

A Virtual Agent that acts as first line support for customers across all digital channels

To support a large national customer base, a Telecommunications company offers an extensive walk-in branch network, as well as a 24/7 customer care centre staffed with 1450 agents. The contact centre fields both retail staff and direct customer sales and support queries. Due to the complexity of the products and services, these agents are divided into specialized teams.

Despite significant investment in agent training and knowledge bases, as well as the provision of a unified desktop that simplifies system actions, customer satisfaction ratings remain stubbornly low. First call resolution (FCR) is also poor, and branch staff and customers endure multiple call-backs before their requests, queries, issues or complaints get resolved.

To improve the overall customer service experience, and to lower the total cost to serve, digital self-service was prioritized. The business looked to move beyond chatbots that offered simple informational or transactional support to a full service Virtual Agent capable of resolving most sales and support queries first touch.

This Virtual Agent not only had to work across multiple digital channels, but it had to be able to offer consistent, compliant and hyper-personalized service at the level of a human expert.

The challenge

- The significant range of products and services, and the frequency of changes, means that customers are overwhelmed by choice. Many customers need product advice, not informational assistance. This requires the ability to analyse their needs in context, and then identify relevant and related solutions. The Virtual Agent had to be able to perform like an expert, and not be limited by generic knowledge bases or restrictive decision tree logic.
- Most service queries are technical, complex and contextual. To resolve them, you need to be able to analyse the underlying need or root cause before you trigger the required actions. While some data can be found in systems, most has to be gathered from the customer, in context.
- To close more sales via automated outbound engagements, the Virtual Agent must be able to dynamically adjust to each customer's context and not offer a generic experience.
- Customers use multiple digital channels – the website, the mobile app, email and WhatsApp. Ensuring that irrespective of channel they can expect the same quality of engagement with the same outcomes is difficult, especially when products and rules change frequently.
- To resolve sales and support queries without relying on a human in the loop means that the Virtual Agent must be able to always arrive at the right outcomes and pass the right data to operational systems for straight through processing.

The business requirement

CLEVVVA™

- + Offer customers a one-touch digital self-service via the website, mobile app, email and WhatsApp channels
- + Increase the number of sales and support requests, queries, issues and complaints handled via unassisted digital self-service channels
- + Increase call deflection
- + Improve customer satisfaction ratings
- + Increase sales
- + Reduce the total cost to sell and serve



The solution

After an extensive international search, the decision was taken to partner with CLEVVVA in building, deploying and managing the required Virtual Agent.

The roles, query types and channels that the Virtual Agent should support were then prioritized and a roadmap agreed. The first priority was to get the Virtual Agent to handle all known inbound assurance queries via the website, app and WhatsApp channels. Thereafter, the Virtual Agent needed to expand its work to include inbound and outbound sales queries.

To replicate the contextual logic current sales and support specialists apply when resolving all known assurance-related queries, the team worked closely with identified Subject Matter Experts.

Within 3 months, the company's Virtual Agent was deployed on the website and over the next few months, the team ensured it

could resolve all prioritised assurance-related queries without the need for human assistance.

The next step was to deploy the Virtual Agent into the mobile app and WhatsApp channels. Within a short time, the Virtual Agent was handling over 2.5 million assurance-related queries per annum across the digital channels.

While constantly improving the Virtual Agent's performance within assurance, the team then expanded the Virtual Agent's scope of work to include sales. Where required, the Virtual Agent was deployed to pop up and helps the customer analyse their needs and make a specific product choice, in-context.

This sales role was also expanded to include outbound sales. Customers could receive a targeted link that, when clicked, opened the Virtual Advisor in context. This allowed them to complete upgrades entirely unassisted.

The impact

Customers love their Virtual Agent

- 2.5 million requests, queries, issues and complaints were resolved by the Virtual Agent in the first year
- Customers rated their experience of working with the Virtual Agent at 7.2/10
- 81% of customers said they would use the Virtual Agent before calling the contact centre
- Customer satisfaction after working with the Virtual Agent was rated at a NPS of +34

Call Centre agents love the Virtual Agent too

- Improved call quality as a result of lower call volumes
- More consistent average handling times (an increase of 4%)
- Improved net promoter scores (8% lift)
- Improved first-call resolution (9% lift)
- Improved talk time (3% lift)
- Customer dissatisfaction mentions were significantly reduced (decrease of 50%)

In summary

The telecommunication business is complex. There are many technical products and services that address a wide range of customer needs. And while human agents perform admirably, the complexity of queries and the volume of calls gets overwhelming.

The Virtual Agent changed this. It stepped up as the first line support across every digital channel and initially started resolving all known technical support requests, queries, issues and complaints.

The Virtual Agent then expanded its role to sales, ensuring that customers had immediate access to expert level product advice. This gave customers the confidence they needed to make contract decisions without waiting to first talk to a consultant.

By significantly reducing the call volumes coming into the assisted channels, the Virtual Agent has freed up time for agents to have richer, more impactful customer conversations. Their focus is less on query resolution and more on relationship building.

The journey is not complete. Currently the Virtual Agent's role and reach is being expanded further to include in-context support within the different websites, and increasing the scope of automated e-mail servicing.