The Future of Contact Centres: How the CRM Can Boost Your Customer Experience
Contents

Introduction: The future of the Contact Centre is happening now

1) Contact Centre challenges (and how CRMs solve them)
   a) Building a next-generation Contact Centre
   b) Understanding the customer journey
   c) Lack of data and customer insights

2) The CRM’s role in the Contact Centre space
   a) Contact Centres: A brief history
   b) The future of the Contact Centre is context-aware
   c) Delivering a next-generation Contact Centre

3. CRM/CSM technology overview
   a) Salesforce Service Cloud
   b) Zendesk
   c) ServiceNow CSM

Conclusion

About Conn3ct
Introduction: The future of the Contact Centre is happening now

The CRM (Customer Relationship Management) or CSM (Customer Service Management) system is playing an increasingly significant role in the Contact Centre space as businesses seek to:

- Consolidate their technology
- Increase automation and efficiency
- Reduce costs
- Ultimately deliver a better customer experience

As your business’ communications solutions come up for renewal, you must now decide whether to invest in two tightly integrated, best-of-breed products — a Contact Centre and a CRM/CSM system — or an all-in-one platform. You can't look at the Contact Centre platform in isolation to the CRM/CSM system, as functionality will be blended between the two. Without a trusted partner, many businesses are making critical mistakes when it comes to building their next solution.

With this shift in mind, Conn3ct has recently partnered with Salesforce and Zendesk, enabling us to fill in the gaps in our customers’ Contact Centres and deliver a next-generation, context-aware, adaptive solution.

Read on to discover how CRMs solve Contact Centre challenges, why the future of the Contact Centre is happening now, and the pitfalls to avoid for an efficient Contact Centre.
1. Contact Centre challenges (and how CRMs solve them)

The CRM helps to overcome a multitude of Contact Centre challenges, including:

- Agent productivity
- Quality of service
- Consistency
- Speed of training
- Agent churn

Most significantly, a robust CRM makes it possible to develop a 360-degree view of the consumer and personalise the customer experience according to the specific context.

The ability to overcome all of the above challenges with a single solution makes the CRM a crucial building block in the next-generation Contact Centre.

However, the CRM is just one piece of the Contact Centre puzzle. While you might have got to grips with customer interaction management, if you haven’t factored in workforce optimisation and workforce management, you’re missing a vital pillar that CRM providers can’t address.

Related Read: How to Optimise Your Contact Centre for Efficiency

a) Building a next-generation Contact Centre

One of the key challenges is building a Contact Centre that’s future-proof.

Historically, businesses were more concerned about the cost of delivery than the customer experience. Now that the world has changed, one unsatisfied customer has the power to share their unsavoury experience with millions of people on social media. Suddenly, the stakes are much higher and therefore NPS (Net Promoter Score) is a key metric. AHT (Average Handling Time), on the other hand, has fallen down the priorities list.

To deliver an excellent customer experience, knowing your customer extremely well is vital. The CRM is the ideal place to store and use that information when needed.

If your key business challenge is building a future-proof Contact Centre, prioritising your CRM is crucial.

Related Read: How to Improve Customer Experience Using Cloud Contact Centre Technology

b) Understanding the customer journey

Another key challenge is understanding where the customer is in their journey so that you can act accordingly.

Put simply, customer experience is about doing the right thing at the right time. More specifically, it’s about identifying a moment of truth in the buying or service cycle. The moment of truth is when the customer is about to take an action which will ultimately determine their NPS.
To put this into perspective, a traditional Contact Centre can't possibly know where the customer is in their journey. In fact, it wasn't built to know.

The CRM, on the other hand, is built to know, and can identify when a customer is at stage three of the buying cycle and ready to make a purchasing decision. Armed with this information, you can handle the customer interaction accordingly.

For example, if a high value, loyal customer is having trouble with their service, it's important to have that interaction flagged so they can be routed to a senior agent who can provide expert help and empathy, rather than add to their frustration by being routed to the standard IVR system (“press 1 for sales, 2 for billing, or if you're a new customer, press 3” — none of which may be relevant to the context of this interaction.

Turning a negative customer experience into a positive one by providing exceptional service in tough situations often results in some of the most memorable customer experience stories.

When it comes to delivering an excellent customer experience, context is king — and a good CRM can equip you with the information you need, fast.

To find out how we can help your organisation deliver a next-generation Contact Centre successfully, book your free consultation with one of our experts today.

c) Lack of data and customer insights

Finally, most Contact Centre managers don't have enough visibility over what's actually happening in their Contact Centre, typically because they don't have access to day-to-day data. While a handful of agents might say, “X problem seems to happen a lot”, this tends to be on a random sample basis. This can make it very difficult to take action to drive positive change and keep improving the customer experience.

However, if you store every piece of information in a CRM, you can mine that information and reveal powerful insights. What if 90% of customers are calling in because your website doesn't work? If you know this, you can take steps to quickly resolve the issue.

If you don't have the data, you can't make decisions. The CRM is designed to combat this.

‘Most roads point back to having a 360-degree view of the customer and their journey. The CRM is the key building block on which that sits.’

— Martin Cross, Group CTO, Conn3ct

A good CRM system can also help new agents get up to speed on the customer quicker and ensure a consistent service, since every agent has access to the same database and can therefore act based on the context.

Now that you're familiar with the top three Contact Centre challenges, read on to find out more about the role the CRM plays in delivering a strong customer experience.
2. The CRM’s role in the Contact Centre space

The CRM’s role in the Contact Centre space continues to evolve as time goes on.

*How does this relate to the future of the Contact Centre? Read on to find out.*

a) Contact Centres: A brief history

Historically, the Contact Centre was made up of three key pillars.

1. **Customer interaction management**
2. **Customer service management**
3. **Workforce management and optimisation**

Here’s a brief summary of each pillar:

**Customer interaction management**

Customer interaction management refers to the Contact Centre technology enabling interactions to reach the right agent with the right skill set – this could be a call, an email, SMS, etc.

**Customer service management**

Once you’ve funnelled the interaction to the right agent, you’ll need to identify the requirements before taking the necessary action; this is where customer service management comes in (where the CRM traditionally sat). This can include your ticketing system, sales system and so on.

**Workforce management and optimisation**

The third pillar relates to how you manage your workforce, known as workforce management and optimisation.

What we’re now seeing is the CRM is eating into the Contact Centre space — in some cases so much so that the traditional Contact Centre is no longer required.
For example, big players in the CRM space (Salesforce, Zendesk and ServiceNow) are already incorporating digital channels so that you can manage email, Facebook Messenger etc. directly from the platform.

‘These worlds are colliding, and more and more now, you need less of the Contact Centre platform and more of the CRM.’
— Martin Cross

Most recently, both Zendesk and Salesforce have adopted and tightly integrated Amazon Connect as their chosen customer interaction management system for the voice channel, rebadging it as their own voice contact centre platform.

b) The future of the Contact Centre is context-aware

The Contact Centre of the future is context-aware, adaptive, and conversational.

In order to be context-aware, you need to know how your customers have interacted with your business in the past. Therefore, a key element to any future-proof Contact Centre is having somewhere to store all customer interaction information; the natural place for this is the CRM.

Even if you’re thinking from a Contact Centre perspective, rather than a CRM-first perspective about how your future Contact Centre should look, then the context store (and so CRM) remains key.

What we’re now seeing is if you do want to go down the context-awareness route, you’ll naturally fall into the CRM space. With that said, we’re also now seeing the big CRM players beginning to include the traditional Contact Centre technology players’ offerings within their platform.

c) Delivering a next-generation Contact Centre

If you want to deliver an opti-channel approach by customising the experience each time a customer interacts with your brand and offering the optimum channel to deliver that interaction, having a next-generation Contact Centre architecture is key.

If you look at the traditional Contact Centre, a customer calls in and likely gets the same IVR response each time. The experience isn’t structured around what the customer wants to do, but rather how the business is structured in terms of departments, which isn’t the future.

The future is customising the response based on where the consumer is in the customer journey.

At Conn3ct, our natural language processing capability (complemented by our recent ICR acquisition) enables us to enhance the customer experience, improve self-service containment metrics and boost operational efficiency, drawing on our years of knowledge and experience in speech bot design and development, context-aware intelligent automation, and range of available technologies.
Here's a couple of examples:

“Hi, I can see you missed your flight today. The next one is at 21:00; would you like me to book you on that flight?”

“Yes, please.”

“Hi, are you calling today to pay your water bill?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, your balance is £30. If you would like to proceed with payment, say “yes”.”

In order to customise the experience in each of the above instances, your system needs to know about all previous interactions that have taken place between the business and your customer (the idea of a context store). The best place to store that information? The CRM.

If you look at the buying habits of Contact Centre Managers, the biggest cost is the system the agent works in, i.e. the CRM. If you’re spending 10x as much on the CRM, it’s much easier to add on functionality to handle the customer interaction management than it is to start at the other end (traditional Contact Centre technology) and work backwards.

To deliver a next-generation Contact Centre, you need the key ingredients that sit in a customer service management system (additional channels can then be added later on). As a result, the whole market is moving towards a CRM/CSM-led approach.

Lastly, a next-generation Contact Centre demands that agents become more efficient.

If they’re all operating from one system containing unified customer information and a shared knowledge base, which prompts agents with the right answers or next steps, agent productivity and efficiency will naturally increase and your agents will become productive far quicker. The CRM, combined with a clever Contact Centre platform, makes this shift possible.

Instead of saying “I need a CRM system and a Contact Centre system” and buying the two separately, there’s now just one buying decision. Businesses are naturally gravitating towards CRM systems because they’re the biggest spend and will generate the biggest advantage.

‘These are the building blocks on which you build the customer experience.’

— Martin Cross
3. CRM/CSM technology overview

With numerous CRM/CSM technologies on the market, it can be difficult knowing which to choose. In this section, we outline the top three CSM solutions and highlight the benefits of each:

1. **Salesforce Service Cloud**
2. **Zendesk**
3. **ServiceNow CSM**

a) **Salesforce Service Cloud**

The first CSM solution that’s making waves in the Contact Centre space is Salesforce Service Cloud. Service Cloud is built on the Salesforce Customer Success Platform and provides businesses with a 360-degree view of their customers, enabling you to personalise each and every interaction.

With Service Cloud, you can automate service processes, streamline workflows, and surface key information to arm agents with the tools they need to deliver a seamless customer experience.

With Service Cloud and Customer Communities, businesses can even create self-service communities to help customers find the information they need, connect with other customers, or contact an agent if required.

The Salesforce Lightning Console is designed to boost agent productivity, with features including email-to-case, skills-based routing, and more. With a comprehensive knowledge base and access to company experts, the interface is highly intuitive and helps to reduce costs.

The addition of Service Cloud Voice (SCV), based on Amazon Connect and exploiting other AWS solutions, brings the voice channel directly into Salesforce. Leveraging Amazon Lex, natural language virtual agents can service customers quickly and efficiently without needing to speak with one of your agents. Leveraging live transcription in combination with the Salesforce knowledge base, Salesforce supercharges your agents by identifying customer sentiment and automatically prompting agents with answers to customer queries and next best action recommendations.

b) **Zendesk**

Next on the list is Zendesk, another key player in the marketplace.

Zendesk’s support, sales and customer engagement software is a flexible solution that’s ideal for businesses with ever-evolving needs. In particular, it’s easy to scale up or down to meet peaks and troughs in demand, as well as being fast to implement.

Their Support Suite enables agents to have natural, yet contextually-aware conversations with customers, allowing them to provide a comprehensive service.

Their platform is truly omnichannel and supports an impressive number of channels, including email, chat, and voice — as well as a whole host of social media applications. Its customer-centric view means all agents can access the same customer information simply and easily.
Zendesk is also particularly strong if you’re looking for data-driven insights, as it enables you to track and monitor interactions across channels to eliminate guesswork.

Zendesk Sunshine is designed to provide that perfect context store, enabling you to understand the customer journey across all of your channels, while Sunshine Conversations provides truly omnichannel capability.

Zendesk Talk, leveraging Amazon Connect and exploiting other advanced AWS solutions, brings the voice channel directly into Zendesk. Leveraging Amazon Lex, natural language virtual agents can service customers quickly and efficiently without needing to speak with one of your agents. Leveraging live transcription in combination with the Zendesk knowledge base, Zendesk supercharges your agents by identifying customer sentiment and automatically prompting them with answers to customer queries and next best action recommendations.

c) ServiceNow CSM

Last but certainly not least is ServiceNow CSM (Customer Service Manager), a CSM platform that’s built to service multiple customers at different service levels (unlike its predecessor solution).

ServiceNow’s leading offering is designed to equip agents with the tools to handle customer queries from request to resolution quickly and efficiently.

The solution promises to increase customer satisfaction through personalisation and process automation, boost resolution efficiency by fast-tracking customers to the right agent, and improve product and service quality by analysing customer interactions and product trends.

ServiceNow Cloud Call, leveraging Amazon Connect, brings the voice channel directly into ServiceNow. Leveraging Amazon Lex, natural language virtual agents can service customers quickly and efficiently without needing to speak with one of your agents.
Why Choose Conn3ct to Integrate Your CRM and Contact Centre?

CRM platforms are now beginning to replace parts of traditional Contact Centre solutions with their own. The downside to this is CRM providers don’t have a complete understanding of how Contact Centres work. Fortunately, at Conn3ct, we know Contact Centre systems inside-out and help you identify the right solution for your business. Conn3ct is unique because we are the only Salesforce and Zendesk partner who has extensive knowledge and experience of the Contact Centre space. We’re also vendor-agnostic, so you can rest assured you’re getting a truly tailored solution. Whichever CRM solution you have, ensuring it’s implemented and integrated correctly is vital to ensuring a seamless customer experience across multiple channels.

With over 30 years’ experience, we will bring our knowledge of the Contact Centre and all the wider technologies to maximise the value of your CRM. Backed up by our day-to-day experience of implementing thousands of Contact Centre solutions, we know what it takes to deliver an outstanding customer experience.

*Why not explore our range of customer success stories to discover how we’ve helped businesses just like yours?*

At Conn3ct, we will help you to:

1. Design, configure and manage the new elements in your CRM solution
2. Create a best-of-breed solution thanks to our unique vendor-agnostic capability in the CRM space
3. Incorporate WFM (Workforce Management) and WFO (Workforce Optimisation)
4. Take the best of what you have today and integrate it with your CRM/CSM, replicating many (if not all) of the benefits
5. Understand what your existing Contact Centre offers and ensure your new (CRM-provided) system does the same
While the CRM/CSM providers are now including voice channel and Contact Centre interaction management capabilities into their platforms, designing, configuring, managing and tuning the performance of your speech-based virtual agents across voice and digital channels is always best achieved through a partner like Conn3ct, with the experience, vision and capability to rapidly make it a complete success.

With our deep knowledge across Contact Centre technology, we can help determine the best technology for you and tightly integrate it with your chosen CRM/CSM system to achieve the same levels of efficiency, but tailored to your business.

*Book your free consultation with one of our experts today to find out how we will help you deliver a next-generation Contact Centre, ensure a seamless customer experience across multiple channels, reduce Contact Centre costs, and stay ahead of the competition both now and in the future.*

### About Conn3ct

Conn3ct is a truly vendor-agnostic communications partner that helps multi-site organisations across the world solve their communications challenges by providing simple solutions to complex problems. Conn3ct draws on over 30 years of experience enabling digital transformation to deliver exceptional customer experience, improve efficiencies, and enhance business performance. Central to this is our consultative approach. As a trusted IT service provider, we share our expertise and educate your team throughout your transformation journey, delivering your company's personalised project to budget and on time.

Our ‘Stabilise, Enhance, Transform’ approach enables us to solve legacy technology issues and improve efficiency and performance, before navigating the complexity of digital transformation at a pace that suits your business’ needs.

[BOOK YOUR FREE CONSULTATION]