

BOOSTING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WITH ATTENDED AUTOMATION

How attended bots can help increase customer-facing employees' productivity by providing real-time, contextual guidance every day



Inside:

- › The Coca-Cola Company's intelligent automation leader on how attended automation increases productivity
- › NICE Systems' executive on creating a symbiotic man-machine working relationship through attended automation
- › How Telia Finland Oyj reduced average hold time by 30 to 50 percent

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A key driver for process changes in many organizations, on top of adapting to a hybrid-work model, is customer experience (CX). In this new working context, companies need to avoid customers turning to competitors by ensuring employees deliver high-quality service.

To do this, organizations can implement attended automation. With attended automation robots are implemented on employees' desktops to assist them in their day-to-day jobs by carrying out repetitive tasks. As Oded Karev, general manager at NICE RPA, explains, with attended automation "we have a symbiotic of man working with machine".

"We have the robots processing transactions, guiding agents, collecting data, navigating through and updating multiple systems," he says.

This *PEX Network* report created in collaboration with NICE Systems, provides an understanding of what attended automation can offer to improve employees' productivity and in turn deliver a better service to customers. Featuring insights from experts at The Coca-Cola Company, Swinton Group, Telia Finland Oyj and NICE Systems, it offers advice on how best to leverage attended automation and integrate it with intelligent automation (IA) technologies.

"The robots can give alerts about upcoming process automation before it is implemented, so once it is deployed it is not imposed and the robot can help with guiding employees through it."

Oded Karev

General manager at NICE RPA

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The need to ensure great customer experience

Customers are a key driver in organizations' process journey. PEX Network's [The PEX Report 2022: Global state of process excellence](#) revealed that customer-centric process management is the second top priority for process improvement among the organizations surveyed, while improving customer satisfaction through better quality and efficiency was the third way in which process programs were viewed.

Optimizing customer-facing processes should be therefore at the forefront of companies' strategies to allow for business growth. Jon Atienza, intelligent automation manager at The Coca-Cola Company explains how it is a "win-win for everyone".

On one hand, it will help customers fulfil a need without having to go "out of their way" and use a different channel from their preferred one. On the other hand, if a customer's need is fulfilled upfront there is no need for the back-end office to resolve these issues.

"When customers' needs and pain points are being addressed immediately, it creates brand loyalty," Atienza says. "Focusing on servicing operations and looking at customer input will remove the need for interaction (due to poor and broken processes) with them which will in turn decrease incoming servicing demand volume."

Attended automation can play a key part here. It was first coined by NICE Systems in 2011 after the company purchased Eglue, which had a capability to apply "electronic glue" to bring disparate applications together and allow to read information from one and move it to the other or manipulate data.

The technology encompasses software robots implemented on every employee's desktop, that activate when an employee may need assistance or next-best-action guidance to help them work through complex processes. The robots communicate via an intelligent, interactive screen that can be fully customized to each employee's role and responsibilities. By taking care of repetitive admin tasks, attended automation simplifies operational processes for employees and increases efficiency and accuracy.

Real-time triggers are activated by the employee's desktop actions, which can take the form of typing a certain word, initiating a process or making a specific selection with the mouse. These can trigger the bot to automate an element of the employee's desktop, or issue out a callout with guidance on next steps or links to relevant data and actions.

Unlike RPA, attended automation does not create exception piles when the bot encounters a situation outside the binary yes/no rules it works under, that employees need to resolve later.

For customer-facing processes, Atienza explains that attended automation cuts down on the wait time and the batching volume.

"Everything happens in real time and if there is an exception, the bot automatically asks the agent for immediate input," he says. "From a productivity standpoint you are reducing the wait time, which means employees are completing more output."

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Place of customer-centric process management in priority list for process improvement work

Source: PEX Report 2022

#3

Place of improving customer satisfaction through better quality and efficiency

Source: PEX Report 2022

>> The need to ensure great customer experience

UK-based insurance company Swinton Group operates a contact center in Manchester, employing 450 frontline agents who handle 2.4 million calls annually. The organization's contact center operated several in-house, customized software platforms and wanted to move toward a single comprehensive third-party workforce management solution.

To achieve this in the nine-month timeframe it set itself, the insurer initiated a large-scale transformation program. It deployed both attended and unattended robots to automate repetitive and time-consuming tasks in the contact center's workflows. The attended ones assisted agents in handling new processes and guiding them through customer journeys, which facilitated improvements in quality, compliance and time spent addressing customer issues.

The company appointed contact center agents to help customize the NICE Advanced Process Automation solution to align it to its needs. The automation program was launched with a phased, bi-weekly approach across the

contact center, which allowed additional customization based on implementation.

Named "Winston", the attended automation solution relieved agents from routine tasks that took up time and assisted them in real time, which reduced hold and wrap time. Customers' calls were shortened by more than 50 seconds each on average. This helped the company achieve cost savings equating to 40 FTE and the contact center was able to handle an extra 7,781 calls per month.

The results were also felt by customers, who provided positive feedback by increasing Swinton Group's net promoter score by 11 percent, from 32 to 43.

By functioning as a personal digital assistant to employees that provides real-time, context-specific assistance as and when needed at various steps of a process, attended automation can help an organization operate efficiently in a hybrid-work model. The next section of this report explains why.

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Jon Atienza

Intelligent automation manager at The Coca-Cola Company



Leveraging attended automation to navigate the current working context

The adoption of new processes or process changes can be slightly more challenging in hybrid-work models as employees cannot swivel their chair to ask a colleague for assistance. PEX Network's [Mastering change in hybrid-work models](#) report uncovered the need to break down the change into incremental, manageable doses over a long period of time. These can take the form of on-the-job training, microlearnings and small, digestible communications around modifications embedded in employees' day-to-day operations.

Attended automation can be especially helpful when a new company policy is implemented or when a process is automated. Employees will be informed as soon as they access their updated attended automation platform and will be guided through each step in real time, as notes NICE's Karev.

"The robots can give alerts about upcoming process automation before it is implemented, so once it is deployed it is not imposed and the robot can help with guiding employees through it," he says. "It makes people not afraid of the robot, they understand it is there to help them."

Attended automation is essentially the same solution as robotic process automation (RPA) but with added functionality, and organizations should have central tools to manage both. Specific tools should be created for attended automation to create guidance flows, build dynamic callouts and intelligence into the way that bots assist human employees. According to Karev, it "brings the value from automation to the entire process landscape".

"More than 90 percent of processes require a human in the loop even for just one process step," he says. "This

"This means automation will be applied on more complicated processes where man works with machine on real-time automation and leverage AI."

Topias Huovinen

Senior manager at Telia Finland Oyj



>> Leveraging attended automation to navigate the current working context

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significantly increases the “art of the possible” with more processes becoming relevant for automation.”

Attended automation robots can integrate into any application including customer relationship management (CRM) systems to garner information about a customer. It is then summarized and categorized in the interactive screen viewed by the employee. As explains Karev, navigating through multiple systems and logging the data is the number one impact on CX.

“If an employee cannot find the relevant data they cannot resolve the issue and spending a lot of time updating the system prolongs the call,” he says. “The customer will feel it is taking forever to resolve their issue.”

Attended bots can pull customer information from different applications to prompt employees if they need to complete a step. At Finnish telecommunications company Telia Finland Oyj, part of Telia Company, customer service agents needed to navigate multiple tools, systems and processes to address customer queries on the phone or in the chat. In a typical interaction, they had to source and capture data from multiple applications to ensure the customer got the product, service or change they needed.

The company has 4,000 employees, 4.3 million subscription customers in Finland and handles 3.5 million customer contacts per year. Customer information available to agents was often outdated and the data did not offer much insight into the customers’ personal needs or call context. This resulted in higher than average hold time (AHT) and additional after-call work.

The company implemented NICE’s NEVA to enable the automation of a range of desktop tasks for its agents. It also provided real-time guidance via customer data summaries, compliance guidelines and best practices. It was integrated with the existing RPA platform to automate after-call work such as capturing call notes and customer data. When the RPA bot could not automatically complete one of the tasks, it alerted the human agent to intervene.

The NEVA solution was implemented as part of the telecommunications company’s IA initiative focused on improving CX, that included artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced analytics. The next section of this report looks at how to link attended automation with IA technologies to form a holistic transformation.

Linking attended automation with intelligent automation

Attended automation robots can mine and observe activities executed by employees on their desktops. On one hand, through task mining, organizations can gain insights into where employees struggle and are less effective.

On the other hand, coupled with a machine learning (ML) algorithm, the data can be analyzed to recognize elements such as patterns, routines, process and volumes and identify automation opportunities. NICE's Karev explains: "It becomes robots building robots – the robots are monitoring and driving recommendations on how they can help."

The Coca-Cola Company's Atienza believes that the baseline of automation is to identify pain points in the end-to-end customer journey and from there understand what kind of technology can be used to alleviate those.

"Not all customers are the same, there is no one-size-fits-all solution," Atienza says. "Understanding each customer's profile and journey will help you know what kind of automation can be done on specific profiles."

The data collected on customers can be leveraged to help segment customers in order to provide the right solution. He says: "Once customers are segmented, organizations can know what pain points apply to a specific profile and introduce automation to solve them."

At Telia Finland Oyj, ML models and advanced analytics were used alongside RPA and attended automation solution NEVA to provide insights that help agents offer better and more personalized advice and service. An analysis of the customer's potential pain points, for instance, could lead to product recommendations that addressed their needs.

Since the deployment of NEVA, the telecommunications company reduced AHT by 30 to 50 percent across use cases that involve multiple legacy systems and complex processes. Agents are guided through compliance steps and have customer insights available on their desktops.

Topias Huovinen, senior manager at Telia Finland Oyj, says: "[We have] not only experienced dramatic improvements to call handling times and contact center productivity – we have also seen significant improvements in customer satisfaction since deploying the NICE RPA solution."

Organizations can also integrate attended automation with chatbots. If a complicated customer query cannot be actioned by unattended robots in the back end, it can be routed to an attended robot. It will in turn either notify a human employee to take action or will interface with organizational systems to provide a response, retrieve more data or perform an automation.

Conclusion

This report has demonstrated that by assisting employees and provided contextual guidance, attended automation can help boost productivity. In the context of customer-facing processes, this can be especially useful as contact center agents will be able to provide a personalized, more seamless experience and quicker resolution to customers' queries.

In the future, Karev believes there is going to be a higher level of automation as centers of excellence and

RPA market mature. He says: "This means automation will be applied on more complicated processes where man works with machine on real-time automation and leverage AI."

There is no doubt those implementing such technologies will help employees conduct their day-to-day job more efficiently while providing a more competitive service to customers.



Key takeaways of this report:

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- > Attended automation can help organizations achieve improved customer experience by providing real-time, contextual assistance on customer queries.
- > In hybrid-work model, attended automation can be especially helpful as employees cannot swivel their chair to ask a colleague for information.
- > By coupling attended automation with data analytics and machine learning, organizations can pinpoint automation opportunities and expand their automation footprint.

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