



An Exceptional Customer Experience Each and Every Time:

Boosting Service by Unifying the Desktop

Lillian Vernon®

since 1951

Background

Lillian Vernon, a leading catalog and online retailer, markets gift, household, children's and fashion accessory products. Personalization is a specialty of Lillian Vernon, which has been doing business now for more than 50 years. Almost three million contacts per year come through its large, consolidated contact center, which is staffed by both year-round and seasonal agents. Because of its reputation for providing reasonably priced products with a customized touch, Lillian Vernon places great importance on its image as a customer care leader.

To deliver the best possible customer interaction, Lillian Vernon is committed to improving the environment for its customer care agents, who must take on multiple roles in their customer interactions – order processing and personalization, returns/replacements/refunds, product reviews, shipment tracking, etc. According to Toni Cicero, Director, Contact Centers for Lillian Vernon, "Our customer care agents are the frontline to our customers and it is imperative that each customer's experience is exceptional."

The Problem

Lillian Vernon places high value on both the customer care agents and their capabilities, but the retailer was experiencing excessive operational costs due to poor agent productivity and high turnover. Complex legacy systems processes for the customer care agents created functional issues and high call handle times, which in turn led to inefficient order entry and customer service processes resulting in poor service rates. Lillian Vernon also suffered training woes caused by their legacy applications and the sheer number of open windows that had to be navigated by the agents.

As a retailer effected by seasonal buying, Lillian Vernon faced the additional challenge of staffing up the call center for the short holiday peak period. The complexity of the call center environment made it difficult to hire and train seasonal employees efficiently. Agent attrition during the ramp-up training period approached 40%. The company also contracted with an outsourced service provider to assist with 25% of the order sales volume.

Lillian Vernon's peak holiday season was fast approaching – which would mean an increase in the number of agents from approximately 125 year-round to an additional 525 seasonal agents, and the outsourced service provider staffed from 25 year-round to 150 agents for the holiday season.

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Benefits Achieved:

- Reduced average call time by a minimum of 17%
- Reduced systems training time by 50% and recruiting costs for new hires
- Reduced agent classroom attrition, and improved agent retention and satisfaction
- Improved productivity while increasing tasks for sales-only agents, moving towards a universal agent model
- Reduced manual feedback processes that were timely and untraceable while automatically adding agent order comments.

The Solution

With a limited implementation timeline and tangible, bottom-line business requirements, Lillian Vernon set out to solve its customer care challenge. While internal options were weighed and multiple competitive vendors were researched and compared, the retailer selected Jacada.

What the retailer envisioned included an intelligent view of the customer to allow for easy access to full customer history. Along with a significant reduction in average handle time (AHT), the customer wanted to be able to measure real-time performance of its agents. The retailer also knew that a reduction in system training time would allow for more soft-skills training, resulting in improved productivity, especially in the first weeks of handling live calls. But the bottom-line goal was an increase in sales activity as a result of improved agent performance.

An additional objective of this initiative was to reduce their dependency on their outsourced service provider and consolidate the operations in-house, which would have a dramatic and positive impact on operational costs and, they believed, the quality of service provided.

Jacada® WorkSpace was selected because it could address all of these requirements. Jacada WorkSpace was used to simplify tasks for the agent while reducing errors and automating workflows. With Jacada WorkSpace, instead of having to locate customer data in multiple legacy systems, all data relevant to a specific call type can be automatically displayed in an intuitive user interface, significantly reducing the amount of time it takes for the agent to service the customer, resulting in an exceptional customer experience.

The Results

The customer care project quickly moved from kickoff to full production implementation in only six months and succeeded in automating or outright eliminating many tedious and manual processes. Jacada was able to demonstrate the “wow” factor that Lillian Vernon desired and followed through on all commitments and expectations.

The result is a user-friendly solution that reduced system training time by well over 50% for new hires, reduced classroom attrition and improved agent retention, which is especially important

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for the returning seasonal agent. Previously, customer service agents required an intensive six weeks of both classroom and live-call training to learn a complicated nine-step call procedure process. The new four-step procedure is not only easier to learn, but agents can now access and navigate the process in much less time and with much less frustration. First-call resolution and call escalation were also improved as a result of the agents requiring less training on the use of the legacy systems and gaining more knowledge of soft-skills and customer satisfaction techniques.

One of the key metrics, average handle time, was reduced by a minimum of 17%. This represents a 25-second average reduction in handle time, and for Lillian Vernon, a one-second reduction in AHT can mean staffing one less customer service agent – so the savings can be significant.

“A principal requirement for this project was a rapid return on investment (ROI), and the non-invasive Jacada approach allowed us to realize a complete return on our investment in less than 12 months of going into production,” said Cicero.

Agent satisfaction and productivity have increased because of the ease-of-use and intuitive nature of the new unified desktop. Forms are now automated, which speeds up service levels and allows trending to identify areas of concern for quick resolution. Agents can now see their own sales performance numbers and compare those numbers to the stats for the entire contact center as a way of self-motivation. With the Jacada solution, the agents now have access to data that was previously unavailable or difficult to retrieve. In addition to customer item and order history, the Jacada solution also provides easier product identification, detailed product information and product images from the catalog.

One of the key improvements was for the “Where Is My Order”, or WISMO functionality. Previously, sales-only agents were unable to access this

information due to the security measures of the legacy (customer service) mainframe and the complex navigation required. Agents can now track an order with the click of one button without being logged into the customer service system. Making the WISMO function available to sales-only agents moved Lillian Vernon towards the much-sought-after universal agent model – enabling any agent to take any call from anywhere.

The agents have also boasted two improved processes due to the unified desktop. The addition of detailed product information displaying both catalog copy and image without the agent having to search through the catalog or the company’s website. This process was tedious and time consuming not to mention doing so while the customer is waiting. The second favorite is the “hover” of the item image when placing the cursor over the item in the customer’s product history.

Perhaps most notably, Lillian Vernon was indeed able to eliminate their outsourced operation. They have now consolidated sales and customer service functions into a single, local center, made possible due to the increased efficiencies within their customer care operations.

Along with its personalized products, this leading retailer now offers an even higher level of personal customer service. By creating a superlative unified service desktop environment for its agents, both agent and customer satisfaction can continue to flourish. Lillian Vernon is boosting customer service levels while simultaneously reducing their cost of operations – thanks to the new unified desktop.



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