BPO & Analytics - A service model

BPO as we know it are essentially Call Centres. However Call Centres have evolved over the years into a plethora of types of service control and providers. From call centres that call prospective customers to excite them about a product/service, to call centres where customers call for after sales service- there are many types in this spectrum with nuances. The two broad brush categories are:

1. Outgoing Call centres
2. Incoming Call centres

These two broad categories do have types depending on where in the entire sales/after-sales-service scale the service is provided:

1.1 Call centres with one-time product promotion

1.2 Call centres with repeated product promotion with known frequency:- usually happens in financial products.

1.3 Call centres with memberships to facilities with special rates:- usually in the hospitality industry, education industry etc.

1.4 Call centres to catch customers for life or long term memberships for facilities like super-multi-facility care centres.

1.5 Call centres that seek donations for charitable or humane causes.

Among the Incoming call centres there could be many type differences too:

2.1 Call centres run by companies to record, acknowledge, resolve calls from customers for after-sales-services.

2.2 Call centres for general information and inquiry services.

2.3 Call centres for emergency help.

2.4 Call centres simply to redirect callers in redirecting them further in their inquiries.

In the management of all these types there are some common features as well as some differences.
Among the common are the requirements to ascertain:

1. The rate of calls per caller.

1.1 Call centres for general information and inquiry services.

1.2 Call centres for emergency help.

1.3 Call centres simply to redirect callers in redirecting them further in their inquiries.

These are some metrics that not only judges the KPIs of callers but also decides the efficacy of campaigns. From each caller to the aggregate, from the average to the rate of growth of the campaign success, from the metrics of one campaign to multiple campaigns- average, aggregate, trends and then coming to decisions on popularity of types of campaigns, timing of the campaigns, deciding on the target group for campaigns [age

wise, demography wise, region wise, product/service type wise etc]- all these require meticulous number capturing, processing, analysing, depicting pictorially and from different angles, presenting them in reports and using these presentations to be used further in other research and investigations, remain a challenge that need be undertaken - fast, effectively, appropriately and accurately.

Data Analytics as in any other Big Data producing industry is the mathematical abstraction and the logical meta-data that gives the huge transaction data the Character. Looking from a campaign point-of-view any campaign when examined in terms of performance is a process where the characteristics of the campaign are first ascertained, agreed upon, measuring metrics decided upon, measured and results examined and analysed, is a task than had transgressed its manual age into the age of software tools . Big data producers and users used to approach this problem through part by part control and management and then summing them up- this tells upon the internal relations of those data-parts. For a strongly and multiply coupled campaign where viewing it in terms of parts would actually lead to more dimensional view or views through more “in-terms-of” actually might help in getting some aggregate and average values but might fall apart in finding out the trend values. Trend analysis is good only to that extent where parts are of exactly similar features, but where slicing the entire data becomes little more complex in terms of repeating features - one does stumble upon some problems in losing the finer details.

A tool that can handle the entire data set and multiple equally huge related data sets in one GO, and can view the data set from various angles gives results that is way different from the algebraic sum total of the parts - the magic and the intricacies of Big Data lies exactly in those widgets. This remains the challenge of handling Big Data.

A typical model based BI tool would build up a huge model from the various data marts, relate them, combine them through internal relationship building. That model subsequently would be diced and sliced into VIEWS and presented- losing the natural flexibility of data change in what-if analysis, or finding alternatives. A statistical analysis is not effective unless that is complemented by an analysis with possible and plausible spread of data as input factors into the final expression of the objective function, or in lay terms an analysis needs the capability of not only handling the transaction data that is captured but also handling data with what might happen if some inputs undergo changes - this leads to a better forecasting and predictive analysis than merely forecasting with extrapolations.

Measure of effective calls per caller from various view-points on one hand create the performance hierarchy among the workforce and rewarding and retaining them through proper incentives and growth path becomes a handy managing tool for big call centre facilities.
Small call centres can only serve niche products for a very specified target group for a limited time period. Mass campaigns need big call centres and fast handling of Big data, that again requires specialized skill-set with effective management process and managerial skills. The process however remains unaccomplished without proper Data Analytics tools in the hands of the management.

Empirical values in the industry in different sub-silos or sub-sections of the industry have not thrown up a general catch value for all types of lines of businesses. This value should be captured over periods in the same industry, decide upon a common asymptotic value then publish that value has found itself quite inadequate as any measuring standard because of the nuances and complexities that are joining in every now and then. Those days are gone when we could say that a 1 to 2% success rate in campaign calls means a very successful campaign. Depending on various factors the rate could not have any standard model value. This feature therefore requires repeated transaction data capturing with slightly changing input values and studying the changed results - a feature that can only be provided by a flexible tool that can deal with ad-hoc data sets and run independent of any pre-fixed meta-model.

The performance rate or that specific KPI does not remain same or does not have a meaningful average value for a specific person or caller. Over the years the rates do differ. Some callers are found to have done progressively better in some special types of calls including different languages, different product types, and different lines of business, different demographic groups and many other aspects. Thus the running graph of KPI of a caller would be a good presentation to study. This again requires meticulous and appropriate data capturing over longer periods of time and over various lines of businesses and then flexible and fast data analysis always dealing with Big data sets in centralized operations. Thus specializing skills even among the callers has become a very important personnel data metric required for HR practices- high level professional recruiting agencies are now looking for the specified metrics in the professional resumes of candidates.

Product-support BPOs:

This is an entirely different animal. The effectiveness of a caller is not judged by the number of the calls he/she handles but by the rate of resolved calls and the rate of resolution within what time-span. Rate of resolution of problems includes however the length of the chain through which he/she redirects the calls to get them resolved, how he/she redirects in what sequence and closes the calls and who he/she picks up for resolving the call. The fail rate is not of any value in this case; rather the choosing of the appropriate line of action and the right persons in the right sequence gives more successful resolution of calls. Thus a different result-set gives a different performance metric-set. Product support BPOs do therefore need a different data-set to be captured as meta-data inputs albeit from the same sets of transaction data.

The real challenge in Data and Business Analysis comes however in the effective relations building of the product-support call centre data with the pre-sales call centre data and then figuring out if there is any relationship that gets emerged- this is the pristine beauty and knowledge mining from the data in any line of business. A data analytics tool that can relate data from any differing platforms and applications and can combine or relate otherwise non-pre-structured datasets would actually work as an effective tool to mine information and knowledge for further decision making.

Our experience in BPO data handling has brought out unforeseen or un-planned knowledge artefacts when we could do exactly the one stated [combining of data from different applications for analysis]

Models -mathematical and statistical and/or stochastic and of higher mathematical skills are only one part in the infrastructure of data exigency in Data-Analysis- what is more important is the right data combination technique. An Analyst cannot presage or pre-ponder over the elements of data capture for all time to come, she should be equipped enough to bring in any kind of data from any application and then relate them as she wishes and analyse them fast, without bothering about the data-set size, about the repository of data and about the physical data handling and storing and retrieving them- that would be best and appropriate resolution of the challenge faced by the business today.

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