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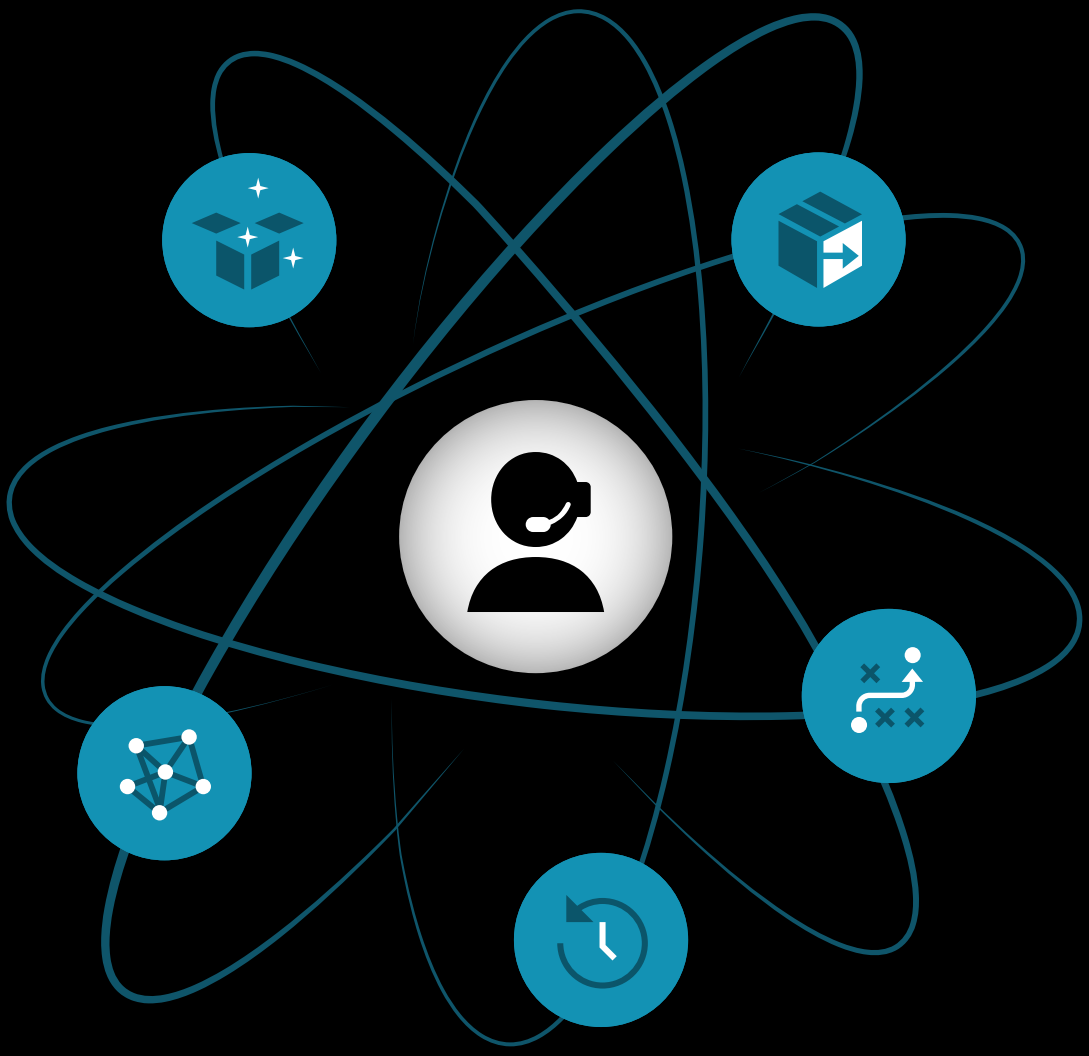
Five Ingredients to Ignite Always-On Service



Who this is for

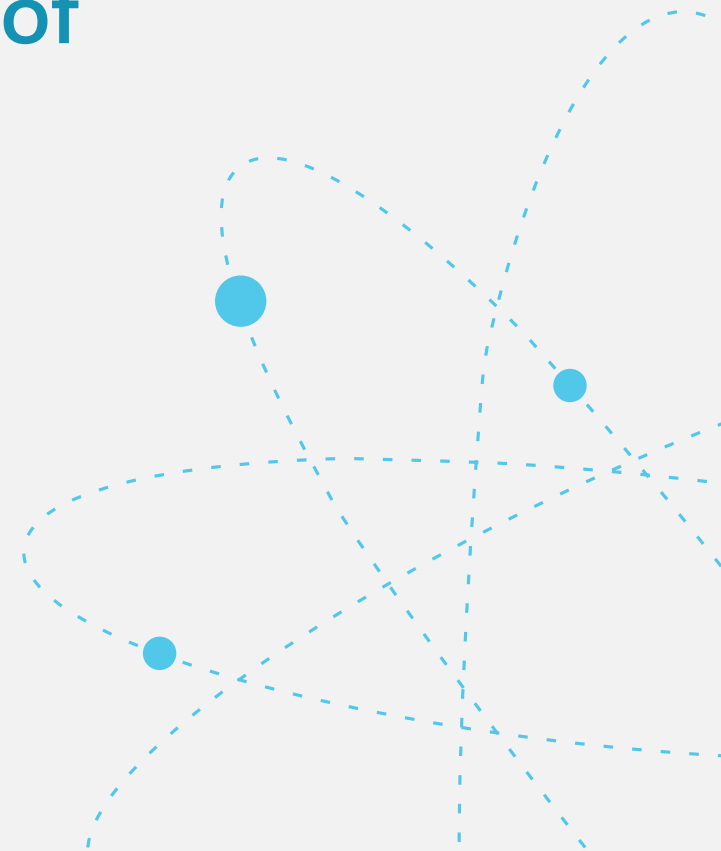
This e-book is for business leaders such as sales and customer service VPs, as well as C-level revenue, financial, operations, and technology officers who:

- Are facing an increasing volume of customer requests and heightened customer expectations.
- Want to explore new strategies to improve customer service, contact centers, and field service.
- Would like to see how companies use technology to empower customer and field service agents.

Estimated reading time: <6 mins

“While we haven’t had a pandemic for many years, we can look at history to assume there will be major lasting changes in the mind of the customer.”

Blake Morgan
Forbes



In the wake of a crisis, the challenge to meet the volume and intensity of customer inquiries has escalated. There are **five key ingredients** every service organization can incorporate to ensure excellent customer experiences.

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Into the mind of your customers

Over the past decade, service excellence has become a competitive differentiator for brands. In times of crisis, however, maintaining high-quality service as request numbers rise is more challenging.

Customers expect organizations to deliver exceptional service 24/7, regardless of what's happening within or beyond your organization. Companies who respond well to new challenges will differentiate themselves in both the short and long term. To do so, they need the right technology.

Many service organizations may be tempted to seek out point solutions for specific issues. Those who opt for integrated solutions will discover a unique advantage resulting from the synthesis of several vital elements. This e-book explores each of the five elements that are critical to unlocking the potential of every company's customer and field service success.

1. Maintain quality of service when customer demand spikes

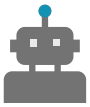
Many US businesses are racing to keep up with a spike in service calls. This trend will linger as the impact of the 2020 pandemic makes its way through our lives and the economy.

Financial services, manufacturing, and public sector organizations face some of the greatest challenges. Banks, for example, may face an increase in customers trying to work out new arrangements for auto, credit card, and mortgage payments. Front-line workers in manufacturing are under pressure to maintain production despite fewer people on the job. Public sector organizations are receiving record numbers of requests for unemployment and other services on their portals and at contact centers. Across many industries, agents and technicians are facing higher case volumes from customers who are stressed and frustrated.

The impact on service organizations

To better understand the impact of a crisis on customer service departments, Harvard Business Review's team at Tethr (an AI and machine learning venture) completed a study of one million customer-service calls involving more than 20 companies that represent a broad cross-section of industries.[1] The calls took place between March 11, 2020, when the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, and March 26, 2020.

The team categorized calls according to the effort level required for the customer to accomplish their goal (from easy to difficult). Over two weeks, the average company participating in the study saw the percentage of difficult calls double, from 10 percent to 20 percent.



The role of technology

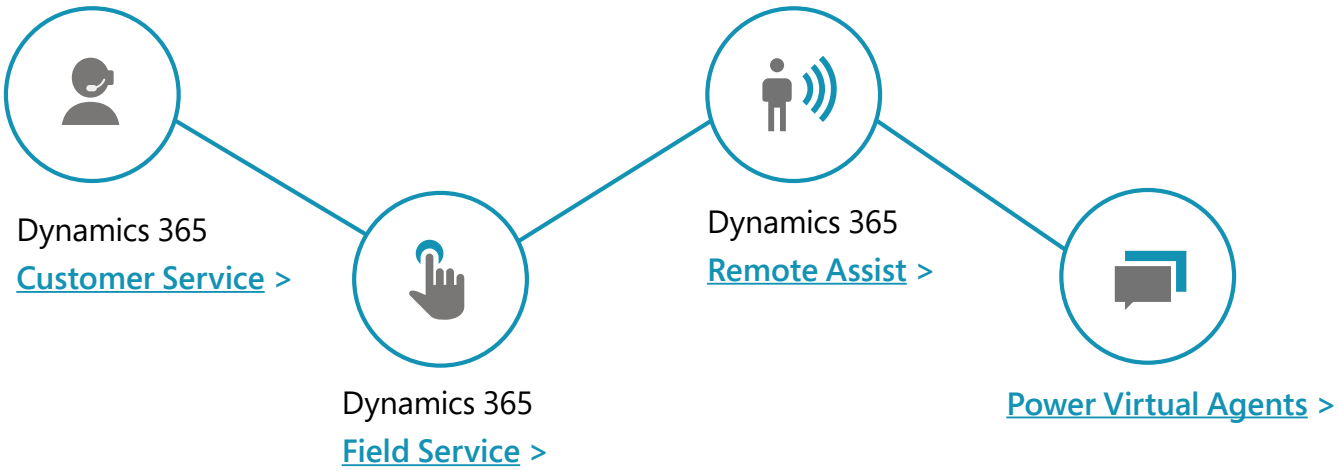
Technology can help address these issues. For example, service departments can automate repetitive tasks to free up valuable agent time. Customers are also getting used to interacting with self-service channels, such as portals and chatbots. Chatbots can often help customers resolve common issues without engaging a live agent. When necessary, the chatbot can connect a customer with the agent best suited to address the issue.

[1] "Supporting Customer Service Through the Coronavirus Crisis," Harvard Business Review, 2020.

Analytics capabilities can give customer and field service agents a more holistic view of customers for better decision making. Collaboration tools help front-line workers support each other, even when they're not in the office.

The real power of technology emerges when these tools come together, with data and insights passing from virtual agent to customer service agent to field technician, providing a seamless and positive experience for customers.

Service Organization Solutions for Meeting Increases in Customer Demand



2. Improve efficiency and automation to reduce costs

Even though many companies are seeing the number of their customer inquiries increase, in most cases, the size of service staff and resources has remained the same or even shrunk due to layoffs. This trend may continue for years, as service teams contend with understaffed departments and limited budgets. The answer to this problem lies in automation.

There are several ways companies can reduce agents' administrative work and free up time to focus on customers. These include focusing on automating processes such as:

Workflows

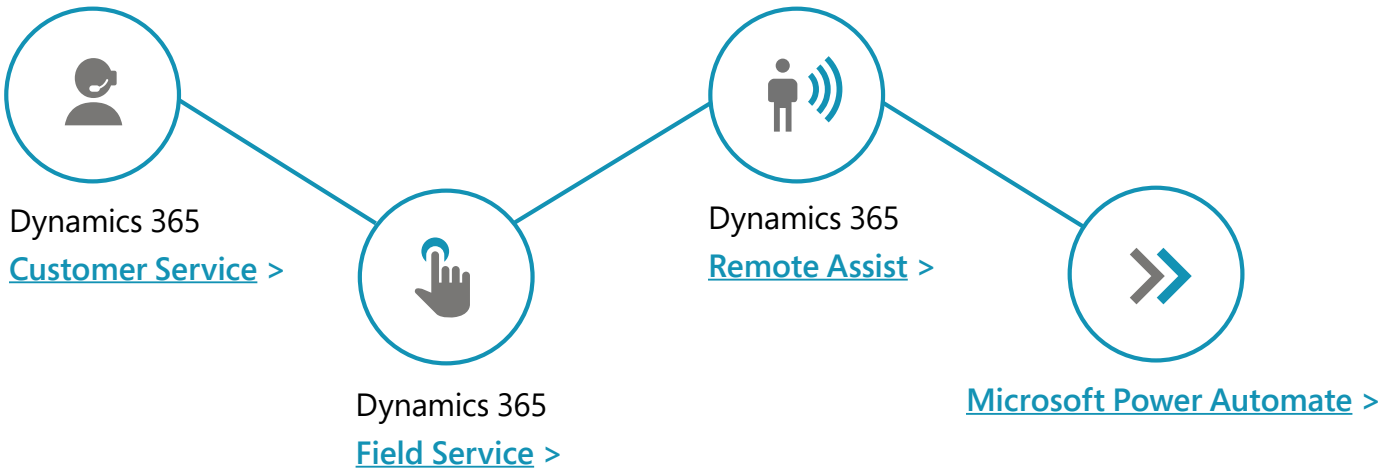
Document management

Document review and approval

Employee request management

By streamlining management for service-related business processes, agents are more likely to have accurate information and better serve customers.

Service Solutions for Automation

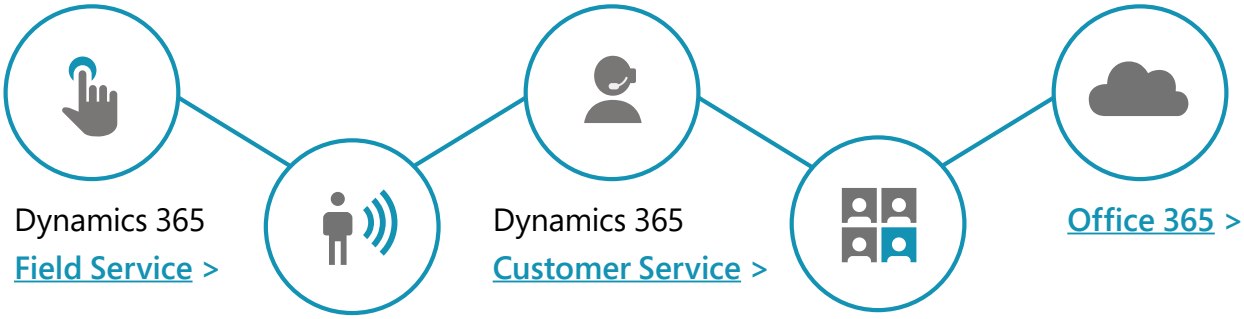


3. Support remote teams to work effectively

Customer service organizations have also seen a shift toward more agents working remotely, a trend that analysts predict will continue. More agents working remotely may necessitate increased technology support, including investing in or upgrading technology for workers and shifting contact centers to cloud-based services.

Teams that used to work and collaborate side by side may also benefit from online collaboration tools and platforms. Good collaboration tools make staying connected and gathering advice in an informal, ad-hoc way easy for employees.

Service Solutions for Remote Work

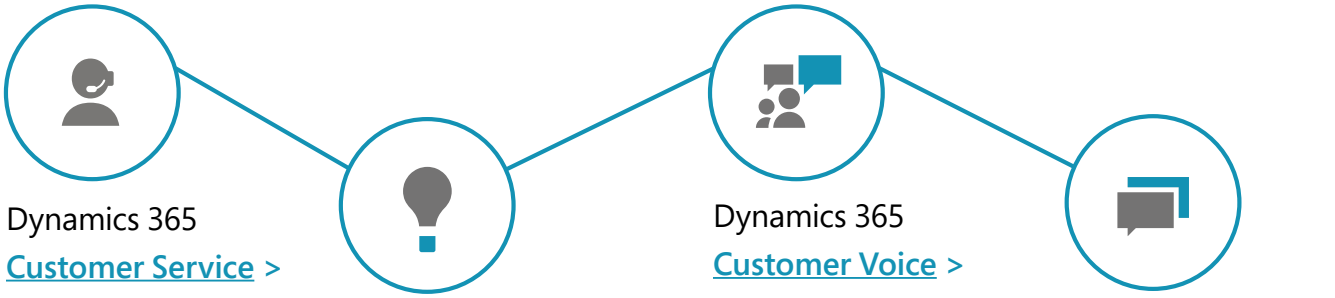


4. Deliver connected and empathetic customer experiences

Becoming a customer-centric organization requires high-quality information, insights on customers, and integrated service applications to create more personalized engagement across the customer journey. By adopting a holistic view of customers, and bringing together transactional, observational, and behavioral data in real time, service professionals can better identify next best actions and product recommendations.

Organizations are also incorporating customer insights into digital processes. For example, if a customer logs into a self-service portal, an AI-enabled chatbot can recognize the customer, pull their profile, and identify the product or service related to their inquiry. Having a chatbot recognize the person and their purchase history is a digital way to create a positive customer experience.

Service Solutions for Empathetic Customer Experiences



Dynamics 365 Customer Service >

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Power Virtual Agents >

5. Align customer service, field service, virtual agents, and mixed reality to create a connected customer experience

When service leaders explore technology solutions, they often seek a solution to address a specific pain point. For example, a company may purchase a virtual agent product to meet rising customer inquiries or invest in a mixed reality offering to increase productivity for field and manufacturing site technicians, reduce the need for expert travel, and enable faster issue resolution.

The problem with this approach is that point solutions lack the critical element for service success: integration across all applications in the customer journey.

Make integration the foundation

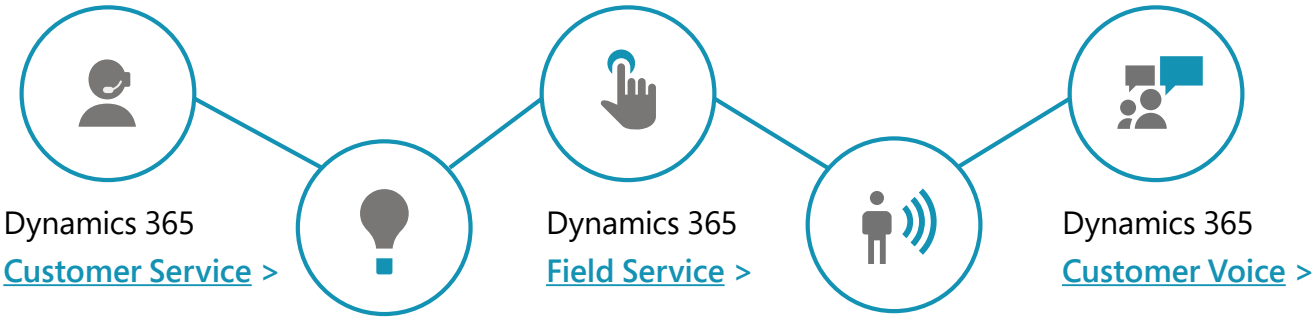
Companies that use point solutions create extra work for their agents, who must navigate through several systems to see all of a customer's activities across channels. An integrated solution gives agents a full picture of the customer, empowering them to provide fast and personalized service.

A point-solution approach also burdens agents with administrative tasks that an integrated solution could automate. For example, an integrated solution can knit together various aspects of phone support, such as automatic ticket creation, call recording, and customer history documentation, so agents can focus on customer interactions.

Working with an integrated solution also gives managers better visibility into the performance of their department and individual agents, which can help set training goals and direction.

Service organizations should, at a minimum, start with a couple of integrated solutions. Working with an entire platform of integrated solutions brings together each solution's strengths to a new standard of performance.

D365 Service Solutions



Align customer service, field service, virtual agents, and mixed reality to create a connected customer experience

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Next steps

Service organizations can no longer compare current service levels against those from the past. Customers engage with hundreds of vendors every month. As they do, they compare your business not only to your past performance, but also to every other company they engage with—inside and outside your industry.

Standard-setters in one sector, such as retail, are delivering service levels that customers expect from every company. This means service professionals need every advantage possible to meet customer expectations and deliver quality service.

The right integrated technology solution can help meet the needs of escalating customer inquiries using limited resources. By adopting an integrated solution, customer-related information can flow throughout the customer's service journey, making their experience more personalized, relevant, and positive.

Learn more about how you can develop the full potential of your organization's customer and field service teams.

Connect with a sales advisor

Microsoft Dynamics 365

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