

Kathie Johnson, CMO at emerging CCaaS leader Talkdesk



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Presented By: [CrmXchange](#)

CrmXchange Managing Partner Sheri Greenhaus had a conversation with Kathie Johnson, CMO at emerging CCaaS leader Talkdesk, as part of the continuing series of interviews with solution providers.

In the first moments of the crisis, the initial reaction among businesses was “What will this mean? What do we need to do now?” As we have entered the second phase, we are seeing companies taking steps to ensure that they continue to interact effectively with their customers as they increasingly come to the realization that all their agents don’t have to be in one place. Once companies figured out how to get people working at home, whether it’s an interim situation or permanent position, they then turn to optimizing processes. They need to ensure that supervisors can manage their teams and handle the knowledge base.

During the devastation of Hurricane Maria our client, Millennial Solutions, had to immediately get their contact center employees up and running remotely. The company transitioned via Talkdesk. Since they had already migrated to remote workers, they were able to avoid the scrambling many companies now find themselves in.

In the latter stages of this situation... the post-crisis phase...it will be interesting to see how much of the world will shift permanently to a remote model. They might find that they don’t need to have agents in their immediate area; they can recruit agents with the right talent from almost anywhere.

Prior to the crisis, we have heard estimates that 80 – 88% of agents were employed on-premise. Now, companies have two choices: they can move everyone remote, or they can space their staff to comply with social distancing. If they choose social distancing, often they don’t have staff to answer all the calls resulting in long wait times.

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As an industry, it is important for us to determine if there is a way to help those who are currently unemployed become agents. Due to the environment we currently find ourselves in, companies are more inclined to hire someone remotely. The question is – How can we help businesses get the right agents trained and working from home? It's almost as if a new economy can be born. The perception has changed from an agent being a low-growth position to an important front-line contributor. While many companies are currently thinking about how to get through this situation, they're also thinking how to ensure that their brand is still strong in the future. When you look at which industries are rising and which are struggling, it's obvious that transportation and hospitality are the most negatively affected. Others, such as telehealth and ecommerce, are picking up. Banking and financial services are experiencing higher demand with people worried about their investments. Customers want to talk to a live person.

Talkdesk Helps

Our marketing plans have pivoted quite a bit. We have put offers out in the market that can help companies without having to do massive technology acquisitions. We recently launched a program for travel and hospitality by offering them a free solution for a set period of time. We recognize that they are not positioned to make investments now. This does not negate the fact that their lines are jammed with people trying to resolve and reschedule flights for a future time. We've heard horror stories about how long people are left on hold. While making these types of goodwill gestures to new companies, we're also engaged in helping our existing customers. Even those that have Talkdesk are not able to always make everybody remote without buying the agents laptops and equipment. We're offering a free solution to our customers on mobile agent. This solution allows them to work on their phone, or other mobile devices, without making the investment for at least a few months. It helps them in the near future.

For new customers, we can help them move to the cloud if they're currently on-prem. As an alternative, we are also offering those that don't want to upgrade their legacy system the opportunity to provide safety for their agents with another free solution. We're offering Talkdesk Boost which enables them to do that without abandoning the legacy system. We hope that by helping businesses through this incredibly difficult time, they will remember us when things return to some semblance of normalcy.

Covid19 Marketing Challenge

Right now, just about every email you receive starts with "coronavirus or Covid19." Sometimes, I feel like we're all guilty of it as well when we send out communications that say "we want to make sure you're safe and that we have a solution for you." You can become numb after a while. At the same time, if you don't acknowledge it, you can appear as being tone-deaf. We're developing relevant content, such as work-from-home tips. We're exploring some of the behaviors that agents need to adapt. We're also leaning into the training piece. The work at home model offers the opportunity to give those agents who no longer need to commute additional training time. How do we help educate them and further build their skills?

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We have a Talkdesk Academy. Some of our customers say they can train agents in 15 minutes; but more say an hour. One can be fully certified as an agent in two hours; then also be certified as a supervisor. We ask ourselves, 'What's the best way to train someone who has never had agent experience become an agent?' There is some soft skill training built in. We want the training to be a combination of learning what the role of an agent is, as well as technical guidance.

Talkdesk Products

Our solution has workforce management capabilities as well as a knowledge base component. We are launching 20 new products in 2020. Ours is a cool technology that makes it very easy to innovate. Beyond the WFM, we are also doing some things based on upskilling that we will be announcing in the near future. We launched virtual agents, a predictive dialer, and proactive notification in February. We launched some new functional applications and just released regional cloud, select cloud, and Guardian for enhanced security controls.

In this time, having a contact center in the cloud is fine, but there are other capabilities that can be added. In years past, security in the cloud was a concern. There is a great deal of security built into the Talkdesk solution. It's something inherent and far more than most cloud solution providers have. It was an element that our CEO, Tiago Paiva, recognized early on. While security is most important to regulated areas such as financial services, we now have a large healthcare company moving to the cloud with us. It was an incredibly compressed sales cycle and a 5-day implementation. We were able to implement the solution with all the security required.

Those who were skeptical about moving to the cloud are now awakening to the fact that it's more important than ever to take care of their customers, to ensure they maintain their brand reputation, and build the necessary revenue to survive coming out of this crisis. If a company is left without enough people to take care of customers, it won't be there in the future. We're helping agents who previously worked in a congested contact center for little more than minimum wage keep the economy running. By enabling agents to continue earning money, they are supporting their employers and their customers. It's a win-win.

Summary

We have a solution that enables businesses to keep their contact center function running remotely; whether they want to keep their legacy on-prem system or move to a 100% cloud solution. We also are doing everything we can to help companies train people who are out of work to quickly become effective agents. And for those companies that are already on the cloud and doing remote, we help them become as productive as possible.

We are hearing that a lot of companies that work on-prem are using a VPN solution. They are experiencing dropped calls. The solution is not working well. This might be the time to move to the cloud and explore Talkdesk.

At Talkdesk, we want to give those who want to work, the ability to work. The Talkdesk Academy is available for free

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The crisis mentality wasn't even on anyone's radar until the beginning of March. We launched Talkdesk Boost for business continuity a week before it was trending on Google.