APTEAN
WHERE SOFTWARE WORKS

Hounslow

HOUNSLOW COUNCIL

CASE STUDY

CUSTOMER DETAILS

Hounslow Council

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APTEAN SOLUTION

Respond

SOLUTION

Hounslow chose Respond as a robust complaints and feedback management platform with multichannel data capture, processing and reporting functionality. All information or feedback from customers is captured on one central database that can be accessed by the entire organisation and extended to all the critical contact points around the Authority.

BENEFITS

- Provides visibility of data between departments and enables Hounslow to easily share information

- Extends feedback capture to all customer contact points through corporate-wide accessibility

- Standardises the data captured from all customer facing channels, including call centres and partners

- Pinpoints deficiencies to tackle problems and implement change

- Provides bespoke reports on the customers' experiences with the Authority's services for in-depth analysis by management and board

BACKGROUND

A major part of central government's national 'local e-government' strategy is to update and modernise the way local government delivers its services to citizens. The intention is that local government services should become more accessible, convenient, responsive and cost-effective.

The London Borough of Hounslow is one of those leading the way in improving customer service through complaints: by extending its complaint and feedback capture and analysis the council can pinpoint service deficiencies and implement change. However, it is not just the central government directive that is driving Hounslow's dedication to customer care – it is embedded within the culture of the organisation. Hounslow knows that providing citizens with effective services and offerings, and listening to feedback are key priorities.

Part of Hounslow's initiative has been to improve the way that complaints are dealt with by making them more visible and accessible throughout the organisation. All types of feedback are positively encouraged and the aim is to deal with all incoming complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible. Hounslow recognised that delivering these improvements would require new ways of working and investment in technology. Firstly, to implement the procedures, a separate Corporate Complaints department was set up, which sits within Member Services.

THE CHALLENGE

Melanie Gadd is the corporate complaints manager and her team, which is independent of all departments at Hounslow, deals with stage three complaints. Where possible, stage one and two complaints are dealt with around the organisation, with stage three complaints escalated to the Corporate Complaints

department. Her department was tasked with implementing and managing the complaints initiative across the organisation. Gadd says: "Complaints should be used positively to provide a better service for our customers. They demonstrate what has gone wrong within the organisation and should be used to highlight the areas where changes are needed. We proactively encourage citizens via research and focus groups to let us know what they think of our local government services. I am pleased to say it is not all complaints; we also get our fair share of compliments."

To tackle the complaints and feedback that the council receives from citizens, Hounslow wanted to implement a central corporate complaints system that provided a better service and experience to citizens. In the past, many separate systems were used in different departments, with none of them linking in to each other. If a citizen were to telephone the council with a query or problem, they would often get passed from department to department, while council representatives passed pieces of paper backwards and forwards. No one was able to view the previous history of the case and the experience was difficult and frustrating for the citizen.

Hounslow recognised the need to automate and integrate the 'back office' functions, which had to be addressed by investing in a central corporate complaints system. It was important to find an effective software package that was simple to use, easy to roll out to all departments, required limited training and meant that in the end, all departments could be working to the same standard. They also wanted to set up reporting facilities to view complaints analysis and performance indicators. Hounslow was looking for a partner that could offer excellent, proven software, backed by 'best in class' support. The council chose Aptean Respond, a market-leading provider of complaint and feedback management software.

THE SOLUTION

Respond fitted the bill as it is a robust complaints and feedback management platform with multi-channel data capture, processing and reporting functionality. It enables the easy capturing, monitoring and analysis of complaint and feedback data, which can take place departmentally or across the organisation.

Gadd explains: "Respond was chosen over other systems because it is flexible, intuitive and user-friendly. All the information or feedback from citizens is captured on one central database that can be accessed by the entire organisation and extended to all the critical contact points around the Authority Now, if a citizen calls or emails, anyone at the council can log onto their record and see how far the case has been progressed and who is dealing with it."

Nicholle Lennon, a corporate complaints investigator and part of Gadd's team, believes that Respond is much more beneficial for day-to-day enquiries and adds: "The Respond system accommodates all forms of feedback, such as complaints, compliments and requests, which are key to us, as we actively ask for this from our citizens and people in the borough. It enables us to pinpoint deficiencies within the organisation and tackle those problems, but also highlights where we are getting things right. We learn from receiving compliments and use that information to improve other areas of the organisation."

THE IMPLEMENTATION

The first department at Hounslow to implement Aptean Respond was Social Services. This particular department receives the most complex complaints and if the technology worked here, Hounslow believed that it could work anywhere in the organisation. Social Services has a vast remit where feedback is concerned. It was therefore essential to install a system that dealt with all this quickly and efficiently in an organised, structured way, causing citizens as few headaches as possible.

Once the decision was made to invest in Aptean Respond technology, the system was rolled out on a corporate scale to the other departments within Hounslow. The roll-out took place one department at a time to ensure that each area was comfortable with the system and to minimise impact on citizens, and as the Aptean Respond system was quick and painless to install, Hounslow was able to recognise an immediate benefit.

Gadd oversaw the roll-out which went extremely well for a number of reasons: "The software itself is very simple to use, so the training was easy. We found that council employees were enthusiastic and happy to learn a new system, as they knew that it would have a positive effect on the way we worked in the future. The result is that we are able to share information, keep up-to-date and easily access records which all means we provide a better service to citizens."

Hounslow's partner agencies also use Aptean Respond on behalf of the council. One of these is Hounslow Homes. In this particular call centre, there are four dedicated people to log stage one complaints. Although technically part of another

company, they still represent Hounslow so the level of service and customer experience must be standardised as customers expect to receive the same service that they are used to from Hounslow directly.

The database used in the call centre links in directly with the central database enabling the team to record any complaints, ranging from anti-social behaviour to repair issues. Again, the remit of the data captured is wide-ranging.

THE FUTURE

Another important role that Aptean Respond will play is to help Hounslow with complaints analysis and performance indicators: analysis of captured information can give an important insight into the differences between the citizens expectations and those of the council.

Aptean Respond can be configured to the specific processes and procedures of an organisation and reporting facilities can be set up, allowing quick, easy and real-time reporting of customer experiences with the council's services. The system is extremely versatile and can be tailored to the needs of the organisation, producing strategic bespoke reports and providing information for in-depth analysis.

This functionality is extremely valuable for Hounslow, which is currently deciding on the structure and which details to include in the reports. The reports will then be discussed on a quarterly basis with the Chief Executive and the management team. Ultimately, the findings will be used to improve strategies within the council and will be fed back to the citizens via the council's website or included in the new 'Hounslow Magazine'.

Councils in general often receive many complaints, but the new system in Hounslow means that there are no complaints about the technology. "Aptean Respond has provided us with the opportunity to overhaul the way the 'back office' works" says Gadd. "It has, made it easier, faster and cheaper to process information, to share between departments and present to citizens, staff and partners. We believe that cost savings have been delivered as we have been able to use the resources that we do have in a more effective way than in the past."

About Aptean: Aptean helps businesses profit, innovate and grow where the work gets done—in the call center, on the floor of the factory, at the end of the assembly line. That's where Aptean's CRM, ERP and Supply Chain software applications enable nearly 5,000 customers to satisfy their customers, operate more efficiently and stay at the forefront of their industry.

Aptean is where software WORKS. For more information, visit **www.aptean.com**.