

What is the future of humans in contact centres? asks Puzzel

Thomas Rødseth at Puzzel looks at the pros and cons of bots, artificial intelligence and virtual assistants in contact centres

LONDON, UK, October 3, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Robots, bots, chat bots, intelligent or virtual assistants are just very sophisticated forms of self-service. We know that self-service is here to stay - the younger generation is quick to embrace self-serve and typically find virtual agents entertaining and interesting. So where does that leave humans in contact centres?

It's everywhere

Every kind of robot is around you. Amazon's Echo and Google's Alexa compete to prove who is smartest – both are voice-enabled wireless speakers, which answer questions, play music, control smart home devices and even read the news. Coming back to UK shores, Enfield Council has used Amelia to transform its cost to serve. New knowledge can be automatically captured and categorised whenever Amelia has to escalate unresolved enquiries to live assistance. It's fair to say robots have reduced contact centres' live assistance of inbound volumes leading to huge savings in time and support costs.

Fortunately, cloud-based contact centre solutions are rapidly catching up with the latest developments in automation, self-service, intelligent routing and integration on a single platform for a truly modern customer experience.

Robots certainly have some good points but it depends on the needs of your customers and your organisation. Here are some pros and cons;

Pros

- 24/7 access – customers can get an immediate answer at 2am without waiting for the contact centre to open at 9am
- Your own virtual butler - the truth is that robots and intelligent assistants are rather like having your own virtual butler. They can order lunch, a taxi, set up meetings, shop and book flights and in the same way removed routine enquiries from contact centres.
- Real-world business benefits - some industries, such as insurance, are experimenting with conversational personal assistants to automate claims management. Contact centre solutions, offering superior automation, advanced self-service and intelligent routing capabilities are making it all a reality. They can also boost productivity whilst reducing the need for additional headcount - an attractive business proposition.
- Capture the hearts, minds and purse strings of the younger generation - as technology advances, so too does its application and popularity. A well-designed virtual agent can feel like a real live agent. Given a face and even a name, they boost the customer experience and strengthen brand loyalty. When it comes to attracting tomorrow's potential big-spenders, robots are a smart move.
- Effective on boarding tool – new agents can hit the ground running because they have instant access

to accurate information to answer customer enquiries, courtesy of artificial intelligence or machine-to-machine learning.

Cons

- Image – virtual agents can appear trite, especially in B2B industries where customers often expect a more conventional approach to customer interaction, they can be cause for irritation or a complete turn-off for older customers.
- There will always be a need for the human touch - which even the most sophisticated advances in technology can never provide. This is especially true of organisations with complex enquiries on emotional subjects such as housing or health. Some sectors might consider retaining more human advisors to conduct sensitive conversations.
- Risk alienating an older, faithful generation - the same applies to servicing the communications preferences of certain customer demographics, particularly less technology-confident older generation. From a business perspective, it doesn't make sense to dismiss the spending power of the silver pound let alone alienate a huge section of many companies' loyal customer base.

The best of both worlds

Success lies in being all things to all people. Using the latest multichannel cloud contact solutions means advisors have the ability to handle enquiries from all channels. Clever integration with major customer relationship management (CRM) applications such as Salesforce and Microsoft Dynamics enable personalised enquiry handling and queue prioritisation. Giving advisors the right tools to handle customers based on their own judgement improves customer loyalty and delivers the quality of service that all customers deserve and expect.

Ultimately, contact centre leaders should blend the benefits of self-service and virtual agents with the human touch to meet the needs of customers, advisors and the overall business.

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