



Reimagining Telco CX, the Touchless Way

**Don't let liquid customers
slip through your fingers**



Cutting-edge technology has become a part of our everyday lives. Innovative tools like artificial intelligence (AI), data analytics and cloud are out of the lab and fully in the wild, powering everything from the virtual assistant in our kitchens to the algorithms that choose our movies.

As these technologies become more prevalent, consumers become more sophisticated. They're digitally savvy, well-informed and open to exploring new ideas and offerings from the companies they do business with. And as they cast their nets across a wide range of product and service providers, they gravitate toward those that deliver the best customer experience (CX). In fact, CX has arguably become the single biggest factor driving customer loyalty—and therefore revenue growth—today. And for the vast majority of customers, digital underpins the CX they're looking for—especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated both consumers' and companies' adoption of digital channels.

This is certainly true in the communications and media (C&M) industry. Customers expect the high-quality, digitally driven experiences they encounter in other industries to be matched by their telecommunications providers (Telcos). Small and medium businesses (SMBs), in particular, are increasingly looking

for Telcos to provide digital self-service—half of them are open to interacting with Telcos in this way¹—as well as to help them create an omnichannel approach so they too can deliver a best-in-class experience for their own customers.

For legacy Telcos, this is proving to be a challenge.

Digital natives are raising the CX bar, which has led to new types of competition for Telcos. Yet direct competitors are no longer the only worry. Adjacent competitors like Netflix and YouTube provide intuitive experiences that customers are growing accustomed to—and expect their Telcos to provide. At the same time, Telcos are being measured against perceptual competitors like Instagram or Zomato—completely unrelated businesses that shape customer expectations across the board.

The fact is, the expectations of customers—whether a consumer or an SMB—are only becoming more liquid within a rapidly changing business landscape. To survive in this world, Telcos must become far more agile, prioritize delivering a superior experience across the business and embrace technological advances. That's the only way they will be able to give both business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) customers the CX they've come to expect.

¹ COVID-19: Helping SMBs outmaneuver uncertainty (Accenture, July 2020, [link](#))



A close-up, low-angle shot of a woman's face, looking slightly upwards and to the right. She is wearing dark-rimmed glasses. Her face and the lenses of her glasses are overlaid with vibrant, glowing digital data patterns in shades of purple, blue, and green. These patterns resemble binary code, data streams, and abstract geometric shapes, creating a futuristic, high-tech aesthetic. The background is dark and out of focus.

Opportunity on the Line

Telcos' mission is clear: Deliver a differentiated CX to meet evolving expectations and stand out in the crowd. This starts with proactively driving customers to digital self-service channels that offer them a frictionless buying and support experience, freeing up time for Telcos' people to focus on other tasks that require a human touch.

However, digitizing transactions is just the first step. Telcos that can orchestrate the CX across both physical and digital spaces will open up gaps between themselves and competitors that are focused on the experience of a single, discrete channel.

Digital services will be crucial to Telcos' ongoing ability to derive insights about how their customers evolve and then optimize customer interactions accordingly. Through an omnichannel approach that orchestrates multiple points of contact, Telcos can embed data and intelligence across every channel and touchpoint of the customer journey. Customers get an enriched experience while Telcos can better understand their customers' unique needs.

Moving Ahead with Accenture

Of course, this is a massive challenge for established Telcos, which still face a wide range of legacy technology-driven impediments to delivering the kind of omnichannel CX customers today expect—and that are crucial for future growth. New foundational technologies are enabling Telcos to take advantage of the data and advanced analytics capabilities that power a seamless experience and interactions across multiple channels—including apps, call centers, retail spaces and beyond—throughout the customer journey (Figure 1).

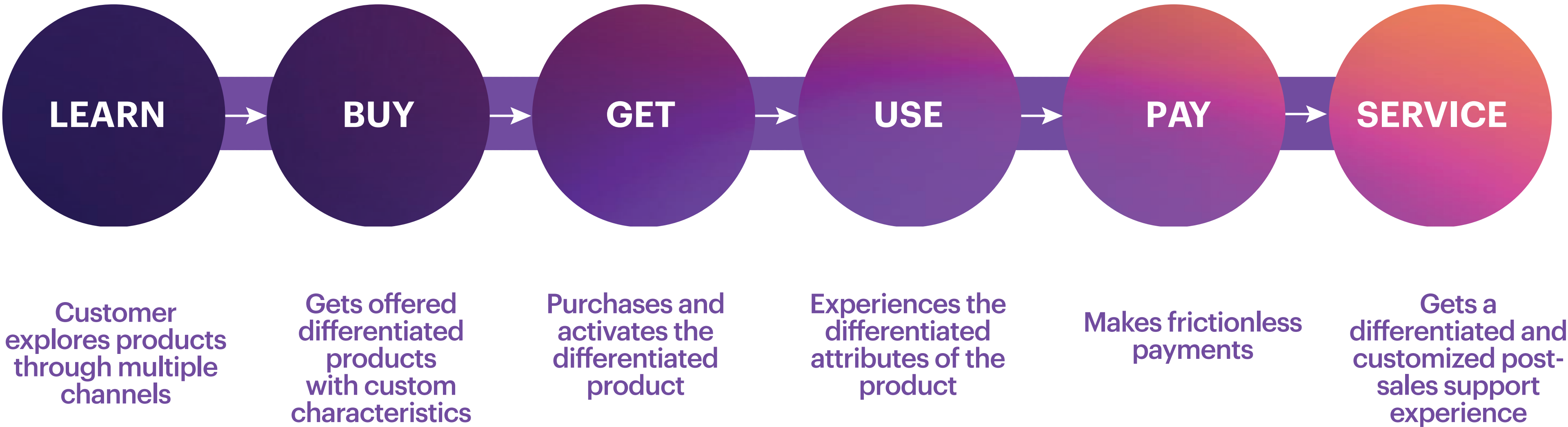


Figure 1: Providing a differentiated, “touchless” customer experience across the customer journey

With the right layer of technologies (such as cloud and virtual assistants that run on AI engines), data and analytics, Telcos can continually innovate their CX and transform themselves into true data-driven organizations. And that's the reasoning behind Accenture's five integrated digital solutions for Telcos (Figure 2). These solutions are enabled by Accenture partnerships across the ecosystem for scalability, and feature pre-built software assets and accelerators for faster delivery. Working together, they enable Telcos to transform the specific interrelated aspects of their businesses that are key to creating a CX that attracts customers and keeps them coming back for more:

1. Advanced Customer Engagement+ (ACE+)

focuses on value in the customer service channel, enabling Telcos to correctly identify customers who want to interact digitally while also predicting customers' intents to ensure their needs are met. ACE+ is complemented by a team that continually enhances and refines the solution so the AI powering the experience constantly learns and improves.

2. Intelligent Revenue Growth (IRG)

concentrates on growing sales and revenue by identifying new signals in data that help a company identify opportunities. This solution provides AI-assisted dialogues in the sales channel and also uses AI to match the right sales agent with customers.

3. Digital Marketing & Sales Transformation (DM&S)

integrates the experience between marketing and sales by understanding the journey a customer is taking through digital channels and how to give them the right message at the right moment.

4. Channel Interaction & Decoupling (CI&D)

enables omnichannel experiences by helping Telcos create a modern architecture, decoupling channels from the complexity of the back-end systems and processes and allowing them to develop a compelling customer experience.

5. Customer Value Management (CVM)

improves engagement quality and the value generated from customers by centralizing marketing, loyalty and sales initiatives into a unified marketing solution.

Let's take a look at each of these solutions in more detail.

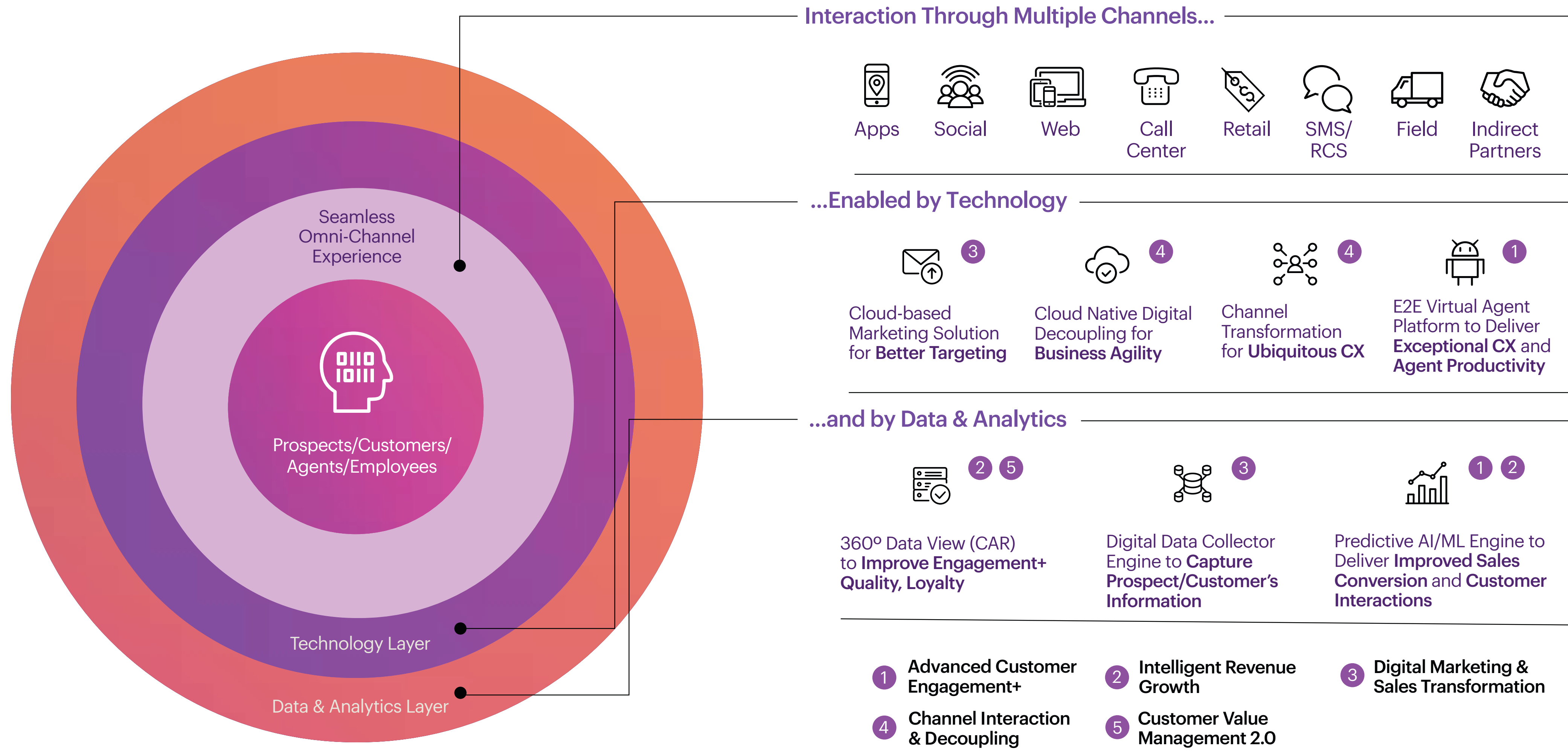


Figure 2: Accenture Integrated Digital Solutions for an Omnichannel Customer Engagement Experience

ACE+: Deliver CX That Stands Out


ACE+ delivers exceptional CX by unlocking value from customer interactions that occur across channels and at all stages of the customer life cycle, from exploration through support. It does so by using analytics and cognitive computing to predict customer intents and, subsequently, provide a hyper-personalized, conversational experience.

ACE+ leverages AI/ML to derive insights from customer interactions, which it combines with a predefined library of intents and journeys to predict what the customer wants or will do. This intent recognition paves the way for ACE+ to then provide a proactive digital experience to customers via their preferred channel using a scalable, cost-effective interaction mechanism that combines humans and machines.

ACE+ also empowers customer service agents by uncovering relevant content and appropriate responses and, by leveraging behavioral analytics, pairing the right agents with customers. The result is a more automated and enhanced customer-centric experience.

Consider the work Accenture did with a major North American Telco that was regularly experiencing an influx of customer calls and online inquiries. Despite having invested heavily in digital customer self-service tools, the Telco still experienced a low adoption rate and increased call volumes.





Accenture deployed the ACE+ solution to identify each customer's intent along with their preferences for interacting digitally, and redirected customers from an agent call to either the digital portal or a chat with an Accenture-developed conversational digital assistant.

By combining intent recognition with a predefined intent database, the digital assistant offers customers an opportunity to seamlessly switch to the digital assistant on their smartphones.

The results of the project were significant.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE
INTERACTION TIMES FELL BY**

80%

as calls with human agents that previously lasted approximately 20 minutes have been reduced to three to four minutes.

MORE THAN

70%

of the calls were addressable via a conversational digital assistant.

IRG: Focus on a Data-driven Approach

While ACE+ helps Telcos offer hyper-personalized cross-channel digital experiences, IRG enables Telcos to identify revenue growth opportunities.

IRG is an intelligent data foundation that offers a 360-degree view of each customer based on demographics, browsing history, web crawlers and other data. With IRG, data is run through AI/ML learning models that generate new insights and build a foundation for hyper-personalization and omnichannel targeting. IRG enables Telcos to have rich, interactive communications in real time that lead to more customers, better performance and improved product leadership. Typical outcomes include a 10% increase in digital channel sales, 40% boost in customer engagement from targeted campaigns, four times higher conversion rates on digital channels and 70% or higher revenue increase from personalized experiences.

One large Telco, for example, was looking to drive new growth by enabling reps to talk to the right customers at the right time with the right insights.

IRG was applied via a three-step approach:



TARGET

with analytics-driven prioritized lead lists



ENGAGE

with enhanced rep insights



NURTURE

with integrated lead and funnel emails

IRG helped the company:

INCREASE CONTACT RATE FOR

OPPORTUNITIES

15% → 53%

OPPORTUNITY CREATION

13% → 39%

It's important to note that both IRG and ACE+ require a solid data strategy to be effective. A data strategy is the fundamental backbone that provides the necessary view of customers' interactions, history, purchases and other key dimensions to enable the solutions to accurately predict intents and identify signals that lead to more effective customer treatments and future sales.

DM&S: Develop a Digital-First Strategy and Operating Model

Digital marketing and sales can no longer operate in silos. Instead, they should be integrated with business and technology—with data at the center of it all. By shifting to a digital-led strategy and operating model, Telcos can increase their digital channel mixes for both sales and services.

Accenture's DM&S solution gives companies the tools they need to increase revenue, enhance CX, improve time to market and optimize digital marketing and operational costs.

It does this by aligning human data, marketing and advertising technology, and people to continually provide an outstanding CX.

With DM&S, Accenture is helping Telcos boost their digital sales by more than

40%

and reduce their digital marketing costs by

30%

per customer acquisition.

Take Telefonica, for instance. The company wanted to build out a seamless omnichannel experience that was personalized to each customer's unique needs. Working with Accenture, Telefonica was able to completely reimagine its digital marketing and sales capabilities through a combination of analytics marketing technologies, design thinking and creativity.

Consequently, the company could tap into the end-to-end analytics embedded in the customer journey, from traffic generation to closing digital sales, to optimize marketing and sales. In the past three years, we have helped various business units within Telefonica double the percentage of digital sales per total sales.

CI&D: Embrace Omnichannel Modern Architecture

Telcos will need to break away from their legacy systems and processes if they want to realize the full benefits of an omnichannel experience. Through CI&D, Telcos can reduce the time it takes to create and deploy a compelling customer journey and tune the experience to specific target personas. By bringing customer interaction and enterprise data together, Telcos can design experiences and products around the customer that are more relevant and personalized across multiple channels.

Underpinning CI&D are technologies and solutions that allow Telcos to create a modern and flexible architecture. This architecture, which is digitally decoupled from the system of record and its complex data model and processes, is built on Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) and microservices and powered by agile-driven DevSecOps tools and practices, which allows it to scale and integrate with internal and external systems and provide easier and faster access to data.

Swisscom shows what this looks like in action. With Accenture, it put all of these elements into play when it wanted to implement

an open-architecture, API- and microservice-based digital decoupling layer. This additional layer would use data and cognitive computing to offer an extraordinary customer experience, ensure higher efficiency in capital allocation and reduce time to market. Through an orchestration of automation and other technologies, Swisscom accelerated its move to omnichannel across all lines of customer interaction.



The entire customer base was enabled in about 12 months



The share of online sales increased by 10% to 15%



NPS improved by more than 10%



New capabilities were deployed more than 30 times faster

CVM: Improve Engagement Quality with Customers

Customer engagement is becoming so important for Telcos, to the point it's almost as big a priority as average revenue per user (ARPU) and revenue-related KPIs. CVM focuses on delighting existing customers with personalized propositions, which enables Telcos to leverage their strong "control points" to convert interactions into "engagement moments."

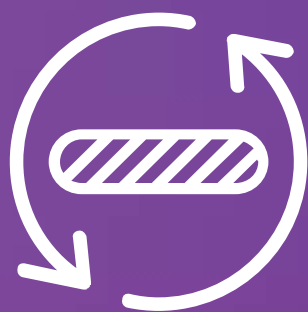
This solution can open doors to a multiyear data monetization sales journey and drive higher conversion rates: more than 10% for B2C call centers and approximately 8% for personal daily offers.

Etisalat created, with Accenture, a single "brain" to orchestrate the experience and interactions across all customer touchpoints (which is typical of an advanced customer-centric solution such as CVM). To take full advantage of this solution and make more relevant and interesting propositions, the company expanded its portfolio with products and services from partners into a marketplace integrated with the company's CVM solution.



Today, the company’s mobile app and web portal have become part of customers’ “digital daily routines”—i.e., the digital actions customers take daily as a habit rather than for a specific purpose. For example, similar to a social media platform’s newsfeed, customers check the company’s touchpoints daily, creating the customer lock-in effect that’s typical of social media platforms.

CVM UNDERPINS THIS LOCK-IN BY:



Designing and a creating a 360-degree customer view data set



Making this data set readable and actionable by a centralized brain



Using this centralized brain to orchestrate all channels, driving actions and ingesting feedback into a virtuous loop



Picking relevant offers based on this virtuous loop from a large portfolio of products and services from partners participating on the CVM platform



Combining customer data that transcends purely Telco-related behaviours, ready to be monetized on the CVM platform

A New Chapter for Telcos

There's no question that customer behaviors and expectations continue to evolve, and Telcos will need to change accordingly to maintain loyalty and, ultimately, to grow. This means focusing on delivering the CX that's most relevant to each customer—across channels and the customer journey—and continuing to adjust and refine it to remain relevant. But they also will soon find that to be truly differentiated, they'll need to push beyond a CX emphasis and reimagine their entire businesses through the lens of experience. This holistic approach, focused solely on customers' needs, is what we call the Business of Experience.

There's no one-size-fits-all approach for companies looking to become a Business of Experience. It's up to the C-suite to determine what their organization needs to serve their customers. But by elevating the marketing, sales and service life cycle; investing in digital channels and innovative technologies; and adopting

a modern, cloud-based, decoupled architecture, Telcos can clear the bar that's been set across industries—and possibly set a new bar themselves.

Certainly, Telcos face a long road ahead. That's why, in this fast-paced changing landscape, they'll want to expand their ecosystems and partner with the right companies to help them along the journey. The right partners, combined with the requisite culture change, will enable Telcos to continue to put experience at the heart of their operations so they can capture—and captivate—today's liquid customer.



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