



# Case study

Industry sector:  
financial services

## Prudential's new BT queue management system increases customer satisfaction

Since implementing BT's revolutionary QueueBuster solution at two UK contact centres, Prudential has improved customer service and enhanced agent productivity

### Executive summary

Bringing enhanced customer satisfaction and improved call agent productivity, Prudential has invested in two QueueBusters, the new queue management system from BT, for use in two of its UK contact centres. The first has been installed in Prudential's centre in Craigforth, Scotland, serving financial advisors, the second at Prudential's Belfast centre, which manages enquiries from the general public.

Designed for contact centres of 100 agents or more, BT QueueBuster reduces call abandon rates and improves customer satisfaction by giving customers the option to receive a return call rather than waiting on the line.

Having purchased and installed the two QueueBuster solutions, Prudential has achieved a reduction in abandoned, repeated and lost calls; enhanced management of peak call demand and improved levels of satisfaction both for the customer and the call agent. The morale of the Prudential call agents has risen appreciably since the implementation, with handlers reporting a much-reduced incidence of 'telephone rage' from customers.

"I have been bowled over by the enthusiasm of our call agents for the QueueBuster solution. I have never come across a product that has created so much positive morale in all the years I have worked in the call centre industry."

Dorothy Hall  
Contact Centre Development Manager  
Prudential UK

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“One of the main benefits of the system for us is that its automated nature means that promises are rarely, if ever, broken. If a customer asks for a call back, that customer will almost always receive a call back.”

Shaun Hewitt  
Network Platform Manager  
PruTech – Infrastructure Services  
Prudential UK

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### Marketplace

Prudential is a leading UK life and pensions provider. It provides a range of financial products and services including annuities, corporate pensions, with-profits and unit-linked bonds, savings and investments, protection and equity release products. The company currently employs some 6,200 full-time staff located in offices in Stirling, Reading, Belfast, London, Dublin and Mumbai.

Prudential focuses on providing first-class customer service to a large installed base of policy-holders and an extensive network of financial advisors. It does this through a network of contact centres. Two of these: at Craigforth, Scotland and Belfast, Northern Ireland, have implemented the QueueBuster system.

As Dorothy Hall, contact centre development manager explained: “It is the responsibility of the internal business services function at Prudential to explore opportunities to enhance and improve the quality of the service offered in the call centres.

“This process would initially involve research into opportunities, monitoring relevant technologies available in the marketplace today and then making recommendations to Prudential's senior management team about ways of addressing business needs. From there,

the key challenge would be to engage the top management to take these initiatives forward.”

Having received backing for QueueBuster from the top directors at Prudential, the customer services team liaised with Prutech to take the process further.

The success of this project was aided both by chief operating officer, Jan McNish's experiences with the BT call centre's QueueBuster system and by the recent IT outsourcing deal struck between BT and Prudential.

### Business opportunity

Prudential was attracted to BT QueueBuster because it saw its potential to address one of the key issues it was currently facing. At the time Prudential was finding that, especially at peak periods, some customers were abandoning calls and others becoming increasingly irate at being kept in queues.

The company wanted to avoid a situation where customers would be put on hold for long periods before reaching the front of the call queue. The company understood that such a scenario inevitably resulted in high levels of call abandonment, disgruntled customers and low call agent morale.

Implementing QueueBuster would enable Prudential to avoid these problems by giving callers the option of leaving a message to be called back while still maintaining their place in the queue.

For Prudential, the business opportunity came from the chance to ensure higher levels of customer satisfaction – unsurprisingly, it is finding that callers treated are generally more positive and happy when they reach the Prudential call handling agent than previously. Also, because the whole process of making and receiving calls is more efficient with QueueBuster, the average time taken per call has been radically reduced.

Prudential realised that implementing BT QueueBuster would enable it to establish an edge over many of its competitors in the financial services sector.

## BT solution

Jan McNish, Prudential's chief operating officer, first experienced QueueBuster in use at one of BT's own contact centres. She was so impressed that she lent her support to the further investigations of Prutech, the Prudential technology division. Prutech then contacted BT and following detailed discussions decided to put one of its QueueBuster systems on trial at its contact centre in Craigforth, Scotland, which handles business lines to independent financial advisors and is used by BT to test all new contact centre technologies.

A condition of the trial was that if the system passed a number of technical and commercial goals, Prudential would buy it at the end of the trial period. Events then proceeded to move at lightning pace. The first planning meeting between BT and Prudential took place on August 3rd 2004; the system was installed on September 11 and went live on September 14.

After just eight weeks the trial was cut short. Prudential agreed to buy the first system so that could extend the agreed trial to their Belfast call centre, which caters exclusively for end customers.

The primary reason for this rapid decision was that Prudential had quickly seen the benefits it was receiving from the system. In soft terms these included enhanced customer satisfaction largely because of shortened call waiting times. Before Christmas, pleased with the results it was achieving in Belfast, Prudential decided to purchase the second system also.

Prutech played a critical role in the installation. In particular, it was responsible for managing the relationship with NetCall, the original manufacturer of the QueueBuster system. Prutech also managed the deployment process right through from the server installation to the implementation of relevant security systems and remote access capabilities. In addition, Prutech co-ordinated some of the training activities with NetCall.

The two QueueBuster installations are completely separate at the moment. Prudential is hopeful that once it completes its current transformation programme with BT, the two can be migrated into one global system.

## Why BT?

- The timing was excellent as Prudential had just announced a multi-million pound five-year outsourcing deal with BT. This involved BT taking over responsibility for the management and upgrading of Prudential's entire network infrastructure in the UK
- The ability to provide rapid implementation of the systems at both Craigforth and Belfast was a key benefit for Prudential

## Results

While it is currently too early for Prudential to have carried out a detailed analysis of metrics, key benefits achieved since implementing the solution include improved management of peak call demand and a reduction in rates of abandoned, repeated and lost calls.

Before agreeing to purchase the first Craigforth QueueBuster system, Prudential surveyed both IFA customers and its own call handlers to obtain their detailed feedback.

According to Dorothy Hall: "Many of the IFAs we spoke to were stunned at the speed of the call-backs they received with QueueBuster. Call agents were also generally highly impressed and testified to the positive impact the system was having on levels of morale."

By providing customers with an alternative to queuing while still maintaining their place in the queue,

Prudential believes it has improved customer service and its brand perception at the same time.

The call back success rate is very high with 99.5 per cent of customers requesting a call back actually receiving one. Call agents are also happier at having fewer instances of phone rage with which to deal.

The potential applications for QueueBuster extend far beyond the financial sector. Demonstrating the strength of its belief in QueueBuster, BT uses the solution in its own call centres.

And any large company, which operates a contact centre, stands to benefit. Key areas actively being targeted by BT include retail, utilities and local government.

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### Technology blueprint

At both Belfast and Craigforth, Prudential has a thirty-channel QueueBuster system, which connects physically to the Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system and is located in the same communications room onsite. In both cases, QueueBuster is also connected to a call recording system so that outbound calls are recorded.

Prudential uses an Avaya ACD system in Craigforth and an Aspect ACD solution in Belfast. In order to maximise the benefit of the local QueueBuster implementation at both sites, BT is in the process of transforming the infrastructure of both call centres to a hosted Cisco IP Contact Centre (IPCC) solution. This will take place over the next twelve to eighteen months.

A key challenge for BT going forward will be the need to migrate the QueueBuster product in line with Cisco IPCC deployment.

The implementation of the two QueueBusters was relatively smooth. Prudential merely needed to check the capacity on the ACDs to ensure that they could take the relevant cards and make some slight changes to the configuration of the call recording systems to ensure calls were recorded properly. The Craigforth installation took approximately a week to complete.

At Belfast, the timescales were even more aggressive. The period from Prudential initially contacting BT to completion of the deployment was less than four days.

Prudential decided to run both systems as standalones. It was not thought necessary to build redundancy into the QueueBuster element of the system as it was felt that the cost of doing this would probably outweigh the benefit.

### Main BT products & services

- A thirty channel BT QueueBuster system implemented at Prudential contact centre in Craigforth, Scotland. Solution connected to an Avaya ACD system to record outgoing calls
- A thirty channel BT QueueBuster system implemented at Prudential contact centre in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Solution connected to an Aspect ACD system to record outgoing calls



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