

Modernizing Contact Centers to Enable Remote Work



The pandemic forced government contact centers to modify how they provide services. Ivory Dugar, senior solutions consultant at Genesys, answers the equipment and workforce optimization questions that are top-of-mind for agencies that extend operations to remote agents.

How has remote work impacted government contact centers?

The need for contact center agents to provide services from home forced organizations to ask some important questions. First, do we have the right solution and connectivity in place to handle calls that are directed to agents at home; in particular, do we need to migrate to a cloud-based solution? Second, do our agents have the right equipment? Third, with agents moving from place to place, how are we going to manage our personnel from a workforce optimization perspective?

What challenges should organizations address to make remote work successful?

To ensure callers have a secure, fluid and reliable customer experience, agencies must maintain diverse channels of communication. Another challenge is ensuring that contact center agents have secure and timely access to their agency's database, intuitively orchestrated communications and sufficient bandwidth for reliable connectivity. Organizations also need to minimize the learning curve associated with introducing new endpoints such as Bluetooth-enabled headsets, softphones and web real-time communication (WebRTC), which eliminate the need for traditional desk phones and

enable workers to use their laptop for voice or digital interactions.

How can contact center modernization support remote work and improve constituent experience?

It starts with a sound, strategic methodology for migrating contact center activities from an office to agents' homes. This is where seasoned contact center business and solution consultants can provide strategic guidance for getting from point A, whether that's a premises-based or cloud-based solution, to point B, a platform solution that places contact center agents in a reliable remote environment. These conversations help agencies identify areas that might yield greater efficiencies, benefits and cost savings; create a solution roadmap; justify costs; and set performance benchmarks.

What should agencies consider before enabling contact centers for remote work?

First, security controls are critical to protect caller's credit card numbers, electronic health records and other private data. Second, agencies must consider how their state- and agency-level security practices around VPNs, remote desktop protocol (RDP), ports and firewalls affect a remote worker's endpoint in terms of access to their virtual desktop, voice traffic passing through the virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) or RDP, and bandwidth restrictions that might cause poor voice quality. Third, to ensure people with the right skills are at the right place at the right time, organizations need to automate workforce optimization. Fourth, they need to decide whether to repurpose existing devices such as SIP hard phones or procure things like Bluetooth-enabled headsets to enable

WebRTC and softphone communications. Finally, agencies must consider unified communications so remote workers can connect and communicate with back-office workers in a timely way.

What questions should organizations ask vendors when they consider a remote agent solution?

I suggest these three: 1) What would our security posture look like? Does the solution support security standards such as HIPAA, GDPR and PCI, and is the customer's data secure regardless of the communication channel — voice, chat, SMS, bots and so on? 2) Does the solution support flexible phone options — such as WebRTC, generic SIP and remote — so agents can remain connected and proficient wherever they are? 3) Does the solution support E911 (Enhanced 911)? Both Kari's Law and Ray Baum's Act require that contact centers enable agents to dial 911 without having to press or dial a prefix beforehand and provide the location of the endpoint the agent is calling from.

Many government contact centers pivoted quickly to remote work. What should they revisit now?

A lot of agencies overlooked E911 support for remote workers. That needs to be corrected. Agencies should also reconsider repurposing office-based hardware and software for employees working from home. Reusing that equipment may seem like a cost-saving strategy; however, with the availability of softphones and WebRTC, there really isn't a need to repurpose equipment as the sole method of communication but rather as an additional option for agents.

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