Analytics: Beyond Data Proliferation

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Contact centers have no shortage of data, but most centers struggle to use it wisely. They fail to really look at the data with an analytical eye. The end goal often seems to be simply producing and distributing reports. And the tools are the easy scapegoat for any shortage of insight.

If you want to break the cycle of "just cranking out reports," it's time to focus on and understand the distinction between data, reporting, and analytics.

Data are the raw bits and bytes produced by the systems and applications used in the contact center. Structured data are organized in fields in a database. Centers strive to consolidate data from many sources.

Reporting organizes the raw data. Most applications have some "canned" reports, while the user friendly ones offer customization capabilities. Reacting to the challenges of presenting the data in a useful way, analysts often dump data into other tools, such as Excel, Access, Crystal, data warehouses, or other tools.

Consolidation of data from multiple sources is the first step in ***analytics***. However, simply combining data from multiple sources doesn't imply analysis. Creating insight or meaning from the data is the essence of analysis. It uses the relationships revealed by the data to dig deeper into the data to find cause/effect, ideally leading to action within the contact center and across the enterprise.

Scorecards and dashboards are commonly used analytics tools. A ***"scorecard"*** is a way to address the question, "How did I/we do?" It presents a <u>historical</u> performance picture against targets and the peer group, along with trends, generally using visual indicators (e.g., red, yellow, green) with the numbers. A ***"dashboard"*** on the other hand answers "How are we doing?" It typically provides a <u>real-time</u> view with gauges or some other sort of visual indicators. In either case, these tools are most useful when applied against a balanced set of metrics that consider such things as productivity, quality, costs, and the customer experience.

Analytics demands focus on the goals in using information:
- What is the data telling us? What is happening especially with trends we observe?
- Why is it happening?
- What is the impact if the trend continues?
- What are we doing about it? What actions will we take?

These questions are sometimes difficult to answer, prompting many to purchase more tools that produce more reports. They assume that more data displayed in more ways will enhance understanding. Lacking investment in the people and processes to use the tools productively, they wind up with another stack of reports or visual displays and no greater insight into their operations. Analysis can't be an afterthought or a "spare time" responsibility.

Analytics should compare effort to outcomes, efficiency to effectiveness, internal results to customer experience. It takes commitment, brainpower, and effort to yield insights. It has limited value without a broader enterprise focus on the results. Consider bringing a cross-functional team together that can

initiate, drive and advocate for the change opportunities revealed in the analysis. Alternatively, create an analytics group, carefully defining where it will sit – contact center, marketing, customer experience group, IT, etc. If you – or your leaders – chafe at the investment, ask these questions:

- What's the value of understanding which marketing programs are working?
- What if you could gain new insights into the customer lifecycle and customer behavior?
- What could the product people do with more intelligence on issues, customer feedback, and resolutions?
- What's the value to your company of a five-point improvement in customer satisfaction?
- What can you do with more knowledge about why people contact the company?
- If you had greater insight into what CSRs are doing and saying, could you develop more effective processes, tools, training and coaching?
- If you better understood the impact of technology on overall performance, might IT reprioritize some things?

Analytics opens the door to answers far beyond what your spreadsheets and canned reports can reveal. It's time to extract the value from the plethora of data at your fingertips and drive productive change that makes the entire organization more efficient and effective in achieving business goals.