



Contact Centre Standards and Accreditation (CCSA)

**Australian Teleservices
Association**

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

The mission statement of the Australian Teleservices Association (ATA) is to lead the contact centre industry and to promote professionalism, growth and ethical behaviour. In line with this mission and in its role as a truly national industry association it is appropriate that the ATA provide a standards program for the Contact Centre industry in Australia.

Officially launched nationally on Wednesday, 4th July 2007 as the Australian Contact Centre Standards (ACCS), it has been re-branded as Contact Centre Standards and Accreditation (CCSA). The re-branding will eliminate confusion with the Australian Contact Centre Survey, which also promotes itself as ACCS.

1.2 Why Standards

Although the industry in Australia is still growing strongly it is a mature market having commenced in real terms during the late 1980s. This growth has occurred largely in an unstructured way without proper guidelines and disciplines to protect both the industry and its users.

Despite the maturity of the market the industry still does not have a framework of standards that it is able to operate within. Those centres that do have some form of standards program in place tend to have them based upon the industry they cover rather than how they operate.

Increasingly various Governments have also looked towards governance of the industry with their efforts to date proving to be disjointed and uninformed. The legislation that has been introduced has been of a responsive nature seeking to impose limitations on the operations of centres, particularly in outbound Telesales and Telemarketing.

Standard development and administration by the ATA ensures that there is one benchmark for excellence for all contact centres and that the administration of the accreditation of these standards is conducted by a national, independent and non-profit organisation.

The creation and introduction of the ATA's Contact Centre Standards and Accreditation will be of significant assistance in enhancing the standing of the industry.

2 THE ATA STANDARDS

2.1 Framework

ATA Contact Centre Standards and Accreditation contains five Categories, which define the cornerstone of contact centre management:

- Category 1 Planning
- Category 2 Infrastructure & Environment
- Category 3 People
- Category 4 Process
- Category 5 Achievement & Performance

Each of these five Categories are further broken down into 41 sub-categories to defined what processes, policies and procedures need to be in place to manage a contact centre and achieve the business goals.

Category	Sub-Category
PLANNING	Mission Statement:- Evidence and appropriateness of vision/mission statement.
	Planning:- Strategy and Business Plans are in place.
	Review of Performance:- Review performance against business plans.
	Leadership:- Effective management and leadership of the centre.
INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENT	Information and Communication Technology- Centre has appropriate Information Technology and Telephony.
	Front Line Tools:- Centre has an approach for the introduction and enhancement of front line tools.
	Physical Facilities:- Physical facilities are appropriate.
	Ergonomics:- Centre has an adequate ergonomic environment.
	OH & S:- Centre meets OH&S requirements.
	Health and Well Being:- Centre has an environment that engenders a healthy workplace.
	Culture:- Centre culture is in line with business objectives and drivers.
PEOPLE	Job Descriptions: - Clarity around each role within the centre.
	Recruiting:- Appropriate recruitment processes.
	Induction:- Induction training equips new staff to perform their role.
	Training:- Appropriate training programs for all roles within the centre.
	Skills assessment:- Centre verifies staff have the necessary skills required to perform their roles.
	Staff Performance Management:- Staff are provided with adequate feedback on their performance.
	Reward & Recognition:- Program encourages good performance and promotes a positive atmosphere.
	Staff Satisfaction: Centre measures staff satisfaction and takes appropriate action.
	Attrition:- Centre measures attrition and takes appropriate action.
	Attendance:- Centre measures and manages attendance.
	Succession Planning:- Centre has plans in place to cover the loss of key staff.
	Career Planning:- Centre formally develops career plans for staff.
	PROCESS
Management Information:- Centre has an effective MIS.	
Change Management:- Centre has a change process in place.	
Communication: Centre has an effective communication process.	

	Transaction Process:- Centre has a process to manage the quality of its interactions with customers.
	Process Control:- Centre controls variations to key processes.
	Process Improvement:- Centre takes action to improve processes.
	Management of Work Volumes and Resources:- Centre looks to match work volumes and resources.
	Real Time Management:- Centre has ability to respond to real time issues.
	Contingency Planning:- Centre has processes to cover unplanned outages.
	Security:- Centres ensures security of customers, staff and data.
	Legal Compliance:- Centres operations abide by all legal requirements.
ACHIEVMENT and PERFROMANCE	Performance Measurement:- Centre is performing against established targets.
	Customer Satisfaction:- Centre measures customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction and acts on results.
	Complaints Management:- Centre has a process to manage complaints.
	Financial Management:- Effective financial management of the centre.
	Asset Management:- Appropriate management, use and care of assets.
	Contract Management: Contracts are managed and reviewed.

The ATA Standards have a standard set for each of the above 41 sub-categories.

Given the variations in size, function and complexity of centres in Australia, it is clear that the ATA Standards need to have a broad reach. To ensure they can be applied to all centres the ATA Standards will be applied in a tiered manner or three levels i.e. *Bronze, Silver and Gold Accreditation*. To provide clarity as to the expectation for each of these levels, each sub-category has been broken down into the three accreditation levels. As such, each sub-category has a set benchmark or level for Bronze, Silver or Gold Accreditation. In its simplest form, these three standard levels could be defined as:

Bronze	Level 1	<i>“having something”</i>
Silver	Level 2	<i>“doing something with it” or “checking it happens”</i>
Gold	Level 3	<i>“reviewing and keeping it alive and current”</i>

2.2 ATA Standard Levels

The Standard Levels, and the process to audit them, have been set to ensure that the ATA standards have application in centres from across the spectrum of the industry, from 5 to 1,000 seats. Thus, the ATA Standard Levels are:

Bronze Accreditation: This level of application requires centres to submit a folder of documentation for assessment. This level is to be of particular benefit to start-up operations and organisations seeking assistance with self-improvement. The onus will be on the centre to provide the necessary documentation for assessment. The contact centre must demonstrate that they have the basic processes in place to manage a contact centre and achieve the business goals.

Silver Accreditation: At this level, centres need to satisfy the requirements of the Bronze level prior to an on-site audit by ATA Standard Auditors. The onus will be on the auditors to gather sufficient evidence to award silver accreditation. The contact centre must demonstrate that they not only have the basic processes in place to manage a contact centre and achieve the business goals, but that these are utilised effectively within the centre. The centre will receive a written report on their audit performance, confirming areas of high performance and areas that are deemed to require stronger management attention.

Gold Accreditation: At this level, centres need to satisfy the requirements of the Bronze level prior to an on-site audit by ATA Standard Auditors. The onus will be on the auditors to gather sufficient evidence to award gold accreditation. The contact centre must demonstrate that they not only effectively utilise the basic processes in place to manage a centre and achieve the business goals, but that these are also subject to review to ensure performance is optimal and processes reflect continuous improvement and the changing business requirements. The centre will receive a written report on their audit performance, confirming areas of high performance and areas that are deemed to require stronger management attention.

Obviously, centres of excellence will achieve the gold level.

The following is an example of a standard (this standard covers a Centre's Mission Statement)

1.1 Mission Statement

Centre has a defined Mission statement that is not only a statement of purpose but also outlines the centre's deliverables.

1.1.1	<p>A stated vision or mission statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centre has a defined mission statement that communicates the reason for the centres existence, what it needs to achieve and how it wishes to be seen by its customers and stakeholders.
1.1.2	<p>A process to communicate the mission statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centre has a formal method of communicating its mission to all staff. Common goals are discussed, scoped and reviewed at leadership group meetings.
1.1.3	<p>A process to review the currency of the mission statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual review of business plan includes update to mission statement as required. A change management plan is implemented for any changes and a communication plan implemented to keep all staff aware of the mission.

Level	Auditors Interpretations	
Bronze	1	Confirmation that mission statement exists. It is acceptable for the centre to use the corporate vision or mission statement of the organisation.
	2	Mission statement must be current, i.e. date of creation or last update should indicate if it is current.
	3	Clearly communicates the reason for the centres existence, what it needs to achieve and how it wishes to be seen by its customers and stakeholders.
Silver	4	The vision or mission is communicated effectively to all staff.
	5	75% of staff demonstrate an understanding of the vision or mission.

	6	Leadership groups work effectively together to achieve the vision or mission.
Gold	7	Annual review of business plan includes review of mission statement. At interview, staff can articulate the common goals of the centre. Key processes/activities aligned to vision or mission.
	8	A change management plan was implemented for any changes and a communication plan was implemented to keep all staff aware of the mission.
	9	Signs, posters, mouse pads etc where utilised, must cover the real mission or purpose of the centre. Alignment between agent and management understanding of the mission.

2.3 Attaining an ATA Standards Accreditation

There are 41 sub-categories against which centres will be assessed for their accreditation at either Bronze, Silver or Gold level. To further clarify performance, the accreditation level for each sub-category is divided into three elements for scoring purposes. If each element is equal to one point, this means that a maximum of 9 points can be earned for each of the 41 sub-categories. This is broken down into:

- An element score of 1, 2 or 3 for the Bronze Standard;
- An element score of 4, 5 or 6 for the Silver Standard;
- An element score of 7, 8 or 9 for the Gold Standard.

Each level builds on the previous level. With a maximum of 3 points in each of the 41 sub-categories for Bronze Accreditation, 6 points in each of the 41 sub-categories for Silver Accreditation and 9 points in each of 41 sub-categories for Gold Accreditation; the maximum level of achievement is an aggregated element score of:

- 123 for Bronze Accreditation;
- 246 for Silver Accreditation;
- 369 for Gold Accreditation.

To achieve a Bronze, Silver or Gold accreditation to scoring components will need to be met:

- 1) A minimum element score will need to be attained in each sub-category. This will mean a minimum element score of 1 for Bronze, 4 for Silver and 7 for Gold for each of the 41 sub-categories.

and

- 2) The average element score or the average of all the element scores in each sub-category will need to be above the median level for that standard level. This will mean that the average score for Bronze Accreditation will need to be 2 or higher; for Silver Accreditation it will need to be 5 or higher and for Gold Accreditation, it will need to be 7 or higher.

This will ensure that accredited centres are consistent in the management of all their policies, processes and procedures and their deployment is to the required level. The scoring methodology will make allowance for centres where the sub-category is not relevant.

The element scoring system is further defined as: -

Accreditation Level	Score	Element Description*
Bronze Accreditation	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence exists to show that the necessary process, policy or procedure exists and that it is clear and current.
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence exists to show who in the centre has ownership of the policy or procedure.
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence exists to show how the process, policy or procedure is communicated to relevant staff.
Silver Accreditation	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence exists of communication to the staff of the process, policy or procedure.
	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that the process (e.g. training) is applied to all staff. 80% of relevant staff can articulate of the process, policy or procedure.
	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibilities are allocated. The centre's leadership team works together to achieve the goals. Data is collected and analysed. Actions within the centre are in line with the process, policy or procedure.
Gold Accreditation	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence exists to show that the process, policy or procedure is fully deployed across the entire centre; that it is fully integrated across the centre and success measures are being monitored.
	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence exists to show that the centre is using the learning from measuring the performance of the process, policy or procedure and its deployment and is implementing improvement opportunities.
	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence exists that corrective action is taken for non-confirming to process, policy or procedure and that this action is successful in improving performance. Evidence exists that the organisation is implementing further enhancements or continuous improvement of performance.

* Please note that not all element descriptions will apply to all sub-categories but three descriptors will apply to each accreditation level.

Once accreditation is attained, it will remain for a period of two years from the date of attainment. At the end of the two-year period the centre will need to be re-assessed to retain their accreditation status. The ATA reserves the right to withdraw or suspend centre accreditation if it becomes aware that a centre no longer fulfils the requirements of its accreditation.

Centres have the opportunity to seek re-assessment at any time should they seek to improve their level of accreditation e.g. from Bronze to Silver or from Silver to Gold. These will be treated as a separate assessment within the Standards program and their level of attainment in the second assessment will override their original level of accreditation. The date of this second level of accreditation attainment will re-start the two-year period.

The ATA Standards will apply on a centre-by-centre basis. In those companies that operate more than one centre, accreditation will need to be sought for each individual centre separately.

2.4 Evolution of the ATA Standards

In order to maintain their relevance to the contact centre industry the ATA standards will be updated on a regular basis to reflect the changes within the industry. It is expected that changes to the ATA standards will be announced at the ATA's Annual conference.