Blog

GenAI Is Coming to Contact Centers. How Can You Prepare for Success?

By Stephanie | 15.10.24 | 8 mins

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Every leader in customer service wants to tell shareholders that they're exploring generative AI (genAI) to elevate experiences and increase contact center agility through automation. But getting past that stage can be tough if everyone isn't on the same page about pulling the trigger to purchase and implement a genAI solution.

When it comes to implementing genAI into contact centers, visionary leaders will ensure that all decision makers involved in budget, technology, and resource management are aware that the company is exploring genAI solutions, and include them in the decision-making process. By involving the C-suite and IT team, miscommunications won't hold up implementation. If all stakeholders aren't included in the purchasing process, there can be cumbersome hurdles at the crucial moment of purchase.

Get stakeholders on board from the beginning

At the exploration phase of any generative AI project, it is essential to achieve alignment between key stakeholders – from the C-suite to IT to agent teams, to set the stage for a successful outcome. Not only should you align on how the customer experience will evolve and the potential results, but you should set expectations on how each area of the business will be impacted.

One of the best ways to avoid holdups is to work with a vendor to quantify the benefits and payback period of a genAI solution, so that everyone at the C-suite level has concrete numbers to overcome inevitable budget questions. When stakeholders who oversee critical resources like IT can anticipate a payback period, the benefits of genAI in your contact center can be rolled into future planning.

"Customers who are most successful are clear about their needs and wishes from the beginning, and have a clear idea of what they want to realize in different stages of the Parloa roll-out. Smooth implementation happens when we work with customers who are well connected internally and can pull in the right stakeholders quickly, if

they're needed. We love working with customers who are technically curious, and want to learn the products in depth."

Lena Wisser
VP of Customer Experience

Rolling out genAI isn't just a change in tech, but a mindset shift

Generative AI is new, even within the realm of AI, and as with anything new, introducing it into your workplace means inviting those who aren't sure of it to understand its benefits. Fear surrounding a new AI solution should be expected, which is why communication is paramount. Human agents might be worried their jobs will change with the introduction of AI agents, and customers may have had negative experiences with automation in the past. IT and telephony teams will need to be ready to tackle a new project. By being transparent and acknowledging hesitation, you can help ensure a better rollout of any genAI solution in which everyone has an opportunity to understand the anticipated results.

Because genAI is a new technology, select a vendor partner that you trust to collaborate with to navigate these new waters and to develop the right process to evaluate genAI solutions for your company. The optimal approach involves fostering transparency. The best way to begin a comprehensive inquiry is by posing thorough and insightful questions about security, data storage, and the LLMs or AI systems the solution is built on. It's always helpful to ask for input from a trusted partner, like system integrators or specialized consulting companies.

Questions to consider

1. **Trust:** What guardrails does the genAI solution have in place to avoid hallucinations? What is the vendor's protocol to handle hallucinations when they occur?
2. **Ethical AI:** What are the guiding AI safety principles of the company to ensure the ethical use of AI?

3. **Data Isolation:** Can you guarantee that no company data or customer conversations are used to train public models?
4. **Enterprise Readiness:** Can the solution support your business operations, including availability, reliability, data handling (storage), security, and privacy?

Implementing genAI in your contact center will shift the way it operates, affecting not only how your employees and agents perform their jobs, but how you communicate with your customers.

Communicate, because genAI is more than a SaaS platform

Everyone, at every level, needs to commit to the "mindset change" of implementing AI in a contact center – and if you are leading the charge for an AI solution for your contact center, you need to communicate it from the beginning. A recent report from IBM on CEO decision making in the age of AI revealed that 74% of CEOs "agree or strongly agree that their team has the knowledge and skills to incorporate new technologies such as AI," but "just 29% of other executives, though, agree that their organization already has the expertise in-house to adopt AI and only 30% agree that their organization is ready to adopt AI responsibly." If you are championing a new AI solution for your contact center, you must close that desire gap.

This also goes for your customer service agents, who are the ones who are ultimately going to experience the immediate effects and needs of any generative AI solution driving contact center automation through AI agents conversing directly with callers. Because human agents will experience the results of a platform like this firsthand, they should have insight into the decision making process, so they can see – before they are told – how AI agents frees them up to use their expertise and empathy in new ways, and how upskilling to supervise AI agents will result in more demand for their skills. Plus, if all customer service employees are involved from the beginning, the implementation will be smoother.

Prep your team

At Parloa, we know that there are a few fundamental roles required for a successful genAI project delivery. Here are some examples of what we suggest. Thankfully, **these roles don't all have to be covered by your company** – in many cases, these roles will be covered by personnel from an implementation partner that knows genAI for CX inside and out, and is able to get to know your company and your specific needs.

Project Manager
This is the go-to communicator who's willing to get cozy with the genAI product. This person will oversee the project tasks to be completed during implementation. They should be prepared to do internal and external stakeholder management, working with the genAI product provider, implementation partner (if necessary), and their internal stakeholders.

Conversational Experience Designer/ Agent Builder
This person ensures that the conversational experience is top-of-mind throughout the process. They need to come equipped with prompting skills, high-level coding knowledge, and a passion for language design. They are responsible not only for building the bot, but also for thorough testing and quality assurance, in sparring with the Project Manager.

Solution Engineer/ Voice over IP (VoIP) Expert
This person is the API master. They are responsible for technical integration of a genAI solution into your company's telephony system, for the tech integration of your system – like your CRM – into the solution's landscape. This person ensures that all pieces of the puzzle talk to each other properly.

Language Expert
This person knows how your customers speak – and how you want to speak to them. They enhance the AI Agent with utterances in relevant languages, and translating those utterances as precisely as possible.

Data Analyst

This person gets the real benefit out of a genAI solution. They provide input for an implementation partner to set up a dashboard so that Agent performance can be

Get out in front of data security and regulation

There's one more essential piece to your AI team: your legal team. You should prepare to carefully evaluate genAI solution providers and the technology they run for data privacy and data security criteria like ISO and SOC 2 certification. Regulation is changing swiftly around the world, and the genAI solutions you're bringing in should be prepared to adapt. A recent report from McKinsey on how AI will help with customer personalization emphasizes this sentiment as well: "Operators that are slow to venture into this new frontier risk lagging further behind over the next three to five years as they struggle to satisfy customers' evolving demands."

9 steps to success for genAI adoption in your contact center

Because the era of genAI customer service has arrived, enterprises are initiating large-scale projects to adopt new AI-powered solutions to automate more customer interactions, seeking a competitive advantage and enhanced contact center efficiency.

But the technology and customer expectations are rapidly changing and at times it can seem nearly impossible to keep pace with the speed of innovation. Parloa recommends all enterprises consider the following when adopting a generative AI solution to set themselves up for short- and long-term success.

Download 9 Steps to Success for GenAI Adoption

1. Identify and Prioritize Use Cases

Identify the use cases that deliver the greatest impact, optimizing customer experience and contact center operations. Then, prioritize them based on time to value and feasibility. Start with low-risk, high-reward use cases to build momentum. Examples could include **customer identification** or **call routing**.

2. Define GenAI Adoption Success Goals and Metrics

Align within your company on the goals of adopting genAI and the corresponding metrics you're going to use to measure the performance. This increases focus and removes ambiguity when deciding how genAI impacts your contact center.

3. Prepare Business Systems Integration and Data Readiness

Identify potential gaps and areas for improvement in data and business systems integrations prior to implementation. This ensures any genAI solution is using accurate and consistent data, increasing performance, while integration readiness can reduce development and deployment time. Keep in mind that the documentation of your current APIs will impact integration, and **well-documented APIs will drastically reduce time to value** – making the integration of different systems and workflows much easier.

4. Security and Compliance

Implement robust data privacy and security measures to protect customer data, ensuring these considerations remain at the forefront when safely implementing and using genAI.

5. Quality Assurance and Testing

Anticipate that you will need to establish an extensive testing program for AI agents. This means running automated, simulated conversations to ensure quality and identify any potential issues before deployment. On the flip side, you will need to continuously monitor and evaluate performance after deployment to fine-tune automation to increase satisfaction and efficiency.

6. Employee and Agent Training

Develop enablement programs for employees and agents to streamline the transition. Employees will need to adapt to using these new technologies, building and maintaining AI agents, while human agents will need training on interacting with AI agents and handling more complex use cases that can't yet be automated. Innovative vendors will provide best practices for enterprises to start using these technologies quickly and effectively.

7. Change Management and Communication

Document existing workflows to create a change management plan to remove any potential roadblocks that could impact the transition to a genAI solution in your contact center. Proactively communicate any changes internally, and to customers, to increase successful adoption.

8. Scalability for Growth and Continuous Improvement

Keep a growth mindset that includes scalability when laying a genAI foundation in the contact center, ensuring that your company can meet the demands of more customer conversations and more complex use cases. You must be able to build on top of what you implement initially.

9. Proper Mindset

As stated above, genAI is more than a new SaaS platform. It requires a shift in how your contact center views customer interaction and loyalty. Roles and personnel needs may change, but the end result is not only satisfied customers, but also better-utilized co⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛obust value.

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GenAI for contact centers in 2024 is essential

Visionary decision makers know that a genAI solution for customer service must be part of the budget and vision for 2025 and beyond. Anticipating budget, team resources, and unusually thorough communication will allow business leaders in customer service to be prepared now and into the future.