Inside: iQor's Strategic Solutions Series

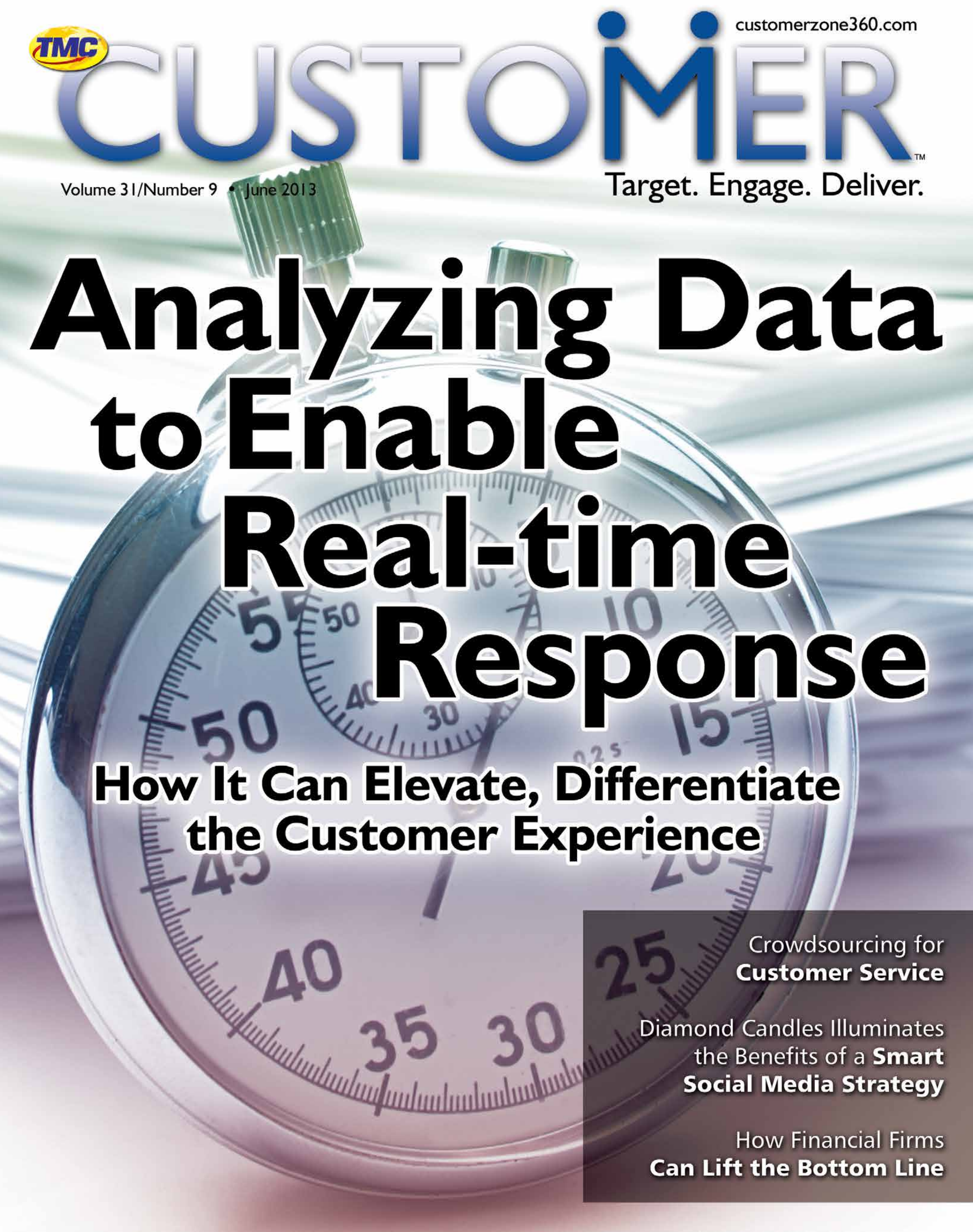
customerzone360.com

TMC

CUSTOMER™

Target. Engage. Deliver.

Volume 31/Number 9 • June 2013



Analyzing Data to Enable Real-time Response

How It Can Elevate, Differentiate the Customer Experience

Crowdsourcing for **Customer Service**

Diamond Candles Illuminates the Benefits of a **Smart Social Media Strategy**

How Financial Firms **Can Lift the Bottom Line**

Leave them smiling every time.

Personalize and enhance your customers' experiences through real-time variable scripting to create stronger connections.

By combining data from our consumer database, and our innovative **Inscription** technology, we can tailor scripts before the call even begins. And seamless, real-time script updates can also be made as information is gathered, further personalizing the call.

Why wouldn't you want to provide the best experience every time?

- Enhance long-term donor/customer loyalty
- Increase response rate
- Strengthen your brand
- Increase ROI

Give us a call to find out how Inscription can work for you.

Download our Inscription case study at: infocision.com/companyinfo/resources

YOUR TRUSTED CALL CENTER PARTNER
InfoCision
SINCE 1982

InfoCision

YOUR STRATEGIC
DIRECT MARKETING PARTNER

Contact Us at:
330.670.4777 / www.infocision.com

Rich Tehrani,
CEO, TMC

NextPrinciples Looks to Simplify Social Customer Interactions

Love it or hate it, social media has to be embraced by companies that are interested in communicating with their customers where they spend an increasing amount of their time. Yet scaling social media interactions is truly challenging. A company called NextPrinciples is looking to simplify the complexity of integrating social into your company with its Insight-To-Action Platform.

When I asked Ted Sapountzis, head of marketing and product management with the company, what pains the company eliminates for customers, he told me his company provides them with a unique platform which integrates analytics, listening, monitoring and engagement. Moreover he explained that customers can learn the system in one hour. He then walked me through how it works, and it is certainly a powerful solution with lots of functionality. Let's just say I'd allocate a bit more than 60 minutes for training to be safe.

The company was founded in 2010 and has eight employees – many of whom worked at SAP. Its platform integrates with Salesforce, SugarCRM, and Microsoft in the CRM space. The goal of the offering is to allow companies to provide their customers a consistent cross-channel experience.

One area of differentiation is that the product can tell you how many leads from social networks are actually converting into sales. One wonders in amazement at organizations that spend large amounts of money to generate Facebook likes. Do they have software that shows them that likes turn into sales? Perhaps they are using Insight-To-Action.

One area of differentiation is that the product can tell you how many leads from social networks are actually converting into sales.

An interesting feature on the company's road map is predictive analytics that can be used to determine a product's success in the market based on the social love it receives. This seems like a fantastic way to test-market new product launches without actually even having to manufacture a product or develop a service.

Such testing is done at car shows when Ford, GM or others launch a concept vehicle and gauge reaction. At some point every company can do the same thing.

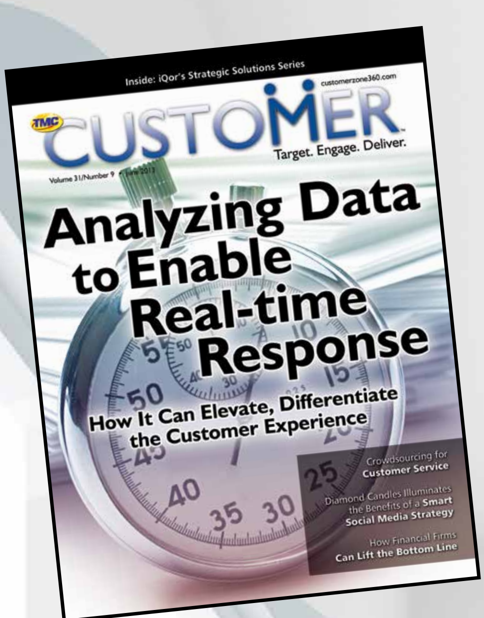
NextPrinciples is focusing on socially mature companies and has a focus on the following scenarios: crisis management, management of large numbers of accounts through a simple interface, and marketing events.

Ted took me through a demo of how a company can track keywords and conversations relating to an event like a conference and then delve into what is being said and by whom. The system can further add the new contacts into your CRM system. From there you can create CRM service tickets and assign tasks to teams and monitor workflow.

As social interactions, and scaling to meet the needs of large numbers of customers, become more important, solutions like the Insight-To-Action Platform from NextPrinciples seem to make a lot of sense. The company tells me the platform offers user-based pricing determined by features and data volume.

JUNE 2013 • VOLUME 31, ISSUE 9

INSIDE



On the Cover

SUBSCRIBE FREE Today!

INSIDE Every Issue

Sections & Series

TABLE OF CONTENTS • AD INDEX

To receive free information from our premium advertisers, please visit freeinfo.tmcnet.com.

CUSTOMER

Executive Group Publisher and Editor-in-Chief
Nadji Tehrani (nadjitehrani@tmcnet.com)

Group Publisher
Richard Tehrani (rtehrani@tmcnet.com)

EDITORIAL
Group Editorial Director, **Erik Linask** (elinask@tmcnet.com)
Executive Editor, **Paula Bernier** (pbernier@tmcnet.com)

TMC™ LABS
203-852-6800 (tmclabs@tmcnet.com)
Executive Technology Editor/CTO/VP, **Tom Keating**

ART
203-852-6800 (cisart@tmcnet.com)
Associate Vice President of Creative, **Alan Urkawich**
Graphic Designer, **Lisa A. Mellers**
Production Manager, **Stephanie Thompson**

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS:
Nadji Tehrani, *Chairman and Founder*
Richard Tehrani, *Chief Executive Officer*
Dave Rodriguez, *President*
Michael Genaro, *Executive Vice President of Operations*
Tom Keating, *VP, CTO and Executive Technology Editor/SEO Director*

ADVISORY BOARD: Lori Bocklund of Strategic Contact, Steve Brubaker of InfoCision, Charles Ciarlo of Monet Software Inc., Rodney Kuhn of Envision, and Joe Staples of Interactive Intelligence

CUSTOMER® magazine is published monthly except during February & August by Technology Marketing Corporation, 800 Connecticut Ave 1st Fl. East, Norwalk, CT 06854-1628.

To Subscribe, Call: 203-852-6800

Or write to the circulation director at hjuden@tmcnet.com. Subscription rates: Digital Subscriptions free for qualified U.S., Canadian and Foreign subscribers. Print Subscriptions free for qualified subscribers in the U.S.A. only. For non-qualified U.S.A. subscribers, $59. All Canadian subscribers, $89. All Foreign (air mail), $109. All orders are payable in advance in U.S. dollars drawn against a U.S. bank. Connecticut residents add applicable sales tax.

Circulation Director, **Helen Juden** (hjuden@tmcnet.com)

Postmaster: Send address changes to CUSTOMER magazine, Technology Marketing Corporation, River Park 800 Connecticut Ave. 1st FL., Norwalk, CT 06854-1628 U.S.A. Canada Post: Publications Mail Agreement #40612608 Canada Returns to be sent to: Pitney Bowes International, P. O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2, CANADA

Reader Input: CUSTOMER encourages readers to contact us with their questions, comments and suggestions. Send e-mail (addresses above), contact our Web site (www.customerzone360.com) or send mail.

We reserve the right to edit letters for clarity and brevity. All submissions will be considered eligible for publication unless otherwise specified by the author.

Reprints: For authorized reprints of articles appearing in CUSTOMER, please contact The YGS Group, 717-505-9701 or 800-501-9571 x105, tmcnet@theYGSgroup.com.

Lists: For list rentals, please contact Jill Olsen at JOlsen@listincorporated.com or call 914-765-0700 x 105.

ADVERTISING SALES: 203-852-6800
Karl Sundstrom, ext. 119 (ksundstrom@tmcnet.com)
Vice President Business Development

EXHIBIT SALES: 203-852-6800
VP of Events, **Joe Fabiano** (jfabiano@tmcnet.com)
Sr. Director of Global Events
Maureen Gambino (mgambino@tmcnet.com)
Event Account Director,
Nikki Pradella (npradella@tmcnet.com)

Editorial Offices are located at River Park 800 Connecticut Ave. 1st FL., Norwalk, CT 06854-1628 U.S.A. **Customer Service:** for all customer service matters, call 203-852-6800.

CUSTOMER® magazine has been the voice of the industry since 1982. It is written by industry practitioners for industry practitioners and is regarded worldwide as the "Bible" of the industry.

A Technology Marketing Publication
River Park 800 Connecticut Ave 1st Fl.
Norwalk, CT 06854-1628 U.S.A.
Phone: 203-852-6800 Fax: 203-295-3773

ANGLE

Paula Bernier,
Executive Editor

Avoid Getting Bitten by the Summer Bug; Meet Generation C

It's summertime. For me, a desert dweller, that means checking my shoes for scorpions and taking extra care to avoid rattlesnakes when I'm hiking. But summer also has its high points.

For me, like many others, summertime means taking a vacation. And for some, my family being no exception, the season signals more time with the kids.

For contact centers, that translates into scheduling challenges.

But Rajeev Venkat, director of solutions marketing at Verint, says that can be easily managed with the right tools and a bit of advanced planning.

(And by that, I mean contact center management – not scorpion and rattlesnakes.)

While for some industries summertime means demands on contact centers are relatively light, other verticals such as travel and leisure may actually see a lot of contact center action during this time of year.

To prepare for seasonal variability, Venkat suggests contact centers take the following three steps:

- have a plan and the right tools in place;
- leverage home-based agents when needed; and
- call on people within the larger organization with similar skill sets.

Companies can plan for contact center workers' vacation times in advance by seeking time off requests, inputting them into a workforce management tool, and approving vacation requests either as they come in from agents or based on other parameters, such as agent performance. A performance management system can track certain KPIs, and the company can give agents that are the best performers first dibs on vacation time or preferences for particular shifts, says Venkat.

Organizations may also want to consider calling on home-based agents to fill staffing gaps. Venkat notes that such workers, who sometimes require more flexibility in scheduling, can easily be worked into the mix by WFM software. These systems can also enable remote agents to access the schedule to see when the contact center is overstaffed or understaffed going forward so they can think about when best to plan vacations or when to communicate their availability for a particular work opportunity.

Finally, Venkat suggests that organizations could make better use of folks in other parts of their business by calling on them to help with the contact center when they're not otherwise occupied. For example, he says, people with a similar skill as those in the contact center may be working at a bank branch. During less busy times at the bank, those individuals could be pulled in as remote contact center agents.

And now for something completely different.

I was recently talking to Dennis DeGregor, worldwide CRM executive at HP, who is selling the idea of Generation C, and how to parse and cater to it.

While Baby Boomers, Millenials and Gen Xers are identified by their year of birth, Gen C is a "psychographic" definition based on lifestyle, explains DeGregor. The C in Gen C stands for connected, so Gen C transcends all age groups, although it is more concentrated among younger folks, who tend to be more tech savvy, he says. DeGregor adds that there are various subsets within Gen C.

The bottom line to this whole discussion, DeGregor says, is that companies can ask customers for their online personas by adding entry options for such information in their online forms. That way, HP can identify those personas in Twitter streams, Facebook communications, and the like, and based on that HP can do content analysis to understand what those end users are saying and whether those individuals are considered influential in various online circles. And that can enable HP and its customers to identify different communications and decide how best to communicate with them and target them with new offers and campaigns.

DeGregor notes that research offers mixed messages on whether people in social networking situations want to be sold to. Some reports say they don't, but other data shows that 60 percent of people who are surfing social sites are looking for discounts on products. And, DeGregor says, research shows that people who participate in communications based on platforms like Jive and Lithium buy three to four times as much online as non-community participants.

In any case, HP believes that the ideal way to approach Gen C is to build trust by acting as a subject matter expert by providing links to address inquiries and/or recommending users visit other blogs they might find of interest. Once they've earned trust, he says, those businesses are positioned to deliver those end users product offers.

Analyzing Data to Enable Real-time Response

How It Can Elevate, Differentiate the Customer Experience

The Internet and smartphone boom have made customers expect quick results from the companies with which they do business. And now CRM and voice of the customer solutions are coming together to allow businesses to not only be more responsive, but to be more proactive – and quicker – about it. This requires not only that organizations collect and analyze customer input quickly, but that they get that information to the right employees so they can immediately move to improve the customer experience.

Customer research traditionally has been about influencing strategy, a longer-term type of effort; meanwhile, CRM is typically more operational and tends to focus on serving specific customers, says Andrew McInnes, director of product marketing at Allegiance. Recognizing that customer research was not delivering the results it could, companies began working to provide businesses with tools that allow them to do some CRM-like activities and to quickly leverage data to do customer inventions when needed.

"This stuff is not just touchy feely, this stuff is operationally important," adds Chris Cottle, CMO at voice of the customer solutions provider Allegiance.

Cottle says such solutions on this front can enable businesses to make a thousand decisions a day vs. one big decision a year. It's early days for this kind of thing, he adds, but these solutions are in use by a couple dozen forward-thinking businesses.

Michelle de Haaff, vice president of marketing at Medallia, offers a great example of how this kind of thing has been put in practice.

Weight loss company Medifast earlier this year began leveraging real-time customer feedback so it can reach out to customers who have expressed they are less than satisfied with the company. This capability is powered by Medallia's SaaS-based, real-time customer feedback solution, which continuously asks for customer feedback via surveys sent to customers' mobile phones, through QR code signs at retail locations, and other methods. If a customer expresses a negative response to Medifast survey questions, in either scorings or in text replies, the Medallia system sends an alert to the Medifast Customer Client Team, which contacts customers via the contact center or another channel to resolve the issue.

Medallia says that Medifast has already seen a return on the solution. For example, de Haaff notes, one unhappy customer was identified, so Medifast's contact center called that customer to offer a solution. That customer just so happened to be a reporter at a major TV news outlet who said he was planning on writing a blog trashing Medifast, but as a result of the proactive outreach and offer to solve the problem, he became a Medifast brand advocate. This could have turned into a United-breaks-guitars kind of situation, says de Haaff, but instead it yielded positive results.

"The contact center [can] be a differentiator if armed with the right information, that's information relevant to the people there, based on actions they can take to improve" the customer experience, says de Haaff of Medallia, whose solutions are also in use by such major brands as Four Seasons, Gold's Gym, Sephora, Sony, and Verizon.

But the call center doesn't necessarily have to be part of the mix.

For example, a hotel using Medallia might receive customer input that the lobby is dirty, so the manager or head of housekeeping could deploy personnel to clean the lobby right away, de Haaff says. Medallia's system provides role-specific views so that the data that's analyzed always pertains to the viewer's domain. That way everyone from the vice president of customer

Time is of the Essence

By Paula Bernier

KANA CMO James Norwood says organizations need to think about customer experience holistically rather than in piece parts. KANA understands the context of individuals based on their history and everything they've done, even in real time, he says, and it can enable its business customers to use that information to make the right moves at the right time.

For example, if a person is on a website perusing smartphones, KANA can see that and enable a wireless service provider or other smartphone supplier to launch a chat after a certain amount of time or push that individual a document suggesting three smartphones he or she should consider. The company could also reach out to the visitor via other channels, like the contact center, where that makes sense.

KANA in April debuted the next generation of KANA Enterprise, which the company says was the biggest launch in its history. With this release of KANA Enterprise, which is available via the cloud or as an on-premises solution, the company's case management, self service, social analytics and social listening modules now talk to one another. Among the companies using the full suite of KANA solutions are European airline easyJet and financial services company Western Union.

Companies can also differentiate the customer experience they offer by helping repeat customers who call in to the contact center get expedited and personalized attention, says Mark Langanki, executive vice president of operations and engineering at Spanlink Communications, a systems integrator delivering Cisco products.

One way they can do that is through the use of dynamic IVRs, Langanki says.

For example, if a customer is buying a house, the bank knows he or she has been sending a lot of online forms, so the contact center can flag that customer so it can respond in a way that makes sense to that individual. Perhaps the contact center IVR could respond to his call (recognized by phone number) with the greeting "Hi Mark, Are you calling about mortgages?" That way, Mark doesn't have to sit through the IVR options to get where he wants to go.

"That gets the customer to feel like stuff is being done for him," says Langanki.

As an aside, Langanki mentions that while many contact centers use tools to measure agent performance, it's uncommon to measure the customer experience. However, tools from companies like Convergys now allow companies to leverage real-time and/or post-call analytics to assess the customer experience and address how to improve it.

service to the service agent has an informed view of the customer experience data.

Analytics has been a stronghold of IT and less available to other departments such as the contact center, marketing, or sales groups, says John Joseph, vice president of product marketing at Lavastorm Analytics. What we're seeing now, however, is analytics getting pushed out to people in all parts of the business, he says, adding that new, easy to use tool are enabling that to happen.

Syed Hasan, president and CEO of ResponseTek, a customer experience management business, agrees. In fact, the company this spring unveiled ResponseTek Mobile, so that any user, from frontline employees to executives, can from their mobile devices access results dashboards, real-time survey results and key performance indicators relative to customer experience.

"We wanted to put the voice of the customer into the pocket of every employee," says Hasan.

The solution, he adds, is "very Twitteresque" because every time a customer weighs in, employees get a buzz and have the ability to view the feedback. Employees also get details on customer feedback related to the specific transactions with which they were personally involved. Additionally, companies can leverage the overall ResponseTek solution to gather customer feedback and use that information to not only allow individual employees to respond but to help better understand training needs, store performance, and other metrics within an organization.

Esteban Kolsky, a former Gartner analyst who now runs his own research firm called Thinkjar, says we're experiencing a fundamental shift in how we do knowledge management. We're moving away from knowledge in stores and toward putting that knowledge to use. That's great news, he says, because once you store knowledge it decays almost immediately. However, getting information out quickly to the right communities can result in companies reacting in ways that are actually relevant to customer issues.

VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

Elaine Cascio

Five Ways to Rev up Your Customer Experience

I often talk about strategic projects that help understand and improve customer experience. But many of you just want to know how you can improve your customers' experiences today without spending a lot of time and money. Here are a few places to look for customer experience gold.

1. Deal with failure better.

How companies deal with a problem can make or break a relationship. Evaluate how successful you are at managing failure by tracking customer behavior after customers have an issue with your company. Do they run for the hills, or do they buy again? Does their purchasing fall off, indicating that maybe they're buying from your competition? Do you receive angry e-mails, or are they Tweeting about the failure?

My niece dropped her month-old iPad on the street, and when she went to the Apple Store, they replaced it right then and there. Apple gained a customer for life. Now most customers don't expect to get a replacement iPad, but they do expect quick resolution and to be treated in a respectful, courteous way. Train reps to take responsibility and make things right for the customer. Don't bog them down in process and procedure to the point that you jeopardize the customer relationship. Give them some latitude – if my lawn mower isn't repaired when you promised, offer me a loaner for the weekend, and offer to drop it off.

2. Treat first-time customers like gold.

In a recent brand loyalty survey by Clickfox, 48 percent of respondents said that the most critical time for a company to gain their loyalty was when they make their first purchase or begin service. Make a point of welcoming new customers, offering discounts or coupons, or educating them in ways to use your service, for example. Train agents to recognize new customers and make them feel special. As far as I'm concerned, you should treat all your customers like gold, but making the extra effort with new customers can garner a huge return in repeat business and loyalty.

3. Connect the dots.

One of the complaints we've heard ever since the advent of customer service is "Why don't you know about the promotion I'm calling for?" Communication is key to understanding the totality of the customer experience, and there's no excuse for not connecting the dots in this age of hyper communication. Make sure the contact center is on the radar for sales and marketing – and approach this relationship as a partnership in customer experience excellence. Use all the tools available to share information – anything from quick briefings to setting up internal LinkedIn or Facebook pages where marketing can share a promotion that's scheduled to hit in a week, for example. Don't make your customers the victims of your poor internal communications.

4. Little things still matter.

We all aim for the wow factor in the customer experience, but customers truly appreciate the little things as well. At Zappos, the customer loyalty team sends handwritten cards to customers for special events or sends flowers if they know a customer bought shoes for a special occasion. Similarly, Southwest sends me a birthday card and free drink coupons every year. It's a small thing, but it always makes me smile.

5. Improve your short-term memory.

How irritating is it to enter your account number and identify your problem in an IVR only to have a rep ask for your account number "and what can I help you with today?" There are numerous ways to accomplish passing customer ID to reps – via screen pop, displaying information on a phone set, or even whispering it before the call is transferred. In many cases, it's not a technology problem, but a training and compliance issue. I've frequently spoken to reps who claim that they can't trust the data they receive, or say that it's just as easy (obviously for them) to ask the caller. Make sure reps know what data they get with a call and that they actually use it.

With multi-channel environments, we're also challenged to remember what customers were doing on a mobile app, on the web, or on Twitter or Facebook 15 minutes ago. What are you doing to ensure that your multi-channel experience is seamless for customers?

Elaine Cascio is a vice president at Vanguard Communications Corp. (www.vanguard.net), a consulting firm specializing in customer experience, self service, contact center processes, operations and technology.

ART OF THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Art Rosenberg

Look To Cloud Services for Mobile Customer Needs

Let's face it, mobile consumers expect direct access to information and timely notifications, without having to talk to someone first, unless really necessary. And when it comes to notifications, they don't want it to be a phone call, when there are simpler, less intrusive modes of delivery and confirmation through the web.

Finally, when live assistance is needed, there are new, more efficient ways to click for assistance that are more flexible and cost efficient than initiating a PSTN phone call. WebRTC is coming with its browser-based, contextual information that can simplify access to live assistance in a variety of ways.

As I have frequently suggested, migrating to UC capabilities doesn't mean dumping your old telephone systems and call center setups, when they still are functional. However, implementing new, complementary capabilities for your growing mobile customers is a hole that you can start to fill with new technologies. The challenge, of course, is that the technology is still evolving and your IT staff has little or no experience with the new stuff.

VARs, SIs, and consultants will bring the UC pieces together. It has become very apparent that the technology vendors cannot support the ongoing and evolving customized needs of organizations that must now support different needs of mobile customers. As a result, they are all looking for channel partners to take care of client support needs in implementation planning and ongoing management of communication and self-service applications that are cloud based. This is particularly necessary for the huge SMB market that already has little or no IT staff to do the job.

> It has become very apparent that the technology vendors cannot support the ongoing and evolving customized needs of organizations that must now support different needs of mobile customers.

Not only are cloud-based applications less costly to implement and maintain, but they provide an ideal venue to integrate with any existing, premises-based contact center technologies that are still functional. The old telephony call/contact center is transitioning to the multi-modal interaction center that will need cloud services rather than premises-based systems, to support the new generation of mobile consumers.

One of the big changes we are already seeing is the shift from old and very limited IVR applications, based on the telephone user interface, to multimedia and visual self-service application interfaces for mobile devices. Innovative technology developers like Voxeo and Jacada are already doing well with their offerings to wireless service providers that facilitate visual self-service interfaces, that also accommodate simple click-for-assistance options (chat, calls). A long-time service provider for cloud-based contact center applications is Echopass, which has a practical approach to providing the tools for implementing self-service mobile apps. (Read my white paper.)

But they will all need channel partners to do the heavy lifting of implementation and integrations.

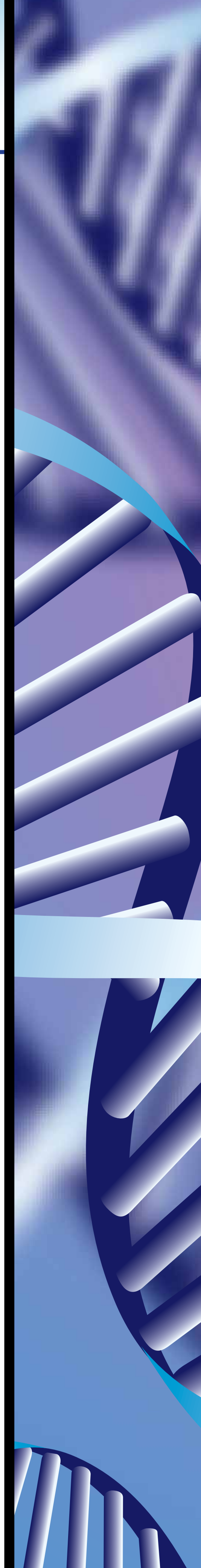
By the time you read this post, I will have given my contact center presentation at the 2013 UC Summit, which is an invited audience of VARs, SIs, and Consultants. I will then be able to report back on their views on supporting contact center functionality for mobile customer services.

Art Rosenberg is a blogger at The Unified View (http://unified-view.blogspot.com) and consultant with UC Strategies (www.ucstrategies.com).

Strategic Solutions series

Understanding Your Customers' DNA

The Key to Intelligent Connections



Featured in:

TMC CUSTOMER

Sponsored by:

iQor

Understanding Your Customers' DNA
The Key to Intelligent Connections

Your contact center can handle hundreds of millions of customer interactions each year. At iQor, we believe each and every one of these calls, emails, chat sessions, and social media responses generates a series of important data points – small but useful clues, like strands of DNA. Utilizing the right digital network, infrastructure, tools, and processes to analyze, innovate and act, today's advanced contact centers can assemble these strands to help organizations develop a deeper understanding of their customers and, in turn, connect with and delight them more intelligently.

CONTACT CENTERS: BIG DATA GENERATING MACHINES

Just a few years ago, only a handful of iQor's current processes were in use. iQor pioneered the digitization of the contact center with its proprietary technology platform, teQ21. Advancements in this platform have enabled us to not only record 100 percent of calls and screen interactions across all channels, but also segment and categorize the terabytes of structured and unstructured data sets that hide within them. iQor's expertise in Big Data analytics allows contact centers to take advantage of the patterns that reside in the millions of recorded client interactions and use that information to improve customer connections.

IQOR CENTER FOR APPLIED ANALYTICS

We established the iQor Center for Applied Analytics to help our clients decode their customers' DNA and gain valuable insights not available through traditional data capture. Our team of data scientists collaborates with our clients to transform data into actionable insights that drive profitability, improve efficiency, and enhance customer satisfaction.

FOUR KEY STEPS TO CREATING CUSTOMER INSIGHTS

If you want to use Big Data to understand your customers' DNA, you should follow these four key steps:

Step 1: Develop the Right Data Infrastructure

Before you can understand customer DNA, you need a Big Data technology infrastructure. Your data platform doesn't need to be costly: you can use off-the-shelf servers and open-source software. But, you must configure your platform to manage all of your data – structured and unstructured – to accommodate both scalability and immediate, on-demand access for your business applications and business users.

Step 2: Identify Your Data Sources

The more data sources you can incorporate into your Big Data platform, the better. You can start with data from structured, in-house sources but to drive new insights, you need sources that may not be immediately available or easily corralled. Your goal should be to combine these unstructured, harder-to-capture data (voice recordings, social media stream, consumer demographics, etc.) with the structured data (from operational databases) to make the breakthrough connections that maximize insight into your clients' needs.

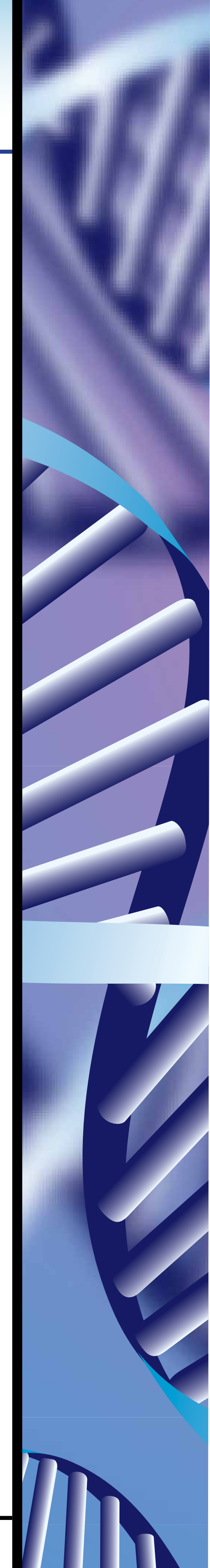
Step 3: Make Data Scientists Fundamental to Your Operations

The next step in the Big Data transformation process is enlisting data scientists who have the technical skills necessary to navigate your big data universe. Proven data scientists are an increasingly scarce commodity, but they will have the business acumen and analytical ability to develop hypotheses, generate results, uncover trends, and decode even your most complex customers' DNA. These scientists may be in high demand right now, but without their expertise, you won't unlock the wealth of information hidden within your data.

Step 4: Continuously Adapt and Evolve Your Data, Platform, and Strategy

Without this last step, you may still improve your reactive problem solving, but neither your data nor your Big Data platform will become a strategic investment. With every measurable success that you achieve through Big Data, you must reinvest in your platform, teams, and Big Data processes. The algorithms, data relationships, and analytical results that help you decode your customers' DNA today won't necessarily work next year or even next quarter. So your technology choices, cross-functional teams, and analytical implementations must be not only agile, but proactively, periodically calibrated to keep pace with – or better yet, stay ahead of – your customers' changing needs and behaviors relative to your products and services.

Our advice to contact center leaders is to start building your Big Data capabilities today, before your competitors know more about your customers than you do. And know that you don't have to go it alone: if you need data-driven, technology-empowered contact center solutions and a strong competitive edge, iQor can help you today.



Do You Know Your Customers' DNA

Optimize Your Customer Interactions

iQor is a global provider of **intelligent customer interaction** and **outsourcing solutions**. Our 17,000 employees handle millions of customer contacts each day for the world's most well known brands. Each type of communication yields a series of important data points – clues, like DNA strands, to better understand and optimize your customer interactions. The iQor Center for Applied Analytics converts Big Data into actionable insights by helping you better understand your Customers' DNA.

www.iQor.com

iQor

EDIT SERIES

Alan D. Percy

Phone or No Phone? The UC Debate

I participated in an interesting and animated discussion during the opening night of this most recent Lync Conference in Toronto Canada that started with "Is the desktop phone doomed?"

First, let's clarify that there are situations where phones are mandatory for public safety reasons – school class rooms, elevators, emergency call stations, hotel pools and other spaces that are required by either building or fire codes. Phones are expected items in conference rooms, shared office space locations, unstaffed lobbies and similar locations.

Given that, all those involved in the discussion agreed that for some business roles, it is clearly now possible to work in a Lync-client and headset-only mode, freeing up desk space that would otherwise be consumed by a desk phone. However the conversation got interesting when the question of costs got engaged. "Is it less expensive to eliminate the phone?"

So we did a set of back-of-the-cocktail-napkin computations for a desktop phone and wired headset, calculating both the capex and the annual opex, assuming the phone would last 5 years and the wired headset would need to be replaced every six months (they do break and wear out):

	CAPEX	OPEX
Typical desk phone with Power over Ethernet	$200	$40/year
Average to good quality wired headset for an IP phone	$50	$100/year
Totals	**$250**	**$140/year**

If instead, we buy every employee a Lync-compatible wired headset only (no IP phone) and assume the headset would need to be replaced every six months:

	CAPEX	OPEX
Average to good quality wired Lync-compatible headset	$100	$200/year

Things get more interesting if you add a Bluetooth headset to the mix – as personal experience has taught me that they get lost, left at home, batteries die and accidentally get worn in the shower (don't ask). Expect two Bluetooth headsets/person/year. Also, because of the battery life issue, a Bluetooth headset cannot be your only headset, so we assumed each user would also get one wired headset for the desk that would be replaced once a year.

	CAPEX	OPEX
High quality Lync-compatible Bluetooth headset	$200	$400/year
Average to good quality wired Lync-compatible headset	$100	$100/year
Totals	**$300**	**$500/year**

What does this tell us?

Over the long haul, an IP phone with a wired headset is the most cost effective due to lower opex costs. It also says that today, the convenience of a hands-free Bluetooth office is expensive. Surely the costs for Lync-compatible headsets will come down over time, but for the near term, Lync compatibility will make them more expensive than the more popular RJ-11 run-of-the-mill phone-only headsets.

What's a reasonable compromise that businesses can follow?

There is a reasonable expectation to provide employees with the most cost-effective solution (an IP phone and wired headset), but enables employees to BYOD for the Bluetooth headsets. This ensures employees have what is needed to do their work (a phone and headset), but puts the expensive part that gets lost/broken/left at home/worn in the shower (the Bluetooth headset) on their dime – encouraging that they keep track of it.

Meanwhile, I need to get into the habit of checking my ear before jumping in the shower.

The phone or no-phone debate will go on for some time, until then, do share your thoughts and feedback.

Alan D. Percy is senior director of marketing at AudioCodes. You can reach Alan at: alan.percy@audiocodes.com

by Joshua Gordon

A Custom B2B approach

InfoCision's BAM Model is Ramping up the Growth of its Business Services Division

While InfoCision's roots lie in nonprofit fundraising, the company has made major inroads over the last decade serving commercial businesses in a range of industries, including consumer services, telecommunications and media.

EDITORIAL SERIES

In the last four years, InfoCision has developed a customized model for its Business Services Division, the horizontal business-to-business unit that serves all of InfoCision's vertical industry groups. The Business Account Manager model, or BAM, was developed in response to a growing realization within InfoCision's Business Services division that the model it was using to serve its business-to-business accounts was essentially the same one used to serve its business-to-consumer accounts and some fine-tuning was necessary.

A client-centered, customized B2B approach

It was becoming increasingly evident that a more sophisticated, custom-tailored approach was needed to help InfoCision's B2B unit grow more quickly.

Early on, we started to see that doing B2B with a B2C model wasn't the most effective way to do business in the B2B world. We also started to realize that you can't just use your typical call center solution – B2C agents and predictive-dialer technologies – in a B2B capacity. So we developed the BAM model to address that problem.

What sets InfoCision's BAM model apart from the rest of operations is the fact that it employs high-caliber sales agents with extensive sales pipeline management experience. BAM agents are tasked with cultivating relationships within the targets in their book of business, while in a B2C model and a typical call-center approach; it's more of a one-touch approach, in the form of a call, a close, a sale or a donation.

Another key aspect that sets InfoCision's model apart is the amount of time invested by the BAM agents in cultivating the business of each client.

Building a relationship in the B2B space takes time. You need to call and talk to the gatekeeper first; you need to warm up that gatekeeper and ultimately get that person to give you some information about the decision-maker. Then you call back maybe the next day and talk to the decision-maker, and he or she may tell you to call back next week. It's always the same BAM agent making these calls. It's the BAM's record; they own it.

Agents are given the tools and they have the ability to cultivate those relationships and ultimately get what they need from the contact. InfoCision acknowledges that this is a slower process, but the key is the development of the relationship with the client's customer.

Highly trained personnel make the difference

InfoCision bases its value proposition with clients on return on investment, and the company believes that its BAM agents drive that return. Thus, the company regards its highly trained, commission-driven sales experts as its most important asset. More than 60 percent of them have four-year college degrees, and they are hand selected to ensure they have the appropriate skills and experience to succeed. The company looks for individuals with an extensive background in sales because it is a difficult skill to teach, and it's more efficient to find someone who is already equipped with that ability.

That's not to say that InfoCision doesn't provide any training. Its in-house training excels at teaching BAM agents the workings of the specific industries and market sectors in which they will specialize. It's their background in sales that matters, not the specific industry. Client-specific and product-specific information can be imparted; sales skills sometimes can be another story. If the company hires an agent who's been successfully selling in the telecom industry for 10 years and it has an opportunity in the pharma industry, it has found success in crossing people over into different industry types and training them.

Another aspect that distinguishes the model from the typical business-to-consumer call-center approach is that InfoCision encourages its BAM agents to use their own personalized sales styles to cultivate relationships with clients.

Whereas in a B2C call center you have a highly scripted approach, this isn't that. Some of the BAM agents have a more aggressive sales approach, while others are oriented more toward customer service. Ultimately, we want our agents to feel comfortable with their own sales styles and tactics, and they are encouraged to use their own personality characteristics to achieve the desired outcome.

To complement their own sales styles, employees are given the tools they need to succeed – through ongoing training and mentoring. Their deep level of product and client knowledge enhances the value of each call because they are a true extension of the client's brand. They are going to be able to understand what questions to ask and what benefits and needs their product or service have to create that need for the customer. They excel because they are able to connect with the customer from the first phone call.

As long as InfoCision's BAM agents are achieving results, the company gives them wide latitude to go off-script and approach prospective clients in whatever manner they are most comfortable.

If agents are doing really well, they have the freedom to do pretty much their own thing, as long as they're doing it within the boundaries of the program.

But what about agents who are not doing as well?

Providing the tools to succeed

In situations when agents struggle to hit the desired results, they are given the tools that will help them to be successful. Perhaps that might include role-playing or using a more scripted approach. So, for example, by using a script that has been proven successful, they can see what works and how to overcome objections, or how to move through a presentation more effectively. It's key that they are provided with the tools that have been proven successful.

If agents are willing to follow the script and work toward the goals, they usually begin to develop the traits that the company is looking for. However, sometimes B2B sales isn't a good fit, and that's OK.

InfoCision is an organization that is dedicated to a successful team environment and believes a happy employee is a better employee, even if that means moving a team member to a different client or division where they can reach their potential. It's important that everyone is happy and feels comfortable in their roles. If you're not a good B2B agent, that's OK. We can put you in a B2C program, or in a customer service capacity and you can be successful there.

Ultimately, InfoCision attributes the success of the BAM model to its versatility and to the freedom it provides the company's agents to inject their personal styles into the process.

This is not a one-call kind of approach; it's not a call-center solution. It's a multitouch, multichannel solution that enables agents to use their personalities to be successful. That's what drives the success of the program.


Joshua Gordon

Josh Gordon is director of client services at InfoCision Management Corp. InfoCision is a leading provider of contact center solutions for many verticals including direct response, consumer services, B2B, financial services, pharmaceutical and telecommunications, as well as providing inbound and outbound marketing for nonprofit, religious and political organizations. You can reach Josh at Joshua.Gordon@InfoCision.com or visit www.infocision.com

Statistics

For several years, InfoCison has been utilizing the BAM approach for one of the nation's largest telecommunication companies and has been this client's leading vendor in both quality and results. For one particular program, the client was measuring success in terms of monthly reoccurring revenue as it related to the hours spent on the program by our Business Account Managers. The comparison below shows InfoCision's results as compared to the overall average of the three vendors in the footprint.

	MRR Closed/ Hour
InfoCision results	$10.29
Combined Vendor Results	$8.24
% Difference	25%

by Paula Bernier

Shopping for Statistics

Survey Indicates Retail Consumers are Open to New Experiences, But Social's Impact May be Waning

A new study of the retail clothing space by Market Force Information reveals that more consumers are open to trying and buying new brands, most often prompted to do so by sales and promotions. The same study indicates social media may be having a diminishing impact on customer behavior relative to retail decisions.

Janet Eden-Harris

Here are a few stats from the report:

- 39 percent have tried a new retailer in the past three months, an increase from 32 percent in 2011 and 14 percent in 2010;
- H&M, Kohl's and Macy's were the retailers that shoppers tried most for the first time;
- newspaper, TV and magazine ads ranked lowest for getting shoppers into new retail stores;
- consumers were most likely to try a new retailer when shopping for casual clothing (46 percent), business attire (17 percent), evening wear (12 percent), athletic wear (9 percent) and outdoors apparel (8 percent); and
- of those who tried new retailers, 60 percent said they were delighted, and 40 percent said were neutral or negative; and
- nearly half of respondents (42 percent, up from 37 percent in 2011 and 11 percent in 2010) said they use social media to find information about fashion retailers, and 12 percent (up from 7 percent in 2011) said they have posted about a fashion retailer on social media.

To find out more, CUSTOMER magazine recently interviewed Janet Eden-Harris, chief marketing officer for Market Force Information.

What do you consider to be the key takeaways of the study?
Eden-Harris: I think the overall findings point to good news for the fashion industry – new trial is up, to the point where almost four in 10 consumers say they tried a new retailer in the last 90 days. More people self-report as fashionistas vs. minimalists this year, in contrast to our last retail study a year and a half ago. And, 40 percent of customers [who] tried a new retailer were delighted by their experience, and said they were highly likely to return and spend again.

Were there any surprises?
Eden-Harris: I expected to see more of a drop-off for the JCPenney brand, but consumers are reporting about the same level of satisfaction as they had in our previous study. What's more, in the ranking of consumers' favorite retailers, JCPenney came in fifth, exactly the same spot as it did in late 2011. I think that is good news for the brand trying to regain its footing this year with the return of its former CEO.

What could JCPenney be doing better?
Eden-Harris: They lag behind others in their loyalty programs and customer service, based on consumer feedback. Those could be two areas to focus where they could regain consumers' confidence.

Your study talks about social media having a diminishing impact in retail. Explain.
Eden-Harris: We're finding that the influence that social media has on consumers' purchase patterns is leveling off. We'll want to watch this over the next year to see if it's actually in decline, or if it's just indicating a leveling off. As consumers age, the younger generation, [which] is far more invested in social media, will likely have an increasing sway. But, it may not translate into overwhelming purchase behavior changes. We'll want to take a wait-and-see approach with this one.

Why is social media having a diminishing impact now?
Eden-Harris: [I'm] not sure the data tells us, unfortunately.

CUSTOMERS WANT A SIMPLE WAY TO STAY IN TOUCH. BUT SOMETIMES SIMPLE IS SO HARD TO DO.

» inContact gave a leading equipment manufacturer the power to streamline communication with its thousands of dealers in North America. They went from 25 different numbers - each for a different purpose, causing confusion and frustration in their customer base - to just one. The result: a big increase in dealer satisfaction with the bonus of improved metrics. It was so simple - and so easy to do with the cloud.

At inContact, we're the cloud experts, with more happy customers than any other vendor. And as the cloud market leader, you'll get the benefit of our know-how and expertise so you can stop worrying about your technology and focus on taking care of your customers.

Want to make life simpler for your customers? View our new video and learn how the cloud makes managing your contact center easy at www.incontact.com/simplify.

INCONTACT.COM/SIMPLIFY »

inContact®

WE GET THE CLOUD

by Julio Gomez

Don't Leave Money on the Table

360-Degree View Can Offer Financial Lift

In financial services, an efficient sales process is important, but sales effectiveness is even more valuable. Your customer-facing reps have to trudge through system after system to respond to customers or prepare for customer calls. They simply can't win in a competitive environment where firms are arming their reps with next-generation sales enablement platforms. Whether your company gains or loses market share will depend on how effective you make your brokers, agents, and reps – not how efficient (more calls), but how effective (better calls, higher value content).

Currently, the financial services industry is plagued with inefficiencies and ineffective selling practices. Sales representatives work with different information trapped in separate silos, missing the complete view of the customer. Companies with limited views of their customers are unable to maximize relationships, and in turn, end up leaving significant money on the table or losing high-value customers. Like a leaky faucet, these systems seem to work fine, but are a massive drain on enterprise value.

The most successful financial services firms are those with the deepest and most relevant actionable insights into their customers, operations, investments, risks and market trends. But gaining actionable insight takes more than focusing on structured data alone. Today's business breakthroughs require once-unimaginable combinations of structured data (account and transaction information, market and actuarial data), and unstructured content (such as documents, websites, wikis, email, call center logs, social media).

Why has the goal of a 360-degree view of the customer been such a feverishly pursued goal since the dawn of digital information? It's because that enables superior levels of customer acquisition and retention, and increases the overall value of customers as well as a company's value in the marketplace. To achieve this view, transactional and historical data must be included, but so should feelings, concerns and preferences, expressed in customer communications made directly with the company and online.

This approach requires a comprehensive unified information access platform that offers the maximum possible flexibility in integrating, linking and presenting all types of information, including structured data and unstructured content. Users also benefit greatly from dynamic, real-time recommendations, for more rapid and productive discovery of relevant information. They can also pivot their navigation between facets, exploring different investment approaches, recommendations, ideas, risk profiles, asset allocation models, etc., without having to perform the time-intensive and laborious manual processes that characterizes today's sales research and preparation tasks.

This is Holy Grail stuff. And it's being built right now, bringing together massive amounts of customer information no matter where it comes from, where it lives, or what form it takes, tying all the knowledge together to create a customer experience that is different from other brands and prioritizing new revenue opportunities. The next-generation sales enablement platform has fast, complete access to information for more proactive customer relationship management that maximizes customer acquisition; shortens the length of sales cycle and improves sales productivity by reducing research and prep time; and increases revenue per customer and wallet share through a better ability to market tailored products and services to meet specific customer needs.

A 360-degree view of the customer used to mean seeing all of Joe's accounts. Then the 360-degree circle expanded to mean seeing all the accounts in Joe's household. But the true 360-degree view, the one being built today, expands the circle to encompass everything.

Julio Gomez is general manager of financial services at Attivio (www.attivio.com).

Pronexus Launches New IVR Toolkit

VBVoice 8 is a new IVR toolkit now available for free download from Pronexus. This new release now allows developers to build IVRs using any tablet running a .NET environment, explains Keri Fraser, director of marketing. Enabling users to leverage their touchscreens to do drag-and-drop IVR development introduces a whole new level of ease of use, says Fraser, adding that Pronexus is all about reducing barriers to entry for its solution. VBVoice 8, which supports Windows 8, Visual Studio 12 and Windows Server 2012, is available for free download at the Pronexus website. Free with that are 10 days of support, and two run-time licenses to test IVR creations. The 20-year-old IVR specialist makes its money by selling additional run-time licenses, reselling boards from such companies as Dialogic, and offering speech licenses to allow developers to enable speech recognition on their IVR applications.

Big Data Outfit Raises $10M

Deep Information Sciences, which is led by a deep bench of former Arbor Networks and Ellacoya top brass, in April announced Series A funding and unveiled its DeepDB database. The company has introduced what its leaders say is a new approach to database architecture that addresses performance and scale, and which they report has outperformed existing databases by 10 to 100 times across a wide variety of use cases. Series A investors include Cabletron Co-Founder Robert Levine, Chamberlain & Steward and Alessandro Piol, Robert Davoli, Stage1 Ventures, and a group of angel investors. Deep leaders include Chairman Jack Boyle, former CEO of Arbor Networks; CEO and co-founder Kurt Dobbins, the former CTO of IP services at Arbor Networks and founder of Ellacoya; COO and co-founder Phil Bedard, the former head of operations at Arbor Networks and Ellacoya; CTO and co-founder Jason Jeffords, former vice president of engineering at Integral Access and the architect of Whaleback; Chief Scientist, and Deep database architect Thomas Hazel, who previously served as the chief architect of Akiba and Virtual Iron; and Vice President of Product Management and Strategy Mike Skubisz, former CTO of Cabletron and Pannaway Networks.

Global Telco Calls on TOA

Telefónica, one of the world's largest telecom providers, has selected TOA Technologies as its mobile workforce management solution to manage its worldwide field technician workforce. "Telefónica is committed to providing our global customers with the most innovative products and highest quality service. It was this commitment that guided our strategic decision to evaluate and transform our mobile workforce management strategy towards simpler and more efficient business processes and to select a new technology to support it," said Enrique Blanco, global CTO for Telefónica. "Telefónica is delighted to announce our decision to partner with TOA Technologies as our field service management solution provider. We made this selection not only because their technology is able to scale to our global needs and meet our goals for fast deployment, but also because our vision for a customer-focused field workforce aligns with TOA Technologies' vision for the future of field service."

Xerox Retools

The venerable copier maker recently revealed that its earnings have come in below expectations as it transitions from a manufacturing company to a services company. Xerox's revenue fell by 9 percent to $2.14 billion in the first quarter of 2013. "Europe remains weak. The U.S. remains stable, but weak. We have not seen a pickup in the U.S.," Xerox CEO Ursula Burns said on the earnings conference call with investors. Still, Burns was optimistic about the company's future in the long run, despite flat revenue projections. "We did see a slowdown, a bit of a slowdown, in some developing market economies. But our business model is fairly resilient in the developing markets," she said. This recently ended quarter, the company had a net income of $296 million or 23 cents per share, Burns said Xerox is on track to reach operating cash flow of $2.1 billion to $2.4 billion for the year.

BroadVision Expands Clearvale Capabilities

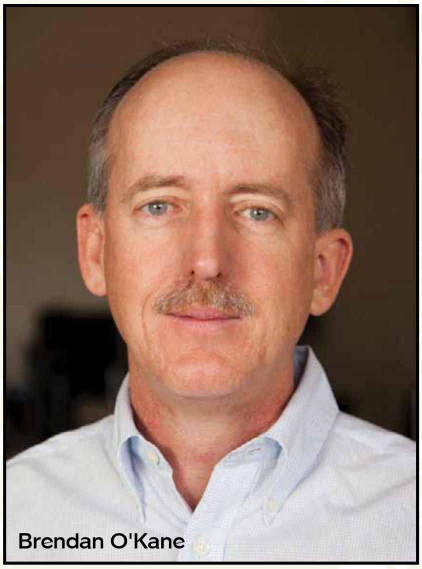
BroadVision Inc. has introduced a new set of features for the Clearvale enterprise social networking platform, which allows organizations to directly engage and conduct interactions on a single network between employees, customers, and partners. New features include enhanced file preview, which allows organizations to change the font size of a document, search the document, or print the document without permitting the file to be downloaded to a computer; a Microsoft SharePoint enhancement that enables files to be shared with a view-only mode in Clearvale, in addition to shared as a link, as copy and as downloadable copy for distribution controls; the capability to hide the history link for a file; and the ability to suppress selected messages in activity streams.

by Brendan O'Kane

Mobile Analytics in Action

The Key to Building Customer Loyalty on Your Mobile App

Picture this: A 22-year-old consumer, who we'll call Joe, loves playing the worldwide smash-hit game Deer Crossing on his iPhone. While mobile-toting consumers spend, on average, about two hours a day using the apps on their devices, Joe spends close to three and a half hours – a lot of which is spent playing this game.


Brendan O'Kane

Thousands of game publishers are vying for Joe's attention, trying to pull him away from Deer Crossing. But Joe is loyal to that app. That's because he's a member of an online mobile loyalty program, which rewards him for his very frequent play with a virtual currency. Using his newly earned currency, Joe can buy real-world rewards such as free music downloads or discounts on gift cards for his favorite clothing store.

How does the loyalty program know to make these particular offers to Joe? First, it uses mobile analytics techniques to measure exactly how Joe interacts with the app and what offers he's most likely to act on based on past redemptions. Then, it uses that information to make future offers that add value to Joe's life and keep him coming back.

In today's cluttered loyalty landscape, that type of messaging analysis is more important than ever.

Helping Loyalty Programs Stand Out

The average American household has 18 loyalty program memberships but is active in only eight of them. Adding to the loyalty clutter, a recent report by the Edgell Knowledge Network revealed that 81 percent of loyalty program members don't know what their rewards are or how they are supposed to redeem them.

If that many loyalty program members are that disconnected from their rewards, it's very likely those customers aren't feeling engaged, or don't find the offered rewards relevant. So, in this kind of loyalty environment, it's necessary to focus on engagement and adding value.

How can companies with loyalty programs accessible through mobile apps differentiate themselves? By using methods such as action analytics, A/B split testing and retargeting for mobile to boost user engagement and conversions by pinpointing exactly which messages are driving redemption rates.

Action analytics collects deep granular data – e.g., number of messages opened, time since last open, and opens resulting in goals such as registrations, purchases or social shares – that links specific message copy to particular user behaviors and outcomes. All of this information can be put together, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, to reveal detailed pictures of individual customers' wants and needs and used to tailor further test message effectiveness.

A/B Split Testing and Retargeting

Using action analytics data, loyalty programs can identify particular audience segments likely to be interested in an offer, sending sample groups two versions of a marketing message to see which drives more positive responses. The winning message of this A/B split test is then pushed out to the wider segments.

However, if marketers want to make sure they haven't missed any opportunity to elicit a redemption, they won't stop here. They retarget, using the previously gathered data to make follow-up messages – be they push notifications, SMS or mobile e-mail – to customers who didn't redeem the offer even more enticing.

For example, a fictional upmarket apparel chain with a loyalty program app might run a split test such as this: From previous interactions, the company knows the segment it's targeting frequently buys items by designer Roberto Rococo. So the chain sends either of these push notifications to a significant sample of that segment:

A. This week only! 25 percent off on ALL ROBERTO ROCOCO shoes with any handbag purchase over $350!

(Message A had a 40 percent open rate and a 20 percent conversion rate. For every 100,000 messages sent, 8,000 led to a redemption.)

B. ROBERTO ROCOCO fans! 25 percent off ALL shoes with any handbag purchase over $350 this week only!

(Message B had 30 percent open rate and a 30 percent conversion rate. For every 100,000 messages sent, 9,000 led to a redemption. Though it had a lower open rate, message B yields better ROI because it had a higher redemption rate – 9 percent vs.8 percent.)

Using action analytics data, loyalty programs can identify particular audience segments likely to be interested in an offer, sending sample groups two versions of a marketing message to see which drives more positive responses.

At each stage of this analytics process, more of the aforementioned jigsaw-puzzle pieces click into place. After the split test, the company uses this better-detailed customer picture to craft more enticing follow-up messages, retargeting customers who didn't open the first message and those who opened it without converting. In this case, 17 percent of retargeted Rococo fans redeem the offer.

The retailer continues to retarget, with each round of pushes yielding further redemptions. That's because it knows that in a rapidly evolving and crowded loyalty environment, it's more challenging than ever to stand out.

As maximum relevance continues to be a key driver for loyalty, programs that utilize action analytics techniques to tailor messaging for individual mobile customers stand to benefit from powerful relevance that can keep customers coming back time and time again. M

Brendan O'Kane is CEO at OtherLevels (www.otherlevels.com), a mobile messaging analytics and retargeting firm.

by Paula Bernier

Diamond Candles Illuminates the Benefits of Smart Social Media Strategy

Diamond Candles is not your grandmother's candle company. The two-year-old home fragrance company sells ecofriendly, jar-encased soy candles with a little something extra. And it does all of its selling online, relying heavily on social networks to promote the brand.

Facebook has been a particularly effective means for Diamond Candles to push its $25 product, which is targeted at mid-market females in the 23- to 55-year-old age range. Diamond Candles, which boasts a quarter million Facebook fans, frequently used Facebook contests to try to boost user engagement. But the company wanted to make sure it was optimizing its promotional efforts on Facebook, so it tapped a company called SumAll to help out, said Justin Winter, co-founder and CEO of Durham, N.C.-based Diamond Candles.

Winter described the SumAll solution as a very easy way review different data sets – like Google Analytics, website information, and activity on Facebook and Twitter – through a single, graphical presentation to gain insights on how activities on different channels affect one another. The alternative, he said, was to run regression analysis on different spreadsheets. SumAll, he explained, enables Diamond Candles to get information on how many people see its Facebook post on a given day, and then look at its sales for the day and see how fluctuations on the social network affected its sales on that day. After signing on with SumAll, Diamond Candles experienced a 10 percent increase in Facebook traffic, customer engagement and sales generation.

That goes against a recent report from Manta, which got a write up in USA Today headlined "Social media a bust for small businesses", saying 61 percent of small businesses aren't getting any positive results from their social media activities, despite a 50 percent increase in their time spent on such activities.

CUSTOMER magazine mentioned this report to Winter, who replied: "I think the problem is that [some] people have no idea what they're doing, to be frank."

For example, he said, a restaurant might launch a website or promotion, but have no real strategy behind it. If people don't know about it, or it has no valuable information once people get there, he indicated, it's tough to get a return on that investment.

Winter added that a couple months after launching its business, Diamond Candles was selling one or two products a day, but that increased as some of its customers took their own photos of the candles (which have rings inside) and shared them via social networking. The photos and videos are fun for the buyers; they help both explain and promote the candles to others; and they drive a lot of revenue to Diamond Candles, he said.

Diamond Candles knew a good thing when it saw it, so it moved to encourage more of the same. It did that by updating the candle labels with a note suggesting that people upload to social media pictures of themselves using their candles and rings. Winter said the effort worked beautifully, driving huge results for the company.

"We do little to no paid acquisition at all," he added. "We only work on word of mouth."

By word of mouth, Winter obviously means not only via in-person interactions, but through social media. And while Winter said that "Facebook has made us who we are today" he added that "I think Instagram and Pinterest are who we are tomorrow."

Recent Pinterest updates have made huge impacts on Diamond Candles' traffic, he said, adding that in the last 60 days it's seen Pinterest traffic surpass its Facebook traffic.

Instagram is like Twitter in that it makes more sense to people, he said, adding that there are between 5,000 and 10,000 Instagram photos each month tagged Diamond Candles.

While home fragrance competitors Glade and Yankee Candles made their names selling traditional products via brick-and-mortar locations, and Scentsy distributes its candles and related products via in-home parties, Diamond Candles aims to build its reputation as the most social-media friendly company in the marketplace and one that delivers a "Zappos-esque high level of customer service."

The company aims to know about any mention of the Diamond Candles brand online anywhere within 5 hours and wants to be able to respond to it within 24 hours. And that's not just for damage control, but to allow it to actively reach out to happy customers. If a customer needs help, said Winter, Diamond Candles can send them FAQs about the product. If the customer says she likes the product, Diamond Candles may send her a "girl-next-store, fun" response.

by Elizabeth Cholawsky

Citrix Renders the Benefits of Multi-channel Support Crystal Clear for Avigilon

Increasingly, what distinguishes you from your competitors is the potent force of service excellence. Savvy service organizations today are looking beyond isolated technology to guarantee maximum uptime and peak operating performance.

Yet, along with an intensifying demand for support, new support needs are emerging that are placing even greater challenges on contact centers to find ways to respond effectively. Customers now want to access support in the exact channel they prefer and have instant resolution to their issues, wherever they may be. The service agent must be always available and more efficient than ever before.

This new era of support technology relies on three keys for success: accommodation of multiple channels – chat as well as phone; creation of efficiencies through integration; and delivering services on demand in the cloud.

Those are exactly the kinds of issues faced by Avigilon.

Named the fastest-growing software company in North America in 2011 and 2012, Avigilon designs and manufactures high-definition surveillance solutions, which include complimentary 24/7 technical support. Its systems monitor and protect retail stores, schools, hospitals, casinos, stadiums and transportation stations across the globe.

Avigilon uses cloud-based Citrix GoToAssist remote support technology, enabling technicians to securely view and assist with clients' computers to deliver fast resolution regardless of technician location. GoToAssist also enables Avigilon to deliver multi-channel options via chat, which can include screen sharing when needed, so clients receive support in the way they prefer.

Clients of Avigilon appreciate the efficiency and speed of accessing remote screensharing from a chat session, especially because many other vendors rely on just the phone. According to Avigilon, its integrators were used to struggling through the process of phone support, where a supplier says, "click on this" or "do that." When clients are in need, they can initiate contact by phone, e-mail or simply click a website button to request a chat session. If support reps need to directly control and view the customer's computer, they can seamlessly escalate the chat session to full screensharing support.

Avigilon estimates that without the Citrix service, issue resolution would take twice as long. Customer satisfaction surveys consistently document that respondents are very happy with Avigilon's support services.

Catering to the channel preferences of customers, however, needs to be matched with back-end integrations and seamless connections to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

For this, Avigilon uses the GoToAssist Corporate app for Salesforce, which enables a smooth and very valuable integration with the GoToAssist remote support service and Avigilon's Salesforce.com account. Team members do not have to leave Salesforce. They can easily launch a remote support session right from the interface whenever needed. All support session information, including survey results, is automatically captured as activity history in Salesforce.com, decreasing duplicate data entry and contributing to a comprehensive view. Screen captures can also be recorded and forwarded to other team members for escalation.

Avigilon is a great example of how putting the right technology processes into contact center operations is critical in serving today's support expectations and changing support preferences.

Contact centers must rethink how they deliver support and look for solutions that simplify, integrate and automate. Technology tools delivered via the cloud will also help reduce large hardware and on-going maintenance costs and allow support reps to deliver service from anywhere. No matter what channel, the support rep should be operating via one easy-to-use interface with the tools and information he or she needs readily at hand. Effective cloud-based, multi-channel, integrated solutions will streamline work, elevate support and drive customer satisfaction.

Elizabeth Cholawsky is vice president and general manager at Citrix (www.gotoassist.com).

by Wes O'Brien

Crowdsourcing for Customer Service

The growth of crowdsourcing is fueling the participation of consumers and professionals in everything from product testing to logo creation, collaborative ideation, even crowdfunding, as an alternative to angel or venture capital investments.

If you're responsible for making your company customer centric, here are five reasons to look into crowd for care.

Call Centers Just Aren't Enough

While phone support is still a principal customer service solution, operating internal or outsourced call centers is expensive.

Beyond call center costs, even though Americans make an estimated 43 billion calls to customer service each year (two to three times per week), the title of Emily Yellin's 2009 book "Your call is (not that) important to us" succinctly articulates consumers' negative experiences with phone support.

Take Away: Diverting a portion of inbound support queries that would have gone to CSRs to expert customers reduces reliance on call centers and improves customer satisfaction.

The Rise of the Connected Customer

While most Boomers continue to call an 800 number for help, Millennials want alternatives. A Forbes article suggested "My way, right away, why pay?" as a motto for 80 million members of the Gen Y generation – a slogan backed up by data:

When they have a problem with a product, 71 percent of 16- to 24-year-old customers and 65 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds search for a solution online first, according to a 2012 SITEL study.

Forty-two percent of 18- to 34-year-olds expect customer support on social media within 12 hours of issuing a complaint or comment, according to Nielsen's 2012 Social Media Report.

CRM is Evolving into Social CRM

With the growth of social media, CRM has evolved into social CRM, elegantly described by Paul Greenberg as business and technology "designed to engage the customer in a collaborative conversation in order to provide mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent business environment."

In a January 2012 blog post, Forrester's Kate Leggett presented results from a survey of contact center professionals, observing: "Social technologies are growing in importance for customer service professionals," based on these results:

* 47 percent of those surveyed use customer communities;

* 39 percent use social listening technologies; and

* 42 percent offer customer service via social sites like Facebook and Twitter.

Take Away: Beyond evidence that social media brings customers and companies closer, investing in social CRM can expand the customer conversation to new possibilities for self-service by tapping into customers' motivations, demand, insights and expertise.

Trust in Peers

Quality customer experiences have a direct correlation to satisfaction and loyalty. As Office of Consumer Affairs research has shown,word of mouth is important: Happy customers who have their problems resolved will tell four to six people about their positive experience, while unhappy customers will tell nine to 15 people about it. Even worse, 13 percent of your dissatisfied customers will tell more than 20 people about their problem.

Since 2000, the Edelman Trust Barometer has documented how public faith in government and business has plummeted, and its 2013 survey indicates that 61 percent of survey respondents would put their trust in "a person like me" (rated just below technical experts, academics and other experts) as the most reliable and objective source of information and assistance.

Take Away: Crowdsourcing customers to provide support efficiently connects your clients with their peers (fellow end users), builds trust for your brand, and drives loyalty.

The Bottom Line

Last but not least, crowdsourcing favorably impacts your bottom line. Customers have told us that crowd for care can reduce the cost of customer support up to 60 percent (in best practices) through diversion of requests from call centers to engaged crowd communities; reduce cost per call from $7 to $15 through a call center down to $3 to $10 per call. It also can divert daily requests to call centers up to 40 percent – 25 percent through cultivating and connecting with online support communities, and 15 percent using by monitoring/listening to inbound queries, intelligently filtering support requests, leveraging knowledge bases and smart routing of queries to expert customers who can best handle each request.

While the customer may not always know best, crowdsourcing your customers to help deliver customer service is something you'll want to explore.

Wes O'Brien is CEO of CrowdEngineering (www.crowdengineering.com).

by Mike Wooden

Are We There Yet?

Not When it Comes to Personalizing the Customer Experience within the Contact Center

These days, everyone from Google to Coke is talking about customer experience. That's because they're realizing that as products and services become more commoditized, complex personal relationships with customers are now more important than ever.

However, despite this awareness, the vast majority of companies continue to fall behind in their ability to move the needle on delivering a truly differentiated customer experience. The Forrester 2013 Customer Experience Index report shows that 61 percent of companies are rated OK, poor, or very poor by their customers, which is only a slight improvement of 2 percent compared to 2012.

It's not that executives aren't committed. They simply don't realize how fast customer expectations have and will continue to change, nor do they understand what this means to their companies – and in particular, what it means for their customer experiences.

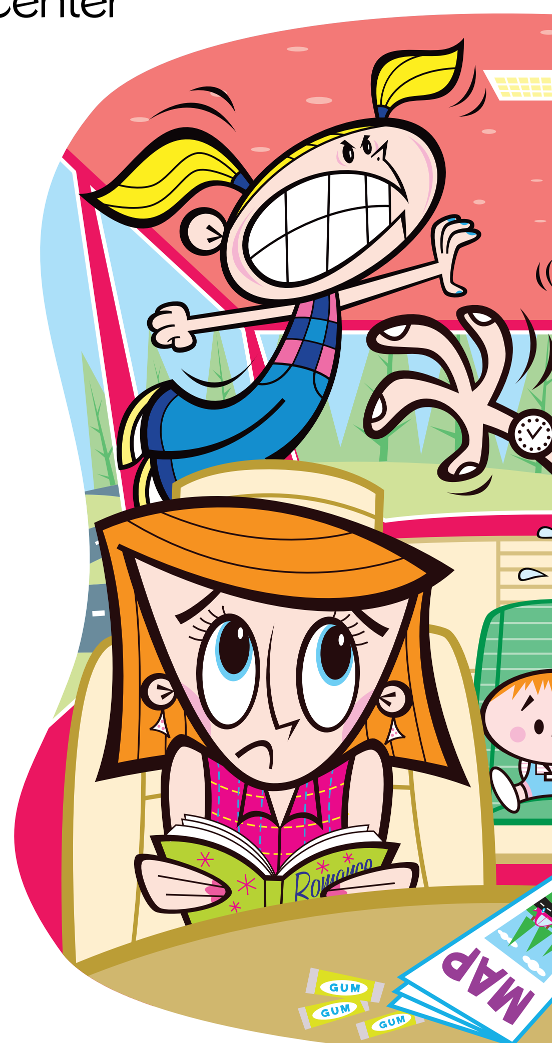
Although the customer experience challenge is one the entire company must own and address, the frontline contact center department bears a hefty burden. This is the place where customer service or sales agents directly interact with customers. Without the ability to know who they are or how best to connect with customers on an individual basis, contact center teams are not set up to do the best job possible.

As a rule, we're just not there yet with personalizing frontline customer service and sales interactions to deliver a truly differentiated, highly satisfying customer experience.

Catching Up to Your Customers

We all know intuitively that today's customers are continually connected, inherently better informed, and armed with the power to make a difference in a brand's reputation based on their experiences with the company. Just take a look at what they're doing when not being treated well or understood. According to an American Express survey in 2012, one person with a bad customer service experience will directly tell 53 other people about the experience via social media, who pass it on to their friends and families. With so much at stake, isn't it odd we're still connecting with most of our customers in an outdated, one-size-fits-all service?

What happens when your customers have a question or issue? More likely than not, they get impersonal, inconsistent, and perhaps inaccurate responses. The sad reality is that a company's most loyal



customers often receive the same treatment as their least loyal. And chances are, a number of those loyal customers are looking for better experiences elsewhere.

In the age of smart customers who expect you to act like you know them, personalization is the future of experience, which makes it ever more imperative for your contact center to evolve faster and smarter in order to get there.

It All Starts With Data

Big data exploded onto the scene last year, and since then, nearly every department in the enterprise seems to be chasing new insights made possible by deep data analysis. But what about the contact center?

As the one place where companies get the often rare opportunity to have one-on-one conversations with customers, these departments should be a treasure trove of customer data. But too often that information is siloed across different systems, some of which the contact center has no control over. As a result, customer service agents have no single view of the customer and no rich insights to pull from big data.

Take health insurance companies for instance. They know more about us than almost any other organization, but are their contact centers using that vast information to deliver better, more personalized customer service? The answer is typically no. They're not making the best use of the rich insights and customer information they have available to personalize the experience and create loyalty.

Putting Customer Intelligence to Better Use

The path to delivering a personalized customer service experience that separates your company from the competition starts with customer data, but it can't end there. You need to be able to transform data into actionable information to drive positive change in the customer experience. Yet many companies don't know where or how to begin.

For starters, try focusing on solving the following business challenges:

Treat different customers differently.
When was the last time you reevaluated your approach to the customer journey? Try separating your customers into groups based on your unique business objectives along with customer profiles. Then you can design personalized interaction scenarios that deliver the best experience for the customers in each group. You will improve customer satisfaction, while also balancing cost and revenue.

Anticipate customer needs and be proactive.
Analyze, model, and reach out to anticipate and proactively address the needs of your customers. By leveraging propensity-to-buy modeling, technology, training, and personalized sales processes to recommend complementary products or services, generating revenue within the contact center becomes seamlessly integrated within the customer experience. This approach can also help decrease customer effort by addressing an issue before customers even knew about it, building trusting and loyal customer relationships.

Enable your agents to personalize every interaction.
Many companies still provide their agents with disparate or antiquated systems for assisting customers. But by utilizing easy-to-deploy technology to integrate these systems into one 360-degree view of the customer, agents become empowered to personalize each customer interaction in a way that shows they care enough to really know their customers. And when you understand your customers well enough to deliver service tailored to their individual needs, not only do you improve satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term customer value, but you reduce contact center costs as well.

Personalization in the contact center helps resolve problems smarter and faster, while reducing the effort and number of interactions required to answer an inquiry. This can translate into very real operational savings – not to mention, happier agents, a better brand reputation, and ultimately, higher revenues. That's just all the more reason to start catching up with your customers today.

Mike Wooden is senior vice president of account management, sales and marketing at Convergys (www.convergys.com).

by Paula Bernier

SilkRoad Helps Smooth the Ride for Employees, Promises Best Results for Businesses

Investing in solutions that address employee lifecycle can result in big returns for businesses, according to recent research from Aberdeen and SilkRoad.

The companies report that organizations with best-in-class onboarding have:

- 15 percent higher customer retention;
- 17 percent higher revenue per full-time employee;
- 91 percent retention rate for first-year employees; and that
- 62 percent of new employees meet their first performance milestone on time, compared to the industry average of 29 percent.

"Leveraging technology to manage high volume workforces, or just managing workforces in general, is no longer a nice-to-have," says Tom Boyle, SilkRoad's director of product marketing. "Companies are seeing it as a must-have, especially with technology-related companies."

Privately-owned SilkRoad, a global company based out of Chicago, in the past decade has put together a SaaS-based suite that addresses the entire employee lifecycle – from recruiting to onboarding and training. It also acts as a human resources employee records systems and a tool for collaboration. SilkRoad an help customers populate the system when desired.

The solution is targeted at mid-market companies with 500 to 5,000 employees, and can work in any scenario, including for contact centers and help desks.

Milestone, which provides technology support for such companies as eBay and Facebook, is among the users of the SilkRoad services. Boyle says the company is a fast-growing company that needed a tool to do hires quickly and effectively. All of SilkRoad's customers are using the system to leverage social media in the recruitment process, adds Boyle, explaining that the SilkRoad service enables businesses to provide tools so candidates can see who at the company they know.

This social media aspect of SilkRoad can also be leveraged for onboarding and training, says Boyle. For instance, a company could program the system to provide a virtual introduction to a handful of people the new hire should know and suggest a couple groups they should join to education themselves on the company and the marketplace.

Survey information and a recently released infographic from Aspect Software detail customer preferences, particularly their feelings and pain points around customer service. Sixty-seven percent of consumers say that when a company offers multiple channels for customer service, they feel more in control of the relationship. Meanwhile, 42 percent of customers would rather have companies use social media for good customer service than to promote their products.

by Ric Kosiba, Ph.D., Bay Bridge Decisions

Customer Experience, Trends, and Staff Planning

If you were to ask a vice president of customer care the metric they think is most important, my bet is they would respond with customer satisfaction score. After that, all other contact center metrics we use to measure service are essentially proxies for these most-important-of-all contact center scores.

For instance, service level and average speed of answer are maintained because we believe long wait times lead to customer dissatisfaction. Abandons are a great proxy for customer satisfaction, too, because a customer who hangs up is almost always not happy with their wait time. And agent quality scores are maintained as the mechanism to ensure a consistently excellent interaction with customers.

Different flavors of experience metrics have similarities

Customer satisfaction, first call resolution, Net Promoter Score, agent quality score, and others count among many customer experience metrics. Internally, companies focus on experience scores that can vary from other business units that focus on customer scoring. But even if the scores are called the same thing, they are almost always calculated using different algorithms.

This type of scoring makes perfect sense as different customers – calling the same company – are contacting the contact center for different purposes. The experience must therefore be attuned to the purpose of the contact, although it doesn't mean that different ways of measuring a customer's experience don't share similarities. An example is that customer experience metrics have seasonality much like most other contact center metrics. As customers call for different purposes at different times of the year, their patience and expectations are likely to change. In the same way, an agent can be more or less motivated seasonally, and will score differently week over week.

Experience metrics are also differentiated by contact type, location, or staff group. A sales-oriented group and a service-oriented group will score differently, for example, even if they're taking the same type of call. Geographical centers, likewise, often score differently because they have different management. Ultimately, though, experience scores exhibit trends. As a workgroup improves or declines, or as company performance changes, focused training can positively affect the trajectory of an experience score.

How can planners use customer experience metrics?

Similar to contact volumes, handle times, attrition, and shrinkage – time-series data that planning analysts typically work with – customer experience scores exhibit seasonality, trends, and differences across contact centers. When center and staff group forecast customer experience scores, planners can use these new forecasts in a host of ways. First, they can draw out the week-over-week customer experience trends to view where the business is heading. By applying a forecasting technique (like Holt-Winters) to a customer experience metric, planners can measure where their math expects customer experience to be weeks and months into the future.

Importantly, these forecasts act to set executive-level expectations. Planners can watch to see that actual expectations are met, and if expectations are trending in the wrong direction, it shows that the specified path should be adjusted. In effect, this time-series experience data acts as an early warning device.

Another great use of a customer experience forecast is as a point of comparison. The best companies view all of their forecasts (volumes, handle times, attrition, shrink, and so on) as a baseline for variance analyses. As weekly performance data is tallied, it can be compared to the forecast. Any differences between forecasted and actual performance implies that something has changed. If forecasting and tracking customer experience scores, any deviation must be noted, explained, and potentially acted upon. For this sort of analyses to have any meaning, it must be compared to seasonally adjusted customer experience forecasts.

Plan better by using customer service forecasts

If improving customer satisfaction is important to your company, then it makes perfect sense to include customer experience forecasts in your staff planning process and decision making. It's simple. If you are using a hiring and extra time optimizer for long-term planning, you can instruct it to hire in such a fashion as to maximize customer experience scores. If you are developing hiring plans by hand, it should be straightforward to move new classes toward those centers with the better scores.

By developing customer experience time-series data, using this data to forecast expected performance, and applying this forecast to variance analyses and staff planning, you can greatly improve your customer's experience.

Download the complete whitepaper to learn more:
Customer Experience, Trends, and Staff Planning
www.inin.com/whitepapers

by Paula Bernier

TMC Reveals 2013 CUSTOMER Contact Center Technology Award Winners

A new business mantra has arisen in recent years. It says customer service is the new marketing. If that is the case, then the contact center has become an even more important, and strategic, part of organizations around the world.

That's why TMC and CUSTOMER magazine this year are especially proud to announce the winners of the 2013 CUSTOMER Contact Center Technology Award, listed below.

TMC is a Norwalk, Conn.-based media company that owns the industry-leading website TMCnet.com; the popular ITEXPO and other events; and various print and online magazines, including CUSTOMER magazine, the leading publication in the CRM, call center and teleservices industries since 1982.

Altitude Software
Altitude uCI 8

Arise Virtual Solutions
Starmatic

Calabrio
Calabrio ONE

Connect First
Cloud Routing

Drishti-Soft Solutions Pvt. Ltd.
AMEYO

HP Autonomy
Autonomy Explore

IntelliResponse Systems Inc.
IntelliResponse Virtual Agent

Interactive Intelligence
CaaS Small Center

LiveVox Inc.
LiveVox

Muroc Systems Inc.
TeamSupport

ShoreTel
ShoreTel Enterprise Contact Center

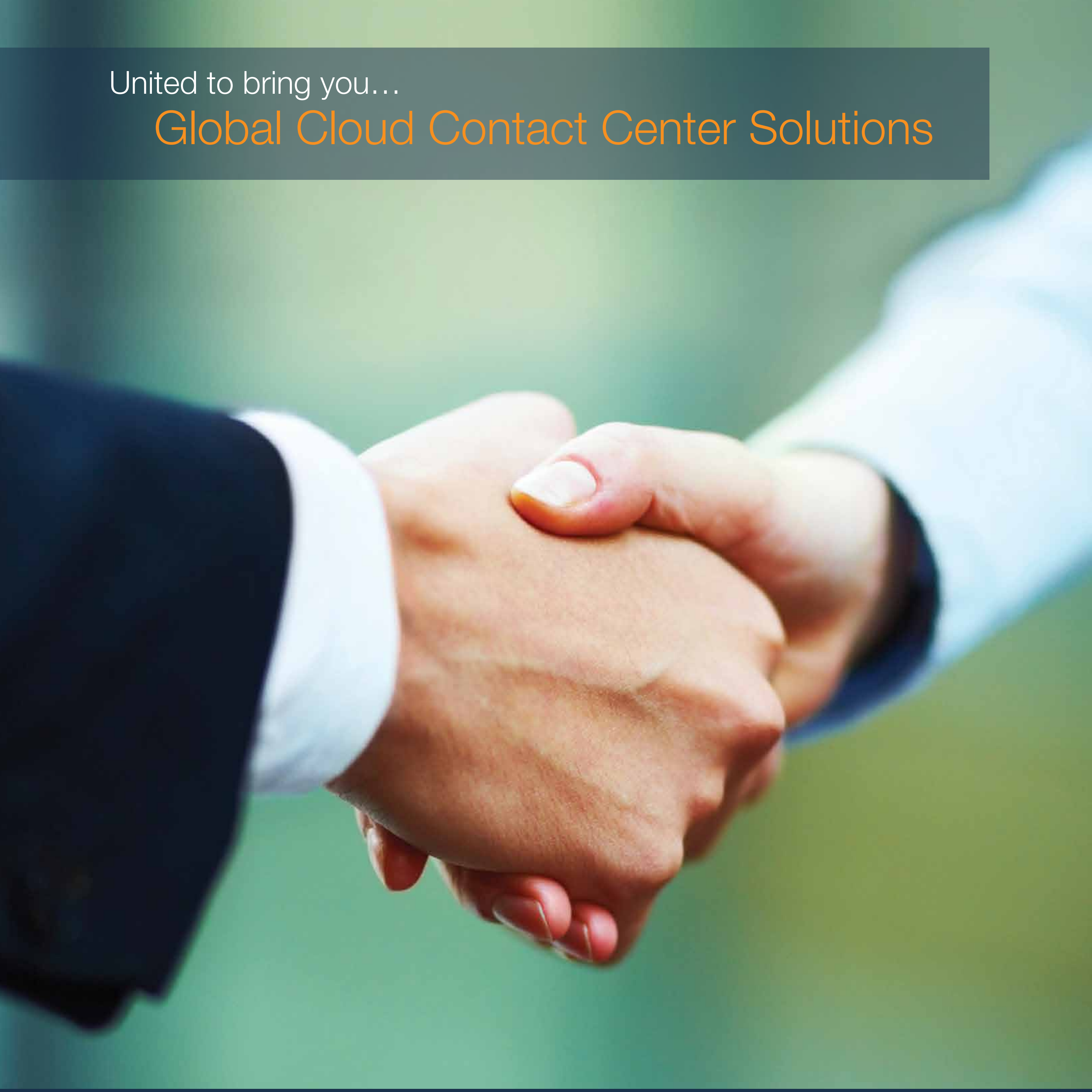
Spanlink Communications
OnGuard Managed Services

Telax Hosted Call Center
Telax Hosted Call Center

Verint Systems Inc.
Impact 360 Recording

XO Communications
Contact Center as a Service

Zultys Inc
SuperView


United to bring you…
Global Cloud Contact Center Solutions

AD INDEX

SUBSCRIBE

FREE Today!

Erik Linask,
Group Editorial Director, TMC

eCommerce: Completing the Customer Experience

The impressive growth of cloud computing and the evolution of the anything-as-a-service delivery model has changed the business playing field and, along with it, the balance of power within many sectors. The idea that what used to be sold as proprietary, on-premises products are now being bought and used on a pay-as-you-go basis has created a new customer-vendor paradigm, where the customer wields much more power than ever before.

Without question, the evolution of social media and the emergence of mobile devices as a de facto standard for communications have played a major role in how customers interact with their vendors, and it has created a massive disruption in the way businesses must market, sell, deliver, and support their products. All of these topics will be heavily debated and discussed at ITEXPO Las Vegas.

But, for all the communications technologies, customer engagement platforms, data analytics capabilities, and marketing mechanisms that have become integral to building a successful business, it can all fall apart if the purchasing and acquisition process is overly complex or fragmented. Particularly in software- and service-driven environments, the expectation is that customers can finalize their purchases as easily as they can surf the web to research products, which means vendors must ensure their eCommerce platforms are attractively designed, intuitive, tightly integrated with their back-end CRM and ERP systems, and easily adaptable to new products or markets to ensure continued growth.

"Time to market is everything and business users are becoming frustrated because they are buying more like consumers," explained Carl Theobald, president and CEO of Avangate, which boasts a wildly successful eCommerce platform, if you consider its 85 percent year-over-year growth the past five years. "Vendors need to put together new offers and get them to market very quickly, but the lag time due to complexity in IT is challenging."

As the shift from business-wide purchasing to individual or departmental buying continues, software and services vendors must be able to deliver greater choice and flexibility and segment their offers granularly to accommodate the changes created by the consumerization of IT.

"It's a difficult transition for businesses," noted Theobald. "It can become quite a mess when IT departments have to deliver consistency across customer touchpoints, transact at every touchpoint, optimize business models on the fly, and reach new global markets."

And it all has to happen in a globalized economy and in a customer-friendly environment, taking into consideration payment platforms, delivery process, entitlement, fraud management, support, refunds, sales channels, cross-border payments and regulatory issues.

To help today's businesses navigate around the turbulence of a changing market, Avangate has developed what it calls a customer-centric commerce solution that allows software and cloud services vendors to deliver consistent customer experience across all products and markets. Theobald called it a complete commerce-as-a-service solution, including everything a business needs to execute its eCommerce strategy quickly and efficiently.

Avangate's newest release extends its advanced subscriptions setup and management, usage-based billing, advanced retention management, and cross distribution channel management to unify data and treatment from direct and indirect channels. As a bonus, Avangate boasts a network of some 3,800 affiliates, which provide instant marketing and branding to a global prospect base, including many widely recognized brands such as CNET and download.com.

Its latest release is specifically designed to allow businesses to embrace the new customer models, allowing them to:

- transact at every touchpoint via optimized online selling channels, mobile, direct sales and service points, channel-enabled sales and service portals, and API integration;

- optimize new business models on the fly with a flexible product catalog, multi-revenue model billing automation and management, self-service setup, testing and reporting tools; and

- reach new global markets instantly with localization best practices, localized payments and taxation services, as well as distribution networks to drive sales to international, as well as micro-vertical, markets.

For all the talk of business needs around customer engagement, loyalty programs, multi-channel marketing and communication, and support, many of those efforts are for naught if the purchase itself becomes an obstacle. Just as customers have grown accustomed to making purchasing decisions on their own terms, they also must be able to make the purchases on those same terms – wherever they are and whenever they want or need to. Simply, a holistic eCommerce platform that enables businesses to quickly and easily roll out new products and services, and allows customers to make transactions in the same manner, is no less critical to rounding out a positive customer experience.