

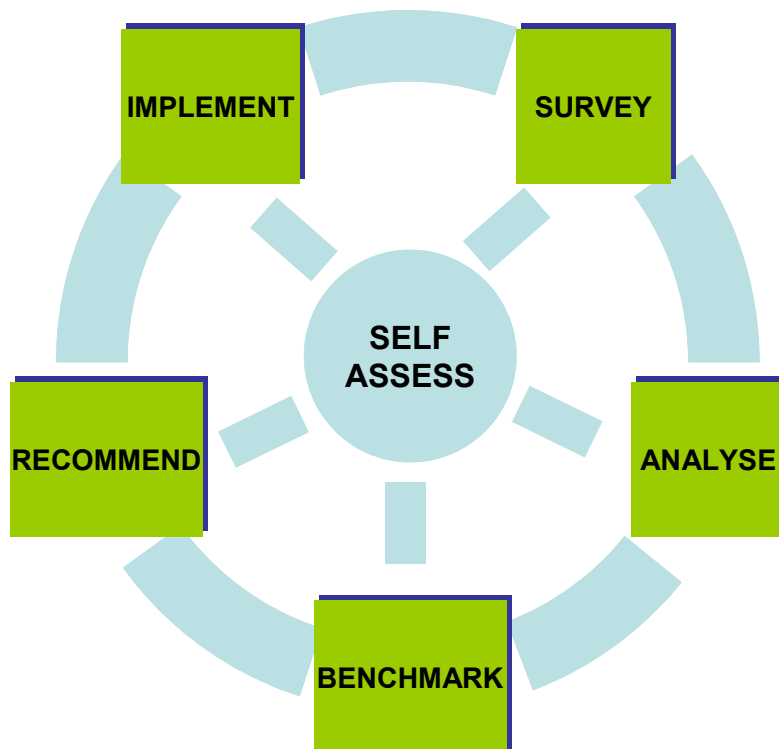
Contact Centre Operations – Are you Maximising the Performance of this Asset?

Chris Luxford, Director – Contact Centre Technology Practice, 3D Networks (April 2005)

Contact Centres are a critical strategic asset for most organisations. Yet contact centre managers or customer service directors are all under increasing pressure to deliver more revenue, increase productivity and drive higher customer satisfaction. The common challenge is managing time, budgets and resources to develop and implement strategic initiatives to achieve these goals.

3D Networks, an experienced Contact Centre consultancy organisation, shares its approach to reviewing contact centre operations with a view to initially exploiting and maximising what exists today and then establishing a roadmap for future initiatives.

When conducting a Contact Centre Operations Review 3D Networks employs a very targeted and objective process. The lifecycle of this process is designed to be ongoing and to leave the centre manager with a toolset that allows for ongoing self assessment.



The Process is designed to provide an objective approach and seeks to understand what the current state of the centre is and to allow an “apples to apples” comparison of multiple

sites / centres. It also provides a tool that can be used in future for self assessment to conduct a similar survey whereby results can be accurately compared to historical surveys.

The process focuses on 6 key areas;

1. **Your Centre** – looking at the broad overview of the centre, services delivered, centre manager, high level management targets and operating hours.
2. **Your Infrastructure** – looks at items like real estate, facilities, floor space, training and break out rooms etc.
3. **Your People** – in this area we survey the number of staff, full time and part time, support staff and shrinkage variables.
4. **Your Technology** – we explore in detail your technology solutions and its performance.
5. **Your Performance** – here we specifically explore recent historical performance results from call volumes, to grade of service, handle times and adherence performance. We also look at non call related contacts in a similar fashion, including IVR contacts.
6. **Your Processes** – there are a number of key processes which support the centre, from Agent tools and information, workforce management, quality monitoring and coaching.

Once collected the review lifecycle continues through;

Analysis – Review all data collected, identify gaps in the data and conduct one-on-one interviews with relevant centre staff to better understand the data and establish the “state of the nation” for the centre.

Benchmark – This step is very important as it provides the foundation for the measurement of incremental benefit. Here we establish a report card. A simple scorecard for each function within the centre that identifies current trends in performance, process overviews and technology platforms.

Recommendations – Using 3D Networks experience we identify a range of recommendations split into 2 categories of tactical and strategic. Each recommendation follows a standard approach, which is:-

- o what metric will the recommendation affect in the functional scorecard?
- o what are the actions required to implement the recommendation?
- o what investment (people, time, budget) is required to implement the recommendation?
- o what is the anticipated incremental performance improvement that can be achieved (against the current functional scorecards)?
- o roadmap for implementation that can be addressed at a business level

Implementation – This is in all cases a process lead by the centre themselves. Guided by 3D Networks it allows significant learning and development and skills transfer to the organisation.

As a follow up and through the highly interactive process each centre will be able to undertake this process themselves, to a certain extent, in the future.

Understanding the process is OK, however what are the key facets of the functional scorecards mentioned above and what should be looked at?

The following, details some of the key areas of analysis and benchmarking and the associated broad areas for consideration for improvement. This is by no means an exhaustive list:

Operation Performance focuses on 3 key areas, all using the current assets and resources:

1. How to drive improved performance / productivity
2. How to decrease costs (where possible)
3. How to increase revenue and customer satisfaction

Agent Adherence

For many organisations agent efficiency and productivity is the single greatest area where focus can bring meaningful improvement in performance. Adherence to schedule is a controllable and tangible metric to review and focus on. Essentially, what needs to be implemented here is a metric that considers agents adhering when they are on the phone as scheduled and off the phone as scheduled. A target of 95% is normally appropriate, but may require a phased approach to drive improvement.

Average Handle Time

Another controllable metric, this one requires a little more pre-work to determine the most appropriate handle time. A balance of speed versus quality and customer satisfaction, it is critical to process map the predominant call types and the "ideal" handle time based on process, systems and information mapped. This also then forms the basis of the coaching guides for agents.

Hot Desking and Utilisation

Hot desking and / or the real estate utilised per desk often provides an opportunity for cost reduction. This can improve the "effective hour" utilisation of desks which in most cases sit idle and unused for 12+ hours every day.

Systems (especially agent interaction systems)

In managing customer satisfaction and AHT systems and the information provided plays a very significant part in delivering the outcome. Quite often a process review that includes the performance of the various agent facing systems will deliver surprising opportunities for improvement.

Customer Contact Channels

Every call centre will have given this some thought. What customer contacts could be moved from inbound call related to other contact means such as IVR, web, email etc? 3D Networks encourages regular reviews of this. Quite often many centres consider it once and put it aside. This needs to be reviewed regularly to ensure market competitiveness, and customer expectations are being met

Agent and Team Leader Metrics

In most centres the basis for performance management is call centre "stats". The usual suspects such as calls per hour, grade of service, AHT and the like. These form a very unbalanced performance management tool. 3D Networks considers a balanced scorecard approach as a crucial component for any centre focused on performance and productivity improvement. The scorecard should look at a range of controllable metrics in 7 key areas. A scorecard should be created for agents, team leaders and centre managers. All will be different and will look at differing metrics which must all be controllable by the measured individual.

As an example a generic scorecard may look like this:

| | Key Element 1 | Key Element 2 | Key Element 3 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Customers | Customer Satisfaction | Data entry accuracy | Agent understanding of strategy |
| Financial | Adherence to schedule | AHT | Sales per contact |
| Learning and growth | Acquired Skills | Call Quality | Development Plan completion |
| People | Employee satisfaction | Process adherence | Training participation |
| Accessibility | Adherence to schedule | AHT | Channel skills |
| Internal Business Processes | Call Quality | First Contact Resolution | Customer Complaints |
| Client | AHT | Client Satisfaction | Contractual SLAs |
| Technology | Intranet usage | Data entry accuracy | Information security |

The most difficult element of all balanced scorecard implementations is the data collection and presentation from the various data sources required.

For the purpose of this document, we have not detailed every facet of the operational performance that 3D Networks reviews. However for every centre, a focus on these six areas mentioned above will provide tangible improvement in operational performance.

By undertaking such a process and focusing on these key metrics and performance improvement areas all call centres can improve their operational performance and establish an ongoing improvement regime.

3D Networks would be happy to discuss any or all of your operational performance improvement requirements.