

# Getting the Most from a Next-Generation Contact Center Platform



*The AI technology needed for next-generation contact centers is available now. In this Q&A, **John Bastin**, vice president, industry strategy – government and education at Talkdesk, discusses important tools and tactics to empower contact center staff, improve constituent experience, and get the most out of AI and ML investments.*

## **What have the ongoing upheavals of the pandemic revealed about the customer experience in state and local government?**

It's important to build an appropriate digital experience that is sensitive to users' needs and available on the communication channels they expect. However, the old ways of delivering services are not keeping up with the rapidly changing needs and expectations of residents. Many constituents were new to applying for benefits during the pandemic, and they didn't know how to go about it. When they did apply, they may not have received timely status updates. In addition, many systems could not scale to meet increased demand. Organizations today need to deliver services from wherever agents are – including at home – to anywhere constituents need them. With next-generation contact center capabilities, a constituent today can get around-the-clock support, for example, via AI-powered virtual agents that use natural language processing to provide assistance when human agents aren't available. AI also frees human agents to handle more complex and sensitive issues.

## **How can intelligent automation address contact center challenges and opportunities?**

AI enables better automation that empowers end customers through high-quality self-service. AI-powered virtual assistants and agents can make self-service channels much more effective – not just for informational requests, but also for more complex transactions like understanding eligibility or checking claim status. Intelligent automation also makes human contact center agents more effective through agent assistance, which uses AI to suggest appropriate responses or provide contextual data about a customer. In addition, agent assistance and other forms of intelligent automation can help new agents become effective faster and ultimately deliver a better constituent experience.

## **What does an intelligent, end-to-end contact center solution encompass?**

An intelligent end-to-end contact center solution integrates and incorporates AI and machine learning into all aspects of its platform to provide a frictionless user experience every step of the way. The best AI tools leverage cloud technology and data to deliver powerful support solutions and an incredible level of operational precision.

## **How does AI support remote contact center employees?**

With the acceleration of work-from-home contact centers, supervisors are no longer able to “walk the halls” to check on the performance and engagement of their agents. AI tools fill this void. For example, AI-based compliance tools monitor audit logs, voice streams and text streams for moments when an agent may have inadvertently – or intentionally – stepped outside of bounds. Anomaly models help detect these moments

and trigger alerts. AI-based assistants help new agents take on the expertise of veteran agents by listening to the voice stream and making next-best-action suggestions as agents interact with customers in their first weeks. AI-based quality management scans the interaction stream and does automatic evaluations so newer remote employees can get better faster.

## **What types of tools can make contact centers more equitable and inclusive for both callers and workers?**

AI-powered real-time translation mediates conversations between people who speak different languages. AI-powered voices allow agents who are non-verbal to type their responses, which are then converted to speech for voice-only calls.

## **Which innovations should government contact centers lean into as they pursue AI and ML?**

Virtual agents are a great place to start. They can save time for agencies and callers by automating repetitive work and assisting constituents who need help. But while AI has game-changing potential, AI systems are not perfect. Human-in-the-loop AI training can fill in the gaps that machines might miss. Using the no-code interface that is available on modern AI platforms, contact centers can easily leverage the subject matter expertise of in-house customer service experts to train and improve AI models. Organizations can also take advantage of tools that allow non-technical staff with domain or business expertise to make simple improvements. These tools reduce dependence on data scientists to program their machine learning models.



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