

# Metric of the Month: Agent Satisfaction

By Jeff Rumburg

Every month, in the Industry Insider, I will highlight one key performance indicator (KPI) for the service desk or desktop support. I will define the KPI, provide recent benchmarking data for the metric, and discuss key correlations and cause/effect relationships for the metric. The purpose of the column is to familiarize you with the KPIs that really matter to your support organization, and to provide actionable insight on how to leverage these KPIs to improve your performance.

## Agent Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is top-of-mind for virtually every service organization, and for good reason: it is the single-most-important measure of quality for a service desk or desktop support group. But what about agent satisfaction? How important is that, and why don't more service desks track it? It turns out that it's plenty important, and every support organization should track and trend this metric on an ongoing basis.

Agent satisfaction is the percentage of agents on the service desk that are either satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs. It is typically measured annually or semiannually using an agent satisfaction survey. Unfortunately, fewer than 30 percent of all service desks track agent satisfaction. When I ask clients why they don't track this metric, the answer is usually the same: it's too difficult to measure, or the metric just doesn't matter. On both counts, they are wrong. Here's why...

## Why It's Important

Agent satisfaction is a bellwether metric that impacts many other service desk metrics. It is positively correlated with customer satisfaction, and negatively correlated with agent absenteeism and turnover, meaning that absenteeism and turnover go down as agent satisfaction goes up. Figures 1–3 illustrate these correlations using data from MetricNet's benchmarking database (2011 data).

Figure 1: Agent Satisfaction vs. Customer Satisfaction

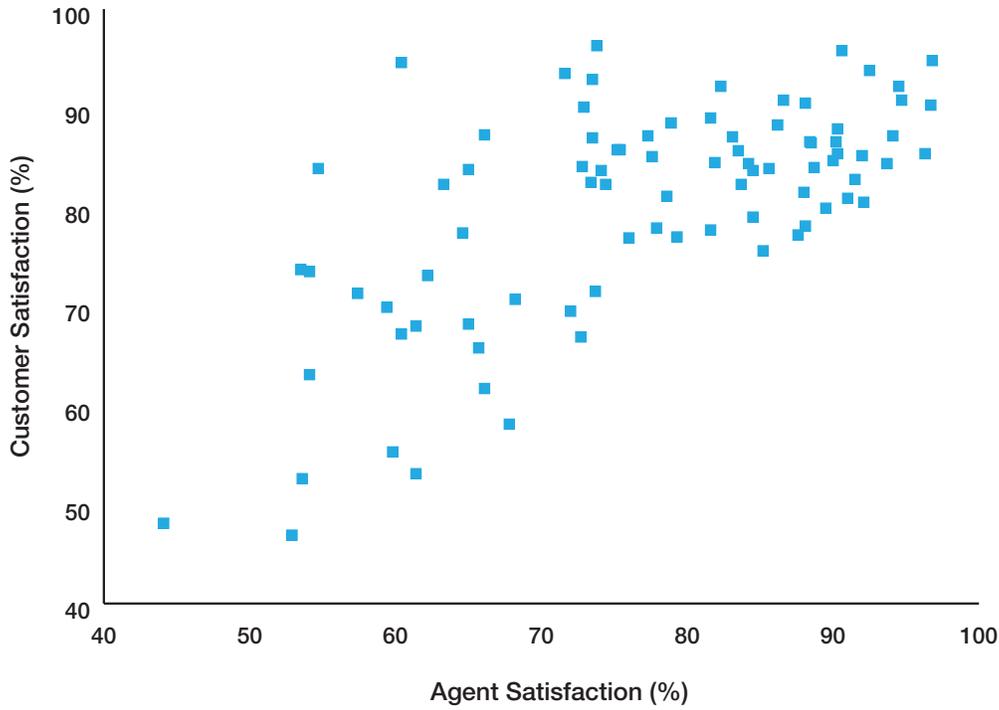


Figure 2: Agent Satisfaction vs. Annual Agent Turnover

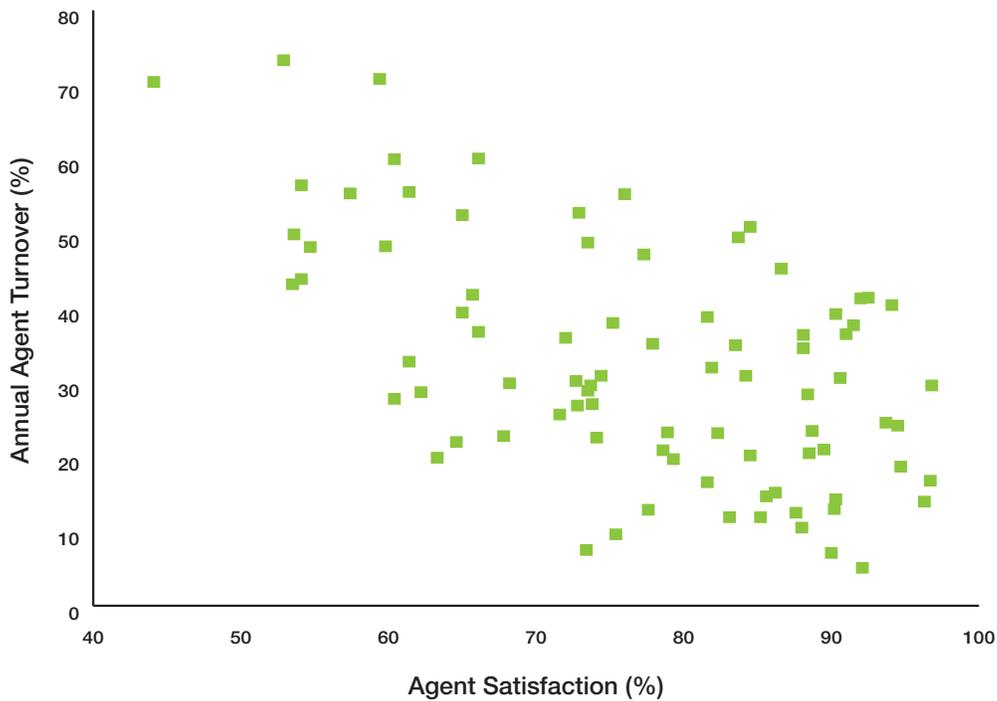
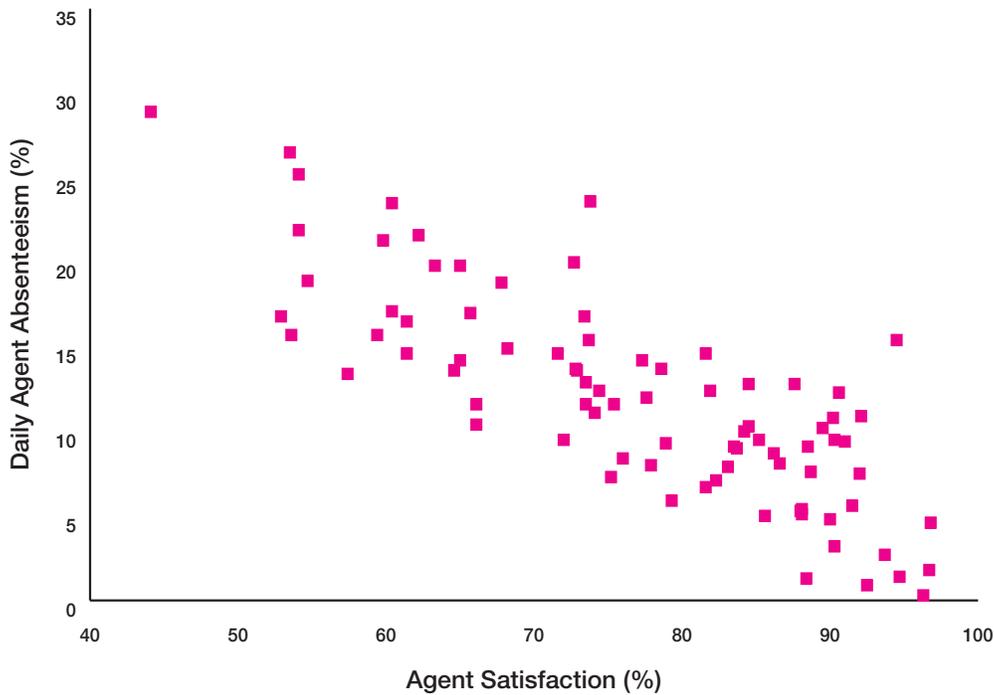


Figure 3: Agent Satisfaction vs. Daily Agent Absenteeism



So, why do we care about these correlations? Two reasons: first, they aren't just spurious correlations; they are cause-and-effect relationships. Agent satisfaction (along with FCR) drives customer satisfaction, agent turnover; and agent absenteeism. More importantly, if we can control agent satisfaction (which we can), then we can drive positive improvements in customer satisfaction, turnover, and absenteeism.

The second reason is that high agent satisfaction has positive economic benefits. Inasmuch as improvements in agent satisfaction can reduce agent turnover, they can also reduce the costs associated with turnover. Last year (in North America), the direct cost of replacing an agent, including the cost of screening, recruiting, interviewing, and training, was more than \$10,000. And this doesn't even take into account the value of the knowledge and expertise that is lost when an agent leaves the service desk. Turnover is costly indeed!

## Key Drivers of Agent Satisfaction

I mentioned above that agent satisfaction can be controlled. But how? Many service desks struggle with low agent morale, and appear unable, despite their best efforts, to maintain a high level of morale in their service desks. Can we do something proactive to manage and improve agent job satisfaction? The answer is yes, and the solution is surprisingly simple.

It turns out that agent satisfaction is driven by training hours, coaching hours, and the existence of a formal career path. Once again, we can turn to our benchmarking data to make this point. Figures 4 and 5 show how training and career pathing impact agent satisfaction.

**Figure 4: Annual Training Hours vs. Agent Satisfaction**

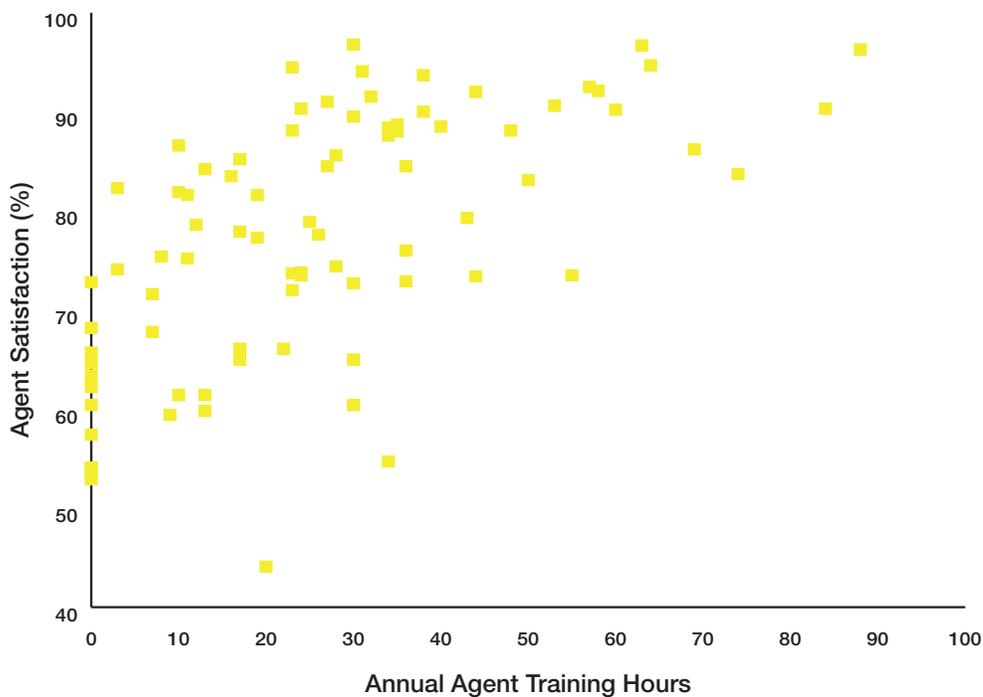


Figure 5: Career Pathing and Agent Satisfaction



## Benchmarking Ranges for Agent Job Satisfaction

MetricNet’s benchmarking database shows that the average agent satisfaction for service desks worldwide is about 77 percent. That is, 77 percent of service desk agents are either satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs. This number varies from a low of 44 percent to a high of 97 percent.

As mentioned above, agent satisfaction is usually measured via annual or semiannual satisfaction surveys. These surveys typically contain five or fewer questions, and can be automated using simple online tools like Survey Monkey. MetricNet recommends a five-point scale, where a score of five is very satisfied and a score of one is very dissatisfied. Given the impact of training, coaching, and career pathing on agent satisfaction, the survey should include a question about each of these topics. For example, “How would you rank the quality of training you receive on the service desk?” The final and most important question of the survey should always be some variation on, “How would you rate your overall job satisfaction on the service desk?”

Please join us for next month’s Metric of the Month, **desktop cost per ticket**, the most important measure of efficiency in desktop support.

*Jeff Rumburg is a managing partner and cofounder of MetricNet, LLC, the leading source of service desk and desktop support benchmarks for IT service professionals worldwide.*