



Barking & Dagenham

THE CLIENT

London Borough of Barking & Dagenham (LBBD) council serves nearly 200,000 residents living in a culturally diverse area of East London.

The council's Customer Services team offers advice and support on housing, financial and general issues, with its contact centre handling over 300,000 calls annually.

LBBD is committed to delivering the highest service standards to all, in line with its corporate vision: One borough; one community; no one left behind.



Business Needs

To assess quality assurance, LBBD's Customer Service management team was previously dependent upon random, manual sampling of calls handled by its 53 full and part-time agents.

This was supplemented by a transcription service embedded within the council's telephony system which, Sabina Onwuka, Head of Customer Services, reports failed to provide the level of insight necessary to inform service and performance reporting.

"I was thinking of a new way to conduct our quality monitoring, moving away from the traditional method of going in, searching for a call, marking it and giving feedback. The way data was broken down was not exactly how I wanted it to be either," she says, adding that the old school method didn't "give a helicopter view of performance across the service or within actual teams."

A further complication was that LBBD's Customer Services operation had moved from being 100% office based, to 100% working from home. This created its own challenge in monitoring not just agent performance, but their wellbeing.

Another key consideration was how the council might further enhance the support it provides to vulnerable residents.



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Sabina Onwuka, Head of Customer Services,
London Borough of Barking & Dagenham Council.

Whilst the council holds information on its Customer Relationship Management platform of vulnerabilities which residents have themselves declared, it was keen to identify any fresh or undeclared challenges that emerged over time. This would allow its agents to signpost a greater number of potentially vulnerable residents to relevant support services.

Residents in every ward face particularly high physical and financial barriers to accessing housing and other services, whilst the borough has pockets of deprivation which are amongst the highest 10% in the country.

LBBD is also very culturally diverse, with over 180 languages spoken. Whilst the vast majority speak English, a small percentage have either poor or no grasp of the English language.

These are just some of the socio-economic indicators which can impact demand for, and may impede access to, local authority services. Looking for a more accurate, efficient and holistic solution, Sabina began researching the various speech analytics and customer experience solutions on the market.

"I was at one of the technology summits and Ian Taylor from Avoira presented Xdroid, I looked at it and thought this actually fits what I'm looking for," recalls Sabina. "It can do exactly what I want to and a bit more."



The Solution

Her choice of Xdroid proved perceptive as the cutting-edge speech analytics tool proved just the ticket for LBBD's busy contact centres.

These deal with a wide range of issues, sometimes sensitive, which range from arranging repairs across its housing estate, welfare and debt - Council Tax, rents and benefits - and everything from anti-social behaviour, potholes and social care.

By swiftly capturing, transcribing, scoring and reporting on, not just a random sample, but every single one of the 300,000 calls handled annually, Xdroid delivers the holistic view Sabina sought.

Working in partnership with our CX team, Sabina could also implement a bespoke solution which satisfied the specific needs of the council. This included creating tags to help identify vulnerable customers and functional reporting such as collection of contact data, compliance with GDPR and the use of an appropriate greeting.

One element that Sabina particularly liked was the ability to deploy tags to identify and flag concerning conversations.



"One thing that really drew me to Xdroid was its ability to support agent wellbeing. There aren't many systems out there which can identify when an agent has had so many horrible calls and then alert their manager and say 'hey, you need check on your staff about this!'"

She's also full of praise for the way the Avaira team worked with her, a process that also yielded invaluable insights with which to inform internal processes.

"It went really well. The Avaira guys really focused our eyes on things, gave us insights in areas that we had not picked on, to be honest, it wasn't a surprise to me because we weren't measuring a lot of our calls whereas with Xdroid it's the whole shabam!"

"It was definitely an eye-opener to understand what was being said, how it was being said and for Avaira to give us recommendations while building the tags. It gave us a whole new view of what we're doing and how we're measuring it."

She also commends our team for challenging orthodoxy whilst building the Xdroid solution. "They've been really good to work with, stretching us just as we've stretched them. When we discussed tags, they'd ask 'Have you thought about it this way?'"

"That healthy debate has been really helpful, as opposed to some suppliers who'll just say, 'you wanted it red, we're giving it to you in red'."



The Benefits

Xdroid's ability to capture and report on every call is a huge benefit, providing the 'helicopter view' Sabina desired whilst eliminating the time her performance coaches previously had to spend manually pulling and marking calls.

"Xdroid's telling me what's happening across my 300,000 calls," she says. "It captures exactly what's happened as opposed to simply noting that someone called for a repair. There could be something else discussed in that call that we need to know and that's captured."

She adds: "We'd already changed the culture of our staff, the way they think and ask questions to draw out things that our residents aren't saying, what I call the silent periods. They will not necessarily say 'I am vulnerable'."

"Xdroid helps us identify those periods and develop a conversation, then, before you know it you've found out that actually this resident needs more than a repair, they need Council Tax support or to visit a community hub because they're a single parent."

The ability to identify repeat calls is also helping to further enhance the service LBBB provides to its residents. Such calls may be indicative of a wider issue which, because they're flagged by Xdroid, the council can then investigate.

"Rather than just marking a call, Xdroid allows us to be a more pro-active. If someone is repeatedly calling, we can alert, say, the Landlord Service Officer or the rent department and suggest they do a welfare check."



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Similarly, the insights Xdroid yields informs agents of their own performance and highlights individual, team or departmental training needs to management.

"Xdroid is helping us to change conversations in our one-to-ones so we're not just coaching but mentoring. Our performance coaches will use the information from Xdroid to help them with coaching, support, training and any gap analysis that needs to be done.

"They now have a full view and can see if a service needs support in a particular area and then roll out a training programme."

The holistic view that Xdroid yields also gives added heft agent reviews, because they know it is scoring across all the calls they handle, not simply a small sample they might believe to be unrepresentative.

Automatic QA across the board also releases management time which can be devoted to performance and efficiency enhancing tasks. This in turn should foster higher first call resolution and further boost productivity.

With LBBB's finances stretched, as they are for all local authorities, such considerations are important. Now, more than ever, it's vital to squeeze every last drop of value from any council investment.

On this count, Xdroid also scores exceptionally well. "Xdroid is definitely worth the money," she concludes unequivocally.