



2021

CONTACT CENTER

buyer's guide

Trends driving the essentials for
modern customer experiences



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New decade, new drivers

The start of a new decade always brings anticipation and speculation about the events, trends and innovations that will define the next 10 years. This one had some surprises in store. The events of 2020 profoundly changed the way we live, the way we work and the way we do business.

Contact centers and customer support teams often were on the front lines, rising to the occasion despite the pressures of sudden remote work requirements, rapid technology changes and sensitive customer scenarios.

This has changed business requirements and priorities for contact center technology. So, whether you're evaluating new solutions or simply staying up on the trends, you need to understand what's driving rapid innovation and how organizations are already putting those innovations to work.

Key contact center technology trends accelerated in 2020



To slow the spread of COVID-19, in-person service became limited or unavailable. Organizations were forced to make rapid changes. The contact center and its customer support channels became a primary way to connect with customers and manage experiences. This fueled the acceleration of several key trends already well underway before the global pandemic hit.

This buying guide explores how these trends are defining the essential capabilities that drive a modern contact center in 2021 and beyond.

Digital **ENGAGEMENT**

The shift away from voice-centric call centers to contact centers optimized for digital communications advanced even further. Organizations scrambled to add or optimize the channels customers want to use – especially chat, text and messaging – to handle an increasing volume of digital conversations.

Remote **WORK** and operations

Contact centers transitioned employees to work from home. The shift from face-to-face interactions between agents and supervisors to an all-remote workforce highlighted the need for effective engagement and management tools.

COLLABORATION tools

Small talk and coffee breaks are now video calls and text messages. The shift to remote work put technology at the center of even the simplest tasks and communications.

AI and **AUTOMATION**

Demand for information and assistance sent customer support interaction volumes soaring across industries. Organizations set out to increase self-service and automation capabilities – for employees and customers.

CLOUD platforms

The immediacy of change called for cloud technology. Older, on-premises contact center solutions proved inadequate to support the new, remote model of contact center operations. Organizations have accelerated their adoption of modern cloud contact center platforms for agility and adaptiveness in these times.

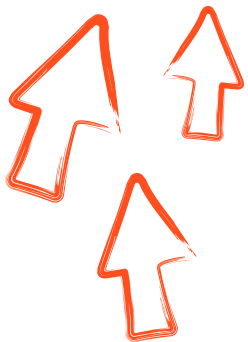
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DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Digital engagement

The genie's out of the bottle when it comes to prioritizing digital channels for customer engagement. Consumers are already accustomed to receiving new levels of service online. And they're increasingly turning to chat, text or messaging apps instead of a phone call.

With the increased reliance on digital support, getting these interactions right is a top priority for organizations everywhere.



Here are some of the challenges organizations encounter as digital interactions increase.

Ensuring speed plus quality

Companies need to serve customers faster on channels like web chat, text, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Apple Business Chat and Twitter. But they can't sacrifice the quality of those interactions.

Managing digital workloads

Messaging applications offer companies new avenues to effectively handle customer inquiries. They also can be an option to deflect unnecessary calls. However, these apps generate their own traffic and workloads to manage.

Transitioning across channels

For organizations offering value-based or premium-priced services, using messaging solely as a call deflection strategy might not be the right approach. Often, human interaction is required, so a smooth transition to an agent is critical.

TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES:

Develop a blended messaging model

Companies see the most success with digital engagement channels when they're intentional about avoiding silos across teams, channels and systems. The best approach is to blend messaging applications with bots, chat, your contact center technology and other important systems — think CRM and essential back-office solutions. Done properly, a blended model removes complexity and enriches the customer experience.



Swisscom reduced handle time and increased first-contact resolution (FCR) while improving Net Promoter Score (NPS) and agent satisfaction with Genesys Predictive Routing and a bold messaging architecture that encompasses WhatsApp and Apple Business Chat.

RESULTS:

- 50% of all FAQs successfully resolved by bots
- 10% of all inquiries solved via messaging without transfer to an agent
- 5% uplift in FCR
- 3% reduction in average handle time

“With **GENESYS PREDICTIVE ROUTING**, we went from queue-based routing to **STRENGTH-BASED ROUTING** around a specific KPI and customer type, all in a fraction of a second.”

Marcel Hischier

Product Manager Customer Interactions, Swisscom

What to look for when evaluating digital engagement solutions

Think about a blended model. Consider the breadth of native functionality, routing options to support goal-oriented flows, transitions across channels and resources, and which level of insight it provides into how digital channels perform.

DIGITAL CHANNELS	INBOUND/ROUTING	OUTBOUND	REPORTING
Do you offer the native ability to handle omnichannel engagement, including mobile, web, chat, phone, social, SMS, video and any future channels?	How is skills-based routing supported?	Are outbound SMS campaigns supported?	What standard reports are provided?
What web chat routing functionality is provided?	Is callback functionality supported so customers/prospects can request a callback rather than waiting in a queue?	Are third-party web services for “Do Not Call” scrubbing supported?	Are real-time, on-demand and historical reporting features included? If so, provide details of the reporting and analytics capabilities.
Does the solution provide virtual agent technology to support customer interactions based on conversation or specific tasks?	Is VIP routing decision based on customer value (high/middle/low) offered?	Can your solution perform post-call surveys?	Can data stored within the contact center platform be extracted to an enterprise data warehouse for further insights and analytics?
Does your solution offer virtual agent (bot/AI) capabilities that automate intelligent responses without needing to queue to an agent?	Does the solution provide IVR self-service or automation functionality? If so, what IVR development tool is provided?	How does the predictive dialer control inbound and outbound call flow? Describe how the algorithm works.	What KPIs are captured? For example, are KPIs like abandoned percentage, customers waiting and wait time available within reports and dashboards?
Describe how AI is applied.	Is natural language speech recognition provided?	Are customer callback capabilities included?	Describe how supervisor dashboards are handled.

REMOTE WORK AND OPERATIONS

Remote work and operations

Remote workforces offer compelling options to provide global coverage and secure top talent. Companies had been trending slowly but steadily toward more distributed and remote teams — until early 2020.

Some organizations made the transition to remote work quite literally overnight. One day, your team was commuting to the office and settling in at their desks. The next, they're swapping breakfast plates for a laptop on the kitchen table to get to work. Many companies already have extended work-from-home orders through mid-2021; others are all-in on remote work and don't plan to transition back to an office at all.

Either way, companies are looking for a workforce solution to address key challenges.

Managing remote employees and operations

Supporting remote contact center operations and large distributed workforces is complex under the best of circumstances. Companies with legacy workforce optimization suites or multivendor approaches found it nearly impossible to achieve. Limitations of the existing system required many to spin up a modern cloud solution within days to get back to business.

Keeping engagement and morale high

Last year was tough. So, it became especially important to keep remote employees connected and engaged. It's the human thing to do in times like these — and it pays to have happy employees.

Frost & Sullivan research found that companies empowering employees to better engage with customers through effective workforce engagement tools are 96% more likely to be able to achieve overall profitability and 82% more likely to provide a better quality of customer experience.¹

1. Workforce Engagement Management: How to Engage Your Team for the Best Customer Experience

TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES: Focus on workforce engagement

Workforce engagement management (WEM) goes beyond traditional workforce management or workforce optimization (WFO). With WFO, call centers focused almost entirely on efficiency and productivity.

WEM balances efficiency with a focus on the human side of your business to improve employee engagement, performance and results. This lets you manage your teams and empower customer-facing employees in an increasingly remote, multi-skilled and omnichannel world.



As passengers scoured the Ethiopian Airlines website to adjust or cancel flights amid COVID-19 travel restrictions, the airline's customer service agents were well-positioned to help.

Ethiopian Airlines had set a new course to better equip 500 agents with the tools for context-rich conversations across emails, chats and calls. They replaced an externally hosted contact center solution with a strong omnichannel cloud platform – and introduced Genesys Workforce Engagement Management. Managers had tools to accurately resource across channels. Support agents had the insights needed to get the job done well, all from a single omnichannel desktop.

RESULTS:

- 70% to 95% service levels reached
- 60% reduction in call-answer times
- 85% drop in abandoned call rates, from 20% to 3%

“Our managers never knew if we were understaffed or overstaffed. Now, with **REAL-TIME DATA**, they accurately forecast and schedule resources, ensuring **AGENTS WITH THE RIGHT SKILLS** are always in the right place at the right time.”

Getinet Tadesse

CIO, Ethiopian Airlines

What to look for when evaluating workforce engagement solutions

Look for an all-in-one platform with built-in WEM functionalities to provide personalized employee experiences. It should include AI-powered resource management, quality assurance and compliance, and employee performance tools.

SCHEDULING AND FORECASTING	QUALITY MANAGEMENT	INTERACTION RECORDING AND ANALYTICS	CUSTOMER AND EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK
Is workforce management historical and real-time schedule adherence supported?	What kind of quality management process is provided?	Are all interaction types recorded and able to be analyzed for sentiment and emotion? Does this include voice, email, chat, SMS, social and phone?	Describe any gamification and performance rewards built into the solution.
Are views into inbound, outbound and blended contact centers offered to provide a complete picture of adherence?	Are recording and quality evaluations for multiple interaction types, including voice, email, chat, SMS and social, included?	Provide an overview of your conversation transcription features, including search, transcriptions and languages.	What supervisory capabilities are provided?
What automated forecasting functionality is available for short-term and long-term? Include capabilities for chat, email and social media.	How does the quality management functionality ensure agent fairness in evaluations?	Can you search call recordings using various attributes?	Describe your survey capabilities.
Are multisite operations that share work between locations supported?	Can you pull or flag sections of a call for review?	What are your standard storage timeframes within the cloud?	Do you provide the ability to create and enable automation to determine when to send surveys to customers?

COLLABORATION TOOLS

Collaboration tools

Collaboration is more than a buzzword; it's been a growing workplace trend since the 1950s. As part of that evolution, collaboration technologies have brought teamwork to the digital world.

The events of 2020 made collaboration tools critical for daily operations. Chat rooms and gifs have replaced water cooler conversations and hallway high fives. The shift to remote work has made collaboration tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Slack must-haves for any modern contact center.



You want to know your team has your back. But it takes work to create a collaborative culture and provide the right collaboration tools. Be prepared to address these challenges.

Making collaboration simple

Providing great experiences internally isn't easy. With distributed teams handling complex multimedia customer engagement and increasing customer expectations, it's easy for employees to go it alone by default. You need simple, effective tools so collaboration isn't put on the back burner when things get tough.

Avoiding siloed solutions

Today, contact center and other employees work in several different systems across multiple devices, constantly toggling back and forth. This adds inefficiency and friction, stifling collaboration efforts and making it more time consuming and cumbersome to serve customers.

TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES:

Make customer support a team sport

Improve team collaboration, productivity and engagement by connecting your contact center users, subject matter experts (SMEs), business users, partners and customers.

Unifying communications across your company gives employees easy access to the knowledge and resources they need to solve customer issues. It also creates a seamless exchange of information that drives rapid response times, raises customer satisfaction rates and gives employees a more connected, intuitive and productive experience.



Providing consistent mental health care 24/7 isn't easy. But the qualified health professionals at Integral Care deliver that support through a unified communications and collaboration toolset.

Integral Care integrated contact center functionality with its electronic health system, improving workflow management and clinical support decision-making. It also integrated with Microsoft Teams to make it easier for case managers to conduct telehealth video calls with clients and collaborate effectively with other agencies. Clients can quickly find the expert or resource they need, see their availability and connect with a single click.

RESULTS:

- Up to 97% reduction in abandoned call rates
- Increased productivity for clinicians
- Greater agility and scope for working from home

“When COVID-19 struck, we set up a **SPECIAL HOTLINE** but were still forced to socially distance in the office. We're grateful **GENESYS WAS ABLE TO MOVE US OVER SO QUICKLY**. Genesys Cloud enabled agents to continue to take hotline calls.”

Teresa Williams

Director of Clinical Programs, Integral Care

What to look for when evaluating collaboration software solutions

To boost team productivity and improve customer experience, collaboration tools should equip a contact center agent to find a user with the right expertise, determine their availability and collaborate in real time with a single click. Look for a solution that integrates fully with your contact center platform and core business systems for effortless collaboration.

Collaboration	Communication	Integration
Is there one collaboration solution that integrates with the existing customer experience platform?	Does the solution provide chat, video and call capabilities?	How is the application integrated? Is there a pre-built integration to your contact center platform?
Is there a single source for employees to use video, softphone, screen sharing, chat, employee profiles and other productivity tools?	Does it extend beyond contact center users to connect agents with SMEs across your organization?	Does the solution include open APIs to easily integrate with other core systems?
Can employees access other core business applications easily to solve customer issues?	Can users search for other users, see their availability and transfer calls without switching between applications?	Does the solution support both telephony and call flow integration, as well as application-level integration?

AI AND AUTOMATION

AI and automation

Interaction volumes spiked in 2020 as customers reached out to businesses, health care providers, and government agencies for information and support. Organizations looked to AI and automation to manage the influx and get customers the answers they needed.

AI's potential is great. Forrester estimates enterprises that blend AI technology with humans can improve customer satisfaction by 61%, operational efficiency by 68% and agent productivity by 66%.²

To get the most out of AI, watch for these potential challenges.

Unifying siloed data

Organizations have acquired an unimaginable amount of data, yet they haven't fully realized how to use and apply that data. In fact, most of the data and insights are lost within siloed organizations, like segmented line-of-business teams and unconnected Software as a Service (SaaS) products.

Reimagining the in-person experience

In the increasingly digital world, organizations are trying to replicate the personal, empathic service that physical environment provided. And AI is proving to be the only path to create this new ecosystem.

Automating without sacrificing customer experience

Increased competition is driving businesses to be faster, smarter and more efficient. That pressure is pushing organizations to rush their digital transformations, which can negatively affect customer and employee experiences.



TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES:

Take a holistic approach to AI and automation to engage with empathy

AI-powered customer engagements are now a reality. With the right connections and access to data, you can leverage AI technology to automate repetitive tasks, personalize digital engagements and improve employee effectiveness.

Look beyond a single line of business to focus on the entire customer journey – from marketing and sales to service and loyalty. By unifying valuable data, AI technology can use it to expose incredible insights and influence outcomes.

Derive cues – like intent, tone and friction – from digital customers that resemble information gained when serving customers in-person. Your employees can use these insights to engage with context and empathy and, ultimately, help customers accomplish their goals.



Online fashion retailer TechStyle applied AI to gain real-time visibility into performance KPIs, flexibility to handle retail peaks, and the ability to seamlessly build and embed custom solutions for personalized engagement across the entire customer journey.

RESULTS:

- Automated handling of routine tasks with use of voicebots
- Adjusted to changes in customer preferences and responded appropriately
- Easily build and embed custom solutions, such as a virtual agent

“We’re now able to **ROUTE, MEASURE AND EXPAND** new digital channels as customer preferences change.”

Aarde Cosseboom

Senior Director of GMS Technology, Analytics and Product, TechStyle Fashion Group

What to look for when evaluating AI and automation solutions

AI and automation technologies are only as good as the data that powers them. Consider AI functionalities as well as data connectivity and protection when exploring solutions.

UNIFIED DATA	APPLIED AI	DATA PROTECTION
Does your solution provide analytics systems or models and the ability to populate data marts?	Describe how AI is applied.	Describe the virtual security of your cloud data center, including monitoring and processes in place for excessive, suspicious or unauthorized attempts to access.
Do you have an integration for dashboard and wallboard functionality that incorporates several data sources?	Does your solution integrate with market-leading AI platforms, such as Amazon Lex, Google Dialogflow and others?	Do you anonymize data for service improvements? If not, describe how you reduce the scope of security breaches during these processes.
Describe how easily you can make connections to external data sources.	Does the solution provide virtual agent technology to support customer interactions based on conversation or specific tasks?	Do you have data-loss prevention technologies in place?
Describe what data can be used and incorporated to influence automated routing.	How does the solution provide omnichannel functionality, including cross-channel communications and data input and analysis?	Which encryption technologies are used?

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CLOUD PLATFORMS

Cloud platforms



The events of 2020 required companies to react fast, often prioritizing speed and customer experience over cost savings and efficiency. Spend on public cloud services spiked in response.

This aggressive move to cloud is expected to continue in coming years.

The right cloud platform can be your playground for hypergrowth. To get there, your organization might need to overcome these challenges.

Untangle complex call center systems

Many call center systems have been built piecemeal over the years: an ACD from one vendor, workforce tools from another and digital channels from a couple more. This creates an overly complex architecture that's likely inflexible, difficult to manage and costly for the business.

Align business and technical goals

A contact center solution should provide flexibility and agility to adapt and innovate. Your IT team needs a modern platform built for security, resiliency and scale. Seek a solution that fulfills both.

Vet the platform architecture

Be particular about how the cloud contact center solution you choose is built. Many clouds have monolithic architectures that are connected to antiquated methodologies and restrictive operations. These won't provide the same competitive advantages.

TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES:

Choose an all-in-one solution with a modern cloud architecture

Centralize your customer engagement technology. An all-in-one cloud platform gives you more consistency and control over the customer and employee experiences you create. It makes planning, scheduling, quality management and real-time assistance for employees easier and faster. And it supports personalized experiences by allowing businesses to be smart in how they use customer data to provide insights and proactively shape the customer journey – across all engagement channels.



With more than 100,000 students, leading online education provider Western Governors University (WGU) gives working adults access to higher education.

Regular personal interaction is key to the WGU model. To boost student experience while also becoming more mobile and flexible, WGU transitioned from the Genesys PureConnect™ application to the Genesys Cloud™ platform.

The switch made it easier for agents to work remotely and gave its DevOps team more control to make changes. They leveraged the platform's robust API layer to customize and build onto the solution. It also used the seamless integration with Salesforce to improve staff efficiency.

“We want every student to feel their learning experience has been **PERSONALLY DESIGNED** for them. Genesys Cloud gives us the **PERFECT PLATFORM** to do that.”

Adam Davis

Vice President of Operations, Western Governors University

What to look for when evaluating a new contact center platform

A modern cloud platform must meet the needs of your IT team and your business. It should be adaptable and open so it works tightly and seamlessly with other systems. It should be built for agility, stability and scalability. And it should be continuously developed and deployed.

ARCHITECTURE	ADMINISTRATION/USER INTERFACE	PLATFORM	INTEGRATIONS
Provide an overview of the technical architecture.	Provide an overview of the system administration capabilities.	Describe how the different applications that make up your cloud solution are integrated and work together.	What level of flexibility is offered in terms of what a customer can buy, build themselves or integrate with your solution?
What is the maximum agent capacity for a single domain?	Does your solution support single sign-on (SSO) with common vendors, as both subscriber and provider?	Describe your testing process and procedures and how you use automation to speed deployment of new capabilities.	What functionality for integration to third-party products is provided?
On which cloud infrastructure model does your solution run?	Does the solution have an intuitive, web/mobile-based user interface that's easy to use and deploy?	How is scale and seasonality managed? Do you support "cloud bursting"?	What packaged CRM integrations are available?
How is SIP integration supported? (For example, native SIP, session border controllers/gateways, etc.)	Do you provide tools for historical and real-time statistics regarding system performance against defined SLAs?	What is your platform roadmap strategy or direction?	How do you support data-dip integration?

Be ready for the **future**

Hard as we try, no one can predict the future. Last year surely taught us that. What we can do is prepare for the expected, expect the unexpected and refuse to navigate these uncharted waters alone.

The experiences you create are just as important as the products or services you sell. Look for solutions that equip you to provide seamless experiences that consumers will remember – backed by a partner you can trust and a team that will be with you all the way.

NEXT STEPS

Explore our cloud contact center products to see how you can connect to your customers with empathy.

[Genesys Cloud](#) →

[Genesys Engage](#) →



ABOUT GENESYS

Every year, Genesys® delivers more than 70 billion remarkable customer experiences for organizations in over 100 countries. Through the power of the cloud and AI, our technology connects every customer movement across marketing, sales and service on any channel, while also improving employee experiences. Genesys pioneered Experience as a ServiceSM so organizations of any size can provide true personalization at scale, interact with empathy, and foster customer trust and loyalty. This is enabled by Genesys Cloud™, an all-in-one solution and the world's leading public contact center platform, designed for rapid innovation, scalability and flexibility.

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