DESIGNATED
Citizen-Engaged
Community

THE VALUE OF INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGIES

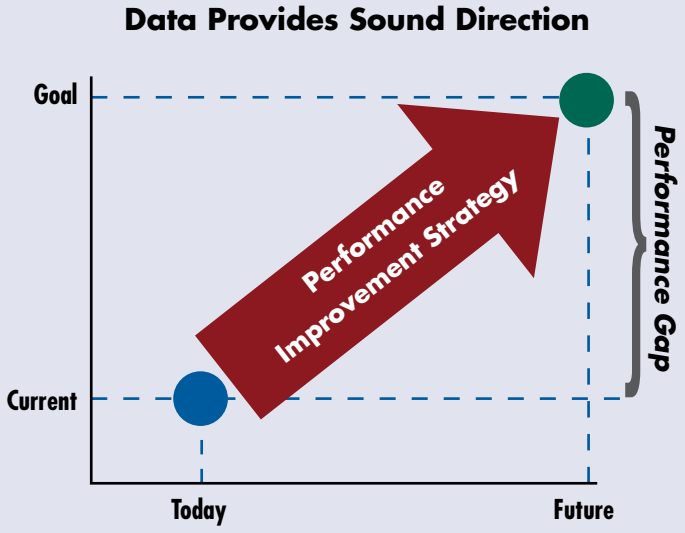
FOR MULTI-CHANNEL CONTACT CENTERS

Achieving Success through Integrated Communications

Contact centers utilize a wide range of technology systems and applications, including telephony and call management; Customer/Citizen Relationship Management (CRM); and web, IVR and mobile applications. Vital requirements are access and connectivity. In best practices, these systems are enhanced with a single knowledge base and integrated with each other and with service department work management systems. The telephony-centric call center has evolved into a multimedia, process-oriented and citizen-centric contact center.

Planning

A key component of successful multi-channel contact centers is a technology plan, coordinated with or as part of an organizational plan. Defined goals, objectives, and timelines not only provide initial direction, but facilitate a transitional service area deployment followed by many local governments. Planning also focuses on innovative uses of existing technologies and how citizens, the contact center and service agencies will or can be using emerging technologies. All nine 2010–12 Citizen-Engaged Communities address their contact centers in written technology plans.



Enhanced Date Through Integrated Technology

Business intelligence tools transform the data captured through call management and CRM solutions into powerful information used for planning, decision making, performance management, and resource allocation. Data provides government organizations with deep visibility into citizen interactions, including the services they use, their levels of satisfaction, and the problems that they experience. Analytical tools equip organizations to adapt to changing circumstances, improve satisfaction levels, and make informed trade-off decisions about costs and levels of service. Because location is often a key to effective service delivery, particularly for local governments, analysis becomes even more powerful when linked with mapping or geographic information systems. Business intelligence tools also enable organizations to use cluster analysis that helps them link cause and effect for service issues. All nine 2010–12 Citizen-Engaged Communities use business intelligence technology to capture performance data.

Connectivity

By integrating technology systems, citizen contact centers can improve efficiency, response time and citizen satisfaction; maintain consistent information and align multiple processes. Integration can be a challenging endeavor. It is important to remember that technology is the tool, not the solution, and that each local government has different requirements. The good news is that technology solutions now offer more open systems, integration opportunities and new media options.

Success in integrating technology depends on several factors. A system to manage call communications is a critical tool to route and queue calls, and provide outstanding data for quality assurance, reporting, and resource management. CRM systems, which come in all shapes and sizes, should automate the activities that follow the initial citizen contact. This means integrating not only the processes, but also sharing the information to eliminate paperwork, extra handoffs, repeated steps, and department silos.

Since a contact center functions as the front line for service departments, important considerations are the applications used by those departments. The best practice is to use the same system, which results in one work order number, accessible notes and close-outs in the same system, same service and priority codes, and one knowledge base. If this is not possible, then interfaces are essential to maintain efficiencies, not just for issuing work orders, but also for data collection, reporting and performance monitoring, as well as extensions to the web and IVR.

Of the first year designated communities, all nine have GIS interfaces and seven have remote and mobile interfaces.

Effectively integrated systems also support mobility and flexibility for remote call agents, mobile field crews and citizens who are using portable devices and smart phones. While e-government most often refers to citizen-facing websites, back-end databases and applications have become integral building blocks in the progression to true citizen engagement.

Improving Service Response with GIS Integration

Integrated technology means that, regardless of the contact channel choice, citizens will get a consistent response. Although availability of channel choices may vary by time and day, integrated systems allow the citizen to access the same informational databases and service request systems, whether the citizen is on the web, speaking with a 311 agent or self-serving via an IVR system.

Network connectivity helps to facilitate knowledge management, and significantly improves productivity and accountability within agencies, through online collaboration tools, video monitoring capabilities and VoIP services for government agencies.

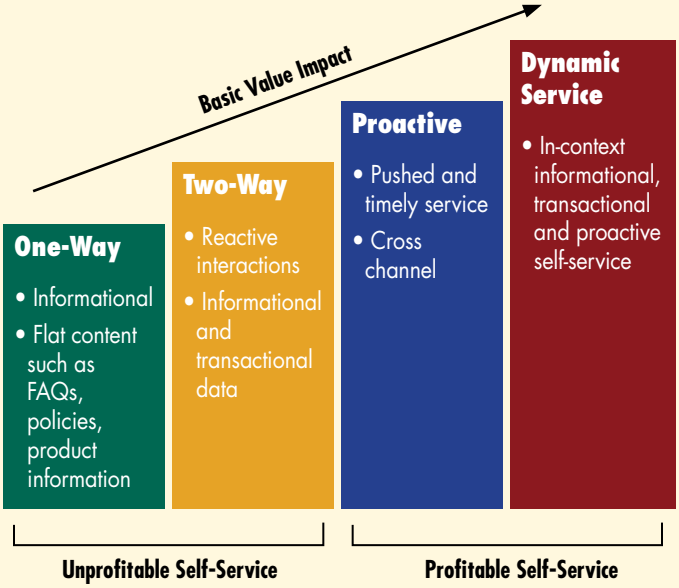
Four of the designated communities use Cisco VoIP call management systems, three use Avaya, one has a Nortel system, and one has a Plant VESTA PBX. For CRMs, three communities have Lagan systems, two use Motorola, two developed in-house systems, one uses Siebel/Oracle and one has NOVO. The designated communities use a variety of IVRs, including Survey System, Cisco, First Data, Websphere, Nortel and Avaya. All nine communities have GIS interfaces and seven have remote and mobile interfaces. Only two currently have voice recognition applications. All communities utilize additional technologies for a variety of functions, such as wallboarding and marquees, call recording, video streaming, and instant messaging.

Self-Service Channels

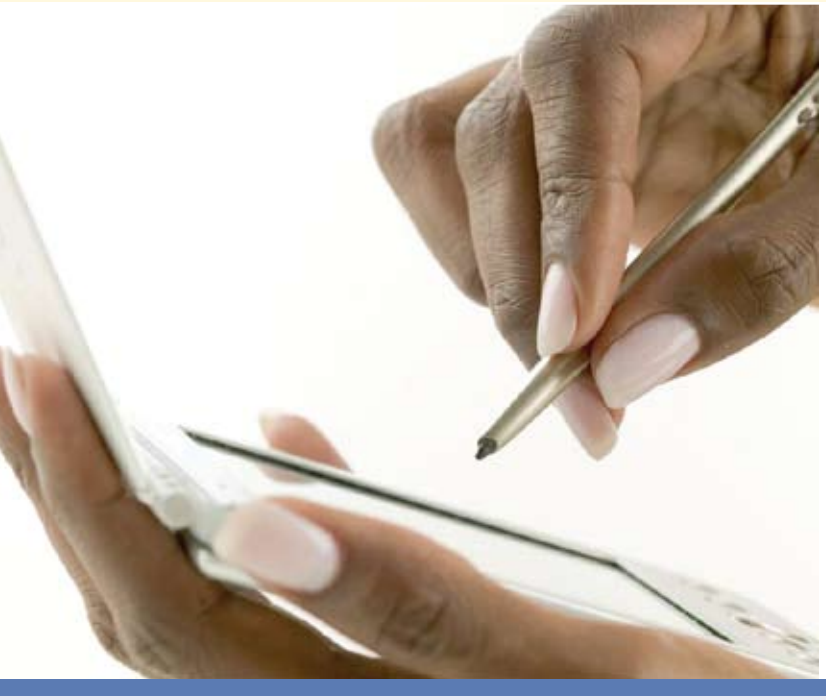
Providing self-service functionality is an important strategy that will help contact center managers balance costs and quality of service and achieve smooth integration from automated self-service to live-agent-handled tasks. Integrated technology can produce integrated service processes, supporting the concept of "closed loop communication," which represents the flow of information from a citizen to a call agent to a work order request system to the service employee to the work item closed in the system and concludes with feedback to the citizen via their channel of choice.

Successful contact centers are gaining tighter integration between channels and increasing their ability to respond to the fast-changing application needs of the call center business. These business drivers are, in turn, leading to greater use of speech recognition and a shift to standards-based platforms and Web-based architectures for voice portals. They also are increasing the need for improved tools to enable call center staff to reconfigure applications without the help of technical staff.

Phases of Self-Service



The 2010–12 Citizen-Engaged Communities have been leaders in expanding to multi-channel options through Web 2.0 tools that include Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, RSS feeds, mashups, mapping, webcasts, podcasts, online chat and blogs.



Disaster Response

311/CRM systems should be considered part of local government emergency management plans and disaster response, especially post disaster information dissemination. The interaction of the 311, 911 and emergency management systems, including homeland security, is essential to ensure maximum responsiveness of the local government. Social media, along with mapping applications, have demonstrated much value in providing platforms for sharing real-time locations, images and information during an emergency, and also function as centralized source for media updates. All nine of the designated communities transition their contact center operations to emergency phone banks to respond to disasters and emergency situations.

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