

# How AkzoNobel UK Reduced Response Times by 80% and Increased Engagement by 172%

Sprinklr enabled paint company AkzoNobel UK to decrease response times and increase engagement.

AkzoNobel UK, a leading global paints and coatings company recognized the need to evolve their social strategy. With Sprinklr, they reformed their care program, reduced response times, and gained important insights about their customers.

## challenge

AkzoNobel had a multi-step social care program in place, leading to slow response times and unsatisfied customers.

## solutions

- ✓ Customer care team provides social care across six social channels, 19 accounts, and six different brands – all on one unified platform.
- ✓ The team set up rules in Sprinklr to escalate messages that require immediate attention.
- ✓ The social care team quantifies their work by calculating the monetary value that each care agent brings and tracking those numbers.

## results



80% decrease in **response time**



172% year-over-year increase in **engagement**



171% year-over-year increase in **post likes and reactions**



133% year-over-year increase in **post comments** from customers



£13,000 (USD \$18,500) worth of products **recommended** by the care team



## navigating social through a fog

AkzoNobel UK, a leading global paints and coatings company and owner of brands such as Dulux, Cuprinol, Sikkens, and Polycell, understands just how important social is, even for a brand selling paint and primers.

In 2015, the digital team recognized the need to create a more mature social media strategy. At the time, AkzoNobel UK had 60+ fragmented accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram covering nine brands. Most of these accounts had extremely small audiences and all were managed natively by various agencies.

There was an incredible amount of risk inherent in the organization. The social tool that the team used at the time had weak listening capabilities that left the brand vulnerable to crises, and many of the channels were not monitored or managed consistently. On top of this, the team lacked the necessary capabilities to monitor and manage the accounts. All of this left the brand very susceptible to a risk.

As James Green, Digital Marketing Manager at AkzoNobel UK, puts it, "Managing our social presence was like driving in the fog."

## refining a complex care process

Across their brands, AkzoNobel's UK care team receives inquiries from first-time home owners in search of a particular paint color, to trade professionals asking about specific applications. Inquiries were varied across the different brands and audiences, and responses were reactive rather than proactive. The customer care team had no way to automate or prioritize inbound queries, much less harness social as a care tool.

"This radical first step we took was putting a foundational level of social customer care in place," says James. "Our social customer care response times were much too slow. And that's because we were treating social like calls or emails. The business wasn't structured to respond to customers quickly."

### AKZONOBEL UK BY THE NUMBERS



3,500 employees in the UK and Ireland



50 million liters of paint manufactured annually in the UK



3rd largest paint retailer in the UK



40 million invested annually in research and development



It took the customer care team nearly a week to respond to customer inquiries, while other brands were responding in about two hours.

“At the beginning, we were not seeing too much traffic on social, but even as this traffic started to increase, we didn’t have a focus on speed or quality of response,” says Caylee O’Neill, a Knowledge Manager for AkzoNobel’s customer experience and transformation team. “Once we had a few trolls target our brands, we realized that we really needed to shift the way we managed customer care.”

At the time, when the brand received a complaint via Twitter or Facebook, an outside agency identified the message and assigned it to Technical Advice Center (TAC), the internal care team. Once TAC found and sourced an answer, it would provide a response to the agency, which would respond to the customer directly on Facebook or Instagram.

“It was very clear to the public when we were abandoning queries over social and responding slowly,” James says. “It was beginning to damage our brand by not having a social care team in place and the ability to respond quickly.”

## creating a customer-first strategy

AkzoNobel UK watched as its customers – both B2B and B2C customers – turned to social for customer care. A few comments a day gave way to a hundreds, which was unmanageable with their slow multi-step response process. The team needed a streamlined customer care process and a formalized social media strategy.

To organize its social strategy for scale, the team set **three goals**:

- ✓ Set up governance across social channels
- ✓ Create discipline and process
- ✓ Align against strategic business goals

The first step to achieve these goals was finding the right platform. Caylee and James joined together to vet different tools that would enable the team to unite and execute a more mature social strategy.

In the end, they chose Sprinklr.

“I quickly realized that actually there was a lot of functionality within the Sprinklr platform that could help improve our customer service,” explains Caylee. “Our focus wasn’t just sorting out each customer as they come, but actually looking at what they were talking about, and what we could do to help customers self-serve. With Sprinklr, we were able to actually unearth these insights and mend customer inquiries quicker.”

## SOCIAL STRATEGY FOR SCALE

1. **Governance**  
Set up governance across social channels.
2. **Discipline**  
Create discipline and process.
3. **Alignment**  
Align against strategic business goals.

“With Sprinklr, we were able to actually unearth these insights and mend customer inquiries quicker.”



**caylee o’neill**  
KNOWLEDGE MANAGER,  
AKZONOBEL UK



## proactive support with a streamlined care center

Now the team is providing social customer care across six social channels, 19 accounts, and six different brands – all on one unified platform.

Soon after adopting Sprinklr, the team had removed the agency from the process and dedicated two agents purely to social care.

“We set a challenge of bringing our average response time down to two hours, a relatively reasonable benchmark for UK social care overall, but with the caveat that we wanted to get to under one hour whenever possible,” says Caylee.

## the #fiveminutechallenge

Once the new process was established, the team set a goal of responding to customer care inquiries within two hours. On top of that, they wanted to answer 25% of customer inquiries within five minutes, and thus the #fiveminutechallenge was born.

“With Sprinklr, we have set up – and improved – the automations to help our advisors reach this goal,” Caylee says.

Using the platform, the team used keywords from customers’ inbound messaging to put an escalation process in place to quickly identify customers that require immediate attention. Once identified, the necessary messages are automatically pushed to the front of the queue.

The team quickly saw positive results. By November, it was answering 47% of inquiries within five minutes. Not only that, but the quality of responses had improved.

“The quality of our replies has improved, because our care agents have more time to find answers, and are able to share knowledge in Sprinklr. With this shared information, conveniently stored in one platform, the agents are able to answer comments more accurately and more quickly,” says Social Media Manager Lisa Boyles.

## proving exact value through product recommendations

The social team is now starting to quantify the work the customer care team is doing by calculating the monetary value that each care agent brings. Each time a care agent recommends a specific product, the price of that product is recorded and tallied. This enables quick demonstration of the revenue generation from the care agents.

“Before, we couldn’t track the value that social care brought to the business,” says Caylee. “It has been revolutionary for us in the last 12 months, to be able to say, ‘We are supporting customers with their complaints and queries whilst also generating added value revenue through our social responses.’”

In just a few months, the team brought in over £13,000 (USD \$18,500) worth of recommendations in just the first few months the program was live.

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**lisa boyles**  
SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER,  
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## increased engagement across the customer journey

The team has made sure that AkzoNobel UK supports customers at every point of their journey, and as a result, has seen a steep increase in interactions, positive sentiment, and even earned reach.

“As customers become more savvy to social advertising, by developing our organic social and customer service care on all channels, we are helping to improve trust and relationships with our customers,” says Lisa. “Our audience does not see content that says, ‘Buy now. Buy now.’ They’re seeing content that actually adds value.”

In the past year, total engagements increased by 172%. Notably, the team has also seen that people are actually engaging with content. Posts, likes, and reactions increased by a 171%, and post comments increased 133%.

## decreasing response times, improving sentiment

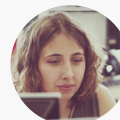
It is no doubt that part of the incredible growth in engagement comes from the work that the care team has put in to decrease response times and become more customer-centric. Sprinklr’s capabilities have helped AkzoNobel UK decrease the average response time from 5 hours and 42 minutes to just one hour and ten minutes — a 80% decrease in a single year.

When looking at response times during weekday work hours, these response times decrease further to around 47 minutes.

Overall, the team are now responding to inquiries quicker, providing customers with better content and gaining valuable insights into the customer journey.

“We went from having limited capability to world class social media management capability. With Sprinklr, we have emerged from the fog,” James concludes.

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