SYMPHONY

Why insurance giants are racing to harness AI to reinvent communication

Introduction

Global insurers face a paradox with outdated legacy systems and fragmented communication channels. Customer expectations have evolved with the rise of messaging apps and AI technology. Discover how insurers re-evaluate communication as a core strategy for success.

For decades, global insurers have been hampered by their own success. Expansive product portfolios, sprawling operations, and decades-old technology have created a web of complexity that makes digital transformation feel like open-heart surgery. Yet customer expectations, regulatory scrutiny, and competitive pressures are forcing firms to reimagine how they interact with policyholders and brokers.

At the centre of this shift is data and communication. Insurers sit on a goldmine of first-party information including claims histories, policy details, interaction logs, but too often this intelligence is trapped in siloed systems that firms do not leverage. At the same time, their customers engage on platforms they already use daily, such as WhatsApp or WeChat. Reconciling these two forces, how insurance technology is currently stacked alongside the desire for modern convenience to suit customer preferences is now a defining challenge for insurance business and technology leaders.

Generative AI (GenAI) and advancements in agentic AI systems are also leading the next wave of automation in the sector. Established organizations are overlaying AI to their core technology stack to drive competitiveness while engaging customers more deeply.

This article examines the convergence of business and technological demands faced by insurers and the growing role of data, AI and communications technology as a critical enabler for leading insurers.

The legacy dilemma

70%

of UK and European technology budgets go to maintaining legacy systems

Modernization is a universal issue for insurers worldwide. In Europe and the UK, more than 70% of technology budgets go to maintaining legacy systems. In the US, at least 58% of US organizations experience weekly disruptions due to flaws in their legacy systems, according to KPMG. In the Asia-Pacific region, insurers view digitalisation as a challenge and a growth opportunity. Changing demographics will heighten demand for additional coverage and services to cater to an incoming population of middle-class retirees and a new generation of wealth, and drive faster modernization.

Most large carriers still rely on legacy platforms built decades ago. Replacing them outright is neither cost-effective nor risk-free. For many technology leaders, projects routinely run over budget and timeline, and they rarely deliver the flexibility insurers need in a fast-moving market. Integrating new digital tools and applications with existing, fragmented data infrastructures and siloed systems is a common and costly hurdle. But the challenge goes beyond core systems.

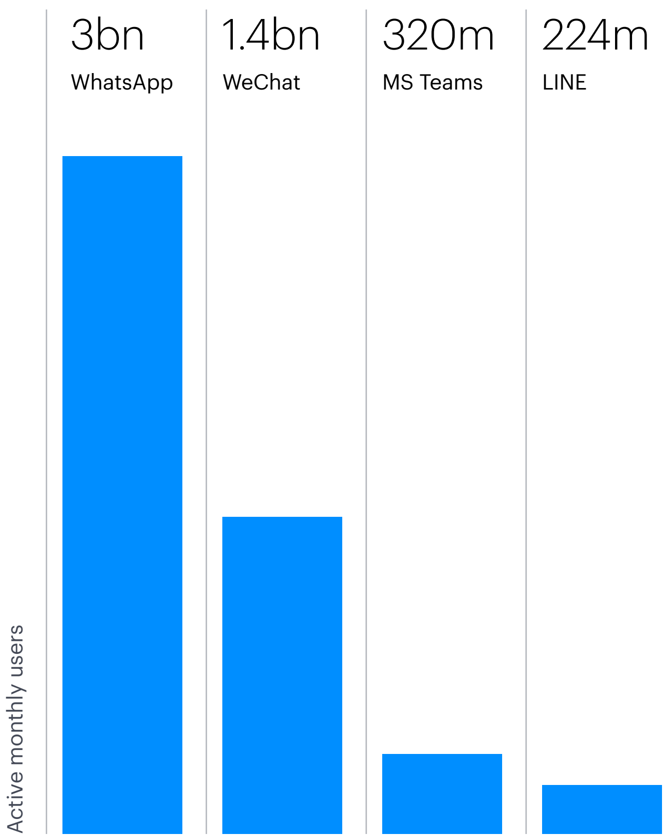
Communication has become fragmented. Insurers rely on a patchwork of in-person interactions, email, phone calls, and portals that are often scattered across devices, with siloed systems and limited capabilities for connecting channels or leveraging data effectively.

As the rise of digital creates more expansive opportunities for connection, facilitating customer-facing communication is becoming an essential part of an insurer's modernization journey.

Messaging with compliance as a must-have

The ability to engage customers and brokers on the channels they prefer, while ensuring that every interaction is auditable, and securely stored, is becoming a differentiator.

Messaging and collaboration apps usage trends



A significant change in communication trends is the rise of messaging apps. WhatsApp, for instance, has more than three billion monthly users worldwide. For many people, it is not just a convenient option; it has become the default method of communication. While consumer-focused apps prove popular, firms have been hesitant to adopt these technologies for business communication due to concerns about compliance and record-keeping requirements.

This caution is justified. Regulators have fined financial firms more than $2 billion for failures to preserve electronic communications on platforms like WhatsApp. FINRA, CFTC and SEC are ramping up scrutiny of unapproved channels. Off-channel communications concerns pose a systemic risk across financial services, which also captures insurance firms. As such, regulators are expected to establish strict standards for record-keeping, operational resilience, governance, and communication practices for insurance firms across all jurisdictions, following precedent-setting fines.

Faced with these challenges, why are insurers compelled to use messaging apps for business communications? This matters because communication sits at the heart of insurance workflows. A claim begins with a conversation. A policy sale hinges on trust built through dialogue. The ability to engage customers and brokers on the channels they prefer, while ensuring that every interaction is auditable, and securely stored, is becoming a differentiator.

Enterprise-ready messaging solutions now exist, but not all offer the same security, data management, or encryption capabilities. Insurers, in particular, must select solutions that strike a balance between ensuring data confidentiality and meeting regulatory requirements. Secure and compliant communication is crucial for maintaining customer trust.

Personalisation at the heart of business

Customers expect their providers to know them, understand them, and respond to them — not just as policyholders, but as people. For large general insurers, achieving that level of personalisation at scale requires more than a single-channel strategy. It calls for omni-channel communication that's intelligent, connected, and customer-first.

Leaders are now orchestrating every interaction, in-person, phone, email, chatbot, or social media into a seamless experience that feels like one continuous conversation.

When digital communications improve collaboration between insurer and customer, insurers can anticipate customer demands, deepen relationships, and realise market opportunities.

Video Case Study: HSBC Global Private Banking (GPB)

Watch how HSBC Private Banking revolutionizes its client communication strategy for HNWI, integrating one-to-one advisory services with digital communications for improved client engagement, ensuring personalisation at scale.

The untapped value of data

In an era where regulators are tightening restrictions on third-party data, first-party data has become strategic currency. Insurers that can consolidate and activate their customer information can personalise policies, predict risk more accurately, and identify fraud with greater precision. The prize is significant: a universal view of the customer across lines of business, enabling cross-sell opportunities and stronger retention.

The obstacle lies in how interaction data is captured. Phone calls, emails, and even in-person meetings are often poorly integrated into central systems. Without a consolidated view, insurers miss opportunities to treat customers as individuals rather than policy numbers.

Furthermore, the centralization of communication technology enables a more cohesive solution that streamlines the digital experience for customers. Insurers can realize the benefits of centralising data and communications to address workflow requirements across several business domains:

- **Underwriting:** Streamlined communication between brokers, underwriters, and risk assessors, with a full audit trail.
- **Claims:** Faster coordination between adjusters, investigators, and legal teams, reducing cycle time.
- **Compliance and risk:** Built-in governance so every chat is archived and searchable, helping insurers meet regulatory obligations.
- **Distribution and sales:** Supporting broker networks and relationship management, leveraging client data from CRM.
- **Operations and data teams:** Breaking down barriers between IT, ops, and data teams working on modernization projects.

The next generation of business and technology leaders will realize that communication is not separate from analytics, but its amplifier. As insurers modernize, the real breakthroughs won't come only from operational efficiency or the enhancement of products and services — but richer, customer-centric solutions harnessed from their own client interaction data.

Case study

Client segment: Insurance

Use-case: Client management and CX, Analytics, Integrations

Product lines: General insurance covering automobile, home, health.

No of employees: 10,000+ / Region: US

Key metrics

90%

Data accuracy

20,000

Processing volume and scalability

Challenge: Insurance firm A needed to process hundreds of thousands of customer feedback documents that contained difficult language, including typos, poor grammar, and slang. Firm A aimed to link customer experiences to specific aspects of their services while ensuring security and privacy. They sought a solution that could integrate into their existing technology infrastructure without external exposure.

Solution: Symphony for Analytics is an AI-driven analytics platform that helped Firm A streamline the data processing of policy documents and enhance the understanding of its customers' policyholder lifecycle.

Results:

- **Powerful AI-driven analysis and data accuracy:** 29 different customer surveys are currently processed at a minimum accuracy metric of 90%.
- **Flexibility and frequency with data updates:** Taxonomy of 40,000 possible extractions, a new one is found and added roughly every 2 months.
- **Scalability:** In an average month, Firm A is processing approximately 20,000 customer survey documents per month through Symphony's analytics model.

Business outcome: Symphony provided Firm A with effective customer journey mapping from policy start to response, with granularity and accuracy. Firm A can adapt to meet customers' needs and make actionable decisions based on data-driven insights.

Case study 2

Client segment: Insurance

Use-case: Messaging and Digital Communication, Client management, Integrations

Product lines: Life, Annuities

No of employees: 20,000+ / Region: US

Key metrics

650

Clients captured in CRM

Challenge: Insurance firm B needed a solution to capture and manage message exchanges between its customers and wholesale brokers. Interactions were conducted via SMS, leaving no formal record, creating oversight gaps, tracking challenges and compliance risks. The organization sought a reliable way to document these communications while ensuring regulatory compliance.

Solution: Symphony Messaging platform, Federation for SMS allows client conversations conducted over SMS to be archived. Smart integrations with Salesforce ensure updates to customer data are seamless.

Results:

- **Enhanced recordkeeping and compliance:** Every opted-in client conversation is captured and stored within Salesforce, eliminating gaps in documentation.
- **Automations and improved efficiency:** Wholesalers did not need to identify unknown SMS numbers, lookups are automated.
- **Customer service enhancements:** Any team member can view past interactions and seamlessly continue conversations, even if someone has been absent.
- **Scalability:** Since implementation, Symphony has captured nearly 650 unique opted-in customers in Firm B's CRM, significantly increasing visibility into client communications.

Business Outcome: Symphony monitors and records all conversations between customers and wholesale brokers in real time, automatically logging them as daily journal entries in Salesforce, ensuring easy access and enabling compliance. The unsolicited SMS lookup feature allows wholesalers and brokers to respond to customers more quickly, boosting productivity and efficiency.

Acceleration with AI

AI solutions may offer new hope with a layer of modernization that connects the old and the new, enabling fresh customer experiences without destabilising the foundations. Globally, insurers are investing or planning to invest in GenAI, and studies show that the anticipated benefits are high:

82% expect productivity gains.

65% expect revenue uplift.

52% expect 11-20% cost savings.

Digital transformation is poised to accelerate. Rather than undertaking an expensive multi-year system overhaul, insurers can focus on pragmatic, outcome-driven objectives, utilizing AI solutions to improve workflows across various business areas.

GenAI and agentic AI are also changing the customer-insurer relationship. Customers expect technology to enhance their interactions with insurers, including the availability of self-directed services, improved human-like responses from chatbots, and hyper-personalized offers and communications.

Companies have the opportunity to move quickly by either embedding solutions or building them natively where they see the most value for their customers. However, for some, the pace of change remains slow. In the US, several existing barriers hinder adoption, including a failure to implement data and analytics practices, gaps in data science expertise, and issues with accessibility.

While the growth potential is significant, so are the associated risks. Quick wins can provide speed, but they may result in a fragmented organization. Without a cohesive vision that integrates data, communication, and artificial intelligence, insurers risk focusing on incremental improvements instead of achieving true modernization.

Building the future of Insurance with Symphony

This is where platforms like Symphony are carving out a role. Originally built for security and compliance-conscious financial services firms, Symphony combines secure messaging, voice, directory, and AI-driven data analytics to complement insurance workflows within its platform capabilities. For insurers, that means they can:

1. Connect brokers, underwriters, and claims handlers in real time on its Messaging network platform, without time delays waiting for data to sync across disparate systems.

2. Capture and operationalise customer interaction data, with featured integrations including Salesforce, to create a 360-degree view that fuels personalisation and risk management.

3. Enable security, compliance, and transparency of communications while helping conversations remain compliant with evolving regulations from the likes of the FCA, SEC, or NAIC.

The result is not a wholesale replacement of legacy systems, but rather an overlay that modernises how insurers engage with their customers and partners today.

Conclusion: The road ahead

Insurance, by its nature, is about trust and risk. Digital transformation in the sector must strike a delicate balance: providing modern, digital-first experiences while maintaining the rigorous standards of compliance that regulators demand. Firms that succeed will be those that can turn first-party data into actionable intelligence and meet customers where they are - whether that's a broker's desk or a WhatsApp chat.

For global insurers wrestling with legacy technology, the lesson is clear. Transformation doesn't always mean starting from scratch. Sometimes it means finding the right connective tissue- a secure communication layer that bridges old and new, enabling insurers to keep pace with changing expectations while safeguarding their most valuable asset: trust.

Appendix

- KPMG — KPMG survey: Organizations report increased market pressure around new technologies
- Insurance Asia — With Asia's population getting older, the insurance industry has a chance to step up
- TechCrunch— WhatsApp now has more than 3 billion users a month
- Demand Sage — WeChat Statistics 2025
- SQ Magazine — Microsoft Teams Statistics 2025
- Business of Apps — LINE Revenue and Usage Statistics 2025
- Symphony — The business case for centralized communication in finance and insurance
- Deloitte — How to walk the talk by treating insurer data as a strategic asset
- EY — How to revolutionize the insurance value chain with generative AI
- KPMG — KPMG survey: Organizations report increased market pressure around new technologies

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