

THE ROI OF UNITING UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS AND CONTACT CENTER

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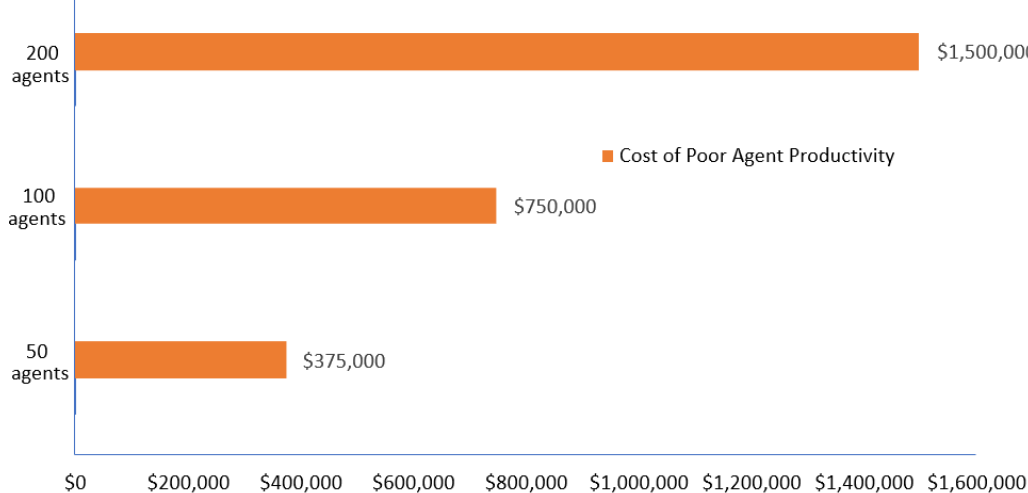
This document highlights how incorporating unified communications (UC) capabilities within the contact center influences operational efficiency and customer experience results.

Empowering Agents with Better Communication and Collaboration Pays Off

Customer experience (CX) has become a strategic differentiator for firms across many industries. As a result, creating happy customers and retaining them is a top priority. Companies often follow different paths to achieve this result. However, there is one common element that all firms must manage well to achieve their CX goals: employees. It's the employees that address client needs — and if they struggle doing their job, that means the CX results will suffer.

A contact center is often the first touch-point customers have with a business when they need support. As such, making it easy for agents to find and access information across the business and collaborate with peers within the contact center and beyond is of utmost importance to successfully address client needs. That said, findings from Aberdeen's October 2019 *Agent Productivity & Performance Management* study shows that **on average, agents spend 15% of their time seeking information to do their jobs**. Let's assume a contact center has 200 agents and that each agent costs \$50,000 in average fully loaded labor cost. This means that when these agents spend 15% of their time looking for information, the company incurs \$1.5 million each year in unnecessary labor costs (200 times \$50,000 times 15%) – Figure 1. In fact, even smaller contact centers incur unnecessary costs when they poorly manage agent productivity.

Figure 1: Poor Agent Productivity Adds Unnecessary Cost for Contact Centers of All Sizes



Cost of Poor Agent Productivity based on number of agents, n=354

Source: Aberdeen, November 2019

Definition: UC-Enabled Contact Center

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

Enriching contact center activities with UC capabilities helps maximize agent productivity, improve customer experiences and reduce costs.

Needless to say, when agents spend more time looking for information or try to find subject-matter experts (SMEs) to help address an issue, the customers are more likely to get frustrated due to lengthened wait time in addressing their needs. Some of these frustrated customers will likely stop doing business with the company — further increasing the cost of poor agent productivity.

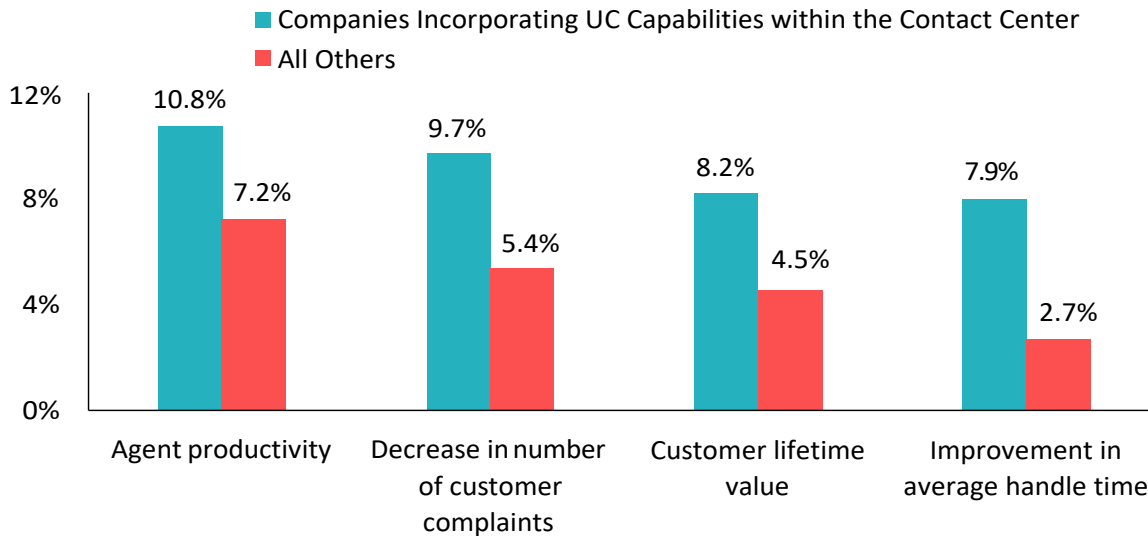
Aberdeen’s research shows that the technology tools companies provide their agents for communication and collaboration have a significant impact on minimizing unnecessary costs associated with poor agent productivity. To this point, Aberdeen’s survey of 354 firms (global and cross-industry) on contact center trends and best practices revealed that **lack of effective technologies agents need to do their jobs is the number one cause for poor agent productivity and performance**. This is where incorporating UC capabilities within the contact center plays an important role — see sidebar.

The Efficiency & CX Impact of Uniting UC & Contact Center

Aberdeen’s research shows that **40% of companies currently enrich their contact center with UC capabilities**. Comparing the self-reported year-over-year performance improvement findings by UC-enabled contact centers to those that don’t have UC capabilities (All Others), shows that firms in the former category indeed minimize the challenges agents face to find and share information to help customers. Specifically, Figure 2 shows that UC-enabled contact centers enjoy 50% greater annual increase in agent productivity (10.8% vs. 7.2%).

Empowering contact center agents with UC capabilities helps transform cost-burdened contact centers to cost-efficient contact centers delighting company clientele.

Figure 2: Year-over-Year Performance Improvements Observed by Firms Enriching the Contact Center with UC Capabilities



Year-over-year percent change, n=354

Source: Aberdeen, November 2019

Contact centers observe productivity gains by enabling agents to more easily communicate and collaborate across the business, finding information needed to serve clients. For example, a customer may call the contact center to inquire about the status

of a recent insurance claim. The agent may need expert guidance to provide the client with an accurate answer. If the agent isn't provided with UC capabilities, they will need to ask the customer to call back — increasing the number of repeat customer contacts. Alternatively, the customer can also wait on hold while the agent takes the time needed to find a SME who can help answer the client's question — lengthening average handle times.

Instead of requiring clients to contact the business repeatedly and lengthening average handle times, providing agents with UC capabilities allows firms to minimize customer frustration. Specifically, the UC capabilities allow the agent to see which relevant SMEs are available at the time to help address an issue. The agent and SME can also use the UC platform to share relevant information (e.g., claims documents, images, videos) to make the collaboration process more effective. Figure 2 shows that incorporating UC capabilities within the contact center helps decrease (improve) average handle times by 2.9 times more year-over-year (7.9% vs. 2.7%).

It's worth remembering that making it easier for the agent to find the information they need to help customers also helps drive the agent productivity improvement noted earlier. Considering our analysis on how poor agent productivity results in unnecessary costs in labor and customer churn, we can also state that **streamlining communication and collaboration for agents helps firms control and reduce unnecessary costs.**

It's important to note that agent productivity by itself isn't enough to create happy customers. Those agents must also effectively manage the customer interaction processes to deliver personalized and consistent interactions across all interaction channels.

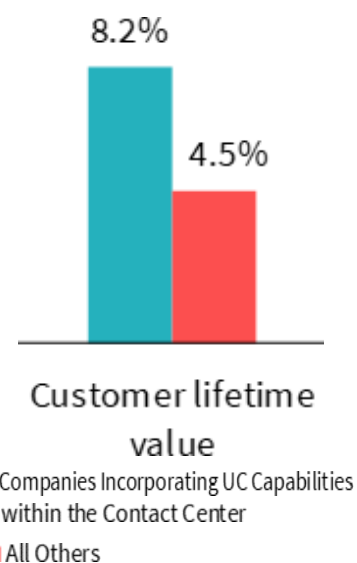
Figure 2 shows that UC-enabled contact centers indeed manage customer interactions more effectively. They report 80% greater annual decrease (improvement) in number of customer complaints (9.7% vs. 5.4%). The previous example where we compared a contact center agent without access to UC capabilities to an agent with UC capabilities helps shed light on the reasons driving such decrease in customer complaints. When agents lack the right tools needed to find relevant insights or when they struggle finding and communicating with a SME, customers wait longer to get their needs addressed. In fact, they may even need to repeatedly contact the business for issue resolution. This results in frustrated clients who are more likely to prefer working with other product / service providers. Therefore, incorporating UC capabilities in the contact center not only helps boost agent productivity, but simultaneously helps decrease the number of customer complaints caused by poor service delivery.

Customers reward businesses that address their needs effectively. They do so by maintaining their spend, referring the company to friends, family, and colleagues, and growing spend over time — if and when they need more products / services. This is validated by the growth in customer lifetime value (see sidebar) where UC-enabled contact centers observe 82% greater annual increase in this metric (8.2% vs. 4.5%).

Definition: Customer Lifetime Value

Customer lifetime value (CLV) is a performance metric reflecting the total spend a customer makes through the course of the relationship with that business.

Improving this metric requires firms to retain their clientele and grow their spend year-over-year. As such, firms observing improvement in this metric are ones that ensure customer loyalty and increase client spend over time.



Improvement in customer lifetime value ultimately means that contact centers with UC capabilities are growing client spend over time. This stands in stark contrast to the earlier analysis we shared where contact centers without UC capabilities incur unnecessary labor costs due to poor agent productivity and customer churn. As such, data shows us that **empowering contact center agents with UC capabilities helps transform cost-burdened contact centers to cost-efficient contact centers that delight their clientele.**

Key Takeaways

Efficiency and CX gains are the two top goals in contact center executives' agenda. There is an abundance of strategic activities and technologies companies use to achieve these goals. However, to truly maximize performance in these areas, firms must not forget that it's ultimately the agents who execute those activities and use the relevant technologies to service customers. This means that companies must first ensure that their agents are empowered to do their jobs.

Comparing the performance improvements observed by contact centers that empower their agents with UC capabilities to those that don't shows that streamlining communication and collaboration for agents is vital to empower them to help delight clients. Indeed, firms incorporating UC capabilities within the contact center improve agent productivity and reduce handle times. They also minimize the number of customer complaints and earn the loyalty of their clientele.

If your agents struggle finding the information they need to do their jobs or if you struggle with customer frustration due to lengthy handle times and repeat contact, then we recommend closely observing the processes and tools your agents use to find and share information. If agents can't communicate and collaborate easily with other agents and SMEs across the business, this means that they also struggle delivering personalized and consistent experiences that customers today have come to expect from businesses. Address this challenge by streamlining communications and collaboration processes which is enabled by uniting UC and contact center capabilities. This will help transform your contact center to become a true differentiator in your CX program.

About Aberdeen

Since 1988, Aberdeen has published research that helps businesses worldwide to improve their performance. Our analysts derive fact-based, vendor-neutral insights from a proprietary analytical framework, which identifies Best-in-Class organizations from primary research conducted with industry practitioners. The resulting research content is used by hundreds of thousands of business professionals to drive smarter decision-making and improve business strategies. Aberdeen is headquartered in Waltham, Massachusetts, USA.

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