



Transforming the Inbound Contact Center from a Cost to a Value Center

WHITE PAPER

Abstract



In today's digital era, with face-to-face customer interactions becoming increasingly infrequent, contact centers are an important means of engagement for organizations to connect with their customers. In fact, 65% of banking customers still choose phone calls as one of their preferred means of interaction.¹ Yet, investment in a contact center is governed by the service level that an organization is willing to provide to its end customers. This approach hampers the role that a contact center can play in creating new revenue streams and driving organizational strategy. This paper throws light on how organizations can transform contact centers into value centers by governing and generating value from customer engagement. This is crucial to gain the desired returns on investment (ROI) and generate new revenue streams for the organization.

[1] *Customer Think, What Communication Channels Do Customers Prefer? It Depends (August 5, 2019), accessed January 2021, <https://customerthink.com/what-communication-channels-do-customers-prefer-it-depends/>*

Managing the Costs Associated with an Inbound Contact Center

While deciding on investments in an inbound contact center, organizations typically evaluate the cost based on the service level, average handling time and investment in alternate engagement channels and emerging technologies such as cognitive chat bots, live web chats and IVR self-service options. For instance, service level is determined by the amount of time a customer waits once in the customer service queue, before getting through to a customer contact executive. Typically measured on the 80/20 principle – 80% of the customers need to be answered within 20 seconds – the service level that an organization chooses decides their investment in staffing. Organizations are also increasingly integrating AI-enabled bots and live chat on customer portals and platforms such as WhatsApp to enhance customer response and reduce staffing cost. Similarly, live web chat is being used to personalize self-service and improve operational efficiency. However, deriving value from inbound contact centres is a pressing issue as investments in contact centres are considered an additional cost. The writing on the wall is clear: an end-to-end cost reduction strategy that helps optimize expenses, enhance engagement, and create new revenue streams makes a compelling proposition to derive value from contact centers.

As organizations increasingly shift to a multi-channel contact center, customer interactions are the most valuable source of insights to increase the operational efficiency. This enables organizations to proactively meet customer demands and take decisions to improve processes and training.

Scaling customer personalization with data enrichment

Organizations can utilize customer interactions to update records such as active email addresses and alternate phone numbers. This helps proactively reach out to customers for subsequent issue resolution, product education, and brand enhancement and awareness through campaigns. Similarly, updating demographic information helps create a targeted marketing approach for new products or services while identifying relevant data points. However, as data enrichment has direct implications on the handling time, it can drive up the cost. It should therefore be performed at the end of a successful service request closure while ensuring compliance with data privacy laws.

Driving appointment generation during the customer care journey

Inbound customer engagement is a good opportunity to ascertain the interest of existing customers in increasing their portfolio size. This reduces the marketing effort by field staff and cold calls made through outbound engagements. For example, an insurance contact center can use a service request opportunity to brief customers about new products or align their product portfolio to their life goals, while ensuring compliance with telemarketing laws and consent guidelines. Similarly, a financial services organization can make appointment generation a part of their structured marketing effort.

Tapping into the power of resubscriptions to retain customers

Inbound contact centers can facilitate renewals or resubscriptions for products and services, adding to an organization's top line. If managed as a structured program, renewals can generate significant revenues. For instance, customer service executives can take a proactive approach to remind the customer about policy renewals and guide them through the process to have renewals completed on a call. Banks can take this approach to help customers setup auto renewal instructions for fixed deposits.

Generating leads with cross sell and upsell opportunities

Organizations can leverage cross sell and upsell opportunities to generate leads and increase market share based on data analytical model. However, telemarketing laws are directly applicable to this strategy and organizations should comply with them while engaging with customers.

Re-imagining Contact Center Branches for a Holistic Customer Experience

As customers increasingly prefer limited physical interactions with service providers, creating virtual branches for contact centers can help provide services akin to an actual physical branch. This helps serve customers round the clock without requiring them to visit the branch. One way to build a virtual branch is by using video calling as a service. This can be done by placing a video calling kiosk at an ATM or a partner location or a single person branch. If the organization believes that customer requests can be serviced in an unrestricted environment, video calling can be enabled through an application on the customers' mobile devices. This helps save time, deliver a phygital experience, and address issues in real time. In addition, services such as document verification can be carried out over video calling by selecting and processing document images shared by the customer. Similarly, in case of Original Seen and Verified (OSV) documents, verification can be performed online through a third party solution, a field agent, or even a single seater branch-retained only for such purposes. Organizations can even take all branch service requests over a video call paving the way for a face-to-face interaction with customers from the convenience of their homes. However, while leveraging the video calling strategy, organizations need to take into account data privacy laws and data protection controls such as GDPR which prevents customer or employee data from being stored or captured in video calls.

Paving the Way for a Zero-Cost Contact Center

As contact centers compete for their existence in the digital world, survival will depend on the way organizations humanize the digital experience, create opportunities to build Net Promoter Scores (NPS) and drive repeat business. This will require creating phygital customer experiences that will help generate enough value through customer interactions for becoming a 'zero cost' contact center.

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