

How SNS 24 Turned Into a Responsive Contact Center Overnight



SPMS_{EPE}
Serviços Partilhados do
Ministério da Saúde

SNS 24 is the contact center for the Portuguese National Health Service. It acts as a remote screening process to avoid unnecessary visits to hospital ERs and more recently used for COVID-19 triage too. **The contact center works 24x7x365.**

1999

offered parents advice about **their child's health in problematic situations** so they wouldn't rush to the hospital with newborns and infants

2002

started a **more generic line to inform, help, and clarify** the Portuguese about public health issues

2007

serve all citizens, regardless of age, and help with all health-related issues

Screening process costs

HOSPITAL
120€



SNS24
6€

SNS 24 has 3 types of agents



Pharmacists

Handle poisoning cases and take care of people who are mixing up pills.



Nurses

Take calls and advise the callers on how to act.

- Minimum 3 years' experience and must work at a hospital.
- Do this job as a part time, in complement to hospital shifts.
- Typical SNS 24 shifts are ~ 40h per month



Psychologists

Advise medical personal on a series of job related issues and citizens traumatized the COVID-19 pandemic



Available to more than

10 million
Portuguese citizens

and all foreign residents **English**
speaking agents to communicate
with foreigners

Regular operation

90

nurses

~4500

calls per day

Flu season

150

nurses

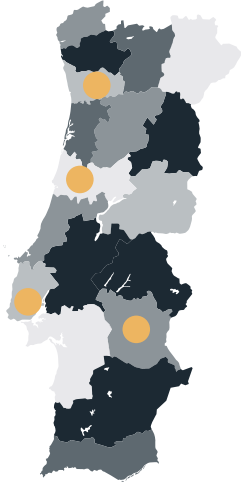
6000

calls per day



ABOUT THE PROJECT

2017 - Altice challenged Altitude Software to develop a new project, from the ground up, for SNS 24:



Completely new system, based on algorithms developed in Portugal that reflected the Portuguese experience and reality, to replace the old system that they were using based in another European country data.

Some facts about the improvements of the solution implemented by Altice and Altitude:

OLD SYSTEM

12 days

5 days

18 months

is experienced on the use of the system

Classroom training

On job training

Learning curve

The best nurse

ALTICE & ALTITUDE SOLUTION

6 days

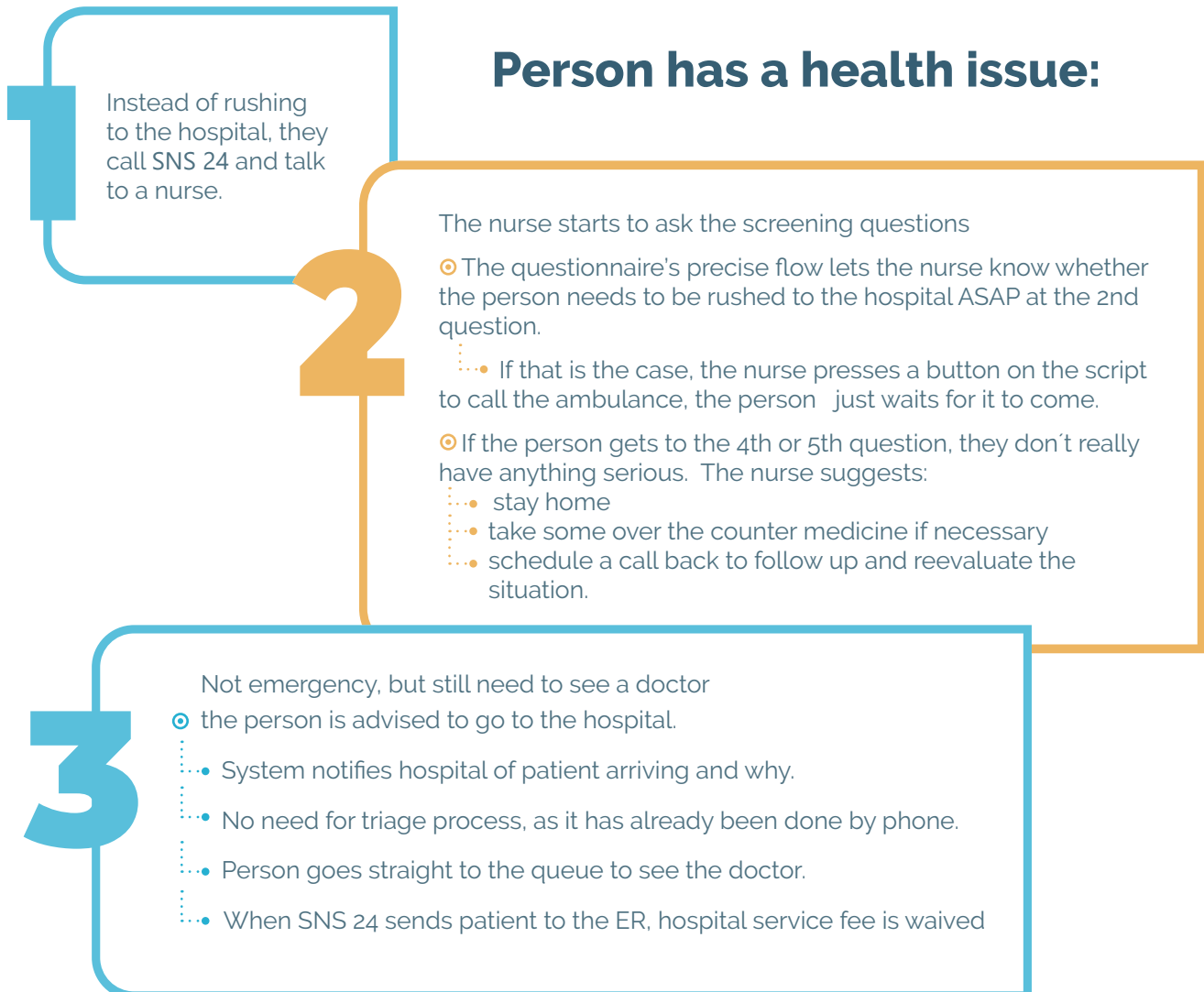
3 days

6 months

is focused on the clinical evaluation. The system's interface is just a detail

HOW DOES IT WORK?

People have some health issue of their own, their child fell at the park, their grandmother has a persistent high fever, and an infinite number of other situations. Instead of rushing to the hospital, they call the number and talk to a nurse.



Follow up on cancer patients to ask how they are doing, if they have any questions, concerns in between treatments or doctor visits.



Call all senior people to ask how they are doing, if they're taking the medicine, if they need have any concerns



Provide a line with psychologists that can be used by nurses, doctors, and other healthcare professionals if they need to talk to someone.

SUPPORT TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Around the beginning of March, when the pandemic worsened, SNS 24 was bursting by the seams and overwhelmed by the number of calls.

The service went from

~4500

calls



40000

calls per day

to face this volume of calls, we added

**1900
IVRs**

**300
agents**

**2200
lines**

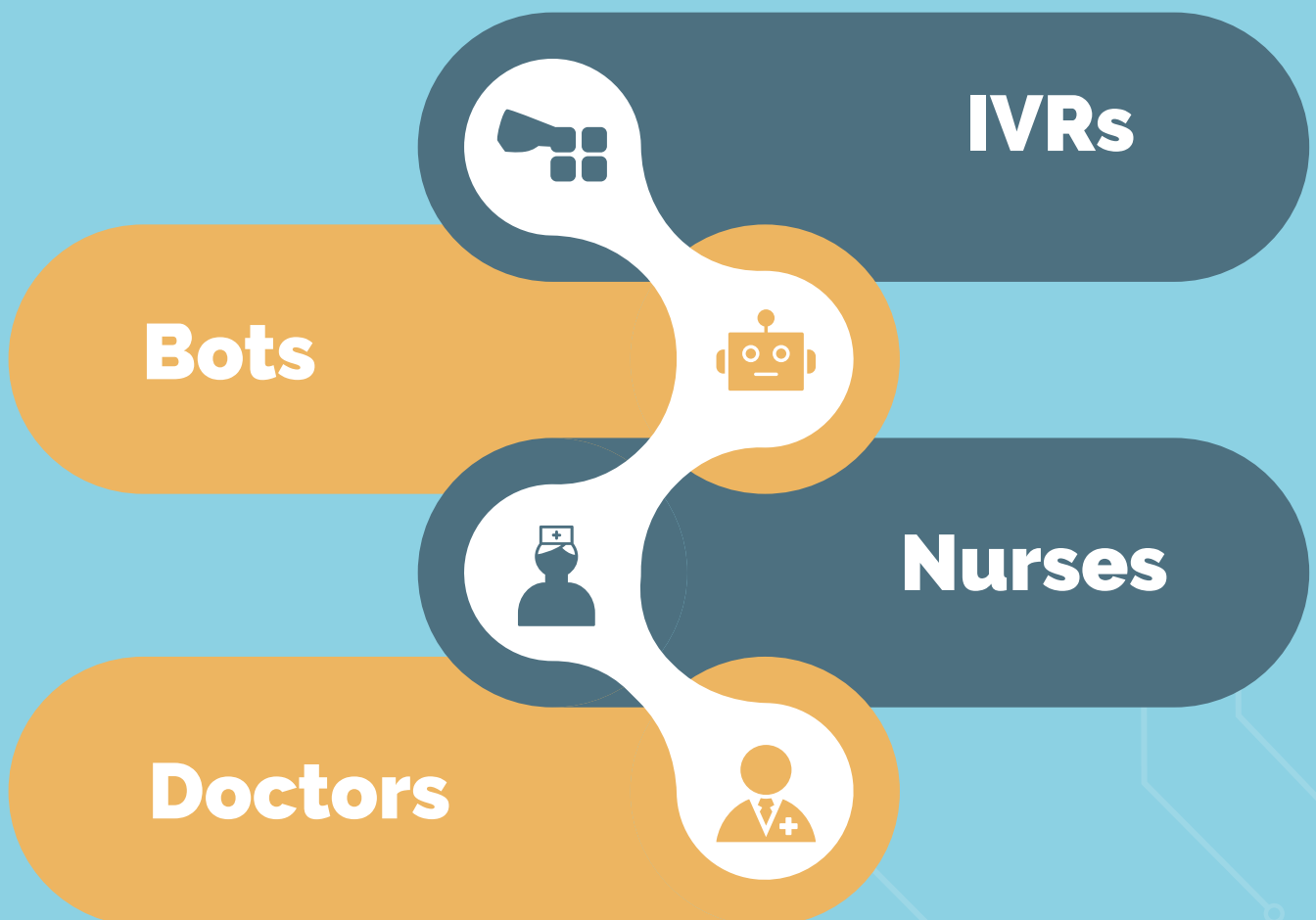
in just 3 days

Working flawlessly since day one

WHAT HAS CHANGED FROM THE NORMAL SCREENING PROCESS?

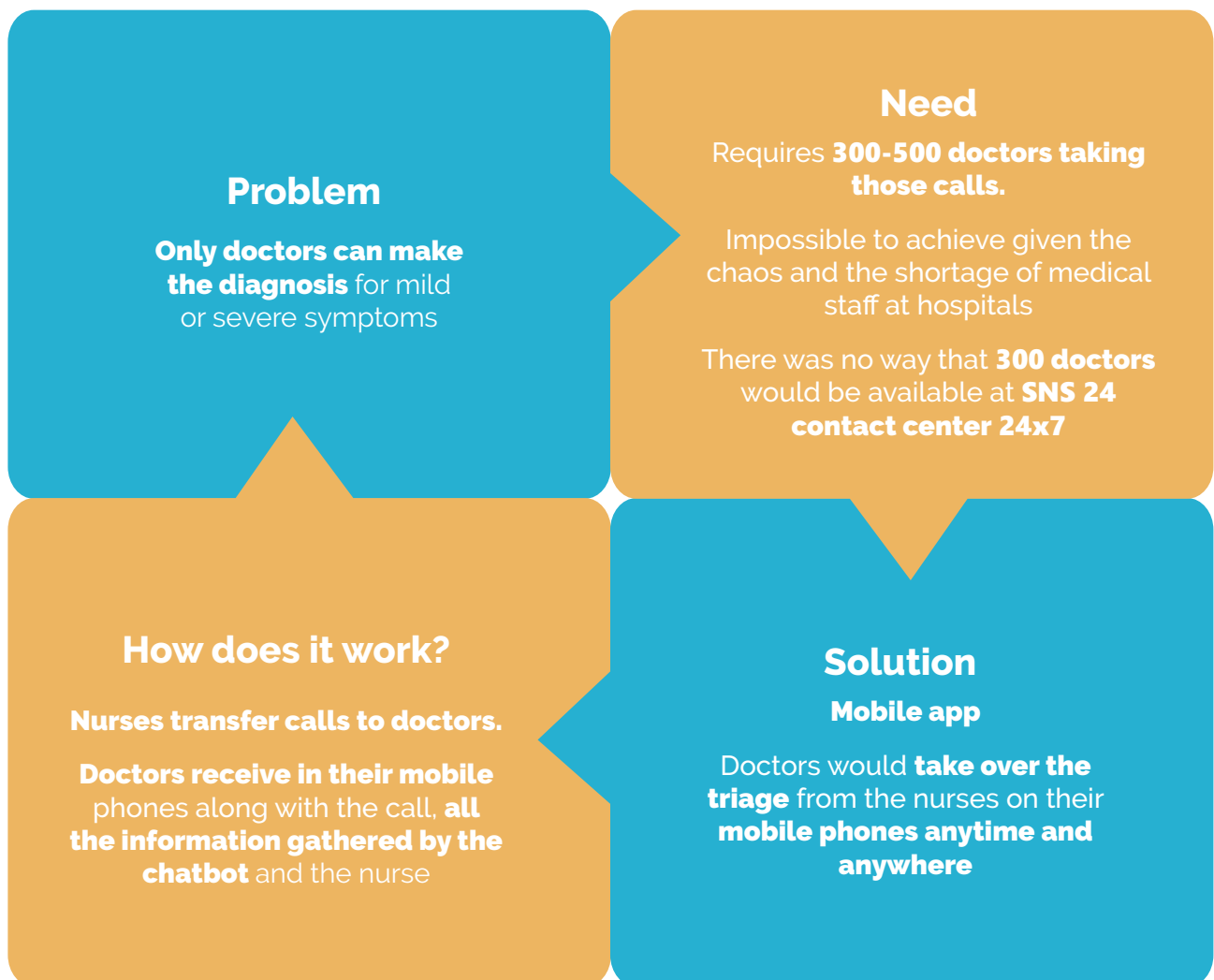
COVID-19 took over, but people still had other health issues

Altice and Altitude Software designed a new screening system that included:



When the Portuguese Government adopted the confinement measures **SNS 24** nurses worked remotely from their homes, connecting to the contact center through VPN.

Operations went on without any disruption. **COVID-19** cases grew exponentially and the Health Department decided that mild symptom patients should stay and recover at home



Technology did not support mobile apps, but we got to work and after

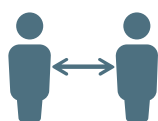


36h doctors were getting calls on their mobile phones

SNS 24 IS AN INCLUSIVE CONTACT CENTER

The COVID-19 pandemic evidenced even more the fact that the line still had flaws, especially in what concerned its access by all citizens.

Deaf people could not benefit from SNS 24 due to:



restrictions and **social distancing**



no interpreters or anyone else to speak for themselves

Now they can!



SNS 24 supports video calls though the website



sign language interpreters make the communication bridge with the nurse

The interaction occurs just like the voice interactions used by the rest of the population, with the same screening questions, interaction history, and procedures to follow.