TalkTalk reduces call centre costs dramatically with Nuance.

Natural Language Call Steering delivers £3 million savings in just three months.

Challenge
– Provide their customers with faster, more responsive service
– Effectively handle the predicted increase in customer service calls
– Reduce the number of transferred calls
– Allow customers to use conversational language in the IVR to get answers to their questions more quickly

Solution
– Nuance designed the IVR experience using information from customer calls to optimize the system
– A conversational IVR was deployed to provide a more intuitive and engaging experience for callers
– Natural Language Call Steering allows callers to use their own words so that each call could be routed to the right agent the first time

Results
– Delivered a return on investment in just 14 weeks
– 16% reduction in misrouted calls
– Average call time decreased by 26 seconds
– Call times reduced by 23% in just three months
– TalkTalk saved £3 million during the implementation
– 94% accuracy of the speech recognition system

Background
TalkTalk Telecom Group plc provides pay television, telecommunications, internet access and mobile network services to businesses and consumers in the UK. Despite operating within an aggressive market, TalkTalk has the fastest growing TV offering in the UK. The company has grown exponentially in recent years through a series of acquisitions and organic growth.

TalkTalk

NUANCE

"We wanted to make the process of customers calling in as quick and efficient as possible, so we decided to look for a better way of handling incoming enquiries. This is one of the most successful deployments of this technology in UK and Ireland. The focused, collaborative approach we undertook with Nuance meant we could test and learn together in a safe environment during the process of designing the IVR."

Eoin Power, Head of Contact Strategy & Planning,
TalkTalk

To remain competitive, TalkTalk continuously investigates ways to enhance the customer experience and remain cost effective. The company was tasked with enhancing its customer journey, reducing transfers, increasing automation and encouraging customers to revert to the website for easily solvable issues. TalkTalk worked with Nuance to create a bespoke solution that would accomplish its goals, while also enhancing the customer experience.

Challenge
TalkTalk knew that with the rapid growth of its TV service, the volume of calls to its call centre would increase, bringing additional costs and potential changes in customer profiles and demands. The main objective was to increase IVR self-service function-ality, reduce misrouted calls and improve customer satisfaction.

Consumer behavior and expectations for service have changed significantly over the past few years. Customers now expect interactions to be intuitive and easy. Knowing that their customers' time is precious, TalkTalk needed a system that resolved queries quickly and painlessly. It was crucial to understand the specific needs of each caller, which couldn't be done using a series of menu mazes with a limited range of options. Understanding what each caller needed and allowing them to express their needs in their own words would not only improve the customer's experience, but would also alleviate the pressures on the agent and gain analytical information that would be needed to further advance the system.

Solution
In August 2013, TalkTalk implemented a Nuance Natural Language Call Steering within their IVR. The new system was designed to lower the cost per call, improve first call resolution rates, reduce the number of call transfers, and to optimise automation whilst providing the business with detailed customer intelligence.

TalkTalk worked with Nuance Communications to implement a proof of concept, with an objective to meet agreed targets, and then widely deploy. To create the best possible solution, TalkTalk involved all areas of its business (commercial, IT, legal, training, marketing, and contact center), helping to ensure that the customer journey was correctly mapped and goals and objectives achieved. In addition, Management Information, analytics and the planning teams were consulted to understand, review and present the results back effectively.

Working with the cross-functional team, Nuance identified more than 500 unique call paths, which are followed depending on the customer intent. This means customers are more likely to get the information they need immediately or to be accurately routed to an agent who can help them.

"Our customers can have many products; a TV customer could also have broadband and phone services with us and that can make it really difficult to understand why they're calling. NLCS can actually properly interpret the call and route that customer to the right place, first time."

"We chose Nuance because they're industry leading in this area. We set out to do what typically would have been a nine month project and they delivered it in three. I don't think that would have been possible if we weren't working with such a good partner. The Nuance Professional Services team continues to offer the best support that's available and with their help we are making further improvements in the services we've got."

Business benefits

The return on investment was achieved in just 14 weeks. The implementation has already saved TalkTalk £3 million and has provided the opportunity to further reduce costs.

TalkTalk customers can now use conversational language to get answers to their questions, while agents are freed to deal with more complex enquiries. The stellar Natural Language system is responsible for a 16% reduction in misrouted calls and cutting the average call time by 26 seconds. The number of calls transferred to customer contact centres dropped and customer self-service increased by 28%.

In the first three months, the system delivered a call recognition accuracy rate of 94%. The 500 unique call paths allow the customers to speak in their own words, enabling the system to understanding the customer's real reason for their enquiry and resolving it quickly and seamlessly - which can make the difference between retaining and losing a customer.

The Management Information that the Nuance solution provides enables TalkTalk to better understand its customers' needs, track trends and identify changes within different areas of the business. The IVR system provides a more granular level of insight into the peaks and troughs created by customer intent, providing TalkTalk with a deeper level of understanding of the

customer call drivers in real time. TalkTalk now has clearer insight to allow the analytics teams to focus on areas of improvements and identify the size of certain opportunities.

After presenting the Natural Language proposal to TalkTalk's board, the decision was made to roll out the solution to all sales and service lines.

Additional benefits gained include:

– 16% reduction in transfers to agents - getting the customer to the right place first time
– Speech recognition delivered 94% accuracy, exceeding expectations
– An average reduction of 26 seconds (23%) in the IVR was achieved, with some journeys reduced by over 2 minutes
– There has been proven enablement for future technology initiatives with 19 opportunities already under review for additional automation
– Account balance and payment self-serve saw a 28% uplift in utilisation through Nuance compared with dual-tone multi-frequency signalling
– Improvements in the fault management self-service meant there was a 6% uplift in call completion
– CR7 improved by 2% - (Contact Resolution 7 days is the percentage of customers that have not called back within seven days of the initial contact)

"Being a value for money provider like TalkTalk means we have to manage our cost base in order to give the amazing value to customers. The benefits of the Nuance NLCS solution have been astronomical. Not only have we reduced customer churn, but we've also delivered a better customer experience and seen a return on investment within 12 months.

TalkTalk would absolutely recommend Nuance NLCS. It's not just about getting the right call to the right place with the right skill of the agent; the solution has also provided valuable insight into why customers are feeling the need to call us. We're also looking to implement voice biometrics to verify the customer when they call in without having to go through lengthy and intrusive security processes. It's all about delivering a great customer experience."

Nick Gunga, Director of Sales and Service, TalkTalk

About Nuance Communications, Inc.
Nuance is a leading provider of voice and language solutions for businesses and consumers around the world. Its technologies, applications and services make the user experience more compelling by transforming the way people interact with information and how they create, share and use documents. Every day, millions of users and thousands of businesses experience Nuance's proven applications and professional services. For more information, please visit: nuance.com.