

EMBARQ

Case Study

EMBARQ drives productivity with assessment science

In the telecom industry, where balancing customer service issues with sales and staff churn are constant challenges, cutting employee turnover by half while increasing consumer sales and efficiency is an amazing achievement. The secret to EMBARQ's success is rebuilding the hiring process around industrial-organizational psychology-based assessments.

Challenges:

In 2006, when EMBARQ, a wireline, wireless and Internet tele-communications carrier, spun off from Sprint, it faced many challenges. Most specifically, it inherited 13 call centers with 1,500 phone-based customer service and sales representative positions to keep staffed using 13 independent hiring processes. This inconsistency created operational inefficiencies at both local and corporate levels, created a confusing candidate experience, and demonstrated a need for an upfront screening process.

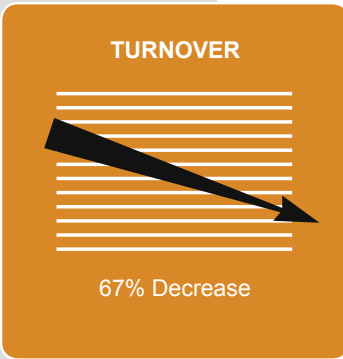
Beyond process issues, the company had high turnover. Average 90 day CSR churn in 2006, the year EMBARQ became independent, was close to 35 percent, which is above estimated industry norms. Knowing the dramatic results that could be achieved with validated, behavioral science-based hiring techniques, EMBARQ engaged PreVisor® to assist with establishing an assessment solution.

EMBARQ identified two objectives. First, to improve productivity in sales performance, average hold time, and QA scores. Second, to reduce costs associated with early churn and inefficiencies in the selection process.

Solution:

To lay the foundation, EMBARQ partnered with PreVisor's experts on a thorough job analysis of customer service positions, determining exactly which skills, abilities, and traits were required for success. In addition, managers and incumbents participated in the design and evaluation phase to ensure a specific understanding of the position requirements.





The result was an entirely new hiring process, beginning with an online assessment screening tool. Designed to measure beyond the typical “hard skills” for a given position, the assessment identifies the personality characteristics and motivations necessary for long-term success in the job, providing an accurate, validated, and quantitative measurement of traits such as “customer focus” and “persistence.” Following that, candidates are given a behaviorally-based, structured interview and a sales-based role play exercise.

Results:

The program began with a pilot in three locations, then a full-scale rollout across all call centers three months later. By all accounts, the program was successful. Measured against the original success metrics, results from the first three months show progress in the following areas.

- Productivity - Among candidates who passed through the selection system, those with higher scores on the initial assessment achieved:
 - Higher sales rates: 103 percent of quota vs. 83 percent for lower scoring candidates
 - Shorter hold times: 42 seconds less than the lower-scoring group
- Churn - This key metric improved dramatically, declining from an average of 33.5 percent for all locations to a mere 12.5 percent (measured as rolling 90-day averages) – an outstanding level compared to industry norms.
- Efficiency - Recruiters report that the training team receives a better pool of candidates, filling classes is easier, and they are experiencing fewer turnovers.

CHALLENGES:

- 13 different call centers & hiring systems
- 1500 CSR positions
- 35 percent turnover
- Inconsistency and inefficiency
- Performance metrics needed improvement

RESULTS:

- Consistent and validated assessment solution
- Ability to screen for key competencies
- Behavioral-based interviews
- Reduced hold time 42 seconds
- Increased sales by 24 percent
- 60 percent reduction in 90-day turnover
- Better pool of candidates