Workforce Optimization and Using Resources No Matter Where they Sit in the Workflow

Richard Mills

Biography

Richard Mill is the Managing Director and one of the founders of Business Systems (https:// www.businesssystemsuk.co.uk).

Over the last 30 years, Richard has seen the company grow from a start up to its current position as the UK's largest independent provider of call recording and workforce optimisation technologies.

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Abstract

In this article, the author discusses why 'blending' front and back office operations using modern workforce optimization (WFO) technology should be a priority for all businesses.

Introduction

Back in 2010, HMRC recommended the use of technology and 'work blending' as a way of optimizing resources in the front and back office, but nearly a decade later and little has changed. Optimization technology – which offers quantifiable SLAs and targets for core business processes – is still very much the preserve of the front office (contact centre) alone – despite HMRC's counsel that applying workforce optimization techniques to the back office was a business imperative. The International Customer Management Institute[1] stated that, despite HMRC's counsel, while applying workforce optimization techniques to the back office was top of the business agenda, businesses were still failing to utilize workforce optimization (WFO) technology to their advantage.

Recently, analyst firm Gartner reminded CIOs that a simple call to action for 2019 would be to blend your front and back office. It accepts that organizations interact with customers in different ways, but believes this is the way forward for the best results. Gartner defines front office as the mechanisms that improve consumer

interactions such as customer loyalty programs or feedback channels. Back office, it maintains can cut costs required to service customers by putting together customer journey maps as a solid foundation for internal developments. It also sees digitalization in the back office as a way to reduce consumer engagement budget. At the same time, merging front and back office can actually work to a CIO's benefit – by helping retain the digital customer.

The front office has been pivotal in delivering customer service as it is the first point of contact for the consumer. With more and more consumers engaging with organizations digitally, the distinction between front and back office has become unclear. Consumers now want the same level of service from the back office in terms of issuing bills, order processing and so forth as they get from their front office experience.

Many CIOs have put the blended approach to one side because of the challenges it presents. These tend to be cultural as much as operational and are not the hurdles many envisage. They just require careful transformation planning.

'Blending' is essential

If you think about it, the majority of customer queries and requests[2] are not dealt with at first point of contact, but are routinely sent to the back office to be processed. The problem is that the omnichannel approach to contact and service

channels we see emerging – from SMS and email to social media and chatbots – has removed the chain of responsibility.

To meet this demand for highly responsive, agile, premium quality customer experience (CX) across all touchpoints, it is essential that the traditional structure changes.

What is WFO?

According to Gartner[3], one of the key characteristics of a workforce optimization solution is that it "integrates disparate contact centre technologies – including contact centre performance management, e-learning, interaction analytics, quality management and workforce management". As customer touch points multiply CX is becoming a competitive differentiator. There is no need to keep optimization within the bounds of the contact centre.

WFO is built on the premise that, by accessing performance data in real time you can drive improvements, such as enhancing service levels, improving customer satisfaction, paring operational costs and lowering duplication and waste.

Omnichannel options have brought increased technological complexity to the front office. At the same time, back office operations are more diverse and complicated by their nature, supporting numerous departments from finance, to HR, production, logistics and so forth. Many have legacy systems that support largely manual processes.

The good news is that workforce optimization technology exists that combines these capabilities, providing the right tools and the right level of advanced functionality to integrate front and back office. Look for a platform that is modular, flexible and easy to deploy. Most importantly it needs to be vendor agnostic and highly scalable.

Be prepared

With its robust analytics and smart allocation systems modern workforce optimization technology can be used to efficiently feed data through the inbound interaction systems to give customers accurate estimates or updates on completion times that they are now demanding. More importantly, blending can prepare you for the rapid multiplication of digital touch points that is coming to the forefront.

Reference

[1] https://workforce-optimization.tmcnet.com/articles/432289-need-modernize-workforce-optimization.htm

[2] https://www.aspect.com/globalassets/bridging-the-gap-between-front-and-back-office-wp.pdf

[3] https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/glossary/contact-center-workforce-optimization