch, the BPO earned back the millions of dollars it had lost and posted a profit to the bottom line—all while doubling their steady-state-agent base to over 1,000 agents in the work-at-home environment. The executive team was ecstatic and confided that they never believed moving to top status within the client’s international vendor organization was even possible. This virtual/work-at-home organization continued to receive performance bonuses on multiple key performance indicators, including CSAT, AHT, and schedule adherence, month after month after month. Previous employee absenteeism went from 25% to less than half of that.

Leadership had previously found themselves in a business environment that was changing and were struggling with how to engage employees and drive change with their front-line work-at-home-employees. Now they were able to drive change that *utilized employee emotions* in a positive way and to incorporate *employee participation*. The organization was able to drive a new and different kind of strategy, where leaders were able to engage employees and goals were achieved without a tug of war.

In retrospect, the executives had expected the management teams to figure out how to turn things around, but they now realized that the leadership at all levels needed to gain new skills that worked in the work-at-home environment so they could see the desired results.

The mindset of the entire organization changed. Through a series of **Virtual Live Labs™**, The “Big Picture” communication strategy continued to morph into every department and program the organization had. It seemed like the organization excelled at everything they tackled, which built momentum. They were doing it new and different. The results were there, and everyone was excited.