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CUSTOMER

Volume 31/Number 8 • May 2013

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Rich Tehrani,
CEO, TMC

Interactive Intelligence Revisits Its Small Call Center Roots

Interactive Intelligence is an example of a disruptor that went mainstream and in the process changed the way contact centers operated. Soon after launching in the mid-nineties the company would attract huge crowds to its booths at trade shows as it showed off all-in-one solutions which combined the dialer, ACD, PBX and more operating seamlessly together. The company was first to espouse the concept and is responsible for getting the competition to emulate them.

In a recent meeting, Joe Staples, CMO and senior vice president of marketing at Interactive Intelligence, told me the company has successfully acted upon its growth strategy from 2006, which was designed to increase its sales to large companies such as BMW, Crutchfield, Honda, Rolex, Sony, and many others. Its average deal size in 2005 was \$87,000 and in 2012 it was \$306,000 with its number of deals over \$1 million increasing from just one to 49 on a comparative basis over these seven years.

But Interactive Intelligence hasn't lost track of the companies that helped it get started, as evidenced by the recent launch of its new CaaS Small Center solution, which gives small contact centers with up to 50 contact center agents many of the same features the vendor has offered for years to the most sophisticated contact centers in the world. Pricing for CaaS Small Center starts at a flat fee of \$99 per agent, per month. Included in the offer is the ability to add the company's cloud-based PBX features for up to 100 non-contact center users.

Joe was sure to point out how the company's offering features recording; UC; real-time speech analytics; quality management; multichannel communications including voice, web chat and social media; routing; and real-time speech analytics with keyword spotting. There is also integration with Salesforce and other services out of the box. Finally, there are guaranteed service levels, geo-redundancy from 11 global data centers, security, and compliance including JITC and customer isolation through virtualization.

He further explained the company focused on keeping the offering easy to use with limited set-up options, and deployment within 15 days instead of months. Other areas of note are the ability to sign a one-year contract to lock in your price; a dedicated implementation manager, Quick Spin, that allows you to try before you buy; and, of course, a month-to-month commitment if you prefer this option.

Interestingly Interactive Intelligence has gone from a disruptive new entrant in the market to an established player. By offering much of the power of its full contact center solutions in a simple, cost-effective, no-commitment way, it has to some degree slowed the disruption it could see from the new breed of cloud-based solutions providers. Moreover, the benefit Interactive brings to the table is stability as well as scalability – companies want a system that grows with them.

Interactive Intelligence hasn't lost track of the companies that helped it get started, as evidenced by the recent launch of its new CaaS Small Center solution, which gives small contact centers with up to 50 contact center agents many of the same features the vendor has offered for years to the most sophisticated contact centers in the world.

Staples said 65 percent of contact centers in the world have less than 50 agents, but they are often underserved because they buy from a startup or just go with an add-on solution provided by a PBX vendor. In fact, one of the company's newest customers for this new offering switched from another solution that didn't allow it to see how many calls were waiting in the queue.

The purpose of CaaS Small Center is to allow these call centers that have the same needs as their larger brethren to access the same features and functions they have on a pay-as-you-go, or should I say pay-as-you-grow, basis. **M**

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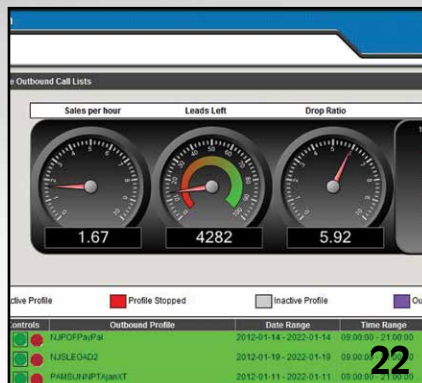
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Paula Bernier,
Executive Editor

FTC Addresses Mobile, Social with Truth-in-Advertising Guidelines

The Federal Trade Commission recently updated its truth-in-advertising guidelines to address new challenges on this front related to mobile devices and Twitter.

While these are guidelines, and don't have the force of law, they do provide some important insight on what the FTC rightly sees as some key challenges related to mobile and social devices and services as they relate to advertising. And it lays out both general guidelines and offers some very specific examples of what it sees as permissible and what might become problematic.

The bottom line is that while mobile devices and social networking may be constrained due to relatively small screen sizes and character limits, "cyberspace is not without boundaries, and deception is unlawful no matter what the medium."

Brian McCalmon, an attorney with K&L out of Washington, D.C., notes that the March revisions were an update to the "Dot Com Disclosures" document that the FTC issued in 2000. That focused on what is required in the online space to prevent marketing and ad efforts from violating Section 5 of the FTC Act, which prevents false, deceptive, unfair statements – either by submission or omission.

"I think [these disclosures and the new ones issued in March] make sense," said McCalmon. "This was preceded by a pretty intensive exercise."

Indeed. The FTC issued the guidelines document in March, after completing a lengthy public input and review process.

"My sense is they exhausted the issue pretty thoroughly," added McCalmon. "I don't see any obvious holes in this. I think this is pretty helpful."

CUSTOMER magazine reached out to major advertising firms, including CP+B, Grey Advertising, and Ogilvy, but either didn't get a response at all or was told they don't publicly comment on public policy.

In any case, McCalmon said he doubts there will be any negative blowback regarding these new rules.

"The most controversial [part] will be the FTC statement that if you can't get your disclosure into your Twitter endorsement or ad, then their advice is you don't use the medium."

Here are a few other choice excerpts from the March guidelines:

"Websites, and mobile applications, however, are interactive and have a certain depth – with multiple pages or screens

linked together and pop-up screens, for example – that may affect how proximity is evaluated. Mobile devices also present additional issues because a disclosure that would appear on the same screen of a standard desktop computer might, instead, require significant vertical and horizontal scrolling on a mobile screen. In evaluating placement, advertisers should also take into consideration empirical research about where consumers do and do not look on a screen."

"Requiring consumers to scroll in order to view a disclosure may be problematic, however, because consumers who don't scroll enough (and in the right direction) may miss important qualifying information and be misled.

"When advertisers are putting disclosures in a place where consumers might have to scroll in order to view them, they should use text or visual cues to encourage consumers to scroll and avoid formats that discourage scrolling.

Text prompts can indicate that more information is available."

"Hyperlinks allow additional information to be placed on a webpage entirely separate from the relevant claim. Hyperlinks can provide a useful means to access disclosures that are not integral to the triggering claim, provided certain conditions (discussed below) are met. Hyperlinked disclosures may be particularly useful if the disclosure is lengthy or if it needs to be repeated (because of multiple triggering claims, for example).

However, in many situations, hyperlinks are not necessary to convey disclosures. If a disclosure consists of a word or phrase that may be easily incorporated into the text, along with the claim, this placement increases the likelihood that consumers will see the disclosure and relate it to the relevant claim."

The key considerations for evaluating the effectiveness of all hyperlinks are:

- the labeling or description of the hyperlink;
- consistency in the use of hyperlink styles;
- the placement and prominence of the hyperlink on the webpage or screen; and
- the handling of the disclosure on the click-through page or screen. **M**



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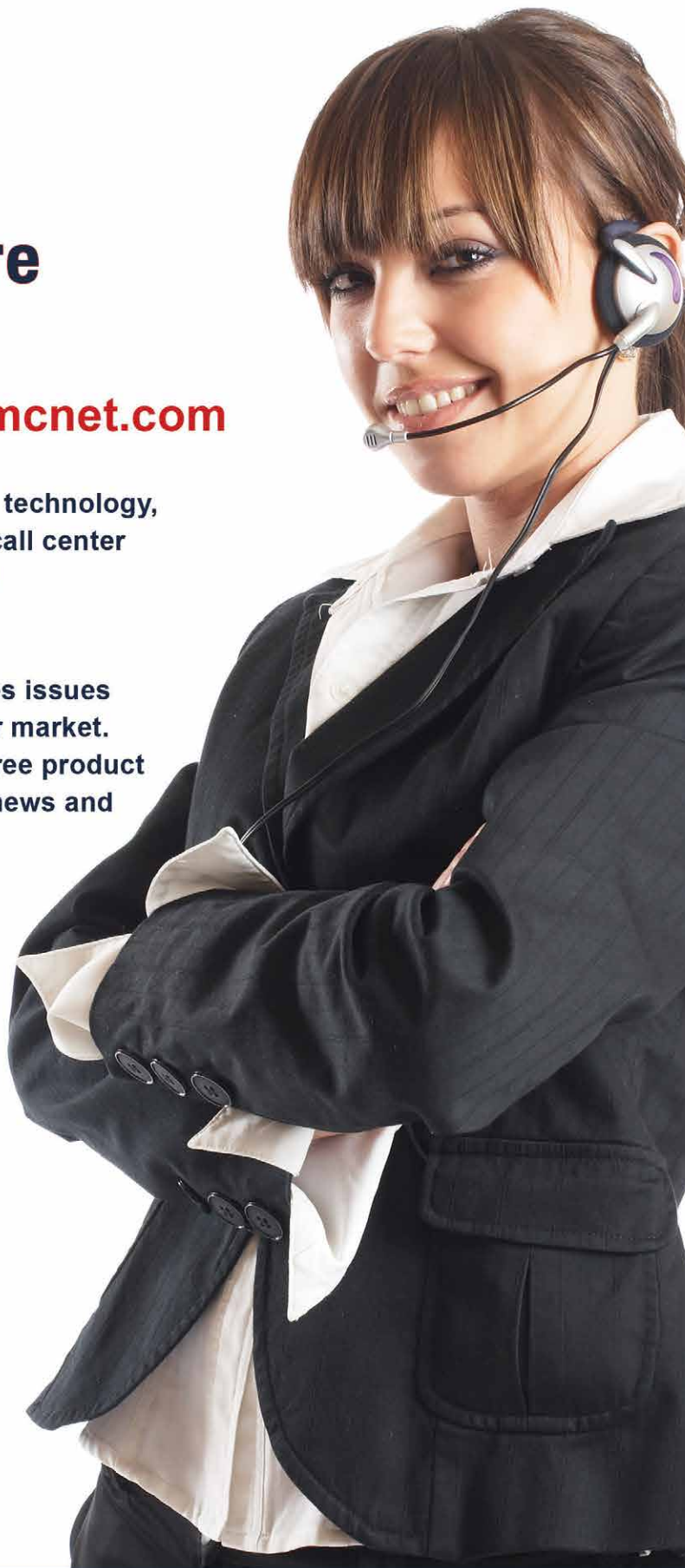
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Good Stuff

Finding the Goodness of Charitable Giving, Gift Cards & Loyalty Programs

By Paula Bernier

Charitable giving, gift cards and loyalty programs are nothing new, but businesses and the organizations that enable these solutions are finding new ways to leverage such programs to get closer with their customers, build their businesses, and in the process save the world.

Pay It Forward Doing Good While Building Brand

It's a small world after all. Advances in transportation and communications over the years have made people and organizations – whether across a state or on the other side of the world – more easily accessible. And the recent social networking phenomenon has allowed communities of interest to come together like never before.

But this article is not specifically about social networking. Rather, it's about the sense of community and social responsibility that consumers today have expressed, and how organizations can cater to that desire and, in the process, contribute to society while building their own brands.

According to eMarketer, “a growing number of consumers considered social purpose the leading purchase driver, even when quality and price were equal.”

Just look at the success of TOMS Shoes, which built a business offering very basic footwear with the promise that with every pair you purchase, TOMS will give a pair of new shoes to a child in need. The company started with just one shoe style in a few colors, but has since expanded to offer an array of styles in a cornucopia of colors and patterns. It has even introduced a line of eyewear.

“We are in business to help change lives,” reads the TOMS website. “It's a big job, and we don't do it alone. With our customers and Giving Partners, we're transforming everyday purchases into a force for good around the world. One for One.”

This message clearly resonates with lots of people, including my 13-year-old daughter and plenty of her peers. And, as a result of TOMS' success, they can now purchase the shoes through a variety of channels.

This is just one example of a brand doing what can be referred to as cause-related marketing to build its profile or reinforce its brand. And most consumers are more than OK with that.

jetBlue

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According to KULA Causes, 76 percent of U.S. Internet users have indicated they approve of brands making money as a result of social purpose, a 33 percent increase since 2008.

KULA Causes is a one-and-a-half-year-old company that powers the charitable giving and loyalty efforts of airline JetBlue, prepackaged foods company Kellogg's, and frequent traveler online research site MilePoint. The company offers web portals through which these companies and others allow their customers to track and redeem loyalty points and, if they wish, donate to any of more than 2.5 local and global causes in any of 29 countries.

Give to your choice of
millions of causes around the world.

FIND your cause and
start **DONATING** today

Search for your cause...



or Browse Causes

How it works



Find a cause you
really care about



Donate - it is
simple as that



Share favorite causes
with your friends



Easily access
donation history

Mark Dority, director of marketing, calls what KULA Causes provides an engagement tool to get people involved in a program and to keep them coming back for more.

"We try to touch each individual in their affinity -- whether it's a school, a rain forest" or whatever.

People who donate via the KULA Causes platform can opt to share that activity through social media, which in turn promotes both their cause and the sponsoring company's brand.

Here are some more details about how KULA Causes' three existing customers (as of late March anyway) are using the platform, for which the company charges based on transaction.

JetBlue launched its program based on the KULA Causes platform in late October of 2012. True Blue frequent flier program participants who visit the JetBlue website and come to the Giving Journey part

of the portal are actually on the KULA Causes platform, although the experience is seamless and there's a single sign on for the whole experience. Once there, True Blue members can see their loyalty points and donate points to charities around the world. (The smallest donation increment is \$10, which True Blue members get/give when they opt to donate 13,034 of their frequent flier points.) The site provides a list of charities to which visitors can donate, where in the world each charity is doing its good works, and how each will use the donation. KULA Causes then accepts the donation, does the currency conversions when needed, and handles settlements between the brand and charity.

MilePoint, which launched in September of 2012, has a similar program.

The loyalty program for Kellogg's, called Kellogg Family Rewards, was in the process of launching on the KULA Causes platform in late March. Kellogg's has more than 2.5 million family rewards customers.

This program targets parents who grocery shop by providing a code inside cereal boxes. These individuals input the codes into the Kellogg Family Rewards website and in return are rewarded with a certain amount of points. They can use those codes either to get products or make donations to local schools or other causes.

Dority says that in addition to enabling businesses to enable charitable giving and promote their brands, KULA Causes will use its platform to launch its own business-to-consumer program. This program will offer donation cards at retail locations that consumers can purchase and provide as gifts to others. This gives the person who receives the gift the option to make the donation to the charity of his or her choice, notes Dority.

"KULA wants to impact the world by giving people more opportunities to give," says Dority, "and not just in times of crisis. We want it to become part of the culture." **M**

General Store Increases Revenue with Loyalty and Gift Card Solutions

In Spencer, Mass., 10 miles west of Worcester, there's a general store where you can get a new pair of jeans, outfit your horse with a new halter, buy tropical fish or drive away with a brand new tractor. Klem's Tractor Inc. reaches a broad customer base.

We noticed the huge growth in gift card sales for retailers across the country. Upon implementation of the Epicor Gift Card solution, the Klem's management team was able to efficiently implement the move from paper gift certificates to gift cards as a way to increase revenue and provide a loyalty program to customers with in-store rewards.

The Epicor Gift Card solution makes it easy to begin. Klem's purchased the application, then designed and ordered four different cards. The implementation of the solution was seamless. Gift cards are activated on our existing high-speed credit card terminals. When the gift card SKU number is entered, cashiers are prompted to activate the card. It takes just minutes to learn the system. Transactions are really fast, unlike the slow, handwritten gift certificates we used to have.

The early results we have experienced are impressive. Within the first four months, with no major holidays, Klem's sold 500 cards with revenues of \$18,000. We have gift card displays at all our registers, and our entire sales staff is trained to suggest gift cards when a customer is trying to make a gift decision. Customers appreciate the convenience and flexibility that gift cards offer. We're confident that revenue will soar even higher over the holidays and this spring for Mother's Day.

An added benefit of Klem's gift card program is the rich information available. We know exactly how many gift cards are outstanding, who purchased them, and the value sold and remaining on each card. You just don't have that visibility with paper gift certificates. We implemented the Eagle Loyalty solution in December 2009, and have signed up over 23,000 customers for the program so far. It's easy, flexible, our customers love it, and our Klem's staff and management love it. It's an all-around win for our business.

The implementation process was very straightforward. Our existing high-speed credit card terminals now work with gift cards and loyalty cards. Within a day and half we had the loyalty program up and running, including all the reporting we'd need to track loyalty customers. The hardest part was determining what type of rewards at what levels we would give to our customers.

We knew that we could use the program for more targeted advertising, but what we have come to discover is that we can use the loyalty program for so much more. It has increased our level of service exponentially. When a customer calls, or comes in to the store, we are able to pull up the customer's information immediately. This allows us to focus on the customer and have all of the necessary information available to provide the best customer service possible. We can easily retrieve receipts, processing returns faster and hassle-free. We store the customer's purchase history, which helps with warranty information. We notify customers via e-mail if a product that they have purchased is part of a recall. It's all about customer service.

Consequently we use the loyalty program to follow up with issues that may have happened during previous employee shifts. We wish we were always perfect, but unfortunately we are not. We are able to research the loyalty customer's issue and contact the customer proactively. With this solution, we are able to reach out to a customer who may have left the store unhappy and offer them a resolution without them ever contacting us with a complaint.

Klem's is a local, family-owned business. The company opened in the late 1940s, and we used to know everyone by name. Over the years, as we have grown, it seemed harder to stay in touch with the customer. Now, with our loyalty program, we can bring back that close personal touch that seemed to have been slipping away.

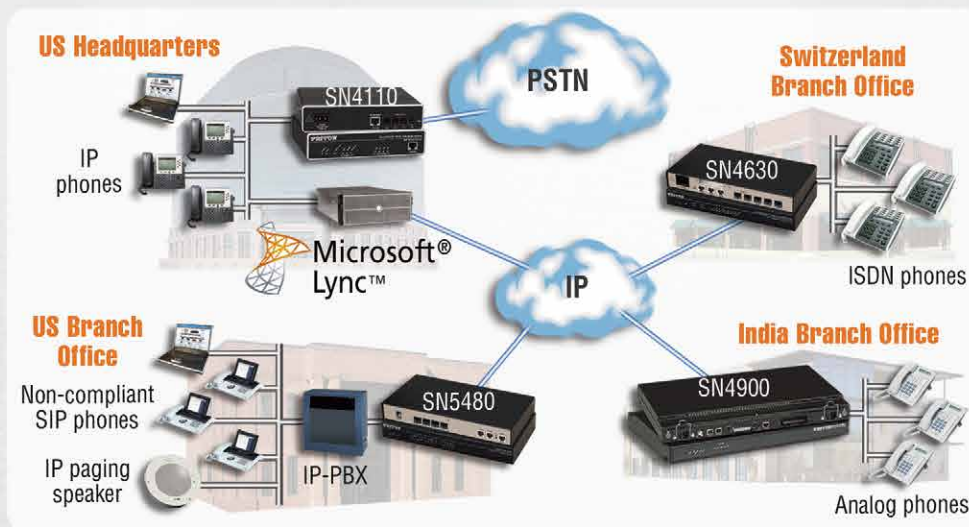
We have big plans for the Klem's new loyalty program, including future targeted promotions. Since we use Epicor Compass to filter purchases by product, quantity, and date, we can work with vendors to send vendor-specific coupons. We can launch targeted promotions for a specific brand or even product. That's a win for our customers, vendors, and us. **M**

Jessica Bettencourt is president of Klem's.

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VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

Elaine Cascio

Measuring Multi-channel Success for the C-suite

One of the biggest struggles multi-channel managers report is demonstrating results to executives. Many are comfortable with all the operational measures of the contact center, but not the measures that are important to the C-suite. These measures are strategic and customer centric – and they make a difference in how the business operates.

Your elevator speech to your CEO shouldn't be about how many web hits you got or that you increased IVR retention rates by 5 percent, but relate how your success contributes to the success of the company as a whole.

Three Types of Measures

To start, gather three distinct types of measures on each channel and across channels: operational, customer, and strategic measures.

Operational Measures

These are the measures that drive contact centers. They include service level, agent and productivity measures, and cost measures. While they play a role in multi-channel success, they are only a part of the puzzle as more and more contacts and interactions are handled on channels that the contact center never touches, like web and mobile apps.

Customer Measures

Customer measures include things like customer experience, loyalty, and repurchase rates. Focus on several key questions:

- What are people trying to do? Look at the most common interactions and most commonly used channels to understand the core activities that are important to your customers.
- How successful are they? We have a wealth of measures to help us understand success, such as completion rates, abandon and transfer rates, speed of resolution or transaction, number of contacts to resolution, as well as quality monitoring.
- Do they need help? How often do customers use live support, if available? Do they use help functions or report errors or incidents? Quality monitoring on all channels helps here as well.
- Do they use multiple channels? Understand what the customer journey looks like and what channels they traverse. Explore the propensity of different segments to use specific channels. Analyze cross-channel effectiveness and channel strengths.
- How do they feel about it? Here's where customer surveys come in, as well as your Net Promoter Score, complaints and

kudos, whether posted online or based on feedback from agents or folks on the ground.

- Measure customer effort. This metric, developed by the Corporate Executive Board's Customer Contact Council, asks customers how much effort they had to put forth on a scale of 0 (low) to 5 (high). While asking customers about effort is important, it's equally important for you to measure it yourself through building customer journey maps and analyzing customer contacts (single and multi-channel). These exercises make it clear where there are dead ends, where customers struggle – in other words, where they have to expend effort just to do business with you.

Finally, measure how you're dealing with customers at key moments of truth. Meeting customer expectations at these critical times in their lifecycles has a significant effect on satisfaction and loyalty.

Strategic Measures

These are the measures that show how you contribute to corporate goals. If, for example, corporate strategy focuses on customer intimacy, your measures should likewise focus on things like the quality of customer contact, the level of customer engagement with the website, understanding defection rates and reasons, and the cost of a complaint. If corporate strategy focuses on cost efficiencies, your measures will be quite different. They'll include cost per contact, lifetime cost to serve, and a strong focus on reduced customer effort, among other things.

So next time you find yourself in the elevator with your CEO, talk about how successful you've been in meeting customer expectations at key moments of truth resulting in additional purchases, or how you've reduced customer effort which resulted in reduced cost for managing complaints and handling voice calls, or how you've helped increase customer loyalty and reduce costs by developing a mobile app for a critical customer need. **M**

Elaine Cascio is a vice president at Vanguard Communications Corp. (www.vanguard.net).

ART OF THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



Art Rosenberg

Unified Customer Services for the New Generation of Digital And Mobile Consumers

It's taken a while, but we are seeing unified communications finally taking over customer interactions in a big way. This applies not only to large organizations, but also to any size organization in every type of market segment.

Three key factors are bringing new impetus to this shift in business communications:

• Mobile consumer devices

Multi-modal mobile devices, like smartphones and tablets, have expanded convenient and fast direct consumer access to online, self services, including various modes of person-to-person contacts, online information access and transactions, and proactive notifications by automated business processes.

• Interoperability and integration between various forms of person-to-person communications and business process applications

Because there is increased flexibility required for contacts with mobile people, the various forms of communication must now dynamically be controlled by the end users, depending upon their individual needs and circumstances as contact initiators or recipients/respondents.

• Cloud-based applications

As both communication and business process software applications become location independent, developing and integrating them in cloud environments becomes critical to faster and lower-cost implementations and ongoing change management.

Clearly, customer services are rapidly changing from legacy call centers to unified interaction centers, where online self-service applications are reducing the need for live assistance to consumers to get information or perform simple transactions, but also facilitating flexible access to specialized assistance whenever needed. The result of such flexible customer assistance is greater personalization, experience customization, and customer satisfaction.

Customer services are becoming recognized as high-value applications that are benefiting from consumer BYOD, UC-enablement, and cloud services.

Customer services used to be locked in together in different technology platforms that were difficult to integrate. As a result, only big organizations could afford to invest and support implementing all the pieces involved with legacy telephony call centers.

Adding to the challenge of supporting customer services has been the advent of mobile UC and multi-modal live assistance and self-service applications, not just phone calls. So, while UC-enabled business communications focused initially on internal organizations and collaborative contacts, the big customer service markets were pretty much stuck on old CPE-based call center telephony. Now, however,

with increased consumer mobile flexibility, cloud-based applications are making big waves in all kinds of customer service applications.

Going After the Big SMB Market

I have always felt that customer services will really be the same for small or large organizations. The main differences showed up in things like:

- how big your market is;
- how much live assistance and expertise will be needed by different customers;
- software tools for running operations smoothly, training customer-facing staff;
- management tools and metrics to insure customer responsiveness satisfaction; and
- customization of self-service applications for different types of applications, especially mobile apps.

I am glad to see Interactive Intelligence, among other leading customer service software technology vendors, going after the SMB market, since small businesses really need to use most of the same technologies as larger organizations.

The cloud environment will be particularly useful for implementing and managing integrations and self-service customizations. That always used to be an expensive and time-consuming effort. Now, with all application technologies moving into interoperable clouds, it should no longer be any big problem for any size organization to move forward selectively with individual customer groups, customer-facing staffs, and specific customized online applications, associated with different forms of live assistance.

Bringing the Right Experiences to the Table

As confirmed in many recent market studies, mobile customers are now expecting:

- more access to mobile online self-services;
- pro-active mobile notifications and alerts, rather than calling in or checking online;
- greater flexibility in choice of user interfaces (voice, visual); and
- options for multiple forms of smart access to live assistance when needed.

So, stay tuned for the next-generation unified interaction center. **M**

Art Rosenberg is an industry veteran and now blogs and does consulting. For more information, visit [The Unified-View/ UC Strategies Expert](#)

Making the Move to Mobile

The days of single-channel, ask and answer surveys are gone. It's imperative that companies become much more sophisticated in engaging all the channels, all the time – whether through an on-line survey, social media interaction, web analytics or good old-fashioned interactive voice response. All channels are valid and together can be much more powerful than on their own.

It is no secret that mobile is a tremendous opportunity for customer engagement. Almost every study conducted in 2012 concluded that brands want to do more with mobile. While the hype and hope is there, uncertainty lingers about exactly how to execute a mobile customer engagement strategy and what the impact of a successful campaign looks and feels like.

According to a recent survey, relatively few market research companies cater to respondents using smartphones or tablets for surveys. 62 percent of these companies either do not have a policy for web surveys that land on mobile screens or they don't modify surveys for viewing on small screens, even though the majority of consumers interact with brands via mobile.

As mobile devices continue to proliferate, they're becoming a vital channel for collecting in-the-moment insights. When done right, mobility makes a huge difference on both sides of the customer survey equation – for those asking and answering the questions.

As companies compete to gain deeper, more relevant customer insights, mobile devices present a host of opportunities. Photos, audio and video all offer new ways for customers to provide incredibly rich, multimedia feedback. Additionally, mobile devices can facilitate trigger-generated customer engagement via location-based applications, and can be used by employees to gather face-to-face feedback in a format that's familiar to the customer.

For companies that want to gain a holistic view of their customers, mobile offers benefits that allow businesses to develop a two-way conversation with customers, creating a shift from monologue to dialogue. In some cases, adding this channel to the feedback loop helps companies engage with a previously hard-to-reach customer group, such as young people or business people.

Many customer respondents appreciate the convenience that comes with mobile feedback, and find the user experience better and more streamlined. Unlike in-person questionnaires or

in-store interfaces that entail an unfamiliar computer or device, those that run on the mobile device use technology that's familiar to the user. This makes for a low learning curve, which help to keep response rates high.

Today's multi-tasking consumers look for ways to stay connected, and productive, as they go about their daily lives. The mobile channel enables surveys to be done during user's cracks in the day waiting in line or before a meeting starts.

If the interface allows customers to save answers until later and is optimized for mobile devices, they will be drawn to it and more likely to interact the next time around. In general, their enthusiasm is likely to be higher, as they won't see the company interaction as overly interruptive to their days.

A successful engagement program will constantly adjust its targets according to these factors. It is a never-ending game that requires a keen understanding of the market landscape. By doing this effectively, organizations keep the VoC program fresh and evolving with the business.

As with any customer engagement program, via any channel, avoid these pitfalls:

1. no follow-up to customer requests or complaints
2. survey burn-out: over-surveying the same individuals
3. missed opportunities to reward employees that receive positive feedback
4. not incorporating positive feedback into a marketing case study or reference account
5. results too high-level to be meaningful and actionable
6. results delivered too late to impact customer loyalty
7. results hoarded by a single department

With mobile, you must excite, involve, listen and entertain if you want to maintain communication – mobile users will disengage faster than from any other medium and accept a higher level of engagement.

For any new process and organizational change to take place, leaders from all business units must take part. If this is your organization's first foray into mobile engagement, get as many people excited and involved as possible. After all, the results should become assets across the company, at all levels and in all departments, to drive change. **M**

Dave King is executive vice president of mobile solutions at Confrim (www.confrim.com).

NEWS



Customer Satisfaction Was Up in 4Q2012

The national customer satisfaction benchmark improved in the fourth quarter of 2012, rising 0.5 percent to an ACSI score of 76.3 on a scale of 0 to 100. "While most of the gain is due to improvements in the public sector — with marked increases in citizen evaluations of both federal and local government services, according to the American Customer Satisfaction Index's 2012 government report — the national index also is helped by higher customer satisfaction in the Retail and E-Commerce sector," according a paper authored by University of Michigan professor Claes Fornell, who developed the ACSI. Customer satisfaction with supermarkets improved by 1.3 percent, despite rising prices. "Among supermarket chains, Publix reigns when it comes to customer satisfaction, just as it has done in every year since the American Customer Satisfaction Index's inception in 1994," according to the paper. Office Depot, meanwhile, was tops in the category among retailers. "Office Depot is transitioning from large, warehouse-type outlets to smaller, more intimate stores with better customer service," Fornell wrote. "So far, the strategy seems to be paying off." And when it comes to department stores it's probably no surprise that Nordstrom leads the way. The company in the fourth quarter had an unchanged ACSI score of 84.

ALU Intros OpenTouch

Alcatel-Lucent earlier this spring unveiled the OpenTouch Customer Service solution, which is powered by Altitude Software. The scalable, multi-channel solution addresses traditional media as well as social media, and can be easily integrated with CRM, ERP, call recording and other business tools and features. It is available as software components that can be sold separately or together, and the feature modules the customer selects are displayed through a single interface. The unified dialer feature offers outbound campaign management, with preview, power and predictive modes. "The OpenTouch Customer Service solution brings the best of both worlds: an innovative customer service offer with all of the capabilities required by today's business, including social and mobile integration, as well as sophisticated traditional capabilities, including predictive dialing," Sheila McGee-Smith, principal at McGee-Smith Analytics, said. "After a rigorous evaluation, Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise has made an excellent choice in partnering with Altitude Software for its new multi-channel customer service solution."

Verint Trumpets Its Leadership Position

According to newly released market research from Pelorus Associates, Verint is the leader in contact center software and services worldwide. DMG Consulting LLC also has published new research on quality monitoring and recording that points to Verint as the global leader in voice recording. That's the word from Verint, which says it "has long been recognized as a leader and innovator in recording and QM applications. In fact, the company holds over 300 patents and applications worldwide in this area, and thousands of customers around the world use its patented recording capabilities for quality and compliance."

CALEA Provider Listens to Customer Needs

Subsentio, a service bureau for Lawfully Authorized Electronic Surveillance recently named Martin McDermott as vice president of marketing and customer care. Customer care is the centerpiece of Subsentio's recently announced Safe Harbor Certification program, which enables carriers to comply with lawful intercept requests by providing those network operators with the ability to accept, review, implement, track and trace individual information for an individual wiretap and then transport that information to the appropriate law agencies. The technology behind all this is important, McDermott said, but it's important to allow customers to talk to people in real time and also to give customers the security of knowing their provider will take responsibility if they don't do the job correctly.

Massive Flow of Data Requires Better Tools

A new survey commissioned by Lavastorm Analytics indicates that the majority of companies (60 percent) plan to increase their analytics investment over the next year. More than 600 business analysts, technologists, data analysis professionals, managers and C-level executives identified the three main analytics hurdles as gleaning insights from data (25 percent), accessing data (22 percent), and the ability to integrate and manipulate data (19 percent). "The survey effectively highlights several analytics-related growing pains the industry is presently dealing with as new data sources and a new emphasis on analytics continue to emerge," said Lavastorm Analytics CEO Drew Rockwell. "Overall the survey points to the fact that data management is a tough problem and requires the right tools, processes, and skilled people to access, integrate, and analyze data."

Low-Profile Touchpoints can Deliver Big Customer Loyalty Gains

The image you carefully craft through expensive advertising can unravel with one aggravating call to customer support. The marketing campaign that brought in all those new leads is worthless if the customers get frustrated by your convoluted contract negotiation process and walk away.

Customer support, contract negotiations, billing, on-boarding, post-sales support – these are the lunchpail customer touchpoints. They lack the glitz and glamour of sales, advertising and marketing, but they weigh just as heavily in your image.

That's not a revelation to most people in business. Though hard to define, we all intuitively know what a customer touchpoint is: any communication or interaction with your prospect or customer that helps them form an impression of your organization or brand. The range of touchpoints has grown in recent years because of digital channels in marketing and sales: e-mail, social media, and even mobile device campaigns.

Understandably, there's a lot of buzz about the importance of, and opportunities presented by, digital touchpoints with customers. In addition to online interfaces for e-commerce transactions, many organizations engage with customers through social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.), mobile device campaigns and other digital channels (like instant messaging) to connect with them as often and as easily as possible and share the information they need (and we want to give them). Technology has undeniably increased the number and variety of these touchpoints, but is it really the most important driver in creating high-quality customer engagement? Is technology what sets your brand apart from your competitors?

In a word: no. Just as we intuitively know what a touchpoint is, we know that all touchpoints are created equally because digital or otherwise, they have the potential to delight or alienate customers. Nevertheless, we don't often do much to streamline and refine the processes behind these touchpoints.

For example, approximately 70 percent of survey respondents confronted by ineffective document-driven processes – whether electronic or paper – said they would be less likely to do business with the company in the future, according to an IDC global survey commissioned by Ricoh. Sixty percent said that they would likely switch to a different company. Clearly, paying more attention to this basic touchpoint would pay huge returns, but how often does your organization overhaul its processes?

As if leaving you for a competitor weren't bad enough, disgruntled customers now have the ultimate platform for influencing other customers to do the same. More than one-third would write negative reviews about their experience on online forums, according to the same Ricoh-commissioned global survey. You can be certain that negative word of mouth will hurt your reputation and competitiveness.

"If you've been in business for more than a week, you know that if someone is happy they'll tell two friends, but if they're unhappy, they'll scream to 200. So it is with your businesses' online reputation, and how it's built," marketer and journalist Steve Faber wrote in 2012 on the blog Business to Community.

However, as social media taketh away it can also giveth back. More than two thirds of respondents to the same IDC global survey commissioned by Ricoh reported that maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of their customer-facing processes could improve revenue by an average of 10.1 percent. This includes ongoing, incremental revenue from (more) loyal customers and additional



new customer revenue stimulated by positive reviews and word of mouth.

So considering that meaningful customer contact occurs at every touchpoint, how often do companies evaluate all of their customer touchpoints to weigh their efficacy?

Effective touchpoints are a balance of people, technology and process, with the emphasis on the first. Technology has undeniably increased the number and variety of these touchpoints. Nevertheless, people are

the axis that effective customer service turns on. Your patient employee who talks customers through processes will stick in those customers' minds long after they forget how easy it was to navigate your online self-service menus.

Successfully engaging with customers requires using technology to give your employees relevant information and wrapping both of them in effective information flow processes. The last element is critical: If your processes are complex and convoluted, then your people and technology can't be as effective.

When was the last time you reviewed your processes for getting information to your employees and your customers? The global survey research showed that 56 percent of the businesses surveyed spent only one day (or less) reviewing processes, and a little over a third of the respondents admitted that they felt this was not enough time.

This may be where companies are leaving that extra 10 percent of revenue on the table. Getting the revenue off the table and in the bank can start with re-evaluating your information processes.

Start with mapping out your processes – warts and all. Identify the places that generate the most customer complaints because of inconsistent or unreliable information. Focus on the customers' needs rather than on weaknesses that don't affect them. Next, enlist subject matter experts with front-line experience to help re-design your process. Don't leave the task to IT. Their expertise is technology; they need advice from customer-facing employees to do their best work for you. This process brings together the three essential elements of effective customer touchpoints: people, technology and process. **M**

Joyce Ouellette is director, GMG services marketing and segment marketing at Ricoh Americas Corp.



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Belgacom Combines Social Media and Workflow to Deliver Service with Character

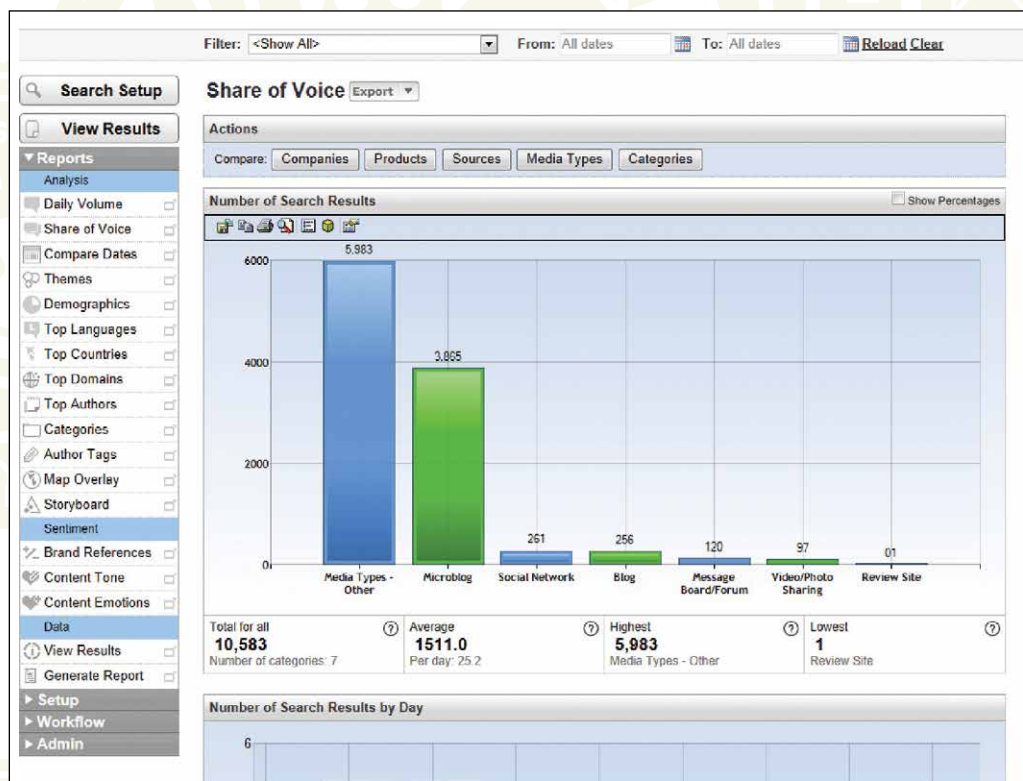
As Belgium's primary telecoms company, Belgacom provides a wide range of services to consumer and business customers including fixed lines, mobile, Internet, television, cloud and networking services. Founded in 1992 the company has almost 16,000 staff and revenues of €6.4bn.

One of the hallmarks and differentiators of Belgacom is its customer-centric approach, represented through the friendly and well-known face of the company's virtual character, Eva.

Eva has been successfully helping customers solve problems or queries online for years. Now with social media emerging as the new method for cus-

tomers to address their concerns, Belgacom was faced with the challenge of learning how to engage these customers across several social media channels, while continuing to utilize Eva as the face of its customer service program. Maintaining the same, great customer experience was paramount.

"In the early days, we could easily manage the process of dealing with customer issues, but with the explosion in social channels it soon became much harder to find the individuals and topics we needed to react to," explained Bram Leunis, product and services specialist for the E-Business division at Belgacom. "We needed a new tool to search the entire social environment and automate the way we dealt with the customer queries we found. We had been using individual, stand-alone tools, but this approach was rather limited and disjointed, as one piece of software would search across Twitter, one would search forums, etc."



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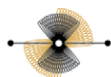


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To solve this dilemma Belgacom turned to the social media monitoring tool SDL SM2, which monitors multiple social sources, across multiple languages, including blogs, news sites, forums, and message boards. SDL SM2 scans 60 billion posts from 250 million sources, with 5-year historical data backup to deeply benchmark/analyze customer behavior.

Leunis continued: “We needed to search the social web in Dutch, French, German and English and gain an understanding of sentiment in each language – which SM2 handles with ease. Plus, most other monitoring tools base their license agreement on the number of queries performed, but with SM2 we have an unlimited number of queries. SDL’s license works by the number of search results generated, and this is straightforward to manage.”

By using a workflow within SM2, search results are directed to the relevant customer service team who needs to deal with that issue. It will also pinpoint and flag emerging search terms (or instances of where Eva should be responding).

“Different issues are routed to the right help desk based on keywords, each with its own ticket, so we can transparently see

when customer issues have been resolved,” said Leunis. “Queries can range from someone tweeting about a billing issue or asking about our broadband products on Facebook.”

Belgacom also monitors social activity for customers who attend Belgacom’s regular lunches it hosts for Twitter

users. Consumers are invited to the company’s offices to visit its Innovation Lounge, where future products and new services are showcased, such as TV for smartphones.

Belgacom can now follow what is being said during and after the event. Most people who attend are early adopters or web influencers and bloggers, so Belgacom values being able to examine their reactions and feedback any revelations into the overall marketing and product development process.

It’s also important to deliver this intelligence to the Belgacom senior management team, such as buzz analysis showing peaks in conversations, or reputation/sentiment analysis that shifts month-to-month.

“SDL SM2’s search results are also the first customer reactions we receive when the company launches a new product or service, so they are invaluable in helping decide how to communicate with customers going forward. In the long-term, being able to create internal awareness of how Belgacom’s actions are influencing customer perceptions is of major strategic importance,” added Leunis. **M**

David Clark is vice president of marketing at SDL (www.sdl.com).

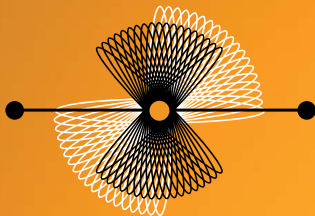


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Kunnect Does Hosted Contact Center Your Way

Kunnect wants to make it easier for organizations in a variety of industries to adopt its solutions on their own terms, so it has taken steps to make its hosted contact center offer more flexible and simple to implement.

"I've always felt one of the problems with hosted systems is you have to endure that company's flavor of doing things, and lose that customization," says Fred Côté, president of Kunnect.

But every business is unique, he adds, so Kunnect has positioned itself as a one-stop shopping source to meet all customer experience requirements.

"It's hosted, so you don't have all these capex expenses, but you can have it your way now," he says of the Kunnect solution.

The company created templates within its scripting to give help desks, merchant services, automotive outfits, fundraising campaigns, and others a head start in terms of implementation, says Côté.

Additionally, Kunnect this year delivered three enhancements to help companies that use its hosted contact center to deliver a higher caliber customer experience, Côté adds.

The first involves linking click-to-call capabilities on customer websites so they automatically place website visitors who click those links directly into contact center ACD queues. Côté says that customers who come into the contact center via click to call are mixed in with the other calls coming into the contact center.

Also new is enhanced e-mail-related functionality.

When people fill out an online request for more information, instead of just passing

that information as an e-mail along, the Kunnect solution can automatically parse that information and inject relevant data into a dynamic calling queue, with the desired time table for the call defined by the customer. The Kunnect feature also reserves an appropriate agent to this task, and provides the agent with the appropriate information he or she needs for a successful call. The goal here is to enable organizations to pursue hot leads while they're still hot, and to do that without having to source out different solutions and then do the integration between them, explains Côté.

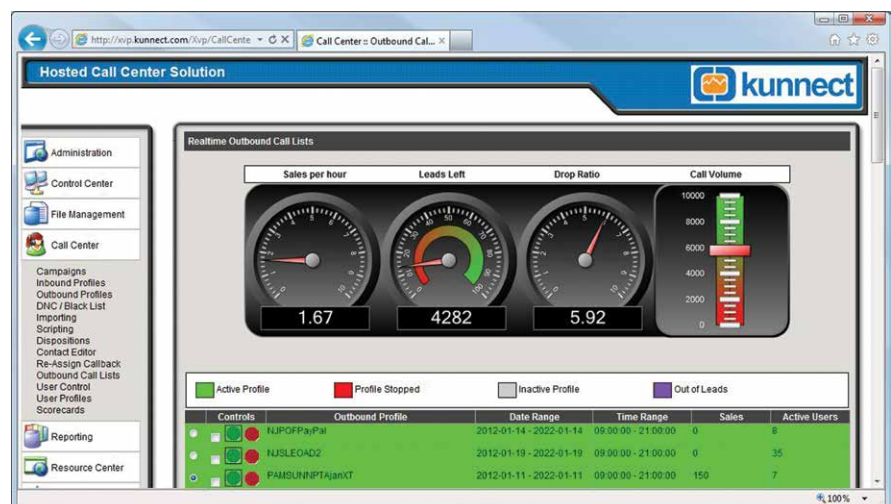
Kunnect also recently rolled out what Côté calls mobile-centric applications.

Here's an example of how those might be used. Côté says an automotive brand might have lots of dealerships with lead-generation

call centers. So Kunnect has designed for some dealerships mobile apps that enable authorized dealership sales people to log into contact center queues to receive screen pops when dynamic leads come in. With this, sales staff members can use their down time to pursue leads and, when they're ready, they can use the mobile app to easily initiate calls with prospects.

As noted in a January 2012 posting on TMCnet, the online entity of CUSTOMER magazine parent TMC, Kunnect initially came to market with a free contact center solution, in an effort that Côté at the time told CUSTOMER magazine emulated Google and Skype, which found great success based on business models involving providing free tools to the populace.

He added at the time that although Kunnect FREE, which runs on the Amazon cloud, will satiate 80 percent of call centers in the marketplace, it is positioned as a stepping stone and promotional tool for those customers that want to move up to Kunnect's for-pay hosted call center solution. **M**





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WebRTC Will Deliver a Seamless Customer Experience

Organizations tend to have a website group and a contact center group. But, in the future, it is very likely that many companies will move to integrate the two in an effort to deliver a better customer experience while at the same time lowering their costs. WebRTC is expected to be a linchpin in bringing all this together.

In the interview below Chris Vitek, president of WebRTC Strategies Inc. and a speaker at the upcoming WebRTC Conference & Expo in Atlanta, explains how and why, and what it all means for companies like yours.

What's your background?

Vitek: I've been working in the communications industry for the last 30 years. For the last 17 years I have been an independent consultant in the contact center and unified communications sectors. I currently am a member of the Board of Directors of the Society of Telecommunications Consultants and a member of the Society of Workforce Planning Professionals. Additionally, I am the editor of www.STCblog.com.

What is WebRTC?

Vitek: Web real-time communications is a new, open source communications standard that is sponsored by Google with both the IETF and W3C. Specifically, it supports browser-to-browser communications via text, file transfer, audio or video without the need to download an app. It works on

any device that supports a browser – smartphone, tablet or PC.

Many people first visit a company website before reaching out to the same company's contact center. Yet there is clearly a disconnect between website and contact center interactions today. How can WebRTC change that?

Vitek: By merging the web and telephony experience the context of a call to a contact center is greatly enhanced. Web browsing history, cookie data and information about the web page that was being viewed at the moment of connection can all be considered in framing the context of a call. IVR authentication and routing are not necessary for these calls.

WebRTC represents the opportunity to collaborate with customers in either the traditional web model or audio or video communications. This is the opportunity to enrich customer communications to make them more precise and anticipatory. Add to this the ability to use big data to formulate real-time marketing offers and



Chris Vitek

talking points that support the customer's needs. This approach can profoundly reduce mass media marketing spend and enhance customer loyalty by reducing customer effort.

One reason for the disconnect between contact centers and websites, I think, is that the contact center is a unique part of the enterprise run by a services team while the website tends to be managed by the marketing department. How can we overcome this divide?

Vitek: I do not think that this divide will be around for much longer. Marketing budgets in many enterprises dwarf that of the contact center operations. Once upper management understands that they can reduce marketing expenses by a greater amount than the contact center operations budget, these organizations will be pushed together very quickly. Currently, websites tend to map to data while contact center technologies

tend to map to people. Creating a website mapping that is consistent for both will require the input of both the marketing and contact center operations.

Do company leaders understand the need to bridge that gap?

Vitek: Right now, no. But once these leaders realize the benefits, they will start the process. In most cases this will be a next year thing to do in terms of reorganization. There may be some task forces set up this year, but the traditional budget process for enterprises is a Q4 exercise.

Look for this timing to influence most organizations. Further, look for capital expenses in these contact centers to be curtailed for the remainder of this year as a result of questions about the viability of existing contact center technology.

How do you suggest companies manage the transition that's coming between contact centers and web environments?

Vitek: Given the right approach, the transition can be smooth with minimal risk. The reorganization of marketing and contact center staff should be fairly logical. Many of these folks will have the same responsibility, but with newer, more functional tools.

From a technology perspective, there are at least six enterprise contact center product manufacturers that have plans to introduce WebRTC products this year. Additionally, there are at least 11 different manufacturers of media servers that already offer WebRTC products or are a software release away. WebRTC products will be ubiquitous by Q3, 2013 (about the time the IETF RFC will be ratified). The key will be to figure out which product fits your customers' needs the best.

In the future, should organizations treat all interactions coming from their websites and moving into their contact centers the same? If not, what are their options for identifying the most high-value interactions to make the

most efficient use of company resources while getting the most value from customer interactions?


Vitek: No. WebRTC will allow for customized routing of every call. Further, not all calls will need to be supported by the traditional ACD/IVR infrastructure. In fact, many organizations may choose to completely eliminate IVR. The traditional algorithm of longest waiting agent gets the next call may also change. WebRTC supports an offer-answer technique of call distribution that works well in non-traditional, low traffic

customer support operations. In these cases enhanced or expert support will trump the traditional high-volume screening and transferring that occurs in many contact centers.

At what stage are we in WebRTC feature availability and corporate adoption?

Vitek: I have engaged two Fortune 25 companies regarding WebRTC strategy and architecture. I have discussed this with at least one start-up operation that claims that half of the New York financial sector has active WebRTC projects under way. Further, AT&T, Telefonica and one other carrier will have WebRTC product available in the network by June.

If there's just one thing organizations need to know about WebRTC and what it means to the future of their businesses, what is that one thing?

Vitek: WebRTC will be transformational, but the big transformations will not be built by the technology providers or even start-ups, but by intelligent business people who can harness the capability to transform their business and gain significant competitive advantage. In the early days of the web/browser, the early adopters that saw using the new techniques to reduce transactions cost were able to gain market share. The webification of telecommunications with WebRTC will create the same opportunity with richer interfaces that will extend well beyond traditional enterprise communications boundaries. 

To Learn More About WebRTC

The WebRTC Conference & Expo will take place June 25-27 at the Cobb Galleria in Atlanta
For more information, visit: <http://www.webrtcworld.com/conference/>



Two Birds with One Stone

Cloud-based Contact Centers Elevate CE, Agent Productivity

Contact center managers must achieve two key goals: providing a high-quality customer experience and achieving high agent productivity levels.

To capture these two birds with one solution successfully and efficiently, contact center managers must determine how to create more customer loyalty, thereby driving profitability and improving customer experience; and achieve maximum flexibility in operations and high agent productivity.

As customers now expect easy access to information and faster problem resolution via a growing number of channels, contact center leaders need an efficient way to attain technology updates and ensure the best service is given. The powerful combination of a flexible IT infrastructure with a dynamic business strategy might sound overwhelming, but it is a necessary component for companies to satisfy these demanding, unique, and increasingly mobile customers.

Updating your contact center's technology backbone may seem daunting; however, the decision to move your contact center software to the cloud will ultimately catch these two birds with one stone – delivering great customer experiences and high agent productivity.

Bird's Eye View

Contact center leaders are steadily shifting their stance on key metrics. Rather than focusing almost exclusively on customer satisfaction, they are looking more holistically at the customer experience. So what's the difference, and how does it affect profitability?

Customers' demands change constantly, because they have the ability to receive information on multiple communications channels and respond in various ways. Tailoring how you respond to those demands creates loyalty and allows you to keep their revenue potential.

Measuring customer satisfaction on a periodic basis will not affect customer experience without closing the loop, using multiple channels when available. Real-time reaction to negative responses is critical in retaining dissatisfied customers – with the opportunity for conversion to satisfied customers.

Proactive approaches, as opposed to reactionary approaches, enhance the customer experience by providing a personalized

and enriched overall experience. Customer service used to be 100 percent inbound servicing. Today, leading organizations are creating a blend, with as much as 10 percent of their customer service as a proactive outbound touch point.

Moving your contact center to the cloud helps enable customer satisfaction by creating a nimble underlying technology platform. Your contact centers can easily add new channels and strategies, satiating the instant gratification customers crave from their experiences at the drop of a hat.

A cloud-based contact center also can handle bursts of activity during peak times, ensuring a positive experience for customers, continuously optimizing as volumes and needs fluctuate throughout the day, week, month, and year.

Making It Fly

IT teams typically perceive on-premises infrastructure to be more secure than cloud-based platforms, with greater control. This common misconception can be mitigated with statistics and evidence of the contrary.

Financial leaders must wrap their heads around the associated changes in cost structure. A cloud strategy will eliminate large capital expenditures and continuous maintenance and upgrade expenses while evolving to recurring, smaller operating expenses.

Contact center managers who oversee the enormous demands of running a contact center typically have concerns about changes that might jeopardize their department's performance metrics or change key processes. Success stories that showcase how other contact centers have made the leap into the cloud can mitigate their apprehension toward this approach.

By educating those who can positively impact a contact center, they will understand these concerns are easily overcome. Many organizations have already proven this to be the case. Ultimately the right cloud-based customer experience solution will transform traditional call centers into cross-channel interaction centers. Shifting contact centers into the cloud will deliver increased productivity and success for agents while providing customers the ability to communicate with businesses in their preferred channels. **M**

Matt Edmunds is senior vice president and general manager of the contact center business unit at SoundBite Communications (www.soundbite.com).

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Empower Your CSRs for First-Call Success

Today's tech-savvy consumers expect immediate answers from the moment they make a purchase to the moment the product arrives at their doorstep. Meeting those expectations demands seamless sharing of information all along the sales-and-service chain, including the field workforce delivering the product, installing it or repairing it.

According to a recent survey conducted by NICE Systems, 50 percent of customers calling a CSR and 42 percent of those contacting a branch office cite first-call resolution as their primary reason for reaching out. And 40 percent expect the person at the other end to know everything about their previous interactions with the company, regardless of channel.

This demand for one-and-done problem resolution by anyone in the organization forces businesses to rethink their entire approach to customer service. Too often, companies silo customer-facing functions; sales staff doesn't share information with customer service; and customer service doesn't share with the field service staff.

But, as the statistics above indicate, customers don't silo their expectations. Whatever problem they raise, they don't think of it as a sales issue or CRM issue or a field service issue; they just want it addressed, and they're just as likely to seek an answer from the salesperson who sold them the product as they are from the customer help line. As Kate Leggett, an analyst at Forrester Research specializing in customer service strategies, has written, "Customer service does not need to be exceptional, but just needs to be frictionless, easily and efficiently delivering answers."

Ignoring such advice comes at a high price. According to a recent report by Genesys, poor customer service costs U.S. businesses an estimated \$85 billion per year in abandoned purchases or defections to other providers. Not coincidentally, industries that rely heavily on field workforces for the delivery of their product prove particularly vulnerable to customer service-related churn. For example, cable and satellite TV providers around the world lose \$37 billion annually; broadband Internet providers, \$36 billion; and other telecommunications firms, \$33 billion.

Fortunately, just as technology has opened new communications channels between companies and their customers, it can also forge

new connections between intra-company silos. Sophisticated software for managing field services provides a key piece of the puzzle, enhancing the service experience all the way to customers' front doors. Integrated with the CRM and other systems, it can now:

- **Schedule appointments at customers' convenience**

A call center rep should have the capability of booking an appointment or even creating a work order and scheduling associated appointments as easily as making dinner reservations online. Customers shouldn't need to wait for a callback to set up service.

- **Reduce waiting**

"Our service personnel will arrive at your home between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m." That script is so last century. By collecting real-time data and applying predictive analytics, software can now narrow the customer's wait window to an hour – and route the field service employee on time with 96 percent consistency.

- **Communicate interactively and transparently on multiple channels**

Automatically giving customers a day-before or day-of reminder extends simple courtesy – and cuts costly no-shows in half. Customers should be able to choose the channel (voice, text, e-mail or social media) for their reminder and have the ability to become a part of the process, to confirm, cancel or reschedule the appointment on their own via the same channel.

Better yet, let customers track their field service rep online. Thanks to location-aware apps that collect data on mobile employees, customers can now log onto a website, pinpoint the location of the field rep headed toward their home in real time, and even see a photo of who will show up at their door – adding to their sense of security. That reduces "Where's my service?" calls by as much as 70 percent.

- **Provide end-to-end visibility**

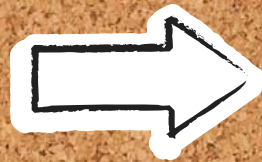
Integrating with CRM and other systems, the right field service management software gives everyone along the sales and service chain a real-time view of what's happening in the field. To ask about the status of a delivery or repair, will a consumer call customer service, or the salesperson at the branch office? It doesn't matter. Anyone in the organization can answer the question precisely, accurately and confidently.

As the last direct face-to-face contact with a customer during any transaction, field service teams literally go the final mile. Connecting them to sales, CSRs and other areas is no longer a luxury. It's a necessity. **M**

Jeff Wartgow is vice president of channels and alliances at TOA Technologies (www.toatech.com).

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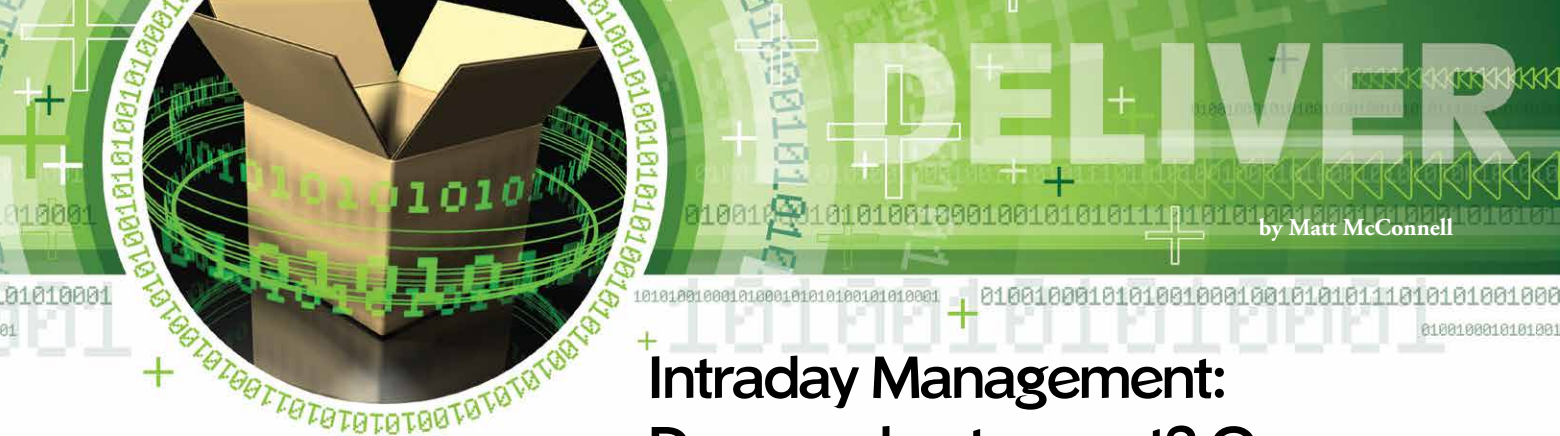
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WE GET THE CLOUD



Intraday Management: Do you plan to react? Or react to your plan?

Despite the detailed planning to ensure staff levels meet customer demand on any given day, any number of events can occur and consequently add additional obstacles for workforce managers. These unexpected events include anything from severe weather that prevents agents from commuting to work, to a product recall that drastically increases the number of customer calls for an extended period of time.

Currently, managers respond to these types of issues by taking the hit to service levels if there's not a plan in place, manually contacting at-home workers or centers in other locations to pick up the slack for weather events to take one example. Alternatively contact centers can choose to overstaff to some extent or take time away from agent development (or any other activities agents may be doing) to help cover the spike in call volume.

This intraday scramble of finding more bodies to cover more calls or constantly scheduling and rescheduling agents' activities based on call volume is costly and ineffective. But what if your contact center had reflexes that allowed you to respond to these unexpected events with ease?

Developing business reflexes

Smart contact centers are using intraday management technology – like a muscle reflex – to help them respond to unexpected activities and events. By complementing other contact center technologies, including workforce management, intraday management technology allows contact centers to stay productive despite unforeseen events and find opportunities for improvement across the contact center.

Contact center managers can use intraday management technology to positively impact contact centers in the following areas:

Task management

Dynamically deliver coaching, training, back office, communications, and other off-phone activities during available time through the identification and redistribution of aggregated idle time.

Staffing

Manage overstaffing or understaffing with automated offers of over-time and voluntary time off determined by specific attributes that, for example, would offer voluntary time off to agents who have not received offers for voluntary time off within a designated timeframe.

Alerts and notifications

Send alerts and notifications based on pre-defined business conditions such as social media posts with trending keywords or calls with longer than average handle times.

Queue management

Update queue assignments to manage capacity or reflect updated skills.

For a large, global outsourcer, Convergys, business includes planning for the unplanned. Convergys utilizes intraday task management technology to help address the “intraday scramble” and automate the intraday scheduling of agent activities during available time. The BPO uses intraday management technology to pool the tiny pockets of idle time and send the appropriate agent his or her prioritized off-phone activities based on pre-defined business rules, when intraday conditions allow. It also allows Convergys to set different thresholds for different types of activities, giving the company more flexibility in how and when it delivers client training as compared to internal training, for example.

Convergys applied this technology to several programs within its organization and recognized significant results including: the deployment of 11,000 hours of training in one month; an increase in agent training compliance from 25 percent to 46 percent; and a 13 percent improvement to its CSAT “very satisfied” score, among many others.

Use business reflexes to react purposefully

The possible ways for contact centers to improve response times and operational efficiencies are virtually endless using the business reflexes that intraday management offers. Unexpected events touch every business, but the ability to respond to those events is what ensures success. It means the difference between meeting the needs and wants of customers and treading water just to stay afloat.

When considering whether or not intraday management could benefit your contact center, evaluate how you're able to respond to events that do not align to your schedule. Are your responses knee-jerk reactions, or can you make adjustments that complement service and staff levels? Intraday management gives you the control you need to manage whatever comes your way.

Matt McConnell is CEO of Intradiem (www.intradiem.com).



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Strategic
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A Better Predictive Dialer/Call Center Solution

MDLsolutions Delivers on Affordability, Ease-of-Use & Support

Mid-sized companies looking for an affordable call center solution, one that has a comprehensive feature set, comes with U.S.-based support, and doesn't require a high level of technical expertise to launch and maintain, should take a look at MDLsolutions Inc.

"And we don't sacrifice great support," he adds.

This predictive dialer/call center solution is a Windows/software-based SIP/VoIP dialer/call center solution that runs on a SQL database, in combination with the Windows/software based 3CX IP PBX, to enable businesses to keep in contact with their clients effectively; for call centers of various sizes, or to serve as a stand-alone automated dialer. It scales easily from four to 500 agents.

The solution consists of four software applications components: the Dialer/Predictive Dialer, the Agent Interface, the Call Center Manager Dashboard, and the 3CX IP PBX using the MDL/3CX plug-in.

The Predictive Dialer is installed on its own Windows computer/server and includes its own SQL database, management reporting, SIP/RTP (VoIP) call/registration functionality, import/export functionality, call recording, call transfer functionality, voice mail/fax machine detection, prompt play, DTMF capture, call list management and also allows clients to integrate their products using the Dialers/Predictive Dialers open SQL database. The predictive dialer calls through the 3CX IP phone system or directly through a VoIP provider/VoIP gateway, depending on the customers' configuration/needs.

The Agent Interface sits on every agent's workstation and displays the information of the person being called. That allows the agent to see the history and update the person's information. This Agent Interface also has many other features that help the agents maintain accurate records, make timely call-backs, and do their job more efficiently.

MDLsolutions offers its predictive dialer/call center as a software license/premises-based solution. The call center solution works with the 3CX IP PBX phone system, and sells for \$159 per agent/\$799 first year of support (required), and there's no upfront fee or recurring monthly charges.

This call center's outstanding advantage is its competitive cost and ease-of-use, which has enabled MDLsolutions to win hundreds of customers in the predictive dialer/call center market, says Langman.

Langman founded MDLsolutions in 2002 after having created a complete IP PBX and call center product for a mortgage company, which contracted him to do the job. That engagement involved him creating a complete solution based on Aculab boards, and resulted in a custom product that worked great, but only for a call center in the mortgage service industry, that had a sufficient budget for the hardware and onsite support.

So Langman – who brings almost two decades of experience working in IT/telecom with Aculab, Avaya, Brooktrout (Cantata), Cisco, Mitel, NMS, Nortel, Patton, Aastra and ShoreTel – used that experience and his industry knowledge to create an affordable predictive dialer/call center solution, that unlike offers from some big players in the market, does not require a large amount of configuration, technical expertise, or cash outlay.

"With many satisfied customers, MDLsolutions continues to provide quality IT telecom/VoIP solutions at truly affordable prices," says Langman. "We are aware that our clients need a wide array of features/functionality, reliability and true voice quality, not the limitations of echoes, and sound delays of past VoIP systems.

"With our many partnerships, products and expertise," he concludes, "we can provide your business with a call center that is full featured, scalable, and one that can be custom tailored and integrated with almost any 3rd party solution on the market."

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Using a Multichannel Strategy to Deliver an Exceptional Customer Experience

10 things to consider when building a multichannel strategy

It's a dilemma in call centers everywhere. How do you provide a superior customer experience, and still keep costs under control? Customer satisfaction metrics such as Net Promoter Score can help, although a more telling metric is the call deflection rate and moving customers to low-cost channels. Here are 10 objectives that, working together, can help your call center create a cost-effective multichannel engagement and improve the customer relationship lifecycle.

1. Have a "data filter" for all channels

In multichannel engagement, certain channels are affected by "noise." Social media is a good example with all of the extracurricular noise that travels through social networks. A "data filter" strategy – a distinct set of criteria, from influencers to sentiment, and from trends to categorization of conversations – can help call centers discern critical consumer information from noise. This strategy, which should be applied to all channels, should also include supplemental workflows, business processes, and cost-reducing options such as IVR and eServices to limit call center overloads.

2. Improve website traffic and page views

Callback, co-browsing, chat, and email can increase page views and conversion rates on your website, and should be interwoven with any analytics or marketing automation tools being used. An example here is a consumer visiting your website after having a positive conversation on Twitter regarding your company. Thanks to your "data filter," the call center agent knows about the consumer's Twitter experience, and is well-prepared to engage the person via chat or co-browsing. The customer experience then becomes more personalized and rewarding.

3. Implement a knowledge base

Companies have the challenge of organizing and providing content to help customers resolve problems – FAQs, how-to's, comments, documents, videos, podcasts, and so on. This content should be organized in a knowledge base, with articles of information classified by channel, type of problem, and other relevant criteria. Consumers can enhance information, collaborate for solutions, and provide expert knowledge to help other consumers, thereby decreasing customer support costs.

4. Use mobile applications

With consumers increasingly turning to tablets and smart-

phones, the multichannel strategy must integrate mobile applications as much as possible. Preferred mobile apps are those that lower the cost of customer service, such as being able to "face time" with a consumer to help troubleshoot a problem. Also preferred are mobile apps that provide content and transactions, allowing the consumer to bypass the call center. An added value to both types of mobile applications is to include options to chat, call, or email directly from the app.

5. Integrate the call center with forums and communities

Blogs and public forums such as Yahoo! Answers and YouTube typically provide content that companies don't include on their website. (Most companies' sites incorporate no knowledge base or content that encompasses consumer reviews, collaboration, and feedback.) To enhance your multichannel strategy, consider incorporating your company's own forums and communities as part of the call center. This allows for better collaboration between the company and consumers, can improve the call deflection rate, and can increase web page views and the number of advocates.

6. Establish business processes and workflow

"Data filters," channels, integration points, customer data and the knowledge base must all work together to offer a suitable customer experience. This is particularly important when enforcing processes to maximize or maintain the relationship with the consumer. In the call center, a "business process platform" can help synchronize all transactions and business rules as needed.

7. Use technology that's agile in the cloud or on-premises

Whether collections, sales, support, BPO, etc., the flexibility, and agility, to provide service via any type of call center is crucial. Call centers must therefore be able to deploy new technology quickly, in the cloud or on-premises, in any geography, for any channel, and for any customer segment.

8. Use technology that offers all-inclusive functionality

Best-of-breed technology is critical to companies in vertical markets, such as insurance companies and banks. But when companies require turnkey solutions for specific markets or geographies, "all-in-one" call center functionality is best. Having one technology platform for workforce management, monitoring, IVR, outbound dialing and other call center functions can streamline operations and enhance the customer experience – while reducing costs and deployment headaches.

9. Implement unified communications

Being able to combine voice, data, instant messaging, queues,



emails, processes, workforce management, routing, and quality control is key to managing the customer relationship based on common analytics and reports. This unified communications approach leads to faster deployments, and provides one source of reporting on a single platform.

10. Go beyond CTI and IVR, integrate the CRM application

CTI and IVR processes are the most common ways to integrate CRM systems with the call center. Companies need to be more effective, however, in providing CRM data to the call center agent. They need to incorporate customer metrics, surveys, and a 360-degree view of the customer and business logic. The more customer data agents have, the better equipped they are to assist the consumer.

In the end, a customer experience strategy is all about the culture of the company, and companies must lead by using technology to deliver a differentiator in the market. **M**

Download the complete whitepaper to learn more:

Using a Multichannel Strategy to Deliver an Exceptional Customer Experience:

10 things to consider when building a multichannel strategy

www.inin.com/whitepapers

Where to start?

1. Educate your company, including non-call center groups such as IT, in the latest customer experience trends and methodologies.
2. Assess your company's culture and processes to see where these 10 recommendations fit in relation to your business needs.
3. Validate what's worked, and what hasn't worked, with previous technologies for the customer experience.
4. Gather requirements based on your processes related to the customer relationship cycle.
5. Set objectives, goals, and metrics.
6. Prepare an action plan and select your call center technology.
7. Conduct a pilot program.
8. Implement in phases.
9. Validate results, and learn from each phase.



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TMC Congratulates CRM Excellence Award Winners

CRM solutions help businesses manage interactions with current and potential customers. So, as customer experience has moved center stage, so have CRM solutions.

As customer behavior and requirements have evolved – and the way people are communicating has changed – so have many CRM solutions. For example, some companies in this space now deliver CRM products and services that enable different departments within an organization to access and share information. Also, CRM is front and center as more companies adopt multi-channel customer contact strategies that expand beyond voice, e-mail and chat to include mobile and social networking. And while many CRM systems traditionally have targeted the largest companies, new solutions in this space now speak to the needs of small and medium businesses, which require more ease of use, and low-cost or no-cost upfront fees.

TechNavio's analysts forecast the Global Telecom CRM market to grow at a CAGR of 5 percent from 2011 to 2015.

Gartner, meanwhile, reports that there are 110 CRM applications in the Apple App Store and 47 in the Android App Store. Mobile CRM will grow 500 percent by 2014. Social CRM will reach \$1 billion in worldwide sales by the end of 2012, making up 8 percent of CRM spending this year. And half of all CRM applications will be web-based by 2016.

Here is a list of this year's CRM Excellence Award Winners, which stand to benefit handsomely from these trends. **M**

Agero
SMART idea

Allstate Roadside Services
Single Call Solution

Alorica
Alorica Helix

Ameridial Inc.
Virtual School Enrollment and Support

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Five9 Virtual Call Center

Infinite Convergence Solutions
Enterprise Messaging Service

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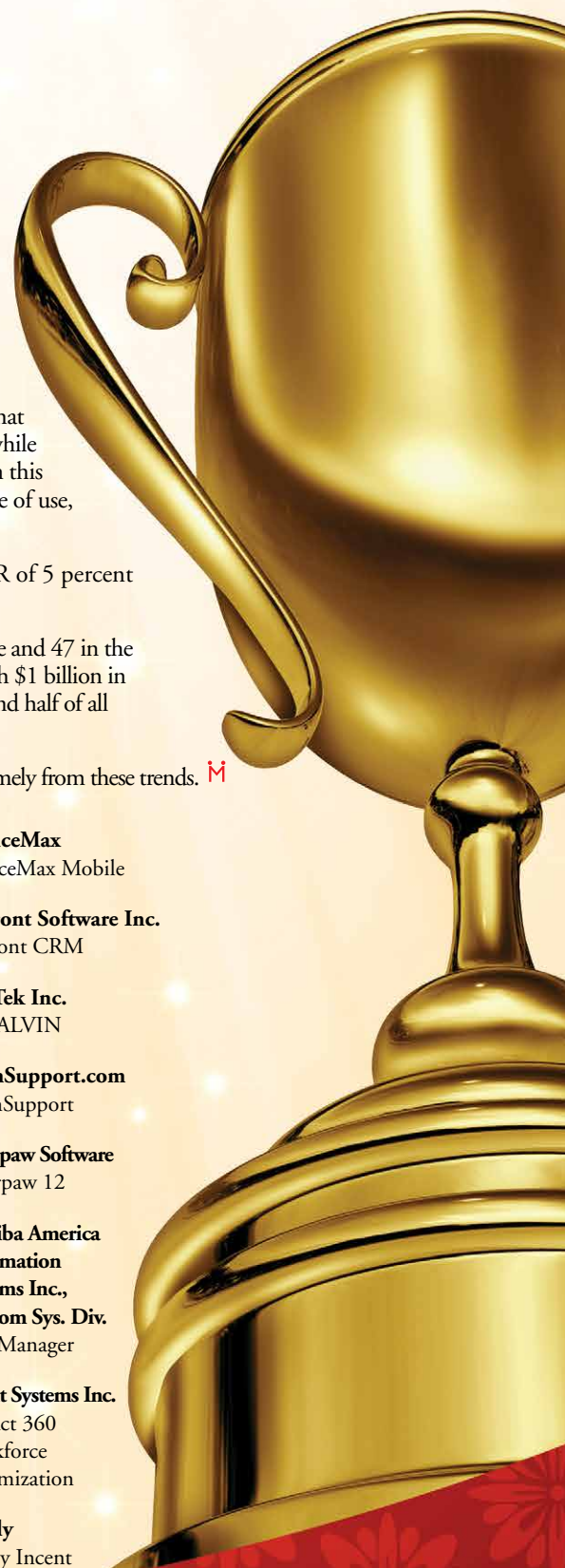
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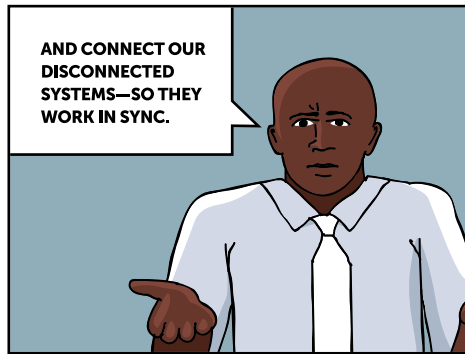
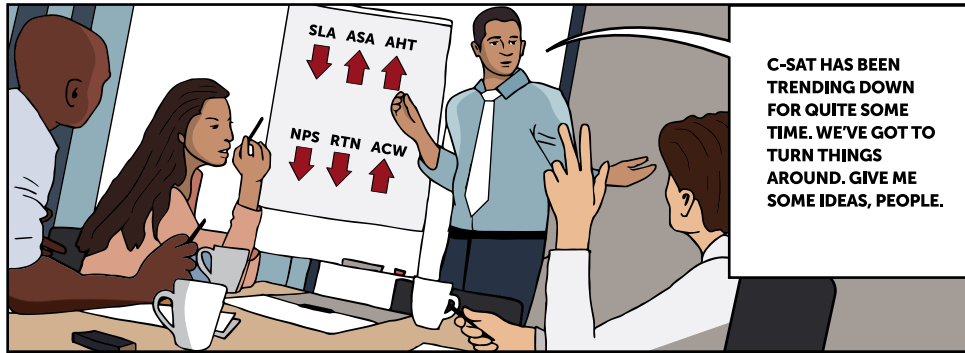
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