



Client

Edexcel

Industry

Education

Country

United Kingdom

Challenge

Deliver high level, bespoke training to 120 agents to provide service support to specialist examination centres. Empower agents with the communication skills and expertise to field a high volume of complex queries.

Solution

Customer Interactive Solutions (CIS)

Outstanding people, exceptional service

Edexcel entrusts Merchants with the high level training of 120 key agents

Client Overview

A leading educational organisation, Edexcel answers the global call 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 Overview

As Edexcel's business evolved, it found itself fielding a growing tide of increasingly complex calls requiring a high level of technical insight. These queries came from schools and colleges, and in particular, examination centres, that needed answers to a wide spectrum of issues relating to the qualifications offered by Edexcel. Queries ranged in complexity and subject matter from student entry queries through to grades qualification.

It became apparent that Edexcel now needed to provide an enhanced service capability, using agents of a high caliber with outstanding training and communication skills, to deal effectively with queries and maintain the integrity and quality of its service.

Solution Provided

Merchants entered into a collaborative training programme with Edexcel. Both parties recognised that the depth and complexity of the information base and the personal skills and aptitudes that mastery of the information required, meant that a joint approach that harnessed the strengths of both parties was needed. The training solution included Edexcel's deep knowledge of their programmes and syllabi, together with Merchants' expertise in training and upskilling.

Results

- ▲ The contact centre team achieved amazing results, generating incredible levels of success and customer satisfaction
- ▲ As a direct result, each agent's role evolved to include greater responsibility and opportunity
- ▲ Hours of operation were extended.
- ▲ A dedicated complement of agents focused solely on capturing examination marks and making outbound calls
- ▲ The number of calls transacted increased dramatically over an 18 month period
- ▲ Agents handle up to 4,000 calls a day
- ▲ Consistently high service levels of over 90% delivered
- ▲ Exceptional accuracy of information provided to callers

How We Delivered

Merchants put an accreditation process in place that ensured that every candidate who attended the training had the skills, competence and knowledge to answer customer queries in a comprehensive, informed and service-orientated way. This guaranteed that callers would be able to speak to someone who could deal effectively with their query from start to finish.

On a practical level, agents would need to access and use four systems when answering calls. It was vital that they all understood and were proficient with the functionality and features of these systems prior to 'go live'. Merchants covered this by integrating potential scenarios and troubleshooting into the training, which allowed the agents to experience an 'almost live' environment in the training arena and allowed them to test what they learned during training in a practical way.

The General Enquiries team received their training directly from Edexcel trainers so that they could exploit the deep knowledge resources already in place. Because agents would also have to deal with calls of a sensitive nature, Merchants offered Communications Skills training to small groups of 12 at a time.

The full team of agents was split into one group of 60, and smaller groups that concentrated on communications skills, trained through interactive sessions with the Lead Trainer. The Lead Trainer was supported by a team of exceptional Lead Agents, who would go on to manage agent teams within the live environment. Leadership and continuity were established from the training stage, and this process allowed Merchants to fully train 120 agents in product and communication skills, ready to move into a simulation environment, within the tight six-day deadline.

Because it was almost impossible to foresee every possible call or scenario in advance training, Merchants extended its training support to provide expert on-site support for the agents after 'go live'. This support was gradually withdrawn over the succeeding weeks as the agent team grew in confidence and proficiency.

The quality of the training began to show dividends in the business almost immediately, with consistently high service levels of over 90% being routinely recorded, and exceptionally accurate and prompt delivery of information to callers. The agents embraced the Edexcel culture and became fantastic service ambassadors. The multilayered training across soft and hard skills meant that agents had a comprehensive understanding of Edexcel's products and processes, whilst also having the ability to communicate often complex information in an empathetic and approachable way. In practical terms, Edexcel was now able to offer extended operating hours and answer between 3,000 and 4,000 calls a day. The success of the team meant that individual agents were offered greater responsibility and opportunities for growth, and the project was a great example of a client leveraging Merchants' skills base to make a positive difference to its service profile.

"90%- plus service levels, exceptional accuracy of information . . . Merchants delivers a great outcome for Edexcel"