



Contact Centers Get RACI to Bridge Organizational Silos

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For as many years as we've worked with contact centers, we've heard the plaintive cries from management and front line staff about the woeful lack of coordination across departmental lines. Marketing campaigns kick off without consideration for the impact on contact center staffing or the need to equip agents for a response. Misaligned communication and processes for end-to-end service delivery result in "dropped balls" that send aggravated customers back to the contact center for redress. IT and the business have stalemates over requirements and priorities. It's bad for business and bad for morale.

The case for operational integration across the enterprise is strong. Contact centers are strategic assets that are interdependent with their corporate counterparts. As a customer-facing organization, their performance has a direct bearing on customer acquisition and retention. As a key element in the "supply chain," what they do – *or don't do* – impacts the efficiency and effectiveness of all other parts of the business. The same can be said of marketing, sales, product management, engineering, field operations, and fulfillment or other back office functions. Given the technology-intensity of operations, IT needs to walk shoulder-to-shoulder with all of the other organizations.

We've taken a tool out of the standard "project management tool chest" to illustrate the importance of interdepartmental coordination. A **RACI Matrix** identifies the roles of individuals or organizations in completing tasks or deliverables for a planned initiative. RACI stands for:

- **Responsible:** the person(s) who complete a task either by doing it directly or delegating it to others under their supervision
- **Accountable:** the decision maker with the ultimate responsibility for completion of a task and the associated outcome
- **Consulted:** the person(s) whose input affects the design or execution of the task and with whom there is a need for two-way dialog
- **Informed:** the person(s) who need to be "in the loop" on plans and status due to a potential or anticipated impact on their work

While we've typically used this tool for process-oriented projects and system implementations, it's equally adept at capturing relationships between organizations as they pursue a slate of major initiatives. The following example might apply to a consumer products company:

	Marketing	CC Mgmt	CC Front Line	Back Office	IT
Plan/launch major advertising campaign	R/A	C	I	I	C
Execute telemarketing campaign	I	A	R	I	C
Restructure fulfillment processes	I	C	I	R/A	C
Engage customers through social media	A	C/R	R	–	C

For most folks, it's easy to identify "where the buck stops" (a.k.a., the *accountable* party) and who is actually going to do the work (a.k.a., the *responsible* party.) The value comes in thinking through all the organizational touch points where there may be sound (expert) advice, where the activities of one group have a ripple effect on others, and where a modest amount of information, feedback, and/or training might



make others more effective at their jobs. A RACI Matrix combined with high level process flows gets everyone on the same page.

The very act of assembling a cross-functional team to craft a RACI Matrix could provide teachable moments:

- Folks outside the contact center may not understand what happens to service levels – and, hence customer enthusiasm/satisfaction – when the center gets hit with unanticipated traffic.
- Process change in any organization affects hand-offs with all the others. Even if one group's restructuring yields stellar performance on its organizational metrics, it doesn't do much good if the end-to-end customer experience goes awry.
- IT is often the "last to know" when folks launch initiatives that bump up against capacity constraints on systems and services. They can't always turn on a dime to resolve the matter. Better to involve them early and understand the requisite lead times than get an unpleasant surprise.

Everyone's schedules are packed these days. Time and distance can foil the best of intentions when it comes to collaboration and communications. But a periodic conversation around a RACI Matrix could yield dividends several times over.