

Skills-Based Routing: The Foundation of Outstanding Customer Service

Skills-based Routing is a concept that has evolved to become the defining strength of any Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) offering. ACD applications were originally intended to handle call volumes that were greater than the number of agents available. They are now seen as an intelligent tool for ensuring that the delivery of calls is executed with intelligence. Many factors are now considered when determining the delivery of calls to agents, both from the agent and caller perspectives. This paper will address NEC's approach to skills-based routing and its implementation within the CCDesign® suite of contact center products.



What is it?

Skills-based routing is the directing of a particular type of call to a single agent or group of agents with the appropriate skill sets to address the caller's needs effectively at the first contact. Callers can be identified based on the number they have called or by collecting information from the caller such as an account code. By identifying the caller, the call can be routed with greater efficiency and with the priority determined by call center management. Additionally, agent skill sets can be defined to leverage agent expertise in certain areas. Agents can be assigned multiple skills sets with varying preferences for each, making them available to handle a variety of customer calls.

What Do Customers Expect?

While definitions vary widely, customers expect to receive benefits from skills-based routing, including:

- Improved customer satisfaction by delivery of calls to most qualified agents at first contact
- Better utilization of resources
- Competitive differentiation through higher level of service

How does it work?

NEC has a flexible approach to skills-based routing, allowing customers to create simple or complex routing based entirely on their needs. This feature is provided by CallCenterWorX®, NEC's Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) offering for small and large call centers. Configuration should be considered from the agent and caller perspective.

Agent Perspective

Once a customer has determined how they want calls handled, they must define the skill sets for their agents. Skill sets are commonly defined as functional areas, such as Sales or Customer Service. Each agent can be assigned to multiple skill sets with a single login ID, which can be used to login at any telephone defined in the CallCenterWorX system. Once skill sets are identified, agents must be defined. This process involves determining agent skills and their areas of greatest expertise. Each agent can be identified as multi-skilled, but call centers should also recognize and leverage agent strengths in particular areas. This is achieved in CallCenterWorX by assigning a preference to each skill for a given agent. For example, an agent may have skills in the areas of both Customer Service and Sales, although he/she may be an expert in Customer Service inquiries. Using CallCenterWorX, the system can be configured to ensure that the agent will only receive Sales calls when there are no Customer Service calls waiting. This configuration model can be followed to include multiple skill sets for each agent.

Additionally, some call centers may assign agents to a particular set of callers. These callers will *always* interact with their 'personal' agents. This option eliminates the need for callers to be transferred to their personal agent, many times following a wait in a general queue. With CallCenterWorX, callers can reach their 'personal' agent the first time and with the highest priority. Personal agents will be presented these types of calls before receiving any other calls that are waiting in the system, thus ensuring the prompt handling of their highest priority calls.

Caller Perspective

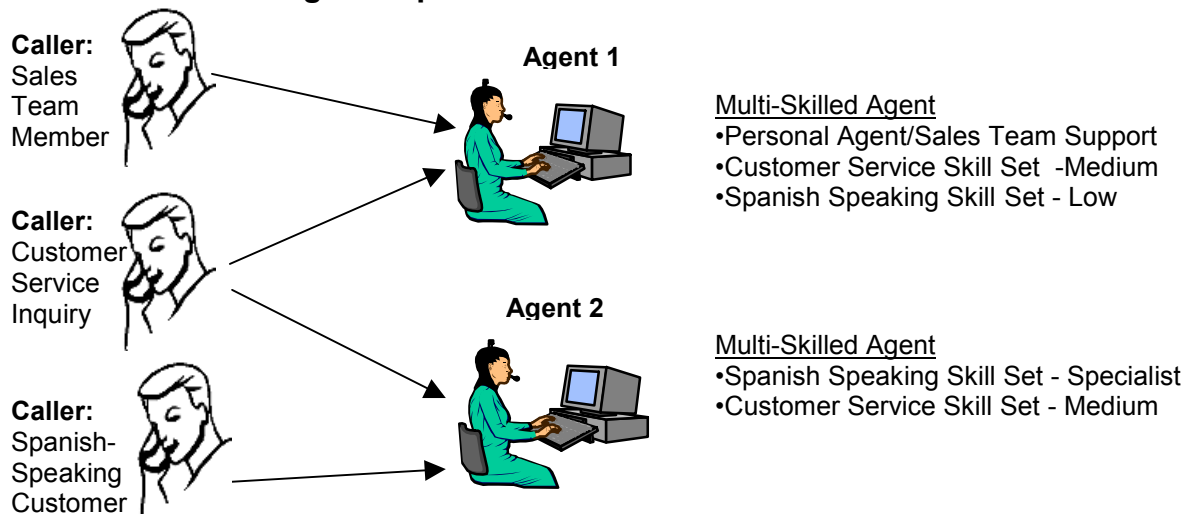
One of the most flexible features of CallCenterWorX is the definition of call routing, configured through Call Control Vectors (CCVs). Customers utilize this tool to define how they want calls handled, thus answering the question, “What do you want your callers’ *experience* to be?” Using CCVs, organizations can determine:

- Skills sets and agents best suited to handle each call
- Caller priority (which can be changed at any time)
- The Estimated Time to Answer for each call, and handling based on this value
- Announcement treatment while in queue
- Invocation of an IVR, if present
- And many more options

Each call can also be queued to multiple skill sets. This feature is in addition to the agent’s ability to handle multiple skills, further increasing the caller’s likelihood of reaching the most skilled agent at first contact.

Through the use of the CallCenterWorX flexible configuration, callers are assured of being handled with the greatest efficiency each time they call. Proper handling will also provide a competitive edge for customers. Efficient and personalized call center treatment will result in a greater ease of communication for a call center customer base and, ultimately, more loyal customers.

Skills-Based Routing Example



A Sales Team Member is highest priority call for Agent 1. A Spanish Speaking Caller is highest priority for Agent 2, who has a specialty in this area. A Customer Service Caller will be queued to the first available agent.

Additional Options

With the addition of QueWorX®, NEC's advanced applications platform, caller information, such as an account number, can also be collected and used to provide an additional layer of skills-based routing. The Automated Attendant feature can also be deployed to help callers direct their call based on specific needs and tailored to each contact. Additional features provided via this platform help to enhance the customer's experience while waiting in queue. QueWorX can set expectations for call delivery to an agent and provide options for a call back at a later time, based on the caller's time schedule. Screen Pops also allow agents to provide a greater level of personalized service to callers.

Is Skills-based Routing for Voice Only?

With the continuing proliferation of multi-media applications in the call center, the same care must be given to routing new media types. Customers who submit inquiries via the Internet expect the same level of service and handling they've received via the phone. With NEC's ContactWorX® solution, customer e-mails and web-chat requests are treated with the same level of sophistication described above for voice transactions, creating a seamless, fully integrated solution.

Summary and Benefits

Customer contact continues to be driven by the telephone, and call centers are the front line to this interaction. A high level of service provided to callers is key to maintaining loyal customers and building a competitive edge in any market. Skills-based routing is a key component in this effort. NEC's CallCenterWorX provides a flexible, fully featured skills-based routing component for every call center, from the smallest to the largest. Additionally, advanced applications are available to further enhance the caller's experience, and to extend this advanced level of treatment to a new customer base – those communicating via the Internet.

For detailed information on all NEC call center products, visit www.cng.nec.com.