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A New Digital-First Imperative for Customer Support

Can service organizations
keep pace with the new set
of digital requirements?



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Summary

Omdia and Calix partnered in September 2021 to conduct a survey to determine how the move to adopt digital technologies and customer engagement tools over the past two years has impacted customer support teams. Moreover, the anticipated outcome of the survey sought to determine how digital deployments are impacting the customer experience.

More than 300 customer support personnel in managerial, directorial, and supervisory roles across the US, EMEA, the Caribbean, and Latin America completed the survey to offer insights on digital deployments and barriers in a post-Covid environment. They represented the financial services, retail, telecommunications, communications service providers (CSPs)/broadband service providers, and travel and hospitality categories. Omdia also scored the digital transformation progress of the respondents into four stages: leaders, advanced, intermediate, and novice (**see Table 1** for the list of criteria).

Some key goals of the survey included:

- Identify the customer experience technologies that are delivering the most value
- Highlight the challenges in meeting customers' expectations
- Analyze the initiatives that are improving omnichannel engagement
- Determine the outcome of digital investments (or lack thereof) on the customer experience

The following analysis seeks to highlight some of the key findings from the survey.

The reimagined contact center is taking shape

Customers interact the most via mobile apps for self-service

When it comes to service and seeking results, customers' expectations have accelerated. They want immediate answers and expect instant results. More enterprises are finding ways to help customers help themselves via mobile by creating mobile self-service experiences that add value to the overall customer experience.

The survey results bolster this claim, showing that mobile app consumption for self-service ranks high. When asked which channels do their customers interact with the most, a steep 66% said they

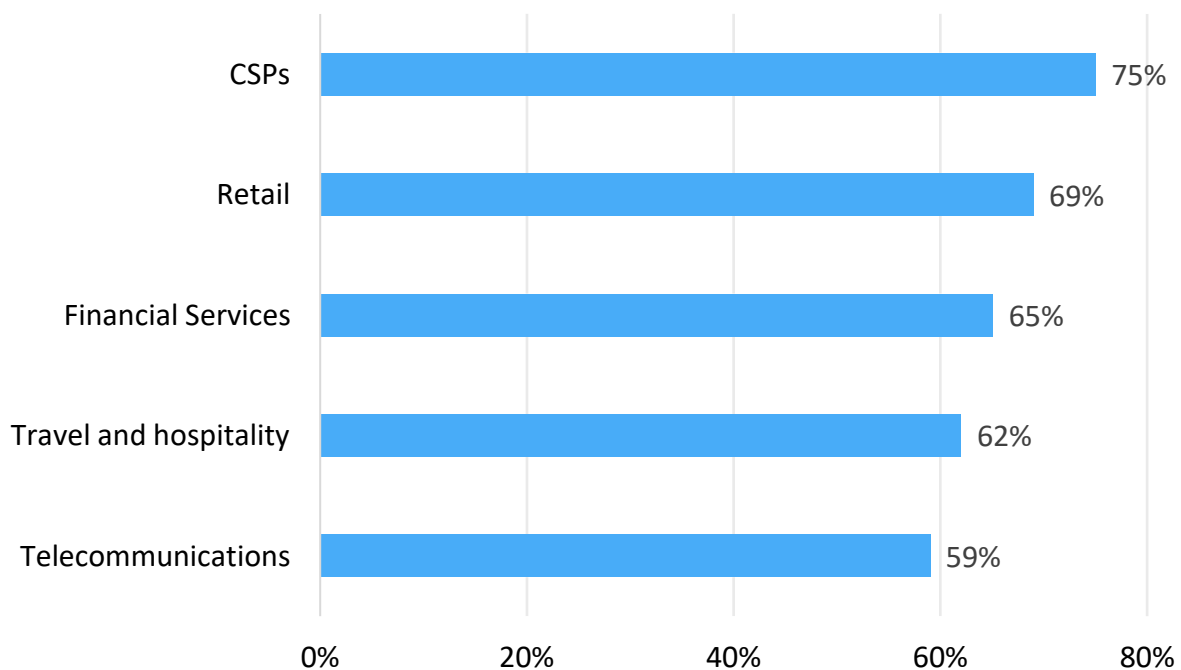
use mobile apps. Additionally, 56% use self-service portals and 54% said online knowledgebases. There's a sharp contrast across CSPs/broadband service providers, where a combined 75% rank mobile apps in the top three versus 59% in telecommunications (**see Figure 1**). And CSPs/broadband service providers rank even higher than the digital leaders, where 68% of CSPs/broadband service providers said they rank mobile apps as one of the top three ways customers communicate.

The high usage of mobile apps potentially points to two trends:

- First, the labor shortage in contact centers that has created a reliance on digital channels like mobile.
- Second, improved mobile functionality that is enabling the seamless creation of customer journeys, allowing for functioning apps to help customers perform more transactional tasks like applying for a mortgage or booking flights.

Figure 1: CSPs/broadband service providers report the highest usage of mobile apps for self-service

Mobile apps for self-service rank high in usage across categories



Note:
 % reflect responses when asked to rank the top three channels customers interact with the most to self serve.
 Source: Omdia

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Source: Omdia and Calix

Such insights on evolving channel usage point to the need for technologies that enable automation while providing self-service options. These changes require enterprises to take a fresh look at the role of agents in their contact centers. They must reimagine how they can co-exist harmoniously with digital technologies to both proactively interact with customers in relevant ways while enabling a frictionless journey for the customers.

Customers use chat and email over voice to interact for live support

For many years, the voice channel represented the singular most important communication channel for customer service. Recently, there has been a fervent debate about the viability of the voice channel and whether usage is waning, as newer channels such as chat, social, and SMS become prevalent. The survey results bolster these theories, as 73% of respondents said their customers use live chat the most and 81% said email has become the most-used channel. Only 58% said voice,

which closely matches usage in the social media channel, with 56% who said they interact via that channel for live interactions.

Additionally, 64% of CSPs/broadband service providers pointed to voice as their top three engagement channels and an overwhelming 76% of CSO said live chat comprise the top three, as well as 75% who said the same for their email. In telecommunications, 59% cited voice as among their top three mostly used channels, 78% said live chat, and a whopping 83% of telecommunications said email is the most used.

Alternatively, social media gets less usage with 58% of those in telecommunications stating it was among the top three and 53% of CSPs/broadband service providers cited the same channel usage. However, those stats fall right behind the voice stats.

While the voice channel remains important for customer interactions, live chat is certainly assuming a starring role in enabling how customers engage with brands. The survey results indicate the growing preference of live chat most likely for the ease of use it affords versus the cumbersome nature of navigating an IVR and dealing with long hold times.

Companies can't keep pace with digital changes

Personalization is a significant pain point

Delivering a relevant and proactive experience through personalized engagement that ranges from targeted product or content recommendations to tailored customer interactions, has become an imperative for businesses to survive in these times of digital transformation. However, according to the survey results, companies across all industries and stages of digital transformation struggle.

The majority of respondents, or 65%, said personalizing the user experience is a primary barrier to customer engagement (see Figure 2). Surprisingly, even the digital leaders struggle with personalizing the customer experience, with 66% of them stating that personalizing the customer experience remains a challenge.

Across industries, 61% of CSPs/broadband service providers said personalization is a challenge, an overwhelming 75% in travel and hospitality, 70% in retail, and 62% in financial services. Telecommunications emerged ahead with 59% who reported personalization as a challenge. Across regions, France and the UK encounter the most obstacles with personalizing the customer experience, with 80% in France and 76% in the UK stating that personalization is a top challenge.

Table 1: Criteria for ranking digital progress: Leaders (14 or more); Advanced (10-14); Intermediate (6 to 10); Novice (less than 6)

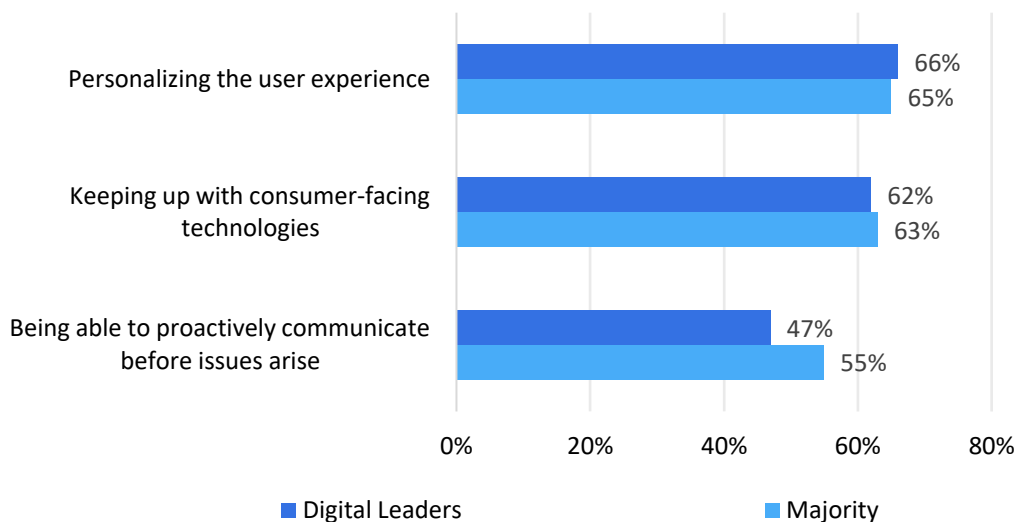
We have an integrated, agile, and scalable digital infrastructure in place
We have a data-driven approach to track performance and measure success

We have a strong alignment of goals across marketing, customer support and operations
We have technology that enable proactive interactions with customers
We have senior level support/understanding of digital challenges
We have the right training/knowledge to deliver against new digital capabilities
We have the right organizational structure to respond to customers and execute quickly
We have access to shared data across business units and enable cross-collaboration
Our leadership has developed a clear digital strategy and communicates it regularly
We have strong technology partnerships in place
We deployed subscriber education initiatives
We have acquired talent with digital skillsets
Our systems and channels are connected and integrated
We tie ROI to digital technologies for continuous investments
We tie digital technology to our business focus
We have a holistic view of the customer journey
We take a proactive approach to customer engagement (responding to issues before they arise)
Our primary performance metrics are customer-focused (NPS, CSAT, etc)
We have a digital workplace strategy in place
We have self-service options for customers that contribute to operational savings

Source: Omdia and Cali

Figure 2: Personalizing customer experiences poses a major challenge across categories

Personalizing experiences: Digital Leaders vs. The Majority



Notes: % reflect the responses to the question regarding the top challenges in meeting customer expectations
 Source: Omdia

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Source: Omdia and Calix

Such insights signal that customer service leaders across all industries and even stages of digital transformation are challenged with delivering personalized experiences. Despite sophisticated technology, the execution remains challenging. This points to the need for improved data management and tighter data integration. Without the information to help agents find the next best context or action, mass market engagements will continue.

Companies can't keep pace with customer-facing technological changes

In today's incredibly fast-paced markets and operating environments, many organizations can't keep pace with deploying the latest technologies and creating a positive impact for the business. The survey results deepen these claims. Across all industries, 63% said keeping up with consumer-facing technological changes ranks as a top challenge in meeting customers' digital expectations. An overwhelming 70% of CSPs/broadband service providers said the same, as did 62% of telecommunications. Surprisingly, in categories characterized as being digitally focused, 67% in retail said they can't keep up, 65% in financial services, and 52% in travel and hospitality.

A closer look across geographies reveals that some countries struggle more than others. In both Brazil and Germany, 70% said they are unable to keep pace, compared to 57% in the US and 57% in France, two regions that ranked the lowest in saying they experience difficulties.

No matter the sector, companies tend to fall behind a viable technology adoption curve while technology keeps piling a growing stream of innovations on the old. Despite the steady increase in the raft of customer-facing technologies, there remains a tangible urgency for companies to continue to examine new methods of intelligent automation powered by artificial intelligence like intelligent routing and digital assistants to meet their technological challenges. The current need to balance automation while delivering personalized human experiences, requires support organizations to look at technologies like digital assistants and self-service functionalities in the immediate future.

Proactive omnichannel engagement remains complex

Optimizing the omnichannel experience should reside at the core of today's customer support goals. Ensuring customers can access their preferred channel and receive a consistent experience across the web, social, chat, and the contact center has become table stakes for omnichannel engagement.

However, an examination of the results shows difficulty in areas that could hamper omnichannel efforts. For example: 57% of respondents across all industries said removing friction across channels is an obstacle, 55% said proactively communicating issues before they arise, and 53% said engaging across multiple communications channels.

Digital leaders also indicated omnichannel persists as a thorny area with 54% who said they are unable to effectively engage across channels and 53% said removing friction poses challenges. Across industries, 48% of CSPs/broadband service providers and 57% of telecommunications reported that removing points of friction is a challenge, while other categories reported it less of an issue with 43% of financial services who said it is a challenge, as well as 44% of travel & hospitality.

Limitations to data management still exist

Holistic, omnichannel engagement requires moving beyond acquiring new customers to delivering an experience at every step of the customer life cycle. Success depends not just on accessing the data from first- and third party sources, but also from orchestrating the appropriate actions across all channels at the right time. Having a single subscriber view eliminates siloed or duplicate customer data to improve accuracy, enables a full understanding of customers' needs, and therefore allows greater relevance with customer interactions.

While the companies surveyed reported progress in their data management efforts, many still struggle with them. Across the industries, 36% said they cannot identify the same customer or prospect across different channels and devices. Additionally, 35% said integrating data sources proves difficult and 34% said they cannot personalize in real time with existing data.

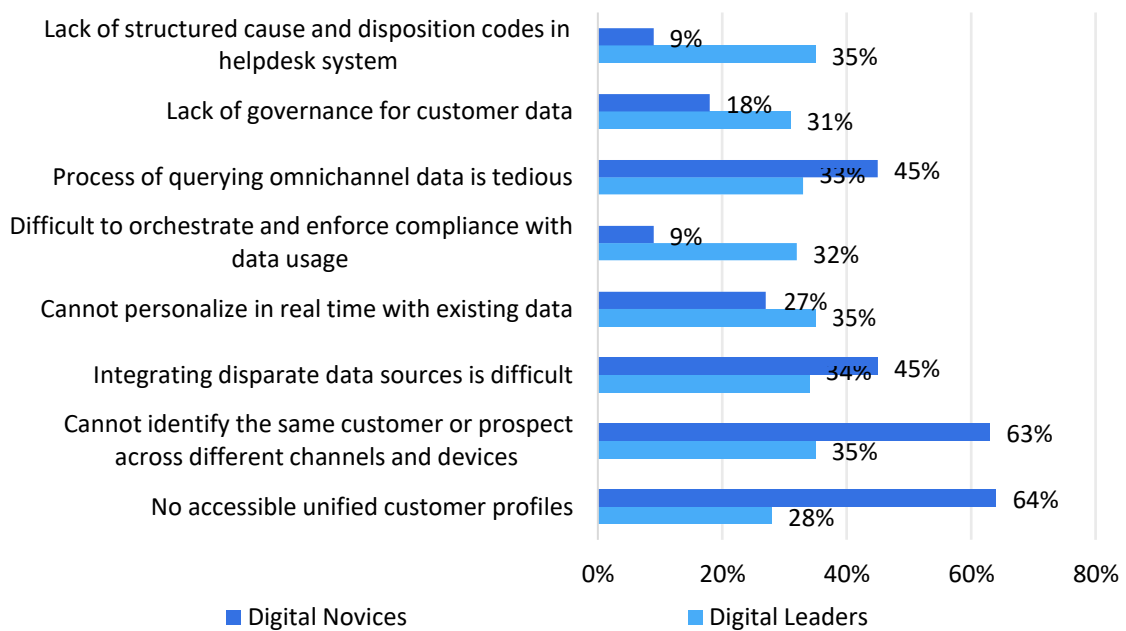
Additionally, when looking at the respondents who Omdia ranked as leaders in digital transformation, 35% said they cannot identify the same customer or prospect across different channels and devices 35% cannot personalize in real time, and 34% said integrating data sources from disparate systems is too difficult and time consuming (see Figure 3).

Unsurprisingly, those that Omdia ranked as novices in their digital transformation efforts had greater limitations, with 64% who said they had no access to enterprise wide unified profiles and common understanding of the customer, 64% said they cannot identify the same customer or prospect across different channels and devices, and 45% cannot integrate data sources from disparate systems, saying the process is time consuming.

The survey results point to a data management deficiency across all sectors and stages of digital progress. Without proper data integration, analysis and strategy and communication, digital initiatives will miss the mark on enabling personalized, omnichannel engagement.

Figure 3: Comparisons toward progress in data management initiatives

Compared to Digital Leaders, Digital Novices Struggle with Data Management



Notes: % reflect responses to question about limitations with accessing and applying customer data
Source: Omdia

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Source: Omdia and Calix

Despite platform deployment, platforms are complex to use

Despite the onslaught of engagement platforms entering the market and the perceived value on them to improve the overall customer experience, the survey results reflect an overwhelming dissatisfaction around the accessibility and usage of platforms. An overwhelming 89% said the

platforms are complex and not easy to use and they don't integrate well into existing systems. A surprising 100% of the digital leaders also said platforms are complex. Additionally, 56% overall said their platforms don't integrate into existing systems, and 56% cannot tie business value to digital activities. Platform complexity is pervasive across sectors, with 75% in financial services who said platforms are complex, as well as 100% in retail, 100% in telecommunications, and 100% of CSPS/BROADBAND SERVICE PROVIDERS reported the same.

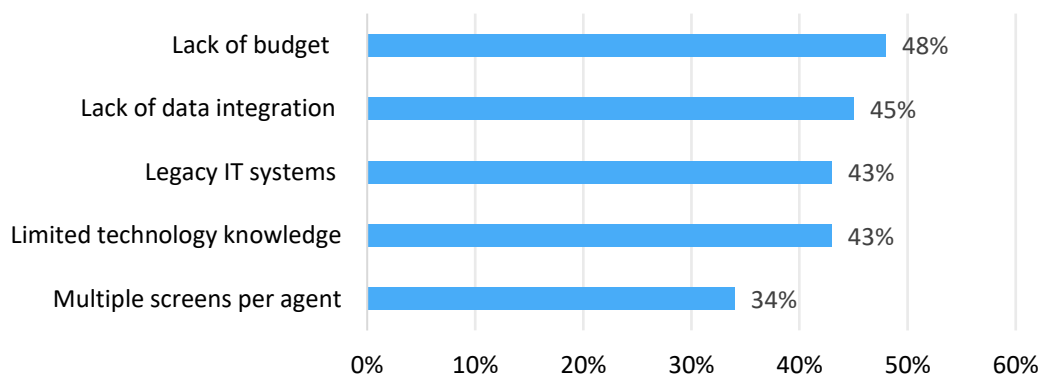
Complexity is an overwhelmingly rampant issue. However, not all platforms are alike. Some concentrate on data ingestion, some on data management and journey mapping, and others on orchestration or engagement. One thing remains the same across all platforms: they must manage the scale of the CX data expanding from new sources such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and connected devices rather than just website clicks and transactional histories. They must also offer the capabilities to analyze data sets in real time to enable proactive and relevant engagement.

Lack of executive support and organizational misalignment remain barriers to advancement

Customer engagement is one of the most pressing issues for customer support organizations today because it underscores how building relationships with customers will ensure competitive advantage in the long term. However, the tools that enable engagement, as well as customer behaviors are evolving rapidly. To keep pace with the changing requirements, companies must remove the barriers to advancement. Conversely, the survey results reveal that traditional obstacles persist. Across the majority of respondents, 48% said lack of budget was a top barrier to digital engagement in their organizations (see Figure 4). Additionally, 43% pointed to legacy IT systems, 43% said limited technology knowledge, and 34% said multiple screens per agent proved to be challenging.

Figure 4: Lack of budget ranks as top barrier to deploying digital engagement

Barriers to Digital Engagement



Notes: % reflects responses to question regarding the most significant barriers to digital deployment

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Source: Omdia and Calix

While lower on the list of obstacles, organizational issues still pose challenges with 30% overall who said they lack executive support. Additionally, 28% said that misalignment of the organization has proven to be a top barrier to deploying digital engagement in their organizations.

Even the digital leaders reported barriers to advancement, with 45% who said lack of budget was a top issue, 43% said lack of executive support, and 42% said legacy IT systems blocked progress. Budgetary concerns plague all categories, especially in the post-pandemic landscape where enterprises are still reeling from protracted uncertainty. Many face dual economic crises—managing remote work structures and labor shortages while consolidating or forging new partnerships. Despite a volatile recovery period, enterprises must still prepare for what lies ahead and evaluate technology investments that can improve their resilience by strengthening their competitive positioning.

Performance training initiatives to enhance the subscriber experience lag

While most of the companies that are leading in their digital CX transformations are in a better position to respond to changes in customer behaviors than the predominantly novice ones, nevertheless they could stand to improve upon internal agent performance initiatives that look to continually enhance the subscriber experience.

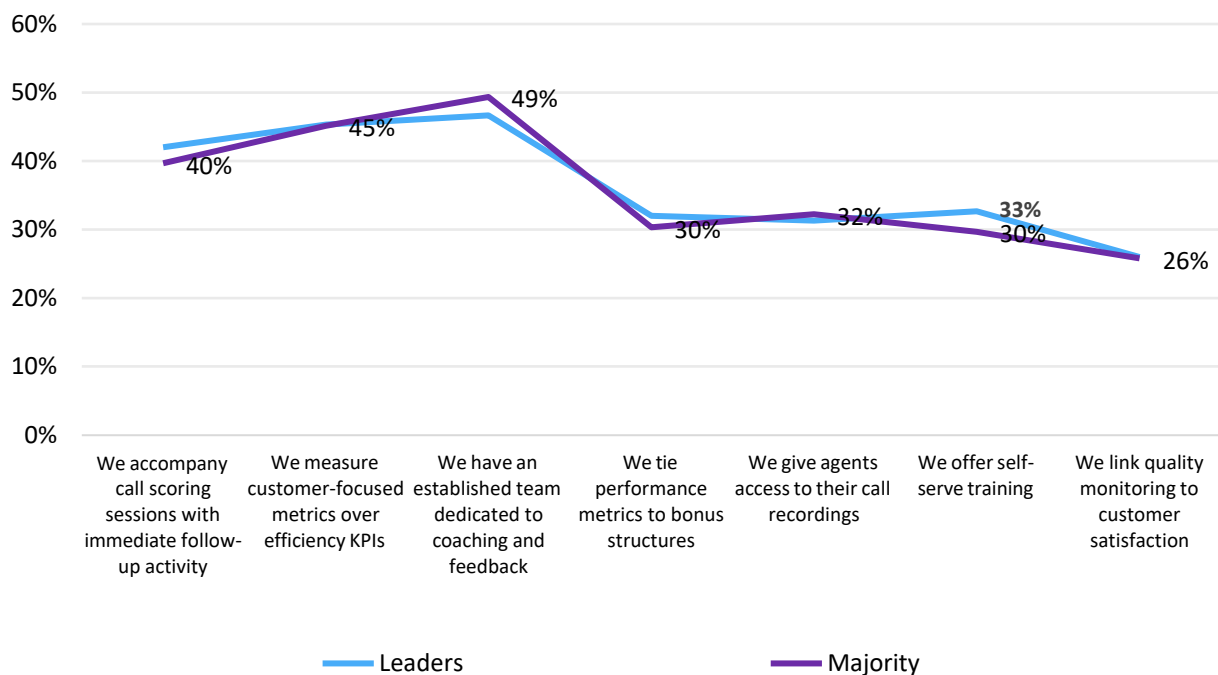
In fact, of the leading companies, 47% said they have an established team for coaching and feedback, 42% accompany call scoring sessions with immediate feedback and follow-up activity, and only 33% offer self-service training.

There's not a stark contrast between the leaders and the majority of other companies, with 49% overall who said they have an established team for coaching and feedback, 40% accompany scoring sessions with immediate follow-up activity, and 30% offer self-service training (see Figure 5).

While both the digital leaders and all other companies seem to run a tight race when it comes to launching experience initiatives outside of technology investments, the percentages fall below the level of which Omdia believes will propel enterprises' digital competency forward. Technology alone won't suffice for creating long-term sustainability. Agents require continuous communication, training, and measurement.

Figure 5: The majority of companies align with the digital leader in enacting experience initiatives

Initiatives Enacted to Improve the Subscriber Experience



Notes: % represent responses to the question about what has been implemented to improve the customer experience

Source: Omdia

© 2021 Omdia

Source: Omdia and Calix

Laying the groundwork for sustainability

Companies believe customer engagement platforms will improve their CX

To succeed in the rapidly emerging digital, omnichannel environment, enterprises must be supported by complete information on the customer so employees can recognize and respond to individual customers, and they can collaborate in real time across enterprise functions.

According to survey respondents, platforms are improving the overall experience. In fact, despite their reported complexities, customer engagement platforms rank high in terms of deployment status. Across all industries, 52% said that the platforms are currently deployed and 29% have plans to deploy them within 18 months.

In CSPs/broadband service providers, 50% currently have platforms deployed and 35% have plans to deploy them; 49% of telecommunications have platforms in place and 30% have future deployment plans; and 58% of financial services have deployed platforms and 27% have plans to deploy them in the future.

Finally, across all industries, a combined 93% said customer engagement platforms provide “significant value” or “moderate value” to their efforts to improve their organization’s overall customer experience. Additionally, 96% of the digital leaders reported that their platforms provide value, a strong testimonial to the value of engagement platforms.

An effective customer engagement platform meets customers where they are and unifies customer-facing employees with a single stream of data along a data and work stream. Omdia defines a CEP as a platform that enables an enterprise to capture, interpret and intelligently orchestrate a response to all customer engagement activities in a way that delivers a proactive, personalized, and appropriate experience for the customers. A CEP also allows an enterprise to analyze, learn and amend how it engages to continually enhance the customer’s experience.

Integrated CEPs allow customer-facing employees to orchestrate and automate engagements in a personalized fashion. Yet complexities threaten to hamper such outcomes. Overwhelming survey responses detailing such complexities potentially indicates hasty investments made without strategy development that documents people, processes, and other enterprise systems involved in initial deployments.

Companies plan to focus on customer retention over acquisition

It’s a well-established fact that it costs businesses five times more to attract new customers than to retain existing ones. The pareto principle asserts that 80% of a company’s revenue is generated by 20% of its customers. Viewed in this way, then it might be advantageous for a company to focus on the 20% of clients that are responsible for 80% of revenues and market specifically to them—to help retain those clients and acquire new clients with similar characteristics.

Retaining customers emerged as a common goal across all sectors. When asked about the most important outcomes they are trying to accomplish with their investments, overall, 41% said they

want to improve customer retention, which dominates customer acquisition goals with only 33% who said acquisition is a desired outcome. Digital leaders are similarly aligned with their retention and acquisition goals, with 42% who said that's the most important outcome they want to accomplish and 37% said customer acquisition.

Across sectors, customer retention is a priority. In travel & hospitality 56% desire customer retention and 43% want customer acquisition. In retail, 43% want to improve customer retention and 35% customer acquisition. In financial services, 37% report that they want to improve retention and 28% want to improve acquisition. When looking at telecommunications and CSPs/broadband service providers, the gap between the two areas tightens: 36% of CSP want to improve retention compared to 32% who want to improve acquisition. And in telecommunications, 33% want to increase retention with 29% who said they want to increase acquisition.

The digital leaders surveyed appear to understand the strategic importance of designating resources and efforts on retaining current customers. Attracting new customers may boost the bottom line in the short term but retaining customers builds customer loyalty which has been shown to lead to increases in profitability.

Customer-focused metrics are being used to gauge performance

Customer metrics are at the heart of successful businesses because when aligned with performance, enterprises can more accurately measure how they are delivering on the customer experience and discover issues that may impede customer journey navigation.

When asked what they have implemented that has most improved the subscriber experience, a surprising 45% said that they measure customer-focused metrics over efficiency ones. A closer look across sectors shows that 48% of CSPs/broadband service providers also use customer-focused metrics over efficiency focused ones, as well as 48% of financial services firms, 40% of retailers, 54% of telecommunications. Travel and hospitality fell behind with only 34% of companies in that sector that measure customer-focused metrics.

Although that represents about half, customer-focused metrics are an important barometer for customer support organizations to gauge effectiveness of their digital, omnichannel initiatives and investments. Yet most still lead with efficiency-focused KPIs.

Of the metrics deemed most important to measuring the customer experience in their organizations, an overwhelming 63% said customer satisfaction is very important and 23% said it's somewhat important. Additionally, 48% said customer retention is a very important metric while 28% said it's somewhat important. Also, 47% said first-call resolution is very important as is customer retention rates, with 48% who said that metric is very important. And 45% said speed of answer is very important while 36% said it's somewhat important.

While the survey results indicate that less than half of respondents across categories have implemented customer-facing metrics, the results nonetheless surprised Omdia. They signal a growing adoption of journey-based metrics and KPIs and correlating them to the key moments to

identify which behaviors triggered changes. Leading with customer-focused metrics is an important step to reducing customer churn and improving customer loyalty.

A road map for digital investments

Immediate priorities start with a foundation of data management

- **Invest in technologies that unify and centralize data**
 - Data serves as the foundation to following and acting on customer behaviors throughout customers' journeys. It involves proper data management techniques, like creating dynamic unified profiles through identity management techniques and integrating that output back through existing enterprise systems so that customers can act on those insights in real time and with the right messaging.
 - When asked how their companies are striking a balance between delivering human touch and digital interactions, only 49% of the digital leaders said they have integrated systems and communications channels. Compared to the majority of respondents, 46% said they are integrating systems and communications channels.
 - Achieving digital omnichannel experience requires integrated data across channels and from a variety of sources. Companies should start the process of integration by performing a gap data assessment on source systems to flesh out requirements for configuring a data harmonization strategy. This strategy should seek to combine and analyze pertinent unstructured customer data across both the traditional and digital channels. They must also create unique customer profiles and IDs from the resulting insights stored in data management platforms (DMPs) to equip enterprises with the necessary roadmaps for how to engage and respond to customers at critical moments throughout their customer journeys. Defining goals for data management and use is crucial to data strategy success and to improve the handling of data.
- **Obtain buy-in from senior executives to secure necessary budgets**
 - Respondents across all sectors said a lack of budget posed a significant challenge. However, the data suggests that the CSPs/broadband service providers and telecommunications sectors are less challenged by obtaining budgets, or the lack of budgets don't appear to hamper digital efforts. In telecommunications, only 15% ranked lack of budget as a primary barrier and only 10% of CSPs/broadband service providers did the same. Additionally, 34% said they don't have senior-level support digital challenges.
 - If customer support organizations don't have the support of top management, they won't receive budgets for investments or support necessary to innovate. To overcome this obstacle, customer support managers must educate executives on customer behaviors through use cases and tie

loyalty to revenue. Include customer testimonials on issues customers have encountered along their journeys. Conduct a granular “points of pain” survey and link business cases to points of pain. Finally, assign change ambassadors who can communicate the value and benefits of planned technologies with their teams, as well as broadly throughout the enterprise.

- **Focus on personalization. It will become the new standard in 2022**

- In a customer-centric environment, differentiating products and services is no longer sufficient. Enterprises must meet customer demands and provide value through personalization. Understanding the individual needs of customers is the key to winning their loyalty. Information is a crucial component to a personalized service strategy, but delivering actionable insights depends on integrated and transparent data. When data is integrated, centralized, and accessible, customer-facing employees will more easily and proactively deliver personalized experiences along the key moments throughout the customer journey. As companies look to improve coordination between service and marketing (17%), create actionable data (14%), and enable proactive customer care (24%), Omdia foresees personalization efforts improving across categories.
- Delivering proactive personalization via the right responses delivered at the right time can improve customer satisfaction and ultimately retention. However, achieving such targeted interactions relies on the use of integrated, real-time data that provides insights on customer behaviors and transactions so that customer support can anticipate future needs and proactively reach out in meaningful ways with next-best actions.
- Today’s customers demand seamless and contextually relevant experiences, and they expect the brands that they interact with to respond at the right time at the right place and with the right messaging. That requires intelligent personalization conducted via a platform approach, particularly platforms that have the capability to respond with the right interaction at the right moment with context.

- **Organize employees around the customer**

- Enabling connected customer journeys requires the ability to retrieve data granularity. However, 41% said they lack a shared view of customer data and 25% cited organizational misalignment as challenges. By integrating data and organizing customer-facing employees along the same work and data stream, they will be able to meet customer needs, anticipate the right course of action, and understand how their behaviors will evolve over time. It also enables employees and front-line associates to act in real time with relevant interactions.
- Organizing employees around the customer happens first and foremost when both functional and data silos are dismantled. Giving customer-facing employees access to centralized customer data, as well as merging teams (for example digital messaging and voice teams) into one group,

will help to organize employees along customer journeys. This will also help employees to adopt a more proactive approach to customer care.

- When they have a view into customers' feedback and issues, and are given the tools to respond, they will act on that, and it will create a fundamental shift in the way they view and engage in their own jobs.
- **Don't overlook mobile engagement and chat**
 - Significant advances in machine learning have allowed conversational systems to better recognize complex sentences of speech, navigate human interactions, and transform text into speech—key elements in natural language processing (NLP). As a result, chatbots or digital assistants can respond with human-like quickness via voice and text. This supersedes the first generation of bots that served up canned responses and prevented effective dialogue from occurring with users.
 - Despite improvements and ease of integration across the enterprise, only 37% of the majority of respondents use digital assistants for routine inquiries. Aligned with that, CSPs/broadband service providers and telecommunications appear to be slow to adopt digital assistants with only 38% of CSPs/broadband service providers who said they are using digital assistants for routine inquiries and 43% in telecommunications. That could likely be attributed to many in that category focusing more heavily on finding scarce resources. Looking ahead, however, these companies will likely speed their chat bot deployments, as they seek new ways to lower costs and deliver rapid responses while maintaining customer service levels.
 - Virtual agents shouldn't be a long-term road map item. Waiting a year to 18 months may be too little too late since chat bots and digital assistants are ubiquitous now and customers have come to expect to interact with them. Identify functional areas within the enterprise that could benefit from immediate cost reductions enabled from chat bots and ensure AI solutions can scale across the enterprise for deeper CX integration. The scalability of chat bots can help to optimize operational costs in a business. At times of unpredictability, it can be difficult for customer support organizations to keep up with consumer interaction. The cost of such a condition may result in poor customer experience. Also, anticipate the stages of the customer journey that require live chat and offer live assistance or proactive chat at strategic points along the conversion path or at points that could reduce abandonment.

Mid- to long-term priorities involve cultural and organizational change

- **Invest in digital training and hire for digital skillsets**
 - With the rapidly changing digital landscape, investing in digital skills training and development for employees is not only mandatory, but potentially transformative. As technology rapidly advances, there comes a need for employees to align with these changes in terms of knowledge, skills, and

abilities. But while 67% report having the right training and knowledge to deliver on digital capabilities, 33% do not. In contrast, only 61% of CSPs/broadband service providers said they have the right training and knowledge and 65% of telecommunications said the same. Also 35% said they don't acquire talent with digital skillsets compared to only 23% of the digital leaders who said they have acquired the necessary digital skillsets. Among the digital leaders, 81% also said they have the right training and knowledge, which illustrates the importance of hiring and continuous training.

- When agents undergo both technical and soft skill training, it not only improves their skills, but builds their abilities and boosts morale. In response, enterprises must establish an organized system of training for customer-facing employees that helps them learn in a systematic way. Also, align digital skills training with digital strategies and goals and then continue to enhance.

- **Mend the technology knowledge gaps**

- A surprising takeaway is the lack of technology knowledge. Knowledge gaps happen in enterprises for various reasons, ranging from groups outside of IT initiating IT projects (shadow IT), to lack of digital talent and skills. With 43% of overall respondents who ranked “having limited technology knowledge” as the combined top three barriers to deploying digital engagement, the need for fixing the technology gaps is critical. In telecommunications and in CSPs/broadband service providers, 35% said the same.

- However, 40% of the digital leaders cite having limited technology knowledge as one of the top three issues. This suggests that those organizations that appear to be well advanced in their digital experience journeys still encounter significant challenges until working digitally becomes part of their organizations' DNA.

- CIOs must ensure everyone in the business – not just those within IT – are well informed on the digital skills and technologies that they need to succeed. That includes customer support. A better trained customer support organization will reduce multiple support tiers and therefore, prevent issues from escalating. Additionally, bridge IT and customer support. With cross-functional leadership and operations, enterprises can break down silos and work toward enabling a connected customer experience, as well as building a composable enterprise workforce where IT and business leaders are aligned around common goals.

- **Tie digital deployments to ROI for continuous investments**

- Many enterprises overall face cost factors that can quickly derail digitally forward conversations. So how do companies balance this need to continuously invest in digital CX to constantly adapt and evolve if there is a lack of budget? An ideal model to follow is the one used by survey's digital leaders. Of the respondents, 77% of digital leaders said they tie ROI to digital technologies for continuous investments. CSPs/broadband service providers align closely with the leaders with

71% who said they also tie ROI to digital investments. In contrast, only 41% of telecommunications providers tie ROI to digital investments.

- Calculating ROI in the digital age is difficult. To ensure customer support teams are equipped with emerging technology as consumer behaviors change, organizations must continue to invest in technologies. Digital transformation success, as well as process and agent performance improvements like agent retention, for example, must be intimately tied to CX through investments in use cases. That emphasis will continue to drive business investments in digital transformation and secure a healthy future for customer support.

Conclusion

Thriving in the new digital reality

The contact center is becoming the epicenter of loyalty and retention. The fusion of contact centers and digital engagement technologies demonstrates how modern contact centers have progressed far beyond the call centers of old.

Many enterprises have accelerated their digital adoption post-pandemic and are on track to meeting customers' digital expectations, as well as delivering proactive customer engagement. But to survive and ultimately thrive in this new reality means meeting heightened expectations.

However, the reliance on legacy technologies, traditional KPIs, and lack of data management means customer support organizations may struggle to realize productivity gains and to avoid unnecessary expenses throughout their contact centers. This in turn potentially stalls the acceleration of digital and can place many at a competitive disadvantage in the long term.

Customer support organizations that want to compete in the digital age must strike a balance between delivering the human touch and automation through self-service and AI. However, elevating the customer experience beyond table stakes digital engagement is an impossibility without such intelligence derived from integrated, real-time data that is analyzed and accessible by front-line employees. Gaining real-time intelligence will allow enterprises to achieve the new personalization standards and proactive support. Also, equipping agents with the right digital skillsets and training and using customer focused KPIs to measure their performance, will only accelerate any baseline digital initiatives.

To find out more about addressing the heightened demands your subscribers have for a better experience and get more data-driven and proactive with your processes, contact Calix for a [Customer Support Consult](#).

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Omdia consulting

Omdia is a market-leading data, research, and consulting business focused on helping digital service providers, technology companies, and enterprise decision-makers thrive in the connected digital economy. Through our global base of analysts, we offer expert analysis and strategic insight across the IT, telecoms, and media industries.

We create business advantage for our customers by providing actionable insight to support business planning, product development, and go-to-market initiatives.

Our unique combination of authoritative data, market analysis, and vertical industry expertise is designed to empower decision-making, helping our clients profit from new technologies and capitalize on evolving business models.

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About Calix

Calix cloud and software platforms enable service providers of all types and sizes to innovate and transform. Our customers utilize the real-time data and insights from Calix platforms to simplify their businesses and deliver experiences that excite their subscribers. The resulting growth in subscriber acquisition, loyalty, and revenue creates more value for their businesses and communities. This is the Calix mission; to enable broadband service providers of all sizes to simplify, excite, and grow.

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