

customer care solutions

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case study :: GE Money

GE Money Partners with Nuance to Align Business and Customer Intent through Contact Centre Innovation

Customer Self Service and Intelligent Call Routing Drive Business
Improvements at GE Money



In 2006, GE Money, a leading provider of credit and financial services to consumers, business and merchants in Australia and New Zealand, embarked on a business improvement program designed to streamline contact centre processes and improve the customer experience.

Recognising the opportunity to reduce the volume of calls handled by contact centre agents, GE Money invested in intelligent call routing technology and self service applications. The initiative was designed to increase the accuracy of call routing processes and ensure that simple transactions were routed to self service applications.

As part of the business improvement programme, GE Money upgraded its call steering infrastructure from legacy touch tone technology (DTMF) to an open dialogue interactive voice recognition system (IVR). This would allow customers to describe their needs in their own words, bypassing complex menus and allowing customers to move directly to their destination

An increase in automated call resolution would reduce the costs relating to the delivery of customer service and improve the total customer experience by freeing up contact centre agents to handle complex customer queries.

A global relationship

Leveraging GE Capital's global relationship with Nuance as its preferred partner for speech technology, GE Money selected Nuance to help deliver a series of contact centre innovations in Australia and New Zealand. Nuance worked closely with GE Money throughout the entire project lifecycle, starting with the design of the business case and application build and test, then later, collaborating on roll out and communication strategy.

GE Money employed Nuance consulting, application development and project management services. Nuance delivered its Open Dialogue Call Steering software and developed custom applications in tandem with Viacore, a provider of self-service solutions for customer contact to large enterprises. Nuance acquired Viacore in late 2007.

Testing the waters

The first engagement between GE Money and Nuance in Australia and New Zealand related to the development of a self service change of address application within the contact centre. The project provided an opportunity for GE Money to test consumer acceptance of speech and the business impact of contact centre automation.

From change of address to full call steering

Building on the successful speech based change of address application; GE Money looked at the broader contact centre infrastructure and further opportunities for process improvements. This led GE Money to develop a business case for the introduction of call steering technology. With the legacy IVR system at capacity, GE Money embarked on the project as a means of improving self service rates, which sat at 40 per cent within the credit card operation.

The project would ensure that calls were routed to the right response unit, whether that be a self service application or sales agent. Self service applications included customer balance enquiries, next payment notifications and the recently introduced change of address service. The project would replace the legacy touchtone system with Open Dialogue Speech, which simplified the customer experience and delivered more effective and intelligent customer call routing.

Helping customers help themselves

GE Money targeted a five per cent improvement in customer self service rates from 40–45% self-service or an average of 500,000 calls, as a result of the investment in speech based call steering technology. Working with Nuance, GE Money developed a roll out and testing schedule that would ensure a rapid return on investment. GE Money ran multiple usability studies and focus groups with customers and agents to ensure that they were meeting the needs and objectives of all stakeholders, as well as organisational and commercial goals.

GE Money negotiated a commercial agreement with Nuance, which ensured that the latter was invested in the success of the project. Performance based targets were set for Nuance to ensure that the agreement delivered optimal business outcomes.

Challenging perceptions of IVR technology

Internally, the GE Money contact centre team ensured that senior stakeholders within the business were engaged with the project and clear about its objectives, a strategy that would pay dividends in the long run. GE Money consulted with Nuance to share learning from the experiences of organisations in Australia and New Zealand that had invested in IVR technology.

GE Money Speech Applications

- Custom speech based change of address application (Viecore)
- Open Dialogue call steering
- New self service options, including statement re-prints and a pin change application

“There is a proportion of our customer base that perceives IVR technology to be a barrier, which prevents them from doing what they want to do,” said Graham Cowie, telephony leader, GE Money. “There was a degree of scepticism internally about whether an increase in call automation was the right path for the business to take. It was therefore essential that we clearly communicated the objectives within the context of a total customer experience. Our over-arching goal was to deliver a system that met the needs of customers while delivering cost and process improvements to the business through automation.”

The project delivered immediate benefits. Contact centre productivity rates improved in tandem as a result of the increase in self service call resolution. The total number of calls completed via self service applications increased from 40 to more than 60 per cent.

Call duration fell by five per cent. Agents within the contact centre were able to spend more time dealing with complex customer enquiries and cross-sell opportunities. The new system streamlined the customer verification process meaning that agents spent less call time identifying and authenticating customers.

John Zgrdja, Head of Digital Channel Solutions at GE Money explains.

“Through the capture of detailed call reasons coupled with customer data, we are now able to provide an exceptional caller experience. With our latest system, we can direct calls to the most appropriate agent whilst dynamically providing that agent with all the relevant information required. This means our customers don’t repeat the reason for their call and are coupled with agents who are best skilled for that call type. This all results in each customer experiencing the best possible service in the shortest possible time – all whilst reducing AHT.”

The IVR has also provided a great deal of business intelligence to GE Money, particularly in relation to the reasons why customers call the contact centre. Call monitoring has provided GE Money with a view of the end-to-end customer experience, which ensures that the system strikes the right balance between what customers expect and what the business wants. These insights have enabled GE Money to continually enhance and improve the call routing technology by making system changes, anticipating bottle necks in business processes and fine tuning product offerings to eradicate recurring customer queries and issues.

“Our speech recognition IVR has fundamentally changed how we manage customer calls for our Cards Business,” said Zgrdja.

“The flexibility created through the IVR has enabled us to get much smarter with our decisioning logic on cross selling. By gathering call reason and customer data through the new speech recognition IVR, we are now able to determine which customers would most benefit from other products. This kind of intelligence improves both our sales capability and efficiency by offering services only to relevant customer segments. Highlighting this is a significant increase in our sales volume since the introduction of this new capability. In particular, we have experienced a 30% increase in leads and a 4% increase in sales, and we continue to find new ways to both improve the customer experience and increase revenue.”

GE Money Metrics

1. Number of calls:	450,000 calls per month to contact centre
2. Efficient routing	5% reduction in misrouted calls
3. Transferred calls	reduced 5-10%
4. Agent call duration	reduced by up to 5%
5. Customer sat	5% increase
6. Self-service adoption	20% increase in self-service
7. ROI/payback period	15 months
8. Annual cost savings	\$0.6 million

Customers have praised the convenience of the updated call routing infrastructure and related self service applications, in particular their ease of use. GE Money's net promoter index indicated a high level of satisfaction with the system and a positive impact on word of mouth recommendations for the GE Money brand.

GE Money and Nuance – working well together

“Our journey with Nuance in Australia and New Zealand has been fruitful and productive,” said Cowie. “Since 2006, Nuance has developed its product and service offering by way of acquisitions. Nuance has continually brought the right technologies to GE Money and helped to identify the role of those technologies within our business. Along the way, Nuance has demonstrated genuine commitment to our business and has, as a result, been a critical player in the delivery of successful business outcomes for GE Money.”

“GE Money is at the forefront of contact centre innovation in Australia,” said Peter Chidiac, managing director, Nuance Australia and New Zealand. “The company’s approach to customer care is an extension of its commitment to the delivery of simple and easy to use products and services.”

“IVR technologies enable organisations to focus their contact centre resources on the customers that require high-touch support for problem resolution or up and cross-sell opportunities. This delivers value to all stakeholders, including customers and shareholders.”

“The business case for speech technology and automation in the contact centre is clear. The challenge for organisations, however, is to not only make the right technology choices but also to implement a contact centre solution that truly matches business intent with customer intent.”

“It is in this area that GE Money demonstrated true leadership. The business was fully engaged in the design and roll-out of the self service applications and routing strategy. Significant resources were committed to monitor the impact of the new technology and make improvement beyond the go-live date leading to value delivery for all stakeholders.”

“We’re proud of our work with GE Money in Australia and excited about the potential for future innovation in the area of speech and contact centre automation.”

Expansion plans

“As expectations for multi-modal customer service increase, we anticipate increased demand for integrated customer services. Looking ahead, our focus is on speech technologies that can extend the efficiencies that have been delivered by self service and intelligent call routing to new areas of our business,” said Cowie.

“Working together with Nuance, we have built an organisational mandate and a technology platform for future investment in speech and automation solutions, which will provide the foundation for future innovation in the contact centre.”

About GE Money

GE Money provides a range of credit and financial services to consumers, business and merchants in Australia and New Zealand. Built on the heritage of General Electric, GE Money is committed to the delivery of simple solutions to everyday financial needs, with speed and ease.

The company provides everyday credit and personal finance services to more than 3.1 million customers in Australia and New Zealand through 10,000 retailer partners, 2,000 practice partners, 120 local branches, brokers, phone and the internet. Employing more than 4,500 people in Australia and New Zealand, GE Money has offices in Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Brisbane and Auckland.

GE Money is a division of GE Capital, one of the four main businesses of General Electric (GE). GE is a diversified technology, media and financial services company focused on solving some of the world’s toughest problems and dedicated to creating products that make life better.

About Nuance

Nuance is a leading provider of speech and imaging solutions for businesses and consumers around the world. Its technologies, applications and services make the user experience more compelling by transforming the way people interact with information and how they create, share and use documents. Every day, millions of users and thousands of businesses experience Nuance's proven applications and professional services. For more information, please visit: www.nuance.com.

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