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About Exceptional Outcomes

Exceptional Outcomes is a provider of both tools and services for optimizing blended call centers. They help their clients maximize agent productivity, increase right party engagement and improve call conversions.

Their most popular service is the 'Campaign Checkup', which is performed solely off the call center's dialer logs. It's fast, it involves almost no effort on a call center's part and does not cost anything unless opportunities for improvement are found.

Mining your Dialer Logs to Increase your Inside Sales Revenue

Predictive dialing has become a cornerstone technology for inside sales organizations, and for good reason – when used effectively; the dialer will increase the efficiency at which telephonic sales representatives will connect with their clients. **Predictive dialing** is conventionally considered an improvement to **progressive dialing**. While progressive dialing dials new calls when agents become available to take a call, predictive dialing dials new calls based on *predictions* of when agents will become available.

The productivity of sales reps on a predictive dialer is ultimately based on the accuracy of the system's dialing predictions and if both staffing and scheduling are optimized. Managing all the variables in play can be a daunting task for a call center manager that does not have a line of sight to the issues that are causing a call campaign to operate inefficiently or ineffectively.

Fortunately, a center's dialer logs provide a wealth of insight to how productivity and conversation rates can be improved. This paper will discuss some of the issues that can be found by mining the data in the dialer logs.

The strategies discussed in this paper apply to call centers that use a premise-based dialer as well as those that use a hosted solution. In the case of hosted solutions, the center may not have access to the dialer's logs. This is not an issue, since most hosted platforms provide reporting capabilities which supply the same pertinent information.

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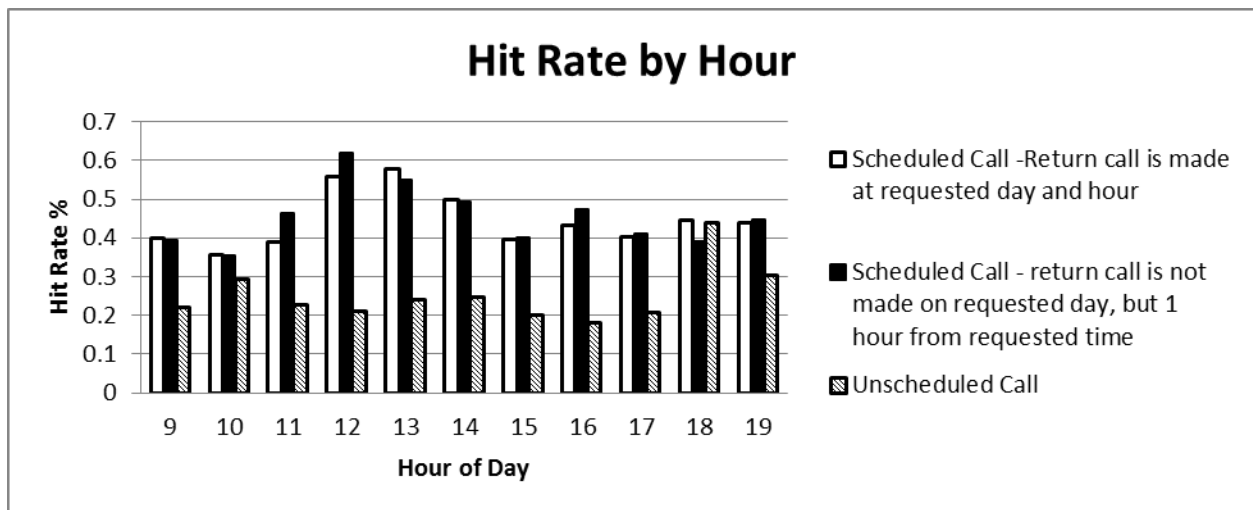
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Issue #1: You are taking the meaning of “best time to call” too literally

Inside sales isn't easy. It's an exercise in repetitive unsuccessful contacts and frustrating rejections. With that said, you would think that if a potential customer was to say "I'm interested in buying from you, but I can't talk right now. Can you call me tonight at 6 o'clock?", a sales person would call them back at 6 o'clock. Surprisingly there are many call centers out there where that isn't the case.

One of our clients is a medical supply company that engages in direct to consumer sales through telephonic outreach. The majority of its sales are for reorders, where the attempted parties have an existing relationship with the organization. An analysis of their dialer logs showed that a large amount of calls resulted in the contacted party requesting a return call at a more convenient time for them. A date and time for the follow up call was almost always provided to the inside sales agent during the conversation. Further analysis revealed that a significant number of the follow up calls were not made on the time and date requested by the customer. There were several reasons for this, including the issue that many customers requested similar times (weekdays between 6 and 8 PM, client time zone). When a call could not be made during the customer's requested date and time, the dialer technology would choose a random time in the future for the follow up call. Simply put, the strategy was to try to call customers when they wanted and if they couldn't, roll the dice and hope for the best.

Our Campaign Checkup algorithms discovered that a second call on a later date than requested, but within a two hour window of the time requested was as effective in reaching the customer and converting the sale as calling on the exact date and time requested.



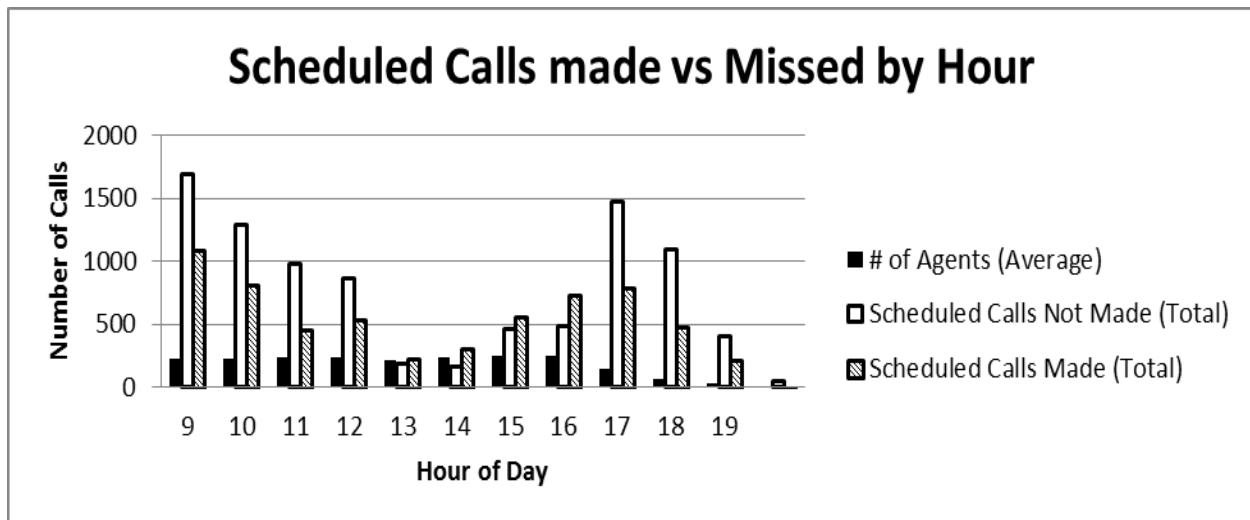
Optimizing the outbound call campaigns to reflect this finding resulted in improving the campaign engagement rates by 9%. This engagement uplift translated to an increase in annual sales of over \$3M.

Issue #2: Your sales reps' schedules are not aligned with the hours you reach your customers.

One of the primary reasons why call centers do not get through all their scheduled return calls is because their staffing is not aligned with when these calls need to be made. This was the case with the medical supply company cited above. The graph below shows the number of return calls made each hour over a week's time, the number not made and the average number of reps logged in during each hour.



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The graph speaks to the fact that staff were spread evenly across business hours and not aligned with need. This issue is readily identified by analyzing the dialer logs. In some call centers, staffing can't be readily shifted. If that is the case with your call center, the problem can still be mitigated by following the solution below.

Issue #3: You don't have the right sales reps working the right hours or the right campaigns.

Dialer logs allow for the analysis of the average handle time and variation in handle time associated with each sales rep. Discrepancies in agent handle times are quite common in call centers and usually continue despite a workforce management team's best efforts to reduce the variation. The most common culprits are turnover and the perceived need by the sales reps to deviate from the call scripts.

Our experience has shown that segregating agents into separate campaigns that serve different purposes is both more effective at optimizing agent utility and more attainable than attempting to reduce the variation in handle times across a population of sales reps with various skill sets and experience. If highly efficient agents are placed in campaigns with only other high efficiency agents and then only presented calls that have a high contact rate (such as scheduled return calls at times requested by the customer), **each agent would see less idling and the number of calls they complete in an hour may increase as much as 30%**. Less efficient agents would best be served working campaigns and hours that have a low contact rate, which would mitigate the impacts of their longer and varying handle times.

Issue #4: You have the wrong reps taking inbound calls

Although Inbound calls play an important role for an inside sales center, it is not always prudent to have a dedicated team answering them. In such a case, inbound calls should be connected to the agents that have a high degree of variation in their handle times already. This allows high efficiency agents to leverage their utility on outbound campaigns without interruption.



Issue #5: Your breaking schedules are affecting the efficiency of the dialer

The effectiveness of predictive dialing is measured by the percentage of time the sales reps are talking and wrapping up calls when they are logged into the dialer. How productive the sales reps are is ultimately based on the accuracy of your system's dialing predictions. If the system underestimates the number of calls to be made the reps will sit idle, whereas if the system overestimates the number of calls to be made, calls will most likely be aborted. A major factor that affects how well the dialer estimates the rate to dial numbers is the frequency at which the number of sales reps logged in a campaign changes – and sales reps breaking during random times of the day is the biggest cause of such variation.

If for example, you were to ensure that all the sales reps that were working the same campaign scheduled their two 15-minute breaks and 30-minute meal break **during the same hours** and remained on the dialer for the remainder of the shift, a campaign may see an increase in attempts by as much as 8% compared to random break assignment. The size of the benefit correlates to the total number of agents in the campaign.

Of course it should be noted that there are cases where breaks may not be readily scheduled –such as in the case of needing to use the restroom. It should also be noted that this recommendation is different than scheduling breaks at the same exact time, which is not readily achievable using a predictive dialer.

One of our clients asked their reps to take their scheduled breaks anytime during a given set of hours and it did not raise any issues or concerns with the reps and did not negatively impact their morale or on-call performance. They ultimately saw their call attempts increase by 7% without requiring any additional staff or technology.

Issue #6: You are not taking advantage of busy signals

A busy signal usually speaks to a contact being on the phone at the time of the attempt. Calling the contact again within 15 minutes of the original call takes advantages of the knowledge that a contact is probably present and actively using the phone. The contact is unaware that the original call was placed; so there should not be a concern that the contact would perceive the series of calls as a repetitive nuisance.

Busy signal dispositions are easily identifiable in dialer logs and **our past consulting engagements have shown that the hit rate of these returned calls improve by an average of 15% when made within 15 minutes of the original call.**

So what's next?

The six issues described in this paper are just some of the insights that are hidden in your dialer logs or hosted dialer reports. If you feel that your organization lacks the time or capabilities to mine your logs, please contact us. Our 'Campaign Checkup' service is our most popular offering and uses your dialer logs to look for these improvement opportunities as well as several others. It's fast, it involves almost no effort on your part and we get paid nothing unless we find opportunities for improvement. We charge a fixed price per campaign analyzed, regardless of the resulting uplift to your revenue. The fee also includes five hours of post-discovery consulting to help you implement our recommendations.

If you are interested in our 'Campaign Checkup' service, please reach out to us.



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