



CustomerDirect

Case Study

Solar Power Company Energizes Technical Support

Background

A Solar Power Company has moved aggressively to become the market leader in converting DC solar power to usable AC through the use of Microinverters. They provide solar energy management systems for residential and commercial markets. The company offers a system that includes high-efficiency microinverters, communications and web-based monitoring and analysis of arrays of solar powered panels. They have shipped over 750,000 units. The microinverter system addresses all of the issues that arise with traditional string inverter systems and allows per module data tracking.

The company started producing and selling microinverters in 2006. As the company was experiencing rapid growth, they realized they would need the infrastructure and process to be able to handle the rising call volume. One of the key performance indicators in their own support process was the number of abandoned calls. It became apparent to them that the challenge of providing direct-to-customer technical support was beyond the scope of what fit with their organizational structure and direction. Some of the challenges included:

- Call overflow, wait-times, customer messaging, and abandon rates
- Lacking the processes and organizational structure to recruit and train large numbers of technical support agents
- Lacking a customer interaction system for troubleshooting that yielded a consistent customer experience, while servicing thousands of homeowners and installers
- No ticketing platform that included management information reporting for process improvement and real-time support remediation
- Technical support scalability as the business and the technical support challenges grew and changed
- Need for an extensive telecom infrastructure, allowing review of recorded calls and granular reporting on call-metrics

In addition to the operational challenges listed above, they found themselves in a situation where the challenges of managing the call volume were creating shortfalls in customer satisfaction.

The Strategy

They realized their customer base was expanding exponentially, and they needed a partner that specialized in technical support and customer service. The Solar Power Company began to research domestic call centers that had the systems in place to support the given workload, the experience to uphold their standards, and the management talent to turn their challenges into opportunities. The requirements were stringent:

- Provide the flexible systems and customization necessary to deliver world-class technical support
- Do so with a domestic labor force
- Craft a custom-API functionality with their own CRM
- Immediately improve service levels

The Director of Customer Support for the company commented, “As our company was experiencing rapid growth, Customer Direct already possessed the infrastructure and process to be able to launch Tier-1 support services to our specifications.”

The Implementation

The workforce management team at Customer Direct went into action immediately and successfully recruited, assessed, interviewed, hired and trained a small team of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in two weeks. Within another two weeks, Customer Direct was able to train an additional team of over 60 Technical Support Agents for troubleshooting and call overflow. This allowed the company to provide a more reasonable hold-time experience to inbound callers. At the same time, the Account Services and Information Systems team constructed the framework for administering and organizing the vast amount of microinverter installation and regulatory information, as well as developing customized troubleshooting steps for the proprietary Gateway Device. With over 1,000 pages of product knowledge and support material that included the National Electric Code, this was an arduous task, but it was accomplished quickly due to Customer Direct's high level of expertise and experience with similar challenges. Secure data sharing was put into place so that management had a transparent view of all customer interaction activities, including:

- Summary and detail phone statistics
- Direct interaction between Customer Direct's API and the company's internal CRM, for ticketing
- Call resolution reports
- Access to recorded calls (all calls are recorded)
- Distinct workflows for proprietary gateway Internet communication and power line communication troubleshooting

Struggling service levels were immediately restored upon implementation. The quality of the level of support that was provided met their needs. In fact, within 3 months of implementation, Customer Direct was asked to hire and train additional dedicated SMEs.

The Director continued, *“Customer Direct’s Client-Services Manager, Kate Asquith, was extremely responsive to our ongoing needs, maintaining open communication with us both during the initial ramp-up period as well as after the production deployment.”*

The Results

Almost immediately after program launch, Service Levels corrected, the troubleshooting and reporting systems were enhanced, and improved guest satisfaction quickly followed. Key Performance Indicators included:

- 90% of calls answered in less than 60 seconds
- 1% call abandon rate
- Average speed of answer (ASA) of 16.2 seconds
- Reduction in average handle time

The transparency of Customer Direct’s services allowed both companies to work together in a process of continual improvement. This helped them better understand the technical support aspects of microinverters, and prepare for their next strategic move in the Solar Power market.

The Director commented, *“I would recommend Customer Direct for dedicated-agent services without hesitation, and even in environments where the technical requirements of support agents are steep and specific.”*

Call us to learn more about how we can help you!

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