

Point of View

CUSTOMER CARE IN 2030: **WHERE THE FUTURE IS HEADING**



The future of customer care is already here for early adopters. Future-facing brands have reimagined customer service as something experiential and relationship oriented rather than just functional and transactional. Contact centers that apply this vision not only pay for themselves with incremental sales and long-term customer value, but also drive brand affinity.

While early adopters of this approach remain in the minority, their cohort is growing. Gartner predicts 40 percent of contact centers will turn into profit centers by 2025, making them de facto leaders in digital customer engagement.¹

Where will your company be when the future arrives?

The answer depends largely on how quickly and fully you embrace half a dozen trends that are

transforming today's customer experience (CX) and, by extension, customer care:

- Intelligent automation
- Proactive contact
- Relationship agents
- Hyperpersonalization
- Realtime CSAT
- Integrated omnichannel

While some of these trends are not entirely new, companies capitalizing on them stand at the forefront. Now is an opportune moment to join these early adopters: **CX proves a critical differentiator in inflationary times, with customer care being the ultimate CX pivot point.** Whether you're ready to greet the future today or tomorrow, contemplating key actions summarized in this paper will help you set the course for transforming your customer care function into a profitable business by the time 2030 arrives.

¹ <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2021-01-12-gartner-predicts-80--of-customer-service-organization>



Automation is getting better all the time.

Up your automation game

Today, if a customer's issue is relatively straightforward, chatbots powered by conversational AI can guide the customer through a no-wait, no-lag experience from first contact to resolution. Meanwhile, by gathering essential details and responding to basic queries, AI-driven self-service can free up live agents to handle more-complex matters and convert service calls into revenue opportunities.

Unfortunately, most companies aren't deploying intelligent automation as part of optimized customer care, beyond using rudimentary IVR. In fact, the majority are still piloting or testing their AI capabilities. Consequently, few enterprises are seeing substantial benefits to date. As for companies that are benefiting, they're doing so in spades, creating superlative customer care environments that generate significant ROI.

Consider a national sports media giant that needed an innovative yet cost-effective way to support and grow its user base of 17 million unique fans. With March Madness approaching, the company introduced a custom-made conversational AI agent to guide fans in creating and operating their tournament brackets on the website. Thanks to this innovation, in just a year's time the platform drove its fantasy sports operating costs down while fueling 122% growth in engaged sessions. The company hasn't looked back.



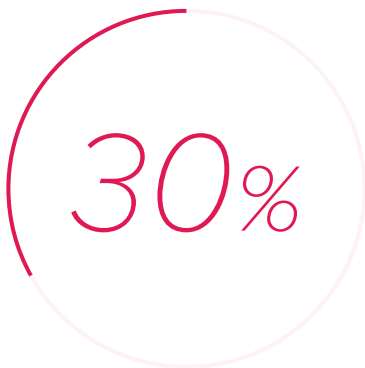
Prioritize proactive contact

By 2030, proactive customer contact will become the norm. Instead of mainly reacting to inbound queries and complaints, brands will reach out directly to customers based on internal initiatives, triggering events and outside signals. For instance, the ability to leverage machine learning in real time at exceptional speed will allow companies to detect a fast-developing problem with a product or service almost immediately and then rapidly push out a satisfactory solution.

Routine outbound customer contact, meanwhile, will focus more on incremental sales and service improvements. The goal will be less about retaining customers through discounts and other enticements and more about approaching them with personalized value propositions. For example, instead of communicating with a customer just a few weeks before a software security subscription expires, an agent will get in touch several months earlier to point out the customer's protection covers five devices but they are using it for only two. Brands already engaging with this fuller view of the customer have a distinct advantage over their competitors.



Nurture relationship agents



increased capacity to handle queries across select languages for a top global audio and media streaming services company

With an emphasis on looking at the complete customer, contact centers of the future will be less about transacting and more about connecting. Gone will be the days when customer queries are automatically routed to agents specializing in rebates, for example, or product exchanges. Instead, brands will pair customers with agents based on relationship compatibility over the customer's lifetime, as indicated by the customer's profile and journey map and by the agent's experience with certain customer personas.

Likewise, contact centers will no longer automatically route customers to agents who speak their language. Already, natural language processing is advanced enough for instant translation in some text-based interactions.

Consider a top global audio and media streaming services company that instantly converts customers' text-based queries into the language of the most appropriate customer care agent. Not only has Sutherland's real-time translation let the company overcome language barriers, it has also increased the brand's capacity to handle queries by up to 30 percent across select languages while boosting customer satisfaction by 10 percent.





Although real-time translation has not been perfected for live calls yet, it's getting there. Today, a voice interaction can be instantaneously translated into half a dozen languages with over 60 percent accuracy while people are talking. By 2030, language barriers to relationship-focused customer care will have all but disappeared.

Sharpen personalization and CSAT accuracy with better data analytics

The key to analytics is that it pays to be thorough. But companies typically analyze just a small percentage of their customer interactions, leaving huge quantities of free customer intelligence untapped. It doesn't have to be that way. And for a small number of companies it isn't. Those companies are using cognitive AI to analyze 100% of their customer interactions and then combining that intelligence with other customer information, such as demographics and past purchasing behavior. By applying a blend of predictive and prescriptive analytics to these various data sets, future-facing brands are supporting contact centers with rich dashboards of customer-specific details, as well as with powerful AI-driven recommendation engines. These tools help agents address customers' problems in a more-personalized way, anticipate their additional needs and make tailored upsell suggestions that customers are apt to welcome.

The next level of customer care will take real-time sentiment analysis of a customer conversation and turn it into actionable insights while the conversation is still underway.

A handful of businesses are already on the verge of simultaneous insight generation and sharing. One of them, a global telecommunications company, provides customer-interaction feedback to coaches and agents within minutes. Most businesses take 24 hours to several days to share such information — well after the optimal teachable moment and the opportunity to steer a customer interaction in the most favorable direction.

For the telecommunications company, the benefits have been considerable, resulting in a call resolution rate of 86% and a corresponding \$45 million in annual savings.

As this technology improves, companies will also reap significant revenue-generating benefits from instantaneous insights, especially when paired with data-driven personalization. Real-time sentiment analysis will also fundamentally change how brands generate customer satisfaction scores. A decade from now, most companies will have discarded post-interaction surveys, with their narrow questions and opaque single scores, feeding agents dynamic real-time scores instead. Such scores will capture a wide range of nuanced customer feelings, including unarticulated emotional cues indicated by tone of voice and speech patterns. The result will be a more accurate and timely view of what customers truly think. By 2030, static and imprecise CSAT survey responses seen through a rearview mirror will be obsolete.





Integrate omnichannel

In the future, “seamless” will be more than just a catchword for interactions across all customer touchpoints, including contact centers. Currently, however, just over one-tenth of companies can seamlessly engage with customers.² Instead, most brands rely on unintegrated multichannel communication. This creates a fragmented view for the business and a disjointed experience for the customer.

A true, next-gen omnichannel approach will deliver on the promise of frictionless, integrated CX by generating customer insight and delight regardless of channel. The fastest and most cost-effective way to achieve this is by bringing all customer interactions onto one platform in the cloud. In a secure cloud environment you can swiftly integrate your current infrastructure with the newest tech while maintaining a cohesive view of your customers, regardless of legacy providers or systems.

The ideal cloud environment is both bespoke and highly flexible, letting you add and remove features as needed so you keep pace with future innovations at the speed you desire.

Take, for example, a multinational entertainment and media conglomerate that flawlessly launched its new streaming services across a single platform to deliver a universal experience for its customers.

Less than two months before the service’s global launch, the company worried that it might be unable to handle extreme growth without any downtime, potentially jeopardizing a consistent customer experience and technology stack across its current providers. The company also realized that to guarantee delivery of uninterrupted, exceptional CX while rapidly scaling up its streaming service, it would need the latest real-time speech analytics and machine learning to obtain vital insights about its customers, including potential user problems.

Having no time to spare, the company found a partner that could provide a hosted, multi-tenant technology environment in mere weeks, as well as fully integrate and analyze huge data sets. This ensured a timely launch, well-coordinated service and utterly reliable customer support. With 10 million subscribers on Day 1, demand on the platform was 16 times what the company had anticipated. The inherent flexibility and scalability of the cloud allowed the platform to rise to the occasion. It scaled 400% in less than a week, and in four weeks scaled 1000% to meet snowballing demand, handling over 140,000 customer contacts daily while experiencing no down time. With success stories like this, no wonder the majority of contact centers expect to be cloud-based within the next year.³

² <https://www.deloittedigital.com/us/en/offerings/customer-led-marketing/digital-customer/elevating-customer-service.html>
³ <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2021-09-16-gartner-says-contact-center-as-a-service-will-hit-mai>



Conclusion

Across the future-shaping trends discussed in this paper, select companies have already made it far along the maturity curve. Most brands have a much greater distance to go.

The good news? Most of what this paper covers is practical and feasible for companies right now. It's mainly a matter of fitting future-state customer care into your roadmap and then prioritizing each trend. This is something businesses should be motivated to do, since the potential ROI is tremendous. So are the cost savings resulting from operational efficiencies achieved through AI-driven automation. With those savings, brands can fuel growth along the key trendlines until eventually customer care is no longer a cost center but a profit center.

Maturity Curve



As your own company makes its way along the maturity curve, we recommend keeping the following tips in mind:

- / **Do more with less:** AI-driven automation boosts the efficacy and efficiency of your contact agents, letting you increase customer satisfaction and sales opportunities without having to increase the size of your team.
- / **Get in touch:** Routinely check in with customers. Proactive engagement is always better than reactive defense.
- / **Don't squander free customer intelligence:** Not analyzing customer care interactions is like leaving money on the table. Use analytics to mine your customer-agent conversations for all they're worth, which is a lot.
- / **Get personal:** Build relationships with customers by forging connections based on data-rich insights about them and routing queries according to agent compatibility.
- / **Reduce complexity:** In building/augmenting your omnichannel presence, be wary of fragmented efforts and unnecessary complexity. Consider putting a fully integrated and easily scalable platform on the cloud, one that you can swiftly modify with minimal cost and effort.
- / **Stay human:** Intelligent automation and sentiment analytics will get you only so far. Make sure your agents have the right training so they can translate digital accelerators into high-value person-to-person interactions.
- / **Pay for outcomes:** Work with a contact center provider that uses a performance-based payment model instead of a standard fee approach, pegging customer care costs to metrics like incremental sales and customer retention.

**Want to learn more? Let's talk.
We'd love to hear from you.**

We make digital
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Sutherland is an experience-led digital transformation company. Our mission is to deliver exceptionally designed and engineered experiences for customers and employees. For over 35 years, we have cared for our client's customers, delivering measurable results and accelerating growth. Our proprietary, AI-based products and platforms are built using robust IP and automation. We are a team of global professionals, operationally effective, culturally meshed, and committed to our clients and to one another. We call it One Sutherland.

