

# Case Study



## Implementing future-proofed communications to service a 75-seat call centre

*“The system we were working with had no flexibility to deal with multi-skilled staff. We needed to physically move the agent from one group to another and back again. This took up a lot of management time.”*

Sue Earnshaw, Operations Director, Premier Holidays

### Summary

Premier Holidays is a privately owned, independent tour operator with over 75 years experience in selling holidays. It tailors holidays to suit individual needs and desires.

This business practice demanded skill based call routing to service a 75-seat call centre. At the heart of the solution is a Siemens HiPath 3750 with bespoke call management software that increased call centre productivity, delivered real-time agent statistics to increase accountability and auto attendants that filtered product specific calls to the relevant agents.

### Challenges

- Improve system flexibility to deal with the randomized nature to high call volumes specific to the industry
- Remove the time wasted by management by physically moving agents from one group to another
- Reduce costs incurred from a legacy telephone system

### Solution

- Siemens HiPath 3750 with feature-rich telephony and voip capabilities
- Bespoke call management software
- 75 individual agent wallboards

### Benefits

- Ability to return missed calls to quote for a booking. Beat the competition
- Calls routed intelligently to the relevant agents
- Future-proofed telephony and cost reduction from the offset

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Premier Holidays is a privately owned, independent tour operator with over 65 years experience in selling holidays. Their independence ensures customers have the widest choice of destinations, grades of accommodation and airlines to match every pocket and every dream.

Their approach to tour operating means every aspect to booking a holiday is tailored to suit individual needs and desires. It is this business practice that demanded skill based call routing technology to service a 75-seat call centre.

Sue Earnshaw, Operations Director to Premier Holidays comments: "We were working with an old Featureline system that tied us completely to our previous supplier. The system was very limited in reference to what statistics could be provided and there was no flexibility to deal with multi-skilled staff. Agents were designated a group and if calls were queuing in another group, they couldn't be fed to them. To overcome this, we needed to physically move the agent from one group to another and then back again. Consequently this took up a lot of management time!" The brief was to design a solution that enhanced Premier's call centre productivity, deliver real-time statistics and a level of agent accountability through the provision of individual 'wallboards'. System flexibility was a key attribute to the solution, so the randomized nature to high call volumes in the travel industry could be catered for. The challenge was set and as Sue says: "The system we were working with was old technology, which meant our previous supplier was withdrawing its support. We needed to implement new telephony and ensure it was going to be future-proofed."

Premier Holidays had a very clear vision of what they wanted from the outset. Roland Hopkins, Opus' Technical Director, recounts: "It's refreshing to work with a client who really knows what they're looking for. After the first planning meeting, it became apparent many more would follow due to the complexities involved." Five meetings later, a solution was tabled.

Opus proposed utilising a Siemens HiPath 3750 to drive 120 extensions, including a 75-seat call centre. In partnership with Swan Solutions, the call management element to the requirement was tendered with the suggested use of detailed agent reporting to generate real-time productivity statistics and individual 'wallboards' so the agent can monitor the number of calls queuing, missed and taken. The same software would also tag the caller identity of missed calls and allow these to be actively returned. Auto attendants were included to ensure incoming calls enquiring about specific products were routed to the relevantly qualified agent. During peak call periods the system needed to be flexible enough to force calls from one group to another to ensure holding times are kept to a minimum and qualified agents are available to take the enquiries.



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With a solution agreed and in an effort to keep staff disruption and downtime to a minimum, Opus scheduled the hardware phase of the install to be completed overnight and during the run up to Christmas.

The next stage was to implement the call management software and as Roland remembers: "The project looked straightforward on paper. We compromised with certain features to keep on budget, but needed to deliver enough telephony technology that would satisfy the original requirement. However, this was always going to be the one area where things could go wrong!" Opus and the Swan development team were pushing the Siemens switch to its limits and adapting call management software around very specific requirements. The system was up and running by mid December, but as we moved into the New Year, serious problems occurred in respect to calls getting lost in the system. Roland comments: "We could see the error, but weren't sure whether it was the switch or software related. We weren't getting these errors before Christmas and put this down to the low call volume experienced at this time. It quickly became apparent that as soon as January's peak call period started, the errors increased and the reality of Premier losing business was concentrating my mind." After several controlled tests, the problem was isolated to a software error in the switch. This required a rewrite using Siemens resources based in Germany. Sue adds: "We realised that the requirement was going to be a tall order due to the demands we put on a phone system. We had high expectations of the system, but soon realised it was necessary to compromise on some things. However, Opus always listened to what we wanted and their technical department tried to devise workable solutions to keep us communicating until the software rewrite happened. There was a lot of trial and error, which was frustrating for everyone, but Roland remained reassuring that the issues would be resolved."

With the new software downloaded onto the switch, the system was fired up and tested. Certain errors were fixed, yet a number of calls were still getting lost. An improvement on the

It was to take two further software versions and a lot of patience for Premier Holidays to realise the powerful benefits bespoke telephony management software has over call centre productivity. Sue's thoughts after the installation were: "Whilst it took some time to resolve a lot of the problems, we initially went with Opus because we felt we could trust the company and more importantly, the people we were dealing with. Their solution is realising a number of immediate benefits, notably the reduction in call charges, but the very fact we are able to return missed calls means we can quote on a booking which might have otherwise gone to a competitor. Conversely, we can track whether that missed caller tried again later and got through. Most agents and clients are very impressed that we have the facility to do this and it shows that we value our customers enough to get back to them. The overall productivity of the call centre has improved, with targets being set and met through enhanced reporting and 'wallboard' functionalities. Agents are becoming more accountable for their actions and their focus improved with the provision of minute by minute performance statistics."

In Premier Holidays, Opus has learned invaluable lessons that's further improving the way it tenders, wins and installs large enterprise deals. The provision and subsequent maintenance of Premier's multi-functional call centre serves as a benchmark to Opus' abilities within the telecom market place. However, Roland Hopkins has the last word: "Success is only guaranteed with the customer on your side!"

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