

CosmoCom Software Makes ABS Associates Virtual Vision a Reality

ABS Associates founder and Chief Technology Officer Tom Mitchell had a vision of what a successful, productive contact center could look like. He had seen others with noisy, crowded spaces; agents jammed together in environments that fostered high-rates of turnover and less than helpful attitudes. "I didn't want to build another windowless warehouse," Mitchell recalls.

His vision was of a virtual contact center where agents could work from their own homes, client sites, other states, ABS offices, and even other countries. In particular, Mitchell wanted to free individuals with physical challenges from a daily commute. He wanted them to be able to communicate with callers on the phone as well as on the web or by fax, email or instant messenger, and he wanted them have access to data that would include a complete caller history. In Mitchell's vision, the call center would come to the agents instead of the other way around.

The way Mitchell saw it, his center would take advantage of the digital possibilities of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology, and agents who served ABS clients would not only be courteous, knowledgeable and efficient, but they would also like their jobs and enjoy the flexibility of working from home and/or other locations.

Virtual VoIP

A virtual VoIP-based contact center was a nice dream, but in 2000 it seemed like wishful thinking. Certainly no legacy PBX system could offer the level of interoperability between voice, video and data that Mitchell's vision required. Mitchell has more than 30 years experience in information technology, beginning with Honeywell and Digital Equipment Corp. He knew the potential, but he also knew the complexities involved in integrating disparate technologies.

That's when Mitchell first met CosmoCom founder and President Ari Sonesh. Sonesh had a similar vision and his revolutionary CosmoCall Universe, VoIP-based contact center software, made Mitchell's goal a reality. "Considering all that it accomplished," Mitchell says, "I was surprised that the installation went so smoothly. I'd never had anything work that easily before. We haven't had an issue with the technology in nearly five years."

Today 60 percent of the contact center agents at ABS work either from home or from client sites, and agents have the option of taking calls from their residence when they need the extra flexibility. Mitchell notes that the productivity of home-based workers equals that of their peers in the office. Tracking output is made effortless with CosmoCom software which generates online, real-time reports detailing the performance of each agent.

ABS launched ABShelp in 2001, and it now supports users across the nation and in three countries. The virtual nature of the system allows ABS to post agents anywhere and still have access to the full range of multi-channel communications built into CosmoCom software.

Multi-channel/Multi-tenancy

Customers for ABS' outsourced technical help desk services represent a variety of industries including insurance carriers, healthcare firms, leading energy drink companies, educational and financial institutions, and manufacturing. Because CosmoCom provides multi-tenancy (the ability to host multiple customers under one virtual roof), all ABS's clients can be served securely from a single platform. And, because of the multi-channel capabilities inherent in CosmoCall Universe, ABS customers can ask for and obtain help in whatever way suits them including voice, email, chat, and the web. Currently, Mitchell reports, about 60 percent of the contacts are initiated by phone.

ABS Associates Inc.

Founded in 1982, ABS Associates, Inc. (www.abs-inc.com) is a leading provider of outsourced helpdesk, desktop management, consulting and networking, and technical support services.

ABS Associates Case Study

ABS offers its clients the benefits of CosmoCall capabilities:

- ▶ Increased productivity of end-users and support personnel
- ▶ Economies of scale that reduce IT support costs
- ▶ Sophisticated call-tracking capabilities to monitor and report on support activity
- ▶ Access to IT services anywhere in the world

Multi-tenancy has the additional advantage of helping to balance the percentage of ABS agents who are dedicated to a specific account and those shared among customers. Staffing decisions becomes a management issue instead of a technical limitation. CosmoCall Universe makes it easy to distribute overflow calls to shared agents who have appropriate training and skills. As a result, the ABS contact center workforce is efficient and able to handle spikes in volume as well as planned and unplanned absences. ABS offers a distinct competitive advantage in a very cost-conscious marketplace particularly since its clients have no investments to make in infrastructure. It is all provided by ABS.

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Multi-tenancy has also made it possible for ABS to add hosting to its portfolio of services, and it currently maintains CosmoCall contact center systems for its customers and their internal staff. Mitchell notes it would be a straightforward task for ABS to outsource calls to a center near shore or in India or elsewhere if business needs justified it. “CosmoCom just makes it all so easy,” he says.

Business flexibility

Besides the advantages for customers and agents, the CosmoCom software allows ABS to align cash flow with license fees so it can “pay as we grow,” affirms Mitchell. “The CosmoCom technology gives us business flexibility that we never had before.”

Another pleasant surprise that came with the CosmoCom software, Mitchell notes is the utility that allows non-programmers, such as contact center managers, to easily create and revise Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems. “We used to have to write everything in Basic,” Mitchell says. Empowering contact center managers to script IVR has allowed ABS to move into markets where there aren’t a lot of developers around. “By putting more capabilities in the hands of help desk managers, CosmoCom has given us tremendous flexibility.”

Virtual management

One of the most appreciated improvements in CosmoCom software over the years, Mitchell states, is the standards-based real-time monitoring and reporting capability that is now built into CosmoCall Universe. “CosmoCom makes it possible not only for the contact centers themselves to be virtual, but it also means that the management can be virtual, too. We are not encumbered at all by where people are.”

When Mitchell was first introduced to CosmoCom six years ago, the only other contact center options available involved proprietary hardware and software. CosmoCom was the first open standards, software-based solution that took full advantage of the IP universe. There are others now, but none of them offer the robust capabilities of CosmoCom software. “We’ve built our contact center business around the capabilities of this software,” Mitchell says. “It just keeps getting better.”

“There are a lot of good things you can do with the right technology,” Mitchell adds. “Thanks to CosmoCom, we’ve been doing it since 2000.”

About CosmoCom

CosmoCom™ provides IP contact center technology for the largest and most complex enterprise requirements, consolidating multiple locations -- onshore, offshore, and home -- formal and informal agents, captive and outsourced operations, multi-channel communications, and multiple applications. Benefit from Consolidation 2.0 with CosmoCom technology deployed on premises or hosted by top-tier service providers.