
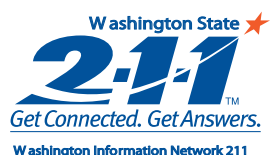


WIN211

Seven Sites, One ACD: inContact Answers the Call for Statewide Helpline

 Every year, the seven regional call centers in the non-profit Washington Information Network 2-1-1 (WIN211) receive tens of thousands of phone calls from residents seeking referrals to community resources. Since all calls come into the same 2-1-1 number and each center has different PBX equipment, the network requires an automatic call distributor (ACD) that can interoperate with all phone switches to route calls both between and within the seven sites. inContact's cloud-based call center platform has seamlessly handled the job since 2006 with **»a hosted ACD enabling unified call routing among the disparate phone equipment, »flexible on-the-fly routing, call queue, message and port allotment changes to accommodate shifting business needs and call volumes, »easy connectivity for information and referral specialists working from home, and »a no-installed-equipment model that saved \$640,000 in initial capital outlays alone.**



Business

Non-profit statewide helpline
win211.org

Challenges

- Seven-site statewide deployment
- Disparate PBX systems
- Flexible call routing
- Easy scripting for fast message changes
- On-the-fly scalability for emergencies
- Integrated call recording
- Common reporting system
- Rapid deployment
- Limited budget

Results

- One ACD for seven sites
- Unified call routing
- Flexible call routing options
- Instant port expansion ability
- Drag-and-drop script changes
- Easy statewide reporting
- No upfront equipment costs
- Fast statewide implementation
- No in-house maintenance needed
- Easy work-at-home setup

Common System Needed

Washington's statewide WIN211 initiative was launched in the wake of a Federal Communications Commission ruling that designated the 2-1-1 dialing code for the use of public helplines providing community services information and referrals. The easy-to-remember three-digit code was intended to help consumers navigate their way through the health and human services maze in their local areas, from food and shelter assistance to employment, medical care, domestic violence and beyond.

While there were a growing number of local 2-1-1 services across the country when the Washington network was being planned in 2004, WIN211 was among the first 2-1-1 programs designed as a statewide implementation to enable full geographic coverage, consistent quality of service, and easy multi-site collaboration in the event of disaster. That made it one of the first 2-1-1 projects to confront the technical complications of setting up a common call handling and data management system for multiple independently operated call centers.

The system had to be capable of directing incoming calls to the appropriate individual center based on the caller's location, time of day and day of week. It also had to easily transfer calls between centers or off-site to accommodate call overflow, varying office schedules, work-at-home scenarios and emergency situations; rapidly expand and contract according to call volume; and be compatible with existing Avaya, Qwest and Nortel switches at the established local call centers and United Way offices that would be taking 2-1-1 calls.

"We knew that proper call management was critical for WIN211's success, but we needed the right technology to make it work," said Mike Maloy, IT Manager of King County 211 in Seattle, the largest center in the WIN211 network. "As it turned out, the most efficient and cost-effective strategy

was to use a hosted call center platform requiring no on-site equipment installation. That's where inContact came in."

Moving into the Cloud

Of the five vendors who responded to WIN211's bid request, three offered conventional premises-based solutions requiring hardware and software installation at each call center, while two proposed Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) platforms with all functionality delivered over an Internet connection.

After multiple in-depth evaluations, the inContact platform ranked #1 on all criteria, including its ability to meet WIN211's demanding technical requirements. It also topped the list for the features, functions and easy-to-use interfaces available to both agents and supervisors, ranging from easy rollover of calls between centers to integrated call recording.

"We wanted to record calls for use during training and coaching as well as for quality assurance, but some of the vendors who bid on the project could only offer third-party add-on applications," said Susan Gemmel, Director of King County 2-1-1. "With inContact, we didn't have that extra expense because call recording was built into the platform, and we didn't have to worry about whether the different pieces of the system would be compatible."

The upfront inContact investment was also one-sixth that of the leading premises-based contender, thanks primarily to the SaaS delivery model. "We didn't need a hardware installation at each site," Maloy said. "That saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in capital expenses as well as eliminating the need for IT oversight at each location."

Easy Centralized Management

Today, the inContact ACD intelligently routes each incoming 2-1-1 call to the appropriate center in the WIN211 network based on the area code in the caller ID. VoIP calls and those with blocked caller IDs are routed to one common facility and transferred manually.

Each call center continues to operate independently, with its own call queues, IVR and on-hold messages created and changed as needed using inContact's configuration and scripting tools. At the same time, the shared telephone system offers major backup, reporting and management benefits to the entire WIN211 network.

If one office is closed for a few hours for a staff meeting, for example, calls can be easily re-routed to another site because all 90 information and referral specialists in the network have access to the same statewide database of social services information. If one center is overwhelmed with calls because of a local emergency, others can share the burden.

In addition, all call data is recorded in a common database for easy systemwide reporting as well as site-to-site comparisons. inContact's visual dashboard provides a real-time view of 2-1-1 call activity anywhere in the state. The system's call recording feature captures a specified number of calls per specialist each month for quality evaluation by individual centers as well as statewide WIN211 personnel. And so on.

"With seven non-profit call centers handling 2-1-1 calls, our major telephony challenge involves routing all incoming calls to the center that is closest to the caller's community even though each site has a different PBX system. inContact's hosted platform does the job at one-sixth the cost of a premises-based system."

Mike Maloy
I.T. Manager
King County 2-1-1

On Site or At Home

For WIN211, another advantage of the inContact deployment has been the availability of easy, low-cost scalability and home agent support not easily achievable with installed phone equipment.

During the busy tax and holiday seasons or when local disasters like a severe snowstorm, flood or H1N1 flu type of event occur, WIN211 uses inContact's ability to instantly add extra ports to field rising call volumes and then cut back when the call load shrinks. The organization pays only for the number of seats used in a given month, eliminating the expense of buying a larger system to accommodate occasional call surges.

Several WIN211 call centers also take advantage of inContact's ability to support work-at-home agents with only a standard phone, home computer and Internet connection. The service has used this capability to solve problems such as limited facility space, provide additional flexibility for experienced information and referral specialists, and prepare for emergency scenarios where home-based call specialists may be required.

With features like these, inContact is helping WIN211 efficiently respond to inquiries from callers ranging from single mothers needing food for their children to senior citizens searching for in-home care. For nearly 400,000 callers per year as of 2009, that is making a world of difference.