

Case Study

Welcome Holidays A Call Centre Solution



“We wanted the technology to work for us, not let the technology drive what we can do. The Axxess system allowed us to do just that.”

Mark Taylor Systems Manager, Welcome Holidays

When you have nearly 4,000 telephone numbers available for strategic marketing campaigns you need a telephone system which provides comprehensive computer telephony integration (CTI) and detailed call reporting.

This case study details the issues facing a leading provider of holiday package wanting to know which marketing campaigns work and which don't using an Axxess phone system.

CUSTOMER BACKGROUND

Formed in 1994, Welcome Holidays started out with six staff selling cottage holidays throughout the UK. It has now expanded to nearly 400 staff selling six different brands, including UK & Emerald Cottages, Irish Directory and The France Cottage Directory.

Welcome Holidays classes itself as a marketing company that uses its own product portfolio of self catering holiday cottages to test and develop effective marketing theories. To this end, the company uses a collection of 3,500 telephone numbers to provide immediate tracking of call volumes from a wide variety of sources, including advertising media, web sites, brand names and brochures.

The main call centre based in Skipton is manned 16 hours a day, seven days a week, with calls outside these hours tracked and answered by a voice manager. Call volumes vary dramatically throughout the year with an overnight increase of almost 3000% in the first week of January.

THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Welcome's previous telephony system had been expanded over seven years to handle the volume of telephone numbers delivering calls to 160 extensions. There were concerns, however, about the system's ability to cater for future developments, including:

- Expansion to a new German based call centre, where compatibility issues with

German line providers were a problem at the time.

- The incumbent CTI package was proving unreliable in the Welcome environment and the licensing structure made it non-cost-effective for the January sales period.
- Welcome's rural location had always caused difficulties in recruiting staff for its long opening hours and the existing switch's development roadmap did not demonstrate a home working solution that Welcome felt would meet their needs.

WHY INTER-TEL EUROPE?

Welcome felt future investment in its existing telephony system would not prove effective without a radical change in platform. The directors therefore set an ambitious timescale of 2 months to evaluate, source and install the new system. This allowed for a month's trading on the new system.

Considerations were given to a number of solutions including full IP based solutions, but in the end a shortlist was drawn up with Inter-Tel regarded initially as an 'also-ran'. In the ensuing discussions, however, it became obvious that the Inter-Tel Axxess encompassed a far more sensible approach and that the relatively standard features would allow Welcome to test far more of its strategic objectives earlier and in a more cost effective way.

"We wanted the technology to work for us, not let the technology drive what we can do. The Axxess system allowed us to do just that." explained Mark Taylor, Systems Manager, Welcome Holidays.



Some of Welcome's key deciding factors included:

- Home working could be easily and effectively tested and ultimately rolled out using IP keysets, whilst keeping the control, tracking and management functions within the head office.
- Expandability of the system into new call centres as the need arises can exploit the principle of remote 'nodes' that communicate with the central office over relatively low bandwidth connections.
- A reseller who was able to answer questions at a technical level without the need for a 'coach-load' of specialists.
- An Open Application Interface (OAI) and developer's toolkit that did not hamper development of the system with exorbitant licensing fees.
- A reseller that who understood and also believed in the Welcome ethos of making the technology work for the business and not the other way round.
- A system whose flexibility in use was not hampered by a massive maintenance overhead of IT specialists.
- A simplicity in design that meant maintenance was infrequent, whilst at the same time being backed up by a quality reseller who in turn had a company behind it that was bucking the trends of the worldwide telephony market.

THE BUSINESS SOLUTION

Within one week of placing the order Welcome had a system that enabled the in-house development team to start CTI coding using the OAI stream and developer's toolkit. This meant that at switch-over a month later the telephony system was seamlessly integrated for the first time with Welcome's in-house Oracle database for all its users.

The instant benefits did not stop there, however. With the reseller working closely with Welcome, the Axxess was configured in such a way that any operator could tell the system what call types they should receive at any time. This meant making the sizing of sales and operational teams a factor of staffing and management, rather than being dependant on technical staff or re-programming of the system.

Swan's Callview package provides a reliable real-time and historical view of what agents are

doing, allowing team leaders to manage teams effectively using the standard configuration. The export features of the software allow Welcome to use its existing forecasting tools to identify staffing needs which have historically been to within 15 calls of that projected.

An Interactive Voice Recording (IVR) toolkit has allowed tracking of calls by telephone number whilst the call centre is unmanned without the massive administrative overhead of configuring individual voice mailboxes, and has allowed Welcome to complete the tracking of its marketing activities. The Inter-Tel reseller provided the development work on this at the same time as the system was being implemented, and integration was again a seamless and painless exercise.

Record Agent from Armstrong Communications provided Welcome with another key requirement - the ability to record its agents' calls and increase the quality aspect of the selling process. Welcome agents are not paid on commission but on the quality of how they deal with the customer, with a minimum of five calls per agent being quality marked per week and retained for assessment meetings and discussions with the agents. The ability to take the calls outside of the telephony system was seen as a real training aid, together with the sensitive approach to licensing that had been adopted.

RESULTS

Welcome's achievements within the first six months of the Inter-Tel system's operations include:

- Successful testing of the home working solution, leading to the installation of two permanent home working sites.
- A Leeds based call centre is using the IP keysets and are managed and tracked as if they were Welcome employees.
- Time-of-day routing of calls occurs between Germany and a new Dutch office, with IP trials in Germany due to start in the near future.
- A unique experiment with a competitor using IP keysets linked to the Skipton office has proved beneficial to both companies.
- CTI tracking has proved so successful that Welcome has been able to extend its affiliate programme to off-line sales, something which is believed to be a first in the UK - especially since this can happen when the call centre is not manned.
- Welcome is now in the process of developing a CTI-centred skills-based routing solution that adds manual inputs to standard DDI information, selects the most qualified agent to take the call, and routes the captured information with the call.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON
INTER-TEL EUROPE AND THE SERVICES
WE OFFER PLEASE CONTACT US:



INTER-TEL EUROPE LIMITED
2260 KETTERING PARKWAY KETTERING
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE NN15 6XR
UNITED KINGDOM

TEL: +44(0)116 290 3000
FAX: +44(0)116 290 3001

E-MAIL: info@inter-teleurope.com
WEB: www.inter-teleurope.com