

CASE STUDY



Cologne gets connected

The answer to citizens' needs: a municipal call center

+ BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- To improve operational efficiency in the handling of 8,000 calls per day, 15 million calls per year within the call center
- To rapidly bring up to speed new agents who lack the immediate knowledge and experience to be effective from day 1 within the call center
- Consolidate the information from 60 departments, and create a 'single point of contact' for the Cologne citizens

+ PROJECT APPROACH

- Scope integration points into Siebel
- Define organizational processes in line with the business transition
- Connect the City of Bonn
- Connect the City of Leverkusen



Call Center, City of Cologne

+ WHY USU WAS SELECTED

- Meta search engine capability – can search structured as well as unstructured data
- Single access point for all information sources
- Self learning algorithms – building on historical question and search results
- Robust user security access
- Associates and recognizes synonyms
- Ease of integration into the Siebel CRM System
- Fast implementation timescales

+ BENEFITS

- Ultimately, a far superior service is provided to the citizens of Cologne
- Improved image and public relations
- First time resolution rate has risen from 60% to 95%
- Call duration has dropped to 100 seconds from 300 seconds
- Call center availability has increased from 9am to 5pm, to 9am to 8pm at no extra operational cost
- Consistency and quality of the information presented to the citizens has increased basically. This was derived from customer surveys.
- The call center capacity has increased dramatically to an extent whereby the City of Cologne has outsourced its services to the City of Bonn and City of Leverkusen

++ AT A GLANCE

Organisation:

City of Cologne,
1 million inhabitants

Departement:

Call Center

Employees:

120

Calls p.a.

15 million

Web Site:

www.koeln.de

Solutions & Services:

USU KnowledgeMiner,
USU KnowledgeBase

With a population of one million, Cologne – the most ancient of all Germany's cities – is the fourth largest urban area in the country. Following the example of its twin city Barcelona, in 2002 the municipal authority set up a call center catering to citizens' needs. This now represents a central point of contact for all matters related to city services, thereby reducing the workload on the authority itself.



“The many thank-you letters received clearly testify to the positive impression made on the citizens of Cologne, who value both the rapid, friendly service and the competence and quality of the responses they receive to their questions”.

Axel Hansen – Head of Call Center, City of Cologne

+ Situation and objectives

Many tasks of the municipal authority are categorized by the topic and are not oriented towards processes. Neither is there a single, central point of contact for all of the information required. And furthermore, there are rarely any applications in place to support key processes. The City of Cologne therefore decided to take a new approach. By setting up a municipal call center, managers aimed to set a shining example among German cities in terms of service to citizens.” The aim was to provide a central point of contact for all matters related to city services and thereby to reduce the workload of the more than 60 different council departments. A tender process was initiated that was open to leading software vendors from across Europe. In the summer of that year, the short listed vendors were involved in extensive tests run on a set of standard documents, whereby USU together with Siemens Business Services, emerged triumphant.

+ The project

The first job involved structuring and classifying the content of the various documents. In order for the call center to provide the high levels of service and response to citizens’ inquiries, it was vital that there was a seamless transfer of knowledge from the relevant specialists within the council to the citizens on the ground. While the CRM system gave agents access to the various standard procedures for contact with citizens, KnowledgeMiner,

as a self-learning, integrated knowledge database, provided call center staff with answers in the form of documents, operational procedures, and scripts.

Previously, full-text searches were the main type of queries run. Thanks to the USU solutions, service center agents are now able to input customers’ questions into the CRM system using natural, everyday language and thereby receive a list of documents rated for relevance. Searches are run on around 15,000 internal documents and external documents from 20 different areas, such as the municipal swimming pools. Following the implementation phase, feedback from the service agents was very positive.

+ Outcome

Currently, an average of 8,000 citizens each day address inquiries to the City of Cologne, with the overwhelming majority of these made by telephone. Even at peak times during the morning citizens generally receive a satisfactory and conclusive answer within only 100 seconds. It’s extremely good news that up to 95% of inquiries can be resolved directly and conclusively by the call center employees themselves. The average call time, including follow-up work and documentation of the call in the system, is 1.5 minutes. In one-fifth of cases, though, a specific citizen file is set up in order to trigger the relevant official processes. Another result of the successful project is that the City of Cologne has outsourced its services to the City of Bonn and City of Leverkusen.