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EBOOK

Reimagine the Customer Experience

Overcoming the challenges facing traditional contact centers

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Adapting to a highly customer-focused future

The business world went through a momentous shift in 2020 that has permanently changed customer behavior across all industries. The customer experience is no longer secondary to the product or service; customers are interacting across a wider array of channels, with higher expectations. Every interaction may now have far-reaching implications for both customers and organizations. And those interactions may also have considerably higher customer expectations placed on their successful outcomes. As a result, the nature of commercial, public, and private interactions has fundamentally changed in ways including the following:

- **Access to groceries can involve multiple contacts**, from making appointments to arranging for delivery or pickup.

- **Healthcare providers must accelerate adoption of telemedicine** and other advances to reduce risk and increase inpatient capacity.

- **Government agencies need to deliver services in new ways** that address not only increased remote interactions but also fast-rising needs and expectations. Unemployment claims, for instance: At one state's Department of Labor, calls have increased from a pre-pandemic norm of 1,700 calls per day to up to 1.6 million calls.

- **Banking, financial services, and other industries have to keep up** with ballooning call volumes and increased digital customer traffic across all channels.

Customers expect highly personalized interactions that anticipate and solve their needs—not just shorten their wait times—and if they don't receive the positive experiences they expect, 96 percent of customers will switch companies.[1] To compete in this changing environment, enterprises need a simple, scalable contact center solution that can adjust to the changing needs of customers in real time while enabling easy and natural engagement.

96% of customers will leave organizations due to a bad experience

In this ebook, you will see three of the major challenges facing traditional contact centers and their solutions. We'll also share common barriers enterprises face in executing a modern omnichannel contact center and our keys to breaking through them. You'll come away with a path to a simple-to-set-up-and-use omnichannel cloud contact center that achieves the following:

- **Makes it easy** for agents to navigate customer sentiment and adjust to the changing needs of your customers in real time.

- **Provides one seamless omnichannel experience** for voice and chat.

- **Has the flexibility** of an open platform that easily integrates with any system your contact center relies on.

- **Includes built-in intelligence**, allowing agents to immediately use AWS artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) services to automate interactions and improve customer service.

- **Costs 80 percent less** than legacy contact center systems.

Amazon Connect: Overcome your contact center challenges

Amazon Connect is an easy-to-launch-and-use omnichannel cloud contact center platform that enables superior customer experiences at up to 80 percent lower costs. Amazon developed the technology that enables Amazon Connect over 10 years ago to fill Amazon Retail's need for a contact center that would give our customers personal, dynamic, and natural experiences—anticipating their needs and resolving them faster. Since then, we've made the same capabilities available for all businesses.

Today, thousands of companies ranging from ten to tens of thousands of agents use Amazon Connect to serve hundreds of millions of customers daily in billions of interactions every day.

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Navigating customer sentiment in real time

A lack of real-time insights can hinder an agent's ability to head off or de-escalate difficult customer conversations. Companies cannot identify compliance risks that might unfold during a call and it's often impossible for agents to get help from supervisors during customer conversations. Then, they often lose customer information when transferring the contact to a supervisor or another agent. That can mean asking an already-frustrated customer to repeat themselves, and might require an agent or supervisor to operate without the full picture.

When the company, its agents, and supervisors don't know the customer's history—and lack the empathy and urgency for their needs—it can result in:

- Poor customer experiences

- Incomplete data collection

- Uninformed recommendations that are irrelevant to the customer's real needs

- Unresolved issues that might have been seen and addressed if only customer insights had been available

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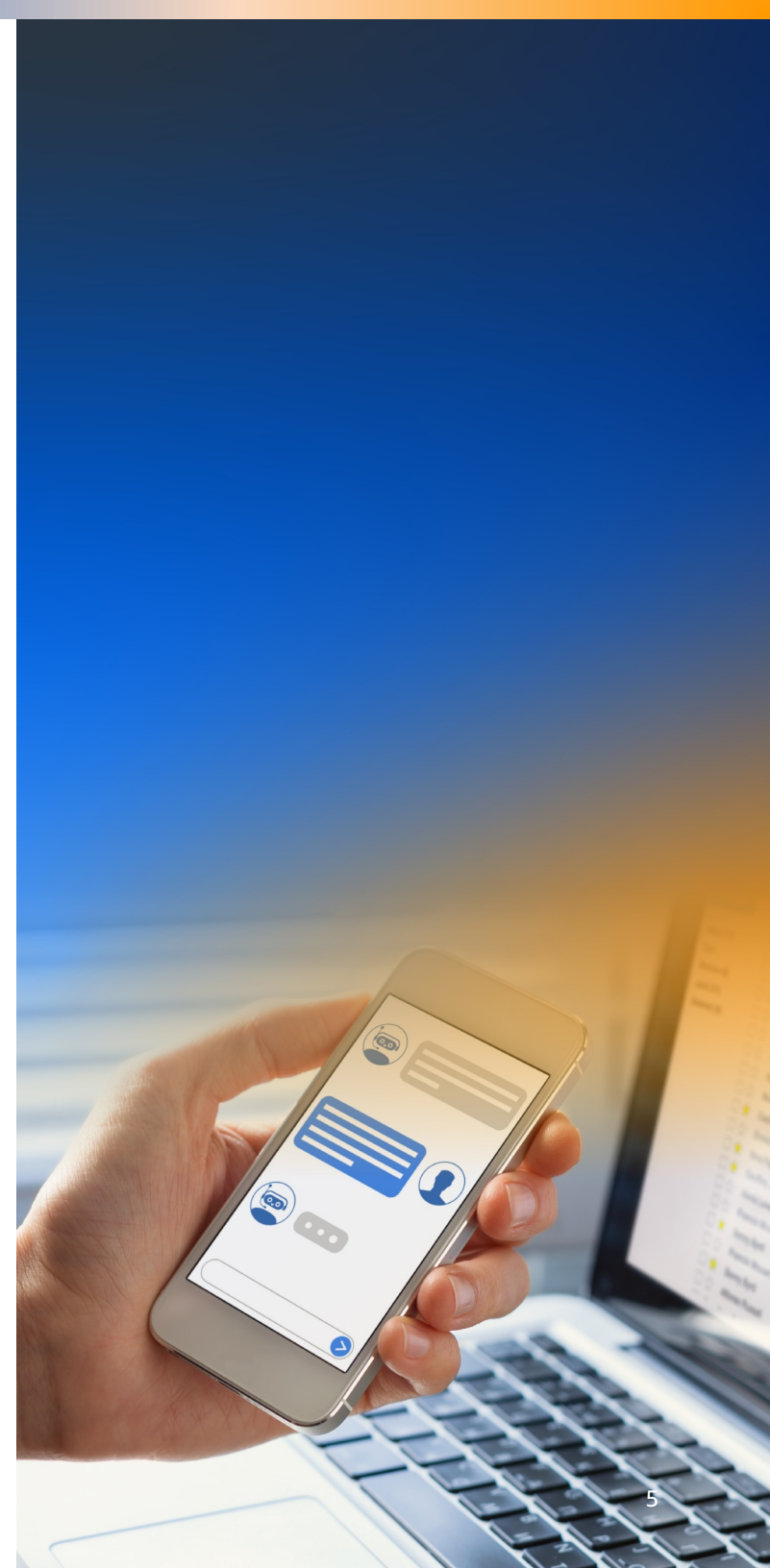
Produce the right insights at the right time

A true omnichannel solution with a user-friendly, graphical interface for voice and chat puts agents in control, improves first-call resolution, and saves time by prioritizing customer sentiment, quick access to their information, and the insights gained during live calls. It also adds an extra level of automated agent support. For example, Amazon Connect provides real-time contact center analytics powered by ML. Contact Lens for Amazon Connect and Amazon Lex bring powerful AI and ML capabilities that allow for detailed analytics and sentiment analysis, Natural Language Processing (NLP), and speech-to-text analytics to discover customer insights.

Contact Lens for Amazon Connect provides a dashboard that enables analysis of call transcripts, sentiment, and conversation characteristics to detect issues and customer trends. Its advanced conversational search enables agents to conduct fast, full-text search while on calls. In addition, it provides alerts for live calls—for example, when a customer is expressing dissatisfaction—so that managers can get up to speed and provide guidance, or have the call transferred. To avoid making the customer repeat themselves, agents can pass real-time call transcripts to a supervisor or another agent while the customer is being transferred. This can head off dissatisfaction with quicker, better answers for customers.

When organizations have real-time resolution recommendations and natural language search across all systems using Amazon Connect Wisdom, they can find answers quickly from data that might otherwise be hidden. Instant accessibility to data can also improve agent performance through real-time analytics, prompts, and guided scripts.

The modern contact center: well beyond the phone

A contact center is more than a call center. A true, modern contact center is a hub managing and optimizing all frontline communications with customers through all channels including telephone, web, chat, email, messaging apps, social media, text, fax, and traditional mail.

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Achieving enterprise-scale efficiency with work-from-anywhere agility

The pandemic of 2020 presented enterprises with the dichotomy of operating contact centers at massive scale out of innumerable individual kitchens, home offices, and other locations. Many enterprise businesses use a mix of at-home, on-site, and contracted workers; Business Process Outsourcing (BPO); global sites; and third-party agents and contractors. This approach results in vastly complicated, expensive, and often siloed systems requiring multiple data sources and third-party solutions that agents must navigate with every contact. It can produce convoluted and inefficient customer experiences with longer wait times and reduced efficiency. And when legacy solutions go down, or agents suffer from remote connectivity or network issues, the customer experience suffers further.

Enterprises need a simple, scalable contact center solution that can adjust to the changing needs of customers in real time while enabling easy and natural engagement.

Empower agents with what they need—in any location— and train them in minutes

The agents' tools must be simple, integrated, and reliable. They should require only an internet connection, a screen, and a headset, quickly connecting agents to everything necessary to address the immediate needs of customers. This requires that managers be able to quickly set up inbound numbers, Skills-Based Routing, queuing, analytics, and management tools for agents, wherever they're working.

For example, with a solution like Amazon Connect, contact center agents can access all that as well as telephony services that scale to meet organizations' needs. Because Amazon Connect is built on a cloud architecture, it can scale quickly, onboarding tens of thousands of agents in response to normal business cycles and planned or unplanned events. The ability to train remote agents on the system in less than 20 minutes enables an organization to scale rapidly. Once agents are set up and trained, they can tap into familiar services like Amazon Chime and Amazon WorkSpaces for easy team collaboration, and can begin talking and messaging with customers right away.

In addition to collaboration tools, Amazon Connect also uses several AWS services to provide additional capabilities and customization. And because it's an open platform, it can easily integrate with third-party systems including CRM, Helpdesk, Outbound, and more, to cater to any organization's needs. This can also reduce the expense and scope of Business Process Outsourcing. As a fully managed cloud service, Amazon Connect saves money with a consumption-based pricing model that can save organizations up to 80 percent compared to traditional contact center solutions.[2]

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Case in point: reaching 11 million customers in 24 hours

A major grocery store chain serving 11 million customers was able to set up Amazon Connect in 24 hours. Overnight, it enabled 1,000 agents to work from anywhere, each needing only a headset and a laptop to be fully functional.

Amazon Connect was developed to address the need organizations worldwide have voiced to quickly set up remote contact centers.

Providing a satisfying and consistent omnichannel customer experience

The modern customer uses up to 10 channels to communicate and expects a seamless and coordinated customer experience that's informed by their personal history, whether they're engaging on mobile, phone, chat, or website.[3] In the post-pandemic world, the combined use of multiple channels will continue—and expand. To deliver the highest levels of customer satisfaction in a consistent experience, contact centers must quickly resolve customer issues with seamless transitions from chat to voice within a single platform that unifies channels.

The modern customer expects that if they have provided information in the past, the organization not only retains that information but will have recommendations based on their history with the company at the ready. Making any customer repeat information is unacceptable, even if it was given via one channel and now the customer is connecting through another. So, when a customer begins their interaction using chat, and then gets transferred to an agent via phone, making them repeat their information will increase the customer's frustration and the average call-handling time—and they will see it as a negative experience. And with 96 percent of customers ready to leave you over one bad experience, this can be very costly.

Improve the customer experience at every interaction

Agents must have an easy-to-use, omnichannel contact center that empowers them to deliver personal, dynamic, and natural customer experiences. At the very beginning of the interaction, agents need to have all the customer information available—a unified customer profile at their fingertips.

An omnichannel contact center meets customers where they are—in chat and voice—which is the first, crucial step of providing an improved experience. When an agent enters a call knowing this specific customer's previous call hold times and recent business transactions, that agent is empowered to address the customer's concerns more empathetically, get to the root causes of the customer's concerns faster, and resolve them quickly.[4]

To create a more unified experience, Amazon has developed a new capability that can:

- **Automatically scan** and match customer records based on unique identifiers to create a unified customer profile.

- **Combine contact history information** from Amazon Connect (number of holds, transcripts, and customer sentiment, for example) with customer information from CRM systems (such as name, address, email, phone number, recent orders, and current order status), and e-commerce and order management applications.

- **Share all this information in real time**, as soon as—or before—the call comes up, to help the agent identify the caller.

All these capabilities are now available in Amazon Connect Customer Profiles. It creates a more positive, personalized experience while simultaneously integrating with any system that your contact center relies on, such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Workforce Optimization (WFO), or Workforce Management (WFM) systems.

How AI and ML enhance the customer experience

Built-in AI and ML capabilities allow agents to anticipate customer needs and proactively offer resolutions, personalizing the customer experience through voice and chat. Rather than use a rigid and difficult-to-scale rules-based system, AI and ML provide the agility to use historical data to learn, generalize, and predict caller intents for future interactions, giving callers fast, personal, dynamic, and natural experiences.

For example, Contact Lens for Amazon Connect offers an alert for any time a customer says "not happy," or "cancel my subscription." This allows supervisors to identify when to assist an agent on live calls so they can provide guidance via chat or have the agent transfer the call. Then, Amazon Connect Wisdom uses real-time call transcripts from Contact Lens for Amazon Connect to automatically detect customer issues during calls and recommend relevant content stored across connected knowledge repositories.

Providing the easy, intuitive self-service customers expect

Using natural Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and interactive chatbots makes engagement fast and easy for customers without the need to transfer them or have them wait for a response. For example, organizations can use natural language chatbot contact flows with Amazon Connect's Amazon Lex (which uses the same automatic speech recognition technology that powers Amazon Alexa), saving live agents' time.

Beyond the immediate experience, Amazon Connect automates customer interactions with natural Contact Flows and Skills-Based Routing to help ensure a smooth customer experience. It tracks customer sentiment through real-time analytics and gives customers the flexibility to return to a chat without losing historical context, through asynchronous chat. Customers can start chatting with contact center agents from any of your business applications, web or mobile. The conversation context and transcript can then be shared across agents and channels, no matter where the interaction continues. Or a customer can keep working with the same agent across channels, preserving their interaction history, resulting in a seamless experience regardless of agent or channel.

Long and complex deployments

Contact center solutions currently on the market may support large volumes of customer inquiries and agents; they may offer robust analytics and allow for custom voice and chat Contact Flows; but they still have the drawbacks of traditional, large solutions:

- They can take months or even years to deploy.

- Enterprises have to hire on or contract with a specialist team to install and configure the hardware and software required to support them.

And then, once the system is operational, upgrades, updates, hardware, and facilities need to be managed and paid for. Contact centers are also sometimes technological holdouts, with many still reliant on traditional on-premises business telephone systems, rather than portable, cloud-based services.[5]

Tap into the power and agility of the cloud

Amazon Connect takes only minutes rather than months to deploy as a pilot or to launch as an entirely new contact center.

With its ability to unify, simplify, and scale, a cloud-based solution saves time, cost, and resources. With a solution such as Amazon Connect, organizations can eliminate the complexity, expense, and manual configuration of the traditional contact center. By building their contact centers with Amazon Connect, organizations start from a foundation built for Amazon's retail business more than 10 years ago.

Now that it is available for all businesses, thousands of companies use Amazon Connect today to support up to tens of thousands of agents to serve millions of customers daily. By taking advantage of the global AWS infrastructure, organizations access more than contact technology, they also benefit from the deep integrations and expertise of the AWS Partners and virtual customer assistance.

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Managing enterprise integration

Bringing any new system, process, or technology to an enterprise is a project in itself. Workflows within the contact center need to be altered; agents and others need to learn and become comfortable with new processes; systems need to dovetail smoothly. And it all has to happen with minimal downtime. In addition, Global System Integrators or enterprises that use BPO need to integrate new technology into existing ecosystems or even across systems through BPO vendors.

Accelerate integration at every level

Amazon Connect provides opportunities to streamline contact center management from a number of perspectives, including:

- An open platform that integrates with other contact center systems, including Customer Relationship Management, Workforce Optimization, and Workforce Management, making it easier for your BPO vendors and others to use.

- A quick, seamless way to connect the new with the old.

- An intuitive UI that creates voice and chat Contact Flows or agent tasks without any coding, making deployment much simpler than traditional solutions.

- Amazon Connect Tasks, which makes it easy to prioritize, assign, and track all contact center agent tasks to completion, ensuring customer issues are quickly resolved.

- An easier way to monitor operations and performance through real-time dashboards and historical reports for helpful analytics.

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Connect to a network of AWS Partners

Even given the ease of implementing Amazon Connect, enterprise organizations can benefit from technical expertise and support with implementing and optimizing new technologies. Certified AWS Partners can provide expert migration support and integrations for Amazon Connect.

Access the highest levels of expertise

AWS Partners help companies build cloud contact centers with Amazon Connect. With a deep understanding of specific AWS services, AWS Partners bring the expertise and best practices to help organizations adopt and implement AWS services at scale to help remove barriers to the cloud and accelerate deployment. AWS Partners have proven success delivering AWS services to customers and can help conduct a proof of concept with just a few hours of training and experimentation.

Enhance Amazon Connect capabilities

AWS Partners provide technology solutions that integrate directly with Amazon Connect. These AWS Partner integrations extend Amazon Connect contact center functionality with popular services and solutions that are designed to be seamless and quick to deploy in a few simple steps. These integrations were developed by AWS Partners in collaboration with AWS. AWS Partner integrations are available from Helpdesk and CRM to Outbound, advanced analytics, and automation.

Sources
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2 AWS: Amazon Connect.
3 "40 Customer Service Statistics to Move Your Business Forward," Salesforce, May 1, 2019.
4 "Deliver Personalized Customer Experience Using Amazon Connect Customer Profiles," Amazon.
5 "Customer Calls to Companies Rise Amid Coronavirus, but Operators Aren't Standing By," Wall Street Journal, March 29, 2020.

Take your customer experiences to the next level

Amazon Connect and AWS Partners can help you elevate your contact center capabilities to the next generation of customer experience, efficiency, and agility.

Explore Amazon Connect ›