AI,
Automation
&Bots -

**Transforming support for the
new age customer**

Introduction

The customer has remained king from the time trade moved from the barter system to money economy. But customer care has changed, many times over. Technology has emerged from the sidelines to lend customer care operations a sharp edge, handling mind boggling numbers with great ease. The shift from a transaction based economy to a relationship based economy demands better service and this is where a raft of technological advancements - automation, bots and AI are making their presence felt. However, customer experience is virtually impossible without human involvement at some point in escalations. Better Customer Experience mandates the need to empower humans manning the customer care operations through technology. The convergence of AI, automation and bots could not have come at a better time to positively impact the touchpoints, to arrest the slide in Customer Experience (Forrester Annual Report, 2017).

Automation in Customer Service

The goals of customer care remain more or less unchanged, it is the playing field that has changed. And the playing field is in a state of flux, ever changing. The 2017 Forrester report on customer service trends indicate how Customers increasingly rely on Self Service at the First Point of Contact , through many channels, including 43% users of voice self-service and 64% of users who pored over the FAQs on the website. This is a huge change from the channels available in the past. In combination with other aspects, this has altered the profile of customer service centers.

Eliminate Silos, improve AHT

Customer Experience mapped across channels - web, mobile and social media, unanimously indicate that there is a need to tear down silos that exist between different channels and departments, to present a single unified platform for customers to interact. Robotic Process Automation will shift gears to next levels, moving into Cognitive RPA which will free up bandwidth for agents to discharge tasks that demand greater interactive skills and judgment. It is this synthesis of technology working in tandem with human skill that slashes Agent Handling Time, improving Customer Experience, positively impacting ROI.

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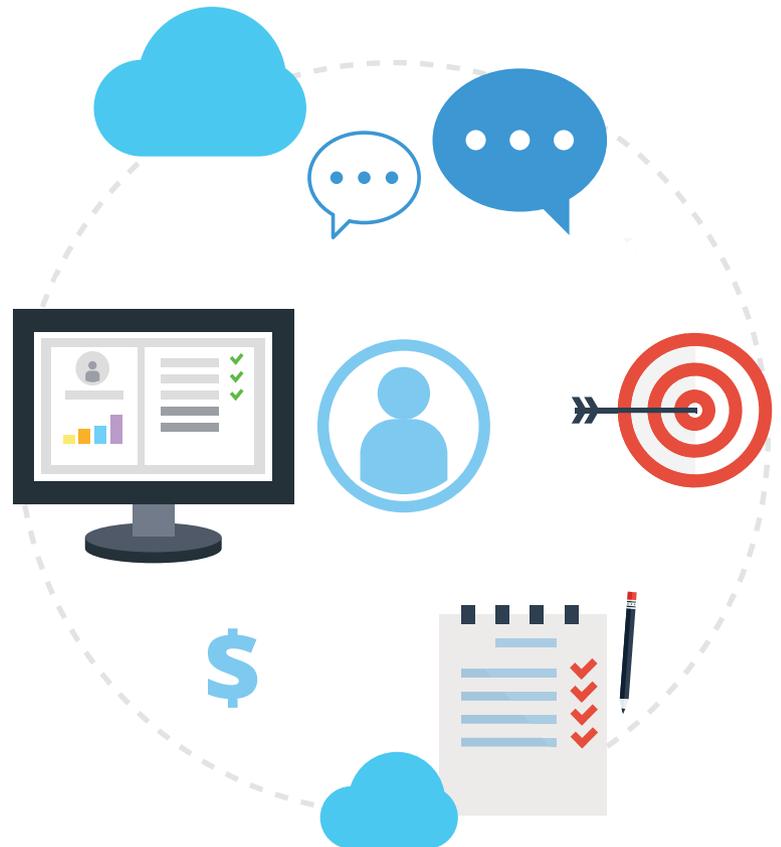
The new age and demands of customer care

55% of Americans and 65% of millennials would prefer chatbots over traditional customer support centers . Customer care is not what it used to be, and here, the reference is to processes that were in practice as recently as a decade back. The demands and the big drivers of **automation, AI and bots are:**

- Customer access to multiple channels of communication – voice, web, chat and social media.

- Global nature of operations – expanded footprints of businesses

- 24/7 - customer care has now become a round the clock activity.

- Offshore/outsourcing route not attractive anymore

- Swamped networks, staggering volumes and the need for speed in handling requests

- Expectations of personalized attention

The need to handle multi-channel requests, with cohesion, mandates the need for customer care to remain synced across channels, and there really is no alternative to intelligent automation. Given the global nature of operations, 24/7 customer care

operations are default standards and not differentiators. The bubble has burst in offshore/outsourced customer care operations, making it necessary for making operations smarter, smaller and strategic as indicated in the Forrester report. This makes it necessary for organizations to roll out customer care operations that meet the expectations of customers.
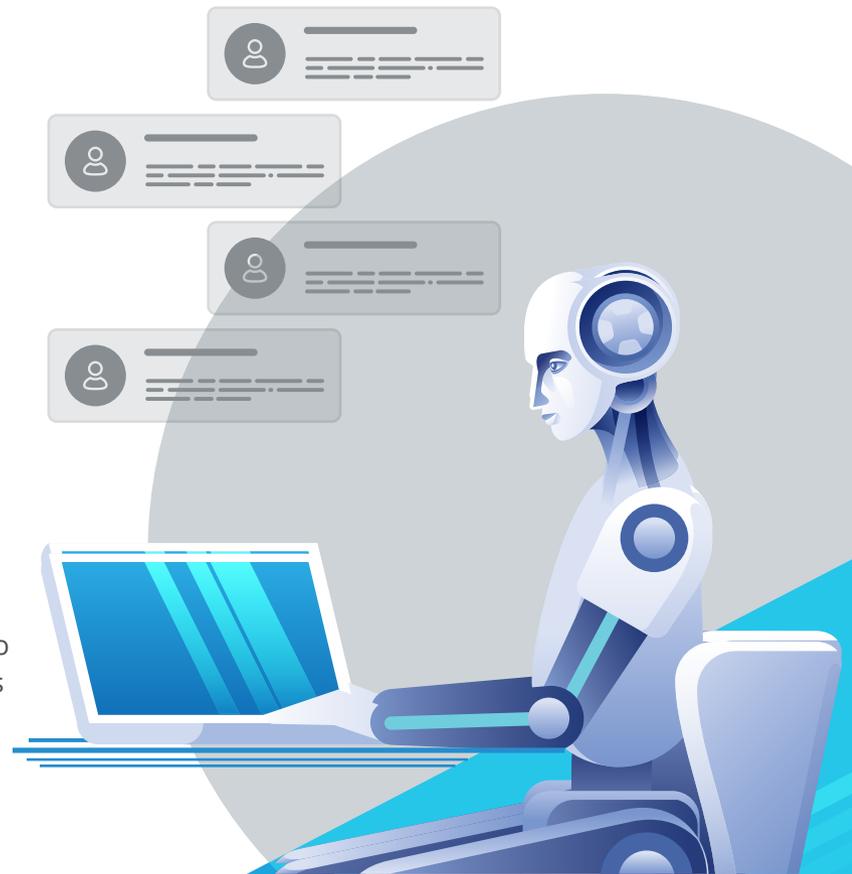
Moving away from outmoded IVR systems

IVR as a concept was great when it was introduced, but in order to handle high volumes, the tree ended up becoming large and complex, resulting in near endless waits for customers as they navigated through complex menus. The internet is rife with narrations of ordeals of customers in loops for insane stretches of time. Only one out of three brands were rated good in the Customer Experience Index . Customer service in the future will witness many changes, three of which include the following:

- Customers will choose the mode of interaction - This is different from the earlier model, where the customer had to accept a particular channel. Self-service models will be on the own terms of customers, across SMS, Web and Mobile Chat.

- Organizations must be fully aware of information - This means the organization should possess all information about customer, and not request repetitions, across every stage of escalation. The Self-Service Channels accessed by customers, need to be updated on screens to make agents aware of information possessed by customers, to be intuitively aware of the customer's needs.

- Customer service agents will work on a single interface for multichannel operations – This will grind away the dissatisfaction witnessed among customers when different updates exist across different channels.

Newfangled processes and re-imaging Customer Support

A customer who finds his or her way through an IVR would certainly wish organizations did something about **three important aspects:**
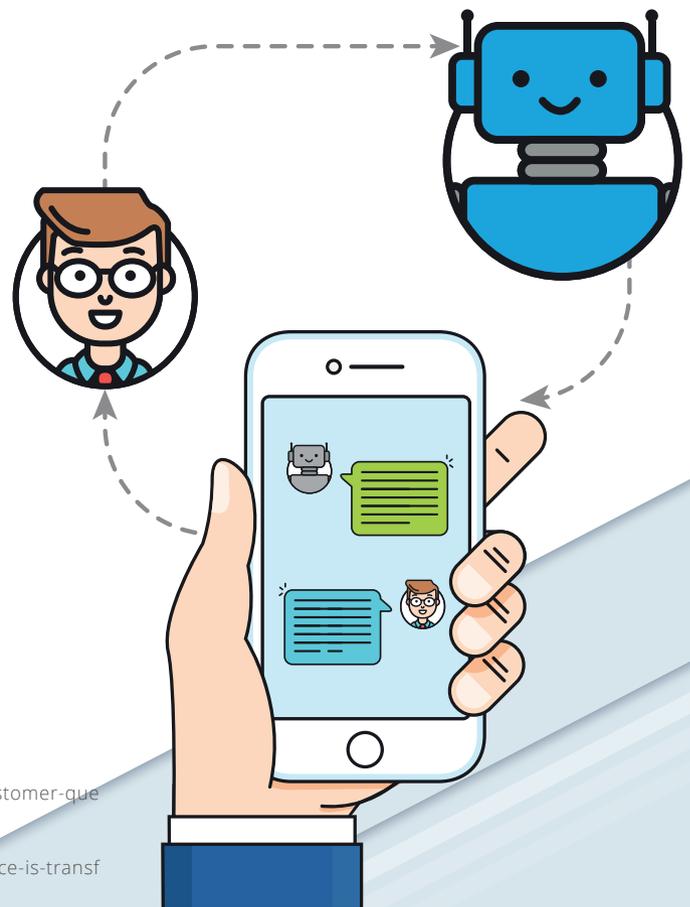
- The need for remembering the customer

- Dispensing with the need for customers having to repeat themselves

- Multi-channel consistency in response and query handling

It would certainly be difficult for existing processes to achieve the above three requirements. Automation, AI and bots do the job by automatically validating (and therefore remembering) the customer, dispensing with the need for repetition and presenting consistency across channels. This newfangled suite of services makes customer care operations a lot more sharp and effective, assisting humans handling other aspects of the operations to present a blend that brings the best of both to the interaction.

BOTS IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

Standard Chartered plans to introduce chatbots to handle customer queries through their mobile apps and the company website . This is an indication of the shape of things to come.

Chatbots will augment customer care services across businesses. While chatbots are not designed or intended to replace humans or handle all the queries, a highly developed system will help chatbots become frontline agents handling queries of a particular nature. AI assisted human agents are handling a large number of queries, while chatbots also independently handle queries of a particular nature. The customer support operations of China Merchant Bank are assisted by bots that handle staggering 1.5 to 2 million conversations daily .

http://www.scmp.com/business/money/article/2119217/ai-chatbot-handle-customer-queries-standard-chartered-next-year

https://www.forbes.com/sites/adelynzhou/2017/02/27/how-artificial-intelligence-is-transforming-enterprise-customer-service/#12cde1ee1483

Customer facing operations are maturing into engagement models

All customer facing operations are slowly maturing into engagement models, through intelligent use of records for enhancing engagement. The human element in Customer Experience journey stands out through four different aspects

- The power of reasoning

- The knowledge of language and nuances

- Cognitive abilities

- Self-awareness and emotion awareness

AI powered bots have developed to a level where it is possible to handle a certain set or subset of queries independently. And AI powered bots possess the ability to assist human operators on a chat by presenting information which can form the basis for quick and efficient disposal.

Slashing interaction time

Juniper Research concluded that the average savings on time in healthcare and banking on calls/enquiries can be slashed by as much as 4 minutes per enquiry . With the high volume of calls seen in businesses on a daily basis, this is expected to translate into 8$ billion per annum

by 2022. AI power bots are transforming customer satisfaction and interaction by offering swift and smart solutions to queries. AI powered bots presently handle the first level of queries, dishing out FAQs to customers and helping reduce Agent Handle Time (AHT). This frees bandwidth, permitting agents to handle other calls that demand more detailed information, while slashing costs and overheads. The rapid strides in AI will take interaction levels higher, as can be seen from the AI assisted customer service models prevalent. This will speed up interaction and conclusion of queries, as powerful AI solutions will suggest appropriate responses which can then be modified swiftly to suit the scenario for a dramatically quick resolution. The day is not far off when emotion aware bots that possess the ability to prioritize messages, are pushed into service for screening and queuing of queries. Time consuming, but mandatory actions such as authentication can be hived off to NLP (Natural Language Processing) systems that rely on biometrics to validate users. Enterprise bots will soon be integrated into Pre-Sales Roles, Customer Support Operations, E-Commerce through Search, CMS, Social, Open APIs and Mobile.

AI in Customer Service

The Forrester 2018 Study Predicts That 30% Of Companies Will Witness A Decline In Customer Experience Quality And See Growth Impacted Negatively . This Move To The Wilderness Will Certainly Be Of Those Companies That Have Not Heeded Warning Signals Of The Disruptive Forces In Customer Experience. Customer Loyalty Is All About Engagement. And Engagement Opportunities Fade With Lost Milestones. A Notification, A Reminder, A Greeting During A Birthday Or Anniversary Or A Welcome Message Are Natural Beneficiaries Of Automation. Customer Care Operations Would Certainly Never Have The Time For Manual Dispatch Of Such 'Engagement' Messages. Contrary To Assumptions That Automation Is Handicapped On The Personalization Front, The Developments In Ai, Bots And Automation Take Personalization To Levels That Are Pleasantly Surprising. The Power Of Analytics, In Combination With Ai, Makes It Possible For Laser-like Personalization. The Same Report Emphasizes The Need For The Digital Engagement To Be Fully Optimized To Handle Customers Effectively.

Customers on a perpetual hunt for the ultimate Customer Experience

Millennials are set to become the dominant segment, both among global workforces and consumers. And multitasking is one among the many traits that organizations need to factor in, in all interactions. It would be difficult to expect this cohort to stay logged in to a call for long stretches of time. This need for multitasking, this desire to handle different activities at one time, will make the interaction frustrating for the customer as well as the agent. AI assisted customer care operations unlock the secret to better customer experience. For the customer, it permits him to chat, while being involved in another activity. And for agents, AI assisted chats make it easy to handle multiple chats at the same time, effortlessly.
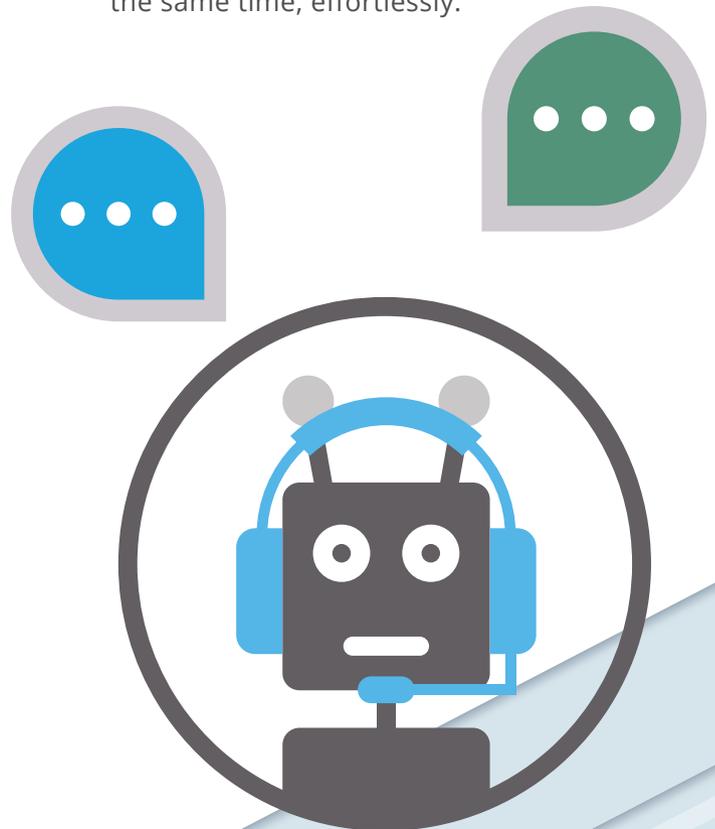
Micro segmentation and sequestering for greater personalization

This is the era of arbitrage, where offerings are weighed, evaluated and cancelled out to make the best pick. It is therefore of primary importance that greater personalization is offered to customers. Powerful computing prowess of AI, triggered through automation and funneled through bots, helps in better micro segmentation of customers for greater personalization. Customers who recognize that their special needs or preferences are understood and met by organizations offering services or products will exhibit greater loyalty. And, one of the most important aspects of personalization is the ability to perfectly meet the demands and expectations of customers without wasting time. Time for the customer is valuable, and for organizations time is money. More time spent on a process, translates into more costs and takes up bandwidth. Lesser time spent on a process, means lesser costs and more bandwidth to take up other calls. AI, automation and bots offer organizations the power to transform customer care operations into more effective, efficient and swift processes that cut Operational expenses, and bring in greater ROI. Perhaps the biggest benefit lies in the fact that scalability will never pose a challenge. Traditional operations always seem

expectations of customers without wasting time. Time for the customer is valuable, and for organizations time is money. More time spent on a process, translates into more costs and takes up bandwidth. Lesser time spent on a process, means lesser costs and more bandwidth to take up other calls. AI, automation and bots offer organizations the power to transform customer care operations into more effective, efficient and swift processes that cut Operational expenses, and bring in greater ROI. Perhaps the biggest benefit lies in the fact that scalability will never pose a challenge. Traditional operations always seem to run into different roadblocks when successful operations are scaled up. In the case of customer care assisted by automation, chatbots and AI, scalability will have nil impact on existing efficiency, effectiveness or speed. And this makes IT the silver bullet in customer care operations.

https://www.forrester.com/report/Predictions+2018+Blended+AI+Will+Disrupt+Your+Customer+Service+And+Sales+Strategy/-/E-RES140259?utm_source=forbes&utm_medium=pr&utm_campaign=predictions&utm_content=report_hong

Transition Roadmap For Cios

Customer care is a perfect example of a data driven process to enrich Customer Experience. Organizations can spot customer preferences through automated analysis and this will help agents to handle queries, and address concerns in a manner that is most appropriate for customers. For CIOs, in the context of digital transformation , digitally born startups, and the digital native generation, organizations need to focus on a digital overhaul to achieve the transformation. And this certainly includes customer care, because, to put it bluntly, products, services and organizational existence revolves around the needs of the customer. This makes for a compelling business case, in not just improvements in customer facing operations, but addresses the all-important question of ROI. Cutting down on the time taken to handle queries, is just the beginning in terms of improved ROI. Automation, and automation assisted handling of queries helps in moving a segment of first level queries to operations that are low-cost. And the all-important achievement of retaining clientele, helps to keep new client acquisition costs on a leash. A survey by Altimeter Group showed that 42% of businesses invest in new digital channels to serve clients more effectively . And the prime driver of digital transformation is Customer Experience, which makes it all the more important for CIOs to focus on bringing in automation, bots and AI into operations.

https://www.hitachivantara.com/en-us/dt/pdf/ebook/cio-guide-to-digital-transformation.pdf?mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiT0Raa01EWXhZakZrTVRZMCIsInQiOiIxRFJROExRelpiOUwxeDN1U1hZRm1KK05QK0dhVjFVcGZ0WXF6UVVFUmZEVUl3TktrrazRaZUdkVDY4RmdxcDJXXC9yTm5cL3VCV3cySEl3MGpvTkZXSXp0RVE3MGp1K00wTnBFbVp4R0FQUE9POGozQjlZNk56MG5GadTRzY2REd0VSIn0%253D&q=1

https://www.altimetergroup.com/pdf/reports/The-2016-State-of-Digital-Transformation-Altimeter.pdf

From an outside-in approach to a digitally integrated, inside-out approach

Paradoxically, the older models of customer care involved processes where the organizations determined when and where interactions took place. This also meant that the approach was outside-in, despite being an organization-controlled process. Evolving customer demands, and the new age of Customer Experience changes the equation. It is the customer who now decides how interactions will commence and conclude. This also demands that the process transforms itself to an inside-out approach that is digitally integrated with all information available on a multi-channel single interface. This, can be achieved only when customer care becomes digitally empowered. One of the hotbeds of AI research, deep learning and cognitive computing will greatly assist customer care operations. Intelligent systems will understand the meanings a user wishes to convey and the intent, making it easy for agents to edit and transmit customer support statements at high speed and in a manner, that improves Customer Experience.

About Wolken Software

Wolken Software is a premier software company with an impressive portfolio of out-of-the-box, configurable and scalable enterprise - class service desk solutions that help modern organizations transform their relationships with customers and employees. With offices in Palo Alto, CA and Bangalore, India, we empower customers around the world to offer the highest level of service performance, quality, and delivery. Built on a modern technical stack, our ITIL-compliant and **PinkVERIFY™** - certified solutions can be deployed on the cloud or on premise.

Our solutions include:

☑ **Enterprise service desk - Wolken Enterprise**

☑ **Customer service desk - Wolken CRM Service**

☑ **Business communication - TeamToq**

To learn more about how our service desk solutions can help your business, contact us:

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