THE FUTURE'S
NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE

The new contact centre playbook for a new world

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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES THAT MATTER
Communication Advisors.

The Future's
Not What it Used to Be

**The new contact centre playbook
for a new world.**

How you can use distributed **Customer
Experience** (CX) and **Agent Experience** (AX)
to define your next system.

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Well... here we are.

And who'd have thought?

Unprecedented times?

The new normal? Covidnomics?
Any cliche will do.

Whatever you call it, these
'interesting' times have changed
the way we all work.

And while the Covid threat is still real, with contingency and continuity now in place, many of us are moving beyond the system shock and are looking out at this new, distributed business-scape, identifying creative ways forward and pinpointing new opportunities. Opportunity through transformation.

In the context of our businesses, call and contact centres will involve the adoption of new technology, more distributed working environments, new business models and a continued shift from Capex to Opex.

And with experience more than ever the key commercial battleground, transformation to drive both improved CX (Customer eXperience) and what we define as AX (Agent eXperience) will play a leading role in defining the future winners and losers. After all, there's no getting away from the mission critical, results-defining role that experience plays.

It's no surprise when Gartner reports, 'A great customer experience strategy is vital to the satisfaction and loyalty of a company's customer base. As customer expectations change, marketing leaders must devise effective strategies to build customer confidence in their brand and increase customer satisfaction.'

While the continual pursuit of world class CX is a given, the Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the pressing need to make sure that your teams, as well as your customers, also enjoy the best possible experience.

For example, 77% of contact centres have more than 50% of their employees working from home.

Afterall, how can you deliver a superior Customer experience if your AX falls short of the mark?

With research from Call North West revealing 66% of respondents reporting anxiety/mental health as a significant issue as organisations have deployed work-from-home centres during the current crisis, ensuring that your people are supported by the right technology as we move into new and uncharted waters has got to be a top priority.

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Just Because you Want Something to be True Doesn't Mean it is:

The Importance of Proper Research

One final Covid-19 related point before we move on to the playbook proper.

There's a piece of wishful thinking, an ancient gem of wisdom that tends to get wheeled out in challenging times like these. It's so apt, so elegant, that people are quick to share it. Even JFK used to cite it.

The story of the Chinese word for crisis, wéiji.

That wéiji is composed of two characters. One character that represents danger, and the other, opportunity.

Fascinating isn't it? An immaculately appropriate adage.
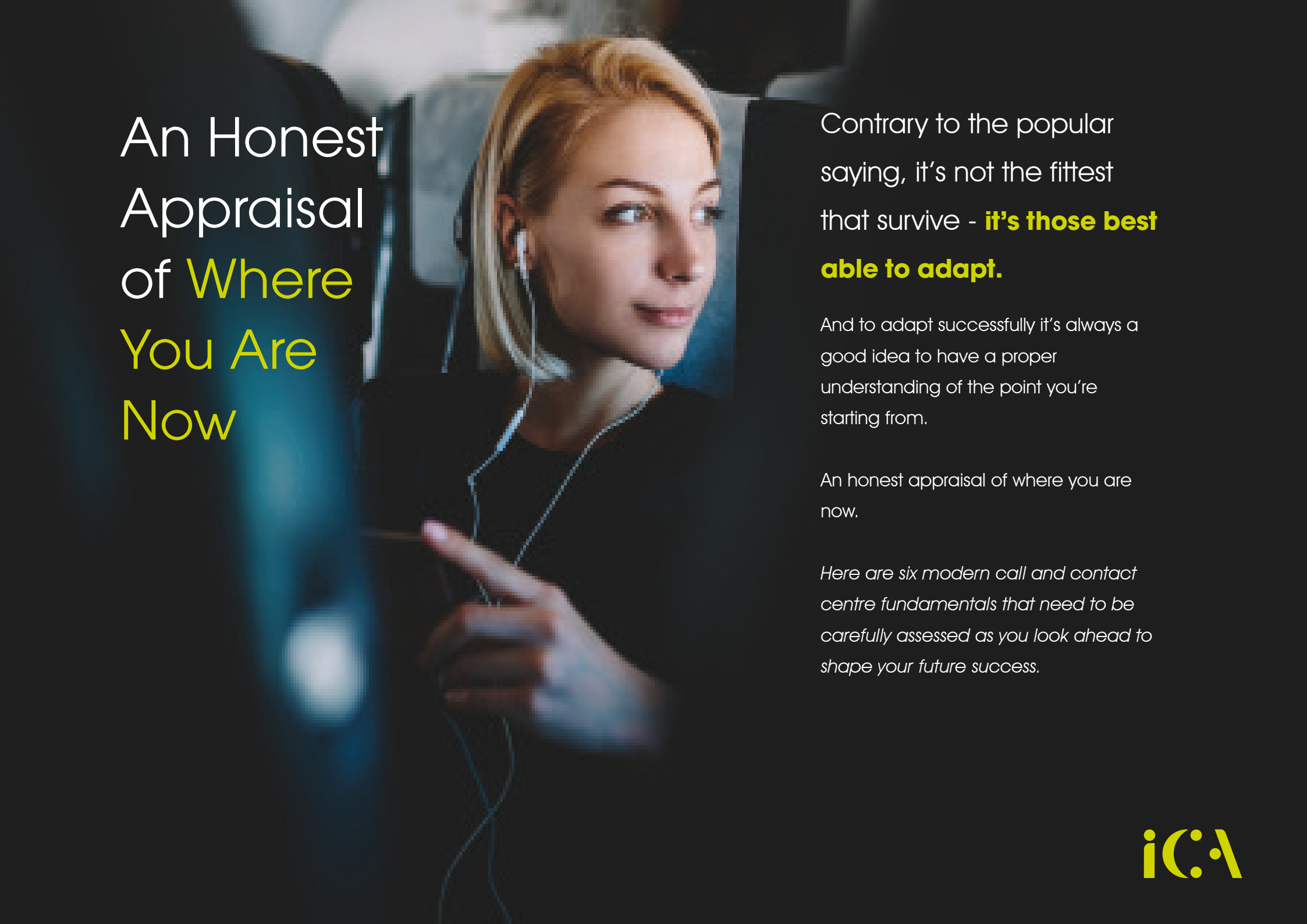
And it would be, if it were true.

It's not. Unfortunately.

And however much you want it to be true, wanting it to be true won't ever make it true.

But what it does go to show is how susceptible we are to a neat idea. How vulnerable we are to accepting truths or facts at face value without proper research.

Proper research and due diligence lie at the heart of this study.

The kind of upfront attention to detail that will reward you handsomely over the long term.

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An Honest Appraisal of Where You Are Now

Contrary to the popular saying, it's not the fittest that survive - **it's those best able to adapt.**

And to adapt successfully it's always a good idea to have a proper understanding of the point you're starting from.

An honest appraisal of where you are now.

Here are six modern call and contact centre fundamentals that need to be carefully assessed as you look ahead to shape your future success.

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Head in the Cloud?
Or the Server Room?

Historically, on-premise contact center solutions required extensive investment in physical hardware and software deployment. Inflexible, expensive, and costly to maintain, they also required specialist IT knowledge.

You? Do you still run the bulk of your operations through a physical call centre? And if so, how reliant are you on legacy hardware?

35% of contact centre leaders report that their centres will mainly be homeworking by 2021. If you are still reliant on physical hardware, server rooms, on-site backup and telephony services, how will you support the growing number of agents who don't set foot in your office from one day to the next? Now is most certainly the time to raise your eyes to the cloud and seriously consider making your move.

You wouldn't be alone. During the crisis, a massive 79% of call and contact centres have invested in Cloud Technology solutions including Employee Communications platforms (such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom) and contact handling technology.

The trend only looks set to continue. 56% of leaders plan to use new technology to manage customer contacts more effectively in 2021, and 40% plan additional spend on communications with Remote Managers/Agents.

Why?

Flexibility. Value for money. Resilience. User experience. Health. Safety. Survival. The list goes on.

It really is less a question of whether to invest in the cloud (be it a complete cloud set up, a hybrid, or a version of edge computing) and more a question of how. How can you achieve the fastest, most cost effective, most sustainable business benefits?

"We've seen an increase in ROI and transformed our contact centre into an effective operation.

We work smarter, better, take more calls and provide improved customer service.

ICA knows that delighting customers increases revenue and their solutions are helping our business grow."

Melissa Savage, Contact Centre Manager
Ripe Thinking Ltd

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The New
Distributed Model

> "We conducted an independent review before proposing a five-year strategy that included a complete communications refresh across five locations and the migration of over 200 channels and hundreds of telephone numbers.
>
> Disaster recovery and business continuity were tested in full as part of the project deployment. And we built an improvement plant into the five-year strategy for continued evaluation of the solution."
>
> **Lee Beaumont,** YM Group IT Consultant
> **YM Group**

The shift to a distributed model has been so sudden and dramatic (over three quarters contact centres have seen more than half their staff working from home during the Covid-19 crisis), that you might think the upheaval has been a bad thing.

Unexpected, certainly. Challenging without doubt. But bad? Far from it.

By accelerating an existing trend, the move has quickly introduced much needed working flexibility, new powerful technologies and unforeseen opportunities to rapidly advance CX and AX potential.

With only one in ten contact centre leaders feeling that contact centres will run the way they used to and more than 30% seeing Work-from-Home as the future, it looks like this change is here to stay.

It's a statistic that's worth repeating: 35% of contact centre leaders believe that contact centres will be mainly homeworking by 2021.

58% that homeworking would be partly optional and partly compulsory.

This ship is not for turning.

If you don't operate a distributed model currently - then it's highly likely that in one form or another you soon will. If only to offer the professional, social, family and healthcare flexibility that so many people need.

Fortunately the cloud has made the whole evolution relatively straightforward.

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Too Little Data?
Too Much Data?

"Features like caller mapping have added to our understanding.

We can see if we're receiving large numbers of calls from a particular region,which the business can use to inform our clinic location decisions."

Andrew Ayres, Head of Call Centres
Optimax

There are few, if any, contact centres these days that suffer from a lack of data. Most are drowning it.

Agent average talk time, average handling time, number of handled calls, proportion of closed deals and first call resolution percentages.

And new, rich data across all your touch points, voice, IVR, social media, chat, SM and agent-assisted... The data is piling up.

Collecting data isn't the issue. Collecting the right data and knowing how to interrogate that data to turn it into insight across the right KPIs is what matters.

To do that you'll need more than just the right software. You'll need a steady hand and a keen eye when it comes to setting up and running your systems. The experience to define and set the right benchmarks, to prioritise competing demands, to manage expectations.

Only by asking the most meaningful questions can you hope to get the most meaningful answers.

The great thing is that as well as no shortage of data, now there's no shortage of tools and talent when it comes to advanced contact centre data intelligence.

Centre-wide insight that allows you to continually and quickly finesse your operations for optimum CX, AX and performance.

"What gets measured gets improved," as legendary management consultant Peter Drucker once famously said.

You? How do you manage and measure your data? And what does your data teach you? What does it give you? Headaches? Hassle? Heartburn? Or genuine insights, improved performance and competitive advantage?

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The Power of Automated Processes

"Avaya Call Recording delivers a new set of sophisticated tools to recognise patterns and anomalies, allowing the management team to evaluate the delivery of customer service."

Victoria Mortimer, Partner
Shulmans

"Monthly communication costs were reduced by over 20%."

Andrew Ayres, Head of Call Centre
Optimax

It's no secret. If you want to be more profitable you need to be more efficient.

And if you want to be more efficient, then you'll need better processes. Behind every profitable business, is a great set of processes.

And here's the quickest, easiest and most sustainable way to apply great processes to your contact centre.

Automation.

Automation that optimises your processes.

For example:

- **Predictive dialler automation for automatic dialling instead of manual**
- **Automatic call and email distribution**
- **Chatbots and active listening customer assist**
- **Statistical machine learning that spots patterns in agent activity, resolutions, and customer feedback**
- **Associate assist that automatically connects agents with system records**

Contact centre processes that extend into reminders, notifications, online payment solutions and recurring payments and far beyond.

If you're not currently making the most of automations to drive your CX and AX then it's time to take a good look at how other organisations use automation in their communications.

A world of new efficiencies and stronger ROI awaits you.

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Contact Centre and CRM System Integration

Of course you want your Contact Centre and CRM integrated.

Who wouldn't like a single, seamless experience that's quicker, easier and more efficient? More productive for your agents and your clients?

Name a business that wouldn't benefit from increased accuracy, consistency and reliability across customer data and customer interactions?

It constantly surprises us that some businesses still don't run integrated systems.

A fact of business life for some unfortunately.

You?

If you're suffering the pain of that Contact Centre CRM dislocation then there's never been a better time to look at creating your single, shared, accessible version of truth - a seamless integrated platform.

"As well as improving performance, we can now more effectively gather and share valuable business intelligence that we can use to increase our capabilities and our profitability."

Adam Mitchell, IT Manager
United Carpets

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Are You
Omnichannel?

You need to be. **Omnipresent.** People expect it.

I'm sure you're the same. When you contact a supplier or provider you expect to be able to pick up from where you left off.

Smart omnichannel integration management makes the history of your interaction accessible and up to date on whatever device or through whichever channel you are using.

From Twitter to webchat to WhatsApp to SMS - across the board, you need to be there, and when you interact you need to be sharing the same story, the same information.

Personal, professional, problem solving on the go. It's the least I, you, your teams, and in particular your customers expect.

If you're not showing up or worse - showing up with a weak customer experience - they'll move on. It's as simple as that.

There are plenty of other businesses out there able to engage in the communication customers want, where they want it and when they want it.

How smart is your omnichannel integration management?

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The Shift
From Capex to Opex

We talked earlier about the revolution in Cloud computing.

It's a revolution that's also driven a sea change in the relationship between businesses and finance.

Instead of upfront Capital Expenditure on servers, server rooms and all the other paraphernalia that used to come with a big commitment to onsite kit, on-demand cloud services now run as Operational Expenditure. From processing, to storage, to your entire Contact Centre.

Specify your services and your spend dynamically. The performance you need when you need it. Fluid, scalable and cost effective. The elasticity of the cloud as a service.

Suddenly even the most advanced and ambitious platforms are available to even the most modestly sized organisations.

Great for businesses like yours. Great for your customers and great too for your teams - empowered to move away from clunky, dusty legacy systems to new state of the art customer support suites.

How will you treat your next investment?

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The Shift
From Sales to Consultancy

Now that you're no longer buying kit in great big upfront money-on-the-table deals, people are no longer trying to flog you kit in great big upfront money-on-the-table deals.

What was once sales has become consultancy.

While all good sales people will always have insisted they were very much consultancy-led, now they have no choice. Hit and run box shifting has quickly turned into relational problem solving over time. Good thing too.

More than simply removing the pressure of high value capital commitments, the consultative approach offers a calmer, cooler opportunity to really explore options.

A consultative exploration and audit of your IT, sales and marketing, and back office functionality - and how your ambitions map to the market across:

- **ACD – Automatic Call Distribution**
- **Automated Outbound Dialling**
- **VR/Speech Recognition**
- **CRM/Agent Desktop**
- **PCI Compliance**
- **Call Recording and Reporting**
- **WorkForce Management**
- **Omni Channel**
- **Sentiment Analysis**
- **Web-Chat/Artificial Intelligence.**

In our consultancy capacity, a **'We Bring The Road to You'** service where we build a system spec - a wish list - alongside our clients, then go to market to find a vendor able to best deliver on that set of requirements. We'll invite the three most impressive contenders to showcase their systems to our client at our showroom.

Not only have our clients saved a huge amount of time, trouble and expense by using our consultancy, they also get the opportunity to test drive the platforms to breaking point.

Our job isn't to broker the sale of a contact centre platform. It's to play Cupid. To make sure that our client gets the right system.

Whether they choose us to support their new setup is up to them. If we do though, again, things have changed.

Where once suppliers would have been treated and behaved as a supplier, the nature of the new service-based models that the cloud inspires adds new depths to the traditional transactional supplier/client relationship.

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The Shift
From Supplier to Partner

"From initial design to implementation I felt well supported by ICA throughout the process.

Any questions or concerns were quickly dealt with and ICA have always gone above and beyond to provide a solution that is right for the business."

James Gatrell, IT Support
Bestway Retail

Many modern suppliers are keen to label themselves partners. Often, in truth, it's a bit of an ego or status thing.

They associate a gravitas to the term 'partner' that they enjoy - they think it makes them look better. But partnership isn't just a label. It needs to be earned.

Anyway, many buyers don't even want a partner. An attentive, high quality expert supplier, on hand with the right answers at the right time is exactly what they need and exactly what they seek.

When it comes to Contact and Call Centres though, there's definitely value in a close partnership.

In this new hybrid environment - a blend of new IT and traditional telecoms skills, the supplier/client relationship is by its very nature ongoing and often close. Delivering shared problem solving as partners.

So what does genuine partnership look like? And what should you look for?

• A relationship built on trust, mutual respect and shared values. With reputations so hard won and so easily lost, who do you see out there consistently winning client hearts and minds?

Are they your kind of people too? Does what matters to you, matter to them? For all the astonishing technology at our fingertips, it's still people at the heart of our businesses.

• Your new Contact Centre is a journey and your needs will evolve. A number one priority today may not be a number one priority tomorrow.

The ability and the willingness of your partner to invest in the relationship, in your journey, over time is crucial.

• When you define success, what does it look like to you? What does it look like to your prospective partner - is it a shared vision?

• Problem solving. When all is said and done your partner's single, simple role is that of a problem solver. You turn to them with your process/technological/data/deployment challenges - it's their job to resolve them.

• Honest, open communications are essential - a clear exchange over money, timings, people, and processes will define the success or failure of the relationship, like any relationship. Use contract clarity as a solid starting point.

• Sweat the small stuff but don't let it dictate and don't let it get in the way of being generous with your time and support. And expect your partner to not get hung up on tiny details in pursuit of the greater good.

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What Was, Is, and Will Be

He may have been mistaken in his understanding of the Chinese word for crisis, but JFK was certainly right when he said, **'Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.'**

As enforced and unsettling as recent and ongoing change has felt for all of us, there's no escaping the need to always factor it into our planning.

Admittedly, sometimes it can feel more dramatic than others.

The future certainly isn't what it used to be, but if your work, reputation, and success revolve around the business of Call and Contact centres, by focusing attention on the many ways that your world is remodelling, hopefully now you're at least a little better prepared to step into the new future.

While tools and models are changing around us, fundamentally, little has altered at the core of the Call and Contact centre business offering.

The need to deliver the best possible CX, ably supported by a committed, considered and high quality agent experience remains.

Experience was, is and always will be the path to success.

It's a path you may have been on already - just that recent events have somewhat turbo charged your thinking.

This journey inevitably provokes questions, and we've tried to address in this document those that we feel are the more important.

You'll doubtless have many of your own.

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An Invitation to The Future

In the 25 years we've spent helping our clients **build better businesses on better communications,** we've learnt a thing or two about best practice communication.

The people, processes, technology, deployment and support that together spell success.

And because we've always been independent it means that we've always been able to work with a wide range of vendors. The Microsofts, the Nice in Contact, Content Guru, 8X8, Avaya and the rest.

We've listened to the hype, read the promises and we've seen for ourselves what really works and what doesn't.

If you want to look beyond the promises, beyond the fluff, the wishful thinking and take a cold hard look at the best ways to evolve your Contact or Call Centre then just ask.

With much of our work now specifying, shortlisting and demonstrating best case communications scenarios for contact centres, multi-site businesses and 200+ seat projects, as part of our, **'We Bring The Road to You'** service - we're ideally placed to answer any questions you may have.

My name is **Pam Blanchard,** I'm the MD here at ICA, just drop me a note: pam@ica.co.uk
or call me direct on XXXXXXXXXX.

I look forward to answering your questions.

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COLLABORATE

With Independent Advice.

CONNECT

Your Digital Journeys.

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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES THAT MATTER
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