

Buyer's guide for

CALL CENTER SOFTWARE



2020

cloudtalk

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Who is a call center software for & why should you have one?

Who is a call center software for & why should you have one?

A few years ago, only large companies could have afforded running their own call center. What's more, its functions were pretty limited in many ways. Even now, when you hear the term "call center", the first thing that most likely comes to your mind is a huge open space filled with identical desks and hundreds of agents dialing phone numbers gathered in spreadsheets. Of course, with headsets on. You might even imagine monotonous, mundane tasks, and activities related more to telemarketing than to anything else. A boring place with limited business purposes.

Now the reality is way different. Today, ***no company can function without a contact center*** that makes it possible to get in touch with customers, prospective clients, suppliers, and business partners. What's more, ***there are ready-to-use call center tools out there that even small organizations can afford to build their own contact centers.***

To put it simply, call center software helps to handle inbound, as well as outbound calls. Of course, the common use of a call center software revolves around offering support to the existing customers. But,

call centers can also be aimed at obtaining new business opportunities, offering telesales, advertising products or services, providing technical support, collecting receivables, conducting surveys, running marketing campaigns... The possibilities here are endless.

Let's dive deeper into them, and see how exactly you can use call center software and choose the best service provider for your needs.

Phone-based customer service

If your customer service agents deal with the stream of phone calls from existing clients, traditional phone connections and spreadsheets may not be enough to offer your customers the support they deserve and need. Fortunately, you can use call center software to organize all activities related to inbound phone interactions with your clients.

With the right solution, all data related to the customer queries are accessible in one place, organized, and easy to filter. Easily accessible information and contact history, in turn, are a must-have for your agents to assist your customers and quickly respond to their queries, resolving them in real-time. A single management system also makes it easier to measure customer satisfaction and improve your service with advanced analytics like [sentiment analytics](#) or tracking call activity, e.g., [real-time dashboard](#).

Cold calling & outbound sales

If you sell products or services over the phone and your sales reps make lots of calls daily, you surely need to have a call center software in place. First of all, it automates many tasks, helping you reach

more potential buyers and convert them thanks to features like emotion analytics, auto-dialers, callback, and integrations with major CRMs. It's also easier to measure your reps' performance and control their work, as all data about their daily activities are stored in the software you use. You can also do it by analyzing call recordings, which you can also use later for training and coaching purposes.



A comprehensive solution can also support you in creating [cold calling scripts](#) for each sales scenario. You will need them while running outbound activities. Relevant templates are also vital to ensure your communication is effective.

Lead qualification

Sometimes, companies own endless contact lists and databases, which put the focus on quantity rather than quality. It's very tempting to make assumptions about the number of potential customers you can get if, for example, you have a database of 20,000 contacts available.

The problem occurs when you realize that you are spending too many resources (time and money) on leads that are far from being your target customers. Instead of trying to convert them all, you can qualify (or disqualify) them with a single welcome call and decide if they are a fit for your sales team or not.

And obviously, you can use your call center software to do so. Hire a sales development rep (SDR), arm them with the right tools, introduce a phone qualification process, and start filtering your leads.

Market research

To expand market share, organizations should have a deep understanding of their competitors, target audience, and client base. There are a few ways to gather all this information, and with a call center implemented - you'll have all the right tools to run a market study, industry analysis, marketing campaign, campaign performance reporting, or survey among your customers (or contacts).

As with the outbound sales, call center software makes it easier to streamline all activities related to reaching out to the outside world. A phone conversation is the easiest and most effective way to gather insights about your company, your customers' expectations, or marketing your new product.

Why should you use cloud call center software?

Why should you use cloud call center software?

As stated above, call center software can apply to and facilitate many business activities. But, in essence, it doesn't only create the infrastructure for your communication with the outside world. It also delivers additional values and offers multiple advantages delivered across your company's departments.



Being in the cloud

You can run a call center from anywhere in the world with a fraction of the cost of a regular on-premise call center software. There are no complicated installations, hardware, or local storage space required - what's needed is a proper device, headphones, and Internet connection to make and receive calls. The actual software is set up, maintained, and upgraded by the call center software provider, which also offers additional support during the whole process.



Personalized service

With professional call center software in place, you are able to offer each customer and a potential client a personalized experience. Your support agents and sales reps can access the contact information of each user in seconds, check the history of their interactions with your company, and assist them with each and every query hassle-free.



Costs reduction

Building and maintaining an in-house call center infrastructure and hardware is time-consuming and pretty expensive. It also requires hiring and managing IT staff responsible for the technical support of your call center. If you implement dedicated software instead, all these costs are gone. Not to mention that a reliable solution also increases the productivity of your employees. Speaking of...



Productivity boost

If you choose your call center software wisely, it will be packed with intuitive and automated features related to both reps' work and reporting. Options such as call tagging, predictive dialer or skills-based call routing can help you eliminate repetitive, mundane tasks, and increase the efficiency of your employees in the process. Not to mention that detailed statistics and monitoring will help you introduce smart KPIs and measure the productivity of each agent.



Improved security

Call centers deal with lots of sensitive data. That's why this kind of solution, if designed well, is highly secure. They offer robust security protocols, compliance, and system maintenance to keep your call center operation secure and up and running all the time.

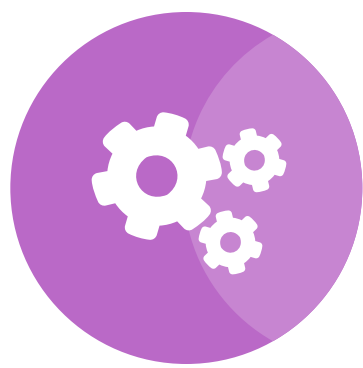


Accessibility

In general, consumers expect a real-time response, 24/7. [Research](#) shows that at each stage of contact with the brand, buyers defined quick contact with a salesperson as "important" or "very important". They indicated this in 82% of cases when they had sales or marketing related questions.



One of the key factors for companies in this new era of communication is accessibility. Now customers are used to comparing, researching, and trying to solve their issues in seconds. That's why it's crucial for any company to be accessible and ready to address all queries that occur at any phase of the buyer's journey. Purchase decisions are made in the heat of the moment, and it's this positive interaction with the brand that speeds up the process, as long as the product or service matches the customer's needs.



Operational flexibility

Modern call center software is a comprehensive, all-in-one solution that can do much more than just manage calls and information. Such tools are easy to use even by new agents and are designed to accommodate multiple types of operations simultaneously. The software can be integrated with your existing applications for CRM, CEM, e-commerce, marketing solutions, and others, building a powerful platform within your company. The best call center software is also highly customizable to meet all kinds of organizational needs.



Brand image and recognition

Owning a professional call center software not only helps to support your customers, sell more and achieve your goals, but it's also an unbeatable way to create and nurture a professional brand image of your business.

When a person interacts with a company on the phone, the first impression says a lot and will be decisive when it comes to tipping the balance in favor of your product or service. Using a call center software powered by advanced features such as [call queuing](#) or [intelligent call routing](#) will make the difference in terms of professionalism and brand image, and will help convey to the customer the message that they are talking to a serious and reliable company.



How to choose a proper call center software?



How to choose a proper call center software?

When it comes to choosing the best call center for your needs, it pays off to use a different strategy depending on your starting point. Have you been running a call center for months (or years) already and you'd like to another software provider? Or maybe you're setting up a contact center from scratch?

In each of these cases, you should focus on different factors, which is why we summarised them below.

Choosing a phone system for a new call center

Picking one of the many options available on the market can be daunting, especially if it's your very first call center. Keep in mind that ***your call center will keep growing*** – and your software should grow together with you. Some choices may work well at the start but later you may find out that they don't scale too well.

And that's not the only issue: every change of call center software is time-consuming – and time is money. This is why it pays off to choose a flexible, [cloud based call center solution](#) at the start to avoid extra

hassle later. Even when you decide on the basic pricing plan, be sure to **see what's included** in the more extended offers.

We're going to discuss all the factors and features worth keeping in mind later on, but here are some of the most important ones to get you started:



Cloud first – Compare the advantages and disadvantages of being in the cloud. Low initial costs and easy scaling make cloud the number one choice for companies looking for new call center software in 2020.



Mobile app – Think about cases when your call center agents would need to work remotely. When your call center software comes with a mobile app, this would give them a lot of flexibility. They would be able to pick up calls on the go, no matter where they are.



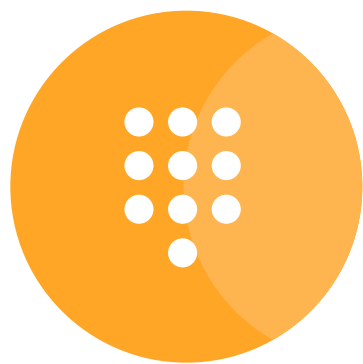
Pricing – When you make the choice, have a closer look at the pricing logic. Will the company charge a set price every month, or does it charge separately for every call center agent? Consider different scenarios that may take place in the future and see how the prices may change along the way.



Coverage – Is there any chance that your call center will need international coverage, either now or in the future? Even if you start locally, you might consider expansion later on. It's important to see which countries are covered by the phone system of your choice. For instance, CloudTalk works in [more than 70 countries](#) across different continents.



Integrations – Make a list of all the tools you're already using. If you're working with a particular sales CRM (e.g. Pipedrive, Zoho or Hubspot) or help desk software, you will probably need to integrate it with call center software of your choice.



Power dialer / Smart dialer – Have a look at more advanced features that are offered by different providers, especially Smart dialer. It's a powerful solution that automatically scans the available content in search of phone numbers, which are then being added to your calling queue and can be dialed with a single click.

Switching to another cloud call center software

No company should be forced to deal with a cloud call center software that limits their options and can't be adapted to their business needs. If you're frustrated with the current service provider, it's time to make the change.

Here are some of our best tips to get it all right:

01 Test the solution first.

Most software providers offer **free trial periods**, usually for more or less two weeks. This way, you can see if the app works smoothly, which features are included and whether you actually enjoy using it. Keep in mind that you're looking for something significantly better than your previous solution.

02 Focus on the intuitiveness.

Speaking of – when you're trying out a new tool, don't overlook your first impressions. If you feel that the app is not intuitive and you have to spend a lot of time to figure it out, it is a potential red flag. Not everything has to be crystal clear from the start, but if you're not really feeling comfortable with the app, it's probably not going to get any better in the future.



03 Consider the ease of transition.

Changing from one call center system to another always comes with extra work. Because of that, the objective is to make it as hassle-free as possible. If you're not sure what you'll need to do, don't hesitate to talk to a custom-

er support representative. They will be happy to explain all the details and you'll know exactly how much time and resources you're going to need.

Some tools might even offer **migration services** or **automated migration of your data** which makes it easier to switch. To give you an example: CloudTalk has experienced a surplus of customers switching from Aircall, which is why they introduced an [Aircall migration](#) feature.

04 Check system reliability.

When you choose a cloud call center solution, service quality has to be impeccable. This can only be achieved with a reliable call center system. Many things can be tested during the trial period yet it also pays off to do some in-depth research. You can check, for instance, **how many data centers** are used by the company or check each provider's [status page](#) for recent uptime..

05 Set your priorities.

Last but not least, have a look at the features you've been using most frequently. Figure out what are the most important ones for your team and treat these as a priority. For instance, most inbound call center teams make good use of ACD (automated call distribution), while outbound salespeople will find it hard to work without the right integrations.

What factors should you keep in mind when choosing a call center software?

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No matter if you're starting your own call center or you're just looking for a new tool for your existing one - choosing the right call center software might get overwhelming at times. With the wide offer available on the market, it's good to have some points on mind letting you focus on what is essential. That is why you'll find here a few important factors that will help you make the right decision.



Call quality and uptime

The quality and reliability of the service are the most important factors to look at. No matter the number of advanced features, integrations, and benefits - you can't make good use of them if the call center system is not working properly and the quality of calls is poor. That's precisely why you should look for a cloud call center solution that offers the maximum [quality of calls](#) with guaranteed latency and minimal jitter.



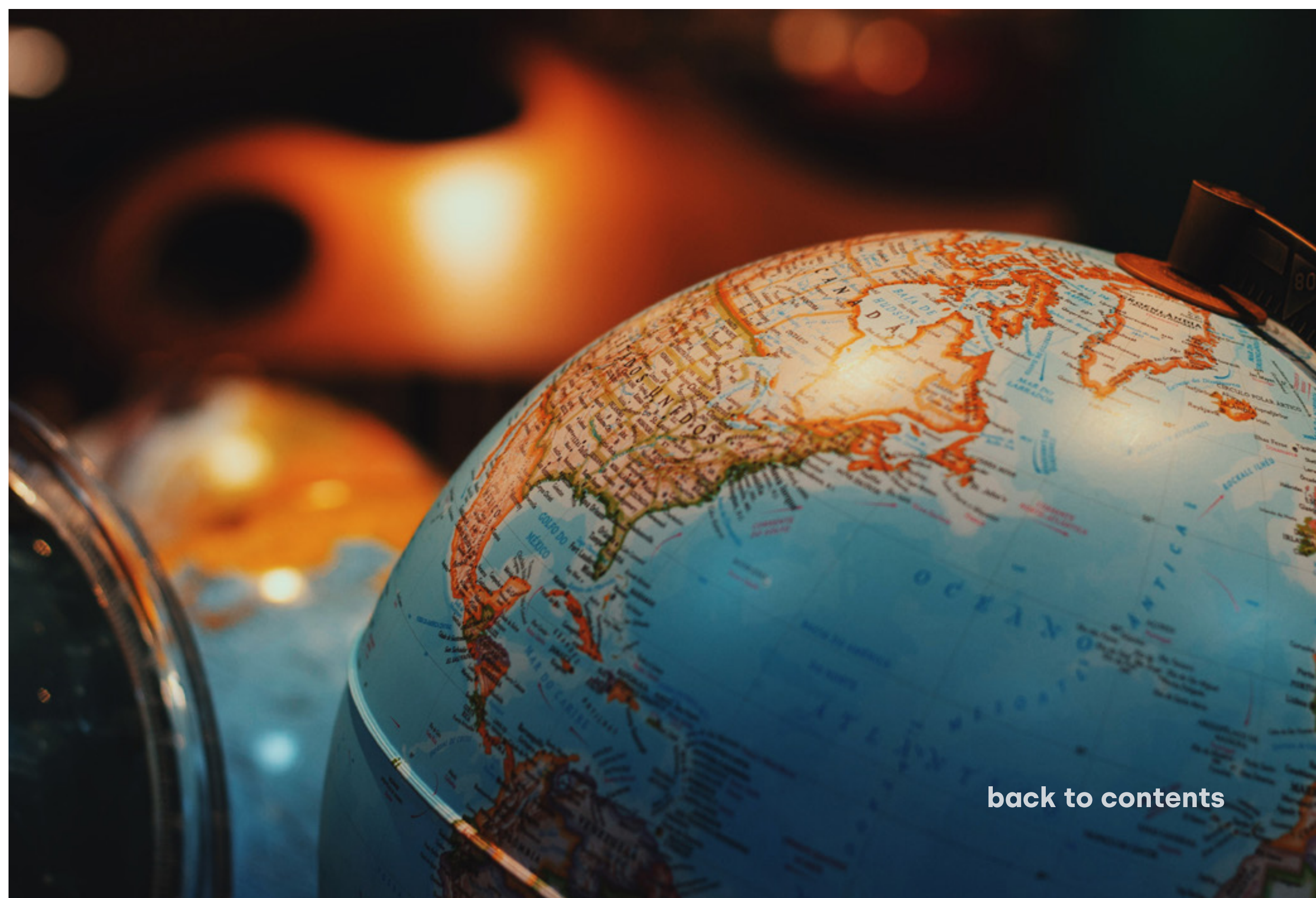
Ease of making & receiving calls

The first and most important task of a good call center tool is to make the process of calling easier for your team. So, it should be intuitive, automated where possible, and with a user-friendly interface. Take a look at the list of features available. If you find there options like [Smart Dialer](#) that helps you to call a list of your contacts with a single click, or call tagging to manage and organize them more easily, this could be a good solution.



International numbers offer

An important factor for your customers when deciding whether to call you or not is the cost of the call - especially if you operate on the international market. Make sure your call center has an option of a toll-free number and an international number, to make getting in touch easier than ever.





Options for call routing

It may actually be the first feature you should focus on, as it ensures that each call will be received by the right agent in the correct department. It impacts your customer service on various levels. Starting from the speed of providing a relevant response, to the overall satisfaction of your customers who aren't redirected from one agent to another, adequately set call routing may be a game-changer.



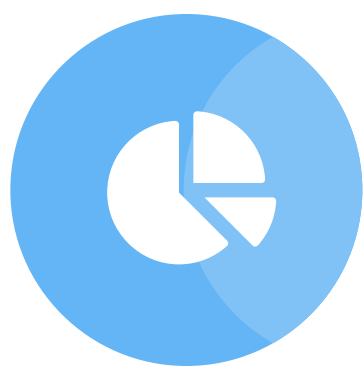
Level of security

In times when the data security breach becomes the nightmare of almost all companies, ensuring your call center solution takes the issue seriously is definitely on the list of deciding factors. If the company offer is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), you can be assured your sensitive data is stored safely.



Range of integrations

The more your tools interconnect, the easier it is for you. No need to copy and paste and to keep in mind some manual synchronization: you get all the relevant data across your software. Think about all the tools you currently use and can't live without, and then search for a call center tool that supports them.



Reporting and analytics

An ideal call center tool will not only help you boost your results by streamlining the workflow, but also by giving you insights into improving your performance. That's where the analytics features show their potential. [Call statistics](#) and [agent reporting](#) are the very basis for evaluating your actions, yet you can go further than that.

An important factor is also the visual and usability sides of the analytics. If your data is presented in a way you can't understand at first glance, chances are you won't make the most of it. That is where a custom reporting feature may be useful: you can adjust your reports to present data relevant to your business in a way you can use it without hassle.



Possibility of upscaling and downscaling your plan

When choosing a call center tool, you probably don't wish to change it anytime soon. That is why you should take into account how flexible the tool is, so it can grow with your business. Translating it into factors to keep in mind, think about how much effort does it take to add or remove your agents: can you do it yourself, or do you need assistance from your provider? Also, do you have to stick to one package for a year, or can you change it according to your needs?

This factor is vital if your business is still in the phase of growth, or if you're planning to develop it further. That's

why a pay-as-you-go pricing or additional features to pick up as you need, can meet your needs no matter how they change.



Free trial

All of the factors mentioned above won't make a difference if you can't test them out in your environment – and make sure they work for you. That is why a free trial period will be the last and the most critical stage of choosing your call center tool. Make sure you get enough time to test all the features you're interested in.



Pricing plans and call rates

After comparing the available solutions and narrowing down your choices, the price vs quality factor should help you pick the most appropriate solution. Take a closer look at pricing plans - in many cases, you don't have to purchase big enterprise packages to use all the options. Flexible pricing and the 'pay as you go' model are definitely something to look for.

Keep in mind that call rates can also make a big difference for your call center. Check how much do outbound calls really cost, and whether there are any limitations on the number and duration of calls, be it incoming or outgoing. [CloudTalk](#), for example, offers unlimited call packages even for high volume call centers.

Ready to test out those factors in practice? See what call center solutions you can choose from.

Top call center software providers



Top call center software providers

It shouldn't come as a surprise that increasingly more companies decide to use cloud-based phone systems, and the demand is met by a variety of call center software providers. As a matter of fact, the global cloud-based contact center market is expected to grow to 20.93 billion USD by 2022.

That's precisely why when choosing the best option for your call center, you should not only keep in mind all of the factors listed above, but also and get familiar with the users' opinions about the tools.

Platforms such as G2 and Capterra can help you make the right choice. The advanced search options enable searching through hundreds of tools and filter the most suitable results. For example, Capterra offers search results filtering considering pricing options, features, number of users and deployment. You can also sort solutions by the highest rated or most reviews to get the most helpful results. Such comparison websites can be extremely useful and time-saving, and enable you discovering solutions, that you didn't know before.

To make it easier for you to choose the best call center software for your needs, have a look at the most popular tools that can help you boost your call center:

CloudTalk

Currently, the highest-rated call center software on G2 and Capterra thanks to above-average call quality ratings and 99.99%+ uptime.

In comparison with other VoIP vendors, CloudTalk comes out on the lower price end with plans starting at 15 EUR per month. It is compliant with GDPR and relies on multiple data centers worldwide, that are constantly monitored and protected physically. You can add tags and notes to your calls and manage your conversations easier.

CloudTalk also offers international numbers from more than 70 countries so that you can efficiently work globally. It has a lot of features that can boost your teams' productivity, such as a power dialer, IVR menu, skill-based routing, automated call distribution and more.

Additionally, CloudTalk provides over 25 integrations with tools such as HubSpot CRM, Pipedrive, Zoho and LiveAgent.



4,8 / 5



4,3 / 5



Aircall

It's probably one of the most known VoIP providers out there. Its pricing starts at \$30 per user for the basic version, while live call monitoring and call tagging, as well as Salesforce integration, are covered in the more advanced plan for \$50 per user per month.

At the same time, using the basic version of Aircall enables having only five callers waiting in the queue, but the Professional plan allows keeping an unlimited number of callers on hold.

On the contrary to some other solutions, Aircall can be used by a minimum of three users. Still, with many features like call recordings, smart call routing, and Interactive Voice Response menu, Aircall can be effective for larger teams, especially in its advanced plan.

You can also integrate it with many tools, including helpdesk, CRM systems, and e-commerce software.



4.2 / 5



4.2 / 5



RingCentral

It's also one of the most popular VoIP solutions, both for small businesses and enterprises. The lowest monthly price for RingCentral is \$19 if paid annually, and monthly pricing starts at \$29.

What's interesting in particular, is that RingCentral Analytics Portal provides in-depth reporting on your call center performance.

When it comes to integrations, it offers, among others, Alexa for Business, Asana, Trello, Mailchimp, and Github. It also has many features helpful for both small and large enterprises and provides a mobile app.



4.2 / 5



3.8 / 5



JustCall

With different call distribution settings, missing a call from your customer is almost impossible. It gives an easy way to your callers to reach relevant departments, allow them to remain in the queue while waiting for an agent to take the call, and leave a voice mail if needed.

Its costs vary from \$25, and up to \$50 per user. Interestingly, it's also charging users per minute of calling.

It misses some of the advanced features, like an automatic callback, or skill-based routing. On the other hand, JustCall offers many integrations, including Salesforce, Pipedrive, Zoho, Hubspot, Zendesk, Freshdesk, Intercom.



4.1 / 5



3.8 / 5



Implementing the chosen call center solution

Implementing the chosen call center solution

It's clear to see that there are plenty of factors and possibilities that come into play when choosing the right call center software provider. Once you make your choice, though, keep in mind that the deployment shouldn't take too long in order not to impede the work of your call center agents. Luckily, when implemented right, many cloud-based call center solutions can take just a moment to go live.



Nonetheless, ***some training and support will be required***, and it may take a while to onboard your agents. For this reason, it also makes sense to see whether the service provider offers some kind of support during the implementation (and after, for that matter).

Consider the following:



Is there a dedicated customer success representative that can take you through the deployment?



Do you have an assigned specialist to guide you through the customization of your software?



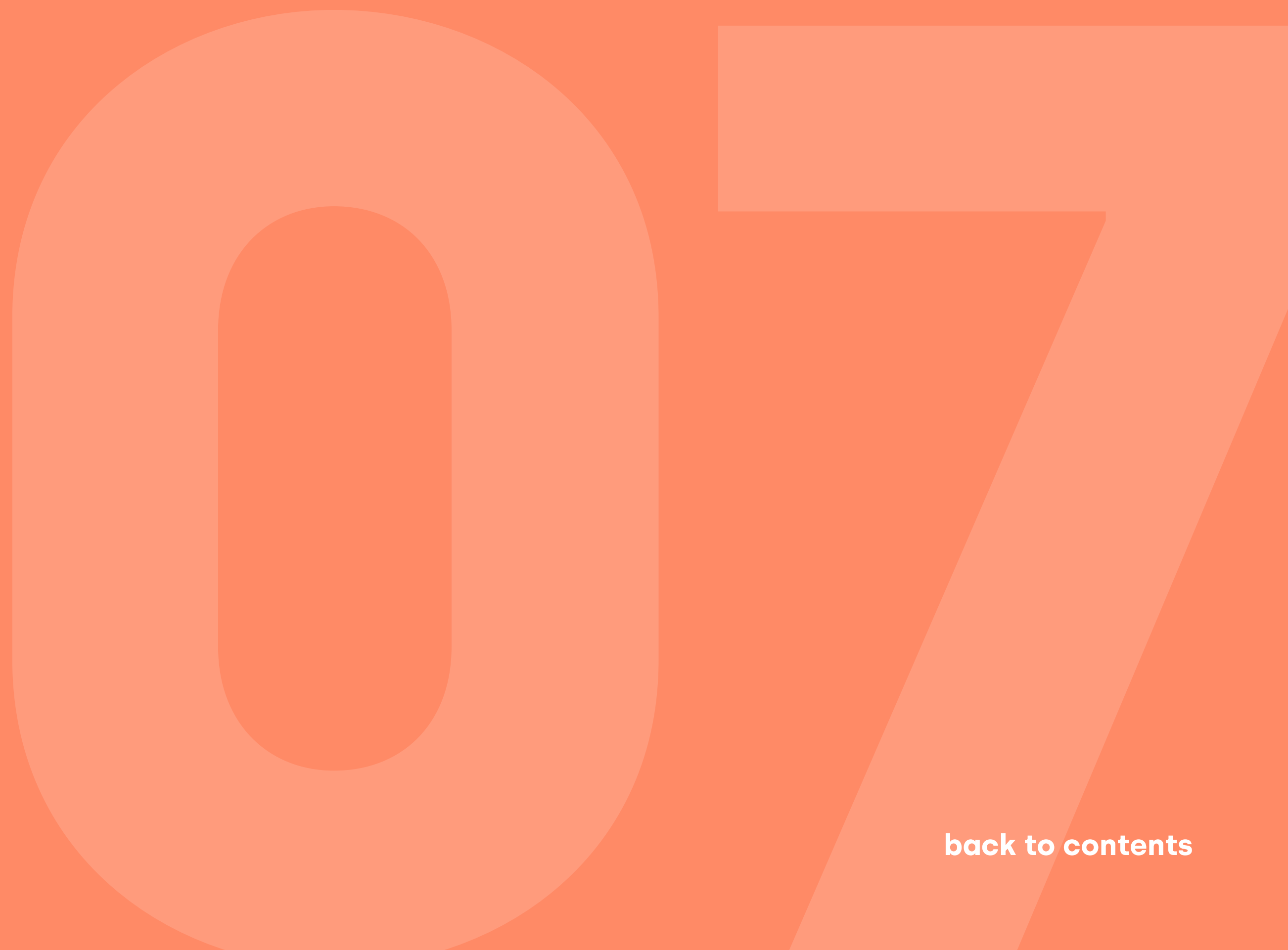
Is there a contact person you can still stay in touch with when the software is up and running?



Is the service provider going to deliver continued learning resources and training?

What should also help you at this stage is to figure out how exactly your team will be using the software. Successful deployment doesn't end with the "installation" - with the right call center software, you will also have to think about how it will affect your agents' job and how it can be used to their advantage.

What's next for your call center?



What's next for your call center?

It definitely is tempting to make a decision about the preferred call center software based on the current needs of your business. Even if you choose to deploy a cloud-based call center solution today, ***ask the service provider about your options if/when these needs change.*** You should know how much autonomy you will have when it comes to customizing the software and its features, and how much dependency your call center has on the service provider when making any changes.

Basically, when choosing any software, you want to make sure that it will help you move closer to achieving your future business goals, not keep you from them. In the beginning, you don't have to choose the most advanced package to use all the features. As already mentioned, ***[flexible pricing](#) and 'pay as you go' model can give you an opportunity to upscale and downscale any time you want or need to.***

A scalable software can help everyone involved - increasingly more demanding customers, ambitious call center reps, and the future needs of your whole call center. Not to mention that ***a call center solution that allows you to easily add or remove the number of agents, numbers, or specific features*** is extremely useful whenever there are any unexpected changes in your call center that have to be made.

The best way to anticipate and prepare for the changes is to keep an eye on the performance of your call center. That's precisely why it makes sense to leverage the insights & reporting feature of your call center software (which should be there at your disposal), and track relevant metrics on a regular basis - such as first contact resolution, average call duration, and customer satisfaction.



This way, you can spot any issues and opportunities almost immediately, and react accordingly once you're at it. In fact, with the possibility to analyze the performance of your call center and scale whenever needed, you can easily keep your customers and call center reps satisfied, for years to come.

How to make sure the software can scale with your business, then?



See if there are any limitations (regarding the number of agents, call volume or concurrent calls, for example),



Check whether you can easily add and remove agents,



Take a look at the available features - are you able to add, remove, and tailor them to the needs of your call center? Can you do it on your own, or you need to rely on the service provider?



Figure out how often do you have to download new software, updates, and plug-ins,



Know what you're paying for at all times – are you being charged for the number of agents? Minutes that you use? Features that you take advantage of?

Answering such questions shouldn't be problematic for the software provider - if it is, you might want to consider switching to [a call center software that can scale with your business.](#)

Summary

Summary

More and more companies are investing in their own call centers, and there are a few good reasons for that. Above all, the phone is still one of the most frequently chosen communication channels - even though its role and available features are changing. It's mostly due to the rise of cloud-based phone systems that are fully capable of transforming any call center into a powerful contact hub.



In fact, cloud solutions offer certain flexibility, reliability, scalability, and support that on-premise solutions are not able to provide. You can easily set up your call center in a few minutes, and there are no complicated installations, hardware, or local storage space required. Not to mention that they are often cheaper and more secure as well.

The only issue here is to find the best cloud call center software that can be tailored to your needs. That's precisely why the ***Buyer's Guide for Call Center Software 2020*** was created - to help you make the right choice.

We hope that with all the tips above, we made the whole process easier for you. No matter if you're about to set up a brand new call center or you simply want to switch from your current software provider, there are certain factors you should keep in mind. Take a closer look at the available solutions, their features, and integrations - and make sure you test them in practice. Compare the providers and take into consideration all the pros and cons. After all, there is an important decision ahead of you!

And to make it even more straightforward:
as you might have already guessed, ***CloudTalk*** is a perfect example of a cloud call center solution that is likely to meet all your requirements. It doesn't only let you make and receive lots of your calls but also offers an excellent quality of calls, a variety of features and integrations, and favorable pricing terms on top of that.

[See it for yourself.](#)



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