

## **Nomination for Leah Tchorniy in the category of Contact Centre Manager of the Year 2015.**

### Introduction:

Leah Tchorniy is from a place of truth. Growing up in South Africa at a politically volatile time, she learnt to rely upon those closest to her, trust her instincts and be true to what she believes in. She inspires those around her to place the customer at the heart of every decision.

Leah's personal moral code aligns perfectly with the Curo values of Caring, Respect, Openness, Fairness and Trusting (known as our CROFT values); this allows her to live and breathe these values as a manager and a champion of customer service excellence.

### Caring

Leah is passionate about the performance of the Contact Centre, and is a catalyst for change within the department as well as the wider business, advocating outward-in thinking in all decisions regarding process and policy, and always considering how the customer will be affected by the actions we take. She consistently goes beyond expectations, seeing the extra mile as a benchmark to go further. Leah has great integrity, and believes in fair treatment for all.

This was evident when one of the Contact Centre advisors who is a Curo customer as well as being a valued team member, experienced a setback in her application for a new Curo home. Leah spoke at length with this team member to establish how the Curo processes had led to these circumstances, and went on to raise this with the directors to ensure that no Curo customer experienced the same disappointments again. She worked with the head of the sales and lettings team to review processes and, as a result, new guidelines were put in place to improve the customer journey. The advisor in question received an apology for the failure of service, and is now happily in her new home and continues to be an advocate for the business.

Leah understands that in order to maintain a successful and happy team, we need to play hard as well as work hard. She has a great sense of humour, and has proactively encouraged fun team activities by setting up a social committee for the Contact Centre to encourage social events and celebrate birthdays and anniversaries.

### Respect

Leah is fiercely loyal to her team; setting up the Contact Centre from scratch, building a strong team whose ideals and principles are aligned with the Curo values. Leah has created a team that represents the ingredients needed to make a success of the Contact Centre: passion, determination, customer focus, and the energy and drive to be the best. She respects the decisions her managers make and supports us all in our endeavours, has a positive and constructive

approach to feedback, and pushes us to stretch ourselves beyond our perceived limits.

Leah actively changes processes and ways of working to better address different customer requirements. In the last 12 months, Leah has been instrumental in the implementation of a diagnostic tool for the Contact Centre to improve the process for raising customer repairs. This tool supports the Contact Centre team to ask relevant questions to ensure our customers receive a consistent and reliable service. It supports customers and advisors, and has helped the company to manage the budget for repair works. Leah has actively promoted this new system and the associated work practices, advocating the consistency and reliability aspect of the new system.

### Openness

Leah is a maverick; she can be a bit of a rebel when looking at how we can better serve the customer and doesn't stick with established way of doing things if she can see a better way ahead. She challenges situations where transparency is not evident or appears as if it is being avoided. Leah lays new paths and changes how we do things for the better. She is innovative, independently minded, goal-focused and successful through risk-taking. Leah is not afraid to break the rules if she feels there's a better way of doing things – she actively seeks out new and better ways to do things with a curious and open mind. She will stand her ground if she thinks that a business decision is not customer-centric, and each month she personally reviews every verbatim feedback from our customer satisfaction surveys and takes actions to ensure the reasons for any dissatisfaction are addressed as quickly as possible.

One example of this was the pivotal role she played in the implementation of our customer call-back service standard. Leah worked to create a policy that would ensure our customers were called back by the relevant person within Curo within less than 12 hours. She supported the roll out of the necessary IT solutions to enable monitoring of performance and ensured that any barriers to success were explored and a solution found. Leah strongly advocated the reasoning behind the changes to all the heads of departments and set the bar high for the Contact Centre to take the lead in adherence to the new process. As a result of this process, all Curo customers now receive a call back as promised within 12 hours, improving our reputation, inspiring trust in the business and, most importantly, addressing customer concerns over communication.

### Fairness

Leah has a determination to ensure that each of her colleagues and customers are treated fairly, demonstrating a strong ability to engage others during times of change, encouraging active participation and employee involvement. This has been evidenced recently, following Leah's decision to extend the Contact Centre opening hours until 8:00pm each evening. From customer feedback, it was clear that our residents wished to have better access to Curo outside of office hours, and Leah used her customer-centred approach to advocate the development of our services across longer opening hours. As part of the implementation of longer opening hours, Leah held meetings with each member of the Contact

Centre to allow them to voice their opinions and counter any concerns about the change of hours. She acted as a facilitator, striving for a fair and equitable resolution for all parties. As a result of feedback provided at these meetings, Leah agreed the implementation a bank model of staffing to support the core team with cover on the late nights, allowing for greater coverage and flexibility of shifts.

## Trusting

Leah demonstrates a proactive approach to developing the talent from within her team, encouraging others to progress by setting stretching targets. She has presented a case to implement a middle tier within the management structure of the Contact Centre by introducing new roles for team coaches and technical experts. This will provide an opportunity for development for advisors wishing to progress within the business and learn and utilise new skills as well as offering greater support to our customers.

Leah always seeks to deliver over and above what has been promised, looking for ways to proactively enhance the service being provided.

In the past year, Leah has created the role of Customer Service Feedback Manager, allowing a central point for all customer compliments, feedback and complaints. With Leah's guidance and support, the customer complaint process has been greatly improved, with significant reduction of the timescales to respond to complaints and extra support for colleagues throughout the business to find a quick resolution to customer dissatisfaction.

Leah has built strong relationships with other departments within the business, working closely with them to ensure the Contact Centre is offering a good service to our internal customers. Leah has suggested ways we can improve the productivity of the Contact Centre team by assisting with extra tasks, such as completing tenancy audits for the Neighbourhoods team, managing communal repairs to minimise duplicated work, and arranging for the Contact Centre team to answer the Gas Servicing line to allow the Gas Safety team to focus on other, safety-critical work. Leah's peers respect the way she actively finds ways to create an environment of trust and confidentiality, so that they are empowered to share issues and problems.

What do colleagues say about Leah?

Paul Ryall-Friend, Director of Strategy & Planning:

"Establishing a new Contact Centre was much more than just implementing a new telephone platform and set of processes – this was a fundamental change to our customer proposition and required customers and colleagues to think and behave differently too. Leah worked tirelessly to win the hearts and minds of team managers, department heads, service directors, the executive team and with members of our Board to ensure we all rallied behind the Contact Centre, bought the vision and held our nerve.

The Contact Centre wasn't without its sceptics but Leah led from the front, putting her personal reputation on the line, held her nerve and delivered a super contact centre for Curo. Customers have visited the Contact Centre too and are

simply delighted and really impressed by the way we put the customers at the heart of everything we do.

Leah's commitment, energy and drive have been instrumental to the success of the Contact Centre in helping us achieve our number one strategic priority of building a renowned customer service culture here at Curo"

Jackie Mason, Contact Centre Customer Service Manager:

"I'm fortunate to have a positive working relationship with Leah. She gives me a high degree of latitude to get on with my job while always being there to help me with any unusual or difficult situations by lending me the benefit of her experience. Like many managers, she's often very busy, but she does a good job of steering me in the right direction to achieve and exceed expected results. She appreciates the work I do and this motivates me to achieve my very best.

I love working alongside Leah; she never lets me down. She has my backing as her trust for me is always evident.

Leah never micro-manages and truly leads by example. The work is extremely demanding and at times incredibly stressful, but Leah is always there offering support and guidance in a positive way. She ensures I have a work-life balance as she understands its importance to me.

Her overall strength is as a true voice for the customer. She always treats everyone with dignity and respect, focusing on Curo's values."

Summary:

Leah has implemented innovative ideas and processes to improve the service we provide for our customers, raising the Contact Centre-specific NPS score from +19 for 2013/14 to +31.6 for the last financial year. Her constant monitoring of performance and the thirst to provide ever-increasing improvement has ensured that the department is performing well against our core KPIs:

- Abandonment rate has improved from 14% in May 2013 to 4.18% average for the last financial year (target 5%).
- Average call waiting time is down to 22 seconds.
- Call maturity is over the 85% target, an improvement of 9% from May 2013.
- Productivity is high, with the Contact Centre answering 167,574 calls, dealing with 18,158 emails, 4,711 social media contacts and 148,389 pieces of post. We have also provided service to 13,368 customers face-to-face in the One Stop Shops and Reception areas. This is an increase of more than 50,000 contacts year-on-year.

Leah has also strived to make the Contact Centre a great place to work, with 100% of colleagues surveyed mid-year saying that overall they are satisfied with Curo as an employer (in increase of 31% from March 2014), and 78% of the team classed were classed as promoters on the NPS question. This is a fantastic improvement from previous surveys; when the Contact Centre was in its early days, colleague NPS business-wide was -32.6%.