

7

Chapter

Leaders open up.

How Acer transitioned to
Operate from Anywhere.

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8x8

Operate From Anywhere: The Next Evolution of Remote Work

In 2020, business leaders had to rethink the way things (and people) work.

What worked before wasn't working anymore. In-store, in-office, on-premises, huddles, handshakes: these staples of business life can't happen from the kitchen table, home office, or spare bedroom many of us now consider our workplace.

But remote work—once considered a cushy tech company perk—suddenly became serious business.

For thousands of corporate offices, Zoom turned itself overnight into a verb and a free quick fix for virtual engagement. But for traditional contact centers tethered by physical real estate and hardware, but forced to work remotely, they had to call on **an entirely new way to work.**

15% of a contact centre agent's time is spent trying to get information from siloed communications channels.

Source: Aberdeen, The ROI of Uniting Unified Communications and Contact centre

No small change.

Often considered a cost centre and the Rodney Dangerfield of departments, the contact centre has historically been overlooked and underfunded during waves of digital transformation. But doing nothing today means driving costs even higher—to the tune of millions of dollars—as disconnected agents lose time trying to find information. Aberdeen VP and Principal Analyst Omer Minkara estimates that a 200-agent contact centre loses \$1.5 million annually in labor costs from siloed agents.



\$1.5 million is spent annually in labor costs from siloed agents.

Leaders are seeing investments to connect the contact centre are paying off, though. According to Minkara's research, unified communication-enabled contact centers see the following:

- 50% increase in agent productivity
- 2.9x average handle time improvement year-over-year
- 80% decrease in customer complaints

That's no small change. In addition to improved CX metrics, employee experiences change too. Improved engagement rates and reduced turnover are just two of the benefits digital transformation leaders are seeing.

Leaders open up.

Technology leader Acer has seen its own set of benefits unifying communications across its Americas-based contact centers and corporate offices. At the start of COVID-19, this made all the difference as Acer was able to respond to the pandemic as a transitional event rather than a digital transformation forcing function. Preparedness proved profitable as demand for Acer's computers and peripheral equipment for professionals, students and gamers skyrocketed.

"We already had everything ready for our contact centre agents to have access and operate from anywhere," recalls Marcella Prieto, Senior Manager of Customer Service for Acer's Pan-America Region. "We were able to manage the situation very quickly."

Prieto says she's impressed by how quickly Acer's agents embraced **Contact centre as a Service (CCaaS) technology**. "One of the most surprising things about the transition was that the softphone solution (over traditional telephones) was amazing. It was a seamless transition, and it has allowed us to keep moving and move the entire team to working from home."

Even on-the-fence contact centre supervisors are sold. "At first, many of the call operations managers were concerned that they were not going to be able to supervise their agents like they had done in the in-office setting," says Prieto, "but 8x8 has allowed them to **monitor agent performance and run reports** any time."

“I feel like the agents are more productive using 8x8. In the past, we couldn’t see the productivity of our agents because we were using a partner. Now our management has access to all of the monitoring and measurement tools we need—and we can access them at any time.”

Marcella Prieto

Senior Manager, Customer Service, Acer Pan-America Region

Leaders bring people together.

Mark Groveunder, Senior Vice President of IT and Service for Acer's Pan-American Region, says that their organization was fortunate to have their unified **CCaaS and UCaaS** solution in place prior to the pandemic. But this forward thinking didn't just prepare Acer for 2020; it provided sustainable agility for the future.

"In 2019, we implemented 8x8 Contact centre, and along the way we moved our business users off of old PBX technology and onto 8x8 X Series. Now we have the employees at all seven offices on 8x8 for enterprise communications, and that's not counting the contact centers," notes Mark.



“It worked out great for our San Jose office move in 2019 because we didn’t have to move that old PBX,” Groveunder recalls. “During the move, employees used their laptops and the 8x8 Desktop App for calls and chats. 8x8 made our office move a lot easier.”

And in turn, it made the move to remote work during the pandemic easier. Fortunate for Acer? Yes. Forward thinking for Acer? Also yes.

“We’ve seen the data and we’ve proven that work from home can work,” says Groveunder. “We’ve actually known that in the contact centre for a long time, but in other parts of the business we’ve just never done it. But now that we’re doing it successfully, the expectation is that, even when we do return to offices, we’ll have a lot more people working from home.”

“Moving to the cloud has made us more nimble and agile. It makes it easier for us to adapt to changing business conditions. But along with that we’ve benefited from some technology upgrades and new capabilities, especially on the contact centre side.”

Mark Groveunder

Senior VP, IT & Customer Service at Acer Inc.

Leaders extend their lead.

Thanks to the benefits of UCaaS and CCaaS, leaders like Acer have been able to extend their lead. “Acer, like many other companies, now sees the potential to reduce operating expenses by reducing their office footprint,” says Groveunder.

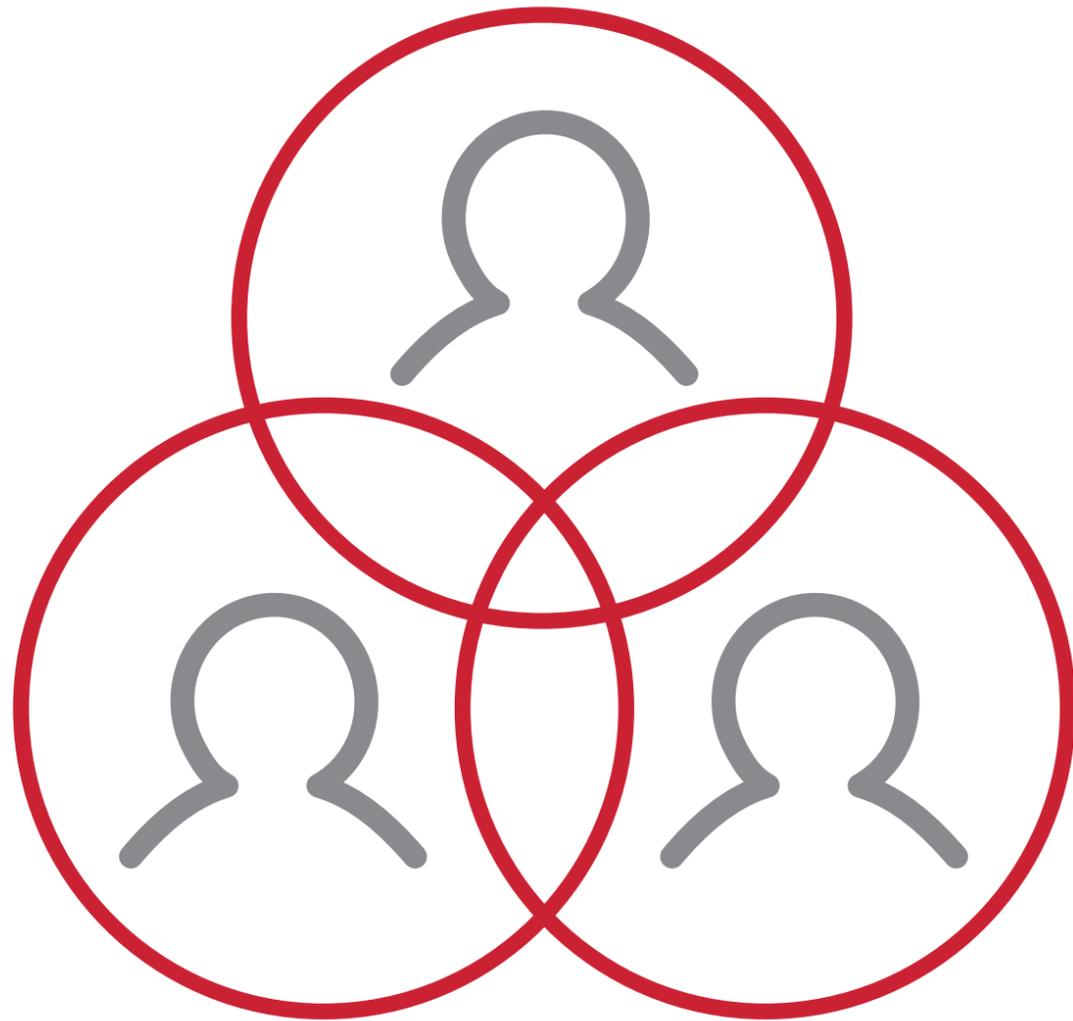
Consolidation is also leading to more seamless communication and collaboration. “We’ve pretty much eliminated our conference bridge technology. We were using Zoom for virtual meetings. We’ve now eliminated Zoom. We’re also moving to chat with 8x8.”

Acer’s senior manager of customer service also believes their technology investments will help attract the best

talent: tech-savvy agents who can meet tech-savvy customers’ high expectations, and more experienced employees who want long-term remote options with the ability to collaborate just like they’re in the office.

Says Dion Hinchchiffe, VP and Principal Analyst at Constellation Research, “Our research finds significant return on investment, on the order of double digits in many cases, across the spectrum of benefits in offering workers a more integrated communications experience.

“What we’re talking about now is that we’ll never go back to where we were before,” says Acer’s VP of IT and Service.



The overall benefits of a more integrated worker communications experience are:

- Higher adoption of communications solutions
- Improved productivity
- Less training/support
- More team cohesion
- Less cognitive overload
- Lower operational costs

Source: Reducing Team Communication Silos for Better ROI, Constellation Research

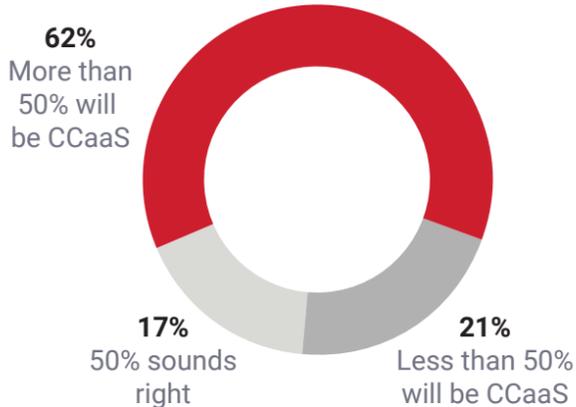
Chapter 7 Takeaways

In-office, on-premises, huddles and handshakes: we may not be going back there, at least not anytime soon. But leaders like Acer will tell you embracing that is not just okay, it can be a competitive advantage.

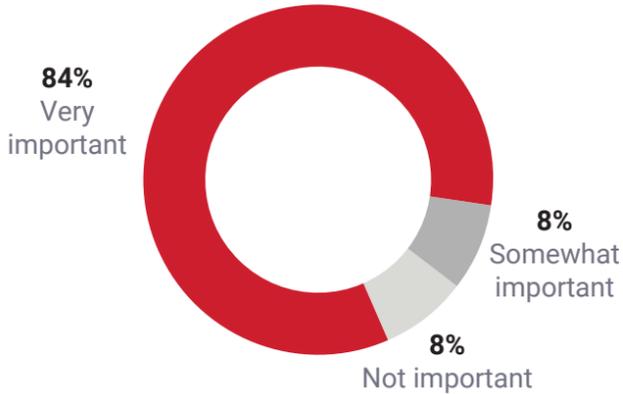
- Leaders are bringing people together through **UCaaS and CCaaS technologies** and transforming the contact centre into a connected, operate-from-anywhere environment.
- Leaders are extending their lead through unified communications, increasing profits and productivity while reducing real estate and technology costs.

8x8 Poll Results

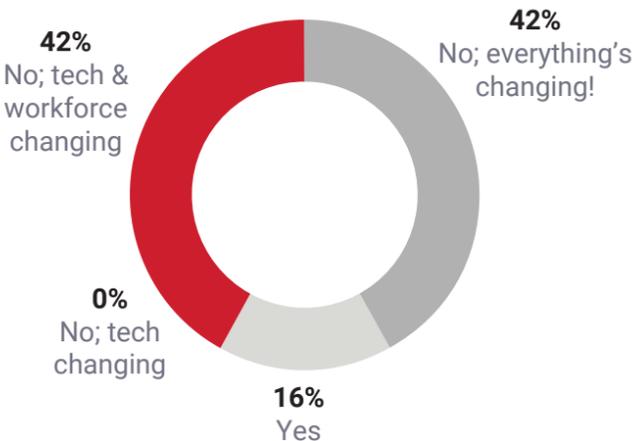
Gartner believes by 2022, CCaaS (Contact centre as a Service) will be the preferred model in 50% of companies. Thoughts?



How important is it for customer service agents to use the same communications tools as others in the business to collaborate?



Do you consider a return to pre-pandemic business operations (business as usual) an option?



Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter

