



Ipsos-Reid Launches Call Centre Evaluation Program

Toronto, ON—Ipsos-Reid reports today the results of a new pilot program launched in 2004 to evaluate and measure call centre performance. The program, called the Ipsos-Reid Call Centre of the Year (CCOTY), was established as a vehicle to recognize high performing call centres and to be able to provide benchmarking information that would allow participating call centres to compare their performance to other call centres.

The Overall top performer in the 2004 program was Softchoice Corporation, a leading Canadian supplier of hardware and software products. Softchoice's ability to provide exceptional customer service and its strong commitment to its employees are the key reasons for their success in the study. Softchoice was also the top performer in the customer satisfaction survey, largely attributed to their caring for their customers - a commitment best reflected in their promise of a live, knowledgeable response every time a customer calls. "We're delighted to have been a part of a program that is helping to raise the bar on service standards within the call centre industry," said Dave MacDonald, President of Softchoice. "Perhaps even more importantly, the CCOTY program is recognizing the important role call centres play as employers, business partners, and in the Canadian economy as a whole. Thanks to the exceptional Softchoice team for their efforts and to our customers for their continued support. This is a great achievement for Softchoice and we look forward to lending our support to this program again in the future."

The top performer in the call centre employee satisfaction survey was CUETS, a leading call centre provider that supports credit unions, caisses populaires and other organizations. The reason for their strong employee allegiance is that they welcome new employees into an atmosphere that promotes teamwork, professionalism, high standards of integrity, innovation, and personal and professional development. "The CCOTY program has confirmed that we are on the right track with our employee engagement strategies," says Tom Kindred, Executive Vice President of Client Services. "Just as important, the diagnostic information from the program will help us to continually improve as an organization and build from our successes."

Fifteen in-bound call centres, who together employ close to 2,500 agents, were selected to participate in the 2004 pilot program. Entrants included call centres that support leading Canadian financial institutions, credit card companies, retailers and technology firms, by addressing in-bound customer requests. All participants paid a program subscription fee to have their call centre evaluated by Ipsos-Reid.

The CCOTY program has two key areas of focus – the extent to which customers are satisfied with their call centre experience and the extent to which employees are satisfied with their career at the call centre. For each participating call centre, Ipsos-Reid conducted a "spot check" by interviewing 100 customers who had recently contacted that particular call centre. Interviewing was done within 10 days of the customer's interaction. At that time, Ipsos-Reid asked customers to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of their call centre experience, including the specific customer service representative (telephone agent) they spoke with. In addition to satisfaction results, centres were provided with diagnostic information in order to help them improve their customer satisfaction ratings.

Customer service representatives from each of the participating call centres were also randomly selected to participate in the program. Each selected agent completed a survey where they evaluated their call centre on a number of criteria ranging from skill development to working conditions.

The vision of the CCOTY initiative is to provide all participants with benchmarking information on two levels: by their specific industry and by the call types that they handle. Once the program has grown to a sufficient size, then this level of analysis will be available. Until that time, overall benchmarking data will continue to be provided.

Ipsos-Reid will be hosting a workshop at the ICCM Canada Conference & Expo held on March 23rd. The focus of the interactive workshop is to recognize the top performers from the 2004 pilot program and to allow these centres to share insights and best practices with their industry colleagues. Feedback from this workshop, as well as feedback from industry associations, will lead to refinements to the program for 2005. The ICCM Canada Conference & Expo is held in Toronto at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre from March 21st through 23rd.

For more information on this press release please contact:

Kristen Korhonen
Associate Vice President
Ipsos-Reid Corp.
416-572-4426
kristen.korhonen@ipsos-reid.com

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