

Work Smarter, Not Harder

ContactCenter Performance Optimization for Collections and Telemarketing Contact Centers

Executive Summary

All contact centers face a common and continual challenge – how to best maximize staff performance without needing to add headcount when call and list volumes increase, unexpected spikes in delinquencies occur or new proactive calling campaigns are identified.

Contact Center Performance Optimization synchronizes people, processes and technology to help solve the problems associated with the management and allocation of staff resources, as well as those related to outbound contact optimization. Applying a closed-loop process to Contact Center Performance Optimization, a manager can increase right party contact rates so as to improve promise to pay rates and/or sales. This process protects existing technology investments by maximizing their use and helps balance account volumes against a given agent resource pool, ensuring that contact center goals are met and exceeded.

The goal of closed-loop Contact Center Performance Optimization is to help organizations “work smarter, not harder.” It means synchronizing processes and tools – including workforce management, quality management, interaction optimization and performance management – to better align contact center goals with business performance.

Business Challenge

Any manager running an outbound contact center is well aware of the daily tactical challenges such as: continually trying to improve agent performance and morale, agents calling in sick, the availability of new calling lists, system outages, implementation of new policies and procedures, agent and supervisory attrition, customer experience and more. Contact center managers have to assimilate hundreds of business intelligence data points and utilize this information, often in a semi-automated environment, to create contact strategies, provide premium customer service and try and meet stated performance targets to grow revenues and minimize losses. As a result, organizations continuously search for solutions that enable them to profitably manage outbound customer interactions.

Contact Center Performance Optimization helps resolve these staff resource issues from an allocation and efficiency perspective, and maximizes successful customer contact for collections, telemarketing and proactive outbound campaigns. It allows contact center management to focus on what they do best – managing and coaching their people to ensure that target goals are met and exceeded.



Maximizing Right Party Contact Rates

Working smarter means maximizing contacts with customers and reaching them with a single connect, rather than multiple attempts, to close the deal – whether that means collecting a past due amount, solving a problem, or selling a product or a service.

One of the biggest challenges facing collections, telemarketing and proactive outbound contact centers today is effectively managing customer lists for optimized contact rates. Identifying which customers are more apt to make payments or be at home in order to be able to hear a sales pitch determines how successful list management truly is.

List management strategies that place a heavy emphasis on list penetration rates are less sophisticated in their contact approach. It is not uncommon to see 350 percent penetration rate goals for contact lists. This offers diminishing returns over time as there are only so many right party contacts, payment promises and/or sales to be made in any given list. It is a brute force mentality that states “If I try hard enough and long enough, something is bound to go my way.” Throwing infinite numbers at a given list to get all of the possible right party contacts is always a possibility, but such an approach is usually tempered by budget allocation. Creating a strategic list management approach that achieves the same result without requiring additional staff or increased effort is the better approach.

Best-Time-to-Call analysis is the first step in the closed-loop process to solve the right party contact problem. It looks at each account to be called and by analyzing right party, wrong party, no answer, answering machine and success outcomes, it builds a probability of contact metrics for each hour of each day and each telephone number.

Contact centers can then populate the predictive dialer with this information and place calls during their best hours. In addition, priorities can be established so that the highest risk, highest delinquent calls can be placed into the top of each hour and contacted first.

Call results from every attempt on the predictive dialer, whether optimized or not, are used to update the individual telephone number contact probability model. This dramatically increases right party contact to connect ratios – by up to 40 percent – and minimizes useless attempts and wrong parties.

The Right Agent at the Right Time

Managing a contact center workforce is no simple matter and adding in the complexities of successful collections and sales techniques only makes the task more difficult.

Workforce management tools have the capability to automatically access call volume data in order to forecast schedules. Contact Center Performance Optimization workforce management tools take it one step further. They enable managers to assess qualitative (e.g., dollars collected, sales made) or quantitative (e.g. shorter call wrap times) performance, create benchmarking and set goals against performance – all within the confines of the contact center infrastructure already in place to influence and affect behavior across all levels of the center.

Closed-loop Contact Center Performance Optimization enables outbound contact centers to actively manage agents and technology in an effort to meet overall contact center objectives at a minimum cost. In the outbound and/or blended environment, connect ratios are used. Connect ratios provide indication of connection patterns that are used to forecast staffing levels in these environments.

What makes up a closed-loop Contact Center Performance Optimization strategy?

Workforce Management

optimizes contact center staffing resources, helps reduce costs, maximizes agent productivity and efficiency, and improves customer satisfaction and campaign performance—helping to drive top- and bottom-line improvements.

Quality Management enables both quality assurance and quality improvement, helping organizations address regulatory compliance, risk mitigation, employee development and process improvement issues; provides capabilities for recording, reviewing and reporting on customer interactions; which can be utilized to help improve agent performance and job satisfaction, increase customer satisfaction and revenue generation, and better manage overall costs.

Interaction Optimization

delivers Best-Time-to-Call information for superior outbound campaign productivity and strategy management; helps increase right party contact rates and maximize contacts with an organization's most important collections, telemarketing and proactive service customers.

Performance Management

measures agent, team and contact center performance against defined goals; enables organizations to completely evaluate how agents spend their time and adhere to schedules in order to pinpoint specific areas for productivity improvement and cost savings.

Collections, telemarketing and proactive outbound centers manage their agent resource pool in multichannel, multisite, and often multisite environments across geographies. When the right number of people are scheduled to handle anticipated inbound and predicted outbound workload by time of day and day of week, centers can minimize the probability of dead air time and maximize the opportunity to reach the customer because this integrated process recognizes the Best-Time-to-Call and schedules agents accordingly.

Outbound workforce management correctly calculates outbound staff schedules for each campaign, as well as other inbound and non-voice activities, such as email response. It also increases staffing efficiency by managing “shrinkage” (e.g. lunch, breaks, training, meetings, etc.). With this, contact center management can understand how to best allocate their workforce across operating hours. They can create and tweak part-time and full-time shifts in order to maximize contact times. This critical business intelligence can be automated and validated against what is already in place in the contact center rather than being created based on “gut” calls or in-house contact studies.

When Best-Time-to-Call data is integrated along with this agent productivity information – sales or promises per hour, average handle time (AHT) per call by individual agent – contact center managers can schedule the most productive and effective employees when the best opportunity exists to reach the customer. Following this strategy enables contact centers to make the best use of their agent talent pool, maximize the revenue potential of their workforce and meet their business goals.

Can't Manage What You Can't Measure

In order to effectively utilize a contact center's most valuable and costly resource – its staff – management must accurately measure and benchmark agent performance by individual agent. This practice allows managers to gain a true picture of the productivity of each agent in the resource pool, and provides for resource optimization, which can result in increased productivity and quality.

Creating individual performance scorecards is the key to measuring agent, team, and contact center performance against defined goals, providing the most comprehensive business intelligence with which to manage the contact center.

Understanding exactly how agents spend their time is critical. Schedule adherence data provides specific areas of potential productivity improvement and cost savings. It is important to be able to consolidate data from the technology infrastructure in the contact center (e.g., ACD, voice self-service systems, web, quality management applications, predictive dialer, etc.) and be able to generate a single, comprehensive management view of agent and overall contact center performance.

With this capability, contact center managers can measure all facets of the organization without needing to separate reporting tools for customer service, sales and collections divisions, making it easier to identify performance trends across time, personnel and work groups.

Management and motivation are the key drivers to contact center success. By simplifying and automating the tools to measure performance, agents can self-correct and be continually motivated when they can visually and in real time compare themselves to their peers. Reporting is a powerful motivational tool when it is available in real time, is graphical and easily accessible. This enables contact center managers to increase the productivity of their agents via a real time feedback mechanism.

Customer experience is a key differentiator for many industries and the contact center is often times the voice and face of the corporation to its customers. Quality monitoring and recording – also referred to as quality management – an important tool for monitoring agent performance and measuring a contact center's legal compliance, is now extending its scope to provide strategic information to the contact center.

It helps all levels of an organization proactively identify trends and determine effectiveness in meeting business objectives. Quality management establishes quality performance targets against which agent performance can be measured. Based on parameters set by contact center administrators, it can record select customer interactions (e.g. Sales, Promises to Pay, etc.) and enables contact center managers to evaluate those interactions and drive improvements to people and processes.

The use of customer recordings for business intelligence enables companies to become more responsive to customer needs and react more quickly to potential problems. Companies that increase quality management to focus on business optimization are more likely to improve customer satisfaction and revenue than those that limit these applications to monitoring and reporting functions.

Putting it All Together

Improving human resource productivity can result in substantial productivity and profitability gains and the ability to do more with less.

As senior management becomes more proactive in aligning contact centers with strategic company goals, they will require a comprehensive view of the contact center to gain insight for maximizing resources and performance.

Closed-loop Contact Center Performance Optimization is a powerful new tool that can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of existing technology and assist with the ongoing task of optimizing contact center staff. Contact Center Performance Optimization tools – including workforce management, quality management, interaction optimization and performance management – help all levels of an organization gauge performance, proactively identify trends and determine effectiveness in meeting objectives. By utilizing Contact Center Performance Optimization to synchronize technologies, people and processes across and among components of the contact center, organizations can better align performance with overall business goals – and learn to work smarter, not harder.

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