

Case Study

Vertical TeleVantage™ with Custom CT Source Interface

Winston Flowers Blossoms with Vertical TeleVantage



For over 50 years, Boston-based Winston Flowers has been a purveyor of the fine art of floristry with a commitment to delivering superlative floral products, award winning design, gourmet gifts and unsurpassed service. A third-generation florist with eight locations, a shopper-friendly website and 225 employees, Winston Flowers offers unique floral products and gourmet gifts that reflect the essence of their philosophy: “Essential to the art of life.”

Because the key to its success is delivering beautiful flowers coupled with outstanding customer service, Winston Flowers constantly monitors its business processes, including order fulfillment, design and delivery, while keeping a sharp eye on the bottom line. To support this effort, Winston keeps technology in the forefront. They understand that voice and data communications affect the entire organization and believe that technology is a powerful tool for increasing revenue, improving productivity and enhancing customer loyalty.

THE CHALLENGE

After identifying ways to improve call handling and speed order processing, Winston determined that its old telephone system was a hindrance. It lacked flexibility and was technically unable to support the new call center monitoring and reporting plans that would help to garner a new level of customer service unlike any other in the industry.

THE SOLUTION

Winston's primary goal was to incorporate new call center capabilities into the business to increase profits and improve customer service. To accomplish this goal, Winston partnered with CT Source, a communications solutions provider based in Salem, Massachusetts. After listening to Winston's business goals and understanding how they wished to orchestrate their call center, CT Source installed the Vertical TeleVantage™ Business Communications System. TeleVantage is a user-friendly IP-PBX phone system with high-value voice applications including full-featured voicemail, personalized call handling rules and a robust set of call center capabilities. CT Source then developed, in conjunction with TeleFlora, a custom interface that utilizes valuable Caller ID information. This new solution, which merges Winston Flowers' internal computer system with the software-based TeleVantage phone system, resulted in a 25% increase in profit in the first year.

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and has reduced customer on-hold time by an average of 45 seconds. Agents can provide better customer service when answering and routing incoming calls and manage large call volumes more effectively, especially during seasonal peak periods.

With its new communications systems and custom Teleflora™ interface, Winston Flowers set out to achieve key call center goals including:

- Improved customer service utilizing Caller ID information to place calls in predetermined call queues, recognizing returning customers and personalizing the customer's phone call experience
- Increased efficiency of incoming calls by correctly routing and quickly answering incoming calls, and eliminating busy signals
- Minimized wait times by forwarding calls to a 'live' customer service representative faster
- Enhanced agent selling tools which provide immediate access to customer order history information prior to answering the call
- Reduced call completion times
- Increased number of calls answered per day by eliminating dropped calls

CALL HANDLING

When a customer calls into Winston, the call is placed in a queue, never receiving a busy signal. If the caller is an existing customer, the incoming caller ID information is matched with Winston's customer database to determine its priority in the call queue. VIP accounts are automatically recognized and routed to a VIP queue.

Prior to answering the call with a personal greeting, the agent is shown a customized computer screen displaying all order history information relevant to the caller. Armed with this information, the sales agent is better able to service the customer according to their specific preferences. Orders are placed more quickly, inquiries are answered more efficiently and customers appreciate knowing they're receiving priority service.

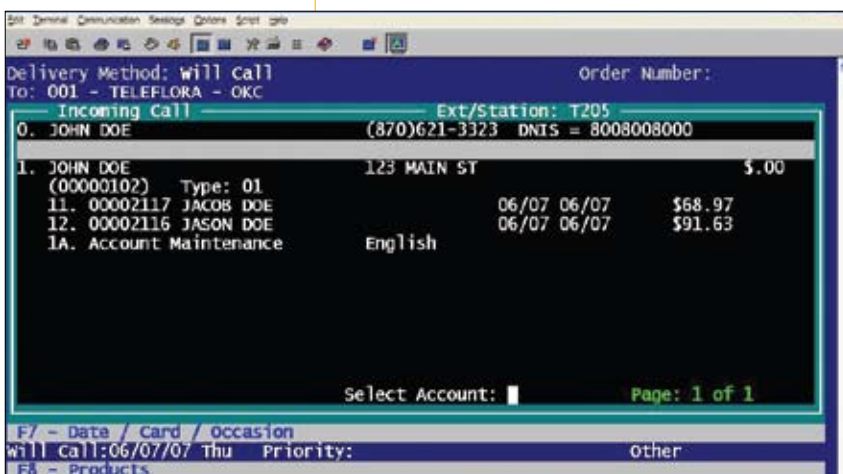
SEASONAL OVERFLOWS

An important issue within the floral industry is handling extreme seasonal peaks in call volume. During busy times of the year, a caller is more likely to be placed on hold. Winston believes that a caller placed on hold for more than 15 seconds will contemplate ending the call. After 35 seconds, 90% of callers will likely disconnect the call. In most instances, this means a lost sale.

To address this matter, Winston cross trains staff members in other departments to become seasonal call center agents. During busy times, these employees' extensions are automatically added to the inbound calling queue. Winston supplements its seasonal workforce with at-home workers as well. TeleVantage routes calls to remote phones based on pre-determined criteria such as how many calls are on hold and how long each call is expected to be. This assures that each and every call is answered quickly and efficiently.

ROBUST CUSTOMER DATABASE

The TeleVantage solution also gives Winston the ability to build a robust customer database to aid in overall business decision making. The information gathered from customer orders allows Winston to mine its database and to analyze and act on business trends and develop targeted programs aimed at specific customer types. For peak seasons, the information gathered allows them, for example, to determine seasonal staffing requirements based on call volume.



The custom CT Source and Teleflora interface automatically brings up a customer's name and previous order history which saves time and ensures accuracy.

PRODUCTIVITY ANALYSIS

Valuable information within the phone system allows Winston to easily monitor and generate reports on each agent's productivity. Reports are available on the types of calls being made, including inbound orders, outbound calls regarding problem orders, customer confirmations and customer satisfaction issues. This information is used to understand the number of incoming calls that are converted into real orders, abandoned calls, and general phone traffic patterns. Coupled with information from the Vertical TeleVantage with Custom Teleflora Interface system, Winston can instantly translate calls and orders into productivity numbers without having to manually break the numbers down on a monthly basis from phone statements.

STREAMLINED MAINTENANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

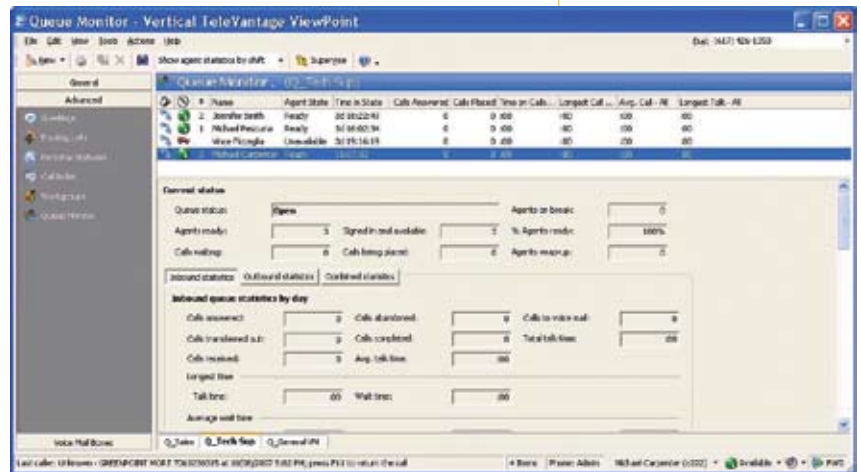
The intuitive TeleVantage phone system administrator interface makes routine maintenance such as adding and moving phone lines quick and easy. The flexibility and scalability of the phone system allows Winston to easily add phone lines and system applications based on business needs. Winston started out with 20 agents. The call center has grown to include 46 lines and 35 agents, but that number fluctuates depending on the time of year. In the past, Winston had to call a service technician to accommodate these changes. Now Winston uses the award-winning Windows-based TeleVantage ViewPoint™ software to handle its own changes to the phone system and call center software whenever it needs to, thereby reducing maintenance costs.

FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

Future enhancements to this application will allow the unique Teleflora interface to automate marketing calls, collections calls, delivery confirmations, and speed service on the order entry helpdesk, allowing users to further maximize labor cost savings by integrating two products.

Winston Flowers recognizes the value of using technology as a powerful tool to augment business goals. Enhancing voice communications helps increase customer loyalty, which in turn results in repeat business and enthusiastic referrals. Working

The management screen in TeleVantage allows managers to accurately staff and measure the effectiveness of agents – helping eliminate overstaffing and lost calls.



together, Teleflora, CT Source and Vertical Communications gave Winston Flowers an affordable custom call center application that has improved call process flow, enhanced customer service and loyalty, increased orders and boosted profits, without increasing costs or number of employees. Customer calls are routed correctly, never given a busy signal, placed in appropriate queues, answered quickly and personally, regardless of call volume or time of year. Reporting capabilities provide Winston a better understanding of its call-in customer base.

THE RESULTS

- Increased profits 25% during first year of use
- Improved customer service
- Enhanced business decision-making
- Reduced average call wait times by 45 seconds
- Lowered call abandonment rate
- Optimized call handling for high volume and seasonal periods
- Reduced telephone system maintenance costs

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ABOUT VERTICAL

Vertical Communications is one of the largest telephony vendors in North America and a global leader in next-generation IP-based business communications systems and applications, with a current installed base of over 200,000 customers. Vertical combines voice and data technologies with business process understanding to deliver integrated IP-PBX and application solutions that enhance customer service and business productivity. Vertical's customers are leading companies of all sizes, from small to large and distributed, and include CVS/pharmacy,® Staples and Apria Healthcare. Vertical delivers its solutions through a worldwide network of over 1800 business partners.

For more information on products and solutions from Vertical Communications, visit our website at www.vertical.com or call 1-877-VERTICAL.

ABOUT CT SOURCE, INC.

CTSource, Inc. is a provider of voice and data communication products and services, including network engineering. Since 1983, the company, headquartered in Salem, MA, has been a pioneer in the development, installation, and support of software-based voice communication platforms that integrate the power of computers with enhanced telephone calling. For more information on CT Source, visit www.ctsource.com.

ABOUT TELEVANTAGE

Vertical TeleVantage combines the industry's most innovative and user-friendly IP-PBX with high value voice applications, including full-featured voicemail, personalized call handling rules and a robust set of call center capabilities. With TeleVantage, small and medium-sized organizations can enjoy all the benefits of IP telephony while greatly enhancing the value of their existing landline and mobile phone infrastructure.

A software-based solution, TeleVantage offers an extensive array of customizable features, a highly intuitive Microsoft Windows®-based graphical user interface, affordable scalability, streamlined administration and a low cost of ownership.



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