

The Innovator's Guide to the Digital-first Contact Center

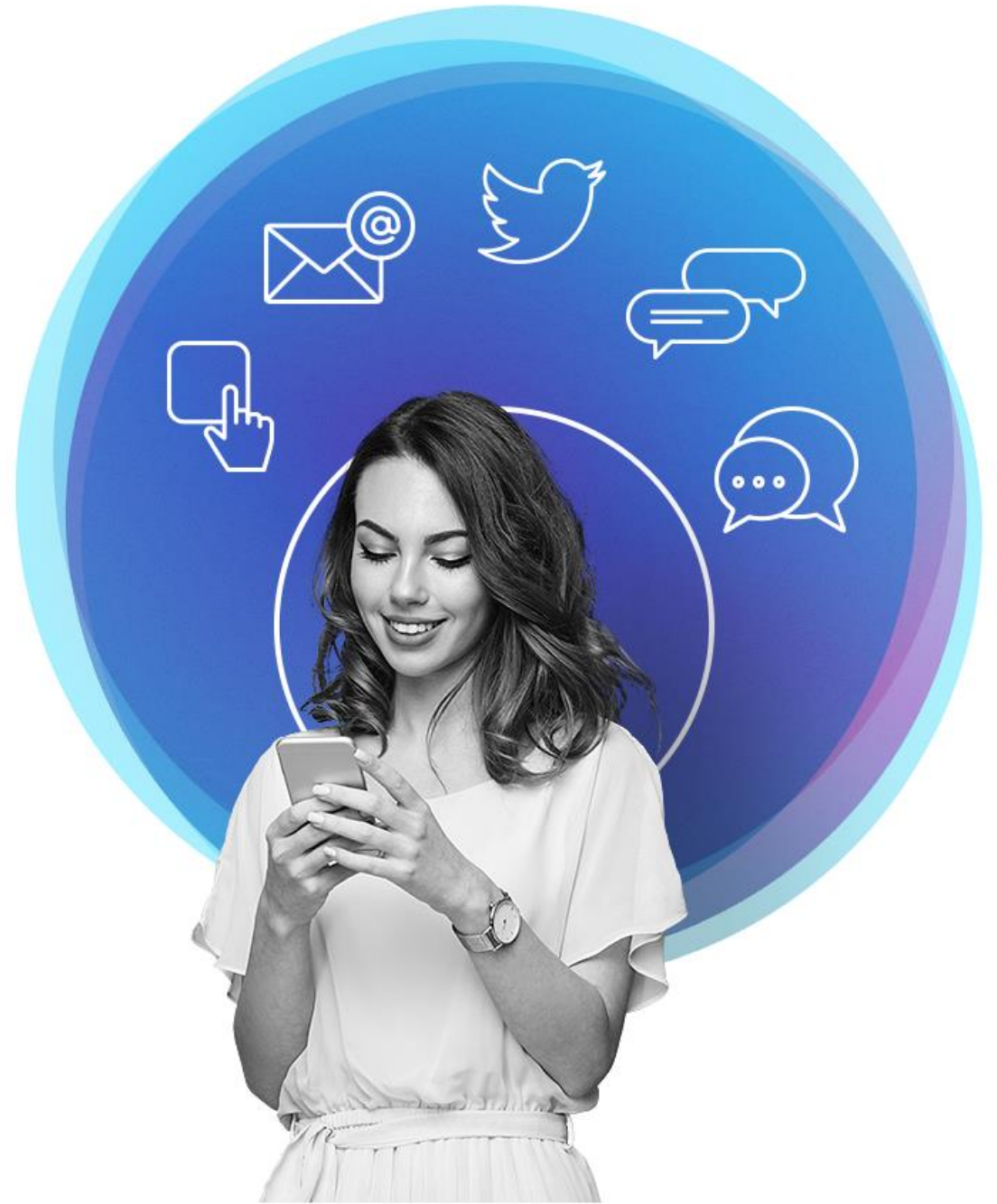


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CX Revolution: Changing Customer Expectations

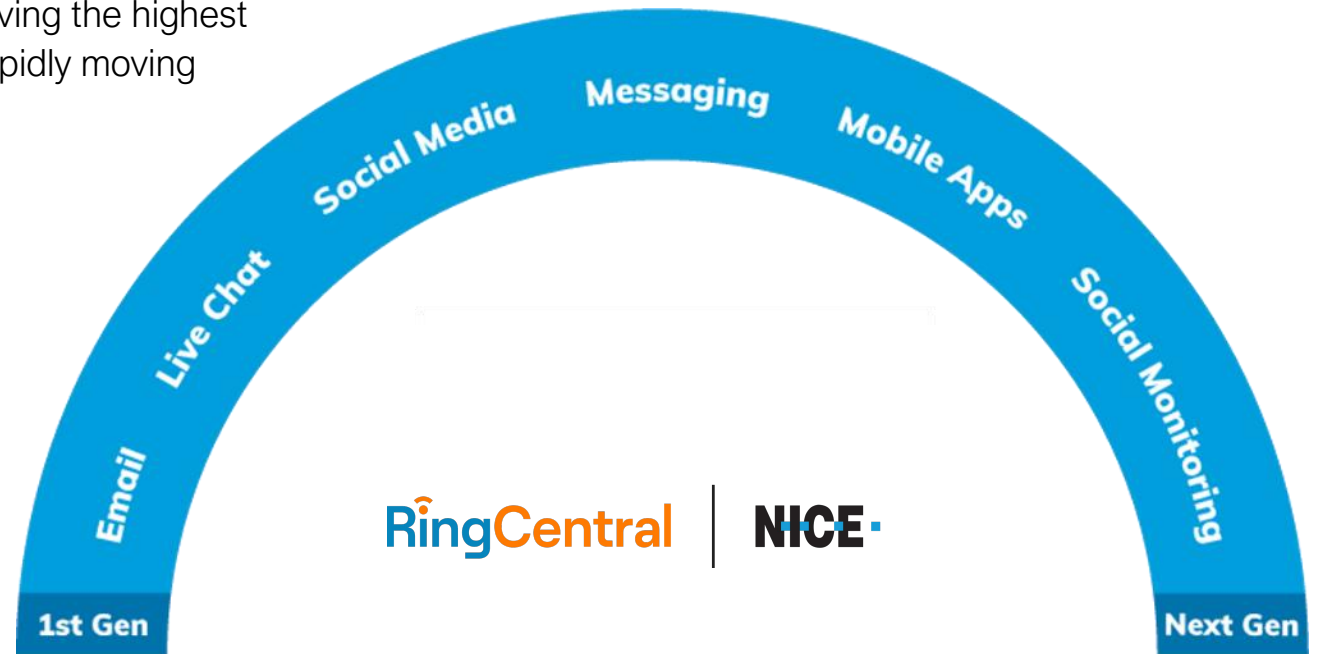
Digital Today: So Much More than just Email and Web Chat

The digital customer service universe is evolving rapidly.

Contact center adoption and support for first generation digital channels such as Email and Web Chat, including video chat and co-browsing, is growing very rapidly. Mobile Apps, while tightly tied to mainstream adoption of smartphones, have been around for a while and are gaining traction, even though contact center support has been lagging behind consumer adoption.

While 1st Gen channels are “alive and well”, with chat currently having the highest growth rate of all contact center channels, customers today are rapidly moving beyond those first-generation channels.

Next generation digital channels include social platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc. as well as advanced messaging like WhatsApp, WeChat, Facebook Messenger, Apple Business Chat and many others. Social and messaging are well on their way to become mainstream contact center channels.



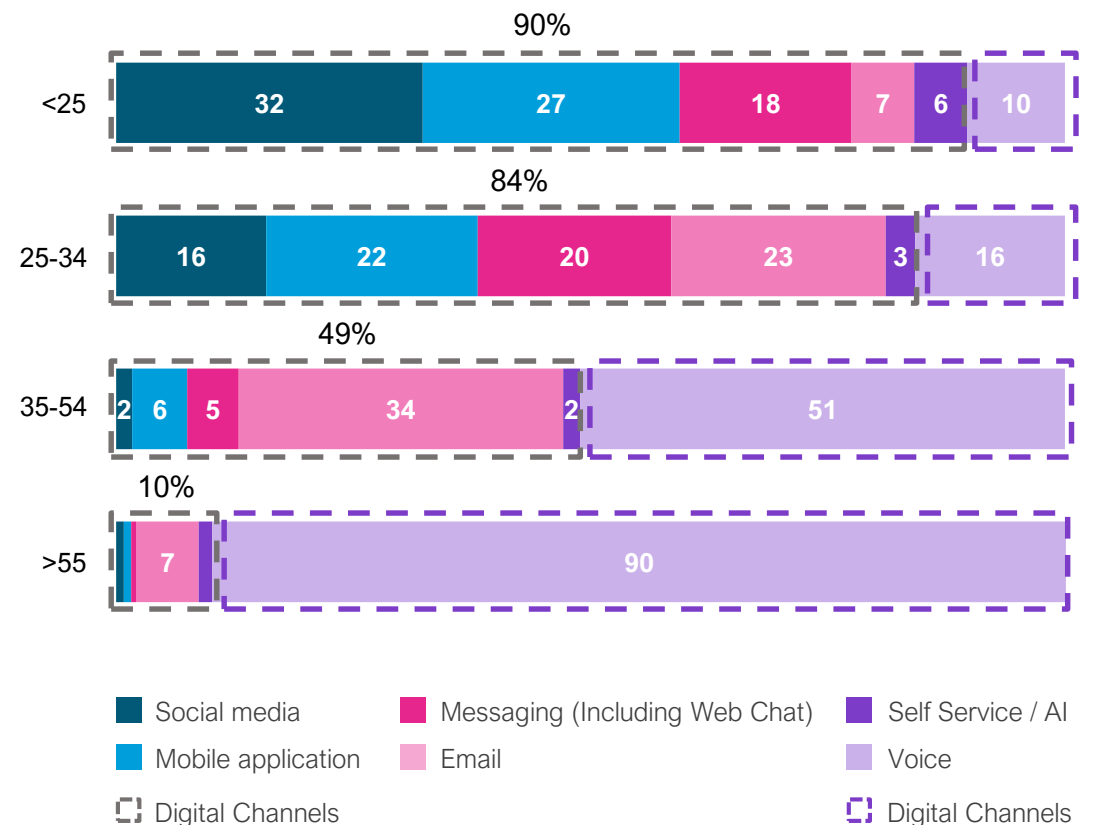
The Great Divide: Shifting to Digital

No need for a crystal ball – all you need to do to predict which channels will become essential in your contact center is to observe consumers and understand the generational differences around the choice of preferred communication channels.

While the voice channel is still widely used and voice and digital channels need to be integrated seamlessly to address customer needs across generations, research confirms that Generation Z and Millennials have a clear preference towards digital. They predominantly use next generation digital channels when communicating at a personal level, and increasingly when interacting with companies.

It's therefore no surprise that companies are starting to invest in supporting digital channels. This includes both agent-assisted and self-service next gen digital channels such as chat bots, interaction automation and self-service solutions powered by artificial intelligence. Actually, the highest growth is expected in the areas of messaging and artificial intelligence (AI) driven self-service. Companies need to start offering consumers more ways to connect. Today's consumers expect to be able to use their channel of choice based on the type of problem or issue that needs to be addressed and their current situation.

Channels popularity by age group (%)



Dimension Data 2019 Global Customer Experience Benchmarking:
"Which contact channel is most popular with the following age groups?"

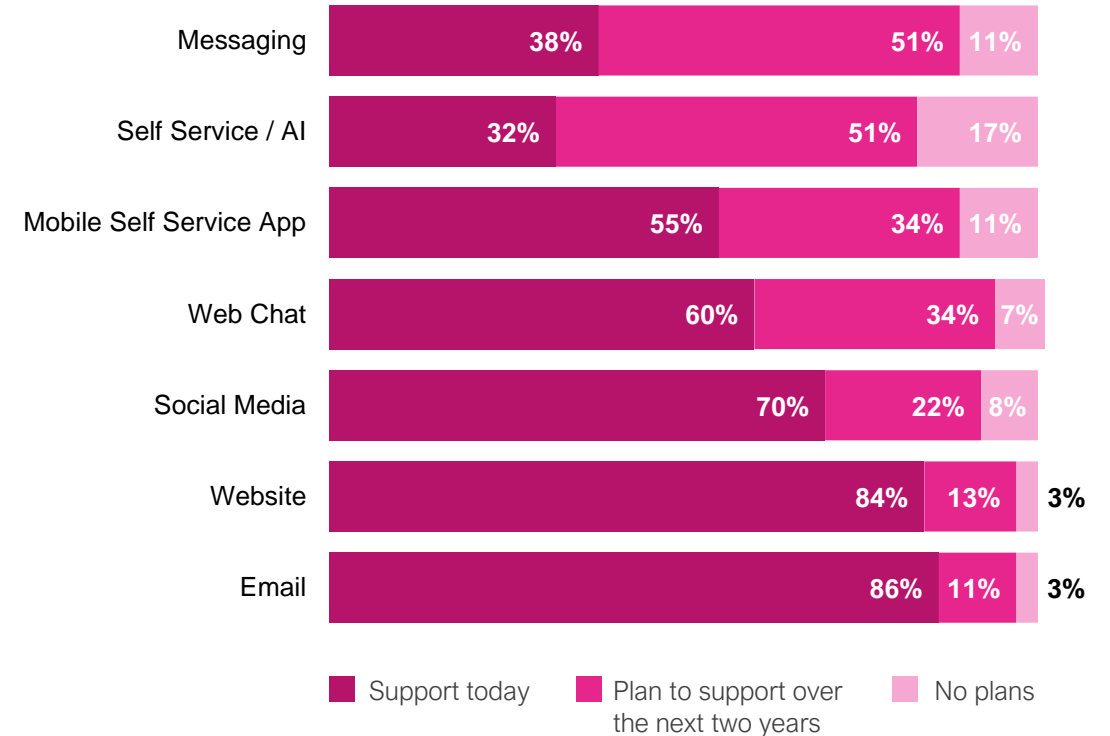
Channel Support: Today & Tomorrow

Research into current support for digital channels in the contact center and short to mid term plans that companies have paints a clear picture:

Companies are aware of the changes occurring in their customer base and are preparing to address them. If predictions hold true, 89% of contact centers are planning to support messaging and mobile self-service apps within two years. And adoption for social media (92%) and web chat (93%) is expected to be even higher.

It seems safe to assume that customers will enjoy more ways to interact with the contact center. They get the flexibility to choose their channel of choice based on the issue at hand, their personal preferences and current situation.

Digital channels supported today and plans for the next two years (%)



Frost & Sullivan 2019 Global Research Midsized Call Centers Take a Digital Approach

Next Gen Digital is Different

Supporting these next generation digital channels, however, is different in many ways from what companies are used to and have been accustomed to doing for many years.

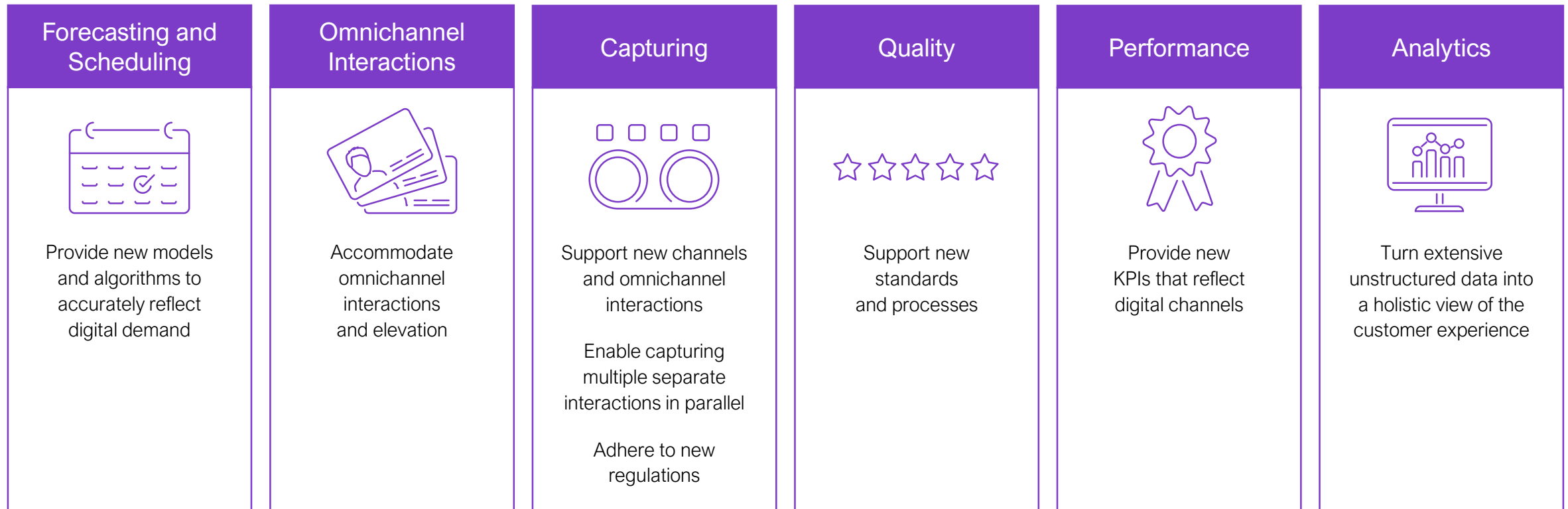
Here are some fundamental differences that companies will have to address to “get Next Gen Digital right”:

- Asynchronous interactions are the rule, not the exception – new KPIs are needed to measure success
- Response times become unpredictable and it is acceptable for a customer to appear and disappear
- The duration for each interaction session is much harder to measure
- Typically, multiple parallel interactions with different customers and in different channels are being managed by the same agent
- Conversations not only traverse multiple agent shifts, but may involve many different interaction channels to achieve resolution
- Richer features (they are interactive, provide deeper links and offer personalization)
- No standards, every application has a different interface and capabilities with minimal if any standardization across channels

Digital Impact on the Contact Center

Support for digital-first omnichannel “done right” will impact many areas of your contact center.

Here are some examples of what will be needed to evolve your call center to a truly integrated digital-first omnichannel contact center.



Taking the Lead: Providing Best-in-Class Digital Experiences

The Impact of Digital Leadership

Supporting next gen digital channels in your contact center affects your forecasting and scheduling. It fundamentally changes interaction routing and handling. Instead of simply recording a call, you need to capture activities regardless of channel and accommodate the fact that agents concurrently handle multiple interactions in different channels. Your quality assurance processes will have to change, as will performance management and analytics.

Today, most organizations providing next generation digital channel support do so via siloed agents, frequently outside the contact center (often in Marketing).

We see the future as blended agents that are empowered to manage omnichannel interactions with customers — within the contact center.

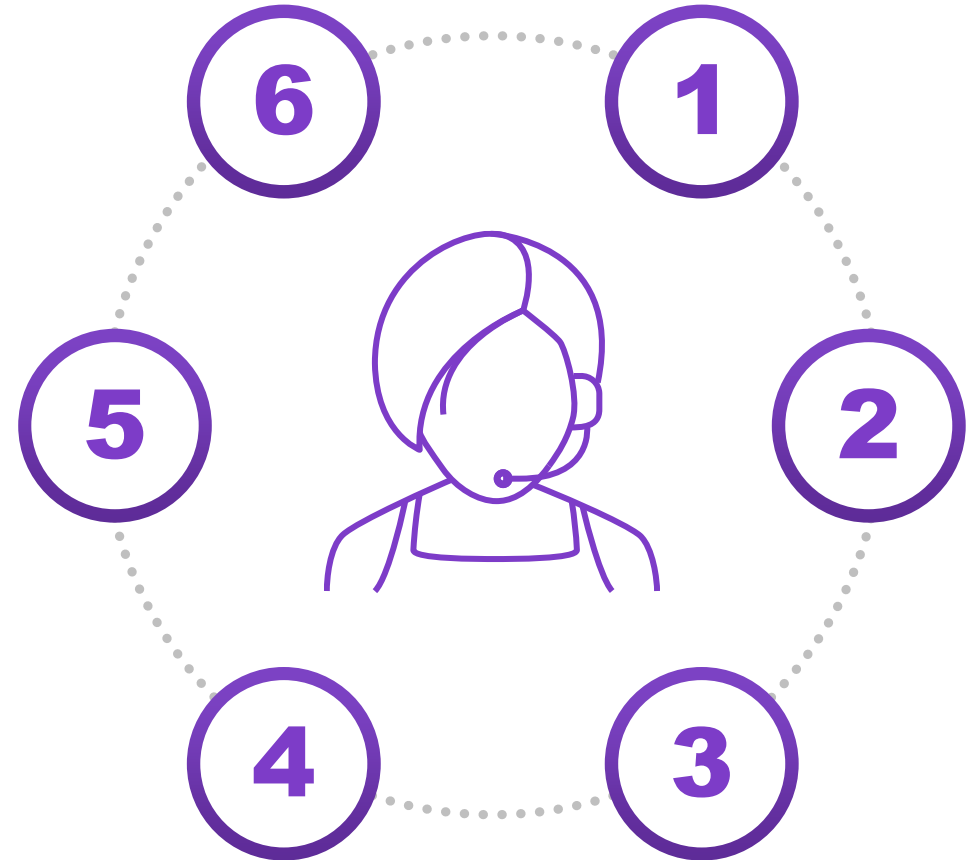
Positioning your company to achieve digital leadership is essential. Why? Because this is what your customers expect. You need to position your company and your contact center as the digital leader to fulfill your customers' expectations.



The “Secret Sauce” of Digital Leadership

Here’s the six ingredients that will help you to achieve digital leadership.

Read on to learn about all you need to evolve your contact center to meet your customers’ digital engagement expectations.



1

Managing Next Generation Digital

Today in most companies, digital channel ownership is siloed outside of the contact center. The challenges when managing this way include:

Customers typically engage for service. If they reach a team that cannot resolve their issue it is likely that they are redirected until they eventually end up with customer service, who can help. This impacts customer satisfaction and experience. It also increases interaction volumes with repeat contacts, creating more cost for the company.

The approach doesn't scale. Teams outside of customer care will typically dedicate a small number of people to monitor digital channels. But since they struggle to resolve many of the issues consumers are facing, efficiency is a big challenge.

Customer issues are complex and inconsistent. Staff assigned to monitor these channels are not appropriately trained nor have access to the tools and information required to provide timely and complete resolution.

Providing a great customer experience requires focus. For example, Marketing might manage social channels focusing on protecting brand reputation. Ironically, their being responsible for customer service undermines the brand reputation because consumers engaging the company via these channels are unlikely to get their issues resolved in a timely fashion.

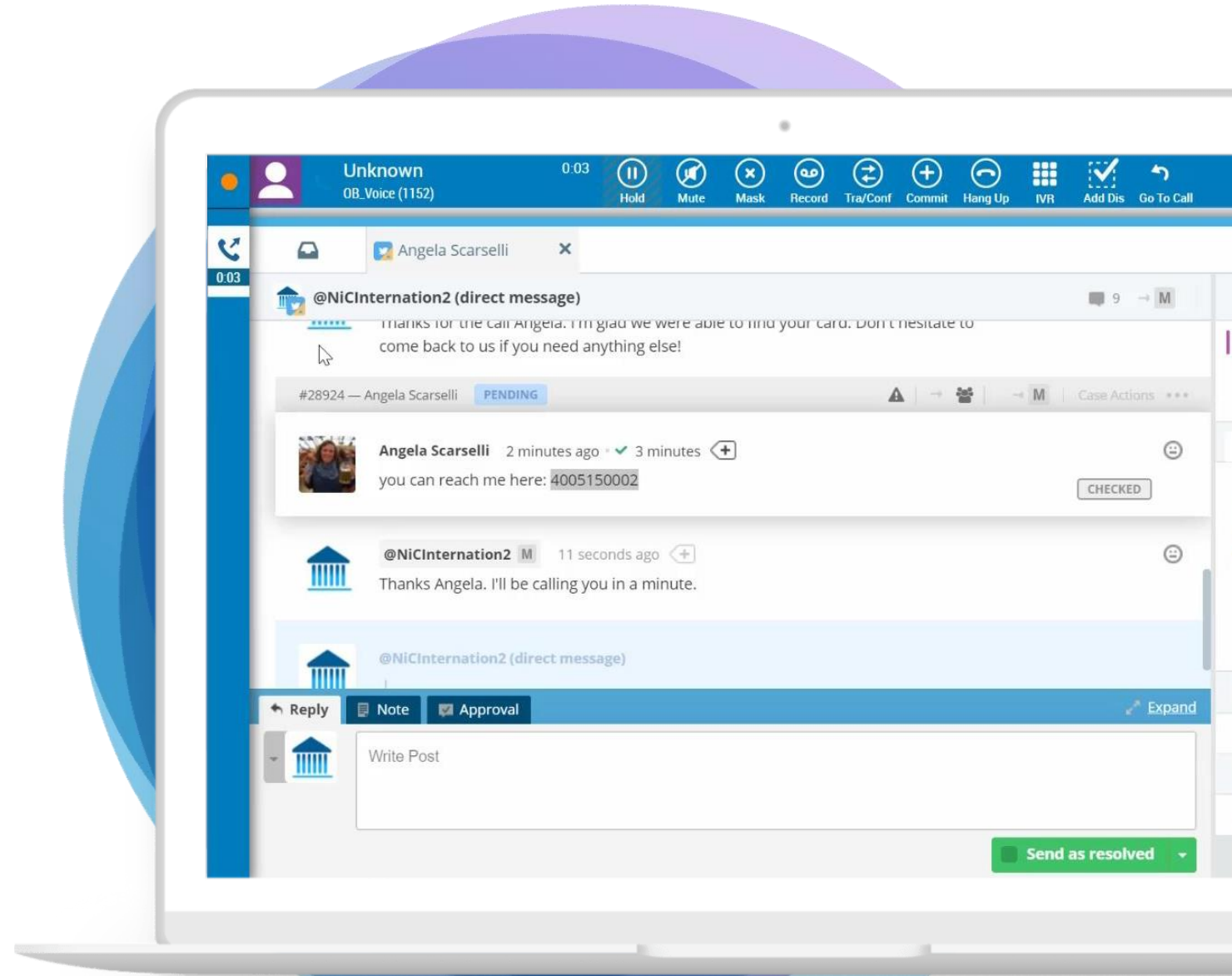
Conversely, when Customer Service owns monitoring and engaging with consumers via digital channels as part of an omnichannel customer service effort, all these issues are addressed. Customer service is staffed for scale, they are customer focused, and have been trained on efficiently dealing with customer care issues. They can manage digital-first omnichannel interactions, but are enabled to include other channels such as voice when appropriate and can provide feedback to Sales and Marketing to ensure organizational silos don't exist.

2

Add Support for Digital Messaging

Supporting digital channels can be technically difficult. They lack standards, it seems like new offerings are coming to the market on a daily basis and their use can vary by demographic (e.g., preferences can vary for younger vs. older consumers) as well as by geography.

You need a solution that makes it easy to support all channels natively and bi-directionally, including voice, digital and next generation digital channels. It needs to be simple to activate new channels via pre-integrated capabilities and it needs to be cost effective to enable all your agents to manage blended interactions that move between channels.



3

Provide a Unified Agent Experience

Ensuring a simple and efficient agent experience to manage digital-first omnichannel interactions is critical. Your agents need a unified inbox for all interaction channels because it provides:

- **Single interface:** one inbox for all interactions, regardless of channel, which reduces training needs and speeds up onboarding new agents.
- **Native experience:** each messaging platform keeps its native features. Consumers usually use certain platforms for a reason. They want to feel that they are being served in a personalized manner in their channel of choice.
- **Agents in control:** contrary to the traditional pushing of voice calls to available agents, digital handling flows more naturally when agents can “pull” their work from a queue that provides them with interactions that are dynamically prioritized.

Break silos between voice and digital agents to create blended, omnichannel agents which improves operational efficiencies and empowers agents to provide a better customer experience by allowing them to create omnichannel customer sessions, instead of being “locked” into a particular channel for the duration of the interaction



4

Cross-channel Context

Customer context is anything that can help your agents handle interactions better: from access to customer data with insight into the customer history and previous contacts across channels, to understanding the current customer mood and sentiment. As agents are equipped to handle blended interactions, they need to be armed with context that is maintained throughout the customer journey and across interaction channels.

A customer card meets this need by providing full customer context across channels and the complete customer journey. It leverages appropriate CRM data bi-directionally to help agents better handle interactions across channels. And CRM data can be enriched with context from customer interactions in the contact center.

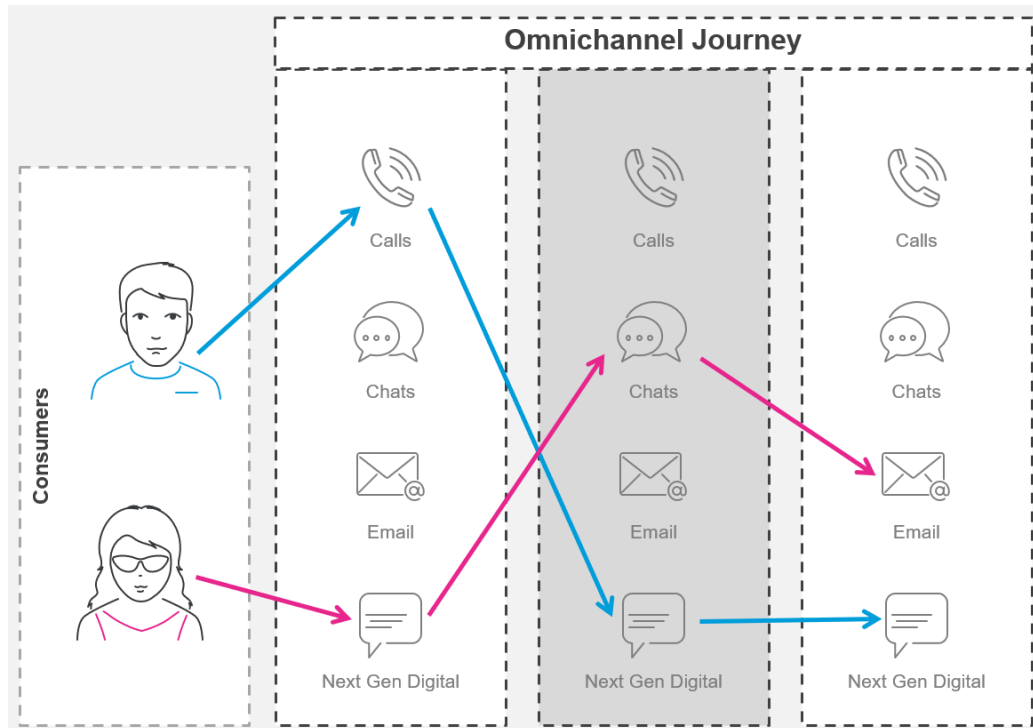
Customer card also provides immediate access to conversation history across channels, as well as customer sentiment. This helps agents to be better prepared before they even start interacting with the customer.



5

The Omnichannel Journey

When supporting true omnichannel interactions, consumers expect to move seamlessly across any channel. In fact, doing so will ensure the most efficient and cost-effective way to solve many problems.



You can imagine using self-service channels to empower consumers to resolve basic tasks on their own. You need to allow them, though, to move to a chat and make or receive a phone call should they have more complex inquiries or encounter a problem.

Here's some examples of typical cross-channel interaction flows:

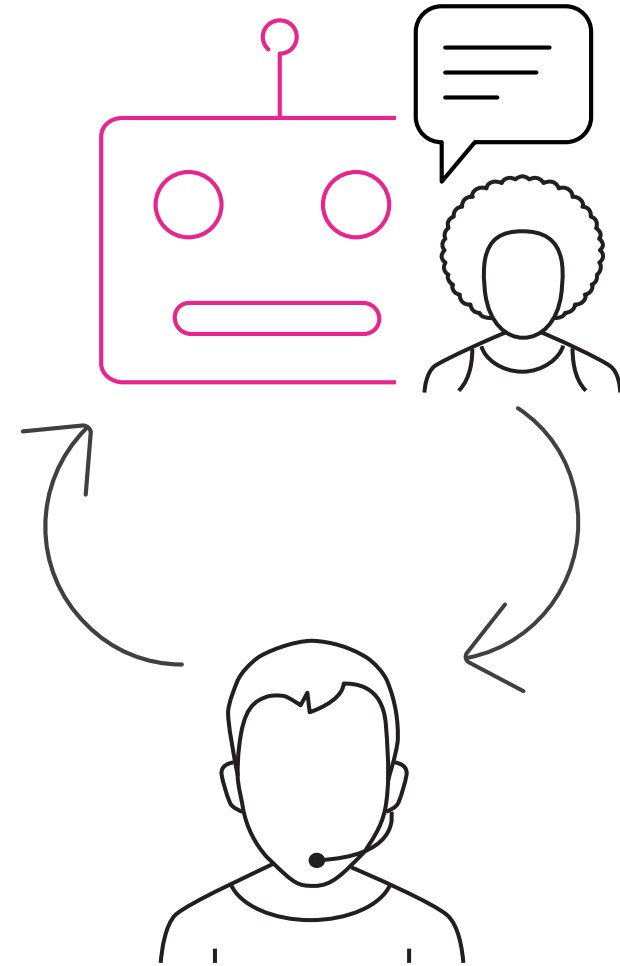
- A customer calls the contact center with a billing issue. An updated invoice is shared via WhatsApp where the customer confirms and pays via payment Gateway right from WhatsApp.
- A customer reaches the contact center via Apple Business Chat (iMessage) with an inquiry on a new bank service. In order to authenticate the new service an inbound automated call is placed. The customer authenticates the transaction via voice and confirmation of the new service is sent via email.
- Research shows that consumers want the flexibility to interact with businesses via their channels of choice, but they also expect companies to direct them to the most efficient way to address their question. Increasingly, this is going to involve multiple channels with an expectation for seamless movement between them. Companies that deliver this will meet their customers' expectations.

6 Incorporate AI for Self-service

Self-service capabilities powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) should be used to optimize digital channel handling. Chatbots, for instance, provide containment for digital channels just as Interactive Voice Response (IVR) does for voice.

Begin with simple and repetitive use cases that generate high value and leverage intelligent routing that understands omnichannel interactions to ensure seamless collaboration between live agents and self-service options.

As with any automated approach, keep in mind that it is crucial to include those channels into the overall fabric of the contact center just like agent-assisted voice and digital interactions. Allow customers to opt out of self-service and cross over to an agent, but also keep in mind that there can be big benefits in using AI and automation throughout the interaction. For example, agents can benefit from handing off mundane post-processing activities to a bot allowing them to move on faster to the next high value interaction that requires their expertise.



About RingCentral

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