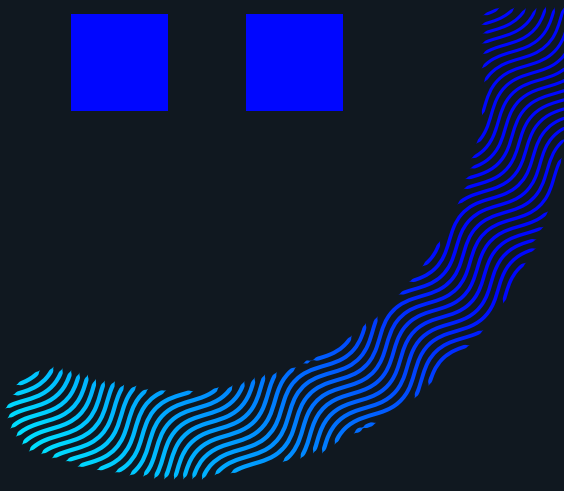# County of San Diego Perks Up Callers and Employees Alike with NICE CXone and Gamification

The County of San Diego's Access Customer Service Center experienced long delays, high rates of caller dissatisfaction, and growing employee burnout. An overhaul of their contact center using CXone solutions solved technical challenges and improved call handling, and the platform's gamification features provided strong employee engagement.
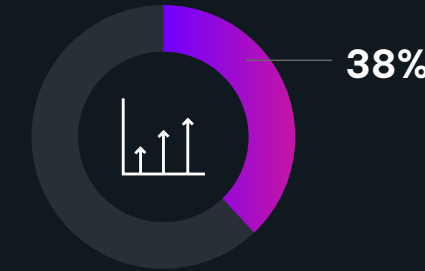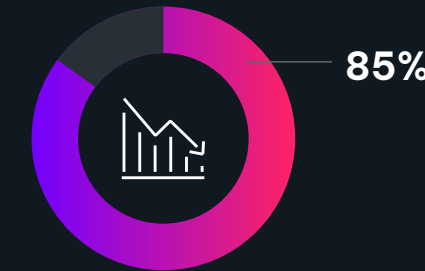
12,515
Average number of gamification coins earned by agents each month
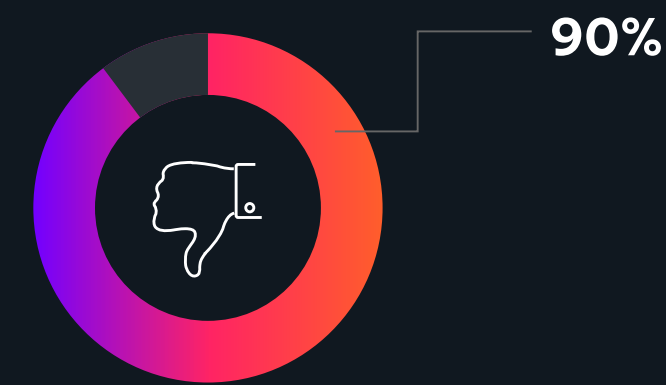
Monthly call volume is **UP 38%** — 38%
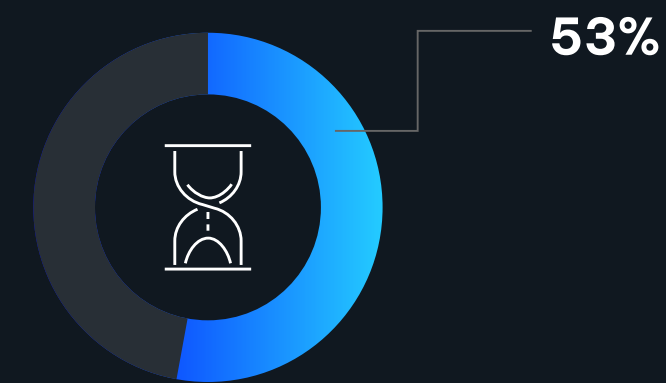
But average speed of answer is **DOWN 85%** — 85%

90% DECREASE
In negative feedback rate from caller surveys — 90%

53% DECREASE
In average handle time — 53%

CUSTOMER PROFILE

ABOUT The Access Customer Service Center provides access to a broad range of health and social services to over 3.3 million residents in the County of San Diego. These crucial services promote wellness, self-sufficiency, and a better quality of life for individuals and families by directly providing food assistance, cash, healthcare, employment services and housing support to over one third of the residents of the County of San Diego. As a gateway to this social safety net, Access prides itself on providing world-class customer service while serving the most vulnerable population and supporting healthy, safe, and thriving communities.

INDUSTRY Government

WEBSITE www.livewellsd.org

LOCATION Headquartered in San Diego, CA

AGENTS 2500+ employees using NICE solutions

GOALS
- Improve customer service experience
- Improve overall employee engagement
- Reduce handle times
- Reduce negative caller events (long holds, disconnects, etc.)

PRODUCTS
- NICE CXone Feedback Management
- NICE CXone Interaction Analytics
- NICE CXone Performance Management
- NICE CXone Quality Management
- NICE CXone Workforce Management

FEATURES
- Comprehensive cloud-based contact center
- Extensive gamification and employee engagement
- Easy customization

01 THE BEFORE

A manual, sluggish service center

This call center, tasked with connecting millions of county residents with essential services, was a time capsule of manual, inefficient processes. Leadership relied heavily on spreadsheets and manual reports that frequently needed multiple layers of review and approval and were often not delivered in a timely or actionable manner. Employee engagement could not be measured in any meaningful or automated way.

Supervisory call review was entirely manual and subjective. Supervisors would listen to calls, type out their own transcripts, and decide what action to take entirely on their own. Customer surveys were manually transcribed to spreadsheets. Employee recognition and reward was largely done on a monthly cadence and was heavily oriented around call volume. This limited the range of employees likely to be recognized, and offered little incentive to persevere during a difficult day or week. Self-service options were confusing and housed in a complex IVR. Any meaningful changes to the IVR required paid consultants and could take days or weeks to implement.

02 DESIRE TO CHANGE

Re-committing to both citizens and employees

New leadership and a county-wide emphasis on both workforce empowerment and a customer service mindset motivated the county center to take a close look at inefficiencies and gaps in performance. Long waits, busy signals, and dropped calls were identified as customer service issues, amplified by an unacceptably high rate of negative caller feedback. The county wanted to see improved customer satisfaction, average speed of answer, and average handle time, while also instilling greater employee engagement.

Leaders also wanted to introduce more objective methods to measure work-from-anywhere performance, and reduce the amount of manual effort involved in evaluations. They also wanted more transparency for agent performance data, with the

goal of helping agents recognize the need in real-time to improve call handling times. To provide more incentive to improve productivity, Access decision-makers wanted to expand the employee recognition process to provide daily and weekly motivation for high-level performance.

03 THE SOLUTION

Smooth transition to a complete overhaul

Access rebuilt its contact center operation on NICE CXone, gaining access to a wide range of capabilities that were not present with the previous systems, including interaction analytics, automated feedback collection, comprehensive workforce management, and cloud telephony. Leadership eased the transition with engaging videos and Q&A sessions with employees as well as mock go-live exercises, which helped make the December 2019 transition smooth and successful.

The first wave of implementation added performance monitoring and efficiency metrics to the toolkit for the first time. Feedback Management made it possible to automate voice of the customer data so that Access could easily monitor how these changes affected their citizens. Other conveniences included a simpler and more reliable call escalation process for agents, and a callback feature to avoid long hold times. This option is valuable for many Access callers who have subsidized cell phones with limited monthly minutes.

Callers noticed a significant change when Access decided post-implementation to radically change the telephone front end, collapsing what had been a 200+ node IVR down to three options. "We decided that we wanted our customers to reach us right away and not get lost in the system. And what was great about NICE is that we could make that change on our own," said a County of San Diego human services operations manager. On top of overwhelmingly positive responses from citizens, Access instilled a data-driven culture with Interaction Analytics and Sentiment Analysis to continually improve and monitor citizens' experiences across the board.

The next wave of implementation began in August 2020, when gamification was rolled out via Performance Management. Coins and special contest awards are earned based on volume as well as quality metrics, and can be redeemed for both virtual avatar rewards and physical branded merchandise. "We went from handing out monthly paper certificates to having so much more for them to earn. It pulls staff out of the day-to-day of mundane calls and gives them more purpose," said County of San Diego chief of self-sufficiency services.

04 THE RESULTS

Rousing success

The Access Customer Service Center considers its objectives met and exceeded following the implementation of NICE

CXone. Targeted productivity measurements have helped staff achieve higher levels of performance.

Automation now provides improved feedback collection and speech analysis, helping supervisors identify issues and immediately identify calls for review or for possible referral to the internal Call of Fame award and other rewards for high-quality, positive interactions.

Agents have flocked to the gamification program and a typical agent earns enough coins each month to make at least one purchase. The addition of branded merchandise to the Marketplace in late 2021 further boosted interest in the program, which includes daily and weekly games, new monthly contests, and special events. High customer satisfaction (CSAT) scores, peer referrals, and special team-only contests have also raised engagement.

The CXone platform and a more engaged workforce have combined to deliver substantial improvements in several KPIs. Average speed of answer is down 85% even as call volume has climbed significantly due to pandemic-era needs and preference for remote contact. Handle time has improved so much that the average agent's calls per hour has nearly doubled. Positive CSAT results have risen and negative results have been nearly eliminated. "These results show that our measures not only improved productivity of our staff but also service levels. This was only made possible by the innovations our agency was able to leverage though NICE CXone," said a County of San Diego director.

05 THE FUTURE

More untapped improvements

Access leadership will continue to experiment with gamification and build on early successes. A recent opt-in bi-annual tournament attracted 56% of agents to sign up, and agents have asked for more avatar customization options. Interest in the program is also expected to grow as higher-tier items are redeemed from the Marketplace. A team of supervisors has been assigned the primary duty of proposing more innovations through the NICE CXone feature set.

"When you want to build a great call center, what do you do? You find **the best call center system,** one used by both public organizations and private organizations that are doing excellent work. **We know that NICE is always looking at what's next and what's better, and brings that to every update.**"

HUMAN SERVICES OPERATIONS MANAGER
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
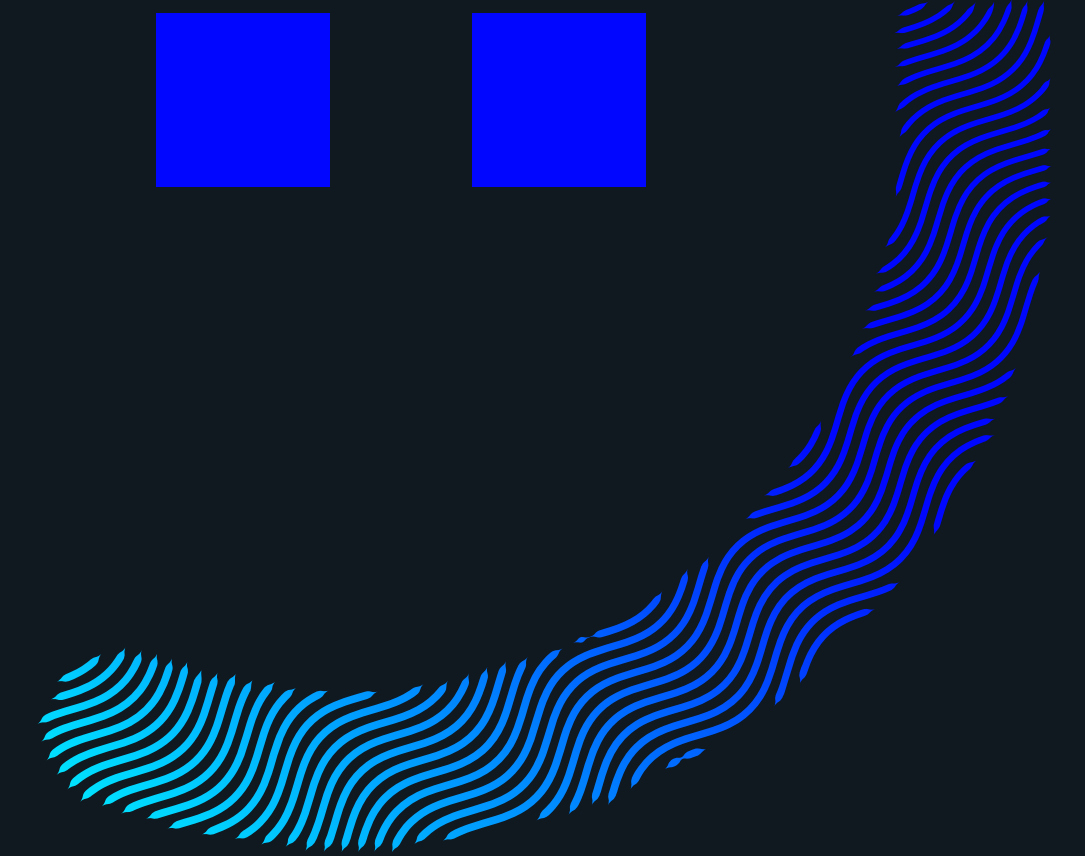
About NICE

With NICE (Nasdaq: NICE), it's never been easier for organizations of all sizes around the globe to create extraordinary customer experiences while meeting key business metrics. Featuring the world's #1 cloud native customer experience platform, CXone, NICE is a worldwide leader in AI-powered self-service and agent-assisted CX software for the contact center—and beyond. Over 25,000 organizations in more than 150 countries, including over 85 of the Fortune 100 companies, partner with NICE to transform—and elevate—every customer interaction.

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