Can Lean Practices Transform Call Management?

See how this proven, 60-year-old manufacturing methodology can boost customer satisfaction and bring new efficiency to your healthcare organization.

It's hard to argue with efficiency.

Lean practices make significant impact on healthcare organizations of all sizes. Continuous focus on waste reduction and process improvement improves the quality of products and services, reduces costs, and streamlines operations. Innovative voice recognition solutions automate and improve the customer experience and raise caller satisfaction – the bottom line of Lean.

Create more customer value by using fewer resources. Find out what Lean can do for your healthcare organization and its call center.
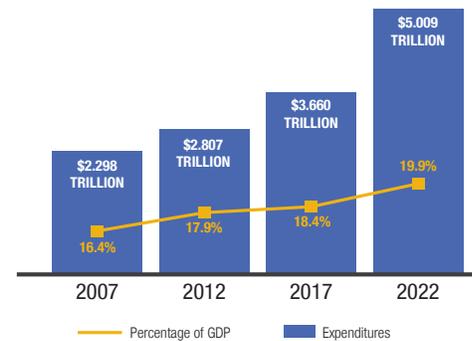
by **Parlance Corporation**

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What can Lean-focused call handling do for hospital systems?

Experts estimate the U.S. healthcare industry will reach $5+ trillion by 2022. Scaling to address this growth means handling ever-increasing patient interactions. Despite estimates on the impact of new inbound channels (e.g. chat), voice calls remain dominant by a significant margin. These consumer preferences drive need for new efficiency.

- Adding staff is expensive.
- Phone trees – automated attendants that force users to press keys on the dial pad and menu-driven IVRs that offer never-ending options reduce customer satisfaction.
- These outdated strategies are inefficient and universally frustrate callers (who often abandon calls) – failing two key Lean goals.

Chart:
- 2007: $2.298 TRILLION, 16.4%
- 2012: $2.807 TRILLION, 17.9%
- 2017: $3.660 TRILLION, 18.4%
- 2022: $5.009 TRILLION, 19.9%

— Percentage of GDP   ▬ Expenditures

Affordable and proven alternatives are within reach.

Healthcare organizations reduce waste, improve efficiency, and are more responsive to customer needs when they use a managed service solution to mitigate call volume with caller-centric and AI-powered voice recognition technology. Callers speak requests in their own words and easily connect to the right place. If a caller has complex needs, the system quickly pivots to a live operator. **Results: Reduction in hold times for callers who require expertise and empathy. Elimination of massive call queues for over-worked operators and managers. Call centers doing more with less staff – a hallmark of Lean.**

How caller self-service achieves Lean principles.

With the benefits of caller self-service in mind, let's look at the four core principles of Lean.

Waste def. *Expenditure of valuable resources that prevents optimizing patient experience and business operations.*
Waste takes a variety of forms — More callers pleased to self-serve eliminates waste in healthcare call centers:

- **Time:** Reduce agent call handling time.
- **Capacity:** Curtail the staffing of additional agents in order to meet existing or projected call volumes.
- **Budget:** Scale down the purchasing of unnecessary licenses for consoles and other products.
- **Labor:** Eliminate live agent resources to navigate routine requests or employee-to-employee connections.
- **Effort:** Avoid unnecessary agent effort required to triage callers who dial the wrong service line.
- **Opportunity:** Decrease call abandonment rates–due to long hold times / frustrated callers.

Improvement def. *Incremental improvements to a system or process step to create more value with less waste.*
In a Lean process, identification of waste is followed by incremental changes to reduce it:

- **Save Time:** Automate routine transactions. Improve efficiency by pleasing self-serve callers.
- **Accurately Scale Capacity:** Minimize overstaffing. Mitigate call volume spikes. Offload as much as 50% of calls and make continuous improvements.
- **Reduce Budget:** Diminished call loads require fewer licenses / applications for agent consoles.
- **Optimize Labor:** Reserve live agents for complex calls. Improve staff morale by removing routine calls, frustrated callers who have been waiting on hold, and agent-to-agent transfers.
- **Focus Effort:** Focus live agent effort where it is most needed.
- **Reduce Space:** Lower staffing reduces space requirements for contact center and switchboard operators
- **Take Back Opportunities:** Reclaim revenue leaked by call abandonment.

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Signals/Control/Queue

def. *Signals to order relevant supplies in response to real-time demand for end products.*
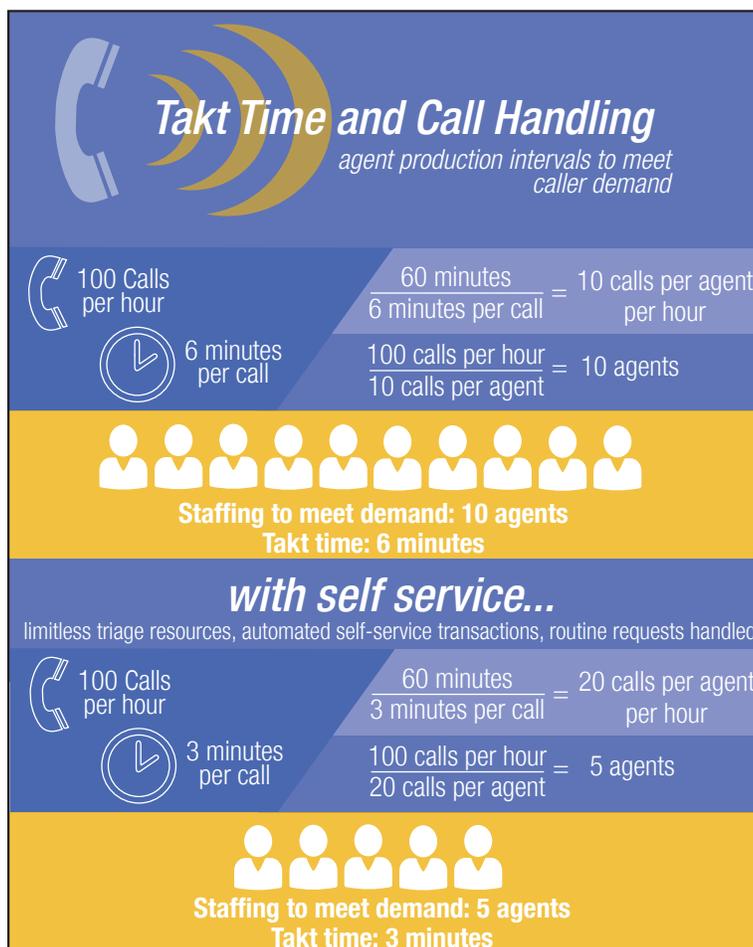Control proposes that overstocking supplies is wasteful and can be harmful if demand for the end product never materializes:

- **Meet Demand:** Efficient, 24/7 call management solutions make it easy to keep pace with any call load.
- **Maximize Live Operators/Agents:** Automating part of the caller experience ensures that live agents are only utilized when needed. Routine caller requests quickly connect to their destination or information. More complex caller requests are immediately recognized and connected to personalized assistance.

Intervals

def. *A measurement of production intervals required to meet customer demand.*
Intervals refers to the average time between the start of production of one unit and the start of production of the next unit, when these production starts are set to match customer demand. For example, if 10 units are needed to meet demand, and assuming a 40-hour work week, the average Interval must be no more than 4 hours.

Takt Time and Call Handling
agent production intervals to meet caller demand

100 Calls per hour

6 minutes per call

$$\frac{60 \text{ minutes}}{6 \text{ minutes per call}} = 10 \text{ calls per agent per hour}$$

$$\frac{100 \text{ calls per hour}}{10 \text{ calls per agent}} = 10 \text{ agents}$$

Staffing to meet demand: 10 agents
Takt time: 6 minutes

with self service...
limitless triage resources, automated self-service transactions, routine requests handled

100 Calls per hour

3 minutes per call

$$\frac{60 \text{ minutes}}{3 \text{ minutes per call}} = 20 \text{ calls per agent per hour}$$

$$\frac{100 \text{ calls per hour}}{20 \text{ calls per agent}} = 5 \text{ agents}$$

Staffing to meet demand: 5 agents
Takt time: 3 minutes

This figure places the concept of Takt Time in the context of contact center call management: Knowing Takt Time helps you meet the needs of callers by measuring how much time agents require to provide exceptional service.

With innovations in natural language technology and caller self-service on your side, you can do more with less. Routine calls (scheduling an appointment, paying a bill, etc.) and calls coming to the incorrect service line are routed without agent assistance. Interval efficiencies can be calculated and projected by looking at each step of caller interaction, and isolating areas where automation can be used to query or guide the caller. Subtracting those times from average handle times demonstrates the impact Lean practices can have on staffing levels in your healthcare organization.

Bring Lean into your contact center today.

As a trusted healthcare partner, Parlance combines 23 years of industry insights and AI-powered voice recognition technology to deliver caller-centric Speech Recognition IVRs as a managed service. To learn more about the benefits for your hospital, medical group, or healthcare network, contact Parlance at 1-888-700-6263, visit www.parlancecorp.com, or email info@parlancecorp.com.

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