

Beyond 2020

The new demands of
your customer and how
you can meet them

Beyond 2020

Introduction



Whatever we may have imagined for 2020, the emergence and spread of a pandemic was not included.

The impact of COVID-19 has been universal and experienced in a myriad of ways throughout society and across our global economy.



Like any crisis, it has tested strengths and weaknesses while creating threats and opportunities. For businesses and organizations of

all types, it's now vital to take what's been learned and use it to improve your organization. In the context of the contact center, that means recognizing what has already changed and what must change in the future.

What we know is that organizations need to be flatter and more distributed in their structure with self-organized teams and more agile processes. The contact center itself has acquired a particularly vital role in ensuring business continuity with hybrid teams relying on remote and on-site technology solutions to maintain agent availability and quality for the customer experience.

If enterprise is a continuous exercise in optimism then we should all be encouraged by the fact that for every contact center challenge that arises, an ideal and often innovative solution already exists.

One of the most powerful innovations - the cloud contact center - addresses the operational, financial and strategic challenges which have been highlighted by the events of 2020. While Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a game-changer that can resolve the challenge of managing contact center costs and while simultaneously enhancing the quality of the customer experience.

What's even more encouraging is that 2020 has accelerated customer demand for digitally-enabled interactions that not only serve their needs in the best possible way but also the needs and ambitions of the businesses that will serve them beyond 2020.

Mike Rajich

Director Contact Center & CX Products | AT&T

Customer

Shopping online is the new normal and

30%

plan to shop more online in the future ^[1]

45%

of consumers stated that the way they shop will be affected as a direct result of COVID-19, and 38% stated it will also influence which products they buy ^[2]

9 out of 10 consumers put “resolving my issue” above anything else ^[3]

52%

of customers stated that the contact center agent is the only company representative they've interacted with during the pandemic ^[3]



of consumers now feel more comfortable using digital channels ^[4]



of customers feel that their contact center experiences since the start of the pandemic have gotten worse ^[3]

1 Consumer Survey April 1–6 2020: Prosper Insights & Analytics
2 Future consumer index: How COVID-19 is changing consumer behaviours, 16 April 2020, EY
3 Five9 Customer Service Index 2020: consumer report, Dec 2020
4 Customer Experience Trends, Challenges & Innovations, CCW, 13 August, 2020

Contact center

The way organizations deal with their customers, employees, and the broader community in a crisis is likely to leave lasting memories in customers' minds ^[5]

CX is recognized as a clear differentiator by

81.6%

of organizations and the number one indicator of strategic performance ^[6]



The number of work at home agents is due to increase from <2% pre-pandemic to around **15% post pandemic with it peaking at >50% now (during the pandemic)** ^[8]

“

Nearly 40% of consumers have changed or left a brand during the pandemic ^[9]

5 Adapting customer experience in the time of coronavirus, McKinsey, 2 April, 2020

6 Customer Experience Benchmark Report 2020, Q3 2020, Dimension Data

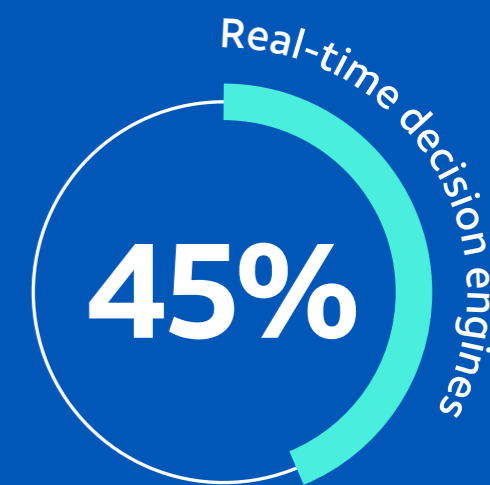
7 The four false narratives of customer experience, 2020 Global Customer Experience Study, Pega

8 Internal research document, 2020, Frost and Sullivan

9 Five9 Customer Service Index 2020: consumer report, Dec 2020

Organizations that excel at CX are investing in methods to centralize analytics and decision making approaches and scale them exponentially, across all connected channels ^[7]

CX leaders are investing in



A catalyst for change

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown a spotlight on the operational strategies and capabilities of mid-market, enterprise and public sector organizations.

While sectors such as retail, hospitality, and leisure have experienced a direct impact from lockdown measures, customer contact and the customer experience have been under pressure across all verticals.

Contact centers have been faced with new and increasing demands while pivoting to accommodate challenges such as unprecedented spikes in demand and enabling remote agent working. Agent availability and manageability may have been impacted but the problem is magnified when organizations are unable to deploy remote working and collaboration solutions at speed and scale.

Without the kind of flexibility offered by cloud-based solutions, contact centers are obliged to cope with technology upheaval, tech support distractions, and delay when trying to adapt at speed to operational change.

Disruption has highlighted the need for contact centers to take full advantage of technology solutions which exist now and which can make the most promising customer experience possible.

The situation has - and will continue to - reveal winners and losers. The winners will be defined by an ability to cope with the disruption of 2020 while still continuing to enhance the customer experience, loyalty, and market share in a new era of customer behavior and expectations.

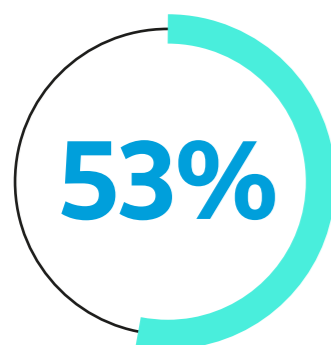
In this briefing we identify the new demands of the customer, the challenges contact centers are facing to meet these demands, and the solutions available to provide better experiences now, and into the future.



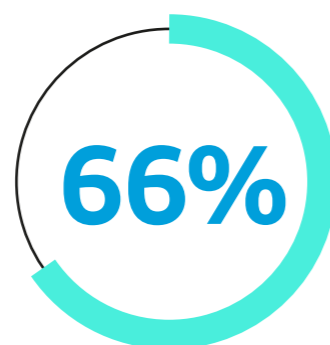
“I want my experience to be as easy as possible.”

These days, I'm spending more time online and on the phone when I want to buy something, get help, or just need information. The experience has to be hassle-free, even when I'm on the move, so options such as callback are particularly useful when I don't have time to wait – they also show my time is being respected.

Chat support also helps but only if the person at the other end has the right information, knows what they are talking about, and can give me the right answer. Otherwise, it's just an added complication that wastes my time.



of consumers would be more satisfied with a brand that offers a callback option ^[10]



66% of consumers will consider switching to a competitor after just one or two bad experiences ^[10]

Contact Center Challenges:

- **siloes information, data, and solutions**
- **fragmented user journeys and channels**
- **restricted customer accessibility and ease of use**
- **legacy solutions and rigid infrastructure preventing system integration, knowledge sharing, and flexible deployment of agents**

Contact Center Solutions:

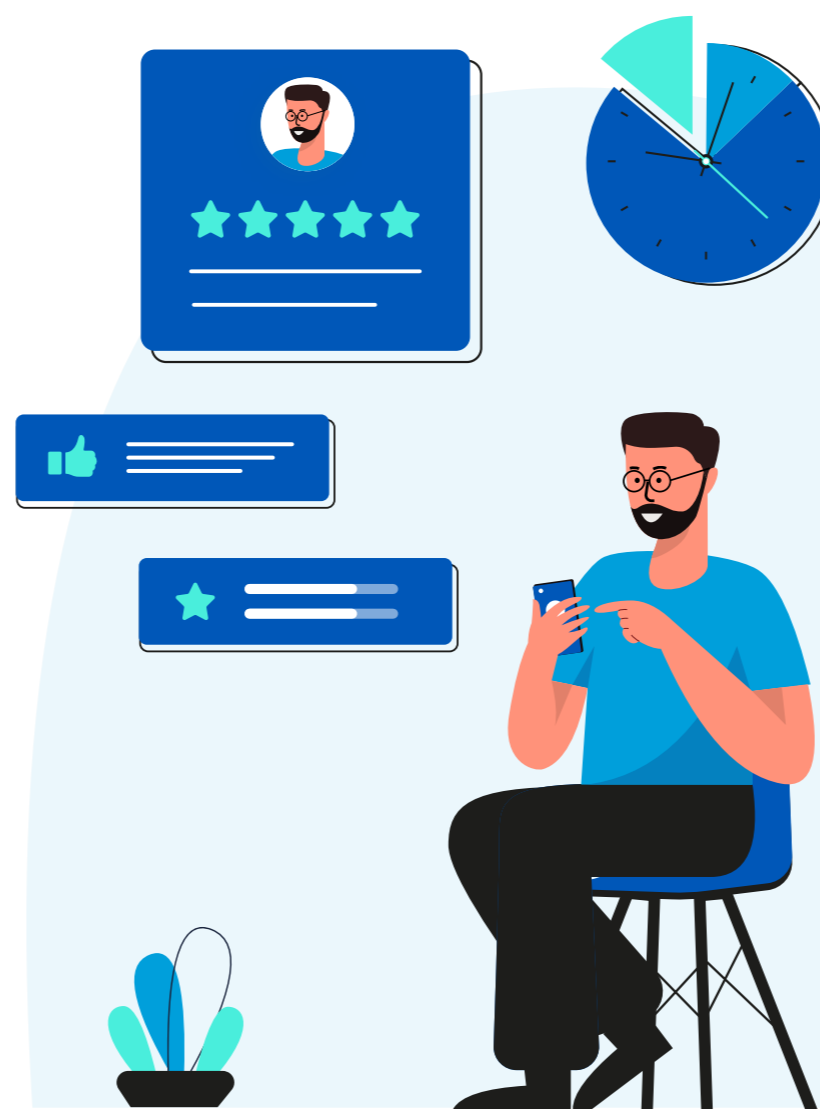
Customers can expect an easier experience with AT&T Cloud Contact Center. Because it's a born-in-the-cloud solution, API integration with other contact center applications is much simpler than on-premises deployments. With AT&T contact center consultancy services we are able to plan and implement proven methodologies to migrate existing, dispersed solutions onto a common cloud platform in a phased approach. These enable the contact center to easily add or upgrade services such as click-to-connect voice, video, and text from your website.

With Customer Relationship Management (CRM) integration, agents can gain access to customer information on purchase and service history, customer preferences, and customer value, regardless of channel. This enables agents to provide a rich, informed, and meaningful omnichannel customer experience. It also delivers interaction-specific context and customer intent for agents to efficiently and effectively serve customers, increase first contact resolution, turn service calls into sales opportunities and decrease average handle time.

Add workflow automation to accelerate the flow of tasks, documents, and information and agents will be free to deal with customers instead of repetitive, time-consuming processes.

Advantages include:

- **proven methodologies to migrate to a common platform across all locations**
- **promoting the best use of information and maintenance throughout the data life cycle**
- **routing interactions to the appropriate knowledge source**
- **increasing productivity by eliminating manual monitoring and processes**
- **improving agent productivity and job satisfaction**
- **avoiding business impacts caused by delayed actions or no actions**
- **reducing integration effort and expense**

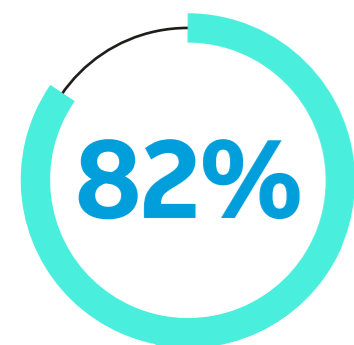


I am ready to use digital solutions on any device.

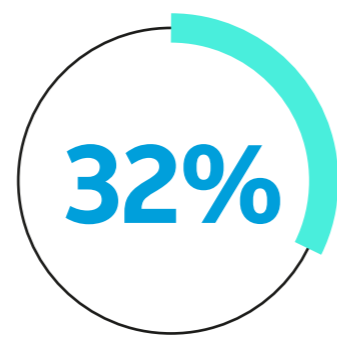
When I want to check an order, interact with customer service, or get a bank balance, I don't mind how I have to do it - as long as it works for me.

Anything that makes the experience better or easier for me is welcome. While a conversation with someone can seem preferable, I understand that I can't always be at the head of the queue so chat or self-service options can work for me as an alternative - if they are set up right. However, if there is an issue, I do want to be able to escalate up to the right live agent. When it's clear the contact center has really thought about things from the customer point of view then I have more confidence in the company and feel a bit more appreciated.

In the wake of COVID-19,



82% of customers say they are more comfortable using digital channels for at least some customer support issues [10]



32% are comfortable using digital channels for all issues [10]

Contact Center Challenges:

- **fragmented customer journeys and experiences**
- **on-premises solutions restrict new functionality deployments**
- **compromised ability to harness customer insights, history, and intent**
- **lack of self-service options for customers**

Contact Center Solutions:

Customers are increasingly prepared to use a wider choice of digital channels. To satisfy expectations, the contact center must have the agility to provision a range of options for customers, both quickly and cost effectively - which can prove challenging for on-premises deployments.

With AT&T Cloud Contact Center, flexibility and rapid deployment combine with integrated communication channels to provide a true omnichannel customer experience. Offering a full stack omnichannel solution can make or break a customer experience and ultimately impact customer loyalty. For customers, it means they can transition across any channel without having to restate their issue or requirements - or resubmit authentication details.

With the addition of in-built integration capabilities, company information systems can be accessed by agents. The result is more insightful, meaningful, and personalized engagements supported by near-real-time and historic customer information.

Advantages include:

- **a near-seamless experience offering the customer the choice of channel through their entire journey**
- **a future-ready environment that allows the rapid roll-out of new services**
- **improved customer journey management with easy integration of current CRM, UC, and Workforce Management applications**
- **knowing who your customers are and why they're contacting your organization empowers agents to deliver a more personalized customer experience**
- **customer journey mapping for an enhanced experience**
- **visibility into customers' past agent or self-service experiences**

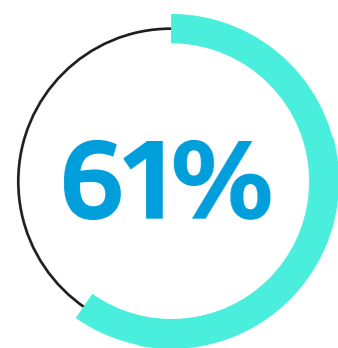


I want to be able to connect with live agents.

Having access to live agents might not always be essential for me but having the option is. It tells me the company cares about my business and doesn't make assumptions about how I should contact them.

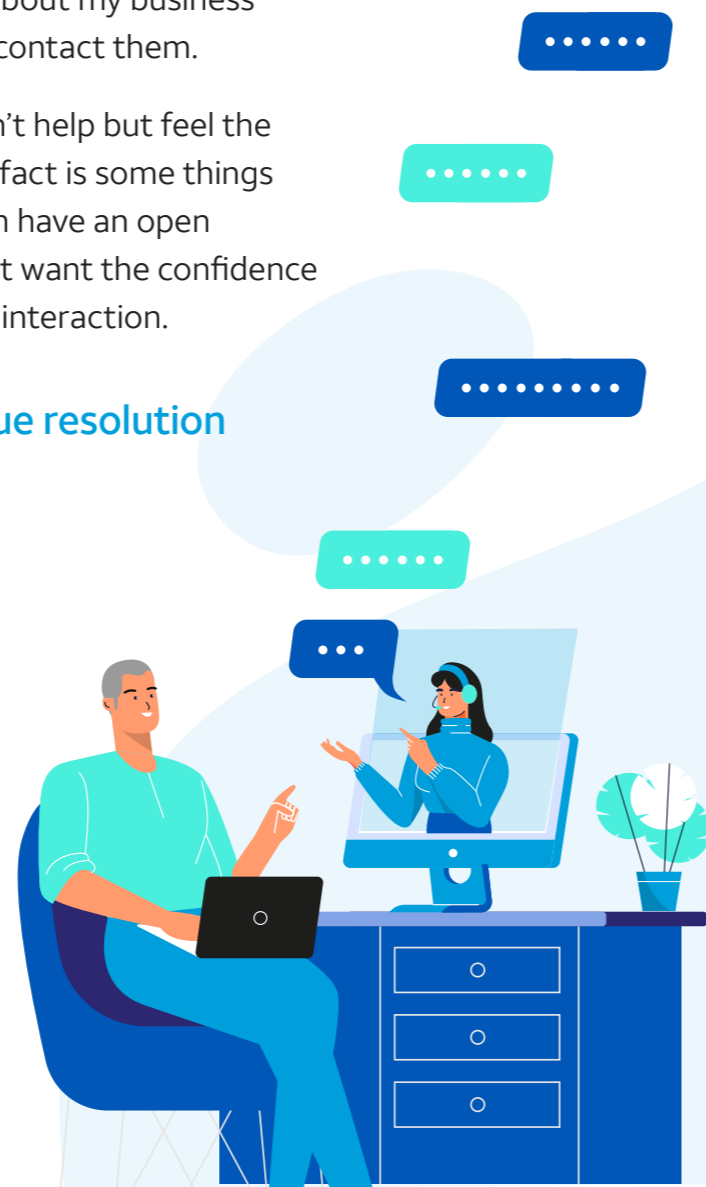
When I'm prevented from speaking to an agent I can't help but feel the company is putting its own needs before mine. The fact is some things are just quicker and more satisfactory when you can have an open conversation about what you need. Sometimes I just want the confidence in getting up-to-date information from a live agent interaction.

Of the top four preferred channels for issue resolution in the United States, Statista found that



of customers choose phone over chat (15%) email (12%) or other digital channels (12%) [11]

11 Mobile commerce in the United States - Statistics & Facts, Sep 10, 2019, Statista



Contact Center Challenges:

- enabling agents to work remotely
- ability for supervisors to manage, coach, and measure agent performance
- lost agent productivity through administrative and manual tasks
- maintaining employee engagement when agents are working from remote locations

Contact Center Solutions:

Matching agent skills and availability with customer needs and expectations is particularly challenging when you're also coping with agents working from home. The AT&T Cloud Contact Center platform has a number of features to address the challenges.

With intelligent Interactive Voice Response (IVR) customers are immediately connected to a smart routing that can quickly identify their needs and fast-track them to the right resource (either live agent or virtual) with the right information.

Integrated systems ensure the right agents are in the right place at the right time - with workforce optimization supervisors are able to remotely manage, mentor, and train agents from any location to ensure quality and performance.

To optimize workforce availability, the AT&T Cloud Contact Center platform empowers agents to work from virtually anywhere - using reporting and analytics for near-real-time and historical reports, dashboards, and alerts. Not only does this ensure business continuity but also continuity in the quality of customer service.

Enabling a remote workforce is one thing, keeping them engaged is another, through improved access to coaching and training resources agents can feel actively engaged and motivated.

In addition, enabling agents to work from home can open up the talent pool resulting in access to higher quality agents at a reduced cost.

With Unified Communications (UC) integration agents can also escalate calls to subject matter experts (SMEs) as well as track agent-customer interactions.

Advantages include:

- fast-track deployment of remote agents to address critical situations and shifts in demand
- increased first-call resolution and handle times
- improved agent engagement rates through remote coaching and training
- ability to rapidly respond to customer demand for agent availability
- enhanced customer experiences and agent engagement
- fast, efficient routing of customers to the appropriate agent or SME, based on customer journey

“I want an efficient experience above all.”

It's annoying when I have to repeat the same information to a contact center or go through multiple security checks. When they aren't able to share information properly across departments or agents, I feel like I am doing all the work.

It's equally frustrating when I try to use self-service options that are supposed to make things quicker and prevent me from having to wait in a queue, but they turn out to be a dead-end. Options to type in questions that lead to vague, generic answers are a typical example.

When a contact center gets everything right, it's a satisfying experience that reminds me that technology can, and should, be here to make my life easier and save me time.

Asked to identify the most important aspect of the customer experience.

75%

(of respondents) selected either accurate or efficient interactions ^[10]

Contact Center Challenges:

- **ability to provide a unified, single pane of glass, agent desktop**
- **fragmented, siloed, and inaccessible customer data that inhibits personalized and meaningful engagements**
- **unable to facilitate assisted or blended agent engagements**
- **limited routing capabilities that don't contain speech recognition, natural language processing or sentiment analysis**

Contact Center Solutions:

Achieving an efficient customer experience can mean striking the right balance between virtual and human assistance.

When virtual assistance is accurately mapped to the customer journey it not only delivers customer satisfaction but can also create significant cost reductions.

AI-powered service automation can take care of many things like automated callbacks, outbound customer reminders, priority routing for VIP customers, order lookups, payment processing, and post-purchase surveys. AI can also assist agents to be more efficient, relevant, and valuable during customer engagements. Screen pop-ups provide insights into customer history that aid and unlock upsell and cross-sell opportunities. Meanwhile, agents are freed up to focus on softer skills such as customer empathy, using near-real-time customer knowledge to deliver a highly personalized and efficient service.

Advantages include:

- **intelligent routing of interactions based on channel, customer need, and agent skill**
- **ability to gather actionable data from a broad set of customer information systems and self-service applications and unify them into a single pane of glass**
- **cost management without compromising the quality of the customer experience**
- **opportunities to increase customer satisfaction, loyalty, and spend through outbound communication and surveys**
- **increased call-handling capacity and efficiency**
- **enabling automated workflows to remove manual tasks**

Beyond 2020: preparing for the inevitable, probable, or possible.

Technology innovation; changing customer and agent expectations; a greater need for workplace flexibility – these are just some of the drivers of change in today's contact center.

For the majority of enterprises, change is an increasingly frequent reality that calls for careful judgement in order to avoid pitfalls such as technical debt or an outmoded customer experience.

This new customer era will evolve into another. Innovation will continue to shape and respond to customer and agent expectations. But what about pivots such as WFH? Will it be a permanent or short-term adjustment?

During 2020, the move to a cloud contact center environment has also gained greater strategic importance. Businesses have had a stark reminder of the downside of on-premises solutions such as higher capital costs, lack of agility and adaptability, and accruing legacy debt.

Knowing what's inevitable, probable or possible for the contact center is essential to sustained success. It's also an exercise that calls for the right kind of planning and partnership.

Visit www.att.com/contact-center to see how an AT&T workshop could help your organization thrive as we go 'beyond 2020'.

According to Gartner, 'to survive this (COVID-19) crisis and emerge stronger than ever, organizations must look for innovative opportunities to make long-term improvements.

For example, during the last global recession, some organizations opted to invest aggressively in their capabilities, enabling them to emerge from the recession stronger as a result. After the crisis, continuing a solid digital-first customer service strategy will deliver long-term benefits, such as business continuity, improved cost and margin realization, and improved customer experience.

By 2023, more than



of all customer service engagements will be delivered via digital and web self-serve channels, up from 23% in 2019' ^[12]

12 AT&T Cloud Contact Center Enhances Customer Experience, 4 May 2020

