

About Heritage Federal Credit Union (HFCU)



Newburgh, Indiana's Heritage Federal Credit Union (HFCU), formed in 1965 by ALCOA employees as Warrick Employees Federal Credit Union, serves over 46,000 members and has more than \$467million in assets. Some 150 employees work out of three support offices and seven full-service branches.

HFCU offers an array of loan products and also maintains an exclusive relationship with auto insurance carrier SWBC to market a lending product coined "MPOWER -The Best Auto Loan in the Market". Through it, members receive complimentary insurance services for an introductory period. Members are educated to the value of adding additional protection at below-market cost for a fully protected loan.

The Challenges

HFCU's rapid growth was producing growing pains for its small but busy Information Center (IC). Nine full and part-time agents currently answer 12,000 calls per month from members.

By late 2011, HFCU's existing phone system was at end of life. Soaring call volume was adversely affecting overall phone system performance.

"Our phone system lacked the flexibility we needed," recalls Amanda Damm, IC manager who joined HFCU in early 2012. "We had little to no visibility into agent performance. There was no recording of calls. Often, a disputed call would come down to a member's word against an agent's memory."

To respond, the leadership team began searching for a unified communications system that would provide dialer capabilities, call recording, and easier real-time integration with HFCU's Symitar® Episys® information processor.

"Our team wanted our telecommunications platform to work in tandem with our core processor to capitalize on emerging opportunities for member growth and enhance our overall member services," Damm concluded.

The Solutions

HFCU considered an assortment of vendors and the variety of solutions each offered.

Several HFCU leaders had previous experience with Interactive Intelligence, makers of Customer Interaction Center™ (CIC), an all-in-one IP communications software suite used by hundreds of financial services organizations. CIC includes multiple applications all running on a single platform, such as IVR, ACD, reporting, and more.

"In the end," Damm said, "our executive team concluded that most other vendors didn't offer extensive core integration capabilities."

HFCU also selected CIC's add-on predictive dialer application, Interaction Dialer®, and its add-on interaction recording, scoring, and quality monitoring application, Interaction Recorder®.

Chosen for custom application development, implementation, and support was Adapt Telephony Services, LLC, a prominent global reseller and systems integration partner for Interactive.

At HFCU, Interactive's Interaction Dialer is used primarily for early stage collection calls to delinquent HFCU members. Two campaigns are used.

In the first, an unattended message notifies members of their early-stage payment delinquency. It is delivered as a courtesy and reminds a member about a payment and restates the past due date.

The second dialer campaign is for demand dialing. It covers all levels of member payment delinquency. Once contact is established, the dialer connects the member with a live agent in Newburgh.

“Since we started using Interaction Dialer, the penetration of our low-level delinquency accounts has improved significantly,” Damm says. “The overall productivity rate of agents has increased.”

Additionally, the dialer can leave unattended messages that alert members when their account was compromised and to “be watching for a replacement card being mailed to you.” HFCU also used the dialer to notify members how to be ready for HFCU’s conversion to online banking.

Interaction Recorder® is used to record calls for collections and in several back office departments whose staff members speak with members regularly. Damm cites the following four benefits of Interaction Recorder:

Quality and Employee Development – Supervisors can access the recordings and listen to calls for coaching purposes. Agents can listen to their calls, learn from mistakes, hear where improvements are needed, and thus improve with future calls.

Scorecard – Supervisors also work from an easy-to-set up, automated “scorecard.” Automated reports reveal scores, give feedback, and note trends in quality performance. Damm adds that individual and group quality scores “are an important part of the performance metrics we report to the HFCU Board.”

Research and Validation – Numerous, potentially sensitive member service situations have been resolved as a result of quickly locating recorded calls and being able to determine exactly what was said by the member and agent.

As an example, agents routinely answer payoff requests on vehicle loans from area car dealerships. Previously, agents weren’t able to verify with 100% accuracy that the payoff amount the member said they were offered was the exact amount actually quoted by the agent. If the payment fell short, remaining balances were frequently written off as losses. This was because HFCU had no way of proving exactly what payoff amount was quoted on the phone.

“Now,” Damm says, “we locate the call for verification, stand behind our service, and avoid a monetary loss. The recording reveals the correct payoff amount was given over the phone.”

Training – New employee training has become more effective because supervisors can listen to live calls on a tenured agent and allow the new hire to silently observe and “role play.” Once new agents begin taking calls, supervisors observe silently to ensure agents are providing the expected service level. Before Interaction Recorder®, new agents would sit side-by-side with a tenured agent, but learned only by hearing the agent side of conversations with members. The tenured agent was forced to stop after each call and take time to recap what was said by the member.

The Results

“We needed to update our phone system, get more flexibility within the IVR, and create a call-recording capability,” Damm says.

“Now our agents interact with a member-focused, robust phone system integrated with our Episys core, allowing us flexibility, opportunity, more room for growth, and a chance to make service enhancements.”

Overall improvements include the following:

Quality – Interaction Recorder has enabled HFCU to improve numerous aspects of member service, particularly loan payoff amount verification.

Collections – Interaction Dialer has improved both HFCU’s productivity and its collections recovery efforts.

Cross-selling – Agents have been more successful in cross-selling additional products and services. One way is through use of an automatic recorded greeting option. Here, instead of an agent manually greeting each member and asking for the name and account number, callers hear the following: “Thank you for calling Heritage Federal Credit Union. My name is (agent name). Be sure to ask me about our 1% cash back offer! May I have your name and account number please?”

“The automated greeting is popular among agents because it not only delivers a promotion to every caller, it gives the agent a few seconds to refresh from the previous call and prepare for the next,” Damm adds.

HFCU recently completed an online banking conversion, which increased call volume significantly. Damm says, “CIC delivered the flexibility required to quickly and easily alter the IVR to support options that routed online banking calls away from other types of calls. This produced better service for all call types.”

Hold messages were used to educate members about HFCU's new online banking system while they waited in queue.

"Members have told us that their question was answered by the message itself while they were holding for support, thus eliminating a lengthy hold and expediting service for other members," adds Damm.

Using CIC's reporting capabilities to improve the front-end IVR, HFCU analyzed reasons members were calling, restructured its IVR options accordingly, and reduced call volume by 5.6 percent by the close of 2013. This effort helped avoid anticipated call volume increases. Today, the IVR message delivery system is regularly altered to provide important member messages, deliver mentions of changes in servicing or announcements about special promotions.

For supervisory purposes, CIC's Interaction Supervisor® "provides a good snapshot of the current and previous day's performance in order to manage in real time and make staffing changes if necessary," Damm says.

"I am always aware of my team's status, calls in queue, and wait times. CIC's reports suit our needs and enable us to determine our service levels and abandon rates," says Damm.

The Future

Currently, HFCU is investigating additional applications to further improve member service.

One is a CIC add-on application called Interaction Feedback®, where automated member post-call surveys would replace the transaction surveys processed currently.

Two others are Adapt's "Smart Info," a member-friendly, pre-queue balance delivery application, and Adapt's "Smart POP," where the member's account number prefills in the core system and lets the agent know if the member has been authenticated.

"Given HFCU's increased membership," Damm says, "the reason for any member to call is growing. Yet over the course of the first half of 2014 in particular," she says, "the credit union's overall call volume has remained stagnant."

Damm states, "CIC - and the additional automated applications provided by Adapt - have helped us hold down our need to deliver increasing numbers of calls to live agents. When you run a small call center, that fact can pay off on a number of fronts."



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