conectys

A GUIDE TO BUILDING UP
CONTACT CENTERS IN 2022

Introduction

The last two years were ... something.

We've had the pleasure of spending some of our own work-from-home time on thinking, researching, and talking to those in the contact center world to figure out where exactly the contact center is headed. In fact, we even wrote a paper on the contact center of the future, which addresses everything from physical spaces (for when some agents return) to the mutating nature of B2B outsourcing contracts. We were also blessed to grow our company during the pandemic year-to-year -- headcount increased over 30% and we had no layoffs, while adding 2-3 new clients and expanding our physical footprint in the Philippines and Europe. We exceeded 3,000 global employees in October 2020.

So as we've been growing during a very different business year, we've had the opportunity to deepen our understanding of what clients in different verticals and industries seem to want from a contact center at this moment.

Here now is a guide to building up a contact center for 2022 and beyond.

The core tenets

Most potential clients we've spoken to in the past 18 months want some combination of the following factors in a contact center partner:

- **Global footprint:** Cover multiple languages, multiple geographies, multiple time zones, and make it possible for the organization to scale effectively.

- **Strategy:** 10-15 years ago, the model for outsourced contact center work was largely about order-taking, with a few pinnacle brands doing more. Now many clients go hunting for contact center partners who can be strategic, i.e. the agents use their front-line observations to help the product, sales, and marketing teams iterate themselves.

- **Cost:** While the nature of the outsourcing contract has shifted, companies are looking for cost optimization and value in their contact centers.

- **Flexibility:** Can the contact center partner scale up (and down) quickly based on seasonal demand? This was a huge factor in 2020-21 as some industries that become more robust when people spend more time at home -- think user-generated content, for example -- needed a lot more agents and moderators. Can the partner get those quickly?

- **Youthful embrace:** We've seen this on a few recent contracts we've been in discussion

around. Leaders of organizations around the world realize that younger consumer generations aren't necessarily going to call into a contact center -- so you need to reach them where they're at, which can be mobile, in-app, etc. There's a different approach to customer experience needed.

- **"Goldilocks:"** This is something that's been very successful for us especially. "Goldilocks" refers to the child's story of the same name; if you remember the plot, Goldilocks ends up preferring the not-too-hot, not-too-cold porridge. She likes the "just right" one. Clients look for the same thing, in that they want a partner where it's small enough that you still have access to executives and stakeholders, but it's big enough to help the client achieve scale and brand safety without sacrificing speed. That's the exact intersection where Conectys sits.

What about technology?

Don't clients expect an advanced tech stack?

Of course they do, and ideally a contact center partner will have an advanced tech stack to serve the end client's needs.

But: Technology can help you in some ways to maintain business continuity in very uncertain times, but throwing technology at a problem doesn't necessarily solve the problem, as we've recently seen with content moderation. [At Conectys, we're bullish on a tech-human hybrid approach to business growth.](#)

For example, recently in our own business, we started thinking more about implementing Robotic Process Automation (RPA) for clients, including hiring our first Head of Digital in the process.

As we began thinking about RPA processes, it became clear that many executives and senior leaders at global companies view RPA and automation overall as a "silver bullet," or something to solve a wide variety of problems at cost and keep the business humming in the process. That's not actually true. RPA works best in specific contexts, including:

- **Highly-manual and repetitive processes:** Think about high-transaction volume or processes that occur daily. Accounts receivable and invoicing fall here, often.

- **Prone to human error:** What are some of your processes most prone to human error, that then causes additional work for others? Some HR functionality typically applies here.

- **Rule-based processes:** Think of processes that follow a specific set of "if-then" type rules, and can easily be turned into a template. When decision-making is based on a series of

standardized rules, that process makes sense as an automation contender.

- **High volumes:** high-transaction volume and high frequency.

- **Mature and stable processes:** Think of well-documented processes with known operational costs. Again, billing often falls into this bucket. Vendor selection RFP could as well.

Use technology where it's relevant, which right now is usually in manual, repetitive processes or time-consuming processes that take time away from more pertinent business functions, such as sales, operations, or people development. Technology should be a force multiplier to make you stronger in chaotic times. It shouldn't, by any means, be your "only solution."

When trying to combine the power of technology and the power of people, however, there are concerns to take into account, [as this article elucidates nicely](#):

> *"We saw this in another of the companies we spoke with when we learned that despite having integrated AI, managers were modifying the output values from the algorithm to fit their own expectations. Others in the same company would simply follow the old decision-making routine, altogether ignoring the data provided by algorithms. Therefore, human behavior is central to implementing AI."*

If you don't explain to your people what the role of the technology is -- i.e. it is there to make them more productive, not make them redundant -- then they will start making decisions to benefit themselves and their source of income, i.e. modifying output values, thus making the tech far less beneficial for everyone (since the output data is now essentially fake).

From the same article:

> *"Top performing companies spent significant time communicating with employees and educating them so that human talent understood how machines made their jobs easier, not obsolete. To build trust in AI, it is imperative for leaders to communicate their vision transparently, explaining the goal, the changes needed, how it will be rolled out, and over what timeline. Beyond communication, leaders can inoculate their workforce against the fear of AI by arranging for visits to other companies that have undergone similar transformations, providing a model for workers to see with their own eyes how the technology is used."*

Humans and technology can work together to make an organization thrive during a pandemic, but there need to be clear lines of communication about why the technology is there and how the human work experience might be shifting as a result.

While we're discussing automation and RPA ...

There are notable benefits to an increased focus on automation, and clients are looking for that -- and any partner should have some plan around it for 2022 and beyond. Notable reasons that clients embrace RPA and automation include:

- **Cost-control:** On the customer-facing side of the business, the reduction in manual activities (and repetitive activities) decreases the cost of delivery. On your back-end, you increase productivity with a 24/7/365 connectivity.

- **Quality of information:** Customers have an increased sense (and reality) of data security, and you are working towards compliance with GDPR and other protocols as the holder of their data. On your back-end, you can greatly reduce (close to fully eliminate) human error, which reduces redone work from human error.

- **Time-to-market:** When we talk with clients about RPA, this is often their primary concern -- and RPA does provide benefits here. On the customer-facing front, you provide real-time servicing, which allows for 24/7/365 connectivity with limited wait times. On your back-end, you can more easily handle spikes in demand, which reduces redundancies.

What people (often executives) do seem to sometimes lack an understanding around is timelines for RPA and automation projects. Said projects typically involve these steps:

- Design

- Build and test

- User acceptance testing

- Go-Live

That can often be accomplished in 3-4 weeks depending on various factors.

For a medium process complexity RPA implementation, you work through the same steps as above -- but the design phase itself might take 2-3 weeks, and the overall implementation could run 6-7 weeks.

For a high process complexity RPA implementation, you are usually looking at 9-11 weeks.

Again, all these numbers will vary by your specific situation, goals, and needs.

It's also helpful to understand who exactly is involved in the implementation. That usually looks like this:

- The first tier is the "Build" tier. These people are putting RPA bots together and making sure

your goals will be met. This includes:

- Process Discovery, usually conducted by the RPA lead

- Process Analysis, usually conducted by a mix of a Business Analyst, Subject Matter Expert, and RPA Lead

- The development itself, led by the developer

- User Acceptance testing, which is driven by the Business Analyst, the developer, and other units of the business that may touch the RPA bot

- Production release, led by the developer and the business units

- The second tier is the "Control" tier, which involves the maintenance and running of the RPA bots. That includes:

  - Scheduling

  - Running

  - Monitoring

  - Maintenance

  - Dashboarding

What about chatbots as a form of automation?

Chatbots are being discussed more and more.

About 40% of companies with 500+ employees currently deploy at least one chatbot or AI-driven assistant right now, and financial services is expected to automate up to 90% of consumer interactions with chatbots by EOY 2022. Gartner has predicted that 85% of customer interactions will be managed without humans by EOY 2021, and by the end of 2023, that could mean 2.5 billion customer service hours saved by companies. (That's the equivalent of 285,388 years.)

Per Forrester and others, the chatbot industry has a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 27.9%, and [should be a $10 billion sector by 2024.](#)

And as we just discussed about RPA, there's a misunderstanding around chatbots in terms of: "Are these bots coming for human jobs?" Chatbots and AI are designed to optimize processes around people's time, priorities, and the scaling of quality customer experience. While many do invest in Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and chatbots as a form of cost

containment or control -- we would never ignore that topic -- the goal of these innovations is not to remove humans from the workforce, but to make human contributions more value-add.

For example, with one hardware provider we work with, when we began automating some of the support processes, the human agents were able to notice new trends in languages we needed to support and the need for Sunday coverage as well. We presented that to the client, who accepted and was glad to have a strategic partner looking out for their brand in the process. Some of those decisions are arrived at because human agents have more time to think about the client engagement when a portion of their support work goes to automated processes.

At Conectys, we partner with Google on chatbot projects, which is designed to engage with your end users. It's very multi-faceted, including ES documentation.

Metrics

The contact center world is heavily metric-driven, but each organization that utilizes contact centers has different metric needs. There are cornerstones, of course -- First Contact Resolution (FCR), Net Promoter Score (NPS), latency, Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), and more -- but it's important to find a partner that can report on "bread-and-butter" stats but also customize certain metrics for you, be that by geographic market or something else. Customized metrics are an increasingly important part of the contact center universe.

Let's put this all together

If you're building out a contact center relationship for 2022 and beyond, some of what you need to consider is:

- Can the partner be flexible?

- Can it be strategic, or just take orders?

- What is the cost structure vs. the value?

- Can the partner help you scale?

- What languages, geographies, and time zones can be covered?

- How often do they report on metrics, and can they customize the metrics you are most interested in?

- How advanced is their tech stack?

- Do they understand the need to balance tech and human touch?

- Where are they with digital tools, automated processes, bots, and more?

- What does their client base/history look like? Have they served your industry specifically?

- How communicative are the executive team and client teams?

If you find yourself thinking positively on most of these questions, you've found a partner to serve as a contact center that helps scale your customer experience, moderation, and overall strategy well into this next decade.

To talk to us about how we work in these regards, feel free to reach out!

Contact us at sales@conectys.com