

Sabio Case Study: Vale of Glamorgan Council

How Vale of Glamorgan Council hit its First Contact Resolution target of 80 per cent by working with Sabio to implement an IP-based contact centre infrastructure based on Avaya Communication Manager integrated with comprehensive Workforce Optimisation capabilities from Verint as part of the Council's innovative OneVale transformation initiative.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE:	SABIO SOLUTION:	RESULTS DELIVERED:
<p>A key goal for the Welsh Assembly Government is to ensure that Welsh public sector organisations deliver against key efficiency targets set under the Assembly's 'Making the Connections' vision. To help tackle the issues set out by this agenda, as well as assist the Council in meeting its key NI14 National Indicator goal of 'reducing avoidable contact' with customers, Vale of Glamorgan Council investigated ways of optimising its contact centre performance and freeing specialist back-office operations to focus on more complex service delivery. To enable this, it was essential to establish a best practice, and fully optimised, customer contact operation that could deliver a high quality service efficiently.</p>	<p>Vale of Glamorgan Council's Customer Relations team knew that it needed to embed a comprehensive IP infrastructure on which to build a public sector showcase contact centre. Sabio implemented a solution based on Avaya's Communication Manager IP platform and reporting technology within its OneVale customer interaction programme. In addition Sabio integrated Verint's Impact 360 Workforce Management and Quality Monitoring solutions to provide the council with a comprehensive Workforce Optimisation (WFO) strategy. This would optimise agent resource planning and scheduling in the Council's Barry contact centre, as well as record customer calls and support the Council's Quality Assurance programme. A key requirement for the Council was to work with a specialist WFO partner that could both deliver on current requirements as well as support the Council's customer interaction vision going forward.</p>	<p>Sabio's implementation of an advanced contact centre infrastructure and WFO technology has achieved a number of key benefits, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping OneVale to deliver on its First Contact Resolution goals – on track to hit 80 per cent target across services • Allowing the Council to go beyond simple enquiries and handle complex and specialised processes such as Adult Social Services within its OneVale contact centre • Enabled delivery of OneVale one number strategy, with 300 numbers reduced down to just one • Significantly reduced call volumes for complex interactions – down from 5-7 calls to just 1-2 on average for key activities such as Social Services • Delivering BPR improvements to support broader OneVale efficiency targets

Putting the customer centre stage

The Vale of Glamorgan Council is the governing body for the Vale of Glamorgan, one of the Principal Areas of Wales. It is Wales' most southern Unitary Authority and lies immediately west of Cardiff between the M4 and the Severn Estuary. Its main towns are Barry, Penarth, Llantwit Major, Dinas Powys and Cowbridge. Barry, the largest town with a population of 48,000, is the Vale's administrative centre, a seaside resort and port.

Vale of Glamorgan Council is committed to delivering against the Welsh Assembly Government's vision for improving public services in Wales, which is based on key themes such as putting the customer centre stage and making the best use of resources. The Council's innovative OneVale initiative is a programme of transformational change aimed at putting service users centre stage and allowing them to interact with the Council in the way that suits them best.

To enable this, the Council opened a Contact Centre and One-Stop-Shop at its Civic Offices in Barry. However, the Council was keen to extend its contact centre operations beyond basic switchboard functionality, and was committed to deploying its contact centre operation as an essential delivery component across the entire spectrum of Council services.

Tony Curliss, Operational Manager for Customer Relations at Vale of Glamorgan Council, explains why this was so important: "If the Council is to deliver on its broader efficiency targets, then it's essential that our contact centre operates at the forefront and frees our specialist back-office operations to focus on more complex service delivery. We had witnessed other local government organisations deploy contact centres

that were not based on the best infrastructures and this limited progression and technology adoption later on. In reality these contact centres did little more than just transfer calls to the back-office, and we were determined to use our own new customer service operation to act as a driver for change within the Council.

“Our goal was to develop a best practice contact centre operation built on a best of breed platform – to enable growth and a certain amount of ‘future proofing’ for our platform investment. The contact centre needed to use state-of-the-art technology and was optimised for maximum efficiency, but also structured to provide our customers with the highest quality service. We knew we had to seize the opportunity and use the OneVale programme to help rethink what it is that the Council actually does and how it does it. This would involve analysing and changing work processes throughout the Council, so that activities were built around service user requirements rather than for the Council’s own convenience,” Tony continued.

“In previous roles I had worked with a number of different contact centre platforms and Workforce Optimisation solutions, so had a good understanding of the kind of infrastructure and software solutions that could help us optimise the performance of our OneVale centre. We were confident that a next generation IP infrastructure with best practice WFO approach would make an important contribution to our customer contact operation, so we carefully researched the market to identify the best-in-class technologies,” continued Tony.

Choosing a specialist implementation partner

“We also wanted to work with a specialist implementation partner that could look beyond the software to make sure we ended up with a solution that worked best for our evolving customer contract requirements. When we opened our contact centre in Barry, we were determined that it would use state-of-the-art technology to help us achieve our targets for service delivery and customer focus. After a detailed market assessment we selected Sabio, the specialist contact centre technology and services company, because of its in-depth Avaya platform expertise and its proven ability to design and implement solutions based on Verint’s Impact 360 workforce optimisation applications.

“Our decision to work with Sabio was made easier by their strong reputation across the contact centre market. What became apparent to us during our discussions was that Sabio clearly had in-depth experience - not just of the Avaya IP and Verint’s Impact 360 product sets – but also of the need for effective integration, and also of the approach needed for our Barry customer service operation to deliver a best practice performance,” he continued.

Extending the performance bar for public sector customer contact

Tony Curliss worked closely with the Council’s management team to focus contact centre activities on enabling service improvements and realising cashable efficiency savings. “It is common for many councils to use their contact centres just to handle basic front-end enquiries, but never really go further. At Vale of Glamorgan we were determined to extend our OneVale approach across all of our key operations – including complex activities that traditionally had been the preserve of highly-skilled professionals,” explained Tony.

“For this it was essential that we had the right infrastructure in place: an Avaya IP infrastructure that allowed us to route all our calls effectively; a workforce management solution that ensured we could accurately forecast customer demands and schedule the correct level of CSR coverage, and a quality monitoring approach in place that would allow us to record all our calls and access them quickly when needed. Sabio worked closely with us to design and implement this core contact centre infrastructure, which has provided us with a powerful platform from which we can evolve our customer contact operations,” he added.

Managing interaction complexity

Thanks to the effective call routing by the Avaya platform and the forecasting, scheduling, recording and quality monitoring capabilities offered by the Verint solution, Tony Curliss and his team were able to systematically introduce and extend the range of Council services offered through OneVale. Starting with services such as waste management, street lighting, housing repairs, building control and regulatory services such as pest control and licensing, Vale of Glamorgan Council has now integrated more complex and demanding operations – such as Adult Social Services – into its offering.

“Because we were able to quickly demonstrate the capabilities and value of Sabio’s contact centre technology solution for our contact centre, we’ve been able to extend the OneVale concept into traditionally more complex service areas,” continued Tony. “An excellent example of this is Adult Social Services, where we’ve successfully combined the accessibility and responsiveness of the contact centre with the in-depth expertise and professionalism of back-office services.

“Before integrating the service into our OneVale programme, our social services department faced a backlog of 300 assessments – some dating back over six months. Now with the support of Sabio and Impact 360 we’ve been able to transfer an element of the process into the contact centre, with fully trained Customer Service Representatives collecting case data directly on to the Council’s Oracle CRM system for an initial assessment by a senior social services practitioner that operates within the contact centre,” he added. “We’ve found this combination has generated a significant process improvement thanks to the reduction in calls needed to drive the social services process. What previously required between five and seven separate calls can now be completed in just one or two. We’ve also seen our turnaround time for social services assessments drop from months to just 24 hours – which also helps with prioritising more urgent cases.”

Tony Curliss believes it’s this kind of integration between the Council’s front and back-office services that will really enable OneVale to deliver on its service improvement commitments. “The combination of expert agents and professional scheduling in order to review and prioritise work queues is exactly the kind of innovative, BPR-led approach that will allow us to achieve our longer-term business case savings.”

Targeting achievable First Contact Resolution

“While our agents don’t have specific productivity targets – we focus instead on the broader qualitative aspects of their calls – the Council is obviously keen to help improve the efficiency of our overall OneVale operation. Deploying Sabio’s workforce optimisation solution has given us the flexibility and control we need to convince our major back-office services to release responsibility down to the front line, while the efficiency of our IP infrastructure and WFM capabilities mean that we’re now ideally placed to deliver improvements in First Contact Resolution.

“We’re currently well on our way to hitting our OneVale target of 80 percent First Contact Resolution, however not all Council services can be measured on a First Contact basis: for example while we are able to resolve waste management enquiries first time over 90 percent of the time, that’s never likely to happen with more complex processes such as planning. For these kind of services, it’s more important for OneVale to speed an application by quickly transferring to the right back-office professionals,” explained Tony.

Adopting a more integrated WFO approach

In the first year since its launch the Vale of Glamorgan OneVale contact centre has dealt with around a quarter of a million calls and some 20,000 e-mail enquiries, freeing up back office staff to focus on more complex activities. The OneVale team also includes a number of Welsh speakers, allowing callers to opt to have their enquiry dealt with in Welsh.

Implementing the Avaya platform in conjunction with Impact 360 Workforce Management has brought efficiency savings in terms of forecasting and scheduling, freeing up team leaders to concentrate on coaching and giving agents more control over their schedules thanks to self-service holiday booking and shift swapping.

Sabio has also implemented Verint's Impact 360 Quality Monitoring solution to ensure 100 percent recording of all OneVale calls, which can then be easily retrieved and assessed for either conflict resolution or answering specific back-office queries. Tony Curliss believes that 100 percent recording has proved a particularly strong feature for getting services onsite, enabling back-office professionals to go back and listen to specific calls when needed. Recording also provides an important resource for OneVale's senior social services practitioners to monitor agent performance on initial assessments, and provide ongoing advice and training where applicable.

According to Tony Curliss, the cumulative benefit of these applications has encouraged Vale of Glamorgan Council to adopt a broader workforce optimisation approach. "In addition to WFM and quality monitoring we're also using scorecards within our contact centre, and are currently looking at additional WFO elements such as customer feedback and desktop process analysis. From working with Sabio, it's clear that there are real benefits that come from adopting a future proof platform and integrated workforce optimisation approach, and we're keen to establish Vale of Glamorgan Council as a best practice centre.

"Going forward, we've already investigated how we can use the expertise of our OneVale centre to promote the potential of collaborative working with partners, and offer shared services in key disciplines such as forecasting and scheduling to other Councils," he continued. "In today's economic climate it's clearly essential that we deliver the best possible service we can at the best cost. With Sabio's help we've been able to build an award-winning centre that is now positioned to unlock further efficiency savings as we bring further services online," he concluded.

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