

A woman with long brown hair is looking at a computer screen. The screen displays various data visualizations, including a grid of small colored squares and a larger green rectangular area. The background is dark with blue and green light patterns.

8x8

Contact Center trends to watch in 2024

Introduction

Survive or thrive. Exist or evolve. Facing and adapting to change has been the focus of every contact center leader and team over the past year—especially as artificial intelligence (AI) augments and accelerates the possibilities for leading organizations. With customer experience (CX) becoming the leading consideration and differentiator for customer acquisition and retention, no organization can afford to sit still when it comes to contact center innovation and adaptation.

It's time to accelerate. It's time to run toward change with purpose and persistence, because as strategic psychologist and author Max McKeown notes, **“adaptability is about the powerful difference between adapting to cope and adapting to win,”** and **“all success is successful adaptation.”**

Read on to learn about four trends that will require this perspective on adaptation in 2024 and beyond.

What's Inside

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Democratization of the contact center

In the ever-evolving business landscape, the future of customer experience (CX) is taking a decisive turn. What was once the sole responsibility of contact centers is now transcending traditional boundaries and becoming an enterprise-wide commitment, with **98% of respondents in a recent study** agreeing that customer experience should be an organization-wide initiative.

This shift not only blurs the lines of roles and responsibilities within organizations, but it also opens up contact center technology, products, and capabilities to non-contact center users, ushering in a new era of interconnected customer-centricity.

CX as a collaborative effort

Marketing, sales, finance, human resources, and even product development departments are recognizing their role in shaping positive customer experiences. In this collaborative environment, employees are not merely fulfilling their job descriptions—they are actively engaged in understanding and enhancing the customer journey.

Marketing teams are leveraging customer feedback to tailor campaigns. HR departments are utilizing customer-centric approaches in employee engagement strategies, and product developers are incorporating insights into the design process.



Contact center technology for all

Accompanying this transformation is the democratization of contact center technology. Once exclusive to specialized contact center agents, these technologies are now becoming accessible to employees across the enterprise. AI-driven chatbots, predictive analytics tools, and advanced CRM systems are becoming integral components of various departments, facilitating a more seamless and personalized customer experience.

By extending contact center technology beyond its traditional boundaries, organizations are fostering a more interconnected and efficient operational environment.

Breaking down traditional silos with technology

The integration of contact center technology into various departments is not just about accessibility—it's about breaking down organizational silos. Fifty-two percent (52%) of organizations believe that data and analytics and technology and communication silos between the contact center and the rest of the organization are barriers to consistent CX.

The future belongs to those organizations that understand the significance of a seamless and interconnected customer journey, where every employee plays a crucial role in delivering exceptional experiences.

[Read more on this trend](#)

A large, bold, red '6%' graphic is positioned on the right side of the page, separated from the main text by a vertical dashed line. The percentage is rendered in a clean, sans-serif font.

Only 6% of organizations say it is very easy for contact center agents to engage with SMEs outside of their department to resolve a customer service related question or issue.

Customer Experience Responsibility
Beyond the Contact Center Report

EX prioritization to improve CX

In 2024, organizations must identify and address the factors eroding their employee experience. The relentless pace of change, amplified by economic uncertainties and the ongoing repercussions of the global events of recent years, has taken a toll on employee engagement and morale.

The cracks in the foundation, exposed in 2023, have widened, threatening the stability of the entire customer experience ecosystem. The burden of executive scrutiny and impossible decisions casts a shadow over the workforce, necessitating a recalibration of leadership strategies. It's not merely about weathering the storm, but understanding the nuanced interplay between employee satisfaction, operational efficiency, and customer delight.

As organizations navigate the uncharted waters of 2024, the key will be a holistic approach that acknowledges the symbiotic relationship between a motivated, well-supported workforce and the delivery of exceptional customer experiences. Only by addressing the root causes of discontentment and fostering a workplace culture that prioritizes employee and customer needs can organizations hope to steer through the challenges ahead.



Focusing all employees on a CX North Star

In 2024, organizations must establish a clear line of ownership, break down internal barriers, and foster a collaborative environment where the entire workforce is committed to elevating the customer journey. Otherwise, the full potential of transformative initiatives risks being lost in the maze of organizational ambiguity.

Businesses also need to clarify their CX North Star and unify the functional stakeholders' ability to understand and serve their consumers. The coming year demands a renewed commitment to forging a shared vision that transcends individual departments.

Companies must go beyond adopting the latest technological innovations to create a frictionless, end-to-end customer journey that reflects a deep understanding of customer needs and expectations. Every employee must see themselves as custodians of the customer experience, irrespective of their role or department. From the frontlines of customer support to the backend of data analytics, each functional area plays a pivotal role in contributing to the holistic customer journey.

[Read more on this trend](#)

46%

When asked what's holding their company-wide CX initiatives back, 46% of business leaders report that the biggest barrier to delivering customer experience consistency across the organization is a lack of leadership in the area.

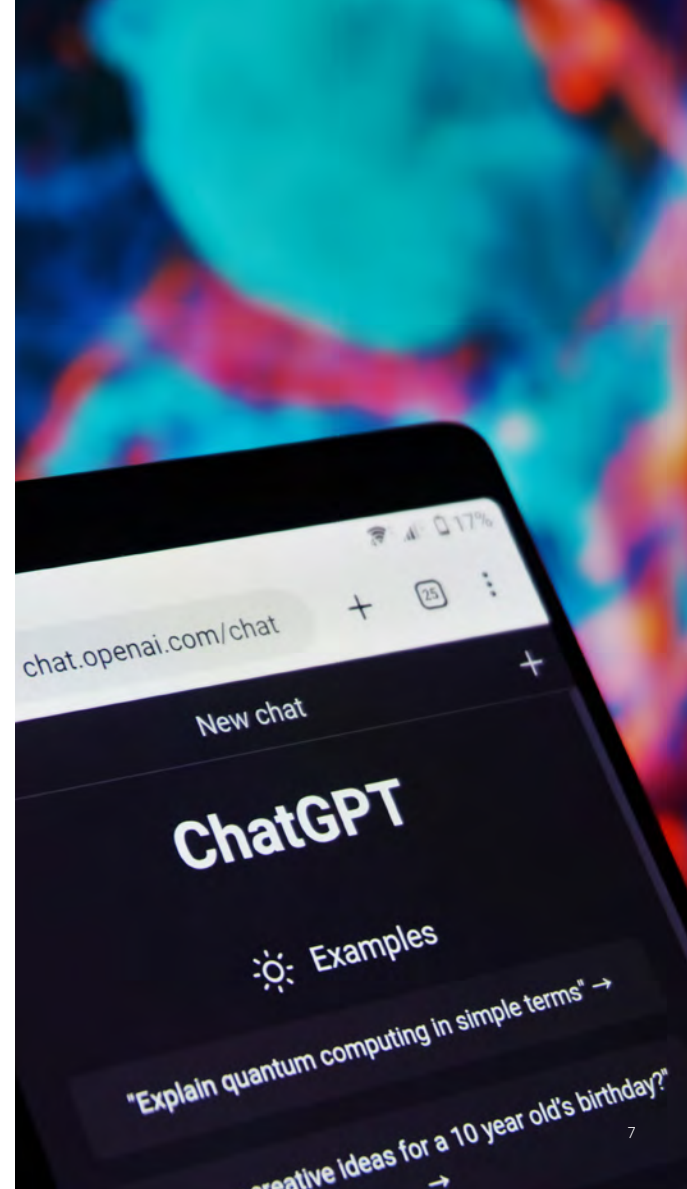
Customer Experience Responsibility
Beyond the Contact Center Report

Getting in the game with generative AI

To borrow a phrase, November 30, 2022, is a day that will live in infamy—the date Open AI publicly announced availability of its generative AI ChatGPT beta. In just five days, ChatGPT had amassed over one million users. As of this writing, the number of users has surpassed 180 million. Business and consumer awareness of the potential power of generative AI has grown quickly and company leaders are asking their operational leaders to understand and evaluate potential use cases in their departments.

At the same time, the race has been on for contact center and customer experience solution providers to incorporate the new technology into their solutions. They have spent the time since the ChatGPT beta announcement expanding existing AI applications and building new ones. As early as summer 2023, market leaders were bringing generative AI-enhanced conversation summarization, intelligent virtual assistant, and agent assistance solutions to market.

What do customer experience leaders need to know about generative AI in 2024? In the following sections, I discuss three of the burning questions.



1. Can companies using legacy on-premises contact center solutions take advantage of generative AI advancements?

Put another way, is using Contact Center as a Service (CCaaS) a prerequisite for incorporation of AI into a company's customer experience (CX) operation? The simple answer is no.

Companies using premises solutions can integrate some types of artificial intelligence into their operations. One common use case is replacing traditional IVR with a chat or voice bot. During the pandemic, many businesses and government organizations used this strategy to handle the sometimes millions of unexpected calls they were receiving.

The more nuanced answer to the question posed is yes, with a few buts. One but is that it is much easier to give customers using a chatbot the ability to switch to a live agent when the company is using a CCaaS solution. With CCaaS, it is as simple as writing an instruction in a design tool and implementing an available API (application programming interface). With a premises solution, a professional services engagement will be required—increasing both the amount of time required and the total cost.



2. If my company is not interested in automating interactions, does that mean generative AI solutions are not relevant in my customer care operation?

Some companies don't want customers answered by bots. They have a corporate value of having calls answered by a live person. There are still valuable use cases for deploying generative AI in these businesses, to support live agents.

One of the most common early Gen AI use cases in the contact center is auto-summarization. At the end of an interaction—either a live phone call or chat—the agent is presented with an auto-generated summary of the call.

The agent then reviews the summary for accuracy, makes any required changes, and saves. Instead of taking two or three minutes to write notes about the interaction, the review can take just a few seconds.

Agent assist is another Gen AI application that is designed to help the agents perform their tasks more efficiently. As a customer talks to the agent and makes their request, the agent assist application can proactively find the information the customer is looking for or guide the agent with the questions necessary to help bring the interaction to a successful close.

“Especially for companies that have already moved their contact center to the cloud, **the time, cost, and risk to trial innovative Gen AI features is low.** It's time to get in the game!”

Sheila McGee-Smith
President and Principal Analyst,
McGee-Smith Analytics

3. Should I wait until Gen AI becomes more mature before I implement it?

There is an oft-used phrase in financial markets that, “you can’t time the market.” It would be great if we could all buy low and sell high, but even the most successful Wall Street arbitrageurs make mistakes and lose big from time to time.

I believe the same is true when trying to time deploy innovations into your business. Yes, technology will continue to change, but waiting for change to stop is like trying to time the market—an impossible task.

My advice to companies is to start small, with a proof of concept or trial, and evaluate the outcome of Gen AI in your business. You will likely find that adding a chat or voice bot can increase your interaction automation rate dramatically, e.g., from five percent with an IVR to 20-plus percent with a well-designed bot. Adding agent assist has been known to increase first contact resolution dramatically, by giving agents the information they need to help a customer instead of transferring them to another agent.

Especially for companies that have already moved their contact center to the cloud, the time, cost, and risk to trial innovative Gen AI features is low. It’s time to get in the game!

[Read more on this trend](#)



Expanding the benefits of AI to every contact center

It's no secret that conversational AI is transforming contact centers. Organizations already using the technology are reporting impressive benefits.

Until now, though, smaller organizations have not enjoyed the same access to AI solutions and their benefits due to the large IT budgets and resources required to support implementation. An [8x8 survey of contact centers leaders](#) finds that:

- 34% of small contact centers consider budget constraints to be a major barrier to adopting AI, compared to 9% of large contact centers
- 26% of small contact centers cite technology limitations as a major barrier to adopting AI, while only 6% of medium to large contact centers report the same

34%

of small contact centers consider budget constraints to be a major barrier to adopting AI.

State of Conversational AI in the Contact Center Report

Contact center and IT leaders already using conversational AI and chatbots say their implementations have improved agent productivity (94%), resolved customer issues faster (92%), reduced effort for agents (87%), and lowered costs through improved agent efficiency (65%).

State of Conversational AI in the Contact Center Report



Bridging the competitive gap

Ultimately this lag in adoption puts small contact centers at a disadvantage, since AI directly improves the customer experience. Customers become accustomed to the more rapid, convenient, and engaging experiences they encounter in larger organizations, and this raises the bar for organizations of all sizes.

So, how to bridge the competitive gap and compete on a level playing field with larger organizations? We recommended two ways:

- **By accessing generative AI.** Generative AI refers to technology powered by large language models that offer more conversational experiences. It doesn't require the same high implementation and maintenance costs as other forms of conversational AI because it is able to perform original content creation based upon an array of training data. It also offers advanced studio frameworks that help non-technical contact center leaders deploy and manage experiences without IT involvement.

- **By accessing AI through an existing contact center solution.** According to the previously referenced survey, 85% of contact center leaders prefer to access AI through an integrated CCaaS suite. This minimizes integration costs, making the solution more accessible to smaller contact centers and businesses.

The first step in realizing the promise of generative AI to democratize access to the benefits of automation is choosing an integrated CCaaS solution. Most organizations will look to generative AI to make self service more effective by deploying virtual agents. Many others will look to improve agent efficiency with an agent assist solution. On the whole this will usher in a new phase of AI deployment, one that levels the CX playing field for contact centers of all sizes.

[Read more on this trend](#)

Taking the next step

Whatever your precise needs for contact center and customer experience evolution and innovation, 8x8 can help. The **8x8 Experience Communications Platform™** powers engaging, responsive communication experiences that delight customers and make your business more agile.

Unlike point solutions, 8x8 delivers personalized experiences that boost employee productivity, guarantees platform-wide uptime, and lowers costs.

In addition, 8x8's offering delivers a number of innovative AI-driven platform enhancements to transform customer engagement including **8x8 Intelligent Customer Assistant** and **8x8 Supervisor Workspace** for **8x8 Contact Center** as well as a platform-wide integration with OpenAI.

By infusing deeper AI/ML, natural language understanding models, and performance capabilities into 8x8 Contact Center, and across the **8x8 XCaaS™** (Experience Communications as a Service™) integrated cloud communications and contact center platform, 8x8 enables customer-obsessed organizations to build exceptional customer journeys, enhance team productivity, and empower leaders with advanced real-time insights.

Beyond the platform's own AI-driven innovation, 8x8 also offers a **Technology Partner Ecosystem** to easily integrate best-of-breed AI solutions for CX optimization.

Interested in taking the next step toward optimizing customer experience in and beyond the contact center? Talk to one of our experts now. Visit **8x8.com**.

Communications for the Customer Obsessed

The companies that get ahead today are truly customer-obsessed. Business leaders know they can't settle for good-enough customer experience or just-okay employee engagement scores. To go above and beyond, they know they need a communications platform built for them. One that unites contact center, voice, video, chat, and SMS and delivers it with the reliability, integration, and expert services only a customer-obsessed company can provide.

At 8x8, we know that it takes great experiences to make new connections, to bring teams together, and to turn prospects into loyal customers. Communications for the customer-obsessed means that we believe in our obligation to provide incredible communications experiences, every time.

[Read more here](#)

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