



Overview

The need

Boost customer loyalty in a fiercely competitive market; improve economies of scale; and broaden non-English language support for growing client base in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

The solution

Enhance the end-to-end customer experience through in-depth analyses; new policies, practices and procedures; and consolidated language support operations.

The benefit

Consolidated operations and end-to-end customer outlook increased customer experience scores by 48 percent over three years, reduced incoming call volume by 20 percent and improved economies of scale.

Yahoo! optimizes assets to boost customer care and expand global reach

Rapid time to market powers competitive advantage

Forging ahead of the competition by staying ahead of customer needs

With 660 million users across the globe, Yahoo! Inc. has a compelling need to deliver exceptional customer service. But “across the globe” in a highly competitive Internet services industry means that when those users need help, Yahoo! must deliver it accurately, quickly—and in a language customers understand.

At the same time, the Internet services/online media company must continually cultivate new audiences and manage hundreds of properties, including popular services like Yahoo! News, Answers, Messenger, Flickr, Mail and Maps.

Launched in 1995 for a handful of hobbyists, Yahoo! today regularly rates among the most-visited websites in the world. The company is headquartered in Sunnyvale, Calif., with 13,200 employees worldwide. In order to maintain and improve its position, in 2009 the company launched a growth initiative with a mandate to zero in on customer needs.

Leveraging IBM's powerful combination of capabilities

With its numerous offerings and deep customer base, Yahoo! faces the potential of tens of millions of customer service incidences a year, said Vice President of Customer Care Manish Sinha. It is his imperative to expand and streamline customer care to those customers, and to support a growing audience in the Middle East.

“In early 2009 we had resources in eight or 10 different countries,” explained Sinha. “This was a very, very small number of people spread all over Europe. In my business, economies of scale are critical, so we began to ask, ‘Is there one location which can provide us seven to 10 languages from one group?’”



“The biggest advantage we get from IBM is the competitive advantage—speed to delivery or even speed to change. Our business is never constant. We will continually be changing.”

—Manish Sinha, vice president of customer care, Yahoo!

Yahoo! soon narrowed its options to IBM Global Process Services in Cairo, Egypt. The two companies have partnered since 2001, with IBM providing English-language support from Gurgaon, India. Many of the agents in that center have been onboard for up to 10 years, said Sinha, providing an unusual level of continuity and depth of knowledge in an industry known for high attrition.

“It’s a very stable team,” said Sinha. “And IBM was willing to relocate some of that talent and expertise, so it wouldn’t be a brand new group in Cairo.”

IBM has had a presence in Cairo since 1954, and opened a state-of-the-art customer contact center in 2009 to capitalize on the country’s multilingual talent, technology infrastructure, strategic geographic location—and its government’s support of the private sector.

“The relationships had already been built with government officials and ITIDA (the Egyptian government’s Information Technology Industry Development Agency), and they had the ability to leverage that relationship to bring value to us as a client,” said Sinha.

He also said the relationships among top IBM and Yahoo! decision makers help move projects forward, noting that it took less than four months to launch support for French and German from Cairo.

“That’s very, very quick,” he said. “It’s a nice collaborative team, a very open team. ... The only agenda is to get things done. Of course resources are being used in an amazing way to get things done.”

Improving the end-to-end customer experience

The IBM team also quickly developed an end-to-end customer experience strategy. It included in-depth analyses of customer verbatim (wants/needs gleaned from customer surveys); changes to key policies, processes and procedures; and quality testing of new software.

To better manage volume fluctuations, the team cross-trained customer service agents. These multiskilled individuals continue to receive cross training for up to four lines of business to ensure that contact centers are properly staffed around the clock.

“When I look at the feedback from my team, at the changes that have been made, at concerns that have been raised, I see a strong team with one agenda: Let’s solve the customer’s problem.”

—Manish Sinha, vice president of customer care, Yahoo!

Meanwhile, the consolidation of non-English language support for Yahoo!’s client base in Europe, Africa and the Middle East involved a multiphase process that included:

- Setting up a call center operation in the IBM Cairo delivery center
- Replicating best practices from the IBM India delivery centers
- Participating in product testing in Arabic for the Middle East market.

Support is now available in English, Arabic, French, German, Italian and Spanish. By summer of 2011, Russian, Polish and Romanian will be added. Most support is conducted by email, supplemented by chat channels; voice support also is available.

Benefits that build on each other

The first language changes went live in May 2010, so the full benefits of this customer-centric partnership are still emerging.

“We’re only four or five months into it,” Sinha said in September 2010. “But I’m seeing customer satisfaction move in the right direction.”

According to customer surveys, satisfaction ratings rose 48 percent over the three-year period ending September 2009. Incoming call volumes fell by 20 percent, contributing to higher customer satisfaction scores. Multilingual cross-trained agents now support a single customer care center, while consolidation and other efficiencies help reduce cost per contact.

The streamlined processes, enhanced customer care and growth strategy complement each other, said Sinha. The three new languages to be added in 2011 will be an exponential leap. “That’s a 50-percent increase in the reach we’re getting now,” he said. “That opens the door for Yahoo! to expand itself in Europe. ... Once we’re done, we’ll have 200-plus people speaking nine languages from one group. That gives me the ability to trade off skill sets, skill set growth, promoting people—all of which adds up to customer satisfaction.”

“I’m very proud of the Yahoo! and IBM team, both in India and Cairo. They worked hand in hand leveraging their expertise, working with us,” he said.

“The IBM team not only had Yahoo! knowledge; they also had knowledge of Egypt and the relationship they’ve built. It’s a powerful combination.”

—Manish Sinha, vice president of customer care, Yahoo!

For more information

To learn more about IBM Global Process Services, please contact your IBM marketing representative or visit the following website:

ibm.com/services/process



© Copyright IBM Corporation 2011

IBM Corporation
New Orchard Road
Armonk, NY 10504
U.S.A.

Produced in the United States of America
January 2011
All Rights Reserved

IBM, the IBM logo and ibm.com are trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation in the United States, other countries or both.

Other company, product and service names may be trademarks or service marks of others.

References in this publication to IBM products or services do not imply that IBM intends to make them available in all countries in which IBM operates.

This case study illustrates how one IBM customer uses IBM services. There is no guarantee of comparable results.



Please Recycle