



# **The Actimax Essential Guide to Effective Communications**

**An applications showcase for  
Communications Management software**



## The Evolution of Communications Management

Communications Management has evolved over the last 35 years from hardware-based telephone logging systems to today's web-based software solutions that absorb all facets of communications, to provide managers with detailed information on fixed line, mobile, Internet and email usage and costs.

More advanced applications integrate with other voice and data equipment, such as voice recording, asset management, unified management and CTI systems, to provide greater management information and control, together with a single point of data entry and database synchronisation.

Communications Management has mirrored the development of the Internet and IP Telephony in its set up, as well as deployment. No longer is it a prerequisite to install a cable from the telephone system (PABX / Switch) to the PC hosting the management software, traditionally restricting its use to the PABX room, and so the benefits just to the Telecom/IT Manager.

With IP Telephony, Communications Management software now integrates directly with the switch over the LAN, which means it can be set up on any PC in minutes. This integration also enables some Communications Management solutions to automatically learn extension details and names, eliminating the laborious task of manual data entry.

With the Internet, secure web-browser clients make it even more widely available, 24 x 7, and globally. Users can literally check their communications system from any Internet connection.

IP technology has also simplified the collation of data from satellite offices, enabling centralisation of Communications Management. IP Buffers download call and event data, in real-time, to the Communications Management server. This delivers a cost-effective solution for multi-site analysis, even across the world where multiple currencies and carrier costing structures reside.

Advancing from this is the recent introduction of the ASP Communications Management solution, where the Internet enables an effective Outsourced Solution. Here, the server is hosted externally and users simply access their reports via the web. This

removes the need for capital expenditure, internal resource (people and equipment) and software support contracts.

Today, Communications Management has transitioned from a back office application to everyone's desktop. Instant Alarms and Messaging brings Communications Management to life – to the front office - to alert people when certain event criteria is matched and to give an instant view of communications usage and costs.

This automation is further supported by the ability of the management reports to be auto-scheduled, run at predefined periods and emailed automatically to designated individuals, or groups, in any file format.

The future of Communications Management lies in its ability, both through software development and services, to help users interpret the information it delivers and propose recommendations for change. This will include trend analysis and business modelling, interactive reports (such as playing a call back through a voice recording, by selecting a line item on a report), and even greater integration with other technologies, to provide the central command centre for voice and data infrastructures.

Considering the concept has been here for over three decades, in a world of changing technology and undelivered promises, one thing remains certain - Communications Management Works.

# Sales and Marketing Manager

## Drivers

It's tough out there; sales managers need to hit numbers and marketing departments need to find and exploit competitive advantage. If they don't then someone else will.

The old adage, 'you can't manage what you can't measure,' is as true today as it ever has been and one of the best measurement tools for sales and marketing departments is Communications Management.

## How Can Communications Management Help?

Sales managers use Communications Management to generate management information on how their sales team is performing on the telephone. For example, seeing how many calls each member of the sales team is making to their client base gives a good indication of activity – and this can be done on either a named customer, or geographical basis, or both.

In professional services-based organisations, this also means that where time is billed to a client, you have accurate call reports from which to generate invoices.

Managers running an inbound sales operation need to know that calls are being answered quickly and dealt with efficiently. Communications Management software will generate the reports you need, when you want them.

Time to answer calls is critical; if callers have to wait too long to be answered, they can always ring off and go elsewhere, so Communications Management will provide you with a list of 'lost calls' and average time to answer. What's more, you can have this list, even with the missed calling number (CL), on an hourly, daily or weekly basis. And if the measurement is that critical, why not have the bad news emailed to you as it happens, so that you can take corrective action. Think of the payback in increased sales and productivity.

Marketing managers can identify the impact of their sales promotion programs almost in real-time. Say you place an advert announcing a special offer with a unique number for customers to call. Communications Management will tell you how many calls you received on that number by the hour, or any other time period you care to specify.

What is your geographical coverage for your products and services? Don't know? How can you find out quickly and take action? Communications Management will identify regions you are calling and who are calling you – or not as the case may be.

## Managers Should Consider Communications Management Because

- It can provide the data required to construct sales and marketing plans.
- It can tell you where you need to put your resources.
- It can tell you which members of your team are idling away their time on the web.
- It should be a strategic part of your CRM strategy.
- It provides the measurement for your management.



## Case Study

A travel agent with 20 sales agents installed Communications Management software to identify time to answer and lost calls. From the outset, it was established that average ring times were excessive and the abandoned call rate was unacceptable.

At first, management thought that they needed to increase the number of agents and provide better training. However, it was further established that, on average, each agent was visiting web sites unrelated to their work function, for an average of 30 minutes a day. Once this was pointed out to the staff, the time to answer improved dramatically and lost call measurements were reduced to almost zero.

# Human Resources Manager

## Drivers

Finding and recruiting the right staff for your business can be difficult enough, but then keeping and motivating them to perform to a level commensurate with your business needs is often far harder.

The balance between work and the personal needs of the employee is a vexing issue and performance appraisals can be a very black and white process in determining who is working for the company and who has their own agenda.

## How Can Communications Management Help?

During a standard working day of 9 to 5, it would be fair to expect that during core hours employees would be getting on with the business of fulfilling their work duties. The trouble today is that, whilst someone sitting at a desk with their head down at a PC screen may appear to be a model employee, how do you know what they are doing unless you look over their shoulder.

Here Communications Management can help in a number of ways; being able to identify which web sites have been visited by any individual can determine whether valid research on a company project is being carried out, or whether the best price for a summer holiday is being established, in your time and at your expense. It's not the cost of the call – most businesses have 'always on' broadband connections these days – it is the 'theft' of company time that is destroying your productivity.

Likewise, excessive use of email systems for personal use during the working day has made headline-grabbing news on many occasions, where sexual discrimination in the workplace and the sending of offensive pictures has caused employment tribunal cases to dramatically increase.

Effective Communications Management can identify these problems, immediately allowing the HR Manager to take appropriate action before rendering his company liable.

But it's not just the negative aspects we should focus on. Communications Management can help in staff welfare issues as well. With the trend towards an increasingly mobile workforce as well as employees working from home, the need to ensure effective personal touch contact is essential to keeping employees part of the team. Here we can measure the amount of contact employees have with the office.

## Managers Should Consider Communications Management Because

- It can identify potential sexual harassment in the work place.
- Offensive images held on company PC's are the company's responsibility- Communications Management identifies the problem.
- It can tell you which members of your team are idling away their time on the web and on personal email.
- Racial abuse within emails is a crime – Communications Management can monitor such activity.
- It can tell you who is making excessive personal telephone calls, email and use of the Internet.
- It provides the measurement for your management.



## Case Study

An enterprise with 200 employees was concerned that, since they made Internet access universally available as a business tool, too much time was being spent on-line for personal use.

The installation of Communications Management software identified that on average each employee was using the Internet during office hours for thirty minutes a day. (30 minutes x 200 Staff = 6000 minutes) Paid at an average hourly rate of £10, this equated to a cost to the company of £1000 a day.

The company then used the software to identify how many private emails were being sent each day and how long they took to read/write/send. Using the same calculation methods they confirmed their original fears and took remedial action to improve their productivity.

# Finance Manager

## Drivers

If cash is the lifeblood of the business, feeding and nourishing development and growth, then allocating departmental costs and forecasting costs and revenues is the meat and gravy on the dinner plate. Finance managers need information from which to base their plans, produce management reports and implement strategies to drive their business forward. Information is King.

## How Can Communications Management Help?

You are looking at your company phone bill – the cost of calls has risen in two consecutive quarters by 15 percent and you are going to have to explain why at the Board meeting in the morning. Deep breath. You actually have no idea, except that you heard somewhere that the sales team were meant to be getting more proactive and there was a problem with the reliability of one of your company's mainline products.

Here's where Communications Management can deliver the answers and make you look great in the meeting. Call costs by department is a standard report you can run in seconds, just enter the dates to measure from and to, see the results on screen and print each Board member a report. But you can do more; let's really impress the Chairman. Yes the sales department has become more active, calling more customers and chasing orders – but at what cost? And what is their hit rate? Is it all worthwhile?

Communications Management provides the information on which to take that judgement. 'And by the way Chairman, we seem to be spending 80 percent of our time calling customers that provide only 20 percent of our revenues...' You can feel those Brownie Points already.

And there's more. You look at the service department costs and call patterns. That new product you launched six months ago is costing the business thousands in man-hours on the phone providing technical support to users – that has to be fixed. 'And by the way Chairman, I have identified hundreds of hours of support time that should have been billed to clients without maintenance contracts.'

## Managers Should Consider Communications Management Because

- It can identify trends in telephony costs by department.
- Costs associated with individual projects can be aggregated and allocated.
- It can tell you which members of your team are idling away their time on the web and on personal email.
- It can identify who your best and worst customers are.
- It can tell you who is making excessive personal telephone calls, email and use of the Internet.
- It provides the measurement for your management.



## Case Study

An engineering company working in the transport sector undertook project management for a number of clients within the public and private sectors.

Delivering on time and within budget was paramount. Installing Communications Management software enabled the company to tighten up on their project cost allocation in terms of time spent on calls related to each project, as well as the actual cost of making the calls. The management reports enabled the engineering company not only to settle their billing processes faster, and with more accuracy, but also allowed them to demonstrate to prospective clients their competence in cost and time management.

# Service and Support Manager

## Drivers

Two competing products are similarly featured and priced; yet one far outsells the other. Why? Well many reasons, but one for sure is that good service brings customers back time after time.

But what is good service and what is the cost of supplying it? Why is it that when you want to buy a product the phone answers after one ring, yet three months later when you have a problem, your call is placed in queue?

## How Can Communications Management Help?

A recent customer survey commissioned by your sales department has revealed that sales are dropping because of customer dissatisfaction. As service manager, you are a constituent part of the remedy to fix the problem. And the boss says be quick about it. But there is a problem, the finance department is on your back telling you to keep your headcount down and reduce your telephony costs. You face a paradox.

Here is where Communications Management can help. Firstly, you can analyse your average time to answer calls for any part of the working day, or week, on an hourly or more frequent basis. This gives you a start point from which to set targets to reduce that time to a level more in line with customer expectations.

You can't hire any more people to take calls, but you can find out how efficient your existing team is at processing each call. You can determine average length of time to clear down a query, set new targets and improve productivity. In practice, this is likely to mean that you will identify a training issue, that once put right will improve the service levels.

Whilst you can't hire more staff, you can deploy the headcount you have at the right time and place. Communications Management has identified that the period between 0900 and 1300 is the busiest time of the day, every day, thus allowing you to schedule resources accordingly.

And what about the finance manager? Well your contract service department offers customers the ability to call your Freefone numbers, so the longer you spend on the line supporting customers the more expensive the cost of good service. Another issue identified for remedial action – provided the customer perceived level of support actually rises at the same time.

## Managers Should Consider Communications Management Because

- It can identify busy periods where resources need reallocation. It allows you to set targets for key performance indicators such as time to answer and length of call.
- It can identify how many 'out of hours' calls you receive for service – is there a new income stream there?
- It can identify who your best and worst customers are.
- It can tell you who is making excessive personal telephone calls, email and use of the internet.
- It provides the measurement for your management.



## Case Study

With four main product lines to support, the service department of a national heavy machinery company has to provide effective post-sales service as it drives their ancillaries business.

Installing Communications Management software has enabled the service department to breakdown the activity and cost associated with servicing each of these product lines, by allocating a group of incoming telephone numbers to each specific product for support.

Average time to answer and length of call for each product line was analysed and targets set. It was revealed that there was a direct and positive correlation between the sales of ancillary products for each product and its corresponding service level. Improving the service levels of the other three product lines therefore developed their sales potential. The return on investment for the Communications Management software was rapid.

# IT Manager

## Drivers

Custodians of IT budgets are responsible for voice and data communications in and out of the company, the IT manager is facing competing pressures for greater service for users and controlling costs.

Technology both helps and hinders: the cost of speeds and feeds is reducing, but the services and application marketing is growing – and then there is voice and data convergence to consider.

## How Can Communications Management Help?

You recently installed an IP PBX telephone system that enables you to use your local and wide area networks for both voice and data communications. You need to produce a consolidated breakdown of communications costs across your company including the remote branch offices that are now also using IP Telephony.

Here is where Communications Management can help. Instead of installing the application at each site, in an IP network only one location needs to be installed as it will gather, interpolate and report on the whole network's usage of telephony, Internet and email.

Furthermore, traffic flow charts will identify the number of external lines required throughout the day to handle the call volumes, as well as identify areas for increased operator support or possibly the deployment of IVR / Voice Mail technology to ensure all calls are received and processed.

Communications Management applications can also report on Internet and email usage indicating bandwidth utilisation throughout any given time period, so providing the information to determine whether there is a need to increase its size, or restrict the number of large attachments being sent and received.

Proactive alarms are ideal for checking the functionality of remote telephone systems; if no calls are received in a specified period this could mean a problem with the switch that can be headed off before the problem becomes a crisis.

## Managers Should Consider Communications Management Because

- It can identify leased line and private wire utilisation.
- It can compare different carrier rates specific to your call volumes and patterns, enabling you to choose the most cost-effective network for your company.
- It provides evidence for additional resource requests together with cost justifications.
- Integration with call recording and other applications provides a complete picture of communications interaction.
- It can tell you who is making excessive personal telephone calls, email and use of the Internet.
- It provides the measurement for your management.



## Case Study

An investment bank with a large portfolio of communications applications installed Communications Management software to verify their communications bills from their carrier.

Over the years, and throughout successive IT management tenures, the bank's network had grown as new applications were added to the infrastructure. Communications Management tracked these applications and the lines over which they were running and identified the call and traffic volumes for bill reconciliation, as well as providing carrier rate comparisons that enabled the bank to choose its most appropriate network provider.

However, the software also threw up a number of anomalies. It appeared that there were a high number of lines still being rented exclusively for applications that were no longer being used. In essence, the bank was paying for services it was not using. Cancelling these unwanted lines resulted in savings of several thousands per year.

## Call/Voice Recording

### Drivers

The call recording market is growing at a double figure rate and there are three principal reasons for this.

Firstly, in an ever-litigious world, the need to be able to prove actions has become a necessity for companies processing financial transactions over the phone – e.g. call centres and the legal sector - or in public sector organisations where there are liability issues.

Secondly, call recording of calls is an excellent aid to training and staff development, whilst the final reason is that the technology has become more sophisticated – integration with Communications Management for instance - and more cost effective.

### How Can Call Recording Help?

As a call centre manager running both a sales and services operation, you have targets to hit but you aren't quite getting there. In fact, on the sales side, there are far too many product returns from the 'orders' processed. You need to find out why.

Here is where call recording can provide all the help you need. On the service side of the operation your integrated Communications Management software provides you with time to answer information and you can then listen to any of the calls from customers by selecting a line item on the Communications Management report. This can be set up so that all calls, or just a sample are recorded.

The smart features of call recording are the ones that speed up your business processes and identify problem areas, so the ability to listen to calls from any web-enabled location are as great as the ability to use natural language 'word searches'. This means that you can interrogate the call recording for key words, say 'sale', 'order', 'complaint' etc., and bring up a list of calls containing those words for any given time period to listen to. You identify a training problem and fix it.

Likewise, on the sales side, you can go back to any call recording where there is a subsequent dispute over the order and prove the point one way or another.

The following week you get a new project – an outbound sales campaign for the latest client the sales team has signed up. Budgets are tight and you need to make sure you are firing on all cylinders and come in with a profit on the contract.

Call Recording can help you script and score your agents performance before they start calling customers, and when you start the campaign the

integrated Communications Management will cost each call so that you can determine more accurately the cost of sale, take action and bring the project in on budget, complete with a comprehensive report set for management.

### Managers Should Consider Integrated Call Recording Because

- It can identify training needs.
- It provides evidence of actions taken, vital in liability and financial interactions.
- Integration with Communications Management applications provides the complete cost analysis of your operation.
- It can identify who your best and worst agents are.
- It can tell you who is making excessive personal telephone calls, email and use of the Internet.
- It provides the measurement for your management.



### Case Study

The use of call recording within the police force has been essential for many years. The increasing rate of crime and litigation has forced a large northern force to re-evaluate their system because it takes too long to respond to requests for evidence in court cases.

Installing new digital systems has resolved this issue, as calls are recorded to computer hard drives instead of tape. This means faster retrieval using sophisticated search engines, as well as a dramatic reduction in archiving costs. The new recording systems have been integrated throughout the whole force providing a 24 x 7 facility for recording of phone and radio traffic.