

The connected center: Deliver superior CX to boost contact center value.

Contact Center Decision-Makers' Guide

Executive summary

Executives from more than 200 contact centers around the United States responded to a survey for the *2019-20 US Contact Center Decision-Makers' Guide* (12th edition). Following are some of their insights on how trends in mobile technology, data analytics and omnichannel marketing are shaping their operations, empowering agents and strengthening the customer experience (CX).

The modern contact center

Contact centers generate insight on customers that can greatly enhance the customer experience, boost the company's reputation and drive business profitability. To accomplish this, implementing performance metrics and workforce management solutions is key.

Quality improvement metrics

Key contact center metrics are evolving to focus more on the customer. While we used to measure performance by metrics like average call duration and cost per call, today, metrics like first-time call resolution and customer satisfaction rates put the focus on delivering positive experiences instead of operations and cost.

Impact of data analytics on workforce management solutions

Workforce management will continue to be one of the most important elements of ensuring contact center performance. Workforce management solutions now have to integrate cloud technologies and flexible working data, multichannel activity and the back office to ensure that they are accurately capturing all contact center activity.

Data analytics is likely to lead to advances in data modeling and analysis that will add crucial functionalities to future workforce management offerings:

- Artificial intelligence (AI) will improve forecasting and optimize scheduling needs
- Customer journey analytics, software that helps companies manage CX across all touch points and channels, will ensure that back-office workloads are optimized to fulfill transactions

The connected enterprise

The enterprise is connected to its employees and customers in several ways. The following technologies enable flexibility and operational efficiency that enhances the customer experience:

Self-service

Customers expect brands to recognize and respond to their needs when and where they need service. While many still want to talk to a human to resolve issues with their bill or to retrieve a password, they also want the ability to troubleshoot common issues on their own. By making self-service options readily available and easily accessible on your website, you not only meet customer needs but also give your contact center agents room to breathe—and to deliver better support for high-value phone calls.

Back-office integration

Around 40% of survey respondents named back-office integration solutions as one of their top three technologies, from a shortlist of more than 20 solutions. Business decision makers say there is a strong need for end-to-end integration between the agent and customer.

Robotic process automation

Robotic process automation (RPA) uses digital software agents to handle repetitive, rules-based tasks at high speed, which frees human agents to manage more complicated interactions. Since it sits on top of existing contact center systems and applications, roll-out is relatively quick and flexible.

Security and customer ID verification

Identity verification continues to grow in importance year over year, with an increasing focus on fraud detection and regulatory compliance. But lengthy security processes also have become intrusive and inconvenient for customers who are tired of remembering long lists of passwords, PINs and answers to security questions.

Sophisticated fraud detection solutions use AI to both identify fraudulent transactions and make it easier for legitimate users to get through authentication.

Queue management and call back

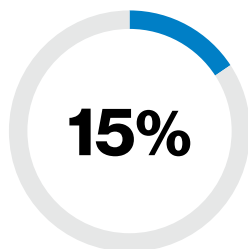
The decision-makers study revealed that 61% of the public hates not knowing how much longer they will be waiting on hold for an agent. Virtual queuing systems address this challenge by providing customers with information about hold times and offering the alternative of receiving a call back when an agent is ready.

Proactive customer focus

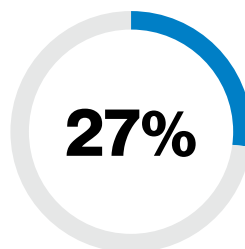
The contact center can play an important role in boosting the customer experience through proactive and efficient outbound services.

Outbound calls

Customers know they can contact a brand for questions or concerns. But sometimes, they may like to hear from you before they decide to contact you themselves. By sending an outbound message, status update or reminder, companies can show proactive interest in addressing potential or current customers' needs and cut down on inbound calls to contact centers.



Automated SMS messages were used by around 15% of respondents in 2019, mainly for notifications and reminders.¹



Twenty-seven percent of contact centers reported that more than a quarter of their inbound calls could be avoided if more proactive measures were used.²

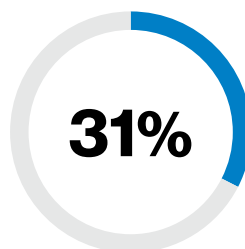
Call blending

Call blending empowers agents to deliver both inbound and outbound calls seamlessly. In this scenario, the contact center regulates outbound call volume based on call traffic, and when inbound traffic is low, outbound calls are sent out automatically.

While this technology offers the opportunity to increase agent productivity, streamline staffing and improve customer service, only 18% of this year's respondents are operating in a structured blended environment where agents are moved seamlessly and dynamically between inbound and outbound calls.

HR management

Staffing accounts for up to 75% of a contact center's operational costs, so issues such as attrition, recruitment and training are always top of mind for managers. While contact center size looks to be the greatest predictor of new agent attrition, using multiple onboarding techniques makes a positive difference in retaining the right agents.



Thirty-one percent of respondents are managing attrition rates of over 30%.³

Attrition

Most executives of large contact centers agree that agent attrition impacts control center operations, and they are turning to technology to support employee engagement and shape the culture of the workplace.

The following technologies have proven effective in addressing attrition:

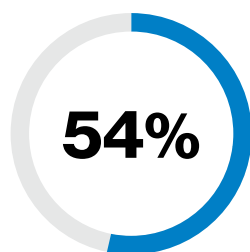
- Voice- or web-driven self-service
- Inbound digital and voice blending

Analyzing the customer experience

As customer expectations grow, contact centers are forced to develop a greater understanding of the customer experience and use data to provide more personalized services that drive business performance.

Benchmarking

The vast majority of survey respondents place first-contact resolution among the top three metrics in terms of influence on customer satisfaction. However, only 3% of respondents asserted that first-contact resolution rates were a key CX metric for senior management.



Fifty-four percent of large contact centers use complaint analysis to measure customer experience.⁴

Omnichannel

Offering multiple channels through which customers can contact your business increases customer satisfaction, but it also increases the risk of losing valuable customer data to silos or poor integration. Customers should not have to start over every time they turn to a different channel or speak to a new agent. Omnichannel customer experience reduces the complexity of managing multiple contact channels.

An omnichannel approach to customer service provides a single view of the customer across channels, integrating data across channels so that customers don't need to repeat themselves, and so that agents have full context about the customer and their previous interactions.

The following efforts support effective integration of customer data across channels:

- Giving agents access to the same master dataset
- Applying all customer knowledge across all channels
- Enabling real-time data flow and updates to channels and databases
- Ensuring accurate customer data capture
- Making the effort to fill out customer profiles

Building this single view requires massive amounts of customer activity data as well as AI and machine learning investments in tools such as speech-to-text and character-recognition applications to understand that information.

How can AI help deliver a superior customer experience across channels and leverage the data that customers provide in interactions? Contact centers are vested in answering that question.

Manufacturing, retail and insurance are top verticals exploring machine learning to improve the contact center customer experience.

Predictive analytics to personalize CX

The customer's experience of each interaction with a contact center is driven not just by what they want to achieve, but also by other factors such as emotional state, urgency of request, time of day, the device being used and their past experiences, among others. Contact centers can use analytics to understand all these factors.

- Customer interaction analytics can provide a solid understanding of why customers are calling. Categorizing types of calls, and then analyzing them for the occurrence of similar types of words and phrases, can give an insight into the reason for the call. Through identifying these patterns, the technology can help agents predict why customers are calling, and offer an appropriate self-service option
- Predictive analytics is a branch of analysis that looks at the nature and characteristics of past interactions to predict what might happen in current and future interactions, helping make recommendations to the agent in real time

Help the agent help the customer.

The creation of one master dataset is essential to the delivery of consistent customer experiences. Using the same knowledge base in the same way across the entire contact helps ensure that agents have accurate, up-to-date customer information at their fingertips when they need it. Real-time data flow and updates about customers between channels and databases enable seamless escalation of service requests within channels and boosts agents' confidence that they'll be able to help customers. A master dataset also gives the business a chance to use its automated systems to react to an escalation before it reaches a live agent, thus deflecting costs while fulfilling the service request more quickly.

The mobile customer

The rapidly decreasing cost of mobile bandwidth and recent improvements to mobile networks mean that businesses can be ambitious as they explore this channel. Plus, the data shows that customers love mobile. Sixty-five percent of respondents said more than half of the calls made to their operation are done through mobile phones rather than landlines. Organizations should explore value-add services such as mobile video and visual interactive voice response (IVR).

Customer of the future

Taking to the cloud

Respondents expect to see significant extra amounts of their functionality being delivered in the cloud by mid-2021. They also indicate that their cloud-based deployment of customer relationship management (CRM), speech analytics and outbound dialing will show the strongest growth within two years.

Contact centers see benefits to moving to the cloud:

- **Reduced IT maintenance costs:** Cloud providers take on the responsibility of maintaining hardware and software
- **Advanced workflow features:** Cloud applications can quickly identify agents based on availability, skill sets and requirements to ensure that calls are routed efficiently
- **Scalability:** Flexible cloud solutions ensure that businesses can quickly ramp up without purchasing more hardware or multiple software licenses or ramp down agents based on seasonal volume spikes, peak periods or marketing campaigns

On the horizon

Improving customer satisfaction and reducing customer effort are the real long-term drivers affecting the contact center industry.

Customer satisfaction score is the #1 driver for contact center improvements.

Many companies expect to invest in CX improvements over the next couple of years. According to respondents, dual-tone multi-frequency (DTMF) IVR, call recording, IP infrastructure and workforce management are among the most likely to be upgraded or replaced in the next year. In terms of new implementations, interaction analytics, web chat, AI, SMS and email management are singled out in the short term, with gamification and RPA also receiving a very high level of attention.

The industry is laser focused on the need to measure and improve customer experience and satisfaction. The explosive growth in multichannel communications, and the realization that customer contact should not exist in a siloed environment, are major drivers for change.

Learn more:

For more information on how Verizon and Pindrop can help reduce your risk of fraud and authenticate your users visit:

enterprise.verizon.com/products/customer-experience-services/transport-and-intelligent-routing/voip-inbound-anti-fraud-and-authentication/



1 ContactBabel, *The 2019-20 US Contact Center Decision-Makers' Guide (12th edition)*, page 280.

2 ContactBabel, *The 2019-20 US Contact Center Decision-Makers' Guide (12th edition)*, page 282.

3 ContactBabel, *The 2019-20 US Contact Center Decision-Makers' Guide (12th edition)*, page 340.

4 ContactBabel, *The 2019-20 US Contact Center Decision-Makers' Guide (12th edition)*, page 298.