

Optimising workforce performance

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Historically, call centres have managed their workforce by reviewing performance using basic call statistics and then forecasting customer contacts and scheduled staff activities to ensure that the right number of agents are available to answer customer calls. While this approach can help deliver a certain level of performance and efficiency, it doesn't necessarily provide a complete approach to managing the workforce for effective service delivery.

Increasingly the companies that are winning – the smart organisations – are the ones that understand how contact centre business processes and their supporting technologies should be combined to allow for a more holistic approach to managing the workforce. These typically include the integration of a range of tools, including:

- Forecasting and scheduling with workforce management (WFM) - Workforce management is the art of having the right number of skilled people, and supporting resources, in the right place the right time to meet the desired service levels for an accurately forecasted workload.
- Quality monitoring - the process where agent performance is monitored and accessed to help coach and develop agents, and improve the quality of customer interactions
- E-learning - the provision of training delivered over the contact centre network
- Analytics/performance management - these work by integrating data from disparate sources such as ACDs, IT systems, CRM, WFM and quality monitoring and recording solutions to turn activity information into performance results and ratings against business objectives

Using this data, the contact centre team can then perform a number of calculations to turn day-to-day data into easy to understand information detailing performance results and ratings against a balanced set of business objectives. These results and ratings are then fed back to all staff to drive performance improvement, both for individuals and company wide.

Evolving performance management

Together these different solutions combine to provide organisations with the tools they need to start taking workforce optimisation to the next level. As organisations evolve from strictly quantitative performance analysis to a more qualitative assessment of contact centre success, there's clearly a requirement for a new set of customer service metrics. A key factor here will be closely aligning contact centre KPIs to high level business objectives, and this will involve going beyond the technology to cover both people and processes.

Using this approach, KPIs can then be broken down into departments, teams and individual targets for each agent within your contact centre. By precisely aligning their targets with your high-level business objectives, agents can then concentrate on focusing their individual activity on what the business really needs them to do to drive overall business performance.

Integrating processes and technologies to offer Workforce Optimisation

At Sabio we term this more holistic approach Workforce Optimisation, and recommend that organisations look first at what the overall business objectives are, assess the critical KPIs that need to be measured, then align their contact centre technology to match those objectives.

Some companies have already spotted the opportunity and are re-aligning their customer service strategy to take full advantage. Microsoft, for example, used to measure its performance by how quickly calls were answered and the number of sales. Now, they are also surveying customers who use their contact centre

service in India, measuring the perceived quality of service and factoring the findings into overall performance management.

Workforce optimisation is certainly a topic that's attracting strong industry attention. "Saddletree Research believes that Performance Optimisation represents a revolutionary concept in contact centre management and operational performance that will drive contact centre growth during the next five years. Performance Optimisation offers a tangible return on investment (ROI) and measurable results that will significantly and positively impact contact centre operations."

Enabling workforce optimisation

Currently all the different WFM, quality monitoring, eLearning, reporting and analytical tools are available as standalone systems, with only basic links between the different components. To enable effective workforce optimisation requires deep expertise in the integration and interoperability of all these different solutions - not just in the software tools involved but also in the relevant strategy and process interconnections.

Currently no single vendor offers such a fully-integrated approach to workforce optimisation and at Sabio we estimate it will be at least 18-24 months before a software solution vendor starts to fully address this opportunity. Until then, organisations are left with either the challenge of doing their own integration from scratch - with all the cost and time implications of such an approach - or working with a specialist partner.

Sabio is one of the few UK organisations with detailed knowledge of all the relevant workforce optimisation components, from an integration, implementation and business perspective, and is ideally placed to help address this opportunity. We recognise that the move towards workforce optimisation will be a difficult evolution as it involves drawing together people, processes and applications. The key focus will be on understanding the interoperability and

integration between components such as forecasting, scheduling, call recording and quality monitoring - and then devising an approach that generates meaningful results and drives performance.

While complex, it's not impossible. Many organisations will already have two or three workforce optimisation components in place or in development already. At Sabio we're ready to help you join them together into an integrated workforce optimisation solution to achieve real efficiencies whilst meeting the strategic goals of improved customer service.