NFON
Cloud Telephone System

Better customer experiences mean better business

The vital role of integrated omnichannel communications.

Simplify Communication.

nfon.com

Customer experiences in an omnichannel world

Good quality products or services, at a fair price, used to be enough to keep your customers coming back. Not anymore. Their communication experience is now decisive.

Experience is everything

81% of companies surveyed expected to be competing mostly or completely on the basis of customer experience[1]

34% of people surveyed have had to wait over 20 minutes for their telephone call to be answered by the relevant person. For 11% it has been over 60 minutes[2]

Only **21%** of business leaders would rate their organisation as good at consistently delivering high-quality customer service[3]

Your customers now expect a flawless experience from every company interaction, at every stage of the customer lifecycle.

Not enabling your customers to be able to contact the right person in your organisation in a timely way is a sure-fire route to frustration.
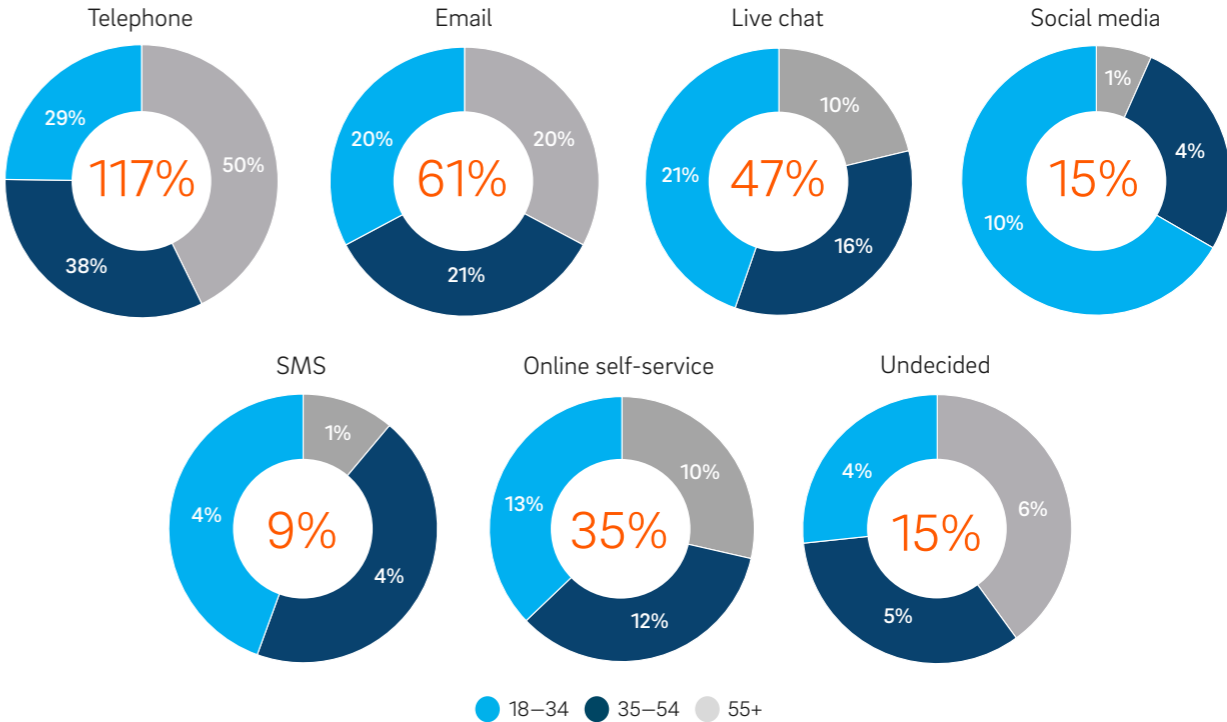
Disappoint your customers and you could find that social media responses cause serious reputational damage. Is your brand strong enough to stay unscathed?

Channel choices

One of the biggest changes in customer service has been the leap in the number of communication channels now available. Today, 50% of customers use three to five channels to contact customer service, with 9% using six or more channels.[4]

It's not just a question of different channels being preferred for different scenarios, such as email for information requests and social media for complaints. Different demographic groups also have different channel preferences. Microsoft research that breaks down preferences by age group shows that, while the telephone remains the most popular channel for all age groups, it is much more popular with those over 55. For the 18—35 age group, live chat and social media are the most popular. Email is fairly consistent across all age groups.

Which of the following customer service channels do you prefer?[5]

Telephone 117% — 29%, 50%, 38%

Email 61% — 20%, 20%, 21%

Live chat 47% — 21%, 10%, 16%

Social media 15% — 1%, 4%, 10%

SMS 9% — 4%, 1%, 4%

Online self-service 35% — 13%, 10%, 12%

Undecided 15% — 4%, 6%, 5%

● 18—34 ● 35—54 ● 55+

1. Customer Experience Survey, Gartner, 2019
2. Captains of Industry survey, Ipsos MORI, 2019
3. Call Wait Times survey by YouGov on behalf James Consulting, 2020
4. State of Global Customer Service Support, Microsoft report, 2019
5. State of Global Customer Service Support, Microsoft report, 2018

Keeping up with your customers

Your customers are embracing the flexibility and control that having a choice of communication channels gives them. Are you?

Many businesses are failing to keep up with customer expectations for a seamless and integrated experience.

70% of customers expect consistent experiences across channels, yet only 16% of customers say companies generally excel at this[1]

When implemented and managed correctly, omnichannel communications can deliver significant benefits for both your customers and your business.

For your customers

More convenience and choice, while eliminating the need to repeat themselves each time they contact a business –70% of customers say connected experiences are very important to winning their business.[2]

For your business

More operational efficiency (agent productivity, efficient resource deployment, removal of task duplication and process streamlining) plus better customer retention, increased customer lifetime value and extended reach to new customer segments.

"Customers are more likely to renew a relationship if their interactions with a company are fast and easy."[3]

"Few organisations can claim to offer a genuinely seamless omnichannel experience though it is a key strategic focus for many"[4]

While traditional voice and email channels are now widely adopted, newer digital channels are also seeing increased take-up. Social media, SMS-based text and messenger apps like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are already used by the majority of service teams. Newer channels – including mobile chat and real-time video support – are poised for growth.

In the January 2020 UK Consumer Satisfaction Index, almost 13% of customer experiences took place through email, an app, web chat, text or social media.[5]

In this guide

This guide takes you through the main communication channels in more detail and highlights the benefits they offer to both your customers and your business.

› Telephone
› Email
› Web chat
› SMS
› Social media

1. Trends in Integrated Customer Experiences, Salesforce, 2018
2. Trends in Integrated Customer Experiences, Salesforce, 2018
3. Customer Experience Survey, Gartner, 2019
4. UK Customer Satisfaction Index, 2020
5. UK Customer Satisfaction Index, 2020

Telephone

Still the most popular customer service channel, the telephone is particularly favoured for high value purchases, customer reassurance, complex queries and when an immediate response is required.
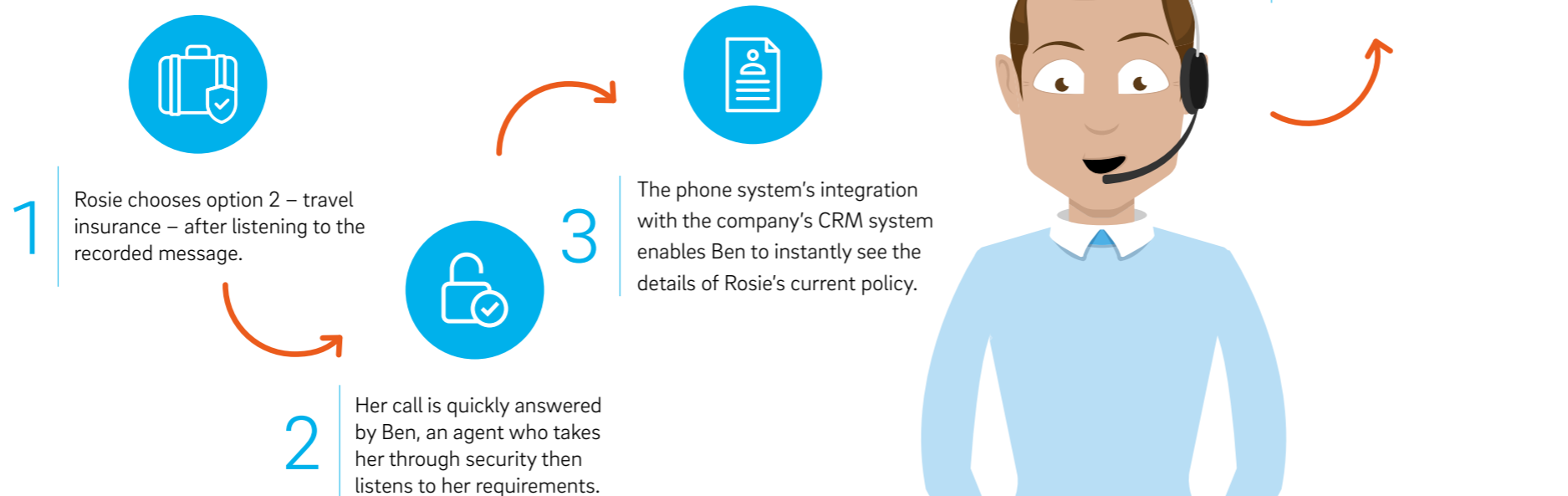
Interactions where telephone is often preferred include querying a bill, applying for a mortgage, booking a package holiday and buying insurance.

71% of people use the telephone as a customer service channel[1]

Typical telephone interaction

Rosie loves going on adventurous holidays to exotic locations. She's got itchy feet but her travel insurance is about to run out. Rosie goes online but feels a bit overwhelmed by all the options available, and is confused by the different exclusions and levels of cover. She calls her insurance broker for advice.

1 Rosie chooses option 2 – travel insurance – after listening to the recorded message.

2 Her call is quickly answered by Ben, an agent who takes her through security then listens to her requirements.

3 The phone system's integration with the company's CRM system enables Ben to instantly see the details of Rosie's current policy.

4 Ben talks Rosie through the two renewal options that most accurately match her needs.

5 Rosie chooses the option with enhanced dangerous activity cover, Ben does a credit check then completes the application and everyone's happy.

Email

The second most popular method of contacting customer services, email is often the first choice for simple, quick questions and for logging an issue or complaint.

Recent research revealed that 52% of global respondents – and 63% of millennials – typically begin their interactions online.[1] Situations where email is preferred might include technical queries, chasing up delivery dates, logging faults and requesting replacement parts.

64% of people use email as a customer service channel[2]

Typical email interaction

Fez has had his order delivered, but some of the parts are damaged. He needs to let the company know and ask for a resolution.

1 Fez emails customer services with his order number and attaches photographs of the damaged item, then gets an immediate automatic email reply acknowledging his message and telling him to expect a response within 48 hours.

2 Customer service agent Greg picks up the email, sees from the subject line that it needs responding to quickly and speaks to the production department to find out when replacement parts can be delivered.

3 Greg emails Fez to apologise for the problem and inform him of the resolution (replacement parts in three working days and a 20% refund).

4 Fez responds saying he is satisfied, and the interaction is added to his CRM file.

Your customers gain...

› An easy way to demonstrate their problem with quick sending of images of faulty goods

› Written evidence of having contacted the company within its returns/complaints policy

› The reassurance of a confirmation email saying that their message has been received and is being attended to

› The convenience of not having to sit in a call queue or be passed from agent to agent for a resolution – they can send their email and get on with other things

Your business gains...

› Time to look into the issue without the pressure of the customer waiting for an immediate response (if the customer was on the phone, for example). Your customer service representative can get the complete picture, liaise with appropriate colleagues and go back to your customer with a satisfactory response

› A more cost-effective communication channel than having to manage customers in a call queue

› A fuller picture of your customer – the email exchange can be attached to the customer's CRM file to maintain a record of the customer's transaction history, analyse behaviour and provide evidence of successful issue resolution

1.   State of Global Customer Service Support, Microsoft report, 2018
2.   State of Global Customer Service Support, Microsoft report, 2018

Web chat

Web chat is popular with people who are already on a website and have an immediate question they want answered, often prompted by pop-up dialogue boxes.

Situations where web chat is preferred can include purchase related queries, such as sizing or technical compatibility.

48% of people use web chat as a customer service channel[1]

Typical web chat interaction

Kim is shopping online for a sound system and has narrowed her search down to two retailers. She thinks a particular system on retailer A's website might be just what she's after. It has great customer reviews and she thinks it looks really smart. But she needs to check whether it's the best choice for her sort of music and the size of her flat.

1 A web chatbot pops up and asks if she needs assistance. She says 'yes' and adds that she has a question about a product.

2 She types in her music and flat information with her question, and the chatbot recognises that it needs to defer to an agent.

3 Sam takes over seamlessly from the chatbot, reads Kim's information, advises that unfortunately this particular system is not the best choice for her but recommends an alternative product that fits her situation perfectly.

4 Kim thanks Sam and purchases her recommended new system immediately.

Your customers gain...

› The ability to multitask and continue browsing while interacting with the chatbot and agent

› A prompt response from a real person, enabling the issue to be resolved quickly

› The relief of a less pressurised interaction than a phone call

› The peace of mind that their purchase meets their specific needs

› Time – the purchase can be made immediately online, maximising the time available for other things

Your business gains...

› The opportunity to interact with customers who are already close to a purchase decision, increasing the ability to secure a sale rather than losing customer to a competitor

› Valuable customer feedback – real-time information about customers' product queries, with the question and answer fed back into the website product FAQs

› More effective chatbots – the more they interact with customers, the more intelligence they build up to deal with more situations, allowing your agents to concentrate on more complicated interactions

› A cost-effective communication channel – AI means your chatbot can begin the interaction, with human intervention at the point of need

1.   State of Global Customer Service Support, Microsoft report, 2018
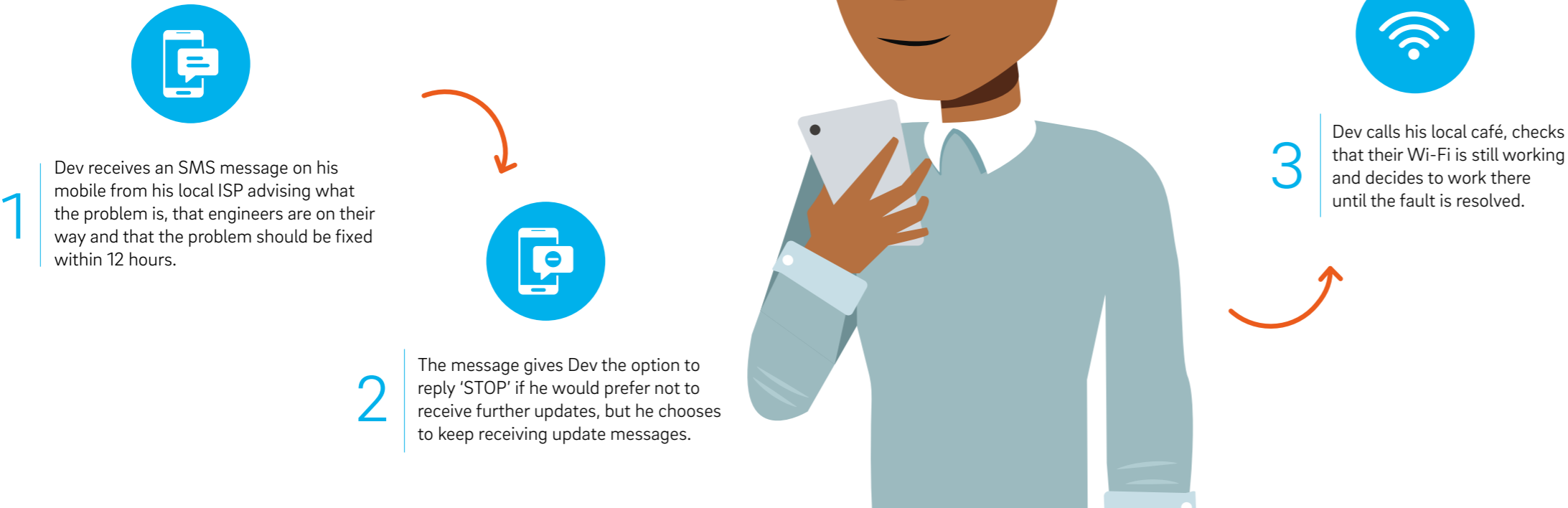
SMS

Whilst not being the most widely used of customer service communication channels, SMS has an important supporting role to play in certain situations.

Situations where SMS is preferred can include automatic bank balance updates or overdraft alerts, fault fix updates, delivery notices and appointment reminders.

15% of people use SMS as a customer service channel[1]

Typical SMS interaction

Dev is working from home today, so he needs Wi-Fi and access to his company VPN. Unfortunately, a local cable has been damaged by roadworks and Dev has no connectivity.

1 Dev receives an SMS message on his mobile from his local ISP advising what the problem is, that engineers are on their way and that the problem should be fixed within 12 hours.

2 The message gives Dev the option to reply 'STOP' if he would prefer not to receive further updates, but he chooses to keep receiving update messages.

3 Dev calls his local café, checks that their Wi-Fi is still working and decides to work there until the fault is resolved.

4 Whist in the café, he receives several SMS update messages before being informed two hours later that his broadband is back online.

Your customers gain...

› The proactive reassurance that their problem is being taken seriously and addressed

› The convenience of not having to chase progress updates, make repeated phone calls or wait in a call queue

› Real-time information delivered in a way that is not disruptive

Your business gains...

› The ability to deliver mass communications when multiple customers need to receive the same information

› The initiative of proactively making contact, avoiding an influx of inbound calls and pressure on the call centre

› The ability to quickly and easily create a targeted SMS mailing list of specific customers

› A cost-effective way of keeping customers informed and reassuring them that their problem is being taken seriously, building positive brand perception

› GDPR compliance and the benefit of enabling customers to manage their communication preferences with an 'opt out' option

1.   Microsoft 2019 State of Global Customer Service Support report

Social media

Perhaps just as important as its role as a customer services communication channel, social media can have huge influence on brand reputation.

In recent research, 54% of respondents were favourable to a brand that answered customer service questions via social media.[2] Situations where social media is preferred can include making a complaint or highlighting faulty goods which might impact a wide group of customers. On the positive side, social media is also a popular way of providing constructive product reviews and feedback.

15% of people use social media as a customer service channel[1]

Typical social media interaction

Jed's online order was supposed to be delivered within six weeks. The deadline's passed and he's not even received confirmation of dispatch. He's tried calling, but doesn't want to sit in a queue, so he takes to Facebook – posting a frustrated message on the company's page.

1 Susan, the company's social media executive, quickly apologises publicly and asks Jed to send a direct message with details so that she can look into it right away.
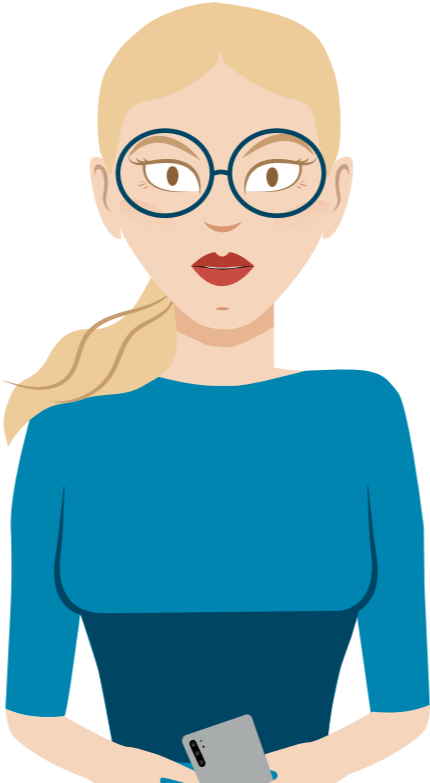
2 Pacified by the speedy response, Jed replies publicly to say thank you and sends the information by direct message.

3 Susan promises to get back to Jed as soon as possible, then discovers there's a supply chain problem causing a further seven-day delay.

4 She sends a direct message to Jed explaining, apologising and offering a 10% refund, which he accepts.

5 As Jed's not the only customer affected, the company posts a public message on their Facebook and Instagram pages to keep customers informed and reassured.
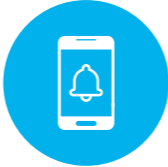
Your customers gain...

› An easy and effective way of prompting a speedy response

› Issue resolution through a direct, one-to-one communication with a named individual who takes responsibility for addressing the issue

Your business gains...

› The ability to quickly identify customer concerns that need dealing with efficiently

› The opportunity to turn negative posts into positive outcomes by responding quickly and efficiently – demonstrating good customer service and strengthening brand image

› The opportunity to show a forward-looking approach by engaging with customers on their chosen social channels, improving customer loyalty

› An effective channel for mass communications

Becoming omnipresent

Offering your customers multiple communication channels is now a fundamental competitive necessity. But it's only the beginning. You also need to ensure that all these channels integrate seamlessly to meet your customers' demanding expectations. Damagingly, many companies are still falling short.

75%
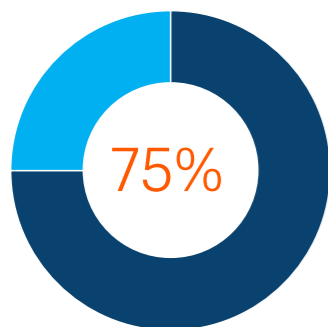
of customers expect the agent to know who they are and their purchase history[1]

70%
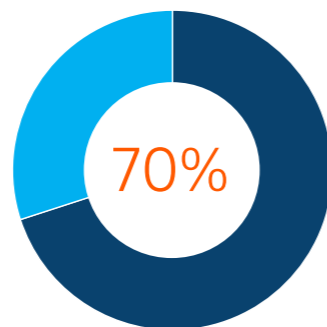
of customers say that the agent only has access to their information half of the time or less[2]

Checking your customer experience optimisation

The more boxes you can tick, the better your customers' experiences are likely to be and the stronger your business will be. The fewer you tick, the more important it is that you address your approach to customer communications as soon as possible.

Talk to us about how NFON's contact centre solutions can help you delight your customers and grow your business

Taking care of your customers

☐ Is your customer experience living up to changing customer expectations?

☐ Are you giving your customers the freedom to choose their preferred communication channel?

☐ Do you provide a consistent experience across all of your communication channels?

☐ Do you have customer data easily to hand, all in one place?

☐ Are your customer interactions fast and easy?

Taking care of your business

☐ Does your customer experience set you apart from the competition?

☐ Are you improving customer retention and lifetime value?

☐ Are you extending your reach to new customer segments?

☐ Are you increasing agent efficiency?

☐ Are your communication channels seamlessly linked to your ERM and CRP systems to avoid duplication and re-keying of data?

Taking care of compliance

☐ Do you have the appropriate level of data encryption to keep customer data secure?

☐ Can you demonstrate compliance with data-protection regulations?

☐ Do you have call recording to keep a secure record of customer interactions?

With the right tools and support, you can consistently delight your customers with unified experiences.

1. State of Global Customer Service Support, Microsoft report, 2018
2. State of Global Customer Service Support, Microsoft report, 2018

About NFON

NFON, headquartered in Munich, is a European provider of cloud-based voice-centric business communications. NFON is listed on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange (Prime Standard) and partners with over 2,700 organisations across 15 European countries and counts more than 40,000 customers. Cloudya, NFON's core product, is the platform for easy, independent and reliable business communications for companies of all industries and sizes. Premium solutions include UCaaS, CCaaS and, in the future, iPaaS. With our intuitive communication solutions, we assist companies on their journey into the future of business communications

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