



**AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE
IN THE CONTACT CENTER:
THE WHY, WHAT, AND HOW**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Phone professionals are the front line of your brand. It's a tough job. They spend all day, all week, all month and all year responding to an unceasing torrent of emotional callers with sticky problems. It's hard for them to stay sharp, empathetic, and effective. Fortunately, artificial intelligence can be deployed to raise performance. AI can read ***honest signals*** conveyed by voices within conversation to suggest behavioral changes to keep the interaction successful and productive. We call the application of AI to enhance emotional intelligence and nudge human behavior "augmented intelligence." The key is to provide specific instructions in the moment they're needed. When implemented, augmented intelligence benefits the entire organization, from the front line phone professionals all the way to the CEO.

For more insights on AI's role in raising human performance, download the ebook, [The Cogito Guide To Emotional Intelligence.](#)



THE WHY OF AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE

You may think artificial intelligence is about smarter machines, but in truth, it's about better humans

We humans make decisions on the basis of emotions. We love brands—and leave them!—based on our experiences.

Our emotionality will ensure that human beings remain key assets in the workplace, even as companies deploy artificial intelligence technology to revolutionize the modern enterprise. Emotions demand interactions with other people.

When we call customer service centers, we want to talk to people who can solve our technical or complex problems. But if we don't trust the phone professional—if we don't establish an emotional connection—we might hesitate to follow their advice.

We may even call back to voice the same problem to a different agent!

MAKING EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS CAN BE HARD

On a daily basis, phone professionals are constantly required to build a relationship on demand—to make a connection with a customer whom they've never met before and will probably never talk to again.

In the absence of other methods of communication (such as eye contact, body language and touch), voice alone becomes the only way a phone professional can display emotional intelligence.

They are hard-pressed to be patient and understanding all day long, even all week long—especially when customers, on the other end of the call, are commonly upset and frustrated.

They have their hands full simply manipulating the screens and fields necessary to do their jobs, leaving little mental bandwidth for other functions.



85% OF CONSUMERS WANT TO CHANGE SERVICE PROVIDERS AFTER A FRUSTRATING CALL

Source: Frost & Sullivan,
Cogito Sponsored Survey 2017



HERE'S WHERE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CAN HELP

At Cogito, we've developed AI that reads and understands the non-verbal behavior expressed through our voices. This non-verbal communication was dubbed "honest signals" by MIT Professor Dr. Sandy Pentland because by understanding behaviors such as timing, tone, and pitch, for example, we can get an authentic view into emotions and intentions.

In a conversation, both participants initiate, detect, interpret, and react to each other's honest signals in what some may call a conversational dance.

All of this nuanced, behavioral complexity is distilled by Cogito's AI technology into intuitive notifications an agent can utilize effortlessly in the moment.

For example, if the customer is sounding agitated, a notification on the screen will cue the phone professional that more empathy is needed. Or if the professional is talking faster or flatter than usual, a notification will provide the appropriate feedback to speak more slowly or with more energy.

With notifications triggered by the analysis of honest signals, phone professionals gain valuable information to guide their communication right there, in real time, when it matters the most.

When phone professionals take a call, it can be a make-or-break moment for your brand.

Forrester notes that in 95% of industries, emotion is a customer's top decision driver.

Temkin discovered that customers who had good emotional experiences were 12 times more likely to recommend the brand to a friend.

GREATER REWARD

Phone professionals respond well to the Cogito live, in-call guidance because they are naturally empathetic, helpful people who aspire to do better—for their customers, their company, and themselves. Not only are they rewarded when they hit their numbers, but they realize greater satisfaction from work.

The objective, non-judgmental feedback provided by Cogito helps phone professionals achieve both individual and company-wide goals.

In summary, emotional connections over the phone can be hard to establish on demand. Fortunately, we've identified five simple ways to ensure more emotionally-connected voice conversations. These five ways are the "what" of emotional intelligence.

Keep reading to discover them!

MOMENTS OF TRUTH

It's also a make-or-break moment for your bottom line.

McKinsey found that positive emotional experiences increased a brand's share of the customer's wallet—among 87 percent of customers! Whereas negative experiences motivated 72 percent of people to switch loyalties.



THE WHAT OF AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE

Behavioral science meets machine learning

As trauma nurses will tell you, continued exposure to strong emotions depletes our ability to connect with other human beings.

Phone professionals also manage strong emotions all day long, all week long. After hearing the same problems over and over, it is inevitable that they may struggle to connect with callers.

It's not sufficient to post pick-me-up reminders in the workspace. In no time, professionals screen out the reminders—the sticky notes with smiley faces, or mirrors printed with “Smile!” hung near monitors.



CORRECTIONS IN THE MOMENT

Behavioral science tells us we need corrections as soon as we stray from the desired behavior.

Take an example from newer cars: safe driving alerts.

Many vehicles tell drivers they're swerving out of their lanes by flashing a light in the cabin or displaying a dashboard icon. These driving alerts illustrate the use of behavioral corrections in the moment they're needed.

Similarly, it's possible to stray from conversational lanes. It's possible—and, in stressful situations, likely—we'll stray outside the boundaries necessary for a smooth conversation. More about that in a second.

Automotive technology that keeps us in our lanes illustrates a key difference between artificial intelligence and augmented intelligence. While AI-controlled, self-driving vehicles are getting the most publicity, the real advances are occurring when we use AI to augment our own intelligence and make us better drivers.

In other words, we can use AI to improve human performance. So if we can use it to help us drive, could it help us serve customers on the phone?





TO BEGIN, LET'S IDENTIFY OUR CONVERSATIONAL LANES

Stressful conversations on the phone demand high emotional intelligence. Without eye contact and visual cues from our counterparts in a conversation, we have to rely exclusively on voice, which makes it harder to properly adjust our behaviors.

Phone professionals are tasked with making emotional connections, on demand, with upset or frustrated people. If we could help stressed customer service representatives correct their behaviors—to stay in their conversational lanes—which behaviors would we assist?

At Cogito, we've identified key conversational trouble areas for phone professionals. Here are some examples:



Interrupting and talking over callers as they attempt to explain their problems



Going silent for too long, without acknowledging the caller



Speaking faster than the caller can comprehend the message



Speaking with low energy that reflects distraction or disinterest



Speaking continuously without listening for customer input or reactions



Ignoring emotional changes in the customer's voice and not being empathetic to their situation

These conversational trouble spots may seem like common sense. However, detecting them under duress, understanding their impact, and adjusting them at just the right time during complex emotional conversations can be challenging. When successful, the results are very powerful.

So, if we were to apply machine learning to help address these challenges, the keys to successfully augment intelligence might look like this:

- 1 Understand what is good and bad conversational behavior within the context of a given situation.**
- 2 Provide agents with behavioral notifications the moment that guidance is needed.**
- 3 Make notifications intuitive, to the point, and actionable.**
- 4 Consider and analyze both sides of an interaction—the caller and the agent—and the conversational dynamics between them.**
- 5 Continuously learn and improve.**

This is the “what” of augmented intelligence, where behavioral science meets machine learning.

How is it done? Keep reading to find out.



HOW COGITO DOES IT

Overcoming latency makes real-time real

Cogito uses artificial intelligence to augment human intelligence; specifically, emotional intelligence. That's right—we use technology to help humans be more human. Almost ironic, isn't it?

SO, HOW DO YOU USE AI TO AUGMENT BEHAVIOR?

The preceding pages talked about the importance of sensing behavior through non-verbal cues and guiding agents with notifications at the moment they're needed. Delivering real-time coaching is a huge change from what's been done previously.

In the past, phone professionals may have taken hundreds of calls before a supervisor would tell them, "You could have handled that call differently." Now, that particular call might have taken place a week ago. What can a phone professional do with information from an hour ago, let alone a week ago? It comes too late and too infrequently to modify behavior when it really matters.

FEEDBACK AT THE MOMENT OF NEED

The key is to reduce the delay in coaching feedback from weeks or days to milliseconds.

During a live call, Cogito's compute engine analyzes hundreds of unique behavioral signals to stream objective behavioral guidance in just milliseconds. We call it "blink time": In the time it takes to

blink, we're providing behavioral guidance for that particular situation, as it happens. If you're interrupting, you need to be notified while you are still interrupting!

HOW IT WORKS

Cogito acquires channel-separated audio from your telephony system. This allows us to isolate customer and phone professional speaking behaviors as well as the conversational exchange. During a call, the tech breaks the conversation down into increments of milliseconds and analyzes over 200 different vocal, non-verbal signals. These signals are then analyzed and correlated with the insights from tens of millions of conversations using our proprietary artificial intelligence.

THREE-FOLD RESULTS

- 1** Cogito provides agents with the ability to make an immediate impact on the call through real-time notifications which nudge agent behaviors.
- 2** The technology detects the customer's perception of a call and generates a customer experience score for every conversation.
- 3** Phone professional behaviors are closely correlated to critical call outcomes and key patterns are identified.



Companies who use Cogito rely on our CX Score, which is an instant, objective measure of a customer’s perception of a call, to help them identify call patterns and trends in customer satisfaction in real time.

All this data helps everyone in your organization –from the phone professionals and supervisors to operations and service leaders—make more-informed decisions. [Senior executives can observe if their company is living up to its brand promise and the corresponding impact to the bottom line.](#)

The previous pages have talked about the what, why, and how of augmented intelligence. To wrap up, we’ll talk about how it’s being used and who stands to benefit in the contact center.



UNIQUE BEHAVIORAL SIGNALS

A small portion of the unique behavioral signals analyzed by Cogito’s low-latency compute engine:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Harmonicity | Vocal effort |
| Tone | Turn-taking |
| Pitch variation | Mimicry |
| Tension | Speaking pace |

WHAT TYPES OF IMPROVEMENTS ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

While every organization has their own KPIs that matter the most and results may vary, many of our Cogito clients have reported some of the following positive business outcomes:

More satisfied customers:

- NPS gains as high as 14%
- Sales yield gains around 5%

More productive employees:

- Reduced handle time by 7% and more
- Improved FCR around 8%





THE WHO OF AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE

This goes beyond callers and phone pros

Previously, we highlighted the why, what, and how of augmented intelligence. Now, let's highlight who stands to benefit from applying artificial intelligence to call centers. It's actually a much bigger question than you might think, because the benefits of augmented intelligence go well beyond just the phone professionals and their callers.

For example, supervisors or team coaches in contact centers can leverage AI in two ways:

- 1 To reinforce their existing coaching on every call—not just the handful they review monthly or the ones they observe live.
- 2 To save valuable coaching prep time by automatically surfacing areas of improvement and recognition for their team, which is made possible by objective and timely measures of their team's performances on the phone.



To help illustrate this, a call center supervisor tells a story about their experience with Cogito:

I've always been someone who didn't want technology telling me what to do, but it's cool to sit with them during a call and see [Cogito notifications about] the things I have been coaching them on. They may give me pushback or think they are doing okay, but seeing it in real time proves to them that they really do need to work on these things.

Interestingly, the appearance of these real-time notifications can also identify behavioral patterns that may be otherwise missed. For example, they may indicate when an agent is simply having a bad day and needs a little extra acknowledgment. Take this real-life story:

One morning I logged into Cogito and I was watching my reps' CX Scores update in real time. I noticed that one of my reps had taken several calls in a row that were trending downwards. I decided to give him a break from taking calls for a while — I didn't mention the CX Score at all — and afterwards his calls started trending upwards almost immediately.



“I’M GETTING ALL FIVES”

Of course, phone professionals themselves stand to gain from improving their performance. Many are compensated on the basis of metrics such as sales (of course), service levels, average talk time, first call resolution, and customer satisfaction scores.

As one professional told us about her CSAT scores, “I’m getting all fives,” the highest ranking. That’s got to be good for her career.

In a large, mature business, even one- or two-point improvements in net promoter scores, average handle times, and first call resolution deliver big dollars. That’s what Cogito customers are seeing, but the benefits extend even farther than operational efficiencies and cost reductions.

BRAND LOYALTY, DIFFERENTIATION, AND THE VALUE TO SENIOR MANAGERS

Brands have to fight for relevance in a world of increasingly undifferentiated providers of goods or services. Commoditization is an especially large challenge within mature industries such as telecommunications, financial services, and insurance. In these industries, digitization efforts over the past few years have relegated many basic transactions to automated systems, IVRs, self-service, chatbots, and apps, which, in turn, reduce obstacles to switching to another company.

The single most popular way to fight commoditization and differentiate the brand is with superior service. Augmenting the emotional intelligence of call center agents to make better connections with customers is a way to improve service and increase brand loyalty. Doing this in a way that can be measured is an added bonus.

Who benefits?

Chief executive officers can deliver greater value to shareholders. (For example, look at the recent efforts by John Legere, CEO of T-Mobile, to ensure that customers talk to a “Team of Experts.” Happier customers result in less churn, which leads to increased profitability.)

Chief marketing officers improve customer loyalty and have direct line-of-sight to customer satisfaction. (Apple is a great example of a company that differentiates itself by striving to deliver empathy in every customer interaction.)

Phone sales professionals present themselves as more trustworthy and empathetic, which increases their opportunities to sell, upsell and cross-sell.

Heads of service gain predictive insights into employee engagement and gain a tool to exceed their operational and customer satisfaction goals. (For example, Humana uses Cogito to get real-time insights into the voice of the customer.)

Service representatives (from companies such as MetLife, for example) deliver empathy in every interaction and have better conversations with customers, thereby improving everyone’s satisfaction with the call as well as the reps’ abilities to meet performance goals.

Supervisors lead teams of high-performing agents and focus on strategic growth initiatives.

This covers the who, what, why, and how of augmented intelligence. The question that remains is, how will you put it to work in your organization?



About Cogito Corp

Cogito provides human aware technology to help professionals elevate their performance. Cogito's AI instantly analyzes hundreds of conversational behaviors to provide live in-call guidance combined with a real-time measure of customer experience. The technology is augmenting the emotional intelligence of thousands of agents in the world's most successful enterprises—improving sales results, delivering world-class service, and enhancing quality of care. Cogito is a venture-backed software company located in Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

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