

# NACC

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CALL CENTER  
RESEARCH LABORATORY

# In Queue

*The fun, informative and unique  
newsletter for the  
call center industry.*

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## Our Contact Info:

David Butler  
Executive Director  
National Association of Call Centers  
100 South 22nd Avenue  
Hattiesburg MS 39401  
Tel: 601.447.8300

[David.Butler@nationalcallcenters.org](mailto:David.Butler@nationalcallcenters.org)  
<http://www.nationalcallcenters.org>

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## NACC Investment Portfolio

## From the Trenches

### Technology Optimization Part 4: Workforce Management

Lori Bocklund, President, Strategic Contact, [Lori@strategiccontact.com](mailto:Lori@strategiccontact.com)

When I scout for the potential to hit a technology optimization home run, Workforce Management (WFM) comes to mind immediately. Its capacity to forecast, schedule, and track the overwhelmingly largest line item cost in your center (your staff!) certainly warrants a place in the starting line-up. Perhaps it hasn't had the best batting average over the years, but the right investment in time, resource, process development, and coaching could turn it into a star hitter.

WFM gets at the heart of a goal for every center: use resources wisely to provide good (if not excellent) service to customers. Labor comprises two-thirds to three-quarters of a center's operating budget. [See Strategic Contact's 2008 series on cost optimization in NACC's *In Queue*, dated [April 4th](#), [April 19th](#), and [May 9th](#).] WFM projects workloads and produces staff schedules – monthly, weekly, daily, hourly, quarter-hourly – that provide consistent service to customers while managing labor costs. As powerful as this tool can be, we see common themes that challenge its use:

- Despite a wide range of solutions (functionality and costs), centers don't do a good job aligning their requirements, their ability to forecast, and their scheduling flexibility with the capabilities of their system. We see home-grown solutions or low-end tools where a robust solution is needed. And we find \$100,000+ systems doing work that a good spreadsheet could do.
- New WFM staff are required to fill the cleats of their predecessors without the benefit of spring training. A few enterprising players might figure out how to make the system work. Most simply get by with bare-bones familiarity and a bunch of home-grown spreadsheets in their back pockets. [If I had a nickel for every forecast or schedule I've seen in Excel...]
- Thinking WFM can run on auto-pilot once it's set up, management doesn't invest the time and resources to use the system effectively for real-time management, ongoing analysis and workforce optimization.
- WFM analysts and supervisors lack the processes and/or incentives to collaborate that ensure schedule adherence and effective adjustments when events deviate from projections.
- Tied to all of the above, the organization lacks understanding of the importance and role of WFM and its connection to business goals and defined performance objectives.

Stock	Price	Value	Change
NICE	22.62	5.63	-4.37
VRNT	5.55	2.27	-7.73
SYKE	16.92	8.90	-1.10
WIT	10.10	6.74	-3.26
CVG	9.11	5.16	-4.84
TTEC	10.29	4.47	-5.53
ICTG	7.16	6.87	-3.13
APAC	5.27	23.85	13.85
TOTAL		63.89	-16.11

Original Value start 11/6/2007 =US\$90.00 or US\$10.00 per stock. Then Nortel went bankrupt so we have adjusted the investment portfolio and now the new start value would be \$80.00 or \$10.00 per stock.

Total Portfolio Value Now= \$63.89, up almost \$1.00 in the past two weeks. Though this week slowed the increase of the portfolio, it is still moving in a positive direction which shows future health for the call center industry. The low of the Investment Portfolio was in November 2008 when it sat at \$36.70. We are now just \$10.00 shy of doubling that number.

### NACC Composite Index

Date	Value	Change	Percent
11/6/07	100.00		na
12/5/07	94.38	-0.56	-0.60
1/15/08	80.89	-17.02	-21.04
2/13/08	75.56	-1.98	-2.63
3/12/08	65.47	-11.25	-17.18
4/9/08	68.98	1.06	1.54
5/7/08	77.31	3.14	4.07
6/4/08	81.51	2.93	3.60
7/2/08	70.28	-10.20	-14.52
8/13/08	65.57	-0.97	-1.48
9/10/08	66.55	-1.69	-2.54
10/8/08	43.24	-13.67	-31.62
11/5/08	43.26	1.43	3.31
12/3/08	36.19	3.30	9.13
1/7/09	42.75	2.10	4.92
2/4/09	35.68	-0.55	-1.54
3/4/09	30.94	-2.42	-7.82
4/1/09	37.88	1.75	4.63
4/15/09	43.13	5.25	12.18
4/29/09	48.53	5.40	11.12
5/13/09	50.72	2.19	4.31

Here are some actions to take to optimize WFM technology and its application in the center:

1. If you have a WFM system, assess your needs and look at what you're doing – and how you're doing it – to address them. Create a WFM role, if you haven't done so already. Get training for analysts, and set up processes from end-to-end to handle forecasting, scheduling, tracking, and real-time monitoring, with defined action plans. Restart your current system, or go find one that is a better fit if you must. It's OK if some things need to happen outside WFM. Just make sure there's a legitimate business reason for doing it, not an overwhelming impulse to invent your own wheel. Supplementary models occur most often with unusually complex forecasting requirements based on business drivers, financial analysis, or "what if" scenarios for options and tradeoffs.

2. If you don't have a system, look at your requirements. What is the nature of your volume? Is it dynamic or static? What are your hours of operation? How much flexibility do you have in scheduling, across how many shifts? How many ancillary things do you need to schedule (e.g., breaks, lunch, training, team meetings, etc.)? Once you've answered these questions, think carefully about the processes and tools you'll need to forecast and staff effectively, and pursue the right system to support your vision. Then follow the other advice in Step 1.

3. Make sure that the folks with oversight of WFM are accountable to the folks who have responsibility for the center's performance, and that there are defined processes between the two. Supervisors need to ensure the right resources are in place at the right time. WFM analysts need to be plugged into what is happening in the center and what needs to be done about it. Educate all front-line staff on things like service level, adherence, Key Performance Indicators, and their role in ensuring the center achieves its KPIs. Tie the success of the WFM analysts to the success of the front-line.

### A First Look at Contact Center Pipeline

Paul Stockford, Research Director, National Association of Call Centers and Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research, [Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org](mailto:Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org)

We're happy to announce the launch of a new print publication covering the contact center industry. Contact Center Pipeline is a monthly instructional journal focused on the specific needs and challenges of the contact center.

According to the publisher, the Pipeline's sole purpose is to address the information needs of contact center professionals by providing meaningful, instructional content to help them do their jobs.

Developing this content is a team of industry veterans who will offer their expertise in each issue, along with a list of highly respected contributors — all of whom are known for their unique understanding of the inner workings of call centers.

Each issue will report on key trends affecting the industry, best practices and successful solutions to the everyday challenges and pain points associated with running a contact center in today's rapidly changing business environment. The Pipeline's monthly editorial lineup will include columns exploring the essential contact center management areas, such as strategy, technology, workforce management, training, performance, management ROI, leadership and more.

The *NACC Composite Index* was up again this week by 4.31%. Though not double digits as it has been the past two reporting periods, it is still another significant gain. Put into context, however, the Composite Index started out at 100 points and has only now reached 50% of that original value in November 2007.

Dow Composite	1.21%
S&P 500 Composite	1.16%
NASDAQ Composite	-2.87%
NACC Composite	4.31%

The *NACC Composite Index* was up this week as were two of the other three indices. The Dow was up 1.21% and the S&P 500 matching the Dow at 1.16%. The NASDAQ was actually down 2.87% the past two weeks. The NACC Composite Index, however, beat them all with an impressive 4.31% gain over the same period, almost double the gain of the Dow and S&P 500 combined.

### Quote

"A solution should be as simple as possible, but not simpler."  
-Albert Einstein

### Picture of the Week



This is a picture of one of the scores of coffins in the Hapsburg crypt in Vienna, Austria. Not only did the emperor and his family live in luxury while alive, even in death they are

The first issue of *Contact Center Pipeline*, published in March 2009, took a look at the impact that the recession is having on contact centers, and the effect of layoffs and budget cuts on training, service quality and the overall customer experience. The Pipeline writers focus on showing readers how to improve performance through customer-centric strategies, offer suggestions for meeting service goals with fewer resources and propose ideas to ensure cost efficiencies while delivering high-quality service. Future issues will cover topics like proactive service strategies, reversing the impact of negative word-of-mouth, safeguarding customer data, translating customer feedback into organization wide service improvements, contact center compensation trends and more.

The publisher, Pipeline Publishing Group, is taking the opposite strategy to most these days by offering a print publication in an era when many trade magazines are moving to a digital medium. PPG's viewpoint is that print is the best format in which to present in-depth instructional content. While no one can deny that business people favor their Blackberries and laptops for accessing real-time news and blogs, print is ideal for reading detailed content where timing is not a critical issue. But for those who prefer an electronic format, the publisher offers a digital version, as well.

Print or digital, *Contact Center Pipeline* is definitely a publication worth checking out. The publisher is currently offering a special introductory one-year subscription price for \$189. You can get more information, and sign up to receive a free print issue, at its Web site, [www.contactcenterpipeline.com](http://www.contactcenterpipeline.com).

### News and Views

#### Speech Analytics Goes Mainstream

Paul Stockford, Research Director, National Association of Call Centers and Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research, [Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org](mailto:Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org)

At about this time last year the NACC published some of the results of a survey we conducted regarding In Queue readers' attitudes, opinions and intentions toward a number of contact center solutions ([In Queue Vol3 No11](#)). Among the technologies included in the survey was speech analytics.

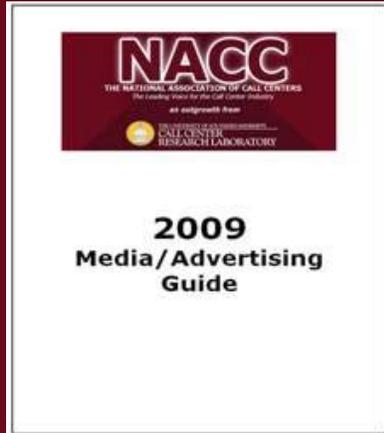
Over 70 percent of survey respondents indicated having no interest in speech analytics, which was not a surprising outcome. While speech analytics has proven itself to be a worthwhile undertaking in the contact center in terms of identifying important customer trends and issues, it is also resource intensive. A typical speech analytics deployment requires dedicated analysts to do the detective work and identify key words and phrases that lead to an understanding of customer trends and issues. Speech analytics also, in most cases, requires several servers to support the processing functions, which increases along with the number of seats in the center. This usually put speech analytics out of the financial reach of most contact centers with fewer than 300 seats.

This week Verint Witness Actionable Solutions introduced a speech analytics solution that significantly reduces the support infrastructure required to run a speech analytics deployment and brings it into the realm of mainstream contact centers. This has the potential to truly

surrounded by art, ornaments and other symbols and trappings indicating wealth and power.

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shake up the industry.

Many vendors of speech analytics solutions depend upon a lengthy and costly consulting engagement up front as part of their profit equation. The introduction of Verint Witness Actionable Solutions Speech Analytics Essentials (sorry....I didn't come up with that lengthy name) eliminates the need for this costly process with a set of pre-configured, out-of-the-box features that proactively identifies potential trends and issues and reports them to the user. Creating categories of calls that identify customer service issues has already been done. Custom categories can still be created by the user as required, but the bulk of the work has been completed before the first call is reviewed by the system. Set-up and configuration is a done deal.

Smaller contact centers will not need dedicated personnel to identify changes in customer behavior as identified in recorded customer service interactions. These changes are proactively identified by the software and the frequency of the identity of these changes can be set by the user to range from as often as daily up to any period of time as determined to be appropriate by the user. Search engines identify which terms should be tracked and also include contextual suggestions for other relevant terms or words that should be tracked to assist in determining the root cause of customer service issues.

With this new solution, Verint is enabling small-to-medium sized businesses to reap the same type of customer intelligence that to this point has been reserved for those businesses with deep pockets and equally deep personnel resources. The cost of this solution has been reduced to approximately one-third the cost of a fully-configured speech analytics solution for large contact centers. Speech analytics is about to go mainstream in the contact center industry.

Next month we will be launching a survey that will update the results of last year's end-user survey and we hope that you will participate. We look forward to measuring any changes in attitude toward contact center solutions that may be a result of the availability of lower-cost alternatives such as this week's introduction of lower-cost speech analytics alternatives.

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## Call Center Comics!

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**WE MAY HAVE LOST THE CUSTOMER,  
BUT I SURE WON THE ARGUMENT!**

If you like this comic and would like to see more write Ozzie at [callcentercomics@yahoo.com](mailto:callcentercomics@yahoo.com) and visit his website at [http://callcentercomics.com/cartoon\\_categories.htm](http://callcentercomics.com/cartoon_categories.htm) or just click on the comic to take you to his page. The NACC appreciates Ozzie letting us use some of his comics in our newsletter.

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