



CUSTOMER STORIES /



Leveling up CX sparks exceptional engagement at Salvation Army

Salvation Army Australia leveled up its experiences, serving more people in need with more empathy and effectiveness, by moving from a disjointed contact center stack to the Telstra Contact Centre Genesys Cloud™ experience orchestration platform. The organization has bolstered employee engagement, improved client satisfaction and increased its Net Promoter Score (NPS). A callback feature has gained near-universal acceptance, and the rollout of web messaging has earned instant engagement from younger Australians.

**8-point
improvement**

in Net
Promoter Score

**90%
uptake**

of callback
queue option

< 2%

turnover rate

AT A GLANCE

Customer: The Salvation Army Australia

Industry: Nonprofit

Location: Australia

CHALLENGES

Heavy call volume with high-stakes personal issues,
Heterogeneous solutions across 10 contact centers, Long hold
times (one to three hours or more), Inconsistent call quality and
stability, No integration with digital channels

PRODUCT

Telstra Contact Centre Genesys Cloud

CAPABILITIES

Inbound, IVR, Voice services, Web messaging

PARTNER

Telstra

Creating simplicity to better handle complex interactions

The Salvation Army Australia serves the entire nation through a network of in-person resource centers, retail outlets and contact centers. The faith-based organization provides support ranging from financial and housing assistance to aid overcoming challenges associated with addiction or violence. Providing people with the support they need, especially at a time of crisis, is more than a mission for the organization. It's a driver behind reinventing its customer and employee experience, providing more effective, empathetic interactions for community members.

"Every 17 seconds, the Salvation Army supports an Australian. They might be looking for a safe place to sleep, or they might be looking for financial support," said Zane Kuramoto, Executive Manager of Customer Experience and Emerging Technology at The Salvation Army Australia. "In that moment of need, when people reach out, it's safety that's at stake. For us to be able to make that experience simple — for you to get the support you need at the time you need it — is something we obsess about."

About 200 general purpose agents and case specialists across 10 contact centers field over one million calls annually. Although many calls are from people experiencing acute need or crisis, a significant proportion are from individuals and organizations looking to provide donations or in-kind support, or to explore individual or group volunteering activities. Effectively and efficiently handling that wide range of calls is a constant challenge, and a chief area of focus for contact center leadership.

"For most people, the phone is the front door to the Salvation Army," Kuramoto added. But its previous contact center technology all too often blocked the door.

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**Zane Kuramoto**

Executive Manager of Customer Experience and Emerging Technology, The Salvation Army Australia

Removing roadblocks to service

Like many organizations, the Salvation Army Australia has grown its contact center as call volume grew. New technology platforms were put in place as new centers opened, with consistency and integration less important than getting callers connected and serviced. As a result, the organization had five different contact center platforms across its operations.

This not only impeded the ability to offer consistent service and understand contact center operations across the country, but it also impacted service quality. For some call types, one of every eight calls had poor audio quality. Sluggish processes and high-stakes interactions mean that wait times could peak at between one and three hours. And some of the call center platforms were unreliable, leading to dropped calls or in extreme cases abruptly losing the entire call queue.

"It takes a lot of courage to reach out for support, so our teams are motivated to get to those calls, not lose them," said Kuramoto.

Because a disconnected call might discourage someone in a crisis from getting the help they need, the organization decided to make a change. With multiple contact center solutions coming up on their end of viable life or the end of their contract, Salvation Army Australia saw an opportunity to make a positive change.

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Zane Kuramoto

Executive Manager of Customer Experience and Emerging Technology, The Salvation Army Australia

A shift to stability — and digital

Seeing a window to substantially improve the quality, stability and reliability of the contact center services at the Salvation Army Australia, Kuramoto and his team studied the most important areas to improve with a new solution. Shoring up call quality and service stability were obvious top priorities, noting that people in need often have significant barriers to overcome just to build up their courage to make a call.

"It may take someone numerous tries to actually reach out. So, to think they could end up with poor quality or a call that drops? We need to honor their courage and make sure our lines are stable," said Kuramoto.

Salvation Army Australia also wanted to open digital and social media channels, starting with live web messaging. Kuramoto said that a complete feature set with room to grow into emerging digital services was most important.

"We knew that we would be able to close down legacy systems and not pay for support and maintenance across multiple vendors," he added. "So, we knew we could save costs by having one standardized approach."

The organization selected the Telstra Contact Centre Genesys Cloud platform on the strength of its native voice and web messaging capabilities; ability to unify a variety of future digital channels with voice and web messaging; and an integration with Microsoft Teams. "We've adopted Teams pretty heavily and Genesys were the most effective in ensuring a seamless experience," said Kuramoto. "We always know who's available and can send calls to the right people who have capacity to take them on."

Along with improving call quality and stability, the most impactful improvement for employees and callers alike is the addition of a callback queue. Apart from improving the caller experience, Salvation Army Australia was particularly motivated to adopt the feature because many callers use prepaid phones and cannot afford to use up connection time on long holds. For some call types, over 90% of callers use the option.

The callback option has eliminated most of the frustration from callers after long waits. "My team dealt with a lot of aggression and morale was down. Callbacks have really helped both team morale and customer satisfaction," said Fuchsia De Lange, phone assistance line manager at The Salvation Army Australia. "Between that, and the sense of security that we won't lose people at their most vulnerable time, our interactions are more positive from the get-go. It's been a game changer for us."

Since implementing Telstra Contact Centre Genesys Cloud, NPS for the Salvation Army Australia contact center is up eight points, from 56 to 64. That is far above its peer group. "The average NPS for call centers in Australia is 30, and now we're at 64. I'm really proud of that," said De Lange.

And clients have shown strong interest in web messaging, with notable month-to-month increases in usage despite minimal promotion of the channel. Kuramoto said that Australians under

40 in particular, as well as those experiencing shame or apprehension to reach out for support via the phone, see it as a lower-friction way to start their outreach.

"Eventually it may turn into a phone call, it may turn into a face-to-face meeting, but it's breaking down that barrier and allowing that person to have that instant opportunity to reach out and say 'I need support,'" he said.

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Fuchsia De Lange

Phone Assistance Line Manager, The Salvation Army Australia

Empowered employees are engaged employees

Salvation Army Australia representatives handle difficult calls from people who may be experiencing violence or actively contemplating suicide. Existing safeguards and a purpose-based mission have contributed to low turnover rates, but leadership felt more could be done.

"We have such a compassionate bunch of people on the phones who, at times, take abuse that anybody else would hang up on," said De Lange. "But the people on the other end of the phone can have immense trauma, so we don't want to hang up on them."

Implementing Telstra Contact Centre Genesys Cloud has provided agents with more opportunities for support and simplifies access to information. For example, employees can review their own calls on demand, which was not available in the previous solutions. De Lange said that it has become common for employees to flag difficult conversations that might have included a mistake or a triggering reference. Employees can also reach out and ask an assessor to join a call as a silent listener on demand, which was not available before.

And by handling all calls in Telstra Contact Centre Genesys Cloud, more employees have remote work options, which can make it easier for them to stay with the organization.

All of this has supported a turnover rate of just 1.4%, which is well below the industry average of 38% nationwide. Employee engagement scores have risen from seven out of 10 to nine out of 10 since the Telstra Contact Centre Genesys Cloud rollout.

"We've definitely seen employee satisfaction improve, and we've seen community member satisfaction improve," said De Lange. "And having a stable system has made a huge difference to the level of stress on a call and our employees' psychological safety. They don't carry the fear that call quality will be poor or that they might experience an outage."

These enhancements are just the beginning. Contact center leadership at the organization is working with Genesys to develop a "circuit breaker" feature, which can help agents more safely manage particularly difficult calls. The circuit breaker acts as a time-out. The caller is told that the exchange is taking a break and that they can either choose to resume the call and proceed respectfully or leave the call. "We're always looking at innovative ways to make the team feel cared for and have psychological safety," said De Lange.

To meet the needs of a diverse audience, Salvation Army Australia is also looking at providing navigation cues and hold messages in multiple languages, and to tailor chat content to meet a wider range of literacy attainment. The organization is also exploring AI

to help provide more consistent, accurate information to more callers with less waiting.

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