

Case Study

Affinity Group, Inc.

Leader in Recreation Activities Increases Revenue and Member Satisfaction with Unified Contact Center Solution plus Workforce Management

The Company

Affinity Group, Inc. is the nation's largest provider of outdoor clubs, media and events geared towards the North American recreational vehicle (RV) and outdoor enthusiast market. Based in Ventura, Calif., Affinity operates two contact centers in Denver, Colorado and Bowling Green, Kentucky. The contact centers handle the inbound and outbound service and sales interactions related to the broad portfolio of consumer brands, products and services the company offers, which includes Affinity Media, Affinity Clubs, Affinity Events and Affinity Ventures.

The Business Challenge

The Affinity Group manages incoming calls regarding membership, new member acquisitions, sales, renewals, change of address information, roadside assistance, and provides help in travel planning. In addition, they conduct a growing number of outbound calls to members- more than one third of the total monthly calls handled in the contact center are outbound interactions.

In late 2005, the Denver contact center recognized it was having challenges successfully managing the increasing volume of calls it was receiving and then getting those calls to the right agents. Many of these challenges were based on the way the contact center agents were organized, since all the agents were required to take calls for all clubs, services and prospects. Agents were not qualified to answer all the questions from all the different niche audiences, and as a result, Affinity was experiencing very high handle times. Agents would take longer to address the callers' issues, and would not be able to get to all of the incoming calls. This would cause high hold times for members, leading to high abandon rates.

Affinity recognized that it needed to address these issues in order to cut costs and improve the service it was providing to members.

The Solution

To best meet its strategic objectives with such a large and diverse audience, in December 2006, the company developed a focused strategy for training and segmenting agents based on the different recreation interests, company brands and clubs, such as RVing, tent camping, ATV riding, snowmobiling, boating, and motorcycling. Affinity's approach was to develop a revised contact center structure to target and segment the larger recreation market into niche groups and clubs.

The company also recognized the importance of arming the skilled agents with advanced contact center capabilities and evaluated their technology needs. The company had an early version of Aspect® Unified IP™ in place at the Denver contact center in 2005, but they were only leveraging a very small part of what the solution offers in terms of functionality. However, by properly training agents and changing into a more club-based contact center, Affinity was able to effectively implement the full breadth of capabilities that Blended Interaction™ offers.

Blended Interaction is a unified communications application for the contact center that provides inbound, outbound, self service and workforce optimization capabilities. By eliminating complex integration and providing common management, reporting and administration, Blended Interaction gives greater visibility, control and staffing efficiency in Affinity's multichannel contact center to enhance customer satisfaction and improve business results. Blended Interaction uses the capabilities from Aspect's product platform's, Aspect Unified IP and PerformanceEdge® Workforce.



Solution

Blended Interaction

Results

- Increased 80/20 service level goal by more than 19 percent
- Decreased abandoned calls by more than 68 percent over a two-year period
- Reduced call handle time an average of 30 seconds per call
- Increased total revenue by nearly 7 percent

"Blended Interaction is a single source of all-encompassing contact center capabilities, and it is robust enough that I don't have to add on capabilities constantly. From a technology perspective, one of the best things about Aspect is having one vendor for all our contact center needs."

Scott Willey

Vice President of Affinity Clubs
Affinity Group, Inc.



Affinity is now taking full advantage of the skills-based routing, outbound capabilities, speech-enabled voice portal, email management, internet contact, workflow management, and the recording and quality management functionality available.

Blended Interaction™ enables Affinity to have incoming member calls routed to agents based on skill and availability. This allows a limited number of agents to address more member calls. Agents also receive a whisper from their headset with basic caller information before the agent screen is populated with the full member history, enabling the agents to mentally prepare for the call seconds before it is received. All of this is resulting in reduced customer callbacks and lower call handle time because the agents have all of the information they need to better manage the call in a more efficient fashion.

In addition, the Denver contact center is now maximizing the outbound capabilities to increase its calling initiatives. Affinity is expanding contact center tasks to include outbound awareness campaigns of upcoming events, sales calls, welcome calls to clubs, and to collect credit card information for automatic renewals.

These capabilities enable Affinity to record 100 percent of all calls for quality monitoring purposes, and the company uses the speech self-service functionality for post-call member surveys to receive feedback on satisfaction directly from the customer. This helps the company continually fine-tune its processes in order to best meet its members' needs.

Affinity is also using the workforce management capabilities to more efficiently schedule agents and forecast call volumes based on historical data. Affinity can give agents greater control over their schedules and enable supervisors to streamline schedule changes and track agent productivity.

Results

Since the beginning of their initiative in late 2005, the Denver contact center has seen significant positive results, including reduced call handling times, reduced abandon rates and increased member satisfaction. As well, in 2007, Affinity saw an increase in total revenue growth from \$11.8 million to \$12.6 million, an increase of nearly 7 percent.

Other tangible results Affinity is seeing in its Denver contact center include:

- 80/20 service level goal (80 percent of calls answered in 20 seconds) increased by more than 19 percent.
- Abandoned calls are down over a two-year period by more than 68 percent.
- Handle time is down an average of 30 seconds per call.
- Percentage of calls handled is up over a two-year period, from 94 percent to nearly 98 percent.
- Abandon percent is down from 4.65 percent to just over 2 percent.
- Revenue per call is up, from \$14.74 to \$15.93.

In addition, Blended Interaction is allowing agents to handle outbound tasks easily during low call volumes, which enables Affinity to maximize agent productivity.

Lastly, with post-call surveys through the voice portal, Affinity has greater insight into the quality of its interactions with members by using direct feedback from the callers. Approximately 12 percent of callers choose to take the Affinity survey after speaking with an agent. The voice portal asks callers questions about their interaction, such as reasons for not purchasing a product, agent empathy, and overall satisfaction. The contact center found that callers are generally happy with their interactions, rating calls an average of at least 4.79 on a 5-point scale. Even members that call regarding an issue or problem generally rate their calls an average of 4.0 on a 5-point scale.

By leveraging the full capabilities from Aspect, Affinity is able to provide even better service to its members and improve job satisfaction for its agents.

"I would attribute our higher revenue to the advanced call blending capabilities from Aspect. The blending functionality enables our knowledgeable contact center agents to resolve the call in less time. As a result, we have cut our time significantly, and we've also reduced customer callbacks quite a bit, because their inquiries are now being routed to agents that have the skills to best manage their inquiries."

Scott Willey

Vice President of Affinity Clubs
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About Aspect

Aspect is a global software and IT services firm specializing in applying Microsoft unified communications and collaboration to help customers achieve optimal results through enhanced business processes across the enterprise and in the contact center. Aspect provides IT consulting, integration services and business applications. For more information, visit www.aspect.com.

