# THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO SUPERCHARGING CALL CENTER PERFORMANCE

# Introduction

Modern call centers face an ever-growing list of challenges. Not only is the call center industry crowded with numerous competitors, it's hard to keep top talents and train new phone agents to meet the increasingly strict regulatory burdens being placed on call centers.

These challenges make it harder for call centers to meet their performance goals, resulting in smaller margins and difficulty in fueling growth.

With the overcrowding of the call center industry, it's more important than ever for call centers to supercharge their performance.

In this guide, we'll cover the best strategies for driving results for almost any call center by addressing the three basic pillars of call center performance:

1. Individual Performance
2. Business Strategy
3. Technology

By improving these three key areas, call centers in any industry can supercharge their results.

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# Supercharging Phone Agent Performance

In any call center, the phone agents that interact with your customers are going to have the biggest impact on your performance metrics.

A great phone agent can calm an angry customer and salvage the business relationship. A bad phone agent can snatch defeat from the jaws of victory, losing business that should have been secure.

The question is, "how can you make sure that all of your phone agents are great?" The following pages highlight different methods for answering this question, including:

• Customizing Training

• Empowering Your Phone Agents

• Increasing Agent Engagement → Improve Agent Retention

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## METHOD 1: CUSTOMIZE TRAINING

The obvious answer is to use training to improve individual phone agent performance. However, this answer doesn't always work. While training can be effective, far too many training programs use a "one size fits all" approach.

The problem with standardized training is it doesn't effectively meet the needs of all your phone agents. One phone agent might get that key piece of information they needed to improve, while another will be bored to tears sitting through lectures that don't address their specific needs.

This means that a standardized training approach simply cannot effectively help all of your phone agents.

If you're going to use training as your primary means of improving phone agent performance, you'll need to tailor your training programs to address the specific strengths and weaknesses of each phone agent to maximize results. To do this effectively, you'll need detailed information about each phone agent's performance and where their skills are most lacking.

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## METHOD 2: EMPOWER YOUR PHONE AGENTS

Create an atmosphere of agent accountability and ownership. Establish a culture and system of soliciting ideas and strategies directly from your phone agents since in many cases they are closest to your customers and know firsthand what seems to work and what doesn't.

Recognize and reward your top performers. Go beyond bonuses and commissions—give praise publicly. People inherently want to do a good job and love to be recognized for it. Money isn't always the best means of motivating workers.

Build a 360* view of your agents' performance. Traditional productivity metrics are useful (e.g. Average Handle Times, Average Number of Calls Handled, etc.), but if given too much focus, they can limit your view of what really matters.

In today's competitive world, how your phone agents make your customers feel can be the difference between keeping and losing a customer. It's like they say, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care…"

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## METHOD 3: INCREASE AGENT ENGAGEMENT → IMPROVE AGENT RETENTION

One of the biggest blows to your call center is when a skilled veteran decides to move on with their career. Veteran phone agents who can reliably meet goals are near-impossible to replace quickly.

Depending on your call center's specific industry, your average **annual turnover can be more than 33% of your staff**. At that rate, you'll completely cycle through all of your phone agents every 3 years (or less)!

Even worse, each phone agent lost bites into your margins because you have to:

- Advertise for an open position

- Use management team time for hiring processes (phone calls, interviews, background checks, etc.)

- Provide new hire orientation and training

- Pay out overtime to other phone agents that cover for the reduction in manpower

- Wait for the new hire to acclimate to the work environment and start producing results

This process can cost your call center well over $10,000 per employee lost, depending on how long it takes the new hire to adjust and start producing results. For a call center with 100 phone agents, that's 33 phone agents lost each year and over $330,000 in annual costs.

Given the sheer cost of turnover, finding ways to reduce attrition can have a huge impact on your margins.

While incentive programs can help, any employee retention strategy will require you to collect detailed data on individual phone agent performance. To be fully effective, you'll need the ability to *closely monitor the emotional state* of your phone agents, as the decision to quit is often an emotional one brought on by stress and frustration.

But, how can you identify which phone agents are on the brink, and which ones are worth going the extra mile to keep? To answer this, you'll need a detailed analyses of agent performance – but did you realize that emotional analysis can be a leading indicator?

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# Supercharging Call Center Strategy

Never underestimate the impact and importance of your call center strategy. A sound strategy that includes well defined hiring, training, and quality assurance practices can greatly influence phone agent performance.

Finding ways to improve your call center strategy can be incredibly difficult. That being said, there are a few steps that you can take to improve your overall strategy and QA processes:

### STEP 1: COLLECT DATA ON ALL CUSTOMER-AGENT INTERACTIONS

An obstacle you'll face in supercharging your business strategy is that to make sound decisions, you need to have access to a wealth of data. Unfortunately, most call centers only have the QA resources to manually review about 1-2% of their phone agent's customer interactions.

Making a sound business decision with **98-99% of your data missing** is nearly impossible. Unless you happen to catch a call where the phone agent is blatantly violating the rules and that call isn't an anomaly, sorting out the employees who need training from the ones who are doing fine takes weeks or months as you sample one or two customer interactions.

To best address the information gap, you need to have tools that allow you to automate the process assessing phone agent interactions with customers.

### STEP 2: UNDERSTAND YOUR CUSTOMERS

Aside from tracking how your phone agents interact with customers, you should also understand your customers.

This means more than just getting a consumer report on the demographics and habits of your customer base. While useful, these broad-stroke reports aren't specific enough to your business to give you actionable intel on your customers.

To gain an edge, you need a way to gather information about how your customers interact with your phone agents, and how they'll behave in the near future. Customer surveys are a common tactic used to fill this particular information gap, but low response rates can create a non-response bias that contaminates survey results.

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## STEP 3: IDENTIFY EXPRESSED EMOTIONS

Emotions have an enormous impact on call outcomes. Gaining insight into customer behavior by studying their emotions provides a huge advantage for call centers.

In his book, The Happiness Hypothesis, Jonathan Haidt describes how our unconscious cognitive capacities guide and control our conscious deliberations. Jonathan describes our emotional side as the elephant and our rational side as the rider.

As Haidt explains, "Perched atop the Elephant, the Rider holds the reins and seems to be the leader. But like a rider on the back of an elephant, the conscious, reasoning part of the mind has only limited control of what the elephant does."

In other words, our emotions drive much of our behavior, with or without conscious recognition and control. By studying the underlying emotions of customers, call centers can greatly improve their operations.

For example, how useful would it be to know which customers started their calls in an agitated, upset state, but finished the call happy because of an excellent phone agent? Or, how about tracking which calls had customers starting off speaking in neutral tones, but finishing in a state of frustration because of poor phone agent skills? This information could help quickly identify top agents or agents who need more training.

To gather the information that's most pertinent to your call center, you'll need a specialized set of tools.

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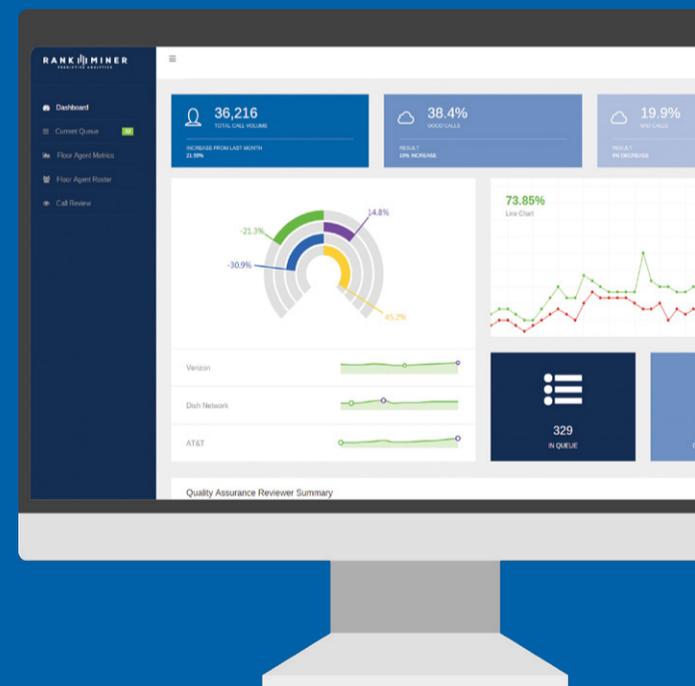
# Supercharging Your
# Call Center Technology

To improve agent success, you need a robust strategy. To improve your strategy, you need access to the right data. To collect that data, you need the right tools and technology.

Many call centers underestimate the importance of their technology solutions in building a strategy for addressing phone agent training, quality assurance, and creating positive customer interactions .

Improving your tech tools for gathering data on your call interactions can give you the information you need to create better strategies and drive phone agent performance.

One example of a technology that can supercharge your phone agent's success and your call center strategies is predictive voice analytics.

Two major ways that predictive voice analytics can help call centers include:

1.  Automate Phone Agent Analytics

2.  Collect Data On the Emotional Behavior and Tone of Customers

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## 1: AUTOMATE PHONE AGENT ASSESSMENTS

As mentioned earlier, one of the biggest problems with manual assessment of phone agent performance is most call centers *can only assess 1-2% of their calls*. Predictive voice analytics helps eliminate this problem by automating the process of assessing phone agent interactions with customers.

Rather than randomly sampling calls, your QA team can quickly and easily identify which calls require attention based on the phone agent's tone and behavior on calls through a unified client portal. This can empower call centers to improve the agents' performance by:

- **Rapidly Identifying Phone Agents in Need of Training**. Studying how phone agents speak to customers on the phone and having assessments of every call allows QA teams to identify trends in phone agent behavior in as little as a day. From here, you can move these underperformers into specialized training sessions designed to help them improve on their weaknesses.

- **Spotting Agents on the Verge of Burnout**. Working a call center is a stressful occupation. Over time, seasoned phone agents will burn out. Predictive voice analytics can help you monitor the emotional state of your phone agents based on how they speak. This gives you a chance to see which agents are close to burning out so you can intervene before they quit.

Knowing which agents are in need of extra training and which of your best agents are under too much stress can be invaluable for maximizing the effectiveness of your phone agents.

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## 2: COLLECT DATA ON THE EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR AND TONE OF CUSTOMERS

Aside from monitoring the emotional tone and behavior of your phone agents, predictive voice analytics can be used to study the tone and behavior of your customers. This information can even be used to predict future customer behaviors and prescribe your company's next best action in relation to that customer.

Predictive voice analytics takes a recording of human speech and breaks it down into hundreds of unique features that represent pitch, emotion, tone, amplitude, and more *using digital signal processing*. Once these features have been created, they are plugged into machine learning algorithms that assess likely future behaviors based on a database of past outcomes tied to specific emotional states.

As these machine-learning algorithms collect more results data, they are further calibrated to become more accurate. By aggregating emotional states and outcome data from thousands of calls, a predictive voice analytics software can become a powerful tool for collecting information on how your customers really feel about your business, creating a source far more reliable than a post-call survey.

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# Real-World Impacts of Predictive Voice Analytics

Having the right tools for gathering information about your phone agents and customers is a major part of improving the overall performance of your call center. With the right tools, your call center can significantly improve results.

Real call centers have already started leveraging the power of predictive voice analytics to improve their business strategy and phone agent performance.

For example, Diversified Consultants, Inc. (DCI) a collection agency specializing in telecom debt, adopted RankMiner's predictive voice analytics solution. Here, DCI uses the solution across their entire customer base.  When DCI evaluated the performance of RankMiner's predictive analytics solution, they found that their conversion rate on the RankMiner identified accounts was **36.7% greater than prior to using RankMiner**.

This increased conversion rate helped DCI's margins soar, as they were able to generate $13,449 for every 1,000 RankMiner-identified accounts versus only $3,294 for every 1,000 non-RankMiner accounts.

That's a quadruple increase in revenue simply from applying data gathered by a predictive analytics solution to their customer targeting.

RankMiner's Agent Performance models allowed DCI to automatically evaluate 100% of their total call volume and increased QA productivity by over 50%. Moreover, instead of waiting weeks to establish agent performance trends, RankMiner helped DCI spot meaningful agent trends within days. These trends were used to identify agents requiring additional training sessions. After training, agents showed an **average of 21.6% month over month increase in their gross collections rates**. These results speak for themselves — no matter your industry, RankMiner is poised to provide call-center solutions to help you work smarter and close faster.

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# Claim a Competitive Advantage with Predictive Voice Analytics

In an industry as crowded and heavily regulated as the call center industry is, every advantage you can get is critical.

RankMiner's predictive voice analytics solution is a proven, powerful tool for gaining the information call centers need to supercharge their strategies and phone agent performance. With predictive voice analytics, you can get the missing piece of the puzzle you need to complete your call center strategy and thrive.

# Learn More About Predictive Voice Analytics:

Receivables Performance Management Case Study

We Get Results! Just ask Gordon Beck, COO of Diversified Consultants Inc

Deep Learning – The Future of Predictive Voice Analytics

An Analytical Approach to Better Call Center Customer Service

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RankMiner is an industry-leading pioneer in predictive voice analytics. Using an advanced machine learning algorithm, RankMiner's predictive voice analytics solution can not only identify a speaker's emotional behavior and tone, it can create a prediction of future behaviors based on that information.

RankMiner is dedicated to providing the call center industry with forward-thinking, predictive analytics solutions that help businesses work smarter, faster, and more efficiently with their current resources. RankMiner allows you to target the right customers at the right time to increase conversion rates, speed up cash flow, and improve profits.

RankMiner brings the future of predictive business analytics to your call center for improved business results that give you a leg up on the competition.

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