Application leaders responsible for CRM customer service and support technology should review how this year’s cool vendors can support differentiated service and lower costs, especially in a digital-first environment, to meet the technology needs of greater customer service.

Overview

Key Findings

Application leaders responsible for customer service and support face the twin challenges of investing in technologies that improve customer experience (CX) and operational excellence while optimizing costs in the short term. This year, a key objective facing those responsible for CRM investment will be to find a balance between the “good enough” capabilities offered by customer service suites and the innovation of “best-of-breed” offerings.

Consistency and personalization are key to providing effortless customer service experiences which along with better employee experiences, will increase both customer and employee loyalty.

Recent research indicates that customers’ experiences are stronger in the digital channel than traditional phone-based customer service. This provides organizations with the impetus to explore innovative technologies and enhance the digital customer service experience (see “Survey Analysis: Digital Maturity in Customer Service, Investments and Impacts”).

Recommendations

Application leaders responsible for CRM customer service and support technology should:

- Prioritize customer experience improvement projects designed to enhance both customer and employee experience (EX) as well as optimizing costs.

- Take stock of existing technologies used to support the four pillars of great customer service. Identify gaps and see how cool vendor technology could be used to pilot differentiated experiences.

- Evaluate each cool vendor’s ability to execute at scale — especially with regard to integration, training, geographical implementation and support coverage for each use case — and develop a
plan to augment their resources with the organization's own skills to address gaps during the trial period.

**Strategic Planning Assumptions**

By 2022, nearly 80% of organizational skills will have to be reprioritized or revisited because of digital business transformation

Through 2023, more than 50% of CRM investments will include benefits to the organization, its customers and employees as the project objectives, instead of including only benefits to the organization itself.

**Analysis**

This research does not constitute an exhaustive list of vendors in any given technology area, but rather is designed to highlight interesting, new and innovative vendors, products and services. Gartner disclaims all warranties, express or implied, with respect to this research, including any warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose.

Engaging customers through digital channels is an imperative for most organizations focused on both B2B and B2C customers. From our “Survey Analysis: Digital Maturity in Customer Service, Investments and Impacts” it is clear that organizations with more mature digital engagement strategies have been able to improve CX metrics, improve first contact resolution and reduce call volume.

As organizations begin to respond to the challenges of meeting customer service needs during the current pandemic, we recognize opportunities for greater use of digital and self-service capabilities (see “Deliver Customer Service During COVID-19: Improve Digital and Self-Service Capabilities”). These opportunities also map directly with the key objectives of customer service organizations we engage during client inquiry. The message is becoming clearer: to deliver stronger and more sustainable customer experience, organizations need to shift to a digital-first agenda supported by artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) for both automated and assisted service personalized customer interactions.

**What You Need to Know**

The cool vendors profiled here offer innovative uses of technology across the four pillars of great customer service: getting connected, orchestrating interactions, resource management, and knowledge and insight (see “Customer Service and Support Technology Primer for 2020”). Common with market developments in customer service, AI and ML play a role in most new developments in customer service technology, along with greater context and personalization (see Figure 1).

- Glia is an example of a digital-first customer service platform, enabling organizations to manage inquiries across multiple channels, including the public switched telephone network (PSTN). The
inclusion of voice is differentiated, because from the survey above we found that digital channel engagement led to an increase in escalations from chat to phone. This demands a more holistic approach to managing multiple channels with a consistent single view of the customer.

- Seekify fills a gap between knowledge management, insights and workforce management by combining a collaborative and contextual learning experience with data-driven CX insights to set clear goals and KPIs, enabling advisors to excel at customer engagement.

- Vizru is an early example of multiexperience for customer service, addressing the demands of customers who engage suppliers with smart devices across multiple modalities (see “Transcend Omnichannel Thinking and Embrace Multiexperience for Improved CX”). Vizru enables stateful conversations to be maintained across web, voice, chat, SMS and email touchpoints.

- Whenwhyhow uses a combination of internal customer data and external market forces to personalize digital customer interactions through continuous learning and insight. It augments existing investments in digital customer service, rather than replacing them, thereby easing the process by which it may be trialed.

- Zoomin addresses the challenges of accessing knowledge in a meaningful way, interpreting content intelligently and personalizing it for delivery in the most appropriate channel based on role and context.

**Figure 1: Four Pillars of Great Customer Service**

Four Pillars of Great Customer Service
Glia

New York, U.S. ( glia.com)

Analysis by Brian Manusama

Why cool: Customers want organizations to provide them with a seamless engagement experience across multiple touchpoints. For many years Gartner has talked about connecting digital touchpoints with analog voice touchpoints. Where established market vendors have failed to invest in integrating voice and digital touchpoints, new vendors have found a way to deliver the promise of a connected digital experience. Glia is one of these vendors.

Glia’s all-digital solution for voice is part of its digital-first customer service platform. This all-in-one solution allows digital teams and contact centers to collaborate in creating experiences that combine touchpoints. Glia accomplishes this by combining cobrowse, messaging, social media, telephony, digital voice and video, enhanced with conversational AI and Glia’s orchestration framework for measuring and managing interactions.

Glia’s digital voice offering also enables enterprises to transition from a traditional telephony solution to an all-digital solution for voice. Glia integrates with existing telephony systems to enable phone calls to be bound to web sessions, providing digital customer service to traditional phone calls.

Glia intelligent queuing and routing rules can be set once for all channels, or customized based on channels and agent type (human or bot). Glia routing can be based on parameters such as website location, behavior on the site and/or information accessed. Organizations like Glia are pushing the envelope in customer service and are part of this new digital customer service landscape (see “Market Guide for Digital Customer Service and Support Technologies”).

Challenges: Glia is innovating in a very established customer service market. Current investments and contracts with incumbent vendors often need to be considered first, especially with a greater focus on cost containment this year. This will challenge success for Glia in the short term. Glia is beginning to build a great footprint in the financial services industry; however, over time, it will need to target other industries in order to avoid dependence on a single market segment and to become a more viable partner.

Who should care: Organizations that are starting their journey in digital customer service and looking for quick time-to-value transition or cutover from traditional voice should consider Glia. Organizations that understand the importance of combining existing voice operations into a digital touchpoint with a single interface should also consider Glia’s technology.

Seekify

Gurugram, India ( seekify.com)
Analysis by Nadine LeBlanc

**Why cool:** Seekify seeks to support agents by combining a collaborative and contextual learning experience with data-driven CX insights to set clear goals and KPIs.

As less-complex customer service requests get satisfied through automation, the pressure is on the agent to deliver effortless, consistent and personalized customer service experiences. Ensuring teams are performing in a context of ever-increasing customer and business expectations will require deviating from traditional approaches in workforce management. This shift is especially relevant to organizations considering remote working. To answer this challenge, organizations will look to provide employees with application experiences suited specifically to their roles and responsibilities, and contexts that can be continuously refined (see “2020 Strategic Roadmap for the Future of Applications”).

Founded in 2019, the Seekify platform aggregates data-driven CX with the goal of delivering actionable insights to agents derived from AI and a ML engine. Seekify’s personalized insights enable individuals, teams and organizations to align their CX and EX goals with the ambition of driving individual commitment toward a group effort. Seekify helps organizations to:

- Provide actionable insights via a mix of organizational and individual goals using data insights.
- Trigger personalized content, set calendar meetings, send emails, assign mentors and give feedback.
- Allow for collaborative and contextual learning experience, improving team performance.

Workforce digital dexterity will drive competitive advantage. At an extreme, embracing what is known as “we-working,” a work philosophy created by Gartner, can be used to guide ensembles of autonomous and high-performing teams. “We-working” revolves around portfolios of diversified roles and skills performed by dynamic teams that resize and reform (see “How We Will Work in 2028 Demands Changes in How We Will Reward”). Seekify is an example of technology filling gaps between customer service leaders and HR leaders about connecting CX and digital workplace solutions.

**Challenges:** Seekify customers are primarily based in India and Singapore with some clients in the U.S., Germany and South Africa. Most implementations are in pilot mode. In addition, Seekify falls into a group of many niche vendors enhancing certain parts of a real-time customer engagement hub (see “Make Your Customer Engagement Hub Real Time With Continuous Intelligence”). Applying real-time continuous intelligence capabilities to high-value customer journeys is relatively new among early adopters, and comes from a mix of established CRM players and emerging startups. As such, vendors must be able to articulate their differentiations, including providing features conducive to collaboration among disparate business units, to help the business case for its technology.
Who should care: Application leaders supporting CX and interested in creating or optimizing remote teams and/or piloting the “we-working” component of their customer service strategy should consider Seekify’s capabilities in combination with customer engagement center technologies. It is most relevant to B2B companies based in the Asia/Pacific region, mainly India and Singapore, working with disparate CX and CRM technologies.

Vizru
San Jose, California, U.S. (vizru.com)

Analysis by Jason Wong and Bern Elliot

Why Cool: New multiexperience customer service capabilities often need to be built, and cannot just be bought. Vizru can help companies address this need with its Vizru Service Desk, which combines bots and low-code development with its out-of-the-box service desk solution to address complex multiexperience interactions.

Vizru Service Desk offers multiexperience service support by maintaining stateful conversations across web, voice, chat, SMS, and email touchpoints. All notification, communication and interaction modes can be customized and controlled according to customer preferences. You can train Zoey, Vizru’s virtual customer assistant bot, to answer frequently asked questions like how to reset passwords, how to get access to guest wifi, or what forms to be filled in for a particular requirement. You can also train Zoey to automate complex tasks, such as validating and approving claims, automating underwriting and onboarding customers, in a matter of minutes.

Challenges: Founded in 2015, Vizru is an incubator-backed startup with offices in the U.S. and South Africa. Although its technology has been implemented by large enterprises, its Vizru Service Desk offering is a recent packaging of its capabilities built on its multiexperience automation platform. Vizru has customers in the banking, insurance and automotive sectors so far, but has not broadly penetrated other industries. It also competes against call center as a service (CCaaS) vendors adding multiexperience support, as well as conversational platforms and multiexperience development platforms (MXDPs) that may address the need to build support for these new touchpoints. Virzu also faces the common marketing challenge of selling to the line-of-business (LOB) stakeholder who will get the benefits, while also ensuring support from IT, who must maintain the solution and perform the back-end integrations.

Who should care: Application leaders looking to build multiexperience capabilities to extend their customer service solutions can use Vizru to help create and automate processes across new digital touchpoints and interaction modalities. Multiexperience products like Vizru Service Desk can help revolutionize customer support by empowering customers to find answers with the help of AI-driven bots. These bots can efficiently record customer cases, notify the right individuals, set priority to a query, assign query resolution tasks and monitor their timely resolution.

Whenwhyhow
Madrid, Spain (whenwhyhow.tech)

Analysis by Steve Blood

Why cool: Personalizing digital customer experiences is a key objective of orchestrating interactions as part of the four pillars of great customer service. Our research indicates greater levels of digital maturity is increasing the number of customer interactions, demanding a more personalized approach.

Whenwhyhow uses a combination of internal data sources (such as customer information and actions, channel usage, past conversations) and external data sources (such as economic data, weather, competitor profiling) to surface insights that build a personalized customer behavioral understanding. Combined with ML to constantly improve insight, whenwhyhow determines the most optimal way to engage customers in digital channels at a personal level. For example, whenwhyhow could detect that a client cancels his flights every time there is an airline strike. The company would anticipate this behavior and, next time there is a strike, could proactively offer him a complementary insurance service. It augments, not replaces, existing investments in digital channels and customer relationship management, using RESTful APIs for data feeds to determine rules and recommendations for engaging with customers. Whenwhyhow has focused its product into key verticals of banking and fintech, insurance and insurtech, airlines and transportation, telco, utilities and e-commerce. Currently the model is available as a cloud (Google Cloud Platform or Amazon Web Services) or an on-premises subscription. The SaaS for SMEs offer is planned for 1Q2021. The software already supports multitenancy, but the initial offering is to have dedicated instances for each customer for the market-fit phase.

Challenges: The concept of personalizing customer service interactions in the phone channel specifically has been on the market for more than 10 years. This is identified as an innovation profile for Mediated Interaction Matching (see "Hype Cycle for Customer Service and Support Technologies, 2019"). The deeper use of AI to manage personalization leads us to change the innovation profile to AI-Mediated Communications in this year’s Hype Cycle. The biggest challenge for customer service leaders has been that there are multiple ways of improving on managing phone calls, and more recently the focus has been on automation, rather than connecting customers to employees. The same arguments can be made for managing digital customer engagements, except that digital customer service is on the rise. Ultimately, we expect personalization will become a component of customer journey mapping as this influences more real-time, next best actions. Whenwhyhow is very new and despite some strong backing from Telefonica, CDTI and BBVA it would still benefit from establishing partnerships with large system integrators with digital customer service practices.

Who should care: Organizations looking to create stronger personalized, digital engagements with customers in the target vertical segments for whenwhyhow will appreciate the API and application augmentation approach. An integration approach to existing digital channels and CRM
applications means when why how can enable more personalized interactions without disrupting existing technology investments.

Zoomin

New York, U.S. and Tel Aviv, Israel (zoominsoftware.com)

Analysis by Drew Kraus

Why Cool: Product companies invest in creating rich technical content, but they often deliver it as a dated, static and frustrating experience. Zoomin focuses on providing a new type of knowledge consolidation and delivery platform for product companies. Their solution does not focus on technical documentation or knowledge authoring; instead, it focuses on delivering product answers by publishing relevant, personalized and dynamic content to customers across a variety of touchpoints.

Founded in 2015, Zoomin’s founders are experts in product technical documentation and customer service. They believe that product companies can never solve the knowledge management challenge by trying to include everything into one authoring database. While product companies have to do something to improve their documents, the authoring tools will not solve all of their problems. The true challenge lies in how to deliver the right knowledge and content to the right roles across multiple channels. Zoomin focuses on providing a new type of knowledge management tool for product companies. Zoomin’s solution focuses on knowledge consolidation, personalization and orchestration. It delivers automation for ingesting knowledge and content from any source, interpreting the content using intelligent classification and personalizing it based on users’ roles and context. It then delivers the content to multiple channels such as a documentation portal, community cloud, support site, or directly within a web app as a help widget, and creates an engaging experience.

Zoomin’s longer-term vision is to position its solution at the crossroad of knowledge consolidation and omnichannel technical and user-related product content delivery, supported by strong personalization capabilities. Because Zoomin has decoupled itself from traditional knowledge or document authoring tools, it can ingest content from a large variety of sources, technical documentations, knowledge articles, community platforms, learning and training systems and more. The knowledge orchestration and distribution capabilities provided could potentially disrupt the product content ecosystem that has been in place for decades.

Challenges: Within a short period of time Zoomin has attracted over 30 enterprise customers. The majority of the customers are product companies. This narrow industry focus helps Zoomin to deliver focused product investment, but at the same time creates limitations for future growth.

Knowledge management for customer service has been a hot space in the past two years. Vendors advance product capabilities leveraging AI, neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), semantic search, real-time personalization, API and omni-channel content delivery. Being a new company, Zoomin
will face increased competition in the next few years from all fronts — product documentation vendors, knowledge management vendors, CRM vendors and search vendors.

**Who should care:** Application leaders and customer service leaders tasked with improving self-service adoption, modernizing knowledge management for customer service and increasing personalization of content in support channels should consider Zoomin's capabilities in combination with product technical documentation and customer engagement center technologies. It is most relevant for product companies.

**Where Are They Now?**

TechSee

Tel Aviv, Israel (techsee.me)

*Analysis by Jim Robinson*

Profiled in 2018 iteration of “Cool Vendors in CRM Customer Service and Support”

Why cool then: In 2018, TechSee had combined computer vision, augmented reality and proprietary supervised AI model training techniques to help equipment support agents determine the customer's equipment model and find relevant knowledge artifacts using just a video stream. It had lowered the number of images needed to train the model to classify images of equipment such as routers and thermostats, often reaching accuracy levels above 90% using less than 1,000 images. However, it had primarily been used in small deployments at large European telecom that had the resources to help drive the vision forward.

Where are they now: By 2019, TechSee had large deployments with several large telecom and had solidified technology partnerships with Salesforce, which is also an investor. It had begun segmenting classified images, enabling humans to train the system on what parts of an image are most important (such as the color of a small LED rather than differences in amount of reflection from lighting in the room). This also helped better enable the reuse of previous learning, such as what a USB port looks like. TechSee had also begun work on new techniques for training models based on Siamese networks, with the aim of further reducing human effort while increasing accuracy. TechSee says these techniques consume more processor time but less human effort and far fewer images are needed (10 seconds to get 95% accuracy vs. 100 seconds to get 85% accuracy). TechSee also has research and development underway to create new AI tools based on “unsupervised learning,” which would allow it to extract insights from accumulated session images, without requiring prior human effort such as image labeling or annotation.

In 2020 TechSee has brought more prepackaged products to market to provide a faster time to value for some of its patented underlying technology. Its SmartAssist product and Eve (its visual virtual customer assistant), for example, are intended to help oversee field technicians by using computer vision to compare their work in real time to what it has learned is “good.” For example, a properly-trained model can, using computer vision, make sure all the wires are connected correctly.
in a smart thermostat. If not, it can provide step-by-step guidance sourced from a knowledge base. Then, it can perform a follow-up confirmation or provide a link to connect with an expert that can guide in real time by annotating the technician's field of view using augmented reality. TechSee is also piloting these concepts for end users in the telecommunications, consumer electronics and utility industries.

As blended workforces contain increasing percentages of subcontractors and freelancers, it is important to scale up review and oversight processes. TechSee has nearly 100 enterprise customers, and Salesforce has certified TechSee's two-way integration with the Salesforce Field Service Lightning mobile app and Salesforce Knowledge.

Who should care: Organizations interested in adding visual support to customer service and field team support should consider this solution. It is most relevant for companies with large customer engagement centers that:

- Serve the onboarding of new customers.
- Provide technical support.
- Have service operations in the field.

**Uniphore**

Palo Alto, California, U.S. ([uniphore.com](http://uniphore.com))

*Analysis by Brian Manusama*

Profiled in “Cool Vendors in Human-Machine Interface, 2013”

**Why cool then:** In 2013, Uniphore emerged as a cool vendor in human-machine interface space for its speech recognition and voice biometrics capabilities for 14 Indian languages. Uniphore developed a “wrapper” around Nuance's core technology that uses information such as the context of the application, regional dialect knowledge and each individual's historic phonetic data to adapt the recognition/biometrics matching at runtime, delivering higher accuracy and usability.

**Where are they now:** Seven years on, Uniphore has grown into a full-blown AI-powered conversational service automation platform. The company has developed more than a dozen AI-driven contact center use cases including self-service, knowledge management, conversational commerce, process automation, customer-agent matching, search, smart routing, digital concierge, personalized content, performance management and augmented agent engagement. Uniphore moved its company headquarters from India to the U.S., and opened additional offices in Asia outside India. The company has grown quickly and is projected to achieve over $100 million annual revenue within the next two years.
Who should care: Application leaders and leaders of large, multi-language contact centers in North America and Asia should investigate Uniphore's AI-driven customer service automation use cases in order to improve productivity, CX and EX.

Recommended by the Authors

Survey Analysis: Digital Maturity in Customer Service, Investments and Impacts
Make Your Customer Engagement Hub Real Time With Continuous Intelligence
Transcend Omnichannel Thinking and Embrace Multiexperience for Improved CX
Delivering Relevant Content and Knowledge to Customers Is Key to Great Customer Service
Market Guide for Digital Customer Service and Support Technologies

Recommended For You

China Summary Translation: Competitive Landscape: AI Startups in China
China Summary Translation: Organizational Best Practices for Successful AI and ML Initiatives
Financial Services Score for Operations Automation
Financial Services Score for Commercial Banking Sales and Marketing Data Analytics
Financial Services Score for Retail Banking Sales and Marketing Data Analytics

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