



The challenge

Because Pay & Go phones are sold off the shelf in supermarkets and other outlets, the only contact detail most mobile service providers have for the vast majority of their customers is their mobile phone number.

Because of this, traditional methods of communicating with customers can't be applied. It's impossible to send people letters or emails, for example. Short of calling each number, the only option is to send a text.

This too has its problems. Longer messages can sometimes break up in transit, so messages have to be kept short. For practical purposes, 160 characters is the limit. It's barely enough to tell customers about new products, promotions or services, let alone about their availability and the terms and conditions that apply.

The answer is to ask customers to call a customer service line via a dedicated short code number for more details, but this creates new challenges. Messages may need to be tailored to specific customers – for example, based on the services they already use – and even if messages are broadcast in waves, queues of callers can easily build up. Inbound contact centres would struggle to cope with the volumes of calls involved.

The solution

An interactive voice response (IVR) system is the obvious answer but, to be effective, it would need to be coupled tightly into the mobile service provider's management systems and adapted on a regular basis in line with the latest marketing promotions.

Many mobile operators do not have the specialist skills and resources it would need to implement and maintain this so, instead, they come to HTK.

Our fully-managed Horizon™ Service Delivery Platform simplifies the development of interactive voice response applications. It's advanced user interface makes it easy for customers to design, execute and manage joined-up marketing and customer service campaigns.

Horizon™ is a unified communications platform. It can interact with people over the phone, using speech recognition or speech synthesis or both, but it's just as comfortable exchanging text or multi-media messages and emails.

Horizon™ has an open software interface that enables simple integration with mobile service provider service management systems. It runs in our own dedicated data centre, so interactions with the mobile service provider's systems take place over a secured VPN.

To cater for high call volumes, our centre is equipped to handle thousands of simultaneous traditional telephone calls and VoIP calls. As a result, the application we developed for one leading UK mobile operator handles in excess of 20 million calls a year.

How it works

Using our flexible user interface, campaigns can be designed and tested within a few days. The mobile service provider sends tailored text messages to its Pay & Go customers inviting them to call their dedicated campaign number for more details of what's on offer.

When customers call, their profiles are loaded automatically and a personalised menu of options is created. This is tailored to their exact tariff and service details, making it easier for customers to understand what's on offer.

Our Horizon™ Inform application collects information as each campaign proceeds, analyses it and makes it available to campaign managers via a secure web portal.

Data is processed in real-time and the on-line reports are never more than 15 minutes out of date.

Our flexible user interface makes it easy for a mobile service provider to tune and update its campaigns as events unfold.

The benefit

Flexible campaigns create new opportunities for mobile service providers to communicate with their Pay & Go customers and offer services that enrich their experience.

Using IVR, the limitations of traditional contact centres are swept away. Many more customers can be contacted, and their calls handled much more quickly than before.

In addition, having one dedicated number allows mobile service providers to combine several promotions or messages in one simple call to action: "Call XXXX". Offers are personalised as calls are received, improving uptake and customer perceptions.

Without this service, we estimate the costs of handling 20 million calls a year to be more than £6 million, even before the cost of staffing a contact centre 24x7 is taken into account.

Measurement of the level of use shows a return on investment in just two months – much sooner than the current industry benchmark of a year.

Testimonial

A Communications Manager of one leading UK mobile service provider comments;

"HTK is everything I could hope for from a supplier – fast, responsive, proactive and honest. I can trust they will deliver what they say they will, accurately and within agreed timescales.

"They helped to revolutionise the way we manage our information IVR, coming up with new ideas and making it easy to understand – so I can easily sell them throughout the business. Ultimately, they've delivered a market leading solution that gives our millions of customers a personalised, easy way to self-serve a huge range of information.

"It works in unison with our direct communications plan, keeping calls away from customer services whilst maintaining great customer experience and satisfaction."