

CUSTOMERS NEED A CX THAT BLENDS HUMAN & AUTOMATED INTERACTIONS



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Originally published April 16, 2019, business2community.com



If you've ever shouted "[SPEAK TO A REPRESENTATIVE](#)" in exasperation at an interactive voice response (IVR) system or tried to buy beer in a self-checkout lane, you understand that there is still a very real need for human interaction in the customer service process. But, just by virtue of participating in such interactions, you also acknowledge the convenience and efficiency that automation brings to the table.

Customers, service representatives and brands all benefit when the support experience blends strategic robotic process automation (RPA) and human interactions. Read on to find out how this leads to a truly intelligent customer experience (CX).

Where does automation fit into the customer service experience?

• Customers

Today's customer has high expectations of the support experience: Service should be instant and accurate, and options other than voice should be

available. In fact, the popularity of voice support has decreased by almost 20 percent over the past three years* (*source aspect, 2018*) in favor of digital channels such as live [chat support](#), [digital self-service content](#), email and [social media support](#). By automating simple, tedious tasks such as resetting passwords, generating printable return labels and checking order statuses, RPA satisfies these progressive customer

• Agents

Automating simple, algorithm-driven processes results in faster, more streamlined interactions being handled by machine. Because these interactions can be resolved without engaging an agent, fewer interactions are directed to support representatives, lightening their overall workloads. Some automated processes begin with human interaction between customer and brand representative but are resolved through automation. For example, if a customer needs to

have an order replaced that was lost or stolen before delivery, the agent may need to input certain information (original order number, reason for replacement, corrected address info, etc.) to trigger the automated replacement process. After successfully initiating, the agent can end the call and move on to the next while RPA takes over re-ordering the product, processing fee waivers, generating a shipping label, notifying fulfillment and emailing a confirmation number to the customer.

Both instances of RPA make the agent's job easier while improving performance measurements by reducing hold times and average handle time (AHT).

- **Brands**

As simpler interactions are handled via RPA, the volume of contacts reaching live agents decreases. This effectively reduces agent headcount while still meeting customer expectations for multiple contactchannel options.

Where does human interaction fit into the customer service experience?

- **Customers**

Think about an enjoyable support interaction you've had and the impact it made on your perception of that brand. Did the representative listen to your concerns and respond in kind? Did they weigh your circumstances and apply a discount or offer an exception to improve your experience? Did they make you laugh?

Customers need human engagement for more complex issues, not only because resolution may be more complicated but also because empathy and de-escalation strategies may be required to alleviate customer stress.

- **Agents**

While automation can complete simple tasks quickly and accurately, live agents can resolve complex customer issues with reason and empathy. And with tedious processes being handled through RPA, agents are more available to do just that.

The presence of RPA also improves overall employee satisfaction, as the elimination of menial box-checking and form-filling from their workflow

allows agents to focus more on engagement and complex problem-solving. And as automation drives down AHT and hold times, agents feel more successful and confident, fulfilling their role of helping people — which is what they signed up for in the first place.


- **Brands**

The benefits of maintaining human engagement in the service experience extend to the brand through increased customer loyalty. When customers feel they've been heard, they are more likely to advocate for that brand — that a positive customer service experience can outweigh a negative product experience is what makes human support engagements indispensable. Incorporating RPA into the customer service experience also helps address current challenges in the labor market. In addition to decreasing the necessary headcount, the increased complexity of issues handled by live agents requires better-qualified employees to address them. In effect, RPA integration allows brands to hire fewer live agents and to be more selective regarding those agents they do hire.

So, where do you start?

The right blend of automated and human interactions is crucial when it comes to optimizing the benefits we've outlined. There is no one-size-fits-all, plug-and-play approach to effectively incorporating RPA in your customer service experience. Your industry and the unique needs of your business dictate which processes can be automated and which should maintain human interactions.

It's also crucial to recognize that implementing RPA is not a "set-it-and-forget-it" process in and of itself. Automating processes will directly affect the workflow around those processes and may ultimately reform other areas of operation. Continual monitoring and analysis of affected processes will reveal how current automations can be improved and new areas that may eventually be ready for automation. Selecting a partner that understands your business, the customer service industry and market innovation is key to successfully implementing RPA in your support processes and creating a truly intelligent CX.

	 CUSTOMERS	 AGENTS	 BRANDS
AUTOMATION 	Completes tasks digitally and instantaneously	Eliminates tedious, menial tasks	Lowers required agent headcount
	Satisfies expectations for digital contact options	Deflects contact for automated issues, decreasing workload	Reduces AHT and hold times
HUMAN 	Incorporates attentiveness and empathy	Exercises reasoning and problem solving	Enables more selective hiring
	Meets expectations for meaningful interactions in more complex situations	More meaningful interactions	Increases customer loyalty
		More successful and confident in their work	
BLENDED 	Meets expectations for digital channels and instantaneous resolution of simple issues, as well as meaningful and empathetic interactions for complex issues	Provides more meaningful and fulfilling work, increasing employee satisfaction and performance	Enables employment of fewer agents who are better-qualified
			Establishes themselves as progressive in delivery of digital contact channels
			Increases customer loyalty and employee satisfaction



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Lance Zingale has been an integral part of the Sykes Enterprises, Incorporated, executive team for over a decade, having joined the company in January 2006 as Executive Vice President, Global Sales and Client Management. In his current role as Chief Customer Officer and General Manager, EMEA, Lance leads the Communications/Media/Entertainment, Financial Services/Insurance, Consumer Technology and Products, Travel, and Retail verticals. His responsibilities include strategic direction, management and revenue generation of SYKES core current clients and potential clients across his verticals.

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