

Charter Communications

Progressive Contact Center Based on Sophisticated Aspect Solutions

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Brynn Palmer

*Director, Customer Experience,
Charter Communications*

The Company

Charter Communications is a Fortune 500 company that provides households throughout the United States with affordable access to the latest entertainment technology.

The Business Challenge

- Consolidate 300 call-handling locations into 12 standardized sites.
- Handle inbound contacts more efficiently.

The Solution

Implement Aspect® eWorkforce Management™, an industry-leading solution for optimizing contact center workforce performance, to increase efficiency and maximize the contact center's effectiveness to help drive performance at every level of the operation. Employ Aspect® Professional Services to quickly and efficiently deploy Aspect eWorkforce Management and integrate the solution with existing disparate Automatic Call Distributors (ACDs) and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems to reduce complexity and operational costs.

The Results

- Efficient, cost-effective operation of multiple dispersed contact centers.
- Accurate forecasting and scheduling.
- Reduced cost per call, improved service levels and higher customer satisfaction.
- Easy integration based on industry standard Microsoft® platforms.



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Dale Franz

Director, Corporate Customer Care, Charter Communications

From its origins as a small analog cable television company in 1993, Charter Communications has grown to a Fortune 500 company with five divisions in the United States, 15,500 employees and more than 4,200 locations. In addition to offering digital cable TV over a state-of-the-art fiber-optic network, Charter now delivers video on demand, high speed Internet access, data and Internet Protocol (IP) solutions, business-to-business video and more.

Contact Centers are the Key to Customer Satisfaction

Customer service is critical to an entertainment and communications company of this magnitude and Charter maintains high service levels by implementing modern contact centers that feature sophisticated tools and technologies.

Charter's five divisions operate a total of 12 contact centers, each ranging from 200 to 500 seats. These centers perform functions such as sales, service, repairs and collections and handle three million telephone calls and more than 100,000 email messages each month.

This extensive operation wasn't always as orderly as it is today. A side effect of Charter's precipitous growth was the evolution of a loose collection of 300 different call-handling facilities ranging from three employees taking calls over a basic Private Branch Exchange (PBX) to larger groups of agents connected to ACDs.

For both cost-effectiveness and service quality, consolidating these facilities was a necessity. "Since some of the calls weren't even handled on an ACD, we had no idea how many calls we took a day," said Dale Franz, Director of the Corporate Customer Care operation at Charter Communications. "Without that information, we couldn't take steps to reduce handle times and make other efficiency improvements."

"We weren't able to track traffic, understand our customers' experiences, or segment our customer base because call handling was being done in 300 different locations using multiple pieces of technology with no way to consolidate data," agreed Brynn Palmer, Charter's Director, Customer Experience.

Standardizing on a World-Class Workforce Management Solution

Charter's contact centers are multi-vendor operations, standardized on ACDs from one vendor, quality-monitoring solutions from another and an IVR system from a third. To help its managers efficiently schedule and staff hundreds of agents, Charter uses Aspect® eWorkforce Management™, a full-featured workforce management solution built on industry acclaimed TeleCenter System (TCS) technology to optimize contact center workforce performance.

Compatible with third-party ACDs, the Aspect eWorkforce Management solution was already in place at some of the Charter centers. In 2000, Charter set out to make it the company standard. "We realized that if we were going to build 300-seat standard sites, we needed to have a tool that accurately forecasts call volumes and allows us to apply our resources strategically," said Franz. "We deemed it mission-critical for the consolidation and standardization of our centers." After bringing in a consulting firm to compare available solutions, Charter made Aspect the company standard.

"With Aspect already in-house and working well, it was pretty much unanimous that Aspect eWorkforce Management would be the solution we'd standardize on," added Palmer. "Aspect product development is going in the right direction. If we were going to invest capital, we wanted a vendor who would stick with us as our organization matures."

Charter deployed the complete software suite of Aspect® eWorkforce Management™. This suite includes core functionality that provides accurate forecasting of call volumes and enables managers to create schedules that match predicted volumes. Utilizing the suite's enhancement packages, Charter was able to realize additional levels of efficiencies in managing their workforce. For examples, using the Aspect eWorkforce Management Perform module enables supervisors to track agent activity in real-time and compare it to schedules. It also provides reports for evaluating and enhancing agent performance. Additionally, the Aspect eWorkforce Management Empower module streamlines the process of requesting, approving, and entering schedule exceptions.

According to Palmer, the results are readily apparent. "You can absolutely tell the difference in cost per call, service level, and customer satisfaction," she said. "We're applying our resources at the times the customers are calling in."

Building on Reliable Industry-Standard Microsoft® Technology

Aspect eWorkforce Management is optimized on the Microsoft® .NET platform, the basis of Charter's IT infrastructure. Charter's IT operation also utilizes Microsoft® SQL Server database servers and leverages the .NET Framework for development.

The combined solution provides the high level of reliability, scalability and ease of deployment required to help Charter maintain its competitive advantage.

Charter's Microsoft® orientation made system consolidation easier as well. "Collapsing some 300 small centers into larger, consolidated centers offered significant cost savings," said Palmer. "Standardizing on Microsoft® technologies allowed us to realize those savings."

Moving forward, Charter plans to use Microsoft® middleware to integrate the several desktop applications its agents use. By giving the agents a consolidated desktop, Charter will cut down the time they spend moving from one application to another and ultimately improve customer service.

Services to Match the Solution

According to Franz, Charter depended on Aspect® Professional Services to get Aspect eWorkforce Management into production quickly. "Aspect's technicians stuck around as long as necessary in order to make sure that our staff had the right training and were up to speed." Charter found the Aspect assistance so valuable in fact, that they purchased the onsite support option in order to continue to take advantage of the company's expertise.

"To be honest, Aspect has been a real success for us," said Franz. "We've gotten a lot of good feedback at their user conferences. That has helped us form a tight-knit group of workforce managers who will continue to become more effective as the management team sees the power of the Aspect workforce management solutions."

About Aspect

Aspect provides software and consulting services that turn the potential of unified communications into real business results across the enterprise and in the contact center. Applying 35 years of insight and experience, Aspect helps two-thirds of the FORTUNE Global 100, as well as small and medium enterprises, power their business processes with communications. For more information, visit www.aspect.com.

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