UPGRADING AND MONETISING YOUR CONTACT CENTRE

Kytec

As cloud solutions are increasingly adopted; customer experience is elevated as a critical business function and distributed working becomes the norm (post-COVID), the contact centre is becoming a critical lever for increasing productivity, generating new income streams and optimising service levels – turning the contact centre into a profit centre.

This paper investigates the benefits of upgrading your contact centre solution, the logical triggers for making change and the key considerations.

Introduction

The contact centre is one of the most critical functions of any organisation, but too often it has been seen as a cost - and measurement has largely focused on efficiency metrics. Typically, those responsible for the implementation and management of the contact centre have been consumed by the day-to-day management and reporting and have struggled to manage the broad range of stakeholders within their organisation - and as a consequence haven't focused on how the contact centre can create greater value for their business. The transactions managed through, and the information generated by the contact centre directly impact Marketing, Sales, IT, Senior Management and Finance.

However, things are changing. The widespread adoption of cloud contact centres has simplified the IT management overhead and commercial modelling, so organisations can focus more on the customer experience and monetisation. The traditional communication channel of 'voice' has now expanded to chat, messaging/SMS, email, social media and AI driven bots. *The call centre has become the contact centre*.
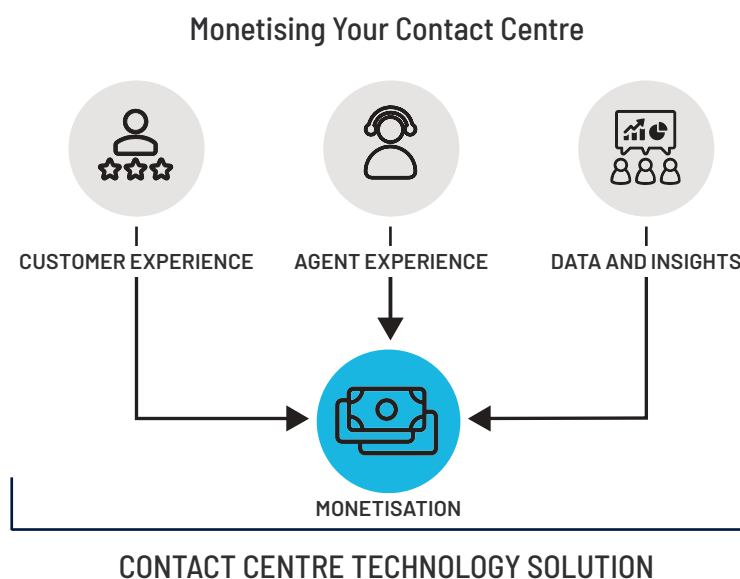
COVID-19 has also had an impact. Because of the increasingly distributed workforce, for example, agents working from home, the contact centre is no longer *four walls with agents taking calls 9 to 5*. It consists of agents working in the office or at home; using multiple channels to engage with customers and service has expanded outside traditional working hours. A cloud solution is ideal for managing fluid contact centres and this new hybrid way of working.

While customer experience is a powerful KPI because it translates into loyalty, improved NPS (net promoter score[1]) and better brand - smart organisations are monetising their contact centres by combining a great customer experience with data insights to improve productivity and generate new revenue streams.

In a world where products and services are becoming increasingly commoditised, customer service, which can largely be delivered through your contact centre, can be a significant competitive advantage. And leveraging the wealth of data in your expensive CRM can be particularly powerful. It can improve both the quality of service and sales revenue.

So ultimately, a considered contact centre strategy can drive increased profitability for an organisation through cost savings, efficiency and productivity management combined with improved NPS, customer retention, and incremental sales to both new and existing customers.

Monetising Your Contact Centre

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE   AGENT EXPERIENCE   DATA AND INSIGHTS

MONETISATION

CONTACT CENTRE TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION

1 Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a customer loyalty and satisfaction measurement taken from asking customers how likely they are to recommend your product or service to others on a scale of 0-10

Key Challenges and Triggers
for Change

Re-evaluating and upgrading your contact centre can be driven by IT considerations or other strategic initiatives in the organisation that need to be delivered through the contact centre.

Below is a table which summarises some of the key triggers for change in the contact centre.

Trigger	Impact
Legacy or end of life hardware	Decreased reliability/degraded performance. No vendor support.
Increased strategic focus on customer experience	Driven by senior management or marketing. The contact centre is an important customer engagement channel.
Agent fatigue, low morale and turnover	The average cost to onboard an agent is $12,000 - $25,000 and it takes approximately 2-6 months to build competency levels. Service performance is also impacted. Under resourcing and poor tools leads to agent burn out.
Cloud strategy	Organisation decides to move its IT infrastructure and key applications to the cloud and the contact centre becomes part of this process.
Poor resourcing and planning	High call abandon rates, long hold times, complaints on social media, poor feedback or NPS scores.
Need to improve security and data privacy	Potential for data breaches and identity fraud, particularly where agents are increasingly working from home.
Commercial considerations: Drive to protect and grow revenue streams	The contact centre becomes an important sales channel: customer acquisition, customer retention, growth and cross-sell.
Fragmented customer experience	Siloed data; poor communication across the business; multiple touches for a single issue or problem; customer attrition/churn; lack of visibility of the customer journey; low NPS scores.
Need to leverage CRM investment	The CRM is a significant investment but the contact centre creates an opportunity to generate value from the data and insights. Segment customers; anticipate customer call to action/requirements; create an ecosystem for all customer touchpoints.
Business wide transformation project	Driven my senior management. Contact Centre becomes a critical project stream.
Need to expand number of channels for engaging customers	Need to upgrade contact centre capability and move beyond voice alone to chat, social media, email, bots, etc to improve service, give customers choice, improve productivity and capacity management.

The Move to Cloud

"Companies that deploy contact centres in the cloud spend 27% less on their annual contact centre costs than their peers"[2]

Compute and storage functions started moving to the cloud – or data centres - 20+ years ago and now businesses are increasingly relying on SaaS applications (Software as a Service) for the key functions of their business, for example, HR, accounting, ERP, CRM and now the contact centre.

Moving your contact centre to the cloud has significant advantages.

Cloud contact centres such as Webex Contact Centre, remove the burden of infrastructure ownership and management, allow for automatic updates (evergreen application) and offer flexibility and scalability. And deployment and configuration is significantly faster. The reduced management overhead means that organisations can now focus their efforts on more 'value add' activities such as leveraging data and insights, improving customer service and monetising their contact centre.

The commercial model is also more attractive and flexible - using a cloud solution means converting capex into opex with the option of different payment or subscription models such as 'pay per call' or 'pay per agent per month'. There is the advantage of more accurately matching resources to requirements with the ability to scale as demand changes, for example, there may be peak months or peak events. According to research by Aberdeen Group, companies that deploy contact centres in the cloud spend 27% less on their annual contact centre costs than their peers[2].

Because contact centres are no longer 'physical spaces', driven largely by increased working from home, a cloud model has the flexibility to more effectively support agents working from different locations. All the agent needs is an Internet connection and a PC or phone.

Because a cloud contact centre is easy to customise, within given parameters, Aberdeen Group showed that organisations with a cloud contact centre were more likely to implement processes that improve performance[3].

A traditional on-premises contact centre does offer the ability to do deep customisation and allows for self-service resolution of certain issues by accessing code, but realistically, very few organisations have this need. There is also the option for more third party integrations, but this gap is closing.

Most vendors are focusing their R&D and roadmap investment on their cloud solutions as they see this becoming the default contact centre option.

"62% plan to implement a cloud contact centre within next 18 months"[3]

2   The Hidden ROI of a Cloud Contact Centre – The AberdeenGroup 2013
3   Cisco Global Contact Centre Survey 2020

UI/Agent Experience

"Over 90% agree the most important
capabilities for a contact centre solution
are intelligent routing, look/feel of UI,
and integrated omnichannel"[4]

The agent's interface for your contact centre application is important because it impacts their effectiveness and efficiency as well as their general level of engagement and satisfaction. Their satisfaction level in turn affects the quality of customer service, trust in the platform and reduces the cost of staff turnover.

Integrations with your CRM, and other information sources, make your agents more effective and 'smarter'. They can solve customer problems more effectively and quickly. Webex Contact Centre for example, can be easily integrated with Salesforce and Microsoft Dynamics, as well as Active Directory.

Typical functionality available to your agents includes:

- customer history across all channels

- visibility of queues and open conversations for every channel, including a virtual agent that is screening, directing or qualifying calls

- call transcripts including any survey scores or feedback from the customer

- short cut keys for common tasks

- dark mode which helps agents when they are looking at the screen for extended periods of time

- mid-call consult or transfer to another agent, queue or manager through the click of a button

- a range of widgets can be added, for example, for current promotions or order tracking

- knowledge articles to minimise training periods and provide information on new products and incentives

- historical and real time personal statistics to drive performance

A major benefit of a cloud solution is that new features and functionality are automatically and seamlessly deployed as they become available.

Because agents are increasingly working from home, the user interface needs to be simple and intuitive as your agents no longer have their peers or supervisor close by to assist with questions or issues. Agents prefer to have a level of customisation that reflects the way the agent wants to work.

As well as the agent interface, a simple, intuitive administrator interface allows for fast configuration and deployment/set up and any changes that need to be made over time. Some examples of configurable parameters include call flow design including menus and surveys; queue, team and site set up and profiling and skills or channel based routing based on created profiles.

"93% agree that technology is very important
in creating a better customer experience"[4]
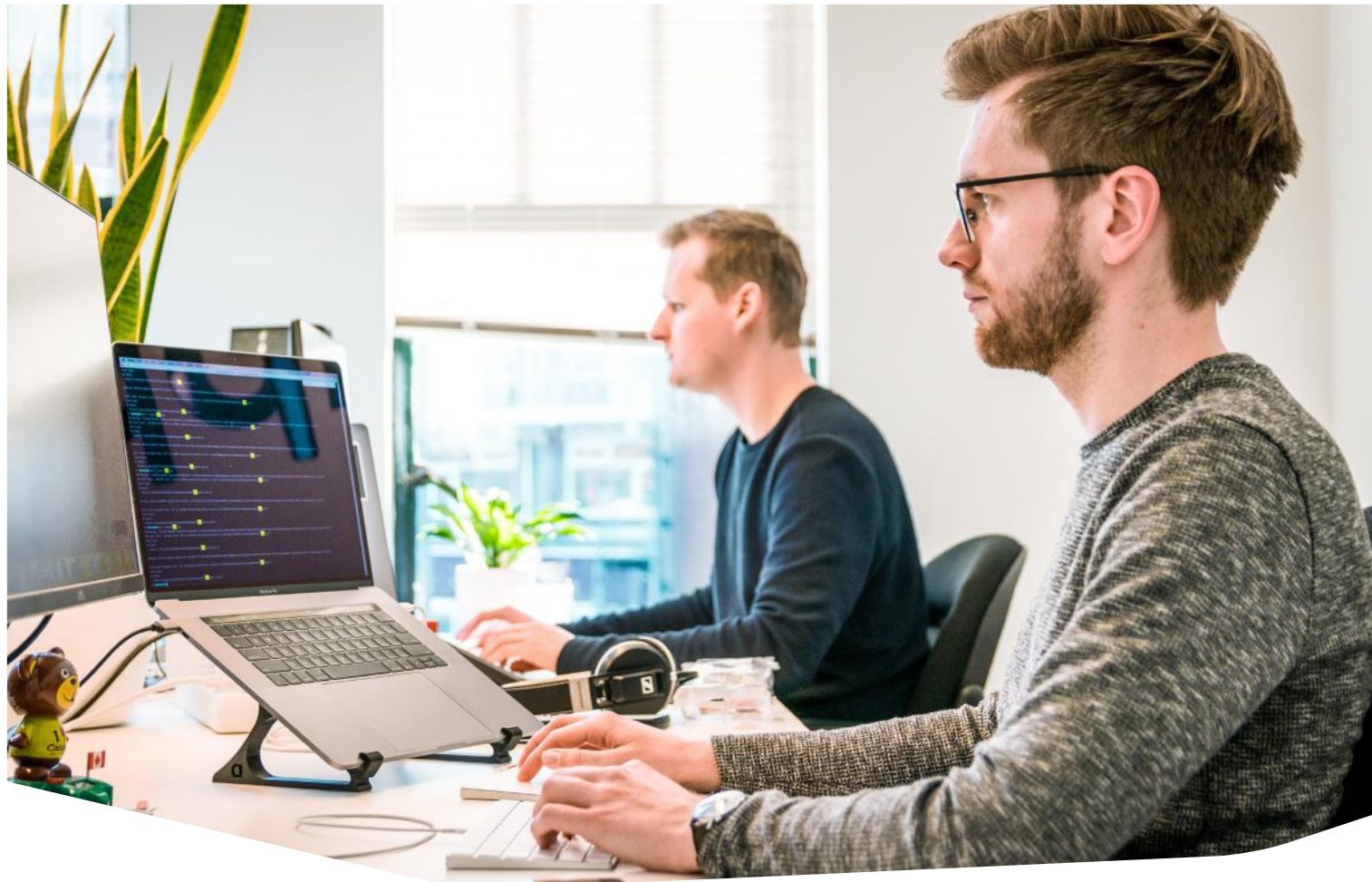
Workforce Optimisation

A workforce optimisation or workforce management application is important functionality for managing the efficiency, effectiveness and engagement of your agents, particularly as flexible working is increasing, and should be incorporated into your contact centre platform. It allows you to plan and manage your operations through advanced forecasting, dynamic scheduling, and intelligent automation, while also providing the tools and technology to empower and educate your agents.

The power of your workforce management tool is complemented by the intelligent routing, skills based routing and omni channel functionality of your contact centre application.

In practice, workforce planning is balance of art and science.

Multi-Channel Contact Centres

"Over 80% consider BOTS and AI robotic automation to be an important function of the contact centre"[5]

There has been hype around omni-channel and multi-channel contact centres for years. What this means is simply offering different communication channels for your customers in additional to traditional voice. Typical channels are voice/phone, email, text/SMS, messaging services, chat, video call, screen share, social media and self-service bots. The sophistication of self-service bots is improving.

Having multiple channels shouldn't be seen as a 'catch all'. Planning is still required. What you don't want is a customer trying a particular channel, not getting through, then trying another channel. The result is an unhappy customer and poor statistics in terms of abandon rates, issue resolution and repeat contacts, ie 'non-first contact resolution'.

Because telephone (voice) is an expensive channel and 'synchronous' meaning an agent can only deal with one customer at a time, new channels were initially seen as a way to reduce telephone traffic, resulting in cost saving and efficiency. However, broadly, telephone traffic has remained constant. The learning is that additional channels increase the options for providing better service and some people prefer certain channels and some tasks are more suited to certain channels. For example, a complex problem is best solved in a telephone call, but a simple account balance enquiry can be solved through chat. Certain channels can also be used to extend typical contact centre hours. For example, chat could be used after hours and on weekends.
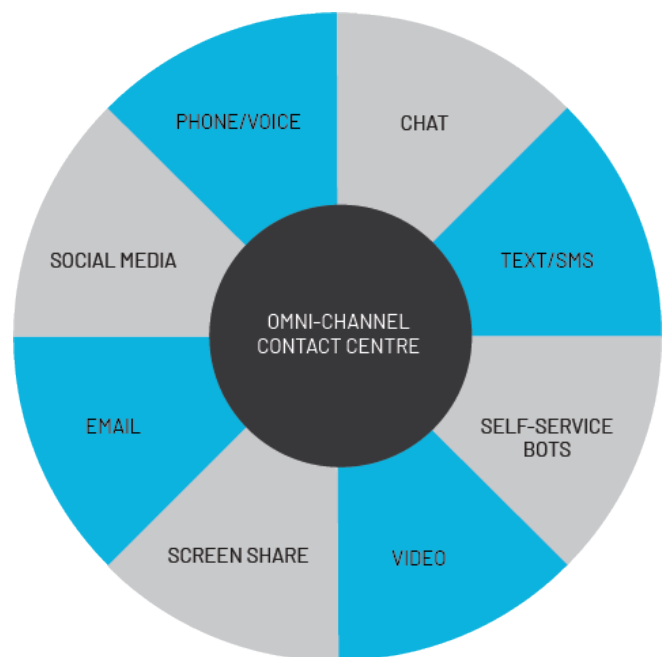
Wait time management is important and having different channels can be helpful. Perception of the wait time can be as important as the wait time itself. On hold music is an attempt to make waiting more enjoyable and regular updates on progress can help reduce anxiety.

However, while expectation management can help, it also has downsides. If you tell a caller their wait time is 5 minutes, they are likely to wait for the agent, but if the wait time slips to 30 minutes, the customer is likely to abandon the call which is not good for customer service/customer experience or call stats. Offering a different channel such as chat or a call back can help here.

5   Cisco Global Contact Centre Survey 2020

Leveraging Data Insights/Intelligent Routing

"90% consider customer journey data analytics an important function of the contact centre"[6]

Theoretically, in the majority of cases, you should know why your customers are contacting you – without them telling you. Based on typical touch-points in your customer journey and by looking at customer database (CRM), the reason for their call or contact should be clear. For example, they may be in arrears with their payments, so you may pre-emptively pass them to your credit team. In fact, you could handle this inquiry automatically, by offering them a payment service or give them a self-service option to request an extension. Or a bank may see that the customer's fixed term loan is nearing its end date, so you may pre-emptively send them to your sales team who can give them an overview of their options. For this last example, the bank could take a broader view at solving the customer's problem, by creating an interactive tool on their website, that steps them through the available loan options and allows them to select and enable a contract. This is a much better experience for the majority of customers and a more cost effective, scalable solution for the bank. Using this approach, it's only the 'exceptions' that flow into your contact centre.

Traditionally, intelligent routing meant directing a call to a person or team who has the right skill set to deal with a particular issue, for example, they may have knowledge of a particular product. But consider how the principle of intelligent routing can be applied to your customers.

Now, by accessing information in your CRM it's possible to segment your customers by any number of criteria, eg credit score, customer v prospect, number of interactions you've had with them, geography/location, age bracket, annual spend, share of wallet, etc. With this information, you can tailor your interaction, eg, route the call the best agent or team, engage them on the optimum channel or even automate the engagement, eg, allow them to make a payment over the phone, provide an account balance, etc.

Unfortunately, organisations often invest a large amount of money in their CRM without a plan to leverage the available data. This is like putting cheap petrol into an expensive sports car. Your contact centre is a tool that can integrate with, and leverage the insights in your CRM, making you money and represents only around 10%-20% of the cost of your CRM.

6   Cisco Global Contact Centre Survey 2020

Product Features Checklist

Contact centre functionality is being continually expanded, particularly cloud applications. Below is a check list of available features to consider. Some are basic and have been available for some time, while others have been released recently.

Of course, the main consideration is whether each feature can improve efficiency, the customer experience, the agent experience or contact outcomes.

- IVR (Interactive Voice Response) which is a menu for 'splitting calls' and directing them to specific agents, groups, communication channels or even self-service information

- Integrated multi-channel communication options (phone, chat, SMS, messaging service, bots, social media, email, video call, screen share)

- Call recording

- In queue treatment, position in queue, call back/opt out from queue, leverage digital channel (transfer from voice to chat or vice versa)

- Intelligent routing to specific queues, teams or agents

- Position in queue messaging

- Music or messaging on hold

- Automated outbound dialling

- Background noise cancellation

- Integration with UC and collaboration platforms with directory and chat options to loop in subject matter experts

- Screen pop to provide customer record from CRM system

- Address/phone book for simple contacts

- Knowledge portal

- Analytics/reporting

Leading vendors will be able to provide you with a roadmap of features.

Security

In addition to network security, there are two key considerations when it come to contact centre security. Firstly, there is the requirement to validate who the agent is speaking to/dealing with and secondly, there needs to be policy and process around the large amount of sensitive data that is at your agent's fingertips. Contact centre fraud is increasing.

Traditional identification (security check) has been done by the agent asking the customer a number of personal questions, but sophisticated fraudsters can assemble information about somebody from social media sources and assume somebody else's identity. This then gives them the power to access information, funds or change passwords and gain control of accounts.

To counter this, some organisations are using two factor identification where are code or a link is sent to a secondary device or a known mobile so the caller's identity can be validated.

Biometrics is also being used, eg identification using the caller's voice, but this has had its teething problems. Typically, the customer would record specific phrases which they would then be matched against next time they call. However, fraudsters use techniques to solicit and record these phrases from people they want to target, and then breach the identification process. A more sophisticated technique, passive biometrics, monitors the caller's voice through the entire conversation rather than relying on specific phrases.

Contact centre agents have access to sensitive and valuable financial and personal information. There is a risk is that they could be bribed to release this information or use the information themselves for personal gain. Strict identification can assist by filtering out fraudster, but internal risk needs to be managed through training and process.

Risk of information breaches and abuse can be mitigated by both role and workflow-based access controls. Roles define what a person (agent, performance manager, or scheduler) can do. Workflow defines temporary access to information based on an assigned task.

Essentially, it is a policy a framework, supported by a technology solution, for defining who should access what information and when.

7   Cisco Global Contact Centre Survey 2020

Monetisation

A call centre was traditionally all about customer service and call centre KPI's reflected this. It was seen as a necessary function of most organisations.

Improving the customer experience (CX), eg, solving problems efficiently through courteous and efficient agents, was seen as a way to build brand loyalty and improve an organisation's Net Promoter Score or NPS. Net Promoter Score refers to the likelihood of your customer recommending your company, your product or service to a friend or colleague. NPS and brand measures are important drivers of customer retention and future sales but a contact centre can also be used to generate 'current sales'.

But a broader view is emerging. You can monetise your contact centre by acquiring new customers, growing revenue from current customers, reducing customer churn or more effective debt recovery.

Some contact centres are set up with the intention of accepting inbound sales enquiries but the addition of data and insights, eg, from CRM, opens more avenues for revenue generation. For example, current customers can be sold other products from your portfolio or prospects can be sent to an acquisition team. If the customer does not want to purchase now, information and time frame can be captured by the agent, entered into the CRM and used for future marketing campaigns, or can be raised on future calls.

Another source of revenue is debt collection and payment acceleration, so relevant customers can be routed to specially trained agents.

More along the lines of the service-based contact centres, a high-quality customer experience can stem revenue loss or churn. The cost to acquire a new customer is a significant multiple of the cost to keep an existing customer, so optimising profitability means focusing both on acquisition and retention.

Considerations

Here are some important considerations for when you are designing and implementing a new content centre:

• What are your call volumes and how are they expected to change over time? What business initiatives and marketing programs with impact inbound traffic?

• Why are your customers calling you? Are you equipped in terms or people and processes to fulfill these requirements?

• What is your current NPS score? Does this need to be improved? Which internal stakeholders care about NPS?

• Are you measuring and tracking the number of complaints you are receiving?

• What are your service levels compared with your competition? Have you done any mystery shopping to find out?

• Do you have CRM integration? What information is available to be leveraged? And is information generated by your contact centre fed back to the CRM and available for other users, eg, sales or marketing?

• What are your measures of success/improvement? It could be NPS, complaint numbers, call abandon rates, first call resolution. What are the levers driving profitability in your business?

• What reporting is required? (trends, complaints, first call resolution – or not, call handling times, surveys, sales, etc)

• What requirements do you have around data security and privacy?

• What is your IT strategy and how is the contact centre aligned?

• Remember you can optimise and customise your call flows over time.

About Kytec

Kytec designs, deploys and manages a full suite of technology solutions for Australian businesses.

Kytec is certified in collaboration, cloud, security, enterprise networking, data centre, unified communications, contact centre, storage and data protection.

Kytec can provide advice and consulting with the objective of solving business problems and creating business value.

Kytec can run discovery workshops, product demonstrations, investigate pain points and provide recommendations for improved contact centre performance.

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