

UNIFIED AGENT DESKTOP: GLUE FOR DELIVERING GREAT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

A White Paper by Frost & Sullivan

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INTRODUCTION

In a fast-evolving business landscape, organizations persistently face the mammoth tasks of balancing revenue growth and maximizing profitability while having to uphold a high quality, efficient, and effective customer engagement strategy. Organizations aiming to sustain a competitive advantage in the market, strive to improve customer service to enhance customer satisfaction, retention, and loyalty. However, optimizing contact center performance could prove a challenge. Within this context, the pressure to reduce costs and customer effort across customer interactions remains a concern among contact centers globally.

Frost & Sullivan believes that contact centers have a tremendous opportunity to move from a cost focus to a value-add focus; from merely satisfying consumers to creating delighted brand advocates and loyal customers. The goal is to get organizations to make customer service and contact centers more strategic to the enterprise's core business.

IT PAYS TO DELIVER GOOD CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The massive number of customer interactions across multiple channels offers contact centers huge opportunities to dramatically reduce costs and enhance customer satisfaction. Over 60 percent of customers reveal that they use multiple communication channels and touchpoints to contact an organization. However, the same customers expect a consistent, integrated and seamless customer experience across all channels. Respondents are also likely to spend more with companies that can deliver a consistent experience.

With soaring customer expectations, an organization's commitment to engaging customers and enhancing their experience is pivotal. In many recent studies, researchers have been able to establish a direct correlation between customer service and business growth. In fact, customer experience has been identified as the single most important factor for customers in determining the choice of their primary service provider, whether it is a bank, telecom service provider, insurer or retail outlet. In short, customers that have a good customer experience are prepared to spend more with an organization.

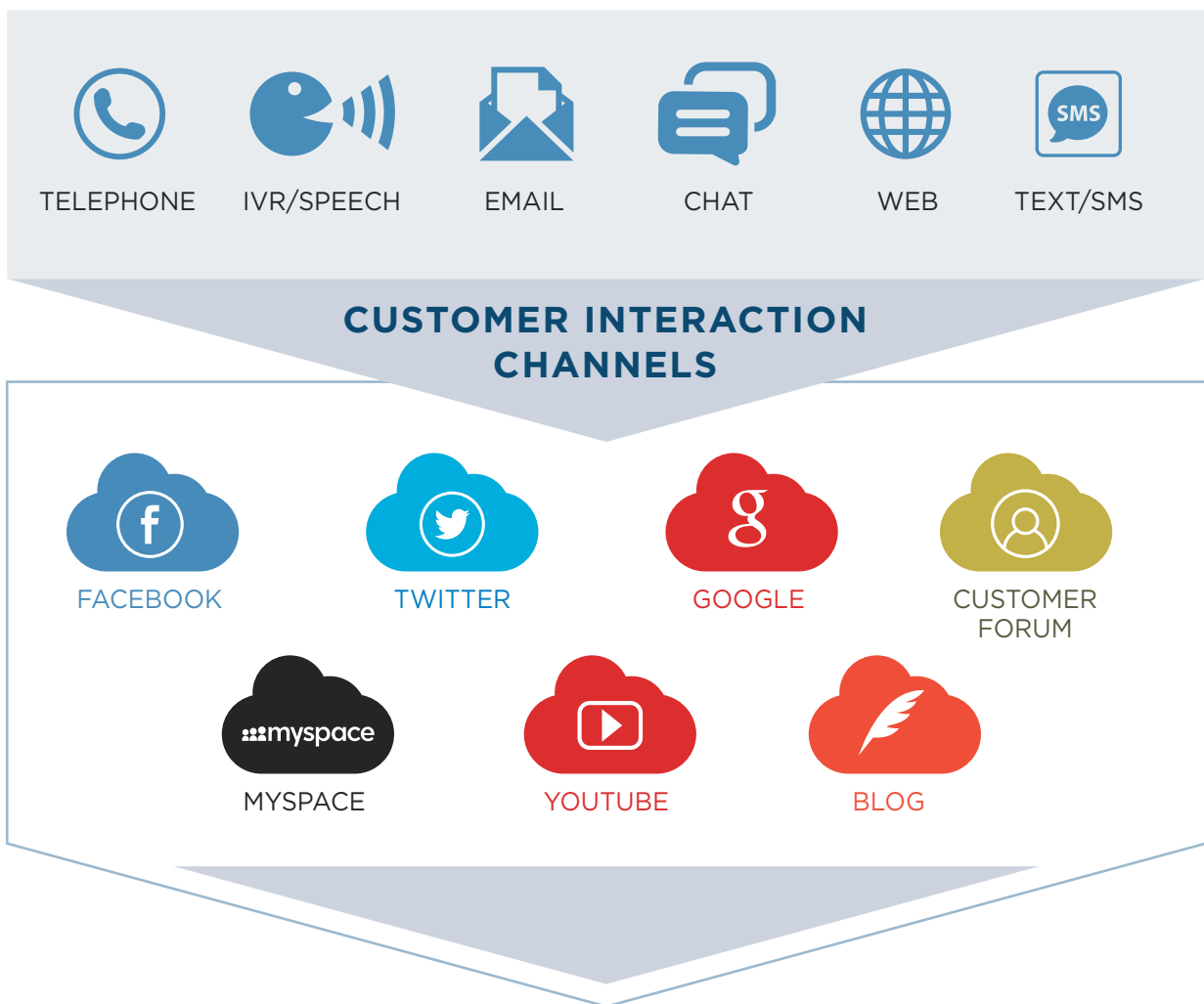
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IS NOT A SINGLE-POINT INTERACTION/INSTANCE

Understanding customer experience means having a firm grasp on the customer's interaction history, demographics, and trends. This involves studying the entire customer experience journey from the time the customer initiates contact, via any channel, through to issue resolution. Businesses need to drill down into any type of interaction – measuring voice calls, text messages, and web chats to understand the impact on the overall customer experience.

INTERACTIONS OVER A PLETHORA OF CHANNELS

The wide availability of technology-enabled communication channels are empowering customers to communicate with organizations in new ways, fundamentally changing the dynamics of customer communications. The proliferation of channels and devices consumers now have at their fingertips is creating an operational challenge for contact centers. Increasingly, customers expect highly personalized interactions and engagement on the channel of their choice. Exhibit 1.1 shows the breadth of customer communication mediums and popular social media channels

*Exhibit 1.1
Emergence of Customer Interaction Channels*



Source: Frost & Sullivan analysis

BASIC NEED FOR CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS REMAINS UNCHANGED

Contact center sales and support agents today utilize a wider arsenal of communications tools. Traditional voice-centric call centers are morphing into “omnichannel” contact centers that deploy a complex blend of communications and collaboration technologies. Customers want their issues resolved irrespective of channel, whether through self-service, support agents or face-to-face interaction. There are now software tools that walk retail staff through customers’ problems. Service staff are also being equipped with tablets that allow them to access knowledge bases, fill out forms, and check on cases.

CHANGING CUSTOMER SUPPORT EXPECTATIONS AND PRACTICES

Customers do not want to wait in long call queues for a support agent and expect detailed explanations to their queries. What’s more, customers dislike escalations and repeat contact; they prefer first contact resolutions (FCR). Customers may also insist on being connected to the “best agents” available – experts who can solve problems efficiently – and perhaps request for agents with whom they have previously interacted. Not surprisingly, fewer customers are following the traditional linear step-by-step support paths; opting instead for non-linear routes such as searching on self-service sites or social media while chatting with agents to obtain the best answers faster.

A recent research study has shown that three of the top four factors influencing customer experience involve the contact center agents; such as their attitude, ability to understand customer issues and resolve the problem within the first call/email. While it seems essential to empower the agent, many contact centers have unwittingly lost sight of a critical bottleneck impeding their future improvement: the Unified Agent Desktop.

AGENTS NEED HELP TO MEET CUSTOMER DEMANDS

Assisting a customer often requires multiple open windows and programs: web browsers, CRM applications, billing information, email programs, and web chat windows. Many contact centers today are challenged by voluminous information. Agents are expected to know how to navigate through numerous applications, databases, and resources for every customer interaction. On average, close to 30 percent of agent time is spent looking for relevant data across different systems and screens during each customer contact. Enterprises need a way to consolidate customer data, making it easier for agents to quickly access specific information.

THE UNIFIED AGENT DESKTOP: A TOOL TO SIMPLIFY INTERACTION

The unified agent desktop is a critical tool to help make the agent-customer interaction more seamless, hugely impacting overall customer satisfaction.

A “unified agent desktop” is an agent desktop application that enables contact center agents to better manage all interactions, regardless of media type, providing consistent, fast, and efficient services to customers, significantly increasing first call resolution and customer satisfaction rates.

A unified agent desktop performs the following functions:

- 1** Funnels all customer interactions – voice, e-mail, chat, social media, SMS, mobile app/web video call – through a single, comprehensive interface. This allows agents to handle customer exchanges across multiple channels, simultaneously.
- 2** Interfaces to back-end applications, content, and databases, presenting only relevant resources in a single desktop.
- 3** Allows agents to access the full customer history and past interactions, regardless of the media used by the customer to contact the contact center. It keeps a record of all the activities related to the customer, the status and outcome of each activity, and leads to a personalized and improved customer experience.
- 4** Aggregates information from all departments of a company, both front and back-office, to present a 360-degree view of the customer. A unified agent desktop offers agents a single interface to view all customer information, enabling them to access the data in real-time.

BENEFITS OF THE UNIFIED AGENT DESKTOP

A truly unified agent desktop can be utilized in sales, marketing, finance and other business disciplines to gain valuable customer insights as well as better coordinate activities with the “tip of the spear”: contact center agents. Implementing a unified agent desktop solution benefits customers, agents, and enterprises.

CUSTOMERS



Often customers have to call back to resolve their issues. In fact, more than 74 percent of customers say they have contacted a company multiple times for the same reason. Over two-thirds of these callers have to repeat the same information to multiple contact center employees and channels. Customers are often put on hold for a long time while agents find the relevant information.

An efficient agent desktop allows agents to quickly view the information previously gathered during automated channels, access the interaction history of the customer, and pass on the same context if the agent needs to transfer the call. Due to the availability of the customer interaction history, workflow and knowledge databanks, agents are able to assist customers with more accurate answers, in a shorter period, and with an increased FCR.

AGENTS



Agents constantly face customers who expect them to know about previous interactions. With customers increasingly utilizing self-service channels to resolve their issues, most interactions with an agent are typically more complex in nature. At the same time, agents are struggling to navigate between multiple applications - the agent desktop, CRM records, and other resources.

A smart agent desktop allows agents to access applications with a single click, and view all the necessary information to handle the exchange on a single window. Easy-to-use interfaces and guided scripts also help reduce training times. Access to a unified customer interaction history and information repository enables agents to provide precise answers, regardless of the interaction media. As this is likely to result in a greater number of satisfied customer interactions, agents feel more appreciated for their efforts. A unified desktop also allows agents to monitor their performance indicators in real-time, to keep up with their goals.

ENTERPRISE



While the unified desktop saves time, it also optimizes the agent performance, directly impacting the contact center's bottom line. Technological tools, such as intelligent routing and a knowledge base, together with the agent desktop can increase FCR rates, improving the contact center performance.

Higher customer satisfaction leads to improved retention and increased cross-selling and up-selling success. Companies can also obtain more complete, consistent views of customer interactions, augmented with real-time feedback, made available to both agents and managers. With this information, companies are able to differentiate their products or services based on customer experience rather than by price. The desktop also enables managers to set up new campaigns within days and make changes and adjustments to existing campaigns quickly.

Armed with rich customer data and understanding of company policies, agents can now confidently assist with complicated requests without spending time trying to figure out protocol or escalating a call to a more skilled agent. Agents gain confidence because they can answer queries accurately and efficiently, in turn improving morale.

Exhibit 1.2**Benefits of the Unified Agent Desktop****CUSTOMERS**

- Customer history - no need to repeat information/data
- Shorter calls; lower Average Handle Times (AHT)
- Fewer calls; higher FCR
- Better and more accurate answers
- Personalized service

AGENTS

- Easy-to-use interface
- Reduced number of windows and applications
- Pop-up windows
- Unified information repository
- Agent skills match interactions
- Guided scripts
- Shorter AHT
- Informed and empowered agents - higher issue resolution
- Reduced training times
- Fewer angry customers
- Real-time view of their performance
- Reduced After Call Work (ACW)

ENTERPRISE

- Increase in satisfied customers
- Enhanced agent productivity
- Reduced agent training times and associated costs
- Lower agent turnover
- Higher productivity
- Real-time monitoring and reporting tools
- Easy to set up new campaigns

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN CHOOSING A UNIFIED AGENT DESKTOP





The unified agent desktop needs to be a customer care solution that integrates sales, service, billing and collections, and provides customer service organizations with a single extensible view of customer data. The agent desktop should be integrated with both the knowledge base and other service channels to provide agents easy access to information and complete visibility of customer data and history. Additionally, the application should provide management with analytics and reports to gain better insights into the services they provide to improve performance.

Enterprises need an agent desktop that incorporates the best of the contact center into a single application. To meet the demands of handling today's complex interactions, employees require a unified agent desktop system that:

- Offers a single integrated view of all channels (e.g., voice, SMS, email, social -Facebook, Twitter - fax, chat, video) and helps manage the universal queue.
- Delivers integrated customer information including records of previous interactions enabling consistent service delivery across all channels.

- Provides an easy-to-use, intuitive user interface to access information, analysis, and systems.
- Integrates the knowledge base with agent guidance and scripting as well as auto-suggest replies based on interactions and past knowledge.
- Aggregates information from disparate business systems with sophisticated data filtering to surface only the information needed at that moment, enabling employees to arrive at every interaction with the right context and resources at hand.
- Allows agents to easily share information and collaborate to resolve customer issues.
- Enables access to dashboards, charts and analyses of average handling times, hold times and quality scores so contact center employees can see how well they are meeting operational targets.

The measurable benefits for different stakeholders are clear for enterprises to adopt the unified agent desktop. While enterprises look for a solution that helps them to deliver an exceptional experience to their customers, they also need to be mindful of the following characteristics in the solution:

<p>MODULAR</p> 	<p>Today enterprises do not have the luxury of devoting months of development and deployment to bring a new system online. They demand a modular software-only solution that can integrate easily and quickly with the existing contact center infrastructure. This allows a cost-effective way of enhancing capability on the existing platform.</p>
<p>SCALABLE</p> 	<p>Customer interaction volume is likely to grow in tandem with enterprise growth. It is imperative that the agent desktop grows with it too. The implemented solutions should be able to handle increased interactions at the highest quality without adding to the complexity due to the additional volume.</p>
<p>USABLE</p> 	<p>The success of the unified agent desktop relies heavily on how quickly and successfully agents are able to take advantage of the capabilities offered by the system. This depends highly on ease of usage from their perspective. The desktop should be purpose-built for the contact center and provide contextual workspaces to feed agents information that help them to solve customer issues immediately.</p>
<p>ADAPTABLE</p> 	<p>The agent desktop should deliver real-time feedback to agents and feed data seamlessly to the customer experience management platform to provide visibility into client interactions and enable contact centers to continuously improve performance.</p>

TETHERFI MULTI-MEDIA AGENT CLIENT

The Tetherfi Multi-Media Agent Client (TMAC) is a unified application that empowers agents to handle and control all types of multimedia interactions including voice, email, SMS, social media, chat, fax, and video conveniently. TMAC is an efficient, scalable, software-only agent client solution that helps businesses deliver consistent services across all channels. Using industry-standard hardware with no proprietary hardware cards, TMAC can be delivered in multiple ways – as a unified agent desktop or web service, enabling end clients to use their CRM as Unified Agent Desktop (UAD) or for customers to develop their own UAD user interface. The solution also addresses security compliance requirements as it offers a Single Sign-On (SSO) with LDAP integration.

TMAC's historical reporting across all channels, multiple interactions handling capabilities and integration of knowledge base makes it an effective platform to handle omnichannel customer exchanges. TMAC's text content analysis capability across all text channels (SMS, email, social media and chat) helps it to dynamically auto-suggest replies based on the interaction context improving the agent's efficiency and handling time. TMAC's Agent Assist provides alerts with relevant information and leverages business intelligence results from call analysis to improve contact center processes.

TMAC successfully completed testing with the Avaya Aura® Communication Manager 6.3 and Avaya Aura® Enablement Services 6.3 at Avaya's DevConnect Solution Inter-op lab and was officially recognized as compliant on December 1, 2015.

CONCLUSION

Enterprises with expansive care, billing and service/sales agents acknowledge the importance of the contact center as a vital conduit by which companies can grow their business, retain customers and enhance brand reputation. While executives continue to push for reduced costs and better customer experience, support agents are being inundated with voluminous information on their desktops across multiple applications, impeding their ability to swiftly solve customer problems. The intelligent unified agent desktop is a valuable tool in this pursuit; balancing between a simple and intuitive user interface and a robust toolset for managing multiple, concurrent customer interactions, efficiently and effectively.

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ABOUT TETHERFI

Tetherfi (a.k.a. Interlink), an Avaya DevConnect Partner, is focused on creating innovations that help organizations realize customer experience management expectations while helping contact centers balance growth and cost containment objectives. Tetherfi Multi-Media Agent Client (TMAC) is conceptualized, designed, developed and deployed with the very intent of empowering agents to interact with customers across multiple channels, have a 360-degree view of authenticated customers and ability to complete the interaction efficiently and effectively.

Tetherfil was recently recognized as one of the “20 Most Promising AVAYA Solution Providers in 2015” by the US-based CIO Review magazine.

To learn more about Tetherfi, please visit www.tetherfi.com

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