



Waterfield
Technologies

Deliver
the **ultimate**
AI experience



What exactly is AI?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an area of computer science that emphasizes the creation of intelligent machines that learn and adapt without specific human instruction. AI impacts the contact center in two specific ways; it understands the volumes of data you have collected about your customer and it understands the behaviors of your customers. Together, delivering a complete picture of your customer that can be leveraged to deliver a deeply personalized, relevant and immediate experience to your customer.

AI has the ability to recognize patterns within the collection of data, predict potential outcomes and recommend intelligent options. AI defines business rules in a way that humans would never be able to create in a lifetime.

The customer experience journey is evolving quickly. There is no slowing down or stopping the convergence of technology and increasing demand for quick, relevant and personalized customer interactions. The stakes are high when it comes to the customer experience, and it is not just the contact center that needs to take notice—it's a whole-company issue.

Customer experience is at a crossroads of change and transformation, adding a new level of engagement across the organization with ever increasingly complex environments. Taking advantage of these forces organizations to reevaluate their strategy, technology and general understanding of customer behavior setting the pace for a cognitive revolution and benefiting from the integration of AI in the contact center.

What are contact center's biggest pain points when it comes to customer service?

- **Increasingly demanding customer expectations:** Customers are increasingly demanding when it comes to service, requiring quick resolution to their question or inquiry anytime and across any channel. In fact, recent surveys suggest that 50% of customers today do not receive the instant and gratifying service they expect.
- **Growing volumes of data without the knowledge and tools to create actionable insights:** Every department in your organization, from marketing to sales, to support collects and stores volumes of data on customer behavior and interactions. That collective data can be used to meet and even exceed the demands of customers. Companies desire to use this data to better predict customer requests however the data is often spread across disparate systems making it difficult to gain a full view of the customer and use the data to effectively understand and resolve requests.
- **Expanding customer channel preferences, creating complexity in service delivery:** Companies are recognizing that while customer interactions often begin in one channel, valuable insight and feedback is also being gathered on other channels across the business. Unifying customer information across channels gives businesses more relevant context to resolve customer issues more quickly. According to Gartner, by 2020, 85% of customers will manage their relationship with businesses without interacting with a live agent. Customers are using more channels to interact with businesses and are doing more research through websites and referrals before ever engaging.

These challenges are facing most contact centers in one aspect or another. Artificial intelligent (AI) is radically transforming the contact center when it comes to delivering a more personalized and seamless customer experience and contact centers need to understand how best to incorporate it. AI has started a ground swell, and companies are looking to implement deeper uses for AI in the contact center to enhance customer service and reduce costs.

Three must-haves for AI in the contact center

There are three key factors to consider when planning for AI that will impact your contact center; knowing how to leverage your data, how to best understand your customer's needs and how to maximize them together to make the most impact.

1. Smart experiences start with data

It is well known that AI is transforming the way contact centers deliver services to customers. In fact, it's become a competitive edge when it comes to keeping up with the changing expectations and demanding nature of customers today. AI technology provides an avenue for organizations to leverage their full bank of customer data from call detail records, to account history, transactions, voice recordings and support tickets, creating opportunity to better serve customers both effectively and efficiently.

However, this massive amount of disparate information is often housed across departments in varying systems with limited access across teams. This siloed approach complicates automation and limits the business' ability to create useful actionable insights from this gold mine of customer information.

Most contact centers today attempt automation leveraging simple if/then/else rules to make use of available data, yet all too often these rules are too broad, lack the ability to dynamically personalize interactions and generally end up being effective for the minority while the majority of customers suffer.

AI effectively assists you in accessing and understanding data, regardless of where and how it's stored, to deliver actionable insights that truly affect every customer interaction for the positive.

2. To deliver a good experience you must understand your customer

Understanding your customer is critical when it comes to delivering a more personalized and relevant interaction. So, what does that really mean and how do you take the complexity out of the web of data and make it work effectively?

There are generally four elements that together create a complete view of your customer's needs:

Intent: What is the customer contacting you about? Password reset, account balance, transfer money, order status—these define the actual intent behind the call and provide clues as to what the customer expects as a result.

Entity: What system or data is required to be accessed to fulfill the customer request. In the case of account balance, bill pay, or billing amount, the entity would be a company's billing system. This defines where the system should expect to retrieve data to resolve the request.

AI has the ability to pull together data from across the organization to identify the next best actions in seconds and in a way humans could never fully accomplish.

Emotion: AI has the ability to understand the tonality of the customer's voice and predict emotion. Someone calling with an elevated voice could be angry regarding a bill. Seamlessly and immediately escalating them to a human agent that can personally address their issue is likely the best response versus pushing them through an automated self-service interaction.

Context: Providing information about the customer from profile or account information creates an understanding of who a customer is. Are they a member, subscriber, a Gold Member or VIP? Additionally, how they are engaging and which channel they prefer—for example mobile, voice or webchat. All data is relevant to the interaction and plays into the response to be given.

Example: I'm frustrated (emotion), I have not been able to log into (intent) my account online to verify my account balance (entity)

With these inputs the automated system and agent have a 360 view of the customer before they interact, providing context and suggested next best action, whether it be a self-service interaction or quickly routing them to a live agent—creating the best possible experience.

3. Intelligent decision-making is a result of data + understanding

AI has the ability to pull together data from across the organization to identify the next best actions in seconds and in a way humans could never fully accomplish. AI in the contact center assists to better understand patterns

of behavior which then, matched with data, predicts outcomes and offers proactive responses.

AI is able to gather full picture detail (intent, emotion, entity, context) and make it easier for automated system and contact center agents to assist customers in the most personalized way possible. AI understands the human input regardless of the method and quickly provides relevant, best action responses.

Through combined data and understanding, AI is transforming every aspect of the customer interaction and how the contact center is able to respond. AI powered decisioning effects every aspect of the customer experience and those that work to deliver it including:

- **Virtual Assistant/Live Agents:** Replacing interactive voice response (IVRs) and the need for tier 1 live agents.
- **Knowledgeable Agents:** Using AI to direct and prompt live agents with the next best action throughout the customer interaction
- **Enhanced Business Insights:** The ability to use voice recordings and translate them into actionable insights.
- **Skills Based Agent Routing:** Route customers to the right agent based on customer profile history and knowledge of both customer and agent profiles.

The balance of human interaction with data delivers an enhanced experience for customers and agents. Enabling a more conversational and relevant interaction every time fueling customer loyalty and delivering increased business results.

What is the difference between legacy speech and AI?

Speech applications have been around for years and in the initial stages of speech there was tremendous hype for increased customer satisfaction. However, how many times have you called your bank, pharmacy or airline and had to attempt to 'speak' to the IVR with no luck. Speech did help in driving a more personalized interaction, however most of the time it still fell short.

Speech applications

In simple terms, legacy speech recognition is the ability of an application to recognize spoken words. It is typically driven off a pre-defined set of 'grammars' that are rules-based in order to perform an action based on the instructions defined. This approach works great for simple yes or no questions however it falls short when it comes to comprehending and responding to more complex questions or issues. Typically, the application will only capture one piece of data at a time, forcing the interaction into multiple steps to provide a response. How many times have you heard the phrase "I'm sorry I did not get that"? That is likely because the customer did not respond with the words that the system was designed to reference. This activity is what then leads to the ongoing effort of tuning your speech application. A vast number of hours are put into tuning cycles to continuously edit and grow grammars to more effectively expand the coverage of conversation. This approach is human and capital intensive.

AI-based natural language

AI-based Natural Language enables customers to use their natural manner of speaking and fully understands the human language. We tend to interact with each other in more informal communication styles and our everyday communication has a lot of ambiguity, slang and even improper grammar.

Natural language understands our nuances and quickly determines our intentions. AI powered natural language takes understanding to the next level, analyzing multiple data elements in a single phrase. It is designed to accept incremental feedback to more quickly move to resolution with less effort than traditional tuning cycles required by a simple speech driven application. NLP engages the customer in conversation naturally, enabling the customer to use their own words to interact with the application. Simple phrases like "Hello, Mary how can I help you today" encourage Mary to respond in a casual communication style and routes her call appropriately. Based on many data inputs, Mary can quickly be greeted by name and routed to the right agent based on her history, current intent and priority. No more robotic call menus where you have to hit zero to get what you need. NLP allows the customer to ask their questions in their own way – fast tracking them to the answer.

AI enables you to apply new business rules to your specific customer conditions, avoiding the 'one size fits all' approach.

How the contact center benefits from AI

We know that artificial intelligent (AI) is transforming the customer experience and we are only in the beginning stages of the journey. AI is redefining the customer experience and organizations are implementing deeper uses for AI and NLP to enhance customer service and reduce costs. With an AI powered contact center, your business can better understand your customers and make use of the data you already have, to provide personalized and relevant responses.

AI enables you to apply new business rules to your customer conditions, avoiding the 'one size fits all' approach. Making each interaction more relevant to the customer driving increased satisfaction and loyalty. A more targeted approach to customer engagement often entices customers to consider buying more, subscribing to more services which the delivers increased revenue overall to the business.

Benefits of AI in the contact center are simple:

- Improved customer experience increases loyalty and engagement
- More personalized and relevant experience to customers
- Enhanced automation of internal processes
- Improved operational efficiency and effectiveness
- Increased employee productivity through smarter automation

Getting started with your AI journey

The journey to incorporating the power of AI into the contact center and throughout the customer experience can seem like a huge uphill task.

However, the best approach is to set the vision and determine that the journey will likely require many phases to reach the destination. It is not a big bang approach to building AI into the contact center, the ability to identify the quick hits and then build up into the major impacts is critical to demonstrating success early and maintaining the focus on the plan.

Start small, deliver quick wins, expand

The decision has been made to incorporate AI into customer service, so what is next? Partnering with an experienced team that can help you create your roadmap is key and that starts with a discovery session. A discovery session with subject matter experts in both the contact center and AI will help define the areas where AI should be prioritized for maximum benefit. Identifying these pain points (what keeps you up at night) and understanding how AI can simplify these processes and positively impact the customer experience are key to any successful transformational journey.

Start small: Take a look at your pain points across your contact center and identify one or two use cases that would easily benefit from increased automation with an AI approach. This is a critical step in prioritizing impactful areas, weighing the feasibility of delivery and gathering quick results.

Deliver quick: For those identified use cases, find the best option for a quick delivery. When proving out the benefits of any technology a proof of concept is often a great first step in gauging how well the solution fits your business. Starting with a simple pain point allows for a quick design and implementation phase delivering immediate business results.

Conclude and expand: Once a few quick hit use cases have been implemented and the results and impact to the business measured, it is time to take the next steps into building out the vision and journey to get there. The key is to prove out results first and then prioritize the rest of the transformation across the customer experience and expand the scope of AI impacts.



Now you are armed with the knowledge and steps required to lead your business through the initial phases of AI powered automation. By implementing these best practices for conversational AI, you'll enable your contact center to increase sales, decrease time to resolution, and provide the best customer experiences possible. You'll deliver engaging, personalized interactions that build brand loyalty and provide the right journey for your customer at the right time.



waterfieldtechnologies.com
+1.800.324.0936