



8x8, Inc.



## eGuide: 3 Ways Your Call Center Choice Can Make or Break Your CRM Investment

## Three Ways Your Call Center Choice Can Make or Break Your CRM Investment



You’ve already got the best-in-class CRM software solution for your business, so you understand how important it is to manage customer relationships effectively. But if you’re also considering contact center software, your next choice could make the difference between a dynamic duo that delivers on the promise of powerful synergy, and a combination that costs more and does less than you thought.

How do you make the right decision for *your* organization? In this eGuide, we discuss important questions that you should ask call center solution providers, so you can make the best possible contact center choice for your organization.

### 1. Support for Multiple Communications Channels

Does your call center support multiple communications channels such as email, chat and phone calls?

Customers today expect to be able to communicate with businesses in the way *they* want to communicate.

While a traditional phone call is still the most common means of communications between customers and businesses, customers have become accustomed to the ability to communicate through multiple channels, including voice, email and chat. But not

all call center software handles all these channels – or integrates them well.

Indeed, the true differentiator between a traditional “call center” and a “contact center” is that contact centers offer several options, or channels, of communications. Call centers usually offer phone service alone.

**What to avoid**—To remain competitive, and continue to drive customer satisfaction, your business needs to communicate with your customers in whatever channels they want to use. Shy away from one-trick pony systems that only allow phone communications. Also, avoid products that include other channels but don’t do a good job of helping you integrate and manage customer communications across those channels.

**What to look for**—The right contact center solution should integrate tightly with your CRM solution and add value to it. Your contact center software should be able to capture all email, chat and standard telephony interactions for linking to the customer records database. This not only ensures continuity in all interactions, but it gives the CRM database more information to use in constructing a better picture of your customers’ behavior.





Multimedia channel options also open up the possibility of routing customer interactions to agents of different skill sets, experience levels and geographical locations. Maybe some of your support people are better at email than they are on a live call. Or maybe some salespeople are better at selling to your higher-end customers. With skills-based routing, you can make sure that customers interact with the best possible person available to handle the issue.

Robust reporting capabilities, both real-time and historical, associated with multimedia communications, can also aid you in determining which customers prefer each method of communication, and let you staff accordingly.

## 2. Native CRM Software Support

Does the contact center solution provide native support for your CRM software? If not, you might have the added expense of extra consulting hours or third-party software.

Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) is the key technology that integrates your CRM solution with the telephony and other customer contact features associated with a contact center. It's also the part that delivers the relevant customer account and profile detail to the agent. This data delivery is also called "Screen Pop," because if it's working right, it pops open a window on the agent's desktop containing the customer data. Bad CTI can be expensive.

**What to avoid**—If the salesperson tells you you'll need a third-party solution to achieve integration, it means additional complexity and potential expense in selecting, implementing, managing and maintaining yet another software product. In some cases, you might even need a separate hardware solution.

For example, even new version upgrades, bug fixes and changes to third-party software will have to be coordinated and tightly managed. That's because it's quite common to accidentally introduce incompatibilities that adversely affect feature functionality, ultimately worsening the overall customer/agent experience.

**What to look for**—If the contact center solution provider supports CTI integration "natively" or "out of the box," it means that the contact center provider has taken on the task of managing complexity for you. You can expect to rely on the contact center solution provider to handle the initial integration and to keep on top of new third-party requirements so that your CRM software continues to work with your contact center to get great results.

## 3. Eliminate Maintenance Outages

What happens to contact center operations during software maintenance and upgrades? Does the "cloud-based" call center software provider's downtime result in service outages for your business?

**What to avoid**—As with CRM software, contact center software requires regular bug fixes, maintenance and feature upgrades. Many contact and call center providers schedule regular and very frequent "downtime" windows for this same purpose, and sometimes these windows are hours long, and occur many times per month. While these upgrades are important to keeping your contact center running smoothly and give you the latest features, the downtime associated with this effort negatively impacts your customer's ability to contact your business, and adds additional complexity in managing staffing schedules.

Many contact center providers include SLAs (Service Level Agreements) that offer rebates for unscheduled downtime.



But most SLAs do not reflect total downtime because scheduled maintenance is usually excluded from this calculation. Also, contact center vendors that have regularly scheduled downtime probably do not have a truly resilient cloud-based solution.

**What to look for**—A real cloud-based service (delivered over the Internet) should have an infrastructure where components can be swapped out or exchanged without long scheduled service outages. Responsible cloud-based contact center service providers can easily upgrade and test new software on separate environments at their facility, while continuing to provide uninterrupted service to their customers.

This type of “true-cloud” infrastructure also allows for elastic scaling up and down without service interruption. You shouldn’t have to even know when upgrades are happening; the first indication you should get is when something works better or faster.

**About 8x8**

8x8, Inc. is a publicly-traded (Nasdaq: EGHT), industry-leading cloud communications service provider. 8x8 provides over 30,000 businesses of all sizes with the industry’s most innovative and reliable IP telephony and business communications offerings.

The 8x8 Virtual Contact Center is a true cloud-based service offering that resides in Tier 1 data centers worldwide, with a fully redundant architecture and 24/7 network monitoring. 8x8 pioneered and patented Advanced Virtual Tenant Architecture (AVTA) which is the foundation that allows for systems maintenance and upgrades without Contact Center business interruptions.

As a 100% cloud-based service, the 8x8 Virtual Contact Center requires no additional software to be downloaded or maintained, and can be accessed from anywhere that a web browser and phone or headset is available. It also includes a robust and full-featured multimedia contact channel platform, with options for email, chat and voice communications.

To see how to get faster, better, more reliable contact center software, delivered hassle-free over the cloud, visit [8x8.com/ContactCenter](http://8x8.com/ContactCenter).

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**To learn more, call 1.866.913.7684 or visit [8x8.com/ContactCenter](http://8x8.com/ContactCenter)**

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