

Managed CX

Techniques for Managing Your Digital Transformation



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Caught in the “Digital Transformation Trap”?

By now you’ve heard all the memes surrounding your company’s “Digital Transformation”. Pandemic-driven lockdowns have driven the vast majority of your customers online. Once there, they’ve redefined their expectations for what they regard as acceptable, not to mention “delightful” customer service. They routinely surf through your online inventory, ask questions of your chatbots and seek speedy resolution of their burning issues by launching queries on social media and messaging platforms.

Investing in technologies and personnel to bridge the digital divide customers and prospects created is now mandatory. Your assignment is to apply these resources to make your firm digitally savvy, and at the same time: “Customer Centric”, “Omnichannel”, “Conversational” and “Empathetic”.

As you evaluate options, you realize that making the transition requires significant (and once again simultaneous) investments in computing power, software, services and personnel that fundamentally redefine Contact Center and Customer Care Infrastructure by infusing it with elements of “Conversational AI” that include focused on new requirements for Machine Learning, Sentiment Analysis, “Dialog Optimization” and support of asynchronous, multichannel and multimodal conversations with both customers and prospects.

The risks are high. Technology is expensive. There are bidding wars for top talent. Meanwhile the competitive advantage achieved by successful selection and implementation of all these resources is ephemeral. Keeping up with your competition feels like running hard to stay in the same place.

Take a Deep Breath

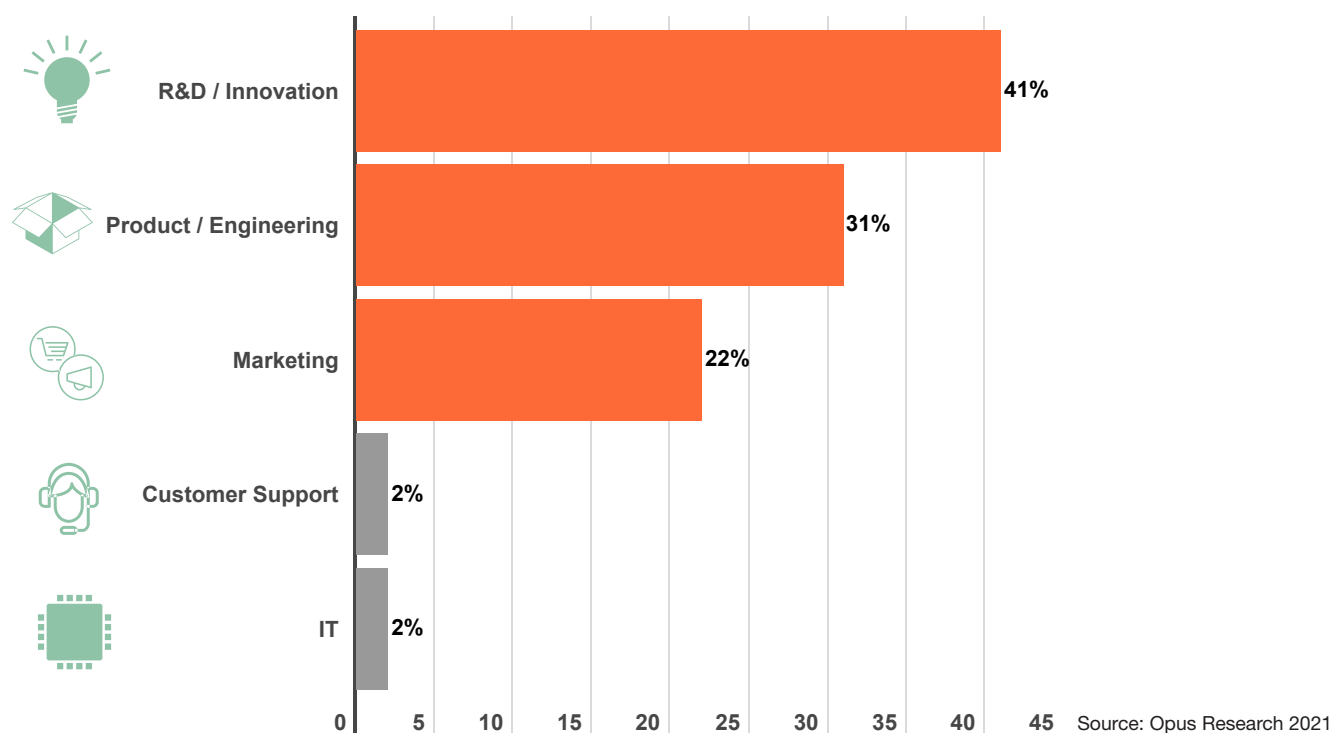
In a recent survey by Opus Research, over two-thirds (69%) of decision-makers indicated that they have plans to step up spending on technologies like voice assistants, chatbots, voicebots and related conversational AI technologies. Yet, as many as half of all respondents indicated that their plans are tempered by concerns about prospective vendors’ ability to fulfill their first order requirements. Specifically:

- **52% wanted assurance that their solution providers have a “fit with their company’s long-term product roadmap”**
- **51% sought a vendor that offers an end-to-end solution: engineering, VUX/VUI, strategy support**

Evergreen concerns like ROI and the ability to differentiate by implementing the latest technologies took a back seat to these first-order selection criteria.

Decision-making problems are compounded by inconsistencies surrounding project management and control. Survey respondents told us that management and decision-making surrounding Conversational AI projects is fragmented and, more importantly, not based in operational areas most concerned with customer experience and satisfaction. (As illustrated in Figure 1 below.)

Figure 1: Who's in Charge of The Budget?



Digital Transformation has forced companies to take a “can-do” attitude toward adding Conversational AI to their customer care infrastructure. At the same time, they are proving to be their own worst enemies as they divide budget and operational responsibilities across a variety of departments, including Innovation, Product Engineering and Marketing before they begin to involve Customer Care or other teams directly involved with customer satisfaction (CSAT), customer retention, increasing sales, and the like.

The largest, most sophisticated and experienced companies have told vendors and potential solutions providers that:

- **We're already doing Conversational AI:** They've launched multiple proof-of-concepts or pilots and don't need “yet another Conversational AI initiative” to manage.
- **We have the brainpower to do it ourselves (DIY):** Reasoning that the company has already invested in top personnel with intimate knowledge of internal systems and processes, why look to third parties to bring Conversational AI?

A large percentage of respondents are looking for a single solution provider, essentially a business partner, that understands their long-range strategy and can rise to the challenges involved with accommodating existing staff, internal wisdom and resources and apply new technologies that match improve both customer experience and employee productivity

The Answer is Managed Customer Experience (Managed CX)

Decision-maker responses from the Opus Research survey make it clear that enterprises need to work with a partner who recognizes and mitigates the challenges that arise as they migrate their customer care (and indeed almost all communications, collaboration, and computing) to the cloud while accommodating the needs of work-from-home and contact center-bound agents. On the flipside of the customer-to-business (C2B) equation, their strategy and infrastructure must enable customers to exercise their prerogatives to reach out from smartphones over digital messaging platforms as well as voice calls.

Checklist #1:

This invites a checklist of solution provider attributes:

- **Single partner approach:** To address all engagement needs: Migration to cloud-based infrastructure + agents, services + Digital Transformation.
- **Unique integrations of Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence (AI +HI):** Exemplified by [24]7.ai's Managed Customer Engagement; its objective is to lead the digitization of each enterprise's customer channels, via AI-powered business messaging and voice automation, and by seamlessly teaming these technologies with expert human agents.
- **Single sign-on / single interface:** For departmental executives throughout enterprises to monitor, analyze and manage customer service needs.
- **One contract:** To enable each company its own strategy and rely on a single partner to own the execution.

Managed services have a decades' long history for customer care and contact center operations. Outsourcing of both live and automated handling of voice-based customer care grew to be a multi-billion industry because of the financial, technical, and tactical advantages they presented to companies in multiple verticals. Those advantages are made more compelling as companies grapple with the uncertainty and vast potential of adding Conversational AI to their customer care mix. Opus Research sees [24]7.ai taking a leadership role in Managed CX.

What's in an Effective Managed CX Offer?

- **No speed bumps to service initiation and onboarding:** For example, it's important for new clients is to just "turn this on". In doing so, they initiate a series of automated business processes starting with automated intent discovery and unsupervised analytics of chat transcripts and call recordings. As a result, in short order, the managed service providers help companies make sense of the mix of contacts they have with customers; assign groups of those contacts into categories based on their intents; and lay the foundation for handling those calls by either automated intelligent assistants or by serving AI-infused suggestions to live agents.

- o Automated intent discovery and analytics can be performed on a one-time basis to get things started quickly. An alternative is to schedule monthly basis intent discovery and analytics sessions to support micro-optimization or fine tuning. In both instances a complete solution will include data scientists with deep domain knowledge of Machine Learning (ML) concepts and “n-classification” algorithms.
- Combines Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence (AI+HI): Until now, companies have been hard-pressed to figure out how to staff up to support Conversational AI. Early adopters, who tended to be large firms with deep pockets for staffing, were able to hire their own computational linguists, dialog designers and ML specialists. A complete solution for a managed service partner is well-staffed with these professionals so that client firms can enlist the aid of subject matter experts with deep knowledge of the factors that lead to resolving customer issues and promoting CSAT.
- Involves subject matter experts (SMEs) who are veterans in customer care: Agents from the contact center or chat platform are the best resources for training and supervising virtual agents. That’s why solution providers like [24]7.ai recommend taking an approach which employs Artificial Intelligence to augment human know-how and intelligence. They call it an “AI+HI approach”. The AI is trained on successful human-to-human communications. Then humans assess the quality of the AI’s responses and recommend best answers and actions. Keep “humans in the loop” is vital to all successful implementations.
- Provides tools for AI Analysts: Even though many companies won’t hire their own AI specialists, a complete offer includes a “bot builder” that lets subject matter experts control how they want to include the computer-generated model without needing to learn programming languages. Taking this managed CX approach enables SMEs to take control of how they want to see a given model.
- Conducts ongoing optimization: Applied to both automated self-service and agent desktops, [24]7.ai, as a managed service provider, monitors systems to make sure visitors are routed to the best channel based on their intent and find new ways to increase automation or augment agent interactions.
- Benefits from deep vertical industry knowledge: Conversations with airlines, insurance companies, utilities, and entertainment specialists follow well-understood patterns that can be captured and analyzed by firms, like [24]7.ai, with more than 20 years of contact center expertise.

Business Advantages of Managed CX

In a time marked by technological, business, and societal uncertainty, Managed CX can be like magic. As you evaluate approaches to maintaining business continuity and high levels of customer satisfaction as you add elements of Conversational AI and cloud-based resources to your service offerings use the checklist below to evaluate alternatives.

Checklist #2

- **Pricing Certainty:** Define the units of measure and costs at the outset and understand what you are paying for.
- **Lower Costs and Higher Customer Satisfaction:** As documented in the case study below, it's possible to bring the most sophisticated Conversational AI algorithms into your service offerings without paying a premium.
- **Minimizing Professional Services:** Automate “omnichannel tweaking” without involving expensive professional services.
- **Take a “Card-based” Approach:** Pursue a development strategy that makes 60% of responses or actions reusable across channels and IVR (voice portal).

Results from the Field

- **Highlights:**
 - Deflect to efficient channels
 - Drive up automation
 - Increase digital channel mix 4x, in 3 years
 - Year 3 automation, 50% increase
 - Total Savings \$32M (33% cost savings)



Managed CX: Simple, Affordable AI+HI

As enterprises across all verticals rise to the challenge of getting new customers, completing more sales, and satisfying existing customers, the idea of “Digital Transformation” (DT) may be far from their minds. Yet we all know that DT is crucial to staying competitive and communicating with customers where they are and when they want. Many will be relieved to find that they can accomplish DT by relying on in-house staff and know-how.

The best solutions rely on existing subject matter experts and give them the tools and assistance to ensure their success. They do so without introducing extra charges and by offering pricing that is simple, predictable, and conducive to the highest reasonable return on investment. In addition, the tools provide visibility into the changes in customer demands and the company’s ability to respond to those new demands. It also creates an ongoing roll for the best customer care agents to help tweak automated responses so that they truly respond to each customer’s needs.

In terms of ongoing support, a solution provider should be considered a partner that brings its own ecosystem by placing all documentation in one place, providing best practices, and introducing enterprises to other members of their community. Ideally, it has its own bot to answer questions and make sure that the ideal mix of tooling, reporting, cloud-based resources, and reusable components are put to best use on behalf of customers and agents.

About Opus Research

Opus Research is a diversified advisory and analysis firm providing critical insight on software and services that support multimodal customer care. Opus Research is focused on “Conversational Commerce,” the merging of intelligent assistant technologies, conversational intelligence, intelligent authentication, enterprise collaboration and digital commerce.

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