

From Workforce Management to Workforce Productivity

Using workforce productivity solutions and practices to turn the contact center into a profit center

For today's modern contact centers to remain competitive, businesses have to go beyond cost savings and become a revenue contributor. The traditional view of the contact center as a cost center that must be managed solely for efficiency is outmoded,

Successful businesses recognize the potential the contact center has to build customer loyalty, win new customers, and increase revenue. And in addition to the traditional goal of keeping costs down, these companies are setting new goals, putting new practices in place, and investing in new technology that takes them beyond workforce management to workforce productivity.

Workforce productivity techniques include tying contact center metrics to business goals such as growth and profit; empowering contact center staff to take responsibility for their own contributions; and applying technologies that go beyond traditional forecasting and scheduling applications.

One of the most powerful of these new technologies is analytics, a new approach to reporting that combines contact center statistics with business data, focuses on the information most relevant to business goals, matches that information to specific tasks inside the contact center, and gives users the ability to analyze root causes and take corrective actions.

This white paper explains the concept of workforce productivity and the technologies that support it, and it offers advice for selecting workforce productivity technology and for choosing a vendor who can supply it.

It's time to write the epitaph for contact center management that focuses solely on internal efficiency and cost control. And it should go something like this:

"Here lies the inward-facing contact center. It didn't accomplish much, but it was cheap."

Workforce management solutions first emerged at a time when the contact center was seen primarily as a cost center. Contact center management focused on cutting costs, and early workforce management solutions were tools to manage staff for maximum cost-efficiency. Job one was reducing the number of agents to keep down the cost of supporting and

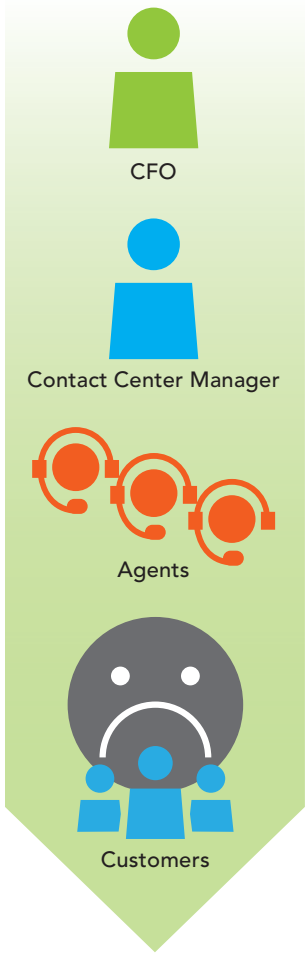
paying them. Workforce management vendors who focus exclusively on workforce management software still see the world in terms of cost-efficiency, and their products reflect that world view.

In all fairness, it's important to point out that the cost-efficient contact center has helped mitigate the effects of the recent economic downturn on their organizations. But as the clouds of economic uncertainty disperse, businesses prepared to move quickly on marketplace opportunities will have a brighter competitive outlook. And that means it's time to take a different approach to managing the contact center workforce.

The Way It Was: Measuring Seconds and Counting Beans

Of all the people who work in the contact center, workforce managers have perhaps been the most inclined to focus on internal efficiency. They frequently cite the fact that 60 to 70 percent of contact center expenditures go to pay and support contact center staff, mostly agents. To operate within budget, they take aim at that 60 to 70 percent, adopt practices that reduce it, and measure the success of their operations by how little they spend.

Managers who take this approach use workforce management software primarily for forecasting contact volumes and devising schedules that get the most work out of the fewest agents. They use simple metrics like talk time or number of calls handled to assess agent performance. Reporting is primarily a process of proving to management that the center



- Reduced costs
- Low customer satisfaction

Managing the contact center for efficiency - The inward-facing contact center focuses on efficiency. It usually succeeds in keeping costs down, but makes no direct contribution to increasing revenue, and in some cases actually works against important business goals such as customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

overarching goals. Who, after all, is the best agent in the contact center? The one who answers the most calls, or the one who sells the most products? What benefits the company most, saving 20 seconds on a call, or winning a customer for life by using those extra seconds to create a memorable experience?

has met its cost-reduction goals, not a process of using information to effect positive change. It is an inward-looking philosophy, and the ultimate objective is to please a tight-fisted CFO.

Most centers are successful in accomplishing this, meeting and even exceeding their goals. But enterprise goals, such as winning customer loyalty and increasing revenue, often suffer as a result. With the focus on getting more work out of fewer people, the relationship between managers and agents is too often adversarial. Dissatisfied agents can make life miserable for supervisors and the experience of dealing with the company unpleasant for the customers. If an agent is measured strictly on talk time, for example, he may not care whether he solves a customer's problem, as long as he wraps the call up quickly. And in this negative environment, high turnover is common, virtually ensuring that customers will be served by agents in training rather than experienced ones. The company's accountants might be happy, but hardly anyone else is.

In extreme cases, the contact center goals are actually at odds with the company's



The Way It Should Be: Measuring Performance and Managing For Productivity

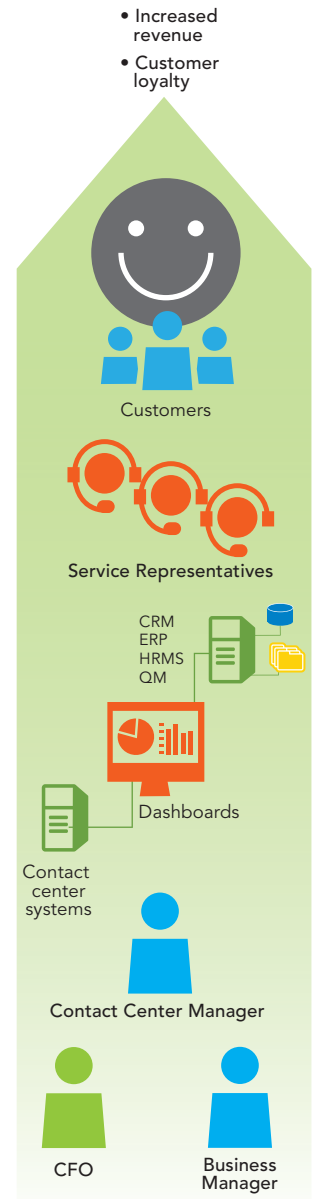
Ironically, that 60 to 70 percent spent on staff, so often used to justify savings-based contact center practices, is probably the best argument for replacing them.

After all, shouldn't the biggest investment yield the biggest return? Why not aim your workforce management practices and technologies at empowering contact center staff to make the largest possible contribution to the company's most important goals?

The call center has evolved into a multichannel contact center, and business drivers such as increased competition, globalization, and more demanding customers have changed the business playing field. To stay competitive today, businesses have to take a different view of the contact center as a key contributor to revenue goals, and contact center managers have to change the way they manage the workforce. The emphasis has to shift from workforce management to workforce productivity.

What is workforce productivity? It is the active management of processes, technology, and people to achieve growth.

Contact centers should continue to use workforce management solutions just as they always have to staff efficiently and keep costs down. But they must also go beyond efficiency and apply the resources of the contact center to enterprise revenue objectives. Productivity must permeate every aspect of the contact center - its goals, its practices, and its technology.



- Increased revenue
- Customer loyalty

Managing the contact center for productivity - The outward-facing contact center focuses on productivity. It is just as capable as the inward-facing contact center of controlling costs, but its real goal is to generate revenue by tying processes to business goals and measuring staff productivity in terms of customer loyalty and increased revenue.

Productivity Goals

The first shift the contact center has to make is to reassess its goals. This doesn't lessen the importance of workforce management technology's highly evolved ability to control costs. Even in the best of times it never makes sense for businesses to spend carelessly, so efficiency is still a key goal. But efficiency alone is not effective. Workforce managers must also establish goals and metrics—such as agent profitability—that reflect corporate expectations for business success.

Managers must adopt new hiring practices to build staff that can meet corporate goals, and they must motivate and empower employees to understand the big picture and willingly take responsibility for their individual contributions to it. They must manage the contact center staff in ways that develop trust and cooperation between workers at every level, making management easier and more satisfying and making the job of contact center agent desirable and fulfilling.

Most importantly, workforce managers must define the contact center in terms of its value to high-level business goals and clearly demonstrate that value to corporate leaders.

Productivity Practices

To achieve productivity, contact center managers must do more than keep agents in their seats. In the outward-facing, customer-focused contact center, managers and supervisors monitor contact center agents in real time and use the statistics to help them understand the effect of compliance on overall business goals. They communicate with agents quickly and constructively when performance falls outside prescribed parameters.

To create a work environment conducive to productivity, managers and supervisors empower agents to view their work schedules and easily request shift changes, vacations, and other schedule adjustments. They automate clerical processes to reduce the time it takes to communicate schedule changes, freeing them to focus on their core duties. They tie contact center metrics and procedures to the company's overall business goals, and they give staff at every level detailed, real-time views of performance so that they can monitor their own productivity and take responsibility for it.

Productivity Technology

Workforce management isn't the only facet of the contact center that is turning toward productivity. Centers that used to route calls to the first available agent to keep PSTN costs down now use skills-based routing of multichannel contacts to give customers more choice and better service. Businesses that once used interactive voice response (IVR) systems to cut

costs by reducing staff are now using advanced capabilities such as speech recognition and text-to-speech to build self-service applications that promote customer loyalty and drive revenue.

In this context, workforce management software built for the inward-facing contact center is like a transistor radio in the age of the portable MP3 player. To contribute effectively to the modern outward-facing, customer-focused contact center, workforce management solutions must focus on the productivity of the entire contact center in terms of the business's revenue goals. The technology is already evolving in this direction as traditional solutions are augmented with tools for empowering agents with insight into their work schedules and for streamlining the interaction between managers, supervisors, and agents. Analytical reporting tools also enable employees at every level of the contact center to understand how their tasks contribute to business goals and to take responsibility for their own productivity.

As these tools are put in place, it becomes increasingly possible to manage the workforce for productivity as well as cost-efficiency.

The Importance of Analytics to Workforce Productivity

Perhaps the most valuable new technology for contact centers that want to manage for productivity is interaction analytics technology. Analytical applications promise to have such a profound and beneficial effect on contact center productivity that you could, in fact, define workforce productivity in technology terms by calling it workforce management + interaction analytics. Of course, different vendors offer different analytical applications, and some have more features than others. The most effective include the following capabilities.

Focusing on Relevant Statistics

The power of analytical applications lies in large part in key performance indicators, or KPIs. To be effective for contact center analytical applications, KPIs must be selected based on contact center expertise, which in turn must be grounded in years of best practices and thousands of hours of evaluating contact center statistics and analyzing their effect on business goals in many different industries. By presenting statistics carefully selected for their relevance, analytical applications eliminate one of the biggest drawbacks of more traditional reporting techniques—the need to sift through an avalanche of irrelevant data to find the facts that matter.

Matching the Data to the Task

In addition to being selected for their relevance to contact center effectiveness, KPIs must also be organized into subsets by function. An analytical application might, for instance, offer one view for agents, another for supervisors, another for managers, and yet another for control desk staff.

Analyzing for Root Causes

If all an analytical application does is simply dump the relevant statistics in front of your staff, then it won't be much more useful in managing for effectiveness than traditional call center reports are. But some analytical applications include navigation mechanisms that let users drill down into the data, looking at time periods, regions, sites, campaigns, groups, and individual agents and identify the root causes of performance to take corrective action.

Drawing Information From Business Applications

Finally, analytical applications can reach beyond the contact center. Traditional call center reports draw statistics from contact center systems such as ACDs. The most advanced analytical applications can deliver all the usual contact center data, across multiple sites and multiple communications channels, and in addition can pull information from other enterprise data sources.

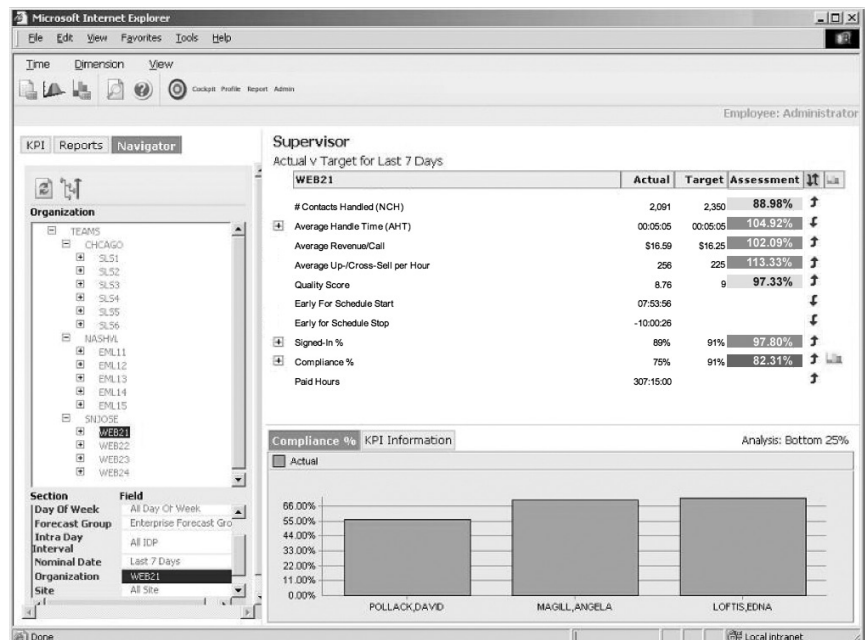
Information in customer relationship management, enterprise resource planning, human resources management, and quality monitoring systems can be combined with contact center statistics to create custom KPIs and dashboards. This is the essence of workforce productivity, allowing contact center managers to manage agent performance according to business goals. Custom KPIs might, for instance, include feedback from customer satisfaction surveys, so that agents can see firsthand how customers are responding to them. Or business managers can see sales for a particular product by time of day and region.

Managing the Infrastructure for Productivity

Ultimately, analytical applications will be applied not only to contact center processes and customer-facing business processes, but also to the management of the infrastructure. This will add statistics such as trunk usage, Web site traffic, and IP bandwidth to the analytical mix and lend productivity to the infrastructure.

What to Look for in a Workforce Productivity Solution

If you're serious about managing for productivity, then you need to have specific functionality in mind when you evaluate workforce management solutions. All the traditional criteria still apply - you'll need accurate forecasting that takes into account historical contact volumes, seasonal patterns, holiday variations, and more, and uses a good forecasting model to merge historical data with current data. You'll need the ability to automatically create detailed employee schedules in multisite, multiskill environments that balance forecast demand with agent preferences. You'll need to be able to do "what if" analyses. And you'll need to monitor agent activity in real time and compare it to scheduled activity.



Full-featured analytical applications draw data from business applications where the real insight into productivity resides, presenting it to contact center managers and allowing them to drill down into detail, analyze root causes, and manage the contact center as a key contributor to revenue goals.

All these capabilities are necessary for your contact center to run efficiently. But if you also want it to run effectively, then ask whether proposed solutions have these additional capabilities:

- Does the solution have any provision for automatic data exchange with outsourced contact centers, so that you can augment your existing agent pool without losing control of quality?
- Is there a feature for automating schedule requests, approvals, changes, and notifications, so that your staff can focus on revenue-generating tasks rather than clerical details?

- Can agents access their schedules from remote locations via Web browser and telephone, bid on shifts and vacations, and otherwise exercise control over their work schedules so that they can balance work with personal responsibilities?
- Does the solution include analytical reporting capabilities that give your entire staff the information they need to understand business goals, monitor their own performance, and take responsibility for working productively?
- Is the solution integrated with other components of the contact center infrastructure, such as the ACD or IVR system, allowing you to optimize operational components as well as the workforce?

A Vendor Who Understands Productivity

If you're ready to move from efficiency to effectiveness and turn your contact center from a cost center into a profit center, then consider Aspect as a partner. Aspect understands productivity better than most workforce management or contact center solution vendors.

Why?

Because unlike vendors that have limited their primary focus to cost control in the inward-facing contact center, Aspect supplies a complete line of contact center solutions. They include inbound routing, self-service, outbound dialing, reporting and interaction analytics, and Aspect® Workforce Management.

With thirty years of experience in understanding the business goals of our customers and crafting multifunction contact centers that advance those goals, we see the big picture.

As the vendor of the most popular workforce management solution on the market, we understand cost control and can help our customers achieve it. But we also understand enterprise objectives. Our expertise is contact center productivity, and our suite of workforce management and customer contact solutions is designed to make the contact center an effective contributor to the company bottom line as well as a cost-effective operation.

Aspect's experience, broad view of the contact center's role, and industry-leading solutions make us the logical choice for workforce management and productivity solutions. We can deliver a solution that contributes directly to your business goals by enabling your contact center and business managers to monitor, understand, and continually improve contact center performance.

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About Aspect

Aspect is the only software company with a fully-integrated interaction and workforce optimization platform for enterprise contact centers globally that need to profitably (and seamlessly) orchestrate people, processes and touch points in an era when the contact center is the new center of the customer experience. For more information, visit www.aspect.com.

