

High tech vs high touch: why your tech is only as good as the person implementing it

 By [Bruce von Maltitz](#)

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Nigel Clarke, an IT manager from the UK, made a few headlines earlier this year when he drew up a comprehensive call centre menu map - a project called "Please Press 1".

He uploaded this service so that anyone attempting to navigate a call centre menu, and the many options it offers, can bypass the system and save a billion minutes of call time. Clarke made over 12,000 calls, navigating about 80 different menu options each time, to draw the map.

It's a handy tool - after all, 40% of customers surveyed say that they feel so frustrated with automated call centre menus that they're willing to switch to a competitor. The problem, though, is not the call centre menu - it's a handy tool that is designed to guide the customer to the agent who is best-suited to handle his query. The real problem lies with the implementation of the technology.

The same thing could be said about quality monitoring in call centres - it's easy enough to monitor sample calls, but drawing real insight from analytics is a lot more involved. It requires a trusted consultant to help choose and interpret the right data models and reports. Clearly, call centre technology has become a lot more involved.

Buying solutions

Surprisingly, the providers who were the industry leaders in on-premises call centre technology are often the ones who are now struggling to meet expectations. A few years ago, it seemed much less complicated to choose the right technology provider. The big-name brands carried the best-of-breed technology and the choices were obvious and somewhat limited. However, building a bigger, better and more sophisticated product every five years is no longer a viable strategy. Call centre managers aren't buying products, they are buying solutions - and they expect those solutions to change when the market changes.

Although the cloud lends itself perfectly to the need for agility and flexibility, and there are a myriad hosted service companies joining the market, along with dozens of freeware options, there is still a significant skills shortage in the industry. As a result, we've seen companies enter the marketplace who offer excellent cloud-based technology, but who are unable to offer support or training.

Matching needs with technology

There is too much emphasis on high-tech solutions, compared to the very real need for high-touch solutions. The difference lies in the technology provider's ability to guide the end-users of their solution throughout the process of implementing and utilising the tech to the best of its capabilities. The ability to, through years of experience, foresee all the possible avenues the call centre will need as it evolves, as well as the potential problems they may face, and offering technical support that goes beyond simply fixing an error or getting a system back up and running after it's gone down.

The industry doesn't need more software installers or resellers. It needs consultants who can sit down with their clients and understand their unique business processes and goals, and match those needs with the right technology. It needs well-rounded perspectives and expertise. There are no short cuts to achieving that - it comes with experience. Although cloud solutions can be rolled out quickly, each solution should come with years of trial and error, and design and experimentation, so that you are guaranteed you won't be left in the lurch when the next wave of change hits the market.

After all, owning the world's best technology and being unable to run it, is like owning a top-of-the-range Mercedes and hiring a chauffeur who can't drive - it won't get you anywhere.

ABOUT BRUCE VON MALTITZ

Bruce von Maltitz is currently the MD of 1Stream, a cloud-based contact centre technology provider. He has over 20 years experience in the service industry focusing specifically on contact centres for the last twelve years. He has a detailed understanding of how to design, build and operate contact centres having worked in the industry in SA, Africa and abroad.

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