

Hybrid working puts telecoms in the CX fast lane



VICKIE COWPERTHWAIT
9 GROUP

"As part of our commitment to our partners, we have introduced a range of digital initiatives which aim to adapt to the changing demands around customer experience. We've created support videos which partners can share with their customers, following an increased demand for digital media. Traditional face-to-face workshops have been digitalised and the uptake has been phenomenal. We also observed a reduction in inbound calls and an increase in cases raised through our support portals. We have responded by introducing portal enhancements, which aim to make this experience even easier. Our teams are equipped to adapt and respond, based on changing demands. We hold open conversations with partners, so that we can clearly understand their current priorities and serve their needs, in order to help them achieve their goals. By having a considered and customer centric digital strategy, which looks beyond lockdown, Partners can be prepared for whatever comes next."



PAUL MCCAFFERTY
BDR

"We're building an e-commerce site for purchasing additional lines, hardware and Office 365 licenses, alongside a broadband checker to inform prospects of their available options and reduce time to sale. Once sales are placed online, we leverage RPA (Robotic Process Automation) to order, add to systems, send updates and organise billing, which significantly reduces administrative overheads and the risk of incorrect data entry. Our self-service portal supplies real-time network analytics and reporting to end-users as well as the ability to raise tickets for faults. And when updates are available, we can automatically inform customers via text and email, which is saving a considerable amount of time and stress. Though an automation platform isn't enough, you need to optimise its capabilities too. That's why we're leveraging our aggressive acquisition strategy to bring the right people into BDR with the expertise to elevate our services to the next level."



RICHARD BETTS
CHARTERHOUSE GROUP

"At Charterhouse, we believe delivering an exceptional digital customer experience is the currency of modern business. Over the last year hosting virtual meetings, roundtable events and conferences became a necessity. We approached the challenges this posed by training our business development team on how to maximise the effectiveness of the virtual medium. At the core was ensuring the team interacted in an appropriate, friendly and engaging manner. Delivering an enhanced, improved digital customer experience to our customers is incredibly important to us, which is why we've just launched our new Charterhouse Service Portal as a gateway to our business, offering more effective and seamless interaction. As we look to the future of office working, we prepare for our workforce to utilise our buildings in a safe and flexible manner, ensuring the right secure collaboration technology is available for meetings so that employees can seamlessly engage from any location."



ED WINFIELD
CONTENT GURU

"Customer experience, already digitalising pre-COVID, underwent a massive acceleration towards omni-channel and intelligent automation last year. Pressure came from both sides, with staff sent home or furloughed, just as customers appeared en masse, demanding service. Now, almost any organisation is expected to offer a consistent customer experience online, on app, on social and on the phone. A great experience has to be personalised, fast, easy and secure. Otherwise, consumers will go elsewhere, probably never to return. Fortunately for businesses, the democratising effects of cloud mean almost any organisation can now provide this world-class service and deliver a more enjoyable and flexible workplace for its own staff as well. Best of all, and whisper this, it is probably cheaper than how they were doing it before. So, in short, an omni-channel digital customer experience, delivered via friendly technology sourced from a knowledgeable cloud-based provider, is the key to competitive differentiation."



DUNCAN WARD
ENREACH

"Customer experience is of the upmost importance, so much so that we have identified this as a key goal for 2021 and beyond. Our customer experience strategy is essential in ensuring our customers are prepared for the different challenges that businesses are facing because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but this shouldn't stop them from reaching their goals. It's crucial that we help our customers to react quickly to the changing market and to do this, we've ensured we have the right structure and people in place internally. We've adopted a digital strategy that provides customers with a supportive partnership as, despite being digital, customers still want traditional contact. It is becoming increasingly important for both new and existing customers to know they're partnering with the right supplier who is willing to invest in their business by providing the right customer experience that meets their changing needs."



DAVID WARDELL
EVOKE TELECOM

"The fundamental question we asked ourselves was: 'can our customers contact us using the method of their choice?' Hybrid working and a boom in e-commerce has totally changed the service landscape. We recognised that we needed to embrace digitalisation to not only support 'hybrid working' for our teams but to also deliver a new 'hybrid CX' solution for our customers. Our systems needed to be seamless, effortless and immediate with self-serve options wherever possible. At the same time, we could not afford to leave behind our more traditional customers who value an interpersonal experience and the sound of a human voice. WebRTC for remote onboarding and open APIs for application integration have been invaluable in delivering our digital CX and customer success strategies. However, the real key has been in truly understanding our customers and helping them to effectively deliver efficiencies and their business goals."

There was a time when comms resellers would sell organisations a telephone system, add in a maintenance plan, put the whole deal on a lease and simply react to any requests for moves and changes. Customer service amounted to a phone call every now and then.

How things have changed, thankfully for the better. Tech integration and the march to digital has created a new breed of resellers and a much closer, almost personal, relationship between clients and their ICT providers. Their 'trusted advisor' status means resellers become intertwined and crucial to the successful functioning of an organisation, its staff and the technology it uses every day.

The need to provide a holistic Customer Experience – now known as CX – has become a fundamental component of a reseller's armoury and has been intensified as the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent work from home directives have transformed living rooms into makeshift offices, classrooms, and gyms.

The return to workplaces will be slow and, as TalkTalk Business learned from its research into the impact of the virus on hybrid working, more than half of 739 business surveyed said they are thinking about downsizing their main place of work in response to the rise of homeworking, which increases to 61% amongst

businesses with more than 20 employees (see hybrid working Round Table report on pages 14, 15, 16).

According to Jordi Ferrer, Vice President and General Manager UK&I at workflow specialist Servicenow, telecommunications providers have become the "backbone of our new normal" and must transform operations and remove friction points to deliver seamless work experiences as transmission loads and reliance on networks skyrocket.

"By applying intelligence to everyday processes—prioritising, categorising, routing workflows, and predicting anomalies—employees get more work done more easily. Data can be quickly and accurately correlated to identify common errors. Remediations can be predicted, freeing up employees to personalise the customer experience.

Ferrer argues that happy customers mean greater retention and, ideally, a greater adoption of new products and services.

"For SME customers, getting services right lays the foundation for long-term profitable relationships as those businesses continue to grow and place greater demand on telecom infrastructure and services," he added.



NIKI FOOTE
FIDELITY GROUP

"We found that the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the need for our digital strategy to be taken to new levels. We have spent the past nine months working behind the scenes on our website to enhance the user experience. We implemented live chat as it became relevant to enhance our response times to customer queries. It has been encouraging to see a lot more engagement via our website from our customers, new and old. We have been building stronger digital connections with our customers, which ties in nicely with our mantra: creators, communicators, and connectors. In employing a third-party digital agency, they have implemented Pay-Per-Click, SEO and display adverts, which has led to new digital leads for our team. The way we communicate has never been more digital, which has led to our team members upskilling for the new digital workplace."



CHRIS MORRISEY
LILY COMMS

"At Lily, we've always proudly called ourselves 'The Home of Digital Transformation'. We believe that adopting the latest digital technologies can deliver benefits for businesses based around our four goals of revenue, profit, cash and efficiency. We've seen major efficiencies in the last 12 months in delivering meetings remotely, which have reduced time and physical travel costs, helping to improve our bottom line. We believe the adoption of video conferencing, live chat and working anywhere is here to stay, and our teams are fully prepared to deliver the same level of customer experience whether it is digital or face-to-face. The resellers' biggest decision now is which platforms to support as the race for increase in market share is now clearly on. Digital customer experience is just customer experience; it shouldn't be defined by the technology you use to deliver it. This is, after all, the new normal now."



PAUL TAYLOR
VOICEFLEX

"Covid has been a learning curve across all market sectors. It has amazed me how quickly we have adapted our lives to new working environments. How would we achieve a level of communication without MS Teams or Zoom? Does the technology need to radically change, or has the technology always been there but never utilised to the full extent? UC&C has been available for years, yet there has never been a need to use it. The footprint moving forward will be UC&C and connectivity, and companies that delivers the total experience will win. Organisations will be spending more money per head on total work experience as there will be huge savings in rent alone. Applications that enhance the UC experience and support staff welfare will have the ear of HR. Underpinning it all is connectivity and UC, which as a channel we are more than capable of delivering."



ANDREW ROBINSON
GAMMA

"We have always placed great importance on delivering a digital customer experience. This is defined through embracing a digital approach in the way we support our partners and customers, from offering multi-media options to communicate with our support and customer services teams, to extensive eLearning facilities, but critically focusing on delivering products and services that evolve with the channel and user behaviour. Our new cloud-based omnichannel contact centre solution Horizon Contact is a clear example of our expertise in CX and evolving customer demands. It creates a real opportunity for partners to deliver the right solution for their customers to overcome the next wave of CX challenges. Furthermore, our single line replacement solution, Phonenumber+, will offer new ways for the micro market to take a digital-first approach for themselves and their customers, in addition to or totally replacing their traditional analogue phone systems in that drive towards the 2025 switch-off date."



MICHELE ANWAR
QCONTACT

"As a remote first company we have had to have a digital strategy from the start, so we really understand some of the challenges facing businesses right now. It's important to deliver a strong digital experience to your customers and that often comes with a lot of trial and error to find out what works and what doesn't. But as a result, we now have the correct tools in place to ensure we deliver the best possible digital experience to our both our channel customers and our direct customers. Customer Experience will be the most important area to focus on with customers getting increasingly frustrated with the pandemic being used as an excuse for unsatisfactory service. Companies need to address this by delivering ongoing digital training to all employees with a big focus on overall customer experience. Any products that can help support this are a big win."



BARRY WARD
WAVENET

"Customer experience is front and centre of the changing business landscape. Digital processes, automation, integration and emerging AI technologies all need to be considered when looking at customer interaction. Resellers need to ensure the ease of transaction and make themselves easy to do business with. Streamlining processes to deliver enhanced automation and experiences is key. Resellers not only need to deliver fast, responsive processes and service delivery, but also choose vendor partners who can offer both the technology and the integration. Wavenet has been investing heavily in development teams and business analysts to ensure process, services and delivery are all synchronised with long-term strategic goals. This ensures Wavenet can offer the channel an outstanding experience alongside market-leading technologies, as well as delivering increased agility and adoption to the changing markets and business environments."



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