Improving business outcomes with omnichannel customer experiences

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Historically, companies have relied on communicating with customers by letter and by phone. Over time, even more means to interact have become available. First came email. Then, web forms and live chats. Today, customers can talk to companies directly via all these channels - or more publicly via social networks. This is the world of omnichannel communications, and many are struggling to keep up.

Expertly tackling omnichannel customer service and support isn't easy, but cloud-based tools are helping. This executive brief explores how adding omnichannel communication capabilities to Spectrum Enterprise Unified Communications (UC) — especially with Hosted Call Center — results in a powerful service combination that offers a fast, easy way to build an effective service operation across multiple sales channels.

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Exploring the omnichannel imperative

Customers are driving demand for omnichannel engagement. For example, Emplifi discovered that 75% of consumers find it important for a business to provide them with a fully self-service customer care option.[1] Seventy-eight percent customers surveyed by Salesforce said that they used multiple channels to start and complete a transaction,[3] showing just how profound this change in customer interaction has become. Companies that don't follow a multichannel approach risk becoming less competitive.

Companies must understand what sets a good omnichannel implementation apart. Setting up a customer sales and support system that spans different communication channels is about more than just running email, telephony, and web chats alongside each other.

The omnichannel technology must offer a seamless experience that enables customers to move between different channels without losing continuity. A customer might begin their relationship with a company by requesting a live chat with an agent on the website, following up with an email, and then finally talking to another agent on the phone to make a purchase. If the omnichannel solution doesn't keep track of the customer's information and status across these channels then it will force them to repeat the same things— telling different agents what they're interested in, what problems they're trying to solve, and what interactions they've had before. If the customer finds themselves divulging their personal information more than once, the company risks losing the battle for customer loyalty.

Companies have struggled to reach this level of continuity because coordinating multiple communication channels has been technically challenging. They must funnel extra data from those incoming channels and send them to the relevant systems. Fortunately, newer technology is now making that easier.

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Spectrum Enterprise was honored with TMC's 2022 Internet Telephony Excellence Award for having developed exceptional IP communications solutions.

The importance of CRM integration

Those omnichannel communications shouldn't just be routed to agent queues; they should also be used to improve the company's existing intelligence about the customer. Customer relationship management (CRM) is a key component in a competent omnichannel solution. By the time the agent reaches the customer's inbound communication in the queue, she should have key information at her fingertips, including what other channels the customer has used for contact in the past, what was said, and which agent dealt with that communication, along with other details about the customer's purchase and service history.

It's challenging enough for many companies to route this information between systems that they own. Some even miss out on the opportunity to return web form queries quickly because they don't route those contact form submissions to traditional inbound agent queues. Extracting data from channels that they don't own, such as social networks, is an even more daunting prospect for them.

The result is a gap between customers' expectations of a seamless and personalized support experience and the reality of fragmented interactions between different communication channels and departments. For instance, Salesforce found that 85% of 13,020 customers and 3,916 business buyers surveyed worldwide expect consistent interactions across departments.[4]

The solution: Spectrum Enterprise Hosted Call Center and UC Omnichannel

Companies needed the missing link: an integrated service that unites communications from these multiple channels with the wealth of customer data stored in the CRM system and presents it to agents in the queue quickly and clearly so that they can concentrate on customer care. That's where Spectrum Enterprise Hosted Call Center and UC Omnichannel come in.

The award-winning Spectrum Enterprise Hosted Call Center (HCC) is a cloud-based contact center service that offers everything required to receive and route incoming communications to agents. It includes advanced call routing, monitoring and analytics capabilities, managed via an easy-access web portal for flexible operation. HCC comes with 24/7/365 support and disaster recovery services to ensure business continuity.

Cloud-based UC, HCC and UC Omnichannel acts as an integrated service that collects the digital communications from multiple channels including email, webchats, web callbacks, Twitter and voice to give agents a 360-degree view of customer communications. Agents equipped with this technology enjoy a single interface to manage all customer communications. They can handle communications via whichever channel is most appropriate for the customer.

Broader integration across multiple channels

Omnichannel expands a company's engagement with customers, enabling them to talk to agents in the manner they prefer – email, webchat, web callbacks, Twitter, and voice. Likewise, an agent can switch between communication mechanisms depending on their immediate needs and general preferences. For example, after researching a company's web site, a certain customer might prefer to call that company directly. Omnichannel enables them to request that interaction by clicking a "call me" button on the site, sending the request into an agent dashboard. The Spectrum Enterprise UC Omnichannel service enable agents to call back directly from the agent dashboard.

Cloud-based UC, HCC and UC Omnichannel give agents a 360-degree view of customer communications.

With the unified dashboard, agents can see webchats and queued emails from customers, read their full contents, and respond in kind using pre-written responses. Likewise, they can also use the dashboard to view incoming tweets and respond publically or send direct Twitter messages to individual customers via the omnichannel tool.

Cross-channel continuity

Cross-channel continuity is a key feature of UC Omnichannel that allows agents to switch conversations smoothly between channels. This feature allows agents to transfer live chats between each other and escalate web chats to telephone calls seamlessly within the agent interface.

Deeper integration for customer insight

Alongside its multichannel integration, UC Omnichannel connects with a range of CRM systems: Salesforce, Zendesk, Agile CRM, Microsoft Dynamics, Zoho CRM and Sugar CRM. The tool can search these systems against customers' incoming communications on any channel, presenting agents with an instant communication history. It also logs conversations across various channels, enabling agents to drop links to web chats into the CRM, including the customer's rating of the chat. Any agent can read the full text of these chats later on.

Maximize agent resources

UC Omnichannel enables agents to work more efficiently by multitasking. It maximizes their efficiency by enabling them, for example, to handle multiple live chats and Twitter conversations at once, showing them all customers waiting for a web chat response. They can set "unavailable" codes to prevent them from receiving any more inquiries from the queue when they're at full capacity. Agents are also able to simplify some interactions using tools like pre-written text snippets for often-used phrases, further streamlining their communication.

Multitasking isn't the only way that the service can make better use of contact center agents. Automated routing and queuing for communications across all channels enables the service to distribute work evenly between workers. Supervisors can choose between different routing models including sending communications to the longest-idle agent or to all agents simultaneously. It can also route calls to the person best-equipped to deal with the query based on the groups that they're assigned to within the contact center.

These features enable agents to resolve more issues and problems, scaling in response to peaking demand without increasing agent head count. It also enables them to focus and convert more contacts to sales.

Resilient connectivity to the cloud

Wireless backup can help in the unlikely event connectivity to the fiber network is disrupted by providing redundant connectivity to the unified communications platform.

A router connects externally to a wireless Long Term Evolution (LTE) network. Should an outage occur, traffic is automatically routed to this secondary LTE network, keeping your business communications flowing without interruption.

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Simple setup

It doesn't take a large investment of time to set up this cloud-based solution. It is easy to customize, offering a range of web chat configuration options including how live chat interfaces look and feel on the company's web site. The service integrates into the website with simple HTML code, meaning no complex, cumbersome redevelopment projects.

Pricing is simple for companies using the UC Omnichannel service. As a cloud-based solution, it's priced on a subscription model to minimize up-front cost and also eliminates the need for costly on-premises hardware. Companies can add more communication channels as their strategy demands, enabling them to start simply and broaden their omnichannel journey as their expertise grows.

Conclusion

Omnichannel integration is a way to keep track of rapidly evolving customer expectations by engaging people on their terms. It's a crucial strategy in the race to craft more convenient, personalized customer experiences. By investing in cloud-based omnichannel services that integrate data with UC and CRM solutions, companies can upgrade their contact centers while minimizing their financial and time investments. Talk to us today about how you can use the Spectrum Enterprise UC, HCC and Omnichannel services to accelerate your business.

Use case scenarios

Step 1: A smooth, efficient purchase

Jill, a 40 year-old eco-conscious home owner, is tired of her loud, gas guzzling push mower. She's interested in the KQ-5000, an electric-powered push mower available from Evergreen Lawn Solutions (ELS). She has looked at the website but it's a complex product with several battery and motor size options. She needs to know if there's a dealer in the area who can help her out. She requests a web chat via the website and Laura, an ELS agent, picks up the request from the queue. Laura takes Jill's details, listens to her needs, and helps her find a local licensed dealer.

Jill loves Laura's fast, efficient responses to product-related questions, which seem to arrive almost instantly. Finally, she's ready to make a purchase but she's a shopper who doesn't like entering her credit card details online. Laura offers to call her immediately, and escalates the web chat to a live call to take her details, arrange delivery via the local dealer and complete the purchase.

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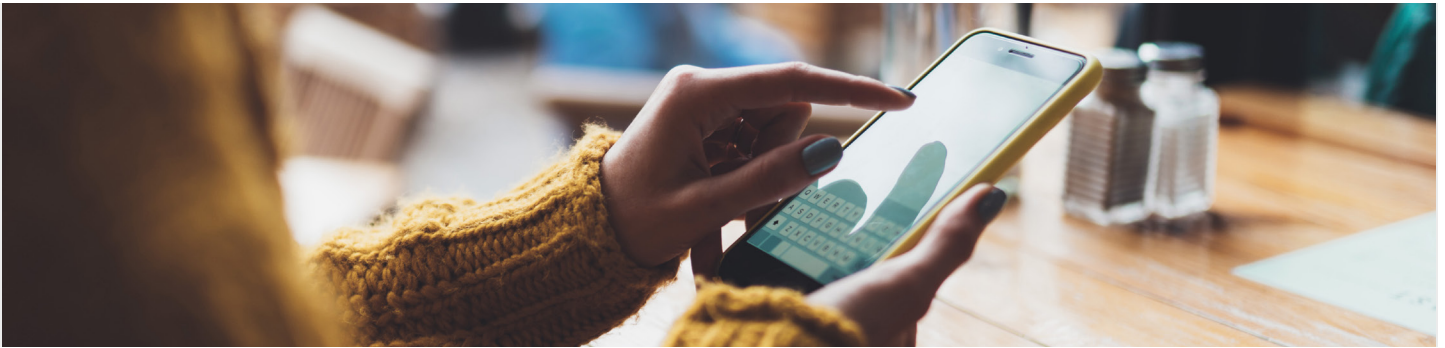
Step 2: Turning Twitter trouble into an opportunity

Four months later, all is not going well with the KQ-5000. A problem with the mower battery has caused her new lawn mower to overheat and she can't complete mowing her lawn in a single charge. Upset, she takes to Twitter and sends an unhappy tweet calling the company out.

UC Omnichannel picks up the tweet and puts it in the queue for agents to pick up. It automatically routes to Pete, an agent in the client retention group who specializes in talking with unhappy customers. He can see Jill's number thanks to the service's CRM integration. He calls Jill immediately and listens patiently to her problem. It's a defect issue that's beyond his capabilities, so he transfers the call to Kristine, a technical support agent who quickly concludes that the battery is defective. Kristine transfers the call back to Pete, who has been reading Jill's first web chat with Laura in the CRM system. From this, he learns the original dealer's details. He tells Jill that he'll organize a fix through the dealer, free of charge, and also arranges to send her some extra lawn feed for her trouble.

Jill is delighted. She tweets about her experience, which causes 50 new web visits to the ELS site over the next day. That's a lot more work for Laura— and a lot more revenue for ELS.

Learn more

1. "7 fascinating facts every customer service team must know today," Emplifi, 2022.
2. Ibid.
3. "The State of the Connected Customer — Fifth Edition" Salesforce, Feb., 2022.
4. Ibid

About Spectrum Enterprise

Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, Inc., is a national provider of scalable, fiber technology solutions serving many of America's largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes networking and managed services solutions: Internet access, Ethernet access and networks, Voice and TV solutions. The Spectrum Enterprise team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. For more information, visit enterprise.spectrum.com.

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