Educate, deflect and delight.

Insider tips to move callers to digital channels.

Educate, deflect—and delight

It's easy to think of digital channels as the low-cost option for customer engagement. At least, when compared to engagement through IVR and phone. But that's doing digital a disservice. The fact is, in many engagement scenarios, digital channels are also the **best option**—offering richer, smarter, more satisfying customer experiences.

Digital – from introduction to creating power users
Today, most brands have already made strategic investments in digital engagement, from creating their own apps to embracing messaging channels and web-based services. The challenge now, is twofold. How do you help customers discover those channels? And how do you make sure their experience is so positive, digital becomes their new first choice, every time?

In this guide we'll explore what you stand to gain by successfully moving customers to digital channels. Then we'll share four best practices for doing exactly that.

The business case for moving customers to digital channels

Two words: customer experience
In so many cases, digital channels can help customers get what they want more quickly and more easily. Because they spend less time **waiting on hold**. Because they're able to **self-serve like never before.** Because they can hold an ongoing service **conversation around their daily routine**.

All this translates into improved CSAT. Which, in turn, translates into greater customer loyalty and advocacy. We know this is true, because we're constantly helping brands to achieve it.

Case in point: Major telco
One major telco has combined our virtual assistant, live chat, and SMS chat solutions to deliver experiences that shift across channels seamlessly. The result:

2X

increase in CSAT

27%
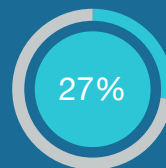
reduction in abandonment

Two more words: increased efficiency
When you brighten your customer's day by meeting their needs in web and messaging channels through your live chat and virtual assistant, you also increase contact center efficiency.

Human agents have more time to focus on high value and complex interactions, since your virtual assistant is handling a greater proportion of inquiries. And thanks to the asynchronous nature of text-based communication, agents can even handle multiple conversations at once.

Case in point: International airline
One international airline extended its AI-powered virtual assistant from the web to Facebook Messenger—allowing customers to check flight status, request changes, and engage in emergency communication through the messaging platform. It has seen:

93%

success rate through Facebook Messenger

Zero minute

response times

So, how do you successfully shift your customers to your digital channels? Here are our four best practices…

#1 Educate your customers about digital channels

If you're serious about realizing the benefits of digital channels, adding them to your mix is just the beginning. Next, you need to actively educate your customers—so they understand those digital channels exist, and experience their benefits.

That means ensuring customers see an option to message you when they search for your phone number. It means actively promoting digital channels within your voice channels. And it means building journeys that shift offline conversations straight to digital.

Offer digital channels on sign up
Many of today's customers want to use the same messaging app they use with family and friends to engage with brands. All you have to do is let them know they can.

One way is to offer customers useful notifications through WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and SMS—and ask them to select their preferred option when they sign up.

Let the mobile ecosystem help
The mobile ecosystem is a powerful ally in your push to promote your digital channels. It can present customers with the option to send a message—not just place a voice call—whether they've found your business through a web search, their maps app, or their phone's assistant.

If your contact center, digital, and customer experience teams are aligned, giving customers this choice can be as easy as registering with Apple and Google, and adding the channel to your digital engagement platform.

Add messaging to your brand app
For existing customers, your brand app will often be the first place they look for the answers they need. So, make sure it includes a messaging option— and that it's simple to find and use.

If you already support chat through your website, this can be a relatively quick win. All you need to do is add an in-app chat channel within your digital engagement platform, review the conversation design, and create a button in the app.

Make smart use of time on hold
When you have to keep a caller waiting, don't waste their time. Introduce them to your messaging channels—and make it easy for them to make the transition.

For example, let's say a customer has called your IVR, but now needs to be escalated to a human agent. While they're waiting for an agent to become available, send them a message inviting them to skip the queue and continue the conversation immediately in a digital channel.

Promote digital channels through offline interactions
In-store conversations. The handing over of a business card. These offline interactions are great opportunities to help customers discover the convenience of digital.

It's as simple as inviting customers to scan a QR or Facebook Messenger code, and continue their journey in the messaging channel of their choice.
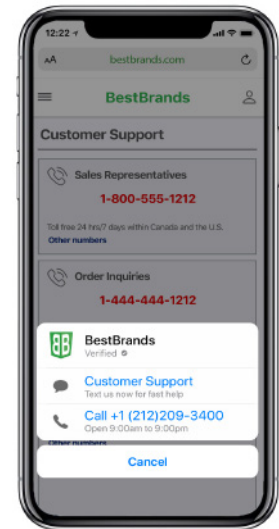
Apple Business Chat Suggest

For customers with iPhones, you can sign up to Apple Business Chat Suggest. Whenever someone taps on your phone number using an Apple device—let's say, on the "contact us" page of your website— they'll see the option to get in touch through Apple Messages.

Apple will route customers' messages to your digital engagement platform, where your chatbot or live agent can respond. As the conversation progresses, you can even allow the customer to make purchases with Apple Pay, right there in the Messages app.

#2 Understand where digital channels excel

What types of conversation are easier, richer, and faster on digital channels?
Understanding this is crucial if you're to shift customers away from voice channels, while actively improving both customer and agent experience.

Here are a few scenarios in which digital channels shine.

WHEN the answer is on your website

The fastest path to a resolution is often to help a customer self-serve. And if the information they need is already available on your website, you don't want them to have to note down the URL over the phone. It's much easier for everyone if you send them the link in a message.

WHEN the customer needs to make a complex choice

Let's imagine a customer is buying a complex product. You could have your IVR or live agent walk them through every option, for every customizable feature. Or you could transfer them to a messaging channel.

All popular messaging platforms (with the exception of SMS) allow you to send interactive menus to customers—so they can quickly select their answers, without leaving the app.

WHEN the customer needs to provide multiple data points

Filling out a form is easier on a digital channel. What's more, customers can provide sensitive information (like their credit card number) without worrying about who could be listening in.

WHEN the customer needs to show you something

It could be an error code, their ID documents, or the web page on their screen—but seeing what your customers can see is often the key to a rapid resolution.

Digital channels excel in these scenarios, whether the solution is sending a photo or starting a co-browsing session.

WHEN the customer hasn't any time

If a customer is trying to fit their inquiry into an already busy day, moving them to a digital channel can make their life a whole lot easier.

Instead of having to find a solid twenty minutes to talk to someone on the phone—or worse, make a series of five-minute calls, repeating themselves each time—they can reply to your latest message whenever they've a spare moment, safe in the knowledge that the conversation is still moving forward.

How to discover customer intent

Understanding your customers' intent is vital. It lets you move them between channels with confidence. And helps ensure you don't accidentally antagonize customers—for example, by directing a caller who's been struggling with your website… straight back to your website.

Simple chatbots are a great way to gather intent. The bot can ask a few clarifying questions, then route the customer to the channel or agent that's the best match for their needs.

#3 Play to the strengths of each digital channel

Just like individual voice channels, each digital channel has its own unique strengths. Your engagement strategy needs to recognize this, using every channel to its best advantage.

SMS is ideal for...

Deflecting from your IVR. When a customer has already called in, inviting them to continue the conversation by SMS is the simplest way to deflect.

Engaging everyone. Because SMS is native on your customers' phones, it should be your messaging channel of choice when you need to reach as broad a customer base as possible.

Proactive notifications. Need to remind a customer to make a payment or confirm an appointment? Reach out by SMS and you can be confident your message will be read. (Some studies put SMS open rates as high as 98%.)[1]

WhatsApp is ideal for...

Delighting customers worldwide. WhatsApp is currently the world's most popular mobile messaging app, with 1.6 billion monthly active users.[2] This includes an estimated 340 million users in India, 99 million in Brazil[3] and 12 million in the Netherlands.[4]

Multimedia conversations. WhatsApp makes it easy for customers and agents to share photos, videos, and documents.

Security and efficiency. With end-to-end encryption and comparatively low power usage, WhatsApp can be an attractive option for switched-on customers—whether they're worried about their data staying secure, or their phone staying charged.

Mobile provider messaging (e.g. Apple Business Chat) is ideal for...

Customers who don't use messaging apps. While not as universal as SMS, mobile provider messaging services are still native to your customers' phones, giving them significant reach. What's more, they're integrated into the phone's search, assistant and maps functions—so that when a customer goes to get in touch, the option to message is right there.

Providing a richer experience than SMS. Some mobile provider messaging services (including Apple Business Chat) are also tightly integrated with the wider mobile experience, allowing them to leverage everything from the phone's native calendar app, to digital IDs, biometrics authentication mechanisms, and more. And that means a richer, more versatile messaging experience.

Wowing customers with augmented reality. Apple Business Chat supports augmented reality experiences—so you can show customers what a couch, lamp, or rug will look like in their living room.

How to use Facebook Messenger and Twitter Direct Message

If your brand has a Facebook or Twitter presence, these messaging channels should be connected to your contact center too.

Make sure your agents—whether they're chatbots or humans—are fully equipped to answer the types of question they're likely to receive. Heavy Twitter users won't think twice about using it to make service requests, while you may find your Facebook page sparks general inquiries about your company.

1 https://www.gartner.com/en/marketing/insights/articles/tap-into-the-marketing-power-of-sms
2 https://www.statista.com/statistics/258749/most-popular-global-mobile-messenger-apps/
3 https://www.statista.com/statistics/289778/countries-with-the-most-facebook-users/
4 https://www.statista.com/statistics/880842/number-of-whatsapp-users-in-the-netherlands/

#4 Plan together—to create seamless transitions

When you move a conversation to a digital channel, that transition has to be seamless.

And that means your strategic planning has to be seamless too—bringing all key stakeholders together, uniting them around the right objectives, and ultimately designing conversations that reflect the capabilities and characteristics of each digital channel.

1. Assemble all your stakeholders
Many large enterprises have separate contact center and digital engagement teams. Many also have a team with overall responsibility for customer experience.

When discussing how to move customers to your digital channels, all these teams should be represented. Together, you'll be able to produce a comprehensive picture of:

– Which channels your customers use
– What they use them for
– What their preferences are

2. Focus on CX (not cost savings)
It's important to focus on using digital channels to improve customer experience. That way, you'll work towards creating seamless transitions and happier customers—and lower costs will follow.

The alternative? If you primarily use the shift to digital channels as an exercise in cost reduction, there's a real risk you won't give journeys and transitions the attention they need. Your CSAT scores will suffer. And customers will default right back to calling your IVR.

3. Introduce new channels with care
When a new, much-hyped channel arrives, there's a natural urge to throw it into your channel mix as quickly as you can. But that's exactly how channels become siloed, and customer experience becomes disjointed.

Instead, take a step back. Decide how the new channel fits into your broader engagement strategy. Then work out how you'll to connect it to the channels you already have—so that information and experiences can flow.

4. Design your conversations—whatever the channel
Conversational design is vital when creating a virtual assistant. And it's also key to optimizing experiences on your digital channels.

Imagine you've transferred a caller to Apple Messages and you now need to find out more about their issue. Should you ask them to select an option from a menu or carousel? Or let them provide an open-ended answer?

Optimizing customer experience means exploring these questions upfront and designing the right conversation flow for every customer journey.

How an omni-channel engagement platform can help

If you've invested in a good omni-channel engagement platform, you'll find building seamless channel transitions is much easier. With the Nuance Intelligent Engagement Platform, you can:

– Provide seamless experiences in your customers' channels of choice – from the phone, to web, and messaging
– Develop an enterprise-grade virtual assistant (VA) and quickly replicate and adjust your VA experience for use on other channels
– Support your agents with relevant insights and efficiencies, so they can handle any incoming message in the most efficient way

Start supercharging customer experience

Today, every large enterprise needs the power to move customers seamlessly between voice and digital channels. It's the only way to make sure you're delivering the best possible customer experience, every time.

And as you optimize engagement across all your channels, you'll also drive down your contact center costs. It's a true win-win.

Next steps

VIDEO

The customer service dream

Let your customers know how easy it is to message with your company (and reduce call volume at the same time!)

Watch the video

CONTACT US

Let's get started

Whether you need help identifying the right digital channels for your business, or making the most of them—we're here. Don't hesitate to get in touch.

Get in touch

About Nuance Communications, Inc.
Nuance Enterprise is reinventing the relationship between enterprises and consumers through customer engagement solutions powered by artificial intelligence. We aim to be the market leading provider of intelligent self- and assisted-service solutions delivered to large enterprises around the world. These solutions are differentiated by speech, voice biometrics, virtual assistant, web chat and cognitive technologies; enabling cross-channel customer service for IVR, mobile and web, Inbound and Outbound; and magnified by the design and development skill of a global professional services team. We serve Fortune 2500 companies across the globe with a mix of direct and channel partner selling models.

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