PolyAI's voice assistant reshapes customer care for Atos

CHALLENGE

Effectively handle seasonal and unpredictable demand peaks while delivering engaging customer experiences at scale.

SOLUTION

Introduce a voice assistant to answer customer FAQs, support a digital-first strategy, and connect complex customer queries to highly skilled agents.

RESULTS

A reduction in agent call volumes by 30%, creating additional capacity to focus highly skilled agents on complex customer queries. Reducing wait times, improving customer service, and enhancing colleague wellbeing.

Industry	Financial services
Use cases	Frequently asked questions; Call routing; Account Management
Featuring	John Murphy, Director of Customer Service, Atos
	Danny Penswick, Customer Interaction Center, Senior Operations Manager, Atos
	Louise Coe, Head of Performance, Atos

Atos is a global leader in digital transformation with 110,000 employees and annual revenue of c. € 11 billion. Atos provides tailored end-to-end solutions for all industries in 69 countries.

Atos handles the entire end-to-end banking operation of a government-backed financial service, including all customer service channels and aspects of technology. The partnership is directed toward building a self-service digital business that enhances efficiency and scales operations to serve millions of customers.

Challenge

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Prior to the PolyAI implementation, the Atos Customer Interaction Centers (CIC) had a standard touch-tone IVR routing calls to 440 agents. Their contract with the government-backed financial service mandated 24-hour service over the phone, 365 days a year.

Meeting the demand of highly volatile call volumes and 24/7/365 service proved difficult to staff for. During slower periods, they found they were overstaffed by up to 60%, but in busy periods, there were not enough people to answer calls, resulting in rising call abandonment rates, wait times of 15+ minutes, and frustrated customers.

> "PolyAI has allowed us to accommodate periods of peak customer activity and to minimize complaints, by significantly increasing our ability to answer FAQs through the voice assistant"
>
> John Murphy
> Director of Customer Service at Atos

On top of regularly high call volumes, two-factor authentication was introduced to increase customer security. Atos anticipated that this update would increase their call volume as a large percentage of their customer demographic are non-digital natives. Hiring additional staff to address these volumes in a tough labor market wasn't an option.

"It's one of the most difficult recruitment markets there's ever been. We can't just go out and recruit 300 people like we would have done five years ago," said Louise Coe, Head of Performance, Atos.

With a dedicated continuous improvement team, they realized a need for a solution that could scale up and down with call volumes to make demand peaks more manageable and reduce overstaffing during quiet times.

With these challenges considered, Atos worked with PolyAI to implement a voice assistant to handle consistently high call volume while delivering an engaging customer experience.

Approach

Engaging customers in natural conversations

With a customer base of primarily non-digital natives, it was crucial for the voice assistant to engage with every caller naturally, allowing them to speak how they like and be understood regardless of the words they use, their accent, and background noise.

Often, customers like to give backstory and context to their queries, which meant the voice assistant had to allow callers to explain themselves in their own words, interrupt, and ask questions at any point in the conversation.

By providing helpful responses and allowing the customer flexibility throughout the conversation, the voice assistant builds trust. This keeps customers in the conversation instead of requesting to speak to an agent.

This was especially important as customers were calling in relation to their finances and needed reassurance they were receiving the right guidance.

Increasing contact center capacity with a customer-led voice assistant

The goal of the voice assistant was to help customers get the right answers to their queries with increased consistency and reduced wait times while continuing to offer friendly and understanding agents to help with more complex customer questions.

"In the space of 8 weeks, PolyAI helped us achieve that goal by building and deploying the voice assistant," said Danny Penswick, Customer Interaction Center, Senior Operations Manager.

"PolyAI has allowed us to automate the telephony service in a way that doesn't feel like automation to customers; we even get positive feedback about the AI interactions"

Danny Penswick
Customer Interaction Center, Senior Operations Manager at Atos

Treating customers with empathy

Calls range from routine queries about accessing application forms to more complex and sensitive calls about bereavement. The voice assistant is designed to adjust its tone of voice according to the customer's needs and guides callers to a solution, even during difficult and sensitive calls.

Meeting security standards

As a financial institution, security checks were an essential part of the 8-week build and deployment process. PolyAI voice assistants have ISO27001, SOC-2 Type 2, Cyber Essentials, PCI, and HIPAA certifications. PolyAI worked closely with Atos to ensure the necessary steps were taken to meet regulatory and security standards.

▮▮ Results

Efficiently scaling support

The PolyAI voice assistant handles the workload equivalent to between 50-95 full-time agents depending on call volume, representing approximately 12-23% of the UK Customer Interaction Center's headcount and at 50% of the cost of an FTE. Answering thousands of calls simultaneously proved invaluable at managing peaks, fully containing 30% of repetitive calls normally handled by contact center agents.

Agent well-being and round-the-clock support

Before the introduction of the voice assistant, Atos colleagues supported customers 24/7/365. This led to a variety of shift patterns, including overnight, weekend, and Christmas Day working.

Through the introduction of the voice assistant. Atos and their client reviewed and reduced the times they required agent support. The voice assistant provided support outside of core hours and allowed Atos to refocus their people on supporting customers during condensed hours.

Implementing this change enabled Atos to improve CSR well-being and work-life balance while also helping with recruiting and retaining the right people.

> "We used to have to work on Christmas day, but with PolyAI answering calls 24/7/365, we're able to close on public holidays - much to the delight of our team!"

Danny Penswick
Customer Interaction Center, Senior Operations Manager at Atos

Upskilling and redeploying agents

With the voice assistant handling repetitive calls, Atos is using the time gained back to commit to strengthening agents' skills and enhancing customer and colleague experiences.

"The call center tends to be an entry into the organization. It's allowed us to develop people into other roles. Working in the call center, they get to know all the products inside out, and they get to move into high-risk transactions teams or fraud prevention roles. It tends to be a gateway into the business," said John Murphy, Director of Customer Service, Atos.

Shifting agent time from low to high-value calls

PolyAI understood the importance of handling low-value calls, including out-of-hours, to give agents a better work-life balance and give time back to handle more complex, high-value calls with care.

By letting callers speak however they like and providing helpful responses at every step of the conversation, the voice assistant builds trust and keeps customers engaged when answering FAQs.

30%

reduction in call volumes

24/7/365

availability

50%

cost of a FTE

"

"The PolyAI voice assistant is now a part of how we speak to our customers on a day-to-day basis. Our customers love it because it means that they can save time and effort. They don't have to wait on the phone to get through to an agent."

John Murphy
Director of Customer Service at Atos

To find out more visit **poly.ai**