

Training and coaching is the most important part of the supervisor’s job. It is also very costly. Recruiting and initial training typically costs \$3,000 to \$15,000 per agent (or more) depending on the nature of the contact center and the types of agents needed. Centers requiring special skills like technical support or multilingualism will be at the higher end of the scale. All contact centers experience higher than desired attrition rates.

Assuming the contact center has 200 agents, experiences 30 percent annual attrition, and spends \$4,000 to recruit and train each new agent, the annual cost to maintain the agent pool will be \$240,000 per year. This does not take into account frayed customer relations and lost sales opportunities attributable to inexperienced agents and the demands on supervisor time spent trying to get new people up to speed.

While best practices dictate that supervisors should spend 75 – 90 percent of their time coaching and developing agents, few if any achieve that lofty goal. Supervisors are challenged just to keep up with changes in products, prices, business processes, preparing reports, and attending meetings. Best practices also call for one supervisor for every 15 agents. This low ratio is rarely achieved, which further reduces the time each supervisor has for individual coaching. In a perfectly run contact center coaching occurs in real-time, at the moment that a “coachable event” occurs. The supervisor runs to the agent’s side or picks up a remote phone and intercepts the call herself to rescue a potentially difficult situation. In fact, supervisors report that a significant amount of time may pass between the occurrence of an agent action that requires coaching and the time the coaching actually happens. In the meantime, the opportunity to have real impact is lost and the agent continues to deliver the same sub-par performance.

“Our training team can create and send out a quiz based on training content that has just been provided, and then revise materials to clarify points that agents didn’t understand, this has been a huge benefit.”

- Lou Orsi  
Vice President  
1-800-Flowers.com

Financial Benefits of Electronic Learning and Coaching					
	Cost Savings			Revenue Enhancement	
	Labor	Productivity	Other	Direct	Indirect
Fewer formal classes – more time on the phones		✓			
Reduced need for dedicated trainers	✓				
Reduction in “herding factor”		✓			
Reduction in paper drops		✓			
More timely and effective coaching		✓		✓	
Shorter and less frequent formal training sessions		✓		✓	
More effective agent development		✓		✓	
Increased sales per agent				✓	
Lower administrative costs	✓				
Improved ability to assess training effectiveness			✓		

Electronic training and coaching are best used as adjuncts to live training, not complete substitutes. Only live trainers can answer questions and provide the motivational “spark” to encourage trainees to immediately implement their new knowledge. However, there are many instances when electronic tools can do the job as effectively – and in some cases more effectively – than live trainers and at a fraction of the cost. Good examples are updates of new information, such as new product features, pricing, and internal procedures and reinforcement of more conceptual learning – like turning service calls into sales opportunities. Agents are tested right after the training to assure that the message got across. The more advanced systems are tightly integrated with quality monitoring and workforce management systems – to make sure the training appears on the agent desktop when the agent has both the need for specific learning and the time to take the course. Contact centers that have implemented electronic learning report cutting both the number and duration of formal sessions in half.



There is no need to take large numbers of agents off the phones, herd them into classrooms, reproduce and distribute handouts, then lose valuable time while agents “settle back” into their workstations. The simple task of getting agents to and from the training room can easily add a half hour per agent. Besides the significant cost advantages, electronic learning eliminates trainer error. Management can be assured that everyone received exactly the same information and at the same time. Knowledge retention can be measured in minutes and scores added to the agent data base so that supervisors can evaluate the effectiveness of the training and the agents’ ability and willingness to use the information.

With the implementation of electronic coaching, organizations can maximize each agent’s potential with targeted, timely training and motivation. The system also allows you to align automated distribution of electronic training content with your workforce management schedules, based on performance statistics from the performance management system and schedule adherence via the workforce management system, focusing on the specific needs and talents of each agent. You can leverage the agent coaching module of the performance management dashboard to display messages and coaching tips and to easily launch course content.

Contact centers that have implemented VPI’s Activ! Coaching report the following improvements:

- Increase in call quality scores – 14 percent
- Up-sell increase – 1 to 3 percent
- Revenue increase – 3 percent

## About the Author

Richard Bucci is Associate Consultant for The PELORUS Group ([www.Pelorus-Group.com](http://www.Pelorus-Group.com)) where he specializes in contact center technologies. He has authored in-depth reports on interactive voice response, workforce management, and quality monitoring. Richard’s articles and observations have been published in CRM Today, Contact Center World, Communications Convergence, CRM Magazine, Call Center Magazine, Contact Professional, Call Center News, Speech Technology, and several other trade and business publications.

## About The PELORUS Group



Founded in 1987, The PELORUS Group has emerged as one of the fastest growing independent market research and consultancy companies in the financial services and telecommunications industries. The PELORUS Group produces authoritative analysis and research reports, provides custom business planning services, and offers timely industry conferences.

## About VPI



VPI (Voice Print International) is a leading innovator and provider of integrated call recording and workforce optimization solutions for enterprises, trading floors, government agencies, and first responders. Through its award-winning suite of solutions, VPI empowers organizations to proactively improve the customer experience, increase workforce performance, ensure compliance, and align tactical and strategic objectives across the enterprise. With the power to be proactive, organizations are equipped to actively identify and maximize opportunities and minimize risk. For more than a decade, VPI has been providing proven technology and superior service to more than 1,000 customers in over 25 countries. Learn more at [www.VPI-Corp.com](http://www.VPI-Corp.com) or call 1-800-200-5430.

