



# Consulting Services

*Contact Center Consulting*



## Ramping Up Citadel's Contact Center to Meet Member Demand

### Overview

#### Client Profile

Citadel Federal Credit Union has served its members in the broader Philadelphia region for 75 years. Established in 1937 as the credit union for Lukens Steel Company, Citadel has almost 125,000 members and over \$1.5 billion in assets.<sup>1</sup> Citadel has partnered with Advisors **Plus** since 2005.

#### Business Challenge

Citadel's contact center needed help with handling call volume to fully serve members.

#### The Solution

Advisors **Plus**® Consulting Services performed a thorough Contact Center Review in November 2010, resulting in a number of recommendations for increasing capacity, channeling overflow and restructuring the automatic call distribution (ACD).

#### The Results

Advisors **Plus** increased Citadel's call center capacity through outsourced call overflow, which increased staffing flexibility while controlling variable expenses. Restructuring the ACD and adopting the Knowledgebase System cut member wait time nearly in half from 85 seconds to 47 seconds and reduced the abandon rate from 13% to under 9%.

### An Overstretched Contact Center

Citadel has long prided itself on delivering superior customer service. The credit union averages 378 members per employee, which is a favorable customer service ratio compared to the national average of 455. Its *Citadel Class Service*<sup>SM</sup> program is a leader in the industry and the guiding philosophy of how Citadel delivers member service.

---

<sup>1</sup> As of January 1, 2012



However, Citadel was concerned that its contact center wasn't delivering the high level of service its members were accustomed to. Despite a dedicated team of 30 call agents, the average call times were lengthy in resolving member needs, responding to requests and processing loan applications. Not surprisingly, staffing shortages had a direct impact on Citadel member abandon rates, which were not only twice the average for a credit union, but also up 10% for Citadel over its 2009 measurement.

Additionally, providing extended call center hours until 7:00pm nightly and 5 hours on Saturday created extra challenges in covering peak weekday call volumes. As with most credit unions offering Saturday call center hours, Citadel staffed Saturdays with full-time agents, providing compensating time off during the week. Subtracting five hours on Saturday from an agent's availability during the week had a significant impact on Citadel's weekday staffing flexibility.

### **Addressing the Risk to Member Service**

While high abandon rates were not showing an immediate impact on business, Citadel was aware of the long-term effect they would have on both current and prospective members. If members were unable to get through for problem resolution, loan applications or other products, they would inevitably look elsewhere.

Supporting this, a third-party study<sup>2</sup> of customer satisfaction found:

- 63% of respondents reported that a call was a "bad experience," indicating they would stop using the company's products or services as a result.
- 92% of respondents reported that the call experience influenced their "image" of the company.

### **Multiple Issues Drove Down Service Levels**

In 2010, Citadel asked the Advisors **Plus** Consulting Services team for a review of its contact center. Citadel already had a strong, trusted relationship with Advisors **Plus**, based on previous Credit & Debit Card portfolio reviews.

---

<sup>2</sup> "The Impact of Call Centers on Company Image",  
Dr. Jon Anton - Center for Customer Driven Quality, Purdue University;  
Anita Rockwell – Benchmark-Portal, Inc.; Teresa Setting - Kelly Services

The Call Center Review identified a number of issues contributing to lower service levels. Using ERLANG C capacity planning models, it was determined that staffing levels were deficient across most of the contact center hours. Citadel had experienced exceptional member growth during 2009 and 2010 and the contact center had not been able to staff adequately to keep up with the increased call demand.

Once answered, the average handle time was exceeding five minutes with after-call work (ACW) adding significantly to the overall engagement time. Based on performance measurement, Advisors **Plus** analysis showed that after-call work doubled over the previous January to June 2009 period as Citadel increased cross sell efforts and focused on capturing detailed member call contact data. Citadel's smaller, dedicated loan queue was also experiencing a rise in ACW time, but through more focused staff deployment, abandon rates were held under 4%.

### Recommendations for a Ramped-up Citadel Contact Center

Based on the above observations, Advisors **Plus** made a number of high-value recommendations to Citadel management.

1. Increasing the capacity of the contact center through outsourced call overflow support would create flexibility to meet call volume challenges with a variable expense model. Citadel would be able to avoid approximately 28% of its overhead expense associated with its current staffing model and pay for services only when used. Further, reducing the calls in queue through call overflow would relieve stress on Citadel's agents by allowing them to focus on member service and sales, not the next call in queue.
2. Restructuring the automatic call distribution (ACD) would streamline and clarify caller options and make the ACD more efficient by directing callers accurately to their desired endpoint with fewer internal transfers. The Advisors **Plus** consultants provided a reconfigured ACD design that consolidated the number of main menu options from 10 to 5, matching up with industry best practice guidelines. The redesigned ACD also laid the foundation for more efficient skill-based routing in the future, to further decrease handle times.
3. Implementing Workforce Management would focus on key processes for success. By linking with the ACD, Citadel could improve its ability to forecast staffing and scheduling needs, and provide sales and service coaching without impacting service levels.
4. Adopting a Knowledgebase System would enable Citadel to make its extensive product information, policies, and procedures available to all agents in a quick searchable database, thus reducing training time, lowering talk and after-call times, and alleviating errors.

## Realizing Value

From 2010 to 2011, Citadel achieved better performance across a number of measures. Average wait-time decreased by 48%, from 85 seconds to 47 seconds. In addition, the abandon rate dropped 31.5% from 13% to 8.9%. The value delivered far exceeded the incremental cost of new staff. **Most importantly, Citadel increased its overall Net Promoter Score by 6% during this period.**

## Continuing the Partnership

As with all Advisors **Plus** engagements, the support and assistance doesn't stop after the analysis is complete. Citadel and the Advisors **Plus** consulting team have continued to work together to solve mutual challenges and build a strong, collaborative relationship. Advisors **Plus** recently assisted Citadel's management in developing an internal staffing model to more accurately gauge staffing needs. And as a leader in employee engagement and sales, Advisors **Plus** has called on Citadel to tell its story of how *Citadel Class Service*, along with unique and exciting employee engagement practices, drive successful sales in their contact center.

## About Advisors Plus Consulting Services Contact Center Consulting

Advisors **Plus** Consulting Services Contact Center Consulting provides an in-depth checkup on the state of your credit union's contact center.

Using a best practices methodology and a proprietary database of benchmarks, Advisors **Plus** offers a process that is 100% credit union-centric. Each review is tailored to meet the needs and goals of your credit union including a series of meetings with the senior management team.

Detailed deliverables include:

- Current state of contact center
- In-depth staffing analysis using ERLANG C capacity staffing model
- Scripted call testing and mystery shopping
- Automatic call distribution (ACD) review
- Observations and recommendations



Consulting Services  
*Contact Center Consulting*

## About Advisors Plus

Advisors **Plus** was established in 2005 to provide consulting and marketing services to credit unions. Our range of services covers the key areas of strategy, credit cards, debit and checking, marketing, contact center, operations, and branch sales.

The experienced consultants at Advisors **Plus** work with the organization's staff through the entire process from project analysis to implementation and management. Our goal is to ensure that each financial institution achieves sustainable business growth, exceptional member experiences and operational efficiencies.

As of December 31, 2011, Advisors **Plus** has superior NPS Scores of: 74 – Credit; 81 – Debit and Checking; 91 – Contact Center. For more information, please visit [AdvisorsPlus.com](http://AdvisorsPlus.com).