Denver Contact Center is Humming

So far, the summer of 2005 has been one of the busiest travel seasons of the past decade. Everyone in our 'ohana, no matter what their position in our company, is working very hard to keep up with all the demands. With that in mind, I took a few moments this week to drop by our Outrigger/OHANA Customer Contact Center in Denver, Colorado, to see how things were going. I also wanted to personally thank the people who work there for their dedication in serving our customers, particularly during this busy time. In the process, I had a wonderful opportunity to see our new state-of-the-art call distribution system, Echopass, in action.

I arrived mid-morning, and the atmosphere was one of quiet efficiency. About 15 members of our 'ohana sat in front of their computer consoles processing reservations and requests for information arriving by telephone, facsimile, e-mail, and a "Live Help" Internet chat facility. In spite of the summer rush, service levels were humming along in the high 90-percent range, and all business was being promptly handled.

The whole scene was quite different from the early days when our fledgling Customer Contact Center was located in a small room behind the Front Desk of the Outrigger Waikiki Hotel. As described in last week's article on Alice Walters, in those days, when a call came in, the telephones would ring loudly and someone would yell, "I'll get it!" as he or she picked up the handset and a pad of yellow reservations forms on which a booking would be manually logged.

The next phase was Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) with a computer routing incoming phone calls to the next available reservationist. The computer was about the size of two refrigerators side by side. In separate departments, a row of fax machines spewed out reams of paper, and several agents sat in front of computers answering Live Help inquiries over the Internet.

About three months ago, the system improved dramatically, when the Echopass system was installed at the Denver Customer Contact Center. The plug was pulled on the in-house ACD equipment and replaced by a laptop-PC-sized apparatus on a rack in the corner of the computer room. Now, when a call comes in, it is first handled by a remote computer in the Echopass facilities in Salt Lake City, Utah. The call is then instantly routed over the Internet to an available, qualified Outrigger/OHANA Reservationist. That person might be working at our Denver offices or elsewhere. Calls can just as easily be routed to another Outrigger/OHANA location or to the desk of a Reservationist working from his or her home.

The real beauty of the Echopass technology is that it not only handles telephone voice calls, but also distributes facsimiles, e-mails, and Internet chat requests to qualified and available agents. On top of that, more and more of our bookings from wholesale tour companies are going directly from wholesalers' computers to Outrigger's STELLEX computer with no human involvement, unless there is an exception from pre-set limits.

Yes, it has been a busy summer, but advances in technology have made it possible for the Denver Customer Contact Center to not only keep up with the rush, but actually provide even better service in the process. My thanks to the entire reservations team for all the great work they do every day of the year.