How-to Guide: Top Ways to Improve Contact Center Performance

HOW ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY IS HELPING CONTACT CENTERS ACHIEVE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Executive Summary

Recent studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between the implementation of advanced technology in contact centers and increased caller satisfaction. For example, advanced call handling techniques reduce average queue time by anywhere from 12 to 43 percent. Calls per hour per agent improved 6 to 18 percent. And self-service options were shown to increase satisfaction among the least satisfied callers from 39 to 66 percent. In this paper, you will learn more about the ways in which advanced technology is transforming contact center productivity.

Questioning Assumptions and Finding Answers

Organizations spend millions of dollars annually on contact center technology to help improve customer satisfaction, become more competitive, and reduce the cost of acquiring and retaining loyal customers. It is commonly assumed that technology investment delivers measurable results—but does it?

> " ...advanced contact center technologies could simultaneously improve customer satisfaction **and** financial performance."
>
> *The Impact of Technology on Contact Center Performance*
> — Benchmark Portal study

In the past, there have not been statistically valid research studies to support that assumption. However, the recent Benchmark Portal study, *The Impact of Technology on Contact Center Performance*, provides positive, statistically relevant evidence that advanced contact center technologies actually do improve customer interactions. Based on rigorous research conducted with 143 contact centers from a wide range of industries, the study found that advanced contact center technologies could simultaneously improve customer satisfaction **and** financial performance. In addition, the study found that technology investments in contact center technology frequently pay for themselves in one to two years and deliver higher return on investment (ROI) than investments made in core products and services.

Over the past 20 years, contact centers have implemented a range of technology solutions to continuously improve responsiveness to customers and cost-effectiveness. As technologies have become more advanced, contact centers build on their capabilities to gain more insight into customer interactions and improve customer care.

Top Ways to Improve Contact Center Performance

Contact Center Improvements At a Glance

First-call resolution rates

\+ 4-13 percent

Cost per call reductions

Up to 35 percent

Increased satisfaction among satisfied customers

+5-7 percent

Increased satisfaction among least satisfied customers

+39-66 percent

Calls per agent per hour

+6-18 percent

Agent satisfaction

+4-11 percent

Average queue time reductions

12-43 percent
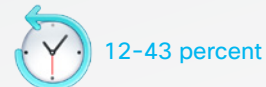
Stages of Contact Center Innovation

Contact center technologies took a large step forward in the 1980s. Since that time, those early technologies have been refined and augmented to achieve three primary goals:

- **Manage costs:** During the 1980s and 1990s, 800-service, reporting, interactive voice response (IVR) and workforce optimization solutions were implemented to drive efficiency and reduce costs. Today, analytics and virtual desktop solutions are enabling contact centers to perform highly granular analysis and support customers from wherever agents are located to further reduce infrastructure costs, increase employee convenience, and target customer satisfaction efforts.

- **Segment customers:** Customer relationship management (CRM) and intelligent routing capabilities introduced in the 1990s enabled contact centers to segment customers for targeted offers or priority treatment. Today, this data plus integrated customer analytics are helping organizations develop individualized customer profiles to support personalized service and marketing.

- **Collaborate with customers:** The third goal is to collaborate with customers. Customer collaboration encompasses integrating existing contact center capabilities with social media, social mining, and crowd sourcing to increase customer loyalty and gain near-real-time insight into customer preferences, opinions, and feedback. This data is used to help the company further improve processes ranging from customer service to product development.

Today's contact centers must achieve cost control and customer segmentation goals before they can effectively engage in customer collaboration. And according to the Benchmark Portal study, they are using advanced contact center technologies to improve performance against eight Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

- Improve first call resolution rates
- Reduce costs per call
- Improve top box customer satisfaction
- Improve bottom box customer satisfaction
- Improve calls per agent per hour
- Improve top box agent satisfaction
- Reduce average queue time
- Improve multi-channel performance

Improve First Call Resolution Rates

Contact centers in the Benchmark Portal study improved first call resolution rates by 4-13 percent compared to centers that do not have these technologies. Technology is critical to calls being received and routed correctly. When callers are routed correctly and agents have the proper desktop technologies, calls are more likely to be resolved the first time.

As described in the study, if a contact center handles 2 million calls per year and achieves a 7-percent improvement in first call resolution at an average cost per call of $5.05, the center would save $707,000 annually. Using the same scenario, if the call center's data indicates that caller satisfaction improves 1 percent for every 2-percent improvement in first call resolution, the center could expect a 3.5 percent increase in caller satisfaction. The advanced technologies supporting these gains include:

- Contact data analytics
- Advanced routing
- Advanced reporting and analytical tools

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Reduce Costs Per Call

Cost per call is derived by dividing the budget for the period by the number of calls handled in the center for the same period. Contact centers reduced cost per call by as much as 35 percent using technologies including:

- Presence-based expert escalation
- Multi-criteria skills-based routing
- Courtesy callbacks
- Computer telephony integration (CTI) and applications

Improve Top Box Customer Satisfaction

Top box customers are those who rate their overall satisfaction with an interaction as 5 out of 5. Satisfaction among already-satisfied callers improved even more—by 5-7 percent. Organizations that reported these gains properly staff their centers and gather data to continuously improve their processes using these technologies:

- Workforce management
- Contact data analytics
- Cradle-to-grave reporting

Improve Bottom Box Satisfaction

Bottom box customers are those who rate their overall satisfaction with an interaction as 1 out of 5. Contact centers that improved this KPI use self-service options that enable customers to avoid longer waiting times and technologies that enable them to identify and correct agent behaviors that can lead to caller dissatisfaction. These centers increased bottom box satisfaction by 39–66 percent using:

- Workforce management
- Speech recognition
- Call recording and retrieval
- Touch-tone IVR

Improve Calls Per Agent Per Hour

Statistically, advanced technologies help agents become more effective and efficient. Customers are connected to the person best able to help them, and agents have customer, product, and service information immediately accessible. Contact centers improved calls per hour per agent by 6–18 percent using technologies including:

- Multi-criteria routing
- CTI and apps integration
- Presence-based expert escalation
- Unified cross-channel routing
- Natural language IVR

Improve Top Box Agent Satisfaction

Top box agents are those who rate their overall satisfaction with their work as the top score on a five-point scale.

Agents want to help customers and become stressed and frustrated with systems that are slow, lock up, or don't provide the information they need. High levels of agent satisfaction reduce turnover, lower costs, and indicate that people, processes, and technology are working well together. Top box agent satisfaction increased by 4–11 percent through technologies such as:

- Advanced reporting and analytics
- Agent desktop with CTI
- CTI and apps integration
- Real-time agent feedback tools

Reduce Average Queue Time

The more agents there are, the faster customers will be served. However, advanced technologies can expedite call handling to reduce annoying queue times without requiring additional agents. Contact centers using advanced technologies reduced average queue time by 12–43 percent. Technologies implemented include:

- Presence-based expert escalation
- Courtesy callback while in queue
- Blended routing
- Multi-criteria routing

Improve Multi-channel Performance

Multi-channel performance includes measuring email and chat response, in addition to phone. Contact centers that handle a growing volume of email and chat traffic can benefit from several technologies to help reduce costs and increase responsiveness:

- CTI and apps integration
- Universal multi-channel queue
- Unified cross-channel routing

Cisco Customer Collaboration Solutions

Businesses around the world are using Cisco Customer Collaboration solutions to improve contact center and financial performance. Cisco was ranked first in "Ability to Execute" in the 2012 and 2013 Gartner Contact Center Infrastructure Magic Quadrant, making Cisco the smart, safe choice for business contact centers.

- **Broad product portfolio:** Cisco continuously extends its solutions and capabilities to help customers meet current and emerging technology needs. A wide range of deployment options gives customers flexibility to gain advanced technology solutions regardless of location, number of agents, or delivery model.
- **Next-generation customer collaboration:** Cisco Customer Collaboration solutions provide innovative capabilities that transform customer care from simple phone transactions into personalized, content-rich experiences across any communication channel chosen by customers.
- **Virtual capabilities:** Virtualization technologies provide extraordinary flexibility to add agents and supervisors regardless of physical location. Businesses can quickly adapt to meet changing customer demands from headquarters, branch offices, mobile, or remote locations while reducing costs.
- **Investment protection:** Advance the capabilities of your contact center while building on existing technology and implementing industry-best third-party applications.

For More Information

Improved caller satisfaction and contact center performance can be achieved using advanced technologies. To learn more about the results that contact centers achieved in the Benchmark Portal study, view The Impact of Technology on Contact Center Performance.

For more information about Cisco Customer Collaboration solutions, visit www.cisco.com/go/cc.