

# Penn Foster Case Study

## Moving to Five9 and Oracle to Improve and Personalize Customer Experiences



### Company Profile

Founded in 1890, Penn Foster provides career pathways for youth and adult learners through diverse and affordable online diploma, certificate and degree programs, offered through its high school, career school and college.

### Industry

Education

### Website

[www.pennfoster.edu](http://www.pennfoster.edu)

### Challenges

- Separate systems for student data made agent training take longer and student service time consuming and unpleasant
- Seven disparate, poorly integrated contact center products made administration difficult and challenging to provide consistent customer experience
- Limited data visibility made reporting results a nightmare; justification of additional resources was always a challenge
- Legacy on-premise solution nearing end-of-life and costly to upgrade

Like many organizations Penn Foster had added products into their contact center over a number of years. The result was a range of products from different vendors including IVR, audio recording, ACD routing and a legacy on-premise contact center system which was over 20 years old and facing end-of-life. Penn Foster selected Five9 for its tight integration with Oracle and their strong reputation in the industry as a company that understands the needs of the contact center.

### Company Background

For over 125 years, Penn Foster has dedicated itself to helping people lead more meaningful and productive lives and improving social outcomes through education. Penn Foster provides career pathways for people of all ages with a wide range of affordable education options for high school, college, and career advancement. With more than 40,000 graduates each year, Penn Foster's online and blended learning programs are delivered in a self-paced, competency-based model combined with comprehensive academic, professional coaching and personal support.

### Choosing a Scalable, Innovative Cloud Solution

Penn Foster has 300 agents at its contact centers across Pennsylvania (headquarters), Arizona, and Canada, as well as at an outsourced contact center in Ohio. The contact center operation supports many functional areas for Penn Foster including accounting, admissions, client services, financial services, student services and success coaching.

Prior to migrating to Five9, Penn Foster was operating a legacy ACD for routing that was over 20 years old, separate call recording with an IVR to gather information about the caller and different call center systems in each call center. As a result, Penn Foster knew they needed a new contact center solution.

Among the criteria for the new solution was the ability to integrate with their CRM system, Oracle Service Cloud. Penn Foster wanted to empower contact center leaders including managers, supervisors, and team leads to have more visibility and ownership of the student experience. The system also needed to scale easily to handle seasonal fluctuations and growth. And the system had to allow for agent mobility, needed to provide increased visibility into contact center statistics and performance indicators to enable more efficiency and allow for management of remote agents.

During Penn Foster's search for a new contact center solution, the decision was made to move to the cloud and they selected Five9. An important factor in their decision was Five9's strong integration with Oracle Service Cloud. In addition, the Five9 cloud solution could quickly replace the seven disparate contact center products which were making managing the operation difficult and causing extended agent training time.

When the system went live with the largest contact center team in November 2016 all agents were provided with a new laptop and trained on the Five9 solution. Within a few weeks, the team faced a challenge – huge snowstorms in Pennsylvania. On extremely short notice, Penn Foster informed team members to take their laptops and work from home allowing the team to continue working without any gaps in customer service.

## Five9 Solutions

Five9 Virtual Contact Center with the following capabilities:

- Oracle Service Cloud Plus Adapter
- Engagement Workflow
- Five9 Reporting and Analytics
- Five9 Supervisor Plus
- Autodialer
- IVR
- Integration with Aspect WFM and Authority Audio Recording

## Benefits

- Integration with Oracle Service Cloud gives agents greater insights into customer data to provide improved, personalized customer experiences
- 18% increase in year over year service level despite an overall volume increase of calls
- Inbound abandon rate decreased by 6.7%
- Improved reporting and data provides insights into trending and pain points to manage staff more effectively
- Better call routing ensures customer calls are handled more efficiently
- Disaster recovery and geo-redundancy
- Automatic upgrades

---

“Five9 offers the best customer support out of any contact center vendor I’ve worked with before.”

*Emily Cramer,  
Contact Center Technical Project  
Manager, Penn Foster, Inc.*

## Get More Information

Call 800.553.8159 or visit  
[www.Five9.com](http://www.Five9.com)

Emily Cramer, Contact Center Technical Project Manager Penn Foster, Inc. said, “In speaking with some of our management team, they are certain that if we had insisted on running the operation from the contact center rather than allowing agents to work remotely, we would have missed performance goals during one of our busiest times of the year.” She adds, “This new form of disaster recovery had almost immediately become a lifesaver to the operational goals.”

## Seamless Customer Experience with Oracle Service Cloud

Selecting Five9 allowed the company to integrate with other contact center components. In the new environment Penn Foster uses Oracle Service Cloud, Aspect workforce management, and Authority Software for audio recording.

The pre-built integration with Oracle Service Cloud was a key factor in selecting Five9. The Five9 Adapter for Oracle Service Cloud enables agents to communicate with students over an embedded softphone, email, and chat UI. All interaction controls and student information are in the Oracle Service Cloud desktop. The unified desktop helps agents to provide better service to students.

With student information available at the time of the interaction (call, email, or chat) representatives reduced the time to answer questions and resolved issues resulting in an overall service level increase of 18% over the previous year.

## Moving to Omnichannel to Adapt to Customer Expectations

Penn Foster’s goal in the contact center is to get its students the most useful and helpful information quickly and efficiently throughout their journey even as they move between channels. To do that, Penn Foster is implementing an omnichannel experience that carries content and context forward throughout the student’s individual journey across channels. No matter where the student is in their journey, Penn Foster’s representatives know where they’ve been and are well informed to help. Through this effort, Penn Foster can involve team members across multiple functional areas, like marketing, sales, service, and IT, to align all student communications with the technologies and channels that are offered. Cramer states “The ability to provide consistent, relevant, and easily digestible communications to the student base allows for a better customer experience and increased satisfaction.”

## Improving Reporting, Analytics, and Routing for Better Customer Service

With Five9, Penn Foster now has visibility into data and can pull the reports they need to run their contact centers more effectively. “Now, we are able to accurately measure KPIs, view trending and pain points in near real-time, and better staff to meet the needs of our customers,” says Cramer. “We can also identify new self-service options based on phone interactions and dispositions to better service our students.”

Prior to Five9, Penn Foster’s post-call survey attempts were not only dismal in terms of customer take rates, they also suffered because they were done via email, sometimes hours after the call had taken place. Now with Five9, Penn Foster can receive immediate feedback associated with the proper agent and phone interaction.

Another improvement area that Penn Foster now tracks was previously a mystery to the company. Cramer says “Our self-service IVR has always been about containment and utilization rates. With Five9 we can now track IVR performance and make changes and improvements as needed.”

“Prior to going live with Five9, we had a target goal of 38% containment rate within our self-service IVR. As of June 2018, we’re seeing an average of 44% containment rate (callers that did not select to speak with a live agent). Twenty percent of our students are now utilizing a personalized self-service feature which equates to 250,000 calls a year contained within our self-service IVR with Five9.”

## High-touch Approach through Customer Life Cycle

What’s next for Penn Foster? The next step is to integrate Salesforce with Five9. Penn Foster plans to use this integration for its B2B/Client Services team and is gathering requirements for launching Visual IVR for self-service functionality. They plan to eventually introduce the option of allowing students to move from Phone to SMS.

“Five9 offers the best customer support out of any contact center vendor I’ve worked with before. From the implementation process to software going live in our contact centers to now, the Five9 team has supported us every step of the way,” shares Cramer.

