

EE improves agility and performance with UKG workforce management

Part of the BT group, EE Ltd. is a U.K. mobile network operator with more than 550 retail stores as well as call centres offering customer support. EE has been using UKG (Ultimate Kronos Group) for workforce management throughout its retail stores for several years, for demand forecasting, automated labour scheduling, time and attendance, and labour analytics. Its nearly 4,000 store employees use the mobile self-service app to check their six-week rotas, request shift swaps and overtime, review their leave balance, request holidays, and check the previous week's timecards. The app is also used to clock-in and -out for recording worked hours.

Numerous benefits had already been realised, but the UKG solution proved even more beneficial when the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic forced the temporary closure of its stores and some of its call centres.

Customer Snapshot

Industry:
Retail

Headquarters:
London, UK

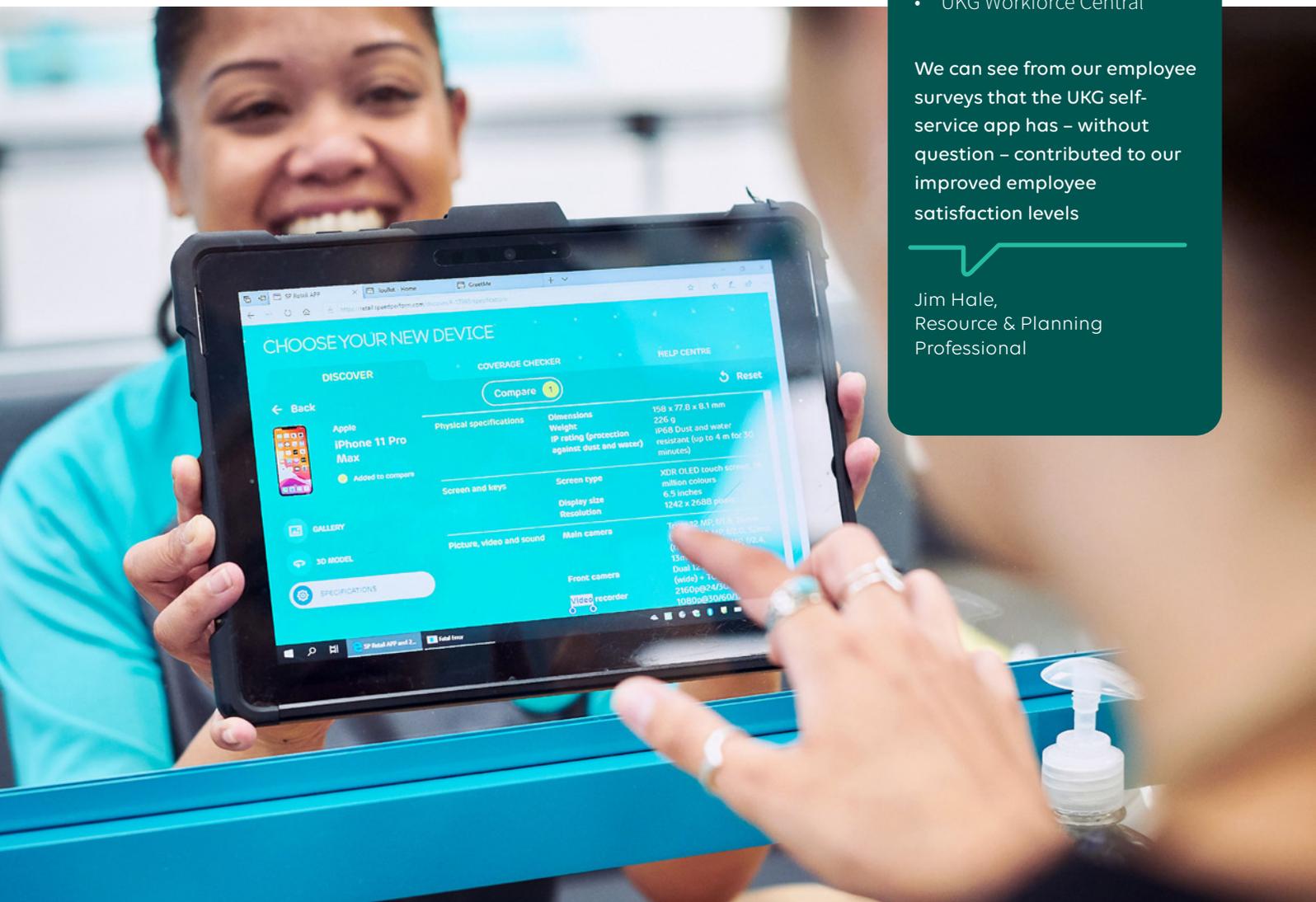
UKG footprint:
Approx. 4,000 employees

Solution

- UKG Workforce Central

We can see from our employee surveys that the UKG self-service app has – without question – contributed to our improved employee satisfaction levels

Jim Hale,
Resource & Planning
Professional





Challenges

- Automation of time and attendance was needed to drive better control of costs, improve reporting, and assist in compliance
- Sickness levels were too high, making it harder to fill shifts
- A consistent and centralised approach to labour scheduling was needed that would optimise staffing levels in line with anticipated customer demand
- Tighter control of overtime spend was needed
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, EE needed to:
 - Communicate with all employees, understand reasons for absence, and get full visibility of employee work locations in real time
 - Produce labour schedules for all employees providing keyworker customer support, based on new customer call volume predictions
 - Safeguard employees when stores re-opened



Solution

An automated UKG workforce management solution with easy access to detailed labour data for informed decision making and better management of labour resources, costs and performance.



Results

- Reduce incorrect BACS pay queries by **95%**
- Reduce unplanned absences to **3%**
- Minimise overtime spend by **1-2%** through the use of analytics to highlight schedule effectiveness
- Reduce - by **90%** - the time it takes each store manager to create labour schedules from 2-3 hours each week, to 15 minutes
- Improve employee engagement, due in part to employee self-service capabilities of mobile app
- Increase sales volume and net promotor score (NPS) in some stores through use of workforce analytics
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, EE was able to swiftly and easily flex its UKG solution to:
 - Identify reasons for COVID-related absence
 - Communicate with all employees, to enable them to provide customer support either working from home or at a temporary call centre
 - Obtain visibility of where each employee was working
 - Produce 'call centre' labour schedules based on new customer call volumes
 - Re-produce store labour schedules based on safe social distance capacities

The story

EE started its workforce management journey with the aim of reducing unplanned absence to less than 6%, establishing greater levels of cost control, improving reporting, and assisting in compliance.

Geotagging assists in accurately recorded work hours

Automated time and attendance (T&A) was deployed in 2015 throughout the EE's retail stores, replacing inconsistent and laborious manual methods. Employees can now clock-in and -out using the self-service app on their mobile phones leveraging geotagging to assist in more accurately recorded worked hours when employees are not in a traditional environment with no access to a physical timeclock.

Payroll accuracy generates time savings

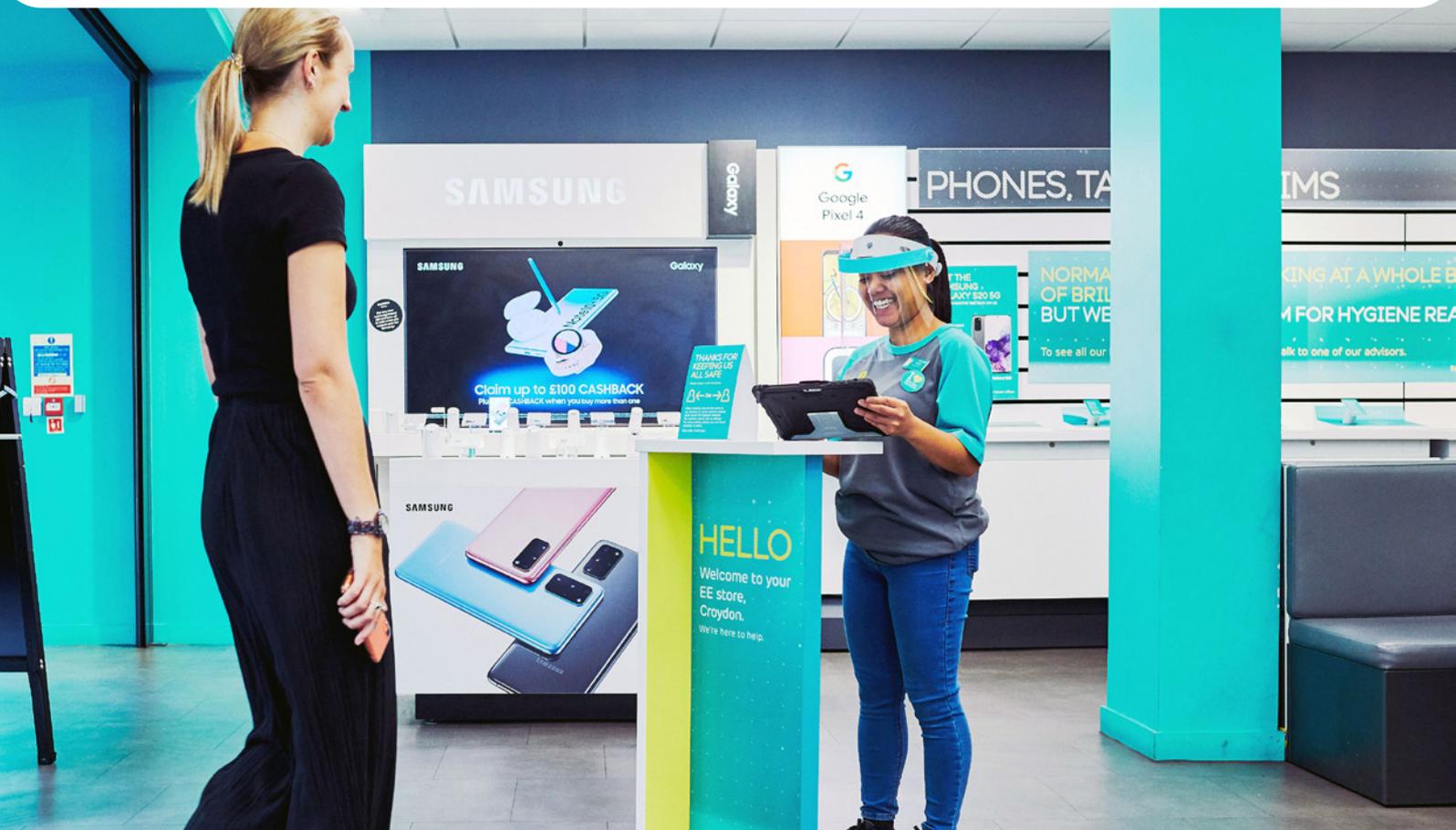
The T&A solution addresses fair, accurate, and on-time pay. "Since introducing our UKG solution, the number of queries from employees about incorrect BACS salary payments has reduced by 95%," noted Jim Hale, resource and planning professional at EE Ltd. "This gives back time to the payroll team to focus on more value-added activities."

Sickness levels reduced beyond 6% target

Unplanned employee absence at EE stores has reduced. "Through our use of UKG, our absence reporting has improved, and we now have a healthier grasp of what's going on," said Hale. "We can spot trends and better understand the reasons behind absence. As a result, sickness has reduced to 3%, which is lower than expected for this sector."

Time to produce labour schedules reduced by 90%

With the aim of reducing overtime costs by at least 1%, demand forecasting – based primarily on historic footfall data – and automated labour scheduling were introduced in 2017. Prior to this, rotas were created manually using spreadsheets, which was clunky and time-consuming and schedule fairness couldn't be guaranteed. "Previously, it took our store managers two to three hours to manually create their schedules each week. With UKG's automated scheduling, this time has been reduced by 90%, now taking just 15 minutes," noted Hale. Manual adjustments can be made by store managers as needed.



Flexibility of mobile app is popular with employees

The self-service mobile app has proved popular with employees due to its flexibility, as it can be used on any mobile device, even when not at work. In addition to using the app to clock-in and -out, employees can also view their rota for the next six weeks, review their timecard from the previous week, request shift swaps and overtime, review leave balances, and request holidays. Additionally, managers can use the app to approve or reject overtime and leave requests. “We can see from our employee surveys that the UKG self-service app has – without question – contributed to our improved employee satisfaction levels,” added Hale.



Workforce analytics drives reduction in overtime spend and an increase in sales and net promoter scores (NPS)

The team at EE continued to enhance its solution and realise business benefits by introducing workforce analytics to:

- Highlight unnecessary overtime spend, enabling the overtime reduction target of 1% to be comfortably met
- Measure schedule effectiveness, which provides store managers with greater control of their budgets
- Report on lost sales opportunities
- Measure management cover, which highlighted that manager presence on Sundays in some stores improved sales figures and NPS values (used to measure customer satisfaction).

“Our use of UKG labour analytics enables us to spot trends and home-in on anomalies that would previously have gone unnoticed. Customer services is at the heart of EE’s business and many of our in-store customers need support. As a result, stores are often just as busy on Sundays as on Saturdays, but our analysis of management coverage showed that store managers were typically scheduling themselves to work on Saturdays and not Sundays. Leadership is needed to manage high customer numbers, so we increased manager presence on Sundays and saw a rise in both sales and NPS,” explained Hale.

Safeguarding ROI

EE’s continued use of analytics enables managers to quickly identify and easily address any issues as they arise, adding further return to the retailer’s investment in workforce management. However, it was the solution’s ability to help EE swiftly address challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic that proved how valuable a workforce management solution can be during a time of crisis.

Swift and effective crisis management

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the temporary closure of EE’s stores, as well as some of its call centres. Having complete visibility of all employees meant that the retailer was able to swiftly understand which employees were absent with symptoms and those that were isolating. “When the U.K. went into lockdown, we added a series of new pay codes to our UKG solution in order to record the reasons for absence, such as isolation, symptoms, confirmed COVID-19 cases, shielding, and so on. We ran daily reports to track absence and built up a true picture of our employees. This gave us confidence in preparation for re-opening our stores,” explained Hale.

“The mobile app was critical for this as it enabled all managers to communicate with their employees and record absence in real-time, effectively providing us with a sense of business-as-usual.”

Enabling store employees to deliver keyworker customer support

As a mobile network operator, much of EE’s business is service-orientated, providing customers with support, often by telephone from call-centres, as well as in-store. This service naturally had to continue when the pandemic struck, despite some of its call centres having to close. Some of EE’s larger stores were turned into mini call centres and store workers were enabled to work there or from home, to become essential keyworkers providing customer support. “Throughout the pandemic, we used our UKG solution to manage who was working and where. There were lots of transfers between employees’ usual store locations to support working from different locations, and this was easily managed within the solution,” added Hale.

New customer support work schedules produced

The next challenge was matching working patterns to call volumes, to set headcount requirements for the different types of support call, such as broadband, mobile phone queries and tablet sales. "We used the UKG auto-scheduler to create work schedules for the employees, based on the demand for each type of call. Once set up, it took only a few minutes to make edits as the demand changed," said Hale.

Safe store capacities drive new retail schedules

EE also used its workforce management solution to plan for the phased re-opening of its stores. With the safety of its employees and customers being the primary concern, EE was able to re-configure its store capacities to be based on the maximum number of employees that can be in the store whilst maintaining social distancing. "With UKG we were able to re-invent our store schedules based on safe limits. With store opening hours reduced, the solution also facilitates schedule-fairness so that all employees can work for some hours – this helps with engagement and the opportunity to earn commission; it's working really well," explained Hale.

The team at EE has created new reports for highlighting safety breaches due to over-scheduling and for gap analysis of larger stores that are quieter. The social distancing capacity of these stores is greater than the usual number of employees scheduled to work there. EE has found that some stores – specifically those in retail parks – are busier than before, perhaps due to people preferring to shop in quieter stores because they feel safer. "UKG shows the permitted number of employees, versus the actual number being scheduled. We would struggle to have visibility of this otherwise. Having this data via UKG at our fingertips is a huge benefit and enables the business to make sensible decisions based on real data," said Hale.

Summing up the value of having a workforce management solution in place at a time of crisis, Hale adds,

"The flexibility of our UKG solution boosted EE's resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic – we were able to react with agility, execute quickly, and protect our employees."

[To view more UKG customer success stories, visit here](#)

Key Benefits

- **UNPLANNED ABSENCE** reduced to 3%, crushing the 6% target
- **TIME TO PRODUCE LABOUR SCHEDULES** reduced by 90% from 2-3 hours to just 15 minutes per week
- **OVERTIME SPEND REDUCED BY 1-2%**
- **REDUCED INCORRECT BACS PAY QUERIES** by 95%
- **IMPROVED EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

Our use of UKG labour analytics enables us to spot trends and home-in on anomalies that would previously have gone unnoticed.

Jim Hale,
Resource & Planning
Professional

