

360°

Business & IT Transformation Insights from Pivot



Leveraging Cloud-based Contact Centers for Better Customer Experiences

More organizations are embracing the cloud for their contact centers. The result? They save money, gain new capabilities, and improve experiences for customers and agents alike.



Jeff Brinckman

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Uncertain markets are bringing customer care to the forefront. Customers are more cautious about spending. They're looking for new ways to shop – increasingly, through digital channels. Brands, for their part, are losing revenues. They're looking for new ways to differentiate.

That's why more organizations are turning to the cloud to manage their contact centers. "The coronavirus has affected contact centers in a big way," says Jeff Brinckman, director of Customer Experience Solutions for Pivot. "Traditionally, agents sat together in a large room. Suddenly, companies had to move them offsite." (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: The Shift to Cloud-Enabled Workers and Contact Centers

2x Increase in employees working from home, from 31% to 62%, following the coronavirus pandemic¹

74% A Gartner Inc. survey of 317 CFOs and finance leaders on March 30, 2020, revealed that 74% will move at least 5% of their previously onsite workforce to permanently remote positions post-COVID-19²

25%↑ Compound annual growth of investments in cloud-based contact centers, from \$13B in 2019 to \$49B in 2025³

Organizations whose contact centers were at least partly in the cloud have an advantage. In fact, Pivot helped several clients shift from on-premises to remote agents within days. "That would have been difficult without the cloud," Brinckman notes.

But a cloud-enabled, distributed agent workforce was already a growing trend. That should be no surprise, Brinckman says, because the cloud delivers numerous contact center benefits:

- **Easier talent acquisition** – You can recruit talented, experienced agents regardless of their location.
- **Around-the-clock customer service** – You can more easily serve customers across geographies and time zones.
- **Lower costs** – You achieve predictable infrastructure costs, with limited upfront capital expenses. “With on-prem contact centers, the latest technology is expensive to acquire, and it involves business disruption as it’s being refreshed every 24 to 36 months,” Brinckman points out.
- **Strong security** – You gain the same level of security as on-prem, including compliance with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS). “We worked with a leading U.S. retail brand to enable work-from-home agents to handle secure credit-card transactions, just as if they were in a centralized facility,” Brinckman reports.
- **Customer service innovation** – With the cloud, you gain economical access to compute power to support emerging technologies such as machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI). “On-prem can involve a never-ending chase after the latest functionality,” Brinckman observes, “and you never quite catch up.”

If the Cloud Fits

But a cloud environment isn’t one-size-fits-all. “Many contact centers have been built over years of investment and have extensive integration with back-end systems,” Brinckman notes. “It might cost millions of dollars to move all of that to the cloud.”

Some organizations therefore benefit from a hybrid environment, combining both centralized and cloud-based decentralized capabilities. Still, to adopt the most advanced technologies, many enterprises will need the cloud for at least some of their operations.

One such capability is natural-language processing (NLP). NLP converts human speech and writing into data that can be processed by AI. The technology enables smart applications that provide customers with self-service options. Customers can quickly and easily find answers without having to interact with an agent, and they can resolve issues on their own schedule.

The technologies behind NLP require high-performance servers. “For most organizations, it wouldn’t make sense to take on the capital expense of that hardware,” Brinckman advises. “With the cloud, you get instant access to all the scalable performance you need to support AI.”

As AI becomes more sophisticated, it can understand questions and provide answers with a high degree of accuracy. As a result, NLP is advancing to the point it can be considered a virtual digital assistant. “It’s like having the best customer service agent available 24/7/365 to handle inquiries through all channels,” Brinckman says.

The approach also lowers costs. By some measures, a typical problem resolution costs \$6 when handled by an agent, according to Brinckman. The price tag for a digital virtual assistant? Sixty-five cents.

Achieving Agent Excellence

Moving contact centers to the cloud is an effective way to improve agent experiences – and performance. All an agent needs to be productive is connectivity, a workstation, a headset, and access to your customer relationship management (CRM) software in the cloud.

A typical agent uses four to five applications to manage customer information and answer queries. A cloud platform is an effective way to tie those tools together. You can seamlessly integrate software that accepts calls, shows who the caller is, displays past contacts, provides a knowledge base for agent guidance, enables access to a product catalog, handles financial transactions, and records results for analytics.

“The easier it is for agents to work with those solutions, the lower their stress and the better their experience,” Brinckman says. “And, studies have shown that many agents prefer working from home over a typical contact center environment.”

Customer Care That Builds Value

Most important, the cloud can position you to deliver better experiences to your customers. That's crucial, because customers now expect the highest levels of service. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2: The Customer Service Impact



Customers who expect to solve complex issues by speaking to one person⁴



Customers who have stopped doing business with a company after receiving poor customer service or support⁵

When customers reach out to a contact center, they want to get an answer to their question or resolve their issue – and then move on with their lives. If they can achieve that, they have a good experience. In fact, research has shown that customers who are initially dissatisfied can be won over as brand advocates following successful problem resolution.

Brinckman believes there are two key ways cloud-based contact centers optimize customer experiences:

- **Customer choice** – Customers want options. Cloud-based tools enable them to engage through phone, email, chat, text, and online self-service tools. Whether they're at a desk and want to interact through chat or in their car and prefer to call, you can meet customers where they are.
- **Personalized service** – When customers need to repeatedly explain who they are and what their problem is, they quickly become frustrated. But if your agent can automatically identify customers, understand their past interactions, and access tools to quickly answer questions, customers are more easily satisfied.

"Ultimately, the cloud can help you deliver the level of experience they increasingly demand," Brinckman concludes. "It helps ensure your contact center keeps customers loyal to your brand."

With the cloud, you gain economical access to compute power to support emerging technologies such as ML and AI. Learn more about delivering exceptional customer experiences. Visit us at www.pivotts.com.

1 "How Coronavirus Will Change the 'Next Normal' Workplace," Gallup, May 2020

2 "Gartner CFO Survey Reveals 74% Intend to Shift Some Employees to Remote Work Permanently," Gartner Press Release, April 3, 2020

3 "Cloud-based Contact Center Market: Growth, Trends, and Forecast," ResearchAndMarkets.com, 2019

4 "State of the Connected Customer," Salesforce.com, June 2019

5 "Rethink Your Customer Service Experience," Accenture, July 2019

Pivot delivers best-in-class information technology services and solutions to help leading organizations optimize infrastructures, improve business processes, lower costs, and achieve strategic objectives. Our client-first approach combines leading-edge technology with expert design, rapid implementation and integration, and best-practice methodologies, powering digital transformation from the cloud to the edge to the workplace.