How Accenture and Amelia Accelerate Time to Value

for Extraordinary Customer Experiences

AMELIA®

Accenture
Breakthrough Innovation report

~75% *"A majority of companies— nearly 75%— have already integrated AI into their business strategies and have reworked their cloud plans to achieve AI success, whether the goal is accelerating R&D timelines for new products or enhancing customer experiences."*

Source: Accenture

Accenture
End-to-Endless Customer Service report

Companies that commit to service as a value center "drive more than triple the revenue growth of companies managing service as a cost center."

Source: Accenture

Accenture
The future of customer conversation: More than words, more than AI

61% *"61% of leading companies say their customers' expectations are shaped by the most relevant, real-time and dynamic experiences they encounter across all industries."*
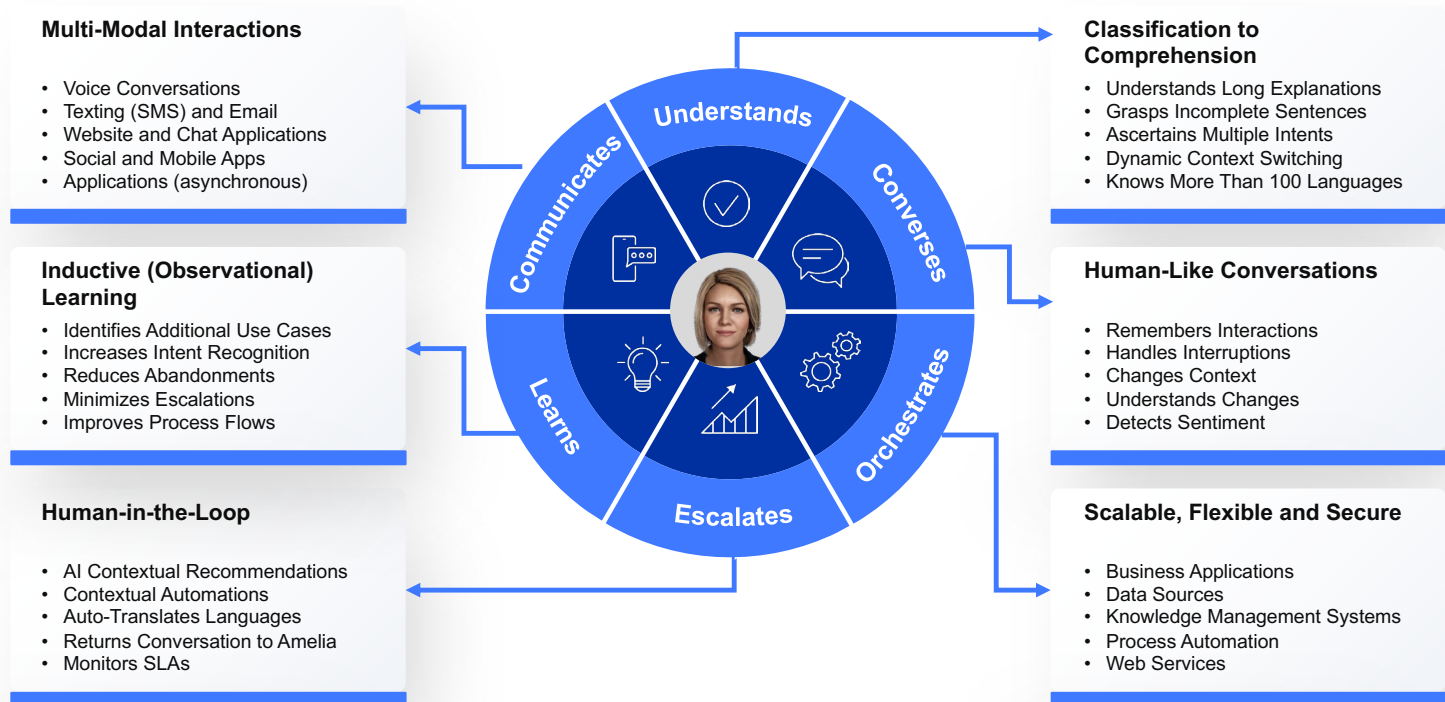
Source: Accenture

With enterprises increasingly utilizing Conversational AI to create Extraordinary Customer Experiences, many are turning to their trusted tech providers and advisors in order to ascertain the best place to begin.

With the number of audiences, stakeholders and systems that would be impacted from a Conversational AI deployment, determining the best approach initially is critical for longer-term success. In some cases, enterprises need guidance on what use cases should be tackled first to have a measurable outcome for Extraordinary CX.

In these cases, relying on established SIs and Conversational AI providers that are working in partnership to provide access to Conversational AI capabilities is the ideal approach. SIs have long-term experience with distributed enterprise systems and building optimal CX in various industries; Conversational AI providers with expertise in various CX use cases have the enterprise-grade technology to deliver higher levels of AI-driven service and support. Together, vendors in these partnerships can fast-track the deployment of Conversational AI solutions for Extraordinary CX and accelerate time to value for enterprises.

How Amelia Creates Extraordinary Customer Experiences

Multi-Modal Interactions

- Voice Conversations
- Texting (SMS) and Email
- Website and Chat Applications
- Social and Mobile Apps
- Applications (asynchronous)

Inductive (Observational) Learning

- Identifies Additional Use Cases
- Increases Intent Recognition
- Reduces Abandonments
- Minimizes Escalations
- Improves Process Flows

Human-in-the-Loop

- AI Contextual Recommendations
- Contextual Automations
- Auto-Translates Languages
- Returns Conversation to Amelia
- Monitors SLAs

Classification to Comprehension

- Understands Long Explanations
- Grasps Incomplete Sentences
- Ascertains Multiple Intents
- Dynamic Context Switching
- Knows More Than 100 Languages

Human-Like Conversations

- Remembers Interactions
- Handles Interruptions
- Changes Context
- Understands Changes
- Detects Sentiment

Scalable, Flexible and Secure

- Business Applications
- Data Sources
- Knowledge Management Systems
- Process Automation
- Web Services

Center wheel: Communicates · Understands · Converses · Orchestrates · Escalates · Learns

Source: Amelia

The partnership between Accenture, the leading global SI, and Amelia, a Conversational AI market leader, is a prime example of a vendor pairing that is focused on building Extraordinary CX. As part of this alliance, Accenture business analysts will utilize Amelia's natural language compiler to quickly design customer service workflows, in a no-code environment. Once live, the deployed solution utilizes the inductive learning part of Amelia's brain to continually improve the quality of customer experiences.

The Amelia development platform being adopted by Accenture is a level above traditional "low-code" solutions in the market, allowing it to deliver the kind of personalized service that is required for Extraordinary CX. The platform incorporates Amelia's natural language understanding and contextual awareness to build end-to-end use cases by guiding designers and subject matter experts through the creation process. This greatly accelerates time-to-value for creating intelligent virtual agents that can anticipate customer needs, perform complete conversations with end users, and resolve any issues or process transactions in a timely manner.

Amelia's unique dialogue-based design approach allows her to talk/interact with subject matter experts about the tasks and experiences they want to create for specific use cases, and Amelia will automatically build all the needed artifacts and workflows required for specific virtual agents.

Collectively, the platform's capabilities will democratize and accelerate the creation of intelligent virtual agents for clients, allowing subject-matter experts with no prior or extensive knowledge about AI-powered solutions to quickly create and maintain virtual agents in the long-term, while achieving a variety of business goals. The result is that an enterprise will be able to deliver on Extraordinary CX in a quicker manner through this partnership, particularly when compared to an enterprise attempting to create these experiences on their own.

Delivering Extraordinary Customer Experiences Using Conversational AI

Accelerating Time to Value and Unlocking Customer Delight

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Contents

Introduction

As the global economy continues to be buffeted by pandemic- and geopolitical-related events, organizations have been compelled to continually accelerate their own evolution to succeed – much less thrive – in such difficult conditions. If nothing else, these ongoing challenges have highlighted the vital importance of an unwavering factor of business success: the need to deliver an extraordinary customer experience.

Changing customer expectations and evolving technologies have rendered traditional methods of CX delivery insufficient to engage and delight customers and drive customer loyalty. Conversational AI (CAI), which enables hyper-personalization and brings deep understanding and empathy to customer experiences, is an enabler many organizations are exploring to bring their customer experiences to an exceptional level.

In this research, we explore the key themes related to Extraordinary CX (ECX) and the role of CAI technology, including:

- Defining the difference between efficient service and extraordinary customer experience
- Discussing how CAI helps deliver extraordinary customer experience
- Explaining the long-term implications and benefits for organizations that constantly and consistently deliver extraordinary customer experience

Customer experience in today's world

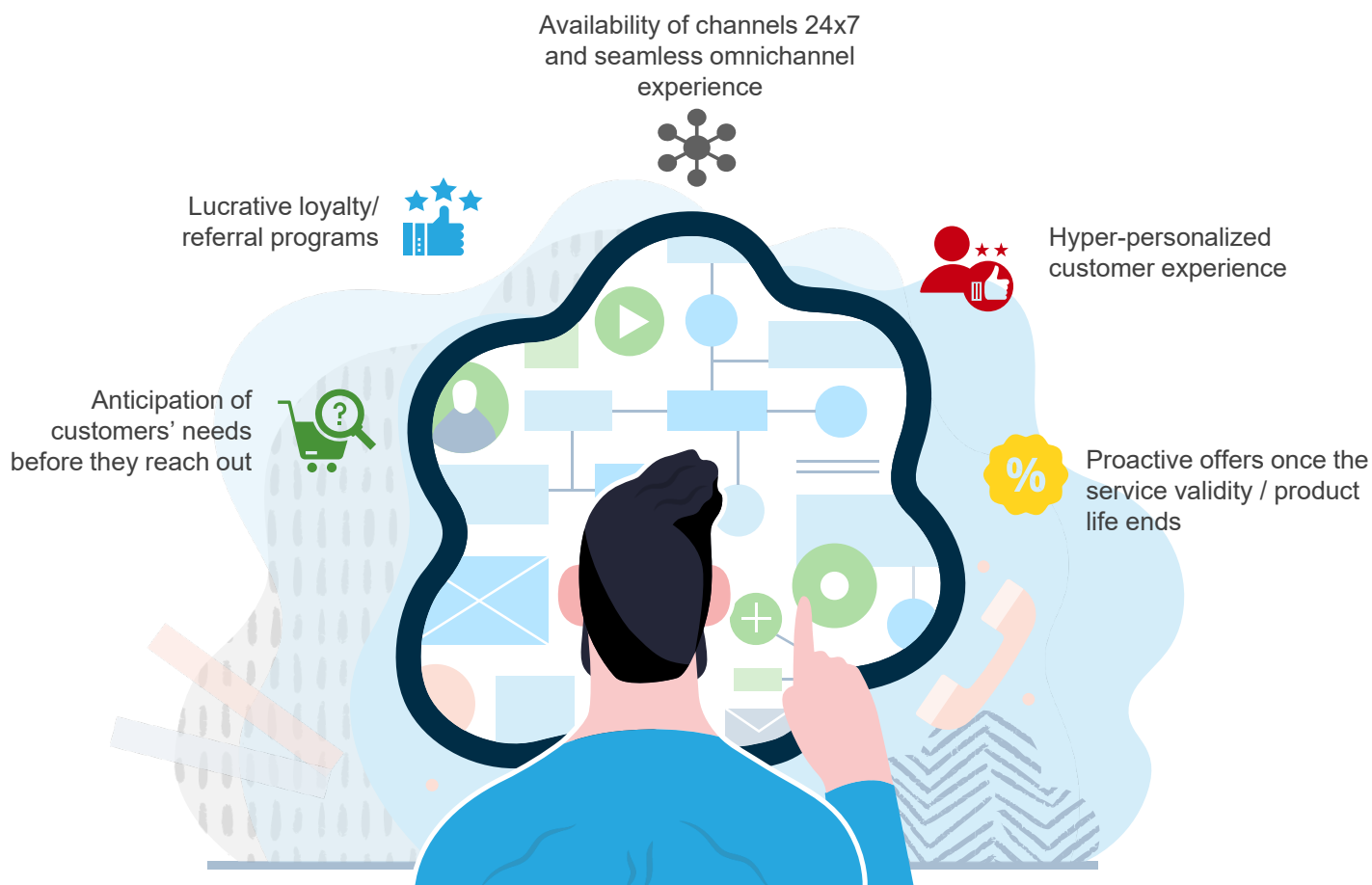## Today's enterprises have two choices: efficient CX or Extraordinary CX

Most enterprises focus their efforts on delivering efficient customer experience, with the primary objectives of reducing resolution time, cutting operational costs, and streamlining processes. To deliver efficient CX, organizations engage various CX technologies and concepts such as Robotic Process / Desktop Automation (RPA/RDA), Artificial Intelligence (AI), analytics, self-service, and an omnichannel approach at different points throughout the customer journey to make CXM operations more efficient, automated, and cost-effective. Some enterprises also seek to drive efficient CX by working agents harder and trying to drive speed through incentives, financial and otherwise.

ECX takes efficient CX to a new level by finding/creating opportunities to maximize impact across the entire customer life cycle and delight a customer in new and unexpected ways. It delivers on key customer delight goals such as enhancing customer retention, building brand advocates, and increasing repeat sales. It feels more personalized, more intimate, and longer-lasting than a simple one-off transaction or resolution. Exhibit 1 shows the key constituents of customer delight.

EXHIBIT 1

Constituents of customer delight

Source: Everest Group (2023)

Availability of channels 24x7 and seamless omnichannel experience

Lucrative loyalty/ referral programs

Hyper-personalized customer experience

Anticipation of customers' needs before they reach out

Proactive offers once the service validity / product life ends

ECX can be defined as next-generation customer experience delivered through a blend of technology and human insight with the primary aim of customer delight. It enables enterprise growth through both customer and employee engagement. Companies delivering ECX empathize with customers, design their strategies around customers, and have customer-centricity as a principle throughout the organization.

ECX is different from efficient CX in that it entails proactive, not reactive, solutions to identify, plan for, and exceed customer needs. Simply reacting to customer concerns/needs is table stakes at this point; providing something extraordinary means that enterprises must anticipate customer needs, inform systems/agents about them before customers submit a request, and fulfill/resolve issues through a powerful blend of human and technology interaction that leaves customers delighted, loyal, and advocating for the brand.

Some customers consider a 20-minute phone conversation to be an extraordinary experience; others prefer quick transactions through bots or self-service. ECX identifies the customer's style even before the customer reaches out for help and applies the best solution. ECX looks at the entire customer journey as one single, connected experience consisting of interdependent, complementary interactions rather than disjointed, modular tasks that need to be addressed. While efforts to pursue ECX can cost more up front, those efforts result in higher efficiency and business impact in the long run. Therefore, over time, the total cost of operations is lower for an enterprise delivering ECX than an enterprise delivering efficient customer service, as Exhibit 2 demonstrates.

EXHIBIT 2

Long-term TCO for ECX and efficient CX

Source: Everest Group (2023)
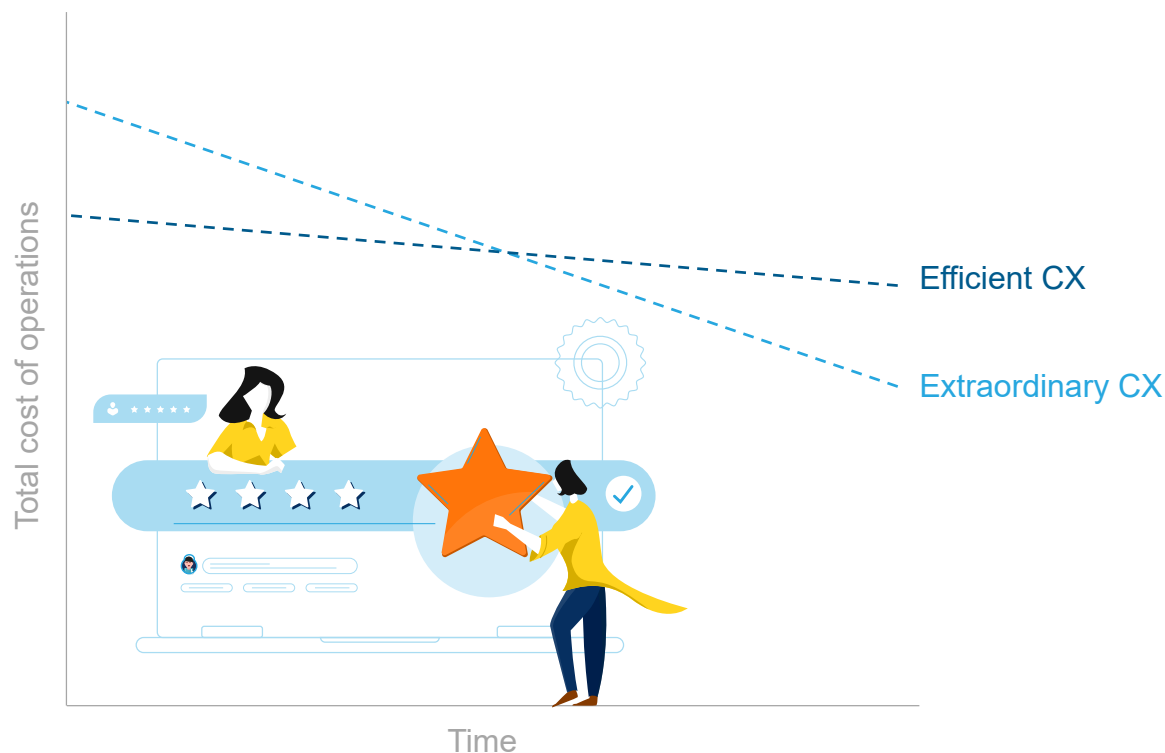
To enable ECX, enterprises are taking a number of measures, including:

- Curating intimate, customized customer experiences through deep customer understanding, and creating personalized journeys with the help of large data sets that talk to each other while maintaining customer data security and privacy
- Delivering a consistent omnichannel ecosystem by proactively tracking customers' activities across channels – website, mobile applications, offline stores, and company social media – and offering customers the option to interact with brands at their convenience and on their preferred channels
- Arming agents with agent-assist tech to listen to interactions and provide agents "known" information to ensure they are aware of customer issues and can offer the best resolution
- Managing and using feedback from customers and employees to continuously improve CX operations
- Changing company culture and mindset to be customer-first through thoughtful hiring, effective knowledge management tools, communication, and value-building sessions
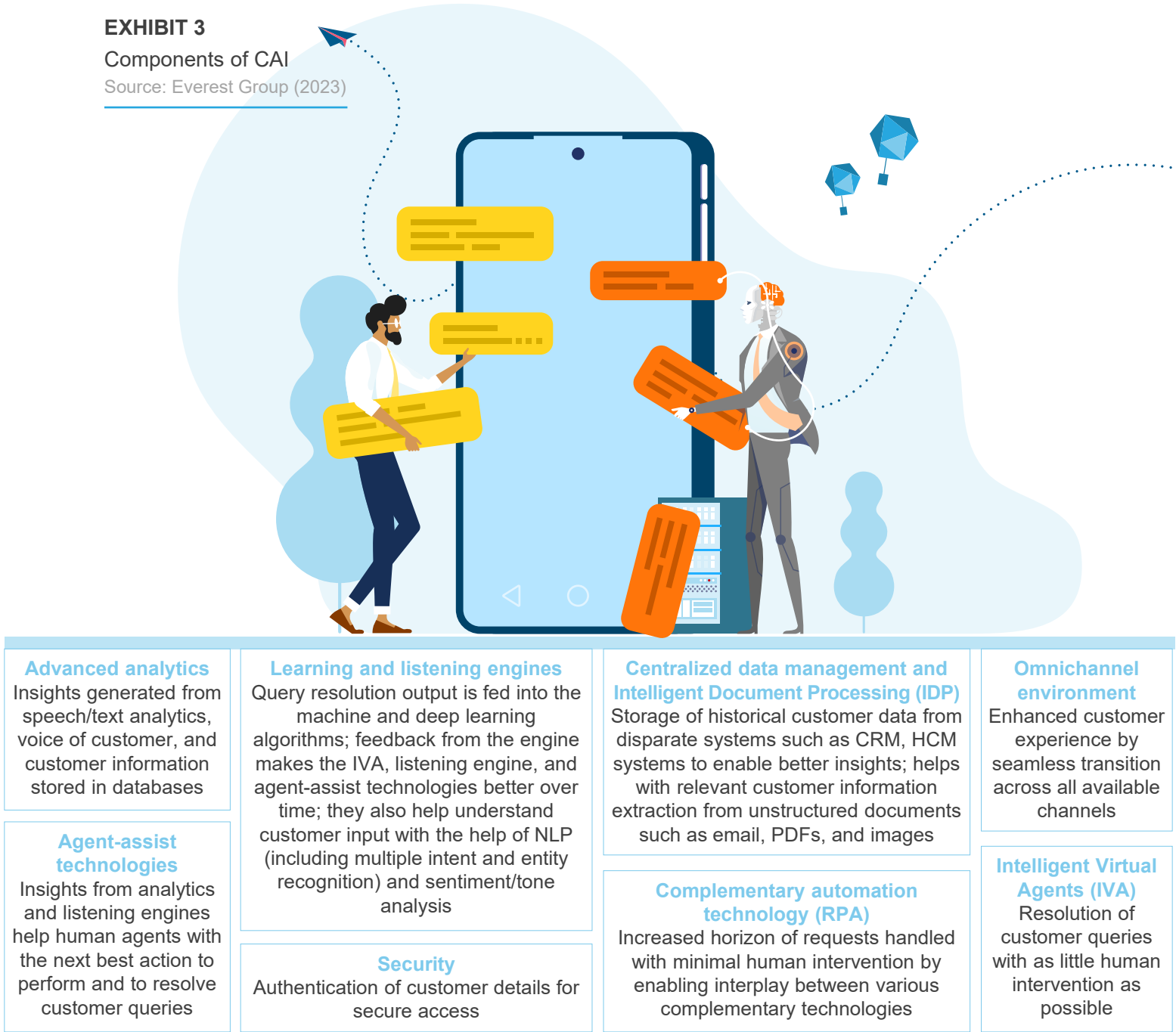
CAI and its role in delivering ECX

In order to deliver an Extraordinary Customer Experience, leading organizations are using AI combined with other technologies to deliver unified, one-to-one experiences across channels, use cases, and business functions, and to optimize metrics such as response and click-through rates, churn, discount percentage, average revenue, and customer lifetime value. AI-enabled technology is essential for enterprises that want to offer ECX.

One specific area that has seen significant growth is CAI. CAI is a digital CX technology suite that enables natural interactions driven by conversational intelligence between humans and computers. It combines the latest advancements in Natural Language Processing (NLP), Natural Language Understanding (NLU), contextual understanding, and ontological and logic models with existing software and solutions such as chatbots, voice assistants, and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) to communicate with customers through either a spoken or typed interface. It offers advanced capabilities such as understanding human dialog, iteratively improving itself from previous conversations and historical data, performing complex tasks, and providing customers with personalized experiences. It can understand contextual nuances, ask for clarifications, and then comb through an extremely large knowledge database in seconds to come up with the best response.

CAI is a complete technology stack, comprising advanced analytics, virtual agents, security solutions, automation, agent-assist tools, and data and knowledge management capabilities along with self-learning capabilities that are built to function in an omnichannel environment. It can replace disparate databases, systems, and solutions from different technology vendors with a single solution. Exhibit 3 describes CAI's components and their role in delivering ECX.

Unlike separate solutions, CAI is able to draw synergies from its underlying solutions to create a deeper impact to improve overall customer experience

EXHIBIT 3

Components of CAI

Source: Everest Group (2023)

Advanced analytics
Insights generated from speech/text analytics, voice of customer, and customer information stored in databases

Agent-assist technologies
Insights from analytics and listening engines help human agents with the next best action to perform and to resolve customer queries

Learning and listening engines
Query resolution output is fed into the machine and deep learning algorithms; feedback from the engine makes the IVA, listening engine, and agent-assist technologies better over time; they also help understand customer input with the help of NLP (including multiple intent and entity recognition) and sentiment/tone analysis

Security
Authentication of customer details for secure access

Centralized data management and Intelligent Document Processing (IDP)
Storage of historical customer data from disparate systems such as CRM, HCM systems to enable better insights; helps with relevant customer information extraction from unstructured documents such as email, PDFs, and images

Complementary automation technology (RPA)
Increased horizon of requests handled with minimal human intervention by enabling interplay between various complementary technologies

Omnichannel environment
Enhanced customer experience by seamless transition across all available channels

Intelligent Virtual Agents (IVA)
Resolution of customer queries with as little human intervention as possible

Because CAI is not scripted or rules-based, it can have human-like conversations with customers, understand human sentiment, emotion, and intent, and also speak in customers' native or preferred languages through advanced translation capabilities. It can provide customer and employee experience insights in real time through stress indicators and Voice-of-the-Customer (VoC) analytics, and identify at-risk, frustrated customers and employees easily, allowing the organization to effectively manage them. CAI can also act as a "concierge" for customers, helping them navigate the customer journey across touchpoints. Exhibit 4 details how organizations can leverage CAI throughout the customer life cycle, from lead generation to after-sales support.

EXHIBIT 4

CAI through the customer life cycle

Source: Everest Group (2023)

1 Awareness

- Targeting marketing campaigns through automated data mining, collection, and real-time processing
- Segmenting leads and creating personas through analysis of past interactions, browsing history, behavioral data, customer preferences

2 Consideration

- Providing information about products/services and recommendations through predictive and prescriptive analytics
- Proactively asking questions, answering simple queries, and directing questions to agents for complex queries
- Capturing customers' positive/negative emotions through stress indicators and sentiment and VoC analytics
- Assessing leads most likely to convert through interaction analytics

3 Purchase

- Promoting and moving customers toward purchase through step-by-step assistance and contextual guidance
- Converting sales through personalized offers at the right time
- Identifying opportunities to cross-/up-sell by analyzing current and past purchases

4 Post-call support

- Capturing feedback
- Providing basic information quickly (product features, return policies, order status)
- Presenting purchase-specific options (return/refund/repair) on the customers' return and proactively sending personalized offers for new purchase by analyzing the customer's purchase history

MIT Technology Review Insights' 2020 survey of 1,004 business leaders titled "The Global AI Agenda" found that customer service (via chatbots) is the most active department for AI deployment today. By 2022, it will still be the leading area of AI use in companies (say 73% of respondents).

ACT to deliver Extraordinary Customer Experience

When trying to deliver an extraordinary customer experience leveraging CAI, it is important for enterprises to follow certain guiding principles that govern and shape all the decisions they make and that teams can use as a guide for future decisions. ACT is such a framework that lays the foundations to deliver ECX using CAI capabilities:

- **Anticipate customers' needs through AI and advanced analytics**
  CAI is making it easier for enterprises to analyze user interaction histories, predict their subsequent needs, and provide them with relevant information or solutions. Using predictive and prescriptive analytics, enterprises can anticipate their customers' needs, and proactively serve them effectively and efficiently, increasing customer satisfaction, and driving customer advocacy

- **Have a complete conversation to ensure you are fully satisfying customers' needs by closing the CAI-and-human loop**
  CAI can take the place of human agents to resolve simple queries and/or collect information and pass it to human agents for resolution, after which it can close the loop by asking for feedback and calculating satisfaction scores. This process ensures a seamless experience for customers, saving them the trouble of providing inputs multiple times, while meeting their needs more efficiently. It can also recommend next best actions to agents by understanding customer interests and suggesting relevant solutions/services

- **Resolve the problem in a timely manner using technology and tools such as agent assist, automation, and self-service**
  Real-time decisioning support can help agents solve problems more quickly. Also, by being truly omnichannel, CAI allows customers to interact with brands at their convenience at a time and in a channel of their choosing

Case study: how Visionworks achieved ECX through CAI

Context

Visionworks is one of the largest eye care service providers in the United States, with 500+ retail locations throughout the country. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, as a customer-facing organization, Visionworks set CX as a top priority. However, given staffing and other challenges, it was struggling to maintain a high level of customer experience given issues around customers reaching stores only to find them closed, waiting for hours to schedule appointments, and trying to contact stores that had shut down due to the pandemic. Visionworks was looking for a digital solution to improve its customer experience, reduce costs, and mitigate staffing challenges. In September 2020 it hired Amelia as its third-party CAI vendor to create the Visionworks Virtual Specialist.

Implementation

Amelia implemented its CAI solution quickly across customer touchpoints such as by phones, in retail stores, and on chat on the Visionworks website. Amelia also set up a Center of Excellence within Visionworks which was a hub for training and collaborative solutioning.

Approach

Visionworks followed a flexible approach with the vendor. Initially, it targeted transactional enquiries that could satisfy customers' information needs. It gradually scaled up to implementing a transformational roadmap and delivering extraordinary customer experience using CAI, which worked to its advantage, as it had good experience from pilot projects before scaling up aggressively.
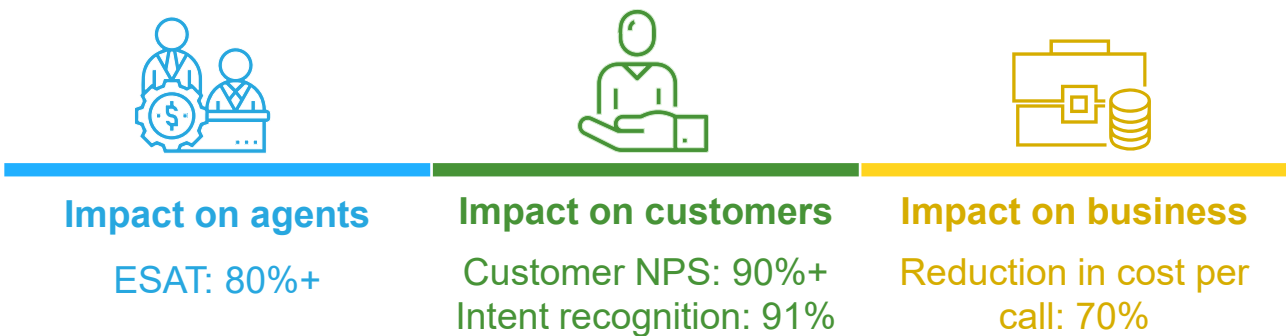
Impact

- **Employee experience:** Survey results showed high employee satisfaction with the solution. There was demand from the centers where the solution wasn't implemented, as there were quick wins and proof points that highlighted the solution's success. Training agents was easy given the solution's simple learning curve, which did not require advanced technical hiring or training

- **Customer experience:** The solution was quickly able to handle 30,000+ incoming calls to Visionworks' 400+ stores daily and freed two full-time employees in each store location from handling repetitive, high-volume questions, enabling them to focus on exceptional in-person customer service. In fact, the appointments booked through the solution had a lower abandonment rate than the those booked through its own website

- **Business:** The RoI was immediate. Visionworks was easily able to leverage tech resources from the CAI vendor's team instead of having to hire technically skilled resources itself, which saved time and money. Eliminating the need for Visionworks to build an in-house call center, the CAI solution efficiently handled incoming calls and scheduled over 2,500 optometrist appointments every day

Exhibit 5 highlights the key impacts.

EXHIBIT 5

Impact of leveraging CAI on Visionworks' agents, customers, and business

Source: Everest Group (2023)

Impact on agents

ESAT: 80%+

Impact on customers

Customer NPS: 90%+
Intent recognition: 91%

Impact on business

Reduction in cost per call: 70%

Outlook

The results were so encouraging that Visionworks planned to deploy the solution across its 725 retail stores by the end of 2022, with the solution expected to handle more than 10 million voice calls and 3-4 million digital chats annually. The scope will expand to include sending reminders to customers and making outbound calls.

Benefits of Extraordinary CX through Conversational AI

ECX delivered through CAI has a positive impact on agents, customers, and the business, as Exhibit 6 details.

EXHIBIT 6

Impact of ECX on agents, customers, and businesses

Source: Everest Group (2023)

Impact on agents	Impact on customers	Impact on businesses
• Empower agents with useful information, actionable insights, and alerts, which better equips them to deal with customer queries	• Eliminate repetition of "known" information, reducing customer frustration and resolution time	• Increase brand advocacy through peer-peer recommendations
• Improve agent satisfaction by eliminating monotonous, repetitive tasks, thereby reducing attrition	• Enable advanced resolution through co-browsing, video chat, and leverage of AR/VR, among other technologies	• Increase customer stickiness and long-term customer loyalty
• Offer real-time feedback and learning to help agents improve and acquire new skills	• Identify customer style and customize the experience accordingly	• Improve customer retention and lower customer churn
• Automate tasks such as post-call recording and real-time transcription to increase agent productivity by reducing much of the manual work required		• Increase customer lifetime value
		• Reduce customer engagement cost due to timely follow-up
		• Reduce the number of escalations given fewer giveaways
		• Reduce attrition costs through happier agents, leading to happier customers
		• Increased business operations security through auto-detection and elimination of security threats

While CAI might not be the only means to achieve ECX, integrating it into the solution has a number of advantages that would be harder to achieve through traditional, labor-intensive approaches, including:

- **The ability to anticipate and proactively resolve customer pain points:** by using the AI capabilities within the solution to capture queues or triggers, enterprises can understand and anticipate future, unarticulated needs. CAI applications can uncover common customer issues and offer insights into what is causing users' problems by observing the broader trends. Using this data to implement CAI at certain customer touchpoints can help businesses personalize real-time customer experiences while also proactively solving customers' issues
- **Enhanced CX KPIs and call routing:** information gathered from CAI can help organizations to identify ideal agent-customer pairings in real time based on past behavior, current agent and customer stress levels, and skill sets, improving customer and agent satisfaction
- **Increased sales:** CAI and real-time data analysis drives rich data and insights, which improve targeting and conversion rates. Virtual agents can analyze user-generated data, classify customers based on customer intent, profiles, and interests, and present hyper-personalized, relevant content and offers at appropriate times, as well as proactively identify cross-sell/up-sell opportunities
- **Improved agent experience:** By arming agents with right tools and information, CAI can help overcome repetitive work for the agents, which can greatly enhance their experience, reducing turnover and associated new-hire and training costs

Obstacles to delivering ECX

While most enterprises want to deliver an extraordinary customer experience, it is often difficult to achieve this goal without reviewing and redesigning their entire customer and employee journeys and undertaking an organization-wide change program that needs to be carefully managed with senior leadership sponsorship. The table below shows the people- and organization-related challenges associated with delivering ECX and offers some mitigation strategies.

Some enterprises have unrealistic expectations from CAI, struggle with budget limitations or perceive CAI to be an expensive proposition

		Challenge	Mitigation strategy
People		**Lack of skilled talent**	Identify the skills needed to succeed in the new system and the gaps in the current workforce. Identify and hire people who have the skill to use the technology or upskill existing resources.
		Internal resistance to change	Develop a change management plan with senior-level sponsorship from the outset. Develop and communicate a business case for change that demonstrates the organizational benefits of deploying the new approach, and describes the benefits for customers, employees, and the company as a whole.
		Privacy and security concerns	Educate customers and employees on the information that is collected, its use, benefits, and their right to stop such collection at any time to enable informed choices and decision-making.
Process		**Division of customer journey ownership among different departments**	Bring together different departments as part of the case for change and show the benefits of an end-to-end customer journey.
		Lack of a clear vision and roadmap	Identify the right use cases, hire resources experienced in creating user experiences in your industry, pilot the program, identify milestones, and plan to scale up.
Technology		**Lack of proven return on investment / need for upfront investment (CapEx)**	Look for similar examples in the market that align with your current objectives/journey and understand what is feasible. Leverage contemporary pricing models such as outcome-based pricing when deploying technologies such as CAI to reduce upfront investment. Partner with a provider that can provide this kind of solution, thereby converting capital expenditure to operational expenses.
		Outdated legacy systems and siloed operations and business models	Unify disparate databases or work with a provider that can integrate them or manage them in parallel until legacy systems can be phased out.

The RoI from a CAI solution can be observed in experiences of other enterprises with similar business challenges, information of which is becoming increasingly available as the use of CAI becomes more mainstream. CAI also provides less tangible benefits such as improved brand reputation and customer advocacy over time which are core benefits of extraordinary customer experience for the enterprises.

Partnership-driven model to deliver ECX through CAI

With enterprises increasingly interested in utilizing CAI to create ECX, many are turning to their trusted tech providers and advisors to figure out where to begin. With the number of audiences, stakeholders, and systems that would be impacted from a CAI deployment, determining the best approach initially is critical for longer-term success. In some cases, enterprises need guidance on what use cases should be tackled first in order to have a measurable outcome for ECX.

In these cases, relying on established System Integrators (SIs) and CAI providers that are working in partnership to provide access to CAI capabilities is an effective strategy. SIs have long-term experience with distributed enterprise systems and building optimal CX in various industries; CAI providers with expertise in various CX use cases have the enterprise-grade technology to deliver higher levels of AI-driven service and support. Together, vendors in these partnerships can fast-track the deployment of CAI solutions for ECX and accelerate time to value for enterprises. The partnership between Accenture and Amelia is an example of a vendor pairing that is focused on building ECX.

Conclusion

While efforts to pursue ECX can create more cost for enterprises, the resulting increase in efficiency and business impact in the long run make it an attractive proposition. Leveraging CAI can help enterprises accelerate their realization of ECX. However, the impact and success of CAI in delivering ECX depends on a number of factors. Enterprises should maintain a fine balance between human touch and technology-based CX through CAI for the best outcome. CAI creates the right environment for human-machine collaboration, which is one of the key elements of ECX.

A focus on delivering ECX is a goal for most enterprises today, but few are able to execute on it successfully. CAI can help organizations take their CX to the next level, equipping them to anticipate and solve customers' problems proactively and hyper-personalize interactions to turn customers into brand advocates. Enterprises that recognize ECX as the most important lever for success will gain a significant advantage in the ever-evolving competitive landscape.

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Learn more at

Amelia.ai

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