

A large, stylized blue outline of a cloud shape, composed of several overlapping semi-circular arcs, positioned on the right side of the page.

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# **The Five9 Guide to Capacity Planning**

## Introduction

Calculating the right balance between contact volumes and staff coverage can be one of the most daunting tasks in the contact center, partially because every contact center is unique and has different requirements, goals, and service levels. Thankfully, we can prepare by capacity planning which uses workforce management (WFM) tools to achieve this balance.

Optimal capacity planning requires knowing the who, when, why, and how for scheduling contact center staff. The plan also needs to account for changes when agents arrive late or call in sick. Most importantly, an optimal schedule must be cost-effective while still achieving your customer service goals.

It sounds intimidating, but it doesn't have to be.

## Past, Present, and Future of Capacity Planning

Before the advent of WFM technology in the 1990s, capacity planning was a manually intensive process requiring complicated formulas and spreadsheets. Today's WFM solutions take the manual guesswork and tendency for human error out of the equation.

Moving away from manual processes is increasingly important in our modern world because customers aren't the only ones with high expectations. As more Millennials and Gen Z's enter the workforce, enterprises are shifting to digitally transform their contact centers and workforce management solutions to keep up with the expectations for technologically savvy, digital solutions.<sup>1</sup>

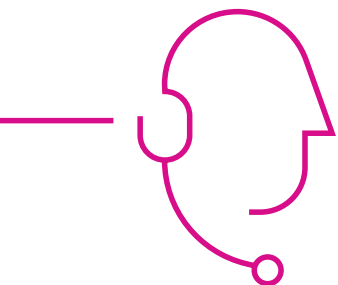
**"As more Millennials and Gen Z's enter the workforce, enterprises are shifting to digitally transform their contact centers and workforce management solutions to keep up with the expectations for technologically savvy, digital solutions."**

**DMG Consulting LLC.**

The good news is that WFM solutions are becoming more accessible than ever. Previously, with on premises solutions, there were expensive upfront costs and a higher risk of investing. Now, WFM solutions built exclusively for the cloud lower the investment threshold and investment risk.<sup>2</sup>

According to DMG Consulting's "Workforce Optimization Product and Market Report," another reason implementing cloud software is important is that AI and predictive analysis are the future of contact centers. Both features require massive processing capabilities and will need to be delivered in the cloud. With new technological advancements in AI, enterprises will move towards a hybrid of automated and human workforces. Forecasting data and automated scheduling will become increasingly necessary as live agents become supported and enhanced by AI functions. This shift will be supported by new, flexible, AI-based cloud WFM solutions designed for real-time, omnichannel, and multi-function forecasting and scheduling.

Keep reading to learn the basics of capacity planning, why it is important for your contact center, and six ways to improve your agent schedules, achieve more accurate forecasts, and maintain control of your bottom line.



## What Exactly is Capacity Planning and Why is It Important for Your Contact Center?

Capacity planning involves staffing the appropriate number of agents with the right skills based on your contact volumes, average handling time, service hours, shrinkage, occupancy, and other factors. Some contact centers still use manual spreadsheets with complex formulas. With increased expectations from customers, omnichannel experiences, and sophisticated contact routing, manual scheduling processes are rapidly getting overwhelmed and could lead to mistakes that result in excessive costs or dissatisfied customers.

Accurate capacity planning is crucial for three main reasons:

1. Cost savings by not paying agents for unnecessary hours worked
2. Providing a better experience for your customers by reducing wait times and transfers
3. Creating a better work environment for your agents

Optimal staffing is especially necessary for businesses where contact volumes fluctuate either by the time of year (e.g., tax preparation services) or by the time of day or week (e.g., food delivery services). Marketing campaigns, promotions, or any offer or event that could affect your contact volumes also need to be considered. Historical data is especially useful to forecast the correct number of agents for the expected contact volumes.

Two main errors can occur when planning capacity for your contact center:

- 1. Scheduling too many agents.** This error wastes money by paying agents to sit idle. It also creates an undesirable work environment where agents feel bored or unfulfilled and can lead to high turnover.
- 2. Scheduling too few agents.** This mistake results in agents answering more calls than they can comfortably handle, making them feel stressed and overworked and causing diminished levels of customer service exacerbated by long customer wait times.

Both errors lead to unhappy customers, unhappy agents, and wasted money. By creating accurate forecasts and optimizing schedules, automated WFM tools help to avoid these issues. In today's crowded marketplace where 95% of consumers say customer service influences their brand loyalty, it makes sense for companies to invest in WFM to retain customers—specifically cloud-based solutions that can be deployed without large capital investments.<sup>3</sup>

## Six Ways to Improve Planning Results

Improving your capacity planning takes a holistic approach that incorporates cloud technology, historical data, reporting tools, and intelligent routing.

Here are six ways to improve your planning results:

### 1. Create accurate forecasts.

Accurate forecasts are crucial to achieving an optimal staffing plan. Historical data serves as the basis for forecasting; however, it may need to be adjusted to remove unusual intervals or other discrepancies that could cause forecast errors. [Five9 Enterprise WFM](#) uses six different forecasting models that provide highly accurate forecasting that can effectively manage multiple skills, channels, sites, and remote workers.

## **2. Minimize manual work with automated tools.**

Manual forecasting and scheduling are very time-consuming. Automated tools save time and produce better results. Five9 Enterprise WFM takes into consideration factors that impact service levels to produce optimal scheduling outcomes that account for staffing needs, availability of agents, and skills required. The scheduling logic also considers break times, lunch, meetings, and training/coaching time.

Agents can request time off, view adherence, and post schedule swap requests. Schedules are accessible through flexible portals for schedulers, supervisors, and agents. Based on past customer results, Five9 Enterprise WFM can decrease time spent creating forecasts and schedules by 50% to 75%.<sup>4</sup>

## **3. Hold your agents accountable.**

Optimized schedules won't achieve expected results if agents do not follow their scheduled activities. Five9 Enterprise WFM monitors agent schedule adherence in real time. Supervisors can easily see when agents are not keeping to their schedules. Agents can also monitor their adherence and productivity and self-correct to help improve overall performance.

Five9 increased contact center scheduling efficiencies by as much as 46% with our customers—efficiencies that add up to valuable savings of time and staff resources. Five9 Enterprise WFM has also been shown to achieve schedule adherence rates of more than 90% and reduce average handle time (AHT) by 40%.<sup>5</sup>

## **4. Be prepared for unforeseen changes.**

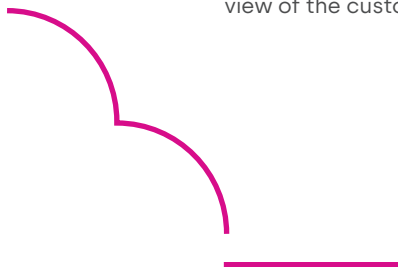
You know what they say about "best-laid plans." Agents will report late or call in sick. Contact volumes may spike higher than expected. These unforeseen events often create a need to adjust staffing plans. Five9 Enterprise WFM streamlines the intraday workforce management processes with Automated Schedule Adjustment Plans (ASAP). Now, rather than manage schedules on a single, ad hoc basis, contact centers can efficiently flex the schedules of their entire agent workforce and deliver messages on six distinct notification channels with just a few clicks.

## **5. Utilize a mixture of scheduled start/end times and shift lengths.**

It would be impossible to do anything interesting with Legos if all the blocks were the same size. The same concept applies to matching agent resources to requirements. Staggering start and end times and a mix of shift lengths give scheduling software much-needed flexibility. Five9 Enterprise WFM supports adjustable start, end, break, and lunchtimes. Shifts can be easily created with differing lengths, providing the adaptability to achieve very high scheduling efficiencies.

## **6. Move to a cloud contact center platform.**

No matter how customized your on premises system may be, it will never compete with the functionality of today's cloud solutions. A cloud contact center platform offers easy work-from-anywhere portability and seamlessly integrates with your CRM, enterprise resource planning (ERP), and other key systems to help measure all customer touchpoints. Five9 offers pre-built integrations with industry-leading CRM vendors including Salesforce, Microsoft, Oracle, Zendesk, and ServiceNow that are always up to date to ensure that agents have the full view of the customer journey when they interact.



## Real-Life Examples of Capacity Planning



Click the link below to read the Jackson Hewitt case study.

Case study →

### Jackson Hewitt

Here's an example of how Jackson Hewitt, a tax services firm, was able to scale its seasonal business with Five9.

Jackson Hewitt had trouble getting new seasonal agents to adhere to schedules and time tracking procedures. Agents would fail to show up for work, come in late, and not use the numerous codes intended to track adherence and performance.

With Five9 Enterprise WFM, the firm was able to quickly audit all event codes and create a standardized code system which helped to improve attendance and adherence to schedules. Managers could understand which agents were not showing up or sticking to their schedule, coach these agents to achieve consistency or, in some cases, help exit employees who didn't improve.

These metrics helped Jackson Hewitt address adherence issues and work toward improving retention. Supervisors could recognize a problem, react quickly, and be more consistent with training. Agents were more engaged, and their overall morale was higher.

Workforce forecasting tools also helped Jackson Hewitt determine if it was scheduling enough agents to handle call volume spikes.

Read the [full success story](#) to learn how Jackson Hewitt utilized Five9 Enterprise WFM to improve capacity planning and deliver exceptional customer experiences.



Click the link below to read the Gonzaba case study.

Case study →

### Gonzaba Medical Group

Another example is Gonzaba Medical Group (GMG), a family medical practice in the San Antonio region that improved capacity planning with Five9.

Before implementing Five9 Enterprise WFM, contact center supervisors were using Excel to schedule their agents. Using Excel for this purpose was time-consuming and ineffective, resulting in staff repeatedly using the same shift schedules. The Excel spreadsheet did not take into consideration agents' requests for shift changes or PTO requests and harmed agent morale.

With Five9 Enterprise WFM, GMG finally had the visibility to schedule agents and make changes efficiently. Staffing requirements dropped by 20% due to schedule visibility and the addition of adherence as a weekly goal.

Supervisors used the Five9 Supervisor portal to manage agents, view alerts, average speed to answer, and breaks. GMG also took advantage of the ability to have bilingual skills for agents, often using Spanish to assist patients. Supervisors and agents felt empowered and productivity increased across the board.

[Read the full story](#) to learn more about how GMG partnered with Five9 to provide exceptional customer experiences.

## Get Customized Capacity Planning Assistance with Five9

Five9 understands that each contact center has a unique focus and operational pain points. For a comprehensive review of your contact center environment and the potential gains you can achieve with our WFM solutions, please contact us for a customized analysis at **1-800-553-8159**. Visit [www.five9.com](http://www.five9.com) for more information.

## Other Resources to Help You Get Started

**Five9 WFO Savings Calculator:** Want to learn how the right WFO solution can help you save money and improve ROI, agent productivity, and customer conversations? Just provide some basic metrics for your contact center and our WFO savings calculator will do the rest. [Calculate](#) your savings.

**Five9 WFO Data Sheet:** Learn more about the benefits of specific Five9 WFO products including quality management (QM), WFM, speech analytics, customer surveys, and CRM connectors and how to integrate them into your contact center. [Download](#) the data sheet.

**Workforce Optimization Product and Market Report by DMG Consulting:** Check out this report to learn about the future of WFO, how AI is being leveraged, and how investing in a contact center WFO solution can help meet customers' heightened expectations. [Read](#) the report.

## References

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## About Five9

Five9 is an industry-leading provider of cloud contact center solutions, bringing the power of cloud innovation to more than 2,000 customers worldwide and facilitating more than six billion call minutes annually. The Five9 Intelligent Cloud Contact Center provides digital engagement, analytics, workflow automation, workforce optimization, and practical AI to create more human customer experiences, to engage and empower agents, and deliver tangible business results. Designed to be reliable, secure, compliant, and scalable, the Five9 platform helps contact centers increase productivity, be agile, boost revenue, and create customer trust and loyalty.

For more information visit [www.five9.com](http://www.five9.com) or call **1-800-553-8159**.

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