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## The Customer Service Model of the Future:

# CREATING INTELLIGENT EXPERIENCES CUSTOMERS EXPECT

# As digital disruption becomes more pervasive, large global companies are feeling more pressure than ever to substantially raise their customer service game.

It's time for companies to trade their increasingly inefficient and ineffective traditional service model for a modern, automated, and intelligent one that delivers the service experience today's and tomorrow's customers want.

Today, in our one-click, always-on society, people have little patience for companies that don't meet their sky-high expectations. They demand a superior customer experience and, if there's an issue, they want it to be solved immediately and with minimal effort. In the digital age, first impressions are more critical than ever. Companies can lose customers rapidly and for good if the services they offer lack purpose and intuitive access.

This isn't news to most companies but many are still relying on outdated ways to help their customers. Many companies today still have a rigid, reactive, cumbersome, and high-cost service model that takes too long to resolve customers' issues. Often times, the same issues are solved over and over and a lack of visibility into the true reasons why customers have those issues leave companies struggling to meet customers' expectations. This, in turn, has a fundamental negative impact on customer retention, brand loyalty and, ultimately, revenue.

# IT'S TIME TO INNOVATE AND TRANSFORM TO A SEAMLESS, END-TO-END CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERIENCE

The fact is, customer service is at a critical crossroad. The traditional service model, based around large, expensive call centers, was built for a different era and is no longer suited in today's global, digital economy. Companies need an entirely new customer service model—people working differently, with new processes and supported by new technologies—if they want to effectively deliver on their brand promise, retain customer loyalty, and continue to grow and thrive.

## What does this new model look like? At a high level, it's defined by four key characteristics.

### It's based on customer expectations.

Everything should begin with the customer perspective. This will drive the services and communications the company will deliver, how it will deliver them, and the capabilities—the people, processes, as well as technologies—that are necessary to do so.

Consider, for example, customers' changing service channel preferences. Gartner predicts that requests for customer support through consumer mobile messaging applications soon will exceed those for support through traditional social media.[1] The increasing use of messenger platforms will require new ways of forecasting, agent-scheduling, and routing.

### It delivers fast, efficient, high-quality, proactive, and personalized service.

Customers should have a single point of contact through which they can get exactly what they need quickly and completely, on the device and through the channel of their choice—which could change over the course of the day.

Customers might use a laptop at work to load the initial request, a mobile phone on the train home to check the status, and a tablet at home to follow up.

This likely means expanding the traditional call or contact center with a personalized self-service portal through which all customer requests and needs are handled and where any interaction, regardless of how it occurrs (e.g., chat, email, SMS, phone, or portal) is recorded in the customer and case records and available to review via any channel and device.

More significantly however, this means a systemic, digital transformation of the traditional Contact Center, not incremental change.  It requires activation of knowledge that empowers customers with 24x7x365 access to rich content via a self-serve portal, supported by virtual agents that delivers a better customer experience and unlocks productivity by empowering agents to work on more complex issues and deliver higher value services.

If further assistance is required from an agent/engineer, then intelligently assign to the best able to assist, based on context, skill, capacity and availability, preserving the customer journey and enabling real time, intelligent swarming, as needed,to rapidly diagnose and resolve the customer's issue.

Customers should also be able to opt-in for such things as proactive communications about open and newly discovered issues, which increases transparency and eliminates the need to re-engage the service center for an update. Additionally, the new service model should enable a company to preemptively solve issues and continuously improve service quality. Customers should always be notified when this has happened so they're aware of the value and high-quality service they're getting.

This digital transformation should result in significant improvements in customer satisfaction/retention, employee satisfaction and business operational results.

### It's tightly integrated with other key functions across the enterprise that influence service quality.

Effectively addressing customers' issues requires interface with other areas of the company—sales, marketing, logistics, manufacturing, finance, procurement, and others—because the problems customers face typically don't originate in the customer service department. For example, if there's a billing issue involving multiple customers, finance can be brought in to investigate and to find a solution. A new model must make it easy to engage these functions whenever necessary.

Importantly, all tasks should be tracked to completion to ensure accountability and closure. This is critical to addressing the root cause of a problem so issues are permanently solved.

The model also should include a data repository for these functions. So finance, for example, has at its fingertips information on a major open incident and sales knows at a glance the entire service history of customers being contacted about a renewal or upgrade. And the model should enable "social listening"—using automation to detect customer sentiment on social media channels, allowing the company to proactively connect with customers who appear to be having an issue with the company or its products and intervene appropriately.

### It tightly integrates external third parties responsible for delivering customer service.

Sometimes, a company may use third parties to manage service issues where it's not practical for the company to do so itself—for instance, dealing with a small number of customers in a remote area where it doesn't make sense to establish or maintain its own presence. These parties need to be integrated just as tightly as internal functions so that all customers enjoy the same level and quality of service.

# WHAT'S "UNDER THE HOOD"?

The new customer service model is evolving. It's a combination of traditional customer engagement with well-established best practices in service management, and is sometimes referred to as customer service management. At its core is automation that streamlines customer service processes to boost the speed, accuracy, and completeness of issue resolution; improve both customer and service professional satisfaction; and reduce a company's overall cost to serve customers.

Automation relies on **integrated data**. Data is the foundation of the new model, but the data needed to deliver a superior service experience is often highly fragmented, residing in a myriad of different systems across a company. To be effective, the new model needs a central data repository that draws in and integrates the relevant data from key systems of record so it can be used to resolve customer issues.

With critical data all in one place, **applied intelligence** can be used in many ways to transform the data into insights and actions. Applied intelligence, broadly speaking, extends human reasoning, processing, and decision-making capabilities, thus enabling the business to reimagine the customer and agent experience to reduce effort and deliver more value. Applied intelligence is driven by three key technologies: advanced analytics tools, robotic process automation (RPA) and artificial intelligence (AI).

Advanced analytics tools can help companies improve decision making by predicting what will likely happen based on multiple, often very complex, data inputs, and generating actionable recommendations that balance cost, service, and revenue (see box). RPA automates repetitive, rules-based tasks and processes, improving speed, quality, and overall efficiency of execution while freeing up human resources for more valuable work. AI automates activities that require judgement and, along with machine learning, can solve business problems without human involvement.

**In a customer service setting, analytics can serve many purposes, including:**

**Helping agents** predict a customer's behavior and help prescribe the next-best actions for agents to take.

**Anticipating spikes** in request volumes and types to ensure appropriate agent coverage and product or service availability (and potentially even automate common seasonal requests).

**Intelligently assign** incidents in real time to connect each customer to the right skilled agent the first time, which cuts the time needed to diagnose and resolve a problem.

Together, RPA and AI can make tasks and processes highly responsive and largely autonomous and we can expect them to become more pervasive in the upcoming years.

One growing use of RPA and AI can be seen in the intelligent virtual agents (or intelligent chatbots) that are handling an increasingly greater share of first-level customer interactions. These virtual agents are significantly more efficient, and can process far more requests than humans. They can conduct the initial triage of a case and make informed product, service, or remediation recommendations based on previous cases with similar characteristics. When equipped with machine learning and natural language processing, they can assume responsibility for increasingly complex issues that require context and more-sophisticated decision making. Virtual agents are powerful tools for delivering the self-service capabilities that today's customers demand.

Another foundational technology is **IoT** because of its ability to transform field service operations. In a traditional setting, a company that sells complex, expensive equipment requires a field service agent to pay regular visits to a customer's site to check on the equipment's condition and operating performance and determine if and when maintenance should be scheduled.

In the new model, sensors in the equipment support monitoring and health checks, feed a steady stream of data back to the company and provide a real-time picture of what's happening with the equipment. When analytics are applied to that and other relevant data (such as environmental conditions where the machine operates), the company can accurately predict when maintenance will be needed and schedule it accordingly to avoid disruption to the customer's business.

In some cases, analytics can even help orchestrate automated, remote resolution, which means maintenance activities are executed much more quickly and reactive trips to the equipment's location are avoided. When the service process is connected to the supply chain and dispatch, it can respond to an IoT warning alarm by automatically ordering a replacement part and having it shipped to the site directly from the supplier.

At the heart of the new model is a **service management platform**. This platform houses the central data repository (which includes such things as contracts, entitlements, service level agreements, and assets) from which insights are developed. It essentially stitches together all the associated people, processes, and technology (both internal and external) involved with issue resolution, and serves as the single "system of engagement" for customers—an online portal through which all of their interactions with a company happen and are tracked.

An important element of the platform is the workflow engine. This tool automates the orchestration of all the behind-the-scenes activities that are triggered by a customer request. The ability to effectively bring together multiple different services, functions, process areas, tools, and technology platforms is critical to providing a seamless service experience to customers and agents. This, in turn, reduces the average time to resolution of an issue; gives the business information on root cause that can be leveraged to mitigate or eliminate recurrence; and minimizes rediscovery to boost operational efficiencies.

But not all customer issues are the same. That's why the platform also uses machine learning to automatically categorize, prioritize, and assign incidents and cases—which helps resolve issues more quickly and makes agents more efficient. And it learns from patterns in a company's historical data so its recommendations become more accurate the more it's used. Importantly, the platform provides complete visibility into every case throughout its lifecycle—from point of entry to ultimate resolution—so the company and the customer always know the status.

# SPOTLIGHT: SIEMENS HEALTHINEERS

The new customer service management model isn't some far-off vision. It's here today, and a number of leading companies are embracing it. One such company is Siemens Healthineers, a leading provider of medical technology to healthcare organizations around the world.

Siemens Healthineers is working with Accenture and ServiceNow to create a new service model that will more effectively meet its customers' needs in the future. Digital technologies are the new model's foundation:

> **Siemens Healthineers plans to significantly increase their service interactions with customers in an online mode in the next five years.**

To achieve that ambitious target, the company has begun digitizing its customer service application landscape, disparate manual and partially digital service processes by moving them to the ServiceNow platform. This platform serves as the company's "system of engagement," workflows—and where it make sense, the interactions with customers and partners—as well as integrating with key systems of record and analytics tools. As part of the move to Service Now, Siemens Healthineers has adopted an agile approach to application development in which the company uses Scrum and DevOps to quickly create Minimum Viable Products (MVPs) that are then rolled out to users.

Now, the company can get better solutions to its partners faster. And, with only one flexible platform ecosystem to work with, agents can be more efficient and productive. ServiceNow will enable Siemens Healthineers to live seamless online interaction with their customers as they are able to access information, get help with a problem, schedule appointments, and even interact with and learn from other customers.

# FOUR THINGS ARE KEY TO THE JOURNEY

It's clear companies need a new approach to customer service, and that approach is embodied in the customer service management model we just described. But, of course, the change can't happen overnight. It requires new processes and supporting technologies, new skills to operate in the new environment, excellence in leadership, strong project and program management, appropriate governance and insightful, effective change management to bring people along.

**To move toward this compelling new model, four fundamental things are key.**

**1** **Take an end-to-end approach to the transformation.**

Start with the vision for where the company wants to be and the strategy for getting there, and ultimately ending with the processes, tools, and people needed to make the vision a reality (See Figure 1).

**2** **Choose the right service management platform and related implementation methodology.**

For example, Accenture uses ServiceNow as the platform of choice in our work with clients because of its leading-edge technologies and robust capabilities, as well as its ability to easily integrate with a company's existing core systems and other key tools. We've also developed a formal methodology specifically for guiding our ServiceNow implementations to help ensure quality and consistency from project to project.

**3** **Don't get bogged down by the pursuit of perfection.**

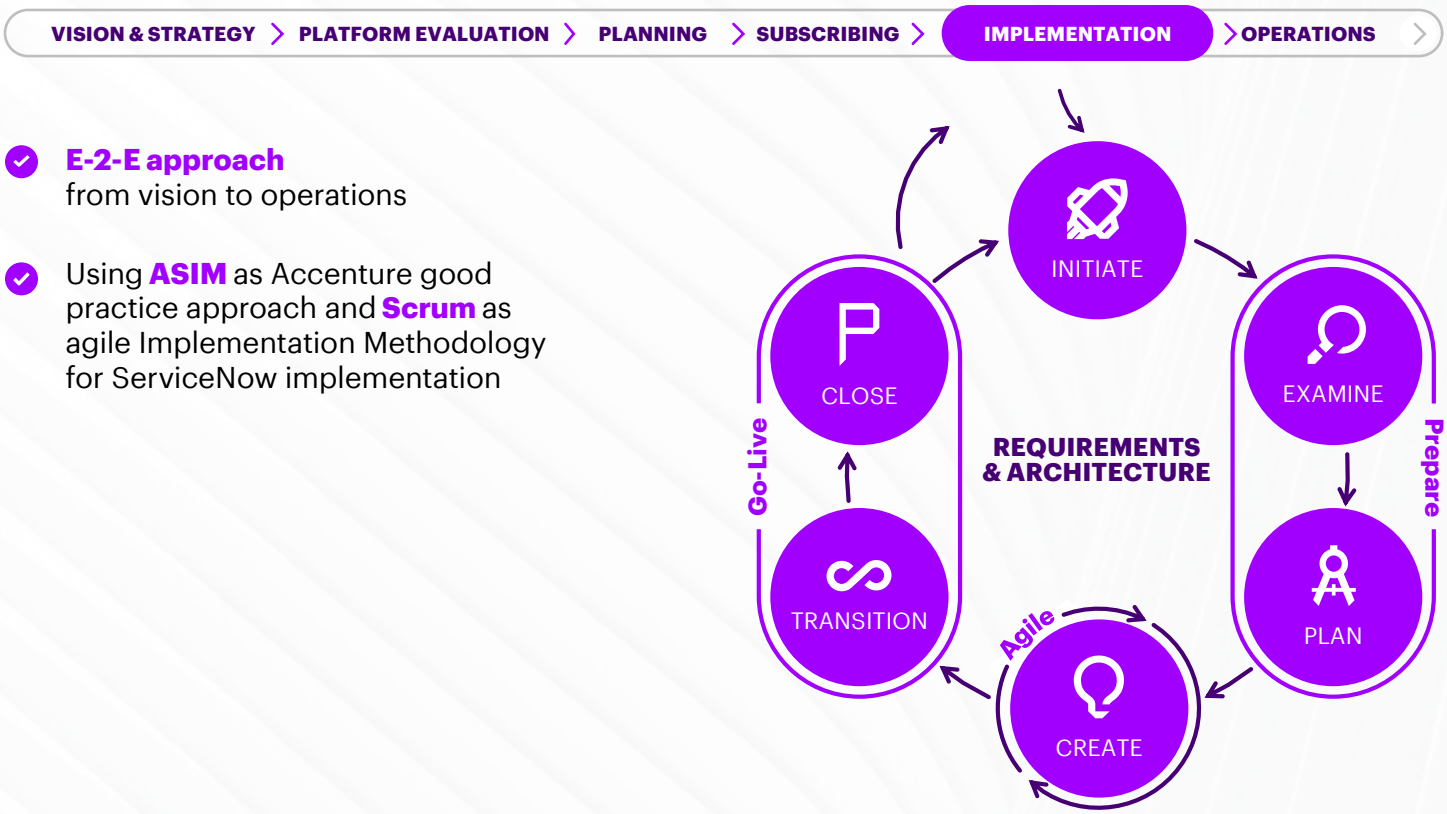
Focus on getting minimum viable solutions in users' hands as quickly as possible, using an agile development methodology and empowering team members to make timely decisions. And make sure that as solutions are rolled out, users receive the training they need to execute the model most effectively.

**4** **Don't try to tackle too much at once.**

Understand the bigger picture of the future service model, but focus on first getting a critical mass of processes and users taking advantage of essential features and capabilities. Once there's sufficient volume, more-sophisticated tools such as AI and robotic process automation can be applied to take performance to the next level.

**Figure 1. Taking an end-to-end approach to a new customer service model.**

## ACCENTURE SERVICENOW IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGY (ASIM)




- **E-2-E approach** from vision to operations
- Using **ASIM** as Accenture good practice approach and **Scrum** as agile Implementation Methodology for ServiceNow implementation

With digital transformation reshaping both customer expectations and how companies operate, the traditional contact center-based service model is rapidly becoming a major obstacle to companies' growth and competitiveness. It's time for a new model of customer service that enables companies to give customers the kind of service experience they want and continue to earn their loyalty and business.

## REFERENCES

[1] Gartner, Inc. Hype Cycle for CRM Customer Service and Customer Engagement, 2017. July 2017; Gartner, Inc. Predicts 2018: CRM Customer Service and Customer Engagement. December 2017.

## ABOUT ACCENTURE

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services and solutions in strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations. Combining unmatched experience and specialized skills across more than 40 industries and all business functions—underpinned by the world's largest delivery network—Accenture works at the intersection of business and technology to help clients improve their performance and create sustainable value for their stakeholders. With approximately 477,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture drives innovation to improve the way the world works and lives. Visit us at **www.accenture.com**.

## ABOUT SERVICENOW

ServiceNow (NYSE: NOW) is making the world of work, work better for people. Our cloud based platform and solutions deliver digital workflows that create great experiences and unlock productivity for employees and the enterprise. For more information, visit: **www.servicenow.com.**

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