RingCentral

What your employees need to keep your customers happy

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Just how important is employee experience?

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It wasn't an easy journey for part-time barista Kimberly McAtee, but she's made it. She was finally able to don her cap and gown and begin her new life as a college graduate of Arizona State University (ASU). Before starting college, she had recently separated from her drug-addicted husband and was living in a trailer with no clear direction in life. College was always on her radar, but the costs of books and tuition forced her to drop out of community college.

It wasn't until Starbucks launched its college reimbursement plan in 2014 that life started to turn around for McAtee. Starbucks promised to pay 100% of tuition for every single eligible employee, eliminating the biggest barrier of entry for people thinking of going to college. After some encouragement from her manager, she applied to ASU and started taking classes online while working at Starbucks.

From juggling work shifts to late nights in the parking lot using the free Wi-Fi at Starbucks (her trailer didn't have Wi-Fi), McAtee made it work. After four years of online education at ASU, she graduated with honors in organizational studies and received a new job offer right out of college.

Her success story is just one of many. That same year, 470 other Starbucks employees from around the country joined her in receiving their degrees—all members of the same education assistance program that Starbucks began in 2014. To date, Starbucks has seen over 3,000 graduates from the program.

> "Starbucks provided for me—my job, a free meal and drinks every day, schooling, and internet. I now have a very clear picture of what I want my future to be."
>
> — Kimberly McAtee, Former barista at Starbucks

Investing in employees

When Starbucks launched its Starbucks College Achievement Plan (SCAP), it wasn't exactly a novel idea. In fact, many companies around the world offered college reimbursement as a perk. However, what made Starbucks' plan truly revolutionary was that over 80% of its employees—even part-timers—were eligible to enroll. Also, employees who graduated had no obligation to stay with Starbucks after graduating.

The coffee giant was putting employees through college at a scale no other organization had done before. Anyone working over 20 hours a week—no matter the position—was eligible to have their college tuition 100% covered by the company. By 2025, Starbucks estimates that it'll have spent $25 million investing in employees' college educations.

Long-term strategy for growth

Among the typical cost-cutting measures most companies implement, why did Starbucks choose to go this route? On the surface, SCAP is part of Starbucks' mission to help guide more people through college and life—a vision shared by the former CEO, Howard Schultz. It's an inspiring story, but it only paints half of the picture.

The reason is that Starbucks, like many other organizations, understands how happy employees are vital to long-term profitability. Cigna, a health insurance company based in Pennsylvania, found that for every dollar they invested in tuition reimbursement, they regained that dollar and an additional $1.29 from employee retention, promotions, and internal transfers, all within just two years.[1] Employees who participated stated that tuition assistance improved career opportunities, as well as other key workplace traits such as motivation, confidence, recognition from managers, and personal achievement.

With higher engagement at work, those employees stayed longer and saved the company money on hiring and training new talent. Additionally, with employees highly engaged at work, Cigna was able to deliver better customer experiences and drive growth.

A worthwhile investment

Starbucks employees are some of the most highly engaged in the food service industry, and that shows in their numbers. From 2016 to 2019, Starbucks' annual revenue jumped from $19 billion to $26.5 billion.[2] By offering amazing perks (SCAP, above-industry pay, health insurance, etc.), the company has raised the bar on employee satisfaction, and those employees are driving customer satisfaction.

1. Why Employee Experience is Important
2. Market Watch: Starbucks Corp

Happy employees, happy customers

Starbucks is just one example of how customer-centric organizations are emphasizing employee engagement. In the past, organizations saw customer service as its own separate entity. If contact center agents treated customers well, they reasoned customer satisfaction would go up. But if you looked at the highest-performing businesses in the world today, you'll notice that customer satisfaction goes beyond frontline contact center agents. Like Starbucks, modern-day organizations are starting to realize that **in order to be a customercentric organization, you need to focus on employees first.**

49% of customers surveyed reported that they switched to a different business as a result of poor customer service, and **67%** of those switched more than once.

— Forbes: Bad Customer Service Costs Businesses Billions Of Dollars

67%

It's about more than just perks

Free lunches and growth opportunities are just one side of the happiness equation. Employees generally want to be productive to feel satisfied at work, and businesses want to tap into that potential. The reality is, if you want employees to be happy at work, you need to **empower them with the tools they need to succeed, and that includes having the right technology.**

Studies show that 57% of employees working with inadequate and obsolete technology at work say it has negatively affected their productivity and morale.[3] With disjointed tools and software, companies are preventing their employees from driving high customer engagement, which ultimately affects the bottom line.

In particular, communications is at the forefront of the movement toward employee empowerment. Employees need the right tools to effectively communicate and collaborate with coworkers and customers, but 33.3% of workers feel their communications technology are far too outdated, and over 66% say it has a big effect on how they do their jobs.[3]

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3. [Office Resource Woes](#)

As communications technology continues to evolve, organizations that fall behind will find it harder and harder to nurture the employee experience—and thus the customer experience. To prevent that from happening, it's critical to understand the communication challenges faced by both employees and customers, and how the right tools can help build lifelong customer relationships.

Today's employees are technologically overwhelmed

In a typical workday, employees juggle chats, emails, project management tools, video conferencing apps, 20 different browser tabs, and a million items on their to-do list, not to mention phone calls, meetings, and other business tasks. Employees want to be able to do their jobs effectively, but with so many applications in front of them, work becomes increasingly more stressful.Workers today are wasting up to 60 minutes each day navigating between apps, with the majority of them toggling between 10 apps in a single hour.[4]

50%
of agents have chat, text, video, and/ or social interactions available in their contact centers.

But it's not just the deluge of applications causing workplace stress. Agents in contact centers and customer support departments face a slew of additional uphill battles. For starters, many contact center agents are locked into "agent silos," where customer reps are disconnected from the rest of the organization due to different communications apps, remote work, and time zones.

74%
have to toggle between applications to help customers reach resolutions.

At the same time, less than 50% of agents have chat, text, video, and/or social interactions available in their contact centers, and among those who do, 74% have to toggle between applications to help customers reach resolutions.

4. RingCentral: Learning Center

Problems with disjointed communications tools

From an agent's perspective, silos and outdated communications tools mean an inability to reach the right experts and resolve issues quickly. Customers expect fast and effortless resolutions to their problems, and having to place customers on long holds (or even worse, call them back) is mentally taxing toevery agent. It doesn't help that switching back and forth between different applications leads to lost customer information, too. Ever had to call a company multiple times and each new agent has no idea what your past issues were? In most cases, it's just as frustrating for the agent as it is for the customer.

App overload
From applications to emails to browser tabs, the overflow of information coming from all directions leads to employee stress and fatigue. As a result, employees are much less productive at work, which hurts the bottom line.

Loss of context
Important customer information (customer history, issues, satisfaction, etc.) gets lost when employees have to toggle between several communications apps. For customers, this means more frustration and less satisfaction with the brand.

Higher cost of ownership
Companies can miss out on significant cost savings by paying for several different communications services compared to a single, unified one. Similarly, the time spent digging through multiple apps for the right information translates into higher cost.

Customer retention
With employees struggling to deliver top-notch customer service, customers lose loyalty in the brand and start exploring competitors. Customer acquisition can cost five times more than customer retention, so nurturing current customers provides much greater returns over time.[5]

5. Don't Spend 5 Times More Attracting New
   Customers, Nurture The Existing Ones

Today's customers expect more from businesses

96%

percent of customers expect their issues to be resolved in a timely manner on the platform of their choice.[7]

6. Transcend boundaries with tailored industry solutions
7. The case for cloud contact centers

Today, 32% of customers say the most important aspect of a good customer service experience is not having to repeat themselves or not getting passed from agent to agent.[6] Additionally, 47% of customers now use more than four different customer service channels for support. Customers expect agents to be knowledgeable, friendly, quick, and available on any channel of their choosing and at any time.

96% percent of customers expect their issues to be resolved in a timely manner on the platform of their choice, and the average customer has stopped using a product or service four times in the past year due to bad customer experiences.[7]

The bottom line is, how your teams communicate affects both the employee experience and the customer experience, and ultimately your brand's reputation and revenue. When you invest in your internal communications and free knowledge workers from their silos, the maximum potential of your organization is unlocked.

What customers expect from today's businesses

Fast response times

Easy and worry-free experiences

Access from any channel

Expertise at all levels

Access at any time

Consistency

Businesses want to deliver exceptional customer service experiences, but the reality is, with disjointed communications tools, employees aren't set up for success. Contact center agents have to deal with performance metrics, resolution quotas, agitated customers, low wages, and technology ill-equipped to address today's customers. The mental toll this takes on employees results in an overall average turnover of 30%–45% across the contact center industry.[8] And when your employees are unable to do their best work, the customers suffer, and so does your brand.

The customer experience is your bottom line, but how customers interact with your brand falls on your employees. From giving them the right technologies to recognizing their accomplishments, investing in the employee experience results in a significantly better customer experience.

So, what's the best way to do this?

8. The Un-Ignorable Link Between Employee Experience And Customer Experience

A unified approach: taking UCAAS to the next level

Unified communications (UC) brings together several employee communications tools to streamline business processes and increase productivity across the organization. To put it simply, it's the unification of anything from phones to emails to team messaging tools that employees use to work together more efficiently.

When the cloud revolution took off in the last decade, unified communications as a service (UCaaS) exploded in popularity. The benefits were unprecedented—organizations saved money on infrastructure, enabled employees to work from anywhere, and had a communications solution that scaled with them as their operations grew. As a result, many organizations stripped away old on-premises UC systems to fully adopt UCaaS.

Taking it one step further

Traditionally, these organizations viewed UCaaS predominantly as an internal tool for employees. Customer service teams used different apps with different functions and were often even physically detached from the rest of the organization (think remote contact centers). Why was there such a disparate strategy?

The short answer is, many organizations had yet to fully invest in the employee experience.

Studies have consistently shown an undeniable link between a positive customer experience and a positive employee experience. In fact, the most successful companies today have highly engaged employees, and those companies outperform their competitors by up to 147%.[9] Key to their success, as touted by experts of the HR world, is an unrelenting strategy around nurturing their workers who, in turn, nurture their customers. In essence, when employees are happy, customers are happy.

9. The Un-Ignorable Link Between Employee Experience And Customer Experience

Why contact centers are essential to the unified communications experience

For many organizations, UC and contact centers have operated separately, leaving agents in silos and sales/marketing/product teams out of the loop. But the market is shifting towards a complete unification of these tools under a single vendor.

In fact, Gartner acknowledged the advantages of contact center as a service in their 2019 report, [10] even factoring the availability of contact centers into evaluations of each cloud communications company.

A study by nemertes research on over 500 organizations found that:

74.2%	42%	13.4%

A staggering 74.2% of companies that have merged their UC and contact centers have seen significant growth in customer satisfaction and revenue. [11]

42% of organizations surveyed have already integrated their UC and contact centers. [11]

Meanwhile, 13.4% plan to do the same by the end of 2020. [11]

10. [Garter Reprint](#)

11. Nemertes study: Intelligent Customer Engagement, Supercharging Digital Customer Experience 2019-2020

While many modern organizations have excelled at redefining their employee experience in the form of perks and growth, it's time technology followed suit.

A combined UC and contact center solution provides several benefits including:

1. A seamless, collaborative ecosystem

By moving both internal and external communications under a single umbrella, it's much easier for agents to organize, sort, and manage interactions with customers and colleagues without losing key customer information. For instance, as an agent engages with a customer, he/she relays the correct information to experts outside of the contact center and resolves the customer's issue quickly in that same single interaction.

2. Easier on employees

App overload is overwhelming employees, and what the tech industry calls "productivity apps" are actually having the opposite effect. A combined UC and contact center solution means your employees—especially contact center agents—won't need to toggle between six different apps to serve customers, enter tickets, message colleagues, join team meetings, etc.

3. A culture of collaboration and innovation

When all members of the organization actively participate in the customer experience, it promotes a culture of collaboration and innovation. Knowledge experts learn of customer issues through agents, and agents learn of internal processes through knowledge experts. Instead of departments competing against one another, the simplicity of communication makes it easier for agents to find answers, resolve issues, offer faster response times, and deliver on positive customer experiences.

4. A single provider

Rather than juggling multiple providers—each with their unique proprietary challenges—a single provider can provide answers to all aspects of the platform, manage billing, provide training, and roll out updates to all tools across the board, taking the load of management off of IT's shoulders.

5. Scalability

As your organization grows, your technology needs to grow with you. A combined UC and contact center solution allows you to create a cohesive strategy with your cloud provider and tailor your communications to the evolving needs of your business.

Achieve your business goals together

A combined UC and contact center solution extends your business's collaborative spirit with your customers. By enabling your agents to reach experts in a matter of seconds, they are significantly more equipped with the knowledge and tools to serve your customers. But it goes far beyond the customer experience. Modern, scalable, easy-to-use communications solutions meet the needs of today's workforces and keep your employees happy, knowing that their employers support them every step of the way. Happy employees and happy customers go hand-in-hand. This will ultimately facilitate collaboration on all fronts and drive your company's bottom line.
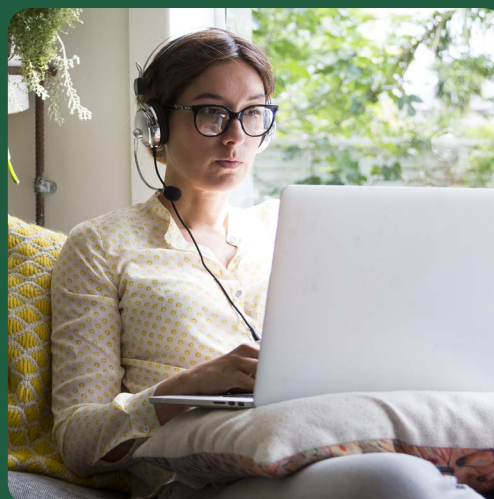
The RingCentral experience

RingCentral offers an integrated UCaaS and contact center solution for businesses of all sizes. The RingCentral suite unifies team messaging, calling, video conferencing, customer support, and customer engagement with powerful open platform integrations (APIs + SDKs), performance analytics, omnichannel flexibility, and an agent management interface.

Want to learn more? Visit ringcentral.com to see how a UC and contact center solution can transform your employee and customer experiences.

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