NUANCE

Happy agents = Happy customers.

How AI helps you augment live agent interactions.

NUANCE

Contents

NUANCE

In the AI-driven world of customer engagement, it's time for organizations to step up their game. AI technology is raising the bar for customer experience,[1] and companies across industries are investing millions of dollars into enhancing their engagement solutions—but many are ignoring one vital part of the customer journey that could greatly benefit from that investment: the contact center agent.

As AI grows more popular, many are wary that it'll replace people's jobs. But AI isn't here to replace human agents— it's here to make their work lives easier. It helps them find answers faster, showing them relevant, contextual information, and allowing them to focus on the customer.

In this white paper, we'll delve into:

— What AI could mean for your contact center

— How AI can learn from your best agents and share that knowledge with others

— Why happier, more efficient agents mean more satisfied customers

AI
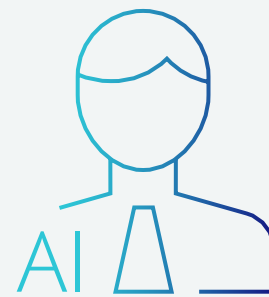
A real human is your contact center's best resource. So why not empower them with AI?

More technology doesn't mean you lose the human touch

Agent interactions impact brand perception significantly
Just one frustrating interaction with an agent can make 77% of customers want to switch service providers.

But with 95 percent of US consumers using at least three channels or devices to engage with customer services,[2] and only 8.4 percent of organizations connecting their channels,[3] many are failing to deliver the unified and personalized experience customers are looking for.

Despite the explosion of new channels, with chatbots and voice interfaces, customer service agents aren't losing relevance. In fact, McKinsey says the number of live agent interactions just keeps growing.[4]

The easier it gets for customers to engage, the higher their expectations rise. So, although AI has made customer service more efficient, customers are looking for more resolution through these automated channels— and many self-service functions aren't offering what customers want. As they bring more complex problems to the automated channels, live agents need to get involved more frequently.

According to Forrester, if organizations want to be agile enough to react to customers' changing expectations, they'll need innovative technology.[5] But as every organization scrambles to adopt these new technologies, those who want to stand out will need to offer a personalized, human service to differentiate themselves.[6]

It's not just the customer experience that's changing—all these new channels are bringing a huge influx of data into the knowledge base.

This is creating a far more complicated knowledge base for agents to deal with. As Forrester puts it: "they lack customer context, cannot access the right knowledge and data, and are unable to keep up with the pace of emerging issues". Now, improving the quality of the knowledge base is top-of-mind for 45 percent of organizations and represents the second most popular agent experience initiative.[7]

There are fewer opportunities for human connection in an increasingly digital and self-service world. Organizations must invest in these moments by upskilling their workforces, empowering them, and guiding them to better customer connections.
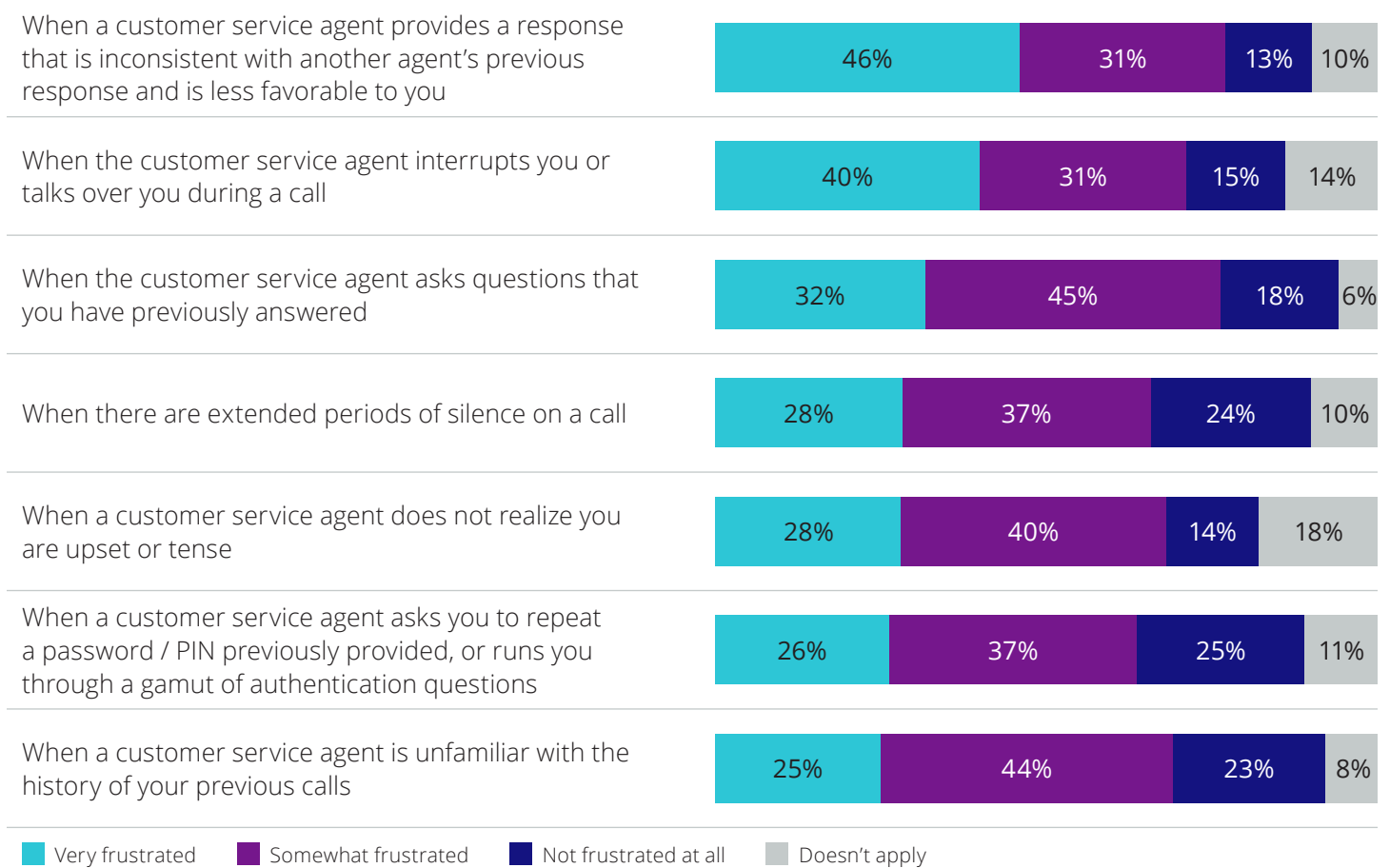
— Forrester Research[8]

Customer frustration leads to customer attrition

Disconnected channels and an overly complicated environment for agents has led to growing customer frustration—Frost and Sullivan found that the top source of frustration is inconsistent responses (46 percent).

Potential sources of frustration
Top sources of frustration are inconsistent responses (46%) and interruptions (40%)

Asking previously answered questions (32%), extended periods of silence (28%) and when the agent does not realize you are upset (28%) are also sources of frustration

	Very frustrated	Somewhat frustrated	Not frustrated at all	Doesn't apply
When a customer service agent provides a response that is inconsistent with another agent's previous response and is less favorable to you	46%	31%	13%	10%
When the customer service agent interrupts you or talks over you during a call	40%	31%	15%	14%
When the customer service agent asks questions that you have previously answered	32%	45%	18%	6%
When there are extended periods of silence on a call	28%	37%	24%	10%
When a customer service agent does not realize you are upset or tense	28%	40%	14%	18%
When a customer service agent asks you to repeat a password / PIN previously provided, or runs you through a gamut of authentication questions	26%	37%	25%	11%
When a customer service agent is unfamiliar with the history of your previous calls	25%	44%	23%	8%

■ Very frustrated   ■ Somewhat frustrated   ■ Not frustrated at all   ■ Doesn't apply

Base: All consumer respondents (n=467).
Frost & Sullivan Report Commissioned by Nuance. (2019, March). Agent AI Adoption Patterns, Preferences, and Potential Benefits: Consumer and B2B Perspectives.

Contact centers face a crucial challenge: how to deal with more channels, more data, and more interactions—without costs spiralling out of control.

If organizations don't find a better way of engaging with their customers, those customers will move on to the competition. This kind of customer abandonment could lose you serious money: in fact, it already results in $75 billion in lost sales each year.[9]

And, you won't just lose customers to this dissatisfaction. More agents will quit due to an overwhelming workload and increased frustration on their side, too.[10]

Forrester's four-step approach to empowering your agents[10]

1	Build a solid tech foundation for customer service.[11]
2	Maximize productivity with more efficient processes.[11]
3	Improve agent effectiveness with better content and coaching.[11]
4	Use data insights to understand your customers and predict next best actions.[11]

More doesn't always mean better

Historically, organizations have simply hired more agents to handle an increasing workload. This may help for a while, but hiring and training more agents isn't cheap—and it won't solve that looming knowledgebase problem.

Others are adding AI to their IVR or virtual assistant to engage with customers more intelligently. While the tech is very effective in helping with higher-level conversations and increasing efficiency, they can't help with the more complex issues, and many customers still prefer the more personal touch they'll get from an agent.

If more organizations roll out poorly optimized chatbots, Forrester predicts there'll soon be a customer backlash—with an expected 60 percent of chatbot deployments providing ineffective escalation paths to agents[12]—which means contact centers need to have a failover strategy for when this happens.

Behold the power of the AI-backed agent

Since hiring more agents is an expensive, short-term fix, and adding more AI-powered automation isn't the silver bullet contact centers are looking to end their dilemma, what can organizations do?

It's time to focus on empowering the agents you already have.

Agents are the essence of the contact center—they're the vital component of customer-centric experiences".[13] Don't they deserve to be empowered with a great experience, and the tools to share it with your customers? To make that happen, you need to improve the quality of their knowledgebase, make systems easy to use and ensure that your metrics are easy to understand.

NUANCE

AI is what makes that possible

Here's how:

Authentication data across channels

AI shares authentication data from self-service engagements with agents, so the conversation can continue seamlessly. It'll also provide indicators to assist the agent throughout the entire interaction to ensure that they're still maintaining engagement with the customer—or let them know when to disconnect if they're talking to a fraudster.
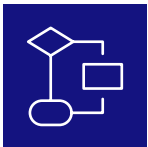
Agent assistance

AI helps your agents access information through recommendations from an internal virtual assistant that monitors customer interactions. This allows agents to assist customers faster, without searching through an impossible amount of data, like manuals or knowledgebases. AI can provide related offers for upselling or cross-selling, next best action suggestions, and contextual information from existing data.

Real-time conversation insight

With real-time insight into conversations, AI gives agents and contact center managers a quick overview of how interactions are progressing. Real-time indicators such as sentiment analysis, performance tracking, score cards, and authentication status help agents react faster when a change occurs and help supervisors assist their agents in their moment of need.

Agent training

AI can even help train new agents as it creates a detailed, searchable record of everything that happens during an interaction. It can automatically highlight areas for improvement, and help managers monitor overall performance. Using this data, organizations can customize the onboarding process and help new hires become productive sooner (or even help existing agents get more productive).

Conversations analyzed to improve future engagements

The AI learns from insights mined from conversational data, allowing contact centers to continuously improve self-service and human-assisted interactions. For example, AI can tweak agent scripts to be more effective, based on previous dialog flows.

And in the end, a happier agent makes for a happier customer.

How an AI-powered agent benefits the enterprise

Higher agent satisfaction and reduced agent turnover
With streamlined operations, easy-to-access information, and improved efficiency, you'll see higher agent confidence and satisfaction. As AI-powered agents are often more satisfied with their jobs and less likely to quit, you'll save on finding and training new hires.

Higher customer satisfaction and reduced customer churn
AI-powered agents deliver better customer experiences, as:

— Shared contextual information means nobody has to repeat themselves when they move between channels, and

— Customers can get more reliable answers faster, and resolve their issues sooner

— Authentication and fraud prevention mechanisms ensure security and verification throughout the interaction

All this contributes to higher CSAT scores, and higher CSAT leads to reduced customer churn.

Continuous, real-time improvement
By analyzing conversations and customer journeys, and learning from the best agents, AI can identify best practices and help you replicate them across your contact center, building a more consistent experience that improves as the AI continues to learn.

> Putting AI at the core of operations will combat headcount increases and will reskill agents to address customer interactions that demand insight and analysis.
>
> — Forrester Research[14]

The circle of AI life

Empowered agents don't just enhance the experience for your customers; over time, they also enhance the technology. At Nuance, we call it the "circle of AI life".

Conversations start with AI-powered automation, such as the chatbot or IVR, providing customers with information. Then, when the contact center agent gets involved, the AI shares recommendations. The insights from these agent interactions then 'teach' the AI to make it more intelligent and confident, which, in turn, improves the answers it sends to customers and the recommendations it gives to agents.
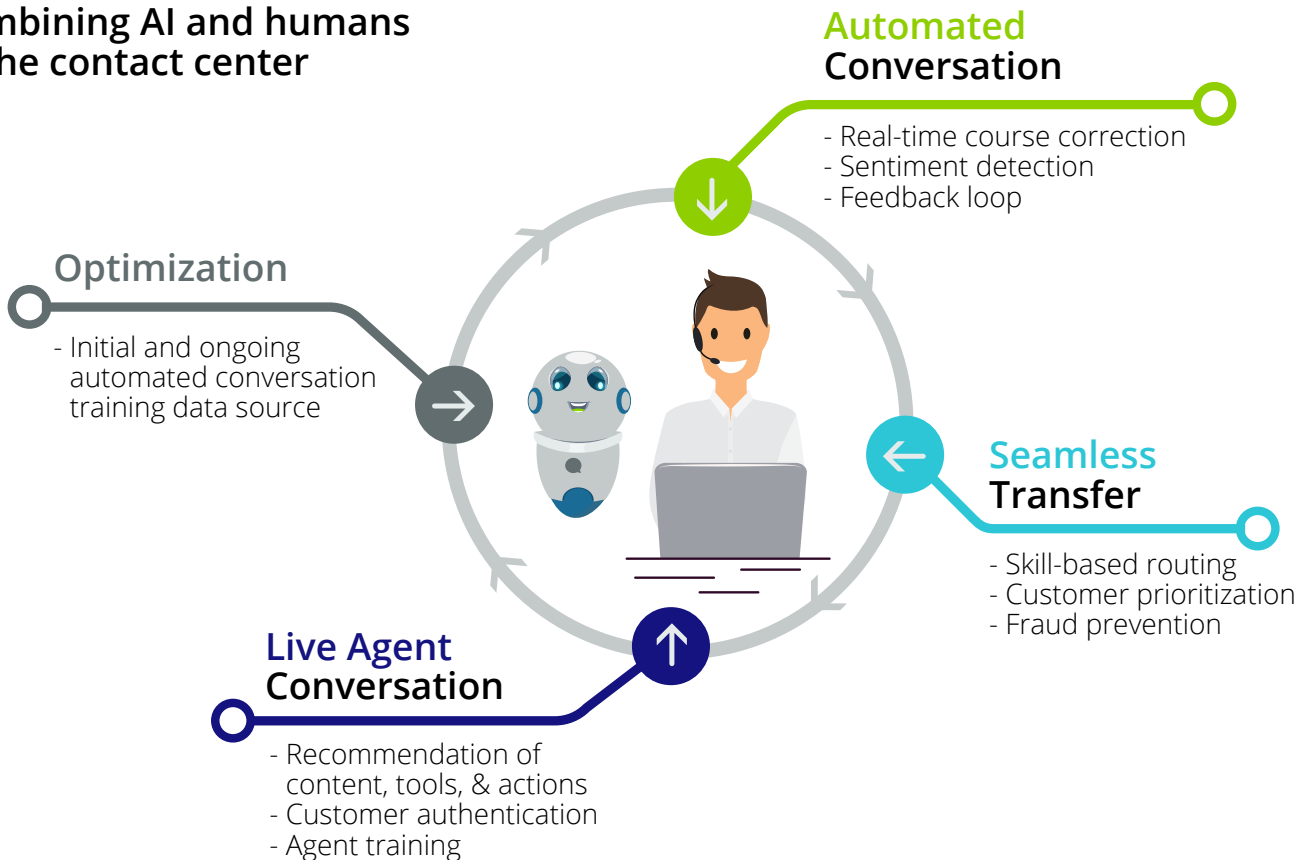
How to get started with AI

Without the right expertise, getting started with leveraging AI in the contact center can be difficult. It's smart to work with an experienced vendor who specializes in contact center AI—to ensure that you're getting the best deployment possible.

There are two types of customer engagement vendors:

— The ones that use AI for customer engagement, such as virtual assistants, IVR, etc.

— The ones that empower your people with AI

We do both. That way, you get seamless integration between customer- and agent-facing technology, and you'll get detailed and useful insights from both ends.

Combining AI and humans in the contact center

Automated Conversation
- Real-time course correction
- Sentiment detection
- Feedback loop

Optimization
- Initial and ongoing automated conversation training data source

Seamless Transfer
- Skill-based routing
- Customer prioritization
- Fraud prevention

Live Agent Conversation
- Recommendation of content, tools, & actions
- Customer authentication
- Agent training

Nuance Agent AI

Nuance Agent AI technology combines machine learning algorithms and natural language understanding technology to augment your contact center. It monitors active conversations and delivers relevant, real-time insights as well as proactive recommendations, which speeds up customer resolution and improves satisfaction for customers and agents alike.

Enterprises that have already deployed agent-facing AI technology with Nuance have seen impressive results:

60% A large US bank found 60 percent of agents reported improved job satisfaction.

15% A US collections agency reduced customer engagements that used 'escalation language' by 15 percent, helping prevent contentious calls from turning into complaints.

60% A major US utilities company increased sales conversions by 60 percent and boosted its NPS score by 84 percent.

60% A leading mortgage services company reduced agent call time by 60 percent and increased its daily handled call volume by 82 percent—without hiring extra agents.

What makes Nuance's Agent AI technology the better choice for contact centers?

Nuance connects the dots between intelligent, automated engagement and your infrastructure, putting AI to work to support your live agents.
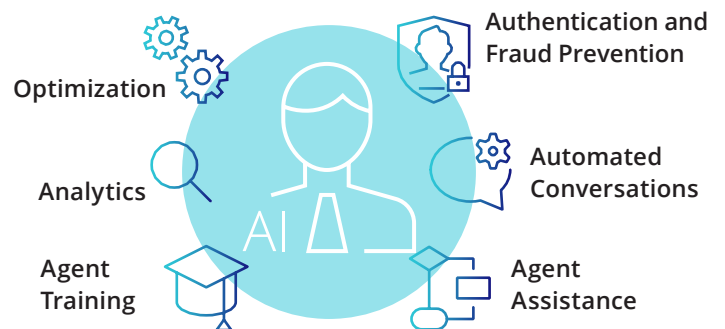
By bringing together our best-of-breed biometric, analytics, and intelligent customer engagement technologies to empower agents with real-time insights—Nuance delivers a full view of the entire customer journey, from chatbot or IVR interactions to conversations with live agents—and everything in between.

Nuance's experience in customer engagement solutions, from virtual assistants to live agent operations, means we understand what your agents need to provide meaningful customer experiences.

And we're the only vendor that can deliver these solutions for an omni-channel contact center, including the ability to authenticate and detect fraud.

It's vital you get an AI solution that fits your individual needs and supports the entire organization, not just siloed areas. We bring you combined technologies that help your people understand what the customer's looking for, recommend the next best action, ensure proper authentication, prevent fraud, and gather actionable insights to continuously optimize the customer experience.

AI empowering agents

Optimization

Authentication and Fraud Prevention

Analytics

Automated Conversations

Agent Training

Agent Assistance

AI

Next steps

Ready to learn more?

Nuance's Agent AI technology gives you all this—and so much more. Get in touch at CXexperts@nuance.com to learn what you could achieve.

Get in touch

Watch how AI can seamlessly intertwine contact center agents with intelligent technologies so your customer experience will never sour.

Watch now

LEARN MORE

Visit our infohub to learn how to create an efficient contact center that supports agents and their managers with relevant real-time information.

1   Jacobs, Ian and Kalika, Marina. (2019, January 29). Webinar presented by Nuance and Featuring Guest Speaker from Forrester: Customer Engagement 2019 – Top Trends, Predictions and Priorities.
2   Schoeller, Art; Hong, Daniel; Dawson, Sarah. (2018, February 23). Forrester Research. Future-Proof Your Customer Service: Build An AI-Infused Cognitive Contact Center.
3   Allman, Rob. Dimension Data. Customer experience trends in 2019.
4   Hage Obeid, Maurice; Neher, Kevin; Phalin, Greg. (2017, July). McKinsey & Company. Why your call center is only getting noisier.
5   Leggett, Kate; Hong, Daniel; Jacobs, Ian; Dawson, Sarah; Harrison, Peter. (2018, January 24). Forrester Research. 2018 Customer Service Trends: How Operations Become Faster, Cheaper – And Yet, More Human.
6   Schoeller, Art; Hong, Daniel; Dawson, Sarah. (2018, February 23). Forrester Research. Future-Proof Your Customer Service: Build An AI-Infused Cognitive Contact Center.
7   Customer Contact Week. CCW Winter Executive Report: Contact Center Priorities for 2018.
8   Leggett, Kate; Hong, Daniel; Jacobs, Ian; Dawson, Sarah; Harrison, Peter. (2019, January 17). Forrester Research. The Three Customer Service Megatrends In 2019: As AI Eats Jobs, Agents Are More Valued.

9   Leggett, Kate; Hong, Daniel; Jacobs, Ian; Dawson, Sarah; Harrison, Peter. (2019, January 17). Forrester Research. The Three Customer Service Megatrends In 2019: As AI Eats Jobs, Agents Are More Valued.
10 Hong, Daniel. (2017, November 9). Forrester Research. Predictions 2018: Blended AI Will Disrupt Your Customer Service And Sales Strategy.
11 Leggett, Kate; Hong, Daniel; Dawson, Sarah; Harrison, Peter. (2019, January 28). Forrester Research. How To Build A Modern Agent Desktop And Transform Your Customer Service Experiences.
12 Hong, Daniel; Kaneshige, Tom; Jacobs, Ian; Leggett, Kate; Schoeller, Art; Powers, Stephen; Shea, Mary; Dawson, Sarah; Harrison, Peter. (2018, November 8). Forrester Research. Predictions 2019: Customer Service and Sales.
13 Customer Contact Week. CCW Winter Executive Report: Contact Center Priorities for 2018.
14 Leggett, Kate; Hong, Daniel; Jacobs, Ian; Dawson, Sarah; Harrison, Peter. (2018, January 24). Forrester Research. 2018 Customer Service Trends: How Operations Become Faster, Cheaper – And Yet, More Human.