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**“Kia ora and welcome to Immigration New Zealand.”**

**The experience of calling and working for the  
Immigration New Zealand Contact Centre.**

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Alyson Margaret Scott

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## Abstract

Call centres are employed to provide an increasingly complex array of government services; however, the experiences of staff and customers remain under-researched. This study investigated the complementary experiences and expectations of employees and customers of the Immigration New Zealand contact centre.

Ten customer service officers in the Immigration Contact Centre and eleven immigrant representatives were engaged in semi-structured interviews. The call centre employees also kept work diaries for one week and were observed working. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Six themes from the callers' data and six themes from the customer service officers' data were identified and compared.

The findings suggest that the call centre model of work organisation frequently creates difficulties for both staff and 'expert' users. Problems arise from the competing requirements of providing accurate information and processing calls rapidly. The study also shows that the complex legislative and policy framework governing immigration sometimes creates situations where it is difficult for call centre staff to provide definitive advice. This can strain the relationship between staff and callers and create problems for both parties. Expert callers' attempts to deal with the underlying organisational issues of complex policy and inconsistencies in the immigration system appeared to exacerbate the problems for the contact centre staff.

The experiences of immigrant representatives and customer service officers are similar in many respects. Both the contact centre employees and the immigration representatives shared the function of 'gatekeepers' and enablers and the requirement for emotional labour in their interactions with their mutual clients.

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