As companies grow, there seems to be a corresponding growth in technologies to support the demand for greater efficiencies. This was where the nine-year relationship between Cerium Networks and Allegiance has proven that a trusted consultative technology partner can be among the greatest assets a company has. Cerium’s value comes with the ability to align technical capabilities with strategic objectives. Allegiance has numerous customers with Service Level Agreements (SLAs) which include call abandon rates and time-to-answer guarantees. The guarantees made in SLAs vary from customer to customer, however the commitment to excellence and efficiency from Allegiance to their customers is unchanged. Growth and technology advancements have only increased that commitment.

Calabrio QM

In December 2014, Cerium deployed the Calabrio QM recording solution for Allegiance, as a replacement and upgrade to the Audiolog Call Recording solution. The Calabrio solution provides for total call recording along with quality management. Personnel are able to audit and score calls, and records are maintained for complaint resolution. Agents that are recorded can log in to a web based interface and listen to their calls. Meanwhile, Allegiance’ quality evaluation team have the ability to set up random call flows. The system will select a random call for agents that are to be evaluated, and drop that into the evaluator’s box. The evaluator logs into the system, which is an on-premises solution, and scores the call. Agents can then go into the system and see their score, and any notes left by the evaluator. The evaluator can flag points in the call and have notes there, which the agent can review. Calabrio has been well received by agents and supervisors alike.

“Recordings assist in coaching and training agents,” says Amber Ball, Customer Service Team Lead. “For example, if a customer service representative has a habit of saying ‘like’ or ‘um’ a lot, you can point this out to them. Also you can flag sections to let them know what they really do well, so they get positive feedback, as well as constructive feedback.”
**Contact Center Optimization**

Every business that the Allegiance customer service team supports has different rules and processes to be followed, so the agent training is very client-specific. Allegiance needed to meet their contractual obligations under the constraints of their existing call handling rules.

In another recent engagement with Allegiance, over the Summer of 2014, included a contact center optimization with auto-answer. Cerium worked with Allegiance to optimize their call flows to align with business strategies, and to improve call handling and response times. With a goal to meet SLAs within technical and resource constraints, the contact center optimization engagement significantly altered the call handling strategy by funneling provider calls towards self-service. By streamlining call routing, and routing callers towards self-service, callers could be educated in the availability of online service tools.

Gary Ritter, Director of Technical Claims Services, says “The vectoring of provider calls to the IVR system has allowed agents to answer member calls more quickly. The contact center solution is easy to customize, and supports our performance guarantees with our customers.”

“When a call comes into the queue, if an agent is available, they get a beep in the ear, and then the call comes to them. This makes auto-answer a great scenario for meeting the SLA. It was quite a transition for people (310 employees),” said Timothy Streets, Telecomm Engineer.

Amber Ball described the results of the optimization and auto-answer implementation, “The auto-answer has really helped with our services, so we are really answering calls right away. It’s helped us on the reporting side to show a faster speed of answer. People had to become more aware of conversations they were having, and be always ready to provide the best service. Once the optimization was complete, we had noticeable differences. We were able to have the auto-answer and routing messages inform our providers about our website and automated system, etc. We streamlined this so that callers would be educated. During the optimization, we had further training on CMS Supervisor to allow us to create the most efficient reports, personalized for our needs.”

Lesson Learned

Eric Jensen, Director of Information Technologies, says “Both the reporting and the vectoring of calls are the most important features of our current system and upgrades. People don’t like to be transferred... so that is probably the single most important feature, however the reporting is important to managing the call center as well. Cerium helped us review our reports to provide an accurate interpretation of usage, and how to best optimize it.”

In regards to the contact center engagement, Garry Ritter offers the following insight, “You need to understand the details of what it is you’re trying to accomplish in order to get the design right. Angela and Susan [Cerium Contact Center Consultants] have the knowledge, expertise and experience to help guide a customer that may not understand the endpoint.”

Customization & R&D: Attendant Soft Consoles

Cerium also supported Allegiance through the implementation of new attendant soft consoles. This implementation was an R&D process, and Avaya provided Tier 4 support — soft consoles had not yet been used with a touch screen. The attendants are using this scenario with a blend of the mouse, keyboard and touch screen.
The History of Cerium and Allegiance

Cerium Networks first began a partnership with Allegiance Benefit Plan Management in April 2006 when awarded the contract for an upgrade of their aged Mitel system. The solution contracted for was the Avaya Communication Manager, Contact Center Elite, Avaya CMS, Intuity Audix and the Mercom call recording solution.

Cerium has since been involved in two major upgrades to Allegiance’ communications solutions. The most recent was the upgrade deployed on the midsize enterprise servers supporting virtualized applications for Aura Communication Manager 6.3, Application Enablement Server (AES), Session Manager, System Manager, and Aura Presence. The upgrade, that included Session Manager, provided more capabilities in the configuration than Allegiance previously had. In the fall of 2014, Allegiance implemented Microsoft Exchange UM as their messaging platform. The longevity of this technology partnership demonstrates both Allegiance’ dedication to efficient technologies, and Cerium’s success as a consultative partner with excellence in service. When asked what has fostered this long term relationship, Gary Ritter offers the following, “Responsiveness as a vendor to our needs as a customer. That’s been a big factor. The second thing is Cerium has the ability to be a consultant as well as provide technical support. Both of those have been very helpful to us.”

About Allegiance

Originally founded in 1981 as Intermountain Administrators, Allegiance Benefit Plan Management, Inc. has been a leader in providing health and flexible benefit plans to employer groups and plan participants nationwide. As a third-party administrator, Allegiance offers clients the flexibility to contract with multiple preferred provider organizations, managed care organizations, physician hospital organizations, tertiary care centers of excellence, dental and vision plans, and stop-loss insurance carriers.

In 2008, the Allegiance family of companies became wholly-owned subsidiaries of Cigna Corporation. Allegiance represents Cigna’s strategy to compete in the market segment that desires TPA rather than fully bundled large carrier products, and has seen significant growth across the nation.

Throughout this growth, Allegiance has remained dedicated to outstanding customer service. Allegiance possesses a corporate spirit that has always been one of allegiance to the companies they serve. Their people are deeply committed to clients and to plan participants, working hard to help clients control benefit costs through self-funding.

With over 30 years of experience, The Allegiance Family of Companies have earned a reputation for quality, service and efficiency that is unmatched. Through proactive cost management strategies, trend management, technological efficiencies and strong provider relationships, Allegiance leads the way for a new future in employee benefits.