



# Omnichannel is a Reality at Last

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## Biography

Lee Trenham is Head of Sales at proactive customer engagement specialist VoiceSage ([www.voicesage.com](http://www.voicesage.com)).

With 20 years experience in the Customer Contact and Customer Experience space Lee has helped organizations across the private and public sector to offer effective and engaging communication solutions to drive better relationships with their customers and citizens.

His specialties include: Sales, contact centre solutions, enterprise applications/software and hardware across all verticals, service providers, channel development EMEA, testing and monitoring, service and performance assurance, managed services, cloud based services, and professional services.

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**Paper type** Research

## Abstract

*'Omnichannel' is one of those words that has appeared in marketing presentations for what seems like an age – more concept than reality. But as the author of this article explains omnichannel has made the switch from concept to reality, but not all of us have noticed.*

## Introduction

Omnichannel – being able to communicate with your customers in any way that is convenient for them and you, in a consistent, integrated fashion – is an important strategic goal for many organizations. There's a sense, however, that omnichannel is more a concept than a reality – something for Marketing presentations, not the actual contact centre coal face.

But things are finally changing. Omnichannel has arrived, which means there's really no basis for being cynical about it any more.

Take Mary Meeker's annual *Internet Trends* report<sup>1</sup> which shines some intriguing lights on omnichannel. In America, customer service is now about real-time and online – and as a result, brand managers and contact centre leaders are actively building out a full omnichannel approach to help, with online, SMS and voice as big elements in the deliverable.

Meeker's synthesis of current data on Internet trends shows that having easier access to online support channels is a number one preference for US consumers (60%), even preferred to faster agent response times (53%). A consistent customer experience across channels was cited as one of the most desired improvements a



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brand could make by one in three – and if this is delivered with an integrated online presence, supported by community building activities and user generated content, some parts of the US business sector are delivering, if not full omnichannel, then something close – which has to be great news for brands and the digital consumers who use them.

### **‘Mid Atlantic’ omnichannel?**

Is there any basis for concluding things are similar on this side of the Atlantic? From the UK contact centre research<sup>2</sup> carried out in collaboration with the UK Contact Centre Forum (UKCCF), the national membership group for call centre and customer service professionals, the answer is yes.

The data offers some noteworthy parallels. British companies are recognizing the importance of omnichannel to their businesses, and how it can optimize customer service initiatives and increase customer loyalty. For example, no less than 56% of respondents told our interviewers they map the customer journey, and 20% say they are about to do the same. The same proportion, 56%, said they have in place or will soon have, fully integrated information and contact routing systems, a pre-requisite for multi-channel engagement.

It is interesting to note that the majority, 51%, are using SMS to interact with their users and 20% are using Automated Voice – and 14% of present non-users of such proactive technologies believe that, if they did, it would be effective (or very effective) as a means of connecting with customers.

This shows that there are UK companies who are already balancing multiple platforms and communications channels with their customers successfully, another metric for omnichannel achievement.

### **A clear picture**

We also checked if UK contact centre professionals have access to a clear picture of customer history, another omnichannel essential. What we found: one in six of the organizations surveyed say they can now give a team member immediate access to the previous conversations with customers about the same issue, and across all channels. Again, that’s just the kind of seamless, integrated face that consumers expect from omnichannel, and it’s happening now for multiple brands.

### **Delivering on the omnichannel promise**

What is the conclusion to draw from all this? It’s that despite teething problems, for a high percentage of organizations omnichannel has moved from aspiration to everyday reality. Organizations are starting to enjoy the kind of integrated information and contact routing that makes the channel mixing consumers like a practical possibility – and we’re seeing real proof that the data omnichannel provides businesses is starting to offer a way to target sales and boost the bottom line.

#### **Reference**

- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.kpcb.com/internet-trends>
- <sup>2</sup> <http://uk-ccf.co.uk/ukccf-2017-proactive-survey/#sf-%7B%7D%5D>