

Call recording & AI

Remote-working solutions
for COVID-19 challenges

TRANSFORM WITH TECHNOLOGY

M247⁷

COVID-19 has caused a large-scale shift to remote working, throwing up a myriad of challenges for businesses across all sectors. Amid this 'new normal', cloud and hybrid solutions have accelerated rapidly to help businesses rise to meet those challenges head-on.

Here we take a look at three of the biggest challenges posed by mass remote working, and the ways cloud-based call recording and integrated AI have stepped in to plug the gaps and ensure businesses can keep those all-important lines of communication open.

Now more than ever, organisations are moving toward perimeterless workplaces.

In recent months, changing business requirements have accelerated the adoption of cloud-based call recording and voice AI solutions to support remote working, enabling, as they do, the seamless movement between devices, networks and applications, while ensuring enhanced security. With teams working from home, often switching between office PCs to dining-table laptops to phones and tablets in the living room – sometimes within a matter of hours – these solutions are helping herald a 'new normal' for the way businesses and organisations communicate with their teams, their partners and their customers.

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As with many technological advancements, uptake on these solutions had been relatively slow while organisations took time to umm and ahh over the security, compliance and cost implications. But COVID-19 has forced businesses to jump on board or risk losing out.

The upshot of this large-scale adoption has been that many organisations have come to see their fears and concerns around cloud-based call recording and voice AI have not only been largely inflated, but that actually they present a viable solution for the 'new normal' into which the world is starting to take tentative steps.

Managers have come to recognise that while the office might be out of sight for their teams (for the moment), it is certainly not out of mind. Concerns around productivity have long been a barrier to large-scale remote working, but teams are demonstrating that is not the case. The ability to switch securely between devices and networks means employees are putting in the hours at home, and being every bit as productive as they were in the office. In some cases, the ability to work from their phone or tablet means they are putting in extra hours once the kids have gone to bed, and are using their time more productively throughout the day as they juggle responsibilities.

More than that, the cost implications have proven to be a benefit rather than a hindrance. Most cloud service solutions are provided as an OpEx cost for businesses. Managers haven't had to worry about finding the cash for a big initial outlay at a time when purse strings are being held more tightly than ever – they have simply had to choose their package, and pay for their services on a monthly-subscription basis. No hardware maintenance required, no disaster-recovery headaches and no loss of data sovereignty.

Let's take a closer look at how cloud-based call recordings and voice AI are transforming the business landscape...

Exploring how cloud-based call recording and integrated AI can help resolve three key challenges of remote working.

1. Compliance

With everyone working from home amid COVID-19, businesses have been facing certain compliance issues that simply don't exist when teams are based in the office. In the traditional, office-based set-up, calls will be recorded and an organisation's data will be stored onsite, with all the necessary compliance duties fulfilled under that banner.

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While businesses were forced to adapt quickly to remote working, one of the biggest challenges for businesses across certain sectors has been ensuring continued compliance. For their part, and perhaps underlining the unprecedented situation in which businesses find themselves, some regulatory bodies, including the FCA and ESMA, have relaxed compliance laws to provide some short-term relief for organisations as they get to grips with the new normal. These are temporary measures, however, intended to give managers some breathing space while they get their remote-working teams established.

But as lockdown begins to ease and it becomes clear social distancing measures will mean vastly reduced numbers of people being able to work in the office, businesses are under increasing pressure to find and implement flexible cloud business solutions that will allow their teams to operate at full capacity - and full responsibility – at home. Businesses need to create an environment that enables workers to carry out their full office duties remotely. And they need to do it quickly, securely, with full adherence to compliance regulations.

Temporary changes to regulations

Due to COVID-19 the FCA and ESMA implemented some temporary changes to the way they operate including relaxing MiFID II. MiFID II requires credit institutions and investment firms to record phone conversations relating to transactions concluded when dealing on own account and those involving provision of some client order services.

However, there are likely to be circumstances where large chunks of staff are required to work remotely or clients do not have electronic communications tools. Therefore, the rules now say firms should look at alternative steps, such as the use of written minutes of client calls, with enhanced monitoring and ex-post review of orders and transactions.

An affected firm “should establish appropriate systems and controls to ensure it maintains appropriate records. Our rules are not specific in respect of call recording in such situations,” the FAC states.

However, this is a temporary solution. Businesses are now under pressure to find flexible cloud technology solutions that allow employees to operate as normal while staying compliant.

The Cloud solution



Compliance and security are almost inherent with any cloud-based solution, and call recording and voice AI solutions are no different. With access management in place for remote workers, managers can be sure that any data that's collected and/or stored in the Cloud is seen by only the necessary people with the necessary access. Without the right level of authorisation, the correct authentication and the sign-on credentials, data will sit securely in the Cloud, untroubled by human eyes or ears.

Control access

Team structures can be put in place to restrict access to data, and individual users can be assigned their own permissions relative to the type of access they need. Perhaps they don't need access to anything. Perhaps they only need to be able to listen back to their own calls, or the calls between and by other members of their immediate team. All this can be controlled securely by the administrator, to ensure the appropriate standards of compliance are being met throughout the organisation.

Recovery

What's more, the ability to delete recordings is available only to those members of the team who have been given express permission to do so, so you needn't worry about things like accidental deletion, or even deletions by an outgoing, unhappy employee. Most cloud-based call recording solutions will furthermore include a full audit log of all incoming and outgoing calls, so should a call recording be deleted – accidentally or otherwise – you will be able to recover information pertaining to who deleted the call, and the IP address that was used. This functionality provides full access traceability in compliance with GDPR, and gives real peace of mind to managers, as well as employees.

Of course Big Data has never been more prevalent or relevant than it is right now, and if there was ever a term that goes hand-in-hand with 'data', it's 'compliance'.

Cloud call recording

Cloud call recording allows organisations to securely collect and store 100% of voice data, ensuring compliance across those industries that require calls to be logged and preserved. Of course, just because you can record every single incoming, outgoing or inter-team phone communication doesn't mean you have to, and the Cloud solution is demonstrating itself to be a cost-effective solution for on-demand call recording across multiple platforms and devices.

Disaster Recovery

Another huge compliance benefit of cloud call recording solutions is the inherent enhanced security of (often as-standard) disaster-recovery functions. At the moment, with IT teams sometimes unable to access on-premise hardware and physically maintain and safeguard infrastructure, having all your data in the Cloud means you are more protected against the compliance issues surrounding data loss in the event of hardware failure. Every time data is shared to the Cloud, it is encrypted and backed up on multiple secure servers, making recovery in the event of a disaster quick and easy. Data loss is arguably one of the biggest compliance concerns for organisations, so pushing those storage and disaster-recovery functions to the Cloud is going to ensure enhanced data security compliance, as well as business continuity.

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Analytics

Companies are also coming to see the inherent integration benefits of cloud-based solutions, with enhanced integration and analytics providing vital information for managers about their teams, their customers, and the conversations that are happening across the organisations. While many businesses were already collecting and analysing data about the flow and content of emails and documentation throughout the organisation, they have no doubt come to recognise and appreciate the additional data and analytics – and the speed at which it can be applied – that comes with cloud call-recording capabilities.

With managers and supervisors unable to walk the floor and get a visual on the productivity, efficiency and data-handling tactics of individual employees, they have turned to the enhanced analytics of their cloud solutions to keep an eye on their teams while still respecting the privacy of their employees as individuals.

AI allows for the identification of key words, which means a call can be flagged up and an automated notification triggered in instances where the identified key word or phrase occurs. Compliance issues can be caught before they go too far, and steps taken immediately to mitigate the potential fallout. For example, if a customer mentions a word like 'complaint' or 'unhappy', this will be flagged up in the system and a supervisor can step in immediately. Whereas call-handlers might previously have had to note down the details about a call, escalate the enquiry to a supervisor and then wait for their line manager to pick up with the customer – all while the customer was becoming more and more unhappy – proactive steps can be taken to achieve a resolution at an early stage. This will tick any compliance box for the organisation, as well as ensuring a more pleasant customer experience.

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Integrate with CRM with full transcripts

Another feature of cloud call recording that bolsters compliance is the ability to combine the data collected with that already sitting in the CRM. Data collected via cloud call recording and AI can be collated with the existing CRM data, helping to provide a fuller picture of the customers and clients in the database. It's not always feasible for call-handlers to take detailed notes the second they get off a call and that means that, sometimes, vitally important details can be missed. Cloud call recording makes this job easier, not only by ensuring you have a full recording of each call, but by spinning up a transcript and then analysing the text for certain key words or phrases. You'll be able to do a quick search of all transcripts in the database to identify key compliance issues, and you'll have full and relevant data to submit for auditing purposes.

2. Loss of employee visibility

With all their teams dispatched to and working from home, business leaders have had to adapt quickly to new ways of carrying out their managerial responsibilities. While unable to physically see their teams and get a visual gauge on productivity, they have been forced to get creative about how they track employee efficiency and performance.

Team efficiency

Some have undoubtedly struck the wrong chord and have faced criticism for taking a short-sighted approach by focusing on individual employee productivity rather than whole-team efficiency. Workers are operating under unprecedented pressure at the moment – often with families at home requiring additional caring responsibilities, not to mention the emotional and mental upheavals necessitating flexible working patterns – and those managers have been criticised as missing the bigger picture.

The Cloud solution



Call recording for employee visibility purposes is really coming into its own for organisations that are intent on looking to the future, rather than clinging desperately to a way of working that may never return. The data being collected now is enabling businesses to compare business insights like never before. Among the many immediate benefits of this enhanced analysis is that organisations are being able to compare and contrast data about employee, team and organisational efficiency while everyone is working from home, against what those data were when everyone was working in the office.

Not only is this providing organisations with potentially eye-opening data about employee working and productivity patterns, it is also giving businesses vital information that they can use when they build strategies for coming out of lockdown.

Some may decide the discrepancy between organisational productivity and the cost of leasing premises is not necessarily worth it, prompting a shift towards more remote-working practices as standard. If the data shows no decline – or even an increase – in productivity while their teams are working from home, it could well be that remote working becomes the new normal for many organisations through choice, rather than necessity.

Business insights

Cloud-based call recordings and the attendant AI allow organisations to analyse business data like never before, freeing up resources to work on implementing changes to ease issues that have been flagged up in the data. Cloud-based solutions integrate seamlessly with business insight tools like Microsoft to analyse patterns in customer and employee behaviour, allowing you to have an overview of customer and employee conversations in just a few clicks.

As well as giving you an insight to what your employees are talking about – what your teams are struggling with and where and when they might require additional support – cloud-based call analytics can give you an important insight into what your customers are talking about.

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Previously, these in-depth insights relied on an individual sitting down with call recordings to painstakingly trawl through transcripts, identify salient matters of interest and cross-reference them with others to identify important patterns. Using cloud-based call recording and AI solutions, data can be automatically extracted from call recordings and fed into the organisation's BI tools to collate and analyse a whole range of data about customer conversations.

- What are their concerns?
- What are they saying about your competitors?
- What are their major pain points?
- What are your employees struggling most with in these customer conversations?

It's almost impossible for a single person to be able to compile this level of data analysis and notice these trends on calls. AI allows you to collate this data, spot patterns, cross-reference calls and group customer contacts almost immediately, making it possible for you to react quickly and comprehensively

3. Communication loss

Loss of communication among and between staff and customers has been cited as one of the biggest challenges facing businesses at the moment. It is, however, vital to ensure the lines of communication are kept open for employees, partners and customers, and that employees aren't left feeling like they have been abandoned to work on their own.

Employees are, however, having to find new ways of communicating with their colleagues. Seeking advice from a teammate is no longer as easy as placing a customer on hold and then turning to the left or right to ask for some guidance. There are no desks, and there are no desk-buddies. And as easy as messaging apps are to use, or phone calls are to place, it's never going to be as easy as turning to the person next to you and getting instant feedback. That's why, with all the technological advancements of recent years, voice calls continue to be one of the most important methods of communications.

Why does voice still play an important role in telephony?



72%
of businesses say improving customer experience is their top priority.¹



About **30%** of customers say the most important aspect of customer service is speaking to knowledgeable and friendly agents.²



Yet:
26%
of customers left a company because they couldn't speak to someone if needed.²



74%
of customers who contact customer services do so by phone.³



The Cloud solution

Cloud-based call recording is a great solution for businesses wanting to keep the conversation going during COVID-19. These solutions are not only enabling those all-important customer conversations to continue, they are helping ensure teams remain connected and in the loop with their teams, and their organisations as a whole.

Team integration

There are likely more team meetings and inter-departmental discussions taking place at the moment than ever before. Workloads need to be firmed up, jobs need to be delegated, strategies need to be formulated and measures need to be implemented. But with people working from home, often around childcare, there is also an increased likelihood that not everyone who needs to attend a meeting is going to be able to find the time in their diary to do so. In this way, cloud-based call recording has been something of a saviour, enabling team members who have been unable to attend an important meeting to log on later and play back the recording or download the transcript. They won't have to carve out a different time to speak to somebody and catch up on the important takeaways, and they needn't rely on somebody else's memory to get all the details they need – they will be able to listen to the call and determine those for themselves.

Source: 1. Forrester Research 2. Microsoft 3. Statista, 2017

Cloud-based call recording and its integral AI functionality is also proving its worth for organisations in terms of keeping the lines of communication open with customers. Not only is it allowing businesses to continue having those all-important conversations in the first place, it is also providing enhanced insights for organisations wishing to up the ante.

Impact analysis

Through the double-whammy of sentiment analysis and key word identification, AI enables you to track and analyse in real-time the number of positive or negative conversations your team are having. You'll get deeper insights into what time of the day these calls are happening, what day of the week they are happening and what the most common content of these conversations is. Are you seeing an influx of calls at a certain time on a certain day? Are customers more likely to leave a conversation frustrated on a Friday afternoon, when your teams are perhaps winding down for the weekend, or there are fewer hands on deck? With this sort of information at your fingertips, you can start to address issues within the organisation that might be leading to longer call-wait times and bringing out negative sentiments in customers.

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It's not only your customers you can help by deploying AI for calls, of course. Your teams and partners are undoubtedly working under stress at the minute, and cloud-based call recording and AI can help you monitor how they are holding up. What emotions are most prevalent in employee or partner calls? Are they getting angry and frustrated? Are they swearing at each other, or about each other? With all the pressure people are under at the moment – with families and work to juggle, new technology to get to grips with and increased demands for visibility through video calls – how unhappy are your teams? And more importantly, can you do something to alleviate their stress? Using call analytics, you'll be able to identify certain times or days when these negative sentiments crop up. Compare this data with your workload and you'll likely spot some patterns. Do negative employee-to-employee conversations happen at times when teams are dealing with a greater workload, or when customers are more likely to be frustrated? Can you redeploy resources to plug a temporary gap and alleviate some pressure?


Call recording in the future

Call recording and AI can help you harvest and analyse some incredible data, and this has rarely been more important than now, when your teams are working disparately and in isolation. Keeping the lines of communication open is important. But it's perhaps more important right now to be able to step in and be responsive – make changes that are going to help your teams immediately, at the times when they need it the most.

You can't walk the floor and keep an eye on your teams at the moment. You can't look over their shoulders and offer advice or support. But cloud-based solutions are helping managers to show they still care, that they're still there, and that they're still invested in ensuring their teams are supported and happy.

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To find out how our
technology can transform
your business get in touch

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