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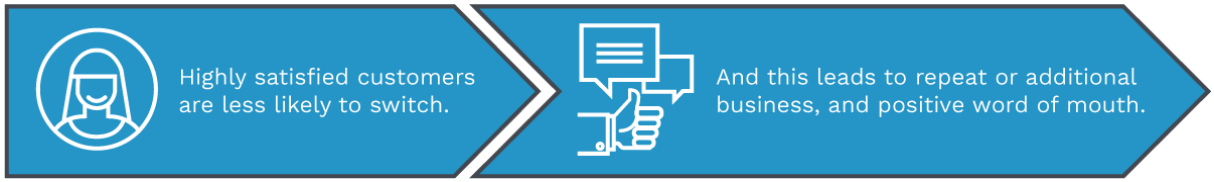
3 Key Practices to Improve Customer Experience

Customer experience has always been a key indicator of how organizations are doing. If your customers find their experience with a brand lacking, they are quick to broadcast the negative across all channels. Consumer opinions can be easily swayed from negative exposure, and brands will feel the pinch of more than one customer moving to a different brand. Are you doing enough to make sure your customers are getting the best experience when they contact your company?

Traditionally, businesses connected with customers through one-way messaging about product features and price. But the internet now gives customers limitless access to information about brands and their competitors—and a powerful platform to share their experiences.

Because of this, companies must make customer experience a key point in differentiating their brands. It helps to attract and retain customers—which directly affects the bottom line.



90%+	of people who have an effortless service experience will buy from that company again. [1]	87%	of customers share good customer experiences with others. [2]

How can you deliver a customer experience that stands out from the competition? To help get you started, here are three practices to focus on for customer success.

1 - The Key to Customer Loyalty, CEB
2 - The Impact of Customer Service, **Zendesk**

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#1: Select Agents for Quality, not Just Local Availability

A key trend in customer service is automation, which enables businesses to deliver service affordably and effectively, especially for simpler, repetitive service tasks.

But for unique, high-touch interactions, skilled workers are key to customer satisfaction. Customers expect a fast and personalized experience, and many complex issues can't be automated.

Your business can improve the quality of high-touch interactions by selecting agents with empathy and friendliness, through building trust and credibility through their use of local language, cultural proficiency and superior product knowledge.

Where do you find people with these skills? Thanks to the trend towards a flexible economy, companies can now reach distributed workers at scale and use them as on-demand workforces or independent contractors. With no geographical limitations to hiring, a flexible workforce offers a higher-caliber agent who is more mature, more educated, and more motivated for your success. Many of these agents are former professionals who are now stay-at-home parents, caregivers, retired, working with a disability, or live in rural America where job opportunities are not as abundant.

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#2: Adapt Quickly to Changes in Customer Demand

Customers are conditioned to expect fast and personalized service whenever they interact with your brand. On the phone, that means short hold times and access to a person who can solve their problem. That person must be familiar with the product, easy to understand, sympathetic and helpful.

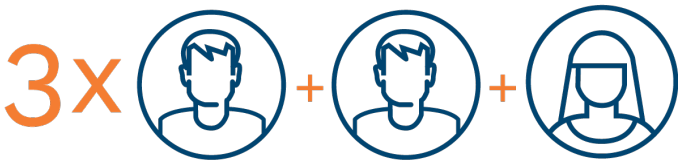
How many times have you heard, “Your call is important to us, please wait for the next available agent,” or struggled through a complex IVR tree—only to end up in the wrong place?

The ability to handle peaks and valleys in call volume is an essential business mandate to maintain service quality and reasonable hold times. For many businesses with seasonal or unpredictable fluctuations in customer demand, it’s critical to have an “on-demand” workforce that can scale as much as three times the number of agents in just hours while maintaining service quality.

Traditionally structured customer service organizations, such as those with full-time, 9-to-5 employees, struggle to keep up when call volumes are higher than expected. When calls aren’t addressed quickly, customers are annoyed, your brand is tarnished and customer loyalty declines.

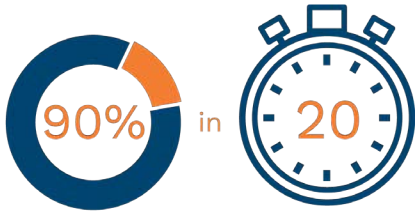
To improve your customer experience, make sure you have enough high-performing agents available to answer your customer’s calls, especially during peak times, or whenever live assistance over the phone is critical.

Have enough qualified agents available to handle any huge spike in calls...



certified agents in just hours

...while delivering the same service level and quality



calls answered seconds

To achieve this flexibility and quality, think creatively about how work gets done, such as exploring a more flexible service model that can scale up or down on the fly. Leveraging a flexible workforce enables you to proactively plan for demand spikes and lulls, elevating your business performance and keeping your customers happy.

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#3: Improve Results With Proven Tools

Executives know that the company brand is expressed in all customer interactions—from advertising, to the website, to agent interactions, to product or service use, to billing.

Given all of these channels, how do top brands ensure an excellent customer experience on an ongoing basis, especially if you're leveraging an outsourced, flexible delivery model? The answer is performance monitoring and real-time corrective action.

To improve your customer experience, you must have real-time access to key performance indicators (KPIs) so you can accurately monitor and assess the quality of agent-customer interactions. These include (but are not limited to):

- Service levels
- Agent quality scores
- Scheduling
- Utilization
- Customer satisfaction
- Conversions and revenue per order
- Net promoter score (NPS) and average call handling time (AHT)

eLearning and gamification accelerate results.

Once KPIs are established, you have the data to implement and measure the effectiveness of eLearning courses, certification modules, role-playing sessions and gamification—all designed to drive more efficient and effective performance. When workforces don't have ongoing access to proper skill development, performance suffers and customer satisfaction declines.

The right blend of skills development and flexible learning programs will ensure that your workforce, whether they are distributed or located in one place, understand and retain content while reducing training and ramp-up time.

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Customer Contact Center Agent Profiles, Decoded

The rise in adoption of a flexible workforce model as a way to achieve better flexibility, quality, and performance management is a tremendous opportunity for customer service executives. To implement these three key practices and generate a positive impact on customer experience, ask yourself:

- What does your customer service environment look like today?
- Do you have challenges with retention, productivity or engagement in your work-at-home or brick and mortar contact center?
- Have you explored a flexible workforce model, or a hybrid of traditional and flex customer service workers?

Today, more than 80% of Fortune 500 companies are using or planning to use home-based agents. Many companies realize that when they solely rely on the traditional brick and mortar model, flexibility and quality can suffer. Even a model with agents working from home on fixed hours creates the same quality and scalability challenges found in the traditional brick and mortar model. That's why a flexible workforce has become so desirable.

A flexible workforce equals super agents:

- Smart, mature people with a host of business and soft skills
- Agents available on demand
- Geographically limitless
- Agents self-select the brands they love to represent
- Agents are motivated to invest time in your program
- Flex agents are more likely to stick with it—reducing attrition and training time

	BPO EMPLOYEE	WORK AT HOME EMPLOYEE	FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE
Average Age	23	30	38
College-Educated	35%	70%	84%
Years Work Experience	5	8	15
Geographically Un-Bound to Match Demand	no	no	yes

3 - Multi-channel Contact Center End-user Survey, Frost & Sullivan
4 - Frost & Sullivan, Liveops Agent Survey

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Getting Started With a Flexible Approach to Customer Service

Before you engage a customer service solution—be it a traditional brick-and-mortar contact center, work-at-home employee base, or a flexible workforce delivery model, you must understand the lifecycle of this important partnership. Here are some practical steps you can take right away:

1. Set up a pilot or proof of concept.
2. Establish an ongoing quality assessment process, such as calibration calls, audit or certification testing, and performance monitoring.
3. Seek powerful analytics and reporting that will provide metrics for both real-time ad hoc and ongoing customer/agent interaction effectiveness.
4. Understand the changes associated with a new agent delivery model, such as changes in service levels, agent training materials, infrastructure, compliance, security, and reporting.
5. Ensure you have at least quarterly executive business reviews to ensure a healthy relationship that delivers the best results.

Every customer service executive is looking for business agility and flexibility and cost effectiveness—without sacrificing quality. If your workforce today isn't as flexible as your business requires, or isn't delivering the customer satisfaction your brand demands, consider using flexible, on-demand talent to supplement permanent staff. Flexible agents can create higher margins and increased customer satisfaction, with an on-demand cost model that further improves your bottom line.

This flexible workforce is already out there and ready to work—what are you waiting for?

Liveops, a virtual contact center, solves enterprise customer experience challenges by offering an agile, skilled workforce. This Virtual Flex model reimagines agent engagement and scheduling that attracts a better agent profile equipped to meet the fluctuations in contact volume at scale. Our 20 years of expertise pioneering a virtual model across industries is proven to deliver superior customer experiences, faster program readiness and increased revenue compared with traditional contact centers or other work-from-home models. Liveops exists to improve the lives of agents, our clients and employees.

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