



CONTACT CENTER CONSUMER PREFERENCES

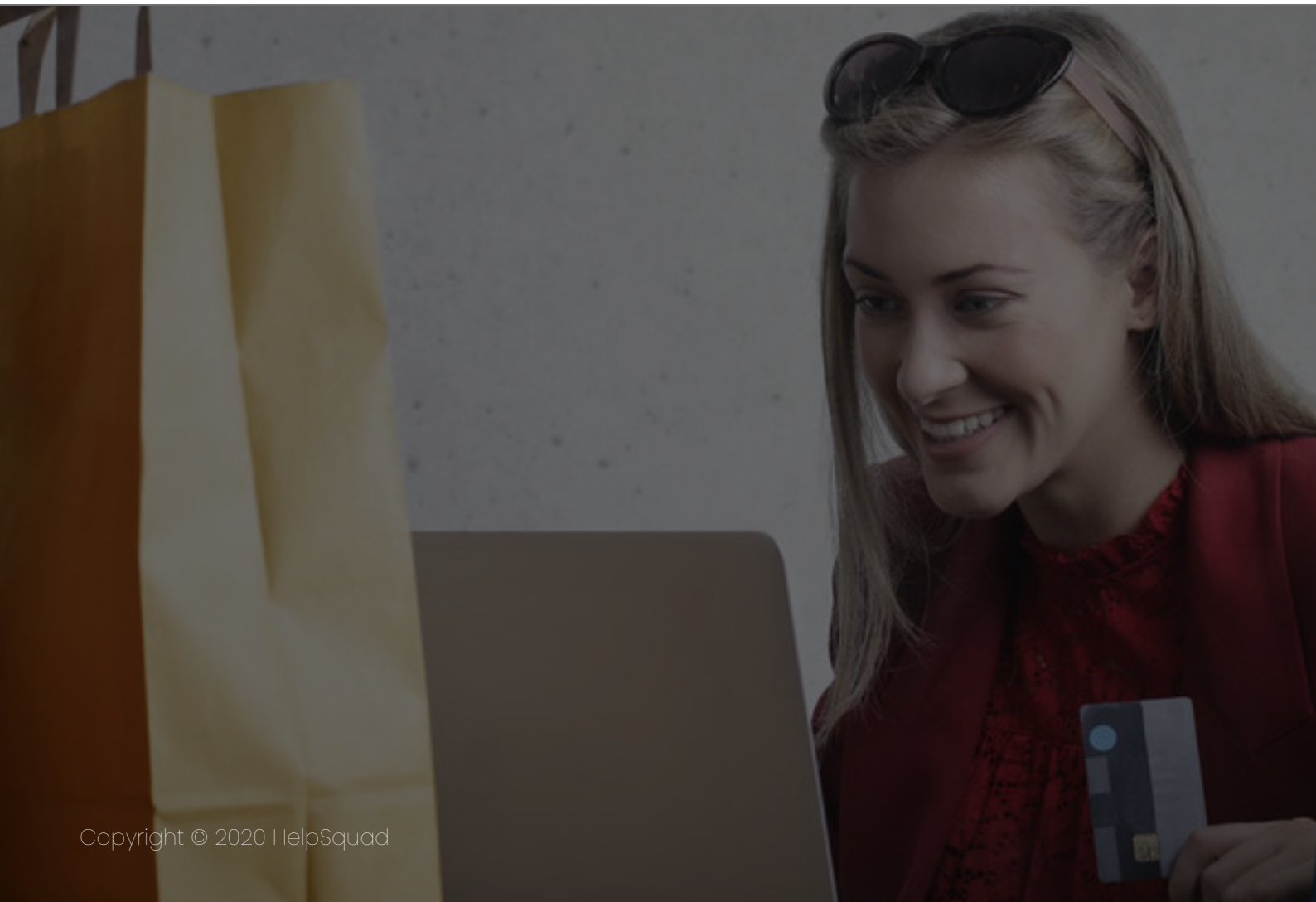
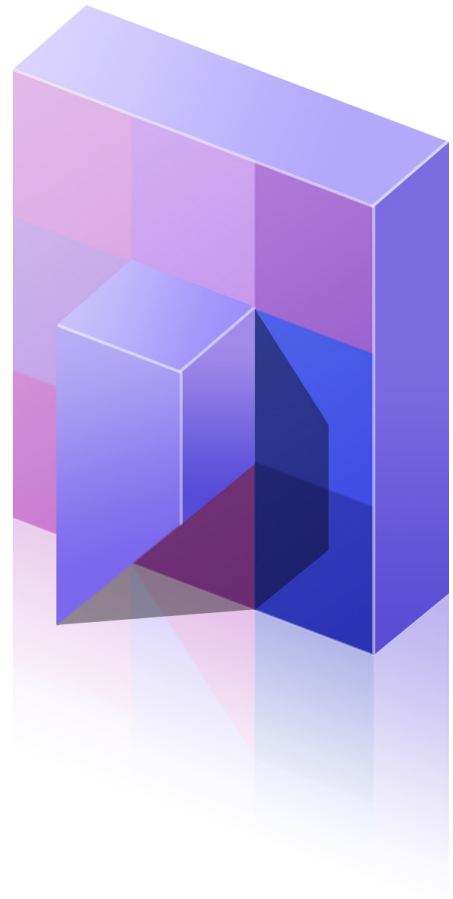
How to balance business objectives and consumer preferences in a contact center environment



E-BOOK

CONTACT CENTER CONSUMER PREFERENCES

How to balance business objectives and consumer preferences in a contact center environment



FOCUS: CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Today's consumers are more autonomous than ever before. They know what they want and how they want it.

For contact centers, however, consumer preferences are not always the driving focus. Technological and economic challenges influence how contact centers address customers' needs.

Profitability is, naturally, the driving force in contact centers' operations. Ensuring positive customer experiences without sacrificing profitability is a must. How can contact centers achieve both profitability and customer satisfaction?

Balancing the customers' needs with the realities of running a business is the key.

ABOUT THIS EBOOK

In this eBook, we'll explore strategies for successfully achieving this balance.

This eBook will help connect consumer interaction preferences with critical business issues like a shrinking customer base, efficiency, brand loyalty, agent productivity and of course, profitability.

Main topics we will discuss include:

- Efficiency optimization and performance management.
- Profitability improvement through cost reduction and revenue increase.
- Protection of tech investments in an unpredictable economy.
- Successful omnichannel customer experience.
- Balance of increasing demands and flattening budgets.



This eBook will guide efforts to meet critical business objectives as well as consumer preferences at contact centers of any size.



CHAPTER 1: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

EFFICIENCY OPTIMIZATION

In every contact center is untapped potential within existing staff and infrastructure.

To unlock it, management must restructure the environment to optimize operation efficiency and proactively manage performance.

High First Contact Resolution (FCR) is the ultimate goal of this restructuring and optimization process.

In a challenging economic climate, most businesses look for ways to do more with less. Staffing is the most expensive part of the operation. Therefore, finding the ideal match between agent potential and training becomes mandatory.

Finally, measuring current inefficiencies in a contact center operation and identifying areas in need of improvement is another necessary and crucial step. All that must be done in a manner that does not sacrifice customer satisfaction.

79%

of customers think they know more about the issue than the agent.

78%

of customers already researched the issue online before contacting an agent.

In this chapter we will address the following business optimization topics:

- **Agent churn:** challenge experts while utilizing talents and resources to their fullest
- **Measuring for success:** drive tangible success with key performance indicators.

AGENT CHURN

Statistically, an average agent lasts about six months in his or her position. Annual agent turnover can reach as high as 40%. It costs an average of \$15,000 to replace an agent.

All this creates a significant impact on the bottom line of a contact center.

What comes with an unmeasurable cost is reduced business and poor customer satisfaction due to inexperienced agents.



SOLUTION: LEVERAGE, MAINTAIN, AND IMPROVE

It's critical to create an environment and build structure that retains talented agents.

Below are the steps that help facilitate such favorable work culture:

- Offering a variable environment with flexible hours and work conditions.
- Using skill-based routing strategy to challenge and motivate agents. This can result in greater job performance and satisfaction.
- Creating training opportunities such as mentoring and highlighting best practices.
- Offering incentives to acknowledge and recognize agent value. Reporting and analytics can help measure and manage performance.



MEASURING FOR SUCCESS

It's difficult to manage without measuring first.

Efficiency and performance metrics can help measure how current contact center operations support both business objectives and customer satisfaction.



SOLUTION: ANALYZE, UNDERSTAND, AND ADJUST

Both real-time and historic data can help identify areas in need of improvement as well as what works efficiently already.

The right solution, however, goes beyond data capture and analysis.

It incorporates easy-to-use dashboards and customizable reports that help make more informed decisions to maximize contact center efficiency.



CHAPTER 2: PROFITABILITY IMPROVEMENT

CONTACT CENTER'S ROLE IN BRAND PROFITABILITY

Customer experience with the contact center greatly affects profitability. After all, it's through these experiences that customers get the feel of a brand.

These impressions are just as important as advertising, marketing, and the brand's actual products and services.

To increase revenue streams and deliver the best customer experience possible, it's essential to connect the best agents with the best customers. Mapping channels of communications to customer preferences is a big step of this process.

Under the right management, a contact center can become a true profit center.

Effective strategies include an enterprise-wide buy-in, a solid infrastructure, the flexibility to adapt to change, and the tools to create exceptional customer experiences without overinvesting in each interaction.

70%

of consumers are willing to spend more money with a company that provides good customer service.

80%

of consumers will buy more from companies that make it easier to do business with them.

90%

of consumers say they're likely to tell their network about a poor customer service experience.

In this chapter we will discuss:

- **First Contact Resolution (FCR):** ways to provide immediate customer satisfaction.
- **Customer defection:** stopping the "Facebook Effect" before it starts.
- **Rising costs:** how to boost revenue without driving expense.

FIRST CONTACT RESOLUTION



As a business grows, customer needs and their complexity grow with it.

At times, the answering agent might run into a problem he or she cannot resolve independently. If the customer is forced to wait, be transferred, and continue to deal with multiple agents, frustration becomes inevitable.

Mistakes, delays, and frustrated customers cost money and drag down a business' bottom line. Ever worse, a customer might not give a business a second chance and terminate his or her relationship with the brand.

SOLUTION: QUICK AND EFFICIENT CONNECTIONS

The answering agent must always be the one resolving the issue. He or she must understand customer needs as quickly as possible.

Separating complex issues from simple ones can help direct the customer to an agent who is the best fit to solve the problem. This practice also allows simpler and routine questions to be answered quickly and presents an opportunity for the customer to self-serve to solve the issues.

If an agent does not have an immediate answer or resolution, he or she must work with his or her teammates and supervisors behind the scene to resolve the issue on first contact. It's critical to make customer data available to all agents at all times so that they can create personal connections with customers to deliver the best customer experience.

CUSTOMER DEFECTION

Modern customers use multiple communications media in their everyday lives. Because culture and technology place social media in everyone's daily life, it's only natural that customers want to use it to resolve their issues. They demand quick, efficient resolution to every query over every channel.

It is now easier for customers to talk about their interactions with businesses and quickly share their opinions with others.

90%

of consumers will share their experiences across their networks.

SOLUTION: MONITOR, ISOLATE, AND ACT QUICKLY

A contact center must ensure customers have positive experiences every time, across all channels. Capturing and prioritizing conversations efficiently is the key.

Doing so in addition to fully integrating social media into contact strategy can increase a contact center's capability and efficiency. This results in a more flexible, tailored experience, happier customers, and, ultimately, greater customer lifetime value.

A network of stylized human icons connected by dashed lines, representing a contact center or customer service environment. The icons are in various colors and are scattered across the page, with a higher density in the top right and bottom right areas. The background is a mix of purple and blue tones.

RISING COSTS

Meeting modern customers' expectations requires contact centers to work more diligently.

Contact centers face the challenge of setting higher standards for exceptional service and using advanced technologies to personalize consumer experiences. All that must be done with keeping costs in mind.

SOLUTION: ANTICIPATE, AUTOMATE AND ACCELERATE

Highly efficient context-based interactions are key to lowering contact center operating costs.

Enabling multimedia, introducing automation, and speeding up connections can take the existing infrastructure to the next level.

- Add new communication channels to automate costly routine calls and processes.
- Offload the cost of brick and mortar with home agents.
- Create peak calling schedules and enable workforce forecasting to reduce headcount during slow periods.



CHAPTER 3: TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENT PROTECTION

CONTACT CENTER'S ROLE IN BRAND PROFITABILITY

Improving functionality, efficiency, and better bandwidth is always a challenge when a call center is working within a strained infrastructure. It proves to be even harder when flat budgets appear as another obstacle.

Replacing the existing investments is not an option in that case. However, modernizing the functionality of a call center to meet customers' increasing needs and demands is truly the key to higher efficiency. It's important to remember nevertheless that introducing new technology always creates complexity.

As the infrastructure evolves and grows, maintenance strategy must always grow with it. That will ensure the continuity of the reliable services the contact center delivers daily.

Dedicating strong support services to communication systems and equipping them with diagnostic tools that extend from previous infrastructure to any new investments can make maintenance and daily operations smoother.

26%

of consumers do not get what they need from contact center interactions the first time.

36%

of consumers will consider defecting after only 2–3 attempts.

In this chapter we address:

- **Balancing functionality against flat budgets:** doing more with less.
- **Investments in scalability:** growing and advancing, without forklifting.



BALANCING FUNCTIONALITY AGAINST FLAT BUDGETS

“Doing more with less” extends beyond software and hardware upgrades.

Adding new forms of communication that aid the delivery of customer service can aid functionality even when working within a limited budget.

A technology investment plan that delivers against corporate objectives will give a contact center a strategic advantage and the required funding.

SOLUTION: MOVE FASTER, MOVE LEANER

Working and building on existing infrastructure can help deliver strong ROIs with minimal additional spending.

- Use analytics to identify and drive improvements and increase efficiency.
- Optimize the customer experience across all channels.
- Eliminate costly practices, such as agent-assisted and outbound calls.





INVESTMENTS IN SCALABILITY

When dealing with multi-vendor systems, flexibility and scalability become extremely challenging.

In these environments business needs seem to become secondary, as all decisions are made based on available and utilized technology.



SOLUTION: EMBRACING AGILITY

Flexible architecture that integrates with enterprise applications to enable simpler, more cost-effective and more scalable models for application, context, and multimedia integration can help protect investments.

Contact centers can maximize the performance of existing resources to boost potential and consolidate IT infrastructure with SIP architecture.



CHAPTER 4: SUPERIOR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

DELIVERING EXCELLENT OMNICHANNEL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Changes in communication media always present some challenges as contact centers must adapt quickly and meet customers' expectations. Delivering personalized service no matter what changes occur leads to contact center success.

How can contact centers achieve high customer satisfaction scores? Moreover, how can they ensure that every communication channel feeds into identically-elevated customer experiences?

In this chapter we will discuss:

- **Personal service expectations:** meeting cascading customer demands.
- **Inadequate contact methods:** changing as quickly as technology does.

60%

of consumers say they continuously change the way they contact businesses.

43%

of consumers say that loyalty to companies is a thing of the past.



PERSONALIZED SERVICE EXPECTATIONS

Companies no longer can direct the conversations customers have about their brands. In fact, customers have full control over these conversations.

As expectations change, organizations have no choice but to adapt and provide seamless service that fits all of the customers' needs and expectations.

SOLUTION: RAISING STANDARDS TO A HIGHER LEVEL

Every single interaction with a customer matters and must be held to the highest possible standards.

The entire process must be airtight. Every communication channel must lead to the right solution. And a constant regimen of analysis and optimization should be in place and prioritized appropriately.

Agents must have a complete understanding of every situation to be able to deliver efficient, personalized service.

CONTACT METHODS

Customers do not want to wait.

Providing immediate answers and resolutions is essential for a contact center.

Additionally, customers want to receive the help they need through whatever channels they choose to contact the company.

That means that the contact center must be equally robust across every channel, including live chat, video, and even SMS.

Most importantly, a contact center must deliver the same quality of service regardless of communication method.

SOLUTION: STAYING AHEAD OF THE TASK

The key to successful contact center operations is for every agent to have a complete understanding of how the customers want to interact.

Giving customers choices they expect and being proactive about newly emerging channels are both effective strategies. Measuring usage and optimizing services as customer preferences change is yet another.

Directing customers to the most appropriate channel for a specific task could also prove to be an effective way to maximize efficiency.



CHAPTER 5: COST BALANCE

INCREASING DEMANDS VS. FLAT-LINING BUDGETS

Balancing trends is not an easy task. Business success demands greater functionality, efficiency, and bandwidth from an already-strained infrastructure. That requires new forms of communication to better serve customers.

On the other hand, flat budgets stall the growth. Doing more with less requires some creative thinking.

There is now one sure constant in business: everything changes except for budget. And this is the single major challenge businesses face.

The good news is that there are strategies for delivering contact center ROI and value without breaking the IT budget.

70%

of customers will contact a company again if they don't get their issue resolved the first time.

Investing in technology focused on the customer experience will reduce costs and deliver strong ROI.

This chapter will dive into the following topics:

- **No funding for the current IT strategy:** meeting budget pressures.
- **Integration across all channels:** marrying front-ends with back-ends.



IT FUNDING CHALLENGES

More often than not a company's IT strategy relies on a specific budget.

While certain expectations for increasing costs might have been part of the original strategy, maintenance and continuously changing support demands always drive costs up.

Keeping the right pace will determine the efficiency and success of a contact center.

SOLUTION: SLIM DOWN AND PROVE VALUE

Analyze, integrate, and streamline available IT systems to reduce redundancies.

Simultaneously, it helps to prove and show to upper management that investments will pay off and additional technologies will drive up revenue.

This can help secure improvements and additional funding for more modern tech.

INTEGRATION ACROSS ALL CHANNELS

Historical contact information and details of each customer interaction must be available to all agents at all times.

First contact resolution should always be the goal, but in case an issue resurfaces it's essential to have all the information in front of the contact agent.

Customers do not want to explain their issues over and over again. It's frustrating to them and it's costly and inefficient for the contact center.

83%

of consumers say they'd buy more from a company if they made it easier to do business with them.

SOLUTION: FOCUSING ON STANDARDS

Having historical contact details available is not that technologically difficult of a task. A good ticket tracking system can significantly improve communication.

Sharing information between the main company database and all agents in the contact center reduces cost-per-resolution and increases agent capacity to solve problems.



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