

Challenges

- Stay ahead of the curve on meeting higher customer expectations for speed of service, account familiarity, quality of resolution
- Improve agents' job satisfaction and engagement with the company and with customers
- Meet increasing load of calls, many of which are more complex than ever before
- Integrate voice, email, chat and SMS in one managed system
- Seamlessly distribute calls across all global contact centers

Value Created

- Improved employee satisfaction and contact center agent retention rates
- KPI goals consistently met or exceeded
- Engaged staff leads to \$400M in annual recurring cost avoidance
- High customer satisfaction scores (83%-87%)

Plantronics Ramps Up Smarter Customer Service

Audio Technology Firm Aims for a New Kind of Contact Center Agent



Santa Cruz, California: As an industry leader in headsets for the home and office, Plantronics pays close attention to consumer and business trends. Social media, mobility, multimedia, the rise of the “empowered consumer” – all are trends that Plantronics has been keenly sensitive to.

Why? These trends have been sharply relevant in recent years, during a period when Plantronics has seen a steady rise in income – and in the number of calls and interactions handled by its contact centers around the globe. During this time, in addition to voice contacts, Plantronics has experienced incremental use of other media, such as email, chat and SMS. Today, Plantronics fields some 750,000 voice calls annually, plus a panoply of customer interactions via non-voice channels.

The complexity of calls has gone up. In many cases, before the typical customer phones Plantronics, he or she has already gone through a self-help process by visiting Plantronics' online

Knowledge Base, which sees four million visits a year. As a result, average call duration has risen 5%-10% per year. A typical call that lasted four minutes three years ago today takes six minutes.

In response to this range of external and internal developments, Plantronics has committed to a new way of serving customers. In 2010, the company initiated a pilot program in its European operations called “Smarter Working.” The core of this strategy was the view that agents who are happy and engaged with their organization provide superior interactions with customers. Plantronics' bet was that happy, engaged employees would pay off in terms of better business results.



“The Plantronics brand was built on facilitating customer engagement. The integration of Plantronics APIs with Avaya solutions is a game-changing innovation that gives contact centers the competitive advantage they need in the evolving customer service market.”

— Ken Kannappan, CEO, Plantronics

Flexibility Sparks Engagement

“What we wanted to achieve was a greater level of enthusiastic engagement between the employee and the organization and between the agent and the customer,” explains Paul van den Berg, Vice President, Global Customer Care and Europe & Africa Operations. *“To achieve this, we focused on people, work environments and technologies. Avaya has played a critical role by sharing our vision and helping us develop very successful solutions in these areas.”*

Plantronics’ first step was to test the feasibility of agents working at home two or three days a week. Avaya assisted by providing softphone technologies and training that enabled the new work-at-home model. The test was gauged a success, and a “50-50-12” initiative (50% of all European support functions to be working 50% of time from home by 2012) was launched. Plantronics ramped up its work-at-home program, and by 2012, 50% of employees with six months of service had been provided the option to work at home.

Motivating and empowering Plantronics’ contact center went far beyond location flexibility. The ‘Smarter Working’ model called for each agent to “own” each of his or her calls, rather than pass them on to product specialists or others in the organization. A clear need to invest in training was identified, to achieve broader and more in-depth knowledge on the part of agents. Each experienced agent now receives at least 10 hours of training per week, in order to stay up-to-date and engaged with the company’s strategies, goals and offerings. Agents are provided with sophisticated technology that enables them to have as much information as possible regarding the customer and Plantronics product offerings and capabilities.

“At first we had a concept of ‘smart working,’ and it has resulted in a ‘smarter contact center’ model,” van den Berg says. *“We have seen the agent role move in a very positive direction, from simply trafficking calls to being fully engaged as a representative of the company. Our agents can speak intelligently about the products and build good relationships with customers.”*

Positive Business Results

Thanks to Plantronics’ steps to promote feelings of happiness, fulfillment, and empowerment among their call center agents, attrition has dropped close to an astonishing zero percent. (The previous attrition rate was 5%-15%.) This development represents a cost avoidance of approximately US \$400,000 annually, which otherwise would have been spent on recruitment and new agent training.

Additional metrics reflect the success of Plantronics' strategy. Van den Berg reports that KPI goals are consistently being met and frequently exceeded. Average speed to answer is 16 seconds, exceeding the company's goal of 20 seconds. First call resolution has gone up to well over the target range of 75%-80%. Perhaps most significantly, customer satisfaction ratings range between 83% and 87%. In recent years, customer satisfaction figures have risen one or two percent annually.

"The KPIs for our contact center today are huge numbers that we could not have achieved in the previous set-up," van den Berg states. *"It is really a great success story for us and for our tech partners at Avaya. We have proven that when agents are happy in their roles and in their environment, they provide significantly better customer service."*

Overall, improvements in customer service have helped shift the contact center from a cost-center mindset to a revenue-generating mentality. Engaged agents are committed to solidifying and building relationships with customers. They are trained to create sales opportunities by understanding customers' needs and identifying opportunities to suggest new solutions. Feedback to marketing and engineering provides insights for potential product improvements and innovations.

Efficient, Customer-Friendly Global Operations

The next step for Plantronics is to build out a fully distributed global contact center—with full integration and management of voice, email, SMS and chat—over the next 18 months. Consolidating separate queues for

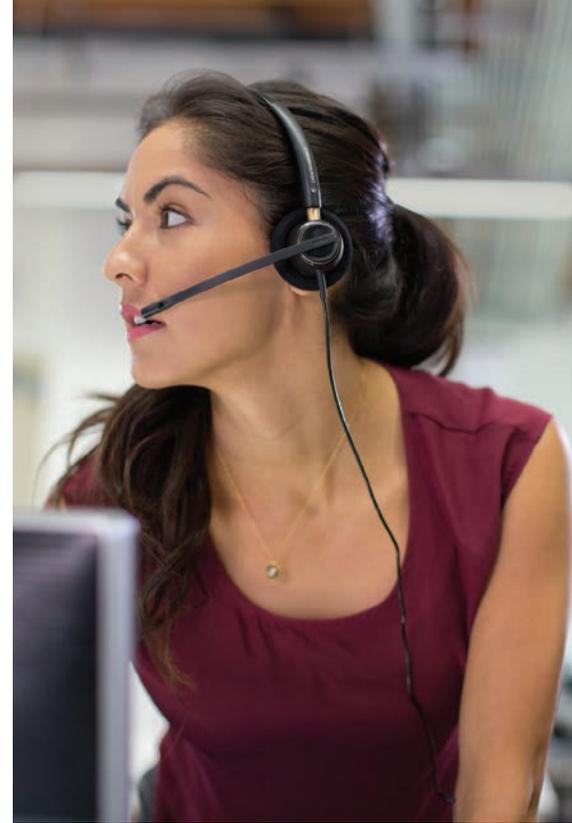
customer engagement channels and increasing the ability to load-balance calls seamlessly across the regional centers are foremost priorities.

According to van den Berg, *"We've been very impressed by what we've seen of Avaya's middleware layer of 'snap-ins,' which enable multimodal communication across one system. This approach will enable us to interact via customers' preferred media, on a fully integrated and controlled basis. We will also be able to route calls from any customer location to any of our centers, so we will have customer service available essentially around the clock, without adding headcount."*

Plantronics anticipates that a multimodal, fully distributed contact center will provide significant savings in contact center staffing and overall operational costs. It will also help improve the real-time delivery of customer feedback to the engineering teams so they can use the data to improve products.

Showcase the Vision

Plantronics is making major investments to transition further from the traditional contact center setup. The company has built a new office in Amsterdam designed from the ground up to showcase its vision of a "smarter work" environment. *"Initially, you wouldn't recognize it as an office building,"* van den Berg comments. *"It showcases products to help promote engagement and provides a variety of flexible workspaces. You won't find offices and fixed desks for people. Instead, you'll see some agents at a desk, others at comfortable seats. This is possible because our contact center representatives need no equipment other than a laptop PC and mouse."*



"As an industry leader in unified communications, Avaya is an absolutely crucial partner to Plantronics... When we say 'business is better on Avaya,' especially when Plantronics is involved, it's all about making sure we are engaged correctly with our customers. When we're engaged with our customers, business is better."

— Joe Burton, CTO and Executive Vice President of Products and Strategy, Plantronics

About Avaya

Avaya is a leading, global provider of customer and team engagement solutions and services available in a variety of flexible on-premise and cloud deployment options. Avaya's fabric-based networking solutions help simplify and accelerate the deployment of business critical applications and services. For more information, please visit www.avaya.com.

Imagine That

In addition to the many customer service and operational initiatives already underway, Plantronics is planning several new enhancements to advance customer engagement to a new level. Areas of focus include:

- Enhanced routing and prioritization capabilities for key accounts
- Worldwide load balancing among centers
- Multimedia integration with Salesforce.com
- Speech and data analytics
- Contextual intelligence deployed in the contact center
- Continued development of the “work anywhere agent”
- Web RTC

Van den Berg concludes, *“Customers are continually demanding better levels of customer service. We have to stay ahead of the curve. We’ve worked with Avaya for over 20 years to achieve that competitive advantage, and the new Avaya call center technologies are exactly what we need to keep moving ahead, transforming our contact centers into full-blown ‘customer engagement’ centers.”*

Solutions

- Avaya Communication Manager 5.2
- Avaya Aura® Communication Manager 6.0 (India only)
- Avaya Aura® Application Enablement Services
- Avaya Aura® Session Manager
- Avaya Call Management System
- Avaya one-X® Agent
- Various Avaya IP Deskphones

ABOUT PLANTRONICS

Plantronics offers one of the industry's most complete families of corded and wireless products for unified communications. Widely recognized for their sound quality, reliability and comfort, Plantronics' audio solutions help companies extend the benefits of IP communications throughout the extended enterprise, fostering better business communication and efficiency regardless of where professionals are working. The company has more than 3,000 employees worldwide with offices in more than 30 countries, with major hubs in The Netherlands, China, UK and Mexico.