

Bad Habits That Kill Your WFM Strategy

10 months ago



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Workforce management has evolved far beyond simple schedule creation.

[Modern WFM strategies](#) must balance complex variables including customer expectations, agent wellbeing, operational costs, and regulatory compliance whilst adapting to increasingly volatile demand patterns. Yet despite significant investments in sophisticated forecasting tools and analytics platforms, many contact centres continue to struggle with fundamental execution.

The difference between WFM success and failure often lies not in the technology chosen, but in the operational habits that either support or undermine strategic objectives. These ingrained practices, developed over years of reactive management, can completely derail even the most well-intentioned workforce strategies.

Understanding and addressing these counterproductive habits is essential for any contact centre leader serious about optimising their workforce management approach.

Here's some bad habits that have the potential to kill your WFM strategy...

Deploying New Solutions with Yesterday's Configuration

One of the most damaging habits is implementing cutting-edge WFM technology while clinging to outdated processes and configurations. Many contact centres invest heavily in sophisticated forecasting and scheduling platforms, yet continue operating with legacy parameters, rulebooks, and workflows that were designed for their previous system. This approach completely negates the value of advanced features like AI-driven forecasting, dynamic scheduling, or real-time optimisation capabilities.

To maximise your investment, conduct a thorough review of your existing processes before go-live. Challenge every assumption, reconfigure parameters to leverage new functionality, and train your team to think differently about workforce planning. The goal isn't just system replacement — it's operational transformation that drives measurable improvements in service levels and efficiency. Even if you're working with a legacy system - it will still be beneficial to analyse its performance to [ensure your optimising its output!](#)

Poor Shrinkage Management

Shrinkage often becomes the “set it and forget it” element of workforce planning, yet poor shrinkage management can derail even the most sophisticated forecasting models. Many contact centres apply blanket shrinkage rates across all teams, time periods, and seasons without regular review or granular analysis. This lazy approach fails to account for varying absence patterns, training schedules, meeting requirements, or seasonal fluctuations across different departments. Effective shrinkage management requires regular analysis of actual versus planned shrinkage, breaking down data by team, time of day, and reason codes. Implement dynamic shrinkage rates that reflect real patterns, and build accountability by making shrinkage management a key performance indicator for team leaders. Remember, accurate shrinkage forecasting is the foundation upon which all other workforce planning depends.

Over-Reliance on Historical Data for Forecasting

Whilst historical data provides the backbone of forecasting, contact centres that rely exclusively on past performance are setting themselves up for failure. This habit becomes particularly dangerous during periods of business change, economic uncertainty, or market disruption. External factors such as competitor activities, marketing campaigns, regulatory changes, weather patterns, economic conditions, and seasonal events can dramatically impact contact volumes and patterns. Forward-thinking WFM teams build external intelligence into their forecasting process by maintaining close relationships with marketing, sales, and operations teams. They monitor industry trends, track competitor activities, and factor in planned business initiatives. Create a structured process for capturing and incorporating external insights, and develop scenario planning capabilities to model different potential outcomes rather than simply extrapolating from historical trends.

Lack of Investment in Planning Team Development

Perhaps the most insidious habit is treating WFM as a purely technical function whilst neglecting the human element. Contact centres that fail to invest in ongoing training and development of their planning teams inevitably suffer from knowledge erosion, outdated practices, and missed opportunities for improvement. WFM professionals need continuous development in statistical analysis, business acumen, technology capabilities, and stakeholder management. Without proper investment, teams become reactive rather than strategic, focusing on daily firefighting rather than long-term optimisation. Establish formal development programmes, encourage professional certifications, provide access to industry training, and create career progression paths within the WFM function. Remember that your WFM team's capabilities directly determine the sophistication and effectiveness of your entire workforce strategy.

Insufficient Intraday Management Capabilities

The final habit that kills WFM strategies is inadequate preparation for when plans inevitably go awry. Many

centres excel at creating beautiful forecasts and schedules but lack the intraday levers necessary to respond when reality doesn't match expectations. This becomes particularly critical for organisations with volatile demand patterns or those operating in unpredictable markets. Effective intraday management requires pre-planned response protocols, flexible staffing arrangements, cross-trained agents, real-time monitoring capabilities, and clear escalation procedures. Develop a comprehensive toolkit of intraday options including voluntary time off, flexible breaks, overtime protocols, skill-based routing adjustments, and emergency staffing procedures. The key is having these mechanisms established and tested before you need them, not scrambling to implement solutions during a crisis.