

# Delivering Happy Customers in the Experience Economy

Customer Experience as a  
Service (CXaaS)



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# Introduction

Digital is the next normal is truer than ever, especially since the COVID-19 outbreak, and enterprises need to adapt quickly and effectively to deliver seamless digital experiences for their customers. Enterprises need to jumpstart their digital-first initiatives while maintaining the balance between cost, quality, and risk and manage talent shortages, wage inflations, and the need for flexibility in operating models alongside. Achieving these goals is not an easy proposition, and, in this viewpoint, we set out some of the considerations to make this goal a reality.

In a previous thought paper, *Winning in the Experience Economy*, we outlined why current approaches to Customer Experience (CX) are not conducive for digital transformation and that one possible solution is an end-to-end managed services approach, or Customer Experience as a Service (CXaaS). CXaaS combines talent, services, and technology, making a service provider responsible for end-to-end management and transformation of CX delivery for an enterprise through best-of-breed digital solutions, CX consulting, and superior talent. It involves a more strategic provider-client relationship, where both the parties share a common goal of achieving CX transformation in a partnership model, with the provider responsible for executing that vision.

The service provider manages end-to-end CX, including talent, contact center-enabling technology, digital themes (analytics, AI, and automation), cloud-native applications, customer journey orchestration, CX services, and CX strategy. Both the parties collaboratively build business cases and decide on a timeline for technology rollouts to achieve the final outcomes.

**In this viewpoint, we study various aspects of the CXaaS model, including:**

- Why a new solution to CX is required today and how CXaaS addresses the need
- The benefits of CXaaS and the right service provider's multiplier effect
- Key attributes to look for in a service provider
- The business case for implementing CXaaS
- Implementing CXaaS by leveraging existing investments and mitigating challenges

## Why CXaaS is crucial for enterprises today

### Everest Group take

Enterprises are experiencing issues with their current operating models due to lack of integration and the need to manage piecemeal solutions from different providers via System Integrators (SIs). The different point solutions negatively impact customer experience by delivering a disjointed experience for both customers and employees. Enterprises need to find the right balance between technology, talent, and services to deliver a seamless customer solution. The CXaaS model is an effective solution to alleviate these challenges as it unifies services, talent, and technology to enable end-to-end management and transformation of CX services.

### The urgency to shift from current operating models

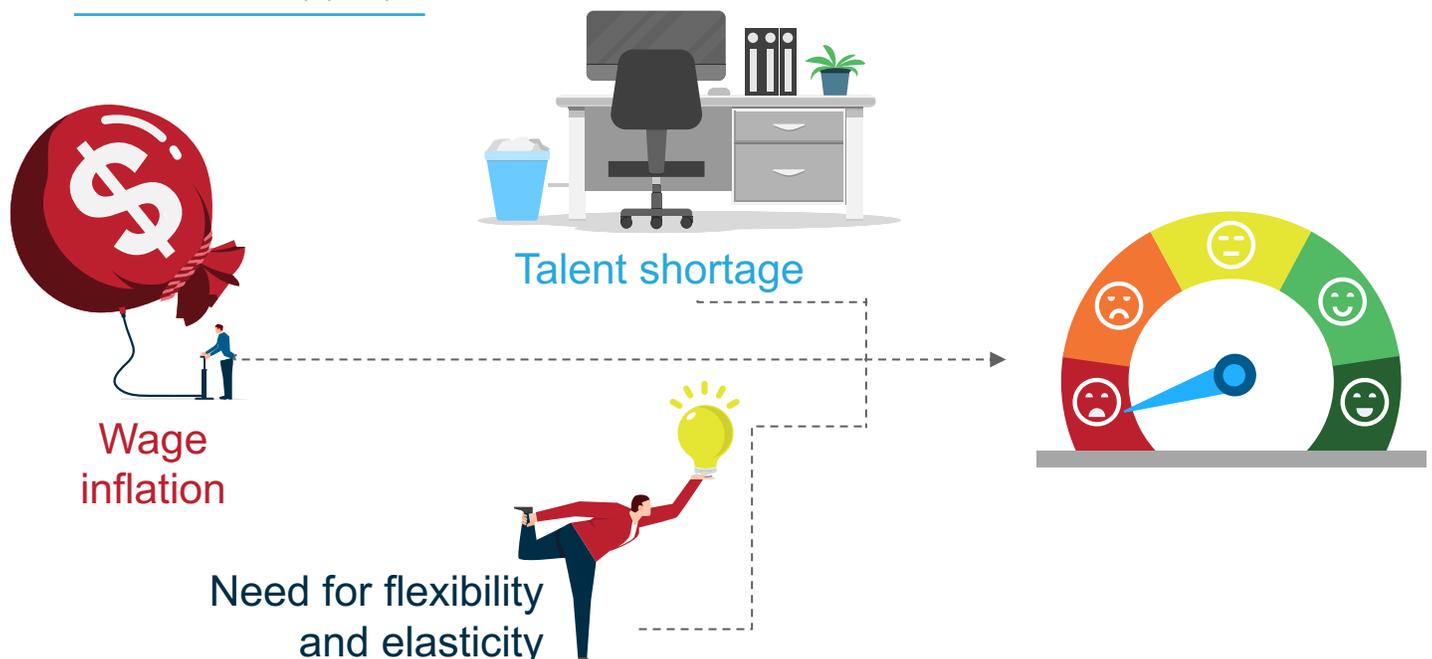
The adoption of new models such as CXaaS is more important today, as enterprises no longer regard CXM services as a cost factor, but as a business enabler that helps deliver a differentiated customer experience.

To deliver best-in-class digital solutions, enterprises have traditionally leveraged several service providers. Each provider has its own agenda, and, hence, the service providers largely work in silos and even compete against each other. This adversely impacts the deployed point solutions, as an enterprise is compelled to spend significant time in bringing cohesion among suppliers, while agents can feel overwhelmed by the need to work on multiple systems. The exhibit below highlights the market forces that have further amplified the urgency to shift from existing operating models.

#### EXHIBIT 1

Key market forces creating a sense of urgency to shift to newer operating models

Source: Everest Group (2021)



**Talent shortages**

While enterprises want superior talent to work on their programs, talent shortages in the market have made this demand increasingly difficult to fulfill. Though talent shortage exists across roles, from call center agents to top management, it is more severe for technical roles and for those that deliver transformation. Pandemic-induced acceleration of digital adoption has driven this shortage of digitally enabled talent. Also, as automation and elimination strategies remove the simplest contacts from the contact center, there is a need for more highly skilled agents who can troubleshoot and solve problems and understand next-generation technologies. Further, attrition has been on the rise following the pandemic, with people having access to more opportunities or looking for a fresh start after the pandemic.

**Wage inflation**

The acute talent shortage means that enterprises must pay much more to attract the right talent. Also, as mentioned above, while employees were reluctant to switch roles/companies during the pandemic, they are now willing to make a fresh start. This means that enterprises need to increase wages to retain existing talent and maintain operational levels. Further, while employees may have accepted not receiving a pay rise during the pandemic, they now expect a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). Additionally, a likely increase in inflation in many countries will also drive up wage demands. Though inflation might drop in the coming years, the cost of key skills will keep increasing at an unprecedented rate and is unlikely to drop back to pre-COVID-19 levels.

**Need for flexibility and elasticity**

Today, enterprises want a model that allows them to easily increase or reduce a solution's capacity, as needed, and only pay for the capacity that is used. The talent shortage and wage inflation pressures have risen exponentially in the post-pandemic world and created an urgency to shift to a risk-sharing relationship between enterprises and service providers. Enterprises are trying to offload the risks and costs associated with challenges such as talent shortages to service providers, either completely or partially. Transacting in a traditional customer-service provider relationship limits the commitment and shared accountability that is required to move with agility, and, hence, there needs to be a new way of working in which both the parties are equally committed to the same goals. Thus, both enterprises and service providers are looking at new operating models to create a win-win for everyone.

CXaaS addresses these enterprise challenges, as well as offers a multitude of benefits, as explained in the next section.

## How CXaaS addresses enterprise challenges

Enterprises face a number of challenges as they try to deliver exceptional customer experiences. In particular, buyers and delivery leads are challenged in three areas, as depicted in Exhibit 2 on the next page.

**EXHIBIT 2**

**How CXaaS addresses the challenges enterprise face**

Source: Everest Group (2021)



Addressing these three challenges and delivering a successful CXM transformation requires enterprises to collaborate with service providers that share a common vision, aligned with the former’s long-term strategy and goals. A CXaaS approach marries talent, services, and technology and leverages commercial constructs focused on business outcomes, guaranteed savings, and gain-sharing to provide end-to-end enterprise transformation, aligned with the enterprise’s vision and strategy. The benefits of the CXaaS approach are listed below:

**Benefits and real-world examples**



**Shifts service providers’ role from trusted advisor to “accomplice”**

The CXaaS model allows enterprises and service providers to work toward common goals with shared risks and benefits. As the service provider takes on additional accountability, it dramatically changes the operational relationship and becomes a trusted advisor to the enterprise, holding a real stake in the outcomes delivered.

**Case study:** A multinational company needed an effective partner to maximize new sales opportunities. It entrusted its CXaaS provider with developing a solution to provide lead management, trend analysis, and propensity modeling for 12 million accounts across the client’s marketing, presales, inside sales, and field sales segments. Today, the relationship has grown to nine Lines of Business (LoBs), and nearly 98% of the most potentially valuable clients are contacted in each operational cycle.

**Challenges addressed**



## Benefits and real-world examples

**Reduces the need for talent**

CXaaS utilizes automation to reduce agent reliance by automating repetitive and less complex tasks. Through cognitive/AI-based automation solutions, CXaaS can address talent shortages and wage inflation pressures, as many tasks can be handled by RPA/AI bots, reducing the reliance on human interaction and the associated talent acquisition, wage, and attrition concerns.

**Case study:** A large telecom enterprise expedited its debt collection process by automating manual tasks such as accounts review, resulting in reduced agent effort and increased productivity. The applied automation is expected to deliver more than US\$4 million in headcount cost savings over five years.

**Challenges addressed****Provides access to best-in-class talent while addressing wage inflation**

The model also leverages cloud services to allow agents to connect virtually from anywhere in the world. By using Work at Home Agent (WAHA) and gig economy delivery models, it can reduce the need to set up delivery centers in multiple locations to find the right multilingual and digitally competent talent. Through the flexibility offered by models such as WAHA, service providers can recruit away from large talent hubs that drive wage increases and reduce attrition.

**Case study:** At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a major airline and its CXaaS service provider transitioned the airline's customer support staff and many other members to the Work From Home (WFH) delivery model. Digital tools such as a digital knowledge base became vital for enabling problem-solving, maintaining consistent service levels, and serving as a knowledge repository. The CXaaS provider launched a multi-step approach to increase utilization of the knowledge base and gain employee buy-in. It improved the knowledge base by streamlining and optimizing user experience and increased articles' searchability. As a result, after six months, 92% of the associates on an average were active knowledge-base users, the login rate stood at 90%, and team lead utilization was pegged at 100%.

**Challenges addressed****Introduces elasticity in operations**

CXaaS leverages cloud services to make operations highly scalable. Cloud-native applications facilitate integration with existing contact center technologies and, coupled with the service provider's talent management capabilities, enhance the ability to deal with volume fluctuations and match workforce requirements with changing demand patterns.

**Case study:** A non-profit organization needed support to quickly mobilize contact center technology and services to reach out to low-income families and assist them in applying for COVID-19 state grant funds. The CXaaS service provider was able to set up a virtual contact center in less than 72 hours and handled about 13,000 calls in less than 14 days providing CX services in multiple languages to a diverse set of people

## Benefits and real-world examples

## Challenges addressed

**Reduces TCO through a unified model**

The model helps move from a piecemeal approach to a single provider in a managed service model, delivering end-to-end management of CX and EX operations and continuous optimization for global talent, technology, consulting, and implementation services. It also shifts the enterprise's finance structure from CapEx to OpEx, allowing quick investment decisions and budgetary control to be held by the team delivering customer experience and away from the IT department. This unified solutions approach with the OpEx model reduces the enterprise's TCO.

**Case study:** A consumer goods company's contact center model was highly siloed, with each department leveraging its own technology and support solutions, including support agents. This model made it difficult for consumers to have seamless personalized interaction and for the company to manage the support process cohesively. The company decided to pursue a consolidated model and worked with the CXaaS service provider to develop and implement an omnichannel solution while also providing the talent to manage all voice calls, as well as the ongoing continuous improvement processes. The CXaaS provider also implemented supporting technology, such as an IVR, further reducing the need for standalone service or technology providers. As a result, not only did customer satisfaction improve, but the enterprise also cut the overall cost of support by reducing the number of service providers it had to manage and consolidating costs through one supplier.

## Challenges addressed

**Delivers superior customer experience**

The creation of a unified CX strategy across departments and integrated technologies results in coherent solutions instead of siloed point solutions. The CXaaS model also improves agent experience, as agents can now focus on a streamlined single interface, making the delivery of an exceptional CX possible. This leads to improvements in key CX metrics, such as Net Promoter Score (NPS), Average Handling Time (AHT), and Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) scores.

**Case study:** A wellness brand was working with a legacy contact center model, with its department working in silos. The model made it difficult for consumers to have seamless personalized interactions with the company. To have a coherent consumer-enterprise interaction, the CXaaS service provider implemented an omnichannel solution that allows communication across several voice/non-voice channels and installed an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system with NPS survey tools. Following the implementation, member satisfaction, NPS, and associate quality scores exceeded expected levels, and about 85% of consumers ranked themselves as promoters after interacting with the brand.

## Challenges addressed



## Benefits and real-world examples

**Brings innovation**

CXaaS provides the service provider more autonomy to control the end-to-end solution and introduces co-innovation with the enterprise due to a shared vision and goals. This drives innovation in creating solutions and technologies to enhance customer experience and reduce costs.

**Case study:** An automotive enterprise was facing a challenge in returning calls from its customers, resulting in revenue loss. The enterprise collaborated with a service provider to create an automated voicemail with a customized message for every customer, reducing the need for agents leaving a voicemail manually. The solution improved employee productivity by 6-8% and is expected to generate an incremental revenue of over US\$200,000 annually due to an increase in returned calls.

Challenges addressed

**Maximizes the value of previous investments**

The CXaaS model enables organizations to leverage investments in existing technologies and does not require a rip-and-replace approach, which is often recommended by technology vendors offering new capabilities. Through its approach of building upon existing technologies wherever possible, the service provider extracts maximum value from the existing infrastructure.

**Case study:** A major bank faced unprecedented call volumes during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. To address this demand surge, it implemented a conversational AI solution. Without making a major investment in new technology, the AI chatbot was able to integrate with existing operations and immediately deflected about 20% of the inbound calls. The deflection increased to 30% in a month and continues to rise further. Additionally, CSAT scores have been consistently above 95% for customers using the chatbot.

Challenges addressed

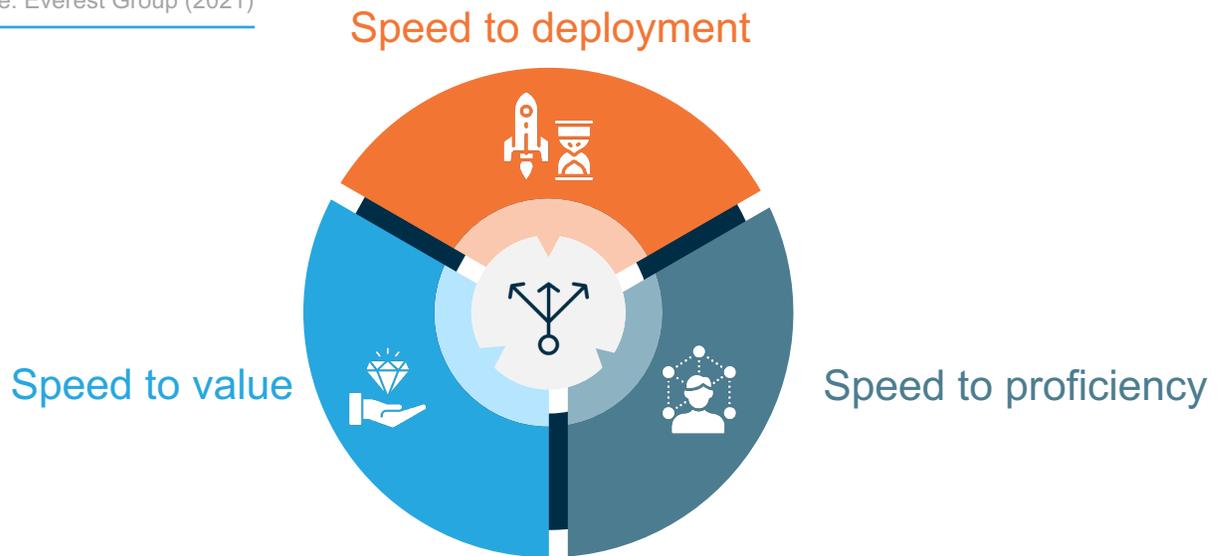


## The “multiplier effect”

The benefits of CXaaS are gradually coming to light, and a key aspect that stands out is the multiplier effect that a right-fit service provider can bring with respect to the business value delivered. Each of the key elements of CXaaS – from journey design, CX consulting, system integration, and delivery of new solutions to the continued delivery of an exceptional customer service – can be delivered by individual providers and contracts that will deliver incremental gains. However, only when a service provider can bring expertise in designing exceptional journeys and combine that with technical expertise in designing and implementing the infrastructure, as well as operational know-how in delivering an exceptional customer experience and the ability to keep pace with ever-changing customer and stakeholder demands, will an enterprise be able to achieve the exponential gains that come with improved speed to deployment, proficiency, and value.

**EXHIBIT 3****The multiplier effect**

Source: Everest Group (2021)



## Finding the right partner

**Everest Group take**

CXaaS provides a transformation opportunity to create a superior brand experience, but it involves significant risk. It requires the service provider to lead from the front and proactively seed and drive the CXaaS vision for the enterprise. Hence, it becomes vital to select a supplier that not only has the requisite technical capabilities, but also alignment with the client's vision to drive the CXaaS initiative. The selected service provider also needs to have the right end-to-end capabilities to deliver the multiplier effect and reduce the time-to-value.

It is crucial to find the right CXaaS service provider, as the service provider is not just a delivery engine, but also an enterprise partner in this model. In fact, the service provider's role might extend beyond a partner and be regarded as an "accomplice," in the sense that it is "in it" with the enterprise, as an integral part of designing and delivering the solutions alongside the enterprise. This will require a mindset change from enterprises to see service providers as equal partners in delivering exceptional CX. It will also require choosing a provider that not only shares the risk, but also has the same vision as the enterprise. Low market maturity for CXaaS as an offering limits the options available in the market.

Thus, it is vital to assess the capabilities and the CXaaS vision of the few participants in the market. Also, as CXaaS involves concentration of risk in a single provider, it results in high switching costs and business risk, making it necessary to select a supplier that can mitigate or minimize the risks involved.

## Key attributes to look for in a service provider

An enterprise needs to consider both qualitative and quantitative parameters to select a suitable supplier for its CXaaS transformation:

**Qualitative attributes:** To transition to the CXaaS operating model, enterprises should look for a supplier that can:

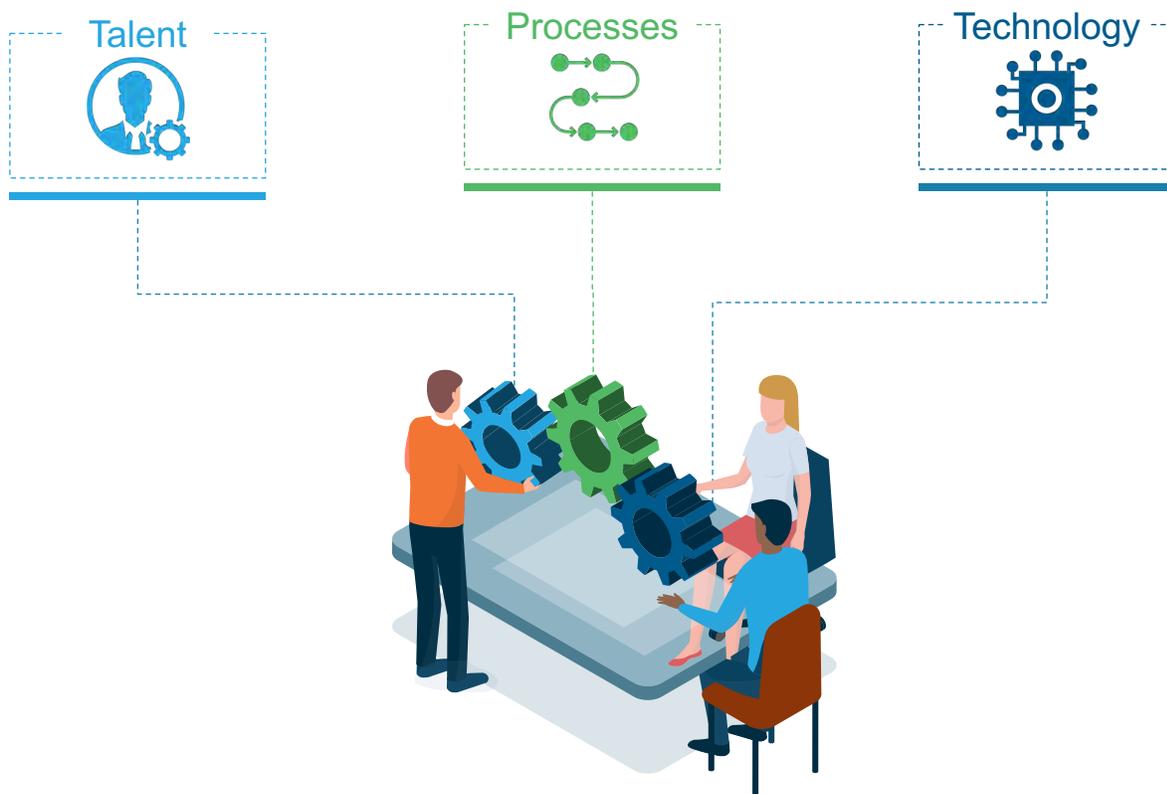
- Shift from a transactional relationship to joint governance, switching from the current role of a delivery engine or even trusted advisor to become an accomplice, mitigating the risk involved
- Take the client's activities to the next level and beyond
- Shift the enterprise from a piece-meal model to a model that unifies technology, talent, and services into one cohesive solution
- Maximize the value of previous investments by leveraging the client's current capabilities instead of opting for a rip-and-replace approach
- Share a common vision for CX transformation and co-innovate with the enterprise to create best-in-class technologies and solutions

**Quantitative attributes:** An enterprise needs to assess a service provider's capabilities in three domains – talent, technology, and processes, as highlighted in Exhibit 3 below. Within these domains, it should assess the supplier on the following parameters.

### EXHIBIT 4

Key quantitative attributes to look for in a CXaaS service provider

Source: Everest Group (2021)



## Talent

- **Delivery footprint:** A balanced delivery footprint with multilingual support is needed to meet clients' diverse shoring and regional language needs. While a significant onshore presence ensures superior CX and strong cyber security while working with sensitive information, presence in offshore low-cost regions helps keep check on high wage expenses. Diversity in footprint also mitigates the risk of inflation in certain economies.

To maintain business continuity in the face of crisis such as COVID-19 and have elasticity in scaling resources up and down, next-generation delivery models such as WAHA and the gig economy are necessary. These models not only provide enterprises with flexibility in operations, but also offer a wide talent pool with future-ready skills and multilingual capabilities amid the existing talent shortage. Service providers today can cater to customers through agents spread globally without building delivery centers across locations

- **Talent management:** The use of manual techniques to discover the right talent is extremely inefficient, time and cost intensive, and difficult to scale. To have best-in-class talent, the preferred CXaaS supplier should leverage digitally oriented talent management tools and techniques. Tools such as analytics, automation, and AI must support the enterprise in talent recruitment through automated prescreening and skills assessments

For training and development, service providers should provide customized gamification, instructor-led coaching or self-paced learning modules. Gamification increases engagement among agents, and assists in skill-building, while real-time coaching gives agents a personal connect with the instructor. Further, for performance management, the supplier should chart out defined career progression paths, establish well-defined incentive mechanisms, and provide on-the-go feedback to improve agents' satisfaction and experience

## Technology

- **Core contact center solutions:** The CXaaS service provider should have cloud-based contact center infrastructure, including integrations with chat platforms, IVR, and other digital solutions. It should have integrations with enabler solutions such as Workforce Management (WFM) / Workforce Optimization (WFO) – call and screen recording, real-time adherence, forecasting and scheduling, and case management – for managing the workforce better, optimizing staff planning, and improving operational metrics such as forecasting accuracy, schedule adherence, and agent utilization
- **CX analytics:** The service provider should be able to provide a diverse set of insights – customer journey analytics, speech analytics, Voice of the Customer (VoC) analytics, and employee insights – by processing both structured and unstructured data. The provider should focus on improving a customer's lifetime value through hyper personalization and better customer insights using analytics. It must leverage AI-driven data management to stitch together data from multiple siloed operations and generate insights to create comprehensive and actionable customer journey maps
- **Automation and AI:** The provider should possess a strong suite of digital solutions, such as RPA/RDA, AI/ML, conversational AI bots, agent assist solutions, and chatbots to deliver automated customer support. The automated AI solutions should be able to improve agent efficiency and productivity by automating agents' tedious and repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus on more complex tasks. The automation will help improve agents' experience, First Contact Resolution (FCR), and Average Handling Time (AHT)

- **Digital channels:** The service provider should support non-voice channels and omnichannel platforms to engage with customers across different channels and ensure seamless transition and consistent CX across them. Such efforts will help build a unified customer view and knowledge base and help improve key CX metrics such as NPS and CSAT. Moreover, the provider should be able to deflect large call volumes by triaging agent calls through bots, messaging, and self-service options, with the help of attribute-based routing and Natural Language Processing (NLP)

### Processes

- **Core contact-center processes:** The service provider should have visibility into the complete CX value chain, including front-end services such as customer care and sales service (outbound and inbound), cross-selling and upselling, technical support (product/application, hardware and warranty support), and back-office support services
- **CX consulting:** The preferred CXaaS service provider should have extensive experience in CX consulting, including technology consulting – transformation roadmap, CX strategy consulting for current state assessment, channel strategy consulting for channel design and cost-benefit analysis, and process consulting for process redesign, process re-engineering, and process benchmarking. It should be able to implement a clear CX transformation roadmap and drive human+tech integration through its CX consulting capabilities. The service provider should be abreast with industry best practices and market developments to strengthen its consulting expertise
- **Journey orchestration:** The service provider should be able to reduce customer churn and increase upsell and cross-sell opportunities by mining customer interactions at every touchpoint. It should be able to provide customer profiling (psychographic, demographic, and geographic), customer journey mapping (persona identification, cross-channel lead prioritization, journey analytics, next-best action), and customer journey orchestration (journey optimization, real-time interaction management, and orchestration engine)
- **Design thinking:** The service provider should leverage the design thinking approach of ideate, prototype, and implement for CX solutions based on insights gathered from real customers' voices

**Pricing models:** CXaaS operating models are based on the premise of risk-sharing, in which the service provider and the enterprise share the pain and the gain in the journey of providing the best CX. The ideal service provider is one that is flexible in its approach to pricing models and willing to / capable of investing in the right pricing model that creates a win-win for both the enterprise and the service provider. It is also important to ensure that the service provider can measure the outcomes achieved through the life of the contract to enable the use of outcome-based or gain-share models

## The business case for CXaaS

After agreeing on the need for a new delivery model and aligning stakeholders on the right course of action, it is important to document the expected value to the organization in the form of a business case.

The business case is unique, based on each enterprise's starting position in terms of outsource footprint, technology infrastructure, and commercial models. However, there are numerous areas where CXaaS is expected to reduce TCO, as mentioned below.

- **Immediate or near-term savings from:**

- No starting cost to implement a transformation delivery model – the service provider bears the initial design and consulting costs
- No hardware, infrastructure, or software costs – these would be included in the CXaaS solution and covered by the ongoing OpEx cost model
- Reduction in support costs from support functions such as IT and procurement, as contracts are consolidated with one supplier, which is accountable for end-to-end management

- **Mid- to long-term savings from:**

- Reduction in contacts through automation or elimination, reducing the total cost of support
- Reduction in assisted support costs by leveraging highly skilled talent to reduce Average Handling Time (AHT), improve First Contact Resolution (FCR), and, where applicable, lower cost locations through a geographically diverse footprint

- **Improved CSAT, which has a positive impact on enterprises' bottom lines, driven by:**

- A cohesive end-to-end CX journey
- Improved Employee Experience (EX)
- Continuous improvement in customer journeys
- Joint accountability of results between the service provider and the enterprise

After documenting the business case and receiving signoff from internal teams on transformation readiness, an enterprise should start searching for a suitable service provider. It should conduct strategic, technical, and commercial evaluations of service providers based on the attributes mentioned in previous sections, and a service provider that can act as an accomplice must be selected to drive transformation.

## Implementing CXaaS

### Everest Group take

End-to-end digital CXM transformation will be a key enterprise priority in the foreseeable future. Enterprises will shift from traditional siloed operations to a more unified approach to deliver superior CX, and a CXaaS operating model will be key to achieving it. That said, CXaaS implementation is a challenging endeavor. It is not a simple linear journey but one that involves continual rethinking and redirection to ensure that the true purpose of delivering superior CX is achieved. Hence, it becomes crucial to chart out a clear outline for the CXaaS transformation journey.

To shift to CXaaS, enterprises should deploy a step-by-step approach that allows them to make the most of previous investments, while also switching quickly to the desired solution. While there are many approaches to transformation, some common steps that service providers should follow are:

- Evaluate their current position to understand the starting point, which will allow the service provider to chart the course for improvement
- Evolve and improve the current delivery model to maximize the benefits from previous investments and continue to serve customers while planning and delivering digital transformation
- Elevate the current delivery model by delivering new technologies or processes and leveraging new talent – this may be done in targeted pockets of the business first
- Extend the new model across the entire operations

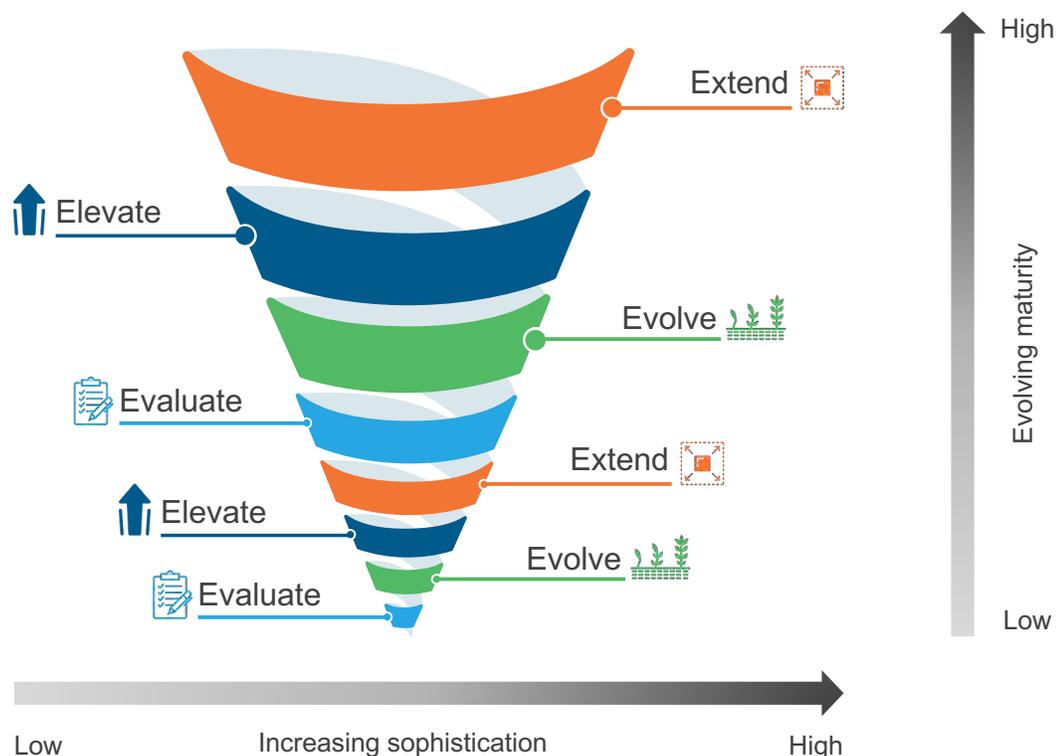
This four-step transformation model or the 4Es approach focuses on two key parameters: maturity and sophistication of an enterprise's capabilities. These parameters are assessed at the evaluation stage, and then, at each step, the capabilities become more mature and sophisticated, helping achieve the next normal.

Once these steps have been completed, a new baseline is established. It is vital that the process does not stop – it should be an iterative process that resumes periodically to ensure that the delivery model improves and increases in sophistication and maturity over time.

## EXHIBIT 5

Change in resource mix only: Impact on deal margin

Source: Everest Group (2021)



## Conclusion

In a bid to provide exceptional customer experience, mitigate delivery risks, and balance costs, end-to-end digital CXM transformation will become a key focus area for enterprises in the foreseeable future. CXM is no longer considered just a cost driver, but a business enabler. While existing approaches to provide high-end digital solutions and better CX rely on several service providers, which work in siloes and provide only incremental gains, the CXaaS approach marries talent, technology, and services, to create a multiplier effect on the business value delivered.

That said, transitioning to CXaaS involves significant risk. Hence, it is crucial for an enterprise to select a service provider that not only has the requisite technical capabilities, but also aligns with the client's vision for CX transformation. To avoid roadblocks and ensure seamless transition, it is important to select a service provider that acts as the client's accomplice on the journey.



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TTEC Holdings, Inc. (NASDAQ: TTEC) is one of the largest global CX (customer experience) technology and services innovators for end-to-end, digital CX solutions. The Company delivers CX technology and operational CX orchestration at scale through its proprietary cloud-based CXaaS (Customer Experience as a Service) platform. Serving iconic and disruptive brands, TTEC's solutions span the entire enterprise, touch every virtual interaction channel, and improve each step of the customer journey. Leveraging next-gen digital and cognitive technology, the Company's Digital business designs, builds, and operates omnichannel contact center technology, conversational messaging, CRM, automation (AI / ML and RPA), and analytics solutions. The Company's Engage business delivers digital customer engagement, customer acquisition & growth, content moderation, fraud prevention, and data annotation solutions. Founded in 1982, the Company's commitment to CX excellence has earned its leading client NPS scores worldwide. TTEC's nearly 62,300 employees operate on six continents and bring technology and human ingenuity together to deliver happy customers and differentiated business results. To learn more, visit us at [ttec.com](https://www.ttec.com).

