

Advanced Call Center Technologies

Matching Agent Skill to the Right Calls—What is it Worth?

- *Easily test dialer theories*
- *The counter-intuitive approach may prove best*
- *Significant productivity gains are possible*

Business Need

Many call centers have hundreds of agents and make hundreds of thousands of calls every day. It is not unusual for sophisticated centers to segment their database based on account risk for collections or prospect quality in telemarketing. Advanced Call Center Technologies (“ACT”) wanted to determine the best approach for matching agent skill sets to their telemarketing prospects.

Their objective was to increase sales through higher conversion rates and greater productivity.

Solution

OnQ™, which simplifies list management on one or more dialers, allowed ACT to easily match segmented pools of agents to segmented pools of prospects. (ACT used another Austin Logistics solution, CallTech™, to not only provide best-time-to-call modeling, but also to produce promise-to-pay and response scores for use in account segmentation.)

Results

Because OnQ simplifies campaign management, including Champion/Challenger testing on the dialer, ACT is able to easily test dialer theories and is assured of reliable, quantifiable results. In this case, ACT desired a simple approach to test skills-based routing on their dialer without disrupting call center operations.

ACT entered its testing with some intuitive assumptions on the best strategy: send the most difficult prospects to the best agents because they surely could outperform less skilled agents on the same population. Besides, ACT was most sensitive to letting sales slip through the cracks. But the test results were contrary to their expectations and seemed counter-intuitive until they further analyzed the data. ACT significantly increased conversion rates (ratio of sales to contacts) and sales produced per agent hour, but not because their best agents converted more difficult accounts.

ACT designed campaigns to test both their intuition as well as the opposing theory. Good test design is just as important as ease of deployment. Their test was still fairly simple and structured to produce quantifiable results.

Results Continued

The outcome was a surprise: the less skilled agents were equally productive on the hardest prospects. While it seemed counter-intuitive at first, the explanation for this outcome did make sense. ACT found that the “hardest” prospects were difficult to sell under any condition. On the “easiest” prospects, the best agents fared much better because their skill set was most effective on prospects who were receptive to sales techniques.

“It is virtually impossible to manage tests on the dialer without introducing significant bias or disruptions to the center. With OnQ, we are able to change the composition of a dialer campaign with a few simple clicks in a web browser. That alone makes OnQ worthwhile, but it has so many other features that make our operations so much more effective.”—Aaron Godfrey, VP of Operations, Advanced Call Center Technologies

Since the primary goal was to increase sales, ACT needed to confirm that leads per hour increased. The best agents pulled ahead further because of their lower handle times and better talk-off strategies.

If ACT had followed its original intuition without testing first, it would have seen degradation in overall agent performance. The best case strategy that emerged was, in fact, the opposite of their expectations, and resulted in more than 7% higher sales over the Business-as-Usual strategy (e.g. random assignment of prospects to agents).

For those call centers using segmentation techniques, it is important to note that the counter-intuitive approach may offer greater gains. In this case, agent productivity is 17% higher when the best agents get the easiest, rather than the most difficult work—without a loss in overall effectiveness.

Summary of Success

ACT met its goal of increasing agent productivity, which translated directly into profits. Unlike many productivity solutions, Austin Logistics’ software made these call center professionals’ lives simpler—and gave them time to focus on more strategic issues.



About Austin Logistics

Austin Logistics is a leading provider of analytic software and custom modeling solutions that use predictive intelligence to drive more profit from every customer interaction.

Austin Logistics determines the optimal treatment for each transaction by collecting disparate data from multiple sources and applying advanced modeling techniques. All Austin Logistics products are designed to deliver a six-month Return On Investment.

Austin Logistics, established in 1992, is headquartered in Austin, Texas. The company maintains business and development offices throughout the United States and in Asia.

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