

Case Study: Healthcare Service Improvement & Cost Savings

Background: Continuous improvement leads to increased revenue for one of the nation's largest health and wellness companies.

Business Challenge

Synergy's client, one of the largest health and wellness companies in the US with a member network of over one-hundred million nationwide, challenged Synergy to help them cut costs by 8% over a three month ramp period by reducing the average handle time for their multi-channel (voice/IVR/web), nationwide provider locator service.

The Solution

Synergy utilized a systematic data-driven approach to define goals, measure performance, analyze defect causes to eliminate problems, and control future process performance. The project team was able to methodically identify the "inputs" of handle time, which were comprised of process drivers, system response time, and agent-controlled behaviors. Using statistical process measurement tools, Synergy identified the most crucial inputs and set in place improvement plans.

The first step was to improve call handle time through a variety of technological and process improvements, including a customized provider-indexing program that improved system response time, lowering Agent Handling Time (AHT). Through rigorous inspection of the data, Synergy discovered that there was a "tipping point" relationship between AHT and quality. As handle time dropped below a certain threshold, overall quality and first call resolution seemed to degrade. Synergy found that the Customer Service Representatives who were taking slightly longer on calls were oftentimes delivering a higher quality service experience. Using process modeling, Synergy discovered a "sweet spot," at which Synergy could achieve the optimal AHT levels to satisfy client goals, while providing a customer experience that drove customer delight and increased first call resolution.

The Outcomes

Synergy's methodical approach showed the interconnectivity of various data points to focus on the most impactful changes and nearly doubled the client's challenge of decreasing costs by 8% while steadily improving quality and first call resolution. Not only did the client benefit from improved handle times, but also achieved improved contact rates, increased customer loyalty, and significant brand enhancement.

The Data Tells the Story

Synergy began an Average Handling Time (AHT) reduction project. Initially, Quality Assurance (QA) scores increased as AHT decreased; however, when AHT dropped below 295 seconds, quality also began to deteriorate. Over the next several months, Synergy worked to define the correlation between AHT and quality and develop a perfect balance between the two metrics.

Creating an environment in which the Customer Service Representatives could provide High Quality Service, in addition to building loyalty through customer delight, increased First Call Resolution (FCR). This improvement translated to an overall reduction of about 4.5% in Contact Rate.

Finally, in order to exceed the client's goal of 8% improvement, Synergy also deployed a technological solution to improve system response time and reduce search times.

The holistic solution created and delivered by Synergy resulted in an overall improvement of 17.1%, nearly doubling the client's goal.