

# Call deflection

How Enterprise CPaaS orchestrates  
and automates end-to-end journeys

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# Call deflection – tactics for success

**According to leading analyst firm Gartner, one of the top 3 priorities for customer service leaders is to optimize previous investments in digital channels and self-service.<sup>[1]</sup>**

Gartner's research shows that businesses have spent significant amounts of money to launch self-service solutions. But, to their dismay, their investments aren't delivering the expected return. The results show that while 70% of customers are self-serving at some point in their resolution journey, very few are fully resolving their issues via digital and self-service channels.<sup>[2]</sup>

The crux of what their research found is that despite efforts to reduce the role of telephony in providing customer service, contact centers are still inundated with customer calls. The majority of which could be solved by self-service. This overload of inbound calls is costly for the business and frustrating for customers. It is also avoidable with an effective call deflection strategy.

Call deflection is the practice of routing inbound calls to alternative channels for customer service. It's a multi-faceted strategy to reduce call volume and cost to serve with traditional tactics, including FAQ pages, encouraging the use of email, and integrating web chat as an agent channel.

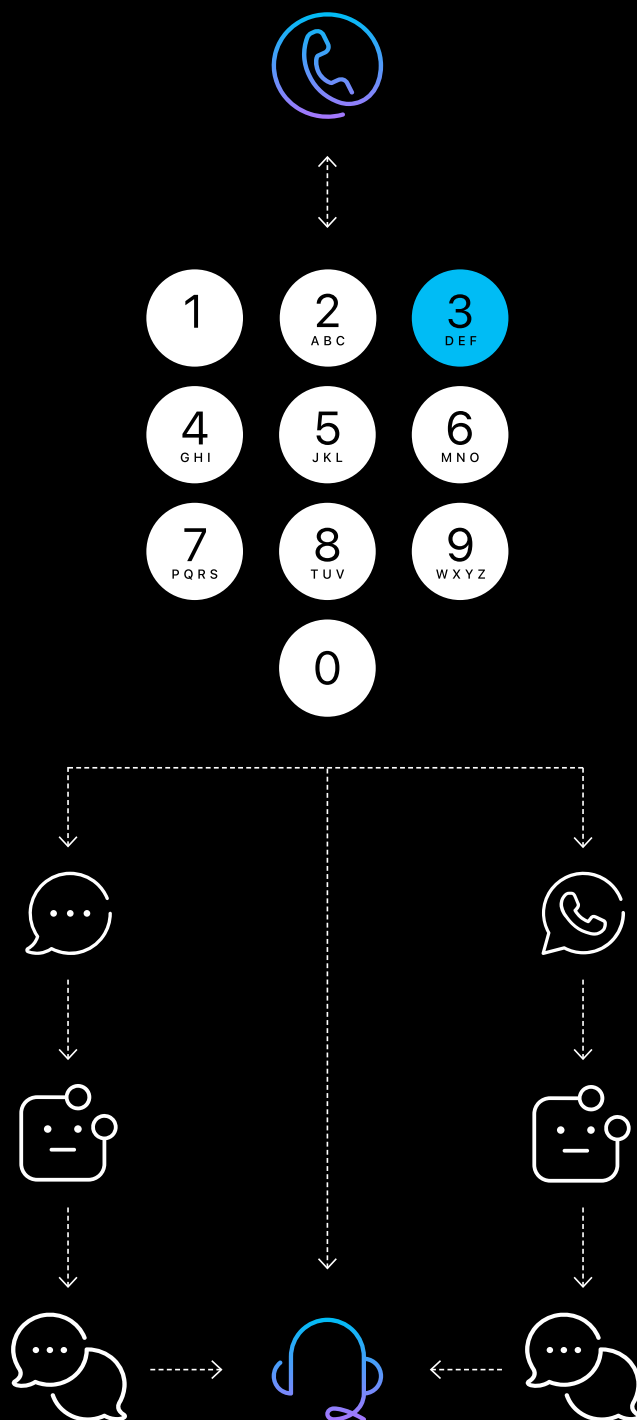
However, as consumers continue to demand to communicate with their favorite brands on the messaging channels they use every day, it's time for businesses to take a fresh look at their call deflection strategy. Two-way messaging, maturing chatbot technology and advances in communication automation give rise to digital messaging as the new go-to place for service and information. Customer service leaders have an indisputable opportunity to harness the digital messaging and automation trend to increase customer satisfaction while simultaneously reducing the number of calls into the contact center.

This whitepaper looks at how contact centers can reduce call volume by deflecting to and communicating through channels like WhatsApp, Apple Messages for Business, and RCS where customers can easily self-serve with the help of automation and AI as well as chat with agents to find the answers they need.

**Reduce call volume  
by deflecting  
through channels**

## Call deflection flow

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## The era of self-service

We are currently in the era of self-service. Where once customers wanted businesses to do everything for them, they are now willing to find answers to their own questions and serve themselves. Already, 67% of customers prefer to self-serve over speaking to a company representative.<sup>[3]</sup>

In response, businesses are pouring billions of dollars into improving technology to provide “DIY” customer service solutions. They have invested in “press 1” IVR capabilities, FAQ web pages, community forums, and knowledge bases.

While these have had some success, the reality is that only 9% of customer service journeys are completely solved through self-service.<sup>[5]</sup>

Instead of simplifying customer service, new tools and more touchpoints have added complexity. Businesses are finding it difficult to manage processes and technology; while customers are left confused. Not surprisingly, 55% of customers find self-service portals on the web difficult to use and over half say that the main reason they cannot resolve an issue on their own is because there is too little information online.<sup>[6]</sup>

In addition to a lack of information, customers are rarely presented with an option to resolve issues or complete a specific customer journey through self-service.

As a result, the number of calls being made into the contact center remains high and wait times lengthy. This is negatively impacting the service experience and risks alienating customers – 90% of customers rate an ‘immediate’ response as important when they have a question and 51% will not do business with a company again after one bad experience.<sup>[7,8]</sup>

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# 73%

**of customers want to solve product or service issues on their own<sup>[4]</sup>**

Despite the growing pains, the value that self-service can deliver for both the customer and business is an opportunity that will continue to gain momentum.

As businesses continue to tweak strategy and implement new technologies; they will simultaneously improve the customer service experience while reducing contact center operational costs and the number of inquiries that agents have to deal with every day.

# Most organizations realize the strategic impact of customer self-service on the overall customer experience, but fall short in demonstrating benefits

# The role of call deflection

The word “deflection” brings to mind negative connotations – dodging contact, diverting problems and intentional avoidance. But, when voice interactions with a contact center are cumbersome and long-winded, the use of more convenient channels will help to turn a potentially frustrating experience into a positive outcome for customers.

Call deflection is about routing calls to alternative channels that are more convenient for customers. Once in an asynchronous messaging environment, customers can multi-task to quickly and easily solve their problems without picking up the phone. For enterprises, call deflection reduces incoming call volume, lowers contact center operational costs, and frees up time for agents to talk to customers with urgent, complex inquiries.

Call deflection also goes hand-in-hand with helping to optimize self-service solutions, guiding customers to channels where they can self-serve to easily receive immediate answers to their questions.

But, which call deflection strategies will have a significant impact?

It is commonly accepted that it costs about \$1 per minute for the average contact center to serve a customer over the phone. Compare this cost to providing customer service on other channels. For example, the cost of developing, launching, promoting, and maintaining a mobile app can range from a few \$10K for a simple app to several \$100K for a complex app. But, will an app significantly decrease call volume? The answer is no.

It's time for customer service leaders to evaluate new options for self-service, enabling agent interaction and deflecting customers to alternative channels for customer service.

## What is call deflection?

### What it is

- Route inbound calls to alternate channels of customer service.
- Handling high volumes of customer calls more efficiently.
- Increasing customer satisfaction.
- Enhancing the customer experience by providing choices for issue resolution.

### What is is not

- Avoiding human interaction.
- Redirecting to numerous parallel channels of customer service.
- Sacrificing customer experience for a reduction in contact center operational costs.
- Circumventing voice-based customer service.



## The shift to messaging

There are over 2 billion monthly active users on Facebook Messenger, and 1.5 billion active users on WhatsApp who collectively send 55 billion messages every day. Looking to the future, messaging's domination is expected to continue, with the user base of different messaging apps predicted to reach 2.48 billion by 2021.<sup>[10]</sup>

Looking at the popularity of messaging, it's no surprise that today's customers want to use their favorite messaging channels to engage with businesses, in the same way as they engage with their friends and family:

69% of customers across all age groups want to be able to contact a business via SMS.<sup>[11]</sup>

83% want to learn about a product or service through their favorite messaging channels.<sup>[12]</sup>

In response to the demand, we have seen major technology and communication players establish themselves as messaging platforms for business-to-consumer interaction.

Apple launched Apple Messages for Business, enabling iOS and MacOS users to initiate a conversation with a business on Messages from a number of different entry points. These include Safari, Maps, Spotlight, and Siri. WhatsApp released an API for the delivery of high-volume communications by enterprises allowing customers to engage in a 2-way conversation. Google is working with the GSMA and mobile operators to champion Rich Communications Services (RCS) as the evolution of SMS for Android devices. Facebook Messenger, WeChat, Line, and Telegram also have business messaging capabilities.

These two-way messaging channels offer rich media capabilities, advanced analytics and can be combined with smartphone capabilities, such as location triggers, to enrich interactions. High-quality pictures, videos, branding, location sharing, typing indicators, carousels, file transfers, and more, can be used to create app-like interactions directly within the channel. Messages can be uniquely laid out, with moving components and multiple call-to-actions helping to engage customers and to guide them through the interaction.

## Advanced messaging channels offer the latest rich media messaging capabilities to transform interactions\*

- |                            |                                |                       |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 01. List pickers           | 07. Trigger keywords           | 13. File transfers    |
| 02. High-resolution photos | 08. Emojis                     | 14. Suggested replies |
| 03. High-resolution videos | 09. GIFs                       | 15. QR codes          |
| 04. Visual menus           | 10. Delivery and read receipts | 16. Rich media cards  |
| 05. Image carousels        | 11. Audio messaging            |                       |
| 06. Action buttons         | 12. Payments and mCommerce     |                       |

\* Capabilities are channel-specific

# The advance of AI and automation

Digital messaging for customer engagement is being propelled forward by the growth of automation and AI.

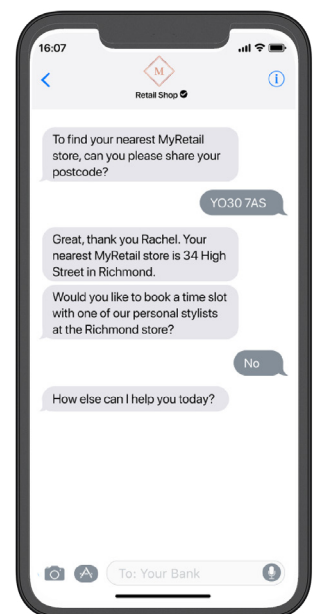
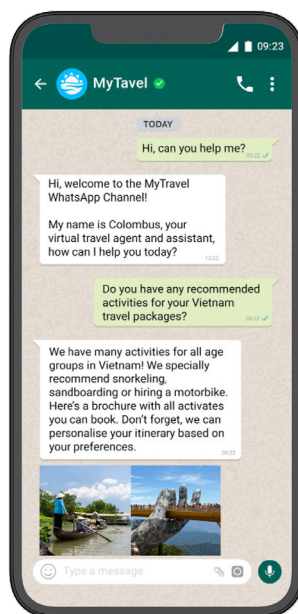
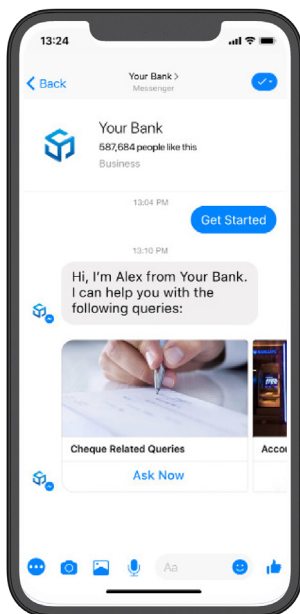
Chatbots are becoming more mainstream as this technology matures and as companies gain a better understanding of the use cases where bots excel. One of the most prominent applications of chatbots is to provide first line customer service. According to Gartner, organizations not only reported higher customer satisfaction after implementing a Virtual Customer Assistant, but also a reduction of up to 70% in call, chat, and email volume and a 33% saving per voice engagement.<sup>[13]</sup>

Another factor that is driving the shift to messaging is the use of communications platforms that enable end-to-end automation. Some specialized Communications Platform as a Service (CPaaS) offerings go beyond providing communication APIs and enable enterprises

to architect and orchestrate customer interactions and entire journeys end-to-end by integrating with business systems and communicating across multiple channels.

These enterprise CPaaS platforms are essential for delivering channel-aware experiences, creating two-way interactions, and orchestrating the right blend of automated and human engagement while catering to the security and compliance needs of large enterprises. In fact, there will be such a demand for large scale CPaaS platforms, that enterprise spend is set to quadruple to \$6.7 billion by 2021.<sup>[14]</sup>

The combination of these technologies is enabling companies to deliver intelligent self-service, personalized customer journeys and contextual interactions over the messaging channels that customers use every day.





## Two-way messaging, chatbots and CPaaS are call deflection game-changers

Sustaining a voice-only or voice-first contact center poses multiple challenges. Mounting operational expenses, agent dependency, increasing customer expectations, the need to deliver exceptional service at scale, are all causes of concern.

However, contact centers are in a fantastic position to benefit from two-way messaging and automation.

Contact centers can create a chatbot front line to provide information to customers and accomplish routine tasks 24 hours a day. Customers can choose from multiple channels, receive instant responses, and reply at their convenience. They don't have to wait on hold and can easily navigate interactions using the latest

rich media features, such as buttons and carousels. When a customer wants to talk to a person or has a high-priority inquiry, an agent can join the chat.

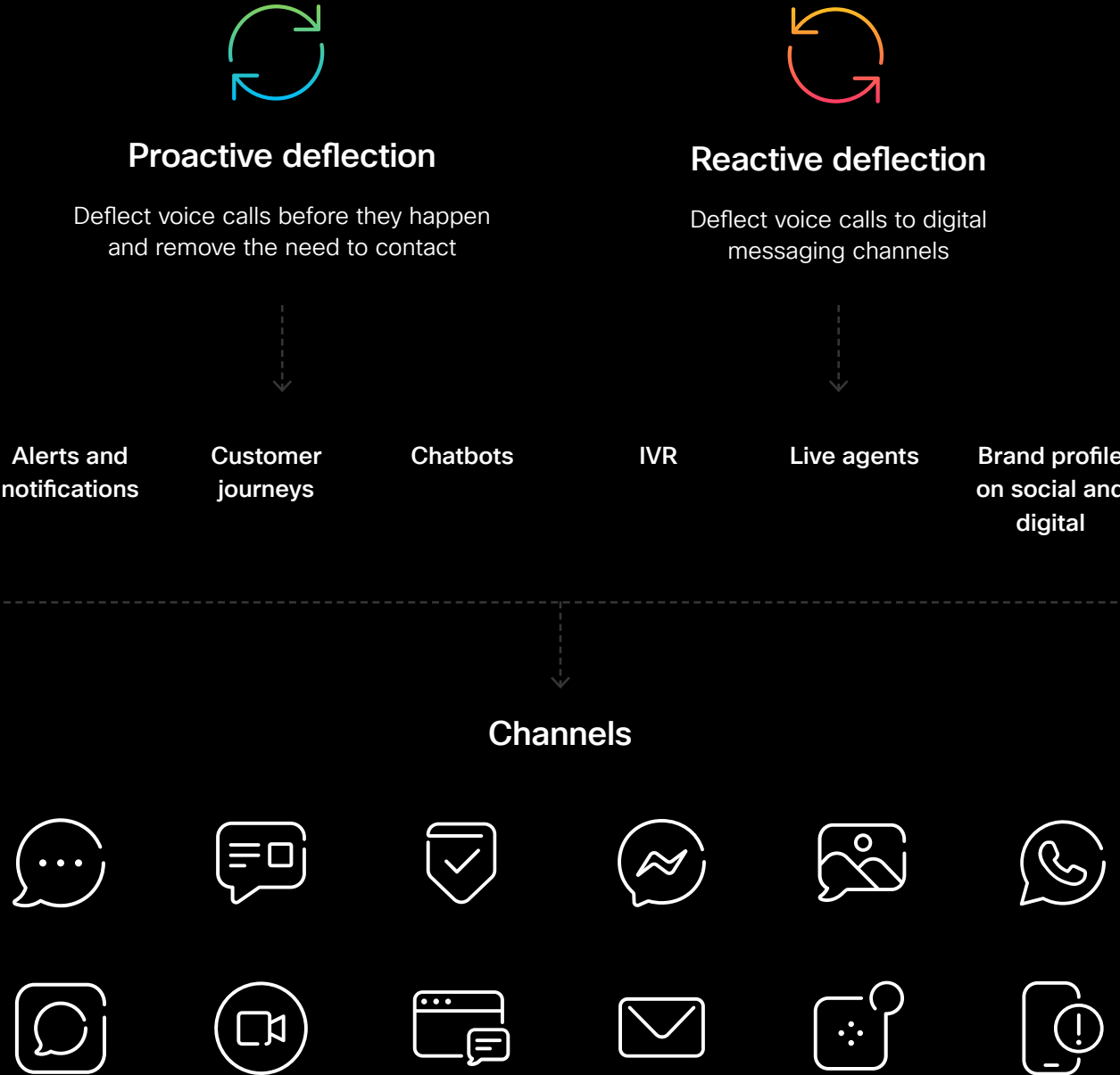
Two-way messaging, AI chatbots and automation through CPaaS help enterprises to deliver a better service experience to their customers' fingertips and reduce their call volume by removing their customers' need to call.

The key question is; how do contact centers deflect to and bring customers into these channels?

The answer, through a mix of proactive and reactive call deflection tactics.



# Proactive and reactive call deflection tactics



# How to move customer interactions from calls to messaging

## Deflect call from within the IVR

The first tactic to shift customer interactions to messaging is to create an entry point in the contact center IVR.

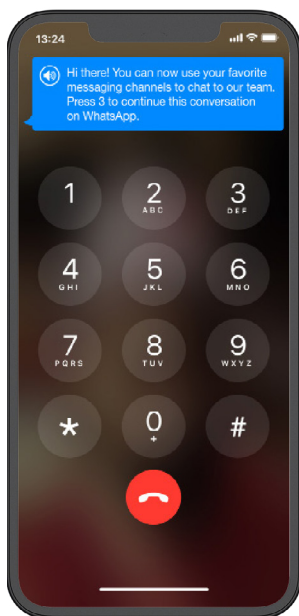
When a customer calls the contact center using a mobile phone, the IVR will offer the caller the option to transfer to a messaging channel. Contact centers can choose to do this for all mobile calls into the contact center or they can use Natural Language Call Steering to offer a channel change to select use cases, such as resetting an account password.

The IVR can offer the transfer via voice recognition, “I see you’re calling from a mobile phone, would you like to continue this interaction over SMS?”, or by pressing a button, “I see you’re calling from a mobile phone, would you like to continue this interaction over a messaging channel? Press 1 for SMS. Press 2 for WhatsApp.”

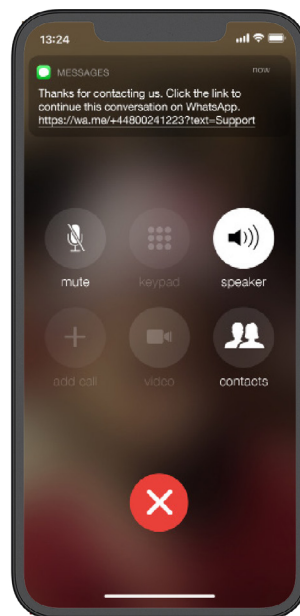
If the customer chooses a messaging channel, the system triggers an SMS to the incoming number. For SMS, the customer can reply to the message directly. For WhatsApp, the SMS contains a link to start a conversation on WhatsApp.

Once in the channel, the customer can self-serve via a chatbot or interact with an agent to receive information or complete a task.

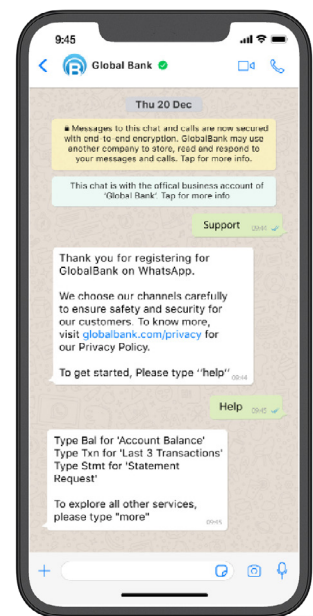
The IVR to messaging tactic will significantly reduce inbound calls by offering a seamless way to transfer to a messaging channel when customers are calling the contact center. The tactic offers customers an alternative to the IVR and avoids lengthy waiting times to be connected to an agent, resulting in an improved experience.



The customer calls and is offered a transfer to messaging. They choose to transfer to WhatsApp.



The customer receives an SMS with a link to continue the interaction using WhatsApp.



The customer continues the conversation via WhatsApp, engaging with a chatbot or agent.

# Deflect calls by integrating channel entry points into customer touchpoints

The simplest, but often overlooked way to encourage the use of messaging channels is ensuring they are easily discoverable.

A wide range of smartphone capabilities can be used as entry points to bring customers into the channel.

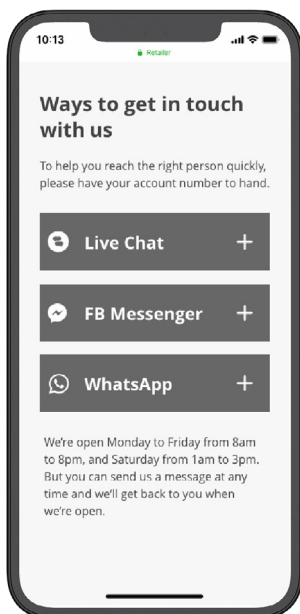
Launch a conversation with a button or link click, or simply message a number to begin a conversation. These options can be used across the company website and other touchpoints to advertise that the easiest way for customers to self-serve and engage with the business is through a messaging channel. Example touchpoints include “contact us” pages, emails, community forums, FAQ pages, and adverts.

QR codes are another method of deflecting calls by being placed on printed documents or webpages,

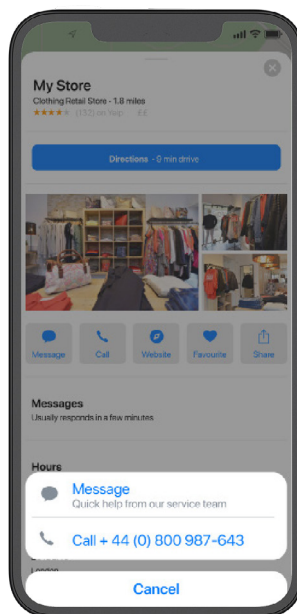
allowing customers to simply scan the code with their phone to open a conversation in the respective messaging channel.

On top of the entry points that businesses can use, the technology providers that own the channels are working to make it as easy as possible to start messaging a business.

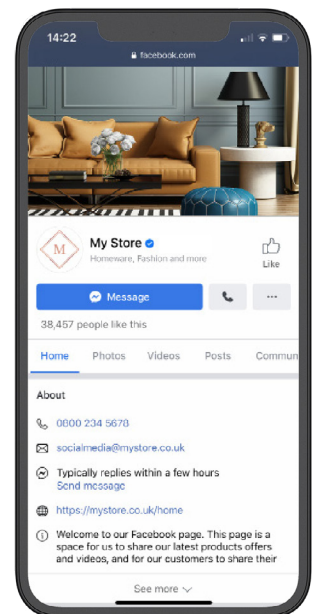
On iOS devices, customers can find a business using Safari, Maps, Spotlight, and Siri, and initiate a conversation over Messages. On WhatsApp and RCS, a business can set up a verified business profile that customers can easily search for and find. In addition to listing information such as contactable hours, the profile assures customers that they are messaging a verified business.



Channel discovery on the web.



Business messaging on Apple or Android devices.



Business brand profile on social media.



# Deflect calls by sending proactive notifications and stop calls before they happen

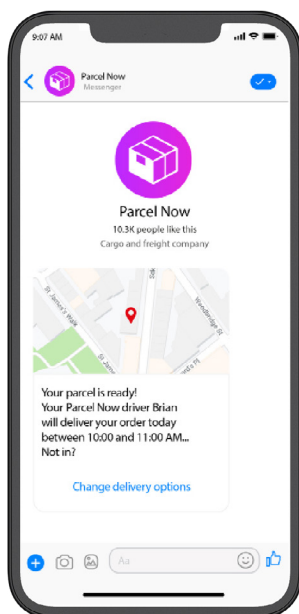
With customers willing to be contacted through messaging, contact centers are able to increase the amount of proactive service they provide. Proactive service is about identifying, resolving and communicating customer issues before they become problems, even before the customer becomes aware. Intervening at the right time in the customer journey not only impresses customers and saves them time, but also saves unnecessary costs.

To determine proactive communication use cases, contact centers can look at the most common inquiries and ask for customer feedback. Outbound message triggers can be set up to react in real-time to business events and trends in customer behavior that might result in calls into the contact center. Many interactions can be facilitated by chatbots and automated flows that take the customer through the steps to resolve the issue without the involvement of human agents.

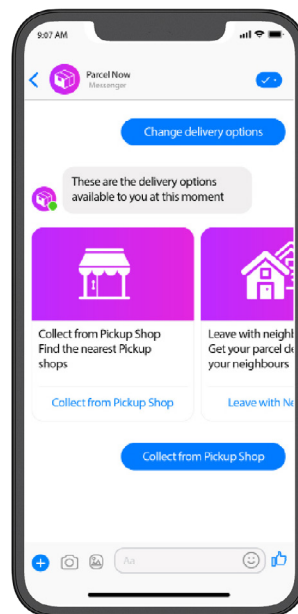
## Some examples include:

A utility provider notifies customers in the area affected by a power outage. The message details the actions the company is taking to resolve the issue and offers customers the option to chat with an agent by typing the word 'chat' if needed. This automated notification keeps customers informed and removes the need for customers to call.

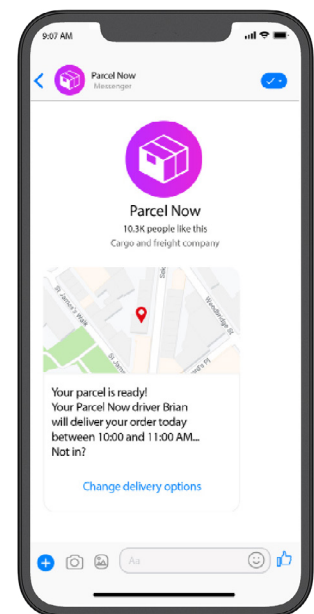
An airline alerts customers about disruptions to their travel plans and provides options to book another flight, get a hotel, or chat with an agent. While travel disruptions might always be an annoyance for customers the process of dealing with the airline becomes less of a hassle. There are hundreds of proactive messaging scenarios that can be deployed to reduce inbound call volume and build customer trust.



A proactive notification informs a customer about a delivery.



If needed, the customer can change the delivery option.



A message confirms the new delivery option.



## Achieve call deflection perfection with Webex

Customer self-service, proactive notifications and messaging with a human agent on a customer's preferred messaging channel is a contact center must-have. Not only will you reduce inbound call volume and operating cost, but also improve your customer's service experience drastically.

Webex can support you with the evaluation and implementation of the tactics outlined in this whitepaper – from IVR deflection to automating outbound messages and creating a multi-channel virtual assistant.

## Call deflection solutions that deliver results for your business

### Operational efficiency

- Improved service levels
- Reduced agent occupancy
- Higher customer engagement

### Cost savings

- Reduced call volumes
- Cost-efficient channels
- Agent hours saved

### Customer satisfaction

- Faster and easier service and support
- High-quality engagement
- Seamless experiences

# Sources

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August 2025



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