



Customer Profile:

Gas utility

Website:

www.socalgas.com

Location:

Southern California

Business Need:

- Performance quality
- Effective coaching
- Meeting budget demands

NICE Solutions:

- Performance Management
- Quality Management
- Recording
- Workforce Management

The Impact:

- Reduced AHT by 8%
- Increased employee engagement
- Ensured cost-effectiveness
- More effective and frequent coaching

On The NICE Solution

"With coaching based on the NICE NPM solution, we started to see improvement right away, which then continued month to month."

- Neena Master, Director, Customer Contact Center, Southern California Gas Company

About Southern California Gas Company

Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas) is the largest natural gas distribution utility in the United States, delivering energy to 21.6 million consumers in more than 500 communities. The company's service territory encompasses approximately 20,000 square miles throughout Central and Southern California. SoCalGas is a regulated subsidiary of Sempra Energy, a Fortune 500 energy services holding company based in San Diego, California.

SoCalGas operates two call centers in Southern California. They are the primary point of contact for customers with energy service problems, requests or inquiries. The total annual volume of calls at these contact centers is 5.3 million, handled by 490 customer service representatives (CSR) providing 24/7 service.

The Challenge

The Southern California Gas Company uses NICE Performance Management (NPM) to measure and analyze the performance of its customer service representatives. Focusing on average handle time (AHT), the company saw initial success in reducing that metric in the first year of the NPM deployment.

However, the company did not see similar rates of improvement in the following years. In other words, SoCalGas was not able to translate the immediate, positive impact of NPM into a sustained methodology of constant, incremental improvement.

The management team determined that the problem was in how the metrics and analytics of NPM were being used in employee coaching at the contact centers. For driving performance improvement, coaching was inconsistent and generally ineffective.

Supervisors were meeting with contact center employees; however, it was almost always only when those agents were doing something wrong. As a result, employees saw coaching as a negative experience. This was reinforced by a coaching process that was unclear in its triggers, goals and methods. The result was employees who were either unmotivated or unable to sustain improvement.

In the spirit of the company's vision of continuously evolving and improving, SoCalGas sought a solution to its coaching challenges. This would help the company continue the successes it had already seen with NICE Performance Management into the future.



The Solution

Taking the most direct approach, Southern California Gas Company turned to NICE in 2014 to help get the most out of NICE Performance Management. In response, NICE Value Added Services (VAS) was brought in to train the gas company's contact center supervisors in applying the NICE Performance Coaching program.

Supervisors were instructed on how best to leverage the automated data collection of NPM for actionable information. They were shown how this NICE solution can make coaching more expedient and focused. Moreover, NICE Performance Coaching includes using the NPM solution to track the effects of coaching sessions over time, even on a daily basis if needed.

The chosen solution, it was expected, would improve employee engagement, including between supervisors and employees, and drive CSR productivity. However, management did not initially enforce implementation of the NICE Performance Coaching guidance, as it represented a complete culture change. No goals were set in 2015 regarding how many coaching sessions were expected, nor how to onboard unwilling employees.

As a result, not all supervisors adapted to the new coaching program. Some did so only partly, coaching according to the NICE NPM-based system once every two months or quarterly. Others did so not at all.

Push Came to Shove

In January and February 2016, SoCalGas had to dedicate resources to a special project. As a result, coaching was cut to a minimum. The contact centers immediately saw a measurable increase in AHT.

In response, the company decided to take enforcing the NICE Performance Coaching program more seriously. SoCalGas management set a goal of two coaching sessions per employee per month and a measurable increase in efficiency on all CSR calls. The company wanted to see improved employee productivity at the contact centers without straying from the allocated budget.

Supervisors revisited their earlier NICE training and refreshers were held for those who needed it. They also shared best practices, and helped each other in using the NPM tool to

guide coaching and identify areas needing improvement. The company's in-house Performance Advisor played a key role in making sure all supervisors were meeting the coaching session goals, as well as helping them craft sessions that were well structured and effective.

Taking Action Leads to Results

SoCalGas initiated the NICE Performance Coaching push at the end of February. By the end of March, the contact centers were reporting reduced AHT, which continued to gradually decrease each month throughout the rest of 2016.

In April, SoCalGas introduced Desktop Monitoring to its performance management monitoring tools. Taking a deeper look at contact center functioning, managers began focusing on process improvements to raise the bar for all employees. Supervisory coaching was important to ensure an understanding of the ensuing procedural changes during onboarding.

By the end of the year, the positive effects of NICE Performance Management on corporate culture were evident. AHT was reduced by 8% and employee engagement had increased significantly. In addition, the cost-effectiveness of the NICE NPM-based optimization was indicated by strict adherence to defined budgetary constraints.

Expecting More Cost-Effective Improvement

SoCalGas was able to leverage the NICE NPM for improved contact center productivity and remain within its 2016 budget. With these results, including greater engagement among contact center agents, the company fully expects to continue to strengthen its customer service over the coming years using NICE performance solutions and upgrades.

About NICE

NICE (NASDAQ: NICE) is the worldwide leading provider of enterprise software solutions that empower organizations to make smarter decisions based on advanced analytics of structured and unstructured data. NICE solutions help the world's largest organizations deliver better customer service, ensure compliance, combat fraud and safeguard citizens. Over 25,000 organizations in more than 150 countries, including over 80 of the Fortune 100 companies, are using NICE solutions. www.nice.com