3 ways to embrace the evolving world of remote work

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Contact centres should look to the cloud for inspiration when supporting their home-working agents, says Magnus Geverts of Calabrio. He shows how to drive workforce flexibility, enhance customer experience and employee satisfaction using modern workforce engagement management (WEM) solutions.

COVID-19 has been a worldwide catalyst for change particularly around the decade-long debate on remote or home-working. When Calabrio interviewed over 300 contact centre professionals to gain a better understanding of the impacts of the pandemic on customer service organisations, the overall message was clear - there is no going back to business as usual. Before Coronavirus, 1 in 3 contact centres had at least 50% of their agents working remotely. Compare this with the situation since lockdown. Today, in 9 out of 10 contact centres the majority of agents work remotely, a trend that is unlikely to be reversed. In fact, an astonishing 85% of employers plan to continue flexible hours as they enjoy the benefits of greater employee satisfaction along with higher productivity, service flexibility, more available agent hours and cost savings.(i)

Statistics reveal regional differences in contact centre dynamics

Dig deeper into the differences between the UK and the US and the results are both interesting and a little surprising. Despite a global increase in remote working, 73% of UK contact centres have moved three-quarters of their agents to work remotely compared with only 59% of US contact centres moving just over half of their agents to remote places. At the same time, managers in the UK report fewer significant changes and challenges than their US peers. Plus, US managers voice concerns over lower agent happiness with remote working.

Be prepared, take to the cloud

So why have UK contact centres responded more quickly and effectively to remote working? The biggest clue to preparedness lies in the cloud. While the percentage of already fully-cloud-based contact centres are similar in the UK and US, UK contact centres are more rapidly deploying additional cloud-based software, giving them a distinct advantage from the outset. It’s a sentiment shared by UK analyst ContactBabel in its 2020 report on Cloud-based contact centre solutions which states a sharp rise in the number of home-based agents in the UK is “driven entirely by the cloud.” (ii) Interestingly, despite a marked increase in remote working States-side, the situation there is predicted to be short-term with “an expected pull-back to a centralized environment”, perhaps indicating a greater cultural difference between the two regions than at first apparent.(iii)

Three ways to embrace the evolving world of work - wherever you are

At Calabrio, we see a definite shift towards giving agents the ‘right tools and tech’ to do their job as they are forced to deepen their capacity for self-management, problem-solving, independent technology set-up and greater security awareness - all essential skills for thriving in a remote environment. Ninety-five percent of contact centres(iv) are continuing to invest or increase their investment in remote working solutions and this is where the cloud, especially when integrated with the latest Workforce Engagement Management (WEM) solutions - comes into its own to:

1. Enable seamless workforce flexibility - deploying a cloud-based platform allows contact centres to maximise their full capabilities while giving agents and supervisors the same, seamless user experience, wherever they are. Agents get the shifts they need to combine home and work life and they can even learn new skills instead of wasting hours commuting to and from their workplace. Meanwhile, supervisors have the opportunity to get creative with scheduling, introducing new types of shifts such as micro-shifts, to respond quickly and efficiently to increased or fluctuating customer demand.

2. Deliver relevant insights across the contact centre and the business - the unique structure of modern cloud-based contact centre solutions blends comprehensive, omnichannel Voice of the Customer (VOC) capture with the ability to integrate virtually any data stream from across the organisation. What is more, the unlimited computing power of cloud-based solutions drives analytics engines that turn contact centre data into powerful business intelligence. This helps contact centres to improve the customer experience by highlighting and addressing critical pain points and anticipating future customer needs.

3. Enhance agent engagement and performance - the same analytics capabilities enable cloud-based solutions to deliver machine learning or AI driven, predictive evaluations for 100% of interactions. This creates a broad and deep foundation for more accurate, more complete Quality Management (QM) metrics that deliver near real-time feedback to agents while strengthening their ability to enhance customer experience.

For more insights and inspiration on how to add agility to your contact centre operations, download the full results of Calabrio's latest survey entitled "The State of the Contact Centre: Embracing the Evolving World of Work" (https://info.calabrio.com/evolved-contact-centre/)

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About Calabrio

Calabrio is the customer experience intelligence company that empowers organizations to enrich human interactions. Through AI-driven analytics, Calabrio uncovers customer behavior and sentiment and derives compelling insights from the contact center. Organizations choose Calabrio for its ability to understand customer needs and the overall experience it provides, from implementation to ongoing support. For more information, visit Calabrio (http://www.calabrio.com) and follow @Calabrio on Twitter.

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(i) Calabrio – “The State of the Contact Centre: Embracing the Evolving World of Work – How leading contact centres are turning forced changes into future-ready strategies.” – published June 2020

(ii) ContactBabel – “The Inner Circle Guide to Cloud-based Contact Centre Solutions 2020 – UK edition” – refer to page 55.

(iii) ContactBabel - “The Inner Circle Guide to Cloud-based Contact Center Solutions 2020 – US edition” – refer to page 48.

(iv) Calabrio – “The State of the Contact Centre: Embracing the Evolving World of Work – How leading contact centres are turning forced changes into future-ready strategies.” – published June 2020

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