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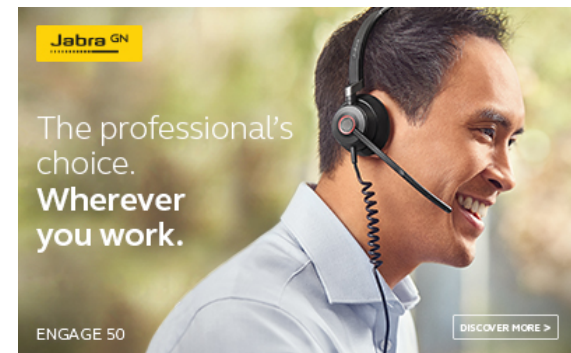
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Guide: The Roll of the Contact Centre Manager Reinvented

By Jennifer Lee, Chief Strategy Officer at Intradiem

The heartbeat of any customer service operation is the contact centre manager. They balance numerous competing priorities to ensure contact centre agents are working efficiently, monitor service levels and deliver a seamless customer experience. Like many of you reading this, I “grew up” in the contact centre, starting as an agent and working my way up through various areas of the business. Of all the roles I’ve served in the industry, that of team manager was by far the most challenging. Trying to juggle the



needs of your agents, your company, and your customers can be stressful and exhausting, and team managers often feel overworked and underappreciated. This has become even more difficult as contact centre complexities have increased, customer demands have strengthened, and remote work has been introduced into the dynamic. So, who is looking out for the manager in this dynamic environment?



Managing a Contact Centre is a Constant Juggling Act

Even before a global pandemic disrupted contact centre norms, contact centre managers were required to wear many different hats. A good manager must be self-structured, disciplined and highly skilled at managing their day. They are tasked with monitoring service levels in real-time, managing attendance and often payroll, coaching agents, maintaining metrics, and staying within a limited budget – all while managing a diverse team of agents that could consist of up to 30 people at a time. In a 24/7/365 contact centre environment, managers may not even work the same schedule as their agents, which adds another layer of difficulty onto an already challenging position.

Prioritising meaningful face time with your team is – and always has been – tremendously difficult, but in a brick and mortar contact centre, managers still found opportunities throughout the day to walk over and say hi, to connect with their team members. Now, without the informal watercooler or breakroom conversations, managers must rely on communication and collaboration tools to ensure frequent and meaningful interactions with their agents, with the added pressure of meeting tighter numbers and adhering to more processes in remote environments.

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Time is Money

There is no workplace where the term “time is money” is more accurate than in a call centre, and managers are responsible for optimising both their own time and that of their agents – no easy task on the best of days. Contact centre managers must balance all aspects of the job to improve efficiencies and reduce costs as much as possible. This includes time spent evaluating data to identify improvement areas, such as call handling time, adherence, quality, and other

performance metrics.

Managers also need to balance operational decisions that are good for the business while maintaining agent wellbeing and development – areas that are often inherently contradictory.

Management Challenges in the Shift to Remote Contact Centres

When the pandemic hit, many contact centres quickly moved to a remote agent operating model, with some centres making the transition in a matter of days. I was amazed at the stories we heard from our customers in the aftermath of the shift – many companies truly pulled off miracles in making such a significant transition while balancing the health and wellbeing of employees with the needs of customers.

Equipment and systems had to be purchased and updated to enable the new work-from-home model, and in many cases, this was occurring against a dramatic increase in call volumes – some contact centre saw increases volumes in excess of 300%. There has never been a more challenging time to be in the contact centre industry.

The increased volumes, coupled with the unbudgeted expenses of equipping agents to work from home, served to further increase pressures to cut costs—without sacrificing



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service levels and the customer experience. On top of these pressures, managers had to adjust to leading, training, and keeping their agents engaged – which was already a challenging role – and now they had to do so remotely. While contact centre managers have always had to juggle service levels against budgets while finding the time to train and motivate agents, within days this balancing act – this tightrope they have always had to walk – became dramatically more difficult to navigate.

So Who Looks Out for the Manager?

While managers spend countless hours tracking metrics and supervising their teams, who – or rather what – can they count on? In today's dynamic and pressurised world, AI-powered technology can provide managers with much-needed assistance in all areas. It can improve agent engagement by identifying and cumulating pockets of idle time in an agent's day, delivering time to train, coach, and develop without hurting service levels.

Intelligent automation also monitors data and service levels in real-time to help direct agent activity throughout the day. With automated alerts set, managers are notified when their agents may need assistance, which is that much more important when you can't physically see your team members throughout the day. The solution empowers managers to deliver timely communication and seamless updates to their agents, and helps them acknowledge and reward top performers, boosting morale and engagement.

The life of a contact centre manager can truly be taxing. Without the support of intelligent automation, their role is virtually impossible. The contact centre is too fast-paced and dynamic for one person to balance all the changing variables, even without the new challenges caused by the migration to remote environments. And managers must find time for coaching and development – there is nothing more rewarding as a leader than knowing that you are helping to develop and engage your team members. My best days as a contact centre manager were the ones in which I had time to connect with my agents – to build lasting relationships and make those agents lives



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easier. Now, with AI-powered technology that eliminates the need to monitor data from different systems manually, managers can truly focus on what matters – their people.

Jennifer Lee is Chief Strategy Officer at Intradiem

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