

DELIVER SEAMLESS DIGITAL BUSINESS EXPERIENCES: THE ROLE OF CONTENT WITH CUSTOMERS & BEYOND

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Report Highlights

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Companies connecting content sources retain 63% more of their clientele year-over-year.

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Effective use of content helps companies improve customer profit margins by 52% more than All Others.

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Companies with connected content sources are 29% more likely to enable employees with access to relevant content through mobile devices.

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Companies with connected content sources are 2.4x more likely to use predictive analytics.

Gone are the days when companies could get ahead with pricing and products. Advances in technology made almost all industries prone to disruption; customer experience is one of the few remaining differentiating factors in our modern economy. This report will highlight the role of content in delivering seamless customer experiences as well as optimizing back office processes with employees and suppliers. It'll also highlight a set of capabilities through which the use of content helps drive customer satisfaction and operational efficiency.

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Eliminating disparate content sources throughout the business helps organizations pave the way for customer experience improvements.

Definition: Connected Content Sources

For the purposes of this research, Aberdeen defines “connected content sources” as a state of being where employees throughout a business, from back office to front office, have a single view of customer insights.

This is accomplished by integrating various systems (e.g. billing, web analytics, social listening, order management and CRM) used to capture customer data.

Content refers to business insights such as account data stored in a CRM system, product information, or knowledge base articles.

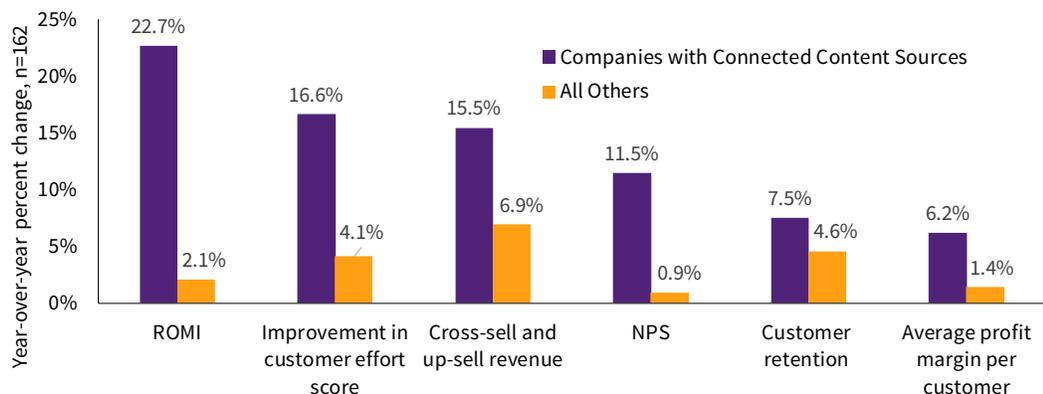
Why Your Company Must Connect Content Sources

When thinking of customer experience management (CX) programs, many organizations think of related processes and technologies. In fact, Aberdeen’s February 2017 [CEM Executive’s Agenda 2017: Data-Driven Approach to Delight Customers](#) study shows that 68% of businesses don’t measure how employee engagement impacts customer satisfaction. The same study also reveals that on average, employees spend 15% of their time seeking relevant content to do their jobs: serve customers.

The above findings must alarm CX executives — after all, it’s ultimately the employees throughout the business, from sales and marketing to the back office, who directly and indirectly influence customer experience outcomes. One of the top reasons why employees struggle with finding relevant content to do their jobs is disparate content sources. For example, a billing specialist will need customer records within the CRM system to observe terms of a customer contract to ensure the accuracy of a bill. Similarly, a contact center agent will need access to the billing system to answer customer questions on the breakdown of a bill.

Figure 1 shows that companies connecting content sources (see sidebar) are well-positioned to alleviate such challenges and create happy customers.

Figure 1: Connected Content Sources Makes for Happy Customers



Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2017

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Data shows that, on average, employees spend 15% of their time seeking relevant content to do their jobs.

Definition: Net Promoter Score

Net Promoter Score (NPS) measures the likelihood of a company's customers recommending its products or services to others.

Many organizations wrongfully use NPS to measure customer satisfaction. Proper use of this metric is to gauge customer advocacy and loyalty — read [NPS: Are you Measuring Customer Satisfaction Correctly?](#) to learn more.

* Net Promoter Score is a registered trademark of Fred Reichheld, Bain & Co., and Satmetrix

One of the many benefits of connecting content sources is the ability to bridge the gap between the front office (sales, marketing, and service) and back office (billing, operations, and product development). This is important, as the [CEM Executive's Agenda 2017](#) study shows that misalignment between company products / services and customer needs is the top factor influencing customer dissatisfaction. This is trailed by back office errors and delays as the second top factor. Both activities take place in the back office; this means that building connected content sources to unify the entire business around the customer is not a nice-to-have, but a must-have for organizations aiming to excel in creating happy customers and driving operational efficiency.

The findings in Figure 1 validate the above assertion. Companies with connected content sources improve [NPS](#) (see sidebar) by 12.8 times and customer retention rates by 63% year-over-year, compared to All Others.

Why are “content-savvy” businesses observing such improvements in customer experience results? Because they report 4-times greater annual improvement (decrease) in customer effort scores, compared to All Others (16.6% vs. 4.1%). Customer effort is subjective to buyer perception, but it's a valuable metric — reflecting how easy it is for buyers to do business with an organization. Improvements in customer effort scores are accomplished by empowering employees in the back office to handle tasks such as insurance claims processing and mortgage loan origination more efficiently, so the customer receives answers within promised timeframes and won't need to provide unnecessary or repetitive information. Similarly, improvements in customer effort scores are gained in the front

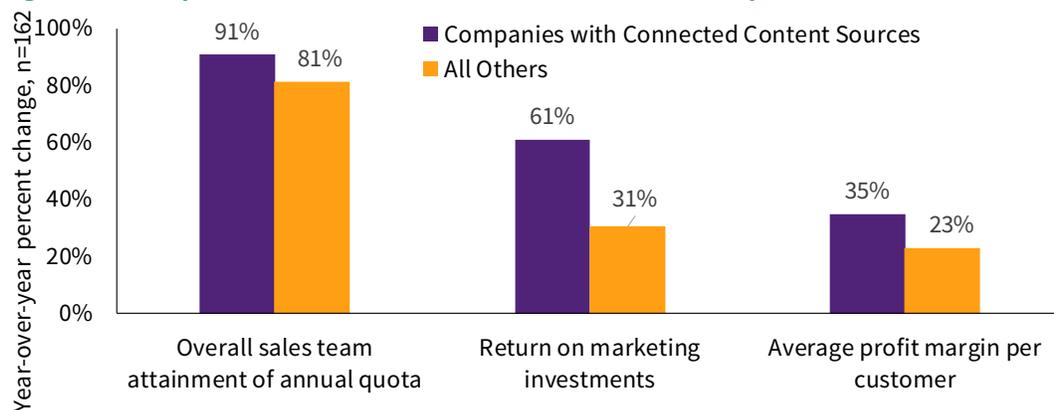
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office by reducing the time to address customer issues such as generating a proposal or answering support questions.

Customers reward those organizations that address their needs. To this point, companies with connected content sources observe 22.7% annual improvement in return on marketing investments (see sidebar), compared to a mere 2.1% by All Others. They also observe 2.2 times greater annual increase in cross-sell / up-sell revenue, compared to companies with disparate content sources (15.5% vs. 6.9%). Customers are more likely to spend with these content-savvy organizations as building unified-view account data enables organizations to deliver more personalized and consistent conversations across all channels.

Figure 2 provides more context for the business benefits of building and managing connected content sources. As depicted below, content-savvy businesses are not only improving their year-over-year performance across various customer experience measures; they also maximize their financial results.

Figure 2: Companies with Connected Content Sources Improve Financial Results



Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2017

Specifically, companies with connected content sources enjoy 12% greater overall sales team attainment of quota, compared to All Others (91% vs. 81%). High performance in this metric means that these businesses sell more, and as a result they are more likely to

Definition: Return on Marketing Investments (ROMI)

For the purposes of this research, Aberdeen defines ROMI as a performance measure indicating the incremental sales that an organization can attribute directly to marketing activities.

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Building connected content sources is not only beneficial to have happy customers. It also helps companies deliver shareholder value.

attain the results within their business plan. This is crucial, as it shows that building connected content sources is not only beneficial to have happy customers — it also helps companies deliver shareholder value.

It's important to note the 8% delta in customer profit margins as depicted in Figure 2 (35% vs. 23%). Companies enjoy greater profit margins when they sell a product or service at a higher price point and / or decrease the cost to sell that product or service. In this case, by helping reduce the employee time spent looking for relevant content, companies can reduce unnecessary labor costs impacting cost to serve customers. For example, back office employees must complete tasks such as responding to an insurance claim within a certain time frame. When they can't access all the relevant content they need, the time it will take them to complete tasks will lengthen severely, resulting in inefficiency in the back office. In turn, this increases costs that the company could have avoided by building connected content sources.

Thus far, we've observed how connecting content sources impacts performance results. Let's now observe how companies build and manage this strategic capability.

The Path to Connect Content Sources Across the Business

There are two main elements companies use when building connected content sources. First are the processes to make it easier to capture, store, use, and analyze content. Second are the technologies used to execute these activities efficiently. The first set of processes savvy firms use are aimed at unifying the entire business through a single view of the customer — in other words, providing all employees throughout the front office and back

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Perspective from the Trenches

One of the top four global banks in Asia Pacific wanted to transform itself into a customer-centric business that could truly understand each client and deliver personalized interactions. After analyzing the obstacles preventing individual customer engagement, the bank determined that they would not gain real customer understanding until they could connect all of their content, which was stored in sources across the enterprise—in multiple file servers, ECM systems, LOB systems and in paper documents.

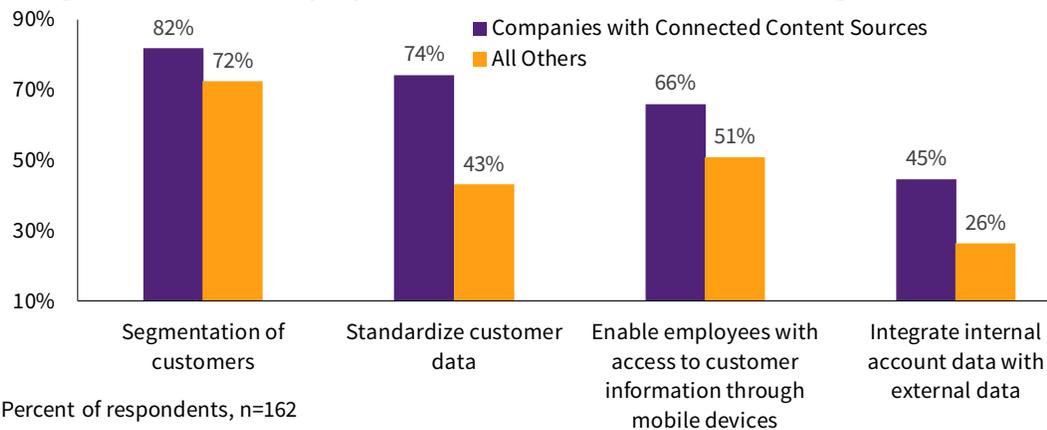
The company embarked on a full-scale digital business project, converting all paper into digital data, connecting content and business systems across departmental borders with search and view capabilities, and pulling together growing volumes of structured and unstructured data in case management solutions in order to develop an accurate profile of each customer for personalized digital interactions. The solution had to be cost-effective and compliant in multiple countries.

The resulting project changes brought about in their digital business project became the foundation of the company's Corporate Sustainability Framework, which seeks to create better customer and community engagement, and to deliver bottom-line shareholder benefits during a time of great transition in the banking industry.

office with the same view of account and operational data at the same time.

As many organizations operate across different regions and use numerous channels, they capture content in different forms. Figure 3 shows that content-savvy businesses are 72% more likely to standardize customer data throughout the organization, compared to All Others (74% vs. 43%). This refers to establishing common standards towards capturing data such as self-service transaction history, point-of-sale transactions, payments, etc. Establishing this capability makes it easier for organizations to integrate content across disparate systems and build a single view of the customer.

Figure 3: Give All Employees a Unified View of Customer Insights



Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2017

Figure 3 also shows that companies with connected content sources aim to enrich customer insights. They do so by integrating internal account data such as CRM records with external data such as insights captured through channel partners and customer-generated social media content (e.g., Facebook posts and tweets).

Once empowered with rich and unified views of customer insights, companies with connected content sources then use segmentation to reveal hidden trends and correlations across different buyer groups. This activity refers to grouping current and

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Only 32% of organizations are satisfied or extremely satisfied with their ability to use content when managing customer conversations.

potential clientele based on numerous criteria, including demographics, previous purchase, loyalty, etc.

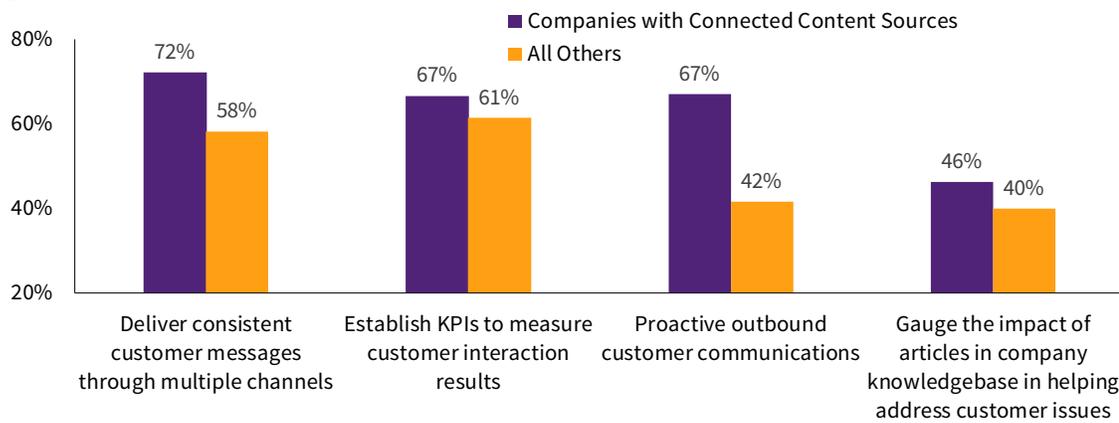
Combined with analytical tools such as business intelligence and predictive analytics, segmentation helps employees throughout the business personalize customer conversations. For example, a utility provider sending a monthly energy bill to a consumer can customize the bill to allow the consumer to see how their energy consumption compares to peers in the same segment — those living in the same ZIP / postal code. Similarly, back office leaders can analyze how completing certain tasks within specific periods of time impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty. This allows scheduling employees and adjusting task management programs to maximize customer experience results.

Another important attribute of companies connecting content sources is that they ensure employees can access relevant content through mobile devices. For example, an insurance claims adjuster must be able to access customer policy details while working remotely at an auto repair facility to provide customers with accurate coverage information. Similarly, a field technician servicing machinery at a customer site must be able to remotely access customer contracts in order to determine whether the client will need to pay for a replacement part — or if the part will be covered through the existing service contract. Data shows that companies with connected content sources are 29% more likely to enable employees to access relevant content through mobile devices, compared to All Others (66% vs. 51%).

Once employees have a single view of customer insights, companies must make sure to utilize this content to generate desired results. After all, what good is the effort to connect disparate content sources if it doesn't help the business achieve

its objectives? To this point, Figure 4 shows that companies with connected content sources are 24% more likely to use content to deliver omni-channel conversations (72% vs. 58%). This refers to delivering customer conversations that are personalized and consistent across all channels.

Figure 4: Put the Power of Content into Action to Drive Omni-Channel Conversations



Percent of respondents, n=162 Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2017

The ability to deliver omni-channel conversations is important because, among other reasons, customers today are more knowledgeable about the choices they have when interacting with businesses. With such transparency, consumers are more selective in working with those businesses that truly understand and address their needs. Given the customer experience performance improvements observed by companies with connected content sources as noted earlier, one can then say that those organizations are well-positioned to meet and exceed expectations of their empowered customers.

Another important activity deployed by organizations with connected content sources is determining the key performance indicators (KPIs) indicating success in attaining their goals. These are measures such as customer satisfaction rates, growth in revenue, and response time to customer needs. Every business is unique; hence, companies are expected to have different KPIs to measure their success. These KPIs might also vary across

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departments. For example, back office might track metrics such as task completion times whereas front office might track metrics such as customer satisfaction and cross-sell / up-sell revenue.

Once organizations determine the right KPIs to gauge their performance, tracking the how use of specific content influences these metrics helps firms establish the foundation to continuously use the right content to generate desired results. Indeed, Figure 4 shows that content-savvy companies are 15% more likely to assess the impact of articles in company knowledge base in addressing customer needs (46% vs. 40%).

For example, analyzing how content on the company self-service site helps resolve buyer issues. Companies must first capture customer feedback and behavioral insights to determine which customers express frustration, along with which of those have used self-service recently. Use of analytics then helps determine the linkage between use of specific content on the self-service site and customer satisfaction results.

While responding to customer issues through effective use of content is important, companies must not stop with simply responding; they must also proactively interact with buyers where and when appropriate. For example, an insurance organization should alert its policy holders in a specific region where hail damage is expected by sending proactive alerts to notify them of the upcoming weather event. Ideally, these alerts should also provide recommendations to help minimize potential damage. This helps policy holders minimize the risk of paying deductibles. It also helps the insurance organization minimize the risk of covering the balance of potential loss — a win/win for the business and its customers. Furthermore, by reducing future potential claims, the company decreases the number of claims back office employees

Savvy businesses
regularly gauge how
each content influences
key performance results.

would have had to handle. Data shows that companies with connected content sources are 60% more likely to have this capability in place, compared to All Others (67% vs. 42%).

Don't Forget the Role of Technology

While the activities observed thus far help companies build and manage connected content sources, they can't be executed manually — without excessive labor costs and a high likelihood of errors, impacting content quality. For this reason, savvy businesses that successfully connect content sources incorporate a variety of technologies to their toolbox, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Use Technology to Gain Efficiency and Enhance Results

Percent of respondents (n=162)	Companies with Connected Content Sources	All Others
CRM	88%	64%
Business intelligence	72%	38%
Case management	52%	47%
Content collaboration	37%	23%
Predictive analytics	33%	14%
Prescriptive intelligence or recommendation engine	22%	4%
Machine learning	16%	12%

Source: Aberdeen Group, May 2017

CRM is one of the most widely adopted technologies by companies with connected content sources. It's used 38% more widely by these top performers, compared to All Others (88% vs. 64%). CRM serves as a centralized system of record that employees throughout the business — from sales and marketing to back office — can use to access relevant customer insights to do their job.

Case management helps organizations provide employees with easy access to relevant information needed to manage customer cases (e.g., insurance claim, bill adjustment, and mortgage application). It also helps companies provide employees with task

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High-performing
companies are more
likely to use a case
management platform.

management capabilities by breaking cases down into unique tasks, and tracking progress in task completion times and accuracy. These activities are enabled through the workflow management capabilities of a case management platform. Table 1 shows that savvy businesses are 11% more likely have this technology in place, compared to All Others (52% vs. 47%).

When customer cases get complex, or span across multiple departments, employees need to collaborate to deliver a seamless customer experience. This requires employees to access the same content (i.e., customer contract) and make changes on it simultaneously. For example, legal and billing might both need to view the contract of a client who is late on payments. In doing so, the legal department would advise billing on how to adjust the customer communication to reflect the terms of the contract. The sales representative might even be included in this collaborative environment to discuss payment terms on the contract. Briefly, content collaboration facilitates teamwork, and helps companies deliver seamless customer experiences.

We noted the role of analytics several times thus far in this report. Table 1 shows that companies with connected content sources lead the way in adoption of different analytical tools. They have 89% greater adoption of business intelligence (72% vs. 38%) and 2.4-times greater adoption of predictive analytics (33% vs. 14%), compared to All Others. They are also 33% more likely (16% vs. 12%) to utilize machine learning capabilities and 5.5-times more likely (22% vs. 4%) to provide employees with prescriptive intelligence, compared to All Others.

Collectively, the technologies noted in the above paragraph reveal that there is a correlation between use of [cognitive technologies](#) such as machine learning and predictive analytics, and making

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better use of content. For example, use of machine learning helps companies determine the complexity of handling specific tasks in the back office and adjust case completion times even before an employee starts working on the task. This would then enable the firm to adjust staffing to attain desired service-level agreements.

Another benefit of cognitive technologies is the ability to guide employees on next best actions. Machine learning can be used to observe how different content types are leveraged in similar cases can help the organization guide a back-office employee with recommended content they should use when they begin work on a new task. This, in turn, helps improve employee productivity and reduce delays in task completion — ultimately helping companies respond to customer needs faster.

Yet another way companies drive efficiency through technology is through robotic process automation (RPA). This refers to using software designed to execute specific tasks repeatedly. An example to these types of tasks could be entering the information a customer submitted through an online student loan application within the company system to gauge customer credit worthiness. While this is an important activity, it doesn't require complex decision-making skills — a robot can copy the content of the online form into a company system. This helps minimize the risk of error and fraud in the process.

As evidenced by the above example, the tasks for which RPA is used are not complex, but repetitive, and require minimal human decision making. Using robots to handle these tasks allows companies to use employee time on more complex tasks that add value to the business — and the customer. Data shows that companies with connected content sources are 86% more likely to use robotic process automation, compared to All Others (13% vs. 7%).

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Recommendations

Customer experience has become one of the few factors companies can use to differentiate in the era of the empowered customer. A winning customer experience strategy puts content at the forefront, and uses it as a way to bridge the gap between the front office and back office. In doing so, it helps companies deliver seamless customer experiences – ones that are personalized and consistent across all channels.

Data shows that employees are challenged with accessing the relevant content needed to do their job — serve customers. Companies that build connected content sources minimize this challenge, and in turn improve employee productivity and decrease unnecessary labor costs. The benefits of a savvy content strategy ultimately helps companies improve customer satisfaction, reflected through increase in client spend and growth in retention rates. It also helps achieve success in the back-office, generally measured in terms of efficiency gains such as reducing time to handle specific tasks. We recommend companies looking to achieve similar outcomes adopt the following activities:

- **Build a single view of customer insights throughout the business.** According to the [CEM Executive's Agenda 2017](#) study, 55% of businesses use at least 10 channels to interact with customers. This means that companies capture a wealth of structured and unstructured data through multiple channels. However, only 32% of businesses are satisfied in using these insights. To help alleviate this challenge, we recommend integrating disparate content sources to provide employees throughout the business with a single view of customer insights. This will help support the ability to personalize

customer conversations and ensure that they remain consistent across all channels.

- **Gauge the effectiveness of content in yielding desired results.** Whether it's in the back office or front office, it's imperative that you measure how content contributes to your top objectives. This requires determining the KPIs reflecting your success in attaining business goals. Use of analytical tools such as business intelligence and machine learning helps determine how each content asset influences KPIs. This helps companies provide employees with the right type of content at the right time to do their jobs. It also helps provide customers with relevant content to minimize their effort when interacting with your business.
- **Use technology to automate when you can.** Employees are a key part of any customer experience program. However, using their time on repetitive tasks that require minimal decision-making is not a good use of organizational resources — especially in today's technology environment where companies can automate simple repetitive tasks. If you're not currently using technologies such as machine learning, predictive analytics, and robotic process automation, we recommend you consider doing so; it'll help make more effective use of employee time. You'll still need a unified view of customer insights; the steps discussed above will help get maximum results from your automation efforts.

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For more information on this or other research topics, please visit www.aberdeen.com.

Related Research

Personalization in the Era of the Empowered Customer: Real-time vs. Traditional; May 2017
Cognitive Customer Experience: The Future is Here; March 2017
CEM Executive's Agenda 2017: A Data-Driven Approach to Delight Customers; February 2017
Customer Intelligence: Using Data to Drive Loyalty & Advocacy; July 2016

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