NICE ®

FirstEnergy ®

Customer Profile:
Utility

Website:
www.firstenergycorp.com

Location:
Akron, OH; Reading, PA; Fairmont, WV

Business Need:
- Comprehensive call recording
- Targeted coaching
- Greater agent compliance
- Timely and accurate performance analytics

NICE Solutions:
- Nexidia Analytics
- Interaction Recording
- Quality Central

The Impact:
- 100% call capture and analytics
- Improved AHT
- Improved script and process compliance
- Improved eBill enrollment rates
- Coaching targeting specific agents and performance goals

On The NICE Solution

"The implementation of Nexidia Analytics along with NICE Quality Central improves our QA program and drives measurable business success."

Gregory Hussing, Director of Customer Contact Centers, FirstEnergy

About FirstEnergy

FirstEnergy, headquartered in Akron, Ohio, is a conglomerate that includes 10 regulated distribution companies that form one of the nation's largest investor-owned electric systems, serving 6 million customers in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic regions. FirstEnergy and its associated companies operate a vast infrastructure of more than 269,000 miles of distribution lines, more than 24,000 miles of transmission lines, and a diverse generating fleet with a total capacity of more than 16,000 megawatts.

To serve its large customer base, FirstEnergy operates 24/7 contact centers in Akron, Ohio, Reading, Pennsylvania, and Fairmont, West Virginia. Seven hundred agents handle an annual volume of 8.2 million calls, while 7.7 million contacts are accommodated via IVR.

The Challenge

Quality assurance at the FirstEnergy contact centers was handled in a very traditional fashion. Supervisors randomly sampled four calls per agent each month, evaluated the interactions and assessed their performance based on those calls.

The issues, weaknesses and strengths identified then formed the basis for periodic coaching and employee reviews. The unsystematic nature of the call monitoring, as well as the time factor, made it very hard to fully identify improvement opportunities and to target them for action when it was needed most. It was even more difficult to locate specific calls for review, either at the request of the agent or to train for specific interaction scenarios.

The limitations of the random review system posed serious challenges for FirstEnergy quality assurance personnel and supervisors in helping frontline agents learn and grow most effectively. It was also a relatively weak method to ensure compliance with in-house process protocols and scripts. At times, employees felt that randomized call reviews created an inaccurate and unfair impression of their work, as well as failing to assist them where they felt it was needed. This lack of agent engagement posed a risk to customer service and employee satisfaction over time.

The Solution

FirstEnergy decided that it needed to modernize the quality assurance program at its contact centers if it was going to promote employee engagement and improve process compliance.

A major step forward in that regard was determined to be speech analytics, as applied to customer interactions with frontline service agents. Speech analytics would contribute needed information on agent behavior and customer experience, while processing bottlenecks systematically and consistently.

FirstEnergy reviewed several analytics products on the market before deciding to move forward with Nexidia Analytics. Contributing to the decision was the comprehensiveness of Nexidia speech analytics and the experience of NICE, as market leaders in the field of customer experience optimization.

Setting Up for Success

FirstEnergy saw the implementation of Nexidia Analytics as not just enriching the company's quality assurance data, but as driving business success and making that success measurable.

For example, FirstEnergy and the Nexidia Managed Analytics Services team (MAS) partnered to build queries around eBill enrollment and associated scorecards. This process took six weeks, although it should be noted that MAS can be retained for any length of time to design, test or run analytics programs alongside client teams.

Using the NICE Recording solution, FirstEnergy captured the data from all voice interactions with utility customers moving into a new home, during which agents were meant to offer eBilling. With speech analytics, the company quickly identified which agents were deviating from the call script or altering or skipping parts of the process.

With Nexidia Analytics, FirstEnergy investigated the reason for those deviations, finding relevant patterns and triggers. Then, based on what had been learned, the Quality Assurance and IT departments completely overhauled the front-office move-in support process. This included creating dynamic scripting based on the customer triggers Nexidia Analytics had previously identified.

Agent adherence to the latest changes in move-in support and scripts is monitored by FirstEnergy using the Nexidia scorecard tools. Agents are aware that 100% of their live interactions are being reviewed for compliance and supervisors coach to those scorecards, creating an organizational coherence in focus and use of resources.

Targeted Goals, Broader Benefits

FirstEnergy had set a goal of improving eBill enrollment rates during the move-in process, while also improving agent satisfaction. Success in reaching that goal, as well as measurable efficiency gains, were the result of the analytics-driven redesign of the move-in script and procedures.

Enrollment rates for eBilling have increased among customers moving into new residences served by FirstEnergy. In addition, the average handle time (AHT) for move-in calls has decreased, indicating greater efficiency among agents. In fact, FirstEnergy quality assurance personnel were able to demonstrate conclusively that agents who followed the new process and script achieved better AHT results and greater eBill enrollment success than those who went rogue.

Summarizing the changes at FirstEnergy, Gregory Hussing, Director of Customer Contact Centers for the company, said, "The reason we were so successful was because we were able to listen to 100% of all calls - or 100% of any specific type of call - gather the data, ask the 5 Whys, and get to the root cause."

Showcasing What Can Be Done Next

Overall, the eBill process improvement initiative was deemed a great success for FirstEnergy. It was a powerful showcase of what Nexidia Analytics can do for the company, making the future application of the solution to other contact center processes more than likely.