

Case Study

Success Story: lastminute.com

lastminute.com depends on Empirix Test Solutions to ensure that its IVR system can deliver consistently high quality and efficient service, even in a rapidly changing environment where new services and products are continually being brought to market.

lastminute.com's multi-lingual customer service IVR is put through its paces with Empirix

lastminute.com is the most popular travel and leisure website in the UK, with around 1.65 million visitors per week for deals on holidays, flights, travel and entertainment. It is the largest retailer of West End theatre tickets, selling more than 1.5 million a year. lastminute.com sells hotel rooms from 80,000 properties worldwide and flights from 300 airlines, and sends over 750,000 people a year on package holidays. Now in its tenth year of operation, lastminute.com has grown into a worldwide business employing almost 2,000 people. It is one of the most successful travel corporations across the globe. Owned by Travelocity, lastminute.com is part of the Sabre family of travel companies.

Operating several brands and products as well as supplying to a very broad customer base across the UK and Europe, lastminute.com's customers can search a wide range of options and complete their bookings online. As holiday and leisure bookings can be complex and detailed, and ar-

rangements can sometimes change, customers are also able to access the additional support and assistance of live agents on the telephone.

To help increase efficiency, customer service calls, along with other features such as certain sales promotions and the ability to track the status of a booking, are offered to the customer via an automated interactive voice response (IVR) service. By self-serving the customer whenever possible through this system and connecting them swiftly to the most appropriate agent with the right expertise as necessary, lastminute.com can minimise the time customers have to wait on line for agents, particularly during busy periods.

To meet demand, the IVR system needs to deliver consistently high quality and efficient service. This challenge must be met in a rapidly changing environment, where new services and products are continually being brought to market. lastminute.com is therefore always looking for ways to both maintain and improve the quality and speed of this operation while also enhancing their processes.

We needed a good quality, reliable product and along with our own evaluation, the feedback we received from our colleagues overseas gave us confidence that Empirix would fit the bill.

Anu Jain
Application Development Manager,
lastminute.com

lastminute.com

COMPANY

lastminute.com

INDUSTRY

Travel services

EMPIRIX SOLUTIONS

Empirix Hammer Test Solution

WEB SITE

www.lastminute.com

Anu Jain, lastminute.com's Application Development Manager, IVR Solutions for Europe, outlines a particular problem which had emerged in this demanding environment: "The IVR service is under a process of continuous improvement and enhancement, but system testing each new release had become a real challenge." Jain explains that the absence of an automated load and regression testing tool was impacting both productivity and service quality. "We wanted to get new features out to customers as quickly as possible, yet every time we implemented an improvement to the service, it was taking us far too long to perform quality and load testing with the limited manual quality assurance resources available to us."

Testing the lastminute.com IVR system is a particularly complex task; the system services countries across Europe and operates in multiple languages. As a result, each option, in every language, needs to be fully tested for every new application or enhancement. Each time a new application was due for release, a resource capable of conducting the testing had to be found somewhere within the business. The delays and inefficiencies in this process meant that whilst new self-service options had been developed, they were not immediately available to customers. Says Jain, "We experienced several instances where the operational teams suggested changes, which we were then unable to implement and fully test within an acceptable timeframe." Jain

admits the problem was increasing as the business grew.

A second issue concerned load testing, where even with adequate resources, it was difficult to generate and sustain, in a testing environment, the same load that the live service would encounter. As a result, Jain's team were unable to conduct appropriate load tests before releasing a new service and each time, ran the risk that a new application might not be able to cope with the demand placed upon it.

Clearly such a situation was unsustainable for an organisation as focused on building good customer relations and winning repeat business, as lastminute.com. It was decided to research a more sophisticated testing capability. "We began looking for a solution which would enable us to automate the quality assurance testing process across the entire IVR system, for both load and regression," says Jain, who already had some familiarity with Empirix. "We knew Empirix was a leading supplier in this field and we already had some appreciation of their products." lastminute.com was aware too that its parent company Travelocity had been using Empirix's Hammer Test System for some time and based on their experience, had recommended it to the company. Following a careful evaluation of Empirix alongside other products, lastminute.com agreed it met their needs as well. Says Jain, "We needed a good quality, reliable product and along with our own evaluation, the feedback we

received from our colleagues overseas gave us confidence that Empirix would fit the bill."

lastminute.com purchased Empirix's Hammer CallMaster™ for test development, debugging, scheduling, reporting and off-line monitoring. The system was purchased in January 2009 and entered lastminute.com's development cycle in March 2009. Now the Empirix solution is used as a proxy, every time there is a new requirement, to prepare scripts for testing.

The Hammer Test and Monitoring System provides the capability to build test scripts with the graphical tool set available in Hammer CallMaster. Once the script is built, the Hammer G5™ or Hammer FX-TDM™ solution sends thousands of calls to load and stress test the system or application. The tool also provides the capability to verify one-way voice quality. Finally, there is the ability to record calls to pinpoint exactly where a problem is occurring during a test.

Based on their experience so far, Jain is pleased with lastminute.com's choice of Empirix's testing and monitoring tools, which he says have been easy to learn and require minimal maintenance and integration. He observes that Empirix is good for the business people as well as the IVR technical team, as the reports it generates are easy to understand and provide a clear picture of their call centre's operations.

"It's doing its job," enthuses Jain.

"It's provided us with an easy-to-use interface where we can develop quick testing scripts using a GUI, as well as reports. We can compare and contrast current tests with historical test results, highlighting where we can make improvements." Jain has an eye to the future too: "Whilst our main interest at the moment is to fulfil our current requirement for load testing and QA automation, we will in the future be looking to Empirix to provide more active monitoring support for our IVR applications."

For a complete list of offices worldwide, or to find an authorized distributor in your area, please visit:
www.empirix.com/contactus.

© 2011 Empirix. All rights reserved. All descriptions, specifications and prices are intended for general information only and are subject to change without notice. Some mentioned features are optional.

All names, products, services, trademarks are used for identification purposes only and are the property of their respective organizations.

ENT:CS:lastminute.com:0310