Benefits of Workforce Management for Back-Office Operating Departments

Back-office operations are the most people-intensive departments in enterprises and government agencies. Companies have tried to eliminate the need for back-office workers and have made progress in automating some back-office tasks, but many of these functions still require human judgment. It's time for organizations to take a different approach to managing their back-office resources in order to have better visibility and transparency, reduce operating costs, improve the journey of their customers/constituents, and better engage their staff.

Back-Office Workforce Management Explained

An important step in improving the performance of back-office environments is to apply workforce management (WFM) technology and best practices. A back-office WFM solution is designed to forecast activity volumes for work, and schedule resources with the right skill sets to meet forecasted staffing requirements. This is often challenging because there can be many types of work performed in a back-office department, all of which require different skills. Also, most back offices do not have automation for tracking the volume of incoming and outgoing work, including items that are backlogged and deferred. These challenges can be addressed by WFM solutions that are designed specifically to help companies manage the unique characteristics of back offices.

The new back-office WFM solutions offer a few methods for helping companies (or government agencies) get started. They track work activities, using either desktop analytics, which tracks everything employees do on their desktop systems; work allocation and management, which function as a "patrol cop"; or a journal where employees manually log their work in and out. While there are varying levels of automation in the three approaches, all of them are effective in collecting the large volume of data required to perform WFM for the back office.

Back-Office Workforce Management Benefits

A WFM solution supported by industry best practices is the most impactful change agent for most back-office operating departments. These solutions provide tools to help manage the most expensive and challenging aspect of the department: employees. Here is a list of common benefits that back offices should expect to achieve from a WFM solution. The benefits will vary based on the size of the back office and the organization's flexibility in changing work schedules and rules.

Employee Optimization and Cost Savings

- ✔ Staff-related savings of 15% – 25% for first-time WFM users
- ✔ Reduction in mandatory overtime and expenses
- ✔ Improved planning, which reduces stress and overtaxing of employees
- ✔ Decreased supervisor administrative burden, which allows them to dedicate more time to helping employees
- ✔ Better capacity utilization of front- and back-office resources
- ✔ Automated payroll administration

Customer Experience

- ✔ Reduction in processing time and improved customer journey
- ✔ Improved compliance for tasks that must be accomplished within regulated time frames, which also reduces fines
- ✔ Meeting service goals and reducing backlog

Employee Engagement and Satisfaction

- ✔ Better work/life balance for employees, due to increased scheduling flexibility
- ✔ Improved employee satisfaction, which promotes engagement and retention
- ✔ Quantifiable performance measures that improve accountability for workers and managers
- ✔ Improved employee empowerment and engagement, due to use of self-service capabilities for scheduling
- ✔ Fair and equitable handling of vacations and time off

Visibility and Transparency

- ✔ Improved visibility and transparency into the workload, productivity and shrinkage (loss time), for the department and each employee
- ✔ Improved schedule compliance, which decreases lost time and increases department throughput
- ✔ Improved quality (fewer errors and less rework), as visibility into key performance indicators (KPIs) provides insight into how and when work is processed

Final Thoughts

The benefits from using a back-office WFM solution are extensive and compelling. Workforce management offers positive and quantifiable contributions to employees, the department, the enterprise and customers/constituents. These solutions come with excellent management tools that provide oversight and visibility into staff performance, improve productivity and reduce operating costs, enhance service quality and the customer journey, and improve staff satisfaction. It's not a question of whether you need WFM for your back office, but only when you are going to get started.