ACHIEVING EXPECTATIONS: EXPLORING A NEW ERA OF CUSTOMER BEHAVIORS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND ENGAGEMENTS
INTRODUCTION

Consumers have permanently changed how they live, work, and shop. Our modern economy has transformed to offer creative solutions for shopping, fulfillment, and delivery of goods and services. While customer service remains crucial to businesses’ success, the way in which it is delivered has dramatically changed. And while the traditional centralized contact center approach will always play a vital role in the world of commerce, it’s time to catch up to where customers are now.

Customers’ physical place has long dictated when, how, and where they connect with businesses, whether they’re calling from their car on their commute, juggling a live chat while attending a meeting, or posting to social networks on their way back from lunch. As their routines change, so will their contact patterns and channel preferences. Increasingly, customers are also turning to the remote delivery of essential services – telehealth, e-learning, and even fitness on demand – despite the lack of in-person connections.

As we enter a new decade with fresh challenges, exciting technology, and endless possibility, contact centers must rethink their role within an organization. As online, in-store, and remote experiences explode in popularity, businesses require a single function to unite the company, direct focus towards the customer, and orchestrate communication and service delivery.

This toolkit equips contact center leaders with the tools they need to evaluate their operational landscape, build partnerships across disparate silos, identify opportunities to create extraordinary engagements, consider the possibilities technology offers, overcome skills gaps, and deliver incredible value. The activities, checklists, and self-assessments contained within will prepare your contact center with everything it needs to thrive today and in the future.
FOCUS AREA 1: EMERGING CONSUMER BEHAVIORS

The last decade brought incredible advancements in commerce and consumption. The appeal of e-commerce was once limited to items practical to ship long distances and where customers could tolerate delays of a week or more. Only select types of restaurants offered delivery services, with limited range and rudimentary dispatch capabilities. The only way to reliably acquire goods and services was from a few trusted, professional businesses, often in their brick-and-mortar stores.

Today, many consider these ideas to be as outdated as rotary dial telephones. Waiting three days for an online order is the rare exception, not the rule. Consumers now order takeout from restaurants all over town through a central marketplace, and they anxiously track the progress of their deliveries in real-time. When modern consumers need a ride to the airport, they reach for their mobile apps rather than hailing a cab or asking a friend. At their destination, peer-to-peer car-sharing and accommodation services provide practical, economical alternatives to the car rental counters and chain hotels of old.

While many consumers will never lay eyes on them or set foot in their facilities, the businesses behind fulfillment, delivery, and peer-to-peer transactions are critical links in our modern supply chain. Although rarely in-person, these organizations must still communicate and build relationships with their customers. Trust in these platforms’ ability to protect all parties to a transaction and settle disputes fairly is critical to their success. That’s where contact centers come in.

For centuries, businesses delivered customer service at the point of sale. Most supermarkets housed a customer service desk, responsible for resolving any problems that individual cashiers couldn’t handle. Items missing from your drive-through fast-food order were the responsibility of local restaurant managers. These days, customers commonly post to a brand’s social media profile, email corporate customer service, or call a national hotline to voice their concerns. To increase quality and efficiency, many chains even route their local telephone numbers to consolidated call centers. As consumers increasingly buy online pick-up in-store, order through mobile apps, and engage third-party logistics services for delivery, the point of sale is no longer a well-defined physical place.

Contact centers have always been critical to some businesses and industries, but they were far from the only point of contact for many. As their face-to-face, in-store counterparts become extinct or undesirable, contact centers will bear increased responsibility for customers’ journeys. At one time, a catch-and-dispatch model of incident resolution was sufficient. They would record the customer’s concern and send it to a local manager for resolution. However, this deprives customers of first contact resolution and timely solutions. This model’s inherent delays make less sense when customers are waiting in their car for curbside pick-up or when they paid extra for one-hour delivery. As such, contact centers will take on a much more active role in incident resolution.

Contact center agents will find themselves orchestrating on-site operations from hundreds or thousands of miles away. When customers want to add an item to their order at the last minute, when the delivery driver forgot the hot sauce, and when the air conditioning in their rental house stops working, it will be contact center agents, not carhops, waitresses, and front desk clerks, who save the day. They’ll need visibility into local operations and the capability to reach employees on the ground who can take immediate action.
THE TOOLS OF MODERN TRADE

To meet the expectations of tomorrow’s customers, contact centers will have to continually modernize their toolbox and optimize the application of technology to enhance engagements. The internal relationships agents leverage to deliver on brand promises and the processes by which knowledge and information are disseminated throughout the enterprise are equally vital to the connected experience. Fostering a one-team, one-company mindset behind the scenes has long helped to deliver seamless service, but customers are beginning to take notice of how internal functions collaborate and how contact centers personalize service to their needs at specific points in time. The concepts outlined in this checklist establish a baseline for demonstrating awareness of customers’ circumstances.

Customer Service

- We capture and organize knowledge so that routine answers may be accessed quickly and accurately.
- Our service levels are suitable for customers with urgent needs, such as obtaining assistance on-site.
- All frontline employees receive consistent training, and representatives on every channel are equally empowered to solve customers’ problems.
- Our agents are trained to recognize the many contexts from which customers reach out, like navigating an airline connection or requesting store information.
- When additional time is needed or customers are required to change contact channels, we own responsibility for a seamless transition and offer multiple options for follow-up.
Collaboration

- Leadership works cross-functionally to ensure consistent information is delivered to service employees throughout the organization.
- Our contact center has real-time information about the operating status of local points of contact.
- Customer-facing employees throughout the company can track the status of request fulfillment and delivery in real-time.
- When they don’t have direct access to definitive answers or require on-site support, contact center agents can reach someone internally who is close to the problem.
- Our agents are empowered to own customer problems without transferring the customer or deferring responsibility.

Technology

- Our technology can accurately identify customers when they reach out for assistance.
- Customers’ experience with our technology, such as IVRs and chatbots, is personalized based on where they are in their journey.
- Customers can reply directly to all outbound communications, and agents see the context for their questions.
- We use a consistent set of tools for managing knowledge and customer information throughout the enterprise.
- Previous conversations follow customers when cases are escalated or when they switch channels.

CONNECTED CUSTOMER JOURNEYS

Historically, customers had few options for interacting with businesses. At its inception, companies delivered customer service exclusively in person on a small scale. Every interaction was personal; you’d likely see the clerk from your local general store, your banker, or your doctor at church or the local saloon. Eventually, companies discovered the efficiency of mail-order catalogs. Instead of stocking goods in cities across the country, consumers could choose from an impressive selection of goods and place orders sight unseen. Typewriters were early contact centers’ most remarkable technology.

Fueled by technological innovation, today’s customers are more connected to our organizations than ever before. They browse our website, follow our social media, download our apps, visit our stores, and occasionally dial our toll-free numbers. Customers expect the same accurate, friendly, and personalized service of the nineteenth century with the scale, efficiency, and omnipresence only modern technology can provide while keeping costs low. Businesses have made great strides in meeting customers on their native channels, but few have truly mastered the connected, unified experience customers crave.

The following vignettes demonstrate how organizations are applying present technology to solve customers’ contemporary needs. As you read the following stories, consider your customers’ journey before, during, and after their interaction with your contact center. Ask yourself these questions:

- Where are customers located when they need our help?
- What channel would be most convenient for them to reach us?
- Are there unique barriers to communication at different points in their journey?
- What tools, skills, and information do my agents need to serve them well?
- Does our contact center have timely and efficient methods of collaborating with colleagues in other parts of our business?
**Case Study: Healthcare**

Donna thought she could escape, but during her last telehealth appointment, Dr. Lee insisted she immediately schedule her annual preventative mammogram. While the exam is bearable, finding time to drive to the hospital, locate parking, find the office on a huge hospital campus, and decipher confusing paperwork is frustrating. Thankfully, her hospital invests big in patient experience, and their contact center is ready to help at a moment’s notice.

Donna decided to fill out the patient information form online from the comfort of her home, but some of the questions are confusing. Luckily, help is only one click away, and after a brief live chat with the contact center, Donna’s appointment is all set.

On the day of her appointment, it’s a good thing Donna left a little early because traffic is heavy! The imaging center texts her an appointment reminder while stopped. Donna replies, yet expects a “do not reply, not in service” message forcing her to call. Instead, a friendly contact center agent texts back; they bought her a little more time. She made it! Now comes the hard part: finding parking. Donna has trouble with the parking gate when she enters the garage. Before leaving her car, she makes a frustrated post on Facebook. Upon seeing the post, a quick-thinking contact center agent phones Facilities to dispatch a parking technician. The agent replies to the post within minutes, thanking Donna for her feedback. As Donna gets out of the car, she opens the hospital’s mobile app to find out where she needs to go. The app provides directions for getting from where she parked to the imaging center’s waiting room in only a few taps.

When Donna arrives, checking in is as simple as tapping the “I’m here” button. Before long, a push notification tells Donna that a nurse is ready to walk her back to the exam room. She’s on her way in no time at all and takes a short survey about the experience as she’s walking back to the parking garage.

These stories illustrate how contact centers serve customers at various stages in their lifecycle and experience. At every point, customers must have the ability to receive convenient, personalized help and prompt resolution. As the responsibility for customer management shifts from disparate touchpoints towards centralized support, contact centers’ ability to collaborate cross-functionally in real-time grows ever more crucial.
Like many consumers, Michael didn’t give his car insurance much thought between billing cycles. Finally, the good neighbors, geckos, and personified misfortune convinced him it was worth shopping for a new quote, but he wants to make sure he’s comparing comparable policies. Before buying the quoted policy online, he uses the company’s click-to-call feature to speak to a person. He can’t talk to just any person, though. Michael’s state’s laws require his questions to be answered by an insurance agent licensed in his area. Because he’s placing the call through the online quote process, the insurance company knows just the person he needs to speak with without any additional interrogation.

While on the phone, the insurance agent explains that Michael can save significantly more by installing the company’s driver monitoring device, which plugs into his car’s computer and using vehicle performance data to determine if Michael is a low-risk driver. Convinced he’s leaving money on the table without it, Michael agrees to give it a try. However, a few days later, when he tries to plug it in, it doesn’t seem to fit his vehicle. He clicks a button to call technical support within the company’s mobile app. Using his smartphone’s camera, Michael can show the technical support representative precisely what’s going wrong. Moments later, he’s up and running. These calls never take very long when agents can see exactly what the problem is.

As Michael is driving around enjoying his new insurance policy, the unthinkable happens. As Michael is making a protected left turn, a driver traveling the opposite direction runs a red light and smashes into his car’s passenger side. Everyone is okay, but Michael’s car isn’t so lucky; he’ll have to tow it away. Michael hasn’t ever had a vehicle towed before, so he calls his new insurance company for advice. After making sure Michel is alright, the roadside assistance agent dispatches a wrecker to his location.

The next day, Michael receives a text message that an insurance adjuster is ready to take a look at his vehicle. Letting them know where the car is parked is as simple as replying to the text message. It’s not long before Michael’s claim is approved, and the vehicle is repaired. This process would have been a lot more involved, but it worked smoothly thanks to the right technology.

**Technology Has Completely Transformed the Auto Insurance Industry.**

Once a wholly in-person experience driven by local agents, now consumers easily request and compare quotes online, switch from one provider to the next, and instantly download proof of insurance documentation. Not long ago, shopping around would have taken all day, but now the process only takes a few minutes. This progress relies heavily on contact centers to build relationships and deliver advice from licensed agents that was only available in person not long ago.
FOCUS AREA 2: EXPANDING COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITIES

For decades, multichannel contact centers have made progress toward meeting customers on the channels of their choosing. For many, this means supporting more traditional channels like telephone, email, and live chat. Delivering excellent customer service over social media remains a dream that many aspire to achieve. Although they’re making advancements, most contact centers struggle to keep pace with developments in the information age.

It seems like every time we master a channel, another one appears to emerge out of thin air. The goalposts are in constant motion. Unless you support WhatsApp, WeChat, Apple Business Chat, and even TikTok, some customers can’t reach you on the channel of their choice. It’s not easy to be everywhere your customers are but understanding why customers choose specific channels can prioritize our resources.

Despite our persistent efforts, voice calls continue to dominate many contact centers’ channel mix. For many organizations, telephone remains the channel of last resort. There’s nothing we cannot accomplish by phone, and customers are generally assured they will eventually reach a human. Telephone calls are often the most straightforward direction to point customers when we cannot resolve their issues through another channel. It’s not uncommon for voice calls to be customers’ second or third attempt at resolving a problem.

Telephones suffer one obvious shortcoming for most service scenarios: voice calls are not where commerce happens. This technology parallels the customer journey, but it’s often not the primary avenue. Naturally, this results in increased effort to synchronize voice channels with the customer environment. Customers do business with companies on their website, in the mobile app, and in stores. When calling for help, the customer must give context to their problem that doesn’t inherently exist within the voice channel.

Leaders in customer service recognize the value of zero-effort context, enabled by many web chat, in-app support platforms, and other closely connected technologies. When customers initiate a chat while browsing a website, agents are provided instant visibility to the customer’s current page, browsing, and search history. Click-to-call integration may offer similar familiarity. However, when customers manually dial a telephone number, they must verbally relay this information to agents in conversation.

A standard shortcut to this challenge is customer identification; upon learning which customer is reaching out, agents may recall their past activity from a customer relationship management or contact center tool. However, this method results in increased handle time and error rates, thereby raising the cost to serve each customer. As contact centers explore new channels and new ways of delivering service, it’s vital to consider how they manage the customer journey and maintain continuity behind the scenes.
PHASES OF CHANNEL LAUNCH

Most contact center leaders already struggle with an excess of channels to consider, and new ones seem to emerge every day. Modern omnichannel tools enable technical compatibility with nearly every imaginable method of communication. With open and flexible application programming interfaces (APIs), the possibilities are limited only by your imagination. It’s technically easy and quite tempting to turn on all available options, but opening the floodgates comes with numerous business risks.

From a technical perspective, omnichannel contact center technology views all channels as equal, give or take a few technical limitations of each platform. Customers have another perspective. Each channel lives within its own ecosystem, on its own platform, with its own rules of engagement, etiquette, and expectations for timeliness and response quality. Best practices for email, such as extended formal greetings, restating our understanding of the issue or request, and extended signoffs are totally inappropriate for a direct message on social media and technically inadvisable for text messages. Conversely, the short, direct, single-sentence replies warranted by text messaging come across as lazy and careless if sent by email. Failure to understand each channel’s nuances and adapt our communication style appropriately appear unprofessional and degrade customer confidence in our ability to serve them.

Organizations must also evaluate fraud, security, and regulatory concerns native to each supported channel. Asking the customer to read a credit card number over the phone or type it into the live chat on our website can be perfectly acceptable while sharing the same information through another platform’s instant messaging might not be. Asking the customer to change channels mid-conversation can be extremely frustrating, even if the purpose is to protect their data. If a high rate of requests through a particular channel requires switching, it could be better to discourage customers from using that channel altogether. To further complicate matters, we often don’t know how customers will use each channel until we witness their behavior first-hand.

For these reasons and more, it’s wise to take a measured approach when launching new channels. It’s perfectly natural to fear the unknown. By recognizing that it’s not an all-or-nothing decision, contact center leaders can embrace the future gradually, avoid missed opportunities, and eventually add service offerings with confidence and competence. Consider using these phases to introduce new ways of communicating with your customers:

1. Listen In

Customers are already probing your contact center, searching for new openings to see what hidden options are available. They’re replying to your do-not-reply email address, they’re texting your toll-free number, and they’re tagging you on social media platforms you don’t use. Customers are talking to you; the first stage is to open your ears. Many contact center leaders are surprised when they learn that customers have been texting them all along. This early stage of listening will give you an idea of customers’ appetite for the new channel. While you’re not necessarily obligated to reply immediately, these messages have always fallen on deaf ears before, it is advisable to provide some type of automated message to ensure customers know this channel is not in service.

2. Reply Cautiously

As you begin to monitor new channels, you’ll undoubtedly identify opportunities for quick wins. Take a chance and surprise a customer by replying to their message. Observe where the conversation leads. If possible, ask why the customer prefers this unsupported channel. Their answer may be enlightening. At this stage, replies are bespoke and may require frequent channel switching, but it offers the opportunity to learn more about customer behavior.

3. Pilot Quietly

The beauty of some channels is the ability to enable and disable support without drawing much attention. If a few customers are surprised to find a live chat button on your website one day, they likely won’t notice its absence the next. Working with a close team who can adapt quickly to new surroundings, begin a preliminary pilot program one shift at a time. Thoroughly document contact reasons, outcomes, and other critical metrics to assist in future planning. Just be careful not to start too big and set unintended expectations at this stage.

4. Integrate Strategically

With the insight gained from your early experimentation, begin to imagine how the new channel fits into your service portfolio. At this stage, you’re able to roughly anticipate demand, assess capacity and resource requirements for a successful launch, and identify additional training needs for agents to support a new channel. At this stage, determine how you’ll measure performance and quality in the new medium and assess the costs, benefits, and risks associated with its support. Continue gradual trials refining your understanding along the way. Slowly make the new channel part of the daily routine.
5. Embark Slowly

Your shiny new channel is practically ready for its debut, but there’s one last step to work out final kinks. Prepare a “soft opening” for the new service. Review customer demographics and contact patterns and selectively invite likely interested customers to test your service. As demand builds slowly, continually refine your operation before inviting additional customers.

6. Speak Loudly

You’ve made it! At this stage, you’re likely confident in your new capabilities and understand their limitations, considerations, and best use cases. At this stage, show off your accomplishments and broadly advertise the latest offering to the public. You’ll continue to improve as you gain more experience, but most of the wrinkles have already been ironed out.

**CHANNEL LAUNCH CHECKLIST**

Successfully launching a new channel requires mastery of three domains vital to its success: people, process, and technology. This checklist will help you evaluate your readiness to take on new channels in your contact center.

**People**

- Our contact center has the necessary staff to support customer demand for the new channel.
- Agents understand their tools, technical limitations, and customers’ expectations for the new channel.
- Leadership has a strategy for allocating personnel to the new channel, whether through dedicated or blended agents.
- Agents have formally practiced the communication skills the new channel demands.
- Agents are empowered with alternative solutions and the ability to make channel switching seamless, where necessary.

**Process**

- We have developed formal guidelines for quality contacts in the new channel and have a strategy to evaluate our team’s success.
- We have established service targets relevant to customer expectations on each channel, such as time to respond.
- We have a formal system for managing queues on the new channel, ensuring that other channels are not neglected in the process.
- There is an avenue for agents to become trained on the new channel or return to another channel, enabling job rotation based on skills, abilities, and preferences.
- Our contact center has a single source of truth for customer records and institutional knowledge, ensuring consistent capabilities and answers across all channels.

**Technology**

- The tools required to support a new channel are as closely integrated with other systems as traditional channels; no channel is at a disadvantage.
- We have a formal process for tracking the types of requests coming through the new channel and whether it was resolved within the new channel without switching.
- Canned and automated messages are customized to be appropriate for the new channel and are consistent with our desired brand voice.
- We have the capability and process to support quality reviews, job shadowing, and training on the new channel.
- Where necessary, cases may be routed or transferred to agents based on the skills needed to resolve a contact without channel switching.
FOCUS AREA 3: EMBRACING COMPOSITE EXPERIENCES

The lines between online, at-home, and in-store engagements continue to blur as businesses innovate the delivery of their goods and services. Likewise, the breadth of contact centers’ responsibility has similarly expanded and become fuzzy. Once answerable for efficiently handling a narrow scope of requests under their immediate influence, they are increasingly responsible for a growing share of touchpoints across the enterprise.

Contact centers and their frontline agents have always comprised one of many faces representing a brand, but as faces disappear from other touchpoints, they inch closer to becoming the only face. After playing a supporting role for many years, they’re up for the challenge. However, contact centers must carefully reconsider what it means to be in the spotlight. It’s no longer about making the lead actor look good; it’s about becoming the lead actor that moves the plot forward.

Customers have always expected businesses to guide them through uncertainty and take decisive corrective action when things go wrong. They once had multiple contacts to pursue solutions, but customers will now look to contact centers to represent all facets of a business’s operations. This new paradigm will require impressive situational awareness, seamless interdepartmental collaboration, effective knowledge management, and empowerment with a bias toward action. Furthermore, the successful enablement of these experiences requires specific skills, processes, and technology.

As new channels come online, each with their own requirements, contact center agents’ ability to adapt will become critical. Various forms of written communication are exploding in popularity, but customers still demand personalized responses. Contact centers will also need strong, internal technical teams to manage the integration of their tools and channels. The ability to iteratively improve technology and adjust to new operating environments will be essential. Finally, these teams will need customer-focused leaders who can work across various silos within organizations, uniting everyone to common goals. Changing skill requirements also creates exciting opportunities to retain and grow employees within the contact center, solving the common complaint of limited upward mobility.

The process that contact centers use to manage and resolve customer inquiries must also evolve to accommodate new conditions. The central organization and management of knowledge across the entire enterprise, not only the contact center, will be vital to the support of connected experiences. Collaboration and escalation processes must also be reevaluated to determine if they meet customer needs at various stages of their lifecycle. Some touchpoints will demand total contact ownership of contact center agents, while others may remain acceptable to defer. Service decisions will increasingly need real-time intelligence about other parts of the organization, external partner service providers, and customers.

Finally, all of these concepts will come together in the form of unified contact center technology. Bringing channels together into a single solution is the easy part. Integrating these tools with other business applications, such as customer relationship management, order management, inventory software, and e-commerce platforms, are needed to achieve the full effect. The functionality will continually be extended and enhanced by APIs and other third-party integrations. Contact centers must acquire the resources to leverage technology to its fullest extent to maximize their capabilities.
CONTACT CENTERS’ ROLE IN EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

Contact centers wear a variety of hats in the customer experience endeavor. Understanding these functions, optimizing how they’re filled, and contributing to the whole company’s success is vital toward successful operations and customer loyalty. This section explores some roles that contact centers commonly play within their organization and suggests questions to identify areas of opportunity.

The Provider

Of course, a contact center’s most prominent role is to deliver customer service, answer questions, and resolve customer problems. In this function, they must be available when and where customers need assistance while balancing customer demand with cost-effectiveness. Contact centers must also ensure accurate information is delivered consistently across all contacts and channels.

- Is customer service always available when customers need help? What opportunities are missed? What are the alternatives?
- Can customers get help consistently on the channels most convenient for them? How can the contact center be more accessible?
- Do customers always receive consistent, accurate answers to their questions? Why or why not?

The Listener

Because they interact directly with customers, contact centers have some of the best visibility to customers’ wants, needs, and preferences. They must listen closely for unexpected feedback and take responsibility for capturing, organizing, and sharing what they learn with stakeholders who need to know. Responsibility for closing the loop with customers who provide feedback through other channels, and making amends where appropriate, often fall on contact centers, too.

- Are agents trained to recognize comments made in passing, without the customer using the word “feedback” or “complaint”? How can this skill be developed?
- Do agents have a central repository for unexpected customer feedback? How do you organize and act on this information? Does it get to the person who can take action?
- When problems occur, are agents empowered to make it right, offer fair compensation, and prevent the problem from recurring without seeking special approval? How is this process tracked and managed? How can it be improved?

The Advocate

Not all parts of the organization share contact centers’ appreciation for customers’ ideas and frustrations. As such, it becomes their responsibility to advocate for customers’ interests and convince coworkers of how their actions impact the customer. Contact center leaders must build trust and mutual respect with their counterparts across the organization to earn the right to advocate on customers’ behalf.

- Do contact center managers have strong relationships with other groups that serve the customer? How can they be strengthened?
- Do other departments respect feedback about their operation when it comes through the contact center? How can you build rapport?
- Does contact center leadership speak on behalf of the customer without personal bias or conflict of interest? Do outside stakeholders agree? How can trust be improved?
The Fall Guy
When failures occur in other parts of the organization, contact centers take the heat. Customers don’t directly call production, distribution, or quality departments when products are delayed or damaged; they reach the contact center. The costs of failures often appear in contact center budgets and force them to be the squeaky wheel, even when they’re not at fault.

- Are agents trained to accept responsibility for failures on behalf of the company, or do they commiserate with customers? How can we create positive conversations?
- Do agents see progress toward eliminating the root cause of problems that frustrate customers? Would better communication build their confidence in the brand?
- Is sufficient time allowed for mental breaks and self-care so that agents always have a fresh face for the customer? How are their collective attitudes measured and managed?
- Does the contact center track resolution of service failures on behalf of other business units? Are costs quantified and shared? Is this data used to build business cases for improvement?

The Organizer
Because of the contact centers’ central role in the customer experience and relationships across the organization, they’re poised to take the lead on experience enhancements. To gain control over their workload and costs, contact center leaders must work cross-functionally within the organization to reduce points of failure and eliminate friction for customers.

- Who in your organization bears ultimate responsibility for the customer? Are they within the contact center or another unit? How can you gain clarity and create accountability if it doesn’t exist?
- What organization-wide initiative would have the most significant impact on reducing contact center costs? What steps are underway to achieve it?
- Does the contact center have access to customer insights from other parts of the organization? Who owns this information? How can it be obtained and leveraged?
CONCLUSION

It is an exciting time to be in the contact center business. As companies experiment with new ways to deliver goods and services, contact centers will remain at the forefront of customer communications. Our role is essential in building rapport, solving problems, and ensuring customer loyalty persists in an age where switching providers has never been more convenient. As modern contact centers’ needs evolve, new career paths are emerging, and opportunities are plentiful.

Technology is no longer a luxury for customer management; it’s the price of admission. Customers continue to find new ways to communicate with the organizations that serve them, and they’re asking for more continuity between contacts and touchpoints than ever before. Fortunately, development is keeping pace. Commercially available, off-the-shelf solutions are finally a practical alternative to building systems in-house. Many offer robust APIs and customization options that make their functionality limitless. Adding channels, features, and capabilities has become as easy as shopping an application marketplace for compatible integrations from a diverse, competitive ecosystem of providers.

Ultimately, customers will benefit from improved collaboration, better intelligence, and cost-saving solutions. Businesses will be right where customers need them, ready to engage the necessary and diverse resources to deliver personalized experiences that perfectly meet customer needs. They’ll also provide service with fewer defects, less repetitive effort, and just-in-time to meet customer demand. In turn, those who master the connected, modern economy may expect greater profitability, loyalty, and long-term outcomes.

Check out Vonage’s latest report on global customer engagement to see how consumer communications preferences have rapidly evolved as a result of COVID-19.
We are all striving to be better. Whether it’s being better people, better leaders, or better organizations, improvement and advancement is at the heart of our daily intentions.

For the contact center, this mission of constant improvement is fundamental to every interaction. We need to meet the expectations of our customers in ways that improve their satisfaction and brand loyalty. We need to improve employee engagement as we build their skills, knowledge, and experience in ways that grow their own loyalty and improve retention. We need to improve our organization’s operational efficiencies in ways that drive revenue and improve the bottom line.

No one understands the contact center’s focus on improvement like ICMI does. We champion contact centers and their people, and our mission is to make both better every day. Through training, consulting, content and events, we unite the community and empower contact centers to serve their customers better, engage their employees more, and improve the customer experience.

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