

Asterisk in the Call Center



An interview by Digium Inc. with Loway's Founder



We are pleased to welcome guest blogger Lorenzo Emilriti, the founder of Loway, a Swiss company that powers thousands of call-centers worldwide. Lorenzo's background is in data modelling and he previously worked for a well-known international consulting firm. Lorenzo started using Asterisk in 2003 - and never looked back!

How good is Asterisk as a contact center? There are some white papers from different vendors explaining the benefits of their specific solutions. The real question of how good the Asterisk platform itself is - or the perceptions its users have when running call-centers out of it - is often left unanswered.

Loway has been developing the QueueMetrics Call-Center Suite for almost 10 years now. We had a feeling that our clients seemed to be quite happy - in particular the ones moving away from traditional telephony. But, until recently, we haven't been able to quantify this with reliable metrics. My own experience, in running a company that prides itself on its high level of technical detail, is that often, time is invested in solving one issue after the other. It is hard to step back, take a deep breath, and look at the landscape around you.

Last year we decided it was time to look at the big picture. We are a company that believes in measurement as the basis of improvement. We had to see some data. So, we asked our clients to fill in a satisfaction survey that contained questions relating to both QueueMetrics and the Asterisk platform, in general.

We ended up having about 150 respondents. They are of course, a self-selected sample, so they might not represent the general population. Regardless, the trends we see in the data are unmistakable.

The first trend is that about one-third of our respondents run call-centers with more than 100 seats. This means Asterisk is working well in demanding environments with a consistently high level of channel occupation. These environments were once the reign of brand-name, traditional telephony suppliers. We found that Asterisk-based solutions compete at this scale.

The second trend is that most environments use either custom Asterisk or the FreePBX GUI. In regards to the type of configuration used for call-center scenarios, we see the arena more or less evenly split between systems running a custom Asterisk dial-plan and systems running the FreePBX GUI. Other GUIs represent about 5% of installed systems. GUIs are dominant for smaller systems, but are also significantly present on large systems as well.

The third trend is that Asterisk users are extremely happy with their PBX.

Over 80% of the respondents graded their system with a satisfaction mark of 8 (or more) out of 10. Though the data shows self-selection at work, the results are still impressive. When asked about what they would do next, none of our respondents were considering upgrading to an on-premise solution that was not Asterisk-based. Only a small minority indicated they were looking for "cloud" solutions. This is likely because hosted solutions add a new set of risks that have to be managed. Additionally, our survey took place in the midst of global headlines describing how widespread Internet surveillance appears to be, and this may have impacted the results.

These three trends show that call-center businesses who decided to invest in Asterisk are reaping the benefits of its mature and flexible technology. That, coupled with the QueueMetrics Suite, can build highly-efficient and complete call-centers that strongly improve the company business.

The full report is available free of charge at <http://queuemetrics.com/callcenter-survey.jsp>