

Call Centers Are Out

Experience

**Centers
Are In**



nobelbiz[®]
Contact Center Technology

THE PREMISE

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE DEFINES THE FUTURE

People appreciate custom-tailored experiences that go beyond the traditional scope of a call center.

Several recent studies revealed a staggering number of consumers, over a wide spectrum of ages and industries, want better support across the board, no matter what product or service they're using.

NobelBiz has the data to back that up.

THE METHOD

Our eBook will take an in-depth look at how trending consumer preferences are actively influencing the contact center space. Because we live in this space and we're also the people behind it.

Day in, day out we talk with industry leaders about what shapes their vision of the ecosystem today. Our recent podcast series, "[First Contact: Stories of the Call Center](#)", further illuminated how impactful global consumer culture is on the day-to-day life of all call center employees and affiliates, from CEOs and agents.

The recent COVID-19 crisis demonstrates just how much customers require support and how much that support is valued – no matter whether it's achieved via traditional voice or newer channels like Twitter.



OUR FINDINGS

Call center people need to adapt or die out. It's time for support to live up to its name and push for personalized experiences focused on the consumer.

To be productive, proactive, and intelligent, agents don't just need to have or learn soft skills. It's also a time for experts to shine. For managers to remove obstacles and make it possible for employees to be both.

In what follows, we'll make our argument as to **why contact centers need to convert to experience centers** if they want to survive in this increasingly competitive market.

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1. TURNING SUPPORT INTO A PLEASURE

Who likes calling customer support?

While it will take time for people to grow out of their anxiety over calling support, the fact of the matter is building a successful brand means owning exceptional support and actively challenging consumers to change their perception of a particular call center.

Teams of anxiety-ridden employees that just take calls with no clear rhyme or reason are becoming a thing of the past. If any business still has those, management should go ahead and root out the causes, make the workplace one in which support can bloom into a culture-forward endeavor.

Such a sustained effort will enable businesses to be at the forefront of the cultural shift towards experience centers. Doing their part to make support a brand-building process, modernized to meet the needs of an increasingly demanding consumer.

THE 2020 CONSUMER

The 2020 consumers don't wish for a resolution. They expect a resolution while wishing for positive interactions that anticipate their needs.

These needs are clear:

- ✕ Putting in the necessary time for a resolution
- ✕ Using soft skills to put consumers at ease
- ✕ Calling back whenever an issue needs more time and/or research
- ✕ Having separate communication channels (WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Email, Twitter, etc.) to provide that support in an integrated way.
- ✕ Having agents provide continuous updates during the resolution process through **omnichannel** solutions.

90.4%
Of NobelBiz customers
appreciated our support
team always going the extra
mile to reach a resolution
- NobelBiz Client Advocates Survey

CEOs and agents alike must be on guard and anticipate these needs especially as the world recovers from crises like (but not limited to) COVID-19. No matter whether they own or outsource their support, the bottom line is the brand will be affected by the experience that's being created in the contact center.

We will see a rise in the active work to cancel bad experiences. One possible starting point would be to remind oneself how during the prime of

internet review culture, a single bad review can cause serious short-term damage to the company. And then never stop improving – keep going until people actively love & praise the support team!

2. MULTILEVEL CARING

People appreciate support representatives that take an interest in the complicated chain of relationships that are interconnected with a request.

In the experience center, it's no longer enough to reach resolutions only for issues that are the company or the customer's fault.

A lot of times, there are other parties involved in the requests and even though it may be more complicated to fix them when that happens, these requests are not, and should not be treated as, less valid.

In fact, dismissing consumer concerns is, in our line of work, a very damaging and unfortunately common practice that results in bad experience.

There's a bigger challenge in this: finding customer support representatives that don't automatically dismiss what they do not know. Or, alternatively, training the current ones to never, ever do that.



28.5%

Of NobelBiz customers
stated how our support
team is so much nicer
than in the rest of the
industry

- NobelBiz Client
Advocates Survey

This also ties back to culture. It's not about the agent that's on call. It's not even about the business, the contractor, or the call center. It's about the customer and their concerns. It's learning to care and caring all the time, for everything. That sounds draining but in time, with enough practice, it can become fulfilling.

You're a support agent and the main thing there should be "support" – not "agent". Starting with 2020, people's need for genuine emotional support has gone through the roof.

Even if agents have nothing to do with an issue, but have an understanding as to what happened, there is a need today to explain that to the customer in a personable, polite way. In the midst of a global crisis, everyone needs and appreciates a friendly voice – and they will return if it goes well.

HERE'S WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT:

14.2%

...went out of their way to thank us for helping even when it was not a problem on our end or with them, but with their customers.

- NobelBiz Client Advocates Survey

We've had specific support requests by a client because a product was not working. It turned out the product was fine. Furthermore, there was no issue on the client's side.

What ended up happening is we discovered their customers, on their end, were messing things up, which ended up causing a chain of issues.

Some support centers might not have pursued the matter too much. But we did, and that made all the difference.

3.

ENABLING MORE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Faking soft skills destroys customer relationships. Faking culture kills the company.

Agents that take time out of their busy schedules to build relationships with customer support callers are much more likely to foster positive experiences. It's not just good for the consumer, it's good for the agents too. This is especially true for recurring calls from the same persons.

The other side of the issue is management. How does management enable that kind of culture where agents can afford the luxury to dedicate themselves so fully to specific people (not issues)? How do you do that while in a work from home environment?

Managers know how difficult it is to create that time for agents and allow that space in their workflows so they care about that.

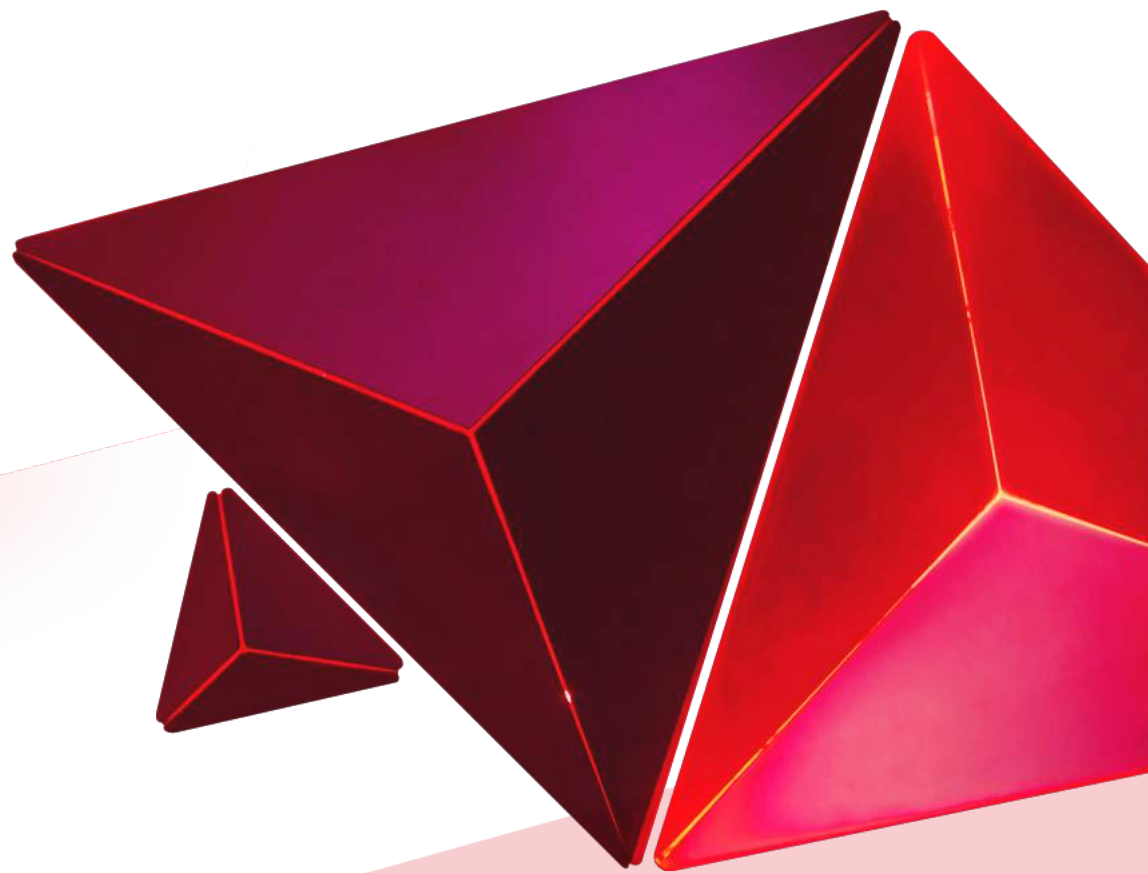
42.5%
Of NobelBiz customers appreciated how support gets back in touch after they do the proper research.

- NobelBiz Client Advocates Survey

If you tell someone to do something, it does not mean they will actually do it. Agents may have too many calls and too many extra tasks. They rely too heavily on numbers like first call resolutions, calls under 240 seconds, and upselling among other things.

It's management's job to balance the numbers – which will always be important – with this new, experience-oriented way of thinking about consumers.

The newer software solutions, like our Omnichannel solution, allow supervisors to add specific details to tasks or entirely new tasks that allow for better customer experience within a specific timeframe. And doing so remotely has never been easier as the old on-premise solutions are finally being replaced across the industry.



4.

IT'S THE EXPERTS' TIME TO SHINE

A great deal of businesses have had an either/or approach to expert support and personal, soft-skill-based support. While some would have us believe there's still no way to have both, we know from personal experience that you can't have one without the other.



LET'S EXPLAIN THE NOBELBIZ WAY

It's simple. Every time we launch a new product, like NobelBiz OMNI+, we schedule a meeting for our engineers to present it to us. A key factor in these meetings are the experts on the support team, who can clarify any confusion and answer questions in layperson terms after the meeting ends.

Plus, our engineers are always easy to reach. If our support gets sidetracked, they can always forward it to the engineers to reach a better resolution more efficiently. All the while our support is keeping our clients in the loop over integrated channels, as mentioned earlier.

Last but definitely not least, all of our training calls are recorded. When someone wants to go back to a point made during any call, they can because we have an easily accessible system in place that allows for efficient data storage, archiving, and traceback.

AN ADVANTAGE FOR NEW HIRES

Think about it – when someone new joins, by making it mandatory for them to listen to those calls and go through training and then participate in a customer support day (even if it's not their job), we're already at a big advantage over the competition.

The data archive helps us raise the bar for new employees. The customer support day keeps people in the loop with our most important asset – connecting with people. And we should never let anyone tell us customer support is not valuable.

Making and receiving countless calls day in and day out does, at the very least, train valuable soft-skilled professionals that know how to handle stressful situations with customers. And at the very best, it creates important, long-lasting connections all while enabling brand loyalty – another great outcome of the move to experience centers.



40%

**Of NobelBiz customers
said support is our most
valuable asset.**

- NobelBiz Client Advocates Survey

EXPERTS VS SOFT SKILLS

We managed to talk about how our soft-skilled support representatives get trained and become experts. But how do we imprint softskills on the experts that don't have them? And if that may prove too difficult, what then?

It's never easy to balance the need for experts and the need for people-persons.

But there are a few things one can do:

- 1** Have a rigorous feedback system in place that can root out lack of expertise and lack of soft skills before they take hold.
- 2** Start a QA team that has one job: listen to calls and evaluate them based on the most important criteria for a specific line of business. This may already be standard practice in some companies, but the QA team's scope must be to guarantee exceptional customer experience.
- 3** Train everyone on the product and on offering people-oriented support. Chances are, most people that follow-through with that training will turn into valuable call agents, QA agents, or even experts (in the long run).

THE RESULT

After sustained efforts to have both experts and soft-skills specialists at the same time, NobelBiz managed to create a brand-building support experience. Since we're part of the contact center industry, it's important for us to set the standard for that industry.

Before marketing, before sales, and even before any other branding effort, putting customer support first enables invaluable and resilient contracts. These contracts can serve as a strong foundation on which to center and build a solid business.

85.7%

*Of NobelBiz customers
singled out support as one
of our top advantages.*

- NobelBiz Client Advocates Survey

5.

BUILDING BRAND RELATIONSHIPS

CX studies by industry leaders such as Forrester show that consumers want brands they identify with, that share their beliefs – political, moral, or ethical. Even more so, they actively go out of their way to purchase and stay loyal to brands that meet very specific criteria.



WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR CONTACT CENTERS?

The first thing to remember is agents cannot bring politics into a discussion with a customer over the phone unless the business or contact center is expressly political in nature (such as political campaigns, political party affiliates, or anywhere in between).

If a business is not overtly political, the other two bases for brand relationships are morals and ethics. By a large margin, simply being kind over the phone is the most successful way towards building a positive relationship with a customer.

In the experience center age, brands have to take the time to research what kind of common values tie the target audience together and provide a data-driven report for its employees. The experience center agents will know what topics have a high probability of success and which they should avoid at all costs.

If your customers align with a social issue that's going viral, train agents about it. If your customers align with more conservative values that would be controversial for your brand, train agents on how to avoid talking about those topics.

The next step is making it easy for employees across the business to identify with those values and, in a broad way that doesn't touch on polarizing issues, authentically integrate them into the core values so that everyone knows the rules.

CULTURE

Culture trickles down. Good or bad, it's in the hands of executives to determine how they want their business to advance in terms of people and the market. Promoting and practicing good culture automatically enables every level of the company to have a baseline in which the core values of the company can thrive.

In other words, a business should not just say they have a culture built on keeping promises, to give our core value as an example. The goal must be to actively demonstrate that core value to the company members.

Whatever a business does, they should not settle on core values management doesn't practice or identify with. If something sounds good, it doesn't mean it will work. The contact center can easily become a toxic workplace and that, as we just said, trickles down to every level.

TAKE THE TIME TO EXPLAIN AND EDUCATE

One smart way to align customers with the brand ethics and culture is for agents to train them on the industry both parties are working in so they understand:

- ✖ Where their problems are coming from
- ✖ What customer support can do to help them
- ✖ What they can do to help themselves
- ✖ Where they can read more

35.7%

...of NobelBiz customers appreciated how our support team takes the time to educate them on how the call labeling and blocking ecosystem works.

- NobelBiz Client Advocates Survey

It won't work for everyone, so persistence is key. This tactic will result in smart clients that understand the issues they're reporting much better.

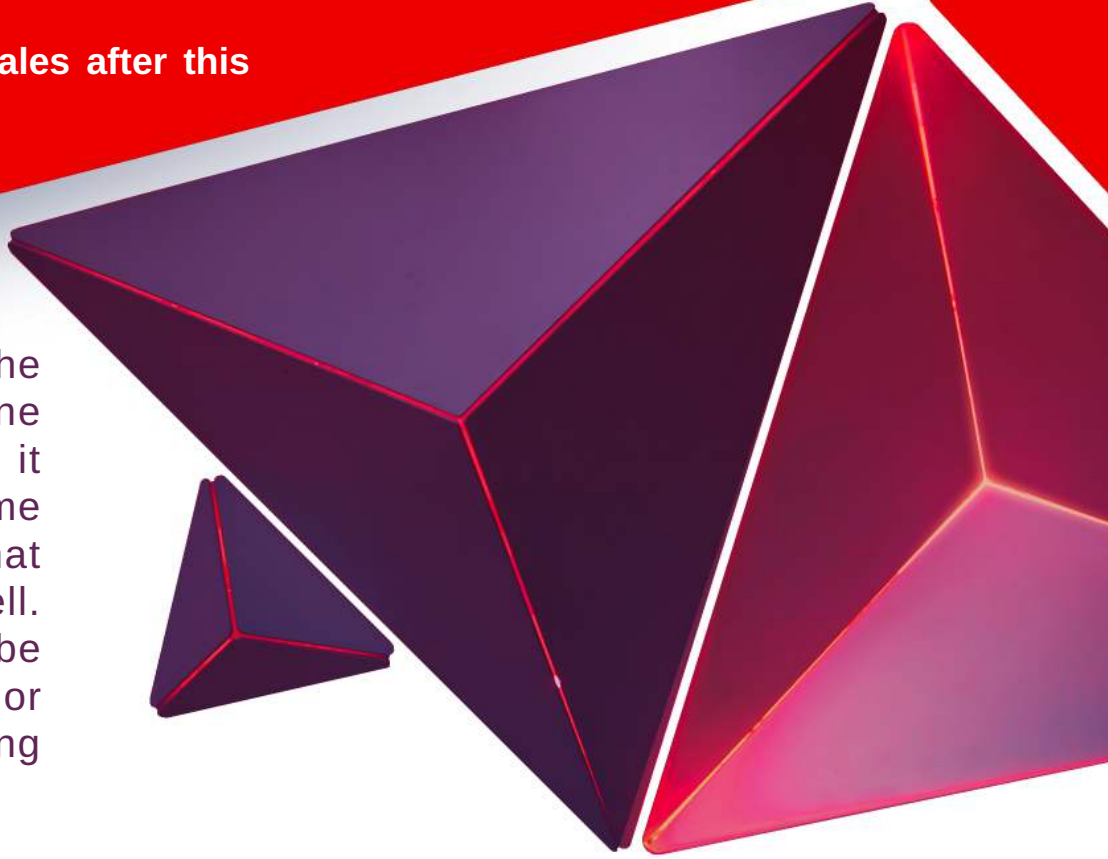
PRO TIP

Coordinate with the your team to create blog posts on your website, providing useful information and a place where your clients can read more about their concerns within the industry.

6. KINDNESS FIRST, SALES LATER

How do I make more sales after this eBook?

Just because the business is the one making the calls, it doesn't mean the same rules don't apply in that case as well. Experiences can be customized even or especially when calling leads.



Just because the business is the one making the calls, it doesn't mean the same rules don't apply in that case as well. Experiences can be customized even or especially when calling leads.

A QUESTION OF TOOLS

Our data shows a steep improvement in agent performance depending on the type of software and the telecom carrier they are using.

For example, local caller ID drastically improves the connection rate, leading to more efficient workdays and less pressure on making a sale quickly. We've seen this firsthand with [our LocalTouch caller ID solution](#):

"The LocalTouch service has become a necessity for what we do. When used correctly, LocalTouch significantly increases our contact rates."

- NobelBiz Client Advocates Survey

It also leads to happier sales agents. By extension, they're nicer on call and land more sales. By optimizing internal processes with small incremental changes like this one, companies can significantly boost sales.

LEADING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

First, create an experience-forward approach to every sales call. This takes time and adequate training, but with the right people, businesses are able to reach the right process for their target audience. And after that, it's just a question of perseverance.

Next, every outbound experience center must double down on enforcing the method throughout the sales team. Then implement a reporting and feedback system that also tracks lead experience through the entire process from the pitch to the sale.

Lastly, salespeople should try to identify commonly shared beliefs among the target audience and integrate them into the conversation in a way that builds brand relationships. This will transform all future interactions with any client into positive experiences.

Once that's done, clients are more likely to want to talk to businesses about any needs and concerns. That encourages further positive interactions which leads to strong personal relationships and, in turn, increases the likelihood of successful upselling down the road.

10.5%

Of NobelBiz customers singled out customer support agents by name and thanked them.

- NobelBiz Client Advocates Survey

7.

THE STRUGGLE TO NOT BE FORGETTABLE

Bad experiences are more difficult to forget than good experiences

Let's assume companies take the right steps to turn their support around as a business.

We can say, however unlikely, that all the agents are doing their job properly. How then do they turn great experiences into exceptional and noteworthy ones?

We've seen this firsthand: our customer support feedback went from "great" to "unusually nice for the industry." What did it take?

PERSEVERANCE

This ties back in with what Steve Bederman said in the first episode of our podcast. Since this industry has such a high turnover rate, perseverance will often be the difference between a job and a career.

Companies have to do the same and keep at it. No excuses. Rome wasn't built in a day. Rome was built by call agents replicating processes and doubling down on product improvement and self-improvement until, eventually, they got a Colosseum of Customer Support Experiences.

- Steve Bederamn, President & CEO of NobelBiz

EXPERIENCE

Gaining experience in being an experience center is, lastly, the most significant way to turn company culture towards one that's tailored to the clients – designed to help them.

In a basic “fake it ‘till you make it” fashion, all businesses have to start somewhere when trying to tailor their support processes to fit the needs of their clients.

It will take a while for that whole mentality to settle in and stop feeling fake – make no mistake – but it will eventually. Once the entire company aligns with the culture, the true work of becoming an experience center can begin.

The best part is that 2020 is the perfect year to start. As customers deal with the unkind reality of daily life, they require a soothing, friendly voice that they can rely on – and that holds true even when communicating via text.

While the static of the news cycle is becoming impossible to ignore, customers are looking for things they like that can offer some sort of stability.

If you're in a business that can fill that space, you're probably seeing great returns this year. But no matter your niche, you can do your part to help by investing in customer experience.

EVERYONE HAS TO PUT IN THE WORK BEFORE THEY CAN EXPECT ANY RESULTS

We know all of this because NobelBiz is a leader in contact center solutions. And we are also delivering our own support.

And all of us must do our part to own that and make the industry-wide move to from call centers and contact centers to experience centers.

From good to great.

THIS EBOOK WAS BROUGHT TO YOU BY



NOBELBIZ

NobelBiz is an industry-leading provider of contact center software solutions, from our carrier of carriers telecom network to OMNI+, our new, innovative, and fully-remote omnichannel software. Our network guarantees your lines stay up, and our omnichannel product makes sure agents can seamlessly switch between Twitter, voice, or any channel, with a simple click. Our expert support and engineers are always ready to help!

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RESOURCES

PRIMARY RESOURCES

- *NobelBiz Client Advocates Survey*, the NobelBiz Client Advocates Team
- *Future of CX*, Forrester, © 2019 Forrester Research, Inc.

SECONDARY RESOURCES

- *Contact Centers: The Last Line of Defense*, Forbes, Luke Williams, Head of CX Strategy & Thought Leadership, Qualtrics | **Jan 15, 2020**
- *First Contact: Stories of the Call Center*, NobelBiz Podcast, Hosted by Christian Montes. Episodes: 1, 2, 5, 7 | **Jan-July, 2020**
- *Coronavirus & Contact Centers - A Survival Guide to Business*, Webinar, Christa Heibel, Steve Bederman, Christian Montes | **Mar 30, 2020**
- *How to Deliver Excellent Customer Support in 2020*, Webinar, Christian Montes, George Seroukas | **June 3, 2020**

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