

# Avaya, Sitel Team

The duo have a new way to handle service calls that should make it easier for customers and companies

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Your new cable modem isn't working.

It's midnight.

You *really* want to find out how the West Coast baseball games turned out before you go to bed.

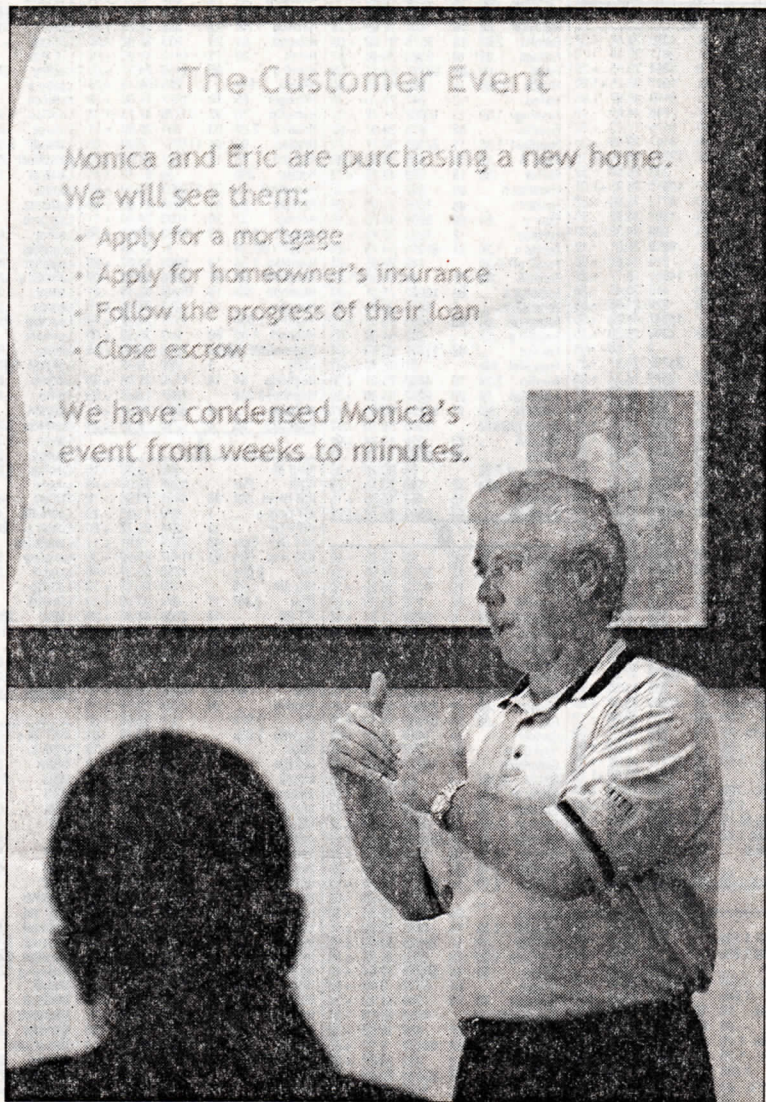
The cable company gave you a 24-hour customer service number that you could call if there was a problem.

But you figure that probably means hours listening to an automated attendant direct you through a series of questions just so you can retell the whole story to a real person when he finally gets on the line.

It's that feeling of dread that a new partnership between communications equipment maker Avaya Inc. and the customer service call center experts at Sitel Corp. seek to eliminate.

"The way things are, people hate to call customer service," said Rod

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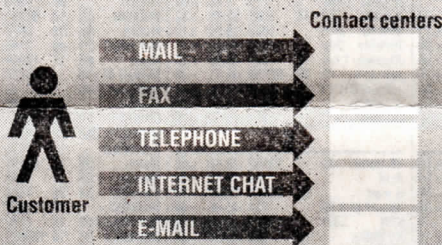
**CONNECTING CUSTOMERS:** Rod Kassmeier, a senior vice president with Sitel Corp. explains how a new partnership between Sitel and Avaya Inc. works. The two companies showed off new technology on Tuesday that will make handling customer service calls easier and less frustrating.

## Improving the Path of Customer Service

Technology companies with Omaha operations, Sitel of Baltimore and Avaya of Basking Ridge, N.J., have created a partnership to help companies handle customer service issues. Here is how the new Sitel-Avaya partnership works compared to the traditional way:

### Traditional Process

Companies were forced to have different customer service contact centers based on the medium a customer chose to use.

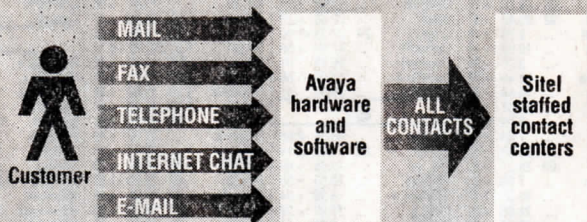


### Problems:

- Very difficult for companies to track customer information.
- Forced customers to repeat information they had already given.

### New Process

Customer contacts are routed through computer hardware and software designed by Avaya. Workers in Sitel staffed centers receive all contacts as if they were phone calls.



### Advantages:

Software tracks customer contacts and includes personal data which helps Sitel personnel solve customer issues.



## ■ PARTNERSHIP

# Avaya, Sitel Form Team To Boost Service

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Kassmeier, a senior vice president with Sitel. "They figure they're going to waste a lot of time and not get their problem solved anyway. We're going to change that."

The two companies, both with major Omaha operations, have developed a new way to handle customer service calls that should make it easier for customers to get answers and cheaper for large companies to help consumers.

The technology duo announced their partnership at a new executive briefing room at Sitel's Omaha offices near 102nd and Fort Streets on Tuesday.

The briefing center, a showroom of sorts, will be used to demonstrate to top executives of potential clients how the Sitel-Avaya partnership works. That means representatives from large companies will visit Omaha to check out the companies' wares. The showroom is one of only two in the world. The other will be in Brussels, Belgium.

"Just this week, we've got people coming in from New York, Washington state and Africa," said Arenell Elliott, an Avaya vice president. "Omaha is centrally located

in the country. There's a good social setting here, and it's easy to get in and out of and that matters to our clients."

Here's how the new call centers work:

■ Sitel manages customer service call centers for more than 300 companies worldwide, including giants such as AOL, Home Depot and General Motors. The company handles more than 1.5 million customers of those companies per day.

■ Customers can contact companies in a variety of ways: phone, e-mail, Internet chat, fax or by mail.

■ Under the old system, each of the different media had to be handled by a different call center (e-mail by e-mail service agents, phone calls by phone banks, etc.).

■ Under the new system, Avaya-developed communications equipment will route all customer service requests to Sitel attendants at one of 75 centers around the world as if they were all phone calls.

■ The new system allows for faster routing and better handling of customer calls, regardless of how they chose to contact the company. That means more satisfaction and fewer headaches for ordinary consumers, Sitel leaders say.

■ The system also allows companies to track a customer's personal data, including address, phone number and previous calls to customer service. This helps Sitel attendants avoid asking consumers to repeat information they've already given.

The Avaya-Sitel partnership could be a breakthrough for both communications companies, both in terms of services offered and their standing in the financial market.

Telecommunications companies such as Avaya and Sitel have suffered in the markets because investors are unwilling to take chances on technology companies after being burned during the dozens of dot-com busts during the last two years, analysts say.

Avaya, which spun off from Lucent Technologies last fall, recently announced 3,000 job cuts and lowered earnings expectations for the year.

Sitel has struggled to gain market respect after changing its focus from traditional telemarketing services to customer call centers.

This partnership could be a major boost to both companies.

"There is real demand for quality customer service, especially in these times of an overall weak economy," said Joseph Cyr, an analyst who follows Avaya for CIBC World Markets in Denver. "Avaya's got a good product, and they are making the right moves in terms of streamlining the company and getting involved in profitable projects."

The partnership could be especially important for Sitel.

"Sitel has kind of lost focus," said Ryan Sailer, an analyst for Kirkpatrick Pettis in Omaha. "They need to prove themselves in terms of earnings. This partnership offers them the opportunity to do that."