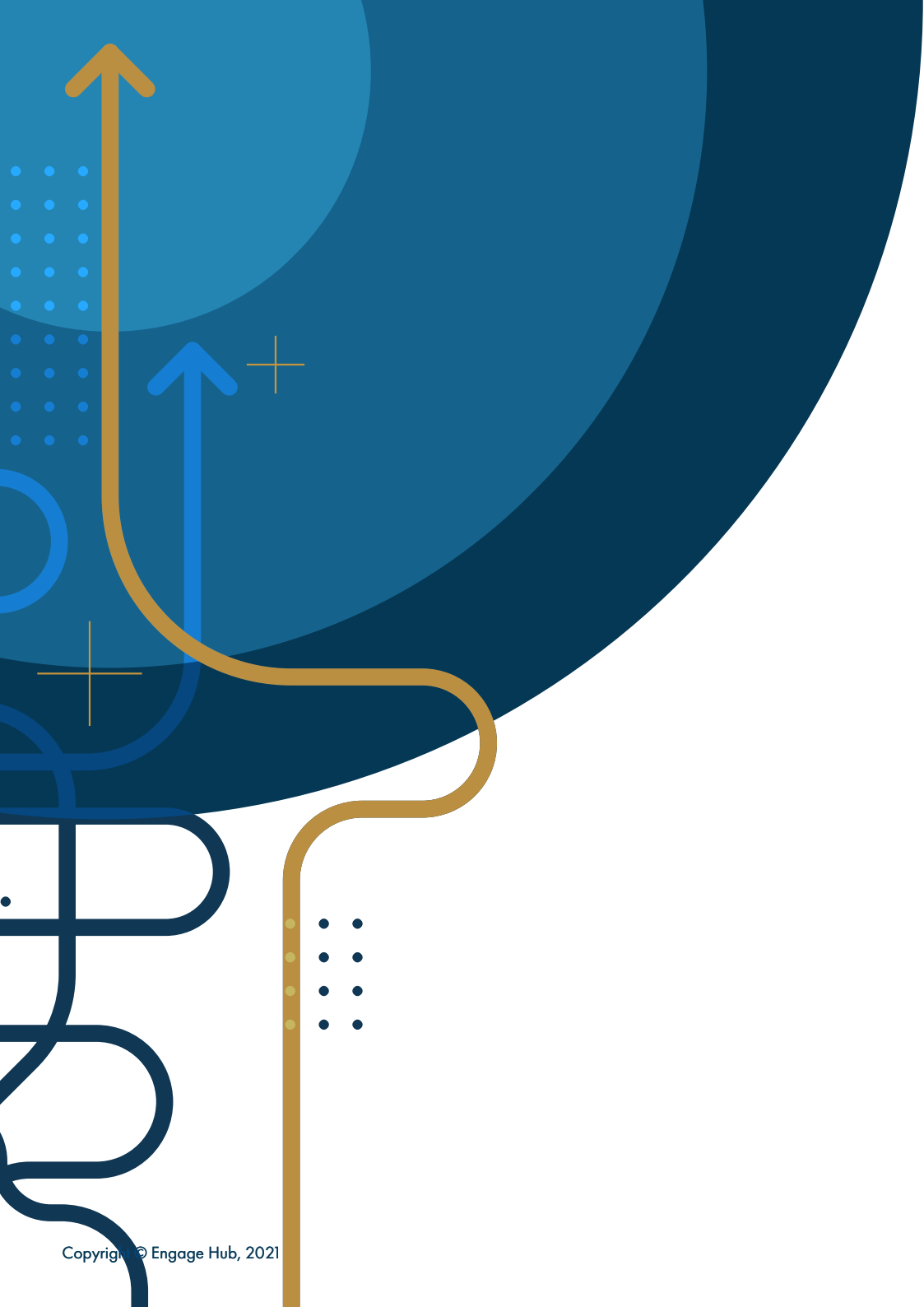
An abstract graphic on the left side of the page. It features three overlapping circles in shades of blue, with the largest one at the top left. Overlaid on these circles are several orange lines: a straight arrow pointing up and to the right, a wavy line, and a line that forms a loop. There are also several small orange plus signs scattered throughout the graphic.

# Retailers guide to a seamless and personalised experience:

HOW AUTOMATION CAN  
DRIVE COST SAVINGS AND  
DELIGHT CUSTOMERS.

engageHUB



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# Introduction

“RETAIL IS DEAD. LONG LIVE RETAIL.”

This sentiment, in relation to traditional bricks-and-mortar retail, has been dominating headlines since before the pandemic. But lockdown has added a new twist to the tale as consumers made rapid and significant shifts to digital channels. Retailers have therefore been forced to innovate at speed – and find creative ways to provide cross-channel and omni-channel customer experiences (CX).

At the same time, margin pressure is mounting – driven by more intense competition, rising labour costs, e-commerce investment and the need to offer support for vulnerable customers.

Automation offers a way to differentiate and bolster margins in this hypercompetitive market. Thanks to advances in artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and Natural Language Processing (NLP), automation technology is helping to deliver seamless and hyper-personalised customer experiences while reducing operational costs. A comprehensive automation programme can therefore significantly offset the headwinds retailers face – and generate more revenue for reinvesting in growth.

In this whitepaper, we look at how automation and digital self-service are helping retailers save up to £2 million in operational costs as they adapt rapidly to rising customer expectations.



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Journey automation  
can achieve up to  
**£2 million**  
in operational  
cost savings.

# Automating self-service across digital channels

Retailers who are leveraging automation have been found to be more resilient in the face of pandemic-related challenges. Those without sophisticated forecasting and planning systems were unable to address issues such as stock levels as quickly as those who did, losing out on sales and potentially damaging customer relations and brand image. The automated front-end of a transactional e-commerce website or an AI-powered Chatbot may have been the only ways non-essential businesses stayed open and in touch with customers during lockdown. Those without these connections suffered.

With more customer service queries, more website traffic and more inbound calls, retailers need automation to manage demand. Digital self-service is helping to manage routine questions and issues. Automating certain functions within the IVR system helps deflect calls to alternative digital channels. Similarly, integrating Chatbots and expanding them to new channels can speed up resolution times compared with waiting on the line to speak with an adviser.

Most of these self-service capabilities are surprisingly easy to implement. And they streamline engagement and improve customer satisfaction when pressure is on.



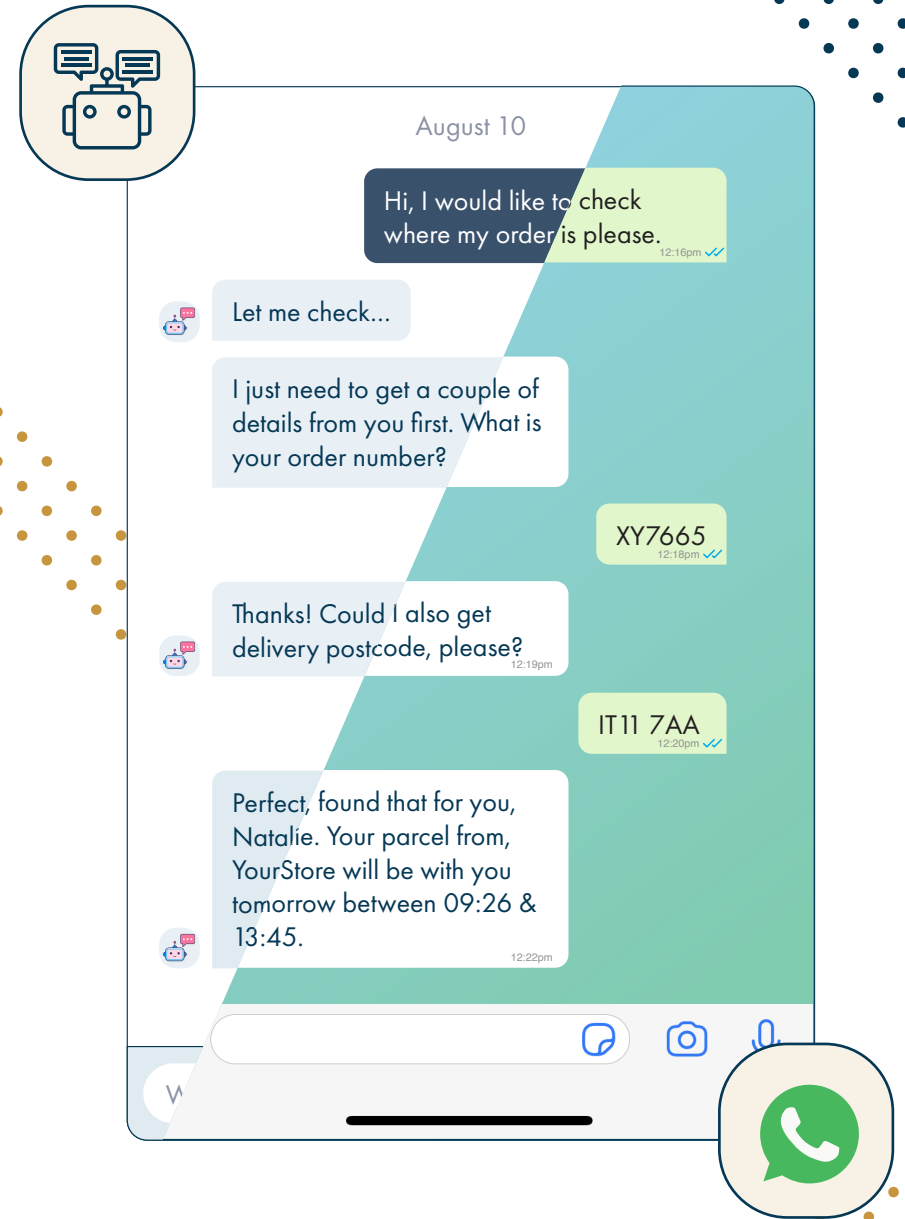
## DEFLECT CALLS FROM YOUR BUSY CONTACT CENTRE

Many of Engage Hub's retail customers saw their contact centres overwhelmed at the start of the pandemic. These unprecedented call volumes created an urgent need to deploy automated contact handling solutions.

With AI and NLP becoming ever-more sophisticated, Chatbots can now take on more than standard FAQs. Not only can they help customers self-serve complex problems, but they can understand intent and interact in a conversational, human-like way that aligns with your brand. This then frees up agent capacity in the call centre, because a large percentage of queries can be resolved by the Chatbot.

You can drive customers to self-service channels in a variety of ways. For example, on the contact page of your website (where people traditionally find your phone number), you can showcase the improved service available via channels such as Web Chat, WhatsApp, SMS or Facebook Messenger. Your IVR system can also deflect people, offering a voice Chatbot when customers call.

As a result, staff can focus on more complex queries and vulnerable customers, while still making it easy for those self-serving to reach a human if needed.



## OFFER THE BEST POSSIBLE SUPPORT IN THE MOMENT, ON THE CUSTOMER'S CHANNEL OF CHOICE

Chatbots are most effective when they work seamlessly across touchpoints. This means they must be able to access customer information and chat histories from any messaging app or communication channel. For example, if customers start on Web Chat and move to WhatsApp, they shouldn't have to repeat their story. Once the Chatbot has confirmed the customer's identity, it should have access to all previous interactions – and be able to pick up at that precise point in their journey.

As the Chatbot integrates with your order system, it can see if customers recently made a purchase – and ask straight away if they want a delivery update. It also integrates with the logistics system, so it can see if a delivery is delayed, and pre-empt the customer's complaint with a more conciliatory approach.



Perfect, found that for you, Natalie. Your parcel from, YourStore will be with you tomorrow between 09:26 & 13:45.

Would you like to change any of the following delivery options?

Delivery Date

Delivery Address

Delivery Options

Write a message

## GAIN CROSS-CHANNEL INSIGHT TO DRIVE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

As with customer journey automation, data integration is key to success with self-service. Having a single Chatbot that works across all channels means customers can get help with issues that cut across systems.

It also means you can use machine learning across all channel interactions, so the Chatbot continuously improves based on how customers actually interact with your business. Plus, you get integrated analytics that help you boost CSAT and NPS – cost-effectively and at scale. In fact, by using Engage Hub's digital self-service solutions, businesses have seen a **12% increase in CSAT score and £11,000 of weekly cost savings**.

**£11,000 of weekly cost savings** from companies using Engage Hub digital self-service solutions.





## CASE STUDY

# TOP UK RETAILER AUTOMATES CUSTOMER SERVICE TO MANAGE PANDEMIC PEAKS.

**Before the pandemic, a major UK retailer was in a comparatively strong digital position. However, the overnight impact of lockdown – and consumer concerns about stock availability and online deliveries – put unprecedented pressure on the retailer.**

### THE CHALLENGES:

#### **30x increase in daily call volumes**

Prior to Coronavirus, the retailer peak periods could receive in excess of a hundred thousand daily contacts across all inbound channels. When the pandemic struck, they received 30 times more contacts in a day. Their contact centres weren't prepared for this extraordinary spike, and many customers failed to get through and those who did had to wait longer than was ideal to get help.

#### **Prioritising queries to support vulnerable customers**

The retailer was acutely aware that vulnerable customers were struggling to get rapid support, particularly around issues like securing online delivery slots. It urgently needed to mobilise priority contact handling to cater for this segment's needs.

### THE SOLUTION:

#### **Deflecting calls to an automated self-service system**

To reduce the pressure on contact centre agents and help every customer get quicker support, the retailer implemented Engage Hub's Conversational IVR solution. This enabled priority call handling for vulnerable customers and deflected less urgent queries to digital channels. Messaging on these digital self-service channels was regularly updated with new opening hours, online shopping slot availability and information about accessing the online stock check tool.

Thanks to the Engage Hub's solution, they achieved a call deflection rate of over 30% within just 3 months. This has also driven a wider behavioural change among its consumers. Now, more than 65% of customers use digital self-service channels in the first instance for speedier support. This is driving long term cost savings and improved customer satisfaction.

**30%** call deflection rate

**65%** of customers now use digital self-service in the first instance





# Hyper-personalise CX with Next Best Action and give automated, AI-powered recommendations for customers'

**Next Best Action is the holy grail of hyper-personalisation. Fully realised, it gives you the ability to identify and deliver the right experience in real-time based on everything you know about the customer. Not only does Next Best Action make recommendations based on customer historical and behaviour data, but it also analyses signals from across the entire customer journey, independent of business domain. Next Best Action can therefore manifest in many ways – from Next Best Offer in marketing campaigns to recommendations in customer service scenarios. In fact, the Next Best Action recommendation may be to take no action at a particular moment if it's in the best interest of the long-term relationship.**

For outbound marketing, this can mean pushing the next best offer for a customer on their preferred channel. That offer is determined automatically by analysing all the customer's data, behaviours on their network and offline activity. This also applies to inbound customer service requests – when a customer gets in touch, the upsell recommendation is tailored to a specific accessory or related product.

Machine learning also lets you take predictive analysis a step further, suggesting the best sequence of actions to get the best engagement. For example, it can determine whether it's better to send an offer now or have an agent call the customer to resolve an issue first (as you'll get a better response to the offer if the customer is issue-free).

When implemented correctly, Next Best Action therefore becomes a continuous way of engaging customers with the most relevant content or offer, using the right channels. And as it's self-optimising, your campaigns can become entirely automated and customer-centric.

With Next Best Action, you use automation to transcend siloed operations and departmental KPIs. You can therefore meet ever-evolving demands for hyper-personalised experiences – efficiently, cost-effectively and at scale.

# Conclusion

**“RETAIL IS DEAD. LONG LIVE RETAIL.”**

**Retail margins are stressed from all sides. You have higher labour costs, higher e-commerce supply chain costs and larger investments to compete with new entrants. At the same time, customer expectations continue to surge as digital-native disruptors raise the bar for personalised service on the back of what can be a more favourable cost structure.**

Automation is an easy-to-deploy and cost-effective way to manage that margin strain and offer exceptional custom experiences at scale. From automating communication across the customer journey to providing digital self-service, there are quick-wins that make a rapid impact on CSAT and profitability – while also enabling faster support for vulnerable customers.

And the opportunities continue – with Next Best Action giving you the ability to hyper-personalise interactions, embed continuous optimisation and gain more value from data.

Automation therefore becomes more than a suite of tools – it becomes a way to overcome traditional silos and help everyone in the business work as a united team to offer the best possible customer experiences. And when you’ve achieved that, you’ve truly created a competitive advantage.



# About Engage Hub.

**Every customer is unique. Engage each one.**

At Engage Hub, it's our mission to make sure your business treats your customers as individuals to engage each and every one, so you win them over faster and keep them for longer.

With over 30 years in the business, our services have evolved alongside the needs of our clients, including some of the world's most successful brands across the financial services, utilities, telecoms, retail and logistics sectors. We understand the challenges you face - from data silos to legacy systems – and have built intelligent, intuitive and effective solutions that work for you.

Our commitment to excellence has helped us build a reputation as the leading global provider of data-driven consumer engagement and customer retention solutions. At a time when brand loyalty is at an all-time low, our data orchestration technology delivers the kind of experiences your customers have now come to expect. So, you can always keep them engaged and happy.

For more information, please visit [www.engagehub.com](http://www.engagehub.com)







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