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# How AI & the Cloud Can Enhance Your Contact Centre



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## Introduction

The way we interact with organisations is evolving. Contact centres are no longer just call centres. People want to connect with your business by whichever channel suits them best. Whether that's via phone, email, social media, or web chat, your business needs to be there for them. Catering for tech-savvy customers requires a shift in mindset about what contact centres can be and what technologies are required to make it a reality.

We've all read about how artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud computing are changing the way we live, work, and play. We can see the effects of these changes in our everyday lives – in our smartphones, TVs, and laptops. But how can these exciting new technologies be applied to the contact centre?

This ebook will shed light on this question and explore how AI and the cloud can revolutionise contact centres and help you deliver simply brilliant customer experiences.



***Contact via phone is in decline, falling below 64% of total contact centre interactions by 2021.***

For many of us, jobs are no longer just jobs. Work has become a thing we do, not a place we go. Thanks to the advancement of technology, there is a wealth of collaboration and communication tools that enable us to be more productive on our own terms – in our own workstyle. That often means teamwork on-the-go; as such solutions that allow for mobile working and innovative workforce management such as instant messaging (IM) and presence management have become more of an expectation than a perk.

When it comes to health and wellbeing, work-life balance has become top priority with technology a key enabler. This places more pressure on business leaders trying to cater for a diverse workforce, with varying needs. Modern work environments that offer flexible and collaborative working have become key areas of focus when it comes to cultural transformation. Those businesses with any hope of attracting and retaining top talent must place technology at the heart of their strategy.







## The Cloud and the Contact Centre: A Match Made in Heaven

More businesses than ever are looking to transition their contact centre to the cloud. In fact, two-thirds of businesses are expected to migrate to the cloud this year alone. And it's no wonder why.

As omnichannel communications become the norm, customers expect you to be there for them no matter the circumstances. They want to communicate across channels and know their data is being kept safe. And, in turn, businesses want contact centres that are easier to maintain, leaner, and more cost-effective.

Transitioning your contact centre to the cloud can provide all this and more.



## What are the benefits of the cloud in contact centres?

### Deliver a Seamless, Omnichannel Experience

Cloud-based contact centres enable true omnichannel support for your customers. But what does that mean, exactly?

#### What is Omnichannel?

Omnichannel allows your customers to contact you through multiple, connected channels at the same time. For example, a customer starts a webchat with an agent online, you follow up that discussion via email, and the customer calls back with further questions later.

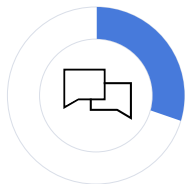
While this has always been possible to an extent, hosting your contact centre in the cloud means that all these communications are logged and available to any agent at any time. This empowers you to deliver seamless customer experiences.

## Why Should I Care About Omnichannel?

Well, times are changing, and so are your customers' needs. 41% of customers now prefer using an online webchat compared to 32% who prefer a call. There are also email and social media channels to consider, with the latter in particular growing traction in recent years.

Keeping all these channels of communication working in sync is critical to providing great customer service – no one likes having to repeat themselves to multiple agents, after all.

Beyond that, omnichannel is quickly becoming the norm, the expected. Those who don't provide for these changing customer needs and fully embrace omnichannel will fail to attract, retain, and delight customers going forward.



***35% of customers expect to be able to contact the same customer service agent through any communication channel***

## Be There For Your Customers, Even When You Aren't

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, many employees are now working from home. With big players like Google and NatWest telling their staff to work from home for the foreseeable future, it's likely this more flexible approach to working is here to stay.

But where does that leave your contact centre staff?

You could go through the rigmarole of delivering contact hardware to each of your agent's homes – and spending thousands on engineers to get it up and running. But this is hardly the most efficient solution.

When your contact centres are cloud-based, your agents can receive calls and help customers wherever they are in the world – all from their laptop or even their smartphone.

Cloud contact centres give you all you need to take your communications up a gear – increased mobility, richer team collaboration, outstanding customer experience – all without the cost and complexity of an onpremises communications system.

With the cloud, you can guarantee you're always there for your customers, no matter what the future throws at you.

## Mobility is a Great Investment

Contact centres demand extensive and time-consuming maintenance, from ensuring your systems are up and running, to installing new lines as your business grows and monitoring expenditure to keep your costs in check. It's a lot of hard work.

But when your contact centre's in the cloud, much of this is taken care of for you – especially if you work with a team of cloud experts to transition your contact centre to the cloud smoothly.

With a well-managed cloud contact centre, system up-time and reliability are guaranteed, costs are optimised automatically based on usage, and scaling your contact centre up or down based on demand is as easy as clicking a button. Suffice to say, the cloud takes the legwork out of managing a contact centre.

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## Keep Customer Data Safe and Secure

There have been many high-profile data breaches in recent years. With data protection at the forefront of many customer's minds, doing all you can to protect their personal information is critical.

The cloud can help you achieve this, offering increased resilience and tighter privacy controls.

Information resilience refers to how well you can protect your customer data from loss or corruption. A cloud-based contact centre pulls in data from a broad range of places and logs it all securely in one place. This simply isn't possible on-premise and ensures data is never lost. Authorised users can access these logs too, giving you a clear audit trail to support compliance.

In terms of privacy controls, cloud technology lets you decide who gets access to customer data and when. This means your agents are only accessing customer data when they need to, reducing the risk of data leaks, theft, or corruption.

Cloud contact centres give you peace of mind, knowing that any private data is kept safe, secure, and is only accessed when needed – making compliance one less thing to worry about.

## Integrate with hundreds of other business solutions

A major benefit of cloud technology is its ability to integrate seamlessly with any number of other business applications.

Want Outlook Calendar reminders set automatically to follow up a conversation? Not a problem. Already have a CRM platform you love? Your cloud contact centre can integrate with it effortlessly. And what about the tools your customers use like Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, and SMS? With a cloud-based contact centre, your customers can reach you how they want, when they want.

The list of possible integrations is endless. When you invest in the cloud, you can rest assured that it'll work in tandem with any business software you currently use or choose to use in the future.



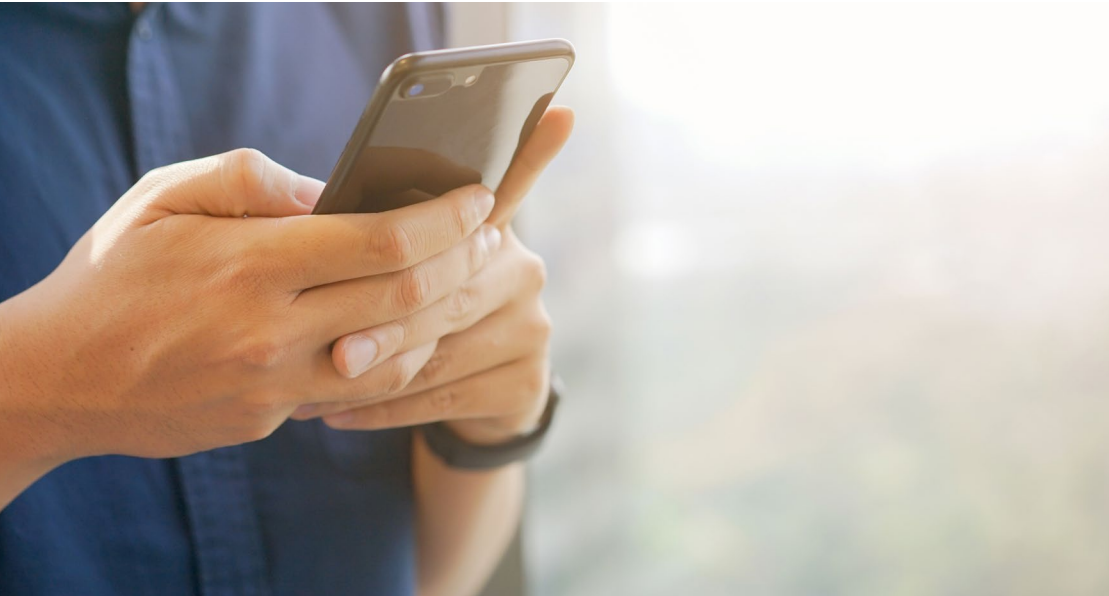


## AI in Contact Centres: The Next Leap Forward

Thanks to the wide-spread adoption of digital technology and the internet, the very idea of customer service is being transformed. In a fast-paced world, customers now want to be able to reach your business faster and they want their communications handled more intelligently.

This move provides enterprises with a huge opportunity to distinguish themselves.

While many businesses are already moving to implement cloud-based contact centres, far fewer are utilising the transformative powers of AI. However, with 83% of companies saying that AI is a strategic priority in their path towards better customer experience in the years ahead, can your business afford to miss out?



## Shifting from Transactions to Relationships

While some customers may be satisfied with transactional interactions with your business (if they have a quick question, say), AI can help you turn these brief encounters into long-lasting, loyal relationships.

It allows you to provide personalised support, better understand customer needs, offer faster service, and resolve issues more quickly – whatever channel they're using.

By giving your customers what they want – faster, smarter, and more personalised customer service – AI can transform the customer journey and nurture fruitful relationships built to last.

## Efficiency Built In

Businesses are always looking for more efficient ways to operate, from both a cost and time perspective.

When AI is introduced into contact centres, efficiency comes built-in. It lets your agents reach customers faster, improves handling times, reduces agent training costs, and so much more. On top of this, AI can analyse your usage data and optimise costs – keeping your contact centre running smoothly and efficiently.



## Empower Your Agents

AI can give your contact centre agents access to the kinds of information they've always wished they'd had without having to switch to CRM and back again. Imagine the time you'd save if AI could bridge the gap between the contact centre platform and your customer database

Advanced analytics – powered by natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning – provide real-time insight into each customer's preferences, and virtual assistants can deliver relevant information fast to speed up query resolution.

With all this data at their fingertips, your agents are empowered to put their customers at the centre of the conversation. They can understand customer needs before they pick up the phone, meaning they can focus on being their helpful, brilliant selves with the power of AI at their back.

## What are the benefits of implementing AI?

Now you know the top-level benefits of introducing AI into the contact centre, let's dig deeper into the ways AI can enhance your contact centre, delight customers, and simplify the customer journey.

## Understand your customers on a deeper level

Getting to know your customers is one of the quickest ways to improve your customer experience and boost that all-important Net Promoter Score. However, understanding customers' wants and needs in the contact centre has traditionally been tricky.

With AI, this is no longer the case.

An omnichannel, AI-powered contact centre can enable your teams to connect with customers on a much deeper level. With every phone call, webchat, and email being fed into the machine learning process, AI can deliver a greater understanding of your customers' intent. When this data is combined with insights from customer feedback, engagement history, and demographic data, agents can know the best way to respond to any customer service situation.

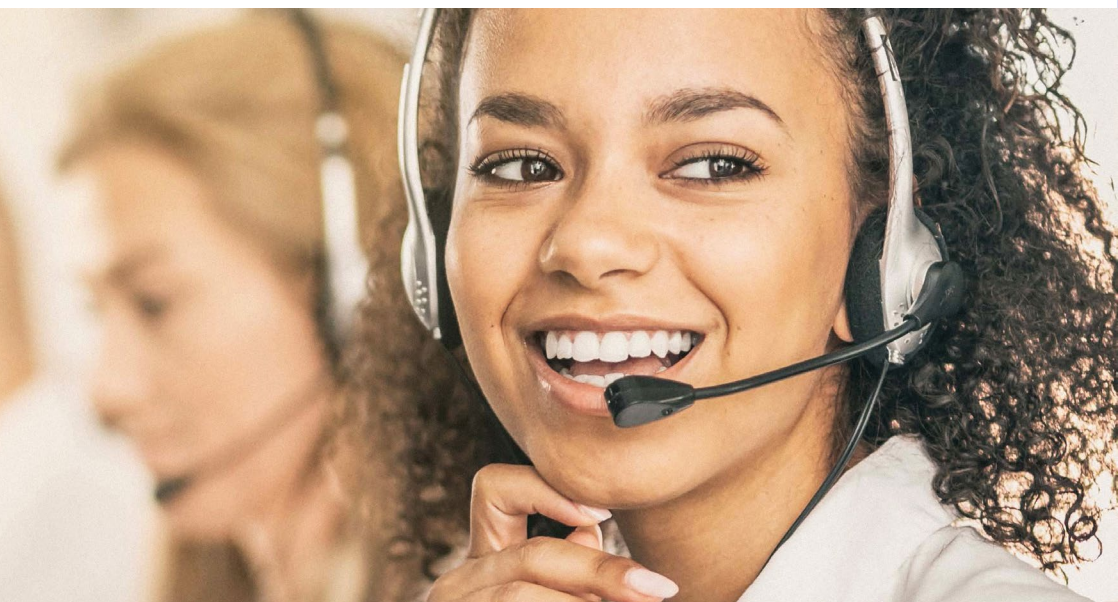
But this is only scratching the surface. AI can also undertake sentiment analysis, which means analysing the way your customers are typing (fast or slow), the type of language they're using (aggressive/ agreeable), and more.



AI offers human-like interactions that redefine the possibilities of AI-powered conversation. With all this rich data at their fingertips, your contact centre agents are much better prepared to deal with the customer's query in a way that's sure to surprise and delight.



***51% of customers say the most important element of a good customer experience is interacting with an agent who understands their issue.***



## Treat Customers Like What They Are: Human Beings

We've all been there. You call a business expecting to talk to someone useful. Instead, a robotic voice talks you through an endless list of options – press one for this, two for that. It's infuriating and feels like you're being treated like a machine. Put plainly, it's not a great way to start a relationship.

Thankfully, implementing AI into your contact centre makes these annoyances a thing of the past.

Firstly, NLP can give your IVR system a more natural, conversational tone. This conveys that – although they're not yet through to an agent – you truly care about resolving their query or issue.

Secondly, because your customers can reach you from any number of platforms, AI can help them self-serve without the need for a physical agent. They could, for instance, speak to an AI chatbot on your website, ask a question, and have the chatbot share a PDF guide that talks them through a solution.

Virtual agents provide your customers with 24/7 access to immediate, personal customer service. If the need arises, these virtual agents can pass the conversation over to a member of your team seamlessly. With advanced NLP, your customers won't even know they were ever talking to an AI.

This AI-led approach treats customers like humans instead of robots. It empowers them to help themselves where possible and makes the journey to issue resolution painless.

## Smarter Call Handling and Routing

AI allows you to handle customer calls more intelligently.

Instead of forcing customers through lengthy menus, AI can automatically route them through to the right agent with the right skill set to help based on sentiment analysis and the customers' past dealings with the company. When that agent picks up the call, they'll know the customer's name and needs from the get-go.

Smarter call handling is more efficient for you and more convenient for your customers – a win-win.

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## Continuous improvements

One of the biggest upsides of investing in an AI-powered contact centre is the fact that it's constantly evolving.

Without data, AI is fairly useless. But as your contact centre continues to collect customer, cost, and usage data, it can adapt and grow alongside your business. AI allows for meaningful, in-depth analysis of all your contact centre and customer experience data at scale. This information can help you measure your contact centre's performance against company objectives and identify where improvements can be made.

This is a quantum leap from contact centres of the past where tracking needed improvements and updating databases was costly and timeconsuming.

## Save Time and Money

Introducing AI into the contact centre is not only great from a customer experience standpoint – it also helps your bottom line.

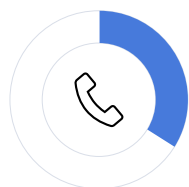
AI can constantly keep abreast of which communication channels your contact centre is using most, allowing you to make better decisions when it comes to workforce optimisation and keep better control on operational costs and resourcing levels. With this knowledge in hand, you can make smarter, more informed decisions about areas in which you can increase efficiency, optimise costs, and even make analytics-backed decisions to address any skills gaps within the business.

## Does AI mean taking people out of the picture?

This is the most common fear around the broader concept of AI. People think that contact centre agents will become redundant because AI can handle everything automatically.

This simply isn't the case.

The customer service experience will always need a human touch to be anything more than mediocre. No matter how far AI comes along, people still prefer speaking to another, real person when calling a business. And while AI can certainly aid the customer journey, especially when contacting a business through webchats, having real people ready to help when needed will be something customers will always value.



***34% of consumers state that the inability to speak to a live person is one of the most frustrating aspects of contact centres.***



## The Very Concept of the Contact Centre is Changing

No matter which way you look at it, contact centres are going through a transition period. An increasing number of people are connecting with businesses digitally before they pick up a phone, customer expectations are growing, and the world itself is continuing to change at a rapid pace. Contact centres need to adapt, become more agile, flexible, and accommodating.

However, many traditional businesses are weighed down by legacy technology and systems that aren't conducive to change. It can seem almost impossible to adopt AI and the cloud without uphauling the entire contact centre as it currently stands.

But look at examples like Starling Bank, Monzo, and Uber. These digitalfirst companies have gone from strength to strength thanks to the hasslefree, digitally-enabled customer experience they provide. Traditional enterprises can create outstanding customer journeys too, but only if they adopt AI and the cloud into their contact centres – and soon. Those who fail to do so will be left in the dust.





## **Talk to Onecom**

Adopting AI and the cloud doesn't have to be difficult. To find out more and discover the art of the possible, talk to the experts at Onecom today.

**Talk to us**