



Benchmarking Customer Services

Is your customer services operation providing good value to your council? We are often asked how many customer advisers should a council have? How long should calls take in the contact centre? How much wrap-up time should customer advisers be given? etc.

Working on the basis of information that we have from other local authorities, together with some standard modelling software (see www.erlang.com for a cut-down free version), we can guesstimate, even at the early planning stage, what resources should be required.

However, the big question is, what are the local factors? Answering a simple question such as, 'when is my bin next going to be collected?' can vary in time dramatically, depending on whether an adviser has access to a system that is able to provide the information. Similarly, if customers find the collection schedule confusing, e.g. the collection day changes each bank holiday rather than remaining fixed for a whole year, then the number of calls per thousand properties is likely to increase. So for this one call type, depending on these two factors, the number of FTEs required may vary considerably.

Whilst a more accurate estimate can be calculated as processes are mapped (i.e. we start to see what is involved in answering a call), the final duration can still vary, depending on the skill and experience of the customer advisers in managing the calls effectively and accessing the information as they do so.

It is only when an operation is live, and we are able to look at the metrics and make comparisons with other councils, that we start to be able to investigate what is going on.

Even our reduced set of metrics – see below – allows us to calculate a number of useful comparators, e.g. average cost per call, calls handled per agent.

1. Average time to answer
2. Number of calls handled
3. Number of calls abandoned
4. Average call duration
5. Average wrap-up time
6. Number of FTE handling calls
7. Average customer adviser salary (those handling calls)
8. Operating hours
9. Cost of non-call-taking supervisors and call centre management
- 10 First-time resolution (% actually resolved by Customer Advisers)

If you would like to take part in our free benchmarking exercise, please contact us. All councils providing these 10 metrics will in turn receive a table with the anonymous results of all participants. Useful information if you are asked to demonstrate whether the customer services operation is providing good value!

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