



Startek Recognized for

2021

New Product Innovation

Americas Customer Experience

Outsourcing Services Industry

Excellence in Best Practices

Best Practices Criteria for World-Class Performance

Frost & Sullivan applies a rigorous analytical process to evaluate multiple nominees for each award category before determining the final award recipient. The process involves a detailed evaluation of best practices criteria across two dimensions for each nominated company. Startek excels in many of the criteria in the customer experience outsourcing services space.

AWARD CRITERIA	
<i>New Product Attributes</i>	<i>Customer Impact</i>
Match to Needs	Price/Performance Value
Reliability	Customer Purchase Experience
Quality	Customer Ownership Experience
Positioning	Customer Service Experience
Design	Brand Equity

Digital Value Propositions Are Key to Enhance Providers' Market Competitiveness

The highly competitive and mature customer experience (CX) marketplace is changing rapidly. Specifically, Frost & Sullivan's independent research reveals that the pandemic has impacted the CX

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- Sebastian Menutti, Industry Principal

outsourcing services landscape on more than one level. First, as social distancing measures limit physical encounters, relationships between brands and consumers become predominantly remote, driving customer contact services demand. Second, the COVID-19 crisis provokes new challenges for in-house contact center operations, such as orchestrating multiple digital technologies to facilitate an efficient work environment and the mobilization of investments to provide a high-quality CX. As a result, a growing number of companies are outsourcing a considerable portion of their customer interactions and CX practices, which opens up significant growth opportunities for business process outsourcing. Frost & Sullivan's independent research forecasts double-digit revenue growth in 2021 in North America.

The market is becoming much more technology-driven as emerging tools can create a seamless and effortless CX while significantly reducing costs across front- and back-office operations. Adopting artificial intelligence (AI), advanced analytics, omnichannel capabilities, natural language processes, and streamlined security tools is vital in this competitive and dynamic marketplace. Frost & Sullivan observes

“Scaffolded by pivotal functions and security features (such as effective collaboration; productivity monitoring; data and document privacy; unauthorized site, application, and activity surveillance; facial, gesture, and object detection; notice boards; alerts; intuitive dashboards; and an audit trail), Startek Cloud provides increased business agility and continuity for its clients.”

- Riana Barnard, Best Practices Research Analyst

that many top-tier CX service providers are moving forward to incorporate more technology into their processes and services successfully. Yet, not all of them achieve a similar level of success. Frost & Sullivan also recognizes omnichannel as an imperative to provide frictionless and memorable customer experiences. The push for omnichannel customer engagement is a multi- and cross-channel interaction strategy organizations use to ensure a consistent and seamless high-quality customer experience. Moreover, while many organizations still plan and design their customer service strategy based on each interaction channel, customers perceive all the channels they use as one conversation or engagement. With CX becoming the primary factor impacting customer loyalty and,

ultimately, turning it into the critical differentiator deciding a business's fate, companies pay less attention to cost-related variables and focus more on customer-related metrics. Many organizations are concerned that automating too much of their customers' interactions (i.e., deflecting calls from the contact center) might jeopardize overall CX and customer satisfaction levels. Hence, many brands are looking for a trusted partner to help them find the right balance between technology and the human touch. Frost & Sullivan observes that companies must move forward with centralizing data and automating tasks and interactions through self-service tools, wherever possible. Still, human agents must be available when intuition, emotional intelligence, and empathy are required to impact customer outcomes positively. Lastly, Frost & Sullivan acknowledges that many forward-looking CX service providers invest in digital divisions or innovation departments to reinforce their digital value proposition.

Advanced Digital-enabled Solutions Deliver Customer Impact

Startek is a global provider of tech-enabled business process management solutions that has served the needs of clients and their customers for more than three decades. Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, it offers a comprehensive service portfolio to enhance CX through digital and AI-enablement, thereby impacting clients' business outcomes. By providing insights-driven customer engagement, Startek leverages the science of human communication, digital technologies, and process innovation to optimize the customer's voice and improve interactions across all channels. Its end-to-end strategic approach covers AI and automation, process management and re-engineering, business intelligence and analytics, new-age industry specialization and domain capabilities, an interactive dashboard and reporting, as well as hybrid process management and integration. With more than 40,000 CX experts working from 46 delivery campuses in 13 countries across five continents, Startek addresses the needs of global and

regional clients in 36 languages across a range of industries. As such, Startek's advanced CX solutions bring flexibility and scalability to maximize customer lifetime value, improve customer retention, increase revenue, and boost cost efficiencies.

Startek's Innovative Campus-on-Cloud Solution Provides a Seamless Customer Experience

Startek designed and developed its campus-on-cloud solution, Startek Cloud, to drive its Future of Work strategy, building on the cloud's ability to enable flexible operating models. This suite of technology and process frameworks helps employees work from anywhere and on any device, while built-in security governance guarantees safe operations at all times.

Startek Cloud's pivotal functions and security features (such as effective collaboration; productivity monitoring; data and document privacy; unauthorized site, application, and activity surveillance; facial, gesture, and object detection; notice boards; alerts; intuitive dashboards; and an audit trail), provide increased business agility and continuity for its clients. In addition, recognizing that customers are at different levels of the digital maturity matrix, Startek's Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) tailors solutions to meet each client's vertical and application configuration requirements, including Microsoft Azure, Microsoft Virtual Desktop, Citrix, VMWare, and Amazon Web Services. The company partners with its clients to select the most appropriate cloud-hosted toolset; for example, workforce management (which offers forecasting, scheduling, state compliance, and remote workforce administration) and omnichannel support (which handles interactions through voice, chat, email, video, social media, and digital). The data analytics and learning management system tracks performance on pre-decided metrics and provides on-demand training, helping agents improve customer engagement by driving best behavior. By integrating these digital advancements in a unified cloud platform, Startek strengthens a hybrid approach that allows home-based specialists and associates on campuses to work seamlessly together, delivering an unparalleled customer experience while reducing costs significantly. These efforts are part of Startek's ongoing digital transformation, bringing Customer Experience as a Service (CXaaS) and embedding and training a digital mindset across the business.

AI-enabled Security-rich Features Set Startek's Cloud Model Apart

COVID-19 dramatically changed the CX landscape, with many businesses, including brick-and-mortar stores, forced to move their operations contactless and purely online, thus, pivoting service provider delivery into a virtual space. To help their clients maintain critical business continuity, Startek had to create a contact center without walls—a shift that required new security structures that addressed both physical and network security. With data privacy a top priority, Startek included information security and compliance features in its campus-on-cloud solution to ensure client trust and safety. Diligence and oversight continue today; every VDI platform, for example, is compliant with the payment card industry and Healthcare Information Portability and Accountability Act. Centralized control by Information Technology (IT) ensures last-mile data privacy through dual and multi-factor authenticity, facial recognition systems, bio-metrics, end-to-end data encryption, watermarks, and the masking of certain content to guarantee that every business interaction is taking place in a safe environment. IT also restricts access to local storage, portable storage, the right to install software or change operating system settings. Furthermore, filters prevent users from examining malicious content

on the internet or gaining access to personal emails. Other standard operating procedures include disabled print screen options and USB ports for keyboard and mouse devices. Essentially, Startek's global virtual cloud-enabled workforce has access to all the tools they need to be more productive, while protective controls mitigate risks such as malware and cyber intrusion.

Most importantly, Startek integrates AI in its multi-cloud environment. For instance, webcams with an AI-based application track associates' performance in real time. Another example is an AI-enabled application that senses if a second device enters the environment, automatically sending an alert in case of a violation.

Within Startek's healthcare expansion in the United States, the COVID-19 assistance program was the primary driver for the company's revenue growth in 2021. As domestic vaccine rollouts progressed across the country, Startek leveraged its cloud and omnichannel platform with an expanded range of capabilities to facilitate greater vaccine access throughout US communities nationwide. The company onboarded thousands of CX specialists in a short time frame, assisting and answering U.S. patients' questions regarding vaccination logistics and facilitating a health hotline to make information readily available. The company successfully leveraged its scale and operational agility to support this important health initiative.

LISA: A Cutting-edge Digital Solution that Delivers a Competitive Edge

A collaborative, customizable digital solution, LISA, is a strong differentiator for Startek. Typically, specialized solutions focus on specific channels within the complex customer experience ecosystem, leaving CX specialists with multiple apps to manage the customer journey. LISA addresses this challenge by simplifying the digital service through a cost-effective modular technology platform that empowers brands' CX teams. The solution converges customer interactions across channels and connects omnichannel service capabilities to streamline processes. Its inbuilt analytics features provide valuable insights to improve the user experience. Moreover, LISA empowers associates and managers to address negative social posts proactively, investigate issues, and resolve them within a closed-loop process. For example, if there is a spike in negative sentiment about a product or a new release, associates anticipate that the call center will experience a high call rate. This attribute allows the workforce to adapt scripts or deflect the known issue through IVR responses. Notably, a unique focal point of this modular, multi-channel engagement tool is its capability to listen to scripts and analyze sentiment across all writing systems. Moreover, unlike other market participants with similar solutions, Startek's LISA processes content in various language families, including Roman (English, Spanish, French, Malay, Tagalog), Arabic (Arabic, Urdu), Devnagiri, and Chinese. Other features include unified queueing and reporting, blending agents and multi-skilling, integrating heterogeneous systems, and real-time analytics and customer profiling.

Conclusion

COVID-19 changed the customer experience landscape drastically, pivoting service providers' delivery into a virtual space. As an industry leader, Startek differentiated itself by launching a flexible campus-on-a-cloud framework to empower its workforce, using advanced artificial intelligence and intelligent automation to drive agility while reducing costs substantially. Startek Cloud enables teams to work efficiently and securely across geographies and devices, facilitating seamless integration between home-based specialists and those working from campuses. Built-in security structures address both physical and network security, guaranteeing last-mile data privacy and compliance and ensuring that every business interaction takes place in a safe environment. Startek further differentiates itself through LISA, a collaborative and customizable digital solution that allows associates and managers to address negative social posts proactively, investigate issues, and resolve them within a closed-loop process. Moreover, this cutting-edge solution processes content in various languages. These efforts are part of Startek's ongoing digital transformation, delivering customer-experience-as-a-service (CXaaS) and embedding and training a digital mindset across the business.

With its thought leadership and vision for the future, coupled with its commitment to innovation and excellence in execution, Startek earns Frost & Sullivan's 2021 Americas' New Product Innovation Award in the customer experience outsourcing services market.

What You Need to Know about the New Product Innovation Recognition

Frost & Sullivan's New Product Innovation Award recognizes the company that offers a new product or solution that uniquely addresses key customer challenges.

Best Practices Award Analysis

For the New Product Innovation Award, Frost & Sullivan analysts independently evaluated the criteria listed below.

New Product Attributes

Match to Needs: Customer needs directly influence and inspire product design and positioning

Reliability: Product consistently meets or exceeds customer performance expectations

Quality: Product offers best-in-class quality with a full complement of features and functionality

Positioning: Product serves a unique, unmet need that competitors cannot easily replicate

Design: Product features an innovative design that enhances both visual appeal and ease of use

Customer Impact

Price/Performance Value: Products or services provide the best value for the price compared to similar market offerings

Customer Purchase Experience: Quality of the purchase experience assures customers that they are buying the optimal solution for addressing their unique needs and constraints

Customer Ownership Experience: Customers proudly own the company's product or service and have a positive experience throughout the life of the product or service

Customer Service Experience: Customer service is accessible, fast, stress-free, and high quality

Brand Equity: Customers perceive the brand positively and exhibit high brand loyalty

