Case Study

EE Expands Workforce Flexibility and Engagement with NICE Workforce Management

Telecommunications provider EE and its sister organizations BT and Plusnet consolidated workforce management solutions into a single NICE Workforce Management instance to improve flexibility and enhance employee engagement. The new solution provides greater schedule flexibility and improved efficiency for 17,000 agents across 37 contact center locations.
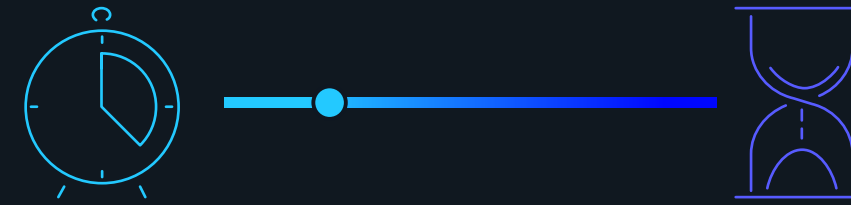
NICE

9 MONTHS
The time required for previous WFM migration

9 WEEKS
The time required to migrate all brands to one NICE Workforce Management platform

11 PERCENTAGE POINTS
Year-over-year improvement in employee satisfaction, 2022-2023

0 HOURS
Spent on holiday shift scheduling due to automation with NICE

CUSTOMER PROFILE

ABOUT
EE, which also offers services under the BT and Plusnet brands, is a communications services company operating a mobile network covering 99% of the population of the United Kingdom and supporting over 25 million subscribers.

INDUSTRY
Telecommunications

WEBSITE
www.ee.co.uk

LOCATION
London

SIZE
17,000 customer-facing agents

GOALS
- Migrate to a single WFM platform
- Improve employee engagement
- Improve scheduling flexibility
- Reduce and avoid manual burden on planning staff

PRODUCTS
- CXone Analytics
- Interaction Recording
- Robotic Process Automation
- Workforce Management

FEATURES
- Robotic process automation streamlines several operations
- Flexible break/lunch scheduling
- Extensive data exploration and integration options
- NICE SmartSync

Case Study

01 THE BEFORE

Inefficient overlap slows progress

Planning operations for EE, BT, and Plusnet are managed by a distributed team. BT purchased its own instance of NICE Workforce Management after acquiring EE, but EE stayed on its older version of the software. Plusnet used a WFM solution from a different vendor—one approaching end of life.

This arrangement was cumbersome for the planning team and inefficient from a process and support standpoint, making it difficult to develop enhanced strategies for a more flexible work environment.

02 DESIRE TO CHANGE

The vision of a single team with greater flexibility

EE recognized that the use of three different WFM solutions necessarily constrained the flexibility it could offer to agents. Any attempt to expand work flexibility risked running into a technological hurdle at one or two of the brands, and at best would require a great deal of overlapping labor to properly implement and maintain. Creating a more personal approach to employee engagement and empowerment would be easiest on a consolidated platform.

Several challenges awaited any consolidation plan:

- Ensuring consistency and fairness across all agents, particularly those previously governed by different WFM rules
- Avoiding additional burden on the planning staff
- Streamlining rather than adding complexity
- Reconciling different call routing and overflow rules and capabilities
- Staying within the boundaries of union relationships

In parallel, EE used a support program at each brand to manage training, coaching, and review sessions for agents and team leaders. This software was also reaching end-of-life and the group faced the

real prospect of needing to reallocate or hire several new planning staff to take over these previously automated functions. A previous WFM migration took nearly a full year to complete, and EE wanted to avoid a repeat of any sluggish systems migration.

03 THE SOLUTION

Greater flexibility for all colleagues

The company decided to consolidate the newest instance of NICE Workforce Management used by BT, starting the integration process in the summer of 2021. Processes were standardized and simplified where possible with an eye toward improving workplace flexibility. A cross-brand team reviewed configurations and recommended changes, then put plans into action to minimize disruption as the solutions were joined together. EE planning and scheduling professionals, with longer tenures on NICE WFM solutions, provided key insight and support to BT peers.

NICE SmartSync and NICE Data Explorer were central pillars of the migration plan to join thousands of agents representing 33 lines of business on the same solution. They also proved instrumental in significantly reducing the amount of time spent on data collection and conversion compared to the company's previous WFM migration, allowing for a migration plan of just 10 weeks.

The switch to a unified NICE WFM platform enabled the group to introduce several sought-after initiatives for employees, including Flexi-time (an accrued time-off

balance that can be spent as desired), seasonal swaps (a similar, volume-dependent time-off balance), flexible holidays, and self-scheduled break periods. "These initiatives made possible with NICE Workforce Management deliver personal flexibility to every employee across all three brands, tailored to what employees want as opposed to what we as a planning function think they would want. This has improved cross-team engagement as well as ensuring buy-in from employees to use these tools," said Wayne Mitchell, EE Planning & Scheduling Manager.

At each step in the process, EE and NICE looked for opportunities to apply automation to both new and existing tasks to keep scheduling analysts from losing valuable time to rote manual tasks. EE's goal is to give analysts more time to have direct, natural interactions with agents to uncover more opportunities for both flexibility and efficiency. Automated data feeds also produce real-time reports on employee training progress, making it easier for supervisors to intervene as mandatory training compliance dates approach.

04 THE RESULTS

Fast, flexible, and virtually error-free transition

The NICE WFM implementation, ambitiously scheduled for a 10-week rollout, was completed one week early and with just a 0.1% error rate on imported data. "It was just phenomenal: at each business unit we would turn off the

NICE

old solution on a Friday, turn on the new one Monday, and move to the next," Mitchell said. "All the tools were in place to enable us to succeed rapidly."

Improvements in agent flexibility from the changeover are already showing up in employee satisfaction surveys, which are up 11 percentage points year-over-year from 2022 to 2023. And EE has realized substantial process improvements as well. One important schedule audit, which took 37 hours in the previous approach, now takes just 30 minutes. "This means we can audit more data faster and more frequently to have more confidence in our data and utilize the rest of that scheduler's time to have more engaging conversations or complete more value-added analysis," Mitchell said.

The sunsetting training session-scheduling software was replaced by a robotic process automation bot that was designed by EE with assistance from NICE, without the need to hire additional staff.

EE has started to offer extra flexibility around the Christmas holidays, creating schedules around blocks of time. In the past, attempts to improve flexibility for busy holiday periods still resulted in fairly rigid time blocks and were cumbersome for planners to manage. With bot assistance, flexible holiday selections can be processed 97% faster than before.

In post-implementation listening sessions, agents have repeatedly praised the new options, citing the work-life balance options as playing a key role in choosing to join the company and helping them navigate life's highs and lows. The EE team is particularly proud of the freedom afforded by the new break/lunchtime system, which can be moved and reallocated by agents in almost any combination. "If you look back a number of years, everything was controlled within an inch of its life. Now we're using technology to give advisors and employees more control over their days, whether that's using Flexi time, or how they use their breaks throughout the day," said Helen Kemp, EE Planning Scheduling Manager. "That sense of control is important for being able to attract and retain the best talent."

05 THE FUTURE

More automated enhancements

EE has a roadmap of opportunities for more bot automation which will streamline processes for both planners and front-line agents. Processes such as time-off approval are earmarked for future automation, and more schedulers are receiving NICE accreditation as bot developers to explore and implement such options.

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WAYNE MITCHELL
PLANNING & SCHEDULING MANAGER
EE

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.

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