



Improving efficiency by understanding why customers call



NHS Professionals is the largest provider of managed flexible services to the NHS with over 50,000 nurses, doctors, administrative and clerical and other healthcare professionals signed to its bank; placing more than 1.5 million shifts a year, recruiting over 600 fully-screened and vetted flexible workers a month, and providing high quality workers to over 80 NHS Trusts across England.

Providing high quality flexible staff to 80 Trusts across the country and established in 2002, NHS Professionals employs some 300 staff of which 115 work in a busy contact centre that handles more than 650,000 calls a year from their headquarters in Watford, Hertfordshire,.

Megan Grant, NHS Professionals National Operations Manager, was looking at ways to improve their customer service levels. One of the possibilities under consideration was the introduction of an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, but Megan was not sure which calls could be satisfactorily automated and which still needed the human touch. She needed to know much more about the type of calls the contact centre agents were handling but her existing management information systems could not provide her with the business insights she needed.

The Solution

"In November 2009 we installed Classify ME from Reading-based CTI Labs". Classify ME is a simple, easily configurable tool that will pop up on the agent's desktop at the end of each call. It prompts the agent to make a rapid selection from a predefined list of call types relevant to the call they have just handled. The agent is given a configurable time-window to make their selection before the application saves the collected data into a central database that is easy to report against. This means that Classify ME provides the ultimate real-time insight into why your customers are calling you, and what it is that has prompted them to call you right now.

For the first time NHS Professionals had complete and detailed information on all the different types of call they were receiving. Prior to Classify ME they just knew the volumes and time of day the calls were received. Now they could drill down to percentiles of what each call was about which enabled the management team to take views on which calls could be sent to an IVR system.

"It was simple for the agents to collect this vital information – they were able to capture it as part of our end-of-call wrap time with a simple mechanism that was well received and widely accepted by staff".

Broadly speaking around 75% of our calls could be easily categorised but the remaining 25% of calls were very widespread in terms of content. This taught us many lessons, including the fact that our call centre agents had to be very skilled indeed to handle their call load.

Knowing the different types and volumes of each category of call enabled NHS Professional to carry out further development of their database. By better understanding the nature of the calls they were receiving they could make more appropriate use of their self service channels, prioritising agent talk-time on those calls that most needed the human touch. Self-service at that time was largely confined to the web, with the call centre acting essentially as a help desk. The insights provided by Classify ME allowed NHSP to optimise the types to transaction that were pushed to the web and also to consider the potential of IVR as an complementary self-service channel.

Business Benefits

While it was initially deployed so solve a specific business problem, a number of significant business benefits have resulted from the installations of Classify ME from CTI Labs according to Megan Grant.

For NHS Professional, the primary benefit derived from the customer insights provided by Classify ME. *The information on call types that we receive from Classify ME has provided NHS Professional with real insights into why our customers were contacting us.* This helped us to prioritise developments to our database to improve the self-service element of our service which resulted in our operating costs being driven down.

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A secondary and somewhat unexpected benefit lay in Classify ME's uses as a business analysis tool. Classify ME provided valuable information on type of calls that NHSP receive and played a principal part in the proving the business case for their investment in an Interactive Voice Response system which they anticipate ordering soon. This in turn will provide significant cost reductions for NHS Professionals and better customer service for our clients.

The third area of benefit was in staff development. "We are able to immediately identify areas where our contact centre agents need further training to handle certain and specific call types which again leads to better customer service".

When Classify ME was first installed there was a small increase in the average time taken to handle each call but this has fallen and it now takes approximately three seconds to capture this vital business information! We consider this to be time well-spent, and excellent value for money given the information it delivers to our organisation.

Extending the Benefits

Once the benefits of Classify ME were widely understood within NHS Professionals, other opportunities for its use were identified.

"We initially installed Classify ME for all our contact centre agents but more recently we have rolled out the application to our payroll department to identify the type of queries they are receiving".

Classify ME is now used on outbound calls as well as in-bound. Presently we receive around 150,000 calls a year but make 500,000 calls. Even though we were initiating the calls so we knew the call-types, Classify ME allowed us to capture and analyse call outcomes in a manner that had not previously been possible. And with outbound volumes running at three times the quantity of in-bound, the value to the efficient operation of the contact centre was immense.

Its extension to other business units beyond the contact centre and the potential for further extension with other ME applications from CTI Labs, makes Classify ME an important tool in the management of customer contact at NHS Professionals.

"Overall, Classify ME has been of huge benefit to NHS Professionals".

About IP Integration

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We know that developing the most successful communications infrastructure and managing new telephony, data and application services is a significant challenge facing businesses today. At IP Integration we understand that organisations must evolve their communications strategy, and through proven knowledge, experience and support, we provide complete business communications solutions.

Our voice, data, and systems integration solutions embrace the technology of the converged multi-service network for businesses of all sizes and the partnerships we have developed with the industry's leading players coupled with our in-house bespoke software solutions allow us to offer unparalleled levels of application integration to our customers.

