Transforming the manufacturing contact center

Emerging technologies and changing habits are transforming the customer relationship. Find out how the contact center can help you win in this new environment.
Manufacturer challenges and the contact center

“When we sell a piece of machinery today, we don’t just sell the product. We also sell services, data and maintenance.”

- Joachim Lang, the director-general of Germany’s BDI industry federation, in a recent interview with The Financial Times [1].

Lang’s words neatly describe the realities for manufacturers around the world, whether in Germany, Japan or the USA. The era of merely selling the goods is definitively over. Even the move from transactional to contractual relationships has been superseded by and subsumed into the growing trend of device-as-a-service.

In the US, car leasing now accounts for almost a quarter of the auto market [2], an increase of over 50% in just half a decade. And the rise of the Internet of Things (IoT) means that many household consumer items now come with an ongoing element of service and maintenance.

These developments have put contact center leaders in ongoing contact with partners right along the value-chain, often for the first time. For the contact centers of manufacturers, this raises a range of industry-specific challenges:

- Establishing a robust service operation in preparation for expansion into new markets.
- Building an effective and cost-efficient customer-experience platform, often from scratch.
- Delivering intelligent and personalized automated contact systems based on AI.
- Collecting product data and turning it into insights that improve customer experience.
- Managing compliance and regulatory issues around partner and customer data.
- Setting and maintaining industry-leading issue-resolution and service levels.

Achieving the right solution for manufacturers

AT&T has over 30 years’ experience working with contact center executives. We can help you find the right mix of technology, the right partners, and the right strategic operating model to deliver an integrated, omnichannel customer experience across the entire manufacturing supply chain.

Our consultants, specialists in contact-center optimization for the manufacturing industry, will work with you to understand your customers’ journeys, their goals at each point across those journeys, how well those goals are being met, and specific impediments and customer pain points. Together we’ll identify the optimum mix of touchpoints, and then implement that model across all channels, with highly-secure and resilient communications.

This includes the virtually seamless integration of:

- IoT, M2M and emerging network technologies
- Telemetry and maintenance on demand
- Location and proximity technologies
- Mobile commerce for improved upsell and cross-sell
- AI and big-data analytics resources
- Social media channels and communities
- Chatbots and process automation.

By upgrading the role of the contact center and making it the hub of a data-driven customer and value-chain experience, the business can respond in near real time in a more informed, intelligent way to market behaviors and emerging data signals.

Typically, this drives improvement in key measures such availability of raw materials, operational capacity, and delivery expectations. The move to a data-driven, omnichannel model can also significantly improve internal contact center performance.

While providing senior management the insights it needs to improve the customer and value-chain experience, it also provides detailed information on agent performance, skill-gaps, and training needs. These can be used to help build a more effective and more satisfying work environment, leading to increased agent engagement and retention.

Transforming the manufacturing contact center

As a manufacturer plays a bigger role in the customer experience, the contact center becomes increasingly important in the brand’s relationship with customers and with channel partners.

With the right processes, the right technology, and a joined-up approach to data sharing across the enterprise, the contact center can use this role as aggregator of value-chain and customer data to measurably improve resolution times, customer satisfaction ratings, and other performance metrics.

Meeting the omnichannel challenge

Omnichannel has been a theme in the contact center industry for some time. Despite this, many manufacturing enterprises have not completed the transformation to a fully integrated, data-driven omnichannel contact center operation.

According to a 2017 study, one third of B2B businesses in the US struggle to successfully transition to an omnichannel business and customer-experience model [4]. This has the potential to be a significant limiting factor too: 73% of customers say that their loyalty to product or brand is influenced by its ability to provide personalized care [5].

A well-implemented omnichannel contact center strategy is not only for the customer-facing parts of the enterprise. According to Gartner, over 20% of US employees have now been issued a company tablet or smartphone [6]. Factory floor workers, delivery drivers, retail staff and maintenance staff now routinely use mobile devices to track, record, and organize work.

**The approach to technology deployment**

Planning and executing the move to an omnichannel and data-driven customer-experience can be complicated.

Many enterprises already have significant investment in and reliance on legacy infrastructure such as IP-PBX systems and stand-alone solutions. Frequently, these systems aren’t sufficiently integrated with the company’s customer relationship management (CRM), unified communications (UC) structure or stand-alone social and live-chat functions. Consequently, these communications processes don’t feed information seamlessly into customer records.

This kind of siloed setup can impede both horizontal integration across the enterprise and vertical integration with channel and supply partners. This degrades the customer and value-chain experience. It also makes end-to-end data collection and processing — vital for the optimization of everything from end-user support to logistics — difficult to achieve.

For contractual, commercial and technical reasons, many enterprises cannot migrate to an optimized mix of contact-center solutions right away. What’s required is a modular approach to cloud-migration in which any given function can be migrated, when the time is right, and a mix of cloud and on-premises solutions work seamlessly together to deliver the right results.

**How to achieve success in manufacturing**

With the right omnichannel strategy — one with the contact center at its heart, but embracing the whole organization, including factory floor, sales, e-commerce, customer services, and marketing — companies improve customer and value-chain experience by making interactions more timely, relevant, and targeted.

This can only happen if the migration to an omnichannel model for customer and value-chain experience is informed by the right insights, the right data, and the necessary depth of understanding of the real-world business processes involved. Often, it’s difficult for organizations to achieve this using only internal resources.

By working with a trusted advisor, such as AT&T, that has experience in contact center transformation, manufacturers can avoid the pitfalls of modernization while reaping the rewards.

Our consultants can help you discover often unseen processes and touchpoints, find the right mix of vendors and platforms for your needs, and develop a strategy to maximize the return on investment.

Building a better omnichannel experience for suppliers, distributors and sellers

Typical journey
Utilizing multiple channels and devices in a virtually seamless, unified experience

Customer Services Center receives order that exceeds inventory held
Advises appropriate corporate functions of fulfillment needs to complete order
Supply Chain Control Center automatically advised of raw materials and suppliers required
Supply Chain Center collaborate with Operations Center on manufacturing capacity and resource availability
Distributor automatically advised on process updates and likely stock availability
Sellers simultaneously advised of logistics and availability

Contact center support path
Powered by a rich, cross-channel history with customer

Website
Phone
Chat
Social
Helpdesk
Email

Technologies driving class-leading experience
Integrating innovative, complementary platforms for powerful and influential experiences

Collaboration
AI
API
IoT
Chatbots
Big data
Enterprise apps

Value chain experience =
Generating better customer outcomes
AT&T contact center capabilities

When you work with AT&T, our expert consultants work with you to carry out a business audit, capturing all the relevant processes, touchpoints, and stakeholder imperatives. Once we’ve understood your organizational requirements, we’ll collaborate with you to design a technical solution — and the processes that underpin it — With the goal of meeting those requirements.

Why AT&T?

We work with 7 of the top 50 companies in the Forbes Global 2000 and many other U.S. and global market leaders. With our flexible and extensible suite of world-class solutions we can help you optimize your contact-center with exactly the right mix of capabilities and technologies for your needs.

Not only will this yield measurable improvements in customer-experience metrics and return on investment but also in back-end functions such as capacity and availability management, incident desk operation, performance and reporting, change management, and roadmapping for the future.

Our experts can also help you design and implement a fully on-premises, cloud-based or hybrid contact-center platform, depending entirely on your specific needs. And because AT&T takes a whole-enterprise approach to change, we can help you integrate the data-gathering functions of the contact center with other strategic functions such as marketing and sales.

By creating a holistic and data-driven approach to customer-experience management — with the contact center at its heart — you can elevate the strategic position of the customer-service function in your company. Additionally, you can make a defined and measurable impact on key business goals, while also making sure your business is better placed than its competitors to profit from the data and customer-experience revolutions.

Typical manufacturing challenges addressed by AT&T

- Help increase sales by removing friction points on the customer journey
- Help ensure consistency of customer experience, across the enterprise and key partners
- Integrate customer data vertically and horizontally to help achieve measurable improvement
- Transform back-end processes for omnichannel delivery
- Find new ways for the contact center to help drive revenue and margin performance
- Balance the resources and priorities to help optimize ROI
Working with industry leaders

With 30 years as a contact center specialist, AT&T has built a close working relationship with the leading technology providers, including vendors such as Genesys, Cisco, Avaya, InContact, and CSGI.

Rather than take an approach that ties you into a specific technology vendor, AT&T specialists take a vendor-agnostic approach in helping you find exactly the right mix of systems and technologies for your company’s specific requirements.

Contact AT&T or visit www.att.com/contact-center to find out how we can help you build the contact center of tomorrow, today.