

A close-up photograph of a woman with curly blonde hair, wearing a light-colored sweater, holding a black mobile phone to her ear and looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression.

Tomorrow's customer experience

Technology and people in collaboration for smarter conversations

As technology evolves, so do our expectations of excellent customer service. We think it is perfectly natural to be able to carry out bank errands on a Sunday evening, and to instantly find out when the next bus leaves, and to purchase a mobile ticket. Regardless of what we want to know or do, we want it to happen immediately. We want it to be available at a time that suits us, and via the channel of our choice. And when we speak on the phone or chat with customer service, we want to get our problem solved during the first contact.

The proliferation of automation and solutions for self-service has led to a greater proportion of the interactions becoming digital. But organisations that choose a digital strategy for their customer meetings need to be aware of the risks as well as the opportunities. Because when we replace humans with technology we lose the intangible human qualities from the interactions – such as empathy and flexibility.

To provide a great experience, digital services need to be intuitive and easy to use, as well as offering a way to get human contact when self-service solutions fall short. Another thing to remember when it comes to automation is that contacts that reach the agents will be more complex, and that agents will need good tools to deliver on the expected service level.

In this guide we will explore how the agent's workday has changed and how smart technology can contribute to better customer meetings. Swedish Skånetrafiken and Norwegian Entur also share their keys to success.



"If the technology is impressive, it's because a human has done the job," says Malin Örnberg who works with automation and self-service at Telia.

Skånetrafiken has smart targets and shares knowledge

Skånetrafiken is a public transportation provider in the south or Sweden with a mission to provide sustainable travel. They serve 465 000 people on a daily basis. Susanne Jonsson, area manager for the contact center, notes that one of the most significant changes that has taken place over the last few years is that focus has shifted from availability to quality. Today it's not enough to offer short waiting times and friendly service.

- The customer expects to solve their query during the first contact, and for us to deliver excellent service we need targets that move us in that direction, says Susanne.

Beware of stupid robots

If you want to succeed with automation and self-service, it's not enough to invest in cool technology. Fredrik Lemming, head of Telia ACE in the Nordics, says that 80 percent of the success depends on processes, ways of working and the people. The remaining 20 percent is attributed to the technology. An increased level of automation also means that you enter a domain with more complex queries, where a click-based automation strategy with yes and no options, no longer will suffice. When it comes to more complicated issues you need to achieve a conversation to ensure a great customer experience.

Malin Örnberg helps our customers to train their chatbots and she shares that if the technology delivers great results, it is mainly a consequence of it being in the hands of great people who are dedicated to working with it.

- In my experience, the common denominator for successful chatbots is that one or several of the agents take it under their wings and feel passionate about coaching it, says Malin.



"The customer wants to solve their problem at their first point of contact," says Susanne Jonsson, area manager for customer service at Skånetrafiken.

Skånetrafiken has gradually phased over from hard to soft targets to achieve the right effects. Jim Nordqvist who works as a unit manager for customer service points out the possibility to measure each agent as a key to success.

- We use the information to celebrate what works well and to identify areas where we need to educate or offer extra support to an agent, says Jim.

Higher complexity

A number of years ago most of the people who contacted customer service had simple questions such as what time the bus leaves from Kristianstad to Nymölla. Today the customer service staff are expected to be able to explain why a bus takes a different route, why a train doesn't stop at a particular station or why the ticket price has increased. Therefore, the personnel need a smart tool that will help them find the right information.

- When I started my customer service journey 20 years ago the personnel knew most of the answers to the customer's questions by heart. Today the errands are far more complex, and our customer service staff need access to all the organization's information in every interaction, says Susanne.



Seamless interaction between human and machine

Machines are superior to humans when it comes to finding, remembering, and categorizing patterns in large data sets. Humans, on the other hand, are superior at working with questions in grey areas, and have the ability adapt to changing conditions. Robotization is technology for automation of recurring processes. It can eliminate repetitive workflows, such as opening an application automatically and fetching information that is needed for a certain task.

- Combining the strengths of the technology with the unique human abilities transforms agents into super agents, says Fredrik Lemming.

"Smart measurement allows us to help our agents develop," says Jim Nordqvist, who works as unit manager for customer service at Skånetrafiken.

Entur facilitates sustainable travel

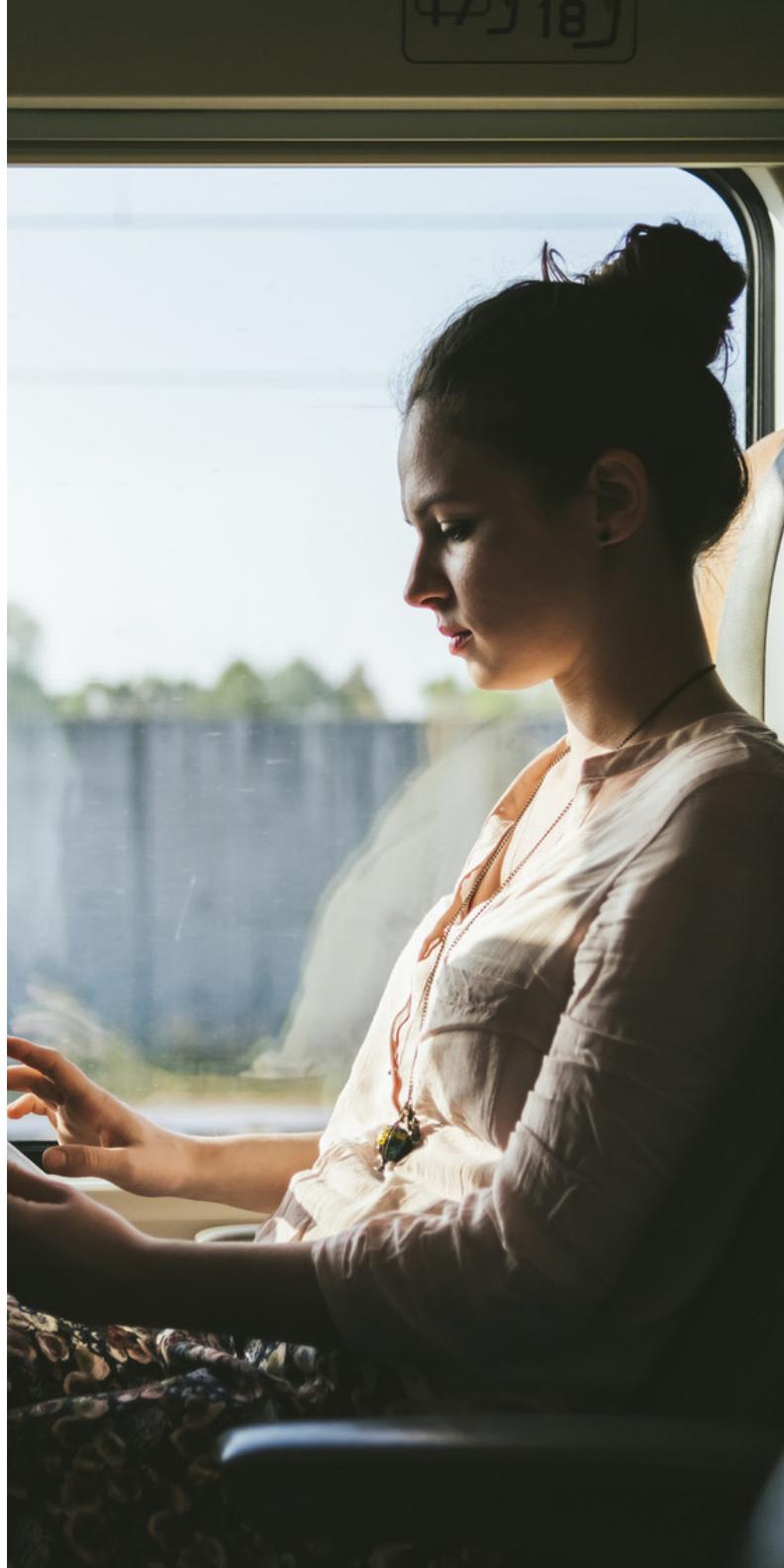
When the train travel was deregulated in Norway the state-owned company Entur was founded. Their mission is to provide travelers with a single point of contact for everything that concerns the journey, and to ensure simplicity that will make more people chose public modes of transport. Entur has 90 customer service staff in Lillehammer and Trondheim serving their customers via phone, social media as well as in chat and e-mail.

Entur set long-term goals to achieve the best possible customer experience, and strive toward achieving harmony between technology, human and ways of working. By implementing smart technical solutions, and aligning processes and people, they have decreased the average handling time by 23%.

- An excellent customer experience requires continuous investments in learning and innovation, and with figures that show that the way we work makes a measurable difference for the customers, we have earned the attention of the rest of the organization.



"Now the organization has a better understanding of our proposals," says Siv Stafsnes - Gregersen, who is responsible for Entur's customer center.



Summary

To achieve a great customer experience you need a strategy and a concrete plan to optimize the interaction between technology and agent. That's how you get the most out of their respective strengths.

