



Using Invoca conversation intelligence to gain marketing visibility and improve sales agent performance.

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150%

of 2020 net subscriber goal after 10 months

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With help from Invoca, Windstream realized ambitious sales and marketing goals in a pandemic-disrupted economy and gained the visibility into campaign performance it needs to optimize its media mix and marketing spend and improve lead quality.



THE MISSION

“Most companies treat marketing and sales as church and state. But we saw an opportunity to change the relationship dramatically. We went from greeting one another in passing to becoming joined at the hip.”

Windstream Holdings, based in Little Rock, Arkansas, is a privately held communications and software company that offers managed communications services, including SD-WAN and unified communications as a service (UCaaS), and high-capacity bandwidth and transport services to businesses across the United States. Its fast-growing Kinetic by Windstream division provides premium broadband, entertainment and security services to residential and business customers in 18 states, primarily in rural areas.

Windstream had set the bar high for performance in 2020, including a plan to add 40,000 net-new subscribers and customers. “Any telco will tell you that’s an ambitious goal because it requires a hyper-focus on lowering churn as well as achieving aggressive growth,” said Lorenzo Clark, a vice president of sales at Windstream. “But we wanted to challenge ourselves.”

The opportunity for Windstream not only to reach but also surpass that goal emerged early in the year — and in dramatic fashion. When the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in the U.S., a large swath of the population was suddenly working or learning from home. The demand for fast, reliable internet service skyrocketed, creating pressure on Windstream to install and provide service to customers at a much higher volume than it had anticipated for 2020.

THE CHALLENGE

When Clark joined Windstream in 2019, the former NFL player immediately noticed that the marketing and sales organizations weren't working as a cohesive team. He said marketing didn't fully understand the sales strategy and processes, and sales didn't fully comprehend the marketing strategy, customer profiles and messaging in the marketplace.

"Most companies treat marketing and sales as church and state. But we saw an opportunity to change the relationship dramatically. By creating synergies across both functions, we've created the right environment for success. We went from greeting one another in passing to becoming joined at the hip," said Clark.

He added, "Sales and marketing need one another to be successful. Working together, they create more value and have more impact — like Batman and Robin, or peanut butter and jelly."

Another ambitious goal that Windstream had set for 2020 was to improve its marketing efficacy while also reducing ad spend.

"Marketing dollars are sunk costs, and it's imperative to have visibility into the performance of those dollars," said Clark. "Marketing can spend millions driving quality leads, but if the sales team doesn't convert those opportunities to customers, it's a loss. Likewise, you can have the world's greatest sales team, but if the lead quality isn't there, that's also a loss."

In addition, the sales team for Kinetic, Windstream's high-speed internet division, realized that its process for doing quality assurance on sales calls was inefficient. It needed a conversation intelligence solution to improve QA efficiency, which would, in turn, reduce labor costs and improve agent coaching.

"Our QA agents were only listening to 0.5% of total calls. Based on this small sample, they were assuming what agents were doing on all calls. But we couldn't be sure those assumptions were correct," said CJ Barnhart, Kinetic Quality Assurance Manager. "In addition, QA agents were spending a lot of time manually looking for sales calls to coach agents on, which was driving up labor costs."

"With Invoca, we can tie our marketing to a purchase, and that visibility lets us optimize our marketing spend and campaign performance. If we find a campaign isn't meeting expectations, we can shift dollars to higher-performing campaigns and drive higher lead quality."



THE RESOLUTION

Windstream was ready to reach its customers and exceed its goals because of strategic changes and investments it had made prior to the pandemic. That included creating stronger alignment between its marketing and sales functions and adopting Invoca's AI-powered conversation intelligence platform for both teams.

Unlocking full-funnel visibility of online and offline marketing performance

"The Invoca platform has allowed us to unlock a 'full-funnel' view of our marketing performance that incorporates both online and offline," said Clark. "That's important for a company like Windstream because 60% of the leads we generate online will pick up the phone and call us."

He added, "Not having visibility into 60% of your traffic makes it really difficult to manage the media mix and optimize which tactic you're going to use from week to week and month to month. Now, we can get a read on lead quality because we can see what's happening on sales calls and also track sales performance on a lead-by-lead basis."

"Prior to using Invoca, we really had no visibility into which tactics and messages were successful at driving traffic," said Melinda Russell, director of digital marketing at Windstream. "That made optimizing our campaigns virtually impossible. Now, we utilize Invoca insights to inform our media mix and our spend into high-performing channels."

With Invoca, Windstream can now tie their marketing to a purchase, and that visibility enables them to optimize marketing spend and campaign performance. "If we find a campaign isn't meeting expectations, we can shift dollars to higher-performing campaigns and drive higher lead quality," said Clark.

The marketing team is also taking the full-funnel view enabled by Invoca platform and ingesting it back into its martech stack. "It creates a 360-loop for ongoing campaign optimization, targeting, and more. We can reach further with fewer resources by attacking our day-to-day in a more targeted way, which is extremely powerful," he said.

Exceeding goals and earning recognition

“We’ve already been able to maximize our performance and optimize our marketing spend, which has led to increased profitability, even when you normalize for the COVID-19 effect,” said Clark. Windstream achieved 150% of its 2020 net subscriber goal after just 10 months and realized 7x ROI for the Invoca solution in the first eight months of use. “We’ve been able to reduce our cost-per-acquisition spend by about 17% because we’re getting better quality leads.”

Russell said, “Over the past year, we have transformed inside sales into a performance-based environment and Invoca’s technology supports that business characteristic. Our partnership with Invoca has produced a strong ROI. Plus, winning ‘Rookie of the Year’ at this year’s Invoca Summit Awards feeds our competitive nature. We’re prepared to go to the next level.”

Improving the contact center experience

Invoca enabled Windstream’s marketing organization to create more personalized experiences for customers who contact the call center by creating clear “swim lanes” for inbound traffic. That strategy prevents customers from being transferred multiple times before reaching the correct department. “Invoca has helped us to address the most significant pain point for new and existing customers,” said Clark. “We’ve been able to lower our transfer rates by 750 basis points. That’s significant not only because we’re saving on labor costs, but we’re also improving the customer experience overall.”

Automating sales quality assurance and improving coaching

With Invoca for Sales, the Kinetic sales team is no longer just performing QA on a small sample of the 30,000 phone calls they receive each month. Now, they’re able to automatically QA 100% of the phone calls they receive, without any lift from their QA team. Kinetic simply sets up its criteria for a successful sales call in Invoca—such as if the agent greets the caller properly, asks for the sale, and handles any objections that arise — and Invoca’s AI scores each call accordingly.

Additionally, Invoca gives Windstream’s sales team automated scorecards so they can see each agent’s strengths and areas for improvement. This gives supervisors more time to be analytical and solve problems, rather than listening to calls. As a result, Kinetic managers can identify trends more quickly and give better coaching to agents.

“We can now monitor more calls and get the supervisor more information on their agents so that they can coach those that were truly driving down performance, not the ones that may have had one or two bad days,” said Barnhart.

Invoca’s automated QA also helps Kinetic’s sales agents stay compliant with industry regulations. Customer proprietary network information (CPNI) infractions can be extremely costly for businesses, with fines up to \$1 million. In the past, Kinetic was only able to listen to a small portion of calls to ensure compliance. This left them open to potential fines and infractions. But with Invoca, they now can ensure that they’re compliant on all calls.

Building a more efficient and proficient ecosystem for marketing and sales

“We’re a better marketing organization because we have a strong partnership with sales,” said Aaron Pierce, vice president of marketing at Windstream. “Our teams have realized that we make each other better — I think that’s the biggest win. And now, when we have a problem, we can put all the smartest people together in the room to tackle it.”

Windstream’s adoption of Invoca is also supporting the company’s ongoing brand transformation efforts. The company has made significant investments to expand its product portfolio with next-generation technology and services and advanced functionality to support the growing needs of its customers. And Windstream has been investing deeply to enable its internal customers as well, including partnering with technology providers like Five9 and Salesforce to advance the goal of creating an efficient and proficient ecosystem for sales and marketing at the company.

“We’ve incorporated Invoca into the very foundation of our ecosystem,” said Clark. “And now that we’re starting to use conversation intelligence, we’re building customer profiles and gaining deeper insight into how Windstream’s customers want to be treated. That knowledge will allow us to provide our customers with the experience, products, and services they want at a price they can afford, and give them the support they need when they need it. And that can help us position Windstream as the obvious choice across the telco industry.”

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Learn more about how leading marketers are using AI-powered conversation intelligence to drive revenue at invoca.com/customers.

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