Artisoft®

Consumer Credit Counseling Maximizes Investment and Provides Room for Growth with Artisoft's Award-Winning Software-based Phone System

Telephone traffic was on the rise at Consumer Credit Counseling Services (CCCS) in Sacramento, California, but the company's traditional proprietary phone system was stifling the company's growth. "It wasn't growing with us and it was very expensive to scale up," said Kathy Stutts, president of the non-profit company that counsels people in challenging financial situations.

The company's call center handles between 8,000 and 10,000 incoming calls each month. Outside of the regular business hours, requests for emergency credit counseling were forwarded to a remote call center, but those calls could only be routed one at a time. "Emergency calls don't necessarily come in one at a time," Stutts said. "It was very difficult." Many calls were lost, and those calls represented people who needed help.

With a move to a bigger building on the horizon, Stutts started looking for an affordable phone system with advanced routing features, so that CCCS could be sure that every call got through. She also wanted a scalable system that could grow with the company, which currently employs 30 people and expects to add another 10 over the next few years.

Artisoft's TeleVantage® Offers a Budget-Friendly Solution

The necessary enhancements to its current phone system would have cost CCCS about $150,000, so a cost-effective communication solution quickly became a top priority. Stutts wanted to stay within her budget as much as possible, but could not afford what she needed from her current provider, especially if the company continued to grow. She decided to research her options for a viable phone system by scouring the Internet and researching trade magazines. Ultimately, Stutts chose Artisoft's TeleVantage, a software-based phone system, because it allowed CCCS to treat its multiple types of calls and client interactions in a customized way. The system allowed in-house queue management and could intelligently route calls to specific telephone stations. TeleVantage could also be expanded to accommodate technologies such as speech recognition and Voice-over-IP. "Even though TeleVantage was a relatively new product, it met all of our needs and provided great value for the dollar," Stutts said.

TeleVantage works with industry-standard equipment because it is built on open systems architecture. That fact enabled CCCS to run its phone system using different types of headsets and handsets. Also, CCCS was able to reduce initial costs for the phone system because TeleVantage was compatible with its existing analog handsets. CCCS purchased new handsets for about $29 and headsets that cost $18 to use with TeleVantage. With CCCS' old proprietary system, each handset cost about $300 and headsets were about $180 each, Stutts said. The flexibility TeleVantage provided in hardware choices actually saved CCCS approximately $11,000. The total cost of implementing the TeleVantage solution was considerably less than the $150,000 CCCS would have paid to enhance its former proprietary phone system.

User-Friendly TeleVantage Saves Money on Training

Because TeleVantage was so easy to administer, Stutts was able to set up a few TeleVantage workstations to train her employees before the company moved to its larger quarters. "That was the beauty of the system. You didn't have to install the entire system to do training. We had live demo tests with real live data and real live people." Capital Networking, an authorized TeleVantage reseller, organized the full deployment of the system. The

company did not suffer any loss of productivity due to on-the-job-training with a new phone system.

With CCCS' former phone system, new employees needed to spend an entire day in a training session to learn how to use the telephone. "It was ludicrous," Stutts said. With TeleVantage, information such as who is calling, what calls are waiting, phone messages, and the customer profile appears on the user's computer screen in a familiar way. "The visual point-and-click interface makes the system user friendly, especially to entry-level employees or older workers who are unfamiliar with data entry," Stutts said.

Advanced Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) Leads to Organizational Effectiveness

CCCS management was able to capitalize on TeleVantage's routing capabilities by establishing queues to route first-time callers to employees with the least experience. Repeat callers were routed to employees with more experience. Stutts soon realized another unexpected benefit of the TeleVantage system: quicker advancement for employees. As entry-level employees dealt with only the simpler questions and problems of first-time callers, they were able to master the skills necessary to handle those calls in about half the time that it used to take with the old phone system. "Employees become very valuable to the company very quickly," Stutts said.

TeleVantage Call Center Reporter Helps Forecast Business Trends

Projecting staffing needs has become much easier for Stutts since her company switched to TeleVantage. The phone system software can track calls even before they are answered and compile reports that reveal peak calling times. With this information, Stutts can accurately project how many workers she needs at any given time during the day. TeleVantage also can track how long callers are on hold and how many people get tired of waiting and just hang up. With this information, adjustments can be made to improve customer service.

TeleVantage Increases Personal Productivity

As president of the company, Stutts has to make the best use of her time throughout the day, and she often uses TeleVantage's call screening capability. When her phone rings, she sees the name of the person calling on her computer screen in the Call Monitor, even if she is on another phone call at the time. If Stutts wants to speak to the person who is calling but wants to first finish the call she is on, she can play an announcement asking the second caller to hold. TeleVantage will hold the call until she is ready for it. She can also listen to a voice message as it is being left, and intercept the call by just picking up the phone. "It was very important to me that it be a user-friendly system," Stutts said. "I knew that if it was user-friendly for me, it would be user-friendly for anybody else, too."

Problem

- The former proprietary phone system was stifling growth because it was too costly to add new users and provide necessary functionality.

- On weekends, emergency credit counseling calls could only be forwarded one at a time to the off-hours call center. Many calls were lost.

- The former phone system could not provide any call statistics. Therefore, it was very difficult to project staffing needs and measure call center productivity.

Solution

- Consumer Credit Counseling Services implemented Artisoft's **TeleVantage**, a software-based phone system.

- TeleVantage allowed the company to set up multiple ACD queues to ensure that all incoming calls were answered or forwarded appropriately during off-hours.

- TeleVantage's call center reporting software enabled CCCS to identify call patterns and track the productivity of individual customer service representatives.

Results

- The use of industry-standard equipment with TeleVantage saved the company approximately $11,000.

- Customer service representatives' training time was reduced 50% by setting up first-time caller queues.

- TeleVantage's Call Monitor provided a significant increase in employee productivity.

"...It met all of our needs and provided great value for the dollar."

— Kathy Stutts
President,
Consumer Credit Counseling Services

Artisoft®

It's amazing what phones can do.™

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