



Preston City Council

Case Study

Introduction

When the Preston City Council decided to scrap its analogue telephone infrastructure and move to a VOIP platform, it knew its outdated call center system – which was incompatible with the new technology – would also need an overhaul.

Located in the county of Lancashire in northwest England, the Preston City Council provides a host of municipal services for its 132,000 residents and local businesses. The inbound call center, which is staffed with 50 agents, handles about 15 queues and 1,000 calls daily made to about 20 government phone numbers. Calls span a variety of topics ranging from general inquiries to tax questions, from waste management to housing benefits.

“Our old PBX/ISDN/analogue telephony infrastructure was old and expensive to maintain,” says Andy Bullen, who is infrastructure officer for the Preston City Council. “We wanted to move to a fully VOIP platform that gives us modern, unified communication functionality. The best solution for us was Microsoft Lync, which covered most bases but couldn’t fulfill our contact center call-handling needs.”

The city council deployed Lync, now known as Skype for Business, on a trial basis for testing before committing to make the switch. Once Bullen and his team selected Lync, they then set out to evaluate compatible call center solutions.

“We wanted a system that was cost-effective and fairly simple to deploy and get running,” Bullen says. “We didn’t want another standalone telephony system to handle the contact center calls. Instead, we wanted a system that would leverage the investment and training we had put into Lync but provide us with the functionality we needed. Clarity Connect ticked all of those boxes and gave us seamless integration with Lync.”

At a Glance

Preston City Council (Preston, Lancashire, UK)

Deployment type: On premises

License: 50 seats

Call center details: About 1,000 calls daily on 20 phone numbers and 15 queues

In fact, Bullen reports, Clarity Connect’s extensive suite of rich contact center features lead to increases in both efficiency and satisfaction scores without the cost and complexity of alternative offerings. “Clarity Connect goes way beyond simply replacing what we had; it has solved problems and made improvements in areas we weren’t even aware of at the time,” says Bullen.

The transition to Clarity Connect offers another benefit, according to Bullen. Although he declined to provide exact numbers, he describes the cost savings as “significant” compared to what Preston City Council was spending on its legacy contact center solution.

A Frustration-Free Experience

During the telephony overhaul, which began about two years ago, Bullen and his colleagues had to manage a lot of moving pieces. Clarity Connect, he says, stands out because the deployment went so smoothly.

“When moving the telephony to Lync and to the VOIP platform, we moved to a SIP trunk at the same time,” Bullen says. “There are a lot of cogs turning in this project and Clarity gave me the fewest problems. The system just works. We’re very pleased with our choice.”

After Microsoft approached Clarity Consulting about building a contact center system that would integrate with their Unified Communication product, Clarity studied existing call center applications and talked to users about their experiences.

“It became very apparent the market was ripe for innovation,” says Jon Rauschenberger, CIO of Clarity Consulting. “Our research showed that most saw contact center products as expensive, unwieldy beasts built by corporations who had stopped listening to their customers. We quickly realized we had a huge opportunity to build a contact center product from scratch, and by building Connect to natively integrate with the most modern Unified Communication platform in the industry, the customer would be able to realize a number benefits. Our priority has always been to listen to our customers and build an agile product that could be easily deployed, configured, and managed as a part of their Lync and Skype for Business environments.”

Providing Local Support to European Clients

Preston City Council is just one of Clarity Connect's many customers spread across Europe.

"We opened our Croatian office because we recognized the need to provide European customers with a technical support staff whose hours of operations mirrored their own," says Clarity Connect's Michael Greenlee, who is Director of Service Delivery. "Given the number of clients we have in Europe, a Croatian office enables us to provide responsive, real-time support of the same quality and caliber as our US-based support team. Between our US and Croatian support teams, clients in North America, South America, and Europe now have access to technical support staff during business hours."

Count Bullen among the group's fans. "The few times that we have needed support, the Clarity support teams in Europe and in North America have been outstanding," he says. "Their commitment to a high level of support is something that differentiates Clarity."

An Intuitive System for Lync Users

Bullen says that agents were able to get up and running quickly after Clarity Connect was deployed.

“Because Clarity Connect is so well integrated with Lync, it’s intuitive,” Bullen says. “If you understand the Lync client, you understand Clarity Connect from an agent’s perspective.”

Administrators and supervisors needed some initial training but immediately started to see the benefits of Clarity Connect. Under the Preston City Council’s legacy system, Siemens Open Scape, Bullen says work flows were clunky and difficult to set up. It was a more difficult system to use and supervisors didn’t have a clear view of real-time activity.

“The Clarity dashboard and the information it provides about calls and call center activity is much cleaner and clearer than the Siemens system,” Bullen says. “We have a real-time view of the queues and who’s answering the calls – those insights are definitely an improvement.”

Preston City Council’s Call Center Manager Peter Kerry also notes the significant performance improvements the Clarity Connect system helps achieve. “One of the attractions of Clarity Connect is the ability to record incoming calls at both a service and individual level as well as ad hoc and planned,” says Kerry. “This has proved to be a great help for training purposes and has directly translated into higher Customer Satisfaction and First Contact Resolution rates.”

Customizable to Meet Every Contact Center's Needs

Clarity Connect understands that one size doesn't fit all when it comes to call center systems. Out of the box, the system is configured to provide the most popular features and functionalities, but clients can configure the software to leverage databases and applications on their own in order to allow for enhanced routing and present relevant information to the agent.

Preston City Council found that the default Clarity Connect dashboard gave them a lot of detail and insights into call center activity, but it did take some tweaks. "We configured some of the KPI (key performance indicators) to match with the SLAs that we use to run the contact

center such as average speed of answer and abandon rate," Bullen says. Built-in data visualization functionality delivers call center insight through clear and powerful graphics and displays.

"In building Clarity Connect, we set out to create an affordable contact center system that is easy to configure and provides users with immediate access to relevant call information," says Clarity's Jon Rauschenberger. "Ultimately, we believe we've built a platform that helps our clients drive their businesses forward by facilitating and streamlining communication between their employees, customers, and suppliers."

How Can Clarity Connect Transform Your Call Center?

For more information about how Clarity Connect works with Skype for Business, watch our "90 Second Overview" video [here](#), or visit our website to request a demo [here](#).