

2015 Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report

Engagement models – go digital, or die



United States of America

The digital services revolution is here – it's real, and today's increasingly mobile customers are forcing organisations to adapt their engagement models, or lose relevance.

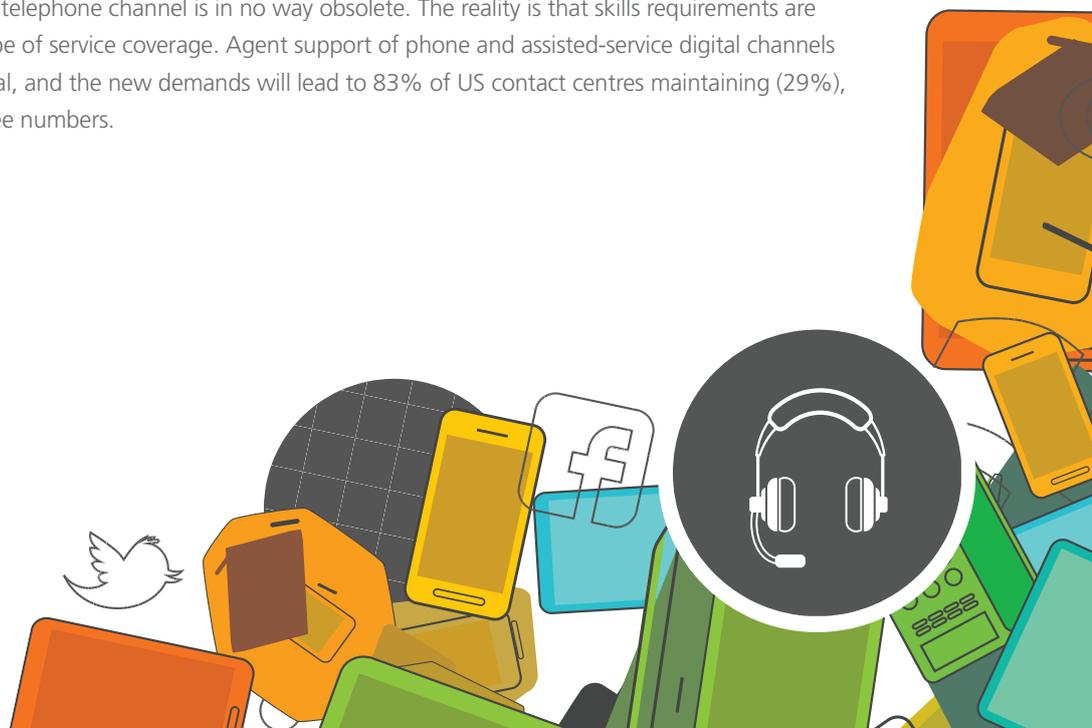
Results from the 2015 Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report show that non-voice traffic (digital) is set to rise in 88% of US contact centres within the next two years. Telephone traffic is forecast to drop in 32% of contact centres during the same period. In fact, based on information gathered over the last 10 years, trends indicate that the global contact centre industry will manage more digital interactions than voice within the next two years.

This represents the most significant change in the contact centre business in 30 years, and has profound implications for the way organisations deploy technology to deliver and manage customer service. Digital convenience is creating growth for the industry, and 79% of the country's contact centres expect combined volumes across all channels to rise by the end of 2016. This shift will transform contact centres from being telephone-centric stereotypes into customer resolution centres, and change the shape of the industry forever.

Customers have gone digital

As contact centres reinvent themselves over the next two years, customers in the US can anticipate common access to seven different digital channels, in addition to the telephone. Smart device apps' capability will grow to 57% (versus 54% globally); web chat will almost double to 70% (versus 70% globally), and social media presence is already at 40%. In fact, web chat is already the most preferred contact option for the country's lucrative Generation Y (19- to 34-year-olds), who only use the traditional telephone as a last resort. It's not customers who are failing to adopt new channels; contact centres have been slow to react, until now.

It's important to note, however, that the telephone channel is in no way obsolete. The reality is that skills requirements are growing along with the broadening scope of service coverage. Agent support of phone and assisted-service digital channels has become far more complex and critical, and the new demands will lead to 83% of US contact centres maintaining (29%), or growing (54%), their current employee numbers.





Omnichannel – integrated customer journeys

While digital is fast becoming a preference, the reality is that service consumers want outcomes. Ease of resolution is acknowledged as the top factor globally that impacts customer satisfaction. Customers want to be able to complete their enquiry within the selected channel and, if necessary, to experience an effortless transition to other channels on a cross-channel journey. This frictionless switching between channels defines the omnichannel experience. But, while it's now expected by consumers, the industry is still slow to catch up.

The impact of this trend on customer satisfaction is concerning. Of the 901 research participants polled globally, 75% recognise that service is a differentiator. It's also voted the most important strategic performance measure, yet customer satisfaction is down for the fourth consecutive year.

Analytics can be the game changer

Another challenge for organisations is determining not just what works for the consumer, but also the impact that each new interaction channel may have on the business, and its positive and negative consequences. For example, are sales conversion rates stronger over the telephone, or can an assisted online interaction provide the same value, but at a lower cost?

Ultimately, the goal should be to create genuine business value through improved customer experiences, and by optimising engagement models to deliver the most value at the least cost. Analytics holds the key.

Despite data analytics being voted the top factor to change the shape of the industry within the next five years, over a third (35%) of contact centres have no data analysis tools. In addition, almost half (49%) of the participants said their contact centres don't share customer intelligence gathered with the rest of the business, and 57% of core analytic systems aren't integrated across the organisation.

A widening technology gap

The combination of technology that's creating an omnichannel environment, the ability to analyse and act in real-time, and personalised customer service provides powerful resources for organisations to create a productive, digital customer engagement model. But the industry is massively unprepared.

An average of 35% of US organisations don't believe their ICT systems meet their current needs, and 83% say that their technology won't meet future needs. Add omnichannel to the mix, and the situation could get worse.

This is forcing vendors and consumers alike to explore new buying options and design innovative technology frameworks. The good news is that a new form of hybrid technology models, in which legacy systems work alongside cloud-based solutions, are providing alternative answers and some compelling results.

This is encouraging news for organisations under pressure to deliver. These systems are much quicker to deploy, so the return on investment for new technologies will be achieved faster. Cloud solutions don't have to be an all-or-nothing decision. With over 96% of the current users agreeing that cloud has reduced their costs, plus 89% confirming that cloud offers them access to new functionalities, new doors are opening.

These solutions will require integration, and the ability to deliver optimal functionality will greatly depend on the quality of the implementation as you journey towards a connected omnichannel strategy. You may need multiple applications to get the result that you want with your customers, but don't get left behind.

Customer engagement models are going digital. Can your organisation keep up?

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