The global solution for a local authority

As part of their Business Communications Project, Cornwall Council completely overhauled their telephony infrastructure and created a new voice activated contact centre. The result is increased productivity and mobility for staff, improved customer services for residents, a huge reduction in the telephone bill and a big annual saving in contact centre staff costs.

Unitary Authority for Cornwall

In 2009, Cornwall County Council and six district councils merged to create a unity authority for Cornwall – Cornwall Council (Konsel Kernow in Cornish).

Cornwall Council has responsibility for running and maintaining schools, social services, rubbish collection, roads, planning etc, for more than half a million residents and five million tourists visiting the county every year to experience it's industrial heritage and enjoy the stunning landscape, pasties and cream teas.

Transformation for efficiency

Cornwall Council has an ongoing commitment to explore new, effective and efficient ways of carrying out their

"This project allowed us to make a significant leap forward in terms of call centre automation and mobile communications in a relatively short space of time. From day one we were able start saving money by reducing our staff costs."

Wayne Smith, Assistant Head of Shared Services, Cornwall Council

business which enable them to cut costs and promote more customer-centric services within budgets.

They use technology to streamline their business, exchanging manual processes for automated, electronic ones and a

shared services business model is adopted where practically possible.

At the point of merger, as a cost saving measure and to make it easier for residents to contact them, Cornwall Council reduced their call centres (through which every external and internal call routes) from four to two. It became easier to manage the call centre function, but there was still room for improvement.

The centres were operating on different telephony platforms, one Mitel, one Siemens and on different numbers, which made overall reporting difficult and caused confusion with residents about which number they needed to call.

ProcessFlows®
Improving Business by Transforming Process

Two become one

A decision was made to consolidate to one call centre and a single telephony platform. This would initially be located in the council's Scorrier offices, but then move two months later to the Camborne site.

Extend, no need to re-build

Cornwall Council got in touch with communications experts, Azzurri Communications, for guidance on the best technology for the job.

Having listened to Cornwall Council's brief – to source a centralised voice activated infrastructure for call processing, routing and remote access to voicemail for all staff, which would take the call centre strain and provide a single contact number for residents – and fully evaluated the telephony and IT infrastructures, Azzurri's advice was to expand and add functionality to their Mitel system.

Key to the whole project would be automatic voice processing at the front end. The Mitel system would also be integrated with the incumbent CRM system to provide instant access to customer information and voice and screen recording would be added to aid management and reporting.

Working with industry partners to provide the functionality elements specified, Azzurri would coordinate the project with Cornwall Council's internal IT and project teams.

Assistant Head of Shared Services, Wayne Smith, joined Cornwall Council at this stage of the Bus Comms project; taking up the challenge to unify the telephony infrastructure, the contact databases and staff, whilst making sure that it was 'business as usual' from the customer perspective.

"A lot of call centre time was spent answering and re-routing internal calls. We could add no value to these calls. We wanted a system which enabled internal staff to bypass the switchboard, so the call centre staff can concentrate on the added-value enquiries (and complaints!) from the public."

At the same time, he had to factor in further efficiency business drivers, such as increased mobility to allow staff to work effectively from home, remote locations or on the move.

Channel Partners

Azzurri chose to work with ProcessFlows to provide the voice processing (voicemail, unified messaging and voice

activated directory) capability, using the independent CallXpress platform.

Tony Corlett, Platinum Client Director, Azzurri Communications Ltd said; *"We have a long standing relationship with ProcessFlows, having worked together on similar deployments and have confidence in their ability to develop bespoke voice solutions with CallXpress."*

CallXpress' voice processing capability means it can deal with all inbound calls automatically, coping with any peak call volumes and routing callers to the most appropriate person or department. If the 'call attendant' can't get the caller through, callers have the choice to be re-routed to another contact or leave a message on that person's dedicated voicemail; which can be accessed from any location.

Being able to get through to the correct person or department in a single call immediately improves the contact experience for customers, reduces phone bill charges for the council and increases staff efficiency.

> **"Public sector organisations can make substantial cost reductions by investing in the IT estate they already have and Cornwall Council have proved this. Unified Communications has transformed the efficiency of their business and delivered impressive cost savings in a short space of time."**
>
> Tony Corlett, Platinum Client Director,
> Azzurri Communications Ltd.

Getting the priorities right and planning for change

Cornwall Council receives, on average, 5,000 calls a day. It took four or five full time employees (made up of internal and extra agency staff) to answer and route each inbound call.

Voice activation would immediately reduce their reliance on temporary staff and deliver the administration cost savings sought.

CallXpress's voice activation and automated call routing depends on accurate contact information to work effectively. So making sure that the Voice Activated Directory (VAD) was up to date before they went live was a priority.

Wayne enlisted the help of his stalwart call centre staff (who would eventually be responsible for implementing the transformation 'at the coal face').

They carried out a thorough clean-up of the contact data and added extra information, such as department details, service (such as plumbing or rubbish collection); in fact, anything they could think of which would enable CallXpress's virtual operator to more accurately recognise the callers voice command and connect them to the correct person or department first time.

Anticipating different pronunciations of staff names, nicknames etc and setting up these aliases was also carried out.

ProcessFlows services team worked closely with Azzurri engineers throughout the project to ensure that when they switched on the new system to go live, it would be seamless and work first time.

The hard work paid off

Everything worked perfectly. Voice activation was rolled out internally first. Immediately, 16% of all inbound calls were automatically routed to the intended person/department.

Within two months, the number of calls bypassing the manually answered switch went from zero to 1658. Voice recognition was proven, so it was time to launch VAD externally, which again worked first time, with no interruption to front line call centre services.

Voice activation continues to go from strength to strength

After three months, calls being automatically routed had risen to 58%. Wayne puts this down to the efforts of call centre staff responsible for ongoing data cleansing. He commented at the time that; *"From no VAD a few months ago, this is nothing short of miraculous. I have already managed to release two full time, temporary switchboard staff and banked the savings."*

Adding more council locations to the system and continued directory updates/cleansing, further increased the number of calls connecting directly to the correct person and department. Ongoing updates can only continue to improve accuracy and accrue cost savings.

Reflecting on the success of the project, Wayne said; *"This is a great example of team working. Our internal teams, Azzurri and ProcessFlows managed to piece this project together and convert our enthusiasm to use well designed technology to help us realise tangible cost savings and efficiency gains, into a real success story. Congratulations to all concerned."*