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TELESAGE HELPS SEARS IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE AT FRANCHISES

TeleSage's automated telephone surveys allow Sears to increase profit margin and increase repeat customers by monitoring customer satisfaction at franchises across the country

Seattle, WA, September 8, 2003- Sears Carpet and Upholstery, a nationwide home services company specializing in carpet, fabric, and tile cleaning, has begun employing TeleSage's SmartQuest™ automated telephone technology to ensure that independent franchise owners provide top quality customer service throughout the country.

Sears' challenge was to find a cost-effective means for managing franchise operations and ensuring customer satisfaction. For their solution, they turned to TeleSage, the leading developer of off-the-shelf, ready-to-use automated telephone survey software. With SmartQuest technology, Sears customer service managers have been able to gather real-time feedback on customer satisfaction to evaluate the quality of franchise operations, to provide faster responses to consumer complaints, and to increase the percentage of repeat customers. The result has been better supervision of franchise owners and higher quality service at substantial cost savings.

Josie Thal, the National Customer Service Manager for Sears Carpet and Upholstery, constantly strives to achieve the highest levels and uniformity of customer satisfaction for the over 2 million services calls it makes per year. By introducing SmartQuest interactive voice response (IVR) telephone software, Sears has gained a better understanding of its franchisees' efforts to achieve high consumer satisfaction. In addition, SmartQuest provides an easier-to-use interface and faster turnaround times at a lower cost than the mail-in surveys the company had been using.

SmartQuest provides Sears with a robust, flexible tool to manage customer service and franchise relations more effectively. As Thal explained, "SmartQuest customer satisfaction surveys have allowed Sears Carpet and Upholstery to monitor and maintain excellent franchise service throughout the country." Sears service representatives leave customers with a toll-free



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number that administers a telephone survey and gives customers an opportunity to evaluate their experiences and voice any complaints. Examples of customer interactions can be found in a case study at: www.telesage.com/success/index.html#sears.

The resulting satisfaction data assist both national management and franchise owners in analyzing and improving the quality of customer service at an affordable price. The mail-in surveys that Sears had been using cost \$80,000 per year. SmartQuest, in contrast, is an affordable, one-time expenditure that allows companies to plan and implement surveys, with prices starting at \$1,950.

Thal also reports that SmartQuest is simple for Sears to administer. "It's easy-to-use and adaptable to my evolving needs. I can easily alter survey questions or develop new surveys for my changing customer service monitoring requirements." With mail-in surveys, revisions are time consuming and the costs of reprinting are expensive. With SmartQuest telephone surveys, Sears can update questions to reflect new services quickly and at no added cost.

TeleSage's SmartQuest software captures consumer satisfaction information in an accessible format with rapid turnaround capability. Sears' former mail-in surveys contained two pages of written questions and often languished at customers' homes or in transit for six months before arriving at Sears. SmartQuest IVR surveys, on the other hand, simply require a customer to call a toll-free number and respond to recorded verbal questions using a standard telephone. Sears receives results in real-time, allowing the company to address consumer concerns quickly and effectively.

Thal projects that SmartQuest will enable Sears to achieve a 25% increase in customer satisfaction, reaching an 80-85% satisfaction rate. As Thal says: "I like the fact that with SmartQuest I can get real-time results and respond to customer needs promptly and efficiently. A timely response is the most cost-effective way to satisfy our customers. A happy customer is a repeat customer." This attention to quality service will mean more repeat customers, a more dependable client base, and lower costs for advertising. The end result is increased profits.

As a leader in automated telephone technology, TeleSage's software presents real-world solutions for everyday business problems. As the Sears example



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illustrates, TeleSage SmartQuest is an excellent choice for managing customer satisfaction in a franchise structure.

About Sears Carpet and Upholstery - Sears Carpet and Upholstery is based in Columbus, OH and is a division of Sears, Roebuck, and Co. The division contains 120 owner-operated franchise locations and 6 corporately owned branch locations. With its two-step UltraCare™ cleaning system and a commitment to quality customer care, Sears Carpet and Upholstery services more than 2 million homes per year.

About TeleSage - TeleSage, Inc., a leader in affordable survey technology, is the developer of SmartQuest™ IVR survey software and iQuest™ Web survey software headquartered in Seattle, WA. TeleSage was founded in 1996 by Benjamin Brodey, M.D., M.P.H. A few of TeleSage's clients include ESPN, DaimlerChrysler, PricewaterhouseCoopers, ValueOptions, Rand Corporation, United Behavioral Health, and Citigroup. For more information about TeleSage, Inc., call 1-800-636-8524, e-mail info@telesage.com, or visit www.telesage.com.