



# Betting on a Sure Thing

Symposium Customer Portfolio

**Staking its future success on a service-driven, skill-based call center, Caesars Palace in Las Vegas picks a winner with Symposium Call Center Server**

After more than 30 years as a major Las Vegas landmark, Caesars Palace is used to big crowds – but what about the thousands of telephone calls that pour in every day? In the casino-hotel's call center, more than 80 agents in 35 positions handle calls from valued repeat customers and new direct-mail prospects inquiring about hotel room reservations, show bookings and ticket sales to high-profile events such as pop concerts or heavyweight fights.

## The Problem

In the past, three separate departments handled room, show and special events reservations. If, for example, a caller wished to reserve a hotel room as well as show tickets, he or she would have to be transferred between departments or asked to call back on a different

toll-free number. An ACD system queued calls for one department only. Managers had no real-time performance data and no detailed reporting capabilities.

## The Solution

All three departments merged into a state-of-the-art call center driven by Nortel Networks' Symposium Call Center Server. Call duration has been cut by 40% and abandoned call rates reduced fivefold as skill-based routing helps identify callers' needs and directs them to the most experienced agents. Real-time displays and Windows-based reports allow far more efficient management. Best of all, the improvement in service has brought a significant increase in customer satisfaction.

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### Caesars Palace

Since its opening in 1966, Caesars Palace has been a fixture of the famed Las Vegas strip. The Roman-themed hotel and entertainment complex includes more than 2,450 guest rooms and one of the city's major casinos. In 1997, the hotel underwent a \$600 million renovation that included extensive refurbishment – plus the creation of a state-of-the-art call center.

### System Reliability

"Symposium Call Center Server does what we want, when we want it," says Tia Rhodes, Director of Reservation Systems at Caesars Palace. "We've had floods, even a lightning strike, and the system has been totally reliable. We'd never go back to what we had before."

### Eliminating Abandoned Calls

"The biggest coup for Symposium Call Center Server," says Rhodes, "is that our abandoned call rate, which sometimes went above 20%, has been reduced to 4%."

### Matching Calls to Skillsets

"Before, each inbound call would go to the next available agent," Rhodes explains, "even if he or she wasn't necessarily the most experienced person to handle that caller's needs. We often shuffled calls around, trying to find the best person to answer them. Now each call is routed to an agent with a high priority level in the skillset we've identified. The customer is a lot more satisfied, because an efficient, knowledgeable and experienced agent handles the call."

### Prompt, Personal Service

"With skill-based routing, our agents are much better prepared for callers," says Rhodes. "Their telephone displays identify what each call is about, so they can open an appropriate computer screen and respond immediately."

### Detailed Management Reports

"We were living in the dark," Rhodes recalls. "Our unreliable ACD system didn't give us the information we needed when we needed it. It would take an hour just to get abandoned calls statistics so we could tell if we should be adjusting any queues. We relied mainly on guesswork. Now everyone can see call center data in real time and create detailed reports. We were already a Windows environment, so the system was easy to learn quickly."

### Vendor Support

"Nortel Networks has been very supportive in everything we've done," Rhodes concludes. "They're available when we need them, they answer all of our questions, and their follow-up is tremendous. I can't say enough good things about the service we've received."

### The Details

The Caesars Palace call center team began by establishing three skillsets. Room Reservations agents have to be experienced in fielding inquiries from prospective hotel guests, as well as travel agents and convention attendees. Box Office agents have to be well briefed on the hotel's shows, entertainment venues and upcoming events. And Direct Mail agents have to know all the latest Caesars Palace promotions featured in campaigns across North America.

Three priority levels are designated for each skillset. Priority 1 agents are the first to receive calls; Priority 2 and 3 agents can be activated when volumes warrant. A program of intensive cross-training ensures that agents are continually upgrading their priority levels in all skillsets.

Nortel Networks technology enables callers to specify what service they are seeking with a few touchtone commands. This data is then used to route each call to the next available agent with the most relevant skillset. Meanwhile, management information at Caesars has evolved from summary statistics on one dumb terminal to detailed, real-time data accessible from supervisors' Windows-based desktops. Symposium Call Center Server offers a range of powerful, customizable reporting tools that help Caesars Palace managers gauge efficiency, boost productivity and optimize customer service levels.



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