

RECOVERY SERVICES

Successful Telephony Recovery ensures Centrica customers are not left out in the cold

A telephony fault meant Centrica's most vulnerable customers were unable to top up their meters during one of the coldest periods of the year. But Centrica's smooth relocation to a Sungard Availability Services Workplace Recovery centre proved customer care is not just hot air.

Centrica is a top 30 FTSE 100 company with growing energy businesses in the UK and North America. Established in 1997 following the demerger of Centrica from British Gas plc, its core retail brands are British Gas, Dyno and Direct Energy (one of North America's largest energy service providers).

Centrica understands the importance of business continuity management (BCM) and has a longstanding relationship with Sungard AS to provide Workplace Recovery services. These contingency plans ensure that it can continue to provide vital services to its millions of customers, no matter what.

Centrica tests its plans at least three times a year and this high level of preparedness stood the company in good stead when an intermittent telephony fault hit its busy British Gas Call Centre in Edinburgh twice in the space of two months. Centrica invoked its recovery contract with Sungard AS on both occasions and relocated call centre agents to a nearby Sungard AS recovery centre. **Well rehearsed plans and a fast, efficient service from Sungard AS meant that Centrica was able to operate business as usual**, with customers completely unaware that their calls were being handled from a different location.

The telephony fault first hit Centrica's busy British Gas Call Centre in Edinburgh, which handles up to 10,000 calls a day, on a Scottish Public Holiday over the Christmas break and during one of the coldest periods of the year. When British Gas' prepayment customers called to top up their meters to get heat and power, they experienced a high-pitched whistle, forcing them to abandon the call.

Murdo Runciman, Business Continuity Manager for Centrica, knew the business had to act quickly as, **"This is our most vulnerable group of customers and every one of these calls is treated by us as a high priority."**

Centrica followed well defined escalation procedures and invoked its recovery service with Sungard AS, making arrangements for around 200 Call Centre Agents affected by the fault to relocate to its nominated Sungard AS Workplace Recovery centre. On receiving the call, Sungard AS's recovery specialists swung into action, setting up comms links, deploying the latest client image on the server, distributing headsets and preparing workplace positions ready for the arrival of Centrica employees.



Business problem

A telephony fault meant Centrica's most vulnerable customers were unable to get through to its British Gas Call Centre to top up their meters and get heat and power during a cold snap.

Solution

Recovery Services.

"Call answering times were exactly the same as usual and customers were unaware that we had suffered a business disruption."

Murdo Runciman,
Business Continuity Manager,
Centrica



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“All the testing and preparation we’ve done over the years led to this moment. Sungard delivered when we needed them to – they were beside us every step of the way.”

Mario Pascoe,
 Head of Business Continuity,
 Centrica

Business benefits

- Minimal loss of productivity
- No drop in service standards
- Staff morale and cooperation maintained throughout both invocations.

When Centrica’s agents arrived at the recovery site, they were welcomed by Sungard AS personnel to an environment that was familiar to most from their participation in Centrica’s testing programme. Mario Pascoe, Head of Business Continuity for Centrica, comments, “We were so impressed with the professionalism and support we experienced from the Sungard team who looked after us. They really made our team feel at home and, for a period of time, that’s what the recovery centre was to us – our home.”

Centrica ultimately stayed with Sungard AS for two full days, during the invocation period with no dip in service levels. It kept the recovery site on standby for a further three days after that, running a dual service until it could be certain that the telephony fault had been resolved.

Little did Centrica’s Edinburgh team realise that just two months later they would need to return to the Sungard AS site when the telephony fault reappeared. This time, Centrica relocated 375 team members handling over 25,000 calls to the recovery facility for five days. Having listened to employee feedback from the first invocation and having addressed the minor issues raised, the second invocation was even smoother than the first.

Mario Pascoe remarks, “We really saw the value of Sungard’s partnership approach and the close working relationship we’ve developed during these invocations. All the testing and preparation we’ve done over the years led to this moment. Sungard delivered when we needed them to – they were beside us every step of the way.”

About Sungard Availability Services

Sungard Availability Services provides managed IT services, information availability consulting services, business continuity management software, and disaster recovery services. To learn more, visit www.sungardas.co.uk or call 0800 143 413

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