Adapting to the Deskless Revolution

Take your brand close to your customers

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Executive Summary

For almost two decades after their creation, traditional CRMs shaped customer experience and success for business-to-business (B2B) enterprises. But changing times have influenced a change in customer behavior, which has resulted in a shift across various aspects of business: technology, experience, and business models. The COVID-19 pandemic has only made things worse for companies who've relied on outdated technology for so long.

If B2B companies fail to adapt the right technologies and initiatives, they might end up alongside Xerox, Kodak, Blockbuster, and a bunch of other companies who failed to innovate and see the forest for the trees. Companies need to start adapting to the deskless revolution if they want to stay afloat and weather these turbulent times.

i. How CRMs Tethered the Customer Experience

Ever since the creation of CRM technology about two decades ago, the phone has always been the primary mode of communication.
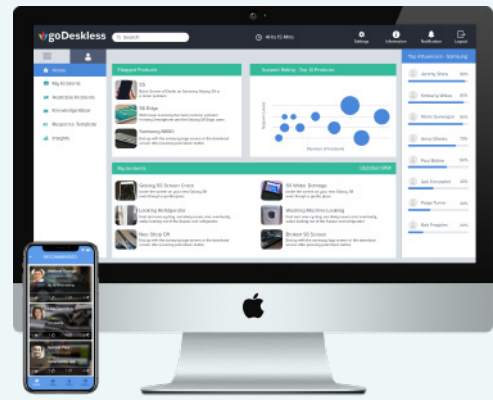
Traditional CRMs have shaped the customer experience for so long, especially in the deskless industry. If you look at field service as an industry or as tools that people use in the field, they're all traditional CRM.

And based on what we know of CRMs, it's essentially a reactive tool that tethers your customer experience. Here's an example: Suppose you want a solar power generation system installed in your home. Naturally, you'll have to phone a solar energy provider.

Then, you talk to someone, a person sitting on a desk somewhere in their office. They take your information down, and they either put you on hold for ten minutes or tell you they'll call you back when they have a schedule available.

Either way, they'll spend that time to basically figure out who's available to do the work. And you'll never really know who they are. Most often, they're third-party contractors, because a lot of industries work this way. Where they don't have employees, they have partners and third party vendors, and these partners can serve different companies and do all kinds of installations.

If field personnel need information or context, the person sitting behind the desk in the office will also serve as their tether point to that information.This has always been the traditional way, ever since the creation of CRM technology about two decades ago. The phone has always been the primary mode of communication back then. **However: times change.**

The person who sits behind the desk is a tether point. Your experience as a customer is tethered to this person, just as the field teams are.

ii. Changing Times, Changing Behaviors

What Uber has done is use technology to elevate the "person behind the desk" experience. The technology they used basically untethered the customer-provider dynamic.
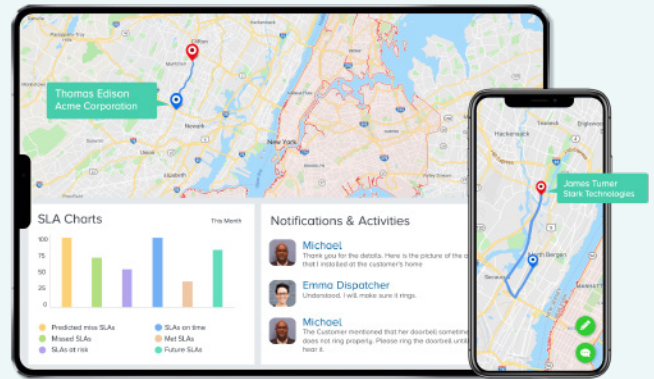
Let's take a look at one of the most common benchmark technologies of the deskless industry: Uber.

Users can just install the Uber app on their smartphones, and they can request a ride sharing service from virtually anywhere at the touch of a button. The "middle man" is no longer a "man", but the platform itself. Say you request a ride.

The platform is smart enough to understand who to send the request to, and let that person decide whether they want to take it or not. Think three to five people receiving the request at the same time, and whosoever picks it up first gets it. Then, the app connects you to this person with a car. Now, you and the driver can take it over, and no one needs to play a middleman. What Uber has done is use technology to elevate the "person behind the desk" experience. The technology they used basically untethered the customer-provider dynamic.

Compare that to the CRM stack, which has not evolved from how they were designed 15-20 years ago. Sure, most of them have moved from an on-prem infrastructure into the cloud, but the underlying technology stack remains the same. Current CRM technology is not adequate enough to deliver the experience that today's millennials expect and can relate to. If you use a CRM, it's going to force you and your customers to connect with that person behind the desk.

Based on research, the current generations hate phone calls, with 71% citing "too time-consuming" as the top reason.

81% also admit to experiencing anxiety often during phone calls.

And based on recent research, the current generations hate phone calls, with 71% citing "too time-consuming" as the top reason. The same research reveals that 81% admit to experiencing anxiety often during phone calls. Even more worrisome is the fact that more businesses realize they are losing up to 20% of the revenue due to sub-par experience in the field. This is because about 70% of their field workforce is disengaged, and cannot provide the best interaction or experience to the customers.

iii. The Three Shifts in Business Today

There are three business shifts that have changed the engagement train and brought us to where we are today. These are shifts in experience, technology, and business models.

Experience Shift

It's not the customers that need to be loyal to their brands anymore; it's the other way around. Moreover, 36% believe brands should strive for more personalization with their marketing strategies. Indeed, the expectations have changed from *"I'll wait"*, to *"I'll say when I need it."* Besides, almost everyone has a smartphone now. People don't go to web pages anymore – they simply use an app if there is one. Social media apps like Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and TikTok also deliver "consumerized experience" with just three actions: Capture, Comment and Share.

It's what most people enjoy doing nowadays: they point (their camera apps), they click, and they share. And it's working so well. Reports reveal that internet influencers and other personalities on social media impact millennial consumers' lifestyles and purchase decisions on a massive level.

Research reveals that 80% of consumers are more likely to choose brands that provide personalized experiences.

Technology Shift

In 2019, smartphone production has doubled, from $1.57B to $3.5B. Moreover, IDC estimates that by 2022, the total spend on industrial and consumer IoT services and technologies will exceed $1 trillion. Directly connected to the shift in experience is the shift in technology.
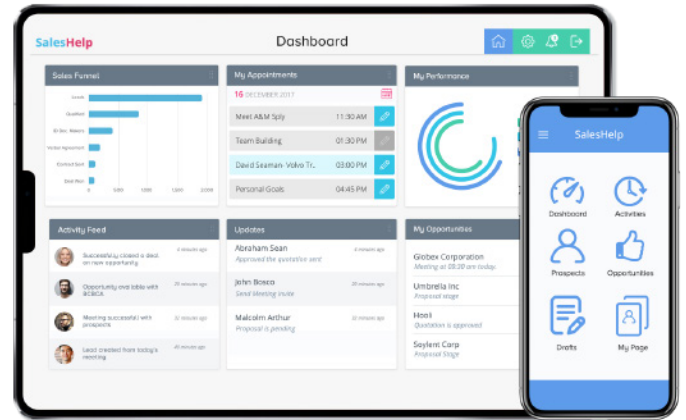
Case in point: the proliferation of smartphones has flipped the board on traditional engagement. In 2019, smartphone production has doubled, from $1.57B to $3.5B. Furthermore, a growing number of companies continue to invest in technologies that make products smarter and more personalized. A study reveals that 89% of digital businesses are investing in personalization.

These include companies like Coca-Cola, Netflix, Fabletics, Sephora, Wells Fargo, and USAA. Meanwhile, IDC estimates that by 2022, the total spend on industrial and consumer IoT services and technologies will exceed $1 trillion. Truly, with these trends and statistics, the one-size-fits-all model of old CRM products is quickly losing the business value it once delivered.

Business Model Shift

Survey report indicates that 42% of the adult American population (that's 86.5 million Americans) have used on-demand service. The business world has also shifted towards the "On-Demand Service" model. Burson-Marsteller's on-demand economy survey reports that 42% of the adult American population (that's 86.5 million Americans) have used on-demand service.

Moreover, every year, 22 million new consumers are using their smartphones to have services delivered at home. Companies like Airbnb, Netflix, Instacart, and Uber follow this business model of providing on-demand products and services. This demand is ever increasing, and the supply (service delivery) needs products that focus on deskless workers who deliver these services.

iv. The New Normal Pushed Things Further

The "new normal" has further increased the urgency of adapting to these changes.
The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing everyone to stay at home to curb the spread of the virus.
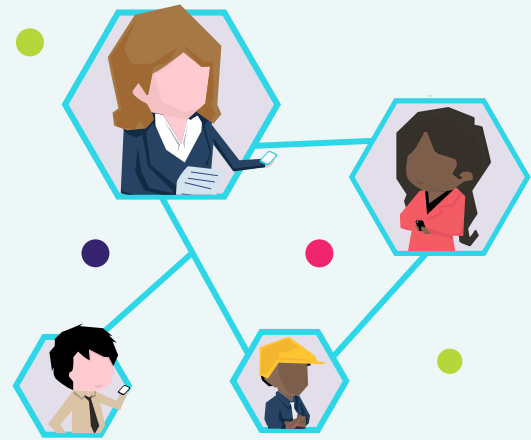
- **As of October 04, 2020, the World Health Organization reports over 1 million COVID-19 deaths globally, with 55% of these from the Americas.**

- **According to a recent McKinsey report, exhaustion and burnout intensified by the pandemic have become the top reasons why people are jumping ship.**

- **Majority of these are senior-level women, and about two million of them might join the exodus.**

People are no longer coming to the office, which means an all the more high demand for deskless technology. Frontline workers, especially, need technologies that will help them connect with both their employers and their clients.

This is supported by another global survey from McKinsey, stating that companies successfully responding to the crisis "have deployed more advanced technologies, digital products, and tech talent to speed up innovation."

Furthermore, they expect a majority of these shifts to survive the pandemic. Companies need to equip themselves with the right technologies and the right digital transformation initiatives. If not, they might end up like certain companies who failed to get with the times.
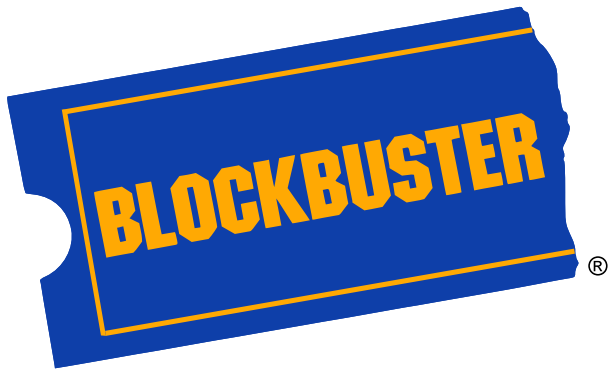
Blockbuster

Blockbuster's demise was a domino effect of bad decisions. They were the leading video-rental company in the early 2000s, raking in $6 billion in revenue in 2004. However, the company made mistakes along the way that caused them to file bankruptcy in 2010.

First: they assumed their physical stores were enough to please their customers, ignoring Netflix's early strategy of shipping DVDs to their customers. Second: Reed Hastings, Netflix's founder, proposed a partnership to Blockbuster in 2000, where Blockbuster would advertise Netflix in their stores as Netflix does the other way around online. Blockbuster CEO John Antioco turned the offer down. Now, Netflix is a $125-billion company, while Blockbuster is a 20-year-old video rental store found only in Bend, Oregon. And, as former Blockbuster employee Jonathan Salem Baskin said in an article he wrote for Forbes, "digital content distribution didn't kill the video store. We did it to ourselves."

Xerox

Fun fact: Xerox was the first company to actually create the personal computer (PC). However, the company failed to capitalize on the product because they thought it was going to be expensive to go digital.

 The book Fumbling the Future: How Xerox Invented, then Ignored, the First Personal Computer by Douglas K. Smith and Robert C. Alexander discussed Xerox' rise and fall at length. David Kearns, Xerox' CEO, was looking towards the company's future in copy machines.

They deliberately ignored the advanced digital communication products they've invented, with the mindset that digital could never replace text on paper. But the time they realized their oversight, it was too late.These companies, and many others, thought their business model was right. But something unexpected happened, and they were caught short of breath.

Kodak

Kodak has been a household name in the photographic film industry for the better part of the 20th century. However, because they were too focused on the success of film photography, they missed their chance to lead the revolution for digital photography.

"...It was filmless photography, so management's reaction was, 'that's cute—but don't tell anyone about it'," said Steve Sasson, the Kodak engineer who was actually the inventor of the first digital camera in 1975. In 2012, the company filed for bankruptcy, which surprised many people.

The same is true today: if companies fail to adapt to the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, their boat will sink.

v. Adapting to the On-Demand Economy Is Challenging

B2Bs have already invested millions and billions of dollars in CRM. Creating policies to adopt something like this is a double whammy.

However, this kind of digital transformation can be quite challenging for B2B companies. The on-demand economy has been growing mostly in the consumer space. Looking at Uber, AirBnb, and Doordash, they're all consumer applications. B2B enterprises are largely missing out on this market, and the reason for that lies in their current technologies. Most, if not all B2B companies have standardized on CRM and/or ERP systems. Therefore, they can't make such a radical shift without considering the losses it could incur.

Unlike B2Bs, companies like Airbnb, Doordash, and Uber do not use CRM tech. They developed their own platforms from scratch. For B2Bs, they already have invested millions and billions of dollars in CRM and creating policies for them to do something like this is a double whammy.

This means (a) forgoing the investments that they already have, and (b) the need to develop a custom-made system for your business, which takes years. However, from a customer's standpoint, the need to adopt such innovations is still there. The current generation of users have their smartphones to take care of things

for them; they don't need a middle-man. So they might ask:

> "If Uber, Doordash, or Airbnb can provide me with this, why can't you?"

Indeed the path towards this experience is difficult for B2B companies. There is no easy way to transition...until now.

vi. Augment Your Deskless Workforce with the Power of AI

Enterprises can provide customers with relevant experience by removing experience friction (no more waiting on-hold and 4-hour windows), and drastically reducing OpEx up to five times less by removing the 'middleman'.
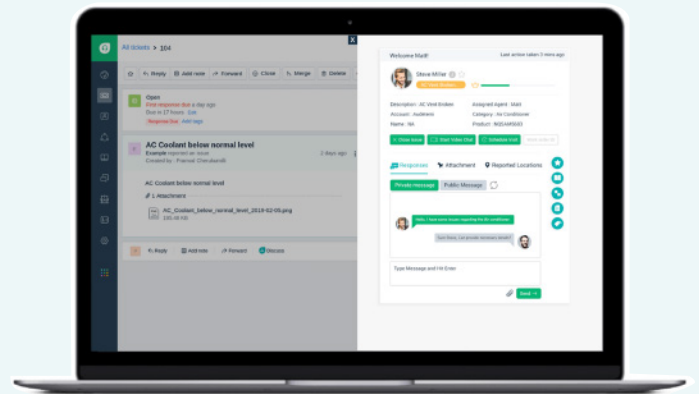

The key to this transition is an AI-powered workforce automation platform, that helps you maintain your status quo in terms of your CRM investment, but enables you to put that Uber-layer of engagement on top of what you already have.

A deskless workforce automation platform will untether your consumers' engagement experience and allow them to directly interact with your field personnel the need for a middle man.

The goDeskless OneCloud is an AI-driven, cloud-based business experience transformation platform specifically designed for smart devices. It helps corporations deliver the deskless business experience and elevates their engagement experience with customers at a fraction of the cost of customization.

With the goDeskless platform, enterprises can:

- **Provide customers with relevant experience by removing experience friction (no more waiting on-hold and 4-hour windows).**

- **Leverage the consumers' own devices instead of spending/investing on devices for field personnel.**

- **Drastically reducing OpEx up to five times less by removing the 'middleman'.**

- **Experience quick growth and expansion, since there is no need to onboard employees on managing a system.**
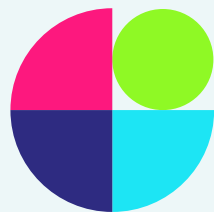
goDeskless

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vii. The Time to Adapt Is Now

For a long time now, customer experience and success relied on traditional CRM. But times have changed, and are still changing.

Business models, technology, and experience have shifted, only pushed further by the current pandemic that took over the world. B2B companies like you have to embrace this kind of digital transformation, if you don't want to be left behind. Adapting an AI-driven, deskless workforce automation platform is the key. With it, you can:

1. Untether your customer experience from traditional CRM and give your consumers the power to directly engage with the field workforce, and;

2. Provide both your consumers and deskless workers with transparency and rapid access to information they need.

Now, ask yourself:

Are you equipped today to meet this new expectation and demand from customers?

Can you deliver your product and services on demand like Uber, Airbnb, and a bunch of other innovative companies do?

If you're not, give us a call, and we'll gladly help.

Start Your goDeskless Cloud Trial Here

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