

ALL CHANGE PLEASE

Call centre 'guru' John Goodeve-Docker, together with Peter Neville and Dave Burrows from customer service experts Interchange Group, have warned that customer service delivery within call centres needs to change to keep up with the demand for eservices.

Burrows, Interchange's director of research and development, said: "Today's customers want one central point of contact, one universal way to do business - they don't want to have to go to lots of different departments to find what they want. Companies need integrated CRM systems and processes in place, backed up by fulfilment. They need a single view of every customer using single database technology which is available for all employees to access, no matter which department they sit in."

It was held that customer service of the future means today's call centres need to evolve into multimedia contact centres, providing fast and efficient solutions to customer enquiries, irrespective of where and how they happen. Since industry experts forecast that by next year, 20 per cent of all customer contacts will be via Web or email, action is needed to ensure customer demands of tomorrow are met. This could mean massive growth of efulfilment

Web-based access and fully integrated solutions which use a single database to access all the functionality and systems needed to serve customers simply, easily and quickly across all trading architectures.

The necessity for change was pushed for by Goodeve-Docker when he revealed that only 50 per cent of call centres are currently delivering their full potential. Failure points were said to be a combination of poor systems and processes and a lack of strategic definition and staffing issues, and it was recommended that businesses recognise the real capability they have under roof.

"Ecommerce and customer demand is pushing the drive towards the provision of eservices but the human touch is still critical and that means many call centres will deliver their full potential by becoming multimedia contact centres," he said.

As well as systems integration that means considering options such as self-service, enabled by artificial intelligence and speech recognition, and outsourcing to experts who really understand how customer service should be delivered, businesses need to consider issues such as needs and benefits analysis, change management, implementation and exploitation to ensure return on investment. Only by doing so will they start to understand the real quantified business benefits that can be achieved.