# 5 TIPS FOR LEVERAGING PROACTIVE CUSTOMER CARE TO DELIVER AN EXTRAORDINARY CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

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**A WHITE PAPER**

## THE FOUNDATION OF AN EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY: PROACTIVE CUSTOMER CARE (PCC)

Enterprises today are increasingly looking for ways to improve the overall customer experience while opening up new opportunities to positively increase competitive differentiation. One of the best ways organizations can do this is not only responding to their customers when a need arises, but being one step ahead.

The concept of Proactive Customer Care (PCC) — when sales or service-related communications are initiated by a company to its customers to inform, remind or drive appropriate actions in an attempt to improve customers' quality of life — is not new for today's customer-focused organizations.

These solutions originally started out as outbound interactive voice response (IVR) applications that enabled organizations to reduce the volume of inbound calls and emails pertaining to common frequently asked questions, which could at times overwhelm even the most well-staffed contact centers. These original outbound IVR applications specialized in delivering targeted notifications which ultimately aimed to reduce inbound call volumes by connecting customers to automated self-service applications.

But today's customers are more connected — via more devices and channels — than ever before. Customers demand timely service when they want it, where they want it and how they want it. PCC solutions are rising to the challenge.

PCC has evolved into technologically complex, yet customer-friendly multi-channel solutions that enable companies to engage and create a two-way dialogue with customers via their preferred communication channels. PCC is being used for a wide variety of applications, such as proactive outbound reminders and notifications pertaining to prescription refills, travel delays, scheduled service appointments, bills and fraud notifications.

### CCW MARKET STUDY: THE FUTURE OF THE CONTACT CENTER IN 2019

**32% OF CONTACT CENTER EXECUTIVES IDENTIFIED PREDICTIVE/PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT AS A KEY PRIORITY**

PCC is helping organizations across many sectors go beyond the traditional definition of customer service to drive positive competitive differentiation.

The benefits of PCC are compelling, including:

→ Increased revenue

→ Reduced operating expenses

→ Improved relationships with customers

→ Enhanced quality of life for customers

→ Greater customer loyalty and allegiance

## TIP 1: EMPOWER CUSTOMERS WITH MULTIPLE CHANNELS

First, it's important to give customers as many ways as necessary to reach their desired outcomes or cure their service needs, as no two customers' preferences are the same. Technology can be a powerful enabler allowing customers to utilize their preferred communications channels on their own schedules. These channels typically include:

→ **Voice** - Interactive messages by phone enable customers to complete self-service tasks without ever having to speak to an agent

→ **SMS /Text** - 160 characters provide endless interaction possibilities, such as delivering account alerts, prescription refill reminders or even sending mobile coupons

→ **Email** - Customized HTML emails can help increase sales, optimize marketing investments and strengthen customer relationships

→ **Print** - Whether a monthly statement, ad insert or other promotional piece, today's print-based communications must complement and seamlessly integrate with evolving digital communication channels

→ **Web** - From hosting customer-managed profile portals and community pages to facilitating customer surveys, the internet continues to be a preferred customer communication hub

→ **Social Media** - Increasingly, customers expect social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, to be available as additional notification/communication channels

Once the proper channels have been identified, enterprises have the opportunity to not only communicate with customers, but to enhance the customer experience with proactive, personalized messages that enable customers to receive information that is important to them, while also being provided with convenient self-service options by which to take action (when appropriate).

Reaching out to customers and giving them easily accessible ways to respond is a critical step in any company's approach to creating a true dialogue geared at developing and solidifying customer loyalty. This dialogue is made seamless by enabling cross-channel communications, such as the ability to connect with a live agent or back to the web — maintaining messaging cohesiveness across channels. Customer-managed profile portals are another key tool that enable customers to create and manage their own unique profiles via the web — such as channel

**CCW MARKET STUDY: CONTACT CENTER 2025 – A ROADMAP**

**MORE THAN HALF OF CONTACT CENTER EXECUTIVES SURVEYED (52.5%) PREDICT IN 2025 "OUR CONTACT CENTER SYSTEMS ARE COMPLETELY UNIFIED"**

preferences and payment methods. This makes PCC interactions more well received by customers due to their ability to manage delivery channels and in some cases, even the topics and offers presented to them.

## CASE STUDY 1: AUTOMATED COLLECTIONS

A leading retail entertainment provider needed a comprehensive customer interaction solution to manage first- and third-party automated collections, as well as in-store data lookup and consolidated customer reporting — all while reducing overall customer care costs.

Working with CSG, the company implemented a multi-channel PCC solution that manages all inbound and outbound self-service customer care and collections. This included a number of important functions such as interactive, self-help IVR, past due postcard reminders, as well as consolidated customer reporting.

As a result, the company was able to reduce its annual collections costs by $1.7 million. In addition, it significantly reduced the number of accounts being sent to third-party collections — cutting average collections costs per customer by more 50 percent. The company was also able to generate $2.9 million in additional collections since the solution was implemented. Lastly, it decreased its client roll rate by 3 percent, as well as its days sales outstanding (DSO) and delinquency rates.

## TIP 2: LEVERAGE CUSTOMER INTELLIGENCE TO DRIVE VALUE

More than ever, analytics help an enterprise to intelligently steer customer interactions to deliver the right message at the right time via the right channel. By utilizing existing customer intelligence data — such as order history, monthly spend data, product usage, or even information on complaints — companies can tailor a set of individualized communications strategies.

For example, an enterprise might identify a segment of highly valuable customers to pursue with an up-sell campaign or analyze a demographic of similar customers to make intelligent recommendations on new services that would be of value to them. On the flip side, enterprises can identify dissatisfied customers and leverage PCC to reach out to them proactively to circumvent an issue or offer a promotion in attempts to win back their loyalty. Mobile PCC solutions — including mobile coupons — give an enterprise the ability to connect with a customer instantly to generate revenues and encourage customer loyalty with targeted special offers.

Another key business value of leveraging analytics comes in the form of positively influencing contact center operations in areas such as the best times and channels to contact customers. Based on historical interaction data, customer intelligence analytics empower businesses to analyze which channels and at what times customers are most likely to respond. This insight allows organizations to deliver a more personalized and customer-friendly experience, which ultimately provides positive returns in areas such as first call resolution (FCR) and lowering total cost per call.

## CASE STUDY 2: APPOINTMENT NOTIFICATIONS

The executive team at a major market North American cable provider challenged the entire company to find new ways to automate existing processes, improve subscriber services and reduce operating expenses. The company operates several call centers consisting of several hundred agents, who had been manually contacting Field Technicians individually with location and appointment details — which translated into lost time and money.

Using a PCC Appointment Notification solution from CSG, the company began conducting IVR calls to subscribers to verify scheduled appointments. They also began utilizing 48-hour, 24-hour, Day of

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Appointment and ETA pre-calls to allow subscribers to verify, cancel and dynamically reschedule within the automation. Interactive post-appointment surveys were also deployed to gauge subscriber satisfaction and promote continuous improvement.

Now, 80 percent of the company's subscriber base is reached for Day-before verification; Day-of-Appointment calling now reaches more than 90 percent of its subscriber base for appointment verification (compared to only 50 percent previously). As a result, the company estimates $3.1 million in annual savings through the reduction of no-show expenses (Day-before Appointment Calling). One major metropolitan market is delivering the company an additional $4 million in annual savings (Day-before and Day-of-Appointment calling).

## TIP 3: CONSOLIDATE DISPARATE SYSTEMS

Many contact centers today are made up of several completely separate platforms. The cost of keeping these platforms in sync, and managing them through internal maintenance and multiple individual contracts, is a major burden on both a contact center and an IT department. If customer information cannot flow freely, systems are inflexible or complexity is an issue, the consolidation of disparate systems into one unified platform based in "The Cloud" could deliver the flexibility and up-front cost saving incentives companies need to migrate from their legacy premise-based systems.

This consolidation involves four key areas: Functions, Channels, Agents and Applications.

**Functions** - First, organizations should consider unifying key contact center functions onto one platform, such as ACD, IVR, CTI, Agent Desktop, Recording and QM, and Reporting. This will create a dramatic reduction in overall system complexity.

This results in 3 key benefits:

→ Simplified systems are more flexible and reliable

→ Unified systems require much less integration and can be implemented much more quickly

→ The consolidation and migration of different kinds of "gear" and their requisite maintenance to a readily scalable, cloud-based model for all of these functions can significantly lower TCO

**Channels** - When an enterprise consolidates channels, such as telephone, videophone, web chat/voice/video, email and voicemail, it again reduces complexity and increases reliability. In addition, agents become more efficient because the workload of different channels can be served by one agent group. Improving agent efficiency naturally reduces TCO in ways that companies can easily calculate.

When channels are consolidated, the implementation of a PCC solution will be faster and more effective because an enterprise can integrate once for all

**BASED ON FINDINGS FROM FROST & SULLIVAN'S NORTH AMERICAN HOSTED CONTACT CENTER MARKETS REPORT**

**TOP FOUR MARKET DRIVERS FOR THE HOSTED CONTACT CENTER MARKET**

1. LOWER TCO OF HOSTED SOLUTIONS, COMPARED TO PREMISE SYSTEMS
2. LIMITED UPFRONT CAPITAL INVESTMENT
3. RAPID DEPLOYMENT TIME
4. FLEXIBLE SCALABILITY AND AGILITY BASED ON BUSINESS NEEDS

channels. Most importantly, when one system is handling all channels, the customer experience will

be more cohesive, because customers won't get the run-around just because they sent an email one day and called the next day — a major benefit of access to real-time data for customized reporting.

**Agents** - Consolidating agents into one virtual contact center can have a tremendous impact on agent efficiency, simply because one unified larger group can be more efficient than disparate smaller ones. But it's much more than that. In today's marketplace, staffing the contact center is an increasingly challenging proposition. When an organization is virtual, it can leverage the best agents wherever they happen to be — onshore and off, in business locations or working from home. Enterprises can even host its outsourced agents to not only provide a more unified customer experience, but to have a much greater level of visibility and control into the outsourcers. Finally, the virtual contact center infrastructure gives great flexibility and allows for the management of major changes in the composition and location of a contact center — all with minimal impact and cost.

**Applications** - Think of an "application" as a complete virtual contact center in itself. Many enterprises have more than one complete contact center, which might be for different product lines or different functions like sales, service and customer credit. These applications may be in different organizational units and have completely different management. With a multi-tenant platform with tenant self-administration, applications can also be consolidated. The implementation of PCC applications is far faster and less costly on one multi-tenant platform because agents are using familiar tools on an existing technology infrastructure. Enterprises also gain great flexibility to add, change and drop applications because they can do all of these things without an adverse impact on the technology investment.

## TIP 4: SEEK CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND TAKE ACTION

At the end of a PCC transaction, or series of transactions, perhaps the most critical step in guaranteeing continuous improvement in a Customer Experience Management (CEM) strategy is to seek customer feedback.

Customer surveys can be delivered via a variety of different channels based on individual customer preferences such as automated phone calls, emails or SMS/text messages. These automated, self-service survey channels not only tend to increase response rates, but also tend to more accurately reflect customers' true feelings towards the topic of the survey due to the perceived anonymity and privacy of the channels.

Surveys are a fantastic way to get feedback and assess customer satisfaction related to products and customer-facing processes, as well as receive real-time feedback on customer interaction strategies. What's working? What can be improved? What suggestions do customers have? Do they prefer to be interacted with differently?

Utilizing customer surveys and feedback mechanisms to their full potential across multiple channels drives continuous improvement and delivers more impactful customer experiences.

But equally important to issuing surveys is to take action based on those survey outcomes. If enterprises are seeing trends or aberrations that indicate dissatisfaction, they can take the opportunity to reach back out to customers and even make the appropriate internal and external changes based on customer feedback — a great way to prove to customers that their opinions matter. For example, an organization could offer a low cost promotion to win back a customer's allegiance based on negative survey responses — and avoid an even bigger cost of that customer defecting to a competitor.

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By creating a customer satisfaction baseline and monitoring how it trends over time, incorporating real-world feedback into a PCC strategy and proactively reaching back out to customers based on what is discovered, enterprises will find that they are quickly positioning themselves to out-service the competition.
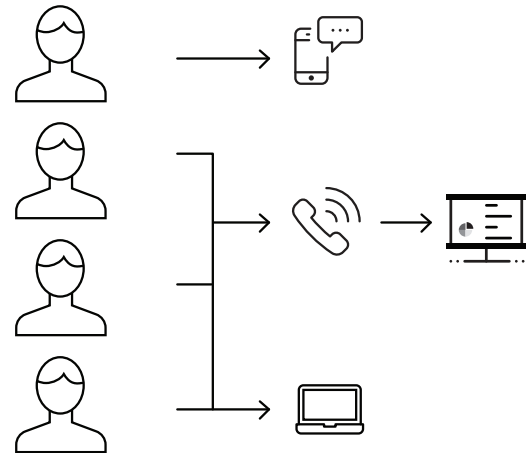
## TIP 5: FIND A SUCCESSFUL BALANCE

Last but certainly not least, it's important to remember that a customer base is made up of a variety of individuals, all with their own unique preferences. There is no such thing as "one size fits all" in today's customer service environment.

Enterprises need to monitor how customers are using each channel and what types of customers are using what types of channels. From there, they can find the correct mix of available channels and understand how to best communicate with each customer set. In all cases, PCC is as much about giving customers a tangible benefit as it is about reaching out to them.

These interactions don't have to be expensive. For example, the use of IVR, email or SMS for customer engagement costs pennies compared to the use of live agents. A company might notify a customer of an approaching payment date using printed notices, emails and interactive voice phone calls and allow them the freedom to pay directly over the phone without ever having to speak to an agent. At the same time, there are situations where leveraging a live agent is worthwhile for the business, such as highly complex transactions, inquiries fraught with emotion or simply because that is how a customer wishes to engage.

At the end of the day, it is important for enterprises to partner with an interactive communications provider who will collaborate with them to ensure that all of their strategic customer interactions position them — and their customers — for success.

> THE ABILITY TO FIND A SUCCESSFUL BALANCE OF AUTOMATED AND AGENT-LED INTERACTIONS WILL RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS FOR AN ENTERPRISE, INCLUDING DRAMATIC COST SAVINGS, IMPROVED AGENT EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY, INCREASED CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, AND AN OVERALL IMPROVED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE. THE RESULTING TECHNOLOGICAL AND OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS WILL EMPOWER THE CUSTOMER WITH CONVENIENT SERVICE ACCESS — ANYWHERE AND AT ANYTIME.

## PCC – ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

The ability to rapidly adopt a PCC solution that efficiently and cost-effectively communicates with customers via their preferred channels has proven to not only turn customer interactions into profitable transactions, but decrease operational costs through increased efficiencies and foster stronger brand loyalty and customer relationships.
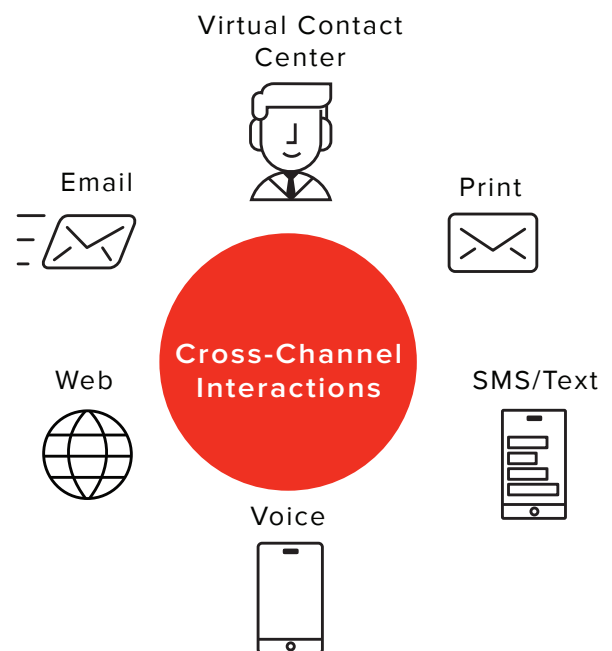
Enterprises that realize this and commit to activating PCC strategies that accurately reflect the goals of their business — and more importantly, the goals of their customers — will greatly improve customer experiences, out-service their competition and solidify a loyal base of profitable customer relationships for the long-term.

## ARE YOU READY? WE ARE. LET'S GET STARTED!

Check out CSG's Customer Communication Management (CCM) portfolio, which clients utilize to send over 1.5 billion messages to their end users each year across a diverse set of channels including print, SMS, email, online, and automated voice. CSG CCM provides flexible, personalized customer communications management and field service management solutions in an integrated approach to help deliver a unique customer experience across all digital and traditional channels.

For more than 35 years, CSG has simplified the complexity of business, delivering innovative customer engagement solutions that help companies acquire, monetize, engage and retain customers. Operating across more than 120 countries worldwide, CSG manages billions of critical customer interactions annually, and its award-winning suite of software and services allow companies across dozens of industries to tackle their biggest business challenges and thrive in an ever-changing marketplace. CSG is the trusted partner for driving digital innovation for hundreds of leading global brands, including AT&T, Charter Communications, Comcast, DISH, Eastlink, Formula One, Maximus, MTN and Telstra.

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