



PROVIDENT FINANCIAL CASE STUDY

Flexible Contact Centre helps lender change with the times.

BRINGING THE PERSONAL TOUCH TO LENDING

An insurance agent by trade, Joshua Kelley Waddilove founded what is now a major UK lending operation in 1880 after experiencing firsthand the difficulties that working class families in the north of England had in paying for essential items. A system of vouchers that the less well-off could exchange in local shops for clothing, food and coal were repaid in weekly affordable amounts. As the popularity of the scheme spread, an office was opened in Bradford, West Yorkshire, and agents hired to collect customer repayments.

By the time Waddilove died in 1920, Provident Clothing and Supply was operating nationwide with a network of 5,000 agents. The company, now called Provident Financial, has continued to demonstrate the innovation and proximity to customers so characteristic of Joshua's original vision. In 2003, for example, a gap in the market was seen for a credit card aimed at people with a 'less than standard' credit rating. The result was a Visa card, Vanquis, with carefully controlled spending limits to help users rebuild their credit scores.

“OUR CONTACT CENTRE IS A CRITICAL PART OF OUR STRATEGY AND OUR BUSINESS AND ITS AVAILABILITY IS PARAMOUNT.”

Wasim Altaf, IT Voice Analyst, Provident Financial Management Services

A CONSTANTLY EVOLVING CONTACT CENTER

The company started by using Genesys in its Bradford contact centre for outbound calling. The next milestone was using Genesys to handle a million inbound calls a year. More recently, Provident Financial moved to a version incorporating session initiation protocol (SIP), allowing new levels of flexibility, for instance enabling agents to work remotely.

As call volumes continued to increase, the company started outsourcing some of its contact centre load, using Genesys Continuous Workforce Optimisation to achieve optimum internal and external staffing levels and improve call routing. The latter was particularly important for the small central debt recovery team in charge of managing customers in arrears.

The calls the team gets are related to agent remuneration, but until 2010, when the team started using Genesys, there was no way of knowing how many calls were coming in and, possibly, being lost. Besides improving the visibility of incoming call traffic, Genesys helped drastically improve productivity.

Previously, members of the collections and sales outbound calling teams had relied on manual dialing, which was inefficient because several attempts were often needed to reach a single customer. By switching to Genesys automated dialing, agents were able to deal with 40 percent more customer records per day, boosting collections.

Provident Financial also introduced Genesys Self-Service to handle calls using interactive voice response-based routing. Given this track record, Genesys was the obvious choice when the company chose to embark on one of its most ambitious initiatives to date.

Provident Financial has been using Genesys products for 14 years, and Connect remains a key partner, squarely focused on contact centre performance. This UK-based systems integrator brings in-depth knowledge of Genesys technologies, coupled with unparalleled implementation experience. That expertise comes from over one hundred contact centre project engagements with organisations of all sizes across all industry sectors.

CHALLENGES

- Maintain leadership in nonstandard consumer lending
- Expand business to new customer segments
- Create new channels to market

RESULTS

- Achieved target of answering 80% of calls within 20 seconds
- Reduced contact centre costs by GBP £200,000 a year
- Improved outbound contact rates by 40%

PRODUCTS

- Genesys Proactive Customer Communications
- Genesys Continuous Workforce Optimisation
- Genesys Contact Centre Modernisation
- Genesys Self-Service
- Genesys Multi-Channel

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● “CONNECT IS BRINGING ENORMOUS VALUE BY HELPING ASSESS, DESIGN, DELIVER AND SUPPORT THE INTEGRATION ASPECTS OF THESE PROJECTS, TO INSURE THEY PROCEED TO PLAN AND WITH NO UNFORESEEN HICCUPS”

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MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM DOORSTEP TO DESKTOP

Even in the present day, Provident Financial relies on agents to collect customer repayments from door to door. This approach is important in maintaining trust, ensuring monies are collected on time and helping identify potential new sales, since many customers would not pass traditional credit scoring tests.

With other online players eyeing the non-standard lending market, Provident Financial recognized that it, too, would need to create digital channels in order to continue delivering the best possible customer service. The issue was how to do this in the quickest and most efficient way, and Genesys provided the answer. “It was a project that was put in place within a couple of months,” says Wasim Altaf, IT voice analyst at Provident Financial Management Services. “Without the capacity to get those calls routed it would have been difficult to see if it was working. And it had to work.”

SUPPORTING ONLINE AND OFFLINE OPERATIONS

The so-called Satsuma Loans lending operation launched in October 2013 with a dedicated contact center team. Within six months, 1,000 Satsuma calls a week were being taken, in addition to the one million calls handled by the rest of the business. This level is expected to rise to 1,000 calls a day by the end of 2014, as more people get in touch via the website and ring up to pay by card. The latter option is already one of the main sources of incoming calls across Provident Financial and is something the lender is thinking of offering on a self-service basis in future.

The lender is hoping to introduce email integration to its customer communications, too. At present, customer emails simply go to an inbox and are dealt with on a first-come, first-served basis. With Genesys, Provident Financial will be able to manage this flow more intelligently, improving customer service. Elsewhere, the business is considering whether there may be benefits in using Genesys to provide a web chat channel or, potentially, video communication.

“Connect is bringing enormous value by helping assess, design, deliver and support the integration aspects of these projects, to insure they proceed to plan and with no unforeseen hiccups,” says Altaf.

A HOST OF BENEFITS ACROSS THE BUSINESS

Notwithstanding these developments, today it's as important as ever to make sure every single phone call is handled correctly. “For us it's critical to ensure the right call is given to the right agent,” Altaf says.

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● “OUR CONTACT CENTRE IS A CRITICAL PART OF OUR STRATEGY AND OUR BUSINESS AND ITS AVAILABILITY IS PARAMOUNT. THANKFULLY, WITH GENESYS WE HAVE A VERY STABLE SYSTEM”

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This also plays a part in staff retention. Provident Financial operates a blended contact centre model with 167 seats, 69 of which are for outbound calling. Being able to give each agent calls best suited to their skills helps enhance employee satisfaction. The company prides itself in having a low contact center staff turnover rate, which helps with customer relations.

For more than a decade, Genesys has helped Provident Financial to continue innovating in line with changing customer needs and expectations. The company has been able to deal with increasing call volumes while improving service levels. Bearing in mind that customers phoning to make a payment will not be motivated to stay on the line for long, the lender has set an ambitious target of answering 80 percent of calls within 20 seconds, and getting to 95 percent of calls overall.

“If we are in any danger of not achieving our targets, the flexibility of the Genesys platform helps us avoid the situation. If the contact centre is experiencing high volumes, for example, we will do something to give important calls higher priority. If the contact centre is not reaching its objectives, we start routing calls to outbound teams.”

Finally, improved workforce management has helped the business make significant savings. Altaf concludes: “Through accurate forecasting, we’ve been able to save around GBP£200,000 a year. Our contact centre is a critical part of our strategy and our business and its availability is paramount. Thankfully, with Genesys we have a very stable system.”

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