



Seven industry trends

for contact center talent

What trends can contact center leaders expect to see in 2018? In accord with the changing talent landscape and the growing importance of contact centers to the customer experience, Kelly® has noted seven significant industry trends that are expected to have an impact on contact center talent in 2018. Thanks to our continuing conversations with leaders in the industry, we're able to offer these unique insights into the contact center talent market for the upcoming year and beyond.

Multiple generations

With Generation Z, millennials, Generation X, and even baby boomers in the workforce, distinct strategies will be needed to recruit the right talent from each generation. Employers have to ensure they're providing a seamless candidate experience—and that involves tailoring recruitment efforts and using the appropriate technologies to meet the specific preferences and needs of these various generations.

For example, Gen Z and millennials want a complete mobile experience that involves social media and provides anytime, anywhere access. At the same time, Gen Xers are more interested than other generations in receiving communications about possible job openings, and baby boomers are more likely to look for employment on company-specific sites.

Technological advancements

Technological advancements will continue to have an impact on contact centers. Thanks to the ongoing rise of cloud-based platforms, it's increasingly feasible to employ home-based agents. In 2015, more than half of all contact centers already employed some telecommuters—and since Gen Z and millennials want flexible work options, this number is likely to increase considerably. Additionally, virtual contact centers provide companies with access to far greater talent pools, as agents can be located anywhere, so long as they can access the platform. This is particularly important when recruiting for hard-to-find skill sets, as well as during hiring spikes or in geographies with more saturated talent markets.

Technology is also continuously enhancing contact centers' capabilities and service levels. For example, an IT help desk can offer remote desktop control to resolve a customer's issue in a few minutes, or a cable company can run a remote diagnostic to pinpoint a problem in the connection. As a result, contact center agents today need the ability to upskill quickly as technology evolves.

Skilled, knowledgeable agents

Thanks to technologies like artificial intelligence and process automation, a growing number of low- to mid-level customer concerns can be resolved without human intervention. This means that the more complex issues are being driven to the contact centers. As such, even first-level agents possess much more advanced knowledge than they did five to 10 years ago.

In addition, with the rise of contact centers for telemedicine, engineering, and other specialized areas, there will be an increased demand for talent with sufficient expertise to provide the required industry-specific support. These individuals are more likely to be mid-career professionals with a background in the relevant field rather than entry-level talent, which means that recruiting and retaining them will require strategies that are customized to their specific candidate personas.

Onshoring and geographical proximity to customer base

The trend of onshoring will continue due to the need for cost and quality control. In addition, companies will also try to locate their contact center talent close to their customer base. Since customer experience is becoming an important brand differentiator, communication needs to be as local as possible in order for the brand to be relatable.

Geography can also play a role in terms of language, and there's a rising demand for bilingual contact center talent in certain areas. For example, a company might recruit local people who speak both English and French Canadian in order to serve customers in Quebec, Canada.

Omnichannel customer service

Today's customers expect to be able to contact companies through any medium available, whether that's by phone, email, chat, social media, or some other avenue. To deliver this omnichannel experience, companies need to recruit a range of talent with the appropriate hard and soft skills. Since each medium requires different communication skills, diverse testing will be needed to determine whether candidates have the right aptitude.

Ongoing training

Agents will need to keep up with technological advancements and changing customer expectations. This requires ongoing training that can provide the required level and quality of education—while at the same time being easily accessible. Since this can be challenging for companies, they will increasingly leverage the services of workforce providers that offer training as an outsourced business process and possess not only contact center expertise, but also the technological capabilities to deliver training remotely.

Staffing partnerships

A growing number of companies are establishing partnerships with staffing agencies and workforce solutions firms that have proven expertise in the contact center space. This kind of partnership can help advance a company's business by providing quality talent, as well as management services, training, and technology solutions. The results of a successful partnership with a staffing firm can also include significant enhancements to the customer service experience, which in turn can positively impact how both consumers and talent view a company's brand.

Do you have a trusted talent partner?

A trusted talent partner should possess an in-depth understanding of not only the acquisition and retention of contact center talent, but also the complex needs and unique characteristics of your specific industry and company. Always make sure your staffing provider has both the experience and resources in place to supply you with the quality talent or solutions that your organization needs.

We hope you find this 2018 trends update informative, and will consider Kelly as your staffing partner in the upcoming year. We would appreciate the opportunity to answer any questions you have and discuss how we can help your organization succeed.

Contact us

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