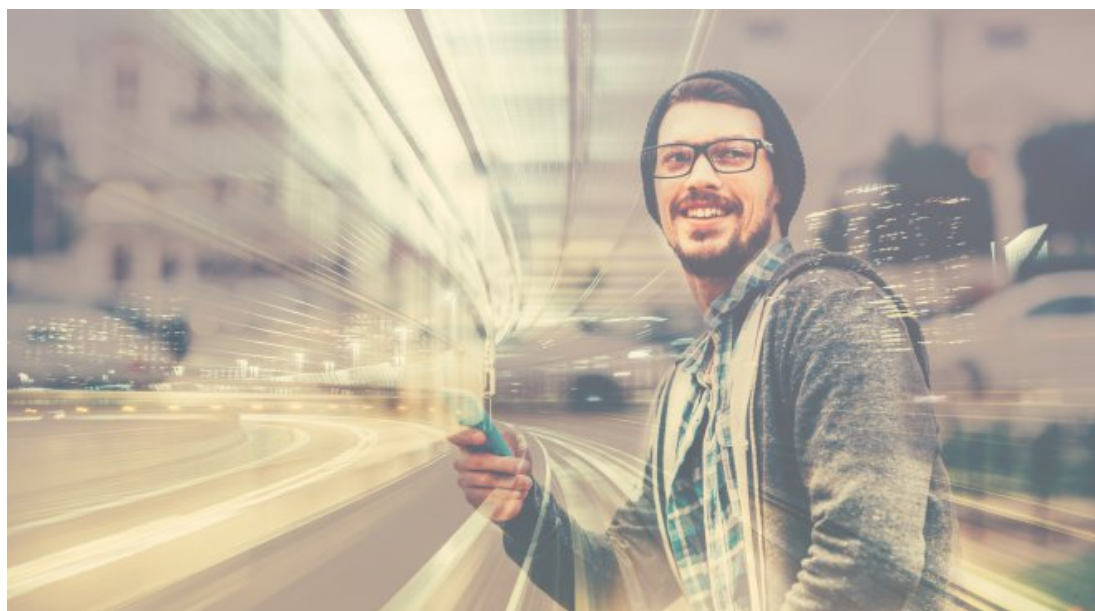


Humans and Automation: How to Deliver Seamless Communications With a Human Touch



By **BECKY LAWLOR** - Contributor

The recent convergence of humans and automation is a tricky business for brands. On one hand, customers expect personal, "human" experiences. On the other hand, the only way for companies to deliver these experiences at scale to millions of customers is by automating their processes.



By connecting humans and automation, companies can meet the demands of today's customers.

Recent Salesforce research reported that a staggering 66% of consumers are willing to switch to a different brand if they feel they've been treated like a number instead of a human. At the same time, 70% of customers indicated that connected processes — such as seamless handoffs or contextualized engagement based on earlier interactions — were very important to winning their business.

Unfortunately, most businesses aren't able to balance providing seamless engagements with a human touch: 51% of customers said most companies fall short of their expectations for great experiences. Here are a few ways brands can ensure they provide a human experience while relying on automation to create seamless interactions.

Be Where Your Customers Are

Today's customers use more channels than ever before to communicate with companies, including SMS, social chat, voice, web, and in-person communication. Salesforce noted that 75% of consumers expect consistency across those channels. With more choices than

ever for how customers can interact with brands, it's imperative for businesses to be available on whatever channel, whenever the customer wants.

Having access to a robust communication API platform can make it easier to gain multichannel capabilities. APIs make it simple to build custom interactions quickly and easily. For example, with just a few lines of code, you can use a chat API for social media platforms like Facebook Messenger to offer customer service help, or an SMS API to message customers about appointments or upcoming promotions. Having the right APIs integrated into your CRM helps you reach customers through the channels they prefer and move from one channel to the next without interruption. It allows for both the seamlessness and the human touch customers demand.



Talk To Customers Their Way

Cloud communications can help you talk to your customers their way. Learn how to adopt a holistic communications strategy.

Move Your Communications to the Cloud

APIs are only as good as their method of service, and a cloud-based communications solution can offer a better, more connected experience for customers. By integrating unified communications as a service (UCaaS) or communications platform as a service (CPaaS) into your existing CRM, you open up a world of connected communications that can enhance the customer experience.

Here are just a few benefits of moving to the cloud:

- **Flexibility.** A cloud solution can adapt to your evolving business needs, allowing you to scale up during the busiest times and down during slower times. This saves you money while allowing you to provide the best customer experience whether your business is in a peak or a valley.
- **Availability.** A cloud solution also allows employees to be more productive and more available to customers. With the ability to access customer information from anywhere at any time, it's possible for your agents to provide real-time service that's based on information from interactions your customer has had with your brand.

- **Accessibility.** A cloud solution provides businesses access to more integrated channels like voice, chat, or SMS.

Innovative, real-time communication tools can move your business much closer to delivering personalized customer experiences, as they balance humans and automation to meet the demands of today's consumers.

Unify Your Communications

Moving to the cloud is a great first step, but unifying your cloud-based applications under one central UCaaS or CPaaS platform is even better. When you combine a cloud-based UCaaS solution with an enterprise-grade contact center solution, the productivity apps your team uses, and a robust API platform, your business will be able to offer a more seamless and connected communications experience to customers.

For instance, with a unified communications platform and APIs, your contact center agents will be able to connect to the productivity tools they use — whether that's Google's G Suite or Microsoft Office 365 — to get work done and communicate with customers across a variety of channels.

Power Customer Interactions With AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is another way to balance seamless customer engagement with human connection. AI speech recognition has advanced to the point where it's as accurate — and sometimes even more accurate — than human recognition. In many cases, the AI-powered voicebot can answer customer questions accurately and faster than an agent.

For example, if a customer is looking for information on how to return an item, a voicebot can give detailed directions without needing to transfer the customer to an agent. Even in cases where the customer's request for help is more nuanced, the voicebot can still improve the customer experience; it can gather initial information instead of putting the customer on hold to wait for an available agent. Then, the voicebot can pass the customer along to the appropriate agent who's already prepared to answer the inquiry. It's the perfect combination of automation and the human touch.

Always Keep It Human

Innovative, real-time communication tools can move your business much closer to delivering personalized customer experiences, as they balance humans and automation to meet the demands of today's consumers. Having the ability to move interactions from self-serve channels to a live conversation remains a key component of providing a personalized customer experience.

Mastering a seamless, connected experience isn't easy. However, with 69% of customers saying in the Salesforce report that a personalized customer experience strengthens their loyalty — it's worth it.