Buyer's Guide:

How to Choose a **Contact Centre Solution?**

Enghouse Interactive

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How to Choose a Contact Centre Solution

Customer service is now central to the success of every organisation, making it vital that the technology underpinning your contact centre enables you to deliver the experience that your customers demand, efficiently and effectively.

At the same time, every organisation is different, with its own requirements, objectives and business drivers – there is no one size fits all approach when it comes to choosing contact centre technology.

Given the importance of your contact centre and the wide variety of factors involved in making your choice, you need to ensure you make the right decision. This guide aims to navigate you through the process, providing insights into the areas you need to focus on and input into how you can solve specific business challenges. Whatever your ultimate needs, asking yourself the following questions will help build a picture of the best solution for you:

1 What are your business needs?

Start by looking at your organisation – what is your overall strategy and how does customer service and your contact centre support this? Think about if this is likely to change in the near future – as we've all seen in recent times, businesses have had to radically transform themselves and their operations, often overnight.

If you already have a contact centre, what is driving the decision to change your infrastructure? It could be because it no longer supports your business needs or there may be other, more detailed reasons. Alternatively, is there a unit within your business that could benefit from contact centre skills-based routing and reporting functionality? Understanding the triggers for change is crucial to ensuring you don't just replace like with like, missing out on new functionality.

2 What do your customers want?

Every business needs to be customer-focused, but again, customer requirements will vary between different organisations. What channels do your customers want to use to contact you through and how is this changing over time? Understand the volumes of interactions your new system needs to cope with to ensure reliability and scale, and analyse the customer journey to see where the contact centre is likely to be most used, and where it adds value to the customer and organisation. What sort of queries do customers have and how can their needs be most effectively met? For example, if you are receiving a high proportion of low-value, routine calls or emails, your new system should include self-service capabilities to help customers to help themselves, either online or via telephone self-service, freeing up resource for other, more complex activities.

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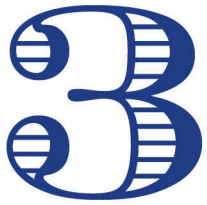
What is your existing technology infrastructure?

Contact centres don't operate in a bubble – they need to integrate with the wider organisation. Your new technology should enable you to link to other solutions used within customer service and also to business systems, such as CRM platforms like Salesforce.com, ticketing systems, reporting tools, HR, sales and marketing. You also need to consider which of your existing solutions you are going to keep, and which you will replace over time.

The current situation has highlighted two key points when it comes to technology. Firstly, businesses require agility to meet fast-changing requirements which can be delivered by embracing the cloud. Secondly, innovation is central to delivering on business and customer needs – technologies such as artificial intelligence can provide both greater efficiency and higher customer satisfaction. Underpinning all of this, solutions need to be secure, scalable, and able to protect customer data and meet regulatory requirements.

Once you have completed this analysis, you'll have a deeper understanding of what your requirements actually are. You can then begin the research process, looking for solutions that meet your specific challenges, now and in the future, with a clear technology development path. Check that suppliers have existing users that are happy to share their experiences with you.

In the next section, we'll highlight some of the key challenges you may face and how they can be overcome.

The driver for investing in new contact centre technology or moving to the cloud clearly varies between companies. However, in this section we highlight some of the key, common issues that organisations face – and how businesses have solved them by working with us.

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Questions

1. What business need is driving the requirement to change your contact centre technology?

2. Are there future business plans you need to take into consideration?

3. Who are your customers and why do they contact you?

4. What volumes of interactions do you receive and on what channels? Do you have seasonal peaks and troughs that you need to cope with?

5. What is the size of your contact centre and will this change over time?

6. What is your overall technology infrastructure and how does it integrate with your contact centre? Are you moving to the cloud or remaining on-premise?

7. What would make your contact centre more efficient? What would make the lives of your agents easier?

8. What would improve the customer experience when people contact you?

9. What are your security and regulatory requirements?

10. What are you looking for in the supplier relationship?

Controlled migration to a cloud-based contact centre

As organisations look to embrace the cloud, they want any migrations to be seamless with minimal disruption to both business operations and the service they deliver to their customers, whilst at the same time protecting existing investment in legacy solutions.

That means they require a controlled migration that moves at the right speed for their business needs.

One organisation that has successfully made a controlled move to the cloud is Landmark Information Group, the UK's leading provider of land and property search information. In a fast-changing, technology-led market, Landmark understood that customer needs were evolving. That meant it required contact centre technology that could deliver service in real-time to a wide range of customers from estate agents and conveyancers to lenders, and that could flex to meet its future requirements.

Additionally, as an organisation that had grown through acquisitions, Landmark wanted to switch from multiple legacy telephony and CRM solutions to a unified cloud-based infrastructure, while still sweating its legacy assets. Taking a single, big bang approach and moving everything at once would have been both disruptive and not cost-effective, as it would have continued to pay for legacy solutions it was not using.

Landmark first adopted Skype for Business on-premise as its telephony platform in 2016, migrating to Microsoft Teams in 2018 as part of its strategy to mobilise its workforce. It therefore needed a contact centre solution that could evolve through this process, supporting the switch to the cloud and delivering continuous, high-quality customer experience. To meet these requirements, it first implemented Enghouse Interactive Contact Centre in 2016, alongside Skype for Business.

Thanks to the close integration between Enghouse and a wide variety of unified communications (UC) environments, including Skype for Business and Teams, Landmark has been able to migrate its existing contact centre solution to a new UC platform, minimising disruption and ensuring a better experience for its customers. It migrated to the latest, cloud-based version whilst it rolled out Teams in 2020 as its telephony backbone. Through the whole migration process, the flexibility of Enghouse's solution has ensured that customers have benefited from a high-quality experience, while contact centre staff have had access to a familiar, easy to use solution.

Moving to the cloud but still providing a customised solution

Like many large organisations, this major UK business wanted to benefit from moving to the cloud but still needed to be able to customise its contact centre solution to its specific needs.

Operating in a highly competitive sector and handling high call volumes through a team of 300 agents, its contact centre is a vital part of its operations and central to its ongoing success. It required a solution that could be tailored and adapted to its existing processes and that integrated seamlessly with existing and third-party systems, now and in the future.

Security was paramount, as the solution had to be able to easily and securely exchange confidential data with in-house systems such as HR, finance and the service desk. At the same time, the organisation was looking to boost efficiency while ensuring the highest standards of customer service. It wanted to reduce contact volumes, shorten calls and eliminate the need for its agents to complete repetitive tasks through automation.

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Finally, the business wanted to remove the management overheads of running a traditional on-premise solution in its data centre, instead moving to hosting it in a private cloud where it still retained control. Essentially, it wanted cloud-based technology that it could customise, optimise and automate, achieving both efficiency and full control of its contact centre.

Based on this, it is looking to implement a cloud-based solution that combines comprehensive access to the customer interaction lifecycle with a distributed model that enables agents to work from home and thus ensure business continuity.

It also wants technology that doesn't tie it down to a particular unified communications (UC) provider, increasing flexibility. Altogether, the aim is to benefit from the power of the cloud to increase efficiency, alongside the ability to customise technology to its specific needs, providing a tailored solution that completely matches its exacting requirements.

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Quickly enabling customer service home working

The widespread lockdowns forced by the coronavirus pandemic dramatically impacted customer service operations.

At the same time as consumers wanted additional reassurance from businesses, their ability to respond quickly and effectively was hindered by the closure of physical contact centre locations.

Businesses had to switch to new ways of working within hours, quickly enabling customer service agents to work from home. This meant providing them with everything they needed in terms of information and technology access to do their jobs, while still maintaining the ability to monitor operations and ensure the highest quality standards.

Even before COVID-19, many organisations were underpinning their communications with Microsoft Teams, enabling both seamless collaboration and the ability to communicate instantly through voice and video calls. Fully integrated into the Microsoft stack, Enghouse Interactive's Contact Centre Solutions bring the ability to manage contact centre telephony to Teams. Calls can be quickly transferred between remote agents, with full monitoring of performance and business metrics built in.

Two organisations that have benefited from the combination of Teams and Enghouse Interactive Contact Centre technology are Mayo County Council in the west of Ireland and gas and electricity supplier, Flogas.

Amongst the most innovative councils in Ireland, Mayo had implemented Teams throughout its organisation and required a contact centre solution that would integrate perfectly and enable it to manage calls within the Teams environment. Thanks to the cloud-based solutions from Enghouse Interactive, the council is benefiting from a much more fluid customer service when supporting residents over the telephone, and at the same time eliminating manual tasks to improve efficiency. When the pandemic struck, Mayo was able to easily enable home working for its agents through Enghouse plus quickly create a response team and helpline to connect with residents and communities, particularly those most vulnerable and at risk.

Energy supplier Flogas was already looking to replace its mission-critical telephony solution, which is the main channel for customer interaction. COVID-19 accelerated the decision-making process and it chose Enghouse Contact Centre to provide a robust and resilient contact centre solution that would integrate with its new telephony environment. With the solution delivered in a matter of weeks after the initial engagement, Flogas was able to move very quickly to support its 130 agents who were all working from home, ensuring the system was configured and ready to go live within 72 hours, with no impact on efficiency and productivity. With its close integration to Teams, Enghouse provides an out-of-the-box solution, thereby avoiding the need for the energy supplier to commit significant IT resource to rolling out or customising its new contact centre solution. The result is a seamless, reassuring service for consumers, that ensures business continuity while increasing efficiency and control for the business.

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Delivering a seamless omnichannel experience by embracing digital channels such as social media, video and chatbots

Customers want to be able to contact organisations through a range of channels and expect to receive a seamless omnichannel experience, whatever combination they use.

To achieve this efficiently, companies need to be able to integrate technology to deliver a single view of the customer, with the flexibility to extend to new channels, such as social media, video and live chat as required.

Leading contact centre outsourcer Ascensos is focused on delivering a state-of-the-art experience to its clients and their customers by embracing digital channels alongside telephony. It needed a solution to support this cutting-edge vision, combined with the flexibility to tailor services to individual client requirements. It chose to work with Enghouse Interactive due to the strength and flexibility of its technology, its commitment to innovation and partnership approach.

Thanks to Enghouse, it now has an omnichannel solution that is easy to navigate by agents and provides good visibility of incoming interactions, whatever channel they are working on, backed by intelligent routing and a single view of the customer. Enghouse also delivers enhanced integration with client CRM systems to increase efficiency and flexible yet powerful reporting tools that enables Ascensos to create and customise reports quickly and easily.

With its contact centre handling over 1,800 interactions every day, across multiple channels, a major UK transport company understood that its existing solution lacked the flexibility and roadmap for the future that it required. It wanted to take an omnichannel approach that supported everything from voice, email and web forms to social media and chatbots, whilst ensuring a seamless experience for customers, regardless of channel. With a new solution from Enghouse Interactive, it now benefits from a single view of the customer and is able to provide service across channels, including Facebook and WhatsApp.

The solution also matches its needs for future innovation, with the company currently reviewing Enghouse's AI and chatbot capability in order to potentially add this to its infrastructure.

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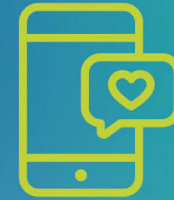
Empowering Agents

For most customers, contact centre agents are the face of the organisations they interact with and are critical to the experience a company provides.

Ensuring that these agents are empowered with the right technology, knowledge and training to deliver consistently excellent service, personalised for every consumer, is at the heart of building a successful, customer-centric business.

However, in many organisations agents are held back by legacy infrastructure that no longer meets their – or the company's – needs. That was the case at specialist lender George Banco, where agents were using its original primitive phone system as the business expanded, making it difficult to handle the growth in call volumes. George Banco had no visibility or control over the interaction process, so was unable to measure key metrics such as length of call, while agents couldn't quickly retrieve the information they needed to help customers when speaking to them.

With a flexible solution from Enghouse Interactive, it now has enhanced control through a dashboard showing all live calls, wait times and duration, enabling managers to intervene as necessary to improve the experience and drive efficiencies. Agents can automatically see who is calling, with instant access to a full history of previous customer interactions, helping them to quickly understand the nature of the call and deliver a more personalised service.

Contact centre outsourcer Ascensos is another business where its agents benefit from Enghouse Interactive's solutions. With an intuitive interface, the agent solution allows greater effectiveness, whatever channel they are working on, with clear visibility of their queue and access to service level agreements. The solution's last agent routing capability enables agents to build relationships with customers, while providing them with a view of all previous conversations, across every channel, creating a better experience.

Many organisations are adopting Microsoft Teams within their contact centres, empowering agents and enabling more collaborative working.

As part of this, a large county council adopted Enghouse Interactive's solution as it enabled its individual contact centre teams to manage call flows and basic configurations, integrated with Teams, without needing the support of IT, helping it to better support its residents.

A Welsh housing association also chose to move to Teams over the long-term, while initially rolling out Skype for Business as part of its customer engagement solution. Working with Enghouse Interactive, it now has a single platform that empowers agents to self-manage while measuring and improving customer service through quality management and coaching solutions.

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Rationalising systems

Most organisations already have existing legacy contact centre systems in place. These have often been deployed in a piecemeal manner or been added to through mergers or acquisitions. Successfully rationalising contact centre systems or migrating to new technology is vital if the aim is to increase efficiency, improve the customer experience and enable agents to operate effectively.

After merging with Spectrum Housing Group, housing association Sovereign had two separate IT estates along with different telephony and contact centre platforms across multiple locations. It wanted to move to a single, streamlined solution that it could build on for the future, and would be able to integrate closely with its chosen unified communications platform and other business systems. It selected Enghouse Interactive to underpin its digital-first contact centre strategy, migrating all 150 agents to its solution. This is enabling Sovereign to handle a greater volume of calls, improve quality and better manage its workforce through more detailed insight and reporting.

Following a merger with a large competitor, a multinational IT company was also aiming to rationalise its infrastructure, migrating the combined workforce to a single set of internal business systems. Enghouse Interactive's solutions were already successfully used within the new acquisition's contact centre and after reviewing solutions across its enlarged business the company opted for Enghouse as its preferred platform, as it offered a low-risk transition. It is now rolling out a global contact centre solution with Enghouse across three continents, future-proofing it and providing flexibility for further expansion.

A leading global law firm took the strategic decision to switch to Microsoft's unified communications platform, meaning it needed to replace existing contact centre technology used by its IT helpdesk. By choosing to extend its current Enghouse Interactive implementation, it is benefiting from a solution that integrates closely with Microsoft and offers a seamless upgrade path as the new UC platform is rolled out globally.

All of these organisations are achieving greater efficiency and saving money by replacing older technology within their contact centres. More importantly, they now have access to the latest, future-proofed solutions, enabling them to deliver an improved service to their customers moving forward.

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Leveraging new collaboration environments

Across sectors, businesses understand that they need to focus on putting the customer first, and that this requires an integrated, collaborative approach that spans the whole organisation.

That's why many are extending the use of unified communications platforms such as Microsoft Teams to their contact centres.

UC brings together all communication channels, including instant messaging voice, email, audio, video conferencing, and more, to help improve business communications, collaboration and productivity. A key part of digital transformation, it increases productivity and enables organisations to manage and integrate a range of communication channels to provide a consistent user experience, while allowing customers to move seamlessly between these channels.

All Enghouse Interactive Contact Centre Solutions are platform independent. That means they integrate and are certified with a range of industry-leading systems including Cisco, Avaya, Microsoft and NEC. This provides flexibility as Enghouse can work within all of these UC environments or as a hybrid solution, increasing choice for organisations.

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As part of its transformation strategy, Mayo County Council in Ireland has implemented Microsoft Teams throughout the organisation, which supports over 130,000 residents. Once Teams was in place, the missing piece in the jigsaw was to find a contact centre solution to integrate with it and to manage calls made within the Teams environment. Thanks to the flexibility of Enghouse Interactive's contact centre solutions, it is achieving this balance while improving efficiency, reporting and collaboration.

Leading contact centre integrator GCI wanted to be able to offer its clients a solution that enabled them to benefit from new unified communications platforms while being flexible enough to work with a wide range of other options. By choosing to extend its partnership with Enghouse Interactive, it is now able to offer a cloud-based unified communications platform to its clients, capable of streamlining the contact centre experience for customers. One of its first clients to benefit is a housing and homelessness charity, which now has a cloud-based contact centre solution built on Enghouse Interactive technology that also makes use of Skype for Business. This provides a clear migration path for the future combined with the flexibility to integrate with existing systems.

Organisations want to embrace innovation to deliver a better, more efficient experience to their customers – but at the same time want to ensure they can move at the right pace to minimise risk and maximise ROI. That means they need a flexible contact centre solution capable of integrating with a wide range of unified communications and telephony providers, meeting both current and future needs.

Driving operational efficiencies and delivering higher quality services
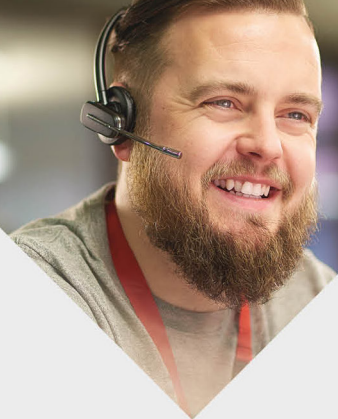
In competitive and challenging times, organisations need to ensure they are maximising their contact centre efficiency – but without negatively impacting customer service.

That means looking for technology that can automate processes and reduce administration, making delivering a high-quality experience easier and more seamless while enabling the introduction of new services that meet changing customer demands.

Sedgemoor District Council is focused on achieving this balance of efficiency and quality. It had outgrown its existing contact centre solution, which relied on increasingly obsolete analogue PBX technology and was causing sound quality issues. It needed a modern interface to support its unified communications approach and chose a contact centre solution from Enghouse Interactive. Its new solution has transformed the way the council interacts with the public. It can handle a higher volume of calls, reducing wait times and ensuring callers have their issues dealt with more quickly through intelligent routing. Switching to a digital approach has also reduced telephony costs and enabled remote working.

Cargiant, the world's largest used car dealership, supplies nearly 1,000 cars a week. As well as offering customers choice and great service, it is focused on keeping costs down in order to operate competitively. Changing, more digital buying patterns were leading to spikes in demand outside the traditional working day and Cargiant wanted to be able to adopt a more data-driven, integrated approach. All of this was putting pressure on its existing contact centre telephony system.

By implementing a new, digital communications platform from Enghouse Interactive that integrates phone and email, Cargiant is now able to deal with calls more quickly, resolve queries much faster and achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction. Through enhanced integration, it has been able to reduce the average duration of contact centre calls from three minutes to two and a half, significantly decreasing average wait times. Enghouse's OPEX-based pricing provides additional flexibility, while enabling Cargiant to meet changing customer needs.

Due to fast growth, specialist insurance provider Home Appliance Guard (HAG) had exceeded the capabilities of its existing contact centre system. At the same time, it wanted to improve operations, both by reducing costs and using call recording to boost agent efficiency. With Enghouse Interactive's Solution, it has been able to move to the cloud, enabling agents to become more productive, all while guaranteeing reliability and resilience. This has delivered large cost savings which have been reinvested into plans for future growth.

A major UK luxury hotel chain needed a solution that would deliver an exceptional customer experience to its guests, reinforcing its brand values, while improving the agent experience. However, its existing contact centre technology was unable to measure or determine the service it provided, with disparate solutions all leading to a disjointed, inefficient approach.

By switching to Enghouse Interactive, it is now benefiting from an integrated approach to customer service, enabling expansion into key areas and providing a smooth upgrade path to Microsoft Teams as the business continues to evolve and grow.

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Having it your way

Choosing the right contact centre technology – and the right supplier to partner with – is vital to your customer service success.

That's why it is a decision that shouldn't be rushed, requiring in-depth analysis of your own needs, budget, timeframes and detailed research into the overall market. You need to ensure your current needs are met and that you are working with a supplier that can support you over the long-term, as requirements evolve and change. Look for a partner that fits these six key criteria:

1 Choice

As we've said, every organisation has different needs, both in terms of business and technology. Therefore, your technology supplier should offer a breadth of proven products and solutions for you to choose from. That enables you to pick what is best for your company, based on factors such as your customer base, volume of interactions, channels, vertical market, location and technology infrastructure. Even if you are not looking to move to the cloud now, check that suppliers provide a choice of deployment methods and unified communications platforms so you can migrate later to your UC of choice if your plans change.

2 Reliability

You need to be able to trust your contact centre technology to perform consistently and reliably. Look for a supplier that has gained industry recognition for the highest levels of uptime and support and is committed to doing the best for its customers. That way you'll benefit from a resilient solution that grows with your business and changing needs.

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3 Understanding

Customers are becoming increasingly demanding when it comes to the experience and service that they receive. This means that organisations must look to innovate if they are to stay ahead of their rivals and ensure continued customer satisfaction. Choose a partner that understands this and is committed for the long-term, investing both in research and development and supporting its customers to meet their changing needs.

4 Flexibility

The current pandemic has shown dramatically how requirements can literally alter overnight. Your technology has to enable you to respond quickly to change, delivering the flexibility to support your business, whatever the circumstances - otherwise it will prevent you achieving your customer service and business goals. Invest in a partner that delivers this flexibility, not just through its technology but in its business terms. You need to be able to quickly increase or decrease capacity, move to the cloud or on-premise and upgrade technology as required.

5 Responsibility

Consumers today demand the highest ethical and environmental standards from the companies they deal with. And that should extend to your technology suppliers - we all have a duty to protect the world around us, so choose to work with those that demonstrate that they act responsibly and ethically at all times.

6 Agility

Ever increasing competition means that to seize opportunities all organisations have to move fast. Technology must support this, with a central contact centre platform that can be easily configured as needs change. It has to integrate with your overall technology infrastructure seamlessly as we move to an era of closer internal collaboration to meet customer demand. You need an open, yet secure, contact centre solution that continues to deliver business value as and when your organisation changes.

Worksheet for creating your contact centre strategy

Formulating a strategy for your contact centre is difficult, especially in the turbulent and uncertain circumstances we are facing right now.

We have created this worksheet to help you prepare for various scenarios.
Building on the insights shared in this Buyer's Guide, you can confidently shape your contact centre into a powerful and efficient solution, designed to satisfy the most demanding customers as well as ensure a profitable operation of your business.

How to use this worksheet?

There are two tables – one as an example and another for you to copy and use as a template. Once you have your scenarios mapped out, identify priorities and start planning your next projects. This will help you to decide where to invest your resources to ensure a future-proof, customer-centric running of your contact centre.

Creating a Contact Centre Strategy

Scenario: Coronavirus forcing us into lockdown

Timeframe	Immediate	6-Month	1 Year
What do you need your contact centre to deliver?	• Fully remote team • Maintain service levels • Deal with increased contact volumes	• Expand remote workforce • Improve service levels • Improved self-service facilities	• Efficient, remote operation • Highest standards in CX • Increased levels of automation
What challenges are you facing?	• Issues with remote setup • High contact volumes • Technical issues	• Staff turnover • Remote management • Reporting & Quality Control	• Track and predict pipeline • Increase revenue • Staff motivation & performance
What goals need to be prioritised?	• Resolving technical issues • Respond to demand • Staff support & wellbeing	• Staff retention • Quality assurance • Improvement to business processes	• Increase sales pipeline • Expand team of highly-qualified, specialised agents • Staff wellbeing
What resources do you need to invest in?	• Remote technology incl. peripheral equipment, software, security • Collaboration & Communication	• Virtual onboarding, training and coaching • Knowledge Management tools • Call Recording	• AI & automation • Self-service • Mobile customer service

Creating a Contact Centre Strategy

Scenario:

TImeframe	Immediate	6-Month	1 Year
What do you need your contact centre to deliver?			
What challenges are you facing?			
What goals need to be prioritised?			
What resources do you need to invest in?			

About Enghouse Interactive

We are the world's most reliable customer contact technology provider. Our global brand is built on our track record of consistently honouring our commitments to our customers, our staff and our shareholders.

Enghouse Interactive, a subsidiary of Enghouse Systems Limited (TSX: ENGH) is a leading global provider of customer contact software and service solutions that deliver enhanced customer service and transform the contact centre from a cost centre into a powerful growth engine.

Our practices and solutions enable businesses to leverage meaningful, daily customer interactions to extract key insights used to deepen customer loyalty and uncover new opportunities to add value, profitably. Supporting over 10,000 customers, in 120+ countries, Enghouse Interactive works within any local regulatory environment and supports any telephony technology, whether deployed on-premises or in the cloud, ensuring that our customers can be reached by their customers – anytime, anywhere and via any channel.

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