



WHITEPAPER

Make Every Agent Your Best Agent

Skills: the New Currency?





A challenging market context

The world is in a period of economic recovery and accelerated change. As businesses strive to compete and thrive, they are finding that their skills requirements have fundamentally changed. Critical new skills are scarce — not to mention in very high demand. So, rather than fight a losing battle to compete for new talent, organizations must develop innovative new ways to develop the skills and knowledge of existing employees, share expertise and retain valuable talent.

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In customer management environments — where great customer experience is more and more often a differentiator — the challenge is heightened. Agents need to deal with increasingly knowledgeable customers across an ever-increasing number of channels (a recent Ovum report revealed that 22% of us use 5 or more channels to contact an organization); and these channels have changed

the nature of interactions. Social media, review sites, online forums and price comparison sites all mean that customers are more informed than ever before. In fact, they are increasingly able and willing to self-serve, so when they get in touch with the contact center they are often more informed than the agents that are serving them, yet have extremely high service level expectations.

So, it is easy to agree that the ability to overcome the skills challenge and to help every agent be the best possible agent they can, will likely differentiate the most successful organizations from the rest. As a result, skills are fast becoming a new economic currency, and business leaders must ensure that the investments that they're making today in Learning and Development (L&D) deliver immediate competitive advantage as well as a sustainable skill bank for the future.

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Individual focus vs. 'one size fits all'

Focusing individual learning investments in a way that links clearly to organizational objectives underpins a strong culture of learning in organizations. Firstly, it delivers higher employee engagement, which has been shown to have a strong correlation with ultimate profitability. According to a 2014 Gallup survey, profitability is 22% higher in organizations that have high levels of employee engagement. Secondly, there are significant benefits for employees. By focusing on skills development at an individual level, employees feel more confident, valued and engaged — all significant drivers of better performance.

This targeted approach not only reduces cost, it also helps employees to do a better job for customers as well as to continuously improve and take ownership of their own development — key drivers to improving and sustaining motivation. In the contact center, this is a golden combination that has the potential to cut cost by reducing unauthorised absence, attrition, recruitment & training costs and improves key operational metrics such as first contact resolution (FCR), average handling time (AHT) and productivity.

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right balance between employee and organizational needs.

In customer management operations, this means transitioning from traditional educational methods to ways that support a more holistic approach to increasing workplace performance such as knowledge sharing, network building, and promoting rapid acquisition of experience. To achieve this, the focus must be on L&D investments that meet the organization's business objectives whilst recognizing the individuals' specific competency requirements and skill gaps.

Last but not least, organizations must ensure the 'stickiness' of learning initiatives. Why invest money in developing skills that are not relevant to the individual or valuable to the organization and even more importantly, not retained by the trainee? This last point is critical in regulated environments where evidencing compliance is a key requirement.

In summary, agents must have access to the tools and resources they need to acquire the skills and knowledge to achieve their full potential. As importantly, this needs to be accompanied by a cultural change in which management encourages agents to take the ownership of their own development. Granted, it might take them away from the frontline for a few minutes, but if that leads to a purchase being completed, or a customer being retained, that's money well spent for the business.

How do you give agents the skills they need without compromising productivity or burdening the organization with massive cost?

You adopt an integrated skills management platform that gives organizations and agents a new understanding of what skills they have and what skills they need, and also supports the acquisition of those skills at speed.

From theory to practice

A specialist technological solution of this kind will enable them to align their approach to L&D with today's customer management challenges — giving agents the opportunities to develop their own skills but also giving businesses the insight they need to understand what skills drive performance, and how these can best be acquired and nurtured.

Such a solution must combine a rich source of management information with practical user tools, blending the best of “push” learning — managers actively targeting specific improvements in the skills and knowledge of team members — with a new era of “pull” learning that puts agents in the driving seat. With such a solution, suddenly, the unmeasurable, intangible realm of knowledge becomes concrete: return on investment can be assessed, not least through the feedback and response of those who matter most — the next generation of knowledgeable consumers you now have to serve.

In this evolving landscape, successful organizations will be the ones that best empower their people to gather that knowledge and build their skills. They will be the ones that recognise the value of those skills and endeavour to make every agent the best agent they can be.

Introducing Competence Manager

Competence Manager from Teleopti enables organizations to gain an insight into what skills really exist within an organization — its “Skills DNA.” Instead of either assuming everyone at a certain level has certain skills, or that skill levels equate simply to what training has been completed, organizations can develop a true picture of each individual's competency. This is based on a combination of training courses attended, as well as other performance data, manager feedback, results of online tests and, crucially, self-assessment.

Agents can see what skills they have but also what they might need — either within their current role or to further their career. They can investigate ways to build those skills, from finding and using online assets such as eLearning materials to registering an interest in classroom training relevant and specific to them. They can ask for colleague support, contact trainers, alert their managers to learning opportunities they want to take and continue to measure progress. Alternatively, they can look at the Skills DNA database and find a colleague who is an expert in the issue — then either hand the customer on to them, or seek their input before answering.

Importantly, it's not just agents that are empowered here: managers are too. In fact, managers retain overall control, even though agents are empowered to make more choices. That's vital in environments like the contact center or retail operations, where the operating paradigm for so long has been top-down and target-driven. While forward-thinking contact centers are increasingly moving away from counter-productive performance measures — the classic example being agents rushing customers off the phone simply to achieve AHT targets — towards more relevant outcomes, managers still want to keep a tight rein on activities.

Competence Manager has been designed to support that managerial role — and give managers new tools to improve performance based on analytics and insight. For example, it enables managers to identify exactly what skills gaps exist in their team and push relevant learning opportunities to team members. They can see requests for learning and factor that in to scheduling, perhaps identifying a suitable time-slot outside of peak demand, or when there is sufficient cover. Managers can correlate their L&D and staff skills with business success — quite simply doing more of the stuff that works and refining or stopping doing things that aren't working.

Where there is a need for several members of the team to complete the same learning programme, managers can even schedule a course, right down to selecting the trainer and booking a room. And importantly, they can make sure that those who don't need the training — because it's not relevant to their work or more importantly because they already have the skill — aren't wasting time in learning which is of no value to them.

Once you have an understanding of the Skills DNA of each individual, of course, it is a straightforward step to understanding the Skills DNA of the entire organization. That in turn lends itself to rich analy-



sis of the link between skills and performance. For example, it makes it possible to determine whether there are common threads in the skills profiles of high performers.

In addition to improving performance and training ROI, comparing each person's skills DNA against their performance can also confirm the effectiveness of your performance management scheme. If you're not seeing a correlation between your performance management scheme scores, actual sales or service performance and skills, it could be time to re-evaluate its effectiveness.

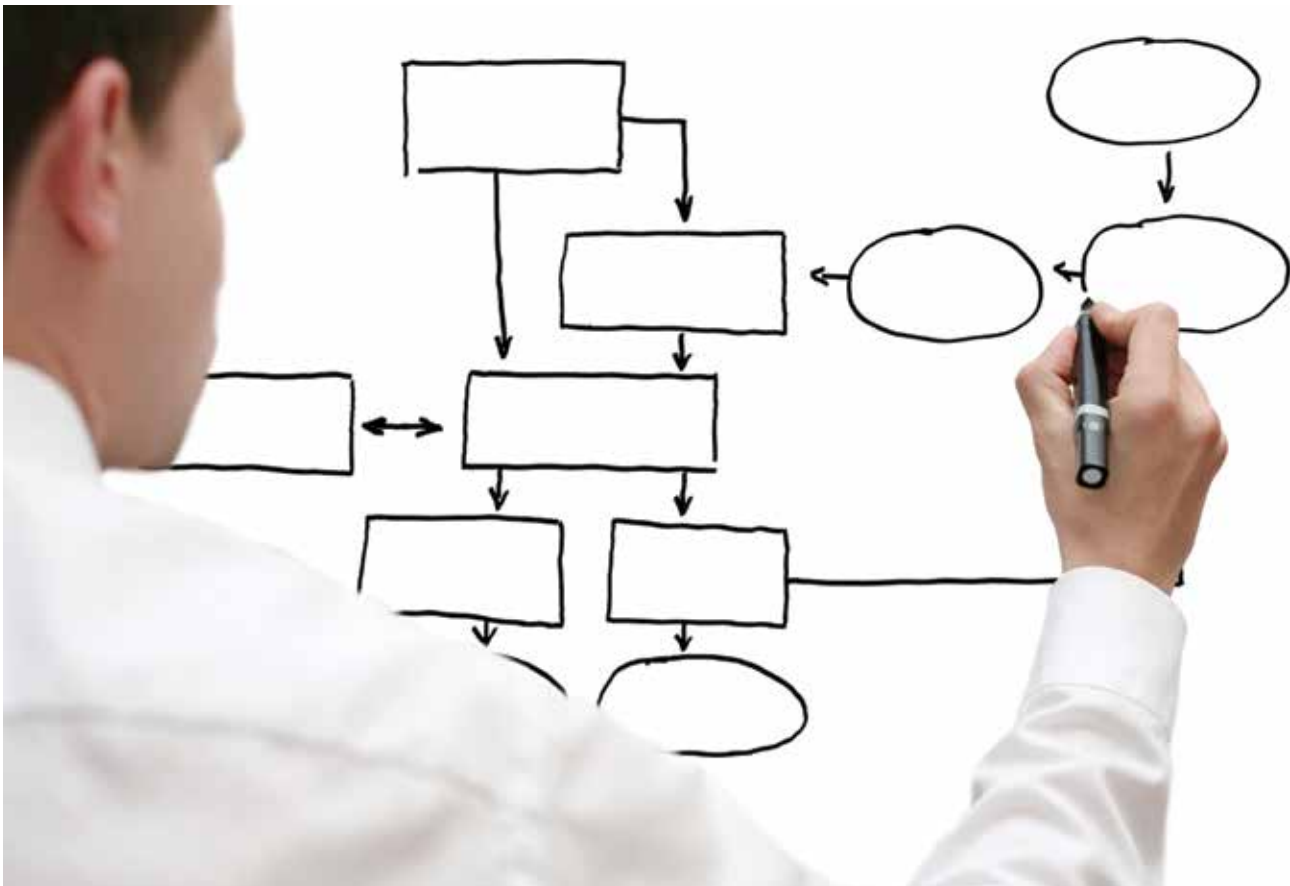
Competence Manager gives individuals the tools they need to develop skills and learn new information fast, and gives organizations the control and insight they need to nurture the right talent, focus on the right skills and streamline learning.

Because it provides a direct link between a person's (or a team's) skills and their performance, Competence Manager offers those organizations a new ability to measure the impact of learning on business performance.

Competence Manager

Key features:

- Enterprise-wide: contact center, back office, branches and retail outlets
- Ability to integrate with outsourcers and 3rd parties
- Benchmarking at all levels; by division, site, country, region, 3rd parties, etc
- Role 'blueprint' function against which employees can be assessed and developed
- Ability to map to and export data into ACD routing to support optimized, skills-based routing
- Integration with Teleopti WFM's Training Planner to plan and schedule individually customized training plans
- LMS functionality and integration
- Online assessment and observational feedback to build customized knowledge nudges
- Effective eLearning capability
- Customizable user-interfaces and systems integration points
- Wizard-driven data import and mapping tools
- Quick and easy installation set-up
- Rich reporting suite





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About USAN

USAN helps companies profitably engage customers and deliver amazing cross-channel experiences with the industry's best cloud, premise and hybrid multi-channel customer engagement solution. From traditional telephone interactions to the web, social media and everything between, USAN's portfolio of call center products gives users infinite flexibility in the way they engage customers across channels. In addition to campaign management, back-office integration, and business process automation, USAN's offerings include Hosted IVR, ACD, and Dialers built upon a fifth-generation carrier-grade infrastructure that delivers "five nines" of availability and proven scalability.