



Building the Contact Center of the Future

Adapting and Adopting to Meet Customer Preferences

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Executive Overview

The game of catch-up is one that many companies are all too familiar with when it comes to keeping pace with customer requirements. This is especially true for providing customer service where and when customers want it.¹ Whether it's the increasing use of mobile devices and social channels for inquiries and support, or expectations of real-time responses, companies are struggling to stay atop customers' ever-changing preferences and demands.

If this is today's reality, how will your company respond to customer demands three years from now? Or five years from now? The answer is, through agility. The contact center of the future must be agile enough to adapt quickly as customers' expectations shift with advances in and varieties of interaction options available to them.²

Contact centers also will need to provide more consistent support across the various channels that customers use.³ According to the American Express 2011 Global Customer Service Barometer, U.S. consumers prefer to resolve their customer service issues using a variety of touchpoints, including the telephone (90 percent), face to face (75 percent), company website or email (67 percent), online chat (47 percent), text message (22 percent), and social networking site (22 percent).⁴ (See Figure 1 on page 3.)

"There are dramatic changes occurring in the service industry that are transforming the ways that contact centers are going to have to interact with customers," says Mariann McDonagh, chief marketing officer at inContact. For instance, executives need to examine their business to determine the ideal mix of assisted- and self-service options they should provide to customers to optimize the service experience.

Catering to customer service preferences in the future will require process and technology changes. For example, to meet customer needs more quickly and effectively, companies must develop a more responsive approach, one that allows companies to better understand and react to customer needs in different channels and under a variety of circumstances in real time, says Don Peppers, founding partner at Peppers & Rogers Group.⁵ These kinds



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Readers of this white paper will learn:

- **What** the contact center of the future will look like and the capabilities it will encompass.
- **How** customer expectations for future support will progress across all channels, including social, mobile, and chat.
- **Which** tools agents will need to access to resolve customer issues faster and more effectively.
- **How** cloud-based contact center services are evolving to meet changing customer demands.
- **Why** the customer-company relationship will change, creating additional opportunities for building loyalty and customer lifetime value.

of capabilities also reflect the potential that a fully evolved contact center can achieve in strengthening the customer-company relationship. “Many people don’t understand what’s possible with a contact center,” says Paul Jarman, CEO at inContact. “Most companies simply deal with the pain.”

Increasing agility

Technological advances are enabling companies to accomplish much more than simply addressing customer issues. Cloud-based contact center services, for example, can be adjusted to meet rising or falling call volume on the fly or to quickly add functionality that supports freshly launched marketing or sales campaigns.⁶ This agility is imperative for quick, knowledgeable reactions to customer demands, whether in response to a product issue that goes viral in social media or to support unexpected demand for a new service.⁷

Decision-makers should also understand that the contact center of the future can’t rely solely on technological wizardry. To attract, engage, and retain customers, companies will need to provide agents with up-to-date customer insight so they can conduct knowledgeable, relevant conversations with customers. This includes access to transactional, behavioral, attitudinal, and other vital customer information.⁸

Such information will also enable organizations to contact customers to address service issues before they percolate. Reaching out to customers proactively can help strengthen loyalty by demonstrating that a company is acting in a customer’s best interest. Proactive customer contact can lower service costs by deflecting inbound contacts, and can help to differentiate companies at a time when it’s often difficult to distinguish themselves by price or product.⁹

As personalized, relevant, and timely customer support takes on greater importance for competitive positioning, decision-makers must plan ahead to ensure that they’ve taken the appropriate steps to build the contact center of the future. “Customer support is the last bastion of competitive differentiation,” says Cheryl Nolan, director at Peppers & Rogers Group.

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FIGURE 1: Customer Service Channel Preferences

Most consumers prefer to resolve customer service issues by speaking to an agent by phone, according to the American Express 2011 Global Customer Service Barometer Report. However, regional preferences show that consumers in India (81 percent) and Italy (74 percent) are also interested in using a company website or email to address a service issue while online chat and instant messaging is preferred among consumers in India (73 percent), Mexico (72 percent), and France and Italy (54 percent each).

■ Significantly higher than 5 other markets at the 95% confidence level

	U.S.	Canada	Mexico	France	Germany	Italy	UK	Netherlands	Australia	India
Speaking with a “real” person on the phone	90%	89%	91%	79%	80%	84%	90%	71%	90%	92%
Face to face	75%	80%	83%	78%	57%	76%	79%	72%	85%	87%
Company website or email	67%	65%	71%	71%	73%	74%	72%	60%	68%	81%
Online chat/instant messaging	47%	38%	72%	54%	36%	54%	38%	30%	33%	73%
Text message	22%	17%	39%	22%	17%	48%	26%	11%	22%	65%
Social networking site	22%	20%	41%	21%	21%	34%	19%	17%	19%	59%
Using an automated voice response system on the phone	20%	13%	36%	17%	14%	27%	10%	6%	10%	49%

Source: American Express 2011 Global Customer Service Barometer Report.

A Glimpse into the Future

For some people, images of future transportation, communications, and appliances bring to mind *The Jetsons*, the early-1960s animated sitcom depicting what life in the year 2062 might be like.¹⁰ In the *Jetsons*' home, for example, a robot takes care of many daily housekeeping chores.

But when it comes to envisioning what contact centers may look like three to five years from now, the *Jetsons*' parallel doesn't quite hold up. To be sure, technological sophistication, including the expanded use of virtual agents and self-service tools, will be more prevalent, and intelligent self-service technologies will also emerge, ones with dynamic answer engines capable of learning, and improving on, recommended solutions to customer issues.

But don't expect robots to replace human agents—at least, not in the next five years—because customers continue to yearn for interactions with human agents they can converse with and relate to. In fact, companies will continue to ramp up their use of remote agents to assist customers.

“One of the distinct differences I see between the contact center of today and tomorrow is that the future contact center isn't necessarily a point on a map in an urban center with 250 seats,” inContact's McDonagh says. With the growing use of virtualization technologies, McDonagh says, “it doesn't really matter if an agent is working in a cubicle in a company office or from a desk at home.”

The spread of virtualization is already occurring within some companies, including two of inContact's gaming industry clients, Electronic Arts and Activision.¹¹ Both make extensive use of at-home agents who prefer flexible shifts and the ability to keep up with their own gaming while supporting fellow gamers from their homes, McDonagh adds.

Of course, virtualized contact centers aren't exclusive to gaming companies. A growing number of business leaders from across different industries are taking a closer look at virtualization in their efforts to reduce high turnover in contact center staff and find more effective ways to attract and retain the best talent. “With gas prices soaring, it's becoming much more difficult to find agents who are willing to commute 30 miles each way for \$8 an hour,” inContact's Jarman says. “This is one of the reasons why many executives are examining virtualization, to help recruit and retain the best agents.”

Propelling productivity

Support.com is one inContact customer that has benefitted from deploying a virtual contact center.¹² When the company brought its technology services to the consumer market, it used an outsourcing provider to manage its contact center, but it quickly became evident that a home-agent model would be more cost-effective and competitive.

Since implementing inContact's cloud solutions, Support.com has saved an estimated \$3.4 million in annual productivity costs by enabling its 500-plus personal technology experts to work from home. The savings includes reductions in absenteeism.

As agents become increasingly dispersed, virtual face-to-face interactions between agents and customers via desktop video cameras will also become more widespread. This positions agents as video concierges. Companies are looking to have more meaningful interactions with their customers, regardless of their location, says Jon Blum, chief illuminator at Infinite Green Consulting, a firm that focuses on customer interactions. “This means agents will need to have more meaningful information about customers, the company, and its products at their fingertips [so they can] connect the dots through the customer's journey with the company,” Blum says. Having the right tools is critical for gathering and acting on customer information,

“The future contact center isn't necessarily a point on a map in an urban center with 250 seats.”

—Mariann McDonagh,
CMO, inContact

but it's not a solution by itself. "You've also got to have the right people in place who are good at listening to what the customer is telling them and able to respond well," he says.

The future agent

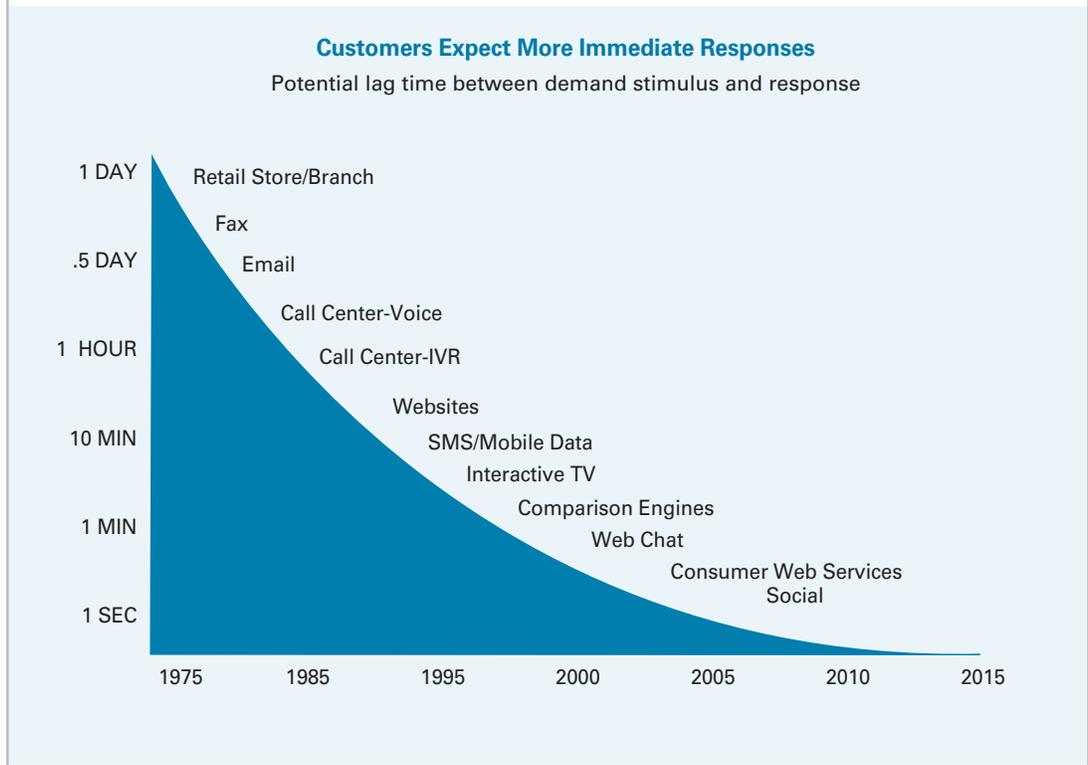
In the not-too-distant future, agents also will work differently, because they will have to multitask between voice calls, social, chat, and email interactions with customers. Today, most agents have to toggle between a set of standalone software applications on their desktops to access the information they need to service customers. The result is workflow fragmentation and a disjointed customer experience, McDonagh says. As agents increasingly respond to customer inquiries across multiple channels, they will need a seamless view of customer information that lets them manage their own time more effectively while fluidly meeting customer needs.

Having accessible, real-time customer insight not only helps strengthen the customer-company relationship, but also offers additional business benefits beyond increased loyalty and customer lifetime value. Contact center staff (including supervisors), for example, can represent as much as 75 percent of support center running costs, which makes it sound business sense for decision-makers to optimize agents with the right tools and information.¹³

In the not-so-distant future, agents also will work differently, because they will have to multitask between voice calls, social, chat, and email.

FIGURE 2: Customer Patience Is Thinning

As this chart from Gartner illustrates, customers have become less and less patient about resolving support issues as technology has become more advanced.¹⁴ Customers expect real-time responses in our always-connected world, especially in social and mobile interactions.



Source: *Customer Self-Service: Bringing the Processes Together*, Gartner Customer 360 Summit, 2011.

Meeting the Expectations of Tomorrow's Customer

Customers have “megaphones.”¹⁵ For some, it's a tablet. For others, it's a laptop or a smartphone. Customers who are thrilled or dissatisfied with their experiences with a company can now broadcast it to, potentially, millions of other customers or would-be customers via social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.). “As a result, there's a lot more at stake as to the consequences of a customer's support experience—not only the potential loss of that customer, but that customer's ability to share their experience with far more people than they ever could before,” inContact's Jarman says.

A growing number of consumers are doing just that. According to a 2011 survey by Spherion Staffing Services, when respondents have good customer support experiences, 17 percent of them will express their opinions via social media, while 15 percent will post online reviews.¹⁶ When customers have poor customer support experiences, 25 percent will vent about it in social media channels.

Consequently, companies that are able to effectively manage and collate the streams of customer data from different channels and use analytics tools to quickly decipher and act on customer sentiment or flag emerging trends are able to gain a competitive advantage, Peppers & Rogers Group's Nolan says. Based in large part on the exceptional experiences that customers have with such companies as Amazon and Apple, many customers now expect companies to be able to provide them with consistent support regardless of the channels they use (e.g., Web, chat, social, email). The always-connected customer of tomorrow won't have the patience or willingness to accept anything less.

Additionally, when these demanding customers connect with an agent, they'll fully expect that person to be knowledgeable about how to resolve their issue, as well as empowered to do so.¹⁷ They also expect that the agent will be able to resolve the issue more effectively than if they try to do so on their own using a search tool like Google. Agents will need to use tools like visual customer profiles that combine all known information about customers as well as automated pop-ups that advise agents on the next best action based on the use of voice or text analytics against real-time customer feedback.

Matching skills to channels

Increasingly, companies will need to identify and match agents with certain skills (e.g., written communications) to the most appropriate channel (e.g., chat, social). These types of skills also play a critical role when matching agents to a specific customer. For instance, agents who are adept at multitasking between different media can be assigned to support Millennials, customers born between 1980 and 1995.¹⁸ Companies will be able to use analytics tools to match customers to the right agents based on purchasing history, geography, demographics, recent behaviors, and more.

Customers also expect to be able to communicate with a contact center in far more ways than traditional person-to-person voice communications. They are increasingly using self-service tools, but when they turn to these offerings, they demand that the tools are intuitive and easy to use. Companies can address this by analyzing customer feedback and unsolicited sentiment about what customers like or dislike about certain self-service tools. Companies can act on this information and make the changes needed to help improve their self-service options. “Experiences, particularly those that occur in emotion-laden situations like customer service, are memorable,” Nolan says. “These represent moments of truth that can make or break the customer relationship.”

Delivering memorable, loyalty-building experiences requires companies to examine customer service from the customer's point of view.¹⁹ Doing so includes gathering and analyzing customer feedback to determine what's most important to customers and to ensure that assisted- and self-service options are meeting these requirements. This includes the use of speech and text analytics

Increasingly, companies will need to identify and match agents with certain skills to the most appropriate channel.

to interpret what customers share in voice and chat interactions with agents. Questions that decision-makers must ask include: What types of issues are our customers trying to resolve? How can we make it easier for customers to resolve these issues on their own, or more effectively connect customers with the right agent?

Obtaining and acting on these insights can go a long way towards strengthening the customer-company relationship by demonstrating that a company cares about what matters to its customers.²⁰ Companies that are able to effectively manage and collate the streams of customer data from different channels, and then use analytics tools to quickly decipher and act on customer sentiment, recommend next-best actions, or flag emerging trends, will be able to gain a competitive advantage.

Using the cloud to unify islands of information

Lofty customer expectations place tremendous pressure on companies to deliver solid support time after time, regardless of the channels that customers use. One of the key barriers to attaining the kind of agility and depth of customer understanding that contact centers will need to meet those expectations are the data and organizational silos that exist between different channels, functions, and systems. For instance, the walls need to come down between customer-facing areas like the contact center and non-customer-facing areas, such as accounts receivable and billing, as customers look to resolve issues quickly, regardless of where the answer to their inquiry lies.

Companies are further constrained by the rigidity of premise-based contact center systems. Whether a company needs to add agent seats to meet a sudden rise in support demand or simply to add new functionality to an existing contact center system, it can take days or even weeks to make the changes to legacy systems.

Using cloud-based contact center platforms, companies can help eliminate silos and make changes quickly by integrating various systems via Web services. This integration can provide a deeper multidimensional view of customers and their needs, preferences, and attitudes by eliminating disparate data sources and leveraging the intelligence that's trapped in islands of information, asserts inContact's McDonagh.

Doing so can provide agents with real-time relevant insights, such as whether a customer they're speaking with just tweeted a complaint about a product issue or if a recent chat session with that customer was satisfactorily resolved. These types of real-time insights can alert contact centers to a potential widespread product or service issue.

Contact centers can also use this information to provide customers with proactive service (e.g., "We noticed that your service is about to expire. Would you like to renew it?"). When handled properly, proactive service can lead to increases in customer satisfaction, loyalty, and customer value. Additionally, proactive service allows contact centers to better anticipate customer issues, enabling companies to resolve problems quickly, reduce the cost to serve, and avoid crises that drain valuable resources emotionally and economically, according to Peppers & Rogers Group's Nolan.

Proactive service builds goodwill and positive sentiment. Customers who are surprised and delighted by proactive service are likely to let others know about their experiences. "In social networks, positive word of mouth has a long tail," Nolan says.

Gaining a complete view of customers

Comprehensive customer insight offers decision-makers much more than a view into recent customer interactions. Given customers' rising use of social channels to share their experiences with companies, it's also important for business leaders to use cloud-based analytics and other tools to determine customers' social influence and short- and long-term financial value, and then provide an appropriate level of support, inContact's Jarman affirms.

The walls need to come down between customer-facing areas, such as the contact center and non-customer-facing areas, such as accounts receivable.

Understanding customer influence and having the capability to make the correlation between customer satisfaction and business performance are vital. ForeSee recently published a contact center benchmark study of about 11,000 customers in which it compared the likely future behavior of highly satisfied contact center customers (those who gave satisfaction ratings of 80 or higher on a 100-point scale) to that of less-satisfied customers (satisfaction ratings of 70 or below).²¹ The study reveals that highly satisfied customers are 154 percent more likely to purchase from that company again and 238 percent more likely to recommend the company to a family, friend, or colleague.

The most effective way to bring customer data together across siloed channels and organizational fiefdoms is by using a cloud-based contact center platform. Because a cloud-based platform is Web-based and makes extensive use of Web services, it's a useful way for decision-makers to break through the data silos that prevent them from gaining a holistic view of customers from the superhighway of customer information that's available.

Many customers today complain about how companies are unable to provide them with consistent support across all of the channels they use, including voice, IVR, email, chat, and social. Companies will not only need to bridge these gaps in the future, they will also need to provide customers with consistent and seamless multimodal experiences, Peppers & Rogers Group's Nolan asserts.

"Customers want to start a conversation in one channel and continue it seamlessly into another channel without having to repeatedly identify themselves and their problem," Nolan says, citing the common escalation from chat to voice. "Customers expect the support associate to know who they are, where they've been in the journey, and what they need to do next to solve their problem." Cloud-based contact center platforms enable agents to follow the customer's journey seamlessly, thanks to the use of Web services to integrate disparate channel applications.

"Customer support is the last bastion of competitive differentiation."

—Cheryl Nolan, director,
Peppers & Rogers Group

Case Study: H-E-B



Developing a Prescriptive Plan for Proactive Service

Having the ability to gather comprehensive customer information provides companies with a rich set of insights about customer needs, preferences, attitudes, and behaviors. Contact centers can use these insights to identify and act on support issues in different channels or to match the level of support to customer value. Companies can also use real-time data to provide customers with proactive service. A wireless carrier can alert customers, for instance, when they're about to go over the data allotted in their plan. Again, reaching out to customers this way demonstrates that a company cares about their interests.

One inContact client that does an exceptional job of this is H-E-B.²² The grocer, which operates more than 300 supermarkets and 219 in-store pharmacies in Texas and northern Mexico, leverages its customer prescription information to help notify customers through their preferred channel when a prescription is about to expire. If the customer doesn't respond after a period of time, H-E-B sends a reminder. If necessary, H-E-B will also reach out to a customer's physician to renew a prescription.

When companies like H-E-B go above and beyond in providing this type of proactive service to their customers, it helps to build trust with customers that can translate into greater loyalty and increased customer value. Providing its customers with outstanding service helps explain why, when it comes to customer experience, H-E-B ranked this year in the top 10 of 206 companies by Temkin Group, based on its annual study of 10,000 consumers. Instead of focusing on short-term profits and revenues, H-E-B takes a long-term view and provides proactive service to remain a customer's pharmacist for life.

Maximizing the Evolving Customer-Company Relationship

In the future the customer-company relationship won't be based on products and transactions, but instead on services and relationships. Unfortunately, too many company contact centers today are bogged down by inflexible processes, legacy technology, and inappropriate metrics like average handle time (AHT) that make it difficult to strengthen the company-customer relationship.

"The outcome is a tedious, sometimes fruitless issue resolution process," Peppers & Rogers Group's Nolan says. "It's a one-size-fits-all model that ultimately fits no one."

For companies to meet rising customer expectations, contact centers will have to provide consistent support across all channels. By integrating disparate systems that gather customer information across various channels, companies will be able to better understand customer needs, behaviors, and value to continually fine-tune support strategies that are tailored to specific customer segments.

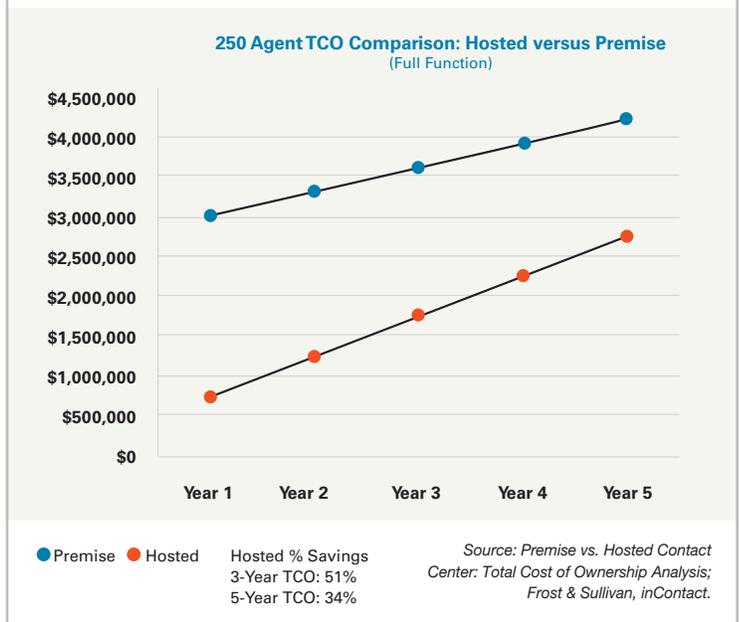
Adapting to ever-changing customer expectations requires more than selecting the right technology platform. Companies must also provide agents with continuous training, as well as incentives and rewards that are tied to customer satisfaction, loyalty, and measurable changes in customer value, Nolan asserts. To make this transition successfully, companies will also need to provide agents with greater autonomy in solving customer issues on the fly. Companies that haven't already started down this path should begin transitioning from a reliance on efficiency-focused metrics, such as AHT and calls handled per hour, to customer- and business-focused measurements like first-call resolution (FCR), customer satisfaction, and ROI.

There are multiple ways for companies to deliver better service and support to help strengthen the customer-company bond. For instance, a growing number of companies are tapping into their "power customers" as unpaid but willing advisors to provide technical support to fellow customers in company-hosted online communities. Forward-thinking business leaders will continue to leverage crowdservice as an alternative form of customer support to delight end customers who trust the advice of their peers. Meanwhile, crowdservice delivers other business benefits, such as reducing the number of calls to the contact center.

There are still more ways that companies can maximize the value of their evolving relationships with customers while keeping an eye on cost containment. A cloud-based platform provides companies the agility needed to meet dynamic customer needs and preferences. Additionally, a cloud-based approach offers other cost benefits that CFOs will appreciate. Companies have gradually added to their arsenal of legacy systems over the years while increasing the number of servers and storage devices to handle the exponential growth of data they're trying to sort through. Because of this, many decision-makers have become determined to reduce their IT footprints to reduce energy, staff, and real-estate costs. A cloud-based contact center elegantly suits

FIGURE 3: The Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) Benefits of the Cloud

Cloud-based contact center platforms provide companies with greater agility and financial benefits, as evidenced by findings from a recent Frost & Sullivan study.²³ For instance, shifting from a premise-based to a cloud-based contact center solution for a 250-agent setup can net a company 51 percent savings over a three-year period.



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Gaining Trust by Mitigating Risk

DATACORE Marketing provides its clients with marketing, technology, CRM, and contact center services.²⁴ The company's contact center, in Kansas City, MO, typically is staffed with from 40 to 60 agents. But if one of its clients needs additional contact center services, such as a healthcare company requiring extra agents during an open enrollment period, DATACORE can quickly ramp up to as many as 500 agents, supplemented by its extensive use of at-home agents located in the Kansas City metro area.

In the past DATACORE wasn't always able to respond quickly to its clients' needs. DATACORE once relied on an IVR system that was fairly rigid. It wasn't integrated with the various channels that DATACORE supports, including voice, email, and chat. This made it extremely difficult to track customer cases quickly and thoroughly across DATACORE's multichannel support matrix.

"It slowed us down and made our operations inconsistent," says Sarah McElwee, vice president of client operations at DATACORE. "And at times, it made things inconvenient for our customers if we weren't able to follow their thread of interactions from email or from chat to the call center." Plus, the premise-based contact center system made it virtually impossible for DATACORE to quickly scale up with agents when necessary.²⁵

Because of these constraints, DATACORE sought a cloud-based contact center platform that would give it the flexibility it needs to support customers across multiple channels.

The need for speed

"The idea of being able to receive instantaneous support has become very important to consumers," McElwee says. "A lot of people approach customer support like fast food—they expect to be able to enter their request and speak to an agent or be able to access their accounts quickly and responsively. This places increased pressure on the business, since customers don't have the tolerance to be put on hold for even 30 seconds." In addition, businesses need to meet these rising demands cost-effectively, McElwee adds.

"The idea of being able to receive instantaneous support has become very important to consumers."

DATACORE adopted inContact's cloud-based contact center platform in late 2011 in its efforts to provide seamless support to its clients' customers across all of the channels they use. DATACORE can now rapidly scale up and meet the needs of its clients—and their customers. It can quickly add at-home agents who need little more than a computer, an Internet connection, and a phone line. "Thanks to technology, today's consumer is really moving at a faster pace," McElwee says. "If we expect to keep and nurture customers going forward, we need to be able to respond to them quickly and completely."

Tallying the benefits

DATACORE's use of inContact's cloud-based platform has provided the company with a slew of financial benefits. By paying a flat monthly fee for use of the contact center platform, this eliminated the need for a big outlay of capital expenditures for switches, servers, storage, and the like to support a premise-based system.

In addition, DATACORE didn't need to purchase extra seat licenses for the system, as is the case with a premise-based system. That prevented it from having to pay for extra capacity or software that could potentially sit idle for months at a time. Instead, it only pays for what it uses, which led to an immediate reduction in DATACORE's cost per customer contact, as well as a reduction in its overhead costs for IVR, phone, and seat licenses.

Also, because the inContact platform includes an integrated workforce-planning tool, McElwee has been able to manage DATACORE's staff resources and more effectively do forecast planning. The improvements enabled DATACORE to increase the productivity of its contact center team by 15 percent after just one month. Of course, success does sometimes come at a price.

"These benefits have led our CFO to expect our side of the business to be very profitable this year," says McElwee. "I've had to calm her down a little bit."

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these endeavors, because it doesn't require equipment and personnel to maintain it on premise, inContact's McDonagh notes.

As companies develop expertise in matching the right agent to the right customer for the right situation, business leaders will also discover promising opportunities for identifying and acting on cross- and upsell opportunities with customers. Companies can leverage intelligent contact center platforms to route customers to the appropriately skilled agent. Agents armed with real-time customer data and targeted cross- or upsell offers via screen pops can act on that information and present an offer at the right time. These types of changes can help contact centers to transform from cost centers to profit centers, thus generating additional value to the enterprise, inContact's Jarman affirms.

Agents don't always come equipped with these skills. In the future, companies will need to invest more in agent training, including improving communication and interpersonal skills. Although there are obviously costs associated with staff training, companies that invest in and empower their employees ultimately end up with more satisfied and loyal customers, McDonagh says. Plus, e-learning tools make it possible for agents to participate in training during quiet periods or through agent rotation. This way, companies are able to leverage their resources more cost-effectively, instead of losing valuable agent productivity to lengthy classroom training.

In the future, companies will need to invest more in agent training, including improving communication and interpersonal skills.

Conclusion

The future is filled with uncertainty. However, there are two things that are undeniable: Technology will continue to advance at breakneck speed and customer expectations will continue to rise.

Will your company be able to adapt and provide the kind of differentiated support that separates it from the competition?

Preparing for the future begins with making needed changes today. For some companies, this may represent an increased focus on how they deliver social support. This could include more effective ways of tracking and acting on customers' social sentiments or providing social support via click-to-call or click-to-chat from a Facebook page, inContact's McDonagh notes. For others, it may be adding intelligent self-service technologies that learn and adapt to customer usage requirements.

Delivering next-generation customer service also means being able to deliver service and support wherever and whenever customers need it, Infinite Green's Blum notes. A cloud-based contact center platform can provide companies with an easier, more efficient delivery model for meeting customers' rising expectations.

Research shows that contact center satisfaction correlates with three loyalty metrics: consumers' willingness to repurchase, reluctance to switch, and likelihood to recommend.²⁶ Customer satisfaction in terms of customer service also correlates highly with consumers' overall perceptions of how useful, easy, and enjoyable it is to engage with companies.

"With improved data integration, deeper analytics, and predictive modeling, we will know customer needs immediately—even before the customers know they need help—and deliver the most economically feasible service level based on customer value," Peppers & Rogers Group's Nolan says. Evolving cloud-based contact centers will enable companies to meet all of these requirements and more, including greater responsiveness and agility for meeting customer needs.

One other thing about the future is certain: Companies must act now if they hope to attract and retain tomorrow's customer and succeed as a business. Standing on the sidelines isn't an option.

"The market is shifting," says inContact's Jarman. "Without the right contact center, you could be looking from the outside in." ■

inContact helps contact centers around the globe create profitable customer experiences through its powerful portfolio of cloud-based contact center software solutions. The company's services and solutions enable contact centers to operate more efficiently, optimize the cost and quality of every customer interaction, create new pathways to profit, and ensure ongoing customer-centric business improvement and growth.

For more information visit www.inContact.com.

Peppers & Rogers Group is dedicated to helping its clients improve business performance by acquiring, retaining, and growing profitable customers. As products become commodities and globalization picks up speed, customers have become the scarcest resource in business. They hold the keys to higher profit today and stronger enterprise value tomorrow. We help clients achieve these goals by building the right relationships with the right customers over the right channels.

We earn our keep by solving the business problems of our clients. By delivering a superior 1to1 Strategy, we remove the operational and organizational barriers that stand in the way of profitable customer relationships. We show clients where to focus customer-facing resources to improve the performance of their marketing, sales, and service initiatives.

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