

CCW Vegas 2019 - Avaya



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Paul Lang, Head of Contact Center Marketing, Avaya, discussed the company's Avaya IX (Intelligent Experience) Workspaces which use advanced desktop analytics across the entire customer journey to help improve agent productivity, customer responsiveness, and matching customers to the right agent both inbound and outbound. The conversation also covered Avaya's expanding AI solutions.

How does Avaya see Workspaces and what it can do in the contact center?

Workspaces describe an agent environment that is really linked into a customer journey or customer experience. The agent has a single pane of glass to look at...one where they're not scrambling across various screens or devices to see what's going on as part of that customer journey, regardless of media or channel or how they're operating. Agents can clearly see the customer journey and they can spend more time listening and working with the customer as opposed to having to toggle back and forth. They're able to drill down and to see where that customer's been, how they're touching the contact center. They can tell whether they've used self-service, the web, or engaged in chat. This enables a truly great customer experience to happen, which is going to be where more and more differentiation is going to happen as we move forward.

What does an agent's screen look like and what would they be seeing?

They'd be able to see what the company wanted them to see. It's very much widget based. The screen could be shared, showing their own agents statistics or the customer journey. It could also show third-party statistics or something as simple as a Google map. In short, the screen would show anything the agent needs to be successful in delivering that great customer experience, ensuring customer loyalty.

Would Avaya customers that have Workspace be able to set up the screen that best fits their needs?

Yes, absolutely. That's the whole point. It's the notion of providing a widget or optimizing the screen real estate. What we've done recently is expanded the reach of Workspaces as a desktop across our solutions starting off with our digital products, then added live chat, web chat, web collaboration, adding voice to enterprise solutions. This month we're introducing it on our outbound solution, offering our clients the consistency of having the same desktop for inbound or outbound communications. We are able to set up the system in days and weeks rather than months. Businesses can communicate within the agent community, with the supervisors, and most importantly with the customers.

Agents looking at a screen now have all the information they need to best serve the customer in front of them, but if something happens in mid-conversation, does this information now go easily into a CRM?

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Yes, that's its most important benefit. It's bringing that holistic view of what's going on with the customer or customers with whom they interact. The agents have all that information at their fingertips. Whatever becomes the system of record, the Workspace plays a key role in bringing that information to the agent.

As we talk about what the agent can do in conversations or other communications, there are processes going on in the background. Can the agent just push a button or perhaps an automatic process is triggered as a result of previous actions. This brings us to a discussion of AI and robotic process automation and how that all fits into that whole communication with the customer.

Great segue. Last year, we announced a partnership with a company called Afiniti, a specialist in AI-based behavioral pairing solutions. The purpose was to take the routing capability beyond where it has been to a brighter evolutionary step. Now when you're calling into a contact center, it knows your records, your purchases, perhaps your complaints. We know all about the customer and then we have an agent who is aware of the context. Our joining forces with Afiniti will enable a business to route by attributes to pair the right combinations of customers with agents rather than doing the generic and less effective first in, first out.

We've also extended that capability to outbound. While there are many outbound use cases, they primarily fall into three categories, some form of sales call, a debt collection call, and calls that are directly related to customer care. Now we've got an available agent with these various skillsets so when the sales department reaches out to the customer, they are best equipped to sell a product or service in which we think the customer is interested. Thus, why not reserve this agent specifically to make that call, to set up right pairing for successful outbound campaign? Now extending what we did with inbound on using intelligence, we also do on an outbound basis. I think the two together are a really great match.

What attributes do you measure and what do you base your pairings on? Is it product knowledge or demographics? Will you walk us through the process?

When a business has a customer's profile, knows their buying patterns and preferences, it can use the attributes that have been assigned to set up a productive pairing. The business can assign an agent who is both a knowledge match and experienced in selling through contextual communication. As companies test pairings, it becomes a learning process. Artificial intelligence is about incremental machine learning to make it work. Even if the optimal person is not available, the system can identify someone else who has similar attributes and make that pairing on either an inbound or outbound basis. We also recently introduced a conversational intelligence product that is now in use at numerous sites which enables businesses to drive desired business outcomes in real time. It goes beyond the capabilities of traditional speech analytics that can take two or three days to provide the insights that conversational intelligence can deliver in two to three seconds. If the call is going badly (as it is being consistently scored on various parameters), an alert is sent to the supervisor and who can listen-in in real time to avert a customer experience disaster. The information can also be leveraged to assist in customer journey mapping.

We've been talking about AI for a long time and it seems to be finally coming into its own. On a scale of one to 10, where do you think it is now as far as implementation and where do you see it going?

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A recent survey that we commissioned revealed that nearly 99% of companies are experimenting with or putting into production some form of AI, whether for automation or better self-service. Over the next three or four years the number of businesses who are doing it in some way, shape or form is going to grow even more quickly. I'd say right now, those in the process of implementing is 9 out of 10, but those who have it in production at this point, maybe a 5. The technology is readily available. I think the barrier is use cases. How can my business benefit? Companies will use it for cost reduction, to improve customer service, and find ways to use it to build revenues. Right now, I envision AI as having just graduated from high school as an honor student. But to speed through college and get its PhD, it needs to be both relevant to specific business needs and serve customer experience goals set up across the entire business. The contact center has its role as part of the customer journey but is just part of the delivery mechanism.

What can we expect from Avaya in the coming year?

You're going to see an ongoing acceleration in the customer experience solutions. As digital channels become more mainstream, how do we take that more to the cloud? We believe there's no one-size-fits-all solution. If a company wants the off-the-shelf, readily available option, it's probably going to go to a public cloud. On the other end of the spectrum, if a business wants something heavily customized, perhaps in the government space with its various required certifications, it's probably going to go private cloud. There's room in the middle for a hybrid cloud, complementing on-prem contact center solution. It could also be routing or digital in the cloud, Avaya is certainly cloud-first, but cloud-first with a choice.