



THE 12 MUST-HAVES TO AUTOMATE YOUR CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS

CHOOSING AN AUTOMATED COMMUNICATIONS PROVIDER

Automated, interactive customer communication technology, sometimes referred to as “Automated Notifications”, “Messaging”, or “Alerts”, is an effective tool used by many of the nation’s top companies. These notifications can be delivered by voice over the phone, email, SMS, or a combination of all three.

Automated communication enables organizations to deliver valuable information to the right customer at the right time and in the right form, which enables customers to take action, such as paying a bill or responding to a survey. As a result, enterprises across multiple industries increase revenue, improve operational performance, and reduce operating costs, while improving the customer relationship.

While automating your customer contact offers significant benefits to your business and your customers, not all solutions provide the same results. **When evaluating automated communications providers, know these 12 must-haves.**

1. EXPERIENCE IN YOUR INDUSTRY

Develop a trusted partnership: Providers who understand your business become a trusted partner. Success in reaching your communications objectives only comes from years of working with organizations in your industry. Your provider should continuously monitor emerging trends, technology, and events across the industry and be proactive in deploying communication solutions in your ever-changing environment.

2. SIMPLE AND QUICK INTEGRATION

Let your hosted provider do the work: Consider the operational impact of manually producing and sorting customer files from your existing legacy system(s). Without a provider who has experience handling complex integrations to your back-office environment, your IT department will end up manually producing, sorting, and formatting customer files to the provider’s specifications on a daily basis. You can avoid this time-consuming process and help your IT department by choosing a provider that can integrate with your internal system and process.



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3. PERSONALIZED INTERACTION

Send the right message to the right customer: The right message to right customer at the right time, and through the right channel, greatly increases your response rate. A message that compels one customer to take action will be different than a message that compels another. Your provider should have the ability to intelligently apply simple and flexible business logic and develop notifications using any field you have available in your customer records. The right provider also allows you to incorporate best practices, such as offering customers the ability to self serve and make payments.

4. QUALITY VOICE AND PERSONA

Don't let poor quality audio hurt your image: Every customer interaction provides an opportunity to strengthen your relationship and improve customer satisfaction. Using low-quality voice messages lessens your credibility and can even diminish your brand's integrity. Choose a provider who offers professional voice talent so the message you deliver sounds as clear and pleasant as if your customer were talking to a live person. Take special care with ethnic multilingual notifications. Engage your customers with the proper tone and they will respond.

5. VOICE MAIL RETRIEVAL

Let the provider handle callbacks: When you reach a customer's voice mail, simply leaving a toll-free number will drive your customer right back into your call center. To maximize the benefits of automating your communications, your provider should leave messages while also proactively handling the message callback. How? Messages left on the voice mail should include a unique toll-free number that calls the provider along with a unique PIN to properly authenticate the customer. When your customers call back, they will then be directed to the original automated message, not directed into your contact center and tying up your call center agents.

6. AUTOMATED CONTACT PACING OR "THROTTLING"

Don't let your contact center get over loaded with inbound calls: A valuable automated solution intelligently controls the flow of calls into your contact center, keeping your staff well managed and your customers free from long wait times. Your provider should have real-time monitoring of your hold queue, processed by detailed business logic, which then automatically controls outbound notification volumes based on in-bound capacity.



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7. EFFICIENT (AND INTELLIGENT) TRANSFER OPTIONS

Make it easier for the customer: Even with a personalized message your customer may have questions or need to talk with a representative. Transferring them into your IVR and making them navigate their way to the right department is frustrating and time consuming. Your automated solution should also transfer more than just the call. CTI integration and warm transfer capabilities give your representatives detailed information to help solve customer inquiries before they take the call. This keeps your customers from having to repeat their name and account number and makes the resolution process efficient.

8. MULTI-CHANNEL AND CUSTOMER PREFERENCES

Let your customer choose the best way to reach them: If your only channel for automated communications is through the phone, you may alienate a customer who doesn't want to be called, plus you may not be able to effectively reach and interact with a customer who travels or is hard to get on the phone. Your solution should handle phone, email, SMS text messages, fax, or a combination of all. This will increase your chances of reaching them and will provide the highest level of customer service.

9. FILE MONITORING

Let the provider keep guard over your files: A provider with an automated system that continually monitors the data flow between your systems and theirs is better equipped to catch any file issues. When troubles or irregularities do arise, you want a single point of contact who will take the lead in finding a quick resolution with the least impact on you.

10. MEANINGFUL RETURN DATA

Get meaningful customer data back: The more you know about your customers, the better you can tailor future messages. Make sure your provider can connect to your back-office systems so that customer information is updated and kept current. You should have the option of choosing real-time or batch integration, sent to any one of your systems. This allows you to apply business rules based on your most recent interactions, keeping your messages appropriate and timely, and maximizing your success.



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11. COMPLETE RESULTS REPORTING

Basic activity reports only tell you so much: Your provider should be able to supply a full range of data that provides visibility into how each customer interacts with your messages. Reports that allow you to see (in near real-time) all of the milestones during a customer call let you evaluate such things as the number of live answers, how long each customer stayed on the line, when they transferred to agent, what time they answered the message, and what action they took. These, and many more details, give you the data needed to continually adjust your calling campaigns, making them most effective for each and every customer, and ultimately, your bottom-line.

12. SECURE CUSTOMER DATA

Keep data secure: Your provider is entrusted with sensitive customer data and should take extra precaution to ensure there is no chance of a security breach (actual or threatened). Choose a provider that ensures tight control at several levels to prevent unauthorized access to systems or data.

About Varolii Corporation

Varolii provides on-demand communication software and services that enable organizations to more effectively reach and interact with their customers and employees, getting the best result from every interaction. By automating the processes required for personalized communications such as flight cancellation notices, fraud detection alerts and prescription pick-up reminders, Varolii helps its clients reduce operational costs, increase contact center efficiency, and get more out of their existing IT investments. More than 380 companies, including many of the largest U.S. banks, airlines, wireless carriers, utilities, and healthcare organizations trust Varolii send nearly 4 million communications every business day.

Varolii is headquartered in Seattle with offices in the Boston and Denver metropolitan areas. For more information, visit www.varolii.com.

For more information, please contact Varolii Corporation at:

1-800-206-2979 or info@varolii.com

Or visit: www.varolii.com

821 Second Ave. • Suite 1000 • Seattle, Washington 98104