White paper
Cisco public

Extending Your Existing Customer Care Experiences with Connected Artificial Intelligence (Connected AI)

It is only natural that organizations want to continue to leverage systems and technologies they have invested in and, in parallel, are looking at ways to extend them with the latest experiences and capabilities. Aligning new capabilities with existing assets is top of mind for most companies. One of the rising focus areas is the integration of bots and artificial intelligence with customer experience. When we talk about extending the customer experience, there are three fundamental pillars that define it. These pillars are **capable, continuous**, and **contextual,** and they are the cornerstones of what Cisco calls the Connected Digital Experience.

This paper describes a 3-step approach that will enable Cisco customers to enhance and extend their existing capabilities with the goal of providing a superior customer experience.

Contents

Capable

The solution needs to be capable – that is, it needs to be extendable using a variety of open platforms and building blocks. Self-service is not a new trend in customer care, and yet to a certain extent the advent of bots is. With our open platform strategy, an organization can choose to extend the bot capabilities to any of a range of solutions, from the most sophisticated customizable systems to plug-and-play platforms. The idea is that any customer query can come from a variety of entry points, such as web, mobile chat, call, IoT devices (Alexa, Google Home), and messengers (Facebook), and still go through a very tailored bot interaction. As we know, many times, after the bot interaction the query may be transferred to a live agent or expert.

The goal is to provide our customers with best-in-class choice, enabling them to choose what works best for their businesses. From a high level, there are three categories of bot platforms that can be integrated with Cisco® customer care deployments.

- Basic do-it-yourself: Dialogflow (formerly API.AI), Amazon Lex, and other similar platforms
- Industry focused: Kore.ai, noHold, and other similar specialized AI platforms
- Highly customizable deep-domain conversational AI: Cisco MindMeld, IBM Watson

The first category is for simple Q&A interactions and falls within the do-it-yourself category. The second category consists of platforms that are specialized for a certain task or industry. Last but not least are the highly customizable deep-domain platforms that mimic human interactions. The good news is that Cisco's customer can choose the best-in-class AI platforms that work best for them.

Figures 1 and 2 depict examples of virtual assistant creation and use.

Figure 1. Configuration step for creating an API.AI agent for a virtual assistant or bot

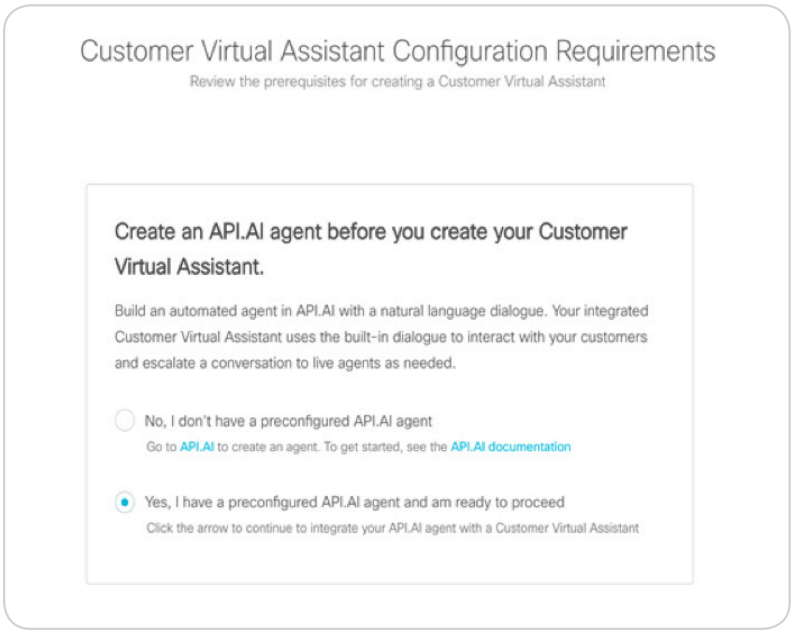
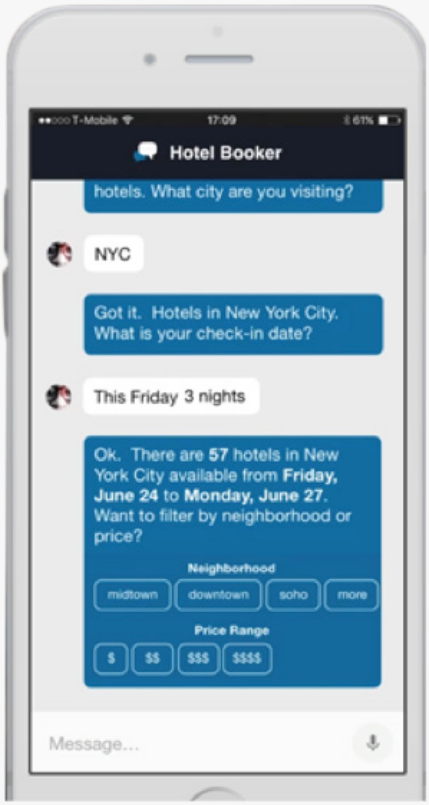


Figure 2. Cisco MindMeld conversational artificial intelligence bot



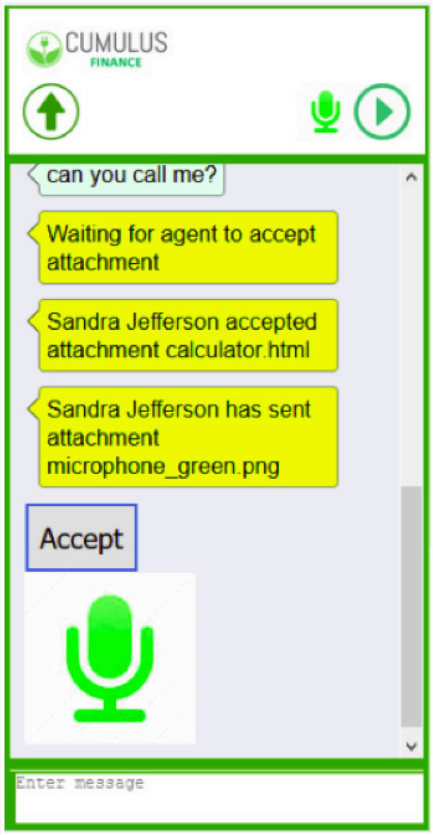
Find more information about bots at https://www.ciscospark.com/sparkcare.html.

Continuous

The solution needs to be continuous – that is, it needs to enable seamless escalation to a live agent as the need arises. The previous section discussed how the solution needs to be open to be able to integrate with a variety of artificial intelligence platforms. Yet in many scenarios, after the bot interaction the chat or call still needs to be transferred to a live agent or expert. To ensure the best, most continuous user experience, the bot-to-live-agent interaction needs to be within the same dialog window. The ability to achieve this escalation could depend on the type of live agent chat and call APIs that the underlying customer care platform offers. At Cisco we offer a variety of multichannel APIs and SDKs, such as Enterprise Chat and Email (ECE), Remote Expert Mobile (REM), and Cisco SocialMiner®, to address this integration issue.

Figure 3 depicts how an agent escalation might appear in a single dialog.

Figure 3. Bot-to-live-call escalation integrated dialog window



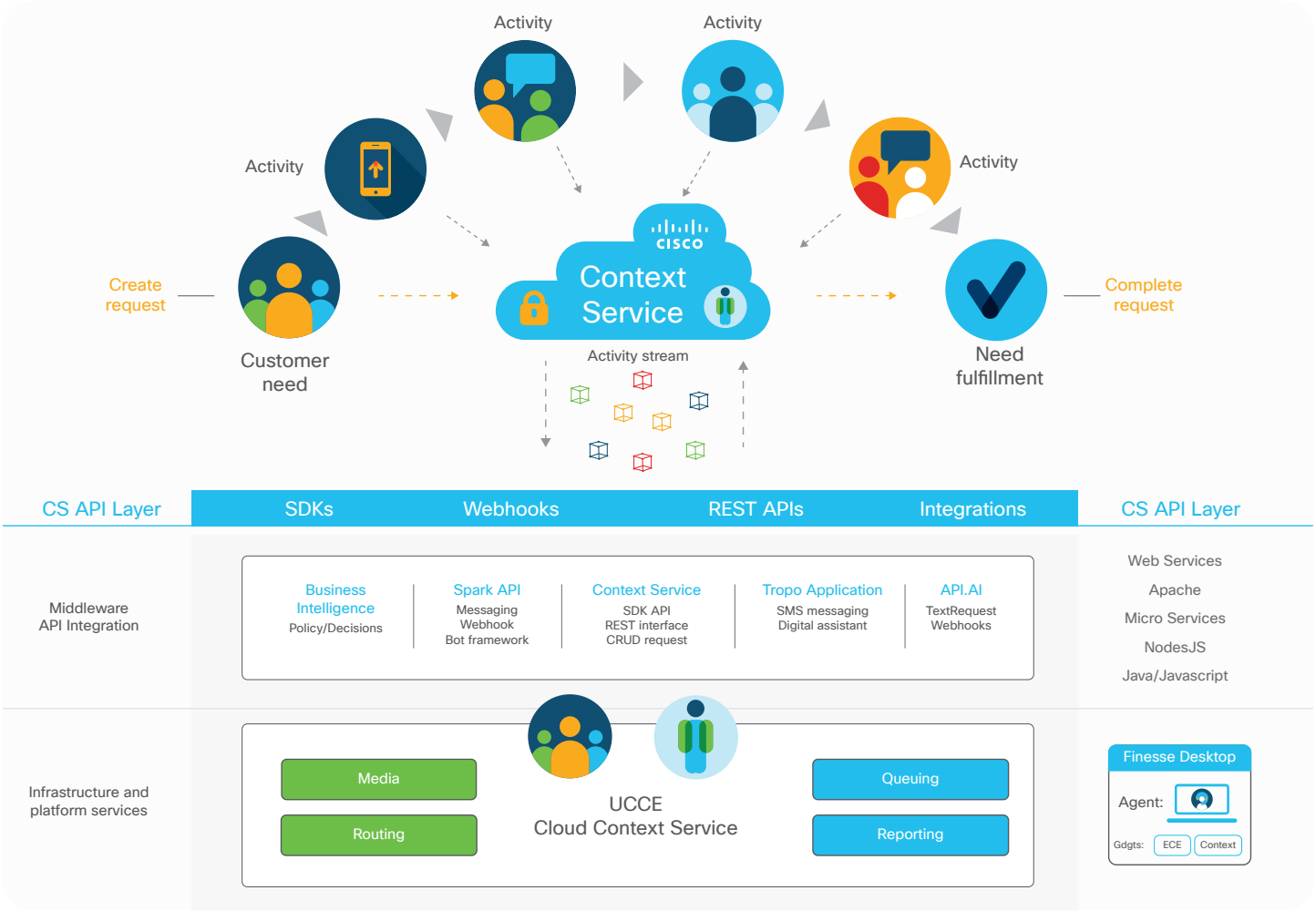
Find more information about customer care APIs at https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/products/customer-collaboration/product-listing.html#OptionsforContactCenterSolutions.

Contextual

Last but not the least, the solution needs to be contextual – that is, it needs to enable data collection as the customer moves through his or her journey. Data collection can initiate once customers are on your website or application. In most cases, the data collection starts even before the customer hits any link or button for help. Cisco Context Service offers an end-to-end way to collect such data. Context Service is also the glue between premises and the cloud. The data collected can be used for intelligent routing, identity, agent insight, reporting, prepopulation of forms, and a variety of other use cases.

Figure 4 illustrates the Cisco Context Service.

Figure 4. Cisco Context Service



Find more information about Context Service at https://developer.cisco.com/site/context-service/.

Bringing it all together

As more customers undertake digital transformation, Cisco continues to lead with powerful vision, technology, and business models, all designed to guide our customers' journeys. We continue to evolve our offerings so that our current and future customers can extend their existing deployment to benefit from the recent trends in artificial intelligence and bots. Cisco's Connected AI allows the best of both worlds – the stability and security of the premises with the innovation and speed of the cloud.

Many brands are either considering or conducting trials of artificial intelligence bots today. The key to success is to make it a seamless experience and not to have it feel like a mere bolt-on accessory. The platform also needs to be extendable so that other third-party components, such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM), analytics engines, etc., can be plugged in to create value from the data that is collected and fed back into the platforms for further refinement.

Customers don't exactly buy products; they buy experiences and business outcomes. Companies will always look for ways to improve their profit margins, along with creating new and improved customer experiences. Some of the goals and outcomes that could be achieved with connected AI are:

- Leverage and extend your current Cisco investments
- Enable automation by sending incoming requests to artificial intelligence-powered bots (advice, sales, etc.)
- Perform seamless handoffs to live agents as and when needed
- Deploy a smart, integrated context engine to enable a superior customer and agent experience

For more info on Cisco customer care, please visit: https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/products/customer-collaboration/index.html

Please connect with the author, Ruchi Gupta, at LinkedIn and Twitter. https://blogs.cisco.com/author/ruchigupta

C11-740029-00 12/17