

Australian Bureau of Statistics blends call automation.

Contact centre automation assists with massive recruitment drive for census agency.

Challenge

- Recruit high number of quality staff in a cost-effective and timely manner
- Maintain a positive and seamless relationship with prospective employees
- Deliver a fair, accountable and transparent process for staff selection

Solution

- Automation of two key processes in the Census recruitment process
- Blended DTMF IVR, speech recognition and call recording

Results

- Total call centre agent numbers reduced by 70% compared to initial forecast
- 80% of applicant details successfully captures without the need for an outbound call

About the Company

Australia's national statistics agency, the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS), completes its national census audit of the Australian population every five years. The Census of Population and Housing aims to accurately count the number of people in Australia, their key characteristics, and the dwellings in which they live. Census data is used to plan for government investment in public infrastructure and services, including roads, railways, schools and hospitals. It also helps determine federal funding for the states and territories.



For a brighter future

“The solution provided was a combination of call automation and human interaction, or assisted automation. Our primary aim with the design was to ensure a positive and seamless experience for the applicants, regardless of the number of callers. Efficiency and effectiveness was of the utmost importance, without sacrificing flexibility.”

Nick Buckle, Director
Nuance

The 2011 Census was a significant landmark for the ABS and for the collection of national data in Australia; it was the 16th Census and marked 100 years of national Census taking in Australia.

The challenges

The gathering of data for the Census is a huge logistical exercise. Census forms are distributed to every one of Australia's 9.8 million households.

One of the first tasks for the ABS is to recruit a workforce from across Australia. Job opportunities are created for more than 43,000 Australians who are responsible for supervising the operation, delivering and collecting forms as well as fielding Census lodgement enquiries.

In April 2011, the ABS formally launched its Census recruitment drive. The agency had to recruit 29,000 workers in advance of the 2011 Census night on the 9th of August. This effort was expected to field as many as 100,000 direct calls over a three week period.

Nuance Professional Services was selected to provide a call management solution for The Census Recruitment

Project. The project was set up to achieve three key objectives:

1. Maintain a positive and seamless relationship with prospective employees
2. Recruit adequate numbers of quality staff in a cost-effective and timely manner
3. Deliver a fair, accountable and transparent process for the management of staff selection

Peta Wilcox, ABS Census Recruitment Project Manager, said: “Recruiting 29,000 positions across the nation is a project of massive scale; we selected Nuance to combine voice technology with human resources in order to deliver the scale and reliability that we required to achieve our objectives.”

The solution

In an Australian first, Nuance enabled the automation of two key processes in the Census recruitment process: lodging an application and obtaining information about available Census roles. The solution used a blend

of DTMF IVR, speech recognition and call recording technologies, which reduced the need for operator intervention and reduced wait times for callers.

For the automated application lodgement process, applicants would respond to a series of closed questions

using DTMF. DTMF was selected as the primary method of automation due its relative low cost and the speed at which it could be implemented. Open questions were processed by a speech enabled IVR and call recording. Agents would then listen to the recording to ensure the accuracy of the information gathered and to transcribe any incomplete fields. Where necessary, an outbound call would be placed to the applicant in order to verify and confirm missing details.

Callers seeking information about the available roles in the 2011 Census were also serviced using an automated

service. Intelligent call routing technology was deployed to re-direct non-standard enquiries to human agents within the call centre.

The automated solution meant that agents were free to focus on non-standard and high priority callers. It enabled the ABS to manage spikes in demand, cancel out wait times for applicants and deliver a consistent service level to all applicants.

The results

The automated solutions delivered some valuable results. By adding automated capabilities to the application lodgement process, ABS was able to capture 80% of applicant details successfully, with no need to place an outbound call to verify or confirm missing details. Overall, the automated solutions reduced the number of call center agents by 70% compared to initial forecasts.

About Nuance Communications, Inc.

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