

Dressed for Success

Essex, United Kingdom – All Fancy Dress is an e-commerce retailer selling costumes and accessories throughout the United Kingdom. The company's philosophy is to offer great quality products as well as solid customer service with same day delivery on orders placed by phone before the cut-off time of 5.15 pm. This successful approach has helped the company to grow its customer base in excess of 25%. However this rapid growth and success also meant unexpected demands were placed on the call centre, which could no longer serve customers as efficiently as it once could. As a result, in September 2010 the company decided to streamline its operations to increase efficiency and create a more flexible and scalable contact centre that could accommodate the changing demands on the business. In partnership with BT and with an initial investment of £10,000 for Avaya Business Communication Manager, as well as Avaya Call Centre and Avaya Unified Communications, in the space of 6 months the company has revamped its operations saving nearly £18,000 in direct costs and reducing the number of missed calls by 92%, from 100 to 8 per month.



Changing needs for a growing business

As an online business, All Fancy Dress prides itself in offering excellent quality products and reliable customer service to its customers across the UK. Customer service is especially important for businesses operating solely in the digital space since a competitor site can be just a click away.

The business' competitive differentiator was its ability to ship purchases same day if the order was completed on weekdays by 5:15 pm. For the first two years of the business' life, a basic phone system with a fixed number of call centre employees was sufficient to power the company's call centre. However, as the organisation grew, the demands placed on the existing system were too severe causing the number of missed calls to grow, stressing out employees and ultimately affecting the bottom line. Javed Bhatti, managing director, BT Local Business Hertfordshire and Essex comments on his initial assessment:

"The system they had in place worked well for a while but it was very basic. More importantly, the quality of customer service started to be affected as the number of requests grew beyond what the call centre could handle. The increasing number of calls also put additional pressure on the agents, which caused a decrease in productivity and high staff turnover. It became apparent that All Fancy Dress would need a more flexible and scalable solution to support its growing needs and the changing nature of the call centre. They also needed a way to balance workloads so we could retain staff as well as add more agents cost-effectively during busy times."

After an extensive evaluation phase, which involved looking into three solutions in the market, the Avaya Business Communication Manager was selected, since it provided the best combination of call handling, unified communications, conferencing and digital mobility and the best all-round solution. Mark Heaton, director, All Fancy Dress comments:

Challenge

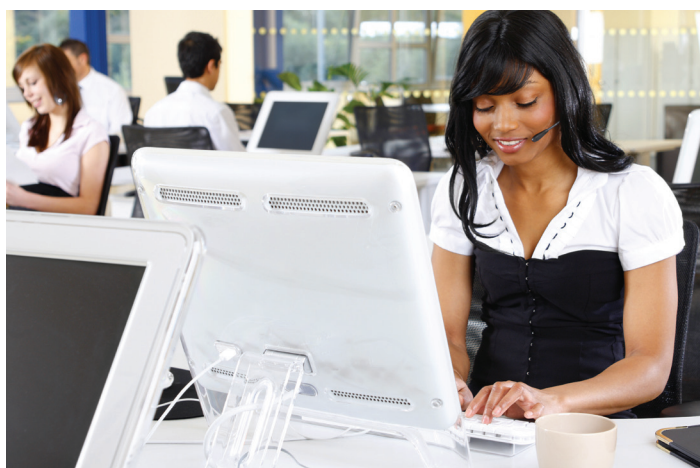
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Solution

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Value Created

- Intelligent, personalised interactions with customers
- More productive internal collaboration
- More agile, secure and reliable operations



Flexible Features

Once in place, the Avaya Business Communications Manager solution delivered a number of features that improved efficiency, integrated communication styles and enhanced management. Mark Heaton describes the benefits:

“Given the delocalised nature of our operation, we needed the ability to deploy extensions to remote or rural locations so that our workforce size could flex. Avaya’s solution allows us to create VoIP extensions at home seamlessly. More importantly, I can now access and manage all the telephone systems from a remote location. Even when I was travelling abroad I was able to login and re-programme the phone system as easily as I would have done from my home or traditional office.

Call handling has also become much more efficient. Before we implemented the Avaya solution, incoming calls were handled by hunt groups, which meant that agents would have to manually select which incoming call to answer when. This process was very inefficient and

“The Avaya solution provided the best amalgamation of features we were looking for including remote working, integration and the ability to incorporate onsite call centre features with remote ones. This was the driving force in our decision process.”

Mark Heaton, director, All Fancy Dress

made it difficult for calls to be answered in the right order. We needed a more systematic approach to distributing calls and balancing conversation loads between agents to ensure calls were answered as quickly as possible in the order they were received – Avaya Business Communication Manager delivered this. We now have a proper contact centre not a basic call centre – our customers can communicate with us in whatever way they please and they can rest assured their queries will be answered quickly and reliably.

Avaya Call Centre Reporting also enabled us to track busy and quiet times and use this information to predict and direct the necessary resources. It also allowed us to clearly record the hours worked by our remote employees, which made it easier for HR to pay them for the hours worked without requiring them to fill out cumbersome timesheets.”

Online customers differ in how they interact with a business – successfully serving customers requires accessible information and prompt response, in whatever style the customer prefers, be it voice, email, fax or text. For All Fancy Dress, the benefits of integrating disparate communication styles through Avaya Business Communication Manager into an easy-to-use experience were tremendous. Mark Heaton:

“As a business we were struggling with the management of different communication mediums – some people wanted to fax in orders, others wanted to leave voicemails. Our Avaya solution brings everything together into a single, unified depository of incoming messages. This has improved our efficiency and productivity, since messages no longer get lost and voicemail and fax requests can be forwarded exactly as email.”

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*Javed Bhatti, managing director,
BT Local Business Hertfordshire
and Essex*

Flexible Employees, Flexible Business

Many businesses have variable levels of activity, with peaks during specific times of the day or year. As a fancy dress shop, All Fancy Dress’ contact centre needed to easily scale up or down to accommodate the demands of the business, for example during Halloween.

Avaya Business Communication Manager was a solid package that included voice, email, fax and paging, as well as unified communications elements to enable seamless remote working and management. Once in place, it delivered flexibility for the business, balance for employees and better customer service. It also opened up new staffing options since being onsite was no longer a pre-requisite and delivered a flexible approach that is beneficial to the business and the worker. Mark Heaton argues:

“By its very nature, this business has peaks throughout the year, for example during Halloween. Before the Avaya Business Communication Manager was in place we lost a lot of revenue during busy periods because many calls went unanswered, so it was clear that if we were going to operate remotely, we needed to employ a solution that could flex to accommodate these peaks. Avaya’s solution delivered exactly this. During busy periods we can now hire mums who need to work from home, for example, but who also have the experience and maturity to serve our customers well. This is a win-win situation for us!”

This delocalised approach to staffing translates to better service to customers since employees can now be hired from a wider pool based on skills, without regard to where they are physically located.

Operating Optimally

For All Fancy Dress, the new contact centre system has delivered a manifold return on investment through reduced overhead costs and a reduction in lost calls. Mark Heaton concludes:

“Our initial investment was £10,000 but we now save over £18,000 in direct costs alone. Our employees are much more productive when they work from home and this brings in extra revenue for us. More significantly, we have now vastly reduced the number of missed calls from 100 before the system was in place to less than 8 on average, a 92% reduction. The system has been in place for six months and we expect it will continue to improve our business even further.”

Learn More

For more information on how Avaya can take your enterprise from where it is to where it needs to be, contact your Avaya Account Manager or a member of the Avaya Connect channel partner program, or access other collaterals by clicking on Resource Library at www.avaya.com/emea.

All statements in this Case Study were made by Mark Heaton, director, All Fancy Dress and Javed Bhatti, Managing Director, BT Local Business Herts and Essex.

Applications

- VPN Client
- Remote Worker
- Call Centre Reporting
- Unified Messaging
- Fax Messaging to Desktop
- IP Telephony

Systems

- BCM

About All Fancy Dress

All Fancy Dress is the second largest independent online retailers of fancy dress in the UK with a £3m+ annual turnover.

About BT

BT is one of the world’s leading providers of communications solutions and services operating in more than 170 countries. Its principal activities include the provision of networked IT services globally; local, national and international telecommunications

services to our customers for use at home, at work and on the move; broadband and internet products and services and converged fixed/mobile products and services. BT consists principally of four lines of business: BT Global Services, Openreach, BT Retail and BT Wholesale.

In the year ended 31 March 2010, BT Group’s revenue was £20,911 million.

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exchanges in London and New York. For more information, visit www.bt.com/aboutbt

About Avaya

Avaya is a global provider of business collaboration and communications solutions, providing unified communications, contact centers, data solutions and related services to companies of all sizes around the world. For more information please visit www.avaya.com.

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