

Customer Interaction Analytics: A Quantum Leap Forward for Your Contact Center

As channels of personal communication continue to proliferate, enterprises try to encourage better communication with their customers by supporting these new channels. With the heritage in voice and technological investment already made, contact centers are becoming the de facto focal point for all channels of communication with consumers. The agents staffing these centers in the voice, chat, email, text, social and other channels have a direct and significant impact on customer satisfaction and new customer acquisition, so interaction quality is a top priority. Most organizations use some form of quality management and coaching process rooted in the sampling of recorded agent interactions with customers.

However, traditional quality management processes are not enough. Sampling of a few percentage points of interactions every month does not provide sufficient information to really understand how individual agents are performing from a quality perspective. With technology that can reliably turn unstructured speech into structured data, more and more companies are turning to omni-channel interaction analytics to ensure that their contact centers are performing at a high level. Omni-channel interaction analytics is now being utilized to provide more than just performance feedback to front line employees and coaching guidance to supervisors. The intelligence that can be mined from the big data of customer interactions is driving continuous process improvement throughout the entire organization. In addition, progressive organizations are using insights from customer interactions to reveal sales, marketing, and operational improvement opportunities that touch every corner of the organization.

Today, customer relationship management and customer journey strategies have become much more integrated – companies want to organize, automate, and synchronize sales, marketing, customer service, and technical support. It's a complicated dance that requires both accurate and timely data. Market leaders have realized that the intelligence mined

from customer interactions can not only provide tremendous insight, it can be used to continuously improve processes throughout the entire business. Insights from analytics are now being used to better target audiences for marketing, improve operational efficiency, and increase sales. Customers benefit from more intelligent offers, quicker delivery, and better service.

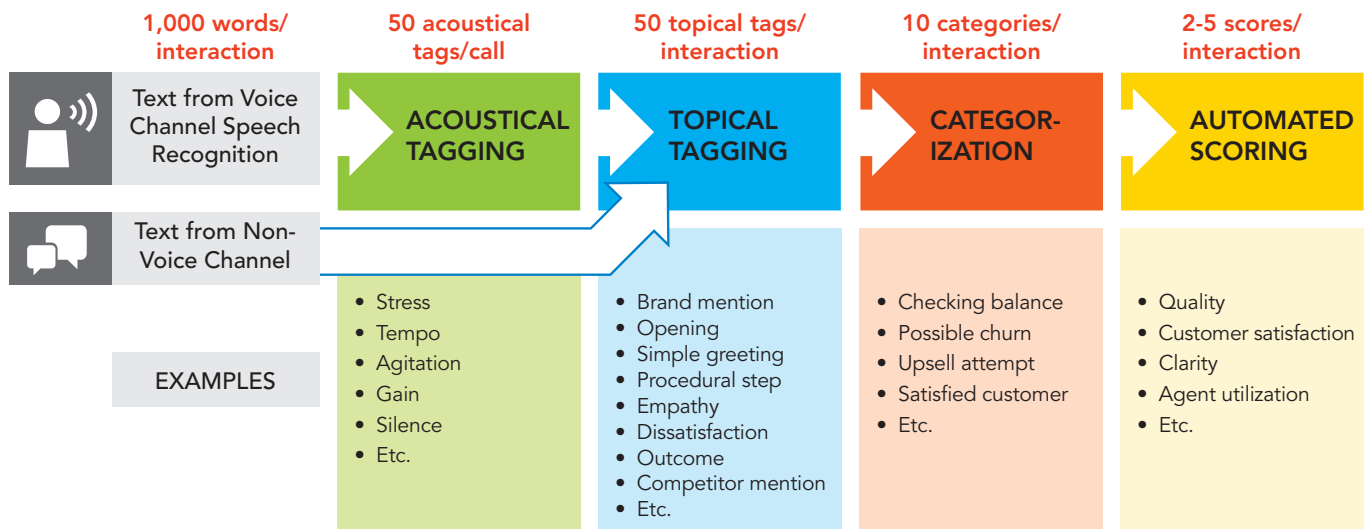
Overview of Customer Interaction Analytics

Customer interaction analytics (including speech analytics) is the process of taking unstructured data trapped in the audio of recorded calls, emails, chat transcripts or other customer interactions and turning it into structured data that can be searched and analyzed. The first step of the contact analytics process involves incorporating conversations from the source system (call recorder, VOIP stream, email systems) and the associated metadata such as which agent handled the interaction, what day and time did it occur, and who the customer was.

Next, the audio undergoes a speech recognition process where sounds are turned into text. At the same time, acoustic signals such as agitation and silence are extracted. Text transcripts are also normalized into a consistent format – for example, chats may have system-generated messages at the

beginning and emails may have quoted messages within the body. These nuances in different formats need to be accommodated in order to use a single system and process for analyzing contacts across all channels. The result is a unified data view for all types of customer interactions.

Finally, the system automatically analyzes the interactions for certain language patterns to categorize or tag contacts as containing certain language or characteristics. Advanced systems such as Aspect® Engagement Analytics™ (omni-channel) and Aspect® Speech Analytics™ (speech only) also support automatic scoring. This combines the presence of certain language and other key metrics into an index that measures various performance indicators such as agent quality, customer satisfaction, emotion, and first contact resolution. Discovery, category analysis, and score analysis is achieved through a web interface that allows users to search for contacts using any criteria, visualize data in any number of ways, and conduct automatic topic analysis. All of this data can be put into action by providing direct feedback to analysts, supervisors, and agents through notifications and reports.



Using Interaction Analytics for Marketing Campaigns

One effective use of customer interaction analytics is to test how to optimally market a new product or service. Even the best marketing departments cannot accurately predict consumer behavior. Champion/challenger testing is invariably required to identify the best way to get consumers' attention. Marketing audits must be conducted to understand the voice of the customer and pinpoint buying patterns that are working well.

For example, a wireless carrier might load the name of a new phone model into the speech analytics system and monitor the number of inquiries coming into the contact center on that phone each week. In month 1, they try an advertisement featuring a teenager using the phone and in month 2 they run a different ad featuring a business person using the phone. By comparing the number of responses between months, they can start to narrow their likely target audience and marketing approach.

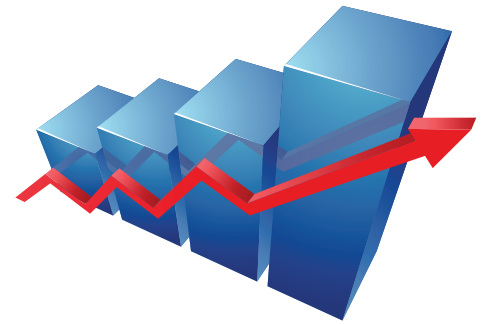
Further, common cellular device issues could be loaded into the system in order to distinguish fixable calls from non-fixable calls and develop upsells around certain products or services, such as mobile phone protectors. Agents could receive training on any observed emerging product issues. If a problem were discovered because of a high volume of incoming calls that included the words "problem" or "issue", the agents could be made aware of it and address the issue in a way that was likely to preserve the loyalty of the customer.

Interaction analytics can also reveal insights on customer behavior and buying propensities for different products. For example, customers might be more likely to pay for an annual support plan for their new smartphone or tablet than they would for a less expensive phone. This knowledge would be extremely valuable to the marketing team to help fine tune advertising strategies.



Driving Sales Performance with Speech Analytics

Speech analytics can have an immediate impact on agent sales performance as well. In a random sample conducted at an e-commerce firm, agents estimated their pitch rate to be around 80%, much higher than the actual rate revealed by the report from speech analytics. The e-commerce provider used this report to determine which plans agents seemed to be leading with (Platinum, Gold, or Silver) to ensure that the products were getting pitched in the correct sequence.



Within two months, a new training program was rolled out to all agents, from new hires to veterans, which increased pitch rate significantly to 70-80%. Similarly, non-sales agents in the service center were able to improve their resolution rates. The e-commerce provider explained to employees that the speech analytics software and the subsequent training were tools to help agents improve their skills, so that they could gain confidence and earn more money. Hearing their own voice interactions in comparison to higher performing peers became extremely motivating for agents who desired recognition in a friendly competitive environment.

The e-commerce provider in this study also began leveraging speech analytics in the IVR system to better understand non-buyer deflection and potential lost sales opportunities. When customers opted for a non-sales option, such as billing or customer support, a brief recording was played asking customers to state the reason for their call before routing them to the appropriate department. Using speech analytics, the voice of the customer was captured and studied before ever hitting the queue. After running IVR audio through the speech analytics system, the e-commerce firm was able to improve their IVR application by adjusting menu options. In addition, the company started offering promotions with universal appeal, which were successful in netting revenue that would have previously been missed.



Agent Compliance Example

Speech analytics can have a significant impact on contact center performance – specifically agent compliance. Major providers typically charge a small activation fee to help lock in customers so that they are less likely to shop competitor sites and cancel new services. To safeguard consumers, providers can use speech analytics to track when agents are reading the disclosure verbatim and stating accurate prices. Aspect Speech Analytics' automated reports can provide immediate insight into areas where coaching is needed.

One such firm that implemented speech analytics was noticing an anomaly on certain campaigns that were showing low activation fee collection attempts. The provider used metadata on when a valid credit card was captured and built a search around the activation fee language in the script. Speech analytics audits revealed agents who were properly disclosing the fees but then immediately offering to waive the charges. As a result, the firm educated all agents and supervisors on the importance of following policies and showed them how the software transcribed calls and captured both infractions and good pitches. The firm created an incentive plan based on accurately delivering disclosures to customers, leading to a reduction in waive language and an increase in customer retention.

Contact Center Efficiency

Common issues in almost every call center are call avoidance and dead air. Using the out-of-the-box features of Aspect® Speech Analytics™, companies can identify top offenders by tagging transfer and hold language. Acoustic measures also helped reveal the causes of large silence blocks during calls.

One client's call centers were showing much higher call durations compared to the average – thirteen minutes versus nine. After analyzing the excess silence blocks, the client discovered that a small group of sales agents were not properly transferring existing customers. Instead of immediately rerouting calls, they would say something like



“customer service is experiencing a high call volume so I need to place you on hold.” The agents periodically checked in with the customers by alerting them to their position in the queue.

With this insight, the client built a search in the speech analytics system for terms like: “place in queue” and “high call volume” to identify agents who were responsible. The issue was quickly addressed and call durations returned to the old average once screenshots, call examples, and disciplinary actions were provided to managers. Ongoing reports were set up to continuously monitor this behavior in order to prevent the issue from recurring.

The client also used speech analytics to improve system latencies. Agent language such as “frozen screen”, “need to refresh”, and “I’m having technical difficulties” was tagged, since this indicated when the agent had issues with their interface. Reports were then run on the times and days that this language appeared to determine root cause. The client also matched campaign metadata to the calls, which helped clarify whether the issue occurred within the provider’s order tool or within the client’s. Evaluating system issues through interaction analytics offered explanations as to why campaigns closed low and why call duration and hold times spiked.

Enterprises are spending upwards of \$30 billion annually to gain information that provides competitive advantage. Much of what they need to know resides untapped within the contact center. Forward thinking contact center managers will leverage speech analytics to take advantage of this great opportunity to elevate the prestige and recognized contribution of the contact center.

-Dick Bucci, Pelorus Associates

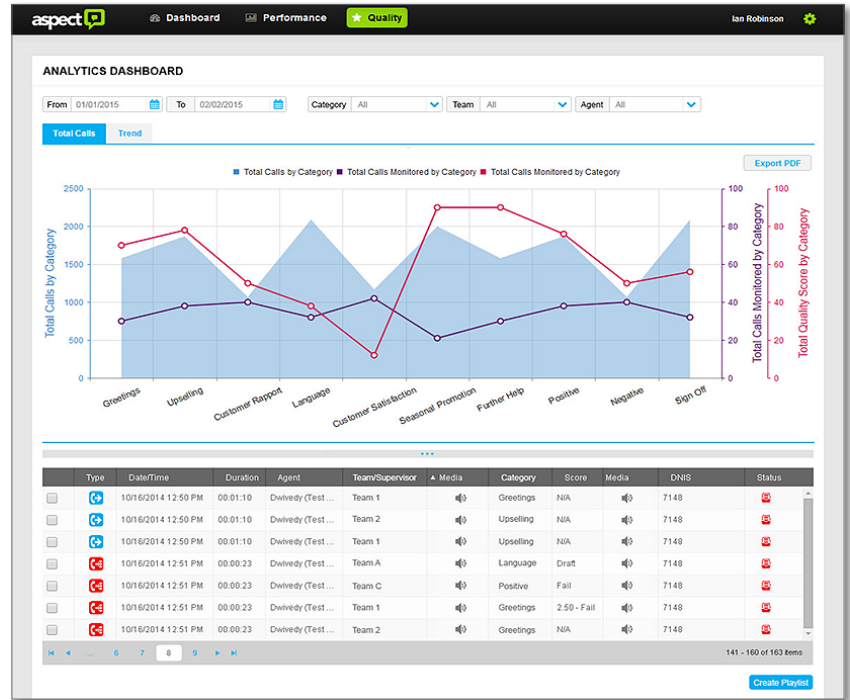
Important Lessons Learned

Customer interaction analytics is a powerful tool and can rapidly surface individual agent issues or fundamental operating problems that affect the entire contact center. After using interaction analytics for a few months, enterprises are usually able to establish best practices for their organizations. Below are some best practices often surfaced by interaction analytics:

- Hire skilled and dedicated staff members. They are essential to making the implementation of contact analytics a success. Look for analysts who are back-end architects with front-end skills: Meticulous when building complex queries, yet comfortable liaising with stakeholders and presenting results. The more specialized the business analysts are, the more value they can bring to the specific department.
 - Set initial goals that are very specific and defined. Don’t try to do too much at once. Start with a top objective, elicit requirements and document the custom score build process. Stay flexible with your timelines and plan project phases: craft basic search, add synonyms, homonyms, and aliases, validate results against baseline.
 - Keep your finger on the pulse of business developments to maintain consistency. Aspect’s Engagement and Speech Analytics solutions easily scale to match product mix, pricing, and team changes. Structure folders and naming conventions so analysts can quickly pause or update scores. Avoid duplicating efforts by understanding shared language. For instance, two departments may offer rebates with differing dollar amounts. Instead of reinventing the wheel and building from scratch, a generic mail-in rebate category can be cloned, cash back amounts can be added, and departmental filters applied.
 - Make sure that there is open communication on all levels – from agents to executives. Transparency promotes credibility of the tool and allows for more a fluid adoption of the changes and insights from the Business Intelligence team.
 - Deliver information in digestible formats. Extrapolate key points into a simple template with an option to drill down as needed. Create cheat-sheets with basic steps and screenshots for users that show them how to run an audit. It’s important to empower users to be self-sufficient in navigating Agent Explorer and the Dashboard.
 - Correlate metrics to strengthen ROI. Aggregate interaction analytics scores and call center data such as closing ratios, retention stats, customer satisfaction, handle time, and cost per call. Centralize reports depicting week over week comparisons of how speech analytics trends influence various KPIs. Business Intelligence can uncover anomalies, recommend adjustments, pilot, and track. For example, improving rebuttal scripting and enforcing on the floor will increase agent pitch stat and directly impact sales’ bottom line.
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Conclusion

In the right hands, speech analytics can be more than just a tool to improve contact center performance. The rollout of an advanced voice of customer analytics package such as Aspect® Speech Analytics™ shown below, along with a commitment to customer service and continuous process improvement, can have immediate and measurable impacts across the entire business. Marketing and customer service programs can be more effectively implemented, new sales opportunities can be discovered, and quality assurance can be improved across all channels. As companies continue to define their VoC and CRM strategies, speech analytics will play a vital role in delivering actionable insights.



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