EXECUTIVE BRIEF NO. 1 | UPDATED OCTOBER 16, 2026

The Contact Center Leader's 2026 Playbook

10 practical priorities for today's operation and 2027 planning

PEOPLE • CULTURE • PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
TECHNOLOGY • OUTSOURCING

Start with the challenge. Learn from experience. Measure what changes.

Contact center, customer experience and support leaders need a practical way to decide what to improve, prepare people for change, and learn from others who have faced similar decisions. This updated brief turns ten priorities into questions, actions and evidence of progress.

Use it to select one or two priorities for the next 90 days. Establish a baseline, name an owner, test a focused change and revisit the result before expanding.

What has changed in this edition

The priorities now place greater emphasis on problem-led AI adoption, knowledge quality, manager capability, change leadership, partner accountability and continued member follow-through. Personalization is treated as part of resolution and journey design; retention is addressed through the broader employee experience.

CCNG's role: Content → Conversations → Connections

Useful resources establish context. Focused conversations add practical experience. Relevant peer and expert connections help leaders evaluate their next steps. Member feedback should show whether that support helped clarify a decision or improve an outcome.

Choose technology around the work

1. Move AI from ambition to a defined business problem

Begin with a recurring service or employee problem and a testable hypothesis. Treat projected savings as assumptions until validated.

Ask: Which problem matters, who experiences it, and what improvement would justify the effort?
Act: Select one use case. Record the baseline, data needs, accountable owner, human review and conditions for stopping or expanding. Include integration, oversight and rework in the cost.
Track: Task success, quality, employee effort and total cost against baseline; record errors and exceptions alongside gains.

2. Design self-service around successful resolution

Self-service should help the intended user complete a task. Channel preferences, confidence and accessibility differ across customers, employees and agency partners.

Ask: Can users finish the task, and can they reach a person with context when they cannot?
Act: Test a frequent task end to end with representative users. Examine repeat contacts, failed authentication and handoffs before adding automation.
Track: Completion, repeat contact, abandonment and customer effort; interpret lower contact volume alongside resolution quality.

3. Give employees dependable knowledge and assistance

Agent assistance is useful when answers are accurate, current and appropriate to the situation. Knowledge ownership and correction processes belong in the operating plan.

Ask: Can an employee find a trusted answer and recognize when escalation is required?
Act: Start with a high-volume issue set. Assign content owners, review sources, test retrieval and recommendations, and create a simple correction route.
Track: Answer accuracy, search success, resolution time and rework; collect frontline feedback before expanding.

Lead people through the change

4. Make employee experience part of service design

Workload, tools, onboarding, scheduling and leadership affect employees' ability to deliver good service. Examine these together when addressing retention.

Ask: What makes good work unnecessarily difficult, and why do people stay or leave?
Act: Combine employee feedback with attrition, tenure and workload patterns. Fix one repeated source of friction and explain what changed.
Track: Early-tenure retention, recurring employee concerns, absence and service quality; avoid treating one engagement score as the whole picture.

5. Build managers' measurement and coaching capability

Introducing metrics requires shared definitions and managers who can turn evidence into fair, useful coaching. Measurement should build understanding and accountability.

Ask: Do managers know what the measures mean, what action to take and how to discuss them with their teams?
Act: Agree on a small balanced scorecard. Calibrate quality reviews and practice coaching with real examples before broad rollout.
Track: Coaching follow-through, scoring consistency, skill development and resolution quality; investigate unintended behavior.

6. Reduce fear and friction in technology change

Adoption depends on trust, involvement and clear expectations as well as system functionality. Leaders need to explain how work will change and where judgment remains essential.

Ask: What worries employees, what do they need to learn, and who can help peers build confidence?
Act: Involve frontline representatives early. Explain the purpose, provide practice time, identify trusted champions and make feedback visible.
Track: Proficiency, actual use, workarounds, employee feedback and service outcomes; distinguish attendance at training from readiness.

Connect performance to business value

7. Improve the journey beyond the individual contact

A well-handled interaction may still leave a broken process. Use customer history and context to reduce repetition and reveal upstream causes.

Ask: What happened before the contact, and what must happen afterward for the issue to be resolved?
Act: Trace one recurring journey across departments. Include repeat information requests, handoffs and the needs of different user groups. Assign an owner to one root cause.
Track: End-to-end resolution, repeat contact, effort and relevant business outcomes; use context only where it serves a clear purpose.

8. Turn conversations into usable business intelligence

Contact reasons, complaints and frontline observations can reveal product, policy and process problems. Insight creates value when someone acts on it.

Ask: Which recurring theme deserves a decision outside the contact center?
Act: Create a short evidence-backed brief: issue, affected users, examples, impact, proposed action and decision owner. Protect sensitive information.
Track: Actions accepted, changes completed and member or customer outcomes; separate evidence from estimates of financial value.

9. Manage outsourcing as an accountable partnership

Sourcing decisions should reflect the work, customer needs, knowledge transfer, resilience and governance. Include technology and change responsibilities in the operating model.

Ask: What should the partner own, how will success be judged, and what happens when performance or needs change?
Act: Review scope, handoffs, quality definitions, escalation, data access, continuity and transition plans. Use a shared review cadence and clear decision rights.
Track: Resolution, quality, customer and employee experience, total cost, escalations and improvement commitments; examine tradeoffs together.

Learn faster and follow through

10. Use community to improve a real decision

A focused peer exchange is most useful when it begins with a clear challenge and ends with an action to test. Preserve what was shared and what happened afterward.

Ask: Who has faced a comparable situation, and what would you ask about their results and lessons?
Act: Bring one business question to CCNG. Use a relevant resource, compare experiences with peers and agree on a follow-up. Obtain permission before introductions or sharing identifiable examples.
Track: What clarified the decision, what was tried, and what changed; a resource sent or meeting attended is an activity rather than proof of value.

A focused 90-day planning worksheet

Period	Decision and output
Days 1-15	Choose one or two priorities. Define the problem, affected users, baseline, owner and desired outcome.
Days 16-45	Review relevant examples. Test a focused change with appropriate participants and safeguards.
Days 46-75	Gather employee and user feedback. Compare quality, effort and cost with baseline. Adjust the approach.
Days 76-90	Decide whether to expand, revise or stop. Record lessons, unresolved questions and the next owner.

Before you begin

Write down: our challenge; the result we want; our baseline; the first change to test; the person accountable; the peer perspective we need; and the next review date. Use the same record to capture progress.

Put CCNG to work on your priorities

Content → Conversations → Connections

CCNG is organizing practitioner experience around People, Culture, Performance Management, Technology and Outsourcing. The purpose is to help members find useful knowledge, compare approaches and connect with people who understand their challenges.

Start with your question

Tell CCNG what you are trying to improve, the decision ahead and the experience you need. A focused question helps us select relevant resources and explore an appropriate peer or expert connection.

Discover and apply relevant content

The website direction distinguishes public Insights - selected articles and introductory perspectives - from deeper member-only Resources, including guides, tools and curated knowledge sets. Contributor packages are being developed to make Academy expertise easier to discover.

Continue the conversation

Focused Talks and facilitated exchanges can help leaders examine practical examples and differing perspectives. Appropriate introductions depend on relevance, interest and permission. Local networking opportunities will be shaped by member demand and participation.

Keep a record of what helps

CCNG is piloting a member value record linking stated challenges, conversations, resources shared, introductions and feedback. The aim is continuing, tailored support and a clearer history of progress. The approach is being tested before broader rollout.

What is underway

Content inventories, contributor packages and audience-specific outreach are underway. The searchable knowledge resource, contributor pages and member experience continue to be developed; access and availability vary by resource. Ask CCNG for a curated starting point while that work progresses.

Which priority matters most to you?

Share your current challenge and the kind of help that would be useful. Visit CCNG.com or reply to your CCNG contact to begin the conversation.

About this brief

An updated CCNG planning guide informed by recent community and program-development work. Use the suggested questions, actions and measures to guide discussion and adapt them to your operation.