NUANCE

HMRC adapts to COVID-19 with support from Nuance

NUANCE LIVE ASSIST AND VIRTUAL ASSISTANT SUPPORTED:

£46.4bn
in claims on the Corona Virus Job Retention scheme

440K
government grant applications on the first day of operation

£4.8bn
in transactions for the Self Employment Income Support scheme

CHALLENGE: When COVID-19 forced the UK into national lockdown, HMRC had to launch new policies and schemes quickly to support people and businesses across the country.

SOLUTION: HMRC used Nuance Live Assist and Nuance Virtual Assistant on its digital channels to support the quick launch of four major government schemes.

RESULTS: Nuance's technologies and agent capacity offered the scale and reliability needed to support millions of transactions in a short time with minimal customer disruption.

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced the UK to go into a national lockdown in March 2020, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)— the UK's tax, payments and customs authority —had to act fast to support the nation.

Many businesses had to cease operating and a large majority of the country had to temporarily stop working, which meant HMRC needed to offer immediate support. The Chancellor asked the department to roll out four key COVID-19 support schemes: The Coronavirus Job Retention scheme, the Self-Employment Income Support scheme, the Eat Out to Help Out scheme, and the VAT Payments Deferral scheme.

The schemes were designed to financially support businesses and individuals during the pandemic, offering grants, loans, and VAT deferrals to reduce financial hardship. The schemes needed to be accessible to millions of people across the country, all with minimal wait times and disruption.

Reliable service on a nationwide scale

HMRC uses Nuance Live Assist—an enterprise-grade live chat platform—and Nuance Virtual Assistant (VA) to serve customers and support transactions across its COVID-related schemes.

Customers can engage with the virtual assistant through HMRC's online portal, accessible on both desktop and mobile. The VA offers a range of self-service options across all schemes to help customers solve their cases efficiently and reduce the need to contact a live agent.

When the VA can't solve an issue, it can seamlessly transfer the customer to one of the 18,000 live agents supporting HMRC's operations—who all have seamless access to the Nuance technologies from their remote working setups. The VA can understand customers' intents from their conversational language using Nuance Natural Language Understanding and transfer them to the most suitable agent.

Seamless support during the pandemic
HRMC worked closely with the Nuance team—from QA testers to engineering support staff—to deliver the COVID-related schemes throughout 2020.

Each scheme saw significant success with the public, accessed by thousands of people every day. Within just half an hour of the Job Retention Scheme going live, Nuance technologies supported 67,000 job claims. Similarly, the technologies supported 440,000 grant applications through the Self-Employment Income scheme on its first day of operation.

Every scheme has seen impressive results across the year; £4.8 billion has been awarded through the Self Employment scheme, and £46.4 billion worth of claims were made through the Job Retention scheme. Also, £28.2 billion worth of VAT support has been given to businesses, and £522 million was claimed by restaurants as part of the Eat Out to Help Out scheme.

All transactions were supported by Nuance technologies, assisting HMRC as it served the nation during a challenging period.

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