

OptCenter™

Achieving Breakthrough Performance Levels in Contact Centers

One of the most important tasks that a contact center manager must accomplish is the effective scheduling of the center employees. The manager wishes to determine the optimal labor requirements throughout the day that provide the appropriate customer service at the least possible cost. The staffing solution may contain multiple skill levels that must be considered when determining the optimal schedule. The labor requirements are often used as the critical inputs for a labor scheduling system that assigns individuals to prescribed staffing levels.

Traditional approaches for determining contact center labor requirements have utilized Erlang and simple queuing models to approximate the real contact center system. Unsatisfactory service levels and high costs often result from the use of these traditional techniques. The reason that these simple approaches fail to produce efficient solutions is that the underlying models are poor representations of the true complex system.

Discrete event simulation is a powerful modeling tool that allows one to represent contact center operations in an extremely realistic fashion. The model can be created to actually mirror the true system with all of its complexity. In particular, simulation models can accurately predict the effects of interactions between multiple skill levels. It is often the case that by addressing these interactions, a lower cost staffing solution can be created.

Utilizing a contact center simulation model, a manager can try various staffing levels and accurately evaluate the resulting contact center performance. In theory, the manager could continue to try various staffing levels until an optimal solution is found. The difficulty with this approach is that the scope of the problem makes human solution techniques ineffective. Consider a contact center that staffs five skill levels every thirty minutes throughout the day. The manager is attempting to determine $5 \times 24 \times 2 = 240$ staffing levels. People can often mentally grasp optimization problems that contain a few variables but a problem with 240 variables is completely intractable for a person. The solution to this dilemma is to use an automated optimization system that can effectively address problems of this size. The OptQuest optimization system, OptCenter™, developed by OptTek Systems has been specifically designed to allow optimization of simulation-based models. OptCenter is unique in its ability to quickly determine high-quality solutions to contact center optimization problems. OptQuest uses powerful search methodologies to suggest solutions to the simulation model for evaluation. Once a simulation is complete, OptQuest offers a new solution scanning all past information with its intelligent search technology to determine the best set of labor requirements.

Contact centers do not have to settle on using current techniques for predicting labor requirements that cause inflated labor costs and inadequate service. Instead, they can adopt OptCenter's methods, which provide the optimal set of labor requirements that maximize service and minimize cost.

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