Exploiting the Cloud’s Flexibility to Compete with the Goliaths

Start-up Straight Forward gains customer insight and agility by adopting the Five9 Virtual Contact Center Platform.

Company Background
With more than 30 years of contact center experience between them, Rod Schwegel and Lori Recker know a thing or two about inbound and outbound contact center services. So when Schwegel and Recker decided to leave a large outsourcing firm to form their own company in 2009, they knew they’d need a contact center platform that would be scalable enough to support the company’s anticipated growth, while providing the functionality needed to meet the requirements of its clients.

Straight Forward, the company that Schwegel and Recker created, provides clients—predominantly Internet, cable, and phone companies—with a blend of inbound and outbound contact center services. Straight Forward interacts directly with its clients’ customers, providing information and advice on a broad range of topics. The company has grown rapidly from three employees to more than 280 in just over two years.

Although Schwegel and Recker had worked with several of their current clients in the past, they needed to convince these companies that Straight Forward had the resources to meet the needs of enterprise companies with large customer bases. As a start-up, Straight Forward was working diligently to prove it could meet its clients’ requirements, but its original contact center platform just wasn’t making the grade.

A Better Way—in Many Ways
Downtime and the resulting losses were the primary reasons Straight Forward abandoned the system and replaced it with the Five9 Virtual Contact Center (VCC) Platform. One of the key benefits the company experienced right away was the cloud’s reliability. Because the platform is supported by servers in multiple locations, the system remains operational even if there are widespread outages in one region. An additional benefit of Five9 was cost. “If we had to purchase a contact center switch ourselves and hire a staff to maintain it, we probably would have never opened our doors,” Recker says.

Another differentiator in Straight Forward’s selection process was the people at Five9. “When we compared the different options, it really came down to the support network provided by Five9,” Schwegel says. “The team at Five9 was exceptional. We didn’t get that feeling from the other companies we looked at.”

The Five9 VCC Platform has made a lasting impression in other respects. When clients discovered that Five9 was able to meet all of their reporting needs without an expensive phone switch or outbound dialer software, “they were blown away,” says Schwegel.
In fact, it’s the amount of detail that Straight Forward is now able to assemble for its reports—more than 1,000 data points—that has helped to differentiate its own services. This data includes granular information about customer intent and outcomes during the call.

“It’s not just the number of calls handled and what your service levels are,” Recker says, “but understanding why people called, what was discussed on the call, whether a sale was made, etc. Five9 has done an excellent job of understanding what those needs are and of working with us to ensure that we can capture that information and report back to our clients.”

**Ramping Up**

Another strength of the hosted platform is that it enables Straight Forward to add agents within hours. That kind of agility is critical, especially if clients need additional support to ramp up their call volume quickly. And the predictive dialing capabilities of its outbound efforts have helped Straight Forward increase the number of prospective customer contacts per hour while improving the overall efficiency of its outbound business.

Thanks in large part to the flexibility of the cloud contact center platform, Straight Forward has achieved impressive growth. From year one to year two, the company’s revenue grew more than 1,000 percent, and they are on pace to grow more than 125 percent this year.

**From Start-Up to Competing with the Major Players**

Recently a large cable services company awarded Straight Forward a small amount of inbound business to assess whether or not it could consistently deliver the required levels of reliability and scale. With the help of Five9, Straight Forward handled the initial volume flawlessly and has since increased volume to thousands of calls for that client each day.

Schwegel and Recker have been pleased with the reliability and agility Five9 has provided, and recognizes how their partnership with Five9 has expedited their transition from a small start-up to a company that competes with the industry’s larger players. “Ultimately it’s the vested interest that each of our companies has in the end customer’s outcome that has truly made a difference,” says Recker.