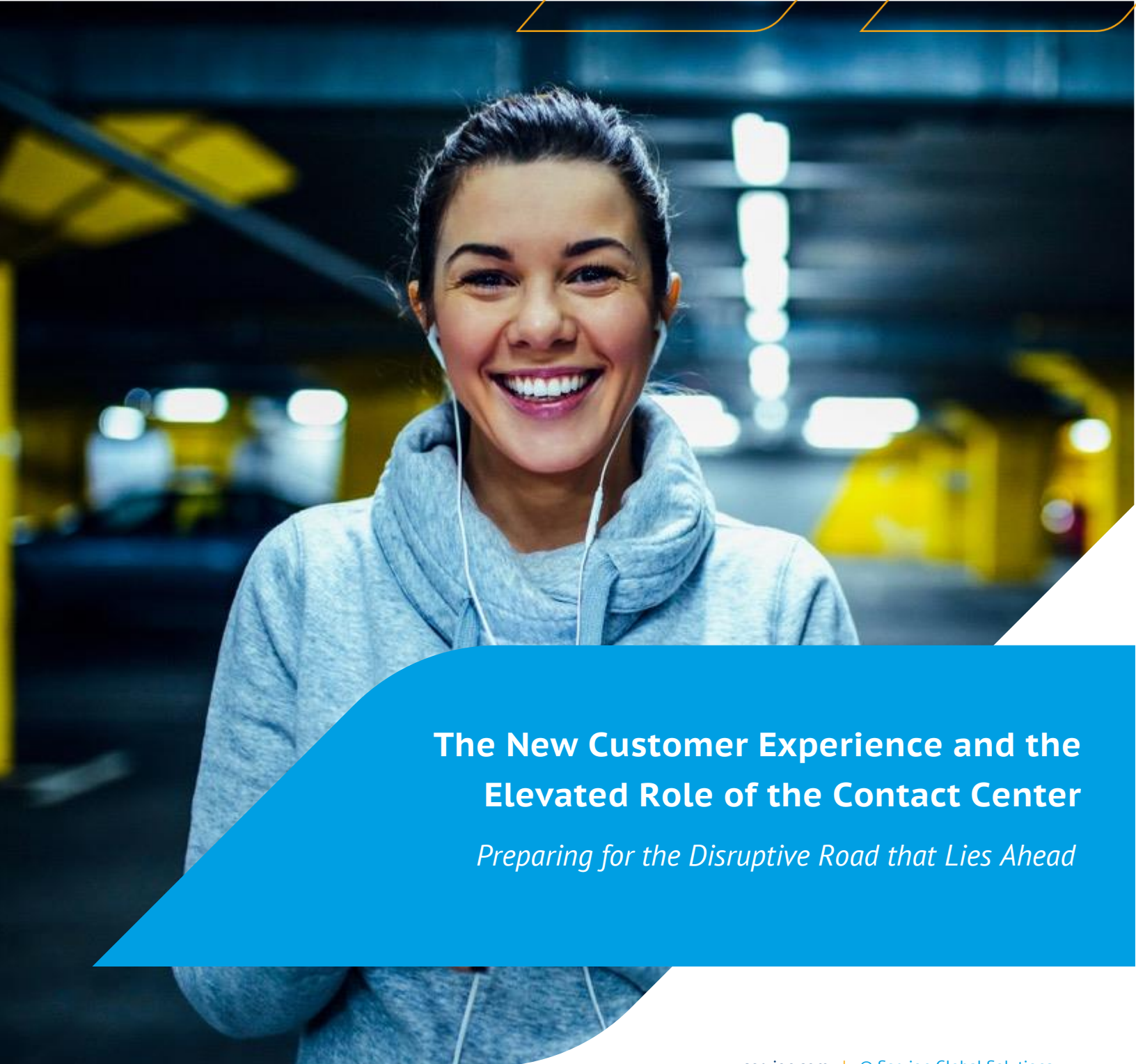




The New Customer Experience and the Elevated Role of the Contact Center

Preparing for the Disruptive Road that Lies Ahead

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The contact center is more critical than ever and at the core of customer experience transformation. Eighty-six percent of customers are willing to pay more for a great service experience, and 88% of companies now prioritize customer experience in their contact centers. COVID-19 has only accelerated the need for contact center innovation as hard-hit customer support teams work to maintain loyalty and satisfaction. The need for better customer experience is evident and includes improved self-service options and agent tools. Organizations must consider agility and flexibility as well. To compete in an era of constant disruption and rising expectations - now more than ever in a "new normal" - companies must elevate the contact center's role in their

competitive strategies. Specifically, using technologies like cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), automated self-service, and data integration.

Orienting changes in process and technology requires assessing the contact center's current state and developing a roadmap for customer experience. Such a roadmap establishes clear improvement measures based on key performance indicators (KPIs) like time to resolution, cost, net promoter score (NPS), customer effort, churn, and upsell.

This white paper explores cloud computing, AI, automated self-service, and data integration for the new customer experience and how brands can plan around these technologies to stay ahead.

CLOUD: Why Businesses Are Accelerating their Move to Contact Center-as-a-Service (CCaaS)

Moving your on-premises contact center to the cloud is one of the most significant technology shifts your business will make. Research shows that cloud contact centers cost 27% less than on-premises solutions, reduce downtime by 35%, increase uptime by 73%, and have measurably improved cost. According to Forbes, 66% of global contact centers that are not using cloud today are planning to accelerate their move to CCaaS due to COVID-19.

With the right approach, your existing on-premises system can co-exist with a more

efficient, security, and compliance for roughly 70% of users. Gartner predicts that CCaaS will be the preferred model of adoption for 50% of all contact centers by 2022 (an increase from 10% in 2019). The pandemic has only fueled this growth.

advanced cloud solution to improve performance while optimizing costs and resources. Consider the following two shifts impacting customer experience and the contact center:

The Rise of Multiexperience

Like omnichannel was the next evolution of multichannel, Multiexperience - pioneered by Gartner in 2019 - is the next omnichannel evolution. The firm predicts that by 2023, more than 25% of the mobile apps, Web apps, and conversational apps at large enterprises will be built and run through a Multiexperience development platform. With the average customer owning three different devices and using a broad range of digital touchpoints and interaction types for engagement - always with the expectation of effortless and consistent service Multiexperience is becoming the expected norm.

Cloud provides the necessary agility for organizations to scale their applications across various platforms and devices to deliver these more dynamic user experiences. Although a novel concept, it's expected that Multiexperience will directly improve key measures of customer satisfaction and operational performance with seamless customer journey management, faster resolution, and less human escalation. Businesses must start planning around Multiexperience, and they need a cloud-based contact center to do so.

The Changing Nature of Work

Long before COVID-19 struck, there was a need for better tools and technologies to support an evolving contact center workforce. The processes and questions agents must handle have grown increasingly complex through the years, and teams have been

gradually becoming more distributed. The pandemic is the proverbial nail in the coffin, creating a new caliber of customer inquiries. One study found that at the height of the pandemic in March 2020, the percentage of service calls scored as "difficult" more than doubled in just two weeks. The crisis also forced organizations to shift to immediate and mandatory work from home, and research suggests this shift is far from temporary. A June 2020 study found that approximately two-thirds of businesses that have adopted remote work policies plan to keep at least some of them in place long-term or permanently. Migrating to the cloud is an opportunity to re-think the business and the balance of agent-assisted service and customer self-service, with cost improvement and ease of experience being the two overarching goals:

- **Greater agility:** There are high expectations for brand engagement today, and customers expect companies to meet their pace of innovation. Cloud solutions enable faster innovation to stay ahead of dynamic and constantly changing needs.
- **Built-in disaster recovery:** Redundancy and failover are native features of cloud architectures, and CaaS solutions provide a great degree of resilience.
- **Flexible capacity management:** Cloud solutions can easily scale up and down to handle the ebb and flow of customer interaction volumes, only requiring enterprises to pay for the resources they use.
- **Intelligent, automated self-service:** Applications of automated self-service like

speech biometrics, conversational AI, and robotic process automation (RPA) are crucial to the future of service, and most of this innovation happens in the cloud.

- **Data consolidation and management:**

An effective, enterprise-wide data management strategy is key for leveraging

the kind of customer intelligence needed to deliver incredible service experiences. Over 50% of recently surveyed IT leaders and executives strongly agree that data modernization is a key component of, or a reason for, their company's shift to the cloud (more on this below)

AUTOMATED SELF-SERVICE: Providing Self-service Where Customers (and Agents) Want it Most

Studies unanimously show that most customers want self-service technology and prefer self-service over human interaction. Arguably, COVID-19 has accelerated the need for automated self-service as strained agent workforces deal with a barrage of complicated and time-consuming inquiries. According to KPMG, the number of companies investigating automated self-service technologies has increased by 15% since February 2020 when the crisis first hit.

Automated self-service reduces operational costs, drives higher customer satisfaction by reducing complexity, and better engages agents with more stimulating work. Here are three critical applications of automated self-service enterprises can't afford to ignore:

Call deflection: Call deflection reduces customer effort and increases agent stimulation by redirecting more straightforward interactions. Consider a customer who calls a company's toll-free number using their mobile phone. The IVR

system offers the customer the option of digital self-service instead of being routed to a live agent. If the customer agrees, they will be sent an SMS (text message) with a link to open the company's mobile app or Web page to continue with the digital self-service experience. The customer can escalate to a live agent at any point in time, with the agent being context-aware of the issue at hand. Research shows that over 60% of U.S. customers prefer an automated self-service option like a website or mobile app for simple customer service tasks.

Automated appointment scheduling:

Integrate with calendaring systems and offer a 24/7 hotline for appointment scheduling and rescheduling. Automate outbound appointment reminders over voice and text channels with customized messages and reservation details to minimize no shows (consider that the healthcare industry loses an estimated \$150B each year due to patient no shows).

Self-authentication via voice biometrics:

By recognizing a voiceprint, an intelligent IVR system saves time that the customer would generally spend answering verification questions while improving business efficiency and costs. By some estimates, organizations can save up to \$10 per call when voice biometrics is applied. For a large, global

organization where requests for support are high, this can translate into substantial savings while maintaining compliance, security, and customer satisfaction.

Automation and self-service will only continue to benefit from new technologies and advances in AI moving forward.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: Transform Customer Experience and Crush Contact Center KPIs

AI is one of the most important technologies for 2020 and beyond. Research shows top benefits of AI adoption in the contact center include greater agent productivity (53%), higher first contact resolution rates (51%), higher revenue per customer contact (48%), improvement in the average number of transfers per call (47%), less time spent assisting agents (47%), and more service level agreements met (43%). COVID-19 has only accelerated the need for AI as customer service centers continue to experience an unprecedented uptick in call volume.

Consider the following two applications of contact center AI, needed by every organization:

AI-powered chatbots and voice bots

If we're being honest, the first generation of bots was disappointing. As recently as 2019, studies found that only 30% of customers believe chatbots actually make it easier to address their service issues. Customers want more human-like engagement with the time-

savings of rule-based automation. Intelligent, conversational bots shine here by providing a more natural interface and more in-depth, relevant answers.

A next-generation, intelligent, conversational chatbot or voice bot combines natural language processing and understanding (NLP/NLU) with machine learning and predictive algorithms. It first detects the intent of the customer, then guides them towards fulfilling the intent. It organizes the conversation based on intents and context (who is the customer, what have they been doing, what is their sentiment, and many other variables). Bots are available from multiple channels, be it the Web or mobile messaging apps, making it very convenient for customers who can choose their time, place and device to get what they want or need. In case the bot cannot solve the customer's question, escalating to a human by chat or voice is a critical capability that must be deployed.

The ability of conversational intelligent assistants to solve customer requests tremendously improves productivity while maintaining quality service experiences. This article demonstrates the gains that small and large contact centers can expect from well designed and implemented bots. Deflecting phone calls to an automated solution reduces costs and speeds up the time to resolution or transaction.

The use of AI has skyrocketed - particularly within the contact center - and will only continue to look ahead. In 2019, enterprise use of AI grew 37%. In 2021, it's expected that AI and digital transformation will create \$2.9 trillion in business value and add 6.2 billion hours of worker productivity.

Real-time agent guidance

Imagine an agent knowing with a high degree of accuracy what a customer is calling about before the first "hello" is spoken. That's the power of agent assistance technology, which analyzes speech to surface contextual insights that empower contact center employees to improve the service experience in real-time. For example, if while in the queue interacting with an Intelligent Virtual Agent (IVA) a customer says the words "frustrated" and "bill," screen pops will appear on the agent's desktop ahead of the call transfer to guide them on how to handle billing questions for a customer with negative sentiment. Gartner predicts that IVAs will drive \$1.2 trillion in business value by 2030.

These screen pops can contain relevant information for the specific issue, from knowledge base articles to corporate policy documents and even special discounts to help retain the customer. Supervisors can also use these speech analytics to identify pain points or limitations on the agent's side by picking up speech patterns, vocabulary, or tone that can be improved.

AI-enabled call summarization also significantly improves agent productivity by reducing after-call work. Transcribed text files of customer conversations can be auto populated into the notes section of a company's CRM system, enabling the agent to spend more time creating meaningful connections and new selling opportunities. Overall, research shows a 61% improvement in customer satisfaction among companies that combine AI with human interaction and a 69% improvement in satisfaction for agents who work with AI. These AI applications must be able to quickly access the enterprise knowledge base to present relevant information to the customer via bots or the agent via a guidance application. They also need access to customer data (structured or unstructured). Data integration is vital (more on this below).

Agent assistance and guidance applications can shorten time to resolution, make answers more precise, detect upsell opportunities, and much more. Overall, these applications help increase productivity while providing a more efficient and personalized customer experience.

DATA INTEGRATION: Without Consolidated (and Accurate) Data, You Have Nothing

For all the talk of how data is the most important kind of capital, you'd think enterprises would have a better plan for managing it. A 2019 study on AI and data adoption found that 53% of organizations are not yet treating data as a business asset, and 52% do not compete on data and analytics. The availability of a clean and comprehensive data environment is a significant issue for Heads of Call Center and Customer Support, whose chief role is to create (and compete on) an accurate and integrated view of the customer journey.

Most contact centers lack the appropriate resources required to perform in-depth analytics and drive real-time decision-making. While operationally critical, reporting tools can only provide a limited view, describing just the current state with few actionable insights. Your contact center performance, your customer experience...it all depends on the accuracy and integration of your data.

Across the board, organizations need to:

Drive CX and operational excellence with a unified data environment

A single, unified data environment consolidates data from disparate enterprise

systems to provide a holistic view of the customer journey and contact centers' operational performance. It gathers data from systems like your CRM, ACD, IVR, ERP, and other useful enterprise or external data (credit scores, demographics, and so forth). You will then be in a position to better determine Next Best Action, empowering agents with real-time, data-driven contextual process guidance to drive continual improvements.

By unifying data pertaining to a customer's activities across all touchpoints, interaction types, and devices, you can seamlessly engage, anticipate needs, and go above and beyond. This is how a hotel brand can give a guest who loves yoga a list of local studios and class times ahead of their check-in. It's how a company can know there's a 75% chance that an incoming caller will be canceling their subscription by month's end and push out relevant retention offers in real-time. Research from McKinsey shows that applying advanced analytics in this way can reduce average handle time by up to 40%, increase self-service containment by up to 20%, and boost conversion rates by nearly 50%.

Understand customer effort score

Companies should interactively drill down customer effort scores from cognitive, time, and emotional perspectives across regions, products, and categories for deeper competitive insights. This helps identify products or categories that are negatively impacting your customer effort score,

allowing you to reduce customer effort and increase satisfaction. Customer Data Platforms (CDP) now provide the ability to consolidate and unify data to drive all the analytics and AI, enabling companies to reach new levels of operational excellence and personalization.

A DISRUPTIVE PERIOD OF CHANGE LIES AHEAD: Why a Strategic Technology Partner is Key

Whether it's considering which experience you want to deliver, how your infrastructure and architecture needs to look, or what your remote work policies are, what has become clear is that it's vital to have the right ecosystem of support partners (application partners, infrastructure partners, etc.) guiding you to support and understand your business outcomes. Successful brands are elevating the contact center's role to meet the needs of the new customer experience, and they're turning to a strategic technology partner to do so.

Servion brings all of this together with an end-to-end, personalized, vendor-agnostic approach that helps enterprises seamlessly navigate the complexities of contact center transformation to successfully implement cloud, AI, automated self-service, data integration, and more. Our global delivery team works backward to design the right solutions and strategies for a client's *exact* needs, then finding the best provider(s) to meet the design requirements to ensure

successful implementation. We also engage on a recurring basis to manage these technologies on your behalf, freeing up your resources to work on strategic matters while our experts run the platforms from our operations centers.

We take pride in being a trusted advisor for businesses worldwide that are making this journey, helping them get more value from their contact center, drive real digital transformation, and bridge the gaps between their customers and the services they want.

- **Trusted global delivery and support capabilities**
- **Certification across a wide range of platforms (Cisco, Amazon Connect, Twilio, NICE InContact, RingCentral)**
- **Compliance (HIPAA, PCI)**
- **Shift left methodology (resolving issues before they appear)**
- **20+ years of application development practice**

- **IP assets created to augment existing platforms and assist the transition**
- **Expertise in end-to-end process for cloud**
- **Trusted expertise in connecting infrastructure to applications**
- **24x7x365 support**
- **Expertise in integrating leading platforms and applications with any cloud delivery model: public, private, hybrid, on-premise**

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You don't have to go it alone. Servion helps many businesses just like yours simplify customer experience transformation with a personalized blueprint for contact center innovation, supported by the industry's most extensive ecosystem of technology partners and service providers. For more information, visit www.servion.com. Or schedule a free consultation with our Contact Center CX Specialists.