

Case Study

Cologne sets a new standard for citizen services



At a glance

Company

City of Cologne, Germany
www.stadt-koeln.de

Industry

Public sector / government

Key figures

Provide citizen services for 2.5 million residents.
1.1 million calls per year
>85 % first contact resolution rate

Solution

USU Knowledge Management

Challenges

- Development and launch of citizens' hotline as the central point of contact for all municipal matters, reducing the workload 60+ offices
- Implementation of knowledge management system and processes to provide service staff with on-demand support information
- Increase in first-contact resolution rate and reduction of call handling time across a wide range of issues

Why USU

- USU offered the best price-performance ratio of all vendors in the RFP
- Advanced technology and consulting expertise combined with positive customer feedback
- and an excellent track record with customer projects
- USU's predictive knowledge management solution met or exceeded all technical requirements and was easy to integrate

Project milestones

- Clearly defined goals of modern citizen services including their organizational processes
- Structuring and classification of document contents in the KM system
- Implementation of the software and integration of multiple data sources
- Implementation of the custom roles and rights
- Successive expansion of services for neighboring cities including Bonn, Leverkusen and Bergisch Gladbach
- Cooperation with national public services phone number 115

Solutions/Benefits

- Improved image and trust via a modern customer service portfolio for citizens
- First-contact resolution rate increase from 50 to >85%,
- 60% reduction of average handling time from 300 to 120 seconds,
- 66% reduction in new employee training time
- Higher efficiency and quality enabled expansion of services to other cities
- Seamless integration into the nationwide 115 knowledge management system



A single source of truth for citizens services

Many tasks in the municipal administration are divided by topic instead of by process. In most cases, there is no central point of contact where residents can find information from a single authoritative source.

The city of Cologne's goal was to create a municipal call center to serve as a central point of contact for all citizen inquiries, successfully resolve issues on the first call and serve as a role model to other cities. This saves residents from long and unnecessary wait times and simultaneously reduces the workload across 60 different city offices.

Due to the wide variety of topics involved, an integrated knowledge management solution was crucial to enabling service staff to quickly find and access support documents on-demand, and respond with accurate answers.

“The many letters of thanks we've received clearly shows the positive impact of our improved service on the residents Cologne, who appreciate the fast, friendly service as well as the competence and quality of the information provided.

Axel Hansen, Deputy Head of Citizens' Helpline,
City of Cologne

From bureaucratic answers to every day help

Once the project began, the first task was structuring and classifying the huge volume of content. The prerequisite for high quality service was the ability to share knowledge between relevant city government offices to service agents and finally to local residents. To this end, the city implemented USU's predictive knowledge management solution which ensured quick and easy access to 15,000+ internal and external documents.

Agents also benefit from the ability to search for natural language instead of classic keywords and can search for inquiries as citizens describe them. The system automatically qualifies and filters visible results and learns from the most used for ongoing search algorithm improvement. As part of the ongoing customer relationship, from 2002 to 2017 the system was continually optimized and customized to the city's needs and has served as the basis for consistent, high-quality service in both the past and future.

Cologne's success a role model for public services number 115

With over a million residents, the city receives an average of 6,000 calls per day and up to 10,000 during special events such as Carnival. Agents provide support for 4,000 different topics across all municipal services and matters. In addition, appointments are made, complaints received and managed and special services provided. Despite the high call volume and range of issues, 85% of inquiries are resolved in the first call.

The average response time is now less than 15 seconds. For the more complex questions, the back office are able to return calls within two hours.

Word of Cologne's success has spread and neighboring cities such as Bonn, Leverkusen, Siegburg, Bergisch Gladbach and the Rhein-Erft district now use the services and infrastructure of Cologne's contact center.

At the end of 2015 the city of Cologne's citizens' hotline was also switched to the standardized public authority number 115. The initiative for a nationwide uniform public services number was based on the successful model of Cologne.



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