



Save Money & Build Stronger Customer Relationships with Modern Customer Communications

Scale the Conversation™

SMART 
COMMUNICATIONS™



Introduction

The greatest movement to transform business in the first few decades of the 21st Century is not the computer, the internet, or social media. It's the rise of empowered consumers, who are using these tools, and more, to reshape their relationships with the companies they allow into their lives.

This movement affects every aspect of customer contact with a company. But, perhaps most directly, it has substantial impact on the communications between that company and its customers. Those communications, and the customers' positive or negative impressions of them, can help a company grow or contribute to its downfall.

To succeed in this brave new world in which customers are in control, a company's approach to customer communications must evolve if it wants to retain and grow relationships with them. The company must not simply keep pace with these empowered consumers but also must anticipate and then exceed their expectations.

What today's consumers expect of your company

These empowered consumers operate with new expectations that drive their buying decisions every day, including these:

- The brands with which they deal every day, must respond quickly and in the channels consumers prefer.
- These companies must recognize their customers and demonstrate that they value them as individuals, not just numbers on a spreadsheet or records in a database.
- These companies must communicate with them, not just at them. They should incorporate customer data to deliver highly relevant messages via preferred channels – including digital contact points on the web, via email and SMS messaging, even chatbots and other automated services – and in as close to real time as possible.

Although consumers have always used the power of the purse to vote brands in and out of their lives, today they can use many more tools to communicate both their pleasures and dissatisfactions, including the declaration that they will move on from brands that fail to meet their upgraded expectations.

This quote from Salesforce's State of the Connected Consumer¹ captures this new reality:



"Today, the service experience is central to customer loyalty. Customers choose companies that provide real-time, cross-channel, personalized, and effortless service. Companies will meet these expectations head-on by enabling the omni-channel experiences and self-service options customers expect. The most successful

businesses will be early adopters of intelligent technologies that allow them to better understand the customer and set the bar for proactive service."



Empowered customers are transforming customer communications platforms

Having consumers in the driver's seat is a new experience for many brands that have historically seen customer communications as a one-way street: The brand sends the message, and consumers listen.

Now that consumers have overturned this traditional structure, it's essential that companies upgrade all their messaging systems to respond to and respect consumers' new expectations.

The marketing team at your company has likely received this message already. Forward-thinking marketers are now focused on "the customer journey" and employ 1:1 marketing

techniques to personalize and target messaging to both prospects and buyers at all stages of the buying cycle. Websites use stored data to recognize returning customers and adjust page content to make site visits more relevant to returning customers.

But, what about the messaging system that affects your current customers most directly – your customer communications platforms?

Internal hurdles hamper company communications

Many enterprise-level customer communications platforms originated in the days when paper and postal mail ruled. Although these systems might have been updated when paper processing moved online, they have not been overhauled to accommodate expansion within the company and the changing expectations of the very people the system is designed to serve – the customers.

Companies using legacy systems find themselves struggling with these drawbacks:

- Fragmented systems are unable to communicate efficiently across business

units and company divisions.

- Companies often use a myriad of systems to communicate with customers but are unable to integrate them with marketing, ecommerce and CRM systems to coordinate data and messaging.
- They rely on on-premises installed hardware, which uses programs that must be updated manually and frequently.
- Companies are using hundreds or thousands of message templates, which often are updated haphazardly, resulting in inconsistent branding and confusion for customers.
- IT departments are charged with updating or managing the program, not the users who control the communications.
- Lag time in updating forms and other structures to comply with changing regulations expose the company to legal risks.
- Paper-based systems require expense for paper, ink and postage, along with employee time to manage them.
- Inability to automate and incorporate customer data into messages, making it impossible for the company to track and analyze contact histories and create personalized messages on the scale needed.

Prudential gains 'just-in-time' agility



The company saved time and money by replacing its isolated document-generation system with Smart Communications' SmartCOMM™ solution.

Benefits:

- IT hands off management to non-IT employees and concentrates on higher-priority development.
- Fast, easy global updates such as a "one-and-done" update of call-center schedule takes hours instead of days or months.
- Document errors are caught and resolved quickly and automatically.
- "Just in time" document production saves money by reducing external development and fulfillment.

"Our business is now able to communicate more clearly and consistently with our customers, while having the agility to quickly respond to new regulation and market demand."

- Document Manager, Prudential

Modern customer communications platforms help company communicate swiftly, efficiently

Modern platforms use the power of cloud computing to break down silos of information within the organization. They leverage data to create more personalized communications with customers, which leads to a more satisfactory customer experience.

More satisfied customers + internal savings = significant ROI: A more satisfactory experience can reduce customer turnover, generate more revenue and reduce the marketing expenses needed for acquisition. When you add in money saved from

operational efficiencies (reducing costs and employee time), the savings can be quite substantial.

A Forrester Research Total Economic Impact study found a major U.S.-based financial institution saw benefits from both reduced costs and greater efficiency totaling \$16.7 million in service fees after moving operations to the to the cloud-based Smart Communications solution, for a 260% ROI.

Employee-users have control: A cloud-based platform puts the control in the hands of the business units that need it: customer service, investor relations, claims management and processing, scheduling or any of the other departments that rely on fast, meaningful communication with customers.

Schernecker Property Services increases productivity 55%



This property-services contractor uses Smart Communications' SmartCORR™ for Salesforce to standardize and streamline its proposal-creating process and integrate the customer data it houses in Salesforce.

Benefits:

- Productivity increased 55%
- Faster time to results
- Higher quality of sales proposals thanks to standard content, control and tight integration with Salesforce data
- Greater return on application data including quick user adoption of SmartCORR™ across company departments to generate reports

“Our finance and administration teams are now taking advantage of SmartCORR™ in ways we didn’t anticipate, so we’re getting more out of the application, and Salesforce, on a day-to-day basis. We’re even creating management reports from SmartCORR, something that was completely unexpected.”

**- Technical Project Manager,
Schernecker Property Services**

System updates easily: Because it operates on networked servers rather than installed hardware, updates can be managed centrally and remotely by the vendor providing the service. This frees up your IT team to work on projects more closely aligned with your company's goals and direction.

Time-saving templates reduce compliance risk: The centralized nature of a cloud-based platform allows you to replace hundreds or thousands of versions of company messages with a unified and consistent set of templates that can be updated swiftly to anticipate or respond to market or regulatory changes.

Brand recognition improves: Manual updates often overlook changes in company logos, colors and content. A cloud-based system lets employees update templates consistently as part of the branding process.

Note: Sending messages with appropriate branding is more than a marketing nicety these days. Inconsistent branding raises a red flag among hyper-vigilant customers who worry about hackers trying to seize sensitive personal and financial information by impersonating banks, credit-card issuers, health-care agencies and the like.

Why the cloud makes the difference

Unlike their on-premises predecessors, a cloud-based customer communications system can be accessed anywhere, from your corporate headquarters to an employee on the road or in a home office 10 time zones away. Because it runs on the web, it is accessible on any connected device.

Managing customer communications in the cloud makes it possible for a company to blast through silos and to integrate systems across the organization. This creates an efficient, data-driven framework that delivers personalized conversations at scale with the most important asset in the organization – your customers.

Cloud computing makes the difference in business today, as these numbers show:

- Cloud integration is **60% to 75% faster** than on-premises services.²
- Companies that adopt cloud services experience a **60% average improvement in time to market.**²
- Businesses that use productivity-enhancing cloud services **grow 19.6% faster** than companies which don't

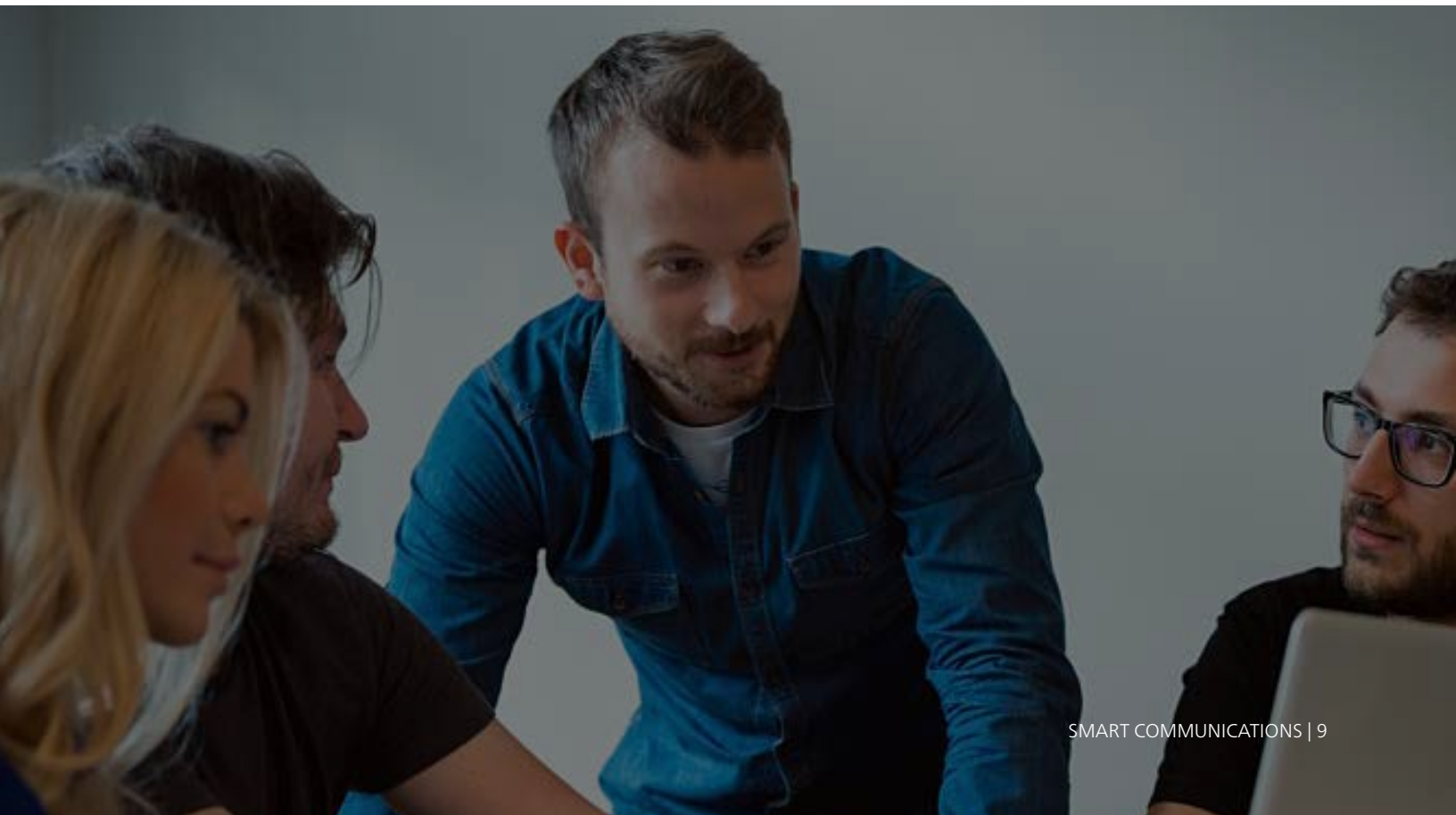
Digital access matters to customers, too

Today's consumers are going digital-first, which makes them more receptive to companies using services like cloud-based customer communications management. This preference cuts across all generations and categories of customers and includes multiple touchpoints.

Internet access spreads across generations: Millennials and their younger cohorts are considered "digital natives" because they grew up with phones in their hands and computers on their home and school desks. Internet usage is near-ubiquitous for anyone under 49: 98% of people ages 18-29 and 97% of those ages 30-49 are online.³

Forrester Research concluded in its 2017 report "The Future of CCM – Communications-as-a-Service" that Millennials will be the death knell for platforms that rely on paper over digital communications:

"Millennials will make up 50% of the workforce by 2020 and require information-rich, secure, real-time, private communication — not voluminous statements."⁴



But a significant majority of their “digital immigrant” parents and grandparents right there with them, with 82% of 65- to 69-year-olds now internet users.⁵

Consumers prefer digital for

communicating with business: Although some claim Boomers and Seniors prefer paper over digital, the tide appears to be turning. A 2017 survey of U.S. consumers by Adestra, a UK-based email service provider, found 72.5% chose email over postal and mobile for receiving messages from businesses.⁶

In a separate study, Adestra found Australian consumers shared a similar trend: 77% of consumers preferred digital over postal and email No. 1 over other digital channels.⁷

Concluding thoughts

Newly empowered consumers are changing the balance of power with the brands that they use every day. With the power of the purse behind them, and a variety of communication tools and preference in their hands, these consumers are taking an active role in the ways they communicate with these brands.

They also have high expectations for how those brands will communicate with them, along with a greater confidence in being able to walk away from brands that don't meet their expectations.

This places a greater burden on the quality of your customer communications platform. Legacy systems that rely on age-old rules and on-premises, installed hardware can't keep up with the faster pace of modern brand-customer conversations and contacts or meet consumers' higher expectations.

Besides these customer-facing failures, legacy systems require more money, people and time to manage, with inefficiencies that hold your company back from growth and customer satisfaction.

The solution: a modern customer communications management program built on system-wide integrations that use the power of cloud communications integrate systems across the organization. It operates on an efficient, data-driven framework that delivers personalized conversations at scale with the most important asset in the organization – your customers.

The customer solutions we've highlighted in this document illustrate how we have put these ideas into practice. They show how



a modern platform can increase customer satisfaction – leading to higher retention and strong relationships – and reduce churn, inefficiency and their related costs on the company. That's a win-win situation that puts your company at a competitive advantage.

Want to Learn More about How to Scale the Conversation?

Smart Communications' executives are recognized experts in the customer communications field, and we take pride in sharing their up-to-the-minute insights.

To that end, we have created a library of resources to help you learn about and understand all the factors that go into successful customer communications management. We invite you to check them out and learn more about modern customer communications platforms and their role in driving customer satisfaction and corporate success.

1. Smart Communications thought leadership

Download informative infographics (easy to share with your team!), videos and white papers covering our research and developments in customer communications, industry-specific viewpoints for health care, insurance, financial services and other industries and best practices for customer communications and its role in the modern corporation.

2. Scaling the Conversation: The Smart Communications Blog

Stay up to date with breaking news, company insights, research headlines, best practices and more for customer communications management professionals.

3. Product Offerings

Learn more about Smart Communications' [Conversation Cloud framework](#) and our product offerings, including [SmartCOMM™](#), and [SmartCORR™ for Salesforce](#).

Contact information

We welcome your comments, questions and requests. Just [complete this form](#), and one of our communications experts will be in touch to discuss your specific needs.

¹ State of the Connected Consumer, Salesforce, 2016

² Navigating a Cloudy Sky: Practical Guidance and the State of Cloud Security, McAfee, 2018

³ Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet, Pew Research Center, 2018

⁴ The Future of CCM-Communications-as-a-Service," Forrester Research, 2017

⁵ Percentage of Internet Users by Age Group in the US, Statista, 2018

⁶ 2017 Consumer Digital Usage & Behavior Study, Adestra, 2017

⁷ 2016 Australia Consumer Digital Adoption & Usage Study, Adestra, 2016



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