

What's next



Enterprise

Beyond Containment

Containment is an important and valuable metric that almost all customer care organizations use to measure the success of their automated applications. But, are they placing too much emphasis on it? John Dionne talks about the dangers of putting too many eggs in the containment basket.

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Earlier this year I had the opportunity to speak at Nuance's annual Customer eXperience

Summit on the topic of [Continuous Optimization](#) – a process that improves performance of deployed applications while enhancing the customer experience and growing operational savings. One of the key strategies by which contact centers can continuously optimize their performance is in measuring the success of their automated applications. In doing this, I've found, many organizations place a heavy weight on containment rates.

From a customer care perspective, **containment refers to the percentage of users who engage with an automated system and end their interaction without transferring** to a voice or live chat agent. Almost every organization that offers self-service applications focuses on and measures containment regularly. It's been the single most emphasized and well-known measure of automated system performance and value delivered, and one that many organizations base their savings targets against. Consequently, they've invested heavily in efforts to achieve higher and higher containment results.

I'm sure that many of you can relate to a narrative like this: "We need to save *<insert dollar figure>* this year, and to do that, we have to increase our containment by *<insert percentage>*." Generally speaking, the logic behind that is sound because if end-users engage in the lower-cost, self-service application and do not transfer to higher-cost agents, the organization will save money while simultaneously providing customers with a quick and easy way to complete transactions, all on their terms. A pretty simple win-win.

So, containment is the best metric, right? Well, let's pause for moment and consider these questions:

1. In a modern care environment where end-users interact through many channels, often using them for different reasons as they move between them, is emphasizing one metric the right approach?
2. Will having such a focus on containment blind you from aggressively pursuing the other sources of benefit?
3. Is it time to start thinking more broadly and be open to the many other ways that benefits can be achieved and measured?

Take a moment to think about how ***you*** interact with organizations when you need care. It doesn't matter whether you think of a personal banking example or one with your telco provider or utility company, or something else. What's important is that you think about your expectations and behaviors and how you engage. If you're like me, those things depend on the reason for your contact. There are times when you have a request that can be completed through automated self-service and you gladly do that, while there are other times when the complexity of the situation means that you need to interact with a human. Still yet, there are instances when you use an automated system to partially complete a task but then decide you need to contact an agent because you have additional questions that require their assistance. These are just a few examples of the different scenarios that can occur. Nevertheless, a key takeaway from them is to acknowledge that as an end-user ***your needs and expectations and also your behaviors are dynamic and can change from***

interaction to interaction.

Now, put your work hat back on. As a customer care professional, it's important to recognize that the end-users that interact with your care solutions have the same expectations and will exhibit the same behaviors as you do when seeking care. Just like you, they're driven by the specific needs they have and the situation in which they find themselves. This means that sometimes they'll automate and contain in your self-service applications, sometimes they will partially automate and then transfer to a contact center, and yet in other situations, they'll simply transfer. Therefore, if you want to provide the best user experience and maximize operational savings, **it's critical that you understand their reasons for contacting you, and then create an experience that aligns to their needs.**

For example, in situations where users are going to transfer to your contact center, utilize strategies in your automated system that increase identification and authentication (ID/Auth), gather accurate intent and partially automate. This will result in more precise contact center routing and transfer of information to agents which will save money through decreased Average Handle Time (AHT), while offering a much better customer experience with better First Contact Resolution (FCR). In this example, containment is nowhere to be found, but **by focusing on how benefits can be achieved through other means and measuring related metrics** such as ID/Auth, Intent Gathering, AHT and FCR, **the value to your organization and your end-users is obvious and real.**

To be clear, automation and containment should continue to be an important part of your customer care strategy; but focusing solely on containment as a measure of success and savings is far too narrow a view and can indeed blind you from maximizing other benefits that are available to you and your customers.

If you're not already doing so, [now is the time for your organization to start thinking and acting more broadly about how benefits can be achieved and their associated measures of success.](#)

Tags: [average handle time](#), [call containment](#), [call deflection](#), [contact center](#), [containment rate](#), [customer satisfaction](#), [customer service](#), [first contact resolution](#), [Intelligent self-service](#), [IVR](#), [misrouted calls](#), [multichannel customer service](#), [omnichannel customer service](#), [quality measures](#)

More Information



Ask the experts

If you want to learn more about how to look beyond containment, talk to our Business Consulting team.

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About John Dionne

John is a Director in Nuance's Professional Services organization, responsible for Business Consulting and Continuous Optimization Services. He has over 25 years of experience in the customer care and consulting space and has worked with and provided guidance to numerous organizations as they seek to transform and optimize the way they do business and offer service to their end customers. John holds an Honours BA from Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Canada and resides in Kitchener, Canada, with his wife and two sons.

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