RESULTS

- Saved more than $50,000 through overtime avoidance
- Saved more than $500,000 with skills-based scheduling
- Achieved 90 percent agent adherence

ABOUT AMERICAN ELECTRIC POWER (AEP)

Ohio-based American Electric Power (AEP) generates the largest amount of electricity in America, owning and operating more than 38,000 megawatts of generating capacity. The company’s 800 customer service agents serve as key contributors behind its success, fielding more than 14 million customer calls per year.

THE CHALLENGE

AEP’s rapid growth was boosted when it merged with powerhouse Central and Southwest Corporation (CSW). Yet with the benefits of the union came the challenge of streamlining the processes in the company’s seven contact centers.

Each of the centers approached scheduling and forecasting from a different perspective. Some were using spreadsheets. Others relied on workforce management software requiring multiple servers that were costly to purchase and difficult to maintain. Neither option provided an affordable, efficient remedy for directing the newly combined operations.

THE SOLUTION

AEP turned to NICE Systems for answers. The NICE team showed AEP how a central server could support all seven of its call centers, allowing them to run the most efficient forecasting and scheduling scenarios possible. The implementation of NICE’s IEX Workforce Management system delivered immediate results.
THE RESULT

“Prior to our NICE installation, we were always behind the eight ball in trying to anticipate how many agents to recruit for our peak season,” said Aaron Johnson, supervisor - forecasting and scheduling. “Now, with the help of NICE’s forecasting capabilities, we are able to predict staffing needs based on volume, average handling times, overhead, and occupancy trends, and can take a proactive approach in hiring and recruiting agents in preparation for peak call volumes.”

Johnson credits NICE’s flexible scheduling capabilities with saving his company in excess of $50,000 through overtime avoidance alone.

“Prior to the NICE installation, schedules were only issued once or twice per year. If a critical shift was vacated, it had to be filled with overtime until the shift could be filled,” Johnson said. “After installing NICE, we began producing weekly schedules four weeks in the future, which allows us to better adjust schedules to meet the needs of the business.”

Not only has AEP benefited from the forecasting and scheduling capabilities NICE delivers, but also from its savvy utilization of some of the system’s optional features.

The software’s skill scheduling feature, for example, allows AEP to substantiate the differences in average handling time (AHT) between its Spanish and English call volume. The skill scheduling solution also helps the company assign schedules based on productivity, rather than seniority, resulting in annual cost savings of over $500,000.

AEP supervisors are using Real-Time Adherence (RTA) to address agent adherence issues as they occur, resulting in an average conformance above 90 percent across all seven centers. They depend on Time Off Manager to accurately track vacation and holiday balances and field time-off requests month’s ahead of schedules. And they rely on the system’s Agent WebStation feature to disseminate weekly schedules to agents electronically, eliminating past practices of manually distributing paper copies.

“The flexibility, efficiency and accuracy of the NICE system have allowed us to satisfy the requests from our agents and our customers, while balancing the needs of the corporation,” added Johnson.

ABOUT NICE SYSTEMS INC.

NICE Systems (NASDAQ: NICE) is the leading provider of Insight from Interactions™ solutions and value-added services, powered by advanced analytics of unstructured multimedia content – from telephony, web, radio and video communications. NICE’s solutions address the needs of the enterprise and security markets, enabling organizations to operate in an insightful and proactive manner, and take immediate action to improve business and operational performance and ensure safety and security. NICE has over 24,000 customers in more than 150 countries, including approximately 85 of the Fortune 100 companies. More information is available at www.nice.com.