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Making Sense of Agent Experience

 **Spark Series**



AN EIGHT-MINUTE READ



What is agent experience?

There's a saying in customer service: "Happy agents create happy customers." But getting there depends on the agent experience.

Let's start with a few key questions. How empowered, satisfied, efficient, and productive are your agents? Do they have the tools they need to help customers quickly or do they face challenges every step of the way? These are the details that encompass the agent experience.

When you equip agents with the right training, tools, and support resources, they can provide exceptional service that delights customers. And as a bonus, great agent experience leads to higher retention rates—a perfect antidote to the high cost of agent turnover.

Employees aged 20–24 have an average tenure of 1.1 years at call centers.¹





This guide will help you identify positive aspects of your agent experience—and opportunities for improvement—so you can meet their needs, make them happier, and build on the success of your service organization and brand.

Why it matters today

If your agents have a poor experience, chances are your customers will, too.

Even though it's directly linked to customer experience, many organizations miss the mark on agent experience. Product knowledge, agent attitude, and agent empowerment are among the top four factors impacting customer experience in agent-led transactions.² To provide great service experiences to your customers, your service agents need the right tools and processes to deliver efficient, accurate, and consistent service across all channels.

A positive agent experience can benefit your business in big ways

A. Curtailed turnover

Decreased agent turnover leads to reduced hiring and training costs. When agents have more time to hone their skills and build their knowledge, they'll be able to deliver expert-level service to customers.

B. Superior service delivery

Better service delivery results in positive brand differentiation, increased customer satisfaction, loyalty, and referrals.



C. Increased revenue

When you empower agents to take advantage of cross-sell and upsell opportunities, you'll be rewarded with additional revenue.

D. Decreased operational costs

Fewer escalations and reduced contact center KPIs, like average handle time and first-call resolution, result in higher agent efficiency and lower operational costs.

Satisfied agents can deliver the service experiences your customers expect

A. Faster, more accurate service

When agents have the right knowledge and tools readily available, customers receive faster, more accurate service.

B. Reduced friction

Agents with a complete view of the customer can reduce friction along the service journey to deliver better customer experiences, which ties directly to revenue.

C. Personalized service

Armed with the right data, agents can personalize interactions with customers when it counts.



The basics

Understanding the drivers of agent experience will help you better serve your customers.

1. Productivity

Unproductive agents aren't able to serve customers to the best of their ability. If an agent has to navigate multiple systems and screens to find the right information, and the customer has been on hold a long time, you'll end up with a poor experience all around. With unified agent desktops that integrate all communication channels and external applications into a single interface—along with embedded knowledge base and team collaboration tools—agents can significantly speed their resolution time and help more customers.

2. Job satisfaction

In a world devoted to customer service, maintaining a satisfied workforce can be challenging. Some of the factors that affect agent job satisfaction include

- Low salaries
- Repetitive tasks
- Inflexible work schedules
- Lack of career development
- Dealing with frustrated customers



While contact center management can't mitigate all of these factors, the incentive for improving agent experience should be a priority since the average agent turnover rate can reach a staggering 45%.³ If management can address as many issues as possible, they'll increase the likelihood of agents pleasing customers and, in turn, produce higher customer satisfaction ratings.

3. Tools

Agents need the right tools to do their jobs effectively. With tools like agent scripting, AI-recommended actions, and decision automation, agents can resolve service requests with minimal training. Through automation and dynamic guidance, agents can follow step-by-step processes to deliver faster, more accurate service without having to dig around for the right answer. Some tools of the trade include

- **Agent desktop:** A single interface for customer service applications and associated data from email, websites, physical stores, mobile sales, and account information customers provide when they contact support
- **Agent analytics:** Role-based dashboards and reports that help management better understand agent productivity and effectiveness
- **Knowledge base:** A repository of information to answer questions accurately and consistently.



- **Automated workflows:** Technology that automates manual processes in day-to-day interactions
- **Feedback management:** A process where agents solicit customer feedback for continuous improvement

4. Training

Instead of one-and-done training, agents should have continuous opportunities to improve their overall service delivery, including both technical and soft-skill training.

- **Technical skills:** Learning the tools needed to provide service, including phone systems, the agent desktop, and product-specific training
- **Soft skills:** Learning the people skills to interact with customers, supervisors, and other employees successfully, such as communication and problem-solving

5. Organization

Organize your agents based on the different roles they play within your business. For some, it makes sense to align agents into tiers according to their experience and product expertise. In other cases, it might make sense to organize by product line, geography, or skill set (like foreign language).

Once this framework is set, modern contact center software can be used to route incoming requests to the best suited agent to improve efficiency and quality of interactions.





6. Measurement

Most agents struggle to keep up with the increasing number of calls and queries, service channels, and service resolution applications. If you can determine what's working for agents and what's not, you can develop strategies to meet both their needs and customer expectations—because happy agents lead to happy customers. Some common agent performance metrics include

- Transfer rate
- Handle time
- Speed of answer
- Wait time in queue
- Call abandonment rate
- Customer satisfaction score
- Percentage of calls blocked
- Number of calls handled



What's next?

According to Glassdoor research, maintaining a satisfied workforce is a key prerequisite to delivering great customer experiences.⁴

When agents are productive, satisfied, and armed with the necessary tools, they'll be motivated to go the extra mile for customers. Here are some factors driving the future of agent experience.



Shift to digital. As more and more customers engage with service digitally, agents need an integrated view of customer interactions across all channels, including chat, SMS, email, and social media.



Move from call taker to brand ambassador. To shift customer service from a cost center to a profit center, provide agents with the tools, technology, and integrated data needed to deliver personalized service and increase revenue through cross-sell and upsell opportunities.





Transition to work-from-home. Nearly all agents shifted to remote work when the 2020 pandemic hit, and 74% plan to make that shift permanent after the crisis ends.⁵ To be successful in a remote environment, agents will need better collaboration tools, more guided assistance, and robust knowledge management systems that provide quick answers in the absence of in-person teammates.



A view toward practical solutions

You've got the basics. Now, look for opportunities to improve agent workflow and job satisfaction.

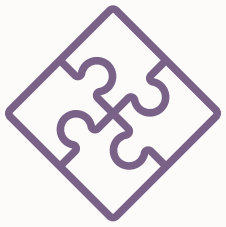


Automation and self-service. Answering the same simple questions day after day can be demotivating to the skilled agents you want to retain. By using chatbots, decision automation, and robotic process automation, you'll improve customer experience and free up agents to engage in more meaningful customer support.



Contact center metrics. Metrics that reflect the value of service to customers, like after-call surveys and first-call resolution, will give you better performance insights than average handle time—and let agents know that you understand and appreciate their valuable skills.





Simplified, connected systems. Relieve one of the biggest agent frustrations by integrating systems and streamlining the interface so agents can help customers more quickly and feel greater job satisfaction in the process.



Data integration. Unified customer and business data allows agents to cross-sell and upsell to customers, personalize interactions, and anticipate customer needs based on the information in their profiles. Expanding beyond issue resolution only is a great way to stretch agent skills and create more job fulfillment.



Agent experience feedback. Because agent experience directly affects customer experience, creating a culture of feedback can have a tremendous impact on your business. Sending out surveys along with training and technology needs can keep you on track for continuous improvement and success.

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To the experience-maker who's always moving forward

At Oracle, we know great experiences come from great inspiration, and we're providing the spark for your next idea. Packed with powerful info, the Spark Series will get you up to speed on core CX concepts—such as visual engagement—quickly.

Think of it as a way to hone your understanding before turning your eyes toward a new strategy. Because if anyone's going to create CX gold, it's you.

What will you discover next?

- [eBook: Essential Strategies for Digital Customer Service](#)
- [Product Info: Simplifying the Agent Experience](#)
- [eBook: Making Sense of Visual Engagement](#)



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Sources

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