

# The 2020 Gig Customer Service Report

The Explosive Rise of GigCX

Research Paper 2020



**Limitless**

## Foreword

### **Aileen Allkins** **Former CVP Customer Service and Support, Microsoft**

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**If you were designing a call center today from scratch, how different would it be to a call center 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 'crowd sources' customer support. Organizations 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. Organizations are using GigCX to reap the benefits of an always-on, agile, highly motivated people that delivers 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 center.

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 understand more about people's motivations, attitudes and behaviours surrounding GigCX, and how it is helping the organizations who have pioneered its application through some truly engaging business use cases.

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 center 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,  
Microsoft, 2016-2020

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## Methodology

Limitless and Ember 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.



## Executive Summary

### Recognizing 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 is 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, GitHub, Unilever, Postmates and Sun Basket.

### The 2020 Gig Customer Service survey

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 worker 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 Experts 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 organization, 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 organizations agreed that 20-50% of customer service will be made up of GigCX Experts by 2025



**6 out of 10 CX Leaders**

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



**The surveyed GigCX Experts**

were from

**21**

Countries

**06**

Continents

spoke

**42**

Languages

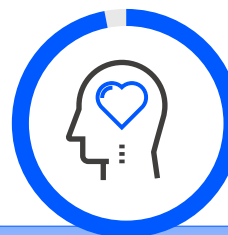
**72%**

GigCX Experts have an undergraduate degree or above



**96%**

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



**98%**

plan to continue to do GigCX for the next 12 months



**75%** say they do GigCX everyday



## In the Spotlight



### **Aileen Allkins, CVP Customer Service and Support, Microsoft, 2016-2020: How GigCX is supporting a new era of business continuity**

**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 quality of service, and this is where GigCX really thrives. It also does this at a lower price point than the traditional call center 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 resiliency 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.

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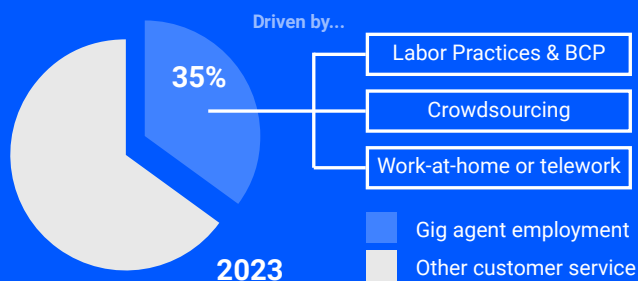
## The Rise of Gig Customer Service

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

These people aren't obliged to take any task meaning they only operate where and when they want and have time to do so. They can range from those that only spend a few minutes performing tasks a day beside a full-time role, to those that exclusively perform gig tasks throughout the day.

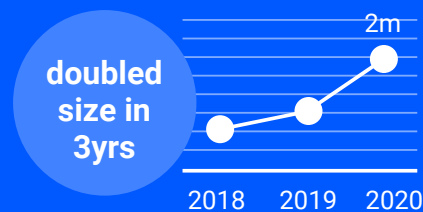
The proliferation of gig tasks available especially through major gig economy players such as Uber, Lyft, Airbnb and Deliveroo points to a paradigm shift in the way people earn and supplement their incomes.

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



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

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



**UK has over 2 million people** in the freelance sector. This has doubled in size over the past 3 years\*



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 center operation as a hotel. A contact center, 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. Fixed business costs will still be there even if the hotel is running at 50% occupancy rate or the contact center 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 center will struggle to cope and accommodate customer needs.

Another point to note is the rising costs of attrition – both hotels and contact centers 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 being 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 where the average call center 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, the customer-to-customer interaction creates a level of personalization and empathy, helping drive engagement and satisfaction.

It's clear that GigCX is set to disrupt the traditional contact center 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 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 amount of demand that a flexible GigCX crowd can answer.

#### And the benefits?



##### Lower cost to serve

GigCX models have been found to reduce 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 ticket (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 of 10 CX Leaders

during this research project cited “embedding more flexible labor sourcing models into a traditional contact center” as the major driver for adopting GigCX within their businesses.





# The 2020 Gig Customer Service Report



## Deliver faster, better service

By tapping into the customers' passion and knowledge of products and services, a gig platform brings a level of personalization 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 answers in near-real time.

GigCX enables brands to drive a positive diversity strategy as GigCX Experts are recruited purely based upon their ability and skills to answer the enquiries they are being recruited for.

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.



## 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.

Traditional contact center	GigCX
Cost per head, FTE based fixed pricing model	Cost per resolved ticket, Pay-as-you-go variable pricing
High recruitment and training costs	Minimal costs 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.

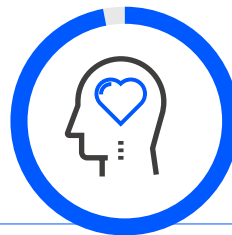


## Perceptions about the gig economy

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.

**94%**

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 interest of people who gig.



Interestingly, perceptions that gig is suitable only for low-skilled labor 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, copy writing, web development being some of the services currently seeking skilled labor via gig or freelance platforms.

From the 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.

**52%**

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



**7 out of 10**

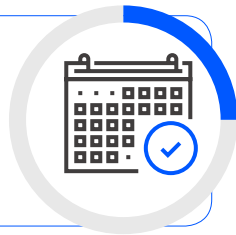
respondents have university degrees.



### 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

For more details, refer to Limitless' GoodGig® charter - [www.limitlesstech.com/goodgig-charter/](http://www.limitlesstech.com/goodgig-charter/)



## The 2020 Gig Customer Service Report

### 4. Customers trust other customers and value their opinions

Customer needs and purchase habits have undergone a seminal shift in last decade – 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)



**40%**

believe empathy and a personal, tailored engagement based on past interactions is important.



**96%**

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



**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)



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.

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.



## CX Leaders who've gone the Gig Way

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



**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 continues to contribute to Unilever's diversity and inclusivity goals



**Manish Makhijani,**  
Global Consumer Insights Director –  
Unilever

**Manish Makhijani is the Global Consumer Insights Director at Unilever and oversees the Consumer Engagement Centers, 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 utilizing a multilingual GigCX crowd to boost engagement across its key global markets including US, UK, Canada, Ireland, Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Brazil and India.

“ Consumer 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-to-consumer engagement brings in an element of trust and authenticity as people share product experiences, useful tips and empathize over common issues. This is the power of 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 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.



## The 2020 Gig Customer Service Report

## 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 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 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 to a lifestyle brand which leverages the passion of its best customers to other customers.





### 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.**

Initially introducing the gig initiative as part of Sun Basket's customer service strategy, Brett has also pioneered Gig Experts as part of their user testing and pre-sales processes and is continuing to look at further opportunities.

“ 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 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 world 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 utilize 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.



## 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 Product & 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 upstream 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 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 helped improve customer experience, by helping novice drivers quickly find their feet.



**Postmates**





### 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 onboard.

“ 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 our brand, four years later, it's still the same crowd that are serving our customers with 95% of them being active on a monthly basis. The engagement and enjoyment of our Experts is evident in both our Expert and customer satisfaction results. Customer satisfaction is up due to the personalized 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 contact volumes quadrupling for a week – however, the Experts were able to easily absorb the demand spike.



**national**  
**express**



## Analyst Opinions



### **Chris Mcilduff, Chief Customer Officer, Ember Group: GigCX as part of an optimized operating model**

**With more than 20 years of senior technology and operational leadership experience, Chris Mcilduff is Chief Customer Officer at Ember Group and responsible for shaping its consulting, analytics, automation and transformation propositions to support their global customers.**

In this Q&A, we discover what Chris thinks about the evolution of customer service models as GigCX becomes more widespread across multiple sectors.



#### **What role will GigCX play in the future of customer service?**

Customer service operating models are evolving to combine the use of technologies that identify the customer, their context and needs and offering relevant support options based on the value, complexity, and risk of customer contact. This intelligent capability lets organizations develop and utilize self-service options along with the use of contact centers 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 center advisor this has typically been delivered through a mix of inhouse 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 centers but the crisis has seen a large shift to homeworking operations that are expected to be retained as a significant part of the operating model by most businesses.

When considering how to optimize their model, organizations have typically considered trade-offs between cost and the potential risk to service and reputation from a lower cost operation. GigCX is a relatively new option that gives organizations the opportunity to access new, flexible resource models cost effectively, giving them greater resilience and agility in their operating model, which will be increasingly essential in a post COVID-19 world.



#### **What are some of the misconceptions about gig crowds, particularly those in GigCX?**

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 experts can support presales queries, troubleshoot issues, coach customers on how to set up products, solve issues themselves, and increase proactive contact with customers cost effectively. GigCX Experts are also often native speakers who can support customers who are emotional or have vulnerabilities more effectively than offshore advisors from other countries. These possibilities create new opportunities for organizations to optimize their operating model.



#### **Why does GigCX present a better mix of services, and what is it that is uniquely appealing to brands?**

Empathy plays a big role here. Higher levels of empathy in customer service usually require higher levels of human intervention and are usually higher cost. GigCX resources are typically culturally aligned to the market the customer lives in and so are better able to support customers who may be emotional, unsure, or vulnerable more cost effectively. Because many GigCX Experts are current or previous customers of brands and have trained as brand experts, their 'affinity to the brand' is unique. These human to human needs are a key consideration for how organizations can leverage GigCX in an optimized operating model.



#### **What is the future of GigCX?**

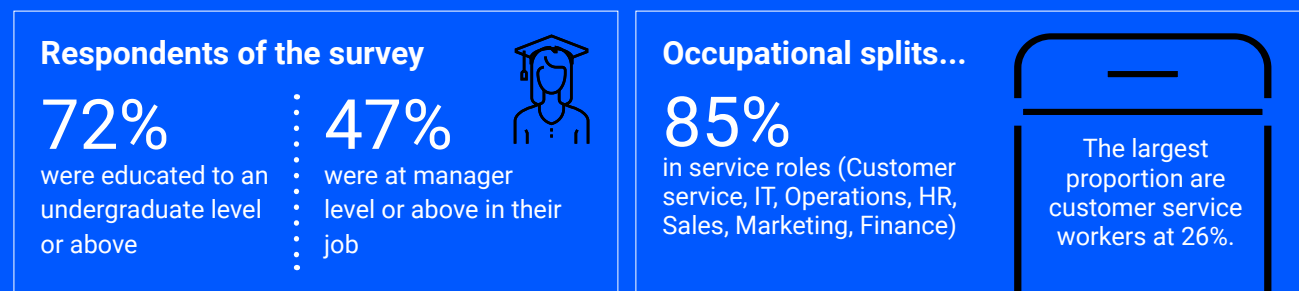
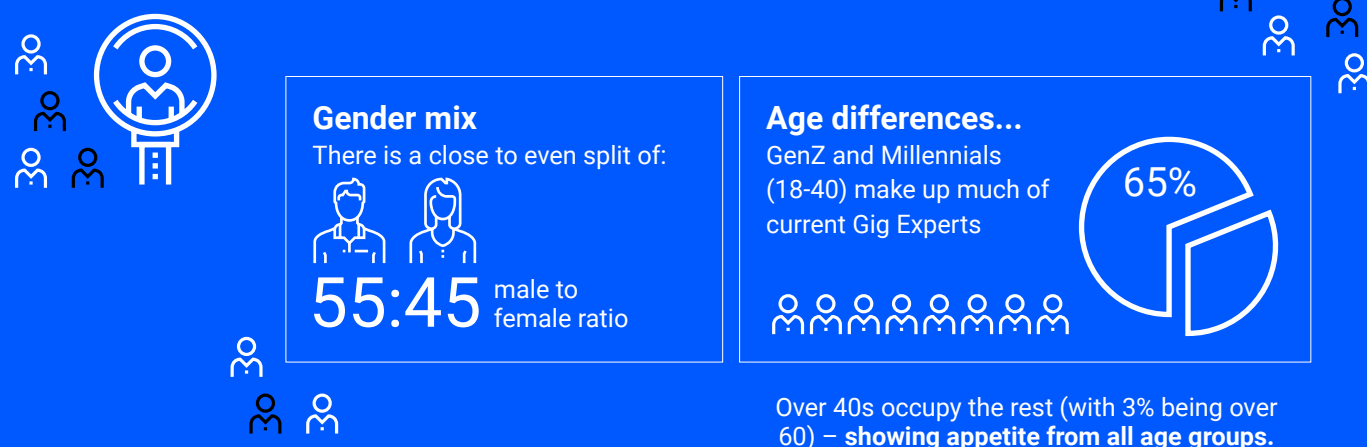
GigCX need not just be seen as an alternative to low value, high volume customer service queries. The real value emerges when you align it with the service propositions you have for different customer segments and leverage it to improve the experience across the overall customer lifecycle.

The GigCX model can play a key role for organizations as they look to leverage technology with people to optimize their operating model and access new workforces, create new services and change the tradeoffs between low cost and the risks and value associated with this.

As we progress into the future, gig will become more varied. Tasks allocated to GigCX will continue to develop and expand. GigCX will continue to be a great way of bringing in and engaging with new people – especially in today's world where individuals are looking for flexible options that suit their lifestyle.

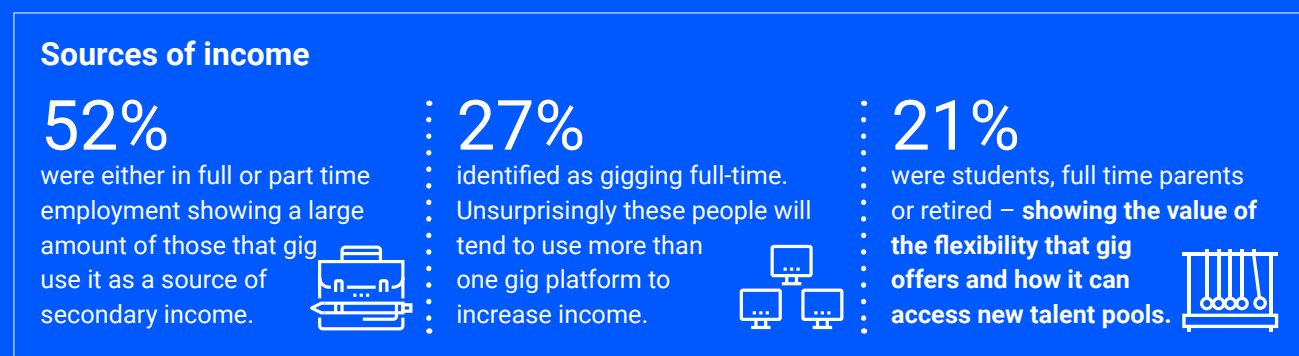
# The 2020 Gig Customer Service Report

## Profiling the GigCX Experts



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

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



## 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 utilizing gig as a strategic sourcing model, not just for customer service, but other areas of business. Organizations 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**

have said that nearly 20% of their CX in the next 2 years, will comprise of GigCX Experts.



**100%**

of respondents have predicted that there will be a rise in the contact via these channels over the next five years – Messenger apps, chat bots 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 6 months



Organizations 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



**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 Expert gig crowd, and for organizations 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 labor pool that can come online where customers require human support. In five years, 75% of the workforce will be Millennials and Generation Z, and these people will not want to work in call centers 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 recognized 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 Experts 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 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.**



### Personalized 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 labor sourcing models into the traditional contact center.



### Digitally Optimized

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.





## About Limitless

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

**For more information visit our website at [www.limitlesstech.com](http://www.limitlesstech.com) or contact us at [www.limitlesstech.com/contact](http://www.limitlesstech.com/contact)**

## About Ember Group

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

**For more information contact Ember on 020 7871 9797 or [info@embergroup.co.uk](mailto:info@embergroup.co.uk)**