Executive Guide: 7 Things You Didn't Know Were Possible with Self Service and Automation

The new paradigms that make it essential for you to do them now.

Table of Contents

The role of automation has changed dramatically in a few short years. Customers now seek out self service options, and their expectations are rising. They want your company – regardless of media channel – to have a single personality, remember them and anticipate their next desire.

Read on to gain seven new ideas for using automation to deliver the right service and meet those expectations every time.

New Paradigms of Self Service and Automation

Zero contact resolution – Automation gives you new ways to anticipate and initiate interactions, instead of waiting for the customer to act first. Self service isn't just an inexpensive way to handle repetitive interactions. Service can be proactive and context-aware, helping you resolve customer service issues before they are routed to a live agent. The result: Turning first contact resolution into zero contact resolution (ZCR). "ZCR" is the new norm among consumers who prefer to serve themselves. It can enable stronger customer satisfaction ratings, Net Promoter® Scores[1] and affect the bottom line.

Automation across the customer journey – Look closely and you'll find opportunities to automate service - whether the customer initiates the interaction or the business proactively reaches out - from the beginning of the customer journey all the way through conversion and into the ongoing customer relationship. Companies can leverage automation not only to optimize resource use, but also to improve each customer engagement. Shoppers can learn about new product offerings while they wait in queue; research and compare products online; respond to shipping notifications using mobile devices; reschedule deliveries using interactive voice response (IVR); and seek assistance using web chat. Customer behaviors in self service channels can even warn you when they are at risk of defecting, allowing an organization to set up triggers for live agents to intervene and retain those customers.

Quick Reference: New Paradigms of Self Service and Automation

Zero contact resolution – Anticipate customer needs and automate your proactive responses to achieve ZCR.

Automation across the customer journey – Leverage your investments to automate service at every step of the customer journey.

Omnichannel service is ever present – Interactions can mix channels, so the participants choose which channel is best at each point in an interaction.

Inbound and outbound are now one – Customers expect every interaction with your company to provide consistent service.

Invest with multichannel in mind – Systems developed for voice, IVR, chat, e-mail, mobile and social media must interoperate fluently.

Omnichannel service is ever present – The evolution of multichannel to omnichannel service means tightly integrated engagements use all possible channels. Instead of relying on a single channel, or simply switching between different channels, offer to simultaneously use multiple channels. At each point within an interaction, the participants can decide the channel that best suits their needs, helping tailor the customer experience.

Combining agent-assisted service and self service allows you to create innovative multimodal customer experiences. More importantly, it makes the best use of valuable resources, making those innovative approaches financially viable. When you are delivering omnichannel service successfully, the volume of interactions you can handle is unimaginable without automation.

Inbound and outbound are now one – When was the last time you heard a customer say, "I made an inbound contact to your company last week?" Customers don't define their communication as inbound or outbound; they are simply interacting with your company.

Conversations that extend across multiple touches are fluid back-and-forth interactions, whether the customer is shopping for an insurance policy or refilling a prescription. Continuity makes that fluidity possible – both parties remember the previous conversations. To your customers, your company is a single entity. They expect every contact with that entity to provide the same high level of service. Uniting inbound and outbound interactions across channels also allows you to interweave automation more often, helping reduce costs without depersonalizing the experience.

Invest with multichannel in mind – It's not cost effective to initiate and build separate systems for voice, IVR, chat, e-mail, mobile and social media interactions. In the past, that may have been the norm, but it is no longer necessary. Systems developed for each channel must interoperate fluently. Initiatives in the contact center must merge with digital, social, and mobile initiatives, leveraging interoperable systems and tapping into one shared source of customer information.

For example, if your web site offers the convenience of scheduling callbacks via web chat, you can magnify the return on that technology investment by extending callback functionality for callers in queue or mobile contacts. Automation can even bring together formerly siloed communications applications, providing the integration tools needed to create truly differentiating customer experiences.

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7 Things You Didn't Know Were Possible with Automation

1. Seamlessly transition from automated chat to live chat.

Automated chat is a peek into the future of self service. Automated chat can enhance live chat by offering efficient, private, always-available service. It's an investment that you can deploy at almost any point in the customer journey.

Automated web chat sessions help improve resource utilization because they don't need to involve an agent. However, if the automated assistant can't answer an inquiry, the call can be connected to a live agent for assistance. When chats originate with an automated assistant and move to a live agent, the insights gathered during the automated chat provide context for the live agent to take up where automation left off.

Agents can hand certain operations over to the automated assistant, and take control again to resume the live chat, with transitions so smooth that customers may not even know that an automated system is involved. Healthcare representatives can assign automated assistants to gather sensitive personal data. Sales agents can rely on automated assistants to accurately recite terms of service and obtain a buyer's consent.
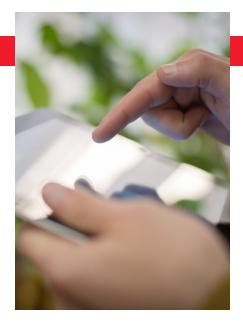
2. Augment mobile navigation with visual self service.

We've all had the experience of listening to a list of vague choices provided by an interactive voice response system. When IVR involves long lists of options – flight statuses, account transactions – many times callers would rather navigate those options as they do on the web: visually.

New technology makes it possible to visually enable IVR on any device with a screen, including mobile devices. It enhances the customer experience by giving callers convenient ways to accomplish more, anywhere, anytime, even during off hours. It can also reduce costs by allowing customers to accomplish their tasks in self service with seamless escalation to a live agent when necessary.

Imagine scanning a roster to look for your own name. How much faster can you read when you know what you are looking for? Because the eye can quickly grasp a complex menu structure, seeing and reading that menu can be many times faster than hearing it read aloud. In addition, visual self service allows users to scan the next level of the menu tree before making a selection.

Beyond menus, visual self service can simplify interactions by presenting pictures or maps. You can offer callers the option of attaching images directly from their smartphone to describe lost luggage, or, if your customer is using a mobile device, use geo-location to help them find nearby retail store locations. Additionally, you can include an option for customers to click if they need to speak with an agent or request a call back at a specific time.

3. Personalize call treatments and route customers intelligently.

Automation isn't just for handling self service interactions. Avaya Intelligent Customer Routing (ICR) works with your IVR and other automated customer service solutions to help customers and agents save time on live interactions, gathering and delivering context along the way.

Intelligent Customer Routing helps you respond to the challenge of meeting customer expectations – not with a one-size-fits-all approach, but with the right service – every time. ICR provides advanced, personalized call treatments for each customer based on what you know about them. If Spanish is their language of choice, ICR can offer information or even music in Spanish while they wait on hold. ICR can also select the best resource – whether that is directing customers to your website for low-cost service, or queuing them to speak to a live agent – based on what it knows about the customer and what it learns through answers to automated questions.

Intelligent Customer Routing can segment incoming contacts and invisibly direct them to the right resources. You can establish express lanes for customers with recent activity, or create high-touch service paths based on your established customer segmentations. You never know when the next customer to enter through your self service doors might be your most important customer.

4. Engage customers in two-way SMS/text interactions.

Customers that prefer text messaging may still want to engage at various points in their journey. Automation lets your contact center send out text notifications and receive text responses back from your customers. You can even receive text messages via your toll-free numbers, letting consumers initiate text questions and, likewise, receive answers.

If you are doubting whether text messaging has arrived as a major communications channel, consider the decision by the Federal Communications Commission to require mobile carriers to adopt text-to-911 functionality[2]. This decision shows how consumer expectations for text messaging have changed. People expect to be able to send a text message – whether to a company for customer service, or to the public sector for emergency services.

Automated two-way interactions that begin with text messaging can be completed within that channel - enabling you to satisfy customers within their chosen channel. It's also a low-cost media option when you are striving for zero contact resolution.

Even interactions that originate with a live agent can use text and e-mail messaging. Technology exists that can recognize when a customer is calling on a mobile device. By utilizing that technology, you can confirm a voice interaction, such as a bank transfer, with a follow-up text message. If they have questions, the customer can reply to your text asking for more information. You can include a link to a self service application in anticipation of the customer's most likely next steps, and save the entire exchange as context for future interactions.

5. Obtain positive identification using voice biometrics.

Voiceprint identification provides a level of positive identification impossible with earlier methods such as automatic number identification. This gives more businesses the opportunity to use identity as a way to personalize and expedite interactions.

Financial services can save valuable agent time by authenticating callers in queue. Healthcare patients can receive automated status updates and prescription notifications securely. This can result in lower cost of service and reduced business liability.

Voiceprints can be gathered during the on-boarding process, and then used in automated and live agent interactions, inbound and outbound, throughout the customer journey. Agents can even hand off a caller to be authenticated in IVR, then resume the live interaction.

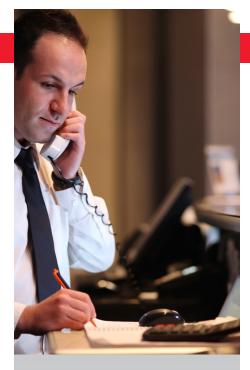### 6. Provide a full suite of services to every division of your organization.

Multi-tenancy is ideal for very large organizations that have a distributed workforce. The latest generation of self service and automation software lets you host securely partitioned applications and data for your various geographies, divisions and acquisitions.

Multi-tenancy reduces the total cost of ownership for IT departments and private cloud users. Nemertes Research has determined that before 2017, more than half of the contact centers with fewer than 500 agents will have transitioned to the cloud[3]. Multi-tenancy also creates new revenue opportunities for hosting service providers.

7. Enjoy complete flexibility with virtualization.

Hardware-centric automation is a relic of the past. Virtualization offers cost-saving agility to IT organizations and scalability to growing companies.

Self service and automation no longer rely on proprietary gear. Virtualization is a major advantage of the evolution from hardware to software. Today's applications can be installed into open virtual appliance (OVA) environments and the entire solution can be scaled up or down according to need.

What to Watch Out For

Complex IVRs can lead to frustration.

Do you find yourself hitting zero to bypass an IVR system when you encounter one? Everyone, at some time or another, has most likely been frustrated enough by long IVR menus to zero out to an live agent. However, "zeroing out" of the IVR defeats one of the main purposes of automation – to reduce agent costs. By using natural-language call steering, visual self service and effective IVR design, you can alleviate the problem of menu complexity.

Automated chat can meet resistance.

A novelty today, automated chat is likely to see rapid adoption. Automated assistants are unfailingly patient, but customers might not always be so abiding. Humans can become frustrated hearing a limited repertoire of canned answers, unless they can easily transition to live chat when they want to. Start using automated chat on simple transactions and be ready to transition those with context to an agent. Once you understand where your customers' tolerance thresholds are, you can confidently move on to more sophisticated transactions in automated chat.

Why Avaya

Avaya understands that meeting customer expectations in the most cost-effective way means delivering the right service each time. Avaya solutions make it possible to improve resource utilization, customer satisfaction, retention and financial performance. In fact, based on the findings from an independent research study Nemertes conducted with IT decision makers, Avaya delivers the lowest TCO when compared to other key vendors that provide IVR, predictive dialing and skills-based routing solutions for contact centers[4].

Avaya is the preferred provider of open enterprise software platforms for self service and automation. By focusing on software solutions, rather than on proprietary hardware, Avaya solutions contribute to lower TCO by being highly scalable and completely at home in hosted, cloud, or virtual environments.

Avaya Aura® Experience Portal is the omnichannel platform for automated customer engagement. On this platform, you can build the automated inbound and outbound services required to deliver innovative, exceptional customer experiences. Avaya Intelligent Customer Routing works at the point of entry to provide segmentation and flexible call treatment. Avaya Proactive Outreach Manager enables cost effective campaigns that reach out to customers through voice, e-mail or text messaging. Configure Avaya Automated Chat to serve online customers while your agents focus on more complex issues. Deploy Avaya Customer Connections Mobile to make it easy for customers to connect with you from their smartphones and tablets and deliver a visual self service experience.

Quick Reference: 7 Things You Didn't Know Were Possible with Automation

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2. **Augment mobile navigation with visual self service**

3. **Personalize call treatments and route customers intelligently**

4. **Engage customers in two-way SMS/text interactions**

5. **Obtain positive identification using voice biometrics**

6. **Provide a full suite of services to every division of your organization**

7. **Enjoy complete flexibility with virtualization**

About Avaya

Avaya is a global provider of business collaboration and communications solutions, providing unified communications, contact centers, networking and related services to companies of all sizes around the world. For more information please visit **www.avaya.com**.

Learn More

For more information on how to implement these and other ideas, contact your Avaya Client Executive or Authorized Avaya Partner, or visit us at **www.avaya.com**.

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[1] "Net Promoter Score": Net Promoter Score measures the loyalty that exists between a provider and a customer by asking how likely it would be that they recommend a company/product/service to a friend or colleague. Source: http://www.netpromoter.com/why-net-promoter/know/

[2] U.S. Federal Communications Commission voted Friday to require U.S. mobile carriers and many text-messaging apps to enable users to text emergency dispatch centers

[3] Nemertes Research, "Nemertes Contact Center," updated July 2014.

[4] Nemertes Research, "Nemertes Contact Center," updated July 2014. In total contact center overall costs for 100+ agents, Avaya cost is lowest compared to Aspect, Cisco, Genesys, NEC and others.

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