

QED Q's:

Quality- and Efficiency-Driven Queues

with a focus on Call/Contact Centers

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Wharton Statistics, February 2008

Started with **Brown, Gans, Sakov, Shen, Zeltyn, Zhao** (JASA)

Students: **Garnett, Gurvich, Aldor, Feldman, Rosenshmidt, ...**

Colleagues: **Armony, Massey, Whitt, ...**

Technion SEE Lab: Feigin, Trofimov, Nadjharov, Gavako; RA's, ...

Contents

- ▶ On Service Science / Engineering / **QED Q's**
- ▶ Example: Anatomy of "Waiting for Service"
- ▶ The Basic (Operational) Call-Center Model:
Palm/Erlang-A ($M/M/N+M$)
- ▶ Validating Erlang-A? All **Assumptions Violated**
- ▶ But **Erlang-A Works! Why?**
Framework - Asymptotic Regimes: **QED, ED, ED+QED**
- ▶ Explain **Practice**: "Right Answers for the Wrong Reasons"
- ▶ Technion's **SEE (Service Enterprise Engineering) Lab**:
DataMOCCA, SEESat

Main Messages

1. Simple Models at the Service of Complex Realities.

Note: Simple rooted in **deep** analysis.

2. Data-Based Research & Teaching is a Must & Fun.

Supported by **DataMOCCA** = Data **MO**del for **C**all **C**enter **A**alysis.

3. Human Complexity calls for the Basic-Research Paradigm (Physics, ...): **Measure, Model, Experiment, Validate, Refine, etc.**

4. Ancestors & Practitioners often knew/apply the “right answer”: simply did/do not have our tools/desire/need to prove it so.

Supported by **Erlang (1910+)**, **Palm (1940+)**,..., thoughtful managers.

5. Service Science / Management / Engineering are emerging Academic Disciplines. For example, universities and USA NSF (SEE), IBM (SSME), Germany IAO (ServEng), ...

Background Material (Downloadable)

- ▶ Technion's "**Service-Engineering**" Course (≥ 1995):
<http://ie.technion.ac.il/serveng>
- ▶ Google Scholar - search <Call Centers>:
 - ▶ Gans (U.S.A.), Koole (Europe), and M. (Israel):
"Telephone Call Centers: Tutorial, Review and Research Prospects." MSOM, 2003.
 - ▶ Brown, Gans, M., Sakov, Shen, Zeltyn, Zhao:
"Statistical Analysis of a Telephone Call Center: A Queueing-Science Perspective." JASA, 2005.
- ▶ Trofimov, Feigin, M., Ishay, Nadjharov:
"DataMOCCA: Models for Call/Contact Center Analysis."
Technion Report, 2004-2006.
- ▶ M. "Call Centers: Research Bibliography with Abstracts."
Version 7, December 2006.

Queueing Science: Data-Based QED's Q's

Traditional Queueing Theory predicts that **Service-Quality** and **Servers' Efficiency** must be traded off against each other.

For example, **M/M/1 in heavy-traffic**: **91%** server's utilization goes with

$$\text{Congestion Index} = \frac{E[\text{Wait}]}{E[\text{Service}]} = 10,$$

and only **9%** of the customers are served immediately upon arrival.

Yet, heavily-loaded queueing systems with **Congestion Index = 0.1** (Waiting one order of magnitude less than Service) are prevalent:

- ▶ **Call Centers**: Wait "**seconds**" for **minutes** service;
- ▶ **Transportation**: Search "**minutes**" for **hours** parking;
- ▶ **Hospitals**: Wait "**hours**" in ED for **days** hospitalization in IW's;

and, moreover, a significant fraction are not delayed in queue. (For example, in well-run call-centers, **50%** served "immediately", along with over **90%** agents' utilization, is not uncommon) **?**

Prerequisite: Data

Averages Prevalent.

But I need data at the level of the **Individual Transaction**: For each service transaction (during a phone-service in a call center, or a patient's stay in a hospital), its **operational history** = time-stamps of events.

Sources: **"Service-floor"** (vs. Industry-level, Surveys, ...)

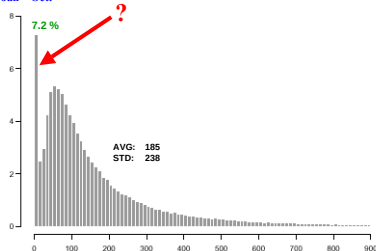
- ▶ **Administrative** (Court, via "paper analysis")
- ▶ **Face-to-Face** (Bank, via bar-code readers)
- ▶ **Telephone** (Call Centers, via ACD / CTI)
- ▶ Expanding:
 - ▶ **Hospitals** (via RFID)
 - ▶ IVR (VRU), internet, chat (multi-media)
 - ▶ Operational + Financial + Marketing / Clinical history

Beyond Averages (+ The Human Factor)

Histogram of Service Times in an Israeli Call Center

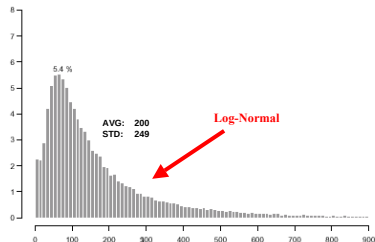
January-October

Jan – Oct:



November-December

Nov – Dec:



- ▶ **7.2% Short-Services:** Agents' "Abandon" (improve bonus, rest)
- ▶ **Distributions**, not only Averages, must be measured.
- ▶ **Lognormal** service times prevalent in call centers (Why?)

Present Focus: Call Centers

U.S. Statistics (Relevant Elsewhere)

- ▶ Over 60% of annual business volume via the telephone
- ▶ 100,000 – 200,000 call centers
- ▶ 3 – 6 million employees (**2% – 4% workforce**)
- ▶ 1000's agents in a "single" call center = 70 % costs.
- ▶ 20% annual growth rate
- ▶ \$200 – \$300 billion annual expenditures

Call-Center Environment: Service Network

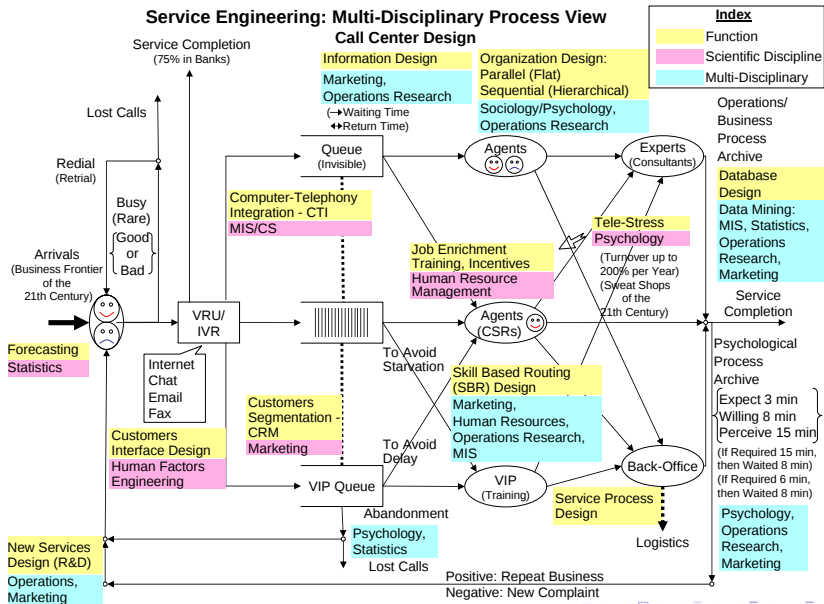


Call-Centers: “Sweat-Shops of the 21st Century”



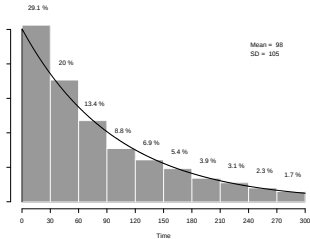
Call-Center Network: Gallery of Models

Service Engineering: Multi-Disciplinary Process View Call Center Design

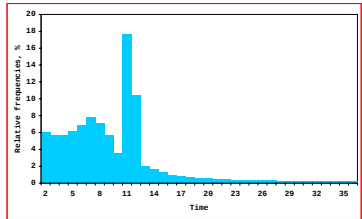


Beyond Averages: Waiting Times in a Call Center

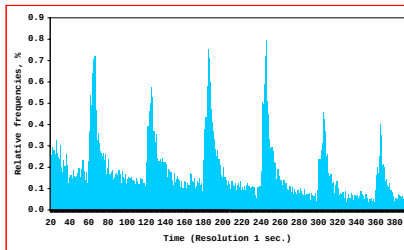
Small Israeli Bank



Large U.S. Bank



Medium Israeli Bank



The “Anatomy of Waiting” for Service

Common Experience:

- ▶ Expected to wait 5 minutes, Required to 10,
- ▶ Felt like 20, Actually waited 10,
- ▶ ... etc.

An attempt at “Modeling the Experience”:

1. Time that a customer **expects** to wait
2. **willing** to wait $((Im)Patience: \tau)$
3. **required** to wait $(Offered\ Wait: V)$
4. **actually** waits $(W_q = \min(\tau, V))$
5. **perceives** waiting.

Experienced customers $\Rightarrow$ Expected = Required
“Rational” customers $\Rightarrow$ Perceived = Actual.

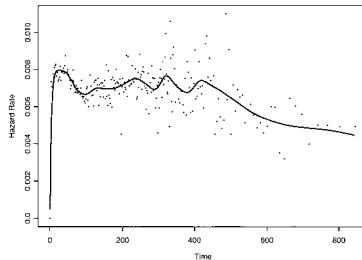
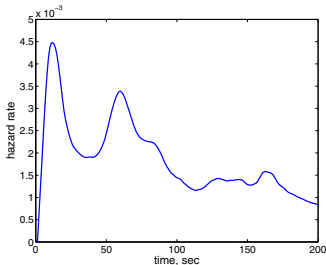
Then left with **(τ, V)** .

Call Center Data: Hazard Rates (Un-Censored)

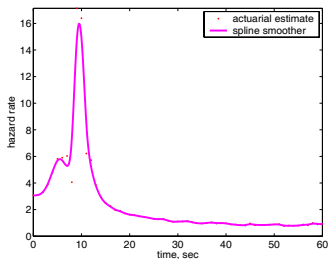
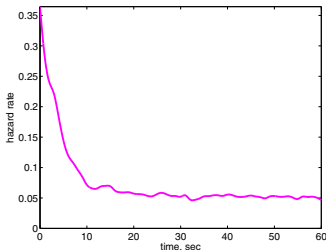
(Im)Patience Time τ

Required/Offered Wait V

Israel

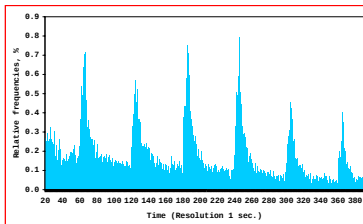


U.S.



Note: 5% abandoning $\Rightarrow$ 95% (im)patience-observations **censored** !

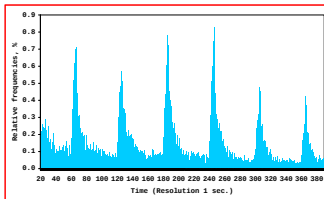
A "Waiting-Times" Puzzle at a Large Israeli Bank



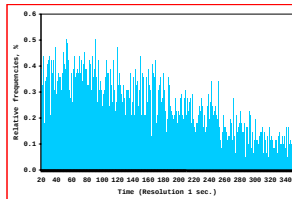
Peaks Every 60 Seconds. Why?

- ▶ Human: **Voice-announcement** every 60 seconds.
- ▶ System: **Priority-upgrade** (unrevealed) every 60 sec's (Theory?)

Served Customers

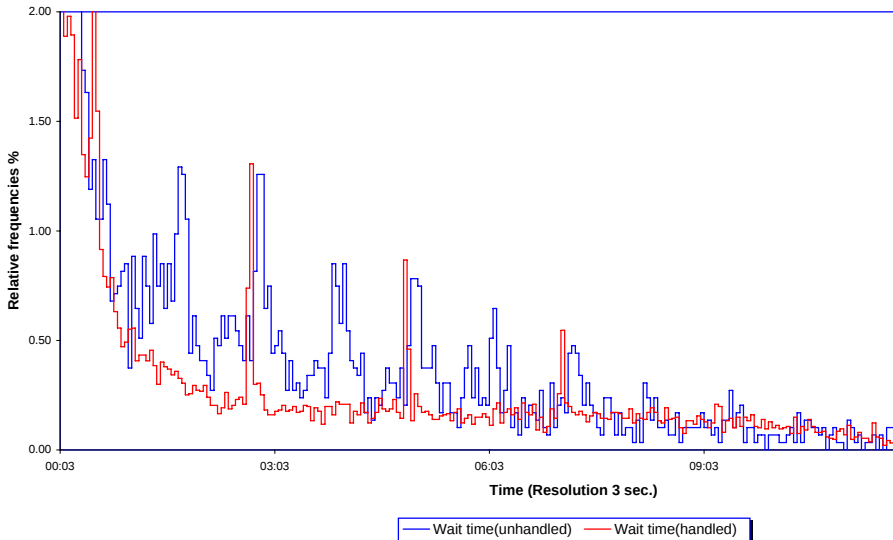


Abandoning Customers



Still a Puzzle at a U.S. Bank

Quick_Reilly
USBank, January 2003, Mondays



Models for Performance Analysis

- ▶ **(Im)Patience:** r.v. τ = Time a customer is **willing to wait**
- ▶ **Offered-Wait:** r.v. V = Time a customer is **required to wait**
(= Waiting time of a customer with infinite patience).
- ▶ **Abandonment** $= \{\tau \leq V\}$
- ▶ **Service** $= \{\tau > V\}$
- ▶ **Actual Wait** $W_q = \min\{\tau, V\}$.

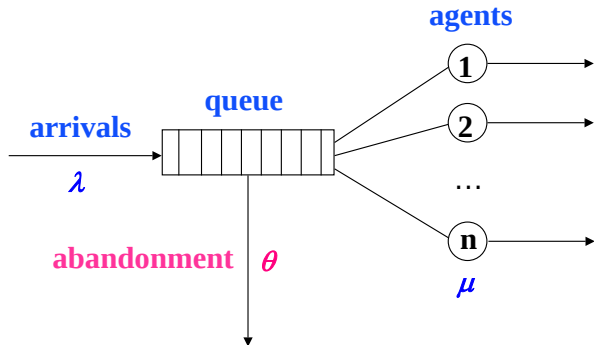
Modeling: τ = **input** to the model, V = **output**.

Operational Performance-Measure calculable in terms of (τ, V) :

- ▶ eg. **Avg. Wait** $= E[\min\{\tau, V\}]$ ($E[W_q | \text{Served}] = E[V | \tau > V]$)
- ▶ eg. **% Abandon** $= P\{\tau \leq V\}$ ($P\{5 \text{ sec} < \tau \leq V\}$)

Application: **Staffing – How Many Agents?** (then: When? Who?)

The Basic Staffing Model: Erlang-A (M/M/N + M)



Erlang-A (Palm 1940's) = Birth & Death Q, with parameters:

- ▶ λ – **Arrival** rate (Poisson)
- ▶ μ – **Service** rate (Exponential)
- ▶ θ – **Impatience** rate (Exponential)
- ▶ n – Number of **Service-Agents**.

Testing the Erlang-A Primitives

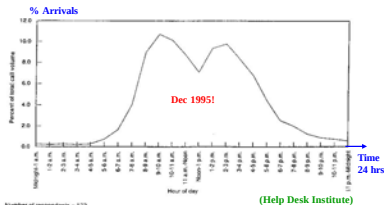
- ▶ **Arrivals**: Poisson?
- ▶ **Service-durations**: Exponential?
- ▶ **(Im)Patience**: Exponential?
- ▶ Primitives independent?
- ▶ Customers / Servers Heterogeneous?
- ▶ Service discipline FCFS?
- ▶ ... ?

Validation: Support? Refute?

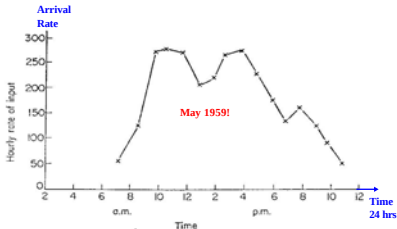
Arrivals to Service: only Poisson-Relatives

Arrival Rate to Three Call Centers

Dec. 1995 (U.S. 700 Helpdesks)



May 1959 (England)



November 1999 (Israel)

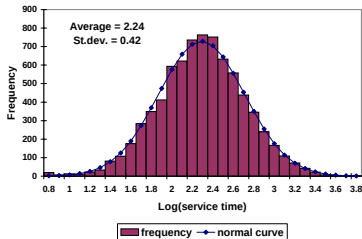


Observation:

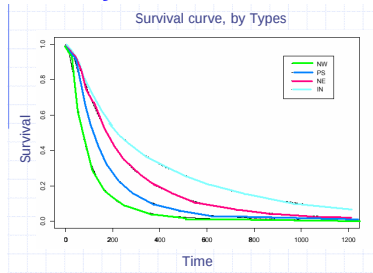
Peak Loads at 10:00 & 15:00

Service Durations: LogNormal Prevalent

Israeli Bank Log-Histogram



Survival-Functions by Service-Class



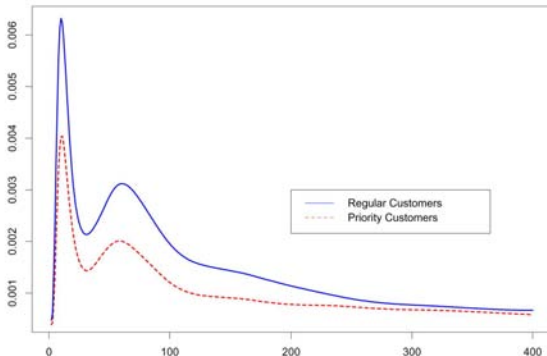
- ▶ **New** Customers: 2 min (NW);
- ▶ **Regulars**: 3 min (PS);
- ▶ **Stock**: 4.5 min (NE);
- ▶ Tech-Support: 6.5 min (IN).

Observation: **VIP** require **longer service** times.

(Im)Patience while Waiting (Palm 1943-53)

Irritation $\propto$ Hazard Rate of (Im)Patience Distribution

Regular over **VIP** Customers – Israeli Bank



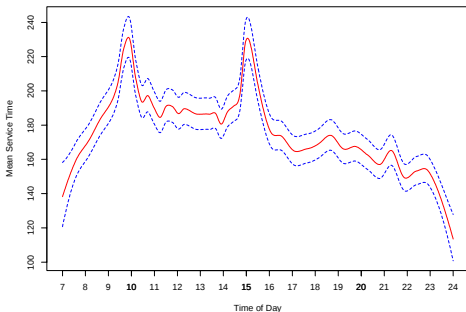
- ▶ **Peaks** of abandonment at times of **Announcements**
- ▶ **Call-by-Call Data (DataMOCCA)** required (& Un-Censoring).

Observation: **VIP** are **more patient** (Needy)

A “Service-Time” Puzzle at an Israeli Bank

Inter-related Primitives

Average Service Time over the Day – Israeli Bank



Prevalent: **Longest services** at **peak-loads** (10:00, 15:00). **Why?**

Explanations:

- ▶ Common: Service protocol different (longer) during peak times.
- ▶ Operational: The needy abandon less during peak times; hence the **VIP remain** on line, with their **long service** times.

Erlang-A: Practical Relevance?

Experience:

- ▶ Arrival process **not pure Poisson** (time-varying, σ^2 too large)
- ▶ Service times **not Exponential** (typically close to LogNormal)
- ▶ Patience times **not Exponential** (various patterns observed).
- ▶ Building Blocks need **not be independent** (eg. long wait possibly implies long service)
- ▶ Customers and Servers **not homogeneous** (classes, skills)
- ▶ Customers return for service (after busy, abandonment)
- ▶ $\dots$, and more.

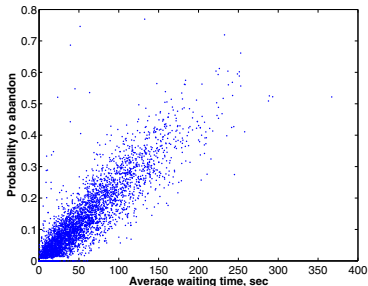
Question: Is Erlang-A Practically Relevant?

Estimating (Im)Patience: via $P\{Ab\} \propto E[W_q]$

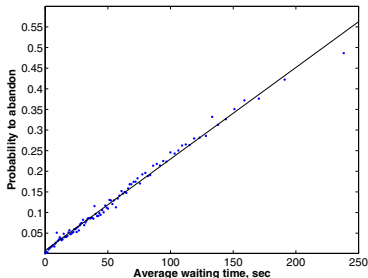
Assume **Exp**(θ) (im)patience. Then, $P\{Ab\} = \theta \cdot E[W_q]$.

Israeli Bank: Yearly Data

Hourly Data



Aggregated

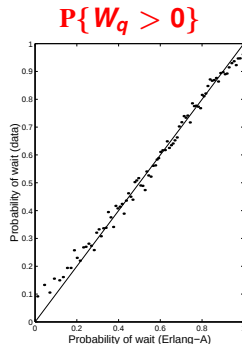
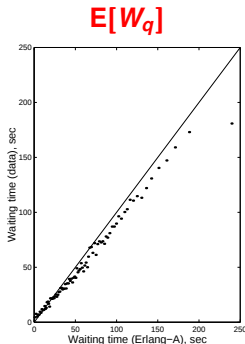
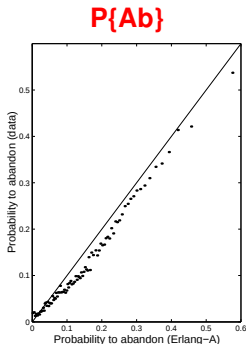


Graphs based on 4158 hour intervals.

Estimate of mean (im)patience: $250/0.55 \approx$ **450 seconds**.

Erlang-A: Fitting a Simple Model to a Complex Reality

- ▶ **Small Israeli Banking Call-Center** (10 agents)
- ▶ (Im)Patience (θ) estimated via $P\{Ab\} / E[W_q]$
- ▶ Graphs: **Hourly Performance vs. Erlang-A Predictions**, during 1 year (aggregating groups with 40 similar hours).



Erlang-A: Simple, but Not Too Simple

Further Natural Questions:

1. Why does Erlang-A practically work? justify **robustness**.
2. When does it fail? chart **boundaries**.
3. Generalize: time-variation, SBR, networks, uncertainty , ...

Answers via **Asymptotic Analysis**, as load- and staffing-levels increase, which reveals model-essentials:

- ▶ **Efficiency-Driven (ED)** regime: Fluid models (deterministic)
- ▶ **Quality- and Efficiency-Driven (QED)**: Diffusion refinements.

Motivation: Moderate-to-large service systems (**100's - 1000's** servers), notably **call-centers**.

Results turn out **accurate** enough to also cover **10-20** servers.
Important – relevant to **hospitals** (nurse-staffing: de Véricourt & Jennings, 2006), ...

Operational Regimes: Conceptual Framework

Assume: **Offered Load** $R = \frac{\lambda}{\mu}$ ($= \lambda \times E[S]$) not too small.

QD Regime: $N \approx R + \delta R$ $[(N - R)/R \rightarrow \delta, \text{ as } N, \lambda \uparrow \infty]$

- ▶ Essentially **no** delays: $[P\{W_q > 0\} \rightarrow 0]$.

ED Regime: $N \approx R - \gamma R$

- ▶ Garnett, M. & Reiman 2003
- ▶ Essentially **all** customers are delayed
- ▶ Wait same order as service-time; $\gamma\%$ Abandon (10-25%).

QED Regime: $N \approx R + \beta\sqrt{R}$

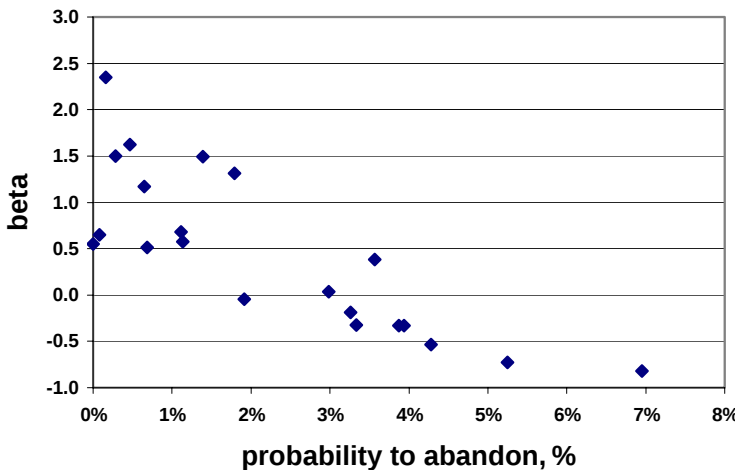
- ▶ Erlang 1913/24, Halfin & Whitt 1981
- ▶ %Delayed between 25% and 75%
- ▶ Wait one-order below service-time (sec vs. min); 1-5% Abandon.

QED+ED: $N \approx (1 - \gamma)R + \beta\sqrt{R}$

- ▶ Zeltyn & M. 2006
- ▶ QED refining ED to accommodate “timely-delays”: $P\{W_q > T\}$.

QED: Practical Support

QOS parameter $\beta = (N - R)/\sqrt{R}$ vs. %Abandonment



QED Theory (Erlang '13; Halfin-Whitt '81; Garnett MSc; Zeltyn PhD)

Consider a sequence of M/M/N+G models, $N=1,2,3,\dots$

Then the following **points of view** are equivalent:

- **QED** $\% \{\text{Wait} > 0\} \approx \alpha, \quad 0 < \alpha < 1;$
- **Customers** $\% \{\text{Abandon}\} \approx \frac{\gamma}{\sqrt{N}}, \quad 0 < \gamma;$
- **Agents** $\text{OCC} \approx 1 - \frac{\beta + \gamma}{\sqrt{N}} \quad -\infty < \beta < \infty;$
- **Managers** $N \approx R + \beta\sqrt{R}, \quad R = \lambda \times E(S) \text{ not small};$

QED performance (ASA, ...) is easily computable, all in terms of β (the square-root safety staffing level) – see later.

QED Approximations (Zeltyn, M. '06)

G – patience distribution,

g_0 – patience density at origin ($g_0 = \theta$, if $\exp(\theta)$).

$$N = \frac{\lambda}{\mu} + \beta \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\mu}} + o(\sqrt{\lambda}), \quad -\infty < \beta < \infty.$$

$$P\{\text{Ab}\} \approx \frac{1}{\sqrt{N}} \cdot [h(\hat{\beta}) - \hat{\beta}] \cdot \left[\sqrt{\frac{\mu}{g_0}} + \frac{h(\hat{\beta})}{h(-\beta)} \right]^{-1},$$

$$P\left\{W > \frac{T}{\sqrt{N}}\right\} \approx \left[1 + \sqrt{\frac{g_0}{\mu}} \cdot \frac{h(\hat{\beta})}{h(-\beta)} \right]^{-1} \cdot \frac{\bar{\Phi}(\hat{\beta} + \sqrt{g_0 \mu} \cdot T)}{\bar{\Phi}(\hat{\beta})},$$

$$P\left\{\text{Ab} \mid W > \frac{T}{\sqrt{N}}\right\} \approx \frac{1}{\sqrt{N}} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{g_0}{\mu}} \cdot [h(\hat{\beta} + \sqrt{g_0 \mu} \cdot T) - \hat{\beta}].$$

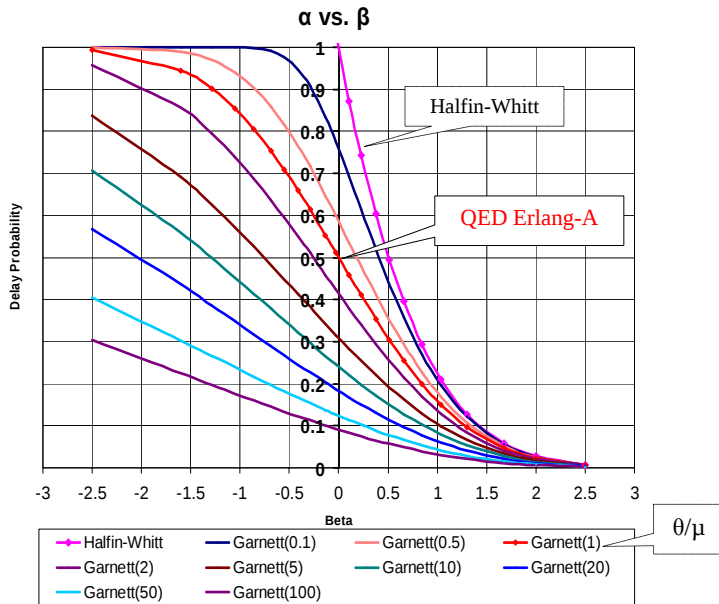
Here

$$\hat{\beta} = \beta \sqrt{\frac{\mu}{g_0}}$$

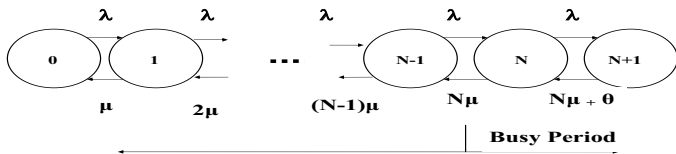
$$\bar{\Phi}(x) = 1 - \Phi(x),$$

$$h(x) = \phi(x)/\bar{\Phi}(x), \text{ hazard rate of } N(0, 1).$$

Garnett / Halfin-Whitt Functions: $P\{W_q > 0\}$



QED Intuition via Excursions: Busy/Idle Periods



$Q(0) = N$: all servers busy, no queue.

Let $T_{N,N-1}$ = Busy Period (down-crossing $N \downarrow N-1$)

$T_{N-1,N}$ = Idle Period (up-crossing $N-1 \uparrow N$)

$$\text{Then } P(\text{Wait} > 0) = \frac{T_{N,N-1}}{T_{N,N-1} + T_{N-1,N}} = \left[1 + \frac{T_{N-1,N}}{T_{N,N-1}} \right]^{-1}$$

QED Intuition via Excursions: Asymptotics

Calculate $T_{N-1,N} = \frac{1}{\lambda_N E_{1,N-1}} \sim \frac{1}{N\mu \times h(-\beta)/\sqrt{N}} \sim \frac{1}{\sqrt{N}} \cdot \frac{1/\mu}{h(-\beta)}$

$$T_{N,N-1} = \frac{1}{N\mu\pi_+(0)} \sim \frac{1}{\sqrt{N}} \cdot \frac{\beta/\mu}{h(\delta)/\delta}, \quad \delta = \beta\sqrt{\mu/\theta}$$

Both apply as $\sqrt{N}(1 - \rho_N) \rightarrow \beta, -\infty < \beta < \infty$.

Hence, $P(\text{Wait} > 0) \sim \left[1 + \frac{h(\delta)/\delta}{h(-\beta)/\beta}\right]^{-1}$.

Special case: $\mu = \theta$ (Impatient):

Then $\mathbf{Q} \stackrel{d}{=} \mathbf{M}/\mathbf{M}/\infty$, since sojourn-time is $\exp(\mu = \theta)$.

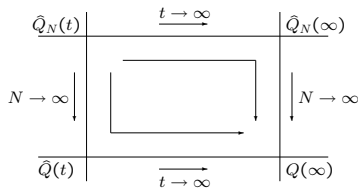
If also $\beta = 0$ (Prevalent): $\mathbf{P}\{\text{Wait} > 0\} \approx 1/2$.

Process Limits (Queueing, Waiting)

- $\hat{Q}_N = \{\hat{Q}_N(t), t \geq 0\}$: stochastic process obtained by centering and rescaling:

$$\hat{Q}_N = \frac{Q_N - N}{\sqrt{N}}$$

- $\hat{Q}_N(\infty)$: stationary distribution of $\hat{Q}_N$
- $\hat{Q} = \{\hat{Q}(t), t \geq 0\}$: process defined by: $\hat{Q}_N(t) \xrightarrow{d} \hat{Q}(t)$.



Approximating (Virtual) Waiting Time

$$\hat{V}_N = \sqrt{N} V_N \Rightarrow \hat{V} = \left[\frac{1}{\mu} \hat{Q} \right]^+$$

(Puhalskii, 1994)

Dimensioning a Service System

Operational Regimes provide a **conceptual framework**.

Questions:

1. How accurate are QD/ED/QED approximations?
2. How to determine the regime? QOS parameters?
3. Is there a regime robust enough to cover the others?

Answers, via many-server **Asymptotic Analysis** (w/ Borst & Reiman, 2004; Zeltyn, 2006):

1. Approximations are **extremely accurate**.
2. **Dimensioning**:
 - ▶ **Cost / Profit Optimization**: eg. Min costs of Staffing + Congestion.
 - ▶ **Constraint Satisfaction**: eg. **Min. N , s.t. QOS constraints** .
3. Robustness depends:
 - ▶ **Without Abandonment: QED** covers all, at amazing accuracy.
 - ▶ **With Abandonment: ED, QED, ED+QED** all have a role.

Operational Regimes: Rules-of-Thumb

Constraint	P{Ab}		E[W]		P{W > T}	
	Tight	Loose	Tight	Loose	Tight	Loose
	1-10%	$\geq 10\%$	$\leq 10\%E[\tau]$	$\geq 10\%E[\tau]$	$0 \leq T \leq 10\%E[\tau]$ $5\% \leq \alpha \leq 50\%$	$T \geq 10\%E[\tau]$ $5\% \leq \alpha \leq 50\%$
Offered Load						
Small (10's)	QED	QED	QED	QED	QED	QED
Moderate-to-Large (100's-1000's)	QED	ED, QED	QED	ED, QED if $\tau \stackrel{d}{=} \exp$	QED	ED+QED

ED: $N \approx R - \gamma R$ ($0.1 \leq \gamma \leq 0.25$).

QD: $N \approx R + \delta R$ ($0.1 \leq \delta \leq 0.25$).

QED: $N \approx R + \beta\sqrt{R}$ ($-1 \leq \beta \leq 1$).

ED+QED: $N \approx (1 - \gamma)R + \beta\sqrt{R}$ (γ, β as above).

Back to “Why does Erlang-A Work?”

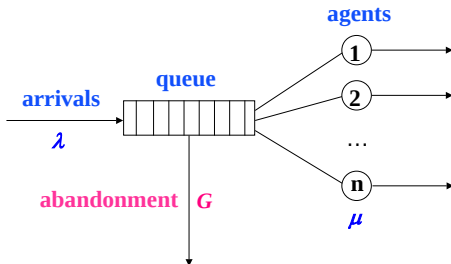
Theoretical Answer: $M_t^J / G / N_t + G \stackrel{d}{\approx} (M / M / N + M)_t, \quad t \geq 0.$

- ▶ **General Patience:** Behavior at the origin is all that matters.
- ▶ **General Services:** Empirical insensitivity beyond the mean.
- ▶ **Time-Varying Arrivals:** Modified Offered-Load approximations.
- ▶ **Heterogeneous Customers:** 1-D state collapse.

Practically: Why do (stochastic-ignorant) Call Centers work?

“The right answer for the wrong reason”

“Why does Erlang-A Work?” General Patience



(Im)Patience times **Generally Distributed**: M/M/ n +G

Exact analysis in steady-state (Baccelli & Hebuterne, 1981): solve Kolmogorov's PDE's (semi-Markov) for the offered-wait V ;
Generalized by Brandt & Brandt in late 90's.

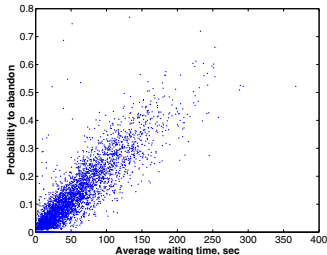
QED analysis (w/ Zeltyn, 2006): $n \approx R + \beta\sqrt{R}$.

- ▶ Assume (Im)Patience density $g(0) > 0$.
- ▶ V asymptotics ($\lambda \uparrow \infty$): Laplace Method, leading to
- ▶ **QED Approximations: Use Erlang-A** as is, with $\theta \leftrightarrow g(0)$.

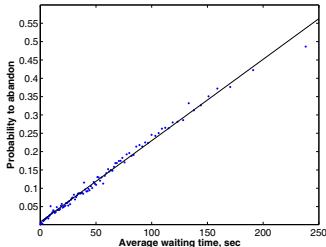
General Patience: Fitting Erlang-A

Israeli Bank: Yearly Data

Hourly Data



Aggregated



Theory:

Erlang-A: $P\{Ab\} = \theta \cdot E[W_q]$;

M/M/N+G: $P\{Ab\} \approx g(0) \cdot E[W_q]$.

Recipe:

In both cases, use Erlang-A, with $\hat{\theta} = \widehat{P\{Ab\}} / \widehat{E[W_q]}$ (slope above).

Why Does Erlang-A Work? General Services

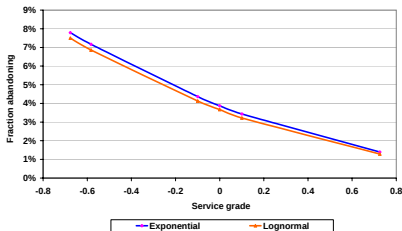
Established: $M/M/N+G \approx M/M/N+M$ ($\theta = g(0)$).

Now: $M/G/N+G \approx M/M/N+G$ ($E[S]$ same in both).

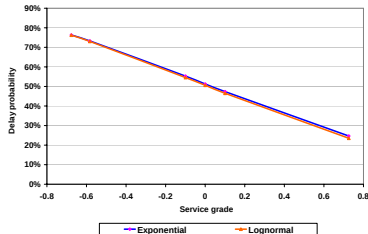
Numerical Experiments: Whitt (2004), Rosenshmidt (2006) demonstrate a **useful fit** for typical call-center parameters.

Lognormal (CV=1) vs. Exponential Service Times, QED Regime;
100 agents, average patience = average service

Fraction Abandoning



Delay Probability



QED G-Services: $G/D_K/N+G$ (w/ Momčilović, ongoing).

Why Does Erlang-A Work? Time-Varying Arrival Rates

Established: $M/G/N+G \approx M/M/N+M$ ($\theta = g(0)$).

Now: $M_t/G/N_t + G \approx (M/G/N + G)_t$ (N_t, λ well chosen).

Two steps (Feldman, M., Massey & Whitt, 2006):

1. Modified Offered-Load: λ

- ▶ Consider $M_t/G/N_t + G$ with arrival rate $\lambda(t), t \geq 0$.
- ▶ Approximate its **time-varying** performance at time t with a **stationary** $M/G/N_t + G$, in which $\lambda = E\lambda(t - S_e)$.
($S_e \stackrel{d}{=}$ residual-service: congestion-lag behind peak-load.)

2. Square-Root Staffing: N_t

- ▶ Let $R_t = E\lambda(t - S_e) \times ES$ be the **Offered-Load** at time t
(R_t = Number-in-system in a corresponding $M_t/G/\infty$.)
- ▶ Staff $N_t = R_t + \beta\sqrt{R_t}$.

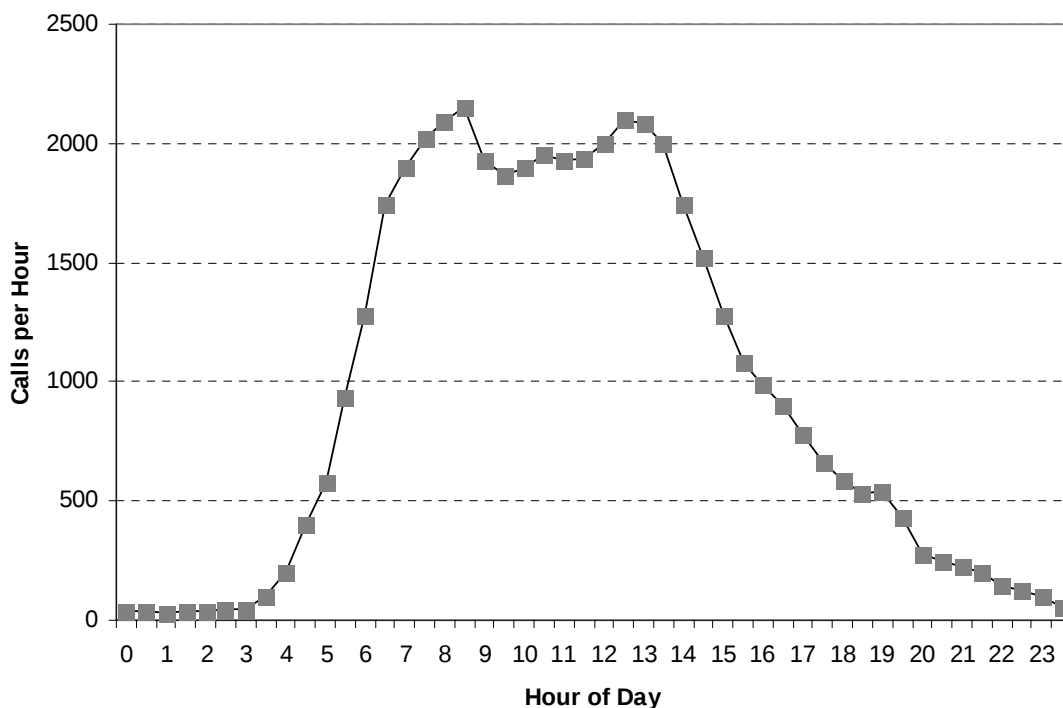
Serendipity: Time-stable performance, supported by **ISA** = Iterative Staffing Algorithm, and QED diffusion limits ($M_t/M/N + M, \mu = \theta$).

Example: "Real" Call Center

(The "Right Answer" for the "Wrong Reasons")

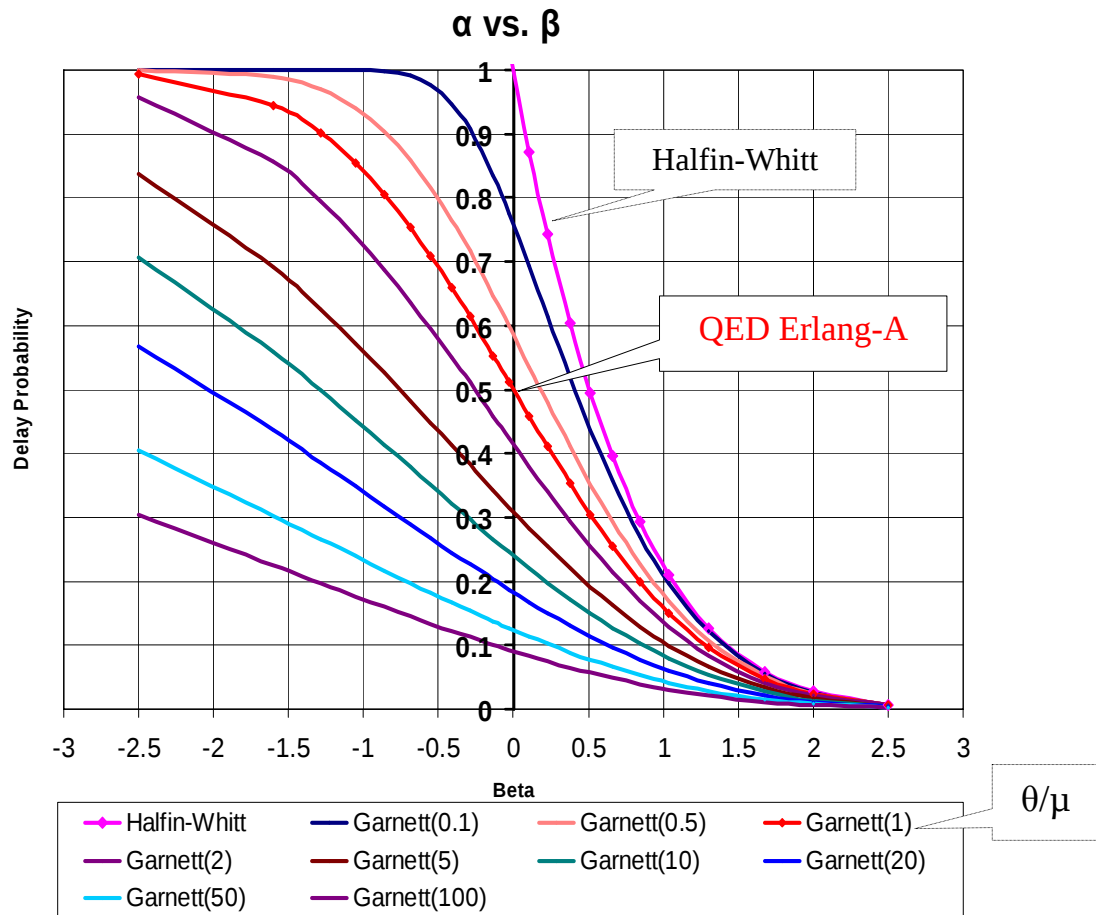
Time-Varying (two-hump) arrival functions common

(Adapted from Green L., Kolesar P., Soares J. for benchmarking.)



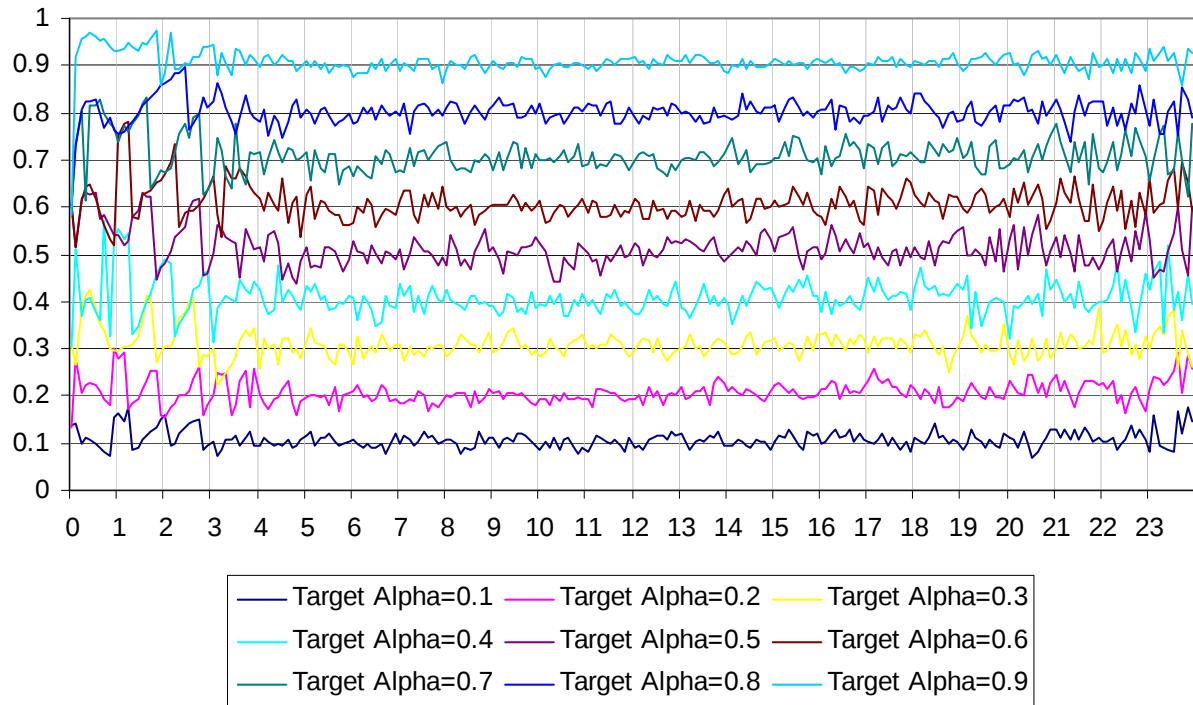
Assume: Service and abandonment times are **both**
Exponential, with **mean 0.1** (6 min.)

HW/GMR Delay Functions



Delay Probability α

Delay Probability

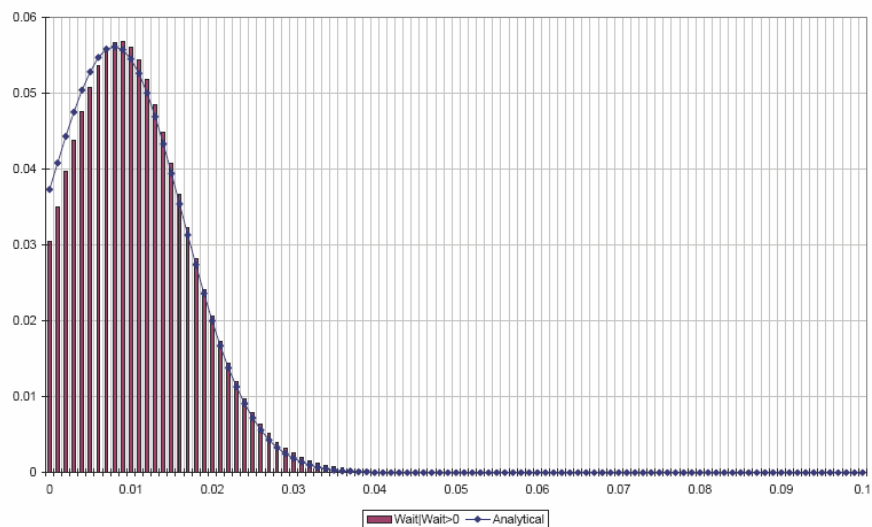
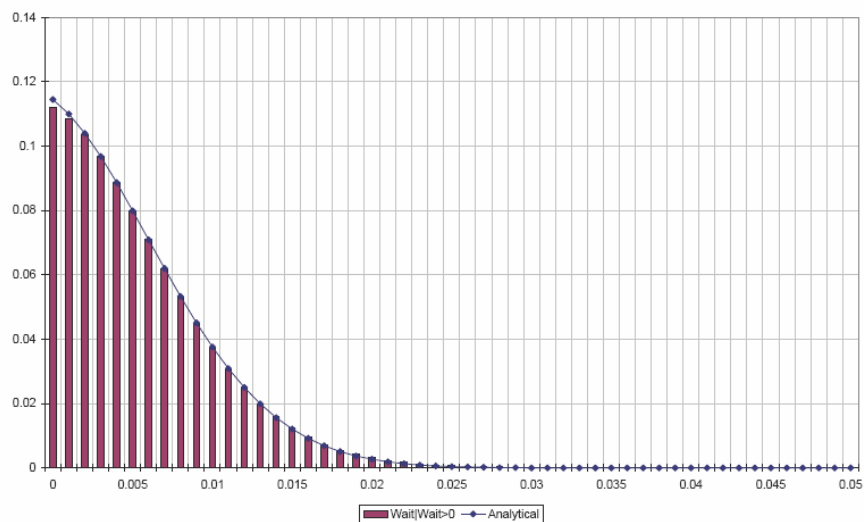
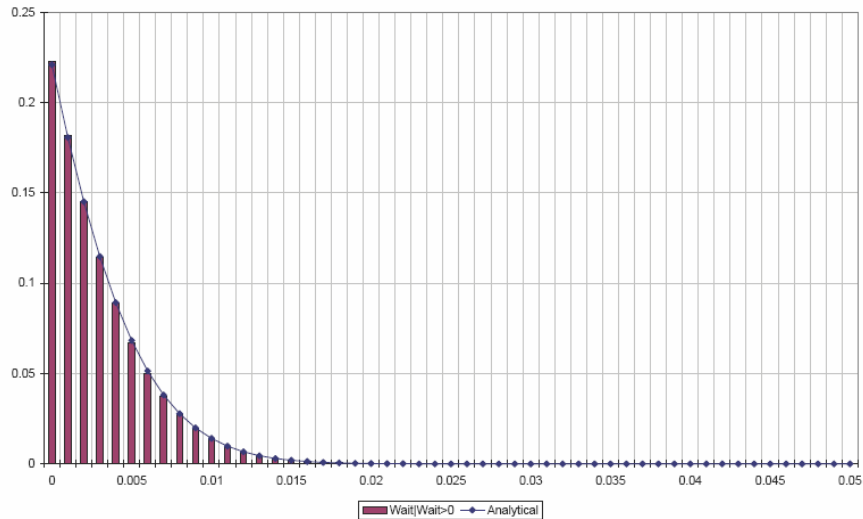


Real Call Center: Empirical waiting time, given positive wait

(1) $\alpha=0.1$ (QD)

(2) $\alpha=0.5$ (QED)

(3) $\alpha=0.9$ (ED)



Why Does Erlang-A Work? Multi-Class Customers

Now: $M_t^J / G / N_t + G \approx (M^J / G / N + G)_t$ (well staffed & controlled).

Service Levels: Class 1 = **VIP**, ..., Class J = **best-effort**.

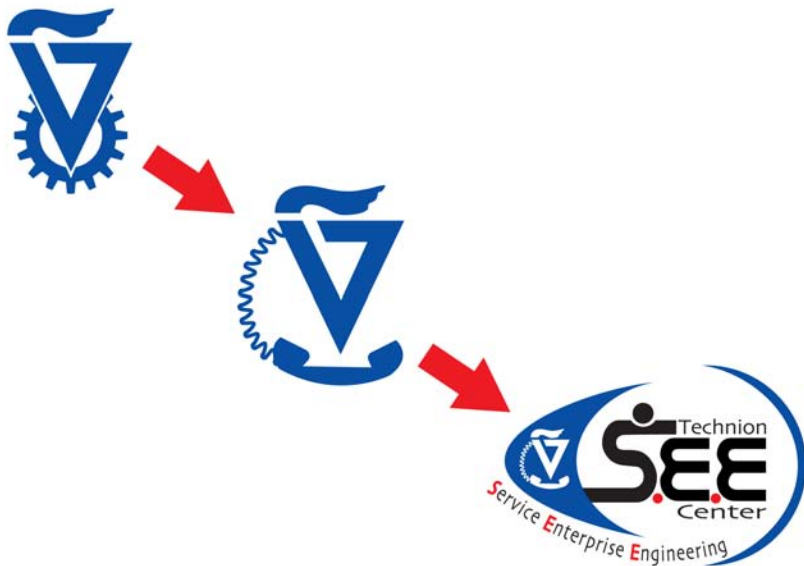
Staffing, Control (w/ Gurvich & Armony 2005; Feldman & Gurvich):

- ▶ Consider $M_t^J / G / N_t + G$ with arrival rates $\lambda_j(t)$, $t \geq 0$.
- ▶ Assume **i.i.d. servers**.
- ▶ Let $R_t = E \sum_j \lambda_j(t - S_e) \times ES$ be the **Offered-Load** at time t .
- ▶ **Staff** $N_t = R_t + \beta \sqrt{R_t}$, with β determined by a desired QED performance for the **lowest-priority** class J .
- ▶ **Control** via **threshold priorities**, where the thresholds are determined by ISA according to desired service levels.
- ▶ Approximate **time-varying** performance **at time t** with a **stationary** threshold-controlled $M^J / G / N_t + G$, in which $\lambda_j = E \lambda_j(t - S_e)$.

Serendipity: **Multi-Class Multi-Skill**, w/ **class-dependent** services.

Support: ISA, QED diffusion limits (Atar, M. & Shaikhet, 2007).

The Technion SEE Center / Laboratory



DataMOCCA = Data MOdels for Call Center Analysis

- ▶ **Technion:** P. Feigin, V. Trofimov, Statistics / SEE Laboratory.
- ▶ **Wharton:** L. Brown, N. Gans, H. Shen (UNC), Zhao.
- ▶ **industry:**
 - ▶ US Bank: **2.5 years, 220M calls, 40M by 1000 agents.**
 - ▶ IL Cellular: **3.5 years, 110M / 25M calls, 800 agents; ongoing.**
 - ▶ IL Bank: **16 months, ongoing.**

Project Goal: Design and Implement a (universal) data-base/data-repository and interface for storing, retrieving, analyzing and displaying **Call-by-Call-based Data / Information.**

System Components:

- ▶ **Clean Databases:** operational-data of individual calls / agents.
- ▶ **Graphical Online Interface:** easily generates graphs and tables, at varying resolutions (seconds, minutes, hours, days, months).

Free for academic adoption: ask for a DVD (3GB) .