



KEY TRENDS
GERRY BARBER,
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BACK TO THE FUTURE

Change is the only constant.

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BACK TO THE FUTURE

CHANGE IS THE ONLY CONSTANT.

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In honor of Contact Center Pipeline's 15th anniversary, this article focuses on key trends over the past fifteen years. I have been a part of the contact center industry since 1975. Over the years, there have been many game-changing trends within the industry, too numerous to mention. From 2009 to 2023, three trends have dramatically changed the contact center landscape. The following trends changed the way contact centers are managed and operated.

CONTACT CENTER SOFTWARE IN THE CLOUD

At the start of 2009, only 2.2% of call centers deployed contact center systems in the cloud. Today, more than 60% of contact center systems are cloud-based. (This data is from Talkdesk statistics.) The number of cloud-based systems continues to grow at a rapid pace. Moving technologies to the cloud allowed leaders to keep up with the lat-

est technological advances, lower costs, and provide better disaster recovery options. Cloud solutions acted as the gateway to deploy remote operations, leading to the next trend, the work from home (WFH) boon.

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THE WORK FROM HOME BOON

Less than 10% of contact centers embraced WFH programs fifteen years ago. While interest was gaining traction, the WFH trend did not take off until COVID-19. During COVID-19, out of necessity, businesses had to move agents and other workers home to keep them safe and able to work. As the COVID-19 risk waned, contact center leaders wrestled with several questions. Do we bring everyone back? Do we keep everyone home? Or do we go to a hybrid model? The pandemic changed the physicality of the contact center forever. In a 2022 study by Strategic Contact, 30% of organizations surveyed stated they will remain 100% work from home. An additional 60% of survey respondents said their organization will continue to provide some level of a hybrid work model for their

agents. Managing a remote workforce brought new challenges to the table. Leaders faced challenges in logistics for training, user equipment management, and performance management. Having a remote workforce challenged leaders to find solutions to maximize and maintain a high-performing culture.

THE GROWTH OF MULTICHANNEL AND OMNICHANNEL CONTACTS

In 2009, phone traffic accounted for over 90% of all contacts. In 2023, phone volume accounts for about 68% of all

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customer contacts, according to Ameyo. However, overall contact volume grew as customers found chat, email, and SMS viable or preferred communication channels. Taylor Research Group indicates that 74% of customers now use three or more communication channels to access customer service. The shift to additional contact channels necessitated new skilling competencies and capabilities for agents. Workforce management systems required retooling to

accommodate all channels to meet service level and response time objectives. Routing systems required tweaking for better utilization of blended agents. And omnichannel deployments provided a more consistent service experience across all channels.

CHANGE IS THE ONLY CONSTANT, SO BUCKLE UP!

As we begin 2024, AI has exploded on the scene. Video as a channel is gaining traction. And higher customer expectations prevail. It's anyone's guess as to what the contact center industry might look like in the next fifteen years. Change is the only constant, so buckle up!



Gerry Barber is currently Senior Advisor at Contact Management Solutions, providing limited engagement contact center consulting. During his 40-plus-year career, Gerry has led successful contact center operations across several business verticals including B2C, B2B, Financial, IT and HR. In 2013, Gerry received a lifetime achievement award from ICM. Gerry can be reached at gbarber@cms4roi.com.



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