CRMXchange

Enterprise Connect

Contact Center Solutions Review

- o Omni-channel customer interactions
- o Customer sentiment and context within chat
- o Cloud Contact Center
- o Voice automation & rapid deployment IVR and speech recognition solutions
- o Cloud-based services/contact center
    Contact center consultancy/systems integration

Providing a Focus on Technologies that Impacts the Bottom Line

Enterprise Connect, billed as a conference and expo for "communications and collaboration transforming business" is mainly a showcase for IP Telephony, Unified Communications and other issues central to enterprise networks. But the event, which took place March 27-30, 2017 at the Gaylord Palms in Orlando, FL, also focuses on technologies and deployment models for the contact center.

APIs for chatbots, artificial intelligence and applications for gf using contextual information were front and center, companies displayed solutions to improve the digital customer experience and consultants were out in force to learn new ways to empower businesses to effectively implement new technologies more quickly and cost-effectively.

CRMXchange was there to meet with Enterprise Connect participants from the contact center space to discuss how their solutions could make a difference to companies seeking to increase operating efficiency and improve customer satisfaction. In the pages ahead, we present brief summaries of their solutions and discuss what differentiates their offerings in the marketplace.

Omnichannel customer interactions, Customer sentiment, and context within chat

Avaya www.avaya.com/en/

While Avaya was not an official exhibitor, they had a presence at the event, answering questions and engaging in a lively discussion of how agents and machines can work side by side to help improve effectiveness by fostering improved agent intelligence. Here are some highlights from an exchange with Laura Bassett, Avaya's Director of Marketing, Customer and Team Engagement Solutions

How does Avaya Oceana enable companies to maintain context and achieve greater personalization in omnichannel customer interactions?

With Oceana, we change how the incoming interaction is matched with the customer from skill-based routing to attribute matching with a single matching engine used across all channels. Oceana augments the incoming interaction with all the details and context that can be mustered up from the customer's personal interaction history within Oceana itself as well as from CRM and other back office systems. This context enables Oceana and an agent in turn to know that the end customer is looking for a certain product, whether they are a VIP customer or not, the person's age, demographics, what their hobbies are, previous interactions, order history and so on. All this information is used to match the most appropriate agent to the end customer as well as ensuring the agent has personalized information displayed immediately.

An example is in an omnichannel customer experience where the end customer channel hops between channels to solve a problem. They may start in a mobile app by sending an SMS, then an email, engage in a web chat (with a chatbot) and eventually go to a phone call. Oceana provides the agent with 360-degree context of the interactions with the customer, and this where the context store and customer journey view come into play. The agent using Oceana Workspaces can visually see

what happened with the customer before they picked up the phone call. Instead of having to figure out what happened and ask all repetitive questions, the agent has real-time, personalized context knowing what actions have already been taken, and they can immediately start from this point.

Can you elaborate on how your solution's ability to capture customer data across the entire enterprise can drive better informed decision making to help increase customer satisfaction?

There are a number of ways Avaya Oceana analytics captures data and drives better informed decision making – but agents' number one request to help them increase customer satisfaction is to know how the customer has been served prior to the time they are being connected. Having this information available in less than 2 clicks, in real-time, lets agents respond more quickly, more accurately, and even proactively to business opportunities

By capturing customer data and relevant transaction information across the customer journey and present it along with interactions in one interface, it increases agent awareness and streamlines communications. Available data include:

- o Web site pages visited
- o Automated and live Web Chat interactions
- o Customer Support emails and calls, trouble tickets
- o SMS dialogs
- o Interactive Voice Response choices
- o Items purchased, shipped, returned
- o Business transactions initiated, in process, completed

All of this can be formatted into a 'customer journey map' that can pertain either to a particular interaction session or a longer-term profile. The agent can click or hover over areas of the customer journey map to view relevant details while assisting customers. Having such information at their fingertips lowers agents' stress levels, and ultimately shows customers that the company values their time and their business.

What types of communications capabilities can businesses create to enhance the customer journey by using the easy applications development made possible by the Avaya Breeze Platform? Can you give examples of some of the more innovative applications now being deployed?

Avaya Breeze applications are functionally integrated with enterprise applications resulting in a superior customer experience. The Work Assignment engine within the Avaya Oceana contact center software selects an agent with the closest match of attributes for handling a specific transaction, such as the location of the agent, and sends the SMS to the agent. The agent using the Oceana Workspaces web application automatically opens the CRM screen enabling the agent to visually see the customer journey, drill into key elements of it, and quickly provide a detailed response. The result is personalized 1-to-1 communications and rapid service resolution.

Since a happy agent is a more productive agent, can you discuss how your solution helps improve the agent experience?

At a time when the digital experience is increasingly the focus of customer engagement, Avaya Oceana offers not only true, multi-touch communications capabilities, but also the tools and resources to create individualized customer experiences based on a contextual, 360-degree view of the customers' journeys.

Regardless of the channel customers select—or even if they use multiple different channels during an interaction — agents and subject matter experts have a single view of customers, their journeys and related context, both immediate "in the moment" and past. The customer journey and the agent's view of it also extend beyond the walls of the contact center.

Avaya Oceana Workspaces enables seamless collaboration with customers, other users, and partners within and outside the enterprise organization. The intuitive agent and supervisor Oceana Workspaces, as an HTML5-based omnichannel desktop application, is easy to use and a powerful driver of user productivity. With today's digital consumers expecting advanced and personalized experiences, Oceana Workspaces delivers in a way that will help not only reduce agent turnover, but also create an improved, more engaging consumer experience.

Cloud Contact Center

Clarity Connect www.clarityconnect.com/

Clarity Connect
YOUR INTERNET SOURCE

The company's solution is designed for Skype for Business or Microsoft 360. A demo of the product showed good reporting capability, enabling users to drill down to get a better understanding of what is going on in the contact center. Craig Reishus, Partner, Sales and Marketing, and Ian Eccleston, Director of Marketing fielded questions

What contact center options does your flexible cloud deployment model offer to businesses?

Clarity Connect can work with any type of Skype for Business deployment, whether clients have Office 365, or an on-premises or hosted instance of Skype for Business.

Clarity Connect is a cloud contact center, so there is no need for on-premise infrastructure. Instead, Clarity Connect routes calls in the cloud and delivers calls to agents via federation. Agents don't even need to install an application – they can simply open a web browser to get started.

Why is it important to have a solution that is both native to --and built exclusively for -- Skype for Business?

Clarity Connect is native to Skype for Business, so it doesn't duplicate or complicate its call control. It simply extends Skype for Business to add contact center functionality to it. This makes Clarity Connect easy to install and maintain, and fully leverages Microsoft's investments in reliability and security.

We were among the first to build a contact center solution for Microsoft UC platforms, from Lync, to Skype for Business and now for Office 365. This gives us a deep understanding of the technology and how best to use its capabilities.

What cost efficiencies can companies achieve by implementing Clarity Connect?

Clarity Connect is available at a lower price point than traditional contact center offerings, but it is quite full-featured and flexible. This is achieved in part because we leverage Skype for Business to its fullest with our native integration, letting it do the heavy lifting for telephony, and leaving us to create the best contact center for it.

Clarity Connect is also cloud-based, so there are no installation or infrastructure costs, and no ongoing costs for infrastructure maintenance.

Can you elaborate on the steps you take to understand your customers' needs and ensure their success of your solution in their environment?

Our goal is to have completely satisfied customers. Starting very early in the sales cycle, we work toward validating that our product is right solution for that specific customer. We are very focused on gathering as much information as we can to understand their requirements – not just features and functionality, but also their goals, business rules and use cases – because no one benefits if our product does not meet their needs post-sale.

We pursue that same goal for the entire duration of our relationship with the customer. We have made significant investments to ensure that our installation process is simple, our documentation is comprehensive and our training empowers our customers to manage Clarity Connect successfully.

Fuze www.fuze.com/

Fuze offers true cloud aimed largely at large enterprises (average over 1000 users). They offer what they consider to be a "customer inspired approach" which enables them to see what customers are using and change and adapt the technology accordingly. They issue hundreds of (mostly minor) updates per week and are able to communicate from the contact center to the larger company ecosystem. Eric Hanson, VP Product Marketing and Steve Kokinos, Founder and Chairman, took part in the conversation.

In what ways does Fuze's cloud-based contact center solution help businesses of all sizes meet their specific needs for delivering a superior customer experience?

Fuze's contact center solution is strategically designed to provide a superior customer experience. Through its unique design, Fuze seamlessly supports businesses of all sizes with a variety of call center needs, ranging from simple to very complex. The cloud-based solution offers numerous features that provide personalized services for callers, simplify processes for agents and encourage real-time employee management.

Skill-based call routing, for example, allows callers to select their own paths, reducing call time by connecting them with the agents who have the most applicable experience. Further, Fuze's analytics-based scheduler allows companies to review collected data and schedule employees who are best suited to answer specific customer questions. Also, through the performance insight feature, managers can analyze customer communication and agent performance, permitting them to take the most appropriate action, if needed, to ensure exceptional customer satisfaction.

Why is it so important for contact center personnel to have access to multi-modal communications tools?

In today's technology-driven world, customer expectations have grown exponentially. If services do not meet consumer preferences, people can easily take their business elsewhere. Fuze understands this, which is why the call center solution is designed to provide communication tools that are convenient, personalized, and meet the needs of every caller. Thus, our multi-modal communications platforms empower contact center personnel to communicate with customers though any method of their choice – including voice, video conference or messaging – to ensure an excellent customer experience.

How does giving callers the opportunity to choose their own call path enable them to quickly reach the most qualified agent while also reducing a company's cost-per-call?

When communicating with a call center, it's important that a caller can speak to the agent who can resolve their issue in the most efficient way possible. Our solution is developed to aid callers and allow them to choose their own call path. Depending on their responses to a predetermined set of questions, as well as through automated speech recognition (ASR) and text-to-speech (TTS), Fuze can route calls to the correct and most appropriate destination. Without the use of an operator, the technology automatically directs calls to the agent who has the expertise needed to assist each specific request – resulting in reduced call time, lower costs per call, and enhanced overall satisfaction.

Most industry leaders are aware of the potential advantages of moving to the cloud, but want to know what specific benefits their businesses can derive. What differentiates what Fuze does from other cloud contact center solution providers?

Fuze's contact center solution is designed to provide significant value to businesses. With the intent to deliver a superior experience for both the callers and agents, it supports every party involved. To do so, Fuze established features such as dynamic call routing, analytics-based scheduling, workforce management, extensive auto-attendant features, and an unlimited queue capacity. Further, through analytic insight, the solution enables supervisors to see abandoned calls, average hold time, caller ID, idle time, talk time, "last time agent took call" and more – allowing them to adjust processes to improve performance and overall satisfaction.

Voice Automation/Rapid Deployment IVR & Speech Recognition Solutions

Inference Solutions www.inferencesolutions.com/

 "There is a need to change the way IVRs are viewed in the marketplace," said Callan Schebella, CEO of Inference Solutions. "Too often, the perception is that they are inherently bad and that people hate to use them. In short, they get a bad rap. When a business is able to easily build and maintain their own telephony-based solution without the need to code, it's positioned to manage all customer IVR calls from a single point. Having this capability also facilitates the development of IVR call flows using a simple, browser-based interface."

The company's Inference Studio solution is a call control platform that can be used by any type of business from a large enterprise to a small firm. Many of their customers are carriers, BPOs, and government agencies. In most cases, they do not sell directly to the end user. They sell to ATT for example and ATT then sells their solution. Their major difference is speed and simplicity. While they use the term IVR, they also route SMS, Speech etc. They have some interesting Voice Biometrics applications outside of the US, including TeleClocking – an example: a worker (such a custodian) calls in to say they have arrived at work, the voice is authenticated. Using voice eliminates the possibility of someone else clocking in for them. In the Philippines they offered an 'are you alive' campaign. Older people called into the agencies to confirm that they were 'alive' so they can continue receiving government checks. In addition, this can help eliminate fraud. Schebella and Lynne Salmon, CMO were on hand at Enterprise Connect to answer questions

How can businesses improve customer engagement, reduce operating costs and possibly even decrease the number of agents needed by improving the quality of their IVR?

Delivering a personalized customer experience can be one of the most significant competitive advantages a business can have today. And with analysts predicting that by 2020, 85% of all customer relationships will exclude human interaction, automated self-service channels -- including IVR and messaging – are becoming even more significant than ever.

Not only does great self-service technology lead to happier customers, but self-support channels help call center agents work more efficiently by reducing redundancies and simple requests, so that they can spend their time on more serious customer issues. And by taking advantage of the efficiencies cloud technology offers, operational costs are considerably reduced for businesses that make the transition from legacy PBX systems.

To clarify, however, the term IVR is misleading because in reality a lot of what is happening in the industry is not traditional IVR at all. Today's IVR solutions can range from simple inbound touch tone IVRs to complex pre-routing and outbound automation services. Implementing a full range of self-service technologies, such as SMS, Speech Recognition, Text-to-Speech, PCI Compliant Payments, Call Center Agent Screen-pop, Outbound Dialer, and Voice Biometrics, into a cloud telephony strategy can drastically improve these board-level metrics.

How does your cloud-based Inference Studio platform enable companies to use scripts to quickly create and deploy more responsive IVRs call flows?

Inference Studio acts as a self-service creation environment within a standard web browser. Using a comprehensive template library or by designing their own solutions from scratch, customers can easily create a smarter IVR solution in a matter of minutes.

From the Studio menu, users access a high-level view dashboard of the scripts and service numbers available and in use. In Studio, all IVR's are referred to as scripts. Using Studio, you can create or modify scripts using a palette of more than 30 different nodes.

Calls arrive at the 'Start' node, and work their way through the individual nodes based on how the caller responds. Any aspect of the Script can be edited by clicking on the relevant node. Changing elements of the experience can be done in a few simple clicks; for example, to change the prompt the callers hear during the introduction simply click on the Prompt node then add whatever prompt you like by uploading audio, specifying language options or even interacting directly using text-to-speech (TTS).

In less than four minutes -- using an interface that is quick and simple – users can design a completely new IVR script and deploy it to the carrier of choice.

What makes your solution easier to use and more cost-effective than other IVR creation products?

Compared to a cloud telephony solution, considerable costs are associated with premise-based IVRs, including hardware, licensing fees, compliance audits– the list goes on.

Inference specializes in providing a true private cloud architecture. We use the existing carrier or service provider to provide dial tone while offering the IVR, self-service and transaction processing via the carrier's' core network. This "core-connected" approach ensures the highest quality of service at the lowest cost. The feature set of Studio is very extensive, you can build simple touch tone or SMS services all the way to complex speech recognition and voice biometric systems.

Can you elaborate on some of the capabilities that organizations can add and tangible benefits they can take advantage of by improving their IVRs?

Customers are the backbone of every company and statistics quite clearly show that if a customer has a bad first experience, they are unlikely to come back to a company in the future. Conversely, provide the customer with a positive experience and they will be more likely to spend more and provide repeat business.

Thus, it stands to reason that valued customers shouldn't have to experience outdated automated IVR systems that we know cause frustration and poor experience. We prefer to think of IVR as voice automation, because ultimately we are not just providing your callers with a rudimentary IVR menu system, we are providing intelligent automation of the spoken word. We are accurately interpreting their many accents and dialects and help them find what they are looking for in the most efficient way possible. Ultimately, we are helping to create the best first impression for a business.

For today's omni-channel minded enterprise, it's critical that call handling solutions provide flexibility to ensure innovative businesses can meet customer expectations. For example, texting has become a preferred method of communication for the smartphone-savvy generation. Enabling a company to engage with its customer through this channel provides an immense value add. Inference Studio's comprehensive multiple support channels include inbound and outbound voice and most recently SMS (text) solutions for a seamless and customized communication experience.

Cloud-based Services/Contact Center

Mitel www.mitel.com

Mitel, offers the flexibility and rich premise-grade communication features a company requires in a choice of public, private or hybrid cloud deployment models. Mitel sponsored an afternoon exhibit hall reception Christian Szpilfogel, VP of Strategy, provided insights.

Why do you think there is such a wide gap between organizations perspective on their level of customer satisfaction and what customers are actually reporting?

Ultimately, this comes down to the way organizations report on customer satisfaction. Using a traditional customer satisfaction score is typically not enough because it's measuring satisfaction for a specific topic or interaction. Net Promoter Score (NPS) addresses this gap by measuring long-term happiness, which is a much better predictor of customer loyalty, but a loyal customer doesn't necessarily equal a happy customer. With the addition of customer effort score, organizations now have more insight into how easy it is for customers to do business with them, and can identify actionable service improvement areas. While all three of these scores provide valuable customer information, none of them provide a holistic view of customer experience on their own. Only by using these scores as complementary to each other, and through mixing measurements that are most effective to the organization, will businesses have results that can be turned into actionable tasks designed to improve the overall customer experience.

How can businesses move beyond simple call centers to provide customers with the flexibility and convenience of communicating using their channels of their choice at any time?

The burden for making this simple depends on whether the contact center solution the organization chooses can easily scale from voice-centric to multi-channel capabilities. In the last two decades, as contact centers introduced new media like email, chat, SMS, social, etc., many were forced to bolt-on third-party, disparate solutions that did not integrate, which prevented

businesses from achieving the end goal of offering multi-channel contact center capabilities. Today, many customer experience vendors offer fully-integrated, unified multi-channel – and now omni-channel – solutions. The benefits of selecting a single-vendor solution for all voice and multi-channel needs are unified configuration, administration, real-time and reporting tools, which make it much easier to scale and grow as an organization is prepared to take on new media. Moreover, in an "intelligent enterprise," call center agents are also able to communicate with the rest of the business to improve time to resolution and quality of resolution.

Why is it important to give agents a single interface to handle interactions across all channels, with all the relevant customer information and necessary tools easily accessible?

A single, pane-of-glass-agent interface is critical to driving agent efficiency, first-contact resolution and time to resolution. By giving agents all the tools they need to handle voice and multi-channel interactions in a single interface, businesses can improve interaction quality and reduce latency. This becomes even more important when organizations have agents working primarily out of a CRM tool like Salesforce.com or Microsoft Dynamics CRM. Some customer experience solution vendors go above and beyond this type of interface to also provide sophisticated CTI and contact center integrations into third-party CRM systems. This goes even further to streamline the agent experience, increase interaction handling and drive quality customer experiences across all media types.

In what ways can increasing customer relevance help contribute to a company's profitability?

Staying relevant to customers is the single most important factor in driving customer loyalty and profitability. If an organization doesn't continue to stay relevant and produce/deliver products and services that are important to its customers, it ceases to exist. Providing new features, products or services that are important to customers promotes loyalty, encourages future purchases and increases the likelihood of them sharing their experiences with their friends and family. The result? The company drives profitability, innovates with new products/services that keep it relevant and the cycle continues.

Contact Center Consultancy/Systems Integration

SPS: Strategic Products and Services
http://www.spscom.com

Strategic Products and Services is a global multi-vendor systems integrator for unified communications and contact center applications, including voice, video, infrastructure and more. Kathy Sobus, Customer Experience Practice Leader offered a closer look at what they do.

Why is it beneficial for companies to go beyond traditional vendor-to-client relationships to optimize the implementation and integration of technology to improve the customer experience?

In the Contact Center or Customer Experience industry, many clients are used to picking the solution that best meets their needs. As a result, most of our clients have a diverse set of solutions that, in many cases, are not from a single vendor. Working with a systems integrator with a broader knowledge of the technologies and how they "all fit together" provides greater advantage to our clients. Gone are the days when clients are happy with the lowest common denominator or easiest integration, as solutions are purchased to maximize their effectiveness throughout the company. Utilizing them at that maximized effectiveness allows for more streamlined operations, or, in some cases, greater profitability.

Once a solution is implemented, changes can occur in the form of patches or enhancements to an existing system. This can cause disruptions to the delicate ecosystem that has been established. A traditional vendor-to-client relationship can lead to finger pointing, loss of services and general dissatisfaction when working across many manufacturers or vendors. Businesses must also keep a pulse on how their customers are engaging with the technology once it has been implemented, if the technology is properly integrated into a holistic experience and whether benchmarks are being met. When businesses work

with a vendor to implement and integrate the technology without any follow-up or monitoring, they fail to fine-tune the experience by analyzing customer interactions. A partner or advisor like SPS can drive voice of the customer initiatives to gather valuable customer feedback that lets businesses know whether their experiences are hitting or missing the mark.

As a multi-vendor system integrator, how do you help businesses assess technologies from a range of manufacturers?

It begins with discovery. Discovery shows up in different forms. It may be a conversation between IT, operations and the business. It could also include customer journey mapping, customer experience mapping or other forms of consultative services. Good discoveries yield opportunities for improvement within the business that create financial improvements. This type of approach allows us to create solutions that work together. We begin by considering how to best deliver the experience the business desires for its customers, rather than trying to place technologies from one specific manufacturer into the business's environment and ignoring or working around the parts that don't fit. As we're not tied to one manufacturer to deliver the entire solution, we are able to integrate different technologies to meet each business's specific needs. We assemble best-in-breed solutions that draw upon the strengths from various manufacturers.

As more companies explore the implementation of speech application solutions, how can they be sure that the technology will meet their needs and deliver ROI?

This depends on how we measure return on investment. Some companies would like to see "hard dollars" and, the definition of that can be complex. Many speech applications can offload mundane tasks. This could lead to greater employee satisfaction, which in turn yields an improved return on investment (ROI). Other companies will document the application's ability to partially or completely "self-serve." If the promise of the application is to reduce staff, or reduce time on the phone for other reasons, then the ROI is clear as long as the company responds accordingly. If the application is well-written and allows for flexibility, then customers will enjoy their experience. Streamlining operations while delivering a better experience is the ultimate goal of any new solution brought into the contact center. Companies must consider the greater purpose behind the implementation of these speech applications and determine how they can enhance the overall customer experience. Focusing on delivering an excellent customer experience is key, as the research and advisory firm Forrester found that companies identified as customer experience leaders grow revenue more than five times faster than companies that provide an inferior

customer experience. An excellent customer experience also results in greater customer loyalty, as satisfied customers will pay 4.5 times more based on the strength of their experience. Companies must realize they are investing in the customer experience, rather than in a specific speech technology, and frame the purpose of the applications around that.

Today's customers want easy-to-use self-service options that can answer a variety of inquiries without the need for agent interactions. What factors do organizations need to take into consideration to deploy the most effective self-service tools that also allow for seamless escalation when necessary?

The best self-service applications are intuitive and easy to use. Why is the customer contacting the company? What has he or she been doing prior to calling in, searching your site or perusing your app? Having good repositories with customers' information, tendencies and answers to the key questions they care about enhances the effectiveness of these applications. Speech enablement is another key, as it allows customers to move back and forth among applications when greater understanding is needed. Customers become dissatisfied when they have to explain the same problem twice, and organizations should be able to insert the customer at the most appropriate point rather than at the beginning each and every time. Therefore, the next channel customers use to contact the organization should understand what has already transpired in previous communications and be able to proactively solve their problems.

Organizations must develop a context-driven, omni-channel strategy that unifies their approach to, web, mobile, chat, text, SMS, speech enablement, social media, email, voice and video. Linking all of these channels together provides a richer experience where data is driving the interaction and smarter systems are enabling customers and agents in ways only imagined in the past. With self-service, web, bots, and interactive devices and voice response (IVR) systems become essential competitive tools. Customers will be able to perform transactions with a well-designed, automated interface that's equipped with personalization capabilities and proactive communications that target their specific needs and help escalate to other seamlessly connected channels.

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