

Re-platforming bank contact center architecture to drive NPS



Abstract

In today's digital banking era, consumers frequently use varied channels to fulfill their banking needs. The customer experience across these channels drives the net promoter score (NPS), which is a direct reflection of customer satisfaction and loyalty. An understanding of the various breakpoints in customer service and/or satisfaction can help banks focus their operational improvement initiatives on those areas and deliver superior business outcomes. To accomplish this, it is imperative to move away from legacy platforms by re-platforming banks' contact center architecture through advanced digitalization and cloud adoption. This white paper analyzes various factors influencing NPS in bank contact center operations and recommends a strategy to transition to the cloud and build a stable, robust, and user-friendly platform, which in turn will help enhance customer experience and increase NPS.

Reality check: Customer pulse post COVID-19

The US Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) reports a significant surge in customer complaints across financial products and services in 2020 (post COVID-19) compared with 2019 (see Figure 1).¹ This has adversely impacted NPS, and banks must re-imagine NPS drivers on priority to reduce complaints and grow sustainably in the post-COVID-19 era.

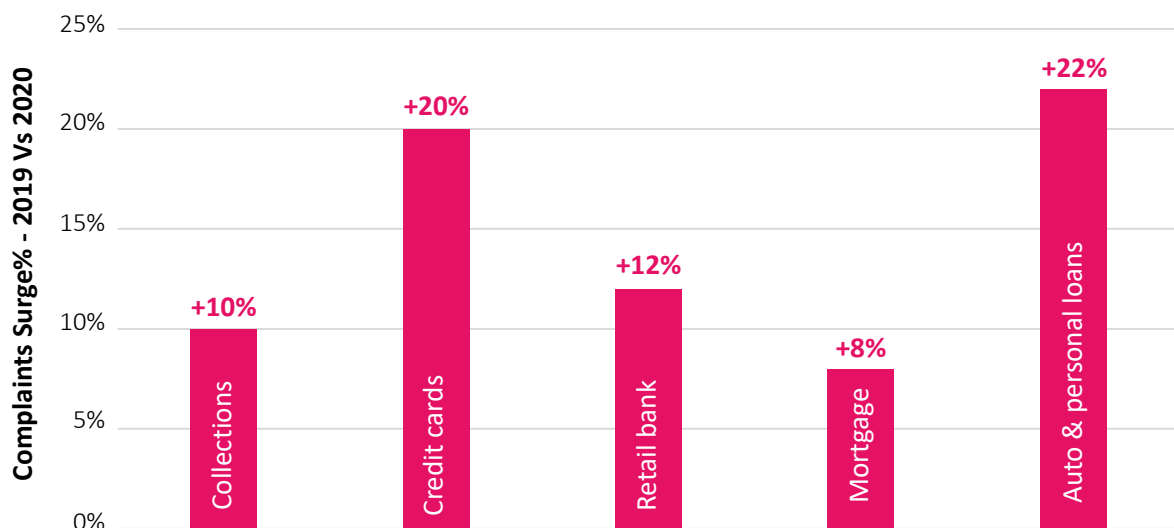


Figure 1: Post COVID-19 complaints surge

[1] Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, Consumer Response Annual Report, December 2020, Accessed November 2021, https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_2020-consumer-response-annual-report_03-2021.pdf

Key factors influencing NPS

Four major factors drive NPS—people, process, policies, and platform—each with unique controllable as well as non-controllable parameters that influence the customer experience.

People-based NPS drivers

When customers call their bank's contact center, the success of the interaction depends on knowledge, attitude, and the communication skills of the agent. These people-based factors need continuous monitoring and control across hiring, training, coaching, and productivity improvement. Banks must deploy innovative cloud-based solutions to monitor and enhance agents' performance and perform customer sentiment analysis by leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) driven machine learning (ML) techniques. Cloud-based real-time analytics and visualization solutions can help banks measure NPS and agent productivity at a granular level and produce periodic reports to enable better systemic controls and improvements.

Process-based NPS drivers

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) are the building blocks of customer service that determine average call duration, time taken for issue resolution, and customer satisfaction. In providing support to customers, agents have to navigate multiple screens, access a plethora of applications across the bank, and carry out a multitude of steps. This labor-intensive process results in high average handling time (AHT). To address this, banks must deploy digital assistants built using AI solutions offered by cloud service providers. Using cloud-based solutions for automated document and image processing helps reduce effort on manual review, sorting, and data entry operations which in turn translates into faster service and improved NPS.

Platform-based NPS drivers

The servicing platform and underlying technology infrastructure play a major role in the efficacy of contact center operations and the quality of customer experience. Primary characteristics that drive overall service and customer experience include scalability to accommodate volume surges, stability to ensure high availability and minimal application downtime, and agility of the platform to swiftly implement changes at the application as well as network layers.

Banks struggle to meet these demands due to legacy monolithic architecture. The solution lies in adopting cloud technologies for more efficient contact center operations. Banks must gradually re-platform the servicing platform and underlying applications by switching from monolithic architecture to a microservices-based one. In addition, automation and cloud adoption will help banks accelerate digitalization, and provide a stable, agile, and scalable platform to improve customer experience.

Policy-based NPS drivers

The customer service function has limited control over the bank's policies, which are typically standardized and laid down for the entire customer base. However, policies have significant potential to impact customer experience. Banks must therefore infuse flexibility into their operating procedures so that customers with a history of exceptional banking relationship are given some leeway—appointing escalation specialists to override policy decisions within permissible limits can help. This will help improve customer experience as well as NPS.

Case-in-point

For a large North American bank, we helped transform the cards customer service operations function by leveraging contextual knowledge, agile techniques, and technology synergies. Coupled with innovations in the people and process areas, the bank registered a 5-7% improvement in NPS in the last two years and reduced AHT by 7-10%. The bank is now considering moving to a cloud-based contact center and adopting AI and ML tools and techniques including digital or virtual assistants to help agents. This has the potential to improve NPS by up to 10-15% by enhancing customer sentiment analysis, call quality monitoring, and advanced analytics.

An approach to re-platforming contact center architecture with cloud technologies

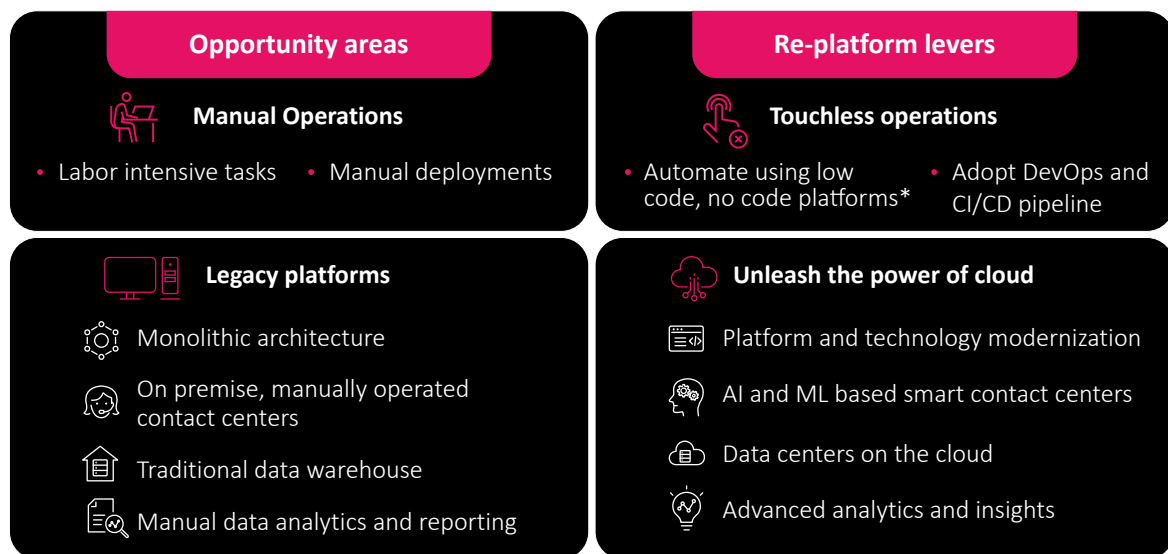
Most banks have invested significantly in building digital transformation solutions like chatbots to improve customer experience in self-assisted channels. The target cloud platform should be flexible enough to be integrated with the existing digital platform spanning telephony as well as servicing, among others, without causing disruption. To ensure business-as-usual with minimal disruption, banks must adopt a step-by-step approach to re-platforming their contact center architecture.

Cloud suitability assessment and strategy selection

Contact center operations of most banks run on legacy infrastructure. A thorough suitability assessment is, therefore, a critical first step before embarking on cloud migration. Mature platforms built upon microservice architecture and continuous integration (CI) and continuous delivery (CD) model are suitable for cloud migration through a simple lift-and-shift strategy. Platforms with monolithic architecture and tightly coupled applications will need to be completely re-platformed on-premise and subsequently migrated to the cloud. An alternative strategy can be a brownfield migration retaining mission-critical legacy applications on-premise and retiring them in phases once all the functions are on the cloud. Another aspect to be considered is security and compliance limitations, and banks must lay down a comprehensive compliance and security framework. Given data is critical to analyzing and addressing compliance gaps, banks must also consider data modernization requirements while evaluating suitability.

Gap analysis

A thorough gap analysis of existing infrastructure, applications, and on-premise automation solutions is essential. This will help identify suitable cloud platforms and solutions and help enhance returns on investment (RoI). Based on this analysis, banks must identify the right re-platform levers (see Figure 2) to transform legacy contact centers.



*TCS, Low-code, No-code Platforms: A Competitive Edge for Banks and Insurers, <https://www.tcs.com/low-code-no-code-programming-bfsi>

Figure 2: Re-platform levers for a cloud based contact center

Cloud partner assessment

Once the detailed cloud suitability assessment and gap analysis are complete, banks must choose the right hyperscaler vendor based on servicing needs to partner in the cloud journey. While hyperscalers offer a variety of cloud solutions across application, infrastructure, and data modernization areas, we recommend embracing a business use case approach. Other aspects that will influence this decision include capital and operating costs, unique billing models, key performance indicator (KPI) commitments, partner discounts, free credits, committed investments, partner revenue streams, and support models.

Cloud integration and implementation

The last and most critical step in the cloud journey is implementing the strategy to migrate platforms, applications, and data from on-premise infrastructure to the cloud environment in a phased manner. Functions with mature database management and platforms with clear access and control of lineage can be immediately moved to the cloud, while other functions should be migrated in phases. Given the huge number of cloud solutions centered on use cases, banks must leverage on-premise products and solutions as a starting point in their cloud journey and later transition to the cloud.

Banks must also evaluate the compatibility of communication platforms used in the contact center. Most major players in the market support cloud integration, and banks can leverage AI and ML solutions offered by cloud service providers. Cloud solutions can be leveraged to convert speech into text, replacing manual typing to improve agent productivity and quality of service. These solutions help optimize AHT, thereby improving customer experience. In addition, implementing a cloud-based call quality monitoring solution along with automated controls can also help banks improve regulatory compliance reporting and overall customer experience. By tapping into real-time customer data residing on bank systems, cloud solutions can predict customer intent and/or issues and proactively deflect calls to alternative channels. By proactively reaching out to customers to address their needs, banks can reverse the traditional process of customers calling the contact center and enable a remarkable customer experience.

In a nutshell

Successful cloud-based contact center transformation in the financial services industry will require a business-driven approach as opposed to a technology-driven one. In addition, banks must adopt a robust and self-reliant cloud framework (without dependence on third-party providers) and proactively build an internal talent pool aligned with their cloud technology roadmap for greater autonomy. In our view, a rapid move toward cloud technology-driven contact centers can help banks deliver exceptional experience, enhance NPS, and drive transformational growth to thrive in the new normal.



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Raghavendran Ravisankar is a client partner in TCS' Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance (BFSI) business unit. Over the last 19 years, Raghav has been driving growth and digital transformation initiatives for leading clients by synergizing his rich experience in domain, technology, and operations across geographies and business segments. He is a certified Google cloud digital leader who helps build transformation solutions for various customers. He holds a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from Bharathidasan University, Tamil Nadu, India.

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Awards and accolades



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