



**SECURING PAYMENTS IN AN
OMNICHANNEL CONTACT CENTRE**

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THE RISE OF DIGITAL COMMERCE

When it comes to purchasing goods and services, digital commerce has led to major changes in consumer behaviour. Of course, this is nothing new to businesses who quickly and effectively embraced eCommerce decades ago. In more recent times, the internet of things (IOT) has led to alternative ways of buying; you can now ask your smart device of choice to add milk to your shopping list and pay for it in store with your smart watch.

2020 saw a marked shift in all our buying habits with the emergence of COVID-19. Many businesses were forced to close their physical stores almost overnight. Inevitably, this led to consumers changing their shopping habits and switching to purchasing online. In turn, global eCommerce sales skyrocketed to \$4.29 trillion in 2020¹, up from \$3.46 trillion in 2019.

According to Paysafe², 18% of consumers are now shopping online for the first time due to COVID-19 globally. IBM³ research suggests that the pandemic has accelerated the shift to digital shopping by roughly five years. The ease and convenience that comes with shopping online is a step change in consumer behaviour rather than an acute reaction to the pandemic and shows no signs of changing as the world returns to normal. Our own survey⁴ found that only 8% of consumers will return to shopping in-store over digital channels. For businesses, this means

1 <https://www.digitalcommerce360.com/article/global-ecommerce-sales/>

2 <https://www.paysafe.com/gb-en/paysafe-insights/how-covid-19-is-impacting-consumer-payment-preferences/>

3 <https://www.ibm.com/industries/retail>

4 <https://www.pcipal.com/knowledge-centre/resource/online-shoppers-more-concerned-about-deliveries-than-personal-security-according-to-pci-pal-survey/>



offering consumers more ways to order, pay for and receive goods seamlessly by adopting an omnichannel strategy to meet consumer expectations.

This does not come without its own set of challenges, however. As organisations unify their communication channels for a smooth and unified buying experience, the risk of exposure of payment information and potential data breaches also increases. This carries substantial risk of brand reputation and damage to consumer trust, not to mention falling foul of a raft of data protection legislation and the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS).

The good news is that organisations can overcome these challenges by including payment security as part of their omnichannel strategy. To do this, we must first understand what omnichannel is and where payment security fits.



WHAT IS OMNICHANNEL?

Omnichannel is defined as the unification of multiple channels into one ecosystem to offer a unified customer experience. The crucial defining element of omnichannel is that consumers can switch between channels and have the same experience over a single interaction.

“This differs from multichannel which is effectively providing numerous contact or payment channels but as silos. The key difference between omnichannel and multichannel is the provision of the same experience via multiple channels in a single interaction.”

Arguably, one of the greatest successful omnichannel examples in commerce is Amazon’s model. Having profile information shared across web, mobile and smart devices offer numerous ways for consumers to move through the buying cycle. Searching for one item on their mobile app or website gives customers the ability to compare prices on the same product, suggests similar items, and offers reviews from other customers. Consumers can place and track their orders, pick those

orders up in-store, at various ‘lockers’, or have them delivered. Repeat purchases can be added to your shopping list with a simple instruction to your Alexa device.

A good omnichannel strategy puts the customer, not the product, at its core. Why? According to Harvard Business Review¹, 73% of all customers use multiple channels during their purchase journey. Only when the customer has gathered as much information as possible will they decide to buy from a retailer. The same study also discovered that the more channels a customer uses, the more they spend. By giving customers a seamless journey, organisations can deliver a consistent and persuasive brand message to their audience which in turn drives customer loyalty and repeat business. By offering more secure payment options via these channels, there are more points of payment available to them, providing an even more enhanced omnichannel experience.

¹ <https://hbr.org/2017/01/a-study-of-46000-shoppers-shows-that-omnichannel-retailing-works>

OMNICHANNEL VS MULTICHANNEL – WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

You would be forgiven for thinking that any organisation which has multiple touchpoints is omnichannel, but this is not the case. Often, omnichannel and multichannel are seen as and used interchangeably. This is incorrect to a degree. Omnichannel is a multichannel approach, but with some key differences.

Multichannel

Each channel is optimised to provide consumers what they need on the channel they choose. For example, let’s say a consumer was experiencing an issue with a new laptop they had purchased in-store. They call the store they made the purchase from to then be told that they have to speak to a centralised customer service team. They do so, only to discover when they’ve spoken to an agent that they need to email a specific team who can help them. There’s no crossover



between channels, which means a multichannel strategy must finish on the same channel it began. There are, however, major flaws in using a multichannel strategy when it comes to customer experience. As our example demonstrates, the siloed channels add friction to the customer journey, which could leave them feeling frustrated.

Omnichannel

The main difference is that omnichannel involves all channels, unifies them, and revolves around the customer. Going back to our earlier example, the consumer having issues with their laptop calls into the store and would be transferred straight through to the correct team. As information is shared across these channels, the agent will know who they are talking to and what the issue is, enabling them to offer a resolution sooner.



WHY ADOPT AN OMNICHANNEL STRATEGY?



As we've already discovered, the majority of customers use multiple channels when considering purchases to research, compare prices and read reviews. Being able to utilise these behaviours by putting them at the centre of the buying process and tailoring content to them not only increases one-off purchases, it lays solid foundations for customer retention. **According to Invesp¹, companies with omnichannel customer engagement strategies retain on average 89% of their customers, compared to a 33% customer retention rate for those who do not.** As more of us adopt this buying behaviour, the benefit of having an omnichannel strategy becomes clear.

Researching and deciding to purchase a product, however, is only part of the customer journey. Consumers expect the same consistent experience from the moment they land on a web page through to payment and ongoing customer support and services. An organisation can spend time, money and effort creating unified channels only to fall short once the customer has made the decision to buy. To be truly omnichannel, any point at which a customer interacts with your brand needs to be seamless, consistent, and unified. The point at which almost all these channels come together, and therefore the most important part of an organisation's omnichannel strategy, is the contact centre.

¹ <https://www.invespcro.com/blog/state-of-omnichannel-shopping/>

OMNICHANNEL CONTACT CENTRES

Gone are the days when the only way customers could interact with a brand was in-store or through their call centre by telephone. As we've already seen, digital commerce has added numerous touch points for customers to interact with a brand prior to buying. This has led to call centres evolving into the modern-day contact centre to consider these additional channels for support and customer service too, but what does an omnichannel contact centre look like?

First and foremost, it's important to differentiate multichannel and omnichannel contact centres. In the same way that the terms are incorrectly used interchangeably in relation to sales and marketing strategies, this is also true of contact centres. A multichannel contact centre can serve customers across multiple different channels (e.g. telephone, email, web, social media) but they are siloed from one another. The downside to this is that agents may not be able to see the context from interactions customers had on other channels, so customer experience across these channels will vary greatly. Moreover, it can prove frustrating for customers to start a journey on a particular channel, say by calling into a contact centre, only to discover that they need to email a specific department to handle their query.

By comparison, a successful omnichannel contact centre unifies all their channels and can serve customers seamlessly across them. With customers embracing and using the multiple channels at their disposal (sometimes simultaneously), the expectation is to be able to transition between them to get what they need in the quickest time. By unifying channels, contact centres can meet these customer expectations via their channel of choice.

There are also several operational benefits to omnichannel contact centres. In the same way that customers can switch between channels, omnichannel contact centre staff can do the same. This has two major benefits. Firstly, it enables staff to be able to pick up queries from multiple channels. For example, during low call volume periods, an omnichannel agent can pick up interactions via other channels whereas in a siloed multichannel contact centre, agents could be left idle. Secondly, agents can be moved between channels to deal with unexpected peaks. This can help reduce customer wait times. Lastly, it can enable agents to follow the customer from their initial contact through to resolution. This means customer experience is the same regardless of the channel the customer is using, which brings significant advantages to organisations that adopt it.

Customer Experience and Omnichannel

OMNICHANNEL CONTACT CENTRE



Contact Centres

Research from PwC¹ places efficiency, convenience, knowledge, and friendly service as being what consumers value most in an organisation. Ordinarily, value for money tops the list as our own research shows², but as the pandemic has progressed, consumer priorities have changed. As a consequence of the pandemic organisations and consumers alike have had to sell and purchase almost exclusively online. For consumers, this has given a wider choice in places to purchase from. It is no longer enough to offer good value for money, customers want to feel valued and understood and are willing to pay for it. Three quarters of

1 [https://www.pwc.com/us/en/advisory-services/publications/consumer-](https://www.pwc.com/us/en/advisory-services/publications/consumer-intelligence-series/pwc-consumer-intelligence-series-customer-experience.pdf)

intelligence-series/pwc-consumer-intelligence-series-customer-experience.pdf

2 https://www.pcipal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Shopping_December_Habits.pdf



consumers³ are now willing to spend more buying from organisations that give them good customer experience. Not only this, 50% of customers will switch to a competitor after one bad experience. That increases to 80% should a customer experience poor service more than once. With these statistics considered, it's little wonder that nearly 46% of businesses⁴ are making customer experience their top priority over the next 5 years. Good interaction with an organisation will keep your customers spending, while poor interaction will lead to a decrease in sales.

Understanding what your customers value is just one aspect of customer experience. Knowing their frustrations when they reach out is just as important. Think of the last time you had to contact a company - did you have to repeat what your query was? If the answer is yes and the experience left you exasperated, you are not alone. Seventy-six percent of customers⁵ reported being most frustrated at having to repeat their issues when switching between channels. Having a multichannel strategy which keeps all touchpoints siloed not only frustrates your customers, but it also adds additional pressures to your contact centre staff who are trying to offer a positive experience. Omnichannel contact centres unify these channels, meaning data syncs up and customers can reach out for help how they want to, without explaining their issue over again. Moreover, 86% of customers⁶ now expect conversations to switch seamlessly between channels. Being able to offer your customers

3 <https://hyken.com/wp-content/uploads/2020-ACA-Survey-1.pdf>

4 [https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2771217/2020 Customer Expectations Report/Gladly 2020 Customer Expectations Report.pdf?__hssc=170799615.7.1590064102773&_hstc=170799615.b542bfefa6d10c05bbd48e862abc12ee.1590064102773.1590064102773.1590064102773.1&hsCtaTracking=c34a5384-f1c6-4d96-8836-f26a0908c74e|7c022b75-417e-4125-bf84-1b0c0ee766dd](https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2771217/2020%20Customer%20Expectations%20Report/Gladly%20Customer%20Expectations%20Report.pdf?__hssc=170799615.7.1590064102773&_hstc=170799615.b542bfefa6d10c05bbd48e862abc12ee.1590064102773.1590064102773.1590064102773.1&hsCtaTracking=c34a5384-f1c6-4d96-8836-f26a0908c74e|7c022b75-417e-4125-bf84-1b0c0ee766dd)

5 <https://www.pega.com/2019-customer-service-insights>

6 Ibid n. 4



this positive experience also encourages customer loyalty.

It's why companies with the strongest omnichannel engagement strategies retain an average of 98%⁷, compared to 33% for companies who do not. Because of this, 88% of organisations⁸ are now prioritising customer experience in their contact centres over supporting business growth. What was formerly a 'nice to have' has quickly become an expectation, and the omnichannel contact centre is at the heart of it.

Payments and Security

Consumer behaviour continues to influence and shape the contact centre. As the research is indicating, failure to implement an omnichannel strategy could be detrimental to an organisation. Consumers expect to be able to be able to purchase goods and services securely, via their channel of choice.. For contact centres, however, this doesn't come without its own challenges.

As organisations expand their digital and payment channels, the risk of

⁷ <https://www.digitalcommerce360.com/internet-retailer/>

⁸ <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/operations/articles/global-contact-center-survey.html>

data breaches and cybercrime increases. Contact centres are a hotbed of personal data such as names, addresses and credit card information. Regulations such as the GDPR, HIPPA, PIPEDA and the CCPA are very clear on an organisation's obligation on what information is personal data and that it needs to be protected. At the same time, omnichannel contact centres have to share some of this information across channels, which increases the number of avenues of attack for hackers also creating additional opportunity for accidental data leaks to occur and therefore fall foul of these regulations.

For any organisation that handles card data, there are additional standards to comply with, by way of the PCI DSS. Unlike other forms of personal data, the standards around credit card data are a lot stricter. For example, the CV2 number cannot be stored, and the full Primary Account Number (commonly the 16-digit number on the front of the card) cannot be seen, heard, recorded or stored in its entirety in plain text. Traditionally, complying with these regulations has meant having to deploy and manage systems such as 'pause and resume' call recording, cleanroom environments and fully encrypted VOIP. Known as compensating controls, these solutions only partially protect credit card data. Pause and resume call recordings for example only prevent credit card data from being recorded and stored. Compensating controls are complicated, costly, and not entirely effective. It's little wonder that the 2020 Verizon Payment Security Report⁹ found that only 27.9% of organizations achieved 100% compliance during their interim PCI compliance validation.

What the coronavirus pandemic has also exposed is that these systems are not effective for agents working remotely. Contact centre managers cannot ensure that sensitive credit card data isn't being intercepted,

⁹ <https://enterprise.verizon.com/resources/reports/2020/2020-payment-security-report.pdf>

or that agents are able to work in environments that minimise the risk of credit card data being exposed. It comes as little surprise therefore, that cyber-attacks have increased exponentially over 2020¹⁰. Cyber criminals recognise the additional strain on contact centres and are exploiting this, which can be costly for organisations.

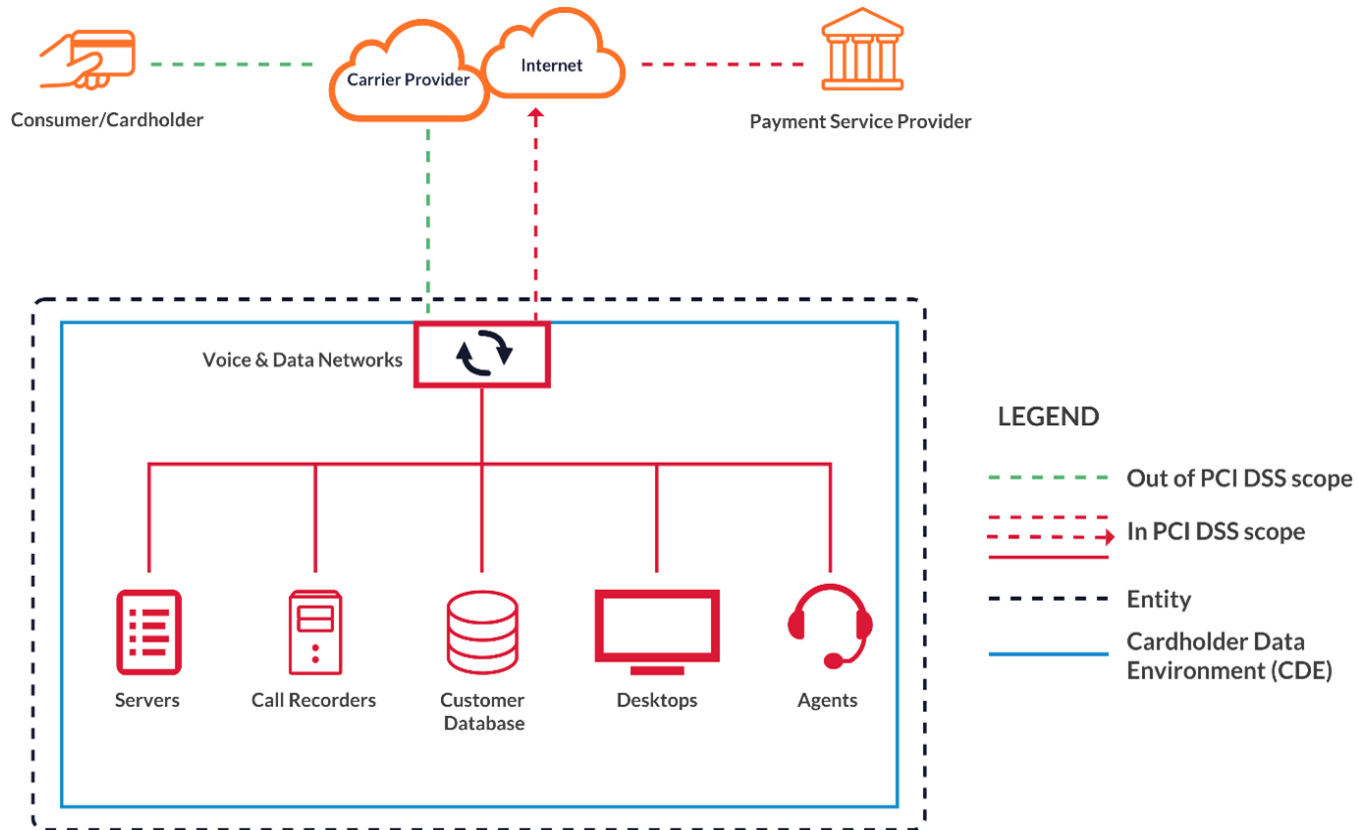
The fallout of a data breach cannot be understated, especially where

10 <https://www.sonicwall.com/2021-cyber-threat-report/?elqCampaignId=14431&sf=7013h000000Mm0SAAS>

credit card data is concerned. Our own research¹¹ has shown that across the world, significant numbers of consumers will stop spending with a brand permanently should they suffer a data breach. Besides damage to reputation and loss of consumer trust, a data breach cost on average \$3.86m (£2.9m) in 2020¹².

11 <https://www.pcipal.com/knowledge-centre/resource/this-is-the-world-the-state-of-security-in-the-eyes-of-consumers/>

12 <https://www.ibm.com/uk-en/security/data-breach>



Simple overview of the contact centre environment showing where cardholder data is present.

With all this considered, it's vital that organisations get in front of payment security by placing it at the centre of your strategy when making the move to an omnichannel.

Put Descoping at the Centre of Your Omnichannel Contact & Payment Security Strategy

For multichannel contact centres, taking payments securely comes with several problems. As mentioned previously, anywhere that payment card data is present within an organisation is in scope of the PCI DSS and must therefore be secure.

In multichannel contact centres, each channel will need to be secured in accordance with the PCI DSS. For example, securing payments via

livechat may be done via encryption, whereas phone calls may use compensating controls. This means having to maintain each individual channel which is complex, time consuming and can be expensive.

Oftentimes, this is overcome by having a single secure payment option such as telephone lines using pause and resume.

As can be seen, this still leaves a significant portion of the contact centre in scope of the PCI DSS. **So, how can contact centres meet their security and regulatory obligations without compromising their overall omnichannel strategy?** Rather than focusing on the multiple ways to keep credit card data secure when it's within your contact centre environment, organisations should be looking to descopify their contact centre environment from the requirements of the PCI DSS entirely,

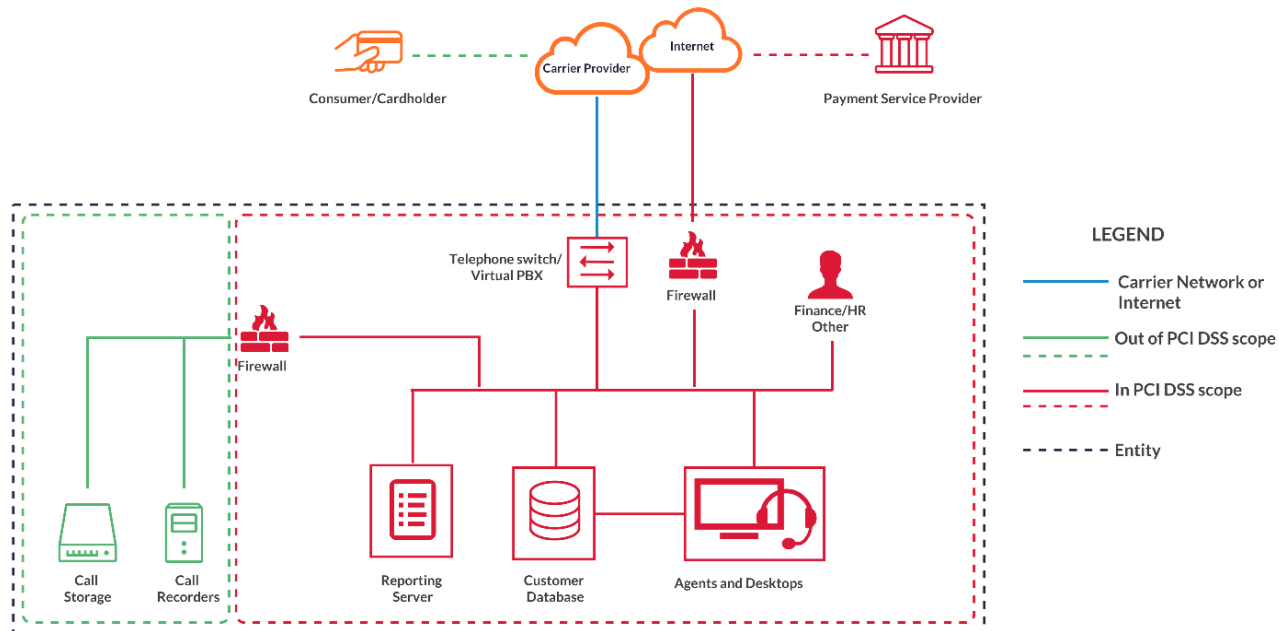


Diagram of pause and resume call recording and PCI DSS scope.

using solutions which prevent credit card data from entering the contact centre environment.

By bringing less data into your organisation's omnichannel environment from the start, descoping simplifies PCI compliance and makes it easier and more cost effective to maintain. Other benefits of descoping include:

- **COST SAVINGS** - Descoping saves your organisation money by reducing the amount of training contact centre agents must receive and minimising the number of technological solutions within your contact centre.
- **FOOL-PROOF SECURITY** - Since descoping prevents sensitive data from ever entering your contact centre, cyber criminals have nothing to steal.

This also means:

- **HAPPY EMPLOYEES** - With descoping, there's no need for clean room environments. Plus, the resulting simplified payment process means customer interactions are smoother and faster.
- **HAPPY CUSTOMERS** - Not only do customers get a better experience, they also rest easy knowing you're safeguarding their data and building trust.
- **TRUE OMNICHANNEL** - Customers can pay on the channel they choose in the way they wish to seamlessly, providing a truly omnichannel experience.

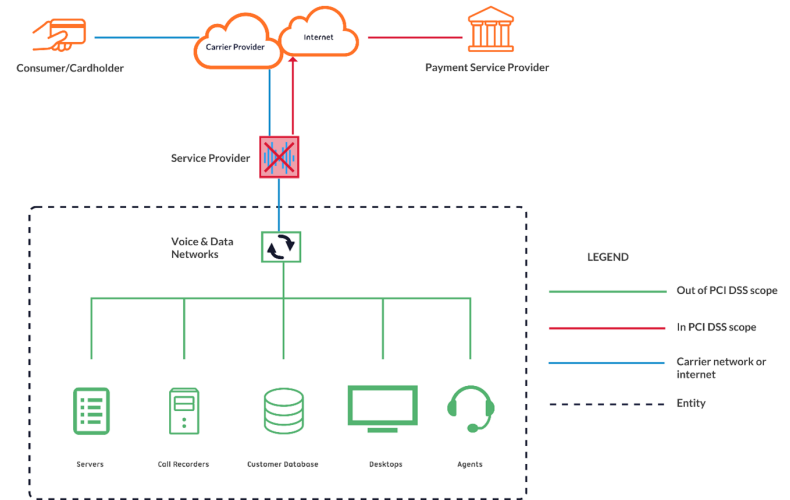


Diagram of a secure contact centre.

PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS AND CUSTOMERS

For contact centres looking for true omnichannel payment solutions, PCI Pal solves your PCI compliance challenges without compromising on customer experience. PCI Pal's secure cloud payment solutions are certified to the highest level of security by leading card companies, enabling us to provide the best possible solution for your business.

Our pioneering Level 1 PCI DSS certified solutions are built around contact centres and processes, so your customer service operation will remain exactly as you want it to be. With the entire product portfolio served from the cloud, integrations with existing telephony, digital, payment, and desktop environments are flexible and proven, ensuring no degradation of service while achieving security and compliance.

PCI Pal Agent Assist

Our core solution, Agent Assist, utilises DTMF (Dual Tone Multi-Frequency) masking and speech recognition technology to provide contact centres with a secure way of handling payments by phone without bringing their environments in scope of PCI DSS, enabling customers to either speak or type in their credit card details using their telephone keypad.

PCI Pal Digital

PCI Pal Digital enables agents to provide secure payment options via digital engagement channels such as Webchat, Whatsapp, Social Media, Email, and SMS. A secure link is sent to the customer through their channel of choice to make a payment.

PCI Pal IVR

PCI Pal IVR Payments solution empowers your customers to make payments 24/7 without speaking with an agent or accessing your website. Payments are handled within PCI Pal's secure cloud and can be integrated with your IVR platform.





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