Getting it right first time

Openreach delivers better customer experiences

Call for change

Openreach runs the UK's digital network. It's a wholesale telecoms business providing engineering services to more than 650 communications providers, which sell phone, broadband and Ethernet services to homes and businesses.

Openreach's mission is to build and maintain the best possible network with the highest service quality to make sure that everyone in the UK can be connected. To reach this goal, two years ago, the Service Delivery unit of Openreach set out to improve the customer experience. Specifically, it wanted to ensure that jobs (e.g. broadband installations and repairs) were completed successfully first time, every time and on time.

Because Openreach serves so many communications providers, it's vital that its processes are standardised, so that it can deliver high volumes of services consistently and efficiently. However, consumers can encounter a broad range of connectivity issues. So Openreach's engineers need to diagnose and fix a wide range of problems.

To provide the best possible service, Openreach had to move beyond its traditional engineering mindset. Instead, it needed to put customers at the heart of its business and use new methods to deliver a precise service to all consumers, every time.

When tech meets human ingenuity

To transform the customer experience, Openreach needed help from a strategic partner. It decided to work with Accenture, because we demonstrated customer-centric thinking, next-generation data science capabilities, and a strong track record of similar transformation projects.

First things first: To improve the customer journey, Openreach had to better understand it. There was plenty of data on the customer experience, but it was spread across more than 40 different systems. With no end-to-end visibility, it was impossible to see why some customers weren't getting their jobs completed first time.

So Openreach gathered, cleansed and consolidated all the relevant data. This enabled the creation of an integrated, single view of each customer, stored in the cloud.

Although this data was immensely valuable, it didn't tell the whole story. To understand the business from a human perspective, the team also spent 100 days working in the customer contact centres and accompanying engineers on their rounds. Combining these insights with rich customer data helped uncover what was really going wrong and why, so we could help Openreach address the issues.

Now, Openreach has used these insights to transform its process to revolve around customer outcomes. By using analytics to reveal which skills, tools and parts are needed for each job, Openreach can send the right engineer with the right equipment to complete each task first time. This has improved the customer experience at each stage of the journey: before, during and after the engineer's visit.

Openreach is also using data to make proactive improvements. For instance, it now targets its network maintenance to prioritise fixing issues that cause most customer pain points. This doesn't just improve consumers' connectivity. It improves ROI by targeting parts of the network that cost the most in terms of customer call-outs.

To reduce complaints, Openreach set up a proactive customer care unit to support some of the most complex jobs. There, staff use predictive analytics to identify and resolve potential issues, before they affect customers.

A valuable difference

The results have been superb. More customers are happy, because more jobs are completed first time and on time. On top of that, the new proactive customer care unit is helping to catch and address issues before they impact consumers. As a result, complaint volumes have fallen by 30%. Overall, the combination of initiatives to get more customers into service first time, every time and on time, has reduced costs materially.

This is just the first step on the journey. Openreach is looking to use its new skills and tools to continually strive for more, as well as drive improvements into other parts of its business.

For starters, greater operational efficiency will help Openreach achieve its goal of bringing fibre-optic broadband to 25 million homes by 2026. It's the key part of the company's mission to ensure that everyone in the UK is connected.

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