



# Belgium Railways achieves ROI in less than a year and First Call Resolution of over 97% by implementing Altitude Software



The National Railway Company of Belgium, Belgium Railways, or NMBS/SNCB was created in 1926 and is part of the NMBS/SNCB Group. Within the group it is the railway operator for both freight and passengers. The main assignments of the NMBS/SNCB are the domestic and international passenger transport by rail, freight transport by rail and also providing the associated logistics. The network currently includes four high speed lines suitable for 300 km/h (190 mph) traffic.

SNCB Europe is the international division of SNCB/NMBS, in charge of international trains operations and of the ticket sales from Belgium to France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, etc.

SNCB Europe's offerings are complex and extensive, including a number of different types of train services to numerous destinations in Europe. These services can involve high-speed trains such as e.g. the Eurostar, Thalys, TGV or ICE, but also InterCity trains (regular trains) as well as more complex services and products (night trains, European passes, etc.).

*“The second best contender was twice more expensive than Altitude Software, without giving any more added value or benefits”*

**Matthias Anthierens,**  
Contact Center Operations  
Manager for SNCB-Europe

## The challenge

In 2009 Belgium Railways was faced with major changes in the market place. Firstly, the market was growing with the introduction of new high speed destinations. Secondly, the market was open to competition and the distribution of tickets was no longer exclusive to local railways. These two changes made Belgium Railways rethink their market strategy and plans for the future.

To renew its competitive edge SNCB needed to change its cost structure, adopt a modern approach to the market which would make them more competitive, increase its offering and accessibility and the quality of service provided.

The contact center was created ten years ago and started its modernization and restructuring in 2009. Following this modernization plan a tender was published on the market to identify a contact center solution that could be a good match between the list of requirements from SNCB and a reasonable financial investment.

The old contact center was divided into 2 distinct divisions, a B2B and a B2C division created in 2001. During these years there was no investment on the infrastructures or on the telephony system.

The data on the results of the call center was scarce and there was no control on the service delivered by the call center. According to Matthias Anthierens, Contact center Operations Manager for SNCBEurope, the best possible scenario was having the results 24h later.

This prevented management from knowing the reality of the call center performance and from outlining improvement measures. SNCB was very concerned in monitoring the contact center and the agents' performance as well as having a view of the calls that were coming in, how they were handled and by whom.

These KPI's are crucial in two distinct aspects. One, to understand how the call center is performing in terms of calls answered, type of calls received, average call time and other figure indicators on the reality of the call center, and secondly to be able to better demonstrate to the agents what calls are coming in and why they need to be answered. To achieve their objectives, Belgium Railways demanded flexibility, real time monitoring and soft phones from their future contact center solution

## How they selected and why

The restructuring process included more than the search for a new contact center solution, the mission was clear, full restructuring and modernization, from the desks, to the phones, to the solution and even the management structure and overall staff mentality. The main goal was to change the way they worked and the way they delivered service to their customers.

Before publishing the tender, Belgium Railways did a full analysis by researching and collecting information on what they were doing in the past and what they would like to do from thereafter. Once their needs and requests were defined, SNCB drafted a tender for 6 months and published it on the market.

The selection of the solution was based on three main aspects that needed to be covered.

The tool had to match the company's demands, such as flexibility, real time monitoring of the contact center and agents performance and be able to install soft phones, for cost, effectiveness and agent work space reasons.

Second, being a reasonable financial investment. And thirdly, Belgium Railways had a very demanding timeline.

From the contract signing to the solution go live there was a four to five month period that needed to be met.

### Client Data

- NMBS/SNCB was created in 1926
  - SNCB Europe is the international division of SNCB/NMBS
  - 61 agents
  - 500.000 calls per year
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### Business Benefits

- First call resolution is over 97%.
  - 5 mins handling time - 10% less
  - Abandonment rate went from 25 - 35% to 10%
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### Altitude Solution's Advantages

- Software Solution
    - Intelligent routing according to priorities and skills allowing B2B and B2C
  - Complete Solution
    - One vendor can address all SNCB's Contact Center business requirements
  - Competitive Advantage
    - Real time monitoring allows view of agent performance
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From the public tender, 5 vendors were shortlisted and finally Altitude was selected because it covered SNCB's demands in terms of features needed and timeline constraints and because it was the one that required less financial investment, in fact, according to Matthias "the second best contender was twice more expensive than Altitude Software, without giving any more added value or benefits".

Altitude together with Comways, were able to deliver all this.

### **Solution fully based on Altitude Software**

- Altitude uCI suite
  - Altitude vBox
  - Voice Portal and Intelligent multimedia routing
  - Voice, email handling and real-time supervising and reporting
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## The implementation process

The Altitude Software solution has been selected in the context of a complete renewal of the NMBS/SNCB Europe Contact Center Multimedia and multichannel.

The integration partner chosen was Comways. Altitude and Comways had worked together in previous installations such as IKEA and Sodexo. The appreciation of the customers and the good results resulted in the development of a cooperation which yielded multiple successful projects for large and well known organizations.

## What was implemented

SNCB's contact center is an inbound only contact center. Before emails were dealt by a small group in the contact center, and nowadays integration is being made between calls and emails to all agents which results in greater flexibility.

The call center is equipped with Interactive Voice Portal, upon arrival of a call, the dialed number (DNIS) is checked and the appropriate handling script is activated to handle the call. The Altitude voice portal builds a skill profile and the intelligent skills-based routing routes the call to the most appropriate agent.

A "call-back" option is available to all callers and can be schedule at the IVR or by the agent. Additionally a FAQ menu and a language menu (1 - Dutch 2 - French 3 - German 4 - English ) is available on the IVR too.

Furthermore SNCB has customized reports that provide management with relevant data and metrics. The whole implementation was done over Altitude uCI and Altitude Vbox.

There are plans to extend the contact center capabilities to SMS, Chat, and a "help me" button on the website that would place a call directly to the contact center.

# Achievements & ROI

Once the first phase of the implementation was completed and the customized reports started producing the first performance figures it was time to understand the level of improvement brought to the service level of the contact center by this restructuring and installation of Altitude uCI.

The figures were surprising, even more when compared to the performance levels of the contact center before the restructuring.

The abandonment rate went from 25 - 35% to 10%, and the wait time from 8, 10, 15 minutes depending of the time of the day to an average wait time of 29 seconds. First call resolution is over 97%.

Another improvement brought to the contact center by this restructuring was a clearer positioning towards employees, internal service providers and partners. By monitoring the agents, management has the tools to manage staff and tell them why people are calling and how they should behave. "It's a matter of having the tools to control the performance of the team, but it's also a matter of telling the staff why we should pick up the phone why we should deliver the service." stated Matthias.

Additionally, it is now possible to have a full view of the contact center performance and to have data in real time in a very stable environment.

Along with the restructuring plans and following the new market strategy, SNCB decided to implement pay lines when renewing the telephony system. The extra revenue alone generated a return of the investment less than one year.

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