



5. Systems & Technology

A key component in the customer management proposition is the systems and technology required - often very different type of systems are used within different sectors, which adds to the challenge.

Typically, customer management functions and contact centres will need to consider a range of different application products, much depending on the contact channels through which they do business or intend to do business in the future. Systems might range from billing solutions, workforce management and complaint management software all the way through to knowledge management software and CRM (customer relationship management). A brief overview of a few of the questions which might need to be covered could include:

- Are you/should you be a multi-channel operation – can customers contact you through the most convenient medium they chose (email, white mail, phone, web, SMS.....)?
- Can your customers deal with you over the net in the same way as they can when they speak to you over the telephone – are your systems enabled for self-service?
- Has your business really considered its strategy regarding the use of automated and semi-automated solutions such as IVR (interactive voice response) and speech recognition?
- Do you need different customers to be handled in a different way at different times – is your customer base segmented and what implications does this have with regard to systems and technology?
- Do you have an external workforce (repairs, maintenance or installation, for example), which needs to communicate with the base office and they with them in terms of work allocation, job progress, etc?
- Are your business processes reflected in the way that the system components are integrated?
- Is your network enabled for voice and data?
- What is your current telephony infrastructure and is VoIP a viable platform for you?
- Do you have or intend to have remote/tele-working within the service functions and would you benefit from it?
- Have you adequately looked at call routing into and within the business and understood its potential impact on efficiency and customer satisfaction?
- Are your systems CTI (computer telephony integration) enabled and can customer identities and other information 'pop' onto staff screens?
- Are your systems properly scalable?
- Do you deploy knowledge management systems with the ability to dynamically share problem resolutions?
- Are you looking to install and do you really need a CRM solution?
- Are any on-line capabilities and actions arising from customer interactions properly linked back to the front-end systems?
- Are all of your applications available to staff through a single front-end interface?
- What elements of your work could be rationalised through provision, for example, of document management/imaging solutions?
- What integration of information and systems is necessary with other areas of the business?
- Do you utilise call and activity recording solutions and tie this dynamically into staff performance improvement and training?
- How much more effective and efficient will the business and staff become by the implementation of new systems – is their proper ROI (return on investment)?
- Are end-users adequately involved in the definition of their business requirements as opposed to technical needs?
- Do IT systems require a re-prioritisation of other projects?
- Do IT implementations result in a better quality of management information to the business and will such knowledge be available to the business sooner and in a more accessible fashion?
- Do you have a proper tried and tested business continuity or DR (disaster recovery) plan – what is the difference?
- Is your IT infrastructure mapped out, understood and communicated?

