

## Virtual Executive Assembly Executive Brief

### Agent Culture and Engagement



Presented by April Sealy

*Vice President, Operations and Customer Solutions*

Elevate

#### **Introduction**

Recently, members of the Customer Engagement Leadership Council gathered for a unique member benefit --a Virtual Executive Assembly (VEA). VEA's are expert or member led-presentations on timely industry topics that include best practice sharing, organizational lessons learned, and strategies recommended for improving business.

The topic of this VEA was **Agent Culture and Engagement**, and it was led by Customer Engagement Leadership Council Member April Sealy, currently Vice President, Operations and Customer Solutions at Elevate. Elevate is an innovative provider of online technology-enabled credit solutions, utilizing technology and advanced analytics to offer customers competitively priced credit when they need it. The company also offers several financial wellness and consumer friendly tools to help customers create a better financial future.

To open the VEA, attending members were encouraged to introduce themselves and share a particular contact center challenge they were experiencing. Issues mentioned included the struggle to build a strong agent culture, agent attrition, motivating agents from different generations with very different skill sets, helping agents to view their role as more than just transactional, and helping agents who take numerous calls daily and weekly to beat burnout.

#### **Creating a healthy work life balance**

Keeping these issues top of mind, April shared a video that showed how Elevate takes a well-tuned, "Work hard, Play Hard" approach to creating a positive and engaged work culture. The video, which featured happy employees working, playing, dancing and more, earned Elevate Frost & Sullivan's 2018

CC “Work Hard, Play Hard” award at the 14th Annual Customer Contact West: A Frost & Sullivan Executive MindXchange.



As April stated, her company was honored to win the award. She reaffirmed that Elevate’s culture and values are built around a common purpose, strong guiding principles and a commitment to creating a positive work environment. Elevate’s four core principles are:

1. **Think Big**—innovate, big and small ideas are focus from front desk to CEO, this is their competitive advantage
2. **Do the right thing** - not optional, need to maintain high standards)
3. **Raise the bar**—practice continuous improvement
4. **Win together**—Have fun, encourage camaraderie, cultivate a consistent internal culture from headquarters to BPOs

#### **Aligning Values and Culture across Time Zones**

Several years ago, Elevate decided to outsource its customer service centers. April shared that the first Business Process Outsourcers (BPOs) selected were not an ideal fit and ultimately, did not meet expectations. From this experience, the company learned that it was important that BPO partners’ values and culture were aligned with the rest of the organization and that all shared a common purpose.

April explained that her company used a sophisticated process to find a new BPO partner, paying a lot of attention to the potential partner’s internal culture, and observing how employees were treated. Did the executives know their employees? Was the work environment pleasant and clean? Elevate sought a true mutual partnership, where BPOs could freely tell the “home office” areas they thought could be improved. Now the company is happy with their partners, and April believes most employees, near and far, remain motivated by the same values and a true focus on delivering exceptional customer service.

## What were the deciding factors?



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### Sharing and Learning from Customer Stories

April also discussed a few of her company’s successful initiatives, including the sharing of customer stories and Random Acts of Kindness programs. The Random Acts of Kindness program allows high-performing call center team members to perform random acts of kindness on customers, such as forgiving a loan. The exchange is usually videotaped and shared with the team, helping all to connect with customers and stay engaged.

Elevate also has a My Two Cents Program that allows agents to submit suggestions or important observations to an online portal. Respective agents are told when the company has acted on their suggestion and are notified about how information is leveraged. The program has proven to be a rich source of ideas for the company, and ensures that employee’s voices and observations are shared and heard. Typically, submitted information ranges from highlighting broken links to suggesting new marketing ideas.

Elevate arranges regular site visits, parties and even charitable missions called “Side by Sides,” events which employees from all organizational levels participate in. These happenings are helpful for integrating teams, keeping everyone engaged...and for having fun in the process! No doubt they contributed to the organization winning a Best Place to Work Award recently.

### Work, Hard, Play Hard

All of these examples illustrate how Elevate really is an organization that works hard and plays hard, too. It’s worth noting that much of the company’s culture and environment is designed to combat many of the challenges participants identified early in the discussion, including building happy and productive work teams, motivating employees from different generations, and helping to beat employee burnout. At Elevate, employees are part of a bigger purpose; as a bonus the company has learned that helping others even helps retention.

## Connecting the front line to the cause



- Smother them in brand love
- Tell them how they bring value and quickly act on their feedback and suggestions
- Incentives, recognition, rewards
- In-person relationship building through frequent site visits
- Work hard and PLAY hard, together!



If your contact center is a great place to work, consider nominating your team for one of Frost & Sullivan's CC Awards today. The CC's are the "People's Choice Awards" of the customer service industry, rewarding excellence and outstanding achievement among practitioners and service providers across a broad range of categories including excellence in AI, Analytics, and Social Media, to name a few. Click [here](#) to learn more. See you at the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary **Customer Contact East Awards: A Frost & Sullivan Executive MindXchange** this April in Marco Island, Florida!

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