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Beyond the Chatbot:

The smart retailer's playbook for agentic AI in retail CX

How AI solutions help retailers address hyper-personalization, omnichannel integration, and agent attrition, improving both employee productivity and customer experience.

Agentic AI tools and technology are emerging from several major industry players to help retailers take significant strides in battling three long-standing contact center challenges they are facing:

Hyper-personalization, omnichannel integration, and agent attrition.
The result: increased revenue, reduced operating expenses, and delighted customers.

High turnover has long been one of the biggest issues for contact centers in all industries due to the cost and time required to onboard new associates and prepare them with the expertise needed to manage customer interactions. With turnover rates in the range of 30% to 45%[1] across industries, there is a huge opportunity to reduce spending through retention.

Achieving true omnichannel integration is another challenge, as retailers strive to combine data about customer interactions coming from their stores, websites, chat, phone conversations, and email to communicate across channels for seamless customer experiences. The compound annual growth rate in the market for omnichannel call center services is expected to exceed 13% annually from 2025 to 2031, driven by "rising demand for seamless customer experiences [CX] and the increased adoption of cloud-based solutions," according to researchers at Lucintel.[2]

Personalization is also becoming quintessential for customers, where they expect companies to know them as individuals and tailor interactions based on their preferences and history. A Forbes study of more than 1,000 US consumers found, "81% prefer companies that offer a personalized experience, and 70% say a personalized experience in which the employee knows who they are and their history with the company (past purchases, buying patterns, support calls and more) is important."[3]

Agentic AI equips contact center agents with intelligent recommendations and real-time insights, empowering them to deliver exceptional customer experience while increasing their own performance and job satisfaction.

Hyper-personalization pays

With personalization being the new normal, it takes hyper-personalization to stand out. That means delivering highly relevant offers and information at exactly the right time. A customer data platform [CDP] creates the foundation for this by unifying information from multiple sources, such as:

- Past purchase history in stores and online
- Abandoned shopping carts and wish lists
- Customer relationship management tools

Tools such as Google Vertex AI — Google Cloud's AI platform — activate this data in real time. They apply advanced AI and machine learning models to predict next best actions, recommend products, and generate contextual insights.

Agentic AI utilizes this intelligence, plus the latest customer profile from the CDP, to orchestrate real-time conversations — both on automated channels and with live contact center agents.

Consider a scenario where a customer looks at smart televisions online and adds a couple of models to a wish list. CDP captures this activity and integrates it with purchase history that shows the customer bought a television and soundbar three years ago. Google's Vertex AI then analyzes these patterns and recommends comparable products or accessories. Agentic AI also uses these insights to prompt the contact center agent during a live call with the most relevant options and deal suggestions. This approach creates a two-way conversation that is highly relevant and personal to the customer and far more likely to result in a sale, or multiple sales.

"The true power of AI in Retail CX lies in its ability to transform every customer interaction into a moment of personalized connection and foresight. We are moving beyond simple transactions to orchestrating seamless, human-like engagements across all channels, driven by AI that understands and anticipates individual needs. This is about elevating both the customer and agent experience, building a future where adaptive intelligence fosters stronger loyalty, boosts productivity, and creates enduring value for retailers." said Ganesh Ravindran, Head of GSI AI solutions, Google Cloud.

Omnichannel integration

Pulling off a conversation like that requires omnichannel integration, meaning the ability to pull data from multiple sources and modalities — including digital interactions, in-store purchases, and customer records.

While it's not feasible to expect a contact center agent to access all this data manually as a customer waits on the phone, agentic AI tools can do it in seconds. It can all happen before the call is connected, so the representative is ready to dive in once the customer is on the line.

"With omnichannel integration, customer context flows between channels and AI can help recommend next steps for customers to take via self-service channels or with agent assistance, driving more revenue and lifetime value for each customer," said Michelle Crovo, CX & AI consulting leader with Cognizant.

Stemming the tide of agent attrition

"The job of human agents is evolving and will become more complex as AI takes on more routine tasks and deterministic flows," Crovo said. "It's more important than ever to focus on the agent experience and provide them with tools to make their jobs easier, their expertise higher and ultimately retain them longer to avoid costly onboarding efforts to backfill them."

Cognizant's AI-driven retail accelerators, built on Google Cloud Customer Engagement Suite (CES), enhance both the customer experience and operational efficiency. These pre-configured frameworks are designed to deliver measurable outcomes faster and with less integration complexity. Combined with Google Vertex AI, they help retailers turn unified customer data into real-time insights so they can deliver hyper-personalized interactions and seamless experiences across multiple channels.

In doing so, agentic AI drives higher conversion rates, stronger customer loyalty, and greater agent productivity. Together, Cognizant and Google Cloud are equipping retailers with the tools to meet the customer demands of today and build more adaptive, intelligent contact centers for the future.

Visit the Cognizant Customer Service Transformation page to learn more about how the combined forces of Cognizant and Google can help you take advantage of agentic AI in your contact center.

Reference

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