4 Tech Innovations Revolutionizing the Telecom Contact Center Experience

Rapidly becoming mainstream, 5G is now the fastest-adopted mobile technology. In the 2021 Telecoms.com Intelligence Annual Industry Survey, eight out of ten respondents expect the transition to 5G core to be completed in the next two to five years.[1]

Bain & Company's research shows that the number of 5G connections worldwide will triple from less than 700 million today to more than 2.1 billion by 2025. [2] This strong momentum has enabled major carriers to begin phasing out 3G technology and focus on delivery of new 5G-based products and services.

Preparing for growth, developing new revenue streams and reimagining products and service will require telecoms to digitally transform the front and back

office as well. Nearly four out of 10 respondents (38%) say that digital transformation is the focus area where their companies are likely to invest in the coming year.[3] Accelerating the digital transformation agenda will be essential for telecoms to increase efficiencies and lower costs.

Equally essential is transforming the telecom customer experience. That's because customer experience has become the single biggest factor driving customer

[1] "Annual Industrial Survey: 2021 Report," Telecoms.com Intelligence, November 2021

[2] "The AI-Enabled Telco Takes Shape: Why Telcos Are Using Artificial Intelligence to Roll Out Their 5G Services," Bain & Company, October 2021

[3] "Annual Industrial Survey: 2021 Report," Telecoms.com Intelligence, November 2021

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loyalty and revenue growth in the telecom industry, according to Accenture. The consulting firm believes that customers expect the high-quality, digitally driven experiences they encounter in other industries to be matched by their telecom providers. [4]

Minimizing Business Disruption With Improved Customer Experience

With a Net Promoter Score (NPS) average of 31, the telecom industry ranks at the bottom of industries for customer loyalty. [5] To improve loyalty and differentiate themselves in a crowded market, telecoms must move quickly to provide a better customer experience, while empowering employees to succeed in work-at-home environments and enabling company security.

Findings from a study on customer experience return on investment (ROI) underscore this importance. Customer experience leaders outperform the market, generating a total return that is 108 points higher than the S&P 500 Index. Leaders generated a total cumulative return that is 3.4 times greater than that of customer experience laggards. [6]

As one of the most critical areas impacting the customer experience, contact centers offer the highest ROI. Companies look to adopt advanced technologies to modernize contact centers to lower their average handle time (AHT) and call waiting times, which improves customer satisfaction.

Going forward, the four main areas where companies can continue to enhance customer value and achieve competitive advantage through contact centers include:

• Customer self-service
• After-call work (ACW)
• Post-interaction analytics
• Promise management

Increasing Self-Service Options With AI and Natural Language Processing

By automating mundane interactions through self-service channels such as intelligent virtual assistants (IVA), companies drive a better experience for customers. IVAs leverage conversational AI and natural language processing technologies across voice, web, and mobile to empower customers to quickly and easily resolve simple and straightforward issues on their own. Examples of customer journeys where IVAs can be used by telecom providers include making a payment, troubleshooting basic service issues, checking status of an order, or setting up a technician appointment.

By using virtual agents, built with conversational AI technology, telecom companies can provide customers with instant, on-demand service to fulfill their needs. This is reflected in a survey of telecom respondents showing that the most popular channel in which telecoms plan to invest in the next two years will be AI-powered chat, chosen by nearly half (48%) of all respondents. [7]

By speeding time to resolution, this type of conversational AI-powered self-service increases customer satisfaction and loyalty, while lowering the cost to serve by offloading routine tasks from live agents. This, in turn, increases agent productivity and lowers call volume.

[4] "Reimagining Telco CX, the Touchless Way," Accenture, July 2021

[5] "Telecom NPS Benchmarks and CX Trends in 2022 | NPS in Telecoms," Cvetilena Gocheva, CustomerGauge, 2022

[6] "The Customer Experience ROI Study," Watermark, October 2021

[7] "Annual Industrial Survey: 2021 Report," Telecoms.com Intelligence, November 2021

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Automating ACW for Immediate ROI

After-call work (ACW) represents a central component of contact center operations, consuming considerable agent time and attention. ACW requires agents to summarize and precisely detail interactions after every single call; agents must complete this work before they are able to connect with another call. ACW is also considered part of a call center's average handling time (AHT), estimated at approximately 6 minutes across multiple industries and geographies, according to Call Centre Helper's Erlang Calculator. [8]

In addition to being a time-consuming, labor-intensive process, ACW also can be prone to errors. Information inconsistency degrades its value. Summaries vary across agents – human beings tend to assess situations differently. Agents may have small, unexpected interruptions following a call, resulting in a slight delay in their write-ups and causing them to forget key points.

Automating ACW improves agent performance and serves customers better – giving telecom companies immediate ROI. Here's how. Imagine the following scenario. An agent picks up a new customer call, a comprehensive and visual dashboard opens, and the conversation begins. As the discussion ensues, the system automatically understands the conversation and captures top interaction insights. Applying real-time conversational AI, the system listens to the agent and customer conversation and alerts the agent to the customer sentiment, emotion, and reason for the call, and provides in-call guidance to best handle the conversation.

Additionally, supervisors become instantly connected to urgent situations, with immediate access to the dashboard, so that they can quickly step in and deliver agent support as needed, also helping improve the customer experience.

In addition to capturing key conversation details, such as the call reason and outcome, real-time speech transcription technology provides a comprehensive summary at the conclusion of the call. Agents have the ability to edit the summary if needed or accept it as is and upload instantly into their CRM or other internal system, increasing data accuracy.

Real-time speech transcription eliminates any wait time for agents to enter data and also ensures the conversation has been appropriately documented for future interactions. Today's customers expect companies to know them and don't want to have to retell their history at each interaction.

Automating this process dramatically reduces agent ACW time, driving higher productivity and lower AHT. With automation, companies can cut time spent on ACW to around a minute, significantly reducing the aforementioned 6-minute average time. This time savings allows agents to quickly help other customers and decreases customer hold times.

Moreover, with the system automatically summarizing the call, agents can focus their attention on providing personalized customer service and care.

> *Internal Uniphore findings show that telecom providers spend an average 2 minutes and 30 seconds on ACW for complex calls. By automating call summaries with real-time speech analytics, AI and NLP, these companies can slash the amount of time required for ACW by 80 percent, while also increasing accuracy and providing consistent summaries.*

[8] Erlang Calculator, February 14, 2022

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Improving Post-Interaction Analysis with Conversational AI

Consider the immense benefits for your company if you could easily and automatically extract data from each and every customer interaction and use those findings to improve your business efficiencies. By using AI-based analytics, telecom companies can further transform their contact center operations. Conversational AI capabilities enhance the value of post-interaction analysis, so that telecom companies can:

• Coach call center agents to higher performance
• Identify areas for business improvement
• Optimize overall call center processes

With insights from conversational AI, telecom companies can identify the most important issues and determine the appropriate actions for planning and operational improvements. Rather than sifting through different systems or reviewing thousands of summaries trying to draw out the data, this information would be available at one's fingertips.

Companies can detect customer- and agent-centric patterns that otherwise would be lost in a sea of data, whether the contact occurred via voice, email, or chat. They can identify potential points of friction in the customer journey to optimize the customer experience.

With automated post-interaction analysis on 100% of customer interactions, operations can spot trends in customer feedback, see what pain points occur most often across their customer base, and address issues to improve the digital experience, answering questions such as:

• What are the top customer complaints?
• Why do most customers cancel?
• How often do agents change their automated summaries and in what ways?
• Which call categories occur most frequently?

Machine-learning capabilities let telecom companies see things through a new lens and derive more value from their existing systems and data. By better understanding customer desires and repeated issues, companies can build a knowledge base and enhance existing processes accordingly to improve efficiencies and lower customer churn.

Closing the Loop With Customers Using Promises Management

A promise made that is not kept or tasks that are not performed correctly are some of the most common causes of customer dissatisfaction. Not closing the loop with customers directly impacts your call handling times, wait times, customer satisfaction and NPS. In fact, a major communications provider in the U.S. has found that the top negative impact on its NPS is missed promises. [9]

Automating promises management reduces the amount of time your agents spend on manual, time-consuming tasks to manage and fulfill promises while improving the customer experience, satisfaction, and loyalty. It also reduces the number of repeat calls due to missed commitments.

A conversational AI and automation platform with promises management automatically recognizes, logs,

[9] Internal Uniphore findings.

and enriches the promises agents make in real time during interactions. Promises could include offering a promotional credit on the next monthly bill, ordering a replacement part, scheduling a service call, and sending follow-up emails. After the interaction, the platform sends the customer a summary of the promises made to align expectations. Then it automatically manages the fulfillment of the promises identified using robotic process automation (RPA).

Automating closing the loop with customers helps telecom companies:

- Reduce repeat calls, improving customer satisfaction and loyalty

- Shorten AHT and reduce call wait time by reducing ACW time and effort

- Improve agent productivity

- Reduce the handoffs for approvals and number of screens agents need to log into to execute workflows that register and fulfill promises made

Applying Digital Technologies for a Superior Customer Experience

As digital leaders, telecom providers must innovate and apply new digital business strategies. Paramount are conversational AI and automation technologies that make it easier to drive a more personalized customer experience and simultaneously increase agent efficiency and performance by automating routine processes.

With a more intelligent, streamlined approach, companies can maximize the efficiencies and enhance productivity of their call center operations. By speeding first call resolutions, telecom companies increase employee productivity and reduce contact center costs. Automating ACW delivers immediate efficiency benefits and lowers AHT, and post-interaction analytics give telecoms access to data that allows them to further optimize and enhance business systems.

Most importantly, by adopting these types of digital technologies, telecom companies can deliver a superior and secure customer experience. Operations teams are empowered to resolve issues faster and deliver a higher quality of service to drive customer loyalty in times of uncertainty and slower growth.