Danish Train Operator Gets Customer Service Back On Track

Danish Rail uses Cisco Unified Communications to sharpen its customer focus and revitalise its call centre operation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name
Danish Rail

Industry
Transportation

Location
Denmark

Number of Employees
9,000

Business Challenge
- To remain the preferred provider of railway transport in an increasingly competitive, deregulated market

Network Solution
- Network-based contact centre application that unites 11 call centres as a 'virtual' customer service operation, improving customer service levels and delivering a competitive edge

Business Results
- Increased business competitiveness due to greater agent efficiency and a reduction in the number of lost calls, arising from contact centre virtualisation
- Achievement of customer service targets such as answering 80 percent of calls taken within 60 seconds
- Improved first-time call resolution, shown by a nine percent drop in call volumes

Business Challenge

Danish Rail (DSB) is the largest rail operator in Denmark, running 80 percent of the country's passenger train services. Founded in 1885, DSB has been an independent public corporation since January 1999 and, although wholly owned by the Danish Ministry of Transport, competes in a deregulated market.

As part of the transition from a state-operated monopoly to a commercial entity, DSB had to renew its focus on customer service. The first stage of this process involved setting up 11 call centres throughout Denmark, close to where the majority of employees were already located, to manage telephone-based enquiries and reservations. Previously these had been processed by staff in railway station booking offices who also handled face-to-face interactions with customers.

The new system relied on separate Automatic Call Distributors (ACDs) located in each call centre. This meant that incoming calls had to be routed to each centre in turn until an agent became available. If no agents were free at that time, the system would drop the call and customers would have to re-dial. An estimated half a million calls per year were lost in this way, and many other customers had to wait a long time before their calls were answered.

DSB was consistently failing to meet its customer service targets such as answering 80 percent of all calls taken within 60 seconds. Another goal was to answer 85 percent of all calls received; DSB typically answered between 50 and 70 percent of all calls.

To improve service levels, the company needed to reorganise and revitalise its entire call centre operation. This exercise

would also help DSB to achieve other strategic goals such as optimising its sales channels, streamlining internal processes and empowering its employees. As part of the restructuring, the rail operator decided to replace the legacy ACDs with a single, centralised contact centre solution.

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—Rasmus Paludan, Contact Centre IT Manager, DSB

Network Solution

DSB already had a Cisco IP data network that was capable of supporting voice and video traffic. The company was keen to take advantage of that infrastructure by implementing a pure IP contact centre solution. This would allow DSB to deploy the solution across the network - and the organisation - instead of confining it to specific locations.

DSB's previous supplier of telephony systems had been poor at sharing information. However, the rail operator knew from experience that Cisco was open, accessible and willing to share knowledge in a variety of ways. The use of industry standards in Cisco technology would allow DSB to in-source the software development it was planning, in order to integrate the contact centre solution with other applications such as workforce management, CRM and an IT helpdesk. Much of the maintenance could also be in-sourced, helping to control costs by maximising DSB's existing IT resources.

These factors, combined with the good relationship that existed between the two companies, led DSB to view the Cisco offering with particular interest and, eventually, to select the Cisco Unified Contact Centre Enterprise. The main features of the solution, deployed in 2004, include intelligent contact routing, call treatment, network-to-desktop computer telephony integration, and multi-channel contact management.

"We saw the contact centre as an application on our network and we wanted an innovative solution, based on the latest technology, that would integrate well with our other applications," says Rasmus Paludan, Contact Centre IT Manager at DSB. "We were trying to inject a new dynamism into DSB. At that time Cisco was emerging as the supplier with the greatest momentum in the IP contact centre market."

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The Cisco solution profiles customers using contact-related data such as dialled number and calling line ID. Then it assigns the most appropriate resources to meet each customer's needs, based on real-time conditions such as agent skills and availability or queue lengths. Agent skills at DSB typically include domestic services, international train travel, disabled facilities and youth products.

Callers to DSB first encounter an interactive voice response (IVR) system that gives them three choices: domestic, international (including access to DSB Travel, the company's chain of travel agencies) and administration (non-sales enquiries). Within the domestic option, customers can choose to be connected to an automated timetable service that uses voice recognition to answer callers' questions. DSB owns 50 percent of Travel Planner, a company that provides an online information service for public transport in Denmark, and the rail operator was able to develop its telephone-based timetable system using data from the Travel Planner Website.

DSB has implemented a Cisco contact centre solution in both its data centres, to create a fully redundant system that supports its 24-hour operation. Instead of using the solution's built-in reporting capabilities, the company decided to develop an application internally that would be more precisely tailored to its requirements. The open database in the Cisco application made this possible. DSB has also changed some of the features of the standard Cisco Agent Desktop to better suit its needs - for example, agents use the modified desktop to log in and out of work every day.

Business Results

Deploying the Cisco solution has helped DSB to reduce customer waiting times and achieve one of its targets for the first time ever - answering 80 percent of all calls taken within 60 seconds. First-time resolution of calls has also improved, with fewer customers making repeat calls. As a result, the total number of incoming calls has dropped by nine percent since the Cisco solution was introduced in 2003.

DSB is managing the distribution of calls more effectively because its 11 call centres now function as one 'virtual' operation. The company's agents have become more efficient on the phone, shown by the fact that the average handling time for a call initially went down by 10 percent.

The average handling time is now rising again. This is largely due to the fact that the automated timetable service handles 2,700 calls per day, of which 72 percent achieve a successful outcome. Consequently agents are receiving fewer routine calls and taking a higher percentage of complex sales calls, which take longer to complete.

The Cisco contact centre application has provided DSB with a distributed architecture for the first time. The contact centre functionality on the company's network is now available not just to DSB's dedicated agents, but also to any employee whose help may be needed to resolve a customer enquiry. This has given the company greater flexibility and helped it to become more responsive to customers' requirements.

The restructuring process, combined with the introduction of Cisco technology, has greatly improved the overall efficiency of DSB's call centre operation. The number of agents has been reduced from 250 to 155, even though service levels have improved. DSB has also consolidated 183 separate phone numbers into one number, saving 75 percent of the associated network and line rental costs.

Thanks to its centralised contact centre application, DSB has gained a clear picture of its entire customer service operation for the first time. As well as high-level management information, the Cisco solution also generates detailed statistics to help track individual and team performances and identify areas for improvement.

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Next Steps

The number of email enquiries that DSB receives from customers is rising rapidly – from 15,000 in 2003 to 65,000 in 2006. To help manage the growing demand, DSB is adding the Cisco E-Mail Manager Option to its existing Cisco solution.

"One of the reasons why we liked the Cisco Unified Contact Centre is because it is scalable. There are many options, such as email, that you can add later and they can be easily integrated into the system," says Rasmus Paludan. "It's a very efficient model for our agents to handle emails as well as phone calls because the majority of emails can be processed when the phones are less busy."

As part of its restructuring, DSB plans to consolidate its 11 call centres into three main locations by the end of 2007, to reduce real-estate costs. The rail operator will also improve the integration between its own network and applications and those of Travel Planner - for example, by developing an automated service for the administration option on DSB's IVR. As well as improving customer service still further, this will bring DSB closer to its goal of becoming the main contact centre for all public transport enquiries in Denmark. Bus companies can already route calls through DSB's contact centre and, when the government introduces a national travel credit card scheme in 2008, the argument in favour of one centralised information service will become even stronger.

PRODUCT LIST

Voice and Unified Communications

- Cisco Unified Contact Centre Enterprise
- Cisco E-Mail Manager Option

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco customer contact solutions, go to: http://www.cisco.com/go/cc

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