



Integrating skills-based routing

A common complaint from contact centre customers is the experience of selecting IVR menu options and making their query, only to discover the person they have come through to cannot help them.

The call is then transferred to another person, and the caller invariably has to repeat their query to the second or sometimes to a third person. If this is a familiar complaint of callers to your contact centre, then skills-based routing technology may be the answer to solving these callers' frustrations.

If your contact centre has the following attributes: handles a wide range of interaction types, e.g. order capture, account balances, and technical support; handles interactions that vary in scope from simple and repetitive, to complex; handles interactions over multiple channels, e.g. voice, web, email and fax; and requires contact centre staff skills that range from generalist to specialist, then chances are you are already considering using skills-based routing

- in conjunction with caller line identification (CLI) technology. This is useful if the business is organised regionally – CLI recognises the region code of the originating call, and automatically directs the call to the contact centre agent group which services that region after the entry of a PIN number, where callers use the keypad to enter their PIN, e.g. an account number. This requires the use of a routing table and CTI which aligns the contact centre agent teams, portfolios and the database holding the PIN numbers.

Introducing the technology

Skills-based routing software can be integrated into any type of contact centre, however there are some technology components which are pre-requisites, depending on the complexity of the business and the contact centre structure, as shown in the Contact Centre Complexity Profile table below.

The table shows the technology components required if skills-based routing is to be

PRE-REQUISITES FOR SKILLS-BASED ROUTING FUNCTIONALITY	CONTACT CENTRE COMPLEXITY PROFILE		
	SIMPLE e.g. Organised by Transaction or Service Type	MODERATE e.g. Regionally Organised	COMPLEX e.g. Organised by Portfolio Requiring PIN
Operating system server	✓	✓	✓
PBX / ACD	✓	✓	✓
Caller line identification		✓	
IVR	✓		Usually
Database routing table			✓
CTI			✓
Skills-based Routing Software			✓

ing technology to direct calls to the right contact centre agent first time.

What does it do?

In its simplest form, skills-based routing technology directs customer interactions, from multiple channels, to the most suitably skilled contact centre agent who can resolve the enquiry personally.

To do this, the organisation must have a good understanding of its customers and their needs when they make contact; and this must be aligned to the contact centre agent skills. This information allows the calls to be sorted by interaction type before being directed by skills-based routing technology.

The technology can be used in conjunction with other telephony platforms to seamlessly direct calls to the right agent:

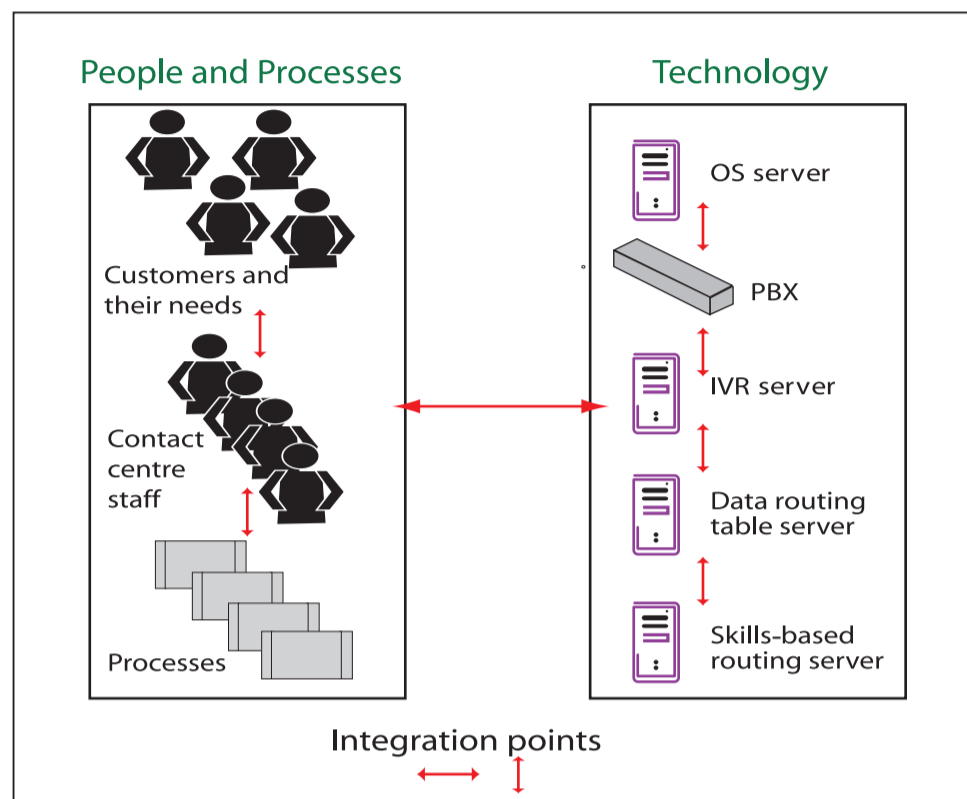
- as an adjunct to an IVR menu, where callers select from a menu of options. This is useful if callers are ringing for specific services and the contact centre agents' skill groups are aligned to those services, and

introduced based on the complexity of the design of the contact centre. The intended routing complexity determines if specialist software such as Genesys, Nortel Symposium, or Cisco ICM is required to complete the solution. When software is required, the integration of the software to the customer database becomes a pre-requisite (CTI), as does a maintainable database routing table.

The choice of software is dependent on the existing telephony design, because there is a need to determine if the software can be integrated into what is already on-site. Some specialist adaptors have been created to integrate routing software and databases, e.g. the Genesys G-plus adaptor that integrates with SAP.

Integrating skills-based routing technology into the contact centre

For existing contact centres, there are significant issues around integration of skills-based routing technology and people and processes. Introducing the new technology is likely to have an impact on the people and processes, i.e. the technology change



will not be independent.

To complete a project with multiple integration points, hardware, and a range of software involved, there is also a question about how the project will be managed.

When multiple vendors are involved, the project management of the vendor delivery becomes as significant as the technical solution that is involved in the integration.

In summary

A skills-based routing system: improves the first time resolution rate and customer satisfaction; reduces customer frustration, contact centre rework and double handling by reducing the number of interactions that need to be transferred; minimises the number of calls that are directed to a voice mail box; and reduces abandonment rates by minimising the time callers are in a queue waiting for a contact centre agent.

To introduce skills-based technology into a contact centre, the level of routing complexity intended has to be determined early on. If a simple form of routing is sufficient, then additional software may not be necessary. For more complex solutions such as routing based on customer account PIN, then the integration between the technology and the people and processes has to be considered, as well as the integration design of the software, the database, and the telephony platforms.

Delivering a complex CTI software integration can achieve significant benefits for customers and the organisation, although managing the design and installation of the software needs to be well thought through and managed independently.

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