

Opportunities abound for big data in the call centre

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The call centre industry is once again undergoing a seismic shift thanks to the evolution of technology - specifically, that of the cloud and big data. The cost of cloud computing has dramatically decreased, thus the ability to store more data has increased. Clustered servers in the cloud have further enhanced performance, thus effectively supporting the large volumes and varied formats of big data.



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As the cloud has opened up new possibilities for big data, the pressure to improve customer service across multiple channels has also fuelled the advancement of this technology. According to Accenture, 66% of customers switch companies thanks to poor service and 65% are frustrated by inconsistent experiences across channels. Insight from Harvard Business Review revealed that 56% of customers have to re-explain an issue when speaking to customer service. There is a need to collate customer interactions across all touchpoints to improve their experiences and brand engagement.

It's clear that, today, call centres can play a vital role in ensuring a seamless customer experience by leveraging the many benefits of the cloud and big data.

Vendor criteria

As call centres explore the possibilities of big data, selecting the right customer engagement technology vendor is critical. Call centres must look for a vendor that offers a 'single source of truth'. This will enable them to pull meaningful data from multiple data stores, such as different database and data warehouse systems. Also important is real-time data processing, as well as alternate paths to process the data offline for new features, exploratory analysis, and predictive and prescriptive modeling. And be sure the vendor not only stores all the original raw data, but can also deliver refined, transformed and aggregate views of that data.

Call centres should also look for a vendor that offers inherent omnichannel capabilities. Many vendors offer omnichannel capabilities via different acquired solutions, which are then loosely integrated. This can add huge expense and complexity when trying to obtain data across different interaction channels. Look for a single-platform customer engagement solution – those where omnichannel applications are inherently built into one platform – to avoid undue cost and complexity.

Finally, the vendor's architecture has major implications relative to big data. A distributed, microservice cloud architecture ensures not just maximum reliability and scale, but also the flexibility to iterate and innovate fast and on-the-fly. This means a company can completely switch out data processing and database platforms – something unthinkable not so long ago.

Key performance indicators

Standard KPIs have traditionally included speed to answer, call handle time, cost per call, abandon rate and queue delay. While big data metrics might not change these, its ability to quickly synthesize and evaluate significance across functional silos will have an impact. It will reveal if these KPIs are truly supporting company objectives, which means data scientists and business experts must come together to evaluate the results from a customer-focused perspective. As the front line of customer service, call centres can play a major role in this potentially transformative exercise.

The insights that call centres can glean from big data are virtually endless. Many companies today are using big data to personalise the customer experience. This can range from anticipating a customer's problem, to proactively providing service via his or her channel preference. It's clear that with many more use cases on the horizon, big data will increasingly give call centres the ability to provide better service, while at the same time drive more sales. This means call centres can evolve into a profitable arm of the company, which is particularly relevant for smaller companies that are traditionally more cost-sensitive.

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