

COMET CASE STUDY

Background

Comet is a household name and a leading specialist electrical retailer, with more than 250 stores throughout the UK, offering a wide range of electrical products. Thousands of competitor prices are checked every week to ensure that Comet's prices are competitive.

Comet offers a unique all-round retail and online shopping experience with a range of services including home delivery, full installation of products such as televisions & computers, take back facilities for large products, and comprehensive after sales service.

Challenge

In order to address the challenges being faced in the current economic and competitive climate, Comet undertook an internal research programme to address a number of key issues including:

- **Retain customer experience:** Comet were recently selected in the Top 50 Call Centres for Customer Service and any new initiatives should support this commitment to service excellence.
- **Expand communication channels:** Changing customer expectations are continuing to drive the requirement for better and faster ways for callers to communicate and retrieve information.
- **Increase productivity:** Skilled customer service agents were routinely handling low-value information calls, instead of concentrating on areas where they could assist and add maximum value to the caller.
- **Show innovation and add value:** Faced with new market conditions and an increasingly competitive environment Comet need to lead with innovative and flexible services to their customer base.

The Comet call centre provides many different functions to their customers from sales and customer service, through to logistics information. Due to this broad nature of customer contact, Comet required a solution which would address the issues above and the initially identified areas of automation, while providing a platform for all future self-service growth and innovation.

Solution Overview

Comet identified a number of key services as candidates for automation using SpeechStorm solutions, these were mainly transactional call-types where the caller was looking for a specific piece of information. Call-types identified included Store Locator, Delivery Enquiries, Engineer Tracking and Stock Availability.

Phase 1 of the programme commenced October 2008 and resulted in the following services being automated and delivered to Comet within a six week period:

- Store Locator
- Delivery Enquiries



“Comet is continually searching for new ways to provide better customer service by ‘enabling’ our customers to self-serve where appropriate, and putting further investment into areas where our customers need more time and care. Speech self-service is a powerful technology that will help us to realise that vision, and SpeechStorm is at the forefront of the market in its experience and expertise in developing and delivering speech self-service solutions.”

Simon Parkinson,
General Manager,
Comet Customer
Information Centre

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Solution Overview Continued

Both applications utilise the power of speech technology, but also offer the caller a familiar touchtone interface if they prefer. In addition to the real-time delivery of information, the caller is offered a helpful option to receive an SMS message containing the requested information.

Utilising the SpeechStorm hosting platform provided Comet with rapid deployment of tried and tested solutions, with minimal capital outlay. This approach dramatically increased the call handling capacity of the contact centre at the busiest time of the year, freeing up agents to deal with more complex enquiries.

Comet closely monitored the caller experience throughout the launch of the applications to ensure the highest level of satisfaction was attained. Customers were surveyed by phone and email to assess their experience and the service was tuned in response to this feedback.

In addition to the speech applications, the solution also provided Comet with a powerful Management Information console through the SpeechStorm Control Centre. This enables authorised Comet personnel to gain instant access to data such as call volumes, average call duration, abandoned call rate etc, and provides the ability to implement and manage operational driven changes in real-time, reducing the overall cost of ownership.

Results

As a result of the initial deployment Comet have been able to drive a number of benefits, including:

- **Expanded Handling Capacity:**
By providing self-service options to the caller for simple calls, additional agents are freed to manage the more complex requests and calls.
- **Improved Customer Service:**
Faster and more efficient handling in self-service, reduced the length of the call while providing all required information. All callers have the option to breakout to an agent if required, however once the required information is gained, very few require any additional assistance.
- **Reduction in overall costs**
Calls handled without any live agent interaction resulted in significant cost reduction. Over 80% of all delivery enquiries are now managed by the automated service, which equates to over 150,000 calls per annum removed from the contact-centres.
- **Positive Brand Reinforcement**
Comet is already perceived as an innovative market leader and the introduction for new technologies which further improves service to customers, has been met with high levels of caller acceptance.
- **Platform for future growth**
The applications selected by Comet from the SpeechStorm application suite, combined with the SpeechStorm hosting platform provide a proven scalable and innovative platform to serve all future self-service requirements