Digital communications are ubiquitous today and every customer of every business builds up a digital footprint over time that reveals their likes, personal dislikes and behaviours. This white paper highlights the importance of this digital DNA to business and explores approaches they can take to capture and leverage it to deliver business efficiencies; achieve enhanced customer engagement and drive competitive edge.
A recent episode of the hit American sitcom, Modern Family, featured a storyline that unfolds entirely on one of the character’s computer screens and was exclusively shot on a combination of smartphones and tablets. The programme maybe fictional but the inspiration behind it was founded in real life, with the show’s executive producer, Steven Levitan. He commented that the idea for the episode stemmed from a personal experience he had while working on his computer, when his daughters and his wife all popped up on his screen at the same time. It’s a potent symbol of how ubiquitous digital technology has become in all of our lives. As Levitan says: “This is how families are communicating today. I see it in my family all the time.”

If you want to understand a family and how it interacts, you increasingly need to understand its digital footprint and to get to the real heart of what makes it tick, you need to have an insight into its digital DNA.

Today’s new breed of digital enterprises need to be able to understand the modern family, and in particular the digital DNA of the people who constitute it. After all, it is these individuals who are their customers today – whether as individual consumers or as business people - and will continue to be in the future.
A tough challenge

Capturing their digital DNA, however is going to become increasingly complex. Analyst group, Strategy Analytics, predicts that by 2020, there will be four connected devices for every person in the world. With the number of ways people have of contacting organisations proliferating, businesses need to explore all available channels to connect with individual consumers and to measure, assess and optimise each interaction. Making the effort to do so will be worthwhile though, since customer information is critical in predicting behaviour, upselling and cross-selling, building competitive edge and tapping into incremental revenue sources.

The good news is that businesses are increasingly getting the message. In recent research by analyst, Gartner, 2/3 of CEOs surveyed said their enterprises were involved in industry-level digital initiatives.

In broad terms, we believe that there are three key objectives that businesses should focus on in every interaction with customers and prospects and these come under the broad headings of empower, connect and engage.

Empower

The first, empower, is concerned with consistently delivering outstanding customer experiences through any channel. It is about anticipating need and proactively communicating to build valuable relationships. It aims to free customers from complexity and predict, adapt and optimise every experience and empower them through self-service.

Connect

The second, connect, involves streamlining the people, processes and technology within your business; obtaining a bird’s-eye view of everyone, without leaving your desk, and connecting your business and staff to customers at the right time – every time.

Engage

The third, engage, is about proactively contacting customers; aligning staff measurement to customer expectations and ensuring nothing is done twice. Businesses need to make sure they are delivering the right kind of communications engagement anytime, anywhere, anyhow to those customers that need it – typically younger customers, including Generation Y and the millennials, who have been brought up with digital technologies and digital communications methodologies.
These kind of people will typically make contact with the centre via smartphone or tablet – maybe on their way to and from work. They may switch channels when they get home – perhaps to their laptop. They might want to open a chat window or to use ‘face time’ and strike up a video multimedia conversation. And increasingly, they may be looking to self-serve, either through online forums with other customers or by visiting the company’s website to find the information they need.

Yet, that is not the whole story. While businesses need to have an online strategy in place for generation Y and millennials, they also need to be aware that there are large numbers of older consumers, particularly those 55 and over, who still largely see online communications as an irrelevance and who typically might prefer to interact over the phone with a trusted advisor.

One size does not fit all
Further compelling evidence a one-size-fits-all approach, simply doesn’t work in today’s complex market. Businesses need to get to know their customers’ digital DNA and deliver services that match up to it. In short, they need to understand what makes their customers tick, how they are engaging with them and through which channel. At that point, they can put in place an omni-channel strategy set up to meet this ongoing need.

Getting their Own House in Order – How to be a connected digital enterprise?
But it’s not just the customer that has digital DNA. Organisations increasingly need to build their own digital DNA in addition to capturing that of the customer. This means they need to start applying digital technology to the front-end customer experience, and make sure back-end processes are fully automated; they need to adapt to the ways in which the digital customer behaves and provide solutions that cater for and engage with this behaviour including social communities, knowledge bases and omni-channel strategies.

Often, they are held back by their own conservatism and adherence to traditional ways of doing business and from taking the plunge by using digital systems to proactively unify, track, route and record all customer communications. Indeed recent research suggests that 75% of UK organisations see company culture and organisational structure as the biggest inhibitors to connecting their business and customers.

To be successful both now and in the future, organisations need to make digital communications a fully-integrated part of the business and be able to also use digital to call on expertise across the connected enterprise to quickly resolve customer queries. They need to use it too to deliver insight into the presence of customer-facing staff, leading in turn to quicker call resolution and happier customers and agents. If businesses want to ensure that they at all times make the most informed decisions possible, they need to not only to track all interactions but record and report them into the bargain.

In line with this, they need to get to know and understand not just their customer’s DNA but their own business DNA too, so that when they are engaging with businesses in social communities, for example, they are presenting their true character and brand value in digital form to prospects and customers alike. Moreover, because everyone within the connected enterprise needs to take responsibility for improving the customer experience, everyone also needs to understand the DNA of the business and be able to convey it in any customer-facing interaction.
Today, we believe there are three key technologies or technological developments that are enabling this understanding of both types of digital DNA – the emergence of the connected enterprise, the continued development of unified communications and the arrival on the scene of Skype for Business and the omni channel strategies for the modern family.

Strategies to help you understand “Digital DNA”

1. Connecting the Digital Enterprise

At the point of engagement, businesses need to know their customers, what they are trying to do and who within their organisation is best-placed to help them achieve it. That’s where the ability to track digital DNA and accurately interpret it is so important. Businesses need to have captured and recorded previous interactions with each customer and use these to quickly analyse behaviour patterns and likely preferences, enabling the business to route individual interaction to the point of contact best suited to address or resolve their query. It’s the kind of process that the likes of Amazon and Google do so well.

Understand your customers “Digital DNA”

Understanding the DNA of the customer is just one part of the process however. Businesses also need to ensure that they have the right robust and flexible underlying infrastructure in place to be able to act on this understanding and deliver customer service that is precisely optimised to that individual customer’s specific needs and preferences.

Build intelligence on your customers “Digital DNA”

Business systems that remember the interaction history of each customer; that gather digital DNA, establish a digital fingerprint that can be modified over time as the level of engagement grows are increasingly prevalent today. But these systems will only be effective if they are backed by an integrated intelligent systems architecture that is capable of triaging and routing calls and other modes of interactions either to experts who understand their specific problems and can address them or to systems they can use to self-serve or otherwise obtain the answers they need.
Extend the rest of your business

This is the essential purpose of what we call the connected enterprise. To answer customer queries in this increasingly sophisticated environment, businesses increasingly need to draw on the skills of staff in the back, middle and front offices. By combining an intelligent flexible customer interaction platform with the latest unified communications (UC) technologies, companies can create a connected business, where everyone is part of a virtualised customer support team focused on resolving customer engagements in the most efficient, cost-effective manner.

Connecting the Digital Enterprise

Finding the new customer service experts within your business

This connected enterprise business model will become increasingly important as organisations seek to leverage the abilities of the whole workforce to support customers and sell more to them.

As digital DNA spreads across organisations, it brings departments who previously would not have been in any sense customer-facing much more into the customer service mix. The enhanced connectivity between separate departments is turning many modern enterprises from siloed organisations into single customer-service focused entities.

For businesses to retain customers and keep them loyal, they need to embrace a rapidly-evolving service environment, where customers don’t want unnecessary steps put in their way and don’t want to have to wait. In short, they expect effortless customer service. They want the process to be intuitive in the same way an iPhone or Google experience is. Unfortunately, the reality often fails to measure up to the vision and the modern-day customer’s expectations.

This unsatisfactory situation is one of the key drivers behind the growing interest in UC technologies – NEC 3C and Cisco Jabber to name but two - that help build the connected enterprise and facilitate the level of customer service today’s businesses are looking for. Organisations are also increasingly attracted by the productivity improvements that can be generated by using UC technology within their customer interaction platforms to obtain a better understanding of the presence and availability of key customer-facing staff.

Collaborate for digital success

The connected enterprise is about collaboration. The ability to collaborate by bringing existing knowledge and new and legacy technologies is key. Employees need to quickly connect with the people and resources they need to resolve or improve customer experiences. The latest customer contact solutions bring in tools to enable agents to log help with supervisors, for example, and to allow action notes to be sent to staff within the system. Valuable knowledge can also be sharable across the organisation but yet be controlled and captured in one centralised system, enabling operators, agents and supervisors to achieve a comprehensive view of all customer interactions and drive exceptional customer experience. The collaborative approach means it is critically important that the system is built to scale and can add in new functionality as and when required, so future-proofing the enterprise.
Getting their Own House in Order – How to be a connected digital enterprise?

But it’s not just the customer that has digital DNA. Organisations increasingly need to build their own digital DNA in addition to capturing that of the customer. This means they need to start applying digital technology to the front-end customer experience, and make sure back-end processes are fully automated; they need to adapt to the ways in which the digital customer behaves and provide solutions that cater for and engage with this behaviour including social communities, knowledge bases and omni-channel strategies.

Often, they are held back by their own conservatism and adherence to traditional ways of doing business and from taking the plunge by using digital systems to proactively unify, track, route and record all customer communications. Indeed recent research suggests that 75% of UK organisations see company culture and organisational structure as the biggest inhibitors to connecting their business and customers.

To be successful both now and in the future, organisations need to make digital communications a fully-integrated part of the business and be able to also use digital to call on expertise across the connected enterprise to quickly resolve customer queries. They need to use it too to deliver insight into the presence of customer-facing staff, leading in turn to quicker call resolution and happier customers and agents. If businesses want to ensure that they at all times make the most informed decisions possible, they need to not only track all interactions but record and report them into the bargain.

In line with this, they need to get to know and understand not just their customer’s DNA but their own business DNA too, so that when they are engaging with businesses in social communities, for example, they are presenting their true character and brand value in digital form to prospects and customers alike. Moreover, because everyone within the connected enterprise needs to take responsibility for improving the customer experience, everyone also needs to understand the DNA of the business and be able to convey it in any customer-facing interaction.

Changes in UC is helping the Digital Enterprise

The unified communications story is one of stability combined with evolution.

75% of UK organisations see company culture and organisational structure as the biggest inhibitors to connecting their business and customers.

The **U** in Unified Communications (UC) has always been about delivering a unified approach by integrating solutions to drive efficiencies.

It is the **C** element – the ‘communications’ component - that has changed over time.

Customer communications used to be facilitated by huge switchboards transferring calls to employees within the business. Now with the added flexibility of UC platforms running as part of the connected enterprise, everyone within the business can be part of the customer service operation from the sales and marketing departments to IT helpdesks, finance and HR.

**Connect your UC and customer interaction platform**

The kind of fully-integrated dynamic customer interaction approach that the connected enterprise can support should be able to help them accomplish this. Indeed, with the combination of a UC platform and a virtualised customer interaction platform, everyone in the business can form part of an extended customer service team. It is a flexible approach that allows customers to interact with the business in the way that suits them best.
Tools such as Skype for Business are embracing the digital age

At a still more granular level customer interaction tools like Skype for Business are further enabling businesses to engage more closely with customers; capture their DNA and build customer loyalty and business advantage through effective communication.

The use of tools like Skype can also significantly reduce the cost of interaction for customers, especially when compared with calls from mobile devices. The ability to interact free of charge with Skype can significantly lessen the frustration users experience when kept waiting. For companies accepting Skype interaction, this can increase the chance of the engagement progressing smoothly.

Skype for Business also builds on the capabilities of its predecessor Microsoft Lync, including content sharing and telephony and making the interaction process easier and more intuitive. For example, transferring a call now takes only one touch or click, instead of three.

Skype for Business takes advantage of the strengths of both Skype and Lync. It is a tool that can play a key role in putting people at the centre of the communications process.

Once again though the overall message is around linking and connecting to people everywhere. Lync already offers instant messaging and audio calling with Skype users. Skype for Business adds video calling and access to the Skype user directory making it possible to call any Skype user on any device. Every digital enterprise needs a Skype for Business strategy. To really make it work though, they need to ensure it is accessible across the entire enterprise, and that it can effectively presence enable with instant messaging (IM), video and voice capabilities.

The adoption of Skype for Business also needs to be looked at as part of a wider unified communication strategy. As the lines between various forms of communication are blurring (voice or video for example), businesses need to offer accessible self-service options, route interactions intelligently, provide productivity tools to agents and managers, and constantly manage quality for customers. Skype for Business will be the digital profile for both the consumer and the business.

Skype has 300 million users worldwide, 22 million minutes being used every hour.

Microsoft
Today's businesses often have to do more than just provide multi-channel service offerings. They increasingly have to go beyond this to deliver omni-channel service to their customers to meet customers' growing needs for a vast breadth of service offerings from traditional voice right through to newly-assimilated social media and webchat tools.

**Be proactive rather than reactive**

Businesses are also looking to drive competitive edge and increase the number of straight-through trouble free transactions by using big data analytics techniques to leverage the DNA they have gathered about customers.

The aim might be to provide them with the chance to take advantage of up-sell and cross-sell options, for example, or by simply stepping in to offer additional proactive engagement to complement a self-service approach the customer is undertaking.

The emergence of the Internet of Things is also helping businesses shift the focus from reactive to proactive. The data mine to which connected devices enable access, allows the business to be better prepared. At the point of engagement, they will not just be aware of the issue but will have remedies in place and may even have started applying them to resolve the problem.

**Channel Strategy**

Organisations will, of course, also need to put in place a coherent channel strategy matched to the specific needs of their customers. Depending on the mix they have, they might want to offer web chat, social media, self-service options and mobile connectivity but at the same time they also need to appreciate that phone and email remain key for many customers, the older generations in particular. The data mine to which connected devices enable access, allows the business to be better prepared. At the point of engagement, they will not just be aware of the issue but will have remedies in place and may even have started applying them to resolve the problem.

**Video is changing**

Skype has been a consumer channel for many years and its success has given people growing confidence in using video to speak face-to-face. It’s an approach that is already being widely embraced across the APAC region and in the US, but has been a little slower to catch on across EMEA.

Think of how you in your role as a customer can best resolve enquiries quickly. – If something is wrong with your fridge, you could skype your concerns and demonstrate in real-time to the relevant support person where the issue is, significantly reducing the potential for confusion as a direct result.
However, will “Digital DNA” take away the emotional connection with your customers

Unified communications platforms like Skype for Business are enablers in this context, performing a critical role in facilitating the capture and analysis of a customer’s digital DNA. But it’s important to highlight that a customer’s DNA is about more than just an evaluation of their data footprint, critical though that is, it also needs to encompass an understanding of the emotional aspect of the interaction. It’s about emotional as well as rational intelligence.

Much of this stems from the kind of environment most business people work in today. As American journalist, Thomas Friedman, neatly encapsulated the dilemma of today’s office worker when he wrote in his New York Times column: “We have gone from the Iron Age to the Industrial Age to the Information Age to the Age of Interruption. All we do now is interrupt each other or ourselves with instant messages, e-mail, spam or cell phone rings. Who can think or write or innovate under such conditions?”

Frustrated by all these distractions, people are increasingly demanding fast, efficient service – and can become emotional when they don’t receive it. It’s a key element of their digital DNA just as much as records of their past behaviour and previous preferences are, but it takes a different approach to measure it.

There is a widely held belief that customer interaction technology available on the market today is only capable of engaging with the rational and conscious side of any interaction. It is a mistaken view.

Real time response for agents and customers
Take, for example, the real-time speech analytics technology in use within many contact centres today. These highly sophisticated software systems employ methodologies similar to those used in neuro-linguistic programming to infer what individuals engaging in a business interaction are feeling – whether the customer, in particular, is happy, or agitated, whether they want an answer quickly, whether the language used is becoming clipped and curt.

There is a growing volume of customer interaction technology out there in the market today which can go a lot deeper into the emotional side of what individual customers are looking for from a business interaction than many people realise.

When you are dealing with the emotional element of customer interactions, just as you might when dealing with the rational element, you need to segment your customers and be aware of the kinds of customers you are dealing with. If you are providing digital games to a young tech-savvy demographic your customers’ proposed channels of engagement and emotional reaction to the interaction will be very different from that of somebody looking for advice on cashing in their pension, for example. Businesses need to be aware of this and tailor the tone and style of engagement accordingly.

In short, businesses must always retain an understanding of the human element in this digital age of any interaction together with a realisation that this element is just as important as the rational one.
The enhanced connectivity that overarching approaches like UC and techniques like Skype for Business deliver are increasingly key in allowing today’s businesses to operate efficiently and achieve competitive edge.

They enable organisations to keep their lines of communications open and to drive positive engagement with customers. Perhaps most importantly, they help businesses to collect and understand their customers’ digital DNA and strengthen their own. Understanding who their customers are and what motivates them helps organisations achieve a better understanding of their own brand identity and how they can best apply it to better engage with customers and more effectively meet their needs.

Running a successful business today, much like running a successful modern family, is about good communication and collaboration and gaining more of an insight into their customers’ likes and dislikes and what makes them tick. For many customer-facing organisations, understanding their customers’ digital DNA and being able to act positively on that understanding will be the key factor in delivering success both today and long into the future.

Looking ahead
Enghouse interactive

Enghouse Interactive develops and supplies the widest range of customer contact solutions on the market. Through our global network of partners, supported by 16 international operations, we are helping thousands of organisations of all sizes, industries and complexity to improve their service, productivity and operational efficiency.

We support more than 1 million agent seats handling over 1 billion interactions through our systems daily – making Enghouse Interactive one of the biggest providers of customer contact solutions in the world.

Web: www.enghouseinteractive.co.uk
Phone: +44 (0) 20 3357 3040
Email: marketingemea@enghouse.com