



YOUR DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO

Contact Centre Technology

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Building the Contact Centre of 2030 today

The Future is Now

Make Good CX Look Effortless

Focus on your Contact
Centre Technology First

Effortless CX

When we think 'effortless', the likes of gymnasts, dancers, and figure skaters come to mind: a complex routine, performed without errors. The perfect performance looks easier than it is – simple, clean. The same can be said for good customer experience. We know how hard it is to deliver a smooth service for people who might interact with our brand via email, social, chat, and phone. Behind the scenes we need practice, knowledge, training, and the right technology to underpin it all.

For our customers, the 'human experience' or sentiment in a call is important. Customers have issues, and want quick solutions. Most businesses genuinely want

to resolve their customers' issues: technology then becomes either a roadblock or an enabler.

Most of us can recall countless 'clunky' interactions as a consumer: awkward IVR systems that take five minutes to route us correctly; dropped calls; the same question asked three times by three different people in the same conversation. We possibly felt that our service provider did not care about their customers, the people on the other end of the phone were less-than-bright, and that our time was being wasted deliberately. It is likely that none of this was true: outdated systems cobbled together poorly were almost certainly the cause.



Investing in Contact Centre Technology

We cannot see CX in isolation if we are to make the right choices and the correct investment in technology. We must join the dots: customer experience should have a measurable return in the way of better retention, increased sales, or brand value in the long term. The ‘effortless’ experience we are aiming for comes at a cost. We should have a well-considered plan of our desired outcomes and their value, before we budget for our future contact centre technology platform.

- Higher customer satisfaction than competitors for the same cost of service,
- Equivalent customer satisfaction for a lower cost per customer, or
- Superior customer satisfaction that leads to revenue growth, which justifies a higher cost of service.

Where competition is irrelevant or non-existent, such as in the case of many government-operated contact centres, benchmarks should be set based on comparable entities. A responsible use of public sector funds can and should lead to a positive customer experience without excessive budgets.

We will explore many ways to measurably lift the performance of a contact centre through technology in later chapters. We also bear employee satisfaction in mind. Reduced call times, the power to solve problems on the spot, and more accessible customer information can save thousands of valuable hours otherwise spent on low-value work, and have an additional impact of keeping staff motivated and retained.

Cloud-based, extensible infrastructure and applications are key to building the right solution here. Whether we are talking about a core phone system, a CRM, applications that enable productivity, or even AI and speech analytics—we will present these solutions and ideas in the context of the cloud. As we write in midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, our thoughts are particularly coloured by the need to enable remote working, something that derailed many enterprises in the early days of lockdowns and work from home orders.

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The ‘effortless’ experience we are aiming for comes at a cost.

Your Inside Sales Engine

CRM and Contact Centre Technology Together

Investing in Contact Centre Technology

Driving revenue through inside sales has never been more important. Face to face interactions have reduced around the world, possibly never to return to pre-COVID levels. The value of a well-tuned phone sales engine for the modern enterprise is immense. A well-integrated CRM should be a source of real-time data intelligence that helps inside sales professionals make the right calls, and have all the necessary insights on hand to support a positive outcome.

CRM and Contact Centre technology integration sounds like the most natural thing in the world. Your database of customer information should interact very naturally with any system of engagement designed to contact those customers.

In practice, we find major disconnects in how CRM systems function versus how call centre or phone systems are designed to work. CRMs are by nature somewhat inflexible: a structured database that adheres to data retention and protection standards can never be the most pliable thing. Contact centre technology, on the other hand, deals mostly with unstructured data –other than the actual phone number used to establish the connection.

Good integration between CRM and call centre software is a triple win. You will lift the value of both systems without increasing cost; your team will see efficiency improvements; and you will have more opportunities to win business on the back of better data and interactions.

CRM and Contact Centre integration that drives sales



CRM and Contact Centre integration that drives sales

Empower your sales team to reach more of the right prospects in less time, by giving them a single place to handle interactions and access customer data. Capable, modern CRMs such as Salesforce, Dynamics CRM and HubSpot allow you to embed call handling controls and digital interaction capability within the CRM interface. As a result, your inside salespeople do not need to constantly switch between applications, improving both productivity and better record-keeping.



Real-time Data

A Customer Experience (CX) Transformation Benchmark report found that most customers surveyed expect companies to know their purchase history, regardless of the communication method used. By presenting relevant customer information from our CRM system on your salesperson's screen, they will have immediate access to pertinent details such as customer history, interactions, and relevant context, regardless of the channel. Putting this data at your sales peoples' fingertips fuels better, more relevant conversations, and means the lead is more likely to convert with you than your competition.



Automatic Data Capture and Sync

Few of us enjoy note taking. Time pressures in a contact centre or inside sales environment create further chances for important notes to be missed. We are best off finding ways to reduce manual data entry as much as possible: this gets our Sales team focused on value-added work, and helps accuracy by automatically mapping contact centre interaction data, into your customer records in CRM. When your CRM has complete information on time and date of interaction, staff members who have been in touch, customer sentiment or reaction, and more –you will have a complete and up-to-date view of your customer journey.



Interaction Routing

Use your CRM information to connect your customers to the right resource the first time regardless of channel. That ideal resource could be a self-service option for customers looking for their account balances, a special queue for customers whose accounts are in arrears, or a live agent who is specially trained to close opportunities. Leveraging customer CRM data to determine the best routing based on prior customer purchases or interactions improves first contact resolution and reduces customer effort.

Lifting Contact Centre Productivity

Contact Centre Technologies that Reduce Friction

Investing in Contact Centre Technology

Productivity (and therefore, service levels) in a call centre traditionally depended on three measures:

1. High First Contact Resolution (FCR)
2. Low Average Handling Time (AHT)
3. High Occupancy Rate (OR)

Various operational analysts and management consultants have arrived at target ratios, based on all these numbers. We are told **that First Contact Resolution should generally be better than 70%**²; Average Handling time around 6 minutes; and occupancy rate, greater than 80%. These might be fairly accurate for a phone-only contact centre. Conversely, we have to question all of these measures, as omnichannel contact centres become increasingly common.

Resolution should generally be better than

70%

Average Handling time around

6 minutes

Occupancy rate greater than

80%

²[https://www.hopeprojectdc.org/getattachment/Our-Program/Admission/001First-Contact-Resolution-Rate-v2-\(2\).pdf.aspx](https://www.hopeprojectdc.org/getattachment/Our-Program/Admission/001First-Contact-Resolution-Rate-v2-(2).pdf.aspx)



...the majority of people get in touch via chat.

Leveraging Chat lifts both CX and productivity

In Australia, we still have numerous enterprise and government call centres that are uncontactable by chat or social media. This is at odds with what today's consumer expects: again referring to the CX Benchmark study introduced in Chapter 2, consumers rate online chat as one of the top methods for satisfaction, ease of use, and likelihood to recommend. The report also surveyed 900 B2B organisations in the US, UK, and Australia as part of the business wave of the CX Transformation Benchmark. It was again found that B2B clients prefer chat over phone, email, and the like.

Let us assume we transform our contact centre in line with what our customers actually want, and the majority of people get in touch via chat. Looking again at traditional

measures of productivity, First Contact Resolution times may or may not change when we allow customers to get in touch over chat –but Average Handling Time and Occupancy Rate change completely. Chat can move at a slower pace than a call, based on how quickly a customer types and responds. Occupancy rate becomes incredibly complex as staff gain the ability to handle multiple concurrent chats.

Technology becomes increasingly important as we leverage chat more, and phone, less. Chatbots do well at starting a conversation, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can support agents in finding the right information and responses for a live chat.

Technology driving productivity

These are our current 'top seven' technologies for improving call centre productivity. We have featured each of the first three in their own chapter of this eBook. We cannot stress enough: if you want to build a next generation contact centre, you cannot avoid integrating CRM, voice analytics, and AI.



01 Integrated CRM

As discussed in Chapter 2, your contact centre system and CRM are the left and right hands of a customer facing operation. They must know what each other are doing, at all times. Getting CRM integration right is your single biggest contact centre productivity win.

02 Contact Centre Analytics

Core contact centre analytics manage a mix of structured and unstructured data generated by your people and customers, to arrive at better decisions which improve CX and profitability. Other technologies such as AI and Big Data are responsible for feeding us information: analytics is the point at which humans with experience and training need to translate information into business insights and decisions.

03 Artificial Intelligence

Chapter 5 drills into AI in much more detail. In a contact centre, AI is most essential for helping with real-time speech or voice analytics, and assisting chatbots or live chat agents. We are best off combining the speed of AI, with the experience and discretion of intelligent humans.

04 Customer Self-Service tools

Today's consumer is used to searching the web for solutions –whatever leads to a resolution fastest is often the best outcome, regardless of whether they achieved the result alone or with another human's help. Many of us even prefer fixing issues on our own, if at all possible. As you add more and better self-service features, you reduce the number of mundane service requests, and drive up productivity all round.

05 Intelligent Call Routing

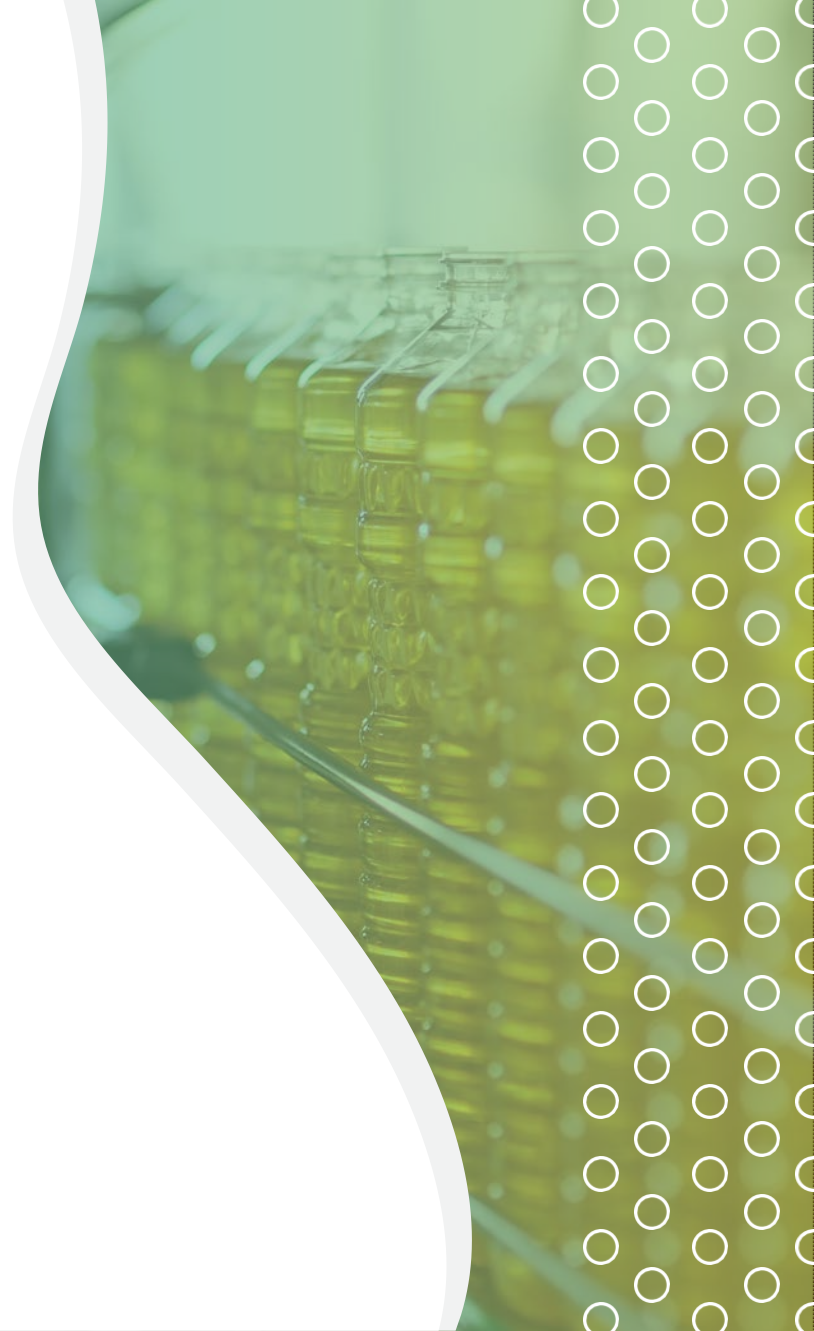
We can play matchmaker by identifying the best possible agent to handle the customer and issue in question. Intelligent based routing systems should take into account skills, training, and track record, as well as customer sentiment and reason for call, to ensure that caller is routed optimally.

06 Big Data

Not to be confused with either AI or speech analytics –a big data approach looks at external data, customer data, and internal data points, to uncover trends and drivers. A concrete example is incorporating weather forecast data into workforce planning. Weather can have a profound impact on whether customers have issues or not, and on whether they are driven to make a certain purchase or otherwise.

07 Customer Data Platforms

Last but definitely not least, enterprise contact centre personalisation in an omnichannel world hinges on your CDP. Each vendor has a different definition of 'customer data platform', which curiously seems to align with whatever product they are trying to sell! Leaving differences to one side, the main purpose of your CDP is to align your customer's journey with your marketing, service, and sales activities –and is a contributor to both productivity and to the 'effortlessness' concept discussed in Chapter 1.



Closing the CX Loop

Using contact centre analytics to make better decisions

The purpose of contact centre analytics is to enable people to make better decisions, whether to accelerate growth, lift profitability, optimise CX, or improve any other business metric.

Some common use cases for contact centre analytics include:

Gauging customer satisfaction level

Improving conversation quality

Understanding customer expectations

Analysing agent productivity

Optimising workforce management

Measuring quality



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Customers would consider leaving a brand they loved after just one poor experience.

Your contact centre technology should either offer an advanced analytics program, or be tightly integrated with a web-enabled, real-time analytics platform that offers both dashboards and historical reports.

The best analytics approaches provide insights for three classes of employee:

01 Contact centre agents

Frontline staff should have insights into how they are tracking to their own measures and KPIs, real-time. It is poor practice to tell someone after the fact that they have missed on core measures, without giving them the opportunity to stay on top of their core job. These will mostly be daily metrics updated to-the-second.

02 Contact centre leadership

Contact centre leaders also need real-time dashboards which allow them to deploy resources, address escalations, and prevent or manage incidents. These will be similar dashboards to frontline staff, just one layer up. Contact centre leadership should also be included in the business-level reporting discussed in point 3.

03 Business leadership

For the most part, these will be historical reports or future-facing analytics, that seek to optimise the business based on contact centre data. The majority of customers would consider moving to a competitor if they have to repeat their query to multiple contact centre agents. Some consumers will immediately seek to move providers if they receive a poor response time to a critical query. **Customers would consider leaving a brand they loved after just one poor experience.** It is not rocket science to conclude that CX is at the heart of customer satisfaction and retention, not to mention the hazardous effect poor CX has on company revenue and reputation. The mechanics of gathering this information quickly is best achieved through an AI-driven, Intelligent Contact Centre –discussed in the following chapter.

An Intelligent Contact Centre

How AI can make your life easier

Investing in Contact Centre Technology

Managing real-time unstructured data is possibly the greatest barrier preventing omnichannel contact centres from arriving at actionable insights. As addressed in Chapter 4, real-time analytics depend on AI to make sense of inflowing, unstructured data points at a speed and level of complexity that are too much for traditional, structured BI approaches. AI voice agents and chatbots can capture a lot of granular data around each customer interaction, which can be fed into analytics engines to help optimise the call centre process.

The vast majority of enterprises use some form of AI to optimise contact centre performance. This does not mean all these companies have fully refined their use of artificial intelligence. It does demonstrate, however, that AI is an essential ingredient for the modern enterprise with a contact centre investment.

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AI is an essential ingredient for the modern enterprise...

Unstructured contact centre data comes in three main varieties:



**Web and
Social
Data**



Chat



Voice



Web and Social Data

Before the conversation begins

Traditional call centres blissfully ignore the existence of the internet: successful omnichannel contact centres know that everything starts with the web. Core web analytics tell us a little bit about who our customer is; potentially what they searched prior to landing on our site; which pages they have interacted with on our site before reaching out; and might even provide their full customer journey if we are leveraging a good CDP. Social data adds another dimension, especially if we are interested in detecting and preventing damage to our brand.



Chat

AI driven conversations

In Chapter 3 we discussed the positive relationship between productivity and leveraging chat technology in some detail. AI must be the brain that gets involved in chat from the moment a customer arrives on your website. There is often too much data for a human being to accurately analyse at speed, especially if they are managing multiple chats: AI will ideally complete the 'grunt work' and leave the complex decisions to a live agent. Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Machine Learning techniques also decipher statements, rather than giving a customer some choices to click, speeding up an interaction and keeping user frustration at bay.



Voice

Speech Analytics coming to the fore

Voice data can give great insights into CX and how the customer is reacting, in real time, whilst on a call. Speech-to-text data, plus true sentiment analysis that measures tone and volume, provide fuel for analytics that contact centre management may use to identify and improve operations. With speech analytics, enterprises can deep dive into the emotion of the customer, and identify the pain points of a particular set of customers. It goes a long way in fixing the challenge and time-wasting practice of recording and listening to selected calls manually. With AI powered voice technology, enterprises can also route calls to agents more suited to resolve the problem, in real time.



Building the Contact Centre of 2030 today

The Future is Now

Investing in Contact Centre Technology

When contact centres emerged decades ago, they were equipped to handle basic problems like password changes, login issues, bank balance checks, reporting the loss of a credit card, etcetera. We had to hire large numbers of people to staff phone lines, with the majority of these being low-paying roles with bad retention due to the mundane nature of the job.

Nowadays, most of the basic services are automated through self-service online portals. People in contact centres are dealing with increasingly complex service requests. There is a good and a bad side of all of this. On the positive, people tend to stay longer in jobs where there is variety, complexity, more training, and the chance to be paid more. On the downside, these interactions often carry more risk of losing a customer or damaging reputation, as the customer has likely exhausted a number of self-service channels before talking to a real agent. The contact centre agent of today needs to be equipped with outstanding communication skills, quick thinking, and possess strong

problem-solving abilities. Furthermore, they must be well-trained and proficient in technology: high empathy and high degrees of ability are equally important.

Although we have spoken primarily about technology in previous chapters, we cannot undermine the value of getting the 'human angle' right. No matter how much you spend on contact centre technology and its integration with other systems, your success or failure in the future will depend on how you hire, train, and deploy people now. The future is very much now, in the hands of the people you are bringing on board today.



Your success or failure in the future will depend on how you hire, train, and deploy people now.

Omnivorous consumption

It is very clear that emerging generations will use even more channels than our consumers of decades past. We have not even discussed video chat, or personalised digital assistants for our customers, or other future-facing trends that are yet to hit mass mainstream. However –we must start planning for them now.

Today, chatbots already play a major role in resolving customer issues. With improving data intelligence and more sophisticated chat systems, it is inevitable that chatbots will start to take some of the complex issues away from live agents, further reducing dependence on voice calls and live chat. Voice remains as the major channel for resolution today: consider this to be a rapidly dying fact.



Minority Report (for good!)

We have already mentioned how AI and ML is going to revolutionise contact centres, along with a sophisticated and well integrated CRM. Technology evolution will continue to add value to customers, creating better CX, reduced call times, higher first call resolution - and create more revenue streams for contact centres. Eventually, many contact centres will move away from reactivity, to proactivity: the 'Minority Report' which tells brands which customers to approach before an issue presents itself.

Good Marketers around the world have long been finding ways to predict and prevent customer churn, by targeting personalised campaigns based on behaviour and analytics. We will see this kind of thinking and behaviour increasingly enter contact centres, too. The best use of a contact centre will be reaching out to people to solve a problem rather than to simply react. Understanding customer emotion will play a major role in understanding their problems, sentiment towards your brand, and their likelihood of making future buying decisions with your brand.

Expect Effortless CX

In closing: we foresee customer expectations increasing, as the standard of contact centres lifts overtime. Effortless customer experience will be a baseline expectation.

CC EXPERIENCE

Contact Centre Solutions

It's All About the Customer – Optimise Expectations

To retain customers and stay ahead of the competition, your business needs a CX strategy. The strategy may be as simple as decreasing costs or improving Contact Centre KPIs. It could also be as sophisticated as driving differentiation, improving loyalty (NPS), and strengthening advocacy.

By offering vendor agnostic technology, innovation, and design, CCNA helps you develop and realise your CX goals.

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