

'Mission Accomplished' for Customer Support Command Center

“Our customer support center strategy is about managing relationships, not just incidents. Customer satisfaction is about having a good product, of course, but also it requires an exceptional support center that answers the first call quickly, reliably and effectively. To deliver the best customer experience, you must have real-time visibility into critical metrics, like first-call resolution.”

A leading global manufacturer of high-technology products needed better visibility to deliver on service level agreements (SLAs) with enterprise customers worldwide. The company delivers three tiers of service – platinum, gold and silver – requiring two- to four-hour response times.

Operating from a central “command center,” the company’s problem resolution team for enterprise customers needed to deliver an optimal customer experience, using the latest technologies to reduce downtime and deliver increased reliability and greater value. In fact, customer experience is the company’s top business driver, captured through email surveys automatically generated after every support call as well as ad hoc surveys throughout the year.

At any given moment, the company might have thousands of open customer service requests (CSRs), managed by hundreds of support and service technicians in North America, Europe and Asia. The company needed a global view across all enterprise accounts, with the goal of achieving an optimal customer experience. This means seeing each account as a relationship, not just an incident management process.

The challenge: How do you achieve consistent, responsive service in compliance with SLAs – when critical metrics are only updated every hour? The company needed up-to-the-minute monitoring and reporting to meet its service commitments.

Getting it right the first time

A key strategic goal for the support center is to resolve the customer’s problem on the first call (or email). An exceptional support center answers the first call quickly, reliably and effectively, which creates high “first call resolution” – thus avoiding follow-on calls to the support center. If the contact center can effectively contain calls and manage backlog, the cost savings can

Industry:

- High-tech manufacturing

Geography:

- International

Information Needs

- Access to real-time data across multiple data sources
- Self-service capabilities; ability to deploy as a “configuration” vs. a development effort, avoiding IT roadblocks
- Support hundreds of users worldwide
- Process tens of thousands of records per minute
- Up-to-minute metrics; multiple dimensions
- Low total cost of ownership (TCO)
- Ease of deployment, rapid time to market
- Scalable, flexible architecture

Platforms:

- Oracle databases and eBusiness suite

Users:

- More than 400 agents
- 500 depot centers, with 10,000+ field technicians

Solution:

- IBM Cognos Now!

Benefits:

- Compelling TCO and ROI in 8 weeks
- Real-time visibility into key customer support center operational KPIs
- Reduction of case aging and backlog
- Faster case resolution
- Increased customer satisfaction

be translated into lower operating costs and a better customer experience.

Repeat calls and dispatches significantly escalate costs, while also eroding customer satisfaction. The company calculates the cost of a dispatch to be three to four times the cost of problem resolution via the contact center. In addition to first-call resolution, critical success factors for the contact center include:

- Reduction of case aging – Do we have the right people at the right place at the right time?
- Accuracy of diagnosis or resolution – Are we using the right resources and the right knowledge bases?
- Quality of the technical professionals – Are we intelligently triaging for assigning cases?

All of these critical success factors depend on having real-time reporting tools. The company needed a continuous monitoring solution for SLA compliance.

Evolution of real-time reporting

The command center's manager is a strong proponent of real-time reporting within call center operations, convinced the company could never optimize service without this capability. A few years ago, the company introduced a real-time reporting schema that could show an entire case summary in one view, but the difficulty was that each customer or account might have a different SLA. The system allowed them to slice and dice data, but it required extensive development effort and hard coding.

The second generation of real-time reporting went the next step and allowed for automatic notifications and introduced the concept of thresholds. However, it could not take the company to the next level – driving compliance with SLAs, enabling cost containment, and providing the necessary process improvements to support containment strategy and efforts with enhanced management visibility.

Now the company needed a next-generation reporting system that would enable continuous monitoring and real-time visibility into critical key metrics like first call resolution, number of repeat calls, and repeat dispatches.

Implementing this type of continuous SLA monitoring solution would be challenging. The company relied on data from at least four databases and a variety of applications, including a personnel system, a dispatch

system, and contact center switch information. The company wanted a system with the agility to manipulate data from multiple sources like these.

It was also critical to be able to update and make changes to the system easily without creating another burden on IT. The existing system was difficult to update, so that the most minor changes became an IT development project, creating additional costs and delays.

The solution

After evaluating a number of business intelligence and reporting solutions, the company selected IBM Cognos Now! – a continuous monitoring solution available as a prepackaged hardware, software, or virtual machine appliance. One of the most compelling reasons was the small footprint of the solution, unlike the existing system. The company needed a solution that would offer a low total cost of ownership (TCO) by placing minimal demand on IT staff and system resources and requiring minimal maintenance.

At the same time, the organization needed a robust solution that could provide real-time data access across more than six data sources. IBM Cognos Now! was able to support hundreds of users, and process tens of thousands of records, minute by minute, with more than 20 data dimensions and dozens of key metrics.

Within just four weeks, IBM Cognos Now! was up and running, providing continuous monitoring across key performance metrics such as:

- First call resolution
- Number of repeat calls
- Repeat dispatch
- Current incident detail
- Call volume
- Call escalations.

With real-time monitoring capabilities, the command center is now better able to drive additional efficiencies across the support center environment and ensure compliance with SLAs. Previously, the company did not have management visibility into customer service requests (CSRs). With the IBM Cognos Now! solution, the command center realized it had more than 1,000 open CSRs. Armed with this kind of information, it is now much better equipped to drive compliance within the support organization.

Freed from having to gather performance data from multiple sources, contact center managers and agents now have more time to spend on other tasks, enabling an increase in productivity and better resourcing within the support center.

Rapid ROI

The IBM Cognos Now! return on investment was achieved in six to eight weeks, based on the company's top three business drivers: decrease in repeat calls, talk time and in number of repeat dispatches – the most significant cost savings for the support center.

With IBM Cognos Now!, the company now has a SLA monitoring solution for ensuring SLA compliance and optimal case resolution, reducing response time and creating an enhanced customer experience. The customer support command center is on track to achieve its goal of 100% compliance with enterprise customers' SLAs, customer satisfaction rates more than 90%, and 100% renewal rates for support contracts. Business improvements can be measured in minutes, not days or weeks.

With its initial "mission accomplished," the command center is now looking ahead to the next phase – a rollout of the solution across additional geographies. Because IBM Cognos Now! is an open solution, it will offer real-time reporting across any environment, ensuring it will scale and grow with the support center's needs.

About Cognos, an IBM company

Cognos, an IBM company, is the world leader in business intelligence and performance management solutions. It provides world-class enterprise planning and BI software and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. Cognos was acquired by IBM in January 2008. For more information, visit <http://www.ibm.com/software/data/> and <http://www.cognos.com>.