



5 Steps to Increase Revenue Through Customer Experience

A guide to picking the right technology for delivering competitive customer service



Ten years ago, people would simply pick up the phone and call your business when they needed help. That's no longer the case. Today, by the time your customers make that phone call, they've most likely already tried three other channels to find the answer they're looking for¹. The customer's journey to your business has changed. And so have their expectations.

The digital world brings new expectations

Your customers' ideas about what constitutes a good customer experience (CX) have evolved in the same way their lives have evolved. They live and do business in a digital world.

People don't pick up the phone and call each other the way they used to. More often, they interact through social media, text messages, chat and email. People switch devices within a single conversation, with seamless handover from their computer to their mobile phone to their tablet. And they expect all of these communications conveniences to be available when they do business with you.

If your customers start a chat session, they expect the employee they're speaking with to know that they've already filled out a web form. When they finally do pick up the phone and call, they expect the employee to know the contents of the web form and the results of the chat session.

When customers contact you directly, it's now often because they haven't been able to resolve the issue on their own. They've tried the web, your company website, emailed a family member and looked for a YouTube video on the topic. Now they need more advanced assistance. And they want their service level tailored accordingly from the moment they make contact.

Consumers' shift to digital communications and their changing expectations dictate changes for your business and for the technology your employees use to serve customers. This primer describes five key steps that will help you select a contact center solution that delivers the experience your customers expect.

Delivering a good customer experience is good business

In its 2017 Global Customer Experience Benchmarking Report², Dimension Data reported that although 81 percent of companies recognize CX as a competitive differentiator:

- *Only 13 percent grade their CX delivery a nine out of 10 or better*
- *Only 10 percent say their digital business strategy is optimized*

The report also noted that the top factor driving digital transformation is improving CX, followed by customer demands for digital interactions.

With one-quarter of the world's population now equipped with active social media accounts, good and bad customer service experiences are shared almost instantly. Research confirms that the customer experience affects revenues:

- *90 percent of fully engaged customers buy more frequently and 60 percent spend more.³*
- *Businesses rated as top performers in terms of customer experience achieve double the revenue of those rated as laggards.⁴*

Companies participating in the 2017 Dimension Data study⁵ reported the following business benefits associated with improving CX:

- *Increased customer loyalty (92 percent)*
- *An uplift in revenue (84 percent)*
- *Cost savings (79 percent)*



STEP 1: Find your technology gaps

If you're in business, you have customers. And any business with customers needs to incorporate customer engagement and experience in its technology strategy.

Combining contact center applications with emerging technologies like chat bots, the Internet of Things (IoT), and omni-channel communications is an ideal way to achieve both goals.

Chat bots use artificial intelligence (AI) techniques to combine language, image, and video processing technologies with audio analysis to mimic human conversations. They can also incorporate company data into their responses and learn from their past interactions to provide more accurate responses over time.

If you don't have a chat bot, consider implementing one where it makes sense (sales, service, or support). Chat bots work even better when they're integrated with live chat.

If you already have a chat bot, then ensure that it is always easily accessible, or predict when a customer might need it most and offer it in a pop-up widget.

The IoT is a network of interconnected things where relationships can be people-people, people-things or things-things. Using the right technology, the IoT can help businesses look at behavioral patterns and market trends to proactively engage customers and deliver better CX.

Implementing IoT to enhance CX is typically done in three phases:

- *Collect data from IoT-connected devices to establish "events" that could result in action*
- *Initiate the appropriate workflow to resolve the issue*
- *Proactively engage with customers to deliver service and support*

Omni-channel communications let customers communicate with you in their preferred way.

When implementing an omni-channel solution, ensure that the system can tie all of the different contacts from the same customer about the same request into a single case. This will make it easier for the next agent that receives a contact from the customer to see the customer's history, proactively engage with the customer, and provide a solution without asking the customer to restate the issue he or she is calling about.

When your contact center is equipped with these technologies, agents can:

- ***Offer helpful suggestions.** If a customer is purchasing a product on your website, proactively suggest the accessories they need to use that product. By taking the customer directly to an item they're likely to need, you're saving them time and the aggravation of only realizing their requirement after the purchase is complete.*
- ***Recognize behaviors and ask intelligent questions.** If someone is browsing your website for 10 minutes or more, it may be because they can't find what they're looking for. Proactively invite the customer or prospect to a chat session and ask if there is something you can help the customer find.*
- ***Suggest alternative communications.** If your system estimates that an appropriate agent won't be available for several minutes, offer to have the first available agent call them back. If a customer is lingering over a web form or struggling with a mobile help app, offer an instantaneous chat session or a call-back option.*



STEP 2: Decide on an analytics strategy

Because simple questions are often handled with self-service options, digital consumers who need assisted service are often facing more difficult issues. And that means that contact centers need to provide “super agents.” A super agent combines knowledge of the customer’s account, their history with the company, and their most recent journey to provide the right answer in a reasonable amount of time and in a single contact.

A contact center solution that provides integrated access to information sources such as corporate data, a knowledge center, customer relationship management (CRM) software and predictive analytics gives agents the insight and information they need to become super agents.

Corporate information sources give agents insight into the customer, their history and typical behavior. To be effective, a super agent must have seamless access to knowledge bases, CRM databases, and your business applications so that everything needed to address a customer’s issue is available in a single pane of glass.

Predictive analytics applies math and statistics algorithms to data to help determine the next best action for the customer at that specific point in time:

- *What kinds of questions do customers with this profile typically ask?*
- *What level of assistance does this customer typically need?*
- *What other communication channels does this customer typically use before calling?*

Predictive analytics often comes as a microservice that can be accessed by the contact routing workflow engine via open

Application Programming Interfaces (APIs). To incorporate predictive analytics into your contact routing workflow, your contact center routing engine should support open media.

Equipped with this knowledge, agents can:

- *Skip basic steps, such as repeating account information or describing the problem, if the customer has already provided that information through a different communications channel.*
- *Provide the appropriate level of service for the complexity of the problem and the steps the customer has already taken. Maybe this customer has already tried a chat session and a mobile application without success. Instead of the agent trying to catch up with the customer, the two start from the same place when they first connect.*
- *Anticipate the customer’s request and have the answers ready. For example, if the customer has just purchased a new device, the agent already knows the top three questions they are likely to ask and is ready to provide answers.*

STEP 3: Make life easy for your employees

Modern workforce optimization (WFO) tools help you make sure that the right person with the right skills is supporting the right communication channel at the right time for each customer.

Some businesses still schedule contact center operations using spreadsheets. Many that use WFO tools have dated software that only supports voice interactions. Neither option is right for scheduling the digital interactions that many customers start with and prefer over voice calls.

In many cases, supervisors are still listening to live calls and taking notes to evaluate agent performance. It's a slow, cumbersome, and somewhat random approach to monitoring and coaching agents in how to deliver a better CX. A quality-monitoring tool lets you target your efforts to improve agent performance. You can:

- *Record all of the activity on an agent's screen along with voice interactions with customers. With this ability, a supervisor has full visibility of every step taken by the agent and can coach the agent based on digital interactions as well as voice interactions.*
- *Select calls for review by a supervisor based on customers' use of key phrases, such as "I want to speak to a manager," or "that doesn't answer my question." Positive phrases can also be identified so supervisors can credit agents with particularly successful interactions. Other criteria, such as identifying calls that were transferred multiple times and those that were unusually long or short, can also be identified.*
- *Automatically offer agents opportunities to increase their knowledge through eLearning during known off-peak traffic times. The training offered can be related to areas for improvement or professional growth that were identified for each agent.*

Most contact center providers offer basic WFO tools as part of an all-in-one solution that provides quality monitoring as well as forecasting and scheduling. When assessing even basic built-in WFO tools, ensure that they support all of the channels that you offer, including digital channels like chat, email, and social media, in addition to voice.

If you need more advanced capabilities, like speech analytics and eLearning, that only third party WFO vendors can provide, ensure that your contact center system has the APIs that third party WFO applications need to do their magic.

STEP 4: Go to the cloud to maximize your gains

When you invest in a cloud contact center solution, CX keeps pace with customer expectations as technology progresses.

You have the flexibility to:

- *Scale your contact center up and down to match changing customer demands.*
- *Add and remove communications channels in line with your customers' usage patterns.*
- *Add new contact center features as soon as they become available to enhance CX and compete more effectively.*

A cloud-based contact center solution also aligns your contact center strategy with that of the major contact center vendors.

The type of cloud offering you adopt depends on your requirements. There are three main types:

- *Public cloud: A multi-tenant cloud where infrastructure is located off-site and is managed by a third party. The infrastructure is shared with other businesses, but your data is partitioned and secure. It is often the best choice for retail businesses that need instant access to agility and scalability at a reasonable price.*
- *Private cloud: A single-tenant cloud with dedicated infrastructure that is located off-site and is managed by a third party. It is more expensive than a public cloud, but is often the best choice for businesses that must adhere to specific regulatory and security requirements.*
- *Hybrid cloud: Combines the benefits of public and private clouds — security, with less complexity and lower costs than a private cloud, but more control than a public cloud. It is often the best choice for businesses that want to start taking advantage of the cloud while still making the most of their premises equipment.*

The cloud is no longer the future; it's the present. For your business to keep up in today's cloud-based world, you need to start examining the best and quickest way to take your customer service to the cloud. Take Mitel's cloud quiz to see the type of cloud that makes sense for your business.

If you have a premise-based contact center platform, ask the vendor if it can be migrated to the cloud. If not, you'll have to move all of your call flows, user profiles, and historical data to the cloud contact center platform.



STEP 5: Choose a vendor

As you look to secure a stronger position with your business's customer experience, make sure to choose a vendor that will be there every step of the way. Technology is ever-changing and vendor consolidation often makes waves in the market. Don't leave your customer experience strategy to chance with a questionable vendor.

When choosing a contact center vendor, look for one that offers:

- **Longevity:** Verify that the vendor is successful and relevant today and has a solid roadmap to ensure they are still successful and relevant in 10 years' time.
- **Flexible contracts:** A vendor that offers three-year contracts, not just five-year contracts, and gives you the flexibility to renegotiate terms, services and prices in a more reasonable timeframe. A lot can change in five years.
- **Open, integrated solutions:** Solutions that provide open application programming interfaces (APIs) and integration with CRM systems put key customer data and analytics at your agents' fingertips.
- **Unified communications (UC) and contact center solutions.** Combining these solutions lets you make all of the people in your business available and accountable for great CX – not just the people who work in the contact center.
- **Options in the cloud:** Look for a cloud-based solution that meets your needs today and gives you a path to delivering an even more enhanced CX in the future.

Develop an evaluation matrix that lists all of the features and capabilities that are important to you (including the ones listed in this step) in the left column and the communications vendors that are on your short list across the top row of cells.

Ask each vendor to describe how he or she would provide the feature/capability and then rate the vendor on a scale of 1 to 5 for each feature. Add up all of the ratings for each vendor to score overall capabilities. Choose the vendor that scores the highest and work with that vendor to turn your traditional call center into a **world class customer experience center**.

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