

GoUnderstand Call Recording and Logging

What is call recording?

Call recording is a system that allows companies to monitor, listen, and record telephone calls. It is also known as call monitoring as it is possible to listen to 'live' calls without recording them.

It was typically used by call centre^{*1} operators in order to listen and/or record conversations between call centre 'agents' (those that make or take calls and customers). However, call recording has become increasingly popular with organisations of all sizes because of its benefits.

What is call logging?

Call logging is a system that essentially produces reports from phone usage. It enables organisations to generate and analyse key information such as where a call is made or from, duration of the call, region or country it was made to or from, and which individual made that call.

The future of call logging and recording

Call logging and recording technology are often confused because of the terminology and because of peoples' perception *but* both systems are very much separate and they are distinctly different applications. As a result, people often believe that they are one and the same however that is not the case.

Call recording systems were typically deployed by call centres but these systems are increasingly in demand by all types of companies, even small organisation where perhaps it was once perceived unnecessary. It is now used by all types of organisations regardless of size and type (including Government authorities) because most organisations can benefit from this form of technology.

There are many reasons for this, including the ability to find out which people need further training, to increase productivity, provide better customer service and improve AHT (Average Handle Time^{*2}). Many companies, such as hoteliers for example, use call logging systems to maximise profits by being able to analyse who, when and where calls are made. Service desks are another type of user, where companies offer phone support or a 'hotline' enabling customers to phone the company with any queries or questions that need to be resolved. It is even used by taxi firms in order to repudiate allegations of taxis not turning up! Many technology companies also offer a telephone response service, for software support or technical queries, ranging from IT to consumer electrical products.

Furthermore, in an increasingly competitive and litigious environment there is an even greater imperative to maximise each and every call made by company employees. The benefits have been recognised by large scale companies and hence the reason why similar technology is being used by smaller companies.

The future of both systems is set for continued growth as is usual with technology. The aim is to drive costs down and improve efficiencies and more often than not, what works within the enterprise will have the same impact within the small business and Government communities.

In future, ironically, it appears that new systems released into the market will in fact encompass both call recording and logging as a single application.

Why call logging and recording?

There are many reasons to deploy call recording and logging technology, but the primary one is to increase efficiencies. If more calls are made (whether it is people making outbound telesales calls, handling complaints or solving customer queries), then the better the service given to customers will be and in the case of telesales, revenues per call should increase.

Compliance is also a major influence on the take-up of call recording technology and as a result, the technology is used by banks and other companies that are regulated by the [FSA](#). The aim in this scenario is to make sure that all facts and figures are recorded during a conversation in order to ensure that the customer has not been misled and also to make sure that a telephone call can be referred to at a later stage should a dispute occur.

Legal issues

One of the reasons why companies log and record calls is to comply with the following legislation or codes of conduct. It is also important to take into account what can potentially be in breach of people's human rights or in contravention of the DPA. (The Data Protection Act).

- Data Protection Act 1988 (DPA).
www.ico.gov.uk/what_we_cover/data_protection.aspx
- RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000),
<http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/ripa/about-ripa/>
- Employment Law
- The Telecoms (Lawful Practice) (Interception of Communications) Regulations 2000, <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2000/20002699.htm>
- Human Rights Act 1998,
http://www.tradeangles.fsbusiness.co.uk/articles/big_brother.htm
- Codes of Practice – FSA Handbook.
- <http://www.fsa.gov.uk/pubs/hb-releases/rel40/rel40aper.pdf>
- Telecoms Licence Obligations

It should also be noted that in some instances, company directors can be held liable for failure to retain documents and other records such as phone calls.

(Please note that this list is not definitive and you should be aware of particular legislation that may affect your company and hence your specific requirements.)

Useful links:

http://www.telephonerecordersdirect.com/pdfs/record_customers_conversations.pdf

http://www.telephonerecordersdirect.com/pdfs/recording_employees_conversations.pdf

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/>

<http://www.fsa.gov.uk/>

Benefits of call logging and recording

Organisations can gain many benefits by implementing a call logging and recording system but these will depend on the requirements, the situation, and the type of organisation.

Benefits of call recording

- **Assessment.** It allows management to assess how individuals are performing and where improvements can be made by training them in specific areas. It allows management to focus on skills rather than solely on, for example, sales figures.
- **Appraisals.** It makes the appraisal process much easier for those being monitored by being able to give real examples of where an employee has done well or perhaps made an error.
- Allows for training to be tailored specifically to key areas where improvements are required.
- Identify poor sales scripts and why they have failed.
- Allows management to hear both sides of the conversation or a dispute.
- **Supervision.** Allows for a manager or supervisor to immediately review a call and recommend improvements as to how it could have been handled.
- **Quality.** Allows managers and supervisors to spend more time coaching and mentoring thereby improving quality.
- **Conflict resolution.** It enables managers to quickly identify problems with customers and then resolve them quickly. It is especially useful with regard to settling complaints and disputes such as accusations of 'rudeness' by a company employee or perhaps where an individual denies making a particular statement.
- **Customer queries.** It helps identify typical queries and frequently asked questions (FAQ's) and allows for processes to be put in place where everyone is trained to deal with them properly or indeed to put those FAQ's on the company website.
- **Compliance.** It ensures that companies regulated by the FSA are compliant. Financial companies must record and retain all telephone conversations relating to customer orders.
- **Customer service.** Call recording ensures that the customer receives a better experience from the company employees making or taking calls because they are better trained to deal with sales and/or the process of resolving issues and queries. This is one of the reasons why even small companies are implementing call recording systems.
- **Traceability** – it is easy to track and trace communications between agent and customer, leading to better security and faster dispute resolution.
- **Improved effectiveness.** Many companies look to improve their sales performance by altering and changing scripts that help their sales people improve their approach. It may well be that one method is more effective than another, with the recordings a manager can easily analyse which method is the most effective and finding out the reasons why that is the case. Even small changes can have a major impact on results.

- Enhances customer experience. If a customer call or query is answered quickly and resolved effectively then it becomes easier to sell more products or services to that person.
- Customer loyalty. The better the quality of experience through the customer support the more likely there will be repeat business.
- Improved revenues. Companies that enhance the customer experience by implementing the above can generally expect improved revenues and sales as well as higher customer satisfaction ratings.
- Effectiveness. It is possible to improve effectiveness of a company or call centre ensuring that agents are able to deal with calls quickly and efficiently thereby enabling them to make more calls and make more sales.
- Capture details from threatening callers and prevent it from occurring again.
- Proof of verbal agreements (sales/legal).
- Prevents misconduct and harassment.
- Sharing information. For example, to show how an individual dealt with a particularly difficult customer or how they managed to generate further business. It can also be used as a conference facility or as an online meeting with colleagues.

Benefits of call logging

- Yield management^{*3}. Unless a phone system is used, clearly there is no point in having it. By being able to make sure that the phones are being used and by whom, it is easy to find out who is being the most productive. This information can be used to generate reports that outline phone usage and other useful statistics for management and analysis.
- Lower costs. Hotels, for example, often use call logging systems in order to find out when most calls are made, to what regions and how long on average a call might take. This information makes it easier to choose a telecommunications provider, or negotiate a more preferential rate to allow the company to operate more profitably.
- Call analysis. It enables supervisors and management to analyse trends and call patterns and to be able to allocate appropriate resources to specific campaigns or busy periods.
- Provides an audit trail of conversations for compliance and legal purposes rather like email can be used as evidence.
- It is possible to see the duration of calls and who a call may have been transferred to.
- It is possible to find out in detail which department or individuals are making calls and allocate costs accordingly. This means that budgets can be better managed and costs allocated accurately.

- Fraud. It is easier to detect if someone is using or abusing the telephone system whether for personal or indeed illegal purposes.

Potential pitfalls of call recording and monitoring

- 'Big Brother' – monitoring and recording can be seen to be interference by senior management and the general perception amongst employees might be that the management don't trust their personnel.
- Not adhering to compliance legislation or other laws that protect people's human rights or privacy.
- Could be considered intrusive by employees and customers, though it should be pointed out that customers must be told that their calls maybe recorded.
- Installing a logging and recording system may not always be legal – in some countries they are not allowed so you need to check carefully what regulation applies to your country and industry.

What can I expect to gain by implementing call logging and recording

It is difficult to give a typical figure that you should expect as a Return on Investment (RoI) because there are a number of factors that influence this calculation.

In some instances organisations have no choice but to implement a call recording system. That said, those that are governed by the FSA and other regulations will still benefit from the call logging and monitoring system because they will still see the same benefits. Remember that not being compliant can lead to heavy fines and potentially imprisonment of the directors. A call recording system can rapidly return a RoI if it prevents or protects a company from a single law suit.

However, as outlined in benefits a fast RoI can be achieved quite quickly through:

- Productivity. Increased revenues through more effective sales. It is easy to find out which sales people are making the most phone calls.
- It enables organisations to improve employees' communication skills regardless of whether they are sales people or customer support.
- Increased customer retention due to improved customer satisfaction.
- Remaining compliant (legal issues) – failure to do so can far outweigh the cost of such a system.
- Cost analysis and reduction. Who or which departments are using the telephones and to whom, for how long. This can lead to questions such as why a person who does not, as part of their job function, require to use the phone for long periods do so?

Six steps to successfully buying a call logging and/or recording system

Step one

Identify the needs of your organisation and your users.

- Does your company need to record calls? If so, why?
- Decide on who needs to be monitored and why.
- Decide for what purpose those recordings might be used.
- Are there any requirements that a particular group may need? It might be that sales (outbound calls) have a different requirement to customer services (inbound calls). Don't take anything for granted.
- Be very clear about the type of system you need. Do you want all calls recorded or do you want an 'on demand' system that can be used at the users' discretion? This may be done on a purely random basis.
- Do you want a system that records other details such as when and where a call may have been transferred to?
- Will you need a system to record all or just certain types of calls?
- What are your expectations? Do you expect to save money or increase revenues?
- Where are you expecting to save money? Is it in call costs or through improved efficiencies or improved sales?
- Can the logging system help me identify ways of making cheaper calls – perhaps by changing your telecommunications provider?

Step two

Identify your needs for a new logging or monitoring system.

- Ease of use. How easy will it be to use the system and generate reports in the case of logging calls, for example by individual or department?
- How simple will the recording system be for your personnel to use and activate and recall call data?
- What equipment and software will be required?
- How much storage will you require to store the calls?
- Will you need other software to be able to analyse the recorded data?
- What will the hardware requirement be, and the associated costs?
- How many people will I need to monitor – will I need to monitor everyone?
- Make sure that the system has a fast retrieval system i.e. the ability to search and find specific conversations. These are normally based on keywords, name of agent, time etc.
- How much will it cost?
- How much will it cost to maintain and support?
- Consider future options – you may be looking to open another office or expand your current operation. As a result you will

need to ensure that whatever you purchase now will be able to meet your future requirements.

- Make sure that the system is 'future proof' especially with the onset of IP (internet-based) systems.

Step three

Identify the right supplier.

- Look through magazine and online reviews.
- Talk to others who have recently installed a call management system in the same area as you.
- Use forums, networks and personal contacts to obtain recommendations.

Ask questions such as:

- Who has the experience of working with a company of the same size and profile as yours?
- Are any of those suppliers local to where you are located?
- How many similar installations have they made?
- Ask for references – ensure that the company is capable and reliable.
- Talk to a couple of their customers in order to see what benefits have been gained and what pains those customers went through when installing the system.
- Obtain a credit check through to ensure that they are financially stable.

Step four

Request a detailed proposal from three or four of your preferred suppliers.

- Set a deadline for when you need the proposal back.
- Give out details in advance as necessary to ensure that the suppliers you have selected can give you the best proposal.
- Go and meet them in person – get a good feel for whether you will be able to work with them.

Step five

Select a supplier.

- Who best demonstrates that they understand your business and your requirements?
- Is the solution flexible and scaleable and therefore able to meet future demand? You don't want to find out later that by investing a little more money now you could save money in the long term.
- Is it cost effective? Have they shown how and where you will save money?
- Does it clearly demonstrate the functional benefits – rather than just listing particular features? Does the proposal clearly show what the benefits are? There is no point on spending money for a system full of features that are of no benefit or that you will never use!
- How will your potential supplier support and maintain your system afterwards?
- How much will support and maintenance cost?

- Have you spoken to a couple of your preferred suppliers' customers?
- Agree on financial terms – you may be required to pay a deposit but do not pay the whole amount in advance of delivery.

Step six

Implementation, testing and go live

- Install the new system. Only when you are entirely satisfied should you pay any balance outstanding on the invoice. This way, if there are any problems, your supplier will sort them out as a matter of urgency.
- Don't forget to account for user training!

Points to remember when installing a call logging or monitoring system

It is extremely unlikely that you will install a logging and monitoring system yourself but by knowing the following steps you will be aware of what the process is, in order to achieve a fully functioning and compliant system.

The following safeguards need to be considered:

1. Communicate to your employees and explain why you are implementing a call recording or logging system. Explain what the benefits are for them and the company.
2. Address any concerns that your staff might have.
3. Ensure that you and your organisation meet all the legal requirements in order that you are not in breach of any statutes or legal requirements. We strongly recommend that you take specialist legal advice just to make sure!
4. Provide a number of telephones that your personnel can use in order to make personal or confidential calls.
5. Ensure that you are completely clear as to why you are implementing such a system.
6. Agree on a set of criteria for triggering the recording of calls if not all calls are to be recorded.
7. You need to ensure that a notification for callers that their calls may be recorded. Likewise for those making outbound calls need to notify any recipients that they may be being recorded.
8. Make sure that the information recorded is safe from abuse or misuse. This is a condition of the Data Protection Act.
9. Your company must be registered with the Information Commissioner (www.ico.gov.uk).
10. Implement a system whereby recordings are deleted when they are no longer required or as the DPA stipulates that personal data should only be retained long enough to fulfil the purpose for which it is held.

11. Training. This is absolutely critical to the success of any installation. Firstly to ensure that people know how to use the system and secondly when to use it. Training also helps retain good people and empowering them to make good, informed decisions.
12. Keep your employees informed. Let them know if there any issues or problems as soon as possible. The sooner you can let them know of a problem the sooner it can be dealt with.
13. Decide whether you want a system that automatically deletes call records when a pre-agreed criterion has been met.
14. Determine what sort of reports you require from your new system and how often.

Conclusion

There are many types of logging and monitoring systems available but it is important to have a very clear rationale as to why your organisation needs them and who needs to be monitored. You need to make absolutely clear that you comply with all the rules and legislation governing the recording and monitoring of telephone calls.

Call logging and recording can be incredibly effective at increasing efficiencies within a company and improving sales, all thereby improving profitability. Any system that maximises your customer data provides a better customer experience and ensures customer loyalty can only be regarded in a positive way.

Do remember that logging and recording systems are two separate systems or applications and as a result resolve two separate set of issues. Logging generates reports and allows for detailed analysis and recording captures information that can be used for a variety of uses, for example, whether to improve sales performance and hence increase revenues or for compliance reasons. Ultimately both are very effective methods of engaging technology to control costs and improve efficiency and should be considered regardless of size or type of company.

The adage that 'we are too small to need this technology' is no longer relevant because of the benefits that can be gained.

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Glossary

* 1 Call Centre – A call centre is a department of an organisation that provides specialist services via the phone. This can be anything from answering technical queries and offering support for both business and consumer products to answering and dealing issues for financial institutions. Call centres can have a focus on taking 'in bound' calls, such as those described where people phone a call centre to ask questions or 'out bound' where personnel are employed to make sales or find out other information via the phone.

* 2 AHT – Average Handle Time. AHT is a measurement or analysis (report) used by organisations, often within a call centre environment, whereby the time spent by personnel on the phone is recorded and measured and an average of that time is taken across all staff and individuals. It can be useful to compare against how long on other similar companies employees spend on the phone as ultimately the faster a person can resolve an issue the more calls they can take or make. This fits in with the adage 'time is money'!

* 3 Yield Management – Yield Management is a report similar to AHT whereby the details of telephone calls are recorded and analysed to find out for example who is making calls, to which regions and how many in a given period in order to analyse how productive they might be. It can be useful to compare people's performance as it may be that some staff are making many call but few sales and someone else is making fewer calls but more sales. So ultimately it is relative to the needs of the organisation and their business objectives.

FAQ's

What is the difference between Call Recording or monitoring and Call Logging?

Recording or monitoring are systems that can actually keep a record of all or some telephone calls made or taken by employees. Monitoring these calls can for example generate data such as who needs to be trained or how well they dealt with a complaint. Monitoring itself is simply allowing a third party such as a manager to listen to an employees call in order to appraise their performance. This information can be referred to at a later date, if for example a customer suggests that a member of staff had been rude or had made a promise that had not been actioned. Call logging is a system that essentially produces reports from phone usage. It enables organisations to generate and analyse key information such as where a call is made or from, duration of the call, region or country it was made to or from, and which individual made that call.

Do I need both and if not can I buy the systems separately?

You won't necessarily need both as they are completely different and are used for different purposes. That said, it is likely in the next few years that will change it appears that the systems will be provided as a single solution.

What are the legal issues that I need to consider?

One of the reasons why companies log and record calls is to comply with the certain legislation or codes of conduct. It is also important to take into account what can potentially be in breach of people's human rights or in contravention of

the Data Protection Act. It is most important that you take expert advice before you install such systems and how you should communicate this to your employees. Furthermore, for recording purposes it is essential that people that you call or that call your company are notified that the call may be recorded.

Aren't these systems only for large companies and call centres?

No. Many companies, small or large, Government departments and 'not for profit' organisations can benefit from this type of technology and in many instances are compelled to have it because of legal and compliance reasons.

Does my organisation need it?

There are many reasons to deploy call recording and logging technology, but the primary one is to increase efficiencies. If more calls are made (whether it is people making outbound telesales calls, handling complaints or solving customer queries), then the better the service given to customers will be and in the case of telesales, revenues per call should increase.

Compliance is also a major influence on the take-up of call recording technology and as a result, the technology is used by banks and other companies that are regulated by the FSA (The Financial Services Authority). The aim in this scenario is to make sure that all facts and figures are recorded during a conversation in order to ensure that the customer has not been misled and also to make sure that a telephone call can be referred to at a later stage should a dispute occur. Regardless of whether your company is a major bank or a small taxi firm, it can be major value.