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Cisco Case Study:
Delivering World Class Customer Service
Cisco's Journey to OneOffice

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Today's enterprises are increasingly challenged to both stay ahead of changing customer expectations and remain competitive. Cisco embarked on its World Class Customer Service (WCCS) project nearly two years ago, when the pressures of the ever-evolving disruptive technology landscape created a burning platform to revitalize how they serviced their customers and channel partners.
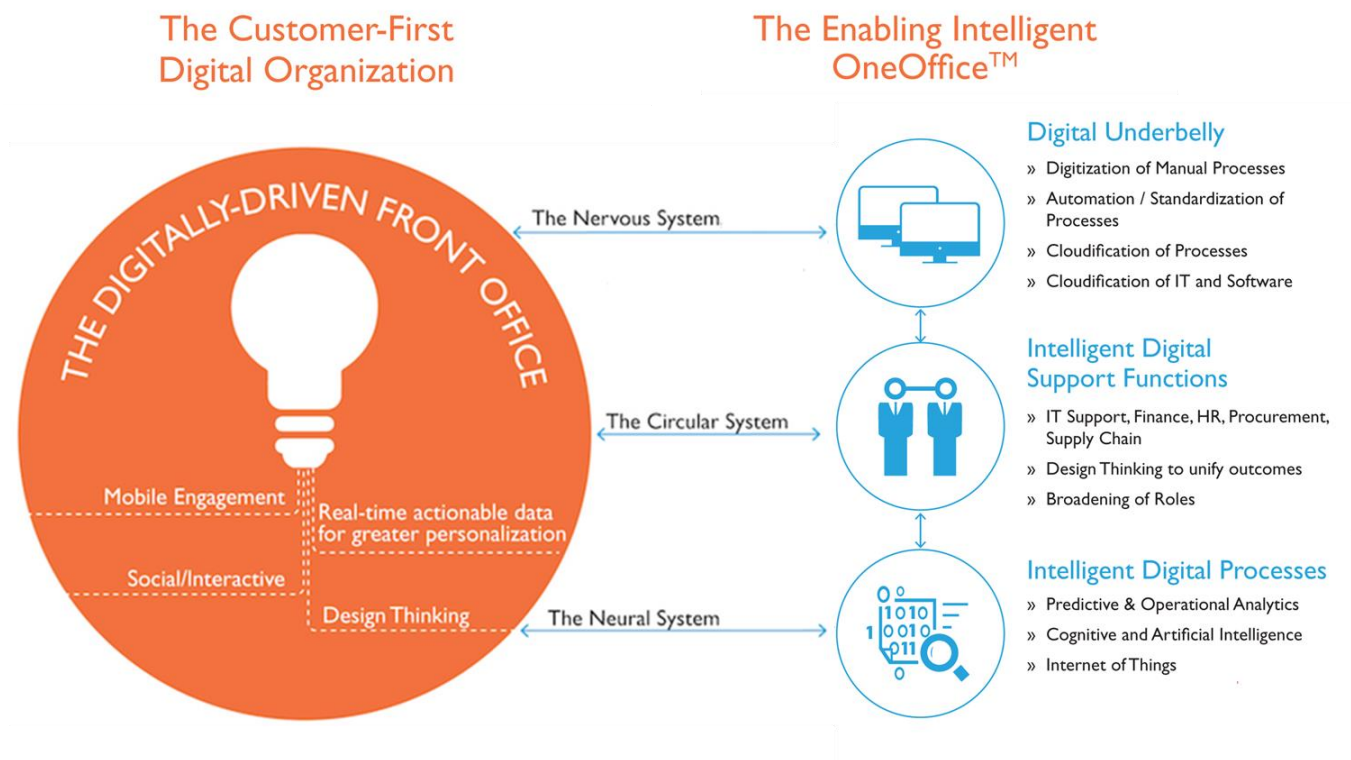
To leverage expertise and thought leadership, Cisco brought in three industry partners, and chose Infosys to play a critical role in the design and implementation of the WCCS program, using a breadth of IT and BPO services to support Cisco's efforts to streamline process and create better customer experiences. These efforts included designing and deploying RPA solutions to reduce both customer and employee effort and transform the interaction model for customer service.

In short, the aim of Cisco's digital customer experience is for all touchpoints and processes across the organization to focus on executing its vision of customer experiences and building foundational capabilities. A true "Digital OneOffice" (Exhibit 1) only works when all breakpoints and silos are effectively automated, which is where much of Infosys' customer experience engagement with Cisco began.

As we move along this Digital OneOffice journey to deliver better customer experiences, enterprises need to think big and take action in order to transform—involving many stakeholders, including service providers, as partners on that journey.

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Exhibit 1: The Digital OneOffice Framework Aligns with Cisco's World Class Customer Service Program

The Customer-First Digital Organization

THE DIGITALLY-DRIVEN FRONT OFFICE

Mobile Engagement

Social/Interactive

Design Thinking

Real-time actionable data for greater personalization

The Enabling Intelligent OneOffice™

The Nervous System

The Circular System

The Neural System

Digital Underbelly
» Digitization of Manual Processes
» Automation / Standardization of Processes
» Cloudification of Processes
» Cloudification of IT and Software

Intelligent Digital Support Functions
» IT Support, Finance, HR, Procurement, Supply Chain
» Design Thinking to unify outcomes
» Broadening of Roles

Intelligent Digital Processes
» Predictive & Operational Analytics
» Cognitive and Artificial Intelligence
» Internet of Things

Source: HfS Research, 2017

The Digital OneOffice Framework is all about the design and implementation of the organizational digital experience and the creation of an intelligent, single office to execute and support it. In a few months, we won't be talking nearly as much about intelligent automation and digital technology as the critical "value levers" for operations, as they become an embedded part of the fabric of the future operations platform for new generation organizations. Instead, we will be talking about an integrated support operation having the digital prowess to enable its organization to meet customer demand – as and when that demand happens. The goal of a digital organization is to engage people by responding to their needs instantaneously, giving people their choice of medium to interact with it, whether by voice, chat box, text, messaging apps, email, or virtual agent.

In this context, "digital" describes the interactive channels that drive customer engagement, such as cognitive agents, interactive tools, mobile, social, text, and chat. "OneOffice" describes the enabling technologies, such as unified analytics and cognitive automation, that enable real-time predictive capabilities and an engaging digital experience that unifies all the stakeholders across the organization: the customers, partners, and employees. In short, the Digital OneOffice is where the organization's people, intelligence, processes, and infrastructure come together as one integrated unit, with one set of unified business outcomes tied to exceeding expectations.

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The outcome is all about creating, supporting, and sustaining an immersive customer experience, where all touchpoints across an organization are tied to serving the customer as effortlessly and seamlessly as possible (and often not necessitating any actual human to human interaction). These "immersive" customer experiences leverage these omnichannels (typically mobile, social, interactive technologies) to create meaningful analytics from converged datasets that make a real-time digital experience happen for the organization and its customers, employees, and partners, throughout the supply chain. The OneOffice organization needs a support function to service those customers, deliver its products and services to market at the right time, manage the financial metrics, understand its needs and demands, and ensure it has talent that clearly understands how to meet the desired outcomes of their work. This is the path that Cisco started on when it implemented the World Class Customer Service program, and the journey it continues through the phases of this transformation.

Keeping It Simple: How Its "World Class Customer Service" Initiative Paved the OneOffice Path for Cisco

Already a very mature services buyer with an experienced global governance structure across its shared services hubs and multiple outsourcing partnerships, Cisco has been outsourcing its B2B customer service and support functions since 2002. Over time, Cisco had continuously evolved the operating model, tweaking it along the way to keep pace with customer requirements—but industry disruption and increasing customer expectations pushed the technology powerhouse to look beyond merely the efficiency gains of consolidating and standardizing processes to rethink its whole customer experience sourcing strategy to stay ahead of the increasing expectations of its clients.

In the face of drooping Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) scores, the solution for Cisco needed to be a holistic examination of how the customer support function operates and how every aspect of the organization pivots to support great customer experience (CX). Rather than trying to boil the ocean, the Cisco team made the decision to keep it simple–make tangible, incremental changes and transform the process over time in to order gather momentum. This approach turned into a multi-generation, multi-dimensional program aptly named World Class Customer Service (WCCS).

"In letter and spirit, WCCS is a fundamental redefinition of how Cisco interacts and serves its customers and channel partners."

In order to redesign a true customer experience and lay the foundations for a OneOffice Framework, a company needs to involve various internal stakeholders and delivery partners, such as Infosys in this case. Each of these stakeholders' expectations, aspirations, and apprehensions had to be factored in to developing the solution. In designing this program, stakeholders identified the following objectives for WCCS:

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» Increase productivity for sales and partners by reducing the effort required to do business with Cisco.

» Deliver high-value customer and partner experiences through simplified, successful interactions.

» Improve overall experience and reduce the touchpoints.

» Create a single "World-Class" Customer Services Entity.

A key theme resonates throughout these objectives and this program: simplicity. Ultimately, customers want simple, seamless interactions with businesses, just as employees want to do their jobs effectively and not waste time. Cisco's mandate was to make life simpler for its customer, employee, and partner ecosystem.

A Three-Step Process to Reach the OneOffice End State: Eliminate, Automate, and Optimize

In order to align to these objectives, Cisco designed the WCCS program as three phases of execution over the course of two years. The first phase of the program focused primarily on reducing effort to serve and eliminating redundant or unnecessary work, but first the core WCCS team looked to redefine their processes. As the WCCS program was set up to be fully self-financed with no funding from the corporate office, the team knew that automation for cost takeout would be inevitable. But before automating a potentially undesirable process, they first sought to look at the processes from the inside out and redesign them before applying automation.

Phase 1 was able to achieve 40% reduction over the baseline year (2015) cost and eliminate over 3 million hours of customer effort.

Through this assessment process, Cisco selected nine processes to automate based upon multiple parameters such as human effort expended (by customers, partners, and shared services partners), scale of impact, and likelihood of success. Cisco and Infosys worked in tandem on the planning and execution of process automation: Infosys' AssistEdge RPA tool was selected along with Pega Systems for server level automation. Pega Systems was selected to complement Cisco's overall IT architecture. That ability to tie together automation using the same rules base within that architecture gave Cisco more flexibility, which enabled the WCCS initiative to move faster and gave it more power to make changes. This initiative has now evolved into a "factory model," which is the ongoing effort to simplify, automate, deploy, and normalize processes.

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The next step of Phase 1 was to address the shift in talent by "inverting the pyramid," (see Exhibit 2). Well-designed process automation eliminated rules-based and labor-intensive processes; the remaining work is complex and needs greater human interaction. Cisco upended its labor model so that more of the workforce is at the top of the pyramid than at the bottom. This leverages savings from the efficiencies automation created to invest in more "experience-oriented" agents in nearshore locations, with efficiencies being delivered through "transaction-oriented" agents in low-cost offshore locations. Within this paradigm, Infosys and Cisco have also introduced the concept of the Super Agent—an agent with sufficient breadth of knowledge, not necessarily depth, which is able to streamline a lot of the cases that were at times lost bouncing back and forth between specialized Cisco and Infosys agents. By incorporating a "Next Best Action" effort, the agents spend less time on the transactional pieces and more time assisting and providing value to the customer. The talent pool composition has shifted from being primarily transactional with a low level of expertise toward more elite agents who understand the customer's problem and are empowered to handle it.

Exhibit 2: Cisco Turns the Traditional Shared Services Model Around with the Inverted Pyramid
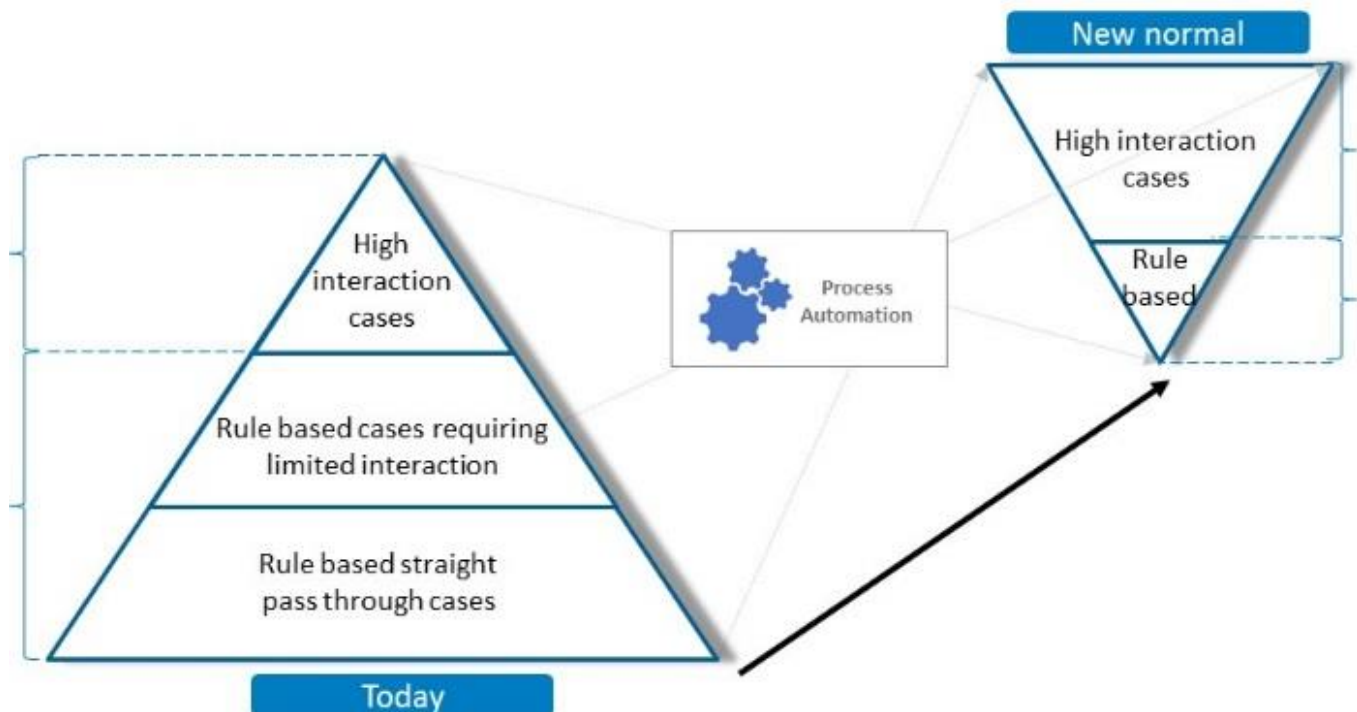
Phase 1 of WCCS achieved 40% reduction over the baseline year (2015) cost and eliminated over 3 million hours of customer effort. Phases 2 and 3 are works in progress and will build on the benefits of Phase 1, tackling some of the more advanced elements that a OneOffice organization demands, such as customer intimacy and greater predictability, using data in real time to generate immersive customer experiences.

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Having made progress on Phase 2, Cisco has used cognitive technology to automate certain aspects of its processes; for example, it used text analytics and machine learning to figure out how to route a call to the best available agent based on the customer's inquiry. This is a powerful way to engage with customers; it optimizes the omnichannel by using cognitive routing to determine the customer's intent and then who (or what) is best equipped to handle the interaction, which could be a live agent, a robotic process, or a blend of the two. This will continue to develop and become more sophisticated as Cisco explores the OneOffice concept of "intelligent digital processes" (the neural system) as an enabler. As Cisco works through these next two phases, the ultimate goal to create outcomes that demonstrate a vastly improved customer experience.
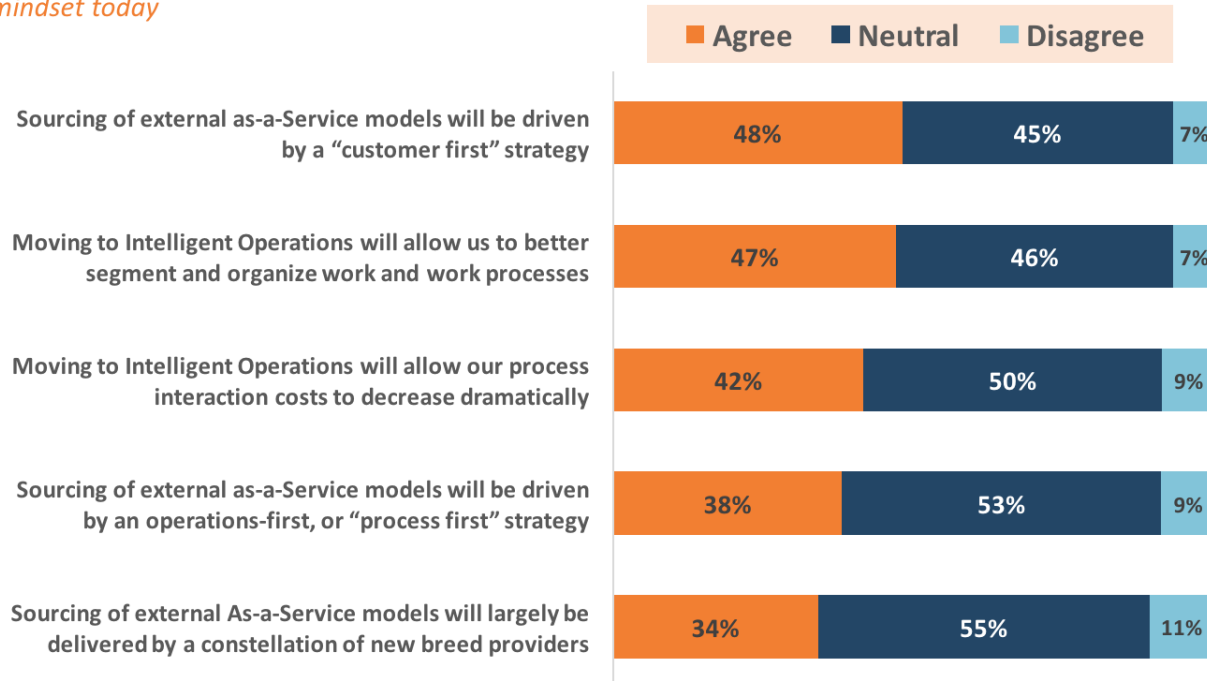
Infosys and Cisco: A 360-Degree Relationship

In order to facilitate World Class Customer Service, the service provider and buyer relationship must change fundamentally. In the case of Infosys and Cisco, the 17-year relationship spans several service lines, and over 3,000 resources across BPO and ITO to leverage Infosys' breadth of capabilities and support customer experience. Much of the success of this story is attributed to leveraging both the BPO and ITO arms of Infosys to support different elements of the OneOffice. No single service provider can support every piece of that puzzle, but Infosys now delivers RPA and server-level automation across Cisco's three shared services providers.

In transformational projects like WCCS, it's imperative for the buyer and service provider to work in tandem on a customer-first mindset. In fact, close to half of enterprises we surveyed believed that a "customer-first" mindset would impact their sourcing relationships (see Exhibit 3). This means that both buyers and service providers need to be prepared to work together to support the journey to each organization's version of the OneOffice.

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Exhibit 3: Buyer-Provider Relationships Will Be Driven by "Customer-First"

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about YOUR Intelligent Operations mindset today

Agree **Neutral** **Disagree**

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Sourcing of external as-a-Service models will be driven by a "customer first" strategy	48%	45%	7%
Moving to Intelligent Operations will allow us to better segment and organize work and work processes	47%	46%	7%
Moving to Intelligent Operations will allow our process interaction costs to decrease dramatically	42%	50%	9%
Sourcing of external as-a-Service models will be driven by an operations-first, or "process first" strategy	38%	53%	9%
Sourcing of external As-a-Service models will largely be delivered by a constellation of new breed providers	34%	55%	11%

Source: "Intelligent Operations" Study, HfS Research 2016
Sample: Buyers = 371

Our Recommendations for Developing World Class Customer Service in Any Organization

We've been talking about aligning support functions with the goals and mission of the firm for decades now, but digital is realigning us all with the true uberlord of the organization – the customer. If our supporting technologies and people can finally respond to, interpret, predict, and be part of our digital customer experience, we'll finally see those barriers stagnating organizations come crashing down.

People simply want to operate digitally these days, whether they are an employee, customer, or partner. Whether they are buying groceries, ordering Starbucks, or applying for mortgages, digital technology is the new language of business. Unfortunately for many businesses, while consumers become more digitally sophisticated, many organizations stuck with legacy technologies and processes that are fast sinking into obsolescence. In addition, many businesses have employees in the back office who remain mired in the legacy way of doing things. How do they drag their operations, kicking and screaming, out of the dark ages to support their digital customers?

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The answer, believe it or not, is quite simple: Break down the barriers between departments and permeate all of the business processes and practices with digital customer experiences by creating a OneOffice digital culture. Customers, partners, and employees together will deliver the ultimate experience to end customers.

Here are some best-practice takeaways gleaned from our experiences with organizations that successfully overcame operations barriers to prioritize the customer experience throughout their organization:

» **Prioritize "quick wins" over "fail fast."** While an organization has to be prepared to experience some failures and might be pressured to "fail fast" in the vein of some disruptive competitors, the key idea should be to implement some simple changes to produce quick wins that revive morale and generate momentum. By breaking up the project into three phases, Cisco was able to focus on one thing at a time and build on its successes.

» **Pivot services relationships toward the notion of the Digital OneOffice.** Service providers play different roles in front- and back-office activities. As organization progresses toward the notion of the OneOffice, the scenarios for service provider relationships that have the capabilities should be expanded to an end-to-end view encompassing the front and back offices, and the various levers at its disposal (e.g., automation, analytics, offshore/nearshore).

» **Think beyond cost savings as a driver.** To become a truly customer-centric organization, you need to think beyond the cost savings value proposition and consider the implications of great customer experience for impacting revenues, growth, loyalty, and the like. The "save to invest" approach that Cisco has taken addresses both eliminating costs and reinvesting for growth. Cisco has also taken the approach of using this effort to drive better employee engagement and outcomes; the cognitive routing, for example, has the potential to both cut down on costs and on employee frustrations, reducing attrition and creating a win-win scenario.

» **Develop digital skill sets:** Cisco quickly learned as part of WCCS that it would need to redevelop its talent profiles and skill sets in order to approach this transformation. Instead of the just the traditional six sigma approach of creating efficiencies and simplifications, you're now also looking to completely redesign processes. This requires a much different mindset and skill set—rather than spending the majority of time figuring out what the problem is, the focus becomes what to do about the problem. This is a primary area of investment for Cisco and a key element of the success of OneOffice.

» **Use automation as a lever as part of a greater design project.** Before applying automation, the Cisco WCCS team first designed a process backbone capable of meeting customers' expectations of today and tomorrow.

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There's no sense in automating a broken process or one that's not designed to be agile to future needs. First look to understand the process as it impacts the customer—then go from there.

» **Embrace a "wrap and renew" philosophy to mitigate legacy integration challenges.** One of Cisco's challenges in the process was its existing complex legacy application landscape. It created a reusable, nonintrusive integration capability between applications that works in Integration As-a-Service mode, which accelerated time-to-value.

» **For every technology change, look to shift the talent model as well.** The more automation and self-service, particularly intelligent automation, are introduced to the process, the more that the role of human talent requires re-evaluating. In most cases, automation will do away with some of the more mundane tasks for humans, enabling them to focus on more meaningful and valuable work. So, hiring profiles and training must be redesigned, as well as how performance is measured. Cisco has embraced this transformation as a way to re-invest in people; generating more sophisticated, engaging, and effective agents.

In this fast-moving services ecosystem, buyers should look to some of these real-world examples of companies leveraging their service provider's expertise and changing the way they work together. WCCS originated from a whiteboard rethink of customer service. WCCS sought to address customer experience issues of today and also to create an ethos and environment that would anticipate and address future requirements. The "nothing is off the table" approach helped Cisco question the status quo and better put itself in its customers' shoes. It's imperative to leave the "way we've always done it" behind and look to future possibilities. And also, keep pushing the envelope, learning, and listening. There will always be opportunities to reinvent delivery of customer service—taking this approach will help enterprises to handle disruptions and opportunities and to better meet the needs of their customers and grow their business.

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About the Authors

Melissa O'Brien

Melissa O'Brien is Research Director, Contact Center and Omni-Channel Operations and BPO at HfS Research. Her research coverage includes customer experience management services, exploring ties with marketing operations and developing thought leadership around intelligent automation for contact center and vertical specific customer engagement business processes.

Prior to HfS, Melissa spent four and a half years at IDC as Research Analyst managing the Worldwide Customer Experience Management Services program. Her role at IDC included analysis of evolving contact center business process and consumer communication trends and delivering reports, presentations and custom consulting projects including market forecasts and in depth competitive assessments.

Melissa previously worked within the BPO industry as Client Services Manager at PSG Global Solutions, an outsourced recruiting services business. Melissa held various roles at PSG Global, including new client implementation, program design, and training, including development and delivery of the original training program in their Manila and Cebu, Philippines offices.

Melissa graduated with honors from the University of New Hampshire with a BA in English and Communication, and is a member of the Phi Beta Kappa honor society.

Melissa is a Boston area native and lives just outside the city with her husband and adorably mischievous Bluetick Coonhound. She enjoys various outdoor activities, traveling, and has recently become a kickboxing fanatic.

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Phil Fersht

Fersht is an acclaimed author, analyst, and visionary in IT Services and BPO, the Digital Transformation of organization operations and cognitive automation strategies. Fersht coined the terms "The As-a-Service Economy" and "Digital OneOffice", which describe HfS Research's vision for the future of global operations and the impact of cognitive automation and disruptive digital business models. Fersht was named Analyst of the Year in 2016 (see link) for the third time by the Institute of Industry Analyst Relations, which voted on 170 other leading IT industry analysts.

Prior to founding HfS in 2010, Fersht has held various analyst roles for Gartner (AMR) and IDC and was BPO Marketplace leader for Deloitte Consulting across the United States, Great Britain, and Singapore. Over the past 20 years, Fersht has lived and worked in Europe, North-America, and Asia, where he has advised on hundreds of operations strategy, outsourcing, and global business services engagements.

Fersht is also the author and creator of the most widely-read and acclaimed blog in the global services industry, entitled "Horses for Sources" and now entering its eleventh year. He regularly contributes to media such as Wall St Journal, Business Week, Economist, The Times of India and CIO Magazine and is a regular keynote speaker at major industry events, such as NASSCOM, ANDI, ABSL, Global Sourcing Association, SSON, Sourcing Interests Group and HfS Summits.

He received a Bachelor of Science, with Honors, in European Business & Technology from Coventry University, United Kingdom and a Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie in Business & Technology from the University of Grenoble, France. He also has a diploma from the Market Research Society in the United Kingdom.

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HfS' mission is to provide visionary insight into the major innovations impacting business operations: automation, artificial intelligence, blockchain, digital business models and smart analytics.

We focus on the future of operations across key industries. We influence the strategies of enterprise customers to develop operational backbones to stay competitive and partner with capable services providers, technology suppliers, and third party advisors.

HfS is the changing face of the analyst industry combining knowledge with impact:

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» 3000 enterprise customer interviews annually across the Global 2000

» A highly experienced analyst team

» Unrivalled industry summits

» Comprehensive data products on the future of operations and IT services across industries

» A growing readership of over one million annually

The "As-a-Service Economy" and "OneOffice™" are revolutionizing the industry.

Read more about HfS and our initiatives on our website.