



Applying automation to IT to help call centers in the wake of COVID-19

From crisis response to thriving in the new reality



Value proposition

As we shift from short-term responses to the COVID-19 challenge, to a new way of life, enterprises that employ self-service and scaled automation capabilities to improve customer and employee experiences will likely outpace their competition.

Prior to COVID-19, IDC predicted that, by 2022, 80 percent of revenue growth will depend on digital offerings and operations.¹ It is important to consider both customer and employee experiences as enterprises emerge into a new reality. Both customers and employees will expect more out of their digital experiences. Organizations that focus on end-to-end customer and employee experiences to find opportunities to enhance automation and artificial intelligence capabilities are expected to be better able to adapt to market conditions.

Web portals with chatbots, contact center systems supported by augmented reality, and omnichannel IT service delivery models with integrated tools are just a few examples of self-service and automation-based capabilities that can be used to increase digital interactions.

¹ <https://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=US43548818>



Triggers and pain points

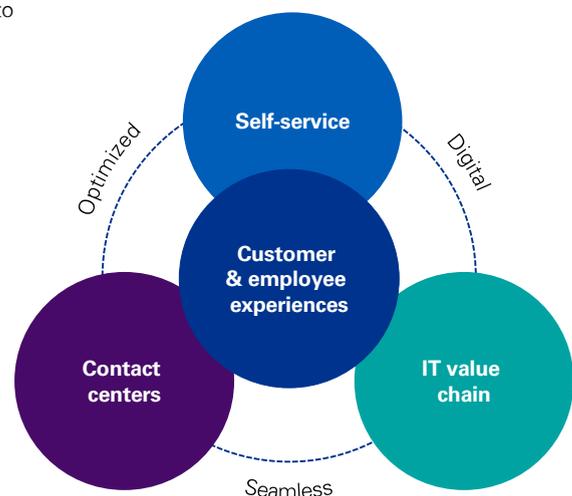
- Limited ability to respond quickly to shifts in business needs due to long application development lead times
- Highly manual operational support
- Inconsistent or nonpersonalized customer and employee experiences across service delivery channels
- High percentage of nondigital interactions in contact centers
- Low customer and employee satisfaction scores and customer retention
- Long wait times in phone queues
- Poor customer and employee experiences caused by underperforming bots
- Lack of simplified means for customers and employees to consume services



Our perspective

With the global spread of COVID-19, social distancing and self-isolation tactics are being recommended or mandated by health officials, forcing companies to redefine how they conduct business. Without face-to-face interaction, customers and employees interface directly with the systems currently in place for their needs. Customer and employee experience hinges almost completely on self-service and contact centers. Automation and artificial intelligence can enhance user experiences and optimize the IT value chain in this new digital reality.

Organizations that chart the course and **improve self-service** and automation can **retain existing customers and employees**, **outperform competition**, and react to changing business needs.



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	Resilience	Recovery	New reality
Self-service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assess resiliency of critical business systems – Adjust IT support models – Ensure employees and customers can access self-service portals remotely – Validate cybersecurity capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify gaps that exist across self-service channels and develop options for filling gaps – Identify areas of AI/ML/automation enhancement and introduce chatbots and virtual assistants to improve user experiences – Implement upgrades/enhancements to availability/reliability as needed – Institute tools for measuring self-service outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support security and resiliency by design – Complete implementations at scale, across channels – Develop AI/ML/Automation enhancements – Deploy AI-augmented solutions that are integrated across channels – Simplify user experience across channels
Contact centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure network/VPN can support remote working and customer contact volumes – Identify capacity of current contact center capabilities and processes – Review contact center work volumes to identify preferred handling of different request types – Determine new ways to automate contact centers to streamline process performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Explore platforms that provide robotic process automation as well as AI and machine learning – Establish mechanisms to quantify and measure the quality of customer and employee experiences – Put in place mechanisms to continually disseminate agent knowledge into AI systems – Deflect call volume through voice bots or chatbots, intelligent routing, and automation of rote tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Leverage AI to enable more empathetic agent experiences through tools that track customer and employee sentiment or preferences and highlight tailored knowledge, offers, or services – Develop automated contact centers based on continually improved AI systems – Implement predictive support utilizing machine learning for the most common support requests
IT value chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Prioritize automation of operational tasks (provisioning, access, change, etc.) to shorten lead times – Set remote working standards and expectations for a culture of collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Integrate automated testing, environment builds, and code reviews to improve flow – Enhance IT’s delivery capabilities to enable DevOps processes in a remote environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Implement advanced automation and integration of DevOps tools across the value chain – Shorten lead times and outages through the use of automation and artificial intelligence (i.e., AIOps)

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Where am I now? - Qualifying questions

Self-service

- Are your channels and touchpoints (e.g., digital, branch, contact center) consistent across product, prices, and promotions?
- Do you have artificial intelligence and automation in place to improve customer and employee experiences?
- Do you approach experience design from both the inside out and the outside in to ensure a human-centric understanding of what customers and employees value and how they engage?
- If you have chat bots or virtual agents, are they integrated to human agents for immediate escalation?
- Have you enabled your employees/customers to contact you in simple consumer-grade methods (text, chat, social, etc.)?

Contact centers

- Does your contact center leverage robotics process automation, artificial intelligence, or machine learning?
- Do your contact centers meet customer and employee expectations?
- Are your contact center platforms integrated with internal and external systems to enable digital interactions and improve user experiences?
- Is your artificial intelligence used within your contact centers built by experienced agents who know how to handle the subtleties of customer and employee interactions?
- Are you effectively deflecting increased call volumes through self-service and automated request fulfillment?
- Are you using ML to analyze agent tasks to identify areas that can be automated?

IT value chain

- How often are application changes reverted?
- Can developers provision preconfigured environments to shorten delivery cycles?
- Can code move through the software development lifecycle seamlessly via integrated tools?
- Are tests automated and cover all relevant test scenarios?
- Are your incidents and outages addressed rapidly through the use of artificial intelligence and automation?
- Have you applied AI or advanced analytics to your backlog, ticket types, problem/incident logs, and retrospectives/root-cause reports to identify trends and apply predictive fixes?



Getting started

As with any journey, the biggest challenge can be taking that first step. Organizations can take the following actions to get started:

- Identify, select, and integrate tools/technologies to improve service delivery models based on validated business needs
- Identify self-service systems of engagement (mobile, web-based, direct access) that can be improved with automation and artificial intelligence
- Assess current IT support models to ensure availability and resiliency of self-service capabilities
- Quantify current contact center work volumes and capabilities and set targets to increase digital transactions supported by automation and intelligent automation
- Design software delivery pipeline with automated go/no-go decision making to shorten service delivery cycles
- Automate routing and resolution of application incidents to increase availability and customer/employee satisfaction.

Contact us

If at any time you need help, please use the information below to get connected to a specialist for more advice and support:



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