



Customer Profile

Covance

Solutions

- Witness Systems' Workforce Management Solution
- Cisco Systems' IPCC Enterprise

Region

North America

Location

- Gaithersburg, Maryland
- San Diego, California

Number of agents

270 contact center staff,
handling 30,000 calls per month

Results

- Increase in client coverage
- Increase in employee productivity
- Decrease in overhead

About Covance

Covance Market Access Services Inc. is the premier provider of reimbursement consulting, economic marketing and customer support services that transform product potential into performance. Covance has a consulting group that helps identify, build and sustain a product's advantage in the marketplace. Its InTeleCenter® contact center programs improve patient access, retention and loyalty, and help secure rapid market acceptance. Covance Market Access Services is a wholly owned subsidiary of Covance, Inc. Headquartered in Princeton, New Jersey, Covance is one of the world's largest and most comprehensive drug development services companies. Reporting sales of \$1 billion in 2004, it has global operations in 17 countries and approximately 6,500 worldwide employees.

Opportunity

Covance's InTeleCenter contact center operations are different from a typical call center environment. The company's employees serve pharmaceutical clients, handling inbound and outbound calls from patients, providers and payers related to health care and reimbursement issues. As Covance has continued to grow, it began to revisit the impact that coverage and agent availability was having on its overall business, as well as the service levels it was providing its clients.

Covance's Cisco IPCC Enterprise environment provides a seamless, integrated telephony solution, which gives the company enormous flexibility and reliability. Yet determining how to effectively staff agents in critical areas and accurately predict the number of employees it needed left Covance relying on dozens of spreadsheets, and many times, guesswork. With 30-plus queues, it was difficult to rely on manual processes to achieve Covance's high efficiency and service standards. A workforce management solution that automated staff scheduling and forecasting was not a concept the company had considered in the past, but after assessing its business value, Covance found the benefits could have a strong impact on the market support programs it provided its biotechnical and pharmaceutical clients.

Solution

To automate scheduling and forecasting in its Gaithersburg, Maryland and San Diego, California locations, Covance selected the workforce management solution offered through Witness Systems' workforce optimization software in order to boost its contact center operations' coverage and magnify consultant availability to provide more consistent levels of support for its clients.

"When we started out in the evaluation process for a workforce management solution, the rudimentary concepts of scheduling and forecasting were unfamiliar territory to us," explained Tina Balfour, vice president for Covance. "During the process, we found the Witness Systems workforce management solution's functionality to be not only competitive, but well ahead of the curve from a feature and ease-of-use standpoint."

"Leveraging Witness Systems' workforce management solution has allowed us to appropriately staff for both inbound and outbound interactions – and having advanced notice using forecasting, we're able to gauge where our resources are best allocated for effective, timely support of callers," added Balfour.



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Tina Balfour, Vice President, Covance

In rolling out its new workforce management solution, Covance faced some initial challenges in educating its workforce on the benefits of using such a tool. “Our staff had little or no knowledge about workforce management and the benefits it could bring to them, so we conducted focus groups and frequent meetings to dispel many of the negative perceptions they had,” said Mo Chaudry, vice president for Covance.

However, as managers, supervisors and other contact center staff began using the system in various stages of their work processes, the InTeleCenter staff quickly embraced the technology, as they experienced the advantages of having such a solution in place. “Employee morale has improved, as our staff understands that there is a calculated, methodical approach to managing workloads. They’ve adapted well to the new policies, and realize adherence to certain guidelines we stipulate as a result of using the tool is critical to our success, both for us internally and for our clients,” Chaudry added.

Leveraging Witness Systems’ workforce management solution, Covance InTeleCenter management employs reverse scheduling – tracked through its inbound call activity. In this way, the software helps the company determine the ideal time for employees to handle inbound and outbound calls by the inbound call volume, and management is able to make informed decisions about the staffing levels required to accommodate spikes in inbound call volume. This includes transferring employees specified for outbound work to cover inbound activities as needed.

In addition to maintaining staffing level flexibility as call volumes rise, Covance uses Witness Systems’ workforce management solution to schedule its team meetings. “Our contact center staff have periodic update meetings that we need to track for staffing purposes,” explained Balfour. “Prior to having our workforce management solution, it was challenging to map schedules to adequately accommodate down-time for our staff to participate in these meetings, not to mention we had to have staff available to meet their vacancies.” Covance is now able to input these meetings into the workforce management solution to optimize the center’s operational and logistical goals.

“The workforce management solution from Witness Systems has helped us achieve higher productivity levels,” states Luis Gutierrez, general manager at Covance. “We have very few idle

outbound call employees, and now our staff focused on inbound calls is no longer plagued with sudden call increases that are difficult to handle. Not only does this lead to better conditions and morale with our employees, importantly, it also has resulted in better, more efficient service – and shortened waits – for our callers.”

From a productivity standpoint, the ability to strike a balance between Covance’s two call types has helped streamline staffing and provided more stability for both sides of the business. Since deploying Witness Systems’ technology, Covance has increased productivity levels and decreased overhead. “Our staff’s expectations, as well as those of our clients, are better defined.”

To maintain the data that integrates into Covance’s workforce management solution, the company relies upon its detailed Cisco reporting infrastructure. In addition to the standard reporting offered through Cisco IPCC, Covance had custom reporting built to ensure accurate data based on specific criteria to meet the operational and business goals of its contact center. Witness Systems’ workforce management forecasting capabilities, along with the data feeds provided through Cisco’s reporting, allows Covance to make immediate decisions for workforce levels.

“At my fingertips, I’m able to analyze call volume and average handle time by the hour, or in 15 or 30 minute increments. I also can determine what headcount is needed to maintain excellent levels of support for our clients to help them meet their business requirements,” concluded Jason Guthrie, senior planning analyst for Covance.

In addition to increases in call coverage, employee productivity and staff morale, as well as decreases in overhead, another core benefit Covance achieved by automating the workforce management function centers on time – both from an efficiency standpoint and a resource allocation perspective. The company is now able to communicate more effectively with its staff, eliminating the requirement for dozens of spreadsheets and other paper trails by replacing them with a concise, valuable solution that delivers statistically sound, robust data and analysis. Leveraging the Witness Systems solution has provided Covance with a holistic approach to organizational and workforce management as it continues to refine workforce optimization to help ensure client satisfaction, while also accommodating for new business growth.



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