



Barclays PLC trusts eGain

Delivering superior financial services to corporate clients

Key results

- ✓ An increase in first call resolutions from 70% to 95%.
- ✓ A 67% decrease in average call handling time.
- ✓ 75% of calls are picked up within 11 seconds.
- ✓ An increase in the overall customer satisfaction rating from 88% to 97%.
- ✓ A 70% efficiency gain in the agent-to-customer ratio.
- ✓ Agent training time decreased from ten to four weeks.
- ✓ Minimal staff expansion while the customer base doubled.

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Rob Hudson

Customer Service Manager
Barclays Business Banking

When you provide core financial services to 60,000 corporate customers around the globe, your eService platform had better be capable of delivering superior, speedy, and reliable assistance. That’s why Barclays PLC turned to eGain when it needed help managing an expanding customer service load within its Business Banking division.

Company

Ranked third among UK-based banks, Barclays PLC offers a comprehensive array of consumer and corporate financial services, with offices in more than 60 countries around the world.

Challenge

In 1998, faced with a rapidly expanding customer base and the need to boost productivity without increasing staff, Barclays executives began searching for specialised tools to help manage the Business Division call centre.

Businesses are always striving to increase efficiency. However, an even more practical impetus drove the Barclays process forward. “We were running out of space in the call centre,” says Rob Hudson, who oversees the Barclays call centre in Northwich, just outside of Manchester. “We were looking to increase the number of customers that an agent could handle, so we wouldn’t have to hire more agents. We simply didn’t have anywhere to put them!”

Solution

After reviewing a number of potential solutions, Barclays chose **eGain® Knowledge™** because, in Hudson’s

words, “it seemed easy to use, easy to develop and capable of scaling to our company’s worldwide operations.”

Once in place, eGain Knowledge proved itself almost immediately. “Before we introduced eGain in July 2000, we were using basic scripted software,” says Hudson. “We weren’t in control of the calls, and our agents were all over the place. The customer was dictating the pace of the call, and we were solving problems by relying on information that agents were carrying around in their heads.”

Implementation

A critical component of the Barclays Knowledge system is the integration with the company’s legacy customer database. “The calls are logged in Siebel, then we query the knowledge base to find the solution to the customer’s issue,” explains Alan Postlethwaite, who manages the call centre’s technical infrastructure. “eGain’s professional services team worked closely with us to develop the linking code.”

Rather than copying and pasting the dialogue between agent and customer, the information is entered once only in a database shared by the Siebel and eGain applications. “That’s very convenient,” says Postlethwaite. “We can review calls by querying one database, which then contains something similar to an audit trail of the problem resolution process.”

Results

Barclays’ customer service team quickly achieved gains in virtually every area of call centre performance. “When we introduced Knowledge, it put us in

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eGain[®]
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control of the call,” Hudson declares. “We dictated the pace of the call and were able to provide consistent answers to the customer. We went from solving about 70 percent of calls at first point to solving around 95 percent of all calls without requiring an escalation.”

Reducing wrap time

Barclays employs some 54 first-tier agents who handle around 2000 direct dial-through calls per day. After the call is completed, the agent enters a recap of the steps that led to the resolution of the customer’s problem. The time it takes to enter this information and proceed to another call is known as “wrap time.”

With eGain Knowledge, the average wrap time was reduced from three minutes to a minute-and-a-half, a 50 percent increase in efficiency. Previously, agents would take around 60 seconds to pick up incoming calls. “Now, we’re answering 75 percent of calls within four rings,” says Hudson. “That’s fantastic, considering we’re dealing with corporate customers. These are far from simple transactions.”

Agents discover knowledge is a good thing

When Barclays first introduced eGain Knowledge into its call centre operations, some agents were concerned that the program would reduce the level of expertise required to perform their jobs and, consequently, narrow their career paths. According to Hudson, exactly the opposite has happened. “Knowledge has, in fact, enabled us to broaden their skill sets,” he says. “Instead of supporting one product, they are supporting four and even five products.”

In addition, Hudson asserts, the positive reception of Knowledge by the call centre team played a key role in improving Barclays customer satisfaction scores. “Before the implementation, overall satisfaction with the help desk hovered around 89%. In the last survey conducted it was around 97%.”

Knowledge cases are structured so that agents can drill down multiple levels and quickly find the solution to a problem.

“The more experienced an agent is, the more efficient they can be,” explains Postlethwaite. “Ultimately, we’re working toward a system that will enable any agent to answer any question on any product.”

Proving the ROI: Doing more with the same

Since the implementation of Knowledge, Postlethwaite and Hudson have been able to show management a significant return on investment. “We operate a resource model that says for every ‘X’ number of customers you have to have ‘X’ number of full-time staff,” elaborates Hudson. “Previously, that figure was one agent for every 680 customers. Now, the figure has nearly doubled to around 1150 customers per agent. In other words, over three years, the increase in head count has been negligible, while the customer base has nearly doubled.”

Hudson also notes a decrease in the time it takes to train new agents on the company’s core product, Business Master. “It used to take 10 weeks,” he says. “Now it takes four. We’ve also seen a reduction in the time it takes an agent to move into a specialist or second-tier category.”

The implementation of Knowledge has even impacted the criteria for hiring new agents. “We don’t have to look for people with technical skills,” Postlethwaite explains. “Instead, we can focus on people with superior customer service skills. It’s easy to teach someone how to use the system, but it’s very difficult to teach someone the interpersonal skills required to be a successful agent.”

Future

Both Barclays call centre managers express their enthusiasm for the changes brought by the eGain solution. “We’ve seen qualitative improvements amongst our team of agents, and performance increases across almost every operation,” Hudson declares. Adds Postlethwaite, “eGain has become a valued partner and we’re looking forward to benefiting from that partnership for years to come.”