

CONTACT CENTER OMNICHANNEL: WOULDN'T IT BE NICE

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Blending disparate communications channels into a harmonious experience for customers and contact centers.

BY Paul Stockford, Saddletree Research

This is a universal truth: If I played you the first two measures of the song "California Girls," you would be able to name that Beach Boys tune in those 16 notes regardless of the year of your birth. There's something about Beach Boys music that transcends time. I have a DVD of the Beach Boys' 50th anniversary tour concert that was recorded in Phoenix in 2012. The audience was comprised of three, possibly four, generations of fans. There were audience shots of little girls moving to the music right next to their grandmother or possibly great-grandmother. Besides the appeal of their fun, fun, fun, carefree California lifestyle sound, the Beach Boys have always been identified with the lush, complex harmonies that poured forth from the brain of Beach Boys co-founder Brian Wilson.

Brian Wilson was the musical genius behind a 1966 Beach Boys album called "Pet Sounds." The Beach Boys' 11th album, "Pet Sounds" was one of the first concept albums in musical history and broke barriers in its use of layers of vocal harmonies, symphonic arrangements, and the inclusion of unusual instruments such as harpsichords, bicycle bells and detuned 12-string guitars. In 2003, *Rolling Stone* magazine ranked "Pet Sounds" No. 2 on its

"500 Greatest Albums of All Time" list.

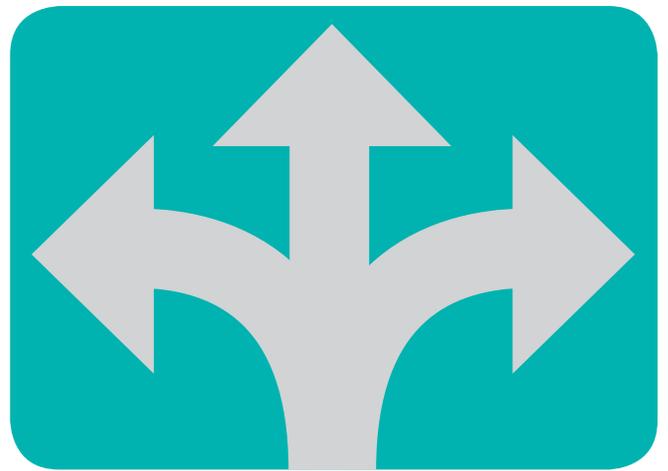
The opening track on "Pet Sounds" is a song called "Wouldn't It Be Nice." Written by Brian Wilson while the other Beach Boys were on a performance tour of Asia, the complexities of the various layers of the song led Wilson to turn to a group of Los Angeles studio musicians known as the Wrecking Crew to record the music. With Wrecking Crew member Glen Campbell on guitar, the musicians had to navigate through the song's introduction in

the key of A, which quickly shifts to the key of F while the bass player lays down bottom notes in the key of D. If you know anything about music, you know how convoluted this sounds and even the Wrecking Crew musicians thought that

there must have been errors on their music. But there were no errors. Regardless of how it looked on paper, Brian Wilson knew those were the sounds he heard in his head and he was able to translate those sounds into the reality of recorded music.

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There are as many unlikely working pairings of technology in today's contact center as there were unlikely musical pairings in "Wouldn't It Be Nice." As the contact center has evolved from the telephone-based call center to today's multichannel customer service center, there are as many or more disparate communications channels as there are divergent key changes in "Wouldn't It Be Nice." Brian Wilson made all those layers of musical complexity work together to create what we know today to be a classic piece of musical genius. Can that same process be replicated in the contact center to create customer experience genius?



The overriding challenge in today's contact center, directly related to the current drive to provide the customer with an optimal service experience, is to bring together the numerous communications channels so that they appear to the customer as a single pipeline to service. The problem is, things don't work like that. The telephone line doesn't typically integrate with email or social media channels or web chats or text messages or anything else. Each channel works independently, even though the customer sees them as simply being different ways to reach the same customer service function. So if a customer makes a phone call to customer service, follows up with an email and consequently initiates a web chat with an agent, that customer sees it as a single customer service transaction while the contact center sees it as three separate, unrelated transactions. See a problem here?

The solution to this siloed-communications

dilemma is omnichannel communications. Omnichannel ties together these various channels of communications so that, not only do they function as a single channel for the customer, they function likewise for the contact center. Integration means that customer information isn't lost as the customer migrates from one channel to another, as is becoming increasingly typical in these mobility-driven times.

I'm sure that at this point, many of you are starting to see nothing but gigantic dollar symbols when you think of the cost and complexity of integrating two disparate channels, let alone multiple channels, but that isn't the case anymore. According to Tod Famous, Senior Director of Product Management at Cisco, "Using the cloud to organize and store information from all customer interactions regardless of how many channels they use helps contact center managers and administrators cost-effectively tie that information to

the contact center to deliver an omnichannel experience."

"Cisco's Context Service—which is included in all Cisco contact center systems—securely stores customer interaction data in the cloud and delivers it to customer service representatives so they can understand where the customer is in their journey and help them more efficiently. The end result," Famous continued, "is a personalized, contextual experience for each and every customer who reaches out to a business."

In the 40 years since "Pet Sounds" was released, more than 100 domestic and international publications and journalists have pointed to the album as one of the greatest ever recorded. In the same way that "Pet Sounds" changed the music industry, expect omnichannel customer service to have a similar effect on the contact center industry. Wouldn't it be nice? ●



The National Association of Call Centers

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