



# Horizon is the right prescription for expert veterinary practice



## About Best Friends Group

If a dog is man's best friend then a dog's best friend - in eastern and middle England at least - is probably the aptly named Best Friends Veterinary Group. An expert small animal practice it has 18 branches across Nottinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire down to London, Milton Keynes and Essex where pets receive the very best of care.

But while a good bedside manner might be lost on a Labrador or a Budgie, it most certainly makes a difference with their owners. Customer care is every bit as important as patient care. And the telephone plays an important part in providing it.

Which is why Best Friends Veterinary Group chose Market Harborough-based Welcomm Communications to update and upgrade its phone system, the main point of contact for pet owners at what can be for them a stressful time.

## The Challenge

Best Friends Group staff found their legacy phone system clunky, unintuitive and difficult to use and navigate. Worse still, the old system had no facilities to track their incoming and outgoing calls. It was almost impossible for managers to know when the busy periods on the telephone were, how many calls might be getting lost or abandoned and which clients' calls had gone unanswered.

"The phone is critical to our business with clients calling to make urgent appointments and to find out how their pets are. But with no logs available we couldn't call people back or see when busy periods fell, and when it might be useful to have extra staff in to deal with calls," says Best Friends Group IT manager Chris Tuzzeo. "All we had to go on was what the surgery staff could tell us."

There was also a lack of flexibility in the old system. Getting numbers and short codes changed, adding new extensions, moving others and replacing or upgrading hardware was slow and time consuming.

“ Suddenly we had visibility of everything we needed. We could see when the really busy periods were and arrange extra staff to cover the phones. We could prioritise calls properly and we were able to do some intelligent call rerouting between sites when branch offices were busy. One valuable lesson we did learn was that there were call spikes every day after the school run: something we'd never have known otherwise. ”

Chris Tuzzeo, IT manager, Best Friends Group





## The solution

When it became time to find a replacement phone system, Best Friends Group did not have to look very far. It already had a business mobile phone contract with Welcomm and had been getting brilliant service from the start. "We've always had good links with Welcomm. Their account manager is friendly and proactive; they've always given us very good levels of support and they've been very quick to help us," says Tuzzeo.

Welcomm proposed the Horizon hosted system from its partner Gamma as an ideal fit for the veterinary group's requirement. Quick to install, easy to use and supplied with fully-featured handsets as standard, Horizon is highly flexible and is readily configured, expanded and controlled by IT staff entirely from a Web portal. It also has powerful and automatic provision for business continuity during contingencies.

Phone system box ticked, Welcomm still had one more ace up its sleeve: the Akixi hosted call management and reporting service. Linked unobtrusively at network level with Horizon it provides full reporting of traffic levels, missed, abandoned and lost calls, and offers a real time call centre-like wallboard display of all activity. For Best Friends Group it came as something of a revelation.

"Suddenly we had visibility of everything we needed. We can now see when the really busy periods were and can arrange extra staff to cover the phones. We can prioritise calls properly and we're able to do some intelligent call rerouting between sites when branch offices are busy," says Tuzzeo. "One valuable lesson we did learn was that there were call spikes every day after the school run: something we'd never have known without Welcomm's help."

Best of all, staff at the branches receive a regular emailed report of lost and abandoned calls and are immediately able to call clients back. "Clients are really pleased that they get a call back. It's been a real builder of good will for us," adds Tuzzeo.

## The benefits

- Much easier for staff to use and much more intuitive
- Real time visibility of call traffic levels allows smart call routing according to workloads
- Ability to view missed calls and make return courtesy calls, boosting customer service
- Detailed management reports to help with staffing levels during peak times
- Flexibility to deploy after-hours, weekend and bank holiday messages to callers
- IT staff can now fully manage and control the system through a simple Web portal
- Provision for failover to mobile phones during contingencies providing seamless customer contact
- Moves, changes and additions much quicker to request and provision

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