



Improve contact center efficiency using data analytics and consumer insights driving digital transformation

**WHAT IS A DIGITAL CONTACT CENTER AND
WHY YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS TO GO DIGITAL**

Business communications today have become much more advanced, sophisticated and more customer-centric. The shift in customer preferences requires companies to offer support day or night with a personalized touch in order to remain competitive.

Communications have also become much more digital, with consumers contacting businesses through chat, SMS, email, phone and social media. Fostering long-term relationships with customers can be better achieved through quality customer service.

It wasn't that long ago that the only option available to consumers was to phone a customer service call center. This is no longer a satisfactory option because consumers expect to be able to contact a brand via their preferred method.

This is the era of the digital contact center, a sophisticated and high-tech solution offering much more than the call center of yesteryear. Digital contact centers can accept customer inquiries through whichever means a customer chooses — from social media to chat; they use artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning

(ML) to capture customer data, which can be analyzed to better understand consumers, thus offering an improved customer experience. They also provide more security to customers revealing sensitive information and improve employee job satisfaction.

DIGITAL CONTACT CENTER: FEATURES, BENEFITS AND EFFICACY ANALYSIS

Digital contact centers utilize technology to benefit both the customer and the employee. Up to 50% of customers will change brands over one bad experience. Digital contact centers use several tools and technologies that will enhance a customer's interactions with a company.

"Customers are constantly on the go and expect excellent and timely service no matter when or how they engage with a business. This creates a high degree of pressure for the organization to deliver," says Deb Marotta, retail and industry CPG vice president, Hitachi. With the number of support requests on the rise, leveraging AI, organizations can use technology to get the right answer to the right person at the right time – whether that is delivered through a virtual agent, a person behind a chat or someone on the phone, Marotta notes, adding, "Providing expertise and data makes it easier for the employee to deliver a high-quality experience and keeps the stress levels down, which helps with retention of team members and customers."



Automation also has become a key tool for brands. Automation has many roles, from providing real-time agent support to the intelligent routing of calls, data collection and volume forecasting, which leads to increased customer satisfaction and improved job satisfaction for customer service agents, who can be more efficient and use their skills more effectively.

AI and ML are the backbone of digital contact centers. AI can personalize and improve consumer experiences through predictive routing, chatbots, sentiment analysis and intent identification. AI models are continually learning and evolving responses as more and more data is available, thus constantly improving automated responses, offering more standardized processes and allowing companies to tap into this wealth of information. Conversational AI goes one step further, making machines capable of understanding, processing and responding to humans and making customer interactions feel less automated.

“We bring together the business and process expertise of working with organizations and their call centers, but also the digital tech — cloud-based data estates to effectively and efficiently provide the data to the models — AI, data science, predictions — to drive meaningful insights,” says Marotta. “We have solutions to leverage and support conversational AI.” Microsoft’s Digital Contact Center Platform, for instance, enables Hitachi to help customers leverage the needed technology across their digital channel journey.

Also improving the customer service experience are interactive voice response (IVR) and intelligent routing. The use of IVR in digital contact centers is not new, but how it is implemented is. IVR prompts customers to answer questions and they are then routed according to their responses. Intelligent routing in digital contact centers matches customers with the appropriate agent based on abilities, expertise and availability, resulting in faster service. Calls, texts and social media can all leverage intelligent routing.

Digital contact centers are also safer for customers than call centers thanks to biometric authentication. This advanced security measure verifies a person is who they say they are through their voice or manner. The benefit of this is that it eliminates the need for passwords or security questions that could be accessed by fraudulent parties — or simply forgotten by the bona fide customer.

KEY PROCESSES THAT LEAD TO ENHANCED CUSTOMER JOURNEY AND INSIGHTS

Companies using digital contact centers quickly realize there are a host of benefits to doing so. Internally, employees are more fulfilled, answering more complicated customer questions, while chatbots can respond to more routine inquiries.



Customer Spotlight: TruGreen

Problem: TruGreen wanted to improve the customer experience for its more than 2.4 million customers by using technology to transform its overall customer journey. TruGreen is not a technology company, but wanted to understand how technology can transform the customer journey and meet its customers where they are no matter the time or the channel.

Solution: TruGreen turned to Microsoft for an innovative chatbot that enables TruGreen to:

- Offer an end-to-end customer experience – to assist in a variety of ways, including scheduling or rescheduling a service, adding a new service and making a payment.

- Deliver lawn care tips to customers.
- Leverage AI and ML to help analyze the tons of data capturing and take relevant actions.
- Use a virtual agent powered by AI to help troubleshoot and then schedule a service agent.
- Use UI flows to help integrate TruGreen's legacy solutions with new solutions.
- Leverage new technology to grow faster.

Source: [TruGreen puts customers first with Microsoft Power Virtual Agents](#)

Digital contact centers, which are entirely cloud-based, allow agents to work wherever they wish, a key factor in job satisfaction today. According to a survey from [McKinsey](#), 87% of respondents said they would work flexibly if their employers offered that choice.

In addition, companies can hire the correct number of employees since analytics-based forecasting allows them to anticipate future demand, meaning they can add to or reduce the workforce as needed. This keeps costs down when employees aren't required and allows companies to meet customer demand when they are, during periods of peak business.

There are other staffing challenges digital contact centers can help solve as well. Hitachi's Eric Lin, director of customer service, CE, also

notes that contact center organizations often face the challenge of support agent burnout, staffing shortages and the lack of metrics to measure agent performance. "Digital contact centers provide the productivity tools to ensure agents are effective and efficient in addressing customer needs, while providing the insights and analytics for supervisors or managers to get real-time and historical visibility into the operational performance of agents, and the utilization across various channels," Lin says, adding, "This improves tracking of agent productivity, planning for training to address gap, and better forecasting for staffing needs to accommodate seasonal or surging demands."

For customers, digital contact centers can also provide seamless service and allow companies to be agile based on customer preferences.

For example, a conversation that begins on social media can smoothly transition to chat and email without disrupting the customer and offering an omnichannel experience.

And that service is typically much faster. With chatbots handling routine inquiries, customers never have to wait for service. If their request is more complicated, intelligent routing can connect them to an agent specialized in that area. And with bots continually improving, customer frustration drops as consumers quickly find they're receiving relevant answers to their questions.

A digital contact center is one of today's must-haves when it comes to enhancing a brand, driving customer satisfaction, improving the loyalty of customers and converting potential customers into actual customers. Companies that don't make the switch will likely face disgruntled consumers who are used to more customer-friendly service elsewhere. Offering multiple ways for customers to connect, companies need to meet consumers where they are and must continue to evolve and improve the customer experience. ■

SOURCES

1. <https://global.hitachi-solutions.com/blog/digital-contact-center/>
2. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-cloud/contact-center>



ABOUT Hitachi Solutions

Hitachi Solutions is a leading global cloud-services systems integrator specializing in Microsoft business applications and technologies.

Hitachi can help companies establish a digital contact center and determine a road map to transform a call center.

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— Deb Marotta

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