Building a Recession-Proof
Contact Center

A 12-step guide to maximizing customer
loyalty while optimizing costs

freshworks

Introduction

With an impending slowdown, businesses are turning to lessons from the past to stay future-ready. Research by **Harvard Business Review** studied the business priorities of 'Leader' organizations that managed to increase earnings by an average of 10% during the recession of 2008, while their 'Laggard' peers lost nearly 15%. Intrigued? Our **webinar** featuring Ian Jacobs, Principal Analyst, Forrester Research, highlights the 3 steps these businesses took and what it means for your contact center. We have compiled our findings into three parts in this 12-step guide. Find out how you can map business and contact center priorities to enhance flexibilty, spend wisely, and build strong customer connections.

Part 1

Protect existing revenue

when business is down by building customer loyalty

Part 2

Optimize costs

to work within budget constraints with contact center efficiency

Part 3

Create operational flexibility

and stay ready to adapt at speed by building contact center flexibility

Protect existing revenue by building customer loyalty

With physical stores shutting down, customers have shifted to digital channels to engage with brands from their homes. If your customers are online, your service channels must adapt to meet them there. Winning new customers is harder and more expensive than retaining your current ones, especially during a downturn. Delight your customers by adapting to their changing behavior and expectations.

1. **Make service effortless with chat & messaging**
2. **Choose digital over voice**
3. **Amplify self-service**
4. **Make customer service personal**

65%

of customers say that a brand's response to the current crisis will impact their future purchasing decisions*

*Edelman Trust Barometer

01 Make service effortless with chat and messaging channels

Why now?

- With the physical distance between brands and customers, service needs to be accessible in every pocket, and on any device.

- Customers expect service interactions to be as familiar as messaging friends and family. They also prefer asynchronous support channels where they can pick up conversations at will.

A better approach

- Improve CSAT scores with rapid support conversation on live-chat or familiar interfaces like Facebook Messenger, Apple Business Chat, and WhatsApp.

- Increase productivity; chat agents can be upto 3x more productive.

- Reduce the stress on staffing with asynchronous channels that don't need real-time agent availability.

Chat agents are

3X more productive

than voice agents

♥ homechoice
for the home you love

> Homechoice, South Africa's leading Omnichannel retailer, saw a 120% increase in revenue by engaging with customers on the modern messaging channels of WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger powered by Freshworks.

02 Shift customers from voice to digital service channels

Why now?

- Your contact center is dealing with massive volumes and limited staff.

- Impatient customers and long queues don't go well together. Anxious customers will only get more frustrated while waiting on the phone.

A better approach

- Shift the conversation to asynchronous channels like chat to remove wait times with an option in your IVR workflows.

- Reduce the burden on your call center.

- Delight customers by responding in under a minute.

- Reduce cost per contact by as much as 58%.

Digital channels can reduce contact center costs by

58%

Klarna.

Swedish online payments company Klarna offers multilingual, round-the-clock support to 85,00,000 customers despite a 20x growth in transactions by making chat the preferred service channel. Support volumes on chat have gone from 20% to 66%, while phone volumes have dropped from 63% to 32%.

03 Amplify access to self-service

Why now?

- 76% of global consumers prefer searching for their own solution over contacting customer service.

- In times of a crisis, you are likely to see a rise in a specific type of query that can be answered with a single knowledge resource. For example, travel & hospitality companies witnessed a surge in queries on booking cancellations during the COVID-19 crisis.

A better approach

- Deflect simple queries from your agent and allow them to focus on complex customer issues or escalations that need more attention.

- Amplify the access to your knowledge resources with self-service across your website, mobile app, and messaging channels.

76%
global customers have a preference for self-service

fp fitness passport

Fitness Passport, Australia's premier corporate health and fitness program, deflects 30% of its routine queries with a self-service portal and in-app chatbot that tackles FAQs on membership costs, inclusions, and cancellations.

04 Get more personal with a 360° customer view

Why now?

- Delivering personalized experiences can be your biggest differentiator and a demonstration of your commitment to your customers' happiness.

- 69% of global consumers have a clear preference for brands that proactively offer tailored content and service.

A better approach

- Delight customers with accurate, timely, and relevant service by learning all about them.

- Deliver personalized service with a 360° view of your customer - including profiles, order history, and past conversations.

69%

customers prefer brands that proactively offer personalized content and service

BLUE NILE.

North American wedding jeweler, Blue Nile, has created a disruptive online business by taking the high-touch, high-value business of jewelry shopping to the digital world while retaining the intimacy of an in-store experience. Blue Nile's agents deliver 24x7 expert advice on chat, virtual design consultations, and personalized concierge service with a 360° view of the customer's journey on the website, history, and preferences.

Part 2

Reduce contact center costs with efficient operations

Economic uncertainty signals budgetary constraints. While cost-cutting is often a top business priority during a downturn, it cannot come at the expense of customer experience. This means that you need to get more out of your contact center investments. Build an efficient contact center while delighting your customers.

5. **Deflect with AI-powered chatbots**
6. **Use AI beyond bots for lower AHT**
7. **Bust data silos**
8. **Keep teams on the same page**

86%

of businesses are considering cost-containment strategies in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis*

*PwC COVID-19 CFO Pulse

05 Manage support volumes with AI-powered chatbots

Why now?

- Manage the burden of volumes without increasing your headcount in times of constrained budgets.

- Make the job more interesting for your agents by eliminating the need to answer the same queries repeatedly.

A better approach

- In addition to general FAQs, automate specific workflows that are most common to you. For example, if you are an e-commerce vendor, you may be seeing frequent questions on order status, refunds, or exchanges. For an insurance organization, common queries could be on claims, renewals, and add-ons.

- Select a no-code bot that can be deployed in days to automate up to 75% of your queries.

Bots can deflect **75%** of routine queries

DUNZO

Dunzo, a 24x7 delivery platform for anything from groceries to pet supplies, set up AI-powered chatbots on various pages of their app when they noticed that 60% of their queries were routine - regarding order status, cancellations, or payment issues. Customers get their answers in seconds, and agents are freed from responding to repetitive queries.

06 Reduce Average Handle Time by extending AI beyond bots

Why now?

- AI is capable of more than routine ticket deflection. Your agents - and therefore your contact center - can be more efficient and productive with AI across the ticket life-cycle.

A better approach

- Automate routine tasks like classification, routing, and triage and allow agents to focus on the customer, not the process.

- Onboard agents faster, especially when remote, by deploying agent assistant bots to guide them with the next best actions.

AI-powered automations can save agents

1.2 hours a day

PhonePe

India's largest mobile payments app, PhonePe, has 225 million users transacting with 6.5 million businesses. By leveraging AI-powered agent-assist for solution suggestions, guided workflows, and next best actions, PhonePe has eliminated agent-training as a variable and reduced ramp-up time by 50%.

07 Unify siloed systems and data for faster operations

Why now?

- Remote agents don't have the comfort of proximity to their colleagues to seek help with a tap on the shoulder.

- Agents need ready access to the right information to stay self-sufficient and have quality conversations.

A better approach

- Bust system, channel, and data silos to provide agents a unified customer timeline of everything including conversations, past activity, and order history - without making them switch tabs.

- Allow agents to have continuous conversations across channels with your customers with the right context from a single screen.

- Free agents from the administrative burden of manual data-preparation and reporting.
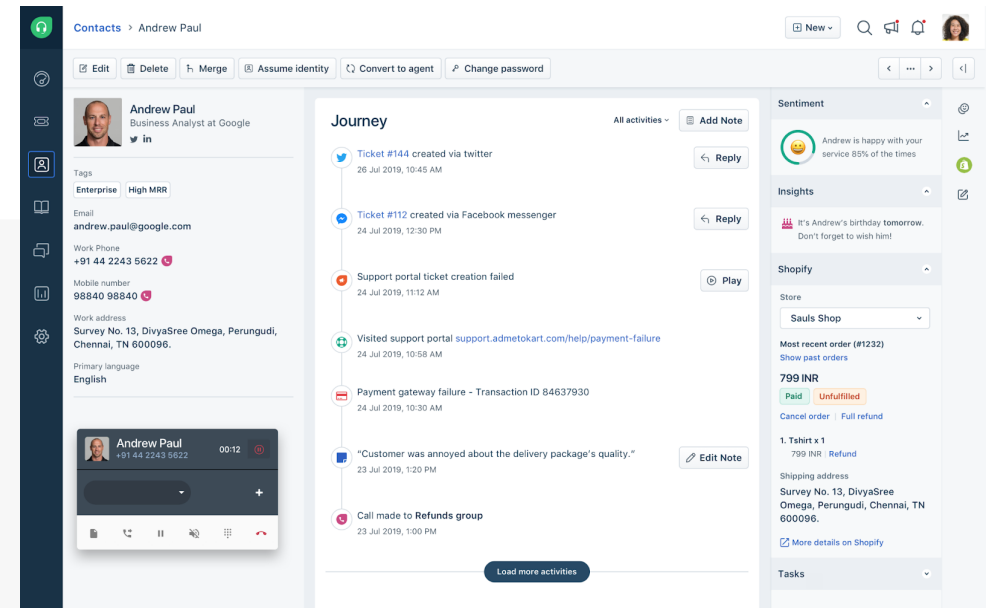
Unified customer view

Online travel agency Travix operates five brands and 43 websites dealing with flight, train, and hotel bookings. By unifying cross-brand and channel support, agents have a single view of their customers for rapid, effective, and personalized conversations.

08 Keep teams on the same page

Why now?

- Support agents often need inputs from their colleagues or other internal teams to resolve customer issues. But bringing teams together can be tricky when they are remote or globally dispersed.

A better approach

- Allow remote agents to collaborate with context and work as one to resolve customer problems with ease. For example, a retail organization can help agents from across customer service, accounts and operations come together to process a return pick-up and refund order for a customer.

- Help agents split and share tasks across teams and work on them in parallel for faster resolutions.

Powerful collaboration features can save

120 clicks a day

HIRED

Hired, a tech talent recruitment marketplace brings together teams from across engineering, talent advocacy, sales, office operations, and IT located in the United States, Canada, France, and the UK to deliver delightful customer experiences while maintaining 97% SLA adherence.

Part 3

Adapt at speed with a flexible contact center

A flexible contact center can help you proactively respond to the first signs of economic disruption and help you maintain business continuity. Stay agile and stay accessible to your customers regardless of location or staffing constraints.

09. Stay remote-ready

10. Upskill and reskill agents

11. Adopt agile processes & technology

12. Rent, don't buy

68%

of CFOs think a hybrid physical + remote model is here to stay*

*PwC COVID-19 CFO Pulse

09 Be ready for a remote workforce

Why now?

- The transition to remote operations should ensure that agents can work from anywhere without disrupting your support operations.

A better approach

- Take your contact center to the cloud for a one-time set-up where subsequent changes or upgrades can be made remotely without expensive consultants and negotiations.

- Help managers monitor their team's performance remotely with live dashboards and insights from a single screen.

- Ensure that your agents have the right customer information at their fingertips, even when sharing tribal knowledge is not an option. Offer them a 360° customer view of the customer on a single screen.

Live dashboards

Kiewit, one of North America's largest and most respected construction and engineering organizations, traded the frequent downtime, manual maintenance, and machine upgrades of its on-premise system for a reliable, always-on cloud solution to achieve CSAT scores of 93%.

10 Create role flexibility with cross-training

Why now?

- As channel preferences change, your agents will need to be trained to support a shifting channel mix - like moving from phone to chat or vice versa.

A better approach

- Ensure that your agents can handle service across channels either in response to volume shifts or personal preferences. For example, an agent assigned to phone support might prefer to move to chat while working remotely if she's likely to be interrupted by her young children in the background.

- Embrace emerging roles brought about AI and automation technologies like chatbot trainers and knowledge managers to deliver effective self-service.
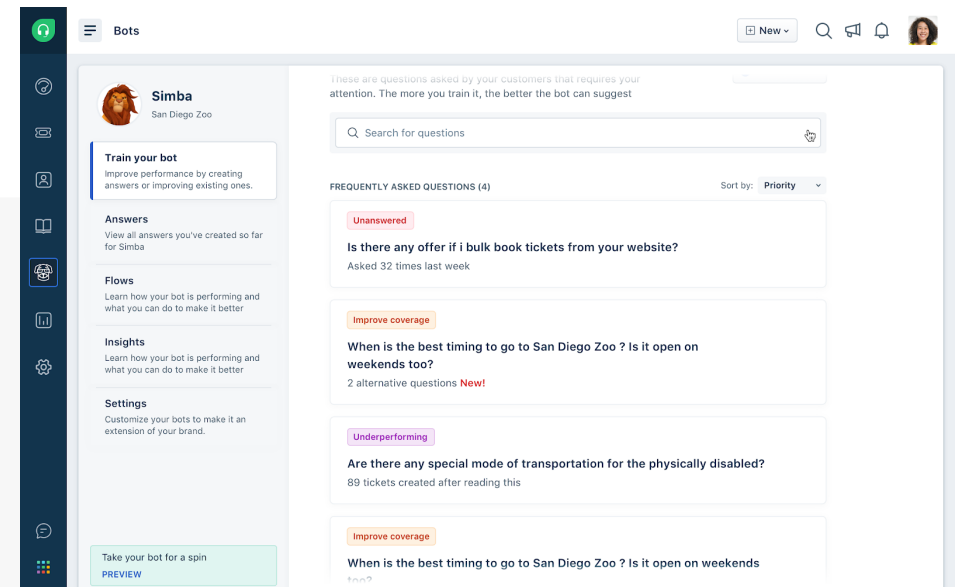
Training your bot

We practice what we preach at Freshworks. We run our own support organization with our born-on-the-cloud suite of customer service solutions, including AI-powered bots. A 'chatbot trainer' studies bot performance and creates knowledge resources and workflows for the questions it couldn't answer.

11 Create agile processes to innovate rapidly

Why now?

- Customer behavior and business priorities are changing. Your workflows need to be flexible to keep up.

- The agility to innovate will allow you to make proactive changes to your contact center at the first signs of a downturn.

A better approach

- Choose code-free, click-to-configure software that helps you adapt processes without technical support. For example, your support team should be able to create and deploy the right knowledge resources during a crisis without having to wait for help from your web operations team.

- Manage remote agent availability in line with a changing channel mix by combining support queues across channels and using automated omnichannel routing to improve utilization.

Agent name	Tickets	Chats	Calls
Sadie Baldwin	off	on	off — Agent not logged in
Nelle Fowler	off	on	off
Gregory Benson	on	off	on — Agent is on a call
Leroy Hale	on	off	on
Hulda Smith	off	on	off
Jason Lee	on	Not available	Not available
Mary Bates	on	off — Agent not logged in	on
Willie Lawrence	off	Not available	off
Harriet Barber	on	Not available	on
Ruth McCarthy	on	off	Not available

Automated omnichannel routing

MultiChoice
ENRICHING LIVES

MultiChoice, South Africa's leading satellite television service provider, wins at customer service with 'omnichannel agents,' agents who can seamlessly share the load across channels based on volumes while being monitored 'under one roof'.
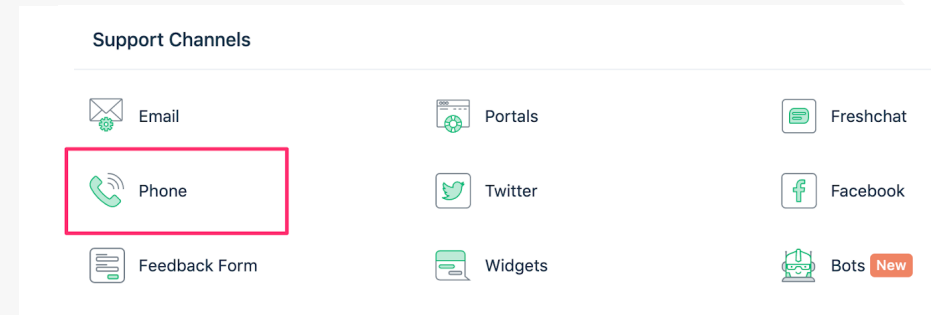
12 Rent, don't buy

Why now?

- By avoiding lock-in, you can keep your options open when faced with mandatory budget cuts.

- You can transition to a leaner contact center and continue supporting customers without disruptions.

A better approach

- Renegotiate your facilities leases, explore cloud-hosted technology that allows license flexibility, and evaluate on-demand, contractual staffing models for elastic workforce planning.

- Choose contact center software that allows you to add support channels with Out-of-the-box integrations.

- Adopt a pay-as-you-go model to scale without the oversubscription charges.

Support Channels

✉ Email	🗔 Portals	💬 Freshchat
📞 Phone	🐦 Twitter	f Facebook
📋 Feedback Form	📱 Widgets	🤖 Bots New

Out-of-the-box integrations

Whittard
CHELSEA 1886

Premium British tea retailer, Whittard of Chelsea, sees a 500% increase in ticket volumes during its peak season between October and January. With flexible agent licensing, Whittard doubles its customer service staff during this period while maintaining a year-round lean contact center.

Conclusion

This global crisis has forced us to evolve, and there's no doubt that contact centers will look very different in the future.

What you should do

- ### Make it effortless
  Embrace digital-first, messaging and self-service

- ### Automate
  Invest in AI across the support life-cycle

- ### Stay agile
  With evolving processes, enabled by the cloud

About freshworks

We at Freshworks have a proven track record of helping businesses transform their customer service experiences. Freshworks provides customer engagement software to businesses of all sizes, making it easy for customer support, sales, and marketing professionals to communicate more effectively with customers and deliver moments of wow. Freshdesk, our cloud-hosted customer service platform, enables you to deliver delightful, omnichannel support. Its democratized AI capabilities leverage AI across the ticket life-cycle to improve contact center efficiency. Freshdesk also offers the fastest time to value and lowest cost of ownership, allowing our customers to enjoy an RoI of up to 462%.

Impressed? Request for a **personalized demo** to see what we can do for you.

For more information, please visit

www.freshworks.com