



The Future of the Contact Centre

The Transitioning Role of Agents to Knowledge Experts

Take a good look at your customer base. Technology, in particular the widespread adoption of smartphones, is altering the way customers engage with brands and increasing their demands and expectations for instant, 24/7 customer service options. There is also a generational change taking place, with a new generation of customers who spend more time having text conversations with their friends and loved ones than they do actually talking to them. The last thing they want to do is pick up the phone and speak to your company or get into a lengthy email exchange to have an issue resolved. Millennials and the generation following them, sometimes referred to as iGen, are used to having instant access to information and prefer to find answers on their own rather than interacting with a live person. So what does all this mean for the future of the contact centre?

The contact centre in its current form is finished.

Today's customers want effortless interactions with organisations. Research shows that customers are increasingly leveraging self-service and digital channels for customer service for this reason. The traditional model for call centres and contact centres is no longer providing the experience customers have started to demand, and customers aren't hesitating to take their business elsewhere when their service and support expectations are not being met.

While this contact centre change won't happen overnight, the industry is already starting to see a transition to more automation. For many companies, this requires not only the implementation of new technologies but also a vital shift in attitudes toward customer engagement. This paradigm shift offers organisations enormous opportunities on the cost savings and sales front, too.

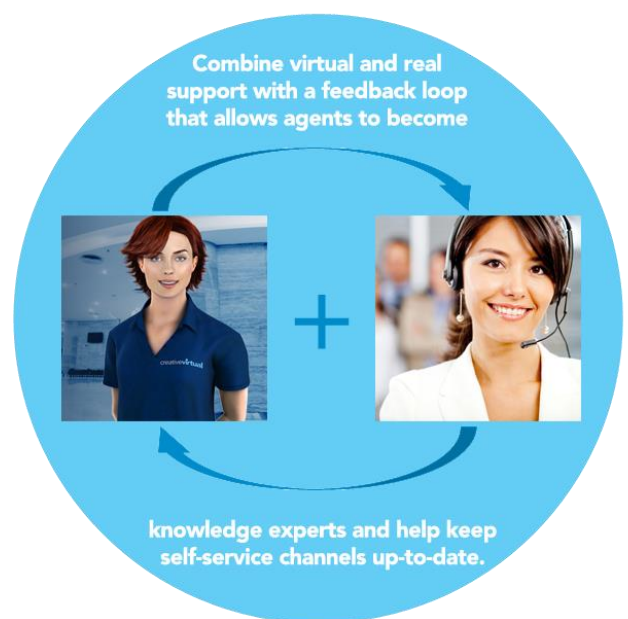
Virtual agents fit perfectly with this new world order.

Organisations should look to a combination of virtual and real support with a central knowledge management and workflow platform to help them manage the transition to automation in their contact centres. Virtual agents, also called chatbots and virtual customer assistants, are ideal for providing digital self-service as well as supporting live agents. When implemented properly, they complement the end-to-end customer experience and help create happy and loyal customers. Virtual agents should be integrated with personalised account information so that logged-in or authenticated users receive responses specific to them. Customers should also have the flexibility to seamlessly escalate from virtual agent to live chat agent within the same application and have their conversation history passed over for a continuous experience.

Selecting a virtual agent solution with a central knowledgebase and feedback loop that are linked with workflow functionality gives organisations the ability to keep information up-to-date and consistent across all self-service and human-assisted support channels. This builds confidence with customers because they'll know that no matter how they choose to engage – self-service, live chat, phone call – they are receiving consistent information. Accuracy of that information is also a top priority, which is why a feedback loop that is in line with industry best practice is key for live agents.

Live agents will take on the role of knowledge experts.

The adoption of virtual agent tools directly impacts the role of contact centre agents in several ways. By empowering customers to self-serve for transactional queries and troubleshooting common problems, live agents benefit from no longer having to deal with the tedious and repetitive task of answering those basic questions. This frees up agents to develop expertise in dealing with more complex issues that require human assistance. Using the virtual agent to support agents within the contact centre makes it quick and easy for them to find the information they need to help customers, thus reducing average handling times and increasing first contact resolution.



Perhaps most important to the goal of providing a consistent end-to-end customer experience, implementing a feedback loop as part of the virtual agent allows live agents to provide feedback and suggestions on content in real-time. Linking the feedback loop with the centralised knowledgebase and workflow functionality enables the automatic creation of a change request associated with the corresponding piece of content. The suggestions can then be easily reviewed, updates made quickly and the correct information deployed for customers and agents across channels. Contact centre agents are empowered to constantly improve the virtual agent just by doing their normal jobs.

While contact centre agents will still be providing support directly to customers, they will also become knowledge experts sharing the responsibility of keeping self-service channels up-to-date. This will help bridge the gap between these previously siloed engagement channels to improve the overall customer experience and meet the growing expectations of customers for 24/7 access to accurate information and support. Contact centres will also benefit from lower costs, reduced staff turnover and more engaged, skilled and happier agents.

The bottom line: As seamless, personalised smart assistants increasingly automate everything the current contact centre offers, organisations need to turn to the combination of virtual and real support and prepare for the transitioning role of agents to knowledge experts in order to create and keep happy, loyal customers.

About Creative Virtual

Creative Virtual is a world leader in self-service solutions that enable anywhere, anytime customer engagement between brands and their customers. As a pioneer in the intelligent virtual assistant space, we have played an important role in the advancement of this technology and the ways in which it can be implemented. Our expert team closely monitors trends and the evolution of potential new customer engagement touchpoints in order to provide organisations with cutting-edge Smart Help solutions.

Leading global organisations rely on our award-winning V-Person™ technology to improve their customer support experience, increase sales, reduce costs and build brand loyalty. Backed by an experienced, expert team as well as an extensive partner network, our innovative virtual agent, knowledge management and business intelligence platform empowers organisations to provide customers with consistent, accurate, personalised and seamless omnichannel engagement.

To learn more about how our Smart Help technology can improve the success of your customer support strategy, visit our website www.creativevirtual.com or email us info@creativevirtual.com.