



# Boardwalk Rental Communities

## Property manager finds bilingual and motivated contact centre agents at home

“We have excellent longevity with our agents. Instead of spending time training new staff, we can focus on honing the skills of our existing agents. I would have no hesitation recommending this solution to people I deal with.”

— Kelly Mahajan, Vice President, Customer Service, Boardwalk Rental Communities

### Situation

- Boardwalk Rental Communities owns and operates over 26 million net rentable square feet of apartment space, serving over 60,000 residents in 5 provinces across Canada
- Boardwalk ran its own in-house contact centre in Calgary, where agents answered calls from prospective renters enquiring about apartments, as well as from existing tenants requesting service
- The telecommunications equipment in the contact centre was obsolete and no longer reliable
- Retaining contact centre staff in Calgary's booming employment market had become extremely challenging
- Boardwalk had difficulty finding bilingual agents to serve its tenants in Quebec

### Approach

- As a long-term TELUS client, Boardwalk approached TELUS about replacing its outdated contact centre technology
- During discussions about different options, TELUS recommended that Boardwalk consider switching from employing in-house staff to contracting at-home agents
- When Boardwalk expressed interest in this concept, TELUS introduced them to TELUS AgentAnywhere™, powered by LiveXchange™, a TELUS partner company specializing in distributed contact centre solutions
- Working closely together, TELUS, Boardwalk and LiveXchange refined and enhanced the solution to meet Boardwalk's very demanding requirements

### Business benefits

- Boardwalk finds it much easier to locate, hire and train contact centre staff
- Through LiveXchange's contracting service, Boardwalk has access to a much wider pool of highly qualified potential agents
- As a result, Boardwalk can now focus on core business operations, while saving on human resources costs due to reduced turnover
- Boardwalk also finds it easier to contract bilingual agents
- Contracted at-home agents are self-employed and therefore highly motivated, which makes for a higher quality of call for the customer
- Agents understand that they are only as good as their last call, so they provide superior customer service to every caller
- Due to reduced churn, there is less need for basic agent training and Boardwalk is able to work with agents on honing their skills and productivity to better enhance the customer experience
- Management can join calls when an agent needs help and provide coaching as required
- Callers are unaware that they are dealing with at-home agents, allowing Boardwalk to provide expert service from capable English and French-speaking agents

## Boardwalk Rental Communities

### Solution details

Based in Calgary, Alberta, Boardwalk Rental Communities owns and operates over 26 million net rentable square feet of apartment space, serving over 60,000 residents in 5 provinces across Canada. One of those provinces is Quebec, which means that a significant portion of Boardwalk's target market is French-speaking.

Boardwalk ran its own contact centre in Calgary, where it employed agents to answer calls from people looking for accommodation, as well as from existing residents requesting services and repairs. Calgary's low unemployment rate at the time meant that experienced agents were in high demand. As a result, there was significant employee turnover and it was often difficult to replace agents who had left.

In addition to these concerns, Boardwalk's contact centre technology needed to be replaced. "The technology would fail at the most inopportune times," says Michael Guyette, CIO, Vice President Technology. "For our line of business, every call is a major potential source of revenue, and when our contact centre is down, we could be missing out on thousands of dollars a month. Not only that, if we have a fire or other emergency at one of our properties, we need to know about it immediately."

Seeing this as an opportunity to consider new options, Boardwalk began talking to TELUS about different replacement scenarios. TELUS presented a number of proposals, including a suggestion that Boardwalk consider hiring contracted agents to work from home. "Our investment in new equipment would have been significant," says Guyette. "So it made sense to look at different alternatives."

TELUS recommended TELUS AgentAnywhere™, a solution built on the unique Canadian offering of its partner company LiveXchange™, a leading North American provider of remote enabled contact centres. According to this proposal, Boardwalk would connect to LiveXchange's remote management and access technology on the TELUS network, where TELUS manages it around the clock. Boardwalk would also have access to over 30,000 qualified agents belonging to LiveXchange's contracting service – and the agents chosen by Boardwalk would connect to the same solution at TELUS, via their own computers and Voice over IP service.

Today, Boardwalk contracts agents primarily from Ontario and Quebec. The fact that these agents are self-employed and doing work they actually want to do means they are more motivated. They also tend to be more flexible in their schedules, able to work the hours Boardwalk needs them most, especially at night and on weekends.

"Our agents are generally from smaller communities where there are fewer job opportunities," says Guyette. In fact, a large number of the agents first contracted by Boardwalk are still working for them. This allows Boardwalk to spend more time and resources on honing agent skills and building their business, rather than continually training new agents. "We're not spending as much time trying to find qualified agents as we were before," comments Kelly Mahajan, Vice President, Customer Service. "Instead, we can focus on specific areas, for example, helping agents to improve their sales and customer support techniques."

Boardwalk is able to provide training via conference calls, so no travel expenses are incurred by managers, trainers or agents. In addition to the remote agent support tools available with AgentAnywhere, managers in Calgary can also seamlessly join calls to provide coaching or when agents need help.

While Guyette is satisfied with the solution, he is careful to point out that in the beginning, the fit wasn't quite perfect. "We had some technical issues, but TELUS stepped in and worked with LiveXchange to address them. Reporting has also improved since the early days."

In addition to typical reports such as missed calls and the number of hang-ups, Boardwalk can monitor hours available, the agents scheduled to fill those hours, missed shifts and more, allowing them to set limits and expectations for all their agents.

Boardwalk is now extremely pleased, both with the way the solution works and the new levels of redundancy added since Boardwalk signed on. "I have no difficulty recommending this solution to the people I deal with," says Mahajan.

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