



Bringing Joy to Constituents and Staff with a Cloud-Based Contact Center

The Challenge: **Frustrated Constituents, Burned-out Staff**

The customer service team at the Clearwater, Florida, utility department was stretched thin. Overworked agents struggled to handle the volume of inquiries and often dropped or skipped calls. Callers were left on hold up to two hours, with no idea of their estimated wait time.

The department had no way to analyze or report on data. Management could only track the number of incoming and answered calls. Leaders had no information on the number of dropped or rerouted calls, meaning they had limited insight into the quality of constituent experience.

Unsurprisingly, the public was left frustrated and dissatisfied. Callers would contact the city manager to complain about long wait times and unanswered calls.

“Constituents felt like they could not get ahold of anyone from the city,” says Amy Sessions, customer service division manager for Clearwater’s utility customer service department. “They felt disconnected.”

In turn, agents became frustrated by both the call volume and negative constituent feedback. “Staff were used to seeing countless calls in the queue,” Sessions says. “They were overwhelmed and stressed.”

Sessions was determined to “bring joy back into the department.” To do that, the organization needed a new contact center solution that would enhance the customer service experience for agents and the public.

Callers used to wait on hold up to two hours. The average speed of answer is now just

 **14**
seconds.

The new contact center took less than
6 months
to set up.

The Solution: **A Cloud-Based Contact Center**

In 2023, the city collaborated with Powernet to implement a Genesys Cloud CX contact center. The contact center solution supports not only the utility customer service department but also other agencies throughout the city, including planning and development, the gas system and solid waste disposal.

Powernet met regularly with customer service management to discuss the city’s needs, map out call flows and train agents.

Less than six months after first meeting with Powernet, Clearwater’s new contact center was up and running.

The Results: **Happier Callers and Agents**

Having a cloud-based call center streamlines any system updates, saving the city time and money. The city can also easily increase or decrease the number of licenses as demand ebbs and flows. For example, in an emergency such as a hurricane or other natural disaster, the city can quickly scale up licenses to meet increased call volume.

(Cloud solutions also let customer service staff take calls from anywhere, allowing for remote or hybrid work options.)

And the cloud allows the city to easily expand and evolve its contact center. “With a cloud-based solution, an agency is on a continuous journey of innovation,” says Casey Bowen, senior sales account executive for Genesys. “They are creating a foundation they can modify to uniquely fit the needs of their constituents.”

This customization can even happen within each department. For example, the utility customer service department is collaborating with Powernet to enhance its contact center solution by automating collection calls, adding an AI chatbot and integrating the department’s email system into the platform.

Clearwater’s utility customer service department has seen a number of positive outcomes:

Reduced waits and increased answer rates

Within two weeks, the department’s call answer rate went from a low of 47% to a high of 98%. The average speed of answer is now just 14 seconds, thanks in part to the call center’s auto-answer feature, which immediately connects callers to the first available agent. The department also implemented a callback option that allows agents to return constituents’ calls, giving callers more flexibility and reducing the risk of dropped calls.

Enhanced data reporting

The contact center’s robust analytics solution generates customized reports to improve the experience for callers and agents. For example, managers use data on call volume to schedule staff lunches and breaks, making sure there are enough agents on staff at any time.



Zero staff turnover

With streamlined call center technology, staff burnout is no longer a problem. The utility customer service team went from a historic turnover rate of about 40% in recent years to 0% in the year after the launch of the new contact center. “We simply set the expectation of what we’re looking for and gave agents the tools to do their job effectively,” Sessions says.

Conclusion: Embracing Change

One of the biggest challenges of any new technology is getting leadership and staff on board with change.

“Sometimes a department has been using the same phone system for years,” says Powernet CX and Process Manager Ian Clark. “The first step in implementing a new system is to create a change in mindset. We want to encourage departments to ask, ‘How can we make this a better experience for the agent and the constituent?’”

By listening to concerns of agents and the public, Clearwater’s utility customer service team implemented a solution that improved the contact center experience for everyone involved.

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