

**TRANSFORMING CX CHALLENGES
INTO OPPORTUNITIES BY GETTING
BACK TO BASICS**



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INTRODUCTION

The early 2020s were challenging for the customer experience (CX) industry, forcing many BPO and CX providers to face the reality that CX would never be the same. As we navigate a pandemic and post-pandemic environment, the key theme is risk mitigation and workforce challenges.

Nevertheless, despite the problematic shift in customer dynamics, operational strategies, and employee work culture, the industry has many opportunities to emerge from these challenges with a high success rate.

With CX providers falling behind during the pandemic and customers needing to contact brands more than ever before, the key is getting back to basics to reduce lead times, increase communication channels, and improve customer care.

This white paper includes insights from global leaders at leading CX outsourcer Infocom during a round table discussion moderated by Ryan Strategic Advisory, exploring the many challenges CX providers face in 2022 and how they can transform them into opportunities.





USING TECHNOLOGY TO BOOST EFFICIENCY AND TRUST

One of the most critical issues that emerged from the round table discussion was the degradation of transaction resolution throughout the industry. Attendees pointed out that customers were contacting brands several times to resolve their issues, sometimes waiting on hold for hours, primarily because of the increase in call volumes and the lack of true omnichannel solutions.

According to participants, voice volumes are rising as much as 30-40%, with customers preferring human-to-human connection after months of isolation and pandemic-related segregation. The pandemic also led to market disruption among different age groups, with more people in older generations using digital technology to pursue customer care.

As more people leverage technology to achieve their CX needs, brands must improve trust by reiterating the importance of data privacy and prioritizing every interaction. Participants of the round table agreed that treating customers like valued partners is an effective method for building trust in this area. Equally, helping agents develop the ability to communicate quick, concise answers in a timely fashion will boost that trustworthiness manifold.

Moreover, CX providers have to uncover ways to use technology to improve efficiency, blending insights from phone, email, social media, and chat channels to expedite customer resolutions and improve overall CX.

SPENDING SHRINKAGE: DOING MORE WITH LESS

Outside of the customer dynamic, according to research by Ryan Strategic Advisory, most enterprises in crucial demand markets — North America, Western Europe, and Australia — anticipate their CX budgets to either shrink or stay flat in 2022. This will push customer management outsourcers to find ways to improve CX with limited spending capacity.

During the round table, participants were bullish about implementing strategies to reduce the reliance on Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) and Net Promoter Scores (NPS), pointing to the evolving reality of consumer needs during the pandemic. In addition, they pointed out the immense value in introducing tools that proactively identify poor interactions, helping teams perform service recovery, call the customer, turn the experience around, and turn them into long-term customers instead of losing them to a rival brand.

Ultimately, any provider with decreasing budgets should include sentiment analytics, service recovery improvements, and overall higher quality of work in their CX improvement strategies. After all, it costs six times more to win a new customer than it does to retain an existing one, so smart investments to reduce customer attrition should be a priority for every business.

AGENT CAPABILITIES AND RETAINING TALENT

Employee attrition has always been one of the contact center sector's most complex challenges. With "The Great Resignation" impacting several locations worldwide, there is a tremendous amount of pressure on the industry to retain talent.



As discussed during the round table, successful retention strategies revolve around improving the training experience to make it repeatable and empowering. As such, participants agreed that providers should focus on motivating agents and driving quality through exceptional training techniques rather than short-term benefits.

Remote training is a particular concern since many agents still work from home. Training technologies that utilize online learning platforms and include a robust knowledge base can drastically improve speed-to-proficiency and quality of work.

Since the pandemic, mental health concerns among the workforce have also grown exponentially, adding more importance to improving the remote training experience. Agents need to feel valued, cared for, and included in the company's decisions to avoid unnecessary loss of talent. Most crucially, successful employee retention leads to improved CX.



THE SOCIAL MEDIA CONUNDRUM

After voice, social media is the most deployed CX channel for enterprises in major global markets, so the importance of responding urgently, with emotion, while conveying a trustworthy brand is higher than ever on these platforms.

Social media transactions are far more delicate in their public domain since everyone can read them. Thus, brands need to understand when it's appropriate to engage in a public manner and when to bring more sensitive issues into a private domain with the customer.

Additionally, conveying emotion in written communications is always a challenge, so companies invest in ways to introduce that emotional level of the customer experience through social media, including standards that outline how to interact casually or formally and use emojis appropriately.

EVOLVING OFFSHORE AND NEARSHORE DELIVERY MODELS

Round table participants agreed that offshore and nearshore delivery models are here to stay, despite some enterprise executives' varying comfort levels when entertaining alternatives to domestic onshore solutions. Part of the reason for that is product shortages, increasing volumes, and service level inefficiencies deriving from poorly implemented digital channels.

Again, the pandemic was the primary reason brands were on the fence about offshore and nearshore, but now many decision-makers embrace it. Enterprises began to run pilots to test out offshore and nearshore contact center facilities, usually leading to complete contracts when their maturity and expertise became apparent.

Still, one statistic that emerged during the discussion was that prospects contacted only 10% of client references given on RFPs, so most enterprises are falling short in their due diligence process. The risk here is that BPO and CX providers may perform exceptionally in one industry but fall short in others, so brands would benefit from contacting all client references to understand the environment and the culture providers are cultivating fully.

HYBRID CX AND THE FUTURE

Hopefully, with the pandemic phasing out, many enterprises are pressuring CX providers to bring agents back into physical offices and contact centers. At the same time, there's also pressure from the labor side, with many agents communicating a solid desire to retain their work-at-home benefits on some level.

Against that ongoing challenge, enterprises realize they have to encourage customers to move towards email, chat, or social media channels while staying mindful of the potential issues around internet bandwidth reliability in a remote setting.



According to the Infocom round table participants, some brands are now moving chat and email support to a work-from-home setup while keeping smaller teams of voice agents in the contact centers to handle complex work, inbound calls, and customer callbacks. Others are reviewing their transactions to determine which are low-risk and which they feel comfortable bringing to a work-from-home setup while leaving the more complicated and data-sensitive ones back at the site.



Many of these decisions are industry-specific, with brands in the financial sector insistent that their CX providers run on secure, breach-proof systems to protect customer data. Only then are financial enterprises comfortable deploying work-at-home agents.

Overall, participants agreed that highly regulated industries that deal with sensitive customer data find it the hardest to get behind a hybrid model of CX outsourcing. But, on the flip side, the retail space is primed to take full advantage of it, leaning into the benefit of employee swell during seasonal ups and downs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Infocom leaders stressed the importance of CX and BPO providers getting back to basics, focusing on improving customer experience amid rising volumes.
- Technology and analytics can allow providers to increase customer trust, enhance data security, and retain talent in a challenging employment environment.
- Smart investments to reduce customer attrition include tools that proactively identify poor interactions, help teams perform service recovery, and enable a repeatable, empowering employee training experience.
- Social media channels continue to grow after the pandemic, requiring providers to implement new standards that bring an emotional level to the social media customer experience.
- While nearshore and offshore delivery models are gaining popularity, enterprises will find a better cultural and professional fit by following up on client references during the due diligence process.
- Hybrid CX is here to stay but remains difficult for highly regulated industries to implement. As a result, many brands are compromising, with voice moving back in-center while digital channels remain remote.

ABOUT RYAN STRATEGIC ADVISORY

Ryan Strategic Advisory is a specialized agency providing BPO advisory services focusing on customer experience excellence, work-at-home delivery, BCP, and offshoring.

ABOUT INFOCOM

Infocom Technologies is a Philippine-based CX management specialist with over two decades of experience. Our dedicated team of 4,800 CX experts is strategically located across four delivery centers: Makati City, Quezon City, and Dumaguete. We combine strategy, people, innovation, and analytics with a steadfast commitment to your company's success.

Altius Link, Inc., a synergistic partnership between KDDI Corporation and Mitsui & Co., Ltd. owns Infocom Technologies. This new company combines KDDI Evolva and Relia's expertise in contact centers, back-office operations, and information technology to create Japan's largest contact center by sales value. Altius Link aims to become a leading digital BPO and trusted partner to companies globally.

INFOCOM ROUND TABLE PARTICIPANTS



Rommel Regino

Global Head of Operations
and Sales



Mark Belcher

Chief Solutions Architect



Aly Antonio

Senior Vice President for
Strategic Alliances and
Synergy



Ricelle Matti

Senior Vice President and
Regional Head of Operations
covering Japan and the
Asian Pacific region

RYAN
STRATEGIC
ADVISORY

For more information please visit www.ryanadvisory.com.