The Customer Experience Is Fluid,
Your Contact Center Strategy Should Be Too

FROST & SULLIVAN VISUAL WHITEPAPER

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It's Time to Move Your Contact Center Forward

Inflation, budget-tightening, a threatening recession, and resource reassessment are guiding IT investments. But while companies clearly need to do more with less, they must also continue to maintain (and even improve upon) all measures of customer satisfaction.

For decades, the contact center marched to the mantra of reducing costs while improving CSAT scores. Then came the era of agent engagement, born from the knowledge that happy agents drive better customer engagement. Technology advancements, including automation and artificial intelligence (AI), have expanded and improved upon the ways to engage customers and employees— and digital transformation took off.

Today, contact centers must embrace a mix of in-office and work-at-home models while rethinking how they deliver customer service and what technology they need to do so. Moving to the cloud is part of the solution, but most organizations have deep investments in premises-based solutions. A hybrid approach ensures companies can enable a remote workforce while also giving their customers the best possible experience.
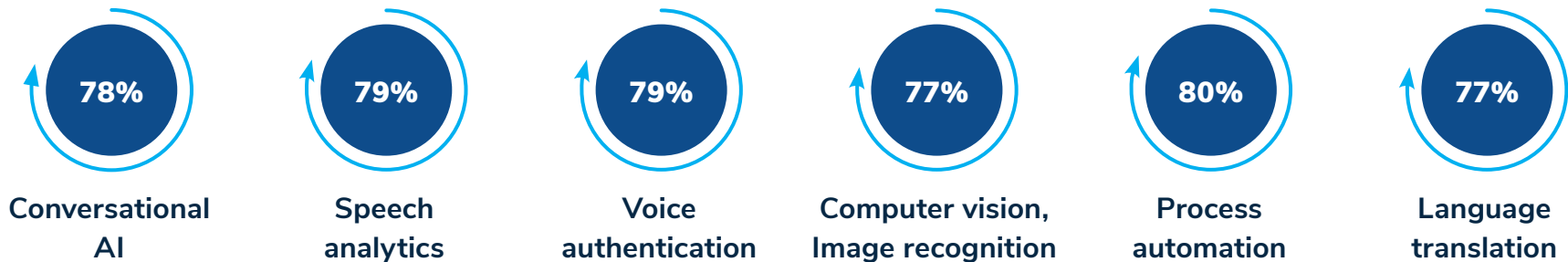
This vBook will look at the changing needs of both companies and their customers to address the ways in which businesses can adjust—now and well into the future.

AI and automation are best consumed through cloud technology. But moving an entire contact center can be an enormous (and expensive) task. Taking a hybrid approach to deploying technology ensures you get the advanced tools you need without the high costs of total transition.

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WHAT WE KNOW:
Advanced Automation and AI Technologies Are Impacting the CX Game

Adding new agent functionality to improve the customer experience is top of mind for most decision-makers who look at AI as the key to success in terms of engagement, which leads to loyalty. And they're not just talking about chatbots or virtual agents. Technology designed to leverage AI to assist agents gives them contextual information to deliver better informed, more personalized interactions. For example, if the system sees that an online customer was looking at kayaks before she contacted the company, it can feed the agent relevant information about kayaks to include in the conversation—spec sheets, accessories, promos, and so on. That leads to better support and, often, higher revenues.

AI Technologies Deployed or Planned To Be Deployed in the Contact Center

78%	79%	79%	77%	80%	77%
Conversational AI	Speech analytics	Voice authentication	Computer vision, Image recognition	Process automation	Language translation

AI-infused technology can make transitioning to new contact center solutions easier for agents and customers, which is crucial to encouraging their adoption.

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Frost & Sullivan Cloud Data Spotlight

Importance of Moving the Contact Center to the Cloud in the Next Two Years

Bar chart:
- Not important: 1%
- Somewhat important: 10%
- Important: 30%
- Very important: 41%
- Crucial: 18%
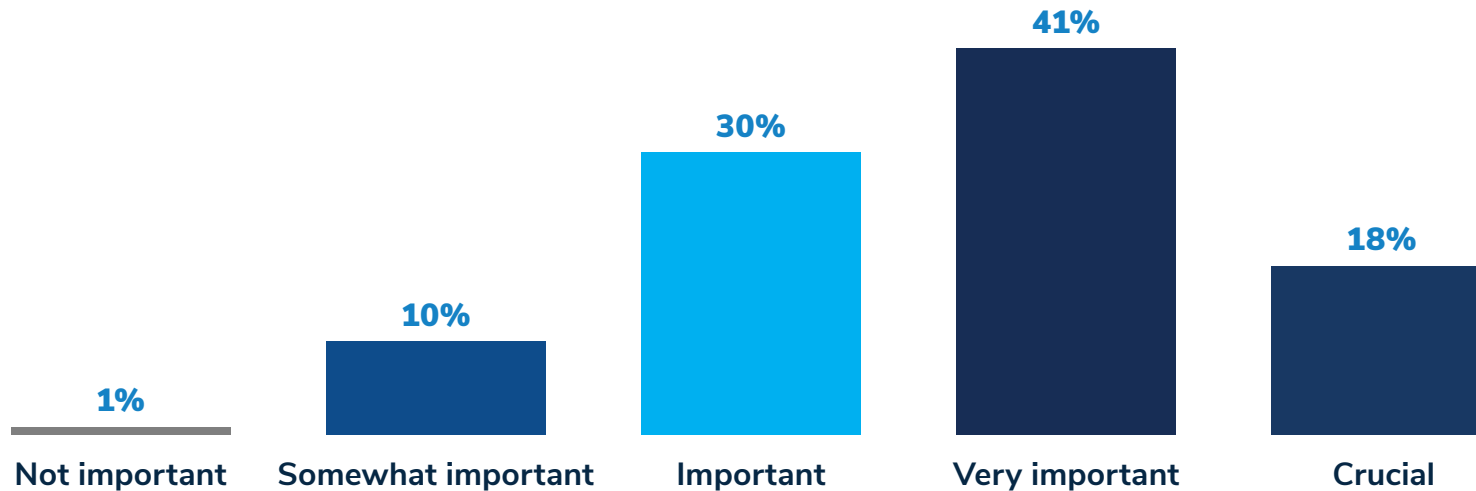
Frost research shows that **38% of companies** have at least part of the contact center in the cloud today.
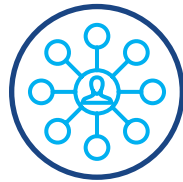
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KEY CONSIDERATIONS:
Cost, Speed, Security, and Compliance

Challenges IT Will Face When Supporting Contact Center(s) During the Next Year

Systems integration; managing multi-vendor solutions	Providing an omnichannel customer experience	Skills shortage; training requirements	Supporting remote/ hybrid work	Dealing with security and privacy concerns

Only 40% of companies deliver omnichannel customer experiences.
Businesses cite the cost of implementation and system integration difficulties as top hurdles.
Survey results reveal that when the voice, live chat, and email channels are fully integrated, customer satisfaction rates are 5% to 10% higher — and hybrid can make that integration happen.

ON-PREMISES OR IN THE CLOUD:
Should You Have to Choose?

When investing in new functionality to improve the customer experience, companies have a choice: host it on premises, in the cloud, or via a hybrid model. There is a cost to transitioning to the cloud—you don't just unplug the contact center and move. But there is also a cost to remaining on a 100%-premises-based system.

It's not just the financial cost, but also all the established workflows, processes, adjacent applications integrated and intertwined, routing, agent and supervisor training, and so on. Although a total cloud-based system may seem to be the easiest route to omnichannel, many organizations have made significant capital investments in contact center infrastructure, trained agents on existing tools, and value the features they have acquired and learned to use for maximum effect. A hybrid approach can smooth the transition and allow organizations to continue to leverage their existing solutions.

Contact center leaders recognize this reality. Even when the ROI is proven, almost half of all decision-makers will not consider replacing their existing infrastructure with a 100% cloud-based solution.

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Futureproofing through Hybrid Models

Embracing a hybrid model is the best way to prepare for constant change. It allows companies to maintain the value of their past investments in premises-based solutions while also making it possible for them to realize the benefits of modern cloud services, especially in the area of AI and advanced analytics. On-premises solutions can still support the core contact center capabilities, but advanced automation and AI require deployment in the cloud. The key is integrating new technology with the existing systems to maximize both investments.

A hybrid model is also best for geographically dispersed organizations. A company with operations across a country or around the world will have highly dispersed employees, physical offices, and IT infrastructure: It's increasingly common for companies to have headquarters in one geographic location, contact center staff in another, and back-office employees in yet another—with data centers spread out among them, or in different locations altogether. A hybrid deployment model provides the flexibility to address data-sovereignty issues as well as support for various location-specific policies, applications, and services.

40% of companies cite complicated access to corporate applications and services as a barrier to performance for remote agents. A hybrid infrastructure can alleviate this problem.

Frost & Sullivan Recommends

Customer trust and loyalty are top of mind for contact center organizations as the world moves toward more and more digital interactions. Businesses have difficulty retaining customers when their competitors are simply a click away. Keeping customers engaged online or through self-service tools is a hurdle for most organizations, but automation is critical for survival.

When looking for a contact center provider, make sure your chosen vendor can meet your needs for a hybrid solution.

Modern Contact Center Must Haves:

- **AI speech analytics and noise removal** to help agents and customers resolve problems faster

- **Attribute-based routing** to ensure every customer is matched with the agent best suited to their needs

- **Workforce engagement tools** to empower agents to be their best and help supervisors be effective coaches

- **Automation and self-service** to let customers use their channel of choice and reduce repetitive and mundane tasks for agents

- **Communication APIs that make integration** easy to ensure you can quickly add new capabilities to your existing infrastructure and connect disparate users, networks, applications, and geographic locations

> Hybrid contact centers let you continue to see a return on your existing investment while reaping the benefits of a cloud-based solution for certain locations, job roles, departments, and geographic locations.

For information on the topics covered here and more, click below.

<u>Innovate</u> without disruption ➜

<u>Discover</u> the power of a digital contact center ➜

<u>Use</u> AI to create deeper connections ➜

<u>Manage</u> the new normal: remote contact centers ➜

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Contact us: Start the discussion ➜

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