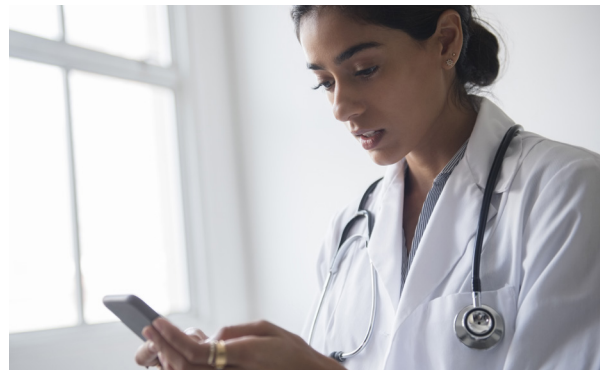


# Welcome to the digitally transformed contact center

Is your contact center ready to exceed customer expectations and increase customer loyalty in a rapidly evolving marketplace?



## Executive summary

- Customers expect more flexibility, greater personalization, and faster issue resolutions
- To protect their competitive advantage and revenue streams, organizations must deliver these improved experiences
- Contact centers are essential resources in delivering better customer experiences, but they face challenges:
  - Ensuring virtually seamless, secure experiences by adopting the mindset of customers
  - Considering how automation, artificial intelligence (AI), and integration applications can increase efficiencies
  - Upgrading resources for agents to improve retention, satisfaction, and productivity
  - Reimagining how to ensure the flexibility customers expect through an omnichannel infrastructure
  - Unifying leadership around instilling a culture of customer centricity
- These challenges correspond to the 5 digital transformation requirements covered in this paper:
  - Customer journey
  - Process
  - Workforce
  - Platform
  - Cultural
- The right digital transition adviser can help organizations implement these stages and deliver an intelligent omnichannel experience
- Even incremental changes can significantly impact the quality of customer experiences and help protect revenue





## Learning from history

Great leaps in technology cause seismic shifts—transformations in thinking and acting. Sometimes the arrival of new technology upends conventional wisdom or threatens the status quo. History is filled with such examples.

In the 16th century Nicolaus Copernicus claimed that the Sun, not the Earth, was the center of our planetary system. This radical discovery inverted humankind's position in the universe and changed the way we view ourselves.

Some found it difficult to adapt to this new paradigm. Those who ignored the advance of scientific knowledge, however, faced increasing irrelevance.

**Has the progress of technology created a tipping point for the contact center? Is your organization prepared to evolve at the speed of innovation by adapting to the seismic shifts ahead?**

That lesson still applies today, when innovations change lives and industries much faster—sometimes overnight. For instance, the popularity of Uber and its competitors disrupted existing models of transportation and forced taxi companies to introduce comparable services immediately or lose greater market share.

**As we consider the contact center through the lens of today's rapid transformations, we ask: Has it already had its Copernicus-Uber moment? Has the progress of technology created a tipping point for the contact center? And is your organization prepared to evolve at the speed of innovation by adapting to the seismic shifts ahead?**

In this white paper we will explore the impact of digital transformation on contact centers and the reasons for the growing focus on customer behaviors. We will also outline key considerations for implementing contact center improvements that bring your organization in line with new models of customer engagement.

## A new disruption: digital transformation

For modern businesses and organizations, technology is again disrupting the status quo. Digital transformation is altering customer expectations and reconfiguring established patterns of interaction. Gartner defines digital transformation this way: “The process of exploiting digital technologies and supporting capabilities to create a robust new digital business model.”<sup>1</sup>

So, what does this mean for your contact center?

It means that with the rise of mobile applications, self-service solutions, and AI, consumers expect more from you. Today’s consumers count on businesses to conform to their routines and preferences, not the other way around. Like Copernicus’s disruptive discovery, new thinking and technologies are replacing long-standing models, but at a more rapid pace.

It also means that one of the key factors influencing a contact center’s success is an agent’s ability to recognize and track customer data from one channel to another. Transferring customer data between each stage of a customer engagement shaves time off problem resolution and makes the customer experience more satisfying.

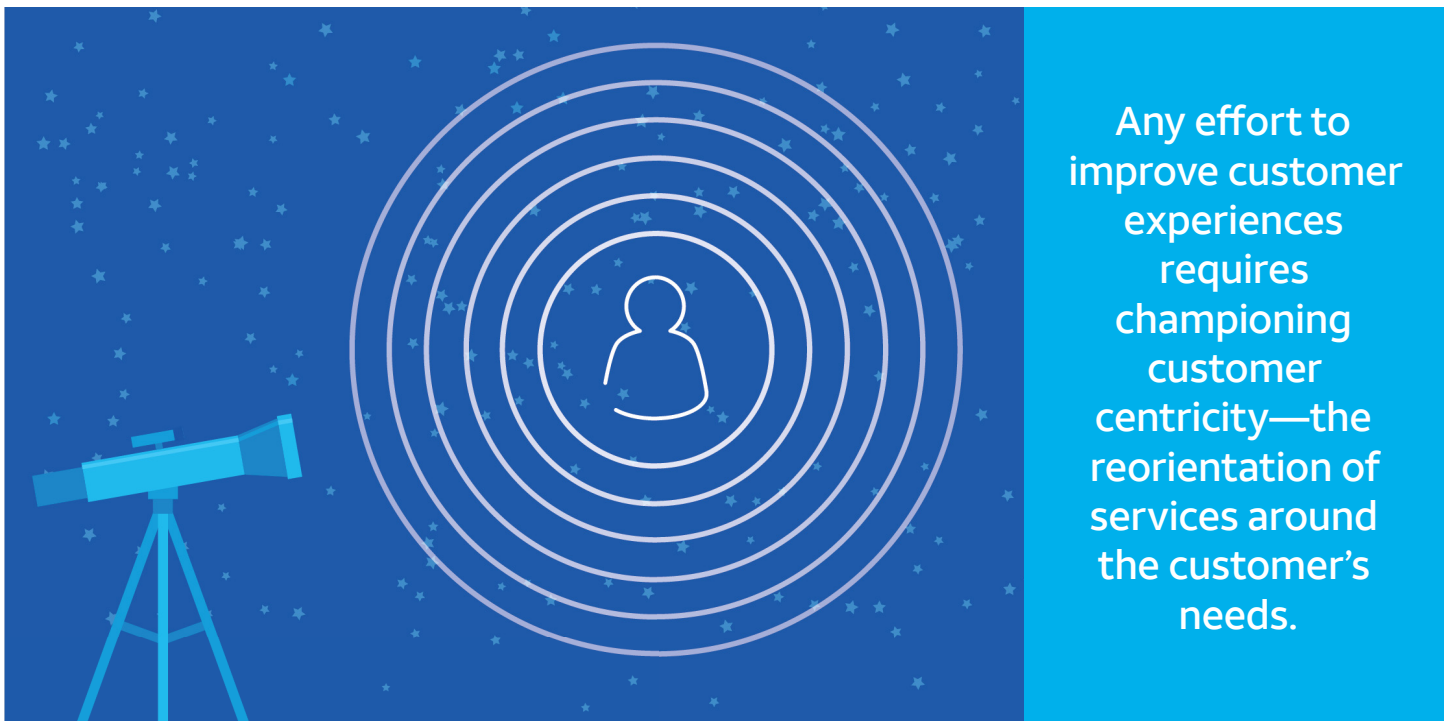
The willingness of businesses to adopt emerging best practices has become a key differentiator separating forward-looking industry leaders from reluctant stragglers. Satisfying customer expectations in the new technological landscape is no longer optional, it’s a fundamental business imperative—and the clock is ticking.

## The solution to change: customer centricity

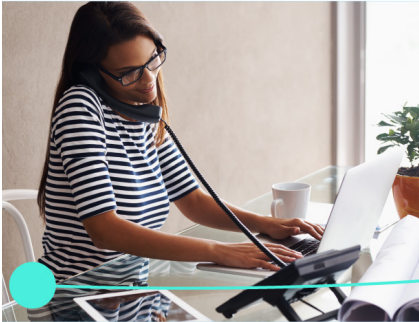
For businesses willing to embrace digital transformation, delivering an exemplary customer experience ranks among the most urgent priorities.

Think of unrivaled customer experience as the appropriate outcome of digital transformation. It’s the inevitable reconfiguration of mindsets, operational models, and engagement paradigms prompted by changing expectations. At its core, any effort to improve customer experiences requires championing customer centricity—the reorientation of services around the customer’s needs.

Delivering best-in-class customer experiences is central to retaining customers and protecting market share. It’s also a potential revenue driver. A recent report revealed that even modest increases in customer experiences at a typical \$1 billion company can contribute an additional \$272 million to \$462 million in revenues over 3 years.<sup>2</sup> Giving customers the opportunity to engage across multiple channels of their choosing will help your organization remain competitive and responsive to evolving cultural expectations. As we will see, supporting a genuine omnichannel infrastructure is key to enabling a truly customer-centric experience.



## Past



### Call center

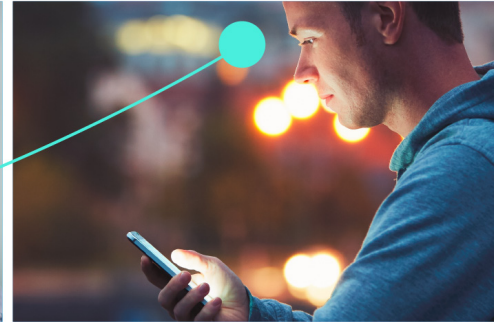
Single-channel communication



### Contact center

Multi-channel communication

## Current



### Customer experience

Omnichannel communication

## Bringing it down to earth: contact centers

Not so long ago, contact centers were voice centric and gauged success in terms of the number of calls cleared per agent. The emphasis has now shifted toward providing personalized, flexible options for initiating and sustaining contact with well-trained agents who can supply timely, relevant information. With the evolution of performance metrics, customer satisfaction surveys are gradually replacing call volume as a better indicator of contact center excellence.

When you invest in your contact center by expanding its capabilities, you're not only increasing agent satisfaction by improving the tools available for performing routine tasks—you're also strengthening your relationship with customers at every stage of their journey. You're placing them at the center of your operation.

In concrete terms, implementing customer centricity within contact centers requires adopting and blending technologies and workflows to improve customers' experiences. Rather than requiring customers to conform to your company's policies and customer engagement infrastructure, customers can select the method best suited to their needs and lifestyle. By supplying more channels that suit customers' preferences, organizations give customers flexible choices that encourage rather than inhibit continuous interaction.

Because customer information is frequently siloed and fragmented among dedicated applications supporting each channel of engagement, customers get locked into one channel, one application, and one customer service agent. Switching from a chat to a phone interaction may require an agent to move from one application or screen to another. Or it might necessitate another agent

assuming responsibility and re-initiating the resolution process by once more collecting the customer's information. This has a number of drawbacks, including the inability to seamlessly resume communication via another, more effective avenue of engagement.

These siloed processes thwart rapid resolutions and frustrate customers. They can ultimately reflect poorly on your business and may encourage customers to seek out competitors.

## Fighting fire with fire: harnessing digital transformation

As we've seen, technological advancements have retrained consumers to expect more convenient, more personalized choices to communicate with businesses. But the very technology that is reshaping customer expectations can also be part of the solution by delivering customer-centric experiences through your contact center.

An indispensable component of a customer-centric contact center is the availability of an intelligent omnichannel experience. A true omnichannel solution allows customers to transition across channels without requiring them to restate their issue or resubmit their authentication details at every new engagement. To achieve this flexibility requires that contact centers secure a digital handoff between agents assigned to different channels, passing the customer data baton from one stage of the journey to the next without burdening the customer. Enabling agents to access customer data from a consolidated application—or "single pane of glass"—is equally critical to supporting seamless and satisfying customer interactions.

## Multi-channel



## Omnichannel



**“A true omnichannel solution allows customers to transition across channels without requiring them to restate their issue or resubmit their authentication details at every new engagement.”**

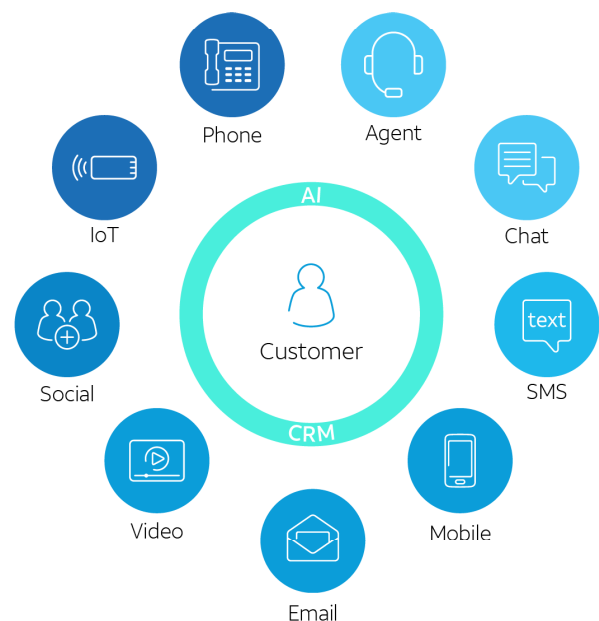
### Multi-channel versus omnichannel

Many organizations confuse multi-channel with omnichannel. A multi-channel infrastructure supports various discrete channels of communication such as telephone, chat, SMS, email, video, social, and Internet of Things (IoT). Without full integration, consumers must reiterate their concerns at each channel transition. These siloed interactions not only make it difficult to quickly resolve the customer’s issues, they frustrate efforts to analyze customer trends.

Unlike a disjointed multi-channel infrastructure, an AI-infused omnichannel architecture coordinates, aggregates, and continually updates data so that virtually every channel and agent receives access to near-real-time and historic customer information.

This coordination of data permits customers to pass from one channel to another—and from one agent to another—while receiving a consistent level of service. An AI enhanced omnichannel contact center continually learns and updates its intelligence with each customer interaction. And by equipping contact center agents with a “single-pane-of-glass” overview of the customer’s journey, omnichannel architectures can deliver vastly improved customer experiences.

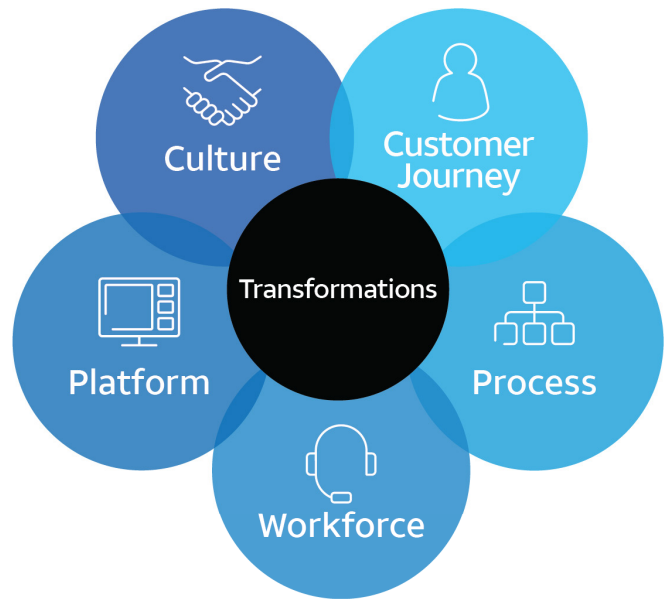
Omnichannel architectures entail more than unified channels and coordinated data. Higher degrees of integration also generate more satisfying customer interactions. When contact centers integrate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems with interaction routing, customer data updates are made automatically,



helping create one version of the truth across all systems. Irrespective of the channel of interaction, the historical record of the conversation remains current, removing the need for the customer to repeat critical information while also reducing resolution times.

Embracing this level of customer centricity should no longer be viewed as a hypothetical aspiration. Joe Rabah of ICMI, a leading contact center consultancy group, writes, “It seems clear that the future lies in omnichannel purchasing and customer engagement experiences, and businesses have little choice but to provide these.”<sup>3</sup>

No one tool or strategy can modernize a “Sun-revolves-around-the-Earth” mindset. It requires more than a single solution to implement a customer centric contact center. The sections below address the key stages involved in enhancing customer experiences and detail how to bring a contact center into the age of digital transformation. Your organization may not be prepared yet to make a systemwide overhaul and the task may seem daunting, but even modest integration efforts have the potential to improve customer satisfaction.



## 5 digital transformation stages

Businesses and organizations encounter considerable challenges when they try to digitally evolve their contact center. Most of these occur in pursuit of 5 major transformation requirements: customer journey, process, workforce, platform, and cultural.

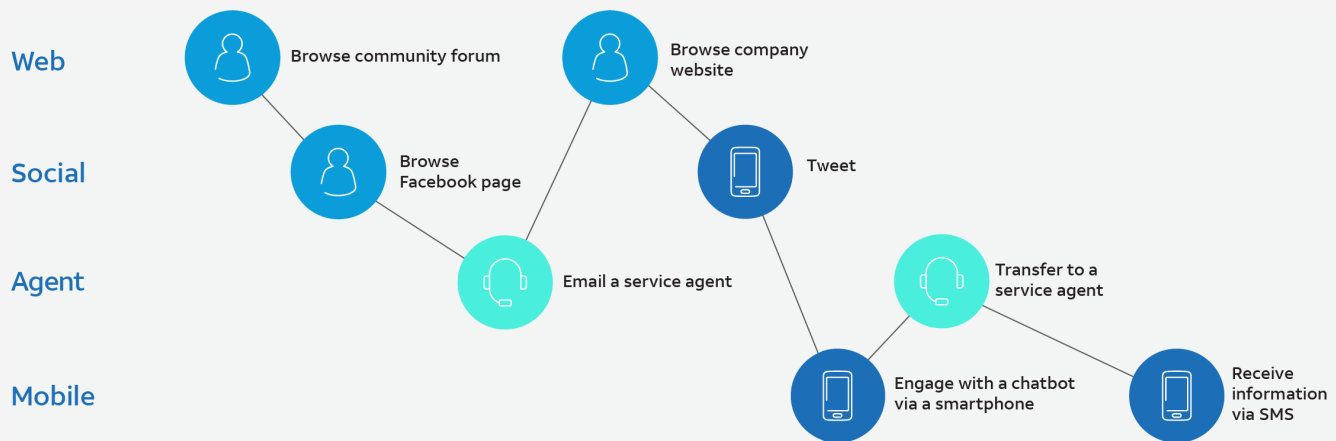
### Customer journey transformation

**The challenge:** Available data suggests that contact centers should endeavor to increase the speed and effectiveness of customer resolutions. Nearly 20% of respondents surveyed reported that it took a lot or too much effort to resolve their issues.<sup>4</sup> The pathway along which customers advance towards achieving their goals is often crowded with inconvenient interruptions and repetitive steps. These experiences can damage organizations’ reputations and threaten customer loyalty.

**The solution:** It’s crucial that you take time to understand your customers’ preferences in reaching out to your business. Intelligent, AI-powered customer engagement tools can aid you in identifying customer intentions and the many individual journeys they will travel towards resolution. Only when your organization develops a better grasp of your customers’ wishes can you choose to deploy tools such as AI that satisfy their needs. Knowing the customer’s preferences will also aid in allocating the right number of live agents and self-service options to strike an ideal balance between personalized and automated resolution pathways.



## Customer Journey



A network analysis tool can help you gain a comprehensive overview of your customers' experience. For example, AT&T Visual Network Analytics can isolate each leg of the customer journey and identify points of friction to troubleshoot problems impacting customer experiences. Shoring up problematic touchpoints with AI and automated routing can expedite issue resolution.

Automation can intelligently route customers to the right agents and empower customers with self-help options, but more is needed to ensure agents deliver exemplary support. An omnichannel infrastructure permits the cross-channel flexibility and data accessibility required to allow customers to move freely between channels. And with access to consolidated customer data in the form of a "single-pane-of-glass," agents can resume the customer resolution process at any point in the journey.

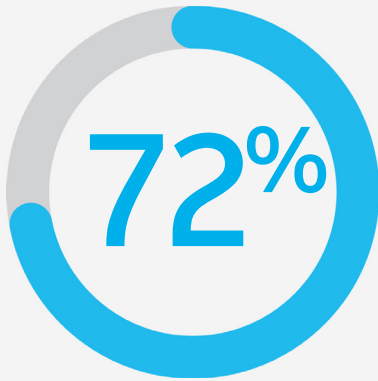
### Mapping the journey

When completing a customer journey exercise, remember to observe more than just the customer's habits—your management team, operations, workforce, processes, and procedures all deserve close scrutiny. Taking a deeper look into each of these areas will require specialized tools and expertise to derive actionable insights.

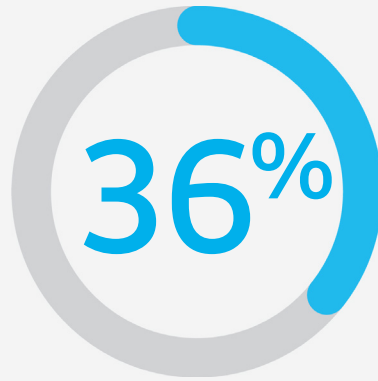
- **Customers (journey mapping).** Map the journeys available to customers and observe the paths they prefer. Which do they most frequently use? Which are the least used? On average, how long does resolution take? What questions are they asking? Are there alternative methods of engaging that might provide greater satisfaction? Can any of these touchpoints be automated? Can their journeys be condensed or better structured? Is there a possibility to incorporate upsell or cross-sell?

- **Operations (service level mapping).** Are service levels standardized and the measures accurate? Are there any interim processes which may affect Service Level Agreement (SLA) outcomes (aggregations, extraction, transformation, manual manipulation)? How are equipment and service SLAs differentiated from resource KPIs? Are all SLAs generally attainable across the business? Should your SLAs be re-evaluated? Can you apply a large number-based model (Defects per Million Opportunities (DPMO - 6Sigma) to a data set?
- **Management (process mapping).** What methods, systems, or solutions exist to support internal and external processes? Can you identify individual task streams for mapping? Is there any repetition or manual manipulation within those tasks? Is there any duplication of effort or processing to achieve the same goals? Are decisions required within the process and how are they achieved? Can automation be supported by existing systems or solutions, or is a technical refresh required?
- **Technical (solution mapping).** Do your solutions and systems provide transparent operations, or are they "black box?" Can you apply any software measurement tools for analysis? How much manual intervention is required to operate, support, and manage your solutions and systems? Is data processing a premium factor, and how complex are those operations? Is data warehousing applied, and what rules exist for data retention and deletion?

Combining the results of journey mapping provides a clear and concise "schematic" of your customer, your operations, your processes, and your technical solutions. This blueprint allows you to investigate, observe, measure, and identify elements through gap analysis, costing models, optimization techniques, and automation solutions, leading to a digitally transformed landscape on which to base optimized operations.



of consumers expect agents to know their contact and product information, as well as their service history, as soon as they engage



of contact centers have implemented multi-channel integration in the form of an omnichannel infrastructure

This sort of coordination and cross-channel fluidity is only possible when technology enables customers to select their own pathway to issue resolution and tracks their progress through the journey.

**66%** of consumers report that they actively use 3 or more channels when seeking customer service

### Making contact count

Among the most critical challenges facing contact centers in the age of digital transformation involves agents' ability to recognize and connect customer data from one channel to another.

72% of consumers expect agents to know their contact and product information, as well as their service history, as soon as they engage.<sup>5</sup> A simple multi-channel infrastructure can't achieve this degree of customer insight, as individual channels often depend on dedicated and siloed systems or are serviced by specialized agents with limited knowledge of other channels. Without better channel and data continuity, you can't achieve a common pool of customer information, and even the most motivated agent can't provide the expected level of service.

Too often data gets trapped within dedicated applications that obscure or conceal key customer information essential for a quick resolution. To eliminate isolation and open data to access by other tools, consolidate all data sources, data streams, and aggregated storage via processes, data queries, and orchestration techniques.

Only 36% of businesses surveyed said their contact center is capable of tracking a customer journey across multiple channels<sup>6</sup> And while organizations frequently mistake their multi-channel contact center for a genuinely integrated solution, anything less than a virtually seamless customer experience from initial contact to final resolution doesn't qualify.

Forbes makes the point this way: "Real omnichannel requires making the customer the focus, no matter what the channel is. It means that you're understanding and responding to conversations in real time, not just having a lot of conversations at once. No matter where they contact you, the customer journey has to be progressing—no repeating, no steps backwards."<sup>7</sup>

This sort of coordination and cross-channel fluidity is only possible when technology enables customers to select their own pathway to issue resolution and tracks their progress through the journey. 66% of consumers report that they actively use 3 or more channels when seeking customer service.<sup>8</sup> They may initiate contact via SMS on a mobile device and resume contact via email at a later date. Remember, a true omnichannel solution allows customers to transition across channels without requiring them to repeat their issue at every new encounter.

Genuine omnichannel integration extends beyond mere channel integration. To fully reap the benefits of consolidated data repositories, businesses need to integrate agent applications with CRMs so that all customer data moves seamlessly throughout the course of the interaction.

In some scenarios, even this degree of integration fails to deliver an omnichannel experience. If your organization relies on business processing outsourcers to service any segment of customer engagements, achieving true integration may be impossible. Consider bringing those responsibilities within the scope of your center's infrastructure and on-premises agents to allow for full integration of all possible customer journeys.

## Getting it right the first time

Technology is disrupting customer interactions and redefining how businesses view first contact resolution. With access to social media and chat channels, customers engage in ongoing conversations with organizations, making first contact resolution more nebulous than in the past. But the principle still applies: Businesses need to resolve engagements on the customer's timeline without introducing needless interactions or delays.

Rapidly resolving customer concerns not only improves customer satisfaction—it also increases agent productivity and morale. When businesses provide agents with the resources and data needed to deliver exceptional customer service, they can turn their attention to the next customer sooner.

First call resolution also impacts contact volume by reducing the number of customers initiating repeated contact. This can alleviate agent frustration and instill a sense of accomplishment. When agents sense that their efforts are delivering real benefit to customers, they are less likely to grow disenchanted with their roles and seek employment elsewhere.

## Personal, but not intrusive

Striking a balance between personalized, attentive customer service and invasive questioning can make the difference between delivering exceptional customer experiences and aggravating customers with repetitive or irrelevant inquiries.

Consumers are often willing to share details of their concerns with an automated interactive system, a chatbot interface, or a live agent, but they expect that data to follow them throughout their resolution journey. The more knowledge an agent possesses from the start of an engagement, the more satisfied a customer is likely to be with the outcome of the encounter. The data they submit at the beginning of their interaction should follow them through to their eventual issue resolution.

**Consumers are often willing to share details of their concerns with an automated interactive system, a chat interface, or a live agent, but they expect that data to follow them throughout their resolution journey.**



Intelligent voice response systems are used across the industry as a non-invasive way of collecting customer information via telephone. Paring this tool with artificial intelligence can greatly improve its ability to gather data and direct customers toward faster resolutions. Frequently referred to as virtual assistants or conversational AI, these tools comprehend customers' spoken replies to automated prompts and can route callers to the most qualified agent or department.<sup>9</sup>

By integrating with CRMs and accessing relevant account data, AI can also predict a caller's concerns and route them through the resolution process more efficiently. Sometimes referred to as sentiment analysis, AI can even detect the caller's mood or level of annoyance and escalate the call automatically to a live agent when appropriate. These automated interventions reduce customer frustrations and lessen resolution times.

Other technologies yield similar benefits. Acting as an automated chaperone, intelligent voice response systems enhance agent productivity and can reduce the number of times a customer is asked to repeat themselves. And with machine learning, the contact center becomes increasingly more aware of and responsive to customer needs. Voice response systems can also supply actionable insights into broader customer patterns to help better allocate contact center resources.

Customers appreciate the opportunity to first resolve an issue with the aid of intelligent voice response systems.

As many as 73% want to solve a product or service issue on their own.<sup>10</sup> The next generation of intelligent voice response systems—mobile-based solutions that guide customers through a series of visual menus—is already gaining popularity among customers seeking alternatives to traditional phone interactions. When paired with omnichannel infrastructures and AI, visual voice response tools can deliver satisfying customer experiences and eliminate unnecessary conversations with agents.

### Keeping it highly secure

Contact centers are vulnerable to security breaches in more ways than one. To maintain customer confidence, your organization must commit to safeguarding their data. Beyond meeting minimum regulatory requirements, adopting robust policies can reduce the likelihood of a breach.

- **Internal threats** consist of vulnerabilities related to internal employees' access to sensitive data. Whenever possible, introduce measures protecting customer data from internal exploitation. For instance, the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) obscures credit card key data entries, masking and protecting sensitive financial information while agents are on the line. It also ensures, where necessary, identified PCI DSS data elements are permanently removed from screen recording software, data stores, extraction, transformation, loading (ETL) processes, and other elements within the data storage and retrieval processes.<sup>11</sup>
- **External threats** require different defenses. Examine each platform, software package, and automation routine for security weaknesses. For example, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) systems are internet-based and therefore vulnerable to infiltration without industry-strength encryption techniques (128-bit as defined by AES). Ensure that firewalls sufficiently insulate VoIP and SIP traffic from outside networks and are capable of alerting administrators of Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks.<sup>12</sup>

Business social media accounts should also be encrypted to protect every data stream, including more sensitive login data such as usernames and passwords.<sup>13</sup>

Personal data is regulated by national and regional legislation, which may pertain to activities performed within particular industries. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) governs digital interactions involving European populations, while Personal Data Protection regulations ensure data is used only for its intended purpose, including system, access monitoring, data retention periods, and record keeping for data acceptance, permissions, access, archiving, and deletion.

## Process transformation



**The challenge:** Your current infrastructure may consist of a disjointed, multi-tiered channel hierarchy that requires customers to restate authorizations and issue details at every successive encounter with agents. Customers may move haphazardly through this structure without any guarantee that they're receiving the agent best qualified for their unique needs.

**The solution:** Task automation keeps customers progressing through the resolution process without requiring them to repeat themselves at each stage of the encounter. With more intelligent screening and routing procedures, your contact center can quickly connect customers with the best agent for their needs or resolve their issue through time-saving self-help applications.

The aim of automation is to enhance the efficiency of every agent by deploying technologies that streamline common tasks and match customers with the most qualified agents. Automation-enabled chatbots can also guide customers through the engagement journey while updating key systems with the latest customer information. By integrating data and populating customer attributes into key data fields, process automation can help reduce repetition and enhance accuracy.

For industries that must supply customers with regulated legal disclosures, process automation offers an efficient way to achieve compliance through automated scripts and response coordination. Rather than burdening agents with the obligation to issue legal notices, robotic process automation can deliver notification and capture customers' consent.

### Intelligent routing

More advanced interactive voice systems now include the capability to direct calls according to customer profiles, account and issue histories, and even geographic location.<sup>14</sup> By pulling in data from CRMs, voice response systems can help guide customers to the most qualified or specialized agent based on the nature of their goals. These tools make you smarter about customers so your team can deliver the best experience possible.

AI-enabled voice response systems and skills-based routing applications can gauge customer needs before assigning their case to a specialized agent. Alternatively, these applications can automatically feed the customer to agents with the necessary language proficiency.

This technology not only avoids unnecessary re-routing of customers to the appropriate agent, but also evenly distributes cases among agents with the necessary skills. Intelligent routing also gives businesses actionable

insights in the form of metrics related to how effectively agents resolve cases based on their training and skills.

### Improving first call resolution: benchmark and assess

60% of companies that measured first call resolution for a year or longer saw improvements in performance of up to 30%, including customer and agent satisfaction, increased efficiency, and profitability.<sup>15 16</sup> Time invested collecting insights will deliver benefits down the road.

**60%** of companies that measured first call resolution for a year or longer saw improvements in performance



But before businesses can monitor first call resolution, they need to define the criteria determining a successful conflict resolution. Every business needs to consider for themselves what qualifies as a repeat call, an escalated call, and a rapid resolution.

For some businesses, issues resolved within a 24-hour period satisfy the requirements, while others take a more literal interpretation and stipulate a single-contact resolution. Businesses should consider how customers' expectations are conditioned by the availability of new social media channels and must set criteria for what qualifies as an ideal resolution window for each platform. Response times for chat differ from those of voice conversations. For new channels, businesses should prescribe protocols to ensure customers face the fewest number of obstacles during the course of their interactions.



To effectively apply first call resolution statistics, your organization should single out effective customer interactions to determine which factors and techniques resulted in successful resolutions. Learn from agents who achieve unusually high numbers of rapid resolutions and integrate their tactics into your processes. Build effective strategies into automation routines and chatbots. Rather than simply tracking resolutions, respond to trends and incorporate effective methods supported by the data.

Here are a few additional tips to consider:

	<p>Deploy business intelligence solutions to identify circumstances leading to call escalations or redirection to a different channel.</p>
	<p>Incorporate a sentiment analysis tool to assess customer attitudes and route them according to key emotional variables.</p>
	<p>Apply your knowledge base to identify previous customer issues and flag agents of any potential complications.</p>
	<p>Use advanced analytics to assess trends, identify channel demand, and track seasonal variations in customer preferences that impact performance.</p>
	<p>Automate as many critical tasks as possible to feed customer inquiries to the most qualified agent.</p>
	<p>Unify siloed data to enable single-screen access of critical customer data.</p>

## Workforce transformation



**The challenge:** Once you have implemented new automated processes and embraced an omnichannel architecture, your agents will face an increasing number of specialized customer issues. As self-help and artificial intelligence help resolve common customer concerns, agents should prepare to address more complex requests.

**The solution:** Any overhaul of your contact center that omits to support agent development will likely fall short of customer expectations. As automated tools handle common customer issues and route unique cases to agents, your center must train agents to cope with a different type of workload. Whereas they may have resolved 40 customer resolutions in a single day under your previous architecture, agents may now expect to spend the same amount of time clearing 20. Training should focus on giving agents the tools they need to adjust to their evolving role within an omnichannel infrastructure.

Be certain to coordinate improvements in infrastructure with agent training and introduce policies that sensibly allocate agent resources. While technologies such as interactive voice response and other automation tools can augment agent roles, well-trained agents remain indispensable to delivering the personalized attention customers demand.

### Training

Few factors impact overall contact center performance to the same extent as agent training. Continuous and thorough training can affect handle times, first contact resolution statistics, quality control, agent retention, and overall productivity. Agents are likely to develop bad habits on the job, so schedule routine refreshers to keep them honoring protocol.

### Generalists or specialists?

Decide whether specialized or generalist agent types—or a mix—are best equipped to deliver exceptional customer experiences for your organization. Specialists are trained to address a specific type of customer issue, while generalists are adept at handling most cases with equal proficiency.

Cross-training can bring benefits, too. Besides equipping agents to handle a variety of customer issues, cross-training agents on multiple channels gives them new, marketable skills, which helps keep them motivated and loyal. In fact, many businesses see reductions in turnover rates after cross-training agents, especially among younger generations.<sup>17</sup>

## Keeping agents engaged

Other ways to incentivize agents include gamification. Contact centers can encourage friendly competition by tracking agent statistics and publicly recognizing high-performing agents. Some providers offer leaderboards designed for office TVs, mobile apps, and desktop computers, and make recognizing top performers easy and fun. By clarifying and monitoring key performance metrics, your agents are more likely to deliver exceptional customer experiences and enjoy their work.

## Single-screen applications

Among contact center agents' top complaints is the need to move between multiple screens and applications to service customers. More than a nuisance, navigating through a series of disparate systems to review customer data, log interaction notes, and initiate procedures prolongs the length of customer engagements and forces the repetition of routine tasks.<sup>18</sup> Agents may have to enter data into multiple, isolated applications, moving from one screen to another just to complete a single customer interaction.

To effectively deliver an omnichannel experience, your agents need access to technologies that unify common tasks and data, such as integrated applications offering access to critical tools. These single-screen interfaces should mirror a broader orchestration of departments and personnel. Orchestration means delivering agents a centralized and coordinated way of managing and accessing data, tools, and channels to provide seamless customer experiences and efficient processes. All channels, dispute resolution resources, and data should integrate with accounting, product, and other external departments to form a continuous and intuitive workflow. With a holistic platform providing a bird's-eye view of customer data and operational processes, agents can focus their attention on satisfying the customer.



## Platform transformation



**The challenge:** A contact center incapable of delivering flexible engagement options through a genuine omnichannel infrastructure will fail to eliminate the friction points in the customer journey and cannot satisfy customers' desire for convenience and freedom of choice.

**The solution:** In the preceding stages of digital transformation, your organization identified customers' preferred methods of engaging and targeted potential points of friction inhibiting their progress towards resolving issues. Be sure to also pick out patterns of interaction that reveal how customers use combinations of channels to achieve their goals.

Does one type of customer prefer to initiate contact via phone but concludes a resolution with chat? How can your contact center deploy those tools to better enable that pathway to customer satisfaction? What age groups are most likely to engage through social media channels, and what types of issues cause them to initiate contact? Does one social channel allow for easy orchestration within your omnichannel infrastructure, and does it supply actionable analytics?

Armed with knowledge of customer habits, you must now choose the suitable platform to satisfy customer goals and eliminate redundant or inefficient processes. With a better sense of how your customers engage, you can pick a solution that supports the types of channels by which they prefer to initiate contact.

Your selection of a platform should also reflect your organization's operational and strategic priorities. Are you in a financial position to invest heavily in on-premises infrastructure? Or do you need to limit capital expenditures and operate on a fixed budget?

If your organization can afford to entirely revamp its platform infrastructure, then you're in a fortunate position to build your solution from the ground up. But even if you're limited to making incremental improvements to existing hardware, experienced advisors can recommend ways to improve performance and enable omnichannel flexibility.

Whatever approach you take, a major infrastructure investment is a complex undertaking. To help guide your decision, here are a few critical questions to consider:

- **Evolve or replace:** Do you want to build upon your existing architecture or redesign it to suit your particular needs?
- **Manage or outsource:** Do you want to limit costs by outsourcing platform management or retain maximum control by keeping it local?

- **Multi-channel or omnichannel:** Can you afford to ignore the preferences of your customers and limit their interactions to a multichannel architecture?

Bear in mind that new international regulations impose heightened security standards for maintaining consumer data. Under the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), for instance, contact center infrastructures and software must safeguard the data privacy of EU citizens.<sup>19</sup> Organizations interacting with consumers in Europe must comply with the GDPR's regulations to avoid penalties.

Contact centers must proactively assess all the legal and security implications of servicing customers residing in regions with unique regulatory and security requirements and ensure their choice of infrastructure satisfies global and regional standards. An experienced digital transformation adviser can inform you of additional regulatory considerations and recommend strategies to help meet compliance.



## Considerations when choosing a platform architecture

1	<b>On-premises</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers financial and operational advantages</li> <li>• Gives organizations total control over their architecture's management</li> </ul>
	<b>Cloud-based</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequently includes built-in omnichannel functionality and AI automation</li> <li>• Makes it easier to utilize your data and analytics from CRMs with the aid of application programming interfaces (APIs) and other time-saving automation tools</li> </ul>
	<b>Hybrid</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blends on-site capabilities with subscription cloud services</li> <li>• Can achieve the right balance of on-premises stability and cloud integration convenience</li> </ul>
2	<b>Capex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some solutions afford total autonomy and operational independence</li> <li>• Requires a significant initial investment in hardware that will eventually require life-cycle intervention</li> </ul>
	<b>Opex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other solutions will likely necessitate a monthly operational investment in the form of management, subscription, and maintenance fees</li> </ul>
3	<b>Single tenant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are the sole occupant of the premises, your organization is responsible for installing and maintaining your platform architecture</li> </ul>
	<b>Multi-tenant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you occupy the space with another contact center, it's possible that all tenants can share core features of the building's infrastructure, thereby reducing your organization's total operational obligations</li> </ul>

### Platform architecture

Even if you're convinced of the need to deliver a genuine omnichannel experience, your organization must decide how to implement it. Your choice of platform will influence how you support the many integrated channels comprising an omnichannel architecture. A few basic guidelines can help your business take the first steps toward adopting the right platform for your needs.

#### On-premises vs. cloud-based

On-premises hardware solutions may require additional integration tools to achieve the omnichannel experience, as dedicated systems might not work harmoniously together. But on-premises platforms offer financial and operational advantages that give organizations total control over their architecture's management. Security and regulatory requirements pertaining to your industry or location may necessitate using a premises-based solution, so consult with an experienced adviser before making a selection.

Cloud platforms frequently include built-in omnichannel functionality and AI automation. They also make it easier to utilize your data and analytics from CRMs with the aid of APIs and other time-saving automation tools. Vendors now supply an array of cloud-based microservices to facilitate integration between discrete applications, making a cloud architecture an excellent choice for most contact centers.

While businesses that elect to implement a cloud solution are reliant on off-site providers to service customer needs, the scalability and ease of deployment—along with long-term cost reductions—make cloud an ideal option. Unlike on-premises infrastructures, it's easier to attain omnichannel support right out of the box with a cloud-based solution. Plus, cloud-based infrastructures support popular channels such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP).

A cloud infrastructure can also dramatically impact your selection of a workforce model, as it enables agents to work remotely. It also allows your organization to scale flexibly up or down.

**Unlike on-premises infrastructures, it's easier to attain omnichannel support right out of the box with a cloud-based solution.**

## Hybrid

The alternative to on-premises and cloud-based architectures is a hybrid solution that blends on-site capabilities with subscription cloud services. For businesses concerned by the risk of placing control of core functions in the hands of cloud-based providers, a hybrid solution can achieve the right balance of on-premises stability and cloud integration convenience. It may also deliver many of the omnichannel capabilities your center requires without you having to integrate pre-existing independent channels. A good service provider can oversee a complete facility take-over to merge your existing on-premises infrastructure with a cloud-based solution.

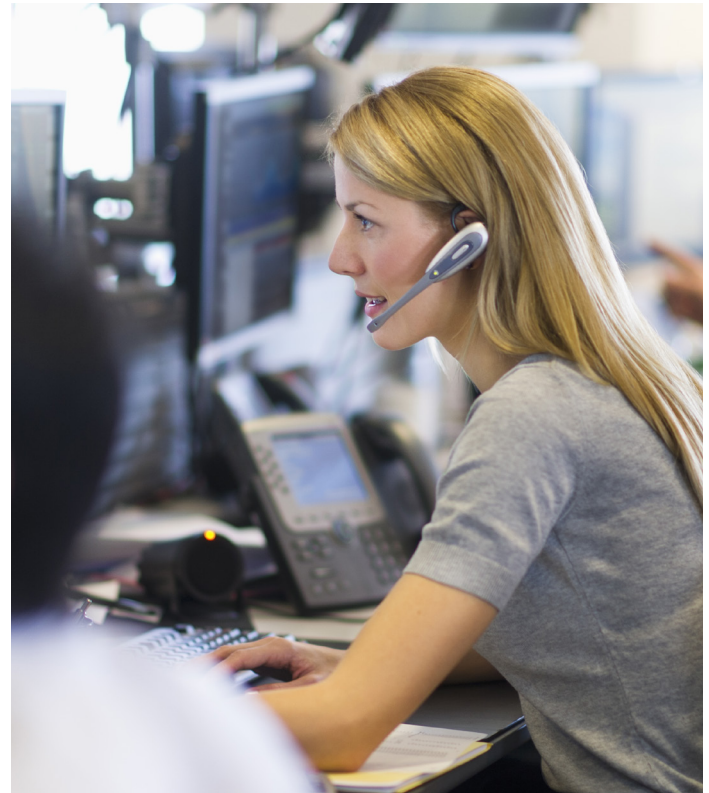
## Opex vs. capex

When weighing the relative advantages of on-premises and cloud-based architectures, consider how each model will affect your annual overhead expenditures. While an on-premises solution affords total autonomy and operational independence, it requires a significant initial investment in hardware that will eventually require life-cycle intervention.

Alternatively, a cloud-based architecture, although a convenient out-of-the-box solution, will likely necessitate a monthly operational expense in the form of management, subscription, and maintenance fees. Either approach can achieve an omnichannel infrastructure, but your organization's financial priorities may favor one approach over the other.

## Single tenant vs. multi-tenant

Your contact center's location can also influence your selection of an architecture. If you are the sole occupant of the premises, your organization is responsible for installing and maintaining your platform architecture. If you occupy the space with another contact center, it's possible that all tenants can share core features of the building's infrastructure, thereby reducing your organization's total operational obligations.



of different departments, complicating your organization's goal of delivering virtually seamless customer experiences. For instance, a CRM may be owned by marketing, contact center, or IT. Senior leadership should harmonize disparate teams and rally management around a single strategic agenda to avoid creating unnecessary obstacles that needlessly introduce friction into the customer journey.

Once executive leadership is committed to overseeing the cultural changes required to achieve excellent customer experiences and before purchasing solutions or selecting workforce management tools, your organization should begin to assess the current opportunities, limitations, and deficits of your contact center:

- What are your key aspirations and objectives in pursuing changes?
- What do customers complain about most in the course of their interactions with agents?
- Do you know how customers prefer to engage, and are you accommodating the favored method of interaction?

Determine what it means to have exceptional customer experiences in the context of your business's distinctive culture and value proposition. How can you bring the same character that distinguishes your products or services from competitors to the way you interact with customers in a contact center context?

## Cultural transformation



**The challenge:** Embracing an omnichannel infrastructure alone isn't enough—customers will not enjoy the full benefits unless leaders instill a cultural mindset promoting process adherence and comprehensive data integration.

**The solution:** Executive leadership is best positioned to orchestrate organization-wide cooperation. A contact center's individual channels and capabilities may fall under the authority and supervision

## A digital transformation roadmap



Once convinced of the need to embrace digital transformation, businesses face the prospect of implementing changes across a complex infrastructure.

Although the process of adopting better tools and policies can seem overwhelming, partnering with an experienced digital transition leader will lessen the likelihood that the new infrastructure delivers a one-size-fits-all solution ill-suited to unique industry and customer needs.

To make it easier, the following basic framework breaks down the major steps involved in a deliberate, methodical approach to digital transformation.

### 1. Designate digital champions

It's crucial to rally support for the initiative within each department and team. Select influential leaders and recruit their assistance in overseeing policy and technology changes. These digital champions can also promote the benefits of digital transformation among agents and personnel who may view the undertaking as an unnecessary disruption. Educating champions with the reasons and advantages for upgrading systems and policies will help encourage adoption and boost morale.

### 2. Perform digital mapping

Before you can make improvements, you need to map the workflows and channels comprising your existing infrastructure. Which channels are isolated from the rest or require support from specialized agents? What data are trapped in siloed systems accessible only by dedicated applications? Charting the routes along which information must travel will help digital transition experts plan a more efficient omnichannel solution that maximizes your agents' training and unlocks their potential effectiveness.

### 3. Conduct digital assessments

The next stage involves scrutinizing processes and technologies through the lens of the customer journey map. Professional digital transition advisers are adept at aiding businesses in better understanding the path customers take towards satisfying their goals and identifying solutions that can improve that experience. This type of audit focuses on matching capabilities with the unique points of friction that customers are likely to encounter over the course of their interaction with your business.

### 4. Devise a digital strategy

From there, digital transition experts can recommend technology and process improvements to optimize contact center's customer experiences. Creating a "living plan" for digital transformation provides a roadmap for immediate improvement and sustainable life cycle interventions. The plan orients your business' investment around the ideal automation strategy for your operation. Having a living plan in place is vital before purchasing solutions or implementing new policies.

### 5. Implement digital transformations

Once capabilities have been assessed and plans laid, digital transformation can commence. Rather than view the process as a one-time investment, you should commit to ongoing refinements, periodic technology upgrades, and routine policy calibrations pursued in accordance with your living plan.

## Choosing the right digital transformation adviser

The level of sophistication and sheer complexity of contact center digital transformation necessitates the support of an experienced team of advisers.

Look for an adviser with expertise in the delivery, support, and lifecycle management of leading contact center platforms. To effectively implement an intelligent omnichannel experience, a digital transition adviser should excel in omnichannel communications and possess deep knowledge of third-party applications. They should also understand how to approach upgrading and integrating legacy enterprise systems and CRM platforms.

AT&T possesses leading-edge capabilities and extensive experience supporting digital transformation and can work with your organization to help ensure you are delivering exceptional customer experiences. We conduct data analysis and deploy artificial intelligence to address emerging data requirements. We also work hard to consider the security and regulatory implications for a business' data infrastructure and take measures to safeguard customer and transactional information.

Once we understand your strategic and operational objectives, AT&T advisers unify your siloed data, help you select the platform infrastructure best suited to your needs, oversee transitions to cloud or on-premises upgrades, and track data to monitor the impact of new processes.

**A digital transition adviser should excel in omnichannel communications and possess deep knowledge of third-party applications.**

A qualified digital transformation adviser can provide the following capabilities to deliver an intelligent omnichannel experience:

- **Customer contact strategy and roadmap:** Guide and advise on strategic decisions
- **Value based ROI:** Provide fact-based assessments of investment costs and benefits
- **Solution design:** Blueprint architectures for call and workforce management, QA, and reporting
- **Implementation and integration:** Deploy leading platforms (on-premises, cloud, hybrid) and integrate best-of-breed solutions
- **Contact center life cycle transformation:** Incorporate omnichannel and AI technologies
- **Support:** Provide operational support throughout life cycle
- **Global coverage:** Cover a wide spectrum of countries and understand the local regulatory hurdles on a country-by-country basis
- **Customer contact optimization:** Help achieve growth, loyalty, and profitability goals
- **Visual network analytics:** Pinpoint and remove friction points such as calling loops, excessive transfers, and abnormal disconnects
- **Environment simulation:** Test effects of alternative conditions
- **Enterprise optimization:** Optimize people, processes, and technology
- **Network and security:** Layer in other important services that enable a successful deployment of the contact center such as VPN, toll-free, SIP trunking, and security services

AT&T has helped numerous organizations of all sizes transform their contact centers through the platforms, tools, and workflows that fit their unique needs. And we can help you. When you create an omnichannel contact center oriented around customer experiences, it can move the needle on your performance goals, revenue potential, and customer loyalty.

## Conclusion

When you acknowledge the shift in market dynamics influencing consumer behavior and commit to digital transformation, you're making major investments in your organization's competitive advantage. Attuning your business now to the habits of an increasingly sophisticated consumer can protect your organization's future.

Fortunately, the technology and expertise are available to deliver exceptional customer experiences and improve business outcomes. The first step is to avoid the plight of digital transformation stragglers by welcoming change and positioning your business as an early adopter of exciting new paradigm shifts in customer experience.

Just as Copernicus positioned the Sun at the center of our solar system, technology has shifted the customer to the center of the business universe. Reorienting capabilities around their needs will help protect your future customer loyalty and revenue streams.

To learn more about how AT&T can help transform your contact center and optimize your customer experiences, view our portfolio of contact center solutions at [www.att.com/contact-center](http://www.att.com/contact-center).



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