Understanding Omnichannel Customer Experience:

Analyzing Every Touchpoint

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Thanks to advancements in technology and digitalization, customers can connect with your brand across more channels than ever – succeeding in omnichannel engagement is no longer a nice to have, it's a must have to drive business improvement.

The coronavirus pandemic has established a 'new normal' in the way consumers interact with the world and with your business. You need only look at the **dramatic rises in online shopping** and **streaming entertainment** since stay-at-home orders were enacted for proof of these changes.

Digital transformation has also influenced customer expectations for omnichannel customer service. Their ability to hop between web self-service, chat and other digital channels creates the expectation that a seamless transition to a phone call should be no different.

For several reasons beyond the pandemic, customers no longer take a linear path to their product or service challenges. Rather, they engage with companies on multiple devices and across channels while pausing and resuming their journey along the way. The challenge is in identifying that a customer is on a single contiguous journey without channel boundaries, while at the same time delivering a personalized, contextual experience at each touchpoint.

Every company should strive to create an outstanding omnichannel customer experience that eliminates the need for customers to repeat information, re-authenticate their identity or require multiple attempts to resolve their issue.

Achieving this goal requires solutions like conversation analytics and customer journey mapping. Both provide enormous business value beyond channel engagement.

This whitepaper outlines a clear path through omnichannel challenges, shares how much has changed in customer interaction, as well as offers omnichannel best practices and solutions to deliver consistent, personalized customer engagement throughout each journey – and across all channels.

Read on to learn how to span data silos, reduce customer hassle and deliver the personalization your customers expect to drive overall business value, including customer loyalty and retention.

Exploring Today's Customer Journey:
**Current Channels of Customer Engagement**

In late 2019, many thought leaders and analysts predicted that **"customer service channels are on the cusp of a digital revolution."** Today that digital revolution is in full swing – and the rapid push toward digital for customer service engagement is accelerating.

Digital sentiment reports show **75% of people using digital channels** for the first time say that they will continue to use them when things return to "normal." Prior to the crisis, however, many customers had already begun their move toward multichannel communications.

The chart to the right shows that in 2019 customers preferred digital channels over email for their customer service inquiries..

Of course, just because consumers have embraced digital channels doesn't mean your customer service can abandon live agents altogether.

As the chart shows, phone calls account for most inquiries. While digital tools like chatbots and interactive voice response (IVR) effectively handle simpler tasks and support issues, consumers still **desire human intervention** when the problem is more complex.

20%

38%

42%

Phone   Digital Channel   Email
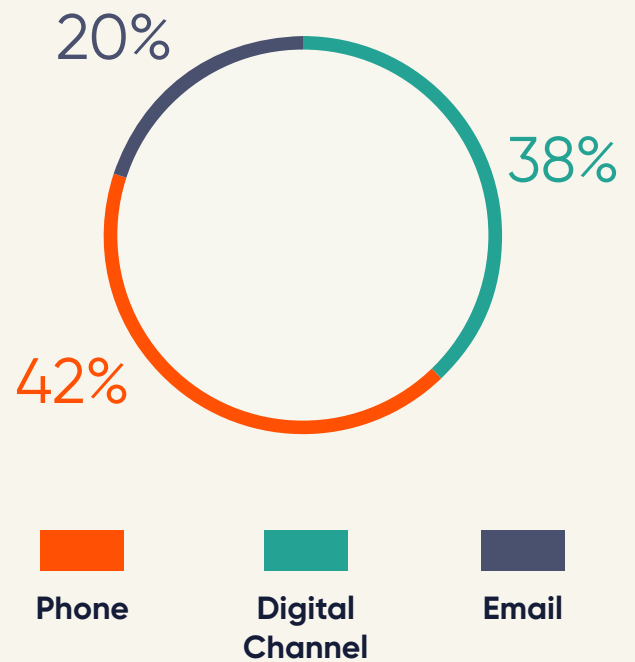
Communication channels preferred for service issues by US customers in **2019.**[6]

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The real challenge for businesses is providing a smooth, integrated customer experience across every communication channel.

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Here it's important to understand key distinctions between multichannel and omnichannel engagement. The first is just a step toward the second.

1. **Multichannel customer engagement** refers to companies interacting with customers through multiple channels, such as phone, email, and live chat, with each channel managed in its own platform.

2. **Omnichannel customer engagement** blends multiple channels and manages them all from a single, unified console. This more integrated approach provides a cohesive and seamless experience for both the customer and the agent across devices and touchpoints.

   While multichannel capabilities are a crucial step toward meeting customer needs, too many channels without integration creates disjointed experiences that frustrate customers, as well as agents. Integrating disparate channels means adopting true omnichannel customer engagement.

64%

of customers expect
to receive real-time assistance regardless of the channel they use

87%

of customers think
brands need to put more effort into providing a seamless experience

Zendesk

The omnichannel customer service gap

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Omnichannel: The Ideal Customer Experience

Omnichannel takes the customer experience further than multichannel by enabling cross-channel customer engagement.

Unlike multichannel, omnichannel refers to some level of integration, data sharing or analytics that work to mitigate the technology "gaps" between each channel of communication.

Common benefits include reduced effort to repeat information on the customer side, and increased intelligence for optimizing agent performance.

By providing a means to share intelligence across all communications, omnichannel ensures that information travels with a customer as they switch from digital channels such as online chat to phone support.

Customer-focused businesses have embraced the omnichannel approach. With customer channel of choice preferences and available communication deployments, the prevalence of omnichannel customer engagement has been increasing. The figure below shows that **omnichannel adoption more than tripled over four years**

Growth of omnichannel customer engagement. **Nemertes, 2019**
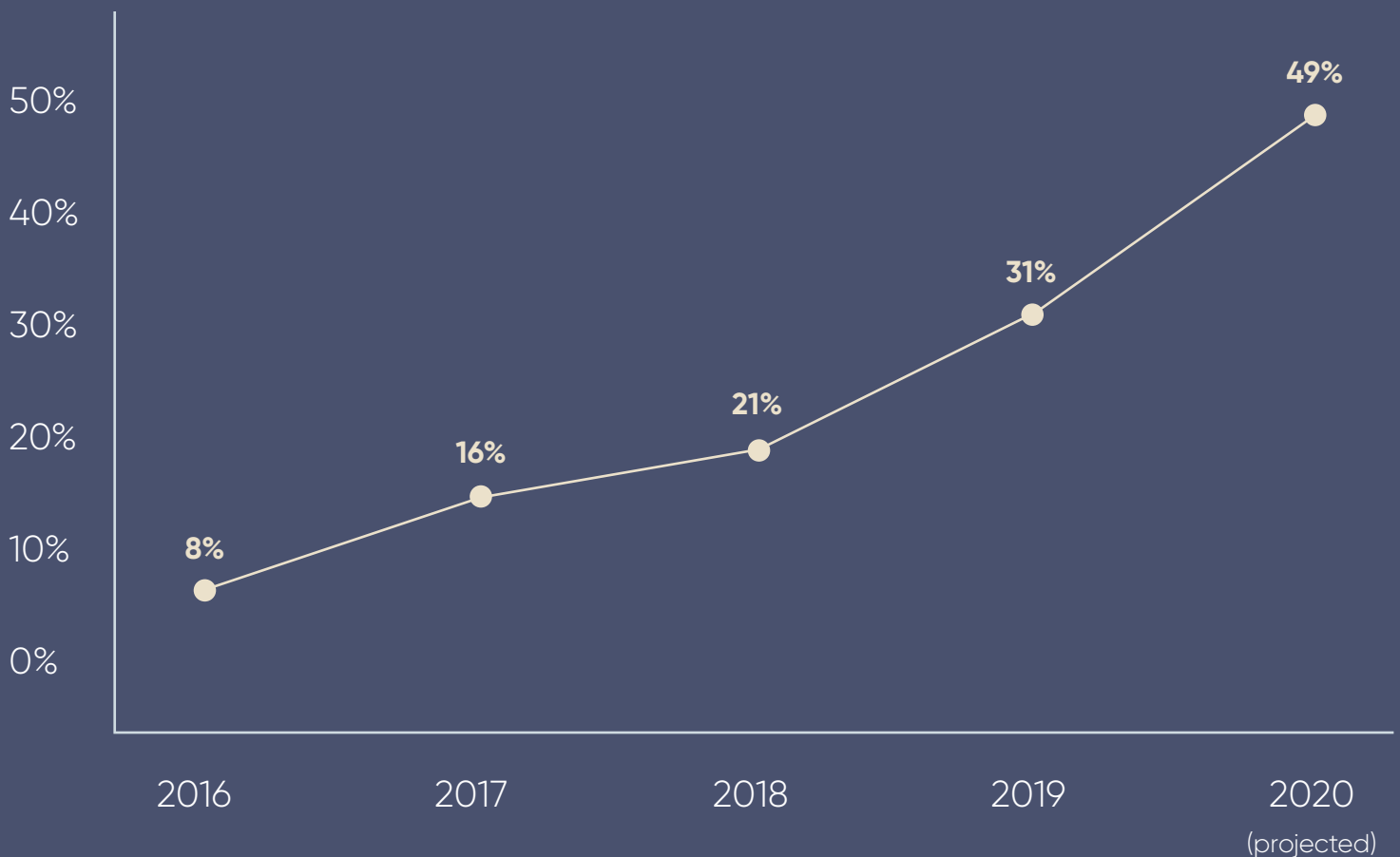
Omnichannel grew even further during the pandemic.

A PWC report indicates the number of companies investing in omnichannel experiences rose from 20% to more than 80% since 2020. Because of this increased adoption, there's a widening gap in how well omnichannel customer experience has been implemented. And these differences reveal themselves in customer satisfaction and business success.

One report shows that companies with the strongest omnichannel engagement strategies retain on average 89% of their customers, compared to 33% retention in companies with weak omnichannel engagement.

> ### *The question then becomes, what separates the strong from the weak omnichannel performers?*

Two critical factors of strong omnichannel customer experience are effective data management and understanding customer needs across channels. Robust analytics tools, such as conversation analysis and customer journey mapping, can achieve both of these omnichannel performance goals.

Before diving into the tools required, it will help to explore the challenges and best practices to achieve strong omnichannel customer experience in detail.

Challenges of Omnichannel Customer Experience

Customers come to your business with high expectations. They expect personalized experiences with each interaction. Fulfilling their expectations can be difficult because at most organizations, channels of communication have evolved within technology silos.

There is usually little to no consideration for blending management or analytics between them. Many contact center and CRM software solutions do not deliver integrated, omnichannel customer experiences.

The best solutions support some digital channels from one platform, but newer channels, like social media and automated chat, are not integrated.

CRMs cannot be the proxy for supporting omnichannel experiences – they can't keep up with multiple customer touchpoints and the data management required for cross-channel personalization, and they cannot integrate customer experiences across old and new channels while enabling customer service automation.

Given the challenge of legacy contact center solutions, in addition to siloed information, customers often complain about the following challenges:

1. **Lack of personalization** – Consumers expect experiences to be personalized because they know companies gather data from them, yet gathering data from multiple channels and **eliminating siloed data** is a challenge for companies.

2. **Repeat information** – Customers seeking support become frustrated when they have to repeat information from one channel to the next and from one agent to the next – and downstream agents don't like it either.

3. **Disjointed omnichannel experiences** – Customers expect social networks to be part of their experience, just as much as their latest phone call. Customers expect to have two-way conversations with companies on every channel.

Eliminating Communication Channel Boundaries

Conversation Analytics and Omnichannel Customer Experience

For most organizations, there is neither the time nor the funds available to realistically integrate existing communication channels. However, that doesn't mean omnichannel failure. Conversation analytics provides a way to "democratize data" across your technology landscape even when you cannot physically integrate your channels of communication.

As a result, business can learn from each of those interactions to create strong engagement strategies and drive business improvement. Conversation analytics allows you to optimize omnichannel customer experience by capturing and analyzing every interaction with your customers, regardless of channel (phone, email, chat, social media, or surveys).

The most effective and comprehensive solutions ingest text-based interactions, as well as voice, to support omnichannel experience insight with data driven root cause action.

The essence of capable conversation analytics is to accurately reveal meaning from the way customers and agents speak (contextual meaning) as well as how it was said (acoustic measures).

Platforms that support chat, email, survey and other text-based communications enable an organization to gather a complete perspective of customer behaviors, even for channel hoppers. Conversation analytics also enables businesses to capture and **analyze customer emotion**, which can lend deeper insight in tone, one of the most impactful customer experience metrics.

Conversation analytics can also help your business quantify emotion with acoustic intensity to help prioritize focus and compel action across departmental boundaries with evidence of how people "feel."

Conversation analytics helps organizations understand every touchpoint, giving customers the flexibility of using multiple channels. These customer insights can empower every part of your business from marketing to finance to operations.

A comprehensive conversation analytics solution, like CallMiner, can be a key resource for customer journey mapping by stepping beyond silo- and channel-specific boundaries to capture insight from 100% of customer interactions.

Additional benefits of conversation analytics for omnichannel customer experience include:

- Developing a single view of the customer journey, allowing for historical contextual analysis.

- Easily navigating to previous or subsequent interactions from the same customer.

- Determining root cause of repeat contacts and poor first contact resolution, even across multiple channels.

- Capturing information across a multitude of platforms.

Best Practices for Omnichannel Customer Engagement

We know your customers expect personalized and integrated customer service across multiple channels. The following best practices will help create strong omnichannel experiences that satisfy customer expectations.

1. **Meet Customers in Their Channel of Choice**

   The easiest way to ensure you're providing top notch customer service is to meet your users where they already are. Look at your history of customer contact—and in particular, look at where the longest response times exist.

   It may be that you need to change your team structure to place a deeper emphasis on chat rather than calls. Alternatively, you may need to scale up your social media team. Making these changes is a quick way to improve customer experience.

2. **Offer Robust Self-Help with an "Out"**

   Providing customers with an opportunity to **answer their own questions** is a "no-brainer." Moving toward self-service can be as easy as expanding your FAQ section. But remember to make it easy to offer a path forward when self-help fails.

   For more complicated requests, video tutorials or the ability to schedule **online meetings** with experts can go a long way – and can keep call centers reserved for the most complex issues or customers who best communicate via phone.

3. **Creatively Mitigate Your Technology Siloes**

   If customers call the support center after asking a question on chat, and are then transferred between departments only to repeat the same story, you may have lost a customer entirely.

   Brands understand this, but are handcuffed by legacy systems that, in many cases, make what seems like common sense integration a monumental task. To get around challenges, consider improved knowledge management such as rigorous dispositioning coding.

   This intelligence can ensure that the customer service team can easily see past customer communication when a reference (like their name) is provided. This will make the process much smoother.

4. **Address Every Channel**

   Consider process changes, instructional guidance, and agent coaching to help reduce gaps experienced by channel-hopping customers, especially when technology barriers exist.

   Manually tracking disposition codes or preparing agent with scripts specifically designed for emotionally "hot" customers who failed to self-serve in a digital channel can resolve challenges created by legacy communication channel silos.

5. **Correlate Analytics Without Channel Boundaries**

   Ensure that scored meaning and presentation is not limited by channel boundaries. A best practice is to ensure text and speech analytics are consistently scored and presented, even when the channels from which they are derived are not integrated.

6. **Apply Continuous Improvement**

   Before you implement these steps, test certain metrics. After you've implemented everything you've learned, test them all again. Make sure that everything is working as intended by checking the following:

   - Average response time by platform
   - Shared knowledge between channels
   - Ease of navigation
   - Satisfaction regarding the response

Beyond adopting the communication channels your customers prefer, many best practices for omnichannel customer experience require capturing a unified view of each customer's interaction with your business regardless of channel.

Achieving this single view starts with mapping the customer journey across each touchpoint and capturing relevant data within each interaction. In addition, understanding your customers' needs requires a robust conversation analytics platform capable of capturing each channel.
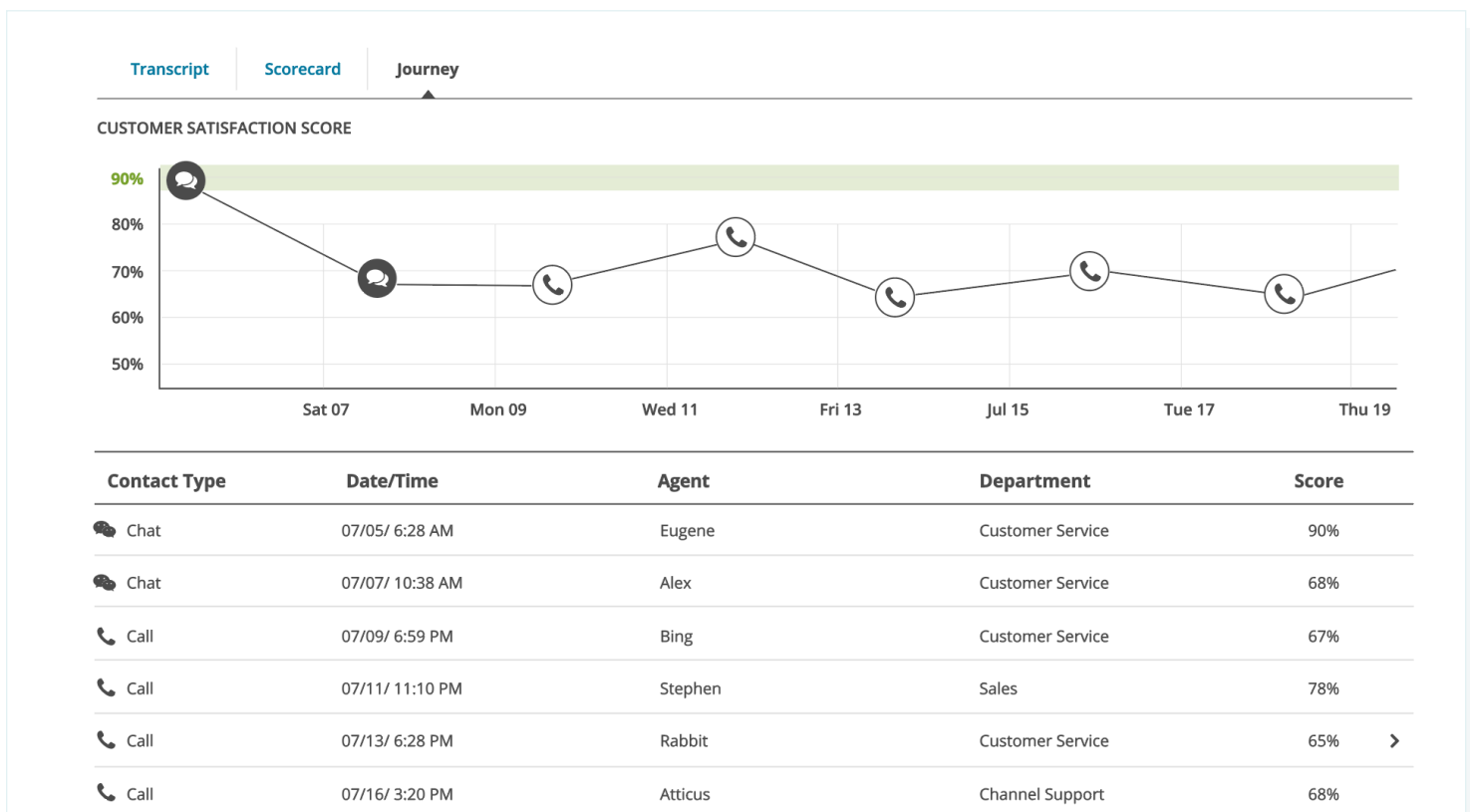
Mapping the Customer Journey Across Channels

Siloed information is the source of one of the leading customer complaints that your business must overcome in omnichannel customer experience. **Eighty-nine percent of customers report becoming frustrated** when they must repeat the issue they already explained in chat or to another agent.

Customer journey mapping is a critical step toward spanning siloes of intelligence and empowering agents with critical information as your customers move between channels. Customer journey maps are essentially diagrams with each customer/company interaction plotted. These interactions start from a defined initial touchpoint to a final result.

Such maps tend to move in a linear fashion and accurately delineate key portions of a customer's experience with your company. Customer journey maps come in a wide variety of formats, depending on the objective for use.

The example below shows a customer's journey, providing icons to illustrate the type of interaction, a time and date stamp, as well as the department contacted. Additionally, this example includes satisfaction scores for each interaction.

	Transcript	Scorecard	**Journey**		

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SCORE

Contact Type	Date/Time	Agent	Department	Score	
💬 Chat	07/05/ 6:28 AM	Eugene	Customer Service	90%	
💬 Chat	07/07/ 10:38 AM	Alex	Customer Service	68%	
📞 Call	07/09/ 6:59 PM	Bing	Customer Service	67%	
📞 Call	07/11/ 11:10 PM	Stephen	Sales	78%	
📞 Call	07/13/ 6:28 PM	Rabbit	Customer Service	65%	>
📞 Call	07/16/ 3:20 PM	Atticus	Channel Support	68%	

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Customer Journey Mapping Features

Not all customer journey mapping solutions are created equally. Some offer minimal features, while others offer features that enable businesses to monitor and improve omnichannel customer experience.

Effective journey mapping solutions allow organizations to not only capture raw information for mapping purposes, but also group that information for analysis.

The features listed to the right are critical to a strong omnichannel strategy.

1. **Visualization:** Features in this category create graphical representations of a customer's journey. Visualization features should offer multiple prebuilt diagrams and templates, as well a toolset for customizing journey maps to fit your own business goals.

2. **Collaboration:** These features allow team members involved in the mapping process to share information, update conceptual details and work together from separate work environments. This shared environment enables your business to collaborate effectively on your omnichannel strategy.

3. **Monitoring:** This feature captures critical customer data through business development tools, such as customer satisfaction analytics, customer experience monitoring, customer surveys and other tools that enable businesses to capture the voice of your customer, as well as customer emotion.

Because the strongest omnichannel customer experiences provide a seamless transition between channels, it's critical to capture every interaction in every channel.

Further, conversation analytics technology and analysis of the customer journey enables organizations to reveal and resolve challenges that arise when customers transition between channels of communication.

By monitoring and analyzing customer interactions across various channels, these solutions help you identify what customers want with an outside-in perspective, which ultimately improves the customer experience.

Additionally, insights gained from conversation analytics empowers businesses to make data-driven shifts in service strategies to improve customer retention and satisfaction.

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Analyzing and Understanding the Entire Customer Journey

The combination of **customer journey mapping and conversation analytics** drives insights with the perspective that a customer may be on a journey with multiple touchpoints across more than one communication channel.

Conversation analytics track and monitor customer behavior across multiple channels, from the customer's first interaction and throughout the business relationship. Because the customer journey mapping doesn't end with the purchase or when an issue is resolved, conversation analytics solutions can monitor and analyze customer behavior through customer service interactions and beyond.

One hallmark of conversation analytics and customer journey mapping is that they can combine both quantitative and qualitative data.

This allows you to identify the customer journeys that have the biggest impact on specific business goals, such as increasing revenue or reducing customer churn, and making data-driven decisions designed to influence those outcomes.

By combining data about customer behavior with satisfaction or retention metrics, companies gain a better understanding of customer needs and wants, as well as actionable insights that can inform decision-making.

Additionally, combining conversation analytics and customer journey mapping can help companies better forecast and predict customer behavior based on data gained through historical interactions and similar messaging at various touchpoints.

Done properly, analytics optimizes engagement across every channel in the customer journey and yields valuable customer insights.

More expansively, insights into **omnichannel engagement** benefit more than your contact center and customer engagement.

These analytics provide the insights necessary to drive improvements beyond the contact center, including across marketing, finance, product development, operations, and other departments throughout the organization.

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Overcoming the Omnichannel Challenge

By using omnichannel customer experience best practices and powerful conversation analytics technology, your business can more effectively meet your customer service needs. Today's customer journeys cross multiple channels and involve more touchpoints than ever before.

Ordinary analytics solutions provide valuable insights, but that data exists in silos. By employing customer journey mapping solutions with effective conversation analytics, your business has immediate access to data from every channel, creating a holistic view of your customers' journeys.

Additionally, the insights derived from these customer interactions make it possible for organizations to better predict and influence outcomes, ultimately driving business improvement.

Take your **customer experience initiatives** to a new level with insights captured from every customer interaction, in every channel on a continuous basis. Metrics for key customer indicators, such as emotion, empower businesses with insights that spark awareness and drive action.

With more businesses competing for customers, using omnichannel insights has the power to both enable richer customer experiences and put your business ahead.

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.

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