

Balancing the needs of efficiency with greater customer service

A Case Study by Nexidia



Customer service is now one of the top differentiators in the contact centre industry. In today's recessionary times, the challenge is to eliminate waste and cut costs while improving customer relationships and growing market share. Organisations are now looking to utilise technology that gives 'more for less'; technology that enables them to balance the needs of efficiency against greater customer satisfaction.

In a tough competitive environment, outsourcing specialist Ventura chose to employ speech analytics to drive improvements in quality and service, win loyalty and reduce costs. As one of the UK's leading outsourcing specialists, Ventura's clients include some of the largest global blue chip and UK government organisations including O2, Sky, bmi, British Gas, Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The company has grown over the last 40 years and now employs over 7,000 people in its 8 sites in the UK and offshore, all dedicated to making a difference to its client operations.

THE CHALLENGE

Ventura's company philosophy is to be proactive rather than reactive to market demands and changing client

needs. In the contact centre business, the real challenge is to understand what is happening at the point of interaction between the customer and the agent. Why are your clients calling? What are their issues? Where are they having problems?

Historically, the main metrics available were numerical logistics—time, date and number of calls, etc,—and they were of limited use. Previously, the only approach to content analysis was through manual call listening which is far too time-consuming, taking as much time as the original call, poorly targeted and therefore produces meaningless results or gross assumptions. Ventura wanted to get a much deeper understanding of their challenges and drive improvements across the service. Also, as an outsourcer with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to meet for each client, they wanted the ability to define and quantify actual improvements. Speech analytics is now seen as integral to their business and is of great strategic importance going forward.

THE CHOICE

After a detailed market evaluation, Ventura chose Nexidia's Enterprise Speech Intelligence (ESI)—a proven, scalable and affordable solution to:

- Drive improvements in quality and service
- Reduce Average Handle Time (AHT)
- Drive down repeat callers
- Identify and remove problem processes
- Gain detailed insight across a high volume of calls which is impractical using manual call listening
- Improve cross/up selling
- Drive revenue
- Build customer satisfaction through value-added services

"Nexidia's ability to handle huge call volumes and deliver accurate meaningful analyses in very short timeframes proved decisive for Ventura," states Neil Conway, Head of Operations at Ventura. ESI has enabled the company to objectively measure and analyse large volumes of audio across customer service and sales areas. In 6 months, 592,413 calls encompassing 51,490 hours were analysed and key recommendations acted upon with staggering results. "We quantified that it would have taken us 11 man years to analyse the same volume of calls that Nexidia did in the 90 Day Proof of Concept and QuickStart programs," adds Conway.

LOW RISK ENTRY COST

The Proof of Concept (POC) provided business insight in targeted areas and identified £600,000 potential return on investment. The more extensive QuickStart Program then identified even further savings, more than justifying the full business case. And all of this was quantified prior to the need for any capital investment or infrastructure changes.

“It was the quality of engagement that proved the business case. Nexidia’s quality of analytics expertise is unheard of in the industry,” comments David Howe, Project Manager Ventura. “The POC proved Nexidia could do it before we had to think of investing.”

The 60 day QuickStart program was run on a Nexidia hosted server and took daily extracts of 250 hours of audio encompassing 3,000+ calls, totalling 20,000 calls per week. Analysis was done using remote desktop access and all data was set up and accessible within 7 days, and within 3 weeks the first detailed report was available. Ventura then took an OnDemand hosted service to ensure full operational capability throughout the hardware installation and in-house system configuration phase. And, as the system is fully scalable, once fully operational it will process up to 2,000 hours of audio per day from thousands of agents across all sites and clients.

“The ability to run a hosted service was great and enabled a smooth transition. It proved a very strong selling point that we were able to keep going throughout the installation with no break in service,” adds Howe.

QUANTIFIED BENEFITS

Reduced AHT: In the initial stages of the project, Ventura chose key high traffic areas for detailed investigation. Through Nexidia’s call driver analysis, Ventura was able to categorise and validate the Average Handling Time (AHT) for each type of call, quantify the outliers and draw up targeted actions for maximum improvement. Surprisingly, Explain Bill and Direct Debit calls, which were ostensibly automated processes, accounted for 14% and 11% of all calls respectively, with Explain Bill accounting for 23% of overall handling time. In drilling down to understand the root cause it was realised that agents were struggling to explain complex bill processes and were losing call control.

“We were able to do targeted listening directly to the point where ‘bill’ was mentioned in the call, and begin to understand the knowledge and skill gaps. We rebuilt the agent framework and developed specific coaching programs for those with high handle times,” says Michelle Winter, Quality Manager Ventura. Over the three teams that were running this pilot, Ventura achieved a staggering 42 second call reduction, which gave an overall 4 second reduction in AHT across 30,000 calls and 800 FTEs in the customer services unit—generating major savings. Due to this huge success the new processes have now been rolled out to all teams.

Driving down non-talk time: Weekly and monthly call driver analysis reports also highlighted the non-talk time by advisor and the top 200 agents with the highest level of silence time were

offered targeted training and support. Prior to the start of the program, silence time per call was running at 30% due to online processes, hold time and areas of poor call control. Within three weeks of the start of the QuickStart, non-talk time had been reduced by 10%—over 550,000 calls! This quick win saving came directly out of the bottom line.

Adding Value/Cross Selling: The client taking part in the Speech Analytics pilot has a target percentage for cross selling of a key product. Through call driver reports, Ventura was able to clarify the advisors offering the product, chart the reasons for their success and pass this information to the process improvement team to help those not yet meeting their quotas. Ventura has now increased cross selling of this particular product by 50% in only five months.

“The Speech Analytics findings are also providing very valuable insight directly for our client to use in their own business. It is seen as not only opening exciting new capabilities, but as a very definite ‘Value-Added’ service,” adds Winter.

Customer Satisfaction/Complaints: Outsourcing companies are increasingly measured on multiple performance indicators, not just simple cost reduction, hourly rates or number of calls. KPIs are a core commercial mechanism that rewards key behaviours that result in lower bills, improved customer satisfaction, loyalty etc. Ventura continues to strive to understand what drives customer satisfaction, and perhaps more importantly, what generates complaints.

“The KPIs for our customer satisfaction survey, which amongst other things chart positive and negative agent behaviours, have doubled for this client,” states Winter. “Additionally, I can now get a report at the click of a button that tracks key complaints, which makes my life so much easier.”

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Whilst selecting Nexidia as the technology of choice, it was appreciated that analytics is still a very people-based process. “It is not an ‘out-of-box’ solution,” states Andy McKenzie, Head of IT Ventura. “Analytics is a process aided by a tool, not the other way around. Speech Analytics is a young technology and to maximise its potential, you need committed staff from both sides to fully understand key factors in your processes that you didn’t know before.”

Nexidia’s Analytical Framework is an applied effective speech analytics process which combines analyst expertise from both the customer and Nexidia. Customers bring their in-house knowledge and Nexidia adds the analytical and product knowledge. Focussing on key issues within the organisation, queries are developed to categorise the type of calls being

received; observation allows the classification of call drivers by handle time; targeted listening for high handle time calls investigates root causes; working with training and process improvement teams puts in place key corrective actions, then the improvements are measured to ensure effectiveness.

MENTORING AND IN-HOUSE SKILLS TRANSFER

With any emergent technology, building in-house skills is a challenge. Often however, the core skills do exist in-house and simply need to be redirected. At Ventura, new Business Analyst and Engagement Manager roles have been created within the core team to aid implementation across the company. “Our transition towards self-sufficiency has been smooth, thanks to Nexidia’s excellent mentorship and training program,” adds McKenzie. “The quality of the presenters, trainers and training materials has been very good and the assistance on mentoring calls has been invaluable. It’s important when you’re just beginning to stand on your own two feet to have someone to call as a sounding board to validate if you’re using the right queries.”

FUTURE PLANS

Due to the notable success of the project, all the divisions and other premier clients want to be part of the program. The key issue is prioritising where the biggest gains are to be made. A core factor in the original choice of Nexidia was the ability to roll out the project to other clients in very short timeframes, no matter what the call recording platform, system infrastructure or specific client requirements. A major roll out sequence with a number of the clients is already in place.

Going forward, Ventura is focusing on specific strands that will contribute to driving continuous improvements across the business. These operational areas include:

- Adherence
- Efficiency
- Customer Experience
- Staff Development
- Business Insight
- Cross Selling/Adding Value

“Ventura strives to offer a ‘Best in Class’ service and speech analytics is giving us that value-added ingredient that differentiates us from the rest,” concludes McKenzie. “Speech analytics has become an invaluable part of our arsenal, providing the insight that enables us to deliver real benefits to our clients.”

Nexidia – Headquarters
 3565 Piedmont Road NE
 Building Two, Suite 400
 Atlanta, GA 30305
 USA

404.495.7220 tel
 404.495.7221 fax
 866.355.1241 toll-free

Nexidia – UK

Gainsborough House
 2 Sheen Road
 Richmond TW9 1AE
 United Kingdom

+44 (020) 8973 2440 tel
 +44 (020) 8973 2301 fax

nexidia.com