



# MAKING HOME WORKING WORK

This article explores how contact centres can utilise new technologies to manage, support and motivate their teams as remote working and self management becomes the new norm.

## CONTACT DETAILS

If you would like to discuss any of the contents, particularly how miPerform can help your business adapt to these challenges, we'd love you to get in touch.

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## MAKING HOME WORKING WORK

In the world of personal exercise and the desire to stay healthy, fitbit type gadgets use tracking and algorithms to monitor everything from the number of steps taken to how many calories are burned. By providing this data instantaneously, and allowing it to be shared, these tools do more than inform. They reinforce, motivate and reward by turning exercise into a game.

Contact centres are highly metricised environments that provide a plethora of reports and information to users. However, what is too often missing is the ability for agents and team leaders to engage with that operational information and take ownership of the results.

In response to the COVID-19 situation, many contact centres have quickly changed their operating models with a significant proportion of front line staff now working from home. They continue to deal with customer calls, emails and chats but in an environment with less supervision and support. What's currently missing from this home working revolution is sufficient consideration to the impact on staff – and what changes will make them effective whilst working in this new environment?

Remote working requires an alternative vision – where empowerment and accountability are drivers of employee engagement – that leads to positive business outcomes. The latest cloud based technology can help transform the way home working staff use information to enable individuals and self-managing teams to drive continuous improvement. In the same way that a personally motivated individual does with their fitness programme, enabled and shared through their app.

## ATTRIBUTES OF A HOME WORKER

Finding the right person to work from home adds an extra dimension to the candidate selection process. Not only do they need all of the relevant skills and technical abilities to do the job, but they also need to be effective and productive away from a regimented working environment.

The following five traits are commonly found in those individuals who thrive at working from home:

- 1 SELF-MOTIVATED** – the single most important trait is their ability to function with minimal direction, always taking personal responsibility for the outcomes of their actions.
- 2 HIGHLY RESPONSIVE** – in addition to being good communicators, home workers should always be contactable during the workday within minutes.
- 3 RESOURCEFUL** – being able to solve a problem or issue without input or advice from colleagues.
- 4 SELF-EVALUATORS** – one of the hurdles to overcome is a potential reduction in the amount of peer group feedback. A self-starter is always looking for ways to be more productive, more efficient, and generally better at their job.
- 5 INDEPENDENT** – a key trait is the ability to work effectively when alone. Whilst collaboration tools can help them keep in touch with colleagues, the reality of the situation is that they need to be at their best without the buzz of office life happening around them.



## TIME TO RETHINK THE APPROACH TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Most contact centres operate to a balanced scorecard of performance measures:

- **efficiency related** - measuring the speed and productivity of the operation, telling managers how well their agents are processing the workload – through metrics such as calls handled, utilisation etc.
- **effectiveness related** - measuring how the operation is performing its tasks and activities, telling managers how well the work is getting done – through metrics such as ‘one & done’ call handling, accuracy of data input etc.
- **customer related** - measuring the value of the service that a customer is receiving, which is administered through a customer survey / feedback system – through metrics such as Net Promoter Score, level of complaints etc.

Most contact centre technology uses BI tools, in the form of configurable dashboards, to provide performance information that tracks each of these metrics. These dashboards analyse individuals, teams and the centre as a whole. On the face of it, performance management in contact centres should be a doddle – as what get measured gets managed.

However, behavioural psychology tells us that there is a direct correlation between ease of use and likelihood of participation, where visual tools can reduce the effort to access data which makes self-management more of a success. Cultural attitudes provide strong links between empowerment, accountability and engagement. Gallup research confirms that:

*“Employees who strongly agree that their manager holds them accountable for performance are 2.5x more likely to be engaged.”*

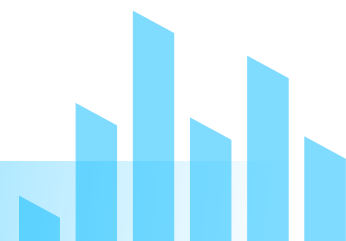
In traditional contact centre, agents rarely have their operational MI provided in a way they enables them to perform at their best. Often that information is not structured or there is too much of it to be consumed. When coaches and leaders try to improve their team performance they struggle to identify the correct interventions or to provide support in a structured way.

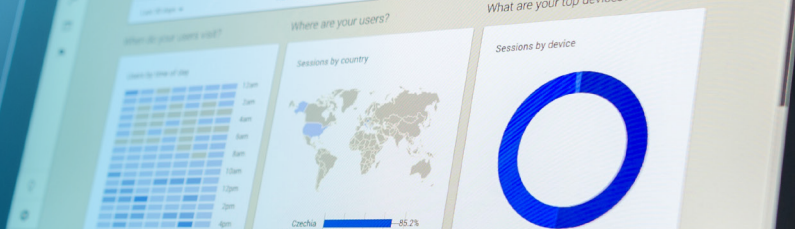
## APPLYING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FITBITS TO CONTACT CENTRE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The success of personal fitbits is related not just to the way that information is provided to the user, but also to the way that they reinforce, motivate and reward by turning exercise into a competition. Significant developments in the flexibility, capability and cost of cloud based technology have now made it possible to provide new cost effective performance management solutions. These platforms provide contact centre data, insights and tools in an accessible and user-centred way that enables each team member to take responsibility for their own performance.

The following six requirements are key to achieving this outcome:

- 1 **Data visualisation on demand** – access performance data on any device – phone, laptop or corporate system – allowing agents and leaders to pull up performance data to use whenever they need it.
- 2 **Clear goals and direct comparison to peers** – agents need to know what is expected of them and how they compare to others in the operation. With balanced scorecard KPI reports configured for the individual, team and operation, access to further diagnostic information is possible if a specific performance metric is off plan. In addition, agents also need to know where they sit on a performance scale, not only against any operationally imposed targets, but also relative to others in their team.





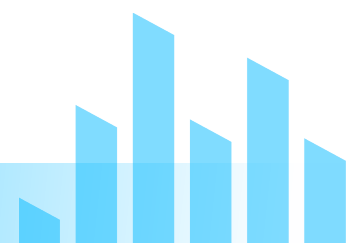
- 3 **Integrated team leader coaching support** - the role of the team leader is enhanced in remote working through daily proactive engagement in addition to the more formal one to one reviews. Good TLs will naturally focus their coaching effort on specific development areas – providing guidance, encouragement and mentoring to get the agent to take ownership to address the issues. These coaching interventions need to be recorded alongside performance data so that improvements can be tracked.
- 4 **Reward and recognition** - in subsequent reviews, the team leaders use their judgement to reinforce the changes in agent behaviour that they have observed. They are quick to acknowledge the improvements achieved – praising the agent and sharing these positive results with others in the team. They use games and real time challenges to motivate the team to collectively perform at the next level.
- 5 **Driving social engagement** – gamification can help keep remote staff engaged - from getting a quick 'Like' from your leader, achieving a new Personal Best, to being the best improver in your Peer Group, they all help to reinforce an agent's performance.
- 6 **Sustainable performance outcomes** - underpinning the data is an objective quantification of the spread of performance across the operation against its KPI targets. Techniques such as Quartile Analysis group agents into four equally sized peer groups that allows the overall performance outcomes to be measured. In performance management terms, by moving a proportion of the Q4 (lowest performing quartile) up one level to Q3, the operation can quantify the tangible improvement outcomes that have been achieved. This in turn reinforces the recognition of the collective achievements made.

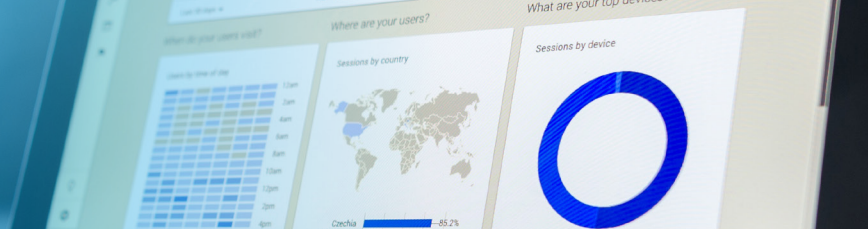
## IMPLEMENTED USING A VIRTUAL DELIVERY MODEL

Another factor that should be considered as part of the transition to remote working, is the ability to provide training and support to staff when working from home. A virtual delivery model is required – one where classroom training is replaced by online training making use of videos, tutorials and assessment tests to ensure learning outcomes have been achieved. This is all enabled by a support model where agents can ask questions through messaging apps and have links to the relevant online materials pushed back to them in response.

## SELF-MANAGEMENT IS THE OUTCOME

By providing better data, insight, tools and support then all individuals – regardless of whether they are working in a contact centre building or from home – can become self-propelled and motivated, and teams become self-managed. A virtuous cycle is created where less time is spent by leaders on accessing data and more time is spent on coaching and improving performance. This shift in culture and mind set empowers and transfers accountability for performance management to the performers themselves.





## TAKING THAT NEXT STEP

Now you know the direction to take that makes performance management more effective, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are your customers receiving a consistent level of service regardless of who they interact with in your organisation and where your team are working from?
- Have you adapted your coaching and development tactics in light of more agents working from home? Do you understand how best to support your staff remotely?
- Do you know who contributes most to the performance of your business, and importantly, do they know? Has their performance been celebrated?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'no' or 'I don't know', then talk to us to understand the scale of the opportunity and how to access it. A one hour demo could help you turn the 'lights on' so that you see how individual performance can have an over-night impact on your business results.

## CONTACT US

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