



HomeChoice Chooses Avaya, Driving Double Digit Increase in Customer Satisfaction



HomeChoice is the largest home shopping retailer in Southern Africa, selling homeware merchandise to the expanding urban middle-income mass market. The company is intensely customer-focused and committed to delivering a high level of service and operational efficiency.

Following years of continued growth and increasing contact volumes, it had become impossible for the organization to ensure continuous availability of the communication systems for its sales teams and 900 customer support agents. Outdated technology had created a significant gap between consumer needs and the experience that HomeChoice was able to deliver.

Driven by the desire to delight customers with top-notch service, HomeChoice upgraded the contact center infrastructure with a unified communications solution from Avaya, reducing the complexity and cost of managing multiple customer interaction channels, optimizing agent utilization and productivity, and increasing operational efficiency and flexibility.

In addition, HomeChoice gained the ability to deliver a superior level of engagement with their customers. The Avaya solution helped enable the company to capture every aspect of the customer journey across all interaction channels—from chat on the group's website to phone, fax, email, and social media—delighting agents and customers with optimized workflows and an excellent experience at each interaction. "With the

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Challenges

- HomeChoice was operating on outdated and incompatible technology for inbound and outbound calling, monitoring, agent interfacing, collaboration, and analytics
- Downtimes during campaigns and other times of peak call activity were frequent, led to inconsistent customer experience, and hampered the company’s ability to conduct outbound sales calls
- Agents needed to navigate multiple applications to find customer interactions or information, delaying responses and making customers stay on the line longer than necessary
- Written customer communications such as emails and faxes were processed manually, negatively impacting service level agreements
- Customers could contact HomeChoice via social media channels, but they were not integrated with Contact Center, so it was very inefficient

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HomeChoice preferred to engage with Avaya for a single vendor solution to ease integration across diverse business functions, simplify technical support, and ensure low maintenance costs.

Zero Contact Center Downtime

With its legacy communications platform, HomeChoice experienced substantial downtime, especially when transactional volumes were peaking. “77% of our sales ran through our call center, both inbound and outbound. Every time we launched a successful campaign, thousands of customers would call in at once, and our communication systems would fail,” said Lazarus. “On top of this, we were regularly facing problems with call volume surges during the major shopping periods, and were accumulating up to 43 hours of contact center downtime per year. That was extremely frustrating for our customers and agents, and was costing us millions in lost revenue.”

The Avaya solution can be virtualized and is Internet Protocol (IP) enabled, so that HomeChoice’s technicians can quickly add servers to the disaster recovery environment and connect to the infrastructure on that site. Since the deployment, the contact center has not experienced a single minute of downtime, greatly improving employee and customer satisfaction, and boosting revenue by eliminating missed-opportunity costs.

Integrated Communications Platform

The multitude of systems used by HomeChoice—one for inbound customer service calls, one for outbound and collections, and yet another for advance query resolution calls—was making it very difficult to utilize agents effectively across the entire organization and to bridge the gap between different departments, resources, and databases. “We were unable to identify which records belonged to which agent, we couldn’t transfer a customer to a different department, and agents were spending precious time searching multiple applications just to access customer information,” said Lazarus.

Value Created

- Implemented a multichannel solution to utilize the growing number of digital channels as a source for successful customer engagement and revenue
- Improved efficiencies across the contact center through agent blending
- Ensured consistently positive interaction experiences for both customers and agents, improving customer satisfaction by 11%*
- Decreased support, training, and service costs by 18%* because systems within the Avaya solution are integrated

* See more key metrics on last page.

The applications composing the Avaya solution are interoperable—speak the same technical languages and protocols—enabling seamless integration. HomeChoice’s engineers found it easy to use the interface on the solution’s administration portal, and Avaya’s implementation partner didn’t have to spend more than four hours guiding technicians on system support and administration. Support complexity has been reduced significantly, because with just a few screens to look at, fewer integration and interoperability issues, HomeChoice’s technicians are able to easily identify any issue, decreasing support, training and service costs by 18%.

“We integrated all core business tasks and activities within the contact center with the help of the Avaya solution. Our agents now have a 360° view of each customer including all interactions with the company over any channel,” said Lazarus.

Increased Contact Center Productivity

Improving agent utilization and productivity was one of HomeChoice’s major goals, because the lack of integration between legacy software meant agents needed to be allocated either to inbound or outbound activities, limiting the type of tasks they could perform. Customer information was spread across different databases, meaning that agents had to switch between screens and assemble the puzzle while speaking with the customer, negatively affecting call handling times and agent productivity. Management was finding it hard to strike an even workload balance among business operations so that enough agents were available to handle calls during peak call volume periods. Hiring more personnel per contact channel would leave resources underutilized during periods of low call volume, and accurate agent staffing was difficult to schedule. “We manually tracked customers’ requests for contact using a paper-based, error-prone methodology,” said Lazarus. “Sometimes paper notes would get lost when a task was transferred to another agent and customers would not get the callback they expected.”

HomeChoice is now able to use agents across different interaction channels and/or customer categories. During times of peak inbound call activity, agents who were previously allocated to outbound calls can share the load, significantly reducing call waiting time and improving overall customer satisfaction by 11%. When inbound call volumes drop, the Avaya dialer allocates outbound tasks to all idle agents, maximizing agent time. The added automation increases document handling efficiencies by 71% while the extra bandwidth allows agents to call back more than 56% of customers who have abandoned their web shopping baskets within 8 hours, and convert around 7% of those interactions back into sales.

The efficiency of Avaya Proactive Contact has pleased the HomeChoice team. “The dialer is always a couple of numbers ahead of the agent’s actual call, eliminating calls with no answer, fax tones etc. from the queue and handing over to an agent when a live person answers. The efficiency gain is negligible if you look at a single call—maybe a few seconds. But

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multiply that by the 200,000 calls that we make daily and it adds up to enormous savings,” recalled Lazarus. “As a result, we have increased sales revenue by 4.1%, as we are able to serve many more calls using the Avaya Aura Contact Center technology.”

Full-Featured User Interface

With Avaya Aura Agent Desktop, staff members have a full-featured user interface for managing calls, capable of consolidating information from multiple applications onto a single screen. Agents have all necessary information in just one window, such as the customer’s contact details, previous orders, past interactions, delivery addresses, and credit balances.

Using Avaya Contact Recorder, HomeChoice gained the ability to monitor call recordings quickly in order to take decisive action in a timely fashion. Managers can easily identify performance shortfalls, reinforce best practices across the contact center, gain early insights into customer expectations and behavioral trends, and address customer pain points by continuously enhancing the buying journey.

Improved Customer Satisfaction

HomeChoice’s legacy system was not keeping pace with the customer expectations of being able to seamlessly move across channels throughout the sales journey and enjoy consistent services and offerings. Furthermore, the company was selling through several channels—web store, catalog orders, and phone orders—without integration between those channels, leading to a disjointed customer experience.

Thanks to the agent blending capability gained with the Avaya deployment, the contact center’s service levels improved from 73% to more than 87% out-of-the-box. Customers now interact with better-informed agents who respond faster to their queries, substantially improving the overall customer experience with the HomeChoice brand, and helping the company to further improve its services.

“Our quality assurance staff can now quickly adjust to customer needs. If people struggle to access something on our website or think that a feature is not user-friendly, we hear about it immediately from calls, surveys, and quality assurance scores, and can start to implement the desired changes straightaway. Because we are able to provide better service, our customers are even more satisfied than before,” Lazarus said. “Their call center experience is vastly improved, because they spend less time on hold, and their account details are utilized to route them directly to the most suitable department or agent.”

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HomeChoice also provides customers with the option to purchase catalog items in installments, over 6, 12, or 24 months. The team contacts these customers to establish payment arrangements, but on the legacy system, debt records were updated manually which would sometimes take up to two days. An agent would often therefore call a customer who had paid within the past 48 hours, wasting both agent and customer time.

Leveraging the Avaya Proactive Contact dialer’s capability of permanent synchronization with the collections system, unnecessary debt collection calls to customers each month are averted. Not only does this save agent time, it also eliminates the risk of delivering a negative service experience to customers.

Comprehensive Reporting Capabilities

Using siloed legacy systems, contact center reporting was almost non-existent, and considerable manual effort was required to extract statistics and calculate service levels and key performance metrics. In some cases, the information was also unreliable and the company required extensive analytical support to answer simple questions.

With Avaya’s unified solution, contact center managers can now generate numerous analytical reports, empowering them to rapidly identify skills shortages as well as opportunities to improve business results.

“With the applications now all speaking the same language and the easy-to-use reporting interfaces, we have all the required reports at our fingertips. Moreover, we have the flexibility to match the reporting to our business needs by easily creating new reports, combining several reports into a single one, or changing the fields displayed in a report,” Lazarus said.

Seamless Deployment within Five Weeks

After three months of analysis and discovery workshops, the deployment took just five weeks, thanks to the excellent pain point evaluation and thorough planning that was conducted ahead of time.

“Avaya’s implementation partner spent many hours with us to fully understand our needs, and planned the deployment such that we achieved substantial efficiency gains right from the beginning. It was easy for us to identify the return on investment for each component,” said Lazarus.

Key Metrics

- Service interruption eliminated: from 43 hours downtime (2013) to 0 hours today
- Document handling efficiency up by 71%
- Service levels rose from 73% to more than 87% out-of-the-box, and are improving weekly
- Customer satisfaction levels up by 11%
- Costs for support and service down by 18%
- Inbound sales revenue increased by 4.1%
- Conversion of online shopping basket abandonment into sales: from zero to 7%

The installation was launched by replacing the old call center gateway with IP enabled Avaya Aura Contact Center in both production and disaster recovery sites to prevent business interruption and establish a single interface for managing all customer interactions. HomeChoice then deployed Avaya Aura Experience Portal to provide a single point of orchestration for all automated voice and multimedia activities, and Avaya Proactive Contact dialer for seamless agent blending. The implementation was completed with new IP telephony terminals and Avaya Contact Recorder, allowing HomeChoice to easily store and retrieve calls for quality assurance and regulatory compliance.

Solutions

- Avaya Aura® Communication Manager
- Avaya Aura® Session Manager
- Avaya Session Border Controllers
- Avaya Contact Recorder
- Avaya Proactive Contact
- Avaya Aura® Contact Center with Multimedia
- Custom Post Call Survey & Click to Dial Integration
- Avaya Aura® Experience Portal
- Avaya Aura® Workforce Optimization

About HomeChoice

The Home Choice Group is the largest home shopping retailer in Southern Africa, selling homeware merchandise and financial services products to the expanding urban middle-income mass market. Established in Cape Town in 1985, the group has evolved from a mail order business into an omnichannel home shopping retailer with a customer base of more than one million people. Channels include direct mail, phone, fax, and email orders, inbound and outbound contact centers, and social channels such as Facebook and Twitter.

About Avaya

Businesses are built on the experiences they provide and every day millions of those experiences are built by Avaya (NYSE:AVYA). For over one hundred years, we've enabled organizations around the globe to win—by creating intelligent communications experiences for customers and employees. Avaya builds open, converged and innovative solutions to enhance and simplify communications and collaboration—in the cloud, on premise, or a hybrid of both. To grow your business, we're committed to innovation, partnership, and a relentless focus on what's next. We're the technology company you trust to help you deliver Experiences that Matter. Visit us at www.avaya.com.