

insight On:



Taking Customer Relationships to the Next Level

Life used to be so much easier. Your agent groups were organized so that all agents had assignments that precisely captured their skills. And every routing script selected the right agent groups in just the right order. Life was predictable — manageable — good! Agents were occupied nearly 100 percent in the peak hour and average occupancy was almost ideal.

But advances in technology have delivered new challenges to organizations trying to provide the best possible customer service, while maximizing every customer interaction.

Now you're operating multisite call centers and/or multichannel contact centers. Customers have significantly more options when contacting your organization, through such mediums as email or Web chat. Consequently, you have more contact segments and they are demanding different service levels. Traditional contact center routers may not be doing the job anymore. Your agents are increasingly burned out or they don't have the skill sets to handle a customer's specific request.

It has become very difficult to match groups of different contact types with groups of skills – groups and management tasks are growing

geometrically. Customers are demanding the very best service available. Competition is fierce. You realize that only through one-to-one marketing interactions will your business continue to be successful.

Smart companies are treating each interaction as an opportunity to strengthen existing relationships and beat the competition by increasing their share of the customer's wallet.

Don't panic, there are solutions that will help you excel in this demanding and ever-changing contact center environment.

Routers are Not Created Equal

Contact center management demands intelligent routing engines for all channel types. Intelligent routing provides a robust and flexible environment that allows your organization to choose the manner in which you want to route customer contacts.

Today, it's not enough, in most situations, to have your basic PBX router or computer telephony integration (CTI) middleware.

They are limiting in their capabilities. They are not able to take into consideration your contact center's agent occupancy levels or service-level thresholds. However, with the introduction of premier skills-based routing, contact centers are able to route their contacts to the most appropriate agent, without causing agent burnout, while meeting service level requirements.

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Premier skills-based routing consists of a routing algorithm optimized to meet agent occupancy objectives when your customer interactions fall within your service level threshold. As your contact center volumes increase and exceed those thresholds, the routing algorithm automatically switches from skills-based routing to service-level compliance. There are a number of factors evaluated by the router before it chooses an agent including:

- Agent skills
- Work priority
- Workload
- Service level achievement

In some situations, you may only need your routing mechanism to consider occupancy levels. In other contact centers, it's more important to meet service level requirements. For your contact center to meet its customer service objectives and prevent agent burnout, it may be necessary for the routing mechanism to incorporate both occupancy and service level requirements.

This is particularly important with the proliferation of multichannel and multisite contact centers. It's essential that regardless of channel the customer is using to contact your organization, they are being handled within service level thresholds.

Who's On the Hot Seat Now?

Premier skills-based routing with occupancy optimization analyzes both your agent skills, as well as, occupancy levels. Agent occupancy measures actual time spent on customer contacts compared to available or idle time. This is calculated by dividing workload hours by staff hours.

Occupancy is an important measure of how well your contact center has scheduled its staff and how efficiently it is using its resources. If occupancy is too low, agents are sitting around idle with not enough to do. If occupancy is too high, your personnel may be overworked.

Routing interactions based on your agents' occupancy levels eliminates the hot-seating problem usually caused by traditional routers. Hot seating refers to sending interactions without balancing the distribution to agents throughout the contact center. Typical routers review a static list of agents and route to the first available agent on the list. They start the search from the top of the list until an available agent is found.

Conversely, premier skills-based routing will first determine the best skill type to answer your customer's request. Then it reviews the occupancy level of every agent with that skill and sends the interaction to the agent with the highest occupancy level deviation.

In addition, by defining the business rules for customer segmentation, calls or other multichannel contacts, are routed according to a combination of business priority, service objective, and required agent skills.

Premier skills-based routing enables your contact center to match the customer with the best skilled agent. It utilizes business logic to ensure first time resolution with every contact. Additionally, agent burnout is reduced by reviewing occupancy levels prior to routing the interaction.

Responding Isn't Enough

There may also be times when your contact center service levels are not being met. Premier skills-based routing can automatically bring your contact center back into compliance. It identifies those customer interactions that have been queued for a considerable amount of time, due to higher than planned traffic, and enters them into an escalation state where they are assigned a higher priority for handling. This enables your agents to provide faster treatment to customers that may otherwise be ignored in extremely busy situations.

During the configuration of agents, a reserve interaction type is configured to bring the service level back in compliance. As a result, your agents are automatically moved out of the skills routing logic and put into service level compliance mode. This enables better use of contact center resources during unexpected increased call volumes.

For example, a bronze-level customer that has been queued for five minutes may be more valuable, from an opportunity standpoint, than a gold-level customer that will tolerate some wait time. This scenario allows businesses to escalate the bronze-level customer to a higher priority than the gold customer. Moreover, your agents will only take these calls when a service level threshold is out of compliance.

Multisite Routing

Some premier skills-based routers will enable you to route your customers between multiple contact centers. The most common use of multisite routing is load balancing across multiple contact centers. By reviewing contact center statistics or service levels, multisite routing leverages the core router to determine the best location to handle the interaction the fastest. Once the best center is identified, the core router sends the interaction where premier skills can be utilized for advanced routing options. This reduces customer hold times and makes better use of your contact center resources.

There are many different ways to manage contact center customer interaction volumes, as well as agent productivity. As time and technology have evolved, so have the options for managing the contact center. Determining what solution works best for your contact center is the first step to improved customer service and agent productivity.

About Aspect Software

Aspect Software, Inc. founded the contact center industry and is now the world's largest company focused solely on unified communications for the contact center. Our all-in-one, IT-ready solutions help two-thirds of the FORTUNE Global 100 and a variety of small and medium enterprises to communications-enable their customer service, collections and sales & telemarketing business processes. For more information, visit www.aspect.com.

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