Multi-Corporate-Culturalism: Map To Innovation
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Multi-corporate-culturalism. In the contact center business we experience it all the time. We ask the question, how can multiple corporate cultures co-exist happily and profitably in one organization? And even more than co-exist, how can multi-corporate cultures be a continual revenue and innovation opportunity for the contact center and the customer?

Outsourcers face this challenge continually.   Aligning a contact center's culture with the organization's values is a challenge; now imagine multiple corporate cultures existing in one outsourced contact center. When an organization is deciding whether to outsource its contact center services, it is one of their worst fears.   They wonder if an outsourcer's culture will affect their customers? Corporate values and cultural fit are playing a larger role in decision-making. However, multi-corporate-culturalism can be used strategically as an innovation and revenue opportunity for customer's to grow their organization and execute their business goals.

Outsourcers are realizing that service levels and metrics only tell part of the story. In order to strategically help a customer to grow its organization and execute its mission, an outsourcer must align its contact center's culture, passion and values with the culture and values of its client and use this cultural alignment to strategically grow its customer's business.

In the past, outsourcers have performed what I call *cultural transplant*. That is, outsourcers will completely replace their own culture with their customer's corporate culture. While at first this seems like a good idea, both organizations eventually realize that even if the transplant seems successful, it fails to recognize of why a customer outsources in the first place! For an outsourcer, the key is to provide strategic value and innovation in order to help an organization achieve its own business goals. Cultural transplanting is not strategic and may even lead to a costly culture clash.

Other outsource organizations have chosen the *cultural import* method. That is, outsourcers will import a client's culture and segregate it in the contact center. This method creates an insular culture and, while popular, can limit an organization's ability to grow expertise and innovate revenue opportunities.

As a customer of an outsourcer, we get the best of both worlds. Don't let that opportunity to innovate slip away in exchange for the insular status quo. Integrate planning for multiple corporate cultures that ultimately leads to dynamic innovation. While completing a business and requirements assessment, a portion should include a contact center cultural assessment based on key indicators of values and culture.

Industry research conducted in the area of contact center corporate culture concurs. One example is research conducted by *LIMRA* that indicates service-based contact centers can be classified into several key corporate culture categories:

- Fast and friendly service cultures that have a high customer satisfaction and results, high volume environment
- Concierge level service culture denoted by high-end service by very educated agents servicing low volume. This is the culture of "anything for the customer" which creates a high level of job satisfaction.
- Frenzied service culture denoted by a culture of extreme urgency and low stability
- Quick and slick service culture denoted by an entrepreneurial environment of risk-taking and bonuses, high turnover and low success
- Low gear service culture where customer focus is challenged by lack of achievement, performance, success and morale are low.

This is only a sample of many contact center cultures that influence business decisions and directions. Just as the Greek inscription on the Temple of Apollo reads "Know Thyself", a contact center cultural assessment begins with a self-assessment. What kind contact center do you have? Who or what drives your culture? What does your cultural map indicate are your tension points?

Cultural assessments consider how multi-corporate-cultures will not only co-exist but how an organization can embody the best parts of a customer's culture while still living its own. Assessments include a knowledge and cultural map of the organizations, planning how congruencies and tension points can become opportunities for business growth. Organizational charts are only a starting point.

Cultural maps include nuances of strategic goals and tactical process and procedures that affect customers and employees.

Cultural planning is a multi-disciplinary process, most importantly including your contact center operations team that live and breathe multi-corporate-culturalism every day. They are the experts that can inform an executive team of ways to create revenue opportunity from a multi-corporate-culture environment. Ensure the contact center lives a culture of selecting the right people to embody who your mission and brand, extending the arm of your business deeper into your market and community of interest, utilizing that arm through strategic programs and partnerships, and turning front-line contacts into your "ear on the ground" that creates revenue opportunities that add value to the relationship your customer has with you.

Multi-corporate-culturalism starts with people, dynamic passionate experts that can widen an organization's sphere of influence, extending its reach into the community or market. It is a value that drives culture, innovation and results.

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FineLine was awarded the 2006 CAM-X Award of Distinction and earned the TOP SCORE in this award category.

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Source Reference

McCulloch, Malcolm. "Contact Center Work Culture Study". *LIMRA International Inc.* Windsor, Connecticut. 2003. Retrieved on October 10, 2005.