

Case Study

Hilton Reservations Worldwide

Efficient staffing for a contact center that helps maintain a reputation for hospitality.

The Company

Hilton Reservations Worldwide is the customer-service branch that handles reservations and information requests for 2,100 hotel properties, including the Hilton, Conrad, Doubletree, Embassy Suites, Hampton Inn, Hampton Inn & Suites, Hilton Garden Inn and Homewood Suites brands. At five contact centers in the United States, this global reservation system leverages 1,300 customer service representatives whose mission, while it takes a complex mix of skills, can be stated simply—to make sure that the pleasant experience of lodging with Hilton begins when the phone rings in the contact center.

The Business Challenge

As with almost any contact center, Hilton Reservations Worldwide is continually focused on trying to manage customer service interactions more efficiently and cost-effectively. But keeping costs down can't be done at the service representatives' expense. "Agent morale is also very important," says Sandra McFatridge, Manager of Forecasting and Planning for Hilton Reservations Worldwide. "The customer experience begins with us, and we want our agents to be satisfied with their work environment so that their satisfaction carries over to the customers."

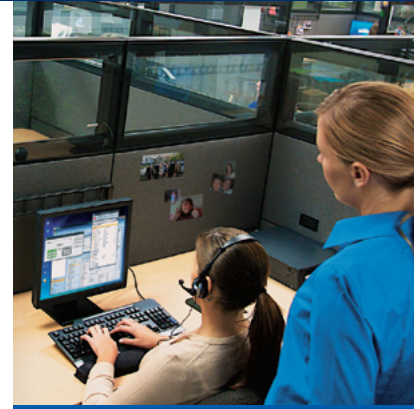
"There's a lot of interest at HRW in shift bidding," she added. "Currently we create the schedules and export them via spreadsheets to the contact centers, and the centers have to take agents off the phone to come to the control desk to bid in order of their seniority." HRW wanted to bring that process online to help reduce the workload on the control desk so that they can focus on intraday management, as well as to reduce the errors that happen during the manual process.

The Solution

To help the company address the challenges of managing customer interactions more efficiently, while at the same time successfully maintaining agent morale, HRW decided to implement the workforce management capabilities of the PerformanceEdge® suite of applications. Aspect® Workforce Management enables Hilton Reservations Worldwide to accurately plan, manage and optimize staffing resources. One of the other factors that influenced their decision to go with Aspect Workforce Management was its seamless integration with their existing Aspect® CallCenter® ACD and Aspect® Enterprise Contact Server™ products.

The Results

Since implementing the workforce management capabilities, HRW has seen data accuracy go from within ten percent of actual to within three percent of actual due to Aspect Workforce Management. More importantly, the Aspect solution has improved occupancy, which is a key metric for HRW.



"I've been in contact centers now for about nine years, and in workforce management for about seven, and in every company I've been with, we have looked at all the competitors, and always ended up with Aspect."

Sandra McFatridge
Manager of Forecasting and Planning,
Hilton Reservations Worldwide

Products:

- Aspect Workforce Management
- Aspect CallCenter ACD
- Aspect Enterprise Contact Server

Results:

- Highly accurate forecasting and scheduling
- Improved occupancy to an average of 90 percent
- Lower staffing costs
- Increased agent morale and reduced attrition by more than 20 percent



"Our original goal was 86 percent occupancy," said McFatridge. "We made some technology changes that helped us reach that goal, but because we tie occupancy to our budget, we wanted to minimize overhead by only hiring as many agents as we truly need. So we later raised the goal to 90 percent. When we implemented Aspect® Workforce Management we saw almost instant results. We immediately went over the 90 percent mark, and have consistently maintained 90 percent occupancy ever since. This has saved us US\$1.2 million in one year."

"In addition," she says, "we've maintained our call-handled percentage at 96 percent, and surprisingly enough, our attrition rate has declined. When you talk about high occupancy and high call-handling rates, most people think of agent burnout, but we haven't experienced that. Our attrition rate has gone from between 60 and 70 percent to the low 50s because the workforce management tools allow us to provide balance for the agents. We're asking for higher occupancy, but we forecast more efficiently, schedule more efficiently, and plan efficiently for off-phone activity, such as training. So agents get time away from the phone even though their productivity is up."

HRW also took one additional major step toward creating a friendly working environment by implementing the optional Empower module for Aspect Workforce Management. Empower includes eSchedule Planner, that allows agents to view their schedules and to request changes online, and Notification Server, which automates the process of notifying staff of schedule changes.

"We'll gain a quicker response when we need agents to work overtime or when we're overstaffed and want to allow people to take off early. Before, the central planning team had to go to the local control desks and say, 'you need to send ten people home,' or 'we need ten people for overtime,' and the control desks had to manually publish the information to the agents and then go out and recruit for it. Now it will be much more immediate. We can send a notification out through Notification Server and we get a much quicker response."

HRW is also using the workforce management solution as an education tool to help contribute to agent satisfaction.

"We've recently put together a module that we'll first deliver to our current staff, and eventually use in new-hire training as well," says McFatridge. "We're educating agents on planning and scheduling so that they understand why we have to have the schedules that we do, and why not everyone can work Monday through Friday from eight to five. We tell them how we go about creating forecasts and why there are decisions sometimes not to offer overtime even though it seems to the agents that we need it."

Is HRW satisfied with the workforce management capabilities of PerformanceEdge® and with Aspect? McFatridge puts it this way. "Everyone you contact at Aspect is genuinely friendly and helpful. They really do want to make your center successful. They're willing to listen, and try new things, and help you figure out a new way to accomplish your business goals that the software might not have been originally designed for."

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About Aspect

Aspect is a global software and IT services firm specializing in applying Microsoft unified communications and collaboration to help customers achieve optimal results through enhanced business processes across the enterprise and in the contact center. Aspect provides IT consulting, integration services and business applications. For more information, visit www.aspect.com.

