IBM

Telecom New Zealand rings the bell with new state-of-the-art call centers

Telecom New Zealand, with an already well-earned reputation for customer care, has dramatically improved its service by deploying advanced technology to re-engineer its business processes and supporting systems. The company achieved this by implementing Genesys CallPath, Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) software. The solution provides 1,000 customer service agents in five sales, service, credit and telemarketing call centers, with a range of powerful

Overview

■ **The Challenge**
 Develop a dependable voice response system that will improve overall performance and deliver better service to Telecom customers

■ **The Solution**
 IBM WebSphere® Voice Response with DirectTalk® Technology and Genesys CallPath® running on IBM @server xSeries server, IBM @server pSeries server

■ **The Benefit**
 Advanced technology reduces network costs, improves customer service and saves time on each call, increasing overall efficiency
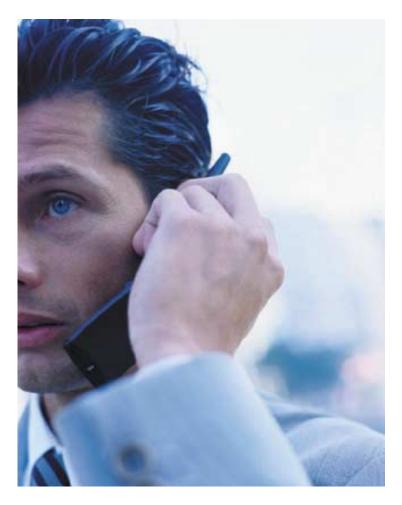
"All of our agents are busy, please hold"
Hearing that phrase is frustrating at anytime. Compounding the frustration is being put on hold for an agent, with no idea of how long the wait will be — 30 seconds, 20 minutes, more?

Telecom New Zealand provides a full range of network voice and data services as well as telephone equipment to business and residential customers throughout the country. Its management strongly felt that their customers deserved better service than they were getting. Through an alliance with IBM, the company sought to find a way to deliver that service.

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 Mike Bradley
 CTI Leader
 Telcom New Zealand

inbound and outbound dialing features. These features have had a major impact on customer service and efficiency. For example, the system, which handles 800,000 calls per month, can now calculate the average time a customer will have to hold and then uses a voice message to announce the wait time.

"This puts the decision to wait in the customer's hands, and that's appreciated," says Mike Bradley, the CTI leader at Telecom New Zealand. "International studies have shown that if you advise the wait time up front, customers feel they have been waiting less time than if you don't."

Shaving seconds off each call

This feature is just one of many that have been rolled out to the company's Customer Service Representatives (CSRs). One of the most valuable benefits is "screen popping," which can save customers and agents a significant amount of time. When a customer calls, intelligent call processing software uses the caller's number to display their profile information. Since this information no longer needs to be keyed in, time is saved on each call. Customers get the information they want more quickly, allowing CSRs to handle more calls. In fact, the company has

experienced higher-than-expected customer hit rates with "screen popping," according to Bradley. The hit rate for residential customers ranges from up to 90 percent in the evening to 50-60 percent during the morning work period.

"Screen popping" is also used if the call has to be transferred. This can also save time and eliminate the need for customers to have to repeat their name and account details. Genesys CallPath, working in conjunction with IBM WebSphere Voice Response with DirectTalk Technology, has saved a per-call average of more than 17 seconds on inbound calls and 15 seconds on transferred calls, Bradley says. The CSRs can also prerecord their greeting to each customer. Genesys CallPath can then automatically include the greeting at the beginning of each call.

One unusual challenge was the need to enable call centers to handle peak calls resulting from television ads. For example, let's say a company runs a commercial for a new service and provides a toll-free number for viewers. Within seconds, the phones light up as 500 to 600 calls are made. Two minutes later, the calls stop. Rather than manually taking customer information and calling

back, WebSphere Voice Response can automate the process by capturing the incoming caller's phone number. This frees the CSRs to answer the first few hundred calls, while the system picks up the rest, telling customers that it has their phone number and that an agent will call back shortly.

"This is a terrific benefit," Bradley says, "because it enables us to balance our resources, provide better service to customers and capture calls we simply couldn't capture before, which of course, increases our business."

Reaching out to customers
CallPath also lets Telecom's agents contact customers more quickly, using a variety of outbound dialing features. These include manual dialing from desktop computers, manual and automatic dialing from a campaign list, to an eventual fully-predictive dialing system.

The implementation of these outbound dialing features has resulted in some very significant productivity improvements. For example, the outbound Credit Management Center improved productivity 350 percent by automating its call process.

Another method used to improve results is an automated tele-messaging system that calls overdue customers to remind them that their account is overdue. According to Bradley, the reduction of net debtor days has achieved a return of 4,000 percent!

The predictive system can provide Telecom with even more productivity benefits. The system predicts when an agent will become free, dials a customer automatically, and passes only live calls to the CSRs . Since the "screen pop" can automatically displays customer information on the agent's terminal, the call can proceed immediately. Genesys CallPath captures and stores all phone transactions, updating records and providing management with a variety of valuable reports to constantly improve call center operations.

Providing personal service
Voice response features—intelligent queue announcements, agent greetings, call recording, interactive voice response and captured callback details—are provided by WebSphere Voice Response, which can dynamically allocate ports to maximize the use of equipment. "We have a policy of benchmarking ourselves against the leading telecommunications companies," says Bradley. "Since we re-engineered our operations, our call centers are among the very best in the world, if not the best."

"We've reduced our networking costs and increased productivity substantially. Even more important, we're now providing extremely rapid personal service to our customers, and they appreciate it. In an increasingly competitive global environment, customer loyalty is critical."

To learn more
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