

# Charles Miller, Chief Technology Officer at S2G and Asterisk guru, speaks about the evolution of the Asterisk community and effective call-center management business

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*Mr. Miller has more than 16 years of contact center experience. Prior to joining Support Services Group (S2G), he spent the last 6 years as CTO of a contact center company called UpSource Inc. Before UpSource Inc., he spent 10 years working for telephony companies Verizon and Bell Atlantic managing technology and operations for over 30 contact centers located in the United States, Canada, Mexico, India, and the Philippines. Mr. Miller started his career at Gateway as a Technical Support Professional in the late 1990s. He is co-inventor of a USA patent for a security apparatus, method, and computer program for contact centers and currently holds certification as a Certified Information Systems Security Professional*

*(CISSP). Mr. Miller holds a BA in Business Administration and a BS in Computer Information Systems from Saint Leo University; and MS in Information Systems specializing in Information Systems Security from Northwestern University. Mr. Miller joined S2G in January 2015.*

## **Could you summarize for our readers your profile and your role in the Asterisk community?**

Prior to my role as Chief technology officer (CTO) at [Support Services Group \(S2G\)](#), Asterisk was a well-known platform, but was generally never considered a viable platform for medium to large contact centers. Most of my career in the contact center industry involved leveraging established enterprise telephony platforms like [Avaya](#). Therefore, my involvement with the [Asterisk](#) community in the past has been rather limited.

However, in the past year Asterisk has now become a critical piece of S2G's business success. As CTO at S2G, I had the privilege of leading the integration of a recently acquired contact center company. S2G was running a rather simplified deployment of Asterisk while the other company was running the more complex [Avaya Aura](#) platform. After reviewing both platforms against the company's long term strategy, the decision was made

to move forward with Asterisk as S2G's enterprise platform. While the Avaya platform was very capable with a well-established support network, Asterisk was able to provide the majority of what we required at a significantly lower Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).

What gaps we identified were easily filled by working with the Asterisk community and augmenting Asterisk with complementary software like [QueueMetrics](#) and [OrecX](#).

QueueMetrics was able to assist us in four major gaps: 1) Provide confidential, accurate, and an easily accessible interface that our users can leverage day to day to perform tasks minimizing risk to the underlying Asterisk platform, 2) Easily deploy and maintain Hot Desking / Hoteling of agents, 3) Integrate with our commercial off the shelf (COTS) Workforce Management Software, and 4) Provide accurate and accessible real-time and historic reports to improve our decision making.

Lastly, Orecx was able to fill our last major gap by providing an open source software solution for call recording that seamlessly integrates with our QueueMetrics platform. With OrecX integrated with QueueMetrics and QueueMetrics being our primary front-end solution our contact center environment is simple to learn, use, maintain, and manage.

After 10 months of partnering with [Loway](#) and other key Asterisk community contributors, we have all our clients on the Asterisk platform along with QueueMetrics without any negative impact to our clients while reducing our Telephony TCO by more than 75%. I can now say with confidence our involvement with the Asterisk community has evolved into an active role where we are eagerly looking forward to help drive the next iteration of Asterisk and QueueMetrics.

### **Mr. Miller, what's your view on the future of the Asterisk call-center industry in the next two years?**

Asterisk provides an excellent platform solution for businesses that aren't ready or don't have the means to invest in a commercial off the shelf (COTS) product and are unsure about Cloud based services. Asterisk provides an easily implemented and manageable telephony platform at low Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).

I think we will continue to see Asterisk gain market share in the industry as a premise and hosted solution for small and medium size businesses.

### **What kind of [benefits](#) do you think professionals experience with call-center monitoring suites like QueueMetrics?**

Asterisk is a capable platform and if augmented with complementary software like QueueMetrics the deployment, management, and ongoing maintenance of the Asterisk platform is simplified.

For example, QueueMetrics makes deploying Hot Desking / Hoteling of agents extremely easy through an interface that is quickly learned by entry level support staff.

## **What are the key factors which make a successful Asterisk based call-centre?**

While success can be defined in various ways depending on the niche of the contact center, I think all contact centers have at least three key factors in common: profitability, quality of service, and value add.

An Asterisk based contact center can often have an advantage over traditional telephony platforms and even [Cloud based services](#) because Asterisk has in many cases the lowest Total Cost of Ownership (TCO). However, less expensive doesn't necessarily mean more profit. Quality of service is key to maintaining customers and earning new customers. Asterisk, once properly setup is very stable, scalable, and flexible. From our experience with running Asterisk side by side with an Avaya platform it was practically impossible for our clients to know the difference between the platforms; this says a lot about a properly deployed Asterisk platform. Lastly, Value Add is critical; handing transactions alone for contact centers was great in the 1980s and 1990s, but in the 21st century it is all about data and analytics.

Complementing Asterisk with software like QueueMetrics provides the ability to capture most of the data and many of the reports our clients demand right out of the box. For those that have additional needs, partners like Loway have eagerly worked with users like us to build custom reporting and assisted us in finding new ways capture data enabling our business to provide insight to our clients about their business and their customers.

## **Do you see space for further improvement in the near future? Are you still researching [QueueMetrics](#) potential?**

Yes, like all successful businesses we have to continue to evolve, identify opportunities, and make improvements constantly.

We have been exploring other modules and means to improve our business using QueueMetrics and Loway's expertise. For example, we are exploring the [Agent Awareness module](#) (AGAW) as a potential new tool for our agents and supervisors. Another example is we are partnering with Loway on a critical Key Performance Indicator (KPI) that will greatly improve our ability to timely and effectively improve productivity of our agents.

We are planning to use a modified Occupancy report with an added KPI for Agent Productivity. This new KPI as part of the existing Occupancy canned report within QueueMetrics will allow us to quickly take action to improve agents' productivity in a near real-time basis as well as provide consistent and accurate agent productivity at the enterprise level to help shape company strategy.