

# Demonstrating the value of multichannel contact centres

 By [Paul Fick](#)

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How contact centre leaders can show clear business cases for migrating from a simple call centre - to a dynamic, multichannel contact centre

The world of multichannel contact centres that incorporate social media, instant messaging and video chats as methods of communication to mention a few, is becoming extremely complicated. But behind the countless, often confusing new technologies, lie some fundamental benefits to evolving one's contact centre beyond traditional voice and email only.

These benefits include: increased agent productivity, better customer service, increased relevance to all customer segments, new cross-sell and upsell opportunities, and staying ahead of competitors.

Organisations are increasingly looking to customer service as a key competitive differentiator, and are treating customer relationships as a prized corporate asset. In this new era, the importance of a strong multichannel strategy becomes clear.

## So what is multichannel?

Most broadly, it describes an organisation that is available to customers via whatever channel of communication they prefer. Traditional voice and email channels are augmented with things like web-based instant messaging, video chat, SMS, 'call me back' buttons, and social media interactions.

Ensuring all of the channels are fully joined-together allows customers to move fluidly between any of them at any point in an interaction. Customers are able to use the communication platform with which they are most comfortable which is most convenient for them at that time.

For this to happen, new channels need to be opened up as part of a long-term, strategic roadmap strongly connected to the organisation's core business operations. Building out a contact centre in an ad hoc manner, not underpinned by a singular workflow system can cause disunity between the channels - and an inconsistent, frustrating customer experience.

In South Africa, there has been limited adoption of true multichannel contact centres - many local companies have successfully added one or two new channels, but few are seeing the benefits of a fully integrated multichannel customer proposition.

Aside from the obvious problems of costly bandwidth, it is also often difficult to properly articulate business value (particularly in today's business environment where most firms are looking to cut costs). In order to 'sell' the concept of

multichannel to business execs, contact centre managers have to deftly forecast the benefits in the areas of:

- Negating revenue threats and market share losses to competitors with a better level of customer interaction
- Saving on payroll costs by increasing agent productivity and automating certain customer interactions
- Increased opportunities for upselling and cross-selling to customers
- The ability to appeal to a broader base of consumers across all demographics, geographies, age groups, and communication preferences
- The tools to create richer customer profiles to personalise interactions and target special offers and promotions

While these are usually the fundamental areas on which multichannel business case is built, added to this list is the fact that an organisation embracing multichannel (in the right way) is now able to capitalise on new technological innovations in future.

## New disruptive technology

Voice biometrics, for example, is emerging as a new disruptive technology that may forever change the way customers are authenticated into conversations with their bank, insurance provider, mobile operator, credit card issuer, or any other customer interaction dealing with sensitive data.

This technology holds the potential to replace the laborious process of answering a set of questions or confirming certain personal details - it simply recognises the customer's voice as they repeat a pre-determined sentence, and validates the caller's identity.

But perhaps the most critical technology advancements in the contact centre space will be on the back-end - the new systems that will scan the vast swathes of phone calls, emails, web chats, messaging interactions, tweets and Instagram photos - to create detailed customer profiles.

Where this information starts to become very powerful is when it is used to present customers with a tailored shopping experience the next time they interact with an organisation. Imagine a sales clerk armed with roaming tablet or smartphone devices, drawing on a central database of customer information.

This is a fundamental shift where data gathered for 'reactive' reasons (during a customer service issue at the contact centre, for instance) is used to create more informed, more personalised, 'proactive' interactions that are more likely to result in a sale.

Essentially, developing a first-rate multichannel contact centre strategy is the first step towards becoming a multichannel company in general - one which leverages every possible touch point as a sales channel. This could well be the strongest business case for multichannel.

So as an organisation begins on this transformative journey, it is essential that the technology partner selected is able to provide the higher-value consultancy required to design a long-term, integrated multichannel solution. This partnership approach not only opens doors to more fruitful customer interactions, but sets the organisation on course to become a truly multichannel business.

## ABOUT PAUL FICK

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