



Delivering the  
Human Experience  
in a Digital World

The Future of Sales and Service



## Introduction

Over the last twenty years, the way in which customers buy products and receive service from organisations has been transformed as new digital technologies have emerged, enabling better access to self-service for customers, better insight into customer behaviour for the organisation, and improved efficiencies for sales and service teams. What has changed less over this period, however, is the type of work performed by sales and service teams and the role they play in the customer journey. We believe that this is now changing, and at an accelerating rate.

We believe that advances in technology and societal change are creating an environment of increasing tension between the continuing business drive towards automation and self service, and customers' demand for longer term, and more genuine, 'human' engagement with the organisations they buy from. The challenge is as acute for organisations who both sell and service other business customers as it is for consumer-serving businesses.

### The drivers of change:

We believe there are three fundamental shifts driving change in the way we interact with customers.

#### *1. The service is becoming the product*

Many organisations are moving away from the transactional selling of either a product or commodity to taking on the management of the customer's needs over time. This trend has been particularly apparent in the energy and telecoms sectors, where organisations are selling their products 'as a service', and in manufacturing, where engines are being sold as 'power by the hour' with full maintenance rather than as an actual product that the customer owns. In these examples, service is integral to the product.

As this change accelerates, sales and service teams will need to understand, react and respond to a range of customer needs and demands across the life cycle of the product or contract, rather than just at the point of sale. Business customers in particular are demanding a higher level of flexibility than before as they adapt to

changing needs themselves. For example, the recent move of workforces from office to home and, in some cases, back again, has had a profound impact on the energy and connectivity needs of many businesses, and the assumptions they had when they negotiated their contracts no longer hold true. Delivering a service to meet those changing assumptions requires both commercial and operational agility.

#### *2. Digital is a customer necessity; human engagement is for when it really matters*

Customers, whether businesses or consumers, now have a baseline expectation of what they'll be able to do digitally. As consumers, we are all used to using advanced digital services, such as media streaming or e-commerce websites. Increasingly we carry our expectations of digital over into our business lives and crave the simplicity we are used to. Our expectation is either that things 'just work', and that we therefore don't need to contact the organisation, or that when we do need something, we are able to get it for ourselves through digital sales and service channels.



What this means for sales and service people is that when customers do contact them, they are expecting something more than a functional, process driven interaction. Years ago, an internal salesperson might take down the details of an order and go on to process it. A frontline service person might look up the answer to a question. Now that both of those things can be done digitally, we expect those roles to deliver more, whether that's being able to suggest the right product or service as a result of really understanding our needs or an ability to reach into the organisation to resolve an unusual or complex issue. Human interaction in the digital age should be about delivering extra value.

### ***3. Our relationship with the organisation is changing***

The social context that organisations operate in has always been important for sales and service people, and this context has changed significantly over the last few years. We've seen interest and participation in social activism rise, with the movement around climate an obvious example.

When coupled with top-down government pressure in areas such as de-carbonisation, these societal changes are driving different expectations on organisations. Businesses are seeking suppliers who will deliver on the expectations their own customers and their own people place on them, whether that's helping them reach net zero carbon targets or running an ethical business. Businesses have a growing need to engage on the things that matter to them, their customers and their people, and sales and service teams have a pivotal role in this as the face of the organisation.

Alongside this, the way employees interact with employers is also changing. Why we come to work is becoming more important for employees, who want to feel connected to a wider purpose for the organisation, rather than being assessed just on core operational metrics. As employees increasingly move towards a hybrid home and office working model, the relationship they have with their employer is also shifting. Working from home has humanised the relationship like never before, with an awareness of people's

personal commitments putting greater flexibility and autonomy at the heart of the employee experience, and an increasing commitment to the mental and physical health of employees is changing the way in which we interact for the better. All of these changes are supported by a more digitally enabled, personalised experience within the workplace, which mirrors the changes we are seeing between the organisation and the customer.

In combination, these three changes are driving an expectation that sales and service people deliver long term value not short-term targets; that interactions are about delivering value, not process; and that sales and service is about delivering the human experience, whether that's to customers or to colleagues.



## Building the future of sales and service

As sales and service people focus more on connecting with customers at the 'moments that matter' and less on administrative, process-driven tasks, we believe these two roles will have more and more in common. Sales and service will be increasingly about coming together to deliver value and purpose for the customer. We believe the future of sales and service will be built on three pillars:

### 1. Combining sales and service insight to dynamically develop and offer products and services

Connected assets and devices offer a rich source of insight into how a product or service is used. Combining this with data from service and sales processes provides vital insight to feed into the product and service development process.

### 2. Automating the IQ and letting your people deliver the EQ

As technology has evolved, the level of complexity which it can handle has increased exponentially – we believe the future IQ of the organisation sits with artificial intelligence. What this enables people to do is to deliver the emotional 'moments that matter', the EQ of the organisation.

### 3. Enabling a flexible, autonomous and empowered workforce

Sales and service teams have traditionally been siloed, both from one another and within their own function. Effective automation, process simplification and remote working technology are enabling a different model to emerge.

These three pillars are underpinned by an emerging cloud-based technical architecture, which brings together the power of data, analytics and artificial intelligence to drive intelligent automation and the connected customer experience.



## 1. Combining sales and service insight to dynamically develop and offer products and services

In a world where the service is the product, and delivering long term value is critically important, organisations need to make sure their initial offering is right for the customer and adapt it dynamically over time as needs change. Connected assets and devices are becoming increasingly prevalent and offer a rich source of insight into how a product or service is used by the customer. This data, combined with data from customer service and sales processes through advanced analytics tools, provides vital insight which can be used in the product and service development process. Taking this a stage further, the process of developing highly personalised service offerings such as energy use tariffs could be automated and done dynamically at the point of need for the customer.

As the power of data and analytics is realised, sales and service will play an increasingly important role, moving beyond selling and servicing the products to actively feeding into their development.

- **Service offerings will be dynamically generated based on customer insight**

Consumer businesses like Netflix and Amazon apply algorithms to customer viewing patterns to dynamically tailor their offering to the customer in near real time. While it is challenging for business-to-business sales organisations to offer the same level of dynamism, given the greater value and complexity of their products and services, the principle can still be applied. Leading manufacturing businesses are already building sensors into their equipment, gaining valuable insights into how and when their customers are using it and to provide services such as preventative maintenance.

Our own research with telecoms buyers has shown that, whilst the upfront contract negotiation process is likely to be with us for some time, customers are increasingly demanding that flexibility is built into those contracts and that they are able to change their needs over the course of the contract. The next step for these organisations is to automate this process, with usage monitoring and predictive

analytics identifying when there is a change in usage, or there is likely to be a change in usage given external factors, and automatically suggesting a re-optimisation of the services the customer is buying or the support they need.

"The best providers use analytics for auto-scaling and auto-provisioning. You can put in rules like if you hit 80% of usage, it'll ratchet up and back down – and it gets reflected in the bill." Large Telco Customer (Deloitte Research 2020)

- **Personalised, targeted, context-appropriate sales messages will be delivered automatically across channels**

While some customers might welcome a full automation of the way their service is provided over time, others will be more cautious about handing over purchasing decisions completely to the seller. The role of the sales and service person will still be central to delivering long-term customer value. Where technology is already playing an important role is in providing sales and service people with the real-time insight they need to proactively manage the customer's needs. 'Next best action' capability, where machine learning suggests a personalised, targeted message to deliver to the customer, is already built into many sales and services processes. Richer sources of data, through IOT technology will provide advisors with more relevant, immediate recommendations. Dynamic personalisation can come at a cost, however. Organisations that have given their salespeople free reign to personalise and adapt services to win the deal have often found themselves with a range of contracts which are impossible to service and manage effectively. There is a balance to strike between simplicity

of product/service/contract set-up and personalisation that builds complexity and cost with every layer of configuration. The ideal future is a fully modular design that allows for real-time configuration, and therefore personalisation, at little or no extra cost. Leading organisations we have worked with in this space have a modular product catalogue that can be configured through an effective configure, price, quote capability. The service expectation against those modules then feeds through to the service people.

To deliver on the future of sales and service, what is needed is both the data and the intelligence to turn it into insight and use it effectively. Gathering and managing this data presents significant challenges. Will the future include customers being offered discounts for extra data? Or partnering with other companies to share data as we see online with web cookies today? However the insights are gathered, the ultimate messaging for customers will be clear, consistent and available across channels.



## 2. Automating the IQ and helping your people deliver the EQ

Automation and artificial intelligence will drive a more efficient operation, but will they deliver a better customer experience? Getting humans and machines working together effectively is key to delivering the future of sales and service.

Organisations used to look to automate the simpler enquiries and processes, leaving the more complex things for the advisor or salesperson to complete. As technology has evolved, the level of complexity which it can handle has increased exponentially. We believe that in the future the IQ, the intelligence of the organisation, is heavily supported by artificial intelligence or 'AI'. What this enables people to do is to deliver the emotional 'moments that matter', the EQ of the organisation. This could be dealing with a complaint, being there to support an important, high value purchase or having a conversation about the things that matter to the customer, such as their net zero target or their personal social purpose expectations.

This doesn't mean, however, that technology is only there to support less emotional enquiries. Artificial intelligence runs right through the experience:

- **All interactions are assisted at some level by AI and automation**

The most visible application of artificial intelligence for most customers is the 'chatbot'. Conversational AI is one of the key components of automation, providing customers with a conversational

interface into self-service and moving organisations gradually away from asking the customer to do all the work. It is not the only component, however. We expect all interactions in the future to be assisted by AI and automation. Sales and service 'next best action' capability helps deliver relevant content either direct to the customer or to the sales or service person, based on their history and in 'real-time' during their interaction. Process orchestration and robotic process automation help relieve some of the manual burden on the advisor or salesperson by automating simple tasks, either in the back office, or increasingly live during the interaction itself.

- **Connected devices self-heal or self-diagnose for automated assistance**

Connected devices offer a real opportunity to realise value through automation. Delivering automated diagnostics and product/service management to automatically schedule a fix or optimise services, either with or without human assistance, is already happening today. Self-healing networks are able to identify when servers, machines or equipment fail and re-boot them automatically, without the need for human intervention and, critically, without the need to call a service person to troubleshoot. Sensors within grain silos in the food industry are able to identify when materials are running low and automatically schedule a re-order. Both these use cases offer significant benefits but also have risks in that the machines might be offline or the materials run down deliberately. This is where communication

with the sales and service teams, whether digitally or through direct interaction, remains critical. Sales and service people need to understand what's happening within the organisation's business and be part of the planning process to really optimise these capabilities.

- **People are enabled to deliver the emotionally intelligent 'moments that matter'**

If sales and service people retain a critical role in delivery, they are also central to delivering the empathy that the machines can't at the 'moments that matter' in the experience. The old adage that 'people buy people' is as true today as ever, and personal relationships and trust are central to the sales process, particularly in the early days when suppliers are chosen and terms of service negotiated. Once the service is 'in life', automation can make things easier, but when something goes wrong and the customer's level of emotion rises, they need to interact with a human who not only sorts the problem out but is also empathetic and makes them feel like the organisation is invested in them.

What all of this suggests is a new place for people in the future of sales and service, getting closer than ever to the customer's business and having the emotional intelligence to manage the most difficult of situations.

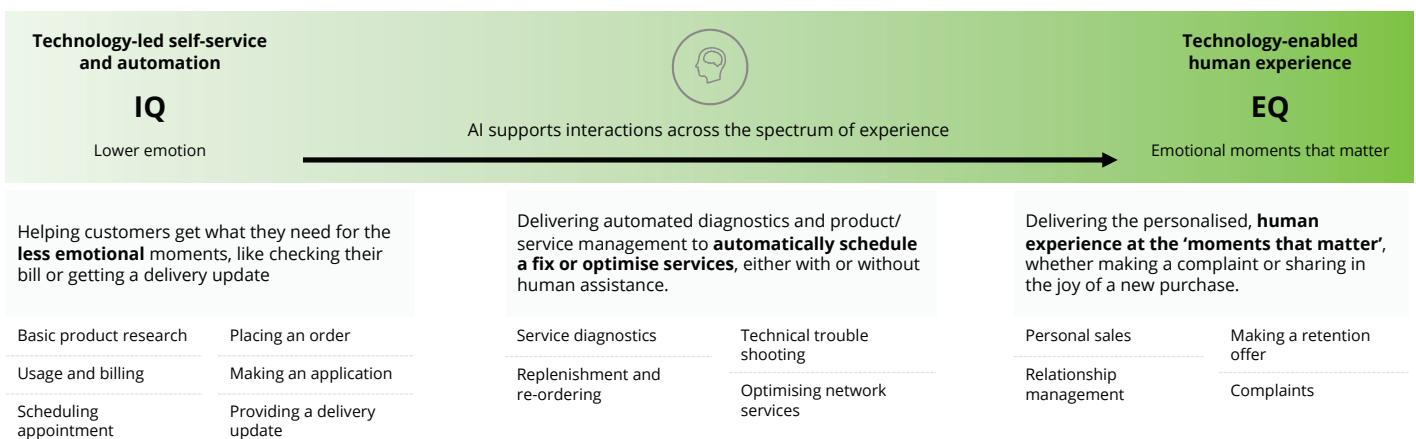


Figure 1: Delivering the Human Experience across the moments that matter

### 3. Enabling a flexible, autonomous and empowered workforce

Sales and service teams have traditionally been siloed, both from one another and within their own function. Effective automation, process simplification and remote working technology are enabling a different model to emerge. We believe that, as organisations focus on delivering value ‘in the moment’ through their human-to-human interactions, a new hybrid role will form right at the heart of the sales and service experience. Where internal sales teams and frontline customer service teams used to provide distinct channels for customers to either place an order or raise a service issue, this new hybrid team will be able to manage both. The

traditional roles within those two teams will gradually merge into one, with a ‘super-agent’ able to work with the business over the long term to manage value and resolve order and service-related issues. As this model emerges:

- Customer-facing roles will spend less time managing process and more time managing value and developing relationships.
- Leadership and management roles will become increasingly strategic, as managers move from making sure things get done, to making sure the right things get done, driven dynamically by insight.
- Support roles that have traditionally been focussed on transactional and operational activities will become more outward looking and customer-focussed, looking to improve the process through a blend of business and technical skills and a toolkit containing advanced analytics and process automation.
- Whilst internal sales and service will come together, there will still be distinct roles for sales and service specialists, the people who manage the prospecting and contracting and the people who deliver long term service improvement and work on major issue resolution.

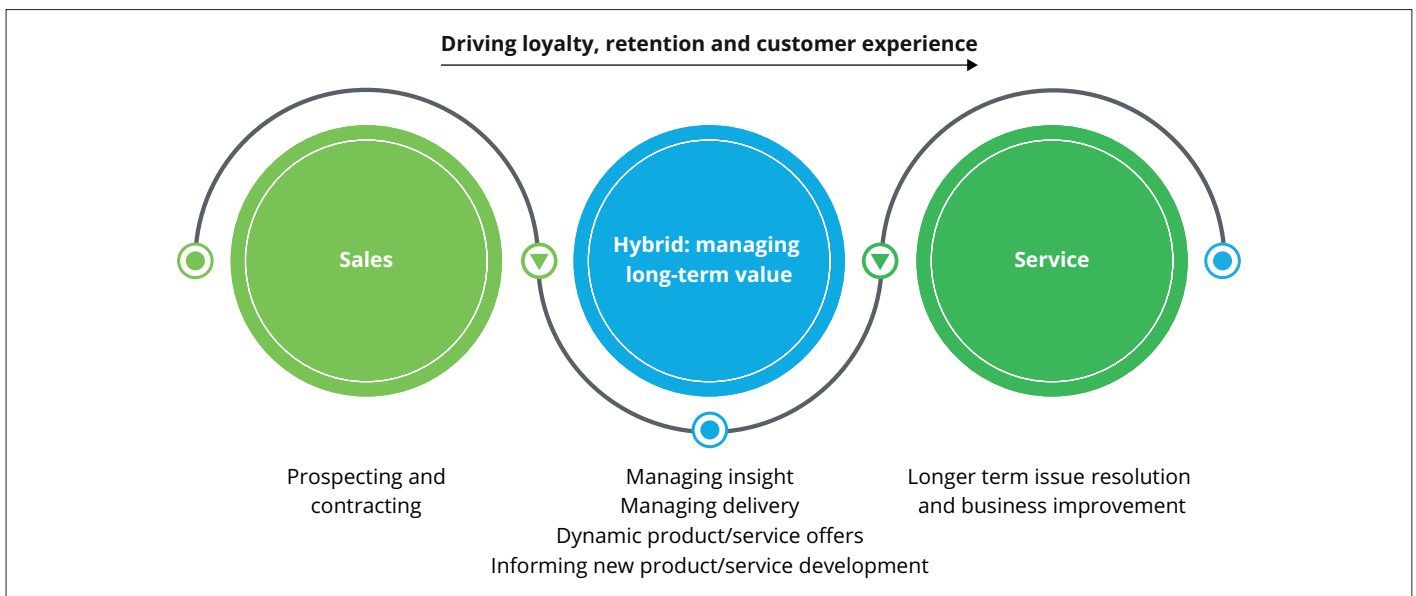


Figure 2: Sales and service capabilities are increasingly coming together

We believe there are three changes which will support this shift:

- **The structure within the sales and service organisation will become more dynamic and mission based** with advisors working in autonomous pods structured around customers, not process or skills. The organisation structure has flipped to focus on the delivery of customer outcomes rather than process delivery. Teams will be focused around ‘missions’ that solve customer problems with sales and service teams coming together with skilled employees from across a mixed

delivery model to meet their objectives. These team structures are dynamic, with objectives re-set once achieved. This allows for the right skills to be deployed to the right problems with the autonomy to execute in the way that they see fit.

- **Multi-skilled teams, empowered by technology and data, will enable an end-to-end experience.** Automation will drive a simplification of process for frontline sales and service staff, meaning that they no longer need to be expert in how to make a process work and can focus instead on the customer. Having simplified processes means

that salespeople and advisors will be able to do more for the customer and can be multi-skilled across different enquiry types. Large utility companies, for example, are looking at how they bring repairs and maintenance, field service and billing and customer service together in one team, with ‘right skilled’ advisors able to handle enquiries end to end. Alongside this, it’s critical to have the right blend of skills in the team to solve the customer’s issue, with salespeople, service people, data



scientists and technology experts all coming together to deliver the right solution in an agile, responsive way.

- **The contact centre will evolve, becoming more flexible, dispersed and on-demand.** The pandemic moved organisations into homeworking with a pace nobody could have anticipated, and the agile operating model is here to stay. Alongside this, in recent years, organisations like Limitless have transformed the way in which we see service people altogether, crowdsourcing responses to customer enquiries from highly engaged customers and people who really know the product, wherever they are. All of this supports a shift to a world where big teams of internal sales and service people sitting together in offices will become increasingly rare, with a flexible and dispersed workforce across home, office and international boundaries coming together to deliver the customer experience.

To make this new model work, organisations will need to invest time and thought into how to bring its constituent parts together. Investment in new and optimised technology will also be critical to getting the right insight to the right people in the right places. Getting the right metrics in place will also be important, shifting from measuring operational and sales performance to measuring outcomes for customers.



## Data and intelligent automation are at the heart of the technical architecture underpinning the future of sales and service

To bring together sales and service into a single, unified customer experience, your people will need the right access to data and insight, the right tools to drive enquiry and process automation and the right mix of interaction channels. For most organisations with legacy applications and infrastructure, the option of starting from scratch and implementing a totally new solution set does not exist. However, by leveraging a loosely coupled architecture based on open API integration and cloud infrastructure, it's now possible to bring the right components together.

The key components of the architecture to support the future of sales and service include:

- **Data and analytics.** This is the foundation stone for the insight which will drive the right value-adding interactions with the customer. An easily integrated extendible data architecture combined with customer behaviour

models will help generate actionable insights. Core components include the data orchestration layer, data lake and engineering solutions such as Snowflake, Google Cloud, Azure and AWS. Alongside this, the business will also need visualisation tools, such as Tableau.

- **IOT and IOT edge computing solutions.** These components provide the data from connected machinery and devices, connecting machines, facilities, fleets, networks and even people to sensors and controls. Feeding sensor data into advanced analytics applications and predictive algorithms enables the automation of machines and entire systems, thereby delivering self-diagnosing and self-healing capabilities.
- **A single CRM platform.** This is a critical enabler for joining up interactions across multiple channels, and guiding processes/customer journeys across those channels through designed experiences. It will help orchestrate customer journeys

and processes and provide sales and service people with a single view of the customer. A customer data platform (CDP) will provide a joined-up view of customer interactions across channels, a critical enabler for customer journey orchestration and personalisation.

- **Service orchestration and integration.** This facilitates the orchestration and delivery of functionalities and processes as events and micro-services across multiple systems. A flexible architecture delivered through loosely coupled and exchangeable ecosystem partners enables integration without the risk of being 'locked in'.
- **Conversational AI and process AI tools** augment human intelligence, allow faster and more informed decisions.
- **Platforms with contact distribution capabilities,** such as Amazon Connect, Genesys and Twilio intelligently distribute incoming and outgoing communications.

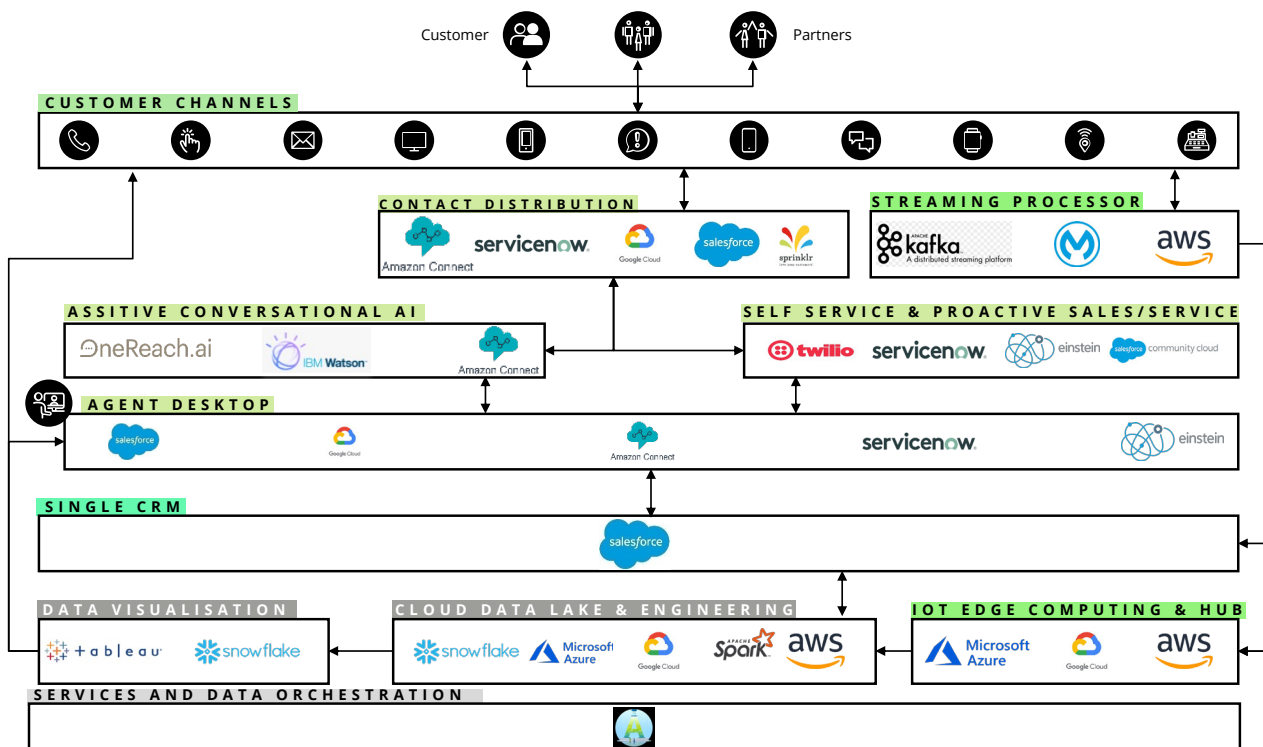


Figure 3: Illustrative reference architecture for technology capabilities enabling the Future of Sales & Service (all technology vendors are indicative examples only)

Bringing all of this together relies on being able to design in a modular and flexible way to enable continuous improvement and the launch of new propositions. This modular architecture allows organisations to plug best in class and best of breed digital offerings from a multi-alliance eco-system in to the solution and play via Open API integrations.

All of these capabilities come together to drive an enhanced, omni-channel experience across digital and physical touchpoints, getting the customer to the right person to help them, regardless of team or location, and supporting that person with the right tools and insight.

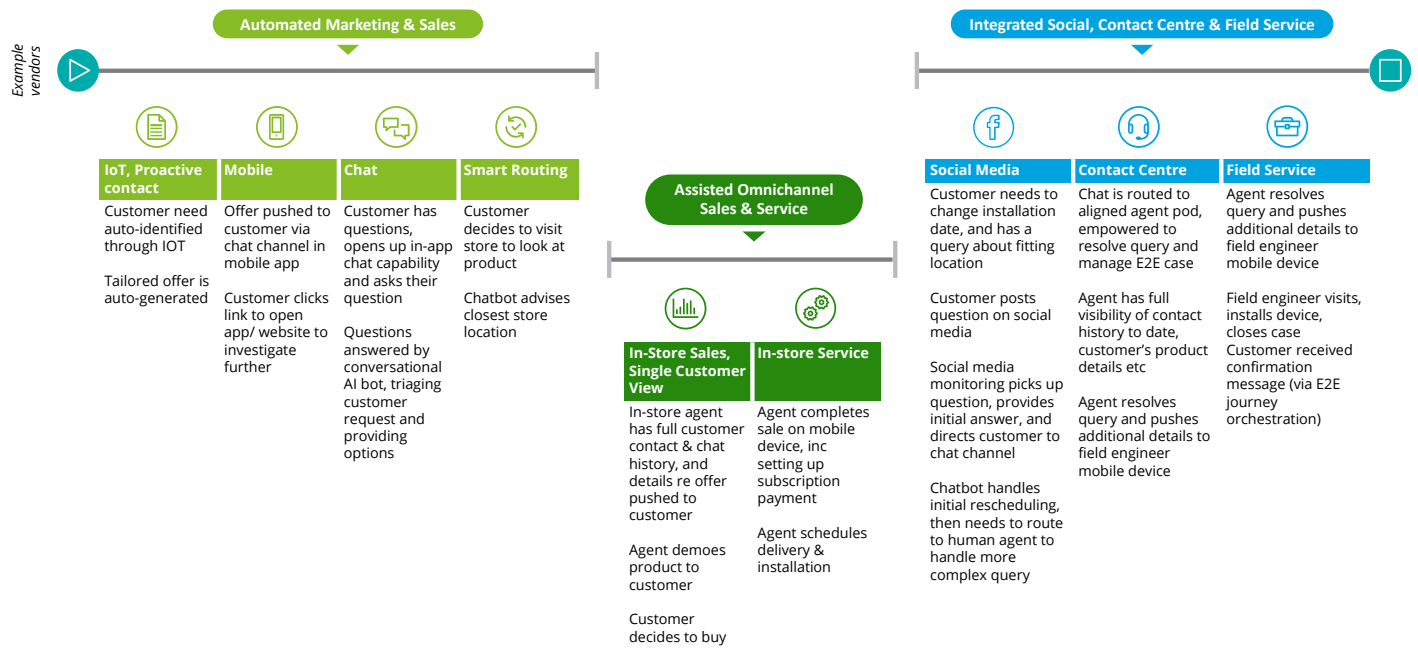


Figure 4: Illustrative omni-channel customer journey across physical and digital touchpoints



## Getting started: moving towards the future of sales and service.

Getting started needn't be daunting. Sales and service organisations are beginning to adapt to the new reality already and it's likely that your people will already be engaging in different ways with your customers. The changes you make should support them on this journey. What will make your transformation a success is developing through a series of iterative steps, built around a target customer experience. We have put together three guiding principles which will help you on this journey:

### **1. Begin with the customer in mind and keep them there!**

Traditional sales and service structures only make sense if they deliver value to the customer, and all too often, they don't. Work with your data, but most importantly your customers, to understand how they want to interact with you across both the sales and the service journeys and build your operating model around that. Bring them into the process as you start to test your new ways of working.

### **2. Deliver something now**

Overcoming structural, technology and political obstacles is hard and you won't be able to change overnight. However, that doesn't mean the challenge is insurmountable. Work to find a 'thin slice' of the organisation that you can deliver a proof of concept in, perhaps taking a single customer journey or smaller market and developing a 'test and learn' operating model.

### **3. Be agile and adaptive**

Moving towards the future of sales and service is a step into the unknown, so learning as you go is essential. Agile principles need to run right through the team and the proof of concepts you deliver so that everyone quickly learns from what works and what doesn't and adapts. The concept of the operating model itself also needs to be agile – it may well have changed by the time you've finished designing it!

We recognise that operating model change isn't a simple three stage process. There are multiple dimensions to consider as you look to change the way your customers interact with you, the roles your people perform and the technology and operating model that support them. The changes taking place in the market and in society are moving fast, however. As the service becomes the product and customer expectations of sales and service people change, you need to be in a position to adapt quickly. The future of sales and service is already here and it's time to start the change.



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## Digital

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