



## Contact Center 2.0: A Better Normal

By Special Guest / April 29, 2021  
Jennifer Lee, Chief Strategy Officer for Intradiem



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Is it safe to go back to the office now? *Should* we go back? Do we *need* to?

There are no definitive answers to these questions, but they are top of mind for contact center leaders everywhere. After a year in which dispersed agents drove the industry's remote workforce rate from 31% to 64%, most centers are now making plans for at least a partial return to the office.

But under what conditions? It's still too early to tell, but a consensus seems to be forming around the "hybrid" model, with service split between remote and in-center teams. This could be an effective strategy, as long as business leaders incorporate positive lessons from the past year and equip their centers with tools that ensure consistent, high-level performance across both remote and in-center teams.

#### Remote Lessons

Balancing KPIs across the contact center is job one for supervisors. Before the pandemic they relied on a blend of physical proximity and technology to track multiple metrics on a bay full of agents. This was an effective formula for driving KPIs; being onsite made it possible to observe the needs of individual agents and to deliver face-to-face coaching sessions that refined their skills and also boosted their trust—which in turn made agents receptive to more coaching and continued improvement.

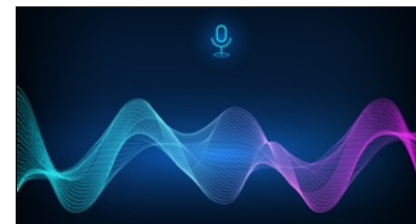
The shift to remote work had a major impact on productivity, some for the better and some for the worse. Greater flexibility was one positive result; eliminating the need to commute to work reduced tardiness and absences and made agents more willing to accept voluntary overtime. On the other hand, when homebound agents sometimes put customers on hold to deal with children, barking dogs or ringing doorbells, handle time climbed and productivity slipped.

In this situation supervisors were forced to rely solely on technology to monitor remote agents' performance and engagement. Call center leaders quickly learned which tools and technology translated to the remote workforce, and which did not. As a result, many organizations are undergoing or planning to undergo significant overhauls of their technology stack. Cloud-based solutions and tools that translate seamlessly for both in-center and remote agents will become the new norm.

#### Contact Center 2.0

Early in the pandemic many companies talked of keeping their agents remote for good. But with public health metrics slowly turning positive, most are now planning to reopen their centers in one form or

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another. Talking to our customers and partners, a hybrid model—with some agents working in-center while others continue to work remotely—seems to be the most popular. Hybrid could take different forms, with all agents splitting their work time between home and office, or some agents permanently at home and others permanently in-center.

Many questions remain to be settled, but one thing is certain: the new contact center will not be like the old one. Instead, successful post-pandemic center operations will blend the best of traditional practices with effective new practices discovered over the past year.

### With an Assist from Technology

Even in person, the best supervisors can't see everything that's happening at all times. This is where technology comes into play: An intelligent automation platform capable of monitoring activity across the entire center, aggregating and processing the mass of data generated by that activity, and taking direct, prescriptive action, can help ensure effective operations in a way that supervisors alone cannot.

If that platform were also cloud-based for easy distribution to dispersed employees and featured parameters a business could calibrate to support the different needs of remote and in-center workers, it would be indispensable to success in the new, hybrid contact center model.

### Looking Forward

Contact centers will thrive if they fortify traditional best practices with key lessons from the past year: a more flexible work environment creates more engaged agents; mastery of remote work processes creates new staffing possibilities not limited by geography; the right technology can be a force multiplier for performance.

Looking forward, businesses equipped with **intelligent automation technologies** will be able to drive consistent, seamless performance across their in-center and remote teams. Organizations which have embraced this kind of technology early are already experiencing these benefits, and have a head start on navigating this “new normal.” The ultimate beneficiary of these plans? Customers, who can count on a streamlined and optimized experience—no matter what the next year throws our way.

Edited by [Luke Bellos](#)

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