



CASE STUDY: PLANTRONICS WIRELESS OFFICE HEADSETS



IMPACT ON JOB QUALITY AND PRODUCTIVITY



Company Profile

SALESFORCE.COM

Web site

www.salesforce.com

Headquarters

California, United States

Industry

High Technology

Salesforce.com is the market and technology leader in Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) and Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS). Salesforce.com manages customer information for approximately 41,000 customers.

Plantronics Products

SupraPlus Wireless Headset System

CS70N Wireless Headset System

CS55 Wireless Headset System

Recruiting the best employees. Creating the optimal work environment to retain those employees. And not losing, but indeed, enhancing productivity in the process. Goals to which every employer aspires.

Tools that make it easier and more comfortable to use the telephone are central to recruitment, quality of work life, retention, and productivity where employees spend any significant time on the telephone. Plantronics develops wireless headset systems that enable employees to optimally conduct business.

Plantronics recently commissioned an independent study to determine how wireless headset usage affects employees' quality of work life and productivity. The study took place at salesforce.com, a Software-as-a-Service technology company where sales reps work in an open environment and use the telephone heavily to conduct business.

Findings, as described below, demonstrate that adoption of the wireless headsets resulted in increased employee comfort and satisfaction as well as measurable gains in productivity. Use of the wireless headset allowed employees to more fully focus on the lifeblood of their business, the sales call, free from the myriad of surrounding distractions.

The Setting: Salesforce.com

Salesforce.com is a leading provider of Software-as-a-Service and Platform-as-a-Service. In many cases, its sales reps sell the services to customers through telephone contact: either a sales rep calls a prospect, or a prospect contacts the company through an 800 number.

Many sales teams sit together in an open area, with each rep stationed in a cubicle. Reps are typically on the telephone most of the day – an average of five to six hours. Their goal is to talk to as many prospective customers as possible in any one day. Simply put, the more calls made, the more deals closed. In such a transactionally based business, time and efficiency are at a premium.



Plantronics SupraPlus Wireless Headset System

Until this study, sales reps conducted business using wired headsets attached by cords to their telephones.

The Study

Plantronics commissioned Adams Consulting, an independent research company, to conduct this study. The study consisted of three elements:

- Interviews and small group discussions with managers and sales reps before and during the implementation.
- A longitudinal online survey. Two groups participated in this survey: a “test group” consisting of 46 sales reps who received the wireless sets, and a “control group” consisting of 18 sales reps who continued to use their wired headsets. The test group took the survey four times: first, a baseline survey pre-implementation, and three additional surveys taken in each of the three weeks post-implementation.
- Production numbers supplied by sales team managers pre- and post-implementation.

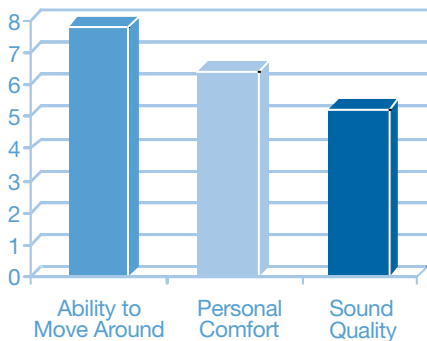
The Findings

Benefits of Wireless Use

Getting Rid of the Cord: Ability to Move and to Focus

Situated in an open area, other reps’ sales calls can be a source of distraction, making it hard to focus. Reps reported that noise level, low walls, and lack of privacy were three of their top barriers to productivity. Wired headsets limited their ability to move to a quiet place to focus on a call.

Perhaps not surprisingly, sales reps rated getting rid of the cord as the top job benefit of using wireless headsets. They described the corded headset as awkward and restrictive. To simply answer a call, the rep had to go through several steps: locate the right headset, untangle the cord, and only then answer the call. With wireless headsets, the cord, and the tether to the phone, disappeared. What did it mean to the reps to be “untethered to their desks” as one described





Plantronics CS70N Wireless Headset System

it? It meant mobility and freedom. Sales reps rated their ability to move around as the single most significant way their job improved from wearing the wireless headset. They were now free to move to a quiet corner; to a conference room – to anywhere they were most at ease conducting a sales call.

Being untethered also meant that they could leave the headsets on in between calls, or when they left their desks. Answering a call now only required one step. And being able to take that call to a conference room or a quiet corner meant increased focus. As one sales rep reported, “I’m zoned in.”

Sound Quality and Personal Comfort

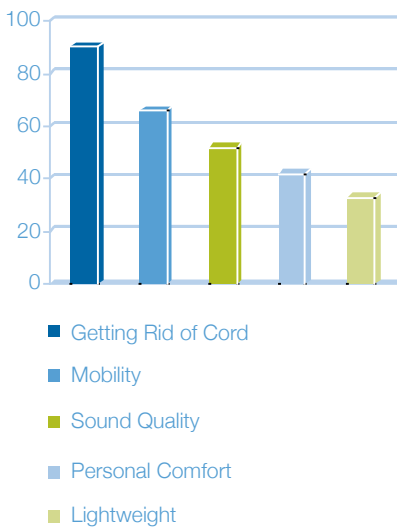
Sound quality improved with usage of the wireless headset. Users attributed the improvement to two factors: first, a better fit around both ears with the wireless set, rather than a flush fit against one ear with the wired set, and second, the ability to adjust volume. Personal comfort, specifically, posture, also improved with usage of the wireless set. Sales reps ranked personal comfort as second (just behind mobility) in ways their job improved as the result of wireless set usage. For employees who spend an average of five to six hours a day on the phone, the ability to move around, stretch, and adjust their posture, in other words, to feel more comfortable and less stressed, results in a significant improvement of their workplace experience.

The Ability to Multi-Task and Not Miss Calls

Allowing the reps complete mobility also facilitated multi-tasking. “I can go to my manager’s desk, get the solution I need, and then return to the conversation,” reported one sales rep.

Wired headsets required the reps to remove their headsets in between calls or whenever they left their workstations. Wireless headsets allow the reps to keep them on in between calls or when away from their desks. The result: fewer missed calls. Fewer missed calls rated as one of the top five benefits of using the wireless set. Missed calls dropped significantly over the course of the study from an average of 4.9 a day with wired headsets, to 2.9 a day after two

Top 5 Benefits





Plantronics CS55 Wireless Headset System

weeks with wireless headsets, to 2.1 a day after a month with headsets.

Having the Latest Technology: Hiring and Retention

The look and feel of a workspace and the work tools provided by the employer cannot be underestimated, both before and after hiring. Reps reported that having the latest technology helped reinforce their belief that they worked for a cutting edge company.

When asked their opinion of wireless headset users, the number one response of sales reps was “They are technologically savvy.” This response was consistently number one in all three surveys. By the final survey, taken a month after adoption, the number of reps who saw wireless headset users as “technologically savvy” grew by 21%.

Impact on Productivity

Prior to the test adoption of wireless headsets, sales managers described the centrality of the number of calls made to productivity: “the more calls made, the more deals made.” An evaluation of production conducted pre and post-implementation showed a 7.5% to 20% increase in new opportunities, depending on the sales team.

While one month is not enough time to truly evaluate long-term effect on productivity, it can be expected that such an increase in new opportunities would result in increased productivity over time.

Conclusion

This study was conducted in a competitive sales environment where the phone is the primary work tool. In this setting, employees’ interaction with the phone is central to their experience of job quality and to their productivity. Does the phone allow employees to optimize their time and to be physically comfortable? Or is it an obstacle to efficiency and comfort?

Adams Consulting has over 25 years of experience guiding companies' innovation through a deep understanding of people, culture and change.

The surveys and interviews conducted pre and post implementation demonstrate that adoption of wireless headsets in the salesforce.com environment resulted in job improvement and an increased quality of work life for sales reps. The ability to be mobile when conducting calls allowed reps to focus, achieve physical comfort, multi-task, and miss less calls. It aligned employees' perception of the company – a technology company – with being cutting edge. In a business dependent on maximizing the number of leads, wireless headset usage helped result in a measurable increase in new opportunities.

Adams Consulting

Adams Consulting specializes in research about brand and product development and solutions related to marketing strategy and communications. It has over 25 years of experience guiding companies' innovation through a deep understanding of people, culture and change. Engagements range from service, technology to product companies; start-up businesses to established Fortune 500 corporations.