

## Case Study



The London Borough of Wandsworth operates a combined Call Centre supporting its Council Tax and Benefits services.

Industry Sector

### Local Government Revenue & Benefits

#### Wandsworth Borough Council – Council Tax & Benefits

The London Borough of Wandsworth is the largest of the inner London boroughs. The Council operates a combined Call Centre supporting its Council Tax and Benefits services.

The Council Tax Service is responsible for the administration of Council Tax for over 129,000 properties and is one of the largest public interfaces within the Council. The Benefits service is responsible for the assessment of 25,000 Housing & Council Tax Benefit claims within the borough.

The nature and importance of the services generates a high level of customer demand for information and advice through the call centre and reception office.

#### The Challenges

In 2004 the Council implemented its plan to refresh its call centre infrastructure. The Council was not looking to implement one central call centre, but required call centre technology with the ability to set up virtual call centres. This enables the Council's different business areas to administrate and set up their own call handling peculiar to their business needs whilst retaining the flexibility of a common technology platform.

The Council Tax & Benefits operation is the largest Call Centre in the Council with 24 officers handling around 1,000 calls on a typical day. The service faces an unusual, but not unique, position; the caller is typically seeking to discuss an important issue and the Council is the only body that can resolve the issue.

This means that when the centre is busy there is a high propensity for callers to hang up and try again later.

This challenge is exacerbated by the Council's requirement to distribute significant volumes of correspondence at specific times of year. For example all Council Tax bills are distributed over a 10 day period. This inevitably results in significant seasonal variation in call volumes.

The Call Centre also faces the challenge of meeting fluctuating customer demand across the different services whilst meeting service level targets. The call centre needs to balance availability of skilled officers with the expected and actual demand.

#### The Solution

The Council has deployed **rostrvm** call centre software to meet its virtual call centre requirements. The **rostrvm** system 'overlays' the existing Ericsson PBX infrastructure to preserve existing investments and providing a common technology infrastructure.

**rostrvm** provides a modular suite of call centre software applications which gives each of the Council's business functions the opportunity to address its specific customer contact requirements.

The Council Tax and Benefits Call Centre uses the **rostrvm** CallDirector ACD and the associated SuperVisor management information system to implement skills based routing to ensure that callers reach the best-skilled Officer.

Project Objectives

To provide access to services and information that is user-friendly and meets the needs of all sections of the community; To respond promptly and to ensure a high resolution of queries and requests at first point of contact.

"rostrvm makes my job easier to plan ongoing resources and when I'm looking at specific projects I have the supporting information I need"

Kristina Burman  
Customer Service Manager  
London Borough of Wandsworth

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## Case Study Continued:



### rostrvm software used

rostrvm CallManager

rostrvm CallDirectorACD

rostrvm CallGuide

rostrvm SuperVisor

### QueueBack & CallBack

The QueueBack and CallBack facility lets callers to get the help they need whilst giving the Call Centre control of the workload. In busy periods callers are given the opportunity hang up and receive a return call from the Council.

"The callback facility means that our customers perceive that they are getting a high quality service whilst giving us the control to handle the call volumes"

Kristina Burman  
London Borough of Wandsworth

Whilst in general the call volume mix is 70% Council Tax and 30% Benefits events, such as distribution of notices, can change the mix. Skills based routing automatically accommodates the fluctuations.

But there are times when even the best run, standard call centre wouldn't be able to satisfy the surges in demand faced by the Council – on a bad day the call volume can be 40% higher than average. The **rostrvm** virtual call centre meets the challenge in two ways; Firstly, the common technology infrastructure means that additional staff from other departments can be drafted in to support the service; Secondly **rostrvm**'s QueueBack and CallBack facility provides a means for callers to get the help they need whilst giving the Call Centre control of the workload.

How it works is that the **rostrvm** system continuously monitors call volumes and, if the wait time is becoming excessive, callers are given the opportunity hang up and receive a return call from the Council. Kristina Burman, Customer Service Manager, said "The callback facility means that our customers perceive that they are getting a high quality service whilst giving us the control to handle the call volumes".

### The Results

The **rostrvm** system helps the Council to meet increasing customer demands and service expectations without increasing staff levels. Nyemeh Bajan, Deputy Customer Services Manager said: "Before we had **rostrvm** I didn't know how we were performing until the end of the month and it would take a long time with an Excel Spreadsheet to work it out. Now I can see our performance at any time with the click of a mouse and make the necessary staffing adjustments".

The callback facility is a particularly popular. There are some periods when the call centre doesn't need to offer callbacks but in peak periods, such as March and April, up to 3,000 callers per month use it.

Management information is a key benefit. Kristina observed "**rostrvm** makes my job easier to plan ongoing resources and when I'm looking at specific projects I have the supporting information I need".

Nyemeh expanded "For team leaders the management information is useful in one to one reviews. It allows us to easily show how Officers are performing as individuals and in comparison with the team".

Maintaining staff levels is a common problem for call centres. **rostrvm**'s ease of use helps in this area – new recruits are productive very quickly.

The **rostrvm** technology has contributed to independent recognition of the high quality service provided by the **rostrvm**-supported call Centre, with both teams being awarded a prestigious Charter Mark for providing the public with an excellent service. The Charter Mark Assessor recognised that improvements in delivery to the public have made the contact experience a lot easier.

Kristina Burman concluded

"My experience of **rostrvm** is that the product is flexible and adapts to the needs of the individual very easily.

The support and advice we receive from **Rostrvm** Solutions suits us very well".

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