



3 Ways to Transform Contact Centers Into Strategic Business Assets

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In a digitally powered world, leading companies know that customer experience is king. In retail, for instance, customer experience is what keeps shoppers closely engaged with brands and creates profitable upselling opportunities. Contact centers are on the front lines of successful customer experience strategies – they're where consumers resolve problems, learn about new deals, and ultimately are made to feel valued by the business.

But retailers aren't the only ones that understand the elevated importance of these resources. Whether they communicate with consumers, business partners, or internal employees, enterprises of all types are redoubling their efforts to increase the business value of their contact centers and help desks. This

customers. The following three steps can help organizations achieve success.

1. Start with a clear understanding of potential business benefits. When reps in customer-focused contact centers shift from just triaging calls and solving problems to enhancing customer experience, they build closer relationships with clients. This can enhance consumer loyalty and even spur shoppers to make additional purchases, such as extended warranties for products, platinum-level upgrades for services, and new products of which they wouldn't otherwise be aware.

Similarly, an internal help desk that provides superior performance ensures that questions and problems don't keep employees from being fully productive. A successful help desk experience also reinforces the employer's reputation as a successful, well-managed organization worthy of top talent.

2. Look beyond traditional ways of providing assistance and measuring success. Transformation strategies must give today's digitally savvy consumers and employees multiple communications channels, including multilingual telephone reps, live chat sessions, responsive email exchanges, web forums, and social-networking support.

In addition, while high first-call resolution rates and low numbers of repeat calls are still important, they've become table stakes in today's highly competitive world. It's essential to track new performance indicators, such as data that demonstrates an enhanced customer experience by successfully resolving problems that your most profitable customers encounter. Similarly, analyses may show how a responsive help desk reduced downtime among line-of-business workers.

3. Promote self-help services. Enabling customers and employees to find their own answers to routine questions and problems relieves pressure on contact centers and help desks, and frees highly trained reps to

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Enabling customers and employees to find their own answers to routine questions relieves pressure on contact centers and help desks, and frees highly trained reps to perform more valuable strategic roles.

helps explain why spending for hosted contact centers in the United States is on pace to grow nearly 12% a year to \$2 billion from now through 2018, according to IDC.¹

But spending alone won't turn contact centers and help desks from a necessary cost of doing business into a strategic business asset. To succeed, CIOs and CFOs need a comprehensive transformation strategy and the insights to know when to elicit the help of a leading service provider.

3 Steps to a Modern Contact Center

To fully capitalize on contact centers, CIOs must address the needs of both external and internal

7 MUST-HAVES FOR A MODERN CONTACT CENTER

Not all managed service call center providers deliver the quality that growing enterprises need. Here are seven capabilities to look for.

1. **Cultural compatibility** that ensures you'll be a priority for the provider, and it will be effective at promoting your brand and corporate identity when interacting with customers and employees.
2. **Highly trained reps**, with multilingual, accent-neutral phone personalities and the ability to discuss highly technical problems in laymen's language.
3. **A full range of communications options**, including voice, live chat, email, web, and social media support.
4. **Sophisticated reporting and analytics capabilities** that enable the provider to give you raw data about important performance indicators; top providers also will meet regularly with clients to explain results and identify key emerging trends.
5. **Self-help options**, such as training materials, how-to videos, and other tools, to reduce call volumes, save money, and increase the satisfaction levels of your customers or employees.
6. **Effective innovation** that indicates the provider stays up-to-date on rapidly changing contact center technology and is able to quickly capitalize on new developments.
7. **Financial strength** to ensure that the service provider has a business model and track record that indicate long-term stability to avoid future disruption in this important resource.

perform more valuable strategic roles. To do this, CIOs should provide a portfolio of wikis, interactive forums, FAQs, and training materials covering common issues.

Profit With the Right Partner

Although turning contact centers and help desks into strategic assets may be a top priority for many enterprises today, not every CIO has the time, internal talent, or training materials needed to get the contact center to the top of its game and keep it there. To balance new requirements with resource realities, many organizations choose to partner with a third-party service provider that can augment the work of internal departments; alternatively, organizations can outsource their contact center and help desk activities completely.

The best managed service contact centers offer a wide range of benefits. They have expertly trained reps staffing phone lines and digital communications channels who can effectively promote your brand and corporate identity. These reps stay current with the latest best-practices for speeding response times and increasing service quality to reduce overall

costs and bolster line-of-business productivity.

Clients can take advantage of the specialized training these reps receive to guide consumers to make additional purchases. Leading service providers also offer broad expertise to help CIOs think through the rules, regulations, and processes needed to economically service customers and employees. Finally, help desk experts let in-house subject matter experts – those valuable folks who get diverted from their duties to become ad-hoc problem solvers when someone needs to reset a password or clear a printer jam – stay focused on more valuable activities.

Long-Term Assets

Modern contact centers not only tackle customer problems and concerns, they promote new and add-on products and services that attract additional revenue. Well-managed help desks make employees more productive by quickly resolving problems to maintain uptime. With the right strategy and outside service provider, CIOs can turn these former cost centers into strategic business assets. ■

1. Melissa O'Brien, [U.S. Hosted and On-Demand Contact Center Services 2014–2018 Forecast: Customer Experience Driving Contact Center Interactions to the Cloud](#), IDC, Feb. 2014.

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