



transform the management of information

IPSA Soluciones de Convergencia

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Multi-channel Access

Multi-channel means to transform the Contact Center into a membrane that surrounds the whole company, through which all the contacts with the customer are made, trying to offer a comprehensive approach of the customer service cycle and to get a 360° view of the customer.

Implementation of multi-channel access is a double challenge, organizational and technological.

The organizational component implies a rational assignment of resources, both human and technological. The service level that we want to deliver through each channel and to each customer must be defined in a clear way by applying business criteria (customer profiles, SLA contracted, etc). A wrong dimensioning, whether in the number of agents assigned to the service in each channel, or in the definition of the queue management processes, may lead the customer to abandon the use because of a bad experience, when dimensioning is not enough, or in case dimensioning is excessive it may lead to the under-use of the Contact Center resources. A multi-channel system produces significant savings as a result of the union of Front-Office and Back-Office.

The core basis of the technological part is an only platform of multi-channel distribution, that is, a CTI system that provides an only queue in which rules are applied in order to prioritize some sources over others, so that tasks are distributed in a planned way.

Other element involved is the unique repository, with fields that allow the storage and the access to information whatever the channel it comes from. The integration of repositories that allow contrasting the information coming from different channels is complex, since the processing requires a database of common knowledge to unify the answers for the customers. Other necessary piece is a comprehensive tool for developing reports to measure the result of the multi-channel integration correctly.

Within the channels to be integrated, the voice, video, chat, and collaboration web services shall be provided on real time, whilst the email, fax, SMS, MMS, and ordinary mail allow a bigger time window.

The classical channel is the customer service through telephone, which constitutes the higher economic cost in a Contact Center. The traditional TDM systems, of circuit commutation, have evolved towards IP, of package commutation, with the drastic decrease in costs that this migration implies. Nowadays, the quick progress of the SIP protocol facilitates a gradual incorporation of other real-time multimedia channels, such as the videoconference. It is

important to select a dynamic telephony platform, modular, flexible, and adaptable to future changes.

The chat, popularized through the so-called internet social nets, allows a real-time service, requiring small dedication of the agent in each interaction, by the use of answer templates. It is worth mentioning the importance of listening to the suggestions from the agents about the effectiveness of the templates, given their experience in the direct dealing with the customer, to get a continuous improvement in the design of the processes, obtaining also a higher degree of involvement of the operator in its labour.

The collaboration Web consists in make a shared navigation at the customer request. However, given the intrusion into the PC that this represents, and despite the predicted promising future some years ago, its use is scarcely experimental except in companies where core business is internet.

The main channel in Back-Office tasks is the email, which has the extraordinary advantage of not requiring immediate attention (which means savings in operational costs) and still is as useful providing solutions as the real-time channels. To promote the use of this and other alternative channels, the Contact Center can encourage the customer with some incentives.

The email also draws together all the rest of the Back-Office channels, which in the end are forwarded to an email box as attached files. This is the case of the faxes, still used nowadays despite the prediction of its extinction, announced one decade ago.

SMSs are in the opposite side. Its use has exponentially increased in a world where the use of mobile phones has exceeded all expectations. The multimedia messaging system MMS also incorporates images. The reception of SMS can be done through email-SMS gateways to facilitate the distribution, whilst the sending of SMS to the customer converts it in a proactive tool for informing, for instance, about the expiration date of a contract and the convenience of its renewal.

Even by traditional mailing, the paper can be incorporated into the multi-channel system. Plenty of daily transactions that require the reception of mailing from the customer, with some fields filled and its signature (in forms previously sent by the company) are still necessary for contracting new services. Information received can be digitalized and then it can be applied optical recognition over several fields in order to automate the data processing tasks and to store the information in a unique repository.

As an achievement of the multi-channel system, it stands out an increase in the satisfaction and the customer fidelity, whose perception of the quality delivered by the company improves when the waiting time decreases and it is available a wider range of connection possibilities. A challenge for the Contact Center is to provide a consistent image through the different channels.

Another underlying advantage is the automation of many Back-Office tasks and a better distribution of resources, with the benefits that this operational optimization implies. The following advantages are obtained: improvements in the management, monitoring, controlling, and productivity of the agents.

And finally, we find the CAPEX savings, the optimization of costs obtained by the reduction of the number of agents dedicated to provide telephonic services, and by the elimination of the data processing which, until the implementation of the system where duplicated.