

CHATBOTS AND INTERACTIVE AUTOMATION:

Have you got the right balance?

The robotic revolution:

how automation is redefining customer service

The digital age has given rise to a culture of immediate gratification. Today's customers demand fast, efficient service that satisfies their needs, first time. It's about getting a positive result, as quickly and effortlessly as possible. And regardless of size, budget or transaction, they expect businesses to give it to them.

As technology evolves and people become more comfortable using it in their daily lives, they also know what it can do for them. Because they understand its capabilities, this further increases their expectation of customer service excellence. Robotic automation is a great example of these expectations in action. Consumers are already well versed in what Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri can do to enrich their daily lives. AI is rapidly advancing our interactions across multiple media platforms such as Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter – through to Mobile Banking, Insurance apps and more.

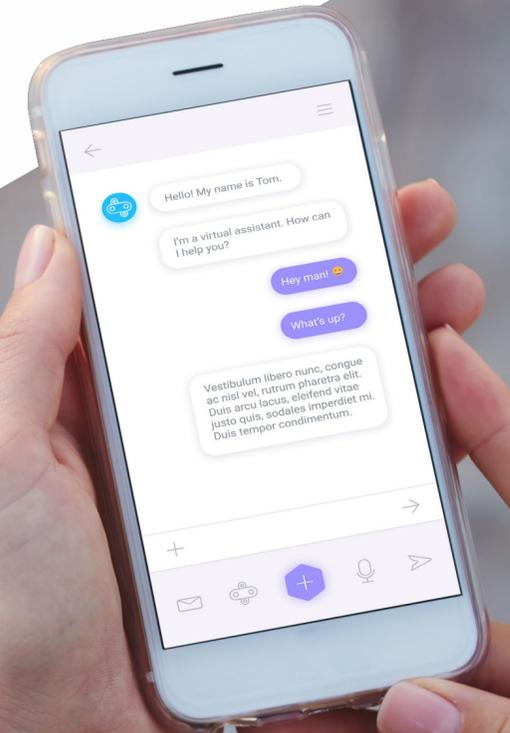
Organisations of all sizes are having to satisfy these demands, to stay competitive. In response, many customer contact centres now rely heavily on automation in their everyday operations and interactions. Self-service tools and functionality are deployed as an increasingly important part of these communications.

Indeed, self-service technology is big business. Global sales are expected to reach \$37.75 billion by 2021¹ – with Chatbots handling the majority of interactions – and it's easy to see why. It benefits contact centre agents and customers alike in all sorts of ways.

Routine enquiries can be managed faster with the help of automated processes which are always available and resolve issues quickly and quietly, so customers are happy. Meanwhile, hard-working agents are freed up to spend more time focussing on high-value, personal interactions which strengthen customer relationships and build loyalty. This experience is more rewarding for agents, which increases overall job satisfaction.

That said, self service, automation or ChatBot technologies should never operate in isolation. Rather, they should be a tightly integrated element of overall contact centre technology and treated as in exactly the same way as a human agent or other communications channel. In this way, if a customer isn't able to solve their issue through automation, they can be quickly passed back to a live agent who has all relevant information at hand.

The global self-service technology market is expected to reach \$37.75 billion by 2021, growing at a CAGR of around 15.8% between 2016 and 2021¹.





95%

of consumers believe customer service is going to be the major beneficiary of chatbots.



85%

85% of all customer interactions will be handled without a human agent by 2020²

This symbiotic relationship between human and machine is nothing new, of course. The digital era has seen the evolution of the 'informed customer'; and this has been underpinned by the concurrent development of self-service capabilities. Forward-thinking businesses have long since relied on new technologies to enhance customer experience, by empowering these customers to serve themselves, and stay in control of activities and outcomes. Simple actions like product orders, bank payments and appointment bookings now use self-service as the norm.

These experiences come about by creating systems that make the most of data, and put this information at the heart of our interactions. Way back in 1990, Bill Gates proudly revealed that Microsoft would put 'information at your fingertips' as the Information Technology revolution began. Then, in 1994 Google confirmed it would now 'organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.' Data wasn't now just accessible, it was useful, with a purpose and structure that could be shaped and defined by us, the internet user.

We never looked back. By 2013, the average smartphone had 41 apps downloaded on to it, and more mobile devices were activated each day than there were children born. Today, Amazon's Alexa is equipped with more than 30,000 valuable skills: with new ones being added everyday. Future predictions see no let-up in the sheer speed and scale of this innovation. Gartner predicts that by 2028, 'Intelligent software and AI-powered robots will join humans at work'.

These sustained and transformational trends have major implications for life in the customer contact centre.

At the end of 2017, about 70% of all AI use cases were related to customer service and call centres³. Seven in ten. Technology isn't just increasing, it's taking over.

As with many other walks of life, this digital transformation is creating exciting and unprecedented possibilities for customer service. People can achieve more in less time, with relatively immediate results and a sense of self-fulfilment. But is all this automation entirely a good thing? Is it as simple as just deploying Chatbots and AI, and expecting better results? Are there limits to what we should expect from technology – and what our customers will accept?

The case for

contact centre automation

By 2030, as much as 80% of routine work will be automated⁴.

While this promises to improve service levels in ways never before possible, the remaining 20% of tasks may prove even more valuable in differentiating organisations. These are the high-quality human interactions – and they're what make good customer service great.

In the industry, automation is on everyone's lips. ChatBots and AI are buzzwords of the moment, and contact centre professionals are enthusiastic and nervous about their potential to improve operations and performance. But is all this a sustainable commercial reality, or just a fad? Are businesses jumping on the bandwagon because of all the hype? Can humans and Chatbots really work hand in hand, to create a seamless service journey? And do customers really want to be bombarded by all this technology?



The core aim of every modern contact centre is to be customer-centric. With so many communications channels, competitive offerings and comprehensive requests to manage, the most successful services cut through the clutter and focus on the customer, from start to finish. It's not just about installing the latest, greatest technology... it's what you do with it once it's in place.

That said, technology can do an impressive amount of the job for you. AI mimics human behaviour. It anticipates customer needs, and uses in-built intelligence and self-learning to continually improve customer experience. It performs a variety of automated tasks. ChatBots are essentially Virtual Assistants, which enable customer self service via digital communications channels. They draw on data to express themselves using natural language, and augmented intelligence to give customers relevant information and help ensure a positive result.

But however impressive AI is, it still lacks that one vital ingredient that is so vital for customer satisfaction.

Emotion

Human agents can empathise. They can discuss sensitive or complex issues one-to-one with customers. They listen, sympathise, share their feelings, give a point of view. These emotional responses are unique to every human agent, and cannot be replicated. They are vital in a world where every customer values being heard, understood, and cared for. And no amount of AI can deliver them.

By finding that perfect balance of human and robot, that fine blend of data-driven process and emotionally-driven understanding, we can realise the optimal contact centre operation: which will never stop delivering value to your business.

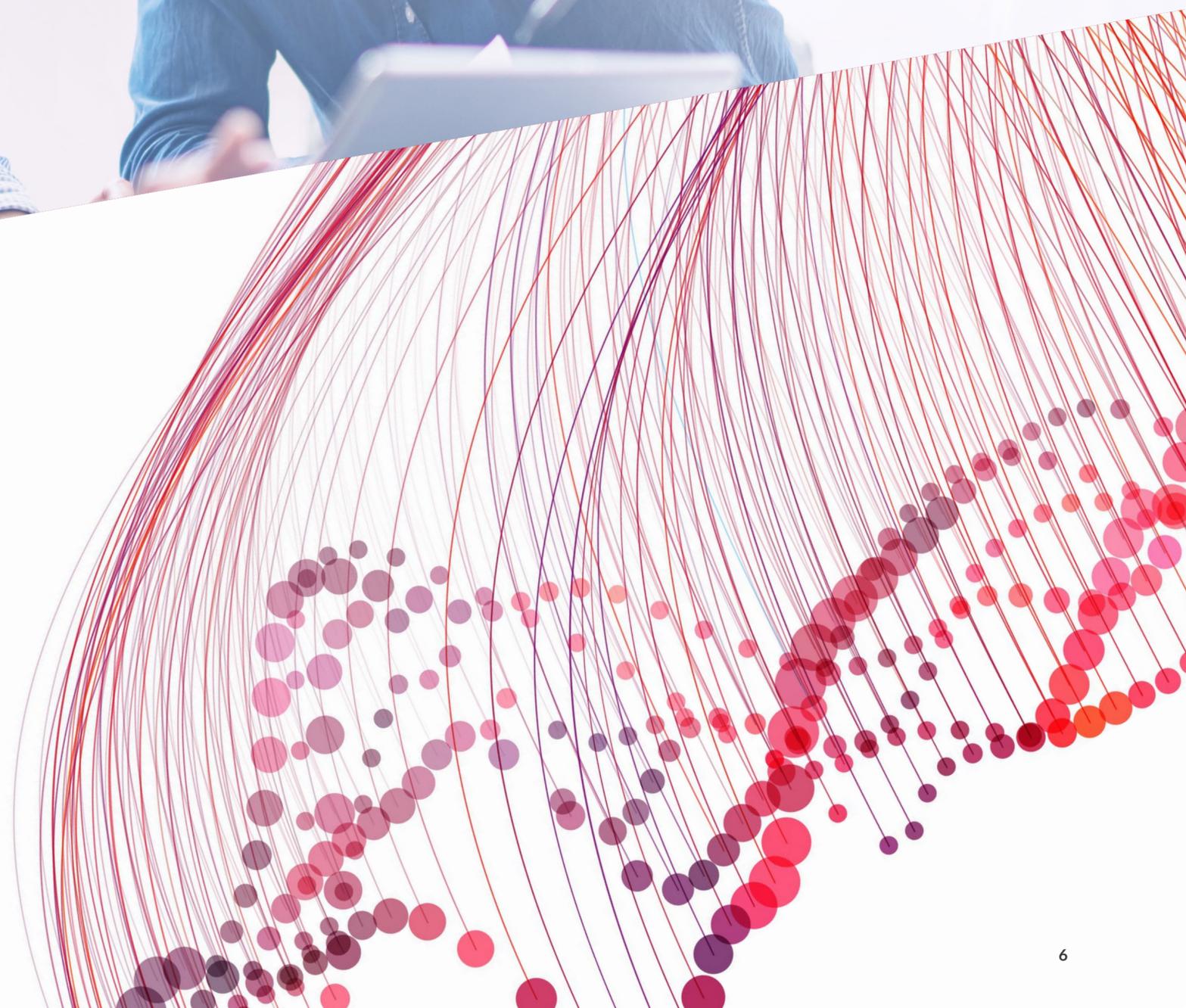


Striking the right balance

So, how do we strike this balance, to reach our contact centre utopia? Let's start by looking more closely at the ways in which our human agents interact with their supporting automation.

Most customer requests typically relate to relatively simple topics: for example, resetting a password, asking where an order is or finding out more about a particular product or service. Practically all queries of this nature can be managed using self-service interactions, via automated tools or Bots with no real need for live (human) assistance.

However, these interactions must still be connected to and work in synergy with human agents. Siloed automated tasks can create confusion and disruption across the contact centre when something goes wrong; as no one has visibility of activities performed and it is time-consuming to trace them back to the source. By joining everything together, issues can be easily escalated to an agent while any learnings can be quickly taken on board as part of continuous management and improvement.





The good news is, the technology required to achieve this is not that costly or complicated. In fact, high levels of customer self service and automation are happening with minimal amounts of technology investment. The majority of organisations already have more than 80% of the resources they need: they just have yet to use them to their full potential.

The utopia we're talking about, then, is a symbiotic relationship where automation can fulfil elementary self-service tasks while providing every human agent with the critical information they need to serve individual customers effectively, every time they need it. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to this. No established mathematical formula or perfect percentage. Every organisation has its own particular and unique needs.

How then, are Chatbots best deployed? What jobs should they be assigned to? How will they be trained? Generally, they are best suited to high-volume, process-driven tasks that are repetitive and time-consuming by nature. This is where automation can deliver the greatest benefit in the shortest possible time. A task complexity and depth of interaction increases, human intervention will likely increase also. 79% of consumers want brands to demonstrate they care before they will consider purchasing from them⁵, so every improvement in interactions is critical.

Suitability for Self-Service & Automation

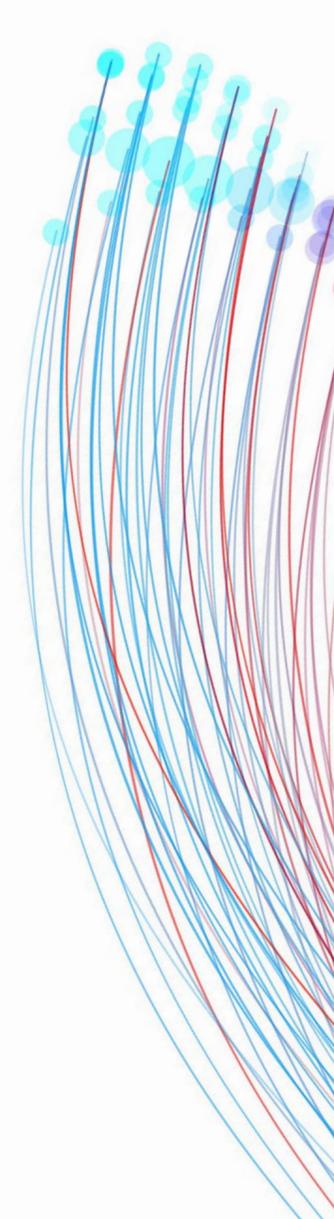
Volume of Interactions	High	Very High	Medium
	Low	Medium	Low
		Simple	Complex

Interaction Complexity

This approach works well for everybody. Cumbersome, labour-intensive tasks are completed faster and without human error. Complex interactions are managed by agents with more time to devote to them, who feel more rewarded in their working lives. And customers enjoy a consistently superior service experience.

79% of consumers want brands to demonstrate they care before considering a purchase⁵

With such clear and comprehensive benefits on offer, it's fair to ask why more contact centres aren't working with this balance of human and automated resources. The answer is simple: because the balance is not as easy to achieve as it first appears.





How Enghouse Interactive can help

Given the fast-changing and highly competitive contact centre environment, coupled with constantly evolving, complex technology, it's worth working with a specialist partner to get where you want to be.

Enghouse Interactive is committed to doing just that.

Our solutions empower customers in all walks of life to self-serve using a wide range of automated tools: including chatbots, AI, speech recognition, touch tone, web, forums and mobile options. All of which are quick to implement, powerful, and extremely cost-effective.

Choose an 'off-the-shelf' solution that fits your needs, or configure your own unique customised version. Either way, you can be confident it will integrate effortlessly with your existing systems, and be easy to manage and maintain.

Our user-friendly Enghouse Interactive Self Service Portal is an open standards-based development platform that significantly reduces the time, cost and complexity of creating and deploying tailored voice self-service and communications solutions. Deploy voice, Chatbot, video messaging, SMS, mobile automation and email communications, as well as Knowledge Management Solutions all in one place, without any hassle.

ChatBots and voice applications are monitored around-the-clock for reliability, while Mobile Automation quickly allows users on any device to participate in a self-service session through a mobile app. It all adds up to a more intuitive, superior customer experience.

Contact Enghouse Interactive to discuss your ChatBot, AI or self service strategies.

Enghouse Interactive is a leading expert in customer communications. With over 25 years' experience in the contact centre industry working with dozens of financial institutions, our agile self-service platform efficiently manages customers through any channel while providing actionable intelligence for ongoing improvement.

Our unique omni-channel contact centre solutions give you the choice and flexibility to meet any business demand. They are also scalable in deployment, size, complexity and integration to ensure successful and effortless customer interaction, whatever your budget.

- 1 <https://www.zionmarketresearch.com/report/self-service-technology-market>
- 2 <https://www.business2community.com/infographics/the-growth-of-chatbots-usage-in-customer-service-industry-infographic-02062417> (May 2018)
- 3 Gartner
- 4 Gartner
- 5 Wunderman
- 6 Babel