



Hosted Call Center Featured Article

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Manage Effectively with Knoa Software Experience Performance Manager By Jessica Kostek

Knoa Software, a leading provider of end-user experience and performance management software, recently announced that the Enterprise Management Associates (EMA), a leading industry analyst and consulting firm dedicated to the IT management market, named Knoa as the leader in its report, "An Adopter's Guide to User Experience Management: How to Pick the Right Quality of Experience (QoE) Solution for You!"

In a report by DMG Consulting the company claims that two new classes of applications, customer experience analytics (CEA) and desktop analytics (DA) applications are delivering cost savings of 5 percent to 10 percent to organizations.

In light of Knoa Software's recent announcement TMCnet had the chance to speak with Lori Wizdo VP of Marketing at Knoa Software who, over the past 25 years, has helped launch several new technologies in emerging markets.

Can you explain a little about what Knoa does?

In a nutshell what Knoa is doing is we're looking at one of the last things in the use of technology that has not been properly monitored or managed well and that is how do end-users interact with the technology that they are using to perform their jobs whether it be a CRM applications or any number of the applications that people can deploy in call centers. The two things that we're trying to look at is first, what kind of experience is that piece of technology or application presenting to that end-user? Is the application slow and unresponsive, is the application of poor quality? Are end-users saying that there are always system errors and applications errors? Is an aspect of the experience received cumbersome or awkward or is it to get a certain aspect or certain process executed using the technology. So that is the information we capture about what kind of experience the application is presenting to the end user.

What is the software called and can you explain how it can be used?

The software is call Knoa Experience Performance Manager (Knoa EPM) and it's naturally a horizontal technology that can be deployed in any industry, and in fact we have a lot of customers, about 75 customers, that are in about 12 or 15 different industries. From consumer package goods, to pharmaceuticals, to energy and utilities they are all across the board. But some applications are more interesting than others in some solution areas.

Can you give some examples?

In Salesforce Automation this technology is interesting because a lot of Salesforce Automation applications fail, the CRM applications fail because so much of the behavior is actually voluntary. Sure the sales rep might have to use the order entry function in order to book an order but all the contact management and all the things you can use to really gain good intelligence about his account and manage his opportunities and manage the pipeline, all the things that generate a lot of benefits for the company that's deployed with the Salesforce

Automation application all require the sales person to adopt the application and end use it. And if they don't the company doesn't get the benefits even though the company has made the investment. There are so many ways, because it's a remote field force that the sales rep can say that they weren't able to enter their forecast because they couldn't connect to the system or they were getting bad response time and it was preventing them from making customer calls, so there are a lot of excuses that people can use.

So what the condition is, is that without a technology like Knoa people who are managing the application can't tell whether that's just noise or the application is just performing poorly, or the application isn't available, so there is no way to sort the truth with the noise. Companies don't know if they have an application problem that needs to be fixed or an adoption problem that should be handled through management and what we do is provide facts of what is really happening.

What are some of Knoa's goals with its Knoa EPM solution?

Our goal is to improve the way the end-user performs, we call it end-user performance, when using that application but the first thing you need to do is identify those barriers that are actually getting in the way. Once you've identified those barriers, you now look at what the end-user is actually doing. Have they adopted the application, are they using the right transactions for their role or for the kind of customer interaction that they're trying to execute? Are they using the application well or they making a lot of user errors? And are they using the applications in a compliant manor, meaning are they using the applications in the way that they were designed? We're capturing metrics on both sides of that equation, the experience received and the performance achieved and the kinds of metrics such as response times, system errors that are presented to the end-user, application errors that are presented to the end-user, user errors that the end-user is making and then what we call work flow, which is the information about how the end-user is stepping through the application from which you can derive the compliant process execution as well as adoption.

How are these metrics gathered?

We deploy a piece of software, called a passive agent, to the desktop or laptop of each employee. Basically, there are two components that get deployed, one is an agent and the other is an instruction set which we call a template that says of all the things that we can capture, what are the data elements that are actually going to make a solution.

We have two different kinds of templates, some that go very deep into a particular application and they see every interaction and every transaction and some that go more horizontally across everything the end-user is doing on the desktop and it shows how much time someone is spending in Siebel and how much time are they spending in the Knowledge based and how much time are they spending on IM and just try to get a profile on how the end-users are using technology.

For call centers who do not implement a program like the Knoa EPM solution how does this affect them?

In a call center environment, it's even more interesting, first of all the call center environment is really one of the most complex in terms of the amount of technology. During one customer interaction a call center agent might need to deal with ten different applications: a customer data management application, a CRM application, a billing system, a knowledge base, that's just to name a few and what is interesting is that even though there is a lot of monitoring in the call center, the monitoring of the interaction between the agent and their use of the software is like the last blind spot in the call center.

What are some benefits call centers have found using the Knoa EPM solution?

First is one from a consumer services company and what they found was that they had invested significantly in a knowledge management system that the agents were supposed to be using in order to answer questions about the service and about the various plans and such. What they found by implementing our software was

that the agents were actually signing into the knowledge base system at the beginning of the day but they were never using it. It was there and opened in case a supervisor ever walked around and asked questions but they weren't using it. Instead they were doing when they had questions was using IM and they were like phoning a friend, so the fact of the matter is you don't know whether that is good or bad. Maybe that was getting the customers questions answered better and faster but the company was planning a major upgrade of the knowledge management system and no one was really using it. They were going to upgrade to the latest edition and found that there was no business value in that because it wasn't really being used. The visibility into that was able to give them the ability to make an intelligent decision of first of all let's put that on hold and not spend that money for this multi-million dollar investment and let's find out what's happening. The real problem is that if all this knowledge is being exchanged in IM, it's not being captured and it's can't be reused and certainly there's no visibility as to whether or not it's giving bad advice to the customer.

Another implication is the ability to really just see how the agency is using the technology and what affect that has on average handling times and productivity. This is an example from British Telecom that they discovered that one of their call centers in the UK, the sales associates were 25 percent more productive in terms of the number of orders that they took at day. They were a consumer phasing retail telephone sales environment and when they started to look at why that was happening and what they found out that these particular call center agents were using the application or the system, which was a number of business software, differently. They weren't using it the way they had been trained and not the way they have been designed but they had invented a work around that in fact was faster. So once the company had discovered that they were able to roll that out as best practice to all the other call centers which ended up impacting 300 agents in total and they calculated that it was equal to 75 full time equivalent.

What do companies need to do for them to integrate the Knoa EPM into their environment?

It's a very quick installation. Basically, a Knoa software agent gets deployed to each employee desktop and there is a software that needs to be installed on a server or a piece of equipment in their IT environment so that the data that we're collecting can be stored somewhere and then the information is viewed through a Knoa dashboard which is a Web-based application so that anyone who has an Internet connection and the right permission can look at the information. Generally the implantations take 4-6 weeks.

How do you see the progression of Experience Performance Management in the industry?

The progression, looking at most of our call centers now, are just looking at what's happening and the first step is just to see inside the average handling time and see how you can improve it and strip time out and see how you can implement best practice but, over time what the real value is correlating this information into the overall analytic strategy. So, a lot of information about a customer experience is picked up through survey techniques that are conducted far after the call. But being able to correlate the customers who had a higher rating in regards to customer experience were correlating with agents who used this kind of work flow or that kind of work flow who used the knowledge based platform when didn't use it before, when you're really able to correlate the actual performance of the end-user with the behaviors of the agent with the ultimate outcomes in terms of revenue, up-sale, customer experience, that's kind of the end-game to really fine tune your performance enhancement program.

In a statement released by DMG, Donna Fluss, president of DMG explained that these solutions, like the Knoa EMP are already making positive contributions to contact centers and their customers.

DMG expects CEA and DA solutions to grow rapidly over the next three years, despite the recession. The number of CEA implementations is expected to approach 1,000 by the end of 2011. The number of DA seats is expected to exceed 1.5 million during the same period.