



Automated solutions should be seen as an added benefit for customers because they increase their available options and improve their experience.

Automatic for the People

Companies now realize that the CRM programs they use to build stronger customer relationships must also contribute additional profitability. In response, SR.Teleperformance has developed Customer Value Management, its approach for measuring, predicting and optimizing the Return on Investment from CRM programs.

At the same time, companies must seek to improve profitability by reducing operating costs, although not at the expense of service quality. Automated technologies, which enable customers to serve themselves, can provide efficient and low-cost solutions.

TYPES OF AUTOMATED TECHNOLOGIES

There are essentially two types of automation technology:

- Contact Management solutions, which provide customers with fully and semi-automated interaction points
- Process Management solutions, which improve efficiency, manage workflows, knowledge bases and facilitate back-end processes.

Because they are key to successful brand-customer relationships, we will concentrate here on the Contact Management solutions, or Self-Help technologies.

> Automation Solutions

Automated solutions have the benefit of allowing activity to be tracked, which gives measurable data that can be used to monitor ROI at all levels.

SELF-HELP SOLUTIONS

Modern Self-Help technologies are a step beyond Website FAQs, where users pick from a list of questions, and IVR systems, where users choose options with a touch-tone keypad. These new technologies enable users to provide information and interrogate databases in very intuitive ways. They are enabled by Natural Language Processing, which has three major components:

Speech recognition - even though we all talk very differently, this technology now enables a computer to respond to virtually any spoken sentence without being "trained" to recognize an individual's style.

Semantic analysis - this is the software that processes and interprets the text input into the Web page. It enables customers to pose written questions or make refined searches using natural language, as if addressing a contact center agent over e-mail or Web Chat.

Text to speech - to output information from a database, the computer synthesizes human speech using fragments of words, or sound-syllables, to produce an almost human quality response over the Web or IVR.

INTERNAL DEPLOYMENT OF THE SOLUTION

Automation technologies must be fully integrated with 'live operator' channels, with databases and knowledge bases, and also with back-end systems. This ensures that the level of service is the same across all channels, and that the company fully benefits from savings on labor costs.

SR.Teleperformance uses the following checklist to ensure that the implementation process runs smoothly and supports the company's CRM goals:

- Define the required functionalities across all channels
- Identify the technologies and resources (front-end and back-end databases) to meet these requirements
- Describe how the customer will use the Self-Help applications and how these will link with "live" channels, then design the system
- Test and refine for ease-of-use, efficiency and bugs (testing should stretch the system to its ultimate limits).

PROVIDING AUTOMATED SERVICES

To gain any benefit, the customer's experience and satisfaction with the automated service should be comparable to that provided by a live agent. A business case must also be developed to prove that there is a Return on Investment, as in the examples below:

- A cinema group was able to reduce its contact center workforce by 40% and at the same time increase pre-bookings by 20% with a Web and IVR ticketing system
- A brokerage firm used IVR to allow customers to sign up and make transactions. In one year its customer base grew 30% and it handled 25% more transactions without increasing operating costs.

FULLY AND SEMI-AUTOMATED

For certain functions a fully automated service can be provided, for example to enable bank customers to check accounts or utility customers to report meter readings. These add little value to the customer relationship but are necessary and can be costly to manage.

In other cases an automated front-end can gather information from the caller, route the call to an appropriate contact center agent and provide a screen pop-up of the newly-captured and existing data for that customer. Teleperformance USA has developed Enhanced Screen Pop (ESP), which does exactly this. Tests have shown that these systems can reduce call lengths by 40%, leading to massive cost savings.

Automated solutions are developing at such a pace however that already it is possible for them to manage complex interactions, even where there is a two-way exchange of information.

PRIORITIZING SERVICE

An automated service may not actually be desirable for all customers. The opportunity that human interaction gives for up and cross-sales may in some cases be too valuable to pass up on.

Automation can be used to maximize available resources and differentiate service levels for important customers. This means segmenting the customer base around an analysis of current and potential value, deciding on the mix of channels to use, and screening-out the most valuable customers to ensure they receive a priority service. This process enables a company to balance its return from each customer group against the cost of servicing it.

THE BENEFITS OF AUTOMATION

In summary, automated Self-Help solutions will enable a company to:

- Retain customers by providing the most efficient response to their needs
- Provide information wherever, whenever and however the customer wants it
- Lower operating costs by decreasing the need for expensive human agents.

Automated solutions also have the added benefit of allowing activity to be tracked, which gives measurable data that can be used to monitor Return on Investment at all levels (overall, per customer, per product, per interaction) and continuously improve performance.

Finally, the use of automated solutions should never be viewed simply as a means of lowering costs, but should also be seen as an added benefit for customers because it increases their available options and improves their experience.

Goodry GUBBELS, IT Regional Manager EMEA
SR.Teleperformance

