



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
Beneficiary Contact Center (BCC)

***Providing High-Quality Customer Interaction
Management for CMS and the Citizens It Serves***



Case Study

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
Beneficiary Contact Center (BCC)

Providing High-Quality Customer Interaction Management for CMS and the Citizens It Serves

The Challenge

Medicare is the largest health insurance program in the United States, covering more than 43 million beneficiaries. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services responsible for administering the Medicare program's benefits. To assist Medicare beneficiaries, family members, and caregivers, CMS provides a nationwide toll free contact center, the Beneficiary Contact Center (BCC), accessed at 1-800-633-4227 (1-800-MEDICARE). The goal of the BCC is to efficiently handle General Medicare and Claims-related inquiries from beneficiaries and their caregivers with a high level of services across the United States and its territories. CMS' Virtual Call Center Strategy envisions a flexible, scalable BCC infrastructure to support the consolidation of Medicare telephone customer service operations.

CMS faces multiple challenges in achieving the goals of its Virtual Call Center Strategy. The BCC must provide complete, accurate, and consistent responses to inquiries involving subject matter that is frequently complex and dynamically changing due to legislative action such as the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA). This changing environment dictates that the BCC must also respond effectively to large fluctuations and spikes—both expected and unexpected—in call volumes. Comprehensive performance monitoring and business analytics are needed to support informed decision-making and ongoing service improvements. To be successful, the BCC must provide the outstanding level of service expected from its unique and diverse end-user population.

The Solution

Vangent, Inc. (formerly known as Pearson Government Solutions) began work on the BCC in 2003, successfully implementing our contact center solution 3 months ahead of the customer's anticipated timeline. Since that time, we have combined industry best practices—Capability Maturity Model/ Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMM/CMMI), Institute of Electrical

Case Study

and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK)—with state-of-the-art technologies to provide an evolving, high-quality, awarding-winning service to CMS and its customers. Our scope of work includes contact center operations (Tier I and II customer service representatives [CSRs]); reference center operations (Tier III CSRs); voice and data telecommunication system management; desktop application maintenance; content management; training of contact center staff; Medicare Web site technical support; print fulfillment (both pre-printed and customized publications); transcription services; enrollment and disenrollment processing; written and e-mail correspondence services; quality assurance; and business analytics.

With one in four Americans receiving healthcare coverage through Medicare, Medicaid, or the State Children’s Health Insurance Program, the BCC is a large-scale operation. Our BCC team is able to manage the associated high volumes using multiple BCC contact center sites as a single, integrated “virtual” interaction center with 24x7 availability and English, Spanish, and TTY/TDD capabilities. Vangent’s design expands the services offered by the BCC to provide more of a “one-stop-shopping” experience for CMS’ customers, while improving quality of service. The solution integrates a CSR desktop system, providing a quick source of Medicare and beneficiary information for caller inquiries, with:

- Well-designed response scripts based on customer satisfaction research and past experience
- Intelligent Call Routing (ICR) for faster, more efficient call handling
- Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) that can relay information from the network Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system
- Witness Systems eQuality Balance (eQB) call monitoring tools for observing CSR knowledge, customer skills, and adherence to the Privacy Act
- Stellent Enterprise Content Management (ECM) for streamlined content management across the entire enterprise

- SumTotal Learning Management System (LMS) for efficient, flexible training delivery and assessment tracking, and Witness Systems eQuality Producer for e-learning based on actual customer interactions
- Actionable business intelligence through business analytics studies
- Program-wide quality management, including transaction monitoring and calibration activities specific to contact centers

Our scalable contact center solution allows us to quickly increase or decrease staffing levels to accommodate fluctuating call volumes in a cost-effective manner. For example, in May 2004, we brought on 900 CSRs to respond to inquiries related to the MMA Prescription Drug Discount Card implementation. We also provided additional training and scripts for CSRs and new routing plans for callers with Prescription Drug Discount Card questions. We supported CMS in handling 3.8 million calls in May 2004, exceeding combined January through April 2004 call volumes of 3.65 million. During the fall of 2005 and 2006, Vangent again supported CMS in handling call volume spikes, resulting from the MMA Prescription Drug Coverage Program and beneficiary enrollment in corresponding prescription drug plans, including an unprecedented call volume spike of more than 4.5 million in November 2005.

This work requires extensive Medicare/Medicaid subject matter expertise, and the ability to provide high-quality information in a complex, dynamically changing environment. To ensure consistency of information, we use a knowledge base built into the CSRs’ desktop application. This knowledge base contains approximately 500 scripts used by Vangent CSRs to respond to inquiries. To prepare CSRs to handle the complexity of BCC calls, we conduct a rigorous training and certification program. CSRs are paced through a series of preparatory exercises, including role-playing, mock calls from internal staff, listening to live calls, and sitting side-by-side with experienced CSRs. Before taking live customer calls, our CSRs must achieve at least a 90 percent score on a comprehensive written test.

The Results

Vangent's BCC team has an unwavering commitment to meeting and exceeding CMS' requirements. Since contract inception, each component of our contact center solution has continued to adapt and evolve; including contact center operational procedures, management processes, project schedules, facilities, and staffing. From an original contact center staff of fewer than 600 to a peak staff of close to 5,000, Vangent has demonstrated that it understands how to develop and maintain successful contact center operations. We respond with staffing and operations flexibility to fluctuating call volumes throughout the year; our CSRs currently respond to between 800,000 and 1.2 million calls per month for CMS. During 2006, our CSRs responded to approximately 12.7 million calls from seven steady-state and multiple spike-state locations across the United States.

We consistently meet or exceed BCC performance metrics, including CMS' service level requirements for average speed of answer and abandonment rate. We consistently achieve 95 percent or greater in customer satisfaction through courtesy and politeness, and exceed 90 percent on quality assurance scores. We also review content on a monthly basis in close collaboration with CMS, produce a monthly quality assurance report, and develop weekly training updates.

In years past, Vangent's contact center solution has received a number of awards for CMS, including a 2004 E-Gov Institute Pioneer Award and the 2004 Witness Systems "Innovator of the Year" Award for our home-based CSR initiative. Under our operation, CMS' data warehouse received the Technology Association of Iowa's 2006 IT Service Provider of the Year Award and was named a "Top 20" Industry Advisory Council (IAC) Excellence.Gov Award Finalist for 2006 based on the project's success in meeting information sharing objectives with collaboration and the use of best practices.

Contact Information

Vangent, Inc.
4250 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 1200
Arlington, VA 22203

Email: media@vangent.com
www.vangent.com