

WHITE PAPER



THE AGENT DESKTOP: THE CONTACT CENTER'S SECRET WEAPON

The Secret Weapon for Mistake-Free Contact Center Service

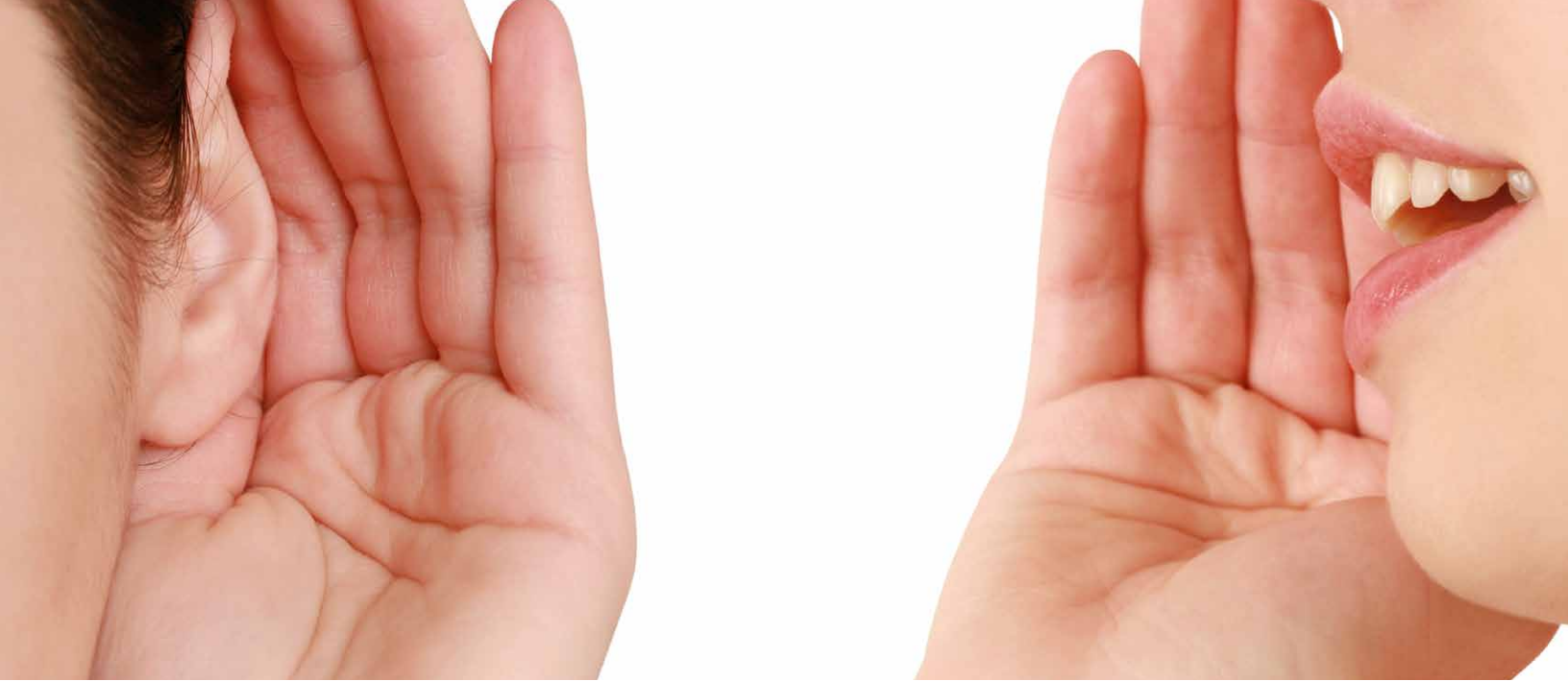
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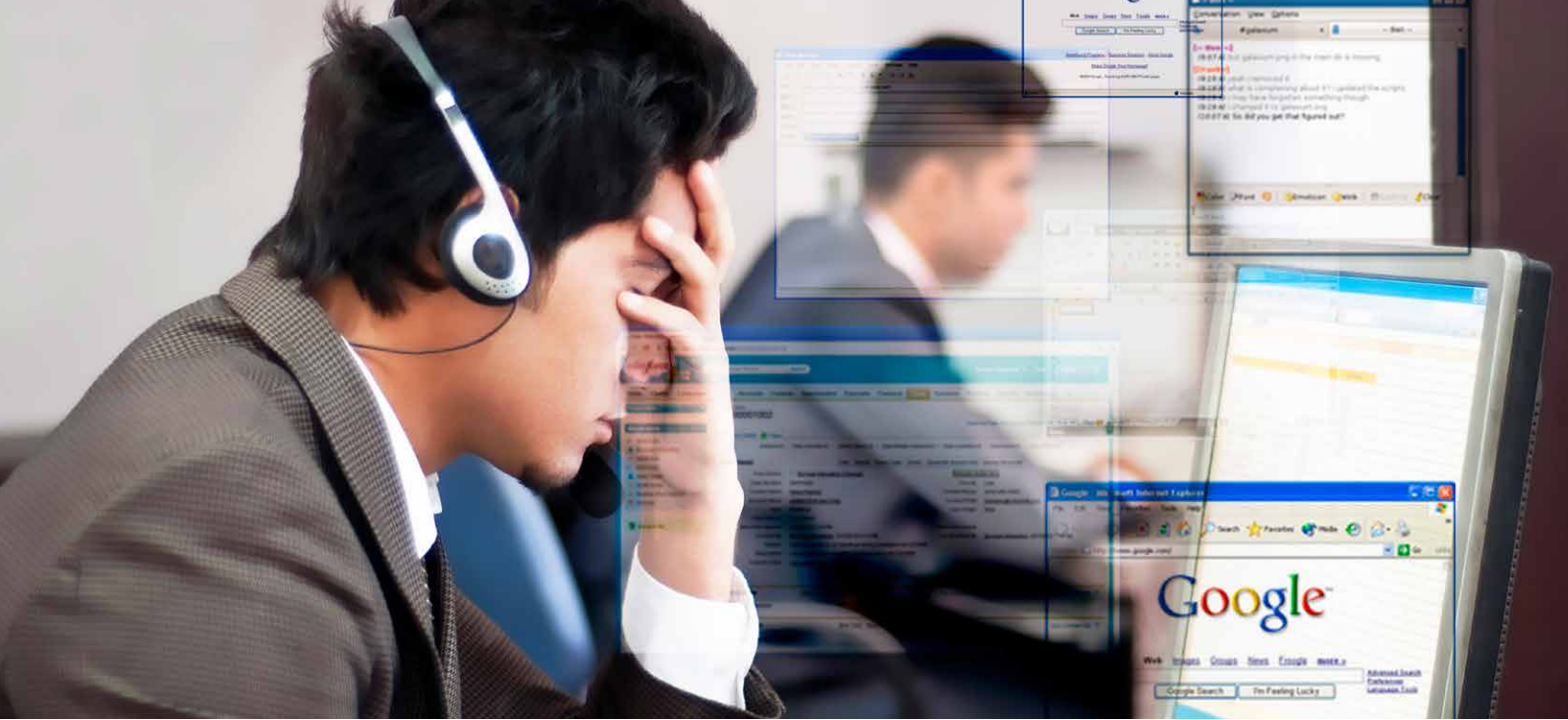
THE AGENT DESKTOP: THE CONTACT CENTER'S SECRET WEAPON

How a modern agent desktop can transform customer service delivery

The pressure to improve customer service has never been so great as it is today. Regardless of your company's size or industry, customer service is a competitive differentiator, and organizations strive to deliver more timely, more personalized service. To that end, contact centers are pushing their agents to increase first-call resolution and reduce call-handling time, all the while adding communication channels.

But these efforts only serve to add complexity to the contact center and make it more difficult to improve customer service. The one thing that can truly transform service, lower costs and improve agent productivity is in plain view. It's the tool agents depend on the most, yet it's the most often ignored technology in the contact center. It is, in a sense, a secret weapon. It is the agent desktop.

The agent desktop is the primary tool contact center agents use to do their job. The software provides a view into the operation of the automatic call distributor (ACD) or dialer, and is the control panel so to speak, for taking calls. The agent desktop is the tool agents use to interface with the dialer. It enables agents to perform critical tasks like accepting calls, capturing information that goes back to the contact center system, turning on and off recording functionality, initiating transfers and putting callers on hold. As the conduit for communicating with the backend telephony (and potentially almost any contact center system), the agent desktop is the doorway to the contact center.



THE PROBLEM TODAY

Agent desktop software has been around as long as computers have been used to handle customer service calls. However, agent desktops haven't changed significantly in the past 25 years, and—for the most part—neither has customer service. In fact, it's actually taken a hit.

A typical customer service call today goes something like this: Jane calls customer service to check on the status of an order she placed over a month ago. After being identified and authenticated by the IVR system, Jane navigates through several menus and “tells” the IVR that she’s calling about an existing order. She is then transferred to a customer service agent.

Bob greets Jane and asks for her name and customer identification number. This is frustrating to Jane (after all, she’s already identified herself), but she doesn’t argue—she just wants to get the call over with as soon as possible. Once Bob authenticates Jane via the agent desktop, he asks how he can help her. Jane explains that she’s calling to check on an order. She received a shipment notice about two weeks ago, but the order hasn’t arrived.

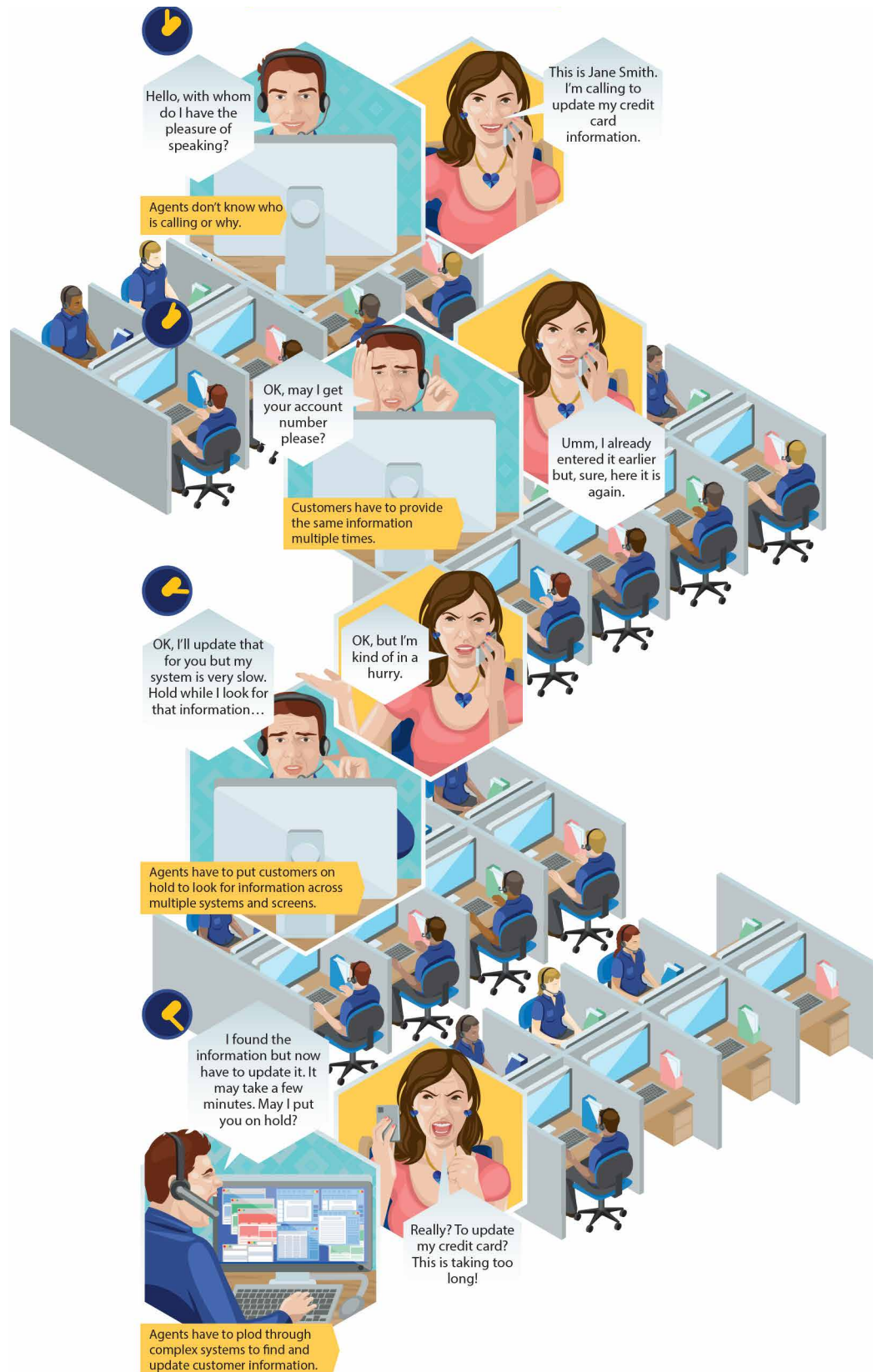
Bob apologizes to Jane for the wait as he moves to the order fulfillment system. He asks Jane for her order number, and is apologetic as he confirms Jane’s shipping address and navigates through several screens to investigate the issue. Bob sees that the order was delivered—to the wrong address. The recipient sent back the package, but it was not resent to Jane. Bob puts a rush on a reorder and requests that a \$20.00 credit be applied to Jane’s account¹ for her trouble. To prevent future communication issues, Bob navigates to the CRM and confirms Jane’s mailing address, phone number and email address. Bob then concludes the call and navigates back to the agent desktop to tell the system that he is ready to take another call.

¹ This hypothetical scenario could vary wildly depending on the situation, industry, etc.

THE PROBLEM

In this very common scenario, the agent desktop is operating as a silo. Because it does not exchange information with the IVR system, not only does Bob not have a clue as to why Jane's calling, he must also authenticate Jane a second time. Jane has to wait—and grows increasingly frustrated—each time Bob needs to move between systems, because the agent desktop is not integrated with the order fulfillment or CRM systems.

In the meantime, the clock is ticking. The call takes longer than either Jane or Bob would prefer (and certainly longer than the organization's metrics allow for). Bob can sense Jane's frustration and becomes stressed, thereby increasing the chance that he'll make a mistake. Both Bob and Jane are relieved when the call is over, and she decides that next time she'll place her order with a competitor. Bob knows that the interaction could have gone better but doesn't know how he could have done things any different.





A BETTER WAY

Why the very different outcome? Quite simply, the agent desktop is integrated with every system required to address the customer's needs. Integration with the IVR system means there is no need to identify and authenticate customers a second time.

Now let's take a look at how the same scenario plays out in a more advanced contact center. The customer, Jane, is identified, greeted by name and authenticated by the IVR system. She "tells" the system that she's calling about an existing order and is transferred to a customer service agent.

In the contact center, Bob accepts Jane's call and the agent desktop automatically displays information about her. Bob sees Jane's last five orders, as well as their status, and her contact information. He can immediately see that there is a problem with the last order. It was shipped but returned to the warehouse. When Bob connects to Jane, he greets her: "Good afternoon, Jane. This is Bob. It's my pleasure to serve you today. Are you calling about your last order?"

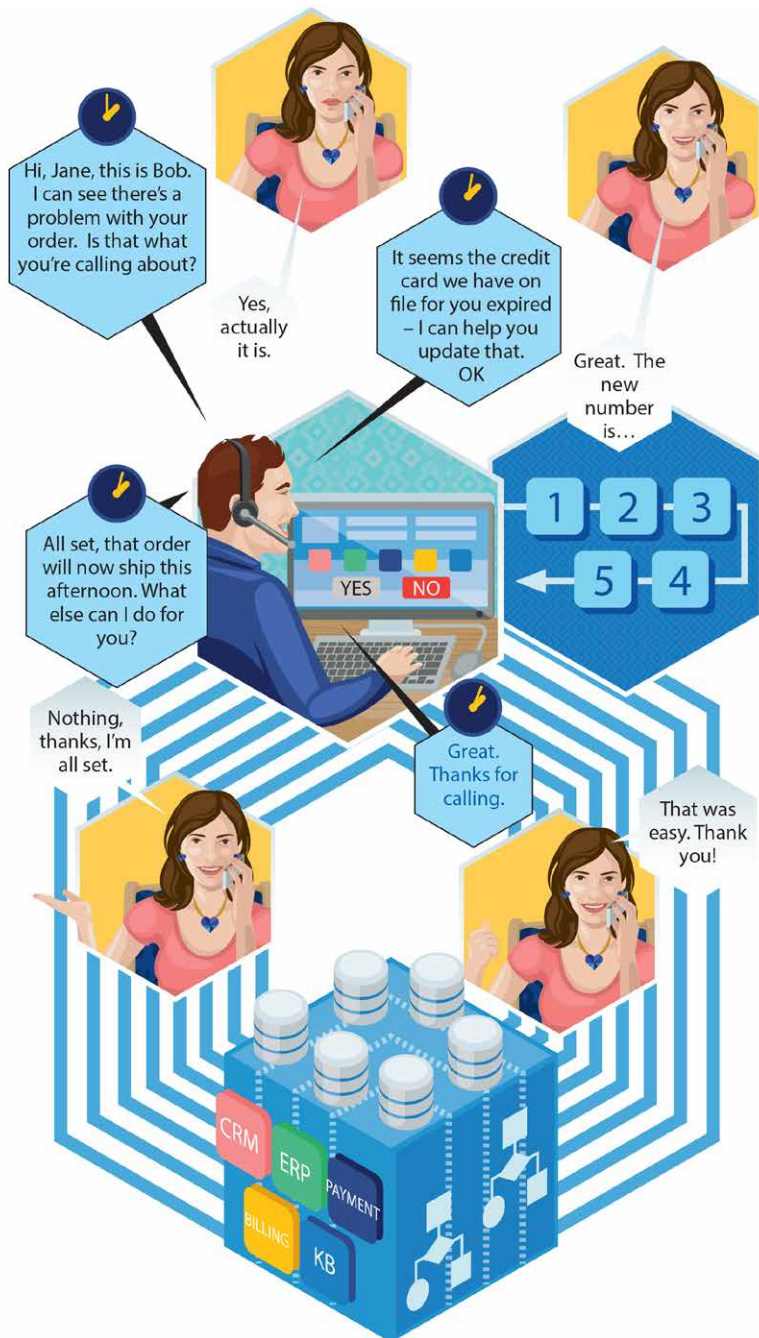
Jane says yes, and Bob clicks on the order detail in the agent desktop to get more information. The address the company has on file for Jane and the address to which the package was shipped are both displayed, allowing Bob to quickly realize that the package was sent to the wrong address. Jane is annoyed that the company didn't proactively contact her to straighten out the problem, but she is pleased when Bob puts a rush on a reorder and requests that a \$20.00 credit be applied to her account. To prevent future communication issues, Bob confirms Jane's mailing address, phone number and email address via the agent desktop. He then concludes the call and tells the system that he is ready to take another call.

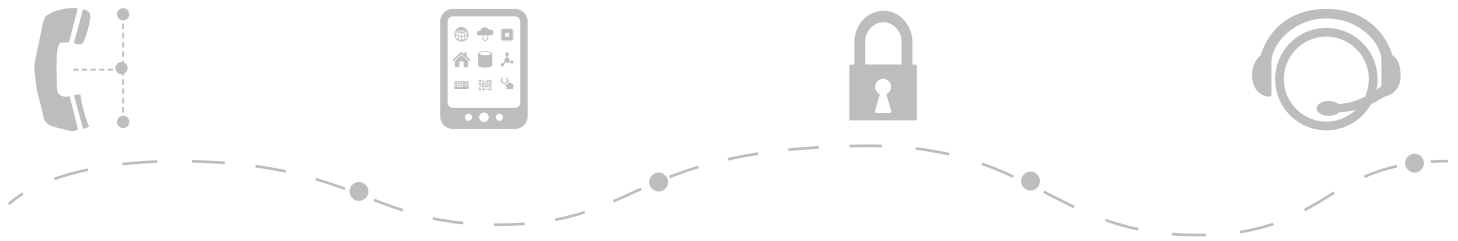
The one thing that can truly transform service, lower costs and improve agent productivity is in plain view: the agent desktop. But the desktop is the most often ignored technology in the contact center.

THE SOLUTION

Jane has the same problem, but her experience calling customer service is very different. Jane does less explaining and waiting, and doesn't become frustrated. The overall experience with customer service is pleasant. Because Bob is able to provide personalized service, Jane feels like the company knows her and genuinely cares about her satisfaction. She wasn't put on hold or apologized to excessively, so therefore she concludes that Bob was highly professional. Jane makes a mental note to do business with the company in the future, even for items or services that may be more expensive than its competitors. Meanwhile, Bob is confident that he efficiently addressed Jane's problem to her satisfaction.

Why the very different outcome? Quite simply, Bob's agent desktop is integrated with every system he requires to address Jane's needs. Integration with the IVR system means he doesn't need to identify and authenticate Jane a second time. Integration with the CRM system enables him to see Jane's customer information as soon as he connects to her. Integration with the order fulfillment system means he can see Jane's outstanding order and reasonably conclude why she might be calling. All of this information is available to Bob on one screen via the agent desktop.





THE NEW AGENT DESKTOP

Contact centers have at their disposal a wealth of customer data and a growing number of channels with which to engage customers. However, if these channels and data stores exist as segregated silos, they can cause more harm to service than good. Companies constantly gather information from their customers, and attempt to engage with them via email, phone, social media, SMS, etc., but the communications are disjointed. Customers don't understand why interactions with a company are inconsistent or why, for example, they have to identify themselves multiple times during a customer service call. But they do know companies collect data on their browsing habits, purchasing history and social media use. Chances are, they expect the contact center to use that information, but it doesn't appear to do so. It's time companies put that data to use. This is where customization and integration of the agent desktop comes in.

As we saw in the example "A Better Way" with Jane and Bob, customizing and integrating the agent desktop offers several benefits. To start, it saves valuable time. Bob is able to more efficiently address

Jane's needs, thereby improving his call handling time and Jane's satisfaction in the company's service. Because Bob does not need to excessively apologize for keeping Jane waiting while he moves from the agent desktop to the order fulfillment system to the CRM and to the agent desktop again, when he does apologize for the company's mistake, it resonates with Jane. The apology sounds genuine and she is receptive to it.

In addition to integrating enterprise systems, an agent desktop can be customized to guide agents through business processes across these systems and channels. This offers several benefits. Because processes remain consistent and are contained within a single application (the agent desktop), agent training is much more efficient. The cost of training new agents or training existing agents on new processes is lower than training agents on multiple systems, and agents can get up and running sooner. They also feel more confident because it takes less time to become proficient with the systems.



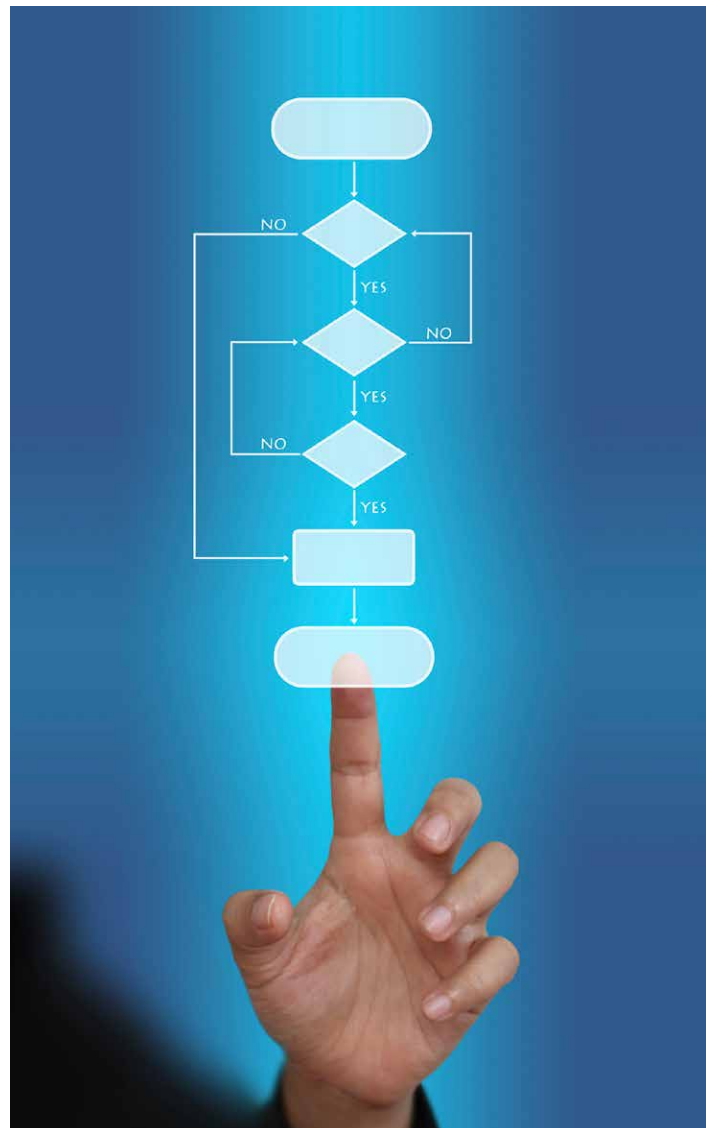


Customization of the desktop enables agents to focus on what really matters—solving the customer’s problem—instead of worrying over the task at hand.

Customization and integration also reduce agent error. Anytime you have a manual task, the risk of human error increases. For example, each time Bob re-enters Jane’s customer identification or order number, she risks miskeying the data and having to start over. This minor error, especially when combined with the other inconveniences of Jane’s call, can have a major impact on customer service levels, call-handling time and first-call resolution. Customization enables agents to focus on what really matters—solving the customer’s problem—instead of worrying over the task at hand.

Finally, a single agent desktop across multiple communication channels improves agent productivity. A single panel changes to allow the agent to interact via chat, email, social, etc., while the information the agent needs to address the customer’s needs remains in a static location for consistency. This enables agents to easily move between channels as opportunities arise. For example, an agent may respond to customer emails during lulls in incoming telephone calls. And, having all the information in one place helps ensure a consistent customer experience.

Unfortunately, integrated and customized agent desktops are not common today, and there’s a reason why. Quite simply, it is not easy to build an agent desktop that can be customized and integrated with virtually any other enterprise system. Vendors are happy to offer an agent desktop that integrates with their own systems, but an agent desktop that integrates with their competitors’ systems is another story. Unless you are undergoing a brand new deployment or completely replacing your technology, it’s unlikely that you have a purely homogeneous environment (i.e. all Cisco or all Avaya). It is far more likely that you have a heterogeneous environment, having procured multiple systems (your PBX, IVR system, CRM system, order fulfillment system, etc.) over time, and therefore you have no choice but to operate your agent desktop as a silo. That is, until today.





INTRODUCTION TO USAN

At USAN, we have gone where no other contact center technology provider has gone before. We developed an agent desktop that is fully customizable and integrates with virtually any enterprise system. Our agent desktop enables contact centers to leverage customer information and automate processes across multiple systems and channels. The result is truly transformative. Agents are able to deliver more personal and effective service while increasing first-call resolution, and reducing agent error and call-handling time. Contact center costs go down while customer satisfaction goes up.

Our agent desktop is available standalone or as part of the USAN Metaphor Voice Suite, an all-in-one hosted contact center solution. We built Metaphor Voice to give contact centers of any size in any industry complete flexibility and scalability at an affordable price. In addition to the agent desktop, Voice comes with an Automated Outbound Dialer for high volume outbound calling, an Automatic Call Distributor for intelligent inbound call routing and an IVR system for automated customer service.

Metaphor Voice is powered by our Metaphor Customer Engagement (CE) platform, a built-in integration framework with adapters that can

connect almost any existing technology and database. This, along with business process management capabilities and a flexible workflow designer, is what allows customer service agents to interact with any enterprise system via the agent desktop.

At USAN we have 25 years of hosted IVR design and integration development experience that is unparalleled in the industry. We are the experts in interactive voice response systems and multi-channel customer engagement. Let us show you the power of a customized and fully integrated agent desktop. Call us today at (770) 409-2441.



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About USAN

USAN helps companies profitably engage customers and deliver amazing cross-channel experiences with the industry's best cloud, premise and hybrid multi-channel customer engagement solution. From traditional telephone interactions to the web, social media and everything between, USAN's portfolio of call center products gives users infinite flexibility in the way they engage customers across channels. In addition to campaign management, back-office integration, and business process automation, USAN's offerings include Hosted IVR, ACD, and Dialers built upon a fifth-generation carrier-grade infrastructure that delivers "five nines" of availability and proven scalability.