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BACK OFFICE,
IS BIG BROTHER
WATCHING?

Desktop Analytics: Visibility is not Voyeurism

Modern desktop analytics, which includes monitoring application usage and on-screen processes, provides the back office with greater operational transparency and visibility into employee activity than ever before. Based on customer feedback and analysts reports, desktop & process analytics provides anywhere between 15%-18% increase in employee efficiency.

But do these invaluable insights come at the cost of an erosion in trust? Will they remind your employees of George Orwell's "Big Brother"?

They certainly don't have to.

Visibility Means Productivity in the Back Office

Desktop analytics is one of the most important tools available for fully understanding productivity in your back office.

With authentic data on which applications each employee is using, how often, and how effectively are they performing their processes or work items, managers can now drill down to identify true task handle times, reopen rates, and other metrics. This kind of visibility lets managers know who in the back office is doing the right thing and who is doing the thing right, and how best to support them.

With insight into how your staff is spending their working hours, trends appear that provide the forward-looking information necessary for ensuring appropriate staffing levels, needs forecasting, and attainable service level agreements. What is more this kind of information enables organizations to take corrective measures such as closing employee knowledge gaps through dedicated coaching and restructuring lengthy processes to be more efficient. Running back office operations without the advantages of full visibility would be like running a marathon blindfolded – it leads to many costly collisions and dead ends.

The 'Big Brother' Challenge

Yet, you may feel that adding an additional layer of visibility into employee activity will result in entirely understandable pushback. Perhaps desktop activity monitoring is a step your current back office corporate culture just would not support.

Employees may not feel comfortable with closer monitoring of their behavior. Seeing their work as entailing a higher level of complexity than the front office, back office employees often expect to be trusted with a higher level of personal responsibility. They may therefore insist that performance be measured by real-world results, not by how they got the job done. For example, desktop application idle times might be the result of any number of reasons, including some that are wholly work related, such as in-house conversations with colleagues or supervisors. There is a concern that a constant focus on desktop activity may force employees to feel they need one hand on the mouse at all times.

Other employees may fear that monitoring will create unjustified pressure or negative attention. They don't want to get "dinged" by their superiors leveraging the latest technology merely to catch them out.

In short, there is a risk back office employees will see desktop activity analytics merely as a "Big Brother Telescreen" application.

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It Wouldn't Be the First Time

Many years ago, when call monitoring and recording was first introduced into contact centers, there was significant opposition from labor unions. Among their reasons for this attitude were those related to privacy and abuse. Today, however, call recording is accepted, ubiquitous, and many unions are great supporters of it. Why? Because it often provides hard evidence in support of customer service representatives in customer disputes or regulatory audits.

Desktop analytics serves a similar function, and even more broadly, in the back office, vindicating employees in the event of a work-related dispute. In this case, not just a dispute with an aggressive customer, but even a dispute with the boss.

The main reason however lies in the role of desktop analytics and what organizations use it for. Desktop analytics is (or at least should be) part of a broader Back Office solution which takes the application and processes insights derived from desktop analytics components and uses them to:

- Provide employees (at all levels) clear key performance indicators (KPI) and goals regarding their performance and progress.

- Create and drive performance plans which include corrective measure to ensure knowledge and behavior gaps are fixed. These measures often include various types of coaching (group coaching, peer coaching, eLearning and Trivia to mention a few) and other performance incentives, many of which include gamification concepts.

- Monitor not only employee performance but also process performance. Many times, it is the process which needs fixing not the employee.

Desktop monitoring is indispensable to fully recognizing and rewarding performance in the back office. When so much of the operations processes is hard to quantify, desktop application analytics can give you the tools to measure performance for such rewards as bonuses or greater say over leisure time scheduling, and the like. This, in turn, engages employees and encourages higher levels of motivation. Organizations putting desktop analytics to use as part of a Back-Office solution which includes performance management components have indicated a **35%** decrease in employee turnover (in addition to a **30%** increase in productivity) as employees can now see not only where their weaker spots are, but are assigned with individual performance plans which drive their skills forward and recognize their success.

And for those back-office employees who underperform, careful analysis of their desktop activity provides the needed clues to identify precisely where they need assistance and/or motivation. It becomes a tool for crafting more targeted coaching, as well as understanding if there is a wider operational bottleneck affecting the back office. Supervisors can also set more realistic and attainable goals and expectations (throughput, idle time, KPIs) with desktop monitoring.

Leading organizations today are using desktop application and process analytics data to provide their employees with adaptive goals and performance plans which adapt and change based on employee previous performance, skills and preferences. This too works in driving a higher level of employee engagement which ultimately results in higher productivity and a better customer experience.

Real World Results: Who Likes This 'Big Brother' and Who Doesn't?

These are more than theoretical assumptions. NICE corporate customers adopting desktop analytics solutions as part of a full Back Office solution which includes performance management components report that their top employees, as well as their average employees, approve of the solution and have had their level of service driven to a new (and higher) level. Most enthusiastic, of course, are those hard-working employees who feel they have been underappreciated. In some cases, when back office employees were not being paid for their actual labor hours, the solution created visibility

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that companies used to close those gaps. Both work councils and unions have naturally been pleased with those results.

In practice, the initial complaints regarding excessive intrusiveness tend to come from underperformers; however, their objections tend to dissipate once they benefit from desktop analytics. Chronic underperformers, who are not really interested in improving, remain in opposition, as accurate data on their work habits actually endangers their continued employment.

A Few Recommendations from the Field

- In deploying desktop application and process analytics, establish trust. Roll out the solution openly. Such an approach provides some protection from criticism over privacy issues.

- Make sure supervisors are on board with the project and know what metrics they will be seeing. It is an important element of the roll-out that many companies miss.

- Make sure employees know they are being monitored, and why. Employees at all levels should understand the intent of the increased visibility and what is driving the numbers. Highlight the role that such solutions play in the driving and the recognition of achievements, rectifying uncompensated work, identifying procedural issues, and protection from unjustified complaints

- If there are concerns about the impact an announcement before desktop analytics deployment could have on employee behavior, skewing initial data, then decide on a limited period of time to run the

monitoring and measurement tools, collecting and analyzing the data to get a true baseline regarding performance levels. Leading Back Office vendors offer such a method of limited rollout which include defining success criteria for a full-blown deployment.

- Last, it is always recommended that organizations look at deploying desktop application and process analytics as part of a full Back Office solution which includes a performance management component. If the desktop analytics gives you the answers to '*What and Why*' the Performance management answers the *'How'*. It will ensure that the information you are gathering is not for 'spying on your employees' but for educating, motivating and empowering them to be better at what they do. No argument is more powerful than having an engaged and empowered workforce.

The Bottom Line

Naturally, incorporating a solution which 'rocks the boat' in terms of changing old habits is bound to raise questions and encounter some resistance. If, however, the potential benefits are shared with the team from the start, and are later used as part of a plan to drive performance then there is much to gain in terms of employee productivity, engagement and recognition.

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About NICE Systems

NICE Systems (NASDAQ: NICE), is the worldwide leader of intent-based solutions that capture and analyze interactions and transactions, realize intent, and extract and leverage insights to deliver impact in real time.

Driven by cross-channel and multi-sensor analytics, NICE solutions enable organizations to improve business performance, increase operational efficiency, prevent financial crime, ensure compliance, and enhance safety and security .

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