

Co-existing

How BPO call centers and corporate contact centers can create human-chatbot harmony and thrive in the Digital Age

Staring down an existential crisis

Enterprises have long looked to business process outsourcers (BPOs) to handle front-line customer support, incremental revenue programs, and lead generation efforts. Outsourcing these services is essential to free up in-house resources so they can focus on more strategic activities.

But as a new generation of artificial intelligence (AI)-powered chatbots and customer engagement systems emerge, many BPO companies and even internal contact center leaders worry that technology will replace the need for qualified, well-organized, human-powered customer support and engagement teams that are core to their business.

Fortunately, enterprising BPOs are beginning to recognize that there's a better way to stave off extinction and even spin the advancement of new technologies in their favor.

They're realizing they can create a competitive advantage by embracing a combination of powerful chat technologies and targeted automation across their environment to improve deflection rates, increase business efficiency, and deliver a superior customer experience — without replacing the humans they value and rely on every day.

The Global Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Services Market is projected to develop at 10.8% CAGR between now and 2024.¹

A hybrid customer engagement model featuring simple chatbots and custom automation across various tools and technologies can produce many of the benefits of AI-powered systems without the hefty financial investment or need for hiring an army of AI or machine learning experts. This guide will help you better understand how the right tools can help your business create human-chatbot harmony and an optimal customer experience that will keep your clients — and your team — happy for years to come.

1 - Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Services Market Global Industry Growth Analysis, Segmentation, Size, Share, Trend, Future Demand and Leading Players Updates by Forecast to 2024. MarketWatch. Aug. 25, 2020.

New challenges can create more fear

As a BPO leader, you're doing your best to add value for your enterprise customers by offloading essential yet time-consuming support services and providing the talent, manpower, and programs to help them deal with the new realities of the modern business landscape, characterized by:

RAPIDLY EVOLVING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

To say that customers today are more demanding than ever is an understatement. They expect immediate attention, no matter the time or day. More than 90% of consumers say that an immediate response to their customer service issue is important or extremely important ², amplified by the fact that more than 70% also prefer to communicate with brands through channels like live chat and text support instead of a phone call.

More importantly, they want a seamless, personalized interaction to answer their questions or concerns without having to repeat the question or concern each time.

MORE CX EMPHASIS, LESS BRAND LOYALTY

These days, customer loyalty feels like a thing of the past. Recent research suggests that by the end of this year, customer experience — more so than price and product — will become the biggest brand differentiator.⁷

Unfortunately, the pressure on enterprises (and by extension, their BPO partners) to maintain an exceptional customer experience is increasing seemingly by the minute, as the number of customers who say they're willing to switch brands following a subpar customer experience has increased nearly 30% in just the past five years and more than three-quarters of them report that it's easier than ever to take their business elsewhere to find an experience that matches their expectations.⁸

What do customers really want?

50%

Over 50% of customers expect a business to be “open” 24/7. ³

89%

89% of customers expect a response to their email within an hour. ⁴

2/3

Two-thirds of consumers will wait on the phone two minutes or less, and 13% say any wait time is unacceptable. ⁵

45s

Consumers expect chat or other non-phone communications to start within 45 seconds. ⁶

RAPID SCALING FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

As enterprises look to grow their customer bases and geographic footprints, they need resource pools and systems that can expand with them. Now that there are more personal devices and more ways for customers to connect and interact with brands than ever, providing the responsive, 24/7 support customers demand puts an enormous burden on BPOs and contact centers, not only to accommodate spikes in customer traffic but to do so with the speed and quality of interactions that customers expect.

Usually, BPOs support their clients' growth projections by adding headcount or the occasional new tool system. But scaling doesn't just happen with a snap of the fingers and eventually reaches a point of diminishing returns, as quality talent slowly becomes more scarce and the costs of recruiting, onboarding, and training them becomes untenable.

*66% of customers who switch brands do so because of poor customer service.*⁹

Because your enterprise clients are always looking for cost-effective ways to drive business growth and create new revenue streams, they're likely already investing in AI technologies across a variety of business units to enable greater operational scale and efficiency. And they may be asking you to enable the same scale and efficiency in your customer support and engagement services.

The problem, though, is that you may not have the resources or expertise in place to meet those demands. BPOs need a way to address client business concerns now and be able to scale with them without losing out to AI.



*Experts predicted that by this year there would be 20 billion internet-connected things.*¹⁰

8 - State of the Connected Customer. Salesforce. June 2018. 9 - Afshar, Vala. "50 Important Customer Experience Stats for Business Leaders." Dec. 6, 2017. 10 - Leading the IoT: Gartner Insights on How to Lead in a Connected World. Gartner. 2017.

How BPOs Can Zig When Everyone Else Zags

A human-chatbot hybrid environment can help you meet today's needs and tomorrow's curveballs without having to resort to expensive AI technologies. The right chatbot solution can help you build easily configurable bots to triage customer or prospect communications and deliver them to the right agent.

Simple-but-smart chatbots don't require extensive coding or costly development teams, nor any specialized skills in AI. They can be deployed in days or a couple of weeks, instead of months, so you can avoid the lengthy rollouts that can put you behind your competitors. And they provide you an opportunity to dip your toe into the automation and chatbot

water before diving headfirst into a much larger and more expensive AI initiative.

This approach helps you achieve automated functionality and value at a much lower cost. For example, smart bots integrate seamlessly with your existing live chat platforms while multi-step interactions and logic trees connect with your existing knowledge base.

It's realistic for businesses to aim to deflect between 40% – 80% of common customer service inquiries to chatbots.

Intelligent, customized routing automation also creates a seamless handoff between bot and human. The bot handles the initial interaction and connects the customer with an appropriate agent based on the logic tree. The agent then sees the conversation history and can pick up with the customer without missing a beat.

A human-chatbot hybrid environment enables you to:

- Deliver customer self-service at scale
- Route more complex answers to the right resources, faster
- Collect vital prospect and customer information for upsell, cross-sell, and greater conversions
- Better serve multiple clients and customers simultaneously with easily-managed, reliable chat and automation solutions

Businesses spend \$1.3 trillion on 265 billion customer service calls each year.



Chatbots help save customer service costs by speeding up response times, freeing up agents for more challenging work, and answering up to 80% of routine questions.

Use cases:

There are a variety of smart chatbots you can deploy to respond to a multitude of scenarios, such as customers looking for answers and information or businesses wanting to gather and consolidate customer data.

For example:



Answer bots connect to your knowledge base to enable on-demand customer self-service.



Info-gathering bots fully automate any conversation, collect customer data, and store the data for use in future targeted actions like sales, marketing, and retention campaigns.



Guide bots direct customers and prospects to the right solution or agent using multi-step, intent-driven logic. Guide bots can also aid in triage and lead qualification.



Multi-platform integration bots create custom bot workflows to share customer interaction data among your most-used systems, such as Zendesk, Salesforce, and marketing automation platforms. Multi-platform integration bots also deliver information to human agents in a consolidated view instead of requiring them to log in and out of multiple systems.

Connecting Humans and Bots for an Enhanced Customer Experience and Business Success

BPOs and internal contact centers competing in an increasingly AI-driven world can combine the best elements of emerging, but proven automation and chat technology with time-tested, human-powered customer and business support.

By enhancing necessary human interactions with automated smart bots, you can deliver a consistently superior customer experience featuring faster response times, seamless routing to appropriate information resources and team members, and personalized customer interactions at scale from anywhere, at any time.

Adding smart bots to your existing human teams can create a fuller, richer, and more comprehensive understanding of customer journeys and even help you uncover just-in-time cross-sell and upsell opportunities that drive additional revenue opportunities and value for your enterprise clients.

Specifically, a human-chatbot hybrid solution enables your business to:

- Operate at global scale, around the clock
Improve customer engagement and conversion
- Develop a reputation as a thought leader and strategic partner to your clients
- Improve efficiency and save operating costs
- Apply your learnings and experience to an upgraded AI system later when you have the resources in place
- Make room for your agents to have higher-value conversations with clients

*Site visitors who use web chat are 2.8x more likely to convert than those that don't.*¹¹

Laying the foundation for a long-term shift

Taking the interim step of creating a human-chatbot hybrid environment opens the door for your enterprise customers to further shift their business direction toward automation. While many enterprises won't have the time, resources, or expertise themselves to strategically deploy the most robust automation and AI tools, they will continue to seek these tools nonetheless and will need expert advice on how to choose and implement them.

As a trusted BPO partner, you're in a unique position to leverage what you learn about chatbot technologies and act as automation advisors, helping your enterprise customers adapt to and meet ever-growing demands for AI. By integrating chat technologies into your processes now, you can maintain the advantage by setting the pace of progress at which your customers move toward AI and mostly humanless operations

and advising on best practices. In other words, what you sow in the next year or two before AI reaches its full potential can have far-reaching implications five or ten years down the road, when AI is more firmly established.

And until the majority of enterprises have successfully implemented all-encompassing AI systems, BPOs like yours can continue to fulfill the need for human service and intervention, remaining indispensable to your customers for the most complex and nuanced interactions that are better served by human agents.

Survive and thrive

AI's meteoric rise in popularity can feel like the final nail in a BPO's proverbial coffin, given the technology's promise of near-infinite scale, efficiency, and long-term cost savings. It's easy to feel like the technology will replace the need for high-touch, high-quality human powered teams sooner rather than later.

But it doesn't have to be (and shouldn't be) this way.

Your BPO can survive — even thrive — in the digital age by employing more cost-effective, customizable, easier-to-deploy chatbots that unburden human teams of repetitive, low-value tasks. Partnering with a chatbot and automation solutions provider with an extensive track record of supporting BPOs is crucial to getting it right.

Working with an experienced team to deploy the right

technologies and strategies will allow your team to focus on higher-value, revenue-generating activities and help your enterprise clients continue to grow their business while solidifying yours for years to come.

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