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Enghouse Interactive

"The Connected Enterprise"

Stay connected to your customers, employees and partners

White Paper - "The Connected Enterprise"

We are in the middle of a customer service revolution. The coming of age of the millennial generation, armed with an expanding portfolio of consumer devices, is changing the way businesses think about customer interaction. Today, customers demand service anytime, anywhere, anyhow. Some see self-service as the quickest way of getting what they need. So, businesses are providing ever-more sophisticated self-service tools to enable them to find what they are looking for. Others, with more complex enquiries, are looking for a more personal approach based on human to human voice-based interaction. A further group requires a multi-channel approach that weaves in and out of the above communication modes as and when required.

To answer queries in this ever more sophisticated environment, businesses increasingly need to draw on the specialist skills of staff in the middle and back offices as well as those in the front to keep customers happy. By combining an intelligent flexible customer interaction platform with the latest unified communications technologies, everyone in the organisation can form part of a virtualised customer support team, focused on resolving every customer engagement in the most efficient, professional and cost-effective way.

Are you missing a Lync in the Chain

This is where the concept of the connected enterprise, where workers across a business are linked in a collaborative network, comes into play. It is a business model that will become increasingly important as organisations look to leverage the abilities of their whole workforce to support customers and sell more to them. This white paper looks at key challenges facing customer service today and the benefits of key unified communications (UC) technology, in combination with the latest communications centre solutions from companies like Enghouse Interactive, ranging from helpdesks to operator consoles and from call recording devices to full contact centre solutions such as the Enghouse Interactive Communications Center (EICC), in addressing them. It then goes on to provide top tips about how businesses can best use UC platforms such as Lync to turn the vision of the connected enterprise into a reality.

Today, for business to retain customers and keep them loyal, they need to embrace a rapidly evolving service environment, where customers don't want unnecessary steps put in their way and they don't want to have to wait. In short, they expect effortless customer service. They expect the process to be intuitive in the same way an iPhone or Google experience is. Unfortunately, the reality often fails to measure up to the vision and the modern day customer's expectations.

This unsatisfactory situation is one of the key drivers of growing interest in UC technologies, like Lync and Cisco Jabber to name but two, that help build the connected enterprise and facilitate the effortless customer service today's businesses are looking for. Organisations are also increasingly attracted by the productivity improvements that can be generated by using unified communication platforms within their customer interaction platforms to obtain a better understanding of the presence and availability of key customer-facing staff.

Seeking the extended customer service team

At the point of engagement, businesses need to know their customers, what they are trying to do and who within their organisation is best placed to help them achieve it. A fully integrated dynamic customer interaction approach can help them accomplish this. Indeed, with the combination of a UC platform and a virtualised customer interaction platform, everyone in your business can form part of an extended customer service team. It is a flexible approach that allows customers to interact with the business in the way that suits them, thereby supporting effortless customer service.

Cost is a further key driver. The traditional PBX switching approach to managing customer engagement still employed by many businesses is often a severe drain on financial resources. This means that when switches reach end-of-life, or businesses move to new sites and need to upgrade systems, they are increasingly looking for innovative new approaches that will drive cost savings and allow businesses and their customers to take advantage of the proliferation of new ways to interact.

Lync is an attractive option in this context. Businesses increasingly understand and appreciate the benefits around faster return on investment, lower total cost of ownership; streamlined operational processes and enhanced productivity. Yet many aren't ready for the big bang approach and instead prefer a controlled migration where parts of the business or certain interaction or customer types are switched over to a softer switch. In this scenario, it's key to have a customer interaction platform like the EICC that can work in conjunction with Lync in the old world as well as the new. The EICC has become one of the most popular contact centre solutions available on the market today and has now been deployed by over 4,000 organisations around the world.

The growing trend of Lync

In light of its widely acknowledged business benefits, it is not surprising that Microsoft Lync is also experiencing dynamic growth. According to Microsoft, as of September 2013, 90 of the Fortune 100 were using Lync, while in the third quarter of 2013, Lync revenue grew over 30% again. In a recent earnings call, the company also revealed that the Lync business including Lync Server and Lync Online had surpassed US$1 billion in annual revenue.

So Lync is already a big success story. Yet, while growing volumes of businesses understand the benefits of using it as part of an integrated customer interaction management strategy, many remain worried about the migration process. They are frequently unsure what they need to do about current applications that they need within their business. How are these going to migrate across to Lync?

There is a common perception, in fact untrue, that they will have to go to multiple vendors to provide the apps they need, thereby entailing multiple support contracts and increasing complexity and cost. The fact that the technology is seen as relatively new and even by some as immature also represents a big sticking point – although it is more one of perception than reality. And for some, especially when their reputation depends on the decision they make, the easier and less risky option is to stick with their incumbent solution.

Top tips to avoid the pitfalls and capitalise on the opportunities.

It's a balancing act but for many companies today, the potential benefits outweigh the perceived risks, especially as Lync can be the catalyst that helps make the connected enterprise a reality. So, how can businesses start to put in place the building blocks of the connected enterprise by using unified communications technology together with the latest customer interaction technology? Here we outline some top tips to avoid the pitfalls and capitalise on the opportunities.

1.   Connect your business so that everyone is part of the customer service offering

Any company wanting to focus on customer service needs to put in place an approach that puts the customer at the heart of their business. You will have to leverage people, systems and processes across the whole organisation to ensure a quality customer experience is maintained.

To be certain of achieving this, however, you need to ensure that you implement a communications centre solution that is capable of intelligently managing all contact media types from phone calls to voice messages, email to text, web chat and fax as part of one fully integrated approach. You need to be able to route and assign tasks to staff within your business or supply chain to ensure first interaction resolution is achieved, tracked and measured.

You can make this happen by combining several different technologies. Cloud computing and IP-based networking enable a virtualised environment, Lync delivers an insight into the presence of key customer-facing staff. Strong directory and database integration, which we specialise in at Enghouse Interactive, enables you to know who is available and best placed to support your customers at all times.

Such an approach, when allied to techniques like skills and task based routing helps ensure that interactions best suited to a self-service approach can be handled in that way. The savings enabled by this much lower cost approach can then be re-deployed to allow more expensive higher-skilled workers scattered across your business to become part of the customer service effort as and when required.

Ultimately, to deliver this kind of all-inclusive customer service offering, you need to deliver a combination of several key capabilities.

• An ability to receive interactions through any channel;

• Being able to connect to CRM data to know who you are dealing with;

• An ability to dip into transactional data across the system;

• Being able to use presence and profile information to make real-time decisions on the best pathway for a particular customer to follow based on their value and worth to you, what they are trying to do, who you have available to help and what their communication preference is;

• An ability to assign an interaction or task to the best placed person in your business in real time.

Critically, though, you also need to provide the glue that can effectively pull all of this capability together. And that's what integrated communications solutions like those offered by Enghouse enable you to do.

2. Learn from successful implementations

Today, objections to Lync, based on risk and lack of maturity, are increasingly being cast aside. Look into the growing list of 'case study' implementations where companies are able to show demonstrable benefits from having made the switch to Lync and using the unified communications solutions in conjunction with the latest communications or interaction management technology. If you want to future-proof your approach or you need a hybrid approach now, look for vendors that are able to provide both cloud and on-premise contact centre 'flavours', as part of the migration. At Enghouse Interactive alone, we have implemented over a hundred customer contact deployments on Lync since we started doing this in 2012, equivalent to more than six every month.

In terms of specific implementations, sports and outdoor clothing manufacturer, Helly Hansen has been achieving benefits from a combination of Microsoft Lync and the Enghouse Interactive Communications Center. which complement each other well. As it rolls out its new communications solution, Helly Hansen's strategy is based around global standardisation. It is making Lync the foundation for its telephony and the EICC the basis of its customer contact approach worldwide.

HELLY HANSEN is pleased with the enhanced control the EICC has enabled it to exert so far. According to Sandy Abrahams, IT director at Helly Hansen, "the Enghouse Interactive solution is already enabling us to establish much greater control over the call management and call routing process. It has armed our customer service staff with a much greater understanding of the nature of interactions. It's already beginning to streamline the whole interaction management process."

The SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL also recently elected to deploy the EICC in a Microsoft Lync environment. According to Stephen Roy, project manager, Scottish Borders Council: "We chose the EICC and Lync based approach on two key factors: cost and flexibility. We were able to reduce data and telephony network requirements and implement a single unified communications network across our offices significantly reducing costs.

"It was also key for us to be able to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. We were frustrated that our old systems architecture could not be easily customised," adds Roy. "The combined Enghouse Interactive and Lync solution means that we can now route calls to whatever endpoint we want. And we can be creative in the way we structure the organisation, safe in the knowledge that our technology will be acting as an enabler of choice rather than a barrier to it."

3. Assess the different migration paths and choose the one that's right for you

Look for an effective migration plan that enables you to transition smoothly to Lync with as little disruption as possible.

The best vendors in this space can now deliver this, providing a one-stop shop for a business's complete communication needs from attendant consoles and self-service options through to multi-channel contact centres and quality management solutions, integrating all of the modules for improved efficiency; testing systems and platforms on Lync and giving customers the benefit of many years' experience in the contact centre marketplace. This low-cost, low-complexity approach to Lync migration is proving increasingly popular across the contact centre market, thereby countering many of the objections businesses may have around making a shift.

You understand the benefits and you are happy that your objections to migrating have been overcome. But how do you go about choosing a migration path that is right for you? At the moment, we are seeing three different models in use.

Rip & Replace

The first, rip & replace, is generally used as part of a site relocation strategy. If you've just moved site and especially if the reason for the move is, at least in part, to reduce cost, then you're likely to feel that the low-cost option of moving to Lync is more attractive than buying a completely new switch and incorporating that into an existing network.

Hybrid Model

The second approach, known as a hybrid model, is where Lync is rolled out to a select group within the organisation, typically a non-critical line of business where the company can run it in parallel with existing systems. We see this happening a lot within internal IT helpdesks, who can effectively act as a mini contact centre in their own right.

Pilot, Prove, Migrate

This therefore links in closely with the third approach, 'Pilot, Prove, Migrate', where the approach is trialled within a small workgroup before it is subsequently rolled out across an entire department and then ultimately the whole organisation. If you are focused on reducing the risk of the migration process, one of these latter two migration strategies is likely to be the right option for you.

Implementing the new should not mean discarding the old. Organisations have decades of investments in legacy telephony infrastructure and technology that needs to be bridged to the Lync environment. Old systems should not necessarily be cast aside. Any new implementation should be able to balance the need to protect legacy investments while realising the new business benefits of Lync.

4. Make sure you are using Lync within your skills-based routing engine

Putting Lync in place is of course just one part of the battle. You also need to make sure you are using it effectively to support your communications strategy. Think about how Lync can help you deal with your most popular interaction types and drive productivity and efficiency into the bargain.

Spend some time working out the top ten queries or requests you receive. Then decide what the best way of resolving each of these requests is. Details of employee skills can be worked into employee profiles. One of the great benefits of Lync is that it has 24/7 availability from virtually any PC, laptop or mobile device. This means you can use Lync to instantly assess who within the business is best placed to address a specific problem; the presence of that person (whether they are available) and whether they have access to the right device to engage with the customer.

So, in a split second you have got all the intelligence you need to make a highly intelligent profile-based routing decision and resolve the customer's query as quickly and efficiently as possible.

5. Create an Effortless Experience

Imagine the scenario. The customer starts off on a website. They can't find what they are looking for, so they toggle onto a chat window. That does not work either, so they phone up the company. Then, they need a file, which has to be emailed, effectively adding another interaction channel into the mix. It can get messy. And it is about as far away from effortless customer interaction as you can imagine.

The customer will often have to abandon one form of communication and all the effort they have put into it and start the interaction from scratch in another. But with a unified interaction approach, all of this can be wrapped up in one neat bundle. It is much easier for customers to keep control of the information they have submitted as they toggle from one channel to the other. Customers can switch channels quickly and easily. They can collaborate. People can share their desktop to help resolve problems.

Today, the growing connectivity between Customer Interaction Platforms like EICC, Lync and Skype are enabling even closer communications between businesses and customers, amongst whom the use of video communications technologies like Skype is steadily mounting up. And there are great new opportunities for businesses here, to use the two solutions in tandem, particularly with regard to enhanced sharing of video, application files and other rich media to drive enhanced business productivity and customer satisfaction.

6. Communicate with your customers and keep your customer informed

Make sure that your customer interactions are equipped to efficiently manage email, chat, SMS and social media, otherwise your enterprise may missing out on valuable opportunities. Communicate with your customers on their preferred communication channel at any time. Ensure that you have a blended multimedia queuing of all channels, so letting you route, manage and measure all types of contacts using one workflow engine. A customer who is kept informed is a happy customer. Make sure you communicate with multimedia automated notifications and self-service options, for example a SMS message of confirmation, announcements in the voice queue of an outage, etc. This approach creates a consistent user experience, and delivers proactive communications whilst keeping customers informed.

7. Build in actionable intelligence to your connected business

Make sure you add the capability to measure your customer service and monitor its delivery into your overall contact centre solution. You need quality monitoring tools which typically include call and screen recording, performance metrics and cost analysis tools and you need customised real-time reporting that gives you the actionable intelligence you need to make fast, well-informed decisions that enable you to optimise the value you get from your connected business and deliver enhanced customer service.

Of course, to capitalise fully on the benefits of this reporting capability, businesses first need to make sure they are measuring and reporting on the right metrics. Before they act on the intelligence they have gathered, businesses first need to decide on their strategic approach to their customers. Do they see them as a means to an end or as their future to be embraced and invested in? And, if the latter is the case, what are they doing to improve the customer experience and, at a tactical level, how have they evolved their KPIs and metrics to drive the right operational behaviour.

Today, any business that truly values its customers and wants to deliver the best possible experience, is moving away from old world measures like average handle time (AHT), that fail to prioritise customer needs to move to measures like first call resolution (FCR), sometimes termed first contact resolution, that gauge how effective the business has been in properly addressing the customer's need; or higher level metrics like Net Promoter Score that move beyond a simple measurement of customer satisfaction with a service or solution to evaluate customer loyalty to a specific brand or company.

Underpinning these customer-focused metrics for businesses is the concept of driving continuous improvement to the operational process through quality and performance measures like Six Sigma and Continuous Improvement.

Once they have decided on the right metrics to pursue, businesses can look to bring the full capabilities of the connected enterprise to ensure they meet the targets they are looking to achieve.

8. Collaborate to connect your enterprise

The ability to collaborate by bringing existing knowledge and new and legacy technologies is key. Employees need to quickly connect with the people, resources they need to resolve or improve customer experiences. Start to collaborate with front, middle and back office functions to break down organisational silos, cross departments, geographies, and the rest of the enterprise. The latest customer contact solutions bring in tools to enable agents to log help with supervisors, for example, and to allow action notes to be sent to staff within the system. Valuable knowledge can also be sharable across the organisation but yet be controlled and captured in one centralised system, enabling operator, agents, supervisors to achieve a comprehensive view of all customer interactions and drive exceptional customer experience. The collaborative approach is critically important that the system is built to scale and can add in new functionality as and when required so future proofing your enterprise.

Delivering on the Vision

Today, the connected enterprise is no longer just a pipe dream. For many businesses it is an accurate description of how they are working today. The growth of the connected enterprise is at least in part due to the rise of unified communications and in particular the success of Microsoft Lync. Lync may not have been specifically designed for the contact centre, however it is contact centres that are increasingly seeing the biggest benefits from deploying it.

Lync is increasingly becoming a permanent fixture in the contact centre environment. The potential benefits around cost savings, streamlined business processes and enhanced productivity are well understood.

Remember though, in building the connected enterprise, implementing unified communications platforms like Microsoft Lync will not be enough in itself. These solutions do not offer the advanced customer interaction, reporting and measurement capabilities businesses need to deliver a complete connected enterprise. Today, businesses are increasingly looking to take advantage of opportunities presented by technologies that enable the connected enterprise and the latest breed of integrated customer interaction management platforms, including the EICC are increasingly seen as the key driver that enables businesses to turn this vision into commercial reality.

About Enghouse Interactive

Enghouse Interactive develops and supplies the widest range of customer contact solutions on the market through an extensive network of value-added partners. Enghouse Interactive's integrated suite of solutions includes multi-channel contact centre, self-service, attendant operator consoles and workforce optimisation. These solutions enable organisations to classify and respond to customers in the way that they want: quickly, efficiently and successfully, with minimal effort.

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Learn more at www.enghouseinteractive.co.uk