COUNTY OF NORTH YORKSHIRE

CASE STUDY:

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Glance:

Situation:

- A lean group of IT agents was handling internal incident tickets from 7,000 users
- Employees had to wait on hold on either the telephone / web chat or submit web forms, which impacted their productivity
- A small team was responsible for pioneering the county's first web chatbot

Solution:

- MiContact Center Business with Google AI-Powered Virtual Agent

Results:

- Quick and simple chatbot implementation
- Employees get immediate responses to routine questions via chat
- Employees can be transferred to a live IT agent when the Virtual Agent cannot help them
- Agents are free to focus on complex service requests
- The county can offer 24-7 service cost-effectively
- IT equipment requests are addressed more rapidly

Summary

A chatbot solution promised to provide the North Yorkshire County Council with a cost-effective way to offset the volume of calls and webchat requests coming into its internal IT service desk. The Google AI-powered Virtual Agent was the perfect solution, providing digital self-service with intelligent handoff to a human agent. This not only saved considerable deployment time and labor, but it also served as a positive experience to lead the way to a future bot deployment and improved service for county residents.

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Company

The largest county in England, North Yorkshire sprawls across the historic and picturesque region of Yorkshire and Humber in North East England. Home to over 600,000 residents, it is a rolling expanse of coastal villages and countryside, blending old world charm with the modern trends of Europe.

The council's mission reads, "We want North Yorkshire to be a thriving county which adapts to a changing world and remains a special place for everyone to live, work and visit." To this end, county residents and the broad council community rely on it to provide a wide and complex range of public information and services from licenses, permits and community programs to city planning, transportation services and education (for about 2,000 schools).

Situation

The internal service desk at the County Council has around eight agents to field a variety of IT issues, from laptop requests to software assistance, from over 7,000 users. Looking to make the process more efficient, the Data Intelligence team wanted to implement a chatbot as a way to curb the volume of routine calls and liberate agents so they could respond more thoroughly to more complex service requests. It would also allow them to offer service support outside of working hours — a solution they could eventually extend to county residents.

"We're always looking at upcoming trends, AI specifically," said Luke Morris, Graduate Data Officer, North Yorkshire County Council. "We knew we wanted to go with a chatbot and figured we would be building it ourselves."

The council was already using MiContact Center Business as its customer experience platform and wanted a chatbot that would integrate with the Mitel solution. They chose Google Dialogflow as a foundational element. Next was the right set of APIs for development. John Kelly, Head of Data Intelligence for the council, said Mitel was a natural option based on its reputation for reliable open integration and because of the council's positive existing relationship with Mitel R&D.

Mitel had just announced its partnership with Google Cloud AI, and the county council was intrigued. What they discovered was encouraging:

"Instead of building a front end ourselves, we were able to bring in Mitel's solution and very quickly set up a Google chatbot," John said. "Because Mitel was already working with Google Dialogflow, it was a natural fit. It really aligned perfectly and worked brilliantly."

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> **John Kelly, Head of Data Intelligence**
> **North Yorkshire County Council**

Solution

"It was a great accelerator that we didn't have to build (the chatbot front end) ourselves," Luke said. "The Mitel solution saved us a lot of time from a development perspective. We've gotten quite far quite quickly."

Luke said the chatbot has added a lot of value. It can handle routine questions, but still provides a sense of dialog and attentiveness for users looking for IT help. Anyone using the chatbot gets the satisfaction of problem resolution without the agent having to get involved.

At the same time, Luke said, the Mitel solution had another capability they hadn't expected: virtual agent handoff to a human agent.

"The real good thing about it — the beauty of this bot — is that it can escalate to a human when an agent is needed. So the customer will know there will be someone on the other end if you need there to be."

Results

Although rolling out web chat was an endeavor the team had expected to be complex, their experience was much simpler thanks to the Mitel solution.

"(Chatbots) are more accessible than people think," Luke concluded. "We're a local authority and a very small team and yet we got it off the ground in good time and within a great cost.

"The partnership approach we have with Mitel has made this a very quick turnaround. The Mitel solution, by its very nature, was what we were trying to deliver. And the fact that it can hand over to a human — it's really ideal for someone who wants to implement a chatbot in a great way."

Luke said key for them was in starting out small, with an internal IT service desk bot, but with an end goal in mind: to ultimately improve the citizen experience for county residents. He said, "It's really about understanding and keeping in focus the citizen's journey."

John agreed, adding that the benefits of the chatbot solution are already making a difference. Not only is the county's IT department able to provide 24-7 support outside of working hours, but, he said, "we can turn equipment out sooner and ultimately provide better service to our customers."

In the future, the county plans to add web chat to its social care services, to support queries and requests coming in after business hours. Mitel's Agent Assist is also in the plan to add sophisticated knowledge base data to each service response. John said this will help them organize their service information more strategically.

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"We've already had to restructure our knowledge base so it's more relevant," he said. "To simplify. We'll be applying that principle to other services, so it's going to be a huge benefit. It will force us to be much more customer-faced."

Along with all the benefits the chatbot brings to the IT service desk, the Mitel Google AI solution ultimately curbed time to development — a critical step in the deployment process. With a simpler way to achieve the customer experience it was aiming for, the Data Intelligence team had what it needed to add the same value to county residents.

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