

Optimising digital banking: Unifying communications for seamless CX

Financial Services Webinar



In the digital age, financial institutions risk falling behind their rivals if they fail to unite fragmented communications ecosystems to deliver seamless, personalised customer experiences.

FStech and Precisely hosted a live webinar featuring Kevin Ricks, vice president of product management at Precisely; John Greenwood, head of technology and payments at Contact Centre Panel; and Michelle He, chief operating officer and co-founder at Abound to explore vital strategies to optimise cross-channel messaging through omnichannel orchestration and real-time customer data access.

The session examined how financial institutions can map out an ideal communications journey for key personas by fostering collaboration between departments, and harness customer insights and intelligence to enable relevant, tailored interactions.

The speakers also discussed best practices for leveraging AI and automation to coordinate 1:1 omnichannel engagements that delight customers and examined how unified customer profiles and analytics dashboards can provide visibility into how streamlined communications can be the difference in increasing satisfaction, engagement, and lifetime value.

Attendees of this webinar discovered strategies to eliminate channel silos and implement the integrated systems that are essential to meeting rising consumer expectations for frictionless digital banking. It also provided insights into to harnessing the power of real-time data, leveraging integrated communications for seamless customer journeys, and implementing effective engagement strategies.

Best practice for breaking down silos

The webinar got underway with the speakers reflecting on some of the best practices for breaking down silos between marketing, product, IT, and contact centre teams.

“You’ve hit the nail on the head with a real problem,” said John Greenwood, head of technology & payments at Contact Centre Panel. “There are three strategies that you can use to begin to break those down: communication, communication and communication.”

Greenwood went on to say that it is important to get people “shoulder to shoulder” and understand what everybody’s problems and perspectives are. He added that companies need a champion at board level to really drill home that you need everybody to talk to each other.

“Some of the best practices that I’ve observed have been around the data and making sure that you have accurate data on the customer that you’re looking to communicate to or the set of customers you’re looking to communicate to,” said Kevin Ricks, vice president of product management at Precisely.

He went on to say that it is important that organisations understand how they want to drive one-on-one personalised engagement that is accurate, protects the integrity and privacy of the customer, and engages them.

Michelle He, chief operating officer and co-founder at Abound, said that she agrees that communication, data, and infrastructure are very important.

“One thing I would add is the organisational setup,” continued He. “So, making sure that you not only have the verticals to say I have the product, I have the IT, I have the marketing but that you have a horizontal set up so that someone can actually look after the communication and the execution end-to-end to make sure that the things are moving to the right direction. Some of the separations I have personally seen across decades working in very big financial services organisations like banks and consultancy firms is that a lot of that kind of set up is very, very siloed.”

She added: “So, for example, you have a regional specific team or maybe you have a business specific area. And the people in that specific area work very closely with each other. But if we have that kind of top down set up and have that kind of horizontal and the vertical team it will work much better.”

Leveraging customer insights

Next the experts talked about how financial institutions can leverage customer insights and intelligence to deliver tailored interactions.

Michelle He from Abound said that this was “bread and butter” for her AI-driven credit tech business, explaining that her organisation’s aim is to expand access to affordable loans through directly offering loans to consumers and AI and Open Banking driven technology and software to empower other lenders to make better decisions.

“With the customer’s consent, we read their real time bank transaction data and then our engine analyses how much they earn, how much they spend, and how much is left every month,” explained He. “This way we can make very responsible lending decisions based on if they can afford to pay their loan back or not.”

She went on to say that the technology the business has built so far is “very powerful”.

“It allows us to serve six times more people and we also achieved a 75 per cent reduction in bad rate versus the market expectation; so, we have proved that that the scale of this technology works,” said He. “In our case we provide a better product to the customers by analysing their transaction data in a smart way, that kind of insight we can extract from the information that the customers share with us. It is very powerful.”

Contact Centre Panel’s John Greenwood said that his organisation has a very fragmented approach to technology.

“So, a lot of our customer insights go back 30 years, and you didn’t get much insight from how people answered or opened the direct mail,” explained Greenwood. “We got far more insight when we could listen to people on the telephone and we got that human-to-human real time interaction.”

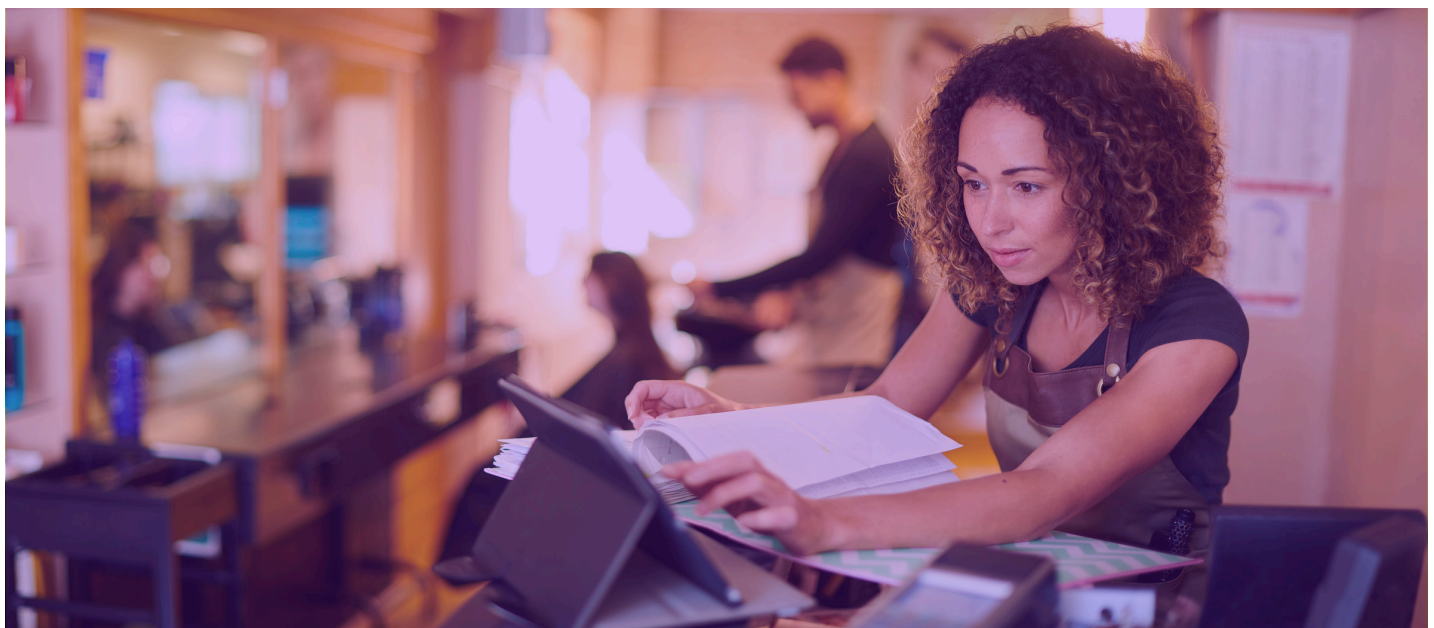
He continued: “Now, if you look where we are today and – Michelle’s business is a testament to what technology can do today – we can see data flows in real time. When we were doing customer service and putting people in internet shops, the difference between us and an internet shop or a retail outlet in the High Street and a web shop back at the turn of the century, was that you could see where people had been in a web shop. You could see which shops have been on in the High Street. You couldn’t do that in an ordinary retail outlet.”

Greenwood went on to say that the company now has the opportunity to “see all of the data all of the time”, as well as increasing ability to bring sense to this data.

“So, our take on it is that the more you can consolidate your data flows and bring voice and all of your other customer interaction channels together and apply the analytics engine, apply the machines to all of that data all the time, you are in a much, much better position to make real time judgments, real time impacts on your customer data flow, on your product development, on your product design, on your process development and really speed everything up,” he concluded.

Precisely’s Kevin Ricks said that one of Greenwood’s points touched upon the idea of the immediacy of being able to respond and react when a company sees that they have created a bad experience. He also said that it is important to be able to leverage a successful experience and look at how you that can be replicated.

“It’s how you merge all of that data from your delivery channels; being able to score or measure the effectiveness of the delivery channel with each of the individuals, each of the different customers; what worked in that personalisation, what didn’t work in that personalisation; taking immediate correction on the next engagement that you have regardless of the channel that it’s in,” he continued.



Unifying fragmented customer communications

The three speakers explored some of the challenges financial institutions are facing in unifying fragmented customer communications ecosystems.

“So, a lot of it is embracing it,” said Ricks. “So, how are they embracing the fragmentation that they have within all of their different systems – whether it’s the core lending, deposits or banking systems. They have the credit scoring systems; the back-office systems; and the tools that they’re using in order to engage with the customers in order to send those communications out.”

He continued: “And then as you’re working across those, that fragmentation or those different siloed applications, it’s about identifying which of those systems provides the source of truth, and what is not only the quality of the data that you’re getting from that source of truth, but then, where you have conflict, how do you resolve the conflict if you’re getting differences across different systems so that you really have the right data that you’re using for your communication and for the personalisation as you’re developing what needs to go into the channel.”

Abound’s Michelle He said that a lot of the communication big institutions have with their customers is “broken”. “I came to the UK about 14 years ago for from Singapore,” she said.

“I came here to work and in the very beginning it was very difficult for me to open a bank account because I didn’t have a UK address or UK credit history in the country – I had to pay £8.00 a month just to put my own money into the bank account.”

He explained that she still currently uses the same bank all these years later and that it recently asked her a range of questions when she applied for a personal loan. She went on to say that the bank “should have more information than she does”.

“This was a very, very big bank and what I realised – and that’s probably one of the reasons why I set up this company – is that financial services in general really lacks innovation,” said He. “A lot of the innovation seems to be focused on superficial things like the front end. So, for example, moving from a WAP to an app or changing the colour, the look and the feel of the app to look more innovative and more trendy, but actually fundamentally a lot of innovation should be driven by the back end.”

Greenwood said that He had raised an interesting point.

“It’s a real-life example, but the financial services industry in the UK has been very, very quick to pay dividends to shareholders, but not very quick to replace the systems they’ve all written off in the books to declare more profit – it’s as if the customer as a stakeholder has missed out,” he said. “Now that’s turned around and the banks are missing out because the customer expectations weigh higher, because we judge our customer service against everything, you know, Amazon being a great leader and an ‘it-arrives-that-afternoon’ type of deal.”

Frictionless digital banking

Next, the experts looked at the ways in which integrated systems can support frictionless digital banking experiences.

“I’m glad Michelle brought up the integration problem in her last set of comments, because that’s really key here,” said Ricks. “Observation sometimes is that banks have all of this historic information and they’re almost fearful of migrating it or moving it from their older platforms to something newer because they’re going to lose something. That something could be context, it could be history, and so forth.”

He continued: “It’s up to vendors like us to figure out how we lower that fear that they have by showing them the promise of tomorrow by migrating the historical data and merging it with new data sets. Being able to take that data and almost modernise that data in the way that they would engage with their customers in a more meaningful manner and being able to have that data shared across multiple systems.”

Ricks went on to say that analytics is extremely important too.

“We’re taking a look at how we help organisations manage that whole interaction,” he explained. “It’s really about trying to position them in a in a in a manner that they can integrate or collaborate with the other systems in a non-disruptive manner to the organisation, non-disruptive manner to the customer.”

“When change comes in, understanding the impact of change to each and every system because there’s an impact at each and every touch point and how do you manage that change and mitigate the risk of that change to the overall execution and your engagement with your customer and then doing that in a way that complies with all of the standards you have from a brand perspective.”

Abound’s He said that the customer would definitely have a much better experience if the big banks truly innovate their systems.

“But the reality is that a lot of the big banks get their customers too easy and they have enough existing customers to serve,” explained He. “That’s why a lot of the people are excluded from the financial system, so it’s not very inclusive.”

She continued: “Another thing I experienced is that when I first came here, where I had a paid job with very good educational background, healthy spending behaviour, but no banks wanted to lend £5000 to me because I was credit invisible. I didn’t have any credit history. That’s one of the reasons I set up the current company Abound because we want to look at the people from a very different angle, look at their financials, real time financials rather than just focus on the historical behaviour.” She continued by saying that there is a big gap in financial services, which has caused a lot of people to be excluded from the better services they deserve.

Eliminating channel silos

The speakers were asked about the strategies that can help eliminate channel silos which can impact seamless CX.

"I think the starting point of some sort of strategy has got to be around a mutual agreement to the definition of success, particularly because of some of the legacy challenges that some of the major players have," said Contact Centre Panel's Greenwood. "You can begin to define success in in terms of cost of acquisition, cost of owning a customer, but it's got to be something that everybody can relate to and everybody can contribute towards."

He continued: "The next thing again, Kevin mentioned it earlier, single source of truth. You know you've got to have a data strategy. You've got to have a direction of travel and that direction of travel has got to be understood by the people in these silos so everybody knows what they're contributing toward – I think that's the chief exec's job when it comes down to it, to make sure those messages are understood."

Precisely's Ricks said that as a consumer sometimes he feels that for some of the brands he interacts with, abandonment is not a critical issue.

"If I'm on the call too long, if I'm experiencing chatbot confusion, if I get to a live takeover and it's uninformed, then it's more of my time and I just give up and I just hang up or I disconnect," he explained. "It's interesting how few times I would get a return query that says, 'your abandonment can equate to a bad experience, was that a bad experience?' What they capture in the analytics is the abandonment and maybe the engagement that I had in that time. Where brands need to figure out how they can improve is what happens at a time of abandonment and what is that impact on the overall customer experience that you're providing."

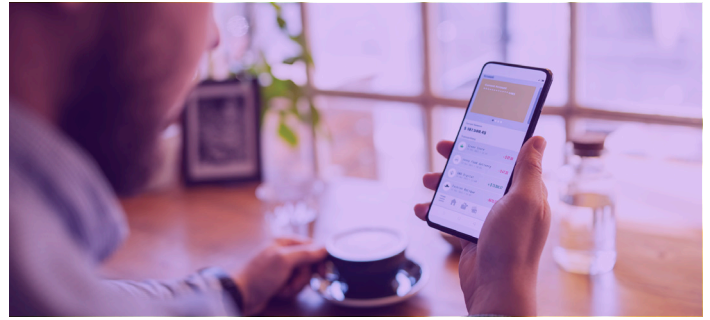
Strengthening customer loyalty and competitive advantage

Next the senior leaders talked about how optimised cross-channel messaging can strengthen customer loyalty and competitive advantage.

"For us, real time bank transaction data is used as a core part of our credit decisioning, and we need to make sure that our customers are comfortable sharing their bank transaction data with us, and we made a lot of effort when we designed the customer journey to make sure that journey is smooth," Michelle He explained. "The message is very simple, very clear."

But she talked about how Open Banking is still a relatively new concept and it's important to be able to explain it to the customer so they are comfortable.

Greenwood explained that it's crucial to be able to communicate with the customer in their channel of choice.



"Pushing people across channels has risks attached to it and ultimately whenever you're looking at customer segments, you've got to apply that customer contact thinking," he said. "You don't decide how the customer interacts with you. We now are in the age where we let the customer decide and we respond, hence the agility we need in our systems and if our systems haven't got the agility then we need partners with us who can provide that agility and can provide us with the insight we need as brands, as financial service brands to respond."

He went on to explain that building agility into the IT infrastructure and tech stack is one of the first things a firm needs to do.

Striking a balance between personalisation and privacy

The final topic on the agenda was about striking the right balance between personalisation and privacy when it comes to using customer data for communication purposes.

"That's a tough one because it's a different conversation with every bank that that we interact with so," explained Ricks. "Striking that balance is very much about identifying the boundaries that you our client wants to execute their communication strategy with and then how do we formulate the data strategy around those boundaries and what are the guiding principles to those boundaries and assessing what the risks are around that."

He continued: "There's a lot of that kind of risk identification, mitigation type of strategy there. It's more of asking what your objectives and your intents of it are. And then how do we make sure that the data that you're using that you're collecting for that journey is clean and of a high quality with a lot of context that, as you're sanitising or cleansing, or rationalising that data, you're using the most appropriate data sources for that so that you take out any of the conflict in doing that. And then how do you handle conflict if you get differing context from two different data sources."

Ricks concluded the event with some final words, explaining that smaller banks will often take more chances than longstanding brands because they are really trying to push the envelope in how they communicate and personalise. He added that they can take more risk because they have a more agile approach when it comes to collecting their data from new systems.

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About Precisely

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