

[Is your company's customer service a thing of the past?](#)

By James M. Carchidi

The world of customer service is changing and so are the skills, abilities and aptitudes necessary for customer service departments to succeed. The old days of using an interview script and simply checking references aren't going to help you hire people who can succeed in tomorrow's center.

For instance, how many bad hires have you experienced in the past month, six months or 12 months? Far too often we have been duped by applicants because they looked good on paper, had relevant customer-service experience and came across well in the interview. Once hired and trained in your customer-service protocol, the new agent's performance was less than desirable.

In these cases we find the new hire's service behavior becomes erratic. Some weeks they are on, some weeks they are off ... really off. This contact, while limited, can define the reputation of a company and thus hiring managers are overly concerned about lackluster performance levels among new employees. The obvious question: "Have you considered improving your method for hiring agents?" The obvious answer: "Add formal testing to the hiring process to get more information about applicants' potential for success."

Hiring by "gut feel" often results in a "pain in the gut." Take the guesswork out. Consider partnering with a staffing agency who administers "interactive" customer-service testing, such as in-bound and out-bound sales; listening and math skills; reference-manual skills and call-center environment.

Interesting facts:

- The cost to replace one customer-service representative earning \$18,000 annually is nearly \$58,000, according to a Resource Development Group study.
- There is a 25-percent no-show rate among customer-service representative interview appointments. Three-to-four in-person interviews should get you one good candidate, according to "The Successful Sales Manager's Guide to Business-to-Business Telephone Sales."
- Call center managers spend on average 40 percent of their time training, coaching and counseling, according to "The Successful Sales Manager's Guide to Business-to- Business Telephone Sales."

How much is turnover during the initial training period costing you?