

CCW Vegas 2019 - ServiceNow



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Holly Simmons, Global Product Marketing, Customer Service Management at ServiceNow offered her input on how the company's "Now" platform transforms outdated manual ways of working into modern digital workflows to ensure that employees and customers get the information they need, when they need it.

Can you tell us a little bit about ServiceNow and why companies should be interested in your offerings?

We focus on making the world of work better for people. That applies to every part of the business -- helping to connect employees together, to connect employees with customers, as well as to manage all the work and what we refer to as 'digital workflows' throughout a company. We started in IT, extended into HR and customer service.

We are now hearing a great deal about customer retention management. Is this a trend?

Everyone is familiar with traditional CRM systems in the customer service space and the intent has always been to capture customer information, develop a view of the customer, and track cases. While that is important, at the end of the day, it doesn't fully resolve all a customer's issues, nor does it necessarily support making people want to continue to do business with an organization... that requires an effective retention piece.

In our conversations, CRM is really 'call reaction management,' focused on agents waiting for customers to call with their issues. What's really needed is an approach that is end-to-end, focused on the entire customer journey with a company. Helping companies retain customers requires being more proactive, often finding ways to solve issues before customers start making inquiries. Every interaction is no longer an isolated engagement. It is about more than capturing a single issue. It's part of an ongoing relationship with the customer. Everything a business does to build that journey and connect all the pieces together makes for a seamless experience every time the customer's interacting with a company.

How important is exploring the addition of artificial intelligence bots and self-service?

A lot of the press coverage over the last few years goes down a negative path, portraying AI as some evil technological weapon designed to take jobs away and eliminate the human element. The truth is, it can be a very positive force not only for customers, but also for the agents and others within a company who are trying to deliver the best possible service and support for customers. If you look at machine learning, we can automate many common requests allowing agents to focus on more interesting and meaningful work. They can become advisors to customers and use their time to help customers resolve more complex issues. It's not about eliminating jobs but changing and improving what agents can do, which creates a higher level of job satisfaction and makes their work a far more engaging activity. Automating mundane tasks ultimately translates into positives, not only for agents, supervisors, and customer service leaders, but also for the consumer.

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With rote and repetitive tasks deleted, do you envision any change in the type of person that becomes an agent?

We hear the term “super-agent” being used more frequently. That is an outgrowth of the growing opportunity to do work differently. There probably will be more problem-solving required, but there's also unprecedented potential for agents to learn new skills. It's important for leaders to put the right training and support mechanisms in place to ensure that as many people as possible can make that type of transition. And I think most agents would be excited about the prospect. They would prefer to see repetitive tasks automated and use their love for the product that they're supporting to help customers get more out of it.

Where would ServiceNow fit in to help the agent?

We provide many capabilities to empower agents. This includes an agent workspace for omnichannel engagement and case management that takes advantage of AI for routing requests to the best agents and exposing related cases and solutions to problems. It eliminates the typical ‘swivel chair’ activities for agents.

We have extremely robust workflow that creates a connection between customer service and other departments. A customer service agent can engage someone in billing, legal, or another part of the organization, and can even work with an external partner to help them resolve a specific problem. They can assign specific tasks that foster increased visibility. The workflow can not only manage all these functions, but also automate a lot of processes.

We also support service management and service operations, which greatly helps companies selling and supporting technology, digital products, and services. We help them monitor customers' products and services, as well as identify, diagnose, and resolve issues. Incorporating necessary changes based on customer input results in continual improvement over time of the product. It also reduces the number of issues that arise for other customers. Agents don't get the same inquiries about a bug in the software because the organization is able to resolve it. We help companies avoid outages and when a problem is identified, agents can proactively notify customers who might be affected. There's no greater feeling of accomplishment than being able to proactively fix an issue before a customer contacts you.

We offer many opportunities backed by technology and intelligence to help the agents. A company can layer on machine learning to both prioritize requests coming in and identify resolutions for one specific issue or something affecting thousands of customers. Businesses can add chatbots to help customers without human involvement, but when necessary, route the case to a live agent. These types of efficiencies are valuable, but they also lend greater visibility to customer service teams. Through their expanded role, they are engaging the entire organization to make it everyone's responsibility to deliver a great customer experience.

If the customer needs to talk to an agent after they've received a text or self-served, is there a flag created for the agent that gives them all the information?

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Sometimes the company can take the customer directly to a personalized portal which has all the detailed information specific to that customer. It may recommend knowledge articles because it knows who the customer is, what products or services they have, and what cases were opened. The system could even identify postings from the community that are related to the customer's products or issues reported. The business can bring all that information together for the customer.

There's seems to be a great deal of flexibility as to what part is machine learning, what part is automated, and when a customer needs an agent. Is that determined by the specific situation?

Yes there is a great amount of flexibility because every business and industry is different. For example, I was talking with a customer service leader who runs an emergency response center. She laughed when we talked about self-service for her business because, in an emergency situation, the callers want to speak to a human. Alternatively, you have technology companies selling services like clothing or shaving subscriptions. These are digital services and customers don't usually need to speak with anyone. Self-service is the desired engagement model.

What can we expect from ServiceNow in the near future?

We've made several investments in AI and mobile and will continue along that path. We'll continue to build out an amazing agent workspace and agent experience, which a major focus for us. This goes back to the overall theme of making the world work better for people - agents, and other departments in the organization. We're integrating more third-party data and applications in our agent workspace because a productive customer service agent shouldn't have to have two monitors and 72 applications with which they have to engage. Our goal is simplifying their job and cutting down the time needed to help them achieve resolutions by giving them access to information that they might not find easily on their own.