Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery

How the Virtual, Crowdsourcing Model Ensures Seamless Service Operations During Planned and Unplanned Events

By Dan Kusel, Vice President and General Manager, Client Results, at Arise Virtual Solutions Inc.

In today's extremely competitive business environment, where customer expectations are higher than ever before, service interruptions are simply unacceptable. Regardless of the reason, busy signals or long on-hold times can damage brands, diminish loyalty and cause customers to switch to competitors. Yet, providing consistent service delivery during times of call volume fluctuations is a tremendous challenge.

Fortunately, Arise offers a solution.

Operating in a virtual environment, with a national network of professionals and sophisticated technology systems, Arise delivers uninterrupted service and important peace-of-mind in times of crisis.

Service Without Interruption

Whether it is operating in the aftermath of a tornado or providing customer care during a blizzard, Arise's virtual call center model with crowdsourcing can easily accommodate call volume fluctuations. Fortune 500 and other industry-leading organizations have partnered with Arise to fortify their operations during unforeseen events because its model has unique business-continuity capabilities unavailable in other types of call center environments.

Virtual Operations

In a virtual environment, customer service representatives work from geographically dispersed home offices. With no commutes, it is faster and easier for them to take calls at a moment's notice. In addition, the majority of virtual resources have part-time schedules set in 30-minute increments. Should a client need an immediate increase in call coverage, this vast resource of skilled customer service representatives can be quickly ramped up or down as necessary.

The workforce flexibility of virtual operations is especially beneficial during crisis situations. In the case of a nature disaster, for example, customer calls can easily be re-routed to skilled professionals located in unaffected areas. This is a direct contrast to a physical call center whose only option during a disaster is to shut down the facility and let calls go unanswered.

Business Continuity in All Situations

Passionate Professionals

Partnering with a virtual call center that provides services through crowdsourcing, using a network of independent business owners (IBOs) rather than employees, is another important element to providing seamless customer care during times of crisis. IBOs are constantly looking for opportunities to maximize revenue potential for themselves and their employees. Therefore, when a client unexpectedly needs help handling its call volumes, IBOs are usually eager to step up and accept the additional workload. This is a major advantage over the employee-based call center model where employees can be reluctant to work extra hours and frequently require over-time pay when they do.

State-of-the-Art Technology

Arise's advanced technology systems allows it to provide operational efficiencies not available in traditional brick-and-mortar environments. For example, to quickly engage an independent business owner for an immediate need, urgent service requests are sent through real-time communication channels such as instant messaging and text. Additionally, proprietary scheduling systems developed from years of first-hand experience, allow for on-the-fly adjustments to coverage levels, thereby ensuring high quality service at all times.

Help When It's Needed Most

In May 2011, the city of Joplin, MO was struck by a devastating tornado that killed 161 people and destroyed a third of city. One of the structures affected was the call center of a large telecommunications company.

The day after the tornado, Arise received a call from the telecom asking for help. Management wanted to offer Joplin-based employees the ability to spend the week with their families without having to worry about providing services. Arise rose to the challenge and for the entire week picked up 95% of the center's call volume (the other 5% was handled internally) with consistent service quality.

When the week was over, several IBO owners and their staff picked up shovels and helped Joplin residents begin to rebuild.

Mirroring Call Curves

The ability to mirror changes in call volumes with levels of resources is one of the strongest benefits Arise provides to its clients. Not only are service metrics held constant during unexpected events, but costs are kept to a minimum due to the unique combination of incremental scheduling and part-time professionals. At Arise, schedules are set in 30-minute increments according to forecasts. Also, payment only is made for actual time taking calls. This avoids paying for underutilized resources like those typically found in Brick-and-Mortar centers.

The majority of customer service professionals on Arise programs invest just part of each week taking calls, which creates a large network of resources that can be called upon when flexing is needed. Consider this example:

All 100 resources on a program average 10 hours a week.   A heat wave hits and a client needs to cover unplanned calls. If every resource added just one more hour a day for 5 days, the client would benefit from a 50% increase in coverage from knowledgeable professionals.

Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Case Studies

Industry leaders with well thought out business continuity and disaster recovery plans continue to deliver high quality services even during or following unplanned events.

Help After Hurricane Sandy

Early on October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy struck the Northeastern coastline. Among the devastation left in its path was a major cruise line, forced to reroute nine of its ships and 20,000 passengers. The cruise line was unable to handle internally the thousands of call resulting from last minute cancellations, port of call changes, and shortened itineraries. Leveraging its existing relationship with Arise, the cruise line was able to secure immediate assistance with a single phone call. Arise issued an urgent service request and added the equivalent of 120 full time resources to handle the unexpected call volume. This was a 60% increase in capacity over the forecast for that same period. Additionally, Arise and its IBOs worked closely with cruise line management to distribute updated policy information to affected customers.

Assistance When Disaster Strikes

When the cruise ship, Costa Concordia, partially sank on January 13th, 2012, after hitting a reef off the coast of Italy, Arise was one of the first companies a major cruise line called for assistance with handling calls from concerned customers. Detailed communications were delivered to Arise's IBOs and an urgent service request was sent out via text, phone and emails asking for additional assistance. Over the period of increased coverage, customer satisfaction remained steady and the cruise line's service metrics were consistent.

Better Results With Arise

The ability to provide continuous service during natural disasters, such as Hurricane Sandy or winter blizzards, as well as during planned events like product launches or seasonal business cycles, is a quantifiable advantage of virtual call centers and crowdsourcing. With the flexibility of a virtual environment, a large network of independent business owners, their skilled customer service representatives and an advanced technology infrastructure, virtual call centers give clients peace-of-mind knowing their customers will be insulated from potential service-impacting events.

Arise Virtual Solutions Inc.
3450 Lakeside Drive
Miramar, Florida 33027

US: 1.855.274.7301
UK: 44.0.795.780.3983
marketing@arise.com