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Interactive Intelligence Unveils New Customer Feedback Products

The provider of business communications solutions seeks to gain ground with midsize and large contact centers in what one analyst calls "a large, untapped market."

by [Christopher Musico](#)
Wednesday, May 14, 2008



In order to meet the growing need for differentiation in customer service, companies must be able to accurately measure customer satisfaction. Many

contact centers are relying on the plethora of available analytics solutions to measure call times, first-call resolution, and other metrics, but executives at Interactive Intelligence believe that those options fail to capture the entire customer story. Bearing this in mind, the Indianapolis, Ind.-based provider of business communications solutions is unleashing new customer feedback management products to help complete the story of the (potentially) satisfied customer.

"Customer service is now the key battleground," says Joseph Staples, Interactive Intelligence's senior vice president of worldwide marketing, adding that internal metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) only go so far in accurately measuring customer satisfaction. "We need the voice of the customer," he says.

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Interactive Intelligence's first customer feedback management product is Interaction Feedback, an automated customer satisfaction survey module intended to provide the opportunity to "accurately measure customer service levels in a timely and cost-effective way," according to information released by the company. Ken Landoline, program manager at research firm Yankee Group, says he thinks it's a product that contact center managers absolutely need: "Even though people think customer opinion about service is critical to their operations, when I poll [them] and ask how many people who manage contact centers actually do surveys with customers, the numbers are consistently under 30 percent," he explains.

Consequently, Landoline says, the absence of customer polling has created a massive opportunity. "There is a large, untapped market for some good, effective products that are cost-effective," he says. "While Interactive [Intelligence] is not the first one out there with this kind of solution, it is certainly a great complement to its highly integrated suite. [The new product] will be a lot different than others that came out prior to this."

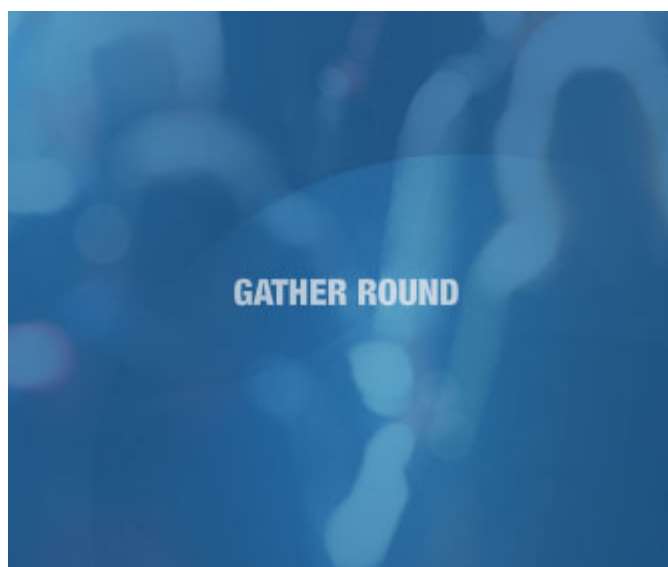
According to Staples, Interaction Feedback, which is designed as an add-on module to the company's Interaction Center Platform, will be generally available in the third quarter of this year. Features include:

- a wizard interface, eliminating the need for programming expertise;
- real-time supervisory alerts;
- integration with call-recording and -scoring features;
- removal of agent bias in the survey process; and
- a third-party question library from the CFI Group, which Interactive Intelligence says holds a patented methodology for tying customer satisfaction to financial results.

Having an automated solution to remove the agent from the polling process is very important, according to Landoline. "In prior [customer feedback management] products, agents had to refer the caller to a survey or ask if they'd like to be surveyed," he recalls. "In these cases, there is a built-in agent bias, because -- with humans being humans -- agents would refer good calls, and not the bad calls, to a survey. So [Interaction Feedback] removes the agent from the equation and makes [the results] much more accurate."

Even though Interaction Feedback won't be out until later this year, Staples believes there won't

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be any difficulty in selling the module. "[The new products] are in response to customer demand," he says. "We don't need to evangelize in this case."

Landoline believes that as long as the company can show organizations how the product improves financial results, there shouldn't be any major selling issues. "It's easy to sell and deliver," he says, "so I think the real thing here is the education process of trying to show the [return on investment] for the user to see how it will affect the bottom line."

Interaction Feedback is only the first chapter in Interactive Intelligence's customer feedback story. The company has also announced that it is "actively developing a speech-analytics/emotion-detection product." According to Staples, the speech-analytics software module will also be designed as an add-on to Interaction Center Platform, and will enable companies to monitor calls in real time to detect heightened states of emotion from either the customer or the agent. Though still in the development phase, Staples says the target date for release is 2009.

Landoline says he's eager to witness the next chapter. "I'm anxious to see what [the speech-analytics product] is," he says. "Speech analytics, I think, is an important tool in the marketplace, as it has opened up another avenue of input from the customer. I can't wait to see what the product is going to do and how it'll be unique."

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