



Covid-19 lockdown expedites Harambee's cloud migration plans



Case study

Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, a not-for-profit organisation that works with partners to build solutions to youth unemployment, relies on technology to help change the trajectory of young lives.

"Genesys is our platform of choice when it comes to enabling a voice channel," explains Marzanne Collins, Chief Information Officer and Product Manager at Harambee.

"And Pivotal Data is our trusted technology partner for the contact centre. The team implemented a Genesys PureConnect contact centre solution for us, which was successfully integrated with our Harambee Pathway Platform."

The Genesys PureConnect contact centre solution enables Harambee to effectively and efficiently reach young work seekers irrespective of where they live.

Harambee opted to transition from its legacy contact centre system to Genesys PureConnect to unlock additional operational and cost efficiencies.

The solution is securely hosted in Pivotal Data's geo-redundant Teraco data centre environment and seamlessly integrates with Harambee's core system and data environments, which are hosted on the Google Cloud platform.

But as call volumes continued to grow and Harambee sought to unlock additional functionality, discussions began with Pivotal Data around a complete cloud migration.

"Planning around our cloud transformation roadmap had already started, with 10 agents working on the Genesys Cloud solution when the global Covid-19 pandemic hit," explains Collins.

Customer	Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator
Industry	Staffing and recruiting
Solution	Genesys Cloud
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 5 lockdown restrictions prohibited agents from travelling to and working from the contact centre. Existing on-site hosted contact centre solution unable to accommodate remote agents. Existing on-site hosted contact centre solution unable to effectively scale to meet rising call volumes.

Government announced the nationwide lockdown soon after, which forced Harambee – deemed a non-essential service – to suspend its operation. However, as an organisation that is passionate about social change and upliftment, the company didn't want to sit idle as the country grappled with the crisis.

"We wanted to help South Africans in any way we could. As an experienced contact centre operator, we felt our expertise and experience could help the Department of Employment and Labour handle the Unemployment Insurance Fund's Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) benefit applications and general queries," continues Collins.

When Harambee got approval, the youth employment accelerator had mere days to pivot their contact centre operation before lockdown went into effect.

"We immediately turned to our trusted technology partner. Pivotal Data helped us become a scalable and responsive query handler that was capable of helping government manage the anticipated explosion in claim queries," says Collins.

"Harambee needed a contact centre solution that could accommodate remote working and rapidly scale to accommodate many hundreds of agents in a matter of days – an undertaking that typically takes several months," explains Karl Reed, Executive: Solutions at Pivotal Data.

However, Harambee's existing PureConnect solution was not fit for purpose. The team decided to spin up a Genesys Cloud instance and take advantage of a Genesys Covid-19 initiative that offered temporary 90- day licenses at no charge.

This Genesys Cloud solution needed to accommodate an unknown volume of potential claimants. And due to lockdown restrictions, agents required access from anywhere with a simple 3G connection or better.

The Pivotal Data team set up the project in less than 24 hours and by 20 April 2020, over 100 Harambee agents were able to field calls from home. Additional agents were added periodically in response to rising call volumes, until 200 Harambee agents were taking UIF calls.



"We scaled with an additional 300 agents from a partner to support our staff complement," elaborates Collins.

By mid-May, 500 active agents were answering call volumes of between 30,000 to 33,000 per day," adds Reed. In total, the contact centre had taken roughly 1,100,000 calls by end of June.

"Ramping up a non-commercial operation on that scale to assist citizens was a huge feat," continues Reed.

"The experience brought together numerous organisations, including many that wouldn't normally interact, with competitors meeting to discuss how they could collaborate for the greater good."

However, this was never a long-term play for Harambee, as call centre outsourcing is not its core focus. "We committed to support government until the end of June. We then handed over the business model we had built, including the processes, technology, reporting and operational models, for the UIF or a third party to continue managing it," explains Collins.

The experience was nevertheless beneficial to the business. It provided Harambee with important experience and insights into the power and potential of cloud-based solutions.

"We used the opportunity as a testbed for our own cloud transformation strategy.

And the lessons we've learnt are invaluable in refining our strategy to migrate our business systems."

According to Reed, the project revealed to Harambee exactly how they could conduct business more efficiently, and the full potential that cloud-based solutions offer their business.

"The cloud computing model allows business to easily operate from anywhere, not only from home. The ease with which we scaled the UIF solution showed Harambee that they could set up shop within days in any new location." And moving away from an office-bound model will become an increasingly relevant need in an era of social distancing.

"Harambee traditionally supports many young people on a face-to-face basis, but we aren't doing so now. Physical distancing and Covid-19 safety protocols will limit our ability to interact in this manner. Enabling 'Harambees' to work from anywhere will ensure we don't put staff or young people at risk," explains Collins.

"Harambee, like so many other companies, has realised that cloud is the future. It offers flexibility and scalability, with better uptime and security to enhance business continuity. Cloud also creates opportunities to access additional functionality, or gain instant access to new tools and features without massive capital expenditure or long implementations, which can future-proof your business," elaborates Reed. And the cloud computing model offers organisations cost benefits: it negates the annual costs that businesses incur to upgrade systems and add features, which are in addition to monthly licensing or subscription fees.

"Traditional systems require continual investments to remain up to date. But cloud can effectively lower the total monthly cost per seat or user as the provider implements everything on the back end," adds Reed. Cloud solutions also offer baked-in compliance in accordance with global standards.

While the UIF contact centre was a simple solution to set up because it didn't require integration, Collins says integrating a Genesys Cloud solution with Harambee's Pathway Platform and systems will require significantly more time and effort.

"Migrating from our current technology environment, which has lots of moving parts, may create some complexity and will likely make it trickier to integrate. But based on the possibilities, our experience with the UIF project, and Pivotal Data's proven ability to deliver solutions that work, the appetite is there to invest the time and resources needed to accelerate our journey to the cloud," concludes Collins.

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