UNLOCKING HIDDEN VALUE IN COMMUNICATIONS: TALK TO CUSTOMERS THEIR WAY

Vonage® Business

TechTarget®

Custom Media
White Paper

INTRODUCTION

How do the world's most successful enterprises communicate with their customers? Every way they can, since every customer has their own communication preferences. By using application programming interfaces (APIs) to connect voice, SMS, email and other communication mediums, savvy organizations let their customers choose how, when and where to communicate with them. Until now, this required lots of programming talent and a deep understanding of communications platform development. Fortunately, that's all changed, and tools that only enterprises could afford are now readily available for businesses of all sizes.

This white paper looks at the evolution of communications platform as a service (CPaaS), a tool that enhances unified communications (UC) platforms and services to help businesses of every kind achieve measurable results. CPaaS integrates multiple modes of communication into every customer interaction, driving up engagement, retention, net promoter scores (NPS) and the lifetime value of a customer while reducing communications costs overall—without the need to create new applications from scratch.

THE COMMUNICATIONS IMPERATIVE

The ability to create deeper engagement and strengthen relationships with customers becomes more critical with every day that passes. Thanks to the consumerization of IT, business users expect an easier, friendlier, more game-like experience from business applications, the same kind of user experience they have come to expect from games and consumer apps on their phone and tablets. And there is a steep price to pay if businesses don't deliver: Thanks to the Internet, barriers to switching suppliers for any service or goods—whether retail, medical or technology—have been lowered to a simple click of the mouse and a wave goodbye.

Perhaps the best way to strengthen tenuous customer relationships is by enhancing the communications between buyer and seller. Keeping constituents informed can make the difference between retaining and losing valuable customers, and it takes much greater effort to gain new accounts than it does to expand the relationship with existing ones. Smart businesses understand that communication is the underlying foundation that makes business growth possible, and they are always looking for new ways to deepen relationships across the board.

AUDIENCES CHOOSE THEIR PREFERRED MODE OF COMMUNICATIONS

So, what is the best way to reach your customers? There is one correct answer: all of the above. Every individual has different communication preferences. For example, some buyers are more visual and prefer email communications, while others who are more verbal prefer voicemails and phone calls as their primary method of contact. And for the growing number of millennials in the marketplace, keeping it brief is what matters, which is why SMS messaging is the preferred medium for that segment of the buying universe. People even have preferences for the way communications are initiated, with some preferring to take a self-service approach via telephone, tablet or kiosk, while others require hand-holding throughout their buying journey, from initial inquiry through support engagements. The simple truth is that regular communications in the customers' preferred mode enhances preference for a brand and engenders positive feelings that can help weather bumps in the road.

INTEGRATING APPLICATIONS: EMBEDDED COMMUNICATIONS AND APIS

Many organizations have utilized UC for years as a crucial part of their growth strategy. CPaaS is a natural evolution of UC, and savvy companies understand its benefits, including the ability to upsell or cross-sell, improve customer loyalty, achieve a higher NPS and many others.

What is not as well-known are some of the other positive business outcomes that can be realized by adopting a holistic communications strategy, including:

- Lower overall communications costs
- Improved business workflows, which eliminate double data entry and other workarounds required when dealing with disparate products
- Overall reduction in manpower needed to achieve business and communication goals
- Faster time to resolution for all manner of customer interactions, from inquiries to sales quotes to problem resolution—anywhere they are in the customer journey
- Ability to deliver a clear, measurable competitive advantage over businesses whose communications strategies are outdated

Although companies have been achieving better business outcomes from CPaaS for a while, until now, adoption has been slow. Why? Until recently, it has been difficult to integrate UC, customer relationship management (CRM) and other applications into a communications platform without a large amount of programming, development operations and low-level applications knowledge across the board—something reserved for large enterprises with IT, telephony and marketing budgets to match. Today's advanced CPaaS offerings knock down those barriers, and even small and medium-size businesses now find that the benefits of CPaaS greatly outweigh the implementation costs and effort.

Now, businesses can leverage straightforward, simple technology to implement communications into existing processes with ease. Today's building-block approach eliminates the need to build or code from the ground up and integrates communications of all kinds to deliver information to every customer and prospect when they need it and in the manner most likely to be acted upon.

HOW CPAAS CAN HELP: REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES

Here are some examples of how businesses are using CPaaS today to deepen their customer relationships:

- A travel agency based in the U.S. receives notifications from the airlines when customers' flight information changes, such as weather delays or gate changes. Based on customer preferences, the travel agency communicates those changes in real time via text, phone call or in-app push notifications, ensuring the traveler isn't left in the lurch—or at the wrong terminal. The process is totally automated, which frees up agents to solve other challenges for their travelers.

- Chatbots now routinely make shopping for automobiles, appliances, furniture and other consumer goods more efficient. Artificial intelligence (AI)-powered chatbots enable shoppers to ask questions, refine their product search and access automated customer service. Such features can be embedded on e-commerce sites or on social media (like a company's Facebook page), allowing customers to continue their experience seamlessly without leaving the webpage they're on.

Then, there are those "moments of truth" in the relationship between a business and its customers that can either make or break the relationship forever. For example:

- A realtor engaged in a bidding war for a couple looking to buy their dream retirement home would have lost out by not being able to reach the prospective buyers via email or telephone. The realtor's CPaaS integration enabled the buyers and realtor to keep in touch 24/7 as bidding heated up and helped them procure the winning bid and land the home of their dreams.

- Ambulance drivers transfer real-time patient medical data from ambulances to waiting emergency room staff so doctors are fully prepped on patients' status upon their arrival, enabling them to administer the right care as quickly as possible. Hospital staff also can take advantage of geo-tracking APIs in ambulances, so doctors know exactly when ambulances will arrive and are scrubbed and ready to go at the exact moment of arrival.

Businesses can also use CPaaS to improve security, giving customers and prospects a deepened sense of trust. For example, a financial institution can use two-factor authentication to send PIN codes to a preselected phone number using an SMS API, with a voice API that uses text-to-speech in the event that the user doesn't receive the initial text. The result: Happier customers are able to complete their transactions securely, while the company saves time and money by automating the process.

Combining telephony, UC and other business applications, CPaaS creates new avenues of opportunity for businesses of all sizes and type, preparing them for new application integrations, whether for in-house, off-the-shelf, contact center or social media applications—simply and quickly.

The bottom line is clear: Organizations can meet and exceed increased customer communications expectations—or lose business to competitors that do.

DELIVERING ON THE COMMUNICATIONS PROMISE: INTRODUCING NEXMO THE VONAGE API PLATFORM

True to its roots as a technology disruptor, in 2016 Vonage acquired Nexmo, seeing the value of API integrations delivering communications embedded in the applications we use every day. Years of listening to changing customer needs have enabled Vonage and Nexmo to create a communications platform that simplifies deployment, helps deepen customer engagement and enhances brand loyalty—all with minimal effort on the customer's part. Adding Nexmo to Vonage UC-as-a-service (UCaaS) offerings elevates the ability for companies to provide their customers with outstanding communications and the best possible experiences.

What defines the ideal CPaaS platform? What customers want is frictionless communication. Ideally, CPaaS allows an organization to automate communications so it can reach its customers wherever they may be, on whatever device they choose, at whatever time is most convenient for them, without having to build custom applications. Next, the CPaaS solution should provide for a rich user experience, akin to popular consumer and social media integrations that keep customers engaged and delighted. By doing so, CPaaS delivers the experiences that customers have come to expect from every business and service.

WHY VONAGE?

There are many reasons why businesses are adopting Nexmo The Vonage API Platform. First, Vonage's understanding of the API layer enables it to offer a more customizable, flexible experience for its customers—and its customers' customers. This higher level of customization enables the creation of user experiences that are more in line with changing customer demands. Furthermore, Nexmo The Vonage API Platform, lets businesses customize existing applications to enable better two-way communications across the board.

Vonage does all this by putting your customers in the center of all communications, whether they are using your website, having an in-store encounter with both employees and kiosks, on the phone, using live chat, engaging via social media or using your company's mobile application.

The combination of Vonage UCaaS and Nexmo The Vonage API Platform, lets you reach your customers the way they want to hear from you, through the entire communications spectrum, using the most appropriate application, in an automated, easy-to-use fashion.

Is your business ready to reap the enhanced benefits of CPaaS? Click here to find out how to get started with Nexmo The Vonage API Platform.