

Transform Your Contact Center into Customer Engagement Hubs

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Key Insights

Using a phased approach is essential to quickly elevate your traditional call center into a powerful and positive customer experience.

- **Stabilize.** Quickly respond to marketplace conditions via a cloud contact center platform that acts as an extension of the existing center
- **Optimize.** Automate high-frequency and low-complexity customer queries, collect data from common interactions, and identify the future contact center stack
- **Transform.** Build a business case for cloud migration, adopt a modular plug-and-play architecture, and reuse components from the Optimize phase

In an increasingly remote business environment, contact centers are essential in delivering a superior experience that not only delights, but serves the customer during times of uncertainty and crises. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, digital transformation within contact centers was underway. Fast-tracking these digital initiatives is how organizations will be able to meet customers' needs while providing a seamless anywhere-anytime, instantaneous, and yes, engaging experience.

Essential Contact Center Capabilities for Agile Engagement

In this new post-pandemic world, businesses have had to accelerate enabling contact center agents to work from home (or some other remote location) while keeping their centers running. The ideal contact center gives businesses the ability to pivot quickly when it offers these capabilities:

- **Pay-Per-Use Pricing and Scalability.** Most companies are going through a period of business uncertainty and will likely remain this way for the foreseeable future. Companies need to be prepared for instability by building in flexibility in both pricing and capacity of their contact centers, including the ability to scale up or down quickly to meet fluctuating demand.
- **Work from Anywhere Enablement.** With “work from anywhere” expected to become the standard operational model, every business needs to enable their contact center to support this capability in the most efficient and optimal way possible.
- **Non-Voice Channel Options.** Many companies do not have the infrastructure in place to allow their agents to answer voice calls from home or offsite. As a result, customers have been forced to move to the chat channel. The chat channel offers productivity improvements and immediate customer satisfaction, prompting many companies to consider expanding the scope of chat-based query resolution.
- **Conversational AI.** An efficient way to handle low-complexity customer inquiries is by implementing chatbots and voice bots (via artificial intelligence), which reduces the workload of contact center agents and allows them more time to focus on more complex scenarios.

A Phased Approach to Transform Your Contact Center

While the product or platform choices could be different, the fundamental structure of a future contact center stack remains the same. Contact center (CC) technology stacks are evolving to become cloud hosted,

conversational AI-driven, and truly omnichannel in nature. The following three-pronged approach is designed to help stabilize, optimize and rapidly transform your contact center capabilities, giving it the ability to fluidly evolve and respond to changing conditions (as shown in the following graphic). This future-ready state can be achieved through multiple product and platform combinations, based on the requirements and preferences of a specific business.



Stabilize

In the aftermath of COVID-19, companies needed a swift response to the crisis while stabilizing their contact center operations. Using a cloud contact center platform enables it to become an extension of the existing contact center – increasing the capacity and reducing call wait times immediately, as both operate simultaneously.

Part of that response includes the following best practices:

- Setting up a parallel cloud contact center fast (less than a week is ideal)
- The ability to selectively divert/transfer calls coming into the existing center to the new cloud contact center platform
- Call transfer may be based on a specific business process, business team or interactive voice response (IVR) tree option

Optimize

In the medium term, contact centers must optimize their operations as there will likely be pressure to reduce costs and do more with less. Companies should also keep an eye on the future while selecting technology interventions in this phase, so that maximum reusability is ensured in the future.

- **Adopt the X/Y principle:** Most contact centers will have X% of customer queries, which are in the high-frequency, low-complexity category. These interactions are the ideal candidates for end-to-end automation. But contact centers should also look to automate Y% of the conversation found within each customer interaction – most interactions will have an initial phase of data collection, identity verification and other simple questions, which can be handled by a bot, before handing off the interaction to an agent for completion.

The combined impact of this approach could lead to 25% of customer service operations being serviced using virtual customer assistants.

- **Identify the technology products/platforms for Transform phase:** Being mindful and having a plan for the Transform phase is important at this stage. A view of the future contact center stack will help in identifying the appropriate NLP engine and other solutions to enable future reusability.

Transform

Ultimately, the goal is to transform your contact center by migrating to a cloud-based platform that can evolve as your business evolves. This requires the business to:

- Build a business case for cloud migration, factoring in cost of operations, customer experience impact and other factors.
- Adopt a modular plug-and-play architecture to future-proof the stack.
- Reuse and extend components already built-in during the Optimize phase.

The Customer Engagement Hub of the Future

As customer expectations change, contact centers need the ability to evolve and keep up with those demands or the business will suffer negative impacts. Contact centers are no longer limited to a reactive approach that focuses only on customer service issues. They can and should engage the customer by sending offers, proactive notifications and being available in their channel of choice. Backed by cloud contact center platform, conversational AI technologies and analytics, engagement and interactions between your customer and the business can be instantaneous, personalized, timely and relevant.

The technology to enable this transformation is already here and offers the opportunity of ushering contact centers into an era of new possibilities—one that creates true customer engagement hubs that foster engagement and loyalty with a better customer experience.

Do a Deeper Dive

To learn more about this topic, read the comprehensive white paper “Transforming Contact Centers into Customer Engagement Hubs.”

[i] Gartner Says 25 Percent of Customer Service Operations Will Use Virtual Customer Assistants by 2020, <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2018-02-19-gartner-says-25-percent-of-customer-service-operations-will-use-virtual-customer-assistants-by-2020> Accessed, September 11, 2020

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