



Anticipate, Simplify, Learn:

A Proactive Framework
for Intuitive Customer Care



Executive Summary

Despite ongoing investment in and deployment of technology, infrastructure, and agents, many enterprises are finding that their contact centers are ill-prepared to meet the needs of today's customers. Across industries – financial services, travel, healthcare, communications, and retail – companies are facing similar challenges:

- A demanding customer base that increasingly expects consistent and contextual experiences across channels
- A flood of structured and unstructured data about customers, behavior, and product performance

Together these challenges have combined to make many companies' customer service and sales practices reactive to customer needs, rather than proactively anticipating them. Today enterprises find themselves constantly playing 'catch up' to match how and when consumers choose to contact them. What's more, the ability to deliver truly intuitive, differentiated consumer experiences is hampered when an organization is in a reactive position.

With consumers so keen to adopt new communications channels, a new operating model is necessary to regain control over customer service and sales experiences. In parallel, key innovations in customer care delivery are making it easier for businesses to:

- Better predict their customers' needs
- Present customers with an optimized path to resolution
- Ultimately drive better outcomes for the business

At [24]7, we work with our customers to overcome these challenges by putting into practice our mantra of 'Anticipate, Simplify, Learn' – or ASL for short. By predicting a customer's specific needs, reducing the level of effort for a customer to complete a task, and continuously measuring and improving these experiences, our customers have achieved significant improvements in the performance of both sales and service outcomes. As an example, **one technology retail client with whom we work reduced the number of inbound service calls to their contact center by 76 percent in one year.**

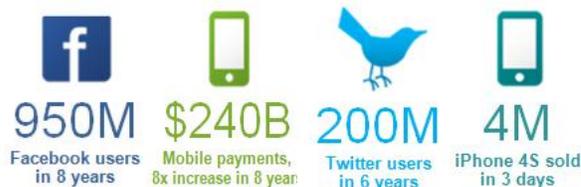
In this paper, we will explore how consumer behavior is changing, lay out a plan your organization can use

to better understand how and why customers contact you, and show how applying Anticipate, Simplify, Learn as a framework can help you achieve significantly better business and customer satisfaction outcomes.

Customer Needs and Behavior Are Changing Rapidly

"Video killed the radio star"
- The Buggles, August 1st, 1981

Even before the days of MTV's video revolution, consumer demand for new ways to connect and communicate shaped the course of technology development, adoption, and social change. In the last decade, however, the focus of technology analysis and forecasting has shifted. No longer are we impressed by the magnitude of technological advances – faster processors, denser silicon, and more efficient networks. Rather, it is the **undeniable acceleration of technology adoption** that captivates us. You have seen the statistics. In fact, you, your friends, and your colleagues are likely responsible for the surge in these statistics, as evidenced by these uptake figures below:



In short, people are more connected to information, through more communities, and across a dizzying array of devices, locations, and modalities. Additionally, the amount of data people generate and share is growing at an exponential rate. For the individual, it is second nature to adopt a new device, join a new community, or try out a new way of communicating with friends and family.

For businesses – and particularly for customer care organizations – it is a dramatically different story. Every new device and new channel drives a new set of costs, management disciplines, and relationship complexities. Left unmanaged, there is also the risk

of creating new organization and communication silos within an enterprise, resulting in customer service inefficiencies. Customer messaging must be updated



to meet the expectations of each channel. New teams and skills must be implemented to meet the customer on their terms. New metrics are devised to help quantify, measure, and manage each channel.

In sharp contrast to a decade ago, **enterprises no longer dictate the sales and service channels used by consumers**. Rather, **enterprises are now forced to meet the expectations of consumers and how and when they choose to contact them**, which is like running in a race where you are behind from the start.

Another crucial point – customers have not abandoned those ‘old’ channels. A phone call is still the main way a customer seeks to resolve issues, ask questions, and seek service. In fact, at [24]7 we have continued to see significant increases in annual call volumes, even at our most sophisticated enterprise customers. Each new channel only increases the total number of contacts we have with our end users.

Fortunately, this presents an opportunity as well as a challenge. With the right approach, the proper set of capabilities and metrics, we can leverage these rapidly proliferating channels to build better relationships with our customers.

Getting Started: Look at the World from Your Customers’ Point of View

Even in a world with rapidly increasing channels, it is possible to transform your sales and customer service investments from reactive to proactive, reducing customer effort and providing them with more intuitive experiences.

To be proactive, the first step is to examine these trends and the role your products play from your customers’ point of view. To start building better relationships, ask two questions to understand how your customers use technology:

- Why do customers choose specific channels to contact you?
- What are your customers trying to accomplish when they reach out?

Let’s tackle channel preference first. Studies from independent analysts like Ovum¹ have shown that nearly **3 out of 4 people** use **3 or more channels** when they seek service from a business. This means they are using a range of technologies, including voice, mobile apps, the Web, social media, and forums – in serial and in parallel – to try and solve problems.

A person’s channel preference shifts over time – based on the situation and the task – with several factors influencing that preference, including:

- **Environmental factors.** There is a reason that the saying, “When you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail,”² still rings true. People use the tools they have on hand when they are faced with a task. When they are on the go, at their desk between meetings, or on the couch after the kids are in bed, they have a certain device within reach and begin there when they need to contact you. As a result, you need to build the channel experiences that anticipate these contacts and can handle requests in-channel, when possible.
- **Channel limitations.** Tasks are rarely completed in a single step, despite the increasing capability of self-service to handle complex, multi-step tasks. Good design takes into account the limitations of both channel and modality. By necessity, today’s experiences ‘design out’ tasks that are not suitable to a given form factor. As an example, you will be hard pressed to find a mobile banking application that allows a customer to file a charge dispute without transferring them to an agent. Customers switch channels or try new ones when their first attempt fails – e.g., they tried to do something on the Web and got stuck, so they called you instead. When this happens, you need a solution that makes it easy to move a conversation, as well as any contextual information, from one channel to another.

¹ Daniel Hong, Ovum, “Customer Service in a Multichannel World,” 2011

² Abraham Kaplan (1964), “The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science.” San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., p. 28.



- Personal choice.** Our society values free will in nearly every circumstance. The key corollary here is that an individual may prefer the security, familiarity, and novelty of a specific channel – and we should encourage their right to choose by creating services that are flexible and user-driven. In particular, novelty is a compelling factor in channel choice, and we see this reflected clearly in the adoption curves of customer service applications. Customers rapidly adopt new experiences to ‘give them a try,’ but often abandon them just as quickly when their expectations are not met consistently. The key takeaway – businesses need sales and service applications that can better scale across channels to provide a consistent and contextual experience.

After examining the driving forces behind your customers’ channel preferences, the next question is, “What are your customers trying to accomplish when they contact you?” Depending upon your industry and your specific product sets, there are a range of possibilities. For example, airline customers need to accomplish a fairly well-defined set of tasks, both informational and transactional in nature. The challenge, even for well-defined tasks, is identifying if a task is informational or transactional, and then determining the channels that are naturally aligned per task. As an example, take a look below at this matrix of common travel tasks. At [24]7, we refer to these end-to-end tasks as ‘customer journeys,’ the paths that customers take to resolve problems and get information when they contact you.

| Channel | Informational Tasks | Transactional Tasks |
|--------------|----------------------|--|
| Social | | Service Complaint |
| Mobile/Voice | Flight Status | Boarding Pass Check In |
| Tablet | Check Upgrade Status | Request Upgrade Research/Make Reservation |
| Desktop | Check Points Balance | Modify Reservation Cancel Reservation Change Seats |

Prioritize Experiences: Determine Value and Volume

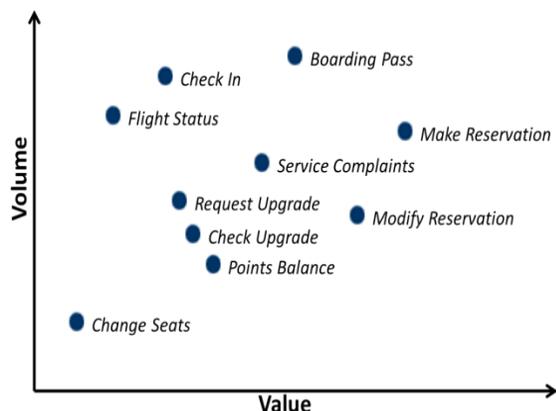
Once you have a firm grasp on these journeys – your customers’ channel preferences, use cases, and goals – the next step is to create a journey map, a representation of all the paths a customer can take to resolve a particular issue. As you develop these journey maps, you can use them to identify gaps in your customer experience – areas where you can invest to improve the way you communicate your brand, your value proposition, and the value you place in the customer relationship.

The next step is prioritizing these different journeys. By identifying the journeys that are most significant to your customers – and those that represent the best opportunity to meet your specific business goals – you can make an immediate impact on your overall success.

To effectively identify and prioritize these journeys, we recommend that our clients focus on two points:

- Value.** What is the value of the journey? This can be measured as complexity, cost, differentiation, revenue, or customer satisfaction. The key point is to ensure you are investing in journeys that provide the greatest business return down the road.
- Volume.** What is the volume or scale of the journey? Traditional ways to measure volume might be the number of interactions, or the number of impacted customers in a given time period. Other ways to express volume are the by-products of customer contact – e.g., how many transfers to agents does this journey create? How many are avoidable? Some journeys might be focused on the future – e.g., what are the opportunities we can uncover for a new business case?

Returning to the airline example discussed previously, this is how an airline might graph the value and volume of each customer journey.



Your New Mantra: Anticipate, Simplify, Learn

With a strong understanding of your customers and a prioritized set of customer journeys that are aligned with your strategic business goals, you are much closer to building your proactive approach to customer sales and service. However, there are still tough questions you may need to tackle along the way, such as:

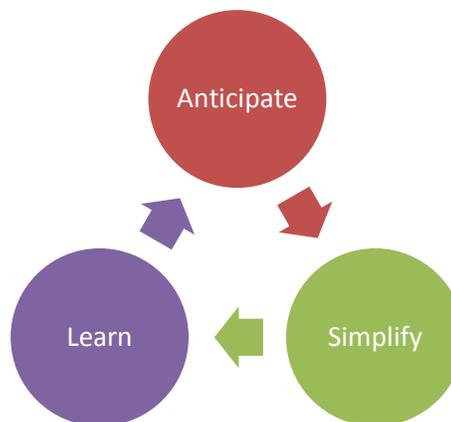
- How do I deal with changing customer expectations and behavior?
- How can I help colleagues to think more outside-in (i.e., from a customer's point of view) vs. inside-out (i.e., from a technology point of view)?
- What can I do with all the data collected about customers?
- Can I combine this customer data with journey maps to create more business value?

At [24]7, we have built our platform and our clients' applications with these questions in mind. To help enterprises manage change, share the customer's perspective across organization boundaries, and make sense of all the structured and unstructured data that our clients collect, we use the simple three-step framework of Anticipate, Simplify, Learn to guide not only how we build our products, but also our approach to creating truly intuitive experiences.

- **Anticipate.** Determine who you are talking to and what they are trying to get done. For each journey, the key is to use the information you have on hand to proactively

identify and predict a customer's intent, so you can provide a tailored, targeted experience. Within a journey, you can take advantage of information such as customer segment, history, task, and behavior within that journey.

- **Simplify.** Once you have determined a customer's identity and anticipated her intent, carefully think through how you can make an experience simpler (e.g., reduce steps, shorten task time, create more elegant flows). As an example, if you have a traveler on the line, and you know her connecting flight has been cancelled, what's the best way to help her take the next step towards resolving the issue? Which channel is she most likely to start with, and what is the best way to engage her – with self-service or assisted?
- **Learn.** The most critical step in this framework is learning. When designing new journeys or refining existing experiences, it is critical to continually measure, monitor, and refine. If you do not, you risk inadvertently returning to a reactive operating model – the opposite of your goal when beginning this process. Think about what you need to measure to make anticipation and simplification easier in future interactions. Are you measuring the right metrics? Businesses that focus on outcomes and effectiveness (i.e., resolution, sales, retention, effort, satisfaction) instead of traditional efficiency metrics (i.e., handle time, service level, automation rate) are much more successful when they set out to transform their service model.





Putting Anticipate, Simplify, Learn into Action

The point of this exercise is straightforward – we want to help businesses implement a proactive model of customer interaction, one that:

- Places the customer at the center of your investments
- Understands why customers are reaching out to you and which channels they choose for communication
- Builds a repeatable process around predicting, refining, and measuring your experiences

If you follow these steps, you can regain control over your channels, and provide a single, consistent, and more effective platform for communicating with your customers.

We help our customers do this billions of times a year with the predictive quality of our big data platform. The ASL mantra permeates every aspect of our organization. By applying this approach to challenges simple and complex – from password reset to highly technical product support – we have helped businesses drive quantum leaps in the performance of their sales and service organizations. **Customer-centric, ASL-inspired designs have helped one PC manufacturer increase sales through chat agents by 400 percent in the past year. We have also doubled speech self-service automation for one of North America's largest airlines.** And, we have done it all while driving double-digit improvements in customer satisfaction.

About [24]7

24/7 Customer, Inc., the intuitive consumer experience company, provides software and services that make it simple for consumers to connect with companies to get things done. [24]7 is a trademark of 24/7 Customer, Inc. [24]7 has one of the largest cloud-based, self-service networks in the world, managing more than 2.5 billion interactions annually. [24]7's software helps companies anticipate what consumers want, simplify interactions, and learn from those interactions so that future experiences get better all the time. [24]7 is based in Campbell, California.

For more information or to learn more about our products and solutions, please visit us at www.247-inc.com or find us on Twitter at [@24_7_inc](https://twitter.com/@24_7_inc).

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