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**Keywords:** customer experience, customer journey, telemarketing

**Offline left out of attribution**

**Voice as a relationship milestone**

**Phone data needed**

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# Business Intelligence

## The voice as a relationship milestone

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### Abstract

As mobile has become the first screen for so many consumers, marketers are asking how to obtain a better picture of the customer journey and what that might mean for their experience. This article reports on an international survey researching the power of voice in marketing, what data matters, how voice is valued by the consumer, and what marketers and brands can do to enhance the customer experience.

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### Introduction

The buying process for a consumer has never been easier — over time brands have realized that the different routes to purchase are usually attributed by simple science. Google research shows that, during online purchases, 61 per cent of consumers find it very important to be able to pick up the phone and call a business. In the digital era, a clear return on investment can now be calculated for all online sales and marketing spend. The age of marketing automation is upon us, but, as it stands, it does not include offline data, and marketers are using data for targeting personalized offers, rather than improving the overall customer experience.

However, ResponseTap research shows that in purchases where the phone call is part of the journey the human voice is the relationship milestone and not just a conversion point. This goes beyond high-value purchases of products such as cars, mortgages and holidays — the human voice is important across all purchases, regardless of size. In addition, while excellent customer care at the time of purchase is key, the follow-up process post-purchase is just as vital.

Consumers do most pre-purchase research on their own initiative and interact with a brand physically when going into a store or picking up the phone. This is the point at which the brand promise often does not live up to the customer's expectations. To not have data relating the phone call affects business decisions, marketing optimization, customer targeting and acquisition, and, above all, reduces the value and the quality of all other data.

## Methodology

### Role of the phone call

Over the next 9 months, ResponseTap is releasing three whitepapers on the voice, the customer journey and the value of different clicks when it comes to conversions within four separate verticals: retail, finance/insurance, travel and automotive. The first of these, 'The voice as a relationship milestone', is a report based on US and UK opinions on a phone call being part of the customer journey. ResponseTap carried out a major piece of international research, polling 4,000 US and UK consumers on the role of the phone call in how they interact with brands.

### Impact in the customer journey

The data looks at the impact of the phone call in the customer journey and focuses on the following five core elements of that journey:

- the online to offline experience;
- building a customer profile;
- the human voice as the relationship milestone;
- building brand equity;
- creating a seamless experience for the customer.

### Respondent profile

In the United Kingdom, the age groups surveyed were 16–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54 and 55+. People from the following regions were surveyed: Scotland, Northeast, Northwest, Yorkshire, Midlands, Wales, South West, East of England, London and Southeast. People from social grades AB, C1, C2 and DE were surveyed.

In the United States, the age groups were 16–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64 and 65+. People from the following regions were surveyed: Northeast, Midwest, South and West. People surveyed had one of the following income brackets: <US\$35,000, \$35,000–\$49,900, \$50,000–\$74,900 and \$75,000+.

## The new customer journey

### From online to offline and back again

The ResponseTap research shows that, despite living in an always-on world, human interaction is valued by the modern customer, as 64 per cent of people get frustrated when they are only able to interact with a company online. Many companies are not aware how many offline interactions are used in the customer journey, as the focus has shifted towards online interactions and social media. In a technologically advanced world, companies expect their consumers to convert online, due to the ease of the medium, and a large proportion of budgets are allocated towards this. For a lot of companies, this finding provides the 'I don't believe it' moment of realization that human interaction is important for customers, across all age groups and generations.

## Building the consumer profile

### Picking up the conversation

The poll asked people how they feel about an agent starting a conversation with them from where they left off researching a brand or product online. This essentially means that an agent knows what the individual is interested in from computer searches and does away with the

‘press 1 to ... , press 2 to ... ’ situation of streaming calls by answering questions in more targeted ways.

### **Changing perceptions of data use**

The main issue here is the opinion that customers have on the use of their personal data by brands, as customers often tend to link this with an intrusion on their privacy. It is the marketer’s role to change this perception by using insights more appropriately, by truly improving the customer’s experience based on the knowledge we have of them.

### **Data access builds rapport**

There is still work to be done around misconceptions about access to data and what that actually means. Accessing basic data on the online journey means that, once the customer is ready to pick up the phone, there is a rapport between themselves and the agent to save time on both sides. So, in fact, phone numbers appearing on brand websites have a positive effect on the consumer and influence brand choices. Aviva, the UK-based multi-national insurance company, used call-based marketing automation and saw call volume increases of 121 per cent from Q2 to Q3. On top of this, the duration of calls increased by an average of 20 per cent, which suggested that customers who called were engaged and likely to purchase.

## **The voice as a relationship milestone**

### **Reaching conversion**

Only when the human voice is put into action can one see how much it affects the relationship between marketer and consumer. Once brands and marketers can understand how important the voice is to securing a sale, the relationship milestone will be realized. Without the human voice, sales may not be delivered — with voice and the knowledge that comes with call-based marketing automation, a milestone is reached that allows brands to convert successfully with empirical proof.

### **Purchaser confidence**

To achieve excellent customer service, it is important to have strong links between a call centre and the marketing division. ResponseTap found that the power of a well-informed and helpful operator is clear and, for both US and UK consumers, it translates into peace of mind, purchaser confidence and increased sales.

### **Using informed agents**

During the customer’s researching and browsing process, marketers are building a digital footprint on the customer’s preferences, and thus this profile information could be used to deliver a seamless experience for the customer. The call could be routed straight to an agent who specializes in the desired item. This is when voice can tip the scales — as customers move from online to offline, the phone call becomes the critical aspect of delivering an experience worthy of your brand.

## **Building the brand**

### **Relating to real life**

No brand is an island. A brand is about people working together to make something happen. The customer will never understand or appreciate that brand until they have chatted to someone and related it to their own lives. Brands need to be real, relevant and relational in order to connect. Once the brand is built up successfully, consumers will be quicker to trust and to complete a sale with it. This way, not only is the consumer profile being built, but the reputation you have as a brand is improving too.

**Sharing positive experiences**

ResponseTap's research shows that if people receive great customer service they are most likely to share their positive experience through word of mouth. What is crucial here is that people do indeed share good experiences with others, which means that the investment a company puts into marketing will be more successfully returned, especially if that investment focuses on creating a stronger call centre-to-marketing team relationship.

**Voice a vital element of brand**

These findings support the notion that the human voice offers a vital element of brand identity — a reassuring and helpful voice helps to develop and strengthen loyalty between business and customer. The customer journey is all about human interactions.

**Complete view of the customer**

**The seamless experience**

The more often and the more fluid the process becomes between the contact centre, customer relationship management (CRM), the marketer and the consumer, the more seamless the consumer experience will be. Creating this seamless experience should be the holy grail of marketing automation as, for the first time, brands are now able to build a complete view of the customer, are able to offer the caller the information they want when they want it, and, as part of this process, can build brand equity with the consumer and increase sales conversion rates.

**Integrating all elements**

From research, it is clear that sales are happening over the phone regardless — and marketing teams have limited exposure and even less ownership of the outcome. In order to deliver the best customer experience, which will attract new customers and retain existing ones, the CRM and contact centres need to be as involved and work together.

**Enhancing the customer experience**

**Conclusion**

It's important for digital marketers in all industries to fully understand the role that marketing automation plays in the overall customer journey, changing the way clicks are tracked online in order to recognize where your marketing budget is at its most effective.

For those brands, the human voice is the relationship milestone. Brands will want to cherish these relationships in order to enhance the customer experience. Also imperative to this is the quality of data those brands are working with, ensuring that marketing automation works and can be a platform for business growth. To lack data on an offline phone call affects business decisions, optimization and customer acquisition, but, above all, undermines the quality of all the data.

**Need for the full picture**

Marketers cannot sit in their ivory tower any longer, throwing their entire budget at an outdated system that won't show them the full picture. Alongside a more robust, accurate analytics system, all parts of the business, including CRM and contact centres, need to work cohesively to achieve a seamless experience for the customer — and the voice is intrinsic to this.

(The full whitepaper is available to access from [www.responsetap.com/uk-voice](http://www.responsetap.com/uk-voice)).