



CASE STUDY

The University of Southampton



Scalable cloud solution reduces waiting time for prospective students



About the Customer

The University of Southampton is a world-leading, research-intensive institution. Ranked as one of the UK's top 20 Universities and recently securing a position as one of the top 100 in the QS World university rankings for 2019, the university boasts more than 150 years of experience in delivering world-class education.

Each year, starting on the morning of A Level Results Day, the University of Southampton's phone lines can receive in excess of 10,000 calls during a mass call event known as "clearing", where prospective undergraduate students yet to secure a place on a higher education (HE) course wait to be matched with places that the institution hasn't yet filled.

In order to deliver the high-quality and stress-free service that prospective students expect, the university needed a robust, reliable, high-performance telephony system that could easily cope with the surge in demand that comes with results day.

The Challenge

The institution's method of call handling during the clearing process relied on a traditional "hunt group" – distributing phone calls from a single telephone number to a group of several ISDN phone lines where several people are then set up to handle the incoming calls.

Scaling their infrastructure during peak periods was proving to be difficult and costly, requiring significant investment in physical ISDN hardware to meet only temporary demand and leaving little room for the flexibility needed to meet any additional capacity requirements on the day. This meant that many calls were not answered, and there was no facility to leave a message, leading to frustration and a level of service below that which the university strived to provide.

Recognising the limitations of its existing infrastructure, and the limited access to key marketing data and a desire to enhance customer service, the university contacted Wavenet*.

At a glance

Industry: Education

Sites: 1

Employees: 5,001 - 10,000

Objectives:

- Upgrade ISDN phone lines to a more scalable infrastructure
- Gain insight into key marketing data to align future campaigns as required
- Improve overall quality of service and call answer times for prospective students

Solutions:

- Cloud & Hosting

Results:

- 56% increase in online applications

*The initial engagement was with Daisy, acquired by Wavenet in 2024.

They were keen to explore a simple yet effective entry into the cloud.

As well as ensuring that any inbound calls during clearing were answered as quickly as possible, the ability to gain visibility of the quantity and timing of calls, the success of various marketing campaigns, and the ability to direct queued callers to the online form was of paramount importance to the business. Therefore, any proposed solution would need to facilitate measuring the success of any marketing activity, enabling them to better understand their student population and origin.

The Solution

Facilitating the University of Southampton's need for increased capacity and improved efficiency during clearing, Wavenet proposed "Clearing in the Cloud", a solution that leverages cloud technology for processing calls and mitigating bottlenecks caused by existing equipment and ingress.

After undergoing a detailed design and consultation stage, Wavenet's dedicated team set about implementing and testing the new platform, ensuring call flows would work for the desired outcomes.

By moving to a cloud-managed solution, the university would mitigate the costly and labour-intensive process of installing additional hardware and instead benefit from a solution that can scale up and down as demand changes.

Clearing in the Cloud allows callers to dial one of 10 local rate 033 numbers, each linked to a specific marketing source. These calls are then presented to the Wavenet system and delivered to one of 90 agents. From here, calls are processed within the cloud and callers are either held in a queue or played a series of recordings highlighting key marketing messages or, more importantly, urging callers to complete the clearing process online rather than waiting in a queue.

Wavenet were available throughout the clearing process in the event of any issues and is now looking to assist with the evaluation of data on the system.

The Result

Today, the University of Southampton can see how many students called throughout the clearing process, with added visibility on how many calls were queued. This means that next year's staffing levels can be aligned well in advance.

What's more, the reporting functionality enables staff to determine the success of specific marketing streams, enabling them to focus on and, where necessary, realign marketing tactics for the coming year.

In addition, the university saw a 56% increase in online applications, which they attribute to the promotion of online applications via the queue messaging function played to callers waiting to be transferred to an agent.

As a trusted partner, Wavenet is looking at evaluating the service and enhancing it further for 2019. In addition, as part of the University's unified communications strategy, SIP trunking will be deployed on campus.



Every year, the clearing process becomes more intense. With competition fiercer than ever, our telephony infrastructure was leaving us behind. Wavenet designed a cost-effective solution that enabled us to handle calls efficiently and also improve the quality of the service provided to our prospects. Because of this, we are now able to use the data generated by the solution to inform staffing levels and marketing campaigns for future years and assess how else we might utilise the solution to benefit both applicants and current students alike.

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