Thanks to the recording of all customer inquiries, we can resolve defects and customer problems significantly faster.

Johann-Josef Jossen, Head of Contact Center, SBB

Journey for improvement
SBB, Swiss Federal Railways, transports around one million passengers and 185,000 tons of freight every day. With 3,260km of routes covered by 10,772 trains daily, SBB still achieves 92.6% train punctuality for passenger services. SBB firmly believes and practices that listening to customers is part of a comprehensive continuous service improvement strategy. Its contact center handles more than three million customer interactions a year, triaging and forwarding 200,000 customer inquiries and 55,000 defect reports to other departments for resolution.
Until May 2021, contact center employees worked with a wide variety of applications that did not integrate with each other. Not all customer inquiries were systematically recorded, which meant there was no single overall view of customer needs. Only inquiries via contact forms and email could be analyzed and evaluated, making it difficult to effectively transfer customer concerns and defect reports to other company departments for resolution.

Impact on employee productivity
The system’s limitations made it difficult to implement new communication channels such as Live Chat and Messenger, and the lack of transparency meant monitoring individual service levels was problematic. This had a negative impact on employee productivity, and the lack of a 360-degree view reduced the amount of information that could be fed back to customers.

“Live Chat is a win-win for both our customers and our Customer Services teams.”
Kilian Salzgeber, Junior Project Manager – Digitalization, SBB Contact Center

“We have worked continuously to improve productivity and quality in recent years, but further improvement is an important step in the implementation of the SBB strategy,” says Edwin Imsand, Deputy Head of Contact Center, SBB. “The aim is to integrate the needs of customers even more strongly into processes, service creation and service provision, as well as to decrease the turnaround time for remedying defects and transparency vis-à-vis our customers and our employees.”
To achieve this, SBB needed to implement a single, unified system that would be more accessible for customers and would deliver simplified and standardized workflows for employees. Specifically, SBB’s goal was to record, categorize, and assign every customer inquiry systematically to the appropriate customer profile, regardless of the channel through which the inquiry arrived. In this way, SBB would gain a complete 360-degree view of the customer and their specific transportation needs.

Against this backdrop, SBB decided to extend its existing use of the Now Platform by implementing ServiceNow Customer Service Management (CSM).

Integrated service management
Close co-operation between the business and IT was a crucial aspect of placing customer needs at the center of SBB’s operational activities and strategic planning.
To ensure that implementation standards were met, a uniform end-to-end process was defined at the beginning of 2020, with input from all relevant SBB divisions and ServiceNow representatives. The goal was to create a uniform process by which all customer inquiries could be handled in the SBB contact center.

Requirements were then implemented by IT in two-week sprints. This agile BizDevOps process meant certain elements would be in use before the main launch in May 2021; these included the handling of national passenger rights in January 2021, followed by a February 2021 pilot for all customer inquiries relating to online and mobile sales, and the launch of B2B business inquiries in April 2021.

A cross-divisional ticketing system now supports the end-to-end value chain to deliver transparency, traceability, and an increasing level of automation. The introduction of Agent Workspace and Advanced Work Assignment (AWA) speed up bundling and triage of inquiries from a variety of communications such as telephone, email, contact forms, and ServiceNow Engagement Messenger, which combines chatbot and Live Chat functions.

**Defined customer satisfaction targets**

A uniform, end-to-end process for customer contact ensures that every customer inquiry is answered in line with the specified service level, and that necessary measures to eliminate faults and improve quality are implemented. Customers also have full transparency into whether SBB is keeping customer promises.

“Since the introduction of the unified end-to-end process, all customer requests have been systematically recorded and processed in ServiceNow. This has added significant value for our customers and employees,” says Johann-Josef Jossen, Head of Contact Center at SBB. “Thanks to the structured recording of all customer inquiries, we are able to resolve defects and customer problems significantly faster.”

Using CSM, SBB has unified all of its channels of communication. The help and contact portal on sbb.ch directs customer inquiries to the customer’s preferred channels: telephone, contact form, or Live Chat. Populating a multi-step contact form on sbb.ch, for example, now creates a case directly in CSM.
Cases are then automatically routed to SBB staff via AWA and assigned to available people with the appropriate skills.

CSM is also integrated directly with SAP, which in turn links to the order management of ticket-vending machines.

**SBB Live Chat: win-win for customers and agents**

With the unified CSM application running, SBB can now offer a full range of service options. The new unified, end-to-end process for customer inquiries has also been foundational for an important innovation on the SBB website: SBB Live Chat, powered by the ServiceNow Engagement Messenger, part of the CSM suite. This new application, which went live for SBB’s private passenger business in June 2022, allows customers to register service issues interactively. A chatbot provides immediate answers to simple inquiries within seconds, and routes more complex queries to the appropriate customer service team.

Using Live Chat, agents can see which topics the customer has already discussed with the chatbot, and then respond directly. This represents a vast improvement over the previous telephone-based system where customers often had to be identified using a series of targeted questions.

“Live Chat is a win-win for both our customers and our customer services teams,” says Kilian Salzgeber, Junior Project Manager for Digitalization at the SBB contact center. “Customers benefit from a better experience, while our agents can immediately assist customers with their specific requests, rather than passing them on to another agent.”

Moreover, the ServiceNow Engagement Messenger allows SBB agents to engage with several customers in parallel, compared to only one at a time with traditional channels such as phone or email, thereby speeding up response times. What may be most significant, however, is that SBB means a growing number of customers can resolve queries in self-service mode, rather than having to wait for an agent to reply.

**Transparent processes and ambitious outcomes**

SBB measures quality by continuously surveying customers and employees to ensure improvements across its business, and plans to use ServiceNow CSM to help achieve some key targets: the company is aiming for sustainable increases in both customer satisfaction and the number of cases resolved on first contact, along with a significant streamlining of operational processes.

More importantly, SBB has created a consistent experience for employees and transparency for its customers. The support of ServiceNow’s integrated knowledge management also means staff can easily and conveniently access appropriate text modules and information when processing cases, ensuring a long-term increase in efficiency and making a significant contribution to its ‘first contact resolution’ rate.