

RETHINKING TRAINING THE NEW AGE CONTACT CENTER WORKFORCE

Abstract

When it comes to training our contact center executives, everything takes precedence but its intrinsic composition that has evolved over time. With the induction of digital natives into the workforce, the generational divide has further widened, and the ubiquitous use of smartphones and broadband penetration has changed the face of the technological landscape over the years. Yet, the industry heavily relies on conventional wisdom to train the contact center workers.

This paper examines the effectiveness and the brand impact of the current training programs and attempts to define the need and methodology to bridge the gap and re-shape the discourse.

“Bad experiences drive consumers away – fast. Globally, consumers would stop doing business with a company due to unfriendly service (60%), unknowledgeable employees (46%), and lack of company trust (50%). One in three (32%) say they would walk away from a brand they love after a single bad experience.”

- [A market research study conducted by PwC](#)

One of the hallmarks of the 21st-century work environment is how profoundly the nature of work has changed with the evolution of the technological landscape. Some sectors have been quick in bracing the new challenges and new ways of work, while some are still playing catch-up. Contact center training is one such sector that has lagged for far too long as, despite the tremendous technological advancements, we continue to train our

new-age workforce with the same old information-heavy monologues. This practice could be damaging to the contact centers, as in most use cases, the CX (Customer Experience) is primarily driven by the AX (Agent Experience), which unfortunately happens to be the most overlooked component of the CX. The agent is the face of the product/service, acting as an extension of the company’s brand at every touchpoint.

We need to understand and evaluate multiple elements to create a holistic, continuous, and evolving ecosystem for training the contact center workforce. The era of one-size-fits-all training is long gone, but our training ecosystems have not been able to pick up the pace. Let’s understand what it takes to build a comprehensive custom learning solution for the workforce.

Let’s first understand the workforce ecosystem.

WHO constitutes the workforce?

Most of the contact center workforce consists of Gen Z workers, who barely remember the world before the advent of smartphones. These digital natives,

with shorter attention span and new-age communication style, may not be able to ascribe to the content-rich long-format training programs. Also, there is a pressing

need to design customized training modules to suit the workforce w.r.t the frequency, content, and mode of delivery.



WHEN should there be training interventions?



Onboarding

On New Product / Service Launch

Continuous On-the-Job
(driven by Analytics)

“**When to train**” might be a no-brainer but is vital to ensure that these interventions bring out the desired outcomes and

workforce is trained with minimal or no impact on the BAU operations. The analytics-driven, continuous, on-the-job

training interventions can prove to be the most effective and efficient way of improving the critical aspects of customer handling.

WHAT type of content would make sense in which scenario?



Generic, Structured Content
(comprehensive, detailed)

Focused and Byte Sized
(quick & targeted)

Customized and Personalized
(driven by Analytics)

Although we might require **generic structured content** for a specific domain, compliance, policy, and soft skills-related training sessions, **focused, byte-sized, customized, and personalized** content are better suited for **continuous learning**. The diverse mix of the workforce calls for content designing and delivery to be creative and engaging to improve the training effectiveness.

Let us understand **WHAT** are the key

challenges that contact centers today face while designing an effective training program for their workforce:

1. Designing a **highly engaging and interactive experience** given the composition of the workforce
2. Improving **speed to proficiency** at optimized cost
3. Providing a **simulated environment** with AI-driven real-time feedback and

enabling the trainees to improve the subtle aspects before interacting with the external customers

4. Training the agents to handle the **complex and key call drivers** with empathetic, problem-oriented, critical thinking skills as the standard queries are increasingly being resolved by the self-service portals.

HOW should the training programs be designed to overcome these challenges?

Primarily, training programs should be designed to enhance the soft skills, domain, products/offering, campaigns, and software (tools/dashboards) knowledge based on the job description.

These programs must also ensure that the **top 20% of call drivers**, which usually account for **80% of the volume**, are well covered with each of the following training modes. **Compliance** is another

critical area that is strictly regulated, and robust compliance training should be an integral part of the practice to eliminate the possibility of violations while facing the clients.



Classroom Sessions

Collaborative Learning

Digital Learning Platform

Simulated Learning

Immersive Experience

Continuous On-the-Job



Classroom Training

Sessions with monologues should give way to creative roleplay-based training to encourage an interactive fun-n-learn environment for better command of the concepts and finer aspects of the subtle art of communication.



Collaborative Learning

Facilitating peer-to-peer learning in a conducive and inclusive environment where introverts get equal opportunity to contribute and engage helps in mutual growth. Learning while teaching or presenting to someone (like a colleague) improves the effectiveness and retention by manifold.



Digital Learning Platform

On-the-go access to digital platforms with analytics-driven recommendations, gamified learning, and a diverse set of leaderboards help motivate trainees for healthy competition to hone their skills.



Simulated Learning

Customer retention today has become tricky as the representatives get only one shot at getting everything right, and the slightest oversight in a sensitive case can have repercussions and a cascading effect on the company's brand. For such cases, AI-driven simulated environments with real-time NLP/speech assessment, analytics/AI models, and training bank crafted with a diverse mix of customer call recordings become imperative.



Immersive Experience

XR-driven 3D models can equip agents better understand the intricacies of a product and better handle customer queries. Scenarios like live troubleshooting with the customer require agents to understand the product inside-out. An immersive training based on Augmented, Virtual, or Mixed reality with the necessary gears can help agents get their hands dirty on the virtual version of the product and let them assemble, troubleshoot, and explore the product in-depth. Advance immersive experiences in the future can also facilitate experts/trainers to collaborate in a Mesh/Meta-verse.

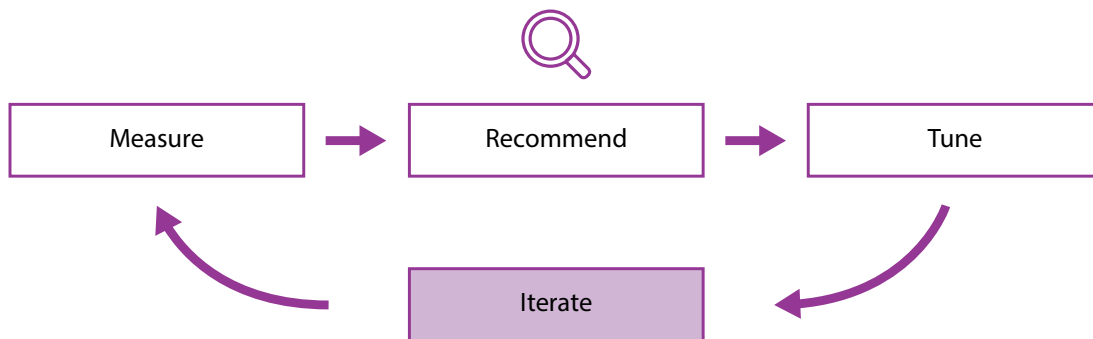


Continuous On-the-Job Training

This is one of the most crucial components of the new age training and involves one-on-one engagement sessions between the supervisor and the agents. However, this method can only work well for small teams and cannot be scaled for larger teams with high call volumes. We can leverage speech analytics, click stream telemetry, and performance tracking AI models-based technology to bridge this gap. The AI models can assess an agent's performance across different call segments ,right from greeting, to discovery, resolution, cross-selling/upselling and to closure. The fine-grained feedback on every agent's performance across these metrics over a timeframe helps the system recommend the most relevant/personalized training bytes for specific improvements. It can also help escalate critical compliance violations by spotting aberrant behaviors and suggesting immediate course correction to avoid any business impact.

MEASURING training effectiveness and addressing the gaps

Measuring training effectiveness by evaluating the key parameters is of utmost value to fine-tuning the training content, mode of delivery, and knowledge artifacts.



Contact centers can deploy multiple tools to measure the training effectiveness for the agents serving the customers. Each interaction can be scrutinized to extract behavior, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and intent-resolution path traversal related KPIs. The rich set of attributes captured from the clickstream analysis and agent-specific

AI-driven performance models can help specify focus areas of the individual and group training. It can help suggest recommendations to improve the training programs and help individuals work on their shortcomings, thus eliminating the need for one-on-one sessions. Iterations of this process can help transcend the overall contact center training effectiveness.

To summarize, to ensure – the training programs in contact centers focus on high engagement, synergy, continuous interventions, creative modes of training to improve effectiveness so that the customer experience is not compromised – is of utmost importance.





About the Authors



Vishal Manchanda is a Principal Architect with **Infosys Center for Emerging Technology Solutions** and has over 21 years of experience in the IT Industry. He leads the engineering of **Infosys Cortex** a platform for transforming the Contact centers from cost centers to Value centers while ensuring Customer Success.

Vishal has been developing, architecting, and incubating various IT solutions around contact centers, personalized intelligent interfaces involving hyper contextual personalized videos, voice interfaces and comprehensive Conversational AI platforms.



Venugopal Subbarao (Venu) heads the Digital Engagement CoE at **Infosys Centre for Emerging Technology Solutions**, which is focused on incubating offerings in the converged areas of XR, IoT and Cognitive technologies, which includes solutions such as Infosys Conversational AI Platform, Infosys XR Platform. He has 25+ years of IT Experience in project delivery, consulting, research, and enterprise architecture handling large projects/product/practice management.

For more information, contact askus@infosys.com



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