

UTILITYWEEK

Caring and sharing: pooling knowledge at Yorkshire Water



Perfect picture: Yorkshire Water is meeting 80% of its customer experience measures

Allowing call centre agents to share their knowledge dramatically increased service levels at Yorkshire Water, says Ian Jones

Yorkshire Water receives 400,000 customer calls a year purely about water supply problems such as low pressure, burst pipes and water quality. Although 80 per cent of customer calls are relatively simple to respond to, the other 20 per cent are not. Not only are these complex queries hard to answer, but providing an incorrect response can lead to a significant increase in costs, unnecessary engineer callouts and customer dissatisfaction.

Yorkshire Water needed a knowledge management and customer service solution advanced enough to enable its agents to easily handle complex enquiries. It wanted to make every agent as good as its best agent by propagating expertise, best practices and resolution knowledge to the entire pool of agents. It also wanted to improve first-call resolution, reduce call handling and wrap-up times, and minimise repeat calls and escalations.

Partnering with eGain, Yorkshire Water implemented eGain KnowledgeAgent, a knowledge management solution for contact centre agents. eGain helped the supplier design best practice processes for knowledge capture, creation and management as well as customer service delivery.

The knowledge base now contains over 750 resolutions and is being used by 130 agents. The system drives efficient and effective conversations between agents and customers, improving service consistency, first-call resolution and compliance with corporate processes, while minimising the number of unnecessary engineer callouts.

"One of our requirements was to free our agents from rigid and often inappropriate scripts. eGain's solution drives adaptive and

flexible conversations between agents and customers that speed up call resolution and enable superior customer experience," says Alan Clubb, team manager on the integrated customer and operations management team at Yorkshire Water.

Following a call, the audit trail of what has been discussed and recommended is automatically captured by the system and passed into Yorkshire Water's call tracking system, along with the service request. This eliminates the need for the agent to make notes and therefore speeds call wrap-up time, while ensuring high-quality data for closed-loop management of the call centre.

If a callout is required, the transcript of the call diagnosis is passed to an appropriate engineer. This ensures that the right engineer is despatched with comprehensive details about the nature of the problem so that the visit results in efficient problem resolution.

Yorkshire Water is now achieving more than 30 per cent first call resolution on operational contacts. This in turn has cut unnecessary engineer callouts, saving an average of £30 per call, or £3.6 million per year.

Agent training time has been cut by 25 per cent and agents are able to handle a wider range of enquiries, resulting in a marked improvement in employee satisfaction. Customer satisfaction has also increased, with Yorkshire Water currently hitting an impressive 80 per cent of its customer experience measures.

On the back of the project's success, Yorkshire Water is now planning an expansion in the use of the system to handle alternative types of customer enquiries.

Ian Jones is head of global strategic solutions at eGain.