



# CONTACT STRATEGY - A STARTING POINT

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Contact Strategy constitutes the work of having a deliberative approach of how to apply contact channels to your digital platforms.

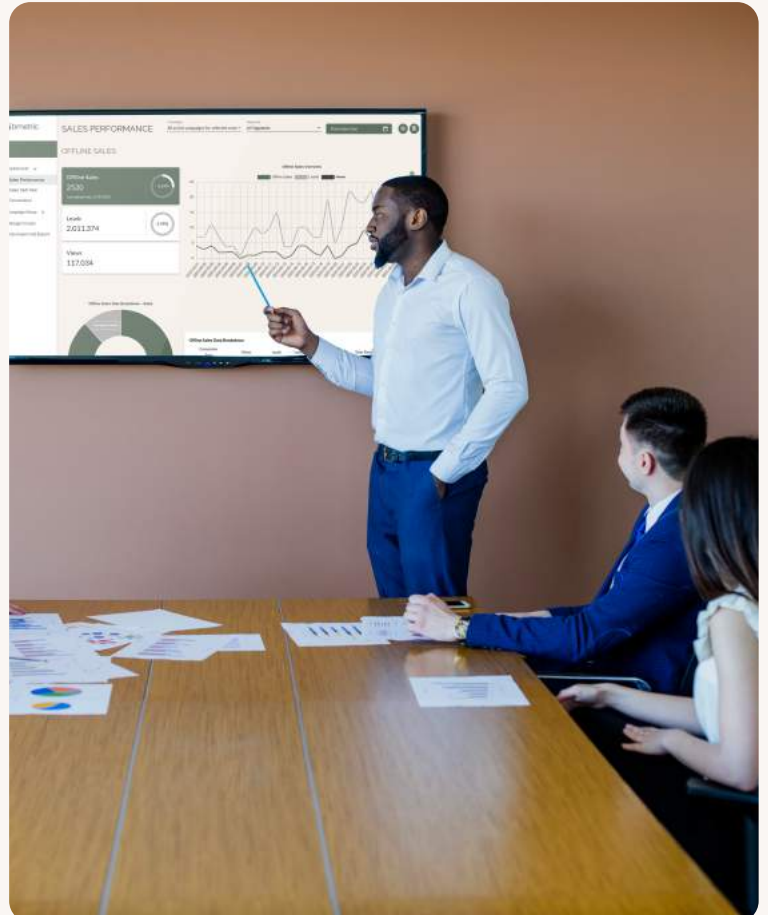
The following document outlines the essential aspects of making that happen.

First, it's important to determine KPIs that allow you to track the performance of each channel. It creates the foundation for comparing the performance of each channel and allows for validating the chosen strategy.

Secondly, to evaluate Harmony or Contrast between customer and company preferences in channel options and utilizations.

Thirdly, how to assess visitor intent, so that each channel is applied in accordance with the Contact Strategy; ie. making sure that each channel serves the customer needs that benefit them the most.

Lastly, how to apply these elements to your website, so that it operates efficiently and towards a high customer satisfaction.



## 1. DETERMINE THE KPIs PER CHANNEL

To make your Contact Strategy a success, it is important to have clear KPIs in place. These indicators can change slightly depending on the defined objectives. Measurable, relevant, performance indicators are essential for understanding how effective your efforts are. Without setting the right KPIs and measuring them properly, it's hard to optimise your Contact Strategy for success.

The data obtained through these KPIs can be utilised in the analysis of Channel Harmony/Contrast and towards customer intent and segmentation. In short, this analysis of the data of the contact channels is necessary to refine the application of the strategy throughout implementation. It goes without saying that contact channels with poor scores should encourage you to reassess what channel to use when. While channels that score well KPIs confirm the choice of channel and supports reinforcing it.

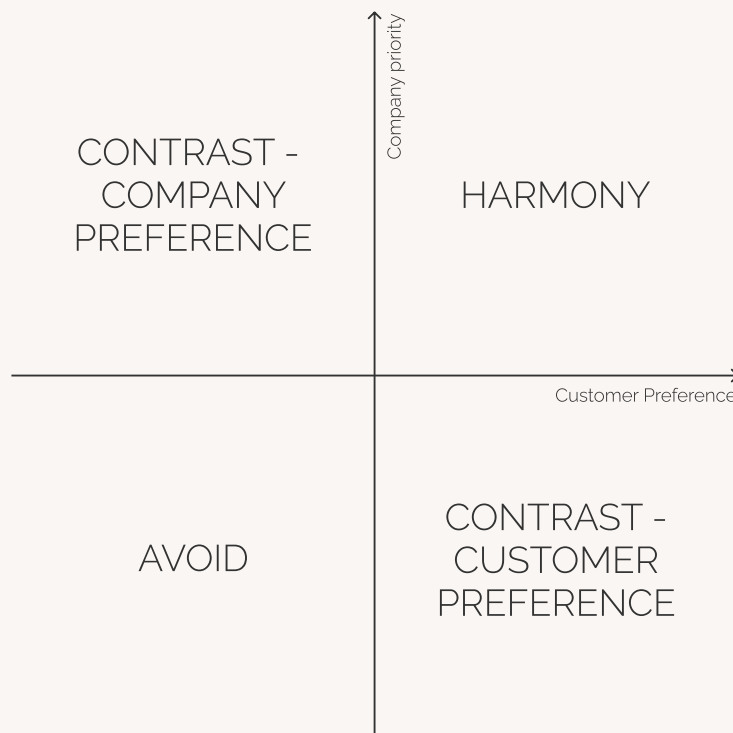
In terms of a Contact Strategy, there are best practice KPIs that are important to take into account:

- **Cost per conversation per channel:** It easily gets complicated to determine and obtain the proper cost of a channel. It is however important in order to identify the effectiveness. A simple approach is to calculate the cost per conversation per channel, by dividing the total costs associated with operating a particular contact channel by the number of conversations conducted through that channel. Alternatively consider the cost at realistic efficiency, ie. not at how many contact moments there have actually been, but how many it could serve. A big discrepancy between the two should be cause for alarm.
- **Volume per channel:** Volume per channel refers to the quantity of communications that occur through a specific contact channel within a given time period. Understanding this holds significance because it indicates an implied customer preference, and a latent preference in the company of what is communicated.
- **Customer satisfaction (CSAT):** Essential to understand customer preference and experience. A good way to gain this understanding is to make use of surveys. However, to be able to assess this KPI correctly, ideally all offered contact channels should be rated in terms of customer satisfaction. The challenge here is how to narrow the CSAT down to a specific channel. It might be that someone gave a bad rating about the quality and information on the website through a phone survey. Even so, getting measurements on all channels allows for proper evaluation and less estimation.
- **Sales effectiveness:** In order to know how effective your channel is in terms of sales, you need to look at three things: the volume of sales, the conversion rate per channel and the value per sale (efficiency). It can be that the conversion rate of a channel is high whereas the value per sale generated through that channel is low. Keeping these things in consideration give you a good insight into the sales effectiveness of the channels.

## 2. COMPANY PRIORITY VS CHANNEL PREFERENCE

In order to form the contact strategy you need to examine whether there is harmony or contrast in the utilisation of channels and the customer preference. To better evaluate proper use of your channels both company priority and customer preference must be taken into account. Certainly, the choice of channels can vary depending on the specific purpose of the customer visit, but before we dive into this topic in section 3 it makes sense to consider if there is contrast or harmony in the organisational understanding of how channels could/should be utilised.

### Channel Matrix:



### Company Priority - Y-axis

Company priority refers to the specific goals, tasks, projects, or areas of focus that a company considers most important and deserving of its attention, resources, and efforts. These priorities are established based on the company's strategic objectives. Often it is the efficiency of a channel, but it can also be its effectiveness as a value driver, for example: striving for results as cheap and valuable as possible. Company priority is often driven by KPI's from our previous section such as Volume, Efficiency and Value. However, often the value created by a channel (especially over long periods of time) can be harder to determine. So often the focus ends on Efficiency.

### Customer Preference - X-axis

Customer preferences refer to the specific choices, opinions, and inclinations that customers have when it comes to products, services, experiences, and interactions with a company. These preferences are influenced by various factors such as assumed and previous experiences.

Combining these into a schematic where putting the company priority on the y-axis and the customer preference on the x-axis, you can create an example such as below:

The matrix above is divided into four stages in which a contact channel can be, given the intent of the contact.

**Avoid:** This is the most straightforward category. If both company priority and customer preference is low, you should avoid showing these contact options for the specific customer intent. Verify that the channel is not being used.

**Harmony:** On the other hand, when both company priority and customer preference show the same contact channels per intent, that means we are in a stage of harmony. Company vision aligns with customer preference for these kinds of inquiries. Ideally, this is the stage you are in and these are the channels you should focus on as a company. Verify if these channels are actually being utilised to their fullest potential and exposed to visitors.

**Contrast - Company Preference:** This occurs when a contact channel is prioritised by a company when there is no customer preference for this channel. What you as a company need to consider is either to improve the experience for customers; in other words to motivate the usage of the channel. As this falls under company priority. Alternatively, if there is no way to adjust customer preference, when customer preference remains low, consider if alternative channels will perform better. It's important to evaluate if the cost of improving a channel with low customer preference is worth the effort (depends on what is available as an alternative). Think of a website offering chatbots, when you as a visitor are in a need to talk with an actual person. You can try to optimise your chatbot, and apply utilisation where relevant (and create a plan for that to happen) or decide to stop using it.

**Contrast - Customer Preference:** If there is a low company priority for certain contact channels, while the customer prefers these channels. This is a contrast stage, where you as a company have opposite interests compared to your customers. As a company you can choose to either demotivate the use of the channel, since this has no company priority or find a way to make it more efficient and effective for sales. This way you keep the customer satisfied and transition that channel into a company priority as well. The important element here is the realisation that you need to make an active decision to do either and make a plan of action. A good example for this is email. A surprising amount of customers prefer to write emails, whereas companies try to eliminate it as it is the least effective channel.

### 3. ASSESSING ONLINE VISITOR INTENT

Assessing online visitor intent is crucial for businesses and websites to provide a personalised and effective user experience. Understanding what visitors are looking for can help tailor content, products, and services to their needs.

One approach is to divide visitor intent (jobs to be done) in the following broad categories:

- **Technical Issues:** A customer contacting with a technical problem, means that they need help with a technical issue with the product or service they have.
- **Administrative Issues:** A customer contacting with an administrative intent, means that they need help with an administrative issue such as invoicing or address changes.
- **Commercial Intent:** A visitor on the journey to become a customer or an existing customer towards up-sell/cross-sell.

Note that the framework is even more advantageous with a solid understanding of the jobs-to-be-done by the customer (there can be more detailed categories). A simple example: for insurance companies technical issues would likely be replaced by damage claims

To further assess how to use these intents, let's dive into two important aspects:

- Data-signals available to assume visitor intent
- Confidence of the assumed visitor intent



#### 3.1 Data-signals for visitor intent

Visitor intent can be assumed based on available “data-signals”. Data-signals are available at various levels of complexity for both utilisation and implementation. Each indicates a certain behaviour within a certain confidence level.

Depending on the maturity of the data-signals and to what extent the assumptions have been confirmed, the Contact Strategy can be implemented on the website to provide visitors with the desired channels.

Data-signals can roughly be grouped into three levels based on the increased complexity of implementation and utilisation:

1. **Visitor navigation on the website:** Where are they on the website and what is the intent of the page they are currently viewing.
2. **Source information:** Such as marketing campaigns that led to the visit, emails or historic visitor behaviour such as logins to self-service interface or similar.
3. **Customer Data Platform or CRM information:** On recognised visitors/customers, products and full customer history (and even further algorithmic calculations based on this information).

Privacy plays a huge role in this too. Without consent to personalisation you have to rely on the first level. I.e. what content do I provide my visitors at each page-view.

### 3.2 Confidence of data-signals for visitor intent

Depending on the data signal utilised, the confidence level of the visitor intent changes. Visitors with a low level of “confidence of intent”, should either be allowed to further qualify their intent with online navigation or the contact channels presented to the visitor allow for further qualification of the intent, such as an IVR on an inbound phone call.

The exact qualification rate of intent required to present a given contact channel without further qualification must be determined by the organisation. You will never be able to reach 100% as there is always some assessment going on, but a ratio of qualified contact moments should be defined and applied, to have a quantifiable metric that confirms assumed visitor intent.

Say, at what level of conversion to sale should an outbound (callback) lead convert, before it makes sense to gather the lead in the first place. To answer that question, utilise the KPI data from section 1.

**Ex. 1** If a visitor visits the frontpage without any prior information it's impossible to know the intent. The available options for contact should reflect this and require further qualification (Ex. inbound phone number with IVR, or allow the customer to qualify their intent by further navigation on the website before presenting the right channel)

**Ex. 2** Visitors progressing to the purchase flow are most likely of commercial intent. But even such a strong signal cannot be confused with 100% confidence. It can be an existing customer desiring to compare their current price plan with what is available or an update to their product.

**Ex. 3** Visitors logged in to the self-service area are almost certainly already customers. But even so might be in the market for upsell. A CDP-signal on already owned products could verify it, but without such advanced implementation campaigns can still be run, just with a lower “hit-rate”.

## 4. APPLYING CONTACT STRATEGY TO WEBSITE

- Applying Contact Strategy
- Testing & Measuring Outcome
- Evaluate and iterate

### 4.1 Applying Contact Strategy

Applying the Contact Strategy to the website means taking the desired channels from the channel matrix and mapping it to the assumed visitor intent. One of the biggest challenges in this exercise is that too many options will confuse the visitor.

A recommended path is to select the elements on the website that “are in play” to communicate a given channel option (Call-to-Action). This could be in-page elements, floaters/widgets, menu & footer (though not all need/should be in play).

Secondly to start utilising the data-signals that are **already available** or can **easily be implemented** to not delay application of the Contact Strategy.

A good foundation is therefore to start with the pages on the website and their designed purpose towards customer intent, and then map that to the Contact Strategy channel prioritisation (towards customer intent). From there changes or adjustments to this foundation can be tested and iterated.

**Ex.** The primary CTA of the website are in-page elements and the floater. The CTA of the website focuses on leading the visitor to online self-service (whether purchase or support), while the widget changes based on assumed customer intent. The element in the footer is decided to be out of scope, as the phone number should always be displayed there.

### 4.2 Testing and measuring

Utilising the data points and KPI's (as described in section 1) you can fully measure the effect of the channel and customer intent mapping. But to truly know the actual lift in performance improvement we recommend split-testing vs. a control group to automatically adjust for seasonality and campaign behaviour. Alternatively time-periods (time-series) can be compared, but with increasing uncertainty in the numbers due to seasonality or other “macro” impacts on the performance.

The goal of the testing is to verify the assumptions of

- a) channel priority - is our channel selection to customer intent correct and working as desired?
- b) visitor intent - is our assumption based visitor intent based on data-signals correct?

## 4.3 Evaluate and iterate

Based on the results of the data from the test (whether in a time-series or A/B-test) evaluate the channel prioritisation of the matrix and/or the assumptions of visitor intent on a given page.

**Ex.** In a scenario where chat is utilised across the website, both for sections of commercial intent as well as service intent tested against a scenario where inbound phone is communicated. What is the impact on the amount of inbound leads? Has it reduced the amount of service intent phone calls?

ie. how did our control group perform vs. our challenger across the important KPIs of Lead Volume & Quality, Contact Moments (to Inbound Service & Chat) and CSAT.

An important, and often missed point in evaluating performance - is the holistic impact on the channels. Providing a channel option is likely going to increase the use of that channel. But use in itself is rarely the desired outcome.

**Ex.** To follow the scenario before. If the volume of chats has gone up, but service calls have not, it is a net increase of contact moments, and therefore not necessarily a more efficient approach. If sales however has increased (whether online or through the chat) then the use may be warranted.

In short, channels provided, quickly affect volume in a major way for both commercial and service teams. And often in ways where there is a derived effect through commercial and service channels, as contact channels are often seen as a “safety net” for customers.

It goes without saying that the best performing variant of the test should be implemented, and followed up by further improvements.

