Customer-Centric Strategies

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Hosted CRM with "Built-in" Contact Center Solution: The Choice for Lower TCO and Increased Flexibility

Executive Summary

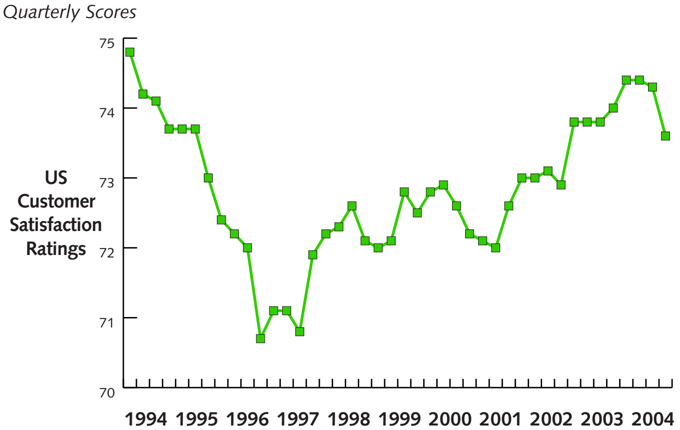
Today's competitive markets require companies of all sizes to continuously improve their ability to handle customer interactions across all channels. As a result of competition, customer satisfaction continues to rise and drives this trend (see Exhibit 1). Staying still is not an option: If enterprises don't consciously plan to take advantage of technology improvements and adopt innovative market solutions to address these requirements, their competitors will. In particular, there are several key requirements:

- **The need for a unified agent desktop:** Use of web-based communications will continue to rise with the increased deployment of broadband. However, as contact centers off-load simpler interactions to web self-service, the need for a single unified agent desktop that ensures the complete history of interactions across channels is captured and made available for agents becomes paramount.

Exhibit 1

Competition Continues to Raise Customer Satisfaction Levels

Source: American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), 1994 to 2005 National Quarterly Scores



Note: ACSI is compiled by measuring customer satisfaction with a representative 41 industries in ten sectors of the economy. It is updated on a rolling basis with new data for one or more sectors each quarter replacing data collected in the prior year.

- **The need for flexible, distributed contact center infrastructure:** Communications costs continue to drop. With VoIP, enterprises can more readily take advantage of lower labor costs in offshore locations. However, the resulting geographically dispersed workforce will require an equally flexible and distributed contact center infrastructure.
- **The need for business insight to drive efficiency and effectiveness:** To continuously monitor operations and look for both efficiency and effectiveness improvements, enterprises are demanding comprehensive real-time and historical analytics. In many cases, vendors are responding with tighter integration among all the various application and data sources in the contact center. However, this approach is not on par with hosted CRM solutions with built-in contact center infrastructure, which provides a single analytic platform across CRM and communications.
- **The growing need for hosted applications:** Enterprises are increasingly taking advantage of hosted applications for their CRM, and this extends to contact center infrastructure as well. Although this approach has clear advantages, many implementations still require some integration and unanticipated management costs—unless the contact center solution is prebuilt.

The total cost of ownership (TCO) analysis in this Report shows that deploying a built-in model, where both CRM software and contact center infrastructure are hosted by one vendor, has distinct cost advantages during a 3-year period. The savings start at 21% for a 25-agent contact center and continue to improve, up to as much as 59% for a 400-agent center. These savings come largely from eliminating best-of-breed integration costs and the associated contact center and IT staff. Larger contact centers may still want to pursue the best-of-breed model, but these economics bear investigation when considering the next steps in evolving their contact centers. SMBs that lack the ability to hire or develop skilled staff can rapidly deploy a relatively sophisticated contact center quickly and with minimal upfront expense.

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I. Why Managing Communications Is Important

In today's competitive market, it's even more critical for companies to sell more to new and existing customers, and retain their best customers while delivering profitable service. A critical element to success is differentiated customer service. Strong customer relationships are critical to the success of many businesses. Businesses rarely have a second chance to make a quality first impression. As a result, companies must deliver a consistent, personalized experience in-context to customer demands across all touchpoints (phone, e-mail, web and in person).

Customers today demand convenient, personalized communications. However, customer expectations may vary. Although the majority of customer interactions are still primarily phone-based, many customers simply want the ability to send an inquiry via e-mail or the web. Meeting the unique needs of customer communications is mission critical. Whatever their channel interaction of choice, customers need to interact with knowledgeable staff members who can answer questions, solve problems and assist with purchases.

Adding to the complexity, contact center managers are being asked to do more with less, such as meet and exceed service-level agreements (SLAs); adhere to Do Not Call legislation; escalate and resolve hot issues quickly; and measure telemarketing ROI. The bottom line is many contact centers are transforming from a traditional cost center to a profit center. Communications are no longer pigeonholed into just a call center for customer support. All customer-facing employees need the power to deliver quality service and assist in sales and marketing efforts.

Building and maintaining a traditional premises-based multichannel contact center is often cost-prohibitive and resource-intensive, even for large enterprises. However, today's competitive environment increasingly will force all businesses to provide customers with a personalized experience across sales, marketing and service interactions.

Market Requirements for a Multichannel Contact Center

A multichannel contact center is not a new concept. It has been a gradual evolution from the traditional call center, which is optimized for maximizing call volume. Today's contact centers tend to be loosely integrated silos of interaction infrastructure, with live calls, e-mail and web interactions all managed and tracked in separate systems that all reside on an agent's desktop. Although telephone and interactive voice response (IVR) remain the primary means of customer communication—70% to 80% for most companies—e-mail, chat and web self-service are growing alternatives to voice.

Enterprises Struggle to Tie IT Customer Contact Investments to Customer Satisfaction

Enterprises are slowly moving toward a more holistic view of contact center technology investments and their effect on revenue. It's hard to change behavior because it's much easier to relate investments to cost reductions in contact centers. The traditional measurements focus on controlling costs: They are easy to obtain and understand, and therefore the business case is easy to document and deploy.

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Customer Contact Center Silos Still Exist Within Enterprises

A majority of enterprises manage their customer service resources to derive quarter-by-quarter financial results. The desire to maintain customer satisfaction levels while reducing costs drives most contact centers. A clear example of this is the trend during the last 5 years to move back-office and contact center front-office work to lower cost locations, such as the Philippines and India. This is opposed to high-performance organizations, which have the longer term goals of increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty by refining, optimizing and integrating all their channels of customer contact. Assessing customer satisfaction and its relationship to both top-line and bottom-line growth is challenging, but high-performance organizations accept this and still drive long-term investments in technology to achieve that goal.

Although the technology issues that create silos of customer contact rules and data are dropping fast, it's now clear that sales, marketing and customer service are still operating in their separate silos and compete for individual customer contact technology projects.

Exhibit 2
Contact Center Deployment Options
Source: Yankee Group, 2005

	Best-of-Breed	Suites
Hosted	**Hosted Separately** **Deployment option:** Separate CRM and hosted contact center infrastructure **Characteristics:** Componentized offerings; integration resources required; higher TCO	**Built-in** **Deployment option:** Hosted CRM with built-in contact center **Characteristics:** Single vendor approach; integrated analytics; single workflow across channels, lowest TCO
On-Premises	**Premises Best-of-Breed** **Deployment option:** Premises-based **Characteristics:** High level of functionality; systems integrators; feature bloat with unused functionality; multiple vendors, highest TCO	**Premises-Based Suites** **Deployment option:** Premises-based **Characteristics:** Lower integration and management costs; functionality improving; still requires internal staff

Market Forces Driving a Suite Approach vs. Best-of-Breed

Although the market for contact center technology has focused on best-of-breed components, it's evolving to more integrated software suites. Evidence of this trend exists on both the supply side and the demand side. Vendor consolidation and road maps that stress integration instead of incremental feature expansion are proof of this trend on the supply side. The demand side of the market is showing a gradual increase in companies planning to purchase contact center technology from a smaller set of vendors. Also on the rise are enterprises that wish to forgo the ownership of CRM and contact center infrastructure and evaluate hosting options. Exhibit 2 highlights the main characteristics of the deployment options and their effect on TCO.

Most midsize to large contact centers are based on relatively brittle architectures, where many disparate technologies are integrated into a distinctly unique and costly combination of components. When contact centers have attempted to reduce the number of vendors to control management costs, the available technology was still more component-oriented than truly integrated. For example, acquiring an IVR system from vendors such as Avaya, Nortel and Genesys doesn't ensure tight integration with their automatic call distribution (ACD) or computer-telephone integration (CTI) products. This results in high costs to maintain, upgrade and test across all the integration pain points in contact centers. Industry estimates have ranged as high as \$12,000 to \$20,000 per seat per year for ongoing testing and maintenance of contact center technology. In addition, applications that span components such as analytics are expensive to implement, thereby limiting their deployment.

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A Fully Integrated Solution Enables True Analytics

The expense of integrating contact center components has prevented enterprises from adopting many applications that would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations.

This is especially true with contact center analytics. Integrating CRM data with output from other contact center infrastructure components is complex and labor-intensive. Very few organizations have successfully integrated detailed data on customer communications and interaction typically output by an ACD (e.g., length of call, number of transfers, speed of answer) with transaction outcomes (e.g., closure of a trouble ticket, revenue of a cross-sale, marketing promotion) from other sources such as CRM software. Having the ability to link these together for analysis purposes would help contact centers further identify and improve critical elements, such as investments in agent training and improvements in business processes. The contact centers that do this pay the high cost of dedicating as many as two or three full-time equivalents (FTEs) to simply consolidate the data.

The Hosting Option

Because there are many options available to add or better integrate multiple methods of communications, companies must understand the differences between the alternatives, such as adding on to existing customer-premises equipment (CPE) or transitioning toward hosted solutions. The top-line drivers of migrating to an integrated multichannel contact center both for CPE and hosted include:

- Ability to deploy agents around the globe to reduce costs and provide "follow the sun" service
- Support mobile workforce and work-at-home agent communities
- Offer new channels of communication
- Reduce integration costs
- Improve analytics
- Speed time-to-market

There will always be large enterprises that spend much to own their infrastructure application running on their own premises. Customers evaluating a CPE solution need to consider:

- Data and business logic are separated across the communications and application stacks, limiting data analysis and increasing complexity. An example of this would be a contact center using an Avaya ACD for managing channels of communication with Siebel enterprise for the agent desktop. Data about customer interactions is spread across the two systems, which impedes better analytics.
- The growth of packaged CRM applications in the past decade has enabled the centralization of customer data and better equipped agents to deliver high-quality service, but the traditional CRM implemented at the call center has largely ignored the actual customer interactions with loose CTI at best.
- Lack of an integrated solution will negatively affect universal workflow rules for routing different communications based on skills, and create limitations on analysis and reporting.

The major benefits of a hosted model include:

- Rapidly scale capacity to match business demand, such as seasonality, recall marketing campaigns and disaster recovery
- Preintegrated agent desktop with IP telephony, depending on hosted solution vendor
- Reducing upfront integration and implementation costs and ongoing upgrade, testing and maintenance costs

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Best Practices for Managing Customer Communications

Providing superior service across all interaction channels is essential for large and small organizations. Once a customer contacts the company, businesses must manage that customer quickly and accurately across any touchpoint. A poor service experience will have a negative ripple effect on performance. Over time, it could potentially:

- Increase costs by potentially forcing multiple interactions with different employees over multiple channels—customers will put in multiple service requests via phone and the web through
  e-mail or chat
- Decrease potential wallet share by losing valuable sales opportunities
- Force the customer to look at competitive offerings

It's important to treat customers well and also intelligently. However, it's practically impossible to service customers intelligently without tight integration with the CRM solution. An integrated solution is critical to deliver highly personalized service with automated routing of inbound communications based on a customer's needs and agent availability to maximize first-call resolution. Without built-in contact centers in the CRM system, businesses can't easily:

- Segment customers to deliver premium service for their highest valued customers by placing them in priority and reserving the most skilled agents for special customers
- Service other customers with lower cost alternatives, such as automated response using IVR technology
- Provide effective web self-service for all customers depending on the situation
- Enable real-time customer information to be displayed in-context on the agent desktop

Another benefit of having contact center technologies and CRM capabilities integrated is improved analytics. Companies can then take superior service to the next level by integrating traditional contact centers metrics, such as average handle time and first-call resolution, and run analysis on their effect on traditional CRM metrics, such as deal size, pipeline and close rates. Integrated contact center and CRM analytics enable companies to gain business insight by answering questions such as:

- Which toll-free number created the most opportunities and return on marketing investment?
- What communications channel leads to more sales?
- Can we increase sales by adding more agents during peak calling times?

Integrated insight can improve performance by providing contact center managers with historical analysis of trends in key performance indicators (KPIs) over time, such as average handle time by agent, workgroup or division, to understand:

- Campaign effectives (DNIS: revenue)
- Channel effectiveness (channel: revenue)
- Average speed to answer and its effect on dropped calls
- Sales agent metrics (average talk time: opportunity generation)

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II. TCO Options

Enterprises have many deployment models for enhancing or building out their contact centers. On-premises contact center suites promise to lower the TCO by primarily reducing integration costs while ignoring the capital investment for equipment. Today, these suites are not mature or comprehensive, so the issue of managing multiple vendors and technologies remains.

Secondly, CRM application software can be hosted, enabling a more usage-based model. Contact center components such as ACDs, IVRs, quality monitoring, e-mail handling and CTI—which are now merging into suites—can also be hosted, bringing the same usage-based model to the rest of the contact center infrastructure, while still requiring loose integration and occasionally premises-based infrastructure.

Of particular interest is a newly emerging option where all contact center components and infrastructure is built-in to the hosted CRM application and sold as one usage-based hosted model.

For all deployment options, this analysis assumes that the agent desktop hardware, including phones and LAN infrastructure, generally stays the same.

The Premises Equipment Model

A very high percent of contact centers are constructed with best-of-breed components that are purchased and managed by the enterprise. In some cases, service providers and integrators operate these systems for clients and present a per-agent or desktop charge to simplify the financial and operations model. Underlying these service offerings is still the same best-of-breed architecture. This model affords a high level of functionality, security and the ability to customize but with a high cost of management and complexity. This complexity requires enterprises to put in support staff for the following functions:

- Telecom staff to handle voice traffic engineering
- Systems integrators to bridge the CRM and contact center suites
- IT or telecom staff to configure, update and manage contact routing
- IT staff to upgrade, maintain and test the entire set of components
- Contact center or IT staff to manage reporting, including custom report requests
- For multisite contact centers, IT and telecom staff to configure, maintain and troubleshoot multiple layers of contact routing and reporting
- IT staff to coordinate and manage numerous vendor relationships for each component

Separate Hosted CRM and Contact Center Infrastructure

Hosting CRM software and some other components—such as IVR, e-mail routing and queuing, and knowledge management—are reasonably mature offerings in today's marketplace. Hosting the rest of the contact center infrastructure (ACD, CTI) is now emerging as a viable option for enterprises. Typically, various service providers deliver these components (one for CRM; the other for telephony), requiring the enterprise to integrate and manage the coordination of the vendors. This model goes a long way in reducing the staffing costs highlighted above in the premises equipment model, but still carries significant integration expenses and internal resources.

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Hosted CRM with Built-in Contact Center

The third model has both the CRM applications software and contact center infrastructure hosted and managed by one vendor. The agent desktop is tightly integrated into the hosted CRM application and back-end reporting, and analytics are consolidated into one customer interaction data warehouse. Business rules based on CRM data are easily applied to routing customer contacts due to the tight integration between contact center infrastructure and CRM software. This model has a positive effect on IT staff that support the contact center. Software license management is positively affected and optimized because there is only one vendor and one per-agent charge to manage all the functions.

TCO Model Definitions

The TCO model used for analyzing contact center deployments accounted for all hardware, software, installation, maintenance and ongoing support components. In each case from 25 to 100 agents, the model assumed a single site and the underlying communications infrastructure (LAN, WAN, hardware and software for WAN connections, and phones) stayed constant (see Exhibit 3). Also, we assumed the per-minute network costs were constant and they were excluded from the analysis:

- **Contact center components and staffing:** This category includes the servers, software and staff required to manage customer interactions across all media types (voice, e-mail and web collaboration). ACD, CTI and appropriately sized IVR software is included in this category. Implementation includes installation charges and professional services. Under this category, the staffing cost is the fully loaded rate for internal or outsourced contact center and IT resources, which provide ongoing support for the contact center infrastructure. This staffing includes vendor negotiations, coordination and management. When these elements are hosted, the usage charges are the monthly per-seat charges.
- **CRM application and staffing:** Similar to the contact center category, this section includes the servers, software and staff required to manage the CRM software application for agents in the contact center. Implementation includes installation and charges for professional services. Staffing is the ongoing personnel required to maintain and administer the CRM application, including vendor negotiations, coordination and management. When the application is hosted, the usage charges are the monthly per-seat or per-named-user charges.
- **Integration of contact center and CRM:** For the premises equipment and hosted separately models, developing and maintaining the integration of the CRM application software and the contact center infrastructure is a requirement. This line item goes away in the built-in model.
- **Year 2 to year 5 annual costs:** In this portion of the model, ongoing upgrades, maintenance, staffing, and so forth are calculated to represent the steady state of running the contact center after the initial year 1 implementation. The numbers displayed are for a typical year of usage, upgrades and staffing.
- **3-year TCO:** By adding 2 years of operational costs plus the initial implementation in year 1, a 3-year TCO is calculated. The model compares the premises and hosted separately options to the built-in option.

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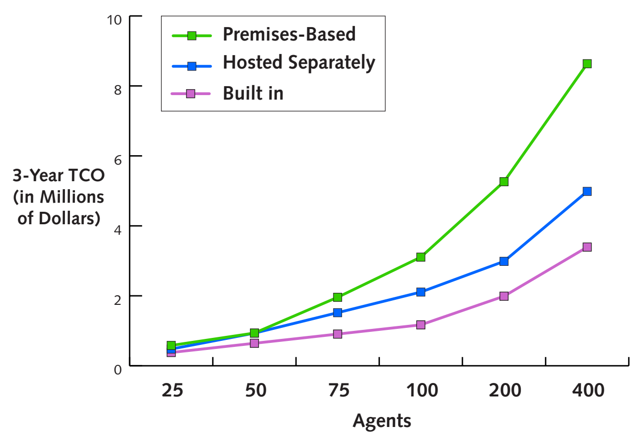
Exhibit 3
TCO Analysis for Contact Center Deployments with 75 Agents
Source: Yankee Group, 2005

	Premises-Based	Hosted Separately	Built-In
Year 1 Implementation and Operation			
Contact Center Components and Staffing			
Hardware	40,500		
Software	142,500		
Implementation	91,500	22,500	
Staffing	234,000	156,000	78,000
Subscription/Usage Charges		90,000	
Subtotal	***508,500***	***268,500***	***78,000***
CRM Application and Staffing			
Hardware	14,000		
Software	112,500		
Implementation	189,750	28,125	33,750
Staffing	156,000	117,000	78,000
Subscription/Usage Charges		112,500	135,000
Subtotal	***472,250***	***257,625***	***246,750***
Integration of Contact Center and CRM	***24,000***	***16,800***	
Year 1 TCO	***1,004,750***	***542,925***	***324,750***
Year 2 to 5 Annual Costs			
Maintenance	55,710		
Upgrades	30,950	12,000	
Staffing	390,000	273,000	156,000
Subscription/Usage Charges		202,500	135,000
Subtotal	***476,660***	***487,500***	***291,000***
3-Year TCO	***1,958,070***	***1,517,925***	***906,750***
Built-In 3-Year TCO Savings	1,051,320	611,175	
Built-In 3-Year TCO Percentage Savings	54%	40%	

TCO Analysis

Consistent with other IT trends toward hosting, the analysis of hosting contact center infrastructure coupled with CRM software helps reduce enterprise costs by reducing the staff required to manage infrastructure and converting hardware and software expenditures to usage-based fees. The added benefit of the built-in model is the elimination of the integration costs between contact center infrastructure and CRM application software, and the staff required to manage across two separate service providers. The built-in model also extends these benefits to the enterprise by reducing the monthly usage fees from $225 per agent to $150 per agent. This allows the built-in model to scale in a more linear fashion as the contact center increases in size, whereas the premises model escalates more rapidly due to the increased staff required to manage the many diverse elements (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4
Contact Center Deployments Model Analysis
Source: Yankee Group, 2005



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III. Conclusions and Recommendations

The model of built-in contact center infrastructure integrated with CRM software carries a much lower TCO and bears investigation by enterprises looking to upgrade their contact centers or SMBs that have delayed contact center implementations due to resource constraints. This Report has reviewed a number of hard-dollar cost justifications that are mostly tied to displacing or eliminating IT support staff. Other attributes that vary by organization can also be tied into the TCO analysis:

- As reporting and analytics become more pervasive across the enterprise, contact centers can improve both efficiency and effectiveness by looking deeper into contact center operations. This will add to the benefit of the built-in model.
- A single user interface will improve agent productivity. The return on this improvement is highly dependent on the current desktop environment and how a more streamlined environment helps both efficiency and effectiveness.
- There is more flexibility in deploying queuing and routing changes. Once the enterprise has better analytical data, it can easily take action and make changes; whereas in other models, routing changes would cause a ripple effect of time-consuming changes across contact center components, mainly the IVR, ACD and CTI. The model doesn't include conversion costs of an existing center to the new deployment options. Retraining of support staff and agents must be factored in, along with technology conversion work.
- Although both hosting options can be deployed to allow corporate data to reside behind their firewalls, some enterprises may believe the most secure option is to own and run their own technology on-site.
- Many enterprises may still want to custom-build the CRM application and contact center infrastructure for their highly customized business needs, and the only path to that end may be the premises equipment model.
- Hosting may introduce complexities in sharing contact center traffic with an outsourcer; these are better handled by the premises equipment option. In some cases, the hosting models can accommodate it, but the details bear investigation before going down this path.

Both hosting models provide rapid deployment for both single-site and especially geographically distributed contact centers. To ramp up operations quickly, new contact centers can focus on hiring, staffing and real estate issues, rather than concentrating on technology infrastructure.

Recommendations

- **Enterprise contact center managers need an architectural road map.** To manage the technology infrastructure of contact centers effectively, enterprises need a long-term plan targeting the migration to suites and deployment alternatives such as hosting. This technology road map must move the organization toward more integration of customer contact data and business processes, and less toward incremental features in individual contact silos. It must span all contact points, including those managed by outsourcers.
- **Adopt a strong IT governance plan for customer contact investments.** All customer contact stakeholders—including marketing, sales and service—must drive the IT governance plan. They must align on the business goals first and technology second.
- **Vendors need to consolidate and integrate.** To survive in the contact center technology marketplace, vendors must expand their footprint in client accounts. It's not sufficient to focus energy on a specific module or best-of-breed component: That is a clear formula for business failure during the next 2 years.
- **Contact center suites and hosting can reduce TCO.** The maturation and commoditization of best-of-breed contact center components further expose integration costs in the contact center technology budget. Eliminating or dramatically reducing integration costs is a major element in making the business case for migration to suites. Hosting can displace staffing costs and convert the purchase of assets to usage-based expenses.

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