



# Where next for Utilities?

## **5 CX TRENDS FOR 2022.**

Five CX trends every utilities provider needs to know  
Shining a light on a connected future in Utilities

# WELCOME TO THE NEW WORLD

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the utilities industry was being thrust headfirst into a new era of connectivity defined by convenience, innovation and personalisation.

Having been spoilt by the likes of Amazon, Apple and other digital-first disruptors, consumers had begun to expect every organisation to deliver the same intelligent, joined-up experiences. And that includes their utilities providers – even if customers only interact with them a few times a year.

The pandemic has only served to accelerate this shift – placing pressure on providers to meet rising engagement levels, provide empathetic interactions and manage the impact of social and economic disruption.

In this new era, everything is to play for. Those quickest to adapt will be the ones that capture the loyalty and trust of consumers. Complacency isn't an option.

These are the five customer experience (CX) trends we believe every utilities provider needs to know about as they learn to navigate a new and unpredictable customer landscape.

**79%** of customers are **MORE LOYAL** to organisations that are **EASY AND SIMPLE TO CONTACT**

**66%** of customers find dealing with customer service issues **EXHAUSTING**

**84%** of customers rate the CX of large organisations as '**NOT EXCELLENT**'

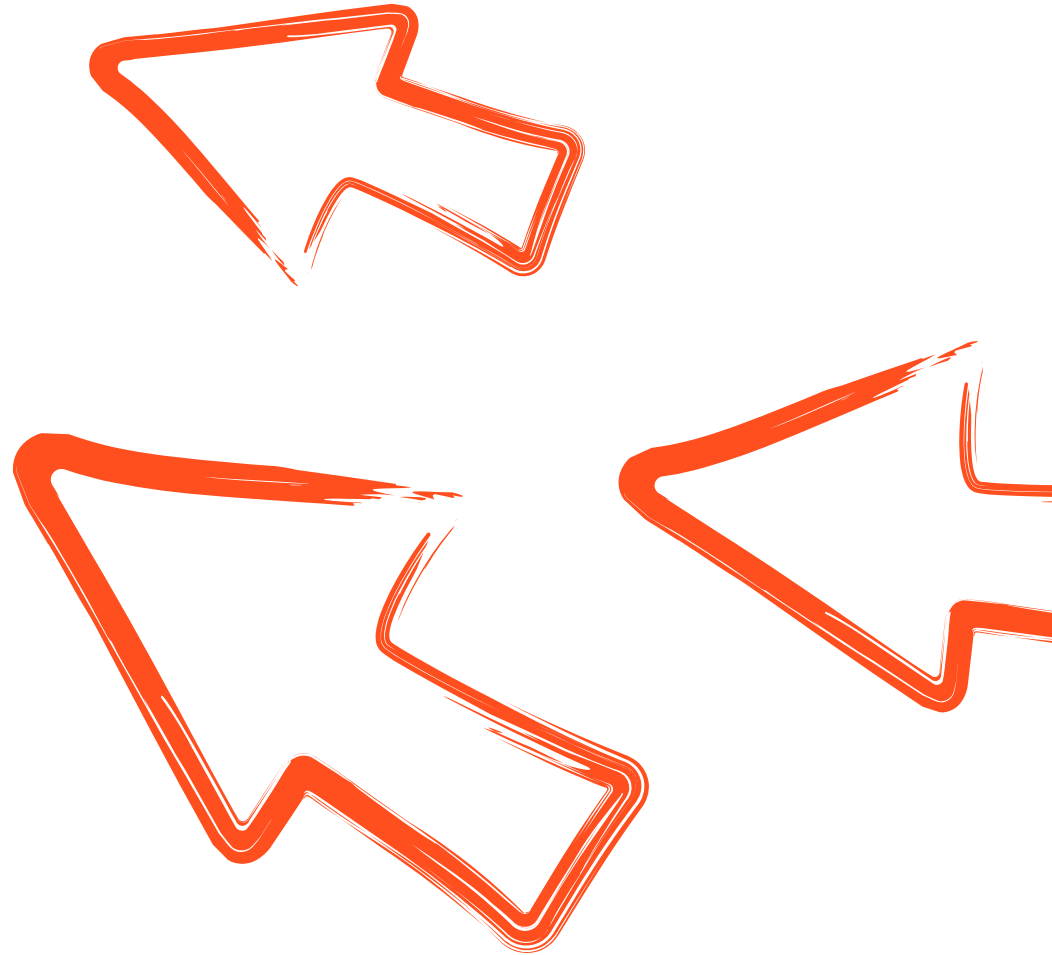
# 1# THE CUSTOMER BELONGS AT THE HEART OF YOUR DATA USE

Data is the lifeblood of modern business. It helps organisations across every industry continuously transform services and operations around changing customer needs. And how you use the data entrusted to you can make or break the customer experience.

In fact, 83% of consumers say they'd share their data in return for a more personalised experience<sup>1</sup>. But here's the tricky part, the social and economic landscape has changed so dramatically that, in many cases, your legacy data stores no longer apply.

In response, utilities firms need the tools to continuously capture and analyse customer data across every touchpoint to find relevant, actionable insights. With these insights, you can better predict customer needs, personalise experiences, and develop innovative new services. It all adds up to more trust and loyalty, and improved growth.

But remember, it only takes one bad experience for customers to withdraw consent to you using their data. And with GDPR making that easier than ever, it's vital you approach their data with care and restraint.







## **2# ADD A TOUCH OF AI TO YOUR INTERACTIONS**

In times of crisis, most customers want to talk to trained agents – as shown by the 44% rise in call volumes to utility firms during the pandemic<sup>2</sup>. But it can be tough for your agents to deliver the same level of care to every customer when they're under pressure to keep resolution numbers up.

That's why many contact centres are turning to Artificial Intelligence (AI) to empower human agents and enhance the customer experience. For example, AI can match agents to callers based on performance data – things like experience and skill sets – and even proactively suggest packages, discounts, and products during the call.

AI can also use historical data to learn and improve its contextual suggestions, helping ensure your agents always get smart, relevant and timely assistance.

### 3# THE POWER OF DIGITAL MESSAGING PREVAILS

Although calls are still the best way to deal with an emotional customer, consumers generally prefer to self-serve when performing simple tasks like paying their electricity bill. In fact, 83% of consumers will now use self-service options when available<sup>3</sup>.

But self-service isn't the only CX channel that's on the rise. Asynchronous messaging helps millions of utilities customers every day stay connected to their provider without picking up the phone. And it's the simplicity and accessibility of SMS that's responsible.

In a recent study by Commify, 38% of finance and utilities companies said they were sending more SMS messages to customers than before the pandemic<sup>4</sup>. This includes account updates, customer satisfaction surveys and emergency information.

These non-intrusive updates help build trust and reassure customers that you're looking out for their best interests in a time when empathy can go a long way.



## 4# VOICE CONTINUES ITS ASCENSION

Along with asynchronous messaging, voice is one of the fastest growing CX channels. And we're not talking about traditional voice calls either, but smart voice assistants like Alexa, Siri and Cortana.

With non-essential brick-and-mortar stores shut throughout much of the pandemic – and smart speakers and voice-enabled smartphones increasingly popular – consumers are more comfortable using voice assistants than ever before.

Whether they're used to remotely control appliances or check their energy consumption, voice assistants can help utilities firms become an integral part of their customers' everyday routine. And in a world where there is a correlation between brand engagement and loyalty, voice is becoming a commercial imperative.

### DID YOU KNOW?

52%

of voice assistant users say they use it "SEVERAL TIMES A DAY OR NEARLY EVERY" <sup>5</sup>

8 BILLION

VOICE ASSISTANTS are expected to be IN USE BY 2023 <sup>6</sup>

## 5# IT'S TIME TO PRIORITISE EMPATHY

It's arguable that empathy has never mattered more – at least, in the CX space.

Empathetic interactions help demonstrate that you care about your relationship with the customer, and when done right, they can become a key competitive differentiator.

When customers trust you, they'll be more open, providing you with the kind of deep insights you need to consistently deliver powerful, personalised experiences.

For instance, one in three people in the UK have got into debt since the start of the pandemic<sup>7</sup>. This has serious implications on many people's ability to pay utility bills on time, and to help retain these customers and their trust – empathetic interactions are paramount.



# FLIPPING THE SWITCH ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: BULB

Renewable energy supplier Bulb has one mission: to turn their customers into climate change heroes. The business offers tariffs 20% cheaper than competitors, and saves 3.5 tonnes of carbon per household each year.

But there's a problem: switching suppliers is traditionally seen as difficult. In order to succeed, Bulb had to make switching as seamless as possible. Bulb achieved this through a frictionless signup process. Once on bulb's website, customers can get a quote in less than 30 seconds – all they need to know is their house's postcode.

Bulb calls this radical simplicity, and it's present throughout the entire signup process. The company asks as few questions as possible, and always ensures the user will have the information to hand.

The process is made smoother through directional choice. Although Bulb will never tell a customer what to do, they will guide them wherever possible. For example, when answering the above questions, they will highlight the most common answers so that they are easy to select.

Similarly, when customers should increase or decrease their payments, automated messages will appear advising customers to do so – again, suggesting rather than telling them.

Bulb also tries to find simple solutions to some of the more tiresome aspects of dealing with energy companies. For example, giving your meter reading is never a pleasant experience. But on the Bulb app, users can simply take a photo of the meter without worrying which numbers need to be submitted. They can even toggle a torch on and off without exiting the app.

The energy market is incredibly crowded. However, thanks to its innovations, Bulb has signed up over 1.3 million customers, and continues to grow as it shrinks the carbon footprint of its customers.



## SUMMARY

The rising diversity and use of digital channels in recent years has created countless ways to grow customer loyalty. We help businesses in the financial services industry capitalise on these opportunities.

Get in touch with us to learn how better customer experiences can help you build stronger customer relationships and lifelong trust in your brand and services.

## NEXT STEPS

If you'd like to learn how Genesys technology solutions can seamlessly connect customer experiences to your strategic needs, please get in touch.

**For more information, contact:**

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