NOBLE SYSTEMS

# FUNDAMENTALS FOR A MODERN CONTACT CENTER

*Realizing a new vision of customer service*

# TODAY'S CUSTOMERS DEMAND MORE . . .
## *And Less*

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*More* ways of engaging. *Higher* availability and accessibility. *Fewer* transfers. *Less* time on hold. *Lower* tolerance for poor service. Customer demands are high — and so are the ramifications of providing less-than-ideal service.

**62%** of customers consider taking their business to a competitor after just one or two bad experiences[1]

**10%** of customers allow for four or more bad interactions before looking elsewhere[2]

**45%** of customers would switch to a competitor even if they charged more for an equivalent product[3]

Consumers have been clear about what they want from contact centers: they want their problems solved quickly by courteous, knowledgeable agents who don't place them on hold or transfer them. They aren't afraid to make some noise when they're not happy, and they don't hesitate to use social media to express dissatisfaction and get problems solved.

The good news is that contact centers have many tools at their disposal to help meet increasing consumer demands. In this ebook, we'll outline how to bring your contact center in line with the needs of modern consumers so you don't get left by the wayside.

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With the amount of data available to contact centers, it's easier than ever to make decisions based on actual performance, *not assumptions.*

*Section 1*

# Is Your Contact Center Up to the Challenge?

Increasing customer retention and building loyalty is critical when it can cost upwards of five times more to attract a new customer than to keep an existing one. Modernizing your contact center can improve your customer satisfaction rates and provide a positive return on investment.

Is your contact center equipped to address the top customer service demands?

If not, it's critical that your organization quickly commits to incorporating solutions and processes to bring your center in line with customer expectations. Today's contact center technology solutions not only help you provide a better experience, but they can reduce costs, streamline processes, improve efficiency, increase productivity and help you manage regulatory compliance.

**First contact resolution**

**Fast resolution speed**

**Friendly, knowledgeable agents**

**Easy experience**

**Reduced hold times**

# THE RISE OF OMNICHANNEL

Consumers use a variety of communication channels every day for personal and professional interactions. They choose their channel based on how complex their need is, how quickly they need a response, and how much time they have to engage at that moment. This desire for choice extends to contact center interactions as well.

While phone support is still important and necessary for resolving certain types of issues, it can be inefficient and costly. Contact centers that offer only phone and/or email support risk frustrating customers — **or even losing them.**

While companies understand the need for omnichannel and are investing in it, many struggle to create truly integrated channels. It's critical to overcome this obstacle, since connecting customer journeys is the second top factor that will influence customer experience efforts in the next five years.
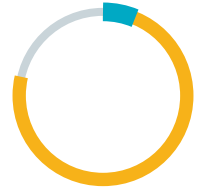
**76%** of companies have some support channels connected, but **only 8%** have all channels connected.

Channels include voice, email, chat, text and more.

- 76% of companies have some support channels connected
- **Only 8%** have all channels connected
- **Almost 60%** of multichannel companies are managing channels in silos
- 42% of them **don't actively share data** between teams[5]

*While omnichannel should definitely be on the table for most companies,* it takes significant planning and resources to implement properly. As an organization, you must consider the following:

### Will you "right channel" or allow customers to select their channel?

If you know that a certain channel is best for solving particular issues, you can drive users to that channel by "right channeling." Right channeling should result in a better customer experience, but some customers won't fit your predefined right channel strategy. Even the best-designed systems require some flexibility.

### How will you integrate your channels?

Customers get frustrated when they have to repeatedly start the identification and verification processes from scratch. Customer data should carry over from one channel to another so customers are easily identified.

### What channels can you support?

For example, customers expect messaging to be real-time and personalized. Social channels demand constant monitoring and thoughtful, timely responses. Negative social posts can quickly snowball if they're not dealt with appropriately. If you don't have the right staff in place, it's wise to hold off on implementing these channels until you're certain you can effectively service them.

### Are your legacy systems equipped to integrate?

Your contact center systems must sync up with your CRM, sales and other systems. Since it's unlikely that all of these systems will be changed or upgraded at one time, you need to consider how these legacy systems will interact with your new channels and tools.

# Taking the time to develop a *strategic approach* to omnichannel systems will pay off in the *long run.*

It's important to be realistic about what you can and can't support and how each channel fits into your overall strategy. Jumping into omnichannel without a formal plan is likely to result in frustration and lost customers.

*Section 3*

# BRINGING ON NEW TECHNOLOGIES

*There's no shortage of technology solutions for contact centers.* While it can be tempting to jump headfirst into the latest offerings, incorporating new technologies can be expensive and disruptive — and you don't want to have to do it more than once. Companies should carefully evaluate whether these new systems solve real business problems and consider the impact on operations.

Contact center technologies are designed to solve problems, improve overall operations or increase the productivity of inbound and/or outbound programs. The following page includes some of the more common systems that companies are implementing.

# SERVICE EFFICIENCY

**Interactive Voice Response (IVR)**
Routes calls to the appropriate queue for faster service, and can also allow customers to solve simple issues without an agent.

**Automated Call Distributor (ACD)**
Distributes calls to available agents and collects important analytics, like wait time, call length and call volume.

**Intelligent Call Routing / Skills-Based Routing**
Uses predetermined parameters to prequalify and route calls to the most appropriate agent.

**Artificial Intelligence (AI)**
Uses tools like chatbots to automate routine support processes and capture predictive analytics.

# AGENT PERFORMANCE

**Workflow Management**
Beyond agent scripting, full workflow management guides agents quickly to exactly where they need to be and automates tasks, saving each agent hundreds of hours per year.

**Call Recording Systems**
Records all calls and stores them in case you need to review a particular call or use it for training purposes.

**Speech Analytics**
Analyzes all interactions to identify insights and trends, as well as uncover inefficiency and service issues.

**Real-Time Speech Analytics (RTSA)**
Allows supervisors to monitor calls as they happen and to intervene as necessary.

**Gamification**
Increases productivity and reduces turnover across the organization through recognition, competition and collaboration, and transforms daily routines into rewarding rivalries that give everyone a reason to do their best.

# CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

**Auto Responders**
Lets customers know their request is being actively worked on and when they can expect a response.

**Call-Backs**
Gives customers the option to have an agent call them back so they don't have to sit on hold.

**Self-Service Options**
Provides quick access to common issue solutions to improve customer satisfaction and reduce call volume.

# DATA INTEGRATION

**Customer Relationship Management (CRM)**
Provides agents with a unified customer view to improve service and eliminate customer frustration of repeating personal information and issues.

**Knowledge Management (KM)**
Central information repository that agents can quickly and easily access to solve common issues.

# COMPLIANCE & SECURITY

**Voice Biometrics**
Uses the intricacies of the human voice to authenticate callers.

**Regulatory Compliance**
Helps manage operations in accordance with government legislation and industry guidelines nationally and globally.

**TCPA Compliance Solutions**
Requires manual dialing and prohibits adding software that can use a random or sequential number generator to predictive dial or automatic dial from a list.

**PCI-DSS Compliance**
Secure hosting with a PCI-compliant provider is required for all companies that accept credit card payments and store, process and transmit cardholder data.

*Once you decide which systems are most important for your company, the job of selecting the right solution begins.*

All solutions are not built the same, so it can be difficult to compare one offering to the others. Here are some criteria to consider when comparing:

- Will an off-the-shelf solution work or do you need something tailored to your business?

- Do you prefer a unified solution from a single supplier or would you rather choose best-of-breed modules to tie together?

- Which type of model best meets your needs – premise-based, cloud-based or hybrid?

- Do you need a solution that's designed for your specific type of business?

- Does the solution integrate with your existing systems?

- Does the supplier offer consultation to assist you in identification of all business and IT requirements?

- What type of support does the supplier provide before, during and after implementation?

- How intuitive is the system? What type of training will be required?

- Is the supplier an established and respected solution provider?

- Is the solution flexible and scalable?

| | Premise-Based | Cloud-Based | Hybrid/Managed Service |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Ownership Model** | • Customer owns and operates the software and hosts it on their local equipment | • Software and hardware are owned by the vendor<br>• Customer accesses the software through a web browser | • Some hardware resides locally with the user, while other pieces (such as disaster recovery) are accessed remotely |
| **Pros** | • Can be adapted to the organization's specific needs<br>• Best suited to large organizations<br>• Handles complex security<br>• Does not require recurring fees aside from service agreements | • Quick to start up<br>• Does not require hardware purchase<br>• Does not require in-house IT staff<br>• Allows agents to work remotely | • Allows for scaling up or down based on volume spikes or seasonal programs<br>• Can add modules more efficiently than premise-based |
| **Cons** | • Requires IT staff to configure and modify<br>• Requires capital expenditure for hardware | • Ongoing usage fees<br>• May have limited features or customization | • Creates more network complexity<br>• Must manage compliance on two different systems |

*Selecting the right technology solutions can be a formidable task*. It may be worthwhile to consider working with an objective third-party to help identify issues and opportunities.

Don't forget to be sensitive to agent concerns — many are apprehensive about new systems and worry that new technology is meant to replace them.

*Section 4*

# LEVERAGING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

*More than half of contact centers are considering adding AI capabilities this year*,[6] with chatbot usage expected to grow 23% by the end of 2017. Although robotic process automation (RPA) and chatbot technology are evolving, they are still limited by the inability to understand the nuance of conversation and react accordingly. Even so, these tools are managing increasingly complex issues and blurring the lines between human and AI interaction.

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**Common uses of AI:**

• Automated responses to initial customer contact including information on next steps
• Improving call routing
• Handling simple transactional matters
• Monitoring and analyzing trends in agent performance
• Helping to tailor individual agent training

At the end of the day, customers aren't concerned about whether they're interacting with a human or a 'bot', as long as their problems are *solved quickly.*

*Section 5*

# OPTIMIZING YOUR WORKFORCE

More than just scheduling agents and tracking shifts, *today's workforce management solutions bring total visibility to quality and performance.* The right tool can help organizations optimize labor costs, manage capacity more effectively and improve service levels.

## Reduce Operating Costs and Increase Profitability

Forecast activity and ensure the right people with the right skills are doing the right thing, and that they are doing it at the right time, to deliver bottom line profits and satisfied customers.

## Optimize the Resources Within Your Contact Center

Skills-based scheduling reduces administrative duties for management and allows them to focus on more important issues, such as long-term business strategy.

## Real-Time Reporting

Allow managers to view traffic and performance as they occur so that adjustments can be made on the fly.

## Improve Agent Morale and Performance

Balance the needs of your team members with the requirements of your business through schedule preference and equity and easy access to agent schedule information.

## Improve Customer Service Levels and Brand Loyalty

Reduce wait times and react to unforeseen issues by creating schedules that account for shrinkage and tracking real-time adherence and intra-day changes.

## Increase Agent Productivity and Motivation

71% of all employees are not engaged at work and the average call center has a 26% attrition rate. Gamification improves engagement across all generations – from Boomers and Millennials to the Gen-Z workforce.

*Of course, technology alone can't solve all your staffing issues.* Attrition is a problem for many contact center organizations. Agents who work long hours in less-than-ideal environments and who have to deal with frustrated customers are at risk of burnout. But there are a number of non-technology strategies you can put in place to help improve agent satisfaction and retention.

### Location and Schedule Flexibility

Giving agents the ability to work remotely and manage their own schedules gives them a sense of control over their professional lives.

### Incentives and Recognition

A combination of public recognition and rewards (financial, time off, increased flexibility, etc.) shows agents you appreciate and value their efforts.

### Professional Development Opportunities

Establishing a career path and advancement opportunities will help keep agents motivated and see long-term benefits to staying at your company.

### Competitive Compensation

Make sure your salaries are competitive for your market and that your benefits packages are adequate. When you consider that it's more expensive to replace than retain agents, a small investment can go a long way.

Section 6

# INVEST IN TRAINING

*Your agents are the voice of your company — and they're your most valuable asset.* An engaged, knowledgeable and productive workforce will help your contact center run smoothly. A well-designed and thorough training program will position your agents to provide top-notch service and keep customers happy.

Well-trained agents are versatile, and can handle many different types of tasks. They should be able to identify surface and underlying issues, solve them quickly and efficiently escalate issues when appropriate. First contact resolution (FCR) should always be their goal. As they develop their skills through ongoing training, these agents will be able to take on increasingly complex issues.

Even though your agents may only speak to a particular customer once, they need to understand the value in building relationships. Customers appreciate agents that can develop a rapport and demonstrate that they're invested in finding the right solution. Recognizing your best performers and showcasing their successful customer engagements can be an effective training tool for the rest of the team.

A well-designed and thorough training program will position your agents to provide top-notch service and *keep customers happy.*

Effective training programs incorporate many channels and engage agents. Some tools to consider are:

## Automated Learning

eLearning systems allow you to provide customized training to agents based on their prior performance and give them flexibility to complete courses during downtime. Rewards and recognition for completing training and gaining new skills can increase employee participation.

## Live Agent Monitoring

Managers can listen to agent calls, coach agents during calls, or even take over calls and speak directly with the customer, creating additional training opportunities and relieving agent frustration with difficult interactions.

## Real-Time Speech Analytics (RTSA)

Provide feedback automatically to agents during live calls and deliver recommendations for the next action to improve the customer experience, without requiring a manager to listen to every call. This is particularly helpful in identifying agents who are not in compliance with scripts, guidelines or standard operating procedures.

## Interaction Recording Solutions

Identify workflow improvements by monitoring agent screens and conversation concurrently. Screen recording also allows centers to capture multichannel interactions such as email and chat.

Remember that *training should be an ongoing process.* Even the best agents can benefit from learning new systems and techniques.

Efforts should focus on continuing to get better results, improve quality and increase productivity.

*Section 7*

# DATA-DRIVEN IMPROVEMENT

*With the amount of data available to contact centers, it's easier than ever to make decisions based on actual performance, not assumptions.* As an organization, you'll need to agree on what to measure and how to measure it. Involving other company teams in this process will help ensure that all interests are represented and that you're taking a holistic view of the company's needs.

Aside from measuring agent performance, you can use data to address larger contact center issues. Mine the data to determine which channels are most effective, improve staffing projections, develop coaching and training plans and much more.

## Factors to Consider:

○ What are the most important metrics to monitor? FCR, average speed of answer (ASA), average hold time, call handle time, or response time?

○ How will you determine appropriate benchmarks against which to measure?

○ Have you adequately communicated expectations to your contact center staff?

○ How will you reward agents who outperform expectations?

○ How will you manage agents who fall short of expectations?

*There are a number of tools you can use* to help you turn your data into actionable strategies to improve performance and efficiency of your contact center. Here are some to consider:

### Automated Decisioning

Use customer interaction data to develop strategies that can lead to additional or improved business like promoting adjacent products or accelerating collections efforts.

### Speech Analytics

Automatically review 100% of customer interactions to build training and coaching plans, monitor trends and evaluate performance against training.

### Campaign Management

Determine the best time and place to reach out to new and existing customers while ensuring call rule compliance.
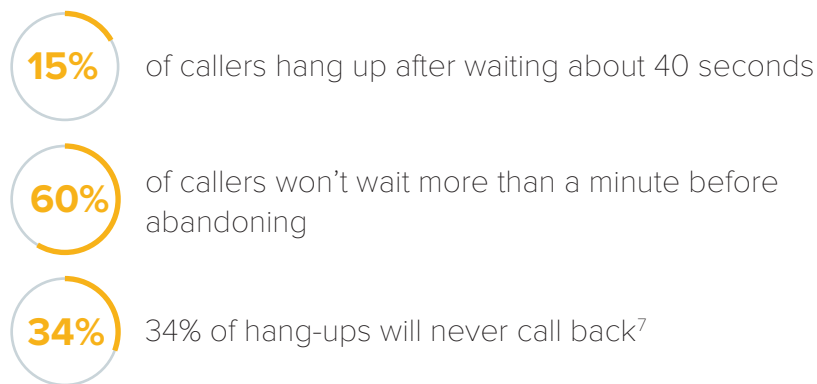
### Interaction Recording Solutions

Apply predictive models to schedule the best calls for each hour of the day – not only to reach the desired customer, but also to get the desired result.

# A WORD ABOUT
# HOLD TIMES

We all know that customers hate being put on hold. But did you know:

**15%** of callers hang up after waiting about 40 seconds

**60%** of callers won't wait more than a minute before abandoning

**34%** 34% of hang-ups will never call back[7]

It's clear that minimizing hold times will lead to an improved customer experience. Here are some strategies that can help keep callers engaged and active, rather than sitting idle and growing frustrated.

- Call routing can help you get callers to the right place quickly.

- Unified systems help you identify who is calling and why so agents are better prepared to help them.

- Turn hold time into active time with advanced messaging features that play targeted messages or provide callers with detailed account information.

- Allow callers to hang up and still hold their place in line by opting for a callback.

# ABOUT NOBLE SYSTEMS

Noble Systems is a global leader in the customer communications industry. Founded in 1989, we deliver award-winning contact center solutions for companies across many industries. Our customers value our consultative approach that helps identify needs, define requirements, set goals and find the right solution for their contact center. Our top-notch support teams assist customers with implementation, after-sale service, training, support and maintenance.

Our unified suite of inbound, outbound and blended omnichannel contact processing, strategy planning, resource management, and compliance tools are built for companies of all sizes. Available in on-premise, cloud or hybrid configurations, our patented tools help you increase productivity, reduce operating costs, and build a better customer and agent experience.

Noble Systems is committed to providing the highest value, most flexible and feature-rich product solutions. We'll design the just-right solution for you and deliver unbeatable customer service, effectively guaranteeing your satisfaction. We'll do more, we'll do it better, and we'll do it for less.

# SOURCES

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