

## P&Q Challenge case study



**Soha Housing: re-examining contact centre quality** When Soha Housing's contact centre team took up the P&Q Challenge, little did they know it would spark wholesale organisational change and give customers a greater say in what quality means. But what is the P&Q Challenge and why has it had such an impact? **Claudia Thorpe, Industry Content Expert** interviewed **Maureen Adams, Director of Customer Services and Operations** at Soha Housing to find out...

### What is the P&Q Challenge?

The P&Q Challenge is an initiative designed to give contact centres the tools to re-examine performance and quality and how it is measured. It consists of a series of workshops and the introduction of the P&Q Framework, followed by a period of implementation. Centres that make it to the end of the programme then undergo an assessment with a view to achieving accreditation.

Participants in the initiative so far have reported impressive results, including: increased sales; increased NPS; reduced customer effort; reduced staff attrition; increased first time resolution; and increased board-level engagement with customer service.

Soha Housing gained special recognition during the accreditation process and received a P&Q award for Simplicity, in acknowledgement of how they have made it so much easier for residents to communicate with the organisation.

### In brief: Soha Housing

Soha Housing is a social landlord, providing affordable homes for those who prefer to rent or can't afford to rent or buy in the private sector. The organisation manages houses in Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire. Soha is co-regulated, meaning residents and staff run it jointly – so it's important that there are open channels of communication.

### Claudia Thorpe: Why was the timing of the P&Q Challenge right for you?

**Maureen Adams:** Although, we had been successfully attaining customer service excellence accreditation for the previous three years, we wanted to refresh our approach to

make sure we were stretching ourselves in terms of service. We saw Martin Hill-Wilson, CEO, Brainfood Consulting, give an excellent presentation on performance and quality at a South East Contact Centre Forum seminar – and we signed up to the P&Q Challenge there and then.

While we already had a motivated and well-trained team of agents, we needed to increase first time fix and call resolution and the P&Q Challenge gave us a method for doing that.

### CT: What have you produced as a result?

**MA:** We have explained to the whole company that we are placing the contact centre at the heart of the organisation. We are going to feedback the voice of the customer – both good and bad information. We take the customer comments to the relevant department within the organisation and solve the issue collaboratively with the manager.

If the required solution is very complicated, or requires extra resource, we get the CEO into what we call a 'sweaty' meeting where we have difficult conversations about changing business processes. This takes us away from standard improvement logs, and takes us into an environment of dynamic solutions that are sustainable in the long term.

Through taking part in the challenge, we have also really understood the concept of looking after the contact centre team – so we are making various changes to the office environment, including glass screens, circular team-friendly desks, and better lighting.

### CT: Who benefits and how?

**MA:** It's early days in the process for us, but customers have certainly benefited. If they call with a difficult problem, they are much more likely to get a swift and satisfactory response.

Staff are also benefitting because they're not getting caught up in bureaucratic processes. What's more, the contact centre team have been involved in a discussion around the meaning of quality, and they were delighted to see some of the things they suggested come into being.

### CT: What are you most proud of in terms of your new approach to P&Q?

**MA:** The customer services team has moved from being the last line of defence, to being the beating heart of all customer insight within the company. There is much more recognition for the excellent work that they do. Soha was always good at listening to the customer, but we needed to make sure there was a one-team approach across the business – and the P&Q Challenge has given us the framework to do that.

I'm also proud of the fact that we've involved our customers in the process right from the outset. They have helped us define what quality should look like and we have

customers who continually look at how the process is performing.

### CT: What advice would you give to those wondering how to improve their P&Q processes?

**MA:** Take time to work through what quality means and listen to the different voices within the organisation. We found it had to find space to do that, but it was important to sort through the different viewpoints. It's crucial to look at quality in a wider context – you have come up with a broad series of measures that will give a view of the whole customer journey. The advantage of the P&Q Challenge is that it allows you to find the fault lines in your service, plus it has a lot of adaptability so you can make changes as you discover new things throughout your journey.

### CT: What made the P&Q journey special?

**MA:** Working with organisations we normally wouldn't come in to contact with. As a not for profit, I assumed that our challenges would be vastly different to private sector companies – but I discovered that our problems were identical. The whole programme was a very stimulating learning process.

### CT: How are you going to continue the journey?

**MA:** We want to monitor customer service trends and make sure the solutions we have in place are sustainable. We also need to use the time that we think will be freed up through the new business flow to ensure we are continually improving quality. Another key aim is that we want the new approach to quality to feed into key performance indicators across the business, not just within the contact centre.

### CT: What role do you think technology has in improving performance and quality in contact centres?

**MA:** Technology clearly has a role in influencing call centre performance. We are interested in the concept of voice analytics as a means of sourcing customer data very quickly, which would allow us to make service adjustments based on evidence without the usual time lag for gathering and analysing data. Technology definitely has the capacity to bring the customer voice through into business process flows.

*To find out more about the P&Q Challenge, or to register your interest in taking part, please call Zaiba Mian on 020 8973 2441 or email [zmian@nexidia.com](mailto:zmian@nexidia.com)*