



## **HDI Key Performance Indicator Bulletin #9- Handling Time**



## **Handling Time**

**Definition**-The time an agent spends in Talk Time and After-call Work, completing a transaction.

### **Key Points**

- Handling Time is often expressed as an average; Average Handling Time (AHT) should be reviewed with call volume to determine call load.
- The value of AHT lies in its use for forecasting; as with call volume, ATT and ACW, it usually falls into predictable, repeating patterns.
- The difficulty in analyzing AHT resides in the tendency of support managers to calculate it as a desire expressed as a goal, rather than what historical data shows. As a goal, if it is lower than what the AHT has proven to be in the past, it can lead to understaffing, a lower service level and a dangerously high occupancy rate. If the goal is higher than a proven reality, the reverse will be true. In either case, the objective of using resources efficiently and effectively will not be met.
- “The basic forecasting approach involves utilizing historical reports along with a measure of good judgment. You begin by looking at the AHT for a recent week, broken down by half-hour. If the week is ‘typical,’ the data represented by this pattern is what will likely continue.”<sup>1</sup>
- AHT is measured by half-hour and is indispensable for planning purposes.
- Do not assume that AHT will remain consistent throughout the day unless you have substantial amounts of data available to support such an assumption.
- It is critical to identify what type of after-call work should follow calls and what type of work can wait.
- It is also critical to identify AHT for different call types. Support centers with dozens or even hundreds of call categories should reduce them to a reasonable number since it is impossible to forecast Call Load with an excess of call categories. Note: A typical four-tier hierarchy, such as S.T.E.M. (Subject, Type, Element & Module) is an excellent classification structure, in general, and a useful for planning purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> Brad Cleveland, *Call Center Management on Fast Forward* (Annapolis, Maryland, 2006) 100-101.



“Less experienced agents often require more time to handle calls as they learn how to deal with processes, systems and callers. Compare average handling time to the experience levels of your agents. This will enable you to estimate the impact that new-hires have on average handling time. It will also be useful in establishing realistic expectations for them.”<sup>2</sup>

### Formula for Handling Time

**Talk Time + After Call Work = Handling Time**

**12 minutes + 2 minutes = 14 minutes**

**Talk Times (12+10+5+9+3) + (2+3+3+1+2) =**

**39 + 11 = 50 minutes**

**50/5 = 10minutes**

**Source of the Key Performance Metric:** Automatic Call Distributor

**Research from the HDI Practices and Salary Survey Indicates:** The median of average handle times for tickets via phone is 8-10 minutes. (2012 data)

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<sup>2</sup> Cleveland, 102-103