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White paper

# Elevating your CCM:

The benefits of a next-generation omni-channel processing platform

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CoTé

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# Elevating your CCM: The Benefits of a Next-Generation Omni-Channel Processing Platform

## INTRODUCTION

Customer Communications Management (CCM), the industry term for managing omni-channel communications at scale, has seen a surge of interest in recent years. Driven by a need for better customer and employee experience, many businesses have started to modernize and digitally transform their communication processes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided more impetus for organizations to further digitally transform their customer communications and improvement is now accelerating at an unprecedented scale. Our latest market insights, collected from a consumer and business survey conducted in July 2020, show that the number one enterprise response to the coronavirus and its aftermath has been to shift more communications volume to digital. Respondents reported that they prefer using cloud-based, functionally-diverse CCM solutions that can easily and cost-effectively scale and improve communication experience while enabling their business and technical staff to work remotely. A positive two-way communications experience can help organizations demonstrate transparency and engender trust in their brand during this time of profound and widespread turmoil.

*"Our July 2020 survey shows that digital transformation is the number one enterprise response to the COVID-19 pandemic."*

**Source: Aspire, 2020**

Leveraging the latest advancements in cloud computing, innovative providers like CoTé (a CCM vendor from Australia with offices in the U.S. and partnerships in Europe) are redefining effective communications management. They offer an extensive native cloud platform (called virsaic) featuring infinite scalability,100% availability and full regulatory compliance, and have wholly integrated the development lifecycle together with other core specification management, development,

testing, delivery, archival, inbound, reporting, analytics and business processing functions to provide complete management of CCM.

Modern cloud platforms are often hosted on public cloud infrastructure and developed in an evergreen way, meaning that they are continually refreshed, without any outages. Virsaic is a great example: centrally managed by CoTé, hosted on MS Azure, developed continuously yet each of CoTé's clients have a discrete, fully insulated instance, so elastic performance is guaranteed, individually.

The benefit of the hosted managed services (HMS) approach is that clients can focus on using and exploiting the platform and not be concerned at all with infrastructure. HMS providers also typically offer communication design and management services to their clients. CoTé does that as well: clients can entirely self-manage (with a support agreement in place of course) or arrange to have CoTé partially or fully manage their CCM. An important characteristic of virsaic is that it has been designed to put control in the hands of the business user instead of the IT professional; development is via configuration, not coding.

In this sponsored whitepaper, we will examine the value that a modern omni-channel processing platform brings and look at the value that virsaic brings from a customer experience mgmt. (CXM) point of view.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.  Organizations that are interested in modernizing their customer communications infrastructure to enable staff to create, manage, review, approve and produce communications internally or remotely should consider investing in a hosted managed CCM technology platform that will help them secure greater agility, better scalability, and a faster time-to-value compared to traditional, on-premise systems.

2.  Organizations looking to improve customer experience (CX) through superior communications should not only invest in modern technology but also develop best practices around prototyping, atomized and fully indexed content, rationalizing templates, automated change impact assessment, setting up

intelligent workflows and creating cross-functional teams that can break down organizational siloes and functional barriers.

3. With marketing and compliance communications converging into a consisent message, there is a need for end-to-end management of omni-channel communications across the entire customer lifecycle. Modern cloud-based platfoms like CoTé's provide organizations the tools they need to integrate with other enterprise systems and track, manage, and process omni-channel communications securely at scale.

## CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION TRANSFORMATION

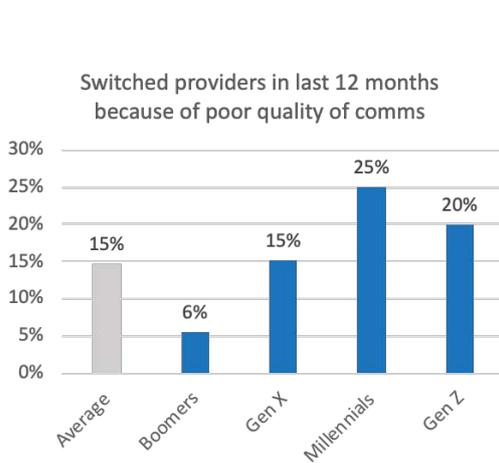### THE GROWING NEED FOR CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION TRANSFORMATION

*"In regulated B2C industries, improving customer communications is often the easiest way to build a better customer experience."*

**Source: Aspire, 2020**

The CCM industry is in the midst of tremendous disruption. Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, organizations were focused on improving customer experience by transforming static, outbound documents into bi-directional, digital interactions. Particularly in highly regulated industries, price and product are often fixed, so businesses can only build a lasting competitive advantage by improving customer experience.

Aspire's recently published survey of 2,000 consumers in the U.S. and Canada found that 15% have switched providers in the last 12 months because they were unhappy with the quality of their communications experience. If we look only at Millennials - consumers between the ages of 26 and 39 years old - the number rises to 25%! In other words, one in four Millennials (who now make up the largest group of workers in the U.S.) believe that providers are failing to communicate with their customers in the most efficient or appealing way. Other questions in our survey determined that Millennials want communications that are more relevant, easier to understand and engage with, and better leverage digital channels.

**Figure 1: Switching rates by generation because of poor quality of communications**



Switched providers in last 12 months because of poor quality of comms

| Category | Value |
|----------|-------|
| Average | 15% |
| Boomers | 6% |
| Gen X | 15% |
| Millennials | 25% |
| Gen Z | 20% |

N = 2,000 consumers in the U.S. and Canada

18 - 25 — Gen Z — Born Between 1995 - 2015
26-40 — Millennial — Born Between 1980 - 1994
41-55 — Gen X — Born Between 1965 - 1979
56+ — Baby Boomer — Born Between 1944 - 1964

**Millennials** are **4x** more likely than boomers to switch providers because of poor quality of communications

*Source: Understanding the New Digital Reality, Aspire, 2020*

Today, savvy businesses are answering the call and raising the bar on customer experience, forcing competitors to evolve their customer communications approach and processes, as well.

## CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION TRANSFORMATION EXPLAINED

In essence, customer communication transformation is the practice of modernizing older customer communications, often by migrating them onto more modern systems and by redesigning them to leverage the capabilities of modern channels. In the past, communications were developed for print and mail distribution only, not for bi-directional communications using HTML5 and secure digital delivery.

In order to successfully transform legacy documents into modern customer communications, organizations must first:

1.  **Define the business problem**. CCM transformation always begins as a way to identify and eliminate pain points in the business. These pain points could be anything that keeps the organization from realizing its full potential - from the risk of non-compliance to a broken experience along the customer lifecycle that negatively impacts Net Promotor Score (NPS). Our most recent research

shows that digital and CRM teams most often identify the need for customer communication transformation and initiate the process. Progressive vendors, such as CoTé, typically help organizations with communications frameworks that encompass strategy (why, how and when to interact with customers, suppliers and other stakeholders) and operational management (principles, policies, procedures and standards).

2. Once the business goals are identified, the next step is to build **requirements management and prototyping**. This includes the review and approval of all pertinent requirements, the definition of scope, and the assigment of involved templates, data, communciations, and workflows.

3. **Review your content library**. Good content is a crucial compotent of building a better customer experience. Your communications must find the right tone of voice and be easy to understand. You should also avoid jargon and complicated terminology whenever possible.

   a) From a technical perspective, organizations must review all content and related resources, such as data models, workflows, imagery, layouts, and stylesets, which should be migrated to a managed and version-controlled instance library that allows cross-referencing across templates.

4. **Change impact assessment**. This is a crucial step to ensure compliance with all governing regulations and safeguard against a costly breach. Customer communications are often mission-critical, affecting cashflow and customer service operations. Before making any changes, double-check for mistakes and then perform a thorough review so that you fully understand the impact of your plans. Unforeseen consequences at this stage could result in customer complaints, overwhelmed call centers, regulatory infractions, negative press, and ultimately, lost revenue. Be sure to prototype your transformation workflow, access the impact, manage risk, and ensure that any unintended consequences are minimal.

5. **Communication composition and omni-channel delivery design**. This is the actual migration phase, in which older communications are fully developed and transferred to a modern platform.

   a) From a processing perspective, it is imperative that you map the end-to-end workflow and use dashboards or other business intelligence solutions to provide detailed tracking, overview, and ideally - depending on the capabilities of your solutions provider or in-house operations - the option to start or stop production. Partcularly in the event of a major crisis, it is critically important to exercise the ability to stop communication delivery and easily switch channels or setup alternative delivery methods.

   b) In terms of design, businesses must craft the kinds of experiences their customers value. To gather that data, you should conduct focus group sessions with sample demographics that properly reflect the makeup of your larger customer base. After all, differences between generations can diverge widely, with Gen Z (those aged 18 to 25 years) and Millennials (aged 26 to 39) expressing preferences and demonstrating behavior that set them apart from Gen X (40 to 55 year olds) and Boomers (those over age 56).

*" The top obstacle along the path to customer communication transformation is excessive overhead caused by a high volume of communication templates "*

**Source: Understanding the New Digital Reality, Aspire, 2020**

6. **Don't forget response management**. Customer communications were once exclusively focused on outbound messaging. Today, digital communications can trigger new responses, and those catalysts need to be captured and managed. Sometimes this requires integration with marketing automation, interactive, saveable web forms or Business Process Management (BPM) solutions. At others, businesses should use CCM platform capabilities to setup those responses.

7. **Test, test and test!** Extensive testing is required to ensure that the system works as it should. Modern systems come with automated regression-testing capabilities and include detailed reporting and other helpful features. It is also important to ensure that auditing works properly so you will be ready to share an archive of customer communications if reguators or other governing authorties want to review the records.
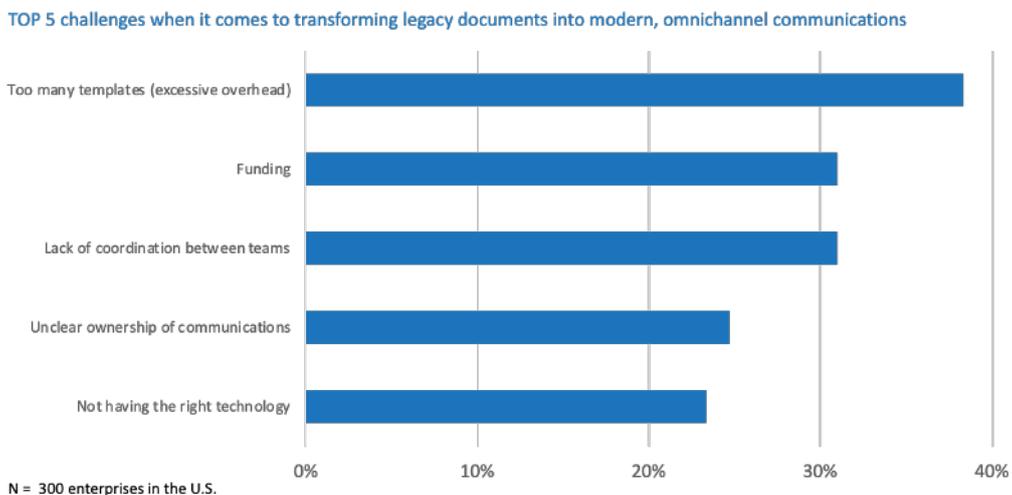
# OVERCOMING TRANSFORMING CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES

## KEY CHALLENGES OF CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION TRANSFORMATION

Customer communication transformation is a key challenge for many organizations. The sheer volume of all the communications and templates involved can require the coordination of several teams. Their challenge is made even more daunting when organizations are forced to grapple with legacy communications developed years before on systems that are no longer supported or by employees who have long left the business. Furthermore, securing the necessary funding to modernize legacy materials is sometimes an uphill battle, particularly when IT is under pressure to reduce cost or focus on more pressing concerns to the business as a whole.

As Figure 2 illustrates, nearly 40% of enterprises reported that their glut of templates is an obstacle to upgrading their operations from legacy applications to next-generation communications. New developments in artificial intelligence could help with content cleansing and template rationalization, but nearly a quarter reported that they do not have the technology they need while over 30% struggle with a lack of funding.

**Figure 2: Top 5 challenges in customer communication transformation**

TOP 5 challenges when it comes to transforming legacy documents into modern, omnichannel communications



N = 300 enterprises in the U.S.

*Source: Understanding the New Digital Reality, Aspire, 2020*

> *"Today's processing solutions allow businesses to operate at significantly lower cost while offering a way to modernize end-to-end communications on a single platform"*
>
> **Source: Aspire, 2020**

Nevertheless, more than half of the enterprise respondents to our July 2020 survey reported that they wrestle with even more fundamental organizational issues. Communications are often created within individual departments that traditionally haven't been required to coordinate their communications with other parts of the business. This lack of cohesion and the uncertain ownership of communications it inspires can result in a muddled and even contradictory message reaching a single customer. This problem is compounded further still when a business only has access to conflicting or inaccurate customer data, or if their marketers and customer experience professionals have an incomplete understanding of their regulatory responsibilities.

As we will see below, a modern CCM omni-channel processing platform can help businesses overcome these challenges, particularly if they are coupled with organizational changes and implemented according to accepted best practices.

## MEASURING SUCCESS

> *""For customer communication transformation to be successful, you must let your business objectives drive proto-typing, data and content optimization, and end-to-end workflow development "*
>
> **Source: Aspire, 2020**

According to our latest survey, when businesses embark on a transformation initiative, one half to two thirds attempt to improve their templates and redesign them for digital channels, only 44% attack the problem of excessive overhead head on by working to clean and reduce content so they can optimize fewer templates. Of course, you must find a healthy balance. There is no point in rationalizing all your templates down to just a few extraordinarily complex ones full of incomprehensible business logic. Instead, the goal should be to improve management and customer experience by bringing together all of the communication data, content, artwork, inclusions and templates scattered across the organization together within a single environment. We believe that the centralization of templates is often a function of digital maturity - the more digitally mature an organization becomes, the more they will feel the need to centralize content and templates in a single platform. This, in turn, will allow them to benefit from more efficient processing on more modern channels.

When embarking on a path toward communication transformation, it is crucial for organizations to identify their business objectives and then be led by them as they take all the necessary actions outlined above. It is

equally important for businesses to use the best measurement to properly gauge the success of their efforts. When asked about their performance metrics, more than half of our respondents reported that they measure the success of their transformation efforts through customer experience, satisfaction, or engagement metrics. Other popular metrics are cost and risk reduction, the uptake of digital customers, or an increase in operational excellence.

## THE BENEFITS OF USING AN OMNI-CHANNEL PROCESSING PLATFORM, OFFERED AS MANAGED SERVICE

Today, organizations can approach customer communication modernization in a number of different ways. At the most fundamental level, organizations must decide if they want to buy, implement, manage, and run the software themselves, or if they would prefer to procure customer communications as a managed service from an outside omni-channel solutions provider. Of course, there are many variations in between. For example, virsaic can just be offered as a managed technology platform, enabling the customer to create, manage and produce communications themselves. Or, enterprises may own the infrastructure and may ask their service provider partners to help with template development or communication delivery.

While choosing between in-house deployment or going with an outsourcer depends on several factors, our research indicates that enterprises are increasingly looking to outsource their communications management albeit more to nearshore providers, particularly in the U.S. There are several key benefits for enterprises to outsource communications management to a hosted managed services provider.

Key benefits of using a modern CCM platform offered as cloud-managed service include:

1. No need to worry about **keeping the software up-to-date**. Maintenance is a costly exercise, not only involving the typical 20% software maintenance fee, but also ensuring that to-be-released versions of software are compatible with operating systems, middleware and database management systems (DBMS). This all takes planning and a lot of testing, across system development

lifecycle (SDLC) environments. If incompatibility arises upgrades can be delayed or if, for example, middleware must be upgraded because it will be out of support, an organization may be forced to upgrade its CCM solution, which may be an unplanned expense.

2. **Elastic and infinite scalability**. Customer communications are never produced evenly across the year. Every business knows times of peak volumes, resulting in excess server and other hardware capacity that is costly to maintain.

3. **Faster time-to-value**. Typical implementation cycles for large on-premise implementation can easily span 12 to 18 months. Cloud-based platforms often come with significant lower time-to-value, sometimes bringing back cycle times to days insteads of months. Cloud-based systems nowadays often come with accelerators ("sample" templates for common communication types) and connectors (predeveloped integration points with other popular systems like Salesforce CRM or SAP ERP), thereby speeding up implementation times dramatically.

4. **End-to-end processing**. An end-to-end processing platform is built on various software components that in the traditional world of on-prem and licensed software requires separate investments and installations. Examples include archiving, portals, business intelligence/dashboards, data normalization, payments, digital signatures, content management, workflow and more.

5. **Remote working and collaboration**. This is a massive benefit in today's world, now that working from home by employed persons has jumped from about 5% to nearly 50% in several countries in the western world. Modern cloud-based platform come with browser-based software that allows employees to securely manage and produce communications remotely. Most systems nowadays come with online approval workflows as well, reducing the need for e-mailing changes back-and-forth.

6. **Future-proofing your CCM**. The future is clearly in the cloud. With marketing technology and operational / CCM technology starting to converge, having a modern cloud platform that allows you to provide customer engagement across the customer life-cyle and

integration with other marketing and customer engagment technologies is essential.

## THE VIRSAIC PLATFORM - COTÉ'S APPROACH TO MODERN CCM

### VIRSAIC INTRODUCTION

virsaic is an end-to-end cloud platform that enables clients to manage inbound and outbound customer interactions across all channels and devices. Users can manage everything from composition, to review, testing, delivery, and archiving from an integrated and configurable automated workflow. Developed independently from service providers and actively supported by CoTé, virsaic is hosted on Microsoft Azure, helping to ensure regulatory compliance, and offering instant upgrades and the scalability of the cloud.

**Figure 3: Overview of virsaic platform components**
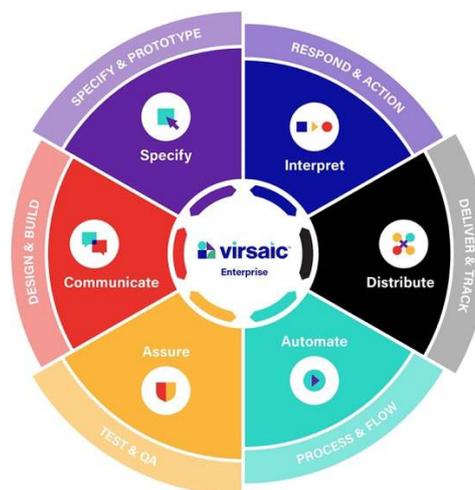


*Source: Image courtesy of CoTé*

virsaic is modular in its design, see Figure 3. It consists of six key components that can be independently used, depending on the client. For some customers, all components are used to build a true end-to-end solution, while for other clients, virsaic is deployed on top of other composition or workflow solutions, for example to extend those solutions with stronger automation, approval, or prototyping capabilities.

## VIRSAIC COMPONENTS

- **virsaic Communicate** governs the composition of customer communications, enabling users to draft omni-channel messages, monitor and manage their creation, and leverage high content re-use.

- Through **virsaic Specify**, enterprises can manage business requirements, share content, and protoype communications while recording all proposed changes and assessing their impact.

- **virsaic Interpret** is designed to increase clients' efficiency in handling more direct customer interactions, including inbound communications.

- **virsaic Distribute** manages omni-channel delivery, tracking, reconciliation, optimization, reporting, and archiving for compliance. Distribute has out-of-the-box connectors for print service providers, email and SMS providers (all with built-in contingency) and Whatsapp, can take print output from multiple solutions and optimize for print production, postal sorting and co-enveloping.

- **virsaic Automate** allows users to manage digital workflows and orchestrate customer journeys while ensuring compliance throughout the whole process.

- **virsaic Assure** tests all scenarios and the impact of every change automatically. Assure also tests the template build constantly, allowing users to go back to any point in the process to fix a problem.

CoTé virsaic requires no installation, and since it is priced as a subscription model, users only pay for the products they use and the documents they process. virsaic storage is included with the subscription, allowing for management of all CCM-related artefacts and storage of archival replicas of outbound, inbound and uploaded documents.

A key differentiator for CoTe is that virsaic can complement existing CCM solutions, for example many CCM solutions today offer no capability to manage specifications; add Specify to improve quality, inclusion and pace. Similarly, Distribute can be added to a solution mix to take output from one or more solutions so that physical and digital communications can be optimised and tracked.

*""The integrated prototyping capabilities as offered in virsaic Specify is something unique and not typically found in core CCM systems"*

**Source: Aspire, 2020**

By integrating CoTé's six core products, virsaic offers clients a comprehenisive customer experience management (CXM) platform that provides end-to-end processing capabilities, see Figure 4.

**Figure 4: virsaic end-to-end capabilities**
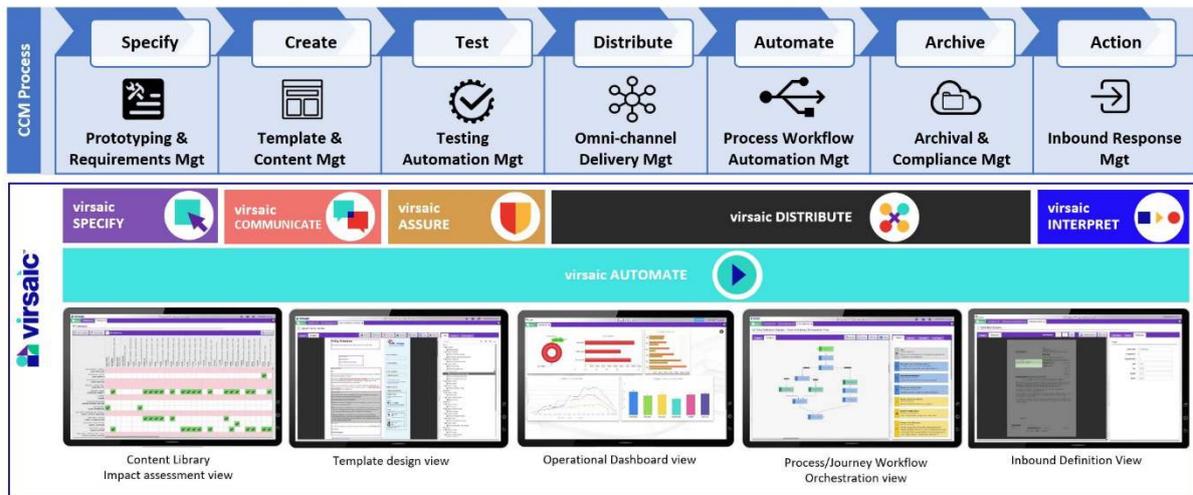


*Source: Image courtesy of CoTé*

## ABOUT COTÉ

CoTé Software & Solutions is a technology company providing Communications-as-a-Service via its virsaic™ platform, supported by advisory services, professional services, managed services and solutions within the CCM domain. The company is headquartered in Australia, has an office in the U.S., and sells through partners in Europe, South East Asia, and other parts of the world.

## ABOUT ASPIRE CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

Aspire Customer Communications Services (Aspire), is a London-based CCM/CX strategy firm with offices in the U.S. and the Netherlands that works with enterprise C-suites across the globe to realize high-impact customer communications transformation. Visit aspireleaderboard.com for our CCM industry portal or aspireccs.com for our consultancy website.