What's next

Enterprise

Let's address the elephant in the contact center

A growing number of channels, more automation, increasing consumer inquiries - contact centers are facing many new challenges that weren't an issue just a few years ago. What can contact center managers do to continue delivering great customer service?

Josefine Fouarge
Posted March 15, 2018

There has been a lot of noise around customer engagement lately. New channels to use for customer service, an increase in self-service, decline in traditional channel usage, a robot

take-over – but what does all of that actually mean?

With new channels comes more choice. Customers have more options to reach out to a brand than ever before. Gone are the times where you could only get an answer if you walked into a store or picked up the phone. Nowadays, we can yell at our fridge to get customer support or we can use our mobile phone while on the way to work (car is parked, of course).

Why is there an elephant in my contact center?

In the end, the presence of more channels means more consumers trying to connect with businesses. At first thought, that's a good thing as it allows companies to sell more. The problem is that contact centers are not capable of scaling. There is a point where hiring new agents is not an option anymore. Yes, technology can be improved to route incoming messages more efficiently, agents can be trained to handle concurrent conversations, and they can be enabled with all sorts of information. But, there *will* be a point when customer satisfaction drops because consumers have to wait too long for an answer.

Automation seems to be the holy grail. Let's use a bot to handle all the incoming conversations. Thanks to AI they are smart enough, right? Not quite. Current technology is capable of handling certain things. Bots and the more sophisticated virtual assistants can help enterprises with their work load. But even if they are fed with hundreds of chat logs and have been trained by professionals, they can only handle so much. **Businesses will always have some topics that have to be handled by an actual human.** Hint: That's the elephant!

Balancing customer engagement

A McKinsey survey stated that **94% of customer care executives believed they would need to hire new agents or train current ones with new skills**.This is not too far away from the truth. Nuance best practice for customer engagement is the following balance between technology, automation and humans:

- Enterprises need technology that handles interactions as efficient as possible, from intelligently routing incoming messages to providing an interface that simplifies the everyday tasks of agents and their supervisors, to meaningful and actionable insights that help optimize the experience.

- Agents transform into two different directions. They are either used to train the virtual assistant until it has a certain confidence to handle the majority of the repetitive tasks, or they become a customer advisor for the complex inquiries. That means contact centers now need more highly skilled, paid and competent people.

- Using today's AI technology, businesses can use virtual assistants for a variety of use cases that will all help augment the customer engagement processes, for example collecting all needed information upfront, pointing users to a knowledge base article or landing page, helping compare specific products or services, and much more.

It's time to get rid of the elephant

This paradigm shift requires enterprises to rethink their approach to training and managing the agent workforce. New skills must be developed, new processes put in place and interfaces should be redesigned to ensure an always successful contact center. No need to panic, though. This is not an impossible task. There are experts out there that know exactly what contact center managers are going through and that have tested several options on how to transform your contact center. Let's tackle that elephant together and create an experience your customers will love.

Tags: call center, chat, customer satisfaction, customer service, omnichannel customer service

More Information

	How to balance technology, humans and bots to create a successful contact center. Contact us if you want to learn more about how to train and manage an agent workforce that meets your customer's needs for instant service through any channel. Click here for more information. Learn more

About Josefine Fouarge

Josefine Fouarge is Sr. Product Marketing Manager in the Nuance Enterprise Division, focusing on automated and human assisted engagements in digital channels. Josefine brings more than 10 years of experience in sales and marketing for technology related businesses in Germany and the U.S. Her past expertise ranges from selling and configuring Apple computers to defining the market and messaging for a security software for on-premise datacenters and services offered through the cloud.

View all posts by Josefine Fouarge