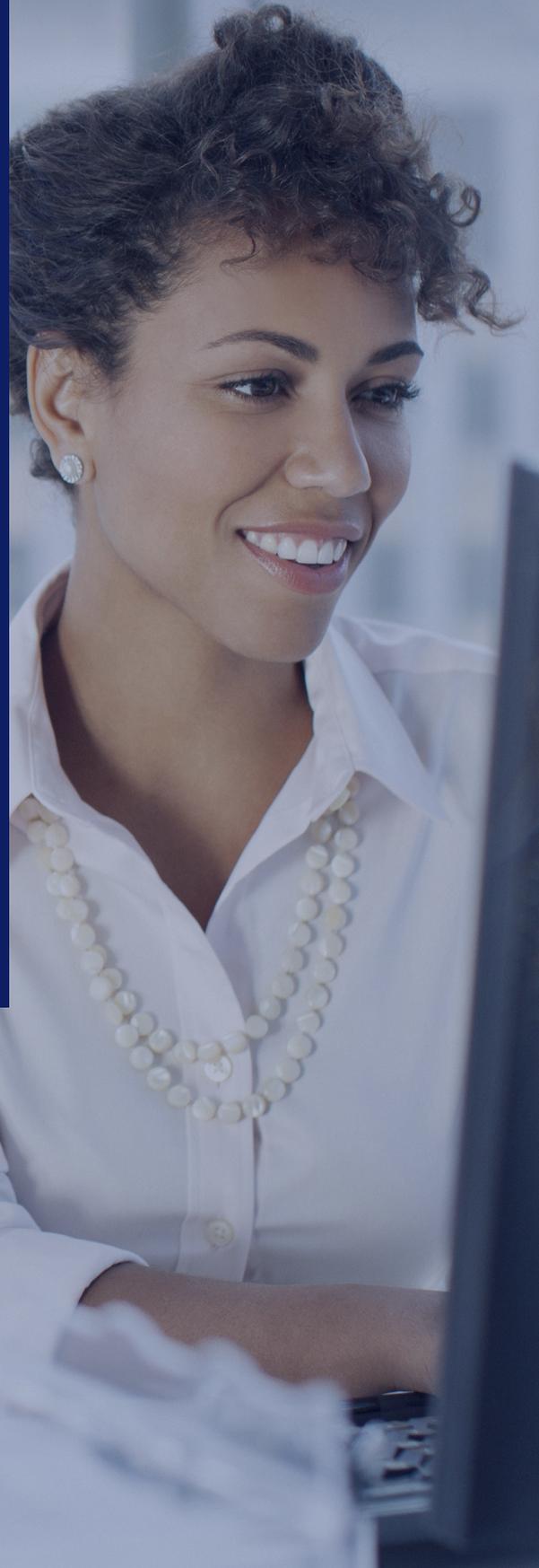


HOW TELECOMS CAN EMBRACE THE OMNI-DIGITAL ERA

Challenges that telecoms should address to differentiate through customer experience



INTRODUCTION

This white paper provides advice on how telecoms can improve productivity throughout the contact centre, utilise messaging to offer adequate customer experience, and embrace the omni-digital era.

Using this information will help you to create an experience for your customers that is innovative for your business.

We aim to answer the following questions:

- **What are the benefits** of productivity improvement?
- **Which channels** are customers using and how?
- **What challenges** are telecoms encountering?
- **How to increase** customer satisfaction and customer loyalty?

Customers have more reasons than ever to contact their telecom providers. The expansion of services with varying degrees of offers continuously evolve (broadband, TV, mobile, data services, etc.) and so does the number of queries customers have. Examples of the most common questions relate to technical issues, questions about invoices, contract cancellation demands, and adding new options to price plans.

Once customers have defined what they want from

a telecom operator, they are going to search for the best offer for them. As we now see across the industry, consumers are no longer reliant on price to differentiate when it comes to deciding on their provider. They will read customer reviews, check availability in their area, and investigate if customer service standards will live up to their expectations should issues arise throughout their journey.



EXPERT ADVICE **CUSTOMER** **EXPERIENCE IS THE** **KEY DIFFERENTIATOR**

“Customer experience is even more important than pricing strategies because companies recognise this is the differentiator. In addition to that, customer experience can help make price less relevant and a company more competitive.”

SHEP HYKEN

Customer Experience and
Service Expert

WHAT CHALLENGES ARE TELECOMS ENCOUNTERING?



It is crucial for telecom operators to meet demand and adapt to the evolution of the contact centre. As the advent of digital transformation is ever-present, these operators are focusing on bringing communications to the next level of digital innovation both internally and for customer service. Customers are using multiple touchpoints to communicate with organisations, and [72%](#) of them expect to use their favourite channel to engage with brands.

The goal is to make the customer journey shorter, better, and painless for clients. But in terms of digital channels, companies need to scale up so they can offer better customer care on the customers' channels of choice.

Don't forget that younger generations are increasingly averse to using email and phone calls since they have grown up with the evolution of messaging by their side and in their hands. Plus, contacting a telecom over digital channels is an essential criterion for customers today.

WHAT SHOULD TELECOMS EXPECT TO GO DIGITAL?

ANTICIPATE THE SHIFT TO A MAJORITY OF DIGITAL INTERACTIONS

The central role of telecoms with the multiplication of their services (broadband, TV, mobile, data services, etc.) explains the growth of customer enquiries in the industry.

While they were mostly relying on phone interactions in the past, customer interactions are now moving to digital. A study by Gartner outlines this shift, with a forecast of phone interactions dropping from [41%](#) in 2017 to 12% in 2022.

This transition is encouraged by customers' new habits. These channels include the ones used in their daily lives, such as messaging (Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Apple Messages), social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram), live-chat, and email.

Moreover, [92%](#) of customers think that stores are not a must-have for mobile operators. It highlights the expectations for a digital experience and the relevancy of digital-only players.

One of the notable benefits of digital channels for customers is the ability to contact companies whenever they want. Rather than being constrained by opening hours and waiting on the phone, they can send their request at any time. Enriched

features such as media sharing can also help to solve issues more efficiently.

Processing large volumes of digital interactions requires routing messages with the right approach. By using AI, it is possible to classify and allocate incoming messages automatically. For telecoms, this means that a request is assigned to the right team—such as a technical, billing, or sales team—immediately after it's received. With the ability to process all messages from a unified interface, agents' productivity is improved, meaning that more channels can be handled with the same number of agents.

To further improve message processing and free up agents' time, telecoms can also rely on AI to automate answers to common questions. Telecom operators often receive common questions requiring the same answers. These can be on topics such as SIM unlocking, invoices, subscription of new options, etc. For these types of enquiries, customers expect a fast resolution at any time, without necessarily talking to an agent. A chatbot can provide instant 24/7 answers to those kinds of basic questions.

ADOPT THE RIGHT CHANNELS AND OFFER A CONSISTENT EXPERIENCE ACROSS THEM

After understanding the necessity for digital channel adoption and the shift that is already happening, the next step is to adopt the right channels. It is essential to start by analysing customers to understand who they are and what are their preferences.

With [5.1 billion](#) unique mobile subscribers in 2018, equivalent to 67% of the world's population, telecom customers have various profiles and demographics. This figure is even higher if we focus on North America ([84%](#) of the population) and Europe ([85%](#) of the population).

It means that telecom operators can reach a variety of customer age groups with distinct preferences. While younger generations favour the use of channels such as messaging, used daily by [91%](#) of teens, others mostly rely on email and phone calls.

Adopting the right channels is the first step, and the next step is being able to provide a consistent experience across them. It means that a customer should be able to use any channel for his or her enquiry and get the same service quality without being redirected.

Some telecom companies manage to offer that seamless experience, but many of them still have

to implement it. For example, it is still typical for customers contacting a brand via messaging to be asked to call to get their problems solved. It suggests that they are forced to use a channel they did not choose and have to explain their issue again. It is an important issue when we know that [94%](#) of customers expect to not have to repeat information across channels.

It requires companies to move away from an organisation by channel (one team for live-chat, one team for email, and so on) to have an approach based on agents' skills. By using a customer engagement platform, agents can process all digital interactions from a unified interface. Technological silos fall, and messages are allocated automatically to the most relevant agent based on the skills required to respond to the enquiry.

Since it costs five times as much to attract a new customer than to keep an existing one, it should be your priority to differentiate your customer experience to retain customers.

90% OF CUSTOMERS EXPECT TO NOT HAVE TO REPEAT INFORMATION ACROSS CHANNELS.

WHY SHOULD MESSAGING BE CONSIDERED?



Asynchronous app-based communications are trending, and platforms are creating business versions of popular messaging apps such as WhatsApp Business Solution, Facebook Messenger for Business, and Apple Business Chat.

Companies wishing to improve the customer experience can do so by utilising these channels in a portfolio. Among those, both Facebook and WhatsApp compete for the top spot in terms of personal communication channels, giving you an extensive reach of users. Then there is Apple Business Chat, which is available to anyone with

an iOS device, of which there are 1.4 billion users. If your company has an application, then a must-have is in-app messaging, which can be integrated within your app and gives customers even more reason to keep your app installed.

These channels can enhance the customer experience, primarily since they are used by a large number of users worldwide. By using them within a customer care strategy, telecoms can offer maximum engagement and opportunities for conversion.

WHICH CHANNELS ARE CUSTOMERS USING, AND HOW?

FACEBOOK MESSENGER

Facebook Messenger has paved the way for customers to contact companies directly. There are around [20 billion](#) messages sent on the platform between people and businesses every month, plus 300,000 active Messenger bots on the platform.

Telecoms can utilise the messaging platform to offer communications on the go to users who are already engaged via the Facebook page. Before, customers used to ask questions in public mode on Facebook, which was not convenient to share personal details. Now they can use Messenger for 1-to-1 conversations.

APPLE BUSINESS CHAT

There are a variety of entry points for Apple Business Chat that can benefit customers to connect with telecoms. One useful feature is the built-in list picker, which can allow customers to schedule appointments or choose an option within Apple Business Chat.

Apple built native features in iMessage that make the customer experience better on this channel, such as option choices (colour and size of text) or completely secured payments via Apple Pay.

WHATSAPP BUSINESS SOLUTION

WhatsApp has 2 billion users worldwide, who send [65 billion](#) messages daily via the app. WhatsApp allows users to send a variety of media, such as

photos, videos, documents, location, and voice messages, which can be innovative for a telecom operator to use with consumers.

The app ensures confidentiality: all messages are secured and encrypted end to end, meaning that no third party can access it. This is useful for resolving issues with customer accounts and data usage.

IN-APP MESSAGING

A significant benefit of in-app is access to customers' profiles. Agents logged in to the app can directly access customers' details (customer ID, services subscribed) without asking them.

Unlike external messaging apps, the interface can be customised by the brand (visual identity, identification with customer account) and users do not have to leave an operator's app if they are checking data usage or their SIM plan. Plus, by integrating messaging within your app, you have complete control over the customer data and can securely answer account-related questions.

CUSTOMERS ARE USING MULTIPLE TOUCHPOINTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH ORGANISATIONS, AND 72% OF THEM EXPECT TO USE THEIR FAVOURITE CHANNEL TO ENGAGE WITH BRANDS.¹

1. 2020 Survey Results: https://cdn.bostondigital.com/sites/default/files/pdfs/How%20Brands%E2%80%99%20Social%20Media%20Impacts%20Consumers%20_0.pdf

IMPROVE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY



Customer satisfaction is a crucial metric for telecoms. In an industry where it is easy to switch from one provider to another, customer satisfaction is a guarantee of loyalty.

In the US in 2018, the satisfaction index for telecom services was standing at [67/100](#), one of the lowest across sectors. It translates to a churn rate at [22%](#), meaning 95 million customers are switching providers. This issue is also illustrated by the average Net Promoter Score (NPS) of [32](#), one of the lowest industry averages.

Facing this challenge, telecom operators can improve their customer service by being present on channels used by customers daily. According to Capgemini, the use of digital channels positively impacts the NPS of telecom operators.

Contacting a telecom over digital channels is essential for customers. If they are not able to do so with their current provider, they could switch to another.

To improve customer satisfaction and reduce churn, one of the keys at the disposal of telecoms is data. In the era of big data, the challenge is to centralise all the information available, analyse it, and make it usable.

By making this information available to agents when processing enquiries, telecoms can provide them with a 360° customer view. It is made possible by integrating the customer engagement platform with the CRM. With this complete customer view, agents can solve problems more efficiently, reduce waiting times, and identify signs of churn.

Finally, given the critical role of customer satisfaction, telecoms should adopt ways to measure it efficiently and smoothly for customers. Using a survey tool on all digital channels is a great way to monitor satisfaction to understand strengths and areas of improvement.

A DIGITAL STRATEGY IS PROVEN TO REDUCE CHURN:

46% OF TELECOM CUSTOMERS WHO RATED THEIR DIGITAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AS “POOR” PLAN TO SWITCH PROVIDERS, AND ONLY 14% FOUND THE EXPERIENCE “GREAT.”

THE BENEFITS OF PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT



The impact of digital innovations can be observed across any industry. Many companies have been slow to facilitate the adoption of digital processes; the realisation is that the future lies with the implementation of such technologies.

This is particularly true for telecoms, and a recent study showed that [92%](#) of customers think that stores are not a must-have for mobile operators, as the expectations for digital experience in this sector are becoming relevant, as are digital-only players.

Digital channels, which operate both synchronously and asynchronously, are also taking over in preference of phone calls and their synchronous specificity, meaning that transitioning from phone calls to digital interactions requires profound changes in the contact centre organisation.

Instead of replying to only one customer at a time in real time, agents can handle more than one interaction at any given time. This can help implement goals to improve productivity and smooth the activity across the day.

SEVERAL BENEFITS CAN HAVE AN IMPACT ON PRODUCTIVITY

- **Increasing customer satisfaction:** Thanks to productivity gains, telecoms reduce their response time. With increased customer volatility in the industry, getting a quick answer is a decisive criterion. If a customer estimates that they don't get an answer fast enough, they can easily turn to a competitor. By being closer to these expectations for quick answers, companies can increase customer satisfaction.
- **Turning customer service into a profit centre:** The improvement of agents' productivity means that they free up time for more added-value tasks, such as cross-selling or upselling. For example, they could offer to subscribe the customer to a new service or upgrade his or her existing subscription that fits his or her usage. When done in the interest of the customer, it is a win-win situation: the customer can optimise the price of each service while the company improves loyalty.
- **Facilitate the adoption of new channels:** Adopting an approach that prioritises productivity enables companies to integrate new channels seamlessly. Adding new touchpoints usually increases the volume of interactions. It is easier to manage additional volume when silos between each channel disappear. They also become more flexible to adopt new channels: there is no need to implement a new tool and train agents.



EXPERT ADVICE MESSAGING APPS REQUIRE PLANNING & RIGOR TO HANDLE—AS DOES ANY CHANNEL

“If you're struggling to manage your existing channels, well then adding messaging apps isn't going to help. The discussion on execution—and the resources and effort to get it right on an ongoing basis—is what I see missing from discussions on 'which' and 'what' channels to offer customers.”

DANIEL ORD

CCXP, Founder & Director
OmniTouch International

FACING CHALLENGES OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



Recruitment of agents in the contact centre and the retention of their skill set is a challenge that can be difficult to manage. Studies show that contact centres tend to see turnover rates from [30 to 45%](#).

The reasons related to this number and the overall issue of recruitment is attributed to various reasons, including stress, monotonous tasks, and an inappropriate work environment.

In the case of telecom operators, who are serving millions of customers, they rely on large teams of agents. Turnover can then represent thousands of employees leaving every year, associated with significant costs (hiring, training, productivity loss).

Adopting a scalable approach helps telecoms face the challenge of resource management. By developing contact centre staffing models, companies can standardise the following:

- **Onboarding:** Reducing the number of tools used and creating standard models makes this process easier.
- **Training:** This is essential for new employees. There are many aspects to learn for agents: the tools to use, the tone to use, and the product or service sold by the company. By relying on intuitive tools, companies can reduce training time.
- **Agents messages:** Thanks to a knowledge base or templates for messages, agents can access standard answers, allowing the company to unify their answers.
- **Scalability:** This allows telecoms to reduce costs, ease agents' onboarding experiences, and make customer service efficient. The contact centre can then evolve and adapt to the changing expectations of customers.

75% OF AGENTS REPORTED BEING UNHAPPY AT WORK WHEN THE TOOLS THEY USE TO COMMUNICATE HINDER PRODUCTIVITY.

HOW TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY

Companies can improve productivity by focusing on the unification of digital channels that consolidate everything into a single interface. Moving away from an organisation that silos teams depends on channels.

If agents have the availability to answer across each channel, then telecoms can adopt an organisation based on skills such as billing, sales, and technical assistance.

A unified customer engagement platform integrates features that enable productivity gains:

- **Smart routing:** A routing feature, similar to ACD (Automatic Call Distribution), automatically assigns messages to agents with the right competency based on urgency and skill. For a telecom, this means that a message from a customer about to churn will be prioritised or that a message about a technical issue will be sent to the right team. This approach contributes to the improvement of response time and productivity.
- **AI to assist agents:** 88% of CX professionals believe AI will enhance, not replace, agents. It can be used to provide employees with a knowledge base and auto-prompt contextual answers. That way, agents can access common answers, saving time and facilitating faster responses. Chatbots can also be leveraged to interact with customers. For example, it will be able to answer basic requests or collect information before escalating the conversation to an agent.
- **Identity merging:** When customers contact a brand through multiple channels for the same issue, this creates duplicate conversations for customer service. These can be identified by merging customer identities. In that way, the

company answers only once on the customer's preferred channel. For example, it is common for customers to contact their telecom operator via email for a technical issue. If they don't get an answer, they may follow up on a public channel such as Twitter. With a unified customer identity across all channels, it is easier for a brand to detect duplicate conversations and provide the same experience across all channels.

- **Analytics:** The centralisation of channels makes it possible to get the same KPIs for all of them. Rather than relying on multiple dashboards, customer service departments get data to obtain a global view of their digital activity. This comprehensive view allows telecoms to monitor and pilot their activity in real time. If peaks occur, they can optimise their resources in real time to make sure to provide a qualitative service. For example, if peaks occur on a particular channel after a product launch, telecoms can choose to assign more resources to this specific channel, to handle the volume, and keep their response time promise.

Finally, telecoms need to connect all their customer service tools such as their CRM, customer engagement platform, business intelligence (BI), workforce management (WFM), etc. The circulation of data enables the optimisation of processes between tools and contributes to productivity improvement. By relying on an open platform, telecoms also make sure they are ready for the future: whatever new tool or channel is needed to innovate, they can easily integrate it.

88% OF CX PROFESSIONALS BELIEVE AI WILL ENHANCE, NOT REPLACE, AGENTS.

CONCLUSION



Adapting to customers' omni-digital habits is now essential for telecoms. Most of them are already offering digital customer service, but the next step would be to adopt the right channels and provide a consistent experience across them.

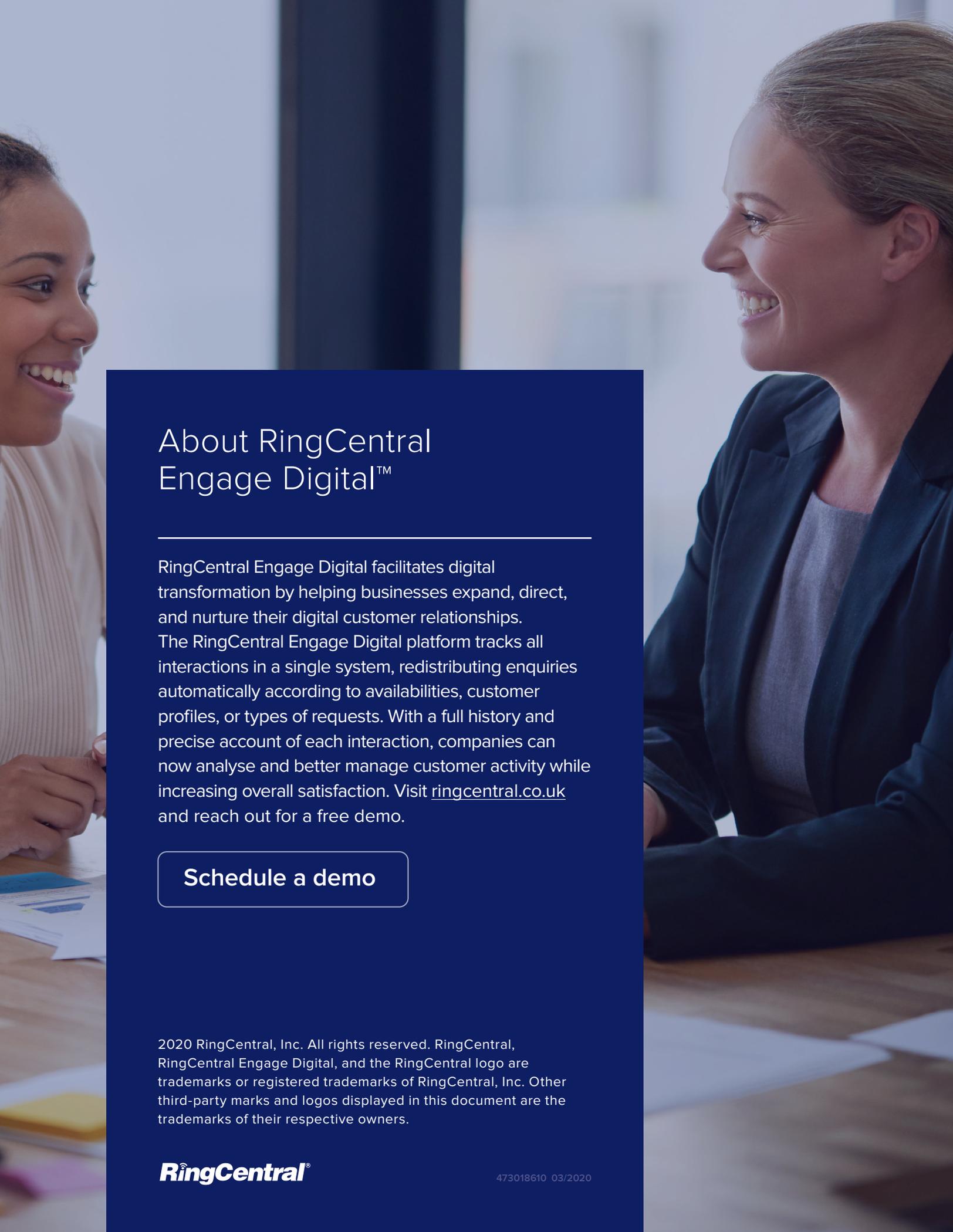
Customer experience is becoming the main criteria of choice in the telecom industry. If prices and products are similar, the customer will make his or her choice depending on the experience and how easy it is to contact a business.

With the increase of digital channels such as messaging, in-app messaging, live-chat, and customer review platforms, telecom companies need to centralise their management. This allows them to provide faster answers and consistent experiences across all channels.

With this approach, companies can build stronger relationships with customers wherever they are online, ultimately increasing customer satisfaction and generating higher revenue.

Consumer behaviour is constantly evolving. Therefore, adapting to the new ways of establishing a relationship with customers is essential.

Elusive customers and intense competition have made customer experience the main differentiator for telecoms. Investing in this field will not only improve satisfaction and loyalty but also have an impact on sales.

A photograph of two women sitting at a table, smiling and looking at each other. The woman on the left is wearing a light-colored sweater, and the woman on the right is wearing a dark blazer over a grey top. They appear to be in a professional setting, possibly a meeting or a collaborative work environment.

About RingCentral Engage Digital™

RingCentral Engage Digital facilitates digital transformation by helping businesses expand, direct, and nurture their digital customer relationships. The RingCentral Engage Digital platform tracks all interactions in a single system, redistributing enquiries automatically according to availabilities, customer profiles, or types of requests. With a full history and precise account of each interaction, companies can now analyse and better manage customer activity while increasing overall satisfaction. Visit ringcentral.co.uk and reach out for a free demo.

[Schedule a demo](#)

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