

Original Cottages

The UK's Leading Holiday Cottage Agency Uses RingCentral to Scale its Growing Business and Deliver Outstanding Customer Service

originalcottages.co.uk



INDUSTRY:
Travel and Hospitality

YEAR FOUNDED:
1992

HQ:
Norfolk, United Kingdom

EMPLOYEES:
400

“Organisations were all forced at the same time to work through the same business continuity emergency. The Original Cottages team stayed productive and responsive to customers throughout—and for that we share the credit with RingCentral.”

If you've ever enjoyed a holiday cottage in England or Wales, there's a good chance you've worked with Original Cottages—the nation's top family-owned letting agency and a longtime favourite of holidaymakers.

One of the keys to Original Cottages' success has been the unparalleled level of choice that the agency offers to holidaymakers. Whether you're looking for a coastal getaway, a cottage on a golf course, a countryside holiday, or just a place that's dog-friendly, you'll almost certainly find the right property for you among the agency's 5,500-cottage portfolio.

In recent years, Original Cottages has grown considerably, both through organic expansion and by acquiring smaller letting agencies across the country. Although this growth has benefited both the company itself and

the thousands of customers who rely on it to find the perfect holiday property, Original Cottages also found an operational challenge growing with its expansion.

Retiring a trouble-prone phone system

With a central Sales and Support Team in its Norfolk main office, and more than 40 brand offices all over the country, the organisation was finding it difficult to efficiently direct the increasing number of daily phone calls—from prospective holidaymakers, current customers, property owners, etc.—to the appropriate teams and locations.

Richard Sage, the company's Chief Technology and Innovation Officer, describes the challenge: "The phone system didn't allow us to easily balance call traffic according to various teams' capacity. One office might be quiet while another was getting hammered with local customer calls. We needed a way to centrally manage and distribute those calls, to make the whole process more efficient."

And this was just one of many operational challenges Original Cottages' legacy phone system created. Another problem was the system's increasing vulnerability to outages. "The phones gave out more and more," says Richard. "Because our supplier inherited us as a customer after acquiring the previous supplier, they really didn't know the system well enough to help us."

"Our legacy phone system impeded our ability to provide outstanding customer service—both from a reliability perspective and also because of its lack of functionality."

– Richard Sage, Chief Technology and Innovation Officer

Moving phone and other communication services to a unified platform

With the outages becoming more common and disruptive, Richard's team investigated other phone solutions. And while they had many items on their wish-list for the new infrastructure, Richard notes that there was one underlying must-have:

"It had to be a cloud solution. Telephony was one of the few remaining areas of our infrastructure not already cloud-based, and it showed—in

the hardware problems we had to manage, the inconsistent experience across our locations, and the lack of sophisticated phone features we needed, such as real-time call reporting and analytics.”

Additionally, the company wanted to make sure its new phone solution would provide the flexibility and mobility to let its employees work from anywhere—rather than continuing to tie them to a desk in an office. “Considering we all ended up locked down and working from home due to COVID, our work-from-anywhere goal turned out to be prescient,” Richard says.

Improving so many operational processes with RingCentral

When they rolled out RingCentral’s unified cloud solution to the company’s 400 employees, Richard’s team began seeing the benefits almost immediately. “Where we used to have difficulty routing calls to the right people, RingCentral made it easy. We could now set up call-queue groups online in minutes, decide which teams would get which calls, and easily updates routing instructions anytime.”

The company also now has real-time data and analytics to monitor agent performance and make informed decisions about call management. “Because we can see what’s happening across our entire estate,” explains Richard, “we’re able to experiment with varying levels of phone support at different times, at different locations, and adjust quickly based on what the data tell us. That’s helping us become more efficient and responsive.”

And since they switched to RingCentral, Original Cottages isn’t experiencing the regular outages that had previously taken down phone service to the business. “Outages just aren’t a concern here anymore, and that’s a great feeling,” says Richard.

"I've heard several directors say things to the effect of: 'Thank goodness we went with RingCentral. If we didn't have this solution when COVID hit, what would we have done?'"

– Richard Sage, Chief Technology and Innovation Officer

Staying productive—and breaking sales records—through COVID

While their new cloud communications solution was already improving operations pre-COVID, the decision to switch to RingCentral looked downright brilliant when the lockdowns went into effect.

Because the system allows for business communications from anywhere via a desktop or mobile app (and an optional headset), Richard was able to make sure everyone in the company had the ability to work from home within just a few days of learning the company had to close its offices.

“They plugged in their headsets, fired up the RingCentral app on their laptops, and just like that they were in the right call queue, serving customers from home,” he says. “Considering how big a cultural and logistical change this was for our staff, the transition to the new setup was incredibly smooth.”

Being able to make this transition to remote work without disrupting Original Cottages’ operations was particularly valuable because customer calls skyrocketed as the quarantines went into effect. “We were overloaded with demand,” says Richard “People were calling with questions about their upcoming holiday stays, looking for transfers, asking to turn bookings into vouchers.”

Then, as the lockdown orders began to lift, the company experienced even more call traffic. “People weren’t going abroad, obviously, but they still wanted to go on holiday. We were breaking sales records, repeatedly. And part of what allowed us to be so responsive and efficient was RingCentral.”

As Richard also notes, the other communication tools integrated into the RingCentral platform have helped the staff stay connected and productive. “We use the team messaging feature all day for targeted team discussions,” he says. “And our managers are taking advantage of RingCentral Meetings to have regular video calls with their teams. That’s especially valuable now, I think, to maintain team cohesion and morale.”

For more information, please contact one of our solution experts. Visit ringcentral.co.uk or call 0800 098 8136.

RingCentral, Inc. (NYSE: RNG) is a leading provider of business cloud communications and contact centre based on its Message Video Phone™ (MVP™) global platform. More flexible and cost effective than the on-premises PBX and video conferencing systems it replaces, RingCentral helps employees communicate across devices from wherever they are. RingCentral offers three key products. RingCentral MVP™ combines team messaging, video meetings, internet phone and other functionalities in a single interface. RingCentral Video™, along with its team messaging feature, enables Smart Video Meetings™. RingCentral Contact Centre™ gives companies the tools they need to connect with customers across channels. These are available on an open platform that integrates with hundreds of third-party apps and makes it simple to customise workflows. RingCentral is headquartered in Belmont, California, USA, and has offices around the world.



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