

Vodafone UK Increases Volume of Work without Increasing Size of Field Workforce



The Company

Vodafone UK has 16.3 million customers and is part of the world's largest mobile community, offering a wide range of voice and data communications. The company is committed to providing mobile solutions that allow both consumer and business customers to "make the most of now." In addition, Vodafone connects customers across the globe, with roaming agreements worldwide.

To maintain its network infrastructure, which includes 10,000 GSM and 3,800 3G towers, Vodafone UK employs close to 200 field technicians across the United Kingdom. These field technicians work from a home base and are responsible for various types of work, including planned jobs such as network enhancements, unplanned jobs such as fault fixes and emergencies, installation and commissioning, and dedicated quality of service work. Nearly one-third of the customer visits made by field technicians are for unplanned work, so Vodafone UK requires a dynamic scheduling system that allows it to react both to changing and unexpected events in the field and to customer requirements.

The Challenge

Vodafone previously managed the schedules of its field personnel manually. They relied on this method of operation for several years, but at times it led to schedule conflicts and significant inefficiencies. In some cases, engineers spent more time on the road than necessary.

As an organization that prides itself on customer satisfaction and high performance, Vodafone UK embarked upon an initiative that was designed to overhaul the way its service operation currently functions. To reduce the travel times and increase productivity of the field force, Vodafone UK decided to transition from service teams built around limited engineer skill sets and covering a large geographical area, to multi-skilled teams covering smaller territories. To do this, Vodafone UK needed to properly catalog all the skills that each engineer held.

"Across all the services we provide, our engineers possess about 75 discernible skills," said Alan Peacock, Area Manager for Vodafone UK. "Under the new system, we wanted to keep service engineers within certain geographic areas as much as possible, so we needed the ability to quickly identify the skill sets of each engineer as customer requests came in."

The Benefits of Optimized Service Scheduling and Analysis

- Increased total customer visits without requiring an increase in the number of field engineers
- Prevented schedule conflicts that had previously occurred regularly because of manual intervention
- Reduced number of incidents of failing to meet service-level-agreement requirements
- Eliminated need for manual schedule intervention for routine service incidents
- Created a stable scheduling platform requiring minimum intervention
- Freed up valuable regional service center resources from dispatching duties to more value added tasks
- Moved dispatchers' roles from daily routine activities to handling exceptions

Vodafone UK sought a solution that would allow it to optimize its engineer schedules based on a combination of customer service level agreements, the skill sets of the engineers, and their geographic location. "We also needed a solution that would allow us to assess the schedule at the beginning and throughout the course of each work day," Peacock said. "This would allow us to react more quickly to priority calls that came in at the beginning of the day."

Vodafone UK ultimately wanted the ability to automatically identify the best engineer to take on each service incident based on a combination of who had the skills to complete the job successfully and who could arrive at the customer location the soonest.



The Solution

"We chose to partner with ClickSoftware because we had engaged with them on a previous scheduling project," Peacock said. "They had proven their capabilities so well that we did not feel it was necessary to seriously consider anyone else. We knew how reliably their software performed, and we trusted their knowledge of our scheduling challenges."



Vodafone UK selected ClickSoftware's ServiceOptimization Suite and, in particular, ClickSchedule and ClickAnalyze—ClickSchedule to manage the optimized daily scheduling and ClickAnalyze to assess overall performance over time. Vodafone UK's internal development staff then built a simple interface to integrate ClickSchedule with Vodafone UK's Clarify CRM system and Oracle database.

"We have 75 skills listed in the database for our 200 engineers in varying locations across the UK, so it's a complex equation when determining the best person to take on an assignment," Peacock said. "But ClickSchedule handles it automatically and makes sure we get the right person to the job—while also making sure we meet the customer's needs as well as our business-operation efficiency needs. We only have to intervene manually in the case of an exception."

ClickSchedule automatically assesses several service-incident attributes for Vodafone UK when allocating a resource:

- The required engineer competency level and skill set to complete the task
- The time frame required by the customer and other service level agreement requirements
- Whether the task requires more than one person
- Unusual physical conditions, such as the need for four-wheel-drive vehicle access or the need to enter a public building such as an airport or other transportation center

"Because of all of these considerations, combined with the volume of work allocated to the field teams, we are totally reliant on ClickSchedule to effectively manage our resources," Peacock said. "It is no longer possible to achieve efficient scheduling manually. If we didn't have ClickSchedule, we would require many more resources to do the same work manually."

Vodafone UK runs ClickSchedule in the morning and again at lunch time to ensure that priority calls are addressed. "Running the schedule in the middle of the day helps make sure we get to high-priority calls on time," Peacock said. "Under the old system we sometimes would run late on priority calls that came in during the morning because we often would not react to the schedule until the next day."

Vodafone UK uses ClickAnalyze to monitor how well the field service teams comply with business policies. The software helps assess performances by engineer, by team, by district, and by region. "We look for situations in which the duration of visits was longer than expected or engineers traveled beyond their home-base area," Peacock said.

ClickAnalyze also helps management evaluate a range of operating expenses, such as travel time, mileage, and number of jobs per day. This information allows Vodafone UK to determine why policy violations occur and whether changes need to be made. "ClickAnalyze specifically helped us realize that we would benefit from rerunning our schedule at least twice per day," Peacock said.

Peacock expects that ClickSchedule and ClickAnalyze will eventually help Vodafone UK increase engineer utilization to 65 percent and visits per day to 2.0 or more. "We want our field engineers to become completely independent of the regional service center," he added. "With ClickSoftware automating our scheduling process, our field engineers can now use their Blackberrys in the morning to get their assignments and their GPS systems for directions to each location. They can go from site to site without intervention from the home office. This reduces our resource-intervention costs considerably."

"ClickSoftware aided the transition of our field-service model from functional teams to geographic teams, which in turn helped increase our volume of work—without increasing the size of our workforce"

- Alan Peacock, Area Manager, Vodafone UK

- For more information on Vodafone visit www.vodafone.co.uk
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