

CASE STUDY – ROADSIDE RESCUE AND CONTACT CENTRES

Customer:	RAC (United Kingdom)
Sector:	Roadside rescue
Requirement:	Automatic, optimised scheduling for 3,500 colleagues
Solution:	InVision Enterprise WFM with AutoScheduler from InVision Software
Results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– 50% reduction in planning effort for producing demand-led annualised hours schedules– Reduction of over- and under- staffed shifts by 12%– More efficient schedules, resulting in reduced need for subcontracting, equivalent to annual savings of more than £1m– Full compliance with RAC’s sophisticated scheduling rules and fairness guidelines

With around seven million members, RAC Rescue is one of the largest motoring organisations in the UK, providing services for both private motorists and corporate clients. Founded in 1897, the RAC has consistently been at the forefront in developing motoring services – from introducing uniformed patrols in 1901 and roadside emergency telephone boxes in 1912 right through to the present day, having in place the world's most advanced computer systems to provide its members with roadside assistance. Since March 2005, RAC Rescue has been part of Aviva, the world's fifth-largest insurance group and the biggest insurer in the UK. RAC Rescue has an excellent reputation for quality of customer service, having frequently been awarded the independent JD Power customer satisfaction award.

www.rac.co.uk

Background and Challenges

RAC Rescue provides a 24/7 service to its members, 365 days per year. RAC Patrols provide roadside assistance for approximately 2.5 million breakdowns each year. Over 700 contact centre agents in two contact centres coordinate the breakdown operations, dealing with approximately five million incoming emergency calls a year.

RAC's service goal is to provide an RAC-branded patrol to the member at the roadside, on average within 45 minutes of the initial breakdown call. Over recent years, RAC Rescue has introduced many innovations to enable it to meet the service goal consistently and efficiently. These include pioneering mechanical and communications equipment in the patrol vehicles, advanced command-and-control techniques and a sophisticated approach to staff deployment. RAC Rescue introduced demand-led scheduling, annualised hours and flexible working arrangements in order to ensure that the right number of employees is on duty at all times, both in the contact centres and at the roadside. RAC Rescue introduced flexible working time arrangements with its employees and as part of the move to greater flexibility, RAC and the Unite Union agreed on 19 fairness rules which go far beyond the constraints of the EU Working Time Directive. These rules not only provide employee convenience

(e.g. consistent start times) but also a fair distribution of undesirable working patterns within teams (e.g. all employees work more or less the same number of weekends in a given period, within a defined range).

For several years, RAC Rescue had used an automated staff planning system. However, as the size of the organisation grew and as the complexity of the fairness rules increased, RAC found the previous solution no longer met its needs. The previous system was incapable of automatically producing optimised schedules which also guaranteed compliance with the fairness rules. The scheduling process required a large amount of manual intervention and this was very time-consuming and error-prone. Consequently, RAC decided to find a new workforce management (WFM) solution.

Solution

Having reviewed the entire WFM market, RAC set up a shortlist of software solutions, including tools used within other divisions of the RAC Group. During a series of workshops, the RAC Rescue project team documented a comprehensive set of business, functional and technical requirements, based on the many years of WFM experience within the team. This requirements document was used to compare the shortlisted WFM products.

The evaluation process included a Proof of Concept (POC) exercise. The objective was prove that iWFM could significantly improve coverage and service level (compared to the 'reference schedules' generated by the previous solution) while respecting all of RAC Rescue's fairness rules. The POC was a success. It not only showed a reduction in under- and over- staffed hours; It did this while respecting every single rule. As a side effect of the POC, it was detected that the reference schedules actually contained some breaches of the fairness rules. In fact, 88% of the reference schedules contained at least one small rule breach (although the total percentage of non-compliant shifts was very small).

iWFM offered full compliance with RAC Rescue's business, functional and technical requirements. The RAC Rescue project team also appreciated the easy-to-use user interface and intuitive operation. To offer maximum flexibility and scalability, iWFM is designed as an open system. RAC Rescue -specific interfaces and reports were developed with the iWFM Software Development Kit (SDK), enabling RAC Rescue to enjoy a solution which is an exact match with its needs.

Finally, the decision was made in favour of InVision, since InVision Enterprise WFM (iWFM) was the only system capable of increasing schedule efficiency while respecting RAC's scheduling constraints, i.e. the complex set of fairness rules. The high quality of InVision's project management, consulting, and technical support further helped to confirm the decision.

Implementation

RAC Rescue generates staff schedules on a number of fixed dates during the year, with a large rostering exercise taking place every January. RAC Rescue required iWFM to be ready for the January exercise. Contract signature took place in September and implementation was completed in time for the January runs. The project included startup, assessment, design, delivery and support phases, including some fine tuning of the AutoScheduler plus training of IT administrators and key users. AutoScheduler is a pivotal module within the

InVision's solution, enabling planners to generate optimised schedules with a single mouse click while guaranteeing coverage of the varying staffing requirement and compliance with scheduling rules. AutoScheduler handles the whole optimisation process in a single step, whether it be the long-term planning of working hours per day or the detailed definition of individual activities within the course of a day.

For both roadside activities and contact centres, there is a team of Roster Builders setting up strategic schedules for Patrols for a complete year, three months in advance. The same team builds six month rosters for contact centre agents. The strategic rosters are passed to planners who manage adjustments and changes over a shorter time horizon. Scheduling with iWFM enables RAC Rescue to build rosters confident that none of the fairness rules agreed between RAC and the union are broken; RAC's employees accepted the implementation of 'demand-led rostering' on condition that RAC agreed to consistently observe all the fairness rules. Representatives of the union have the opportunity to inspect and comment on the rosters when they are generated.

Results

Before the implementation of InVision Enterprise WFM, a team of nine Roster Builders set up the schedules for a total of 3500 employees at RAC Rescue. The scheduling of patrols for one geographic 'cell' for a period of one year took at least one week and was error-prone. Now, an optimised, rule-compliant schedule is produced within twelve minutes by the InVision software. Union representatives still check the schedules each time they are produced to ensure rule-compliance, but in practice the rosters are near-faultless and queries have practically been eliminated, so this process has been streamlined.

One of the main objectives of RAC was the reduction of understaffed and overstaffed shifts, i.e. the improvement of coverage and service level. Tests by RAC Rescue showed a 12% reduction of over- and under- staffed shifts. These improvements have a direct effect on one of the RAC's main key performance indicators, the PAR (Patrol Attendance Ratio) which refers to the percentage of incidents attended by RAC's own patrols. In order to deliver on its commitment to attend members at the roadside within a clear time frame, RAC subcontracts to third-party breakdown service providers when no RAC branded patrol is available in time. Now, with optimised workforce management from InVision, RAC patrols are able to attend more incidents. By scheduling its own patrols more effectively and thus reducing the need for subcontracting, RAC has significantly reduced its third-party costs. Tests comparing the former schedules and the ones generated with iWFM showed an improvement in coverage of 1.3% which translates into avoided outsourcing costs of approximately £1.3 million per year. At the same time, the customer experience is improved: RAC patrols have a well-earned reputation for being knowledgeable, courteous, well-equipped and efficient, and RAC members prefer to be served by patrols in RAC branded vehicles.

"By implementing InVision solution, our planning effort has been reduced considerably: Building rosters used to take us up to one week per geographic cell – now it's only fifteen minutes. The InVision WFM solution enables us to schedule our employees in an effective and optimised manner, taking into account the flexibility of our colleagues while guaranteeing that all the work/life balance fairness rules are respected. Scheduling our colleagues more effectively has resulted in a reduction of outsourcing to third parties and we estimate that this is saving us over £1million per year."

Tony Lover

National Resourcing Manager, RAC Roadside



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