

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Six Easy  
Steps to More  
Effective  
Contact Center  
Performance  
Measures

ISG

“You can improve what you can measure” is an adage many contact center managers strive to realize. But while data collection and reporting systems are critical contact center tools, access to statistics alone will not ensure success in improving performance. Improper communication, unnecessary complications and inconsistent application of performance measures often cause the best contact centers to underachieve and cause key programs to fail.



Determine which key measure(s) is/are most critical to the success of the operation and develop the plan for improvement around that measure.

How do you acquire the biggest bang through measuring performance? Here are six steps that can boost your chances of operational improvement:

- 1. Plan your direction carefully.** Determine which key measure(s) is/are most critical to the success of the operation and develop the plan for improvement around that measure. Additional performance measures should be set to ensure success of the primary target.
- 2. Limit key measures to a core four or five.** Do not be trapped into developing multiple simultaneous improvement plans. Too many directions can cause confusion. For example, if the enterprise has a desperate need to reduce the abandoned call rate, then it is probably the wrong time to develop and launch an intricate sales improvement plan. Customer frustration (caused by being placed on hold for long periods of time) may well eliminate any sales opportunity by the time the customer reaches a sales agent. Instead, take the necessary steps to reduce abandoned calls, then consider the sales plan once the abandoned call rate is well under control.
- 3. Ensure that all goals are achievable.** In an attempt to improve numbers rapidly, do not be fooled into thinking a lofty, unachievable goal will provide sufficient incentive for an agent to stretch performance that much further. Most likely, agents and team members will recognize the goal as a target they cannot achieve and will ignore the direction — and sometimes even the overall plan. Consequently, they will spend more time devising excuses for failure than making an effort to achieve the goal.
- 4. Avoid metrics that send conflicting messages to the staff.** Key performance indicators and metrics that are contradictory in nature can lead you down a path to failure. For example, if increasing revenue per call is your primary objective, then reducing the average handle time (AHT) should be de-emphasized or avoided. It takes time for agents to go through the necessary steps of explaining the advantages to the customer, asking for the business, and securing address and credit card information. Agent reviews that include poor performance for increased AHT when revenue is increasing are a pitfall that must be avoided. Such action can lead to frustration on the part of the agents and cause them to cut corners in critical areas during future calls.



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**5. Carefully explain the objectives to all members of the contact center team.**

Every member of the team must clearly understand your objectives and work together to achieve the primary target. If the operations and customer service/sales staff are not firmly aligned, then agents will receive mixed messages, choose the path of least resistance and probably fail to realize the program objectives. Be sure to include executives, members of the management team and agents whenever possible. Ask for their suggestions about the road-map to achieving key objectives. If possible, give them an opportunity to review presentations and training materials. Make sure that key members of the executive team understand and support the plan thoroughly. Plan to brief the executive staff regularly on their progress toward the stated goals.

**6. Support the program with advances in technology wherever possible.**

Technological advancements can streamline processes and provide a morale boost to agents when introduced. Screen pops (CTI), enhanced reporting, interactive voice response (IVR), quality monitoring (QM), knowledge management (KM) systems and other enhancements can pay for themselves in a short period of time if properly developed and applied.

Following these tips may not ensure performance improvement, but it can certainly improve your chances of success. ISG can help you to compare your contact center technology to best-practice enterprises and identify key technologies and how best to apply them.

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