

The Google Search Appliance and Contact Centers



CONTACT US

Google Enterprise
www.google.com/enterprise
(650) 253-4370
EnterpriseSolutions@google.com

Contact centers play an important role in many industries – from telecommunications, manufacturing, and financial services to energy, utilities, public sector, and travel and tourism. In all of these industries, the end goal is the same – provide a high quality customer experience in the most cost effective manner possible. Yet, in trying to achieve this simple goal, nearly all contact centers face enormous challenges. To address these, we must first understand the perspective of the central player – the customer service representative (CSR). From their viewpoint, here are just a few challenges:



- **Where do I look?** – Data residing in multiple silos causes the “where do I look”? issue
- **Hotkey from screen to screen** – Combination of structured and unstructured data causes CSRs to hotkey from screen to screen
- **FAQs are limited** – While a list of frequently asked questions is a popular means for a CSR to get at the right info, most often customers ask questions that vary from the FAQ list
- **Scrolling only goes so far** – Many times, CSRs scroll through lengthy pages with vast amounts of information; this wastes precious time and doesn’t always result in them finding the right information
- **Long ramp-up time** – Learning the intricacies of where all the information is and how to access it can take weeks, if not months
- **Constant addition or multiplication of data** – The amount of data increases rapidly; for example, when an acquisition occurs, an entire new company’s data must now be available to sift through

While there is no panacea to address all of the challenges, a few, simple things can be done to substantially improve performance. One of these is to implement a search solution that empowers the customer service representative to be able to find the exact information that the customer is looking for.

Read on to find out more ...

Why Search?

A closer look at the goals and challenges of contact centers shows us exactly how an ideal search solution could help. Broadly speaking, every contact center has two goals:

1. Increase customer satisfaction
2. Become more cost efficient.

So how can search help address both of these goals? The answer is simple – by making all the relevant information easily accessible to the customer service representative:



The Google Search Appliance

With the Google Search Appliance, your company's internal search engine can be just as good as Google.com – and just as easy to use. The Google Search appliance provides secure search across all your enterprise content – document management systems, intranets, portals, databases, legacy applications, etc. The Google Search Appliance can search in any language, and recognizes 220 file types, including HTML, PDF, MS Office, and IBM Office suites. Customers of the Google Search Appliance include Fortune 500 companies, such as The Boeing Company, Cisco Systems, and Honeywell.



Why is Google better?

Specific benefits of The Google Search Appliance over existing search tools:

- **Unified access** – Allows CSRs to use one search box to crawl all relevant content
- **Ease of use** – Familiar interface and features of Google.com
- **Compatibility** – Integrate directly with any knowledge or content management system
- **Speed** – Retrieve documents in a split-second
- **IT Unburdened** – IT no longer has to worry about back-end systems integration
- **Security** – Sits inside your secure firewall
- **Cost efficiency** – No costly agent training; leverage existing technology investments
- **Friendly price point** – Often an order of magnitude less expensive than competitors

Immediate ROI

There are multiple quantifiable benefits of using the Google Search Appliance:

- **Increase agent satisfaction** – Agents typically react very favorably to the simple interface which resembles Google.com. This typically leads to high usage of the search feature.
- **Reduce agent training costs** – On average, companies spend \$3,000 to train one customer service representative over a two week period (Source: Hancock Information Group). Implementing the Google Search Appliance can substantially reduce these costs – by up to 25% per representative. For a company that hires 200 contact center representatives per year, this can translate into \$150,000 in annual savings.
- **Increase first call resolution** – The Google Search Appliance is highly relevant – it pinpoints the exact information the agent is searching for. This is because the GSA leverages the algorithms of Google.com, fine tuned over the years with a laser sharp focus on relevancy. This leads to an increase in first call resolution – which, as noted above, is the #1 challenge faced by contact centers.
- **Reduce average handling time per call** – By finding the exact information they are looking for in a matter of seconds, agents can quickly respond to customer needs. Agents do not have to scroll through pages of information and click on dozens of links. Some of our customers have experienced average handling time reduction of 20%. Assuming a much more conservative 5% reduction, the numbers could be as shown below:

	Number of Agents*	Annual Salary*	Total Annual Cost*	Average Handling Time (AHT, in Seconds)*	Search Applicability**	% AHT Reduction because of search***	Time Savings Per Call	Total Annual Savings (\$)
Tier 1 Agents	400	\$25,000	\$10,000,000	200	50%	5%	5.00	\$250,000
Tier 2 Agents	300	\$30,000	\$9,000,000	220	50%	5%	5.50	\$225,000
Tier 3 Agents	200	\$35,000	\$7,000,000	240	25%	5%	3.00	\$87,500
Tier 4 Agents	100	\$40,000	\$4,000,000	280	25%	5%	3.25	\$50,000
Call Center Managers	50	\$80,000	\$4,000,000					
Total			\$34,000,000					\$612,500

Figure 1 – Sample Savings Using the Google Search Appliance

* Estimate used for demonstration purposes.

** While search can be used by all agents, it is expected that Tier 1 and Tier 2 agents have a higher need for search because of unfamiliarity with the information.

*** While some customers of Google Search Appliance have seen reductions in average handling time up to 20%, we are conservatively estimating 5% reduction for demonstration purposes. Note that actual average handling time reductions can vary dramatically from organization to organization.

Given the low price point of the Google Search Appliance, the ROI is significant and immediate. Typically, the installation pays itself off within 2-3 months.

- **Increase customer satisfaction** – Ultimately, by reducing average handling time and increasing first call resolution, customers satisfaction increases. As executives are well aware, customer satisfaction ultimately enhances customer retention, which itself offers a much higher ROI for businesses.

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Telco: Reduced Average Handling Time

Companies implementing the Google Search Appliance report back great results including increased efficiency and greater productivity. A perfect example is a large, global telecommunications service provider (Telco) who reduced average handling time by 18%.

“Now our service reps have easier access to product and support information, so they can answer questions and help customers more quickly.”

Senior Vice President of Marketing, Telco

Overview

Telco is a leading telecommunications service provider. A Fortune 200 company, Telco has built a vast all-digital wireless network in the country. Telco currently serves 295 of the top 300 U.S. markets, where approximately 252 million people live or work.

The Challenge

“An important metric for anyone managing customer relationships is ‘Average Handle Time’,” says Telco’s senior vice president of marketing. “It’s how we judge both customer satisfaction and our own productivity for customer support calls.” Telesales and Web Sales Order support staff handle thousands of calls each day encompassing technical support and sales. Customers call to get help with phone setup, account changes, service changes, technical issues, and order status as well as upgrades and accessory sales. “The calls put us on the front lines,” says the vice president. “It’s paramount to have excellent customer service.”

“Our order support reps are very resourceful, but even with the extensive knowledge base on our intranet, we needed a fast way to search for the right document at the right time. Our overwhelming need was for a real search solution – a way for our reps to find the right information in real time to help resolve issues and get customers up and running.” Recognizing the need for a different approach, Telco began the search for tools to help reps find answers efficiently, reduce call times, and provide the best possible customer service.

The Solution

Telco chose the Google Search Appliance to install on the Telesales and Web Sales intranet, which houses thousands of HTML, PDF, and ASP documents on a single server. It is dedicated to customer service search help. “The fact that it was so easy to set up and use was certainly a deciding factor for us,” says the vice president.

End Result

Using the GB-1001, the Telco team was able to post more documents to the intranet quickly and with confidence, knowing that they will be located efficiently using Google search technology. In fact, their average handling time reduced dramatically, by nearly 18%. In addition, Telco reports that more calls are resolved on first contact – an important measure of positive customer experience and productivity. “The Google Search Appliance clearly enables our reps to quickly find the information they need on our intranet, and use it to respond thoroughly to a customer call,” he says.

