



# BREAK DOWN ORGANIZATIONAL SILOS WITH ENTERPRISE COMMUNICATIONS

*IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY, CUT COSTS & CREATE HAPPY CUSTOMERS*

**ABERDEEN**



# INTRODUCTION

Between December 2018 and January 2019, Aberdeen surveyed 369 businesses (of all sizes and industries) across the world to determine the key trends and best practices influencing their customer experience management (CX) activities. Participants were asked to share their level of satisfaction in their ability to use existing insights to achieve their CX goals. Only 27% of companies reported that they are fully satisfied with their ability to use organizational knowledge to attain goals such as improved customer satisfaction rates, reduced average call handle times, etc.

A follow-up question shed light on why 73% of businesses struggle achieving their goals despite a wealth of knowledge to do so.

Aberdeen's analysis revealed that on average, employees spend 17% of their time looking for information — knowledgebase articles, insights from a subject matter expert (SME), etc. — across the business (through technology tools and colleagues) to serve customers.

Put together, the two mentioned findings mean that the lack of processes and tools employees possess to find and use the right knowledge at the right time have a direct, negative impact on customer experience results, such as retention rates, growth in client spend and average handle times.

This eBook highlights how integrating unified communications within contact center activities helps transform company performance across a variety of key performance indicators (KPIs).



## UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS

For the purposes of this research, Aberdeen defines “unified communications” (UC) as a set of technologies that allow employees throughout the business to interact with one another through various modes of communication.

These include phone, video, chat, email, presence, mobility, desktop sharing and directory services.



UC also enables employees to use a single number to interact through all these channels, making it easier for employees to communicate and collaborate.



Technology is only the delivery mechanism for UC; the goal for most UC platforms is to help employees such as contact center agents communicate and collaborate more easily to do their jobs.

## Better Communications Means **Better Contact Center Results**



Findings from Aberdeen's recent CX survey shows that half of all businesses currently use at least 10 channels (e.g., phone, live chat and the web) to interact with their customers. Managing customer interactions across so many channels is complicated. What complicates it further is that employees across multiple departments use these channels; companies must synchronize their activities across all departments to deliver omni-channel (consistent and personalized) customer experiences.

The contact center is often the first point of contact for customers when they need support to resolve an issue. Playing such a critical role, it's vital for contact centers to understand and address the complexity of managing customer interactions so they can meet and exceed customer expectations. This requires contact centers to address the challenges noted in the previous section by empowering employees with the right knowledge at the right time. Between March and June of 2018, Aberdeen surveyed 445 contact centers from around the world.

Findings from this research show that 36% of organizations currently have a process through which they empower contact center agents with UC capabilities. This refers to providing agents with technology tools to streamline how they communicate and collaborate internally with other agents and colleagues in other departments (e.g., sales and back office). Figure 1 shows that enriching contact center activities with better communication and collaboration capabilities helps transform performance results across several traditional contact center KPIs.



## AGENT PRODUCTIVITY

The previous page shows that ‘UC-enabled contact centers’ — those integrating unified communications within their contact center technology toolbox — achieve 31% greater annual improvement in agent productivity (9.4% vs. 7.2%). That’s because agents in those businesses can more easily communicate and collaborate with their peers internally to address customer issues. In turn, this helps agents reduce the time it takes to address client issues — reflected by UC-enabled firms enjoying 3.3% annual improvement (decrease) in average handle times, compared to 0.9% worsening (increase) by non-users of UC.



## DRIVING EFFICIENCY

According to Aberdeen’s June 2018 The Intelligent Contact Center study, improving customer experience results is the number one objective driving contact center executives’ activities. The second top objective, however, is driving efficiency. This refers to improving measures such as agent productivity, shortening average handle times for customer interactions and maximizing first contact resolution rates.

Efficiency is important as when companies achieve it, they observe reduced customer care costs — funds that they can reallocate to drive more innovative programs. Efficiency is also often tied with the ability to deliver more effortless customer experiences as we’ll note later in this eBook.



## FCR RATES

Providing agents with the tools to better communicate and collaborate also helps improve their ability to address customer issues at the first point of contact. This is reflected by first contact resolution (FCR) rates — a metric reflecting the percentage of customer issues successfully addressed at the first point of contact without the clients needing to repeatedly contact the business.

Since repeat contact in a short time period is often tied to contact centers not being able to resolve an issue, it’s linked with customer frustration and elevated effort. Hence, by improving FCR 36% more than others year-over-year, UC-enabled contact centers can also be said to minimize the effort of their clientele (7.5% vs. 5.5%).



## QUALITY SLAs

Some other traditional measures of contact center success include number of quality service-level agreements (SLAs) met and reducing the number of customer transfers.



SLAs vary from company to company, but by empowering employees to better communicate and collaborate, UC-enabled firms achieve 2.2x greater annual increase in this metric (7.1% vs. 3.2%).

The former is measured by the percentage of customer interactions where the company was able to attain its customer commitments — which may be connecting customers to a live agent in less than two minutes or addressing a specific issue in less than an hour.



Because agents can more easily communicate and collaborate with their peers in the business through UC capabilities, data shows that UC-enabled firms also minimize the need to transfer customers from one agent to another. Instead, agents can collaborate with colleagues in real-time to address the issue without the customer being transferred to another agent.

### UC IN ACTION > HEALTHCARE



*UC enables a doctor to remotely oversee a patient surgery through video.*





## CONTACT COSTS

Through the performance improvements highlighted in the previous pages, companies ultimately reduce their support costs by becoming more efficient in managing contact center activities through superior communication and collaboration. Specifically, Aberdeen's research shows that UC-enabled firms enjoy 1.0% annual improvement (decrease) in customer contact / support costs, compared to 1.3% worsening (increase) by others. While this 2.3% gap may not seem significant, it has significant monetary impact.

Let's assume for a contact center:

{ TOTAL CUSTOMER SUPPORT COSTS }

**\$10 Million**

Including labor costs, telephony, real-estate and other related expenses.

ADDING UC

{ TOTAL CUSTOMER SUPPORT COSTS }

**\$9.9 Million**

According to Aberdeen's research, adding UC within its activities would help this business decrease its annual support costs to \$9.9 Million

WITHOUT UC

{ TOTAL CUSTOMER SUPPORT COSTS }

**\$10.13 Million**

This means that adding UC within its activities would help this contact center enjoy

**\$230,000**

annually in reduced customer support costs.

{ SAVINGS OVER 5 YEARS }

**\$1.15 Million**

Over the course of five years, this business would save \$1.15 million — funds that it can invest elsewhere such as adding emerging technologies into its toolbox and driving customer experience innovation.



## SELF SERVICE

Aberdeen's September 2018 Omni-Channel Customer Care study shows that 52% of contact centers currently have a self-service program in place. The same study reveals that this is expected to increase to 69% by the end of 2019. Such growing use of self-service is fueled by customer expectations to resolve simple issues without the need to navigate a complex interactive voice response (IVR) menu and then explain the issue to an agent. Instead, buyers expect brands to provide them with the ability to solve simple issues through various self-service tools, including chat bots.

They prefer interacting with a live agent for more complex issues they can't easily solve themselves. Proving agents with the ability to better communicate and collaborate is therefore helping companies better manage these complex interactions with minimal effort on behalf of the customers.



## SMEs

Some of the capabilities provided by unified communications are the ability to find SMEs in the business, view their availability and communicate with them through mobile devices. Enabling contact center agents with ease of access to find and communicate with a SME who may be at a client site or working remotely makes it easier to access contextual insights needed to handle the customer issue efficiently. In turn, this helps reduce handle times, improve agent productivity and minimize customer effort.

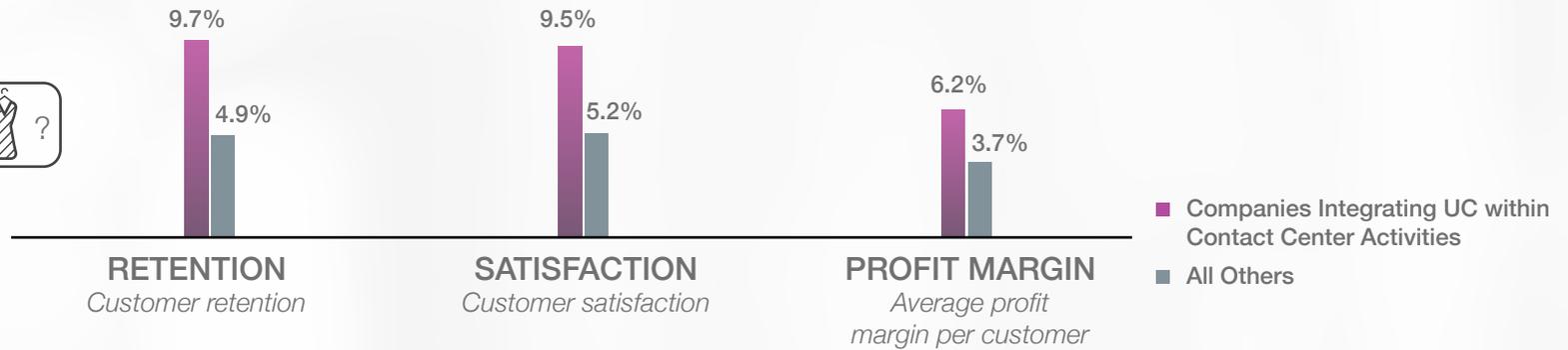
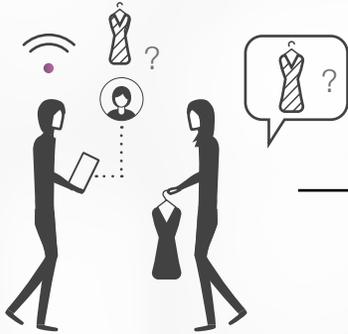
### UC IN ACTION > BANKING

*UC enables a banker to use instant message / chat to discuss a loan application by a client.*



# Working Better Together as a Business Helps Maximize Customer Experience Results

UC enables store associate to communicate with supervisor over tablet while helping customer.



Now that we've outlined how enriching contact center activities helps transform performance across traditional contact center KPIs, let's look at how UC influences customer experience program results.

The graph above shows that UC-enabled contact centers enjoy superior year-over-year performance gains across several key CX metrics. First, they enjoy 83% greater annual improvement in customer satisfaction rates (9.5% vs. 5.2%).

This improvement can be attributed to our earlier analysis asserting that UC-enabled firms make it easier for them to resolve customer issues by empowering their agents to more efficiently find the right knowledge through better communications. This is reflected through their success in metrics such as reduced handle times and improved first contact resolution rates. These efficiency gains enable firms to more seamlessly handle client requests, and hence create happy customers. When customers are happy, they are more likely to reward businesses that meet and exceed their expectations by maintaining their business with these firms and growing their spend.

The findings depicted in the above graph validates this assertion. It shows that UC-enabled firms that improve customer satisfaction rates also enjoy 98% greater annual improvement in client retention rates (9.7% vs. 4.9%). By addressing client needs and retaining them over time, these savvy businesses grow buyer spend year-over-year. Combined with the cost savings enjoyed through the efficiency gains noted earlier, these UC-enabled firms enjoy 68% greater annual increase in average customer profit margins (6.2% vs. 3.7%).

## Key Takeaways

The wealth of knowledge available to contact centers provides them with an often-untapped potential. One when realized, helps maximize efficiency, reduce costs and create happy customers. Earlier in this eBook, we noted that only 27% of businesses are fully satisfied with their ability to use existing organizational knowledge to achieve their CX goals. UC-enabled contact centers' success in maximizing their performance across numerous CX metrics and traditional contact center KPIs shows that they have truly mastered how to effectively use organizational knowledge.

These savvy firms eliminate organizational silos by improving communication and collaboration to reach their untapped potential. By doing so, they minimize the time it takes for agents to address customer issues. They also improve their ability to address customer requests at the first point of contact, hence reducing the risk of repeat customer contacts resulting in client dissatisfaction. Ultimately, these improvements allow companies to decrease their support costs while winning customer loyalty and expanding wallet share.

In short, working better together as a business with the help of communication and collaboration capabilities is clearly what sets successful firms apart from the rest. If you struggle improving your performance in any of the areas covered in this eBook, we highly recommend that you consider transforming your activities by bridging the silos in your business. To do that, observe how your employees currently communicate and collaborate. Then, use the findings in the below research report to successfully unify your enterprise communications to realize your untapped potential for greater success.

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