



Centrica plc

Partnering improves productivity



Centrica relies on Fujitsu for services. When working from home drove up call volumes, Fujitsu suggested a virtual assistant, Buddy, and automation through Alluvio Aternity analytics. Together they saved an average of 200 person-days a month between July 2021 and August 2022.

Challenge

Keeping the Centrica contact centre up and running became more challenging when the pandemic hit. Centrica wanted to ensure that colleagues working from home were able to get support whenever they needed it.

Solution

Fujitsu demonstrated an automated virtual assistant and suggested use cases for its adoption. Combining the virtual assistant Buddy with Alluvio Aternity's automated proactive self-healing brought added value.

Outcomes

- Cut resolution times for straightforward IT issues by 80%
- Gave Centrica employees back an average of 200 person-days a month
- Cut costs and delivered a >300% return on investment

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Emma Cawthray, IS Operational Delivery Director, Centrica plc



80%
quicker time
to resolve

Optimising productivity

“Having our frontline agents able to service our customers is a real priority for Centrica,” reveals Emma Cawthray, IS Operational Delivery Director at Centrica. “Ensuring they don’t have technical issues, and when they do, getting them back up and running as quickly as possible is vital.”



10-12
minutes return
time to agents

Field engineers need access to everything from customer addresses through to online manuals and parts-ordering systems, while call centre colleagues require access to customer account information. Even a minor IT issue could compromise their ability to fulfil the task at hand, impacting the customer they’re helping.

Like many other businesses, Centrica’s whole working environment changed during the pandemic. Technology became even more critical as staff moved out of the office. Cawthray recalls how, as employees began working from home, the volume of IT incidents hitting the service desk “went through the roof”. Problems often included issues with Wi-Fi that non-technical staff may not understand, necessitating support from the IT service desk to suggest that they perhaps needed to sit closer to the router or free up bandwidth.

For Centrica’s IT service desk, getting incidents resolved quickly so call centre operatives and field engineers could get up and running was often challenging. Fixing an issue over the phone could take 15 minutes. At peak times of the day, despite Fujitsu’s great ability to scale, colleagues often needed to wait a few minutes in a queue before they could speak to the service desk. That wait increased their non-productive time and, more importantly, meant they couldn’t serve end customers.

More recently, as consumers feel the pinch of energy prices, delivering exceptional customer service has become even more critical for Centrica. “We don’t want customers queuing on the phone to discuss their bill, or vulnerable customers unable to top up their prepayment meters,” explains Cawthray. “Our teams need to be able to do their job without being disrupted or having to go into the office to fix IT issues.”

Enhancing the service desk experience

Technology partner Fujitsu runs Centrica’s IT end-user services and service desk. “Fujitsu is constantly working to drive process improvements,” shares Cawthray. “It’s great to see the passion that comes through. The team brings us lots of great ideas.” Those ideas include implementing a virtual assistant called Buddy, and then collaborating with Centrica’s technical teams to demonstrate how it could help colleagues resolve IT issues quickly and efficiently – without needing to call the service desk.

Buddy uses scripted automation to provide a fast and effective way to fix IT issues. Users log in and explain their issues using natural language; Buddy then guides them through to resolution. Buddy even considers the varying services that different call centre staff use, directing them to the right knowledge article for their specific needs rather than offering a range that users have to narrow down themselves. To date over 200 new and improved topics have been added.

Utilising Predictive Intelligence, the virtual assistance platform can also route an incident to the right team or tool to fix it – including Centrica’s automated monitoring and proactive self-healing service, Alluvio Aternity. Centrica adopted Alluvio Aternity, part of Riverbed’s Alluvio portfolio, to identify potential device issues and proactively resolve them before they have any impact.

Industry:

Utilities

Location:

UK & Ireland

Website:

centrica.com

About the customer

Helping customers to live sustainably, simply and affordably is the focus of leading energy and services provider, Centrica. Its business is founded on a 200-year heritage of serving people. It supplies energy and services to more than nine million residential and business customers, mainly in the UK and Ireland, through brands such as British Gas, Bord Gáis and Centrica Business Solutions.



£100K+

saved on resource
costs annually

Alluvio Aternity might, for instance, send out a replacement battery or clear down a cache if a hard drive is full – and do so quietly in the background.

“Bringing Buddy and Alluvio Aternity together enhances our ability to keep our frontline agents productive,” notes Cawthray. “We have only scratched the surface of what we could do.” She shares an example of Buddy seeing that a user is having problems with a spreadsheet and proactively messaging them to ask if they would like an incident raised for Alluvio Aternity, or to clear their cache to prevent it from happening again.

Serving customers through partnering

Together Buddy and Alluvio Aternity are having a significant impact at Centrica, helping keep field engineers and call centre staff productive so they can focus on serving customers.

Michelle Jordan, Head of Customer Experience, Centrica plc says, “I have been delighted with the success Buddy has provided to our colleagues. With Buddy, we can resolve IT issues in two or three minutes instead of 15 minutes, giving our contact centre colleagues back 12 or 13 minutes of their valuable time,” adding that Centrica colleagues used Buddy over 100,000 times during the last year and it has received over 10,000 positive feedbacks, representing 77% of total responses.

Together Buddy and Alluvio Aternity are helping Centrica avoid or resolve an average of over 10,000 incidents each month, allowing colleagues to gain an average of 200 person-days of productivity while reducing the number of calls to the IT service desk. These productivity gains, in combination with the person-hours returned to the IT service desk, are saving Centrica thousands of pounds in costs each month.

However, Cawthray believes Centrica’s journey with Buddy and Alluvio Aternity is still in its infancy. “We have already seen some significant benefits from Buddy and Alluvio Aternity, but there is so much more in the pipeline. It’s really quite exciting. The service desk fixes most of our instances first time round, but we want to do that faster and proactively. That’s where Buddy and Alluvio Aternity come in.”

She shares numerous examples of how Buddy and Alluvio Aternity could do even more for Centrica’s contact centre teams. One involves Buddy and Alluvio Aternity building laptops at Centrica colleagues’ homes, removing the need for them to come into the office. A second sees Buddy allowing users to request parts such as chargers quickly and easily using natural language. Cawthray describes how field engineers would save time because they would no longer need to phone the service desk or search through catalogues.

And as well as being a one-stop shop for anything technology-related for contact centre teams, Cawthray also sees Buddy’s potential for helping call centre staff as they serve customers.

Importantly, Centrica sees Fujitsu as a partner rather than a supplier, travelling a journey together. “The Buddy and Alluvio Aternity project demonstrates the strength of our partnership,” she concludes. “I can’t fault Fujitsu at all in the enthusiasm and the quality they bring. The passion, engagement and communication have all been fantastic. The whole team can’t do enough for me.”

Customer:

centrica

Fujitsu

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