

ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES GROUP

DESTINATION: WORLD CLASS CONTACT CENTRE

ROD JONES | 26 NOVEMBER 2021

snapshotz[™]

ASSESS • BENCHMARK • GROW



Ethiopian Airlines Group. Destination: World Class Contact Centre

In November 2021, following a rigorous audit across over 800 datapoints using the internationally recognised Snapshotz¹ Audit and Benchmarking methodology, the Ethiopian Airlines Global Customer Interaction Centre located in Addis Ababa, has been awarded and certified as 'World Class' in terms of the strict Snapshotz criteria.

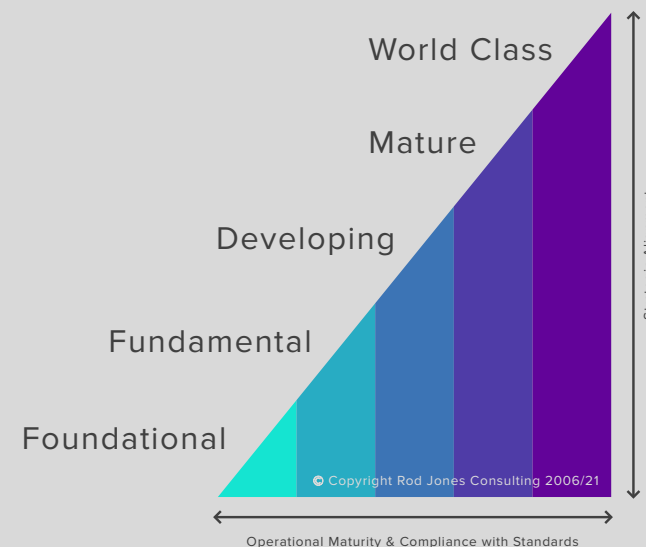
What is a “World Class” Customer Contact Centre?

To be categorised as a 'World Class' CX Contact centre, the operation is required to achieve a better than 85% independently assessed compliance score, measured against globally recognised 'best practice' standards.

Three other key factors influence the rating.

- Alignment with the organisation's strategic and tactical vision
- Compliance with internal and external standards.
- Benchmarked annually against similar CX Contact centre operations.

Using the proprietary Snapshotz methodology and on-line application, contact centres are independently assessed and categorised as Foundational, Fundamental, Developing, Mature or World Class.



¹ Snapshotz is a product of Customer Services Audit Ltd, Auckland. New Zealand. <https://cxsnapshotz.com>

The Background

Prior to 2014, Ethiopian Airlines had outsourced the organisation's global call centre to a centralised outsource service provider located in India. Customer calls from throughout the world were routed to this resource for processing. Early in 2014 the outsource contract was terminated and the decision was taken to establish and run the operation in-house. A small call centre was rapidly established at the airlines' headquarters located at Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

With little call centre operational knowledge, experience or expertise, the airline's small team put together a rudimentary call centre operation with basic telephony and ACD functionality provided and hosted by the state-owned telco, Ethio Telecom. Even in the formative days, the airline's management had a clear and concise vision for the future of the contact centre:



“

“Our vision is to be the leading customer focused, world class contact center by providing consistent 24-7 best-in-class service, by managing, resolving, and preventing problems efficiently, communicating effectively, and exceeding customer expectations.”

”

November 2014 - Initial Assessment

In the latter part of November 2014, at the airline's invitation, the writer spent several days at the contact centre in Addis Ababa, engaging with senior and middle management. During this visit an initial assessment of the operation was carried out; this with the view to developing a formal development plan for what was to evolve into the Global Customer Interaction Centre, or GCIC.

At that time, in a meeting with the airline's CEO, Mr Tewolde GebreMariam the writer was assured that the airline was fully committed to providing the call centre management team with whatever reasonable resources that would be necessary to achieve independently certified "World Class Status".

January 2015 - First Snapshot Assessment & Audit

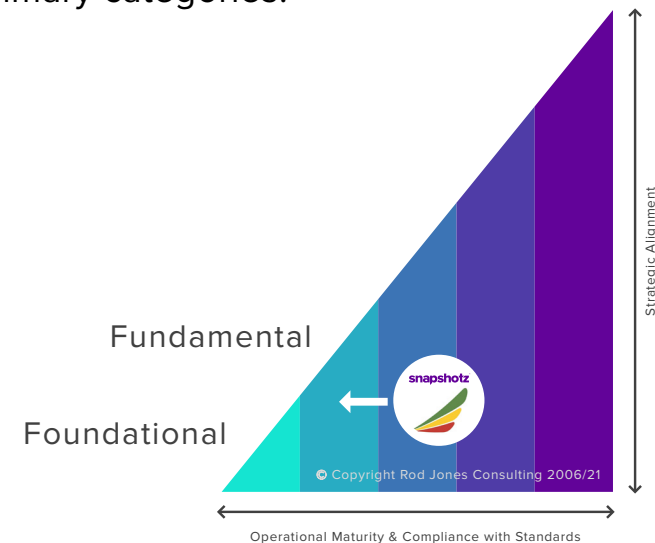
Early in January 2015 the writer spent a week at the airline's call centre, working with the management and operations teams using the cloud based Snapshot™ Assessment and Auditing methodology¹.

The robust Snapshot methodology probes over 800 specific strategic and operational datapoints in the contact centre and the tool is utilised to score, rank, and rate the operation in eight primary sections covering thirty

sub-sections and over six hundred individual question-probes.

Snapshot's Benchmark scores for the audited operation are calculated from the aggregated performance of the top 25% scores of all other Snapshot users spread across the globe. At that time, over 1,500 Snapshot users were contributing to the tool's benchmarking process. Today, almost 3,000 contact centre licensees use the Snapshot methodology, and performance of these users form the basis for benchmarking.

In terms of the Snapshot protocol, to achieve "World Class" status, the operation is required to score 85% or better against the Snapshot Benchmark, in at least 25 of the 30 primary categories.

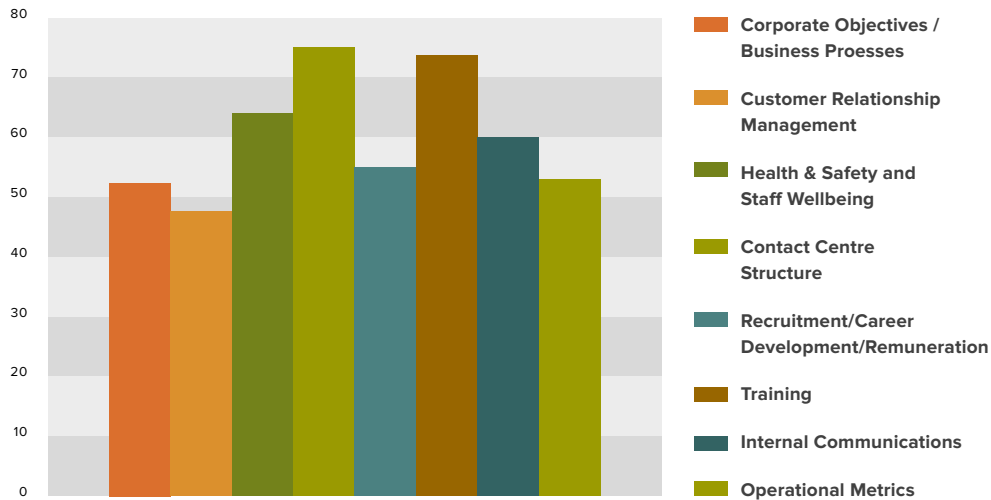


The Snapshotz audit summary shown below clearly highlights that in 2015 the Ethiopian Airlines call centre was still in the early stages of establishing operating principles and processes, and it was also experiencing severe challenges with its core customer interaction technologies.

The 2015 Snapshotz audit placed the Ethiopian Airlines call centre in the early stages of the “Fundamental” operational status category.



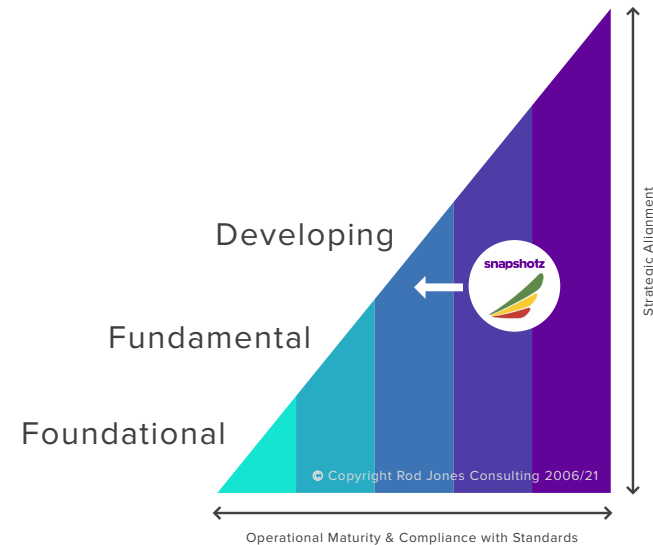
AUDIT SUMMARY 22ND JANUARY 2015



November 2018 Second Snapshotz Assessment & Audit

The second Snapshotz audit that the writer carried out in November 2018 showed some significant improvements in several key areas of the operation, but the challenges associated with the legacy telephony platform and various integration and additional channel development issues severely impacted the centre’s ability to reach optimum performance.

Whilst the centre had made considerable progress since the initial Snapshotz audit, the Snapshotz scores put the operation marginally into the ‘Developing’ category.



Over 200 Developmental Tasks - On the Runway to 'World Class'

In late 2018, using the built-in Snapshotz 'Tasks' functionality, under the writer's direction, over 300 clearly set out and actionable tasks were defined as key outputs of the audit process. Each of these tasks was assigned a level of priority (Red, Amber, and Green) and specific deadlines were set for the completion of each task or action.

Members of the management team were designated as the responsible person to be accountable for the execution of each task. Tasks included - for example - the development of specific processes as well as the crafting of documents detailing Policy, Process, Procedure and Accountability. (These were known as the PPPA documents) Many of the defined tasks also involved establishing interaction communication and process flow channels and SLAs with other business units or for seeking clarification of certain corporate policies and standards.

The regular review and progress-tracking of the defined tasks by senior and middle management ensured that all major flaws or weaknesses in the contact centre identified through the Snapshotz audit process, were systematically addressed, problems resolved and where appropriate, improved on.

The slogan that one sees on posters throughout the Ethiopian Airlines Global Customer Interaction Centre is, "Get it done. By any means"

By late 2018, following a series of site visits facilitated by the writer to numerous contact centres in South Africa, Ethiopian Airlines contracted to acquire the Genesys Pure Cloud solution as the basis for building what was to become the airline's Global Customer Interaction Centre. The vision to become a truly 'World Class', full-service, omnichannel customer interaction centre serving Ethiopian Airlines international customers, was starting to come to fruition.

2019 to 2021 – Poised and Ready for Take-Off. 'Destination: World Class'

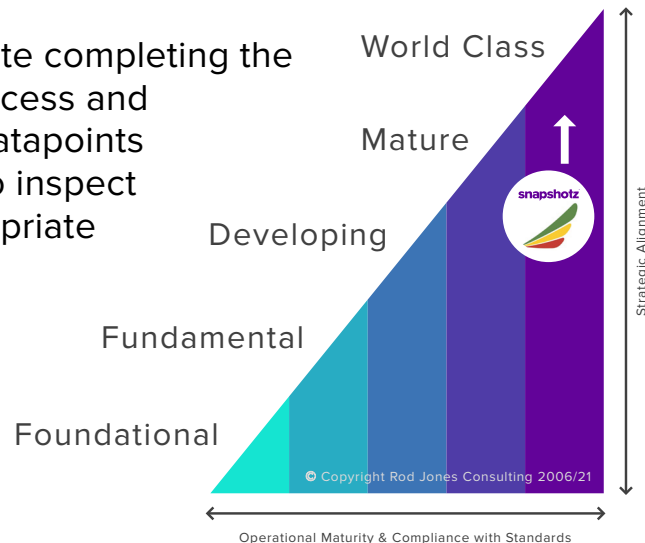
Throughout 2019 and amid the realities of the severe implications for the airline as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the GCIC team persevered with the challenges of implementing the new Genesys platform, deploying and integrating new channels, developing new processes, procedures and operational protocols, and systematically addressing the specific tasks identified in the initial 2015 and the November 2018 follow-up Snapshotz audits.

November 2021 – Certification as a World Class CX Contact Centre

In early November 2021, the writer personally carried out the third Snapshotz Assessment and Audit of the Ethiopian Airlines Global Customer Interaction Centre, now located in its own gleaming, brand new multi-floor building located at the airline's head office at Bole International Airport, Addis Ababa.

Seldom has the writer been so impressed with a contact centre and its management team. In virtually every one of the Snapshotz' 30 Sub-categories, the airline scored in the 80% plus range and in most cases, exceeded the 85% compliance requirement for 'World Class' status.

After four days on site completing the Snapshotz audit process and probing over 800 datapoints (frequently calling to inspect evidence and appropriate supporting documentation of certain audit items) and thereafter conferring with Snapshot's founder and CEO,



Deepak Selvaratnam who ran a peer review process on the audit, we concurred on our findings and officially awarded the Ethiopian Airlines Global Customer Interaction Centre Snapshotz' highest accolade – "World Class Contact Centre".

Auditor's Observations

How did the Ethiopian Airlines GCIC team achieve their goal of becoming a certified, 'World Class Customer Interaction Centre'?

In the writer's opinion, the 5-year journey or transition from being virtually a 'start-up' call centre to becoming certified by Snapshotz as a truly World Class CX Customer Interaction Centre, has been as a result of six significant and identifiable factors.

01

Clear and Concise Strategic Intent.

02

Systematic Approach using Globally Recognised Methodologies and Tools.

03

Confronting the Brutal Facts

04

Professional Advisory Services

05

Regular Reviews, Self-Assessments and Implementing Defined Tasks

06

Passionate, Empowered People

01 Clear and Concise Strategic Intent.

In 2010, Ethiopian Airlines developed its 15-year strategic plan called Vision 2025 that clearly stated the organisation's intent:

“

“To become the most competitive, leading aviation group in Africa by providing safe, market-driven and customer focused passenger and cargo, transport, aviation, training, flight catering and ground services.”

”

In the context of the airline's call centre (becoming an omnichannel customer interaction centre), the organisation's defined strategic intent has served to guide the systematic development of the contact centre and ultimately, the GCIC operation.

Clear strategic intent is critical to the on-going development and success of any effective and efficient contact centre.

02 Systematic Approach using Globally Recognised Methodologies and Tools.

ACE Process & Project Management Tools.

Much of Ethiopian Airlines' phenomenal success during its 75 years existence can be attributed to the widespread utilisation of the highly sophisticated and robust ACE (Achieving Competitive Excellence) process and project management methodologies operating tool, developed by the American aerospace manufacturer Pratt & Whitney and largely based on well-proven Lean Principles. These tools and methodologies have been in extensive use in the contact centre since the business unit was established and their continued use ensures continuous improvement.

Snapshotz Audit & Assessment Tools.

Early in the contact centre's development cycle, Ethiopian Airlines adopted the globally recognised Snapshotz solution to provide the methodical assessment of the operation by systematically examining over 800 critical datapoints. The Snapshotz findings, coupled with the consulting teams recommendations and the provision of Best Practice guidelines, positioned the operation to clearly identify flaws and omissions in the operation and to craft the most appropriate solutions.

The implementation of many of the Snapshotz recommendations were enabled and project managed using ACE methodologies.

03 Confronting the Brutal Facts.

In his best-selling book ‘Good to Great’², celebrated business author Jim Collins writes that “All good companies began the process of finding the path to greatness by confronting the brutal facts of their current reality.” In the context of the first two Snapshotz audits, the GCIC management team embraced the ‘Brutal Facts’ highlighted by the two audits (2015 and 2018) and used these as the building blocks for implementing the highly visible continuous improvement programme. As mentioned above, the ACE methodologies were used to drive these initiatives and to maintain momentum and focus on what was, from the outset the clearly defined end-goal: To become a certified, World Class Customer Interaction Centre.

04 Professional Advisory Services.

The Snapshotz audit and assessment methodology was able to simultaneously identify both the operation’s strengths and its weaknesses whilst scoring and benchmarking over 800 important operational and infrastructural datapoints. During and immediately following the audit procedures, the consulting team – in close consultation with the contact centre’s management – crafted appropriate remedial interventions and recommendations based on industry best practice guidelines and personal experience.

Using the ‘Tasks’ functionality within the Snapshotz tool, the consulting team concisely defined literally hundreds of individual recommendations and interventions together with appropriate Prioritisation (Red, Amber & Green), Task Deadline and Task Accountability.

² From “Good to Great” by Jim Collins 2001. Published by Random House Business Books ISBN 9780712676090

05 Regular Reviews, Self-Assessments and Implementing Defined Tasks.

It is the writer's opinion that the regular, systematic reviews and the implementation and on-going self-assessment by the management team of the Snapshotz-defined tasks has been the single-most important factor resulting in the achievement of certified 'World Class' status by the Ethiopian Airlines Global Customer Interaction Centre.

Methodically implementing Snapshotz' Tasks has been fundamental to the achievement of the operation's World Class status.

06 Passionate, Empowered People.

Strong leadership made it possible for the GCIC team to achieve certified World Class status. From its early origins, the airline's call centre (later to become the omnichannel interaction centre or GCIC) has had highly experienced senior managers directing the operation, as well as a core of highly competent and committed middle managers. With on-going executive support from the highest levels of the airline and clear and concise directives, the operational team has been empowered to systematically and diligently work to implement the Snapshotz-based recommendations.

About Snapshotz

Snapshotz is an on-line (SaaS – Software as a Service), contact centre assessment and benchmarking tool. The Snapshotz solution provides a structured framework for a comprehensive SWOT analysis of the contact centre or customer service operation. The assessment processes examine a total of 800 variables within 8 focus areas of the contact centre and 30 subsections to provide a comprehensive analysis of the entire operation.

Snapshotz is built on globally recognised contact centre standards and ‘best practice’; the tool provides accurate benchmarking of the operation against international norms, and it monitors compliance with statutory, regulatory, or other operational requirements or standards. Reporting and outputs provide accurate management and executive dashboards reflecting the overall ‘health’ of the centre.

Snapshotz incorporates a powerful task management tool specific to contact centre/customer service operations to ensure that everything that needs to be done, gets done on time!

Snapshotz is the product of twelve years of constant and on-going development and refinement and is utilised by contact centre and customer service professionals in over 3200 sites worldwide.

Snapshotz is deployed and supported in 30+ countries including South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, USA, Canada, UK and China.

Representing & Facilitating Snapshotz Audits throughout Africa



eMail rod@rodjones.co.za
Phone +27 (0)82-568-9976
<https://rodjones.co.za>