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Small Contact Center Attracts Clients with Big Talent

WALDOBORO, Maine, June 2010 – What kind of company uses a tiny call center tucked into a converted Odd Fellows Hall in rural midcoast Maine?

The kind that wins awards, it turns out. No fewer than three companies that are clients of Taction – The Contact Center were recently awarded medals by Multichannel Merchant, the industry’s preeminent voice on merchandising via catalog and the Internet.

Taction is staffed with agents who know how to grow vegetables and drive in deep snow. The company’s sales manager is good with a chainsaw. The CEO throws staff parties on his deck overlooking the lazy Medomak River and the head of HR met her beau while she was swimming in a country lake.

The three Taction clients were among thirty-six gold and silver medal winners of Multichannel Merchant’s 2010 MCM Awards, presented at the Retail Marketing Conference in Orlando, Florida, in May.

Vital Choice took a gold medal for its glorious “Wild Pure Delicious” Holiday 2009 catalog. La Tienda won silver for its mouth-watering “The Best of Spain” Holiday 2009

catalog. Both won their medals in the contest's print category for food and gift companies with sales under \$20 million.

Century Novelty won silver for their website, www.CenturyNovelty.com, in the consumer specialty products division for websites with sales under \$20 million. It was their second silver medal in as many years.

So how does a small contact center attract catalogers and web merchants with such big talent? With a shared philosophy for the customer experience.

Taction was recommended to La Tienda by 5th Food Group, a top-drawer marketer for specialty food companies. La Tienda's colorful catalogs feature photos of Spanish cuisine so delicious looking you can almost smell the fresh paella.

"Taction was highly recommended by one of our business consultants. We pride ourselves on the very high level of customer service we provide, before, during and after the orders are placed. We wanted a call center partner who would mirror our dedication to our customers and would embrace the callers as if they were their customers as well," explains Lesa Robinson, Customer Service Manager at La Tienda. "After contacting several of Taction's clients, meeting with the Taction team, and interacting with several of the Taction agents, we felt that the philosophies of our two companies would make a successful partnership."

For Vital Choice, a purveyor of delicate and tasty wild seafood and wholesome organic products, it comes down to a great fish story:

"We did not want to become one small fish in a really big ocean. We were looking for a company with the same business philosophy and internal culture as our own; one where every call and caller would be treated with personalized care as if they were the only customer/transaction on the floor," says Karen Long, Customer Relations Manager at Vital Choice.

Long says Vital Choice sought “hospitality rather than mere effective processing; a contact center not just a call center.”

The benefits of a boutique contact center go beyond the way it handles callers and emails with kid gloves and incredible efficiency. For a company that offers playful and popular gifts and everything you need to make a perfect party, it turns out that Taction’s flexibility and lower pricing were the lure. Of the contact centers Century Novelty looked at, Taction was happy to use their order entry system in real time without charging a premium.

“You were the only center that would use OrderMotion. The others wanted to use their own systems or charge extra for using OrderMotion. They would upload their orders to OrderMotion every morning. This would have created out-of-stock situations,” says Ian MacDonald, Vice President & General Manager of Century Novelty. “Also, your price was cheaper than the big guys.”

Taction’s CEO, Steve White, prides himself on making innovations in the call center industry, and likes to brag that Taction was Maine’s first independent call center. (The state’s first call center was L.L. Bean’s in-house operation.) But even though White is a technology geek who likes to stay ahead of the field, he says something much more simple than that accounts for Taction’s longevity.

“Taction has been in business for more than a quarter of a century because we’ve always put the customer experience first, transaction after transaction,” White points out. “And we’ve always partnered with clients who care deeply about that, too.”

White said the relationships that haven’t worked for Taction in the past failed primarily because the client put other priorities – like average call length – ahead of the customer experience.

That's why Taction continues to seek partners like Vital Choice, La Tienda, and Century Novelty. They are innovators who care about excellence, and when it comes to what's really golden (and silver) they put one thing first: the customer experience.

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