Leveraging Digital Channels

WHAT ARE DIGITAL CHANNELS?

There's a reason that modern contact centers are referred to as such, rather than "call centers." The latter term is somewhat limiting; many of today's customers prefer to communicate via other methods.

Here are a few reasons why customers might expect – and in many cases demand – alternative means of contacting a company, be it the customer care team, the sales group, client or patient services, or nearly any other group that interacts with the public
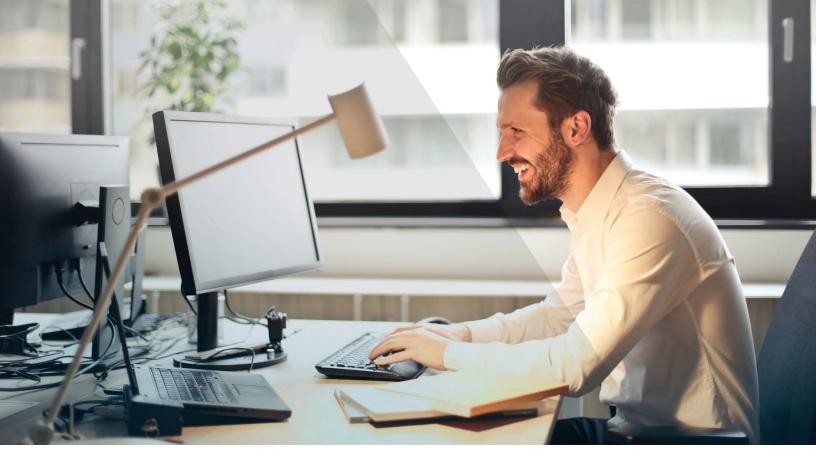
- **Multi-tasking:** a phone conversation, while efficient, demands a great deal of concentration. It's difficult to do anything in the background without the other party hearing awkward silence (or a bunch of noise, as the case may be). Digital channels allow the customer to tackle other tasks, leave the room and return in a few minutes, or even carry the conversation in their pocket as they go about their day.

- **Traceability:** most people mean what they say, but some customers are leery of handling important, high-value requests purely over the phone. Written conversation records are easy to find later, unquestionably accurate, and searchable – the agent or customer can quickly pull up a keyword after the fact.

- **Complex requests:** some customer inquiries produce a long list of touchpoints (sometimes referred to as "customer journey") over the span of days, weeks, months, or sometimes even years. In scenarios where the customer has access to the case/ticketing system details, it can be easier to reference specific conversations, dates, and attachments using digital channels as compared to voice.

- **Personal preference:** many customers simply don't like talking on the phone, and will default to another medium wherever they have the choice. Having the option for digital channels means a better chance of catering to these customers.

WHAT TYPES OF CONTACT CENTERS FEATURE DIGITAL CHANNELS?

Far from a one-size function, contact centers come in several different "flavours."

- **Voice – inbound.** The only communication channel available is voice, and the center accepts only inbound voice calls (agents cannot call out). The term "call center" is most commonly applied to this setup. Very common in organizations that handle functions such as sales and support via a reactive model, done through centralized team. The emphasis is typically on simpler, more transactional requests that can be resolved relatively quickly over the phone.

- **Voice – inbound and outbound.** The communication channel is still voice, but agents can make outbound dials, either manually and/or via some type of automated scheme. Agents may use outbound calls to generate sales, handle more complex requests, conduct surveys, and more.

- **Multi-channel – inbound.** This is where digital channels start to appear. Like the first category, the purpose of the center is still to handle inbound requests, but customers receive more options for how they send those requests. SMS, web chat, and e-mail are common media.

- **Multi-channel – inbound and outbound.** The final category represents the robust modern contact center, with bidirectional interactions (customer to agent and agent to customer) and multiple digital channels. Voice, SMS, web chat, e-mail, and even social media integration are all common. Agents in this schema are generally empowered to perform a wide range of tasks, and leverage the digital channels to go beyond reactive and become truly proactive, on everything from sales to support to raising awareness. Integrations with various CRMs and other business productivity suites are commonplace, partly due to the increasing complexity and detail of the customer interactions.

DIGITAL CHANNELS IN CONTACT CENTER

Contact Center offers the following forms of digital channels, to help your contact center respond to the widest possible range of customer preferences and deliver outstanding customer experience across the entire communications spectrum.

- **Web chat.** Web chat can be embedded on any website, allowing customers to self-select into this mode of communication. Both reactive (reacts to customer request) and proactive (chat option is proactively presented before the customer requests it) are available. Embedded chat windows can be styled to suit any website, and a proactive self-service mode allows customers to get answers to common questions even when an agent isn't available.

- **SMS.** Contact center administrators can incorporate a range of SMS functions. Messages may be routed to e-mail addresses or to agent chat queues. When routing to queues, the recent message history can be delivered to the agent for additional context. Rounding out the package is SMS to web endpoint mapping, allowing companies to automatically capture various details of interaction outcomes (e.g. was the delivery successful, what action did the customer take, etc.)

- **E-mail.** Agents can both send and receive e-mails, with a composition window built into the software. Several e-mail routing schemes are available, including default, routing to the last agent who handled a given inquiry, and routing by key word or key phrase. Response templates are also offered, with options for manual and auto-response. E-mails interactions can be suspended for review and resumed afterwards,

- **E-mail via social.** The range of modern social media is vast, and it's difficult to cater to every possible platform preference. However, Contact Center solves for many common use cases by capturing customer messages (as e-mails) from Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The integration receives inquiries sent via these platforms, and routes them to an e-mail queue to be answered by an agent.

DYNAMIC NOTIFICATIONS

Not a channel per se but an inbound and outbound, multi-channel suite, Dynamic Notifications turns the Contact Center into a bidirectional communications hub.

With automated outbound notifications across voice, SMS, and e-mail channels, customers can craft campaigns ranging from straightforward reminders to longer-term, multi-touch marketing - while also enhancing engagement by capturing and actioning customer responses.

Several use cases for Dynamic Notifications follow.

• **Healthcare**: appointment reminders, pre-screening questions, large-scale health notices

• **Education:** campus orientation, general information, weather alerts, emergency alerts

• **Real Estate:** open houses, visits, top-of-mind newsletters

• **Service industries:** installation reminders, outage notifications, network upgrades

• **Transportation:** pick-up reminders, delivery notifications, scheduling

Dynamic Notifications capabilities include:

• Voice, SMS, and email capable

• Customizable and intuitive

• Buildable library of message phrase templates

• Scalable to very high message volumes

• Integrated with Contact Center features

• Live dashboard reporting on campaign status

• Ability to export reporting on completed campaigns

• Text-to-speech voice notifications in 6 "voices" with English, French, and Spanish options

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