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BEST PRACTICES FOR SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE REMOTE TRAINING

INTRODUCTION

For agents to perform their jobs effectively and provide a great customer experience, they need to feel empowered, confident and supported. These are the goals of any training program, but having to deliver one that can achieve these results remotely presents additional challenges.

As much of the world's workforce transitions to working remotely for what may be an indefinite period of time, there are best practices that you can use to ensure agents are still receiving and have access to high-quality training.

LEVERAGE COLLABORATIVE TECHNOLOGY AND RESOURCES

- Make learning as easy and convenient as possible! Keep all training resources in one place, make sure all processes and procedures are well documented and up-to-date, and consider using SSO. No one will need to remember another password!

- Most contact centers monitor and record calls as part of their quality assurance process. Call recordings (even better if they also have a synchronized screen recording) can be used to give new agents a clear example of what high and poor performance looks like.

- Video conferencing is a critical component of any online training program – so embrace it! It allows agents to get to know each other face-to-face and ensures people are paying attention. Video conferencing allows you to show, as well as tell agents what and why you are doing something, and the recording feature makes it easy to capture and share those best practices by creating a permanent resource agents can refer back to later.

- Think about how your agents can actively contribute to your training content. User-generated content is becoming an increasingly popular way for agents to share knowledge and ideas and receive feedback from colleagues.

MAKE TRAINING INTERACTIVE

Keeping agents attentive and engaged is challenging in a remote training environment, but it's not impossible! Work to establish an interactive, fun training culture that makes agents feel comfortable.

- Enhance passive tools like videos, lectures, and presentations with more active tools, such as pre and post training assignments, discussion and debate, and role playing.

- Ask lots of questions and use quizzes and polls to give agents an opportunity to voice their experiences and ideas.

- See what content can be covered in smaller groups and use the breakout feature on your video conferencing software to break the class out for a workshop (or two).

- Reinforce what agents learn during the online sessions with self-guided modules, reading, etc. where agents can work at their own pace. While goals and learning outcomes should be clearly defined at the beginning of training, how agents reach these goals should be flexible.

- Make training a part of your agents' regular schedule and foster a culture of continuous learning. They'll be more likely to approach it with the same enthusiasm as everything else.

REPLICATE REAL LIFE

If you take away nothing else from this post, please take away this: **training should replicate *exactly* what the agents will be doing when they start taking live calls.** Agents should leave training feeling confident that they can handle anything that comes their way. So strive to develop and deliver training that is 'hands on' and mirrors real life as closely as possible:

- Have agents role-play and work through real life contact scenarios, including the completion of any related system work that they'll also have to do on live calls.

- Consider having agents take live calls during training, with a trainer observing nearby to assist if needed.

- Use call recordings to illustrate how calls flow so agents have an idea of what to expect.

- Use a testing environment 'sandbox' to allow agents 'hands on' training and time to practice with required systems.
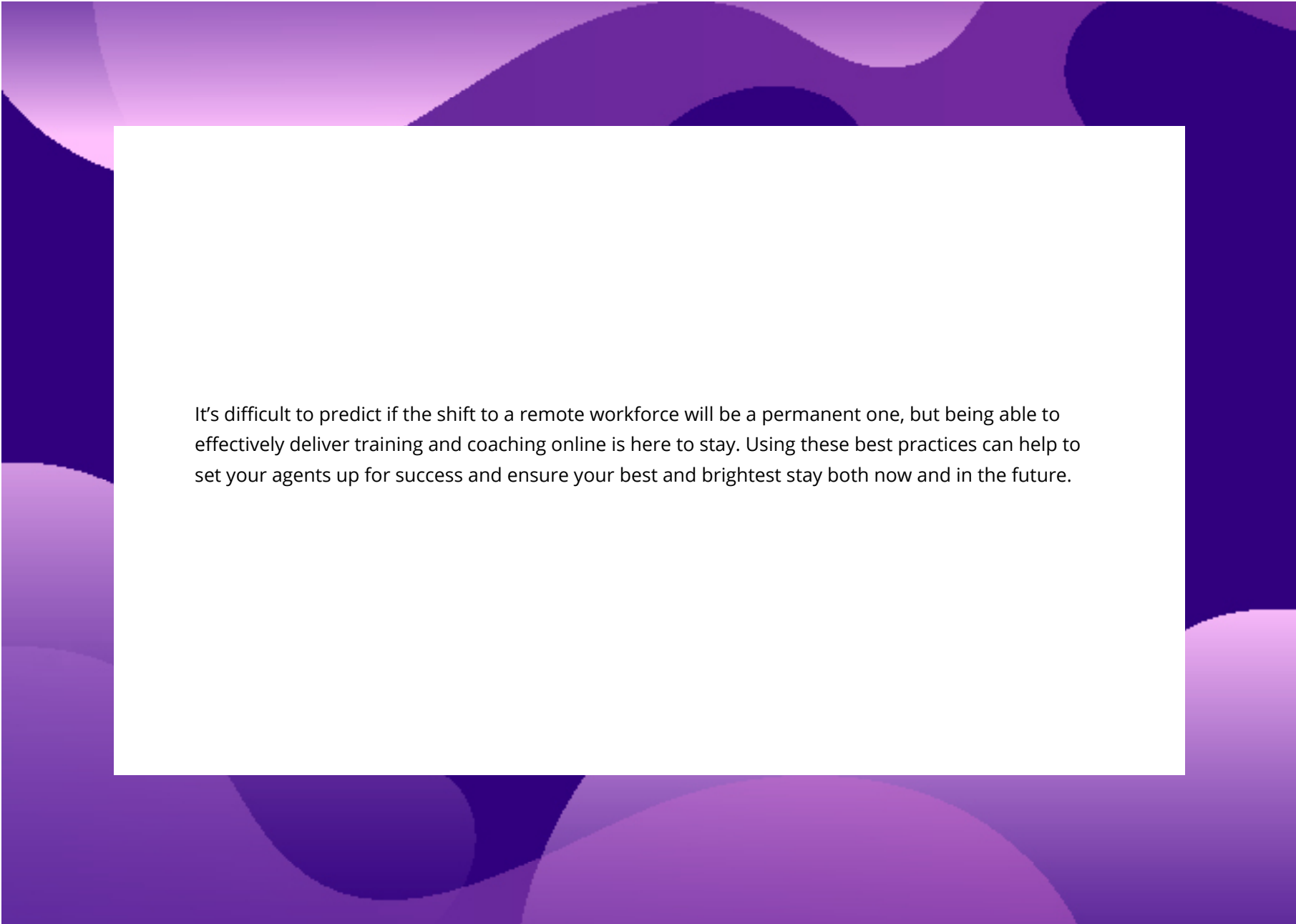
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CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Agents don't build expertise through training programs alone. Practice, correction and coaching from peers and supervisors are critical to their success:

- Teach agents where to find the information they need and where to go if they get stuck and need help.

- Ensure help resources and supervisors are highly visible, responsive and available. Help lines and online chat tools are widely used and can provide effective support in real time.

- Use quality assurance, call monitoring and analytics to track agents' progress and performance, and proactively identify agents who may need additional help and guidance.

- Schedule frequent face-to-face check ins and coaching sessions with each agent individually. Everyone wants to know what they're doing well and where they can improve. But the days of panic-inducing performance reviews are over. Frequent and informal progress meetings help you to nurture and develop a personal connection with each agent, and opens a critical two-way communication where you can provide feedback on their progress and performance, and they in turn have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on how the training program can be improved. The more touch points and face-to-face interactions you can have with your agents, the more engaged they'll be.

INCLUDE TEAM BONDING ACTIVITIES

- Use video conferencing so agents can see each other face-to-face and open the conference a few minutes early so they have the opportunity to chat with each other before you get started.

- Have SMEs and other members of the team help deliver the training and share their experience and expertise. This not only allows new agents to interact with and get to know them, but also helps new agents feel comfortable if they need to reach out to them in the future.

- Give remote agents time to get to connect with other team members on a personal level. Whether it's a virtual book club or other interest-based group, or just meeting up for a virtual coffee break (no 'work talk' allowed), this investment goes a long way to helping new agents feel connected and part of the team.

It's difficult to predict if the shift to a remote workforce will be a permanent one, but being able to effectively deliver training and coaching online is here to stay. Using these best practices can help to set your agents up for success and ensure your best and brightest stay both now and in the future.

REMOTE TRAINING MADE SIMPLE.

If you're looking to quickly get started with remote training, we can help. We've worked with organizations across the globe to create highly effective and interactive training that enables employees to start work sooner with confidence.
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