

## Exploring the Influential Role of the Contact Center Agent

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The role of a traditional customer service agent is changing. Technological advances and evolving business strategies are transforming the way customer service organizations leverage their most vital assets: their agents.

## ANALYSIS

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Customer service representatives are a customer service center's largest asset, and its largest expense. Improvements in back-office efficiency have resulted in a closer examination of the front office, thus fueling transformational change projects and technology investments (such as contact center consolidation, self-service promotion and outsourcing). However, as cost savings become less of a priority and organizations begin looking toward growth, customer satisfaction, personalization and consistency across contact channels, the role of the customer service department and its agents has evolved.

In this group of research, we explore the key technologies and relevant organizational changes that will help drive contact center business strategy execution during the next five years — highlighting the role and influence of agents.

"How to Transform Employees Into Contact Center Agents" explores the evolution of unified communications and its potential effect on the number and role of call center agents. This future change in roles is further explored in "Contact Center Agents Are Still Needed in the Self-Service Environment," which examines the topic of enabling the customer through self-service, and highlights the effect this will have on agent functions during the coming years.

"Matching Contact Center Sourcing Models to Needs Protects Organizations From Costly Failures" describes the importance of including agent characteristics as a selection criteria in sourcing decisions through the identification of five key areas.

"Agent Esteem and Self-Actualization Are Key to Customer Satisfaction" revisits the role of maturing technologies (such as workforce management and quality monitoring) in promoting aspects such as agent empowerment and performance enhancement. It examines the effect this can have on the call center's goals.

Guidance on how to improve the customer experience by focusing on agent-related aspects is provided in "Define the Role of the Customer Service Agent in Customer Experience Management."

Customer service agents are key assets that must be nurtured to achieve high-level corporate objectives. Evolving technologies, channel preferences and business drivers are reshaping the traditional agent role. Organizations must focus more on their agents and use the referenced research identified here to educate themselves and guide their strategies.

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