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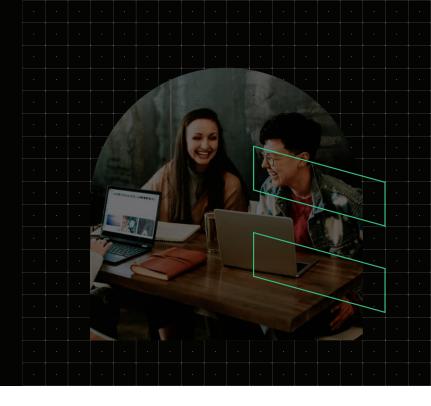
From calls to connections: WSU's strategic shift to digital-first student services

Western Sydney University (WSU) embraces multichannel Cloud communications and the power of AI to transform 12 contact centres

By leveraging the latest Cloud platforms, modern communications and artificial intelligence, WSU has rapidly transformed student service experiences and staff workflows in partnership with Nexon Asia Pacific and Genesys.

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

As one of Australia's leading universities, with some 2600 staff looking after 47,000 local and international students across 12 campuses – each with a student support hub – WSU faced a complex and growing customer service challenge.

One million reasons to make a bold call

Before their major digital transformation, voice was WSU's primary communication and support channel. Every year, service agents received over one million phone calls from across their campuses, startup incubators and community support programs.

With fast-growing student numbers and new enquiries, the student care team could not keep up with demand. Fragmented legacy IT platforms across 12 contact centres required agents to switch between multiple systems and juggle manual processes, which led to unanswered calls, inefficient service, disjointed student experiences, and staff frustration.

Increasingly, students also preferred to interact via digital channels like SMS, WhatsApp and web messaging, which were limited and decentralised at WSU.

Having identified that the latest customer service tools could resolve these issues, WSU began searching for a partner to help them modernise.

"Customer experience is critical to Western Sydney University and its success at being able to support students becoming lifelong learners," explains Scott Synder, Chief Information & Digital Officer at WSU.

"Prior to moving platforms, the university's communications channels were quite limited. So the transformation of the contact centres was what the university was really looking for."

Moving fast to kick off the new student year

Having identified the urgent need to move platforms, WSU needed to act quickly to complete the transition before the flood of new semester enquiries.

After careful consideration, the university's business and technology teams decided to migrate all its contact centres to the Genesys Cloud omnichannel customer service platform, engaging Nexon as their strategic consulting and technology implementation partner.

At a glance

Industry
Higher education

Challenges
- Legacy technology unable to handle increasing enquiries
- Agents switched applications to handle different channels
- Inability to scale WhatsApp, a popular student channel
- Inability to engage student and deliver a contemporary CX

Solution
- Inbound & outbound voice
- Two-way SMS & WhatsApp messaging
- Web messaging & email
- Digital bots & multichannel surveys
- Knowledge management
- Predictive engagement

Outcome
- **45% reduction** in abandoned calls
- **65% improvement** in average speed of answer
- **90% customer satisfaction** (CSAT) score
- Strong interaction growth across digital channels
- Centralised multichannel student services
- Improved employee satisfaction

With the project kicking off in December, the team had just six weeks – including the holiday break – to go live in time for the new year rush. The first and largest WSU contact centre went live on Genesys Cloud in January, followed closely by the second largest in February, just in time for the peak period of student engagement.

The following five months were dedicated to transitioning all remaining contact centres to the new AI-powered experience orchestration platform, incorporating features such as email and outbound SMS campaigns. With meticulous transition planning and streamlined implementation, each contact centre migration was completed within two weeks to limit disruption.

The second half of the year commenced a new delivery phase focusing on digital and innovation channels, including web messaging, WhatsApp, predictive engagement, digital bots integration, and knowledge management.

"It was a complete game changer"

"In our previous system, we couldn't handle 100 calls queued. We very quickly went to being able to handle and queue 500 student enquiries without any impact to the experience," explains Sara Tavora, Senior Manager of the Student Services Hub at WSU.

This shift from a voice-based contact center to a cloud-based omnichannel platform has increased its load capacity, with 45% reduction in abandon calls but has also significantly improved average response times with 15 minute reduction in average speed of answer in 2023.

This strategic transformation has empowered students to interact seamlessly across various channels, including inbound and outbound voice, web messaging, email, two-way SMS and WhatsApp. This has resulted in personalised experiences and prompt responses – all with more efficient staff workloads.

Reshaping student and employee experience

In the initial consultations with Nexon, WSU made it clear that a smooth customer and employee experience (CX/EX) would be a key measure of success. Deploying new technology is only effective if people are enthusiastic about the tools and use them in their day-to-day roles. Nexon worked closely with the WSU team to bring them on the journey.

"It's easy in IT to put a package in, it's very hard to get the business groups to not just embrace it, but to reform the way they've done things for the last umpteen years. It's a completely different mindset, a completely different way of working for the call centre staff, and that's exactly the outcome the university is looking for," says Scott.

"When we made the change it had huge impacts instantly with our team. We are seeing really good results in terms of how the customers are responding – both students and staff on campus," says Ellie Trajkovska, Director of User Experience & IT Support at WSU.

For example, agents no longer need to switch systems to access different channels, repetitive tasks are automated with script buttons, voice-to-text transcription saves time, and single-view dashboards provide better workload and productivity management oversight.

An average of 90% customer satisfaction scores (CSAT) and overwhelmingly positive agent feedback demonstrate the positive impact on students, with employees praising its reliability, flexibility and ability to simplify support tasks.

Connecting with students on their preferred channels

The omnichannel contact centre has enabled WSU to efficiently handle an ever-growing 573,000 interactions in less than a year. As proof that students love the convenience of messaging, some 10,000 digital interactions were recorded just a few months after launch.

"We use Genesys for voice, email, web chat, SMS and WhatsApp. Two-way SMS is fantastic for us, particularly with our market being students who are on their phones and would like to avoid phone calls," says Sara.

With a strong foundation, the best is yet to come

Beyond communications, WSU has integrated seven separate knowledge bases into one single source of truth using Genesys. This has transformed how students and staff source information and complete standard support tasks, with DIY support easing the pressure on agents.

A new self-service bot consolidating knowledge from multiple sources is accelerating service. Initial data reveal that 78% of its users are happy with their response without asking to speak to an agent, while the other 22% are asked a few qualifying questions and automatically routed to the most relevant department and consultant for assisted service.

With centralised systems and information, WSU can leverage emerging data-driven AI innovations such as self-service chatbots and predictive engagement solutions that analyse visitors' past behaviours, predict their needs, and offer personalised assistance.

"Personalisation directly impacts the way the customer succeeds here for us – that's our students, our lecturers and our teaching staff," says Ellie.

For example, Launchpad – a division of WSU that supports local entrepreneurs and start-ups – has deployed new Genesys features to offer 24/7 advice and support to the local community through digital channels.

With the help of Nexon and Genesys, the WSU team has positioned itself as a future-ready institution focused on enhancing student engagement and operational efficiency.

> " [Digital] is the channel that international students most want to engage us through, and so the beauty of the Genesys package is the ability to incorporate these additional channels.
>
> Scott Synder
> Chief Information & Digital Officer at WSU

About WSU

Western Sydney University is one of Australia's leading higher learning institutions, ranked among the top 250 universities globally. Founded in 1989, WSU has grown to become a multi-campus facility offering undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral research degrees. It offers courses in various areas, including business, education, social sciences and health care.

About Nexon

Nexon is an award-winning digital consulting and managed services partner for mid-market, enterprise and government organisations across Australia. We offer clients a uniquely broad suite of solutions requiring end-to-end capabilities coupled with specialist expertise in security, Cloud and digital solutions. As a certified and accredited local and state government provider, CREST and ISO-certified, Nexon partners with world-class technology vendors to deliver innovative and integrated solutions.

To find out about Nexon, Call us at **1300 800 000**, email us at **enquiries@corp.nexon.com.au**, or visit **nexon.com.au**

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