

Garlands Call Centres

Aspect® Unified IP™ drives IP transition strategy for leading UK outsourcer

"By investing in a state-of-the-art IP Reference Architecture and IP Contact Centre, Garlands has realised incredible business benefits in terms of performance and quality improvements, flexibility, business agility, resilience and technology thought leadership. It has also enabled the company to centralise operations, reduce the technology footprint required at satellite offices, and simplify moves/ changes and network administration. It's been a phenomenal success that owes much to our use of best-of-breed technology solutions and successful business partnerships with companies like Aspect."

Chris Colyer

IT Director, Garlands Call Centres

The Company

With more than 3,000 employees, eight contact centres handling more than 36 million calls per annum, and sales of nearly £50m a year, Garlands is the largest contact centre employer in the North East of England. The company provides a range of outsourced services including customer service, outbound customer acquisition, collections and debt recovery, customer retention, technical assistance, and back office administration.

Garlands has built an international reputation for quality and people-focused customer service for blue chip companies, including Vodafone, Virgin Media, easyJet and TalkTalk.

At the heart of Garlands' business philosophy is a belief that to deliver the best service, contact centres must observe four rules - namely:

1. Stimulate, respect and develop your people
2. Support them with the best technology
3. Create environments that are motivational and encourage team work
4. Aim to consistently exceed customers' expectations

The company has won a string of industry awards for quality, including "Outsourced Contact Centre of the Year" at the 2007 National Outsourcing Association Awards and, together with Vodafone, "Best Work by a Contact Centre" at the 2006 Marketing Direct SMART awards.

Business Challenge

In 2004, Garlands undertook a detailed examination of the way it interacted with its clients, its recruitment and training programmes, workplace environments and technology infrastructure. It also analysed business infrastructure and processes with a view to cutting costs and building a fit-for-purpose quality business. What followed was a new and ambitious technology strategy involving a multi-million pound investment programme. The company aimed to:

- Create a 21st century IT infrastructure that builds business and differentiates Garlands from its competitors through technology leadership
- Streamline costs and processes
- Improve customer satisfaction by adding recording and analytics, and by supporting new channels of customer interaction (automation, video, collaboration, etc.)

The Solution

Garlands' first created a 'Reference Architecture' that supported a transition to IP-based systems and allowed the company to leverage existing technology assets (automatic call distributors (ACDs), call recording, MIS systems, and more) to obtain maximum value. The Architecture uses best-of-breed components to create a converged network infrastructure that delivers high performance, resilience, high reliability and security.

A technologically-advanced IP contact centre, using commercially-proven, leading edge IP hardware and software solutions, was then built on this Reference Architecture. The contact centre uses:

- Uniphi Connect contact management software to work with the company's existing Aspect® CallCenter® ACDs (and moving to Aspect Unified IP in the near future)
- PerformanceEdge™ workforce management application
- Cisco® CallManager IP-PBX software
- eTalk Qfiniti contact recording, quality management and speech analytics software
- Unified Command and Control™ - Reporting

Solution

- Aspect Unified IP
- Aspect CallCenter ACD and Uniphi Connect
- PerformanceEdge - Aspect eWorkforce Management with additional Empower and Perform enhancement packages
- Unified Command and Control - Reporting.

Results

- Reduced technology footprint and administrative costs.
- Slashed cost of technology-enabling new advisors by 50 percent.
- Cut IT operating costs by 25 percent.
- Improved quality by 15 percent on one major client account.
- Increased customer satisfaction and agent performance.

Garlands has used Aspect solutions since 1999; and the launch of its new IP infrastructure provided the opportunity to advance to next-generation capabilities.

It extended its Aspect® eWorkforce Management™ capabilities (from the PerformanceEdge™ suite) by investing in the Empower enhancement package to give the company's advisors more control over their working days. They can now view a snapshot of the Garlands' resource scheduling database on their desktop screens and request changes, such as holidays, as appropriate. If advisors need time off at short notice, they can put in a request and automatically receive a response without managers and MIS department planners needing to intervene. The company also invested in Aspect eWorkforce Management - Perform. This provides an at-a-glance view of each agent's activity in real time and compares it to that agent's scheduled activities. Perform registers adherence deviations in real time and produces historical reports.

In 2007, Garlands extended the capabilities of its Aspect® CallCenter® ACDs by investing in Uniphi Connect, a SIP-compliant product that delivers IP-based functionality to agent desktops. As Uniphi Connect was rolled out, advisors were equipped with Aspect TeleSet® 3 handsets, as well as Cisco and 3Com IP handsets.

In the future, Garlands plans to migrate from its existing Aspect CallCenter ACDs to the software-based Aspect® Unified IP™, delivering feature-rich contact centre features while allowing Garlands choice of transport (SIP-based VoIP or traditional voice). Currently, an Aspect Unified IP test bed is being created with full implementation to take place during 2008. Unified management reporting is also being enabled using Unified Command and Control™ - Reporting.

The Results

The new infrastructure has exceeded Garlands' expectations in terms of performance, flexibility, business agility, cost savings and resilience. Uptime has improved from 99.6 percent to 99.9 percent. When a recent client was launched, all phases of go-live - from planning to full technology implementation - were completed in a mere three days.

The Garlands IP-enabled contact centre played a significant role in four business wins in 2006-2007 worth more than £12 million. The company also grew its business with existing clients as a result of its enhanced business agility and technology thought leadership. In addition, by reducing its technology footprint and administrative costs, Garlands slashed the cost of technology-enabling new advisors by 50 percent and decreased IT operating costs by 25 percent, and this number continues to decline.

Garlands has also seen improvements in overall customer satisfaction and agent performance. The introduction of speech analytics will move quality to the next level, with greater customer knowledge and customer choice, creating additional business opportunities. One client has seen a quality improvement of 15 percent.

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 centre. 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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