

# How to modernise your retail **customer experience** with **AI** and **Voice Insight** tools





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# The state of retail in 2022

**B2C retailers are facing unprecedented market conditions as the industry undergoes a massive transformation. The last 24 months have seen particularly acute business transition caused by the global pandemic, forcing a sudden shift towards more digital operations and socially-distanced working patterns. As a result, the retail industry has seen rapid growth in online activity, especially in the UK.**

Analysis from McKinsey across 2020 and 2021 showed that UK e-commerce growth was **four and a half times faster** than the previous five years and Salesforce e-commerce data showed a **91% YoY GMV growth** in Q4 of 2020. Global surveys suggest that consumers are unlikely to abandon newly established online shopping habits. UK consumers in particular have some of the world's highest conversion rates and lowest cart abandonment rates (at **3.2%** and **70%** respectively), making British buyers among the best in the world for online retailers.

However, the move to online retail is heightening competition, challenging the future success of large brands in online spaces. Driven by value amid more choice and convenience than ever before, customers are seeking retailers with loyalty perks and high-quality service.

Disruptor brands are attracting and retaining customers by offering personalised experiences and reliable assistance. Consequently, surveys show that **75%** of customers are experimenting with new brands more frequently, sampling features and benefits that differentiate the newer players.

Altogether, the shift in consumer appetites is making the future of a product-first approach unsustainable. Moreover, the new focus on experience-driven commerce creates systemic problems for retailers unable to provide them. As many as **80%** of shoppers will abandon a retailer after three bad experiences, with some stopping even sooner. Therefore, given the **growing supply of e-commerce merchants**, there is little room for error.

In this white paper, we will explore the current and future state of retail customer service and discuss why today's customer service practices are ill-equipped for where the industry is heading. We will also examine the future of automation in customer service and showcase the potential of newly available software tools. Specifically, how integrated software and powerful analytics can improve customer satisfaction, increase productivity, decrease staff attrition and enable proactive customer support strategies all in one.

UK e-commerce

**4.5x**

faster growth  
in 2021





# How is the retail customer service evolving?

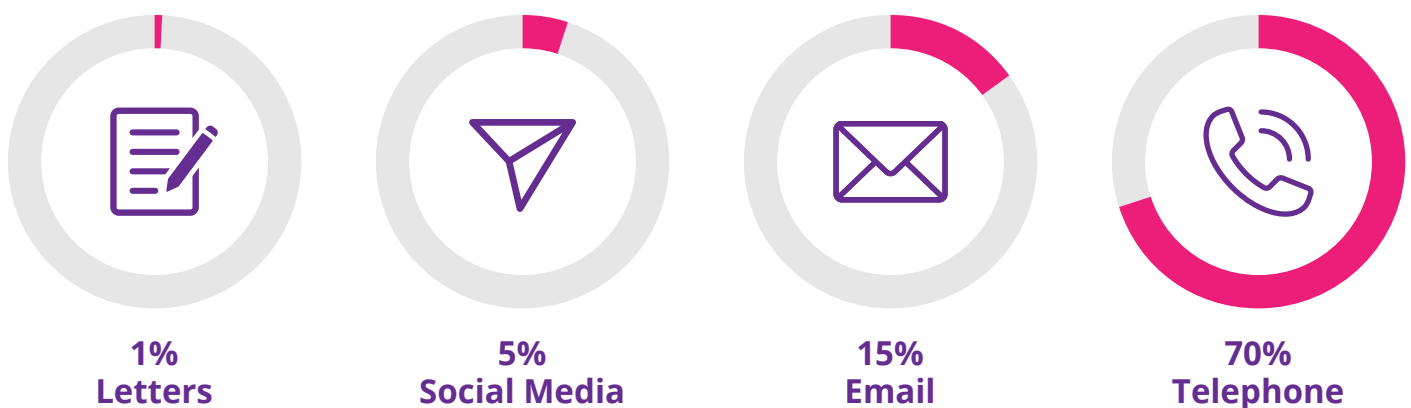
**Customer support has become more fragmented with time as consumers occupy varying technology niches. 2021 research from Contact Babel shows just over 1% of consumers still use letters for correspondence, with email and social media channels holding around 15% and 5% respectively.**

However, telephone support still remains customers' favourite method of communication. The same survey found that over 70% of customer service interactions are conducted via live phone calls, of which only 6.2% are automated using self-service frameworks. Given its accessibility and speed of solution delivery, telephony remains the primary customer service medium for companies.

Surveys show that consumers are unsatisfied with alternatives like static FAQ pages or email and overwhelmingly favour live phone support. Data from the State of Service measured just a 2% dip in firms offering phone support over the last two years while other live mediums, like video calls, saw their uptake grow as much as 42%.

Similar data from Salesforce also shows that customer call times have increased over the last two decades. Since 2004, sale-related call times have increased by around 50% while service-related cases have grown by around 60%. Therefore, as the complexity of cases rises, staff workloads have increased, creating significant challenges for service leaders.

## 2021 Customer preferred methods of communication\*



\*2021 research from Contact Babel.

**Whether it's through a voice call, chatbot or WhatsApp, or via a company's mobile app, website or good old-fashioned email – there's never been as many options for customers to interact with a brand through its customer service teams based in the contact centre.**

But after what can only be described as an explosion in communications channels in recent years, how do brands keep on top of those interactions, often coming at them via any channel (or several), at any given time? And what's more, how can they maintain the provision of consistent, memorable and end-to-end customer experiences in the face of such a tsunami of communication?

Each interaction has the potential to be either detrimental or beneficial to a customer's experience of that brand, one wrong move in one channel or a disconnected, clunky journey from one to another can leave a lasting impression that's difficult to pull back.

Although telephony remains important, brands now need to be able to support customers across every single channel equally.

Contact centre agents, representatives and management are playing an increasingly critical role in helping retailers meet the constantly evolving needs and expectations of their customers no matter the channel.

Tools that have traditionally been used in the contact centre include the likes of workforce optimisation (WFO) and reporting and analytics technologies and solutions. But now, used in isolation, they're simply not up to the job anymore. Retail brands need to be looking to introduce levels of automation to try and reduce the load on their agents, and at the same time use the technology to assist people during the more complicated interactions that will emerge instead.

**Jon Brooks**

Head of Enterprise Sales – Retail



Unfortunately, the demand on contact centres has only intensified in recent years. Over the last 24 months, surveys suggest **87%** of customer service professionals have faced higher or sustained case volumes. Yet, **68%** are working with relatively smaller budgets and **81%** with dwindling staff numbers. With demands on staff time and resources increasing, companies risk losing some of the gains from e-commerce. Moreover, poorly optimised customer service threatens brand loyalties in the long term, meaning brands have to act soon to keep pace with the market.

Businesses need to invest in innovative automation solutions to streamline service workloads and enable greater telephony self-service. Doing so will allow retail firms to maintain their position as market leaders and help withstand the wider changes facing the industry.



**87%** of customer service professionals have faced higher or sustained case volumes



**68%** working with smaller budgets



**81%** working with smaller staff numbers



# How automated tools are aiding productivity

**Software tools are steadily improving overall productivity and customer satisfaction by automating customer service tasks.**

Already, around **two-thirds** of customer service professionals report having systems in place that can automate routine case tasks such as information gathering, feedback prompts, classification and routing. Together, automated systems hasten resolution times by collecting case details and assigning workloads. In particular, tools like Salesforce Service Cloud unify customer interaction data within a single dashboard, aggregate omnichannel enquiries and manage complex data workflows via macros.

Until now, telephony systems have been the hardest to automate. Spoken language is one of the richest data

sources available, making timely analysis incredibly complex and expensive. Real-time voice data is unpredictable, making processing extremely difficult, as speakers can mix tonality, tense and sentence structure to create ambiguities that computers struggle to process.

Thanks to recent advances in language software development, computer accuracy is now greater than ever. Speech recognition metrics have grown slowly since the 1970s, and Salesforce Service Cloud Voice technologies are now 96% accurate. As a result, the latest features from Service Cloud Voice go even further in increasing agent productivity.

## **CRM and Marketing Automation Systems are often considered non-business-critical tools for sales and marketing.**

However, CIOs and CTOs should add them to their agenda, especially when it comes to Retail.

Using the right CRM strategy and tools can add exponential value to the business in the form of enhanced customer experience (CX), while significantly reducing operational and service costs.

Having worked in this space for many years, I've identified four key areas where Retail brands and marketplaces can leverage modern customer relationship management (CRM) and Marketing Automation technologies to drive growth.

### **Enable order transparency and accuracy**

Customers expect more transparency and accuracy when looking at the availability of items or checking the status of their orders. With retailers having multiple systems to manage their operation (e-Commerce, Point-of-Sale, ERP, Warehouse Management and Order Management to name a few), their CRM can become the single source of truth.

What this means in essence, is that they'll be able to integrate, manage and share data in near real-time across the organisation, empowering sales and marketing, branch network, e-Commerce platform, customer service etc. Moreover, they'll be able to connect and safely share information with their channel partners enabling efficiencies across the supply chain.

Ultimately, they'll ensure that their customers enjoy an improved experience by receiving accurate, up-to-date data about products, prices and orders across the different touchpoints of the business.

### **Timely, accurate, personalised communication**

An intuitive Marketing Automation tool, when seamlessly connected to the CRM, can help retailers establish timely, accurate, and personalised communication with their customers at scale.

Most marketing automation tools provide out-of-the box workflow, trigger and journey features so that sales, marketing and customer service teams can be more proactive in their engagement with customers. Communicating at the right time with the right message via the right channel, can enhance transparency and prevent escalations when there is an issue. It can also significantly improve the overall customer experience with the brand, strengthening satisfaction, loyalty and share of wallet.

### **Give customers more delivery and pickup options for their orders**

Creating seamlessly connected ecosystems means that retailers can give customers a wider range of options when it comes to receiving their order faster. Whether it is utilising available in-store stock to fulfil orders, expanding the affiliate network for drop-shipping, or optimising last-mile delivery, sharing order data in real-time backed with intelligent routing based on set rules and criteria, can create significant efficiencies in time, cost and effort, strengthen supply chain ties, and improve customer satisfaction.

Given the current market uncertainty, CRM leaders should work closely with CTOs, COOs and CIOs and align their digital transformation efforts to create seamless customer journeys that are driven by an agile operating model, and a connected, transparent retail supply chain.

### **Nessa Marriott**

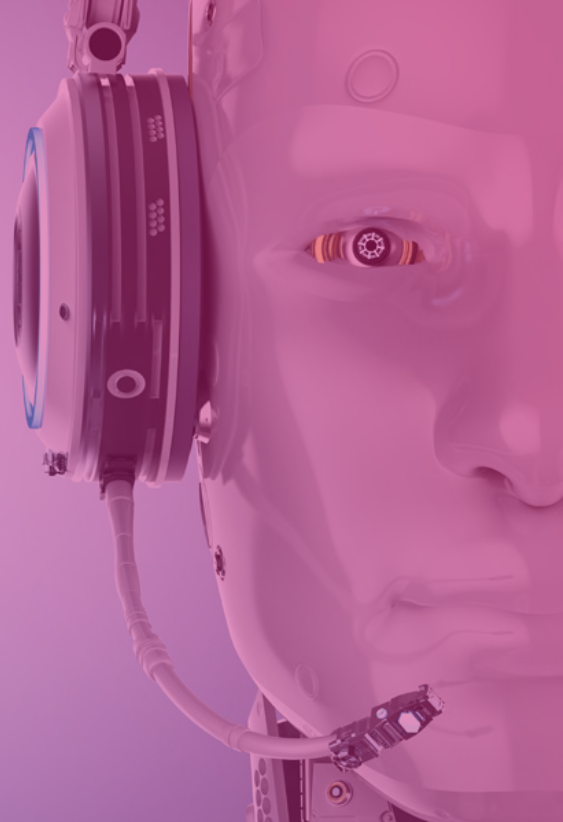
Commercial Lead, Retail & Media



Service Cloud Voice automatically records and transcribes call content, tagging customer cases with relevant topic descriptions and information. Cloud-based AI tools then analyse voice data and provide prompts to agents on helpful next steps and potential resolutions. Agents no longer have to focus on taking notes or finding files as everything they need is available in a single dashboard and in real-time via Einstein and Lightning flows.

Service Cloud also stores analytics data for review and quality assurance purposes, helping to shape the future strategies of call centre resource planning. Service leaders can track call lead times and cases frequencies related to products or contracts, as well as how resource availability changes with peaks in call volumes.

However, existing software features are only scratching the surface of what automation tools are capable of. In the next section, we unveil how we have developed our Service Cloud Accelerator programme and telephony support for retail organisations, and outline how they can revolutionise your customer satisfaction.



# Modernising the retail customer experience with AI tools

**Our aims at expanding your customer service capabilities with Service Cloud and other platforms. The accelerator offers a pre-mapped Service Cloud solution that follows Salesforce best practices, ensuring your new software is optimised for longevity and quick return on investment.**

The implementation template tackles common pain points during software launches, helping you to de-risk change-based projects within your organisation. As a result of our templated approach, we can deliver project launches 60% sooner than normal and with more confidence for key stakeholders.

In recent months, we have tailored our Accelerator programme for retail organisations and developed three tools to address shortfalls within the present-day customer service model. These software tools are aimed at helping contact centres deliver tailored customer support and proactive retention strategies. Combined, they will allow your retail organisation to keep pace with the future of the retail industry and stand as a leader in customer satisfaction.





## 01 Streamlining resolutions with integrated data sources

**Customers frequently overlook FAQs and online dispatch updates. As a result, contact centres are overrun with routine questions concerning delivery dates and logistics, with 'WISMO' and 'WISMR' ('Where is my order/return?') terms emerging to describe such cases.**

Routine cases like these are particularly burdensome for service agents because of their volume and dependence on external courier organisations. Each time a customer calls to raise WISMO cases, service agents are forced to increase case resolution times while they track down order information across delivery partners. Meanwhile, customers face unspecified and ever-growing wait times. According to ContactBabel, customers are now on hold for an average of **106 seconds**, an increase of 563% since 2004.

Our Accelerator for retail contact centres utilises Service Cloud Voice and modified App Exchange tools to create a telephony-based FAQ system. By integrating data from over 100 logistics partners including Parcelforce, DHL, Royal Mail and more, you can automate the data discovery process and collect customer-specific order information more quickly.

The result is a more streamlined process for both parties. When a customer queries an order status, agents can automatically see the last three purchases the customer has made and select the specific one the customer is concerned with. From here, service teams can provide updates and address any subsequent matters that customers mention afterwards.

As a result, resolutions for WISMO case types are faster and more productive, enhancing the customer experience and agent productivity. Given the speed of the data discovery, customers will leave the interaction with a highly positive brand impression and a unique feeling of support, which will invite more investment in your brand at later stages.

# 02 Diffusing customer frustrations via historical analyses

**Our research also highlighted high rates of attrition in contact centres. Reviews by Contact Babel show that UK contact centres have a staff turnover rate of 26% — nearly double the national average of 15%. Recent events are compounding this problem further, creating an even more challenging work environment for staff: 80% of service professionals reported customers are more anxious, 75% were reported to be more demanding and 66% more difficult to satisfy.**

High turnover rates are extremely damaging. Recruitment and training are costly and time-consuming and standards can easily slip between generations of

employees. Yet, service leaders are nonetheless forced to aggressively onboard new agents before workload pressures create a self-perpetuating attrition cycle. It is therefore clear that data-based tools are needed to improve the agent experience and reduce stress levels, staff churn and recruitment overheads.

With this in mind, we have found ways to equip service agents with tools to navigate sensitive customer cases more readily. We have developed software that uses historical interaction data to generate real-time insights into live customer temperaments. Our software model predicts customer temperaments using a variety of historical data sources, including:



## Service performance:

Our model considers what a customer's experience has been by measuring recent order data against your ideal service tolerances. Where a customer has met or surpassed your service tolerance limits, our software alerts staff before they address the case.



## Number of previous calls

Service agents are also briefed if a customer has called in numerous times over a small period of time and on what recent topics they have raised. Doing so helps workers address recurring customer issues and find permanent solutions.

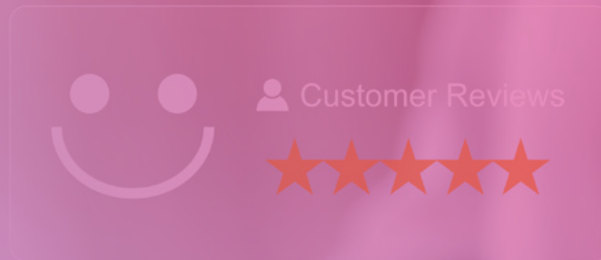


## Previous performance review scores

Service teams also have access to previous reviews that a customer has left, helping them understand what leaves an impression on them positively or negatively.

Collectively, our Service Cloud Voice analysis tools help staff preempt negative customer interactions and reinforce existing positive ones. By providing your staff with historical analytics, they can navigate customer interactions with more confidence and insight. In turn, they can carry out their responsibilities more effectively and sustainably. Crucially, you can escalate customers with recurring or high-priority cases and defuse temperaments at more manageable stages.

As a result, customer interactions no longer feel intimidating, as service professionals can spend more time applying solutions and closing cases, rather than disarming disgruntled customers. Customers also benefit from faster resolution times and more capable staff, improving overall satisfaction and creating mutually-beneficial interactions within your organisation.



## 03 Proactive multi-channel customer outreach

**Along with convenience and choice, review platforms have become another source of consumer power in today's retail market. 53% of consumers say they always research before making a purchase, even reading as many as six reviews before purchasing. The practice is most popular with younger, smartphone-owning demographics, which will only make reviews an increasingly important conversion mechanism in future.**

According to Trustpilot data, unprompted, organic reviews are caused by **emotional customer experiences** (positive or negative). Their data shows that **problems with delivery** are a common factor behind many poor reviews. However, the same analysis found that businesses that replied to their bad reviews were among **the platform's highest-rated**, meaning that customer relationships are salvageable even after negative reviews.

Our Service Cloud Accelerator makes monitoring review platforms easier than ever for eager service teams. We have expanded the multi-channel routing features on Service Cloud, allowing your service team to monitor customer multiple review websites and reach out to displeased customers automatically.

Using our smart routing models, you can address unhappy customers before they give future customers reason to hesitate from purchasing. Instead, our Accelerator offers you the opportunity to recover your reputation and recoup lost repeat business. The same tools can also be used to identify systemic performance issues in staff and begin targeted agent training to alleviate recurring issues.

Moreover, your platform activity is visible to future readers who are conducting research on potential purchases of their own. Your activity can provide reassurance to new customers who are keen to find supportive retailers and attentive after-purchase support.



**53%** of consumers say they always research before making a purchase



## Access pioneering customer support tools using our Accelerator programme

### **The retail landscape is shifting with new customer expectations and market vulnerabilities emerging from online shopping habits.**

With more convenience and choice than ever before, retail companies need to invest in ways to differentiate themselves from competitors and offer additional sources of value to customers — vitally, value that which is beyond their products alone.

Consumers are increasingly seeking personalised and unique experiences that complement the products and services they buy. However, the continued use of telephony creates a significant bottleneck on the ability of large retailers to change their operations. With case volumes rising and customer satisfaction becoming more difficult to achieve, retailers need to invest in scalable solutions to support their service team and customer retention strategy.

Only automated software tools and self-service telephony systems are capable of overcoming the data processing needed to support real-time insights and proactive customer service strategies. makepositive's Accelerator is a fast-track Salesforce implementation service, tailored to the needs of retail businesses and their customers.

We offer a flexible template of customer support tools that follow Salesforce best practices, allowing you to hasten your digital transformation and keep pace with the changing face of retail in the UK. Our team of experts can help you establish core Service Cloud functionality to fully-automated workflows and AI-derived insights across a range of customer interaction channels.

Get in touch with us at [info@makepositive.com](mailto:info@makepositive.com) and learn where Service Cloud and other Salesforce solutions can take your business today.

## About makepositive

makepositive (part of Sabio Group), is a dedicated, multi award-winning (Platinum) Salesforce consulting partner since 2008. The company brings deep industry expertise and extended experience from over 1800 successful Salesforce projects, to help leaders in Retail accelerate time-to-value and future-proof their investment in Salesforce.

### Let's discuss:

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