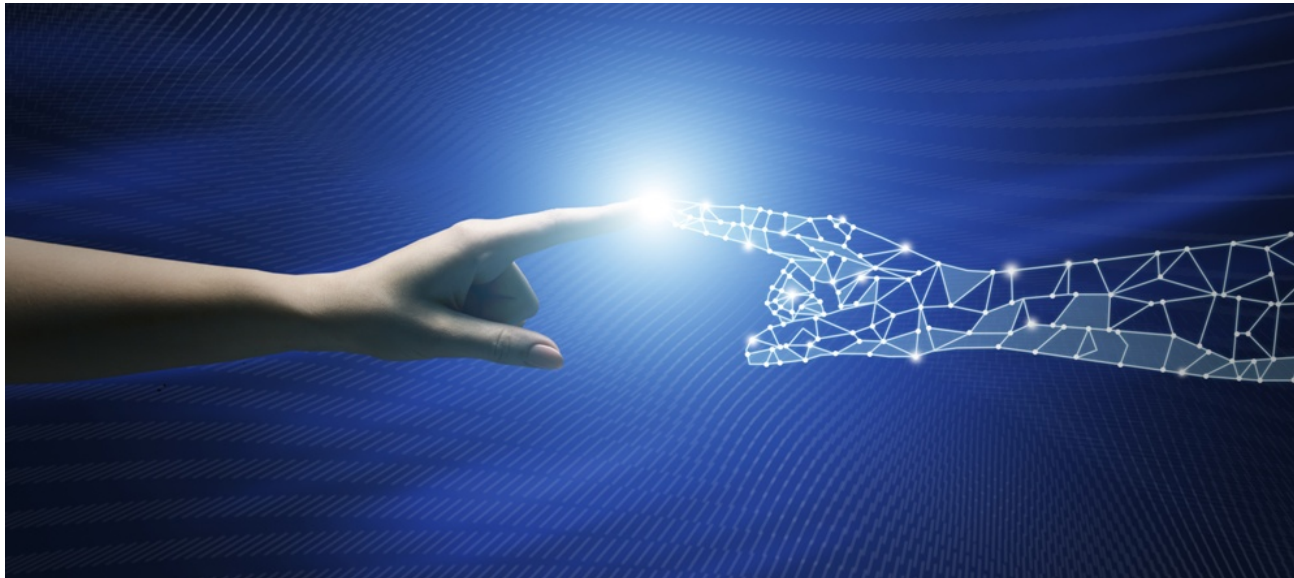




Why We Need to Stop Saying the Call Center Is Dead

By Special Guest / July 16, 2020
Matt McConnell, CEO, Intradiem



We have long heard the death of the call center is near, but are these claims actually valid? Articles [dating back to 2000](#), and even as [recently as last month](#), are singing the same tune. They all claim the call center is fading and being replaced with live chat, self-service and other communication channels – all of which we'll solely rely on in the future.



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This lazy trope, while peddled as “forward-thinking,” is as outdated as its Y2K origins. There’s a reason the call center is still alive and well today and will be for the next 20 years. Like many facets of technology, it is adapting to the current business landscape and will be more vital than ever before.

Robots Replacing the Call Center is All Smoke and Mirrors

AI-fueled robots will not replace the call center. Rather, **automation technology** will complement humans to make the call center smarter, faster and stronger. Robots can’t solve every problem and, often, can cause more issues to

be escalated as opposed to making operations run more smoothly. The solution to the contact center of the future does not lie solely in the hands of humans or machines. Rather, we are seeing a blend of the two, in which automation technology will augment human agents to dramatically improve the customer experience.

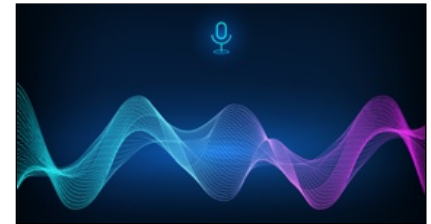
According to **Gartner**, only 9% of customers report solving issues via self-service technologies. Despite a vocal minority of chatbot evangelists ready to anoint live chat and self-service as the new king of customer experience, when push comes to shove, nothing can replace a human on the other end of the line. Technology like **workforce automation** can enable call center agents to work more efficiently, but the thought that we will entirely replace call center workforces with artificial intelligence is disingenuous, at best. Until computers achieve the true emotional intelligence of people, we will still have human agents at work complemented by technology, not replaced by it.

Human Interaction Has Never Been More Essential

Even beyond our current circumstances, people expect and demand authentic customer service experiences. Everyone has a frustrating story of getting the run around by chatbots and self-service systems in an attempt to resolve an issue with a company. **Factor in the impacts faced due to COVID-19**, the demand for human interaction has rapidly increased – anything less won’t cut it. Tensions are running rampant and a poor experience can ruin a customer relationship for good.

The need for call centers has been exacerbated by COVID-19, especially in industries like healthcare, insurance and banking. In the midst of an economic downturn, the last thing consumers want is an anonymous chatbot dragging out the process of paying bills, moving funds or sorting out updated employment or insurance information. No matter how advanced chat tools become, they will always be artificial. Chatbots cannot process empathy, something that agents have displayed daily as consumers are faced with challenging conversations around their health or finances.

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Although call centers are critical for business, they still must adapt to an constantly changing business landscape. They're here to stay, but will look far different than ever before, even in a year's time. We could potentially see the "physical" center go away given the rise of the remote and tethered call center models.

New challenges from COVID-19 have led to the rise of virtual contact centers, which come with their own set of opportunities for companies able to make the shift. Recent **insights** show decreased operating expenses are the largest benefit companies see in the shift to remote call centers, closely followed by lower absenteeism and higher agent satisfaction. As **74% of CFOs say** telecommuting will soon be permanent, it's safe to say that virtual contact centers represent the future of customer service.

The call center, although changing, is not disappearing. While the physical center model may be endangered, we will still see a demand for human agents aided by technology. The call center will continue to evolve to meet customer needs and acclimate to the new requests of the market, but the notion that it is "dying" is still as wrong today as it was 20 years ago.



*About the author: Matt McConnell is Chairman, President and CEO of **Intradiem**. Matt co-founded Intradiem with a vision of helping companies increase the level of customer service they deliver using automation technology. Today, Intradiem is the leader in workforce automation with over 230,000 contact center employees who use Intradiem's solution daily.*

Edited by **Erik Linask**



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