CONNECTING WITH THE NEXT GEN CUSTOMER

Top 5 trends smart companies are addressing to evolve their contact centers into engagement centers

A MITEL EBOOK

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CONTENTS

CONTACT CENTERS HAVE EVOLVED

Traditionally, the contact center has been positioned purely as a voice-only sales and service center. It was the central point for solving customer problems and had everything to do with improving first call resolution, minimizing hold times and scripting perfection.

Fast forward to a new decade and progressive companies are realizing these customer connection points can be maximized by focusing on the customer experience. In the new engagement center model, leading companies are interacting with customers anywhere and everywhere both when they reach out (via phone, email, chat, SMS) and in their everyday experiences.

To develop a truly effective engagement center, communications need to flow in both directions and customer sentiment should be measured in multiple touch points including social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

This eBook will outline the top five trends progressive companies are addressing to transform their contact center into a true customer engagement center, all designed to keep customers coming back for more and sharing positive feedback with their networks.

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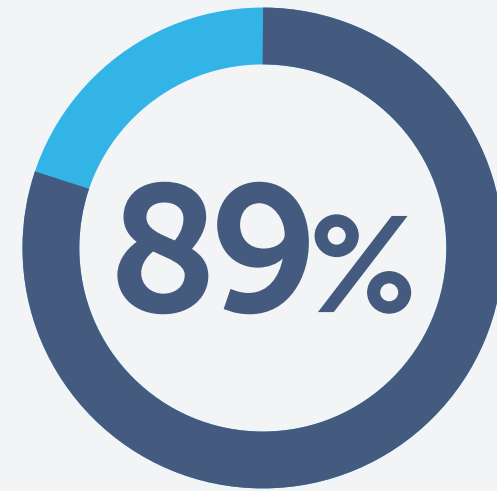
of businesses will compete mainly on customer experience.

Source: *Gartner Report — Customer Experience is the New Competitive Battlefield (Nov. 2016).*

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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IS DRIVEN BY IMMEDIATE INTERACTION

In today's competitive business climate, simply providing good customer service is no longer a competitive differentiator. Building and maintaining a responsive and proactive professional contact center has become table stakes.

With access to instant information and real-time updates, customers expect immediate answers and demand engagement from brands and solution providers. Companies must offer an "experience," and a differentiated, real-time one at that. You need to understand your customers' needs and value to your organization and ensure you are providing the experience they seek in their preferred communication channel.

> "Fluency in customer conversation is a key business driver, one that will make or break a company's tenure."

Valerie Maltoni, Blogger, *Fast Company*

Engagement in Action

Say, for example, "Sandy" has thousands of followers on Twitter, making her a person of influence on the web. Sandy has a bad experience with your company. She tweets about her dissatisfaction. Using automated tools, an engagement center can pick up on this information before the news has a chance to spread widely and reach out to Sandy to proactively address the issue. The result: Sandy feels the company is listening. Now, rather than being a critic of your brand, Sandy tweets about how quickly you responded. She becomes a promoter rather than a detractor.

② TODAY'S MEDIA-SAVVY CUSTOMERS DEMAND MEDIA-SAVVY COMMUNICATIONS

One of the key principles of a next generation customer experience is the ability to serve customers according to their preferences. Some customers only want to receive email, while others want the reassurance of speaking to a person and only a person and that's fine, too. Early in the relationship, you'd need to capture these preferences so you can do right by them.

Some customers, however, will push the envelope. A growing percentage of people, led by the tech and social media-savvy millennials, demand mobile communications on their smartphone as well as their social networks. Customers are now used to using their mobile device to connect via voice, text, chat, email and the web. However, most contact centers are currently only equipped to handle one or two of these channels.

Real-time notification is much more valuable than the traditional "service window" which is quickly becoming an antiquated way of doing business. Using SMS to respond to customer inquiries is a great way to engage customers in a conversation and reinforce brand preference.

In another engagement center strategy, more companies are integrating live chat into their web sites to connect with customers in real time as they browse. The result is a powerful and efficient method to engage customers in a conversation that creates a positive user experience.

Gartner predicts that the number of social media interactions handled by customer care agents will triple between 2017 and 2022.

Source: Gartner Report — Plan Now for Critical Shifts in Customer Interaction Patterns (June, 2017)

Engagement in Action

Joe is looking for a flat screen TV. He calls one of the retailers near his home and is connected to a rep at the contact center who gives Joe model and pricing options. The rep is authorized to extend Joe a deal-closer: free delivery. The next morning Joe receives a text message from the retailer's service department assuring him that the TV will be at his house by noon.

The next day, when Joe receives a followup email asking him to rate his experience, he not only gave the retailer a positive review, he also shared his great experience on Twitter and his Facebook page.

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REAL-TIME PERSONALIZATION = REAL ROI

Many customers associate contact center experiences with frustrating, uniformed hand-offs and long wait times. They want a more human and flexible experience. By transitioning to an engagement center strategy and empowering representatives to immediately respond, many companies are realizing the benefits of engagement.

Contact center representatives require a common view into customer information to make this change. Then, priority customers can be quickly identified and offered personalized treatment. This

visibility also enables conversation centers to influence revenue as they can extend, up-sell or cross-sell offers where applicable, increasing bottom line profit.

To avoid multiple hand-offs or drop-offs that can annoy customers, companies are now using cloud computing environments to allow agents to communicate with supervisors and get an immediate response to a customer issue. A shared, 360 degree-view of customer data across channels enables conversation centers to listen to customer issues, respond in real time and provide personalized offers that can help grow the business.

> "Customer Experience Management is about managing interactions in real time so responses, whether from an agent or an automated system, are appropriate, in context and personalized."

Richard Snow, Vice President and Research Director, Ventana Research

Engagement in Action

Ann has been dealing with the same financial institution for more that 10 years. When she decides she wants to increase the balance on her credit card, she anticipates going through a volley of automated voice prompts and hold times to get a representative. However, when she logs in to her account, she notices the bank offers a VIP access line for preferred customers. Because the bank's contact center is integrated to a cloud-based CRM system, the representative is able to access her profile and provide immediate approval. The next day the bank follows up with a text message delivered to her mobile device thanking her for her business and encouraging her to provide feedback on her experience.

④ OMNICHANNEL INTEGRATION CREATES A CONSISTENT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Today's customer has access to real-time information using multiple means of communication; therefore, engagement centers need to support these channels with a seamless integrated platform. However, addressing omnichannel engagement is one of the most challenging factors for current and future contact center operations.

Being able to communicate via email, chat, phone call, etc. is a good start. But having customer interaction history shared, integrated and readily available to agents across media lays the foundation for a proactive, consistent customer experience.

There is nothing more frustrating for a customer than getting a different answer from different channels. A disjointed customer experience will give the impression of incompetence or indifference to your brand. Whether they are dealing with a financial institution, a wireless provider or a retailer, customers are more than willing to switch brands after a negative experience.

Having a consistent cross-channel customer experience means customers must be recognized and engaged seamlessly in the medium of their choice, in a tone and manner that is consistent with the overarching brand.

"90 percent of consumers value the ability to communicate with a live person in any channel — voice, email, chat, SMS or social.".

Harris Interactive and Social Business Builders Research

Engagement in Action

Ted is planning a vacation for his family. Using a web chat option he receives a special price quote for a 3-day special. He confirms the reservation online and immediately receives an email confirmation. After talking with his wife, he decides to extend the trip one day. He calls in to an agent who pulls up his online reservation and references the chat offering the special rate. The agent confirms the web price will be extended for the additional day. The call is recorded and Ted receives an email confirmation. But when Ted arrives at the resort there is no record of the additional night. The matter is quickly resolved, however, when the reservation desk reaches the contact center, which uses a cloud application to access the recorded call to confirm the change to the reservation.

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A CLOUD-BASED CONTACT CENTER PROVIDES AGILITY, FLEXIBILITY AND SCALABILITY

Cloud computing has already been adopted by some of the biggest and most trusted companies in the world. Rapid technology changes have enabled companies to move from purchasing a premise-based contact center to leveraging a cloud-based contact center solution.

A cloud-based contact center is easy to deploy, easy to use and easy to manage. You receive critical contact center feature functionality, such as call recording, quality monitoring, post-call

surveys, interaction routing and reporting, allowing you to manage your customer experience. Furthermore, you can take careful, measured steps in your implementation and then scale up based on your need.

The cloud model also provides contact centers with access to continual innovation. As cloud adoption increases, rapid improvements, new features, and new functions are made available to all subscribers.

Contact centers can choose which enhancements and features they want and when they want them. This business agility will enable contact center business owners to get the desired functionality they want and enable IT to deliver those capabilities quickly and easily.

By moving your contact center to the cloud, you can also benefit from reduced deployment cycles, high availability and continuous innovation. You will also want a service provider that supports industry-standard security and mission-critical availability with virtually no downtime.

"More than 65 percent of all new deployments of a Customer Experience Center are in the cloud model.".

**Source:** Gartner Hype Cycle for CRM Customer Service and Customer Engagement, 2017

CONCLUSION

The stakes have risen. Customers expect answers in a real-time personalized way, converse with each other and share their experiences in real-time. Brands not actively encouraging conversations with their customers are likely missing out on critical market feedback and trends.

In this world of changing customers and changing communication patterns, the contact center needs to react to these changes and become a more proactive and flexible engagement center.

In this world of changing customer expectations and changing communication patterns, the contact center needs to react to these changes and become a more proactive and flexible engagement center.

Mitel provides cost-effective solutions that can help companies meet these challenges.

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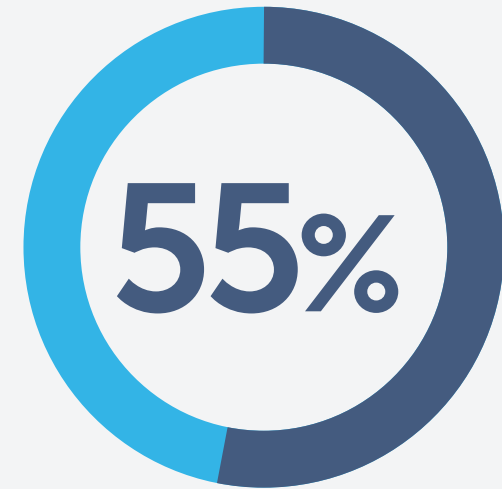
of consumers are willing to recommend a company due to outstanding service (more so than product or price).

Source: Forrester Research

Isn't it time to transform your call center into a customer engagement center?

Contact a Mitel Representative

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