WHITEPAPER

Steering Through the Customer Experience Era with Contact Center Transformation with GenAI

From personalized interactions to anticipating needs, the focus of contact centers shifts from transactional efficiency to emotional connection. Learn how CX leaders can transform contact centers into experience centers for a delightful journey for every customer.

Executive summary

In the ever-evolving landscape of business, customer service is essential for success. Recent surveys underscore its pivotal role in purchasing decisions. Recognizing this, leading companies focus on the human aspect around digital and tech. Contact centers serve as the vital link between customers and businesses, offering support and an opportunity for meaningful engagement. As enterprises embrace the digital era, cloud contact centers and advanced AI technologies, such as generative AI and conversational AI, revolutionize operations.

However, legacy contact centers face challenges such as reducing contact volume, migrating to the cloud, and ensuring easy access to customer information. Addressing these challenges requires strategic solutions and a shift towards a more holistic customer experience. Key personas associated with customer experience include customers, marketers, service agents, and partners, each playing a crucial role in shaping seamless interactions. To modernize customer experience, businesses must embrace key capabilities like self-service portals, cloud contact centers, unified service windows, KPI analytics, AI virtual assistants, knowledge management, and a comprehensive view of customer interactions. The adoption of Gen AI emerges as a game-changer in this transformation, offering solutions across brand marketing, virtual assistants, agent productivity, and backend productivity.

The modernization journey involves persona and landscape analysis, identifying critical use cases, outlining a business value proposition, and ensuring efficient execution and stakeholder coordination. As businesses navigate the complexities of customer experience transformation, a pragmatic approach, strategic investments, and a focus on balancing costs and outcomes are essential for achieving the desired business goals.

This paper discusses challenges encountered during customer service transformation and effective mitigation strategies. It also discusses the future of contact centers in the cloud era, emphasizing the potential for innovation and growth. The paper is intended for C-suite levels, IT Heads, Customer Experience Heads, Contact Centre Heads, and Senior Leaders.
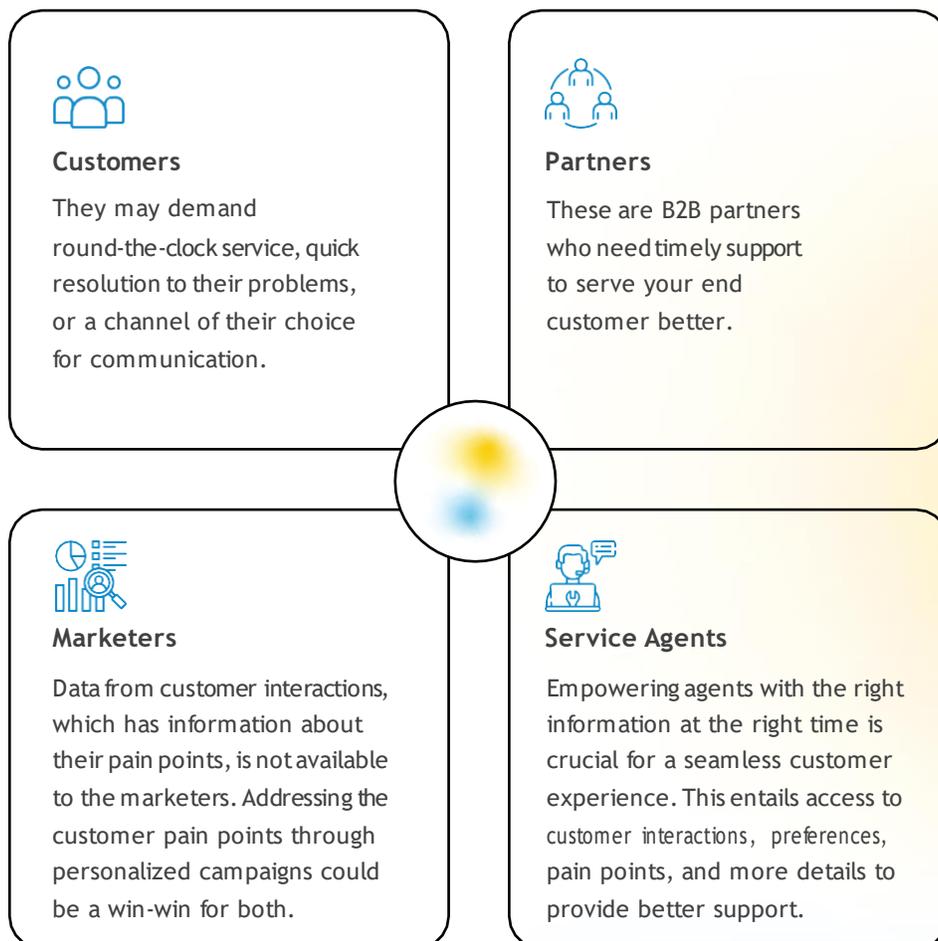
Introduction

Customer service is a critical component of any successful business. A recent survey by Khoros1 suggests that *"83% of customers cited good customer service as their most important criterion for deciding what to buy."* Taking cognizance of the importance of good customer service, several top-performing companies emphasize human experience. As per PwC, *"82% report paying close attention to the human experience around digital and tech."[2]*

In modern times, contact centers bridge the gap between customers and businesses, offering seamless communication and responsive support. Companies can lend an empathetic ear to concerns, resolve queries and issues quickly, and delight their customers through a well-functioning contact center. This is where they can continuously gather feedback and use the data to improve their offerings. A contact center is a service hub and a company's commitment to fostering a culture of delightful customer service for building everlasting relationships. Gartner's guide to strategic customer service states that 51% of CX leaders plan to migrate volume to digital and regard self-service as one of the key strategies3. They prioritize enhancing customer experience, reducing contact volume, and using AI to augment the experiences.

The advent of cloud contact centers, generative AI, and conversational AI have revolutionized how contact centers operate. Gartner predicts that 80% of customer service and support organizations will apply Gen AI to improve agent productivity and customer experience4.

Key personas associated with customer experience

Experience is crucial to businesses for their customers, employees, and partners. Organizations look forward to delivering seamless experiences to build customer loyalty, provide employees with a safe and convenient work environment, and create a robust partner ecosystem. Building seamless experiences requires access to data and insights over several touchpoints available for different personas. The most crucial personas in such an ecosystem are customers and service agents. However, there are others that are equally important for enhancing customer experience.

Customers

They may demand round-the-clock service, quick resolution to their problems, or a channel of their choice for communication.

Partners

These are B2B partners who need timely support to serve your end customer better.

Marketers

Data from customer interactions, which has information about their pain points, is not available to the marketers. Addressing the customer pain points through personalized campaigns could be a win-win for both.

Service Agents

Empowering agents with the right information at the right time is crucial for a seamless customer experience. This entails access to *customer interactions, preferences,* pain points, and more details to provide better support.

Challenges faced by legacy contact centers

Maintaining contact centers to cut costs requires addressing challenges that add to the cost and make it difficult to adapt to change. Some crucial ones are mentioned below.

Measuring and improving KPIs

No easy access to customer information

Strategy for using GenAI to power self-service models

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Migrating from legacy/on-prem to cloud

Knowledge management to enable talent

02

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Challenges

Reducing contact volume

A holistic view of customer interactions

01

07

Reducing contact volume

The contact center workforce constitutes up to 95% of the total costs. One of the critical strategies to reduce costs is limiting the contact volume. Leaders must find alternatives to make information reachable to their customers without relying on agents for support.

Migrating from legacy/on-prem to cloud

As traditional on-prem contact centers are complex, innovation and enhancement are challenging. Another challenge is keeping the transformation cost-effective in an industry that is moving towards a pay-per-service model. In some scenarios, leaders try to leverage the perpetual on-prem license cost. However, cloud investment is driven by the need for customer experience transformation and contact center product vendors moving to the cloud. Identifying the right CCaaS product that can support future innovation is the key challenge for leaders.

No easy access to customer information

The front-end customer support team plays a vital role in delighting the customer. However, they spend considerable time on repetitive tasks, switching between multiple applications, searching for information, and understanding past interactions. Additionally, increasing attrition rate amplifies the complexity. Enabling the front-end support team with the right information at the right time is necessary to enhance CX.

Measuring and improving KPIs

Enterprise-wide CX transformation initiatives usually encompass multiple business functions. Introducing a cloud contact center provides most of the operational metrics out of the box. The real challenge is identifying and managing KPIs generated using data from multiple enterprise systems and establishing a closed-loop mechanism to improve business KPIs.

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Strategy for using GenAI to power self-service models

Business leaders are adopting self-service as one of the core focus areas, and the growing maturity of GenAI makes it more compelling to adopt this strategy. Defining a strategy for using GenAI and the required tools and technologies diligently is essential. It empowers virtual assistants and self-service models with an end-to-end automation key for a better CX.

Knowledge management to enable talent

One of the key priorities for business leaders is to manage knowledge for enabling talent. Most of the time, support teams refer to SOPs combined with their experiential knowledge. With growing attrition, it becomes a challenge to manage this knowledge through a traditional approach. It is time to establish AI-led solutions to empower knowledge management efficiently.

A holistic view of customer interactions

A complete view of customers, based on their interactions across all touchpoints, regardless of the channel, is crucial for customer service. This includes data from sales, marketing, customer support, etc. A customer 360 (C360) view is important for personalized support and efficient issue resolution, increasing customer satisfaction.

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Key capabilities for enhancing customer experience

The artifact below depicts the architecture that can transform customer service.
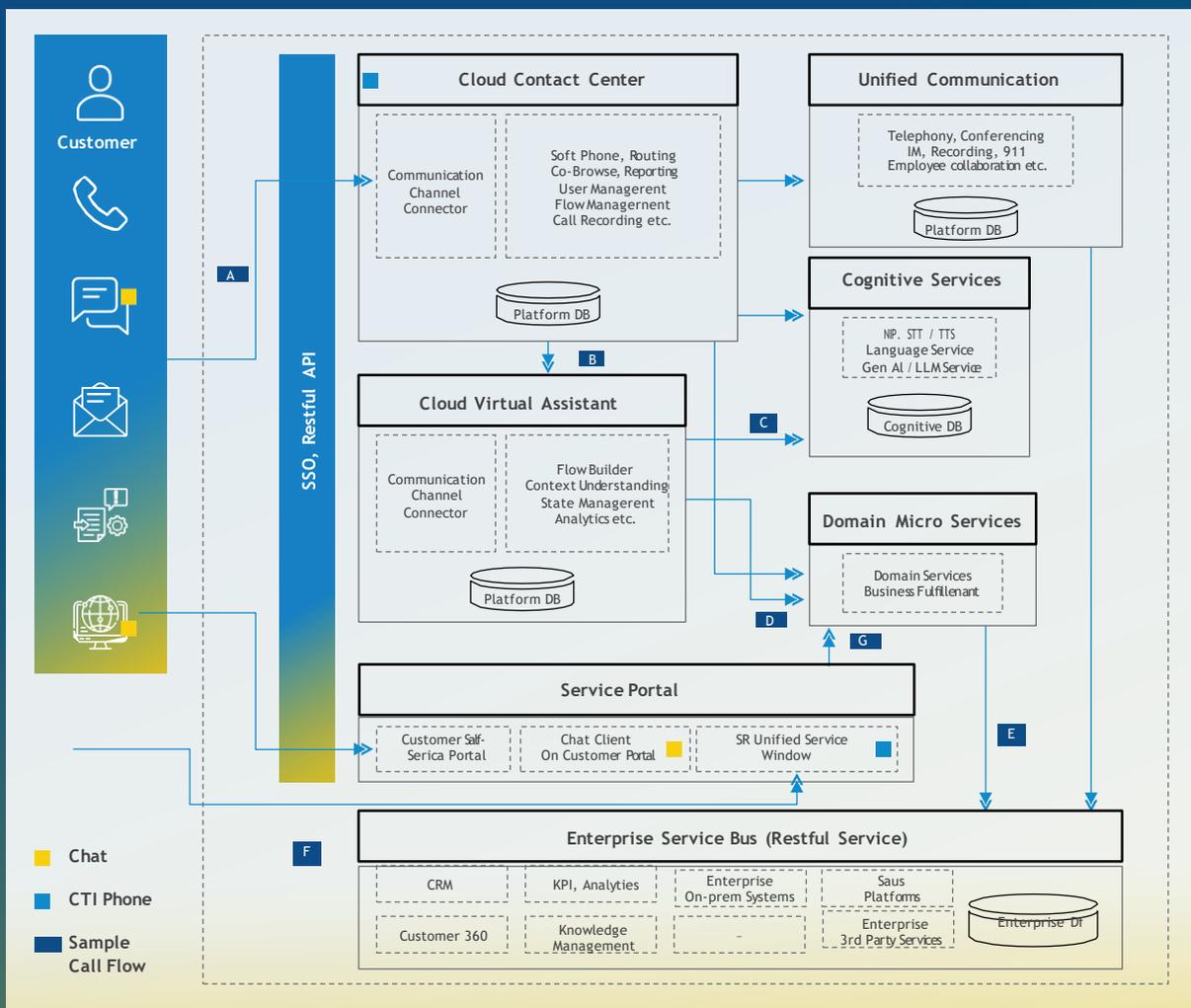
Self-service portal

Modern-day organizations define self-service portals/websites as their front-end digital channels. These portals must be easily reachable, accessible, and responsive. **Some of the essential elements of an easy-to-use self-service portal are:**

- Search engine optimization so that customers find the brand portal easily

- An effective semantic search to provide highly contextualized information

- Effective recommendations based on past interactions and transactions

- Effective web analytics strategy to capture search details that can help customer service representatives serve better

- Consistent and connected experience across all channels of engagement

- Responsive design for access from mobile and different screens, better navigation, and personalization

- An AI-enabled virtual assistant to engage with the customer through conversation

- Up-to-date proactive notification for login users on the self-service portal

Cloud contact center

The adoption of cloud contact centers is constantly growing, and there is a clear shift to CCaaS platforms as one of the CX transformation initiatives. Market leaders that offer on-prem contact center software are rapidly innovating and maturing their CCaaS platform to keep pace with the market demand. Industry leaders in the CCaaS space include Nice CXOne, Genesys, Amazon Connect, Five9, and Talkdesk. Other hyperscalers like Google CCAI and Microsoft Digital Contact Center Platform are also developing their offerings rapidly. **Setting up a cloud contact center requires:**

- Finding the right cloud contact center platform with TCO

- Integrating with enterprise ecosystem at scale and employee collaboration

- Designing call routing in alignment with business operation, phased roll out to LOBs helps to finetune

- Optimizing business processes using self-service bots and end-to-end automation

- Defining a channel strategy and identifying and enabling adoption is the key

- Defining an OCM strategy for organizational changes in terms of people, processes, and technology

Unified service window

Customer support teams can provide a delightful experience with easy access to all the information they need. This includes the customers' past interactions and the knowledge base that provides information to answer questions or resolve issues. **This can be achieved with:**

- A composable architecture that brings the right information from an underlying system

- An integrated view for customer 360, past interactions, transactions, right knowledge articles, etc.

- An established Single Sign-on (SSO) across applications makes front-end light and agile to meet growing business demand

- A connected ecosystem to enable seamless integration with knowledge workers and SMEs

KPI analytics

Business leaders have certain goals to justify ROI driven by data and KPIs. While the business KPIs for CX transformation are linked with NPS, CSAT, or CES scores, there are other important metrics that are equally important to make the program successful. **These can be measured by:**

- Establishing business and operation KPIs and aligning with the organization's data warehouse and data lake strategies

- Revisiting analytics metrics as a new process or channel introduced in the ecosystem

- Defining analytics at each layer by leveraging the core SaaS platforms used for CX transformation

- Using a feedback loop to measure and improve the KPI metrics and fine-tune across various layers

AI virtual assistant

The growing maturity of GenAI makes it a preferred option for business leaders aiming to set up a self-service option as a core focus area. Defining a strategy for using GenAI and the required tools and technologies will empower virtual assistants and self-service models with end-to-end automation. **This can be achieved by:**

- Understanding user input across channels with the right NLP and GenAI for best results

- Managing the dialogue and keeping track of the user's goals and context to bring relevant information

- Handling data privacy, multiple languages, and domain-specific information along with scalability

Knowledge management

Most of the time, agents identify the correct information from their repository. While experienced agents can manage customer expectations, customer service becomes challenging with growing attrition and new agents. In addition, introducing new business and knowledge repositories scattered across systems adds to the challenge of maintaining the quality of service. **Establishing Gen AI/AI-led solutions can help with knowledge management and overcome problems like:**

- Removing information silos by identifying systems and repositories across functions

- Defining processes to manage knowledge base from traditional industry processes and experiences

- Prioritizing AI solutions like semantic search, text classification, text analytics, and knowledge graph

- Enabling effective search and access for knowledge retrieval using Gen AI and other emerging solutions

Customer 360

Getting a holistic view of a customer based on their interactions across all touchpoints, regardless of the channel, can be leveraged for customer service. This includes data from sales, marketing, customer support, etc. A customer 360 (C360) view is important for personalized support and efficient issue resolution, increasing customer satisfaction. **This can be achieved by:**

- Managing data silos and quality appropriately to provide adequate information to customer support representatives (CSRs)

- Managing interactions across channels effectively to consistently respond to customers

- Mapping Contact center business goals with C360 requirements and an underlying system of integration

- Processing data in real time across channels using an integrated system and data cache

Modernize your customer experience

Generative AI can play a vital role in modernizing contact centers. Many leaders are adopting GenAI as an organization-wide strategy. Applying Gen AI to the right use case can significantly reduce costs and improve customer experience.

Here are some contact center-centric use cases where GenAI can help –

Brand Marketing

Lead generation
Create contextual brochures and flyers for target campaign

Campaign generation
Create campaign ideas for social and e-mail channels

Marketing ops
Create content for marketing and analyze response

Targeted marketing
Perform target marketing and offering based on lead response

Virtual Assistant

Understand user query

Identify multi-intent, entity, PII input, and compliance keyword

Generate response

Summary / Response generation

Process documents

Process uploaded documents and guide regarding further requirements

Know the sentiment

Understand sentiments and empathize during interactions

Translate multiple languages

Understand and interact with users in different languages

Intelligent route

Seamless handover to the right agent during interaction

Intelligent search

Enable semantic search for user response

Agent Productivity

Call intent and routing

Understand call intent for self-service and perform intelligent routing

Fraud identification

Detect fraud by simulating scenarios with synthetic data

Post-call tasks

Summarize interaction details

Sentiment view

Understand sentiments of users during the interaction

Next-best action

Suggest action based on chat interaction and knowledge search

Thoughtful reply

Help agents craft smart responses during the interaction, e-mail response

Intelligent search

Help agents to perform complex searches very contextualized based on customer input

Multi-lingual

Help agents to perform support for multiple regions and languages

Backend productivity

Document processing

Help agents analyze uploaded documents and process with OCR and search ready

Contact categorization

Analyze interaction to understand the intent and categorize for automation

Automated survey

Create a customized survey based on interactions to improve CX

Feedback insights

Process feedback across channels to find insights to improve customer experience

Quality analysis

Analyze call interaction to identify improvement areas for agents

Training and coaching

Create specific coaching content based on quality improvement areas

Knowledge management

Refine knowledge repository based on query resolution during interaction

Contact centers play a crucial role in achieving CX transformation. CX leaders should appoint a partner who understands the pain points and can recommend a practical approach. The approach will help understand the organization's ecosystem to drive change in all aspects, from business and technology to operations. **A modernization journey involves the following steps.**

The 3Ds of contact center transformation

Discover

Define

Deliver
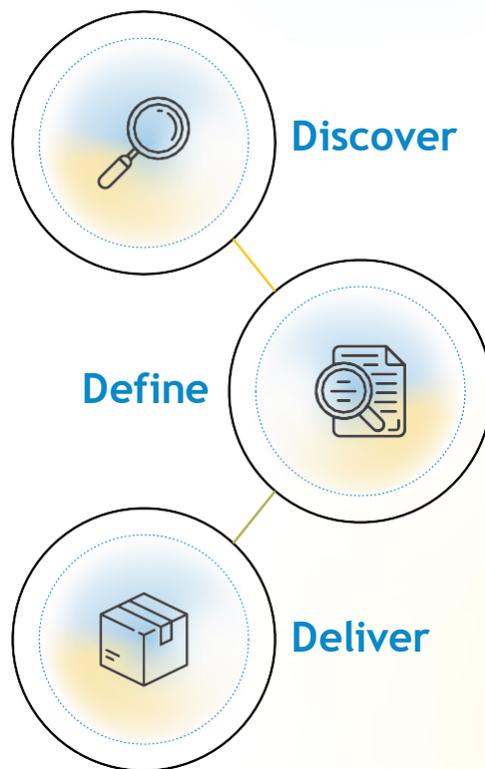
Discover

This stage starts with persona and landscape analysis and getting to know the current processes. Analyzing the contact volume helps understand how effectively the agents handle queries. The analysis also highlights the gaps in customer service. Defining the company's future state requires reimagining processes and providing guidance for improvement. Finally, evaluating the technology involves getting to know the existing landscape and recommending measures for alterations or additions within the ecosystem. This is the discovery phase, wherein a complete assessment takes up to four weeks.

Define

Identifying key use cases and clearly assessing the requirements helps identify the most suitable platform for the contact center. Detailing a business value proposition and highlighting the benefits of transformation is crucial for contact center leaders. It helps them justify the funding they need and get budget approval. After presenting a proposition, providing a technology blueprint gives the leaders an idea of the technology for the transformation. Finally, spending the budget appropriately requires a well-defined roadmap, which helps prioritize the most relevant and crucial initiatives. This is the suggestion phase and typically takes about eight weeks.

Deliver

Organizations can leverage program management capabilities for the efficient execution of tasks. It helps maintain the visibility of tasks and efforts, manage time and costs effectively, and accelerate execution. It also involves identifying and mitigating risks and ensures smooth coordination between vendors, partners, and managing stakeholders with timely reporting.

Conclusion

Customer experience is the core focus area for business leaders. Finding the right path to achieve the North Star vision of the organization is always a challenge. A practical approach and balancing costs and outcomes to justify ROI at every step of the CX transformation journey are crucial. Investing in the capabilities mentioned above can help achieve the desired business goal effectively.

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Bikartana is an expert in helping businesses improve their customer experience through digital transformation. He heads the Contact Centre Transformation initiatives for LTIMindtree Consulting, USA. He has a deep understanding of the latest cloud-based contact center-related technologies and how to use them to bring transformation, improve self-service, and create a more omnichannel customer experience. His expertise includes Gen AI, NLP, AI Bots, and Cloud Contact Center.