

A glimpse into 2022: How can contact centres plan ahead?

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The year 2021 was one of adjustment. New challenges emerged and contact centres learned many lessons. Dave Hoekstra at Calabrio reflects on these before offering a glimpse into 2022, helping contact centres to plan ahead.

Hybrid working, The Great Resignation and Digital transformation are buzz terms that swarmed the contact centre industry in 2021. Yet, perhaps the word “buzz” does them a disservice. Each represents a significant trend that goes beyond the day-to-day operations of many organisations.

One thing is true - such a profound period of change has proven difficult to manage. Already facing conventional problems, including budget limitations, broken processes and IT restrictions, contact centre leaders experienced many difficult periods. Some operations entered crisis mode. Constant firefighting meant that knee-jerk decisions were commonplace and finding breathing space was challenging.

However, 2022 does not have to follow this pattern. By better understanding growing trends and how they may impact future reality, contact centres can start improving their decision making to plan ahead. So, as 2021 winds down, now is the ideal opportunity to take stock of a chaotic year and look forward to what the next 12 months may hold.

Lessons learned in 2021

The biggest takeaways from 2021 are:

1. Attrition is only getting worse – attrition has always been a significant contact centre conundrum. Yet, the problem seems to be snowballing, as automation complicates the agent role and the open job market presents many new opportunities. On top of this a recent Calabrio research found that one in three advisors will consider leaving their post within the next year, making 2021 seem like only the beginning of an attrition crisis. In this reality, improving agent work-life balance, reducing contact complexity and managing occupancy rates are crucial initiatives to safeguard retention rates.

2. Hybrid strategies require constant refinement – setting and forgetting hybrid strategies is proving to be a grave mistake, contributing considerably to “The Great Resignation”, which is plaguing contact centres. After experiencing the flexibility of full-time homeworking the hassle of returning to the office, if only for two or three days a week, has proven to irritate many. Such a trend highlights the significance of consulting agents when building and reviewing hybrid plans. Combining this feedback with workforce engagement management (WEM) software will enable contact centres to enhance the employee experience.

3. The demand for digital intensifies – as eCommerce grows, understanding and improving digital-first experiences is now a crucial skill for contact centre leaders. Of course, bolstering the digital proposition is time-consuming and expensive. Nevertheless, digital transformation is a matter of the fast versus the slow. If businesses fail to act now, they risk losing business to brands that provide an omnichannel service. Contact centres must build business cases with this in mind.

What's in store for 2022?

The next 12 months will present a series of new curveballs. Contact centres must consider these, in tandem with the lessons above, when planning. The following predictions will enable leaders to stay ahead of the curve.

1. Leaders grapple with complacency – often, stakeholders judge the health of a company through revenue statistics and a north-star metric. Typically, this is a net promoter score (NPS). When these measures stay stable, there seems little need to invest. Very real problems, concealed within metric scores, are then overlooked. Yet, to meet growing customer expectations further investment is critical. Many leaders will, therefore, challenge the status quo. Instead of presenting stakeholders with metrics alone, they will isolate fundamental issues to show how they impact customer experiences and create relevant cost analysis models. Such models demonstrate the value of further investment. To keep pace with competitors in 2022 it will be wise to educate stakeholders through a similar process to secure more resources and overcome complacency.

2. Anticipation becomes an art form – thanks to a new digital-first consumer mindset engaging in conversations with companies is less appealing than ever. Therefore, contact centres must do more than sit back and wait for calls. Assessing customer journey maps to identify where common queries arise enables a more proactive strategy. Even better, this process can remove contacts through mapping new, improved journeys, self-service and automation. Doing so simplifies customer experiences and cuts customer contact. For these reasons anticipating customer needs will move higher up the agenda for many contact centre leaders. Yet, expect many to go even further, turning to speech analytics to build predictive models. These predict how customer outcomes impact customer experience (CX), enabling organisations to be more proactive and continuously bolster performance.

3. Contact centres to connect the enterprise – in many cases, customer experience strategies and journey maps are the product of third-party agencies. While the outcome may seem immaculate, there is often a failure in making these strategies operationally useful to each department. There exists a disconnect that disrupts the progress of CX. In response to this, many department heads now have “customer experience” related job titles. These aim to connect leaders with overarching CX objectives. Such a trend has particularly impacted contact centre leaders. Why? Because contact centres are the cornerstone of CX. From connecting siloed data to channelling feedback, they hold the insights to create a unified view of customer experience. Business intelligence (BI) platforms enable this and are therefore likely to grow in popularity as leaders come to terms with the responsibilities of their new job titles. With this unified view of customer experience, contact centres will become CX hubs, highlighting opportunities to improve customer journeys across the business.

Would you like to look further into the crystal ball? For a glimpse into the future, download Calabrio’s latest report: “Health of the Contact Centre 2021”

(https://info.calabrio.com/uk/agent-wellbeing-survey/?utm_medium=Public_Relations&utm_source=PR_Artistry&SF_Campaign) and discover even more emerging trends.

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About Calabrio (<http://www.calabrio.com>)

Calabrio is the customer experience intelligence company that empowers organisations to enrich human interactions. Through AI-driven analytics, Calabrio uncovers customer behaviour and sentiment and derives compelling insights from the contact centre. Organisations choose Calabrio for its ability to understand customer needs and the overall experience it provides, from implementation to ongoing support. Find more at calabrio.com and follow @Calabrio on Twitter.

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