



DIGITAL WORKSPACE SOLUTIONS

Delivering Better Customer Experiences (CX) with Contact Center as a Service (CCaaS): 7 Key Factors to Consider





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Introduction to CCaaS.

The Gateway to Better Customer Experiences

In 2017, business leaders were asked what they felt would be the most important measurement for success in the future. Their answer, overwhelmingly, was customer experience (CX).¹ Time has borne out that prediction. Positive customer experiences are the best predictor of success, whether you're a healthcare provider, hotelier, or retailer. Likewise, poor customer experiences are a sure pathway to customer attrition and revenue erosion. Even loyal customers will abandon a brand they love after only one bad experience.²

While a multitude of factors influence CX, at the heart of those experiences is the contact center. This is where customers and companies connect, from pre-sales queries to post-sales support. In the last few years, as cloud technology and artificial intelligence (AI) have transformed the IT landscape, contact centers have benefited from this innovation, leading to cloud-based Contact Center as a Service (CCaaS) solutions and AI-enhanced CX applications such as self-learning chatbots and sentiment analysis. These next-generation contact centers have improved customer experiences even as they've raised the bar for consumers' service expectations.

Moving from a traditional on-premises contact center solution to a cloud-based CCaaS solution can bring a host of benefits, from enhanced features to lower costs. But CCaaS alone is not a silver bullet.

Truthfully, customers don't really care about your contact center's physical location; what they care about are personal connections. Routing calls to the right agent quickly, having customer information readily available, and connecting experiences across digital and physical channels all help to create a positive experience where the customer feels valued and understood. Today's CCaaS solutions are designed to support these capabilities, provided that the CCaaS solution is designed for your unique business and customer needs. In other words, it needs to be customized for your customers.

¹ Pemberton, Chris, "[Key findings from the Gartner customer experience survey.](#)"

² Pwc.com, "[Experience is everything. Get it right.](#)"

5 Ways that CCaaS Can Improve CX

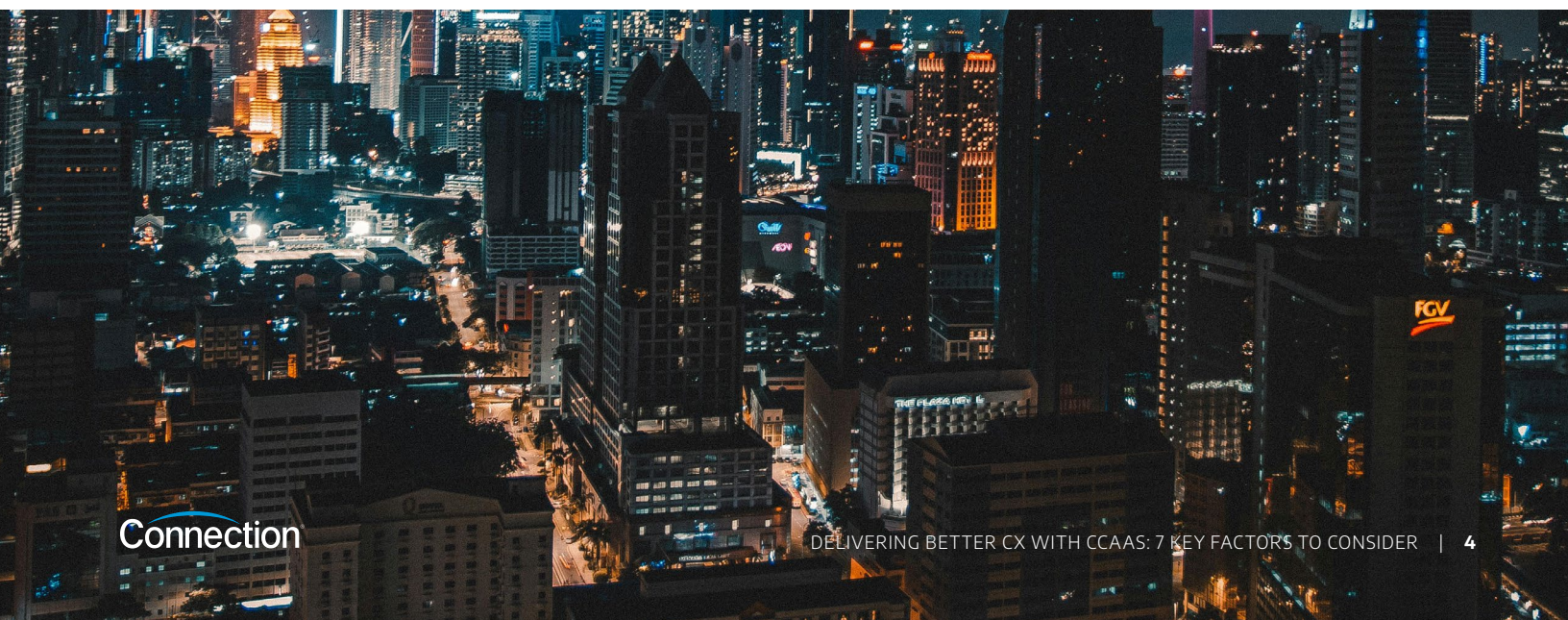
The growing popularity of CCaaS can be attributed to two main factors: lower costs and higher personalization. Moving contact center applications from the data center into the cloud reduces CapEx, because you're no longer paying for the physical servers and server-based software licenses, and OpEx, because you're no longer responsible for managing and updating the hardware and software. In addition, CCaaS solutions provide more flexibility in the deployment of contact center agents, since they can be located anywhere so long as they have a secure connection to the cloud, which means that a physical contact center space is no longer a requirement.

The real upside of CCaaS, however, lies in its ability to improve the customer experience. Many CCaaS solutions have some type of embedded AI functionality designed to enhance CX, such as intelligent call routing, conversational chatbots, and sentiment analysis. Hosting these solutions in the cloud allows CCaaS vendors to push new features automatically to users, which ensures that everyone has access to the same set of AI tools and security fixes at the same time.

That said, in a market where most CCaaS solutions offer some type of cloud and AI component, how do businesses know which CCaaS solution is right for them?

Ultimately, choosing the right CCaaS solution comes down to considering seven key factors:

1. **Artificial Intelligence**
2. **New and Enhanced Features**
3. **Speech and Text Analytics**
4. **Security and Compliance**
5. **Remote Workers**
6. **Cost Savings**
7. **Seamless Integration**



Artificial Intelligence

The use of artificial intelligence has become a polarizing topic in contact centers, in part because the focus has been more on the artificiality of AI than the intelligence it provides. To be clear, AI in its current form will not replace human agents, or at least not replace the very human desire to speak to another human being. Instead, AI will primarily augment human agents by providing them with relevant and actionable intelligence, from which products a customer has bought in the past to what mood they're in right now. Tellingly, most contact centers (81 percent) plan to invest in AI to enable their human agents to be more effective and efficient.³

The use cases for AI in the contact center are manifold and include:

- **Sentiment analysis** to identify a customer's mood during a conversation: e.g., happy, frustrated, bored.
- **Intelligent call routing** that ensures customers speak to a knowledgeable agent (or receive a relevant answer) the first time they call.
- **Real-time recommendations** that alert agents to an appropriate offer, promotion, or resolution to present to the customer during the call.
- **AI-powered chatbots** that are capable of handling complex interactions in an intelligent and engaging (i.e., "human") manner.
- **Improved interactive voice response (IVR)** systems that provide a conversational interface versus a static, menu-driven approach.



³ Deloitte, "[Trends & AI in the contact center](#)."

New and Enhanced Features

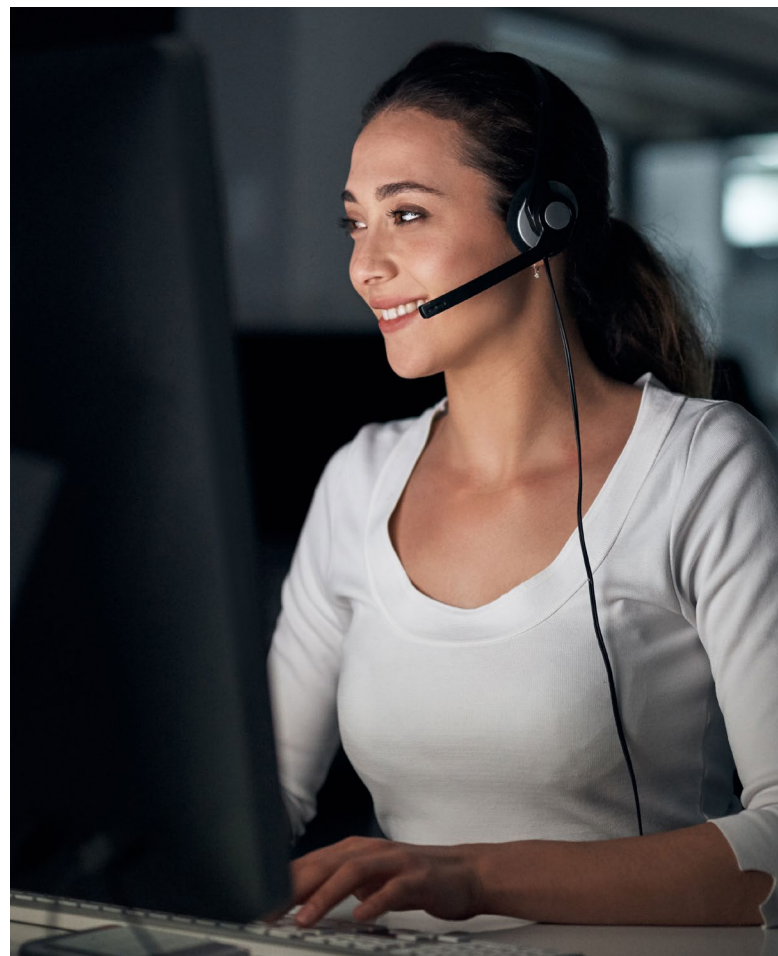
AI isn't the only innovation to impact contact centers in recent years. As businesses look to integrate customer experiences with back-office systems and across multiple channels, contact center solution vendors have steadily introduced new tools and features to support these goals. Yet managing software updates and adding new features can be a time- and cost-intensive process, especially if contact center agents are spread out in different locations.

Moving to a cloud-based CCaaS solution makes it simpler to ensure that all agents have access to the latest and greatest tools, features, and security fixes. Cloud-based CCaaS solutions can automatically push out new updates to everybody at once, which allows businesses to stay at the cutting edge of contact center technology without constantly updating and testing new software.

Some of the new contact center features that CCaaS users can take advantage of include:

- **Real-time agent assistance tools** that harness AI to help human agents resolve issues more quickly to improve productivity and increase customer satisfaction.
- **Enhanced analytics** that deliver actionable insight into call patterns, customer problems, best practices, and more.
- **Coaching tools** that allow mentors and more experienced agents to assist junior agents during a call without being heard by the customer.
- **Increasingly sophisticated virtual agents** that utilize AI and machine learning to provide richer customer interactions.

- **Automated dialers** for outbound call centers that can save agents hours every week by automatically calling numbers from a stored and approved list.
- **Self-service features** enabling customers to bypass complex IVRs and menus to get the information and answers they need quickly.
- **Intelligent routing** that connects callers with the most qualified agent depending on a variety of factors such as reason for calling, customer support level, etc.
- **CRM integration** to bring customer and sales data into the conversation for a more personalized experience.



Speech and Text Analytics

Contact centers have their finger on the pulse of customer sentiment and behavior. In fact, a Forrester research study found that 82 percent of marketers believe that customer call data can hold the key to revealing organizational blind spots.⁴ Tapping into that data, however, can be a challenge. Most traditional analytics tools aren't designed to mine speech and text communications, leaving a rich source of customer data to go ignored—data that can help call agents do their job more efficiently. Fortunately, businesses recognize the value of mining this conversation intelligence and are investing in UCaaS solutions that feature advanced analytics to generate this intelligence.

Examples of the kind of customer intelligence that contact centers can mine with the help of AI and advanced analytics include:

- **Identifying product issues** based on technical support calls and chat logs.
- **Improving agent effectiveness** by analyzing time to resolution, customer sentiment, and other metrics.
- **Creating customer support best practices** based on success rates.
- **Using outbound call analysis** to improve marketing messages and sales strategies.

⁴ Hill, Kevin, "[A strategic approach for banking contact centers.](#)"



Security and Compliance

Contact centers are one of the most important gateways to your business and, like all gateways, they need to be protected and secured. Denial-of-service attacks, man-in-the-middle attacks, and fraud attacks are just some of the dangers that contact centers face. Because contact centers deal with personally identifiable information (PII), they're also subject to regulatory controls and compliance to ensure that PII data remains secure. A good CCaaS solution will protect your contact center against attacks, safely collect and store PII data, and ensure encrypted communications no matter where your agents are working.

When selecting a CCaaS vendor, look for robust security and compliance features:

- **Flexible call recording features** that meet the requirements for state, federal, and industry regulations—which can differ from region to region and industry to industry.
- **Protection of PII data** including credit card information, noting that (here again) these security requirements can vary based on industry requirements such as PCI-DSS and HIPAA.
- **Compliance with privacy laws** that govern how persons can be contacted, which is especially important for outbound call centers, and how personal data can be collected.
- **Anonymized data analysis** allowing businesses to gain valuable insights into customer behavior without running afoul of new rules such as GDPR and the California Consumer Privacy Act.
- **Disaster recovery provisions** that ensure contact centers don't have a single point of failure or reliance on a single network.



Remote Workers

The post-pandemic workplace looks much different than it did just five years ago. While some businesses have re-instituted in-office policies, many more have maintained a flexible approach to work—which is exactly what workers want. According to a recent survey, 95 percent of employees expressed a preference for either full-time or part-time remote work, with almost two out of three employees choosing full-time remote work and nearly one in three selecting a hybrid home/office model.⁵

Just as the shift to a remote and dispersed workforce is driving the adoption of unified communications as a service (UCaaS), the trend toward remote-based contact center agents is creating demand for CCaaS solutions. A cloud-based contact center solution supports a remote workforce in several important ways. First, it provides a consistent user experience and set of features to agents whether they're working at home or in the office. The best CCaaS solutions also provide centralized visibility into agent performance so that businesses can effectively manage and improve their customer operations. A cloud-based contact center also reduces the cost of maintaining a physical location for agents and frees up IT staff from managing an on-site solution.



⁵ Dawkins, Megan, "[Remote work statistics and trends: The latest in remote work.](#)"

Cost Savings

Contact centers have long been viewed as cost centers—i.e., the cost of doing business. But as companies shift their focus to delivering great customer experiences, contact centers have become competitive differentiators.

Cloud-based CCaaS solutions can reduce the cost of customer support even as it increases the quality of customer experiences. In our own experience, we've seen customers save 30 percent or more on contact center costs as a result of moving from a premises-based to a cloud-based platform.

Some of the ways that CCaaS can reduce costs include:

- **Lower OpEx** because IT staff is no longer responsible for managing and maintaining premises-based hardware and software.
- **Increased agent productivity** and efficiency as a result of new optimization tools that shorten time to resolution and improve the number of positive outcomes.
- **CapEx reduction** by moving contact center infrastructure from the data center to the cloud.
- **Lower licensing fees** by allowing companies to customize which features each agent needs versus buying a one-size-fits-all license where many features may go unused.
- **Pay-as-you-go pricing** that enables businesses to scale up or down contact center resources during seasonal spikes.



Seamless Integration

As CX becomes the new metric for success, contact centers can no longer operate as an isolated island within the business. They need to be integrated with internal communications (UCaaS), sales and customer data platforms (CRM), and both digital and physical sales channels to deliver great experiences. Customers want personalized interactions. They expect businesses to know who they are, what they want, and where they can find it. And they expect those interactions to be interconnected across all channels of the business. Even before the pandemic, nine out of ten consumers indicated they were looking for an omnichannel experience that connected communications across online, offline, digital, and mobile channels.⁶

Looking ahead, there are several key integration points that businesses need to consider when moving to a CCaaS platform:

- **AI integration** probably tops this list for most companies today. CCaaS vendors are building their own proprietary AI into their solutions as well as leveraging the AI tools available in public cloud platforms from AWS, Google, Microsoft, and others.
- **CRM integration** is another top priority as it provides real-time customer data to agents that makes customers feel known and heard.
- **UCaaS integration** is essential for businesses that want to connect knowledge workers and subject-matter experts with agents and customers to accelerate problem resolution and answer questions quickly.



⁶ Jarman, Paul, "[Delivering an excellent omni-channel experience.](#)"



We're Your Connection to CCaaS

Choosing the right CCaaS solution can be a daunting task. There are dozens of CCaaS vendors on the market today, myriad cloud platforms that can host these solutions, multiple integration points to consider, and legacy investments that need to be preserved. Connection is here to help you find the right CCaaS solution for your business. We partner with many of the leading CCaaS vendors to give our customers the freedom to select the right pricing and features while supporting them with customization and integration services.

And when you're ready to connect your UCaaS and CCaaS solutions, we can help you with that too. Our experienced consultants and technical professionals are certified with the leading UCaaS/CCaaS providers (Microsoft, Zoom, etc.) to provide flexible options for your business.

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