



Client

Edexcel

Industry

Education

Country

United Kingdom

Challenge

In line with the rapid expansion of the examination system and rising customer expectations, Edexcel aimed to dramatically increase the provision of customer services delivered to examination centre's, especially during the busy post results period.

Solution

Customer Interactive Solution (CIS)

Edexcel beats the exam rush with support from Merchants' outstanding outsourced team

Success through quality customer communication

Client Overview

A leading educational organisation, Edexcel answers the global hunger for knowledge and skills by awarding mainstream qualifications to students all over the world.

Edexcel was formed in 1996 by the merger of BTEC (a leading provider of vocational qualifications) and The University of London Examination and Assessment Council ULEAC (one of the major GCSE and GCE examining bodies).

It provides a wide range of qualifications, including GCSEs, GCE AS and A Level, GNVQs, BTEC First National and Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, NVQs, Key Skills, Entry Qualifications and specific programmes for employers. Its mission is to encourage and recognise individual achievement and give equal standing to academic and vocational success.

Qualifications are offered through more than 6,000 schools, 450 colleges and 100 higher education establishments. Edexcel also runs training support for over 40,000 teachers and lecturers every year and publishes over 2,000 publications.

Business Challenge

Faced with the rapid expansion of the examination system and rising customer expectations in terms of response times and service levels, Edexcel aimed to dramatically enhance the level of customer service provided to examination centre's, especially in the critically busy and pressurised post-results period.

Before outsourcing the contract, Edexcel assessed the possibility of handling the increased volume and output through its central London location. Research indicated that they would not be able to contract the volume of quality staff needed on short-term contracts, and in stepped Merchants with its specialist outsourced contact centre resources.

Edexcel published results three times a year: March, August and November. August was by far the busiest time of the year because of the volume of exams and tests taken in May and June. With over four million students enrolled for Edexcel exams at schools, colleges and learning centres across the UK, Edexcel anticipated unprecedented volumes of calls and enquiries over the summer session.

Edexcel selected Merchants because we understood the seasonal pressures they were facing and had the operational capability to offer their customers exceptional service and support both during and after the release of exam results. Merchants had the flexibility to increase numbers up or down as required.

Results

- ▲ During the 8 week period, Merchants had minimal issues with staff retention, and the staff recruited remained constant for the duration of the project.
- ▲ 50% of the agents employed for this operation had previously worked for Merchants and a number of them went on to further operations within Merchants.
- ▲ The key performance indicators initially set by Edexcel were over achieved, and both parties were delighted with the overall performance and results of the Post Results Service.

Solution Provided

The Edexcel Post Results Service offered an eight hours a day, five days a week service to centres. They opted for a comprehensive service providing ten hours a day, with six hours support, on Saturdays.

Edexcel was uncertain of the volume of calls to expect on Saturdays, but it was a service the centres had requested and they felt this would demonstrate a full service and their level of commitment to the centres.

How We Delivered

Merchants provided 150 fully-manned seats at their Milton Keynes site, available to handle calls for up to eight weeks. A high volume of quality staff was recruited within extremely tight timescales; many of whom had worked for Merchants on previous occasions and demonstrated their service skills and aptitudes.

The operation was live from 8am to 8pm weekdays and from 10am to 4pm on Saturdays.

Merchants provided additional queue capacity for 130 callers via an intelligent queuing system.

Merchants also selected ten managers from around its business to assist during training and manage the teams during 'go live'. This was complemented by a team of managers and staff selected by Edexcel to provide onsite support to the live operation.

Operational management was extremely flexible, changing shifts and rosters daily. Merchants had a team of 30 on standby, ready to provide back office support if necessary. This flexibility meant that Edexcel could review seat numbers on a weekly basis.

The rapid set up and launch of the Post Results Service was a complete success.

Value Derived

The rapid set up and launch of the Post Results Service was a complete success. During the eight week period, Merchants had minimal issues with staff retention, and, as predicted all staff remained until the end of the project.

50% of the agents employed for this operation had previously worked for Merchants and a number of them went on to further operations within Merchants.

The initial key performance indicators set by Edexcel, were over achieved and both parties were delighted with the overall performance and results of the Post Results Service.

"I haven't come across a group of people who are so professional, enthusiastic and positive before."