

Zendesk and Connect spark a CX and CRM revolution at Leroy Merlin.



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LEROYMERLIN

Overview.

When French home improvement solutions provider Leroy Merlin entered the South African market in 2016, the retailer required a contact centre that offered customers one easy phone number to remember and a choice of voice and digital channels through which they could engage.

After considering the ideal strategy, which included potentially launching mini contact centres in each store, Anderson says the team decided that a centralised contact centre best suited the company's customer engagement and customer experience (CX) requirements.

"We had no presence or experience in the country at the time, so we did not know the vendor and solutions provider landscape," explains Dmitriy Anderson, CIO & Head of E-commerce and Marketplace Strategy at Leroy Merlin South Africa.

"We needed to find a solutions provider to roll out out a centralised contact centre that met our requirements, and asked the French consulate in South Africa for recommendations."

The consulate proposed a global mobile network operator that offered business solutions, including a contact centre solution, connectivity and networking services.



Over promised, under delivered

"We signed up for a solution based on the impressive presentation from the sales team, but when it came time to deliver, the implementation team said they could not meet the specifications."

The implemented contact centre was a legacy solution that was reliant on complex architecture that connected the data centre to the Leroy Merlin head office via a Multi-protocol Label Switching (MPLS) network.

"The complex networking requirements made it difficult to answer and process tickets from home. That meant agents had to use physical sticky notes, which was inefficient and any lost notes meant a customer query went unresolved," bemoans Anderson.

Despite the inefficiencies and complexities, the sunk cost in the solution and the need to launch into the local market meant Leroy Merlin South Africa opened its first store with the implemented solution in place.

Growing pains

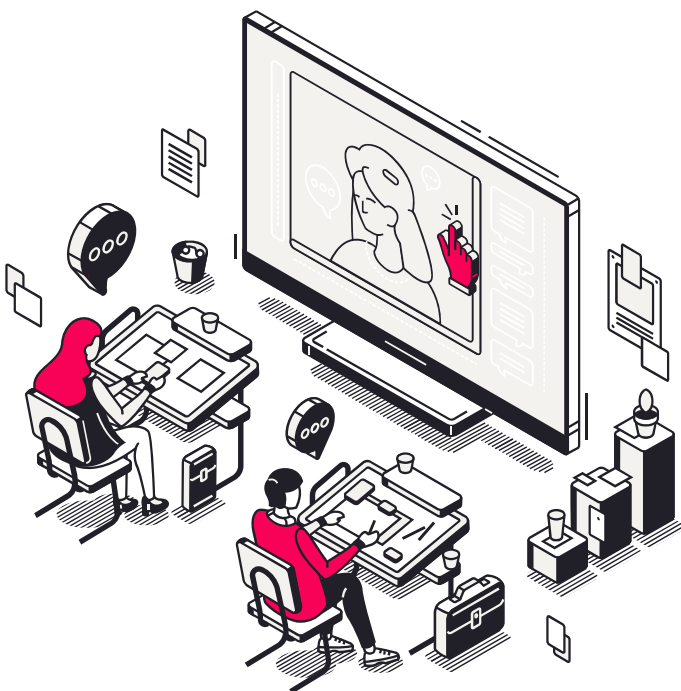
Within three years, the Leroy Merlin brand had taken off in South Africa, with the company experiencing exponential growth in its e-commerce business.

"Due to our rapid growth, we were unable to keep up with the higher customer demand. While we took steps to ramp up capacity, the contact centre was not equipped to handle the spike in customer complaints with the existing solution," recalls Anderson.

In 2019, the team decided that they could no longer tolerate the unworkable solution and decided to look at different options.

"Then the Covid lockdown hit in early 2020. We were forced to close on 27 March, but the business was then listed as an essential service due to the plumbing and essential home maintenance products and solutions we sell."

Leroy Merlin reopened for contractors on 15 April and to the general public on 1 May, which is when the wave of e-commerce adoption hit the business.



The Covid e-comm boom

"We experienced a 20-fold increase in e-commerce business when we reopened, which we did not expect."

While this was a boon for the business, the higher volumes exacerbated all the supply chain bottlenecks that already existed.

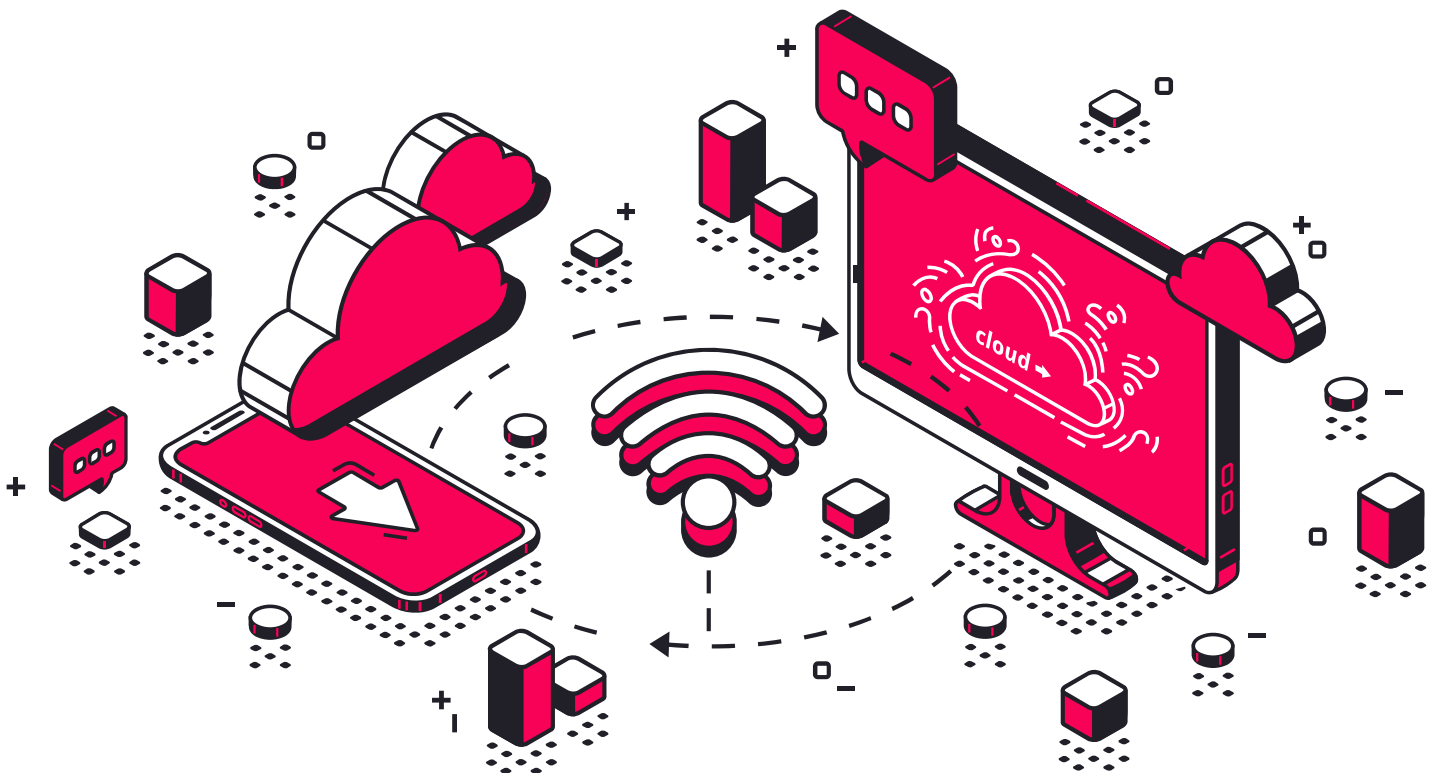
The business could no longer afford to operate without the ability to integrate the contact centre with a better CRM system and a ticketing solution that offered integrated channels to resolve the rising volume of customer queries.

Moving to the cloud

"We restarted the short-lived search exercise that began in 2019 and discovered Zendesk after I conducted extensive market research," explains Anderson.

After comparing Zendesk's customer interaction and engagement capabilities and costs against other leading solutions, Leroy Merlin determined that Zendesk offered a modern and flexible native Contact Centre as a Service (CCaaS) solution that met the company's requirements and criteria.

"We approached Zendesk to discuss our requirements and the vendor recommended Connect (formerly illation) as their preferred local implementation partner," explains Anderson.



Smooth implementation

Connect began the Zendesk implementation in July 2020 and successfully concluded the project in September. The Connect Business Enablement Services (BES) team closely managed the process and ensured the implementation ran as smoothly as possible.

"The implementation exceeded our expectations and timelines, and went smoothly for the most part. Whenever we experienced any challenges, the Connect BES team assigned resources to the project to resolve the issue as quickly as possible," says Anderson.

"Connect also ensured that we had a representative from senior management to manage the rollout, who was regularly on site to engage with the internal team members and explain everything. This commitment and availability reassured the contact centre leadership team, especially the CX leader, that the contact centre transformation was in good hands."

During the implementation phase, the Connect BES team conducted a nationwide training roadshow, travelling to the contact centre and various store locations to train agents and staff on how to use the solution.

"This training meant the transition went smoothly as everyone knew what to do and how to use the solution when it went live," affirms Anderson.

When the implementation was complete, the switchover to Zendesk happened seamlessly overnight and agents came in the next day able to work in the contact centre using the new CCaaS solution.

A CRM and CX revolution

The results delivered from the best-in-class software and solution architecture was a "CRM and CX revolution", says Anderson.

"Agents could address most tickets, and customer satisfaction scores soared to 79 from a negative Qualtrics-measured net promoter score (NPS) before the implementation, and the South African operation remains consistently above 60, which exceeds the group level at 50."

The easy integration offered from the cloud-based solution has unlocked new capabilities to drive additional performance improvements and operational efficiencies.

"After integrating a workforce management (WFM) solution, productivity rose from 35% to 70%. We also benefited from more efficient capacity planning based on real-time insights and analytics – it is no longer a guessing game," continues Anderson.

The automated WFM system predicts volumes and gives management better control over rosters to manage capacity by allocating sufficient agents to field incoming calls when volumes rise. When volumes drop, agents can then take a break.

Leroy Merlin was also able to add additional digital channels to meet shifting customer preferences around engagement, including WhatsApp, social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter, and the Hello Peter customer experience platform.

“As Hello Peter is not an enterprise application, it did not offer off-the-shelf integration. Connect had to build a middleware layer to import the data and pass it to the ticketing system via an API.”

In addition, another local solutions provider easily implemented and integrated the Five9 Intelligent Cloud Contact Centre platform, which empowered agents to engage with customers across their channel of choice.

The Five9 solution also provides managers with better visibility into contact centre performance and brings overall agility to the operation with Workforce Optimisation (WFO), Intelligent Virtual Agents (IVA), Agent Assist, and Workflow Automation (WFA) capabilities.

“Integrating Five9 with Zendesk in the cloud bolstered our ability to meet the consumer engagement and CX demands that the contact centre was facing by bringing market-leading technologies together that empower agents to deliver excellent customer service,” continues Anderson.



Customer-focused business

The 55 agents in the Leroy Merlin contact centre now handle over 20,000 tickets a month on average, with roughly 23% originating from email and 74% from voice calls.

Importantly, the implemented solution enabled Leroy Merlin to onboard store-level team members into the CRM system by leveraging light user licenses.

Of the 1,000 local staff, 600 had a profile on the system, which expanded the company's customer service capabilities and created better integration between in-store and contact centre engagements.

"Sales staff, HODs, and store leaders on the floor were able to create tickets and comment from the floor based on customer interactions, which streamlined processes and significantly boosted customer satisfaction and issue resolution," elaborates Anderson.

"We were unable to achieve this level of integration with our previous solution due to the additional costs and complexity."

A more agile organisation

In terms of operational efficiency and organisational agility, the cloud-native contact centre solutions allow agents to work from anywhere – all they requires is a reliable internet connection, a standard Jabra headset and a device with a web browser.

"The flexibility and agility have revolutionised the way agents work. We typically always have 5-10 agents working from home on a rotational basis," explains Anderson.

The company's contact centre leader has also leveraged this flexibility to break down the team into smaller squads that are each responsible for different tickets. This strategy is delivering significant improvement in issue resolution rates and NPS.

"The biggest benefit of the fully managed CCaaS solution is that we can all come into work and do the best for the customer, as we are no longer focused on time-consuming technical issues or worrying about the technology that enables our business," adds Anderson.

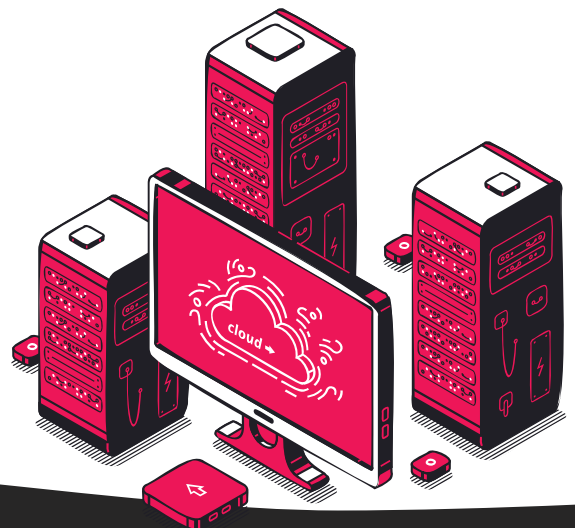
Based on the success achieved in the South African operation over the three years since implementation, Leroy Merlin has taken the decision to implement Zendesk at a group level, securing 5,500 licences to place the technology at the heart of the iconic brand's CX management strategy.

About us.

About Connect

We're Connect, a global business communications expert with over 30 years' experience. We have a clear and simple purpose; to help people communicate better. We make this happen by powering frictionless journeys and providing secure networks that benefit organisations, their people and their customers, building towards a brighter, more sustainable future for all three.

By leveraging our expertise in CX and automation, we orchestrate connected experiences. And while we are trusted by many technology vendors, we're independent of all of them, enabling us to make the complex simple.



Connect with us.

To discuss a communications challenge or find out more about our capabilities, get in touch with us today.

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