

Quality Service through Call Center Transformation

In an era of heightened customer demands and increased competition, call centers have become a crucially important mechanism to cost-effectively serve customers and sell products. Bank of Ireland realized that it needed not only to reengineer its call center delivery processes, but also to ensure that it provided the same level of outstanding service across channels to give a consistent customer experience. To meet this objective, the bank launched “Banking365,” a customer relationship management system powered by Siebel Finance. Today, the bank enjoys customer satisfaction ratings above 85 percent and has earned a string of awards for service excellence.

Business process transformation (BPT) is now a fundamental part of most retail bank strategies. By optimizing the role of people, processes, and technology, banks can deliver outstanding services to customers. They can also react at high speed to changes in the marketplace and maintain a high quality of service whatever the circumstances.

The Bank of Ireland’s Banking365 call center desktop replacement project is an excellent example of BPT in action. Banking365, an innovative technological approach, combined with an intelligent rethink of the role of staff and other resources, has resulted in customer satisfaction ratings as high as 85 percent and nomination for several awards, including the European Call Center of the Year.

The transformation of the Banking365 call center service originated in a survey of the previous setup conducted four years ago. Sean Carney, Manager, Business and IT Strategy, was responsible for the business

analysis and design of the new solution. He was also responsible for assessing levels of customer and staff satisfaction post-launch. “At that time, there was very little real integration between the existing call center, branches, and other channels. When you look at the technology available at the time, that’s hardly surprising, but we were determined to take the lead and develop a truly multichannel distribution strategy.”

Streamlined Processes

As part of the analysis, Bank of Ireland undertook an intensive assessment of the technology options available to support its new business strategy for direct channels. “Although J2EE was a relatively new concept at that time, it was clear to us that it was the way forward. This early conviction has proved successful, placing our business in a position to achieve future integration and streamlining of business processes to meet our objectives for greater cost efficiency and an enhanced customer experience.”




SOLUTION OVERVIEW

Bank of Ireland Group

Providing a broad range of financial services in Ireland to the personal, commercial, industrial, and agricultural sector

Industry

Financial Services

Geographies

Ireland

Business Challenges

- Improve integration between the call center, branches, and other channels
- Streamline business processes
- Increase customer satisfaction
- Improve cross-selling

Solution

Deployed Siebel Finance Call Center to support a truly multichannel distribution strategy

Benefits

- Increased customer satisfaction to 85 percent
- Reduced staff training time by 25 percent
- Minimized the need to rekey and recheck data in the back office
- Improved cross-selling
- Nominated for European Call Center of the Year

Solution Components

Siebel Finance Call Center

Database: DB2
Back Office: Legacy systems

Siebel Alliance Partner

IBM

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—Sean Carney,
Manager, Business
and IT Strategy,
Bank of Ireland

The Banking365 call center was selected as the first channel to be addressed in the bank’s multichannel strategy. Working closely with Siebel, Bank of Ireland developed the solution based on Siebel Finance Call Center, a customer banking solution assembled from process-driven J2EE components. The project commenced in the latter part of 2000.

A “soft” launch followed at the end of 2001, and by May 2002, all 400 of the bank’s call center agents at two sites in Ireland, Dublin and Kilkenny, were using the system. One feature that helped accelerate this step was the new browser-based interface. Says Carney, “It’s a lot easier to use and is far more intuitive. The system automatically validates data when it is entered by the agents, increasing their confidence and helping them to deal with customer inquiries more quickly.”

Positive Feedback

As with most new systems, feedback from agents on the new functionality came thick and fast. “We were very pleasantly surprised,” says Carney. “Most of the comments were positive and constructive. In most cases when we came to the end of the pilot, the reaction was ‘when can we have it back?’” The new interface also makes it much easier to train agents. In most cases, staff members require only three weeks of training, compared with four weeks using the old system—an enormous reduction in the overall cost of the service. And, although Bank of Ireland has very low staff turnover, it does mean it can get new employees up to speed far more quickly than before. Front-end validation and embedding of the business rules in the mid-tier also resulted in an improvement in the customer interaction/experience and a significant reduction in post-fulfillment customer queries.

The transformation of the Banking365 call center has had a significant impact on other areas of the business and their performance. The Siebel Finance Call Center solution automates the end-to-end processing of all call center operations. “There’s very little, if any, requirement for rekeying or rechecking at the back office, and as such we’ve been able to reallocate almost 75 percent of staff to more productive areas of the business,” says Carney.

The greater accuracy of the system and its ease of use have had a direct impact on the quality of service to customers. Staff can now access information on a customer’s full range of services and products—including payments, savings, credit cards, and personal lending—in a single view. Critically, processes have been automated from end to end, with manual interventions eradicated. “By virtually eliminating rejections or errors associated with these activities, we have pushed the customer satisfaction rating with our agent service to a level where it is consistently higher than 85 percent,” says Carney.

Access to information from the new desktop is significantly improved for agents and customers alike. Carney cites direct debits as a good example. “Setting up, canceling, and verifying direct debits plays an increasing role in most people’s lives. With the old solution, agents used to scroll down a full statement, picking out the direct debits and associated transactions. Now they link to the direct debit database, access this information directly, and provide the customer with immediate service. It’s a simpler and faster process.”

New Opportunities

Although Bank of Ireland is eager to keep agents focused on servicing customer requests, the new solution has increased the ability to identify cross-selling opportunities. Bank of Ireland has integrated the desktop with its standard consumer lending products so that opportunities can be identified according to the customer's profile and banking history. "It's effective, but still low key," says Carney. "If the system identifies a product that matches a particular customer's requirements, this is flagged on screen to the agent, who can make the caller aware of the opportunity."

With Siebel Finance Call Center providing such strong business benefits, Bank of Ireland's long-term objective is to migrate all the channels in its Banking365 center to take advantage of Siebel technology. In addition to the call center, Banking365 offers customers Interactive Voice Response (IVR), Internet, and mobile access to their accounts. "We would like to see other channels sharing the benefits of Siebel technology soon," says Carney. "But we don't lose sight of what has already been achieved. The call center already represents an impressive step toward true multichannel banking."

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