

Partnerships that build businesses



# Call Centre Skills Based Routing in Practice

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## 1. Summary

The number and range of services delivered by today's call centre has risen dramatically. This has led to a number of difficult issues facing the customers calling organisations, the call centre management and the agents working in the call centre.

The customer is often faced with an array of different numbers to dial depending on which service they require or, a single number and being presented with an automated system, with an increasingly complex set of options to allow the caller to select the required service. Neither option is popular!

Call Centre managers must strike the balance between providing excellent service to each caller and optimising the cost of the call centre operation.

Rostrvm Solutions has worked with customers in many different industries to deliver the caller-benefits of skills based routing with the operational challenges faced by the Call Centre Manager.

Rostrvm Solutions' products **rostrvm** CallDirector, **rostrvm** CallDirector ACD and **rostrvm** ResourceBroker ensure that calls are delivered efficiently from your customer's perspective, whilst maintaining an effective operational and business balance for the call centre and all its customers.

## 2. Skills Based Routing Advantages

Traditional Automatic Call Distributors are designed with the assumption that any agent from a group of agents is equally capable of handling a customer's enquiry about a subject; a caller identifies the enquiry subject by dialling a specific phone number and/or providing information to an automated system, the call is then routed to a longest (or first) agent in the target agent group(s) able to handle this call type.

This simple methodology works very well in environments where there are few call subjects and consequently the number of agents able to deal with the enquiry is relatively large.

But the number and complexity of different transaction types in a typical call centre continues to grow. In a traditional group-based call centre it is a complex task to define and manage the group of agents that should receive a particular call and the best-fit group(s) for an individual agent

Skills-based routing changes the emphasis on routing the call from "longest-or-first available agent" to the "right" agent based upon call information and each agent's skill-set.

Pure skills based routing environments focus upon making each caller happy. Each individual call can be routed directly to the best-available agent who is likely to handle the call most effectively.

### 3. Skills Based Routing Challenges

Skills based routing can route individual callers to the best resource to deliver service, but it presents a number of challenges.

- Standard queue theory proves that subdividing groups of agents into smaller groups to match specific skills will require more staff to achieve the same level of customer service when measured as the percentage of calls answered in a given period of time. In many environments the number of staff required can increase by over 10%.
- In the most granular skills based routing implementation calls can be routed to individuals who not only have a particular skill, but also the individuals with the highest level of that skill. This can mean that highly skilled agents will receive a disproportionately large volume of calls and the agents with a lower skill level may not receive calls to become better by experience.
- Skills based routing makes resource planning difficult. Ensuring that the call centre has enough agents available to meet a small number of call types and skills is relatively straightforward. Planning staff levels for a vast array of skills with a relatively small number of calls per skill is extremely difficult.
- A fundamental challenge is determining which skill the caller wants. Customers will call you on the first number they find to contact you, which might easily not match the service they need today. Customers don't like complex automated systems unless they perceive that it is clearly adding value.

## 4. Skills Based Routing in Practice

Rostrvm Solutions designs, develops and delivers open Customer Interaction Management software applications for inbound & outbound call centres. Rostrvm Solutions' products and services allow organisations to deliver personalised customer relationships, balancing the needs to optimise and integrate existing technology investments, support operational processes and achieve business objectives. Rostrvm Solutions has worked with customers in many different industries to deliver the caller-benefits of skills based routing with the operational challenges faced by the Call Centre Manager.

The Rostrvm Solutions product portfolio includes three elements that individually and collectively directly support skills based routing, **rostrvm** CallDirector, **rostrvm** CallDirector ACD and **rostrvm** ResourceBroker.

The role of these components is best described by an example; a customer service centre with multiple caller types (for example business and consumer) and multiple service types (for example reporting a fault, querying a bill across several products).

The customer makes a call to the call centre. The number dialled may determine the service required, or, more commonly, the caller may be routed to an automated system. But customers don't like complex automated systems unless they perceive that it is clearly adding value.

With **rostrvm** CallDirector the call can be controlled in a manner that makes it effective for the call centre and easy for the customer. As the call arrives information can be interrogated, such as the number dialled and the customer's Calling Line Identity and matched to the customer database.

- Do we know who this person is?
- Have they called recently?
- Is there a pattern to the type of call this person makes?

Armed with this information **rostrvm** CallDirector can route the caller appropriately without asking for further information.

If the customer or the call-purpose cannot be automatically identified then **rostrvm** CallDirector can operate in partnership with automated systems, such as an IVR, to gather information such as the customer account number and customer-entered routing information.

**rostrvm** CallDirector then works with **rostrvm** CallDirector ACD to route the call to the appropriate group of agents. CallDirector ACD extends standard CallDirector functions such as integration with IVR, real-time and historic management information, database 'dipping' to ensure that your calls are routed to the most appropriate person or service in your call centre. CallDirector ACD can use any of the available real-time information to make call routing decisions. This allows CallDirector ACD to dynamically alter the manner in which calls are routed in response to changing call centre and business conditions, for example in balancing calls between queues at different sites based upon the length of the queues or ensuring that high-value calls and customers are routed to the most appropriate agent.

**rostrvm** CallDirector ACD skills-based routing allows each agent within the contact centre to be assigned a set of skills. For each skill, a level of competence can also be configured. Whenever CallDirector ACD handles a call it can use all of the information at its disposal to intelligently route the contact to the agent with the skills that are most appropriate to handle the contact.

For all the reasons highlighted earlier, CallDirector ACD's skills based routing delivers all the benefits of skills based routing, but it can also raise some of the challenges.

To overcome the challenges **rostrvm** CallDirector ACD is best deployed in combination with **rostrvm** ResourceBroker.

**rostrvm** ResourceBroker combines

- the ability to effectively route customers according to their needs
- support of the call centre's overall service level and business targets
- maintenance of a group based call centre staffing strategy to support call centre economies of scale and straightforward staff planning

Standard skills based routing call routing systems operate on the basis of directing the call to the best-skilled, best-available agent. **rostrvm** ResourceBroker turns this concept around and operates by moving agents to the team of agents that is defined to handle the call. In making the decision to move agents into different teams **rostrvm** ResourceBroker takes into account not only the requirement to handle a specific customer effectively but also the overall service level and business goals in the centre.

For example a specific person may be the best-skilled, best-available agent for handling customer service calls from business customers and is usually in the group that services that call type, but the agent may also have skill in selling service to consumers.

In standard skills based routing schemes any business-customer-service call would be routed to that agent irrespective of other activity in the centre. ResourceBroker can 'override' standard skills based routing and apply business logic.

If the centre has an overriding business objective to sell new service to consumers and the queue for this type of call is long then ResourceBroker can move the agent to the group servicing this call type. From the management perspective it is easy to review and plan for the resources and skills needed to meet the overall call demand.

**rostrvm** CallDirector, CallDirector ACD and ResourceBroker ensure that calls are delivered efficiently from the customer's perspective, whilst maintaining an effective operational and business balance for the call centre and all its customers.