

# Contact Center and the Digital Experience: Trends and Maturity

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## Four Core Elements of Organizational Success

New technologies and channels, combined with evolving preferences and behaviors, have revolutionized how customers interact with brands. Consumers have changed, and they expect the companies they do business with to quickly and intelligently adapt. Today, it's no longer about "service." It's about experiences. The former delivers the result a customer expected in the first place. The latter goes beyond to create lasting impressions, memorable moments, and lifetime reminders.

Time and again, we hear during customer consultations how difficult it continues to be to retain existing consumers and gain new ones. Research makes it abundantly clear that organizations need to evolve how they look after all customers given changing wants, needs and desires. This includes the employees who work to serve customers across the enterprise ([research from The Temkin Group](#) shows that 79% of employees at companies with above-average customer experience are highly engaged in their jobs, compared to 49% of employees at companies with average or below-average scores). The key is to define the right strategies to deliver experiences that matter.

This usually starts with the contact center, which is the first place most customers interact with a brand. Organizations need to bring the right components together in a way that drives measurable improvements in satisfaction, productivity, revenue, and costs.

The key to success is found in four core elements:

1. Connecting the agent and customer experience
2. Leveraging the benefits of an application ecosystem
3. Freedom from technology refresh cycles
4. AI as the foundation of organizational success

**Regardless of what platform or application is needed or whether a task is manual or automated, all that matters is that it's fitting to the employee at the right moment to drive the best outcome.**

## Connecting the Agent and Customer Experience

Even in an increasingly digital, automated world, human interactions are still an essential part of the overall customer experience. Ensuring employees are best enabled to deliver interactions effectively is as critical as the customer experience itself. The right technology, implemented in the right way, creates experiences that matter for customers and employees, driving measurable increases in satisfaction, revenue and operational efficiency.

Case in point: as omnichannel grows, consumers should be able to seamlessly move between traditional and digital channels; the channels themselves being virtually irrelevant so long as they are best suited for the user at the right moment. Similarly, employees shouldn't have to think twice about how they're able to access information to assist those customers (in a [recent study](#) conducted by Contact Center Week, 80% of organizations agreed their agents have to access multiple systems when supporting customers). Regardless of what platform or application is needed or whether a task is manual or automated, all that matters is that it's fitting to the employee at the right moment to drive the best outcome.

According to CCW, today's contact centers have three key objectives for performance: improving self- service and digital engagement, eliminating friction and frustration, and empowering agents to make more meaningful connections. By connecting the agent and customer experience, organizations begin to effortlessly achieve these goals. Here's how [CIEE](#), a nonprofit organization that offers training and learning programs that help students get their first job and organizations find trainees and interns, achieved this with Avaya solutions:

- **The need:** streamline and improve interactions and relationship-management with students looking for employment via digital channels while meeting the communication preferences of business decision-makers that CIEE connects students with.
- **The solution:** Avaya Oceana. CIEE was able to tie all communication parts of the journey together to better serve its constituents as well as integrate applications to improve the customer and employee experience. Avaya Oceana broadened the company's omnichannel horizons by incorporating telephony, IVR, dialer, and other technologies, as well as chat and mobile communication, to drive customer engagement and help agents better do their jobs.
- **The results:** up to 88% of CIEE's calls are now handled with no need for an agent to get involved, increasing productivity and satisfaction for both students and organizations. There was also an 8-fold increase in the company's volume of service interactions nationwide and a 5-day reduction in the time it takes to fill positions when benchmarked against previous metrics.

It's equally important that back office functions are brought into the fold to streamline and enhance the customer journey. After all, the customer experience doesn't start and end in the contact center. It extends the entire organization: beyond the contact center, to and through the back office, across all departments and lines of business. Just as customers

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want seamless access to information during interactions, agents want access to the right information when, where and how they need it to deliver the best value.

This could be addressed through an open, rich media chat messaging capability that enables faster, easier, real-time communication and collaboration not just between agents and consumers but also back office functions. This drives productivity and engagement beyond the contact center to directly impact first contact resolution and customer satisfaction.

Connecting the agent and customer experience requires facilitating intelligent, natural interactions with channel independence (it doesn't matter how it happens, just that the desired outcome is achieved), enterprise-wide integration, and leveraging real-time insight (not just data) for driving the right actions.

### **Leveraging the Benefits of an Application Ecosystem**

While application programming interfaces (APIs) have been around for decades, the concept of the API ecosystem is relatively new - and it's fueling an exciting new era of customer experience. This ecosystem enables enterprises to cherry-pick services from different cloud providers, getting access to best-of-breed technology for creating solutions that drive specific customer and business outcomes. Gartner predicts that by 2025, most contact center organizations will be exploiting the benefits of an application ecosystem to deliver experiences that matter.

An application ecosystem is a much more agile way to address changing needs surrounding communications, collaboration, customer experience and more. Users can leverage communications services delivered as digestible APIs from a range of leading software providers like Google, Amazon, Salesforce as well as Avaya. These APIs can be embedded into virtually any application (i.e. mobile, phone, Web) created either internally by your own developers, by someone in a partner community, or by your vendor.

APIs provide the modularity needed for delivering innovative, in-demand customer engagement services and changing those services on the fly. They can also be used for improving the employee experience (ex: helping agents more intelligently manage data), operational efficiency (ex: automating manual or time-consuming tasks), and expenses (ex: helping supervisors more cost-effectively manage communications).

The benefits of an application ecosystem are endless. Vendors can extend the reach of their services and generate more profit, enterprises can deliver the utmost value to their end-users, and partners can create custom services that can be delivered as part of a subscription.

Here are two use cases of customers using Avaya APIs:

- A national retailer running on an Avaya phone system with data housing in Google wanted to be able to better serve its customers via an intelligent assistant solution. What would have been a massive undertaking in years past was made possible in 30 days using our Avaya cloud solution, which had modules to invoke calling, text and Web chat, and Google's cloud solution, which had modules for capabilities like sentiment analysis and speech transcription. By simply stitching the two together through code, we were able to have the use case in production in just one month.
- A municipality was able to create an automated self-service application for citizens to easily pay bills and property taxes. Without having to deploy any infrastructure, city officials were able to write an application layer, invoke data lookup, and allow for self-service interaction by embedding capabilities like speech recognition, recording, and voice transcription into their Avaya-based voice, text and Web applications. All interactions continued to be logged, and everything remained compliant. What would have been a manual, time-intensive and very expensive project was transformed into a simplified, streamlined and cost-effective process.

### The benefits of subscription are plenty:

- Scale consumption of contact center and UC solutions based on your unique needs
- Avoid the hassles of software and support licensing and contract renewals, instead focus on growing your business with a comprehensive package offering monthly or annual subscription payments
- Enjoy cost certainty: one price for software, support and upgrades delivered as one simple monthly bill
- Reduce costs: no large capital outlays with operational funding made more easily available

## Freedom from Technology Refresh Cycles

According to Nemertes, 20% of executives are concerned that their company will fall behind due to slow technology adoption. Organizations want and need to be free from the demands of a technology refresh cycle to more quickly adapt and innovate. They also want the operational and financial flexibility of a usage-based model versus an ownership-based one. Technology has evolved to the point where this is more than possible, providing companies with a range of alternative pricing models that align costs with usage.

This is game-changing for the contact center, where many enterprises aren't yet ready to move their communications systems completely to the cloud but would still like the benefits of paying only for the services they use and the flexibility to adapt as needed. A subscription model, in which enterprises are charged strictly based on usage, helps lower business risk, increase operational agility, streamline the budgeting and purchasing process, and gain flexibility when adding new services and users. The model enables enterprises to shift from Capex to Opex; the former being higher investment and risk and the latter being lower risk with faster time-to-value.

These organizational benefits trickle down to the customer with the ability to respond faster and more intelligently to inquiries, deliver more personalized engagement, and better adapt to changing preferences and needs.

According to Nemertes, successful companies spend 48% more on contact center subscriptions compared to the average organization. Subscription (or usage-based) purchasing models unleash organizations from fixed technology refresh cycles to benefit from innovation on a fluid, ongoing basis, providing a unique path for every enterprise.

**The Avaya AI solution automatically transcribes customer voice interactions into a readable format to improve the accuracy of conversations and meet more high-demanding in-call applications.**

## AI as the Foundation of Organizational Success

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is driving revolutionary capabilities in the contact center that play into the sweeping trend of digital transformation. Nearly 70% of organizations plan to increase their AI budget in 2020, according to Nemertes, and 94% recognize the ability of AI to improve contact center performance, [according to Vanson Bourne](#).

Top applications of AI in the contact center include smart routing, answering customer inquiries outside of regular business hours, answering inquiries faster than an agent, freeing agents up to handle more complex interactions (Gartner predicts that by 2025, 74% of companies will have live agents only handling complex or specialized interactions compared to 58% today), virtual assistants, conversational intelligence and predictive service. Nemertes' research also found that successful companies are using or planning to use applications of AI like smart routing, sentiment analysis and automated self-service more than the average organization.

The outcomes of contact center AI are virtually endless:

- Provide simple, easy-to-navigate conversational interfaces that improve self-service accuracy, efficiency and effectiveness for customers and agents.
- Empower agents with modern desktops that allow quick access to information without having to search or leave their main screen. According to Gartner, agent screen jumping costs a 300 agent contact center \$1.57 million a year in lost productivity.
- Better understand the types of experiences customers are having in certain communication channels and where agents are struggling with things like limitations in applications, procedures and policies.
- Apply AI to interaction data to drive next best action, deciding what action to take for a customer based on a particular circumstance.

Consider the following use case of a customer leveraging Avaya's AI solutions to stay ahead:

Atento, a leading provider of CRM and BPO services, [has driven measurable improvements in its customer satisfaction score](#) (CSAT) and net promoter score (NPS) while reducing after-call work for its clients by up to 65% using AI transcription and conversational intelligence services from Avaya. The Avaya AI solution automatically transcribes customer voice interactions into a readable format to improve the accuracy of conversations and meet more high-demanding in-call applications.

This AI functionality can also evaluate language and voice inflections to quantify next-level drivers of customer satisfaction like attitudes, opinions and emotions. The company now monitors sentiment for 100% of interactions in real-time, enabling supervisors to interject during conversations rather than wait for survey results to create better immediate outcomes and improve the overall customer and agent experience.

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According to Vanson Bourne, organizations that are using AI in the contact center are roughly 40-60% of the way through their rollout. This indicates that companies are making progress but still have work to do. Critical is finding the right partner; one that is a global leader in the contact center market and has demonstrated a strong history of leadership, vision and execution.

### **It's Always About the Experience**

Customer experience is still the No. 1 measure of strategic performance, with nearly 90% of organizations agreeing that CX can be directly linked to commercial success. Some studies suggest that revenue can be increased by as much as 70% within three years of investing in CX. These four core elements help lead to success, enabling organizations to deliver seamless, connected, intuitive and personalized experiences. Experiences that truly matter.

Organizations of all sizes need a smarter approach within the contact center – one that contributes to more rewarding outcomes for your customers and employees, and now's the time.. We are here to help, from assessing your current set-up, to reviewing business, technical, and financial objectives to developing and executing a targeted strategy and roadmap aligned to your vision.

### **About Avaya**

Businesses are built on the experiences they provide and every day millions of those experiences are built by Avaya (NYSE:AVYA). For over one hundred years, we've enabled organizations around the globe to win—by creating intelligent communications experiences for customers and employees. Avaya builds open, converged and innovative solutions to enhance and simplify communications and collaboration—in the cloud, on premise, or a hybrid of both. To grow your business, we're committed to innovation, partnership, and a relentless focus on what's next. We're the technology company you trust to help you deliver Experiences that Matter. Visit us at [www.avaya.com](http://www.avaya.com).

