



**Serenova**<sup>®</sup>  
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# HOW TO ELEVATE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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## Executive Summary

Despite the increasingly direct and powerful impact of customer experience on reputation and bottom line, research by Vanson Bourne<sup>1</sup> finds many brands still aren't getting it right. This customer experience breakdown is seriously thwarting the ability of some businesses to thrive, and it can often be attributed to the failure to satisfy customer expectations for frictionless interactions. As more consumers choose to connect through digital channels, contact centers need to capture a real-time—and seamless—flow of information about these interactions, even as customers switch channels to resolve a single issue.

The mandate is for contact centers to eliminate the silos between channels and departments to optimally support today's customers, especially the youngest generations of consumers that rely—nearly exclusively—on digital channels such as social

media and messaging apps. To thrive, today's contact center leaders must have the resolve to disrupt the way contact centers have historically operated and deliver the next level in customer care. By moving to the cloud, you can enable the digital transformation that paves the way for a superior customer experience.

This e-book explores:

- The consumer shift to digital channels
- Why and how contact centers may be failing to keep pace
- The benefits of moving to the cloud in the age of digital transformation
- How to evaluate cloud-based contact center solutions

## Rise of the Digital Experience

In the last 10 years, the rise of digital technologies and the creation of a sharing economy have significantly impacted nearly every company and industry. Consider these examples:

- Airbnb upended the hotel industry with more options, lower costs and increased control for travelers, who can now stay in private homes instead of traditional lodging.
- Uber sent taxis scrambling to reinvent themselves and even the way we think about transportation with an app-based, on-demand service for private ride sharing.
- Spotify dramatically altered the way we listen to music, no longer requiring us to buy entire albums and instead delivering music that matches our preferences.
- Instacart lets us order delivery of food and other essentials anywhere and at almost any time of day.

Combine this with the average consumer's easy access to technology and their dependence on texting, social media,

etc. These shifts have not only changed the way we buy, rent and secure services, they have also forever altered consumer expectations for brand interactions. Moreover, they've reframed the way companies win—and keep—business. While price and product will always be important, your business now truly competes on customer experience.

***“The best experience a customer ever receives becomes their new benchmark for all (digital) experiences going forward.”***

— Forbes

## Are Contact Centers Keeping Pace?

Today's modern consumers demand more of brands. According to the Gartner Customer Experience in Marketing Survey<sup>2</sup>, consumers want:

- On-demand, high-quality service
- Minimal inconvenience to get their issues solved quickly
- To be understood without having to repeat themselves
- To reach out through any or multiple communication channels (phone, text, chat, etc.) without being siloed or forced to use only one channel

It's no wonder the Gartner survey also found that 81% of companies say they expect to be competing mostly or completely on the basis of customer experience in 2019.

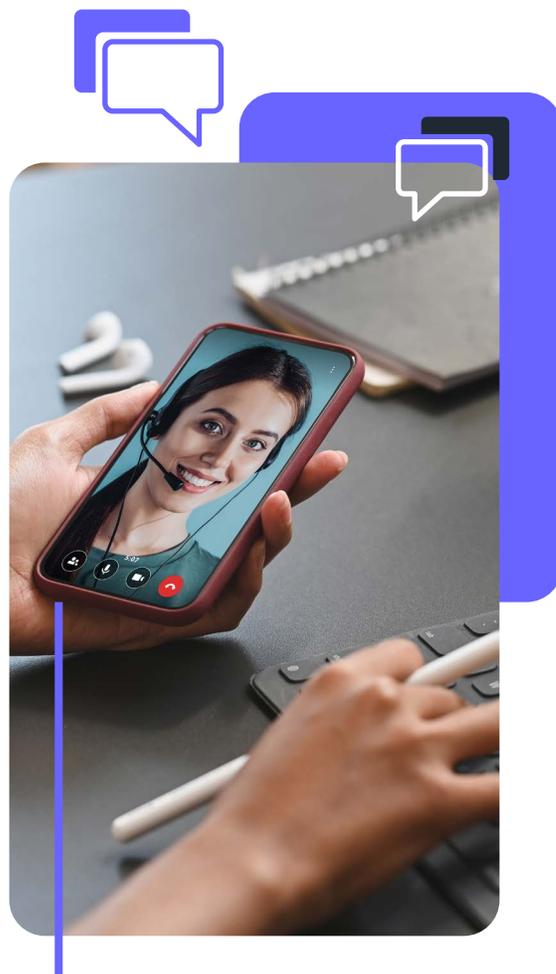
Yet, with the shift in media consumption and digital behavior, companies must ask if they are satisfying customer expectations in the evolving digital age. If a consumer sends an email and follows up with a call to your contact center, will the agent who receives the call know the customer has already reached out for help—even if on another channel—and how it was handled? If not, this turns into an expensive proposition for your company, since you'll end up addressing the same customer issue more than once. And, perhaps more importantly, it leads to customer dissatisfaction and sends a message that your company doesn't prioritize the customer experience.

***62% of consumers reported needing to make multiple contacts to resolve their most recent customer service need.***

— Northridge Group, State of Customer Service Experience

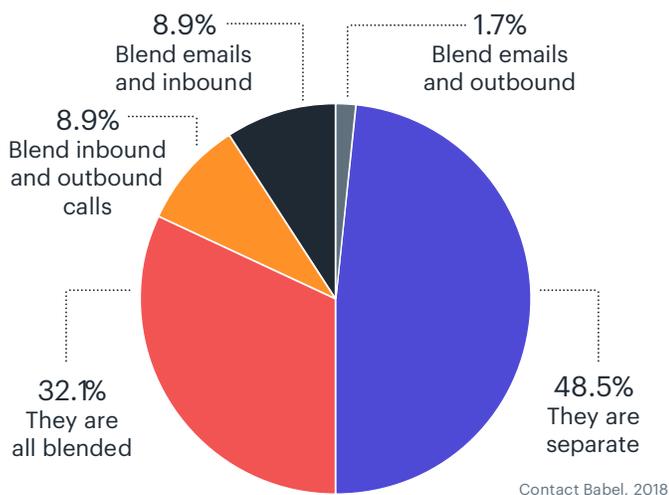
***“The combination of digital channels is heralding a new era in customer care. After years of steady change, the tipping point is upon us.”***

—Sheila McGee-Smith,  
McGee-Smith Analytics



## Why Do Contact Centers Fall Short?

The siloed nature of the contact center is a major roadblock to satisfying customer expectations. According to a recent survey from Contact Babel, just under 50% of today's contact centers still keep email and inbound and outbound calls separate in their contact center systems, limiting their agents' ability to smoothly address customer issues.



### Channels are still not unified

This is unfortunate since the solutions used to blend these channels also help contact centers automate call routing, synchronize customer data and align reporting. Blended channels improve productivity and efficiency across the customer journey. Moreover, 20% of contact centers surveyed by Contact Babel do not feel they provide equal service across all channels in terms of quality. This impacts the consistency of the customer experience, which can result in irreparable brand damage.

To understand how well—or badly—organizations are doing with customer service, and how this impacts their brands, Vanson Bourne, in an independent study commissioned by Serenova, surveyed 3,000 consumers in the US and UK. Nearly all respondents said poor customer service often drives them to a competing brand.

*The vast majority (94%) of respondents admit that poor customer service would prevent them from purchasing from a brand ... and instead buy from a competitor.*

—Serenova Contact Center Survey (via Vanson Bourne)



## The Cloud Paves the Way

Cloud-based solutions are the new norm, but contact centers haven't kept pace. According to Irwin Lazar, VP and Service Director, Nemertes Research, "Often the lack of omnichannel capabilities is due to constraints created by legacy platforms, and the lack of capital budgets to add new capabilities. As a result, nearly half of organizations are using or evaluating cloudbased customer engagement platforms to increase agility, roll out new capabilities, and reduce capital expenditures." <sup>3</sup>

Yet, the cloud presents an opportunity for contact centers to truly enable an omnichannel experience for their customers.

Cloud computing is a model for delivering information technology services in which resources are retrieved online via web-based tools and applications rather than via a direct connection to a server. These on-demand services are generally leased from a third-party provider that manages all systems and software. In turn, they provide contact centers with access to powerful applications without the high costs and headaches associated with owning and maintaining them.

Cloud solutions are no longer hype. More specifically, cloudbased contact center platforms (also known as contact centers-as-a-service (CCaaS)) enable organizations to far more rapidly and easily support emerging channels. They also provide access to analytics, bots, machine learning and customizable APIs in support of companies' digital transformation.

In the cloud, data is centralized, not siloed. That means your agents can access and maintain the context of customer interactions across channels through the entire customer journey. As consumer behaviors change, a cloud-based solution allows your organization to respond and adapt to your customers' communication preferences.

Unlike on-premises systems, CCaaS can easily connect to your other cloud-based solutions and quickly scale based on how many agents are needed due to call volume. The cloud presents a new future for contact centers—one that's flexible, connected and enables quality experiences.

### Benefits of a contact center in the cloud

- Eliminates data silos to truly enable an omnichannel experience for customers
- Easily connects to other cloud-based solutions, regardless of location
- Quickly scales out geographically or across an enterprise, based on how many agents are needed



***CCaaS makes it possible to access all the features of an enterprise contact center in the cloud, letting your organization focus on delivering the best experience possible while the provider takes care of software hosting, upgrades and maintenance.***

## How Contact Centers Can Evolve to Address Omnichannel

Once convinced it's time to digitally transform your contact center, apply these best practices to ensure a successful initiative.

**Analyze your customers' behaviors and preferences.** Review the information you've collected about your customers to date and combine it with a fresh survey to identify customer channel and communication preferences.

**Roll out new channels in succession.** Rather than deploy all digital channels simultaneously, it's wise to launch them one at a time. Prioritize the digital channels in terms of customer preference and your ability to support them. Consider deployment, training and support requirements as you develop a rolling implementation plan.

**Involve your agents early.** Your agents will play a key role in ensuring the success of your omnichannel initiative. Socialize the omnichannel plan with your agents, and find out which agents are comfortable with digital channels and which ones require training. Supplement training with a playbook to help guide interactions on each channel. Remember, each channel has a distinct character, and your agents need to understand these in order to interact with customers appropriately on each.

**Implement the right tools and technologies.** In addition to a cloud-based contact center platform, deploy tools that will enable your agents to best serve customers. For instance, a quality management solution documents interactions between your agents and customers, allowing your supervisors to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of customer experience. Combining this with a tool that makes it possible to gamify the agent experience and incentivizes agents to improve their performances helps ensure alignment between overall contact center performance and business goals.

**Be selective about what ends up on the agent desktop.** You will likely end up assigning agents to different sets of channels. For example, some might feel most comfortable on email and social media, while others are also at ease with messaging. Ideally you tailor the user interface that becomes your agents' main base of operations so each agent has access to only the necessary tools and information.

**Measure success quickly and continually.** Like any strategic initiative, you want to monitor and gauge the impact soon after rollout and then on an ongoing basis. While you will still track many of the metrics you already use in your contact center (e.g., Average Handling Time and First Contact Resolution) add metrics associated directly with customer experience, such as Customer Satisfaction and Net Promoter Score. Watching trends over time can help you identify opportunities to retrain your agents and streamline processes.

*“Contact center platforms are maturing from collections of siloed best-of-breed components to integrated suites that organizations can operate as a cloud service.”*

—Art Schoeller, Forrester Research

## How to Evaluate Your Contact Center Options

Integrating cloud contact center technologies can yield a seamless contact center operation supporting each aspect of the contact center lifecycle. Your agents and supervisors can be located anywhere while accessing a complete contact center application suite via a web browser to handle a comprehensive range of communication channels. As you evaluate your cloud contact center solution options, vet each vendor for the following:

**Availability:** Confirm the service level agreements the provider offers. Ensure your customers can always reach you.

**Security:** Confirm any cloud vendor you work with—whether providing a contact center or other tool—has implemented layers of security. Multi-layered security means both you and your customers can rest assured that your business is at as little risk as possible.

**Scalability:** The ability to dynamically adjust staffing is crucial, especially for seasonal businesses. Scalability helps control costs and ensures your customers aren't spending excessive time on hold.

**Innovation via Automatic Updates:** Your contact center vendor should handle hardware and software upgrades and continually implement the latest and greatest technology. You reap the benefits without the work or the cost. And your agents and customers benefit from smoothly implemented, cutting-edge tools.

**Monitoring via Real-time Reporting and Visibility:** Having solid insight into agent performance from robust reporting allows you to make adjustments as needed to keep your customer satisfaction high.

## Conclusion: Enable a Quality Experience with the Cloud

With increasing focus on the customer journey and growing pressure to enhance the journey, more contact center executives are recognizing the need to evolve their operations in the age of digital transformation. While consumers use multiple channels—and increasingly more digital ones—to reach the contact center, they don't think in silos. Yet, far too often, their experience interacting with companies feels like a disconnected and frustrating series of interactions.

A growing number of executives are embracing cloud contact center solutions because they eliminate data silos to enable a seamless, quality omnichannel customer experience. Unlike onpremises solutions, CCaaS can easily connect to your other cloudbased solutions, and quickly scale based on how many agents are needed due to call volume. Plus, as consumer behaviors change, a cloud solution allows you to respond and adapt to your customers' communication needs and channel preferences.

The cloud presents a new future for contact centers in the age of digital transformation—one that's flexible, connected and enables quality experiences.

For additional resources on cloud contact center solutions and optimizing customer experience, visit Serenova's [resource center](#).

## About Lifesize

Lifesize delivers immersive communication experiences for the global enterprise. Our complementary suite of award-winning cloud video conferencing and cloud contact center solutions empowers organizations to elevate workplace collaboration, boost employee productivity and improve customer experiences from anywhere and from any device. To learn more about our analyst-recognized solutions and see why tens of thousands of leading organizations like Yelp, RBC, Yale University, Pearson, Salvation Army, Shell Energy and NASA rely on Lifesize for mission-critical business communications, visit [www.lifesize.com](http://www.lifesize.com) or [www.serenova.com](http://www.serenova.com).



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