



Leveraging Emotion to Improve CX & Elevate Contact Centre Performance

Market data, strategies and best
practices to create emotional
connections that drive growth



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Executive Summary: Welcome to The Age of the Customer

Brands are officially doing business in what Forrester calls "The Age of the Customer." In this new era, customer experience (CX) is the battleground in which organisations win and lose. In fact, **Gartner** predicts that 89% of organisations will compete primarily on CX, and **Forrester** has declared CX as the only sustainable competitive advantage remaining in today's marketplace.

But despite the urgency around CX performance, **Forrester's** annual US Customer Experience Index showed that between 2017 and 2018, CX remained stagnant. And in 2019, the index improved a mere 0.4%, with 81% of brands on the index not improving their scores at all.

In order to compete effectively in The Age of the Customer, brands need to elevate their approach to CX. The journey starts in the contact centre.

The key ingredient for delivering a five-star CX in the contact centre is understanding and leveraging emotion across customer interactions. Emotion is a key driver for developing strong and lasting customer relationships.



Consider the recent research:

- Emotion has a bigger impact on brand loyalty and customer retention than ease of engagement and CX effectiveness.ⁱ
- 60% of loyal customers use the same type of emotional language they'd use for family and friends when speaking of their favourite brands.ⁱⁱ

However, not all organisations are taking advantage. Harley Manning, Vice President and Research Director at Forresterⁱⁱⁱ predicts that 20% of organisations will give up and stop trying to win at CX. However, as Manning explains, firms that ignore CX will do so at their own peril.

Emotional Connections: Invest in Talent & Technology in the Contact Centre

Urgency for exceptional CX has never been higher. Organisations are responding by increasing investments in talent and technology, and by cutting programmes – and people – that fail to deliver.

In fact, Forrester^{iv} predicts that one out of four CX professionals will lose their job. At the same time, brands will spend \$8 billion more on customer service agents in 2020^v than in 2019 due to heightened demand and competition for contact centre agents with strong subject matter expertise, the ability to handle complex situations, and deep interest in the brand's products or services.

The driving force behind these changes is two-fold: 1) the criticality of emotion and positive CX on the bottom line, and 2) the complexities associated with mastering emotion and managing delicate customer situations.

On the first point, companies across the globe are losing billions per year due to avoidable consumer switching. Forward-looking organisations are investing aggressively to turn this risk into competitive gain. In addition to their people investments, on the technology side, organisations are deploying speech analytics and AI in the contact centre and leveraging sentiment analysis to help measure customer emotions.



Sentiment Analysis: A Way to Measure Emotion

Sentiment analysis helps agents develop an emotional connection in the contact centre. By definition, sentiment analysis is the process of understanding how customers feel about products, promotions, brands or the interactions they have with your organisation. The end result is an in-depth, personal look at the true **Voice of the Customer**.

Powered by speech analytics technology, sentiment analysis enables companies to assess language used in customer interactions along with acoustic measures such as tempo and agitation. This provides actionable insight on a customer's emotions, attitudes and opinions, as well as customer service and agent performance.

Unlike traditional feedback methods, such as post-call surveys, sentiment analysis derived from unsolicited feedback captures 100% of customer interactions to paint a clearer picture of how your customers really feel and why.

By including analysis of the acoustic measures that accompany what your customers say, organisations can understand the emotional intensifiers that depict the intent, action and satisfaction. This is much richer than anything that can be gleaned from a survey.

"Humanizing feedback means making it more real, understandable, and relatable for stakeholders. This requires moving beyond traditional surveys and reports – and tapping into emotionally engaging forms of feedback like social media, speech, images, and video. To do this, CX professionals must first gather emotionally compelling insights, then use those insights to create empathy and make emotional connections that drive change." ^{vi}

Forrester, 2019. Humanize Feedback To Drive VoC Engagement And Action.

Putting Emotional Data into Action with Customers

By considering sentiment scores and behavioural metrics, brands can more effectively identify customer satisfaction and loyalty drivers to provide that “Wow” moment. Whether it’s offering same-day emergency delivery for a customer that’s in a tough situation, performing spontaneous acts of kindness for a caller that’s having a bad day, or finding innovative on-the-spot solutions for a customer with a hard-to-resolve problem, sentiment analysis can help agents uncover how a caller is feeling, and respond appropriately.

For example, a health insurance company may have an audience that values high levels of empathy in the CX journey, whereas a technology company’s audience may grow agitated with empathy – preferring quick, get-the-job-done approaches. There are many instances in the contact centre where the correct, efficient approach doesn’t match an agent’s intuition. In order to positively influence a customer’s emotional state, agents need to understand what behaviours lead to positive experiences.

This is also true of different cultures and illustrates the potential risk of outsourcing contact centre operations to a location where the culture is at odds with that of their customers.

While every customer, industry and region is different, in the contact centre, one thing is consistent: emotion matters. Many callers just want to be listened to when calling a brand. Listening is a skill so basic, yet complex in the contact centre, where agents are often trained to stick to scripts and reduce the amount of silence on calls. Speech analytics can provide real-time guidance to help agents divert from scripts when the situation warrants, and instruction for how and when to exert certain emotions or actions to improve call outcomes based on its analysis of sentiment.

Another important practice is to gather and analyse emotional feedback in the “cries for help” from contact centre recordings. With speech analytics, employees can “tap into the context and emotion in the calls at scale,” according to Forrester^{VII}.

Although agents won’t be able to use these post-call insights in real-time to impact the outcome of those calls, they can learn and improve. On a more strategic level, organisations can use the information to change or transform different aspects of their organisation for the better, based on the true voice (and emotion) of the customer.

An example of this is the collections organisation that learned that if their agents expressed empathy during a call, the customers from whom they were trying to secure past-due payments were five times less likely to express a negative emotion during the call and nearly three times as likely to provide a promise of payment. This was discovered by analysing emotions expressed by both the customer and the agent during calls, and the subsequent successful result recorded during those calls.

Understanding Context Before Emotions Run High

Combining emotion with words and other situational factors can reveal what is taking place in the moment, as well as the appropriate next step to take. Contextual data can show why call lengths vary from each other, and how to improve CX to accommodate the long and short interactions.

When calls have extended periods of silence, you can identify the driving force. Context can uncover hidden meaning behind words that typically would be used to describe satisfaction.

The Benefit of Getting Emotional with Agents

Understanding emotion isn't just beneficial to customers – it's a major driver in retaining and attracting hardworking, long-lasting contact centre agents. Speech analytics delivers real-time, crucial feedback to agents, equipping them to respond appropriately and improve the outcome of the interaction.

Companies can monitor agent performance by identifying patterns, and agents are able to self-assess and use the data to help improve and develop the skills they need (empathy, politeness, efficiency, etc.) to reach better outcomes.

Measuring and understanding agent emotions is also important to boost employee happiness, fulfillment and ultimately, productivity and retention.

After all, research has proven that happier employees perform better than unhappy employees in the workplace.

Speech analytics is also ideal for encouraging the agent performance you want. For example, highly scored interactions can be used for agent bright spot analysis with examples to emulate – including the most appropriate sentiment expression or response. And when agents are given appropriate feedback with the tools needed to succeed and improve, their confidence is boosted, as is their likelihood of retention.

University of Oxford's Saïd Business School

produced evidence of what many people have long suspected – happier people do a better job. Its six-month study of 1,800 contact centre workers at British telecom firm BT found a clear causal effect of happiness on productivity. Happy employees not only worked faster, making more calls per hour, but also achieved 13% higher sales than their unhappy colleagues.



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For decades, agent retention has been a massive challenge for contact centres across the world. The Quality Assurance & Training Connection (QATC) found that the average annual turnover rate for contact centre agents is between 30-45% – more than double the average for other occupations. On top of that, data from the Work Institute Retention Report revealed that it costs an average of 33% of an employee's salary to just find a suitable replacement.

By keeping agents satisfied through speech analytics and sentiment analysis, organisations can combat and proactively prevent agent turnover and its expensive price tag.

Conclusion

In The Age of the Customer, only the emotionally intelligent will survive. Brands can get ahead by equipping their contact centres to understand emotion and extract and leverage the data to drive a better, more human-centric CX. AI-powered speech analytics gives contact centres the ability to understand customers better, provide improved service, develop higher performing agents, and create stronger customer connection. The bottom-line impact on growth, reputation and revenue will speak for itself.

CallMiner's Emotion Solution Suite enables organisations using CallMiner Eureka speech analytics to quickly and accurately understand, measure, and trend human emotion in interactions between contact centre agents and customers. This applies to both "after-call" interaction analysis and real-time next-best-action agent guidance.

Benefits include:

Richer Insight

Gain a deeper understanding of how your customers feel through a scale of emotions crossing different levels of positive or negative sentiment spanning emotion intensity.

Emotional Accuracy

Achieve industry-leading precision by leveraging a unique resource of conversational data applied for machine-learned emotional meaning.

Context Empowered

Conversational behaviours with sentiment markers account for meaning to understand root cause ignitors of emotional "moments of truth."

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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 analyse omnichannel customer interactions at scale, allowing organisations 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 organisations across retail, financial services, healthcare and insurance, travel and hospitality, and more.



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