

VentureWire

Armed With Fresh \$10M, Transera Tackling Call Center Management

By Emily Westhafer

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Cupertino, Calif. - We all know what it's like to be put on hold for minutes, dreadful minutes, waiting to talk with a customer service representative who may not even answer our questions.

Transera Communications Inc. is out to fix the problem. The Cupertino, Calif., start-up just closed a \$10 million second round to help market its software for better managing customer service calls. Participating in the second round were lead investor Storm Ventures as well as Apax Partners and Accel Partners. All of them backed the \$10 million first round Transera raised last year.

Through a Web-based dashboard business managers can view calls as they're routed to call center agents around the world. If a call center agent does not pick up a call, the call can quickly be routed to another agent that's available, thus reducing the wait time.

Transera Chief Executive Prem Uppaluru said business managers can also use the Web dashboard to see which offices are handling calls better. He can type in his phone number to be rung when a call is going on and hear how it's being handled. Uppaluru said in future versions business managers will be alerted with a call to their cell phone when problems like service levels dropping occur.

The software is also handy for businesses that don't want to anger key customers by putting them on hold. Instead, their calls can be routed to the top agents who are used to handling those calls.

Customers' calls can continuously be monitored using the Web dashboard, both on the call center side and the business location. Using the Web dashboard, customer service agents can be alerted when calls need to be handled. They also have detailed information on specific callers, including whether or not the person has called before and what the reasons for those calls were.

Transera is tackling a big space, as there are millions of call center agents around the globe. "They're kind of defining a new market space," said Drew Kraus, a research director at Gartner.

Kraus said alternatively, call centers typically use different technology from the businesses they're working with, so it's not easy to monitor the calls. "If I've got an Avaya-based call center here, but the company in Bangalore is using Siemens, the company in the U.S. has to hand off the call and not know what happens," he said. With Transera, it doesn't matter if the enterprise and the outsourced operations are using different technology because the system works with both.

Transera is in field trials with its product and expects to be in production in the fourth quarter. Partners like MCI Inc. will help market the product. Target customers are financial services companies like Citigroup Inc., which outsources much of its call center operations. High-tech companies like Dell Inc. and Microsoft Corp., which also have thousands of

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customer service agents handling calls, are on Transera's customer wish list.

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