BIG DATA IN THE CONTACT CENTER
Three Ways to Improve Customer Engagement

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BIG DATA IN THE CONTACT CENTER:

Three Ways to Improve Customer Engagement

It's an exciting time to be in customer service. Decision makers are increasingly recognizing the vital role contact centers play in the success of the business. Case in point: When asked which initiatives are likely to be top business priorities over the next 12 months, 80 percent of respondents to a Forrester survey[1] ranked acquiring and retaining customers a critical or high priority. Sixty-eight percent ranked addressing the rising expectations of customers and improving customer satisfaction a critical or high priority.

But wait, you might be thinking to yourself. *How is this a good thing?*

Two words: big data. No other organization within the business is better positioned to leverage the data it collects. Contact centers gather a wealth of customer data via multiple channels: social media, the corporate web site, mobile applications and voice calls. When taken together, the data collected from these channels can be used to aid decision making in any single channel. It's simply a matter of harvesting value from that data.

Big data makes this possible. And there is plenty of opportunity. On average companies only use 12 percent of their data.[2] With business decision makers already prioritizing the need to improve customer engagement, contact centers are in a good position to get the resources they need for big data.

Every day it seems there is yet another new communication channel by which organizations can interact with their customers, but voice still reigns supreme.[3] Unfortunately, it's not always obvious how data gathered by an agent, for example, can later be used in an IVR interaction to provide superior customer service. Let's look at how big data can be used to improve customer engagement through a variety of channels, including phone and/or IVR interactions.

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[1]   Forrester's Forrsights Business Decision-Makers Survey, Q4 2012

[2]   Forrsights Strategy Spotlight: Business Intelligence and Big Data, Q4 2012

[3]   The Aberdeen Group's September 2012 "Speech Analytics: Listen to your Customers" benchmark report found that nearly two-thirds of interactions in contact centers involve voice — phone and/or Interactive Voice Response (IVR) conversations
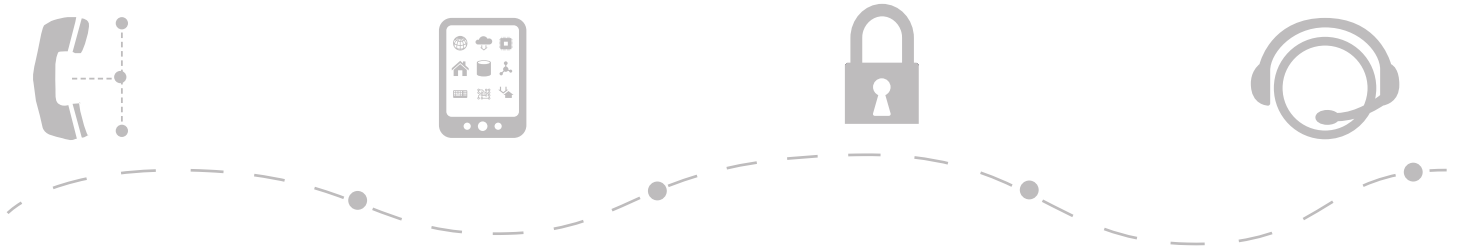
JUST-IN-TIME PERSONALIZATION

Just-in-time personalization refers to the marketing practice of serving up, in real-time, content or options that are relevant to an individual customer based on his or her implicit behavior and preferences, and explicitly stated details. Organizations have been capturing this type of data for some time and using it, for example, to display on their web site products or services a customer may be interested in based on past purchases. These personalized offers are an important factor in encouraging repeat purchases.

Just-in-time personalization is an effective tool for improving customer engagement, because it speaks to our human desire to be treated as an individual. This is particularly appealing in today's business environment where the "face" of the business is often an intangible series of ones and zeros. Modern purchasing habits include researching products and services, and comparing prices before stepping into a brick-and-mortar store. So even if your company has a physical presence, chances are your customers have already become familiar with your online presence — what can be viewed as a cold, impersonal entity. When businesses transcend the anonymity of technology — be it social media or a voice call — customers feel like your business knows them as well as they know you. This familiarity is the foundation for a relationship, which in turn leads to customer retention.

Despite the benefits of personalization, Econsultancy research shows that only 19 percent of marketers are actually using it.[4] This indicates that there's some confusion as to how just-in-time personalization can be used to improve customer service and/or a lack of awareness of the opportunities that exist to do so. For example, today's IVR systems allow organizations to take just-in-time personalization leaps and bounds beyond the traditional Internet marketing technique of offering personalized products and services on a web site. An IVR system may change its routing or prompts based on the existence of some exception like an overdue bill, a recent purchase or line-of-credit increase. After the customer authenticates, the IVR system may determine that the caller recently made an in-store purchase over $200 and is eligible for an extended warranty at a nominal fee. The IVR system presents this offer while directing the call to an agent who, in turn, thanks the customer for their recent purchase.

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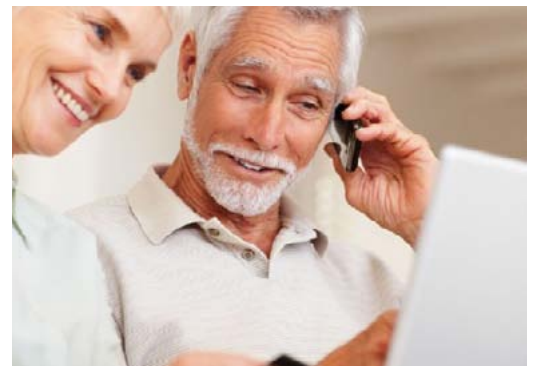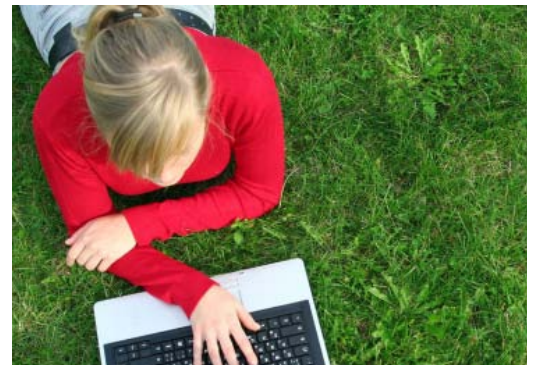
[4]   As reported in the article *Three major benefits of using personalisation in marketing.*

BIG-DATA DRIVEN CUSTOM INTERACTIONS

Big data can also be used to drive custom interactions; interactions that are more meaningful and of value because they are based on the customer's needs, interests and motivations, and not just on the company's desire to increase product sales. Big-data driven custom interactions seek to build on existing interactions rather than interrupt them. These interactions are welcome by customers because they help them achieve a goal, save money and/or time, or simply make the shopping experience more enjoyable.

Let's look at some examples. Every company these days sends marketing email to its customer database. These email messages can be perceived easily by customers as a nuisance and labeled spam. However, if emails are sent strategically and customized based on big data insights, they can be made more effective. Information such as how and when a customer last interacted with your company, whether he or she used a loyalty card during their last purchase, whether they abandoned a

purchase in an online shopping cart, expressed their dissatisfaction with your service via social media or returned a product — all of this can be used to tailor the email so that it will be relevant to the customer's unique situation rather than appear irrelevant and uninformed — both indications that your company does not care about its customers.

Consider yet another example. If you are a large home goods retailer, you may track purchases and conclude, based on purchasing patterns, when a customer is approaching a significant event in their life. Perhaps multiple purchases from the baby department in the brick-and-mortar store and items placed on the customer's wish list are a strong indication that a newly married couple is expecting their first child. You might send an email to the customer with relevant content on preparing for the arrival of a child, how to set up a registry with your store, and product reviews of major items like strollers, high chairs and cribs.

This example implies that data gathered via a web analytics platform is being pulled into the IVR system. But any data entered into the IVR system, either by the customer or the customer service agent, should also be pushed out to inform other departments, such as marketing. Perhaps the customer service agent learns that the customer is not expecting a child of their own — but a grandchild. While it may still be appropriate to send the customer marketing emails that advertise baby products, the language should be modified accordingly. Grandma may not be spending many sleepless nights with a colicky baby, but she does need to have the proper supplies on hand for when her *grandchild* is visiting — diapers, wipes, extra bottles, etc.

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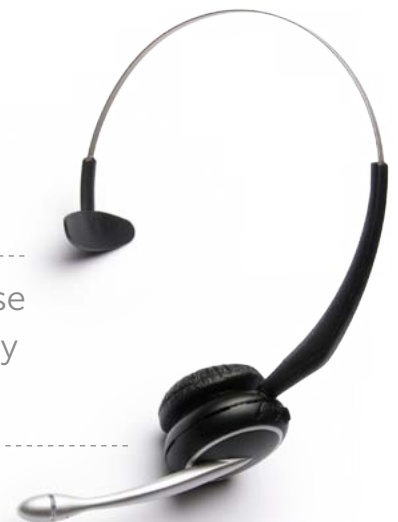
DATA-DRIVEN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES CREATED ON THE FLY

Companies can take the concept of data-driven custom interactions one step further by applying those insights to customer experiences in real time. Imagine the customer in the previous example was to call the retailer's customer service department to inquire about extending his or her line of credit. The customer authenticates via the IVR system and, while on hold, is offered a coupon code for their next online purchase over $50. In the meantime, the customer service representative is presented with information about the customer's purchasing history so that it can be leveraged during the conversation to build rapport and help determine if there are other offers that would be applicable to the customer.

Google search results are another good example of how data-driven customer experiences can be created on the fly. Google refines its search results based on the user's search history and the links the user clicked on. If the user is searching for craft stores, the search engine will return pages for stores that are local to the user.

It is clear how data-driven customer experiences can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of customer service interactions and marketing campaigns. Even more than that, matching campaigns and service offers to customer preferences at the exact moment of decision making helps improve customer engagement. It gives the impression that the customer is more than a sales transaction and that the company is invested in maintaining a relationship with the customer.

CONCLUSION

Customers have more channels than ever before by which to interact with your company and each interaction is an opportunity to gather data about customers' needs, wants and desires. The result is a vast store of information that can be integrated and analyzed to enable relevant and customized real-time responses—from any channel. This, in turn, can help your company retain customers and achieve higher customer satisfaction scores. But how do you go from raw data to engaged customers? That's where USAN's Metaphor Voice comes in.

Metaphor Voice is an all-inclusive cloud-based contact center technology solution. Base features include everything a contact center needs to conduct inbound, outbound and blended customer interactions for any line of business in any industry segment. Metaphor Voice is powered by the Metaphor Customer Engagement (CE) platform. The Metaphor CE platform offers a built-in integration framework and adapters that can connect Metaphor Voice to almost any existing technology and database, including competitors', so organizations can continue to leverage their existing investments. And with included process management capabilities and a flexible workflow designer, organizations can centralize and coordinate business processes that will improve agility and productivity.

For organizations that plan to expand beyond traditional channels to include mobile, social media and SMS, USAN will offer expansion models powered by the Metaphor CE platform to enable true multichannel customer contact based on big-data insights. To learn more about how USAN can help you use big data insights from across the enterprise to improve customer engagements, call us today at (770) 729-1449.

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.

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