

How remote collaboration can help attrition



Attrition has always been a concern for contact centre managers - not just in terms of managing costs, but also for the ongoing challenge of trying to maintain service levels while busily trying to recruit and train replacement advisors. The recent dramatic growth in home working has only served to make the task of managing attrition even more complicated.

In this CCMA Good Practice Guide, we'll look at how collaboration and improved remote work management techniques could play a key role in helping contact centres to manage the rising attrition challenge.

Collaboration is key to successful hybrid and remote working

That's why it's vital for contact centre managers to do everything they can to not only provide advisors with roles that are challenging, but also implement the kind of team engagement and support processes that will help people to overcome some of the barriers imposed by hybrid and remote working. From an advisor perspective, research conducted by The Harris Poll showed that 36% of respondents felt that lack of team connection was a top challenge to working from home vs. in an office, with staying motivated (31%) and equipment challenges (24%) making up the top three advisor concerns. Technology, tools and infrastructure will inevitably be at the heart of hybrid/remote contact centre strategies. However, it's also important that employers think hard about collaboration and the role it can play in keeping advisors motivated and engaged. Five important areas where contact centre managers can help ensure strong collaboration include:

1. Fostering inclusivity through communication
2. Providing hybrid working advisors with the right equipment
3. Aligning advisor benefits with new working models
4. Building gamification into remote working
5. Capturing the Voice of the Employee.

1. Foster an environment of inclusion through communication

Even though team members may be working remotely, managers need to focus on nurturing the conditions that help keep their colleagues connected. While team-bonding activities have a role to play, it's perhaps more important to get the basics right. Our research has shown that advisors prefer clear guidance when it comes to hybrid working. 39% felt that establishing clear guidelines about when to go into the office was important; 35% wanted clear expectations to be set for communications and reporting, while 34% expected management to set and communicate consistent company-wide expectations for hybrid work.

Setting up feedback loops to identify areas for improvement, checking in with individual advisors to establish priorities, hosting 20-minute video stand-ups at the start of the day with the whole team can all help to

encourage communication and build team-working across locations. Making sure advisors have clear communication channels for feedback is also key.

2. Providing hybrid working advisors with the right equipment

Whether advisors are working in the contact centre, from home or remotely from another location it's important to provide them with the right equipment so that they can offer a professional-sounding service. Having the right headsets, for example, can make a huge difference to productivity – with noise-cancelling microphones able to shut out the noisiest contact centres as well as distracting background noise at home - whether that's a barking dog, particularly loud family members or a domestic dishwasher. This not only provides a less stressful experience for advisors, but can also translate into improved AHT and CSAT scores, saving seconds off calls as advisors and callers no longer need to say, 'I'm sorry I didn't catch that, could you repeat.' Smart microphones in headsets can also measure background noise wherever they're being used. This can then be analysed on a team or advisor level to identify noise challenges wherever they may be. It's also important to make sure that advisors have a good quality video conferencing camera, with features such as intelligent zoom, picture-in-picture and lighting optimisation all helping to improve advisor engagement in team meetings or regular face-to-face coaching and feedback sessions – even when working from home.

3. Aligning advisor benefits with new working models

Contact centre managers also need to think about their existing company employee benefits and whether they still apply for a more hybrid working advisor population. Do company benefits work as well for home workers as well as on-site contact centre advisors? Benefits such as an on-site gym, fresh fruit, Friday drinks or free on-site parking are all great, but won't be of use to advisors who work at home or rarely come into the contact centre. Consider other benefits that might be more useful for home workers, with mental health support, online yoga classes and online shopping discounts as possible options.

4. Keeping remote advisors engaged

It's obviously much harder to motivate advisors and individually recognise their performance if they're working from home. However, contact centre managers need to make sure that they're considering the individual and not the group. Advisors are of different ages, and have different needs and wants from both engagement and

benefits/incentives. At the same time, advisors working remotely need to be much more self-disciplined in achieving their targets and meeting KPIs. Gamification techniques can be a great way of motivating advisors regardless of location, while also helping to make work a bit more fun. Gamification needn't be complicated, with some Workforce Engagement Management tools already featuring built-in modules, it's a great way of helping managers to foster levels of team competitiveness, while also delivering valuable online performance tracking across key disciplines.

5. Capturing the Voice of the Employee

Capturing the Voice of the Employee on an ongoing basis is also valuable here – not just once a year in an annual survey but through small pulse surveys. Having this kind of feedback loop across both contact centre-based and remote workers can provide early insight into potential attrition drivers. For example, when The Harris Poll asked advisors about their top three concerns about a hybrid working future, 28% cited lack of clear expectations around when or how often to go into the office – or what type of work to go in for. 26% were also frustrated about lack of consistency of hybrid working best practices across the company, and one out of four showed concern around equal opportunities for employees who choose to work from home more often.

Involving employees, acknowledging issues raised and being open and honest about changes that can be made will all help to make a positive difference. And, given that even percentage point improvements in contact centre attrition rates can have a significant bottom-line impact, these are all activities that are definitely worth pursuing.

With more remote contact centre worker roles available, advisors now have a much greater range of opportunities open to them. As attrition rates start to rise again, it's more important than ever for managers to listen to team leaders and colleagues and work across the board to minimise the impact of attrition on the business. To address this, managers need to understand the key drivers behind their attrition rate, implementing an exit process and interviewing each advisor prior to departure to capture why they are leaving and what could have been done to prevent this. Even percentage point improvements can have a significant bottom-line impact here.

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