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THRIO

Thrio’s Contact Center Offering Combines Intelligence with Security and Flexibility



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“Thrio is a great choice for companies that want to reduce contact center vendor count and take advantage of an all-in-one platform that reduces cost and customer friction. Our customers appreciate Thrio because we help them to adapt to new technologies and therefore make them better prepared to serve demanding consumers.” Edwin Margulies

CEO CFO: *What is the overall vision for Thrio, Inc. and what is your focus today?*

Mr. Margulies: Our vision is to 'democratize' AI-based Contact Center technology at a global scale so both small and large companies can afford the technology and deploy it easily. Heretofore, only very large companies have been able to afford sophisticated contact center technology owing to all of the vendors that are involved in a robust solution. Thrio helps its customers to drastically reduce vendor count as an 'all-in-one' provider to achieve this affordability.

CEO CFO: *How does your technology help achieve results for your clients?*

Mr. Margulies: Thrio technology helps our clients to step up to today's very demanding, more sophisticated consumer. Several megatrends have had influence on more savvy and demanding consumers. This includes the explosive growth in social media and smartphones. Now, consumers can quickly get answers to questions on their phones. They can do self-service, order goods, and get service more easily.

But when they call in to a contact center, most enterprises have old systems that can't keep up with consumers' expectations. Also, consumers now self-publish and this puts more pressure on brands. Thrio helps by reducing friction in these contact center interactions. We reduce friction by allowing all channels to be used (email, chat, social, bots, voice calls, etc.) while maintaining context between modes of communication. We use AI to make the agent's job easier along with a smoother customer experience.

CEOCFO: *When your artificial intelligence is helping your clients deal with people that are not happy, how are you able to intuit subtleties like tone of the conversation or the chat so that a customer who is annoyed or does not want a lot of standard stuff, gets a customized response?*

Mr. Margulies: First, the reason why people are angry is because they have been made to repeat themselves. They might try to get information from their knowledge base or some bot on a website, but it does not give them the answers they need. They may even have to fill in a form and all kinds of information and then when they get to an agent, they get angry because the agent asks them twenty questions and they end up saying, "I told that stuff to your bot or in the IVR (Interactive Voice Response)." Customers wonder why the agent did not have that essential information, so it becomes exasperating.

What makes the situation worse is that some enterprises have roadblocks that do not allow customers to get to the meat of the matter. These roadblocks make customers even more angry. Therefore, the question is how can AI be used to reduce friction or sensitize the agent to what is going on with the customer. We are agnostic when it comes to the different technologies we use for AI. We use the most popular and top-performing technologies like IBM Watson, and Google AI. Customers don't care what's under the hood, all they know is that we surface these AI goodies in the form of productive applications.

For example, we can use AI to ascertain a customer's state of mind and then even escalate to a different person with a certain skill set, depending on the situation of that individual. We can use tone analysis, which is a way of looking at the words and understanding that certain words and phrases mean a person is either happy, sad, angry or frustrated. It can be used in an interactive voice response dialog, where sentiment can be captured and surfaced to the agent. In this scenario, the live agent has a heads-up on what the customer may say. Another way AI can be used is with "Personality Insights." It is software that allows you to analyze previous emails and chats and even transcribed voice calls that get transcribed from speech to text. We transmit this data into the IBM Watson personality facet engine. IBM then sends back suggestions on how to treat the customer with specific suggestions. For example, the system may suggest: "this person is a leader and likes to be perceived as someone in-charge. Or, make sure when you talk to this person you offer details because he is a detail-oriented person." To be especially effective it is good to have some history with the customer because the engine acts upon things already covered in previous interactions.

Another use of AI surfaces in Thrio's use by a healthcare wellness program provider. One such customer has nurse practitioners who speak to patients on behalf of insurance companies to reduce the cost of insurance claims. These patients who might have diabetes, they might be dependent on certain drugs and some even have suicidal tendencies. Enrolled patients talk to these nurse practitioners and they text back and forth with their assigned care coach. With this particular customer for example, we have programmed the system to do a classification called SIHI (Suicidal Ideation and Homicidal Ideation). It means that these nurse practitioners and other senior people at that company put their

heads together and go through all kinds of patient records and put together a corpus of several thousand phrases that the doctors and nurses identify as being SIHI. Because we have this AI classification capability, we are able to scan the communications that are going back and forth via SMS and plucking out certain phrases that are indicative of SIHI. This may automatically trigger an alarm that tells a supervisor to call 911 or have a wellness call from the police made on that person who might be suicidal or threatening to cause harm. In addition, it can route that chat that is being led to a specialist in suicide for example. That is a real-world example of how AI classification is used in real-time.

CEOCFO: Is that part of your standard service or would that be a bell/whistle that a client could add?

Mr. Margulies: I would not classify it as a bell and whistle, because AI is built-in to the platform. AI costs money on a transaction-by-transaction basis so it is kind of a premium service. I would characterize it as a capability of the platform that customers use to solve particular problems. We surface the use of AI in practical ways that help both the agent and the customer.

CEOCFO: What is involved in an implementation?

Mr. Margulies: Implementation is straightforward with Thrio. After a kick-off call, our implementation team conducts a discovery process in which all the customer goals, policies and ideas are detailed. All of this goes into a Statement of Work which acts as a roadmap for customer success. Thrio conducts training for the users of the system and during the launch of service, Thrio team members are on hand to answer questions and support the overall operation.

CEOCFO: Your site tagline is Smart. Secure. Flexible. How do each of these apply to your solution?

Mr. Margulies: Smart: Thrio uses AI to make contact centers intelligent and easy to deploy. For example, we use AI to transcribe calls automatically into text. We further use AI to search through recordings for compliance phrases so supervisors can better coach agents on what to say. We use AI for bots so customers can self-serve. We also use AI to classify phrases so emails, chats and SMS communications can be more accurately routed to properly skilled agents. We even use AI to share personality insights on customers with agents so they can better tune-in to customer likes and dislikes.

Secure: Thrio makes cloud contact centers secure. Using third party auditors, the Thrio team has been certified for HIPAA, PCI DSS, GDPR and HITRUST, for example. This ensures the highest level of security and privacy especially for clients in the healthcare, insurance and financial services industries.

Flexible: Thrio technology is also resilient, adaptable, and flexible. We have built-in robotic process automation, workflow engines, and a complete set of APIs that allow us to adapt to any customer situation. This flexibility makes it easier for customers to use data from existing systems.

CEO CFO: *What is your target client? How do you reach out-how does someone find Thrio if they do not know the company?*

Mr. Margulies: In order to democratize Thrio technology globally, our primary clients are service providers and contact center BPOs. This is because these folks (like Telus International for example) have extensive call center experience and serve hundreds upon hundreds of customers in many different verticals. When we sell our service to individual enterprises, we tackle very complex opportunities such as those in healthcare and financial services, because these types of companies enjoy our omnichannel and automation capabilities the most.

CEO CFO: *In the health industry, for example, many times organizations will look for services specifically geared for that industry. Do you find that a challenge and how do you get into some of the industries that seem a little specific?*

Mr. Margulies: In terms of our vision... When we started this company, we made a promise to ourselves to embrace high transaction environments and very complex environments. This was in anticipation of laying down the tracks of credibility with the distributor channel that we wanted most. More specifically, we are experts in working with telephone companies and larger business process outsourcers. Those are the kinds of distributors that we are looking for. These are people that already have feet on the street and contact center infrastructure and telecommunications offerings that they do as part of their normal course of business. Therefore, we kind of threw ourselves into the breach of very complicated verticals on purpose.

To be more specific we went after financial services, healthcare, and insurance. Not only are those verticals complicated with high transaction volume, they also are very keen on security and privacy. We therefore worked on getting third-party audited and certified for certain security standards specific to those industries. In the US those are PCI DSS, which is a payment card industry standard for security when making and taking payments either over the phone or electronically, which is very important for financial service companies. Then there is HIPAA, which is a governmental standard having to do with privacy in healthcare, so we are certified by third-party auditors on HIPAA. There is another one called HITRUST CSF which is the gold standard for security and privacy globally, it is the hardest certification to acquire and we just acquired it a couple months ago. We were awarded this certification from HITRUST. There is another one in Europe called GDPR which is roughly equivalent to PCI and kind of a mix between PCI and HIPAA, but it is for the European Union and it has to do with security and privacy. If you have a GDPR compliant product or offering, that means that you can do business in those intense verticals with any companies in the EU.

These security and privacy standards give customers in those verticals a great deal of comfort. Therefore, we got those into the business plan, and we worked on them real hard. These audited certifications give us a seat at the table for opportunities that we otherwise would not have the ability to bid on.

CEO CFO: *What is your global reach? Where do you see areas for growth?*

Mr. Margulies: Thrio is a global company, serving clients in the Americas, Europe, and Asia. Our technology is hosted in global hyper clouds. For example, we are using Google GCP to serve clients in dozens of countries. We see significant growth with BPOs and Telephone Companies that serve multinational companies. One of the factors that enables global reach with Thrio is the localization of data. This is important for security reasons. With Google GCP, we can localize data regionally.

CEOCFO: *Would you address affordability as well as security?*

Mr. Margulies: The biggest reason Thrio is so affordable, often half of leading suppliers, is because of our modern, cloud-based deployment. We use the best network load balancing and orchestration tools available to reduce the need for on-site data center visits and unnecessary build-outs. This puts Thrio in a position where we consume much less labor to get the job done and we are able to pass those savings on to our customers. Thrio's developers are also veterans in this contact center industry -- having designed award-winning systems over the past few decades. This puts our team in the position to add features and capabilities quickly and more economically because of their world-class skills and experience. From a security standpoint, Thrio's team is also very familiar with telco-grade deployments where security is of utmost importance. This puts Thrio's enterprise customers on an even footing with the largest telcos security-wise.

CEOCFO: *What have you learned during the Covid era that has changed your offering or approach?*

Mr. Margulies: Because Thrio designed its offering to accommodate work-at-home use, little has changed in the face of the COVID pandemic from a product standpoint. All users need is an internet connection and a PC. Users are able to easily switch between a landline telephone interface, WebRTC, or SIP phone. In fact, the majority of our enterprise customers have a workforce that login from home. This applies to both small companies and ones with hundreds of agents.

CEOCFO: *Are you seeking funding and investment partnerships as you continue to grow?*

Mr. Margulies: We just closed our Series A to the tune of \$11 million. Our seed round closed a couple of years ago and we raised \$4 million in seed round. At present, we are not looking for additional financing.

CEOCFO: *Why choose Thrio?*

Mr. Margulies: Thrio is a great choice for companies that want to reduce contact center vendor count and take advantage of an all-in-one platform that reduces cost and customer friction. Our customers appreciate Thrio because we help them to adapt to new technologies and therefore make them better prepared to serve demanding consumers.

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