

Dining *à la carte* can be overwhelming *Is your contact center giving you heartburn?*

The service may be great and the table set nicely but as soon as I open a restaurant menu with *à la carte* choices, my stress level rises. I'm not sure whether the sweet potato mash or the wild mushrooms would best compliment the seared sea bass I'd like to order. Perhaps the wild mushrooms are a tastier option with the peppercorn steak. I want some choice in my menu selections but I want to benefit from the chef's expertise in food pairing.



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Most of us want choices but we don't want to labor to understand them. We expect the experts to do what they do best while we reap the rewards—in this case, a great meal. Most restaurants today, even the high-end ones, have moved away from *à la carte* dining. It's an easier and more enjoyable experience for the diner to have choices between set food pairings. Mind you, if I prefer fries with my pasta carbonara instead of a salad, I would expect the restaurant to accommodate my request.

Perhaps the contact center industry should take a page from the restaurant menu. When outsourcing the vital business of customer or donor relations, many organizations quickly become overwhelmed with the myriad decisions related to service options. Further, they're faced with making decisions in an area that is often unrelated to their core business or mandate. Like the chef in a fine restaurant, the contact center is the one with the expertise. A contact center should have the tools necessary to provide an organization looking to outsource with well-planned services suited to meet its strategic needs.

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Value beyond answering the phone

Today's leading contact centers need to provide strategic value that goes beyond answering the phone. The contact center should be able to provide customer and business expertise as well as the "right" data to drive key marketing decisions.

Perhaps your non-profit organization has been struggling with donor drop off that at best meets, or at worst exceeds, the acquisition of new supporters. Likely, the cause lies not within your organization's mandate but with your donor retention program.

When a donor calls or sends an email, can you respond? Can you see patterns based on collected data that informs you when a group of supporters may be about

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to drop off? Can the people answering the call respond to the supporter strategically, based on the data in front of them, to maintain or even grow that caller's support? These are services the contact center needs to provide in order to partner effectively with your organization.

Perhaps you have spent the last few years refining the brand for your business, building a reputation for quality products and/or services. Through analysis of changing demographics, you realize that to connect effectively with your customers you will need to do it through multiple channels.

The "contact us" email address you threw onto your website has proven to be more difficult to manage than you thought. A growing number of customers are using this communication option but you haven't found the best way to manage this and in reality, it's not even in anyone's job description. Without integrating their touch points, customers have to explain two or more times, their concern or query. This issue is threatening the brand you have just spent years building.

Informed guidance

In both of these scenarios, a contact center focused on strategic business processes should be able to create an outsourcing plan that meets both the customer/donor needs as well as your business needs. To revisit our restaurant analogy, it shouldn't be up to the diner to tell the chef how much or what type of balsamic vinegar should go into the marinade for your chicken dish. Diners depend on the chef's expertise to blend the ingredients that will ultimately satisfy their customers' hunger and desire for a pleasurable eating experience.

Your contact center should be able to create a strategic package of services that will best fit your organization.

If you're feeling overwhelmed with too many *à la cart* options upon engaging with a contact center, it likely means that its staff hasn't taken the time, or doesn't have the skills, to understand your business needs. Your contact center should be able to create a strategic package of services that will best fit your organization. You should always have flexible options when outsourcing, but without informed guidance, *à la carte* services may very well leave you with indigestion.

FineLine

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*FineLine recently announced a new line of customer/business packages based on 30 years of client feedback and contact center experience. These packages are constructed into three tiers of service to match an organization's customer service strategies: **Customer Fundamentals**, **Customer Focused** and **Customer Driven**.*

"We developed our packages with our clients in mind," states Polly Craik, CEO of FineLine, "They cover a simple customer service plan ranging from a no frills service to a strategic multi-channel customer driven plan for those organizations that need strong retention and loyalty programs."

FineLine was awarded the 2006 CAM-X Award of Distinction and earned the TOP SCORE in this award category.

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