



INTERACTIVE INTELLIGENCE®
Deliberately Innovative

Case Study

Contact Center Automation

- Multichannel Recording & Quality Monitoring
- Customer Feedback Management
- Outbound/Blended Dialing & Campaign Management
- Network-based Pre/Post-Call Routing
- Web Self-Service & Knowledge Management
- Workforce Management

Enterprise IP Telephony

Communications-as-a-Service (CaaS)

Summary

Customer: Dawson McAllister Association



Headquarters: Columbia, TN

Industry: Nonprofit (radio show/helpline)

Challenge: Find a cost-effective hosted contact center automation solution that could support rapid growth, along with multiple channels of interaction and remote agents.

Solution: **CaaS Contact Center** is a comprehensive set of on-demand services for contact center automation, including IVR, multichannel routing and recording, screen-pop, desktop call control, desktop faxing, unified messaging, and presence management.

Vendor Replaced: Avaya (partial replacement)

Benefits:

- Savings of about 80 percent compared to an on-premise Cisco solution.
- Increase in number of calls answered from 30 to 50 percent.
- Cost-effective growth: from 40 agent volunteers to 175, with 120 of those agents working from home, or from newly established remote call centers.
- Improved customer service as a result of new hosted recording and whisper/coaching features to better train and monitor agents.



Dawson McAllister Improves Call Response Rate and Reduces Costs Using Communications-as-a-Service for the Contact Center

About Dawson McAllister Association

Dawson McAllister Association is a call-in radio show designed to meet the needs of teenagers and young adults. Those 25 and younger call to talk about life's deepest needs and issues such as broken families, abuse, depression and addictions. Dawson McAllister also provides an off-air HopeLine, where teens and young adults can find answers to their problems in a one-on-one setting with a trained "phone coach." For more information, visit www.dmlive.com.

The Challenge

In 2005, Micky Thompson, chief information officer for the Dawson McAllister Association, was asked to help find a new contact center solution. He faced some unique challenges in his search. The radio show's headquarters, based in Spring Hill, Tenn., operates as a nonprofit and accepts donations for its faith-based work with teens. That meant the show didn't have a big budget for a contact center solution.

"The show relies on many small donors, so we needed to make those dollars stretch as far as possible," Thompson said. "Since the show is a nonprofit organization, we felt the obligation to be a responsible steward of those donations."

The show was also entering a period of rapid audience growth – not only for the show itself, but for its HopeLine service, which provides one-on-one guidance to teens via phone. By early 2006, the radio show was distributed to five "top 40" stations (today, it's on over 60 "top 40" stations), and the audience was growing dramatically, as was call volume.

"We had to make a dramatic change in our technology," Thompson said. "We had to quickly grow our contact center by a factor of 10 and higher to meet the growing demand."

Prior to this growth period and before Thompson came onboard, Dawson McAllister had purchased two Avaya PBX systems (about 30 seat licenses total) for inbound calling. That capacity was adequate for the contact center's volume at the time, but it was rapidly outgrowing the system.

As call volume increased, the five-person contact center and its HopeLine, staffed by 10 volunteers, could not keep up with incoming calls. By 2005, agents could only respond to 30 percent of calls coming into Dawson McAllister and the HopeLine. Thompson considered buying new PBXs from Avaya, but the cost was prohibitive – as much as \$250,000 per PBX.

In addition, there were other negatives beyond costs associated with the Avaya PBXs. Expanding the on-site contact center was not possible given that the staff was already outgrowing available office space at the radio show's headquarters. Because of this growth, Dawson McAllister wanted to expand its capabilities to enable volunteers to work from contact centers in other states, as well as let agents work from home. Providing volunteers this flexibility made great sense – however, the Avaya PBX didn't enable agents to work remotely.

Avaya also didn't support Web chat, and Thompson recognized that with an audience made up of teens and young adults it was vital to offer this contact option. "Our demographic is 13-year-olds to 24-year-olds, and their number-one way to communicate is via chat, not the phone," he said.

The Solution

Thompson had a number of requirements for a contact center solution. "We realized that the best option was a hosted solution," he said. "We didn't want to tie up a lot of money in capital expenses, especially since nonprofit organizations don't receive tax breaks for such expenditures." So Thompson set out to find a vendor with a long history developing contact center applications with a hosted option, as well as one that could demonstrate uninterrupted service and support.

"We wanted to avoid investing in a company that was in the process of an acquisition because their products and team could change during our implementation and this presented some uncertainty," Thompson emphasized. (In fact, Aspect Software was briefly considered but was quickly ruled out as a possible vendor because of its pending acquisition.) "In addition, we wanted to work with a financially sound company that would be with us for the long haul."

In mid-2006, Thompson contacted Cisco to arrange for a demo of its Unified Contact Center Hosted solution. He also contacted Interactive Intelligence for a demo of its communications-as-a-service offering for the contact center, called *CaaS Contact Center*.

Thompson was already using Cisco equipment, so initially he considered Cisco the preferred vendor. "The problem was, Cisco had never deployed a hosted solution before," he explained.

Thompson was also concerned about the complexity of the Cisco solution. "Each component was licensed separately and Cisco recommended adding up to five people to our IT staff for the deployment," he said. "But we needed to get up and running fast and we were already tight on resources."

Thompson then viewed a demo of the Interactive Intelligence *CaaS Contact Center*. This hosted solution was driven by the vendor's standards-based, all-in-one IP communications software suite. The Interactive Intelligence product architecture was designed to lower costs and give customers a modular solution whose applications could be deployed in any combination without forklift hardware upgrades.

"It was an epiphany," Thompson said of the demo. "We realized that Interactive Intelligence was the only way to go. It didn't require us to purchase its hardware, and we could also keep our existing systems, like the Avaya PBXs. We could even have our volunteer agents working at home, since the solution wasn't location-specific." Thompson was also impressed by the reasonable cost of the *CaaS Contact Center*, especially when compared to Cisco's on-premise solution. "The cost for Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise would have been \$3 million over five years," Thompson said. "Today, we pay \$11,000 per month plus some additional fees for new agents for the Interactive Intelligence *CaaS Contact Center*. That's about an 80 percent savings compared to what we would've paid for an on-premise Cisco solution."

The Benefits

The Interactive Intelligence *CaaS Contact Center* went live in early 2007, and immediately enabled the show and the HopeLine to grow staff and improve call response. The show and the HopeLine had 40 volunteer agents prior to the go-live date, and grew to 75 agents shortly thereafter. Within four months, the agent staff grew to 175, with 120 of those agents working from home, or from newly established remote call centers.

The show and the HopeLine are also using the Interactive Intelligence hosted recording and whisper/coaching features, mainly to train new volunteer agents. Other hosted features in use are auto-attendant, automatic call distribution, and screen pop.

"Immediately after going live with the Interactive Intelligence *CaaS Contact Center*, the percentage of HopeLine calls answered increased from 30 to 50 percent; today, about 60 percent of calls are answered, or 1,500 calls per week," Thompson said.

The radio show and the HopeLine deployed the Interactive Intelligence hosted web chat feature in mid-2006. Chat interactions now make up about 20 percent of current volume. With the addition of its current web chat feature and possibly web callback in the near future, Thompson expects to boost call response to 80 percent.

"The Interactive Intelligence *CaaS Contact Center* made it possible for us to handle the huge increase in calls from teens over the past year," Thompson said. "The fact that it's also a cost-effective solution has enabled us to use our donated funds wisely, while still receiving robust and reliable service."

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INTERACTIVE INTELLIGENCE™

Interactive Intelligence Inc. (Nasdaq: ININ) is a global provider of unified business communications solutions for contact center automation, enterprise IP telephony, and enterprise messaging. The company's innovative standards-based, all-in-one communications software suite was designed to eliminate the cost and complexity introduced by multi-point vendors. Founded in 1994 and backed by more than 3,000 customers worldwide, Interactive Intelligence is an experienced leader delivering maximum customer value through its comprehensive solution-set comprised of premise-based and hosted offerings, including software, hardware, consulting, support, education and implementation.

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