



Thames Water

Customer

Thames Water

Industry

Utilities

Solutions and Services

Impact 360[®] Workforce Management

Impact 360 Quality Monitoring

Impact 360 Recording

Region

EMEA

Location

Swindon, United Kingdom

Number of agents

350 (front office); 350 (back office)

Results

- Delivered a 100 percent planning productivity improvement for customer service operations.
- Optimised staffing to save the equivalent of more than 10 full-time agent positions.
- Increased adherence from 81 to 97 percent.
- Centralised planning and forecasting functions to manage both contact centre and back-office employees.
- Enhanced scheduling to forecast peaks in customer demand and allocate resources effectively.
- Automated over 20,000 holiday requests, freeing up 20 percent more of each team leader's time.
- Increased intelligence on back-office call volumes, enabling more accurate scheduling and adherence.
- Helped facilitate the move up the Ofwat (water industry regulation authority) customer satisfaction league tables.

Opportunity

Thames Water is the UK's largest water and wastewater services company. Every day, it supplies some 2,600 million litres of tap water to 8.5 million customers across the London and Thames Valley area. Thames Water also removes and treats 4,300 million litres of sewage for an area covering 13.6 million customers.

The company's Swindon-based customer service operations office is split into two. A "front office" contact centre handles inbound customer calls for account management and operations, such as leaks or burst pipes. The "back office" is focused on outbound calls and relationships with key partners, such as local authorities and housing associations.

"Over the years, we had evolved to a situation where the two complementary parts of our customer service operation were effectively working independently, with perceived separate functions, different service cultures, and distinct technology platforms," explains Will Brown, Head of Planning at Thames Water.

"Our front-office staff worked in a carefully managed contact centre environment, with a dedicated, three-person planning team that used complex spreadsheets to manage shifts, breaks, and holidays for our 350 agents. While functional, this solution was limiting, particularly at times when our average monthly call volume of around 300,000 calls experienced seasonal peaks, during which activity levels can grow by almost 50 percent. We also found that planning and forecasting tended to be reactive, and was inevitably impacted when our key planners were either on holiday or away from work."

Brown continues, "In contrast, our back office didn't use any form of scheduling system. Because it used a PBX separate from our contact centre ACD, we didn't have any practical means of tracking and reporting on activity levels in the back office — particularly as staff breaks were also unstructured and taken without consideration of actual customer service levels. Collectively, this meant that while our contact centre was operated to professional planning and forecasting guidelines, a significant part of our overall customer service operation was unmonitored."

Brown was also determined to implement measures that would help Thames Water improve the performance of its customer service according to the measures regularly monitored and assessed by Ofwat, the regulator for the water and sewerage industry in England and Wales. "Thames Water was ranked too low in the Ofwat tables, and we were determined to make the changes we needed to climb up the rankings."

Thames Water recognised that to achieve this goal, it was essential to adopt a unified approach across its front- and back-office service operations. The organisation committed to a major technology refresh programme for its Swindon centre, as well as to implementing a "New Start" programme that included implementation of a new ACD platform across its contact centre and back office. As part of this programme, Brown also planned the introduction of a best-practice workforce management (WFM) solution to help ensure the effective planning and forecasting of work levels across both parts of Thames Water's customer-facing business.





Solution

Thames Water now uses Impact 360® Workforce Management from Verint® Witness Actionable Solutions®. The solution provides Thames with a centralised planning and forecasting hub, allowing the organisation to schedule activities for its 700 customer service employees across both its contact centre front- and back-office operations.

“Having successfully implemented WFM in previous roles, I was already aware of the key benefits that it could deliver in terms of creating optimal schedules to meet service levels consistently and cost-effectively. We knew that WFM could make a big difference for Thames Water, so we carefully researched the market to identify a best-in-class solution,” Brown says.

“After an in-depth procurement process, we selected Verint’s Impact 360 Workforce Management and chose Verint’s partner Sabio to implement the solution. Impact 360 delivered the highest standard of performance, and we were particularly impressed by its ease of use and powerful features, such as its ‘pulse’ screen that tracks key operational metrics to provide a real-time graphical view of forecasted, actual, and predicted contact volumes. We’ve found this a particularly useful feature for flagging potential problems early, allowing us to take corrective action right away.”

Brown continues, “We were also particularly confident about Verint Witness Actionable Solutions as a specialist provider of workforce optimisation, as we were already successfully using Verint’s Impact 360 Recording solution in our contact centre. Adding Impact 360 Workforce Management gave us the opportunity to start building a more integrated workforce optimisation approach.”

Supporting Thames Water’s New Start Programme

Working with Sabio, Thames Water decided to stage the implementation of Impact 360 Workforce Management across the organisation as part of the company’s wider contact centre

and back-office technology refresh. “Verint’s solution was very easy to install and deploy, and we found we were able to configure the system exactly to match our structure,” Brown says. “This meant we could formalise our workforce management operations, centralising scheduling across both our front- and back-office agent groups while still using the resource that had previously been dedicated to just the contact centre.”

Results

“In pure efficiency terms, the effect of Impact 360 has been significant. Instead of three planners scheduling for 350 contact centre agents, we’re now using two specialists working with Impact 360 to handle our entire front- and back-office operations. That’s a 100 percent improvement in planning productivity, just from an effective WFM implementation,” Brown adds.

Thames Water is also taking full advantage of Impact 360’s impressive adherence module. For the first time, the company’s customer service management team can see exactly how the company is performing in real time against planned and forecasted customer demand across the front and back office. Advanced adherence capabilities within Impact 360 Workforce Management enable resource planners and team leaders to track schedule adherence, including activities that are not phone-related, such as other types of customer interaction and back-office operations.

“It wasn’t long before we started to realise how important the intelligence that Impact 360 could provide was going to be,” Brown says. “When the project first went live, our adherence was 81 percent. Very quickly, this started to improve. Now, by using Impact 360, we are consistently running at around 97 percent adherence, which is an impressive result in such a short period. This translates directly into the kind of improved responsiveness that is helping us to move up the Ofwat Customer Service tables,” he explains.

Team Leaders Better Able to Lead, Thanks to Impact 360

Historically, holiday requests were managed at Thames Water using a paper form that had to be physically walked from one end of the half mile-long building to an office at the other to be processed against a manual diary. Since implementing Impact 360, Thames Water agents can now schedule their own holidays from their desktops and gain immediate approval — an important step forward in terms of productivity and the agents’ own adoption of Impact 360 as an added-value tool.

Brown believes that using Impact 360 has revolutionised agent management, both from the agent and team leader’s perspective. Since going live, Impact 360 has already processed over 20,000 holiday applications at Thames Water. This not only saves a lot of walking for team leaders, but more strategically for Thames Water, it also enables team leaders to spend much more time at their desks, talking with customers or coaching agents. For the agents, the automation of holiday requests has provided a level of empowerment, and from a management perspective, has dramatically improved productivity.

“The Impact 360 project has been a major contributor to the success of our ‘New Start’ programme. As a result of efficiency savings achieved through tighter schedule adherence, Thames Water has been able to optimise staffing and save the equivalent of more than 10 full-time agent positions.”

Will Brown, Head of Planning, Thames Water

Delivering Benefits with Impact 360

“For the team leaders, Impact 360 has significantly reshaped their roles from a primarily administrative function into a more strategic, ‘added-value’ function,” Brown says. “Before we had implemented Impact 360, our team leaders were only spending about 30 percent of their day coaching their teams of agents. The rest of their time was taken up by administration. Impact 360 has automated simple processes, so they can now spend 80 percent of their time on coaching. That’s a massive improvement, and one that’s contributing to the overall quality of our customer service operation and customer satisfaction in turn.”

Brown notes, “As a result, we have already moved up the Ofwat customer service rankings, climbing over five places in under 12 months. Certainly, the Impact 360 project has been a major contributor to the success of our ‘New Start’ programme. As a result of efficiency savings achieved through tighter schedule adherence, Thames Water has been able to optimise staffing and save the equivalent of more than 10 full-time agent positions.

We’ve also seen strong acceptance from our agents, who have appreciated the ability to schedule their own holiday and shift schedules. This, we believe, has been an important factor in our reduced absence and attrition figures since implementing Impact 360 Workforce Management.”

Planning for a Fully Optimised Workforce

Looking ahead, Brown is optimistic. “Our ultimate goal is to migrate our operations into a single, integrated service centre operation, and Impact 360 Workforce Management gives us the planning and forecasting flexibility we need to help enable this goal. We’re already taking advantage of Verint Witness Actionable Solutions’ Impact 360 Quality Monitoring capabilities through call recording in our contact centre, as well as piloting its screen capture functionality in the back office. The next stage is to evolve our operations to a more integrated workforce optimisation approach that takes advantage of the advanced reporting offered by the full rollout of our major enterprise software development programme.”

About Verint Witness Actionable Solutions

Verint® Witness Actionable Solutions® is the leader in analytics-driven workforce optimisation software and services. Its solutions are designed to help organisations capture customer intelligence, uncover business trends, discover the root cause of employee and customer behaviour, and optimise the customer experience across contact centre, branch, and back-office operations.

Verint. Powering Actionable Intelligence.®

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