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Keep Your Customer Service Up When the World Goes Down

Business Continuity for Contact Centers

Expect the Unexpected

Your contact center is mission critical to your business. Any downtime directly impacts your bottom line and, more importantly, affects your customers' ability to reach out to your company. When disruption happens, customers need to be able to connect with you.

You need the ability to deploy and support your workforce in any location with the ease of a laptop and internet connection, scale your team and call volume at a moment's notice, and assure your customers, teams, and partners that business continues despite the disruption.

Companies who do this well are those who use cloud-based solutions, have a solid business continuity plan, and have prepared their employees to respond to disruption with calm confidence.

Whether it occurs due to power outages, natural disasters, fires, pandemics, sudden surges in call volume, or any other situation out of your control, disruption happens without warning and can require you to quickly pivot to continuity response mode. Keeping your employees safe is your first priority, and supporting your customers is next.

Here's how to keep your contact center up when the world goes down.

Plan for Disruption

The old adage that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" still holds true when it comes to preparing for the unexpected. And while planning for the unexpected disruption can feel like a boring obligation, it's absolutely critical for your business and can be the difference between continuing to support your customers or losing them to a better prepared competitor when disaster strikes.

Your business continuity plan needs to encompass detailed, actionable directions and pre-made decisions about what to do when a crisis happens. It should cover:

- Chain of command for implementing the plan and throughout the duration of the crisis
- Prepared internal and external communications to activate (emails, texts, social, web content, and messages from your CEO)
- Operational adaptations, including where agents work, what technology they will use, scheduling, scaling procedures, reporting, and troubleshooting
- Which technology resources to use during the response implementation
- Plans for providing added emotional support to agents and managers during the crisis

In a crisis, remember that your objective is to take care of your employees first and your customers second. This may sound counter-intuitive, but only when your employees feel calm and cared for will they be able to truly deliver exceptional customer care during a crisis.

In addition to developing a documented plan and training, planning for disruption also includes addressing the technology that will enable work-from-anywhere deployments and facilitate connected communications. The only way to do this is through cloud-based technology.

Deploy Cloud Technology

If your contact center is still on premises, you should be nervous. On premises operations cannot facilitate work-from-anywhere flexibility as they require hardware tied to your server. Disruption quickly brings the flaws of on premises systems to light – especially its inability to scale, integrate, and minimize downtime when agents can't work from the office. In a localized event, you may be able to transfer calls to another location, but what about when none of your agents can get to your facility?

Cloud is designed to be available anytime, anywhere. Cloud contact centers enable agents to login from any computer with an internet connection and a headset. They can work from home or from an alternate location at a moment's notice. Customers will experience the same level of care as agents will have all of the tools and resources they normally have right from their devices. Customers won't even know that agents aren't in the office as they will continue to experience the same high-quality service.

But business continuity is just one of the advantages of a cloud contact center. The cloud's full array of benefits makes it the best solution for agile businesses, including being able to:

- Easily integrate with your customer relationship management (CRM), enterprise resource planning (ERP), and unified communications (UC) systems to deliver an extraordinary customer experience
- Quickly scale to manage spikes in call volume
- Automatically update systems so you're not dependent on IT resources
- Easily manage scheduling, coaching, and training with workforce optimization (WFO) options
- Reduce the cost of managing and maintaining IT systems

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Unless you move to the cloud, you will not be able to ensure a seamless customer experience when disruption happens, and you will find it nearly impossible to compete with brands that leverage the cloud. In addition, your ability to hire high-performing agents is contingent on giving them a modern, seamless software experience that gets technology out of the way and frees them to deliver a more human customer experience.

With a cloud contact center in place, your employees have the tools they need to keep working from anywhere. But they need to be equipped with business continuity training to deliver exceptional service when times are uncertain.

Equip Your Agents

Your employees trust you when things are going well. When disruption happens, the first thing they worry about is their job security and how they will take care of their families. They need to know you will do the right thing: take care of them first. Employers that protect their employees during a crisis generate a sense of loyalty that cannot be undone.

Your business continuity plan needs to include how the business will manage keeping people employed during the crisis, and what will be cut before jobs are. Make sure you initiate a timeframe where all jobs are secure until a reassessment of the economic impact can take place and further decisions made. When your agents know they are safe, they can focus on finding the inner resources they need to continue to address customers who will be stressed, upset, or worried.

Every contact center employee needs to be trained on the business continuity plan. They should know what to expect and what is expected of them in the event of a crisis. Review the plan at least annually with all employees. While it may seem like a major undertaking, rehearsing crisis response mode by having agents work from home for one or more days can be a worthwhile undertaking, and can help you refine your plan.

Aside from being trained on the plan and being enabled by a cloud contact center, agents also need:

- Cloud-based communications platforms to use
- Clear communications from their team leaders without unnecessary meetings
- The understanding that a crisis impacts the agents too, and all but essential customer care work should be minimized to the degree it can be
- Emotional support and encouragement
- Trust that they will be motivated to be productive from a remote location
- Compassionate understanding and connection

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Five9 Keeps You Connected

The Five9 Intelligent Cloud Contact Center is the platform of choice for cloud contact centers and for business continuity when the unexpected inevitably happens. It enables you to transition your workforce to any location around the world, including employees' homes, and seamlessly integrates with the other critical systems you rely on to ensure your business operates optimally and delivers the type of service experiences your customers expect and deserve.

Your employees will have the tools they need to easily scale up service, work from anywhere for as long as required (or as a permanent remote business model), and keep customers connected during any crisis.
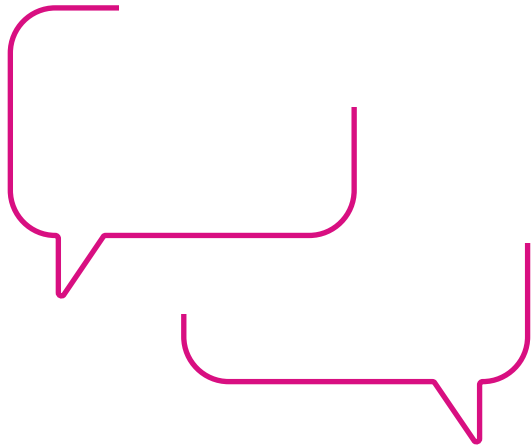
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About Five9

Five9 is a leading provider of cloud contact center solutions, bringing the power of the cloud to more than 2,000 customers worldwide and facilitating more than five billion call minutes annually. Five9 helps contact centers increase productivity, boost revenue, and create customer loyalty and trust.

About Online Business Systems

Founded in 1986, Online Business Systems is a leading Digital Transformation and Cybersecurity consultancy. We help enterprise Clients by designing improved business processes enabled with secure information systems. Our unsurpassed delivery, our people, and the Online culture of loyalty, trust and commitment to mutual success set us apart.

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