

RIGHTNOW BEST PRACTICES HELP BA MAXIMIZE ITS RETURN ON INVESTMENT

A few years ago BA embarked on its relationship with RightNow creating AskBA, a customer service implementation that answered 55,000 customers' questions every week. This was at the forefront of the airline's vision of a customer-enabled ba.com where the web plays a pivotal role in allowing customers to serve themselves to everything from booking a flight, holiday or car, to checking in online, changing their booking, and printing their own boarding pass.

Now in the present day, BA continues to develop and extend its customer-enabled ba.com and looks to RightNow's on demand technology to help it deliver the vision, as Chris Carmichael, technical editor, at BA.com explains:

"A key element of a customer enabled ba.com is that dealing with us should be so easy that customers can choose to serve themselves. The original RightNow deployment was certainly assisting us with this; it was also helping to drive down operational costs by reducing dependency on the contact center, while at the same time benefiting customers. However, from talking to RightNow we knew that we could squeeze more out of our investment."

"A top priority was to explore the ways we could exploit the asset to deliver increased utilization," continues Carmichael. "We were looking for improved ROI above and beyond that already experienced with a continued focus on driving out even more cost from the contact center. We wanted all of this with the additional and important caveat of improving the customer experience."

To help BA achieve its goals RightNow's vertical sector consultants recommended implementing a series of tried and tested best practices, gathered from working with blue chip enterprises across various different sectors, as well as more than twenty different airlines. These have been designed to ensure RightNow's customers maximize their return on investment and enhance the benefits delivered by the solutions.

Specifically, best practices gained with e-commerce customers seemed to align closely with a customer-enabled BA, and RightNow made the following three recommendations:

1. A RightNow-driven search function on the home page and subsequent pages
2. Book Now buttons added to customer services pages for easy end-to-end transactions
3. A "manage my booking" tab allowing customers to reach the new customer enabled functions

The overall effect provided clearer sign posting to important site areas and doubled utilization of RightNow overnight, something fundamental to driving down operational costs.

"Usage uptake suggests that the web is becoming the preferred customer service channel and this is having a direct impact on reducing calls to agents," declares Carmichael. "There's a cost saving associated with this. We calculate that every 10

Industry: Travel

Goals

- Extend ROI and reduce operational costs via deeper product utilization
- Improve consistency of customer service to Executive Club members across all contact channels
- Continue enhancing the customer experience

Achievements

- Increased customer utilization drives out more calls from contact center for heightened ROI
- RightNow-enabled contact center improves customer experience across Executive Club
- Depth and utilization continues to grow and deliver benefits throughout organization
- Ease of use and additional functions improve overall customer experience

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CASE STUDY: BRITISH AIRWAYS



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While BA is not permitted to disclose actual figures saved from deflecting calls from the contact center, it can confirm that the sum is substantial.

RightNow was confident that by activating SmartAssistant further gains could be made. SmartAssistant reads a customer’s question before they submit it via a web form, and proactively pushes additional answers to the customer. In many cases this resolves the customer’s enquiry by providing them with content that they may have over looked during their initial search.

“The returns from implementing SmartAssistant have been astonishing,” says Carmichael. “We budgeted for an email reduction of about 12 percent, our goal was of achieving 15 percent, so we were staggered by the 60 percent reduction. It’s exceeded our expectations and now our future goal is to have every inbound email come in via the SmartAssistant tool.”

By deflecting repetitive emails out of the contact center, SmartAssistant saves BA a sizeable sum of money each year. By managing email in this way, agent workloads have reduced, allowing them time to concentrate on the more complex problems—while responsiveness to customer-critical issues has improved.

One of BA’s most complex businesses is its Executive Club, a highly subscribed to loyalty program segmented into three levels. Being able to provide effective customer service to members was proving challenging. There was no way of centralizing the vast quantities of information about the club or capturing expert agent knowledge so it could be shared across multiple call centers and customer touch points. Neither was there a method of ensuring that information given to members was accurate regardless of contact channel or location.

With a RightNow-enabled customer contact center BA was able to simplify internal processes so that all Executive Club-related information could be streamlined into a common system for use across multiple contact channels. The system allows agents to add their own expert knowledge, which can then be viewed by colleagues while on the phone or responding to emails. According to Carmichael the impact has been significant:

“Out of all the recent work we’ve done, the Executive Club exemplifies how we’ve managed to cost effectively maximize our use of RightNow. They’ve helped us take what is fundamentally a mountain of information and made the data within it useable for customers and agents. The result is a worldwide deployment offering consistency of experience across all customer service channels, feedback from users has been very positive.”

It’s little wonder that customer reaction has been good, especially when you consider that RightNow is also helping to provide synergy between BA’s internal departments. For example, the system enables details of Executive Club marketing campaigns to be made available to agents, readying them for any resulting enquiries and so helping to improve the customer experience.

In fact, BA’s maturing relationship with RightNow has been so successful that other areas of the airline are also using RightNow’s on demand solutions to drive internal efficiencies, while other departments are preparing to do so. For example, the employee intranet uses RightNow to support its “Employee Self Service” program, supporting staff as they move away from dependence on off-line resources. And BA’s busy press office prepares to deploy RightNow to simplify and speed up the provision of information to journalists and investors.

“Our relationship with RightNow is longstanding,” concludes Carmichael. “So after all this time, it’s very refreshing when a company is able to continue innovating with your investment so its usefulness continues to grow and deliver bigger and better returns.”

ABOUT BRITISH AIRWAYS

British Airways is one the world’s largest international airlines, carrying around 36 million passengers worldwide. The airline’s two main operating bases are London’s two main airports, Heathrow (the world’s biggest international airport) and Gatwick. British Airways franchise carriers GB Airways, British Mediterranean, Loganair, Sun Air, and Comair add to the BA network to give the airline a presence in all major world markets.