# Improving CX with a Flexible Workforce for a Global Athletic Apparel Company.



One Fortune 100 athletic apparel company was struggling to meet customer experience (CX) expectations. The company faced challenges with service levels, trying to make a brick-and-mortar call center tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Great Resignation, and with unpredictable call volumes during the holidays. Their systems lacked the flexibility to meet service levels with their rapid cycles of change.

Here's how Liveops was able to help.

## Key challenges

**Key Takeaways:**

- Traditional brick-and-mortar partners lacked flexibility to meet fluctuating call demand
- Client needed a partner who could improve service levels and quality
- Planned and unplanned events (like COVID-19) were hard to scale

In the athletic industry, clients usually win with strong brands. This brand was no different, with an international reputation for quality and style. But when your CX doesn't line up with your brand in call quality, or even average wait time, the brand suffers.

The brand enjoyed incredible popularity during the holidays, which is typical for retail. Unfortunately, they relied on a brick-and-mortar model of CX, which is difficult to scale up and down quickly.

## Traditional, brick-and-mortar lacks flexibility.

The brick-and-mortar model is the traditional option for agents. They come in, sit in their cubicle and work their shifts, and then go home. But it leaves little room for flexibility. Rarely are agents called in to handle unexpected demand. The model is just not set up that way. They have to staff for demand ahead of time, and this takes planning. They can't scale up quickly without adding employees since employee schedules are more rigid.

The traditional model couldn't meet fluctuating demand.

And that was before the COVID-19 pandemic.

## COVID added further stress to an already-stressed system.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought its own challenges as call center agents were prevented from coming to work in a brick-and-mortar contact center. Although the technology existed to allow agents to work from home, it wasn't widely implemented. And implementation takes time.

But as time went on, it became increasingly obvious that the traditional contact center model couldn't meet the needs of customers without sacrificing quality or creating unacceptably long hold times. The system simply lacked the flexibility to respond quickly to changes in demand.

At this point, the company's other vendors—as well as their in-house contact center—found themselves scrambling to build and implement a distributed, work-from-home model.

## CSAT and service levels reflect on the brand.

The company needed a partner who could improve service levels and improve quality. They also needed help to meet fluctuating demand during heavy retail traffic and unplanned events (like brief sales events, natural disasters or COVID).

For brands with reputations as good as this company, poor service levels and call quality can leave a terrible taste. Because a bad CX is just not something their customers would ever expect.

Staffing for unforeseen events or unpredictable busy times continues to be a headache for brick-and-mortar contact centers. Companies are either spending too much in anticipation of demand that never materializes, or predicting low call volume only to see their CSAT (customer satisfaction) scores plummet. And when a natural disaster (or pandemic) strikes, how do you quickly mobilize new workers who are geographically dispersed, get them vetted, onboarded, and ready to help customers?

# Solutions

**Key Takeaways**
- VirtualFlex attracts adequate skilled talent in a tight labor market
- Distance learning teaches client procedures with brand affinity
- Agent community connects with one another to learn and share best practices

The VirtualFlex platform was the logical answer to the rigidity of traditional brick-and-mortar contact centers.

## Navigating the Great Resignation.

The Great Resignation made it difficult for companies to meet hiring goals, as workers' preferences moved away from contact centers to a desire for flexibility and control. So while traditional contact centers struggled to fill seats, Liveops' VirtualFlex platform allowed them to onboard agents because the model reflects the way agents want to work – on their own terms.

Then, Liveops set about certifying agents through distance learning.

## Award-winning distance learning.

As companies began grappling with the realities of onboarding for the remote model, they gained an appreciation for remote certifications which could ramp up adult learners quickly.

This was another area VirtualFlex showed its value. The platform allowed enterprise clients access to a nationwide network of talented professionals who knew the brand, loved the brand, and wanted to represent the brand.

Liveops collaborated with the athletic apparel company to optimize and customize distance learning platforms for their brand and products. For those agents who were interested, Liveops offered certifications that prepared them to represent the brand—and its products—in a call or chat.

Liveops then worked with the client to establish priorities for further optimization. This included introducing gamification and role-playing, and providing real examples. Liveops then added ongoing certifications, even after agents started taking calls, and added a brand affinity element to create even stronger connections between the agents and the brand itself. And since they prioritized CSAT, Liveops bolstered the existing certification to target those skills that lead to a better customer experience.

## Great brands make great ambassadors.

One of the advantages of being a great brand is that people identify with you. So when Liveops saw how much agents loved the brand, they removed every roadblock that could prevent natural conversations around the brand between agents.

This led to a new agent-engagement program that connected senior, experienced agents with newer, less-experienced agents to help transfer knowledge. By fostering these informal conversations, agents learned how other agents spoke about the brand and its products while noting common mistakes or misunderstandings.

# Results

**Key Takeaways**
- Holiday service levels improved from 52% to 86%
- VirtualFlex met up to 300% forecasted volume
- CSAT improved 4% -10% year-over-year

A platform like VirtualFlex sounds great on paper. But does it work in the real world? Let's look at some numbers.

Liveops started with the athletic apparel company in May 2020. The brand's traditional model left them struggling with performance, especially during the holiday season. After they brought on Liveops, service levels during the holiday season improved dramatically from 52% to 86%. The client saw a reduced average speed to answer (ASA) from 45 seconds to 28 seconds during the holiday season year-over-year, and customer satisfaction improved by 8% year-over-year compared to all their partners.

Liveops continued to meet baseline and fluctuating demand, helping the company meet intraday spikes of up to 300% of forecasted volume.

The company saw improvements in quality year-over-year as well with monthly CSAT improvements of 4%-10% year-over-year (2021-2022), and 23% better since the launch in 2020. And these improvements come with minimal deviation, showing consistent and reliable CX over time.

Liveops ranked #1 among all outsourced call centers for this company, with the client expanding the partnership by 11% year-over-year.

## A retail sports brand that can handle the volume.

Brands grow when they sell. But great brands see their reputations threatened when their sales success outpaces their ability to support their customers. And the market doesn't care if the call center isn't able to predict demand—not even during a pandemic.

Liveops was able to help this Fortune 100 athletic brand scale its CX, using the VirtualFlex platform and its network of contracted agents all over the United States. Liveops was then able to optimize brand certification to meet the client's specific goals. It then took on additional services, growing the client relationship through trust, collaboration, and consistently improving its results yearly.

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