

## Benchmark Cost & Profit Centre Measures

The key differences between cost and profit centre measures in a contact centre are apparent in that one focuses more on staff behaviour than on cost control and/or cutting. Typically, measurement criteria in both cost and profit centres are:

- Calls completed per hour, day, etc.
- Calls received per hour, day, etc.
- Average call length
- Staffing hours available per day, week, etc.
- Supporting staffing ratios

However, the approach is divided between attitudes and activities that lead eventually to staff and customer behaviors.

Cost Centre	Profit Centre
<p><b><u>Attitudes</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compliance driven</li> <li>- Limiting</li> <li>- Minus Profit</li> <li>- Plus Loss</li> <li>- Status quo</li> <li>- Divisively competitive or sometimes non competitive</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Attitudes</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer service driven</li> <li>- Unlimited</li> <li>- Plus profit</li> <li>- Minus loss</li> <li>- Innovation</li> <li>- Friendly &amp; healthy competition</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Control staff numbers</li> <li>- Cost containment</li> <li>- Units incurred/cost</li> <li>- Spend budget or lose it</li> <li>- Budget based on call volume</li> <li>- No outside or additional support costs considered</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sales growth</li> <li>- Active staff turnover control</li> <li>- Sales produced/cost</li> <li>- Create profit</li> <li>- Budget based on sales volume</li> <li>- Allocation of overhead costs</li> </ul>

One thing we can forget in our busyness as leaders is that our activities (and ultimate results) are a result of our attitudes. From our attitudes and activities, our staff (and customers) reacts to those attitudes and activities with behaviours that affect whether or not our benchmarks are met.

I've worked with many contact centres over the years and customarily begin my projects by conducting a confidential "human & process audit" with the staff. In too many cases, staff have expressed their frustration and concern with conflicting management directives i.e. quantity over quality, sales over customer service.

"One of the reasons they hired me over somebody else" they will tell me, "was because they wanted someone who really cares about serving the customer. But I can't do that here!"

For a contact centre to measure and benchmark to become a successful profit centre, the focus must be on:

- Management of costs – not simply containment or cutting.
- Pursuit of beneficial productivity – effectiveness rather than efficiency.
- Motivation of staff and management – the need for more time and effort in training and empowering all management levels to always practice motivation -- not movement (except under extraordinary circumstances) and to work toward harmony within the organisation
- Meeting management objectives – by educating and managing management's expectations. Managing up has never been so important than it is today.
- Management of quality rather than quantity.

It sounds old-fashioned -- but we need to reconsider the basics: putting our benchmarks where our business drivers are. To be successful with customers into this new millennium we must redirect our efforts from being inwardly focused to being outwardly focused. Because, if we don't – someone else will!

***Read about the author, Darlene D. Richard, at [www.CallCentreINTEGRITY.com/articles.htm](http://www.CallCentreINTEGRITY.com/articles.htm).***