

# Rethink Queue-Based Routing In a Digital-First World

Optimise your contact centre routing to create happy customers, satisfied employees and better business outcomes

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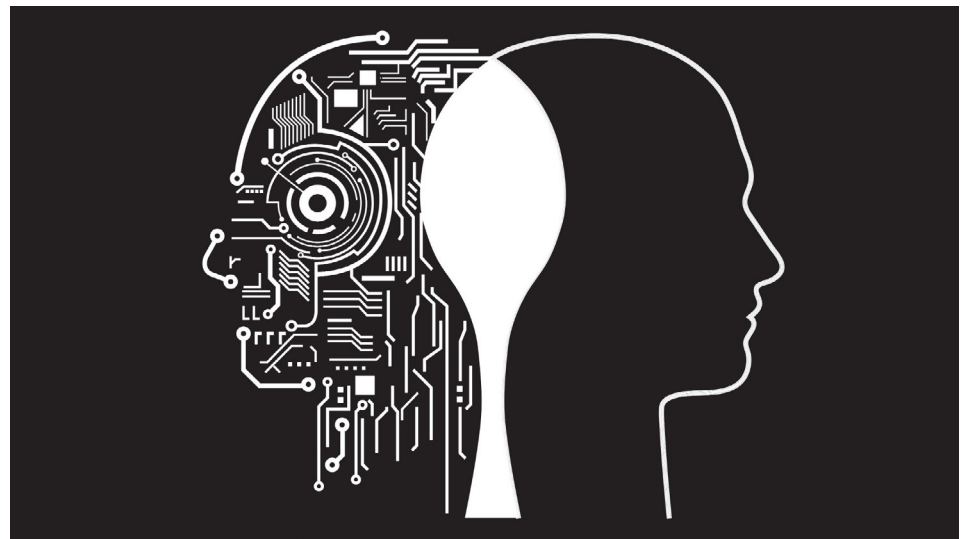
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## Executive Summary: The impact of routing on the customer experience

In today's digital age, customers have more choices and higher expectations than ever before. Optimising the customer experience has become essential to sustain a competitive advantage. This increasingly means being able to offer seamless, consistent, personalised engagement across all customer journeys, channels and interactions. And that means the routing required to make this happen.

Although routing technology has advanced significantly in recent years, it's still focused on using a limited number of attributes, typically collected during an interaction, to route callers to a fixed number of predefined agent groupings. This queue-based routing approach, which powers most contact centres, is inherently static, rigidly siloed and unwieldy. While skills-based routing holds an advantage over earlier methods, it's often deployed with siloed queues, and it frequently lacks the capability to drive and support end-to-end journey orchestration. Most common contact centre challenges are tightly coupled with the use of basic queue-based routing.

Routing is foundational to deliver personalised, omnichannel experiences and engage employees. So, it's imperative to get it right. A smarter alternative to queue-based routing supports a larger, omnichannel experience that spans the entire customer journey – whether it includes one or multiple interactions across self-service and assisted-service channels. Customer routing needs to occur between both virtual agents, or artificially intelligent technologies, and physical agents. It also must support seamless routing both from physical to virtual agents, and vice versa.



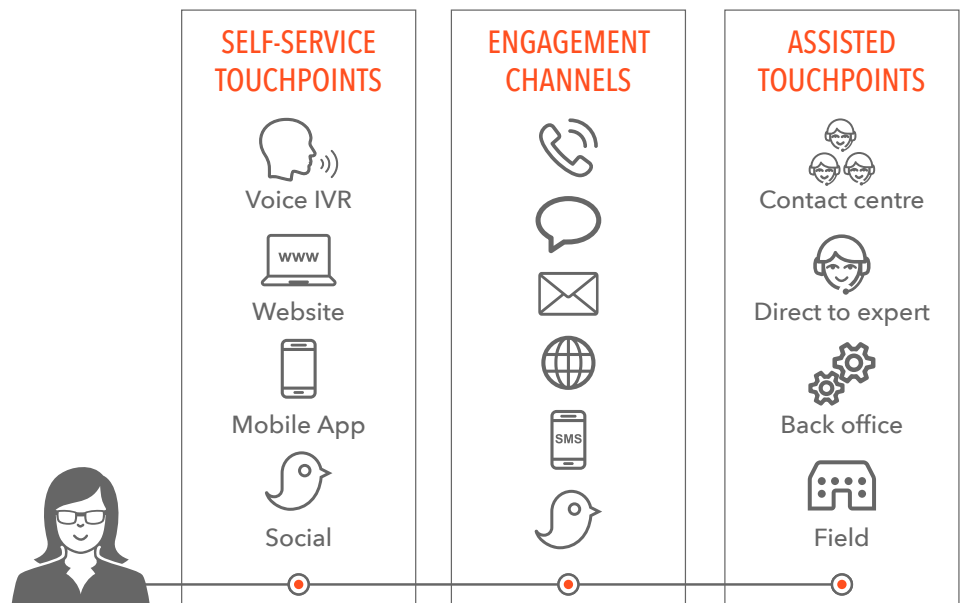
With true omnichannel routing, your customer experience platform can evaluate any number of system and external input using managed business rules that determine the optimal agent to use. The system then sends the customer directly to that agent. You can manage service levels universally across channels to ensure that agents remain focused on high-value opportunities, while customers move seamlessly across touchpoints and channels.

Through true omnichannel routing, customers can also pause and resume their journeys; relevant engagement data and context are preserved to inform journey path analytics and customer engagement optimisation. The platform remembers where customers left off and carries them to the next step of their orchestrated experience – whether that’s routing them to the right agent for assisted service or offering appropriate self-service.

Contact centres currently face multiple challenges with queue-based routing. There are compelling business reasons to move to orchestrated routing – a fully virtualised, proactive, and data-driven approach to personalising customer engagement, empowering employees and increasing contact centre productivity and profitability.

## Examine the status quo

Although contact centres have become more complex with the introduction of digital channels, most still use some form of queue-based routing. Customer interactions are assigned to queues, and agents are assigned to service the queues – typically on a first-in, first-out basis. Queues focus on single customer interaction types and serve as walls that contain both customers and agents.



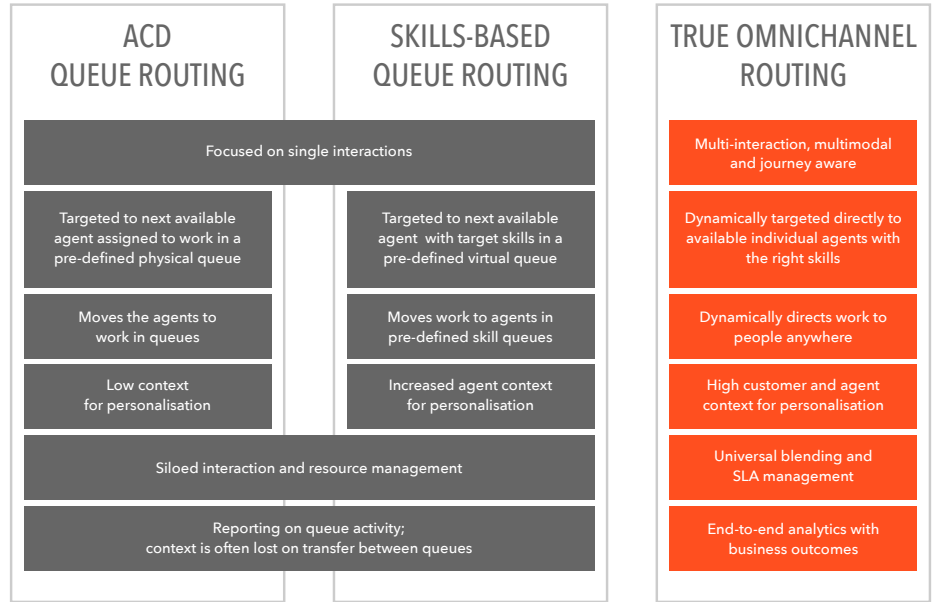
To move beyond traditional, queue-based routing, it’s critical to clarify the differences between physical queues, virtual queues and skills.

A queue is a staging area or bucket of work that waits for distribution. While physical queues isolate interaction data and have agents statically assigned, virtual queues logically isolate data and typically have agents associated using a predefined query.

You may hear some vendors put a skill label on a physical or virtual queue, but that can be misleading. A skill isn’t a queue that an agent logs into or is assigned to. A skill is a capability or attribute that agents possess, which can be used to improve routing to the right resource. You can overlay a skill label on a queue as a naming convention, but the underlying queue-based approach is still a limitation. Skills also have a proficiency level or competency level that indicates the agent’s qualification to handle it.

Queue-based routing targets interactions directly to queues, typically on a next-available-agent basis. Contact centre managers then assign agents to work in the queues. Therefore, managers manually move people to the work. As mentioned, queues often group together many similar interactions, but details are lost because everyone sent to the queue receives similar treatment.

In a queue-based routing environment in which one queue is full, the customer flows into the next queue and is assigned to agents who are not as qualified to resolve the inquiry. This method uses low context, and thus, there is little to no personalisation to improve the customer experience.



Some vendors go a step further, implementing skills-based routing that uses predefined, virtual queues that are constrained through fixed skill definitions to determine agent assignments. While this approach simplifies the process of directing work to resources based on skills, it still matches customers to available resources using queues or buckets of work that must be set up in advance. This greatly limits dynamic personalisation, as interactions cannot be dynamically targeted to the right agent.

Because queues are created for different combinations of intents, locations, and channels, the result remains siloed management of a proliferating set of queues. To cover all the skill combinations with queues, it becomes an exponential equation. For example, adding a second language option will double the number of queues. Adding a third language triples them. This means that organisations with several skills often have an enormous number of queues that are difficult to manage. Whether queues are physical or virtual, they limit the contact centre's operational efficiency and potential to deliver personalised experiences.

Queue-based routing was the model of efficiency when it was first introduced over 40 years ago. Yet with the addition of digital and self-service channels, and as customers increasingly use multiple channels – sometimes even within a single interaction – this approach constrains contact centres. It's time to rethink the status quo and current practices for directing work to the best-suited agent. While there are many varieties of queue-based routing, they all impose similar limitations.

**1. Operational inefficiencies**

In an environment of queue-based silos, it's impossible to prioritise optimally across all channels. This results in missed SLAs and lost opportunities. For example, a high-value customer might wait in an email queue while available agents answer low-value voice calls. Alternatively, an agent who is speaking with a customer could be oblivious to their previous email messages and web activity.

Contextual metadata is also regularly lost when transferring customers to another queue, channel or touchpoint. This results in a fragmented, high-effort experience for the customers, where they have to repeat information. Additionally, data loss compromises reporting and analytics.

Contact centres that use only queue-based routing often face substantial staffing challenges. Extensive planning is required to determine skill combinations used in routing; significant operational effort is spent reassigning agents to those queues as workloads fluctuate. This approach doesn't scale well and requires continual efforts to move people to the work when, in fact, staff member skills haven't changed.

When resources are tied to queues, it takes time-consuming, manual effort to balance workloads. Agents typically are restricted to a limited number of queues, so managers often will manually retrain agents on the fly, sometimes even assigning them to queues for which they lack necessary expertise.

This leads to uneven and inefficient workloads. By the time the team discovers issues and resolves them (sometimes to the detriment of other queues), customers have been affected already. Changing agent skills frequently also interferes with workforce planning and the scheduling process, causing a cycle of inefficiency.

## **2. Barriers to personalised customer engagement**

Queue-based routing limits seamless customer journeys across interactions, touchpoints, channels and locations. Siloed, disjointed systems fail to capture information and preserve context globally, so customers cannot pause and resume interactions without having to repeat themselves. Even if critical data is captured, it isn't collected early enough in the journey.

For example, most queue-based routing solutions don't capture what happens prior to the routing decision. Yet this information is critical to inform the entire journey. More than three-quarters of customers use self-service options first; the majority use voice calls only for more complex matters. This means most customers start their journeys before they pick up the phone. Without the data from these non-voice interactions, it's impossible to accurately identify intent, segment customers, and prioritise interactions. The result is missed opportunities and lower service levels.

With queue-based routing, interactions are routed to the best queue — not the best agent. Unfortunately, agents aren't pooled across locations, channels, and touchpoints, nor can they communicate via various channels simultaneously during the same interaction. If an agent with the most appropriate skills and experience to address a customer's needs isn't assigned to the same queue the most appropriate agent doesn't get the interaction. That compromises the outcome.

Similarly, when you're unable to make simple changes to routing strategies without IT intervention, you can't address needs in the moment. In the worst-case scenario, it's impossible to route a valuable customer who's threatening to leave to your best retention specialist. Limitations of queue-based routing commonly cause costly service failures.

## **3. Lack of insights**

It's no surprise that reporting from queue-based routing is queue-centric. Queueing environments deliver only high-level metrics that contain little to no information about the customer experience or resource productivity. Because of these limitations, many contact centres create additional queues specifically to drive more precise reporting on customer segmentation, further compounding the proliferation of queues and the overhead used to maintain and assign agents to them.

When you can't track the entire path that was taken to obtain the current interaction and link it to its business outcome, you don't know what works and what doesn't. Without knowing which interactions and journey paths result in the highest sales, you can't optimise for the best business result with staff or customers.

## **Digital explosion compounds the problem**

Driven by the rise of mobile and digital engagement, customer expectations evolve at a much faster rate than traditional contact centre technology can handle. Digital engagement across web and mobile devices is exploding, driving a proliferation of new touchpoints and various channels.

As customers are exposed to these new technologies, their engagement expectations change, and companies face pressure to rapidly adapt.

## Modernise your contact centre with true omnichannel routing

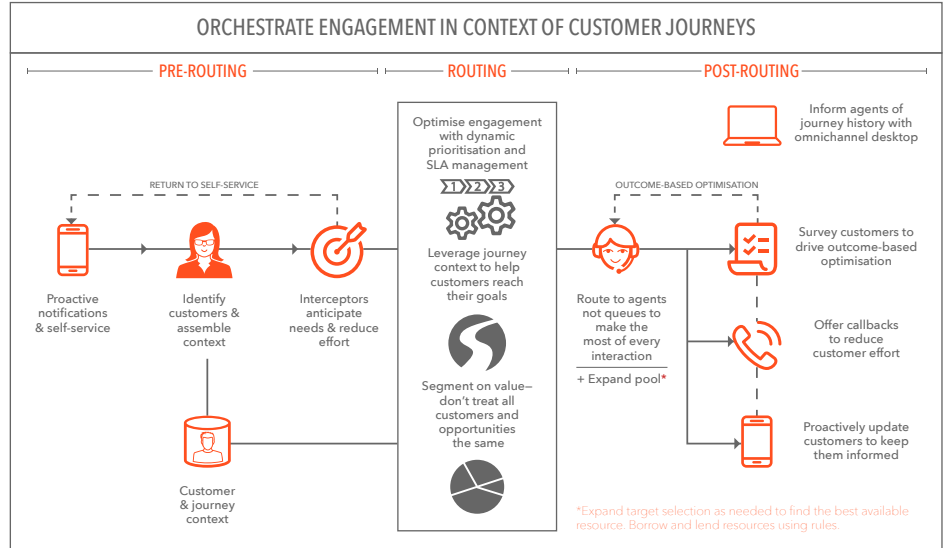
True omnichannel routing removes the limitations that queues impose on contact centres, customers and the business overall. Contact centres are under pressure to improve their Net Promoter Score (NPS) and customer satisfaction scores while keeping costs low. Genesys Experience-as-a-Service powers omnichannel experiences across all customer journeys. This include physical agents, virtual agents, self-service, assisted service, workforce optimisation, multimedia communications, omnichannel analytics and omnichannel journey management.

With true omnichannel routing, you gain the advantage of a data-driven and rules-based approach that goes beyond single interactions to manage related interactions over time, as well as concurrently. You can dynamically match each customer interaction from any touchpoint over any channel with the optimal agent, removing the need to pre-configure all routing scenarios into a static set of physical or virtual queues. Instead of residing in silos across queues, all interactions across every channel are universally captured, assessed, and prioritised to identify the best resource across a global, virtualised resource pool, while still meeting required service levels for every interaction type.

Because true omnichannel routing directs work to match customer context and intent with the skills and attributes of individual agents, it drives personalised engagement for each customer and maximises the potential of every interaction. Omnichannel data is preserved over time and you can pair it with outcomes that drive analytics and journey optimisation. For example, to understand service levels based on location, language, and intention.

Where traditional, queue-based routing solutions hinder operations and stifle the customer experience, a modern, orchestrated routing approach supports today's contact centres and customers. With the capability to move beyond single interactions, you can design and optimise customer journeys to replace random interactions. Routing is orchestrated with full context and visibility into each customer's intent, and then it's handed off to agents with the insights needed to optimally serve them. However, routing goes far beyond the handoff.

To orchestrate the step-by-step sequence of actions that customer journeys require, an orchestration engine applies business rules to all relevant context to manage engagement across all self-service and assisted-service touchpoints. With true omnichannel routing, each customer's intent is matched directly to the right agent's skills and proficiency. In some cases, it directs to a single agent; in other cases, more than 60,000 physical or virtual agents can handle the intent. There's absolutely no need to pre-define and manage a proliferating set of queues to deliver a personalised experience.



Orchestration also enables personalisation across all self-service and assisted-service touchpoints. A rules engine processes events and context for the next best action. This could mean that a target virtual agent is selected during routing, a post-call survey is used as an engagement follow-up, or a web promotion pop-up appears during a self-service action – all without any physical agent involvement.

Engagement orchestration and business rules work together to identify customers, link interactions across time and channels, evaluate context to understand intent, segment customers for personalised handling, and find the available agent with the skills and proficiency that fit customers’ needs. The state of the customer journey is preserved, and data captured before, during and after the routing decision remains intact and does not lose context or business opportunities. Your customers can pause, switch channels, or resume their journeys – and the conversation continues uninterrupted.

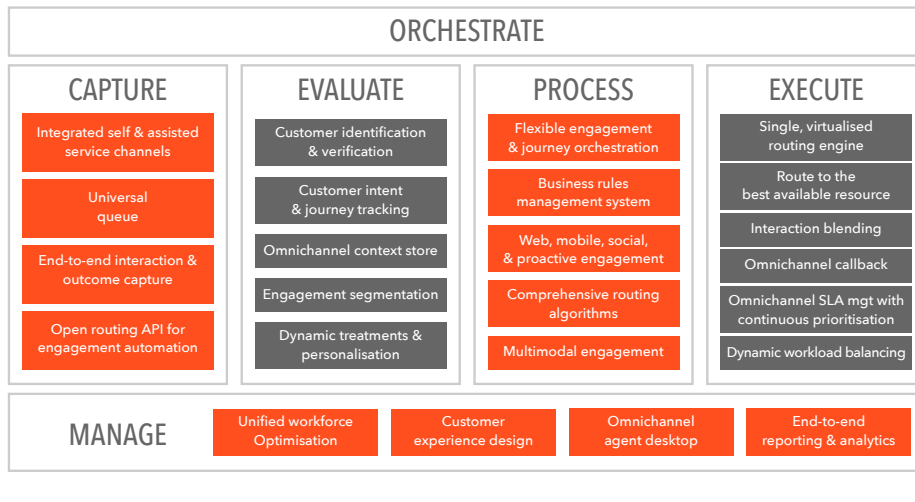
## Empower employees

A single, unified desktop enables physical agents to manage omnichannel customer journeys and interactions and access the information they need, including history, context, and multimodal engagement options, to provide the best service possible to customers. Calls are routed to match each agent’s skills and capabilities. This results in happier, more productive agents as well as higher first-contact resolution rates, decreased on-hold time and fewer transfers.

## Capabilities that drive business success

True omnichannel routing delivers a wide range of capabilities that benefit every contact centre:

- Capture interactions and work items on any channel from any location to unify self-service and assisted-service.
- Evaluate context to recognise journeys, segment customers and personalise treatment.
- Process customer engagement and journey orchestration over time and across channels.
- Execute next best actions, including routing to the best available resource.
- Manage a single platform with unified workforce optimisation, an omnichannel desktop, and end-to-end optimisation.



### Summary of true omnichannel routing capabilities

Moving beyond the limitations of traditional queue-based routing to a data-driven, proactive approach with true omnichannel routing offers high ROI and major benefits. Linking these benefits to customer experience, revenue, and efficiency strengthens your business case and helps overcome organisational inertia.

Pairing true omnichannel routing with state-of-the-art machine learning algorithms that match predicted agents achieves the best results for a given customer and the enterprise. These include improving NPS for service calls or customer satisfaction and revenue for sales chats, first-contact resolution for billing, handling time for password resets, and improving retention. Orchestration also complements adaptive learning. And skills-based, context-based and rules-based routing provide outcome-oriented predictive targets within the controls that orchestration logic provides. The results are fine-grain matching between the customer and the agent, as well as measurable improvements for the business.

With true omnichannel routing, you can design personalised, low-effort, end-to-end customer journeys without the limitations of silos. Directly match your customers with the best available resource – at the right time, in the right channel – dynamically and automatically balance workloads, and meet your SLAs. The net result is better business outcomes, more efficient operations, empowered agents, and happier customers.

The contact centre is evolving; managing end-to-end customer experience consistently across every channel and touchpoint is essential. Achieve true omnichannel engagement with an open, scalable customer experience platform that provides contextual journey capabilities across digital and voice.

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