



CRM Magazine

Support for Your Support Staff

New call center consultancy to help tackle various call center trouble spots.

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Technology and business processes increasingly change the way call centers are structured. To help companies cope with keeping their call centers competitive and up-to-date industry veterans **Bob Furniss** and **Scott Thomas** have formed a new consultancy.

The duo founded Call Center Ideas (CCI) to help call center operators improve productivity, update tools and technology, and increase employee morale in today's evolving call centers.

"Today's customers are more sophisticated and are demanding a higher level of personal service, an increased number of contact channels, and immediate answers to unresolved situations," says **Furniss**, president and cofounder of CCI. "We help companies respond to these demands by placing a greater emphasis on call centers as a cost effective and productive vehicle to service global customers."

Furniss says CCI seeks to provide support to companies as they transform their customer interactions through the call center. As changes are implemented across touch points, the call center must change to provide a consistent level of service to the customer.

Furniss adds that the growth of CRM initiatives, and the amount of customer information pushed to the call center agent, is forcing companies to rethink the way they look at call center staffing. "The easy calls have been pushed to the Web and other self-service methods, so now the agents are dealing with more in-depth issues," he says. "Agents simply need to be more talented than they were four or five years ago."

In addition to the demands CRM initiatives place on the call center, **Furniss** says that agent retention is a major issue that CCI hopes to address. By consulting employers on training, better identification of the right type of employee, and teaching ways to better foster employer/agent relationships, **Furniss** says CCI can help keep call centers focused on the changes taking place within companies today.

The founders say the rapid growth of the call center market, both in the U.S. and abroad, has increased the need for a firm like CCI. According to research firm Datamonitor, during the past two years the call center industry has grown 14 percent. In the United States alone, there are more than 2.7 million call center agents making up 3 percent of the total workforce and close to 1.6 percent of the international workforce.

