



“We wanted to ensure our customers received top-notch professional help: fast, competent, and creative.”

Carsten Kirchhof, Call Center Manager for Inbound Services, Premiere AG

AT A GLANCE

Company

- Name: Premiere AG
- Location: Munich, Germany
- Industry: Media
- Products and services: Pay TV
- Revenues: ~€1.06 billion (2006)
- Employees: 1,099 (2007)
- Web site: www.premiere.de
- Implementation partner: Frings Datacom Group (with hosting services from BT)

Challenges and Opportunities

- Huge volume of subscriptions and massive customer base
- Disparate systems throughout call centers and external call center service providers
- Costly, difficult upgrades

Objectives

- Improve service efficiency by implementing an IP-based contact center
- Reduce costs associated with a proprietary call center model

SAP® Solution and Services

SAP® Business Communications Management software

Implementation Highlight

Use of hosting services

Why SAP

- Integrated technology
- Comprehensive, automated functionality

Benefits

- Increase in customer satisfaction
- 10% reduction in costs through shorter call times and more efficient processes

Existing Environment

Non-SAP software

PREMIERE

Leading Pay-TV Company Runs One of Europe's Largest IP-Based Call Centers with SAP® Software

Germany and Austria's leading pay-TV company, Premiere AG, handles around 17 million customer calls every year. To improve service efficiency – and maintain its number one position – Premiere decided to restructure its call center architecture. “We wanted to ensure our customers received top-notch professional help: fast, competent, and creative,” explains Carsten Kirchhof, call center manager for inbound services at Premiere. The new hosted solution runs using SAP® Business Communications Management software and constitutes one of the largest IP-based contact centers in Europe.

Munich, Germany–headquartered Premiere has nine million viewers and more than 3.4 million subscribers. The company offers subscribers 28 TV channels, a sports portal with up to 15 sports channels, and 21 digital audio channels. It also provides a 24-hour hotline to ensure customers get answers right away to all technical and general queries.

Since its inception, Premiere has placed special focus on customer service – which today plays a key part in the company's success and reputation due to the sheer volume of subscriptions. As an example, in 2005, Premiere received 16.8 million customer calls; 10 million were handled by agents and 6.8 million were received via the company's interactive voice response (IVR) system. During peak periods, such as the December holiday season and sports events, some 800 customer service agents at different locations handle customer calls.

All-in-One Solution

Prior to the implementation of SAP Business Communications Management, Premiere operated several call centers with separate systems, which included external call-center service providers. The company knew it needed to make some changes to help it better coordinate customer contacts. This required an integrated solution. Explains Kirchhof, "We wanted to unify our call center operations and external service providers to ensure fast, flexible, and cost-efficient processes."

To set up its new call center, Premiere chose software from SAP and hosting services from BT, with systems integrator Frings Datacom Group on board for the implementation. The convenient usage-based hosted model was a key factor in Premiere's choice. "We would no longer have to invest in the technology; we could simply pay a monthly fee that reflects actual system use," Kirchhof says. "This would enable us to keep our costs down during periods of low activity. Also, having the option of extending the system according to future needs was another important factor in our decision."

Premiere now operates a single virtual contact center. Thanks to the SAP Business Communications Management software, the center integrates all external and internal contact center resources.

Automatic Routing

The SAP software automatically routes calls to available agents, regardless of their physical location. Previously, calls were forwarded to different call centers according to predefined percentages, which meant they could not be rerouted if an agent was tied up – and the caller was kept on hold. Now, calls are transferred to the first available agent regardless of whether he or she is across the room or on the other side of the country. The solution is deployed at two separate data centers. A fully redundant architecture guarantees high availability at all times.

The software also makes it easier for agents to perform their jobs. Using Web-based softphone clients, the agents simply plug their headsets into their PCs to get a real-time view of all activities within the virtual call center – and there is no need for additional phone hardware.

Premiere can also forecast call volumes more accurately to ensure it has the right number of agents on staff during peak and nonpeak times.

Cost and Time Savings

With the new system in place, customer callers are identified by either their phone numbers (up to 80% of the time) or via an automated speech recognition system. This means agents can bring up callers' histories even before the conversation starts, enabling calls to be completed more quickly – now, around

"The new system signifies a shift from a proprietary model, which was costly to maintain and difficult to upgrade, toward an open platform that adapts flexibly to future developments."

Günter Weinrauch, VP of Information Management, Premiere AG

20 seconds faster. For Premiere, this has translated into significant cost savings. In fact, during 2005, the company reduced costs by 10% through shorter call times and more efficient processes. Customers are more satisfied, too, due to faster, more efficient service.

Overall, Premier is happy with its decision. "The new system signifies a shift from a proprietary model, which was costly to maintain and difficult to upgrade, toward an open platform that adapts flexibly to future developments," comments Günter Weinrauch, VP of information management at Premiere.

And there's more to come: Premiere is already planning to expand its use of the SAP software. This will include implementing functionality that pulls up additional customer data so calls can be routed to the correct specialist, while displaying the type of service that should be offered – all before the customer is even connected to the call center agent.