

HAWAIIAN TELCOM

Communications provider uses call-center business intelligence to improve sales and service



OVERVIEW

Challenges

- Multiple data-collection tools made it difficult to access and use collected information to see how the operation and individuals were performing
- Pulling in offline information and using it in conjunction with online data was not timely and sometimes impossible

Solution

- EMC Consulting call-center assessment and recommendations, development and installation of four dashboards built on Microsoft technologies, and development of technical and user documentation and training

Key benefits

- Easy information access enables the company to make timely and informed decisions
- Eliminates time and effort it previously took to manually aggregate and transform data to create reports
- The company's abandon rate—people who hang up before their calls are answered—dropped 30 percent in the first month
- The company's bridge rate—or how often a rep is able to bridge to selling after taking a call—is now running at 85 percent

Hawaiian Telcom is the state's leading communications provider, offering a wide spectrum of products and services, including local and long-distance calling, high-speed Internet, and wireless. The company's call center is a critical channel for selling products, delivering service, and building customer relationships. Hundreds of agents handle thousands of consumer and business service and sales calls daily—taking orders, answering questions, and resolving technical and billing issues.

To improve customer experience, capitalize on selling opportunities, and help the business run more efficiently, Hawaiian Telcom's call-center management team needed more timely, relevant, and actionable information at all levels.

MAKING OPTIMUM USE OF VALUABLE INFORMATION

As it prepared for emergence from Chapter 11 reorganization, Hawaiian Telcom looked for every opportunity to work more efficiently and maximize its operations. The call-center operation was targeted for improvement as part of its efforts to streamline operations and help the company work smarter. The center already collected dozens of statistics on its calls—average speed of answer, call volume, dropped calls, calls per agent, and more—but multiple data collection tools made it difficult to access and use this information to see how the operation and individuals were performing in meeting service delivery and sales objectives.

“Our metrics were manually compiled,” says Craig Inouye, senior vice president of sales at Hawaiian Telcom. “To create a report to share with a manager, coach, individual agent, or union representative, meant pulling data from as many as 12 different systems.”

Even once data was compiled, considerable effort was required to connect data points in meaningful ways to gain a “big-picture” view of the operation, do a root-cause analysis, or review an individual's performance. Not surprisingly, information was often out-of-date by the time a report was created and forecasting was almost impossible.

“It was very difficult to set goals and monitor progress,” says Inouye. An initiative to build a strong culture of capability and responsibility, for example, was hindered by the inability of agents, coaches, and managers to easily measure individual agent performance. “We invested in a new physical environment for agents—with new ergonomic chairs, workstations, paint, and carpeting,” says Inouye. “But more importantly, we also wanted to empower them with the information they needed to be productive and successful.”

Beyond the challenge of working with diverse data sources, the company had no visibility at all into the offline work agents did when not on the phone, such as manual order entry or answering customer e-mails.



“We always struggled with how to pull the offline information in and use it in conjunction with the online data,” says Jason Fujita, contact center operations director at Hawaiian Telcom. “We knew we needed more automated reporting and some kind of dashboard tool, but we didn’t know what it looked like or how to get started.”

EMC CONSULTING ASSESSMENT MOVES HAWAIIAN TELCOM IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Hawaiian Telcom engaged EMC® Consulting to perform a call-center assessment and advise them. “Besides the technical expertise of pulling data together into one tool, we were looking for guidance to move us in the right direction,” says Fujita.

EMC Consultants with call-center operations experience and business intelligence (BI) expertise worked with Hawaiian Telcom to assess their current operation, analyze data sources, and understand their business and user requirements at all levels.

“The assessment helped us quantify and specify exactly what was needed,” says Inouye. “It also gave us a perspective on how are we were doing compared to other call centers.”

EMC presented a set of recommendations which included quick changes Hawaiian Telcom could make for immediate payback and the creation of a tool to track offline work. EMC then proposed the development of a BI system that would automatically extract data from the offline tool and existing online data sources, integrate it, and transform it using business rules to create analytics and provide realtime visibility into operations and performance against goals.

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CRAIG INOUYE
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES

FOUR DASHBOARDS BUILT ON MICROSOFT TECHNOLOGY

EMC consultants used Microsoft® technologies to provide low-cost, easy-to-use, extensible functionality. The system uses Microsoft SQL Server® Integration Services (SIIS) to stream performance data with more than 60 different metrics into a single Microsoft SQL Server Analysis Services cube and then present the analytical information in dashboards in a Microsoft SharePoint® portal.

To meet different user needs, EMC developed four levels of dashboards that report and analyze call-center performance using specific measures or key performance indicators (KPIs). Red, yellow, and green indicators show the status of each KPI and recent performance for each KPI which enables quick trend analysis. The Executive dashboard presents high-level metrics on performance, sales, marketing, and work management by line of business, so senior managers can spot issues at a glance and look at trends. The Call-Center Manager dashboard provides visibility into all call-center operations, and a Supervisor/Coach dashboard presents team metrics. Users can drill-down for details, including the performance of individual agents. An Agent dashboard gives individual agents access to up-to-the-minute information on their own performance against goals, so they can see if they’re on track to meet objectives or where they need to improve.

The Management dashboards also support “what if” analyses that calculate any relationship among an array of interdependent variables. Reports can be ad hoc, as well as scheduled for regular, automated delivery. Reports can also easily be distributed online, so others can view them and collaborate proactively to improve results or resolve issues.

USER ADOPTION

The EMC consultants spent significant time working with Hawaiian Telcom employees at all levels of the call-center operation to make sure the metrics and tools fit the business needs and to advise on developing and aligning user skills to meet business requirements. “The EMC consultants were on the floor every day for weeks, watching agents and asking questions. As a result, everyone really felt part of the solution,” says Inouye.

In addition to installing the new system, EMC developed technical and user documentation and training and supported Hawaiian Telcom during the transition.

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ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION LEADS TO TIMELY AND INFORMED DECISIONS

Now managers throughout Hawaiian Telcom’s call center can easily access the information they need to make timely and informed decisions that improve efficiencies, capitalize on sales opportunities, and improve customer experience.

REALTIME VISIBILITY INTO THE BUSINESS

“We can see, in real time, on any given day, where the department is relative to our objectives,” says Inouye. “The feature I like best is the ability to view summary metrics, and if I want more detail, to drill-down on it. I can get information at a group level, supervisor, or individual representative level, whenever I need it. I can see week-to-date, month-to-date, year-to-date, and the trending. It’s not just a static report that you look at, it’s very flexible.”

For Fujita, the dashboard provides realtime visibility into the operation—including alerts if performance is not in line with goals—that enables him to respond immediately. If for example, bad weather is causing customer service calls to spike, he can immediately re-assign agents. Or if trends show more agents online than are needed, he can give coaches the opportunity to have team meetings or work on individual development plans or offer agents on the floor unpaid time off. “We didn’t have that capability before,” he says.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE

“Agents appreciate being able to monitor their own progress against clear, performance-based metrics,” says Fujita. “Reps are not only more productive now, they’re happier. They’ve told me it’s good to be able to see how they’re doing on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. They’re salespeople, they have a quota, and they want to know where they stand. It’s absolutely boosted morale.”

“The system has really helped us to create a culture of accountability and ownership,” says Inouye. The ability to easily track individual agent performance across multiple metrics also helps supervisors to coach agents based on fact-based data. They can pinpoint where agents are struggling and go back and listen to calls to determine what specific type of help or training agents need. They can also see where agents are excelling and take advantage of opportunities to share best practices with colleagues.

“From a sales perspective especially, we’ve been able to do a lot more in terms of coaching and action planning because now the information is readily available,” says Fujita.

The new system also measures agent utilization, or how much time a representative is actually on calls. “We were never able to track that before,” says Fujita. “We only knew how many calls a rep handled in a day. The utilization report has been very valuable for us; for example, in being able to increase our outbound calling without overloading reps.”

FREEING RESOURCES TO BE MORE STRATEGIC

The system also increases productivity by eliminating the time and effort it previously took to manually aggregate and transform data to create reports.

“It’s really saved our coaches a significant amount of time,” says Fujita. “If you have 18 reps you’re coaching and trying to compile data on each one, sitting down with them weekly to show them data they’ve never seen before, the time-savings adds up very quickly,” says Fujita. “In addition, my resource management team, which previously handled requests to create reports, no longer needs to do that. So now they can focus on what they were hired to do—scheduling, agent utilization, outbound calling, lining up the proper resources—making our team more effective.”

BOTTOM-LINE IMPACT

The new solution has had a direct impact on customer experience and revenue, says Fujita. “Now that we track offline order entry, orders don’t get delayed sitting in someone’s e-mail box somewhere. We’re getting services to the customer faster, which means we can bill faster and realize revenue faster.”

“Our average speed of answer has also gotten better,” he says. “Customers are not waiting as long for their calls to be answered.” The company’s abandon rate—people who hang up before their call is answered—dropped 30 percent in the first month after the new system was implemented.

Hawaiian Telcom has also seen an impact in sales. “Customers are getting the services that they need when they call us and getting their questions answered,” says Fujita. There’s been an increase in the organization’s bridge rate—or how often a rep is able to bridge to selling after taking a call. “Now our bridge rate is running at 85 percent,” says Fujita.

Currently, the company is in the process of using the BI solution to automatically track and report on the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. “Our marketing director and his senior managers are already using the system to pull data for performance metric meetings and reports,” says Fujita. “Best of all, now I don’t get calls at eight o’clock at night asking me to pull information for the next day’s meeting.”

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

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