

# POWER UP YOUR CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS:

An SMB Buyer's Guide to  
Cloud-Based Contact Centers



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# What Is a Cloud-Based Contact Center?

Powering your team with cloud-based contact center tools can help them close more sales, improve customer service and gain productivity. It can also cut costs. This buyer's guide will help you understand how to choose the cloud contact center that can best meet the needs of your small or midsized business.

## The following pages will cover:

- The range of features available in cloud-based contact centers
- How cloud contact centers help SMBs succeed
- How to choose the right contact center for your company

Cloud-based contact centers provide a suite of powerful communications tools that enable sales and customer service teams to work more productively, handle calls more efficiently and improve customer engagement. They equip organizations with the latest contact center technology, allowing them to forgo specialized equipment on site.

When you use a cloud-based contact center, there's no investment in infrastructure, and operations are

the responsibility of the service provider. You can begin using it within days, rather than months. This ease of adoption all flows from the fact that you simply access the technology via the Internet, rather than installing hardware and software.

## Cloud-based contact centers offer:

- **Access to advanced features**  
This includes intelligent call routing, customizable interactive voice response and integration with CRM and help desk tools.
- **Minimal technical investment**  
The service provider hosts the service and oversees the maintenance and upgrades of all related hardware and infrastructure. Employees simply log in via the web to use the service.
- **Scalability as demand increases**  
Additional capacity is instantly available when needed, allowing you to ramp up operations easily. You pay only for what you use, making access to highly sophisticated capabilities affordable for even very small teams.



## How a Cloud-Based Contact Center Helps SMBs

The right cloud-based contact center solution can help drive revenue and lower costs for smaller companies. Powerful, intuitive features enable employees to work toward sales more efficiently and provide better, faster customer service. More sales and better service can translate to revenue growth for your business, while improved efficiency lowers costs.

**Consider these five specific ways a cloud-based contact center solution can help your company:**

**1. Increased productivity.** Cloud contact center technology replaces manual dialing with automatic calling and can even filter out answering machines and inactive lines. This means your team spends more time talking with customers, and less time dialing. You can also determine the most appropriate routing for incoming calls, so that customers reach the right person faster — allowing all service staff to make the best use of their time.

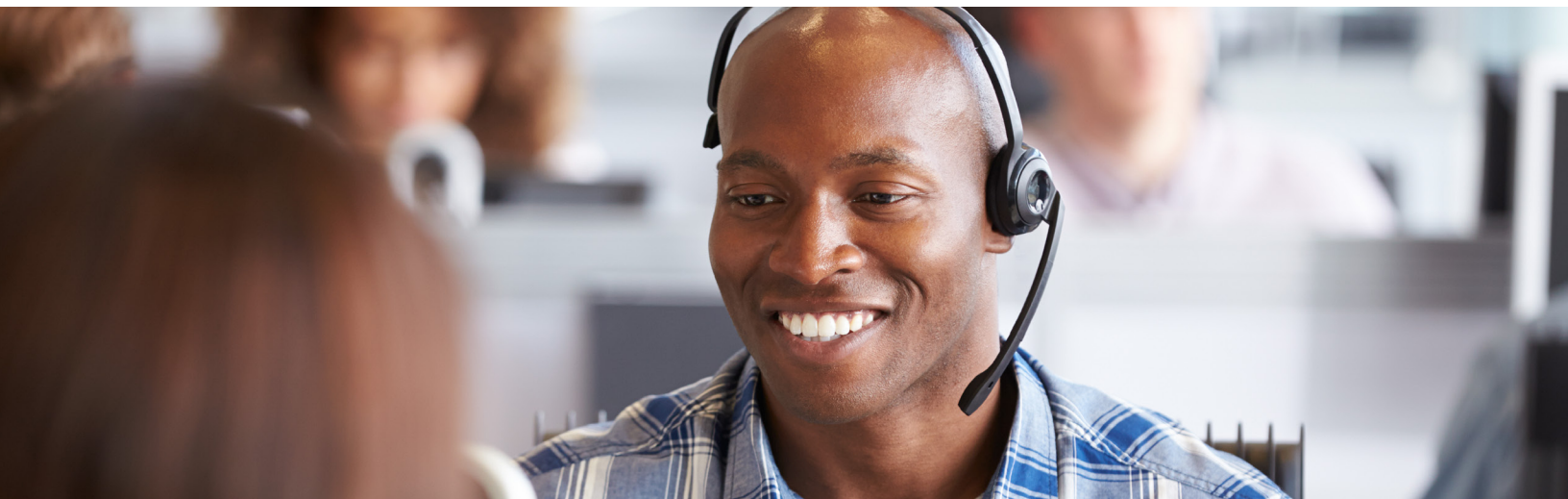
**2. Better customer experience.** Since cloud-based contact centers can help route calls to the right person or team, it becomes faster and easier to satisfy customer needs. Choosing a system that integrates with customer relationship management and help desk tools will give your team members access to information that allows them to provide better service and quickly resolve problems. Some solutions also let you monitor and record calls to help ensure a smooth experience and identify employee training needs. Other customer-friendly features include allowing customers to request a call back instead of waiting on hold until a team member is available.

**3. More effective sales.** Connecting with prospects quickly and efficiently can mean the difference between success and failure. Cloud contact centers automate dialing so that you can avoid voicemail, busy signals or gaps between calls. Moreover, easy access to customer information and contact histories means your team is better

equipped to capitalize on sales opportunities. Spending more time on productive calls and being able to route customers more efficiently may also help boost sales. The analytics tools available through some contact center solutions provide insights into individual contributors' performance, which can help you manage staff more effectively.

**4. Streamlined collections.** By automating the dialing process and reducing downtime, cloud-based contact centers enable employees to reach more customers in less time, maximizing the odds of collecting owed funds. In addition, the real-time analytics that cloud-based centers provide can help you identify optimal times to place calls. Many cloud-based contact solutions also include customizable interactive voice response tools that can simplify the process of taking payments. You can upload recorded instructions to guide callers through your system, collect and store key presses from customers and repeat back information customers have provided.

**5. Lower costs.** Cloud-based contact center services let you forgo the costs of buying and maintaining contact center hardware and instead, pay a low monthly fee based on what you use. With no equipment on your premises, there's no need to budget for repairs or upgrades. Set up is quick, allowing you to start seeing payback right away. As your business grows or your needs increase, you can easily add users from a web-based interface.





## 8 Features to Look For in a Cloud Contact Center

Cloud-based contact center solutions vary widely in terms of the features they offer. Review the following contact center options to determine which ones would help your business most.

### **1. Inbound and outbound calling**

The cloud contact center you choose should allow your team to efficiently make calls and streamline the process of fielding incoming calls. Look for a solution that includes an intuitive, web-based interface for placing, receiving and transferring calls and that offers automatic dialing. It should also provide customizable routing options for inbound calls.

### **2. Multiple dialing modes**

A cloud-based contact center solution should let your team make calls in the way that best meets your business objectives. For example, if maximizing call volume is key, consider a service that provides the option of dialing ahead and screening for no-answers, so that employees can potentially speak with more customers. Or, if it's more important for your team

members to review customer details and notes of previous interactions before they place calls, look for a service that allows you to pull in this information so they can prepare.

### **3. Customizable interactive voice response (IVR)**

The cloud contact center you choose should allow customers to connect with the information or assistance they need quickly and easily. Look for flexible, user-friendly tools for routing incoming calls, such as drag-and-drop tools for building custom IVR systems that let you create a sequence of steps for callers to follow. Your service should let you upload custom audio messages to help guide customers through your system and easily capture input via voice or key press.

### **4. CRM and help desk integration**

A solution that integrates with your customer relationship management (CRM) software and help desk tools can give your team up-to-date information when they talk to customers. Integration with help

desk software can make it easier to create support tickets and assign them to the person who's best able to assist.

### **5. Ease of setup and use**

A solution that requires no in-house tech support and can be set up quickly will allow your operations to continue with minimal disruption. It should be easy to configure — for example, letting you easily import customer contact information and grant specific levels of access to different employees and teams. It should provide an intuitive interface for making, receiving and transferring calls, so that employees without previous contact center experience can get up to speed quickly. The service should also scale automatically to accommodate your business as it grows or as you need to increase capacity during busy periods.

### **6. Real-time reporting and analytics**

While many contact center solutions include analytics capabilities, choosing one that provides them in real time can allow you to make on-the-spot adjustments that improve customer satisfaction and results. For example, there may be times when you want to see how many employees are on calls and how long customer wait times are, so you can reallocate staff as needed. Drilling into this data can help you discover patterns and trends and then make better-informed decisions.

### **7. Call recording and monitoring**

Your cloud contact center should give you the ability to monitor the customer experience by allowing you to record or listen to calls. Employees should be able to pause recordings when they're taking customer payments or sensitive information and resume recording once they're finished. The service should allow you to monitor calls as they happen and jump in to provide additional support if needed. Saved recordings should be easy to search and access for training and development purposes.

### **8. Flexible pricing options**

Look for a solution that is priced in a way that makes sense for your business needs. For example, if the number of calls you make and receive fluctuates, explore services that allow you to pay as you go. If your call volume is more predictable, consider a service with a monthly cost that includes a set number of phone minutes. Whatever type of plan you choose, be sure it includes the other features you may need, such as interactive voice response, analytics and storage for call recordings.

#### Look for:

- ✓ Web-interface for call management
- ✓ Flexible dialing modes
- ✓ Customizable call routing
- ✓ Ease of integration with other systems
- ✓ Scalability as you grow
- ✓ Real-time analytics
- ✓ Call monitoring
- ✓ Stop and start recording
- ✓ Pricing to meet your needs

# The 8x8 Difference

Companies around the world turn to 8x8 for a secure cloud communications solution that quickly and seamlessly connect teams with each other, their customers and the information they need. With its unified communications and state-of-the-art features, 8x8 provides small and mid-sized businesses (SMBs) with the same powerful communications tools as their larger counterparts.

8x8 ContactNow is an easy-to-use, full-featured contact center solution tailored to the needs of small and mid-sized businesses. Built on a scalable cloud platform, ContactNow offers easy installation and configuration, along with flexible payment options to suit your needs and budget.

## Key features include:

- **Automatic dialing options** that allow agents to avoid voicemail, busy signals or inactive lines, helping to maximize talk time
- **Inbound calling capabilities** that enhance employee productivity and ensure a smooth customer experience
- **Intuitive setup and configuration** that allows you to be up and running within minutes
- **Seamless integration** with customer relationship management and help desk software
- **Real-time analytics** that allow you to make quick adjustments to how calls are handled, along with the ability to monitor contact center performance remotely
- **Pricing plans** to suit your needs and budget, including pay-as-you-go and monthly options

Ready to learn more? Call 1-855-202-5198 or visit [www.8x8.com/ContactNow](http://www.8x8.com/ContactNow).

