ICMI 2017 Contact Center Expo and Conference Summary

The 2017 ICMI Contact Center Expo and Conference, held at the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, FL from May 22-25, focused on the theme of "Delivering Exceptional Customer Experiences in a Complex and Changing World." It provided executives, managers and supervisors from every type of customer care operation an in-depth educational opportunity to better understand how to:

- Leverage the most efficacious technologies
- Deliver higher levels of service across all the channels that customers now prefer
- Find the best ways to balance people, processes, and automation

The event offered a multifaceted educational program as well as a diverse marketplace to review the latest products and services. The program included a variety of training and networking opportunities, case studies, and site tours of local contact centers, Including such landmark operations as the Walt Disney World Reservations Center and Jet Blue University.

In addition to seeing live demos and obtaining product information from nearly 75 solution providers, professionals enjoyed social events in and out of the exhibit hall. All attendees were invited to a an opening night Expo Hall Bash, a Lunch and Learn session which featured an innovative Food Truck Rally, as well as an Award Party celebrating finalists and winners of the ICMI Global Contact Center Awards.

Among the primary topics discussed by speakers were technology planning, performance evaluation and training social media and live chat and how to best work with millennials.

CRMXchange spoke with number of exhibitors onsite to learn more about their latest solutions and gain insight on where they felt the market was heading.

[Bucher and Suter](https://www.bucher-suter.com/)

https://www.bucher-suter.com/

The firm offers its services as CTI integrators for greater efficiency, specializing in working with businesses that have Cisco contact center solutions and Salesforce CRM. One of their key strategies is to put all the information on the agent's desktop for single view convenience. According to Mike Kulik, Chief Product Officer & SVP of Global Products at Bucher + Suter, there is now an even greater reason to use CTI applications since the deployment is now less costly than ever before. Mike had the following responses to our questions.

How are 21st century consumers different and why do you believe that customer service as we know it needs to be reinvented?

Today's consumer has evolved in a way that significantly increases the expectations placed on the companies with which they do business. Modern customers are well informed, multimodal, busy, impatient and now expect the same level of 'me' that they get from the common social platforms they may be using today.

Companies are quickly realizing the importance of customer retention. There is a high value to reshaping customer service to be engaging and ready to handle any change in the environment. This applies whether its new interaction channels, new intelligence or new work streams.

Since the contact center is usually the customer's initial encounter with a company, what do businesses need to do to ensure that they convey a positive first impression?

First, give customers insight and set expectations for how, where, and speed of the service channel. Let them feel the transparency of the organization. Then delight them by truly knowing all facets of their person relevant to the service you provide them. Be personal, engaging, inquisitive, and predictive in how you talk to them from the first interaction.

How are you able to create solutions specifically formulated to reduce complexity, limit operational costs, and increase efficiency?

Bucher + Suter links business applications to communications systems. Our impetus is to marry the two and go further to blur the lines relative to how humans interact with these two systems. We don't just give users access to the most important data at their initial glance or finger touch, but also allow simple access to deeper underlying data relevant to the operation they are performing at any given time. Our mission is to essentially reduce application clutter and complexity during the customer service function.

Why is it so important for a technology partner to provide both on-site assistance with the implementation of contact center technology as well as offering ongoing support?

This is a cornerstone of our philosophy. As mentioned above, we believe in how companies can better engage customers. Technology partners can provide a better experience and help to truly better understand a company's needs, struggles, opportunities by engaging and building relationships with the end customer. We do things that make sense, not that make the job easy.

What steps do you take to evaluate the technological and business needs of your clients?

We utilize discovery workshops, Agent side-by-sides, Supervisor interviews, and business owner Q&A. From these sessions, we distill information and share it with the client to ensure accuracy and completeness. Often finding 'Aha' moments on both sides that ultimately improve the quality of the deployment and ensure customer satisfaction with both the product and Bucher + Suter as a trusted partner.

Content Guru

http://www.contentguru.com

Content Guru is part of the Redwood Technologies Group. Traditionally delivering high-reliability, premise-based communications platforms for organizations in finance and government sectors, the group is now addressing the cloud model through Content Guru and the **storm** platform. Content Guru has been identified by Gartner as a leading challenger in the Western European Cloud Contact Center Market and ranked 5th largest Cloud Contact Center provider globally by DMG. While at ICMI, Sean Taylor, CEO of both Redwood Technologies and Content Guru, was going back and forth between the activities in his booth and monitoring what was going on in the aftermath of the tragic Manchester bombing – their solution was involved in helping to communicate the services being provided in critical areas. Sean Taylor, CEO, Content Guru responded to questions from CRMXchange.

How can companies better integrate the wide variety of applications and databases they use for critical business processes to eliminate technology siloes?

Businesses have had to introduce numerous new technologies to respond to customers' ever-evolving expectations. These demands change so quickly that it can often be difficult to predict the next trend or future-proof an organization's ICT estate against the next developments. Instead, businesses have often had to install systems reactively to address immediate problems. These frequently do not interoperate with one another, which can not only lead to inefficiencies but also increase the risk of human error'.

As a first step to better link disparate systems, companies should look toward applications and databases with open architecture. Although it can often be the route to fully-integrated solutions, a single vendor model is not always the best option as typically best-in-breed products are developed by different vendors. Instead, when introducing new capabilities, the open approach is better for integrating existing technologies as there are certain solutions which can create Common Data Models or other ways of 'translating' information. Any solution that does not encourage the client to rip-and-replace existing functionality is preferable.

Platforms such as Content Guru's storm are optimized for interfacing with many different systems, applications and databases. Typically, customers introduce specific modules they require while integrating with existing business processes that work effectively. This can either be through an existing API, or in many cases, a custom integration can be rolled out. storm can also be used as a conduit between multiple disparate information

systems. Storm converges data and communications to enable disparate systems to interoperate, providing Unified Communications and multi-channel Cloud Contact Centre solutions.

What do companies need to do to ensure their contact centers have the reliability, power and scalability required to seamlessly process a high volume of inquiries across multiple channels and be ready to meet spikes in demand?

Organizations should look toward 'true' multi-tenant cloud platforms to ensure that their contact centers have the reliability, power and scalability required.

Private or hosted cloud deployments have limited capacities, which very rarely offer the organization the scalability needed in unpredictable high demand incidents. Furthermore, the proliferation of channels available to the modern consumer, and the rate of new developments means that these solutions are typically frozen in time at the point of purchase, unless the client pays for upgrades.

The 'true' cloud model offers enormous scalability through a single 'super-platform', accessible to its clients by partitioning. Vendors offering this sort of solution have invested enormous amounts into far fewer, far more powerful cloud instances, and are able to continually deploy updates across their entire customer base across areas such as new technological capabilities or security patches. Furthermore, during peaks in demand, such platforms are designed to scale to volumes that no single organization could begin to approach, meaning that all clients are effectively protected from surges in contact volume.

For an effective and reliable multi-channel experience, organizations require a platform which has a mature technological core – both for fundamental telephony and also web-based services. Such a platform needs to be integrated architecturally, so that all channels can be seamlessly treated in the same way and distributed accordingly. It is not enough to have a scalable web element, then fall down on the telephony front.

The storm platform regularly handles enormous and unpredictable levels of demand as many of its clients operate mission-critical services: in the electricity sector where power outages can occur at any time and result in simultaneous spikes in call volume, in the travel industry where disruptions are unavoidable and cause similar incidents, or in healthcare, where outbursts are unpredictable but end-customers must get to the information they need.

What is "universal queue management" and how does it work to handle both inbound and outbound interactions in a single, blended queue?

Universal queue management is the concept that every single channel and interaction can be treated in the same queue. In storm's case, the platform converges all channels

into a single, blended queue, with algorithms in place to consider presence, skills, personality and other customizable factors to decide the best routing location for every contact. Multiple queues can also be assigned and different channels prioritized as required, which ensures that each customer is provided with a consistent service across multiple channels. If a customer changes channels, storm links data such as Calling Line Identity (CLI) and email address to connect the customer to the same agent. Multi-channel history can be viewed by the agent through the DTA.

Content Guru has had an impressive history of success in Europe and India: how do you plan to make your business case to create an impact in the North American market?

Our 2017 strategy places a major focus on the US market. Content Guru is taking tried-and-tested technology that's proven successful in the European market and is deploying the same model in the US.

With a platform already live, the next core steps are expanding our marketing and sales presence, attending key trade shows, and growing staff numbers in our US office to become a fully-functioning commercial and support hub across the whole region.

Already identified by US industry analyst DMG Consulting as being among world's leading cloud contact center providers, Content Guru aims to become the provider of choice for organizations of all sizes of organization across the globe.

Gladly

[Gladly](https://www.gladly.com/company/)

https://www.gladly.com/company/

Gladly's website states that their objective is to "reinvent customer service. They believe that since most customer service products on the market today are case management tools designed decades before the iPhone, social media and modern messaging apps, there is a need for businesses to implement solutions that reflect the changing demands of today's connected customer. Unlike other companies in its space, Gladly focuses more on b-to-c than b-to-b services. VP of Marketing Jenny Roy's responses to our questions provided insight on the company's mission.

How are 21st century consumers different and why do you believe that customer service as we know it needs to be reinvented?

21st century consumers expect exceptional experiences. They believe companies should be on any channel and they expect you to know their history with you. A [recent survey](#) we did found that 91% of consumers expect you to know their history with an organization. Because consumers communicate across many channels in their personal lives, they expect to do the same with companies they do business with. But today's technology is largely ticket-based and thus, hasn't enabled companies to effectively build strong relationships and have empathetic conversations, particularly across multiple channels.

This is why we created Gladly**.** We believe legendary customer experiences are a result of how you make customers feel through the conversations you have with them. We built a platform that puts customers at the heart of the experience, not tickets or cases. We built Gladly to empower customer service agents to engage with customers so they feel their best interests are being taken to heart.

How does your platform enable agents to converse seamlessly and maintain context with customers across all channels?

Our platform is channel agnostic, meaning customer service agents can communicate to customers across any channel without missing a beat. The platform provides a single view of every conversation a company has ever had with a customer. Whether they text or tweet, email or dial a phone call, all the information is all right there - giving agents more context to better help customers quickly.

In what ways can agents convey a genuine sense of empathy improve the customer experience?

The best service is about people talking to people, because who wants to be treated like a case number? A way for agents to convey empathy starts with something simple: know who they are and their history with your company. If you have to search for 5 minutes to understand how long they've been a customer, what their recent transactions have been and what previous conversations you have had with them, you are already creating a negative first impression.

With Gladly, customers are immediately recognized and valued. Unlike legacy systems, Gladly is customer-centric so the customer gets routed as a person, not a ticket or a case. That way the customer and history of every conversation are never separated. By enabling B2C companies to focus on people talking to people, Gladly powers a lifetime of naturally empathetic conversations across any channel - from phone, email, text, chat and even on social media.

What elements make your platform superior to other available offerings on the market?

The customer service market has been around for a long time. Most systems, including those that are considered newer and cloud-based were all created before the iPhone even existed. Companies could have never anticipated what mobile devices would do to the expectations of consumers and the phenomenon of being "always on."

Most of these systems were designed to handle one channel making it hard for companies to stitch together multiple solutions to get a single view of the customer and every historical conversation. Other newer systems were supposed to be able to handle multiple channels, but many are ticket or case-based systems, and every new communication kicks off the creation of a new ticket. When a customer calls, then emails, then tweets, it often means three different tickets are being created. While the agent struggles to find the other open tickets, the customer is left repeating and recapping all their previous conversations. Not exactly a positive customer experience.

With people as the atomic unit, the customer and the conversation are never separated. Companies can treat their customers as people, not as ticket numbers. In fact, a recent survey we did on Customer Service Expectations we found that customers who talked to big companies with which they did repeat business, 2 out of 3 felt like they were treated like a ticket, not a unique customer.

By providing the historical context of every previous conversation, the ability to communicate across any channel, and the ability for agents to be more productive to help customers faster, Gladly helps power a better customer experience for

companies, which ultimately means more revenue, stronger brand loyalty and more differentiation from competitors.

Oracle's Senior Director of Product Management, Jeffrey Wartgow, doesn't think that most businesses are effectively using technology to improve the customer experience. While some point to improvements in ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) and asset management applications that is not what they were meant to be. He believes that contact center management has both the plan and the vision to effect change but notes that they're often "swimming upstream" in their attempts to do so. (He was surprised to see how many companies there were at ICMI that didn't have a CRM in place.)

While budgets remain a consistent barrier, he sees companies freeing funds to ramp up service on messaging apps, including Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, which are different than simple texting. "No one wants to talk anymore," he noted, "but when things get really bad, they want to move to super-rich communications." This would include a screen sharing situation or sharing a video chat from a self-service application. "People want the same kind of response in assisted service as they do in self-service," he noted. "When they jump on to another channel they expect a continuation, not to have to start over." He sees "organic channels" as the next step after omnichannel, where customers are simultaneously engaged on several touch points at once. "Someone might make a reservation on a website, then call to see if they can gain added value, open a chat and look on a community to get answers. "This allows a person to be in control of their own customer experience," he noted. Wartgow provided a closer look at how companies can use Oracle's solutions.

In what ways do you provide a complete service solution that is effective across both self-service and assisted channels?

Oracle has created a unified service solution that handles all customer touch points. These days, we're finding that customers prefer to engage in self-service options, and our Digital Self-Service products include mobile and community self-service options to build out these experiences. Supported by our wide suite of knowledge products, customers can get the answers they need on their own terms.

When it comes to assisted service, Oracle's robust Cross-Channel Contact Center adds a range of additional channels for customer interactions, including our live chat, co-

browse, video chat, social messaging, and even field service tools.

By encouraging service conversations across all channels, customers can toggle between self-service and assisted-service, or use them both simultaneously. In the background, that customer context is being captured by the Unified Agent Desktop.

How does your flexible self-service framework make it easy for companies to create multichannel customer service portals that help to reduce contact center interactions?

Oracle provides a strong self-service solution on web and mobile devices. The web self-service portal framework is a flexible, widget-based approach that allows large consumer companies to implement "pixel perfect" branding to match the look and feel of their websites. Oracle also supports responsive design, automatically formatting the portal for smaller mobile or iPad screens.

If a customer can't find the answer they're looking for on the website, they have options to self-serve before interacting with an agent. Oracle's Smart Assistant takes customer queries and parses through the text to find the best online answer. Thirty percent of the time, Smart Assistant solves the issue, deflecting those interactions from the contact center.

In an era when consumer preferences for self-service are on the rise, Oracle's community self- service offerings have enabled peers to provide sometimes immediate answers to consumer inquiries. In fact, Oracle Service Cloud has worked closely with Directly to encourage proactive user support, leveraging trustworthy experts in community forums to answer inquiries and effectively reduce contact center interactions.

Can you explain how your cross-channel agent desktop empowers agents to provide quicker, more personalized service in cases of escalations?

To ensure that a customer inquiry is resolved the first time around, Oracle's Cross-Channel Contact Center automates the routing of calls to the agent that is best suited to handle the incident based on his or her skills. To empower agents, Oracle has invested heavily in guided assistance, unified knowledge bases, smart assistants, and now virtual assistance to help them find the best answer with as little friction as possible.

Furthermore, our Policy Automation product can quickly guide agents through very complex questions, like warranty and entitlement information, with each interview question personalized to the customer's needs. It allows companies to provide super-robust guided assistance and answer questions that begin with "It depends…" We can even supplement a service experience with IoT data drawn directly from a customer's connected device to further improve the time for resolution or even provide predictive and highly personalized customer service.

All these customer interactions occur in one Unified Agent Desktop. If the inquiry does get escalated, the responding agent is fully prepped with interactions and previous service conversations. The customer is met with a seamless and personalized experience, without having to repeat his or her story again.

What distinguishes Oracle Service Cloud from other solutions in the marketplace?

Oracle Service Cloud stands out by taking a comprehensive and in-depth look at the customer experience. From a dynamic and contextual agent desktop and knowledge base to a co-browse interaction or field service experience where a company representative interacts in person with a customer, we cover it all. This in-depth and unified consumer view is unique to Oracle.

In addition, Oracle's scalability is second to none. Oracle Service Cloud provides an industrial strength customer service solution. Whether a company has a single contact center or thousands of agents working 24-7, Oracle can handle the load and help tailor a solution that increases ROI and provides modern customer experiences for every business size.

Lastly, Oracle understands that service is only one part of the customer experience. We work very closely with our cousins in commerce, sales, and marketing to make sure our customers can integrate and build experiences that are completely unique to their industries.

[Rulai](http://rul.ai/)

http://rul.ai/

The AI development specialist makes it easy to set up the logic for its intelligent Virtual Customer Assistant. Customer Experience Managers need real-time control, so it's important to give them easy-to-use tools to create, manage, and deploy customized dialogues from start to finish. Companies using Rulai will no longer need to take up scarce IT resources. The system is 'smart'. For example, if you want to find the email address and the person has not yet chatted the address, the system will ask for it. However, if the person chats with their email, it will bypass asking that question. CRMXchange met with company founder Roger Jin and received responses from VP of Business Development and 'AI Evangelist' Jim Diaz

What factors enabled Rulai to be named to Bloomberg's list of the "50 Most Promising Start Ups You've Never Heard Of?"

For the ["50 Most Promising Start Ups You've Heard Never Heard Of" award](#), Bloomberg commissioned market researcher Quid to examine over 50,000 companies, and chose 50 it deemed the most promising based on big data. Rulai was one of just three AI-focused companies to make the cut, not to mention the only enterprise Virtual Assistant solution.

Have the company's founders worked together before?

Yes, the Rulai founders' have known each other for more than ten years. They both went to CMU for graduate school. Many of the top AI researchers that were recruited for the Rulai team worked at companies like Alibaba, Baidu, Facebook, etc. In addition, part of the team was involved in the first research published on neural networks for language models when they were working on search engine and dialog systems, 2000 ICSLP.

Can you explain what you mean when you say your solution delivers "next-generation self-service driven by deep learning"?

This describes two decades of evolution of self-service-driven chatbot technologies. It all started with rules-based systems, entirely dependent on labor intensive, manual

programming that took months to build, limited to simple QA use cases. It progressed to ones that could incorporate labeled data and thus more use cases such as Siri, but remained encumbered by upfront data labeling, programming and ongoing maintenance costs. Rulai represents the next generation of self-service with state-of-the-art intelligent virtual assistance, which leverages deep learning across both natural language understanding and dialog management. Rulai can analyze and learn from many existing data, enabling the complex multi-round conversational AI necessary to scale a company's spectrum of use cases, while removing the need for upfront programming or any ongoing maintenance investment.

In what ways can truly sophisticated chatbots/intelligent virtual assistants tangibly improve customer satisfaction ratings?

These are a few ways in which a truly sophisticated virtual assistant can tangibly improve CSAT scores over time:

- The ability to scale a company's use cases and be easily fully operational
- The ability for the VCA to retain memory and context during a multi-round conversation, much more closely resembling the way a customer would engage with a live agent
- The ability for the underlying AI agent to self-learn and improve in real-time while chatting with a customer
- The ability to scale up to hundreds of thousands of concurrent sessions during peak spikes
- The "always on" nature of virtual assistance

With numerous chatbot and AI solutions available, what differentiates your offering from others in the marketplace?

While there are many chatbots in the marketplace, there are very few enterprise-level, truly AI-driven virtual assistance solutions. That is a very real discrepancy. True AI is very hard to get right, and only hundreds of people in the world are working on this problem at this level. Nearly all these individuals are working within a few of the major tech companies on internal solutions, and are not exposed to CX leaders at external enterprises.

Two primary differentiators separate Rulai from other B2B virtual assistance solutions:

- Rulai's next-generation approach uses deep learning. Our Mixed Initiative Task Intelligent System (MITIS) AI platform features multi-round conversational capability that can scale up to more complex use cases across the full spectrum of a company's issue rank. MITIS provides CX leadership with the flexibility to apply AI across customer- and escalated-agent-assistant channels to any extent.
- The second differentiator addresses two of the main inhibiting factors in the

adoption of virtual assistance by brands: control of the branded customer experience and lack of engineering resources to address the evolving needs of the typical CX team. Companies are hesitant to outsource what could end up being a material component of their CX to a "black box in the cloud." Rulai's Conversational Design and Interaction Console provide a structured Bot development process that safely transitions approved conversations from pre-production to production. We provide an intuitive admin and design console that enables users to drag and drop specific task modules and configure actions to formulate the desired dialog workflow. The completed dialog can be committed, repeatedly tested and updated, then deployed to production from the console with just a few clicks. The design console allows simple configuration to manage the dialog, while not exposing the complex underlying NLP and machine learning processes. We are shifting the decisioning process from "buy vs. build" to 'partner & build."

SaleMove

https://www.salemove.com/

SaleMove offers an enterprise-class omnichannel way to reach customers with instant Video, 2-way Chat, Voice and CoBrowsing. Justin DiPietro, Co-founder & COO of SaleMove, sees the market shifting from Customer Support to customer engagement.   The demo at their booth showed how when a consumer clicks to talk to an agent, the consumer's screen appears on the agent's console. There are no downloads so the conversation is much quicker. Jeff Mack. Director of Marketing, responded to our inquiries.

How do your one-click co-browsing and video chat applications instantly enhance customer engagement on any website?

SaleMove's CoBrowsing and video chat solutions instantly enhance customer engagement by providing a human-to-human experience that is often lacking online. Additionally, when used together, CoBrowsing and video chat provide companies rich visual context which their representatives can leverage to more quickly get in front of potential issues and provide more relevant personalized support.

In what ways can your CX Tool Kit enable businesses to better understand their customers and build a unique customer experience?

SaleMove's solutions enable companies to have more relevant conversations with their customers by creating a "face-to-face" engagement with minimal customer effort. Our multi-medium communication options reduce channel switching, while the visual context afforded by CoBrowsing provides valuable clues that aid in a reduction in average handle time and increase in first-call resolution.

Can you tell CRMXchange readers more about your mission to 'bring the in-person customer experience online?

As complex business transactions begin to migrate online, companies are facing great challenges maintaining the sales and support processes that allowed them to succeed in their brick and mortar operations. For these companies, leveraging the expertise of their field representatives was critical. Having a name and face to answer customer questions and close deals was vital. SaleMove technology brings the human representative to the center of the online customer experience by providing live 2-way video, audio, chat, and CoBrowsing to the customers who are looking for answers from a trusted source.

Keith Pearce, Vice President, Service Cloud Product Marketing for Salesforce, was one of the keynote presenters at ICMI. In his address From Transactional to Intelligent Conversational Service: Your 2017 Imperative, he delved into how the old rules of customer conversations no longer apply and examined how the rules have changed. He sees the ability to aggregate all customer information in one place with the capability to structure such information in a specific way that allows AI to work as his company's differentiating factor. He believes that trepidation about moving to the cloud can be ameliorated by taking an AI based approach and building science into the platform that requires no layers and or frequent upgrades. In case management, while auto-populating fields may sound good, it's more important to be able to shave seconds off of all calls. Since people don't want to move between channels, he thinks companies need to be able to discern the right channel to communicate with them based on customer value. "Businesses need to lead first with digital," he said. "If calls are still most of their volume, they're doing something wrong." He also noted that Salesforce Desk which had been created for small businesses will be moving to Service Cloud to consolidate the solutions for the mid-to higher part of the market. They share a common architecture, common UI and common tools. Here are Keith's responses to the questions posed by CRMXchange.

What are the benefits to companies of connecting sales and service with a complete customer view?

Today's consumer is ultra-connected, informed and empowered by technology. In their personal lives, consumers engage seamlessly with their friends, family and colleagues easily and instantly on mobile and digital channels. They want to engage with companies in the same way. However, most service organizations aren't set up to do that. Instead, they often run on several different platforms, lack a 360-degree view of the customer and aren't connected to their marketing or sales teams.

By connecting sales and service, organizations can not only get a complete view of their customers, they can also empower their IT organization to move faster. They can experience cost savings, increased productivity across agents and reps, application integration across

the company, but more importantly, they can increase customer satisfaction. For example, giving customer service agents access to a customer's sales history and data can help the service department not only solve a customer problem, but also deliver a personalized experience that builds customer loyalty, and ultimately a superior experience.

How does Salesforce Service Cloud empower agents to deliver the right answers more quickly and provide personalized service across all channels?

Today's connected customers expect service to be as instant and easy as their personal conversations. Salesforce Service Cloud enables companies to meet their customers where they are–whether that is mobile, chat, email, text or out in the field. Agents need to be empowered to deliver personalized, conversational service on a single platform. When they do, customers remain happy and engaged.

The introduction of Artificial intelligence (AI) introduces a whole new level of personalized service. For Service Cloud, we've created AI-powered customer service with the introduction of Service Cloud Einstein–enabling any service team to transform into a modern, intelligent service organization. With Service Cloud Einstein, companies are empowered to turn routine customer transactions into smart customer service conversations and use service to create competitive differentiation. It does this by delivering capabilities that are:

• Personalized - arms agents with the insights and intelligence needed, to build deeper customer relationships that are personalized and seamless across every channel

• Productive - agents, mobile workers & supervisors are empowered to deliver exceptional customer service with intelligent productivity tools like AI-fueled insights and bots

• Predictive - agents become smarter and customers happier. With intelligence and AI, companies can identify customer service issues before they become cases and automating tasks with bots

• Connected - with a single platform for built for agility and scale, companies are provided a complete view of the customer and are able to move faster and smarter than ever before

In what ways can mobile apps and communities improve the effectiveness of customer service?

Mobile apps and communities give customers the ability to connect with brands in ways that best suit their preferences. For many customers, being able to instant message with a service agent via mobile app or quickly scan through an FAQ from their phone can be the deciding factor for remaining loyal to a brand–or even engaging with a brand in the first place.

Additionally, communities can be a place where Q&As, forums, FAQs and other content is housed, giving customers the ability to find answers to questions on their own, increasing customer satisfaction and reducing the number of service calls and tickets.

What differentiates your solution from other customer engagement applications in the marketplace?

Service Cloud allows companies to deliver a modern, intelligent and innovative customer experience by using AI-powered technologies like predictive service and smart chatbots. Routine customer transactions are turned into smart conversations that create competitive differentiation.

Most traditional customer engagement apps fail to bring together insights from across a brand's sales, service and marketing operations. Because Service Cloud is built on the Salesforce Customer Success Platform, we're able to leverage a single data set that is linked back to sales, marketing and more, to provide companies a truly single-view of their customers.

Speed to Contact describes itself as an "emerging global provider of fast and efficient enterprise call center software." Businesses can deploy all of their Ricochet solution's system components — ultra-fast Predictive Dialer, CRM, Marketing Automation, Inbound Lead Tracking— or can integrate Ricochet with their existing systems. Beau Bratton, the company's Founder and Managing Partner, takes a leadership role in all aspects of the product vision including design, development, sales and marketing.

How does your Custom Call Routing capability enable companies to quickly get leads from a variety of channels into the hands of the best qualified agents?

Web leads can get routed by priority to different team members based on any of the lead field criteria. A simple example is that we can route calls to the "A Team" if the monetary value of a field was greater than $100,000 and the "B Team" is the monetary amount was lower than 100,000; or by vendor, state, credit grade, multiple data points. The options are limitless.

Inbound callbacks can ring the whole team on a hunt, or round robin, or the system can ring the user that owns the lead, or who called it last. We also can look up the number to detect the state and then route the call to a licensed agent in that state. In addition, there is routing by team, branch, agent, or number with failover options as well. When you include that with a Screen Pop of the lead information you get the right person on the phone with the information at their fingertips immediately.

Can you explain the ways your contact center scripting applications helps businesses develop personalized and relevant communications with their customers?

Our dynamic scripting can be different depending on the user, the source, or even a tag on a lead. Therefore, a business can personalize it to the consumer's experience. You can also bring in the lead data into the scripting dynamically and it can process formulas for the agents to figure out financials. Also with the ability to add HTML clients can create interactive scripting experiences with colors, i-frames, images, or even videos. Lead forms and surveys can be embedded into the scripting and our tree- based system allows clients to create a true sales workflow. If the consumer says 'yes,' the agent clicks yes and it will take him/her to the next section.

What tools does Ricochet Social Media Links put in agents' hands to provide ready-to-use customer information?

We bring in data including the photo, title, location, description and link to their social profile from over 4 sources such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Google + and Twitter. This helps the agent find commonality or touch points to bring up and feather into the conversation. Also, in many cases it provides the ability to interact through those other mediums with the consumer.

What tangible advantages does having the ability to send automated text messages offer to help businesses deliver an improved customer experience?

At this point in time, many consumers will not answer their phone but will reply to a text message on their mobile device. Having automated drip SMS campaigns and SMS enabled numbers creates a huge increase in contact rates and interactions.

What elements make your solution superior to other available offerings on the market?

It's all in the name. At Speed to Contact our biggest advantage is speed. If a company buys web leads/internet leads it's incredibly important to call them quickly before the consumer contacts someone else or is contacted by someone else. Our patent pending process for calling web leads is the fastest in the industry. Finally, many companies have too many logins and too many systems to use, which causes difficulty in aggregating solid, dependable reporting and integration of processes and data across different systems. We believe Speed to Contact provides one of the most robust all-in-one systems on the market which streamlines reporting, systems and logins in to one easy to use platform.

[Sundown AI](https://www.sundown.ai/home/)

https://www.sundown.ai/home/

Sundown AI builds self-learning Artificial Intelligence applications that are powered by NLP, graph algorithms and machine learning. They automate customer service and sales via existing business suites. Organizations can use Chloe, Sundown's AI platform, in chats, emails, SMS, kiosks, websites, and mobile apps to improve the customer experience. Sundown AI's system automates training, handles complex workflows and automatically learns from each interaction. As what they call the 'Internet of Everything' (IoE) continues to bring together people, processes, data and things to enhance the relevancy of network connections. "We're at a crossroads in the IoE when choosing to add Artificial Intelligence as a layer to make systems smarter will become a huge differentiator," said Fabio Cardenas, President of Sundown AI. "The organizations that embrace AI will see boosts in productivity, improved customer service and reduced labor costs." Here are some of his additional thoughts

How does your intelligent communications platform help companies to better understand the true voice of the customer?

Chloe, our AI automation layer, helps companies automate contact center tasks that would otherwise require human intervention. For example, some of these tasks include answering customer questions, looking up information (order/account status), or updating CRM with details from a chat/email. As to the true voice of the customer, Chloe monitors and analyzes all customer service interactions. She will highlight and flag issues that are unique and correspond to new customer insights.

Why is it so important to not only monitor and transcribe 100% of voice calls, but provide the capability to rapidly search, filter and play back conversations?

Monitoring calls in real time is important for the resolution of customer problems and automation of tasks. One use case has been for clients to use Chloe to detect when agents are going off script to potentially prevent poor performance. Essentially, an agent going off script is flagged and scheduled for training. Contact centers have the ability to proactively QA their agents and manage performance.

In what ways do your artificial intelligence capabilities enable companies to glean more effective customer insights?

From our dashboard, contact centers will have an analysis based on the type and frequency of customer service issues. Our clients can also search our graph to determine

how often each of those issues occur, distribution of issues during the day, and the workflow followed that led to resolution.

What elements make your solution superior to other available offerings on the market?

- Automation of training for faster setup and deployment
- Answering in Natural Language instead of canned responses or forms
- Self-learning to automatically increase accuracy and quality
- Compatible with unstructured text data enable advanced functionality with email/chats/calls.
- Multiple channels and integrations

TATA COMMUNICATIONS

Tata Communications is a major player in the field of global communications, recognized in Gartner's Leadership Quadrant of Global Network Carriers. While many people think of it as mainly an Indian company, Tata has been doing business in North America for 15 years and counts 300 of the Fortune 500 organizations among its customers. It has been focused on contact centers in this region for the past two and a half years. Tata's InstaCC Global cloud contact center offering is built on Cisco's hosted omnichannel platform but can be integrated with solutions from other leaders such as Genesys or inContact. It combines the knowledge of worldwide experts with skilled planning to help companies deliver interactions that result in fast, smooth and personalized services for customers. Gaurav Anand, Vice President, Strategic Partnerships and Global Alliances for Tata, sees his company as being on the cusp of huge growth in the North American market as the company gains momentum in building its identity and businesses realize the advantages of a platform that runs seamlessly on one global system of voice network connections.

For what reasons do you consider the contact center to be the lifeline of an organization?

The real question should be – "when is a contact center no longer the lifeline to the customer?" The answer: when the contact center is no longer relevant to serve the current generation of customers. Traditional call centers assume a customer wants to pick up a phone, enter an account number and wait 20-30 minutes before reaching an agent.

Recent surveys clearly indicate the next generation of customers prefer using chat, social media and mobile devices as their most important channel of communication when reaching a call center; and voice – only as the means of last resort.

If companies now want to be positioned to better serve their customers, they must provide the communication channels of choice, and through these channels, provide a seamless Digital Connect Customer Experience, in which barriers that exist in an omnichannel environment are eliminated. To be digitally connected to a call center means a customer should not have to repeat their questions when choosing to be transferred to a live agent, or be forced to hang up during a chat to dial a live agent. To be digitally connected, the customer's information is preserved, and used to intelligently route the customer to an available agent. When the call is received, the agent's screen is populated with the customer's information, and provides the services required in the least amount of time possible. The call centers of tomorrow must be equipped to provide customers with a connected digital customer experience today.

How does your InstaCC Global solution provide worldwide reach for enterprise companies while diminishing complexity and delivering consistently superior omnichannel customer experiences?

Tata Communications is a global company and as the largest international voice carrier with over 1600 service provider partnerships and a global, Tier-1 IP network which carries 24% of world's internet traffic, we have the world-class technologies and infrastructure in place ready to serve our customers. We provide customers with a consistent, seamless global connectivity, communication and collaboration experience. We help customers implement their UC strategy across disparate technology platforms, software and end points.

Tata Communications is the only global service provider that leverages its privately owned global fiber infrastructure to offer cloud contact center solutions in a ready-state, pre-connected with MPLS network, Centralized SIP Services, ITFS, DIDs, and pre-tested DR sites. InstaCC Global is offered with a single Service Level Agreement (SLA), that provides the customer with a single umbrella or responsibility to provide support for assets - from infrastructure to the application. We proactively monitor the customer's resources 24x7x365 through our Network Operations Centers to ensure all systems are operational across the globe.

Tata Communications' InstaCC Global allows our customers to quickly, easily and economically establish contact and call centers on demand without significant up-front costs and is based on Cisco Collaboration Solution (HCS). It includes valuable features such as a connected digital customer experience, precisions queueing, consumer to agent video, co-browsing, AI chat bot technology, voice biometrics, social media analysis, deep learning, natural language, automatic call distribution, predictive dialing, real-time and historical reports, call recording, and quality monitoring systems.

In what ways does your hosted cloud solution deliver the same level of security, data protection and control as any on-premise solution?

InstaCC is a hosted contact center service on a virtually dedicated platform where the customer's environment is secured and not shared with anyone else. The service is delivered on a private MPLS environment through secure ISO 27001 data centers, dedicated virtual firewalls, secure HTTPS or certificates on any external database/CRM integration required, and if necessary, we can encrypt the voice RTP stream.

What benefits can a business achieve by embedding real-time communications in to existing mobile apps and web pages?

In our current software release, we encourage our clients to develop mobile applications to make it easier for their customers to access their customer service departments and help desks, where a high level of customer satisfaction, speed and

human touch is required. For example, Tata Communications has digitally transformed the customer experience of a global bank by enabling preferred members with a mobile app that makes banking, authentication and human interaction possible at the touch of a button.

VoxGen

http://www.voxgen.com/

VoxGen states their mission is to "rid the world of bad IVR." They see themselves as conversational IVR experts, focused on creating experiences that support, surprise and satisfy customers. By throwing away call-flow diagrams, they believe they have pioneered a radical new way of designing, developing and deploying superior IVR experiences. They offer tools that let designers, developers and call center staff work together. To enable businesses to have the best possible IVR, they will either work with them to develop it or encourage them in developing it themselves, whether its hosted on their cloud or it in the client's data center. They will also help clients to maintain their IVR internally or maintain it for them. Kerry Robinson, CEO of VoxGen in London collaborated with Marketing Director Marsha Jones in the US to answer our questions.

Why is it important to design IVR experiences that are human, conversational and natural?

Voice doesn't play by the same rules as other communication channels. Humans converse instinctively, and if a business can present a customer with an IVR that speaks to them the same way another person would, they'll engage with it immediately.

In what ways can replacing an ineffective IVR application add value to an existing contact center platform?

While most companies may have made a big investment in their contact center platform, and might even have built a decent IVR on top of it, over the years things have changed. Customer expectations are rising, business processes evolve, and the impact of multiple ad-hoc changes build up. If a company is not careful all these changes can cause the IVR to lose its effectiveness. We call it 'IVR rot.' The good news is that it's not a problem with the underlying technology, it's how the organization is utilizing it. For a fraction of the cost of the infrastructure, they can design, build and run new applications that will turn a clunky experience into a modern, personalized and proactive experience. This can literally breathe new life into an old platform, simply by building a better application.

How does integrating an IVR help to improve a business' omnichannel service?

The IVR is an essential part of omnichannel service. It provides a way for customers to get help if the digital channels fail them. Companies can use it to help migrate customers who

are used to picking up the phone to move to lower cost and more convenient service channels like SMS and mobile web. The best omnichannel solutions integrate IVR to reduce effort and provide a seamless customer journey, but beware of technology push. No one needs to spend megabucks on an omnichannel suite, nor does a great omnichannel strategy mean a business needs to provide every service on every channel. It means letting each channel do what it does best, while making it easy for customers to shift channels if they want to, or they need to – and a lot can be achieved with some simple point integrations between the IVR, SMS messaging and a company's mobile-friendly website.

What specific benefits does your solution deliver that differentiates it from other offerings in the marketplace?

Great IVR is about much more than just software. It's about understanding who calls your organization, knowing the kind of language they use, and designing an experience that feels like having a real conversation. It's about understanding your business objectives, understanding customers' needs, and developing an application that aligns with both. It's also about providing a contact channel that never fails your customers, is easy to manage and update, and can be hosted anywhere you want. VoxGen's approach is different because we start with the customer experience and work back to the technology. Our tools are different because we have consciously created different tools for designers and developers, and connected them together to cut down the cost and time taken to deploy great conversational apps.   Plus, they're not tied to any particular platform so companies can design and develop an IVR that will run on contact center platforms like Genesys or Avaya – or both, and use the same tools to develop SMS applications or deploy skills for Alexa, cutting the complexity of designing, building and managing conversational applications across multiple technologies and channels.