

# Doing Contact Center QA the Right Way:

The Complete Guide to  
Call Center Quality Assurance

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## Is Your Current QA Program Delivering?

It may seem simple, but the reality is that great customer service experiences start with great customer service agents. When a customer calls, emails, or chats in with an issue, your agent has the opportunity to make or break their perception of your brand with how they handle the situation.

If you're like most customer service team leaders, you already have a quality assurance (QA) program in place to monitor customer interactions with your team.

Maybe it looks something like this: a small number of agents' calls, emails, and/or chat logs are chosen by one or more QA leaders or contact center managers, who rate the calls according to how well agents adhere to brand standards and protocols. If problems or weaknesses are found, managers bring them to agents' attention during weekly QA reviews.

The purpose of your QA program, of course, is to ensure agents serve customers well, and the end goal is to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. **Investing in your customers' happiness** is one of the **most important things your brand can do** for long-term profitability and growth.

So, why isn't the needle moving?

As QA scores rise, why do customer satisfaction and/or NPS scores remain flat - or continue to drop? Countless customer service professionals struggle with this question every day.

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No matter how much they invest in their QA programs, they see little return in the form of happier customers who spend more over time.

Meanwhile, from the agent's perspective, QA reviews are a waste of time (or worse). Calls being discussed are days old; they might not be representative of overall performance, and the delays preclude any opportunity for real-time coaching.

Much of the great service agents provide throughout the week goes unseen and unheard - never captured, remarked upon, or rewarded.

In many contact centers, QA monitoring alienates agents and makes them wary, motivating them not to excel but to avoid a negative review.

Here's the good news: done the right way - with the help of real-time customer feedback collected on the frontline - **QA is a powerful tool that can drive up agent performance and customer satisfaction scores.**

In the following pages, we'll take a look at some standard QA operating procedures that could be holding your service teams back. Then, we'll explain how QA done right can help you manage your team in a more active, effective, and lucrative way.

Getting the maximum return out of your QA program starts with understanding how certain common QA applications and practices not only limit progress, but actually undermine it.

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# Diagnosing a Flawed QA Process



Traditionally, for customer-facing businesses of all kinds, QA has served an essential function: measuring customer service agents' performance and alignment with standards and protocols put in place by their organization and their brand.

For example, is there an upcoming product launch agents are expected to promote? Is there a disclaimer agents must read during service calls to keep the brand out of legal trouble?

This is the most basic use and value of QA: **ensuring agents are staying up-to-date and in line with standards and practices at your organization.**

But QA can be taken a step further.

If your program is truly built to help agents perform at their best and improve in each customer interaction, QA can become a treasure trove of **insight, empowerment**, and a method of **encouraging self-correcting behavior** before a review even takes place.

So, how do you reinvent your QA program to get there?

The following questions point to three big issues we most often see.

## 1. Is Your QA Program Designed to Advance Strategic Goals?

This may be the biggest challenge organizations face: tying the tactical day-to-day of QA to a larger strategic objective with top - and/or bottom - line impact.

“Delivering great service every time” is a noble pursuit, but it’s not a tangible KPI for your team to tie back to justify the cost of QA, let alone set the stage for significant gains.

Instead, your QA process should be designed to **drive business impact by improving customer satisfaction**, and/or **helping your organization achieve core business objectives** related to your service organization.

These two aims are related, but offer two distinct perspectives on how you should be thinking about structuring and improving your QA program.

For example, your agents could be following brand standards to the letter, but the gap between QA scores and customer satisfaction scores continues to grow. In this case, you might ask, “Our agents are doing exactly what they’ve been trained to do. Why aren’t customers responding favorably?”

On the flip side, your customer satisfaction scores may be high, but your agents aren't demonstrating knowledge about new products, or adhering to proper protocols, or building relationships the way you'd like as you attempt to move toward more advanced service delivery. Only QA can tell you whether your agents are falling short in these areas.

This brings us to question #2.

## 2. Do Your QA Metrics Take the Customer's Perspective Into Account?

When creating your QA scorecard, it's important to create questions that really get to the heart of agent performance in an objective way. Subjective questions - questions like "Did he/she answer the phone with a sparkle?" and "Did he/she exhibit effective call control?" - leave room for bias and subjective ratings that can harm not only your agents, but your customers as well.

Aside from the fact that five QA reviewers might give five different ratings on these scores, metrics like these don't necessarily reflect what customers care about or prefer.

Every corporate executive, QA professional, and contact center manager defines quality a bit differently. Each has a distinct take on what a great service experience looks like and the relative importance of various behaviors and protocols.

If the goal is to get the most value out of your QA program—and earn your customers' loyalty—you must put internal notions of "quality" to the test.

This is what makes agent-level customer feedback, collected and monitored in real time, so important.

By comparing the data with agents' QA scores, you can not only **calibrate the QA rubric with customer interests**, but also **conduct more meaningful and effective QA reviews** and determine whether new service protocols are resonating.

The screenshot shows the 'QA Scorecard Builder' interface. At the top, the title 'QA Scorecard Builder' is displayed. Below it, there is a form for creating a scorecard. The 'Scorecard name' field contains 'Call & Chat', and the 'Weight' field is empty. A green 'Save Scorecard' button is visible. Below the scorecard name, there is an 'Add section' button. The 'Section name' field contains 'Communication'. Underneath, there is a list of questions. The first question is 'Does the agent communicate clearly and professionally?'. Below the question, there is a 'Question description' field containing 'The agent states their own name and greets customer by name if available.'. At the bottom, there is a table for '1. Answers' with columns for 'Score' and 'Autofail'. The 'Yes' answer has a score of 10 points and is set to 'No' for autofail.

1. Answers	Score	Autofail
Yes	10 points	No

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### 3. Are You Using QA Data to Improve Your Agents' Performance?

Harsh as it may sound, your customers don't care about brand standards.

All that matters is the quality and feel of the service interaction. How well did the agent relate to the customer? How invested did the agent seem? How far did the agent go to ensure the customer's satisfaction?

A single contact can make or break the customer relationship. With so much riding on each phone, chat, and email contact, capturing QA data merely for the sake of knowledge isn't just a lost opportunity.

It's a net loss for the company.

QA should be used not only to facilitate timely 1:1 training and coaching to help struggling agents improve, but also to identify top performers so you can: understand how they operate for the benefit of other agents, make sure you retain them for the benefit of your brand, and know exactly what to look for during the hiring process.

If you're serious about maximizing your program's ROI - and increasing customer lifetime value (CLTV) over time - **you need a results-oriented QA process.**



"I'm not sure who out there needs to hear this, but having a true QA software is a complete game changer."



**Stefanie Wimp,**  
Quality Assurance Team Lead at SmartPak

In the next section, we'll explain how real-time customer feedback can make QA work harder to improve your brand image and bottom line.



# From Passive to Active QA: Driving Meaningful Action

According to an ICMI study<sup>1</sup>, customer satisfaction is hardly a universal concern.

Less than two-thirds of companies bother to measure it. Among those that do, only **38% integrate their customer feedback programs and QA programs** to develop appropriate quality metrics and evaluate agents' performance.

QA programs that operate without customer input are like cars running on fumes.

For many contact centers, the typical QA process captures only 1-2% of total calls, and reviews don't happen till days later - if at all.

QA scores depend not on the impact agents make on customers, but on the perspective of the QA reviewer. In many cases, QA leaders and contact center managers aren't entirely sure of their distinct roles and responsibilities. Day after day, these passive QA programs continue to consume precious resources, sputtering along without a clear destination.

Meanwhile, active QA processes **drive performance improvements** and **accelerate growth** thanks to a steady supply of agent-level feedback.

Real-time customer feedback has it all: it's **immediate, plentiful, and actionable**, and it keeps **QA focused on and aligned with customers' ever changing expectations**.

Without a doubt, agent-level feedback is the best thing to ever happen to QA.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.icmi.com/~media/Files/Resources/Whitepapers/Quality-Whitepaper.ashx>

# 5 Ways Customer Feedback Transforms QA

Feedback from the front-line, shared with contact center agents and supervisors in real-time, does more than complement and strengthen QA - it transforms the entire customer service organization. Here are the distinct advantages customer feedback data brings to the QA process.

## 1. A Wealth of Insight

Agent-level feedback requests, automatically sent to customers immediately after their service interactions, have a uniquely personal feel. Elements such as agent photo and bio, star ratings, and reward recommendations make these surveys hard to resist.

In our clients' experience with Stella Connect, on average, **45% of customers** who receive requests return **complete feedback surveys in under an hour**.

Not only are agent-level feedback programs more cost-effective than standalone QA programs, but the sheer volume of data allows managers and QA reviewers to draw solid conclusions.

Team leader	Star rating This week	Change last week vs this week	Responses This week
Laura Moore	3.59	▲ 0.84	35
Rosie Malbury	4.53	▲ 0.44	981
Evelyn Rodriguez	5.00	▲ 0.44	454
Andy Arnold	4.77	▲ 0.25	300

By correlating feedback with agents' QA scores, contact center leaders can readily identify and address the disconnect between brand standards (the agent is providing outdated information) and customer impact (the agent is caring, friendly, and likable).

Beyond day-to-day performance management, agent-level feedback allows team leaders to identify systemic problems (operational, marketing, training) as well as opportunities to distinguish the brand's service.

And when shared across the organization, feedback data can be used to **refine brand messaging, streamline the customer journey, update policies, and reduce costs**.





## 2. An Immediate Impact

As we mentioned, **nearly half of agent-level feedback requests** sent through Stella Connect **receive responses within an hour.**

The immediacy of this data allows managers to provide short bursts of real-time praise and coaching, which are far more effective than formal reviews when it comes to driving continuous improvement on the contact center floor.

Timely feedback from customers and supervisors also **keeps agents engaged** and **motivates them to continually improve their performance** and ratings. In fact, agents become so focused on serving customers better, they tend to use customer feedback to identify areas of improvement self-correct without any manager or QA intervention.

This makes every customer who responds an extension of the QA team.

When QA reviews do occur, agents are better able to internalize lessons from calls that are still fresh in their memory.

Plus, having customer feedback at their fingertips helps them be **more invested in the QA process** - eager to share what's working, and what isn't - which results in **more collaborative and productive QA reviews.**



 **Emma Reynolds**  
★★★★★  
Emma really helped me with a sizing question.  
I'll definitely buy from you again!

Add Annotation ✕

The sizing chart for any item can be found on its product page

It's great that Emma clarified the sizing chart location! This comes up a lot (needs to be fixed on our site) and is crucial for correctly processing returns / exchanges.

[Save Annotation](#)

[Start Review](#)



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### 3. An Opportunity to Reallocate Time and Resources for Better ROI

When managers and QA leaders aren't certain who's responsible for what, it acts as a drag on the entire customer service operation.

Leaders scatter their attention instead of focusing their efforts in ways that help improve performance, increase customer satisfaction, and prove the ROI of their teams' efforts.

Agent-level feedback frees managers to focus on tactical day-to-day performance evaluation and enables them to coach in a more informed way. When you can tie QA reviews back to specific calls or chat logs, you're able to provide more actionable feedback to agents by pinpointing both interactions to praise, as well as areas for improvement.

Meanwhile, QA leaders can focus on how well internal standards are being met and if each agent is following team and company-wide protocols. This also frees up their time to focus on more strategic initiatives, like coaching programs, to help the team perform at their best.

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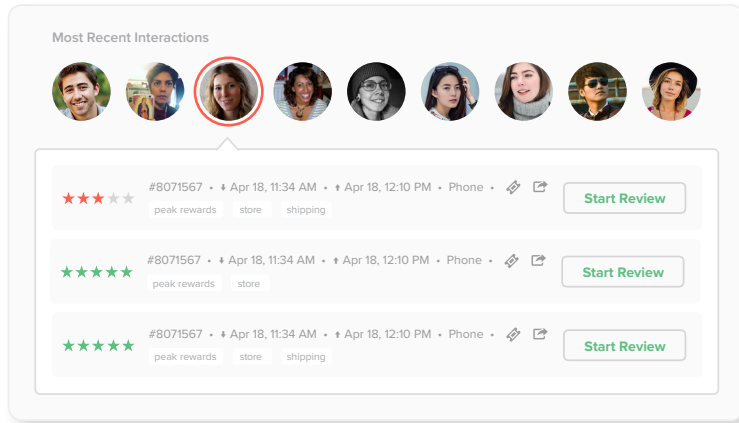
"Previously, the process was extremely manual. We were running QA out of Google Sheets, so auditors would have to manually send scores out via email. **Since introducing Stella Connect, we've saved one to two hours a week** just from the fact that once the audit is complete, the agent immediately gets their score. Every minute counts for our quality assurance team, so a 5 percent time-savings each week is substantial."



**Miles Dunn,**  
Director of Support at Peek.com

## 4. A Way to Optimize Your Entire Supervisory Structure

Optimizing people and performance isn't just about managing agents. You must also empower managers to coach effectively and hold them accountable for the results.



With a real-time feedback program in place, managers don't have to rely on QA leaders to know what's happening on the contact center floor.

Their dashboards allow them to see how an individual agent or the entire team is performing at any given time, based on the most recent interactions, for a holistic view of their service team.

They'll know which agents are struggling and in need of real-time 1:1 coaching, which

are deserving of an extra shout-out or praise, and can keep an eye on the metrics that matter most to their team and organization, like Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), Net Promoter Score (NPS), and more.

## 5. An Agent's Dream

QA reviews powered by agent-level feedback are both timely and useful. Agents come away with a better understanding of their performance, and they also develop a more favorable view of the QA process.

Too often, QA is seen with a negative connotation - it's a review focused on calls that an agent may have struggled with or an email exchange that went poorly. By shifting your QA process to include customer feedback, you thereby shift the overall mindset of how agents think about QA.

Instead of a negative way to pinpoint their mistakes, QA becomes a means of lifting them up and highlighting their performance and praising a job well done. When feedback is negative, it becomes constructive and actionable rather than simply a way to point out where they fell short.

Together, these elements help to create a more positive contact center environment that drives up engagement, morale, performance, and retention.

As a result, customers are eager to share their experiences, agents are driven to excel, and managers and QA professionals are better equipped to lead.

These are the real results that drive ROI, making agent-level customer feedback an integral part of the QA process.

## CONCLUSION



# The Customer's Point of View: "Quality" Can't Be Defined or Achieved Without It

Once you introduce agent-level customer feedback and integrate it with your QA process, your QA program - how it functions, how it impacts the service team, and the value it delivers - will never be the same.

QA will cease to be a managerial burden and a morale killer, and will instead serve as an active, positive force on the contact center floor.

At the heart of this cultural transformation is a more focused and nimble QA process that looks toward adapting and measuring performance standards that are both meaningful to customers and universally understood.

Leveraging real-time customer feedback data, and sharing the data throughout the organization, also sets the stage for huge market gains.

Your customer service team (from top to bottom) will finally hit its stride, your other teams will become more customer-centric, and happy customers will reward the brand with higher customer satisfaction scores and more of their hard-earned income.

Time and again, we've watched this transformation unfold. And it always reaffirms a simple truth: if you let customers help define "quality," it will carry more weight, become both measurable and achievable, and will change the way your brand competes in the marketplace.

"Before Stella Connect, we were auditing about 4 to 4.5 percent of all of our service interactions. In the first two months of using the QA tool, we were able to audit 22 percent of interactions with the same team size. **We saw about a 5x efficiency gain on the number of audits we could get through.**"

**Miles Dunn,**  
Director of Support at Peek.com



**Perform like the top high-growth CX teams. Learn how Stella Connect can help you provide top quality customer service.**

**Stella Connect** is the customer feedback and quality management platform built specifically for customer experience teams. Our intuitive platform makes it easy to harness agent-level customer feedback and deliver high impact coaching and QA programs, driving agent engagement and customer satisfaction.

[stellaconnect.com](https://stellaconnect.com)