You want more from your call center software. But should you update your current system or opt for something new?
In today's digital age, it's not enough for contact centers to simply deliver an outstanding customer experience. They must also be social media savvy and able to transform from slow-moving, reactive business units into proactive, real-time contact hubs that are always a step ahead of their customer needs and their competition. And because contact center technology changes dramatically each year, if you’ve been using the same technology for five to 10 years, it’s time for a renovation. But the question is, should you upgrade or completely replace your contact center? We’ll walk you through an extensive series of considerations and options that can help you make the best decision for your business.

Is Your Contact Center an Underachiever?

If you haven’t upgraded or replaced your contact center in the last five to 10 years, you may think you’re doing just fine. You may even be hitting all of your Service Level Agreements and have a high customer satisfaction score. But if it’s been some time since you had a technology refresh, you could likely be doing even better. Here are 10 signs that your contact center may not be up to snuff—and thus at risk for being out-performed by your competition:

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1. You only provide inbound customer service.
2. You only support voice calls into your contact center.
3. No one in your business understands caller trends or customer sentiment.
4. You constantly face budget cuts and are asked to do more with less.
5. Your agents are stuck at their desks all day staring at their phones.
6. Your agents are bored and unengaged.
7. You have an employee retention problem.
8. You have a hard time scheduling agents to handle your ever-changing call volumes.
9. Your executive team frequently discusses outsourcing your call center.
10. Your executive team continually mentions that contact center costs exceed your worth.
These are just some of the problem areas that may be keeping your contact center from being a key business unit. And this list doesn’t even begin to take into account the other technological advances you could be missing out on, like Internet Protocol (IP) telephony, Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) telephony, support for mobile phones and tablets, and the latest PC hardware, software, and operating systems. At the end of the day, contact centers are often the face of a company and its hub, and first impressions can be lasting.

That said, the process of upgrading or replacing your contact center technology is not a simple one. Any worthwhile technology project requires resources to be prioritized against business priorities. You need to weigh the advantages of upgrading with your existing vendor or going to a new vendor and replacing your system. You also need to weigh the costs of upgrading the technology against the costs of taking your business offline to upgrade. Finally, you need to discern what infrastructure will best meet your needs now and in the future. The following sections are designed to help facilitate a conversation within your organization about upgrading vs. replacing your contact center solution, carefully weighing the pros and cons of both options.

### The Case for Upgrading

Gaining the ability to leverage the latest technology to address your sophisticated customer base: This is a critical reason to upgrade your center. You’ll also be able to take advantage of multimedia contact capabilities, inbound/outbound/blended dialing, more efficiently measure and manage your contact center, improve workforce management, improve employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention—as well as creating happy customers.

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In some cases, simply upgrading your contact center software to a newer version can help you achieve business process and operational efficiencies. This is a best-case scenario for speeding up your Return on Investment (ROI) and minimizing your Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).

In other cases, more extensive improvements may be necessary, like upgrading your telephony infrastructure or hardware in order to upgrade, which would slow your ROI and increase your TCO. In making this decision, you will need to consider the following:
Do you continue with your investment in an on-premise solution or is it time to look at a cloud-based contact center?

You may be able to lower the TCO of a newer, more modern solution by going to the cloud, but this may not be a simple upgrade story, and could require a rip/replace solution, and even new vendors.

If you can’t upgrade easily, is it time to add new solutions from additional vendors?

This often results in multiple systems to manage and little communication between them, which creates an administration burden, slowing the speed at which you can complete an upgrade, and disrupting economies of scale.

Do you protect your existing investments or re-invest in innovation?

Ultimately, a simple software upgrade is the lowest cost way for you to attain new contact center features and functionality, but the upgrade path is not always so simple. You may need to add new hardware or re-architect your contact center design—which may require considering alternate vendors. And sometimes, you may not even be able to access all of the tools with a newer version of your current solution. Make sure you clearly identify the features and functionality your business is seeking before making this decision.

Are you happy with the support you’ve received from your current vendor?

This is often one of the driving forces behind fully replacing a contact center solution. Has your vendor done a good job of quickly resolving any issues you’ve had with their product? Have they kept you up with the latest and greatest technology? If the answer to either of these is no, it may be time to look to a new supplier.

Can you achieve full resiliency, redundancy and high availability with your existing solution?

If your contact center is the core of your business, whether you’re an inbound sales organization or a customer care center, downtime costs you money. Lost calls means lost customers, and lost data can destroy your business. Without a fully resilient, redundant, and highly available contact center solution, your organization is at risk. But upgrading to a business continuity and disaster recovery solution may not be easy and will definitely come at a cost. If you need to deploy new servers, gateways, and other hardware infrastructure, you may want to consider a vendor who can provide a more feature rich, cost effective solution.

The Case for Replacement

Much like simply upgrading your contact center solutions, there are many benefits to replacing your contact center with a new solution—possibly from a new vendor. But this comes with significant costs, which increases your TCO. Replacing your contact center often means entirely rebuilding your telephony infrastructure, and not everyone is prepared to leave behind their existing investment—even if you may be able to achieve a more rapid ROI with a new vendor’s solution. Here are some key considerations regarding replacement:
Are you ready for a full contact center rip and replace?
This is the most important aspect to completely overhauling your contact center infrastructure, with many key considerations factoring in to the decision. For example, an overhaul will definitely increase your up-front TCO, even if it will give you the tools to speed up ROI. Network readiness, determining the appropriate architecture, security and compliance, system readiness, serviceability, maintainability, and support all factor into the equation. Ripping and replacing your contact center will also take time, from the moment you begin looking at new vendors to system engineering, deployment and end-user training. Make sure you weigh the benefits of the new system against the time and cost to get it operational.

Do you fully understand the factors driving the replacement system?
Much like upgrading, you need to decisively identify the features and functionality that are driving your decision and ensure that the new solution can meet your needs. For example, does the new solution give you the multi-channel tools you need to serve customers via the media of their choice? Will it help you drive quality engagement to satisfy the high expectations of your customers? Will it help you evolve into an IT best practices organization that is service-oriented? Is it a cloud-based contact center solution, and if not, can you migrate to a cloud, or hybrid infrastructure in the future? Will the new solution scale as you grow? Answering these questions prior to making your purchasing decision is crucial.

Does the new system meet today’s technology needs?
Today’s IT professionals expect very specific qualities from their technologies. They must be thin, flexible, unified, IP-based, open standards based, highly scalable, resilient, redundant and highly available. Can your new vendor meet the ever-growing, ever-changing needs of your IT department?

One of the easiest ways to speed up ROI is to extend your workforce to remote, home-based, teleworking employees.

Does replacing your existing solution extend the workforce?
One of the easiest ways to speed up ROI is to extend your workforce to remote, home-based, teleworking employees. Significant cost savings can be achieved by enabling remote workers. Not only can you save on operational costs by letting employees work out of the office, but one study found that remote workers work longer hours and take fewer breaks. In addition to working remotely, you should also consider the ability for your new solution to support an ever-growing workforce that wants to leverage their mobile phones and tablets as part of their daily routine.
Taking the Next Step

Regardless of whether you’re upgrading or replacing your contact center, take your time. This will ultimately be a big project with many considerations. Here are a few more guidelines to help you make the decision:

1. **Think long term**
   - Will your new solution scale with you as your business and customer interactions grow?
   - Does your new solution involve new hardware or technology?
   - Will your new solution provide multi-channel routing capabilities?
   - Does your new solution align with your employee skill set?

2. **Consider your deployment model options**
   - Choose a strategy that meets your needs, addresses your goals, and is consistent with your long-term strategy (on-premise, cloud-based or hybrid)

3. **Before you buy, test out realistic scenarios**
   - Can the new system handle your current and forecasted future call and contact volumes?
   - If you are a multi-site organization, does your new system meet the needs of geographically dispersed locations?
   - Can you virtualize your contact center infrastructure and take advantage of resilient, redundant, and highly available architectures to promote business continuity?