



DMG
CONSULTING LLC



Real-Time Agent Guidance: Use Cases and Best Practices

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Table of Contents

I. Real-Time Analysis of Customer Conversations	1
II. Top Uses for Real-Time Analysis of Customer Conversations.....	2
III. Best Practices for Applying Real-Time Analytics and Agent Guidance	4
IV. Case Study: Using Real-Time Feedback as a Game Changer	5
V. Final Thoughts	6
About CallMiner	8
About DMG Consulting LLC.....	8

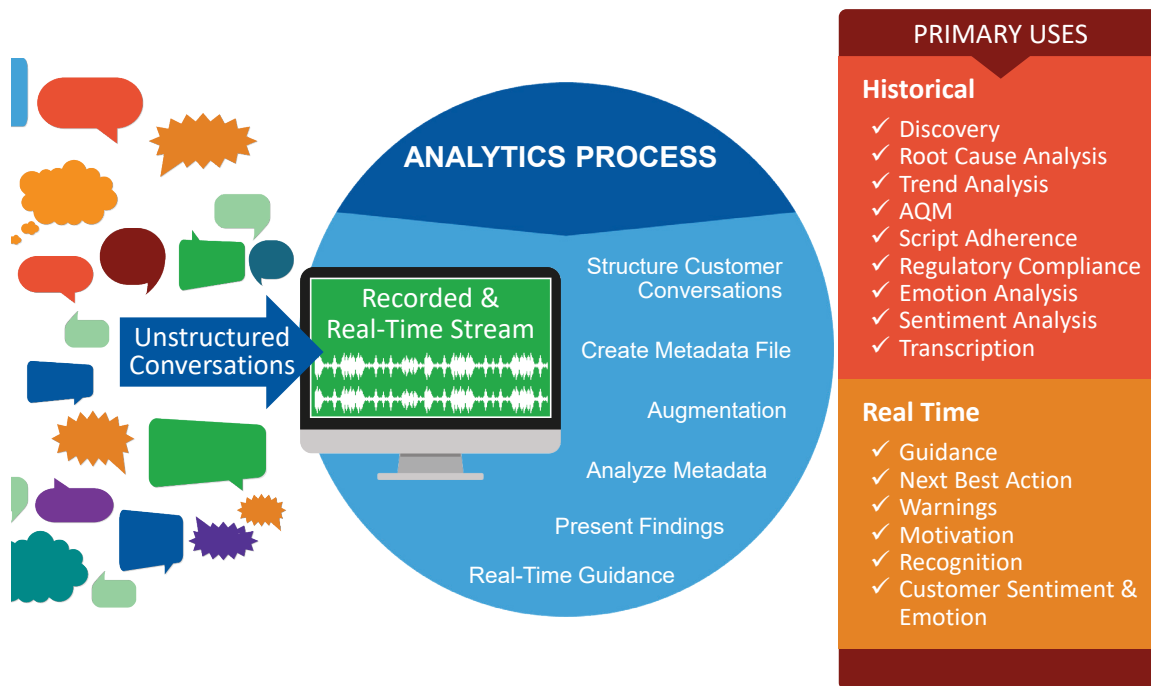
I. Real-Time Analysis of Customer Conversations

To meet ever-increasing customer expectations, it's essential for companies to be able to transform their service and support organizations on-the-fly based on real-time feedback. Providing employees with in-the-moment insights about customer emotion and sentiment along with next-best-action recommendations and guidance to address customer needs requires real-time analysis of customer conversations. These capabilities are available only from real-time speech (conversation) analytics solutions.

Real-time analysis of customer conversations is typically offered as a module of an interaction (speech and text) analytics suite. Full-featured interaction analytics (IA) suites are designed to convert unstructured recorded and live-stream audio and digital customer conversations into transcripts and structured output files that can be categorized, searched and analyzed. The post-interaction, or historical, capabilities of these solutions extract business intelligence from omnichannel customer conversations and report what is happening throughout the enterprise. The findings can be used by an organization to gain insights into customer needs, wants, trends and opportunities. Interaction analytics enables companies to measure and quantify the impact of its actions on customers and prospects.

Real-time applications leverage artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to analyze live conversations as they occur, and deliver actionable alerts or recommendations to managers, supervisors and/or agents. The objectives of these real-time solutions include remediating customer situations by taking the right actions before a discussion ends; maximizing opportunities to up-sell/cross-sell; or simply providing a better customer experience (CX). In some situations, it is about converting a "bad" call into a good one so the customer (and hopefully) the agent are both highly satisfied at the end. In other cases, it's to make sure agents say the right things at the right times.

And sometimes it's about providing real-time guidance to enable an agent to meet a company objective or "wow" a customer by delivering an elevated level of service. As importantly, these solutions discern the nuances in customer conversations, including sentiment, intent, propensity (e.g., to buy or churn, etc.), and more. Analyzing customer conversations in real time has the potential to alter a company's servicing experience while greatly enhancing the role of contact center agents.



Source: DMG Consulting LLC, July 2021

Real-time applications provide direction and encouragement to guide agents in handling often challenging customer situations. This assistance helps reduce the stress and burden of trying to remember all of the data and processes required to deliver a great service experience; this gives employees the opportunity to concentrate on building rapport to meet customers on an emotional level, which is a necessity in today’s service world. These solutions align nicely with the concept of mindfulness, as they keep agents in the “here and now” without having to break away and look up information while an interaction is in progress

II. Top Uses for Real-Time Analysis of Customer Conversations

Historical IA solutions are powerful because they capture and analyze the voice of the customer passively, without the need for a surveying solution or any customer effort. Real-time analysis of customer conversations takes this to the next level, providing “in-the-moment” guidance and feedback to agents and supervisors about how to deliver an outstanding service experience while the call proceeds. Top uses of real-time speech/conversation analytics include:

1. *Compliance*: Notifies an agent using a pop-up or color-coded message when they are out of regulatory compliance. This applies to any contact center where an agent is required to say things to customers in a specific

- time frame, as is the case with the mini-Miranda in collections environments. It also pertains to the need to verify a caller's identify or to read a non-disclosure statement for a sales transaction.
2. *Supervisor/agent alerts*: Notifies a supervisor and/or agent when pre-defined situations occur during a phone conversation. Examples include when a customer sounds angry or frustrated, threatens a lawsuit, indicates that they've been transferred too many times, etc. The system also listens to the agent and notifies them when they get irritated, annoyed or use inappropriate words. The goal is to de-escalate a situation by calling the agent's attention to what is happening. And if this doesn't work, the solution may let a supervisor know so they can intercede (e.g., through live monitoring and whisper coaching, by sending the agent suggestions via chat, etc.) or join the call, as a last resort.
 3. *Next best action/real-time guidance*: Provides agents with the steps or actions they need to take to answer a question correctly, complete an inquiry, or perform a transaction. In some cases, the solution may also access a knowledge article and deliver it to the agent.
 4. *Up-sell/cross-sell opportunities*: Identifies callers who are well-suited for an up-sell/cross-sell, as well as the specific offer for them to present to the customer. The real-time application can pick up the nuances of a conversation, identify the appropriate offering, and provide instructions or a script for the agent to follow to complete a sale.
 5. *Sales/collections effectiveness*: Recommends rebuttal wording or suggested verbiage to overcome objections, as well as detecting pace, tone, intensity, and other factors to help agents maximize their sales and collections efforts.
 6. *Identifies missing words*: Sends reminders to agents to include specific discussion points during the conversation, if the words are not spoken.
 7. *Productivity and efficiency*: Keeps agents on track by directing them through targeted conversations that minimize non-productive time, while providing guidance to help them complete customer requests efficiently.
 8. *Delivers immediate reinforcement*: Identifies "good" behaviors to encourage positive actions agents should continue to cultivate or "bad" practices that should be stopped right away.
 9. *Improves coaching consistency*: Delivers coaching content systemically to ensure the same message is communicated in a consistent format to all agents, regardless of their team or supervisor.

10. *Employee engagement/gamification*: Recognizes and rewards agents for outstanding performance. Encourages and motivates agents when they are in the midst of a difficult call by sending pop-ups such as an emoji or a chat. At the end of a customer conversation, sends agents rewards for a job well done.
11. *Analytics-enabled quality management (AQM)*: Provides real-time feedback for each component of a call so that an agent knows if they are on the right track. (This is not intended to be a full AQM solution but instead a method for constantly providing positive and constructive feedback, which is highly appreciated by millennials and Gen Z'ers, in particular.)

There are many reasons to analyze customer conversations in real time, but most fall into these categories. And, while real-time speech/conversation analytics was important prior to the pandemic, it is now essential for delivering feedback and guidance to agents working remotely who may not have anyone else to ask for help. These solutions are always listening and know when to intervene to improve a customer interaction, or motivate and reward agents for a job well done.

III. Best Practices for Applying Real-Time Analytics and Agent Guidance

Real-time speech/conversation analytics can improve the culture of a contact center, making it a better, more enjoyable and rewarding work environment for employees, while enhancing the customer experience. These solutions capture 100% of interactions, so nothing positive or negative slips by without being properly identified and presented to agents and supervisors. When these solutions are used to recognize and reward outstanding performance, as well as to provide constructive feedback, they empower, engage and motivate agents.

These real-time applications provide direction and encouragement to guide agents in handling often challenging customer situations. This assistance helps reduce the stress and burden of trying to remember all of the data and processes required to deliver a great service experience, thereby giving employees the opportunity to concentrate on building rapport to meet customers on an emotional level, which is a necessity in today's service world. Real-time speech/conversation analytics solutions align nicely with the concept of mindfulness, as they keep agents in the "here and now" without having to break away and look up information while an interaction is in progress

The application needs to be set up to listen, analyze and send feedback/guidance for calls in real time, which means that the automatic call distributor (ACD) must send it a real-time feed. Once the real-time speech/conversation analytics

application hears the conversation, it uses rules and/or AI to decide on the right actions to take.

Next, it notifies (or communicates with) the agent and/or the supervisor regarding the appropriate actions. This may include sending a high-emotion warning to the agent and/or their supervisor; complimenting the agent for following the script and properly verifying a caller; delivering a mini-Miranda in the right time frame, or de-escalating a tough conversation; issuing real-time guidance along with a knowledge article, etc. By the end of an interaction, the solution should provide feedback and recognition as a form of motivation.

IV. Case Study: Using Real-Time Feedback as a Game Changer

The opportunity:

Performing third-party collections is challenging in good times and gets tougher when the economy is weak, and unemployment is high. Healthcare organizations often depend on third-party collections firms to assist them with the difficult task of obtaining late payments from patients. Revenue cycle management firms, such as Company A, the subject of this case study, use a variety of techniques to convince individuals to pay their overdue bills and need tools that position them for ongoing success. The more a collections agent knows about a person, the more effective they will be in coming up with a customized repayment program.

The solution:

In the collections world, real-time speech/conversation analytics is a game changer, as it uses machine learning to continuously enhance its ability to alert and guide agents so they can modify and personalize their approach for each contact. The key to success is coming up with the appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor and measure each live conversation so that an agent can be notified in real time if an interaction is not going as well as it should.

For revenue cycle management, the essential real-time KPIs to measure are: regulatory compliance, dissatisfaction language, positive/negative sentiment, emotion, presence/absence of courtesy language, compliment language, first contact resolution (FCR) rate, and negotiation score. These KPIs provide a balanced view of agent performance, productivity, and their effectiveness in building a positive relationship with each contact. When a conversation is properly aligned, odds are better that there will be a good outcome to the call.

The benefits:

Companies that succeed with real-time speech/conversation analytics use it to provide helpful and constructive feedback and guidance to their agents in the moment. The application focuses on all elements of the conversation – words, intent, tone, emotion and sentiment – and identifies where there is a breakdown so that the agent can change their approach and behavior and alter the outcome in real time.

With the help of their real-time speech/conversation analytics solution, Company A is collecting substantially more of the receivables than they did without the solution and has a much lower number of complaints. While these are desired and important outcomes, they are only two of the many benefits this fast-growing revenue cycle management company is experiencing from their implementation. Real-time speech/conversation analytics solutions also provide the following practical benefits for this collections contact center:

- Constantly provides positive feedback and rewards – improves agent satisfaction, engagement and retention
- Provides guidance/next best action – reinforces agent training and onboarding and may reduce the training time
- Reduces agent stress – reassures agents because the solution is always available to help them
- Involves supervisors when necessary – eliminates and de-escalates potentially contentious situations
- Keeps their collections techniques new and fresh – provides a competitive advantage because their approaches do not become dated or stale

As Company A is a third-party revenue cycle management company, the real-time solution has been instrumental in helping them win new business.

V. Final Thoughts

Companies ask a great deal from their agents and need to give them the tools to succeed. Solutions that can analyze customer conversations in real time fill a void in contact centers. These applications listen, interpret and transform customer needs, wants and opportunities into real-time actions, guidance, encouragement and motivation for agents. They also recognize and reward agents for doing a very difficult job. This improves the outcome of challenging phone conversations and enhances the customer experience and brand.

A real-time speech/conversation analytics application should pay for itself within 9 – 12 months after full implementation, but the payback will vary based on the number of agents and specific use cases. The quantifiable payback should come from a reduction in average handle time (AHT), increase in first contact resolution (FCR), decrease in complaint calls, and increase in sales and collections. However, the benefits of these solutions are far-reaching as they make the contact center working environment better, more enjoyable and rewarding, while also enhancing the customer experience.

About CallMiner

CallMiner is the global leader in conversation analytics to drive business performance improvement. Powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning, CallMiner delivers the industry's most comprehensive platform to analyze omnichannel customer interactions at scale, allowing organizations to interpret sentiment and identify patterns to reveal deep understanding from every conversation. By connecting the dots between insights and action, CallMiner enables companies to identify areas of opportunity to drive business improvement, growth and transformational change more effectively than ever before. CallMiner is trusted by the world's leading organizations across retail, financial services, healthcare and insurance, travel and hospitality, and more. To learn more, visit [CallMiner.com](https://www.callminer.com), read the [CallMiner blog](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

About DMG Consulting LLC

DMG Consulting LLC advises enterprises, vendors and the financial community on all aspects of building, acquiring, operating, optimizing and investing in contact centers, to enhance their enabling technologies and the customer experience (CX). A leader in vendor-agnostic research and consulting, DMG is the only firm whose expertise spans operations and technology. DMG is the primary source for market activity and revenue data and analysis for contact center IT segments. It publishes annual in-depth reports on contact center and back-office industry sectors, including cloud-based contact center infrastructure (contact center as a service, CCaaS), digital customer service, intelligent virtual agents, interaction analytics, robotic process automation (RPA), workforce management (WFM), workforce optimization (WFO) and more. These reports provide the accurate market share, trend identification, growth predictions, functional capabilities and pricing information DMG's global clients rely on to make critical business decisions. Learn more at [dmgconsult.com](https://www.dmgconsult.com).

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