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Enhanced Customer Experience with an AI Advantage

Exceed Customer Expectations. Build Lifetime Value.

Gartner

When Done Right, AI Can Turn the Contact Center into a Revenue Generator

What if we could make contact center agents better, faster, smarter to more successfully create loyal, forever customers? This has been the goal of contact center software and services companies for the past three decades. Now, peruse any customer service site or search on the topic of "improving agent performance," and the popular answers to this question are pointing in the direction of using chatbots, robots, Artificial Intelligence instead of human agents. In fact, Gartner Research predicts that by 2021, nearly one in six customer service interactions globally will be handled by artificial intelligence. But we believe the answer is not to outright replace agents with machines, but rather to leverage this newer technology to make the actual contact centers better, faster, smarter.

The reality is that customers who engage with a contact center —via voice, chat, email, web, etc. —still want to know they can connect with a human if they want to or need to. In fact, according to Gartner, though the proportion of phone-based communication will drop from 41% to 12% of overall customer service interactions, a human agent will still be involved in 44% of all interactions. In other words, replacing agents with machines is clearly not something customers want.

Maximizing the capabilities of AI and machine

learning is what contact center innovators have to figure out sooner rather than later. There are a lot of really cool and interesting ideas around AI and the struggle of where to start is very real. One way to narrow the focus is to start by looking at what contact centers already do well, then determine how to augment it. For example, intelligent routing.

Intelligent routing at the very basic level is about matching the customer to the agent who is best skilled to serve him or her, and then routing the customer to connect with that best agent. The challenge with intelligent routing is that high-performing agents can easily end up with the majority of customers being routed to them. To transform the contact center into a revenue generator requires improving the performance of all agents, not just the top percentile.

What if we add AI and machine learning to the mix? Use these technologies to make intelligent routing more intelligent by leveraging data analytics to learn all the different behaviors of all the agents in an organization, as well as the behaviors of all the customers when they engage with that organization's contact center.

Behavior matching in the contact center is similar to what online dating apps are attempting to achieve. Each dating candidate completes a time-consuming online questionnaire which produces a significant amount of data about each candidate. Having access to all that information, the dating app then finds similarities between candidates to create ideal matches with the end result hopefully being a real human to human connection.

Companies in all industries want to provide that same connected experience. Customers also want the companies they do business with to know them. It seems like an easy match to make. And the logical place for the company-customer relationship to begin is in the contact center. But no customer wants to spend hours completing a questionnaire just to do business with a company. Thankfully they won't have to.

With the variety of consumer information that currently exists across the Internet, as well as in multiple databases within a company any customer does business with, it is possible for AI to access analytics from a variety of sources. The inclusion of machine learning with AI means companies can now automate the process of "getting to know" a customer and "getting to know" an agent, to create a more connected customer-agent experience and lasting customer-company relationship.

Avaya A.I. Connect Partner, Afiniti, is leading the way in applying AI and machine learning to contact centers and utilizing behavioral matching to improve the agent-customer experience. It all starts with a customer's automatic number identification or caller ID from the IVR system. Using the customer's phone number as an initial data key, Afiniti's Enterprise Behavioral Pairing™

(EBP) accesses information from more than 100 different data sources from around the Internet. All of this data is then fed into a neural network to compute customer types or customer segments in a matter of microseconds.

Based on the customer and agent data, Afiniti can determine how likely a particular agent is to meet the business objective (sell, subscribe, upsell, retain, etc.) successfully. EBP also takes into account contact center service level commitments and operating rules for a holistic approach to overall contact center performance. Since it is using machine learning, once the software has "learned" a particular customer, it continues to learn and improve, thereby continuing to improve customer experiences.

T-Mobile is highlighted on Afiniti's website and credits the Afiniti behavioral matching software for giving them a higher conversion rate from prospect to paying customer. The wireless provider says Afiniti is responsible for $70 million in additional new sales annually, clear evidence of transforming the contact center into a revenue generator.

AI and machine learning are modern tools that many contact centers are struggling to wrap their arms around. While the opportunities for these technologies seem endless, the challenge when thinking about the contact center is to think first about the customer experience. Get that right, and the revenue will follow.

Source: Avaya

Different Preferences, Same Expectations:
Can Your CX Platform Handle It All?

When was the last time you as a customer used live chat to interact with a brand? How about a self-service option like IVR? Have you ever received an automated message with a discount, or perhaps an appointment reminder? Chances are, you've engaged in at least one of these forms of service at some point, if not more frequently. That's because we now live in a world where our first level of interaction is usually some sort of automation. This has thrown a wrench into the standard CX platform.

These service examples are just the tip of the iceberg. Gartner predicts that by 2021, 15% of all customer service interactions will be completely handled by AI, an increase of 400% from 2017.

And, by the end of today, more than 3 million people will have chatted with Amazon Echo's AI assistant, Alexa. Over 70 million people will have enjoyed listening to Spotify's automated "Discover Weekly" playlist. U.S. sales of Google Home smart speakers increased by 40% in Q3 2017 alone, reaching 7 million units. In a very short amount of time, automation has evolved from static and human-operated to dynamic and autonomously learning.

Because of this growth, automation is now everywhere we are and in everything we do. It is proven to transform experiences and enhance the outcome of nearly every customer interaction. The ROI is there, too. For example, research has found that after customers start using Echo, their spending increases by 10%. Bottom line: businesses should be aggressively working to embed automation into their existing IT ecosystems.

But what about your traditional customers? The first level of interaction may not always be automation for everyone. The fact remains there are customers who will never consume digital services, whose modality of communication will always be voice, and that's perfectly fine. But those customers still expect a personalized, end-to-end experience. For example, when calling their healthcare provider with a question, they expect the organization to know who they are and to have their health records pulled up prior to that first "hello."

And this brings us to an important point: it doesn't matter how services are consumed, the experience must be the same. So, how can companies meet expectations across the board? First, they must gain an inherent understanding of each customer's individual journey, whatever that looks like. Then they need to build technology that adapts to that.

Let's dig into this...

Context: The Crux of Next-Gen CX

With respect to the term "gain an inherent understanding of each customer's individual journey," this essentially means gain a context-driven understanding. After all, every experience will differ depending on the circumstance. Here are two examples to show you to illustrate this:

A customer (let's call her Becky) is in the car driving to JFK airport. She called your contact center about an hour ago and requested through IVR to be put into your automated callback system. Her place has been reached in the queue and now it's time to reach out. However, your system shows she's currently driving 70 mph on I-95 south. So, although she normally prefers video chat, you choose to connect via a traditional voice call instead.

Becky later vents on Twitter about poor service she received from the restaurant in her hotel. With the ability to bring social analytics to the agent desktop, the hotel can have its support team proactively reach out to let her know they noticed her post from five minutes ago expressing dissatisfaction and ask if there's any way they can help make things right.

A True Next-Gen CX Platform

Regardless of whether customer preferences evolve, your CX platform must in order to drive real-time responsiveness, anticipatory engagement, and intelligent communication at the individual level. AI will play a key role in this, as 55% of respondents in Gartner's 2017 CX Innovation Survey said they expected to use machine learning (which is one form of AI) for CX projects within the next three years.

So, what should this next-gen CX platform look like? This isn't something that can be summed up in a nutshell, but companies need a platform that provides the utmost flexibility for them to bring the right technologies together with the right modality of interactions in an open world. The key here is to be agile and flexible enough to give each individual customer the choice to get what he or she wants, as well as respond to their needs quickly and efficiently.

The full integration of UC, contact center, and AI to begin immediately developing features and applications that meet different customer, organizational and vertical needs. Technology has evolved to the point where it no longer takes 10, 12 or 18 months to build a targeted, feature-rich release. A next-gen CX platform offers the necessary levels of agility, flexibility, scale, and openness companies need to very quickly develop these solutions. Or, they can release small footprints of incremental functionality within the platform. Companies can develop at their own paces, depending on their goals.

An open data model that rapidly integrates various information sources to present a full visualization of the customer journey. Companies must now bring an immense amount of information together to make smart, real-time decisions (something human beings are incapable of doing). This is where AI, machine learning, and contextual analytics come into play. This is how your contact center will be able to see that Becky tweeted about poor service five minutes ago, and that she engaged in three web chat sessions the week prior. The integration of AI with Becky's smart vehicle enables you to see statistics like speed and traffic to maximize her service experience. An open data model enables organizations to truly capitalize on big data to make impactful, real-time decisions that transform the individual customer experience.

The future of customer experience will be supported by a next-gen digital platform that's capable of seamlessly converging UC, contact center, and AI. Long gone are the days of proprietary schemes. Long live digital, automated, data-driven experiences!

Source: Avaya

Eight Things Contact Center Agents Want

If your organization is part of the majority that has either introduced a digital transformation plan within the last two years, or is planning to introduce one this year, then you understand the critical importance of advancing the contact center. A new generation of employees is needed to manage the higher complexity of customer service processes expected through 2022. Gartner believes this will cause a shift in emphasis away from operational efficiency toward greater value placed on employee engagement in customer service. By 2022, operational efficiency will be of less strategic importance than employee engagement in 50% of customer engagement centers globally.

You know your contact center needs to mature to support the customer experience as a natural, enterprise-wide journey. One where interactions take place across multiple channels and devices, unfolding across multiple key areas of business. You need to make connections within the contact center more seamless, intelligent and intuitive for your business to respond to customer needs as a unified whole.

The question is are your agents empowered to actually deliver this kind of experience? Research suggests not: 20% of contact center leaders say their agents lack cross-departmental collaboration capabilities, 16% use poor desktop tools (CRM, CIS, billing), and 13% have insufficient routing and reporting[1].

Do a quick Google search on what contact center agents want and you'll see a notable pattern:

"Skills Every Contact Center Agent Needs"

"The Most Important Qualities of a Contact Center Agent"

"Customer Service Skills Every Contact Center Agent Must Have"

And herein lies the problem: it's impossible to maximize the skills of even the most proficient contact center agent if he or she isn't supported by the right technology foundation. It would appear as though some companies are working backwards when it comes to the contact center — they're

heightening the standards of agents while lacking the cutting-edge technology needed to drive a next-gen customer experience. So, how should businesses digitally transform in a way that meets the needs of their contact center agents? Here are eight focus areas:

1. Better data management/sharing: Organizations seem to be split on this issue. About 20% of contact centers cite "improving knowledge management" as their number one priority, yet 31% still operate without any knowledge management systems in place. Agents need a true omnichannel desktop that lets them gather, collect, and use data where and when that data is needed. This requires a multi-touch customer engagement solution that's built on an open data model. This kind of solution helps provide powerful insights across all channels, devices, and departments, enabling organizations to capitalize on big data within and across their enterprises.

2. Ease of use: Imagine how difficult it must be for agents to work in an environment of disjointed applications and processes. Flexibly link platforms together so that agents never again have to search for customer details or create activity records. A solution built on open, extensible architecture connects disparate systems, putting everything agents need in one place.

3. Assessment/training: "Improving performance management" and "improving agent training" continually rank as top contact center priorities. It's critical that organizations maximize downtime to improve talent gaps that diminish customer experience. Ask yourself how does your current solution apply innovative new strategies to agents to help them continually improve sales, service and operational outcomes?

4. Resource matching: Your integrated, multichannel strategy doesn't account for much if those channels aren't connected to the best agent for handling the individual customer need. Customers cannot be routed to agents based simply on who is assigned to handle certain channels for the day. Organizations need to get customers to agents who are best qualified to handle them based on such things

as choice of channel, expertise, past experience with a particular inquiry and even next-level variables like personality and emotion.

5. Visual workflows: Do you support a stale user experience that's difficult to navigate or one that's simple and breezy? Consider a visual drag-and-drop workflow design, which makes it incredibly easy for agents to bring the right resources, content, and context together across the CRM and other systems to serve customer and organizational needs.

6. Personalization: Just like customers, can it be argued that agents desire a certain level of personalization? Of course! It's imperative that organizations accommodate today's evolving workforce. For example, 84% of global contact centers say they are adapting to meet the needs of millennials workers, more than half are open to more flexible work arrangements, and 42% are personalizing their management techniques.

7. Proactive automation: Does your solution fully automate interactions to enhance customer experience? This is imperative for agents to naturally support the end-to-end customer journey. For example, it may make sense at some point for a customer to move from chat to a live agent because of the nature of his or her inquiry. Your engagement solution should automatically support these kinds of escalations so that agents can perform optimally.

8. Ease of scalability: Scalability is crucial for ensuring service excellence during peak seasons. However, it's just as important for ensuring agents keep their heads above water to continue meeting expectations. Consider a solution that offers modular snap-ins that can be scaled, managed and extended with custom, third-party cloud applications and services.

The more we do for our employees, the more they will do for us now and in the long run. When carving out your digital transformation plans, keep in mind the critical role of contact center technology for transforming the agent and customer experience.

Source: Avaya

Deliver a Compelling and Differentiating Customer Experience in the Digital Age

Avaya is building on the strengths in our core technologies to ensure we continue to lead the industry in enabling customers to successfully achieve their digital transformation journey. But don't just take our word for it.

Leading research and advisory firm Gartner has released its 2018 Gartner Magic Quadrant for Contact Center Infrastructure Worldwide. The report positions Avaya as a Leader, marking the 17th time that we have held the position—no one in our industry has demonstrated the history of leadership, vision and execution that Avaya has achieved.

This report provides a powerful validation of our current and future strength in this key market. Gartner evaluates 11 vendors based on their completeness of vision and ability to execute, and plots them based on their relative strengths in 15 criteria areas. Those who earn a place in the Leaders Quadrant are defined as companies that execute well against their current vision and are well positioned for tomorrow.

Avaya is truly in the best position to help organizations deliver a compelling and differentiating customer experience in the digital age. We have the robust, flexible infrastructure that enables companies of any size manage all aspects of the customer experience, and we are investing in innovation to integrate transformational technologies like AI, blockchain and leading-edge analytics to bring new levels of value to market. If you'd like further evidence, we have it:

- Companies in more than 150 countries globally trust in Avaya contact center solutions to transform their customer service and support operations, including Alorica, Eletropaulo, Exelon, Florius, Liberty Mutual, Yanfeng Automotive Interior Systems, and others.

- Avaya Oceana® has recently earned two significant awards: the TMC 2017 CUSTOMER Contact Center Technology Award

- We now offer secure multitenant CCaaS for large enterprises via our Spoken Communications

- We're delivering innovation like the unique Avaya Mobile Experience to optimize the customer experience for mobile callers into the contact center, and our new Avaya Ava, a virtual customer assistant that enables enable effortless customer engagement through social media and messaging platforms.

- Our strategic partnership with Afiniti incorporates behavioral pairing into Avaya contact center routing, to help turn a cost center into a profit center.

We are proud to be named a Leader. Rest assured that we will keep working every day to continue to earn that honor. And we'll keep innovating to deliver the best customer experience for our customers, and their customers.

Source: Avaya

Research from Gartner:

How to Use AI to Create the Customer Experience of the Future

Organizations do not need an "AI" — they need solutions to business issues. Application leaders supporting customer experience should use our "sense, think and do" framework to elevate AI initiatives into a clear business case that optimizes business outcomes to enhance the customer experience.

Key Challenges

- Fifty-three percent of organizations have a limited understanding of artificial intelligence technologies, strategies and markets, according to our latest CIO survey.

- Understanding where to start the AI journey to enhance the customer experience is a main challenge, as realized by the number of inquiries we get on the subject.

- Applying AI for the sake of AI, and in a hurried fashion, could be tempting; however, the main focus of any customer experience leader should be on utilizing AI, if and only if it is solving a business issue.

Recommendations

Application leaders responsible for CX and who are looking to strategize and plan their AI future should:

- Document strong and weak points of the customer experience your company offers, and then explore where AI can enhance CX using the sense, think and do framework.

- Start your AI journey by prioritizing two areas where the application of AI could make a difference. Applying AI to customer service, call centers and digital marketing purposes are often a great start.

- Initiate POCs based on the research within six months, if and only if you find it is solving a business issue, using metrics that will show initial gains for senior management. Track the success of early projects with a view to expanding to more complex business scenarios.

Strategic Planning Assumption

By 2022, 20% of customer service will be handled by conversational agents.

Introduction

Among the many technology trends shaping 2018 and beyond, the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) when it comes to customer experience (CX) (see Note 1) is one of the most exciting. Currently, there is no one single solution that will help you across the whole CX spectrum. From presales, sales, postsales and beyond, what we do have today are a myriad of niche solutions that can help your organization excel in marketing effectiveness, sales empathy and customer service excellence. For example, the use of AI technologies such as machine learning, natural-language understanding (NLU) and natural-language processing (NLP) can help analyze customer sentiment and customer feedback at scale, precision and speed not achievable through humans. And, as a few examples, areas where AI can help include:

- **Sales:** AI tools offer white-space analysis for sales and can recommend immediate action on opportunities. They can also prioritize leads most likely to be converted and closed, offer account insights, generate forecasts and provide explanations.

- **Marketing:** There are AI-powered solutions that allow marketing to generate highly personalized messages at scale that could not have been achieved using humans alone.

- **Customer service:** The use of virtual customer assistants (VCAs) can help improve the customer experience as it reduces time to response and allows users to interact with your company through a text and/or voice conversational agent 24/365.

What Are Your Competitors Doing in Regard to Implementing AI?

When it comes to CIOs, our latest CIO survey data highlights that only a small number (5%)

has implemented some type of AI effort to help their businesses differentiate from competitors. However, 21% have AI in their short-term plans or are experimenting with it. Also, a growing number (5%) of enterprises is increasing investment in AI/machine learning. Application leaders need to keep the leadership informed of AI advances and aware of business benefits.

Of the small percentage of CIOs who had implemented AI, our survey data demonstrates that organizations plan to focus primarily on CX use cases, including customer engagement, call centers and digital marketing purposes. While there is a small number of actual deployments, growth is fast, with businesses also looking to expand their AI use to other areas, including cybersecurity and financial management systems (see Figure 1).
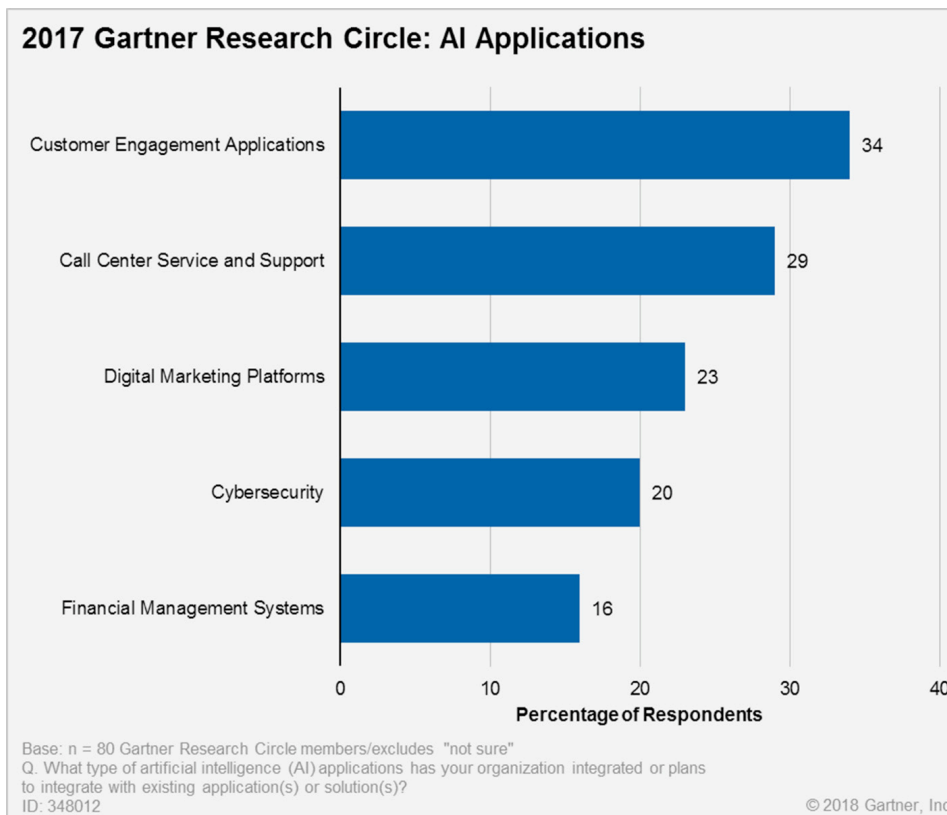
The purpose of this research is to identify the ways to extract the most business value from your AI investments to enhance the customer experience. Currently, the market is awash with AI-powered solutions and it is a daunting task for apps leaders in charge of CX to separate hype from reality, and see what AI can do — particularly so for CX as a whole. By using a framework, following sense, think and do, application leaders can start to strategize and understand where to begin their AI journey.

Analysis

Use the Sense, Think, Do Framework to Accelerate Your AI/CX Journey

To start the AI journey, each company needs to prepare for a multiyear evolution that sees the testing and deployment of solutions to help better their customer service, the sales experience and ultimately the CX as a whole.

FIGURE 1 Top AI Use Cases

2017 Gartner Research Circle: AI Applications

Base: n = 80 Gartner Research Circle members/excludes "not sure"
Q. What type of artificial intelligence (AI) applications has your organization integrated or plans to integrate with existing application(s) or solution(s)?
ID: 348012

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Source: Gartner (March 2018)

In the long run, one issue to focus on is that, even though we are looking toward AI technologies to help with certain areas of CX, this is a cross-functional and cross-departmental function. Therefore, whatever application leaders plan to trial and do with AI, it needs to be part of the bigger picture of your corporatewide CX improvements, and crucially with executive buy-in.

Using the "sense, think, do, learn" framework, you can begin to understand how to apply AI to create customer experiences of the future. For every segment, we have highlighted two main things to get you started on your journey:

- The key AI-related technologies that are particularly useful for a CX environment.

- A selection of suggestions of how AI can help various departments — this is by no means an exhaustive list. We have added some ideas to get you thinking of its applications (see Figure 2). But there will be a myriad of other possibilities.
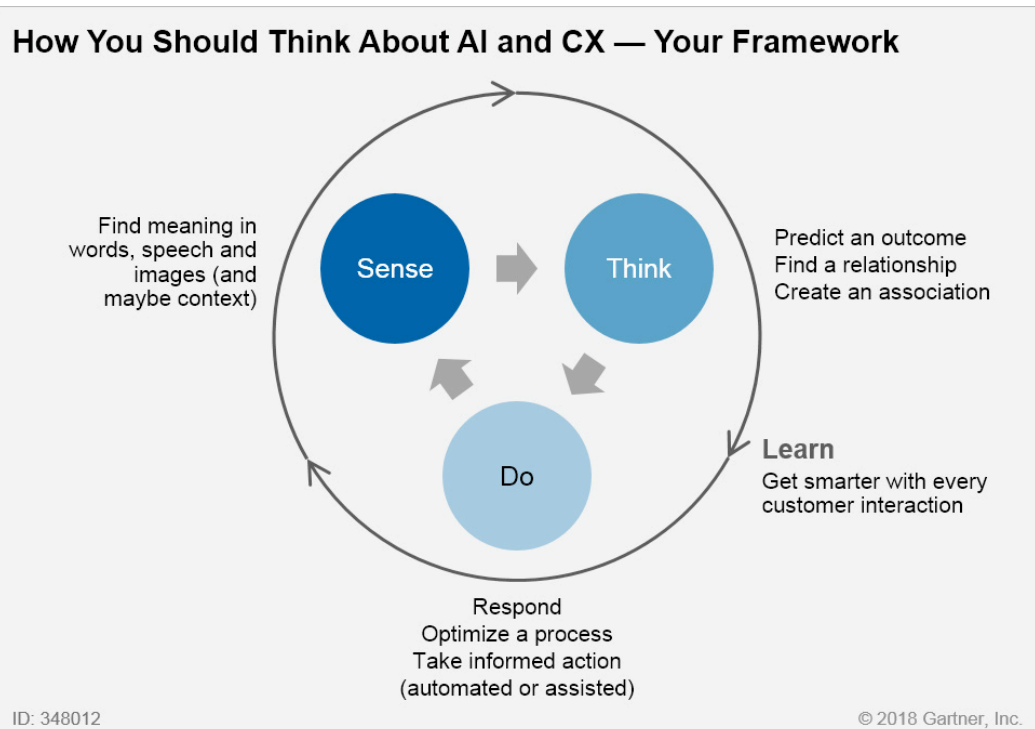
Step 1: Start With the Basics

Gartner's key recommendation is to start by mapping and analyzing your current customer journeys and life cycles, without considering the AI implications. This may already have been done as part of previous CX efforts that are worth revisiting, or may require a fresh investigation. Ask your teams:

- What are the experiences that my customers are having at the moment?

- How do they perceive us?

- What is the current journey from the buying cycle to the owning cycle and feedback points?

When you have a solid idea of how the customer currently experiences your business, you can consider how AI can be used to improve that journey and benefit the business. For example:

- Projects that have a clear goal and focus (aka we want to reduce churn by 10%)

FIGURE 2   The Sense, Think, Do Approach to AI Deployment

How You Should Think About AI and CX — Your Framework

Find meaning in words, speech and images (and maybe context)

Sense → Think

Predict an outcome
Find a relationship
Create an association

Do

Learn
Get smarter with every customer interaction

Respond
Optimize a process
Take informed action
(automated or assisted)

ID: 348012   © 2018 Gartner, Inc.

Source: Gartner (March 2018)

- Projects that can be supported by a good amount of clean data sources (tens of parameters plus is a good start)

Step 2: Explore Sense; Use AI to Deepen Your Customer Understanding

This is about using AI technologies to find meaning in words, speech, images and context. Finding correlations, meanings and understandings in customer-related data is faster and more efficient, thanks to AI. It is also about trying to read your customers' experiences and sentiments through the use of computer vision tech and emotion AI.

Examples of AI-Related Tech to Look Out for (for Sense)

Deep learning, machine learning, natural-language processing, natural-language understanding, computer vision, pattern recognition and affective AI are just a few examples. Most AI solutions offer a combination of several technologies, but these are the cornerstones for the AI solution as a whole. (To read more about these technologies, please see the Gartner Recommended Reading section at the end of this document.)

Example No. 1: Analyzing Customer Feedback Data: Manual Analysis vs. NLP

Organizations have two kinds of customer feedback data that they measure, store and analyze: structured and unstructured data. Structured data is information that is clearly defined and easy to report on. It is the kind of data that is generally found in a survey and can be organized in a spreadsheet. Some examples are name, location, age and rating (three out of five stars, for example, or a 10 for "most satisfied" versus a one for "least satisfied").

Unstructured data as it exists today is basically text, although it can include other media, such as audio, photos or video. Unstructured data can be captured in an email, the "additional comments" section of a survey; voice recordings of customer interactions; a post on a customer review site; in social media, call center notes and chat transcripts; and from other interactions.

Reading through large quantities of unstructured text data is time-consuming and next to impossible for large organizations or government departments. Assuming that the average person can process 50 items of unstructured data an hour, it would take nearly seven years for one person

to read through one million text items at a cost of around $145,000. No wonder that providers that need to sift through hundreds of thousands of postcall surveys each month utilize AI to do the work for them.

Example No. 2: Analyzing (Real)-Time Conversations

Sales reps and customer service reps hold hundreds, or even thousands depending on the size of the company, of conversations every day. AI can help sift through these conversation postcalls, but perhaps even more interestingly, it can transcribe and analyze conversations in real time. Imagine this in a sales environment — saving sales reps the time to write up the conversation postmeeting, analyzing what was discussed during the meeting and offering recommendations on actions.

Solutions such as this can also be used for sales training purposes; currently, senior sales management spends a considerable amount of time training new sales reps. Using a solution such as this could speed up training and save senior management time. More importantly, the AI intelligence gleaned from hundreds of sales conversations will speed understanding of what works in sales situations and what doesn't, thus potentially improving the sales experience and sales potential.

Sense: In Short, How AI Can Help

- Customer service:

  - Mines data for holistic view of customer. Analyzes conversations in real time.

- Sales:

  - Mines customer data and surface hidden insights.

  - Captures data, improves data quality.

  - Analyzes conversations and spots win-win situations.

Step 3: Think; Use AI to Explain, Guide and Recommend

Whereas previously sense helped us understand data and sentiment, now it is about using AI to explain, guide and even recommend what actions to take. When it comes to sales data, for example, AI solutions can provide forecasts, explanations to

what the data means, help dig deeper, and provide dashboards to enlighten the business leadership. They can help predict outcomes and recommend the next best action.

AI tools offer white space analysis and can recommend immediate action on opportunities. They can also prioritize leads most likely to be converted and closed, offer account insights, generate forecasts and provide explanations.

Examples of AI-Related Tech to Look Out For

Predictive and prescriptive analytics, deep learning and machine learning are examples of AI-related tech to look out for. Predictive analytics involves extracting an analytical model from data that anticipates future behavior or estimates unknown outcomes. It uses data from a variety of sources to answer the question, "What will happen?" Prescriptive analytics address the question of "What should be done?" or "What can we do to make 'X' happen?" (See "Combine Predictive and Prescriptive Analytics to Drive High-Impact Decisions" for further information).

Example: Using Think to Elevate Sales Experiences

Most companies are in stealth mode in terms of pushing sales growth numbers quarter by quarter, year by year. The CEO and sales senior vice president (SVP) positions hinge on ever-growing numbers, and to that effect it is usually the percentage growth numbers, per se, that take priority. From a CX point of view, however, it is about increasing sales by elevating the sales experience as such. Empathic sales experiences can trump pushy sales techniques and that, ultimately, may lead to a longer relationship.

How does AI help? It can help a sales rep make faster, more informed decisions, and particularly so around lead management. AI can help sift through all the leads and prospects currently in the sales funnel and pinpoint the most prominent prospect that is the most likely to actually want to interact with your company. Thus, it reduces wasteful prospecting times and efforts. In terms of more empathetic sales approaches, AI-powered sales tools help reps to quickly get a deep understanding of their clients and prospects. This includes who they are, what they have, what they may want (aka AI recommends the next best action) — within seconds and in an easily digestible UI/user experience (UX).

For more information, see "Add AI to Your B2B Sales Organization Now to Improve Revenue." This explores how application leaders must identify strategic business drivers and tactical uses cases with the greatest potential to benefit from AI, to selecting and beginning B2B sales projects. These AI-powered applications, available from a wide range of traditional and startup vendors, analyze data and content to improve performance and outcomes in an automated fashion.

In Short, How AI Can Help Sales

- Helps predict outcomes and recommends the next-best action

- Offers white-space analysis and recommends immediate action on opportunities

- Prioritizes leads most likely to convert and close

- Offers account insights

- Generates forecasts and offers explanations

- Creates instant sales presentations

More generally, "think" should see the business prioritize high-value customers, using advanced analytics (aka predictive and prescriptive analytics) to address potential issues, provide predictive maintenance and responses, and target high-risk/high-churn customers with focused messages.

Step 4: Do; Evaluate Opportunities Around Leveraging AI for Content Creation

Coming to the "do" section of the report, application leaders are faced with a range of decisions. They must plan trialing solutions to help create personalized marketing messages to reduce churn on a more strategic level across the customer life cycle. Apps leaders could leverage AI to effectively create and write material such as marketing materials, press releases, advertisements, quarterly earnings reports and much more. For CX purposes, it allows companies to create personalized customer messages at scale.

AI Tech to Look Out For

Natural-language generation (NLG) supports a number of productivity-enhancing use cases that reduce the need for writers (such as financial reports, sports analysis or product

recommendations) outside of analytics. NLG is a new idea that is gaining traction for content generation. It automatically builds a natural-language narrative. Within the analytics context, the narrative changes dynamically as the user interacts with data to explain key findings or the meaning of a chart or dashboard. It combines natural-language processing with machine learning and artificial intelligence to dynamically identify the most relevant insights and context in data (trends, relationships and correlations).

Example: Large U.S. Hotel Chain Used NLG-Based Solution

A hotel chain used a solution from a provider called Persado to create personalized advertisements at scale. Its goal was to retarget its existing customer base and drive check-out conversions. The solution was to first utilize AI to create personas, and then to allow the platform to generate the content and the message that would be most efficient for that particular persona. The outcome of the various personalized messages versus the control messages saw conversion rates reaching more than 60%.

Gartner's CMO Spend Survey found that 57% of marketing leaders would actively use, pilot or implement automatic content generation technologies as part of their innovation priorities for 2017. Another one in four respondents was assessing capabilities to automatically generate content.

In fact, respondents expressed more use of and interest in automatic content generation than any other type of innovation technology related to voice interaction or natural language. Furthermore, automatic content generation will be instrumental in enabling marketers to engage with audiences via virtual agents and chatbots.

In Short, How AI Can Help Boost Marketing Campaigns

- Optimizing email and social media campaigns
- Optimization and generation of content
- Generating narrative articles at a massive scale
- Generating personalized communication at scale, and reducing the need for writers

Step 5: Sense, Think and Do — Evaluate the Rise of Conversational Platforms

Using conversational artificial intelligence applications and platforms to optimize customer engagement is one of the biggest trends in customer experience. It neatly sums up sense, think and do at the same time. Virtual customer assistants, chatbots and bots allow customers to interact with companies through a new medium that can, if implemented correctly, help customers get fast (personalized) answers. (See "Market Guide for Virtual Customer Assistants.")

Conversational platforms such as VCAs may be considered an easy win by many businesses, saving time and freeing up support or customer service staff for important issues. For example, banks reduced the service resolution time for password resets from 20 minutes to less than four by using a bot.

With rapid rollouts and easy integrations, businesses of any size can benefit from VCAs and chatbots. While they are not intelligent, they improve on the customer experience and provide information or the right connection more rapidly. Here is how AI can help improve customer service:

- Customer service (VCAs):
- Moves engagements to less-expensive customer self-service channels
- Reduces time to response
- Helps to scale customer service/contact center engagements
- Reduces cost to serve
- Offers multichannel experience boost

What to Do Next?

- Evaluate which areas you feel your organization could utilize AI to enhance the experience, taking inspiration from the sense, think and do framework above.
- Focus first on two areas that have clear goals; for example, increase customer service response rates by X% (a specified percent).

- Start proofs of concept (POCs) and trials within the coming six months. But make sure that you track and measure ROI from these trials so that you can pave the way for larger AI investments down the road.

- Evangelize the findings and outcomes to a wider net of corporate citizens — to gain their attention and traction around your projects. Again, CX should be a companywide project, not a niche project.

- Perhaps more importantly, do not apply AI for the sake of AI, just because it is a growing trend or because rivals are adopting it. The hype might make AI sound tempting, and solution providers are selling it as a panacea for many business areas, but you need a solid business case before investing. Be sure that your reason for applying AI to a process actually can be fixed or improved by using it.

Note 1. Definition of Customer Experience

Gartner defines customer experience as: "The customer's perceptions and related feelings caused by the one-off and cumulative effect of interactions with a supplier's employees, systems, channels or products."

This means the experience the customer has from information-gathering stages — to presales, sales, postsales and beyond. It is all of those touchpoints that clients have with an organization, whether it is the effectiveness of the digital experience, the moments spent with the sales reps and the politeness of the service rep, just to name a few. It isn't just the web experience, or the app experience, or the retail experience. It is all of the experiences added up.

Source: Gartner Research Note G00348012, Jessica Ekholm, 30 March 2018

Case Studies

Telekom Srbija

2500+ Employees

"With the Avaya solution our customers are simply waiting less to get issues resolved and our agents have more time to deal with enquiries in a satisfactory way."

– Dejan Ognjanovic, Head Of Contact Center Development And Customer Experience, Telekom Serbia

Read the Case Study

Gtech

2500+ Employees

"With Avaya, my operation runs both effectively and efficiently."

– Nick Grey, Owner, Gtech

Read the Case Study

florius

2500+ Employees

"The customer journey is very important to us. We are committed to a fast turnaround on mortgage applications, so we need to put the customer in the center, have fast access to as much information as possible, and automate processes as much as it makes sense."

– Seif Alhamrany, head of the Advisory Team, Florius

Read the Case Study

NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE®

2500+ Employees

"We found Avaya's understanding of telephony and contact center operations to be unique in the industry."

– Barbara Tucker, Manager, Telecommunications, Norwegian Cruise Line

Read the Case Study

2500+ Employees
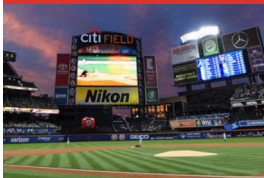
"Avaya understands exactly where we need to go and delivers the technology and support that the Mets and their fans can count on."

– Tom Festa, Vice President of Technology, New York Mets

Read the Case Study

Learn more about how these customers are succeeding with Avaya and more case studies at avaya.com/en/case-studies/.

Gartner Peer Insights: Avaya

Gartner Peer Insights: Avaya

- "Avaya is leading the market on Customer Experience"

  - Overall Comment: "Avaya delivers a wealth of Customer Experience products to meet the every changing market place."

  - Product: Avaya Aura Call Center Elite

  - Industry: Services

  - Firm Size: 1B - 3B USD

  - Licensed Users: 5000 or more concurrent users

- "Excellent new platform, better economics, lengthy contracting process"

  - Overall Comment: "Avaya has a stronger leadership team than even a year ago, and we are pleased with the direction the company is moving."

  - Product: Avaya Aura Contact Center, Avaya Aura Call Center Elite

  - Deployment Architecture: Hybrid Cloud and Premises

  - Industry: Services

  - Firm Size: 10B - 30B USD

  - Licensed Users: 1000 to 4999 concurrent users

- "It's a team effort (Avaya, partner, and us) to have a successful implementation"

  - Overall Comment: "Avaya is a great partner. They listen and work to understand our specific needs"

  - Product: Avaya Aura Contact Center

  - Deployment Architecture: On-premise

  - Industry: Finance

  - Firm Size: 1B - 3B USD

  - Licensed Users: 20 to 99 concurrent users

- "Upgrading to seamless operation for contact center"

  - Overall Comment: "Avaya provided strong support during our implementation and helps to ensure we can complete the project as per our target. the provided solution was a proven technology and we enjoyed the seamless operation, while having the flexibility in performing the system maintenance"

  - Product: Avaya Aura Contact Center

- Deployment Architecture: On-premise

- Industry: Finance

- Firm Size: 1B - 3B USD

- Licensed Users: 500 to 999 concurrent users

- "Reliable and Efficient Platform"

  - Overall Comment: "The platform was implemented with the business continuity logic and guaranteed a resilience even in critical sistuation. The services to the Customer are never stopped even if one of the two data centers in which the solution was implemented is malfunctioned"

  - Product: Avaya Aura Contact Center

  - Deployment Architecture: Cloud Solutions (SaaS or PaaS)

  - Industry: Communications

  - Firm Size: 10B - 30B USD

  - Licensed Users: 100 to 499 concurrent users

- "Have the solution that we need, and can implement it meet the timeline"

  - Overall Comment: "Have the solution that we need, also AVAYA and Local Business Partner can implement the solution meet the timeline"

  - Product: Avaya Aura Contact Center

  - Deployment Architecture: On-premise

  - Industry: Finance

  - Firm Size: 10B - 30B USD

  - Licensed Users: 500 to 999 concurrent users

- "Implementation was easy due rich out of box functionality"

  - Overall Comment: "Avaya became trusted advisor for us in customer care environment. We understand clear vision of Avaya as a technology vendor."

  - Product: Avaya Aura Call Center Elite, Avaya Aura Contact Center

  - Deployment Architecture: On-premise

  - Industry: Finance

  - Firm Size: Gov't/PS/ED 50,000 + Employees

  - Licensed Users: 1000 to 4999 concurrent users

- "Flexible, expandable and customer driven"

  - Overall Comment: "The flexibility of the Avaya product has allowed for easy transitions within our institutional call centers."

  - Product: Avaya Aura Call Center Elite

  - Deployment Architecture: On-premise

  - Industry: Healthcare

  - Firm Size: Gov't/PS/ED 5,000 - 50,000 Employees

  - Licensed Users: 1000 to 4999 concurrent users

- "Solution expandable to multiple locations with Local Survivability with not impacting cent"

  - Overall Comment: "Have been using Avaya for last 10+ years, Solution expandable to multiple locations with Local Survivability with not impacting centralized architecture and bettter administrative managemennt."

  - Product: Avaya Contact Center Select , Avaya Aura Call Center Elite, Avaya Aura Contact Center

  - Deployment Architecture: On-premise

  - Industry: Services

  - Firm Size: 3B - 10B USD

  - Licensed Users: 1000 to 4999 concurrent users

About Avaya

Learn more about what we do at Avaya.

Avaya is a global leader in digital communications software, services and devices for businesses of all sizes. We enable the mission critical, real-time communication applications of the world's most important operations. Our open, intelligent and customizable solutions for contact centers and unified communications offer the flexibility of Cloud, on-premises and hybrid deployments. Our professional planning, support and management services teams help optimize solutions, for highly reliable and efficient deployments.