



# **3 ways to streamline your retail contact center operations**

without bulldozing your existing tech stack

# Retailers can no longer afford disjointed contact center communications and operations

Contact center platforms have gotten more functional, reliable, and popular over the years, but the majority of retailers still struggle with aging infrastructure, whether due to low productivity, complex processes, or high costs. Deloitte Digital's 2021 Global Contact Center Survey found that [92%](#) of businesses still use on-premise solutions for certain workflows, and [62%](#) of contact center leaders are looking to purchase solutions that integrate endpoint hardware with operating systems.

It's clear: despite the emergence of new contact center technology tackling disruptive changes in consumer behavior, retailers don't automatically reap the benefits. In fact, those that have cobbled together contact center tech stacks over the years may even be at a disadvantage; when both customers and agents have to navigate siloed systems, frustrations can bubble. The result? Costly strikes against your retail business: high customer dissatisfaction, churn, and agent burnout.

Some companies turn to the obvious solution of ripping and replacing their existing technology with an improved platform. But this type of upheaval can be both time and resource intensive.

Luckily, there are alternatives. In this eGuide, we'll cover how communications automation platforms (CAP) and their integrated and customizable omnichannel communications can provide customer service automation, agent optimizations, powerful insights, and self-service opportunities that are key to streamlining your operations.



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# The anatomy of an optimized contact center tech stack

For decades, retailers with contact centers have had to make a tough choice: functionality or affordability? Premise-based contact centers may allow for personalized customer experience (CX), but can be costly to deploy and update, while cloud-based solutions promise efficiency and affordability but may offer limited customization.

When your contact center tech stack is outdated and disparate, it's easy to see your contact center as a cost center. But it doesn't have to be this way; with the right provider solutions, modernizing your operations can easily transform your contact center efforts into a crucial value driver.

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**When designing an effective contact center technology stack, you'll want to prioritize features and attributes that let you:**

## Achieve greater operational efficiency

One major challenge of multiple, siloed, or otherwise inefficient contact center systems is the inability to scale customer and workforce communications — unless you hire more agents, pay for costly contact center seats, or significantly increase your budget, that is. Comparatively, a solution that boosts operational efficiency (e.g., via workforce management or new self-service channels) can help you do more for less.

## Integrate channels

When agents have to constantly switch between different systems for voice, messaging, or email channels, it can consume agent time and exacerbate customers' frustrations — nobody enjoys waiting on hold or repeating their problems to multiple agents. Omnichannel communications on the other hand, can empower agents to perform tasks more nimbly, which trickles down to more personal and faster support for customers.

## Engage with customers proactively

**Preemptively tackling issues is the first step to building a customer-relationship-focused brand**

Retailers that provide superior CX don't just invest in reactive customer support (i.e., issue resolution), but in proactive customer support as well. Preemptively tackling issues is the first step to building a customer-relationship-focused brand; however, to do this, you'll need to gather deep customer insights via a robust data collection strategy.

## Provide customers with self-service options

By making self-service a pillar of your contact center technology stack, you can minimize the time and effort agents spend on high-volume, low-impact requests.

## Unlock comprehensive cross-channel data and insights

Uncovering critical trends and identifying new opportunities to boost efficiency or remove friction from the customer journey can be massive game-changers for retailers.

## Benefit from fast scalability

Fast scalability and time-to-market are essential contact center features that help retailers meet swiftly changing consumer demands.

## The end result of this optimized contact center tech stack?

Higher customer satisfaction (CSAT) scores, better customer retention, more efficient agents, and better ROI for your retail business.

If you're ready to harness the benefits of an optimized contact center tech stack (without having to invest heavily in new infrastructure and training), here are three strategies you can implement to get started.

# 1. Layer on communications automation to integrate your existing contact center operations

Rather than ripping and replacing your existing contact center technology stack, communications automation platforms layer over the top (OTT) of your existing contact center infrastructure. Communications automation platforms deliver smart communications automation, artificial intelligence (AI), and self-service to streamline operations and revolutionize the customer and agent experience. In other words, communications automation platforms offer building blocks for modernizing and customizing your contact center in a way that keeps it lean while still meeting all its needs.



## Key benefits of communications automation platforms

Whether you're operating a growing mid-market business or a well-established enterprise, communications automation offers huge benefits, including:

### ► Improved manageability by unifying existing software, channels, and apps in one portal

Communications automation platforms layer OTT and integrate with your existing contact center solutions, with no overhauls necessary — to unlock powerful capabilities like automation, contextual intelligence, self-service, and more. Additionally, it connects with CRMs, business process applications, marketing automation, billing systems, and other business-critical infrastructure to ensure information flows freely across your entire organization.



## ► Flexibility to tailor communications automation with your specific needs

Most modern contact center platforms offer robust functionalities, but the truth is few will offer every automation, AI, or self-service capability your retail business specifically requires, especially as you grow and your needs change. Comparatively, with communications automation, you can easily innovate by scaling, removing, or adding new channels or features as needed.

## ► Real-time, cross-channel data

Unlike premise-based systems that struggle to collect data across multiple online or offline touchpoints, communications automation unifies communications and offers retailers a comprehensive snapshot of each channel's performance. Comprehensive analytics and insights help better position you to identify trends, understand your customers, and subsequently deliver the high-quality customer service that they demand.

## ► Better security and reliability

Agents and customers must both be able to fully trust the platform they're using. Top communications automation platforms deliver security at the carrier level, providing AI and automation before it reaches the contact center. Delivering at the carrier level shows higher security, ROI, and total cost of ownership.

These combined benefits ultimately translate to more personalized, engaging, and friction-free communication — which is the first step to building omnichannel CX.

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# Examples of must-have communications automations

Here are some key communications automations that can augment your existing contact center operations:

## Smart routing

Smart routing allows you to route calls to different endpoints based on factors like day of the week, hour of the day, or agent expertise. This ensures that calls are handled quickly no matter what time or day — which is imperative if you're a global business operating in multiple time zones.

## Auto responses

Auto responses, which automatically respond to phone calls or texts made to a dedicated phone number, are perfect for managing SMS promotional offers — e.g., "Text SALE to <phone number> for a unique 25% off coupon!"

## Smart IVR

Smart IVR lets you design a self-service menu tree for customers to bypass agents and quickly get answers to common questions, like your locations or hours of operation.

## Post-call surveys

Post-call surveys are critical for retailers looking to gather customer feedback and gauge their satisfaction with the customer service interaction.

## Digital assistant

Digital assistant routes requests based on the keywords that the customer says, such as "billing department," so there's no need for them to manually dial a number to be routed to a specific extension.

Unlike traditional forklift upgrades, communications automations are available as no-code apps in the [IntelPeer marketplace](#), meaning there is little to no coding and development expertise required. Instead, communications automations are plug-and-play, with an easy-to-navigate graphics user interface (GUI) for instant deployment and results. For those looking for more customization than our templated, turnkey no-code applications, you can modify our alternative low-code applications according to your business needs.

## 2. Use AI and machine learning-powered data to identify inefficient processes

Contact centers offer a gold mine of data that retailers can use to better understand their customers. However, the unfortunate reality is that many current systems simply weren't designed for cross-channel data collection and insights.

Luckily, communications automation can come in handy here, as well. Communications automation offers AI-powered monitoring and analytics to help you:

### ► Determine how customers engage with your customer service channels

Insights into the volume and complexity of requests for each channel can help you better allocate resources and ensure a consistent and manageable workload for agents.

### ► Identify opportunities to improve agent performance

By measuring engagement rates and response times, you can spot problems before they occur. For example, if agents are spending too much time redirecting customers to other agents better equipped to serve them, you can build an automated intelligent routing workflow that will ensure customers are automatically directed to the right agent from the start.

### ► Pinpoint areas where you can deliver personalized communications

Whether proactive or reactive, personalized communications that take a customer's purchase history, behaviors, interests, and demographics into consideration are a chance for your business to show that you care about customers as individuals. This can massively increase their satisfaction and maintain a positive brand association.

### ► Find customer pain point patterns

Your customer data can reveal what products or aspects of your business (e.g., fulfillment times) your customers are struggling with most, which you can then communicate across your larger organization.

IntelPeer offers [rich data analytics](#) by compiling all your cross-channel data into on-demand reports in a singular dashboard. By covering both real-time data and historical trends, you can unlock crucial visibility into omnichannel customer interactions and use it to pinpoint actionable next steps.



# 3. Leverage self-service capabilities to empower customers

No matter how seamless your customer experience is, questions like “When is my order’s estimated arrival date?”, “What is your shipping policy?”, and “I entered the wrong address, what should I do?” are bound to come up. Day-to-day customer issues are inevitable, but answering these repetitive requests can drain agent time, especially during busy peak seasons. What’s more, studies have found that consumers dislike going through multiple layers of phone trees and agents to get help either — in fact, 81%<sup>1</sup> say they’d prefer more self-service options, and only 15% expressed high satisfaction with the tools available to them now.

It’s clear that investing in self-service capabilities is paramount for all retailers: By empowering customers to tackle their needs, you can not only eliminate unnecessary wait time, but also free up agents’ queues. This makes customers less frustrated and also allows agents to focus on handling higher priority and more complex tasks.

Depending on your products and services, you might implement self-service automation like:

# 81%

**of consumers want more self-service options**



## Bill payments

From food delivery to ecommerce, automated bill payments via phone are a powerful solution when traditional web payment portals may be down.



## Appointment scheduling

Not only can customers make, change, or cancel appointments, but you can also automate confirmation and reminder emails or texts. Replacing the manual task of appointment scheduling minimizes the risk of human error, which ultimately reduces the number of missed appointments, simplifies customer communications, and boosts customer satisfaction.



## Order status updates

No matter how fast your stated shipping time, customers usually want their orders to arrive as soon as possible. By allowing them to check delivery tracking information as they please, you can appease impatient customers.



## Promotional offer alerts

Make sure customers never miss out on time-sensitive deals by pinging them when a relevant promotional offer is available.

<sup>1</sup> <https://cxmtoday.com/news/81-of-consumers-say-they-want-more-self-service-options/>



Here are some tips to keep in mind when developing automated self-service touchpoints so they can be genuinely helpful (rather than overcomplicated or frustrating):

- ▶ These interactions don't have to live solely on your website — you can integrate them within your IVR system or social media chat, so customers can easily find solutions using whatever channel they prefer, whenever they need it.
- ▶ Your self-service capabilities should integrate with the rest of your communications and contact center system. This will allow personalization across each touchpoint using information from previous interactions, order histories, or customer call notes.
- ▶ It's not just about answering questions correctly. The best automated self-service channels use natural language processing (NLP) to sound less robotic and more like a friend. Powered by AI, NLP combines speech recognition, sentiment analysis, word sense disambiguation, and more to respond with appropriate action.
- ▶ Your self-service automations should integrate seamlessly with human support as well, so customers who can't get the answers they need on their own can quickly speak with the live agent with the best skills and qualifications to deal with their issues.

# Automating your contact center operations is the key to future-proofing your business

Until recently, automation capabilities have been difficult to leverage, whether by locking retailers into expensive yet unscalable contact center infrastructure or by limiting upgrade capabilities, flexibility, and customization. Luckily, solutions have evolved, and retailers now have more options than ever to seamlessly transform customer pain points into new opportunities in an instant.

With communications automation, you no longer have to juggle different disconnected tools (that can ultimately cause your business to fall behind the competition). Instead, you can deliver a seamless omnichannel customer journey without dismantling your existing tech stack. Your team can work more efficiently while your customers enjoy support and services that meet them where they are.

## Get started with IntelPeer

IntelPeer delivers Smart Automation via their communications automation platform (CAP) with plug-and-play solutions that turbocharge your contact center operations. Powered by AI and analytics, our pre-built solutions leveraged through no-code/low-code applications are built for modern brands preparing for tomorrow's customer experience. They're customizable, flexible, omnichannel, scalable, and powered by contextual intelligence. They're a game-changer for retailers looking to instantly improve CX without replacing their existing business systems and infrastructure.

**To learn more about how we can help you modernize your contact center, visit [IntelPeer](#).**





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