



Three Strategies to Future-Proof Your Contact Centre

More effectively manage economic uncertainty and changing workforce dynamics in 2023 and beyond



Learn why CallMiner was named the Leader in The Forrester Wave™:
Conversation Intelligence for Customer Service, Q3 2023



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Today, many global organisations are managing a rise in remote and hybrid work – and few departments have felt the impacts of that more than the contact centre. In fact, **73% of agents** want to continue to work from home. The question is, are their companies prepared to support this for the long term?

Paired with changing workforce dynamics, contact centres are coping with issues such as economic uncertainty, customer vulnerability, an increase in global compliance regulations and ongoing pandemic-related disruptions – from the supply chain to employee health concerns. A perfect storm of external factors have led to higher interaction volumes and more complex customer conversations.

According to McKinsey, **61% of contact centre** leaders report a growth in total calls, with increased contacts per customer and a growing customer base as the key drivers. And 58% of customer care leaders expect call volumes to increase even further over the next 18 months. Not all calls are positive, either. Customer complaints rising to **record levels**.

The 2022 CallMiner CX Landscape Report shows **nearly all organisations (99%)** believe that the way employees deal with customers has a direct impact on the perception of the organisation's brand, products and/or services. An equal proportion believe the employee experience (EX) is at least somewhat important to customer experience (CX) success. But how do you keep your contact centre employees motivated and engaged, while keeping customers satisfied and delivering the best outcomes?

To combat the changing workforce, an unpredictable economy and evolving customer demands, more organisations are adopting technology solutions, such as AI-powered conversation intelligence platforms, to help scale initiatives that drive operational efficiency and improved CX outcomes, while allowing employees to execute more meaningful work.

The most forward-thinking organisations are the ones that know the right technology helps them do more with less. Here are three strategies for how to get started.



Strategy 1. Leverage AI to create a culture of continuous feedback

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Contact centre staffing and retention continues to be an ongoing challenge. With many agents preferring work from home or demanding hybrid work arrangements, many teams have a hard time maintaining the same in-office dynamics they had before. But, as the data above shows, EX is equally as critical as CX.

In remote or hybrid work environments, contact centre managers and supervisors can lean on AI-powered technologies to collect insights on agent performance, as well as providing holistic coaching and training programs. In the absence of face-to-face interactions, establishing a regular feedback loop could mean the difference between high churn and an engaged, motivated workforce.

Here's one example. Many top-performing agents fall through the cracks, and often don't receive the career development support they want (and need) to advance. Their supervisors simply tell them, "You're doing a good job," rather than digging deeper into opportunities to accelerate their careers. Even simple positive feedback with no action can lead to attrition with top performers. Instead, supervisors can coach based on the skills of top performers across the board, using AI as both a career development springboard and continuous feedback loop.

When you understand 100% of omnichannel interactions, you can identify exactly where strong performers excel and where they can improve to more effectively progress in their careers. Managers and supervisors can accentuate and reward positive behaviours among agents, such as exhibiting empathy to struggling customers. In addition, AI-generated insights can help agents cope with and navigate issues as they happen, in real-time. The ultimate goal is to identify both strengths and areas for improvement, and deploy targeted, one-to-one coaching or training at scale.

Embracing a skills-based approach to attracting and retaining employees

Many organisations are coping with staffing shortages and retention issues by hiring based on skill and relevant experience. A skills-based approach involves sourcing non-traditional candidates and offering ongoing career development to encourage retention.

More than **80% of workers'** moves to new roles involve shifting from one employer to another, suggesting the workers have the skills to advance but have not been given the opportunity to do so internally. Regardless of how you choose to hire, on-the-job training and continuous learning programs facilitated by AI-powered conversation intelligence can help retain workers and empower them to develop their skills so that they feel valued.

Strategy 2.

Scale your approach to customer dissatisfaction and vulnerability

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Empathy is more important than ever before. It's not only the right thing to do, but empathy coaching and training can also help agents become better equipped to handle dissatisfied or vulnerable customers.

Recently, many global governments have stepped up efforts to **protect vulnerable customers** in the face of economic uncertainty. Customers can be considered vulnerable for a variety of reasons – whether it's their health, economic status, or digital divides that prevent them from accessing customer service. Understanding vulnerable customers at scale is a major challenge, especially for agents that are charged with maintaining certain business KPIs.

Conversation intelligence technology can flag instances of dissatisfaction and/or vulnerability, so agents know how to react. Real-time analytics can deliver alerts that can be set up based on certain phrases, mentions of the competition, and more to empower agents to act quickly.

For example, if a customer calls to cancel a service, an alert would appear with recommendations on talk down language and standard promotions to offer. If the customer mentions a promotion from a competitor, potentially in combination with sharing recent job loss or hardship, the system would trigger another alert with specialised options available to the agent to compete with that specific competitor pricing – or even a deferment plan that would ease financial burden. Alerts can also be programmed to empower agents to deal with mounting dissatisfaction, and at the appropriate time, prompt a supervisor to intervene.

The overall goal of this technology is to improve empathy coaching and training, as well as give agents the tools to understand customer emotions or read difficult situations.

Managing customer incivility

Customer support doesn't have to be thankless, although it often is: **76% of front-line workers** experience incivility at least once a month. Sadly, 78% believe that bad behaviour from customers toward employees is more common than it was five years ago.

Agents shouldn't have to tolerate uncivil customers. Organisations can leverage conversation intelligence to escalate customers who are behaving badly to management. These solutions can also flag particularly unpleasant or abusive calls to supervisors, who can intervene in real-time or support agents in taking a break between calls to reset. In addition, the technology can provide scripts and empathy training prompts to de-escalate rude or intolerant customer behaviour.

Strategy 3. Embrace omnichannel CX, and truly listen across channels

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In an AI-powered customer service ecosystem, around **65% of tasks** and 50–70% of contacts are automated. This helps create a true omnichannel experience that provides consistency and seamlessness across interactions. Embracing digital and self-service channels can alleviate pressure on front-line agents, while reducing costs. The best part? Customers have to work less to achieve their goals with your brand.

That said, digital and self-service channels won't be right for every customer. Some problems are too complex to be automated and will require a human touch. And for some customers, they simply prefer to speak with someone directly.

To be successful, you must truly support and listen across all omnichannel interactions. Monitoring omnichannel customer journeys and taking steps to improve them can increase customer satisfaction in a tough economy, as well as improve loyalty and customer lifetime value. Many organizations use AI-powered conversation intelligence to map the customer journey and determine where there are areas of potential friction.

When undergoing this process, it's important to ask yourself:

- Where can digital self-service and/or additional customer enablement channels/content help?
- How can we equip our agents with the tools and training to remove friction?
- How can we create a consistent experience across channels, where customers are not required to repeat information they have provided elsewhere?
- How can we ensure that customers can effectively contact us on their preferred channel?

Many organisations employ random call sampling to get answers to these questions. In reality, analysing 100% of omnichannel interactions is the best way to shorten the customer journey and reduce customer effort. In fact, it's the only way to know what's happening day in and day out, as well as uncovering trends across your entire contact centre organisation. Conversation intelligence technology not only helps your agents become more efficient (which saves money in a time of economic concern), but also enables improved customer outcomes.



The contact centre in 2023 and beyond

The contact centre in 2023 and beyond may look strikingly different than it did even two or three years ago. To improve agent job satisfaction and retention, embrace employees' desires to work remotely or in a hybrid environment, while providing them the support they need to be successful.

The benefits of this approach are clear. Happy agents make happy customers. These agents are better equipped to deal with challenges and can help your team reduce the duration of customer journeys, improving loyalty and satisfaction.

Fortunately, contact centre teams don't have to manage these challenges alone. Embracing AI-powered technology can help scale efforts for targeted coaching and training, avoiding escalations, managing vulnerable customers, improving omnichannel customer journeys, and more. In the face of economic uncertainty, you can't afford not to.



About CallMiner

CallMiner is the global leader in conversation intelligence to drive business performance improvement. Powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning, CallMiner delivers the industry's most comprehensive platform to analyse omnichannel customer interactions at scale, allowing organisations to interpret sentiment and identify patterns to reveal deep understanding from every conversation.

By connecting the dots between insights and action, CallMiner enables companies to identify areas of opportunity to drive business improvement, growth, and transformational change more effectively than ever before. CallMiner is trusted by the world's leading organisations across retail, financial services, healthcare and insurance, travel and hospitality, and more.



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