



Gong for CS?

# APPEN WANTS IT. LOVES IT. NEEDS IT.

## THE CHALLENGE

Appen's Customer Success team was looking for a more efficient way to manage their communication with customers.

## THE OUTCOME

Enabling Gong has not only allowed the CS Team at Appen to easily access all calls and emails for the entire lifecycle of an account, but has also reduced customer churn.

*"I saw Gong and I loved it immediately."*


That's what Vaishali "Shali" Reed said when we asked her to share her reaction to hearing the word, "Gong."


Shali is the Director of Global Customer Success & Programs Operations at Appen, a publicly-traded company that provides data used for the development of machine learning and artificial intelligence products.

The Appen platform collects and labels images, text, speech, audio, video, and other data used to build and continuously improve the world's most innovative artificial intelligence systems. They are helping create the technology of the future — working on a wide ranging span of projects from autonomous vehicles, chatbots, to ground-breaking robotics. Sounds complicated? It is.

Put simply, they give companies the confidence to deploy world-class AI by providing intelligent solutions for all their data-labeling needs.


And Shali's job at Appen covers a lot of ground.

 Headquarters  
Chatswood, AU

 Website  
[www.appen.com](http://www.appen.com)

 Founded  
1996

 Industry  
Artificial Intelligence

 Company Size  
800+

She manages a team of customer success managers (CSMs) across SMB, mid-market, enterprise, and strategic accounts as well as a team who run Programs Operations. Her day-to-day is focused on building strategic processes and workflows to facilitate existing user onboarding, identify and implement CSM coaching tools (including Gong — of course!) and optimize Gainsight, Salesforce, and the entire tech stack at Appen.

And if that's not keeping Shali busy enough, she also develops the new hire onboarding and promotion pathways.

Her team focuses mostly on adoption and utilization. “We’re the platform experts that onboard users. We ensure users have all of the knowledge they need to be able to launch jobs on the Appen data labeling platform.”

Prior to Gong, Shali often engaged in the “fun” game of Telephone. And by fun, we really mean frustrating, inefficient, and often a huge waste of time and effort.

“But what if the CSM leaves out that fifth point — and it turns out to be invaluable feedback?” inquires Shali.

“There was no way to go back and validate what was actually said in the call.”

The “game” ended up being a huge pain point for the CSM team.

*Gong, the “super-smart, intelligent tool,” changed everything for Shali.*

“Not only does Gong help me understand what our CSMs are doing but it also eliminates objectivity in the telephone game.”

With Gong, Appen can “see the full story, not just the four points the CSM thought were most important.”

## THE GONG ONBOARDING “TIPPING POINT”

6+ months.

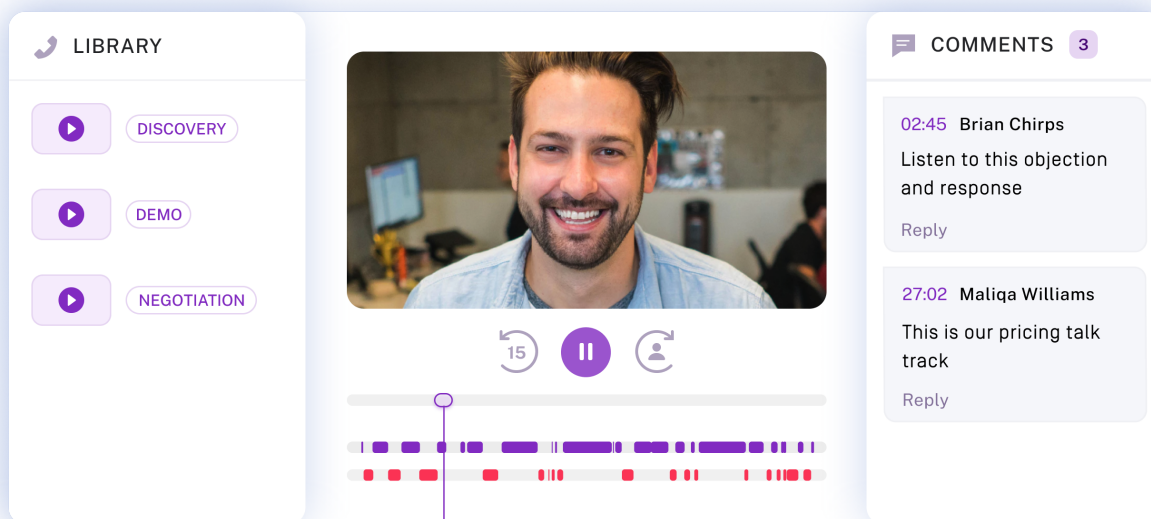
That’s how long it took Shali to onboard a new CSM in a LBG (“Life Before Gong”) world.

“The first three months for a new CSM were reserved for just learning about AI, learning about data labeling, learning about machine learning, and really getting up to speed with the industry,” said Shali.

*Telephone game example:*

**Manager:** “How did your customer call go?”

**CSM:** “Great. Here are my four most important takeaways.”



“The next three months were spent learning the different use cases on the platform.”

*“The onboarding process was completely inefficient.”*

And painfully long.

A new CSM was not able to ramp up for six full months. Two full quarters. It was impossible for Shali to measure the “ROI” of a new hire. And, even if she could come up a number, the investment in time, effort, resources, and money was already a sunk cost.

One of the first things Shali did after deploying Gong was to build the customer success library. She began creating playlists and critical areas to help with the onboarding process.

According to Shali, the “Gong Tipping Point” for Appen was about six months after the CS library was up and running. Gong forever changed — and improved — the CSM onboarding program.

“What I noticed, especially from the newer CSMs, was that my time to onboard began to significantly decrease. Our onboarding time was shrinking from six months to five months to four months.”

*“Ultimately today, I’m able to onboard a brand new CSM within just over two months — down from six months pre-Gong.”*

This fact almost had Shali speechless.

“Amazing,” she said. “I can have a fully productive CSM managing a full book of business within their first quarter. That’s unheard of for most really technical companies with a complex platform and product.”

## FOUR KEY ADVANTAGES GONG OFFERS CUSTOMER SUCCESS TEAMS

Gong offers Customer Success leaders like Shali several key advantages:

- 1 **Shared Memory:** All calls and emails for the entire lifecycle of the account are recorded and easily searchable.
- 2 **Reduced Churn:** Gong’s insights help teams uncover the lead indicators of customer churn — quickly and efficiently get alerted on critical renewals for competitive and market-risk accounts.
- 3 **Drive Upsell Opportunity & Growth:** Easily monitor leading indicators of customer growth
- 4 **Voice of Customer:** Share the true voice of the customer with the product, product marketing, customer education, and operations teams.

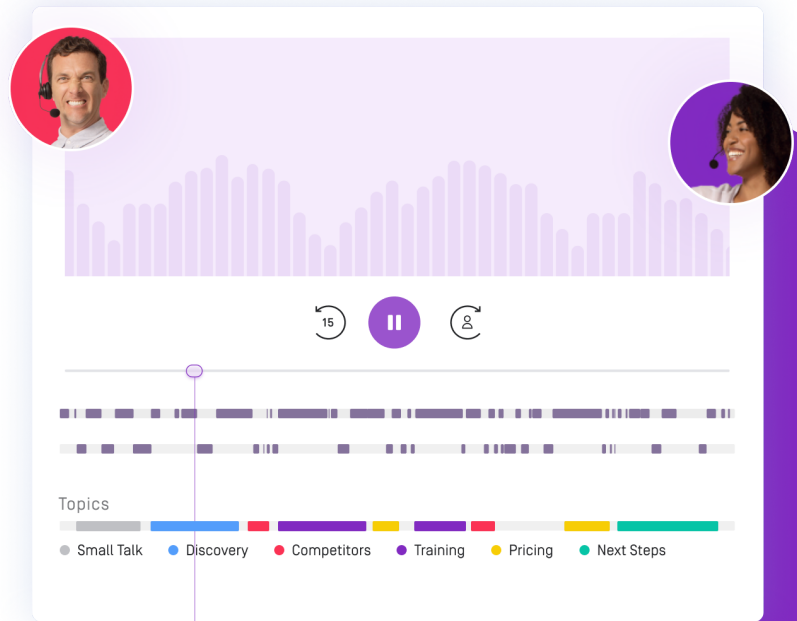
Appen is currently taking advantage of all four of the above.

## 1 Shared Memory

Shali's weekly one-on-one meetings prior to implementing Gong often consisted of her team voicing frustration and confusion. It would not be uncommon for her to hear a team member say, "I'm doing so many things and I don't know where to focus."

"I'm trying to take notes via notepad on my laptop. I have a physical notepad (with a piece of paper and pen) as well. I'm trying to take notes — I really am — but I know I'm missing a lot of critical details or discovery questions I could be asking customers."

"Now that Gong is recording all of those calls," said Shali, "we are able to not only do all of our prep work ahead of time in terms of discovery, but we're also able to really get on the conversation and truly listen to the customer."



*"It's amazing. CSMs are no longer listening to talk; they are actually listening to LISTEN."*

Also pre-Gong, CSMs approached calls with their agenda — a list of questions they "had to get through." It mattered less what the customer was saying and more that they needed to ask their key questions and capture their answers. That's not listening to learn. That's not listening to understand. It's simply listening so you can talk (again).

With Gong's "infinite memory," a CSM steps into a call with a rough agenda and asks the customer to let them know where they want to spend a little bit more or less time on various action items. CSMs can now "peel the onion back" where it's most needed.

*"Gong has helped Appen take the subjectivity out of conversations," said Shali.*

Now, when a CSM asks a manager to listen to a call they think had some risk, an experienced manager can go into the call and pinpoint exactly what the customer said and when.

*Talk about a coachable moment!*

Not everyone comprehends the same word or phrase in the same fashion. Tone matters. Context matters.

*Gong eliminates potential confusion and ambiguity.*

Shali: "As somebody who has been in a customer success role for 10+ years, I can read between the lines better than my associate CSMs, who are often fresh out of college."

Again, Gong serves up incredible teachable moments.

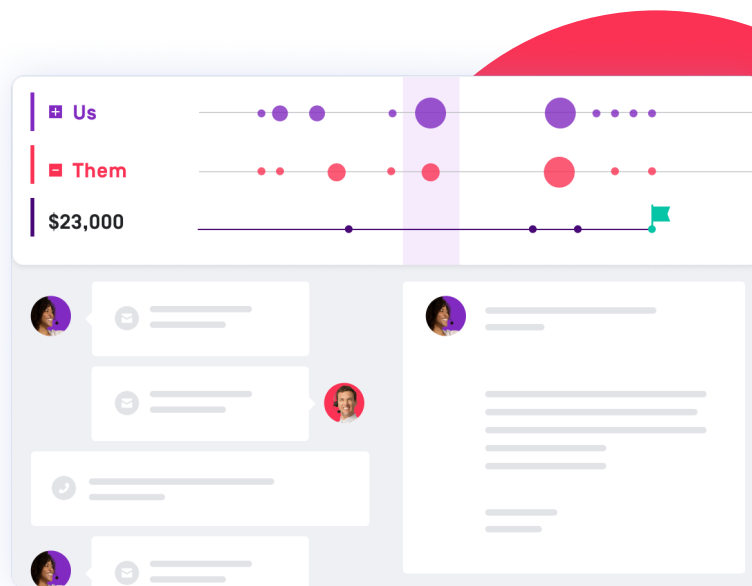
## 2 Reduced Churn

Today, thanks to Gong, Shali can check on the health of a customer relationship proactively.

From a renewal perspective, she can see all communications nested under one account, which helps her sniff out if there are any signs of an account churning, and take appropriate actions to prevent it.

"If I don't see any activity on that opportunity for 45 days and my CSM is telling me there's no risk associated with that renewal, well, I'm kinda looking at them sideways."

Enter Gong: "Let's review the data!"



*Shali says that Gong allows her to hold her team accountable vs. just taking them at their word.*

## 3 Drive Upsell Opportunity and Growth

No doubt about it: acquiring new customers is a challenge.

That's why tapping into your existing customer base for expansion is crucial for success. A wise company tracks and makes the most of these opportunities to grow within a single customer account. After all, your existing customers know and trust your product and your sales team.

Appen is ahead of the pack.

Shali and her team began sharing CSM calls with the Sales team: "Listen to this Gong snippet. It sounds like a great expansion opportunity" or "This snippet suggests a new team that's potentially interested."

With the CSMs and sales teams working together, they are able to maximize an account's value.

## 4 Voice of Customer

Today, Appen is at the point where different teams are involved with Gong — and the entire ecosystem of Gong users in the company benefit from the customer insights that can be gathered from the product.

CSMs are usually the closest people to a customer after the ink on a contract has dried. They are the partners that make or break the bulk of the customer's journey. Through countless conversations, they are privy to tons of feedback, requests, and use cases that many other parts of an organization are hungry for.

But with Gong, the other teams at Appen are not as dependent on Shali's CSMs to interpret a customer's reality for a particular account. They can listen to the calls themselves, and focus on what's important to them. Gong helps share the true voice of the customer with product, product marketing, customer education, and operations teams.

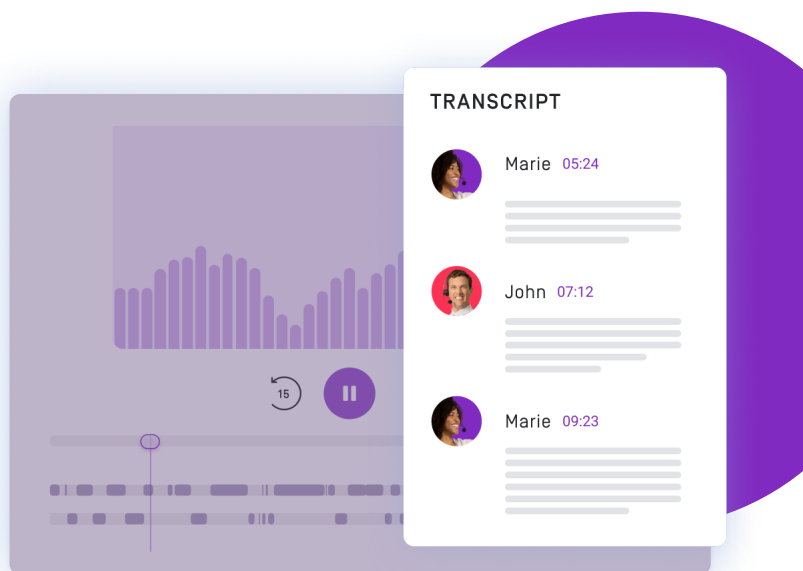
They are empowered to review and listen to entire calls (or pull relevant snippets). And if they need to have a follow-up — more in-depth conversation — it's easy!

Shali is excited to continue evangelizing the platform. She is thrilled to see how other teams at Appen will leverage the power of Gong.

When we asked Shali if Gong was a "nice to have" tool, she emphatically replied, "NO!" followed by,

*"Gong is NEED TO HAVE."*

We are happy you feel that way, Shali.



## GET STARTED TODAY

See how Appen uses Gong to achieve these results.  
Request your demo today.

See it live

