



More Calls, More Customers, More Efficient



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Leading retailer sees performance soar with Avaya Contact Center Select and IP Office Server Edition

The contact center team at retailer Buy It Direct handle more than a million calls, emails and webchats per year. But until recently, the channels weren't integrated – restricting productivity and reducing the quality of the customer experience. That changed with the introduction of Avaya Contact Center Select and IP Office Server Edition. With true skills-based routing and better connections to its CRM platform, Buy It Direct is answering more calls faster than ever before. The agents love the new platform – and customers are happier too.

Buy It Direct is one of the UK's largest online retailers, best known for its ecommerce brands Appliances Direct, Laptops Direct and Furniture123, with specialist divisions covering laptops, home appliances, TVs, furniture, heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC) and even drones. Established in 1999, its business model is built around service and being product experts in every category. It holds larger amounts of stock than many competitors, with each item personally chosen for the target customer base – enabling it to offer faster delivery. Its frontline service team, in UK-based contact centers, handle more than a million inbound and outbound contacts a year.

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Challenges

- Replace an outdated contact center platform and increase capacity
- Deliver a range of new features cost-effectively
- Integrate multiple channels to provide a single view of the customer
- Implement the solution to a tight schedule

Those range from sales calls to delivery checks and service enquiries. Add in emails, and a rapidly growing use of webchat – with some 150,000 already in the current year – and it’s clear the customer service team has a pivotal role to play in the company’s success.

The case for change

But even with high levels of customer satisfaction – with over 90% saying they would buy from the group again – Sales and Customer Service Director James Rigg recognized there was room for improvement. Service channels weren’t integrated from the customer service agent perspective, meaning there was some duplication of effort; with hunt groups, rather than true skill-based routing, there was also often a system delay in finding the best agent to handle the customer queries.

“Email was entirely separate and webchat wasn’t running from the same platform. We didn’t have a universal view of the customer and that meant sometimes a team member would respond to an email that we’d already answered via the phone.”

Above all, the existing platform – an Avaya Communication Server 1000 – was running out of capacity to handle that many calls and support the number of agents Buy It Direct now needed. But while Rigg knew an update to the platform was due, he was also aware of the potential disruption that would cause. “Because of our call volumes, we only have a couple of windows a year for major upgrades.”

Picking the best value solution

The company had compiled a wish list of features for a new contact center solution, including multichannel capabilities such as SMS chat, integration with its customer relationship management (CRM) platform, an auto dialer for its outbound sales and marketing, and improved reporting.

On paper, many providers seemed able to fulfil that list so Rigg focused on other factors. “It came down to the cost and complexity of the upgrade path. Avaya showed us how, using IP Office Server Edition and Avaya Contact Center Select, we could make the upgrade as cost-effective as possible, including by reusing existing licenses and handsets.”

That not only reduced the capital outlay but also meant familiarization would be faster. Add in the fact that Buy It Direct’s IT team were confident



Value Created

- Measurable improvement in agent efficiency
- More calls answered
- Less duplication of effort
- Customer enquiries answered faster – driving satisfaction and sales
- Clear roadmap for future enhancements

with the usability of the Avaya solution, and could be largely self-sufficient once it was launched, and it became clear that upgrading with Avaya offered the best value.

Improved Efficiency

The solution went live in late Autumn 2016, just before the Christmas peak period began, and proved itself up to the task under this high demand. One of the features that provided immediately beneficial was customized skills-based routing, based on the customer's input to the interactive voice response (IVR) solution. With more calls going to the right agent straight away, that helped contribute to shorter queue times and a drop in missed customer service calls.

In turn, that meant more sales could be completed – delivering rapid return on investment.

The integration between channels has also boosted efficiency, as Rigg explains. “Now, when we receive a call, the system automatically checks if the number is already in our CRM system. We can then see the customer's most recent activity and the latest dispatch information, which often enables us to resolve the issue the first time – and the system automatically sends tracking information to the customer whilst they are queuing.”

Further, if that same customer had already emailed about an issue, that can then be addressed on the call – and the email automatically closed down, cutting duplication of work. “In the first 12-18 months since we went live with the new solution, we've measurably improved our overall efficiency,” Rigg confirms.

Happy agents, happy managers

Web chat and SMS chat are now available to agents via the same portal view, so again can be better integrated into the customer experience. That's one of the key reasons that agents love the new Avaya solution – but managers too are seeing the benefits.

“The wall boards and reporting are far more granular and up to date,” says Rigg. “That means we can change skill sets on the fly, in response to how customers are contacting us.”

The new SMS feature in particular has proved popular with customers, particularly in relation to delivery issues; even though it's seen as an “emergency” channel for issues affecting many customers at once – such as snow or flooding – more than 5,000 SMS quick chats were completed in the first month of operation.

Looking to the future

With the core solution now business as usual, Rigg and his team are looking to the future, exploring additional Avaya tools including Workforce Optimization and Avaya Ava™, Avaya's cloud AI solution, to power chat bots to free up first agent response and drive down costs.

“Because we were so comfortable with the previous solution, we didn't previously engage much with Avaya on an ongoing basis. Now though, we can see the opportunities in the Avaya roadmap and want to capitalize on those.”

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Solutions

- Avaya IP Office™ Server Edition
- Avaya Contact Center Select (ACCS)

About Buy It Direct

Buy it Direct are one of the UKs largest online retailers. Established in 1999, they have over 400 staff across 4 sites in Yorkshire and the East Midlands. They sell via specialist websites [Appliances Direct](#), [Drones Direct](#), [Laptops Direct](#), [Furniture 123](#) and also have two showrooms where customers can see and demo new products as well as a collection point attached to their distribution centre giving customers access to over 100,000 products. With over 5 million customers, the key to their success has been through their expert knowledge in the categories they operate coupled with a real passion for giving customers the best service possible.