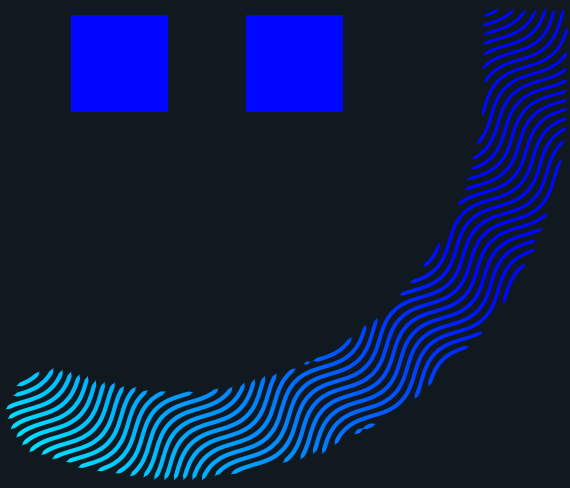# Dutch Railways Gets Omnichannel On Track With NICE CXone

Dutch Railways (Nederlandse Spoorwegen) carries passengers point-to-point within The Netherlands as well as to several European nations beyond, and handles 4 million customer contacts annually including 2.5 million voice interactions. After years of planning, the railway implemented NICE CXone as the platform for a complete redesign of its customer service organization around omnichannel practices. CXone replaced several disparate applications used for voice, chat, and multiple social media messaging platforms. The railway reorganized around customer journeys instead of product-based skills, allowing it to help customers resolve inquiries more efficiently. With a true omnichannel solution, what had been six distinct service teams now operate cohesively.
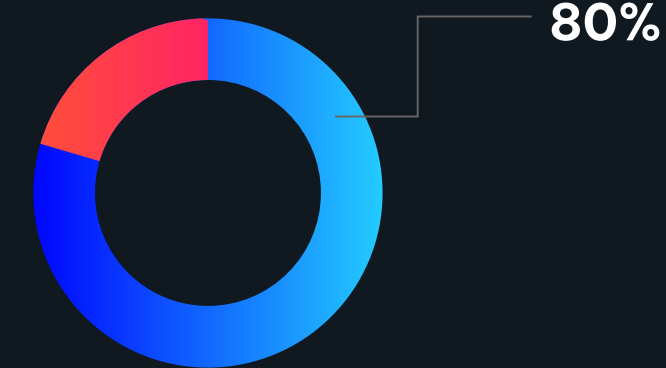
EXPECTED 10-15%
Annual reduction in contact center costs

80%+ REDUCTION
In call transfer rates

80%

WORKLOADS ARE MORE EVENLY AND CONSISTENTLY DISTRIBUTED
With occupancy up six percentage points

NEW AGENTS
can be onboarded in just two days, one-sixth of the previous training time

CUSTOMER PROFILE

ABOUT
Dutch Railways (formally Nederlandse Spoorwegen) is the principal railway operator in the Netherlands. It provides train transportation in the Netherlands, international train services connecting to neighboring countries like Belgium and Germany, high-speed trains, and regional train services to smaller towns and cities.

INDUSTRY
Transportation

WEBSITE
www.ns.nl

LOCATION
Headquartered in Utrecht, The Netherlands

AGENTS
850 agents

GOALS
- Implement omnichannel practices
- Improve and smooth agent occupancy
- Improve first-call resolution rates

PRODUCTS
- NICE CXone
- NICE Workforce Management
- Digital Experience Channels

FEATURES
- True-to-Interval (TTI)
- Integrated voice and digital, including live chat and social media channels
- Content- and journey-based agent skills
- True omnichannel customer service
- Virtual contact center architecture which spans outsourced and in-house agents

Case Study

01 THE BEFORE

A complex, tangled web of options

Like many organizations, Dutch Railways initially benefited from contact center technology which linked agent skills to a product. For example, customers who need assistance with electronic tickets can be routed to agents trained specifically in the sale and service of e-tickets. Over time, the broadening range of products, services, and communication channels meant that the number of product-oriented skills grew unbounded.

Combined with the fact that most of the railway's communication channels were handled by different vendors, as were its telephony platform and quality management systems, the contact center was growing into a state that was difficult to manage efficiently. What had started as a clean division of two agent pools, divided between BPO service for end consumers and in-house care for business customers, had come to operate like six fenced-off teams. Complicating matters even further for customers, several key service tasks were only available on a single channel.

02 DESIRE TO CHANGE

A clear signal for omnichannel

The growth in product-linked agent skills as well as the disparate handling of each contact channel made operations needlessly complicated. Under the old structure, it was difficult to see even how the situation could be improved, or how to efficiently turn skills that could only be handled over a single channel over to a larger group of agents. "Products almost never disappear, so our set of skills would only grow. And nobody really had any control over the situation," said René Klaassen, Business Consultant for Dutch Railways.

As early as 2018, Dutch Railways recognized both technological and business reasons to modernize its contact center platforms to address new regulatory requirements, product end-of-life, and other challenges. When the need became acute in 2022, the organization decided that simply changing technology platforms while preserving current practices would be a mistake. "We decided that it was time to change the platform and change the business as well," Klaassen said. "And our primary focus was to become an omnichannel organization, to take full advantage of a new solution."

03 THE SOLUTION

Focusing on journeys over outcomes

Beginning in early 2023, Dutch Railways selected NICE and BrightContact to implement NICE CXone and NICE IEX Workforce Management solutions. To pair the modern capabilities with a fresh business approach, the railway reorganized its product-oriented skill focus around customer journeys. This simplified the structure considerably. Today, agents focus on three distinct core skills: pre-journey, in-journey, and post-journey. "Every product has questions that can be placed in any of those three skills," Klaassen said.

Dutch Railways transitioned from distinct outsourced and in-house environments to a single virtual contact center powered by CXone, eliminating the distinctions between work carried out by employees and contractors. Instead of several teams with disparate skills and channel focus, NICE's True to Interval (TTI) technology supports handling blended synchronous and asynchronous volumes and enables the company to utilize activity-based staffing requirements effectively to enable 90% of the railway's agents to handle interactions across voice and digital channels, including X, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Agents have input into priority routing for the type of work placed in their queues to help boost employee satisfaction. The IVR has been simplified so that no task is more than two layers deep, and the vast majority of all customer needs can be handled on any Dutch Railways-supported channel.

To best implement the skill overhaul with a focus on journeys and outcomes rather than products, Dutch Railways conducted monthly meetings with agents to review changes and discuss concerns. A trial program in November 2023 validated processes in a department representing one-quarter of the agent pool. Those agents participated in regular discussion sessions and their feedback was used to further optimize new processes. "Once we focused on customer intentions, we saw how it could simplify the service experience, but we also kept the goals of doing good for our agents and good for Dutch Railways," Klaassen said.

04 THE RESULTS

A more efficient and outcome-oriented railway

Dutch Railways set conditions for success just as ambitious as its service skills overhaul. The organization wanted to boost both employee and customer experience while also reducing operational costs. Dutch Railways has reduced the need for call transfers by at least 80%, reducing the overall transfer rate below 1% of all contacts. First-contact resolution is higher as well, both because of the lower incidence of transfers, consults, or other put-throughs, and because more agents can handle more inquiries on the channel of a customer's choice. Service levels are also rising, showing the right amount of people are in the right place at the right time.

NICE

Occupancy across the six contact center teams would vary considerably, as some departments would run very near 100% while others sat comparatively idle. With the new skills modeling and greater ability to serve customers across channels, occupancy is both smoother across groups and more stable over time. "Having more stable occupancy across all groups should be a benefit for employee satisfaction," Klaassen said.

Occupancy has also climbed from 78% to 85%, agent training time has been reduced from 12 to two days because agents no longer need to learn several systems, and overall operational costs are down 10-15% on an annualized basis. "That's a huge result and above everyone's expectation," Klaassen said.

Anecdotally, the strong agent acceptance of the new system shows that the new approach is working. The railway was able to handle a high volume of inquiries related to railway strikes in neighboring countries without overburdening agents. During another recent surge in volume, some agents braced for the worst but acknowledged that call queues were still being efficiently cleared. "One of the agents told me that he could see the system was working as designed," Klaassen said. "Knowing that the agents could see the benefits now was a truly happy moment for me."

05 THE FUTURE

More accurate forecasts and agent scheduling

Dutch Railways will continue to refine its approach with CXone and NICE Workforce Management as it focuses on journey-based customer care. Email, which is still handled in a separate CRM system, will be integrated with other channels in CXone, as will some of the 10% of call volume still handled in a product-based rather than journey-based mode.

The organization is also interested in expanding upon True-to-Interval (TTI) workforce management capabilities to provide more accurate volume forecasts and agent scheduling. TTI's precision is particularly valuable for asynchronous contacts such as WhatsApp, where handling can easily cross time interval boundaries.

"CXone gives us more options to scale our entire service center up or down, across both outsourced and in-house agents. And having all of our agents on the exact same system increases our flexibility to meet customer demands and to stay efficient."

RENÉ KLAASSEN
BUSINESS CONSULTANT
DUTCH RAILWAYS
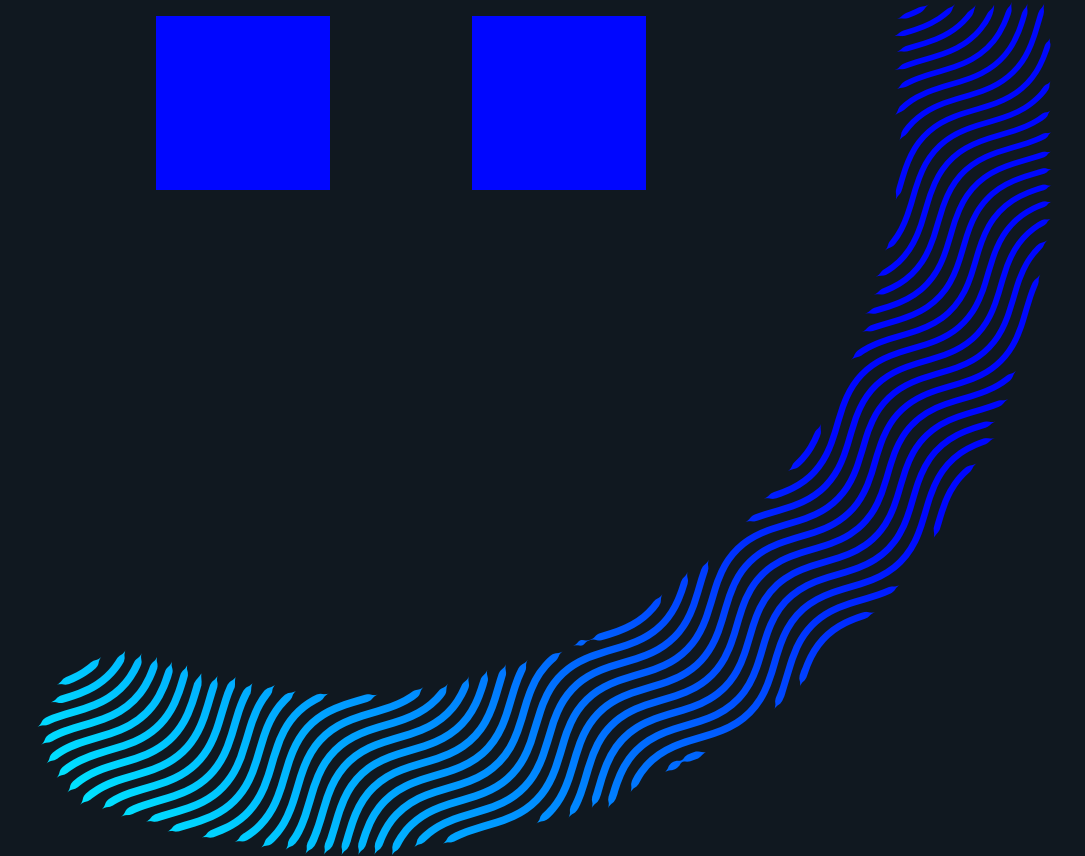
About NICE

With NICE (Nasdaq: NICE), it's never been easier for organizations of all sizes around the globe to create extraordinary customer experiences while meeting key business metrics. Featuring the world's #1 cloud native customer experience platform, CXone, NICE is a worldwide leader in AI-powered self-service and agent-assisted CX software for the contact center—and beyond. Over 25,000 organizations in more than 150 countries, including over 85 of the Fortune 100 companies, partner with NICE to transform—and elevate—every customer interaction.

www.nice.com

NICE