



## Business Process Optimization: The Contact Center is a Good Place to Start

By Brian Hinton, Principal Consultant

*The National Association of Call Centers | Volume 5, Issue 3, February 12, 2010*

Organizations have understood the value of reviewing and optimizing processes for over 100 years. The focus started back in the 1890s with continuous process improvement, grew in significance after WWII with the manufacturing quality initiatives flowing out of Japan, and became Business Process Reengineering (BPR) in the 1990s. Yet moving process optimization out of manufacturing and into the enterprise as a whole has been difficult because:

- End-to-end process change requires total organizational buy-in and massive change. *[You can't turn a ship on a dime.]*
- End-to-end process change crosses organizational boundaries. *[It's tough to break down the silos.]*
- Organizations can be jaded by the ebb and flow of the latest organizational fad. *[Not again!]*

One hundred years of experience tells us that there is value in optimizing processes. The contact center can be a great place to break through the enterprise barriers. Why the contact center?

- Most centers have complex desktops that were cobbled together with less than ideal application integration and the associated processes.
- The contact center is a critical element for many of the organization's internal processes.
- The contact center is made up of labor intensive, repetitive, high volume processes. There is "low hanging fruit" that could generate results – in measurable payback - quickly and secure buy-in to go further.
- Business Process Optimization (BPO) is a way to improve service while reducing costs, breaking the historical tradeoff between better service and lower costs. *You can have it all!*

To begin a business optimization project, define the overall project in detail. Identify the opportunity for process redesign and develop the associated business case for the project. Define and document the business drivers for process redesign project and the goals for the specific project. A detailed project definition includes scope, budget and timeline.

Next, form a project team by identifying appropriate team members based on the project definition. Give the team the opportunity to refine the project definition during the initial team meetings. Then, to complete project preparation, develop a communication plan that starts with passing project details to the entire organization to begin preparing for change.

Over the next few weeks, we will provide a series of articles that provide an overview of the steps in a business process optimization project for your contact center. They include:

- Discover – understand your world, the possibilities and your current business processes
- Assess and analyze – look for improvement opportunities, identify options, define principles and assumptions, develop preliminary value analysis
- Define and Develop/Design – make a plan that defines what you can really change, including phasing, initial redesign and ROI
- Document and Validate – map your new processes and test
- Execution – define critical success factors, including a cross-functional team, a pilot, formal change management and monitoring/fine tuning



We hope that this series inspires you to explore process optimization in your own center and provides effective guidelines to get you started.