

The Future of Retail is Conversations



CHECKOUT ITEMS



BUY NOW

Optimizing the Customer and Agent Experience With Conversational AI and Automation

uniphore 

The Real Transformation is Just Beginning



Retail may never be the same. Consumers who were previously averse to online shopping suddenly embraced it during the pandemic, and many don't plan to return to their old behaviors. Today, thirty-seven percent are shopping online for products they previously bought in stores.¹

Initially, retailers scrambled to revise their business models, operational strategies, shopping technology, customer service, and marketing strategies to adapt to changing behaviors. Now, brands must continue reinventing themselves in the face of heightened customer expectations, changing consumer values, and continued economic and labor uncertainties.

However, many challenges remain for retailers and their customers — ongoing supply chain delays, stock-outs, staffing shortages, increased cost of goods and transportation, and much more. Overcoming the challenges and winning the trust and loyalty of customers will require further transformation, and nowhere is transformation more essential than customer service.

Success in the new retail environment will depend on how brands optimize the conversations happening within the context of customer service and the contact center. In this ebook, you'll discover five strategies for how retailers can use conversational artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance and automate the agent and customer experience, resulting in faster ramp-up, reduced agent attrition, higher revenue, and improved customer satisfaction and loyalty.



“Bottom line for retailers is that change is still happening, consumer behavior is still changing. You have to make sure you're still listening to them, seeing what they're going through and how they're changing their shopping behaviors because we're not done yet.”

| Jeff Orschell, EY Americas Practice Leader

Source: [“What Do Today's Consumers Really Want? #RIC21 Day One Answers the Question,”](#) Retail TouchPoints, November 2021

1. People Are Moving on; Be Part of Their Normal, Kristina Rogers, EY, November 2021

Customer Service Struggles to Meet Consumer Expectations

Even before the pandemic began, retail customer service was falling behind in living up to changing consumer expectations and behaviors. The pandemic greatly magnified an existing problem.

For example, many retailers could not handle skyrocketing customer service volume as stores were closed during shutdowns or as consumers new to click-and-collect (purchasing online and picking up either curbside or in-store) encountered issues during the process. Questions and problems occurring during online shopping and returns turned into frustratingly long waits to get assistance.



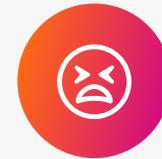
Transforming customer service to deliver a great consumer experience has never been more critical for retailers and brands to achieve, nor has it ever been more difficult to do given the ongoing challenges retailers face:



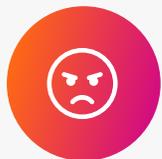
Inability to ramp up quickly/It takes too long to train new agents



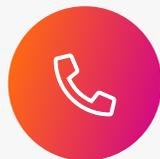
Low conversion rates and missed upselling and cross-selling opportunities



High levels of agent dissatisfaction and stress leading to high attrition rates



Customer dissatisfaction and churn



Unmanageably high call volumes during seasonal spikes



Points of friction in the omnichannel/hybrid customer journey

It's no mystery that retailers that continually disappoint their customers will suffer the consequences. In an industry where competition is fierce, brands must live up to their promises or risk their customers abandoning their carts permanently in favor of companies that can prove they truly care about customer service and satisfaction.



Waiting Longer Than 10 Minutes? Consumers Say No

Retail customers are fed up with waiting on hold for customer service, saying they refuse to wait for long periods:

55%

say they give up within 10 minutes instead of waiting for a live agent

17%

say they won't even wait five minutes for an agent

Source: "[COVID-19 Has Given Rise to Mass Chatbot Adoption in the Retail Space](#)," Bob Grohs, TotalRetail, October 2021

Conversational AI Optimizes the Customer Service Experience



While retailers have long embraced digital transformation, those efforts have not typically focused on enhancing the conversation with customers. Yet, conversations are a retailer's most important asset. Whether they are human to human, human to machine, or machine to machine, conversations are at the heart of everything that is customer service.

That's why transforming the contact center and the customer experience requires understanding, optimizing, and automating every conversation — across channels and languages. To do all that, retailers need conversational AI.

Superficial or point AI solutions won't deliver the type of transformation contact centers need. That's because they don't span the entire customer conversation and are limited in their ability to understand human-to-human conversations. Instead these solutions, despite sometimes being called conversational AI technology, are trained to recognize certain keywords and little else. Any success with these types of solutions often came at the expense of the customer and agent experience.

Conversational AI technology specifically developed for the contact center is much different than early AI products and solutions that retailers may have adopted in the past. With a sophisticated conversational AI platform, retailers can automate end-to-end customer journeys, augment agents to help them deliver more efficient and empathetic service and uncover hidden insights into the voice of the customer.

Retailers Need AI Technology That Is Easy to Use



A conversational automation platform brings together the essential solutions that retailers need to optimize and automate end-to-end conversation and customer journeys, including:



Conversational AI: A set of advanced AI technologies that combines computer vision, voice AI and tonal emotion to recognize and comprehend human language in multiple languages. These technologies use language, sentiment, intent, and emotion to optimize and analyze conversations in and across multiple channels.



Natural language processing and understanding (NLP/NLU): NLP and NLU are components of conversational AI that help computers understand and interpret human language



Attended and unattended robotic process automation (RPA): RPA is software that can emulate the actions of a human interacting with digital systems to automate repetitive tasks and end-to-end business processes. RPA can work alongside humans as attended automation or execute tasks without human involvement in unattended mode.



AI analytics/intelligent decision support: Intelligent decision support uses machine learning and reasoning to discover insights, find patterns, and uncover relationships in data, automating the steps that humans would take if they could exhaustively analyze large datasets.



Intelligent applications: AI-powered software called intelligent applications includes rules engines, user interfaces, notifications, and alerts, and other components that handle specific use cases within the contact center, such as intelligent agent assistance, multimodal conversational self-service such as voicebots and chatbots, and others.



Voiceprint biometrics: This technology recognizes voice patterns for frictionless verification of individuals such as agents, eliminating the hassle of manual authentication and protecting the business against fraud.

While combining all this in one platform gives retailers what they need to transform customer service and overcome contact center challenges, it doesn't mean that they need to be AI experts to use the technology and continuously optimize outcomes. In fact, a platform that offers low-code integration, automation, and orchestration lets retailers easily design and build experiences once for use across multiple modalities, channels, and touchpoints.

Strategy #1: Ramp Up Quickly and Shorten Training Times

While the perennial problem of ramping up for seasonal spikes hasn't changed, supply and demand of workers has. It's more critical than ever for contact centers to have the ability to ramp up quickly, with shorter training time and faster time to agent proficiency.

Augmenting agents with conversational AI and automation is one of the most effective ways to make the most of a limited pool of talent. Using a conversational automation platform optimizes and automates agent conversations with customers, provides real-time coaching to help agents quickly learn and improve, and eliminates manual, time-consuming agent tasks after the call is ended.



Questions to Ask

- How much faster could you ramp up if training time was shorter?
- Do your agents have real-time, in-call coaching guidance based on understanding customer intent, sentiment, and emotion?
- Do agents have immediate access to customer information without having to manually look up information in multiple systems?
- How much time do your agents spend on after-call work (ACW)?
- How accurate are call notations and summaries?

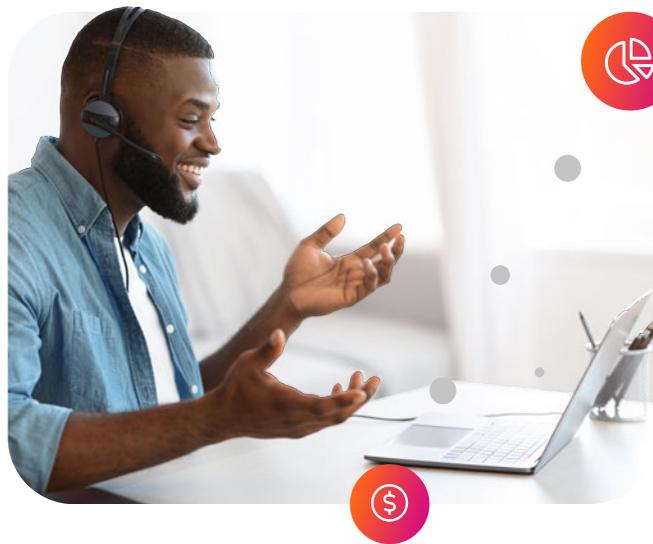
Action List

- Use a conversational automation platform for real-time analysis of customer context including sentiment, emotion, and intent to help agents with in-call coaching alerts and next best action guidance.
- Automate tasks during and after the call to free up agents to focus on the conversation, resolve issues more quickly, and avoid errors that result in repeat calls.
- Deploy a conversational AI and automation solution that automatically listens and transcribes calls in real time, then creates and presents the call summary automatically for agent confirmation.
- Choose a solution that automatically updates the appropriate systems (such as the customer relationship management (CRM) system) and provides automated call disposition to maintain the quality of call categories.

Outcomes

- Help agents become proficient faster.
- Streamline processes to reduce training time.
- Provide information in real time so the agent can focus on the conversation.
- Reduce the number of screens that agents need to log into during the workflow.
- Improve accuracy of call summaries and dispositions.
- Reduce average handle time and shorten wait times for customers.

Strategy #2: Increase Sales and Grow Share of Wallet



With more shopping happening online, the contact center must be prepared to fulfill the role of trusted salesperson, helping customers seamlessly choose and make purchases. Conversational AI can provide real-time agent coaching and assistance and personalize the next best action recommendation using predictive analytics. AI-powered interaction analytics provide insight into trends and opportunities for improving sales effectiveness, increasing conversion rates, and driving cross-selling and upselling revenue.

Questions to Ask

- Do your agents have real-time coaching guidance during the call based on understanding of customer intent, sentiment, and emotion?
- Do you have an integrated view of intent, emotion, and sentiment across all conversations and channels?
- Can you analyze 100% of your customer interactions to better identify trends, sales opportunities, and points of friction?
- What percentage of conversations do you currently review for performance?
- Do you have predictive analytics that model propensity to buy to improve sales outcomes?
- Can you capture and report on unsolicited feedback within omnichannel customer conversations?

Action List

- Choose a conversational automation platform that provides real-time analysis of customer context, sentiment, emotion, and intent to help your agents through in-call, real-time coaching alerts.
- Automatically identify patterns and changes to them to alert agents in real time about products and services that would be most relevant for specific customers, improving conversions as well as customer satisfaction.
- Automate interaction analytics on 100% of customer interactions to understand drivers of sales effectiveness and identify other opportunities to improve customer and agent experiences.
- Automatically monitor and score quality and provide feedback to agents and supervisors.

Outcomes

- Drive higher conversion rates and revenue.
- Optimize upselling and cross-selling opportunities to increase share of wallet.
- Continuously improve performance with consistent, unbiased insights derived from 100% of interactions.
- Reduce quality management costs while improving quality.

Strategy #3: Increase Agent Satisfaction and Retention

The growing talent shortage continues to heavily impact the retail industry, which makes it more important than ever to retain contact center agents. Conversational AI and automation can help reduce agent stress and anxiety and improve their job satisfaction. With a conversational automation platform, retailers can augment their human agents to improve their experience by helping them spend more time on the things they do best and less time on menial and tedious tasks.



Questions to Ask

- Are agent job satisfaction and retention metrics low?
- Which tasks create the greatest frustration and poorest experiences for agents?
- Do agents have immediate access to customer information without having to manually look up information in multiple systems?
- How much time do your agents spend just on summarizing calls?
- How much time do your agents spend on all ACW activities?

Action List

- Deploy a conversational automation platform with real-time, in-call agent coaching and assistance for automatic insights and guidance, which lets agents focus on the conversation.
- Use a platform that automatically handles ACW — including categorizing and summarizing the call, updating systems, and taking follow-up actions.
- Choose a solution that automatically updates the CRM system as well as others to further reduce or eliminate manual tasks.
- Implement AI-powered interaction analytics to monitor and analyze agent sentiment and emotion to uncover issues impacting agent experience, satisfaction, and retention.

Outcomes

- Optimize and enhance the agent (and customer) experience.
- Free up agents to spend more time interacting with customers and less time.
- Improve agent satisfaction and reduce attrition.
- Identify further opportunities for automation and operational improvements to reduce agent frustration and improve the agent experience.

Strategy #4: Deflect Contact Center Interactions and Improve Customer Satisfaction

High call volumes are stressful and frustrating for agents and customers alike. Yet current self-service efforts often fall short of consumer expectations, forcing customers to start over in a new channel to seek resolution.

With a conversational automation platform, retailers can increase self-service and automation rates and deflect transactional interactions from contact center agents — all while delivering an optimized and seamless customer experience across channels.



Questions to Ask

- Can customers quickly find the answer to their questions on their own?
- How often do customers have to start over in a new channel to get their queries resolved?
- Are your contact center agents overwhelmed with calls, including many that could be resolved more quickly and easily with conversational self-service?
- Do your IVR and/or self-service channels understand customer sentiment and intent?
- Do your self-service channels transfer context as conversations move or escalate to an agent?

Action List

- Deploy a multimodal intelligent virtual assistant (IVA) across IVR, web, and mobile as a voicebot and/or chatbot for an intuitive, convenient self-service experience for customers.
- Make sure your IVA is powered by conversational AI that understands customer sentiment, emotion, and intent, which will drive self-service automation rates, thus reducing the number of contact center interactions.
- Choose an AI platform with automation that passes the context from your IVA to agents to create a frictionless interaction and shorter average handle times.

Outcomes

- Offload interactions and reduce contact center volume.
- Deliver a seamless, consistent experience via voice, web, and mobile.
- Accelerate resolution and improve customer satisfaction.
- Further improve the customer and agent experience when escalating from self-service to agent assistance by alerting the agent to customer sentiment, intent, and next best actions.

Strategy #5: Drive Higher Satisfaction, Loyalty, and Customer Lifetime Value

One of the most common causes of customer dissatisfaction is the lack of a promised follow-up communication or action after the call has ended. Poor follow-through on the promises (also known as commitments) made by the agent during the call impacts customer satisfaction (CSAT) and Net Promoter Score (NPS).

Automating promises management with a conversational automation platform reduces the amount of time your agents spend on manual, time-consuming workflows for capturing, managing, and fulfilling promises. By fulfilling promises automatically, you increase customer satisfaction with your brand while reducing repeat calls to the contact center.



Questions to Ask

- How are promises/commitments logged today?
- How are commitments fulfilled?
- How much time do agents spend on promises management during and after the call?
- How many repeat calls are due to missed commitments and follow-ups?
- What additional time is added to call handle times to address repeat and escalated calls due to missed commitments?

Action List

- Choose a conversational automation platform that can automatically recognize, log, and enrich promises and manage fulfillment of them.
- Use automation to align expectations with customers immediately following the call to reduce repeat calls.
- Deploy RPA to automate fulfillment of promises after the call.

Outcomes

- Improve CSAT and NPS.
- Reduce repeat calls.
- Shorten processing time and free up agents to help other customers.

Engaging Online Grocery Customers to Reduce Call Volume



Shufersal is the largest supermarket chain in Israel, operating 277 stores nationwide and employing approximately 13,000 employees. The company also has the largest online retail grocery presence in the country. The team at Shufersal wanted to add a guided self-service experience to the brand's existing customer support channels to service customers and reduce the volume of requests coming into the contact center.

Using Uniphore's Conversational Automation platform, Shufersal offered a digital customer service concierge as an add-on to its mobile application, website, IVR, print receipts (QR codes), and messaging (WhatsApp) channels to guide customers to self-service. Uniphore's no-code multi-experience designer enabled the company to deliver a guided digital customer service experience that was built once and deployed across multiple channels rapidly.

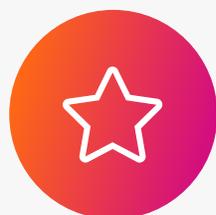
With customers now checking on orders, reporting issues, and finding solutions on their own without having to speak to an associate, Shufersal has:



Substantially reduced the call volume into the contact center



Reduced customer effort



Provided immediate resolution for certain inquiries that previously took 2 days to resolve, on average



Boosted trust in online grocery shopping, which spurred growth as customers shared positive reviews of their shopping and customer service experiences

Next Steps

Getting the customer experience right is fundamental for success in today's retail environment. The smartest retailers are investing now in conversational AI to optimize, analyze, and automate every conversation to create great customer experiences.

These companies are seeing measurable and sustainable return on investment by transforming the consumer and agent experience across the entire customer conversation, from self-service to post-interaction analytics:



Higher conversion rates



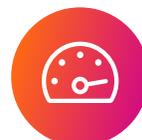
Lower agent attrition



Improved CSAT and NPS



Increased customer lifetime value



Faster ramp-up and time to proficiency



The future of retail is now. It's time to automate and optimize your brands' conversations, deliver frictionless customer experiences, and find value in every interaction.

[Learn More](#)

About Uniphore

Uniphore is the global leader in Conversational Automation, which combines the power of artificial intelligence, automation technology and machine learning. Uniphore is disrupting an outdated customer service model by bridging the gap between humans and machines by focusing on conversations. We make it possible for every conversation, on every call, to be truly heard.

Uniphore delivers innovative solutions across a flexible platform to enable organizations to provide a better customer experience. This includes intelligent conversational self-service, real-time conversational analytics, versatile agent co-piloting, intent detection, agent coaching, quality assurance, regulatory compliance, and automated after-call work. With Conversational Automation, enterprises can now engage their customers to effectively build loyalty, improve customer experience and realize operational efficiencies.