HOW TO ADD OMNICHANNEL EXPERIENCES TO YOUR CONTACT CENTER
When you look at the items on your contact center ‘shopping list’ – let’s say web chat, text messaging or video chat – how many have been on that list for a year or more?

Perhaps you’ve looked into features like SMS then realized that it’s not straightforward when it comes to adding functions to your expensive call center system. You discover that you’ll need a third-party SMS provider, and another to handle integration. Before you know it, you’re looking at a lengthy implementation cycle, and talking about ripping and replacing existing software. And that’s where progress stalls.

Typically, organizations are looking for similar call center features – such as integrated reporting, intelligent IVR and call tracking. Yet, up to 40 percent of contact center managers say that their IT doesn’t meet current needs, with 80 percent saying current systems won’t meet future needs, according to Dimension Data’s 2015 Global Contact Center Benchmarking Report.¹

Given these technical limitations, it’s not surprising that a 2016 survey by Callcenter.co.uk found that companies rank omnichannel as the second biggest challenge facing their contact center, after people and processes.² Heads of Customer Experience want to keep up with changing user behavior and emerging channels, but their existing infrastructure is holding them back.

There must be an easier way, right?

In *How to Add Omnichannel Experiences to Your Contact Center*, we explore a new approach to building contact centers that does not require ‘rip and replace’, or expensive systems integration. Instead, it gives you the flexibility to augment iteratively, and create a better customer experience, feature by feature. Read this whitepaper to learn about how programmable communications has allowed organizations with existing contact centers to:

- Add features to handle new customer channels as needed
- Maintain context across all points of contact
- Route calls and hot leads to the right agents instantly

“74% of customers use three or more channels to access customer services”

ICMI, *Optimising Voice in the Global Contact Center, 2014*³
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Two main things are driving the evolution of the contact center: digital innovation and the changes in customer behavior that it creates. Today, customers use an array of devices, in a seemingly endless set of contexts and channels. They expect to connect with brands and contact centers with tools similar to the ones they use to communicate with friends, from SMS to Snapchat.

And this expectation has an effect on the bottom line: 86 percent of customers will pay more for a better experience, while 89 percent will leave because of poor experience (2011 Customer Experience Impact Report, Oracle). 4 According to a 2015 Dimension Data survey, 50 percent of organizations will soon be managing a multichannel contact center, featuring at least eight different forms of contact methods, seven of which are digital. 5

The proliferation of digital channels doesn’t lessen the importance of the call center; in fact the opposite is true. People still want to connect with other people at the other end of an interaction. So a modern call center must:

- Allow customers to contact you over multiple channels (voice, chat, SMS, IVR, email, social media, etc).
- Maintain context of the conversation and surface customers to the correct agent
- Route any task from multiple sources
Your customers demand contact and support through an ever-expanding network of channels, contexts and devices.
Think about the lead time involved in adding new contact center features. It can take months to select a provider, and up to two years from definition to installation. That’s an eon in the digital world.

By the time the system’s online, the world has moved on. The features you sought at the outset are already no longer fit for the purpose. This traditional approach also requires large capital expenditure investments up front to purchase physical hardware, at which point it becomes expensive to integrate these systems into CRM, social or proprietary databases.

Augmentation challenges faced by traditional contact centers include:

- Long, risky, and expensive upgrades: The existing infrastructure could support new capability, but it requires software or hardware upgrades. Simple software upgrades are service impacting, costly and time-consuming.

- Analysis paralysis: Since you are unable to launch and iterate quickly, it is easy to get stuck in the analysis to try and get the experience right the first time.

- Prioritization problem: Larger high-level decisions, such as deciding what database, CRM or agent console should be the primary repository of customer information, often block rolling out simple enhancements.

If existing infrastructure simply does not support augmenting capabilities easily and quickly, then the only option you have is: ‘rip and replace’.
APIS TO THE RESCUE

APIs allow applications to talk to each other and exchange data. They offer a new approach to agile contact center development, unlocking the ability for you to experiment and learn as you add new features. With the right APIs, you can liberate closed-off systems in your existing contact center infrastructure. This will help you to enable an omnichannel experience, without having to rip and replace your current system.

Of course, all APIs are not created equal. The traditional contact center model presents several integration challenges, with platform vendors controlling proprietary APIs, and certifying different applications against those APIs. This is an expensive and restrictive approach, and your organization usually ends up footing the bill for the certification process.

Twilio is a particularly powerful example of APIs in action. Twilio APIs make it easy to add the types of communication features customers want, iterate quickly and precisely on their design, and roll them out incrementally.

Your app or contact center system controls the logic, while Twilio powers the communication in the cloud supported by hundreds of thousands of servers deployed across 24 international data centers. From messaging to calls, Twilio allows you to use communication data in context.

Because Twilio is vendor-agnostic, its API can integrate with your current CRM, contact center infrastructure and existing channels. Rather than enforcing a set of certified applications and relying solely on in-house developers for innovation, Twilio draws on a vast pool of developers in the wider community who constantly build their own solutions using all kinds of platforms and software, and share the code with other Twilio users. Armed with this knowledge, your in-house team can build, integrate and test with agility, causing little or no impact on existing infrastructure.

With Twilio, you can transform your existing contact center into a multi-channel customer engagement center with modest budget investment.
Twilio APIs serve as building blocks to deliver a truly omnichannel experience. Using these building blocks you can ‘snap’ services together in the cloud to augment new features on top of your existing infrastructure. Think about using these APIs for new contact center experiences like using Legos to build your unique projects.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR OMNICHANNEL EXPERIENCES
So how can you use these building blocks to create omnichannel contact center experiences for your customers?

FOUR WAYS TO AUGMENT YOUR EXISTING CONTACT CENTER
1. ITERATE YOUR IVR

INSTANTLY CONNECT AGENTS WITH HOT LEADS

Every contact center has interactive voice response (IVR) functionality. Yet, despite having very high-end systems installed, we find many of our customers (including brands with users around the world, such as Airbnb) route their phone numbers via Twilio.

Because contact center platforms are very complex, many organizations can’t make the necessary changes in-house. This often means being unable to modify an IVR to successfully prioritize calls based on the hotness of the lead. Using Twilio, contact center managers can iterate on the exact IVR flows more rapidly, putting in place A/B tests and different flows to see which works best for their users.

With Twilio, you can iterate IVR functions using a SIP interface. Build your IVR with any web language, making it easy to change, improve, and scale across different office sites and agent numbers.

Because Twilio is vendor-agnostic, our API can integrate with your current CRM, contact center infrastructure and existing channels. Rather than enforcing a set of certified applications and relying on in-house developers for innovation, Twilio draws on a vast pool of developers in the wider community, constantly building their own solutions using all kinds of platforms and software, and sharing the code with other Twilio users.

- Control the IVR through your app or contact center system logic
- Build with any web language
- Easily change, improve, and scale across different office sites and numbers

Your developers can learn how to build a Twilio powered IVR here:
LIVESTREAM RAPIDLY ITERATES IVR FLOWS TO SUPPORT A GROWING USER BASE

CHALLENGE:

Livestream streams more than one billion minutes of live video each month via key partners such as Facebook, the New York Times, and Associated Press. In such a dynamic environment, every second counts when it comes to customer support. The ability to change call routing logic, IVR messages, and recordings on a moment’s notice is critical to their success.
“We needed to empower our sales and support teams with call center routing and IVR functionality in a reliable, scalable, and hassle-free manner. Twilio’s simple API enabled our team to quickly achieve this goal.”

Ben Homer, Director of Customer Support, Livestream
2. BUILD CLICK-TO-CALL

MAKE IT EASY FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS TO CONTACT YOU

The omnichannel contact center enables customers to seamlessly connect with your sales or support teams. Using Twilio building blocks, it is easy to create a frictionless Click-to-Call experience.

Customers enter their phone number on a webpage or app and receive a call back connecting them to your existing call center. You can track the call, record the call, or add any number of programmable voice functions.

Critically, it also offers valuable context. Your agent knows where the contact is coming from (for example, a product page), providing insight into the likely nature of the communication. This makes for an efficient customer experience which is particularly useful for complex or higher value products, including insurance or mortgages, where customers require more help.

- A visitor clicks a link to reach an agent and enters their phone number
- Twilio automatically connects the visitor and the agent
- The agent has valuable context about the origin of the contact
- Calls are tracked and logged

Your developers can learn how to build Twilio powered Click-to-Call functions here:

TRULIA CONNECTS REAL ESTATE AGENTS TO ACTIVE LEADS

CHALLENGE:

For most people, buying a home is the biggest and most stressful purchase of their life.

And for a real estate agent, speed is everything when it comes to making a sale. In fact, an agent’s odds of successfully contacting an online lead are 100 times higher if the lead hears back from the agent within five minutes of filling out an online form.*

Real estate startup Trulia was looking for a way cut down the time between the initial inquiry and first contact between qualified agents and interested leads, and ultimately boost their conversion rates.

*Dr James Oldroyd, MIT, 2007
CUSTOMER STORY: CLICK-TO-CALL

SOLUTION:

Trulia uses the Programmable Voice API to implement Click-to-call, reducing friction and enabling prospective homebuyers to connect with agents and ask questions in real time.

When a prospect includes their phone number on a webform, Trulia’s Click-to-call application built with Twilio instantly connects them with an agent by triggering a live callback. If the prospect doesn’t include their phone number or the agent is busy, Trulia sends the agent a text message with the prospect’s information.

IMPACT:

- Trulia converts 60 percent of online leads into clients using Click-to-call
- Listing agents have increased their conversion rates 100x
- Trulia has delivered over 100 million contacts to real estate agents
3. ADD MESSAGING

GIVE CUSTOMERS MORE WAYS TO CONTACT YOU

Nine out of ten people would like to use messaging to communicate with businesses. However, only four out of ten contact centers support messaging as a customer contact channel.

Text messaging is one of the most effective ways of communicating. Enabling customers to simply reply to a text can bypass many of the steps in a contact center user journey. For example, a message that says “A field technician can visit your house at 3:30pm. Does this time work for you? Reply Y or N” would omit much of the back and forth associated with scheduling appointments. Using the Twilio SMS APIs along with voice, you can pivot between channels without losing context. This not only improves efficiency by helping you reduce call queues but also customer experience. You can also reduce call wait times by letting customers text you to get a call back when the right agent is available.

Your developers can learn how to build Twilio powered SMS here:

ZINGLE USES SMS TO CREATE TWO-WAY CUSTOMER CONVERSATIONS

CHALLENGE:

Zingle, a customer service messaging platform used by leading brands worldwide, supports multiple channels including Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. Yet, it’s SMS that has proven to be by far the most popular channel, accounting for 66 percent of customer interactions. Zingle was looking for a way to provide clients with reliable two-way SMS messaging, and turned to Twilio to help.

“Before we started using Twilio, our legacy providers were hitting us with some serious quality and deliverability issues, but once Zingle started using Twilio, our customers’ SMS deliverability failures disappeared.”

Nathan Jovin, Senior Director of Development, Zingle
CUSTOMER STORY: SMS

SOLUTION:

Zingle knew they needed to leverage a communications technology that could scale rapidly at a moment’s notice to meet the demands of global customers. Zingle uses Twilio’s Programmable SMS API to integrate two-way SMS into their platform. Agents can both send and receive messages via their Zingle dashboard. They can see all customer texts in one inbox, manage multiple conversations, and see on-demand analytics.

Enabling two-way SMS allows Zingle users to build customer relationships that are more personal, engaging, and effective. In addition, message deliverability and 24/7 real-time service are also critical to maintaining those relationships.

IMPACT:

- 8x growth after moving to SMS
- 10 million messages per year go through Zingle
- More than 110k monthly active business customers
4. USE TASKROUTER

ROUTE ANY TASK FROM ANY ORIGIN

System adaptability is key to setting the pace for the move towards omnichannel. TaskRouter is an incredibly powerful tool in the Twilio box. It offers contact center routing to orchestrate interactions within CRM, support workflows, and facilitate the Internet of Things.

The TaskRouter API allows you to build intelligent routing into your existing system to create smarter workflows. In short, you can handle information from any channel, delivering on the three core principles behind an omnichannel contact center:

- Handle any inbound channel
- Maintain context
- Route any task

Ultimately, the more channels you support and the more contacts you receive, the more important it is to route tasks intelligently. It provides an opportunity to make decisions around what’s important to your business and your customers. TaskRouter enables you to create seamless omnichannel experiences with more ease and flexibility than legacy systems.
Everything begins with a task - whether that’s a phone call, SMS, support ticket, lead or machine data.

Your business logic creates this task in TaskRouter and associates actions to your task, allowing you to prioritize or assign the task to the right person.

Workflow is the brain of TaskRouter. It routes tasks and monitors progress in the task queue.

You have everything needed to build complete historical reporting packages as well as real-time dashboards.

Watch a TaskRouter visual walkthrough:
ELOCAL MODERNIZED ITS CONTACT CENTER WITH TASKROUTER

CHALLENGE:

Online business directory eLocal delivers high-quality, sales-ready leads to home service and legal professionals. In the early days of the business, active buyers came in primarily through online and email channels. But when conversion rates from these sources began tapering off, eLocal turned to the phone to identify and further qualify leads from various channels.

In 2015, eLocal opened a contact center to rapidly and effectively respond to inquiries. With the new emphasis on calls, speed is a top priority. In home and legal services, people need answers quickly, and leads have to be good.

“We wanted to be more dynamic in routing calls, so we could prioritize calls. It’s working for us and makes us excited about TaskRouter. Twilio allows us to be very flexible and scale as our business grows.”

Rob De Marco, CTO, eLocal
CUSTOMER STORY: TASKROUTER

SOLUTION:

The contact center is vital to eLocal’s ability to match its highly qualified leads with a motivated, appropriate professional. eLocal has added Twilio’s TaskRouter API so it can route calls based on agents’ skillsets, availability and other factors, and still be able to quickly pivot an agent’s workload as the business demands.

After adding the contact center and TaskRouter, eLocal increased its revenue by over 45 percent in 2015.

IMPACT:

- 45 percent increase in revenue
- 200 percent increase in contact center size
- 400 percent increase in contact center agents
Omnichannel is almost incompatible with “out-of-the-box” systems. Any system with limited features that requires a lengthy installation process and restricts integration with other platforms will not provide the agility needed to compete in an omnichannel world. And when customer experience directly correlates to a healthier bottom line, there’s an ever greater need to build these features into your current platform.

By leveraging the liberating flexibility of API technology, you can give your team the power to create better customer experiences. The best part is you don’t need to rip out your existing infrastructure, you can simply add to it. Build the next generation contact center block by block, using Twilio.
ABOUT TWILIO

Twilio is a Cloud Communications Platform for software developers. With Twilio, messaging, voice, and video capabilities can be added directly to any web and mobile application. Twilio takes care of building and maintaining the underlying communications infrastructure around the globe, so that businesses can focus on building the right communications experience.

RESOURCES

1. Dimension Data’s 2015 Global Contact Center Benchmarking Report, © Dimension Data 2009-2015
3. ICMI, Optimizing Voice in the Global Contact Center, 2014