Government contact center and digital, better together

How to unlock valuable signals from your government contact center to improve the digital citizen experience

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Introduction

When we spend years reacting and responding to problems, we often overlook how we can anticipate and prevent them in the first place. Today, most government contact centers operate on the premise of responding to every resident's call or inquiry ef-fi-ciently: to 100% satisfaction and the shortest time spent talking. But the question we should be asking is, "Why do people reach out to the contact center in the first place?" If an organization provides sufficient guidance from the outset, few should need this service in the first place. Is there a breakdown somewhere in their journey - their quest for an answer? Is it because digital experi-ences are falling short of customer needs?

In this eBook, we'll examine some of the critical touchpoints throughout the citizen's journey, identify where the breakdowns occur, and unlock the signals, or feedback about experiences, that citizens provide. This allows agencies to remove silos and prioritize actions that improve the overall citizen experience.

Digital is no longer a channel; it's your agency's reputation

Driven by the pandemic, citizens' expectations have significantly changed as they increasingly prioritize digital and contactless experiences over in-person ones. 75% of people using digital channels for the first time indicate they will continue to use them when things return to normal.[1]

Consequently, plans based on multi-year digital implementations have been completely scrapped as agencies across the country have been forced to adopt a digital-first approach in real-time. Recent data shows they have vaulted five years forward in consumer and business digital adoption in a matter of months.[2]

Most agencies have pivoted quickly:

- VA conducted about 2,500 telehealth video sessions daily at the beginning of March. In the fall of 2020, VA conducted nearly 25,000 sessions daily — a 1000% increase.

- Immigration and Customs Enforcement is advertising for 100% telework positions,

- IRS shifted their 2020 tax filing deadline to July 15.

- Nationwide K12 schools switched to an online model.

Did you know?

In times of crisis, traffic goes up exponentially in both the digital properties and the contact center. However people do try to resolve their problems via the website first.

75

75% of customers who reach out to a government contact center first try to resolve their issue via the website[3]

6X

In October 2020 the IRS had 78.7M visits to their website. Six times the previous activity level[4]
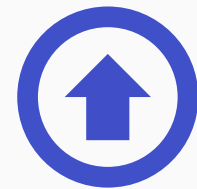
"Disaster Distress Helpline" at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) saw an 891% increase in call volume compared with March 2019[5]

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With these changing dynamics, digital is now front and center. The agency's digital experience should not be distinguishable from the organization. The two have become synonymous. Each interaction a customer has shapes their perception so much that a single bad digital experience can compromise their trust in the organization. While they often won't tell the agency, 20% of people will broadcast a negative interaction or social media experience. With higher expectations, agencies must work harder to maintain customer trust through seamless digital experiences.

But with these quick pivots, new friction points in the digital journey have emerged, negatively impacting citizens' experience. As citizens and employees get frustrated with inconsistent experiences, lack of personalization, repeat issues, or limited self-service options, they turn to the contact center for help. This has had a domino effect on citizen support and service departments—a function often seen as the lifeline between the citizen and the agency.

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The contact center is a gold mine of insights

Contact centers are a crucial channel available to assist and support customers, especially when immediate answers are needed. They are among the most common ways people interact with the government to share issues, feedback, and frustrations. But they are also challenging to operate, with inefficiencies, high turnover, and variability in agent effectiveness.

The challenges the contact centers face was illustrated when the COVID crisis hit. Many contact centers had to close their physical locations at the exact time their call volume skyrocketed. This required agencies to pivot quickly and set up remote working capabilities while at the same time training new personnel.

30% greater ability to predict customer satisfaction when companies understand the entire experience versus looking at individual touchpoints.
McKinsey and Co.[7]

Customers still face silos across channels
Customers are accessing multiple touchpoints during a purchase but there is a significant disconnect within companies.

75 75% of customers expect consistent interactions across all departments.

58 58% say that they feel like they're communicating with separate departments and not one organization.

70 And when it comes to service issues, 70% of customers expect all of the reps to have the same information about them, but 64% say that they have to re-explain issues.[8]

Why do customers and employees engage a contact center in the first place?

1. **They need support for complex issues.** Whether it's checking for a refund, getting assistance completing a complicated form, filing a claim, booking or cancelling appointments, or getting status updates, the need to connect with a live human voice helps alleviate the burning questions and simplify complex issues for citizens.

2. **The digital self-service model is lacking.** Calls to the contact center often initiate because of downstream issues related to repetitive digital self-service breakdowns or problems in the citizen's journey through problem-solving. One of Medallia's customers says 70% of calls to their contact center directly result from digital self-service issues. For example, a common downstream problem is how to process an online return. Processing online returns could quickly be resolved with adequate knowledge management and adjustments to the "how to process returns" customer experience. Because call center agents are trained to focus on resolving these issues as quickly as possible (to satisfy both the customer and the need for efficiency), the root cause of the issue often goes undetected or unresolved. This is how expensive problems get missed.

3. **The primary reason for the call is resolved, but new downstream issues arise.** According to research, 22% of repeat call volume is related to a problem that prompted an original call, even if that problem itself was adequately addressed the first time around.[9] While the initial call driver was addressed, future calls to the contact center will continue until organizations proactively leverage insights to anticipate and forward-resolve these new issues. An HBR article shares how Bell Canada addresses a primary issue and uses the insights to head off the next one. Bell Canada had a high percentage of customers who had ordered a specific feature calling back for detailed instructions on how to use it. The company's service reps were instructed to give a quick tutorial to clients before hanging up in order to reduce callbacks.[9]

Is your contact center missing expensive problems?

From digital self-service issues to repetitive downstream problems, today's contact center is overburdened by costly issues that can be prevented with the right digital and self-service experiences. How do customer contact center teams uncover insights hiding in plain sight, reduce the silos, and drive higher quality citizen experiences?

> A Medallia customer estimated that **$1 million** in contact center savings can be realized by increasing digital visits by just **2-5%**.

A new approach is required

The contact center's design is to support citizen outreach and resolve issues while driving first-call resolution and case closure. The digital channel's design is to help citizens self-service, transact, and be on their way. Both tracks are focused on managing efficiency and citizen satisfaction. Yet, both channels traditionally work independently of one another. To reduce digital frustration while improving citizen experience, organizations need to unlock and share insights captured within the contact center to enhance the digital experience.
The contact center and digital teams need to work better together.

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We are seeing the majority of organizations monitor only ~1% of all contact center calls.

Rachel Lane
Contact Center Solution Principal, Medallia

Start by expanding signal capture to every interaction.

The top three reasons why citizens call in the first place can be a treasure trove of insights to address recurring call volume. Until recently, transcribing and analyzing each of those calls promptly, across all those hours, and draw actionable insights has been nearly impossible. Agencies have done their best to manually understand these citizens' experiences, sampling a small percentage of random calls. Sampling enables fast feedback but provides an incomplete picture and risk missing critical blind spots. With sophisticated speech technology now able to transcribe and analyze every voice interaction, organizations can expand signal capture to each customer interaction and drive rapid improvements within the contact center and beyond.

Medallia tools to help you get started:

Medallia Speech reveals powerful insights from voice interactions with speech-to-text processing and AI-powered acoustic emotional analysis.

Stella Connect empowers your frontline teams with real-time feedback, coaching, and quality assurance.

Medallia Integrations surfaces additional customer experience insights by connecting and integrating with third-party systems.

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Let AI be your superhero.

AI uncovers hidden meanings in vast amounts of data to inform more meaningful insights and decision-making. By applying machine learning algorithms to speech acoustics, organizations can tap into a gold mine of data that reveals customer sentiment, call topics, and themes in real-time. AI can also analyze text in structured formats such as survey feedback and unstructured formats like email, chat transcripts, or agent notes while offering suggestions on what customers might need in-the-moment. It is vital to enable customer experience leaders with the right insights to surface recurring customer issues across digital, web, product, and customer support. You can uncover insights by expanding signal capture through speech and text analysis; this should include what your customers share and where they are remaining silent.

Medallia tools to help you get started:

Medallia Digital collects real-time customer feedback across digital channels, including web, mobile, & in-app.

Text Analytics turns every word into insight and action by leveraging AI and machine learning to unlock the rich potential of unstructured data.

A unified experience management platform breaks down the silos between your contact center and digital teams.

Understanding what your customers are and aren't telling you through speech, voice, and text analysis is only useful if the data is actionable. It must enable the right people and teams to get to the root cause of where digital experience falls short and reduce unnecessary outreach to the contact center. This requires a unified experience management platform that not only captures signals and identifies insights through AI-powered analysis but engages critical functions within the contact center, digital, web, and product groups. The platform dashboard provides nudges and alerts that unlock the distribution of insights to the right teams so they can create and track action plans against metrics like NPS10, cost-saving, call volume, and agent experience.

A Medallia customer enhanced the digital experience while driving efficiencies within the contact center:
200,000 calls reduced
16,000 hours saved
Reassigned >10 FTEs to other tasks

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01 Use case: Paying a fine online

Recurring issue:

Michelle attempts to use the agency's site to pay a fee. She tries to pay via a credit card. However, she receives the error message "security code not recognized" with instructions to call the toll free number for assistance.
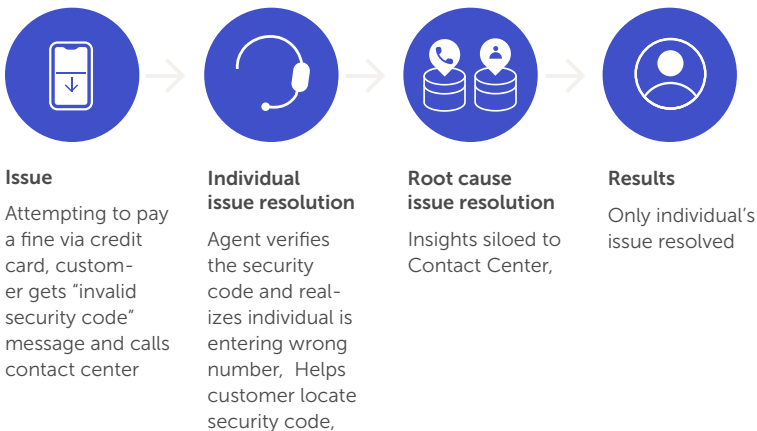
Individual issue resolution:

After waiting on hold for a few minutes, she is transferred to Ryan, a contact center agent, helps Michelle by determining that she was entering her expiration date in the area for validation code. While Ryan solves Michelle's immediate issue in isolation, those insights remain within the Contact Center and Member Services.
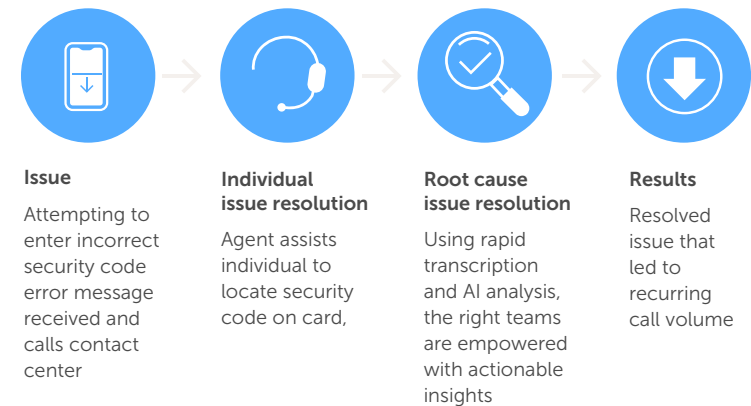
Intervention and recurring issue resolution:

By sharing those insights with the Digital team, they are able to provide more information in the credit card acceptance process, by adding a graphic that shows where to locate the security code. This resulting in a much larger impact that can be realized across the agency. By analyzing all calls and surfacing real-time insights throughout the organization, they are able to respond quickly to issues that affect a large number of people, while getting ahead of emerging trends that drive call volumes and impact customer satisfaction.

New Approach

Issue
Attempting to enter incorrect security code error message received and calls contact center

Individual issue resolution
Agent assists individual to locate security code on card,

Root cause issue resolution
Using rapid transcription and AI analysis, the right teams are empowered with actionable insights

Results
Resolved issue that led to recurring call volume

Traditional Approach

Issue
Attempting to pay a fine via credit card, customer gets "invalid security code" message and calls contact center

Individual issue resolution
Agent verifies the security code and realizes individual is entering wrong number, Helps customer locate security code,

Root cause issue resolution
Insights siloed to Contact Center,

Results
Only individual's issue resolved

02 # Use case: Healthcare co-pay inquiry

Recurring issue:

Lily attempts to pay the co-pay for her recent doctor visit online, but the amount is higher than expected. Since she could not resolve this issue online, she calls into the contact center for assistance.

Individual issue resolution:

Her call is transferred to Frank, a contact center agent, who discovers that the provider applied the wrong due date, resulting in late charges. Frank advises Lily to follow up with her doctor and notates this conversation in her record that is shared only with his manager. However, these insights are not distributed across the organization.
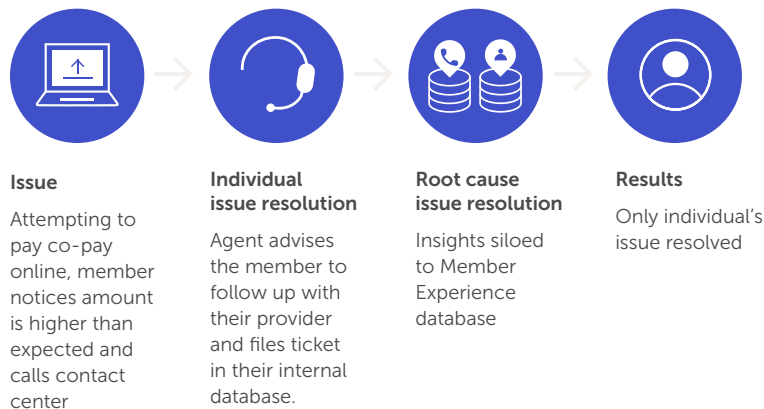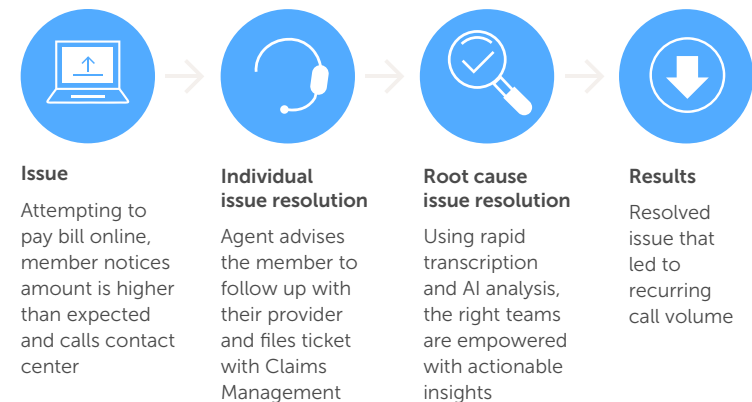
Intervention and recurring issue resolution:

If these insights are shared with Claims Management and Member Experience teams, they can enhance their self-service features to resolve similar issues before they reach the patient. Furthermore, by applying speech analytics to every call, they can prioritize feedback and suggestions such as adding a self-service option for automatic payments.

New Approach

Issue
Attempting to pay bill online, member notices amount is higher than expected and calls contact center

Individual issue resolution
Agent advises the member to follow up with their provider and files ticket with Claims Management

Root cause issue resolution
Using rapid transcription and AI analysis, the right teams are empowered with actionable insights

Results
Resolved issue that led to recurring call volume

Traditional Approach

Issue
Attempting to pay co-pay online, member notices amount is higher than expected and calls contact center

Individual issue resolution
Agent advises the member to follow up with their provider and files ticket in their internal database.

Root cause issue resolution
Insights siloed to Member Experience database

Results
Only individual's issue resolved

03 Use case: Unemployment Services

Recurring issue:

George, a recently downsized chef, goes online to check out the steps required to file for unemployment insurance. However, he is not able to quickly determine what forms are needed in his situation and if he is actually eligible.

Individual issue resolution:

After long waits and several disconnections, due to the high volume of calls, he is connected to the call center agent, Mary, answers his questions and reviews his specific case. The details of their conversation are captured but not shared beyond Mary's immediate team to make widespread improvements and drive down similar calls into the contact center.

Traditional Approach

Issue

Attempting to file for un-employment resident goes online and can-not determine eligblity

Individual issue resolution

Agent provides information and notates that the applicant will be eligible immedi-ately.

Root cause issue resolution

Insights siloed to Contact Center

Results

Only individual's issue is resolved

Intervention and recurring issue resolution:

If these insights are shared with the Digital team, they could have added information on eligibility for unemployment in-surance while collecting a severance package and directed the filer to the correct form. The more detailed the infor-mation the better position that residents are in to proceed without contacting the call center. This applies to both new and repeat filers. Taking it one step further, by applying speech analytics to the conversation, the unemployment office could automatically add Mary to a nurture email pro-gram and send her communications about helpful tips for a successful job search.

New Approach

Issue

Attempting to file for un-employment resident goes online and can-not determine eligblity

Individual issue resolution

Agent provides information and notates that the applicant will be eligible immedi-ately.

Root cause issue resolution

Using rapid transcription and AI analysis, the right teams are empowered with actionable insights

Results

Resolved issue that led to recurring call volume

04 Use case: Base Housing Repairs

Recurring issue:

Brittany is a mother of two and eight months pregnant. Her husband Steven is deployed. It has been a week since she has had hot water at their base housing. She is at a loss as to what to do next or what direction to take. The base website has no information. She locates the base helpline number and gives it a call.

Individual issue resolution:

Chelsea answers her call. She quickly determines Brittany's location and assists her by contacting the local base housing office. They get on a three-way call with Kevin at the base housing office, and she is quickly scheduled to repair the hot water. While Brittany is happy, there may be others on the base with similar problems.
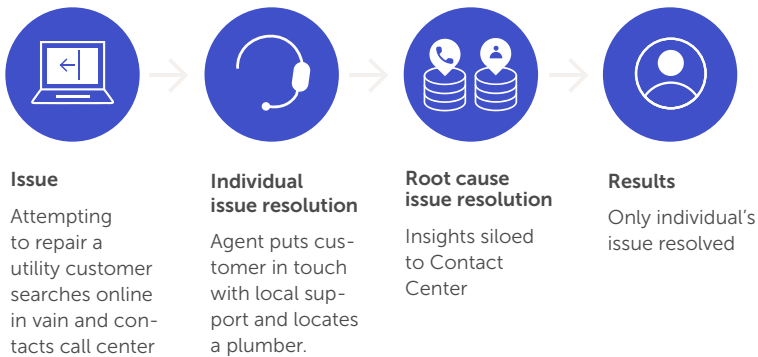
Intervention and recurring issue resolution:

By Kevin sharing this information with the rest of the base housing office, they are able to update the website with the necessary information. Not only can they provide the resolution chain, but a list of approved contractors that can perform repairs. This allows a quick resolution during a stressful time while spouses are deployed.

New Approach

Issue
Attempting to repair a utility customer searches online in vain and calls contact center

Individual issue resolution
Agent puts customer in touch with local support and locates a plumber.

Root cause issue resolution
Using rapid transcription and AI analysis, the right teams are empowered with actionable insights to not only fix the issue, but proactively improve the process for all.

Results
Resolved issue that led to recurring call volume

Traditional Approach

Issue
Attempting to repair a utility customer searches online in vain and contacts call center

Individual issue resolution
Agent puts customer in touch with local support and locates a plumber.

Root cause issue resolution
Insights siloed to Contact Center

Results
Only individual's issue resolved

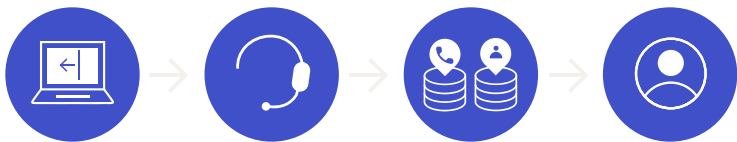# 05 Use case: Employee IT Service Request

Recurring issue:

Zac needs to complete a compliance report by the end of the day. Unfortunately, his computer has frozen for the fourth time in an hour. He has tried rebooting the machine, and it does not work. His co-worker locates the number for the help desk and suggests he call.

Individual issue resolution:

After waiting on hold for ten minutes, he explains his issue and is routed from software to Sarah in hardware support. It is determined that Zac was given a sticker this morning that he placed on his computer. He accidentally covered the fan, which is causing it to overheat. While Sarah solves Zac's immediate issue in isolation, those insights remain within the Contact Center and Member Services. .

Intervention and recurring issue resolution:

By Sarah sharing this information with the rest of the organization, they are able to update the IT Support Pages to warn other employees not to block the fan. Not only can emplloyees resolve problem themseled, it saves them the embarrassment of by correcting the issue independently. This allows a quick resolution during a stressful time when deadlines need to be met.

New Approach

Issue
Attempting to repair his computer an employee reboots to no avail and contacts the IT Services Desk.

Individual issue resolution
Agent transfer employee to other dep, Problem located and solved

Root cause issue resolution
Using rapid transcription and AI analysis, the right teams are empowered with actionable insights

Results
Resolved issue that led to recurring call volume

Traditional Approach

Issue
Attempting to repair his computer an employee reboots to no avail and contacts the IT Services Desk.

Individual issue resolution
Agent transfer employee to other dep, Problem located and solved.

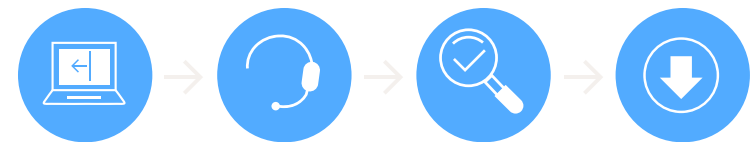**Root cause issue resolution**
Insights siloed to IT Service Desk

Results
Only individual's issue resolved

Conclusion

Delivering excellent customer and employee experiences requires surfacing actionable insights and enabling seamless collaboration between digital and contact center teams. The right
foundation ensures organizations are listening to and delighting customers across all channels.

It's critical now more than ever for agencies to have a comprehensive view of the customer journey. The Medallia platform enables companies to stay connected in real-time and elevate the customer and employee experience by em-bedding rich and intuitive listening tools seamlessly through-out the journey.

The Medallia platform is designed to make your contact center an epicenter for change.

Broad signal capture: Transcribe each call with high accuracy in capturing a rich set of call metrics such as talk time, silence time, overtalk, and tone.

Intelligent analysis: Surface actionable insights from every call such as call reason, customer effort, churn risk, and suggestions.

Widespread action: Enable the frontline to take immediate action with real-time insights and combine data from the call center with cross-channel feedback to drive changes throughout the organization.
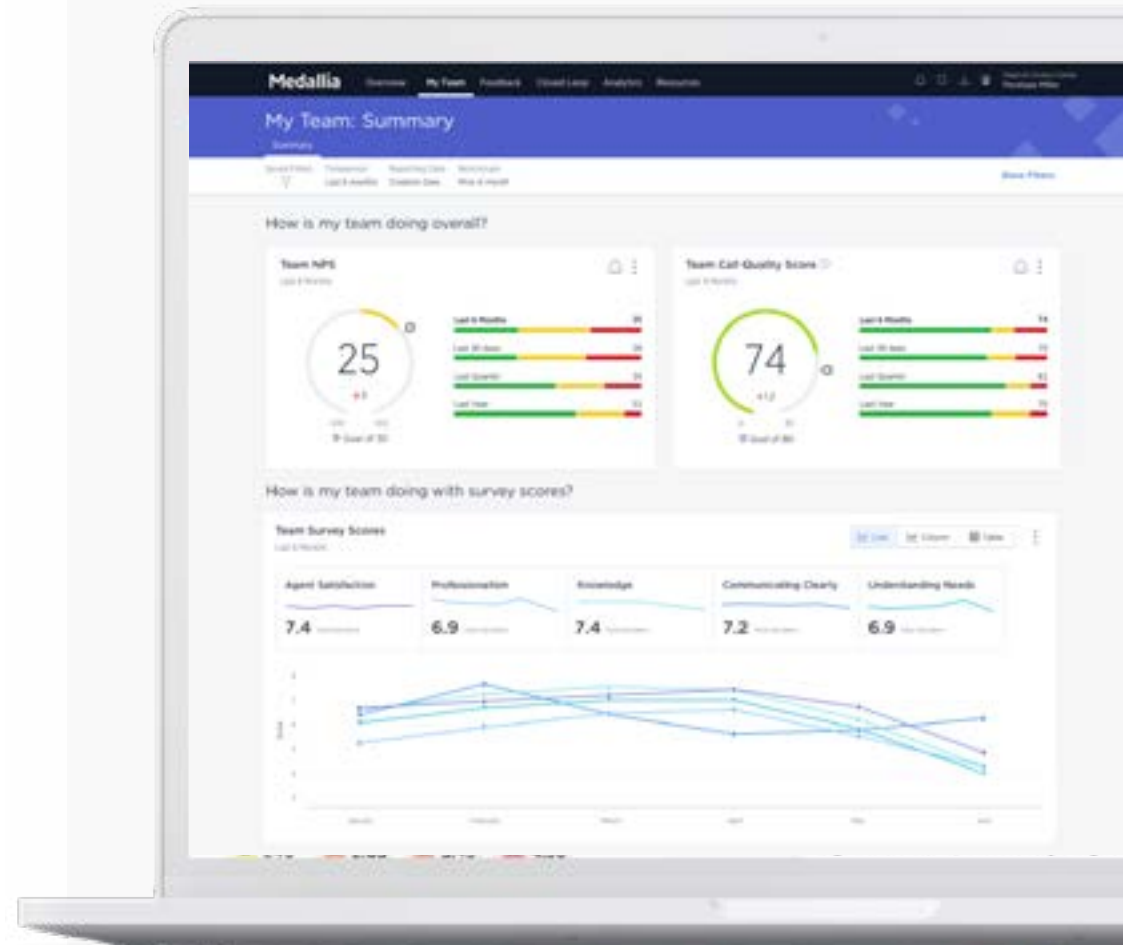
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Jonathan Shafer

Jonathan Shafer is the director of solutions marketing at Medallia Healthcare is one of his focus areas. Before joining Medallia, he held various marketing roles at technology companies including Hearsay Systems, Hitachi Vantara, Informatica, and Oracle. He is based in San Francisco, CA.

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Erin Malone leads public sector industry marketing. In this role, she defines and develops integrated marketing plans, for all Public Sector segments, across all channels. She holds a bachelor's from The University of Maryland and is certified in Operational Customer Experience Mgmt Level 1 & 2.

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Lee Becker currently serves as Solutions Principal at Medallia, leading the public sector practice and supporting the healthcare practice. Prior to joining Medallia, Lee served over 20 years in the public sector. Lee is a Navy Veteran and holds a MS in Management from The Catholic University of America.

Jeremy Golant

Jeremy Golant is a Solutions Consultant for Medallia's Public Sector organization. Jeremy is multilingual and has a passion for making the world a better place. He resides in New York City, New York and holds a bachelor's from The University of Pennsylvania.

1 https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/the-covid-19-recovery-will-be-digital-a-plan-for-the-first-90-days
2 https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/global-surveys-of-consumer-sentiment-during-the-coronavirus-crisis
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5 https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/calls-us-helpline-jump-891-white-house-warned/story?id=70010113
6 https://martechseries.com/mts-insights/guest-authors/consumer-dislikes-and-brand-loyalty-in-the-era-of-digital-customer-experience/

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