

Predictive Dialers - Maximizing Human Interaction

Predictive dialers are many steps removed from their predecessors, the automatic dialers of the past. Whereas automatic dialing allowed callcenter agencies to dial numbers quickly and efficiently, predictive dialing also processes and makes use of a whole range of information, linking callers to live voices every single time. In fact, with predictive dialing, agents' 'talk time' has increased from an average of twenty minutes per hour to fifty minutes per hour. This is a fabulous rate of improvement - instead of wasting more than half of their time on listening to busy signals and answering machine messages, agents now spend the majority of their time engaged in producing interaction. The dialer also manages the line to agent ratio by pacing the call rate at the desired level. In this way, quotas are met, and agents are neither idle nor overwhelmed. In other words, because the hardware and software does its job, agents are able to spend much more time doing theirs. And of course, increased contact time means that the center's goals are reached much more quickly.

In many ways, it is still true that the real value of a call center depends on its 'human capital' - the agents who interact with clients and potential clients. The more the center's human capital is brought to the forefront, the more everyone benefits. The aim of technology, therefore, is to maximize the time that agents are able to spend doing what only they can do - conversing, communicating, interacting. Predictive dialing and other call center technology represents a perfect symbiosis between person and machine.

A predictive dialing system is able to keep track of which agents are available, while monitoring the responses to the outgoing calls that it makes. Numbers that are busy, disconnected, fax lines, or calls that are answered by machines or voicemail systems are not connected to an agent. Only the calls that are answered by a live voice are put through to an agent, which means that the agent spends almost all of his or her time on the line with a live person. Facilitating and maximizing talk time is the goal of every call center.

The hidden benefit in all this is the fact that the agent is much less likely to get bored or disheartened. Human contact is important to everybody, and particularly to those who select careers that highlight communication. Many of the agents who choose to work in call centers are there precisely because they are attracted to the work due to the fact that they have excellent communication skills and enjoy interacting with people. An endless stream of answering machines or busy signals is bound to frustrate them. When they are able to spend fifty minutes out of each hour actually interacting with clients, however, the agents find that time goes by much faster and their workday is more varied and interesting. Furthermore, they know that their skills are valued, and that their company supports them by investing in the appropriate technology.

Predictive dialing technology is improving all the time. One problem that we occasionally still encounter is a short lag between the time the outgoing call is answered and the time the agent gets on the line. Generally, this is only a matter of a few seconds, and some systems play a short recorded message during this time. Nevertheless, any sort of lag time increases the possibility that the potential client will become confused, and that part of the agent's talk time will be spent sorting out the confusion. There is also the chance that the client may hang up. Therefore, measures are being taken to speed up voice connects and minimize this lag time to the point where it may become imperceptible.

Predictive dialing has revolutionized call centers, and has the potential to continue doing so. Calls are made much more efficiently, employees are happier, and the goals of the call center are likely to be met much faster. Now that this technology is readily available (and improving all the time) it would be almost unthinkable for any sizable call center not to invest in predictive dialers.

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About the Author

Prodialing strives to provide concise information concerning the high tech arena of callcenters, including predictive dialers (<http://www.prodialing.com/predictive-dialers.html>), inbound/outbound, IVR and much, much more. See our website at [ProDialing.com](http://www.prodialing.com) (<http://www.prodialing.com>).