



ResultsCX

People power
at its core

PROJECT PARTNER

AVAYA



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People power at its core

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A man in a dark suit and white shirt stands next to a flipchart, gesturing towards it. The flipchart has handwritten text: "1 SYNERGY", "2 CROWDSOURCING", and "Team building". A woman with blonde hair sits at a wooden table in the foreground, looking at papers. Other people are partially visible at the table. The room has a window with a plant and a radiator.

JAMIE VERNON, SVP IT & INFRASTRUCTURE AT RESULTSCX, DISCUSSES WHAT DRIVES CUSTOMER CARE IN THE 21ST CENTURY, AND THE PART TECHNOLOGY HAS TO PLAY

What makes ResultsCX stand out in its field as a customer experience solutions provider

is its deep-rooted people-centric approach. One might assume any similar organisation would focus on that above anything - it seems like a no-brainer - but the thing about IT is that, for many working in that sphere, technology is all they've known. And while IT expertise can be taught, empathy is trickier to grasp. Jamie Vernon, SVP IT & Infrastructure,

knows that better than most.

Vernon's mother was in IT and his father was in music, working at the same university. That mix of technology and creativity laid the foundation for Vernon, creating, in his words, a "more well-rounded person".

"I was talking recently to someone about how many people in IT are very much about ones-and-zeros, hard facts, hard math - they forget how to talk to people," he says. Vernon honed his artistic side as well as his technical skills throughout his education, studying engineering and participating in orchestra and marching



band. And this, for him, has been vital for his personal brand of leadership.

“Engaging with others, needing to coordinate, working across groups and teams – those kinds of skills are critical.” As Vernon’s career progressed along the technology route, something he learned is that IT professionals need to remind themselves of why they have followed that path, and that there’s a bigger purpose at stake.

“So few people write code for code’s sake,” he explains. “Lots of people will play an instrument because they like how it sounds. Lots of people farm because they like to grow things. And in

computer science, you write things to help people communicate and achieve a goal. But it’s so easy for people in our field to lose sight of the fact that we’re doing this to support a larger mission.” Interestingly, some universities encourage (or even require) computer science students to take on non-computer science coursework, to ensure they don’t become too single-minded about what they’re learning.

Having learned this lesson early on, Vernon has been diligent in instilling this attitude in his team at ResultsCX. His team provides customer support to 20,000 customer support experts,

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so it has to be done right. The qualities he grew up adopting are qualities he seeks in others; he wants to know them as people, what drives them, how reflective they are, to know that they're the right people to drive ResultsCX forward in its care for customers.

CUSTOMER CARE IN THE MODERN WORLD

What's interesting about customer service right now is that customer loyalty isn't the same as it used to be. The landscape across every type of consumable and service is saturated, competition is too fierce to measure, and customers' standards are sky-high.

"It used to be that there was multi-generational loyalty to very specific things - newspapers, vehicles, and so on - and those loyalties were based on timeless values like trust and quality," says Vernon. "However, consumer choice is greater than ever before. Not only do we have options that our parents didn't have, but the pervasive nature of the internet has brought those choices to our doors."

What brings customers to ResultsCX is the desire to deliver top-shelf customer experiences and keep people coming back. This includes everything from ordering or returning products to upgrading or renewing a service, and if those enquiries are handled poorly, the perception of the brand is diluted. And some businesses can't afford even one bad customer experience.

"We are the custodians of our customers' customers," says Vernon. "In this increasingly tenuous relationship with their customers, they trust us. My leadership takes that responsibility very seriously, and charges

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each of us with doing everything we can to provide a perfect call, or email, or chat, every time, thousands of times a minute, around the clock and around the calendar."

DRIVING A CULTURE FOR AUTOMATION

With that human-centric focus always in sight, ResultsCX is able to focus on the state-of-the-art technology that forms the backbone of its offering. In a previous role, his commitment to service delivery and stability led to 14 consecutive quarters of 99.999+% IT uptime, and his mission is to deliver those results at ResultsCX too.

Driving a culture of automation is important to Vernon, even if automation is, in his own words, "a foregone conclusion at this point in technology history".

"It's been part of IT operations culture at larger organisations for a while," he explains. "Netflix's Chaos Monkey - which tests system stability within the streaming service's architecture - is a great example. It's about how to further improve, even if that's only in speed and reliability, the repeated processes we perform every day. IT organisations in the customer care space are always pushed to launch more cleanly, more quickly, and at scale, and when the delivery of a call or email is literally one's revenue stream, our responsibility will always be to enable that stream as smoothly as possible.

"We needed to be prepared for



growth after our acquisition by Chrys Capital, and we had a brilliant window to launch automation here at ResultsCX. This involved enabling the IT operations team to become comfortable with at-scale automation so we could support the business. It was a cultural challenge, getting them to embrace it rather than fight it. Thankfully, the business case for automation is an easy one - what CEO doesn't want business agility? What CFO doesn't want a more quickly-billable revenue



stream? What COO doesn't want greater stability? And what CIO doesn't want bragging rights?"

Any leader looking to implement automation has to include some rules that capture when a job is initiated, by whom, and when it completes, otherwise cross-referencing can't occur and you can't calculate its efficiency or ROI. It's a challenge, too; Vernon soon found that ResultsCX's processes within IT operations weren't documented to the degree that the company would want for automation,

but pursuing automation regardless has forced the business to approach the way it operates with a new eye.

"We've had an awakening in how much we let grow old and outdated," he says. "It took a while for us to realise that maybe the way we were working was no longer fit-for-purpose, but we got there."

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED CARE

Embracing automation goes hand-in-hand, comfortably, with the technology



side of customer care. ResultsCX has a platform called SupportPredict, which assists a customer service specialist by reading keywords that the agent is typing and finding knowledge-based articles to help reduce, if not eliminate, the time it takes for an agent to find that information themselves. This saves time for all parties, the customer gets the information they want quickly, and they're more likely to be happy with the service they've received.

The benefits of SupportPredict are being felt by customers in a big way. When one client's customer call volume exploded by 300% at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, SupportPredict was there to ensure a high standard of customer care was maintained while the increase in sales opportunities was maximised. With the platform collecting and analysing customer profile data for agents, supervisors were able to monitor performance analytics and provide coaching support to other agents.

"Our customers have always been high on average handle time, so how do we lessen the need for a phone call?" says Vernon. "In a broader sense, how do we make customers feel like their time is valued? They don't want to be rushed off the phone, but they do want efficient service and their needs to be handled." This is what SupportPredict exists to help with.

The last few years have seen customer service change in a way that couldn't have been predicted, as businesses all over the world were forced to change the way they operate - while customers had to change their own habits. The pandemic hit the United States in full force in March 2020, and while some organisations responded well, many didn't.

"Historically, the contact centre space has been very reluctant to support working from home," Vernon explains. "Mostly because it is, for the most part, an uncontrolled environment. This is concerning for customers who don't know whether

their data is safe. The pressure was on us, in IT, to at least provide a technology secure solution.”

ResultsCX partnered with Microsoft to help build out the Azure Virtual Desktop solution to better suit contact centre needs. Through this, the two businesses were able to convince customers that the right corporate culture was in place for the technology secure solution to not be abused, and remain successful.

“It was one of the most delicate, fragile sales conversations anybody ever had to participate in,” Vernon

admits. “But we were able to ensure our customers could sleep easier at night. There are companies of all kinds that didn’t make it through the pandemic, but we did, and a lot of it’s because of the solution we built and that we were able to communicate its value. We’ve come to terms with the fact that working from home is here to stay, but we’re not pausing to pat ourselves on the back because there’s always something else to plan for in case circumstances change again.”

As with the collaboration with Microsoft, partnerships are highly



valuable to ResultsCX. Avaya is another business ResultsCX trusts and works closely with; a cloud communications organisation that's very familiar to global businesses as a trusted expert. "They've been a force for a long time now, and their technology is reliable and scalable," says Vernon.

"We've had a few instances where our customers insist on having Avaya ACD be part of our solution, which really speaks to their engineering, their integrations, and their long history over which they've been trusted by voice delivery professionals."

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CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Aside from the challenges created by the pandemic, for Vernon, many of the difficulties ResultsCX has faced have been cultural. In many companies, in many industries, IT is often taken for granted; it's just there, in the background, and often isn't considered until it goes wrong. "We're the trolls under the bridge, if you will," Vernon jests.

"We're necessary, but people don't want to be reminded that we're there. We all want a good service with good support and creating new capabilities that our customers didn't even know they needed is where I'm trying to take the ResultsCX team. SupportPredict is being rolled out to every one of our customers, and we're having conversations not only with our internal stakeholders but external ones too, to talk about their processes and how IT can make them better."

ResultsCX is stepping away from the traditional under-the-bridge role of IT and into what it calls 'digital solutions' - working with automation at both back and front ends of businesses, helping customers launch chatbots and other customer care technologies, and being strategic about IT.

"We got bought a year ago and our new CEO has already said, 'Why are we doing commodity IT?'," says Vernon. "And we're all being pressed to find a way to

partner better, to be seen as a colleague and a resource - not just one of the IT people."

WHAT LIES AHEAD

A benefit of being a forward-thinking company in a fast-paced sector is that the future is always exciting. From a technology perspective, there are major opportunities and interest in ML and, even more so, AI. But while ResultsCX is utilising that technology in things like chatbots, Vernon's focus on people and empathy means human connection in customer care is still at the core of the business.

"No AI has ever needed a car service, or had a plane delay," says Vernon, "and as a result, it can't authentically demonstrate sympathy for someone in that position. One of the core lessons we've learned, as an industry, is that customers respond very poorly to inauthenticity, so an attempt to present AI as human is a faraway prospect.


"However, for now, our model is any number of people acting as customer service agents, with team leads and other support roles available. There are scores of mechanical tasks that take place during a call, any of which detract from the emotional connection that is there for the agent to curate on behalf of our customers. Just as SupportPredict takes cues from what an agent types and finds just the right bit of knowledge at just the right time to make the overall call go more smoothly, I expect AI to be listening in on the calls and managing those mechanical tasks for the agent."

This gives agents the power to focus all their attention on the person they're talking to, and make sure the conversation runs as smoothly as possible. "No more 'please hold while I...' breaks in the conversation," says Vernon.

More broadly, he expects ResultsCX's customers' customers to embrace technology as a means towards better customer service. The IT industry will be asked to introduce more digital versions







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of everything as the landscape changes. Vernon recalls an anecdote that highlights the way today's younger generations search for and consume information.

"Our CIO's teenager asked him a question, and he told her to Google it. Rolling her eyes, as teenagers do, she lifted her phone and asked it to Google the question for her. The digital assistant she already had on her phone quickly found the correct answer for her. She valued her time too much to even walk over to a computer, bring up the browser, type the question, and filter through results. Even her father, a professional

technologist, hadn't considered that.

"Today, she's an individual consumer. In 10 years, she'll be a young up-and-comer. In another ten, she'll be making key decisions at a respectable level in a global organisation. She will continue to fiercely guard her time more than our generation does, and she will do business with companies that value her time as well. When I talk about making customers feel valued, it's not just about handling the need, but the entirety of the customer service experience.

"As an industry, we're being asked to not only create better self-service, technology-driven solutions, but



when they're requiring a person, that person has to be even more skilled and caring than before."

Just as healthcare workers are challenged to treat the entire person - not only the condition - technology leaders are in a position where they need to design, launch, and scale market-leading solutions that meet the entire need and leave the end-user satisfied. Bringing more and more humanity to increasingly complex technology is an interesting challenge, but one ResultsCX is more than ready for.

"The art of meeting a customer where they are - geospatially,

emotionally, technologically - that's going to be an ever-changing problem," Vernon states. "And solving it is going to be the most critical thing any company could approach in order to maintain its relationships with customers. I believe in the exceptional service that the evolution of an IT team holds. Even when we implement all these technology solutions, there's still ultimately going to be a person at the end of the phone because it's a better way to handle an upset person. It will be a long time before people stop wanting to talk to people."

In its dedication to understanding the customer's customer, ResultsCX created a persona for its healthcare clients. Pearl is an older lady whose life and personality were painstakingly planned out to create an image of the customer's customer; she is the person at the other end of the phone, ready to be supported.

ResultsCX's healthcare clients loved Pearl, and the company was even approached regarding whether it would sell the videos of Pearl so that other companies could use it for their own purposes.

"And that's a telling story about how we personify and respond to the person on the other end of the phone," says Vernon. "Our own customers were blown away by it. They'd never seen that level of effort to focus on the people that we're helping from any other provider." ■

