

Review of Condor Ferries Customer Contact Centre performance following the Clipper Incident

6 August 2014

Purpose

This report gives an insight into how Condor Ferries handled customers contacting the company in the days after the announcement that Clipper was being withdrawn from service. It deals with call handling at our Weymouth reservations centre where the majority were received. However, many guests were also helped in person or on the phone by our Guernsey, Jersey and UK ports teams.

Background

The data and statistics below cover all the calls received in the relevant period regardless of whether they related to the Clipper incident or not. Therefore a large number of calls will have been regarding changes to existing bookings or unrelated cancellations, customer queries or new bookings.

In June Condor Ferries invested in a new VOIP call system which improves the way in which our contact centres operate. The new system allows calls to be circulated to a wider pool of agents, enabling capacity to be handled more smoothly. The 'go live' of the new system went very smoothly and the Clipper incident also demonstrated the resilience and capabilities of the new system.

Helping customers to receive the best possible service

As soon as the incident occurred, measures were put in place to give customers the best possible support. This included providing briefing notes for staff to ensure consistent information was given (please see separate report into how Condor complied with EU Passenger Rights Directive for more details).

Condor also ensured that all available contact centre staff were taking calls. In addition, port staff in Jersey and Guernsey were deployed to take calls. Office staff in Poole took over some customer contact for complex rebookings such as caravans, where space had to be negotiated with the freight team.

Because Condor wanted to avoid customers having long waits on the phone, external communications asked guests to wait to be contacted by a member of the team who would assist them with alternative travel plans. This also allowed Condor to make rearrangements in order of travel date.

Despite these communication efforts, many passengers were inevitably concerned to make revised travel arrangements as soon as possible. Many therefore disregarded this request and instead chose to phone the contact centre. This led to the high volumes of calls reported below and regrettably, in a small number of cases, lengthy waits.

The contact centre received a record number of calls

Contact centre data is analysed in periods which closely follow calendar months. The relevant period for the Clipper incident is the July period which runs 29th June to 26th July.

During this period

- a record number of calls were made to the Reservations and Customer Services team; a third more calls were received compared with the same period the previous year.
- Importantly, a third more calls were also answered during the period
- The volume of calls received and the volume of calls answered during the period were the highest of any July for the last five years
- Over 60% of calls made to the Contact Centre were answered. Regrettably, however, this does also indicate that a significant proportion of customers chose to end their call before Condor staff could get to them.

Pressure on the Contact Centre peaked during the week of 22 July

When, on 22 July, Condor announced that Clipper would be out of service until 26 August, pressure on the Contact Centre increased. Call answering speeds were below target levels due to the unprecedented levels of calls received, and some customers had long waits.

Because contact centre staff made individual rebooking arrangements for each customer, call lengths increased by 30%. This contributed to longer waiting periods

Callers typically abandoned their calls after 3 minutes on hold – many then redialled and rejoined the queue. Unfortunately in doing so they lose their place in the queue. This practice also distorts the proportion of calls answered data, since once customer may have made three calls, rather than just one, thereby artificially increasing their overall wait. Although one customer waited 35 minutes to be answered (on 22 July), this was not typical and even at peak, the weekly average wait was just over seven minutes (falling to just over three minutes w/c 29 July).

In the period between 15th July and 5th August, Condor Ferries contact centre made almost 2,500 outbound calls to guests affected by the disruption.

Condor Ferries Contact Centre summary since Clipper incident					
	15/7/15 - 21/7/14	22/7/14- 28/07/14	29/7/14- 5/8/14	Metrics summary 15th July to 6th August	
Average speed of answer (hh:mm:ss)	00:04:43	0:07:13	0:03:11	Three week average	00:04:51
Average delay to abandon (hh:mm:ss)	0:03:01	0:04:10	0:02:48	Three week average	00:03:17
Number of Outbound Calls	928	868	666	Total outbound calls to date	2,462

At time of writing, most callers are answered immediately.

Social media was used by both customers and Condor

Customers used social media to voice their frustration regarding the situation.



Have tried for over an hour to contact someone, anyone to cancel my booking and nobody will answer! What do I do? I lose more money if it's left till tomorrow.

Ethan Hubbard [wall post](#) on [Condor Ferries](#) 5 days ago



[@Condor_Ferries](#) hi been trying to contact you via telephone but without success currently been on hold for 25 minutes, please help!!

DeanCP08 replied to [Condor_Ferries](#) Jul 24, 2014



[@Condor_Ferries](#) ... how long do you think it is acceptable to have your customers waiting on hold for your reservations department?

NewbouldRobin replied to [Condor_Ferries](#) Jul 24, 2014



[@Condor_Ferries](#) Is anybody answering your phones or email? Been on hold 10 mins. Also awaiting reply to email from 2 days ago.

ShowbizSimonW replied to [Condor_Ferries](#) Jul 23, 2014



[@Condor_Ferries](#) Why are the phones not being answered?

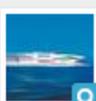
papercontracts replied to [Condor_Ferries](#) Jul 21, 2014

Passengers' questions and concerns via Twitter were responded to in a timely manner, advising them of the best course of action and reassuring them that they would be contacted as soon as possible.



[@Condor_Ferries](#) I still haven't been called ! I need to know when I. Am traveling so I can make plans with work etc !

sdelaney76 replied to [Condor_Ferries](#) Jul 24, 2014



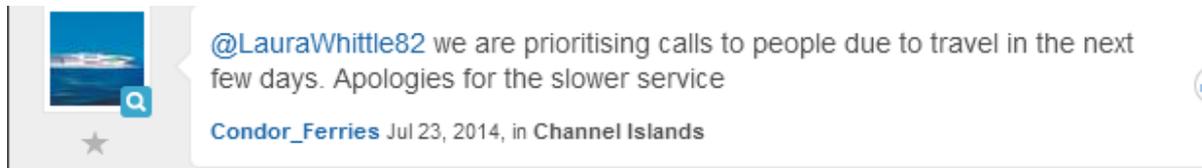
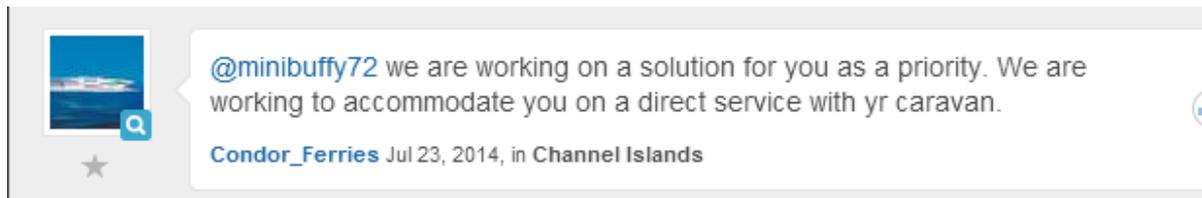
[@sdelaney76](#) Hi Shane, apologies we are working hard to contact all guests affected in order of travel date. When are you due to travel?

[Condor_Ferries](#) Jul 25, 2014, in [Channel Islands](#)

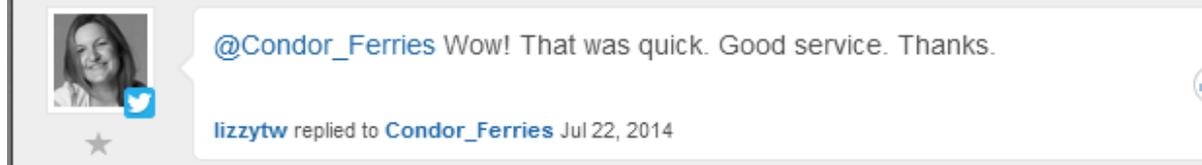
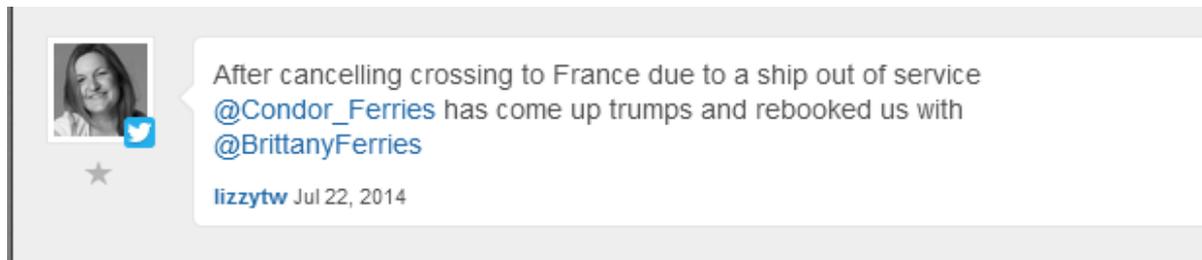
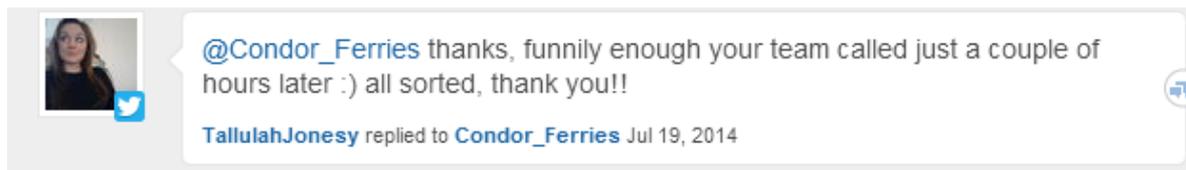


[@sdelaney76](#) One of our agents will be in touch with you today.

[Condor_Ferries](#) Jul 25, 2014, in [Channel Islands](#)



As contact centre staff worked to rebook guests, a high number used Twitter to praise the good service given by the Condor Ferries team.



Overall, complaints fell during the period

Although complaints regarding delays and cancellations peaked during this busy period (+243% versus July 2013); the total number of complaints for the month of July were down (-8% versus July 2013).