

Humanizing Digital CX with AI and Automation

WRITTEN BY: BROOKE LYNCH



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Featuring Insights From:



Jay Gupta

Director of Product Marketing

Talkdesk



Dale Sturgill

VP of Call Center Operations

EmployBridge



Daniel Wilcox

Head of CX

Dutch

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Digital engagement has not only become second nature to customers but a highly personal medium for genuine discussion. Customers now text their closest friends and family members to share news about their lives and make plans for the future. However, when using digital channels for customer service interactions, that personal nature seems to be somewhat lost.

Many customers go straight to the phone channel when things feel complicated, completely bypassing the digital counterpart they use most in their daily life. When CCW Digital asked organizations what steps they are currently taking to improve the use of and/or comfort with digital customer engagement options, the majority stated elevating quality standards in digital to improve customer satisfaction and trust.

To actually do this, organizations must start with a human-centered approach. If companies can translate human qualities into digital interactions, they can elevate the experience and promote purposeful communication across all channels.

With AI and automation, companies can remove inefficiencies throughout the experience to promote better interactions with more engaged agents. As they establish an attentive frontline, organizations will finally deliver the level of personal support customers are seeking, no matter the channel.

This report will cover the importance of humanizing digital customer experiences and touch on the role AI and automation play in facilitating this level of support. With effective AI technology, organizations can empower their frontline to deliver exceptional digital experiences.

Have we Distanced Ourselves from the ‘Human’ Experience?

There was definitely a time when customers considered calling a customer service agent a robotic experience. Customers have always been able to sense when agents are closely following a script and seem disengaged. But now, even a highly orchestrated interaction over the phone may seem better to customers who are struggling to find answers digitally. At least over the phone they can escalate the conversation, speak to another agent and slowly resolve their issue. Online, customers don't feel they have that same flexibility to properly identify another digital outlet for support.

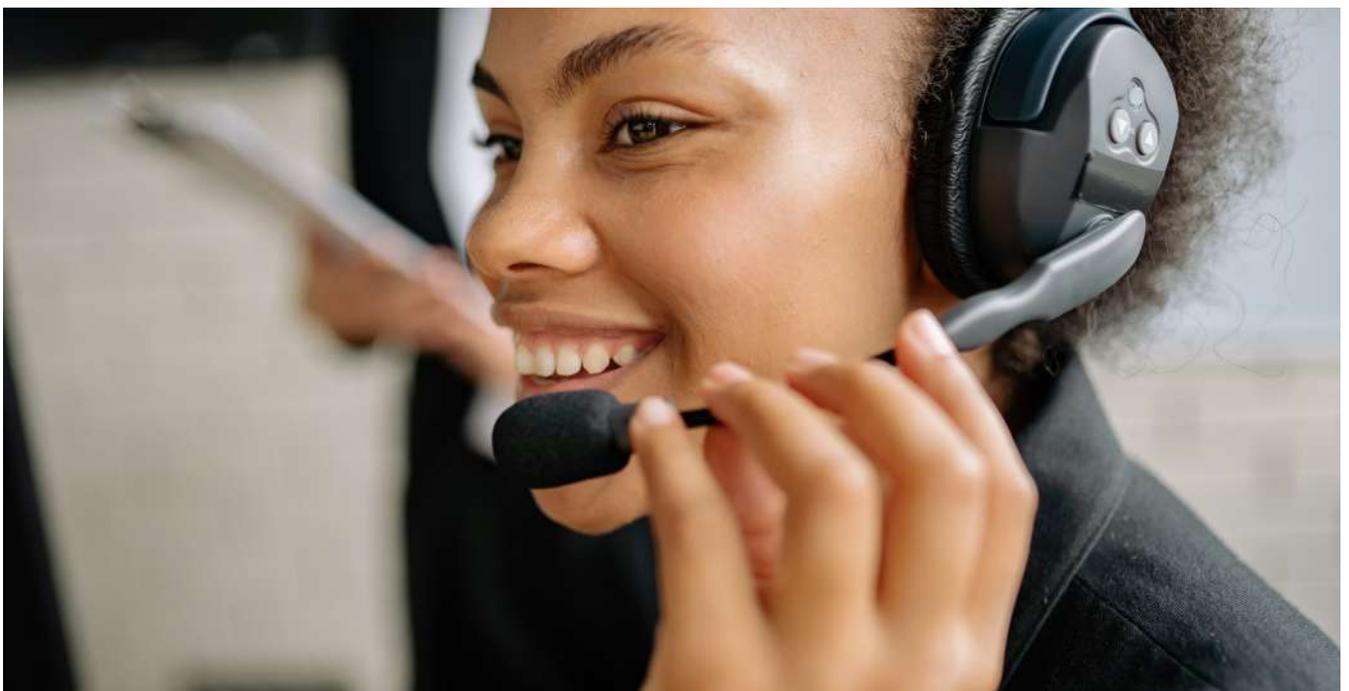
According to CCW Digital research, 50% of customers use the phone channel when an issue feels too complicated, unusual or difficult to explain in a digital interaction. So while it seems as though we've distanced ourselves from these essentially human experiences in favor of highly innovative digital experiences, customers still desire a comprehensive option.

This isn't to say that all digital interactions are inherently impersonal; companies can achieve a more balanced human-centered digital experience, if they implement the right technology. When customers avoid digital options to seek out support for complicated issues, they are being assisted by a frontline equipped with advanced technology that enables them to focus on the conversation. AI and automation technology are actually leading tools behind these meaningful conversations, not just the empathetic agent.

To get back to the human experience customers are desperately seeking, companies must use technology in a way that enhances and simplifies the experience, instead of dehumanizing it. Once we can implement technology that aids the agent workflow and prompts meaningful conversations, customers will feel free to engage across channels regardless of their needs.



“When customers have complex issues or feel vulnerable, they want to know that businesses care and will help them. More than ever, customers expect proactive support during life-changing events. People want to know their favorite brands will support them through tough times. Brands are also expected to fill societal gaps - for example, if customers ask questions about supply chain policies or carbon footprint, frontline staff will need to find the correct answers otherwise they risk harming brand reputation.” - **Jay Gupta, Director of Product Marketing, Talkdesk**



Humanized Experiences as a Competitive Differentiator

With so many brands struggling to deliver human experience online, it's easy to identify it as a key differentiator in today's experience-centric environment. Brands that are able to apply the principles of an exceptional in-person or phone experience in the virtual environment will be much more desirable to customers feeling disengaged on digital.

In a recent MIT Sloan review, Leslie Zane [states](#), "Too often, companies approach the digital experience for customers in a transactional way. Although focusing on making shopping online faster or simpler for customers is important, brands must also take an experiential approach by building new ways to interact with customers on a human level. It's this focus — digital humanization — that separates truly revolutionary brands from those just trying to get by."

Companies that focus on humanizing their experience will lead the way in attracting customers who seek personalized, meaningful support on digital platforms. With so many focused on delivering faster, more streamlined experiences, there must be a simultaneous goal of human-centered CX. Regardless of how fast an interaction is, if a customer can't find the answer in an intuitive way, it means nothing.

With AI and automation, organizations can enhance their human experience while improving efficiency across the end-to-end experience. As they work to automate processes, companies can build a cross-channel experiential approach that truly resonates with customers.

The Complex Agent Experience

Companies have been discussing the idea of a future where AI handles simple tasks so employees can focus on complex ones for quite some time. When considering the complicated agent experience, it makes sense that organizations would want to remove tedious and unproductive tasks from their day-to-day workflow.

However, beyond the actual removal of these tasks, companies are largely unprepared for a reality in which agents are able to hone in on the most complex cases. When CCW Digital asked companies how they are preparing for this future agent workflow, 52% said they are working to train existing agents to handle this new, more complex breed of interactions. However, when asked about the qualities of the technology present in their contact center, only 16% stated that their technology was very helpful and efficient for their agents.

If companies want to humanize the experience, they must first identify inefficiencies in their agents' workflows. With so few companies excited about the ease of use of their technology, there is clearly room for improvement in terms of functionality. Once companies can ensure their agents have access to intuitive technology, they can begin to train their agents to take on complex cases.



“When employees feel a sense of purpose in their work, they are motivated to tackle complex problems. But they need the right tooling and technology to support them. The evolution of human productivity is the story of tools. The job of AI is to meet this basic human need, empowering agents, giving them greater autonomy, ready to face the most complex challenges.” - **Jay Gupta, Director of Product Marketing, Talkdesk**



Employing AI and Automation for a Human Experience

With customers seeking a more human digital experience, companies must prioritize technology that can empower their frontline to deliver more engaging and personalized support. To establish digital CX that mimics real-life interactions, contact center operations should be designed and implemented to individualize interactions for every customer. Here we discuss the role AI and automation play in achieving human-centered interactions and explain the extensive benefits of personal customer experiences.

Optimize Self-Service

To improve the digital experience, companies must start with self-service. Inefficient self-service tools are one of the main reasons customers are, at times, averse to digital interactions. When a chatbot cannot understand their inquiry customers quickly switch to the phone channel to explain their question to a human. However, sophisticated self-service mechanisms have the power to overcome those inefficiencies and recognize language in a way that feels entirely natural.

AI-powered self-service tools can be trained to understand the way humans interact and engage with dialogue that resonates with customers. With this technology in place, companies can make it easy for customers to find answers to their most complex issues in a digital interaction. Virtual agents allow customers to converse in a two-way discussion on voice and digital channels with a seamless and easy flow.

By integrating channels like SMS and live web chat, virtual agents can identify customer sentiment and intention through text and voice analytics. Regardless of misspellings or mistakes, the conversational AI technology can continue the conversation and help customers achieve their goals. When issues seem too complex, virtual agents can identify moments for intelligent call handoffs so customers never have to search for an answer independently.

With a more human self-service tool, agents can redirect their energy to complex cases and avoid repetitive, simple tasks. This ensures that customers receive more human support on all channels, even during their most straightforward self-service interactions.



“AI powering self-service tools helps contact centers overcome many communication barriers of traditional channels like chatbots and IVRs. The AI-powered virtual agent is pre-trained to understand human language by extracting keywords, including the customer intent and sentiment, from unstructured human speech and text. Powerful capabilities like these help drive better customer engagement with more natural dialogue with the virtual agent. It also paves the way for a seamless handover to human agents when needed.” - **Jay Gupta, Director of Product Marketing, Talkdesk**

Enhance Technology For Continuous Success

Technology can only be humanized if it is designed and trained by people. Further, it is most successful once bolstered by feedback from the individuals who actually use it. While this seems obvious, many companies do not actually consider the impact technology decisions will have on their frontline employees. More often than not, these decisions create a chronic disconnect between technology and the employee, resulting in diminished experiences across the board.

Human-centered technology must have mechanisms that can support the individuals that use it. However, these needs will continue to change and evolve, as we’ve seen in the past year. Therefore, companies must prioritize technology that can be trained and developed at a moment’s notice. With sophisticated AI, agents can train tools with their practical knowledge and expertise to improve operations and ensure better outcomes.



An AI Trainer gives agents the power to streamline their workflow through a simplified, easy to use interface. Non-technical staff can work to improve automation performance, identify inefficiencies and promote continuous development opportunities. As the AI technology is advanced with real human behavior in mind, agents can optimize their workflow and direct their attention to moments that matter most.



“There are also great opportunities to upskill agents to help contact centers operationalize AI. Teaching AI systems to fully understand what is happening in a customer's world as completely as a human can is complex. AI for customer service gets better the more it is exposed to diverse data sets and can be 'trained' by humans - who are experts in customer service. With no-code AI training tools, agents and supervisors can help AI understand new things and fine-tune the accuracy of its output. Actions like these could lead to the creation of entirely new roles such as an AI training manager, or be weaved into the existing frontline roles.” - **Jay Gupta, Director of Product Marketing, Talkdesk**



“The ability to self-design and build intelligent workflows is making us more efficient, enabling us to serve more customers with less effort and faster than before... By selecting Talkdesk, we have realized significant cost savings while simultaneously delivering a much-needed injection of innovation.” - **Dale Sturgill, VP of Call Center Operations, EmployBridge**

AI for Analytics

To establish humanized experiences, companies must be equipped to actually identify and understand what their customers are saying. Without accurate and in-depth feedback, companies won't be able to implement improvements that align with the customer's deeper needs.



“If you create a culture that has leadership that is bought into listening and actioning on that feedback and that is part of your DNA, then you are going to be in really good shape.” - **Daniel Wilcox, Head of CX, Dutch**

To uncover necessary insights, companies can leverage AI-powered speech and text analytics to capture and transcribe customer interactions for deeper analysis. Companies can identify trending topics, inquiries and sentiments to deliver next-best action recommendations during critical moments. For example, if a customer is addressing a product that has been recalled and requests more information, the contact center technology would immediately recognize their intention and provide the agent with updated protocols.

Transcription technology allows companies to understand customer needs and present agents with thorough information and a pathway to address the concern. As agents begin taking on more complex conversations, this insight will allow them to be present during moments they have previously spent searching through articles. If organizations want to deliver humanized support, they must provide agents with streamlined information and insight so they can confidently address customer needs.

Human-centered digital support relies on effective tools like speech analytics so agents can build empathy, emotional intelligence and expertise. With better technology, organizations can trust their frontline to take on every case and deliver more effective, personalized support.



“Contact centers can use AI-powered text and speech analytics tools to capture, transcribe, and analyze every customer interaction across all channels. The time to value is fast, as companies can transform the data into insights that help establish more thoughtful processes and make the right changes to improve customer journeys. It also empowers CX managers to make more informed decisions about operational changes to reach KPI goals.” - **Jay Gupta, Director of Product Marketing, Talkdesk**

About the Author



Brooke Lynch, Analyst & Staff Writer, Customer Management Practice

Brooke Lynch is an analyst and staff writer for CCW Digital. With a background in television news and production, she's worked across industries covering B2B marketing, procurement and finance events.

Her current work highlights challenges and opportunities for customer experience and contact center leaders, with a recent focus on e-commerce, retail, and technology.



Meet Our Analysts



Brian Cantor

Principal Analyst & CCW Digital Director



Michael DeJager

Principal Analyst & Head of Product Development



Nadia Chaity

Senior Analyst, CCO Series



Sandy Ko

Senior Analyst



Amanda Caparelli

Analyst

Get Involved



Ben McClymont

Business Development Director

E: Ben.McClymont@customermanagementpractice.com

P: 212 885 2662



Simon Copcutt

Head of Strategic Accounts

E: Simon.Copcutt@customermanagementpractice.com

P: 212 885 2771