

# The Future of Contact Management

A Call Management Briefing

## Delivering Excellent Customer Service in a Fast-Changing Environment

### OVERVIEW

The speed of transformation in customer contact management is accelerating. Your customers use more devices and more channels to communicate than ever before. Ignoring these new channels is not an option – if you can't communicate with customers the way they want, they'll switch to your competitors.

Along with new channels there are also a range of new technologies that make it easier to manage customer requests. From email handling to social media monitoring, there are hundreds of new tools to choose from. The question is whether you can easily train staff and integrate these new tools into your existing infrastructure.

In this briefing we look at recent developments in contact management and make some predictions about upcoming trends. We also describe the business case for outsourcing some or all of your customer service activities.

### KEY POINTS

#### **New Channels**

The telephone is now just one of many options for customer support .

#### **New Technologies**

New technologies are available to handle calls, SMS, email, social media and other channels.

#### **Changing Customer Behaviors**

Customers now initiate contact at any time of day, any day of the week, and across multiple channels.

#### **Outsourcing Customer Contact Management**

Outsourcing contact management lets you transfer the multi-channel technology problem to your service provider while you concentrate on your core business.

## Introduction

From a sector which was once entirely reliant on switch board services we now find ourselves in a society where customer relations are managed across multiple media. Contact can come through multiple communication networks including social media, landline telephone, mobile, email, online chat, and voicemail and bulk SMS text. Where did it all begin?

## A Brief History of Contact Management

Telemarketing first became recognized as a distinct function for organizations in the 1970s. However the name 'telemarketing' fell out of favour as people came to associate it with being interrupted by an unwanted cold calls. Initially focusing on outbound telesales and telemarketing services, companies began to add support for additional services including customer enquiries and help desk calls. The "call centre" industry established itself as a separate sector in the early 1980s but it was not until the 1990s that the term became popularised. Organisations began outsourcing some or all of their customer support management to third party specialists. Since then we have seen both the call centre and customer service experience evolve, leading to the development of the contact centre. The goal of the contact centre provider is to resolve a customer's issue in the shortest time possible, so that customer satisfaction increases while costs decrease. The name contact centre reflects the increasingly sophisticated customer service capabilities these service providers can deliver today.

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## Contact Centre Technology

In the early days of call centre management the technology didn't extend much beyond a phone, a Rolodex and some index cards containing customer names. Now there are a range of sophisticated systems available such as ACD (automatic call distribution) which filters incoming calls and routes them to the best available agent. Computer telephony integration (CTI) systems recognise a caller's ID and bring up the relevant customer account information for that client. CTIs can provide a contact centre agent with pertinent customer details before they even answer the call.

These kinds of systems can increase customer service standards at the same time as handling increasing numbers of contacts at less cost. Businesses across every industry have begun to understand that adopting these new technologies could enable them to better and more effectively target, engage and deliver product and services to the customer.

Customers are becoming increasingly impatient – they want their issues resolved within one or two interactions.

## Managing Multiple Channels

With the rise of the web, mobile phones and social media, companies are beginning to realise they can no longer rely solely on voice communication to interact with their clients. Customers expect to communicate how and when they choose. And customers don't just expect you to interact with them on multiple channels – they also expect individualised communications and fast responses. The new multi-channel contact centre is becoming the central point for managing customer interaction. Contacts are coordinated across a variety of media and information is routed directly to the appropriate people in a timely and cost effective manner.

## The "One Stop" Contact Centre

In today's competitive market where every customer contact counts, contact centres have become an essential part of customer relationship management (CRM).

Some contact centres are positioning themselves as a 'one stop location' for outsourcing needs by covering a broader range of services such as disaster recover, mystery shopping, media campaign support, brochure handling and market research.

## What Customers Want

Customers are no longer satisfied with just phone support. While around 70% of inbound interactions still happen by phone (according to a 2011 report from Ventura and Contact Babel), there is rapid growth in email, web and mobile interactions.

Customers are also becoming increasingly impatient – they don't want to be put on hold, they don't want to wait for a response to an enquiry or complaint, and they want their issues to be resolved within one or two interactions.

And customers are unhappy with inconsistent responses when they move between channels. They don't want to provide the same information to you repeatedly, they expect you to understand the context of their communication, and they expect you to adopt the same approach whether they contact you via your website, email, mobile or phone.

## The Future of Contact Management

There are three key trends in Contact Management

- High value add versus transactional
- Multi-channel
- Increasing Automation

### High Value-Add Versus Transactional

There are two call centre models – the ‘mass service’ and the ‘high commitment service’ model. The ‘mass service’ model aims at a high volume and low value add. The focus is on cost reduction.

The high commitment model is based on customer satisfaction and adding value for clients. We believe the ‘mass service’ model will increasingly be handled through automation. Companies looking for growth will focus on the high commitment, high value-add model.

### Increasing Multi-channel Interaction

The future of contact management is multi-channel. There is already huge growth in interactions via email, mobile and the web. Organizations need to define a multi-channel customer response strategy as soon as possible, setting out their objectives and the resources they need to deliver services consistently across channels. Part of that strategy will assess whether you develop an internal capability to handle multi-channel customer management or alternatively outsource to a third party specialist.

### Increasing Automation

The drive to support greater volumes of interactions at lower cost across multiple channels requires that you implement new technologies. There are growing numbers of systems for handling email, monitoring social media, managing SMS and routing voice calls. Once again, companies will need to decide if they wish to invest in these technologies themselves or work with a service provider that is already well advanced with their automation approach.

## Conclusion

The speed of transformation in customer contact management is accelerating. Your customers use more devices and more channels to communicate than ever before. Ignoring these new channels is not an option – if you can’t communicate with customers the way they want, they’ll switch to your competitors.

## Why Choose Call Management?

•**Multi-channel Capabilities** – We can help you provide a consistent quality of response whether your customers contact you by phone, email, mobile, social networks or live web chat.

•**Customer satisfaction** – by responding fast and effectively to complaints and resolving most issues within one call we keep your customers happy.

•**Quality** – our quality management system is certified to ISO 9001. All staff are trained in the quality system and it is ingrained in our management culture.

•**Friendly, Polite and Professional** – our people love their jobs and they communicate to that to your customers..

•**Experience** – our management team, Pat Keogh, Nuala Meaney and Sean Hickey have been developing customer contact management services since 2001. We have a track-record of delivering high quality services to our customers.

•**Cost Savings** – you pay only for the service provided, with no long term commitments or staffing issues. Customers typically achieve 66% savings when working with Call Management.

•**Great Technology** – we have invested heavily in technology for SMS text management, email handling, live web-chat and social media support..

•**Ramp Up and Down Quickly** – we can provide support for overflow requirements at short notice, ensuring you maintain quality of service to your customers without having to hire additional staff or increase other fixed costs

For more information, please call 021 482 4300 or 01 2477814



Call Management  
Unit 1G  
The Atrium Building  
Blackpool Retail Park  
Blackpool  
Co. Cork

Tel. 02033 686 822

[www.callmanagement.ie](http://www.callmanagement.ie)

## About Call Management

Call Management provides innovative contact management services including email handling, web chat, mobile/SMS and telephone answering. We provide services to a range of sectors including financial services, local government, healthcare, e-commerce, professional services firms, retail, automotive and travel & leisure.