



Checklist:

10 Steps to Recession-Proofing Your Contact Center



Introduction

Extended periods of economic uncertainty are inherently speculative. In 2022, inflation climbed to 8%, the highest in 40 years. GDP [contracted](#) by -1.4% in Q1, and was forecasted to be only 2.3% for the year. Meanwhile, a Bloomberg [survey](#) estimated a 30% chance of a recession in the calendar year, up from 15% in previous data.

For contact center leaders, it's often wasted energy to try to nail down if and when a recession will happen, how long it will last, and when things might rebound. Instead, contact center leaders should focus on protecting against uncertainty while securing future success with these 10 best practices in mind:



1. Identify long-term priorities in a vacuum

Recessions don't last forever. Contact center leaders who remain focused on customer-centric priorities, regardless of the economic environment, will help protect their brands' competitiveness for the long haul. Digital transformation, for example, is one priority [experts say](#) that can "help management better understand their business, how the recession is affecting it, and where there's potential for operational improvements."



2. Analyze gaps in the customer journey

Before forming a holistic recession strategy, unpack your customer journey and identify actionable weak spots. What are your least effective channels? How do your customers place orders, submit claims, or update information? What call flows lead to the highest abandonment rates? Take specific note of customer touchpoints that lead to the weakest results. These will be your most valuable focus areas.



3. Drive loyalty by improving CX

76% of consumers say a poor customer experience [negatively impacts](#) their perception of a brand and one in three say it affects loyalty. On the other hand, increasing customer retention rates by 5% can [increase profits](#) by 25% to 95% and grow revenues even faster. After identifying gaps in a customer journey, contact centers should look to improve existing experiences for even the most loyal customers. This step can help create brand evangelists and boost loyalty even if customers become more selective with their spending.





4. Increase reach with omnichannel

9 out of 10 consumers want an [omnichannel experience](#) with seamless service between communication channels and 89% of customers are retained when they receive it. Consistent omnichannel experiences not only make it more convenient for customers to get their issues resolved, but also drive greater efficiency with features like SMS forms, which can capture information faster and drive down average handle times.



5. Increase agent retention

Following the pandemic, 96% of agents felt [acutely stressed](#) at least once a week. Almost half cited 'too many calls' as their biggest challenge. Contact center managers know how hard it is to hire and retain talented agents today, but increasing agent engagement is a proven method of retention. Look to invest in solutions that can offload the repetitive, tier-1 calls that flood agents, and enable them to focus on requests that require empathy and creativity.



6. Scale service with flexibility

Unexpected surges in call volumes can lead to extended hold times and overwhelmed queues. While in past years, contact centers could simply hire more agents or leverage Business Process Outsourcing during busy seasons, the high cost of these approaches make them unrealistic in a recession. Contact centers should instead invest in flexible solutions that can [scale](#) to provide support during overflow events, after-hours or seasonal holidays.



7. Invest in technology with compounding ROI

Just like contact centers themselves should scale with customer demand, their technology should also be scalable with their own long-term growth plans. Contact centers should look to solutions that can make an immediate impact, but also offer compounded ROI as adoption increases over time. Contact Center Automation, for example, is a future-friendly solution that starts offering relief by automating resolutions to common customer service questions like "where is my order?" and can expand to more complex call flows like payment and billing issues over time.



8. Become more composable

[Gartner](#) summarizes composability as “creating an organization made from interchangeable building blocks.” They also note that composable thinking enables a business to “survive, and even flourish, in times of great disruption.” For contact centers, composability means leveraging APIs and containers in order to enable separate systems like CCaaS, CRM and automation to work in harmony. It also means partnering with solutions that can integrate with any combination of common platforms, as well as self-built systems.



9. Increase efficiency sooner

During the 2009 recession, studies have shown that the most resilient companies reduced costs and increased operating efficiencies [earlier](#) than their competitors. Contact centers can adopt a similar strategy with “[self-funding](#)” transformation projects that pay off quickly, such as automating common customer service interactions. These technologies bring transformation beyond the incremental improvements of traditional solutions like IVRs and agent assist tools. Eventually, they can replace legacy technologies and impact the bottom line even further.



10. Deploy Contact Center Automation

Contact Center Automation is a modern solution built for modern challenges. Powered by conversational AI, Contact Center Automation can achieve every step of a recession-proof roadmap while providing customers with exceptional service. Companies can automate their most common customer service requests while empowering agents to focus on more complex and nuanced customer challenges. Adopting Contact Center Automation can help reduce costs, while increasing CSAT, customer loyalty, agent engagement, and contact center flexibility.

[Schedule a demo](#) to learn how customer service leaders are approaching economic instability with **Contact Center Automation**.