

Contact Center Solutions Featured Article

Axia Exec: More Mobile Ordering and Provisioning Expected in Customer Care

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TMC ([News](#) - [Alert](#)) this year celebrates [30 years of covering customer interaction](#), which means it couldn't be a better time to look at where we've been with customer service and where we're going. We're also rebranding our customer experience effort. In this installment of our [CUSTOMER](#) coverage, we talk with Josh Ross, co-founder and managing partner of AxiaTP. Prior to co-founding Axia, Ross grew and sold his own long-distance company, and held senior sales and management roles at AT&T ([News](#) - [Alert](#)), Affine Communications, and RJN Consulting.



We're celebrating the 30-year anniversary of TMC's Customer Interaction Solutions magazine. What has been the most important development in the past 30 years related to customer interactions?

Ross: Interaction can take place from anywhere through a multitude of mediums. Through the power of IP communication, customer interaction can take place with the at-home worker, offshore contractors, or queued up agents in the office. The

preferred initial interaction has shifted to e-mail, chat, text, or social media rather than the traditional phone call. However, with all of the advancements and added convenience the core of quality customer interaction has not, nor will it, change.

In the past decade?

Ross: Improvements in contact center technology seamlessly integrating interaction mediums with the mobility of IP communications.

In the recent past?

Ross: Social media.

When and why did the trend toward call center offshoring take off?

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Ross: Call center offshoring took off thanks to the flexible IP communications created. IP communications enabled business to create the perception of a local presence to customers and internally be able to manage the call center as if it was housed in the same facility as the corporation. With these capabilities and businesses looking for low cost, skilled, available employees to work as agents drove hiring overseas.

Is the tide turning on call center offshoring? If so, why?

Ross: Call center jobs are coming back to the U.S. Businesses are realizing that the savings deteriorate over time with customer attrition, which in large part can be attributed to the immense dissatisfaction with the inability to solve problems or get answers because of a language barrier. Businesses are bringing the jobs back and leveraging technology to get the most production out of their employees. In our own industry of communications we've seen this take place where the large organizations providing residential services are bringing the support center jobs back to the States.

How has the rise of IP-based networks impacted the call center? Customer interactions at large?

Ross: IP-based networks have enabled the call center to move outside the brick-and-mortar call center office to agents being anywhere in the world, yet still connected to a centralized system. Offshoring call centers or running a work from home center is simply done leveraging IP communications. These systems still allow for the same oversight and advance reporting on all the necessary metrics that companies may want to report on. The advanced reporting and oversight empowers call center managers to build streamlined routing and workflows based on these analyzed reports. With the ability to tie in agents from virtually anywhere, the customer experience is improved through skills-based and overflow routing so that customers spend less time on hold and more time speaking with the right person to handle the call. IP also enables multiple communication mediums such as voice, chat, and text to work in tandem. Customers can choose how they want to interact and are queued up within the structure of the call center.

How is CRM changing?

Ross: CRM is the foundation from which all customer interaction begins and ends. CRM is what most communication integration elements revolve around. The integration of our communications to the CRM database insures that relevant quality data is being logged, improving a business's ability to thoroughly understand the client and prospect base it has gathered. Single system platforms remove the data entry element that in the past had either created inaccurate data or more commonly simply not done. These integrated CRM platforms create a dependable database to mine for improving customer experience and generating higher sales.

How is marketing changing?

Ross: The largest change in marketing is how businesses advertise. Print and television advertising have experienced a change that everyone can see. Thanks to the accessibility of Internet and Wi-Fi virtually anywhere and the DVR, businesses have had to find new ways to get their messages across. Broadcast television stations are now selling advertising for their streaming newscasts, and newspapers are more likely to be read not as a paper but on an iPad. With the shift to digital advertising and the widespread adoption of social media, marketing efforts are more focused thanks to the data that can be gathered through the digital mediums. With this data, marketers can go after customers with a focused approach, improving results. Because it is possible to get a message across to the core group of clientele, doors have opened to businesses with even the smallest of budgets.

How is the rise of cloud computing impacting how businesses target, engage with, and deliver product/service/support to the customer?

Ross: The scalability of the cloud has created the opportunity for businesses to get started or existing businesses to spin up new lines of products or services. Rather



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than experience large capital outlays before businesses make their first dime, organizations can look to the cloud to create software and infrastructure as a service, turning up the volume as the business grows.

How is the widespread use of social networking technology impacting how businesses target, engage, and deliver to the customer?

Ross: Social networking gives businesses a glimpse into the personal side of their customers. Understanding their likes and dislikes helps businesses craft product. Creating relationships with their customers through social media puts businesses in a place to relate and support their customers through the same medium that their customers use to keep up with their friends, making the interaction a more personal experience.

How is the increased use and comfort level with video impacting how businesses target, engage, and deliver to the customer?

Ross: Video has had a huge impact with several facets in business communication. Real-time video communication within the business or with others has been adopted as an efficient way to conduct day-to-day business. Videos are also increasingly being leveraged as a means to deliver a clear message to customers. If a picture is worth a thousand words, the use of video is clearly an excellent way to get a message across. Tutorials through video are also increasingly used to help customers walk through step-by-step instructions, enabling the customer to get the most out of the product or service a business may be providing.

What new tools and practices are businesses using to better leverage their own and/or outside data to target, engage, and deliver to the customer?

Ross: Businesses leverage their own data through CRM databases, and gather outside data from search engines, collecting information on prospective customers. With CRM databases being integrated into the businesses workflow, organizations have better information and can establish a clear history, helping businesses map out a direction for the future. Search engines provide what, how, when, and where potential customers are searching for a solution the business may offer.

How is the mobile boom impacting how businesses target, engage, and deliver to the customer?

Ross: Businesses are using mediums that are either built for mobile devices or mobile device-friendly to communicate with their customers. Apps for mobile devices are almost a necessity to generate new business, deliver or improve solutions, and provide an anywhere, anytime support of customers.

What other key trends are you seeing related to how businesses target, engage, and deliver to the customer?

Ross: Other common trends are focused on purchasing solutions and ease of Web portal use with respect to client interaction. Many corporations are actually adopting more online mobile ordering processes and online product and service discovery. As the age of mobility and real-time becomes more of a client expectation, there will be more online ordering and provisioning of services by way of mobile, Web-based applications. This includes complex ordering scenarios that are made simple through applications available anytime, anywhere.