

# The Impact of Homeworking on Contact Centers

## **Viewpoint of Industry Leaders**



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The Impact of  
Homeworking on  
Contact Centers

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“Overall contact center call volume **increased by over 600%**, while agent call capacity **dropped by 20%**”

-Pindrop 2020

China reported a large group of odd pneumonia cases in late December of 2019, which soon proved to be world-changing. The Covid-19 pandemic is unprecedented and directly or indirectly impacted all economic and social activities worldwide. Companies have to adopt new ways of working, and while this is rough for all, it is especially so for the contact center industry. While companies abruptly transition to a work-from-home environment due to social distancing measures, call centers have to simultaneously deal with a tremendous spike in overall call volume (especially in health care, government, and financial services). Additionally, the chaos of the virus outbreak causes calls to be more challenging and time-consuming. Therefore, contact center supervisors have to ramp up their knowledge and find new ways to support their agents.

A year to date, after this initial turbulent period, the world seems more stable. Most contact centers are still (partly) home-based while some have returned to their on-site activities. The pandemic has forced businesses to rethink everything they know and adopt new technologies and methods to keep activities functioning well. Even though each contact center experienced this transition differently, the valuable lessons and best practices they learned along the way can guide others on many different levels.





**Pooja Meswani**

CX Director  
Deloitte India



**Peter Brouwer**

EMEA Sales Director  
Continuum Global  
Solutions



**Alan Linter**

Innovation Director  
Capita



**Andy Moorhouse**

CEO and Founder  
Alitica

Gerry de Graaf, Managing director of Xdroid International, interviewed thought leaders from Deloitte, Capita, Continuum Global Solutions, and Alitica to gather the valuable insights they learned from their experiences to help other contact centers improve their current operations.

The videos of these interviews can be seen at:

Alan Linter: <https://vimeo.com/536277035/2d3f7b81a4>

Pooja Meswani: <https://vimeo.com/536277482/63fcb44919>

Peter Brouwer: <https://vimeo.com/536277135/1657a2f47d>

Andy Moorhouse: <https://vimeo.com/536277324/21fc68faef>



# Different ways to adapt to the transition

**Pooja Meswani**, CX director of Deloitte India, explains the challenges Indian contact centers have to deal with when switching all their activities to a work-from-home format. India is known for having some of the world's largest contact centers, and nearly all of them were operating from physical offices before the Covid-19 outbreak. Companies had to literally take desktops from the office and bring them to the agents' homes. They had to install the needed preventive measures to protect the network infrastructure and ensure customers' data security. Companies had to invest in better infrastructure and hardware such as noise-canceling headphones to overcome challenges like the size of the agents' houses and the lack of privacy as background noise has an impact on the calls' quality.

At Continuum Global Solutions, agents already had the means to work remotely. This proved advantageous when the pandemic forced contact centers to make a complete switch to a home-based contact center, says **Peter Brouwer**, EMEA Sales Director of Continuum Global Solutions. Even though Continuum Global Solutions is experienced with the work from-home-concept, making this transition at a large scale also caused challenges.

Given the magnitude of people who needed to be deployed from home, they cooperated with one of their biggest clients, who provided them with desktop solutions for all of their agents.

Capita, the largest outsourcer in the UK, successfully moved 25.000 agents into working-from-home format across Europe, the UK, South Africa, and India. **Alan Linter**, Innovation director for Capita, explains that the challenge for the company was rather the acceleration in digital transformation that needed to be completed, something which had a considerable impact on all their contact channels and customer interactions.

Data Consultant **Andy Moorhouse**, CEO and Founder of Alytical, talked to us about the repercussion this way of working had on outbound sales teams. The performance dropped due to the lack of camaraderie and cooperation that very much characterizes these types of teams. The nature of remote working makes motivational morning sessions, team spirit and collective celebrations difficult to maintain.

# Keeping agents close

These are emotionally and mentally difficult times, homeworking represents a massive change for both supervisors and agents, which has both positive and negative sides. On the one hand, working from home has many benefits. Traveling time and costs are entirely cut. It is easier to allow agents to have a flexible schedule with split-shifts, balancing their work and personal lives. On the other hand, all face-to-face contact disappears, no more coffee breaks, no more chit-chat with colleagues, and less support from supervisors when facing troublesome calls. It gets more difficult for quality managers to monitor agent performance and quality of service.

During these times, people's heightened emotional state makes agent-customer interactions more stressful and emotive; thus it is key to provide agents the proper support in the remote environment if we want to ensure their well-being.

An excellent way to do so is through Xdroid's real-time Voice Analytics technology, which monitors and analyses calls real-time to give agents immediate feedback, identifying the best solution to an incoming query. This technology provides direct in-call support to them and allows their supervisors to follow calls live and guide them via chat. Furthermore, the system can identify very problematic calls and automatically notify the supervisors to intervene if necessary. These technologies help contact centers to protect and support their agents while providing excellent customer service.

When talking about agent motivation and maintaining the feeling of connection with the company, some contact centers have established short virtual get-togethers, where the staff shares a coffee and a chat. This helps to keep some of the office camaraderie alive, and it's an alternative way to incorporate these little but special office moments agents might miss.



# Keeping agents close

Without a doubt, homeworking has been an obstacle for contact center quality managers. The geographical dispersion of agents makes it even harder for quality managers to know what is happening during every customer conversation, as well as to monitor agent performance. Some contact centers have tackled this challenge by sending supervisors to their agents' homes to have face-to-face interactions where supervisors can clear agent questions and talk about their KPI performance. Some other contact centers have opted for a more efficient alternative, which uses Voice Analytics technology for remote and automated quality assurance. This technology works as a parallel communication mechanism between supervisors, department heads, and frontline agents.

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Voice Analytics solutions were already being used by some office-based contact centers for quality management, as it is capable of analyzing 100% of all calls and showing quality managers only those calls, which need attention. Through this, the managers valuable time gets freed to focus on more important issues rather than manually listening to random calls.

**Andy Moorhouse** talks about the importance of integrating Csat scores with speech analytics measures. If performance is being measured based on hitting specific metrics, knowing what top performers do to drive Csat scores will allow coaches to share best practices and reinforce that specific behavior in their coaching.

# The Future: Contact Center Digital Transformation

Countless changes that this pandemic has brought are here to stay. **Pooja Meswani** from Deloitte says that “many companies want to make work from home agents a permanent reality.” Whereas **Peter Brouwer** from Continuum Global Solutions thinks it will instead become a hybrid model of homeworking and office working agents. This way, the benefits of homeworking are preserved without losing the fundamental face-to-face interactions. No matter how the future develops, one thing is certain, digital transformation will continue to be essential for contact center operations.

Companies have taken a considerable leap in terms of digital transformation during this past year; innovation at a pace that would have taken years in a normal situation is now done overnight. As **Alan Linter** from Capita reports, the future challenge will be to keep the innovation culture; the speed and growth of transformation resulted from the pressure and challenges companies had to overcome in such a short period. It will be a challenge to make this a sustainable way of working without losing the innovative mindset.

We found three key ingredients when diving into contact center digital transformation: data, automation and artificial intelligence. We live in an era of data, and contact centers need to be dynamic to be successful. Significant steps were made, and companies have started unlocking the value of data, but there is still a long way ahead to capture its full potential.

Intelligent automation of processes is another important topic contact centers should look for in the future. Intelligent automation consists of identifying the right reasons for automation and carefully selecting how much to automate, always giving customers the time to learn what has been changed to avoid negative impact on their customer journey or experience. And last but not least, artificial intelligence. The positive impact artificial intelligence can have on contact centers is enormous; merging 'the best of' from humans and AI can deliver the best outcome for every conversation. **Alan Linter** called it “the AI and human hybrid”, to boost contact center performance and service levels. Whatever its shape, whether it is AI in the form of voice analytics, chatbots for digital channels or automated call routing, this technology is here to stay. .



# About the Companies

## Deloitte India

Deloitte is a leading global provider of audit and assurance, consulting, financial advisory, risk advisory, tax, and related services.

<https://www2.deloitte.com/in/en.html>

## Continuum Global Solutions

Continuum Global Solutions is a leading customer care provider for companies worldwide. From voice, to chat, from social media, to email – our people deliver solutions.

<https://www.continuumgbl.com/>

## Capita

Capita is a consulting, transformation and digital services business, delivering innovative solutions to transform and simplify the links between businesses and customers, governments and citizens.

<https://www.capita.com/>

## Alitical

Alitical is an advanced analytics firm; using data, AI and conversation intelligence to eke out those final human performance gains.

<http://alitical.com/>

# About Xdroid

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THE  
TRUTH  
WILL  
SET YOU  
FREE

Xdroid is an independent, privately-owned software development company. This enables us to respond to changes quickly.

We believe that the truth will set you free

Our Artificial Intelligence solution, based on deep expertise, will reveal the truth about your customer interactions.

Analytics knowledge is the backbone of our development team.

Years of experience in developing high tech software for contact centres of financial institutions, utility companies, telecom operators, etc give us an incredible edge.

Start creating your success by understanding the truth.

We help you predict and anticipate in an uncertain and turbulent environment.

Let the truth set you free.



Agile solution  
Cutting edge technology  
Profound Industry knowledge

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