



Becoming the Best: Assessing your Front-line Operations Organization Structure

By Brian Hinton

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In our last installment in this series, we talked about front-line operational assessments. That story would be incomplete without due consideration of your most expensive and valuable resource – labor.

Therefore, this article provides a framework for assessing your front-line organizational structure to ensure you strike the right balance between efficiency and effectiveness.

Defining the Scope of the Assessment

An organizational assessment takes a thorough look at your work team structure and sizing, and the staffing of those teams. The structural component looks at the grouping of employees across teams, the definition of the job roles and responsibilities within the teams, and the supervisory span of control. Sizing looks at the resources allocated to the workload across those various roles and responsibilities, and whether the organization is properly staffed.

The staffing component looks at where centers secure employees and ensures that the hiring/recruiting approach is consistent with the sourcing strategy. Sourcing can include use of outsourcing, home agents, temps, full time and part time staff, and remote sites to meet daily, peak and seasonal needs. Staff assessment also includes review of compensation, performance management and feedback, rewards/recognition and incentives, and career paths available to staff. These considerations have a direct impact on quality, motivation, satisfaction, and attrition.

Front-line Organization Issues and Opportunities

When looking for opportunities to improve the front-line organization, some common themes emerge. We often discover unnecessarily small, inefficient work groups. The typical motivation for these small groups is supervisor span of control or reporting. While there may be legitimate motivation for smaller work groups, you should be wary of inefficient organizational practices that spark a degree of segmentation that you don't really need. Whatever segmentation is required, ensure you remain as efficient as possible by creating an overflow/backup routing process so available and qualified resources can help busy groups.

A second theme in our assessments is inconsistently achieving service levels due to lack of scheduling flexibility. Most organizations that use workforce management tools effectively analyze staff required in 15 or 30 minute segments. In order to be able to schedule to react to staff requirements at that level of detail, you must have flexibility to alter overall staff numbers. A staff structure with all full-time and fixed shifts does not provide sufficient flexibility.

Another typical issue is excessive attrition. It's a common problem, but your goal should be to maximize retention. One culprit is inadequate coaching and feedback due to overtaxed supervisors. The other "usual suspects" are having the wrong person in the wrong job due to misaligned sourcing, hiring, and recruiting, and job descriptions that are out of date and don't reflect the true nature of the role. The lack of career path can also cause staff to move elsewhere for growth. Other sources of agent dissatisfaction include lower than market pay and unachievable incentives.



Problems with organizational issues lead to not enough people to handle the workload and meet targets. Remember, the overall goal is to organize and staff as efficiently as possible to meet service level and other performance targets.

Apply Best Practices to you Front-line Organization Structure

Best practices can help focus your assessment and the action plan to improve. Our best practice mantra for the front-line organization structure: *Your organizational structure provides the appropriate numbers and types of resources to achieve goals.* Include the following best practices as part of your assessment.

- Roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities within the center are clearly defined.
- The organizational design enables strategic planning and execution while also addressing the day-to-day demands of the operation.
- The organization offers appropriate opportunities for growth and development, and incentives, rewards, and recognition that motivate appropriate behavior and employee satisfaction.
- Sourcing and hiring approaches are effective and aligned with business goals, deliver appropriate staff levels with the proper skills, and optimize retention.
- Established and proven feedback processes and procedures are applied consistently and fairly across the organization.
- Strategy, goals, and outcomes are clearly communicated across all levels of the organization.