

For Every Business a Call Center: Smart Deployment Strategies For Every Organization

The latest PBX platforms give your business the ability to increase revenue by taking more calls and spreading the work out among your staff. Any employee, regardless of their job title, can take and field customer calls at least part of the time, greatly reducing call wait time and boosting responsiveness to customers. Every business has a call center in this sense, regardless of size or industry.

What's the right call center deployment strategy for your company? Start by asking these questions when considering a new phone system:

- Will this system increase call efficiency for my organization?
- Will it build revenue?
- Will we be able to reduce our phone infrastructure costs?
- Does the system provide for growth and flexibility?
- What level of service and support can we expect from the phone system vendor?

Within those broad goals, you should be looking for specific capabilities on the system you're considering. The phone platform should include a robust Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system to provide for intelligent call routing and queuing. We recommend against adding ACD as a stand-alone system. The problem with this approach is that you will need to interface an independent PC with your PBX system. You will have to pay for licensing from two different vendors, not to mention programming and maintenance for two different technologies. Instead, we recommend integrating ACD directly into your PBX. That way, all technology is provided by the same vendor, eliminating licensing and maintenance complexities.

A common formula is to have a ratio of 3-1 in terms of lines to available staff when setting up a call center. Your ACD platform should include an intuitive interface to improve call agent productivity, and feature Auto Answer, Hold, Transfer, Conference and Supervisor Escalation. You can also integrate with your CRM platform so that call agents will have an automatic screen pop-up with information on the caller. And agents should even be able to dial customers right from their Outlook® directory.

With the latest VoIP advancements, you can deploy a remote workforce to handle calls. Customer calls can be fielded by employees working from home or any other location. The advantages of this approach include reductions in facilities cost and maintenance, while improving employee morale. You also gain the ability to support a part-time/contract work force that can be scaled to meet seasonal call demands.

With the proper PBX gateway, you should be able to extend all of the features of your corporate system over a single circuit or packet network. This gateway should be highly configurable, with the ability to operate in a managed IP, or point-to-point synchronous WAN environment. The final result is a fully-converged voice and data network, with only one system administrator to monitor the entire package.



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Other abilities to look for in your remote technology platform include echo cancellation and noise detection algorithms to improve voice quality. Your echo canceller should be G.165 compliant to guarantee Quality of Service (QoS). You should have your choice of voice compression algorithms, including G.729A (8 Kbps), G.726 (24 or 32 Kbps ADPCM), G.711 (64 Kbps PCM). If you spend the proper diligence in selecting your equipment vendor, all of the above should be possible.

Reporting

Any phone platform should include an enhanced call center client supervisor application to enable management to monitor an agent's performance and improve training opportunities. And a quality system will offer very sophisticated call analytics to improve organizational performance.

According to Call Center Magazineⁱ, there are five critical metrics that an organization should monitor to improve their call center. These include:

- Cost per Call
- Customer Satisfaction
- First Contact Resolution Rate
- Agent Utilization
- Aggregate Call Center Performance

A question was once put to WikiAnswersⁱⁱ: "How do you reduce abandonment rate in a call center?" The quip that came back was simple: "Answer the phone sooner." But perhaps, it's not quite that simple.

Interestingly, common Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) such as the call abandonment rate did not make the list above. That's because empirical evidence supports that the five metrics listed are the ones that deliver 80% of the value received from performance measurement and management in a call center.

Regardless of the KPIs you chose to monitor, the phone system you select should always be capable of delivering the information you want. You need to improve call performance across the board, including how calls are processed in your system and how the call is handled when an employee picks up the phone, in order to make the right impression on your customers. And robust call analytics are the first step to determining where more work is needed.

ⁱ Eric Zbikowski, "The Essential Call Center KPIs," Call Center Magazine, (04-17-2007), <http://www.callcentermagazine.com/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=199100188>

ⁱⁱ WikiAnswers, http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_do_you_reduce_abandonment_rate_in_a_call_center



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