



Case study

Industry sector:
government

BT queue management system boosts council service

BT QueueBuster enables London Borough of Lewisham to increase peak call handling capacity – improving productivity and enhancing customer satisfaction

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Zoë Kabir
Performance Manager
London Borough of Lewisham

Executive summary

The London Borough of Lewisham operates a contact centre to handle inbound telephone traffic. Call volume into the centre is very variable. Until recently, peak time abandoned call rates could reach up to 40 per cent, leading to customer dissatisfaction and adversely affecting the morale of contact centre agents. To counter this, Lewisham Council decided to implement a pioneering new technology known as BT QueueBuster to help smooth call flow.

BT QueueBuster is a call queue management solution. Callers are played a recorded message providing the option to leave their details and receive a call back, without losing their place in the queue, saving them both time and money. The BT hosted solution has enabled time to answer targets to be met, reduced abandoned calls by 50 per cent and increased contact centre agent productivity by 10 per cent.

Customer acceptance of the system is impressive with 98 per cent of people surveyed expressing their satisfaction. By providing customers with an alternative to waiting on the line the Council has reduced abandoned, repeated and lost calls – providing a boost to customer service and enhancing its reputation in the community it serves.

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“BT QueueBuster has helped us transform the customer experience. Rather than simply telling customers what they really know already – that the queues are long – it helps us to manage workflow and removes the problem without increasing staff in the contact centre.”

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Marketplace

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Business opportunity

In keeping with most local authorities, the Borough operates a contact centre to handle inbound telephone traffic. Known as CalloPoint the Lewisham Council contact centre has 100 seats and handles more than 1.5 million telephone calls each year. It deals with enquiries from citizens and business customers, supporting departments such as Environmental Services, Housing, Repairs, Revenues and Benefits.

The Council has set itself an ambitious target – to answer 91 per cent of all calls within 15 seconds – but at busy times this was proving to be a challenge. Call volume into the centre is very variable, peaking on Monday mornings and around specific events such as the issue of Council tax bills. At these times the Council was experiencing abandoned call rates of up to 40 per cent, leading to customer dissatisfaction and adversely affecting the morale of contact centre agents.

Zoë Kabir, Performance Manager at Lewisham Council, takes up the story: “We looked for a technology solution that would help us to improve customer service. We initially intended to implement a system that would advise customers of their position in the queue and give an approximate time to answer – but then we found out about QueueBuster from BT and this changed our thinking entirely.”

BT solution

BT QueueBuster is a contact centre call queue management solution. Callers are played a recorded message with the option to leave their details and receive a call back without losing their place in the queue, rather than hanging on the line. This saves the caller time and money and ensures the call is not lost to the contact centre.

An automated real time system, BT QueueBuster takes the place of the customer in the contact centre queue and when an agent becomes available it initiates an outbound call to re-connect with the customer. The call is then presented to the reserved agent in the same way as a normal inbound call but with the advantage of the caller's recorded name first being played to the agent, enabling a more personalised service.

BT QueueBuster integrates with any existing contact centre. Lewisham Council was impressed with the concept, as Zoë Kabir explains: "We were unable to find facilities similar to those offered by QueueBuster elsewhere in the market. BT uses QueueBuster in its own contact centres and they were also able to show us a system used by another customer. That really convinced us to go ahead."

BT commenced with a simulation exercise that calculated theoretical benefits using real historic contact centre data. This data was used to create the business case for the project. Under a live trial of the technology, the benefits were immediate – the solution cut call queues by up to 90 per cent, improved the efficiency of contact centre staff by 10 per cent, and reduced abandoned call rates by 50 per cent.

QueueBuster is available from BT for outright purchase or as a hosted solution. Zoë Kabir says: "We opted for the hosted solution because of the benefit of the simple cost model and quicker implementation. With BT managing the system for us, we have continuous access to the skills and expertise of BT's service and maintenance team." With the trial an unqualified success, full deployment followed shortly after. The London Borough of Lewisham became the very first public sector organisation to implement BT QueueBuster technology.

Why BT?

- Innovative pioneering technology solution backed by strong customer references
- Hosted solution avoiding capital expenditure, speeding implementation and simplifying management and administration
- BT technical expertise and consultative approach

Results

BT QueueBuster has enabled Lewisham Council to meet its time to answer targets and dramatically improve its call handling. Smoothing the flow of peak time calls into its contact centre has increasing staff efficiency and reduced ineffective time. By providing customers with an alternative to waiting on the line the Council has reduced abandoned, repeated and lost calls, providing a boost to customer service and enhancing its reputation within the community it serves.

Reducing repeated calls enables a much more accurate understanding of true call volumes, allowing the contact centre manager to more accurately forecast necessary staffing levels. Zoë Kabir says: "BT QueueBuster has helped us transform the customer experience. Rather than simply telling customers what they really know already – that the queues are long – it helps us to manage workflow and removes the problem without increasing staff in the contact centre."

Customer use and acceptance of the new system has been very good and the system is now handling around 1,500 call back requests each week with a success rate often in excess of 98 per cent. But Lewisham Council has not stopped with analysis of its own contact centre statistics. Zoë Kabir says: "We have conducted a survey of customers to ask them if they used the QueueBuster service, whether the instructions were clear and if the call

back was received in the expected time. Ninety-eight per cent of people surveyed expressed their satisfaction, which is an outstanding result."

This increase in customer satisfaction is also improving morale among Lewisham Council's contact centre agents, who no longer have to deal with increasingly irate customers who have been kept on hold for too long. Instead it is commonplace for customers to begin the conversation with a thank you for the call back and a compliment about the efficiency of the system.

Another advantage is that BT QueueBuster is very easy to set up and use and can be turned on and off as needed at the click of a mouse. This feature is very useful as it empowers the contact centre manager to make informed decisions in response to call volume and working times. For example, turning off the system – say – 15 minutes before closing time to allow call back commitments to be completed without building a further queue that would necessitate extended opening.

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Technology blueprint

Every contact centre has daily fluctuations in call volume that make it impossible to completely eliminate queuing. BT QueueBuster removes the need for contact centre managers to staff for the peaks – enabling lower staff costs, higher productivity and improved customer service. Surveys of organisations using BT QueueBuster have confirmed that contact centre agents are more productive, taking on average an additional ten per cent of calls.

The system is based on technology from BT's partner NetCall and the service used by Lewisham Council is hosted at the NetCall Telehouse data centre in London Docklands. When call waiting times exceed a specified duration the contact centre is programmed to deliver a recorded message to the customer giving

the option of a call back whilst retaining their place in the queue. If the customer accepts the option the call is routed over a BT 0845 number to connect with the BT QueueBuster server at Telehouse. Customers are then asked to speak their name and if necessary provide an alternative telephone number and the system effectively takes their place in the queue.

At the prescribed time BT QueueBuster generates an outbound call to the relevant designated number at Lewisham Council and reserves a contact centre agent before generating a second call to the customer and connecting the parties together. If the customer is unavailable the system is programmed to retry up to three times at prescribed intervals.

Main BT products & services

- BT QueueBuster – fully automated real time call back system
- BT Lo-Call (0845)



Offices worldwide

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