

When the Phone Becomes the Front Door





For many companies in spring 2020, business models shifted from tried and true operations to everything happening over the phone. It was uncharted ground, where distancing became the prime directive and in-person interactions were by necessity curtailed. Phone call volume soared to unprecedented levels, resulting in widespread busy signals. Crisis or not, for many organizations the phone has become the front door – and business has changed for good.

In this new terrain, how can you enable your customers to meet demand not only now, but for the foreseeable future? How do you know you're delivering a great experience when you can no longer see your customer's reactions?

Many organizations, across multiple industries, are finding new communications and collaboration tools – such as Unified Communications and Contact Centers as a Service – to be indispensable gear for the new landscape. These solutions help businesses of all types meet and exceed customer expectations, drive productivity and accountability, and also provide a positive experience for employees.

HOW DO YOUR CUSTOMERS YOU KNOW WHEN THE PHONE COULD – OR SHOULD – BECOME THE FRONT DOOR? WE'VE GATHERED SOME OF THE “SYMPTOMS.”

External events: Unforeseen developments can alter business reality overnight.

The worldwide spread of COVID-19 in the opening months of 2020 was a sobering reminder that we're never truly in control. However, illness and disease are not the only externals that could force a change to how business is done. Think of extreme weather events like hurricanes, tornadoes, or earthquakes, which mandate staff relocation. Other examples might be transit shutdowns or protests that prevent people from getting to the office and encourage a remote customer service model.

Futureproofing: Their current system can receive calls – but can't route them outside the premises.

Even when there's no immediate impetus to make a change, this scenario offers a telltale sign of future troubles. When the customer's setup is inherently incapable of sending calls to anyone outside the central office, it's time to look at alternatives. If they start the discovery process now, they'll likely be ready before external events force their hands.



“Off the hook”: demand is surging to unprecedented levels via remote (phone, chat, etc.) channels.

When distancing measures were enforced, businesses that typically welcomed customers in person had to rapidly pivot to a remote model. The sheer number of phone calls - in addition to inquiries via chat, SMS, e-mail, and social media - obliterated all previous records. Don't think this is a one-off outlier, though. It's very likely that the means of doing business have permanently changed in many industries, and consumer have come to expect greater flexibility in the communication channels offered.

Insights not included: the current system cannot deliver the data needed for fulsome insights.

How do you know whether you're delivering a great experience - especially when you can't see your agents and customers in person? Where are agents spending their time, and more importantly, what's the impact of that time on the bottom line? These are just some of the questions your customers can answer with a comprehensive suite of reporting tools, designed to improve team performance, enhance customer experience, and enable them to meet and exceed KPIs.

Let's examine how the “phone as the front door” paradigm is playing out, across multiple industries and throughout the continent.

RESTAURANTS AND TAKEOUT

Even small restaurants and take-outs can encounter bottlenecks with traditional phone systems. In Kentucky during the early months of 2020 and as dine-in patrons shifted to take-out, callers often heard a busy or call waiting tone due to greatly increased demand for delivery and pick-up. That meant lost revenue when the shops couldn't get to customers in time and capture their orders.

Using Elevate, restaurants can route calls into specific groups of agents for orderly distributed answering, with the option to play a recorded list of specials while customers wait. Building on this capability, Contact Center Express offers real-time metrics, such as the ability to see calls in queue, wait time, abandoned calls and more. Express also offers smart greetings, keeping callers educated on wait times. Finally, the product delivers extensive built-in reporting, helping managers gauge customer satisfaction now and over the long haul.

INTERNET & COMMUNICATIONS

In Iowa, the local provider of Internet, data, cable TV, and phone service to the Cedar Rapids, Marion, and Hiawatha communities thinks and does business differently. Being laser-focused on customer experience, they moved their entire premise-based customer service department – meaning staff, equipment, call flow and more – Elevate cloud Contact Center solution.

The move was driven partly by global circumstances, with the customer care team needing the ability to remotely log in from their homes via a mix of cell phones and soft phones. However, the company also derived permanent enhancements to the customer experience, including:

- Predictive call flows for routing
- Detailed reporting
- Real time data displays that can be accessed remotely
- Multi-channel communications – chat and e-mail in addition to voice
- Interactive menus, including the option to process secure customer payments
- Real-time alerts on important metrics, such as wait time
- Integration with critical business software such as CRMs

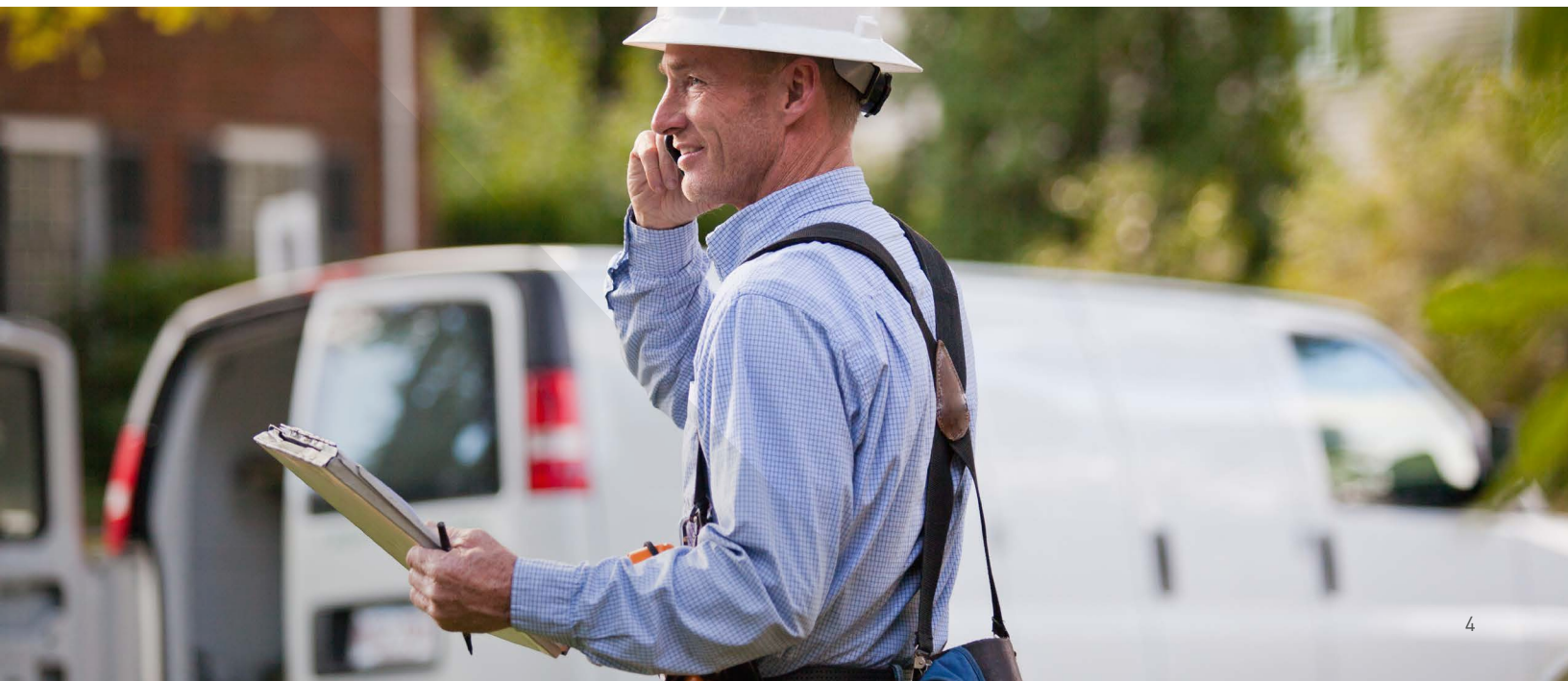
BAKED GOODS

In Georgia, a family-founded baked goods company has had over 100 years of success, and now runs almost 50 highly efficient bakeries across the country, producing exceptional bakery foods for retail and food service customers across the nation. Reaching more than 85% of the U.S. population through their delivery network, and with sales of \$4 billion, the company identified a need for contact center functionality improvements in key areas.

With high call volume but limited reporting, the company leveraged Elevate's industry-leading library of reports and real-time monitoring to derive immediate insight and enhance caller experience. Noticing a high volume of abandoned calls, the next task was to identify the impetus behind that data, and also to isolate a “true” abandon - meaning a caller who did intend to wait in queue but gave up after a certain threshold.

Highly variable call durations were another challenge. With interactions ranging from one minute to as long as 90 minutes, it was crucial to understand the reason for the variance (achieved via recordings), and to reduce the delta using smart routing rules.

Integrations with key productivity suites such as MS Teams and ServiceNow, instant scalability via “bursting,” and ease of moving, adding, or changing Interactive Voice Response (IVR) menus rounded out the feature set that helped make the decision for Contact Center, and position the company for its next phase of phenomenal – and delicious – nationwide growth.





GOVERNMENT

Shifting to the Pacific Northwest, a large government Employment Security department realized they would need a scalable and flexible solution to handle an influx of unemployment claims related to the pandemic. With over 400 agents, this was a sizable deployment that needed rapid deployment at scale.

However, that deployment also had to be done remotely. Prior to the deployment, the department had no remote-capable workers to handle the rapidly escalating number of claims in the state. To manage the high volume of calls, avoid busy signals, and route inquiries efficiently, the department leveraged Contact Center's robust queueing and call distribution functions.

Another significant advantage derived from the Contact Center product was the ability for agents to use any device and phone number available. With the rapid move to remote work, it's not always possible to assign new phone hardware and/or numbers on short notice. As a result, the ability for agents to leverage existing devices and phone numbers – without incurring charges – provides a crucial edge. The department took advantage of a rapid remote deployment offer, in addition to receiving remote training and support.

Finally, remote monitoring and reporting was mission-critical for the department. The solution not only gathers granular metrics from all interactions at all locations, but also provides a significantly deeper level of real-time and historical data to help improve client experience now and well into the future.

EDUCATION

With most facilities shut down until further notice, one leading university decided to take all its customer-facing departments remote with a Contact Center as a Service (CCaaS) platform.

They faced a common but significant hurdle: the existing on-site PBX equipment had no means of connecting inbound calls to outside devices. In other words, they could receive calls but not route them outside the premises – at a time when everyone was required to work at a distance.

Adapting to changing circumstances, the university deployed advanced IVR menus plus call queues. With this strategy they were able to route calls to entirely outside devices, including remote agents' cell phones – and deliver context to the agent about the incoming inquiry.

The university may move entirely to its new "vendor-agnostic" setup, or it can continue using some on-site components. The Contact Center solution is highly flexible and can be spun up on a stand-alone basis or in parallel with existing communications, making it an ideal choice for quick pivots and rapid deployments.



AIRLINE / TRAVEL

Back on the West Coast, a private aviation firm offers exceptional experiences to flyers, from fixed-price charter flights to custom-built membership programs. The company's mission is to act as the trusted advisor and provider to the most sophisticated private aviation customers.

With over 3000 aircraft in its portfolio, and customers ranging from large businesses to high net-worth individuals, the airline needed to move to a multiple-site remote model while upholding their standard of truly exceptional customer experiences.

Because flights start at approximately \$2000, one of the crucial questions when moving remote was "can we continue to tell a \$10 call from a \$10,000 one?" The solution was VIP call routing, which used elements such as phone number lookups to identify the caller and route the inquiry to preferred agents.

Regional call routing rules were also important. With teams spanning the continental U.S., the firm was able to position local staff to serve clients in their areas, using geo-routing rules that direct calls based on the caller ID. The firm also implemented innovative solutions for:

- Voicemail capture and tracking
- Fuel hotlines, allowing for on-demand fueling of craft
- Advanced reporting covering not only who called, but why, including subjects and pain points

YOUTH SERVICES / MENTAL HEALTH

Moving up the coast to British Columbia, Canada, an integrated network of health and social services centers assists young people combatting addictions and mental health issues. With the arrival of the pandemic, the organization needed to quickly shift its delivery model, and deploy a solution that would empower its clinicians to stay connected to clients and each other – while also staying safe.

To stay connected with youth calling in, the group turned to Contact Center Pro. Linking clients, clinicians, scheduling departments, and 140 care partners, the solution not only powers a responsive remote care experience but offers entirely new levels of insight - helping the organization to respond to demand now, and readily scale to meet future challenges. Components of this deployment included:

- IVR menus, to help direct clients to departments, individual staff members, and outside care partners
- Skills-based routing designed to connect clients with clinicians who are most adept in certain disciplines
- Callbacks function for particularly busy times, allowing clients to hang up but retain their place in line. Staff members are automatically connected to these callback requests once their status returns to "available"