

DESTINATION **excellence** INC.

Optimizing Customer Care Operations

Agent Monitoring for Performance



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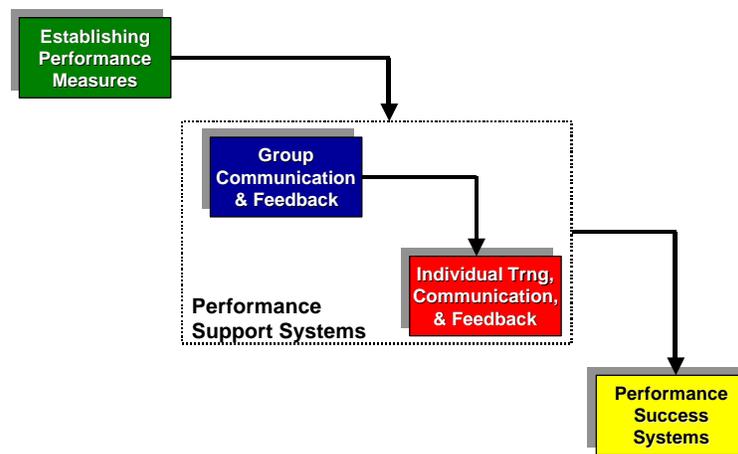
INTRODUCTION

Destination Excellence considers agent monitoring as one part of a set of larger processes, the performance management process. Performance management is a critical process in contact centers because it centers. It focuses people around a set of measurable outputs. Where production lines have tangible outputs that can be seen, contact centers have intangible outputs (e.g., sales rate, service quality) that cannot be seen. Both groups, however, share the need to measure their output through a set of performance metrics that provide feedback on a number of critical components including quality and volume.

In its white paper, "Optimizing Customer Care Operations, The Role of Performance Measures and Management," (please visit our web site <http://destex.vertex.com/Articles.asp> to review this in more detail – a review of this white paper is an essential prerequisite for this white paper) Destination Excellence highlights three key areas for every performance management system:

- *Establishing Performance Measures.* The basis objective of any performance system is to achieve maximum performance for the overall group by optimizing the performance of each individual. In order to achieve this goal, companies must: (1) Establish clear corporate measures for the areas of shareowners, customers and people, (2) Link those objectives at every level throughout the organization and (3) Establish clear performance systems that support optimal goal achievement.
- *Performance Support Systems.* Optimizing performance requires systems that balance both individual and group performance. It must also provide personal performance feedback, support and input.
- *Performance Success Systems.* Celebration of success is a key element in any performance system. Achievement cannot be overlooked, but celebrated. Various financial and non-financial recognition systems should be used within Customer Contact groups to optimize performance.

Performance Management

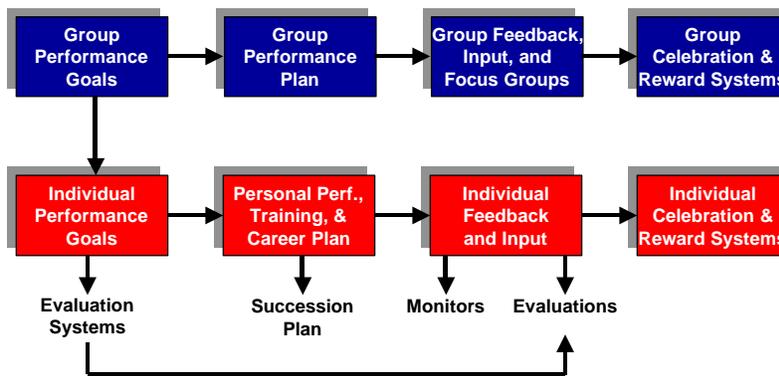


Source: Destination Excellence, 1999.



The white paper reviews each of these elements and outlines the elements of performance support systems. Within these systems, monitors are a critical element to provide individual feedback and input on a day-to-day basis. Coupled with evaluations, monitors provide a key communication link to provide people with the input they need to operate at their highest levels.

Performance Support Systems



Source: Destination Excellence, 1999.

This white paper will focus on how to develop the most effective monitor forms in support of optimal organizational performance.

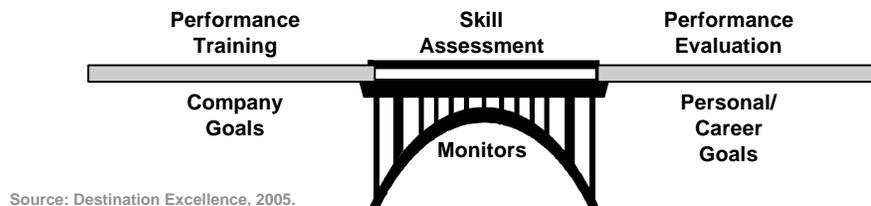


MONITORING – THE LINK BETWEEN PERFORMANCE AND TRAINING

The white paper, "Optimizing Customer Care Operations, The Role of Performance Measures and Management," puts forth the need to establish and focus on specific measures for each person in the organization and to make certain that the measures are consistent with company goals. A related white paper, "Optimizing Customer Care Operations, Results Oriented Training," makes the compelling argument that the way to achieve high levels of performance is to train people in the skills necessary to perform at high levels. Sounds almost too logical, right? Yet, many call centers continue to fail to connect training to measurable goals, guaranteeing that they will never reach world-class performance levels. Companies connecting measurements and training, however, are able to *consistently* produce world-class performance.

Another key piece in the link to world-class performance levels is monitoring. Training prepares people for the performance output that is expected. Performance evaluations measure the end result. Monitoring provides the bridge between training and performance evaluations. It does so by providing real-time input to people through monitor forms.

Monitoring as the Bridge Between Training and Performance



Source: Destination Excellence, 2005.

Monitoring forms should do more than just provide feedback, however. Monitoring forms should identify how what is being monitored is connected to performance metrics and highlight the training available for continuous performance improvement.

DEVELOPING MONITORING FORMS

Having already read the other white papers, readers of this white paper see already that Destination Excellence is committed to linkages between related areas within contact centers. Like the threads of a blanket are interwoven to create something larger than each individual thread, monitoring forms must be developed in a way to connect them tightly with performance measures and training.

For example, the following is the performance measurements (at the agent level) taken from the white paper, "Optimizing Customer Care Operations, The Role of Performance Measures and Management." (Note that the areas that are grayed out under agent measures mean that agents are not measured in these areas.) In addition to the measures, the matrix includes the names of classes that have been developed and delivered to specifically target agent performance measures.

Constituency	Business Measure	Agent Measure	Skills Training
Customers	Revenue	Per Call Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying Needs v. Wants Upselling Closing the Sale
	Customer Satisfaction	Customer Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening Vocal Presence
Business Owners	Operating Expense	Talk Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controlling the Conversation
		After Call Work Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time Management
	Capital Investment		
People	People Satisfaction	Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and Fitness
		P&P Adherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplace Principles
		Committee Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Opportunities
	Turnover		<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Developing an agent monitoring form takes much the same approach, and delves down one level of detail. It includes the specific action that supports the measures (e.g., controlling the conversation is the skill you observe that influences average talk time). Included with the action are the measure and training that the observed skill is objectively measured and the training that supports that skill. Each action then receives a score to provide specific input to the agent on performance. Areas of consistent shortfalls can then be addressed through the targeted training.

The key advantages of this approach are:

- Agents can clearly see the connection between the observed skills and their performance scores. They will note that the actual measures determine their output, but the skills create the results that determine the output. There are no secrets, no hidden agendas, and no arbitrary observations. The measures are linked to the company goals, the skills linked to the measures and the training to the skills. It forms a holistic process that is logical and easy to understand.
- Listing training within the monitor form is a visible example of how the company desires to support the performance of every agent. Agents clearly see the resources available to them and know that they can access those resources to shore up any area of performance.



Both advantages speak to the philosophy of operating in an open team environment where everyone's objective is to provide the support to maximize each person's performance. It also makes each individual responsible for their own performance making known to them the resources available to them.

The following is a sample monitoring form using the approach previously described.

Sample Agent Monitoring Form

		Area	Measures Impacted	Score	Available Training
Customers	Speed of Service	Controls the conversation	ATT		Controlling the Conversation
		Identifies customer needs accurately	ATT		Listening
		Minimal use of hold time	ATT		Hard Skills Training
		Effective use of system	ATT		
	Knowledge and Friendliness	Greeting/Introduction	Customer Sat.		Listening Effective communication Identifying Needs v. Wants Offer presentation
		Positive tone	Customer Sat.		
		Use of positive phrases	Customer Sat.		
		Probes/Asks relevant questions	Customer Sat.		
		Identifies root issue (true need)	Customer Sat.		
		Clear explanation	Customer Sat.		
		Closing positively	Customer Sat.		
	First Call Resolution	Effectively listens	Customer Sat.		Closing the Sale Upselling Listening Defusing Angry Customers
		Understands customer's problem/issue	Customer Sat.		
		Clear articulation and pace of conversation	Customer Sat.		
		Clearly states solutions/presents offer	Customer Sat.		
		Makes valid recommendation	Customer Sat.		
		Closes the sale	Revenue		
		Up-sells (as appropriate)	Revenue		
		Escalated as appropriate	Customer Sat.		
Obtains buy-in from caller/closes sale		C/S or SIs Rate			
Effective wrap-up	Customer Sat.				
Business Owners	ATT	Controls the conversation	ATT		Controlling the Conversation Hard Skills Training
		Effectively defuses emotions	ATT		
		Effective use of system	ATT		
	ACW	Minimizes data entry after contact	ACW		Work Time Management
		Remains available while at position	ACW		
Adherence	Logs into position on time	Adherence		Workplace Principles	
	Logs out of position at appropriate time	Adherence			
People	People Satisfact.	Clear notations on customer record	Customer Sat.		Listening
		Appropriate Availability	ACW/Adherence		Managing Obligations P&P Training
		Adherence to P&Ps	P&P Adherence		Workplace Principles

Of course, each contact center will develop a monitoring form unique to their environment. By using the principles outlined here, and in the associated white papers, those groups will achieve optimal performance.



TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MONITORING

There are many thoughts and many philosophies on agent monitoring. No one approach is right. The right approach is the one that is right for that contact center based on its culture, measures and expectations. The suggestions provided here are consistent with the approach described here, and have been proven to be effective in current contact center operations.

- Avoid using monitoring forms as part of the performance evaluation, if possible. Using monitoring forms as part of the performance evaluation changes the objective of the form. When part of the evaluation, agents seek to maximize their score. By not using them in the evaluation, agents seek to maximize their effectiveness (measured through other measures). The change is subtle, but important in maximizing the overall effectiveness of the contact center.
- Treat monitoring as a supporting activity that is positive. Just like any coach, supervisors using the monitoring form should be clear with agents that the objective is to provide valuable input to the agent. Valuable input includes both positive (what you are doing well) and constructive (what you can work on) comments. Even constructive comments, however, should be given positively maintaining the dignity of the individual.
- Use monitoring forms side-by-side and remotely. Like any other tool, the value of the tool is in the variety of situations in which it can be used. Side-by-side monitoring provides the agents with visible signs of support, and the supervisor can observe facial expressions, habits and other non-verbal activities. However, side-by-side monitoring tends to bring out the best behavior in people. Remote monitoring allows supervisors to observe the “normal” activities of an agent and provide feedback on those activities as well. The two types of observations, mixed together, provide a balanced monitoring approach.
- Allow agents to use monitoring forms to monitor one another and themselves. Nothing helps with the understanding of a tool like using it. Agents can self-monitor on any call by scoring the call (this may be something supervisors will want to do when they are monitoring and then compare scores). When agents monitor other agents, they gain the perspective of how difficult it can be to monitor, and gain an understanding on how to provide feedback. When people provide feedback to others, they are often more willing to receive feedback themselves.
- Review monitoring forms regularly (at least annually) with a cross-section of the operation (e.g., agents, trainers, supervisors, etc.) to maximize the effectiveness of those forms. If the monitoring tool is used to maximize overall performance, allow the people whose performance it supports to participate in its continuous review and enhancement. Team members who bring different perspectives, yet the same goals develop the best monitoring forms.



DESTINATION EXCELLENCE - YOUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

*Excellence is more than a word,
it's a destination.*

-Destination Excellence Motto

Many companies today use outside professionals to augment internal resources. Destination Excellence has the advantage of bringing hands on knowledge and experience of customer care operations along with a history of success across industries. Your company will not spend valuable time and funds training us in what needs to be done – our experience has taught us. You will only need to spend a short amount of time with us to describe your operation, your procedures and your objectives. After that, we work proactively with you to achieve your desired results.

More than 75% of our revenues come from repeat clients. Generally, our clients hire us for one project and find our expertise so valuable, they hire us for additional projects. In addition to providing forecasting, staffing and performance services described in this document, Destination Excellence provides the following additional services (please see our web site for more detail):

- **IMPROVING PROFIT MARGINS.** There are two sides to the profit equation, revenues and costs. Destination Excellence can help you improve revenues through service and sales. We can also assist you in controlling costs through disciplined systems and processes, either for internal operations or outsource partnerships. Destination Excellence has developed strategic business modeling for companies in a number of vertical markets: wireless, utilities, travel, financial and e-commerce to name a few.
- **AUDITING AND BENCHMARKING YOUR OPERATIONS AND SERVICES.** Destination Excellence utilizes its proprietary 100-Point Audit tool to help clients benchmark their current operations and performance against the industry. With a database of over 30 audits across a number of industries, Destination Excellence works with clients to provide recommendations and information on the areas where they have attained world-class performance and which areas that require development. Feedback to clients is provided in a way that they can assess their relative performance against other call centers as well.
- **CREATING A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE AND SUCCESS.** Companies increasingly understand that a culture of service begins with service to the people within the company. It has been shown that companies that create cultures of excellence with their people have higher customer satisfaction and profits. Destination Excellence helps companies to:
 - Define a culture using organizational principles and practices rather than processes and procedures.
 - Create an organizational dynamic using a concentric circle approach rather than the traditional hierarchical approach.
 - Develop a sense of community within an organization to reduce turnover and increase performance.
 - Envelop activities with communication streams to maximize the effect of each individual.
 - Instill a sense of continuity within each individual in the organization to optimize their tenure in the group.
 - Engage individuals in community activities to promote a strong corporate image.
 - Train for specific outcomes with measured goals and objectives to increase the impact of the investment in training.



- **HIRING THE RIGHT PEOPLE AND DEVELOPING THEM FOR SUCCESS.** Hiring the right person is a great beginning. The next step is to train them to achieve their best for themselves and the company in order to create an environment of excellence. Destination Excellence will help your company accomplish the following:
 - Identify the best tools to predict the success of people before you hire them.
 - Develop a comprehensive hiring program to maximize the potential success of everyone you hire.
 - Implement a new-hire training program to equip people to perform at their maximum potential.
 - Design ongoing training and communications systems to maintain the enthusiasm of your people throughout their career.

- **ASSESSING AND INSTALLING SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY.** Destination Excellence has hands-on experience in call center systems. Telecommunications services, ACDs, Manpower Planning Systems, and CRM systems are included in the array of call center technology experience found at Destination Excellence. Destination Excellence provides a three-dimensional analysis of not only the cost of new technologies, but also the return on investment to the call center. Our services also include user specification development, contract negotiation, vendor management and post-installation quality checks.

- **SELECTING AND MANAGING OUTSOURCE PARTNERS.** Destination Excellence understands that not all businesses require, or desire, to maintain their own call centers. Successful businesses focus on their own core competencies. Strategic partnerships with excellent outsourcing centers provide a company with professional customer contact, while freeing up valuable internal resources. Destination Excellence has helped companies place outsourced call center and e-center business, as both a partner and intermediary. Utilizing a proprietary 100-point call center audit, Destination Excellence has successfully placed over \$10 million in call center business, and helped to create excellent, metric-driven long-term partnerships.

- **MEETING YOUR CUSTOMER CARE NEEDS.** The information provided here is just the tip of what Destination Excellence can do for your customer care group. Other client projects Destination Excellence has worked on include:
 - Turning around failing companies increasing their market value and long-term success.
 - Strategic planning for start-up and ongoing firms.
 - Industry opportunity and market analysis.
 - Financial planning and modeling.
 - Workshop development.
 - Executive education.

Contact Destination Excellence to see how we can help you.

Contact Destination Excellence toll-free on 877-433-7839, or e-mail us at info@destex.com. You will be glad that you did.

