Gladly

2020 CX Efficiency Trends Report

Contact centers have long been in the challenging position of having to deliver exceptional service with limited resources—an expectation that doesn't look to be changing soon.

Yet in our recent Survey of contact center leaders and agents, we found that while companies were doing a lot of great things when it came to the customer experience, **many were missing out on key opportunities they could leverage to unlock greater efficiency in their contact centers.**

In this Report, we identify those missed opportunities, along with actionable advice you can use to help unlock the true potential of your contact center. We hope you find this information useful in your journey to optimizing your organization.

Agents are both under and over-utilized

Agents are the lifeblood of any support organization, which makes it absolutely integral that companies leverage them to their greatest advantage. But digging into the data, we found areas where agents were being both over-used (duplicating efforts because of multiple tickets being created for the same issue) as well as under-used (where leveraging more messaging channels would allow agents to help more than one customer at a time).

Siloed platforms affect efficiency and customer experience

While companies are rightly offering their customers multiple channels to reach out to them on, we found that they had to rely on different channel providers and integrations to deliver that vision. Unfortunately, having those disparate platforms was slowing communications down, and contributing to a not-so-seamless customer experience (according to consumers).

A 'single pane of glass' can unlock agent potential

Agents are more than a complaints depository—they're there to make a customer's experience feel as effortless and personal as possible. But while companies have a vast amount of customer information in their coffers, most agents don't have a 'single pane of glass' view of the customer to help them deliver to that standard of experience efficiently.

Companies have omnichannel aspirations

Companies have omnichannel aspirations—on average, most companies provide at least three channels for customers to reach out to them on. Yet despite these aspirations, there are missed opportunities when it comes to structure and staffing that would help them deliver on their vision more efficiently.

Methodology

Gladly commissioned research firm Zogby Analytics to conduct an online survey of 101 Customer Experience Managers, Contact Center Managers, VP of Customer Service and Call Center Managers, as well as 311 contact center agents. Using internal and trusted interactive partner resources, thousands of adults were randomly invited to participate in this interactive survey. Each invitation was password coded and secure so that one respondent could only access the survey one time. Based on a confidence interval of 95%, the margin of error for 101 managers and VPs is +/- 9.8 percentage points, while the margin of error for 311 agents is +/- 5.6 percentage points. This means that all other things being equal, if the identical survey were repeated, its confidence intervals would contain the true value of parameters 95 times out of 100.

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Key Highlights

Less than 1/3
of companies today offer self-service

63%
of companies say duplicate tickets and cases affect overall productivity

92%
of companies said ticket duplication was a problem for them

70%
of agents say juggling multiple platforms and windows negatively affects productivity

Trend 01.
Agents are both under and overutilized

As your customer base grows, so does the demand on your support team. But for the most efficient businesses, that increased demand is rarely solved with a simple increase in agent count; instead, it's all about optimizing for productivity from the agents they already have.

In our Survey, we found that most companies were missing out on key opportunities that could unlock efficiency gains in their contact centers.

Most companies aren't offering self-service

Offering self-service—whether through chatbots, a Help Center, or your IVR—is a great way for companies to have their cake and eat it too.

Not only do customers want to leverage self-service, but it's a big win for companies too, allowing them to take the more rote customer issues off the shoulders of their agents and freeing them up to manage the tougher questions that take more time and effort.

We've seen that play out amongst our own customers that leverage our self-service widget, Sidekick, on their site—on average, **33% of people who use Sidekick don't go on to speak to a human agent**.

Yet despite the significant upside, our Survey showed that less than 1/3 of companies today offer some form of self-service on their sites— that's a big missed opportunity in terms of optimizing for efficiency.

And more than just efficiency, it looks like offering self-service might just make for happier customers too, with High Performers (companies with CSAT scores over 90%) being **almost 4x more likely to offer self-service than their Low Performing peers** (companies with CSAT scores less than or equal to 70%).

But despite the relatively poor representation today, it looks like companies have the appetite to invest in self-service in the near future, with **28% saying they intend to add chatbots** to their site in the next 12 months, and **19% intending to add a Help Center or FAQ page**.

33%

of customers who use Gladly's self-service channel, Sidekick, don't go on to speak to a human agent

MISSED OPPORTUNITY
Less than

1/3

of companies offer some form of self-service on their websites

Duplicate tickets are a near universal productivity blocker

With ticket-based support platforms, a customer reaching out multiple times or on a different channel creates a new ticket each time that gets assigned to different agents—even when they're about the same issue, or just a follow up.

According to our Survey, ticket duplication is a near-universal issue for companies, with **92% reporting that it happens in their contact centers** (and just 1% saying they didn't know how to track if or when it happened for them).

Duplicate tickets are a serious source of inefficiency, taking up the time of multiple agents (versus just one) who don't realize they're helping the same customer. In fact, **63% of leaders said duplicate tickets negatively affected their agents' productivity**.

And while the workaround most contact centers have in place—of an agent manually searching for any duplicate tickets and assigning it to themselves first—does the trick of preventing a customer getting multiple responses, it's still an inefficient use of an agents' time.

To eliminate the time and effort lost from ticket duplication, companies should look for a support platform that can recognize when multiple communications relate to the same customer, and thread them together for one agent to handle at a go.

For fabric and crafts retailer JOANN, for example, switching from their previous ticket-based platforms to Gladly **netted them an immediate 30% efficiency gain**, with their 1000 inbound tickets being streamlined to just 700 unique communications from their customers. It was such a time-saver, JOANN's Director of Operations, Drew Chamberlain, said he was 'sending agents home early'.

63%

of companies said ticket duplication negatively affects their agents productivity

Companies that use Gladly can eliminate ticket duplication and decrease agent workload by

35%

" Instead of 1000 tickets, we had 700 Conversations in Gladly. We're sending agents home early! "

Drew Chamberlain

Director of Operations and Customer Experience

JOANN

Companies take note: there's more to messaging than live chat and text

Messaging channels are by far the most efficient when it comes to your agents' time—according to our Survey, **70% of agents are able to help 3 or more customers at a time** on messaging, versus just the one customer over phone or email.

But while most companies offer some form of messaging (more than half of the companies we polled offer live chat or text), most companies are missing an efficiency trick by not expanding to less traditional messaging channels on the block like Facebook Messenger, Apple Business Chat, and Whatsapp.

Besides the fact that these newer channels are gaining popularity, particularly amongst Gen Z and Millennials, for companies already offering text or live chat, there's almost nothing but upside to adding these channels to the roster. Since the experience and expectations across these messaging channels are relatively identical, agents who currently handle live chat or text can easily transition to the newer channels with little to no additional training or resources needed.

And for those companies still on the fence, a little FOMO (fear of missing out) may do the trick—**upwards of 19% of companies say they plan to add these channels** to their roster within the year, with **Apple Business Chat leading the pack with 36%**.

Most agents can help 3 or more customers on messaging channels at one time

More than

19%

of companies intend to add Facebook Messenger, Apple Business Chat, and Whatsapp in the next year

Trend 02.
Siloed platforms affect efficiency and customer experience

For most companies, the journey to support follows a pretty similar path. They might start with email, then expand into phone, and later add new channels like live chat or social to the mix. And each time they add a new channel, it's usually through a new Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

But while that approach may get companies the channels they need, there are a few drawbacks and missed opportunities when it comes to efficiency and overall customer experience.

More often than not, omnichannel = integrations + add-ons

Companies today understand the importance of offering their customers multiple touchpoints to reach them—**most offer at least 3 channels to their customers**, with phone, email, and live chat being the most popular.

But **97% of companies don't offer that omnichannel experience with a single platform**, instead, they have to rely on integrations with other channel providers or add-ons.

It's these integrations and bolted-on solutions that lead to some of the common inefficiencies that a lot of contact centers face. When you have one provider for one channel, and another for the next, it creates siloes in your support—an agent on one platform can't see what a customer said on another, which results in the not-so-fun 'repeat and recap' game where your customers have to rehash the entire history of what happened the last time they reached out.

That's not an ideal experience for your customers, but more than that, it's also precious extra time that's taken out of your agent's day, and that of your customers too.

In fact, customers estimate they spend an average of 5-6 minutes repeating their past conversations to the next agent they speak to.

97%

of companies integrate with at least one other channel provider or add-on, resulting in disjointed customer experiences

Companies and customers disagree over getting the 'seamless experience'

Much like the conversations they have in their personal lives, customers expect continuity between the first time they communicate with a company and the next—they don't want to have to repeat themselves or their past conversations just because they're following up or talking to a new agent.

But there's a stark disconnect between how companies perceive whether they provide a seamless experience, and what their customers actually experience.

While **86% of companies polled believe they offer a seamless experience** when a customer switches from one channel to the next, **that isn't the reality according to 60% of consumers** who say that a seamless handoff happens 'only some of the time' (34%), 'rarely' (21%) or 'never' (5%).

That disconnect likely comes down to the fact that this isn't a metric that's readily available in a platform's reporting or dashboards, nor tracked in a company's customer satisfaction (CSAT) surveys. But there is a remedy, and it comes down to providing agents with a single view of all of a customer's communications, across channels, so they don't have to expend unnecessary effort piecing together tickets or having to rely on customers to recap and fill in the gaps.

73%

of consumers say having to repeat themselves is one of the most frustrating things about customer support

HE SAID, SHE SAID

86%

of companies believe they provide customers a seamless experience

VS.

60%

of customers who say they don't experience it

Trend 03.
A 'single pane of glass' can unlock agent potential

Customer information often lies across multiple systems and platforms in an organization. A customer's last purchase, for example, may be in an order management system, while their loyalty card balance may be captured in a loyalty program platform.

Being able to gather all that useful but disparate information about a customer, and present it in a single view to your agents, makes it an easier (and faster) lift for your agents to use. With it, they can not only deliver the personal experience that customers today want, but be better equipped to make targeted, personalized upsell opportunities that are more likely to convert.

Multiple platforms and systems slow agents down

According to our Survey, **agents say they use between two to six different systems or windows to help a custome**r—this includes their customer support platforms, order management systems, or external knowledge base apps.

That isn't the best experience for your agents—in fact, **more than half of the agents we polled named having to switch between multiple platforms and windows** as their top frustration with their current support platform.

But more than that, it isn't an efficient use of your agents' time: **70% of agents said that having to constantly switch affected their productivity** and ability to work efficiently.

Helping your agents deliver fast, efficient service isn't about giving them all the information you have about a customer—it's about giving them easy access to the most important details they can use to elevate an experience. Think about auditing your support conversations to see what information agents typically reference to help customers, and then surfacing them into a single space they can access in one go.

That way you deliver a better experience to your agents, that they can leverage to deliver fast, personal service to your customers.

PULLED IN ALL DIRECTIONS

70%

of agents said that having to switch between multiple platforms and windows affected their productivity

More than

50%

of agents said their top frustration with their current platform was having to switch between multiple platforms and windows

Upselling is expected, but could be better supported

Contact centers today recognize the immense potential agents have to guide customers towards a purchase. In fact, **78% of contact center agents say they're expected to upsell or cross-sell to customers in their role**.

And while most agents feel they have the foundational training on what their company's products and services are, there are other tricks companies are missing out on when it comes to optimizing their agents' efforts.

For example, **surfacing a customer's past transactions to an agent provides them a guide to what their customers' tastes** or preferences are, and can steer them in the right direction when choosing other products to recommend.

Companies can even go one step further like and **provide a dashboard of preferred products to their agents**. By analyzing a customer's past purchases and their behavior over their marketing touchpoints, a high-end clothing retailer was able to assign a percentage value to the type of product they preferred—for example, they were more likely to buy shoes (42%) over handbags (20%)—which helped their agents make much more targeted and relevant recommendations and **beat their sales targets by 10%**.

Providing a dashboard of product preferences helped agents of a high-end clothing retailer handily beat their sales targets

78%
of contact center agents say they're expected to upsell or cross-sell to customers

Trend 04.
## Companies can better support their omnichannel aspirations

We're living in an omnichannel world, and most contact centers are placing those omnichannel expectations on their agents as well—almost all the companies we polled said they expected their agents to help customers across multiple channels.

Companies have omnichannel expectations, yet staffing remains channel-specific

According to our survey, **86% of companies say they expect their agents to help customers on more than one channel**.

Yet despite these expectations, most contact centers are still staffing their teams in a channel-specific way—with one team working on just email requests, another handling the phones, and one team for their messaging channels—making it hard for agents to satisfy those omnichannel goals.

But moving to an omnichannel (or more accurately perhaps, channel agnostic) team structure—where agents aren't divided across channel lines—can solve key inefficiencies in a contact center, apart from that fact that it's also more aligned to how today's customer communicates (switching between channels, or even using multiple channels at the same time).
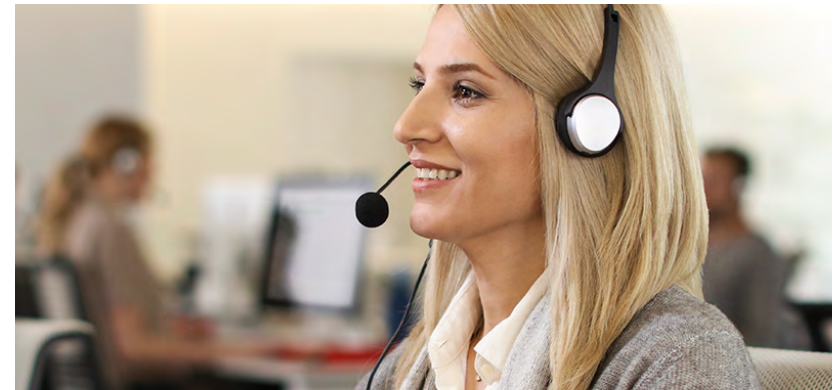
Staffing, for example, is simpler when you don't have to estimate the volume of inbound communications by channel and staffing for that. What's more, it gives managers the **flexibility to move agents from one channel to another** in the event of unexpected spikes.

To support that, companies just need to ensure they have the right foundations in place: ensuring that their knowledge base has ready answers for every channel (so agents don't waste time having to manually shorten an email answer for a customer on text), as well as a support platform that lets agents switch effortlessly from one channel to the next.

86%

of companies expect their agents to help on more than one channel, yet most continue to staff their teams by channel
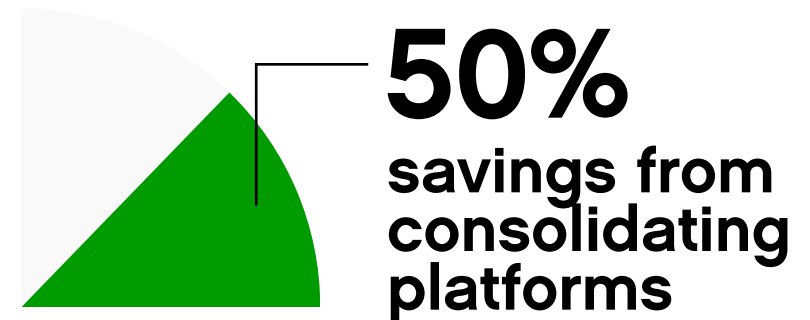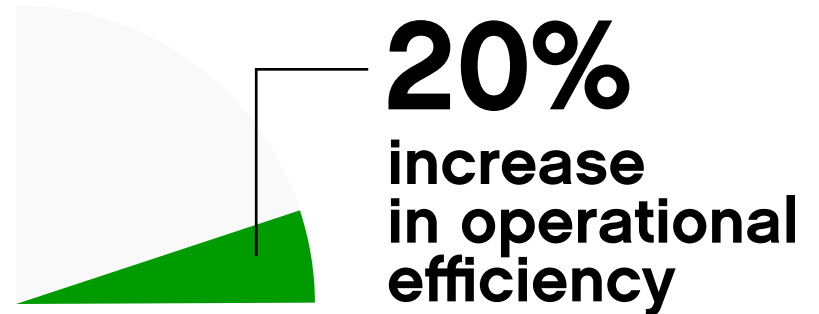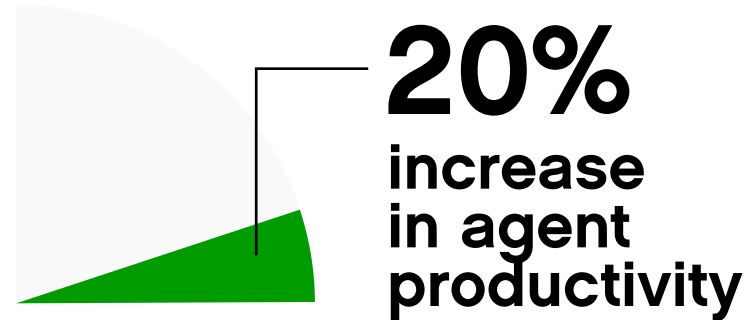
Increase Efficiency and Reduce Costs With Gladly

Radically Personal service is all about delivering an experience that feels personalized and effortless, without compromising on speed.

See how Gladly can help you deliver the Radically Personal service your customers want and expect, while increasing efficiency and productivity and netting you cost savings by consolidating your disparate platforms.

SEE A DEMO →

After switching to Gladly, companies see up to:

20%
increase in agent productivity

20%
increase in operational efficiency

50%
savings from consolidating platforms

+ Gladly