



How AI is transforming the contact centre experience

AI promises to improve and enhance the customer contact experience, but some organisations are struggling to make the most of the technologies.

Our latest Autonomous Customer research confirms that consumers are ready to welcome artificial intelligence (AI) into the contact centre, giving organisations a green light to make the most of all the technology can offer.

AI is already a transformational force, having a positive impact on both the customer and agent experience.

A world of possibilities for a better customer experience

Leading organisations are applying AI at key points in the customer contact process to speed up resolution and reduce customer frustration.

They're using AI-powered chatbots to deliver a fast and efficient self-service offering, relieving the pressure on agents and satisfying customers.

Our research shows that chatbots are an accepted part of life today. When it comes to voice activated chatbots, the rise of smart speaker technology may have had an influence; we know that 28% of consumers made a purchase through a smart speaker in 2020, and I expect that figure to shoot up in 2021. Consumers generally welcome chatbots.

43% actively like using voice chatbots and appreciate the way they make life easier, and 75% see getting an immediate response as their main benefit.



And if self-service doesn't resolve the issue, organisations are using AI to make sure that the customer's call is routed to the agent with the best skillset to help them, and then to update the agent with latest transaction details so the customer doesn't have to repeat their information.

AI is transforming security and identification, too. There's growing public trust in AI's ability to make life online more secure. Our research reveals that 58% of consumers now like the idea of organisations using technology like AI to identify them by their voice and save time on the call.

Organisations are also using AI to deflect customers from calling the contact centre by sending out proactive messages. These often predict issues, offering advice and suggested next steps at points of potential contact. From a restaurant confirming a booking via automated SMS, to a chatbot offering help if a shopping basket isn't checked out, AI supports a great customer experience without involving agents.

Transforming the agent experience with AI

AI is finding new ways to support agents, improving their working experience and sense of job satisfaction. AI-powered solutions search knowledge systems and analyse customer intent, channelling this information into prompts for agents. AI technology also reduces everyday frustrations by carrying important data across different systems, cutting down the amount of information the agent has to re-enter. These 'augmented agents' are more likely to feel they have the tools to do the best job possible.

Realising AI's potential takes work

AI's transformative possibilities are clear, but many organisations are struggling to make the promise a reality. I've talked to so many global enterprises who are exploring AI in a disjointed way. They've got lots of AI trials dotted around the business, but no coherent strategy. Many are finding that AI is easier to consume now, but it's still relatively complex to implement and configuring it to work together well is a tricky art.

The takeaway here is that you can access AI technology quickly, but making it effective takes time and data; AI needs large datasets to train on and learn from, and finetuning virtual assistants can't happen overnight.

Take our work with AI-powered voice technology as an example. We've been able to reduce call times by up to ten minutes, but it wasn't a question of installing and pressing go. We started with the fundamentals – a good quality connection between the caller and the AI assistant so the technology could 'hear' clearly. And, to a certain extent, we had to wait for people to learn how to talk to technology. Now the likes of Siri, Cortana and Alexa are a part of everyday life, people know how to phrase their questions to get a useful response. Then we invested time in establishing a robust data set to train the AI technology on. It's only when we got all these factors in place, we were able to significantly improve our customers' experience and achieve our objectives.

I believe it's important for organisations to recognise that adding these new AI-powered technologies is just the starting point. It takes a lot of knowhow and building on the base technology to realise the full benefits. That's why our focus is on using our expertise to weave this technology into your contact centre so that both your customers and your agents have the best possible experience, and your business gets maximum benefit from your investment.

Get the full picture of what consumers expect from contact centres today, download our [Autonomous Customer 2021](#) [whitepaper](#).

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