

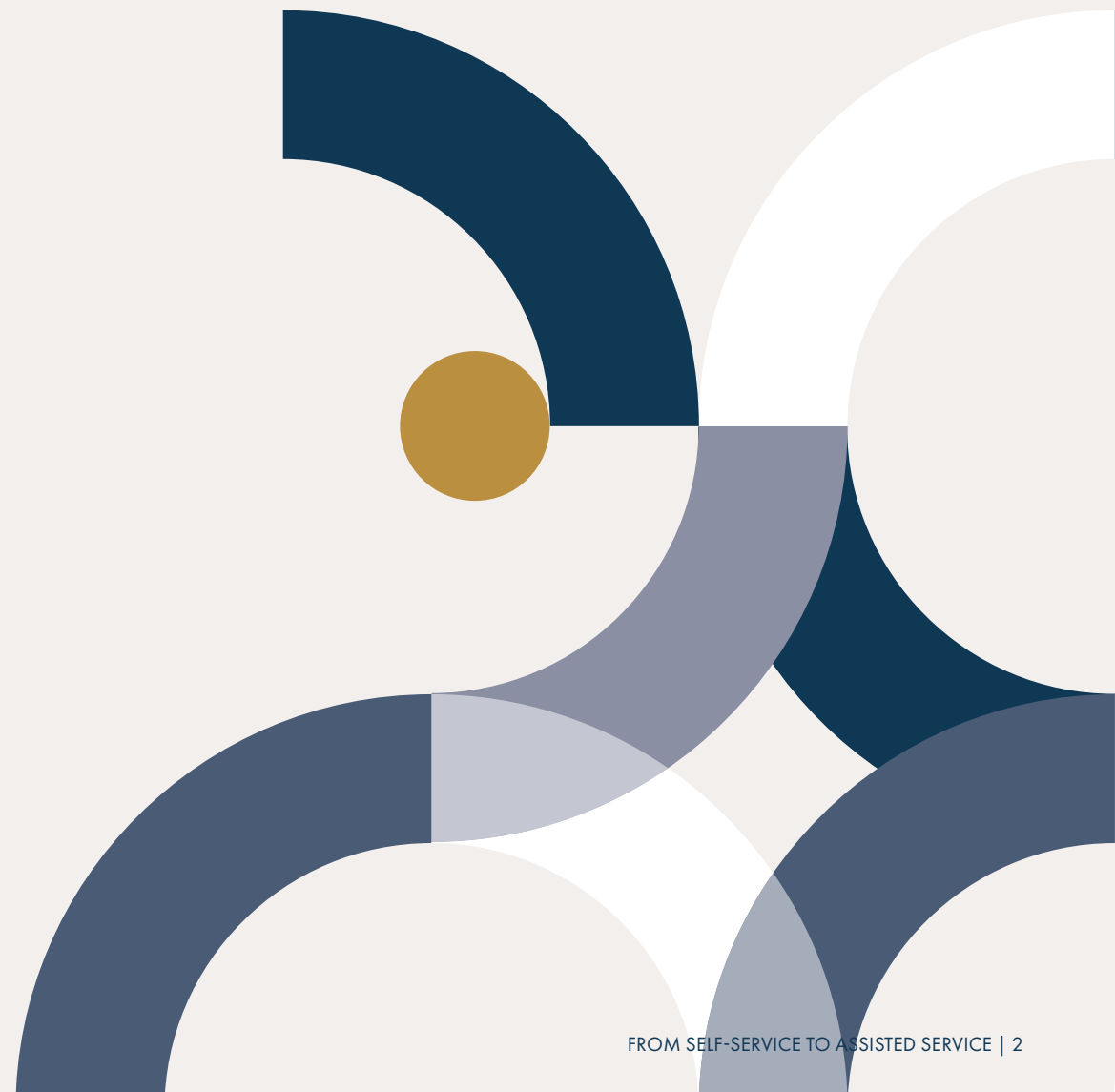
# FROM SELF-SERVICE TO ASSISTED SERVICE:

HOW TO DELIVER FAST RESOLUTION WHILE SUPPORTING  
YOUR CUSTOMERS AND CONTACT CENTRE AGENTS



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# OVERVIEW

60%



of customers feel that long holds and wait times are the most frustrating parts of CX<sup>[1]</sup>

33%



of web chats are handled by chatbots or virtual agents<sup>[2]</sup>

79%



increase in average call length since 2004 – it's now 6 minutes 33 seconds<sup>[3]</sup>

63%



increase in average speed to answer since 2004 – it's now 106 seconds<sup>[4]</sup>

5%



increase in average new agent salary in 2021 (it's now £19,934)<sup>[5]</sup>

## THE 2022 CONTACT CENTRE CONUNDRUM

**It may be a truism, but there is no getting away from the seismic change the pandemic has inflicted on businesses and consumers everywhere – and the world of contact centres is no exception.**

Against a backdrop of the inevitable staff sickness, the last two years have been characterised by a familiar picture across industries ranging from retail to finance:

- Contact centres overwhelmed with calls from frustrated customers
- Businesses embracing AI but failing to leverage it in the right way to support contact centre agents
- Overburdened agents in understaffed contact centres attempting to give the best possible support to customers

The result? Irritated by long response times and unresolved queries, dissatisfied customers are tempted to look elsewhere; 93% of customers are likely to make repeat purchases with companies who offer excellent customer service<sup>[6]</sup>, even if it costs more. Plus, there is a disconnect between views of contact centre agents on resolving customer issues<sup>[7]</sup> and that of their managers – with agents often unconvinced by the impact of investments in technology.

So how do you optimise both the customer and the contact agent experience – boosting your profitability while ensuring swift problem resolution along with customer loyalty and agent retention?

In 2022, forward-thinking organisations are moving from self-service towards assisted service – focusing above all on the human experience that enables speedy resolution. This guide tells you how.



**WILL MAKE REPEAT PURCHASE  
IF A COMPANY OFFER  
EXCELLENT SERVICE**

## NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE

**About five years ago, everyone was shouting about the chatbot revolution and predicting the demise of contact centres as we know them. Fast forward through the pandemic to 2022, and it is increasingly clear that customers are far from ready to bid farewell to human interaction.**

That is not to say there is no place for AI in your customer service strategy. In fact, with effective digital self-service options, some customers may not need to use the phone at all. However, two things are becoming abundantly clear:

- Complex conversations and emotional issues require agent involvement at an early stage
- To optimise your AI, you need the right systems for your business – and the corresponding skillset to ensure they are helping rather than hindering your agents

Far from being consigned to history, the pandemic has highlighted the crucial role that human interaction plays in our lives. It is increasingly clear that there is an important place for the traditional contact centre in 2022's customer service model.

But to optimise your contact centre processes, you need to use the right technology to complement your agents' work – enabling your customers to communicate using the channel of their choice (web chat, email or phone) and your agents to spend less time on low-value interactions while leveraging their expertise on complex issues.

## CASE STUDY SPOTLIGHT

### RETAIL

**A top UK retailer experienced 30 times their normal call volume when the pandemic struck.**

Using Engage Hub's [Conversational IVR<sup>\[8\]</sup>](#), they were able to prioritise calls from vulnerable customers – successfully reducing call volume by over 30% while still hitting customer resolution targets. Plus, our automation solution enabled them to free up agents at core times – and reduce call queues from 20 minutes to just 1 minute.

**As a result, they achieved operational cost savings of over**

**£4 million**

## MAKE RESOLUTION – NOT CALL DEFLECTION – YOUR GOAL

**Customer service KPIs are often focused on removing a certain percentage of calls from a contact centre. However, while this strategy has the potential to free up agent time, fewer calls do not automatically lead to increased resolution rates or happier customers.**

Rather than focusing on call deflection, think of your contact centre as an ecosystem – one that combines the power of technology and the expertise of your agents to deliver an empathetic human experience.

If your customer has tried and failed to resolve their query via your website and chatbot, then trapping them in self-service will not work. They will find a way to get in touch – and when they do, they will be frustrated.

However, by using intelligence to identify your customer's journey before they speak with your agent, you are able to prioritise the call – even adding a personalised, automated IVR<sup>[9]</sup> message along the lines of "Hey, we know you tried to contact us." Contrast this with making the customer wait for another 20 minutes before they finally get through to an agent, and it is easy to see which approach will resolve the issue faster.

## CASE STUDY SPOTLIGHT

### FINTECH

**A leading Irish bank needed to improve their onboarding process and deliver a streamlined customer experience.**

By implementing automated IVR, we have enabled 20% of the bank's customers to make mortgage payments without speaking to an agent. And we were able to roll this out in just 3 days.

What's more, 46% of customers are now self-serving using auto-activation, which has led to a dramatic reduction in onboarding times: from 1 week to just 3 minutes.

**As a result of our involvement, the bank has achieved cost savings of**

**€1.2 million annually**

## SUPPORT YOUR CONTACT CENTRE AGENTS

**Forrester<sup>[10]</sup> sees 3 trends shaping the customer service landscape in 2022, one of which is building a human-centred contact centre. People are important. Your customers, of course – but also, your agents.**

Humans are responsible for delivering the best customer experiences. But your agents can only do that if they are supported in their roles. As Forbes<sup>[11]</sup> emphasises, happy employees make happy customers.

But to create the opportunity for your agents to deliver first-class customer service, you need to offer a fantastic employee experience. Have you thought about:

- Devising strategies to avoid agent burnout?
- Moving away from cost-centric KPIs?
- Offering opportunities for agent career development?

Naturally, seamless technology is a crucial element. It is one of five pillars that a recent Salesforce survey identified as key to building a superior employee experience – and is particularly pertinent to contact centre agents.

While many organisations have embraced AI by automating everything possible, a significant proportion are failing when it comes to using channel connectivity effectively to enhance the agent experience.

Rather than thinking in terms of leveraging the latest technological advancements, your focus should be how you enable partnership between agents and AI. That is where you will find the sweet spot that enables you to deliver cohesive experiences that delight your customers.



## BALANCE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND AGENT EXPERIENCE

**Catalysed by the pandemic, there is a general consensus that digital transformation<sup>[12]</sup> is set to accelerate. But if you want your investment in digital to succeed in your contact centre, you need to review your approach to customer experience – and truly understand the customer journey<sup>[13]</sup>.**

Ultimately, your customer does not mind whether a human or a robot resolves their problem. But inevitably complex or emotional issues can require more time from agents. Therefore, your contact centre teams must be able to spend the appropriate amount of time with these customers, rather than leaving them solely to digital self-service.

From a strategy perspective, it is not just about making your AI more human, because you also need to trust your agents to know how to resolve a complex issue.

By investing in the right artificial intelligence, you will resolve a significant proportion of customer queries – and empower your agents with the tools they need to do the rest within the shortest possible time frame.

## IT IS CRUCIAL THAT YOUR AI STRATEGY ENCOMPASSES:

-  **Automation of first-line support** – our [Cross-channel Chatbot<sup>\[14\]</sup>](#) works across all of your communication channels, recognising past interactions to resolve issues and deliver a seamless experience
-  **Efficient management of conversations handed off from first-line digital channels** – Engage Hub Agent<sup>[15]</sup>, for example, enables your contact centre agents to update customer data in real-time
-  **AI-powered Natural Language Processing (NLP)** – Using [Conversational IVR<sup>\[16\]</sup>](#), you have the power to capture, interpret and understand intent, enabling customers to resolve their issues without speaking to an agent
-  **Traditional and dynamic IVR, automated payments and call-recording to complement your existing contact centre infrastructure** – making your agents' lives easier while meeting your customers' needs

## CONCLUSION

**Customer experience, rather than product, is the key differentiator between you and your competitors. Quite simply, consumers are willing to pay more for better service.**

In 2022, innovative brands should focus on the shift from self-service to assisted service – creating a real chain of value rather than isolating agent and self-service channels.

AI-powered customer service technology is there to complement your agents' work, not replace it – it is all about creating a joined-up approach that delivers seamless experiences. Leveraging the right intelligence, you have the power to boost CX at every stage of the customer journey – improving engagement in the IVR and streamlining your customer's route to your agent.

Ultimately, it is more valuable to have longer resolution times than a multitude of repeat contacts to deal with. Resolution drives both CSAT and NPS, increasing retention and customer loyalty – and therefore increasing reduction in operational costs and boosting profitability for the long term.



**ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS TRAPPED IN YOUR IVR OR UNABLE TO RESOLVE THEIR QUERY USING YOUR CHATBOT?**

**Engage Hub's [contact centre optimisation solution suite](#)<sup>[17]</sup> empowers agents to use their time and experience helping customers who need it – while resolving a multitude of other queries in real-time using AI-powered digital self-service options.**

[Speak to an Engage Hub expert](#) to find out more about how we will help you deliver outstanding customer and agent experiences in the post-pandemic world.

## ABOUT ENGAGE HUB

### EVERY CUSTOMER IS UNIQUE. ENGAGE EACH ONE

**At Engage Hub, it's our mission to make sure your business treats your customers as individuals to engage each and every one, so you win them over faster and keep them for longer.**

With over 30 years in the business, our services have evolved alongside the needs of our clients, including some of the world's most successful brands across the financial services, utilities, telecoms, retail and logistics sectors. We understand the challenges you face - from data silos to legacy systems – and have built intelligent, intuitive and effective solutions that work for you.

Our commitment to excellence has helped us build a reputation as the leading global provider of data-driven consumer engagement and customer retention solutions. At a time when brand loyalty is at an all-time low, our data orchestration and customer service technology delivers the kind of experiences your customers have now come to expect. So, you can always keep them engaged and happy.

For more information, please visit [www.engagehub.com](http://www.engagehub.com)

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