

8x8

# Contact Center Buyer's Guide

## How to choose the right contact center platform for your business

# About this guide

Identifying and deploying the ideal solution takes care and know-how. This short, comprehensive guide takes you through the key themes and concepts you should consider when selecting a cloud-based contact center, while also offering insight into the 8x8 Experience Communications Platform™, technology featured by Gartner's Magic Quadrant for Contact Center as a Service for nine years in a row.




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# A decision with long-term CX implications

In an era when customer expectations are constantly escalating it's vital to choose the right contact center solution to ensure your business retains a competitive edge. Customer service now needs to be delivered around the clock while offering the convenience and personalization that customers expect. Elevating the customer experience is not optional. It's a necessity. And delivering on these expectations requires choosing the right communications platform.

Contact center leaders understand the need to define and exceed CX targets. To meet these goals what's needed is a cloud based solution that enables omnichannel experiences on the customers channel of choice. To ensure service delivery is continuously improving you also need the ability to leverage holistic insights around the metrics that matter most for continuous improvement. Finally the solution needs to be simple to use in order to maximize productivity and minimize agent attrition.

To ensure your CX is world class it's also vital to customize your environment with the solutions that make the most sense to your business, including leveraging best of class AI-powered and third-party applications.



With the right cloud-based contact center platform you'll be ready to transform your CX into a source of competitive advantage. All while lowering costs, optimizing your IT budget, and integrating communications into other vital business applications and processes.

## Here are just some of the challenges posed by an outdated contact center infrastructure:

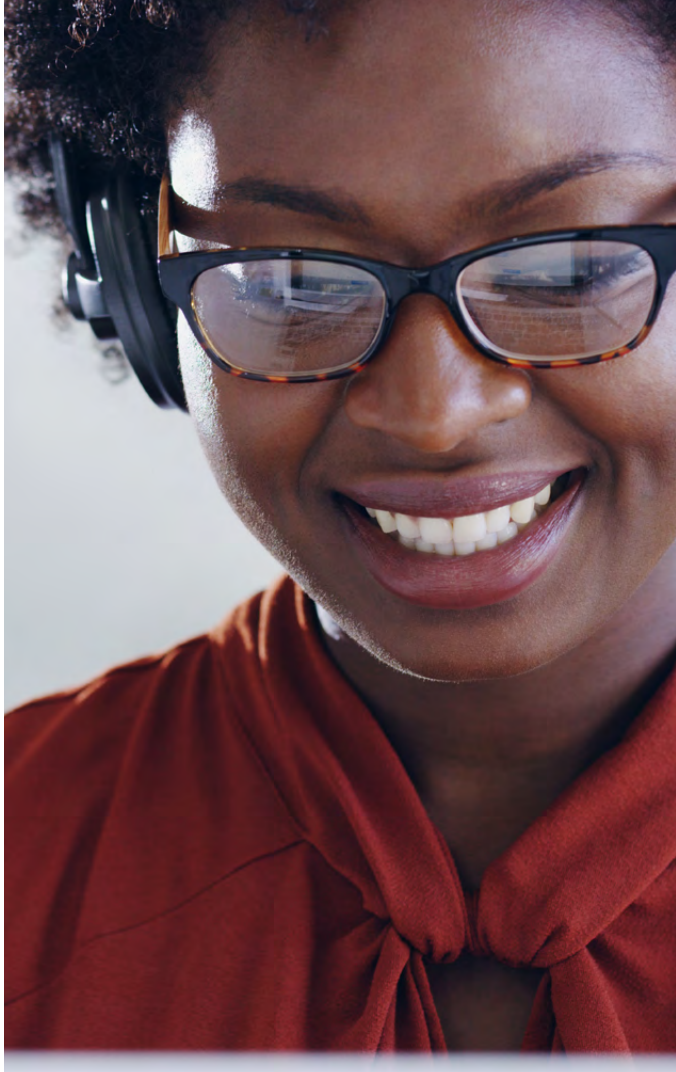
- Limited integration of the contact center with other business apps
- Impersonal customer interactions
- Complex agent desktops
- Inability to deliver service in the customer's channel of choice
- Different solutions and providers used around the business
- No global service
- Inability to capture customer journey due to disparate technology
- No self-service options
- Limited disaster recovery options
- Solutions limited to single sites
- Limited agent management tools
- Impersonal customer interactions
- Narrow reporting capabilities
- Costly maintenance and upgrades
- Limited scalability
- Difficulty enabling remote or hybrid workers
- Inflexible call flows
- Configuration and management complexity

# What should you expect from a good cloud-based contact center?

The short answer: **It depends.**

More importantly, it depends what your customers and your business demand. And as we've seen, today's businesses face rapidly-changing demands, whether due to customer trends, competitor activity, advances in technology, or any number of unforeseen factors.

The more versatile and feature-rich your contact center solution, the easier it will be to respond to challenges—all while supporting remote work, addressing compliance and security issues, and handling increased interaction volume.



## What to look for: A top-notch cloud-based contact center should offer:

### Seamless, personalized experiences

- Take advantage of the latest contact center innovations with instant upgrades
- Make all communications and collaboration tools accessible through one interface
- Integrate seamlessly with existing apps and systems (CRM suites, Microsoft Teams, etc.)
- Be easy and cost-effective to deploy
- Futureproof through a single unified platform that also delivers voice, video, team chat, and messaging APIs

### Platform resiliency

- Enable your contact center agents to operate from anywhere
- Make your agents more efficient and productive
- Consolidate, simplify, and reduce your contact center costs
- Free up your IT budget and resources
- Free you from costly on-site capital expenses

### Operational agility

- Make your business more resilient, secure, and compliant
- Make each customer engagement smoother and more rewarding
- Organize and analyze your data to transform service and productivity
- Allow you to set up new agents and locations easily
- Form a seamless, fully integrated part of any wider cloud-based contact center platform

## The 8x8 approach to contact center essentials

- 8x8 Contact Center, built on the 8x8 Experience Communications Platform, offers an omnichannel solution (voice, email, chat, SMS, social media, messaging apps) allowing you to engage with customers in their channel of choice, and unify communications across the business. Through Agent Workspace, an intuitive, easy to use interface, users can seamlessly handle and switch between channels during the same interaction if needed and engage with employees across the organization.
- We also enable you to incorporate cutting-edge unified communications features (patented award-winning voice, messaging, audio, and video meetings) that can benefit your entire workforce, not just contact center agents.
- This powerful unified system of engagement is combined with a unified system of intelligence that transforms the impact of your contact center and business data through intelligent and actionable insights and analysis.
- Future-proof your investment with secure evergreen updates at regular intervals that keep your business users safe, reduce risk, and improve operational efficiency.
- With our flexible licensing model and infinite scalability, your contact center can grow along with your business (new agents can be added on demand), allowing you to invest once and use forever.
- Thanks to a system of open APIs, 8x8 is designed to integrate fully into your existing way of operating, connecting securely to other internal systems as well as vital third-party apps and technology.
- 8x8 is quick and "capex-lite" to deploy, with little in the way of additional hardware. Our dedicated team can get you up and running in a way that suits your needs and timelines, without disruption to business as usual.
- X Series service plan users enjoy round-the-clock technical and customer support, with a dedicated account manager and regular review meetings to keep your platform running optimally for your requirements.

# Make sure you get the features your business needs

The right contact center platform will supply the features and channels that your business needs to connect with customers and deepen relationships. But it should also do much, much more.

With sophisticated data management and analytics, for example, you can provide more context-rich interactions that make customers feel recognized and valued. Flexibility is also key: your solution should enable you to access new channels and features easily as soon as your business needs them.
A good cloud-based contact center should also be able to integrate with the third party solution of your choice, such as: AI-powered chat bots and Agent Assist, Workforce Engagement Management solutions, and CRM applications.

Look for a cloud-based contact center that's highly customizable, with a range of service packages that you can choose from, according to the needs of your organization and in a way that's cost-effective for you. Simple per-user billing will allow you to switch an employee from one package to another as required.

To keep your employee experience as consistent as your customer experience, it's also worth checking that your supplier provides desktop and smart apps for all employees (not just contact center teams). Some providers might charge extra for this, so watch out.

## The 8x8 approach to features and functionality

All 8x8 Contact Center plans provide users with a single, intuitive interface, ensuring maximum mobility.

8x8 Experience Communications Platform plans include:

### The Voice-focused Contact Center

The X6 package gives your agents sophisticated tools to manage and enhance customer interactions that are mainly voice-based. It also offers key unified communications functionality like video meetings and messaging to maximize internal collaboration, while integrating seamlessly with common customer relationship management (CRM) applications.

### The Omnichannel Contact Center Experience

This package takes the features of X6 and extends the agent interface to include digital channel customer access. It also includes support for 8x8 APIs and CRM integrations for the most-used platforms. Agents with X7 can not only respond to multiple incoming digital channels such as web-chat, email, messaging, SMS, and social media, they can also see customer data via pop-ups for supported CRM systems. Additionally, agents can help customers visually with the ability to co-browse, and even elevate customers to video interactions.

### The AI-powered Contact Center

X8 is designed to help you transform customer engagement with the power of sophisticated AI, this package comes complete with a full suite of analytics, integrations, and cutting-edge functionality like co-browse, quality management, interaction analytics, and outbound predictive dialing.

# Make sure every mode of communication truly delivers

Not all cloud-based contact centers are created equal. With the bar for keeping both customers and employees happy constantly being raised, you need a potent combination of omnichannel contact center capabilities, usability and flexibility to deliver the rapid, personalized service customers expect.

The best contact center solutions will offer a full feature set that includes applications such as: omnichannel routing of live channels, intuitive interfaces, AI-powered chatbots, and workforce engagement management applications. They will also allow contact center agents to connect and collaborate easily with subject matter experts across the organization using presence capabilities to solve even the most complex customer problems in real time.

The 8x8 Experience Communications Platform is a robust and secure cloud-native solution built to fully enable the contact center agents, supervisors, as well as subject matter experts and knowledge workers, regardless of where they work. All functionality is accessible through a single web-based interface, delivering a unified experience across devices and locations.



Leveraging our global data centers, as well as Amazon and Oracle's public cloud technology, 8x8 is able to house your data and solution with absolute security and compliance aligned to your business requirements. Finally, 8x8 provides full geo-redundancy and disaster recovery capabilities ensuring that no matter what the future brings, you are always able to deliver a differentiated experience to your customers.

## The 8x8 approach to business continuity

### Voice and telephony

You should expect nothing less than crystal-clear sound quality and iron-clad reliability from your voice contact service. But it should also facilitate collaboration for a mobile or geographically dispersed workforce.

Customers should also enjoy a quick connection to an agent with the power to resolve their issue, with a variety of features to manage call waiting and give customers a choice as to whether they wait, leave a message, or request a call-back.

**The 8x8 Experience Communications Platform includes:**

- HD-quality voice, backed by the industry's first 99.999% uptime SLA across an integrated cloud UCaaS and CCaaS solution
- Global free calling zones
- Geo-routing
- High availability
- Skills-based inbound voice
- Auto dialer
- Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and Virtual Agent for voice and digital channels
- Secure voice calls (TLS & SRTP)
- Expert Connect—connecting agents to expert colleagues
- Queued call-back, web call-back
- Composed experiences tailoring 8x8's solution to specific roles

**Context-rich customer engagement**

Every customer has unique preferences for how to engage with your business. It pays to offer a full choice of digital engagement channels, while giving each agent instant, intuitive access to all them, as well as the ability to switch between them at will.

One key to a great experience is making each customer feel known, recognized, and valued. With real-time on-screen access to their data and transaction history across all channels, your agents can provide the context-rich, joined-up experience every customer craves.

**Solutions for agent empowerment and elevated CX**

- Agent Workspace is a unified interface leveraging universally familiar, friendly, and intuitive design principles making it simple to use out of the box. Agent Workspace enables seamless handling of voice, email, chat, SMS, social media, and messaging apps, through streamlined navigation and adaptive workflows.
- Supervisor Workspace is a personalized, performance-centric workspace with the tools, intelligence, and insights contact center leaders need to ensure their teams deliver excellent customer experiences. Supervisor Workspace provides a single pane of glass for monitoring and managing the performance of agents and the overall efficiency of the contact center.
- Holistic reporting and analytics across all channels to aggregate and visualize information to deliver a consumable, single source of truth
- A simple, graphical interface for admins to build interactive responses and chat routing based on rules, times, or agent skills
- Flexible omnichannel routing or assignment options for any customer inquiry.

# Don't let valuable data go to waste

High-performance businesses lead the way in generating value from advanced analytics. If you're serious about optimizing customer experience, then data is your friend.

To give you the edge you need, your contact center platform should be capable of consolidating data from across your customer engagement activity and presenting it in the form of various actionable performance metrics.

## The 8x8 approach to contact center insights and analytics

It's hard to make timely data-driven decisions when you have to aggregate information from multiple communications tools. 8x8 provides a single platform that offers clear, consolidated analytics across all your cloud communications, so you can focus on taking action based on the insight you receive.

We offer a potent combination of performance analytics and management tools that will help you monitor customer trends and identify areas where coaching or other optimization is needed. From Supervisor Workspace, a personalized interface that consolidates high level trends and data from across the contact center platform, to Analytics for Contact Center which provides a deep dive into all contact center related data.



**8x8 Experience Communications Platform includes:**

- Personalized visibility with Supervisor Workspace
- Customer journey analytics
- Customizable, real-time dashboards
- Historical reporting across all channels
- Graphical IVR metrics and path analysis
- Performance insights available at agent and team levels
- Post-call survey insights
- Trend and sentiment analysis
- Conversation highlights with annotation tools
- Call quality trends
- Campaign monitoring
- Topic mapping and drill-down visualizations
- Quality Management tools for improving agent performance

# Look for an open platform with native business app integration

Deploying a modern contact center shouldn't mean changing what works for your business or giving up apps and systems that already serve you well. Given the rise in popularity of global apps like Microsoft Teams, your new system should be compatible with vital third-party apps in a way that enhances their effectiveness within your business.

## The 8x8 Approach to Integration

- The 8x8 set of open APIs enable huge flexibility in adapting your new system to work with your wider processes and applications
- We offer pre-built integrations with the most popular CRM and productivity applications such Salesforce, Microsoft Dynamics and Zendesk. If you use it, we probably integrate with it.
- 8x8 Contact Center is included in Microsoft's Connected Contact Center for Teams Certification program integrating seamlessly with 8x8 Voice for Teams' direct routing capabilities



# Accept no compromise on security, business continuity, and compliance

Protecting customer data—as well as your own—is vital to your reputation and ongoing success. Don't settle for a new contact center solution that doesn't maintain or enhance system security.

That's where tools like 8x8 Secure Pay can enable your contact center to simply and securely handle payment authorizations as required to meet PCI DSS Level 1 compliance.

When it comes to system reliability, high availability is essential. With a platform-wide 99.999% SLA covering both UC and CC, 8x8 provides the reliability, security, and scalability required to support mission critical communications for world-class organizations.

You may also need to consider how your call/screen recording and storage adheres to regulatory requirements. Enjoy peace of mind, knowing all recordings are encrypted and secure information redacted as needed, protecting customer information.



## The 8x8 approach to security and compliance

8x8 has documented its minimum security standards and provides initial and ongoing OWASP principles training to ensure staff practice secure coding. The 8x8 SDLC includes multiple stages of review to ensure this is carried out, including architectural reviews, engineering peer reviews, automated tools, and reviews by security staff. The internal security team continuously operates black and white box penetration testing, and external penetration testing firms are also brought in on a regular basis. 8x8 utilizes a bug bounty responsible disclosure process and works with security researchers from around the globe.

Security review and testing occurs before entering production. Any security issues found pre-production are remedied. Additional testing is run against production systems (to cover systems which may be unchanged for longer periods of time where vulnerabilities are found by new tests being included into penetration tools). And 8x8 applies vendor recommended patches in its standard maintenance cycles.



## 8x8 Security and Compliance Certifications

8x8 invites independent third-parties and federal auditors to verify and attest to 8x8's security processes and status, evidenced by a range of achievements.

- FCC Consumer Proprietary Network Information (CPNI) compliance
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compatibility
- National Institute of Standards and Technology —NIST 800-53 R4
- Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) compatibility
- Standard Contractual Clauses (SCC) for data transfers between EU and non-EU countries.
- ISO 27001:2013, ISO 9001:2015, and ISO 14001:2015 certified
- Certified PCI-DSS 3.2.1 SAQ-D Solution Provider Data-in-motion encryption with Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) over Transport Layer Security (TLS) and Secure Real-time Transport Protocol (SRTP)
- One of the first cloud computing companies to comply with GDPR
- UK Government G-Cloud Supplier
- UK Government Cyber Essentials certificate of assurance
- HITRUST Certification
- SOC 2 Type 2 Certification
- CSA Cyber Trust mark (Advocate Level) certified

# You deserve a clear, detailed, custom deployment

Every contact center is different, and you should expect your solution provider to help design your system, plan your roll-out, and embed enhancements. This should be driven by a deep understanding of the role the system will play in your wider, evolving business vision.

And once your cloud-based contact center is deployed, it may require some additional configuration support, call queue set-up, routing based on digital channel or agent skills and/or assignment of agents as your business evolves. 8x8 Service Management for Contact Center allows your team to focus on the customers while an assigned 8x8 systems expert handles all your administration and user management needs.

## The 8x8 approach to deployment

8x8 provides the following deployment support:

- A choice of deployment packages designed for the unique demands of multi-site businesses
- Four main options: managed, tailored, customized, or blended deployment, refined over thousands of rollouts
- Our best-practice deployment approach includes
  - End-to-end design, configuration, testing, and sign-off by you
  - Full support throughout the deployment, transitioning to ongoing business-as-usual support once the solution is embedded
  - Full training for administrators and end-users as needed
  - Number porting planned and executed

# Find a provider ready to invest in you with world-class support

Now more than ever, effective communications mean effective business. This is true for customer engagement and customer experience, as well as the productivity, efficiency, morale, and empowerment of your people.

With this in mind, you need a contact center provider that's committed to ensuring the ongoing performance of your system. That means round-the-clock support to ensure all aspects of your platform—and your business—operate at their full potential.

## The 8x8 approach to customer support

8x8 specialists constantly monitor our network, making proactive adjustments to ensure consistent voice quality and service availability. Meanwhile, a chain of global support teams provide "follow-the-sun" support for high-impact issues. All of this is backed up by our service level agreements for voice quality, system uptime, and response time.



**The 8x8 Experience Communications Platform provides:**

- Support options to meet your every need 24/7/365 via phone, chat, or through your client portal. 8x8 goes beyond to provide whatever level of support your business needs, up to and including complete service management for your contact center.

- More than just 24/7 first line support—8x8's global offices are supported by its remote workforce to cover all time zones. No matter when you call, 8x8 has all the resources you need to support you.

- Automatic upgrades to ensure you always have the latest version of our technology

- A high availability platform with a 99.999% uptime SLA commitment

- All customers have access to the 8x8 Knowledge Base for the latest product capabilities and best practices

- A range of training courses to help your people get the very best from 8x8 (includes administrator/configuration training, advanced topics and troubleshooting, and Tier 1 support processes)

# Communications for the Customer Obsessed

The companies that get ahead today are truly customer-obsessed. Business leaders know they can't settle for good-enough customer experience or just-okay employee engagement scores. To go above and beyond, they know they need a communications platform built for them. One that unites contact center, voice, video, chat, and SMS and delivers it with the reliability, integration, and expert services only a customer-obsessed company can provide.

At 8x8, we know that it takes great experiences to make new connections, to bring teams together, and to turn prospects into loyal customers. Communications for the customer-obsessed means that we believe in our obligation to provide incredible communications experiences, every time.



Read more here

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