Using Analytics to Improve Business Outcomes

Enhancing Understanding of Customers and Agents

Research Perspective

Sponsored by CallMiner
The Importance of Outcome-Related Metrics

In today’s business environment, radically altered by new business models and channels of communication, customer loyalty is key to business success. Consumers are able to switch companies easily, and so competition to acquire and retain customers, and efforts to maximize their value, are fiercer and more determined than ever. To succeed, organizations must improve the customer experience and customer satisfaction while still keeping a close eye on operational costs. Faced with such pressures, executives increasingly rely on metrics that measure the effectiveness of their organization’s performance and the outcomes of interactions. Among the most important of these are customer satisfaction scores, first-call resolution rates and net promoter scores.

Ventana Research’s research into customer service consistently shows that three converging forces complicate customer engagements. People interact with companies through more channels of communication and lines of business; the volumes and types of customer data collected are increasing rapidly; and yet contact center agents are still responsible for handling many of the interactions. To address these, companies must focus on agent performance, and in particular on determining which agents are most effective at handling interactions.

Doing so often is challenging because although company executives increasingly focus on the outcomes of customer-related activities and the effectiveness of employees handling interactions, operational metrics still largely concern the efficiency of those activities. Most companies evaluate their customer-related efforts using operational metrics such as the volume of calls handled, queue lengths, hold times and average call-handling times, which they derive mostly from.
structured data sources such as CRM systems, call records and agent availability information. To evaluate outcomes and effectiveness in the context of multichannel customer engagement, however, their metrics must include data extracted from unstructured sources such as voice recordings and text-based data in CRM notes, email messages, completed surveys, chat scripts and social media comments.

A complete picture of performance can be obtained only when a company has linked operational metrics with interaction outcome metrics. It is also necessary that the metrics extend across business processes and the various people now involved in handling interactions; for example, combining contact center agent performance measured by the quality monitoring process with customer satisfaction scores derived from customer feedback can deliver a deeper understanding than each alone can. Analyses such as these can show which agents need improvement and what training is needed to refine their behavior.

Optimizing Outcomes through Analytics

Companies can use analytic tools on structured forms of data to build profiles of customers and their relationships with the company, and on unstructured forms of data to enhance these profiles with insights into customer sentiment, common issues and trends in behavior. Used in both ways, these tools can help improve outcomes and the customer experience, as well as the efficiency of the employees who handle interactions. Analytics applied to all forms of data can identify useful links (for example, between a completed survey and the person who handled the relevant interaction), automate the calculation of metrics, and raise alerts and start workflows that ensure actions are coordinated across lines of business and processes; for example, analysis of customer feedback and/or call recordings can be used to focus and personalize individual agent training.

At this time, however, most companies don’t use customer or contact center analytics well. Our benchmark research into customer analytics
shows that fewer than one in five companies (18%) have reached the highest Innovative level of maturity. Likewise, most don’t systematically link agent performance and the customer experience; instead, they typically derive agent quality scores by listening to call recordings and manually completing quality assessment forms, while assessing customer satisfaction using other manual processes. By applying analytics to data from multiple systems, companies can create metrics that link the two – revealing, for example, which agents perform best and produce the best outcomes.

Contact center agents play a central role in customer service and thus in customer satisfaction and loyalty, and our research into the unified agent desktop and the customer experience shows companies have a keen interest in improving agent retention and satisfaction; indeed, the research shows that the most mature companies recognize that agent satisfaction has a significant impact on business outcomes.

Deeper analysis of the results shows that highly satisfied agents meet targets for average contact-handling times twice as often as less satisfied agents and at the same time achieve higher customer satisfaction scores, first-call resolution rates and net promoter scores. Analytics can be used also to identify sources of agents’ dissatisfaction and thus to guide actions to improve awkward processes and assure retention of the best performers.

To achieve business outcomes that make a competitive difference, companies need to deploy systems that can produce consistent analysis across all sources of customer-related data (structured, semistructured and unstructured), and put in place processes and systems that ensure the outputs are shared across the enterprise. In this way they can create analysis and metrics that are linked directly to business results, can be refined continually as conditions change, and support decisions and actions based on complete information.
About Ventana Research

Ventana Research is the most authoritative and respected benchmark business technology research and advisory services firm. We provide insight and expert guidance on mainstream and disruptive technologies through a unique set of research-based offerings including benchmark research and technology evaluation assessments, education workshops and our research and advisory services, Ventana On-Demand. Our unparalleled understanding of the role of technology in optimizing business processes and performance and our best practices guidance are rooted in our rigorous research-based benchmarking of people, processes, information and technology across business and IT functions in every industry. This benchmark research plus our market coverage and in-depth knowledge of hundreds of technology providers means we can deliver education and expertise to our clients to increase the value they derive from technology investments while reducing time, cost and risk.

Ventana Research provides the most comprehensive analyst and research coverage in the industry; business and IT professionals worldwide are members of our community and benefit from Ventana Research’s insights, as do highly regarded media and association partners around the globe. Our views and analyses are distributed daily through blogs and social media channels including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+.

To learn how Ventana Research advances the maturity of organizations’ use of information and technology through benchmark research, education and advisory services, visit www.ventanaresearch.com.