Leveraging Emotion to Improve CX & Elevate Contact Center Performance

Market data, strategies and best practices to create emotional connections that drive growth
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In order to compete effectively in The Age of the Customer, brands need to elevate their approach to CX. The journey starts in the contact center.

The key ingredient for delivering a five-star CX in the contact center is understanding and leveraging emotion across customer interactions. Emotion is a key driver for developing strong and lasting customer relationships. Consider the recent research:

- Emotion has a bigger impact on brand loyalty and customer retention than ease of engagement and CX effectiveness.¹
- 60% of loyal customers use the same type of emotional language they’d use for family and friends when speaking of their favorite brands. ²

However not all organizations are taking advantage. Harley Manning, Vice President and Research Director at Forrester³ predicts that 20% of organizations will give up and stop trying to win at CX. However, as Manning explains, firms that ignore CX will do so at their own peril.

Executive Summary: Welcome to The Age of the Customer

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Emotional Connections: Invest in Talent & Technology in the Contact Center

Urgency for exceptional CX has never been higher. Organizations are responding by increasing investments in talent and technology, and by cutting programs – and people – that fail to deliver.

In fact, Forrester³ predicts that one out of four CX professionals will lose their job. At the same time, brands will spend $8 billion more on customer service agents in 2020⁴ than in 2019 due to heightened demand and competition for contact center agents with strong subject matter expertise, the ability to handle complex situations, and deep interest in the brand’s products or services.
The driving force behind these changes is two-fold: 1) the criticality of emotion and positive CX on the bottom line, and 2) the complexities associated with mastering emotion and managing delicate customer situations.

On the first point, companies across the globe are losing billions per year due to avoidable consumer switching. Forward-looking organizations are investing aggressively to turn this risk into competitive gain. In addition to their people investments, on the technology side, organizations are deploying speech analytics and AI in the contact center and leveraging sentiment analysis to help measure customer emotions.

**Sentiment Analysis: A Way to Measure Emotion**

Sentiment analysis helps agents develop an emotional connection in the contact center. By definition, sentiment analysis is the process of understanding how customers feel about products, promotions, brands or the interactions they have with your organization. The end result is an in-depth, personal look at the true **Voice of the Customer**.

Powered by speech analytics technology, sentiment analysis enables companies to assess language used in customer interactions along with acoustic measures such as tempo and agitation. This provides actionable insight on a customer’s emotions, attitudes and opinions, as well as customer service and agent performance.

Unlike traditional feedback methods, such as post-call surveys, sentiment analysis derived from unsolicited feedback captures 100% of customer interactions to paint a clearer picture of how your customers really feel and why.

By including analysis of the acoustic measures that accompany what your customers say, organizations can understand the emotional intensifiers that depict the intent, action and satisfaction. This is much richer than anything that can be gleaned from a survey.

> “Humanizing feedback means making it more real, understandable, and relatable for stakeholders. This requires moving beyond traditional surveys and reports — and tapping into emotionally engaging forms of feedback like social media, speech, images, and video. To do this, CX professionals must first gather emotionally compelling insights, then use those insights to create empathy and make emotional connections that drive change.”

**Putting Emotional Data into Action with Customers**

By considering sentiment scores and behavioral metrics, brands can more effectively identify customer satisfaction and loyalty drivers to provide that “Wow” moment. Whether it’s offering same-day emergency delivery for a customer that’s in a tough situation, performing spontaneous acts of kindness for a caller that’s having a bad day, or finding innovative on-the-spot solutions for a customer with a hard-to-resolve problem, sentiment analysis can help agents uncover how a caller is feeling, and respond appropriately.

For example, a health insurance company may have an audience that values high levels of empathy in the CX journey, whereas a technology company’s audience may grow agitated with empathy – preferring quick, get-the-job-done approaches. There are many instances in the contact center where the correct, efficient approach doesn’t match an agent’s intuition. In order to positively influence a customer’s emotional state, agents need to understand what behaviors lead to positive experiences.

This is also true of different cultures and illustrates the potential risk of outsourcing contact center operations to a location where the culture is at odds with that of their customers.
While every customer, industry and region is different, in the contact center, one thing is consistent: emotion matters. Many callers just want to be listened to when calling a brand. Listening is a skill so basic, yet complex in the contact center, where agents are often trained to stick to scripts and reduce the amount of silence on calls. Speech analytics can provide real-time guidance to help agents divert from scripts when the situation warrants, and instruction for how and when to exert certain emotions or actions to improve call outcomes based on its analysis of sentiment.

Another important practice is to gather and analyze emotional feedback in the “cries for help” from contact center recordings. With speech analytics, employees can “tap into the context and emotion in the calls at scale,” according to Forrester. Although agents won’t be able to use these post-call insights in real-time to impact the outcome of those calls, they can learn and improve. On a more strategic level, organizations can use the information to change or transform different aspects of their organization for the better, based on the true voice (and emotion) of the customer.

An example of this is the collections organization that learned that if their agents expressed empathy during a call, the customers from whom they were trying to secure past-due payments were five times less likely to express a negative emotion during the call and nearly three times as likely to provide a promise of payment. This was discovered by analyzing emotions expressed by both the customer and the agent during calls, and the subsequent successful result recorded during those calls.

**Understanding Context Before Emotions Run High**

Combining emotion with words and other situational factors can reveal what is taking place in the moment, as well as the appropriate next step to take. Contextual data can show why call lengths vary from each other, and how to improve CX to accommodate the long and short interactions. When calls have extended periods of silence, you can identify the driving force. Context can uncover hidden meaning behind words that typically would be used to describe satisfaction.

**The Benefit of Getting Emotional with Agents**

Understanding emotion isn't just beneficial to customers – it's a major driver in retaining and attracting hardworking, long-lasting contact center agents.

Speech analytics delivers real-time, crucial feedback to agents, equipping them to respond appropriately and improve the outcome of the interaction. Companies can monitor agent performance by identifying patterns, and agents are able to self-assess and use the data to help improve and develop the skills they need (empathy, politeness, efficiency, etc.) to reach better outcomes.

Measuring and understanding agent emotions is also important to boost employee happiness, fulfillment and ultimately, productivity and retention. After all, research has proven that happier employees perform better than unhappy employees in the workplace.

Speech analytics is also ideal for encouraging the agent performance you want. For example, highly scored interactions can be used for agent bright spot analysis with examples to emulate – including the most appropriate sentiment expression or response. And when agents are given appropriate feedback with the tools needed to succeed and improve, their confidence is boosted, as is their likelihood of retention.
CallMiner's Emotion Solution Suite enables organizations using CallMiner Eureka speech analytics to quickly and accurately understand, measure, and trend human emotion in interactions between contact center agents and customers. This applies to both “after-call” interaction analysis and real-time next-best-action agent guidance.

Benefits include:

- **Richer Insight** – Gain a deeper understanding of how your customers feel through a scale of emotions crossing different levels of positive or negative sentiment spanning emotion intensity.
- **Emotional Accuracy** – Achieve industry-leading precision by leveraging a unique resource of conversational data applied for machine-learned emotional meaning.
- **Context Empowered** – Conversational behaviors with sentiment markers account for meaning to understand root cause igniters of emotional “moments of truth.”

Conclusion

In The Age of the Customer, only the emotionally intelligent will survive. Brands can get ahead by equipping their contact centers to understand emotion and extract and leverage the data to drive a better, more human-centric CX. AI-powered speech analytics gives contact centers the ability to understand customers better, provide improved service, develop higher performing agents, and create stronger customer connection. The bottom-line impact on growth, reputation and revenue will speak for itself.

About CallMiner

CallMiner is recognized as a leader in the speech analytics software industry, transforming your customer interactions with conversational insight to drive positive experiences and profound business change. Uniting with our customers and partners, our platform surfaces intelligence captured across your multiple communication channels and compels action that leads to improvement within and beyond the contact center for customer experience, employee performance, compliance, security, fraud and interaction automation.

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