

CUSTOMER STORIES

# PolyAI helps Carnival UK advisors connect with guests when needed most



**CHALLENGE**

Effectively handling high call volumes during significant, often unpredictable demand peaks while maximizing the guest experience.

**SOLUTION**

A voice assistant that automates routine calls and FAQs so that advisors can get to more complex calls sooner.

**RESULTS**

14% of calls contained by the PolyAI voice assistant.

Industry	Hospitality
Use cases	Frequently asked questions; Call routing; SMS
Featuring	Jon Wells, Director Customer Contact, Carnival UK

Carnival UK is a leading cruise operator with P&O Cruises and Cunard liners in their fleet. Carnival UK is a subsidiary of Carnival Corporation, which operates more than 90 vessels worldwide, serving 13+ million guests annually.

## Challenge

When travel restrictions and national lockdowns were lifted following the Covid-19 pandemic, both support and sales calls to Carnival UK increased. Guests embarking on upcoming cruises wanted clarification around things like masking policies, vaccine requirements, dining and entertainment guidelines, and general support in this new era of cruising.

Peaks in call volume were nothing new to Carnival UK. Their call center has always experienced considerable demand peaks – some predictable, following promotions of their cruises, and some unpredictable due to things like weather conditions that might

affect upcoming journeys. These demand peaks are significant, putting tremendous responsibility on advisors to offer world-class guest support while addressing the massive influx of calls quickly and effectively. Wait times would increase along with abandonment rates during these times.

To Jon Wells, Director of Customer Contact at Carnival UK, it was clear that they needed to find a way to alleviate the pressure on the contact center while offering instant, high quality service to every guest. The team began by looking to implement a solution for one of their biggest brands, P&O Cruises.





## Approach

Cruise packages are very complex, with different room types, itineraries, onboard offerings for dining and entertainment, and varying order modification policies, presenting a challenge for effective automation.

Even “simple queries” are not so simple. Many P&O Cruises guests have no experience with automated voice technologies, and so they speak in the same way they would naturally, telling long stories with lots of detail.

The following is an example from a real call:

*Hi, I'm just after the passport requirements for a cruise to the south of Spain, do you have to have six months on it, or is it three? You know, after you come back, it's just that the passport for my granddaughter, her passport expires in October and we come back off the cruise in June, so I just wanted to know, does she need a new passport? So is it six months or three months after the date that you come back?*

PolyAI worked with Carnival UK to co-create a branded guest-led voice assistant that could address common questions. PolyAI's large language models are able to accurately 'understand' long and complex stories, without relying on the guest to use specific keywords. Where the voice assistant isn't sure of intent, it asks clarifying questions to guide the guest toward a resolution, without asking them to repeat themselves over and over.

The voice assistant is designed to sound like a real person, encouraging even the most skeptical guests to engage with it. This frees up the call center team to focus on the guests who need them most.

“I listened to a number of different solutions and they all sounded quite robotic – PolyAI was the only one that actually sounded human-like. I was very impressed with PolyAI's natural language understanding capabilities.”

Jon Wells

Director Customer Contact, Carnival UK





## Results

The PolyAI voice assistant is actively **containing up to 14% of calls to the contact center**, with receptive guests saying that it's a "very charming voice" and **"the best voice assistant I've ever spoken to."** P&O Cruises saw a positive return on investment from the deployment in just nine weeks.

P&O Cruises has made the voice assistant a supporting part of process changes by anticipating the questions that will arise from changes and proactively adding responses. The contact center is then given some relief from the influx of calls as the voice assistant answers general queries that would otherwise go through to advisors.



## The future for Carnival UK and PolyAI

With success proven by automating FAQs and call routing, the system is offering insights into areas of FAQ expansion and continuing to address the most asked questions. With continued success, there could be opportunities for Carnival UK to add additional brands and languages and train the voice assistant to authenticate guests and take bookings.

Carnival UK and PolyAI will continue to work together to ensure that the P&O Cruises contact center is running as efficiently as possible, so that they can focus on providing excellent guest experiences.

To find out more visit [poly.ai](https://poly.ai)

