

blueocean
contact centers

Is It Possible to Have a Strategic Partnership with Your Contact Center?



TRUE or FALSE



True or false: your outsourced contact center provider is just another vendor. Attempting to establish a strategic partnership with your contact center is like chasing a unicorn.

It's a valid question. There are plenty of areas of your business that you outsource without a second thought. The place you order office equipment from or the cleaning crew that comes every day are important to the life of your company, but they're not really a "partner" in the full sense of the word.

When we think of partner, we think of someone who is as invested in your company's success as you are. A partner is committed to your strategic goals and is a key collaborator in helping you achieve those goals.

A partner, in fact, is willing to share risk with you for your long-term success even if it means perhaps taking a revenue hit themselves. And a partner can make decisions with a comprehensive understanding of what's important to your organization and your customers.

In that context, is it actually possible to have a strategic partnership with your contact center?

The following pages explore several myths about strategic partnerships.

MYTH # 1

Outsourcing is About Cutting Costs Not Adding Value



Yes, efficiency and cost-savings matter. Our workforce management teams and operations teams work hard to refine staffing models and improve efficiency – their expertise is essential to driving cost out of our clients’ businesses through productivity and efficiency gains. These metrics are important, but the other side of the ledger is the customer experience – and lifetime customer value.

We understand there is a business model for low value transactional work. And there are outsourced models that support that kind of requirement. But in today’s world, the conversations are focused more and more on how a contact center partner can drive that volume down (or even away) through self-serve or “Tier Zero” solutions while adding value to a client’s complex support requirements that can’t be met through self-serve options.

That’s where the strategic partnership comes into play: build a solution that positively impacts your CSat and/or NPS, maximizes customer loyalty, and drives long-term revenue while driving down expenses that don’t deliver long-term value.

When we’re deep in your systems on a daily basis, tracking customer engagement, placing orders, and solving issues, it gets easier to see where there are possible gaps in your processes, where procedures could be streamlined, or if any errors exist in your databases. In fact, some of these weaknesses could be the culprit for increasing call volume, a scenario in which we could actually profit, since contact center costs are in part dependent upon volume. We could choose to profit, or we could choose to act in your best interest and reveal the opportunity for process improvement. And that’s exactly what a strategic partner would do.

If a potential contact center outsourcer doesn’t broach the subject of process improvement, quality improvements, risk mitigation, service improvement, etc., then you can’t be sure if they’re acting in your best interest. When your procurement team is in search of a new contact center outsourcer, they must understand that a true strategic partner will always put value ahead of cost. Cost reduction cannot be a primary driver behind the way your contact center does business.

MYTH # 2

You Sacrifice Your Culture When You Outsource



Some people may claim that an outsourcer could never build the kind of culture that delivers the level of quality service you could achieve in-house. Respectfully, we disagree.

It does, however, take a very strategic partner to align their solution with your needs, brand, and culture. It may feel risky leaving your valuable customer interactions to strangers, but a strategic partner is anything but a stranger. From the moment you start the discovery process between procurement and sales, we make the effort to find out everything about your company.

Once the contract is signed, it's an intense process to establish your unique customer journey blueprint, nail down the exact hiring profile of the perfect agent to represent your brand, train those agents in your systems, and assimilate them into your culture. But it doesn't stop there. If there is one thing we've learned in 23 years in business, it's that successful relationships are built on good governance. For us that means a commitment on both sides of the client-partner relationship to invest in a formalized relationship management process that extends from daily contact to weekly status updates to monthly and quarterly business reviews. We take this so seriously, our president and the senior leadership team attend all our client QBRs. It becomes a mutual effort focused on process improvement and shared strategic vision.

At the end of the day, your customers shouldn't even realize that we're an outsourced call center. Find a contact center that is committed to sharing your vision, and you know you've found a genuinely strategic partner who is committed to helping you grow.

MYTH # 3

Outsourcing Robs You of the Connection to Your Frontline Agents



Does working with an outsourced partner rob your company of the chance to identify stars within the organization? We don't think so.

It takes time and attention, but it is completely possible to have a relationship with an outsourcer that builds a unified team from frontline agents to senior leadership on both sides. Regular site visits where you as the client can have roundtables or focus groups with your agents can be a useful strategy.

We know from experience that engagement is enhanced when agents know our clients by name and know that their experience on the frontline is heard and valued. Regular video conferencing supports the relationship between visits. And for us, our clients expect their quarterly reviews to include updates on stellar performance by agents and coaches.

In these ways, identifying stars and building careers is entirely possible. We can count four or five clients who have hired for their key positions from within our ranks. That is a true success measure, a win-win-win, for our former employees, for our employer brand, and for our client who got smart, capable, new managers with valuable experience gained while working for us, their contact center partner. That doesn't happen by accident. It happens through attention to governance, communication, and regular calibration of mutual goals.

We believe that you get out of a strategic partnership exactly what you put into it. If you want an outsourcer who operates as an extension of your own operating team, make that a priority in how you source that partner and how you participate in the relationship. If you want to hand the keys for your customer care to a call center and sit back and wait for it to work, chances are your vendor is going to fail to meet your expectations.

The Bottom Line

In short, a strategic partnership with a contact center can exist. Aiming to establish that elusive relationship is a lot less hopeless when you know you're not chasing the impossible.

We're passionate about the way we do business and the commitments we make to our clients' brands. We refuse to work with companies who want just another vendor, because a partnership is mutually beneficial; we can help each other succeed.

Let's talk strategy. Contact us today.

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