Digital Island

CASE STUDY

The birth of telehealth to support NZ's fight against COVID-19

Challenge:

In late 2021, New Zealand was facing the reality that the Delta variant of COVID-19 would imminently arrive in the country. Reach Aotearoa (previously known as CBG Research) had already assisted the Ministry of Health to provide information and support to close contacts of COVID-19 cases, and with the number of cases anticipated to increase drastically in a matter of weeks, the Ministry urgently required a national case investigation service.

The service would support the important work of public health units (PHUs) in making initial contact with COVID-positive cases to provide information, evaluate any clinical needs, and link with manaaki support services.

This community contact meant calling many thousands of people every day, so Reach required a massively scalable, robust calling solution, and they needed a partner that could move fast to implement this solution and onboard the huge number of new staff needed to contact the skyrocketing COVID-positive cases.

Solution:

Reach partnered with contact centre technology specialist Digital Island (part of Spark Business Group) to stand up a calling solution that meant within only seven days, call centre agents were able to make and take calls.

Business results:

Over the space of only two years, the Reach contact centre grew from zero to 1500 staff – made up of 80% agents and 20% clinical and support staff. New Zealanders from heavily impacted workforces who found themselves out of jobs were able to be employed by Reach through strategic recruiting networks – with 25% of agents coming from travel and tourism backgrounds, and 15% from retail and hospitality.

From New Zealand's pre-Delta period to the peak of Omicron, Reach staff numbers grew in size by 17x and call volumes increased by 25x (2500%). Through its COVID-19 response support for the Ministry of Health, the team of agents collectively made contact with more than one million New Zealanders – one in five of the country's entire population.

Reach Aotearoa
Formerly CBG Research

Reach Aotearoa is a leading New Zealand-based provider of research and telehealth services.

"It was a privilege to be contracted by the Ministry of Health who trusted us, partnering with Digital Island, to establish one of the fastest growing national telehealth support systems at a local, regional and national level."
- Reach Aotearoa

Continued evolution

Contact centre agents worked closely with the in house team of Reach doctors and nurses – enabling them to respond to over 20,000 calls per day, or 1,700 per hour at the peak of the Omicron outbreak. Approximately 600 Reach staff manned the phones from 9am-9pm daily.

In an outcome arguably rare for New Zealand's public health sector, the service outperformed for prioritised groups, creating a 'reverse inequity'. This means that prioritised groups (65+, Māori & Pacific 35+, and <6 months) were reached at a higher rate than non-prioritised groups or the general population.

Reach Medical Director Dr Barry Gribben describes the call agents as the 'invisible first responders' helping to alleviate the immense strain on public health services.

About the solution

Reach Aotearoa is Digital Island's largest client with the highest record of seats on the company's books, with a rapid stand-up timeframe to boot. The contact centre was delivered via Digital Island's cloud-based, omnichannel contact entre solution Amazon Connect with a consumption-based cost model. The solution included a base Amazon Connect build, Digital Island's unique front end user interface, Native Amazon Connect user management and authentication, voice queues (inbound and outbound), call recording and standard reporting.

A bright future for flawless customer support

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"With the expert support of dedicated healthcare professionals, our team of callers were in many ways some of the unsung heroes of New Zealand's pandemic response," says Gribben.

"Through the power of a sophisticated omnichannel contact centre solution, they helped thousands of New Zealanders to isolate safely, thereby limiting the spread of the virus; ultimately saving lives and preventing hospitalisations, at a time when the public health system was under immense pressure. "

Why Digital Island?

Digital Island is one of the leading Cloud Communications and Contact Centre experts in NZ. We help clients successfully navigate their digital transformation journey with the perfect blend of best in breed technology and a superior service experience.

Digital Island

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