

# MASTER THE WFM PARADIGM SHIFT

With True to  
Interval Analytics



## The Nature of Work Is Changing

The addition of new generations to the workplace, the lasting effects of the pandemic on consumer and employee behavior, and the need for resiliency amid economic uncertainty have combined to create a perfect storm of challenges for the contact center.

These new challenges have fueled an evolution in the paradigms surrounding workforce management. Facing a new, increasingly blended digital office, workforce management teams are looking to enable much more flexible work assignments and much more flexible planning, scheduling, and forecasting. To stay competitive, businesses today need workforce management tools and practices that break the chains of traditional WFM paradigms.

In this eBook, we will detail how the nature of work is changing, unpack the old and new paradigms surrounding workforce management, and discuss how modern solutions have evolved to approach the new challenges in the increasingly flexible blended digital office.



# How (and Why) the Nature of Work Is Changing

For the first time in history, four generations are working side by side in the workplace: Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z. Among other differences, each generation has distinct preferences when it comes to communicating:



Older generations have typically relied on voice and synchronous communications, meaning interactions that take place in real time (and also require an immediate response).



Younger generations, for their part, are increasingly more likely to use non-voice, asynchronous modes of communication, such as mobile apps (e.g., social media, messaging, social monitoring, etc.). These interactions are characterized by back-and-forth communications that allow for time between responses.

The pandemic, however, served as a catalyst for digital transformation, increasing adoption of digital channels as well as boosting the tech-savviness of the broader workforce. As a result, employees of all ages are now familiar with using non-voice, asynchronous communication methods like Slack, SharePoint, or ASANA as part of their day-to-day interactions at work.



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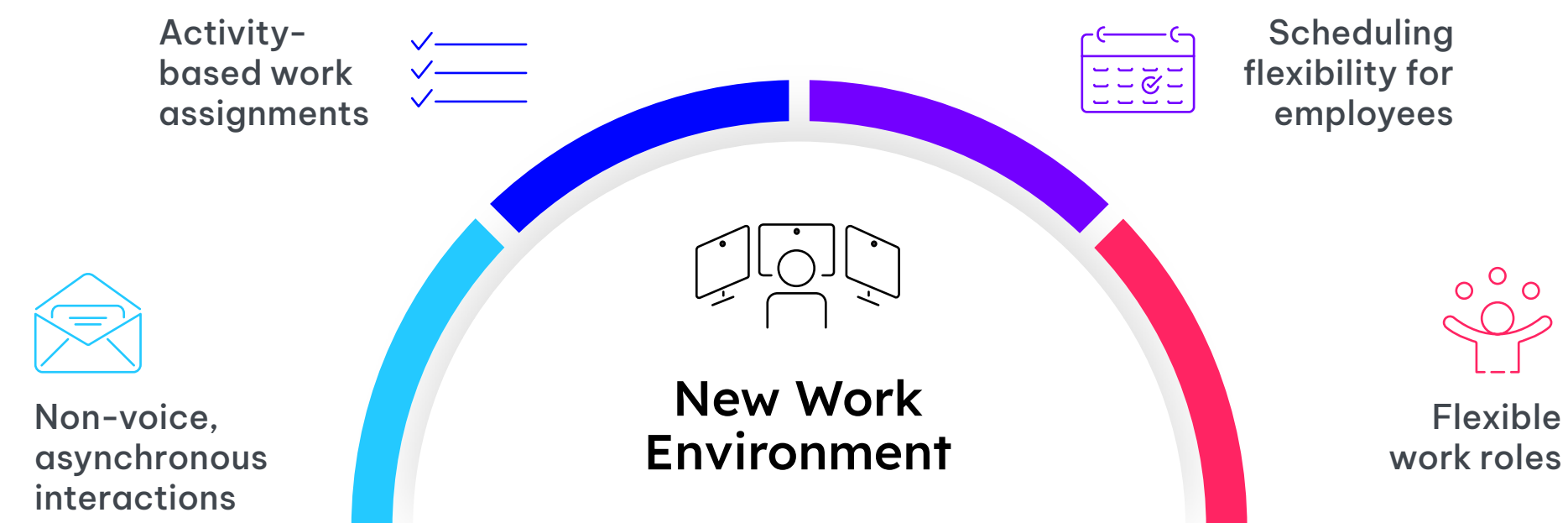
This digital familiarity applies to customers, too. Gen Z as well as Boomer customers are relying on non-voice, asynchronous interactions when they reach out to the businesses. Baby Boomers are now [the fastest-growing demographic on social media](#), and they're increasingly using it for customer service.

At the same time, the pandemic forced companies and employees alike to figure out how to work in a fully remote environment, and this upended everything we thought about managing a workforce, managing contacts, and connecting with others. Rather than having a piece of work to be completed (e.g., answering a customer call) while the agent was in the office, the agent had become a participant in a work stream with many activities underway (e.g., responding via email to a customer whose interaction had begun with another agent via chat the day before).

Companies started rethinking how their workspaces were designed to create an activity-based

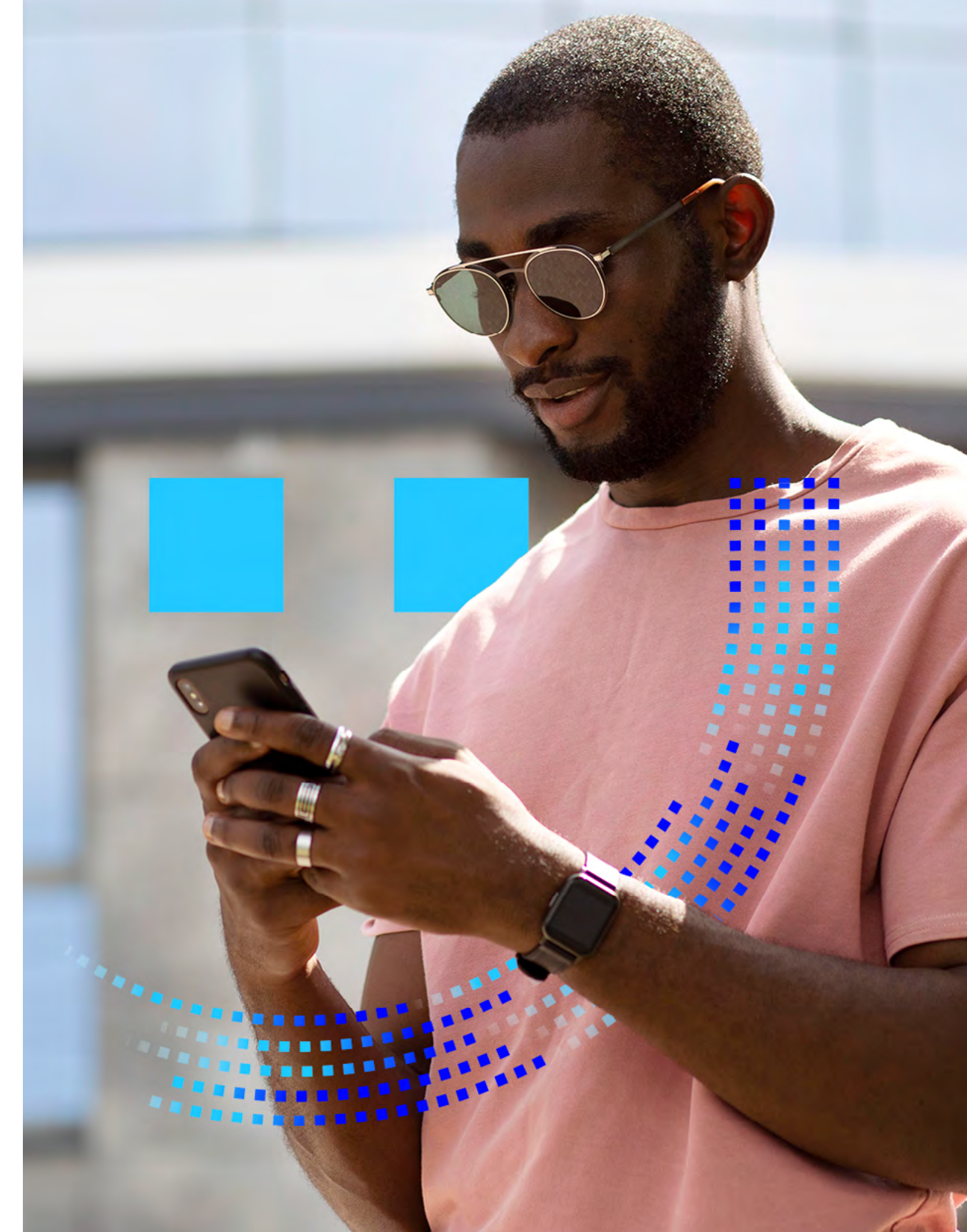
environment that was more living and breathing and adaptable to employees' needs—much like an individual person's home environment is. For example, when Republic Services was consolidating multiple contact centers, the waste disposal company built a new facility from the ground up with a priority on enabling first-contact resolution, giving employees ready access to the resources needed to solve customers' problems.

Scheduling flexibility enables businesses with shift workers to expand and contract staffing levels along with demand. In addition, scheduling flexibility has emerged as an important way to keep employees happy—a critical consideration given that “employees are one of the crucial aspects that keep your business afloat during trying times,” Derek Gallimore wrote in [Forbes](#). This has resulted in a much more flexible workspace, which goes hand in hand with more flexible work assignments and much more flexible planning, scheduling, and forecasting.



### The end result?

The work environment today looks vastly different from that of just a few years ago. With four generations in the workforce, organizations are expected to meet vastly different expectations and communication preferences of an increasingly tech-savvy workforce—all while preparing for the possibility of a recession.



## How Yesterday's WFM Paradigms Are Creating Silos of Inaccurate Data Today

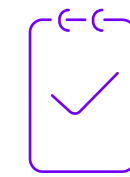
For decades, contact center workforce management largely focused on inbound calls, but we've recently witnessed a refreshing shift toward embracing all media types, from emails and chats to social channels and more, for forecasting and scheduling. This has caused contact centers to rethink the concept of what work is and how it is assigned.

The pandemic accelerated not only the type of support channels offered but also the rate at which people adopted them. In fact, nearly half of the customer service leaders [surveyed recently by NICE](#) said the number of support channels they use has increased over the past two years.

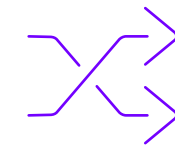
Many contact centers have responded with something of a siloed perspective, organizing contact center operations into separate teams—one that just works the phone, another that just works chats, another that focuses solely on Facebook, and so on. And they continue to calculate staffing requirements in a similar fashion as they did with a single channel (with the exception of accounting for concurrent/simultaneous interactions and longer turnaround times).



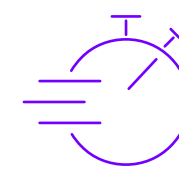
In this evolving environment, yesterday's WFM paradigms are creating silos of inaccurate data in a few key ways:



**Yesterday's paradigm: Forecasts are based on when a work item is completed, not when the work was performed.** Almost every platform we collect data from tends to wait until the work item is completed before it reports any data out to the end user; this creates a challenge when work is asynchronous in nature or when a work item is continuous but spans multiple intervals. This forces a siloing of omnichannel operations from the contact center and the back office because the data needs of each are so different—and, in many cases, the data needed to manage a fully blended environment simply isn't available.



**Yesterday's paradigm: Work items are assumed to be synchronous.** Work items like Facebook posts or messaging can span several intervals—even a day or two in some cases—with a lag between an outgoing response and an incoming one. It's very difficult to plan in this scenario if platforms assume synchronous, immediate resolution.



**Yesterday's paradigm: Average handle time (AHT) is shorter than the planning interval.** Traditional WFM systems operate well when AHT is shorter than the planning interval, but things break down very quickly otherwise. For example, if your planning interval is 30 minutes but it really takes two hours to complete the work item, traditional WFM systems don't know how to deal with the extra time. They generally force it all into a single interval, which results in invalid requirement numbers.



**Yesterday's paradigm: A work item is processed by a single employee.** Traditional WFM systems fail to account for the fact that work can be put back into a general queue and picked up by another employee. That's especially true in environments with asynchronous deferrable work.



**Yesterday's paradigm: An employee works no more than one work item concurrently.** This is perhaps the most painful issue that WFM customers face. That's because multiple concurrency affects not only the data, but also all the calculations you use to interpret the data, impacting your ability to schedule and approve intraday changes accurately.



**Yesterday's paradigm: A work item resides in a single channel.** An interaction between a customer and an agent can seamlessly move between channels, and at that point, a channel-specific perspective gets in the way of effectively planning work. In today's contact center, it's more about what kind of work is happening—and when—regardless of the channel.



# How the Increasing Popularity of Bots Is Making Customer Service (and WFM) More Complex

Chatbots have officially gone mainstream. Nearly 8 in 10 (78%) people surveyed recently said they have interacted with a bot in the past 12 months, and 40% of millennials report chatting with bots on a daily basis, according to [Forbes](#). Usage within customer-focused organizations is only expected to increase, with [Gartner](#) predicting that chatbots will become a primary customer service channel within five years.

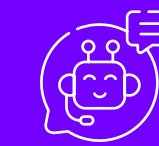
Bots are software programs intended to imitate an employee, either by voice or text communication, and expedite customer service needs. A growing number of organizations are leveraging them, and they offer benefits like 24/7 availability, faster response times, the ability to handle a large volume of interactions, proactive as well as reactive service, and lower costs. In fact, some AI trained bots allow companies to reduce support ticket volume by up to 80% and cost by over 90% per customer contact, according to [VentureBeat](#).

And bots keep getting smarter: Advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning are fueling bots capable of addressing a customer's sentiment or determining when to redirect someone to a live agent to get a more personal touch.

However, there's no need for a WFM system to plan employee schedules around bot success rates. But bots do impact WFM processes. Bots remove work items—specifically, easier-to-handle customer requests and interactions—from the queue, which can have a significant impact on scheduling.

As bots handle simpler work items, the interactions that do make it to a human customer service agent are more complex. When agent interactions are more complex, it typically takes longer to understand the issue, conduct research, and communicate steps to resolution—all of which increase handle time.

Long handle times pose a particular challenge for WFM teams using traditional WFM solutions, which operate well when the average handle time (AHT) is shorter than the planning interval. If, for example, the back-and-forth of an interaction occurs over two hours, but the planning interval is 30 minutes, traditional WFM solutions force the time into a single interval, skewing staffing requirements. **Newer tools offer a solution by deconstructing work items into the activities occurring in each interval, improving forecasted staff requirements.**



Increased use of bots



More complex inquiries go to agents



Longer AHT

## Why Waiting Until the Contact Ends to Report Activity Is Too Late

For years, many contact centers have been planning and forecasting in intervals of 15 or 30 minutes. A business with average handle times (AHT) of 10 minutes, for example, may find that a 15-minute interval is ideal, while one with slightly longer AHT may find that using a 30-minute interval results in much more accurate requirements calculations.

Today, however, with increased usage of digital channels for customer service, interactions can now take hours or days. Waiting until a contact ends before seeing any information about the contact makes it impossible to plan work effectively across planning intervals. Consider the following examples at one company, Globe Inc., which operates in 15-minute intervals.



**Email:** An agent, Joseph, completes an email at 3:57 p.m., and the contact is reported as completed. The reported handling time cannot exceed 15 minutes based on current workforce management (WFM) standards, so the 12 minutes of time Joseph spent handling the email is the only data point transmitted to the company's WFM solution. This fails to account for the 48 total minutes spent on the email by three other employees before Joseph jumped in to handle the interaction. The proper way to account for this would be to continue reflecting the contact as completed during the 3:45 to 4 p.m. interval, but Globe needs a way to reflect the time spent working on the contact outside of that interval.





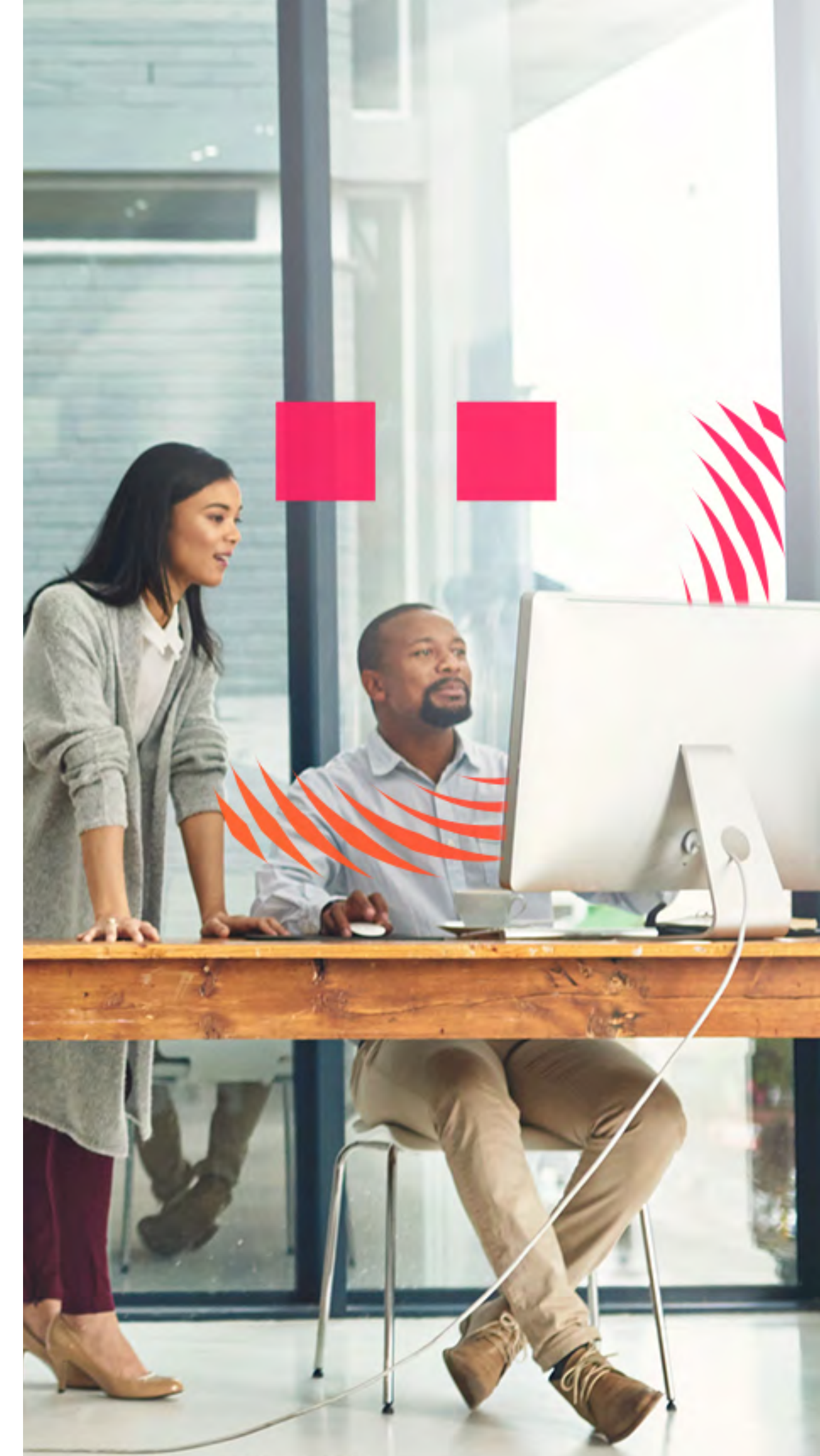


**Social media:** A customer posts to Globe’s Facebook page at 2:20 p.m. Sally is the first agent to respond on behalf of the company; she spends 8 minutes crafting a response before posting to Facebook at 2:37 p.m. The customer replies to Sally’s post at 3:13 p.m., and another agent, Gabriel, works on a response for 6 minutes before posting it at 3:32 p.m. The customer responds with one final question at 4:12 p.m., and a third agent, Nicola, spends 7 minutes drafting a response before posting it at 4:47 p.m. Due to antiquated data reporting, Globe only accounts for 15 minutes of handling time during the 4:45 to 5 p.m. interval, and it only recognizes the person that handled the contact in that ending interval—in this instance, Nicola. The source system tried to send a 21-minute handling time, but Globe’s WFM solution rounded it down to the interval length of 15 minutes; the actual handle time, however, was 21 minutes across three people over six intervals.

As these examples illustrate, traditional WFM applications have two major shortcomings: work items that span multiple planning intervals are treated as a single work item that occurs in a single interval, and asynchronous work is treated the same as synchronous work.

**WFM is centered around having the right people at the right time, but if you are not accounting for all of the time spent working on contacts, how can you trust your projections?**

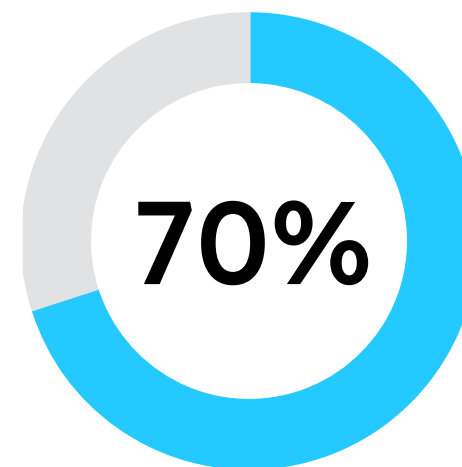
To plan and forecast effectively, contact centers need to start reporting when activity occurs—when the first agent takes action on the email or Facebook post—and report when a contact becomes active again. By deconstructing these conversations into the lowest granularity that the organization needs, (e.g., 15 or 30 minutes), the contact center can create forecasts, staffing requirements, and schedules driven by patterns of interval-specific activity.



# Why Work Planning and Scheduling Must Be Normalized to the Smallest Planning Interval

Workforce management is designed to help companies provide the best-in-class service in the most cost-effective way possible. With labor costs accounting for the majority of contact center costs—around 70%, according to [ICMI](#)—maximizing each agent labor dollar is critically important in today's economy.

Labor costs accounting for the majority of contact center costs



Workforce managers must allocate available agent resources against the contact center's current needs. It's a complex undertaking, given that customer patience and willingness to wait can vary a great deal depending on the type of contact.

For example, people accept a delay in response via email compared to phone; this can lead an organization to strive to answer all emails within 24 hours but answer 80% of inbound calls in 20 seconds or less. Historically, workforce managers have forecasted and scheduled contacts that have different service levels separately.

With the increase in digital channels, however, it is increasingly common to have omnichannel, blended work streams where an employee spreads their time across many different channels simultaneously, or even spreads their time across different types of tasks. This has made it much more difficult to view and manage staffing requirements across contact center, back office, and digital teams.

If you genuinely want to blend work items, whether that's from your digital office into your contact center, your contact center into your back office, or your back office into the digital office, you need a common planning interval. And it's simply not reasonable to expect a contact center to move away from the 15- or 30-minute interval in order to cross-utilize people with the back office, which is much less sensitive to 30-minute increments.

That's why work planning and scheduling must be normalized to the smallest planning interval for blended work items. That means taking longer asynchronous work (whether that's from a digital contact center or from a back office), standardizing the time it takes to handle an interaction, and using this standard time per interaction to forecast call volume and schedule agents.

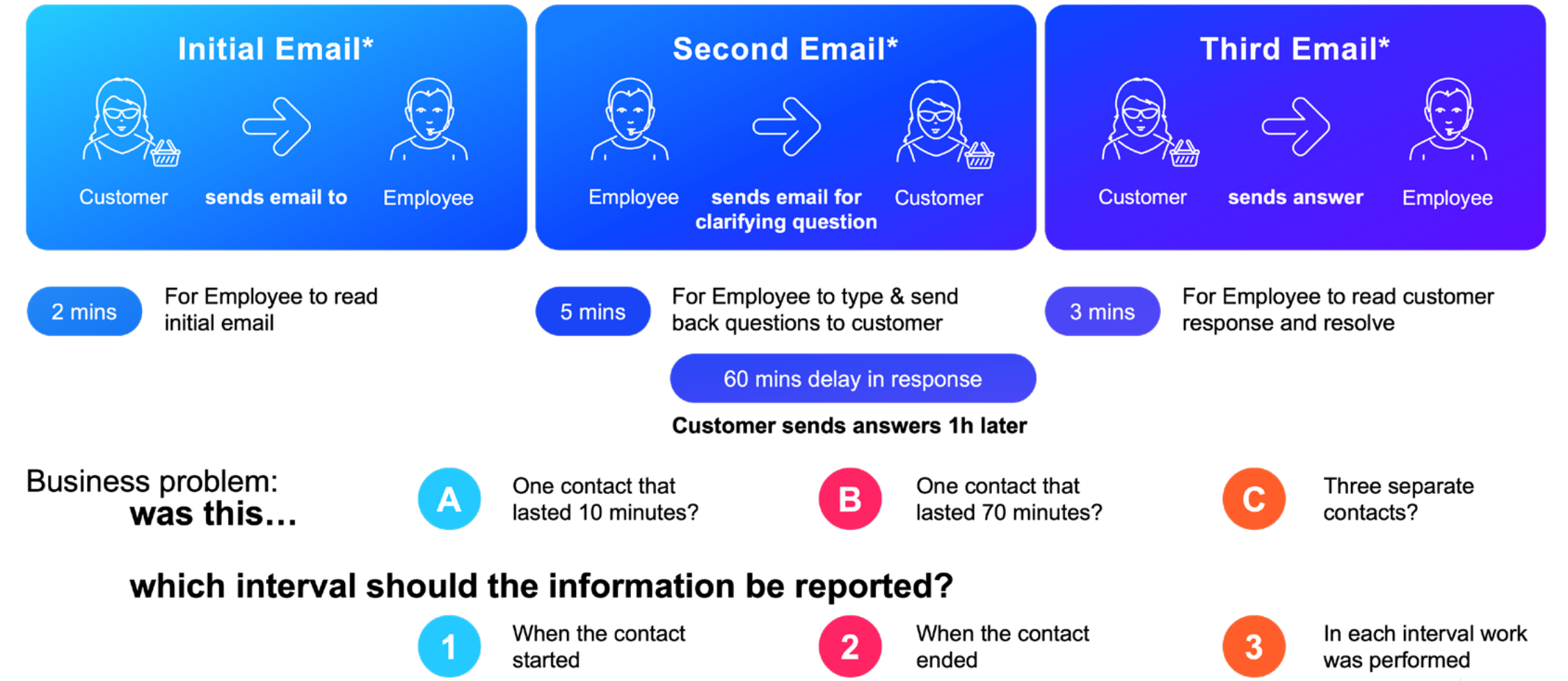
Understanding requirements at the interval level allows for greater insight into service level performance. Doing so, however, requires the ability to deconstruct these contacts into the amount of time and number of contacts worked in each interval.

Viewing the requirements both at the channel level and through a holistic view allows workforce management teams to determine when and how to allocate resources. It also allows companies to provide a more consistent service level across each channel.

**We've squeezed so much out of the contact center.** The next frontier is figuring out how we gain efficiencies by combining the digital office with the traditional voice contact center and the back office.

# Why Contacts That Span Intervals Must Be Deconstructed Into Activity-Based Work History

## Challenges with Long Asynchronous Interactions



\* The example is "email": other examples include SMS, social media posts, chat, claims, tickets, cases, etc.

The increase in digital channels means contact centers are handling more contacts, both synchronous and asynchronous, that exceed the planning interval. This has introduced some complex new challenges into the forecasting process.

Most workforce management (WFM) solutions on the market today have two major shortcomings:

They treat work items that span multiple planning intervals as a single work item, and they treat asynchronous work in the same way as synchronous work. Both shortcomings lead to planning and scheduling inaccuracy.

Consider the case of a contact that is received in the morning but not completed until later in the day. What's the best way to forecast

contact center requirements? With an asynchronous contact, such as an email or chat, it's possible (and highly likely) that the contact isn't being worked on the entire time.

Then there's the case of contact types (CTs) or queues with low-volume contacts. If a contact arrives at 9 a.m. but isn't completed until the next interval at 9:30 a.m., and no other volume is received during the 9:30 a.m. interval, what's the best forecasting approach?

Both of these examples complicate forecasting: If contacts are forecasted when they are finished (i.e., obituary or "when contact ended" reporting), how can you ensure that you have the appropriate staffing for when the contact arrived? With traditional WFM reporting, it can misalign the staff requirement calculations and the forecasting, breaking WFM processes. You don't know what's happening to the work item as it spans intervals.

If, on the other hand, you forecast the requirement based on when the contact arrived, you need to determine how to manage all of the intervals when the contact was actively being worked. In the second example above, having handle time but no handled volume would result in a divide by zero error for the 9:30 am interval, again breaking WFM processes.

These challenges call for an approach in which the amount of agent time that is applied to the contact is reported in the interval in which it occurred—a

## Challenges with Long Interactions

### "When Contact Ended" (WCE)

- A contact is counted once in the interval in which it ends...even if the contact spanned intervals
- Handle Time is reported only in the interval in which contact ends

#### Contact Arrives at 9:10 & Completes at 9:40

Interval	Received	Handled	Handle Time	Staff Req
9:00	1	0	0	0
9:15	0	0	0	0
9:30	0	1	30	2 people*

\*Workload = (1 contact x 30mins) / 15mins in interval = 2 people



Use when...

- most contacts arrive and complete in the same interval
- intervals are longer than the handle times

Creates staffing problems when...

- handle times are long or intermittent and contacts span intervals
- intervals are shorter than the handle times

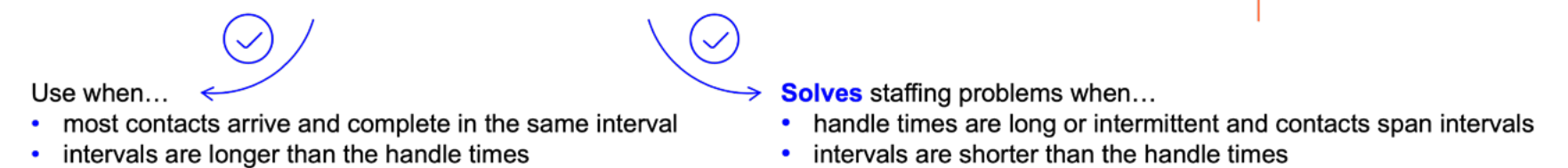
### New "Answered & Active True to Interval" (TTI)

- A contact is counted once in the interval in which it is initially answered  
*If the contact spans intervals, it is counted again in each subsequent interval where activity occurred*
- Handle Time is reported in each interval in which work activity occurs

#### Contact Arrives at 9:10 & Completes at 9:40

Interval	Received	Answered	Active	Handle Time	Staff Req
9:00	1	1	0	5	.33
9:15	0	0	1	15	1
9:30	0	0	1	10	.67

\*Workload = (contacts x handle time) / 15mins in interval = Staff Req



Use when...

- most contacts arrive and complete in the same interval
- intervals are longer than the handle times

Solves staffing problems when...

- handle times are long or intermittent and contacts span intervals
- intervals are shorter than the handle times

“true to interval” approach that provides an accurate representation of what happens within each interval. This requires dividing contacts to the interval in which work occurred. Then, the final piece is to count the contact when it arrives and also count the contact in the intervals in which the contact is being worked or active. By capturing the handle time true to the interval and capturing the contact in the interval it is answered—and any additional intervals in which it is active—you are positioned to generate a true staffing requirement.

NICE WFM and CXone WFM offer a solution in True to Interval (TTI) Analytics. TTI unlocks the ability to divide these contacts into the amount of time (activity of a contact) and number of contacts that were worked in each interval. This allows you to determine accurate interval staffing requirements, with forecasts, staffing requirements, and schedules driven by patterns of interval-specific activity.

NICE WFM and CXone WFM have broken the chains of the WFM paradigm with TTI, making NICE the only WFM solution for the blended digital office.

### Answered & Active True to the Interval (TTI) 1st Interval

WCE	Received	Handled	Handle Time	AHT	Staff Req.
Service Chat	1	0	0	0	0
Service Twitter	1	0	0	0	0
Service Facebook	1	1	2	2	.13

Generic TTI	Received	Answered	Handle Time	AHT	Staff Req.
Service Chat	1	1	11	11	.73
Service Twitter	1	1	2	2	.13
Service Facebook	1	1	2	2	.13

Answered & Active TTI	Received	Answered	Active	Handle Time	AHT	Staff Req.
Service Chat	1	1	1	11	5.5	.73
Service Twitter	1	1	0	2	2	.13
Service Facebook	1	1	0	2	2	.13

Minute	Service Chat	Service Chat	Service Twitter	Service Facebook
↑ Previous interval				
1	In focus			Queued
2	In focus		Queued	Answered
3	In focus		Answered	
4			In focus	
5	In focus			
6				In focus
7	In focus			
8	In focus			
9	In focus			
10	In focus	Queued		
11		Answered	In focus	
12	In focus			
13				In focus
14				Ended
15	In focus			

Three Work Items carrying over to next interval

### Answered & Active True to the Interval (TTI) 2nd Interval

WCE	Received	Handled	Handle Time	AHT	Staff Req.
Service Chat	0	2	16	8	1.07
Service Twitter	0	0	0	0	0
Service Facebook	0	0	0	0	0

Generic TTI	Received	Answered	Handle Time	AHT	Staff Req.
Service Chat	0	0	5	#DIV!	0
Service Twitter	0	0	10	#DIV!	0
Service Facebook	0	0	0	0	0

Answered & Active TTI	Received	Answered	Active	Handle Time	AHT	Staff Req.
Service Chat	0	0	2	5	2.5	.33
Service Twitter	0	0	1	10	10	.67
Service Facebook	0	0	0	0	0	0

Minute	Service Chat	Service Chat	Service Twitter	Service Facebook
↑ Previous interval				
↑ Previous interval				
↑ Previous interval				
1	In focus			
2	In focus			
3	In focus			
4	Ended	In focus		
5		In focus		
6		Ended	In focus	
7			In focus	
8			In focus	
9			In focus	
10			In focus	
11			In focus	
12			In focus	
13			In focus	
14			In focus	
15			In focus	

One Work Item carrying over to next interval

# Taming the Wild West: Bringing the Back Office into Your Omnichannel Contact Center

In many organizations today, the back office is like the Wild West—operations are often uncharted, unstandardized, and unsupervised by a centralized authority. Back office teams often have their own processes separate from their organizations, along with their own metrics and accountability standards, making it almost impossible to compare productivity across teams.

Without consistent standards, back office operations turn into a question mark. You can end up with long backlogs, repeat tickets, and duplicate contacts, costing team members valuable time when reaching out to customers with resolved issues.

And there's no clear winner when it comes to a strategy for the back office. [A recent survey found:](#) Respondents were evenly split (50%) between using similar service level objectives across channels and different ones, and 54% of the respondents treated reopened tickets/cases as ongoing interactions, not new ones.

But just as modern progress ended the Wild West more than 125 years ago, digital advancement is forcing organizations to rethink how they manage the back office. Organizations are coping with economic uncertainty and rising interest rates, and as a result, they are embracing the omnichannel contact center to realize a wide range of benefits: According to [DMG Consulting](#), companies that combine back office and related contact center functions can reduce staffing



in the back office by 25% to 40%, while speeding up processing, increasing first contact resolution (FCR), and reducing errors.

It's time to make the back office as manageable as the front office. Every contact center has different circumstances and needs, but by using data and analytics to accurately staff, measure, and improve operations across the front and back offices, organizations can increase back office productivity and proficiency. To make the two sectors work together, organizations must find a way to normalize two very different environments.

**How to Make the Back Office Manageable**

The back office can be managed just as effectively as the front office. Doing so, however, requires normalizing back-office work activity into an interval of time that can be merged with immediate response channels, such as voice.

Backlog, or deferrable work, does not require an immediate response and is often long in duration and asynchronous. With such work in the back office, organizations can use NICE's True to Interval (TTI) Analytics to deconstruct the work items into interval-specific data to be blended with immediate response work items. TTI Analytics introduces "activity-based staffing requirements" for each type of contact rather than simple contact-based staffing requirements. This opens a door to a planning regimen previously unknown, enabling workforce managers to effectively blend front office and back office work streams.

Workforce managers also need a method to "reconstruct" interval-specific work effort into a more meaningful workload estimate. This helps determine whether staffing is sufficient to maintain a healthy backlog, and NICE WFM's Inventory Insights capability offers a solution.

Inventory Insights automates the forecast of inventory backlog and expiration in blended as well as dedicated operations. The system uses existing WFM data at the 15-min or 30-min planning interval to "reconstruct" work activities into overall turnaround time (TAT) estimates for each work item. The Back Office WFM team is able to analyze inventory data

and predictions in multiple time grains (from 15min to a full week) to create new insights about work that is deferrable (held in backlog). The solution performs robust data analysis of backlog data, forecast data, and schedule data to generate predictions that help workforce managers make informed decisions.

**The back office doesn't have to be the Wild West of contact center operations.** Modern WFM solutions can normalize two very different environments, so that the back office can be managed just as effectively as the front office.

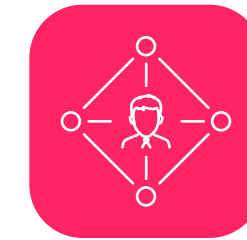
The screenshot shows the 'Inventory Insights' dashboard in the NICE Supervisor Webstation. The interface includes a sidebar with navigation options like Home, Schedules, StatsViewer, ActivityTracker, Process Monitor, User Preferences, Time Off Manager, Reports, MU Configuration, RTA, Omnichannel Planning, Inventory Insights, Work Journal, Long-term Forecast, Administration, and Employee Engagem... The main content area displays a table for 'Inventory Insights' with the following data:

ARRIVAL INTERVAL				START OF INTERVAL				DURING INTERVAL								END OF INTERVAL						
FROM	TO	DURATION	SERVICE GOAL	DUE BY	TOTAL INVENTORY	EXPIRED	EXPIRING IN INTERVAL	NOT EXPIRING	NEW INVENTORY	TOTAL INVENTORY	AHT	TOTAL INVENTORY WORKLOAD (HOURS)	SCHEDULED CAPACITY (HOURS)	SCHEDULE OVERHEAD %	NET (HOURS)	INVENTORY THAT CAN BE WORKED	TOTAL INVENTORY TO BE COMPLETED	ENDING INVENTORY	EXPIRED INVENTORY	UNDERSTAFFING	OVERSTAFFING	
9/20/23 0:00	9/20/23 23:59	01:00:00:00			50	20	50	20	20	70	00:00:55:00	64.17	60	0%	-4.17	65.45	65.45	4.55	0	0	0	
9/21/23 0:00	9/21/23 23:59	01:00:00:00			4.55	20	4.55	20	20	24.5	00:00:55:00	22.5	60	0%	37.5	65.5	24.5	0	0	0	37.5	
9/22/23 0:00	9/22/23 23:59	01:00:00:00																				
9/23/23 0:00	9/23/23 23:59	01:00:00:00																				
9/24/23 0:00	9/24/23 23:59	01:00:00:00																				
9/25/23 0:00	9/25/23 23:59	01:00:00:00																				
9/26/23 0:00	9/26/23 23:59	01:00:00:00																				
<b>Total</b>					<b>54.55</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>54.55</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>94.55</b>		<b>86.67</b>	<b>120</b>		<b>33.33</b>	<b>130.91</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>4.55</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37.5</b>	
<b>Average</b>					<b>27.27</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>27.27</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>47.27</b>		<b>00:00:55:00</b>	<b>43.33</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>16.67</b>	<b>65.45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>2.27</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18.75</b>

# Adapt to the New Paradigms: Changing Workforce Management with TTI

Relying on yesterday's workforce management paradigms—that work items are synchronous, reside in a single channel, and are processed by a single employee, among others—creates silos of inaccurate data in an increasingly digital world. The nature of work has changed irrevocably, and traditional WFM paradigms must give way to an entirely new concept of work.

Contact centers are embracing a new way of thinking about workforce management. Among the key tenets of WFM in today's digital world:



**Everything has changed for omnichannel and blended environments:** Today's workplace bears little resemblance to that of just a few years ago. The pandemic changed employee and consumer behaviors across generations, making newly tech-savvy Gen Z and Boomers just as likely as their younger counterparts to use asynchronous channels like chat or text, in work or their personal lives. At the same time, an increase in remote work has transformed how contact centers manage the workforce and customer contacts alike. On top of that, an uncertain economic environment pushes organizations to embrace scheduling flexibility to retain employees.



**Bots are becoming more popular:** Companies use bots to handle simple customer inquiries, sending more complex customer issues to agents. This often translates into longer handle times, which complicate traditional WFM solutions that operate best when average handle time (AHT) is shorter than the planning interval.

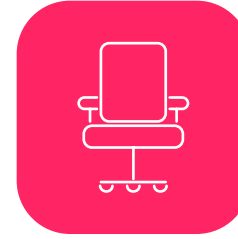


**Waiting until a contact ends to report activity is too late:** With interactions now increasingly digital, interactions can take hours or days—far longer than the typical 15- or 30-minute planning interval. Planning and forecasting requires WFM teams to report when activity occurs (for example, when an agent responds to a social media post) and report when a contact becomes active again (for example, when the customer follows up their social media post with a direct message to the company). This will allow WFM teams to plan and forecast based on patterns of interval-specific activity.



**Work planning and scheduling must be normalized to the smallest planning interval for blended work items:** A standardized planning interval clarifies what work needs to be performed, regardless of where it's being performed. While back office planning can be done on the order of a day, contact centers are more sensitive to the 15- or 30-minute interval. By normalizing longer asynchronous work, whether it's taking place in the contact center or the back office, organizations can work more efficiently by blending work items and cross-utilizing teams from these dissimilar environments.





**The back office is still the Wild West in many organizations:** Even within a single company, back office teams have their own processes, their own metrics, and their own way of being held accountable to those metrics. But while there's a movement toward blending front and back office functions to drive efficiency, organizations must be able to normalize both environments and "reconstruct" interval-specific work effort into a more meaningful workload estimate to determine whether staffing is sufficient to maintain a healthy backlog. NICE WFM's Inventory Insights capability offers a solution, making it possible to manage the back office just as effectively as the front office.



**Schedules must cover both work item-based and activity-based staffing requirements:** Workforce management is in the midst of a transition from being call- or work-item-based to being activity-based. By considering not only the number of work items received, but also the number of work items active, in each interval, you can translate every work item into the activity required to complete it. This gives you the ability to generate activity-based staffing requirements.

Each of these new paradigms unlocks new data insights, and True to Interval (TTI) Analytics enables contact centers to leverage these insights to forecast, schedule, adapt, respond, and engage more efficiently and effectively. TTI represents a paradigm shift from reporting when a contact ends to reporting when activity occurs. Cases/tickets/conversations are automatically deconstructed into data that is usable for WFM purposes at the interval level. Volume/AHT forecasts, staff requirement calculations, and schedules are driven by historical patterns of interval-specific activity required to resolve long-duration cases, tickets, or conversations.

By enabling workforce management teams to understand the true number of resources available by channel—and also understand how to best leverage them—TTI is helping contact centers make best-in-class service, in the most cost-effective manner, a reality.

[Learn more about how TTI Analytics is helping contact centers plan and forecast blended work streams more accurately.](#)



## About NICE

With NICE (Nasdaq: NICE), it's never been easier for organizations of all sizes around the globe to create extraordinary customer experiences while meeting key business metrics. Featuring the world's #1 cloud native customer experience platform, CXone, NICE is a worldwide leader in AI-powered self-service and agent-assisted CX software for the contact center—and beyond. Over 25,000 organizations in more than 150 countries, including over 85 of the Fortune 100 companies, partner with NICE to transform—and elevate—every customer interaction.

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