



# First Group Management untangles communication complexity with Genesys solution



## Case study

Established in 2004, First Group Management is a specialist hospitality management company that manages a portfolio of leisure and business accommodation, including hotels, golf villas, all-suite properties, resorts, apartments and chalets.

First Group Management provides customers with a full spectrum of hospitality options including weddings, conferencing, wellness spas, comprehensive entertainment and a host of ancillary business and leisure services.

The company prides itself on its ability to deliver superior customer experiences across its managed services and properties and on its ability to cater to personal customer preference and interests.

In addition, the company manages five major holiday clubs on behalf of clients and four self-developed clubs, catering to a customer base of 120,000, and also provides timeshare management services across multiple resorts, including residential and commercial properties, catering to a customer base of 13,000.

The company's contact centre in KwaZulu-Natal serves as a vital cog in the operation, managing outbound sales and collections, and inbound reservations and customer support calls.

"However, prior to 2019, we did not have a centralised contact centre solution. Each division operated independently of each other," explains Cecilia Bauer, Senior Manager, Core Operations at First Group Management.

"We used complicated routing strategies to connect inbound callers with the right department while fielding emails via independent mail clients. The outbound team was also using

<b>Customer</b>	First Group Management
<b>Industry</b>	Hospitality
<b>Solution</b>	Genesys Cloud
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centralisation of the contact centre.</li> <li>• Simplified routing strategies.</li> <li>• Automated and robust dialling methods.</li> <li>• Call quality improvement.</li> <li>• Remote agent routing to on-premises solution.</li> <li>• Agility and responsiveness in light of lockdown regulations.</li> </ul>

manual dialling methods, which was ineffective and time-consuming and was holding us back from revenue-generating opportunities."

First Group Management identified that better integration and a more streamlined operation was vital to the company's success as bookings and reservations drive revenue within the business.

"It was impossible to integrate our multiple divisions without a suitable omnichannel contact centre solution due to the organisation's complex business structure," adds Thea Bormann, Director of Support & Operations at First Group Management.

The company also realised that it needed a more robust dialler in place to improve collections. Furthermore, issues with poor call quality further complicated service delivery and negatively affected outcomes.

Most importantly, First Group Management needed a solution that would empower the company to engage and communicate with customers in the way they wanted to connect and converse.

Consequently, the company issued a request for proposals in 2018 and shortlisted four potential managed services providers.

“While multiple providers recommended Genesys Pure Engage based on the specifications issued in the RFP, Pivotal Data pitched the most comprehensive solution at the best price,” continues Bauer.

First Group Management subsequently selected Pivotal Data as its preferred services provider and the team began the implementation in February 2019.

“We began a phased implementation of Genesys Pure Engage and went live in September 2019 with voice services for 120 agents, with plans to integrate email in the subsequent phase,” explains Karl Reed, Chief Solutions Officer at Pivotal Data.

#### Did you know?



The Genesys Pure Engage solution completely transformed the business operation. After implementation, First Group Management empowered its agents to be more productive and the company was subsequently able to field between 1500-4000 inbound calls a day, depending on the season.

The decision to adopt the solution also proved strategically significant to the company’s ultimate survival when the country went into level 5 lockdown in March 2020 and the hospitality industry effectively shut down.

“Pivotal Data worked with the internal team and the company’s network service providers to route remote agents into the on-premise Genesys Pure Engage solution,” elaborates Reed.

Within 24 hours First Group Management had 20% of outbound agents working remotely and over the next four weeks worked to add additional functionality.

The configuration and customisation limitations related to operating an on-premise solution soon became apparent as First Group Management needed to log support ticket to implement changes.

“Whatever we needed to change or update in Pure Engage needed to be scoped, costed and billed. There were also costs associated with implementing the changes,” continues Bauer.

“Ultimately, the tightly coupled system and our reliance on resources that were not always readily available created a compelling case for migrating to a cloud-based solution.”

“We realised that we needed greater flexibility in our contact centre solution to become a more agile and responsive

operation, particularly in light of the challenges posed by strict lockdown regulations,” explains Bormann.

“The limitations imposed by an on-premise solution helped us realise that a cloud-based solution would better serve our business requirements and future needs beyond the pandemic.”

Following extensive consultations with Pivotal Data, First Group Management decided to migrate to Genesys Cloud and Go-live when the company’s Pure Engage contract ended.

The established relationship with Pivotal Data and the company’s experience with Genesys ensured the company could trust the team to manage the migration and opted to implement Genesys Cloud during the height of the pandemic as lockdown restrictions persisted.

“The cloud migration project kicked-off in November 2021 with scoping, and the solution went live in April, which is something we did not think was possible. The migration happened over a weekend and it was smooth sailing from day one,” says Bauer.

“First Group Management immediately gained access to multiple integrated channels” continues Reed.

“Contact centre agents can now seamlessly engage across multiple platforms and channels including voice, email, web messaging and social media all from a single application.”

Importantly, the internal First Group Management team now enjoys more control and can self-manage the system to a greater degree via the cloud enhanced dashboards and reporting.

“This functionality gives us the ability to make changes to configurations on the fly – a process that could previously take weeks,” adds Bauer. “And all agents can seamlessly and easily access the solution from anywhere with a reliable internet connection, which has enabled the company to permanently transition to a work-from-home operation,” adds Bauer.

The improvement to operational efficiency since the migration has had a transformative impact on the business. Since migrating to Genesys Cloud, First Group Management has nearly doubled its contact centre operation, going from 120 to 222 seats, including 60 reservations agents and 68 sales agents. “And this has been a simple process,” confirms Bauer.

“The cloud migration also unlocked greater opportunities for autonomy through self-management capabilities, with the ability to instantly access and integrate new functionality with fewer on-site resources required, which has lowered operational costs with less time lost on logging service calls.”

The Genesys Cloud system is also more efficient and creates a smoother contact centre operation, while offering deeper functionality such as granular dashboards and reporting and team, call and resource management, which the operation needed.

“Updates and new versions are now seamlessly rolled out in the background and are immediately available, which means First Group Management can fast-track their contact centre modernisation plans, with the ability to access new features and functionality as they become available,” adds Reed.

For example, First Group Management opened hunt lines and went live with a dialler in May 2022. The company also plans to roll out web chat, chats bots and additional social media integration in a phased approach in the coming months, which will serve to future-proof the contact centre’s functionality.



“Most importantly, the ability to seamlessly support remote working ensured First Group Management remained operational through lockdown, which ultimately saved our business,” affirms Bauer.

“The resultant business continuity ensured that we could remain close to customers and secure bookings during lockdown, which resulted in 100% occupancy across the company’s portfolio when restrictions eased and pent-up demand drove holiday bookings. The solution was also able to

scale effectively to ensure the contact centre could manage the higher call volumes during this period.”

Remote working capabilities again benefited the business during subsequent catastrophic events in the region, such as widespread riots and flooding in the region, as well as persistent load shedding, which made on-site operations impossible.

“These factors affirmed the need for a solution that could maintain business continuity through uninterrupted system availability and support end-to-end remote working capabilities via a fully hosted cloud-based contact centre,” continues Bormann.

The company has now embraced a Work From Home operation for all contact centre staff, which has helped to realise significant cost savings for the business in the form of lower operating expenses such as insurance and office equipment costs.

“The ability to integrate all departments and sites onto a single platform delivers better collaboration and has simplified internal communications. More importantly, it ensures business continuity by acting as a failover as regional outages no longer affect system availability,” explains Bormann.

In addition, the company has started to source scarce skills from outside the KwaZulu-Natal region as the Genesys Cloud solution can easily integrate resources from anywhere.

## Evolve complexity into simplicity with Pivotal.



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