

New IBM Service Plays Real-Time Matchmaker In Call Centers

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IBM announced a new service today which uses advanced analytics to match a caller with the optimal customer service representative (CSR) in real-time. IBM has collaborated with specialty insurance provider Assurant Solutions, part of Assurant, Inc., to develop the Real-Time Analytics Matching Platform (RAMP). The use of RAMP has enabled Assurant Solutions call centers to increase customer retention, increase sales yields and decrease agent attrition.

With the price of customer acquisition at an all-time high, retaining customers and increasing the profitability of those relationships is critical. Most contact centers use a skills-based system when routing customer calls, which only takes into consideration the agent's product focus and availability. For decades this model has proven frustrating to both customers and contact center agents as the assigned representative may not be the optimal candidate to address the customer's request.

Using techniques invented and patented by Assurant, RAMP combines data about the individual customer with each contact center agent's specific skills, expertise and past performance to optimize the routing of calls. IBM Global Business Services consultants designed a "matching-engine" which leverages this combination of customer insight, agent profiles and real-time analytics to provide "individual-level" decisioning and assignment of calls not available in most contact centers applications.

RAMP is activated the moment a customer contacts the [call](#) center. Within seconds the platform uses data generated from previous call center interactions to identify acceptable wait times for individual customers. RAMP then factors in agent performance and qualifications to decide which agent would serve that customer best. At the same time, RAMP determines when the optimal agent will become available using prediction

algorithms based on the length of the current call and historical call handle times. The analytics-based decision engine then assigns the caller to the optimal agent and routes the call in real-time to that agent. The engine tracks each call assignment and makes necessary adjustments if an agent's call ends before or after its predicted time.

RAMP is available today through IBM Global Business Services' Business Analytics and Optimization (BAO) service line. The platform leverages IBM's deep expertise in analytics and customer insight technologies and joins a growing portfolio of BAO assets focused on helping clients better make better decisions.

The system provides for flexible configuration options and is optimized to run on IBM Software and Hardware platforms. Assurant is deploying RAMP on an IBM POWER6-based system leveraging IBM DB2 and IBM WebSphere software technology to manage their information. In addition to Insurance, IBM is also making RAMP available for other customer contact-centric industries, including: Financial Services, Telecommunications and Cable Television.

"We're seeing an increasing opportunity to use available customer information and analytics to find new levels of customer insight to improve performance," said Michael Schroeck, Vice President, Business Analytics and Optimization Services, [IBM](#) Global Business Services. "RAMP represents the next generation of analytical solutions, combining customer information and insight to transform and optimize important business functions. RAMP enables our clients to enhance [customer](#) satisfaction, reduce attrition, increase revenue, and improve contact center productivity resulting in better overall company performance."

Source: IBM

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