



Symposium Customer Portfolio

# Upgrading Support

**Microsoft Canada connects every caller to the right person with the right answers, thanks to Symposium Call Center Server**

## The Challenge

At its Toronto-area headquarters, Microsoft Canada receives more than 2,000 calls daily for product support, sales-related information and general inquiries. Microsoft's Product Support Services group had earlier implemented Nortel Networks' Meridian Call Center portfolio, but wanted to further refine skill-based routing to ensure each call reached the support professional who is best equipped to handle it. For example, staff primarily expert in Microsoft Word should not receive PowerPoint or Excel calls – but it should be possible to add staff for such calls when volumes are high.

Microsoft was also looking for a more adaptable, easy-to-use system, ideally with a Windows-based graphical user interface (GUI), powerful reporting tools and an open architecture to facilitate third-party applications

development. Finally, the same skill-based treatment had to apply to all headquarters calls, providing a single point of customer contact.

## The Solution

Microsoft Canada implemented Symposium\* Call Center Server. By routing all inbound calls to the support professionals best qualified to answer them, the center has cut its abandoned-call rate in half and is far more successful in maintaining high service standards. The system's Windows-based GUI and detailed, realtime reporting have dramatically improved productivity and customer satisfaction, while its open design means that the company is well positioned to adapt and grow with its changing business needs.

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## Skill-based flexibility

"Symposium Call Center Server is a breakthrough in skill-based routing," says Graham Flint, Group Manager, Product Support Services, at Microsoft Canada's headquarters in Mississauga, Ontario, west of Toronto. "Skillsets are identified by people, rather than by answering position. We can add support professionals incrementally by skillset in an endless diversity of dynamic queues. This makes the call center far more flexible and ensures that each customer reaches the right support person at the right time, through a single point of contact."

## 50% Fewer lost calls

"We're now more successful than ever at maintaining our service-level target, which is to answer a minimum of 80% of calls within two minutes," says Flint. "As a result, we've reduced our abandoned call rate by half, and customer satisfaction has improved."

## Quick reflexes

"The continuous realtime information provided by Symposium Call Center Server enables our managers to react immediately to changes such as low service levels or shortages of staff available for a particular skillset," says Flint. "Support professionals are working more productively and job satisfaction has increased."

## Easy as Windows

"With our old DOS-based system, accessing call center data was counter-intuitive," Flint recalls. "Now we've got a Windows-based tool that makes presentation of data easy and more familiar to my management team. It's simple: just click, and it's there on your screen."

## Cradle-to-grave

"Symposium Call Center Server's cradle-to-grave call tracking allows us to fine-tune call center operations," explains Flint. "We can either look at a broad overview of performance or focus on particular details that will help us, for example, hire and train staff more effectively."

## Open architecture

"We appreciate having the flexibility to add new solutions," Flint says. "For example, we developed a small display unit for each support professional's desktop that shows realtime stats. The system's open architecture enables us to constantly improve our call center, adding our own developments as well as third-party products."

## Looking ahead

"As our Internet offerings grow," says Flint, "customers will increasingly need an effective way to establish personal contact with Microsoft. We want to ensure they reach knowledgeable people, and we want to create a value-added experience. The skillset-driven environment of Symposium Call Center Server lets us do this quickly and well."

## The Details

Microsoft began by defining support professional skillsets: more than 60 in Product Support Services; 10 in the Resource Center, which handles sales-related calls; and 6 for general reception. "Our requirements change constantly as new products launch and existing products evolve," says Graham Flint, Group Manager, Product Support Services. "Symposium Call Center Server makes it easy to change or add skillsets whenever we need to."

On reaching Microsoft, a caller can choose an employee's extension via an automated attendant, or specify the type of service required with a few touchtone commands. Each call is then routed to the best-qualified support professional, wherever he/she is logged on. A call about Microsoft Project 2000, for example, reaches someone who knows the project management software. Similarly, sales-related calls about multi-user licensing options, or the nearest reseller carrying Microsoft's Cordless Wheel Mouse, are routed to call center staff who have the necessary expertise.

Symposium Call Center Server's Windows-based realtime reporting and tracking tools make it easy for managers to access information and respond to shifting call patterns or staffing needs. And Open Database Connectivity (ODBC) has supported

the creation of a custom Excel table displaying the previous day's statistics and analyzing support professional performance.

## The Results

Microsoft's abandoned call rate has been cut in half, and the company has been more successful in holding its service-level target of answering 80% of calls within two minutes. With skill-based routing, customer support representatives use their full range of expertise, spend their time more productively and enjoy greater job satisfaction. Above all, customers get the support they need quickly, making each Microsoft interaction a positive experience.

Symposium Call Center Server's realtime displays help managers spot problems such as sluggish response times or shortages of support staff with particular skillsets. The system's "cradle-to-grave" call tracking offers an overview of performance while managers focus on fine-tuning the operations and increasing efficiency. That insight into workflow leads to more effective hiring and training of support professionals.

The Windows-based GUI is easier to use than the old DOS-based system – again, improving productivity. And the open-ended system design adapts to Microsoft's evolving needs. "The scalability of the Symposium solution lets us plan ahead," concludes Graham Flint. "The effectiveness of our call center is critical in helping us consistently meet the needs of our customers."



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