

CASE STUDY

Verizon Provides Online Customers with a Retail-like Experience Through BlueJeans

When COVID-19 health restrictions prompted Verizon to trial video chat to connect its customers with store specialists, the company quickly realized it was onto something.

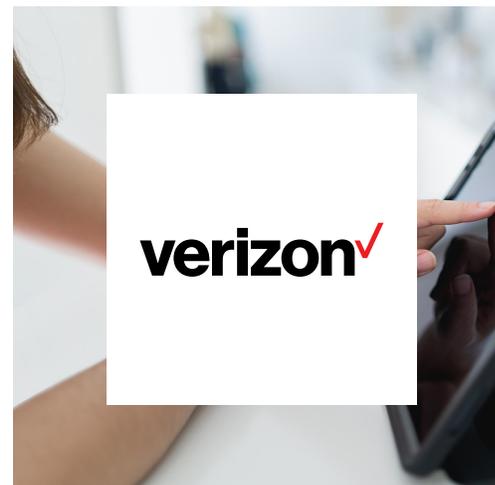
Customers who would previously have visited a local store to review a bill or upgrade their phone were now happy to engage with one of Verizon's sales specialists over video chat. At the same time, sales reps that were unable to serve customers in-person were still able to provide an in-store-like experience from their iPads.

However, the company's existing technology was not up to the job. The Verizon team recognized that the business needed a scalable, enterprise-grade platform that would enable it to seamlessly connect online customers with a direct Verizon store representative over a secure video call.

The team turned to BlueJeans to help it develop a one click-call solution for sales and account management inquiries. This feature would be integrated with the company's mobile point-of-sale (mPOS) solution.

When Life Gives You Lemons...

"At the height of the COVID pandemic, we were seeing customers by appointment only, with only one customer allowed in a store at a time," recalls Pranay Bajpai, Verizon's Executive Director of Software Development. "If there was even a single case of COVID in a store, it would have to close for 14 days, which meant all of that store's employees would basically be nonfunctional."



Industry: Telecommunications

Challenge: Verizon needed a scalable, enterprise-grade platform that would allow customers to enjoy a retail-like experience without having to visit a store.

Solution: The telco used BlueJeans Meetings to develop a one click-call solution for sales. This was integrated with Verizon's mobile point-of-sale solution.

Results: Since launching the pilot Video Assist program, Verizon's productivity and sales have increased.

Pilot data shows Video Assist calls have a higher propensity to end in a sale than calls to a call center.

Video chats are more than four times as likely to end in a sale on the day of the call.

Using BlueJeans Meetings has contributed to revenue growth, with the year-long pilot of Video Assist delivering \$1 million in additional revenue.

Store specialists across the company's 1,500 stores are now able to connect with the company's customers using Video Assist.

“We did not want to force our customers to download any software or install plug-ins, or have them leave the browser while starting a video chat with Verizon stores. [The] embedded SDK solution is seamless and works without requiring customers (or even our sales reps) to download or install anything on their machines/phones.”

– PRANAY BAJPAI, VERIZON’S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

Keen to make better use of Verizon’s highly skilled store specialists, Bajpai and his team revisited an idea the company had come up with several years prior — having retail employees help online customers over video.

The company quickly launched a customer video chat option using its existing video conferencing platform. However, they soon discovered issues with this platform.

“It wasn’t connected to anything and was pretty clunky,” says Bajpai. “While the reps liked the idea of being able to help the customers online, we realized within a few weeks that we wouldn’t be able to scale it. We had to rethink our whole strategy.”

After assessing several platforms, the company partnered with BlueJeans to develop an integrated program that would enable it to seamlessly assist its customers via video. Verizon leveraged BlueJeans’ iOS and web software development kits (SDK) to build the video experience directly within the sales specialist’s mobile point-of-sale solution and the customer’s browser on verizon.com.

Powered by BlueJeans Meeting, Verizon’s Video Assist functionality connects online customers with a direct

Verizon store representative through secure video calls. Store specialists who aren’t serving a customer in person can sign on to the platform to help online customers with their account management and sales inquiries.

“We did not want to force our customers to download any software or install plug-ins (which is something other video solutions force customers to do), or have them leave the browser while starting a video chat with Verizon stores,” says Bajpai. “Hence we came up with this embedded SDK solution, which is seamless and works without requiring customers (or even our sales reps) to download or install anything on their machines/phones.”

Piloted in 142 Verizon stores across the US, Verizon incorporated customer and employee feedback to optimize functionality for the program prior to implementing it across all of the company’s stores. It is now available in 1,500 locations nationwide.

Using Video to Optimize Resources

Video Assist benefits Verizon in a number of ways, according to Ryan Tucker, Verizon’s Vice President of Consumer Sales, South Central Region.

“Being able to access BlueJeans directly from the company’s mPOS platform is a complete game changer.”

– JARRETT DAWSON, VERIZON’S DIRECTOR OF CONSUMER SALES AND OPERATIONS

“If a store is fully occupied with customers, that’s a great situation,” he says. “But that’s not all the time. There are times where team members are unoccupied.

“Video Assist allows us to give our teams good work that drives good customer experience while optimizing our labor. It takes full advantage of all the capabilities we’ve built for our stores over the last three or four years, like external lockers for customers to collect purchases.

“And it gives the millions of customers who go to our digital properties a way to connect with a Verizon team member and experience our brand face-to-face.”

One of Video Assist’s key features is being able to optimize audio quality by eliminating background noise. There is also the option to flip the camera around, which allows store specialists to show customers products or features they are interested in.

“Video Assist is optimized for the showroom,” says Tucker. “So, a customer might be looking on our digital site and say, ‘Hey, I’m looking at this iPhone. I can see the dimensions, but what does it really look like?’

“With Video Assist, a specialist can walk around the store and show the customer the phone. They can handle the payment. They can enter the customer’s information and then arrange to ship it to their house. Or they can organize for the customer to pick it up from the store that’s around the corner.”

“Being able to access BlueJeans directly from the company’s mPOS platform is a complete game changer,” adds Jarrett Dawson, Verizon’s Director of Consumer Sales and Operations.

“And being able to navigate the POS system as they normally would makes our employees feel super comfortable because they’re in their natural environment,” he says.

Delivering More Personal Customer Experience

Feedback from customers has been positive. Not only can they access help when and where they want it, they can do it in a way that feels very natural and comfortable.

“As a customer, it’s more personal to be able to see a smiling person with a nametag, standing in front of the Verizon check, than hearing a voice over the phone,” says Akil Mayer, District Manager for Chattanooga, Tennessee. “It just kind of helps build the Verizon brand and instill confidence in our product.”

Ken Lain, Verizon’s VP, Sales and Service Operations, agrees: “There’s an additional level of trust that comes from a live video interaction versus a chat session or email.”

While customers’ cameras are switched off by default at the beginning of a call, more than half of customers will switch their camera on for a more friendly experience.

Boosting Productivity During In-store Lulls

The experiences of Verizon employees involved with the pilot program have also been positive. Because Video Assist incorporates technology that is already familiar to store specialists, using the platform is largely intuitive. Switching to the platform during downtime enables team members to maintain productivity and achieve sales targets.

Taking Video Assist calls also enables store specialists to meet their 'idle time target' — speaking with two prospects on the phone each day — without needing to cold call potential customers.

“Most employees that choose to work in retail are more comfortable with face-to-face interactions than calling customers,” says Stephen Bozzacco, Verizon’s Director of Sales Program Operations. “With outbound calls, you’re expected to keep going until you talk to two customers, even if it takes 20 calls to get there.

“With Video Assist, you’re getting those two customers right away because they are in-bound calls. It’s helping us to become more productive because we’re not wasting time.”

Mayer, who has been working closely with some of the store specialists in the pilot, believes the program is especially beneficial for employees in locations where in-store traffic is limited.

“Several of my stores were able to make some very high-quality sales transactions during the holiday season, with close to 20 additional customers that wouldn’t have come in,” he says. “There’s also an opportunity for teams that may not be in the right area to sell a specific product — for example, our 5G Ultra Wideband — to go ahead and serve customers with that product as well.”

A Strong Foundation for Growth

By using BlueJeans Meetings to power its Video Assist program, Verizon has increased its productivity and sales. According to initial data collected from the year-long pilot, Video Assist calls have a higher propensity to end in a sale than inbound requests that are directed to a call center. Video interactions are also four times more likely to end in a sale on the day of call.

“With outbound calls, sales reps will see an immediate impact about 10% of the time, meaning they might make 10 calls before they get a conversion,” says Dawson. “When they get a conversion, 10% of the time it will happen on day one. With video calls, 45% of conversions happen on day one.”

Overall, the company’s pilot program generated \$1 million in additional revenue. With all of Verizon’s stores now able to access the Video Assist program, the company is focused on how it can continue to streamline and scale the solution.

“Verizon has 100 million customers,” says Tucker. “So if we do continue to scale it, who knows how big it could get?”

ABOUT VERIZON

Verizon Communications is one of the world’s leading providers of technology and communications services.

Headquartered in New York City and with a presence in more than 150 countries, Verizon offers voice, data and video services and solutions on its award-winning networks and platforms. It has around 1,500 retail stores in the US servicing approximately 143 million retail customers.