

How to Unleash the True Value of Your Contact Center Operations

A CLARABRIDGE WHITEPAPER

Executive Summary

Contact center agents interact with customers day in and day out to resolve issues. What you may not realize is that customer support isn't just a necessary cost. There's gold in those encounters—if you know how to mine it.

Think about this. Today's customers increasingly choose companies based on the experience they provide rather than simply their products or services. But how do you know what's truly important to your customers?

Analysis of the discussions between customers and contact center agents delivers Voice of the Customer insights that illuminate the challenges your customers face and highlight how you can make their experience better.

This whitepaper describes how speech analytics solutions that combine speech-to-text with natural language understanding (NLU) can extract a wealth of information from every single interaction with customers. Using these solutions, you can readily pinpoint and address issues with agent behaviors, products, and processes to enhance the customer experience, increase loyalty, and reduce costs by minimizing operational inefficiencies.

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From Cost Center to Value Generator

Today, the most customer-focused companies are rethinking the role of their contact centers. Customer experience is now a critical differentiator for most companies. A recent Salesforce survey found that 80 percent of customers say the experience a company provides is as important as its products and services. At the same time, 51 percent of customers say most companies fall short of expectations. Because the contact center is often the first place many customers turn to when they have an issue with a product or service, improving the contact center experience will go a long way toward advancing the overall customer experience and creating loyal customers.

How does your company meet expectations for the experience its contact center provides?

Knowledgeable agents personalize interactions. Customers want to interact with empathetic agents who deliver relevant help that resolves their specific issue effectively.

Resolution is fast. Customers are looking for minimal hold times during calls and for calls to be quickly forwarded to the agents who can handle them best.

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 **80%** of customers say the experience a company provides is as important as its products and services.

 **51%** percent of customers say most companies fall short of expectations.

Omnichannel integration is seamless.

Customers expect to interact with brands across channels such as phone calls, email, website, chat, online forums, and social media as well as in person. They expect the interactions to be seamless, yet a recent HubSpot survey² states that even though 71 percent of customers desire a consistent experience across channels, such interactions are a reality for only 29 percent.

In addition to providing a positive experience, contact centers also have the potential to elevate customer experience across an organization. The contact center can serve as a key listening post at which you can tune into the Voice of the Customer and derive insights from it. For example, your contact center gleans comments about your products and services every day, and your product development team can use these insights to improve your products and services.

1. https://c1.fdstatic.com/content/dam/web/en_us/www/documents/e-books/state-of-the-connected-customer-report-second-edition2018.pdf

2. <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2771217/Content/2018%20Customer%20Service%20Expectations%20Cladly.pdf>

The Need to Pinpoint Problems Quickly

Naturally, your company can't fix problems it doesn't know it has. To improve customer experience and reduce costs, you must be able to quickly pinpoint any issues or inefficiencies due to people, processes or products. Identifying these issues requires contact centers to be able to answer the following:

Which agents are struggling with which issues? Agents who answer the phone without the right knowledge, experience or training can frustrate customers or cause costly compliance infractions. It's important to know that Agent X is struggling with billing questions while Agent Y is unable to effectively handle people calling in for a refund and Agent Z isn't sticking to the legal disclosures script.

Which problems are people calling about? To fix problems, organizations need specific, granular information about why people are calling. For example, even if a company knows it's getting 100,000 calls a year about billing, this isn't enough information to create an action plan. It is important to go at least two or three levels deeper to get to the root cause. For example, knowing that customers are having trouble with autopay setup allows a company to directly address the problem.

How can they make processes more efficient? Process holdups such as inefficient call routing or long wait times can negatively impact the customer experience. To improve efficiency and reduce call volume, companies should make sure that essential self-service features such as paying bills, viewing policy docs, or changing account information are straightforward and easy to use. In order to make sure you're focused on the issues that will reduce call volume, one must understand which topics are driving the highest volume of calls.

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It's also important to understand which issues people are contacting your company about on which channel. The issues customers call about on the phone can be different than those for which they use chat, email or social media to communicate. Companies need a holistic understanding of all the channels through which customers contact them in order to determine which issues must be addressed.

Existing Solutions Lack Granularity

Companies today use several methods to collect and analyze the information necessary to answer these questions. These techniques include manual sampling, manual post-call coding, and phonetic speech analytics solutions. Each of these solutions has limitations that make the information it gathers insufficient to answer the questions necessary to improve service and deliver a great customer experience.

Manual Sampling

Many contact centers evaluate agents and determine issues that need to be addressed by listening to a sampling of calls and extrapolating their findings. Not only is this manual process time consuming, but it can also be inaccurate because samples can be outliers and therefore not representative of the calls as a whole.

Manual Post-Call Coding

Companies might require agents to code each call. For example, if the customer calls about a problem with autopay, the agent would code the case as a billing issue. But coding is neither accurate nor granular. Some agents are more careful than others about choosing a code. “Miscellaneous” is typically the largest category because no one code can fully capture the intricacies of customers’ calls.

Phonetic Speech Analytics

Phonetic speech analytics solutions record all contact center calls to evaluate information from them. After recording the calls, these solutions index all input speech, which allows one to search the audio tape for keywords. These searches provide a much more comprehensive and granular view into what’s happening in the call center than manual sampling or surveys.

It's important to note that traditional phonetic speech analytics solutions also have a number of disadvantages. Phonetic solutions evaluate audio patterns, which can be a very complex process. Understanding these patterns requires that you train these solutions to recognize all the different accents, dialects, and ways people have of saying the same thing without inaccuracies or false positives. It can take months or years to come up with accurate queries using these solutions.

Additionally, while you can program these systems to look for particular words or phrases, these tools can’t automatically discover emerging trends, nor can they surface nuances of sophisticated effort and emotion. Moreover, because these solutions recognize only voice, not text, they don't provide a holistic understanding of what’s going on across all channels in the contact center.

The Answer? Speech-to-Text with NLU

The comprehensive, granular insights you need to deliver the best customer experience only come from analyzing every interaction between your contact center and your customers across every channel. Accomplishing that objective requires a speech analytics solution that combines a speech-to-text engine with best-in-class NLU. This solution should include the following capabilities:

Speech-to-text engine

Speech-to-text engines accurately transcribe every recorded call from your contact center and systematically index the words and phrases. Then, the Clarabridge platform adds metadata and applies NLU to identify nuanced insights throughout each conversation.

Omnichannel Analysis

Ninety five percent of data sources are text-based. A solution that can analyze both can analyze calls in addition to chat, email, social media and other text-based data sources gives you a more holistic view of your customers' challenges and demands. Look for a solution that provides a unified, granular taxonomy or single version of the truth to measure feedback from all your channels and languages.

Natural Language Understanding

The solution should also apply natural language understanding (NLU) to the transcriptions from call recordings. NLU uses machine learning to achieve human-like comprehension of texts. Words, phrases, sentences, and passages are fed into machine learning engines where they're processed based on grammatical rules, people's real-life linguistic habits or both. NLU enables more granular levels of categorization, co-occurrence, and sentiment analysis as described in the following sections.

Multiple Levels of Categorization

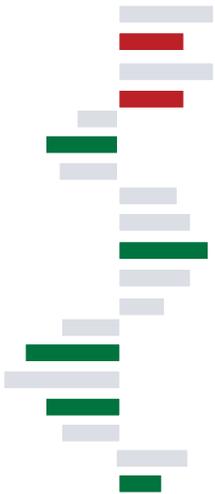
If you want to analyze issues with a high degree of granularity, you need a solution that provides multiple, hierarchical levels of categorization. The most comprehensive solutions will provide multiple levels of categorization rather than only one or two.

Co-Occurrence

An interaction is never about just one thing. To get the big picture, you need to understand all related topics that customers talk about when they discuss a particular topic. For example, what does an agent do when a customer calls about login issues? How often does the agent reset the password or ask the customer to use another browser? Alternatively, the solution could overlay customer demographics on top of topics.

Adding Metadata to Customer Conversations

A hybrid approach of rules-based and machine learning identifies granular insights in the following phone interaction



Customer | 10:30 AM
 I just got my **Donna Karan** order delivered but the heels of the left shoe came **cracked**. The packaging on the box was also **messed up**. I would like to return these shoes and get a refund. Its been **impossible** to figure out how to return the shoes.

Brand: Donna Karan Topic: Returns Topic: Refund Emotion: Frustrated

Agent | 10:32 AM
 Good morning, **Stacy**! I'm **sorry** to hear that this happened and am **happy** to assist you with the return. Would you mind sharing your order number?

Intent: Greeting Person: Stacy Topic: Returns Action: Assisted

Customer | 10:35 AM
 My order number is #577-8320612. I would now like to actually pick up the new pair of shoes in person. I really **love** this shoe and would **love** to buy it I saw its available in the **Saks 5th Avenue** store but the price is higher. I would like the online price to be honored in the store. **Can you please help me?**

Company: Saks 5th Avenue Topic: Price Intent: Cry for Help

Agent | 10:36 AM
 No problem! We are **thrilled** that you **love** the shoe and can **easily** help facilitate an exchange. Our stores offer a price match guarantee, so this can be completed at no additional cost to you. We would be **happy** to honor 10% off for our mishap in shipping. Please use code: DKSAVE10

Action: Resolved Topic: Price Match

Customer | 10:38 AM
 Thank you for making this process **so easy**. As usual, you have provided **great** service.

Action: Thanked

The Clarabridge Sentiment Scale



- 1** The packaging on the box was also **messed up**
- +1** I really **love** this shoe
- +2** provided **great** service

The Clarabridge Effort Scale



- 2** It's been **impossible** to figure out how to return the shoe
- + 2** Thank you for making this process **so easy**

Emotion, Sentiment and Effort

NLU allows you to make deeper connections with customers by detecting customer emotion, sentiment and effort. Emotion detection shows you how customers feel about their engagement with you. Sentiment tells you the positivity or negativity expressed in the text. Effort is how much work customers put forth when interacting with your company. Negative effort scores derived from customers' failed attempts at self-service can contribute to increased call center volume and costly escalations. Digging into interactions with negative effort score helps uncover the pain points that cause escalation, thereby highlighting the pain points a company

should address to reduce these high effort experiences. Focusing on remedying these points of friction can reduce costly escalations from digital channels.

Analytics Take You to Action

No company has time to fix every issue. You need to prioritize. Your analytics solution shouldn't make extra work for you by forcing you to dig for actionable activities and then switch to a separate application to quantify impact. A solution that quantifies the costs of issues (such as extra handle times, repeat calls, excessive silence, transfers, and short calls), shows the ROI that you can achieve from addressing each issue, thereby helping you prioritize your issue remediation efforts.

Making the Business Case for Speech Analytics

The following table demonstrates the types of ROI calculations your company can make after implementing a speech-to-text solution with NLU.

Putting Analytics to Work: ROI Framework

(Impact figures in this table are based off of 1 MM calls annually, at AHT of 6 mins, at Cost of Contact = \$7.5)

Impact Category	Description	Calculation	Annual Impact
Churn Reduction	Reduce Customer Churn by improving customer satisfaction and monitoring retention/cancellation interactions	Increase retention rate by 0.25% (save 2500 extra customers) at customer acquisition cost of \$200/customer	+ \$500,000
Cost Reduction	Improve First Call Resolution by reducing number of repeat calls per topic	Eliminate 10% of repeat calls at 20% Repeat Call Rate	+ \$300,000
Cost Reduction	Improve Agent Efficiency by reducing handle times (AHT) of each call	Reduce AHT of 30% of calls by 10% (36 seconds)	+ \$375,000
Cost Reduction	Improve Quality Assurance Efficiency by increasing Coach to Agent ratio	Reduce QA FTE count by 40% for QA team of 5=2 FTE savings at 50,000 annual	+ \$100,000

Putting Your Analytics to Work

A best-in-class speech-to-text solution that leverages NLU provides an in-depth understanding of issues your customers have with your products, services and processes. By translating these analytics insights into action, you can improve customer experience with your contact center, bolster customer loyalty, and reduce costs.

Improve Customer Experience Metrics

Customer service is a critical element of your company's overall customer experience. Ensuring that your agents are well-trained and knowledgeable is key to success. That's why every contact center has coaching and training teams dedicated to improving agent quality. A speech-to-text solution that uses NLU offers a number of capabilities that make it easier for supervisors to pinpoint agents and situations that can use improvement so they can train them more effectively.

NLU speech analytics allow supervisors to analyze 100 percent of the data from both text-based and phone interactions. For example, supervisors can see a transcript of a call and customer feedback from a post-call survey on the same screen to gain a more comprehensive understanding of agent performance.

Because these solutions allow supervisors to overlay customer sentiment, effort, and emotion on top of text, they're able to highlight the point at which a customer felt "peak" emotion, making it easier for supervisors to find teachable moments.

Supervisors can even create weighted scorecards based on business rules to evaluate and provide feedback to agents. These scorecards can measure a range of soft skills (empathy, proactiveness, professionalism) and call handling skills (hold management, transfer management, escalation management). It can also weight instances when agents display these behaviors based on which responses result in better customer outcomes, and then send evaluations to agents on a regular basis. Supervisors can even compare the best performing agents with ones that need more support to further determine areas for coaching.

As a result, supervisors can continually refine agent responses to provide faster, more knowledgeable service.

Bolster Customer Loyalty

Because even one percent churn from poor customer experience can mean millions in lost revenue, your company needs to nurture customer loyalty. An NLU-based speech analytics solution can help you

identify and reduce areas of high effort and poor sentiment across your company. Customer interaction information can also help you determine the most appropriate action with which to reach out to customers to elicit delight.

For example, a media television company might want to identify drivers for customer purchasing decisions and pinpoint popular content. An NLU-based speech analytics solution makes it easy to analyze customer content preferences and compare customer conversations with their actual behavior to inform content development strategies that resonate with the target audience.

A health insurance company might want the solution to identify customer expectations for all interactions with the company across all channels throughout the customer journey as well as opportunities for improvement to address those requirements. As a result, the company can improve customer loyalty while reducing the number of calls to the contact center.

A bank might want to devise a thoughtful social media strategy with regards to what questions and mentions it should respond to. Tagging and sentiment analysis functions can enable the bank to filter mentions by type, establish escalation and reporting procedures, and determine sentiment.

Reduce Costs by Minimizing Operational Inefficiencies

Inefficiencies can be caused by process or product limitations or by a lack of agent support or training. To address these, NLU-based speech analytics can categorize areas to help you understand which issues are driving inefficiencies in your operations. Here are several examples:

- Considerable “dead air” or silence in calls usually indicates that the agent has put the customer on hold and is looking up the answer in internal systems. Understanding the reason for the silence helps identify areas where access to information and agent training are needed.
- Analyzing short duration calls that typically focus on a single transaction can help you discover good candidates for website self-service optimizations or deflection to cheaper channels like chat and chatbots.
- Topics that are often not resolved on the first call and cause customers to call a second time within 5-8 days indicate a need for training or process improvements.

A solution that quantifies the cost of these contact center inefficiencies enables you to prioritize projects to reduce costs.

Mine Golden Insights to Improve Customer Experience

Customer interactions contain all manner of priceless information about how customers feel about your products and services and where they're having issues. Tools such as NLU-based speech analytics will improve your ability to mine all of these conversations for golden nuggets of feedback that uncover problems and enable you to make improvements across your company. With this feedback, you

can train agents to better serve your customers, learn how customers use your products and services so you can come up with improvements that will delight them, and fix customer service and business process inefficiencies to lower costs. Learn how an NLU-based speech analytics solution like Clarabridge can benefit your business.

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Actionable Insights from Every Customer Interaction, in One Platform

About Clarabridge

Clarabridge helps the world's leading brands take a data-driven, customer-focused approach to everything they do. Using AI-powered text and speech analytics, the Clarabridge experience management platform enables brands to extract actionable insights from every customer interaction in order to grow sales, ensure compliance and increase operational efficiency.

Why Clarabridge

Clarabridge is world-class analytics platform with beautiful, interactive and easily customizable dashboards that can be tailored for every role in the organization, advanced predictive algorithms and sophisticated case management workflows.

Clarabridge is a patented, best-in-class Natural Language Understanding (NLU) platform specifically designed

for Customer Experience Analytics that combines the latest AI and machine learning technologies and offers accurate and nuanced topic, emotions, effort and intent detection.

Clarabridge was named a Leader in Customer Feedback Management Platforms and Text Analytics, as well as a Strong Performer in Speech Analytics by Forrester Research.

Visit www.clarabridge.com/demo
or call 1.866.761.5661 to see it in action.