

# The real-time customer

 By [Jan Kühn](#)

8 Sep 2020

The Microsoft Global State of Multichannel Customer Service Report underscored the value of resolving customer issues at speed and the importance of equipping contact centre staff with the right knowledge.



Jan Kühn, director at INOVO

This customer demand is dictating the rise in real-time resolution solutions at contact centres – companies want customers, and customers want better attention. According to Jan Kühn, director at INOVO, this requires a pragmatic approach to technology and digital contact centre investment that's driven by strategy and managed by realistic expectations.

"Customers are expecting to receive answers to their questions and problems immediately," he adds. "They equally want to receive this information at speed. If a company can resolve a query fast, provide relevant information on time, and guide the customer to the right answers without frustration and hassle, then customers will be more inclined to wait or to remain loyal. What's key is not necessarily always the speed of the engagement and the resolution, but in answering the question properly."

## The future

In the past, customers had to wind their way through increasingly complex self-service options that ranged from calls to personal visits to irrelevant self-service menus (IVRs) in contact centres. However, this is not what they're prepared to tolerate today. Why? Because customers are time-starved and aren't interested in adding an incompetent company to their already full to-do lists. They'll just move on and go somewhere else.

"Businesses have to offer their customers self-service options that include applications, websites, social media and other relevant channels," says Kühn. "These have to be executed perfectly, they have to include relevant pathways to resolution, and they need to be suited to the company's target market."

If customers prefer WhatsApp, invest in this platform for immediate customer engagement. If customers are more inclined to use Facebook, then that's the right choice. Empower the customer with the right touchpoints and then further enrich this engagement by empowering employees with the right information so they can actually help the customer at speed. The Microsoft survey found that 68% of customers will walk away from a company that delivers poor customer service, this is how to make sure those feet walk directly into your business instead.

"Basic self-service options offer multiple benefits to the organisation," says Kühn. "They can manage most repetitive and simple queries at speed and they can help cut costs by reducing the load on the contact centre. However, they do need to be balanced with more in-depth support where there are more complex queries or multiple queries within the same request. Additional technology such as artificial intelligence (AI), chatbots, analytics, and text and speech recognition are the next step in evolving this capability and improving customer engagement."

### **The use of technology**

Strategically, organisations should make use of what technology has to offer in terms of efficiency, cost-saving and customer satisfaction. Technology has become intelligent enough to offer the business an always-on, always-informed extra edge when it comes to customer problem resolution. Using smart design and clever response curation, these technologies offer a mechanism by which the organisation can identify the intent and context of customer queries. This will not only help map customer journeys and common customer complaints, but it will also identify specific pain points or issues within the business.

"You can do a lot of customer service on the front line without an agent," says Kühn. "Implementing additional technology (like advanced chatbots) allows you to deliver real-time resolution to individuals asking common questions on multiple channels. The technology can then be used to escalate queries that it cannot address – but for this to succeed there has to be a process in place. A process that pushes the query up the chain of command and ensures that if they are promised a response, they get it."

The key to successful real-time resolution, to first call resolution, and to transforming customer contact, is to integrate and combine all customer contact channels into one holistic ecosystem. Every element must be managed and accessed from a single place, such as the contact centre, and employees need to have immediate access to customer information and interaction history. The customer doesn't repeat themselves, the agent isn't on the receiving end of legitimate frustration,

and the entire process – from complaint to resolution – is seamless. This ensures that real-time resolution is tightly woven into the fabric of the contact centre and the organisation, and that customer expectations are always met.

## ABOUT JAN KÜHN

Jan Kühn is a director of INOVO, a contact centre business solution provider.

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