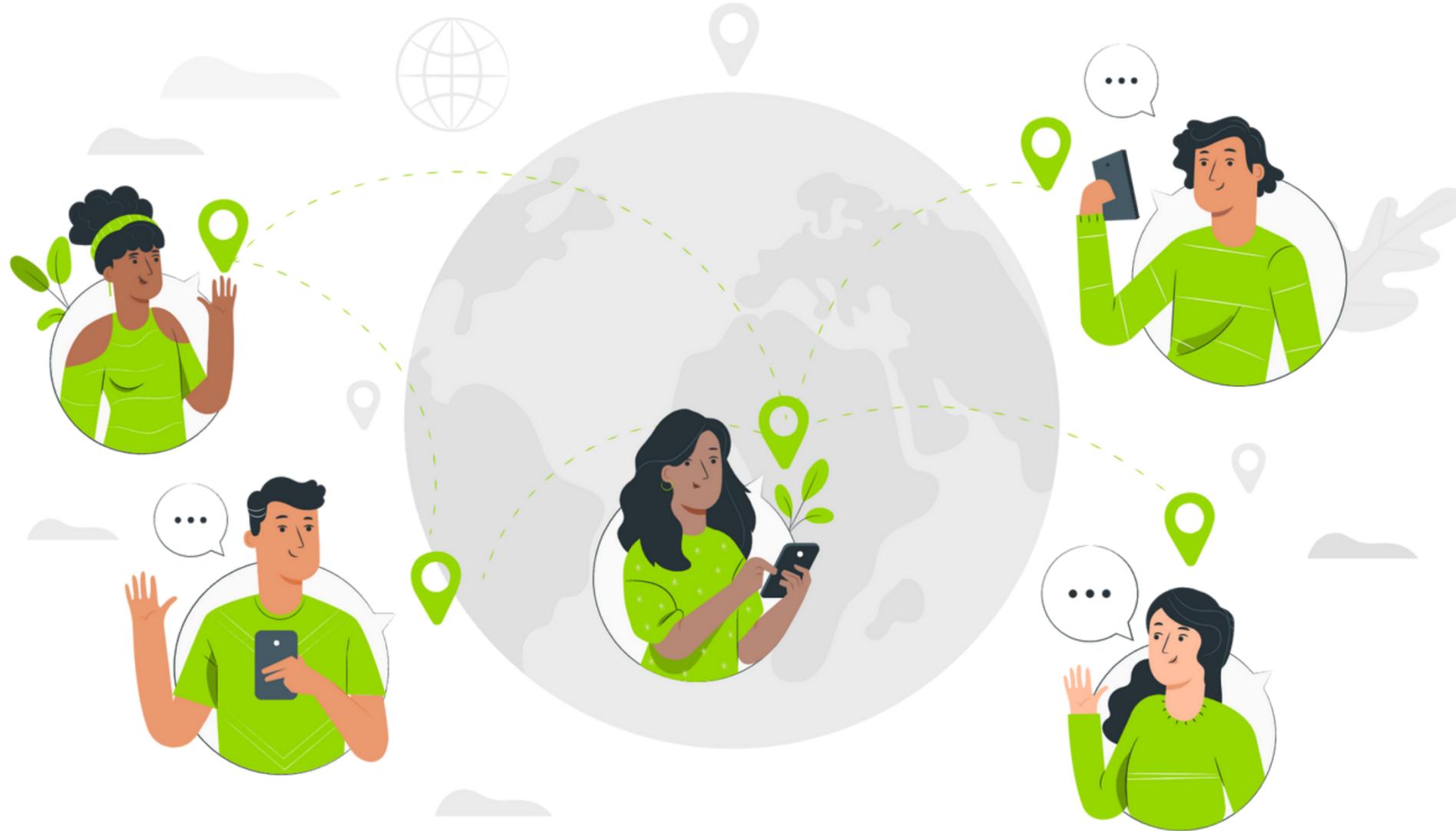


# Take the international accessibility of your customer service to the next level

The customer service telephony and omnichannel checklist





## **Take the international accessibility of your customer service to the next level**

In today's digital world that is becoming increasingly globalized, it is getting ever more difficult to distinguish yourself at product level. It is difficult to compete on great products alone as there are more of those.

The emotions evoked by your brand and company therefore become all the more important. One of the contributing factors is your customer service. Here you can create a wow experience and exceed expectations.

One of its prerequisites, however, is that your customer service is set up properly and efficiently. That your employees have access to the right tools and proper channels. That you have a good understanding and overview of all the data. And that your service numbers and the rates that you apply are compliant.



In this white paper we will therefore guide you through various topics relating to customer service telephony and omnichannel channels that will enable you to easily check whether your international customer service is set up in a compliant, effective, and efficient manner.

**This is the checklist:**

- The telephony channel
  - Service numbers
  - Statistics
  - Compliance
- Latest developments
  - Click-to-call with Talk
  - Video chat
- Optimal accessibility
  - IVRs
  - Routing plans
  - Overload solutions
- Customer service software

# The telephony channel

Despite the advancing digitalization, telephony is still an important customer service channel. This is because it is fast and personal. That makes it a favorite channel for matters that are urgent or complex. At moments like these, you don't want to type your story and wait for an answer but call for direct and 1-to-1 contact. What do you need to have in place for this channel?

# Check your numbers

## *Inbound*

Is your customer service available in various countries? Then it is very likely that your numbers are from different suppliers as your first supplier may not provide numbers in the new country and you therefore look for another party. And so it slowly expands. It is then important to have a clear picture of which numbers are active with which supplier/provider so you can quickly contact the appropriate party in case of changes or problems.

## *Outbound*

This may also apply to the outbound traffic, which you use to call 'outside' (nationally/internationally). Do you know which numbers are being used for this? And whether these numbers are visible to the caller or hidden? Here too it is important to have an overview and to know how this is configured. Anonymous calling, for example, is not always permitted.

## *Master number plan*

When making the overview (master number plan) it is advisable to include all numbers for both inbound and outbound traffic. Including inactive numbers that are no longer in use or that you have requested but in the end were not activated. For example, because a new brand fell through for which numbers had already been requested. Or because that new country turned out not to be so interesting as expected. When you work with different suppliers, such things are difficult to monitor.

# Result

- **Little understanding of the costs**  
invoices coming from different suppliers
- **Little insight into all the different numbers**  
active with the different suppliers and not available in one overview
- **Multiple contacts and suppliers**  
in case of questions and changes
- **It takes time**  
to make everything clear and easy to understand
- **Little flexibility in scaling up and down**  
due to long-term contracts with different parties



## Check your statistics

### *Call data*

When you have many different numbers in different countries, having a clear overview and understanding are key. It is important to be able to see clearly what the peak times are, when your accessibility is less, if and how many callers hang up during the wait time or how many callers call outside your opening hours. It may be the case that not all that call data is available in your portal, while it is key information.

### *Volume*

You also want to be able to monitor the volume of your numbers. Are there deviations that fall outside the normal pattern and what is the possible cause? In doing so, do not only look at high volume numbers. Because if you have a lot of numbers, the numbers that receive little traffic are easily overlooked.

Make sure you know which numbers have low volume and why. Is there usually less volume? Are the numbers hardly being communicated (and can they perhaps be phased out)? Or do they not work properly? Especially when the volume is low, you receive fewer signals about accessibility problems or an IVR that is not functioning properly. But these matters do affect customer satisfaction. You should therefore also keep these numbers into account in your analysis and check them on a regular basis.

## Result

- **You may be missing data because** your numbers are run by different suppliers (providers/carriers) and the data available or stored may not always be the same
- **The call data are not all in the same format**, so it takes time to make them consistent
- **It is difficult to work with clear dashboards and reports** that provide the desired insight due to the large amount of numbers
- **Poor or no insight into the number of callers** you miss out on outside opening hours or if the wait times are too long



## Check your compliance

Customer service inevitably involves compliance. Regulations regarding the use and registration of service numbers are constantly changing. In many countries, for instance, calls to service numbers must be free or at most be charged at a local rate. Also, more and more countries require proof of presence in the respective country, e.g., business address and ID of the person in charge. If you do not provide this, it may happen that your numbers are deactivated, and you are temporarily unavailable by phone.

The more numbers you have, the harder it is to keep track of whether all those numbers comply with local laws. So hopefully you have a supplier who has this topic high on his agenda, as the numbers are often compliant when purchased but what happens when the regulations change?

## Result

- You are not sure whether **all your numbers are still compliant**
- **You run the risk that your numbers are (temporarily) disconnected** and customers cannot reach you by phone if not all required information is supplied
- **You have no idea who to turn to with questions.** Especially when you have numbers through cheap online providers. Compliance is often overlooked by such parties





## Is there a smarter way?

There are suppliers who can provide numbers in many different countries, not only the easy countries but also the more exotic ones. Suppliers who are also aware of the local laws and regulations in all those countries and who continuously monitor this, as part of the service.

When all your international numbers are managed by one specialized supplier, you get:

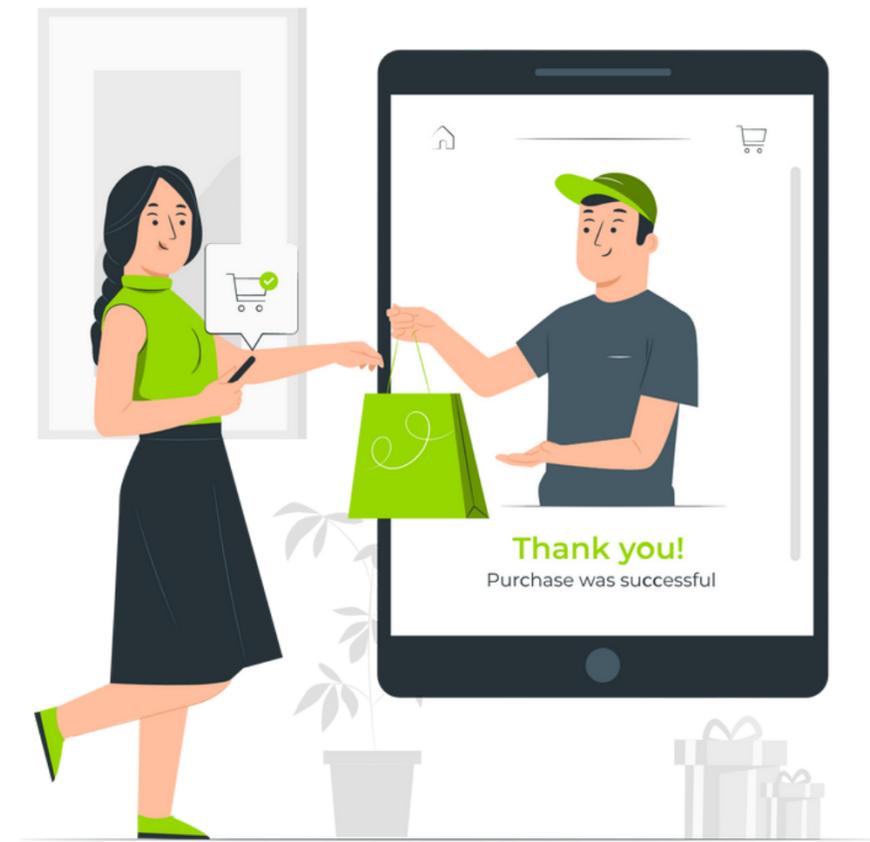
- **A better overview and understanding** of all your data, numbers, routing plans and usage
- **All call data available in one tool** and in the same format
- **One point of contact** for all questions, changes, new numbers, invoices, etc.
- **Better rates** due to the combined volume
- **Assurance that your numbers and rates are compliant** because the supplier is aware of the international laws and regulations
- **Insight into other possibilities and alternatives** in the various countries for numbers, routing plans and rates, if required

## How do we do this?

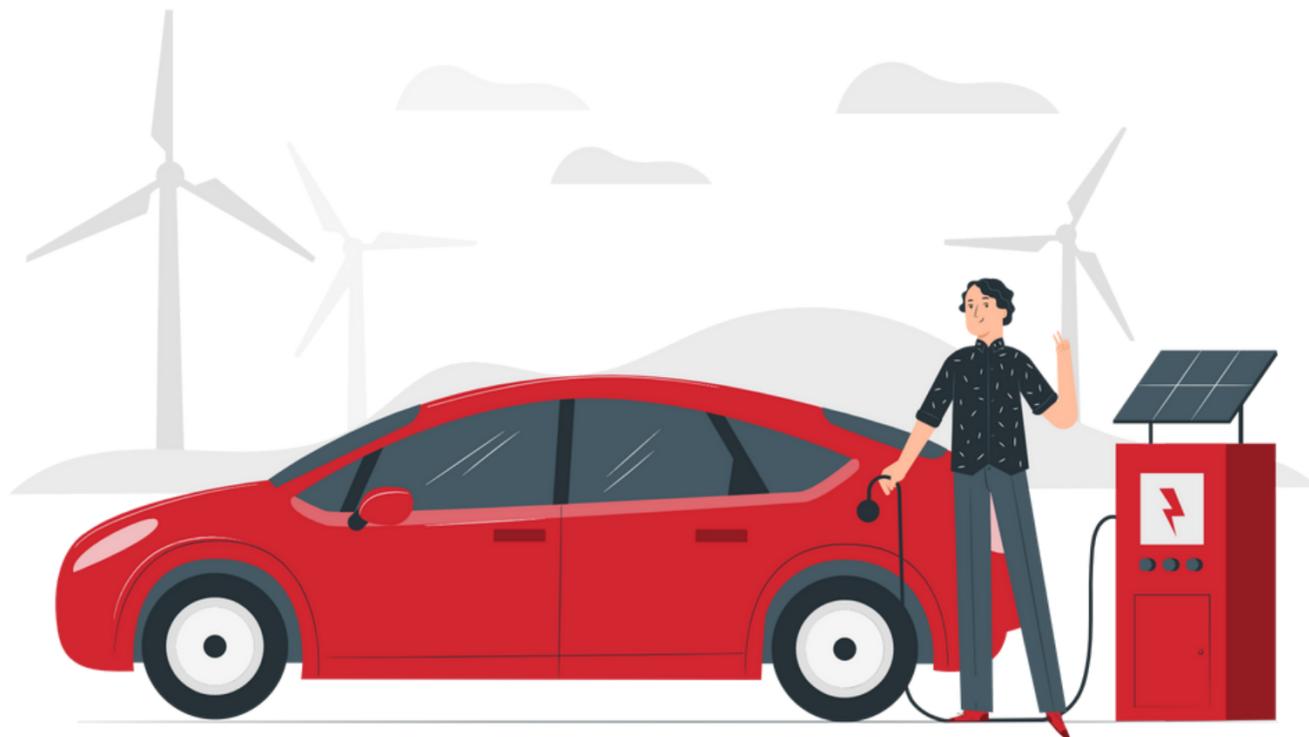
- **Need a fresh look when it comes to your numbers?**  
Request a non-binding Voice Channel Health Check. We check your numbers for compliance, whether you are paying too much for your numbers and phone costs and whether there are opportunities to gain more insight
- **More insight in our online self-service portal Gearbox**  
This portal is available for both desktop and mobile devices and gives you:
  - **Access to all call data** of all your international service numbers plus the associated usage & costs
  - Customized **interactive dashboards**
  - **Possibility to change** routing plans, destination numbers and more
  - **24/7 insight** into your active numbers and call forwarding



*"Yeet! builds high-speed charging stations at strategic locations throughout Europe. Thanks to the collaboration with Sound of Data, both our location partners as well as the actual users of the charging stations can easily contact our customer service."*  
Wout van Hoogenhuizen, Manager Customer Service & Officemanagement, Yeet!



*"Sound of Data has arranged for the conversion of the business numbers of our Belgian stores in one fell swoop. Their service was quick, and we received adequate after-care and monitoring. It saved us a lot of money, so actually a win-win situation, without having to make any effort."*  
Michel van Gent, ICT Manager, vanHaren



# Latest developments

Developments are also ongoing within the telephony channel. How about calling customer service by simply pressing a button on a website, newsletter, app or even by scanning a QR code? Sometimes it is even easier to call 'live', i.e. through live video chat.

## Check the latest developments within the telephony channel

Telephony has been a customer contact channel for many years. This is only logical as it is direct, fast, and personal. Something that is not always the case with all the new channels. In the case of live chat and social media channels, agents often have multiple conversations at the same time, which means that customers must wait longer for an answer. Therefore, telephony remains a favorite channel, particularly in the case of urgent or complicated matters. In those situations, your customer does not want to wait in a chat until an employee has time to write his reply via the keyboard. Telephony is the most practical and fastest channel.

### Telephony is offline

Telephony, however, is offline. Your customers drop out of sight when they pick up the phone and you do not know if they come back to your website to make a purchase for example after they end the conversation. Also, you have to send the survey through another channel (SMS or e-mail) which makes it unlikely that your customer will actually fill it out. After all, it does not seamlessly fit into the journey.

### Surcharges and lack of flexibility

In addition, more and more countries apply an international surcharge to deliver incoming calls in other countries. It is also difficult to print service numbers on packaging and brochures in case your numbers change.





## Is there a smarter way?

You are familiar with click-to-call. **Calling by pressing a button** directly from search results or via your mobile when you click a phone number on a website. But did you know that you can now also do this from your tablet and desktop with our new Talk solution?

You can **seamlessly integrate this Talk button to start a** conversation into your website, app, newsletter, and other channels. Your customers can even call you by scanning a QR code on brochures and product packaging.

Talk uses WebRTC. **The call is not made through the telephony network but via the Internet.** To initiate a call, the caller only needs a device with a microphone that has access to the Internet and any modern browser. In other words, a mobile, tablet or desktop/laptop.

The call is a VoIP call and enters the contact center in the same way as regular calls. The call is part of the online customer journey so it can be tracked throughout your statistics. In addition, you are no longer dependent on requirements that apply to local service numbers.

## What are the benefits of Talk?

- **The call becomes part of the online journey** which means you can track the entire journey
- The caller no longer has to search for a phone number but **calls by clicking a single button or by scanning a QR code**
- During the waiting period you can **show special offers** and after the call you can **show a short survey in the same screen**. Afterwards you can **redirect the caller to another page** with, for example, a special offer
- With Talk **you no longer pay a mobile surcharge**. Calls can also be **routed internationally at no additional costs** as you are no longer dependent on requirements that apply to local service numbers. This can result in significant cost savings.
- **Activating Talk is easy** and can be done **in less than one day** so you can use it straight away



## This way

- You **increase the conversion rate** of calls
- You **increase completed surveys**
- You **improve** the customer experience
- You can effectively **measure the contribution of your customer service** to sales

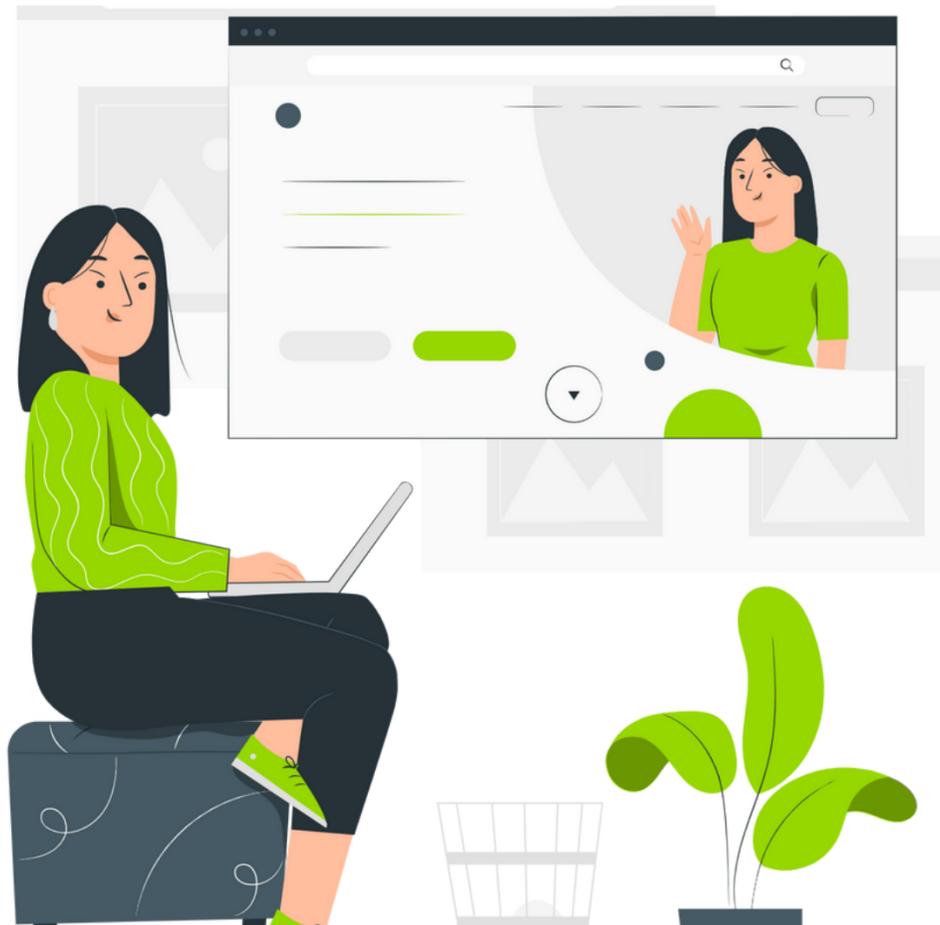
*"I am convinced we can turn customer service into a moneymaker by using a tool like Talk as it allows us to measure how telephony contributes to online conversion. I cannot think of a better mix of customer contact, sales and marketing."*

Tim de Groot, Kaspersky

## Check out the latest developments

### Live video chat

Sometimes telephony may not be sufficient, and a conversation is more effective if you have more options. For example, to look at someone's screen, to see the situation on location, to share documents or because face-to-face contact is necessary.



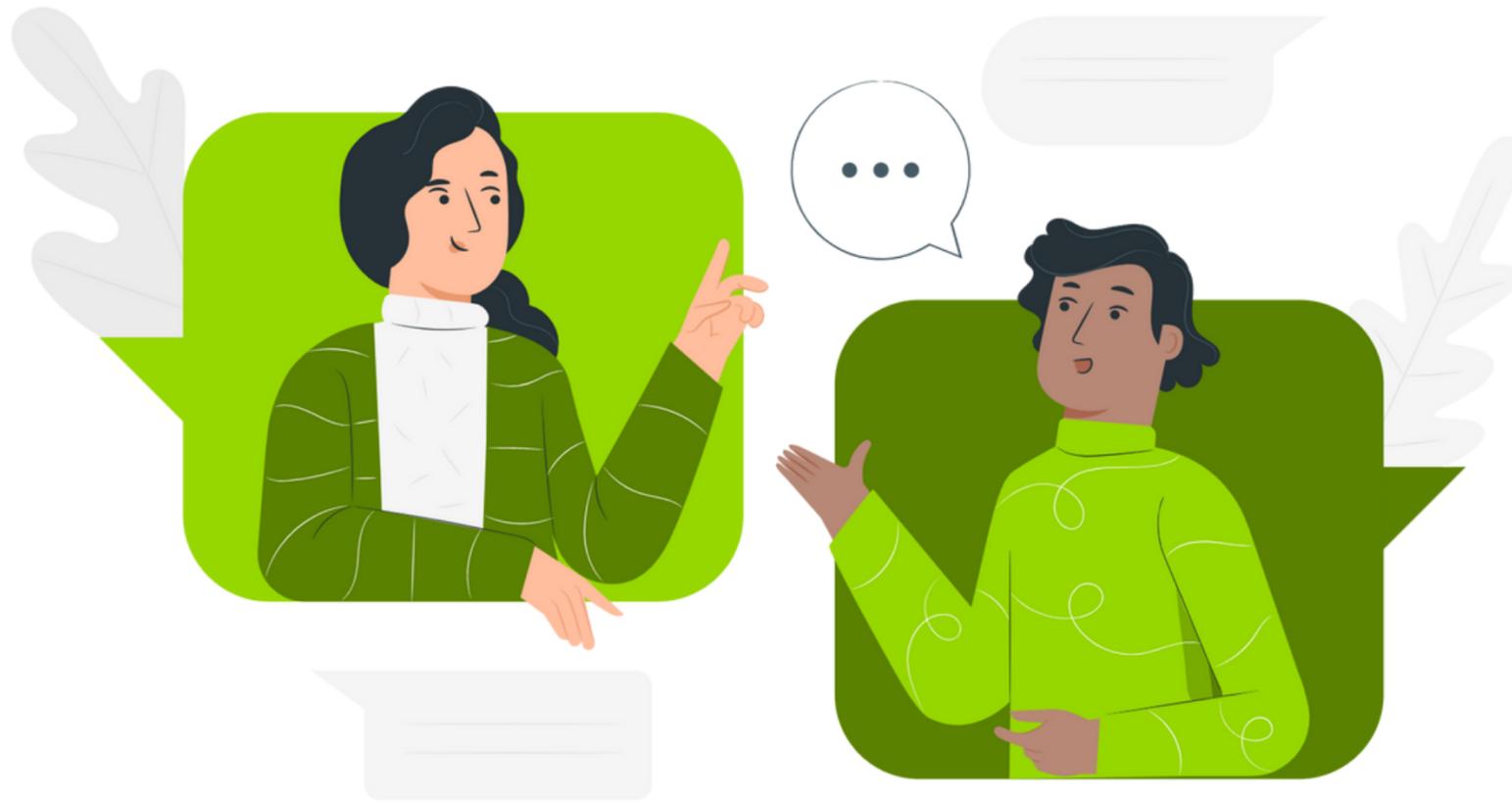
## Is there a smarter way?

All of this is possible with live video chat. Communicating with each other via video. In the banking and insurance world this has already been implemented for some time. Mortgage and insurance conversations, for example, no longer take place at the kitchen table but via video.

In the United States this tool is being used in hospitals for quite a while now. In the Netherlands there are also GP centers who use the tool. It allows patients to talk to doctors without having to physically go to the hospital or GP center.

In the case of technical problems, a mechanic can, for example, review the situation remotely and solve the problem in this way so that a home visit is no longer necessary. This saves a lot of travel movements, time and thus money.

Because of the prolonged lockdown many people are used to calling via Teams, Google Meet, etc. which makes the transition to live video chat easier.



## What are the benefits of live video chat?

Live video chat (also called video calling) makes it easier to solve complicated questions:

- **It is more personal than telephony:** you not only hear someone's voice and emotion, but you also see that person
- **It has a positive effect on the conversion rate:** because you can also see the non-verbal communication, you can better anticipate and respond to the caller's needs
- **Screen sharing makes it easier to explain technical and financial matters,** it facilitates customer onboarding, you can review documents together, etc.
- It has a **positive effect on first call resolution, call handling time and customer satisfaction** as the video capabilities and the more personal connection make it easier to solve problems

Video chat is a tool that is easy to implement, and the channel is available by default in many omnichannel platforms. If your employees use laptops, they already have a camera and if not, separate cameras are easy to purchase.

It is a channel that you can easily start as a pilot with a few employees who are interested. This allows you to check if it is well received by your customers and if it has a positive impact on your KPIs. If so, you can easily scale up.

# Optimal accessibility

All the incoming traffic needs to end up with the right contact center and the right agent. Not only at quiet times, but also when it is busy. For this you can use all types of (internal) routing plans, IVRs and overload solutions. It allows you to distribute incoming calls as efficiently as possible and to bring in 2nd line support or another colleague as required.

## Check your IVRs

IVRs (Interactive Voice Response) are often set up once and then never looked at again. Technical developments, however, are constantly taking place and nowadays there are often more possibilities than you realize.

Things that were just a pipe dream only a few years ago are now up and running, such as voice menus or visually building and adjusting your own IVRs.

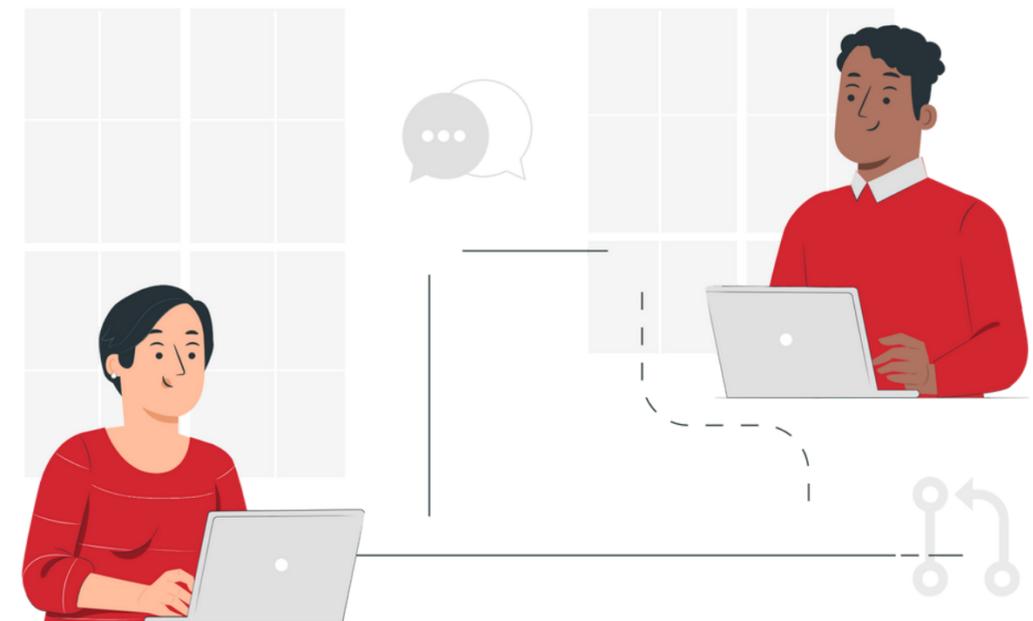
No more complicated issues that can only be addressed by a supplier with technical knowledge. This gives you more flexibility and enables you to respond better to changes, which in turn promotes customer satisfaction.

It may, however, also be that your IVR has been adjusted so many times that it has become a heck of a script that drives your customers crazy. It is questionable whether you will ever be told. Do you actually know yourself how they work?

When was the last time you called the various customer service numbers and went through the menus? Not only at quiet times, but also when it is busy. When it is busy you often get different messages than when it is quiet. At times like these you also want to be customer friendly and address your customers in a correct manner and use the right tone.

## Result

- While they are waiting, **callers are poorly or not informed** about the wait time or how many callers are waiting in the queue
- **IVRs are not set up efficiently**
- This is **inconvenient and frustrating for callers**
- It leads to **declining customer satisfaction**



## Is there a smarter way?

- **Make sure you know which IVRs are active** and how queue expectations are managed
- **Make sure that your callers are informed** about the wait time and the number of callers waiting in the queue
- **Make sure to have hold music in place**
- **Make sure you can adjust** the audios to fit the situation
- **Make sure your IVRs are set up effectively.** Providing too many options tends to lead to confusion rather than clarity



## How do we do this?

- **Need a fresh look when it comes to your IVRs?** Request a Voice Channel Health Check. We analyze all IVRs, routing plans, etc., check if they are still efficient and smart and whether new innovations are available that provide better outcomes
- In our online portal Gearbox **you can determine which audio is played** and you can modify this when necessary (or we do so for you)
- In the better **omnichannel contact center platforms you can visually build IVR scripts and more easily manage them yourself.** Like XCALLY and 3CX, for example.

## Check your (internal) routing plans

What can you manage yourself when it comes to routing and changing destination numbers? Do you have to turn to your supplier for any modification or can you do so yourself? Relying on your supplier seems convenient but it does mean that you are dependent. You will need to wait until your supplier is available. This is not very convenient, particularly in the event of malfunctions or unexpected spikes. At such moments you want to be able to change a routing or activate an overload solution yourself at the touch of a button.

How extensive are your routing possibilities? Do you manually adjust your routings to different active contact centers or is this a dynamic process based on incoming traffic and the performance of those contact centers? Usually this is done manually because people don't realize other options exist.

Also, do you have the possibility to transfer calls internally to 2nd line support or other colleagues when necessary? Or do you still use the cumbersome process of generating tickets and customers simply have to wait?

## Result

- **You are dependent on your suppliers** for the adjustment of routing plans and destination numbers
- **You are dependent on the KPIs of your contact centers** and adjustments in the distribution of calls are therefore made too late
- **Your Channel Managers spend a lot of time** monitoring the KPIs
- **2nd line support cannot be accessed** from the contact center
- **You have little control**



## How do we do this?

- In our Gearbox self-service portal, **you can adjust your routing plans and destination numbers 24/7 and you determine which prerecorded message is played** on your numbers at peak times. You can also see at any time which routing plan is active, how many callers are waiting in the queue and to which destination number incoming calls are being forwarded
- By integrating your customer service telephony with your office telephony, **you can easily switch to 2nd line support and other colleagues** so that customer inquiries are resolved more quickly. This has a positive impact on the first call resolution and thus customer satisfaction

- **Do you work with several contact centers for your inbound telephony?** You can now take your call distribution to the next level with Cruise Control. **This API makes a real-time automated distribution of incoming calls across the different active contact centers, without human interaction.** Calls are distributed based on pre-defined KPIs. **This results in:**
  - Shorter wait times
  - More efficient call distribution
  - Improved customer satisfaction
  - Higher conversion rates
  - The best performing contact center automatically receives the most calls



*“Without any effort on our part, we achieved a significant conversion improvement during the Cruise Control pilot. And it also saves us a lot of time in terms of monitoring.”*  
Tibout Hemmes, Goede Doelen Loterijen

## Check your overload solutions

What happens when suddenly more people call your customer service than expected and your lines are overloaded? No matter how well you plan, some situations cannot be foreseen. A campaign that results in more questions than expected or a virus like COVID-19 that throws your entire planning overboard.

If this happens, you don't want customers to get a busy tone or for them to wait in the queue for a long time without being informed. It reduces customer satisfaction and customer experience. Not to mention the sales you may possibly lose.

At such times you need a plan that can be activated. Or better still, software that detects that action is required based on pre-defined parameters. This may include automatic redistribution of calls across the active contact centers and activation of a message to inform callers about the longer wait time.



## Is there a smarter way?

- **Make sure to effectively manage expectations:**
  - Always provide an estimate of the wait time to callers in the queue
  - Also indicate how many callers are waiting in the queue; counting down gives the feeling you are getting closer
- **Make sure to have hold music;** it sounds rudimentary but if there is a silence it seems as if the connection is lost
- **Indicate via your website and social media that your phone lines are busy** and refer to other channels for simple questions
- Are some questions asked over and over? **Answer those questions in your welcome message or refer to a place with answers to frequently asked questions.** You may ask the caller to leave his or her mobile number so that you can send a short link to that special page via SMS
- **Reroute calls to contact centers that are less busy;** perhaps some callers can be assisted in a different language?



## How do we do this?

- **Our overload solution consists of a multitude of options that either automatically switch on when the lines get busy** or that can be switched on manually via Gearbox.

Some examples include:

- An automatic announcement when the lines are busy
- Rerouting calls to contact centers that are less busy
- VIP routing for your best customers
- Possibility to leave a number
  - To be called back at a quieter time
  - To receive an SMS with a link to further info
  - To receive an SMS at a quieter time
  - To hang up but keep their place in the queue

- **Do you work with several contact centers for your inbound telephony?** You can now take your call distribution to the next level with Cruise Control. **This API makes a real-time automated distribution of incoming calls across the different active contact centers, without human interaction.** Calls are distributed based on pre-defined KPIs. **This results in:**

- Shorter wait times
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- Higher conversion rates
- The best performing contact center automatically receives the most calls

*“Thanks to the overload solution we can keep the number of active lines under control and our customers are informed. With the online portal we can easily manage this solution ourselves.”*

Desiree Hoogdoorn, Sunweb

*“At Ticketmaster we regularly have peaks when popular concerts go on sale. Thanks to the overload solution we can manage this ourselves. Even if 3,000 customers want to call us at the same time.”*

Reinout Al, Ticketmaster

# Customer service software

Where customer service once started with personalized service in a store and telephony, the landscape of channels has now expanded considerably. Telephony, e-mail, messaging (WhatsApp, Facebook, SMS), social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Snapchat, etc.), live chat, chatbots, video chat. The list is almost endless.

## Check your customer service software

We often see that all the different channels are managed separately. This is not called omnichannel but multichannel. Agents need multiple software packages to manage interactions.

In this case the conversations and actions cannot be centrally recorded in one system. Also, customer service does not always have access to the CRM software in which all the customer information and order history is available.



## Result

- There is **no single customer view**
- The **channels are not interlinked**
  - As a result, agents cannot switch channels when the conversation requires doing so
  - Customers cannot simply switch from a conversation with a chatbot to a live chat with an agent
- **Customer interactions are not centrally stored**
  - As a result, callers have to repeat their story more often when they are forwarded or call back later
  - It is more difficult to solve a problem in one go as not all information is available
- This **negatively affects**, for example, first call solution, customer satisfaction and wait time



## Is there a smarter way?

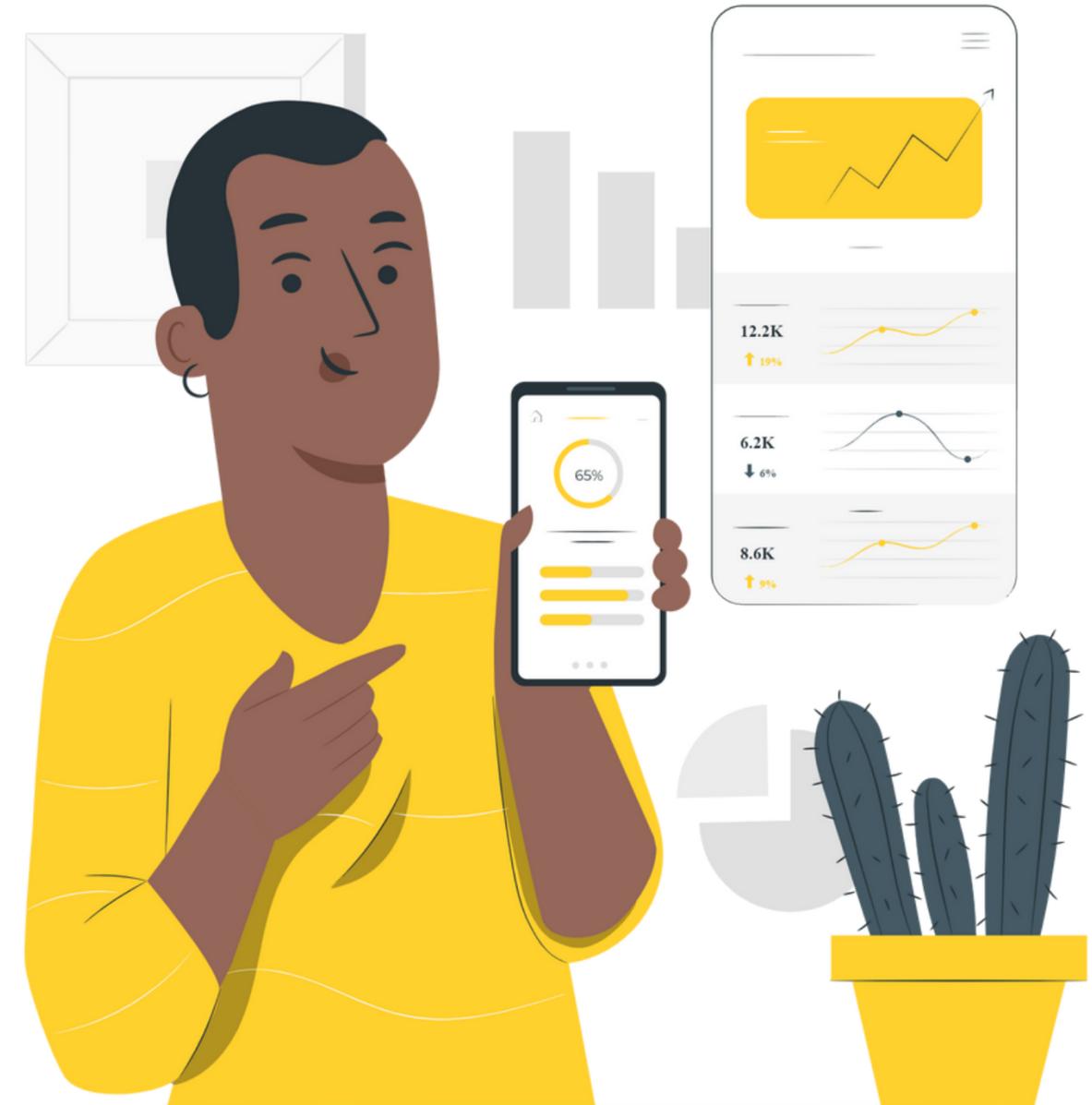
Stop managing channels in different tools (whether or not linked) and **transition to a complete omnichannel contact center platform.**

Initially this often seems like a real headache because switching over and introducing and activating a new platform sounds like a considerable investment of both time and money. The benefits, however, outweigh the disadvantages:

- **Easily manage all different interactions** from one central online portal
- **Agents can attend customers more easily** and rapidly as they have all the information at hand
- **Reduces caller frustration** as they do not have to repeat their story
- **Improves first call resolution**
- **Improves customer satisfaction**
- **Reduces wait time**
- **Provides a better overview and more insight** through the integrated reporting possibilities and overviews per channel and functionality, custom reports, and dashboards

## How do we do this?

- To make the implementation manageable, it is not necessary to switch completely in one go. **You may also choose to implement step by step:** per channel, per product group, per location or per external link. Gain experience and then build on it. This allows everyone to slowly familiarize themselves with the platform while customers experience a continuous improvement. **Without stress.**
- **Many omnichannel platforms include CRM software.** They can also easily integrate with existing CRM software. With our guidance you no longer have to worry about implementation and integrations.
- **The omnichannel platforms we use are completely cloud-based.** This means that agents can log in from anywhere and work with the same tools.



## Conclusion

If everything is already optimally set up at your customer service, you have not discovered anything new in this white paper. And that is great! However, chances are that this is not the case and you have discovered some areas for improvement. Don't miss out on the opportunity and address them. This is not only good for you but also for your employees and therefore your brand.

The effective and efficient organization of your customer service will result in:

- **A better overview and more insight into your customer service KPIs**
- **Improved (international) accessibility**
- **Improved customer experience and customer satisfaction**
- **Cost savings**
- **Resulting in increased turnover**

And that is of course what we all want!



Images: Stories by Freepik

## Make the right choices

Do you prefer not to tackle the optimization by yourself but rather brainstorm with someone about your customer service and office telephony environment and your modus operandi? Do you want to be relieved of the (operational) management and have a better overview?

You have come to the right place at **Sound of Data**. We will gladly help you make the right choices to **resolve any accessibility and operational problems**.



**Jos van Loo**

CEO

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**Emile Stappaerts**

Client Partner

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**Menno Leenart**

Account Director

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# About Sound of Data

“Hi, it’s me!”

Why would anyone end a white paper with such a strange statement?

We, because it encapsulates our reason for being. “Hi, it’s me!” is the voice of today’s customers who are crying out to get service. They’ve bought your product, provided their personal data, but rarely see this information used for anything they really feel is worthwhile. They ask themselves: “Why do companies that know so much about me, at the end of the day just see me as a phone call that needs to be forwarded?”

We do not accept that customers are still treated as if they are just ‘a phone call in the queue’, ‘a KPI in a sales target’ or ‘a missed service level’. We want to put customers at the heart of our communication technology: to create better client experiences, to let customers know that we care about them, to give them adequate information and to communicate in a humane way. You provide the human voice and personal touch; we provide the technology to facilitate that process.

[www.soundofdata.com](http://www.soundofdata.com)

