

For good customer service it pays to think Lean

“Fujitsu’s consultancy helped mature our thinking about how a ‘Lean’ approach could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our customer service operations.”

Sonia Leighton – Head of Customer Service Centre, VocaLink



Challenge

VocaLink is a specialist provider of transaction services to banks, corporate customers and government departments. It processes domestic and international automated payments, which can reach 90 million transactions a day, and provides ATM switching solutions.

The company was created in 2007 following the merger of the Voca and Link organisations, and in a drive to improve efficiency and introduce a more competitive, service-led approach it wanted to review its service desk performance.

Sonia Leighton, Head of Customer Service Centre, VocaLink, says, *“The original companies had very different service cultures, with one running a traditional call centre, focused mainly on effective call handling, while the other was more service orientated and focused on resolving issues at the first point of contact. So, there was room to improve the overall effectiveness and quality of our customer service.”*

Solution

Having visited Fujitsu’s own service desk in Stevenage, VocaLink chose Fujitsu to assess its customer service operations and identify any key issues and areas for improvement.

Initially, Fujitsu recommended making the service desks structurally more efficient and also enhancing their existing capabilities. *“Fujitsu’s consultancy helped mature our thinking about how a ‘Lean’ approach could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our customer service operations,”* comments Sonia Leighton.

Fujitsu had identified a much lower resolution rate for First Time Fix (FTF) calls in the North. So, it undertook a three week consultancy project to help improve the FTF rate for internal support calls. Having analysed the ‘as is’ situation and run workshops with staff, Fujitsu developed a clear action plan to improve the capability of the service desk agents. In total, Fujitsu identified 90 improvement opportunities, which included 25 ‘quick wins’. Eight of these were implemented during the final week.

“We were really pleased with Fujitsu’s recommendations, because they were all clearly achievable over a period of time,” comments Sonia Leighton. *“It also left us with a range of expert methodologies and knowledge.”*

After a short period, VocaLink moved on to prepare for the consolidation of its service desks into one centre in the North. Sonia Leighton continues, *“Our Southern service desk supports over 100,000 Bacs users, which meant we could not afford to get the*

SUMMARY OF KEY FACTS

Organisation

VocaLink

Services delivered

Consultancy to assess customer service operations and identify and resolve key performance issues, including First Time Fix rates and the consolidation of service desks

Key metrics

- Manages 90 million transactions a day
- 100,000 users of the Bacs service

Benefits

- **Reduced costs** – will generate significant savings within two years, predominantly through structural changes
- **Enhanced the customer experience** – with faster and higher quality customer service and problem resolution
- **Increased efficiency** – by optimising resource usage and streamlining processes using a ‘Lean’ approach
- **Enhanced performance** – improved staff motivation using a ‘shift to the left’ to empower people
- **Promoted cultural change** – has been a catalyst for change through an inclusive and partnering approach
- **Minimised risk** – utilising Fujitsu’s extensive business expertise and proven management methodologies
- **Increased operational flexibility** – provided the tools and knowledge to successfully implement change

consolidation wrong. So we decided to get Fujitsu onboard again as an insurance policy, using its expert methodologies for the upfront planning.”

Fujitsu split the project into two streams for the ‘methodology’ and ‘communications’. Given the sensitivity of the project the communications plan for the key stakeholders was especially critical as it also enabled effective governance of the project. *“It made us think deeply about who the project was really affecting and how best to get them onboard and onsite,”* confirms Sonia Leighton.

As part of its review of existing methodologies, Fujitsu condensed 170 pages about the company’s Bacs processes into 17 precise flows, so it was much more manageable for service desk agents to understand and utilise. They can even store the information on their iPods for quick and easy access.

Fujitsu also initiated a programme of call analysis to identify any underlying performance issues. *“Before this we’d always measured our performance against SLAs,”* explains Sonia Leighton, *“but the call analysis showed that our staff utilisation was actually very low! So we’ve now trained our own staff to continue doing this as part of our ongoing way of doing business. It’s really changed the way we think.”*

Fujitsu also worked closely with VocaLink to help develop its training plans, including holding workshops with staff and stakeholders to understand their needs and developing a ‘training pack’ on how VocaLink could develop new courses and templates. Sonia Leighton adds, *“It was not strictly within Fujitsu’s remit to look at the training requirements, but it did as it recognised that getting it right was very, very important.”*

Other activities initiated by Fujitsu included proactive engagement with Resolver Groups to get them involved in the new way of working. Fujitsu also advised on the use of new technology, such as ‘e-cards’, which capture data from back-end systems about different aspects of VocaLink’s service and present it in an easily assimilated format.

Using the outputs of Fujitsu’s consultancy work, which include the Implementation Plan, Stakeholder Analysis, Business Change Plan and Training Schedule, VocaLink is now in the process of implementing the service desk consolidation. *“Fujitsu left us in a mature state to move forward. It didn’t just come in and tell us what to do, it also left us with the ability to do it,”* confirms Sonia Leighton.

Ian Gausden, Operations Director, VocaLink, states, *“We operate in a very competitive and fast moving market, so we have to be extremely responsive to customers’ needs. Fujitsu has helped us develop a new understanding of our business and new ways to manage change, so that we can continue to deliver an exemplary level of customer service.”*

Benefits

The consultancy services provided by Fujitsu and have helped VocaLink to:

- **Reduce costs** – the service desk consolidation will generate significant savings within two years, predominantly through structural changes

- **Enhance the customer experience** – with faster and higher quality customer service and problem resolution
- **Increase efficiency** – by optimising resource usage and streamlining processes using a ‘Lean’ approach
- **Enhance performance** – improved staff motivation using a ‘shift to the left’ to empower people and give them more responsibility
- **Promote cultural change** – has been a catalyst for change across the organisation through an inclusive and partnering approach
- **Minimise risk** – utilising Fujitsu’s extensive business expertise and proven management methodologies
- **Increase operational flexibility** – has provided the tools, techniques and knowledge to successfully implement future changes and service improvements.

“Our work with Fujitsu has taken the entire team on a journey of discovery about what the service desk is really capable of delivering,” comments Sonia Leighton. *“We now feel a valued part of the business, because we’re leading from the front and making a big impact on the customer experience. We’re also confident that we can deliver change in other parts of the business, so we’re all very excited and looking forward to the future.”*

Chris Dunne, Director of Customer Service, VocaLink, says, *“We chose to work with Fujitsu as it clearly has considerable expertise in service centre management. We were also impressed by its unique Sense & Respond approach to continuous service improvement and experience in applying ‘Lean’ principles. Using its expertise, we have been able to transform the way we do operate, but without destabilising our business.”*

Approach

Throughout its consultancy work with VocaLink, Fujitsu has adopted an ‘inclusive’ approach with key staff and stakeholders in order to gather valuable input and quickly gain their buy-in.

“Given the sensitivity of the projects there was a risk that things could have gone wrong, but Fujitsu’s approach was very friendly and non-threatening,” explains Sonia Leighton. *“It meant that people got engaged very quickly and found the whole process really good, because they felt involved. It really opened my eyes to the fact that we had not talked to our staff enough in the past.”*

Expertise

With over 40 years experience of supporting the needs of customers, Fujitsu has a proven track record in providing consultancy services, complex systems integration and application development and management services that reduce costs, improve productivity and customer services and deliver a compelling return on investment.

“Fujitsu could not have been more helpful and went out of its way to deliver a good quality set of recommendations in a very short time, which left a good impression on everyone. It had a real passion to get it right,” confirms Sonia Leighton. *“We also learnt about a lot of other things on the way, because Fujitsu was willing to help and educate us and share its experience. It told us things that we had never thought of before and they made absolute sense, because they already work in Fujitsu.”*