



Future Technology: Customer Contact in the years to 2012

A paper for CCA Industry Council



GALLUP



Ipsos MORI



CCA INDUSTRY COUNCIL

CCA Industry Council drives the contact centre industry’s research agenda, by sharing information from all sectors to ensure the research approach, debate and output provides the pathway for the future in terms of new thinking and strategies.

An initial meeting was held when 30 leading players from industry debated ‘Changing the Rules’. From this debate it is clear there is a need to create ‘Beyond Operational Efficiency’ – a new vision for how customer contact centres should be repositioned within organisation, placing the customer at the heart of the business.

The Industry Council consists of an exclusive group of representatives from leading organisations who are committed to providing this input whilst themselves benefiting from a unique package of: leading edge research, networking, government influencing opportunities and establishing their profile as ‘Leaders of the Future’.

Expert academic and private sector facilitators will draw on leading edge debate and invite participation from other recognised research houses and agencies to engage with Industry Council to ensure the group deliver leading edge analysis.

As the independent professional body, CCA has a partnership with leading organisations and groups to access relevant research and information for the development of the Industry Council. CCA’s vision is for contact centres to be repositioned within organisations to reflect the increasing complexity and competitor challenges arising from the dominance of this channel.

CCA are indebted to the efforts of the Foundation Partner Group who have formed the backbone of activity in taking forward the development of the CCA Global Standard[®] and creating the vision for CCA Industry Council. These organisations from all sectors, public and private, each have a significant impact on the contact centre market-place.

FOUNDATION PARTNERS



Foreword from Rob Pike, Chair of CCA Industry Council



During the past 18 months CCA Industry Council has looked at many key questions facing the contact centre industry. Several topics have been covered, from getting the DNA of the customer into the boardroom, to understanding the impact of automation on the agent. We have carefully considered the impact of change with the able assistance of the Research Council.

For this quarter, we set out to answer the question “is there an iPod equivalent for the customer contact industry?” In doing so, we were conscious that there may not be something as significant as the iPod in customer contact, but an exploration of key technology changes is the first step in understanding how the future might develop.

Our time horizon being the next 3 to 5 years, we wanted to understand what technological developments have the potential to impact end-to-end customer contact. Obvious areas include front-end channel interface, workflow management and scheduling, database management and analysis, networks and virtualisation. We also sought to share learnings about successful deployment of new technology in customer contact and also to remember the changing customer.

The results of our debate and the contributed papers have centred on how people communicate with a company, how they are handled, and followed up by the organisation when the call gets through. The first is all about what external channels of communication the organisation provides and the second is concerned with the quality and level of support provided to agents and web-based processes.

Although we have not (knowingly!) identified the equivalent of the iPod for customer contact, we have established that the future is already here in terms of technology. Advanced contact centres today are using the technologies, such as IM and voice analytics, which the majority will be using in five years time. For the director needing to develop strategy, I’m sure the papers will provide useful guidance and advice.

Once again we are indebted to the work of CCA Foundation Partners who have been the catalyst of CCA’s evolution to become the present day Customer Contact Association. Their dedication has helped create CCA Industry Council, a unique think-tank which is challenged with finding solutions to ensure that the customer is placed at the heart of an organisation’s operations.

We would like to extend our grateful thanks to CCA Research Council, which has been strengthened with the addition of Ipsos-MORI and Ventana, for again providing very insightful findings into this critical issue.

Rob Pike
Chair, CCA Industry Council

Rob is Director of Operations, Ulster Bank Group and European Consumer Finance at the Royal Bank of Scotland

The Future of the Contact Centre... It's in the consumers' hands

Prepared by Aspect



It would be impossible to predict what tomorrow's contact centre will look like without taking into account what consumers will be demanding. Good technology development is, after all, market-led.

Tomorrow's consumers will have more power than ever - and we see the beginnings of that today. The ease with which they can access and compare product features, service capabilities and pricing, combined with their unprecedented ability to influence thousands - if not millions - of fellow consumers, has exploded.

This age of the activist consumer, which Aspect Software has dubbed Power Shift 2.0, is a time in which consumers can and do utilize emerging web technologies, such as blogs, chat rooms, wikis, content syndication feeds and personal web pages to air both their praises and frustrations about their experiences with corporate brands. And, Power Shift 2.0 promises to further change the dynamic between consumers and companies as time goes on.

Consumers' expectations of service quality will be considerably higher as they see results of the pressure their influence puts on companies. They will expect greater channel choice and a consistent experience no matter how they interact. They will expect agents to be more knowledgeable, have a greater range of skills and really be able to address their inquiries or challenges instantly.

Because of its visibility on the front lines of customer interactions, the contact centre is in the trenches of this battle. In fact, the contact centre has the power to expand or contract the gap between consumer expectations and an organisation's ability to satisfy them. Closing the gap could mean the difference between engendering lifelong loyalty or sending customers running to the competition. And in the age of instant, one-to-many and viral communication, the impact of a single positive or negative interaction can have exponential consequences for a business, making the contact centre a crucial part of how companies manage today's - and tomorrow's - empowered consumer.

To satisfy these consumers now and into the future, organisations must use the right technology to support both their business processes and their people. They must plan for and implement powerful, unified, multi-channel centres and do so at an acceptable price.

Aspect Software believes that organisations must take action on four fronts:

1. Provide Greater Choice

All consumers are different. Some want to talk to one person who can solve their problem in a single interaction. Some don't want to talk to a person at all and prefer the convenience and privacy of self-service.

Some prefer the phone, while others rely on email and chat to conduct their business. But consumers do have one very important thing in common. They all want a high quality experience and to be treated as individuals with personalized service. To succeed with consumers, contact centres must increase flexibility and reduce complexity. Aspect believes this is best achieved by investing in:

- **Speech Self Service**
 - Empower consumers to speak their requests rather than using a touch-tone keypad.
 - Secure sensitive transactions using voiceprint identification, eliminating the need for customers to enter PINs and other identification numbers.
 - Personalize customer service by integrating self-service applications with contact centre and enterprise data sources.
 - Make best use of agent resources by automating routine portions of an interaction and seamlessly transferring the call to an agent for more complex portions, without making consumers repeat any information they already gave through automation.

- **Web Self-Service and Assisted Web Browsing**
 - Synchronize agent and customer browsers in a collaborative environment, enabling browser-independent shared navigation.
 - Help consumers access relevant information or complete transactions that may otherwise be abandoned.

- **Email Management Systems**
 - Give consumers the choice to interact with your organisation via email.
 - Implement business rules across your centre, including email, to enable proper routing and provide rapid turn-around times.
 - Address consumer emails with personalized responses.

- **Web Chat**
 - Offer the convenience of live support without having to make a phone call.
 - Enable agents to handle as many or as few chats at a time, dictated by business needs.

- **Web Callback**
 - Provide the convenience of integrated web and telephony via your website.
 - Enable consumers to complete a contact form and request a callback from an agent at the time that suits them best.
 - Let agents participate simultaneously in the voice interaction while continuing a web chat or collaboration session as well.

- **Skills-based Routing**
 - Get consumers to the most appropriate agent or application every time.

- **Knowledge Databases**
 - Empower agents with a 360 degree view of consumers.
 - Provide a personalized experience using context and history.

- **Text Messaging Systems**
 - Increase satisfaction using proactive contact methods (outbound) or call back requests (inbound) with text messaging.

- **Customer Satisfaction Surveys**
 - Ask consumers for their feedback early and often via all contact centre channels.

2. Invest in People

Agent training and development must be a key part of any contact centre's strategy for increasing customer satisfaction, retention and ultimately revenue. In order to arm agents with the skills they need to meet the needs of more demanding consumers, technologies such as quality management and performance optimisation must continue to evolve. Organisations should be cognisant of the impact that these applications, when used properly, could have on the contact centre and the business. Here are some things to consider investing in for the good of the future of your business.

- **Performance Management**
 - Align contact centre operational performance to strategic business goals.
 - Ensure agents are focused on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that help drive strategic success across sales, collections and customer service processes.
 - Pull data from all other systems and data sources into a common platform for reporting and taking action.
 - Empower employees to manage their own performance against targets that have been clearly defined.
 - Allow supervisors to easily and efficiently manage, track and identify root causes for performance shortfalls and take timely corrective training and coaching action, as needed.

- **Quality Management**
 - Record, review and report on customer interactions to help improve agent performance and job satisfaction, increase customer satisfaction and revenue generation, and better manage overall costs.
 - Ensure quality and ongoing improvement.
 - Effectively address regulatory compliance, risk mitigation, employee development and process improvement issues. In addition, you should always be thinking of how things are going to continue to evolve in your particular business or with your particular target group of consumers. Here is some action you can take to stay ahead of the curve.

- Couple effective call recording with in-depth and flexible speech analytics applications to identify unexpected trends in agent or customer behaviour.
- Look for new workflow technologies being developed that allow contact centres to automate links between poor performance metrics and corrective actions, such as triggering call recording, additional training, and real-time coaching. They must also allow contact centres to trigger actions on outstanding performance to ensure those behaviours can be called out and duplicated across the entire operation.
- Be ready to deploy real-time performance metrics that enable you to track customer interactions across multiple channels (e.g. web to email to phone) in order to accurately assess costs per customer query or sale.

3. Unify

If your contact centre looks like a puzzle made up of various different pieces from a number of vendors working independently of one another, you have some work to do. But how do you go about fixing what is such a complex situation? Custom integrations can be cost-prohibitive, labour-intensive and potentially very time-consuming and burdensome. The solution to the perplexing contact centre puzzle is to unify. This is the future – and it is starting today.

By administering, managing, monitoring, and driving the performance of the contact centre – inbound and outbound calls, emails, chat sessions, faxes, staffing, productivity and more – from a single unified platform, you can increase flexibility, reduce complexity, lower costs, inspire customer loyalty, and enhance productivity. Most importantly, a unified contact centre puts control in the hands of those closest to the customer – your business managers. And this is what will make the difference with the empowered consumers you will be dealing with, if you aren't already.

Of course, your business is unique. Perhaps you have extremely dynamic practices and processes, or maybe your organisation operates in a more consistent manner. Whichever the case, every organisation needs extreme flexibility to respond to changing consumer demands and business environments, while balancing the realities of the bottom-line. The unified contact centre is the affordable, attainable, flexible, reliable way to break the tyranny of integration that has troubled your contact centre for far too long.

Getting unified is in every contact centre's future. The question is when, not if.

4. Make IP your future

Before long, all organisations will have to decide how and when they are going to make the move to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). There are many reasons that push the issue. Perhaps your contact centre system hasn't changed in a while, but now you are getting to the point where you need greater functionality or increased flexibility. Or, maybe your company will be opening a new location in the coming months, which will require integration with your overall network, as well as interoperation with contact centre and back-office applications.

Whatever the reason behind the need, session initiation protocol (SIP)-based VoIP can be an extremely valuable tool because it can be tightly incorporated with other solutions to provide an increased level of flexibility, efficiency, and cost savings.

And because it's standards-based, it makes it easier to interoperate with other existing SIP-based contact centre applications.

With SIP-based VoIP, for example, you can more easily employ at-home agents, giving you access to a diverse labour pool, allowing your contact centre to quickly add appropriate resources during unexpected spikes in traffic, and helping your organisation to reduce facilities-related costs. VoIP also enables agents to handle Internet chats immediately followed by voice calls. And, for business continuity, if a primary system fails, SIP-based VoIP calls can be redirected to a backup system using the same telephony device.

As more and more companies recognize that SIP-based VoIP is a credible and realistic option, they are setting plans to implement it in the near future to gain or maintain their competitive advantages. Companies will either deploy it all at once or incrementally, as dictated by their budgets and needs. With the right technology partner, your road to IP can be as customized for you as you require - moving at your pace, working with your existing investments.

But one thing is certain; to stay competitive, don't wait to learn more about VoIP. You may be pleasantly surprised by the benefits your contact centre can realize without requiring a forklift implementation, while logically setting the stage for future applications and systems.

IP will enable a new generation of powerful contact centre services and capabilities that, by cutting costs and reducing complexity, will improve both agent performance and service quality.

Conclusion

Keeping these four areas in mind as you continue to grow and expand the capabilities of your contact centre will enable your organisation to be better prepared to manage the ever-increasing demands of consumers.

Ultimately this will provide you with an edge over the competition and should positively impact the top and bottom line.

For further information please visit: www.aspect.com

Cost: Members - £150
Non-Members - £200

