

ac² Solutions - The Techie's Alternative to WFM

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Excerpt from: *Optimal Scheduler reviewed in the May issue of CallCenter Magazine*

Call Center Magazine and our related shows keep giving awards to ac² Solution's (Hazlet, NJ) **Optimal Scheduler** because we love its rigorously quantitative approach to forecasting demand and optimizing schedules. Last year, we promised that we'd give you more details about it "in a future article." Well the future has arrived.

ac²'s founder, Turgut Aykin, has several degrees (including a Ph.D.) in management science and operations research, and his company's WFM product reflects that. ac²'s software has, bar none, the most sophisticated set of forecasting algorithms of any WFM product on the market.

The software can automate the process of finding the forecasting technique that best predicts your call center's needs (you can also choose your forecasting methods manually). The company has also incorporated the latest research in optimization theory into its algorithms. If you put Albert Einstein to work as a WFM software developer (giving him today's computing power), he'd probably have developed something similar to Optimal Scheduler.

If you are an inveterate quant (which the author of this piece is), you're going to like the way Optimal Scheduler works – it's neat stuff. This doesn't mean that everyone in your shop needs a Ph.D. in applied math or a membership in the Star Trek fan club to use their software, however.

Aykin says, "Workforce managers complain about the complexity of software – they're focused on generating results, and that's what we do."

Another feature that we like is the bias toward maintaining service levels. Aykin says, "For us, agent requirements are hard constraints," though they do have methods to allocate unavoidable shortages. ac² has built flexibility into the optimization engine, letting you choose between minimum cost and minimizing agent hours for any desired service level, and the company still has more options under development.

You may want to look at the software more as a modular offering that complements other WFM packages. The product is offered on a hosted basis, using a .NET Web-services architecture to ease integration...

For larger call center operations that are interested in a more mathematical approach and that are willing to consider a multiple vendor system for WFM, there is one additional compelling feature of ac²'s philosophy – the company is willing to prove the value of its product by helping you to compare its scheduling results against those of the software that you currently use.

Aykin explains, “No matter what I say, a smart manager will say ‘show me what impact it will have on my operations.’” When you’re looking at any major investment, we think that’s sound advice.

