



CASE  
STUDY

# International Casino and Resort Wins Big with Avaya Consulting and Systems Integration

Challenge	Solution
<p>A premier international casino and resort was experiencing a call abandonment rate averaging 11-13 percent and as high as 15 percent in its existing call centre. An aggressive new marketing strategy was expected to double call volumes.</p> <p>The resort established a tightly condensed timeline of just eight weeks for its call centre to be ready to handle significantly increased traffic. A major increase in expenditures was not in the cards: existing infrastructure, tools and some additional staffing would have to meet the expected demand.</p>	<p>The resort called on Avaya Consulting and Systems Integration (CSI) to conduct a thorough Business Communications Consulting engagement. Using their proven methodology, CSI conducted a three phase engagement to understand the resort's pain points, immediate concerns, and future direction. The outcome resulted in recommendations for immediate, near-term and strategic considerations.</p>
Value Created	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call volumes more than doubled from an average of 30,000 calls per month to an average of 65,000, sometime much higher. Through the use of astute analytics and evaluations of call metrics, the increase in call centre staff has been contained to only 25 percent.</li><li>• Abandon rates were reduced to an average of 3.5 percent, going as low as 1.5 percent, at the same time the call volumes were doubling. Wait times were reduced because of the efficiencies from analyzing call traffic patterns and reporting functionalities.</li><li>• Return on investment (ROI) for the Business Communications Consulting engagement was less than 60 days due to the increase in successfully handled customer calls that resulted in increased hotel and theatre reservations and other casino services.</li><li>• Average talk time decreased by over 30 seconds per call due to simplified agent screens and enhanced processes.</li><li>• The Resort's theatre used to hover at 60 percent capacity. With consistent communications to customers and fore-knowledge of show schedules, occupancy is up to 100 percent and waiting lists are needed for certain entertainment venues.</li><li>• On any given day, the hotel may have been booked at 85 percent capacity. Due to effective marketing, a reduction in abandoned calls and the increase in "first call resolutions", the hotel is now at 100 percent occupancy every day of the week.</li><li>• The use of metrics has changed the culture of the centre. The centre now "lives and breathes metrics." Metrics are used as part of normal daily operations and changes are implemented regularly based on analytics. Ongoing change and improvement is an accepted and welcomed working condition.</li></ul>	

## Business Challenge

A premier international casino and resort was looking for a way to enhance the stay of tourists and continue to provide an outstanding service to its loyal customers by providing a complete entertainment experience. It was also important to the local economy for entertainment, employment, and a significant infusion of revenue. With several other major casinos in the area, competition is constant and growing.

In mid-2006, the resort introduced an intense marketing initiative. The new direction involved an aggressive stance

toward marketing its facility as a marquee casino and entertainment venue, focused on attracting and retaining loyal repeat customers as the keystone of its ongoing success.

The call centre, a 24/7 operation, handles a variety of important customer and internal requests including hotel, dining, and show reservations as well as dispensing general information and specifics on upcoming events. With the new marketing strategy, the limitations in the call centre became all too apparent.

Historically the call centre had not been a key component of the marketing strategy. With more than 30,000 inbound calls received monthly during its peak times, an abandonment rate regularly over 10 percent was costing the resort revenue. A call segmentation strategy had never been developed; all calls were brought into the same queue with the same priority. With appropriate “business rules” left undefined, the centre’s environment became highly reactive and disjointed. The call centre had not been operationalized to monitor, understand or respond to the ever-changing demands being placed on it. Often, call centre agents and supervisors were not aware of the marketing campaigns being launched and were unprepared to handle customer inquiries and call volumes. Not surprisingly, minimal attention had been paid to call centre metrics. Internal follow-up to calls (both after-call work and auxiliary time) frequently took longer than the original calls themselves, adding significantly to customer care costs.

The new management team had several major business imperatives on which it planned to act. Differentiating itself from the competition would require improvement to the guest experience, which would be driven in part by improved staff responsiveness and more efficient operations. If new sales and marketing initiatives were to meet with success, major operational changes would be needed, none more apparent than in the call centre.

With just eight weeks to the launch of its new marketing campaign, the resort’s executives charged the call centre technical manager, along with the call centre operations manager with resolving these issues using the existing infrastructure and staff while incurring minimal additional expense.

### Avaya Consulting Raises the Table Stakes

Because of the aggressive time frames, the resort did not have the internal capacity to dedicate themselves to the challenges facing the call centre. In addition, the call centre technical manager realized that the existing team did not have the depth of understanding to fix some of the issues she had identified. With vast telecommunications experience on both sides of the table, the manager knew that the resort had the technical capabilities already, but needed expert support to review applications already in place that had not been activated or configured for maximum benefits. An expert would also provide an objective perspective. Based on her solid, long standing relationship with an Avaya BusinessPartner, the manager

asked for its recommendation and BusinessPartner immediately referred her to Avaya Consulting and Integration Services.

*“It was a non-issue for me. If you have a valuable car with specialized features and you need service, you take it to the dealer who has in-depth, proven, first-hand experience with the car and its special functions. If I have an Avaya solution, am I going to bring in a generic consulting company who can make only generalized recommendations? No! Their knowledge level isn’t specific to the platform I’m using,”* the call centre technical manager explains.

Having Avaya on the project gave credence to the changes in software and processes that would be needed. Also, Avaya could guide the resort not only on the reports it needed to drive efficiencies, but to evaluate the metrics to make crucial changes.

*“Avaya is the most knowledgeable about its products and applications. They not only can analyze and make recommendations, but can implement – or train our staff to implement – applications and software. Avaya has the internal resources to answer questions and provide solutions and recommendations to implement functions we need,”* the call centre technical manager explains. *“General consultants don’t have easy access to specialized technical resources and they can’t know everything about other applications and integrations.”*

### Avaya Consulting Antes Up

Avaya provided an assessment of the technical and process infrastructure in place, with an emphasis on determining what changes could be implemented to increase operational capacity in the short-term.

Craig Wilson, an Avaya Consulting & Systems Integration (CSI) business communications consulting principal, immediately began fact-finding to understand the industry in general and the resort’s business in particular. He reached out to his colleagues who had been responsible for the success at other resorts. Although the resort’s management viewed Avaya as the expert in call centre consulting, Wilson wanted to bring value-added knowledge of the industry.

Partitioned into three phases, Avaya gathered all available background documentation on the call centre. An on-site review was conducted consisting of interviews with management, extraction of additional reports, and monitoring of agents to determine how the technologies and business processes could be optimized for performance.

**“ This is not a one shot deal. You have to continuously look at metrics and make changes as the business changes. ”**

— Call centre technical manager, premier international casino and resort

“When you look at things every day you miss things. It’s good to have an expert like Avaya consulting with you.”

— Call centre technical manager, premier international casino and resort

Wilson spent hours side-by-side with agents, listening to their calls and identifying their pain points. Since the centre is 24/7, Wilson conducted morning, mid-afternoon, early evening and late night monitoring to gain a perspective on how calls and call management changed over the course of the day, and in response to changing caller demands.

The third phase confirmed observational findings with thorough data analysis, matching monitoring notes with screen shots, workflows and detailed call statistics. A final report compared the call centre current performance with best practices and other call centre norms; identified immediate changes that could keep pace with the increased volumes expected from marketing campaign fulfillment; and recommended changes to foster growth and enhance performance long-term.

## Resort Wins Big

The Resort began right away to implement the nine immediate actions outlined in the Avaya evaluation. One such recommendation was to segment calls using call prioritization based on defined criteria.

To partially address call abandonment rates and provide timely response to valued guests, callers are given the option of leaving a voicemail. Voicemail notifications are placed in queue for an agent to return the call, usually within the time customers would have waited on hold. The voicemail option has dramatically reduced lost, forgotten or abandoned calls.

Avaya also identified computer telephony integration (CTI) “screen pops” and screen layout enhancements that were easily implemented by FCR’s own IT team. Customer information that once might have been entered on up to eight different screens has been flattened and now automatically pops onto the agent’s monitor, allowing for personalized greetings and saving time in retrieving records. These changes shaved valuable seconds off calls, increased agent’s personal job satisfaction and enhanced the overall customer experience.

Agent scheduling had not been adjusted to meet the needs of the business. Agents worked 10-hour shifts four days a week, regardless of call volumes. The centre was able to respond to call volumes only on a reactive basis once the volume spiked in the course of a day. Agent shifts were

changed to eight-hour shifts, five days per week. Staggered workdays address daily late morning peaks, with agents reporting for duty in varied intervals consistent with traffic patterns. Today, the needs of the centre are analyzed before any hiring is done; often part-time and contract workers can fill shift gaps, saving the resort a considerable amount of money.

Abandonment rates have dropped by approximately 19 percent, averaging between three to four percent during peak hours and are even lower during non-peak hours. Again, when thinking of the spending power of one caller, lowering the rate of abandonment increases revenue.

The Avaya evaluation produced a collateral benefit impacting the resort’s internal communications. A lag in communications left many departments unaware of the interdependencies within the organization, leading the resort to institute processes for inter-departmental sharing of information. Compelled to clean up the reservations data fed to the call centre agents through CTI, hard numbers showed IT the evidence of how one department’s actions improve another’s. *“There was a day when IT didn’t understand the call centre’s concerns. Over the past eighteen months there is true teaming with IT so the technical teams understand how their work impacts the call centre, marketing, and the overall business,”* the call centre technical manager says.

Internal training motivates call centre agents, involves them in overall process changes that improve efficiencies and encourages their participation in decisions ultimately affecting them. Getting input and involving call centre agents and managers in overall process changes has improved efficiencies and has provided motivation by according greater importance to their work.

*“It used to be that the marketing department and the call centre didn’t talk as they were part of different business units. The call centre didn’t always know when a campaign was being launched. Now the call centre, as part of marketing, participates in the planning process with marketing teams, the box office for ticketing, and convention planning to ensure that big weekends for club members don’t conflict with large conventions. This change is huge,”* the manager explains.

## Lessons Learned

- **All calls are not equal.** The call centre was trying to serve all customer sets in the same way, but customer segmentation is vital.
- Employees might be initially reluctant to embrace change, but with **effective and informative internal communications and training** to gain their understanding of the changes they have rallied to the cause.
- **Everyone needs to be on same page.** Include the call centre in the planning stages to ensure proper staffing and knowledgeable and informed supervisors and agents.
- By using **tools and analyzing metrics**, transactions may be doubled without having to double resources. Metrics also help to determine the best time to schedule training, administrative tasks and other less time-sensitive job responsibilities.

- Repeated examination is needed. **No business stays the same.**
- Avaya consultants bring value to a business by not only understanding the solution technology but also understanding the client's business. Avaya consultants can make recommendations that integrate the **technology as a strategic business differentiator.**

*"This is not a one shot deal. You have to continuously look at metrics and make changes as the business changes,"* the call centre technical manager says.

The resort sees reengaging Avaya CSI. *"When you look at things every day you miss things. It's good to have an expert like Avaya consulting with you,"* the manager concludes.

## ABOUT AVAYA

Avaya delivers Intelligent Communications solutions that help companies transform their businesses to achieve marketplace advantage. More than 1 million businesses worldwide, including more than 90 percent of the FORTUNE 500®, use Avaya solutions for IP Telephony, Unified Communications, Contact Centres and Communications Enabled Business Processes. Avaya Global Services provides comprehensive service and support for companies, small to large.

For more information visit the Avaya Web site: <http://www.avaya.com>.

Applications	Systems	Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avaya Communication Manager 3.1.2</li> <li>• Avaya INTUITY® AUDIX® with the lodging package</li> <li>• Avaya Call Center PHD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avaya S8700 Server</li> <li>• Avaya 3500 Digital Telephones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avaya CSI Business Communications Consulting Engagement</li> <li>• BusinessPartner for Implementation and Maintenance Services</li> </ul>