

A FOUR-YEAR ODYSSEY OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION.





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Region: South England



Products/Services: Contact Centre, UCaaS, Digital Assistant, PfH



Primary Reason for Choice:

- Desire to move to the cloud,
- Unify Communications,
- Maximise Microsoft Investment.

A FOUR-YEAR ODYSSEY OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION.

A CASE STUDY ABOUT HOUSING SOLUTIONS' JOURNEY OF ENHANCING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT USING AI.

In the ever-evolving landscape of customer service within the housing sector, **Housing Solutions** has stood out as a forward-thinking organisation dedicated to leveraging technology to enhance customer engagement and operational efficiency. This case study delves into the transformative journey Housing Solutions embarked upon, when it decided to deploy the 8x8 Contact Centre and Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) across its business operations.

Faced with the challenges of an aging legacy telephony system that could no longer keep pace with the demands of modern communication, Housing Solutions recognised the need for a robust and scalable solution. The objective was clear: to implement a system that not only addressed the immediate communication inefficiencies but also laid the groundwork for a future-proof digital strategy that aligned with its corporate objectives of being safe, satisfied, and sustainable.

The decision to partner with Social Telecoms was a strategic move that promised to revolutionise the way Housing Solutions interacted with its customers. With a commitment to providing more than just a roof and four walls, Housing Solutions set out to create an environment where technology facilitated a seamless, intuitive, and responsive service experience for every customer.

This case study will explore the initial challenges, the strategic decisions that led to the adoption of 8x8's innovative solutions, and the subsequent evolution of services that have since become a benchmark for excellence in the housing sector. From AI-driven speech analytics to proactive digital assistants, we will uncover the layers of digital transformation that have not only met but exceeded the expectations set forth by Housing Solutions' ambitious digital strategy.

PROJECT GENESIS

The genesis of Housing Solutions' project to revolutionise its communication systems was rooted in the strategic objectives outlined in its Digital Strategy.

Written by Richard Harvey, this strategy emphasised mobile and flexible working to enhance productivity, collaboration, and staff engagement, with a strong focus on data accuracy, GDPR compliance, and customer visibility and control over its information. As a community-focused association managing over 7,500 homes in the south of England, Housing Solutions was committed to



simplifying processes and encouraging customers to embrace digital offerings. The legacy telephony system, however, was a significant barrier to this vision, unable to support the flexibility and efficiency required for modern communication demands.

The contact centre team, responsible for handling a high volume of calls every month, was hindered by the outdated system. The need for a unified communications solution that could integrate seamlessly with Microsoft Teams and provide the agility for staff to work from anywhere was evident.

In response to these challenges, Housing Solutions conducted a Soft Market Test. The objective was to explore the market for solutions that could meet their business requirements. The Soft Market Test was crucial in validating the budget and ensuring that the chosen solution would align with the strategic goals of enhancing customer service and operational efficiency.

The successful response to the Soft Market Test, resulted in Social Telecoms being awarded a direct award via the PfH telecommunications framework, sidestepping the need for a tender exercise. This direct award was facilitated by Social Telecoms' top-ranked status on the Procurement for Housing (PfH) telecommunications framework, which is a testament to their compliance with stringent quality and service standards, as well as EU procurement standards. The PfH framework allows its members to benefit from combined purchasing power and ensures that suppliers like Social Telecoms meet the high standards required for public sector procurement.

This project was not merely a technological upgrade but a strategic move towards a digital-first approach that was brave and bold, designed around its customers' needs and expectations. It marked the beginning of a transformative journey for Housing Solutions, aligning with its ethos that “Housing is more than just a roof and four walls” and paving the way for a future of digital empowerment and enhanced customer engagement.

IMPLEMENTATION JOURNEY:

The implementation of 8x8's Experience Communications as a Service (XCaaS) at Housing Solutions was a pivotal step in its digital transformation journey. With a pressing deadline, as the provider's on-premises telephony server was scheduled to go offline in just four months, the project required swift and decisive action.

“Integration with our Microsoft stack was key, but we could also see that 8x8 is a company that launches new features ahead of others, which was hugely attractive to us, going forward. Plus, Social Telecoms have shown our sector, and us especially, that they fit in with our own values as a community first company.”

RICHARD HARVEY, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & ORG. DESIGN

RAPID ROLL-OUT

The roll-out of the 8x8 solutions was rapid yet smooth, thanks to the collaborative efforts of Housing Solutions and their digital transformation partner, C Davidson Consultancy. Utilising the compliant procurement framework from PfH, they were able to expedite the process. Social Telecoms, a Community Interest Company and a key partner of 8x8 in the UK, was instrumental in this transition, ensuring that Housing Solutions could swiftly move to a cloud-based system that unified contact centre, voice, video, and chat functionalities.

OVERCOMING INITIAL HURDLES

One of the initial challenges was replicating the familiarity and functionality of the legacy system while introducing the advanced capabilities of the 8x8 platform. Training and support were critical during this phase, with dedicated sessions to ensure staff were comfortable and proficient with the new system.

successful handover into in-life support, ensuring that Housing Solutions' employees were well-equipped to utilise the new system to its full potential.

TANGIBLE BENEFITS

The implementation of 8x8's solutions brought about significant benefits, including operational efficiencies, cost savings, and an enhanced customer service experience. The omnichannel service capabilities allowed Housing Solutions to offer a seamless customer service experience across various communication channels, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty.

AI-DRIVEN INNOVATIONS

Housing Solutions' deployment of 8x8 Contact Centre service has been instrumental in enhancing customer engagement. Solutions such as speech analytics and digital assistants have transformed the way Housing Solutions interacts with its customers providing a more streamlined and responsive service experience.

SPEECH ANALYTICS

The AI-driven speech analytics feature has enabled Housing Solutions to gain deeper insights into customer interactions. By analysing the content of voice communications as well as text-based ones such as SMS and WhatsApp, Housing Solutions can identify common concerns and trends, allowing them to proactively address issues and improve service delivery.

This technology has been particularly useful in understanding the reasons behind customer calls, whether they relate to repairs, complaints, or positive feedback, and has served as a valuable tool for advisor training and improving customer satisfaction.

CHATBOTS

The implementation of AI-driven chatbots on Housing Solutions' website has significantly reduced the volume of repeat calls and inquiries to the contact centre. These chatbots provide customers with instant access to information and assistance, especially during busy times or when the contact centre is closed. The chatbots have been continuously improved over the years, incorporating call trends and analytics to provide more accurate and helpful responses to customers. This has not only driven customer service efficiency but also encouraged customers to self-serve, aligning with the growing trend of digital interaction.

RICHARD HARVEY CONTINUES:

“It's more than just a Q&A; it's about building a comprehensive knowledge base that evolves with tenant interactions. Over the years, we've enriched the chatbot with data and analytics, allowing us to address common queries like rent increases and maintenance issues effectively. This has significantly uplifted our customer service, empowering tenants to find answers independently, which is a growing trend.”

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

The AI-driven innovations have also contributed to operational efficiency within Housing Solutions. The 8x8 Analytics for Contact Centre allows team leaders and managers to monitor performance in real-time, set thresholds, and take immediate action to optimise customer experiences. The Supervisor Workspace provides a performance-centric dashboard for proactive management, offering insights and guidance to ensure optimal operational efficiency.

On the operational front, the 8x8 solutions have reduced call volumes, freeing up customer service representatives to handle more complex inquiries. Agent productivity has improved due to the streamlined workflow and unified communication interface, which reduces system-switching and allows for more efficient inquiry resolution.

FUTURE OUTLOOK.

Housing Solutions is poised for a promising future, with a clear vision to scale and expand their digital initiatives through the deployment of 8x8 solutions via Social Telecoms. Its Digital & Data Strategy underscores the importance of fostering an environment where employees, residents, and the Board can flourish, backed by technology that transcends traditional housing services.

The plan is to further harness the power of 8x8's XCaaS to boost customer engagement and operational efficiency. This involves

broadening the application of AI-driven analytics to delve deeper into tenant needs and preferences, while also exploring the innovative features that 8x8 continues to roll out.

In alignment with their Digital & Data Strategy, Housing Solutions is investigating a range of digital initiatives that will bolster their corporate goals of safety, satisfaction, and sustainability. These initiatives could encompass the launch of new digital communication channels, the incorporation of advanced data analytics for strategic decision-making, and the ongoing enhancement of the tenant experience through technology.

The strategy also emphasises the significance of embracing change and investigating the potential of digital solutions. Housing Solutions is dedicated to remaining at the cutting edge of digital innovation in the housing sector, aiming to not just meet, but surpass the expectations of their tenants and stakeholders.

Richard Harvey shares the excitement for the future:

“As we look ahead, we are eager to elevate the 8x8 solutions, integrating more AI-driven technologies to improve our tenant services. Our new Digital & Data Strategy is more than just a roadmap; it's a pledge to innovation, efficiency, and most importantly, our community. We will persist in exploring and implementing state-of-the-art solutions that align with our strategic objectives, positioning Housing Solutions as a leader in the housing sector.”