

Avoidable Contact – Parking Service

Award-winning service brings benefits to both customers and East Herts District Council

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Case study

East Herts District Council (EHDC) is approximately 14 miles north of London and comprises five market towns with a population of 131,000. Employing 350 staff, EHDC has a cabinet system of government and is Conservative controlled. The 2004 CPA judged EHDC as 'Good'.

Between December 2008 and February 2009, using GovMetric's WIL, East Herts Council recorded 3,957 contacts to its Parking Service. The records show that 11.9% of these were avoidable and further analysis of the data revealed that the most common enquiry (resulting in 110 contacts), involved challenging or complaining about a Penalty Charge Notice. These calls offered no value to either the customer or the council, and used considerable amount of customer service time as the current system required all challenges to be submitted in writing.

East Herts Council took action to find a solution to these calls in order to improve the service provided to customers and make a significant efficiency saving. In association with Inform Communications, we developed an innovative self serve system for the parking service. This new service, a first for any council in England, allowed customers with Penalty Charge Notices to make a challenge over the phone. These challenges were transcribed by Inform and sent directly to the parking back office team.

Customers now benefit from a fast service, that is much easier to use and available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. The new system also means that the council receive the challenges immediately as there's no need to wait for them to arrive in the post. Challenges made using the new system are often far less emotional which allows the challenge to be processed more quickly and saves time previously spent dealing with these contacts. This has meant that Customer Services now have more time to take on new services without the need to employ additional staff. An example of this was the last European election, during which the customer service team was able to take the additional calls that in previous elections was handled by recruiting temporary staff.

The self serve telephone system has enabled us to resolve 3,000 calls during the first three months of operation. Based on an average handling time of 4 mins 21 seconds, this has released 211 hours of staff time across both customer services and the parking department.

The savings in staff time made by the system are currently equivalent to 10 Customer Service hours a week. This does not take into account the additional savings to other departments that have been able to benefit from Customer Services being available to take additional calls (i.e. local and European elections). These savings will continue to increase as the service is promoted and advertised to the public.

The Govmetric data has allowed us to demonstrate the success of the system, through showing avoidable contact, to the council in a simple fashion. Members could, for the first time, visibly see how these contacts were causing negative customer experiences, how staff had to deal with difficult and sometimes emotionally charged situations and how we could change it for the benefit of everyone!

Extra quotes

“Your case study demonstrated an excellent example of how you have used GovMetric to save staff time & also the costs saved by not having to get temporary staff in during the election period. We also thought the parking solution demonstrated innovative thinking.”
GovMetric Marketing Manager

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