

# A Coherent Customer Experience (CX) Across All Channels

Alexander Michael

*Global Practice Area Leader, Information &  
Communications Technology*

and

Michael DeSalles

*Principal Analyst*



**A Frost & Sullivan Executive Brief**  
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F R O S T  S U L L I V A N

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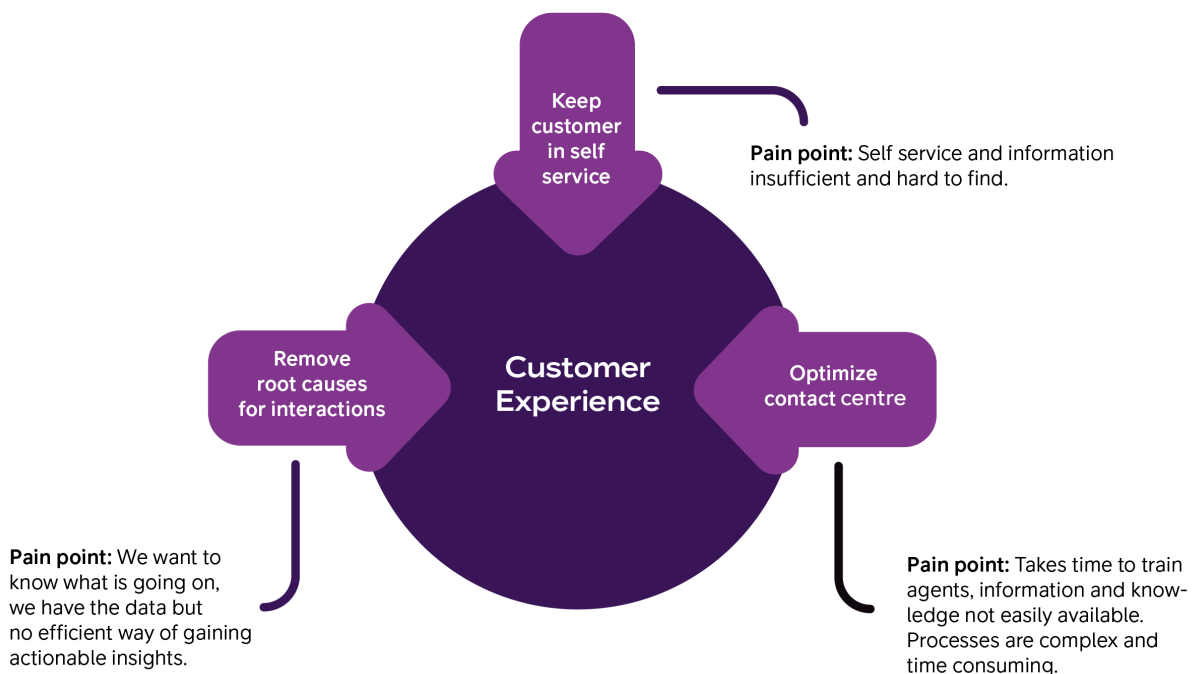
Customer behaviour and expectations are constantly evolving due to the significant technological, economic, and social changes occurring in society. Lower-cost communications networks with 5G and IP telephony provide ubiquitous connectivity, and software applications are now routinely available via the as-a-Service model in the cloud. Customers accustomed to an always-on, everything-everywhere lifestyle demand a mobile-first, targeted, value-rich, short-duration, omnichannel experience.

New, sophisticated offerings from innovative contact centre technology vendors are energising Europe's Contact-Centre-as-a-Service (CCaaS) market. Successful vendors understand the European business environment and continue to develop seamlessly integrated, automated systems that monitor the CX end-to-end across channels and over time. Organisations must harness technology to achieve high levels of personalisation and frictionless experiences at all touchpoints across all interaction channels and devices.

To maximise the differentiation potential that each well-trained contact centre agent represents, organisations must rethink CX delivery along strategic lines. Telia ACE, a leading CCaaS offering in the Nordic region, is an outstanding example of a solution that enhances CX delivery strategically by building on 3 pillars to address CX pain points and minimise friction:

1. Keeping the customer in self-service
2. Optimising contact centre operations
3. Removing the root causes behind interactions

FIG. 1: Telia ACE Strategic Pillars



## Keeping the Customer in Self-service

The Fourth Industrial Revolution boosted CX operations as data permeated all of businesses' and citizens' private lives and the focus shifted from tangible products. Customers felt the traditional 4 elements of the marketing mix—product, price, promotion, and place—no longer offered meaningful differentiation. As it was not enough for companies to offer quality products or services at the lowest price, customer engagement and loyalty emerged as a more sustainable source of differentiation.

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Meanwhile, a Fifth Industrial Revolution is taking place. It describes a quasi-working relationship between humans and artificial intelligence (AI) (i.e. interdependence between humans and AI-powered systems), mass customisation, and personalisation. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the pace toward realising the Fifth Industrial Revolution, which includes customers increasingly expecting to encounter self-service applications to achieve an outcome quickly and accurately.



## Self-service—a Strategic Opportunity

Much research has examined and accepted the tactical importance of online and in-person self-service. Frost & Sullivan tracked the challenges and progress companies are making as self-service has evolved, and many began the self-service journey via customer communities and forums that later became repositories for information sharing and advice. Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) sections emerged from the forum discussions and continue to flourish.

However, the CX industry has only recently embraced self-service as a strategic opportunity. Self-services achieves efficiency benefits. But given the high expectations of modern customers, organisations face a significant challenge to deliver excellent customer outcomes consistently and at speed. Companies must provide self-service options that allow customers to address issues themselves or connect seamlessly to the contact centre without leaving their preferred channel, re-entering information, or repeating steps. This challenge affects customer satisfaction scores (CSATs), business effectiveness, and the evolution of customer expectations.

Most customers can identify a routine interaction. They seek a relevant resolution to a simple query, and a human agent adds little value. In most businesses, 80% of interactions are routine. Enabling customers to self-serve increases their satisfaction, and such solutions must generate relevant, accurate, and bespoke responses. Unsophisticated self-service tools that do not resolve queries are unpopular, deliver a frustrating experience, and generate additional costs downstream.

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## Self-service Orchestration Requires Continuous Innovation

In 2022, the widespread adoption of automation and self-service solutions has dramatically changed the customer interaction landscape. Organisations use increasingly complex applications and systems to engage their customers, encompassing many different technologies, platforms, channels, and devices that must be managed and continuously improved.

Frost & Sullivan's research shows that enterprises capable of managing complexity and maintaining a unified view of the customer (including interactions with self-service applications) achieve the best outcomes. They can better innovate, drive higher productivity, share knowledge, motivate employees to treat customers with empathy (when a complex query benefits from a human agent), and meet their needs and expectations effectively.

Consequently, organisations must develop a culture of continuous innovation in their customer engagement strategies.

### CASE STUDY

#### E.ON Sverige—Living Sustainably

Telia ACE's strategic self-service design has produced some superb examples, such as its successful deployment of advanced self-service options for E.ON Sverige.

E.ON Group is among Europe's largest operators of energy networks and infrastructure. Its Scandinavian subsidiary, E.ON Sverige, serves more than 1 million customers and has 2,200 employees in Sweden and Denmark. E.ON's goal is to enable sustainable living by offering smart, competitive, and sustainable energy solutions for the new energy market. Despite its leading position, E.ON has faced several business challenges:

- Enhancing and simplifying CX
- Improving agent productivity and internal efficiency
- Developing a set of flexible self-service solutions, available 24/7
- Integrating with customer relationship management and back-office processes
- Reducing costs
- Eliminating internal organisational silos

E.ON's strategy is to engage with customers in their channel of preference. To address the challenge of simplifying the CX, E.ON needed to ensure it could complete most customer queries in its original channel. Transferring queries between channels is unpopular with customers. It creates friction and generates avoidable additional costs downstream.

## Sophisticated Conversational Hub

Using Telia ACE deployment, Telia's transformation specialists worked with E.ON's operational and client teams to design and deliver an advanced, conversational interactive voice response (IVR), which acts as a common point of entry to 3 different channels: web, chatbot, and voice.

E.ON employed the logic and integrations from its existing IVR to create a smart self-service journey enabling customers to use free speech. Unlike typical early IVR implementations with inferior speech recognition that only routed calls, E.ON's conversational hub aims to resolve various queries directly. Re-using application programming interfaces (APIs) enables convenient data retrieval and presentation and lets customers interact with the data to feed choices back to the business systems.

In a utility company, most customer queries are routine and do not require human agent assistance. E.ON has gradually increased the number of issues customers can handle via self-service. The conversational hub and text-based chatbot enable customers to resolve routine queries regarding contracts, house moves, bills, payment deferrals, service interruptions, and consumption monitoring. Approximately a quarter of customers now prefer to self-serve using the solution. E.ON's customers have embraced the technology and provide favourable feedback.



When the conversational hub fails to resolve a query, it either sends a text to give customers a shortcut to find information or self-serve online or diverts the interaction to an agent. The solution can authenticate the customer before the hand-off.

E.ON's chatbot coaches—a new role in the company—train the conversational AI engine daily to improve its understanding of customers' natural language. Chatbot coaches (typically experienced contact centre agents with excellent knowledge of customers' needs) can infer meaning using their experience of how customers express themselves.

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The results are as follows:

- Overall costs reduced 15% to 20%
- Customer cases decreased by 15%
- Overall productivity increased by 25%
- A single-platform knowledge base evolved that agents and customers use

### Operational Improvements at E.ON

BEFORE TELIA ACE SELF-SERVICE	AFTER TELIA ACE SELF-SERVICE
800 agents	250 agents
11 sites	2 sites
11 silos	0 silos
3 systems	1 system

This case study is among several example solutions E.ON has implemented. With Telia's self-service solution, E.ON could fulfil its mission to provide world-class CX and help all customers, regardless of energy type, to make smart energy choices.



## Optimising Contact Centre Operations

Contact centres are highly data-oriented environments, and many CX executives base their entire professional existence and self-understanding on their planning's accuracy. Traditionally, optimising contract centre operations relied on transactional performance indicators and the presumption that we could foresee every eventuality enforce policies using statistical models, and write contingency plans for every known risk.

The pandemic caused a rethink and made top management recognise the vital strategy implications of contact centre optimisation for the entire company. Most CX processes belong to the business recovery platinum tier. It comprises business functions that, if unavailable, result in financial loss and legal penalties and negatively affect the brand. Today, optimisation involves capturing the levers an organisation can control in the face of extreme adversity, maximising agility, and always offering useful CX.

When COVID-19 first hit, most CX executives experienced approximately 2 months when customers relaxed expectations and were more patient. Many brands used the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse when service standards fell short of customer expectations. Most CX thought leaders agree, however, that customers quickly lost patience. They normalised their expectations to pre-COVID-19 levels, expecting a rich, hyperpersonalised, digital experience involving speed, data security, privacy, and self-service. Brands cannot operate in crisis mode because they are unprepared for the next emergency, as customers may not concede another grace period.

Customer journeys are changing and so must contact centre workflows. In Frost & Sullivan's experience, most organisations' essential CX processes are up to 30 years old. Before designing and executing new CX strategies, organisations should map and analyse existing journeys and processes. Although technology provides an effective solution to most CX challenges, often, re-engineering old processes best harnesses technology and increases resilience. For example, many organisations must separate (and automate) personal data, payment, and authentication in the agent workflows.

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## Intelligent, Predictive Access to Knowledge, Optimising for Revenue

With so much at stake, contact centre optimisation requires companies to emphasise the self-sufficiency of the agent environment, focus on tools that reduce agent effort, and enhance agent productivity, knowledge, and empowerment.

Contact centres are revenue hubs, and companies should regard agents more as powerful differentiators than assets. Natural touchpoints equal merchandising opportunities, and relevance and timing increase conversion.

Customers expect brands to treat them consistently and appropriately, and agents need awareness of what is appropriate using a single view of the customer and an understanding of how they feel in the moment. Knowledge is essential, and the Entur case study shows how smart access to knowledge was central to its pandemic response.

Entur experienced how the knowledge made available to customers and agents reduced effort, minimised friction, created a superior experience, and reduced effort and cost downstream by eliminating further interactions. These are all fundamental modern CX operation goals that organisations can achieve with simple solutions.

Frost & Sullivan sees a trend toward cross-skilled agents capable of delivering an empathetic, intuitive experience rather than just being efficient. Cross-skilled teams mitigate forecasting uncertainty from their dynamic deployment and redeployment across several functions when they have access to knowledge and predictive AI-powered tools.



## Agent Experience (AX) is the New CX

The shift in competitive parameters in recognition of CX as the driver of trust and loyalty will affect hiring, onboarding, and training, especially when organisations recruit work-at-home agents directly. Frost & Sullivan believes this is the future of most organisations.

Organisations will move to new procedures for management and supervision, virtual onboarding and training, and certification and will attempt to use training tools more effectively. Many organisations see working from home as a reward, which will benefit the best-performing agents. There are many potential controversies to avoid, and questions remain about ensuring agents embody brand values. Organisations are learning from agents who have never been to a site. They will carefully embed culture in agents' daily activities, regardless of where they work.

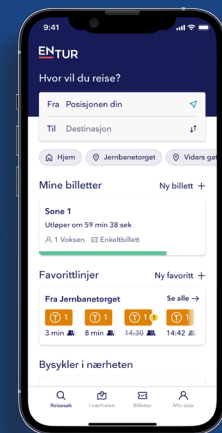
Countless organisations, such as Entur, have recorded positive results and feedback from agents and clients despite the chaos that COVID-19-related lockdowns caused. So, AX is the new CX, and several new work and reward models will emerge. Businesses must reimagine most of their key performance indicators to reward agents for being empathetic rather than transactional and providing a people-centric, not a process-focused, experience.

Optimisation comes down to soft factors such as culture, attitude, and trust, as the Entur case study demonstrates. Partnerships with CX technology vendors and the quality and flexibility of the CX technology are essential to AX and achieving agility and resilience. Initiating an inclusive approach will get organisations through future emergencies. Consequently, optimisation relies on enablement, mitigation, motivation, and knowledge rather than policy enforcement.

### CASE STUDY

#### Entur, the Norwegian National Travel Platform

The Norwegian government created Entur to enable sustainable travel throughout the country. With Entur, travellers can search for connections from all Norwegian public transport providers, including bus, train, tram, and ferry operators. Entur builds digital infrastructure; runs call centres, information offices, and an app; collects, refines, and shares open traffic data; and creates future-oriented services for travel planning and ticket sales. Entur sells tickets for all trains and several other public transport alternatives.



## How Entur Addressed its Unique Challenges During Lockdown

COVID-19 hit Entur on days 1, 2, and 3 of the national lockdown in Norway with a massive influx of extra phone calls and chats with travellers' questions. Entur also faced many email cancellations that took longer to process. There were 17,000 excess cancellations during March 2020, 4 times more than usual. CCaaS was essential to Entur's success, and it is convinced it would have faced a worse outcome had it still operated its previous on-premises solution.

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Entur's departments improvised new processes that enabled staff to work productively from home. Telia ACE already categorised every inbound call. When travellers gave specific feedback and recommendations about improvements to the train experience, Entur gathered these in a collaboration tool where team leaders and operations managers focussed agents' attention. Entur saw common knowledge improve rapidly. Not all staff members knew each other pre-pandemic, and at the big Lillehammer site, many staff members had never spoken to each other. The social contact improved, and the organisation democratised, albeit virtually. The workforce demonstrated extraordinary adaptability and determination. Post-lockdown, all colleagues still take significantly more responsibility for their daily learning.



## The Role of ACE Knowledge in Maintaining a Useful CX

ACE Knowledge is an AI- and data-driven knowledge base and an essential part of Telia's ACE offering. ACE Knowledge allows organisations to gather and manage their entire fact base on a single platform to provide internal agent support, smart FAQ as well as information and training for ACE Chatbot.

Dynamic train service changes and a constant flow of new information, guidelines, and step-by-step instructions from train operators and the authorities forced Entur to structure knowledge tools better, with easier access to more comprehensive articles. Agent resource management is more accurate now, and the shared knowledge pool is better. Updating articles was a push process but has become smoother, allowing information to flow naturally into the system.

The rapidly evolving knowledge base was necessary in almost real time, and ACE Knowledge supported the updates' immediacy. The shared information volume became substantial and required accurate management when counties introduced local restrictions. The 2 ACE Knowledge features that were particularly valuable to Entur were the ability to define several sets of answers to the same question, such as traveller- and agent-facing responses with additional details that allowed agents to make informed choices, and the ability to use decision trees in documents, which proved particularly powerful in the main COVID-19 article. Entur can change elements of the decision tree without editing the entire article and give ownership of different branches of it to different staff members.

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Staff members can collaborate to maintain the same article without taking it down. Travellers did not experience any drop in Entur's service beyond the first few days of lockdown, and the information Entur feeds back to train operators using traveller interactions improved. Entur was at the centre of the intelligence gathering with systems and processes it could harness to provide intelligence on traveller satisfaction and the nature of issues experienced. Entur has influenced train operator priorities to better align with traveller expectations and has accelerated the development of new functionality that will enable travellers to self-serve reservation and ticket changes.

## How Entur Improved Performance on its Journey with Telia ACE

Entur introduced Telia ACE at the end of 2018 and measured an efficiency increase of 18% between 2019 and 2021 and a CSAT increase of 3 percentage points during the same period. It believes the browser-based user interface made a decisive contribution to its success.

Entur feels it can affect the Telia ACE roadmap to maximise the return on its investment. A prominent system vendor had provided Entur's previous CX solution. However, it had evolved less and Entur had less influence over changes, fewer dealings with the vendor, and a longer route to the developers. Entur selected Telia ACE after an extensive, systematic tender that compared Telia ACE to the best available solutions. A main selection criterion was Telia's ability to provide everything Entur needed (e.g., workforce management tools and call and email handling), as it favoured a single-vendor environment. Entur was eager to dispose of physical handsets, move exclusively to softphones, manage more of the solution itself, and have a solid partner that would not fire-and-forget. Entur had a list of more than 100 essential demands that Telia could best fulfil.



## Removing Root Causes for Interactions

Omnichannel customer engagement is essential for survival because customers increasingly take a consistent, high-quality CX for granted regardless of how, where, and why they choose to interact with an organisation.

Reducing customer effort by ensuring that data and context from previous interactions carry over to subsequent channels is now a hygiene factor. However, reducing customer effort by removing the root causes for interactions—eliminating the necessity for the interaction—is still an untapped source of meaningful differentiation for many organisations.

As customers' lives become progressively device-driven, an always-on, hyperconnected environment with multiple customer touchpoints increases in importance to the commercial success of a business. Companies globally are undergoing a digital service transformation, constantly evolving and innovating to survive and thrive.

Most CX professionals agree that no substitute exists for the human touch that well-trained and motivated agents provide in omnichannel contact centres when connecting virtually with customers for complex service and sales support issues. Agents are the crucial link to successful and profitable customer engagement. For most customers, however, the best possible experience involves no interaction because any problem that might have triggered one is handled proactively. Many root causes are banal (e.g., unclear or insufficient communication to customers) and easy to fix, yet many businesses fixate on deflecting the interactions the contact centre receives rather than identifying their root causes.

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## Why Customers Call: How Interaction Analytics Work

Interaction Analytics is a smart tool that enables analysing large amounts of data and extracting insights from every interaction. It comprises AI-powered omnichannel analytics that identifies trends and root causes across every interaction. Interaction Analytics analyses and measures voice, text, and digital conversations to uncover insight that drives CX improvements.

- Interaction Analytics uses configurable word clouds and graphs—it visualises volumes, what is said, who says it, and their emotions.
- The tool provides an automatic trend overview and proactive analysis.
- Sentiment analysis reveals positive and negative emotions during discrete interactions.
- Related phrases show the relationship between utterances (customer and agent).

Harnessing the tool can assist with other essential internal contact centre activities, including:

- Agent coaching
- Long-term analysis
- Custom queries by call type
- Ad-hoc call analysis

This type of deep, advanced analysis enables organisations to act and communicate with customers more proactively, which delivers higher CSAT and more satisfied employees long term. Any new trend in customer service calls can provide clues about technical problems, marketing issues, or an open possibility to act proactively in customer communication.

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**“Interaction Analytics saves more time for the team leader to be there for the agents and to coach them versus simply generating a report for them to view.”**

**“It can be hard to determine causality; it’s not just some magic button you push. You have to interpret the results.”**

Per Åström, Business Solution Specialist, Telia

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## Success Story: Telia's Customer Service Operations in Sweden

Businesses often lack a single, unified view of the customer, critical customer information and context, and effective processes. Furthermore, they often lack the tools to track the root cause of interactions and may be uncertain about why customers are calling them.

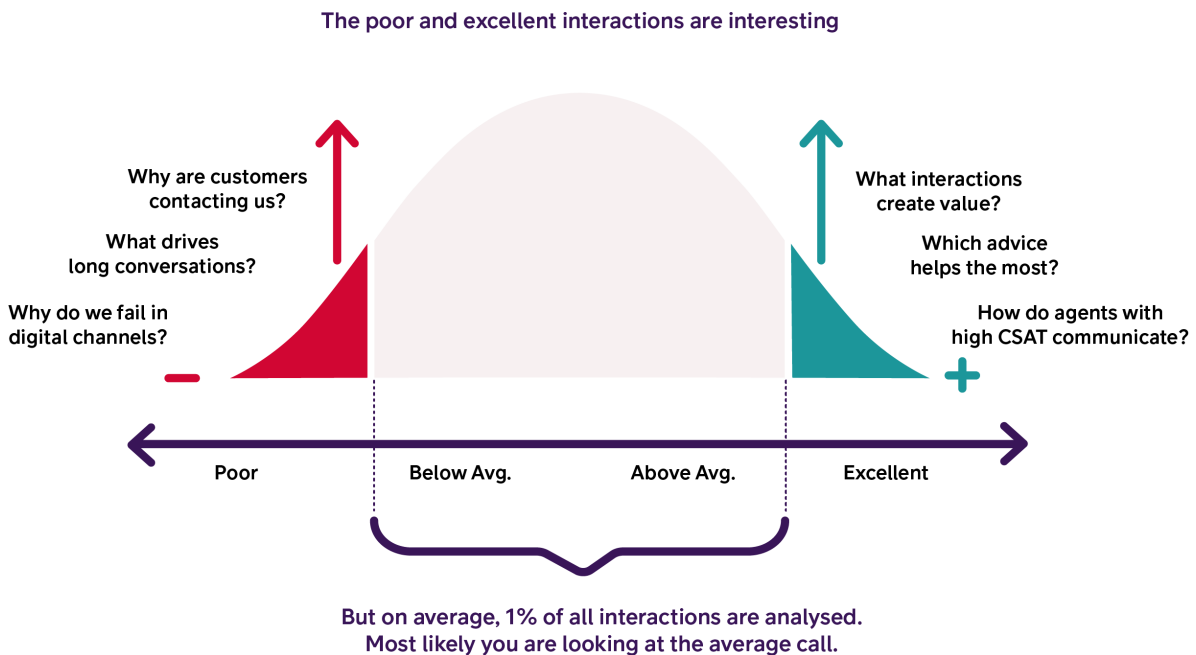
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Telia's customer service centres of excellence in Sweden experienced this. Centre managers were struggling to understand significant daily variations in call volumes. Simple call monitoring using a traditional approach to root cause analysis (see Fig. 2) did not explain the spikes.

FIG. 2: Root Cause Analysis: Traditional Call Monitoring

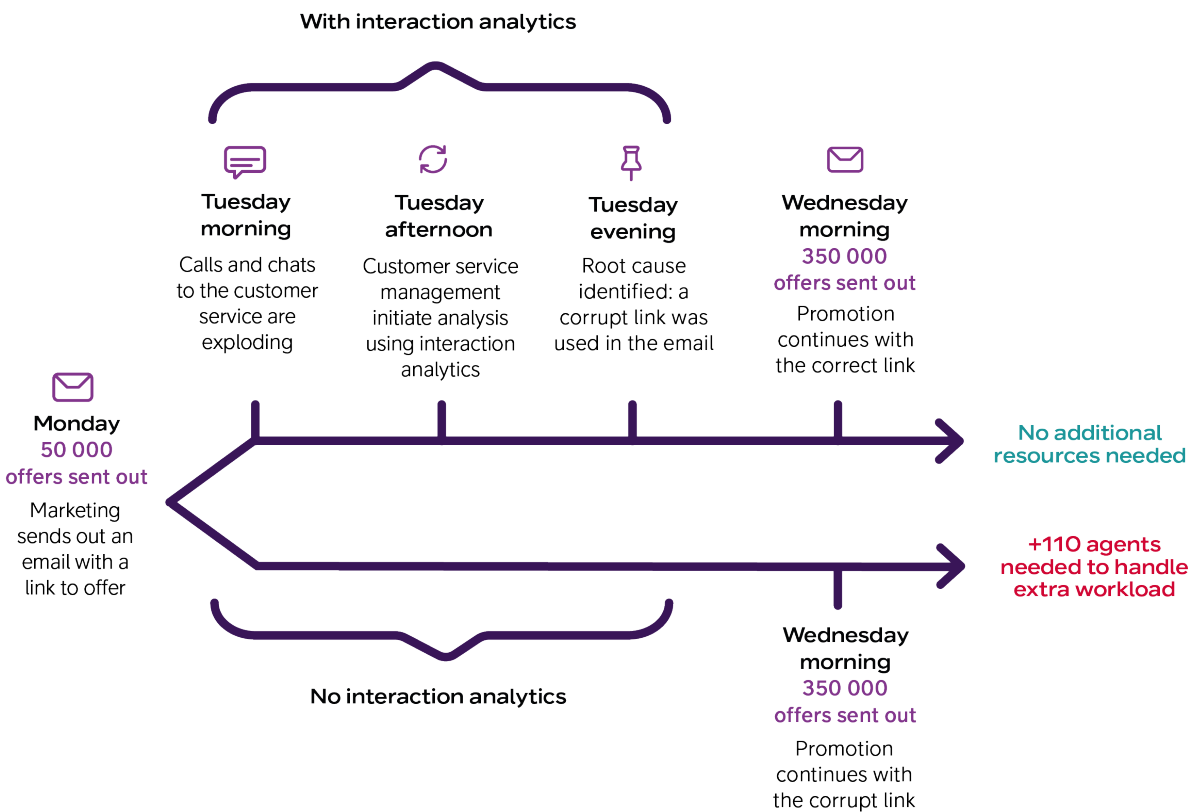


The traditional approach is slow, tedious, and labour intensive. Telia would randomly sample approximately 1% of interactions, so its staff spent most of their time analysing interactions unrelated to the root cause that provided little information and insight.

**Telia’s main benefit from harnessing interaction analytics was identifying the interactions that most affected customer outcomes.**

Telia’s main benefit from harnessing interaction analytics was identifying the interactions that most affected customer outcomes. In Fig. 2, those would be the interactions on the far left-hand side, producing poor outcomes, and the interactional on the far right-hand side, producing excellent outcomes.

**FIG. 3: Root Cause Analysis: Interaction Analytics**



Telia quickly and efficiently identified the root cause as a broken promotional web link. Interaction Analytics reduced the time necessary to complete the analysis and identify the root cause, from the weeks or months of traditional call monitoring to 1 day, as Fig. 3 illustrates.

## Analyst Perspective: The Last Word

Contact centres are pioneering global customer interactions. With the latest customer intelligence tools, organisations can:

- Better respond to customer needs and demands
- Fully understand customer sentiments and emotions
- Harness an intelligent knowledge base to respond to questions across channels
- Enhance the customer relationship and create brand ambassadors
- Integrate seamlessly with modern workforce optimisation tools to drive information to the right people at the right time
- Help organisations increase revenues, reduce costs, and enhance CX

Despite the disruptive COVID-19 pandemic, omnichannel customer engagement as a business imperative is here to stay and is a critical component of CX strategies and customer journey mapping. During the last decade, several trends for contact centres have revolved around digital transformation, AI, new channels, a new focus on AX, and the evolution of contact centre analytics. These should be essential to an overall service strategy. Customers must be able to interact with an organisation at the time and through the channel of their choice.

Smart companies use customer data and analytics to adapt to change quickly and proactively and provide the best experience for every customer by understanding who they are, what they need, and how to best train agents accordingly. With its Interaction Analytics platform, Telia has earned and increased its relevance as a digitalisation partner for its clients.

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## About Telia

Telia Company, present in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden, serves millions of customers every day in one of the world's most connected regions. Telia connects businesses, individuals, families and communities via fixed and mobile communication solutions. Its services positively affect society, the economy and the environment and pave the way for an inclusive society. In an ecosystem of new start-ups and major service providers, Telia delivers the infrastructure for creativity, growth and change. Telia has approximately 470,000 shareholders.

Telia believes an excellent customer service experience is seamless, with the native intelligence to route customer enquiries to the appropriate answer or person, regardless of channel. It has developed its own contact centre as a service platform, Telia ACE, designed for seamless customer interaction and smart conversations.

## About Frost & Sullivan

For the past 60 years, Frost & Sullivan has applied actionable insights to create a stream of innovative growth opportunities for companies, governments, and investors. With a team of experts based in 45 global offices, we generate intelligence spanning 10 industries, 35 sectors, and 300 markets using a powerful understanding of how value chains operate on a global level.

Frost & Sullivan is at the centre of an ecosystem of best practice cultivation, executive peer support, and cutting-edge insights that is singularly focused on reshaping the world through managed growth.

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Growth is a journey. We are your guide.

For over six decades, Frost & Sullivan has provided actionable insights to corporations, governments and investors, resulting in a stream of innovative growth opportunities that allow them to maximize their economic potential, navigate emerging Mega Trends and shape a future based on sustainable growth.

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