

Contact centres for the next generation

Customer experience is the last source of sustainable differentiation in a battle for the next generation digital consumer, and the only way for contact centres to rise to this challenge is through digital transformation, says Interactive Intelligence.



Deon Scheepers

Deon Scheepers, manager of sales operations at Interactive Intelligence South Africa, says the digital revolution cannot be ignored. "Digital technology is impacting everything, including the contact centre. Global research shows that digital is impacting every facet of life and work. The next generation of digital consumer - Gen D - is emerging fast, with new demands and expectations of what organisations can deliver and how they will engage with consumers.

Embracing change

Digital encompasses more than just mobile, social media, big data and cloud. IDC says although digital is all these things, we also need to be aware of new technologies that are starting to emerge: the next generation of security, Internet of Things (IoT), augmentation, artificial intelligence, robotics and more."

Scheepers says research indicates that by the end of 2017, two thirds of CEOs at Global 2000 enterprises will have digital transformation strategies in place. The key focus in this transformation, he says, will be cloud. "Cloud computing is growing exponentially: at Interactive Intelligence alone, it makes up 60% of our revenue and it is growing fast. Gartner research shows a key reason for this is that it gives organisations agility and flexibility as well as cost savings."

"Cloud will give access to the latest and greatest digital tools without breaking the bank," Scheepers says.

Contact centres have been slow to move to digital transformation, says Scheepers. "In fact, the Dimension Data 2015 Contact Centre Benchmark Report shows we are going backwards when we talk about customer service. The report says digital interaction will overtake traditional voice interaction by the end of 2016. Social media is the first choice for interaction in millennials but 57% of contact centres have no social media capabilities.

The game is changing. The contact centre of the future must become the action hub of engagement, but 40% of contact centres have no analytics capability. How will you engage with the customer if you don't know what their preferences and expectations are?"

"All these new channels are being thrown at you and you need to be able to use them to communicate. The single view of the customer is still key, but only 20% of organisations achieve a 360-degree view of the customer, because it is becoming more complex."



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The digital divide

In the social media space, a lack of digital strategy is causing a divide between customers and organisations, says Scheepers. "The customers use the digital toys they have, but the organisations don't understand these new channels half the time; or they don't have budgets to enable effective omnichannel engagement. When there's a disconnect between customers and your organisation, what happens to customer experience?"

Scheepers says the contact centre industry must focus on digital transformation that enhances operations and the customer experience. "It is key to understand the customer, making sure all the right touch points are in place and all processes are effectively automated. Organisations must design the customer experience from the outside in, understanding the customer journey."

He notes: "Most companies say customer experience is important to them, but few get it right and most are not ready to meet the expectations of Gen D. Customers are changing - they have a lot more of the power, they expect access to information, they want control. They expect digital self-service, social media and mobile engagement as they navigate between different channels. Organisations must transform to meet these expectations."

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