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Delivering top-quality customer service in difficult times

A new world order has been established. So much has changed in just a few weeks. The old ways of living, working, meeting, greeting, and communicating are passé.

The primary need today is supporting and helping customers, communities, and employees to adjust and deal with the extraordinary situation that we find ourselves in. Remote or distributed contact centres and customer service delivery have become significantly relevant in the current COVID-affected global industry scenario. The lockdown situations across most major economically active geographies have brought in drastic changes, both in the demand and supply sides as well as the consumption and delivery sides of all customer support and business process services. Given that people's movements are severely restricted and most people are working remotely, face-to-face service delivery options for customers are now virtually non-existent unless they involve essentials, healthcare or related services.

Enabling agents to work remotely involves complex requirements. These may include organising VPN hardware devices, SIP phones, or even landline phones at agents' homes. Hands-on assistance from the networking, security, and telephony teams will be required as well. In addition, onboarding remote agents requires individual maintenance to ensure agents are available online, over reliable networks with high availability and bandwidth. This adds to the infrastructure services and operating costs, since the economies of scale achieved in a consolidated and physically co-located environment do not hold good in a distributed and remote service delivery model. In addition, enforcing enterprise-level governance on distributed working (in the context of remote contact centres) is very different from the Business-As-Usual (BAU) scenarios for delivering these services on premise. Organizations are looking for a strong digital-first approach to security and compliance related to distributed working and want to leverage automation as far as possible to enable consistent and faster resolution experiences.

The need to run remote contact centres efficiently and effectively during unusual times

The global COVID challenge has exposed two critical aspects of digital technology progressions:

1. **A weak digital underbelly:** Regardless of the number of advancements in digital technologies like AI and IoT, our applications of these technologies remain poor, slow, and inefficient due to the lack of contextual relevance and understanding of human behaviour and well-being. Therefore, despite all technologies being available, we are NEVER ready to take complete advantage of these though we should be able to get the best and most time-relevant value out of these technologies.

2. **More frequent Black Swan events:** The scale of COVID-19's impact cannot be viewed simply as a one-off catastrophe. As several experts from the environmental sciences and healthcare industries have been warning, these types of massive disruptions are going to be the neo-normal. Be it biological, environmental (cyclones, earthquakes), or most likely directly man-made (market collapses), catastrophes will be the new BAUs. Subsequently, BFSI, healthcare and essentials supply chains will have to reinvent themselves.

Given these new realities, the scenario planning exercises for contact centres and services organizations to survive and thrive, have to factor in the following two key scenarios:

- BAU - where physical movements of goods and services, resources and supply chains happen at the normal pace

- Non-BAU environments – which are massively and frequently disruptive and which require business readiness and agility to handle the same

The second scenario is a more relevant scenario in the current COVID context, especially for some contact centres, because during pandemics and
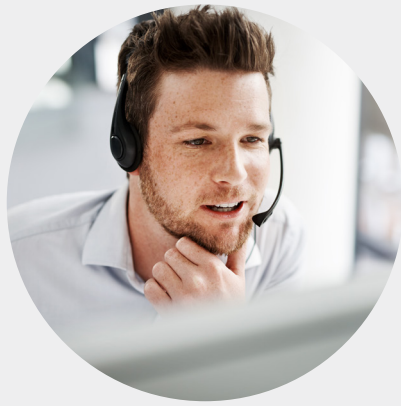
Wipro HOLMES™ Remote Digital Contact Centre allows one to set up a contact centre in the cloud and route incoming calls and messages to tens of thousands of agents.

calamities, customers and consumers need even more support from industries like BFSI and healthcare, and essential goods supply chains like pharma and food, and utilities.

What are the key solution constituents of each of the two key scenarios?

For the BAU scenario: Already existing solution strengths e.g. CX, rapid response, quality of service, resilience (replacements and knowledge automation), manual and RPA/AI-assisted approval based periodic compliance, with a final vision being an "Agentless contact centre" service.

For the Black Swan, non-BAU scenario: Here the solution constituents are the unique AI-powered capabilities enabled by the LAACS framework and focuses on four unique dimensions, viz.

1. **Location-free:** Making available the service and process knowledge as well as the required customer data and records of interactions over appropriate technology infrastructure

and network such as enterprise VPNs and VDIs, remotely, from anywhere

2. **AI-augmented:** Intelligently automating the processes and service delivery mechanisms, orchestration and queue management, prioritization and resolutions, through process and service knowledge automation, using combinations of AI and RPA

3. **Autonomous Compliance:** Since most of the business processes, informational and transaction systems and customer service scenarios require constant monitoring, control and visibility into sensitive data access, continuous and autonomous compliance is imperative for successful service delivery, especially in remote work environments

4. **Security:** The scale and depth of usage of AI techniques in cybersecurity can enable effective service delivery and information management in the context of remote contact centres.
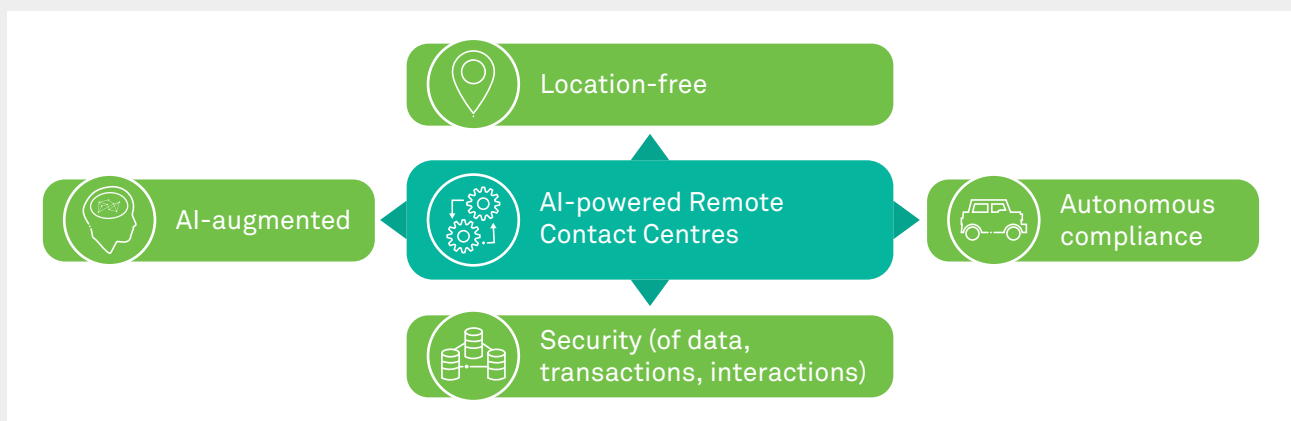

Figure 1: The LAACS Framework implemented in Wipro HOLMES™ Remote Contact Centre Solution

Let's deep dive into the Wipro HOLMES™ Remote Digital Contact Centre. It is a fully operational omni-channel cloud and digital-first contact centre that can provide the same quality of service, regardless of the employees' location, based on the LAACS framework. This service allows one to set up a call or contact centre in the cloud and route incoming calls and messages to tens of thousands of agents. Agents, supervisors, managers, and administrators can all work from home and still be able to perform all of their daily contact centre activities. Some use cases are as under:

- Unified view across channels with seamless transfer from one channel to other with context (Chat to Voice)

- Near-real-time language translation

- Near-real-time entity extraction (from the conversation) and cognitive search to provide contextual information to the agent

- Sentiment Analysis during the call

- Call summarization (that the agent can modify as needed, post the call)

- Extraction of user-specific information – tickets, emails, chats etc. for reference and context, enabled through various integrations

- Ensuring security, identity, and trust in voice interactions to identify fraudulent and high-risk callers
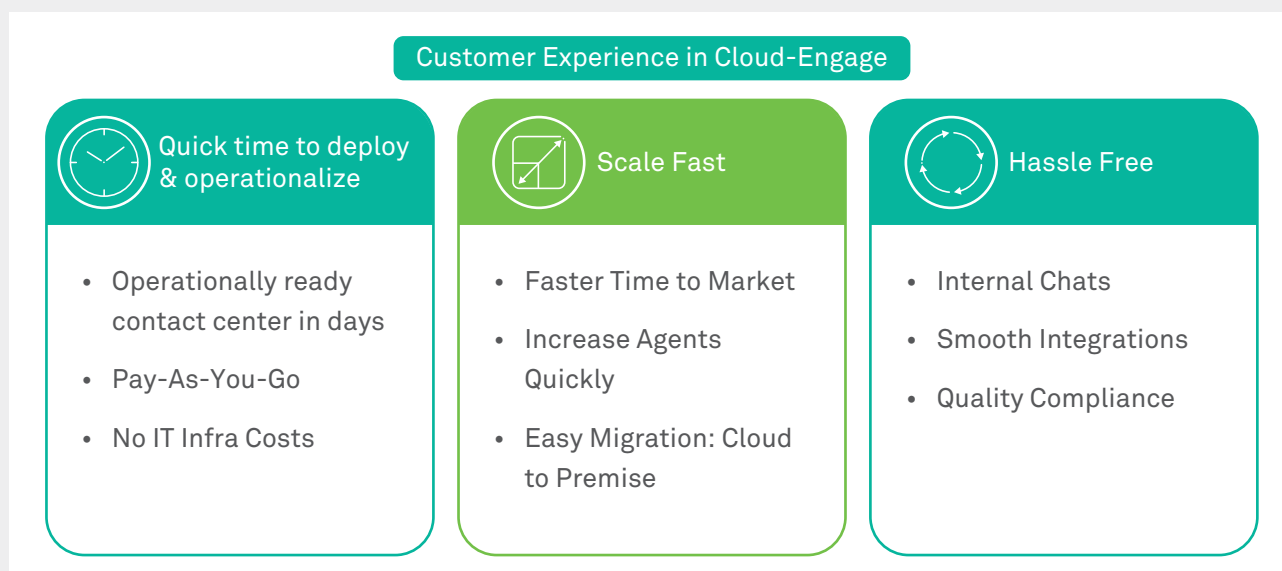
Customer Experience in Cloud-Engage

Quick time to deploy & operationalize

- Operationally ready contact center in days
- Pay-As-You-Go
- No IT Infra Costs

Scale Fast

- Faster Time to Market
- Increase Agents Quickly
- Easy Migration: Cloud to Premise

Hassle Free

- Internal Chats
- Smooth Integrations
- Quality Compliance

Figure 2: Customer Experience in Cloud

How is it done?

Activation Model: Days to a few weeks

- Wipro HOLMES™ remote digital contact centre can be set up with the initial base pack in just a few weeks. No browser plug-ins or applications need to be installed to start taking calls or chatting with the HOLMES remote digital contact centre. It uses a WebRTC-based softphone that is designed to provide high-quality audio by using the OPUS codec.

- If there are internal, non-internet accessible applications that the Control Panel needs to interact with, such as a home-grown service

desk system, the solution in a HOLMES Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) environment can be used. For other cloud-based application requirements, the connection is direct.

Operationalization ecosystem capabilities: In addition to the core remote contact centre capabilities, the other capabilities for the ecosystem to run in a secure and compliant way can be activated by augmenting the remote working agents with the HOLMES autonomous compliance and security governance solutions.

The need for the remote centre option

- Sudden drastic increase in remote work at both the clients' and service providers' (SPs)

ends (from <10-15% in most cases, to 75% + in several industries except healthcare) have increased risk exposures manifold. This is a high uncertainty situation with no prior experience, hence, "compliance to what?"- is also a new question. Leaders are worried and have questions like "Will BAU compliances be enough in these situations especially since hybrid cloud is a reality across companies today? Can BAU compliance be enforced in the first place, in remote work conditions? What are the new compliance conditions that will need to be proactively added and monitored? Who to reach out to for guidance? Which systems will ensure more transparent and auditable enforcements and compliance? Are risk scores being continuously monitored and red-flagged? Is the people-planning to take care of red flags in place? Is there knowledge automation available or pre-coded for autonomous resolution and healing for non-compliance issues and incidents?" No one wants a fiasco like what a large tech service provider went through recently!

Business benefits of a remote digital contact centre

WFH Helps Businesses in More Than One Way

Productivity
- Increased Productivity & Focus
- No Commute
- Work/Life Balance

Retention & Hiring
- Better Retention rates for people working from Home
- No location Constraints for existing and new resources

Cost of Operations
- The infrastructer cost is reduced to a minimum
- The transportation issues & cost are also resolved

Improved Services
- Consumer will now have the options for a longer Service Window
- Scalability specially during BCP situation become easy

Advantages During COVID 19 Situation
- Keep Employees Safe
- No Impact to BAU
- Adaptability for New Ways of Working
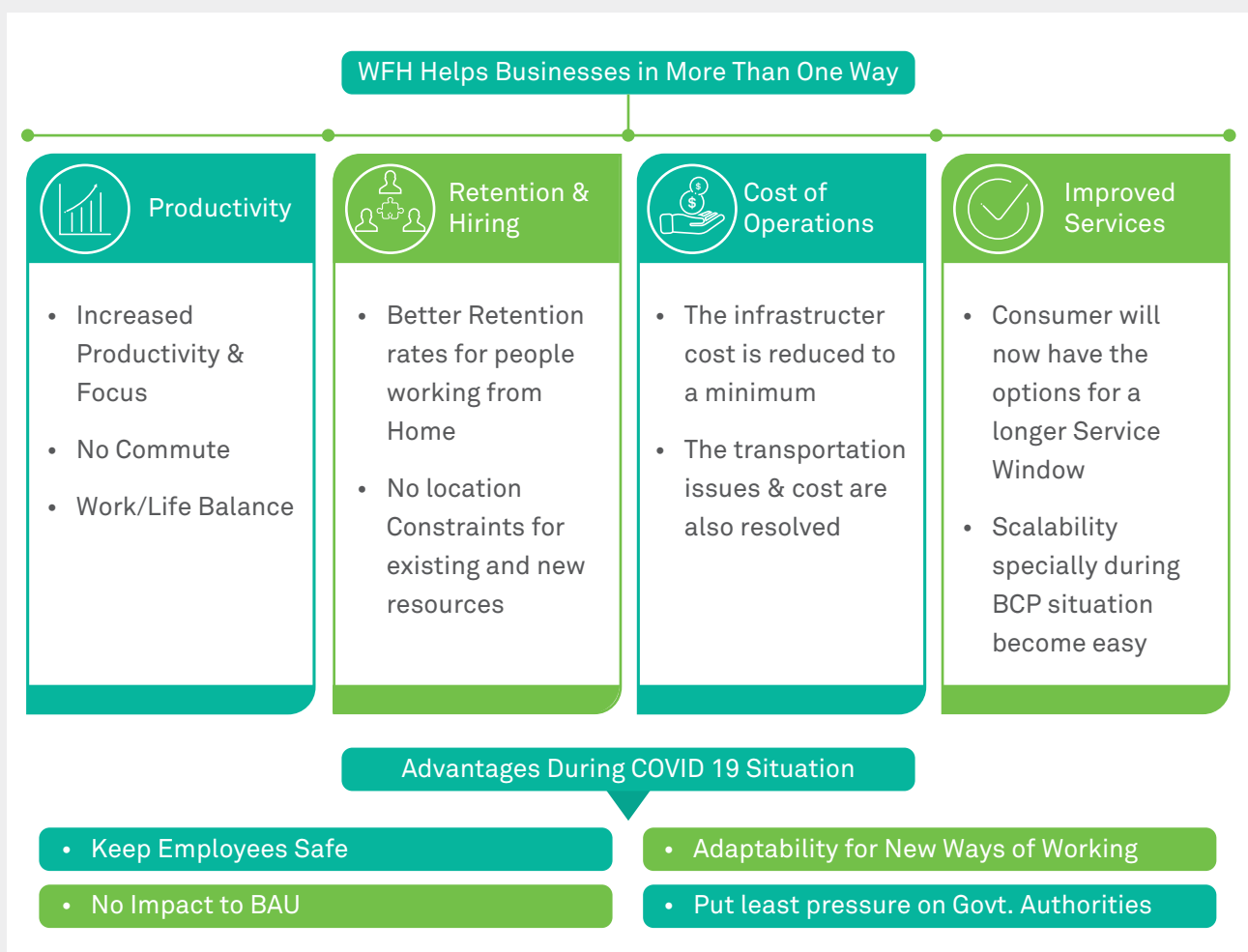- Put least pressure on Govt. Authorities

Figure 3: Business benefits of a Remote Digital Contact Centre

The COVID-19 crisis and increased demand for remote work capabilities have driven the need for AI automation at an unprecedented rate and pace. This article in the context of customer engagement for enterprises was an attempt to highlight a completely elastic and scalable new way of delivering services over the traditional contact center.

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He is responsible for building AI partnerships, formulating go-to-market strategies and driving service delivery for enterprise clients. With over two decades of experience in client relationship management and business development roles, Sanjay specializes in shaping new offerings and driving business outcomes across multiple verticals including retail, consumer goods, financial services, and telecom.

Dr. Tapati Bandopadhyay

Dr. Tapati Bandopadhyay has over 25 years of deep technology research, consulting and implementation experience in AI and intelligent automation. She started global coverage of AI and automation applications in services management at Gartner as part of her role that she played for 7 years as the Senior Director of Research. She set up and led Wipro HOLMES™ AI and automation strategy and practice capabilities for 2 years, and then led the India research team and global research coverage of AI and automation technologies at HFS for 1+ year.
A DFID scholar @Strathclyde with a PhD in AI as well as a university gold medal in engineering, Tapati is a globally known consultant and industry expert on AI and automation technologies, strategies and applications.

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