Virgin Mobile trusts eGain

eGain Knowledge reduces unnecessary handset exchanges and saves millions of pounds

Key results

- ✔ 38% reduction in handset exchanges within the first six months.
- ✔ 30% improvement in accuracy of questioning.
- ✔ 23% improvement in call quality.
- ✔ 19% improvement in first call resolution.
- ✔ Improved agent satisfaction evidenced by a 90% improvement in call handling.

"The original business case called for … a five percent reduction in handset exchanges. What we've actually found six months down the line is that there has been a 38% reduction in handset exchanges."

Jason Tye
Knowledge Manager
Virgin Mobile

To deliver on its customer service commitments in a sector where there is an ever-increasing complexity of product services with an ongoing focus on cost control, Virgin Mobile implemented a knowledge-based solution from eGain. The result has been improved levels of service, happier customers, and cost savings of millions of pounds a year.

Company

Trading now for more than four years, Virgin Mobile is the most successful virtual mobile network operator in the world, with over four million customers in the UK alone. It has focused primarily on the consumer market, particularly on the pre-pay sector, and its customer proposition revolves around service.

Andrew Ralston, Virgin Mobile's Customer Relationship Director explains, "The overall level of service provided by the mobile networks has been pretty woeful. However, Virgin is synonymous with service—it is a cornerstone of the brand—so there was real opportunity to make a difference here. Our vision was to give customers what they want and deliver a consistent quality of customer service."

Challenge

To deliver on its service promises, Virgin Mobile has a 1000 plus strong customer service team based in Trowbridge and Middlesbrough that responds to 25,000 calls, 50 letters and 6000 emails every day. The growing sophistication of mobile handsets and the increased variety of the services provided on them (from email to games) means that the challenges—and costs—of delivering cost-effective customer service to mobile customers is increasing almost daily.

"We have to continue to offer a unique experience and a differentiated service, but do so at a very economic level. That is the constant challenge for us going forward," says John Elliott, Head of Customer Operations at Virgin Mobile.

Solution: Knowledge is power

Virgin Mobile wanted to ensure its customer service advisors (CSAs) managed their many customer calls each day in a consistent way. They also needed information to improve the resolution of calls at first point of contact, and reduce the need for repeat calls by use of an intuitive knowledge base.

Virgin Mobile realised that a knowledge management system would provide much needed support to agents to improve the accuracy of diagnosis of customer's problems. This would allow all service agents, irrespective of experience to have direct access to that knowledge and consequently keep customer service levels high in the face of an ever-increasing range of products and services. Eventually, the decision was made to select **eGain® Knowledge™**.

"We went through a fairly full evaluation of all the providers in the market place and felt eGain's comprehensive product functionality met our key criteria most accurately," says Ralston. "We felt it was a flexible product but—more importantly than anything—we felt there was a group of people in eGain that we could really work with and who could help to deliver the quality of service we wanted."

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Jason Tye, Knowledge Manager, adds, "We chose eGain for some really compelling ROI predictions and because they had a lot of experience in working with telecommunications companies. They also showed a strong commitment to continue working with us."

Implementation: A successful pilot

"eGain was a significant implementation for us; it was important to prove the benefits of the eGain knowledge base to our CSAs, customers and the business, before fully committing to the investment and implementation. We therefore felt that it was important to pilot it first," says Ralston.

Tye takes up the story, "The pilot approach involved researching the most expensive calls and these were to do either with handset exchanges or when the call needed to be transferred to a specialist team. Based on that research, we built the knowledge base and had a working pilot delivered within two months."

The knowledge base guides the agents through the interaction with the customer, from the initial enquiry through to a consistently accurate resolution. Tye continues, "Over the course of the pilot, we found that CSAs were asking 30% more correct questions when compared to a control team and the actual quality of the calls they handled was 23% better. There was also a 19% improvement in terms of calls transferred to our second contact teams."

Once the pilot was up and running, a business case analysis identified a payback in less than three years. However, in reality the project delivered a return on investment in less than 12 months. This led eGain Knowledge to be rolled out across Virgin Mobile in late 2002.

Elliott says, "Virgin Mobile is very demanding in terms of its suppliers and supplier relationships but, as we've gone through the life cycle of this particular commission, the experience with eGain has been a positive one. In the early days, they were very supportive, helping us to build the business case and as we went through the implementation, we could anticipate the issues that we were going to come up against. We've had some challenges in terms of how to develop the MIS and how to best use the tool and they have been there for us."

Paul O'Neill, Knowledge Base Manager, adds, "We've benefited hugely from eGain's wide expertise in the telecommunications sector. They have a real understanding of how Virgin works and how we do things so they've been able to tailor some of their solutions to meet our requirements."

Results

In live deployment, eGain Knowledge actually delivered benefits that were considerably better than was predicted in the ROI case. Tye notes, "The original business case called for eGain to pay for itself over a three year time period and one of the statistics in there was a five percent reduction in handset exchanges. What we've actually found six months down the line is that there has been a 38% reduction in handset exchanges."

Tye continues, "The CSAs using the system said that by giving them the answers they needed, it enhanced their ability to take ownership and the whole feeling of being able to give a better service increased their job satisfaction. This was evidenced by a 90% improvement in call handling."

This observation is confirmed by Virgin Mobile's Automation Manager, Duncan Hall, who notes that customer feedback on calls where agents had eGain Knowledge support has been extremely positive.

Future

Ralston adds, "Clearly, our products and services are going to get more complicated and we will most definitely need knowledge management to help us alleviate some of that complexity and continue to deliver 'the Virgin Experience' our customers expect."

Elliott says, "eGain Knowledge will help us enable more self-service through the Web channel as well. The potential of the Web for self-service using knowledge is enormous and clearly we've only just touched the tip of the iceberg."

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