

Realising the benefits

As a large authority with a distributed and bilingual population and workforce, the knowledge and ability to answer customer queries accurately was dispersed among staff across six sites and difficult to manage. Powys saw that bringing together its 60 customer service agents and some 3,000 back office staff virtually by using a resilient IP network would help resolve enquiries quicker and make services more easily accessible.

“We were working from a standing start and focused on bringing together technology, information and people to give our customers an efficient and effective customer experience.”

Julie Nicholas-Humphreys,
Customer Services Manager, Powys County Council

POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL IMPROVES CUSTOMER CONTACT WITH REDSTONE CONVERGED SOLUTIONS

The client

Powys County Council is a Welsh Unitary Authority serving 131,100 people across a quarter of the area of Wales. Around 8,000 staff work in a wide variety of roles in distributed locations across the county, making the Council the region's largest employer. The Council spends more than half of its £300m turnover within the county's boundaries. With one person in every 10 acres it is also one of the most sparsely populated local authority areas in England and Wales, meaning that many of its citizens are remote from Council offices.

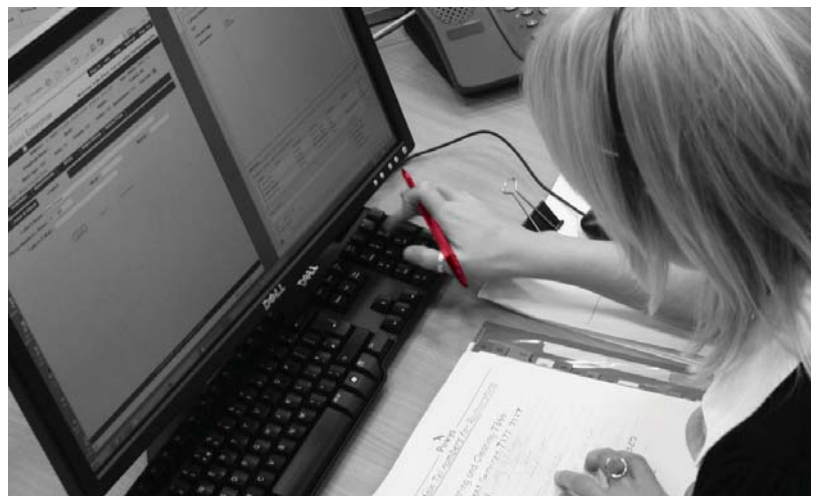
The challenge

In line with Government emphasis on improving citizens' customer experience, Powys was required to deliver enhanced customer service and efficiency out of its existing operating budget.

Satisfaction surveys found that the majority of Powys' citizens wanted to make contact with the Council both by phone and face-to-face. A common customer complaint was that citizens were often referred to three or more people before their query could be resolved.

The Council did not have the technology to manage calls to its 160 telephone numbers systematically and integrate this type of customer enquiry with an ability to track face-to-face enquiries.

Julie Nicholas-Humphreys, Powys County Council Customer Services Manager, said: "We were working from a standing start and focused on bringing together technology, information and people to give our customers an efficient and effective customer experience."



“Redstone’s expertise and its Avaya solution’s customer centric functionality met our requirements and were in line with what we were looking for in a long-term partnership.”

Julie Nicholas-Humphreys,
Customer Services Manager, Powys County Council

The results

- Redstone Converged Solutions supplied Powys County Council with advice and Avaya technology for a distributed virtual contact centre operation.
- The Council now has the means to monitor and improve customer service delivery and agent productivity.
- In the first six months after installation the Council saw its call abandonment rate drop from around 40 per cent to ten per cent.
- Prompt call resolution has doubled in some departments.
- Powys can prioritise calls, ensuring that citizens are routed directly to an appropriately skilled agent.

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The solution

Powys was looking for a solution that would realise its ROI through ease of implementation and use, functionality, resilience, and scalability to meet changing demands. Redstone Converged Solutions recommended a solution based on Avaya Call Management System, IVR (Interactive Voice Response), Call Centre Express and S8720 servers.

Two S8720 servers on separate sites connected over a private fibre link in high reliability mode enable the contact centre to continue functioning in the event of any potential service interruption, for example a major flood or power outage.

The outcome

With the solution’s ability to route calls according to agents’ skill levels, Redstone has enabled the Council to increase the likelihood of prompt call resolution, thereby providing stronger customer service and improving productivity per agent. For example, productivity has doubled in the Housing Repairs department.

“Callers no longer find themselves being passed from pillar to post. Prior to the solution, we had estimated our call abandonment rate at about 25 per cent. However, we have found that on some key services it was probably 40 per cent. This was reduced to ten per cent in the first six months after the installation,” Nicholas-Humphreys continued.

One feature of the IP-based system that has been particularly useful for the Council is IVR where the welcome message is amended to include a notice or information to advise and direct callers if large volumes of calls are expected about a particular issue. For example, when benefit cheques were delayed in the post, the Council put a recorded automatic message onto the system to reassure callers that cheques were on their way.

“Before installing the Avaya solution, anecdotal evidence led us to believe that the peak time for calls was in the morning. We now know that our busiest time is 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The distributed nature of our call centre means that we can spread calls, plan employees’ hours and recruit agents in line with peak times. Also the intelligent call back function assists in flattening the peaks while improving the overall customer experience.

“With Avaya’s technology and Redstone’s support, we have an end-to-end system for tracking customer service delivery and a strategic platform for future developments. We are transforming how we operate, proactively helping citizens to access services,” said Nicholas-Humphreys.

