

DOING SOMETHING ABOUT SERVICE CALLS!

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ABSTRACT

Unnecessary service calls waste money and contribute to customer dissatisfaction. Subscribers call our offices between one to three times per year feeling they need a service man. A third to three quarters of them still receive a service call. Computers can now identify the reasons why our subscriber call for service and will indicate for us the individual employee whom last had contact with that customer. Knowing what the employee did or said that may have caused a service call allows us to work with that person to improve their work skills. Tracking of service calls and making each employee accountable for their work is improving productivity. There are now fewer phone calls for service and we are making fewer trips to the home because we are learning to do it right - the first time.

INTRODUCTION

Today, good customer service must extend beyond answering our subscribers' inquiries over the phone and responding quickly to their service difficulties in the field. We must work at understanding the specific reasons why our subscribers phone our offices for a service call. Then armed with this information, we must do all we can to satisfy that subscriber on his initial install, phone call, or service call. The key is first obtaining this knowledge and effectively putting it to use. Figure 1 shows the relationship between our subscribers calling for service and those actually receiving a service call.

A subscriber normally will call for service because they have a problem with their reception or are in need of information. Typically when the technician responds to this type of call he finds a TV that is broken or is

in need of fine tuning, a problem with the converter, the drop, or the distribution system. Too often he finds no one at home, no adult present, no problem at all, or the call was canceled or rescheduled. Unfortunately, by the time the technician responds to a service call we have lost on two previous occasions opportunities to resolve the subscriber's problem.

UTILIZING CABLE DATA

Cable Data is used in many of Viacom's systems. We are currently using reports obtained from Cable Data to assist us in reducing the number of service calls we do each year. The interpretation of this data is helping the efficiency of all of our service departments. The customer service representative is now sending fewer non-productive service calls into the field especially for fine tuning, subscriber education and the not home call. The technician is now having fewer call-backs because he has learned to correct the problem the first time. In order for the installer to do his job properly he must have a converter that works on installation, be taught to do an install that lasts for years instead of weeks, and shown how to encourage the subscriber to operate any of his cable related equipment on his first visit. By providing our subscriber, on his first contact (install, phone call, or service call), all that he needs to enjoy and operate his cable, we eliminate the need for his calling our offices a second or third time.

Most systems keep track of service calls in general: how many and of what type. Cable Data provides a new twist to tracking these calls by identifying the individual employee (service representative, technician, or installer) associated with each call. Various reports will list what they did while working with the subscriber and compare what the subscriber thought against what we found. This can be accomplished within 95 different

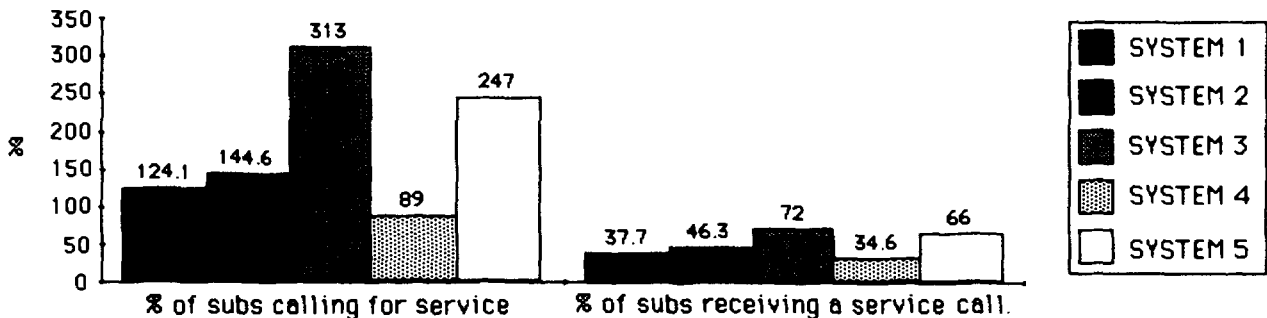


FIGURE 1

categories of our choosing. Cable Data reports are assisting our customer service representatives, technicians and installers to be our best front line force in reducing the need for our subscribers to call for service. The following paragraphs show ways that we have used these reports to become more efficient at our jobs.

THE PHONE SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

One Cable Data program produces a report for our service phone representatives that tracks every service call assigned to a technician. A second report lists those calls that could have been handled over the phone but were sent into the field i.e., fine tuning, subscriber education, etc. We were surprised that some representatives were scheduling calls for fine tuning at twice the rate of others on the same shift. Rather than re-train the whole group the art of fine tuning a television over the phone (this was done several times in the past), we were now able to target individuals for that training. When we discovered that one representative sent so many calls into the field in comparison to the others on that shift, we replaced that representative with a service technician for one week. The technician manned the phones while the representative rode with a technician. During that period the technician was so effective at reducing unnecessary calls from being scheduled that his lack of presence in the field was not missed. In fact, he eliminated enough calls from going into the field that a second technician had nothing to do. The program worked so well that all the service representatives were given this week long, one-on-one training. The results have been 10% fewer service calls scheduled.

Figure 2 is a sample of a report given to the phone service supervisor. This report lists the occurrences of calls scheduled by the service representative #305, where a technician fixed the problem by fine tuning the customer's TV set. The end of the month report summarizes the department's phone activities and lists the number of service calls by type that was sent into the field by each representative.

FIGURE 2
THE CUSTOMER
SERVICE
REPRESENTATIVE

ADDRESS	CUSTOMER NAME	ACCT #	ORDER -TIME	PHONE	PROBLEMS	FIX CODE
:	PHONE	:	COMPLETE	REP	:	:
321	MIRIAM LOAGUE	33344-8	3/28/85:9	:	NO PICTURE	FINE TUNED
LAKE	375-8888	:	3/29/85:9	305	:	TV
321	KATHRYN ROSE	13245-9	3/30/85:14	:	FLASHING	FINE TUNED
LAKE	291-4006	:	3/31/85:10	305	:	TV

FIGURE 3
TRACKING
A
TECHNICIAN

ADDRESS	CUSTOMER NAME	ACCT #	ORDER -TIME	TECH	PROBLEMS	FIX CODE
:	PHONE	:	COMPLETE	:	:	:
1876	ROBERT KESSLER	611117-9	3/26/85:08	:	NO PICTURE	BAD FITTING
MEADOW	229-0000	:	3/27/85:12	806	:	:
1876	ROBERT KESSLER	611117-9	3/27/85:13	:	FLASHING	FINE TUNED
MEADOW	229-0000	:	3/28/85:09	806	:	TV

THE SERVICE TECHNICIAN

The service technicians now receive a report that lists the number of call-backs each technician has had in a 30 day period. Again the group as a whole was good, but a few technicians had far more call-backs by a particular category than other technicians. As an example, a report indicated that certain technicians swapped out converters more often than others; the call-back report showed that other technicians would finally solve the subscriber's problem by fixing the drop. Our supervisors armed with this information can now work with each technician on specific problem areas. We also print on the technician's service work order: the date, fix code, and the name of the last technician that was at that home. We then give back to the technician any job that he had previously been to in the past 30 days. When we started to track the performance by individual service technicians, call-backs ran 20% per month; they now run 5%.

Figure 3 is a sample of a report given to the service repair supervisor. In this instance Mr. Kessler received a service call on the 26th of March. Technician #806 fixed a bad fitting. Mr. Kessler called back that same day complaining of flashing. We sent technician #806 back to the house where the final solution to the problem was to fine tune the TV set. Had he noted the condition of the TV on the first visit the call-back may have been avoided. The month end report summarizes the service technicians' activities. The supervisor noted that technician #806 had nearly three times the number of repeat visits for fine tuning than the other technicians.

THE INSTALLER

The installation report shocked us! The report indicated that out of every 100 installs completed, 30 of them required a service call within 30 days; most in 48 hours. Again the group was good, however a few installers had more than their share of problems in various areas such as fittings and low drops. Some installers had a habit of leaving little or no information with the subscriber on how to use the converter or fine

tune their TV. It was a relief not to bore the entire group with how to put a fitting on again and work with those installers that really needed help. The installers also appreciated the fact that in addition to rewarding them for the number of installs they did every month, we now could reward those of them that had the fewest number of call-backs.

Figure 4 shows Mr. Baker called for an install on March 21, and was installed on the 25th at 4 p.m. by installer #705. The following day he called at 9 a.m. and complained that his converter was slow to change channels. On the 27th technician #806 found a poorly installed fitting inside the home that corrected the problem. At the end of the month Cable Data summarizes these occurrences in a report that is provided to the installation supervisor.

TRACKING CONVERTERS

An additional program within Cable Data now being implemented is one that tracks converter problems. The program, as highlighted in Figure 5, will provide the converter repair technician with information as to why a service technician had removed a converter from a home for each of the past six service calls. Also listed is what was done each time to repair that converter. The program has already identified for us a few converters that check out as "Ok" on the repair bench, but had been removed from the field six times for problems that we had been overlooking in converter repair. We are still looking for ways to include the converter technician's name with the converter history to provide them with accountability for their work.

FIGURE 4
TRACKING AN
INSTALLATION
CALL-BACK

ADDRESS :	CUSTOMER NAME :	ACCT * :	ORDER - TIME :	TECH :	PROBLEMS :	FIX CODE :
:	PHONE :	:	COMPLETED :	:	:	:
14363	STAN BAKER	503946-2	3/21/85:10	:	:	:
WATT	338-7531	:	3/25/85:16	705	:	:
14363	STAN BAKER	503946-2	3/26/85:9	:	:5-10 SECONDS	BAD FITTING
WATT	338-7531	:	3/27/85:14	806	TO DECODE	INSIDE

FIGURE 5
REPAIR HISTORY
OF A
CONVERTER

BOX # :	IN :	DATE RETURNED :	PROBLEM :	DATE RETURNED :	PROBLEM :	PROB :	PROB :	* OF :
STATUS :	SERVICE :	RETURNED BY :	FIX :	RETURNED By :	FIX :	FIX :	FIX :	REPAIRS :
43966	10/6/84	11/9/84	DEAD	:	:	:	:	1
HOUSE	:	806	CORD	:	:	:	:	:
44187	9/5/84	3/21/85	SOUND	2/30/85	SOUND	SOUND	SOUND	6
REPAIR	:	812	COSMETICS	805	COSMETICS	COSM.	COSM.	:

This program should decrease the time it takes to repair a converter, reduce paper work of our current manual methods of tracking converters, and improve the chances of getting a converter in the home that works right - the first time.

CONCLUSION

The detailed tracking of phone calls, service calls, and converter problems is helping to make our employees accountable for their work. With such tracking we are able to reward our employees for the quantity of work performed but also praise them for the quality of their work. Because we now know why the subscriber is calling for service and know the employee associated with those calls, we are able to effectively train and motivate every employee to eliminate service call-backs. The fruits of service call tracking are: a house is installed properly - the first time; a converter's problem is identified and repaired - the first time; a subscriber gets all of his questions answered - on the first call; a technician fixes a problem - on the first visit. Fewer service calls mean contented subscribers. What would happen to your subscriber growth if every subscriber kept his cable service just two months longer because of better service - the first time?

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