White paper
Nuance Proactive Engagement

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Make the first move

How conversational, proactive engagement drives higher CSAT, fewer calls, lower costs and more revenue.

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Customer service has traditionally been reactive—customers contact you with an inquiry and you give them an answer. But waiting for customers to come to you frustrates them as they try multiple channels to resolve their issue, which reduces satisfaction and loyalty. And it increases costs because customers so often end up calling the contact center.

It's time to start the conversation

It's essential to engage customers proactively to minimize their effort and reduce contact center volumes. Proactive engagement has proved especially valuable for responding to the growing business challenges stemming from the pandemic. A combination of higher contact volumes, workforce shortages, and increased expectations of fast, effective support has turned up the pressure on contact centers, so making the first move has never been more important.

The new contact center reality

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on customer-facing operations. As agents suddenly began working from home—and dealing with higher contact volumes from stressed and anxious customers—workloads and burnout increased.

In an industry with already high levels of employee churn, the Great Resignation has left many contact centers understaffed and overworked, so taking a proactive approach that reduces inbound volumes is vital.

At the same time, organizations that suffered downturns during the pandemic have a renewed focus on revenue recovery and revenue generation. Proactivity has an important role to play here, too. For example, sending customers automatic alerts and reminders about upcoming bills or past-due payments can help increase revenue without adding to employees' workload.

"By 2025 proactive customer engagements will outnumber reactive engagements."

— Gartner

Customers want proactive engagement

Beyond the cost savings and revenue gain proactive engagement can bring, there's another compelling reason to make the first move: customers *expect* you to be proactive.

In Gartner's 2021 State of the Customer survey, only 28% of consumers reported receiving any type of proactive service. That's a low percentage, but it's up from just 13% in 2020—more than doubling in one year. Clearly, organizations are ramping up their adoption of proactive engagement, and that trend is set to continue. But there's still an opportunity to use proactivity to differentiate your brand and build competitive advantage.

Gartner's 2021 State of the Customer survey revealed:

85%	of consumers said they're interested in receiving proactive notifications
90%	said they're more likely to do business with a company that sends them reminders
28%	of consumers reported receiving any type of proactive customer service

A fundamental shift in consumer behaviors

Even before the pandemic, proactive engagement across multiple channels was becoming vital to respond to significant changes in customer behaviors:

- **Generation mute:** People prefer to engage on digital channels, not on the phone. They want fast resolutions, in their moment of need, no matter where they are. Meeting customers proactively in the channels they're comfortable with makes them more likely to engage with your brand—and stay loyal.
- **Portable intelligence:** People spend their lives on their smartphones and are bombarded with information, making it difficult to capture their attention. If you can meet them where they are with a one-touch experience to connect with your brand, you reduce the chance that they'll get distracted—and increase the likelihood that they'll engage with you.
- **Digital amnesia:** People increasingly outsource their memory to smart devices, causing them to forget appointments and obligations. They want and need reminders and notifications that allow them to take quick action. By delivering intelligent, actionable information and reminders in customers' preferred channels, you can increase engagement rates and satisfaction, reduce service costs, and boost revenue.

It pays to be proactive

Reaching out proactively to customers at just the right moment can make them feel appreciated, drive sales, boost customer loyalty, reduce churn, and improve the overall customer experience—all the while lowering costs for you.

And with a proactive customer engagement strategy, you can create a secure connection between your customers and your brand that gets strengthened over time, delivering mutual value.

If you can anticipate needs and proactively give the right customers the right content at the right time—on the channels they engage on most, you'll create opportunities to:

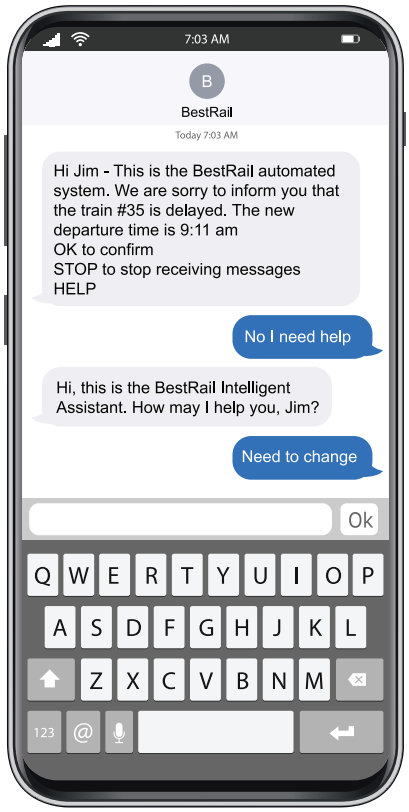
— **Deflect and delight**: Increase self-service containment and reduce inbound calls by proactively alerting customers to upcoming tasks and enabling them to address their needs with a virtual assistant or a live agent in the same channel as the notification.

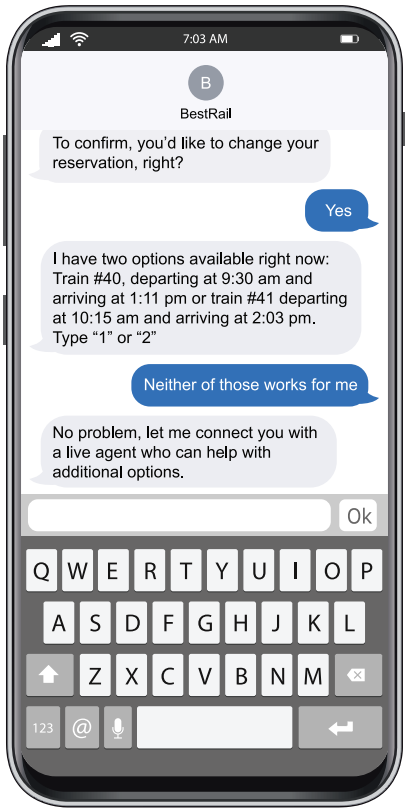
— **Boost sales:** Motivate customers to complete specific tasks with timely, relevant, and actionable information for appointment confirmations, bill payments, and product orders. Use personalized, ad hoc messages to deliver customized offers and incentives to help drive additional sales.

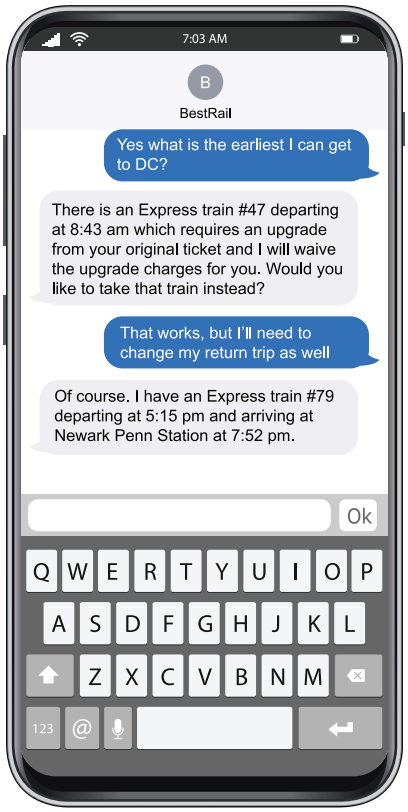
— **Increase agent efficiency:** Reduce agent attrition and bridge training gaps by addressing issues proactively and passing on the full context of the conversation to the agent when live assistance is needed.

Serve customers with the best resources

What's most important is that you serve customers in the channel with the best resources for solving their issue. In the example shown here, the engagement starts with a proactive notification in SMS and continues in the same channel, first with a virtual assistant and then with a live agent—turning a delayed train into a positive customer experience.







The two-way SMS opportunity

For effective communication, it's hard to beat SMS. Messages delivered by SMS are typically read within 90 seconds of being received and responded to within an hour. By initiating a two-way SMS conversation, you can get customers' attention, get them to act, and get your costs down.

Missed opportunities and endless possibilities

Plenty of major brands send their customers proactive notifications, but when customers try to respond, they either get no response in return, or they receive a basic "Contact us" message directing them to call the contact center phone number. It's a huge, missed opportunity to engage customers more effectively and gain vital differentiation in crowded markets. By turning proactive engagements into meaningful conversations, you can open up a limitless world of opportunities to innovate the customer experience.

Get proactive: opportunities in every industry

Brands in many industries already use proactive engagement to improve the customer experience, reduce costs, and drive revenue. Airlines send SMS messages to let passengers know their flight's been canceled—but they've been automatically booked onto the next available flight. Healthcare organizations send automated calls to remind patients about upcoming appointments—helping reduce expensive no-shows. And banks alert customers to potential fraud on their accounts—allowing them to approve or deny the transaction in the same channel as the notification.

There are opportunities in every consumer-focused industry for brands to make the first move.

Retail

- Split-shipment notification with acknowledgement by customer or update of shipment options
- Re-targeting SMS notification on abandoned cart with link to complete purchase

Financial services

- Fraud alert with acknowledgment or escalation escalation to agent
- Late payment reminder with option to instantly pay

Travel and hospitality

- Flight change or cancellation with options to reschedule
- Delayed baggage notification with passenger update of delivery address

Telco

- Payment reminder with option to complete payment
- About to exceed data allowance, with option to upgrade plan

Healthcare

- Appointment reminders with interactive reschedule options
- Prescription reminders with re-schedule and/or update pick-up location options

Utilities

- Power or service outage and restoration notifications
- Late or missed payment with option to pay or sign-up for payment plan

Shipping and transportation

- Package delivery status with ability to re-schedule delivery day/time

Start the conversation with Nuance Proactive Engagement

Nuance Proactive Engagement automates communications across channels, so you can give customers the notifications, reminders, and updates they need in the channel most likely to inspire action.

Voice: Deliver targeted messaging that prompts customers to take action immediately within the phone call or later when they listen to a voice message.

Email: Send more informative communications that customers can react to at a convenient time.

SMS: Engage customers in a two-way conversation in a preferred channel—either through a virtual assistant or live agents.

Increase engagement and enable action

Nuance Proactive Engagement gives you new capabilities across a range of key applications:

— **Inform and remind:** Engage customers and encourage them to act by sending important notifications on the right channel, at the right time, with the right response options.

— **Collect:** Increase cure rates and reduce operational costs by allowing customers to engage with the collections process more effectively.

— **Message on demand:** Gain reliable critical communication coverage before, during, and after unplanned events, emergency situations, or planned situations with an intuitive, DIY interface.

— **Callbacks:** Eliminate long wait times and handle peaks in volume efficiently by giving callers the option to receive a callback instead of waiting in the queue.

— **Patient engagement:** Improve outcomes and adherence through timely communications, from appointment reminders to wellness checks.

LEARN MORE
To find out more about how you can deliver intelligent, proactive customer engagements, get in touch at cxexperts@nuance.com.

Citations
Manusama, Brian; LeBlanc, Nadine; Jenkins, Philip; Rathnayake, Pri; Davies, Jim; Robinson, Jim. (December 1, 2020). Gartner Predicts 2021: CRM Customer Service and Support. Gartner.

Analyst(s): Customer Service and Support Research Team. (June 29, 2021). State of the Customer: Proactive Service Increases Cost but Enhances Value. Gartner.

About Nuance Communications, Inc.
Nuance Communications is a technology pioneer with market leadership in conversational AI and ambient intelligence. A full-service partner trusted by 77 percent of U.S. hospitals and 85 percent of the Fortune 100 companies worldwide, Nuance creates intuitive solutions that amplify people's ability to help others. Nuance is a Microsoft company.

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