

TAMING THE WILD WEST: RADICALLY IMPROVING CONTACT CENTERS WITH MASS PERSONALIZATION

By Mary Bartels, Director of Contact Center Solutions, Varolii

At times, today's contact centers can seem a lot like the old Wild West: chaotic, fast-paced, and turning a blind eye to the rules governing what people do on a daily basis. While contact center managers aren't dealing with gunslingers in a life-or-death situation, there is something to be said for taking a step back and considering better ways to deal with the ever-present challenges.

As a call center consultant, I have spent my career providing advice to some of the world's leading companies on how to run an efficient call center. Some of the companies I've worked at or consulted for include Medco, FTD, CapitalOne, and Aflac. So when Varolii asked me to join their team and serve as a "been-there, done-that" resource for improving contact centers, I jumped at the chance. Why? Because frankly, I was absolutely intrigued with the company's technology and could immediately imagine the slew of improvements this technology offers contact centers.

As I'm sure you know, Varolii technology often touches many areas of your business, including customer service, collections and marketing. All of these areas rely on each other and share the same goal: to improve revenue while building and maintaining strong relationships with customers.

It's the same with your contact center. When it comes to how you interact with your customers – whether for sales, marketing, service or collections – your contact center is the backbone of your operations.

As a result, contact centers are going through a massive shift from operational metrics to customer experience measurement. While they've traditionally focused on key performance indicators such as average handle time, number of calls handled, customer call backs, and telephone metrics, contact centers are now tasked with deploying customer experience strategies across multiple communication channels and adhering to more customer-focused metrics such as first call resolution, transfers to experts, multichannel metrics, and corrective action taken on information gathered.

So what does this mean for people like you – the ones asked to solve the big problems? To put it succinctly, you have new challenges:

1. **It's a lot harder to reach customers** – tried-and-true contact methods are losing impact and are becoming less effective.
2. **Contact center agents are still the number one expense in call centers.** But they have a larger workload and aren't always able to get through their list of calls every day, which means customers aren't always taken care of.
3. **Providing a quality customer experience is nearly impossible.** The clutter of disjointed communications across multiple channels only serves to inflame customers rather than make them happy.
4. **There's a huge generation gap in how people of different ages communicate.** Generation Y'ers and Z'ers have an inseparable connection to technology, and this will change the way business is conducted over the next three to five years.

So what are some ways you can meet these challenges? Luckily, you've partnered with a company that continues to build tools to help your call center out.

For example, we help companies contact hard-to-reach customers through timely delivery of important information. You can use Varolii as an alternate or even as an enhancement to your call center operations. The point is, you have a variety of tools in your arsenal to achieve the best possible customer communication experience.

But maybe cost is your primary concern. Varolii can help offset the expense of call center agents through self service, in which customers receive personalized voice alerts with options to take immediate action. We can provide two-way messaging for simple conversations. Your customers can actually text their response, eliminating the need for agent interactions. We also offer intelligent cross-channel communications – self-service options – such as signing up for an offer or an appointment without speaking to anyone. Which means your highly valuable agents can spend more time on the more complex customer issues.

And lastly, we help enhance a quality customer experience through consumer contact strategies that address each customer's contact preferences, whether via mobile, home phone, direct mail, email, and SMS. More and more, technology-savvy customers are expecting the companies they do business with to know their preferences and to honor them.

With Varolii, you can avoid bombarding customer with multiple messages by adapting to your customers' behavior - for example, if your customer responds to the first voice attempt, he won't receive any more messages. Or if she doesn't answer the phone, perhaps she'll receive a text message – whatever it takes to make sure your message gets through, customers appreciate the information and take the appropriate action. In this month's Outreach, you'll learn specifics about how Varolii is helping call centers reduce the chaos and reach more customers with fewer messages, all while minimizing costs. If you, or your company's call center department have any questions, I'm happy to sit down and meet with you – consider me your resource to help solve your contact center challenges. Just ask your Account Manager to help schedule some time.

And stay tuned for more call center trends, challenges, and solutions over the next few months!

Feel free to contact me directly – Mary.Bartels@Varolii.com. Thanks for your time!