



6 Surefire Ways to Improve Your Contact Center Efficiency

By Alexander Anoshin

VoIP technologies suggest numerous ways to make the most of contact centers with minimal effort. For example, VoIP technologies allow companies to choose a distributed solution or employ at-home agents and thus

- reduce facility expenses, salary rates and even hardware costs (when agents provide their own);
- eliminate geographical recruiting boundaries and employ operators with a required skill set;
- overcome the language barrier and cultural differences;
- smooth out peak load periods and develop a reliable business contingency plan.

As statistics show (<http://searchcrm.techtarget.com/resources/Call-center-VoIP-software?bucketCode=ETA>):

“At-home agents have a 10% attrition rate, which is significantly lower than for on-site staff. At-home agents are 25% more productive. At-home agents cost \$11 less/hour.”

However, to get the maximum efficiency from both a distributed solution and a local contact center, you need special IP telephony software. Here you can learn about which benefits what type of software can provide you with.

1. Process up to 80% of Incoming Calls Automatically

A voice portal can provide your clients with a self-serving facility and thus help process automatically up to 80% of incoming calls. Your clients can use a voice portal to:

- log into the system with his/her password;
- get information from your enterprise databases and/or request certain actions to be performed in accordance with his/her access rights;
- end session.

Interactive voice response (IVR) applications provide the similar facilities. With an IVR application, your client can use his/her phone pre-defined buttons to choose:

- an appropriate employee to process his/her call;
- which information he/she wants to get (such as a caller's bank account balance or currency exchange rates).

Thus you can:

- help your clients promptly get the required information/manage their personal accounts;
- release your staff to process more complicated requests.

2. Smooth out Call Peak Loads

You know that your clients hate to waste time waiting for an operator's answer. With virtual queuing software, they will never get annoyed while waiting any more, even when all your operators are busy. Your clients will just leave their contact information and return to their business, while an available operator will automatically call them back. Thus, you'll get a convenient tool to smooth out call peak hours.

To reduce the time wasted passing a client call from one employee to another, you need a facility to automatically route calls to:

- a manager who usually works with a calling client or
- an operator with demanded skills that can be defined from:
 - information about a calling client (such as his/her previous requests or his/her location and language he/she speaks, determined from a country/city phone code);
 - operator's product expertise, overall skill-level and language capability.

Skill-based routing (SBR) software, integrated with your CRM and ERP software, can let you do that exactly. If you wish to process VIP client calls first or suggest some special algorithm of incoming call queuing, you can set your IP telephony software to do this too.

Besides that, integration of your IPT software with CRM software helps significantly speed up client request processing by providing your employees with actual information about the calling client (such as his/her name, a company he/she represents, credit history, order status, etc.) before he/she starts a conversation.

Thus you can:

- provide your clients with a quick response of an employee with a required skill set;
- smooth out peak load hours.

3. Save Your Efforts by Getting Client Requests from a Unified Inbox

You invite your clients to contact you by phone, to send you a fax message or an email letter, to leave a request at your website, but how to ensure that your staff timely checks all these sources? With a voice mail service you can collect all messages in a single mailbox and access it both from your e-mail client and by phone.

Thus you can:

- save time on checking different message sources;
- service any client request in time.

4. Save Your Employee Time on Daily Communications

A presence service provides the real-time information about user availability and preferable ways to communicate. With this service your employees can use their IP phones to:

- manage their presence status;
- set a preferable way of communication;
- check other employee availability.

With a "Corporate address-book" your staff gets:

- access to timely updated contact data of all employees, regardless of a company site they work;
- advanced search capabilities

right from their IP phones too.

In general, you can use your IP phone to decrease time, wasted on such daily tasks as:

- text/voice messaging (for example, you can send automatic notifications to a conference call participants or remind your clients about credit repayment);
- retrieving information from corporate databases;
- signing-in for/signing-out from work.

Note that the above facilities require integration with your enterprise resources.

Thus you can:

- save your employee time;
- easily control employee working hours;
- reduce the costs for employee workplace equipment by using IP phones instead of PCs when it's possible.

5. Improve Call Processing at all Your Sites with a Single Solution

Hardware attendant consoles have been used for dozens of years to streamline incoming call processing. With VoIP technologies all features of traditional consoles were transferred to software-based ones. Thus an operator can use it to get incoming calls from several phone lines and route them to appropriate employees. However a software-based attendant console provides you with considerably wider set of facilities. It helps you support:

- quick employee/phone number search;
- quick text/voice messaging;
- call recording;
- an intelligent call queuing.

Moreover the foremost benefit, that a software-based console provides you with, is a remote team/at-home operator support.

Thus you can:

- deploy a single solution that integrates the advantages of many separate IP telephony applications and helps both your local and remote teams process incoming calls in the most effective way.

6. Control and Improve Your Staff Productivity

Modern call accounting software is not only a tool to control/reduce employee telecom costs. By analyzing various reports, produced by call accounting software and based on call detail records (CDRs) received from your IP PBX, you can:

- determine peak phone network hours and compose an appropriate call plan;
- track unanswered calls and control if your employees return calls in a timely manner;
- track employee "friends & family" calls and set special rules to limit and even deny such communications at peak load hours.

Thus you can:

- smooth out peak loads on your phone network;
- thoroughly control your staff daily activities and set corporate rules to improve employee productivity.

Conclusion

As it was shown above, appropriate IP telephony software can help you:

- automate processing of up to 80% of incoming calls and release your staff to process more complicated requests;
- smooth out peaks load hours;
- save your effort getting incoming messages from numerous sources;
- save your employee time on daily communications;
- improve call processing at all your sites with a single solution and save money for purchasing separate solutions for each site;
- control your staff daily activities and enhance your employee productivity and improve your customer loyalty.

Alexander Anoshin is the author of the book, "The Connected Enterprise", from which you can learn how to reinforce your enterprise with VoIP (you can find the book here: <http://bcs-it.com/books/connected-enterprise/>).

Alexander is the CEO of BCS-IT, which specializes in VoIP software development.

