

Centrica

How Webex Connect enables seamless customer experience across digital channels

Customer Summary

Customer name

Centrica

Industry

Utilities

Category

UK



9 million customers – that’s a lot of potential inbound contact

Centrica is a multinational energy, gas, and services provider that powers homes and businesses across the UK.

With over 9 million customers, Centrica’s contact center received a huge volume of inbound calls every day covering multiple teams and types of inquiry. As a result, customers could often be frustrated by long queue times during peak hours, and with so many inquiries solved through voice, the cost to serve for Centrica was high.

As part of an initiative to modernize and improve their operations, Centrica wanted to reduce the number of calls into the contact center by embracing multiple digital channels.

Digital communication channels such as SMS and WhatsApp Business allow businesses to serve customers more efficiently as well as providing a more seamless, end-to-end customer experience. Call deflection was a priority for Centrica and integrating these messaging channels offers customers a way out of the call queue and onto a more convenient channel. Customers would no longer be stuck on the phone, waiting to connect to an agent, but could carry on with their day and chat at their convenience.

Deflection to digital channels would help to deliver a better customer experience through concise, results-driven conversations, and increase efficiency by enabling agents to manage multiple inquiries. And that’s where Webex’s CPaaS solution comes in.



Challenges

- Reliance on voice as main customer support channel
- Poor customer experience



Objectives

- To use digital channels to maximize efficiency and reduce costs
- To improve the customer service experience



Why Webex?

- Webex is a strategic messaging partner since 2000
- 16+ digital communication channels offered within Webex Connect



Solution

Enabling seamless customer experience across multiple digital channels.

Centrica used Webex Connect and Webex Engage to offer customers a seamless, connected experience across SMS and WhatsApp Business. This solution was deployed to handle queries across different teams within Centrica including Energy Solutions, Landlords, Retentions, Plumbing and Drains, Billing Disputes, Payments, Tariff Switch, Home Move and General Enquiries, with Annual Service Visits and Hive soon to come.

The Webex Connect platform is integrated with Centrica's existing IVR system to provide this seamless solution. When a customer contacts Centrica over the phone, they are offered the option within the IVR flow to switch their interaction to WhatsApp or SMS channels. Customer information such as name, postcode etc. is then captured within an automated journey via WhatsApp and then Webex Connect routes the customer to the right team within Centrica to handle the query. If a customer does not use WhatsApp, then Webex Connect automatically facilitates the fall back to SMS so the customer can continue the conversation via that channel.

With Webex Connect, Centrica can make changes to all its message templates and hours of operation quickly

and easily. The platform also offers auto-scaling so Centrica can be flexible, dependent on the number of calls, and offer more customers the option to transfer to a digital messaging channel at peak times.

While Webex Connect is handling the orchestration and automation, customer service teams use Webex Engage to manage the conversations. Agents receive the details collected during the qualification stage and previous conversation history before sending the first response. This ensures customers don't have to repeat themselves and that agents can begin resolving the inquiry immediately.

Once the customer query has been resolved, Webex Connect automatically sends out a customer survey so they can rate the interaction and provide any feedback. This closes the loop for the customer and enables Centrica to understand any ways they can improve their service experience.

In addition, customers can always return to WhatsApp to continue interacting with Centrica at any time. Webex Connect also provides the integration layer to Centrica's 'Cosmo' chatbot to handle returning customers contacting them on WhatsApp. The chatbot performs identity and verification checks for each customer to provide conversational automation and intelligent routing.

Quick and easy deflection to WhatsApp



* British Gas is a part of Centrica

Results

13,780 customers chose to deflect to WhatsApp in the first week the service was launched.

The solution has helped to significantly reduce the number of inbound calls being answered by agents and given customers a choice in how they want to be served. Centrica has seen a real desire from its customers to use digital channels, with 5% of customers now deflecting to WhatsApp. The Net Promoter Score (NPS) for customers using WhatsApp was as high as +60 for Centrica's 'Service and Landlords' team and +40 for their 'Retentions' team.

"Providing customers the choice to talk to us on messaging channels is a key part of our digital strategy and a means by which we can maintain our service levels while improving customer experience. Webex's solution using WhatsApp has been a game-changer for our service operations and it's great to hear positive feedback from our customers and agents who are using the service.

We look forward to providing greater opportunities for our customers to chat with us on WhatsApp and serving them on this channel." – Adam Waite, Head of Digital Conversations and AI at British Gas

The reduction in voice calls is helping Centrica to reduce operational costs while improving the customer service experience. A win-win situation for the business and its customers.

In the future, Centrica is looking to increase the number of agents on WhatsApp whilst improving conversational automation and self-serve capabilities so that even more customers can be served via the channel. They are continually optimizing their existing customer journeys and identifying use cases that could be better served through the richer features of WhatsApp Business e.g., use of menus, quick reply buttons, pictures, video etc.

13,780

**Customers using the service
in the first week**

5%

**Customers now deflecting
to WhatsApp**

1,300

**agents are now serving
customers via digital channels**

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