Improve the Customer Experience from the Inside Out. Here's How.

TechTarget | **Custom Media**

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Enhancing internal tools to improve the customer experience

Improving the customer experience is a near-universal business goal. As it has become simpler for customers to switch brands, providing the best customer experience has become a key differentiator for businesses. Today's digital consumers act and buy very differently from those just a few years ago. Modern customers use many communications channels, interact using many devices, and want it all to be seamless, efficient and fast. All these changes make legacy customer-facing tools a poor match for today's consumer.

Legacy tools were never designed to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's customer. Older systems are often siloed by channel type (such as voice, email, SMS and the like), making cross-channel interaction frustratingly difficult, if not impossible. Customers must repeat information multiple times to multiple agents. Data that could enhance customer interactions is often trapped and inaccessible. Contact center agents bear the brunt of customer dissatisfaction when their systems and tools exacerbate a poor experience rather than improve it.

Many organizations want new tools that can proactively enhance the customer experience. Best-in-class solutions pre-inform agents about customers, better preparing them to address customers' immediate and future needs. They also provide agents with a comprehensive omnichannel view, eliminating blind spots. In addition, the best tools provide real-time insights that help agents deliver memorable experiences that build brand loyalty. The key to these modern tools is the effective use of data and intelligence to substantially improve the agent and customer experience.

When agents get real-time cues from conversational intelligence, they become smarter in the moment and can deliver far greater value to customers.

Three concrete practices that improve the customer experience from the inside out

Every business must consider new tools to improve customer experience. However, the choices can be overwhelming. To simplify moving forward, this white paper details three specific practices that deliver outsized payback and have the largest positive impact on both the customer and agent experience.

1. A single, integrated desktop for contact center agents

When agents switch between apps, wait for apps to load or try to figure out which app is required in the moment, about the only possible outcome for the customer is a negative experience. The customer who has to wait for the agent's screen to load or is required to re-enter or repeat information is an unhappy customer. The agent, meanwhile, is frustrated and annoyed because helping customers is clumsy and takes too long. A modern contact center demands a system that puts all relevant tools and information on one desktop screen. A single desktop lets agents cross-utilize information to further enhance the customer experience.

The benefits of this single environment are many. Key among these are:

- **Access to all relevant customer information at once —** Customers no longer must repeat information. Best-in-class systems automatically retrieve this data prior to calls being connected to agents.

- **No wait time for screen switching —** Waiting for apps or screens to load is a poor experience. A single, integrated desktop minimizes or eliminates wait time.

- **Better agent responsiveness and performance —** With only a single desktop to access tools and relevant customer information, agents get the information they need to resolve calls much faster.

- **Proactive delivery of what agents really need —** It is possible to build information "paths" or interaction streams that anticipate customer and agent needs and proactively deliver relevant apps and information.

Another important benefit of a single agent desktop is simpler integration with other systems, such as CRM, billing, back-office systems and shipping. In many legacy systems, there are so many different apps and tools that it can be extremely difficult to build a single agent desktop.

2. Conversational intelligence technology

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing how applications work. The use of real-time AI to optimize outcomes of customer calls is often referred to as conversational intelligence. It uses proven algorithms and intelligence to provide a real-time evaluation and analysis of the call, finding keywords that might indicate a problem, a potential upsell or other action to improve the customer interaction. When agents get real-time cues from conversational intelligence, they become smarter in the moment and can deliver far greater value to customers.
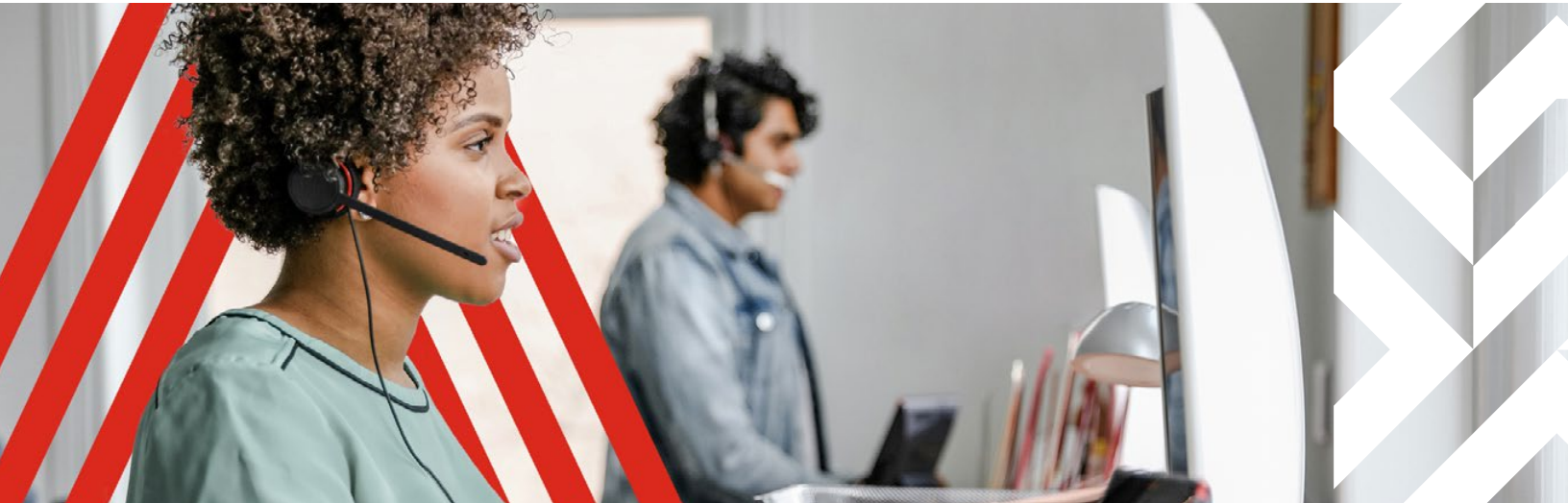
Conversational intelligence also helps ensure that internal and external regulations or policies are consistently implemented and followed.

With conversational intelligence, agents can focus more on callers, while relying on the system to analyze and suggest actions and make sure that nothing is missed during the call. Customers notice when agents focus on them rather than being distracted, even slightly, by some pending action, be it finding information or accessing other systems—and that translates into a better customer experience.

Conversational intelligence tools are able to surface hidden or unseen issues during customer calls. This makes them a powerful tool for doing thorough discovery during calls, which makes it much more likely that one call can answer the customer's questions and resolve and manage the customer's concerns, eliminating the need for multiple touches. Shorter and more effective interactions with the brand help lead to higher customer satisfaction scores.

Another important benefit of conversational intelligence is that it can accurately identify underlying sentiment during the interaction, providing important insights about the customer's state of mind. An agent's judgment will be necessarily subjective, but AI brings consistency to those times when escalation or other actions are needed to produce a positive interaction. Perhaps even more important, difficult interactions can be identified very quickly, allowing action to be taken before emotions spiral out of control.

Conversational intelligence also helps ensure that internal and external regulations or policies are consistently implemented and followed. The system can immediately identify when interactions have elements that may contravene internal policies or compliance demands. Because conversational intelligence records, transcribes and analyzes each voice conversation in real time, keywords or phrases that might indicate something is amiss are caught immediately. Agents can change, modify or update their language with the customer if a problem is flagged, minimizing the impact of a negative issue. Additionally, supervisors can review the call recording with the agent to improve compliance skills.

Agents get the knowledge they need to build skills and feel more empowered to deliver on your customer experience vision.

3. New tools and capabilities that improve the experience for both the customer and the agent

Perhaps the most overlooked benefit of enhancing the customer experience from the inside out is that, when agents are empowered with new capabilities and tools, agents deliver better service. Quite simply, when agents know they have been provided with the best systems, they are more motivated, turnover is reduced, their job satisfaction improves, and they deliver a better customer experience.

Many important capabilities are now available and offer organizations the ability to fundamentally improve the customer experience. Each industry may prioritize these capabilities differently, but the following capabilities can provide measurable value:

- **Immediate contextual access to the knowledge management system** — Simplifying and reducing the time necessary to get answers to complex customer questions drives a better overall experience. Contextual access in real time is critical to enhancing the interaction.

- **Usable real-time call analytics** — Assisting agents with relevant analytics information during calls empowers them and allows them to better focus on delivering an optimal customer experience.

- **Delivery of customer-specific information and intelligence, with accurate routing prior to engagement** — Pre-informing the agent about the specific customer enables the agent to be more responsive and saves customer time. The interaction focuses on the issue, not triage steps.

- **Integrated e-learning and coaching** — Helps contact centers improve agent performance by initiating, delivering and following up on personalized coaching sessions that are linked with key elements of performance, such as quality evaluation scores. Agents get the exact e-learning assignments they need to improve skills highlighted by performance metrics. Agents get the knowledge they need to build skills and feel more empowered to deliver on your customer experience vision.

- **Elimination of omnichannel blind spots** — One of the chief complaints of agents is that they have no information about earlier interactions customers have had, regardless of prior interaction channel. Providing the agent with an omnichannel perspective that shows earlier customer journey touchpoints such as voice, email and web chat interactions allows them to truly "know" the customer and personalize each interaction.

- **Fewer blind escalations** — Too often, calls are escalated beyond the agent without attendant information about the customer. This forces customers to repeat themselves, creating an even more negative experience.

- **Automated background/after-call assistance for agents** — Many agents report a high degree of frustration when they must complete duplicate work to finish after-call reports or notes. In extreme cases, some agents resort to doing less on calls than they should to reduce after-call workload. Automating these after-call tasks not only allows agents to spend more time with customers but can also let them focus on optimizing the interaction to increase customer loyalty.

About Avaya

Businesses are built on the experiences they provide and every day millions of those experiences are built by Avaya (NYSE:AVYA). For over one hundred years, we've enabled organizations around the globe to win—by creating intelligent communications experiences for customers and employees. Avaya builds open, converged and innovative solutions to enhance and simplify communications and collaboration—in the cloud, on premise, or a hybrid of both. To grow your business, we're committed to innovation, partnership, and a relentless focus on what's next. We're the technology company you trust to help you deliver Experiences that Matter. Visit us at www.avaya.com/en.

Key takeaways

More and more, organizations are using their customer experience capabilities as a competitive differentiator. To meet the competitive threat, businesses must do all they can to improve the customer experience they deliver as rapidly as possible. For this reason, enhancing internal tools and giving agents better and expanded capabilities is quickly becoming a critical priority.

Avaya, a leading provider of solutions that improve the customer and employee experience, is delivering the most up-to-date capabilities to make this possible. The offering includes a single, modern, integrated agent desktop that delivers the comprehensive capabilities necessary to upgrade the customer and agent experience. Avaya's conversational intelligence offering completely changes the game, delivering real-time analytics and input that dramatically improves what agents can do for the customer *during* the call, in the moment. And coupling these solutions with other Avaya capabilities, such as equipping agents with contextual knowledge management, real-time analytics, customer journey touchpoints, e-learning and more, will help you improve both the agent and customer experience. For more information on how Avaya can provide the tools to improve your customer experience from the inside out, please visit **www.avaya.com**.

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