

German no-frills provider opts for flexibility and a short chain-of-command

No-frills seems to be gaining more and more ground, especially in the Germany market with its population of 82 million people, mobile penetration rates of more than 100%, and something like 90 million active mobile subscriptions. And, "keeping it simple" seems to be the best way to sum up the success of the German no-frills service provider, callmobile, in lining up their business in this market.

callmobile was launched in November 2005 under the name easyMobile. callmobile is 100% owned by debitel, which has significant sales power in Germany, selling every fifth mobile contract sold on the German market.

Growing fast the simple way

In 2007, callmobile grew more than 100% without increasing its human resources base, demonstrating that the people behind the concept had chosen the right approach and infrastructural setup for operating in the highly competitive German market. And this even at a time when the German mobile market has experienced a bit of a slowdown in recent years.

There are more than 30 no-frills providers in this market alone, and callmobile's strategy is to differentiate clearly by offering a very low community rate and a mix of post-paid and prepaid plans, where an auto-refill functionality via direct debit bank transfer is started if a customer's account comes under a certain predefined threshold. This auto-refill functionality lets callmobile customers concentrate on what's really important in life and leave worries about refilling phone balances to callmobile.

To make it even easier for customers, callmobile offers just two tariffs, and only a limited set of the configurations provided by the network operator. Furthermore, callmobile's customers are not bound to their subscription for any specified period of time, which is very unusual in the German market, where a two-year contractually binding period is customary.



Head of IT for callmobile, Steffen Perszewski, is convinced that access to best-practices from all over Europe is something callmobile can benefit from.

Adapting to new challenges and needs

From the start as a no-frills provider, callmobile handled all mobile sales and all customer care over the web or phone, using the Rator system as backbone. In Q2 2008, callmobile started to expand its distribution to include physical retail shops. This put the Rator system to a very challenging, yet convincing test in proving its flexibility and scalability.

The move from "web-only" to "shop-also" had to take place fast – very fast. And, according to Steffen Perszewski, Head of IT for callmobile, the Rator system passed the test with flying colours!

"The thing about the Rator system that has really proven priceless is the nice, short and informal chain-of-command in CDRator", says Steffen Perszewski. "In the German market, for a no-frills provider like us, things have to move fast and we need our backbone system to be able to move fast with us!" As an example, he mentions that the time from discovering that changes or add-on's are needed until the changes are made and implemented in the Rator system is usually just a few days (but, of course, always depending on the workload in general). "This gives the Rator system a clear advantage over bigger systems with more complicated and formal chains-of-command", he points out.

Minimum training and good sparring

And as Steffen Perszewski continues, "It is no secret that in our line of business, the turnover in customer care agents is pretty high. So to get new customer care agents up and running fast you need a very intuitive customer care GUI like in the Rator system. When we get a new agent, he or she is "fledged" in just one or two days, and when we get a new functionality, usually the crew need just a brief introduction to the feature to get going."

Another thing that is always at a premium for a service provider like callmobile is knowledge and sparring about how processes can be optimised and customers best served. In the mobile service provider market, knowledge about best practice is vital.

And since the Rator system is up and running in many markets all over Europe, the knowledge gathered by CDRator covers best practice from all over – "Something we have certainly benefited from...", says Steffen Perszewski. "CDRator has a huge pool of knowledge in the field of telecom billing and rating and gladly shares it – but without ever compromising the confidentiality of any customer, of course. It has been very interesting to learn from CDRator how things are done in other markets – operating only in the German market can make you a bit one-sided at times, and then CDRator can help you broaden your perspectives".

For callmobile, it is also important that a service and knowledge provider like CDRator is a multicultural place with people from all over the world. This brings energy and practical and cultural understanding into projects and eases collaboration at the interpersonal level. And the fact that CDRator can often meet the customer in his or her own language might even overcome language barriers on projects.

"As mentioned earlier, callmobile is growing, and hopefully the Rator system will grow with us for years to come!" concludes Steffen Perszewski.

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