



The Open
University

Case Study

A fully *embedded solution*
to address peak sourcing demand



Client profile

Founded in 1969, The Open University is a global leader in higher education and flexible distance learning. As the largest academic institution in the United Kingdom and a pioneer in globally accessible education, The Open University has taught over 2.3 million students worldwide and currently has more than 208,000 enrolled students. The Open University aims to give anyone the power to learn anywhere — a goal made possible by its accessible education model and commitment to exceptional education and research.

The Open University's latest research assessment found 76% of their submitted research had earned four or three-star ratings in terms of overall academic quality and rigour — the highest ratings available. Additionally, 82% of their research achieved a “world-leading” or “internationally excellent” rating.¹ This recognition demonstrates The Open University's successful commitment to the societal impact of their educational programs and research, as well as the high standards of excellence achieved by both.

Since 1971, The Open University has had a long-standing and unique educational partnership with the BBC in which they co-produce a wide range of television, radio, podcast, digital, and social content. Notably, The Open University playlist on BBC Ideas has generated over 4.2 million views from 43 videos.



Industry Education



Footprint

Having reached millions of students wherever they are on their education journey, 71% of The Open University's 208,000 directly registered students are in full-time or part-time employment. Additionally, The Open University works alongside 2,800 total employers to offer workplace education, including over 190 local authorities and 149 NHS trusts and nations health boards.

Last year, The Open University's programs achieved over 286.1 million viewing and listening events — prompting over 630,700 visits to broadcast-related content hosted on their Broadcast and Partnerships website with the BBC.²

Operational overview

The Open University began its partnership with Teleperformance in June 2022 in order to build in more staffing flexibility during peak demand seasons while maintaining high quality measures. Teleperformance operates with The Open University on a unique model of retaining a team of 16 full-time employees throughout the year and then ramping up to 60-80 full-time employees during the peak registration season each summer.

Services offered

Student support

Support channels

Inbound calls, Web chat, Email

Languages

English

Locations

Remote, United Kingdom



Business challenge

High attrition and limited flexibility to keep up with demand

Due to the unique nature of The Open University's remote enrollment and educational delivery model, students and inquirers rely heavily on The Open University's frontline operational teams for a wide range of services throughout their learning journey. During operational peaks in the summer, it is necessary for the capacity of these frontline teams to increase to meet the new contact demand. While The Open University formerly relied solely on one external agency to source the additional temporary staff members, they realized bringing on an additional partner with targeted expertise could help ensure a more robust staffing strategy.



After the global pandemic, various internal and external factors — including student behavior and process shifts — impacted demand, creating new challenges that called for a more flexible resource strategy than their previous approach had allowed. When The Open University came to Teleperformance, their primary business challenges included:

- Additional workload: Managers and teams were continually bogged down with the various aspects of recruitment during peak windows. Completing timesheets, authorizing leave requests, administering interviews, hosting conversations about the suitability of candidates, and conducting all the work required to temporarily onboard the new recruits was taking up more time than the team had to spare.
- Sourcing volume: Low availability of suitable candidates in the job market meant sourcing the volume of staff needed during peak seasons was always a risk and a moving target to achieve.
- High attrition: Crucially, The Open University was experiencing a high level of attrition during the early weeks of temporary staff onboarding. While the loss of staff could be attributed to a variety of reasons, including voluntary candidate resignations, high attrition rates meant maintaining the staff necessary during peak demand became increasingly difficult.
- Piling costs: All of the above challenges incurred costs to The Open University in terms of staff time spent on recruitment and training. The high attrition also created a risk to their service levels if the operations team wasn't staffed to the requisite capacity.

Solutions implemented

Embedding an experienced, flexible, and integrated partner

For The Open University, it was clear they needed to bring on an experienced outsource partner whose core business was supplying contact center services and staff in addition to the temporary agency. They wanted to bring on a true partner who could support all nations in the UK, had the flexibility to meet their annual ramp-up cycle, and could take over all recruitment and management activities in order to help their operational teams focus more on running their own services.

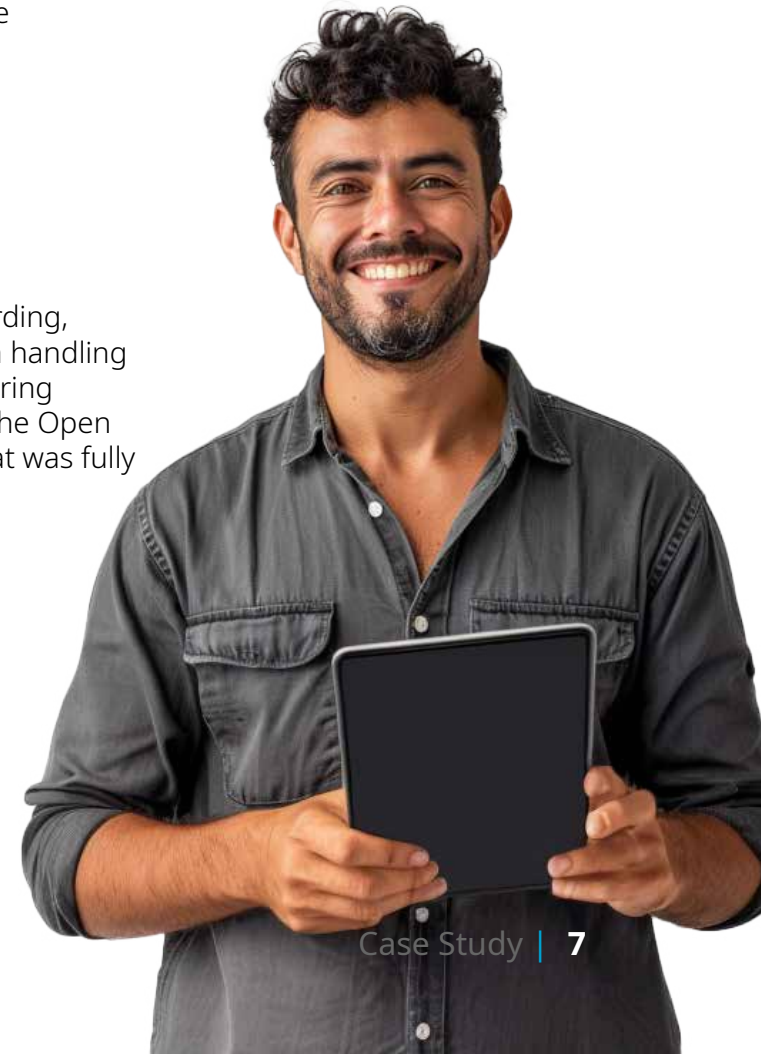
In 2022, The Open University turned to Teleperformance's deep experience and flexible offerings to fill the gaps in their support staff challenges.

Integrated partner

To help The Open University achieve their goals, Teleperformance took a true integrated approach by maintaining a core team throughout the year as well as a national team supporting Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. This helped Teleperformance grow a team of in-house experts who were intimately familiar with The Open University's processes, tools, technologies, and personnel resources. This integrated methodology also meant that, during peak ramp-up windows, The Open University's workload was lessened as Teleperformance's subject matter experts could optimize the ramp-up process and support new recruits from the onset.

Experienced team

Since The Open University team had been previously beleaguered with recruitment, onboarding, and training activities, Teleperformance brought on an expert team that was experienced in handling ramp campaigns. Therefore, Teleperformance was able to advise them on best practices during these periods, offering a truly collaborative, structured, and open partnership that fit with The Open University's culture and work process. Having a deeply experienced contact center team that was fully embedded helped both parties learn from each.

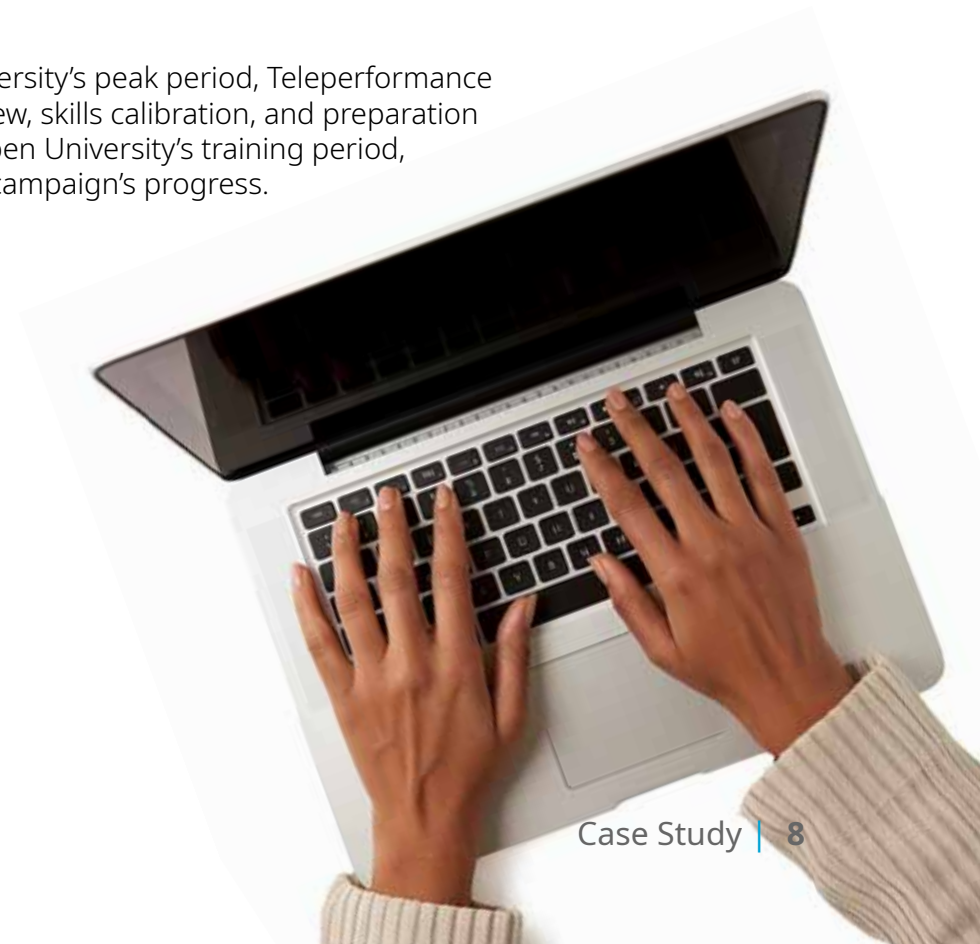


Service highlights

Fully embedded: Teleperformance agents are a fully embedded part of The Open University team. While Teleperformance takes care of recruiting and sourcing agents during the peak season, there is no differentiation between TP and The Open University's contact centre staff. Both go through the same training processes, use the same technology, and are part of a cohesive team handling The Open University's calls, emails, and web chats. TP also undergoes dedicated training for our additional teams supporting Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.

Successful ramp-up periods: To recruit a ramp team during The Open University's peak period, Teleperformance applied our resources and connections to manage the recruitment, interview, skills calibration, and preparation process. Teleperformance's team then managed performance after The Open University's training period, working closely with their internal teams to regularly meet and review the campaign's progress.

Staying flexible: Because The Open University has a thorough training and embedding period, Teleperformance made sure our approach was as flexible as possible with The Open University's ramp strategy in order to keep staff engaged throughout the full onboarding period. This was crucial to minimise attrition, as well as reduce the workload on their current team.



Real results

Delivering high service quality and achieving core objective

For The Open University, finding a partner who aligned with their culture and values was important from day one. Additionally, a partner who was able to demonstrate, recognize, and then deliver on The Open University's high quality service standards was crucial for a successful partnership. Since the partnership began, Teleperformance was aligned with these values and able to achieve The Open University's core objectives for the partnership.

Teleperformance's flexible and embedded approach with The Open University has led to consistent and reliable results:

- An average increase of 7.85% per month of productive hours.
- Teleperformance staff are achieving 90% of The Open University's quality set measures.
- Teleperformance has never failed to meet The Open University's quality measures once since the partnership began.



By adding Teleperformance's deeply experienced team and fully embedding them together with The Open University staff, the university's students have experienced a consistent and seamless service when contacting frontline staff. Not only has this partnership benefited students, but internal Open University teams have also resolved many of their pain points related to sourcing and ramping up staff for peak demand periods.

In Teleperformance, The Open University found more than just a contact center supplier — they found a true partner. As the needs of students keep changing in the current economic and learning environment, this flexible model can provide the resources needed for The Open University to grow alongside their students in the future while providing the critical support they need today.

Endnotes

1. <https://research.open.ac.uk/news/ref-2021-recognises-82-ou-research-impact-world-leading-or-internationally-excellent>
2. <https://connect.open.ac.uk/>



