

5 Contact Center Challenges—And How to Solve Them

Improve the customer experience, enhance agent productivity and be a more agile business with a virtual contact center.

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Many issues trouble today's business contact center, from tracking agent productivity to making omnichannel work efficiently. Internal struggles often become customer vexations: Slower call answering times, lost context with client interaction, and broken communications when the network goes down.

Businesses suffer when their contact centers can't provide customers the help they need, when they need it, in the most efficient way possible. In many industries—particularly consumer businesses—the contact center is the face of a company to customers and prospects. What organization can afford to have its customers walk away from a contact center engagement feeling that their time and business is unappreciated?

Often a company's problem with delivering a premium contact center experience results from the fact that the business relies upon a legacy on-premises system. The contact center capabilities may be outdated, especially given increasing customer expectations about seamless, reliable interactions. But the costs of buying new hardware and software or upgrading old systems to accommodate growing demands—and expanding businesses—likely are too high.

In the past, companies have had security and privacy concerns about moving a customer-centric service, such as a contact center, to a cloud environment. But that's changing: The cloud-based contact center market size is expected to grow from \$5.4 billion in 2016 to \$15.7 billion by 2021, according to MarketsandMarkets, driven by requirements such as disaster recovery, faster deployment and the flexibility of cloud solutions.¹

Research conducted by the Contact Center Network Group (CCNG) similarly reveals that cloud contact centers are gaining share, finding that 25 percent of contact centers in the U.S. and U.K. have fully deployed cloud today and another 28 percent have partially transitioned.² Over 20 percent plan to migrate within the next year.



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Why? Migrating your contact center to a cloud-based solution can turn the challenges you face into opportunities to move your business forward.

Challenge 1: Business Continuity

On-premises contact centers operate as a single system and can go down when your data center has an issue. These simplex systems, with their non-redundant configurations and lack of call rerouting capabilities that prevent diverting contact center inbound traffic to an alternate phone number or a secondary tenant, present a single point of painful failure.

How painful? The average cost of an unplanned data center outage, in fact, has increased to \$740,357 from \$505,502 in 2010, according to the 2016 Cost of Data Center Outages study conducted by Ponemon Institute.³

That figure is not exclusive to on-premises contact center costs. But it is worth noting that the top three data center downtime costs—business disruption, lost revenue and end-user productivity—potentially can have ties to on-premises contact center systems. Data center outages can affect agent output, for instance, or make it impossible for customers to get the help they need to complete a transaction.

Opportunity: Always-On Reliability

With a virtual contact center, it's all in the cloud. Cloud-based contact center technology runs out of fault-tolerant, redundant and bulletproof data centers, and your business' local and remote agents are always connected. So they're constantly on the job and within reach of your clients.

1. "Cloud-Based Contact Center Market by Solution (Dialers, Reporting, and analytics), Service (Professional and Managed), Application, Deployment Model, Organization size, Industry vertical, and Region - Global Forecast to 2021," MarketsandMarkets, November 2016

2. "Cloud Contact Centers Gaining Share," 8x8-CCNG Survey, November 2016

3. "Cost of Data Center Outages," Ponemon Institute, January 2016



Nearly **43 %** of companies responding to the CCNG survey report that business continuity and disaster recovery is one of their top three reasons for moving their contact center to the cloud.



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Companies switching to cloud solutions for contact center services won't have to worry about their agents' ability to continue interacting with customers in the face of a single failing system. If these employees aren't already working remotely, they can get back on the job simply by taking their phones home and hooking them into their home networks, drastically reducing personal productivity and business losses.

Challenge 2: Business Growth

Your business is growing, but it's hard to find all of the contact center talent you need in your local area. Unfortunately, when your business is reliant on an on-premises contact center, you have to live with limitations.

Finding top-notch call center workers can be an issue even if your expanding client base is primarily domestic. But it becomes even more challenging if your business is growing its customer base around the world. In that case, you may have difficulty finding enough employees in your vicinity with the correct foreign language skills, or who are available to work odd hours to accommodate different time zones.

High attrition rates among contact center workers add to the pain of the hunt. The task must seem never-ending for close to one-quarter of respondents to a survey conducted by Contact Center Pipeline,⁴ who identified high attrition as a top challenge they face. "Attrition is an age-old problem in contact centers and may be getting worse as the economy improves and the unemployment rate goes down," the report states.

Opportunity: Remote Staffing

Cloud-based contact center technology lets you cast a wider net to hire the right talent, so they can help you grow from wherever they are. Just over 26 percent of respondents to the CCNG survey say that enabling remote agents is a top reason for moving their contact centers to the cloud.

When employees can work remotely around the world, customer service agents are available in all the different time zones where your company has a presence. That way, all your customers' calls are always answered.

Not only that, but you may increase incentives for even local call center workers—especially your most proven and productive staff—

4. Contact Center Challenges and Priorities," Contact Center Pipeline, January 2016

Top 5 Contact Center Challenges— And How A Virtual Contact Center Can Solve Them

1. Business Continuity:

Cloud contact center providers deliver always-on availability and bulletproof reliability

2. Business Growth: Easily accessible from anywhere, so you can hire agents with the right skills and in the right time zone

3. Agent Performance:

Analytics and dashboards help you keep on top of key metrics and identify which agents need coaching

4. Call Center Isolation:

Fast, easy integrations with CRM and other enterprise apps keep agents productive with relevant customer information at their fingertips

5. Inconsistent Customer Experience:

Create an omnichannel contact center so customers communicate with you the way they want, whether it's chat, phone, email, mobile, social—or whatever's next

to stay onboard if you can provide them the option of working remotely from home. Many employees welcome the flexibility that provides to their lifestyle.

Challenge 3: Agent Performance

Managing staff—especially remote agents—is difficult when using data-crowded spreadsheets and limited to drawing conclusions only from historical reporting. Yet, many companies (59 percent) continue to rely on such outmoded tools and methods as spreadsheets and notes to try and improve agent performance, according to the CCNG survey.

That has to change, especially when you consider that labor accounts for three-quarters of the ongoing costs of running a call center. It's critical that managers be better equipped to maximize worker value to the business.

But most companies have to look beyond on-premises contact center systems for these solutions. Typically legacy call center metrics solutions don't compile real-time data to support agent performance management, never mind presenting analysis of that information, as well as historical data, in a readily usable format.

Opportunity: Accessible and Easy-to-Use Analytics

Using cloud-based management analytics, your contact center supervisors can get information in dashboard views that make it easy to manage agent performance, both in real time so that actions like coaching can be taken when needed and with historical insights to make bigger-picture business decisions. Ideally, they'll be able to independently run reports to stay on top of critical contact center labor metrics, so there's no delay on taking insights-based action.

Managers leveraging cloud-based analytics also have the advantage of using any device they choose to assess how contact center agents stack up to KPIs—regardless of where those workers are located and across all service channels from voice to social media.

In addition to providing a more seamless way to manage individual agent performance, accessible analytics also make it easier for managers to spot things that can impact overall customer experience and address these issues in a coordinated way. For instance, a manager may notice that one queue has extended hold times, and move agents around on the spot to decrease the wait.

23.6%

Compound annual growth for cloud contact centers from 2016 to 2021⁵

43%

say business continuity and disaster recovery is one of their top three reasons for moving their contact center to the cloud⁶

One-third

of companies say they lack the right technology for an omnichannel customer experience⁷

Challenge 4: Call Center Isolation

If your contact center solutions aren't integrated with critical applications that incorporate customer interaction data, you're losing money on every call. Costly agent time is wasted waiting for CRM systems to load before they can process the call. The delayed response generally creates client frustration, too.

You're probably familiar with that scenario if you have a legacy on-premises call center system. While some businesses have put development resources into custom-coding to achieve integration ends with these systems, typically that's a long and labor-intensive process. Not everyone's up for that task.

Absent CRM or other back-end system integration, businesses can't achieve better call-handling capabilities, such as matching customers to the right agents, thereby promoting more holistic customer experiences.

Opportunity: Integrated Operations

Cloud-based contact center management solutions have built-in integrations and plug-ins, including fast and easy integration with leading cloud CRM solutions such as Salesforce and Zendesk, as well as with other custom systems. That drives greater agent efficiency and cost-savings for your business.

Consider, for example, how integrating Salesforce with the cloud contact center could deliver a streamlined and cost-effective login process for

5. MarketsandMarkets

6. CCNG

7. CCNG

a technical support center. The cloud contact center console would immediately pop up when agents sign into Salesforce, so that they can take calls right away.

A unified view into customer history, including purchases and support tickets, via integrated operations also can build loyalty among customers who feel that a company “knows” who they are when they reach the call center. But equally compelling is that the same view can also be a tool to leverage in the service of up-selling and cross-selling.

Challenge 5: Inconsistent Customer Experience

Customers desire to engage with your company using multiple channels—chat, phone, email, mobile, social and so on. But legacy on-premises contact center systems typically don’t support these capabilities. If they do, it’s difficult to track any single client interaction because those interactions are often recorded on different systems and managed by different groups.

That’s a headache for the business—one that gets worse if customers realize the built-in inconsistency and react negatively to it.

One-third of companies in the CCNG survey say they lack the right technology to manage multiple channels, and it also reveals that the issue must be addressed: More non-voice channels that aren’t already part of contact center implementations will be soon, with chat, mobile app, SMS and social media leading the list of planned implementations.

Opportunity: All-in-one Communications View

Make it possible for your contact center agents to use phone, chat, and email to see how a customer has communicated within and across your various business channels. When cloud contact center communications are integrated with your critical systems, agents can have all of a customer’s information at hand regardless of which channel they come in on, and they can tailor their responses with those previous interactions in mind.

That drives continuity in customer communications, and successful interactions between your agents and clients.

“As businesses look to implement omnichannel customer experience capabilities,” according to Frost & Sullivan, “moving to the cloud can be the fastest, easiest, and most cost-effective approach for contact center organizations.”⁸

8. “Creating Better Omnichannel Customer Experiences in the Cloud,” Frost & Sullivan, 2015

Learn More

To learn more about how virtual contact centers can turn your contact center challenges into opportunities, please go to

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