



Metric of the Month: Agent Occupancy

By Jeff Rumburg

Every month, in the Industry Insider, I highlight one key performance indicator (KPI) for the service desk or desktop support. I define the KPI, provide recent benchmarking data for the metric, and discuss key correlations and cause/effect relationships for the metric. The purpose of the column is to familiarize you with the KPIs that really matter to your support organization, and to provide actionable insight on how to leverage these KPIs to improve your performance.

Agent Occupancy

Agent occupancy is a service desk metric that measures the percentage of logged-in time during which an agent is actually delivering customer service. Let's say, for example, that an agent is logged into the service desk ACD for six hours a day, with four of those hours spent in talk, hold, or wrap mode. In this case, agent occupancy would be 66.7 percent ($4 \text{ hours} \div 6 \text{ hours}$). Likewise, let's say that an agent is logged into the ticketing system for seven hours a day, with five of those hours spent responding to customer tickets that are emailed to the service desk. In this case, agent occupancy would be 71.4 percent ($5 \text{ hours} \div 7 \text{ hours}$).

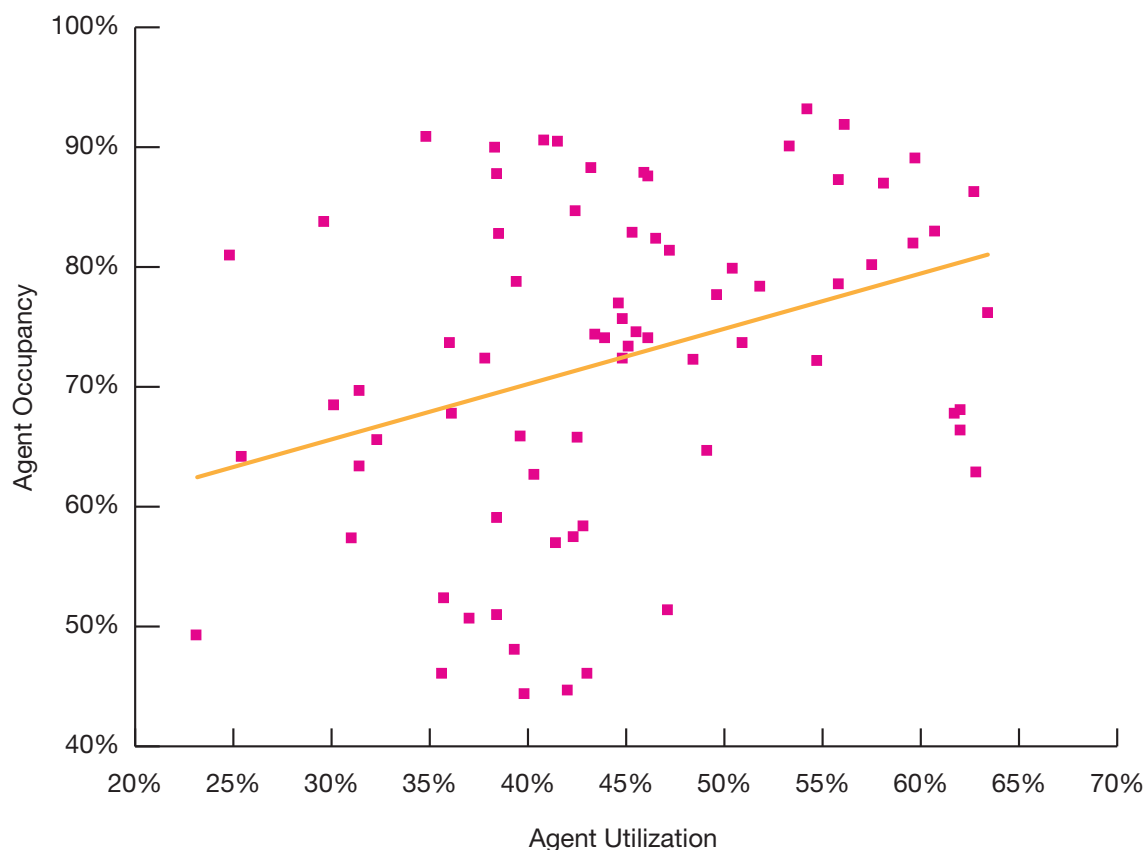
Agent occupancy is often confused with agent utilization. Although the numerator is the same for both metrics, the denominator is different. The denominator for occupancy, as demonstrated above, is the total time a voice, email, or chat agent is logged into the system. By contrast, the denominator for agent utilization is the total time a voice, email, or chat agent is at work, *including the time that the agent is logged into the system*.

To continue with our example from above, let's assume that in both cases the agent is at work for a total of eight hours. In the first example, agent utilization would be 50% ($4 \text{ hours} \div 8 \text{ hours}$); in the second, 62.5 percent ($5 \text{ hours} \div 8 \text{ hours}$). This leads us to an important point: agent utilization is always *less than or equal to* agent occupancy.

Agent occupancy and agent utilization are weakly correlated (Figure 1), and it is possible to have high agent occupancy and low agent utilization. This scenario occurs when agents are not logged into the system for very many hours each day but are fairly busy when they *are* logged into the system. For this reason, agent utilization is recognized as a more accurate indicator of overall productivity than agent occupancy. Additionally, while low

agent occupancy guarantees that agent utilization will also be low, the reverse is not true: high agent occupancy does not guarantee high agent utilization. Finally, when agent occupancy and utilization diverge (i.e., high occupancy and low utilization), this is generally an indication that the service desk is overstaffed.

Figure 1: Agent Occupancy vs. Agent Utilization

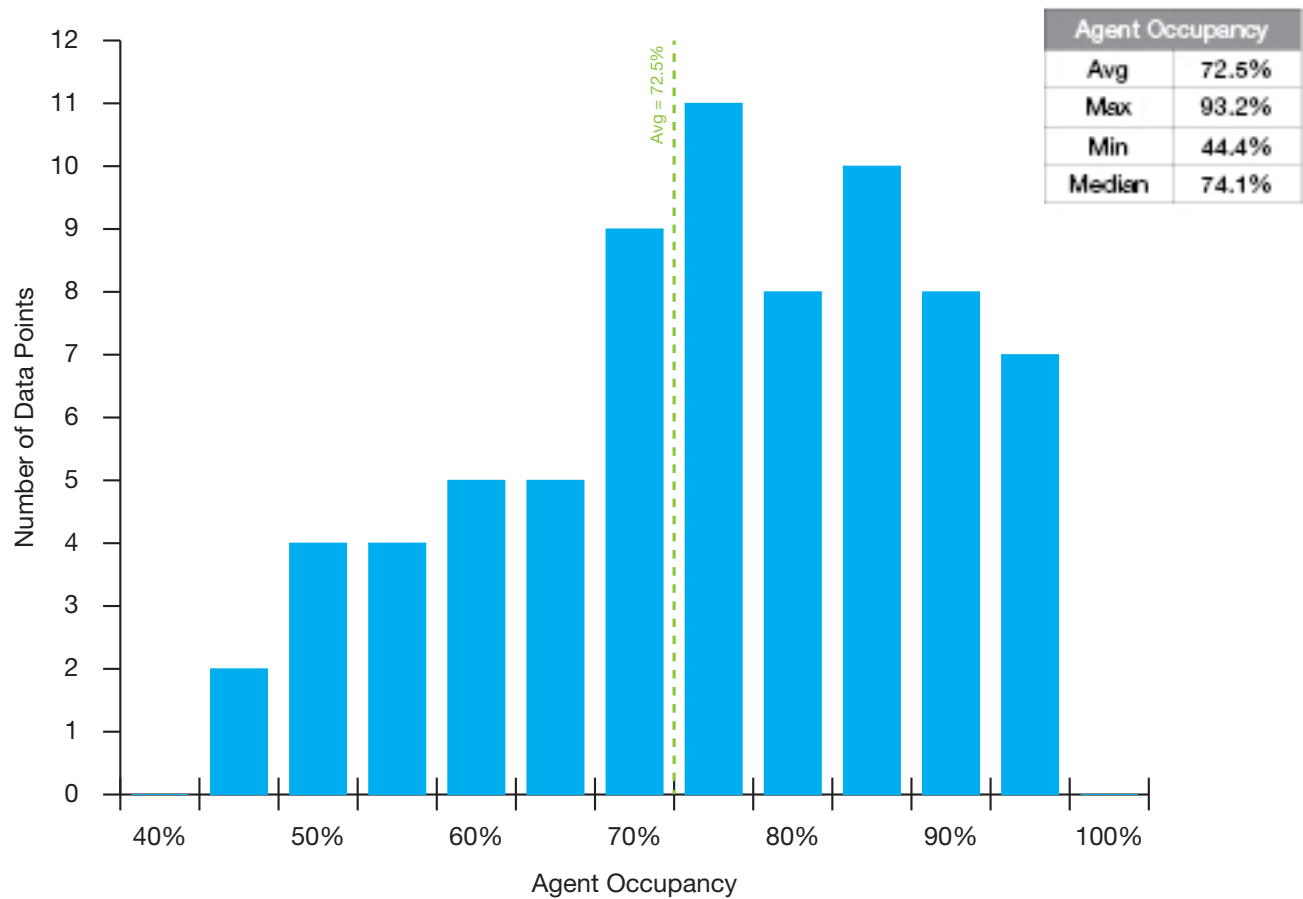


Benchmarking Data for Agent Occupancy

MetricNet's benchmarking database shows that the average agent occupancy for service desks worldwide is about 73 percent. This number varies widely, however, from a low of 44 percent to a high of 93 percent. Those at the low end of this range tend to be smaller service desks that lack economies of scale, or service desks that are simply overstaffed. Those at the higher end of this range tend to be service desks that have good economies of scale and good agent scheduling practices.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of agent occupancy for a representative cross-section of service desks worldwide.

Figure 2: Benchmarking Data for Agent Occupancy



In summary, agent occupancy is a common and important service desk metric to track and trend, as it does provide an indication of how productive agents are *while they are logged into the system*. But for the reasons outlined above, agent occupancy has limitations, and agent utilization is a better overall indicator of agent productivity.

Please join us for next month’s Metric of the Month, **technician utilization for desktop support**, which is calculated very differently from technician utilization for the service desk

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