

In Contact Centres, Self-Service is Getting Personal!

Part 1 of our look into Contact Centre AI.



The world of customer service will be upended over the next 5 years. AI's spoken and written abilities are fast approaching those of an Agent. Life on hold, stressful queues, repetitive tasks and even recruitment challenges will hopefully become a thing of the past. Let's explore ...

In previous articles, we've looked at office productivity improvements – using AI to help your people get the most from your current systems and processes. In this one, we look at the world of contact centres, and the ways AI is now being used to properly transform our service.

The latest Conversational AI systems can interact with your customers in a human-like way that make self-service feel like personal service...

... providing we don't get it wrong of course. Like the parcel carrier whose bot in 2024 was persuaded by a customer to swear and create a poem lamenting its owner's delivery performance. It was a unique instance of personal service but apparently not in line with their corporate tone of voice!

With AI's natural language processing, opportunities abound for faster service, improved customer experience, higher levels of compliance, automated back-office functions and quicker agent skills development.

One obvious area is to extend customer service to 24x7. In this day and age, why should a customer wait for 10 minutes, or half an hour, for a service when there is an infinite number of interactive bots standing by to engage within seconds? How many customers appreciate hearing that your service is so successful that it is "overwhelmed with exceptional call volumes"? How many would be very pleasantly surprised to get straight to a good, friendly source of spoken support? There may be a slight delay on the line as the bot develops its next sentence, but compared to life on hold, the bar for improvement is low. And the latest systems have now eliminated any spoken delay.

We have identified dozens of ways that Generative AI could improve customer service and productivity. You could evaluate each one to see if, how and when it should be explored. Areas to investigate come under the following headings:

Generative AI improving customer experience

<p>Limitless capacity on demand</p> <p>No more life on hold</p>	<p>24x7 comprehensive service</p> <p>Resolution now! Not at 0900</p>	<p>Data cleansing and alerts running in the background</p> <p>Customer accounts always up to date</p>
<p>Fewer handoffs between teams</p> <p>The end of “press 1” “press 2”. Go straight to a multi-skilled bot</p>	<p>Fully personalised services, in any language</p> <p>Talk in one language, be heard in another</p>	<p>Brand new services that were never before possible (or imagined)</p> <p>This is the interesting part!</p>

Automated AI conversations are now in use in a tone and style that customers can easily relate to, with no pressure on handling time. Imagine you were offered 20% extra capacity, at no extra cost to your ops budget. What would you use the resource for?

Agent job satisfaction would be higher as they are now dealing with the more complex and interesting queries. The people they speak to are not frustrated by an extended period of listening to someone else’s choice of music.

To ensure a good customer experience, make sure that the bot is well-trained on your service and ‘tuned’ to be an effective ambassador for your brand. An immediate benefit is available for customers, to request information, place orders at will and resolve a complaint at any time of day or night. In the event of a more complex query there could also be an option to get through to an agent or receive a call back during opening hours.

Automated natural language outbound calls can work really well too. Bot calls to existing customers to relay information, provide reminders or respond to service requests can be cost-effective. The ability for the customer to interact and ask questions is far better experience than receiving a plain recorded message, followed by another half hour on hold in the event of a customer question.

However, the future regulatory guidelines for cold calls are unclear. Interestingly, some contact centres are looking at this as a way of improving employee satisfaction and reducing stress. The bot can confirm if the customer is interested and that their details are correct before handing off to an agent who now has a far more rewarding job. There are currently many AI voicebot demo calls on the internet, but one of the best ones is an outbound call at www.air.ai. The demo on their home page gives you an idea as to the fluency and flexibility possible. However, none of us wants to be bombarded with a dozen cold bot calls each day, so regulators are rightly thinking on this.

There are also many applications in the back office to enhance agent and management roles. We will explore these in part 2 of this article.

How do you picture this technology interacting with your customers? What are the next steps in your AI journey? Your contact centre will look different in 2 years' time, and very different in 5 years.

To be future-proof, every leader should have an AI vision and an AI strategy. Only by keeping up with the market changes and constantly thinking through the implications will we serve our customers well and thrive in the future.

Let's make sure your business strategy properly considers the incoming impact of AI!

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Visit www.TouchpointChange.co.uk or message us on LinkedIn.

#AI, #ResponsibleAI, #AIstrategy, #Contactcentres, #BusinessTransformation
