



Blending Human Agent and AI Automation Roles in Contact Centers

This whitepaper explores the role of contact centers in customer experience, the benefits and challenges of incorporating AI automation technologies, and strategies for successfully blending the best that human agents and automation have to offer.

Introduction

Customer experience has become crucial for companies to maintain their competitive edge in today's fast-paced business environment. Customers expect quick, efficient, personalized service and will take their business elsewhere if they do not receive it.

In its future of CX report, PwC surveyed 15,000 consumers and found that 1 in 3 customers will leave a brand they love after just one bad experience. At the same time, 92% would completely abandon a company after two or three negative interactions.¹

Contact centers play a vital role in the customer experience value chain by serving as the primary point of contact. Not only do contact centers provide customer support, but they also act as a vital source of customer insights, which can help organizations improve their products and services.

With the rise of digital transformation, AI has become an increasingly popular tool in contact centers. AI-powered technologies, such as chatbots and intelligent virtual assistants (IVA), have the potential to automate routine tasks, reduce wait times, and offer quick solutions to customer queries.

However, as much help as AI can provide, the human touch remains a vital customer experience component. Companies must ensure the two blend seamlessly—AI helping human agents perform better and agents helping improve AI model performance and understanding of utterances.

¹ [PricewaterhouseCoopers. "Experience Is Everything: Here's How to Get It Right."](#)

A report from Aragon Research entitled "Aragon Research Globe™ for Conversational AI in the Intelligent Contact Center (ICC), 2023" explains the AI-human interplay.²

The report states that IVAs are now fully capable of handling tier-1 support issues, such as password resets, order lookup, and appointment scheduling, independently without any interaction from a human while passing more complex issues on to agents for investigation and resolution. However it adds the caveat that AI solutions providers like Interactions are developing IVAs capable of handling far more complex requests.

Benefits of AI Automation in Contact Centers



Reduced operating costs

AI-powered tools like those previously mentioned can handle routine inquiries and support tasks, freeing human agents to focus on more complex and higher-value interactions.



Improved efficiency

AI automation can respond to customer inquiries and support requests quickly and accurately, without human intervention, leading to improved efficiency and faster resolution times.



24/7 customer support

Contact centers can provide 24/7 support to customers across various channels, including phone, email, chat, and social media, making sure customers receive timely assistance whenever and wherever needed.

INTERACTIONS CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORIES

Vistra Energy, a Texas-based utility and one of the ten largest electric companies in the U.S., wanted a more efficient, customer-friendly way to handle millions of calls each year. Vistra worked with Interactions to replace its existing IVR and created “Ivy,” an IVA solution.³

RESULTS

- ✓ CSAT rose by 11%
- ✓ 18% call containment increase without the need for live agents
- ✓ Savings of \$750,000 in IT costs and more than \$200,000 in cost avoidance
- ✓ Payback goals reached in just 40 days

In another instance, Hyatt partnered with Interactions to expand its automated customer experience and sales efficiency using Interactions IVA.⁴

RESULTS

- ✓ 33% average savings per call while also improving sales conversion rates
- ✓ 94% savings on fully automated customer interactions, such as frequent reservation confirmation calls
- ✓ Year-over-year ROI growth of 125%

³ [Vistra Intelligent Virtual Assistant Case Study](#)
⁴ [Hyatt Saves \\$4.4 Million with Conversational ...](#)



Challenges of Using AI Automation in Contact Centers

While AI automation can deliver many benefits to customer service contact centers, businesses must be keenly aware of the challenges to its use. These include:

LIMITED PERSONALIZATION

AI-powered tools can be limited in their ability to understand complex emotions and nuances of human language, resulting in less personalized customer interactions.

INABILITY TO HANDLE COMPLEX ISSUES

AI may not be able to handle complex issues that require more nuanced and human-like decision-making.

RELIANCE ON HISTORICAL DATA

Most AI algorithms are trained on historical data, limiting their ability to respond to new or unforeseen situations, resulting in incorrect or inadequate responses to customer inquiries and support requests. On the other hand, Interactions Conversational AI models learn on the fly and constantly improve as a result.

INTERACTIONS CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORIES

Despite the many benefits, automation does not always meet expectations, such as with Westar Energy. Its traditional IVR offered few analytics and no ability to listen to calls to understand why customers needed support. After looking at other cloud-based solutions, Westar chose Interactions to implement an IVA suited to energy company needs. The solution provided efficient self-service and the ability for customers to be routed to a live agent only when necessary.⁵

RESULTS

- ✓ 39% of callers completed transactions through self-service
- ✓ More than 80% of callers satisfied or very satisfied with the overall experience
- ✓ 25% improvement in JD Powers customer satisfaction scores

⁵ [Interactions Case Study: Westar Energy](#)

Strategies to Blend AI and Human Resources in Contact Centers



Companies can adopt the following strategies to successfully blend AI automation and human resources in contact centers:

IDENTIFY THE RIGHT TASKS FOR AUTOMATION

The first step in balancing AI and human resources is identifying the right tasks for automation. Centers can use AI-powered tools to handle routine and repetitive tasks, such as answering frequently asked questions, processing orders, and providing basic support.

DEFINE HUMAN AGENT ROLES

Next, clearly define the role of human agents. This step includes determining when agents should be involved in customer interactions and outlining their specific responsibilities. Creating human touch-points along the customer journey ensures customers receive a personalized and empathetic experience.

PROVIDE AGENT TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Provide agents with training on how to work with AI-powered tools and ongoing support and coaching to help them develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

EMPOWER AGENT EXPERIENCE (AX)

Agent training, combined with customer interactions and Task Orchestration⁶, which blends Interactions conversation IVA with human agents, enables agents to take on higher value tasks. This leads to improved agent experience, customer satisfaction, enhanced problem solving, and reduced escalation to live agents.

Not only that but AX also allows agents to use their intelligence, intuition, and judgment to work in synergy with the IVA, which deflects mundane questions and sends complex tasks to the agent to engage in conversation with the caller.

COLLECT AND ANALYZE DATA

Finally, collect and analyze data to continuously improve the AI-human resource balance. Track metrics such as customer satisfaction (CSAT), first-call resolution (FCR), and average handle time (AHT) and then use the data to identify areas for optimization.

⁶ [Transforming Customer Experiences with Conversational AI](#)

Conclusion

Contact centers must take full advantage of the best that AI automation has to offer, complemented by the role humans play. Combining advanced conversational AI with human agents is the way forward to ensure better business outcomes and guarantee customers receive the service and support they expect,

By adopting the strategies listed above, companies can successfully blend AI and human resources in their contact center operations, enabling them to deliver a superior customer experience while improving efficiency and reducing costs.

Interactions IVAs, powered by Conversational AI, utilize proprietary Adaptive Understanding™ technology to seamlessly blend AI with human-assisted understanding (HAU) that allows customers to speak naturally, just as they would with a human.⁷

Features include automation that understands and interprets complex human language to provide accurate and relevant responses, an intelligent virtual assistant that routes user queries to the most appropriate agent or resource, and a success-based business model that either works or you don't pay.

HEAR OUR AI AUTOMATION IN ACTION

⁷ [Adaptive Understanding Technology](#)

About Interactions

Interactions provides Intelligent Virtual Assistants that seamlessly combine artificial intelligence and human understanding to enable businesses and consumers to engage in productive conversations. With flexible products and solutions designed to meet the growing demand for unified, omnichannel customer care, Interactions is delivering significant cost savings and unprecedented customer experiences for some of the largest brands in the world. Founded in 2004, Interactions is headquartered in Franklin, Massachusetts with additional offices worldwide.

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