



CLOUD FIRST

# CO-OP GROUP - HELPING ITS CUSTOMERS WHEN THEY NEED IT MOST

## CUSTOMER OPPORTUNITY

Co-op's customer and colleague contact centre operations sit within Co-op Business Services (CBS) with circa 500 colleagues. CBS is a shared services business unit which serves Co-op's customer facing businesses.

In mid-2019, CBS decided to start considering moving its telephony system into the cloud and away from its on-premise solution. CBS was keen to adopt more advanced technologies and having a cloud-based infrastructure was crucial. The ability to allow CBS staff to work from home via a cloud system was an added bonus.

Its team put together a business case and, began to scope requirements and compare solutions in December 2019, initially engaging BT. At the start of March 2020, a formal RFP was issued, however, it was superseded by the rapidly developing global pandemic.

Suddenly the need for a more flexible cloud-based system became more urgent as CBS' existing telephony platform didn't enable staff to work from home.

Co-op's priority right from the start was its customers and the communities it serves.

As such, Co-op stood up several new services to support vulnerable customers and communities throughout lockdown meaning more traffic into CBS and a whole new set of processes to build and embed.

This would have been difficult enough to deliver before the pandemic, but lockdown restrictions meant big changes in the workplace too. Stores lost staff who needed to shield or self-isolate, raising more issues for the contact centre to deal with. Not wanting to close off a line of communication with customers by closing its call centre (as the competition did), and needing to respond to a surge in calls, emails and social media activity from concerned customers and members, Co-op initially kept its contact centre open and asked staff to keep coming into the office.

Co-op was caught in the jaws of a demand-resource squeeze and needed a solution that would enable it to effectively mobilise its contact centre team to work from home to cope with demand from existing and new services and be able to help its members, customers and wider communities more effectively.

## ABOUT THE CO-OP GROUP

The Co-op Group (Co-op) is one of the world's largest consumer co-operatives with interests across food, funerals, insurance, legal services and health. Owned by millions of UK consumers, Co-op operates 2,600 food stores, over 1,000 funeral homes and it provides products to over 5,100 other stores, including those run by independent co-operative societies and through its wholesale business, Nisa Retail Limited. As the UK's largest consumer co-operative, Co-op has 4.6 million active members, 70,000 employees, a £10 billion-plus turnover and a presence in every postal district in the country.

# THE CO-OP GROUP



## HOW WE ENABLED IT

Co-op had worked with IPI for a number of years – implementing a variety of changes to its telephony process. Recently, the team had made several service enhancements to CBS’ systems, which were built around an on-premise telephony platform, such as enabling IVR self-service.

With speed of the essence, CBS turned to IPI to help provide a solution. The team suggested the Genesys [Rapid Response](#) offer, which would quickly enable contact centre agents to work from home using the Genesys Cloud.

Tapping into IPI’s systems integration skills and knowledge of Genesys Cloud, CBS set up a project team to scope and deliver the solution in mid-March 2020. It went live two weeks later on 2nd April, and within four weeks CBS had successfully switched over half of its total call traffic. By the end of May, CBS had completely re-platformed its service centre, easing the pressure on its resources considerably and making its advisers feel that their safety was being put first, thereby securing their engagement.

## KEEPING THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

Despite these being unprecedented times, the new cloud-based system from Genesys held up – enabling Co-op to carry on speaking to its customers, but also to ramp up its outreach activities to help vulnerable members of local communities. Co-op phased the delivery of the new system over a few weeks to manage the risk associated with migration, however, as it was, service levels remained almost unaffected.

Throughout this period of technology transition, Co-op’s commitment to the community remained at the heart of activities throughout. With the technology supporting its teams, Co-op was able to administer £15m of funds to charities and community causes and put in place several new charitable initiatives.

The partnership with IPI and Genesys played a critical role in accelerating Co-op’s IT transformation and COVID response. Key successes include:

- ◆ **REMOTE WORKING** Co-op successfully transitioned around 200 contact centre staff to flexible home working. In this period, Co-op handled over 12,000 calls, while its social media teams absorbed a 700% volume increase. It also dealt with more than 15,000 complaints, mostly from customers worried about social distancing. In a pulse survey taken in June, 80% of staff said they had access to the systems and tools they need to work effectively.
- ◆ **QUALITY CSAT** (customer satisfaction) was maintained and marginally improved despite the upheaval. Service levels were met with just a dip in performance when volumes first impacted and new QA scorecards were built in Genesys, which are now embedded into performance.
- ◆ **EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT** As a result of the measures introduced to protect colleagues and keep them connected whilst working remotely, 88% of CBS staff felt the company was keeping them informed about the impact of coronavirus on their working lives. In Co-op’s year-end employee ‘Talkback’ survey, scores went up 9

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### OUR CUSTOMER IS HAPPY BECUASE:

Under normal circumstances, IPI and Genesys’ speed of delivery would be impressive, but bear in mind that at the time of the system’s migration our teams were dealing with a surge in enquiries across the business – via phone, email and social media. During these unprecedented times, our new cloud-based system from Genesys has enabled us to carry on helping our customers when they need it most. Without IPI and Genesys’ exceptional support, continuing business as ‘normal’ would have been near-impossible, let alone carrying out our additional outreach activities to help vulnerable members of our local communities.

Adrian Morley, Operational Change and Integration Manager,  
The Co-op Group

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- ◆ **BUSINESS RESILIENCE** Now, with support from IPI and Genesys Cloud contact centre, Co-op has eliminated creaky legacy technology and single points of failure. Its staff can work from anywhere. They just need a broadband connection, a device (PC, laptop or even a smartphone), and a headset
- ◆ **SERVICE LEVELS** The Genesys platform enabled Co-op to keep service levels almost unaffected whilst delivering the new system and rolling out new service initiatives. Throughout this period Co-op’s answer rate was 93% as compared to a target of 95%. This exceeded the CCMA benchmark for this same period (set at 86%) and was a noticeable improvement on other companies, many of whom offered reduced or even deflected service to non-voice channels over the period.

The Rapid Response platform from Genesys will in time be replaced by the Genesys PureCloud solution. Once this is in place, CBS will be able to work with IPI to deploy new capabilities, such as intelligent routing, caller identification and speech analytics to drive improvements to key contact centre outcomes such as self-service, first call resolution and repeat contacts.

