

11 Industries, Endless CPaaS Solutions: How New CommTech Can Help Your Business Flourish



By EVAN WADE - Contributor

Communication is a cornerstone of business. Today, a company that fails to provide relevant, targeted information through a consumer's preferred channels is undoubtedly losing ground to a competitor that does.



With their ability to connect customers and organizations in real time and through multiple channels, CPaaS solutions have something to offer every industry, from retail to hospitality.

Because communication has become increasingly important in business, communications platform-as-a-service (CPaaS) has become an indispensable part of internal and external information sharing. CPaaS solutions, collections of application programming interfaces (APIs) that allow companies to embed real-time communication features inside their business-critical applications, provide easy inroads to customers and more internal channels to employees. CPaaS allows developers to seamlessly integrate APIs without having to build anything from the ground up.

Countless industries are benefiting from CPaaS every day. Financial services earning client trust, higher learning institutions finding better ways to secure funding, insurance agencies simplifying the claims process — they're all examples of how this technology can streamline the everyday. Here's a closer look at how businesses are using CPaaS in 11 industries.

Accounting

In accounting, client trust is everything. Results, availability, and the individual agent's projection of competence and engagement can all enhance or erode credibility. An optimal mix of CPaaS solutions helps accounting firms project their presence beyond office walls while simultaneously improving individual agents' ability to provide one-on-one service.

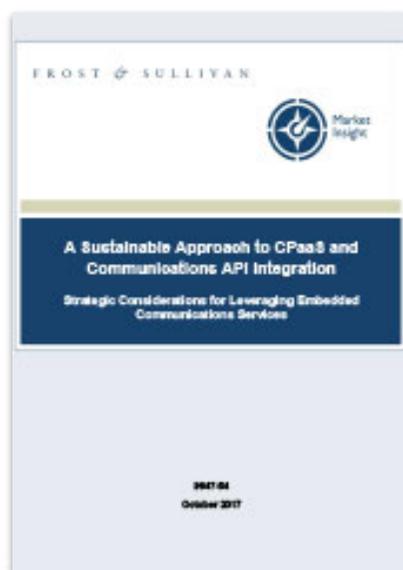
The best CPaaS enhancements improve processes customers are already familiar with. In-app video communications powered by CPaaS, for instance, give clients real-time face-to-face meetings they can access through a standard browser via WebRTC. This reduces confusion and effort for the client and gives the accountant an impressive built-in tool that doesn't require major technical proficiency.

When tax season rolls around, accountants are pressed for time and resources, and clients who are late to appointments or miss them altogether are costly for firms. During this time, using CPaaS to send automated appointment reminder messages to clients is vital. These messages can be tailored to the client's needs and sent via their preferred channel of communication. Besides the obvious benefits for customers, this feature can reduce rote busywork for accountants, freeing them for tasks more suited to their skills – a change that ultimately benefits clients, too.

Finance

The need for client trust runs every bit as deep in finance, an industry that handles not only client assets but also sensitive data. Banking clients often expect a close connection with consultants. At the one-to-one consultancy level, embedded video communication at drive-up windows puts a face to formerly voice-only communication. Moreover, letting every call-in customer choose between video and voice through an app or website provides a stronger customer experience and efficiency for certain transactions.

CPaaS solutions in finance also act as a backbone to features beyond person-to-person communication. Other critical tools include two-factor authentication (2FA) for safeguarding financial information and protecting privacy. If the user cannot provide a code sent to her device via an automated, CPaaS-generated SMS, they cannot access sensitive records. This allows banking organizations to send protected group SMS messages about account information or transactions without fear of the message getting intercepted.



A Sustainable Approach to CPaaS and API Integration

Looking to leverage CPaaS in your business communications strategy? Learn more about what this tech can do for you.

Education

CPaaS can be integrated in a host of places in the education vertical. For example, consider a high school teacher who needs to contact students outside of class hours but does not want to hand out their personal phone number. A school could use a virtual phone number and a voice API as a proxy for the teacher's real phone number.

CPaaS provides benefits for higher education institutions as well. Sending opt-in SMS messages at key points of the school year can be an unobtrusive way to let alumni donors know when their donations will have the most impact. Virtual campus tours could be offered as an incentive for high-dollar donors, who receive an automated messages with a dial-in number or URL when their contribution is confirmed. The biggest names on the donor list could be offered face-to-face video chats with key university faculty in the departments they back as part of a larger VIP package. In this way, CPaaS helps create stronger connections among all university parties, including alumni.

On the administrative side, the same tools make messaging to large groups of stakeholders easier and more effective than ever. An institution with predefined student and parent groups, for instance, could send out a combination of prerecorded voice calls and SMS messages alerting both groups to a pending weather-related school closing, then use video conference tools for expanded make-up office hours later in the semester. These tools go hand-in-hand with similarly popular distance-learning applications; making courses available via video conference opens the doors to larger groups of students, increasing reach (and in certain cases, revenue) for the school and value for the students.

Franchises

Problems that new franchisees face generally have to do with the market or the physical space they occupy. CPaaS solutions can help with both, rendering aid to both the individual location and the larger entity.

New franchisees need near-constant guidance in their earliest days of operation, and the need for easy back-and-forth communication never fully goes away. The communication APIs comprising CPaaS are built to be easily integrated and malleable to a franchise's needs. The lead organization might build chat functionality directly into an app installed in every location's back office, for instance, or standardize communications by requiring monthly video conference meetings to be held over a mobile application. The franchising organization can make these features, which are built for scalability, available whether they operate five locations or five hundred.

CPaaS can also help franchisees tackle a common challenge — establishing a presence in a community — with advanced features like automated opt-in messages and geofencing. When a customer downloads the official franchise app, they're treated to phone-based alerts with exclusive sales, loyalty rewards, and other perks based on their proximity to the location in the future. It's the kind of high-tech functionality that draws franchisees and customers in droves, and the kind of targeted messaging that becomes possible when individual locations and the larger organization embrace CPaaS solutions.

Healthcare

One of the biggest benefits of CPaaS in a healthcare setting comes down to two words: appointment reminders. Health Management Technology reports that healthcare systems lose nearly \$150 billion annually due to missed appointments, making a system that automatically calls or messages patients with a set-interval reminder absolutely critical. With CPaaS, healthcare organizations can send automated reminders with relatively little effort.

Other use cases tap into the evolving field's many emergent markets and models. When a health system offers app-powered telehealth services — often billed as a cornerstone of the industry's future — it gains brand equity and functionality. CPaaS solutions can make this kind of long-distance, virtual patient care possible. They can also empower chain-based retail clinics to communicate with one another via videoconferencing.

CPaaS solutions are making amazing things happen in ambulances as well. In ambulances, comprehensive solutions employing live communications (live status updates to ER personnel), geofencing (automatic location updates), and wireless telemetry (monitoring a patient's pulse) may sound futuristic, but they're available to healthcare systems today. CPaaS tools can replace the phone-based system currently in use in most ambulances and streamline communication with a waiting hospital. Making these day-to-day healthcare operations more efficient may help improve patient care overall.

Insurance

Success in the insurance world stems largely from agencies building trust and convenience with clients. Many of the things CPaaS offers other industries — including in-app video calling, rapid expansion, and even appointment reminders — can help connect insurance agents and their customers.

The main CPaaS benefit streamlines something that happens daily in the insurance industry: a claim. Imagine that a customer, having recently suffered some kind of damage to their home or vehicle, takes a video of the damage from their device for claims purposes. This data is captured from within the agency's proprietary app and viewed on the other end by a claims agent (another take on click-to-call videoconferencing). Since the app allows a total view of the damage and includes geotargeting data, the agent doesn't need to visit the site of the wreck to initiate the next steps of the claims process. They can confirm the correct address from the customer's file.

From there, the customer receives a number of automated SMS messages as their claim goes through various levels of oversight, ending with an alert informing them that their check is in the mail. The agency on the other end uses CPaaS solutions in the various forms of communications they deploy, including chat, phone, and email. The process cuts down on administrative bloat, enhances transparency, and generally improves the experience — a combination that benefits claims agents and customers alike.

Legal

Legal personnel are rarely in one place for long, and clients who are tardy or miss in-office appointments can cause significant problems for a firm. This is why appointment-reminder messages via applications like WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, or Viber similar to those that help healthcare organizations can assist the average law firm.

The immediate benefit of this solution is one part practical, one part implied. Most clients will understand that a firm takes appointment times seriously if it has a reminder system in place. These messages may also include reminders of potential consequences for late arrivals and no-shows (fines, cancellation of legal relationship) and information on what first-time visitors should bring (ID cards, court paperwork). Automated reminders let firms set their human assets to more suitable tasks, which ultimately helps them make better use of all firm employees. And with two-way messaging, customers can reply back instantly to update the firm or reschedule their meeting, making overall communication simple and quick.

Real Estate

What do ridesharing services and real estate agencies have in common? They both benefit from in-app, semi-anonymous messaging, a benefit CPaaS solutions can offer. The simple addition of a click-to-call button on property pages can increase registration for group tour events and turn initial questions into closed sales. In-app messaging further simplifies the process for potential buyers by connecting clients directly to real estate agents in real time.

CPaaS has also become a useful tool in the increasingly popular practice of providing virtual home tours, where the real estate agent guides individual prospects through the home using little more than a smart device, offering a more interactive take on static videos hosted on online platforms. For attendees, the ability to attend from a screen is easier than making time for an in-person visit, which opens the property to a broader selection of visitors. The agent and agency, meanwhile, may host the event as an exclusive teleconference for registered visitors or offer it as part of a digital open house by providing a link that anyone can join.

Other forms of automation can provide similarly compelling benefits for agent, agency, and prospective buyer alike: appointment reminders can automatically provide the buyer important information (like addresses and appointment times) and spare their agent from wasting time on no-shows. Small on paper, benefits such as these form the foundation of a technology that has become an indispensable addition to any agency's customer experience.

Retail

Of all the industries on this list, retail may have the most diverse list of potential CPaaS use cases. Many stem from the industry's increasing reliance on contextual, targeted communication with individual shoppers. A direct messaging system using CPaaS as an automated delivery method, for instance, could assess a shopper's recent history to generate more revenue. Customer A, who hasn't shopped at the location in a while, gets a coupon code for a 10 percent discount, while Customer B gets an automated SMS thanking them for their big-ticket purchase and reminding them that they can still add the extended warranty or home setup package.

The restaurant industry's "soggy fries" problem provides another subset of potential retail use cases. All retailers with a brick-and-mortar presence face the same challenge as a takeout burger joint: capitalizing upon customers' physical presence while providing e-commerce-level convenience and care. Let's say big-ticket Customer B has placed an online site-to-store order from an app with an opt-in geofencing feature. When the customer enters a pre-set radius around the pickup point, the retailer can send a chosen envoy — like someone particularly skilled at selling warranties — to greet the customer upon arrival. CPaaS helps retailers build brand loyalty and improve their bottom line by increasing upsells and enabling unparalleled customer service.

Transportation and Logistics

When it comes to transport and logistics, one of CPaaS's highest-potential offerings is through APIs that enhance the customer experience. An organization can integrate customer-messaging to send automated critical alerts through SMS, voice, or chat app in real time, informing a customer about the status of their package, the estimated time of delivery, or any anticipated delivery delays. They can also establish failover protocol, so if the customer doesn't receive an SMS message, for example, the message will be pushed through another channel, such as chat or voice. Moreover, customers can use two-way messaging functionality to reschedule the delivery of their package if they won't be available to accept it. A good system can automatically route the messages to the right department based on content and context.

Anonymous communication is critical for transport companies regardless of what they haul. Whether or not a company wants to give customers direct communication with delivery personnel, granting drivers the ability to send an SMS message could clear up customer anguish and company phone lines. Who better to tell a customer when a package will arrive than the person delivering it? The same idea applies to any delivery, from pizza to panel siding.

Travel and Hospitality

Travel agencies have fought to maintain their position since the arrival of the internet and smart technology, and CPaaS can help. For example, an airline or hotel mobile app can automatically alert buyers to gate changes or room swaps. Once the client has arrived at their destination, hotels and agencies can benefit from in-app messaging and calling. Granting customers the power to message their agents or hotel management with requests or questions helps all parties stay on top of reservations or itinerary changes.

This kind of personal touch is the key to differentiating white-glove service from mass-market discount sites. Agencies looking to provide an improved version of mass-market offerings would benefit from CPaaS in numerous ways, such as offering a roomshare-like experience by providing in-app messaging with hotels and other partnered businesses or sending automated SMS messages to customers who indicate interest in discounted rooms and flights. With CPaaS, a travel or hospitality organization is able to provide personalized service on a large scale, fostering customer loyalty along the way.

CPaaS Benefits Save the Day – Regardless of Industry

These use cases are only some of the many advantages a properly utilized communications platform-as-a-service solution can provide across industries. Just as a real estate agent can benefit from the same technology as a ridesharing company, a franchisee can use the same video conferencing tools as a financial organization.

CPaaS's flexibility and scalability make it useful anywhere enhanced, automated communications are needed. Any business with a weakness in its current comm structure can ultimately benefit from the presence of CPaaS-enhanced tools and techniques, creating more effective communication between colleagues and customers.