

A background image showing three call center agents in profile, wearing headsets and looking towards the left. The agents are a woman in the foreground, a man in the middle, and another woman in the background, all focused on their work.

# The New Engagement Experience

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X Series Magazine, Volume 2

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How Do Your Communications and Customer Experience Stack Up?

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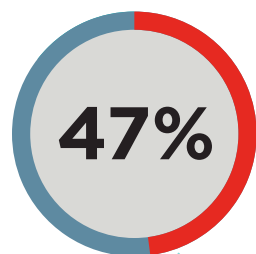


## How Do Your Communications and Customer Experience Stack Up?

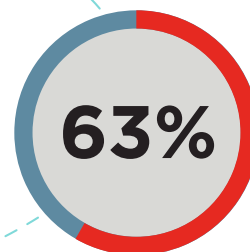
Communication and collaboration fuel the employee empowerment engine that drives a differentiated customer experience. Recent research with companies across the US and UK identifies the bumps in the road some companies run into as they struggle with modernizing communications and delivering differentiated customer outcomes. Here are key insights from that research. How does your company compare? Is it able to move at the new speed of business?



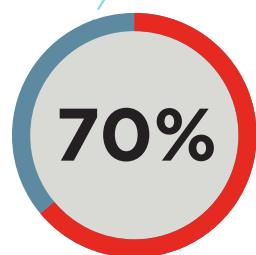
### Companies Are Struggling to Deliver on the Customer Experience Mandate<sup>1</sup>



"of business partners want their CX teams to be **better than their competitors** in most categories."



"of business leaders believe that to build customer loyalty, their **CX teams must be primarily focused on creating new and innovative experiences for their customers.**"

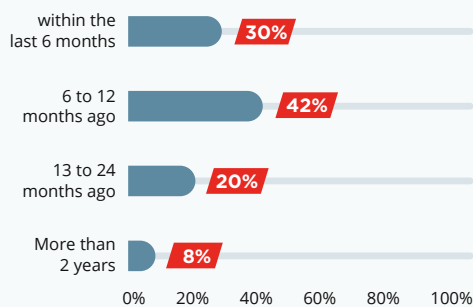


"of **CX leaders struggle** to design projects that increase customer loyalty and achieve results."

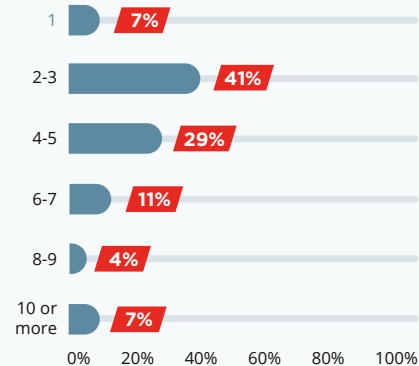
### The Current State of Communications<sup>2</sup>

Companies are working to modernize their communications. Nine out of ten (92%) indicated they had purchased a new communication platform within the last two years.

#### Last Purchased



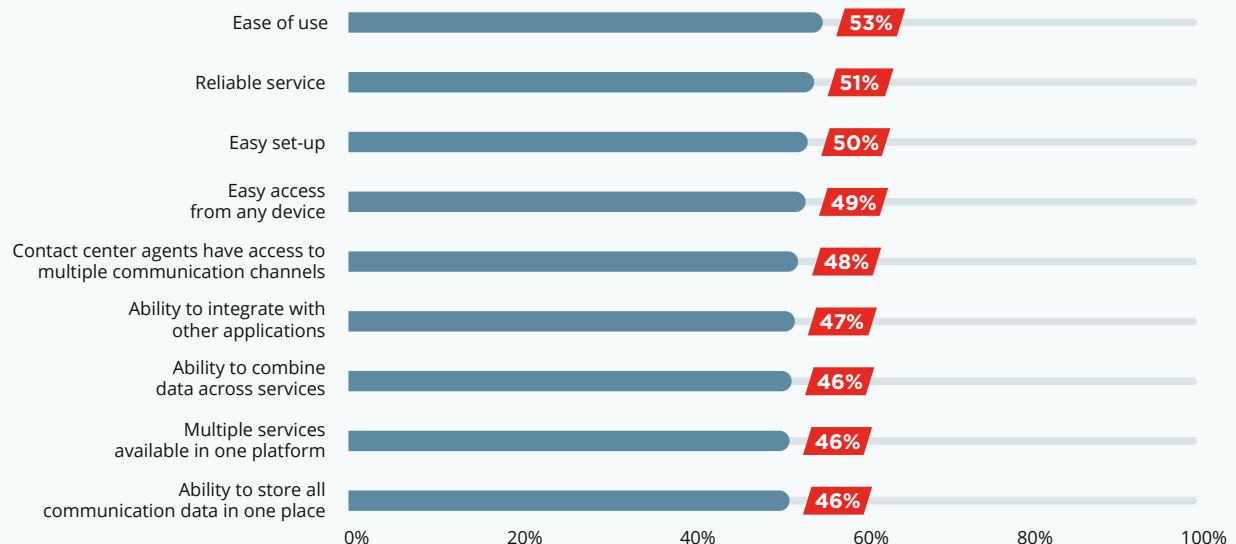
#### Number of Providers



Now they have a complex environment. More than two-thirds (70%) of companies use two to five providers for communication services while almost a quarter (22%) use more than six providers.

**The result is a significant degree of dissatisfaction with their current communications environment. Only half of companies are satisfied with their current communication services or applications.**

#### Company Satisfaction Levels Related to the Communications Services Currently Used



Only the top 2 options (somewhat or completely satisfied) are shown.

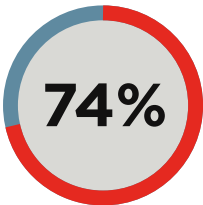


Companies Are Shifting the Way They Use Communications for More Collaboration<sup>3</sup>

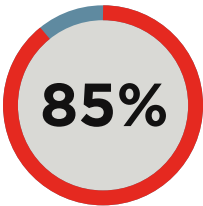
How is collaboration being defined?

The majority of respondents define collaboration as “working together towards a common goal.”

From your experience, how would you define collaboration in the workplace?



plan to buy audio and video conferencing capabilities in the next 12 months



rank audio and video conferencing and instant messaging as very or extremely important



Interestingly, the Line Between Communications and Collaboration is Blurring

Q: Which of the following activities represent collaboration versus communication?

Green indicates a statistically significant difference.

	Collaboration	Communication	Both
Screen sharing	33%	20%	47%
Providing notes on a document via shared platform	32%	19%	49%
Sharing documents via an application	31%	22%	48%
Discussing ideas in person	26%	20%	54%
Participating in a conference call	22%	24%	54%
Delivering a presentation via application	21%	36%	42%
Video chatting	18%	35%	47%
Instant messaging (IM)	12%	48%	40%
Emailing	10%	49%	41%

### File Sharing, Messaging, Audio Calling, Presentation Mode and Screen Sharing Are Considered the Most Important Features for a Business Communication Platform

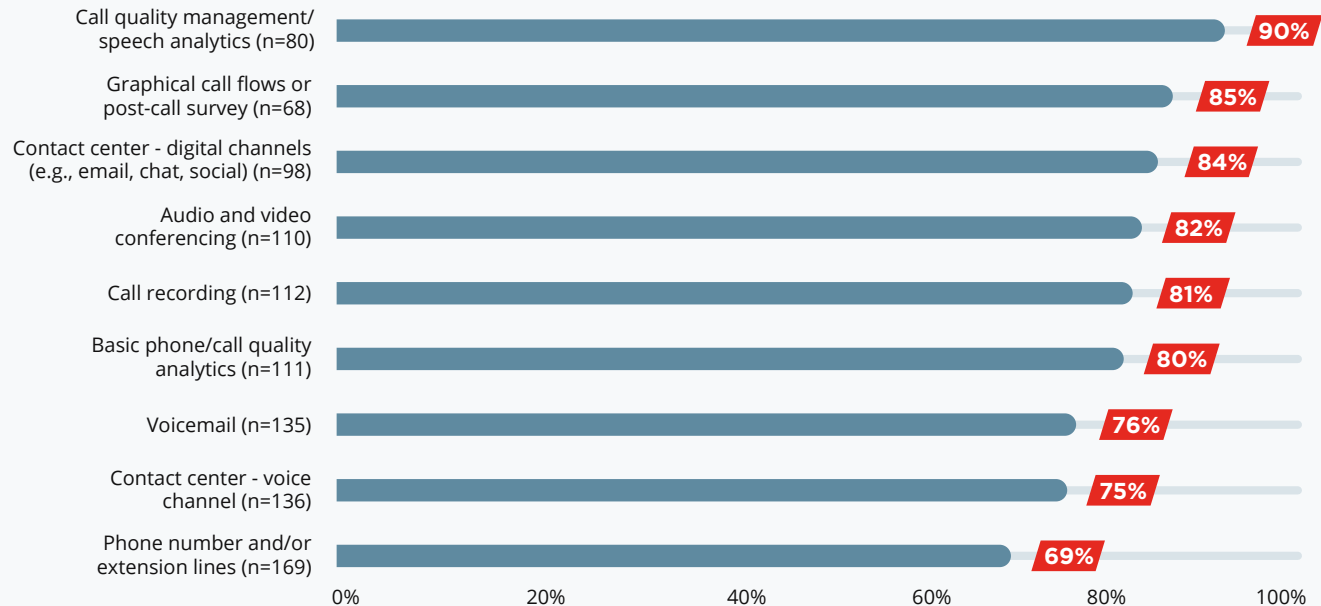
**Q:** Which of the following features do you consider to be the most important for a business communication platform? Please rank the top five features.



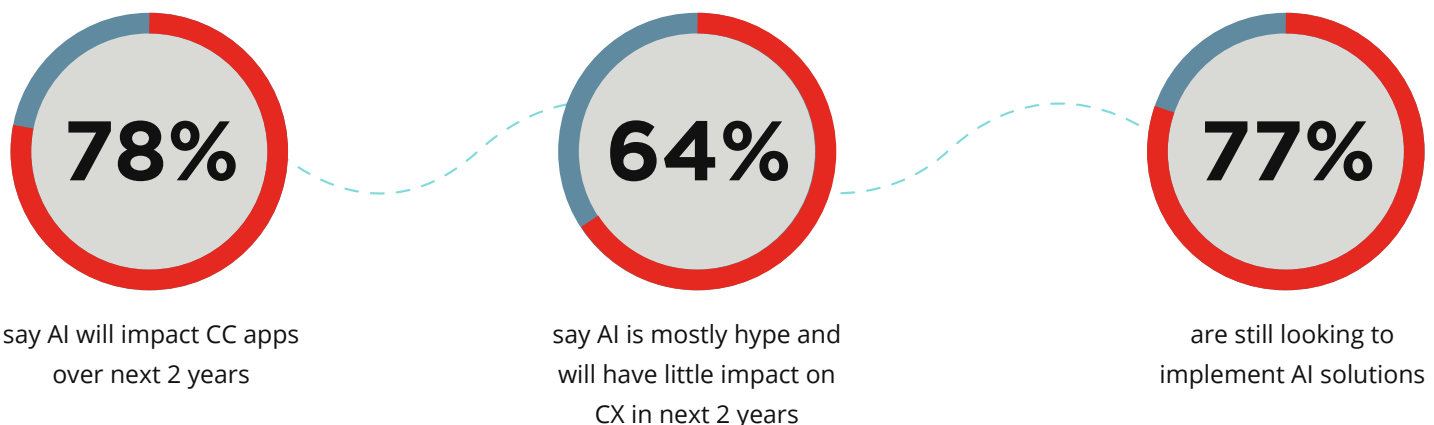
## When It Comes to Contact Centers, Everyone is Moving to the Cloud<sup>4</sup>

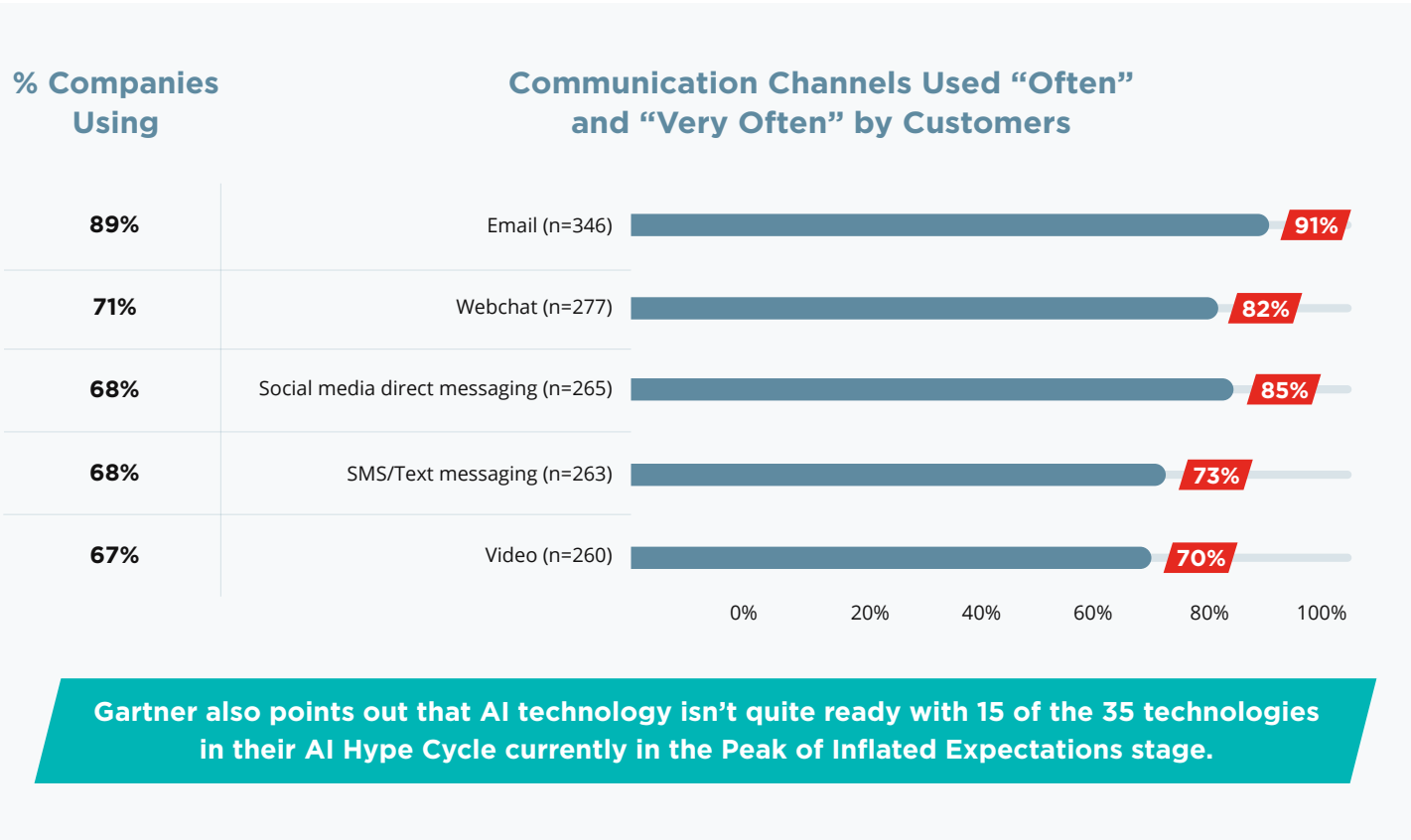
Most current on premise-based software users intend to move to a cloud-based system in the near future.

### Likelihood to Adopt a Cloud-Based Platform in Two Years



Customers are demanding that contact centers are able to support all communication channels with the most popular being email (91%), social media messaging (85%) and webchat (82%). And contact center professionals are pragmatic about the impact of artificial intelligence (AI).

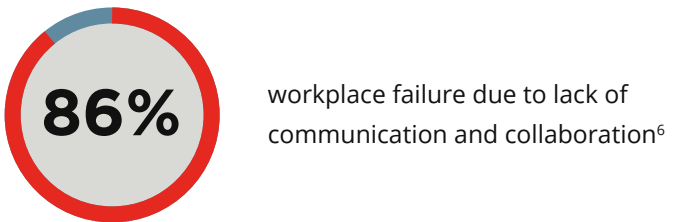




So How Does Your Company Compare?

Companies providing the communication tools and information employees need to effectively collaborate are realizing strong productivity gains.

Research also highlights that those companies not effectively enabling communication and collaboration can struggle.



### 8x8 X Series: Designed for Modern Communications

1

- platform for voice, video communications, chat and contact center
- data set across all communication touch points
- application for centralized administration and maintenance
- integration that easily adds communications to your systems of record
- provider to eliminate risk from multiple vendors
- environment providing maximum security, reliability and quality

Learn more about the current state of communications and how companies like yours are empowering employees with X Series so they can build customer loyalty through differentiated customer experiences.



#### **Business Communications:**

The State of Communications: Lots of Choice and Still Not Happy With It

[View eBook](#)

#### **Contact Center:**

The State of the Contact Center: 8 Insights Shaping the Future of CX

[View eBook](#)

#### **Case Studies:**

Customers Experiencing the New Speed of Business

[View eBook](#)

#### Footnotes:

1. Source: Gartner, *Creating a High-Impact Customer Experience Strategy*, January 2019
2. Source: Primary research conducted with 427 companies based in the US and UK having 250+ employees
3. Source: Primary research conducted with 224 IT decision makers and 207 end users in US and UK companies with 100+ employees
4. Source: Primary research conducted with 388 decision makers for contact center software in US and UK companies with 250+ employees
5. Source: McKinsey, *Capturing Business Value with Social Technologies*
6. Source: Salesforce, *Is Poor Collaboration Killing Your Company?*





# Checklist: How to Spot the Achilles' Heel in Your Communications System

**Answering these questions will help you evaluate a cloud communications solution.**

- ☐ Are monthly phone costs unpredictable... and expensive? (When was the last time you checked?)
- ☐ Does IT spend a lot of time administering and maintaining the phone system and related communications applications—the amount of which cannot be quantified?
- ☐ Are managers unable to measure performance using metrics like how long customers are kept on hold or how often calls go unanswered?
- ☐ Is adding or changing phone numbers or locations burdensome to IT or so slow it becomes disruptive?
- ☐ Does IT require help from one or more third-party vendors?
- ☐ Does a fixed number of lines result in customer calls not getting through and/or limits on the number of employees that can be onboarded; is getting an outside line problematic at times?
- ☐ Is the company attempting to use their phone system and employees as a contact center, resulting in a poor customer experience?
- ☐ Is setting up communications for a new facility or location a major undertaking?
- ☐ What other communication services are used besides phone and conferencing (video conferencing, web meetings/webinars, chat applications and collaboration tools like Slack)? How many separate vendors are you managing for these services?
- ☐ Do employees use other, non-sanctioned technologies to communicate and collaborate (aka "Shadow IT")?
- ☐ What kinds of metrics and insight into customer interactions would help improve your business?
- ☐ What is the impact on your business when your phone system goes down?
- ☐ What third-party validation is done to ensure compliance with HIPAA and security regulations?
- ☐ How do you integrate communication islands across team messaging solutions?
- ☐ How is data protected in motion and at rest?
- ☐ How are communications integrated with security and compliance policies and procedures?
- ☐ Does your current communications solution provide fully automatic disaster recovery?



## How SD-WAN Can Power Digital Transformation

The performance of a cloud communication service is dependant on the service level agreements (SLAs) and enabling technologies from the service provider. Equally, the existing network must be capable of supporting bandwidth-intensive applications, smart devices and real-time voice and video traffic. Network inefficiencies can cause the audio to “break-up,” and video to become “jittery” and unusable, so optimizing performance to deliver a good user experience is critical.

Upgrading inefficient networks that deliver both continuous traffic optimization and real-time visibility while providing budgetary relief can really help. That’s where software-defined wide area networking (SD-WAN) comes in.

SD-WAN is a cloud-enabled networking infrastructure which uses any available connection to the internet by constructing a web of virtual private network (VPN) links. It makes the network more flexible and software-centric, delivering easy monitoring and a management.

Businesses can use additional connections to the internet, providing a much faster end-user experience for staff working from remote locations. It also provides increased flexibility when connecting remote sites for shared IT support.

Cost-conscious businesses can benefit by shifting from expensive multi-protocol label-switching (MPLS) services to SD-WAN solutions. While MPLS does a great

job at managing a private network, when you move communications to the cloud, everything is routed through a single point of failure, causing bottlenecks and inefficiencies. SD-WAN solutions offer better traffic flow management.

SD-WAN can facilitate digital transformation in businesses in the following ways.

### **It’s software-defined!**

SD-WAN abstracts away the hardware and puts all of its functionality into the software. It takes the intelligence of how a network is managed and decouples that intelligence from the network itself. Since it’s software-defined, it’s much easier to configure, deploy, scale and re-configure than hardware-based networking options.

In practice, it means that an IT manager can send an SD-WAN appliance to a remote office. The discovery and identification processes are automatic, as is bringing the node appliance online, configuring it and applying governance policies. No further intervention from an IT manager is needed. This process that previously took days or even weeks has now been reduced to a matter of seconds. This increases the business’ control, peace of mind and savings while delivering crystal clear cloud communications services even to far flung remote offices with choppy internet.

### Cutting Costs

As cloud delivery models become increasingly popular, cloud voice, video, even cloud contact centers can be hosted anywhere and everywhere, supporting mobility and reach. Businesses can choose to not only optimize their cloud communications traffic but also cut expensive fixed lines, focusing instead on selecting the most effective broadband service: fiber, 4G, 5G or satellite and consolidating suppliers, allowing IT budgets to go further.

### Easier to Manage

SD-WAN is much easier to monitor and manage since all the intelligence is abstracted away from the hardware and hosted at the customer premises or on the cloud. SD-WAN offers businesses a centralized view of the whole network. It allows IT staff to make on-the-fly adjustments to network performance and communications delivery to meet their ever-changing needs.

### Makes Failovers Much Easier

Figuring out how to prevent network downtime is the thing that keeps IT admins up at night. How do you keep the business-critical communications up and running if the network fails? SD-WAN improves network resilience by logically aggregating all those connectivity links, and it can switch between links during an outage.

Not only does this provide continuous uptime, but because SD-WAN enables automated failovers, there is no need for constant monitoring, analysis and reconfiguration during a failover. It ensures cloud communications and public services are available when users need them.

**SD-WAN is an essential enabler for the next generation of IT and communications.**





# Contact Center AI: Don't Believe the Hype, but Don't Ignore It Either

**The term artificial intelligence (AI), once only present in science fiction, is now widely used and mostly misunderstood.**

Far-fetched claims suggest AI could learn to recognize galaxies, while more well-known possibilities propose AI controlled cars and AI-based technologies diagnosing terminal diseases. However, at its most basic, AI refers to a computer system's capacity to perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence.

Over the last few years, businesses have made artificial intelligence a significant initiative detailing how artificial intelligence and machine learning (ML) can automate defined, repeatable tasks, augment decision-making and enhance understanding in decision making and operations.

However, you can't just deploy AI/ML technology and expect it's going to make everything better. You need three things to make it work:

1. Topic modeling (a series of steps to inform a decision)
2. Data sets (often from multiple data sources)
3. Processing or computing power

The availability of large data sets can help train AI systems to recognize patterns in those data sets with little human direction, leading to better, more informed decisions over time.

AI has the potential to transform business services by automating tasks, improving customer interactions and helping businesses make data-driven decisions.

AI does not come ready to work out of the box. In most cases, you need to integrate the right data sets, apply the appropriate topic modelling and choose the correct use cases.

That's what we're working on at 8x8. We have a massive data set across our combined Unified Communications and Contact Center platform, spanning voice, video, messaging and contact center information. We have pulled this data together and aggregated it, made it useful to glean insights and improve customer interactions.

We have trained our virtual agent to start customer conversations by predicting why they are calling so it can get right to the point on its first try using the data at hand.

We've partnered with Google Contact Center AI to understand the voice transcription, the topic modelling and the caller profile. We use their dialogue flow and set up an interaction with the knowledgebase, and present the right information back to the customer.

Some customers won't be fully satisfied with a response from the virtual assistant, or they may call back again. When that happens, we use the customer's knowledge graph to understand that they've called previously and presumably their prior service visit was not successful. The customer can be directed to a knowledgebase article, or the call is escalated to a real service agent, and we use AI to do just that.

The call is split through the transcription and interface to the Google Contact Center AI backend, and we present the knowledgebase article to the agent, to help provide a quick response to the caller. If the agent cannot resolve the issue, then an expert within the company can be located to help solve the customer query.

This is why it is essential to have a single communications platform with unified communications and contact center capabilities.

Agents can also locate information from public chat rooms, which have a wealth of knowledge about a particular issue or topic. The same AI topic modelling is applied, allowing the AI to query the rooms and make suggestions regarding which expert to call, if a subject matter expert outside the contact center is needed.

Businesses can take this approach to start deploying AI-based virtual assistants within the contact center, combining data from across the organization to help obtain the right answers in real time.

8x8 provides this highly scalable, consistent data platform, that processes real-time and historical data, effectively leverages the compute power of the public cloud and provides immediate responses. It's not what you get in a typical chatbot solution, with generic answers based on natural language processing.



# 8x8's One System of Engagement, Explained

Customer expectations and competitive pressures are forcing companies to transform digitally. A great place to start is with your communications system. Voice still matters. Salesforce.com found that 92% of customer interactions still happen over the phone. That's a high percentage, but it makes sense when you think about how people still prefer to talk to people. So communications is a key part of the digital transformation trend. A company can only move as fast as their communications system. And one system of engagement increases your communications speed.

What do we mean by one system of engagement? One system of engagement is a term to specify how unified communications and contact center can be combined on one platform in the cloud, creating benefits such as a lower total cost of ownership, full customer journey analytics, and revenue acceleration. In "industry speak," it's the convergence of UCaaS (Unified Communications as a Service) and CCaaS (Contact Center as a Service) into one integrated platform instead of point cloud solutions. One system of engagement means one cloud communications platform for business phone, team messaging, meetings, and contact center.

In contrast, when companies turn to buying a bunch of point cloud solutions, each one of which has very limited capabilities, employees get app fatigue. They have to download, learn and mentally manage 4+ apps just to do their jobs. Also, the data is fragmented across the different systems which inhibits analytics and insights to improve operationally.

One system of engagement eliminates app fatigue and enables business-wide analytics and insights. Instead of the point cloud solutions, now you have one integrated platform for all your communications needs, which enables you to engage with colleagues and customers more productively. You also get more of these benefits:

## Lower TCO than Cobbled-Together Point Solutions

With one system of engagement in the 8x8 UCaaS/CCaaS approach, the total cost of ownership is even lower than with cobbled-together point solutions. With one system of engagement, you're only paying for one support team

and one sales team—and all the technology is owned by one company. These economies of scale get passed on to you, leading to a lower total cost of ownership.

## Full Customer Journey Analytics Integrated Across Systems

The second major benefit of one cloud versus multiple clouds (using many cloud vendors for your communications and customer experience) is that you get full customer journey analytics integrated across systems. With multiple point cloud solutions, it is not possible to track metrics such as revenue conversions across a customer's interactions, which might include a transfer from a contact center to a retail store phone. With one cloud system of engagement, it's possible to track metrics and conversion rates across any mode of communication, because it is all part of one set of data in one system of intelligence. Executives get very excited about using these kinds of insights to improve their companies.

## Employee Productivity Increases

A third benefit of the 8x8 UCaaS/CCaaS strategy of one system of engagement is that employees' productivity increases when everything is readily accessible—leading to revenue growth acceleration. Less clicks are required to move between modes of communication, and full context can be served up with every live interaction, allowing Sales to close deals faster and Support to delight customers and upsell. In addition, subject matter experts become accessible with one click, allowing the full company to contribute to answering customer and prospect requests. Instead of saying "I don't know" to a customer, your teams should be able to answer questions and please customers. And we all know better customer satisfaction and higher NPS drives revenue and referrals.

## 8x8's One System of Engagement

8x8 is the leading UCaaS and CCaaS provider of one system of engagement for communications and collaboration. We pioneered one cloud solution and continue to innovate to help companies transform their communications.



# Case Studies



## 104 year old innovative manufacturer of bleached cotton fiber products

**Challenges:** High failure rate, expensive and difficult to make changes, limited support for remote workers and lack of analytics for visibility into call patterns.

**Solution:** Integrated cloud-based communications into Salesforce and Microsoft email; deployed 775 lines across all offices, manufacturing facilities and remote workers.

**Results:** Increased operational efficiency, analytics dashboards, increased collaboration across teams including remote workers and the ability to instantly make changes to support their growth. [See the details.](#) [Watch the video.](#)

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**"The initial deployment was fantastic; 8x8 had one of the best implementation teams I've ever worked with. The well-structured deployment processes gave me confidence that the system would deliver to expectations."**

– Delane Heath, Network Support Specialist

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## Popular restaurant chain saves 30%-40% a month on phone costs

**Challenges:** Rapid growth put a strain on their aging premises-based phone system, which also lacked modern features and was increasingly expensive to maintain.

**Solution:** Quickly implemented business communications using 145 lines across headquarters and 16 store locations.

**Results:** Lazy Dog is saving 30%-40% on its monthly phone costs, enjoying modern capabilities all while supporting their expansion goals. [See the details.](#)

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**"We evaluated [cloud communications] solutions, and 8x8 was clearly the better one. It was easier to install, easier to use, and provided all the features we needed at a very attractive price."**

– Anthony Mejia, VP of IT

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## Industry leader in the manufacturing and distribution of mobile hydraulic products.

**Challenges:** High call answer times, abandonment rates, telephony costs and potential for disruption combined with an inability to support their growth drove the need for a new communications solution.

**Solution:** Cloud communications solution integrated into NetSuite CRM providing business communications, contact center and fax capabilities across all locations.

**Results:** Reduced call answer times by 15%, call abandonment rates by 70% and telephony costs by 15% while increasing business continuity. [See the details.](#)

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**"Communication between all of our teams is now much smoother."**

– Jeremy Hall, Systems Analyst

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## Ready to take the next step?

Contact a Solutions Expert to learn why 8x8 is the only complete communications platform that uses the collective power of your business to improve the customer experience across all interaction channels.

**Call us at 1-877-291-9279 or visit us at [8x8.com/x-series](https://www.8x8.com/x-series)**



8x8, Inc. (NYSE:EGHT) is a leading provider of cloud phone, meeting, collaboration and contact center solutions with over a million business users worldwide. 8x8 helps enterprises engage at the speed of employee and customer expectations by putting the collective intelligence of the organization in the hands of every employee. For additional information, visit [www.8x8.com](https://www.8x8.com), or follow 8x8 on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook.

