NEED

CALL CENTER

SOFTWARE?

sas O
Specialty Answering Service

Contents

1.   Abstract

The paper will compare and organize information about the leading call center software providers. Historically, call centers have been built on PBX equipment that was owned by the call center operator. With the onslaught of internet-based software as a service technology, massive migrations to the virtual realm are occurring. The most advanced versions of call center software are cloud-based, permitting the software to be integrated with customer relationship management programs.

2. About Call Center Software

Call center software enables call centers to modernize their operations. Call centers have often utilized PBX equipment, which is limited in features and expensive to purchase and maintain as compared to digital technology. The modern trend has been toward virtual and cloud computer technology. Under these models, call centers pay a monthly, annual, or per-user fee for the usage of the software. These models are decentralized, meaning that employees can work from home if they desire and require no hardware beyond a phone or headset.

The most advanced call center software, cloud computing, supports application programming interfaces (APIs), which give developers the ability to greatly extend the capabilities of the service, or even integrate directly into customer relationship management software such as Salesforce or Oracle. This provides an easy, centralized interface for a company to handle lead management, the sales funnel, and support.

Call centers may deal with inbound customer service calls, outbound telemarketing calls, or both. During the hiring process, employees are generally organized into multiple tiers for efficient call handling. The first tier consists of operators; the second, support; and if there are any higher tiers, they typically consist of highly skilled technical support staff.

A standard feature of call center software is the ability to monitor calls. This allows the company to plan its workload and listen in on employees to ensure quality of service.

2.1. How to Choose Call Center Software

There are several important factors to keep in mind when choosing call center software:

- Is it important that multiple agents have the ability to work on the same case?

- Should your knowledge base be integrated into the software?

- Do you have a CRM that is compatible with the call center software you have selected?

- Do you need a free trial?

- Should your call center software be tailored for incoming, outgoing, or a mix of calls?

Be sure to keep these items in mind as you consider different services. Businesses should take the time to create a formal list of required features and then match them against our chart. We've also included definitions below in case you run across any terms you are unfamiliar with.

2.2. Standard Features of Call Center Software

Through our research, we have found that call center software usually shares a few standard features:

- Case collaboration, so multiple agents can work with the same people

- Utilizing a web panel

- Has detailed reporting features

- Enables integration with CRM software

- Allows calls to be forwarded to the most appropriate person

- Queues calls virtually

- Must be contacted for a quote

2.3. Definitions

Case Collaboration – Allows employees to communicate and work together. Information can be exchanged easily allowing greater efficiencies.

Web Panel – This allows sales agents to view and enter information about customers. The ability to view case information makes web panels the utmost in productivity boosting.

Multi-Communication – Enables email, social media, and chat capabilities to call centers, on top of standard telephony.

Reports – Many cloud providers give agents and management the ability to view detailed reports.

Telephony Integration – Allows a cloud or virtual-based service to communicate flawlessly with standard telephone systems. This allows instant access to a user's information.

Knowledge Base Integration – It's common that support staff need to look up information in a company's knowledge base. With knowledge base integration, those articles pop up right inside the call center software.

Auto Case Forwarding – Problems need to be solved by the right person with the right skills. Automatic case forwarding allows cases to be sent directly to that person, meaning an employee won't have to manually filter the information.

Customer Information Display – When a call comes in, the customer's information and any associated cases will also pop up.

Virtual Queuing – The ability for calls to be placed on hold.

Text To Speech – This feature allows textual information to be automatically converted into spoken words.

3.   Providers List

3.1.   SALESFORCE.COM'S SERVICE CLOUD

Pros
Great user interface. Utilizes Salesforce's cloud for massive feature integration.

Cons
As with everything from Salesforce.com, the price is high. Comes as part of Service Cloud package and is not a standalone service.

Conclusion
Salesforce.com is famous for making absolutely wonderful cloud-based software. It's really no surprise why – it was founded by a former Oracle executive. Service Cloud is utilized by Nokia, AOL, and United Way. Large companies choose Salesforce because the service is rock solid.

The user interface is pleasant to look at and packed with information. The fact that it has been designed to minimize the amount of clicking an agent has to do to bring up the relevant information is great. It's a nice feature that the knowledge base is directly integrated into the service.

When a call comes in, the customer information will pop up on the screen immediately. Any associated cases will also appear so that the call center personnel will know the history and details of the individual.

Service Cloud also comes with detailed reports and supports multi-communication to reduce labor cost. The fact that it integrates with Salesforce's CRM makes it a no-brainer decision for many firms. With that said, Salesforce is known for being on the pricey side. So if you're trying to build a service center on minimal budget, this might not be the provider for you.

3.2.   TELAX

Pros
Great range of features. Offers disaster recovery services. Service team will develop and implement any feature your business needs.

Cons
Cannot integrate knowledge base, and is self-hosted, which means no telephony integration.

Conclusion
Telax is the biggest call center software provider in Canada, serving primarily small and medium sized companies. Not that enterprises don't find the service useful; Johnson & Johnson as well as the Royal Bank of Canada utilize Telax.

With its wide range of features Telax is a serious contender in the call center service industry. Its web panel is clean and easy to use, and the service supports multi-communication and CRM

4

integration. It can generate a plethora of reports and handles automatic case forwarding as well as virtual queuing.

Perhaps the greatest part about Telax is the support they offer. Everything is free including the development of new features your business needs. Yes that's correct: if anything is missing, Telax will actually develop and implement it for you. Talk about amazing service.

Prices are quite reasonable as well, which is why so many small and medium businesses use the service. They're not posted publicly so you'll have to contact the company for a quote.

The bottom line is that Telax makes things simple. Reasonable prices, the full gambit of features and unlimited free support makes it a company worth taking a closer look at.

3.3. FRONTRANGE VOICE

Pros
Excellent service. Use of scripts helps agents perform better. Multi-communication and click to dial features increase productivity.

Cons
Cannot integrate knowledge base.

Conclusion
This VoIP sales center provider is best known for its CRM entitled "Goldmine." Voice is primarily used by small and medium businesses, though Virgin Money and Coca-Cola Bottlers use the service.

The idea behind all FrontRange products is that they be affordable and intuitive to use. Voice's web panel is tidy and displays all the information needed by call center agents.

Their call center service is loaded with features. Using VoIP technology FrontPage allows agents and managers access to campaign management tools, reporting features, and offers the ability to record conversations.

Of course, one of the greatest features of modern call center technology is the ability to integrate directly with a company's CRM. FrontRange's Voice allows this to happen, further increasing the cost-effectiveness of the program.

FrontRange offers an extensive support program. Their website also has a wide knowledge base to help you with training personnel.

FrontRange's Voice is a highly reliable and cost-effective solution. Their wide range of features will aid your company in providing exceptional customer service. Highly recommended.

3.4. CONTACTUAL

Pros
Award winning user interface, very powerful tool, 99.99% uptime.

Cons
No free trial available.

Conclusion
Contactual was recently acquired by 8x8, a leading cloud solutions provider. The reason? They're a great company. They primarily serve small and medium companies but offer services to divisions of multiple Fortune 1000 companies.

Contactual is a "software as a service" (SaaS) company which means it is cloud-based – the only thing an agent needs is a web browser, and an internet connection, and a phone. That's about as lean as it gets.

The program offers professional service capabilities, knowledge base integration, and an award winning user interface. Companies can expect 99.99% uptime and will appreciate the ability to seamlessly integrate CRMs such as Salesforce.

As with all modern call center software, Contactual makes use of interactive voice response technology, which is the menu system that directs customers to the most appropriate agent. Management is able to monitor calls in real time so that they can ensure agents are providing exceptional customer service.

One additional advantage of Contactual is its rapid deployment speed – it only takes one week to get everything up and running. Support staff is available to answer any questions that users may have.

This reliable and cost effective service is highly recommended. No hardware means no maintenance or problems, and with the fantastic user interface, it's easy to navigate.

3.5. INCONTACT

Pros
Has received numerous technology awards. Exceptional list of features.

Cons
No knowledge base integration.

Conclusion
InContact is an extremely powerful call service solutions provider. They have nearly every feature a company could desire, allowing for maximum efficiency and return on investment. This company is massive – they process over 30 million calls each month.

This cloud-based service gets up and running quickly and allows multi-site or home office locations to help your firm discover the most productive and cost-effective settings. Geographic redundancy is becoming a popular trend in call centers.

Costs are done on a person by person basis similar to Salesforce – this means the system can scale infinitely with no issues. They take no upfront fees or annual service fees either which further helps keep costs down.

Because this is a cloud based service there is no hardware necessary. Likewise companies will never have to pay for upgrades or maintenance.

InContact is a fantastic service with an incredible list of features. With their numerous awards and support staff available during regular business hours, they're a very viable option.

3.6. FIVE9

Pros
Comprehensive solution for any firm. Unbeatable list of features.

Cons
No case collaboration or knowledge base integration.

Conclusion
A leading call center provider, Five9 provides services to companies of all sizes – from small businesses to multinationals. This beast of a company is rapidly growing and no wonder, it offers literally everything. Five9 was listed in Inc. Magazine as one of America's 500 fastest growing private companies and is a pioneer in "software as a service."

The call center service is cloud-based, meaning absolutely no hardware will be required, nor will there be any maintenance fees.

The list of features offered by Five9 is truly outstanding. Any feature you can think of – and many you won't be able to – are included in the software. Companies will enjoy 24/7 support and training videos provided by Five9.

Five9 offers many different pricing mechanisms depending on the type of company being serviced. This flexibility along with its excellent service and many features makes it a phenomenal choice for any firm looking for a call center provider.

3.7. CONNECT FIRST

Pros
Good cloud based service. Exceptional at handling volume spikes and balancing loads.

Cons
More basic than other competitors.

Conclusion
This cloud-based firm offers a unified solution to the call center. Having all important technological capabilities and tools necessary, this firm is a powerhouse.

The solutions offered by Connect First are ideal for three main areas: business continuity (natural disasters, homeland security emergencies, etc.), unexpected volume spikes (seasonal or market based), and load balancing. Load balancing in particular is a capability Connect First excels at. It's a great feature that automates the pace at which calls come in and loops clients through various systems when necessary.

You won't need any hardware since this is a cloud service, and the web-based management will allow remote access, giving your firm geographical freedom. Additionally, the ability to monitor calls is important and with Connect First you'll be able to do exactly that. Support is available via chat, email, or phone.

Connect First is a decent company overall, but unless your firm regularly runs into issues with volume spikes, other providers would be recommended over this one.