



## Evolve Your Customer Engagement

Deliver customer service excellence through customer engagement hubs

**How do businesses create market leading customer experiences** when “experience” is determined only by the customer? They do it by developing a customer engagement framework that meets the individual needs of each customer at every touchpoint, at any time.

### The Two Faces of Digital Empowerment

The term digital empowerment is incredibly apt. A digital, connected world has empowered companies to communicate their brand identity and understand their customer better than ever. However, this empowerment has worked on both sides of the buy-sell relationship. The traditional one-directional flow of information from seller to buyer has been transformed into a complex network of communication channels where trust and influence are dynamic, but peer recommendations rule.<sup>1</sup>

According to Google’s Zero Moment of Truth handbook, the customer’s thirst for product knowledge is seemingly unquenchable, as customers consume more than 18 pieces of content before making a purchase. Companies are supplying the demand by pumping out digital content, although content marketing is only part of a wider customer engagement strategy.

**Managing multichannel customers remains the greatest challenge for companies.** The customer will choose what they perceive to be the simplest, most effective channel through which to communicate — even if this is not the case. Customer expectations such as speed and efficacy have risen inversely proportional to the number of communication channels. Therefore, it is on the company to ensure that they have the tools to simplify customer engagement.

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The customer need never changes: They want a simple, frictionless solution to meet engagement priorities. The challenge is that multichannel communication requires an *omnichannel* strategy.

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Types of Customer Interactions	Channels	Customer Journey
Informational	Social Media	Discovery
Transactional	Website	Qualification & Evaluation
Troubleshooting	Web Chat	Trust & Purchase
Advice Seeking	Phone Call	Loyalty & Advocacy
	Forum	
	Email	
	Digital	
	Self Service	

<sup>1</sup> <http://digitalintelligencetoday.com/word-of-mouth-still-most-trusted-resource-says-nielsen-implications-for-social-commerce/>

## Putting the Customer at the Centre of Operations

People have been talking about customer centricity and the customer revolution for a long time, but with little in the way of action. This is in part because pleasing the customer has traditionally been seen as a cost, which is now changing.

Ultimately, businesses are losing customers to competitors as customers cite experience as the motivator for switching suppliers. Recent evidence suggests that quality service is even more beneficial than loyalty and customer acquisition in attracting higher value customers. No business exists in a vacuum, and a growing number of businesses are putting the customer experience at the core of their existence. Companies such as Google, Amazon, and Zappos are thriving as they create programs to meet rising customer service expectations.

Additionally, a growing number of organisations are creating a customer champion such as the Chief Customer Officer (CCO). Often sitting either in the marketing or operations function, the customer champion is dedicated to making sure the customer is front of mind in all strategic decision making. As marketing moves away from the shout and push tactics of old and into a new era of engagement, designing tailored customer journeys that deliver valued outcomes requires a deep level of customer understanding and insight.

The impact of gleaning customer insight from behavioral data has also created a new challenge for many businesses. Companies traditionally look within their industry vertical for competition, yet this is no longer the case. Service companies, often in retail, are now offering bundled solutions in insurance and banking, further disrupting conventional business models. These companies have invested heavily in loyalty programs over the years. This aligns with a service-first attitude, which means that maintaining market share for niche players is getting ever harder.

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To compete, companies must design and own a customer engagement process that delivers a meaningful, consistent, and effective experience while using closed-loop feedback to understand customer insights and behaviours.

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To break down internal barriers and silos that emerge in hierarchical organisations due to emergent behavior and the technical limitations of legacy systems, organisations are looking at assets in the contact centre to lead the charge and champion the customer.

## From Contact Centre to Customer Engagement Hub

People love simplicity. From an evolutionary perspective, it makes sense to invest as little effort as possible into solving a problem. This saves valuable resources for anything unexpected in the near future. So when designing a strategy for customer engagement, simplicity should be at the core.

To put the customer at the heart of operations, elevating the contact centre to customer engagement hub is essential. This hub becomes the brain, where external stimuli and interactions are channeled to create a single view of the customer and manage their journey towards the next best action.

## Next Generation Customer Engagement

A positive customer experience should be an expectation instead of an extra. Here are five values by which contact centres can begin to deliver next-generation engagements.

### 1. Customer-first engagements

Business processes and leadership should promote customer needs over those of the business through customer centric KPIs and metrics. We can't predict for sure the next big competitor, but we do know the winner will offer a better customer experience.

### 2. Conversational engagements

Speed and simplicity are critical to creating a seamless customer experience. Both can be accomplished by investing in natural language speech solutions. Simplifying complex navigation and automating tasks through IVR reduces the time a customer spends explaining their problem rather than getting a solution.

### 3. Borderless Engagements

Customers are connecting with companies armed with more product knowledge than ever — and their reasons for making contact are becoming more complex. Video conferencing allows experts from different geographies to be where the customer needs them and creates a personalized communications channel.

### 4. Simple and Efficient Engagements

Virtual assistants allow customers to receive accurate, consistent, and personalized service. By focusing on natural language conversations, agents can better understand customer behavior and deliver insight that goes beyond expectations.

### 5. Holistic Engagements

Customer engagement hubs track resolution from start to end and provide visibility over customer engagement touchpoints — whether front or back office or through any channel. As customer needs and demands evolve, removing silos and promoting continual feedback for consistent process improvement is essential.

## The Conundrum of Claimed Versus Real Behaviour

It is well known that what consumers claim is important, or how they behave, rarely matches actual behavior. This has been a troublesome issue for qualitative and psychological research for years, and has led to careful experimental design to remove this effect as much as possible. A host of technologies from heat mapping to eye tracking get under the hood of decision making and thereby offer solutions to perceived or hidden customer problems. A major challenge when deriving insights from customer interactions has been the siloed nature of the information that limits its effectiveness. The customer engagement hub of the future is the conduit for all interactions. It can offer unparalleled insight into customer requirements despite any contrary information.

## Facts and Stats

- 70% of buying experiences are based on how the customer feels they are being treated.<sup>2</sup> (McKinsey)
- Customers who are fully engaged represent 23% premium in terms of share of wallet, profitability, revenue, and relationship growth.<sup>3</sup> (Gallup State of the American Consumer 2014)
- 89% of consumers have stopped doing business with a company after experiencing poor customer service.<sup>4</sup> (RightNow)
- A customer is four times more likely to buy from a competitor if the problem is service related versus price or product related.<sup>5</sup> (Bain)
- 42% of service agents are unable to efficiently resolve customer issues due to disconnected systems, archaic user interfaces, and multiple applications.<sup>6</sup> (Forrester)
- Just 7% of consumers say that customer service experiences they have with companies typically exceed their expectations.<sup>7</sup> (Amex)
- 70% of customer experience management best-in-class adopters use customer feedback to make strategic decisions, while just 50% of industry-average organizations and 29% of laggards do.<sup>8</sup> (Aberdeen Group)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/the\\_moment\\_of\\_truth\\_in\\_customer\\_service](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/the_moment_of_truth_in_customer_service)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/172637/why-customer-engagement-matters.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.slideshare.net/RightNow/2011-customer-experience-impact-report>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bain.com/publications/business-insights/loyalty.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.aspect.com/Documents/Papers/Aspect-NGCC-Forrester-WP.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [http://about.americanexpress.com/news/docs/2012x/axp\\_2012gcsb\\_us.pdf](http://about.americanexpress.com/news/docs/2012x/axp_2012gcsb_us.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bir.net.au/articles/50-tips-on-customers>

## The Last Word... Agility

Digital empowerment has created huge disruptions for businesses across the globe as borders evaporate and new disruptive technologies and competitors emerge.

The customer is switching suppliers and will continue to do so — with customer experience cited as the reason. In a fragmented, multichannel marketplace, organisations that are agile enough to deliver omnichannel experiences over and above consumer expectations can expect more customers and a greater share of the customer wallet.

As businesses search for insight into their customers to improve every aspect of their product and operations, the contact centre creates the opportunity to transform from a cost centre into a unique asset that drives tangible value to the business as a whole.

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