Simplexity:
The Essence of the Contact Center

Introduction

Once upon a not-so-distant time, if customers had concerns about a product or service, they'd pick up the phone and call your company. Today, with so many options afforded them by technology, they aren't always content to wait on the line until somebody answers. Instead, they're sending email or a text message, visiting your website to chat with an agent—even tweeting customer service or posting a comment on your Facebook page. Often, they're doing these things in quick succession. And, while you're trying desperately to keep ahead of all this, they're also contacting communities of your customers online—gathering data that empowers them to ask for even faster and better service.

In this real-time, hyper-connected world, customers are more demanding. They expect great results, and they expect them yesterday. For this and so many other reasons, the traditional contact center has become a significantly more complex environment:

- **The underlying technology is more complex**—not only the telephony infrastructure that controls the calls, but the infrastructure that handles these multi-channel demands as well.

- **The underlying processes are more complex**—Calls are routed to Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems and outsourced across the globe. Mergers and expansions distribute operations further. Quality Assurance and supervisors monitor live calls to ensure agents handle customers in a professional, quality manner. Forecasting and Scheduling take an agent's combination of skills into account when orchestrating services (the ability to handle several different contact channels, for example, or multilingual capabilities). And contact centers are becoming holistic operations that both contribute to and require the support of departments across the organization.

- **The amount of information you deal with continues to expand**—With mobile devices and applications proliferating at breakneck speed, data collection is at an all-time high. Contact centers field as many as 450,000 voice calls a day; and voice data is both unstructured and highly interrelated, making data analysis all the more difficult. In addition, with contact centers facing pressure to return value to their parent companies,

managers from the operations side of the business now work closely with marketing, sales and finance, and must gather the kinds of data that those departments require.

Ironically, although the easiest way to address the new technology, new processes, and big data explosion that define today's contact center is to build new features and plug them wherever you can into the software contact center agents use to do their jobs, this actually increases complexity for these same agents.

What we need to do is to take all of the complicated requirements driven by technology and processes and information and make the resulting interface usable—something that agents can easily navigate and use to perform their day-to-day jobs efficiently. This will also enable them to deliver precisely what your customers want in record time.

If you want to find ways to differentiate your business to your customers, start looking for ways to bring powerful functionality and immediate service to them in a very simple package.

What Is Simplexity?

Simplexity is an emerging term that acknowledges the relationship between complexity and simplicity. It addresses the questions

- Why do simple things become complex?
- How do complex things become simple?

From a design perspective, the dynamics we outlined above—advancements in technology, more complicated underlying processes, and the big data explosion—drive complexity across the technology industry.

Conversely, what will tame these complex systems—improve their usability—are simple interfaces.

How Does It Work?

Simplexity is getting a lot of attention these days because the concept touches our contemporary lives in many different ways. One of my favorite examples is the TV remote control.

Before we examine the remote control of today, let's take a look back at yesterday. 1956 saw the introduction of the first wireless remote control, the Zenith Space Command.

For the purposes of this white paper, the key design element is this: The Space Command had just four buttons—channel up, channel down, power, and mute. There was no configuration

necessary. It didn't even use batteries. Out of the box, it just worked. Pushing the buttons caused a tiny hammer inside the control to hit aluminum rods of different dimensions, producing ultrasonic sounds at different frequencies. The TV interpreted the various frequencies as particular commands.

It doesn't get much simpler than that.

Fast forward to today. In 2013 the TV remote boasts on average 50 different buttons, including picture-in-picture controls, freeze, favorites, fast forward, rewind, exit, pause, zoom, menu, search, and on and on. It also requires not only batteries but some pretty sophisticated setup and configuration: It doesn't work with your television right out of the box. In fact, it's usually accompanied by a tome of an instruction manual.

How did we get from the simple Zenith Space Command to this degree of complexity?

Let's take a look again at the three big drivers. First up? Technology. Today's TV remote has to be tuned to satellite, cable, or broadcast TV signals. You also have to configure settings for mono or surround sound, built-in or external speakers, a receiver if you have one, and so on. The result? More buttons and a how-to manual.

With regard to the underlying process:

- Today we tend to switch back and forth between multiple sports programs or TV shows airing at the same time. Thus, on the remote control we have split screen, picture-in-picture, DVR controls, and many other features that help us do just this.
- We want the option to pause our TV program so that we can get some chips from the kitchen or answer the door. As a result, we now have options on the TV remote such as freeze or stop picture.
- We have also grown accustomed to using computers to shop online, so that option, too, has been integrated into the modern TV set, and hence the remote control.

Finally, let's examine the big data explosion in this industry. There are hundreds of cable channels and close to a thousand channels available via satellite. So now we have options such as favorites, last, and so on to manage that data using the remote control, as well as search options to sift through all the content currently airing or available via DVR.

All these features, regardless of their genesis—technology, processes, or data explosion—come at a cost, and that cost is added complexity.

Customers Want Powerful Functionality in a Simple Package

We've seen how simple things get complicated. But how do we simplify what is complex?

The market really wants the best of both worlds. Your customers want powerful functionality, but they want it in a simple package. Simplexity maintains that you can take the complexity of modern life and add design and usability to simplify it.

Continuing on with our example of the TV remote, let's take a quick look at a manufacturer whose product designs across many technology industries are synonymous with the concept of simplicity: Apple Inc. Apple strives to pare down its devices to the smallest size and fewest buttons possible.

With just three buttons—menu, play/pause, and the well-known "wheel," one button with five different positions—the Apple TV remote hearkens back to the Zenith Space Command of old, but with far more functionality provided. Apple uses icon-based menus to present a streamlined, less cluttered content menu that simplifies navigation.

Apple's customers—and even those who are not yet their customers—approve. A 2012 survey by Quixel Research found that about 80 percent of people with a flat-screen TV who don't currently use Apple Inc. products (and 88 percent of those who do) would be interested in Apple TV. Among the reasons the survey participants proffered for their response? Apple's simple interface and convenient usability.

Calabrio Gives Customers What They Want

Workforce optimization is becoming the embodiment of how complex things become simple. Here, the complex administration and clumsy user interfaces of the past have given way to today's familiarity and ease of use.

We'll take a quick look now at design principles to which Calabrio adheres that embody the principle of simplexity.

Calabrio Software Is Intuitive

First, we employ human factors engineers, individuals who synthesize knowledge from a broad range of fields—including psychology, engineering, statistics, probability, and industrial design—to study both the behavior and psychology of how people work. These individuals then help build UIs that support this behavior, and are consequently much more intuitive, reacting the way people want and expect them to—and simplifying their day-to-day activities in the contact center as a result.

Calabrio Software Is Personalized

We also pay a great deal of attention to contextual rendering: We make sure that your UI changes based on context—on what you're trying to do.

What is contextual rendering? I'll give you an example. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has a media lab project that's aptly nicknamed "bar of soap." Despite the device's resemblance to a hygiene aid, it is in fact a handheld device that MIT is trying to fashion into a universal device: It changes function depending on how it is being held by the user. If you hold it up to your eye, for example, it assumes that you are trying to take a picture, and all the features and functions and interaction changes to what one would expect of a camera. But, if you hold it up to your ear, that same device assumes you're trying to make a phone call, so it changes its functionality to that of a phone.

Contextual rendering is something that we take very seriously. Our software can be used for so many different things. Once we understand what you are trying to use it for, we can re-render your environment to support that specific function. Each user's toolset can be personalized, whether we're talking about an executive who wants to correlate contact center performance to business results, a conscientious agent who wants to measure their own performance, or a multi-tasking supervisor who needs convenient access to scheduling and customer interaction tools. The workspace truly becomes optimized when the most commonly used and vital applications are also the most accessible, and everything is just a click away.

Calabrio software lets everyone do their jobs better.

Calabrio Software Gives You the Big Picture

The final piece that we focus on is visualization: A picture is worth a thousand words.

As we discussed earlier, contact centers field hundreds of thousands of voice calls a day. When analyzing that data, it's hard to see patterns in it, due to both the sheer volume of data and the fact that it's so unstructured.

Calabrio has addressed this challenge by creating a very visual UI that resizes and restructures itself based on what you're trying to do. We hide data that you're not using, and we present and center the data that you are.

Summary

Contact centers are facing more pressure to perform and add value. And when asked to demonstrate that value, managers must be able to translate contact center activity into practical business-oriented metrics for upper management.

Meanwhile, the social media–savvy Millennial generation comes to work with smartphones and tablets in tow, as impatient for real-time troubleshooting and results as the customer base with which they interact. And they are used to getting those results using software that is flexible, intuitive, and easily customized.

To do their jobs well, both kinds of workers, young and old, require software that is simple to learn and execute. In fact, the only way to meet the needs of executives, agents, and customers alike is to simplify.

We know something our competitors don't: Contact center software doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, use can actually result in a pleasant work experience. Products *can* be personalized to fit the user and the way they want to work. Managers *can* define which metrics mean the most to them at any particular moment. Widgets *aren't* just made for social applications.

We're changing the reputation of contact center software, one desktop at a time.