

ia

interactions
talking with customers

Benchmarking:
A marked evolution

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in new ways to benefit
business performance

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Many organisations face challenges when trying to manage the complex range of processes in both IT and business operations. Knowledge about internal contact centre systems is often limited to a few internal staff members and when there is a requirement to fix a problem these few resources can become a bottleneck to enabling the business.

This Quarter: Value from **Insight**

Contact centres are under more pressure than ever to optimise resources and deliver excellent service. It is only by understanding, in detail, how resources are utilised that organisations can predict and improve future performance. Through gaining insight into current performance and business processes, organisations can use this information to significantly enhance the customer experience and ultimately deliver real value to the business.

In this eighth issue of Interactions, we look at how to gain a deeper insight into the way we do things and how we can do them better.

Our first article looks at how Analytics can support better decision making and ultimately benefit customers through improved service and efficiency. Accurate data and the ability to expertly interpret the data can lead to valuable predictions that can have a powerful effect on the quality of the customer experience.

Continuing on the theme of quality information, our next article on Benchmarking examines how comparing performance to best practice and other industry and regional

benchmarks can make a difference to costs and service. Along with the benefit of improved planning, organisations are better equipped to drive value and deliver on improvement initiatives.

Our third article focuses on the connection between customer satisfaction and employee engagement. A fascinating look at how recognising the value of employees can deliver real value to the customer experience. By creating a climate of engagement, companies can improve their service and give employees new opportunities for professional development.

Managed Unified Contact Centre Express (UCCX) is a managed solution that enables organisations to focus on their core business and most importantly, their customers. Through a well designed and complete service, our final article looks at how organisations can focus on what they do best and leave the management of the contact centre to a team of experts.

I hope you are able to use this issue of Interactions as an aid to gain more insight into your business. Please feel free to pass this on to any of your colleagues who might be interested.



Best wishes,

Martin Dove

Managing Director,
Customer Interactive Solutions

Enhancing the customer experience through analytics

As organisations compete for customers in a tough economic climate, they are looking for ways to lever existing resources to offer a differentiated customer experience and achieve major improvements in performance. Most contact centres have achieved acceptably good levels of performance, but the return on additional initiatives is not perceived as significant enough to pursue them. This is where analytics comes in.

Analytics is defined as the 'science of analysis' and is about the effective use of business data to support, drive and manage decisions. Using analytics to make the right decisions and optimise resources, organisations have a much better chance at cutting costs, delivering value to their customers and ultimately retaining their competitive advantage. Analytics provides the insight into which initiatives will deliver the most impact for the organisation.

Contact centres depend on, and operate with, people. Dimension Data Solutions Sales Specialist Craig Rodger says contact centres are a collection of processes that try to do slightly more each day with what resources they have.

"Centres are often focused on spending less time on calls, automating channels for more self-service and answering calls quickly. While these factors play a role in delivering a good quality experience, they are now merely the starting point. Organisations must focus on the other valuable information they have available to predict future performance and improve service levels to benefit customers, while simultaneously achieving major leaps in performance".

In light of increased interactions and more converged channels, organisations need to look at how to harness technology to support better decision making based on quality data they can trust.

The insight gained through such analytics can be invaluable. It can point to areas for improvement and highlight interesting trends that could help predict performance.



“It is never too late to add MIS tools and companies will soon see a return on investment after implementation, even if they hadn't deployed such a system to start with”.

Although the management information (MI) landscape is still dominated by a number of less relevant measures, organisations should seize the opportunity to refine their data and use it to gain maximum value and insight into improving service and efficiency for customers.

A move away from retrospective productivity and activity measures is what's needed in the first instance. Contact centre managers should take a critical look at the analytics available. A good rule of thumb is to evaluate the data on the basis of how it can help support strategic decisions. This management information should also be simplified and available real-time. Most importantly, the information must be actionable and used to shape strategic decisions that will ultimately enhance the customer experience.

The only way to support strategic decision making is through sustainable and intelligent measurement. As Rodger points out,

“If you cannot measure something, you cannot manage it. The reality is that high quality decisions depend on high quality information drawn from high quality data. And the best way to collect this data is through automated collection”.

This implies a pervasive, yet unobtrusive (i.e. intelligent) underlying layer of technology which must be correctly integrated and applied and in turn, feeds a reliable MIS and reporting process.

Clearing the obstacles

The challenge for many management information and reporting systems lies in their

dependency on what is often poor quality data that is manually captured. Tackling the issue of data quality can be done at very little marginal cost by automating the process. The next step is ensuring insightful interpretation and analysis of that information.

Improvements in performance arise out of sound management practice that is deployed through the intelligent use of the appropriate tools. Too often, under the law of diminishing returns, managers make judgements about the next investment on the basis of its insufficient return. These decisions should instead be guided by insight and a broader view of investment in the future.

At the outset, most contact centre managers would choose to deploy an accurate and reliable MIS capability to guide them to what would deliver the next best result. The problem lies in the catch-22 situation where there isn't any data to start with. Rodger says,

“Organisations should take a pragmatic view of their resources and applications and integrate MIS capabilities from the start. By neglecting to do this, MIS will be relegated to a pile of more expensive and lower yield initiatives that are left for another day”.

If companies were to take a more considered view, they would soon realise that the investment in a management information system would pay for itself very quickly through improved decision making and the ability to identify initiatives that will deliver impact to the business.

The valuable insight gained through analytics is worth its

weight in gold because, as Rodger points out, without it contact centres are playing a guessing game.

“It is never too late to add MIS tools and companies will soon see a return on investment after implementation, even if they hadn't deployed such a system to start with”.

Most contact centres have realised this and are creating dedicated MIS teams to address this need. Identifying high quality data and using technology to gather it automatically will play an important role in supporting improvements to the customer experience. It is this 'point of insight' where organisations realise that the investment in high quality information for better decision making is invaluable. This insight is the only way to shift the return curve and harvest returns from initiatives that have been difficult to justify before.

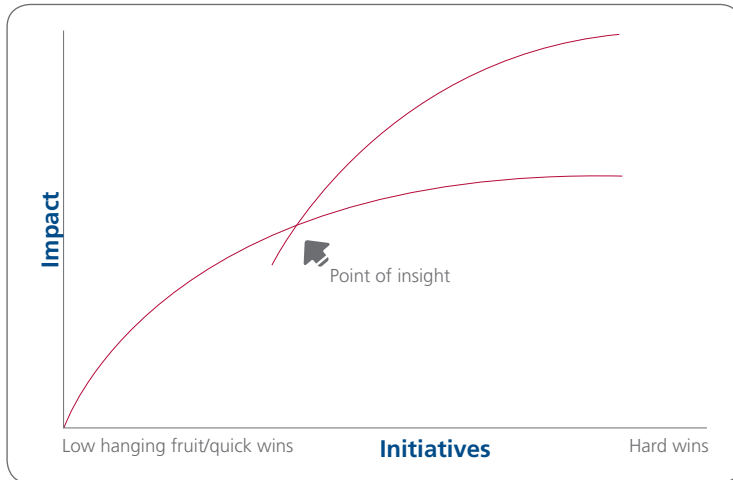
High impact levers vs. low impact levers

To enhance service delivery, organisations are aware of the 'high impact levers' that can deliver improvements in efficiency. What are perceived as 'low impact levers' are generally further up the curve of diminishing returns and are often not considered. Typically most organisations have exploited the big wins by, for example, installing an ACD, scheduling sufficient agents to handle calls, providing self-service channels and using skills based routing.

Rodger says,

“Companies are now looking to the 'low impact levers' to help enhance the customer experience and optimise resources.

Shifting the return curve



Managers have been cautious up until now in considering these levers without knowing what their impact will be. Analytics is one of these levers and forms a crucial part of the process in providing better quality data to make the right decisions”.

In fact, low impact levers become high impact levers when their impact can be established – this is the point of insight.

Low impact levers include:

1. Improving agent skills to handle more types of calls and more efficiently. Cross skilled agents are easier to schedule and provide more options for routing of calls
2. Implementing full quality management to assess agent skills compared to call types. This will expand the scorecard to include providing feedback to the rest of the organisation
3. Implementing word spotting and voice recording analysis to provide deeper analytics of calls to management
4. Fine tuning self-service applications to improve completion rates in the application

5. Implementing customer experience management philosophies to improve customer satisfaction and thereby improve customer retention

Using better analytics in combination with other ‘low impact levers’ results in improved service delivery and a better experience for customers, and has the added benefit of motivating and empowering employees.

Gaining insight through analytics

While the challenge exists for organisations to ensure they measure the right things, they should pay particular attention to their ability to interpret the data. For a real insight into the available data, organisations need to ensure they have the skills to gain a deeper understanding through analytics. This may mean establishing a specialist quality team or using data experts to help them identify the key trends to predict performance.

Rodger advises taking a sensible approach,

“In deciding whether MI is relevant and useful, you need to ask whether it means anything. And if it doesn’t, don’t measure it!”

Valuable MI should translate into valuable predictions for the future and will, in turn, give a deeper insight into how to deliver real business value to the organisation through a better experience for its customers.

About the author

Craig Rodger is a Solution Sales Specialist with Dimension Data in Australia. His responsibilities include sourcing new opportunities for clients and suggesting solutions to fit with their business needs.

Craig has worked within Dimension Data for 11 years and has held a number of different roles. He has been involved in CRM and has worked as the Chief Technical Officer for Dimension Data iCommerce in South Africa. He held a Sales Director role in the Global CIS business and has spent a number of years in the Business Intelligence and Data Warehousing area both developing MIS, EIS, Warehouse offerings as well as taking those solutions to market. Craig has been in the IT and telecommunications industry since 1991 and during that period has been exposed to a number of technology areas across various industries.

Craig has also been involved in numerous entrepreneurial ventures including a position as CTO of a start-up, licensed telecommunications operator in Lesotho (Southern Africa), where he was responsible for building the network including satellite earth stations.

Craig has a Bachelor of Commerce in Information Systems and a Bachelor of Accounting. He has an Honours degree in Information Systems and is currently completing a Masters in Management of Information Systems.

Benchmarking a marked evolution

Ever asked yourself how benchmarking actually makes a difference to service? Today, benchmarking is being used in new ways to benefit business performance. It is less about ticking a box and more about putting the information to good use.



Companies across the globe are looking at how to use this **invaluable** benchmarking data to highlight areas for **improvement** and **deliver real value** to their business.

Companies across the globe are looking at how to use this invaluable benchmarking data to highlight areas for improvement and deliver real value to their business. The Merchants Benchmarking service looks at contact centre operations and compares subsequent scores to industry and regional benchmarks as well as best practice.

Merchants Consulting Director Mike Wells explains that by understanding your contact centre practices and performance, a clearer picture and more structured view emerges of your operations.

“Benchmarking enables companies to develop plans to adopt best practices and assists them in driving improvement programmes across their business.”

Why Benchmark Your Organisation?

Contact centre decision makers are becoming increasingly aware of the fundamental and important role that the contact centre plays within an organisation. Wells points out,

“the necessity to demonstrate the value of the contact centre and to harness optimal and continued value is becoming critical to organisations”.

To gain insight into how they can improve contact centre operations, organisations typically want to benchmark their performance by:

- Identifying problem areas
- Gaining clarity on operational/people/technology priorities
- Knowing what industry best practice looks like and finding out how they compare

- Leveraging knowledge to improve contact centre operations

Where do you fall?

Organisations considering benchmarking exercises usually fall into one of three groups:

1. Companies that want to benchmark their internal operations against global data to ascertain what they're doing successfully and identifying areas for improvement
2. Companies that want to compare centres with others across different regions, market sectors and against the global average and
3. Those companies wanting to go beyond standard service level agreements and specifically benchmark operations and outsourcing services. This detailed analysis is delivering real benefits when monitoring how outsourcing partners are performing in relation to good practice standards and their own operations

Evolution or revolution?

In the case of the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA) in the UK, benchmarking on such a large scale was not only ground breaking but has helped them evolve the way they work. The largest benchmarking project of its kind, 45 police forces of reasonable autonomy and different demographics were surveyed across the UK.

After working with senior staff to determine and tailor important questions, the survey was conducted on an online portal with the aid of a help desk

to support the process. Following detailed analysis and examination of the data for anomalies, a consulting team was able to present an overall report and make specific observations and recommendations for each of the 45 forces.

Wells says the results were incredible.

“What really came out of the lessons learned evaluation was how useful the results were in supporting change and improvements and crucially what the next steps would be to build on them. This is where benchmarking proves its value, time and again. It is not only about looking at where you've been and where you are. It's about looking ahead and mapping the way to get there”.

During follow up workshops a few months later, the responses from participants were incredibly positive. **Police forces across the country reported back on how they had gained value from the information and explained what actions had been taken using the data:**

- many said the results confirmed what they already knew
- many saw things they didn't know
- some used the information for internal leverage, eg. making the case for budgets
- some shared their positive results with the press to build on their reputation
- most shared their results with staff in recognition of a job well done
- most used it as the basis for the creation of an improvement plan.

Investing in improvement

Attitudes to benchmarking are changing slowly. With organisations under pressure to deliver value to the business and keep costs down, companies are focused on return on value propositions. By examining how they can use internal capabilities to drive continuous improvement, organisations are looking to drive further value in their interactions with customers.

Benchmarking is a useful tool to support these aims. As Wells explains

“used correctly, it can help drive improvement through identifying deficiencies and recognising areas of success. Using relevant information, a tailored benchmarking solution provides an invaluable source of reference and is a strategic and tactical tool establishing a view of what current and good practice looks like”.

Benchmarking is not a sunk cost, rather it's the investment companies need to make in the improvement and development of their business. If companies are able to recognise important issues as they appear and deal with them immediately, the ultimate Return on Investment (ROI) over just a few years proves its worth: happier staff who stay longer, improved customer interactions and increased opportunities to gain more business value with customers.

Any company worth its salt will tell you that improvement is a continuous process. The same applies to benchmarking. Wells says,

“more businesses are committed to ongoing qualitative and

quantitative reviews. And they're getting slicker at analysing information while doing benchmarking as part of a constructive strategy to gain customer insight".

Getting down to benchmarking

This is where mature and honest organisations stand to gain the most value. If benchmarking is tackled holistically in comparing internal operations with global information, companies are able to build a picture of their business in context. Wells says,

"by comparing what they are doing with what others are doing, organisations are better placed to identify the performance differences now and map a way to deliver improvements".

When considering benchmarking, organisations should examine:

1. Their motivation for doing it – is it a specific or tactical 'spot check' or a broader 'health check' of the business?

Taking an holistic view means understanding why they want to do benchmarking and what they want to get out of it.

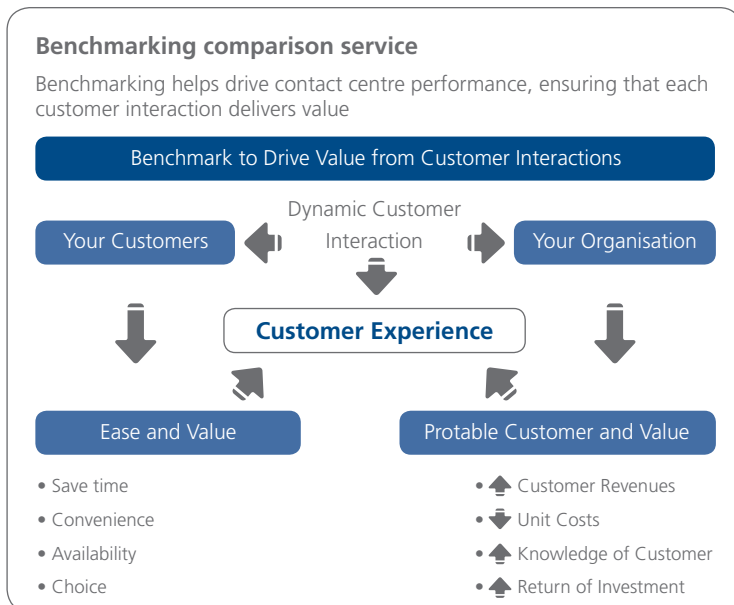
2. How benchmarking fits in with what they're already doing – identify the data being looked at and how often. Look at things like surveys, focus groups, staff reviews and internal reporting and ask whether this can be embedded into the benchmarking exercise.
3. How to ask the right questions and map the results and compare them with a global view to track performance.
4. Benchmarking beyond industry. Mature organisations recognise the value in thinking about service beyond sectors. These companies are comparing themselves with companies elsewhere in the economy to get a real view of customer expectations across their world of service.
5. Agreeing what they'll do with the information once they have it. By bringing concepts

alive to staff, it is a powerful way of engaging employees. Focus on the positive messages and successes and communicate improvement plans for the areas that are weaker. Communicating an action plan effectively and honestly is more likely to ensure staff 'buy in'.

About Dimension Data's Global Contact Centre benchmarking report

The annual Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report is used by decision makers and managers in contact centres globally as the de facto industry standard for the management and development of their operations.

Tried, tested and developed over 10 years, the Report can help you pick out your key performance indicators (KPIs) and give you insight into good practice standards. With insight gained from contact centres in over 36 countries and the added benefit of historical data acquired since 1997, the report explores key topics and trends covering the entire scope of contact centre operations from performance, processes, organisation and technology to organisations' development strategies, financial and customer management. The report has also been endorsed by over 10 international industry associations.



About the author

Mike Wells – Merchants Consulting Director Europe & Middle East.

Mike has worked in the Customer Management and Marketing industry for 23 years. He began his career with BT and has held senior management positions across Customer Service, Marketing, CRM and Sales / Retention functions for major organisations including BT, Yellow Pages, npower, Jaguar & Ford Motor Company and leading BPO organisations.

Mike's key activities currently involve Organisational Change, Business Transformation and Operational Customer Management initiatives. He is passionate about Customer Management and Continuous Business Improvement and works with a wide variety of clients worldwide to develop pragmatic and effective business solutions to improve efficiency and performance. Mike is a regular speaker at Customer management seminars on the topic of Benchmarking and continuous improvement.



Looking at employee engagement

Employees and customers – the missing link

Gaining valuable insight into your customers needn't be an expensive or difficult exercise. It's as simple as asking the very agents who speak to them every day. Employee engagement is recognising the value of employees in delivering value to the customer experience. And, as organisations look for ways to lever more business value, they have realised that a little goes a long way.



Performance development processes need to be seen as an opportunity to have a conversation with employees that will **drive the desired business outcomes** that **impact both** value to the **customers** and the **organisation**.

Employee Engagement is about creating value and meaning for staff. Insight Now's Dave Howard says companies are beginning to see real benefits to creating a climate of engagement with employees;

"It's about letting staff at the coalface shape their workplace and giving them the confidence and tools to do it".

Through engaging with employees, companies can ensure delivery of an excellent service. But how do you engage with employees?

Historically, organisations have looked at staff engagement in the context of performance development. Often seen by agents as a system which is irrelevant and unfair, it usually comprises one-to-ones with team leaders that involve listening to a very small sample of calls. Agents are then given a quality score based on these calls. The problem is that agents think their team leaders do it mechanically and team leaders often see the exercise as yet another chore on a long list.

Truly great organisations ensure performance development is holistic and linked to the goals of the organisation. Good practice techniques include:

1. Ensuring the contact centre has a mission statement linked to that of the overall enterprise
2. Establishing core principles for employees relating to process and behaviours and creating a sense of purpose for employees – translating it into something tangible in the form of a meaningful strap-line

3. Encouraging ambition through regular proactive involvement and participation by staff
4. Having a good plan of action and sharing it with the stakeholders (agents and their team leaders)

All of this will begin to create the climate for engagement.

Howard says,

“You can tinker with factors like pay and short term incentives but developing real engagement is about so much more. Truly engaged agents feel valued in their role in serving customers and see meaning in the work they do”.

The concept of engagement is quite different to simply measuring happiness and satisfaction of employees.

Start at the beginning

Companies gather vast amounts of information about their operations and customers on a regular basis. By using the information they have already in a clever way, organisations should be able to gain an insight into the drivers of performance. And through recognising what drives calls, they can identify the levers to improve performance.

Howard says companies need to look at information in a ruthless way,

“if it’s not being used, don’t measure it!”

Look at the way performance development is done in the organisation,

“holistic performance development which is linked to the goals of the business should look like

a balanced scorecard. It should measure factors relating to the core principles of the business like customer satisfaction, contact resolution and productivity. Performance development processes need to be seen as an opportunity to have a conversation with employees that will drive the desired business outcomes that impact both value to the customers and the organisation”.

Use a well structured and relevant survey to point to areas of key operational change and to identify good practice. Howard says that because a contact centre’s characteristics are so different, it’s vital to use measures of engagement that reflect the unique attributes of the industry.

“What you are ultimately looking for is the link between engagement, performance and loyalty and how to use interventions, which are designed to increase engagement, to systematically increase performance and loyalty”.

Howard explains,

“the data will identify the agents who are highly engaged. Through regression analysis and focus group discussions, organisations can identify and prioritise key drivers and formulate structured intervention plans. By looking at the levers and characteristics for these agents, organisations can use this information, in regular forums with staff, to drive best practice”.

Agents are very willing to participate in surveys as long as they see it contributing to best practice. It is not about punishing poor performers. As Howard points out,

“the feedback from agents and managers is invaluable and gives the voice of the agent more resonance. Ask your front line staff to help you solve problems or answer difficult questions and challenges – they know more about the current issues than management”.

And be sure to benchmark regularly. Howard says

“use engagement methodology quarterly or every six months as a minimum to measure the impact of intervention plans”.

To avoid any scepticism and defensiveness, Howard suggests getting an independent person to do it,

“use someone who is at least one step removed from operational management to avoid suspicion by staff of hidden agendas. You can use a facilitator for example or a member of the HR or Quality departments to help do it”.

A really important step in the process is communication of the findings to staff, along with a plan to tackle areas of concern and ensuring the plan is actioned. Howard says organisations must have a plan on how to make their centre the best place to work, “use your people to drive it. By helping get them off the phone for a while, you can shape and optimise the end-to-end customer experience.

Engagement in practice

One leading airline recognises the importance of engaging with new recruits as part of the induction process. A senior executive will spend half a day with new recruits explaining more about themselves and what they do. Crucially, they explain how the role of the contact centres is pivotal to the success of the company. Howard says,

“Having this level of executive communication and rapport at the start goes a long way – staff are able to see they belong to something much bigger. It helps them see a link between their role and the contribution they make to the goals of the company and the customers they serve.”

It recognises that employee engagement is dependent on its people. Howard explains that through effective team leaders who are fair and consistent, staff will be better empowered to achieve success and growth within their roles in the contact centre.

“Team leaders must be equipped to do their jobs well – to be able to coach for performance and be less focused on mechanistic things like productivity and absenteeism alone”.

And the customer benefit...

Organisations must define the customer journey in a more serious way. We know that the biggest driver of customer satisfaction is First Call Resolution (FCR), but high customer satisfaction can be derived even when calls aren't resolved. Howard explains,

“engaged agents add a sense of emotional value, a sense of ownership and commitment to solving a problem. This high ‘emotional competence’ and knowledge means that agents can adapt their style to the customer’s needs”.

Howard says there is a key point supported by sound research that we, as customers, tend to remember two things from a call:

1. the peak emotional experience of that call
2. and how the call ended.

Howard says contact centre managers should help drive competency,

“if you can get staff to recognise a bad customer experience, nullify it and close the call positively, the quality

of the overall customer experience will improve.”

It's important to note that a real commitment to the customer experience recognises that employee engagement cannot solve everything. The biggest destroyer of employee engagement is cross functional processes or fragmented business relationships that don't work. Agents ultimately want to be able to resolve calls there and then. To get the most out of engagement with employees, put Service Level Agreements (SLAs) in place across the business. The benefits of doing this are so valuable to both employees and ultimately customers. Quite simply, engaged employees means engaged customers and more real value for your business.



engagement: the key enablers

key engagement levers

| Category | Enablers |
|------------------------|---|
| Value and Meaning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line of site between contact centre roles and corporate goal and objectives. • Recruiting and developing employees who are genuinely motivated by helping customers. • Treating staff as individuals. • Frequent opportunities for participation decisions that will impact upon customer service. Shaping the organisation. |
| Development and Career | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate management who are actively committed to the development of their employees. • Career opportunities within the contact centre. • Availability of relevant and valued training and accreditation. |
| Stimulating Work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of work. Job rotation. • Interesting work – participation in performance improvement initiatives. |
| Work Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good on-site work environment and transportation. • Positive inter and intra department working relationships. • Lifestyle enablers: creche, gym, access to shops, etc. |

engagement outcomes



About the author

Dave Howard is the joint founder of Insight Now. He has been at the forefront of large-scale service delivery since 1995 when he co-founded Catalyst IT Partners. Dave has worked as both a business and technical architect for blue-chip organisations in the UK, Europe, South Africa, US, Canada and India.

Dave has either, designed, implemented or optimised contact centres for over 50 clients. His main professional interests are the management of service delivery operations using real-time customer and employee experience to drive sustained performance advantage across all channels of communication.

Dave has held a number of posts in financial services, management consultancies, software development companies and engineering companies and is an active non-executive director for several customer focused companies.

Managed UCCX: new era for contact centres

It's not an uncommon scenario for an organisation to find itself having to spend more time and resources on managing contact centre infrastructure and less on their core business and operations. In a climate where companies are under pressure to deliver a consistently good service to increasingly demanding customers, while cutting costs at the same time, businesses are searching for intelligent solutions to help deliver value to the business and ensure their ultimate survival and success.

Many organisations frequently face challenges when trying to manage the complex range of processes in both IT and business operations. Knowledge about internal contact centre systems is often limited to a few internal staff members and when there is a requirement to fix a problem, these few resources can become a bottleneck to enabling the business. The result is a shift in focus away from the core business to dealing with contact centre technology support issues.

The provision of consistent levels of service to customers depends on well maintained systems and applications performing optimally with minimal down time.

These requirements have a huge impact in terms of the demands placed on the few staff members who are equipped with the appropriate skills. Further complications arise when these employees are out of the office or unavailable to fix problems. This high risk dependency on a select few people places the organisation in a vulnerable position where service to customers could be compromised.

To combat these problems and leverage existing resources in an optimal way, companies should be looking to outsource the management of their contact

centre systems. Based on the principle of shared resources across a portfolio of clients, a reliable managed service offers organisations the opportunity to access a wide pool of skills and have a dedicated team on standby around the clock to solve any problems that arise. By doing this, companies can leave the management of their contact centre systems to the experts and focus on what they do best.

Managed Contact Centre from Dimension Data is a managed contact centre solution based initially on Cisco's Unified Contact Centre Express (UCCX) product. It offers a solution to organisations by enabling them to focus on improving customer service and optimising the customer experience through their contact centre. Well suited to small and medium sized contact centres, this managed solution means companies can rest in the knowledge that their centres are operating optimally and being managed effectively.

The unique and intelligent design of this managed service means many clients can benefit from economies of scale through shared resources and an ultimate lower total cost of ownership. This translates into a secure, resilient and reliable service for

organisations at a reduced cost. And in terms of planning, companies are able to know what they will spend over a lifecycle, with no hidden surprises.

Dimension Data CIS Practice Director (Americas) Grant Sainsbury says the beauty of such a well defined service lies in its completeness, low cost and ease of use.

"This managed solution is about offering a service that can be delivered remotely while taking the headache out of managing a contact centre, its processes and ongoing maintenance."

Through access to a specialist team of experienced engineers based in Dimension Data's Global Service Centre, businesses can expect a return on investment in a short space of time.

Continuous monitoring of the environment means potential problems are identified before they occur. And, in a business context, the ability for an organisation to provide consistently good service to its customers is what can differentiate it from its competitors. In a pressured economic environment where customers are more demanding than ever, businesses simply cannot afford to have an unreliable customer interface. Managed UCCX fulfils all the requirements for a reliable, consistent and proactively managed service for organisations.

Sainsbury explains,

"The service covers administration on all aspects of the platform and application. This means that organisations don't have to train and retain staff with specialist knowledge. There is

also no extra investment in more management tools to ensure consistent performance and availability.”

Scalable and supporting up to 300 agents today, this fully featured contact centre solution includes everything from ACD and Intelligent Call Routing, outbound campaign dialling, workforce optimisation, Computer Telephony Integration, IVR and Self-Service, E-mail Management, Agent and Supervisor Desktops and Reporting.

Managed UCCX offers a range of benefits to companies:

1. **Lower total cost of ownership** for a contact centre solution – through sharing expertise and managing the solution remotely.
2. **Lower costs in staff training and better management of risk** associated with dependency on **staff knowledge and retention** for system management and administration. Instead of needing to know the finer details of the product,
3. **Optimal application performance** – experts managing the system remotely are able to apply their learning between the systems and different clients. The expert team is then able to share knowledge and best practice with regards to design and configuration.
4. **Improved system availability** through proactive maintenance.
5. Delivering **predictable and consistent services spend** – a very appealing offering in current economic times, allowing companies to plan better and avoid unplanned or lump services spend associated with version upgrades, etc.
6. **Proactive** system administration and **consultative support** to help companies plan ahead for future business initiatives and the associated demands on the contact centre.

companies can focus on learning how they want to use it.

In addition to the already long list of benefits to using Managed UCCX, organisations can use it to plan for the future. Conventional support and monitoring services usually only offer quarterly reviews that are more backward looking and less focused on delivering raw business value to the management of the relationship. Managed UCCX takes a more proactive approach through regular reviews and constructive advice.

Through outsourcing the management of their platforms and applications to a shared pool of experts, organisations can be truly forward looking. Better planning and use of resources is enabling organisations to use their contact centres as an integral tool to support excellent service to customers and drive real value to the bottom line. And as we find ourselves in tough economic times, this new era in contact centre management may well be the key to an organisations' ultimate success.

About the author

Grant Sainsbury is the Practice Director for Customer Interactive Solutions (CIS) in Dimension Data Americas. He is responsible for strategy, sales and services delivery across the CIS portfolio for contact centre clients.

Grant has been with the Dimension Data group since December 2001, joining DDUK as a solution architect in the CIS business after working with Cisco Systems and GeoTel. He has been working in the

contact centre space for over 15 years after starting work as a business analyst, systems engineer and developer for complex contact centre solutions in the mid-1990s.

At Cisco Systems he was a specialist in contact centre integration with service provider intelligent networks. At Dimension Data, Grant has championed the company's entry into the IP contact centre space with Cisco and played a leading role in building a team around that technology in Dimension Data UK, before

transferring to Dimension Data North America in November 2005.

Grant is a regular speaker at industry events and has many publications to his credit. His contact centre integration and sales experience has exposed him to many industries during his career. Though he has the most experience with financial services and service provider, he is also very positive about the importance of industries such as healthcare to the business.

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