

RAPIDLY EXPANDING ENERGY PROVIDER IMPLEMENT INTELLIGENT COMMUNICATIONS SOLUTIONS TO UPHOLD THEIR CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

PROJECT OVERVIEW

HQ Location: Warwick

Industry: Utilities

Service Implemented: Cloud Contact Centre (implemented with Salesforce) & Hosted Telephony

Number of contact centres: 4

Named users: 1400

THE CHALLENGE

“Our primary objective was to find a scalable, robust and secure platform. We wanted to ensure that whatever happens, we will never be restricted by our technology.”

Bill Wilkins, CIO of First Utility

Having grown rapidly since conception, First Utility were experiencing issues with regards to the scalability, stability and functionality of their previous contact centre platform. They were looking to address these issues, improve operational visibility and gain more reporting functionality by upgrading their technology - they were also looking for a partner who they could have a more productive, collaborative and close working relationship with.

Given that their previous contact centre platform was cloud-based, there was a risk of bias against implementing another cloud solution for fear of encountering the same issues. However, given their use of other cloud platforms without issue they were happy to go down this route provided that the reliability of the platform - on all fronts - was clearly demonstrated. Their CRM solution, Salesforce was one of the other cloud-based technologies that First Utility already had in place, so seamless integration between this and their contact centre platform was another mandatory requirement.

Thinking strategically, the company also wanted to be able to utilise their new solution in ways that would improve their customer experience:

“We saw this as the key cornerstone for providing a better customer experience. Our previous solution lacked basic functionality that you’d expect as standard from these types of systems; for example, you didn’t have the ability to prioritise certain calls as part of call routing. We were looking to ‘put all of the basics right’ as well as going that step further to really improve our service.”

John Booton, First Utility’s Head of Technical Operations

Finally, they were also having issues with their hosted telephony provider and were looking for a new solution to sit alongside the contact centre platform.

THE PROCESS

The First Utility team met Russell Attwood, CEO of Unify Communications along with the Serenova (formerly LiveOps Cloud) team at the Customer Contact Expo in 2014. Dave Whitehouse, the Infrastructure Manager at First Utility did some research into Unify as a provider and was impressed by what he found:

“Reading about Unify’s experience gave me real confidence in them as a potential provider. We also loved the look of the platform, with clear evidence of things like scalability and stability readily available.”

Dave Whitehouse, First Utility’s Infrastructure Manager

After conducting some thorough research, John Booton began the RFP process with his shortlisted providers along with their existing supplier. Responses were scored on various factors including scalability, disaster recovery (DR), cost and how seamlessly the technology would fit both the organisation and all other technologies already in place.

"I tried to choose a mixture of resellers, some of the big names who sell directly and then a few smaller suppliers to compare. The Serenova platform was strong in every area, and thanks to being so well-rounded it came out on top."

Various workshops, meetings and practical sessions were held between the start of the tender process and when the decision was made, and through demonstrating their ability to understand the organisation & how they operate along with being able to explain how this would work in the context of the new platform, Unify were able to secure the contract.

WHY UNIFY?

"At the start of the process we considered both going through a reseller and going direct; there is no doubt in my mind now that going through a reseller, and with Unify specifically was the right choice."

John Booton

With the supplier-customer relationship and the level of support provided as important to First Utility as the technology, harnessing the power of the global platform through Serenova's biggest UK-based reseller was the logical choice.

"One of the potential issues with implementing a cloud-based solution of this scale is that you lose the local touch; the level of knowledge and support that a local provider could give you" said

Bill Wilkins. *"By going through Unify we benefit both from the price, scale, functionality and power of a global platform and a local point of contact with a personal level of support."*

First Utility were also impressed by the options presented to them by Unify with regards to utilising Serenova's APIs, including ways that these could be utilised to support a quicker deployment as well as to further customise their contact centre platform.

IMPLEMENTATION

With an immovable cut-off date from their previous provider just 10 weeks from the start of the implementation, the pressure was on to deliver at speed.

"An implementation of this kind, taking into account all of the components would usually take around 6 months. Having the good relationship that we've got with First Utility was instrumental in ensuring that we hit our deadlines, with all of us (First Utility, Unify, Gamma and Serenova) rising to the challenge."

Martin Deaker, First Utility's Project Manager

There were a number of different solutions being displaced across First Utility's locations, so the exercise allowed the company to standardise their technology and gain much more control, visibility and flexibility at Head Office level. Unify's implementation team went to all of the sites during the roll-out process, including on 'go-live' days to ensure that the switch over went smoothly and all hardware (such as phones) was installed correctly.

Utilising the platform's APIs greatly facilitated the implementation, allowing Unify to meet all of First Utility's needs even when a standard integration or existing functionality couldn't. The 'out of the box' integration with Salesforce

also significantly helped the process, allowing their agents to very quickly get access to crucial customer information and history.

With regards to the telephony piece, Unify recommended and subsequently rolled out Gamma's hosted telephony offering named 'Horizon'. First Utility were impressed with the voice quality delivered by Gamma, the cost savings that could be achieved by utilising their 'fixed cost' model and now everything including their phone numbers is managed with them directly.

"We were very happy with how the implementation went. We had no real issues throughout; our project manager over at Unify was a complete rock throughout the entire process, and their whole team have such excellent technical knowledge. We would never have been able to install something else in this timeframe - let alone with time to spare, like we had!"

Dave Whitehouse

As part of the agreement, Unify's Contact Centre Technology Specialist Sally Paul was to be based at First Utility's main contact centre for one year after the implementation was completed.

"We understood that First Utility had been 'burnt' in the past," said Russell Attwood "and we were keen to demonstrate our commitment to the relationship as well as ensuring that they get the most out of the platform. Having a dedicated specialist onsite has been great for communication, our ongoing understanding of First Utility as a business and for them to be able to utilise every single feature that the solution has to offer that they can benefit from."

THE SOLUTION

Once the implementation was completed, performance was meticulously monitored

for evidence of downtime or disruptions to quality with very positive results. Thanks to the platform being easy to administer, the team at First Utility are enjoying being able to be flexible and make changes as and when required.

Of the results, the team concluded:

"It was great to see the same people involved throughout the process. The rate and pace with which they delivered was incredible, and it was nice to see everybody 'standing behind their promises' as such. They've delivered everything that we expected, and more."

Vince King

"Unify are incredibly proactive. We're a supplier's worst nightmare in the sense that we're tech-savvy and always on the ball - but from the word go they've been completely honest with us, always one step ahead and they've just completely understood our business. It's been very impressive."

John Booton

"Becoming a trusted partner of First Utility is not easy. It's a lot of responsibility, and we need to have complete confidence in everybody that we meet and everything that they do for the partnership to succeed. We think very highly of the Unify team, and have a great relationship with them."

Bill Wilkins

FIRST UTILITY'S FAVOURITE FEATURES

1.

'A GREAT PARTNERSHIP'

It was crucial to establish a good working relationship. The secret to achieving that? Do what you'll say you do. We asked for something reliable, scalable and flexible from a partner who would work with us collaboratively on an ongoing basis - and that's exactly what we've got.

4.

IMPROVED AGENT EXPERIENCE

The agents love the way the product works, their new equipment such as the headsets provided by Unify and the fact that they're no longer interrupted by regular outages/downtime. It's providing them with a much better working experience.

2.

SCALABILITY

We've been lucky to continually grow at quite a pace over the last few years; this year alone/since the start of the project we've grown a fair amount. The technology now in place is extremely scalable, and making changes of any nature including this is so quick and easy.

5.

SECURITY

We had a number of meetings to discuss security in terms of disaster recovery processes, backups and exactly how our information would be stored - we were able to gain a really thorough understanding from all of the suppliers involved, and were more than happy with the setup.

3.

STABILITY

Having Sally onsite has been such a huge benefit to us, allowing us to fully exploit the benefits and functionality that comes with the platform as well as to improve our service and cut costs. The rest of the Unify team have been great too!

6.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

We were looking for something that would deliver real value to our organisation as well as a quick return on investment. We don't plan on changing our technology again any time soon, and by outsourcing so much of the requirement that keeps our resources free for other projects.

ABOUT FIRST UTILITY

First Utility is a supplier of gas and electricity in the United Kingdom, based in Warwick. In October 2013 the company was ranked as the seventh largest supplier in the UK, and since they've grown from 200,000 customers to almost 1 million - making them the largest supplier outside of the "Big Six". Their contact centre operations are run from a number of locations across the country, all of whom have come on-board with the new technology.

ABOUT UNIFY COMMUNICATIONS

Unify Communications are a next generation communications services provider, supplying customers globally with cloud-based contact centre solutions and enterprise telephony. Our expertise and approach to customer service means we become trusted advisors to our clients, with a real understanding of their organisation and the challenges they face. We're passionate about the world-class service we deliver, helping our customers throughout their decision-making and transformation processes and providing comprehensive support and advice on an ongoing basis.

ABOUT SERENOVA

Serenova are one of the award-winning global leaders in cloud contact centre and customer service solutions, with customers such as Salesforce.com, Symantec, Royal Mail Group, Dropbox, Twitter, Parcelforce, Nuffield Health and First Utility.

ABOUT HORIZON

Horizon is a complete business communications service that provides a range of fixed and mobile capabilities via an easy-to-use web portal. Gamma (suppliers of Horizon) are one of the UK's largest network operators, supplying a broad range of communications to a wide range of organisations.

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