



VoiceSage Helps Express Gifts Achieve Key Business Goals

VoiceSage services are helping the catalogue giant improve customer service, marketing and collections, as well as achieve significant operational millions.

Express Gifts www.express-gifts.co.uk provides a personal and successful home shopping service to around 1.6m customers annually, through a combination of direct marketing and online via their two key brands Studio & Ace.

Though its roots lie firmly in the traditional home shopping catalogue world, the business is now firmly focused on a transition to becoming a digital first business.

Customer service: pivotal

According to its Strategy & Transformation Director Martin Dove, “Customer service and customer contact matter a lot to us, so we employ VoiceSage to help us achieve these key business goals.”

Specifically, VoiceSage is an important part of Express Gifts’ voice of the customer programme, helping the business survey its customers after each interaction they have with the business, with VoiceSage being at the heart of the process for two years.

VoiceSage surveys: helping populate a growing customer data resource

SMS is a big weapon for this forward-looking retailer. Currently Express Gifts has several processes that prevent the firm from providing real-time credit scoring for new customer credit applicants. SMS, via VoiceSage, plays a central role in facilitating that workflow, sending appropriate, tailored call to action messages to customers to alert them to credit issues or opportunities, giving them a convenient way of actioning their next step.

“This has proven to be a very big win for Express Gifts,” confirms Dove. “We estimate the extra conversion rate since using this has been at least £1m per twelve months.”

In the case of the VoiceSage e-surveys, Express Gifts sends out a quick five-question survey with a combination of transactional questions and a free-text box. This has proven to be extremely useful, as it has helped the retailer build up a huge wealth of data it’s now using to get a better picture of its users and their preferences. “This data tells us how long they’ve been with us, their account utilisation, the frequency they order from us, how open they may be to an up-sell, and so on. It’s a great, and growing, resource.”

This data is also being used to help with coaching and performance improvement. “We see a marked difference in age demographics, for example, in terms of how people react to us, and as a direct result we have set ourselves some challenges about how we can improve the service we offer to specific demographics, rather than just broad brush improvements.

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Customer service and collections

Volume-wise, that's definitely the key use Express Gifts makes of the extensive VoiceSage suite, but it also uses the service in its collections processes. For example, the firm is trialing a visual touch message-based system to help make it easier for customers to make a payment. Express Gifts identified that some of its customers may inadvertently miss a payment, so a helpful reminder SMS is sent two days before a payment is due as a reminder. The SMS includes a unique URL that directs the customer to a payment gateway to conveniently make a payment there and then.

"It's a very convenient and easy way to avoid getting into arrears and getting the payment done," explains Dove. "It's proven to be a very popular option with customers - circa 90% of customers who used it during the trial came back and have continued using this facility.

"It seems once people use a service like this with their smartphones, they don't want to go back to previous, potentially less convenient ways."

Next steps: the firm plans to expand its take up of VoiceSage - not just the visual messaging side but all the way out to IVM and potentially A.I. and chatbots, which are all part of its roadmap, says Dove.

Thought leadership – and delivery 'guaranteed'

Dove says that he has much appreciated VoiceSage's flexibility of approach, open-mindedness and ability to deliver.

"Our partnership started off with some very helpful thought leadership on how to start using technology to start helping make the customer journey easier. That's evolved as we've evolved, and I really like the way VoiceSage is always bringing new ideas to the table.

"I'm also very confident about VoiceSage's ability to deliver. I think the company has a very strong track record in that regard."

AT A GLANCE

Application

- Visual Touch, SMS Messaging for surveys, alerts and payments

Business Challenges

- Build a picture of users and preferences, plus address any performance improvement issues
- Better communicate with and service younger customers
- Allow customers to make frequent, easy payments and address any credit issues and opportunities
- Help keep frontline staff focused on customer contact, not back-room admin

Benefits

- Convenient and safe as possible for customers to resolve credit issues or take advantage of opportunities
- Uplift in conversion rates of over 12 months, amounting to £1m worth of revenue
- 90% retention rate on visual touch message-based payment system
- Quick five-question survey provides an always-excellent customer experience
- Visibility across the whole customer base, especially the hard to reach millennials – as well as detailed profiling
- Staff are able to better service customers