Bpost Chooses Genesys App Automation Platform Solutions

In April 2013, bpost announced that it was using a new Interactive Voice Response (IVR) solution at its Centre Monnaie HQ in Brussels. At the heart of the new implementation is an intelligent, personalized call steering and self-service capability from phone-based and mobile customer service specialist, Genesys. The solution enables bpost to respond quickly to changing business needs and guide customers more efficiently through its inbound contact-center calls by routing them to best suit each individual customer’s needs. The new IVR serves the company’s business and residential customers and those of bpost bank but could also be extended to internal help-desks.

The Client – bpost

bpost [euronext:BPOST], is the leading postal operator in Belgium and one of the largest civilian employers in the country, marketing a wide range of postal and financial products and services. The company’s core business is collecting, sorting, transporting and delivering letters and parcels. Every day, bpost personnel handle over 10 million mail items and 105,000 parcels visiting every single mailbox in Belgium. The company and its subsidiaries provide solutions in document management, international value added services, and also develop activities responding to the interaction between electronic communication and mail.

The Challenge

According to Jan Smets, Director of Customer Care, bpost Mail&Retail Solutions, “bpost needed the deployment of a flexible IVR solution to enable our businesses to respond quickly to changing needs, and to inform customers immediately of well-known circumstances impacting bpost services. At the same time, we wanted a smart tool to further develop intelligent call steering and self-service functionality, providing a customer experience that we could fully understand and manage.”
Wim De Groeve, bpost Operations and Organization Manager Customer Care, added that “previously, to change the IVR if something happened or needed changing, the time to market simply didn’t fit with the near-real-time needs of a contact center facing mainly incident-driven call volumes. There were just too many steps to go through before we could make a change.”

Delivery
In cooperation with systems integrator, NextiraOne, Genesys Intelligent, Personalized Call Steering and Self-Service capability was implemented at bpost HQ in Brussels.

The flexible new IVR implementation was successfully integrated by NextiraOne into the current contact center infrastructure. The implementation was completed in six weeks. The Genesys App Automation Platform replaced a less flexible, bespoke, IVR installation previously requiring a technically complex, time consuming and costly change process before the solution could be adapted to meet new business demands. This latest application, however, makes it much easier for non-technical customer care staff to adapt the IVR system themselves without involving IT departments and other resources.

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The Solution
Genesys App Automation Platform enables a whole new approach to the design and management of self-service applications, providing rapid delivery, instant changes and unlimited flexibility, allowing customers to deliver an individually-tailored experience on every call.

Genesys IVR applications enable the rapid deployment of personalized, dynamic IVR with 70% less effort than traditional development approaches. They offer real-time performance management and instant changes to call-flows and prompts, as well as increased automation, and can be used in conjunction with existing VoiceXML applications.

Wim De Groeve commented, “The moment we began using Genesys we were able to make all the changes we wanted by ourselves, quickly, which is very important because if, for instance, something happens in the night, or at 5:00 a.m. in the morning in operations, maybe a problem in the sorting center, we can begin implementing change in the IVR immediately. We can, for example, change the IVR choices or add new messages specific to a particular problem or issue and perhaps tailor the change for certain target groups or caller segments affected. There are a great many things we can now do on our own using Genesys.”

De Groeve cited an example early in 2014 when there was a problem with pension deliveries due to external circumstances. “In Belgium,” he said, “many thousands of people receive their pensions at home on a designated date in the month, delivered by the mail man.”
On this occasion, however, there was an interruption in the delivery of this cash to our offices and we couldn’t deliver the pensions on the agreed date but, rather, the following day. What we were able to do was to add a specific option about pensions to the IVR immediately. We put the option early on in the menu rankings, which dealt with the problem and informed people calling about it, quickly.” De Groeve said that normally there is no specific pension message on the bpost IVR as the number of calls received about pensions is typically limited.

Other situations experienced on occasion might be regional, De Groeve said. “When a problem occurs at a regional level, we can modify the system quickly to recognize the first two figures of the caller’s number – i.e. the area code – so we would know they were calling from the affected region, such as Ostend or Liège, and their call about deliveries of parcels or letters in their area could then be routed appropriately.

“We talk or meet with Genesys every couple of months to discuss future releases and new possibilities, including possible improvements to our current implementation,” said De Groeve.

“Genesys has given us a toolbox that allows us to react to changing market conditions and be proactive in making changes to the IVR; also for our sales people who come to us with new ideas to help them in their activities, we can introduce a pilot with their ideas on the same day. In the past it would take several days.”

WIM DE GROEVE, OPERATIONS AND ORGANIZATION MANAGER

“For example, one thing we wanted to improve in early 2014 and give more structure to has been the ‘reporting’ capability of the solution. Because it has given us so much more data than we had in the past due to such functions as ‘customer journeys’, it’s now more challenging for us to manage, exploit and make use of that data. Genesys is currently addressing this need based on our feedback and we have every confidence they will solve this soon.”
Making Changes

Wim De Groeve again, “Broadly speaking, there are two sorts of IVR changes. On the one side changes are made ad-hoc as a reaction to unpredictable circumstances, such as volume increases, technical hiccups. At that moment messages or new options in the IVR allow us to manage customers’ expectations or route them to the most adequate agent groups. On the other side we have the structural changes that are the result of fundamental analysis of customer behavior in the IVR.

“If it’s a really major change we are considering then we will bring it up at our weekly staff meetings and together with the operational staff responsible we talk about the ideas and modalities and after validation we put it into practice. We make sure all the team leaders are aware of any changes as they happen.” With four of its contact centers in different locations he said they make sure they all know immediately what changes have been made to the IVR. “After the implementation we come back with an analysis of the impact on the different contact center KPIs.”

He added, “Since Genesys was implemented there have been major cost savings due to the release of workforce—in some cases an IVR change may mean less calls come into the ‘front office’ personnel and these people can then be freed to work on tasks in the ‘back office’. Second, a year ago we only made major changes to our IVR every three to four months, not simple messages, but serious changes. Now, with the flexibility Genesys has given us, we make similar changes several times a month. As for minor changes, making these can now be very fast. If we need to post a message, as we did with the pensions’ situation, or if you want to alter opening times, it’s a matter of minutes, or at most under an hour to make such alterations.”

Making Things Easier for the Team

Jan Smets again, “Not only did Genesys and NextiraOne Belgium successfully deploy the solution within six weeks but they also exceeded our expectations in terms of the support and commitment that was shown. We now have business users building personalized customer service applications and pitching those into other parts of the business in rapid time. Less restricted by technology and process, we can now start to think differently about real-time personalization and improvement to customer interactions.”

Wim De Groeve added that when different departments come up with their own ideas for change to the IVR, running ‘pilots’ is important when preparing to introduce a new change to the system.

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BENEFITS

• Enable bpost to respond quickly to changing business needs.
• Guide customers more efficiently through their inbound contact-center calls by routing them to best suit each individual customer’s needs.
• Easier for corporate users to adapt the IVR system themselves without involving IT departments and other resources.
• Implementation was completed in six weeks.
“Another factor is that being able to do all of these changes and pilots within our own department without involving IT, greatly reduces costs by not involving unnecessary human resources. We still work together closely with our IT colleagues but not on the basic things, only on more complex issues.”

He explained that the solution’s interface was an important criterion in choosing Genesys over similar competitors.

“Our customer care staff who use this, are not software or IT specialists, they are business users responsible for workforce management and operational support in matters of CRM and routing. We have five people who can change or add messages and two or three who can amend options. For them, having an easy-to-use and understand customer interface is essential and makes their lives so much easier.”

User Behavior

In order to find out which IVR configuration would be the optimum for achieving best results for both its customers and its customer service team, bpost also started conducting a number of IVR tests where 50% of callers are sent through one IVR and 50% through another.

This allows the customer care team to identify different behaviors and see how callers reacted to different menu options – did one IVR configuration see more or less transfers to an agent than the other, for example, and why?

“We wanted to see which was the most appropriate and customer-oriented IVR for our clients,” said De Groeve. “We then modified the IVRs to see the impact of different configurations on client behavior and satisfaction and we also conducted hundreds of customer satisfaction surveys to obtain customer satisfaction scores every day. This enabled us to see the impact of changes and which IVR works best, what paths people followed and for what products and services, including complaints.

“We also offer different languages, French or Dutch or German, the three national languages of Belgium and, of course, English. What we found was that at a certain moment Dutch and French-speaking clients reacted in a different way on one IVR, so we modified it to offer language options at different stages of the IVR – that made it more efficient for those customers.

“Overall, the Genesys solution has given us so many new possibilities with which to work and conduct more efficient customer service IVR activities. It is proving to be a win-win solution for the organization, the team and, especially, also the customers.”