



## Case Study:

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Immediate switch on  
customer service support  
for a slimming product  
retailer

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# Introduction

The following is based on actual events....

Picture the scene; it's 4.50pm on a sunny Friday afternoon in July. Just when most offices are closing down for the weekend. The phone rings. It's a slightly panicked retailer who has just been notified that a major tabloid newspaper *might* review their slimming product in Monday's newspaper.

**Might** was a big word. If any major news story broke over the weekend, their product may not be featured. But otherwise, they were all set to receive the biggest media coverage in their history.

It's great news for the retailer. But perhaps bad news for their customer service team. With media coverage like that, it was clear that the in house customer service team of two advisors just wouldn't be able to cope if their call volumes increased.

The retailer contacted Spark Response to see if there was any way we could support them, *if their product was featured*, by answering order calls, providing further product information, or handling customer service queries on an overflow basis. With the paper due for release from 6am on the Monday morning, Spark Response had less than an hours working time to work with the retailer to get a team in place to help, and even then, there was no guarantee we would be required.



# Resource Planning

After the call on the Friday, our team immediately began planning. Our Contact Centre Manager and Operations team had to look at the next weeks forecast, and decide if we had adequate resource to handle the expected volume., if the product made the paper.

## Completely unknown volumes

There was just one problem in trying to resource. We had no idea what the likely call volumes would be. This was a completely new scenario for the retailer. Thankfully, Spark Response has worked on similar campaigns in the past, so we had some previous data to refer to. But one thing was clear, we needed to be flexible.

## A dedicated team with added flexibility

Based on previous campaign data, Spark Response identified that 3 advisors would need to be dedicated to the retailer's campaign from first thing, Monday morning. It was also clear that we would need the flexibility to handle further volumes if they arose. As a result, we also prepared our bureau contact centre team to be ready to handle further call volumes. This gave the retailer complete confidence that they would have a team in place to take advantage of this fantastic media coverage they were *hopefully* about to receive.

By this point, it was around 5.45pm on the Friday. That left little time to train the advisors. We still had no idea if the product would be featured. Despite this, training documents were sent through from the retailer. Our team started the training process, creating standard responses, learning product details, benefits, ingredients etc... Time was ticking, and we couldn't get admin access to their website order management system until Monday morning...



## Monday morning...

The product was in the paper! And not just hidden away at the back. It was on the front cover! With a double page review in a key section. There was more, it was also featured on the online version of the paper. The review was hugely positive too. It was clear that demand for the product would be huge.

## We still had no system access

The retailer arrived into the office at 8am, and immediately called Spark Response to confirm that we would go ahead with call handling on their behalf. At this point, we still had no way of processing orders for them, as we had no system access. Their phone lines were due to open at 9am. Time was still ticking.

## Calling on previous experience

The retailers' IT team set Spark Response up with admin access to their eCommerce store and order management platform, based on Magento. This was great news, as many of our contact centre clients use the same platform, which meant our advisors had existing knowledge of the system. This meant training time was minimised to under an hour.

It was now 8.45am. We still had no way of getting calls through to us. Thankfully the retailers telephony provider were able to route calls to a DDI number at Spark Response, which we had previously provided to manage volumes and provide reporting and analysis.

## 09.15am.... We're live

Once the retailer's IT team set up our DDI transfer, we were good to go. And at 9.15am on the Monday morning, less than 1 working hour from their initial call, Spark Response began handling calls on their behalf. And there were a lot of calls....



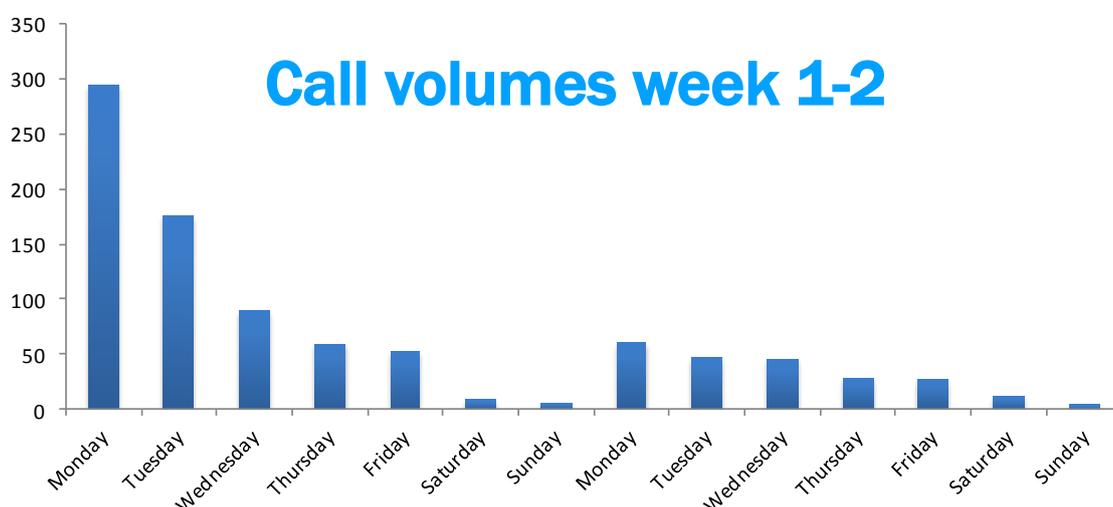
# How we managed calls

As soon as our lines went live, calls began flooding in. It was clear that despite our best guesses, we would need more than the 3 advisors we initially predicted. This was a true test for our often unrivalled flexibility.

## Reacting to volumes

By mid morning, we had added a fourth advisor to the campaign on a dedicated basis. The bureau team were also utilised at various points throughout the day, ensuring that our service levels remained intact, but most importantly, the client received the best possible level of service. 295 calls were offered on that Monday, with an average handling time of over 6 minutes. Our advisors achieved an impressive 85% utilisation level.

We knew Tuesday would see less contacts. So we scaled the team back to 3 advisors, leaving the bureau open for overflow. By mid afternoon on the Tuesday, it was clear that volumes were further reducing. So we reacted, removing the dedicated team, and instead opting to handle calls via our bureau team. This was a move which ultimately reduced cost for the retailer, and moved them to variable cost model, in which we simply charged by the minute per call, and allowing us to answer 80% of calls within 20 seconds.





# Complete confidence

Despite the short notice, the retailer had complete confidence that Spark Response would be there to make sure their calls would be answered professionally and in line with their expectations. Receiving media coverage of this scale meant that many customers were interacting with their brand for the first time. And Spark Response ensured that customer experience was a positive one.

## What happened next?

*“Who knew after my frantic call in July we would still be working together 7 weeks later! Thank goodness I found you is all I can say!”*

After those first two weeks, Spark Response was in daily contact with the retailer, to confirm if we would be required the following day. We really were that flexible.

Over 3 months later and Spark Response continues to support the retailer via our bureau contact centre on daily basis. With call volumes averaging around 35 per day, we continue to offer a cost effective and flexible extension to their customer service team which show's no sign of ending any time soon.

## Flexibility with Scalability

Spark Response prides itself on our ability to offer a truly flexible contact centre service to our clients. This example showed just how flexible we can be, at the extremes of short notice. If your contact centre or customer service team needs some additional support, perhaps over Black Friday weekend, or at Christmas or key retail dates, we'd love to see how we can help.

Give us a call on **0191 495 9931**, or drop us an email to [ideas@sparkresponse.com](mailto:ideas@sparkresponse.com)



**Spark Response is one of the UK's most respected providers of contact centre services to brands and retailers. With 30 years experience in delivering award winning inbound and outbound contact centre services to the retail sector, choose Spark Response to deliver excellence in customer experience.**

