

# Elevate the Customer Experience

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Putting Your Customer at the Center  
of Your Contact Center's Culture

A woman with curly hair is smiling and looking to the side, sitting at a table in what appears to be a meeting or office setting. The image is overlaid with a blue tint.

Elevate the Customer Experience

# Introduction

Culture is an organic part of every organization.





## Creating Culture

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Your organization's culture can be created through diligent planned efforts—or it can arise without purposeful planning. Either way, the culture that develops will determine how your employees engage with one another and how customers perceive your organization.

Many companies say they value the customer experience and believe their call centers are customer-centric, but often their culture doesn't reflect their values. From how an organization reacts to challenges to how they incentivize agents, most still reflect a traditional profit- or process-centered culture in their contact centers.



# Creating Culture

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Creating a customer-focused call center environment requires discipline and dedication in addition to all functional groups working in unison towards making customers' needs the first priority of business.

It's not an easy task, but this isn't about what's easy—it's about what will make your center awesome. By investing the time and energy to develop a customer-centric culture, your organization will be able to deliver a superior customer experience to that of your competitors.



**89%** of consumers began doing business with a competitor following a poor customer experience.<sup>i</sup>

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# Customer-Centricity Counts





In a customer-driven world,  
delivering an  
exceptional customer experience  
matters more than ever.

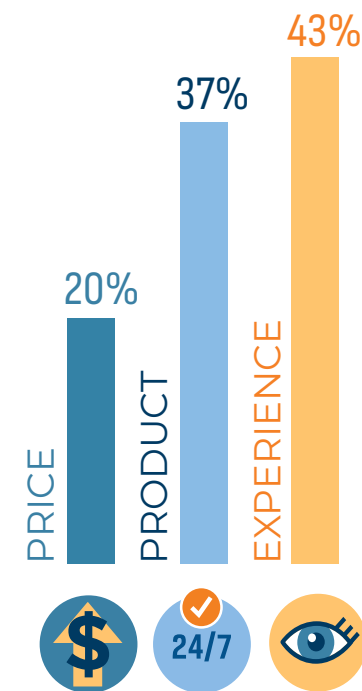
Building **customer loyalty** and focusing on their needs above all else can make a significant difference.



# Meeting Customers' Needs First

Customers value customer experience above price and product.

In a study focused on anticipating customers' needs now and in the future, 43% of customers rated customer experience as the most important competitive differentiator today, listing it as 23% more important than price and 6% more important than the quality of products. What's more, this importance is expected to increase in the future, with 50% of customers valuing the customer experience above price or products by 2020.<sup>ii</sup>



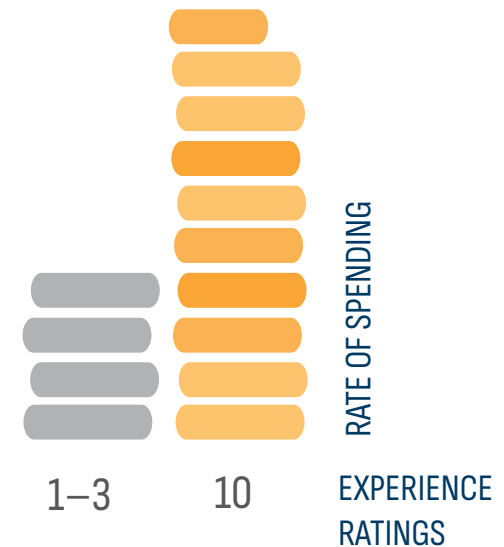
**50%** of customers are expected to value customer experience above price or product by 2020.<sup>ii</sup>



## Meeting Customers' Needs First

The value of delivering exceptional customer service goes beyond competitive differentiation—right to your organization's bottom line. **Customer experience increases spending per customer.**

Research published in the *Harvard Business Review* shows that annual spending increases an average of 2.4 times for customers who rate their experience as a 10, compared to customers who rate it as 1–3 on a scale of 1 to 10.<sup>iii</sup>



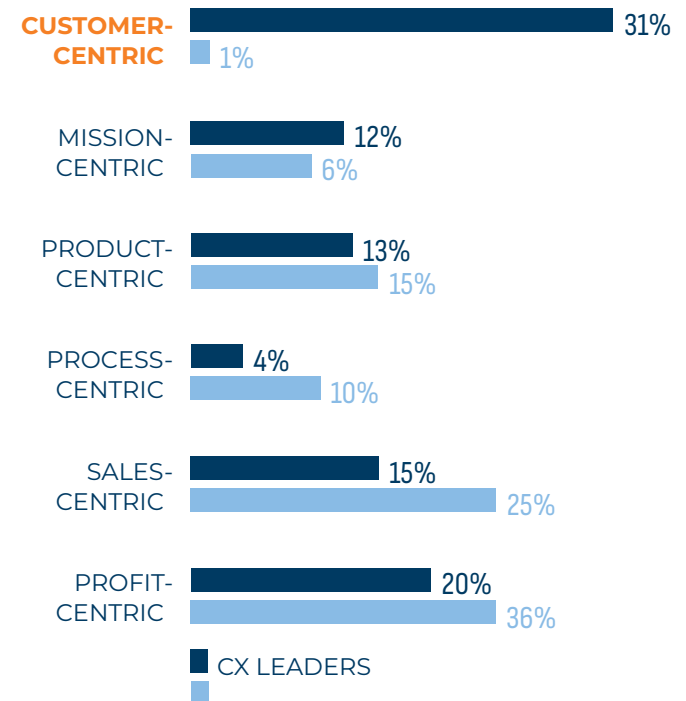
**10/10** *transactional customer experience ratings reap more than twice the amount of revenues in comparison to those experiences rated 1-3.*

# Why Strive for a 'Customer-Centric' Culture?

While many organizations say they understand the value of delivering exceptional customer experiences, the truth is that most don't exhibit a culture that can deliver one.

In a recent *Temkin* report, "*The State of Customer Experience Management*," only 16% of firms with \$500 million or more in revenue classified their culture as customer-centric.<sup>IV</sup> And yet, as *Temkin's* research suggests, having a customer-centric culture closely relates to how well an organization can deliver an exceptional customer experience.

## Temkin Corporate Culture Report



Source: Temkin Group Q1 2015 CX Management Base: Survey 199 organizations with \$500 million or more in annual revenues, 100 companies with above average CX maturity, and 99 companies with below average CX maturity.

## Why Strive for a 'Customer-Centric' Culture?

The message is clear—if you value the customer experience and want to ensure you're delivering an exceptional one, cultivating a customer-centric culture is essential.



**31%** of those organizations that categorize themselves as “customer-centric” perform as customer experience (CX) leaders, and

only **1%** perform as CX laggards. Conversely, of those companies that adhere to a “profit-centric” model:

**20%** perform as CX leaders

**36%** perform as CX laggards.<sup>v</sup>

Elevate the Customer Experience

# Your Culture Assessment





## Assessing Your Current Culture

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Building a customer-centric culture requires hard work and alignment throughout the organization. If you are interested in taking on this challenge (and achieving the benefits that come with this transformation), the first step is to sit down with organizational leaders and have an honest discussion about the culture and values.

During your discussion, assess what your current organizational values are and what type of culture you are producing. Don't forget to also examine how you currently create culture in your organization.





# Assessing Your Current Culture

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There are 3 primary ways your company may have arrived at its current culture:

1. **Laissez-faire**  
(low interference):

There is no active effort to guide your culture. You may not even have defined company values, or they may simply be “words on a page.”

*The laissez-faire approach is clearly not conducive to crafting a deliberate customer-centric culture. It should be noted, however, that many organizations—specifically those that do not make values or culture a priority—take this approach.*

2. **Friction between values and culture:**

Company values are well defined, but they are discussed with employees very infrequently (most likely during annual performance reviews). The daily processes for managing employees do not reflect the company’s values, which in turn creates friction between the values and the culture.

*Take note: You can’t claim “always innovating” as a core value, yet reward adherence to the status quo.*

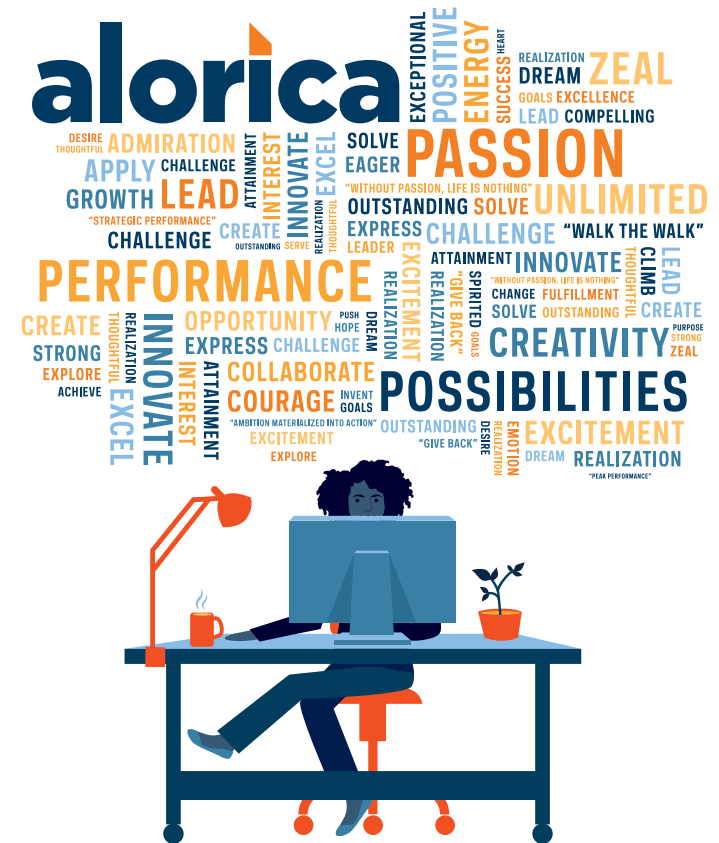
3. **Highly engaged:**

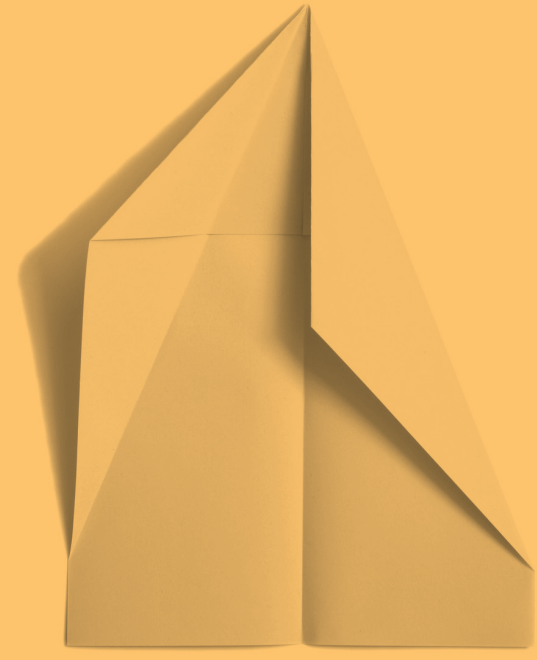
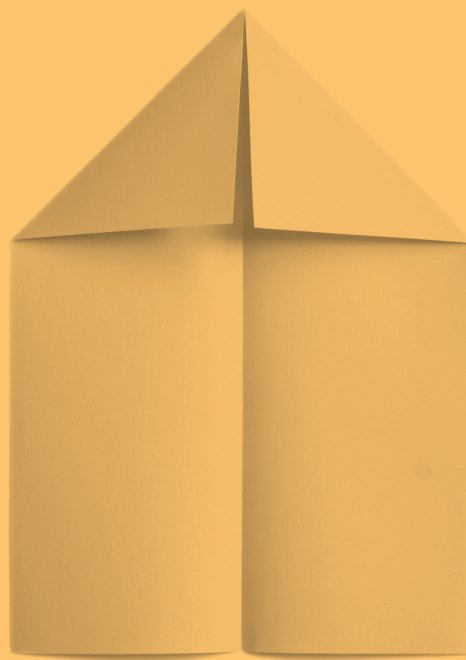
Deliberate company values are created and the values reflect the goals of the organization. Daily processes are built based on the values. Key talent decisions—such as hiring, promotions, performance management and discipline—all work in harmony with the values.

# Assessing Your Current Culture

By determining how culture is currently created within your organization, you can assess what it will take to transform it into a more customer-centric model. In organizations where the approach to culture has been laissez-faire, much more work will be needed to enable the transformation.

For organizations that established values, it may require additional effort to adjust those values to more customer-centric focus. Because the process of actively building a culture is already present, the transformation should be easier and much smoother





Elevate the Customer Experience

# 7 Steps to Customer-Centric Performance





Building and maintaining a  
customer-centric culture  
requires everyone  
—at all levels of the organization—  
to work toward a shared vision.

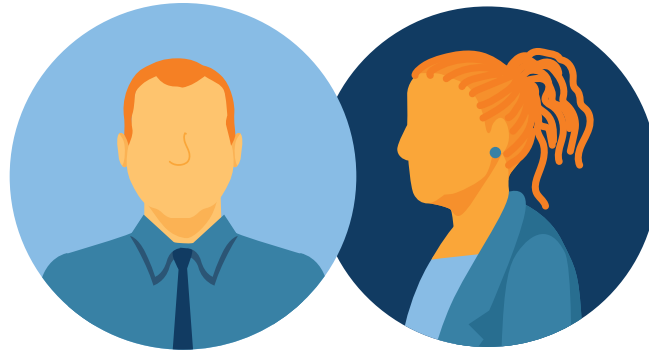
# 7 Steps to Maintaining Customer-Centricity

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To get you started, here are seven steps that will help your organization achieve a culture built around the customer.

- Step 1 Secure executive support
- Step 2 Create a guiding philosophy
- Step 3 Build company values based on that philosophy
- Step 4 Review existing processes and assess: how can they best align with your customer-focused values and philosophy?
- Step 5 Determine motivational rewards and punishments
- Step 6 Engage in leadership modeling
- Step 7 Stick to it!





Every successful customer-centric culture transformation started with a customer experience epiphany of a CEO or COO.

## Step 1: Secure Executive Support

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In any large organizational change, support and understanding from the executive team are of paramount importance. In his *Forrester* post, “*5 Steps to Create and Sustain Customer-Centric Culture*,” Sam Stern notes that every successful transformation *Forrester* has studied began with a customer experience epiphany of a CEO or COO.<sup>vi</sup>

However, even if the push for a customer-centric culture doesn't come from an organization's leader, Stern proposes that there are other ways to help bring executives on board. He cites as an example Brad Smith, the Chief Customer Officer at Sage North America. Smith established a program in which executives spend time in the call center or join sales teams on customer visits. He also started bringing customer stories to monthly executive meetings—all with the goal of getting senior management to understand the importance of having a customer-focused culture.<sup>vii</sup>

Center around customer behaviors and expectations.



## Step 2: Create a Guiding Philosophy

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The healthcare industry has fully entered the *“Age of the Customer”*—a reality faced years earlier by retail and consumer product industries. For these industries, the shift began more than a decade ago, when companies like Amazon burst onto the scene and helped reshape customer expectations for shoppers and consumers of digital content. Since then, technology, communications, and other industries have also made shifts in their customer service approach to better navigate the new landscape of customer service delivery.



## Step 2: Create a Guiding Philosophy

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How does this inform the healthcare industry's own transformation? By looking at other industries and their own adaptation, the healthcare industry can begin to understand what informs modern customer expectations (and what can cause an experience to break down). After all, the same people who enjoy one-click shopping and mobile apps that do everything from tracking a package to analyzing the quality of their sleep are expecting the healthcare industry to follow suit.





Clearly define memorable values.  
*(Core Values = Principles = Code of Conduct)*

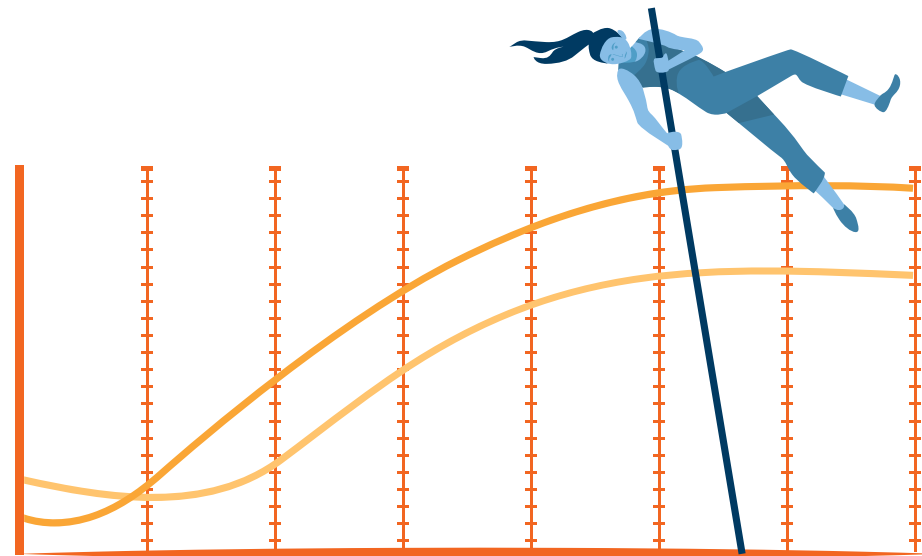
For example, Alorica's values are:  
**Passion • Performance • Possibilities**

## Step 3: Build Company Values Based on Your Guiding Philosophy

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Your values are the criteria against which everything—all your existing and new processes—will be judged. Your guiding philosophy should be brief by design, with supporting values that represent what you wish to see in your culture.

*Zappos®* is a great example of a company that acknowledges the importance of explicitly defining core values. *Zappos* has 10 easy-to-understand values, including “deliver WOW through service” and “build open and honest relationships with communication.” Having these values defined and actively integrated into daily processes has made *Zappos* legendary for its customer-centric culture.



Review processes and  
performance.

## Step 4: Review Existing Processes and Assess—How Can They Align?

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Always be checking in! When building a customer-centric environment, continually ask yourself whether all existing processes are built with a customer focus. If any process creates roadblocks to customers who are looking for information or need an issue resolved, make refinements as needed.



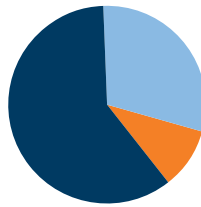
## Step 4: Review Existing Processes and Assess—How Can They Align?

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Don't limit yourself to reviewing processes that directly relate to interactions with customers. For instance, the required agent skills and knowledge are different in a customer-centric environment compared to a traditional call center. Make sure to look at...



**Recruiting, hiring and training:**  
Evaluate how you source, screen, train and assess new agents.



**Workforce management:**  
Evaluate how you forecast contact volume, schedule agents and adjust in real-time to unexpected spikes or dips in volumes.



**Staff performance management:**  
Evaluate how you provide performance feedback and ongoing, structured development to all agents and support staff.

## Step 4: Review Existing Processes and Assess—How Can They Align?

As noted in a Harvard Business Review article, “*Revolutionizing Customer Service*,” it is important that training does not focus solely on specific skills or scripts. Instead, employees should be educated more generally about what “*service excellence*” means and persuaded to commit to a holistic definition of service—creating value for others, outside and within the organization.<sup>viii</sup>

Customer expectations evolve and change over time; therefore, it is essential that all processes built in a customer-centric environment include regular reviews of their effectiveness.



Elevate the Customer Experience  
7 Steps to Customer-Centric Performance



Motivate!

## Step 5: Determine Motivational Rewards and Punishments

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Employees in a workplace are like kids on the playground—they learn very quickly what type of behaviors and performance receive positive recognition, and what type of behaviors and performance are not considered acceptable. Contact center employees are especially aware of this, since performance standing is generally based on fundamental metrics that are applied across large agent populations.



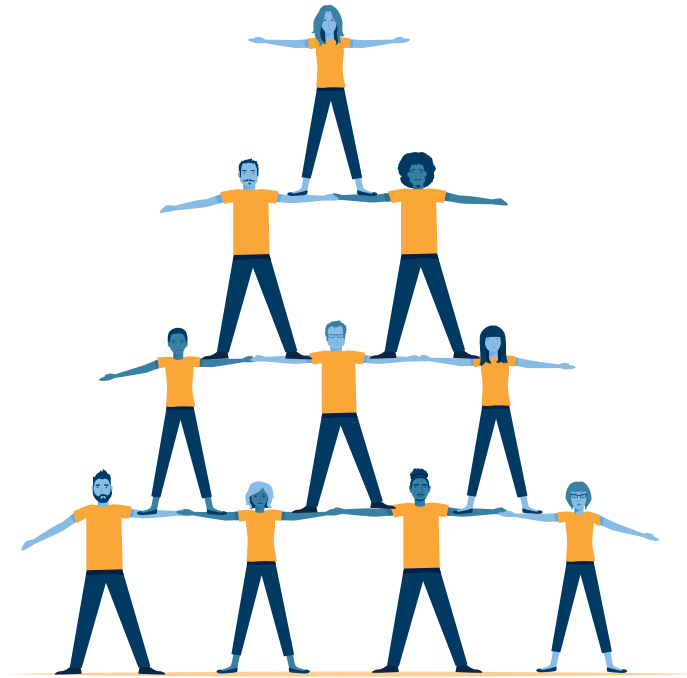


## Step 5: Determine Motivational Rewards and Punishments

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Organizations often preach being customer-centric, but when bonus plans and employee promotion patterns are examined, it becomes clear that agents are primarily recognized for metrics such as average handle time or transfer rates—and not customer-focused metrics such as overall satisfaction or issue resolution.

Similarly, organizations need to evaluate what behaviors earn intervention from managers. Customer-impacting behaviors and metrics must be clearly described during conversations in order to demonstrate to employees that a customer focus is the—real priority.



Model positive behavior.

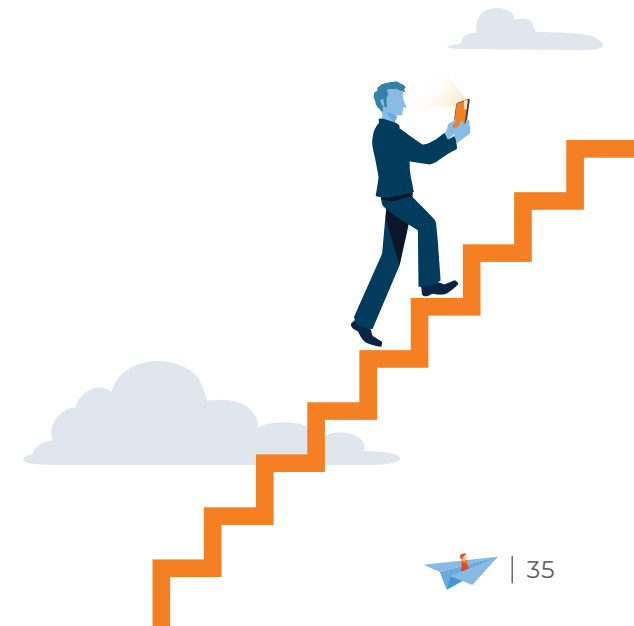
## Step 6: Engage in Leadership Modeling

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Based on the Social Learning Theory that people tend to learn naturally from what is observed and experienced, positive behavior modeling can push cultural change when other tactics fail to gain traction.

In one case study noted in *Harvard Business Review*,<sup>®</sup> a national retailer used positive behavior modeling when trying to build a customer-focused culture. The retailer's leaders enlisted the help of internal “*exemplars*”—people who were known for effectively motivating their teams—and isolated a set of crucial motivating behaviors, such as demonstrating good customer service.

*Stores that introduced improved new behaviors experienced increased same-store sales in key product areas and fewer customer complaints.*



## Step 6: Engage in Leadership Modeling

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Store managers received training on modeling these behaviors and applying them in their daily interactions, such as greeting customers as they entered the store. The stores that introduced the new behaviors experienced positive results, including increased same-store sales in key product areas and fewer customer complaints.<sup>ix</sup>

Similar to the example above, the manner in which supervisors, quality analysts, trainers and managers interact with agents will impact how those agents interact with customers. In this manner, your leadership team's customers are your agents, and when your leadership team quickly resolves agent issues and requests, this positive behavior can improve the overall culture and result in agents positively interacting with customers.



Elevate positive  
performance ongoing.

## Step 7: Stick to It!

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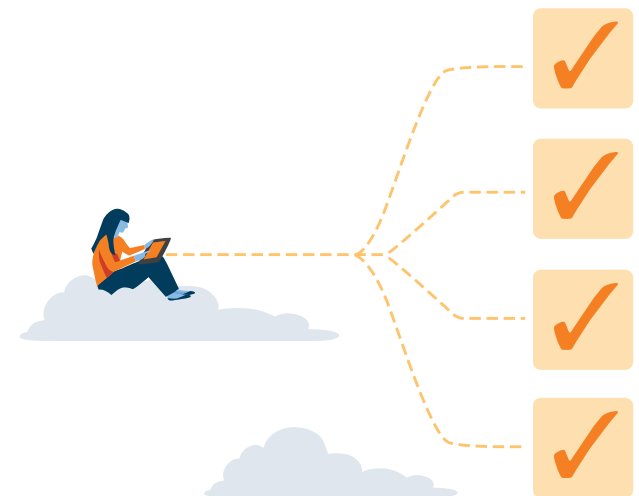
It's just like going to the gym—committing yourself to long-lasting change is often the most difficult step. Creating and maintaining a positive, customer-focused environment is easy—that is, when call volume is well within forecasts and new product launches go smoothly! But, when the (inevitable) hiccups occur, it's all too easy to slide back into old habits.

During these challenging times, it is essential to stick to your customer-focused values when reacting and making decisions. If you throw your standards out the window during times of stress, you send a message to all employees that your values are “nice to have” but not essential to your business. For example, when call volume doubles, coaching, training and focusing on customers' needs are typically dropped in favor of handling as many calls as possible, as quickly as possible.

## Step 7: Stick to It!

A customer-centric culture demands that even when the environment is chaotic, you never sacrifice customers' needs. It's wise to plan for unexpected high volumes by building into your processes necessary safeguards and flexibility so you don't have to compromise customer-centric principles.

*A Gallup study noted that customers were nine times more likely to be engaged customers when the service provided felt thorough and friendly rather than quick.<sup>x</sup>*





# Conclusion

# Conclusion

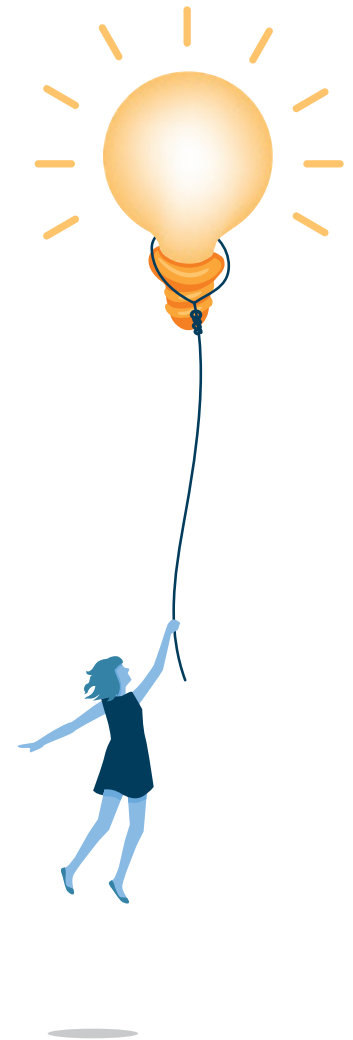


## Elevate your Culture Further, Faster...

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In every call center organization, whether or not they are clearly customer-centric, there are always examples of amazing interactions that support customers. As you begin your journey to elevate your culture, talk to agents, supervisors, trainers, recruiters, etc., and ask them their thoughts on how to better support customers. You're sure to glean invaluable insights that will help you improve your call center processes and deliver insanely great customer experiences.

Additionally, don't be afraid to turn to outside experts for guidance. As a leader in customer experience, and with a deep commitment to building customer-centric cultures in its contact centers, Alorica can work with you to help ensure that your customer is receiving the right kinds—and amounts—of



## ...And to New Levels of **Awesomeness!**

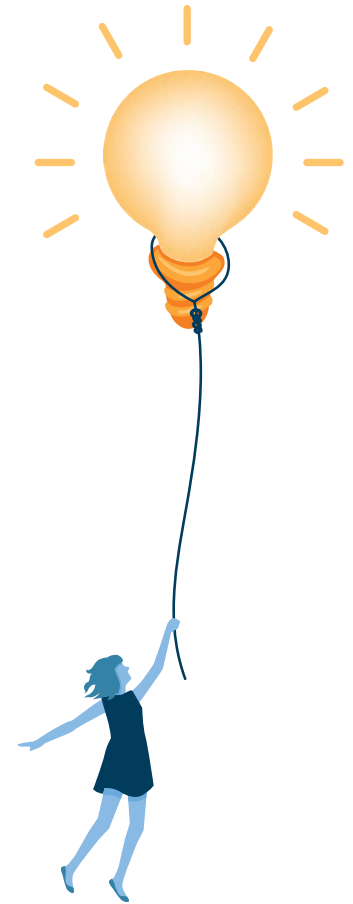
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Delivering an exceptional customer experience in today's digital world will continue to play a major role in retaining and growing your customer base. Undertaking the effort now to transform your contact center into one that puts the customer at the center of your culture will allow you to outperform your competitors now and in the future.

**And Alorica can help show you the way!**

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For more information—and to get started on transforming your company—call 866-ALORICA or email [sales@alorica.com](mailto:sales@alorica.com).





Elevate the Customer Experience

# About Alorica

# Alorica



Alorica is a leading provider of Business Process Outsourcing solutions that span the entire customer lifecycle. Good, glad we got that out of the way. Here's the deal—we think serving customers is awesome. And that's why, when it comes down to it, we really only do one thing—we make lives better...one interaction at a time.

## PASSION • PERFORMANCE • POSSIBILITIES

These are the principles that guide us in helping others make better choices and informed decisions. They're more than words. They're our rally cry.

### PASSION

Everything starts with conviction. A desire to obliterate the status quo, and the audacity to believe that we will. We're problem solvers. Question answerers.

Strategic dreamers. We see every interaction as an opportunity to create opportunities—for our customers, our clients, our colleagues and our communities.

### PERFORMANCE

We're 110% committed to the end result. Onward and upward, it's all about taking our clients to the next level. We stay engaged. We mine new sources of inspiration. And we give it our all, no matter the challenge. They say go big or go home. We don't believe in the latter.

### POSSIBILITIES

100,000 employees. Operations in 15 countries. Over 70% of our clients are Fortune 500 companies. So where do we go from here? Anywhere. Everywhere.

We're always innovating, evolving, imagining new ways to continuously improve. Some see the sky as the limit. We see the sky as a stepping stone.

### WHAT'S IN OUR SECRET SAUCE?

A spoonful of customer care. A dash of technical support. A pinch of revenue generation. Equal parts receivables management, customer retention and reverse logistics. Fulfillment and B2B solutions, for sweetness. And finally, hosted contact center solutions, direct response and back office processing for that added kick.

Guess it's not so secret anymore, huh...

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