

CloudCall Insight

Perfecting The Art of Conversation With Your Customers



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Introduction

Companies are in a constant dialogue with their customers. Customers get in touch with brands and businesses to research and buy new products, get support for services, and track deliveries. This dialogue with businesses has only been increasing as e-commerce becomes ubiquitous.

The vast majority of this contact is remote, carried out by phone, online or via mobile apps. And the use of these channels to sell will only increase further as businesses continue to adapt and evolve during the COVID-19 pandemic. Put simply, its more important than ever that businesses understand the best ways to communicate with customers.

But are these conversations truly a dialogue or more like two monologues? What makes a 'good' conversation, and what role does each channel play? CloudCall has been considering the Art of Conversation - examining how businesses can improve the quality of contact they have with their customers.

When is the right time to send a text, and when do we want to talk? What can be automated, and what demands the human touch? How are businesses managing these multi-channel communications? And how much do businesses need to adapt their communication strategies for different demographics?

To answer these questions, CloudCall commissioned RedFox Research, a London-based research agency, to conduct a survey of over 1000 customers. The research was carried out in January 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

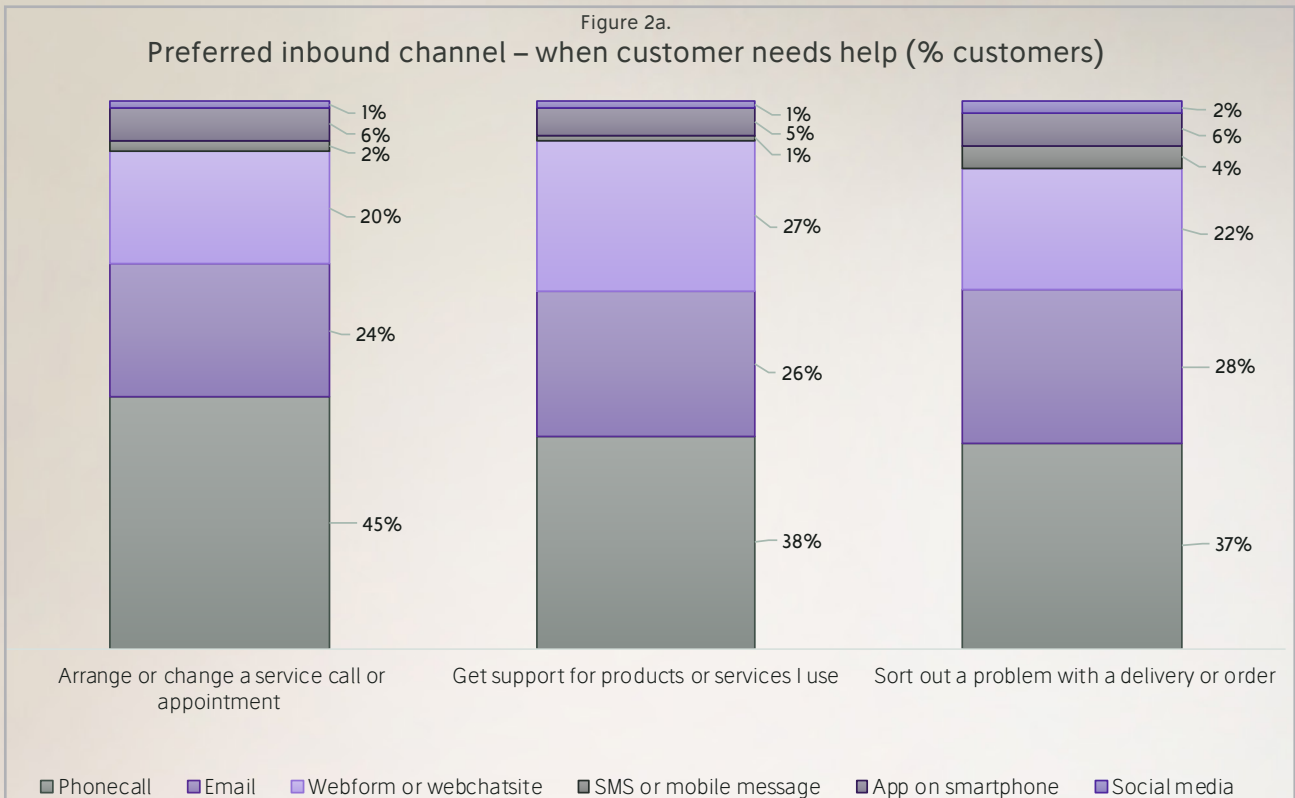
We want to be sensitive to businesses facing disruptions due to COVID-19, while helping them with the means to overcome this difficult situation and come back fighting. We know the world has changed and good communication is vital right now. This whitepaper shines a light on the different expectations customers have on how they expect you to communicate with them. It explores different channels and provides insight into where and when to use them.

Did you know:

87% say it's important they can use the right channel of communication at the right time.

Being a good listener means offering the right channels at the right time

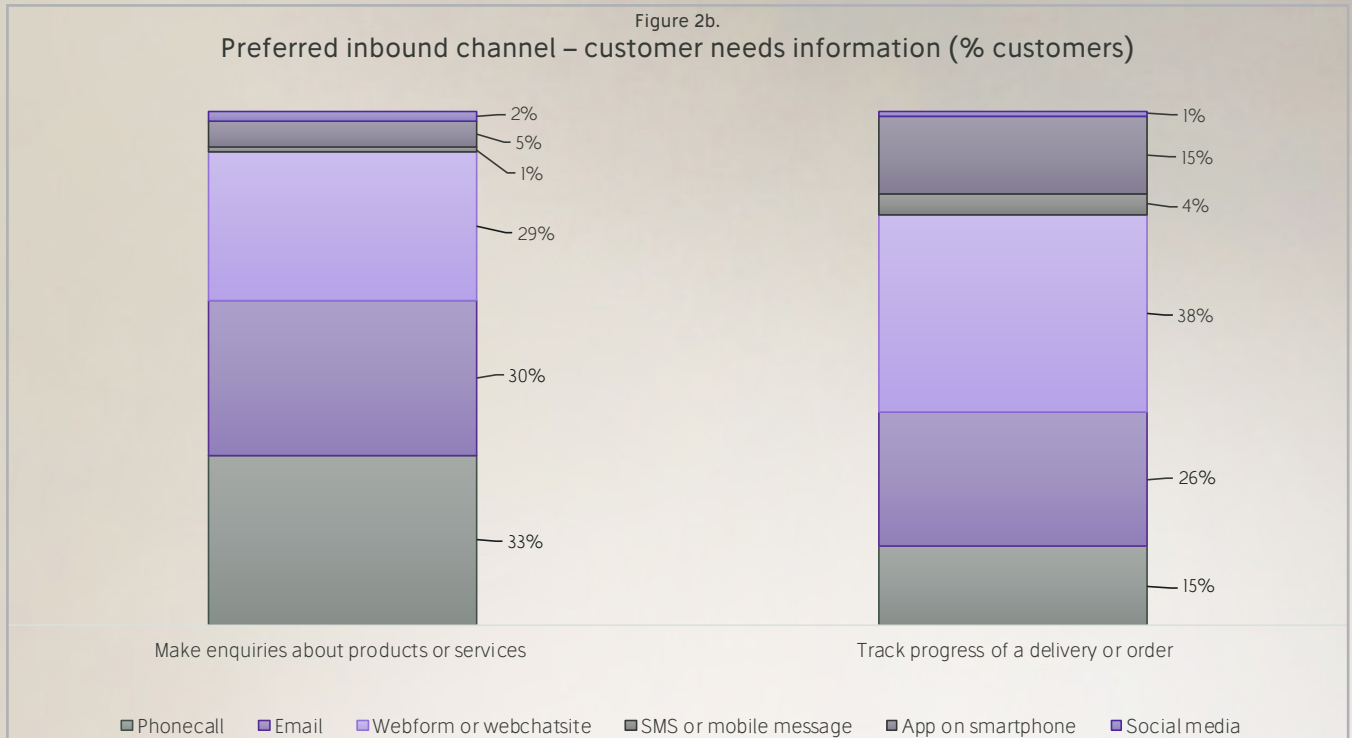
How customers want to interact depends on what they are trying to do. While web-chats and apps are gaining acceptance, there are still times when customers want to pick up the phone and speak to a human being.



What about situations where customers need help to sort out a problem?

Many customers still seek the reassurance of a phone call. When arranging a service call or appointment for example, 45% of customers feel happier speaking to a real person on the phone. That's double the number who will self-serve on a website (20%) or prefer to send an email (24%). And the story plays out in a similar way for product and service support, and sorting out problems with delivery.

In highly transactional situations, where the goal is to access information, customers are often happy to self-serve. Tracking progress of deliveries or orders is a good example of this. As Fig. 2b shows, 38% would prefer to use a web-form or web-chat to track the progress of a delivery; more than twice as many as want to be able to phone (15%).



Did you know?
50% of Gen Z would rather deal with a computer if it had full access to account history, compared with 39% of millennials.

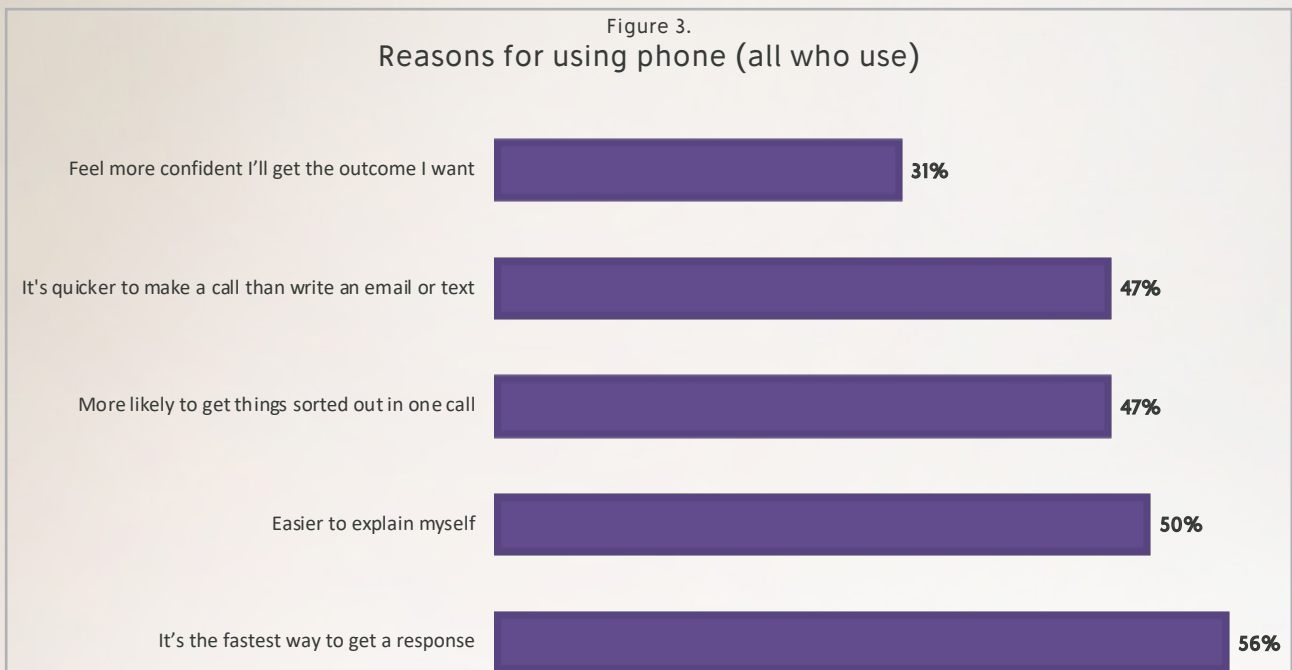


Customers want choice - there is no one size fits all

What's also clear is that 'one size' does not fit all. While we saw (Fig. 2a) that preference for using the phone tends to come into play most where help or support is needed, there are people who opt for digital channels even in these situations.

For many people, making a phone call still feels like the most reliable way to get things done. Fig. 3 shows customers believe it's the fastest way to get a response (56%), it's easier to explain themselves (50%) and they are more likely to get things sorted out in one call (47%).

However, the phone brings its own frustrations, more than half (53%) of people complain about being put on hold (53%), and over a third (38%) worry that there's no record of what they have said. Similarly, over a third (37%) don't like speaking to people in call centres.



61% of those surveyed believe email has the advantage of being 'on record' and suits people who like to take their time over what they say. But the downside comes in getting a reply as Fig. 4 shows. Customers are so concerned about emails being ignored that just over a third (35%) follow up using a different method before getting a reply to their email.

Still, it's not always convenient to talk on the phone, and the vast majority (71%) state it's important they can text or use other options if they don't want to talk on the phone.



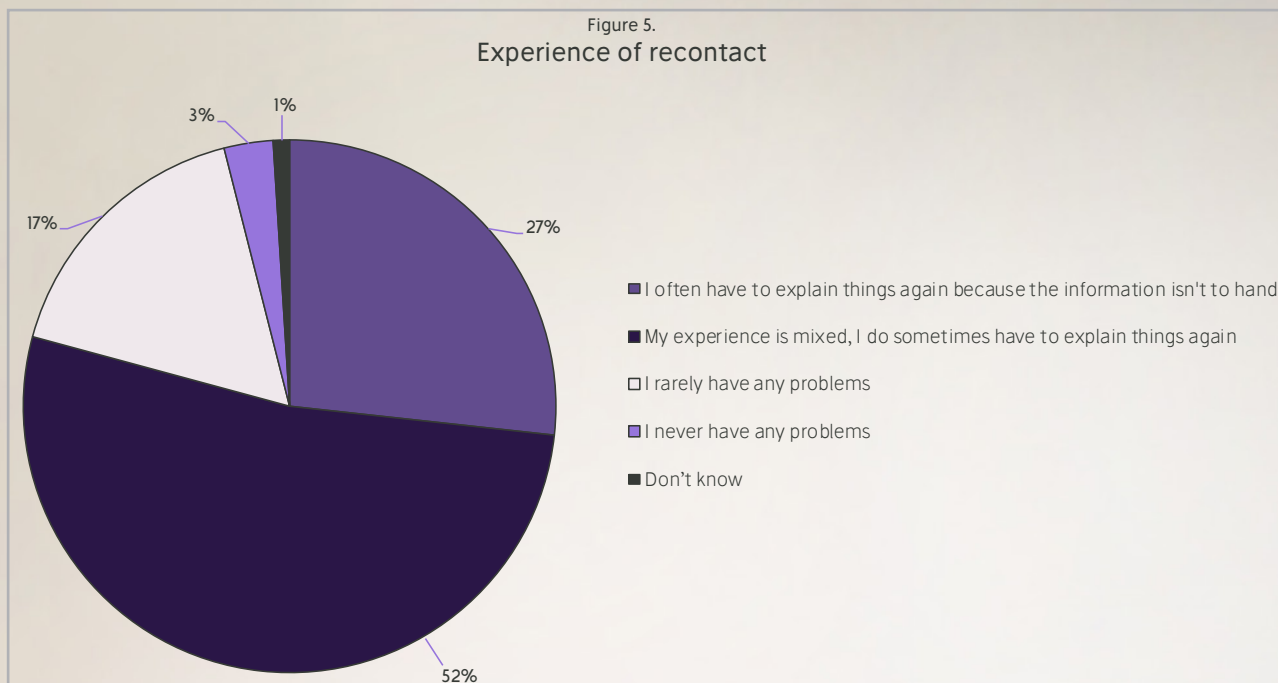
Did you know?...

73% make a phone call to arrange or change a service call or appointment

42% of customers don't like to use email because they don't know when, or if, they'll get a reply

Conversations need to be more joined-up and fluent

It's not uncommon for customers to need to follow up on a call or a conversation they've started online. 86% of customers say that when that happens, it's important that there's a record of their previous conversation. But all too often, that information isn't available when customers follow up.



79% of people find there are times when they have to explain the problem all over again. This suggests that your important customer conversations aren't being captured and that CRM systems are not in place, or are not being used effectively across channels.



Outbound sales contact: Direct-to-mobile gets the attention of Gen Z and Millennials

Phone and online self-service are the preferred channels when customers want to make contact, but what about when businesses want to reach them? What should they use for their marketing campaigns?

What's interesting is that the channels people say they want to be reached by aren't necessarily the ones which are most effective. For sales contact, customers overwhelmingly report a preference for email over any other channel.

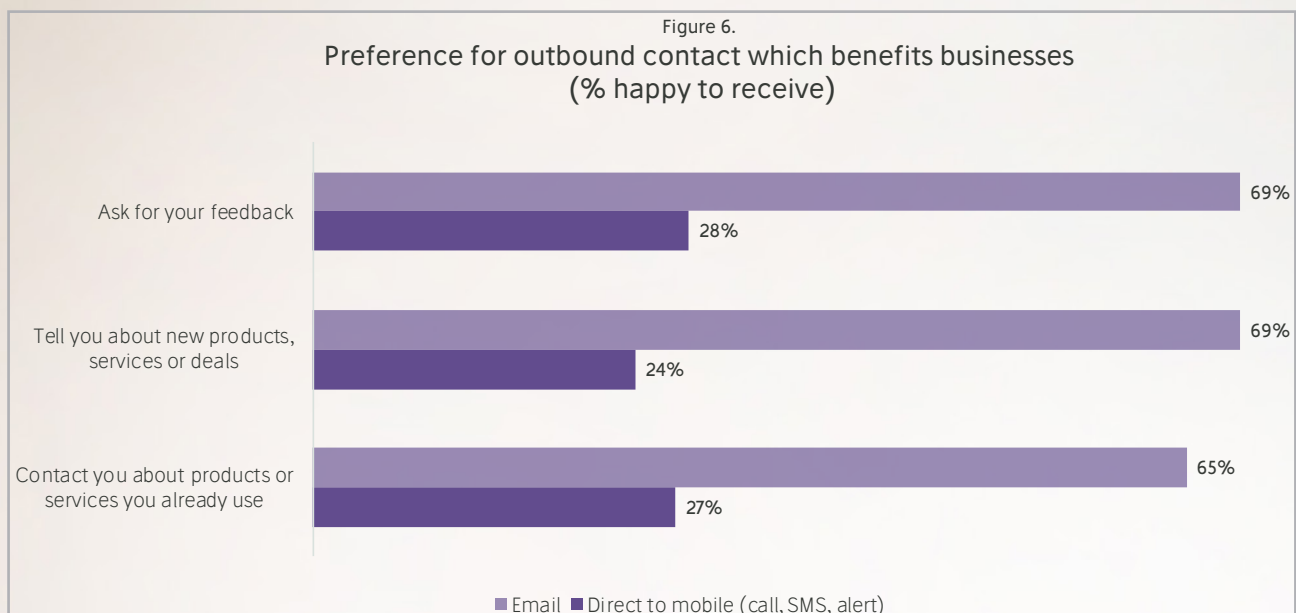
Confused about generations?

2000 - present: Gen Z
1980 - 2000: Millennials
1965 - 1979: Gen X
1946 - 1964: Boomers

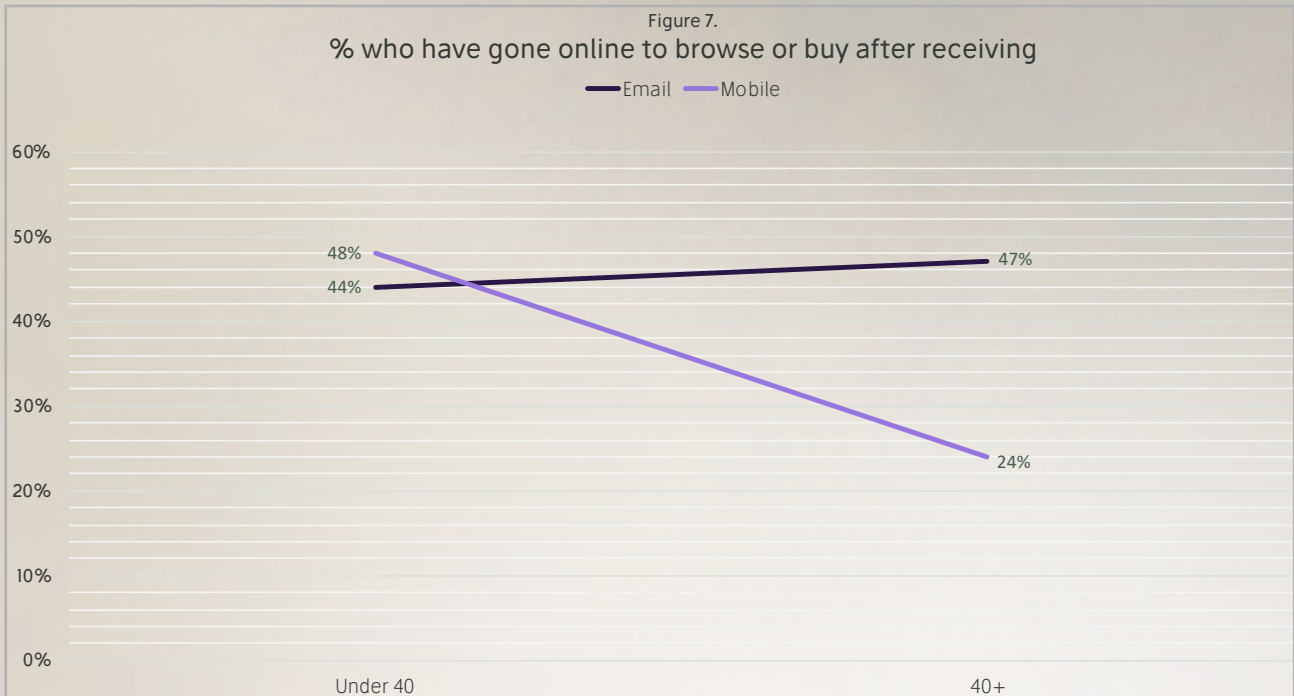
Did you know?

76% of under 40s want to do **everything** from their smartphone.

The vast majority, 69%, state they are happy to be contacted with offers of new products and services by email. Contrast that to a call, message or app alert that were welcomed by only 24% of customers (Fig. 6).



However, businesses meet the same challenges around email that customers face, as Fig. 7 shows. Although email is easy and non-intrusive, we can ignore it if we choose. And in reality, customers often do - especially younger people.



We have reached a tipping point, and online marketers who ignore that will lose out. It's therefore worth understanding in more depth what exactly people want from mobile communications.



Did you know?

In the past two years, 48% of under 40s (Gen Z and Millennials) have gone online to browse or buy from retailers in response to a call or message to a mobile. That makes it more effective than email (44%).

First of all, businesses should not expect to get results from calling alone. 67% of customers are reluctant to answer their mobile phone if they don't know who's calling. So, it's important to give people as much information as possible.

41% say they are more likely to engage if businesses follow up a missed call with a text message they can respond to in their own time. Indeed, sometimes a text alone is enough. 73% have reacted to a text message from a business, and 23% have been prompted to review a deal or contract coming to an end e.g. insurance or mobile contract.

67% of people don't answer their mobile phone if they don't know who's calling.

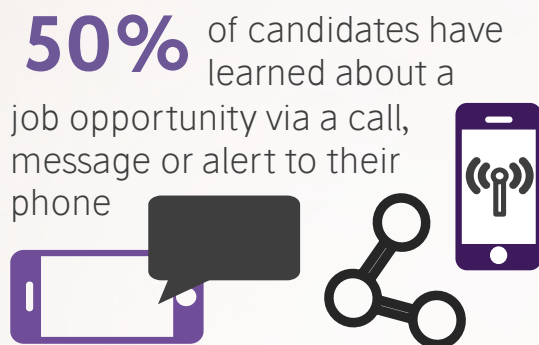
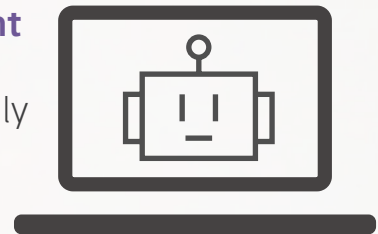
78% say sometimes all that's needed is a text to remind them of an appointment or delivery.

The future is mobile



Half of under 25s

prefer an **intelligent machine** to a friendly human



60% of Gen Z

who were contacted about a job heard about it **direct to mobile**



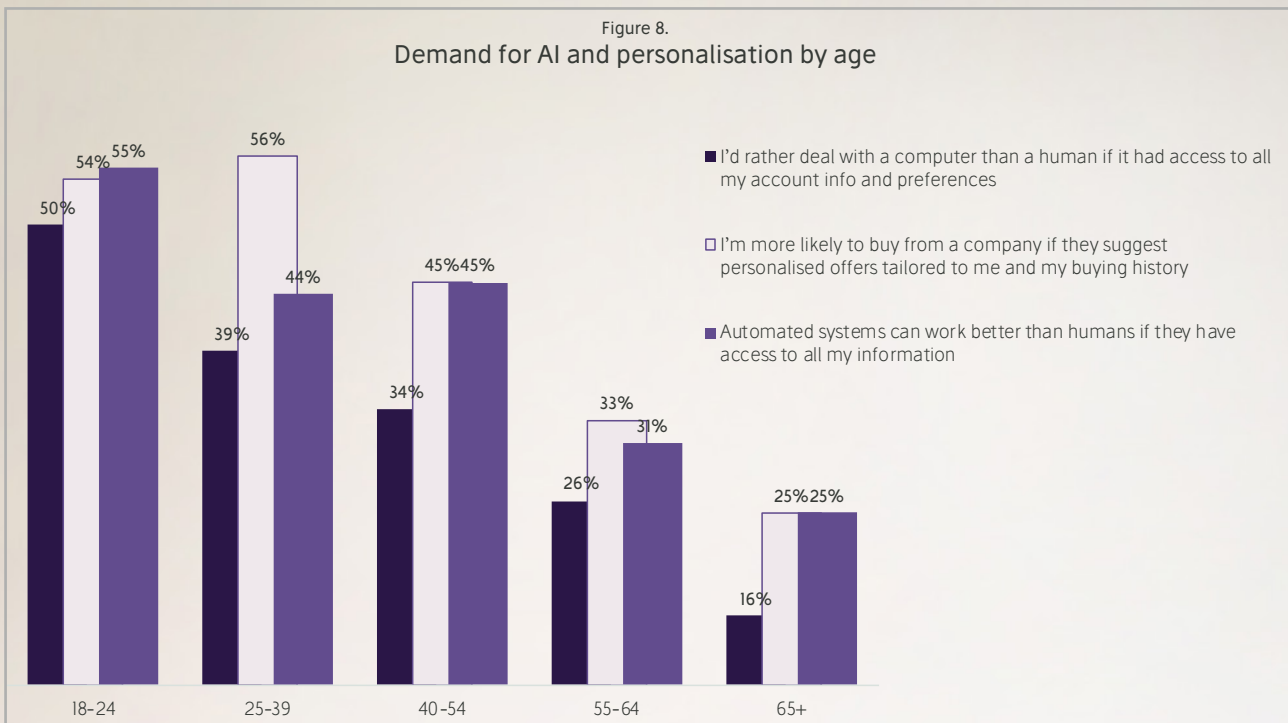
while only **40%** saw an email



Communicating with Gen Z

We've seen that Gen Z and Millennials are more open to direct communication. But what comes with this are higher expectations around personalisation. Over half of these younger customers are more likely to buy if offers are tailored to them and their buying history.

Younger customers are savvier about how their personal data can benefit them. Indeed, 54% of Gen Z think automated systems can work better than humans, and 50% would rather deal with a computer than a person.



While **customers in general** might be less ready to engage with automated systems now.

52% expect that in five years time we'll talk to automated systems as though they are human.



Five Tips for Better Conversations

1 Your customers still want to talk



While self-service options such as web forms, chat and apps are fine for tracking deliveries, many people still want to pick up the phone when they have problems.

Ultimately, businesses must develop their use of mobile communication to allow customers to talk without talking, and feel confident they'll get a reply.

2 Have customers details to hand



Customers don't expect to have to repeat themselves every time they get in contact, but often they do. Make sure your customer contact is joined up across channels.

3 Mobile first



Younger customers expect to do everything from their mobile phone. But they won't always take your call. Use text and messaging to prime them and offer different options for taking the conversation further.

4 Tailor your offers



The more customers understand the value of their data, the more they will expect to see benefits for themselves. Tailor offers and personalise contact, especially to mobile.

5 Make sure you get heard



Make sure you get heard. Customers don't object to email, but it isn't as effective as calling or messaging. If you've got something valid to say, go direct to mobile.

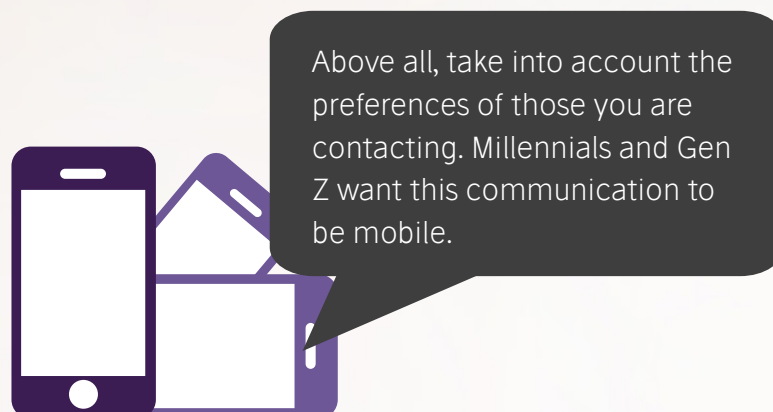
Conclusions

Our research into the Art of Conversation has provided valuable insight into customer communication preferences, and has taken us on a sometimes surprising but nevertheless compelling journey. Here are some important conclusions to take away:

- Know who you are talking to and use the best channel to communicate with them.
- Customers phone when they need to be sure of a response.
- Customers turn to email because it's on record and unpressurised, but worry they won't get the response they need fast enough.
- Businesses must develop their use of mobile communication to allow customers to talk without talking, and feel confident they'll get a reply.
- We have reached a tipping point. Millennials and Gen Z are running their lives from their phones, but businesses need to know the rules and evolve.

Based on this research, it is evident that the future is mobile, the current climate strengthens this argument further. It is apparent that what's important to customers is that businesses are available via the right channel for their current predicament. If they require information from you, make it easy for them to use mobile communications. If they need immediate help, ensure they can reach you by phone.

The variety of communication channels now available mean that conversations with customers are easily fragmented. It is vital that businesses ensure they unify their communications, guaranteeing that customers do not need to explain things over and over again. Customers expect an organisation to have all relevant information to hand. Customers that experience poor contact with a business will often walk away, meaning that it is imperative that an organisation gets it right every time.



How can technology help you to have meaningful conversations with your customers?

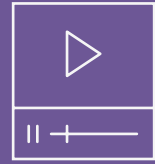
Reach customers the way they want to be contacted by using tools such as text messaging.



Direct your customers to the person that can best assist them with calling groups.



Use training tools such as call recording to make sure every point of contact is positive.



Keep customers records to hand, with up to date information by using tools such as inbound screen pops and call logs.



To find out how we can help you have better conversations with your customers visit www.cloudcall.com

CloudCall create innovative technology that makes business communications easier, quicker and more powerful. Through providing advanced software that integrates with CRMs, our users can manage their communications in the same space as their data, providing insight that has the power to transform the way they work.



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