

Driving a reimagined experience with an AI virtual assistant

Camping World implements IBM solution to reshape call centers

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Business challenge Transformation Outcome

In a day and age where instant gratification has demand responses to their questions and concerns, businesses know that excellent customer service is crucial. Luckily, technology is evolving with the times, and helping to completely reimagine call centers.

Camping World, the number one retailer of recreational vehicles, understands that providing exceptional customer service is a key differentiator from its competition. The business relies heavily on unmatched customer service, but following the launch of its new website, customers revealed some issues in its existing infrastructure. As website traffic increased, gaps within agent management became prominent.

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“We are a unique business where we serve three segments: RVs, travel trailers, and campers. We are into the RV lifestyle (life on the road). There are three different business units: RV, travel trailers, and campers. We have a Digital Officer (CDO) and Chief Information Officer (CIO). We have a decently-sized call center, but I can’t have one for each of the three different business units. That creates our call centers.”

Shah also explains that pulling agents from one unit to another takes training, and Camping World had such training before the seasonal surge came—a shortage. Not having a 24x7 call center was a lot of trouble last season. When customers could not reach a human agent, either went unnoticed, were pushed off until they could respond or were accidentally dropped on a voicemail team with no visibility into the number of leads.

“Our response times were concerning. Customer service was tied to a couple of things,” says Brenda Wirgin, Director of Sales and Customer Experience at Camping World. “Having clear visibility into their performance and the number of chats they could maximize was an issue.”

With its customers unable to reach a live human agent, the retailer was forced to rethink its infrastructure and address functionality gaps. With customer interactions at a standstill, it looked to [IBM® Consulting](#) to modernize its contact center infrastructure to improve processes and workflow.

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Increased customer engagement

As of March 2022, customer engagement increased 40% on all platforms

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That meant removi
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Saurabh Shah

Chief Digital Officer and Chief Information Off
Camping World


Meet Arvee: Camping
assistant

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Camping World needed a human-centered solution to allow its operation to scale and handle the increase in the numbers of customers seeking rapid assistance. After looking for the most fitting route to take for modernizing its contact center, the retailer settled on a cognitive AI tool developed by IBM.

“We always need to think differently and identify what the next best solution is to service our customers. IBM brought us options that we otherwise didn’t have with our previous technology,” explains Wintrow. “IBM provided us with different scenarios including the roadmap to build out their technology that ultimately allowed us to streamline our processes, create agent efficiency, and most importantly greatly improve the overall customer experience.”

The solution, powered by [IBM watsonx Assistant](#), seamlessly integrates [LivePerson](#)  a conversational cloud platform, and was deployed across all the web properties, increasing the coverage of questions and telephone capabilities. It connects Camping World customers with a virtual agent, enabling live agents to take over more complex conversations. Named Arvee, the more efficient response times with dynamic routing capabilities. Arvee’s lead generation, especially after functionality that the team did not have before and allows live agents to easily keep track of and proactively follow up with customer inquiries.

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The Camping World team began with 75–100 intents and has since been able to adjust to areas where customers were finding roadblocks and improving multiple iterations. IBM added new features such as SMS capabilities that enabled customers to switch from voice to SMS messaging when they are calling in. The latest enhancement also allows outbound SMS campaigns to reach customers and increase sales.

The two teams went one step further and integrated additional enhancements in the back end that expanded the capabilities of virtual agents handling customer scenarios, improving live agent efficiency and customer satisfaction. In addition to providing 30-plus FAQs, the virtual agent integrates with Oracle and Salesforce platforms to address customers' queries and find customer information quickly and efficiently.

"The agents love the ease with which they can interact with the customers using IBM watsonx Assistant; Arvee initiates and transmits a warm handoff to agents," says Shah. "Also, having access to the customer engagement stats and metrics on the dashboard is greatly helping agents stay organized; it's very intuitive."

The implementation process was completed in waves so as not to halt day-to-day business. "We did not experience technical challenges with the migration, and I believe that's a testament to the partnership between the IBM team and our technical resources," Wintrow adds. "They did a great job understanding the different complexities and challenges of sometimes disjointed teams. We felt very supported."

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“The visibility into our customer engagement changed the game for us. We’re more prepared as we head into the busy season, and we will be able to meet our customers’ needs in a more meaningful way.”

Brenda Wintrow

Senior Vice President of Sales and Customer Experience
Camping World

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AI takes the lead in customer engagements

Though the advancement in AI capabilities can bring about less human-to-human contact than ever before, that doesn't mean the phone call is dead and that individuals will soon be out of a job. Agents are still very much involved in the sales process, and with the allotted time, they can deliver higher quality service to customers. IBM watsonx Assistant recognizes customers' intentions and provides callers with the opportunity to be routed to an available live agent for that conversation.

Following the implementation, customer engagement rates have trended upwards significantly, and the number of dropped conversations has decreased. Customers are experiencing shorter wait times and faster responses, and agent efficiency has dramatically improved. Aided by the agent desktop integration and with Arvee proactively collecting customer data while fielding web and SMS messaging, live agents can handle multiple simultaneous chats, increasing their overall efficiency by 33%. As of March 2022, customer engagement increased by 40% and Camping World saw wait times drop down to 33 seconds.

"When you look at the total number of chat conversations—13,999 for retail and only 6,000 needed to be then transferred to a live agent—that's incredible. That's nearly 8,000 conversations that were either answered with Arvee and through the integration of the enhanced and improved intents," explains Wintrow. "When it gets to the agents, it allows the opportunity for more revenue-generating conversations and upselling opportunities."


Now that Camping World has implemented AI technology across various parts of its operation, what's next?

"What we've done in the last few weeks—and it's going to change the game for us—is our proactive webchat and being able to prompt customers to talk with us and engage in an RV sales purchase," says Wintrow. "We yet, we will eventually get there, but it has already prompted customers to visit our sales site. We're very excited about this opportunity. Summer has historically been our busy season."


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About Camping World

Since 1966, [Camping World](#)  has specialized in products and services for vehicle owners and campers. What began as a single store in Bowling Green, Kentucky, has grown into the nation’s largest retailer of RVs and RC-related products and services, with over 160 Camping World SuperCenters. Since 2009, the enterprise has served as the Official RV and Outdoor Retailer of NASCAR. In addition, Camping World has formed a multi-year partnership with Major League Baseball.

Solution components

IBM® Consulting	→	IBM Consulting for Salesforce	→
IBM Watson®	→	IBM watsonx Assistant	→
LivePerson (link resides outside of ibm.com)			

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