

REDUCE EARLY TURNOVER WITH THE LATEST TOOLS

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You can improve recruiting, hiring, onboarding and training!

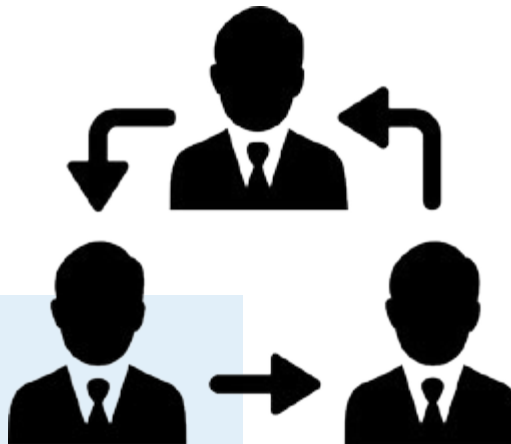
BY Lori Bocklund, Strategic Contact Inc.

Many centers struggle to find the right frontline staff, and then suffer further when hirees don't show up for training, quit during training or quickly determine that this job isn't for them. The company invests significant time and money in the process with nothing but an FTE gap to show for it. Technology tools from vendors of enterprise applications, workforce optimization suites, and niche applications and services can address these all too common scenarios and launch centers on a fast track to better, more productive agents.

GOOD FIT AND FAST

Whether premise-based, or increasingly cloud-based, recruiting, hiring, onboarding and training tools address common challenges and opportunities of today's new-hire process. Centers are looking for speed: They need new-hires fast and don't want to lose a good candidate to another job. In addition, they seek quality and fit, with agents ready, willing and able to do the job well in a multichannel world. They need performance, including speed to productivity and ongoing results. And everyone seeks retention of quality agents, within the center and potentially across the organization longer term.

Centers can't find the best-fit agents fast enough using only standard HR processes and tools. It's time to engage technology to sharpen the focus on the right agents and to get them in the door and productive quickly.



Human Resources and the Contact Center

Both human resources and the contact center play a key role in optimizing the “talent acquisition” process. HR has broad responsibility and perspective to support enterprisewide needs, and its pursuit of technology generally aligns with that charter. But the contact center is different and often struggles to get value from HR’s enterprisewide tools and services, or seeks its own resources.

The market offers both enterprise tools and contact center-specific tools for recruiting, hiring, onboarding and training (SEE TABLE 1). Enterprise HR tools are broadly known as “recruiting software” or “applicant tracking systems” (ATS), but the technology can go beyond these areas to include more of the end-to-end process from requisition to onboarding, as well as reporting and analytics. Given the challenges of the center, training tools are also critical to get those new-hires on a path to productivity.

The contact center needs to work with HR to apply enterprise tools to the center or justify its need for unique tools. Collaboration, discussion, assessment and planning will help HR understand the center’s business needs. As part of

this process, the contact center must convey the unique policy and practice needs of the center and how those can impact the tool requirements. Examples abound: the importance of specific skills qualifications, detailed attendance policies, tracking and evaluation, routine performance management and unique schedules, to name a few.

Once on the same page, HR and the contact center can work together to address the pain

points and improve the timeline and success rate—from position approval and posting to productive employee—through a combination of applying enterprise tools to contact center needs and securing center-specific tools where appropriate.

RECRUITING

Some companies receive an abundance of resumes while others struggle to get candidates—or at least good ones. In either case, the goal is to attract and identify an appropriate number of qualified candidates—and therein lies the first challenge.

Centers need to determine first what constitutes the “best candidates.” Technology can help by identifying top performers among existing employees and characterize their strengths through analytics tied to performance scorecards. This input enables centers to emphasize these qualities in job listings, screening techniques, and other recruitment efforts to find

similar candidates. Tools can help convey the positive things about the company and the position, with a creative, multimedia approach (e.g., day in the life of the center or an agent). Staff can even play a role, posting on social media about performance rewards and center accomplishments. Insights on what works may also influence the places the jobs are posted and how the center uses staff to provide referrals or help promote the openings.

General HR recruiting applications have applicability to the contact center: writing job descriptions, approvals,

postings, applicant tracking, etc. These systems can be configured for contact center-specific processes, including timeline considerations when speed is of great importance. You can use these tools (typically online) to screen applicants based on the identified criteria, and then track and move them through the

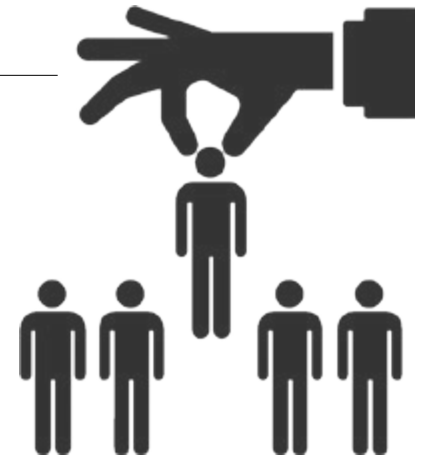


TABLE 1: Enterprise tools and resources can work hand-in-hand with contact center tools and resources

TOOL	ENTERPRISE	CONTACT CENTER
Analytics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enterprise analytics tends to be more general and rely on analysts in other groups to bring focus to the contact center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact center analytics are specialized for the contact center Niche tools identify top performers and their characteristics to create target hire profiles Contact center analytics are often part of a WFO suite Options include data, speech, text and/or desktop analytics, along with scorecards and dashboards (often part of a “Performance Management” package)
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR may have online tools for screening and may target specific skills for the contact center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact center is interested in targeted screening in areas such as customer service experience or willingness to work specific schedules
Skills Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR may have online or in-house tools for skills assessment and may target specific skills for the contact center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact center skill interests include keyboarding, soft skills, language, problem-solving, etc.
Simulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR may have online or in-house tools for simulation and may help create specific simulations for the contact center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact center simulations should create virtual contacts to handle and demonstrate soft skills (in a variety of media)
Knowledge Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The enterprise may have KM tools or an intranet with useful information for new-hires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact center KM tools help a new-hire find specific information quickly and easily, reducing the training burden and accelerating time to productivity
Online learning modules/ eLearning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR may have online or in-house tools for eLearning and may target specific modules for the contact center Often used for corporate compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact center eLearning can be very specialized and integrated into the other WFO tools (e.g., coaching, performance management)
Learning Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An enterprise LMS is used to define and track required training (including security, compliance, harassment, diversity, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact center needs the LMS to be configurable to its specific training needs and ideally integrate with other WFO tools

defined process. Be sure to include updates on their status so you don't lose a good candidate as they wonder what is happening (a common problem in hiring these days—lack of communication and “closing the loop”). Remember, easy

updates can occur via text message or other channel of choice.

Simulation can help the hirees to gain insights into the job role and the hirer to understand how they'll do in that role.

tasks to identify the best ones to proceed to the next steps in the process. Examples for contact centers include: keyboard skills, listening skills, problem-solving skills, language

HIRING

With a qualified pool, the next step is selecting and hiring the best of the bunch. Assessments, simulations and other evaluation tools can all help—both to ensure the candidate fits the center, and the job fits the candidate. Start with screening, using basic filtering

skills, technical or application skills, personality characteristics suited to customer service or sales, and written skills if targeted for email, chat or other text-based interactions. Simulation can help the hirees to gain insights into the job role and the hirer to understand how they'll do in that role.

The tools enable a closer look at competency in the media the candidate and customer will use—e.g., phone call, email and/or chat. Evaluation can target specifics for the media, such as tone on a call, or spelling and punctuation for written communications.

Going back to the analysis that fed recruiting, assessments can use predictive analytics to review the candidates' results and compare to past hires and their performance on the job and predict success (or failure). Assessment results can also identify training needs—for individuals or for the center overall based on trends that reveal gaps between the labor pool abilities and job demands.

Centers can choose between applying enterprise tools to their needs, or finding niche services and applications to manage the various stages of screening, assessments and interviews. Online tools offer advantages of 24/7 availability, speed to complete steps, and automated updates in media of choice. Examples of contact center-specific vendors include HireIQ, FurstPerson and CEB Global Talent Management.



ONBOARDING

Onboarding is the next step with a new-hire, and centers can still get caught with challenges here. Delaying a start date to align with a new-hire class can risk losing someone to another job opportunity. But once they are in the door, centers need to quickly instill confidence, enjoyment and success in the job—and not risk scaring someone off with mind-numbing, non-productive time (e.g., endless observations).

The basics of onboarding (e.g., background checks, corporate orientation, paperwork for payroll) are typically handled through an enterprise system or process. Then it's on to the contact center.

When a center has to bring people on before a training class starts, use tools to help them be useful and contribute while they are learning. Assign them some online learning modules that prepare them for the classroom or other formal training, and give them the basics on the processes, tools, soft skills, products, etc. Assign easy tasks that require minimal training and quick review but get them doing “hands-on” work, such as direct support to frontline agents. Use Knowledge Management and workflows to reduce the training burden

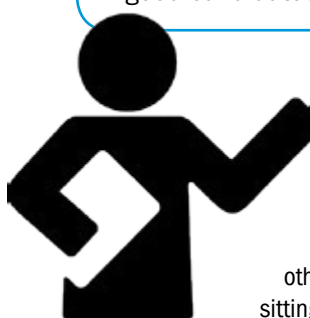
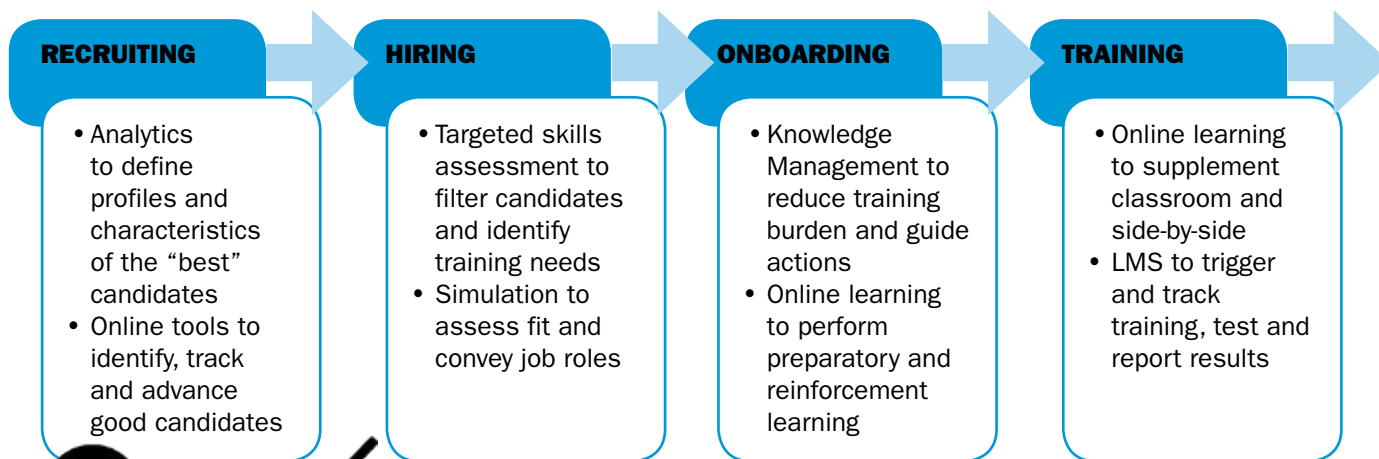
WFM PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE

Too often centers don't do a good job of forecasting staff needs, yet it is critical to planning for and getting the right number of people in place at the right time. Forecasting has to take into account recruiting, hiring, onboarding and training time. Ideally, it treats new-hire performance expectations (e.g., handle time) differently as their proficiency builds. Another common issue is creating the right schedules, optimizing them while ensuring that they are attractive to staff, and showing how people can progress into preferred schedules.

Reasons for forecasting and scheduling shortfalls are abundant: lack of inputs, moving targets, and the lack tools or resources to create good forecasts and schedules being common. It's an area ripe for change. Even though WFM is a “mature” technology, it needs to be applied more effectively and success in the new-hire process is a large opportunity.

Use WFM tools to create the best forecasts you can with the data available (and to catalyze getting and using better data!), and to build and optimize schedules. Put the processes and people in place to use them effectively and the challenges of recruiting, hiring, onboarding and training will decrease.

FIGURE 1: The Four Key Steps in the New Hire Process each have technology opportunities



and guide their actions. With good search functions, the new-hire is led to bite-size knowledge that won't overwhelm. Agents can shadow other staff, but can also benefit from sitting with Quality Assurance to see the review process using a recording and

Quality Monitoring (QM) system with screen capture. Sample recordings can include the "best" contacts as well as some of the issues and things to avoid.

TRAINING

Training is the last step in launching a full-fledged new-hire, and it can take on many forms: online, classroom, side-by-side and On-the-Job Training (OJT) being common. Smaller centers typically have less formal training but can still benefit from training tools.

A starting point can be professional services to assess the current training program. Look at the process and results and define changes to achieve goals or pursue incremental improvements (e.g., improve quality and/or productivity, speed to competency, upselling/cross-selling, etc.). Some changes may be more about content or method than technology, but training tools can help a center address diverse learning styles and create and deliver training in line with adult learning principles and change management concepts. Training should provide context of why the lessons are important, instill knowledge, let them do (practice, apply), and reinforce what was taught.

Training tools include online training modules (aka eLearning), simulation (including testing and training systems), and self-assessment, which can use recordings and QM. And with the new generation and changing channels, consider things like gamification, use of mobile devices and apps, and social

media (including internal to the training class).

Use enterprise or contact center tools to develop, deliver, trigger, test and track training. The Learning Management System (LMS) is a typical enterprisewide tool centers use—as long as it is configured to accommodate the contact center-specific needs. Contact center-specific tools can have the advantage of being integrated with other Workforce Optimization (WFO) tools. For example, quality scores and coaching sessions identify training module needs, and the eLearning tool delivers training at the appropriate time as determined using the Workforce Management (WFM) system. Finally, niche applications can target specific contact center training needs. Keynomics is one example, teaching and assessing keyboarding skills, with other modules focused on key center needs such as listening skills.

Seek Tools for Early Success

Start with a strategy and plan that considers what you have and what you need to optimize recruiting, hiring, onboarding and training. Fine-tune or reconfigure existing applications. Identify gaps and fill them with additional tools over time. Work with HR to leverage enterprise systems and use contact center-specific applications where appropriate. Invest in tools and define the processes to effectively leverage them, with skilled and trained people to manage and apply them. Then you will put your staff on a path to success from day one and eliminate those FTE gaps. •



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