

"There is often a misunderstanding concerning what the contact center should be doing."

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BUSINESSES ARE FROM MARS, CONTACT CENTERS ARE FROM VENUS

**ANALYTICS IS PAVING THE WAY FOR
COOPERATION AMONG ALL ASPECTS
OF THE ENTERPRISE.**

By Paul Stockford, SaddleTree Research

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BACK IN 1992, AN AUTHOR BY THE NAME OF JOHN GRAY, PH.D. WROTE A BOOK CALLED, “MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS.” The basic premise of the book was that most of the relationship problems that occur between men and women are the result of fundamental psychological differences between the genders.

Thanks for clearing that up for us, Captain Obvious.

Actually, Dr. Gray’s thesis goes a little deeper than that. The book uses the metaphor of men and women coming from different planets in order to explain how each gender is attuned to its own planet’s society and customs, but not to the other. The book cites several examples, such as how the different genders respond to stress.

The book states that when a man’s tolerance for stress is exceeded he tends to withdraw, temporarily retreating to his “man cave” in order to get away from the problem at hand. While in the “cave,” a man will take the time to distance himself from the problem and relax. This allows him to re-examine the problem later with a fresh perspective.

Sounds reasonable to me as long as the “cave” has a big-screen TV and a well-stocked bar.

Women, on the other hand, don’t understand the whole “man cave” thing because when they become unduly stressed, they tend to want to talk to someone close about it. I don’t get that. I guess they could talk to a guy if they don’t mind visiting the cave, but that would defeat the whole point of the cave.

Therein lays the problem, according to Dr. Gray. In the stress example, men who are stressed want to retreat and be alone, while women who are stressed want to talk about it. Talk about your source of conflict, and the book goes on to describe a plethora of circumstances in which men and women just don’t get each other. Get each other? After flipping through the book, I’m amazed we can even stand each other.

The purpose of “Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus” was to help us all better understand the opposite sex. I’m not sure that lofty goal was achieved, despite the fact that the book was on the best-seller list for 121 weeks in the 1990s. Given the benefit of hindsight, I think I’ve identified the one ingredient that might still solve this dilemma.

Analytics.

Regular readers of this column know that I’m a huge fan of analytics. I don’t believe analytics can solve all problems, but it’s probably a good starting point for solving most. In the enterprise, the evolution of customer service optimization is causing what could be called a “men are from Mars” sized disconnect between the business and the contact center. Although the ultimate goal of the business and the contact center are typically the same, i.e., keep customers happy so profits are earned and shareholders are content, how they reach that end goal is often a point of contention. The root of the problem usually is an inability to communicate with each other.

Like men and women as described in the book, the business and the contact center often seem like they’re speaking different languages. While all sides understand what the business needs to do, there is often a misunderstanding concerning what the contact center should be doing to make that happen. In the past, the contact center was often looked at as a cost center and played a subservient role to enterprise departments such as marketing and sales. Today, all that is changing and the contact center has much more responsibility in the relationship than it used to.



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Much of the change in the dynamics of the business/contact center relationship can be accredited to analytics. According to Matt Matsui, vice president of marketing at Calabrio, “In the past, the contact center spoke in terms of average handle time and speed to answer—a language the rest of the business didn’t always understand. Today, analytics has, in effect, translated every customer conversation, email, chat and social media interaction into a single, unified voice of the customer. That’s a language everyone can understand.”

The role of analytics in the enterprise will continue to grow as a result of the prevalence of big data and how it is being used to bring the various facets of the enterprise together. Calabrio’s Matsui added, “Analytics has done an effective job of making data available to all parts of the business, providing critical insights that are as useful to sales and marketing as they are to the customer service function.”

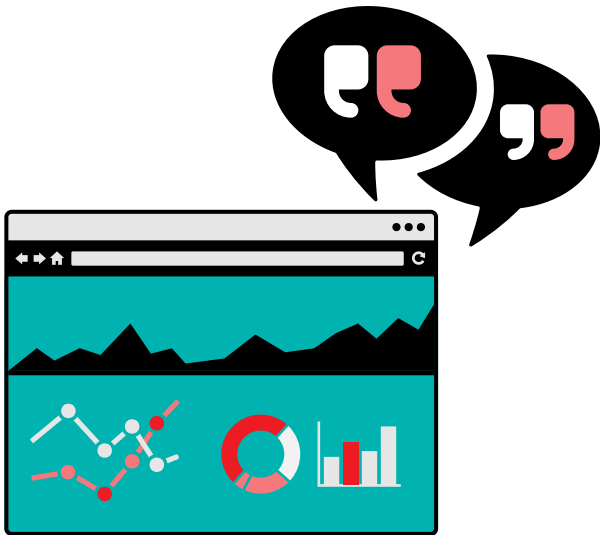
In the 1990s, “Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus” sold over 50 million copies. It became the foundation for Dr. Gray’s subsequent books and spawned a Broadway show, a television sitcom, a line of apparel, fragrances and even a line of his-and-hers salad dressings. Despite all the activity around the book, I question whether men and women really understand each other any better today than they did before the publication of the book.

Fortunately the dynamics of the relationship between the business and the contact center are not nearly as complex, and analytics continues to smooth the path of understanding between the two entities. Data is becoming the universal language of business with analytics smoothing the path of cooperation among all aspects of the enterprise.

There was a time when it was easy to believe that businesses were from Mars while contact centers were from Venus. Not anymore. Analytics is changing all that. The challenge remaining for all of us is to continue to drive the evolution of cooperation and understanding between the business and the contact center in the future. How do we do that? I propose a line of analytics salad dressings. 🍷

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