

FUTURE-PROOFING THE CONTACT CENTER:

Being on the Cutting-Edge of Customer Service



"The customer is king."

The Forrester Customer Experience Index says that customer service is the number one factor in creating good customer experience, regardless of industry or market.

The oft-repeated adage is a reminder that companies should do everything in their power to support or enhance the customer experience, because the customer experience is critical to gaining and/or retaining customers and market share. For example, a [study](#) by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that approximately **one-third of U.S. customers are prepared to abandon a brand that they had previously been loyal to after just one bad interaction.**

In today's world, customer service is not just about handling complaints or giving refunds – it can encompass interactions that take place before or during a transaction as well as those that happen after a sale.

It has become one of a company's biggest tools in driving engagement and customer loyalty. Indeed, **most companies are now seeing customer service as a revenue generator rather than as a cost center.**

All of which makes the task of maintaining high standards of customer engagement even more daunting.

Beyond just the customer's expectation of a pleasant interaction that easily resolves an issue, there is the added pressure to be able to deliver good customer service across a broad range of channels.

In a fast-paced, 24/7 environment, people expect an immediate response, they expect customized solutions tailored to their needs, they expect the agent to have access to a broad range of information, and they expect to be able to contact assistance through a variety of means that include everything from phone calls to websites to social media.

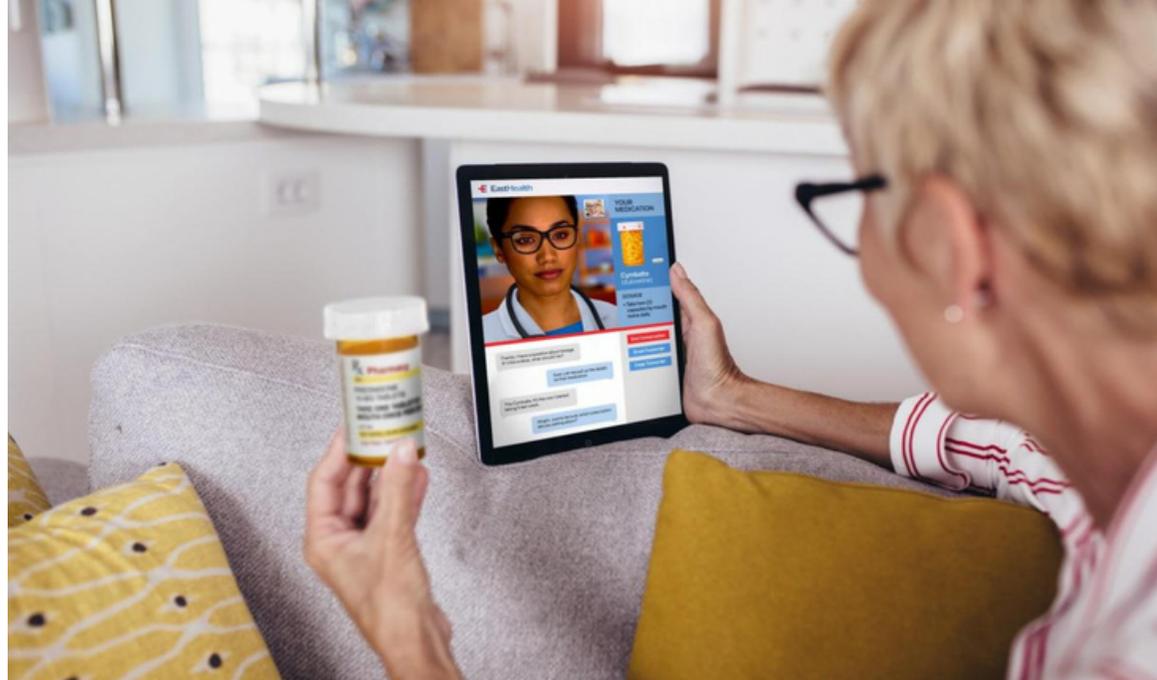
The [Salesforce State of Service](#) report puts it this way:

"The proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) in everyday life ups the ante for companies across industries to meet and exceed ever-rising standards of engagement."

While most company leaders are quick to acknowledge the important role that customer service plays in supporting and enhancing the overall customer experience, many feel that they are not equipped for the changing demands of today's customers. According to the same Salesforce report, 82% of corporate decision-makers say that their company's customer service must transform in order to stay competitive.



Salesforce State of Service Report



Innovation is key

AI is clearly leading a revolution in customer service, and Forbes estimates that the market for AI technology will grow from \$800 million in 2019 to \$2.8 billion by 2024.¹

The ability to gather unimaginable amounts of data and provide real-time analysis is proving essential to providing better service and driving greater engagement. Furthermore, **conversational AI is allowing companies to shift a larger proportion of routine service queries to self-service, freeing up agents to handle more complex interactions.**

In one example, a [J.D. Power survey](#) in 2020 found that the pandemic had brought about a change in customer behavior, with a growing trend toward digital self-service channels. More than half of the companies surveyed indicated increases in customer engagement via the web, email, and social media, with a corresponding drop in phone engagement – and customers expect this to continue beyond the current crisis.

According to the Salesforce State of Service Report, social media, SMS-based text, and messenger apps like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are already used by the majority of service teams. In the near future, **channels with the biggest growth will include mobile chat and video support.**

¹ Forbes - How AI is Revamping the Call Center

Companies that adopt conversational AI technology benefit in terms of efficiency and ROI. **According to Salesforce, 82% of customer service organizations using AI saw an increase in “first contact resolution,” meaning the issue is resolved before the customer ends the interaction.** For more complex cases, AI can gather all the information needed before forwarding to a human agent, which **lessens contact center burden.**²

AI also offers the possibility of significant cost savings, as **self-service interaction can be up to 80 times less expensive than an interaction with a human agent.**

This may explain why although the Salesforce survey found that **only about 24% of customer service organizations currently use AI, that number was expected to surge by 143% in 2020.** That same study notes early impacts to elevating the role of human agents, with service organizations citing **“improved prioritization of agents’ work” as the number 1 benefit of AI.** With AI, agents win, too. In fact, 71% of call center agents view AI as helpful to their jobs.

“Improved prioritization of agents’ work” is considered to be the number 1 benefit of AI

- Salesforce



71% of call center agents view AI as helpful to their jobs.

Salesforce State of Service Report

² 2019 Gartner Customer Service Behavior and Expectations Survey



Face-to-face innovation

“Visual engagement is becoming a much more prominent tool within the customer service industry.”

– [Call Centre Helper](#)

But there is another important trend in customer service which is not being addressed by current AI tools: the increasing use of visual communications. The Salesforce report corroborates this finding, expecting that **video channels will see growth of 98% from 2019 levels within two years.**

Contact centers may fear that a growth in face-to-face digital interactions will require a greatly increased workforce needing additional skills and training. However, there is a solution that blends the two critical factors of AI and visual interaction to provide exceptional customer service with only marginal additional investment: digital people.

Ruth, pictured above, is NESTLÉ® TOLL HOUSE®'s digital baking coach that guides bakers through step-by-step instructions. With 70% of all inbound calls related to perfecting their iconic recipe, Ruth provides AI-powered expertise that's consistent, engaging, and dynamic.



It's not what you say, it's how you say it

The Digital Brain features Autonomous Animation which allows the digital people to respond to difficult situations with greater ease than their human counterparts. Digital People are designed using natural language, they are perceived by the customer as dynamic and engaging.

Since 2016, Soul Machines has been humanizing AI through the creation of Digital People with the capacity to process complex information, take input, and respond accordingly. Soul Machines' patented Human OS Platform with Autonomous Animation is able to contextualize interactions, interpreting such difficult elements as tone of voice, cadence and even facial expressions.

By transforming impersonal online interactions into engaging and meaningful connections at scale, this human-machine collaboration enables companies to connect with customers and employees in a powerful new way and enhance the customer brand experience.



Digital People present an advantage to interaction with a human agent in certain situations. Multiple studies have shown that artificial humans can improve customers' willingness to disclose more sensitive information³, which could be useful in healthcare context or in financial services.

Artificial humans can increase feelings of comfort in situations where a customer might have to admit to something negative,⁴ as in the case of insurance claims. And they also reduce customers' fears of human judgment,⁵ useful for students entering a new university environment, for example.

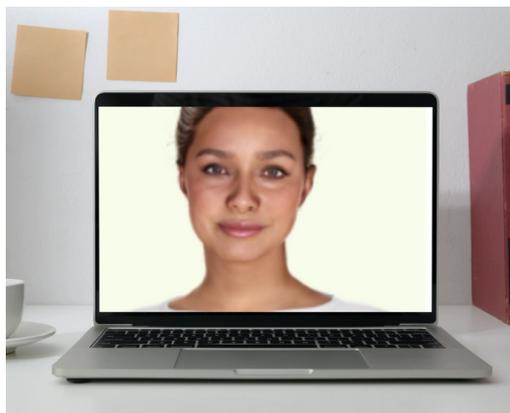
Soul Machines' researchers have successfully created a Digital Brain that replicates the way humans handle everyday interactions, combining models of physiology, cognition and emotion. Its proprietary technology allows its Digital People to be fully autonomous and authentic in their responses. Unique in the conversational AI industry, Soul Machines' Digital People can see, understand, and relate to customers autonomously in real time and in as many as 12 languages.

³ Gratch, Lucas, King, & Morency, 2014, Lucas et al., 2017

⁴ Pickard, Roster, & Chen, 2016

⁵ Pickard, Roster, & Chen, 2016; Lucas et al., 2017

Digital People in Customer Support



1 Sam

Sam, a Digital Call Center Agent for a Fortune 500 Financial Services company allows customers to act on their behalf for credit cards. She is being trained to manage inquiries relating to lost, stolen and compromised cards, blocking or reissuing credit cards, and providing next steps to resolve financial inquiries 24/7.

2 Eva

Eva, a Digital Evangelist of a National BPO allows prospective clients to share information about the company, products and services, and then shares warm leads to the sales organization.



3 Ruth

Ruth is a digital baking coach that guides bakers to perfect their recipes through step-by-step instructions. Up to 70% of all inbound calls related to perfecting NESTLÉ® TOLL HOUSE® iconic cookie recipe, so the company built Ruth to help. 84% say that they would use Ruth again.



And the customer service award goes to...

What can companies expect from implementing Digital People as a part of their customer service operations? Here are the **top five benefits**:

- 1 Astonishing customer service**
Much like the best human conversations, Digital People display kindness, thoughtfulness and deep empathy in any situation. When the customer smiles at the screen, the Digital People smile back.
- 2 Driving revenue and customer loyalty**
Using Digital People will solidify the company as an innovative market leader.
- 3 Thoughtfully and contextually aware**
Soul Machines' Digital People are scalable
They can see, understand, and emotionally respond to customers in real time.
- 4 Personalized interactions at scale**
Digital People can onboard employees, support customers, and sell products in 12 different languages 24/7.
- 5 Make data-driven decisions**
Soul Machines together with the NLP Provider share expression and conversation data to help companies adapt to what customers are saying and asking.



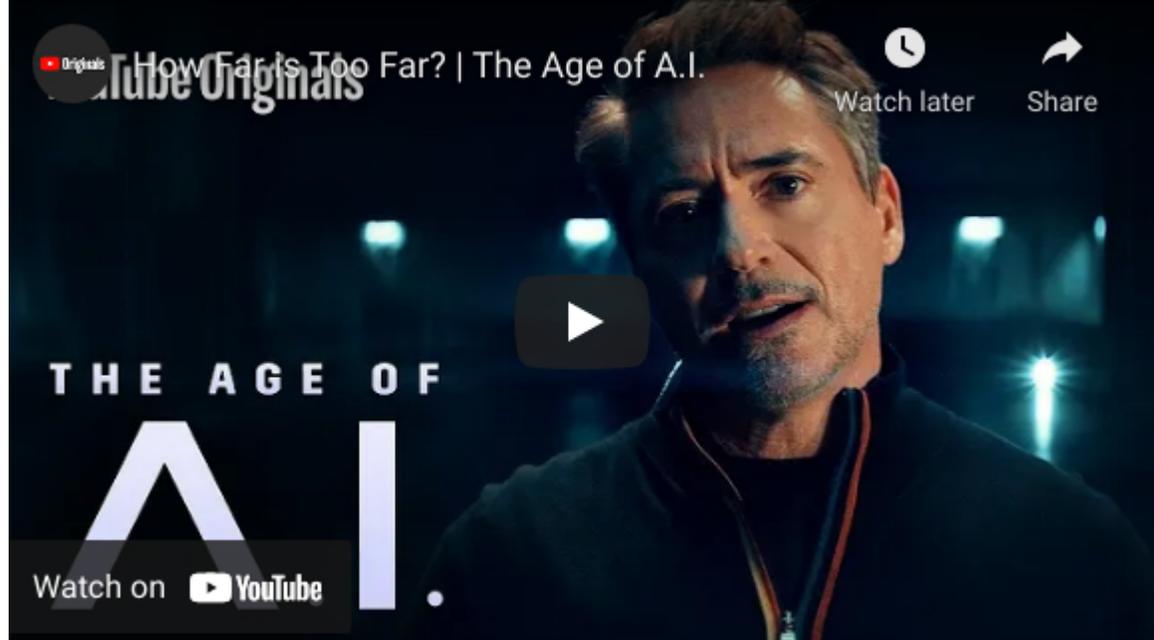
The biggest challenge

Year upon year, surveys show that the biggest challenge facing most call centers is attrition (closely followed by lack of adequate technology). One factor which appears to be key to addressing this challenge is tasking agents with more complex situations which require independent decision-making and involve longer interactions with customers.



Salesforce State of Service Report

This is where digital people can provide large gains in efficiency. By handling many routine inquiries, they free up human agents who are then able to handle more complex situations and have the time available to develop more in-depth relationships with the customer, and, potentially, career development, which leads to greater job satisfaction.



Watch the video [here](#)

Conclusion

Customer service is a highly critical part of the customer experience, and its role is growing. Customers expect to be able to reach the company at any time, through any channel. One of the channels predicted to grow the most in coming years is video interaction. As companies continue to move routine or easily resolved issues to self-service systems, customers will come to expect to be able to use video interaction for self-service assistance as well as agent-facilitated conversations.

In order to remain on the cutting edge of customer service, companies must be ready to move to face-to-face digital connections both for their human agents and for their more routine tasks. Soul Machines' digital people can create a safe, engaging, scalable and powerful brand experience.

***"The best kind of system is where humans
and AI work together"***

– Dr Ayanna Howard, Robotician

Interested in how Digital People can help your contact center?
Request a Demo [here](#).