Davies Consulting

The 2020 Gig Customer Service Report
The explosive rise of GigCX

2020 Research Paper by Davies Consulting and Limitless

Foreword

Aileen Allkins Former CVP Customer Service and Support, Microsoft

If you were designing a call centre today from scratch, how different would it be to a call centre designed one year ago, or even a month ago? Due to the challenges introduced by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, as well as unprecedented economic downturn felt globally, the way we're looking at customer service has changed forever. More businesses are looking to the gig economy - in fact, I estimate that by 2025, 20% of customer service will be what is quickly becoming known as 'GigCX,' which is the term used for the gig crowd deployed to provide customer service.

GigCX may not yet be a term you are familiar with.

GigCX is an AI-powered model that 'crowdsources' customer support.

Organisations can route customer service enquiries securely through a GigCX platform that distributes them to knowledgeable and passionate GigCX Experts who can answer those questions for brands they love. Organisations are using GigCX to reap the benefits of always-on, agile, highly motivated people that deliver consistently higher C-SAT scores at a lower cost to serve as there are no bricks and mortar and salaries to support. On the other side, GigCX Experts have the freedom to do tasks wherever they are and for as long as they want while being paid more than they would equivalently in a contact centre.

The move to GigCX is apparent throughout this first-ever report of what will be an annual series, which has been a project I've been very pleased to be involved with due to my work with AI-based GigCX company Limitless. The research involved reaching out to over 500 GigCX freelancers across twenty one countries, in six continents, as well as many global customer experience leaders. In doing the research, the aim was to learn more about people's motivations, attitudes and behaviours surrounding GigCX, and how it is helping the organisations who have pioneered its application through some truly engaging business use cases.

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The results are fascinating. The study found that the GigCX network is diverse, with a range of ages, talents and an even gender split. We found that COVID-19 is driving increased demand in GigCX where many customers are reaching out to make a human connection. People like to engage with people, and Gig Experts are truly enjoying the interaction they get, with 98% specifying that they want to carry on with GigCX. We also found that GigCX has plenty of scope to grow: there is no reason why GigCX Experts can't be leveraged in a pre-sales environment to answer questions about product features and functionality and best practices.

Experts are brand advocates after all: these are loyal fans of your products.

Throughout this report, it will comment on the information collected during the survey, and through the conversations with global CX leaders. You will learn what types of people choose to do GigCX, as well as their thoughts on how the Gig works for them.

Though the initial research began before the COVID-19 pandemic, the researchers did take the time to introduce a few new research questions. What they found, unsurprisingly, was that customer service volume had increased. On a deeper level, the new research taught us that COVID-19 has redefined what business continuity means today. The call centre of the future can absolutely be prepared for anything. By accessing new 24/7 talent pools and making use of new technologies, we can respond faster, reduce the cost-to-serve and enhance the customer experience in a forward thinking, future-proofed way. This report is proof of that, and I hope you find it as thought provoking and compelling as I do.

Aileen Allkins
CVP Customer Service and Support
Microsof, 2016-2020

Contents

Implementing self-service to improve global CX

Davies Consulting and Limitless conducted a survey to look at the rise and impact of gig-based customer service (GigCX) in the global CX industry.

The study, conducted in February 2020, surveyed 500 current GigCX Experts across twenty one countries in six continents, including the UK, US, Canada, Brazil, Australia, Indonesia, India, South Africa, France and Germany. This Included people from a range of different backgrounds and cultures.

In addition to this, the report interviewed 7 CX leaders across several industries including Tech, FMCG, and Travel.

Analyst Opinions

Chris Mcilduff, Chief Customer Office, Davies: GigCX as part of an optimised operating model

With more than 20 years of senior technology and operational leadership experience, Chris Mcilduff is Chief Customer Officer at Davies Consulting and responsible for shaping it's consulting, analytics, automation and transformation propositions to support their global customers.

Customer service models need to evolve and GigCX can play an interesting role in this

The Covid-19 crisis has brought into sharp focus the need for brands to re-evaluate their customer care estate models. Future provision will need to be more agile, flexible, and offer greater cost-benefit in order to retain competitive advantage.

This report we've developed with Limitless reviews the positioning of GigCX as an option for mitigating some of these prevailing business risks, as it opens up the potential of new ideas and opportunities for both service delivery and the brand. Five distinct potential benefits we see from embedding GigCX in your service strategy are:

1. **Flexibility to manage demand** – especially unwieldy or unexpected demand
2. **Material cost savings** over traditional models (typically c.30-60% seen for the activities in scope)
3. **Speed to deploy** and agile/flexible change capability
4. **Delivering a positive service differential** to that of legacy channels/models
5. **Creating new opportunities;** for example: for resilience, diversity, wider colleague engagement with customers as well as brand and product endorsements

Role Of GigCX In The Future Of Customer Service

The evolution of customer service operating models is being powered by the use of smart technologies that identify the customer, their context and needs and offering relevant support options based on the value, complexity, and risk of customer contact.

GigCX is a relatively new option that gives organisations the opportunity to access new, flexible resource pools cost effectively, giving them greater resilience and agility in their operating model, which will be increasingly essential in a post COVID-19 world.

This intelligent capability lets organisations develop and utilise self-service options along with the use of contact centres to support customers around the clock in a way that is relevant, effective and at the right cost. Where customer contact needs the support of a contact centre advisor this has typically been delivered through a mix of in-house and outsourced operations either onshore using native language advisors, or offshore advisors who will speak the required language but mostly as a second language. Prior to the impact of COVID-19 most of these operations were run from within customer service centres but the crisis has seen a large shift to the home working part of the operating model by most businesses.

GigCX brings forward a potential that creates a new cost/quality option.

Misconceptions About Gig Crowds

There is often a misconception about GigCX being best suited to only taking high volume, low value queries that could be arguably handled by self-service or automated services.

The reality is different and with the right configurations, GigCX teams can support more complex or valuable contact where they have the right technology supporting this. GigCX teams are also often native speakers who can support customers who are emotional or have vulnerabilities more effectively than some offshore advisors where language and cultural differences can impact this. These possibilities create new opportunities for organisations to optimise their operating model.

We are seeing more the opportunity for GigCX within the work that Davies does for clients globally, especially when helping review and transform their operating models and the business drivers that sit behind these initiatives, specifically:

1. The need to reduce costs while improving the customer experience

2. Applying the right innovations that work for customers and the organisation

3. Customer demand and expectation changing

4. The need for greater resilience and agility in operating model

As industry-experienced specialists who understand the right way to approach leveraging GigCX, we at Davies have designed the 'Accelerator' model based on many years helping global

clients optimise their operating model to deliver the right outcomes from them, their staff and their customers.

To find out more about our unique 'Accelerator' model and see how you can rapidly assess the opportunity for GigCX in your operating model and ensure the next steps you take are the right ones, taken quickly and effectively, please refer to page 25 in this report.

We look forward to further conversations with you.

Executive Summary

Recognising GigCX and the Experts driving customer service transformation

**By Megan Neale and Roger Beadle,
Co-founders, Limitless**

The world over, technology is driving changes in customer expectations and redefining the way people work. The traditional customer service model is struggling to cope as costs skyrocket. In order to stay competitive, businesses are finding that they need to adopt flexible and agile operational models which help them deliver faster, better customer service, more cost-efficiently.

The power of implementing resilient, flexible customer service models was one of the many things that became clear in doing the research for the first ever 2020 Gig Customer Service report. As part of our annual research, we spoke to several global CX leaders and analysts. Amongst them, they estimated that up to 50% of customer service queries will be handled by GigCX in the next five years.

Many of these leaders have 'gone the gig way' to improve and scale customer service for their brands. According to GigCX pioneer Susan Caesar (Director of Customer Experience at Sage), the enterprise accounting software company is experiencing all the benefits of GigCX on multiple levels:

> *GigCX enables us to scale people-centric customer service operations at a lower cost base and gather actionable insights which the business can act on. I believe people-based solutions are key to driving C-SAT; self-service and automation are good, but a customer in crisis especially needs personal care and empathy. And that's where having a pool of gig Experts, who themselves are customers can become critical.*

The ability to help with challenges surrounding scale was also called out frequently in our conversations with CX leaders. Vinay Parmar, Managing Director, Accessible Transport at National Express, described how GigCX helped the company handle 400% flexes in demand:

> *With GigCX, we can now support spikes in demand. This was demonstrated during February 2018, When heavy snow led to contact volumes quadrupling for a week - however, the Experts were able to easily absorb the demand spike.*

In section five of this report, you can read more about the unique benefits of GigCX in the words of several other global CX leaders, from brands such as Microsoft, GigHub, Unilever, Postmates and Sun Basket.

The 2020 Gig Customer Service survey

Recognising GigCX and the Experts driving customer service transformation

The results of our global GigCX survey were fascinating, and we were pleased to get a better picture of our GigCX crowd.

Sixty-eight per cent of the GigCX network surveyed speak more than one language, and 72% hold a university degree.

We also found that **52% are in full or part-time work, and nearly a third are gigging on more than one platform.** Nine per cent of those surveyed were stay at home parents, and GigCX projects are also popular amongst retirees and students. This is vastly different to the average contact center where the profiles of workers are less varied, and graduates and multilingual agents are rarer.

The goal of our research was also to understand the motivations for GigCX. What we found is that although people are interested in flexibility and the freedom to earn money on their own terms, GigCX has another added benefit to other gig models. Experts are genuinely interested in helping people using their own knowledge for brands they love.

As we spoke to our crowd of expert and CX leaders, what we also saw is that they are handling more complex and higher value enquiries that can't be automated - where customers need guidance, reassurance or the opinions of others to solve their pre-sales and support enquiries.

We believe that the inquiry types handled by GigCX will continue to expand to include more and more transaction types over the coming months and years such as taking payments or processing refunds by enabling these to be completed securely without Experts needing to access any personal customer data.

This research shows that gig platforms are here to stay, and having spent 20 years running customer service operations, we designed the Limitless SmartCrowd platform from the ground up to make sure there was a scalable quality solution to support millions of customers. It is proof that by innovatively combining AI automation and crowds of Experts on-demand, we can automate simple enquiries while enabling customers to seamlessly switch to chatting with an on-demand Expert 24/7 to solve more complex enquiries.

We're delighted GigCX Experts are enjoying using the Limitless platform and equally delighted that GigCX can help with business continuity during today's COVID-19 pandemic.

We are dedicated to helping businesses maintain resilience in today's uncharted times, and empowering people to earn money for providing brilliant customer service.

We hope you find this report helpful, and that if you find you have questions about how GigCX may benefit your organisation, you can feel free to come to us for an honest and open conversation. Enjoy!

An Overview of the Key findings from the GigCX survey

80%

of organisations agreed that 20-50% of customer service will be made up of GigCX Experts by 2025

6 out 10 CX Leaders

during this research project cited "embedding more flexible labor sourcing models into a traditional contract centre" as the major driver for adopting GigCX within their businesses

They Surveyed GigCX Experts	where from		spoke
	21 Countries	**6** Continents	**42** Languages

72%

GigCX Experts have an undergraduate degree or above

96%

think customer experience is improved when service is provided by someone who uses the products of service and loves the brand

98%

plan to continue to GigXC for the next 12months

75%

say they need to GigCX every day

In the Spotlight

How GigCX is supporting a new era of business continuity

By Aileen Allkins, CVP Customer Service
and Support, Microsoft, 2016-2020

For the past four years, I was responsible for customer service and support at Microsoft globally. That means supporting every Microsoft product, from consumer products, enterprise products, hardware, software, cloud and on-premise. Microsoft has 25-30,000 frontline advocates and engineers, supporting customers 24/7 across the globe.

All of my peers are faced with the same challenges, which is to provide better quality customer service at a lower cost. As a global team, we evaluated workforce strategies regularly, continually looking at what type of work should be done by our full-time employees, what work was suited well to a contracting model, and what could be allocated to the GigCX model.

Like all customer service leaders, we dealt with the common challenges around scale, Fundamentally, there are many reasons a customer service team has to scale up and then down: certain holiday periods, for example, can cause volumes to increase, As has been demonstrated by research conducted in this report, the COVID-19 pandemic is another good example of how different circumstances can lead to increased customer service queries.

It's essential that businesses are agile and flexible in customer service, but it's equally important that we don't compromise the quality of service, and this is where GigCX really thrives. It also does this at a lower price point than the traditional call centre model, which is an added bonus.

In implementing GigCX, we found we achieved equal or better customer satisfaction where we deployed it, and much better response times. Strategic deployment has been key. We successfully automated many categories of inquiry types through our virtual agent solution and deployed GigCX in various scenarios.

For me, GigCX is a way of maintaining a personal level of service: it's really about maintaining human to human contact, at a high level of customer satisfaction. I still think many human beings prefer to be helped by other human beings. This was certainly something that was apparent in this research: for our crowd of Experts, the ability to help people with knowledge about brands they love was as important as the financial motives and flexibility offered by GigCX

Many people ask me when to automate and when to leverage GigCX. My response is that the big difference with the GigCX model is the excitement and enthusiasm for the products which the Experts are supporting. In using various models and channels for customer service, you also provide your customers with the one thing we hear about time and time again in top CX priorities: choice.

Many of us want to speak to a person directly, especially in the time of COVID-19, where human to human communication has been limited. In this case, gig customer service agents have made for a welcome addition in maintaining a personal level of service.

In deploying several models that span in-house agents, GigCX crowds and automation as a multi-tiered approach, businesses will be in the best possible position to increase resilience during these challenging times. When you're able to increase the traffic to elastic channels, you can flex with increase in demand and most importantly, maintain the key performance metrics of resolution rate, time and quality.

For me, GigCX is a way of maintaining a personal level of service: it's really about maintaining human to human contact, at a high level of customer satisfaction.

The Rise of Gig Customer Service

People who gig are generally defined as those that specifically pursue the short individual task in which they are paid on a per-task basis.

A 2019 study by Gartner revealed that total customer services in 2023...

35%

Driven by...

Labour Practises & BCB

Crowdsourcing

Work at home or telework
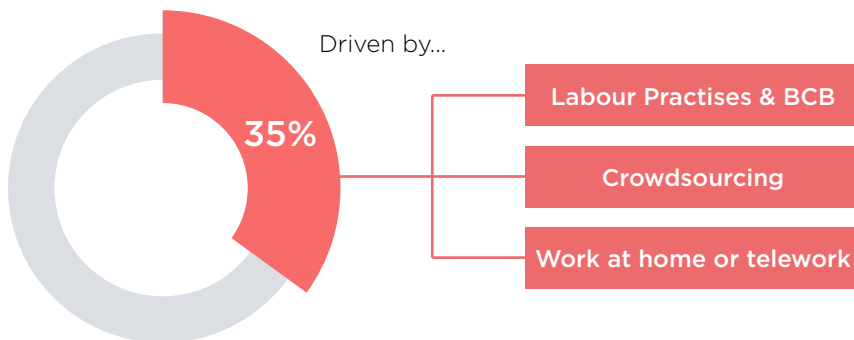
By 2023, driven by changing labour practices and business continuity planning (BCP), crowdsourcing, work-at-home or telework, the gig model will account for 35% total customer services, up from 5% in 2017

Office for National Statistics and the Association of Independent Proffesionals and the Self-Employed (IPSE) report...

Doubled size in 3yrs

2m

2018   2019   2020
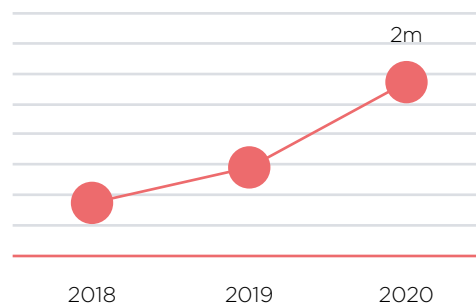
A 2019 study by the Everest Group revealed that gig in the US, currently at 62 million, will surpass the permanent workforce by 2027, growing 40% by 2027 to reach 86 million...

GigCX - the Next Big Thing?

1. Businesses/brands are waking up to GigCX

Traditional vs Gig models of customer service

To explain GigCX in detail, let's think of a traditional brick-and-mortar contact centre operation as a hotel. A contact centre, much like a hotel, is a building with fixed costs and overheads. It houses customer service agents and technology which allows agents to connect with customers.

A big problem with this model is its lack of flexibility to deal with demand fluctuations. The fixed business cost will still be there even if the hotel is running at 50% occupancy rate or the contact centre is only staffed at 70% capacity. At the same time, if customer demand or contact volumes double overnight due to an unplanned emergency, both the hotel and contact centre will struggle to cope and accommodate customer needs.

Another point to note is the rising costs of attrition - both hotels and contact centres hire staff who are mostly on minimum wage and almost always under pressure to deliver. A fixed cost model offers them no flexibility to work hours convenient to them or to do tasks which they are best suited to.

The Transition to GigCX

However, things are different when you adopt an Airbnb model or a GigCX model – the former operates on the basis of allowing homeowners in the area (who have extra space) to list their homes to be rented out for the short-term. A big difference is that rooms are available on-demand, so there's no wastage. And Airbnb can tap into their gig network and attract more inventory to cope with peaks in demand.

A GigCX model works in a similar manner. Brands can tap into a pool of gig talent, mostly their own customers to provide on-demand service. This pool can flex up to 4 times or more in line with unplanned volume spikes or contract in line with a fall in demand. This is possible as to where the average call centre agent will be working at maximum capacity throughout the week leaving no room to expand, gig Experts may only spend a small proportion of their time gigging – meaning they have plenty of extra capacity when needed.

Experts are under no obligation or commitment to complete a task - they simply log into the gig platform, and answer questions if they can. Answers are rated by the customer and the gig Expert gets rewarded for every answer deemed helpful. This flexible, agile model means a large GigCX crowd can be sourced on-demand to serve a brand. It is advantageous for the brands, as they pay on a cost-per-resolved case, stripping out wastage. Additionally

customer-to-customer interaction creates a level of personalisation and empathy, helping drive engagement and satisfaction.

It's clear that GigCX is set to disrupt the traditional contact centre environment in a huge way and this has only been exacerbated by the most recent COVID-19 crisis as the demand for a remote workforce has become one of the highest priorities.

Businesses are always wrestling with the need to reduce costs while also increasing C-SAT and customer engagement. GigCX enables you to do both and while there will always be a need for an in-house human team at one end of the scale and a clear AI strategy at the other, there is still an enormous of demand that a flexible GigCX crowd can answer.

And the benefits?

Lower cost to serve

GigCX models have been found to reduce the cost to serve by up to 50% or more by stripping out fixed costs related to staffing, recruitment and other overheads. Also, by focusing on cost per resolved ticker (rather than the traditional cost per head), GigCX allows brands to adopt a variable pay-as-you-go pricing model and focus on what really matters.

Scale customer service operations rapidly in line with business needs

A gig model allows brands to source their own customers (who are product fans) who then undergo a digital onboarding programme. This mode of talent procurement drastically reduces recruitment costs. Since GigCX Experts are already loyal, knowledgeable customers, speed to competency is greatly reduced as well.

6 out 10 CX Leaders during this research project cited "embedding more flexible sourcing models into a traditional contact centre" as the major driver for adopting GigCX within their businesses.

Deliver faster, better service

By tapping into the customers' passion and knowledge of products and services, a gig platform brings a level of personalisation usually not seen in an agent-to-customer interaction. By sourcing talent which mirrors their customer base, GigCX models can drive engagement and customer advocacy. Additionally, response times get drastically reduced, so customers get their answer in near-real-time.

Flexible model which can peak more than 4 times

The gig pool is elastic by nature, which means brands can tackle demand variability by tapping into Experts to absorb unplanned spikes. There are cases where brands like National Express and Daily Mail quadrupled their gig crowds overnight to deal with demand peaks.

Promote diversity and inclusivity

60% of CX leaders interviewed stated their top reason for leveraging a gig pool as the need to source talent aligned to company values and culture.

A great example is Unilever India recruiting women via the Fair & Lovely Foundation – a charity which works with women in fringe communities to provide employment opportunities. By tapping into this base of underprivileged customers, Unilever undertook a successful corporate outreach programme to empower its customers to deliver on-demand support and earn on the go.

Traditional Contact	GigCX
Cost per head, FTE based fixed pricing mode	Cost per resolved ticket, Pay-as-you-go variable pricing
High recruitment and training costs	Minimal cost to invite and onboard
9 Hours operational model	24/7 on-demand operational model
Cannot flex in line with unplanned demand	Can flex in line with unplanned demand
Sourcing diverse and inclusive talent difficult due to traditional recruitment models	Can source diverse and inclusive talent from own customer base via digital onboarding programmes
High attrition and absenteeism	Experts work on their own terms and other Experts can pick up any tasks left over
Agents not necessarily customers so service can lack in empathy and authenticity	Highly personal and authentic interactions as GigCX Experts are themselves, customers of the brand

Table 1: A comparison between the traditional and GigCX models

2. Changing expectations

More and more people are embracing flexible forms of earning, including gig and freelance, which enables them to access opportunities and earn on their own terms. Data from the global GigCX survey points out that:

Millennials and Gen-Z comprise over 65% of GigCX Experts.

35%

are in full-time employment but do gig tasks on the side to supplement their main income.

27%

described themselves as gigging full-time.

1 in 2

respondents would consider leaving their full-time jobs to gig, which means that the number of people choosing to gig full-time is increasing.

Perceptions about the gig economy

Attitudes towards the gig economy have changed in the past decade. Businesses seem to have learned from pioneers such as Uber, Lyft or Airbnb and as such are taking steps to embrace sustainable and responsible models of operation. At the same time, those that gig have also started viewing gigging as more favourable.

35%

of respondents in the GigCX survey, think gigging has a more positive view in public today.

97%

think companies today are now doing more to protect the interests of people who gig.

Interestingly, perceptions that gig is suitable only for low-skilled labour are also changing, With the rapid growth of businesses offering gig services, people are finding more flexibility and variety in the type of tasks being offered - customer service, tech support, creative design, copywriting, web development being some of the services currently seeking skilled labour via gig or freelance platforms.

From GigCX survey, it is clear that gig Experts are highly educated, full-time professionals - they also tend to pursue gig tasks which align to their experience and core skill sets.

50%

of people doing GigCX have a customer service/ tech background which makes them ideal for customer support/tech support tasks.

7 out of 10

respondents have university degrees.

3. The need for GoodGig®

The gig economy offers people access to flexible earning opportunities on the go.

25% of people in our GigCX survey stated: "Flexibility to work on my own terms and on my own schedule" as the top driver for gigging.

There is an increased call for gig companies to adopt 'GoodGig®' practices. These can vary based on the nature of the business, but essentially GoodGig® practices focus on three aspects:

1. Fair rewards - Ensure people are rewarded fairly for tasks done.

2. Lack of pressure - Allow complete flexibility to operate on their own terms with no penalties for inactivity and no commitments to enter into or exit from gig tasks.

3. Protection - Protect in each country through Terms and Conditions which are compliant with local gig/freelance legislation.

"GoodGig® models attempt to embrace practices which positively impact the lives of its gig crowd, the end-customer and the businesses we support. It seeks to ensure our Gig Experts are rewarded fairly for their time and that they also have the freedom to choose to take on tasks or not. A GoodGig® platform should enable anyone with talent to access tasks easily and at the same time exit the gig platform without fear of penalties or upfront costs. It takes into account local legislation and workers' rights, so people are protected under local laws. GoodGig® is also sustainable and promotes practices which helps reduce overall carbon footprint output."

Megan Neale, Co-founder, Limitless

4. Customers trust other customers and value their opinions

Customer needs and purchase habits have undergone a seminal shift in the last decade – the proliferation of smartphones and social media apps makes it easy for people to access and post information online.

Online product reviews about a product can increase its conversion rate by more than **270%**. (Source: Spiegel Research Center)

83%

of customers no longer trust brands or advertising (Source: Statuslabs)

91%

of millennials trust online reviews as much as friends and family (Source: Brightlocal)

For Customers today, peer reviews are not just important for informing buying decisions, they have become critical in delivering good customer experiences. As part of our GigCX survey, we asked 500 respondents what mattered to them most as customers.

For **35%**, quick and fast issue resolution is critical.

40%

of customers no longer trust brands or advertising (Source: Statuslabs)

96%

think customer experience would be improved if service was being provided by another customer

It's evident that today's customers want fast, empathetic and personal service – a level of support that could easily be delivered if they are interacting with other customers like themselves. Businesses looking to improve customer engagement should consider ways they can innovatively source their best customers to deal with customer issues and reward them for providing on-demand support. Which is essentially the promise of GigCX.

CX Leaders who've gone the Gig Way

GigCX is a force multiplier helping Microsoft convert more customers to fans

Attitudes towards the gig economy have changed in the past decade. Businesses seem to have learned from pioneers such as Uber, Lyft or Airbnb and as such are taking steps to embrace sustainable and responsible models of operation. At the same time, those that gig have also started viewing gigging as more favourable.

Sue Morris
Vice President, Global Support, GitHub,
part of Microsoft (ex-GM, Global Customer Service – Microsoft)

Sue Morris is Vice President, Global Support at GitHub. Sue has long been an advocate of GigCX, helping establish gig as a strategic sourcing model at Microsoft, where she was General Manager, Global Customer Support.

While considering GigCX at GitHub, Sue understands products with loyal communities are ideal for gig customer support. Which is why under her leadership, brands such as Xbox, Office and Surface enjoyed a spike in customer satisfaction, thanks to its communities of fans providing amazing on-demand customer support.

"With a GigCX crowd, you have the amazing opportunity to enable fan-to-fan conversations. The community of product fans at Microsoft are amazing influencers - any interaction with a fan acts as a force multiplier, helping us convert more customers to fans. We wanted to create more product fans by delivering world-class customer experiences and the gig model allows us to do that. The personal engagement and passion a customer experiences when interacting with fan communities of Xbox Surface or Windows is unique and not easily replicable.

Having a GigCX model also helps us deal with demand variability, with the GigCX crowd flexing during peak trading hours. Because we're teaching our own product fans to deliver amazing customer service, the speed-to-competency is remarkably reduced, and we can ramp very quickly to achieve operational goals. At Microsoft, we've worked with GigCX to identify more ways in which we can bring the expertise of customer experience. At the same time businesses also need to work hard to deliver enhanced security and transparency features, so our customers can have the best possible experience."

Any interaction with a product fan acts as a force multiplier, helping us convert more customers to fans. We wanted to create more product fans by delivering world-class customer experiences and the gig model allows us to do that.

GigCX Experts are generating valuable insights and informing critical decisions for our business

Brett Frazer
Vice President of Customer Service Sun Basket

Brett Frazer has been advocating the value of GigCX within his role as Vice President of Customer Service for Sun Basket, a San Francisco-based subscription healthy meal delivery service.

"My job as VP of Customer Service is to fix problems by finding quick and hassle-free solutions to customer problems so that we can continue to maintain a responsibility to the bottom line of Sun Basket from both a customer and fiscal perspective. GigCX can help us from both of these viewpoints.

Where I see the key value of GigCX is in the customer helping another customer. There is an element of empathy, authenticity and transparency that comes with a customer trying to solve another customer's issues. With Sun Basket being a premium product, our GigCX Experts often don't really need the money - they do it as they love helping and being part of the Sun Basket family. It is something they believe in. This kind of emotional reaction and empathy can be difficult to recreate especially in a word where most front-line services are outsourced, to people who aren't customers of the product and don't have a relationship with the brand.

When customers come to us, we need to find the best way to serve them and work out how best we can utilise data to help customers self-serve. How do we get data to know why customers are contacting us, so we can use that information to power automations and make improvements going forward? Gig has helped here but it's about making sure we are offering the right volumes to Gig Experts so they can assist effectively and help us in building an automation model that has the right impact. "

As a premium brand, our Gig Experts often don't really need the money - they do it as they love helping and being part of the Sun Basket family.

GigCX Experts are generating valuable insights and informing critical decisions for our business

Manish Makhijani
Global Consumer Insights Director – Unilever

Manish Makhijani is the Global Consumer Insights Director at Unilever and oversees the Consumer Engagement Centres, the hotbed for all consumer innovation and insight programs at the company.

Manish has in-depth expertise in leveraging consumer understanding to inform key business strategy. Under his leadership, Unilever is utilising a multilingual GigCX crowd to boost engagement across its key global markets including US, UK, Canada, Ireland, Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Brazil and India.

"Customer demands are changing every day, and it's imperative that we maintain a pulse on their needs and wants, in order to stay competitive. With the proliferation of social media and messaging apps, consumers now expect brands to be forthright and communicate with them instead of operating behind a curtain of corporate secrecy. Across all our markets, there is an increased awareness amongst consumers and a call for transparency - people want to know more about the Unilever products they consume, where they come from and how they're produced. Having a consumer-consumer engagement being in an element of trust and authenticity as people share product experiences, useful tips and empathise over common issues. This is the power if GigCX - it allows people who are product lovers to share their passion and experiences with others

Another great aspect of GigCX is that it enables us to pursue our inclusivity and diversity goals when sourcing talent. Our Open Talent Economy platform allows us to access the talents of individuals in fringe communities or with physical disabilities and give them a chance to earn by delivering on-demand customer support. GigCX can become a powerful agent of change by empowering people from all backgrounds, geographies, and genders to seek earning opportunities from the brands they love."

GigCX can become a powerful agent of change by empowering people from all backgrounds, geographies and genders to seek earning opportunities from the brands they love.

GigCX is helping Sage's transformation to a 'Lifestyle brand'

Susan Caesar
Director of Customer Experience Sage

Susan Caesar is a GigCX pioneer. She was Head of Customer Service at The Daily Mail Group in 2017 when the brand embarked on a gig customer service pilot, sourcing its loyal customers to support digital subscription product lines. That experience proved useful at her current role at Sage as Director of Customer Experience.

Susan has been busy rolling out GigCX for Sage, the market leader for integrated accounting, payroll, and payment systems, supporting the ambition of the world's entrepreneurs.

"I think the gig model of talent sourcing will gain more traction in the future, given the specific challenges of the customer service industry. Gig enables us to scale people-centric customer service operations at a lower cost base and gathers actionable insights which the business can act on. I believe people-based solutions are key to driving C-SAT; self-service and automation are good, but a customer in crisis especially needs personal care and empathy. And that's where having a crowd of Gig Experts, who themselves are customers can become critical. In a way it is like a matchmaking service - through GigCX, we can match Experts to the right type of customers. For example, with Sage, we are growing our own gig crowds of e-retailers, plumbers, florists etc. Who talk to customers with similar issues. This type of contextual peer-to-peer customer service will allow us to shift the dial on customer satisfaction and also impact customer loyalty, by rewarding those very customers who provide on-demand support.

GigCX's people-first approach is also key to transforming consumer perception about Sage, Which has always been a B2B brand, speaking directly to businesses looking to scale their finance and HR operations. With gig crowds of Sage customers helping other customers with their day-to-day problems, we have the opportunity to shift the brand image of Sage to that of a B2C lifestyle brand – a business that impacts people's lives on a daily basis and uses its customers' passion to help solve customer issues in a very innovative way.``

GigCX is a bit like a matchmaking service – we're matching customer segments with the right type of gig Experts who can provide contextual and personal advice on their issues.

With GigCX, we can help Sage transform into a lifestyle brand which leverages the passion of its best customers to other customers.

**Our on-demand gig Fleet has improved customer retention,
by helping novice drivers quickly find their feet.**

Hetal Shah
VP of Customer Experience Product & Operations, Postmates

Hetal Shah is VP of Customer Experience Products & Operations at online goods delivery company Postmates. His team is focused on creating effortless customer experiences across the platform by reducing friction points upstream, automating the resolution of issues, designing contextual self-service solutions, and driving efficiency in the customer service experience.

As a business which relies on a gig crowd to drive its operations, Hetal opines that it was a natural step for Postmates to adopt GigCX to improve customer engagement.

"We're constantly looking for innovative solutions to improve customer engagement for all product users. Leveraging the knowledge and experience of our own expert Fleet of couriers to help others was a game-changer in driving customer satisfaction and faster resolution of issues. Not only that, we're finding that our on-demand gig Fleet's knowledge is key in improving the customer experience as they have the empathy and understanding to support less experienced couriers and get them up to speed. Our gig Fleet has especially proved great at helping novice fleet drivers quickly find their feet"

We're now using our gig Fleet not only for on-demand customer service, but also to provide qualitative insight to up steam teams like Product. Agile, growing companies like Postmates need fast and real-time feedback from customers to make improvements.

Our gig Fleet has been able to channel vital feedback to our Product teams informing product decisions. I also believe the gig model can vitally impact other areas of the customer lifecycle such as acquisition, wherein your best and most experienced Fleet drivers can help convert more potential drivers and help them get up to speed quickly"

Leveraging the knowledge and experience of our own expert Fleet of couriers to help others was a game-changer in driving customer satisfaction and faster resolution of issues. Not only that, our on-demand gig Fleet has improved customer experience, by helping novice drivers quickly find their feet.

National Express able to handle more than 400% flexes in demand with GigCX

Vinay Parmar
Managing Director, Accessible Transport National Express

Vinay Parmar - Managing Director, Accessible Transport at National Express is one of the original GigCX pioneers, having adopted the gig customer service model back in 2017 at the UK-based multinational transport company.

4 years, 19 million journeys a year, and 900 destinations later, the same brand Experts are still helping National Express keep their customers on board.

"Every business faces the same standard problems when it comes to their customer service operation. Staff turnover and falling budgets are constant but pressure remains to improve C-SAT. At National Express we are no different, however, we also have some problems that are more specific to us. Demand volatility based on seasonality (holidays and special events) can be predicted but incidents such as traffic accidents are much harder to prepare for, meaning we can often face 400% peaks in customer queries. This is where we get the most value from the GigCX model, as our crowd of experts are always hungry for more chances to serve our customers and earn some money. This means we aren't in a constant state of monitoring agent numbers for resource planning purposes.

An unexpected benefit we've noticed since we adopted GigCX is that after putting in the time and effort to gather the right crowd of Experts for the brand, four years later, it's still the same crowd that is serving our customers with 95% of them being active on a monthly basis. The engagement and enjoyment of our Experts are evident in both our Expert and customer satisfaction results. Customer satisfaction is up due to the personalised nature of the interaction with Experts and the empathy and unique language they use."

With GigCX, we can now support spikes in demand. This was demonstrated during February 2018 when heavy snow led to contract volumes quadrupling for a week- however, the Experts were able to easily absorb the demand spike.

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Profiling the GigCX Experts

Gender mix	Age differences
There is a close to even split of 55:45 make to female ratio	GenZ and Millennials(18-40) make up much of current Gig Experts

Respondents of the survey

85%	26%
85% in service roles (Customer services, IT, Operations, HR, Sales, Marketing, Finance)	The largest proportion are customer service workers at 26%

Occupational splits

72%	47%
were educated to an undergraduate level or above	were at the manager level or above in their job

The GigCX survey shows that the average Expert is highly educated.

This suggests Gig Experts will look for tasks that aligns to the skill sets developed from their other sources of income.

Sources of income

52%	27%	21%
were either in full or part-time employment showing a large number of those that gig use it as a source of secondary income.	identified as gigging full-time. Unsurprisingly these people will tend to use more than one gig platform to increase income.	were students, full-time parents or retired – showing the value of the flexibility that gig offers and how it can access new talent pools.

Access new talent pools

85% of those asked were multilingual and were from 21 different countries. Interestingly there was a significant presence from Europe, Asia, North America, and Australasia.

The most common language spoken was English which is likely down to most of the largest gig providing companies being based in English speaking countries.

Future of GigCX

How businesses and people are preparing to be gig ready

Businesses getting Gig ready

World over, enterprises are opening up to the possibilities of utilising gig as a strategic sourcing model, not just for customer service, but other areas of business. Organisations like Unilever have the Open Talent Economy program, through which talent is sourced through global and local partners for all areas of business. Elsewhere, businesses like Microsoft have revealed that the gig model will be of strategic importance in sourcing customer service talent across all their markets.

In a survey of CX leaders of leading businesses.

4 in 5	100%
have said that nearly 20% of their CX in the next 2 years will comprise of GigCX Experts.	of respondents have predicted that there will be a rise in the contact via these channels over the next five years - Messenger apps, chatbots and mobile apps. This digital transformation fits perfectly with GigCX.

Simply put CX functions are gearing up to invest in processes and technology which enable gig models to seamlessly operate alongside more traditional customer service models.

People preparing for a gig future

Gig Experts are upskilling themselves to be more prepared. GigCX Experts seem keen to attain skills relevant to customer service showing there is an increasing appetite for this kind of task.

6 out 10 GigCX Experts interviewed have participated in some skills-based training in the last 5 months.

Organisations like Unilever have the Open Talent Economy program, through which talent is sourced through global and local partners for all areas of business

A Call to Action in a New Landscape

Keith Weed
former Unilever marketing chief, and WPP board director,
charity non-exec.

As this report was being produced, we had the opportunity to discuss how work will be done in the future with Keith Weed, former Unilever marketing chief, and WPP board director, charity non-exec.

His thoughts formed a perfect call to action for any company:

"We're trying to think about how work is done in the future. The exercise the world is going through right now in working remotely will change the way people think about how they work. We need to think through new models around how people are going to work to ensure brands don't find themselves becoming irrelevant and left behind."

So, what does this mean for the use of gig in CX going forward? As we've seen throughout our research, GigCX is proving that it's better for customers, the Experts gig crowd, and for organisations across the board. All of our data proves this, and GigCX is showing that it can meet the increased demand we're seeing for scalable, flexible customer service, especially in today's remote working-based landscape, where companies are understanding the importance of using a blended resource pool that can handle scale and disruption.

As online and digital volumes grow, it is important to have a flexible, 24/7 on-demand labour pool that can come online where customers require human support.

In five years, 75% of the workforce will be Millennials and Generation

These people will not want to work in call centres for 40 hours per week: we need to create an ecosystem of different customer service resources.

GigCX is offering brands more options, and a better mix of services than the traditional onsite, offshore and self-serve and automation options, However, it's also important that we scale responsibly, and remember that just because GigCX is a solution that is comparable in price to virtual agents and automation, does not mean that the Gig Experts shouldn't be recognised as equal to full-time equivalent humans that are in permanent roles.

This is why we will continue to share our GoodGig® charter. It's also why we're continually encouraging companies to adopt GoodGig® practices to ensure fair rewards for working, and lack of pressure to allow Gig Expert to complete work flexibly on their own terms with no penalties for inactivity and no commitments to enter into or exit gigging. GoodGig® also means that we are advocates of protecting Gig Experts in any given country through terms and conditions which are compliant with the local gig and freelance legislation.

Ultimately, the GoodGig® model naturally embraces practices which positively impact the lives of its gig crowd, the end-customer, and the businesses involved. This is a perfect compliment to the period of increased e-commerce activity Keith Weed discussed during our talk about the future of work:

"Post-this [pandemic]. The amount of online shopping will go down, but the amount of people who have now had an online experience will never go back. So there will be a step change in the amount of e-commerce used – brands are going to have to think about how they engage with that."

As a brand navigating today's uncharted waters, it's time to think about how you're going to engage with your customers going forward. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's perhaps that we've not embraced digital transformation enough, especially in terms of flexibility and scale in customer service. In order to be truly resilient, businesses need to heed a big call to action:

There are big changes and opportunities on the horizon, and the time is now to embrace a new way of working to foster the next generation of business growth and to deliver better, more flexible and agile customer service.

- *Personalised Experiences - If you want to retain your customers, you need to understand them better. Leveraging your own customers to help others is a perfect way to do this.*

- *Agile Service - Your customer service needs to be seamless, even in times of mass disruption. It's time to embed more flexible labour sourcing models into the traditional contact centre.*

- *Digitally Optimised - As e-commerce grows, it's essential that businesses can deliver faster, better 24/7 service that drives engagement and customer advocacy. GigCX helps with all of this.*

- *Diverse Ecosystem - It's time to promote diversity and inclusivity. Top CX leaders know that the gig pool is diverse and the research also backs this up, making GigCX a great option.*

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's perhaps that we've not embraced digital transformation enough, especially in terms of flexibility and scale in customer service.

Davies' GigCX Accelerator

The business-case for GigCX becoming part of your ongoing care estate is difficult to ignore yet finding the time and space to consider how it fits as part of your care strategy requires many inputs and data points, such as:

• Identifying how GigCX can play a role in optimising your care estate

• Identifying a GigCX technology solution

• Designing and implementing a meaningful trial - including full set-up and configuration of the technology, POC measures, governance, stakeholders and roadmap

• Evaluating the impact of the trial

• Creating a compelling business case for wider-deployment

Davies' GigCX Accelerator is designed to address all of these challenges through providing an end-to-end service that minimises the impact on BAU operations and delivers the right results rapidly without pondering or fence-sitting - there isn't time. Just clear decisive action.

Solutions Based On Pace

Being agile and fast-moving is now widely recognised as a key differentiator for organisations, and delivering innovation at pace is certainly more critical than ever.

Davies has combined our existing programmes and services to create Business Solutions that address the industry challenges and need for rapid review, design and delivery of innovation and realising the resultant opportunities.

Our GigCX Accelerator enables brands to leverage the opportunity of a distributed workforce by helping to streamline the process of identifying, validating and commercialising the benefits.

In specific terms - this includes:

• Working with our clients to understand existing contact demand and using this as the basis for identifying contacts that could/should be handled using a GigCX model

• Designing a proof-of-concept (3 Months) using the GigCX platform that is relevant to your business and that will give you the ability to validate the business impact on agreed KPIs

• End-to-end project management of the POC to include all activities and stakeholder engagement

• Commercial Impact Modelling – production of a POC report that will identify the impact, benefit delivered and the business-case and roadmap for wider deployment

Solution & Service Components

- Demand Drivers & Value-Irritant (VI): Review of your existing customer contact profiles to identify the nature of your current demand and apply tools and techniques to help you identify alternative treatment options

- Work Prioritisation: Classification and prioritisation of the work types for consideration within a distributed GigCX workforce model

- Project Management:

1. Development of the project plan that will govern the set-up and deployment of the POC within the chosen market

2. Lead internal discussions and briefings with key stakeholders from marketing, HR and Finance as required by the plan

3. Ensure the POC is positioned with the right customer segments and contact types

4. Ensure the POC is implemented to time and budget

- Commercial Modelling: Develop a post-POC report that will evaluate the success of the POC, key learnings, optimal deployment approach and the commercial business case, represented both from the pilot location and with respect to future geographic expansion to identified markets and applications.

Benefit Of The Services

Using Davies' GigCX Accelerator Model enables brands to quickly identify how, why and where a GigCX approach is relevant for their business and to validate this in commercial terms. Davies will provide end-to-end ownership of the project, minimising the time and resources needed from our clients.

We will:

- Utilise proven tools and methodologies to map out and analyse the existing contact-centre estate

- Utilise pre-built templates to streamline the capture of operational data needed to design the POC exercise

- Utilise pre-built templates to expedite the collation of commercial business case inputs required for a chosen market

- Oversee the set-up and configuration of the GigCX platform using our proven methodology

- Develop and manage the project plan from inception to completion

- Draft and deliver the POC report, summarising the learnings, impacts and benefits case for further deployment

Our experience of working with GigCX platforms and reviewing their role in the market has proven that the following benefits are achievable when effectively deployed:

- Reduced support costs by up to 60%

- Increased customer satisfaction: +20 points

- Access new talent pools, 24/7 in any language

- Fast responses in near real-time (sub 5 mins)

- Flex resources 10x instantly to handle surges

- Average Expert speed to competency is <5 days

- Reduce future propensity to contact

- Increase customer LTV by increasing partner/customer engagement

- Increase ability to leverage knowledge within existing staff members

The three top reasons why we urge you to look at this now are that:

1. It just makes business sense: costs down, service levels up, flexibility improved, brand enhanced. This feels an easy decision on that basis, doesn't it?

2. It joins up marketing and operations–a critical business need –to enhance engagement, trust and brand, delivered one to one. Advocates become stronger and drive even greater advocacy. NPS improvement becomes a by-product of engaging customers to engage customers. It's the TripAdvisor principle: customers trust those on the outside more than the inside. And regular customer advocates often know more than many of those on the inside anyway (**96% of customers think that service is improved when answered by another customer**).

3. It prepares you better: for changing consumers (the growing millennial, X, Y, Z influence and preferences), for uncertainty in demand and for operational disruption. Like now.

About Davies

Davies Consulting is a business services group providing specialist management consultancy, training, analytics, transformation and automation services to global organisations focused the customer experience and how to improve it for customers while creating value for the organisation.

About Limitless

Limitless is a gig customer service platform, combining crowdsourcing and AL to help global businesses address their biggest customer service challenges - rushing costs, increasing attrition, variability in demand and the need for diversity. Global brands are using Limitless 'smart technology to connect with their most engaged customers and reward them for provisioning on-demand customer service that can flex in line with demand.

For more information visit our website at: www.limitlesstech.com
or contact us at: www.limitlesstech.com/contact

Get in touch

We are ready to help you rapidly assess the opportunity for GigCX in your operating model and to ensure the next steps you take are the right ones, taken quickly and effectively.

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