European Tax Agency Goes Digital with eGain Virtual Assistant, Chat, and Offers

257,000 interactions handled using the Virtual Assistant

Volume of tax returns being completed online increased to 89%

ORGANIZATION

This organization is the tax authority of one of the major economies in Europe. It serves 41 million individual customers as well as five million business customers. The authority runs what is possibly the largest virtual contact centre in the world with 22,000 staff and handles 70% of the national government’s transactions.

CHALLENGE

With such a large base of customers and such a critical role in government, the authority already faced an uphill challenge in dealing effectively with contact volumes. In 2014/15 alone, they handled 50 million calls, 16 million inbound letters, 220 million outbound letters and 1,040 million online transactions.

In addition, they were tasked not only with achieving a 15% net costs reduction by 2020 but also with becoming a key part of the government’s digital services initiative, with the goal of making digital services so appealing and easy to use that digital becomes the preferred way for citizens to interact and transact with the government. According to their Chief Digital and Information Officer, they aim to become “one of the most digitally advanced tax authorities in the world.”

SOLUTION

The authority had the following objectives:

- Implement a Multi-channel Digital Tax Platform (MDTP) to integrate and support all channels from phone and mail to web chat and social media.
- Provide a compelling set of digital services as the most effective means of interaction, and encourage customers to take the digital route.
- Provide a single view of customer contacts. “any adviser, any time” can tell the customer how their query is progressing.

The authority chose eGain’s top-rated suite of digital customer engagement products, starting with eGain SuperChat™, which includes eGain Virtual Assistant™, eGain Chat™, and eGain Offers™. They wanted to create an easy and compelling online experience in which customers could get the help they need in real-time.

The Virtual Assistant (VA) allows customers to get answers to common questions without even needing an agent’s help, while easy escalation from VA to live chat means that agents can use their time more effectively to help customers with more complex enquiries. Using
eGain Offers, the authority can not only offer proactive chat but can use sophisticated business rules to target chat towards the customers who need it most. Business rules are entirely configurable so implementing them is easy without changing the site, and minimizes the need for IT involvement.

IMPLEMENTATION

eGain worked with the organization and their system integrators to design an excellent customer experience and give agents the right tools for such a mission-critical job. The customer chat interfaces for interacting with Virtual Assistant and live agents were brand-aligned to provide a seamless transition from the website to the online help tools.

Based on the 80:20 principle, the Virtual Assistant was trained to answer the most common questions, with the ability to escalate seamlessly to live chat when the customer’s question goes beyond the Assistant’s area of expertise. eGain guided the organization at every step of setting up the chat solution, from identifying appropriate entry points and queues to defining the business rules that would make chat offers well-targeted, contextual, and effective.

RESULTS

The authority’s Chief Digital and Information Officer describes the results as “a huge success.” Comparing January 2016 to the same time in 2015:

- 257,000 interactions were handled using the Virtual Assistant rather than a real agent.
- The authority has increased the volume of tax returns being completed online to 89%.
- 88,000 calls have been deflected using web chat and a further 41,000 calls have been eliminated altogether, with call waiting times halved.

- The use of digital services rather than letters has reduced paper consumption by 21%. Considering that print costs previously ran to €96 million, this alone is a tremendous saving.

Customer satisfaction scores are routinely 80%+, which is no mean feat for a tax collection agency. Customers love that they can use the device of their choice, get help at the right time for them, and stay in the digital channel as much as possible, which means their issue is resolved faster.

Looking to the next phase of their digital transformation, the authority has selected eGain KnowledgeAgent™ and eGain SelfService™ to provide the robust omnichannel knowledge management capabilities necessary to support and scale such a high-volume virtual contact center.

Since tax form filling and online self-assessment is such a key part of the authority’s interactions with their customers, eGain Cobrowse™ is the perfect tool for agents to provide step-by-step assistance, with the benefit of privacy rules to govern what agents can see and do on the customer’s behalf. In addition, eGain Social™ will provide easy expansion into the new social channels while their secure messaging inbox will be powered by eGain Mail™. The organization will also leverage omnichannel analytics in eGain Analytics™ for ongoing contact center management and customer journey optimization, integrating with Cisco’s Unified Contact Center Enterprise™ platform.

The authority are well on the way to achieving their ambition to “provide the right channel, at the right time, on the right device to help our customers help themselves.”