



HFS Hot Vendor: Directly

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Introduction

The HFS Hot Vendors are an exclusive group of emerging players, each with a differentiated value proposition for the HFS OneOffice or HFS OneEcosystem. HFS analysts speak with numerous exciting startups and emerging players.

We designate a select group as HFS Hot Vendors based on their offerings' distinctiveness, ecosystem robustness, client impact, financial position, and the impact in our OneOffice and/or OneEcosystem Frameworks. The HFS Hot Vendors may not (at the time of writing) have the scale and size to be featured in our Top 10 reports, but they have the vision and strategy to impact and disrupt the market.

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Directly provides a CX automated platform that changes how companies deliver customer service by leveraging the knowledge of AI and the knowledge of expert users to resolve customer inquiries more efficiently at scale. These experts identify gaps in support content and are paid to: 1) create relevant support content that's delivered to customers automatically, 2) teach AI algorithms to continuously improve, and 3) resolve customer questions quickly and effectively. Unlike traditional contact center workers who are trained on a particular client account or product and are on-call during scheduled business hours, the experts that Directly sources are people who have in-depth, first-hand knowledge of its clients' products already and answer questions on demand, where and when they want to. Directly states that this model boosts CSAT up to 20%, while resolving up to 40% of customer inquiries automatically.

Directly's clients can administer tests to ensure that potential experts are competent and familiar with the tools they're supporting and have the appropriate writing skills and other required attributes to provide suitable responses and administer ongoing training.

Experts then carry an Uber-like rating that highlights their areas of expertise, meaning they will receive queries that they're best at resolving (and more queries, if their score is high). The experts earn a reward for every issue they resolve, or their content helps to resolve. The Directly "experts" also identify gaps in self-service content and create support content, while Directly's AI algorithms to continuously improve its expert routing (which determines which experts to route inquiries to) and instant answers.

Directly's open APIs integrate with leading CRM applications including Microsoft Dynamics, Salesforce Service Cloud, Oracle Service Cloud, and ZenDesk, along with existing help centers, enterprise knowledge bases, messaging and business intelligence systems.

HFS' take

The fundamental nature of work is becoming more fluid and intuitive, and Directly's value proposition speaks directly to that shift. One Directly client we spoke to referred to the ease and dependability of leveraging a trusted network of experts—power users of Excel, the Surface, and other products—to answer questions. In addition to the potential of having better and faster resolution of customer issues, the Directly model also benefits from the “authenticity” of its customer support resource—an active user of the service or product they're supporting. It's also a well-known benefit of the “gig” economy that giving employees the flexibility to pick and choose when they work can encourage more engaged and effective workers; Directly's model provides that valued flexibility. The motivation of compensation tied to the volume of resolved issues is very complementary to this model.

The most interesting potential that Directly exhibits is that of a disruptor to the contact center BPO industry—the largest and most mature of the outsourcing markets. There, high turnover and counter-intuitive business models often prevent delivering on the great customer service companies want to provide. While we predict this market will remain strong, a seismic shift is shaking up the traditional legacy “butts in seats” model of customer service toward more intelligent engagement. Directly's value proposition falls right into the wheelhouse that revamps the old model of paying unengaged employees by the hour to get people off the phone (or chat) as quickly as possible and embraces customer centricity and employee satisfaction. That, combined with its smart crowdsourcing approach and the software's machine learning capabilities, makes Directly a hot vendor to watch for the foreseeable future.

Vendor factsheet

- Launched in May 2015 (Beta in May 2014 and R&D in May 2011), Antony Brydon, Jean Tessier, and Jeff Patterson
- Headquartered in San Francisco, California
- Specialties: CX Automation, Artificial intelligence, customer service, machine learning, marketplace
- Management: Antony Brydon (CEO), Karen Smith (sales), Shaun Donnelly (customer success), Scott Golubock (engineering), Jeff Paterson (product), and Dave Philips (corporate development and legal)
- Financial backing by Microsoft Ventures, True Ventures, Costanoa Ventures, and Northgate Capital
- Company size: 50+ employees
- Client portfolio includes Airbnb, Autodesk, LinkedIn, Microsoft, Nextdoor, Republic Wireless, Samsung, and SAP



About HFS

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HFS is a unique analyst organization that combines deep visionary expertise with rapid demand side analysis of the Global 2000. Its outlook for the future is admired across the global technology and business operations industries.

Its analysts are respected for their no-nonsense insights based on demand side data and engagements with industry practitioners.

HFS Research introduced the world to terms such as “RPA” (Robotic Process Automation) in 2012 and more recently, the HFS OneOffice™. The HFS mission is to provide visionary insight into the major innovations impacting business operations such as Automation, Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Internet of Things, Digital Business Models and Smart Analytics.

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