Retailer Increases Contact Center Scalability and Flexibility

1-800 CONTACTS uses Unified Contact Center Enterprise to create a single queue for inbound calls, emails, and outbound calls to verify contact lens prescriptions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
1-800 CONTACTS
• Contact Lens Retailer
• Draper, Utah
• 600 employees total; 425 in the contact center
CHALLENGE
• Enable growth
• Retain trained agents
SOLUTION
• Replaced eight phone systems with Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise
• Created a single queue for inbound and outbound calls and email
RESULTS
• Tripled number of at-home agents from 50 to 150
• Freed up agents' time for customer service by automating prescription-verification application
• Increased employee satisfaction

Challenge

The world's largest contact lens store, 1-800 CONTACTS, provides prescription contact lenses at competitive prices. Customers like the convenience of having contact lenses mailed directly to the home to save trips to the eye care practitioner. Since 1997, the company has filled more than 15 million orders for over 5 million customers.

The contact center is critical to the company's success. Approximately 425 contact center agents answer 40,000 to 45,000 calls and 5000 customer emails weekly to place orders or resolve issues. The same agents make 11,000 to 12,000 outbound calls each week to verify prescriptions with eye care practitioners, as required by law, and to remind customers to renew their prescriptions. "Our goal is to retain customers by creating a simple and exceptional ordering experience" says Will Gainer, call center director, 1-800 CONTACTS.

Previously, the company had eight separate phone systems, which increased management costs and impeded growth. Calls received on one system could not be routed to agents connected to other systems. Managers could only view performance statistics for agents connected to the same system. And agents had to manually change their status to unavailable before they could make outbound calls.

To prepare for expected growth, the company needed a more scalable and flexible contact center solution. "We wanted to blend inbound and outbound calls and email into a single queue," says Kimberly Hansen, telecommunications manager. "This is a far more effective way to manage agents than to dedicate them to a single contact channel." 1-800 CONTACTS also wanted the ability to support more at-home agents, both to avoid the need for new office space and to increase employee satisfaction and retention.

Solution

After evaluating leading contact center solutions, 1-800 CONTACTS chose Cisco® Unified Contact Center Enterprise. "The Cisco platform has the flexibility to address our unique business processes, including outbound calling," says John Murray, chief information officer, 1-800 CONTACTS. The company engaged Cache Valley Electric, a Cisco Certified Silver Partner, to

deploy Cisco Unified Communications Manager and Cisco Unity® Unified Messaging. To deploy Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise, Cache Valley recommended Spanlink Communications, another Cisco Certified Silver Partner with extensive experience with contact centers.

> ## "A single queue for inbound and outbound calling and email streamlines our business process."
> **—Will Gainer, Contact Center Director, 1-800 CONTACTS**

Spanlink deployed a single Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise system to connect all 425 agents, including 150 at-home agents. The system pushes customer interactions to agents according to the priority of the interaction: inbound calls first, emails second, and outbound calls third. Agents are trained to handle different types of contacts, which gives them a broader exposure to customer issues. "A single queue for inbound and outbound calling and email streamlines our business process," Gainer says.

> ## "One factor in 1-800 CONTACTS' success is that the company has applied the Cisco technology to support its business processes instead of changing its processes to match the technology."
> **—Eric LeBow, Vice President, Business Transformation, Spanlink Communications**

Spanlink also integrated Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise with the customer database so that the customer's history automatically pops up on the agent's screen when a call arrives. "Automatic screen pops speed up the order process by reducing the number of questions that the agent has to ask as well as the number of keystrokes," says Eric LeBow, vice president of Business Transformation, Spanlink Communications.

At-home agents and managers have the same capabilities that they would have if they worked in the company's offices, using a Cisco Unified IP Phone and Cisco Agent Desktop. Phil Olson, a contact center manager who works from home, uses Cisco Supervisor Desktop to monitor 21 at-home agents. "Using Cisco Supervisor Desktop, I can see whether agents are taking a phone call, answering email, or on a break," says Olson. "This helps me to work more efficiently because I can conduct call reviews and agent coaching when agents are in between calls. I can also chat with agents using instant messaging to stay in touch and provide support."

Spanlink provided discovery, design, deployment, and support services. "One factor in 1-800 CONTACTS' success is that the company has applied the Cisco technology to support its business processes instead of changing its processes to match the technology," says LeBow.

Results

Support for Growth
Since deploying its Cisco solution, 1-800 CONTACTS has increased the number of at-home agents from 50 to 150. If the additional 100 agents worked in the contact center, the company would have had to acquire more office space. As the company continues to grow, it can add contact centers and hire at-home agents anywhere in the world or outsource to contact center partners.

Cost Containment and Increased Profitability

Replacing eight switches with one has reduced management requirements. Enabling agents to make outbound calls helps the company recapture orders that would otherwise be lost because of invalid prescriptions. "The outbound calling capabilities in Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise enable us to call these customers and offer to schedule an appointment with a doctor," Murray says. When they receive their new prescriptions, many of these customers will place their order with 1-800 CONTACTS.

Increased Employee Satisfaction

Enabling associates to work from home improves employee satisfaction and retention. In fact, 1-800 CONTACTS received the State of Utah Work Life Award, partly because of the ability to work from home. According to Olson, some of the company's best agents work from home and are motivated to perform well because they enjoy spending more time with their families. "Eliminating an hour-long round trip to work each day saves 250 hours a year that I can spend with my family," Olson says. "Our customers have a simple and exceptional experience whether their call is connected to an at-home or contact center agent. That's the backbone of the company.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Unified Communications go to:
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