



Becoming the Best: Assessing your Technology

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Many centers have a love/hate relationship with their technology – always hoping for the next great thing that will transform their center, yet struggling with existing tools and each new project. An assessment can take a hard look at technology and find ways to get more out of what you have and pursue the right technologies, in the right ways, to ensure high value results.

Defining the Scope of the Assessment

Here is a starter list for consideration in your technology assessment, looking at both what you have and what might fill gaps to meet business goals and requirements:

- Voice switching - PBX/ACD, including VoIP strategy
- Routing – Multisite and multimedia, including tying in home agents and outsourcers
- Computer Telephony Integration (CTI), which may include applications beyond “screen pops” such as desktop softphone, outbound dialing, and multimedia routing and reporting for a variety of media such as Email, text chat, and web collaboration
- IVR and the use of speech recognition for both prompting for authentication and call routing and Self Service
- Web self service and its integration to the center
- Customer Relationship Management, including contact management, scripting, workflows and potentially Knowledge Management
- The desktop configuration and usability, including access to all relevant applications
- Performance tools including: WFM, QM/call recording, reporting, analytics (data and speech), performance optimization tools such as scorecards or dashboards, eLearning and customer satisfaction surveys/Voice of the Customer
- Web 2.0/social media applications and integration

In addition to specific technologies, you’ll need to assess architecture, applications, integration, sourcing, business continuity/resiliency and disaster recovery, support structures and processes, and more.

Technology Issues and Opportunities

It’s easy to find issues and opportunities when looking at the use of or need for technology. Many centers lack the right technology because they’ve never defined a coherent strategy and built the business case for what they really need. Others have the technology but deployed it for the wrong reasons. Too often the “justification” for a new system was really just that someone thought it was the next great thing or got enamored with a product or vendor, IT or another department unilaterally declared “this is what we’re going to get,” or relationships at high levels led to big purchases. Inevitably, these scenarios lead to poorly deployed or little used solutions, or situations in which the contact center has to make do with messy desktops and workarounds that impact performance and the customer experience.

Since it’s not likely that you’ll be able to re-write history, you might kick-start a better future by rectifying or avoiding these common pitfalls:

- Implementations where the “new” stuff gets put in to look just like the “old” stuff with the promise of taking advantage of all those new fangled capabilities *later*. Alas, later never seems to come and technology cynicism builds. *There is no time like the present!*



- Standalone applications where staff act as manual integration interfaces, performing time-consuming, unscalable, and error-prone tasks daily. *Keep your eyes peeled for instances in which data gets hauled into Excel for snazzy reports that no one else can replicate and few trust.*
- User interfaces that weren't really designed with users in mind – CSRs and customers. *Hint: Get feedback on your desktop applications and IVR.*

When it comes to the “who” of technology deployment, it's time to review and rethink sourcing. There are an abundance of options available – hosted, software as a service, managed services, on-demand, and even good old-fashioned premise-based – from an ever-increasing slew of vendors. Every center could benefit from understanding IT's strategic sourcing positions and coordinating with IT for a careful review with each technology decision. Every product and vendor choice leads to a relationship – for planning, deployment, use, and support – that can last many years and impact many facets of technology optimization.

Apply Best Practices to your Technology

Technology best practices make a strong stand for strategic alignment: the goal is simply to *put technology tools in place to enable the operation to serve its mission*. Mature organizations derive maximum technology value by applying these best practices:

- The company is not over-invested or under-invested for the role of the center in achieving its goals, and the resources (human and financial) available
- Technology is properly applied to business needs, considering the user experience (internal and external)
- Business and IT work together to optimize technology – from planning through implementation and ongoing support
- Solutions are sought and implemented in line with enterprise architecture, standards, integration, and sourcing strategies, while addressing the unique needs of the center
- All users have a clear understanding of the appropriate use of the tools through training and reinforcement