

EBOOK

Customer Support and Agent Attrition: What it's Costing You, and How You Can Prevent it

How automation can help create a better customer experience

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No matter what you're selling, customer service is a necessary part of doing business. It's how you keep your customers happy so they keep coming back.

But running a contact center is expensive—and that cost is on the rise. In fact, customer service today costs businesses billions of dollars each year. And when it's not done well, it costs even more. According to NewVoiceMedia's 2018 "Serial Switchers" report, poor customer service cost businesses in the US more than \$75B in 2018, up \$13B from in 2016.

Fact: Bad customer service cost businesses over \$75B last year.

NewVoiceMedia, 2018¹

To remedy this problem and protect the bottom line, businesses are actively looking for ways to improve support from the customer's perspective. But few are looking at the other side of the human experience: the customer support agents.

Customer support agents are a vital part of the equation, and we're not just talking about how much you pay them. It's important to consider how an organization's customer support strategy and technology empower agents and how this affects their work, which ultimately impacts customers.

Highly enabled workers' productivity and loyalty to their companies goes hand in hand with positive business outcomes.

Forrester, 2019²

Agent satisfaction is directly linked to the quality of customer service—however, a majority of organizations are still failing to set their agents up for success. This means not only providing a positive work environment, but also giving agents the tools and information they need to support good customer experiences.

Without looking at both sides of the customer service coin, businesses will continue to leak money through agent attrition, recruitment and training as well as lost customer loyalty and revenue. Because unhappy agents provide poor service, and poor service costs customers.



The high price of high agent turnover

Every industry experiences some employee turnover. But contact center agent attrition is particularly high, especially when compared to other industries. In fact, according to the Quality Assurance & Training Connection (QATC), the average turnover rate for contact centers in the US ranges from 30% to a staggering 45%. That's more than double the combined national average for all industries.

US contact center agents change jobs at more than double the national average rate.

Quality Assurance & Training Connection³

This has led many companies to factor the direct costs of turnover into their budgets, including severance for outgoing agents plus recruiting, hiring, and training their replacements.

Orientation and onboarding also eat up time and money for both the new hires and the people training them. Plus additional expenses such as referral fees and overtime paid to the agents that pick up the slack while new hires get up to speed can make costs snowball. According to Everest Group, the average cost of attrition is \$3,100 - \$5,100 per employee, with other estimates putting it even higher—up to \$20,000 for high-value, experienced agents.

Even more costly, newly hired agents who are still learning the ropes may struggle to meet customer expectations, which can add to dissatisfaction and negative outcomes.

In fact, every 10% of agent attrition leads to 1% of customer churn.⁵



Solving a human problem with AI

In the world of customer service, there's a long-held and widespread belief that agents and AI do not get along, stemming in part from a fear that automation is only here to replace people. But this simply incorrect.

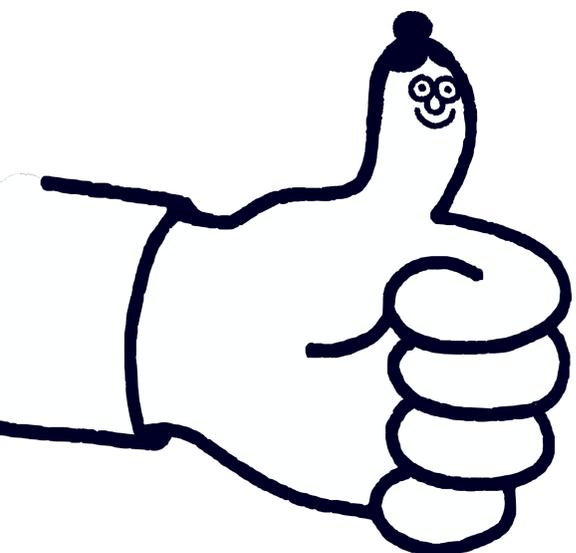
Forrester's research reveals that introducing automation into businesses will only result in a 16% reduction of jobs by 2030. Most jobs — particularly customer-facing roles — will still require the intuition, empathy, physical contact, mental agility, and creative thinking that eludes machines.²

In addition, this way of thinking actually compounds the agent/AI disconnect. Many organizations fail to consider the agent experience when introducing self-service because they think of it as a completely separate channel. Instead, they should consider how technology can serve customers while also enabling agents. It's not an either/or strategy.

Enabling agents with automation

Repetitive, mundane work is one of the key contributors to agent dissatisfaction—and the deflection of repetitive, mundane inquiries is one of the biggest benefits of AI.

Putting automation as the first line of support is not a way of replacing agents, it's a way of elevating agent-driven customer service.



By automating more than 80% of customer answers and actions, organizations can free agents to focus on more complex, challenging tasks. This shifts the agent's role from purely reactive and robotic to proactive and human, resulting in greater job satisfaction and engagement.

TRANSFORMING THE AGENT EXPERIENCE

Mundane	→	Meaningful
Repetitive	→	Rewarding
Reactive	→	Proactive
Low-value	→	High-value
Powerless	→	Empowered

Empowering agents can have an immediate positive impact on customer service, improving the quality of support and outcomes. Plus, arming agents with better tools can increase job satisfaction, reducing the long-term costs associated with attrition.

Forrester's global survey reveals that when companies provide CX professionals with enabling technologies: ²



Consider how automation engages the entire agent experience

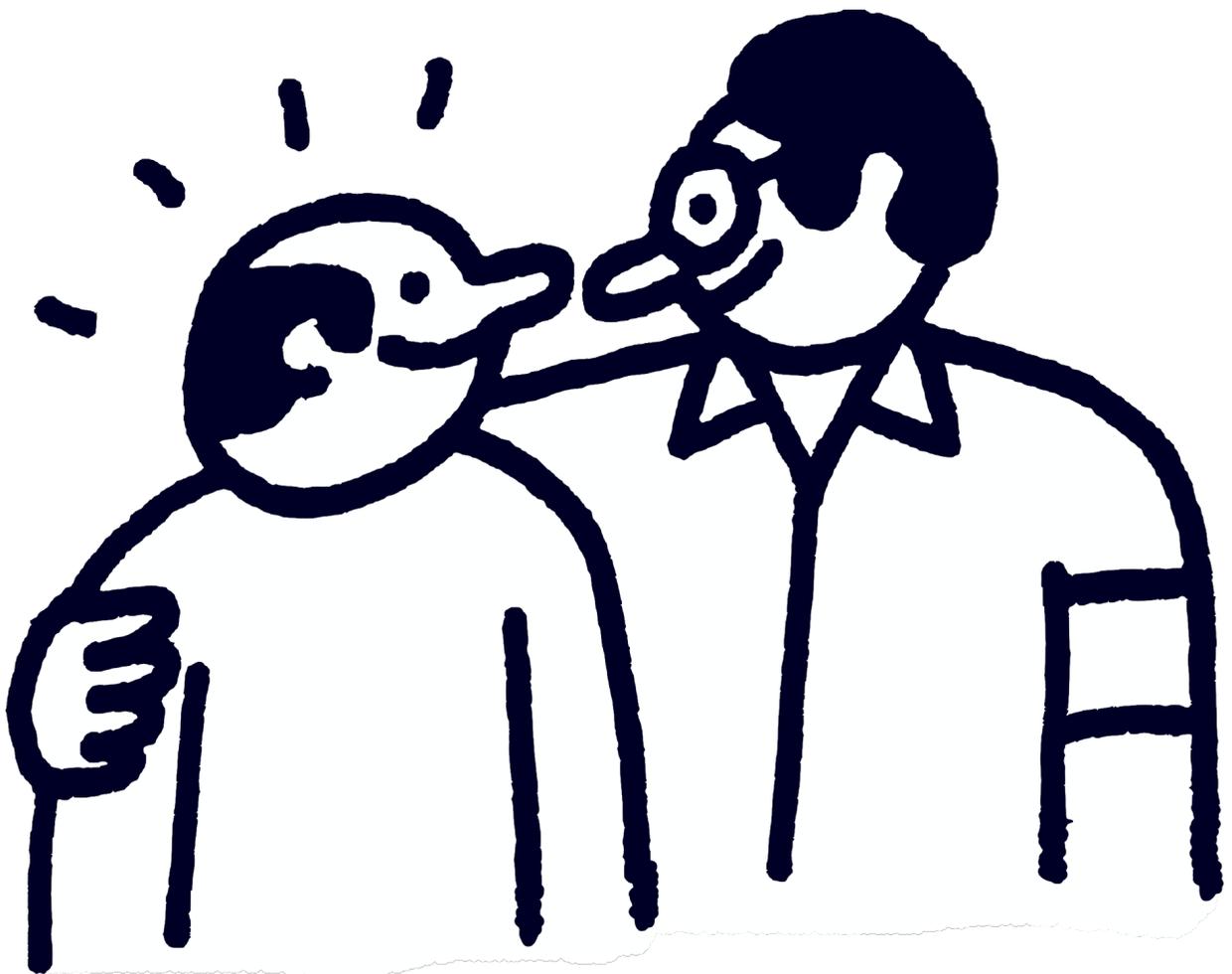
To keep agents engaged and ultimately drive CSAT and sales, it's critical to provide them with the time, tools, and information they need to deliver excellent service. The right automation platform should not only free agents to engage in human-to-human moments, but arm them with the details and customer context to provide meaningful support when these moments occur.

Connecting self- and assisted-service allows companies to bring the benefits of automation directly to their agents, which also benefits customers.

According to Forrester, when introducing digital solutions, organizations must consider how the technology engages the entire worker: mind, heart, hands and feet. See how Forrester represents this idea in the chart below.

“Digital enablement improves workers’ job satisfaction and retention rates, which creates the productivity and staff consistency necessary for good customer experiences.”

Forrester, 2019²





Mind

Ensures workers understand the experience they are to deliver and have the right information and contextual background to make the right decisions.

Let's break this down for automation and agents

A good automation platform should give agents every last detail they need to support customers and make the right decisions during an interaction. Account information and inquiry details should be captured and shared directly within the agent's console—no more time wasted asking the same basic “who are you, and how can I help?” type questions.



Heart

Provides workers with enough insight into the customer's situation to appreciate where the customer is coming from and respond in an empathetic manner.

Let's break this down for automation and agents

Human connection is key to creating a good customer experience. Putting automation as the first line of customer service enables agents to provide high-touch support by giving them more time and information to empathize with the customer. It's these human-to-human moments that make customers feel appreciated and drive loyalty.



Hands

Gives workers access to the resources needed to create solutions to client problems.

Let's break this down for automation and agents

This one speaks directly to one of the top drivers of churn: agents can't provide the answers customers are looking for. With the right technology, a business can automatically connect customers with the agent who is best positioned to serve their needs in that moment. This puts the agent in control and makes for a better experience on both sides, because the right agent can resolve issues quickly and impact outcomes faster.



Feet

Helps employees take the appropriate next step that will address customer issues, ensuring a good customer experience.

Let's break this down for automation and agents

Every interaction takes place in the context of a customer's overall brand experience. Agents need to understand that context and know what next steps ensure an ongoing positive relationship. Giving agents access to information and insights into the customer's history, allows them to look at the bigger picture and make better choices.



Boost your agents, boost your bottom line

Customer service plays a crucial role in protecting revenue and profitability, and it's important to focus on both sides of the human experience—customers, and agents. With the right AI-powered solution and an automation-first strategy, you can improve the experience for everyone. Empower your agents with better tools and information so they can provide better customer support. And by automating the simpler queries and tasks, you can free them to focus on more complex, time-consuming, and valuable customer needs, driving up satisfaction on both sides.

Happy agents boost your bottom line by reducing attrition and angst, and elevating CSAT and outcomes.

Ready to see for yourself how Ada can support your agents and protect your revenue?

Let's talk →

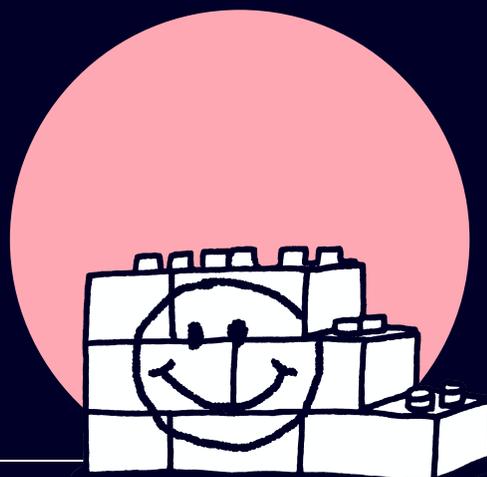
¹ NewVoiceMedia, 2018: shorturl.at/gkpw6

² Forrester, 2019: shorturl.at/mrtIY

³ Source: Quality Assurance & Training Center

⁴ Everest Group, 2014: shorturl.at/uHJT3

⁵ Nice In Contact, 2018: The True Cost of Attrition



As the market leader in Automated Customer Service (ACX), Ada is the only chatbot platform purpose-built to support an automation-first customer service strategy.

By diminishing dependence on IT and uncovering new opportunities for revenue, Ada's automation is designed to transform the support model from a cost center to profit center. Headquartered in Toronto, Ada enables clients around the world, like TELUS, AirAsia, and UpWork, to put automation and AI at the front end of their customer service strategy, thereby freeing live support agents to have greater impact.

 +1 (855) 232-7593

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