

The Regence Group

A healthcare provider with vision and a vendor that understands partnership

"The thing I like most about Aspect Software is the direction that the company is taking with the vision to look at new technology and to be a partner in bringing technological solutions to meet the needs of businesses."

Joanne Gholston

*Vice President of Service,
Regence Group*

The Company

The Regence Group is the largest affiliation of health plans in the northwest and intermountain United States, covering nearly 3,000,000 customers in Idaho, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. It includes Regence BlueShield of Idaho, Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon, Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Utah and Regence BlueShield (in Washington).

The Business Challenges

Provide an excellent customer experience for customers in moments of extreme need.

The Solution

An IVR-based survey that allows customers to provide immediate and confidential feedback. The IVR-based survey functions using the Aspect® CallCenter® ACD to get every call to the right resources, Aspect® Customer Self Service IVR™, which includes advanced capabilities that make using self-service a better experience for customers and increase the number and type of transactions that can be automated and Aspect® Enterprise Contact Server™ to link enterprise resources, coordinate customer transactions, and unify business functions.

The Results

- Objective feedback directly from customers
- Improved agent performance
- Reduced total call-handling time by 16 seconds
- Improved customer service
- Higher employee morale



An Aspect Software customer since 1995, the Regence Group employs 900 agents in nine contact center locations using five Aspect® Call Center® ACDs. The company's near-term goal is to integrate these locations so that from both the customer's perspective and management's perspective, they are one center. "Our goals over the next 18 months," says Joanne Gholston, Regence's vice president of service, "are to integrate all our floor plans and start flowing work across state lines and to start operating in a Multichannel environment."

An important tool in reaching these goals is the Aspect® Enterprise Contact Server™. In addition to making it possible to integrate multiple sites and contact channels, the Aspect Enterprise Contact Server significantly enhances the experience customers have when they call for help by identifying customers as soon as they make contact and automatically routing their calls to the right specialist to meet their needs. It also presents the customer's information to the specialist when the call arrives, so that no time is wasted keying in requests for information. "Traditionally, contact centers would have talked about this capability in terms of reducing talk time," says Gholston. "At Regence, we see it as a way to allow our specialists to spend more time with our customers."

Making a Difference in the Customer's Life

There is a big difference between the old way of thinking about metrics and the current Regence way. "In the long term," Gholston says, "our center will look quite different than it does today. Our contact with our customers will be a key differentiator for us because a positive experience is the reason customers stay with a healthcare provider. Our customers don't have a relationship with us until they need help, and at that moment, there's a real opportunity for us to provide a tremendous service to people in a time that is difficult for them—a time when someone they love is hurt or sick or they have a bill so large that their house can be repossessed. It's a critical moment in their lives, and it's also an opportunity for us to make a difference.

"Historically, a lot of insurance call centers have been reactive," she continues. "Their job was to answer calls and answer questions. And that's not the job of our specialists anymore. Their job is to create a great interaction with the customer. We don't want our reps focused on how many calls they take or what their average talk time is. We need to manage those metrics and understand them for staffing and planning purposes, but we want our frontline employees to think that their job is to make a difference in someone's life."

Using Automation to Enhance the Human Contact

One example of this approach is a new application Regence has developed using Aspect® Customer Self-Service IVR™, an advanced interactive voice response (IVR) system. Most contact centers see IVR systems as tools for reducing costs by automating transactions. Regence is looking beyond the traditional usage with an innovative customer survey tool that actually enhances the human element in the customer experience.

Regence uses Aspect Customer Self-Service IVR to solicit candid feedback and generate accurate customer-satisfaction scores for contact center agents. The number of customers who take the survey is regulated by business rules written in the Aspect® Enterprise Contact Server™. Before the customers selected are connected to an agent, a voice prompt asks them whether they are willing to take part in a survey after the call. Customers who agree are quickly transferred to an agent, and then back to the Aspect Customer Self-Service IVR after their questions have been answered and their issues resolved. At that point more voice prompts ask them to answer five questions on the quality of the experience they've just had.

This allows customers to provide objective feedback without the agent they dealt with knowing whether they will respond or what they will say if they do. Customers can be candid because the survey is private. And, because it is automated, it is inexpensive to administer, and it allows Regence to base its quality metrics on the customer perspective, rather than on internally developed criteria. In fact, Regence bases fifty percent of agent performance on the customer satisfaction scores arising from the survey.

Reduced Talk Time, Better Service, Higher Morale

The survey does more, of course, than simply rank agents. The scores give supervisors the information they need to deliver targeted coaching, which in turn has improved agent performance. Total handle time has dropped 16 seconds, saving Regence US\$146,000 a year in labor costs in Oregon alone. But cost reduction is not the main point—improving the customer experience is.

The feedback also boosts morale by letting agents revel in first-hand customer praise. Comments such as this one can be played to the agents to let them know how much the customers appreciate their assistance: “I just wanted to let you know that Greg was extremely enthusiastic, friendly, helpful, and accommodating, and I recommend him. Thank you.”

If You Asked Me Today . . .

Gholston comments favorably on Aspect Software’s support in making the survey application work, and points out that in general Aspect Software has been a good technology partner in meeting Regence’s business goals.

Asked what she likes best about Aspect Software, Gholston replies, “If you asked me ten years ago, I would have said ‘it’s absolutely the ACD.’ I first became an Aspect Software customer because their ACDs were top of the line and were the best that you could get anywhere. They never broke. They always worked. And they were flexible.

“If I had to answer that question today, I would say the thing I like most about Aspect Software is the direction that the company is taking with the vision to look at new technology and to be a partner in bringing technological solutions to meet the needs of businesses. At Regence, we have business problems to solve and we need to partner with organizations that are forward-thinking.”

About Aspect Software

Aspect Software, Inc. founded the contact center industry and is now the world's largest company solely focused on Internet Protocol (IP) and traditional voice-based products and services for customer service, collections, and sales and telemarketing business processes. Each day, Aspect Software powers more than 125 million customer-company interactions at thousands of in-house and outsourced contact centers around the globe. Its trusted Signature product line offers automatic call distributors (ACDs), dialers, voice portals and computer telephony integration (CTI). The company's leading Contact Center Performance Optimization product line provides workforce management, quality management, performance management and campaign management applications. And, its pioneering Unified IP Contact Center product line delivers a comprehensive, multichannel solution. Headquartered in Chelmsford, Mass., Aspect Software has operations across the Americas, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia Pacific. For more information, visit www.aspect.com.

Aspect Software
Corporate Headquarters
300 Apollo Drive
Chelmsford, MA 01824

+1 978 250 7900 office
+1 978 244 7420 fax
www.aspect.com

