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Digital Insurer

Enhancing collaboration from  
carrier to customer



Evermore fickle customers and ruthless competitors are keeping the pressure on property and casualty (P&C) insurance companies to truly place the customer at the center of business.

Boosted by a growing number of social media channels, customers are quick to openly share their likes, dislikes and constantly-increasing expectations for insurance services, prices, and claims. At the same time, higher commoditization of products—against a backdrop of lower pricing, reduced switching costs and a poor interest rate environment that threatens profitability—is pushing insurers to deliver more discriminating services.

Collaboration innovation within the customer lifecycle is not just about doing cool things. It's about enabling more personal, direct interaction with customers at the point of need to distinguish the provider and deliver highly customized advice and support. Advanced, highly-social, communication capabilities range widely from video, telephone callback, instant messaging, video and chat to newer technologies such as white-boarding, browser sharing, virtual classrooms and social networks. These technologies have the power to energize insurers' strategic approaches to customer-centricity—whether it's increasing service levels across customer touch points, acquiring additional channels to create a wider funnel of prospects or reinforcing their brand with more distinctive, tailored messages. Collaborative tools can draw on tacit knowledge and resources in ways that allow customers to connect, interact, collaborate and do business with insurers on their terms—when and how they want.

"The Hartford has aligned Digital Strategy with Enterprise Business Services & Operations to deliver a truly connected experience for customers and agents across voice and digital channels. This structure allows The Hartford to deliver excellent service at the right time and in the right channel."

Todd Purcell, Vice President, Digital Strategy, Capabilities & Insights, The Hartford



# Collaboration innovation is about “the right time”

Collaboration innovation within the customer lifecycle is not just about doing cool things. It's about enabling more personal, direct interaction with customers at the point of need—the right time—to distinguish the provider.

Customers' shopping behaviors are relatively the same regardless of whether the product in question is shampoo or homeowners' insurance. They want products that meet their needs, delivered quickly through good service and at a competitive price—for an overall compelling buying experience. To influence customers' perception of their products, services and overall experience, insurers can use collaboration technologies at three key interaction points (Figure 1).

- **Between the customer and the agent** to strengthen the brand. For example, a top-ten U.S. P&C insurer is augmenting its service approach with video kiosks that connect customers in an agent's

office with product experts located anywhere in the world. It gives customers greater access to specialized information and reinforces the agents' role as advisor.

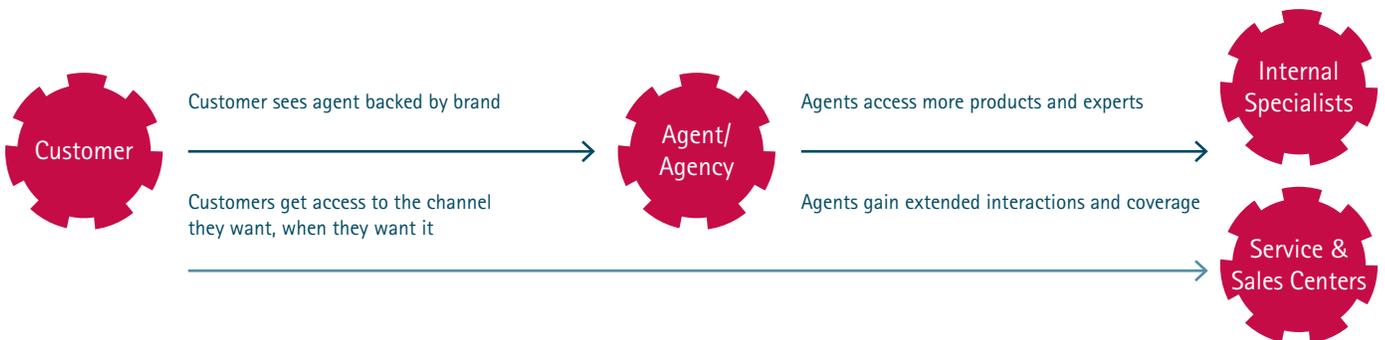
- **Between the customer and the insurer** to accelerate processes at lower cost. Through a click-to-video claims application, customers can use their smartphones to video property damage and then submit it as part of their proof of loss, directly to the insurer. The insurer can also supplement the agent's service with an always available contact center that can access the pertinent customer information and coverage details to provide excellent support 24/7.
- **Between the agent and the insurer** to further streamline processes with measurable productivity gains. In a survey of more than 220 Customer Relationship Management (CRM) decision makers, Nucleus Research found that adding social capabilities to CRM drives an average increase in sales staff productivity of 11.8 percent.<sup>1</sup>

Collaborative tools also provide the agent with access to the insurer's network of experts and specialists to guide them through more complex risks.

There is a significant upside for insurers to embed collaboration technologies into their core business processes. Customers gain more control of, and more choices for interacting with their P&C provider, and can quickly find the resources they need to make solid risk management decisions. Carriers get a much better understanding of customers and their intentions across the insurance lifecycle that may equate to top- and bottom-line results:

- Increased first-call/touch point resolution.
- Lower cost-to-serve.
- Decreased cost-to-acquire.
- Improved initial and cross-sale closure rate (online).
- Increased customer long-term value, better aligning cost to serve with customer age/complexity.
- Higher and sustained profitability.

Figure 1. Key opportunities to engage new collaboration technologies in insurance



# Making an impact quickly

Where might carriers best infuse social collaboration capabilities into their business? Based on our experience, Accenture sees two viable, near-term opportunities for P&C insurers: online/mobile and contact centers.

## Online/Mobile

Being online today can include an array of devices, including tablets and smart phones. The amount of time a person spent on mobile shopping apps increased 274 percent in 2012, according to Vator News.<sup>ii</sup> In insurance, the race to build distinction through the online channel is aggressive—spanning from mobile claims apps to quick online product quotes to small commercial digital capabilities. And, the more time customers spend online, the more difficult it is for traditional insurance providers to differentiate themselves.

Online social- and collaboration-based engagement offers customers direct access to insurance services with agent and expert support just a click away. This dynamic combination both builds user confidence in and differentiates branded online/mobile experiences. Successful approaches are backed by integrated customer relationship management (CRM) systems, allowing continuity of experience with a total view of customers, their products and their future needs. Innovative collaboration solutions will also enable personal customer interactions, drawing insights from user interactions to improve how insurers deliver their brand experience and build customer loyalty online.

## Contact Centers

Although collaborative interactions can be directed through agents, contact centers will serve as the backbone of collaboration experiences for customers 24/7. Through the contact center, the experiences can be delivered at the right time, rather than all the time. One aspect of right-time delivery is having multiple ways of communicating with customers throughout the dialogue—verbal, virtual, passing information back and forth, sharing documents and so forth. Accenture sees contact center effectiveness at the heart of collaboration touch points, supporting both customers and agents.

Collaboration technologies will underlie five key trends introduced in Accenture's report, "The Next-Generation Insurance Contact Center: Driving the Efficient Growth Agenda," as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Collaboration technologies underlie five key trends in insurance

Five trends bringing insurance contact centers to the strategic forefront

Example of collaboration innovation as an enabler

<p><b>1</b> Customer experience continues to be the significant differentiator</p>	<p>Allows the end-user to determine the level of interaction desired—when and how they want it. For example, with a click-to-"x"-back option customers can choose a time convenient for them to interact with the carrier. The "x" can be a chat, a call or a video session. Cold prospects become warm prospects by indicating the product/service of interest and providing their contact information. Current customers become more engaged as they are served on their terms.</p>
<p><b>2</b> The need for cross-channel integration intensifies</p>	<p>Helps the insurer integrate its channels through common customer interaction platforms, providing a single-view of the customer.</p>
<p><b>3</b> Contact centers are being called on to fuel the growth</p>	<p>Uses chat and social media dialogues to sell. Engages social care dialogue, reinforcing the brand promise. Uses contact center efficiencies to enter new markets and support agency sales in an accountable and effective manner.</p>
<p><b>4</b> Capabilities in infrastructure and analytics are maturing fast</p>	<p>Enables social media's move from listening to delivering social care services. Helps routing and management of chat, email, social media and other engagement on a number of platforms.</p>
<p><b>5</b> Continual improvement is becoming the "new normal."</p>	<p>Employs performance analytics to drive sales, cost efficiency and customer experience benefits in a measurable manner.</p>

## Case in Point: Large North American Insurer Blends Online and Mobile Collaboration into a New Customer Experience

Facing flat growth for the first time in its long history, the insurer decided to modernize its distribution strategy to:

- Respond to customer preference for anytime, anywhere access to its services.
- Expand market share, particularly in targeted customer segments.
- Provide a superior customer experience by understanding customers' needs and their desired methods of interaction, and providing more personalized and convenient service.

Along with a unified communications solution that extends to agents, contact centers and all corporate employees, Accenture and the insurer are working to develop an online and mobile collaboration solution. The scope includes transformation of the internal knowledge management platform, business process and the online/mobile presence to enable greater customer self-service and click-to-call, chat, browser sharing, and video interactions across the enterprise. Once the new distribution solution is launched, the insurer will have comprehensive multichannel capabilities set to:

- Enhance customer experience.
- Reduce customer attrition.
- Expand market share.
- Improve agent and call center productivity and effectiveness.
- Increase agility.
- Increase call routing effectiveness and reduced call costs.

# Embedding collaboration innovation into the insurance customer lifecycle

While there are near-term opportunities for insurers to quickly benefit from collaboration initiatives, investing in new collaboration capabilities should not be done expeditiously and in silos across the enterprise. Doing so may undermine the goals of the effort, causing fragmented and inconsistent channels that drive down customer service metrics and drive off revenues.

Based on Accenture's work in delivering innovative collaboration solutions, the vital first step for insurers is the development of an enterprise-wide, holistic strategy to manage interactions and collaborations with customers. It sets the direction for customers to receive the same high level of service and a consistent experience across channels—online, contact center or independent agent. Core principles of any collaboration strategy will align to customer values, purposeful design and totality of the customer experience.

## Case in Point: A Video Design Tale of Two Banks

Two banks sought to employ video-based collaboration tools. Bank Number One launched a video service pilot for customers online and in a few branch channels. That pilot was underutilized; users felt uneasy about using the tool for a wide array of transactions. Management believed they wasted time and money on video. In a similar market, Bank Number Two trialed video in a controlled scenario for selected products. This pilot helped customers establish trust during the buying process. It was a success. The bank still uses the solution today and has expanded it to a wider audience. Accenture believes that one fundamental difference decided the outcomes of these two pilots: a well-planned approach with clearly defined and targeted customer values, executed through a consistent customer experience. Bank Number Two had it; Bank Number One did not.

# High-performance insurance collaboration

The Internet offered insurers the opportunity to give customers "real-time" access to services, products and information. A multi-channel collaboration approach goes further, enabling insurers to offer customers "right-time" access to, and interaction around the services, products and information they need...when they need them. Such an approach is essential for P&C insurers to drive a customer-centric strategy and establish a platform for sustained growth—even in the midst of a fast-paced business environment.

Accenture is helping insurance companies weave social communications and collaborative technologies into their business to provide new and unique experiences that propel customer-centricity. From our work providing sales, customer service and marketing consulting services to more than half of the top 10 US carriers, we have honed a unique blend and scale of insurance capabilities.

Accenture's Sales and Customer Experience practice augments this insurance expertise with a cross-industry understanding of consumer expectations and trends. This unique combination of skills and capabilities places Accenture at the forefront of this emerging trend and helped us to successfully deliver of the largest insurance program in the sales and customer experience space in North America.

Accenture's capabilities are unmatched in the industry, and include:

- More than 4,500 P&C and life insurance professionals located around the globe.
- More than 2,000 cross-industry Sales and Customer Experience professionals worldwide.

- More than a decade of experience creating and executing agency and direct distribution strategies across multiple channels—contact center, digital, social, mobile and agency.
- Accenture Customer Experience Framework, outlining the key activities to design a cohesive customer experience that is effective, affordable and delivers real business benefits.
- Accenture Command Center Services, managing and supporting customer experiences for more than 90 client engagements.

By aligning the Accenture Financial Services Innovation Center with the Accenture Customer Innovation Network, we help insurers better understand and respond to the consumer-driven behaviors that are greatly influencing high performance in insurance.



## References

- i "Mobile and Social CRM," Nucleus Research, March 2012.
- ii Vator.tv, Technology trends and news, January 26, 2013.

## About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with approximately 261,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US\$27.9 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2012. Its home page is [www.accenture.com](http://www.accenture.com).



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