CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Call Centers to Customer Engagement Centers—Make the Transition Now

Providing seamless customer support across all channels is no longer an ambitious goal to be tackled at some future point—in today's climate where customers are in charge, it's rapidly becoming a requirement. But this omnichannel approach can't be achieved unless agents have instant access to the information they need, and unless your workforce is freed from repetitive tasks to focus on the rewarding work of creating a positive experience for customers. In this month's Best Practices guide, our experts explain how AI-powered search capabilities and the new concept of "workforce engagement" can help call centers transform themselves into customer engagement centers.

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Delivering a Winning Experience in the "Age of the Customer"

AI-driven search can get you there

It's the Age of the Customer. The digital revolution has put a lot of power in customer hands, and they're using that power to demand more than high-quality, feature-rich, and price-competitive products and services. Those factors are important, but they're no longer enough. These days, if you want to keep your customers, you need to provide them with an excellent overall experience. In fact, a recent Salesforce Research survey of nearly 7,000 consumers and business buyers worldwide (reported in the second edition of their *State of the Connected Customer* report) found that 80% of customers claim that their experience with a company is just as important as the products and services it provides.

Every interaction, direct or indirect, that your customers have with your organization is part of that experience and provides the opportunity to enhance your customer's experience and help you forge and maintain solid customer relationships. In this context, no group plays a more pivotal role than your customer service team.

Beyond the call center: multiple channels, multiple information sources

Customer service has long outgrown the era of support when basic call center operations were enough. Today, customers choose to interact through many different channels – phone, email, chat, social media, and self-service. Throughout their multiple interactions with your company, expectations are high that when your customers are communicating with a support agent, they'll find someone who has information on your products and services that's current, consistent, and correct. They also expect to be communicating with someone who has current, consistent, and correct information on their unique and personal relationship with your company. And if your customer's initial choice is to look for information themselves using your self-service portal – as is increasingly the case – they're also expecting an experience based on current, consistent, and correct information.

Too often the customer experience is anything but. As people switch from one channel to another, or from one support level to the next, customers often end up repeating themselves – their information, their questions, their issue. They're also finding that the agents they're communicating with often can't unearth needed information and guidance quickly enough. And when your customers are trying to navigate your website and support portals on their own, they're coming away frustrated, their queries not quite getting them the answers they're looking for.

The problem? Multiple silos of information with no easy way to get at what's in them.

Improving the customer experience by taking a holistic approach to finding answers

There is a way to deliver the type of experience your customers are looking for - an experience that results in faster resolutions of customer issues, improved call deflection rates, less customer time spent on the site stumbling around looking for answers, and increased CSAT and NPS. And that's through deploying an intelligent answers and insights solution that lets your agents and your customers quickly search across all the information sources your company has, not just your knowledge base or CRM. Attivio's state-of-the-art search uses the latest AI techniques like machine learning, natural language processing, and text analytics to make asking questions natural and simple.

How a leading telecommunications provider lets its customers access their vast information source – without suffering any information overload

A US-based telecommunications giant had millions of documents in its information repositories – documents that cover both common and simple questions and complex situations that will never make their way into an FAQ. And they want their customers to take advantage of all that information without getting bogged down in cumbersome, time-consuming searches. This company uses Attivio's search solution for its self-serve support site. Customers can refine their searches based on product specifics, locations, dates, ask questions, and describe their problems in a way that's natural to them. Attivio searches through the relevant documents and surfaces answers to issues that get at the heart of a customer problem.

Initial results show that, with Attivio, this telco is achieving one of its most important KPI's: reducing time customers spend on their support website. To date, that time has been reduced by 50 percent, and the company anticipates that in the longer run, this will result in higher customer retention.

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Intelligent insights and answers

Attivio allows users – whether they are your customers or your support agents – to ask questions in a way that comes naturally to them. They don't have to worry about knowing the right keywords, how to frame the query, or even the correct spelling. Once a question is asked, the returned results aren't just a list of documents or links that users need to sift through. Rather, using machine learning, Attivio is able to recommend specific answers and actions to resolve the issue.

Attivio combines all your siloed information – data coming from content repositories such as Sharepoint and other Knowledge Management solutions, from your CRM and ticket management systems, from databases, from cloud services like Google Docs, and from unstructured data such as emails, PDFs, or social media – unifying your content into a single pane of glass. Your customers have just one place to look for their answers. The same goes for your agents. They no longer need to search for information across multiple repositories in order to find the information they need.

Additionally, most search engines rely on federated search, which delivers links to multiple sources and fails to provide an insightful, consolidated answer to a query. Instead, Attivio uses unified search, which understands the relationships across all sources and types of information – both structured and unstructured – to learn the relevancy of any piece of information for a specific question. This enables Attivio to provide an insightful and relevant answer to a query – not links.

And with Attivio search, support information follows your customer across all the channels they're using, providing seamless integration as your customer moves from self-serve to chatbot to agent. Regardless of the support touchpoint your customer is using, the same information and data are used, alleviating two major support frustrations: a customer having to repeat their story over and over again, and being told different things by different support people.

Delivering the experience that your customers are demanding

There are many ways in which AI techniques are delivering the experience your customers are looking for. They're helping:

- **Improve self-service quality:**
  With NLP and text analytics, the true nature of the query is better understood, and you're more likely to get an answer that resolves the issue. Over time, ML learns which questions are most common, which content is most effective. The system gets smarter as it goes along.

- **Route queries to the team best equipped to answer it:**
  With NLP and text analytics, you can invite your customers to tell you in their own words what problem they're having or what information they're looking for, and make sure that they end up in the hands of those best able to help them. ML provides an assist here as well. It learns over time which reps have the best track record when it comes to solving certain types of issues – or succeeding with angry customers.

- **Upskill your call center reps:**
  Just as AI helps improve the caliber of your self-service platform, and more effectively routes queries, it can also expand the ability of your call center reps to answer difficult questions more knowledgably, authoritatively, and rapidly.

- **Personalize the user experience:**
  NLP and text analytics let you look across all your customer interactions and let you get to know them – not just their transaction history, but the behavioral patterns and traits. ML learns individual user preferences and uses like-user behavior to make "smarter" recommendations that are more likely to result in customer satisfaction.

The result? A customer experience that's high on customer satisfaction and low on customer dissatisfaction. And for the Age of the Customer, that's what it's all about. ∎

About Attivio

The choice of Fortune 1000 and Global 2000 companies, Attivio delivers intelligent answers and insights that enable companies to answer the most complex questions asked by their employees, customers, and support teams. Attivio's cognitive search and insight solutions provide immediate insight into a business's data, and feature industry-leading capabilities such as structured and unstructured data aggregation, natural language processing, machine learning, analytics, and knowledge graphing. To learn more about Attivio, visit **www.attivio.com**.

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Amp Up Your Contact Center with Workforce Engagement

You are probably already familiar with workforce optimization (WFO). WFO aims to improve the staffing, efficiency and quality of contact centers. But lately, you may have heard a new term—workforce engagement.

Workforce engagement builds on WFO to empower employees to be their best. Your call center agents aren't robots that you can schedule and move like chess pieces. They are real humans with feelings, personal lives, and career goals. When your employees are at their best, they can give your customers the experience they deserve, and transform your contact center into a customer engagement center.

So what's the difference between WFO and workforce engagement? Here are five key differentiators that extend the business value of workforce engagement beyond WFO:

1. Knowledge management and AI make the hard things simpler.

Contact centers have seen a dramatic rise in the complexity of issues. Not only are products and services more complex, but now most simple questions never reach the contact center and are handled through self-service. This means that almost every incoming customer issue is difficult—and often your agents don't have the tools to respond easily.

Workforce engagement provides knowledge management, giving agents a single place to find answers to questions. By understanding your customers—including what they are saying and the products they use—you can automatically present the right knowledge without even searching.

2. Workforce engagement is all about modern technology.

Too many contact centers are trapped in the past. Call center agents use modern apps to buy groceries and book travel but are stuck with slow legacy technology at work. Agents often have to switch between different screens and manually copy/paste information. Modern organizations use a unified desktop to give agents a single place to work instead.

Another way to modernize the employee experience is through mobile options. Today's employees want a flexible environment where they can easily use tools such as mobile apps to see their schedules, swap shifts, submit time-off requests, and more.

3. Workforce engagement is made for millennials.

The millennial generation makes up a large part of our workforce today. Millennials bring a different set of skills to the workplace that workforce engagement solutions take advantage of, including:

- Preference to look things up rather than memorize information.
- Ability to interact easily on social media and messaging channels.
- Need for modern technology and interfaces to perform efficiently.
- Desire for transparency around goals and performance.
- Preference for a flexible work environment.
- Need for meaningful work as opposed to monotony.

By meeting the expectations of millennials, you can create an environment that gets the most out of this large segment of your workforce.

4. Robots can automate repetitive tasks.

We use robotics and automation to vacuum our floors, order our groceries, and even drive our cars. Workforce engagement brings the benefits of automation and robotics to the call center. Automation gets tasks done faster, and with fewer errors. And what's more, when these tasks are automated, agents are freed up to handle the tasks that need a human touch.

Another way to add automation in the contact center is through automated quality management. Currently, most contact centers score less than 1 percent of their calls for quality purposes. By automating this process, you have a complete picture of your customer service quality and a fairer evaluation of each employee's performance.

5. Workforce engagement puts your employees first.

Everyone wants happy customers, but how do you actually get them? In most cases, a positive customer experience will require an employee to create it. As self-service grows in popularity, our chances to have a human connection with customers are decreasing, placing more importance on creating a positive outcome with each interaction. This is why workforce engagement focuses on your employees. There is no path to happy, satisfied customers that does not include engaged, empowered employees.

Workforce engagement brings WFO together with new capabilities to enhance contact center efficiency and cultivate customer and employee engagement more effectively.
To learn more, visit: **www.verint.com/workforceengagement**

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