DC WATER FOCUSES ON CONTACT CENTER PROCESSES AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO DRAMATICALLY ENHANCE CUSTOMER SERVICE CAPABILITIES

ALCATEL-LUCENT OMNIPCX RECORD SOLUTION HELPS DC WATER TO INCREASE LEVELS OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

CASE STUDY   MARKET: **ENERGY & UTILITIES**   REGION: **NORTH AMERICA**

CHALLENGES

- Enhance customer satisfaction by improving on agents' interactions with clients
- Give contact center supervisors better tools to manage operations, including call monitoring, recording, coaching and review
- Need for flawless execution because of DC Water's high-visibility in community

SOLUTION

- Alcatel-Lucent OmniPCX Record Suite
- Alcatel-Lucent OmniPCX Record Coach Module
- Alcatel-Lucent Professional Services

BENEFITS

- Increased customer satisfaction and call center efficiency
- Supervisors able to perform real-time monitoring and focused agent coaching
- Project completed on time and within budget using proven Alcatel-Lucent approach to coordinate all components of implementation

As part of a company-wide initiative focused on customer satisfaction, DC Water recently concluded a project to modernize its communications infrastructure to create a robust operational foundation for handling phone-based interactions with clients. "Clean water is essential to all life," said George S. Hawkins, General Manager of DC Water. "The system we use to provide this service is incredibly complex, and our success rises and falls on how well we interact with our customers."

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THE ALCATEL-LUCENT OMNIPCX RECORD COACH PROCESS ALIGNS BEHAVIORS WITH GOALS, RESULTING IN THE CONSISTENT DELIVERY OF IMPROVED LEVELS OF SERVICE TO CLIENTS

EFFICIENT INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS ARE CRITICAL TO ACHIEVING OPTIMAL OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE WITHIN ANY ORGANIZATION; THE NEW INFRASTRUCTURE, TOOLS AND PROCESSES MAKE THIS POSSIBLE AT DC WATER.

DC Water is responsible for providing retail water and wastewater services to the District of Columbia, as well as several counties in Maryland and Virginia. The organization has responsibility for a service area of approximately 725 square miles, utilizing over 1,300 miles of water pipes, 36,000 valves, and more than 9,000 fire hydrants.

THE CHALLENGES

DC Water's primary contact center handles approximately 15,000 customer calls per month, covering a wide range of topics; from outages and leaks through to billing-related issues. Several years ago, the organization's legacy PBX system was approaching end-of-life for support and many other components had become obsolete and unreliable. This made the overall system very susceptible to failure, and at risk of negatively impacting DC Water customers.

In addition to the issues created by an aging communications infrastructure, DC Water personnel were acutely aware of additional challenges. Lei Marshall, Contact Center Supervisor, elaborated, "It was tough to optimize our operations because we measured team and individual performances using aggregated data. We could never see what was happening in real-time, and we missed a lot of important detail."

The DC Water executive management team also wanted to optimize the way business was being conducted. Christopher Carew, DC Water Chief of Staff, further stated, "The ability to communicate efficiently, both internally and externally, is critical to achieving the highest levels of operational effectiveness and customer service within any organization.

We needed an integrated solution that leveraged all of our assets to help us attain the best possible standards of call center performance."

Initial efforts were directed towards creating a communications infrastructure that could flexibly support the dynamic needs of the utility company. Once this foundation was in place, a strategy was executed to optimize operational processes and practices across the call center.

THE SOLUTION

An Alcatel-Lucent OmniPCX™ Enterprise Communication Server was selected to provide hybrid VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) call processing capabilities. DC Water's five locations use a combined total of almost 2,000 IP touch and digital phones, complemented by passive communications servers to provide local backup. To ensure business continuity, a second appliance server was installed at a separate site.

Alain Tamdem, Senior Network and Telecoms Engineer for DC Water, recalled, "Once the infrastructure was fully implemented we turned our focus to optimizing contact center operations. We decided to deploy a comprehensive management solution that would allow us to monitor and record calls. The ability to easily gather and leverage metrics to enable continuous operational improvements was also an important factor."

An evaluation team considered proposals from a wide number of leading vendors and its structured review process resulted in the selection of a highly integrated solution from Alcatel-Lucent. An obvious advantage was the ease of integration with the existing Alcatel-Lucent telephony system; however, the ultimate decision was based on many additional factors.

Tamdem elaborated, "The Alcatel-Lucent proposal comprehensively addressed each of the requirements we defined. But, what really differentiated the solution was the combination of technology and an integrated set of proven processes for implementation and ongoing performance improvements."

"The Alcatel-Lucent solution laid out a very well-documented path to achieving all of our goals," added Omer Siddiqui, Chief Information Officer of DC Water. "We really liked the acknowledgement of the importance of the people and process aspects of accomplishing a successful implementation; the majority of the other proposals just focused on technology."

The Right Components Make the Difference

The chosen solution utilized components from the OmniPCX Enterprise portfolio – including OmniPCX Record and OmniPCX Record Coach modules – with implementation assistance provided by Alcatel-Lucent Professional Services.

And, according to Marshall, "Our Alcatel-Lucent consultants were wonderful; they created a fantastic environment and gave us the framework to bring everything together."

OmniPCX Record integrates call recording and monitoring functionalities directly into the telephony infrastructure, providing a scalable, highly modular and cost-effective toolset. All aspects of contact center interactions are easily managed and optimized using a set of intuitive Web-based applications. Supervisors can review recorded calls with agents and use the integrated Coach Management System to record all coaching activities and assess the consequent impact on the recipient's performance.

OmniPCX Record Coach Module facilitates the creation of a highly effective quality monitoring and coaching program that ensures contact center operations are consistent and fully aligned with business objectives, brand values and call handling expectations. Utilizing sophisticated call monitoring and auditing activities to provide a robust mechanism to deliver real-time coaching. Metrics are continually created to allow management and optimization of contact center agent interactions.

In the process of evaluating how an agent handles a call, a supervisor can comment on various segments (clips) of the call, add e-learning attachments and send the evaluation as online coaching feedback. Attachments typically originate from a library of clips representing examples of a specific type of skill,

CUSTOMER SUMMARY

Customer Name: DC Water

Customer URL: www.dcwater.com

Industry: Energy & Utilities

Number of Employees: Approximately 1,000

Budget: $400 million (2011 operating budget)

Number of Customers: 2.2 million permanent residents in DC, MD, and VA; 16.6 million annual visitors; and 700,000 people who are employed in the District of Columbia

such as a greeting, or objection handling. OmniPCX Record supports a wide range of formats for e-learning attachments, including audio or video files, PowerPoint presentations with voice-overs, or even links to an internal knowledge center.

A Focus on Coaching

Evelyn Gould, a fellow Contact Center Supervisor, stated, "Previously, when we coached our agents we could only speak in generalities, but now we can provide specific examples of their performance and illustrate a point using clips of real calls. Seeing and hearing an actual example of a best-in-class behavior is far more powerful than either being told what to do, or reading about it. When needed, we can send a relevant learning attachment to an agent and give them feedback instantly. This allows us to immediately address any areas that need urgent improvement, before an undesirable behavior becomes an ingrained habit or it negatively impacts customers."

The Coach process allows stakeholders to distill objectives, values and expectations into a template that defines the behaviors necessary to achieve those goals. At least one metric is assigned to each desired behavior to enable optimization and tracking. Using a common template makes sure there is alignment and continuity throughout the organization.

The process makes sure that behaviors are aligned with the organization's goals and public statements. Gould observed, "There is no point in promoting how friendly or customer-centric we are when there are no metrics in place to drive the behaviors to actually achieve this. The template links how we want to be perceived by our customers with how we should be operating to accomplish this. Our agents understand exactly how their actions and contributions impact the overall success of DC Water."

THE BENEFITS

Marshall stated, "The Coach process is extremely collaborative and by involving our agents in the project they feel part of the solution. There is a now great sense of accountability and teamwork in the group; everybody feels that they have ownership and a stake in the team's success.

"The primary focus of our business unit is to ensure customer satisfaction. We can do a much better job in monitoring and coaching our team, resulting in the delivery of an improved level of service to our clients. It is a wonderful thing." Gould enthused, "Contrasting our old way of doing things with the new system is like comparing a black and white television set to a color model!"

Carew also recognized the value the solution provides. "The Alcatel-Lucent solution has dramatically enhanced our capabilities by enabling greater visibility and control of just how effectively we are communicating internally and with our customers. We look forward to continuing our partnership and pushing the boundaries of what we can achieve together even further."

Siddiqui summarized, "Partnering with Alcatel-Lucent Professional Services to handle the implementation instilled a great sense of confidence. The Call Center project had enormous visibility in the community, and the improvements in customer satisfaction and efficiency we've achieved have justified our investment many times over."

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