NICE

Case Study

Avios

CUSTOMER PROFILE

INDUSTRY
Loyalty Programs

WEBSITE
avios.com

LOCATION
Warrington, UK

BUSINESS NEED
- Facilitate smooth technical & operational migration to cloud during WFM Upgrade
- Establish best practices
- Enable flexible scheduling
- Grow understanding of WFM capabilities
- Establish foundation for growth & automation

NICE SOLUTIONS
- NICE Workforce Management
- NICE Value Realization Services

THE IMPACT
- Happier Agents!
  - 26% increase in overall shift satisfaction
  - 21% increase in work-life balance satisfaction
  - 50% increase in appreciation for the schedule flexibility Avios offers
- 70% reduction in call types requiring a forecast
- 65% agents using availability points
- 7% absence shrinkage during pandemic
- Save 4+ hours per week forecasting

ON THE NICE SOLUTION

"We've been using NICE WFM for 20 years and would call ourselves experts. But really, we're only experts in what we know, and there's a lot we didn't know. The reality is we were using WFM in a very simplistic, very manual way. Going through the WFM upgrade and cloud migration with NICE Value Realization Services showed us we have the Rolls Royce of WFM, but we've been using it like a Ford Cortina. VRS helped us to really understand features and benefits and tie them to our goals and objectives. We did a complete entity design refresh and full training to understand every aspect of automation and intelligence built into our 'Rolls Royce' and put it to use more effectively."

Terry Harrison, Resource & Planning Manager, Avios

"My son has special needs - 80% of mums in my position can't work. Without this option, I doubt I would have been able to make this job work long-term. The availability points have kept me working. I'm a happier mum, with a happier son!"

Rebecca Herridge, Customer Service Agent, Avios

Avios Enables Flexible Scheduling & Grows Confidence to Pursue New Possibilities with NICE WFM

ABOUT AVIOS

Avios offers a wide range of loyalty services to B2B clients, including the Avios currency, loyalty solutions and employee reward and recognition tools. Avios provides its commercial and airline partners ways to attract, acquire and retain customers and has proven customer impact with over 35 million Avios programme members worldwide. They manage the Loyalty programme for International Airlines Group which includes British Airways & Iberia. They have over 8 million members with their UK contact centre handling English-speaking contacts.

As experts in customer loyalty, Avios knows its people are key to providing frictionless experiences to its members and partners and, therefore, strives to be an employer of choice. They are proud to work with each of their 250 agents, who field over 800,000 contacts per year.

THE GOAL
Global Pandemic Accelerates Work-from-Home Journey

In 2019, prior to the pandemic, most Avios agents were based at the company's call centre in Birchwood, UK, but 30% worked from their homes in the local area. Avios intended to slowly shift more of its workforce to home-based, with the goal of reaching 70% work-from-home by 2023 and 100% through the natural course of hiring. However, when surveyed, only 10% of their physical call centre agents were interested in transitioning to home-based employment.

"It's harder to imagine now," says Terry Harrison, Avios' Resource and Planning Manager, "but we had a significant portion of our workforce that didn't want to work from home. About 25% have been in the business for nearly 20 years. They were accustomed to brick and mortar and liked coming into work, having the separation between home and work."

Then COVID-19 forced everyone home. Avios was able to make this transition in under a week, in part because of the foundation they'd established with NICE. "Things were suddenly different. Schools were closed. Our staff didn't have to be—or want to be—tied to a seven-hour stint like when in the office. They wanted different rostering, and, after 20 years with NICE WFM, that's what got us to begin exploring the benefits of an upgrade to Cloud."

THE SOLUTION

VRS helps Avios Migrate NICE WFM to Cloud

In the past, Avios would upgrade to the next version of WFM only when necessary. With each upgrade, they would get exposure to new features, but they continued to revert to the processes they were comfortable with.

As an example, schedulers would create schedules manually. They would use a "stamper" to put a meeting in, copy it to every agent individually, then "invite" those agents. Harrison explains, "It did the job, and we got schedules to agents, and we'd get a forecast in there, but it was time-consuming, and we were taking advantage of only 60% of WFM's value. We effectively hadn't changed in over 20 years of having WFM."

To accommodate their new work-from-home mindset and the shift in scheduling rosters agents wanted to see, Avios upgraded NICE WFM. They took advantage of WFM's advanced capabilities and gained flexibility in the the cloud. They chose NICE VRS to ensure their use of WFM aligned with their goals, for deep process optimization, change management, and expert education.

"VRS was a no-brainer for us. We wanted to explore the possibilities. We didn't want to take what we had and shape it into something different; we wanted to build something better. Starting from scratch with a new entity design allowed that. VRS helped us identify key objectives, showed us how to use WFM, and change our processes to be more efficient."

Work-from-Home Sentiment Has Changed

The Avios call centre is open 19 hours/day, 365 days/year, and must be for the company to meet their service level commitments to their business partners. However, during the global pandemic, it was clear that staff desired different rostering.

Avios' team didn't know exactly what shape this would take, but they began testing flexible scheduling with focus groups. Avios allowed a small group of agents to choose their shifts for one month to see what would happen, agent behaviours and preferences.

They made several important realizations:

1. People still worked their hours. This eliminated a major concern for Avios.
2. Staff attached emotional reasons as to why the flexible scheduling was so beneficial to them.
3. Schedule flexibility was difficult to achieve with their old WFM version, and it certainly wasn't scalable.

"We didn't know how to implement flexible rostering, so our trial was very simplistic. We gave agents full access to the client IDs and asked them to put their shifts in. But, agents aren't used to seeing this level of detail, so it was time-intensive and confusing. There was a lot of trial and error."

THE RESULTS

VRS helped Avios understand how to streamline flexible scheduling within their upgraded WFM system. Today, agents simply submit their availability through the proper process using webstation and availability points and can update their schedules week-by-week. NICE WFM then takes staff availability and generates schedules.

"Our people. That's the real reason we've done this. It's not for any sort of business initiative. It's not for commercials. It's actually just for our workforce. We've seen the change in the market when it comes to what your staff want and what your staff need. This can be a tough job, so we're trying to give a bit back—let them choose when they work, and it's working really well so far."

Terry Harrison, Resource & Planning Manager, Avios

New Forecasting Saves Time & Sanity

To facilitate the agent's schedule preferences, VRS helped Avios recognise additional areas for improvement. For example, Avios used to do long and short-term forecasting for 40 separate call types, each requiring different skills, and then create schedules for each call type. They've now brought the 40 different call types down to 12.

"Forecasting and scheduling are now automated with NICE WFM," says Harrison. "We're saving at least half a day each week—and our forecaster's sanity."

Mike Heaton, Sr. Analyst, concurs: "The upgrade allows me to be more nimble with the forecast, changing and flexing to what has happened without much workload. This is delivered by both SmartSync and the consolidated CTs. The automated waitlist

function is also a godsend."

The roster flexibility Avios enjoys today enables their long-term goals for 100% work-from-home in the future—which is good because Avios quickly went from only 10% wanting to work-from-home before the pandemic to 80% wanting to remain work-from-home when last surveyed (December 2021).

NICE WFM Becomes Important Recruiting Tool

"Our upgraded solution is far more effective," says Harrison. "But more than anything, the emotional feelings staff have toward their ability to influence their shifts is absolutely massive. It sells itself."

An unanticipated outcome of the entire upgrade process is that NICE WFM has become an important recruiting tool. Avios' people are out there telling others about the opportunities Avios gives them to control their own schedules. This is significant, especially at a time when others are struggling to find willing staff.

"I absolutely love it. It has made such an impact to my work/life balance. I can fit in appointments, events and social gatherings without having to take holidays and shift swaps!"

Rebecca Higham, Customer Service Agent, Avios

Renewed Relationship Fosters Confidence

"VRS is not helpdesk," says Harrison. "They're not there to say 'You want X? Do Y.' Our business consultant, Emma, actually challenged the way we do things and provided key direction along our journey. That 'outside' point of view helped us avoid being too incestual with our decision-making—too tied to what we know, and kept us pointed in the right direction."

VRS supported Avios' strategic roadmap, taking the time to understand what the company wanted to achieve. This included in-depth entity design training as well as regular advisory discussions.

"We've crafted a relationship with NICE that we didn't have in the 20 years prior," says Harrison. "This is going to be really important for us now that we're in the cloud and supporting flexible staffing. We've got expertise we can rely on and a team that supports our strategic roadmap in view of what's possible with NICE WFM. It's given us massive confidence to explore what's possible."

NICE

Make experiences *flow*