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WHITEPAPER

CSAT, Net Promoter, and Home Agent Models

DID YOU KNOW?

Recent case study data illustrates how an organization's choice of home agent model can impact performance.

Background

The home agent model continues to gain more traction and buzz within the contact center industry. Contact center executives are seeing 30% lower cost to operate the home agent model than a traditional brick and mortar model. [Michael DeSalles](#), a Strategic Analyst for Contact Centers with [Frost & Sullivan](#), noted at the [2010 Contact Center East MindXChange](#) that he estimates the home agent market to grow by 40% annually.

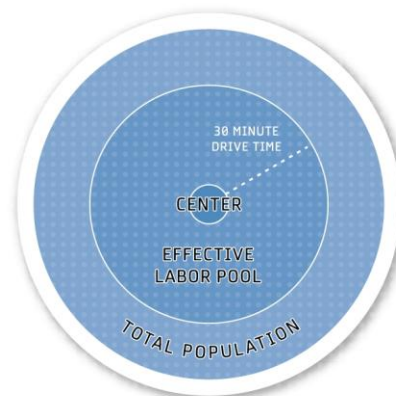
In October 2009, we discussed [two primary home agent models](#) and reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of both of these models. We also discussed the candidate quality within both the brick and mortar job candidates and the home agent candidates.

Recently, a case study by [Customer Relationship Metrics](#) (CRM), an applied Business Intelligence services firm, was published that provided performance data for a firm that took top agents and sent them home. In this research brief, we will review two common home agent models and discuss the case study and its implications to home agent models.

Traditional brick and mortar markets are constrained to a talent pool that is within a specific drive time from the center. Some contact center leaders have compared hiring in these markets to "fishing in the same dirty river day after day."

FurstPerson's research associated with site selection projects suggests that most candidates consider a 30 minute drive time to be the longest commute time they will consider for working in a traditional brick and mortar center.

Traditional Brick & Mortar Model



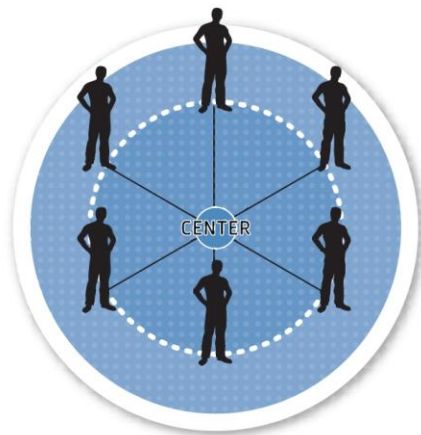
Source: FurstPerson Site Selection Survey Data 2007 to 2009

In FurstPerson's experience, two primary home agent models exist – a hub and spoke model and a true virtual home agent model. In the hub and spoke model, the contact center organization provides the work from home option to candidates or current employees who live within a specific drive time of the center.

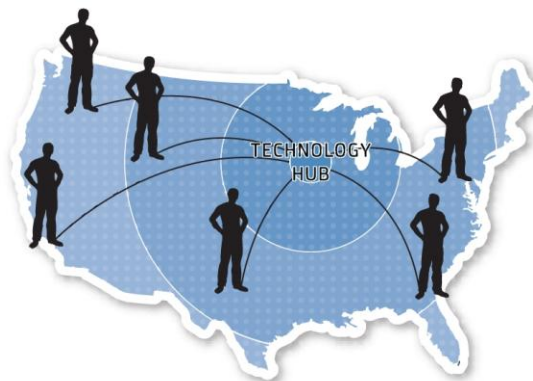
Typically the talent strategy behind these models is to promote current high performing job incumbents into the home agent delivery channel – in other words, as a reward for performing well in the brick and mortar center. Screening these individuals for successful home agent behaviors and abilities might not be a consideration in these models. However, this model has the same labor pool constraints as the traditional brick and mortar model. This does not mean that these models are not successful but they do face talent pool limits.

The second model employs true “virtual” home agents who live anywhere and may never physically be in contact with an actual brick and mortar center or management team. The entire hiring and production process is virtual with the home agent employees connecting to a technology hub or hubs. In this model, hiring managers can recruit across labor markets.

Hub & Spoke Model



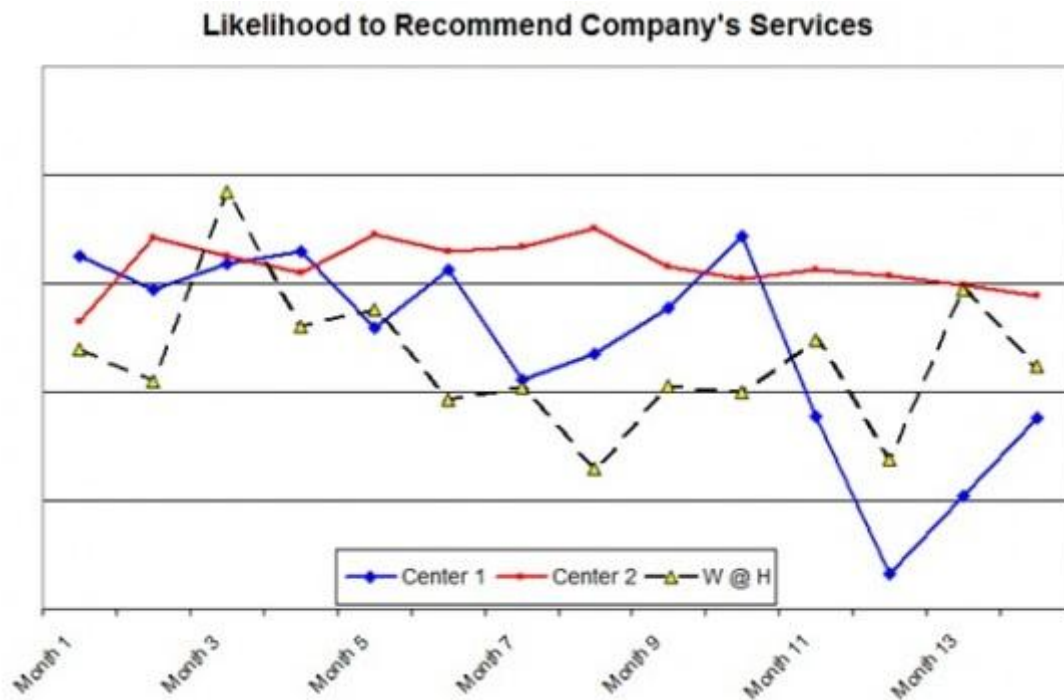
Virtual Model



Case Study – Customer Relationship Metrics

Recently, [Carmit DiAndrea](#), Vice President of Analytics & Client Services for Customer Relationship Metrics (CRM), published a [case study](#) via CRM’s blog. Data shared in this case study provides an example of issues to consider when choosing a home agent model. This case study documented a contact center organization that sent high-performing agents home to work. Per our earlier discussion, this organization adopted a hub and spoke model.

However, when performance data became available for the new home agents, this organization saw a drop in both Customer Satisfaction ratings and Net Promoter ratings. The chart below provides an example of the Net Promoter rating (Likelihood to Recommend Company Services). Ms. DiAndrea points out that the organization realized that home agents who previously performed at a high level were not maintaining this same performance level once they moved to a home agent environment.



Reprinted with permission – Customer Relationship Metrics Blog May 6, 2010-08-26

As this organization began to correct the performance issues, several factors became important. Ms. DiAndrea points out a critical one:

“Have we selected the right employees: The ability to perform well in your call center may not guarantee a high performance level will be maintained once the agent goes home to work. When selecting remote agents, certainly job competence has to be a factor, but is it the only factor to consider? Do the agents who are effective in working from remote locations share similar characteristics? Additionally:

- Are they the self-motivated ones that strive to out-perform their peers and their own historical performance because of the satisfaction it brings them, not the praise they may receive from others?
- Are these the “low maintenance” call center agents? Do the supervisors give them little supervision or direction to complete their job responsibilities? Will this still be true when they work-at-home?
- Do these call center agents typically learn new systems, platforms, or programs more quickly than others? Do they have a natural interest in technology and can therefore help (not impede) remote trouble-shooting?”

Two competencies – autonomy and initiative – stand out as much more important for at-home agents than for brick-and-mortar agents.

Building on the case example results and the analysis provided by Ms. DiAndrea, we can take an example by looking at Customer Service job families for on-premise centers and home agent models. Drawing from our extensive job analysis database with hundreds of job analysis studies and thousands of subject matter expert interviews, we find that two competencies – Autonomy and Initiative – stand out as much more important for At-Home agents than for Brick-and-Mortar agents. Also, Perseverance and Time Management are typically considered among the most important competencies for Home Agent success, but typically do not make the “most important” cut for Brick and Mortar agents.

Sending successful on-premise agents into an at-home setting without evaluating their readiness for such an environment is like promoting the best agents to supervisory positions without assessing their leadership potential. Certainly on-premise agents can be successful in the at-home space, but if you don’t evaluate their potential for success specifically in that environment, you might be setting them up for failure by sending them to the at-home space.

Keys to Home Agent Hiring Success

When selecting a home agent model, keep in mind the following success factors:

- Conduct a job analysis that defines what successful performance looks like for your agents. Home agent job families are different than traditional brick and mortar jobs.
- Validate your hiring model against performance in your home agent role(s).
- Objectively qualify job candidates against your validated hiring model quickly and easily.
- Implement an automated pre-hire screening process that allows you to establish a higher pass/fail “bar” to screen out a higher percentage of candidates compared to the brick and mortar model. Since the home agent model generally provides 3 to 10 times more candidates than the brick and mortar model, hiring managers can afford to be 3 to 10 times more selective.

References

Michael DeSalles – Frost & Sullivan – 2010 Contact Center East MindXChange – industry remarks and comments

Customer Relationship Metrics – May 6, 2010 by Carmit DiAndrea, Vice President of Analytics & Client Services, <http://customerrelationshipmetrics.wordpress.com/2010/05/06/work-at-home-agents-damage-net-promoter-and-customer-satisfaction-is-this-preventable-a-call-center-case-study/>

About FurstPerson

What we do:

- Develop and operate web-based pre-hire, employee selection assessments that help contact centre organisations hire and develop the right employees.

Our experience:

- Thirteen years of research and implementation experience working with all major call types including customer care, sales, collections, win back, and technical support.
- Implemented our solutions in over 250 labor markets in the United States, Canada, UK, the Philippines, and Latin America.
- Significant industry experience in telecommunications, insurance, outsourcing, financial services, retail, travel, and business services industries.
- Home agent hiring since 2002.
- Average client is a multi-site, multi-call type organization with complex hiring workflow models and job profiles.
- Developed award-winning assessments featuring interactive simulations.

Differentiators:

- Predictive assessments with demonstrated bottom line results ranging from:
 - Improved new hire performance (up to 40%)
 - Reduced turnover (up to 70%)
 - ROI – \$1 invested yields \$10 to \$20 in return
 - Lower recruiting expense
- Hiring solutions based on empirical research supported by ongoing job and validation analysis.
- Customized solutions leveraging our extensive contact centre hiring expertise and industry leading assessment solutions.

To learn more about FurstPerson, please visit our website at www.furstperson.com or email us at info@furstperson.com or call us at 888-626-3412.

