



TAKING CX PERFORMANCE TO THE NEXT LEVEL...

WHITE PAPER: Why the convergence of contact centres, AI & Automation and CRM matters

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic triggered an unprecedented demand for customer service, with both contact centres and digital channels seeing rapid growth. Indeed, demand for human re-assurance across some sectors resulted in contact centre volumes leaping by as much as 50%, with many reporting no drop off as conditions eased.

At the same time, rates of digital adoption increased dramatically, with McKinsey reporting that the COVID-19 crisis has accelerated the digitisation of customer and supply chain interactions by some three to four years.

The result is that, for many organisations, the pandemic has moved them forward over a digital technology tipping point, transforming their operations forever – and driving unprecedented change in CX delivery. While this digital transformation opens up huge opportunities for brands, it can also introduce significant challenges in terms of customer expectations, automation, support for contact centre advisors, and technology deployment. Key issues here include:

AI & Automation transforming the customer journey

We're moving rapidly to a point where almost every customer interaction will soon be fronted by AI in some shape or form. Indeed, **Gartner** has predicted that 2022 will see 70% of customer interactions involving technologies such as machine learning, applications, chatbots and mobile messaging.

Customers wanting more joined-up service experiences

Even though most interactions now begin with some form of digital CX, they still need to be backed up by deep integration with the contact centre and critical data sources from across the business. If you're still relying on inflexible legacy contact centre infrastructures this can be challenging.

Human Advisors needing extra support

As AI and conversational technologies now handle many routine CX enquiries, advisors are inevitably handling a far greater proportion of complex customer interactions. This has introduced more complexity on the advisor desktop, increasing the need for assistive solutions that offer true real-time digital advisor support.

Traditional contact centre technologies merging with the Customer Engagement Centre market

Organisations may talk about building complete, end-to-end views of the customer journey – but that's almost impossible to do well without bringing data together from across the business. Data – and effective Customer Relationship Management (CRM) data integration – needs to be at the heart of successful CX transformation.

Not surprisingly, many brands are finding it hard to accommodate this shift, with contact volumes placing huge demands on contact centre employees, legacy technology as well as those teams responsible for leading corporate CX initiatives. However, a number of key factors are now coming together to support what could prove to be the next key phase in customer service: the convergence of the contact centre, AI & Automation and CRM spaces – with customer experience at the core.

HOW THE CONTACT CENTRE, AI & AUTOMATION AND CRM LANDSCAPE IS STARTING TO CONVERGE

Instead of just focusing on traditional operational requirements, CX digital transformation projects typically have a much broader focus – extending beyond the contact centre to embrace all aspects of engagement. This requires a comprehensive view of the full customer journey, as well as the ability to collect deep granular insight into what’s actually driving the customer experience.



Three particular drivers – internal corporate evolution and the overall responsibility for CX initiatives, closer vendor integration, and increased technology convergence - are combining to help move the focus of CX beyond the contact centre to embrace the end-to-end customer journey.

EXTENDING CX LEADERSHIP BEYOND THE CONTACT CENTRE

Those organisations looking to differentiate their position through CX leadership clearly need a comprehensive view of their complete customer journey. This frequently involves the need to integrate previously silo-ed functions, understand exactly how customer information is captured, analysed and managed, and also take account of the need for greater AI and Automation across multiple functions.

Recognising CX’s expanded influence, it’s hardly surprising that many organisations are turning to executive roles with a wider brief to help drive the success of cross-departmental CX projects. Analyst firm Ventana Research suggests that by 2024, three out of four large enterprises will have executives such as a Chief Customer Officer or a Chief Experience Officer in place with full responsibility for customer experience.

These senior roles reflect the increasingly important role of CX as a differentiator, and acknowledge the value that transformational CX projects can have in helping to deliver business goals such as reducing customer churn and increasing customer spend. Given the importance of these goals, CCOs and CXOs simply can’t accept or afford any damaging disconnects within their customer journeys.

CCOs and CXOs will also increasingly have different goals and targets to contact centre management. While previously the focus may have largely been around operational efficiency and cost management, today’s CX leaders are driven by outcome-based or revenue-centric metrics rather than traditional cost centre models. Of course, operational efficiency is still vital, it just can’t get in the way of excellent customer experiences.

Inevitably this CX-driven leadership will start to have an impact on many of the operational silos and different stakeholders that can easily lead to disconnects within extended customer journeys. CCOs and CXOs understand the importance of different customer service perspectives, but they have to be subservient to corporate customer engagement needs.

The role that contact centres played in helping organisations maintain customer contact during the pandemic was vital. However, while it clearly earned C-level recognition for customer service teams, it also highlighted the need for a more joined-up customer experience.

At the end of the day, customers don’t really care who’s driving CX from a corporate perspective, they just want a consistently great experience whenever and however they get in touch.

INDUSTRY SHIFT TOWARDS VENDOR CONVERGENCE

A very practical illustration of the move to combine different elements of the end-to-end customer journey are the shifts towards vendor convergence. CRM, AI & Automation, and contact centre technology vendors have always acknowledged the complementary adjacency of their respective technologies. However, the gulf between CRM software suites and traditional PBX and Automatic Call Distribution systems was previously seen as just too wide.

Lately, however, there have been clear signs that vendors themselves are looking to bridge the gap – not just via alliances but also through significant investments. When Genesys, a global cloud leader in customer experience orchestration, announced its recent **\$580 million funding round**, it was significant that the round was led by Salesforce Ventures with support from ServiceNow Ventures and Zoom Video Communications.

The investment recognised that customer expectations continue to rise exponentially around personalised, empathetic and connected experiences, and that truly integrated digital and human experiences will require input and collaboration from multiple phases of the customer journey. Previously contact centre technology vendors felt that CRM, ITSM and enterprise vendors didn't really understand the specific needs of the contact centre. However, there's now a growing recognition that these disciplines are not only complementary but are all instrumental in addressing the 'experience as a service' market opportunity successfully.

TECHNOLOGY CONVERGENCE ACCELERATING AT PACE

For the last 20 years' most organisations' experience of CRM and contact centre integration has involved little more than basic screen popping customer phone numbers to the contact centre agent desktop for basic identification purposes. Hardly advanced, but actually proving very useful for both customers who felt recognised, and advisors who gained a start on their conversations. Add in another question to help confirm the customer's identity quickly, and contact centres saved a lot of call time while also paving the way for a great interaction.

But customer expectations are increasing, and most CX teams know that basic CTI integration really isn't good enough to support voice let alone the explosion of interactions across channels such as live chat, virtual assistants and knowledge-based bots. And with much of the simpler interactions now being handled by self-service channels, it's certainly not enough to support the much more complex conversations that are already taking up more and more of a contact centre advisor's time.

Delivering this kind of high-quality customer experience at scale has always been challenging. However, the convergence of more extended CX capabilities, CRM, AI & Automation, and contact centre technology is set to provide brands with the technologies and data insights that are needed to provide a unified, end-to-end customer engagement experience.

And with the growth of Communications Platform as a Service (CPaaS) technologies such as Twilio, we're now seeing traditional silos break down as brands seek to unify customer experiences. By providing a consistent set of APIs to support a broad range of customer journey touchpoints, as well as the ability to integrate customer-facing applications into existing enterprise workflows, there's a real opportunity now to build enterprise-class, AI-enabled customer journeys at scale.



BUILDING OUT THE NEXT GENERATION OF CX CAPABILITIES

Traditionally customer engagement technologies have been largely polarised – you’ve either been a CRM-led customer engagement operation with a largely silo-ed contact centre, a dedicated service desk style operation, or more contact centre-focused with basic screen pop links or advisors left to source data manually.

But today’s CX teams can no longer afford to remain isolated in their contact centre, service desk or CRM camps. The pressure for brands to differentiate via their customer experience makes any CX technology decisions taken now even more important. That’s why it’s essential that organisations move quickly to align their technologies so that they’re able to provide a unified, end-to-end customer engagement experience.

How brands manage their customer data is also critical. Technologies such as AI, machine learning and natural language speech recognition are already established within the contact centre and their data is already helping to power cross-functional customer data platforms and digital experience platforms. Implemented in the right way, AI & Automation will provide new ways to free up CX resources and help brands to make more informed decisions – transforming customer journeys into a source of rich insights that drive a richer experience for customers. So, it’s perhaps unfortunate that most organisations still fail to take advantage of the data that’s hidden within voice interactions – still by far the most prevalent CX channel.

The good news is that some of the key technologies already being put to use in the contact centre world are becoming connected with other parts of the organisation. CPaaS communications platforms and cloud-based contact centre capabilities are increasingly overlapping, making it much easier for CX teams to use APIs and programmable components to build out their next generation customer engagement capabilities. This makes it much easier to add a mix of channels, and power customer journeys across multiple departments. It also opens up access to best-of-breed AI capabilities.

As the lines between contact centres, CRM and AI & Automation blur, there’s a great opportunity for brands to build and deploy the kind of customer engagement ‘sweet spot’ that can really help to differentiate their customer experience.

And with the opening up of this next generation CX technology, brands can now work to design their own best practice CX capabilities – but this time without barriers.

Some organisations may find that they are better aligned to a CRM-led customer engagement approach, others may want their service desk to drive contact, while many will still prefer a contact centre-led strategy. None of these approaches are right or wrong, but brands will require CCOs or CXOs in the driving seat to ensure that whatever solution is applied leads directly to a positive impact on their business outcomes and results.

What may prove challenging, however, is in identifying customer engagement technology specialists that are able to demonstrate innovation and capability across Contact Centre, CRM, AI & Automation and CX disciplines.

CX CONVERGENCE IN ACTION – PLACING AI-ENABLED VOICE AT THE HEART OF YOUR CRM

For organisations that are serious about building a true, single view of their customers that supports every part of the customer journey, then it's vital that phone interactions are included. Therefore, it's necessary for the voice channel to be brought into any unified digital channel experience.

Service Cloud Voice from Salesforce fits in here – allowing organisations to fully integrate their enterprise voice telephony into Salesforce CRM. At Sabio we're working with Salesforce to help organisations place voice at the heart of their CRM Customer Engagement Centre. With the introduction of solutions such as Service Cloud Voice, it's now possible for Salesforce CRM users to take advantage of the power of Amazon Connect, as well as further telephony platforms such as Avaya, Genesys and others across their end-to-end CRM experience.

By working with organisations to provide 'Bring Your Own Telephony' support for Service Cloud Voice, the traditional voice platform no longer needs to operate as a separate service channel. For example, Service Cloud Voice leverages the power of Salesforce Customer 360's Service Console, Einstein Next Best Action AI, and Analytics capabilities to give advisors the opportunity to deliver true omnichannel support and resolve calls faster.

The result is a great phone experience for customers and advisors. Service Cloud Voice brings together phone, digital channels, and CRM data for contact centre advisors, offering a better experience that's supported by key innovations such as real-time call transcription and AI-powered guidance on recommended next steps.

Integrating voice with Salesforce customer data helps to improve both the customer experience and advisor productivity, while contact centre team leaders and managers also benefit from enhanced visibility across all channels. With Service Cloud Voice in place, customer journeys will benefit from digital telephony capabilities that are native to the world's #1 CRM platform. Sabio accelerates the deployment of agile cloud telephony fully integrated with existing CRM and digital channels.

Service Cloud Voice unlocks value across end-to-end Service Cloud Customer 360 processes. The Result? Advisors get a better experience – with the ability to resolve calls faster and build loyalty in every phone conversation, while contact centre team leaders and coaches get to supervise teams in real-time from anywhere.



SABIO – UNIQUELY QUALIFIED TO SUPPORT CONVERGED CX SOLUTIONS

Sabio Group is an ideal partner for organisations looking to transform their customer journeys. With customer experience at the core, we are uniquely positioned to help organisations take full advantage of Contact Centre, AI & Automation and Salesforce Service Cloud CRM technologies. We can support brands looking to take advantage of the latest converged CX technology capabilities through;

PROVIDING CONTACT CENTRE EXPERTISE

We've been providing innovative contact centre technology innovations and expertise for more than 25 years. From leading-edge natural language and intuitive technologies to moving entire contact centres to the cloud – we're leaders in contact centre and agent desktop transformation.

DELIVERING EFFECTIVE AI & AUTOMATION

We can help you connect with customers via the channel of their choice. We simplify the set-up process, allowing you to use your AI & Automation engine to optimise the customer experience. We also ensure you have the tools you need to configure and fine tune your Virtual Assistant experience.

CRM CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Through our Salesforce consulting partner business, makepositive, we are able to deliver Service Cloud Voice deployments as part of major CRM Customer Engagement Centre projects. makepositive has over 120 Salesforce-accredited consultants and 700+ Salesforce certifications and is a multi-award-winning Salesforce consulting partner.

CX AT THE CORE

Working closely with a variety of strategic partners means we have a broad technology stack, allowing us to supply more appropriate solutions tailored to match specific customer requirements.

We're tech-agnostic

Working closely with a variety of strategic partners as well as possessing our own innovative products means we have a broad technology stack, allowing us to supply more appropriate solutions tailored to match specific customer requirements.

We'll empower you

Rather than keep our knowledge to ourselves, we prefer to share our expertise with our clients and adopt whatever approach they would like to take.

Only the features you need

Because we're data first, we only propose features or new technologies when the level of data supports it. Rather than suggest the biggest scale solution, we often do a small piece of work with clients – then use the data to expand the business case together.

Many industries, many partners

We're dedicated to providing excellent solutions through the adoption of innovative technologies. We do that by working with world-class technology partners such as Avaya, Verint, Genesys, Twilio, Salesforce, Amazon Connect and Google. Plus, we have deep and wide industry-specific knowledge covering Banking, Insurance, Housing, Travel & Leisure, Utilities, Telcos and Retail.

