



What Contact Centres are Doing Right Now

How do You Compare?

Autumn Survey

(2020 Edition)

A Call Centre Helper Research Paper

Sponsored by



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What We Did

2020 has been an extraordinary year, the most challenging year that many contact centres will have ever faced and a year in which the industry has changed at an unprecedented rate.

For these reasons, this year's version of our annual "What Contact Centres Are Doing Right Now" survey has produced some unexpected results.

As always, the aim of the survey was to capture a snapshot view of what contact centres are doing right now – and how things have changed!

The survey was circulated amongst Call Centre Helper readers throughout September and October 2020, and was run in partnership with Business Systems, Jacada, Voci Technologies and Vonage.

We also took the opportunity to compare the data with data collected over the past five years, as well as introducing some new, more topical, questions.

Each year, the survey provides the latest and most valuable insights into the fundamental framework of the contact centre. In doing so, it covers multiple topics, including customer trends, contact centre initiatives and the technologies that have made it on to every contact centre's wish list.

310 contact centre professionals took part, and we are delighted to share the results with you.



Executive Summary

Every year, changes to technology, processes and training transform the make-up of the contact centre. Add this to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the “typical” contact centre of today is much different than it was in 2019.

These developments have accelerated changes in how call centre agents work, digital customer experiences and cloud technology adoption.

However, change has also presented businesses with new challenges to overcome, and these can prevent contact centres from performing to their full potential.

Here are a number of useful conclusions that have been drawn from this year’s survey, which shine a light on how contact centres are performing in late 2020.

Remote Working Has Brought Lots of Benefits to Contact Centres

More of our survey participants reported that remote working has had a positive impact than those who said it had a negative impact, in each of the following areas:

- Contact centre communication
- Employee engagement
- Service quality
- Workforce management (WFM)

Yet, according to our findings, the area in which most contact centres found the most benefit from homeworking is employee well-being, with 41.3% saying it had a positive impact, and only 15.3% saying that it had a negative impact.

Over Half of Contact Centres are Still Offering Social Events to Their Team

Despite the continuing pandemic, it was good to see that 50.8% of contact centres are still actively arranging social events for their agents.

While many of these social events will likely be virtual, it’s great to see that contact centres are looking for fun ways to protect their team from the social isolation of remote work.

Other popular initiatives included: multiskilling advisors (81.7%), knowledge champions (63.6%) and buddying agents (60.6%).

Many Contact Centres Rushed to Install Virtual Assistants

When the pandemic hit, contact centres rushed into the cloud. But our research suggests that many also invested in virtual assistants.

This time last year, just 14.0% of contact centres had installed a virtual assistant, but now 30.8% have implemented the technology. An increase of well over 100%!

The increase in uptake is probably due to the hike in contact volumes that many contact centres experienced as the outbreak first spread across the globe.

Knowledge-Base Technology Has Also Risen Dramatically

Another technology that has been in high demand in 2020 is the knowledge base, rising from 60.5% of contact centres having installed the technology in 2018, to 71.2% in 2020.

Providing agents with support systems like a knowledge base can be very helpful for remote agents, who miss the face-to-face support available in the contact centre.

Other technologies that have increased in usage in 2020 include: call-back-from-queue solutions, call-scripting tech and process automation.

Customers are Becoming Ever More Demanding

When the pandemic first hit, there were lots of heart-warming stories of understanding customers sympathizing with agents for having to work from home and use new systems in the blink of an eye.

It appears, though, that this customer sympathy has run its course and customers expect smooth-running contact centres that have overcome the challenges of COVID-19.

In fact, 37.2% of industry professionals believe that customers have become even more demanding and that this customer trend has had a big impact on their operation.

Almost 40% of Contact Centres are Digging Into Their Schedule Adherence Stats

Agents being in the right place at the right time is fundamental to running an efficient contact centre, and schedule adherence is your key metric for tracking that.

However, 39.3% of contact centres take it one step further and research employee reasons for low schedule adherence to find solutions unique to their contact centre.

Other popular strategies for improving schedule adherence include: setting adherence targets (48.2%), publishing adherence reports (36.2%) and implementing real-time adherence notifications (29.0%).

Over a Third of Contact Centres Do Not Measure First Contact Resolution (FCR)

Despite 63.8% of our survey participants stating that they believe FCR is a “very important” metric, more than one in every three contact centres (34.0%) don’t measure it.

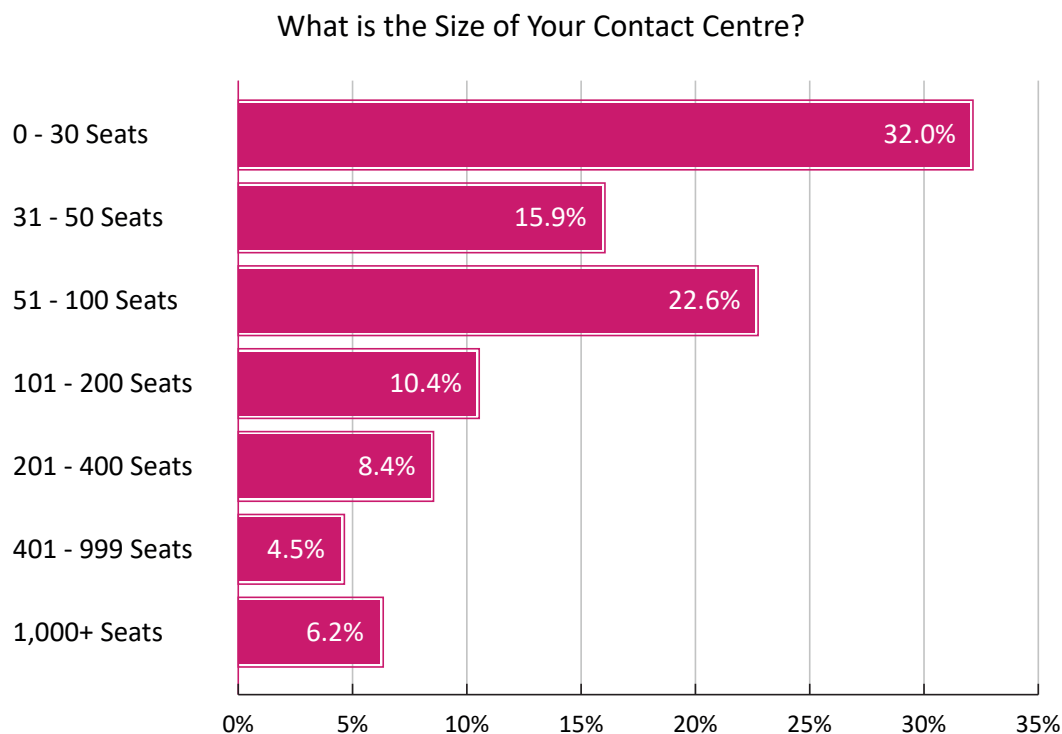
This could be due to the fact that FCR is difficult to measure and that there is no easy way to track multiple calls about the same issue.

There are, however, multiple methods for attempting to do so. Many of our industry professionals attempt to measure FCR through measuring repeat contacts (25.5%), tracking call reason codes (23.5%) and using an analytics system (8.9%).

General – How Does Your Contact Centre Compare?

1. What is the Size of Your Contact Centre?

Our industry professionals that took part in this year's survey came from 301 contact centres, of all different shapes and sizes, ranging from 0-30 seats to 1,000+.



To give greater context to the results shared in this report, the chart above shows the make-up of the different-sized contact centres which contributed to our survey.

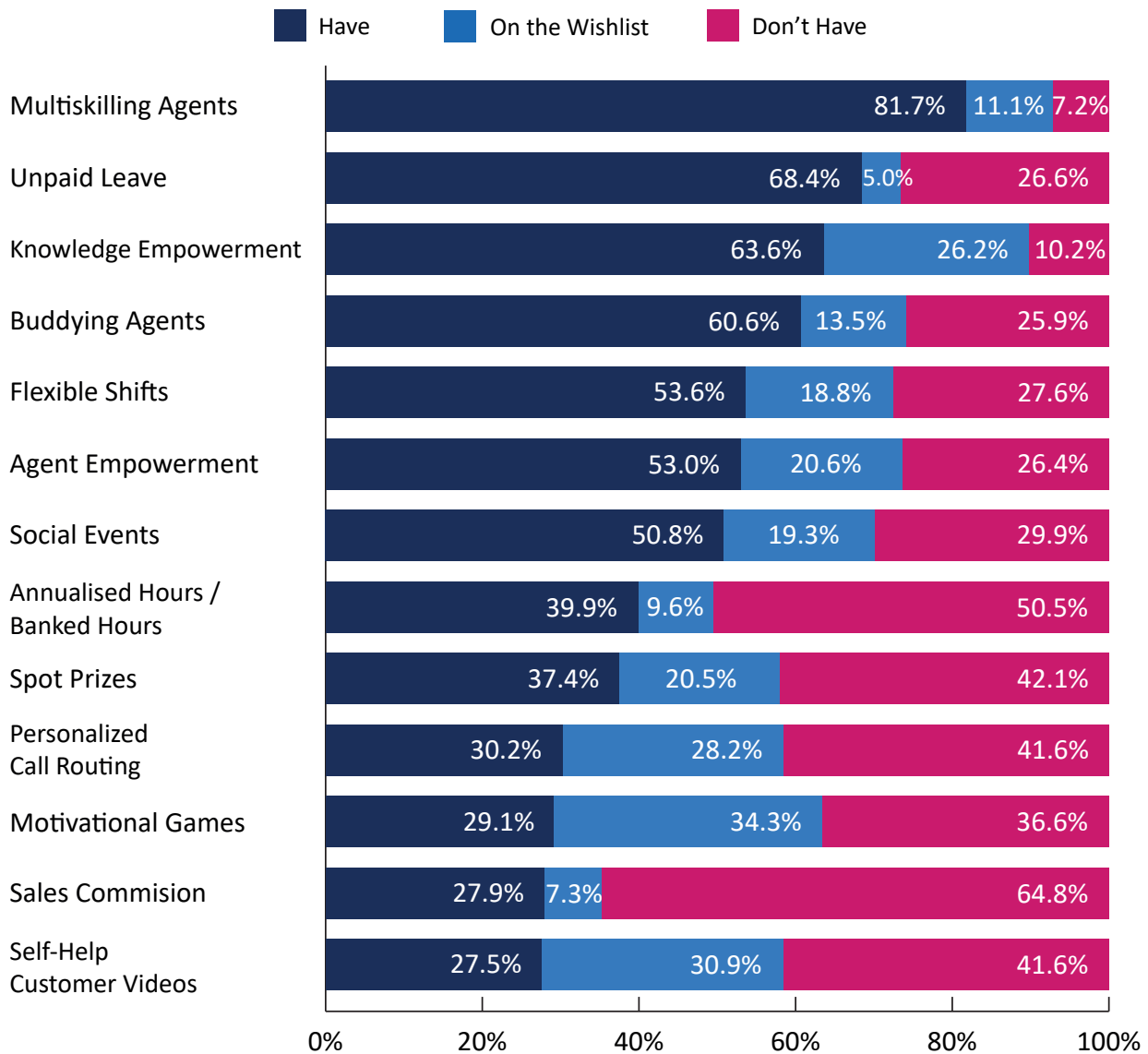


2. What Initiatives Do You Currently Have in the Contact Centre?

Remote Working Has Increased Agent Empowerment

From 2015 to 2019, agent empowerment has been declining in contact centres year after year. But the events of 2020 have put a stop to that worrying trend.

What Initiatives do You Currently Have in the Contact Centre?



What Initiatives do You Currently Have in the Contact Centre?

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Multiskilling Advisors	90.5%	88.2%	80.4%	84.5%	83.9%	81.7%
Unpaid Leave	66.4%	65.2%	70.8%	70.7%	65.5%	68.4%
Knowledge Champions	66.2%	63.3%	66.8%	56.6%	63.1%	63.6%
Buddying Agents	71.5%	71.0%	70.9%	60.0%	58.1%	60.6%
Flexible Shifts	59.7%	61.0%	62.5%	51.8%	58.2%	53.6%
Agent Empowerment	61.6%	61.0%	61.0%	48.8%	47.9%	53.0%
Social Events	77.3%	77.1%	74.0%	66.6%	64.0%	50.8%
Annualised/Banked Hours	30.9%	36.0%	37.7%	36.0%	35.1%	39.9%
Spot Prizes	52.8%	51.5%	45.4%	44.6%	38.9%	37.4%
Personalised Call Routing	38.2%	33.2%	36.4%	30.4%	30.3%	30.2%
Motivational Games	47.1%	50.2%	44.7%	38.5%	30.9%	29.0%
Sales Commision	36.0%	26.7%	30.7%	27.0%	28.9%	27.9%
Self-Help Customer Videos	23.8%	23.0%	23.6%	24.3%	30.9%	27.5%

While only 47.9% of contact centres had initiatives around agent empowerment in their contact centre in 2019, this year that figure has risen to 53.0%.

Agent empowerment involves giving agents more control of when they work, how they work and what work they do.

On this first point of “when they work”, it was also encouraging to see a growth in annualized hours schemes, an initiative that is now used by almost 40% of contact centres.

Buddying Agents is Also Becoming More Popular

Another initiative that has seen a resurgence in popularity after a long decline is buddying agents. This initiative is now used by 60.6% of contact centres, up by 2.5% from 2020.

Similarly to agent empowerment, this initiative had previously been declining in usage every year from 2015 to 2019. The recent rise is likely to protect contact centre agents who are now working remotely from social isolation.

Considering the negative effects of social isolation, however, it was a surprise to see that the use of motivational games has in fact decreased from 2019 – as these can be great in bringing people together.

Multiskilling Continues Its Decline

One trend that has not been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak is that fewer and fewer contact centres are multiskilling agents.

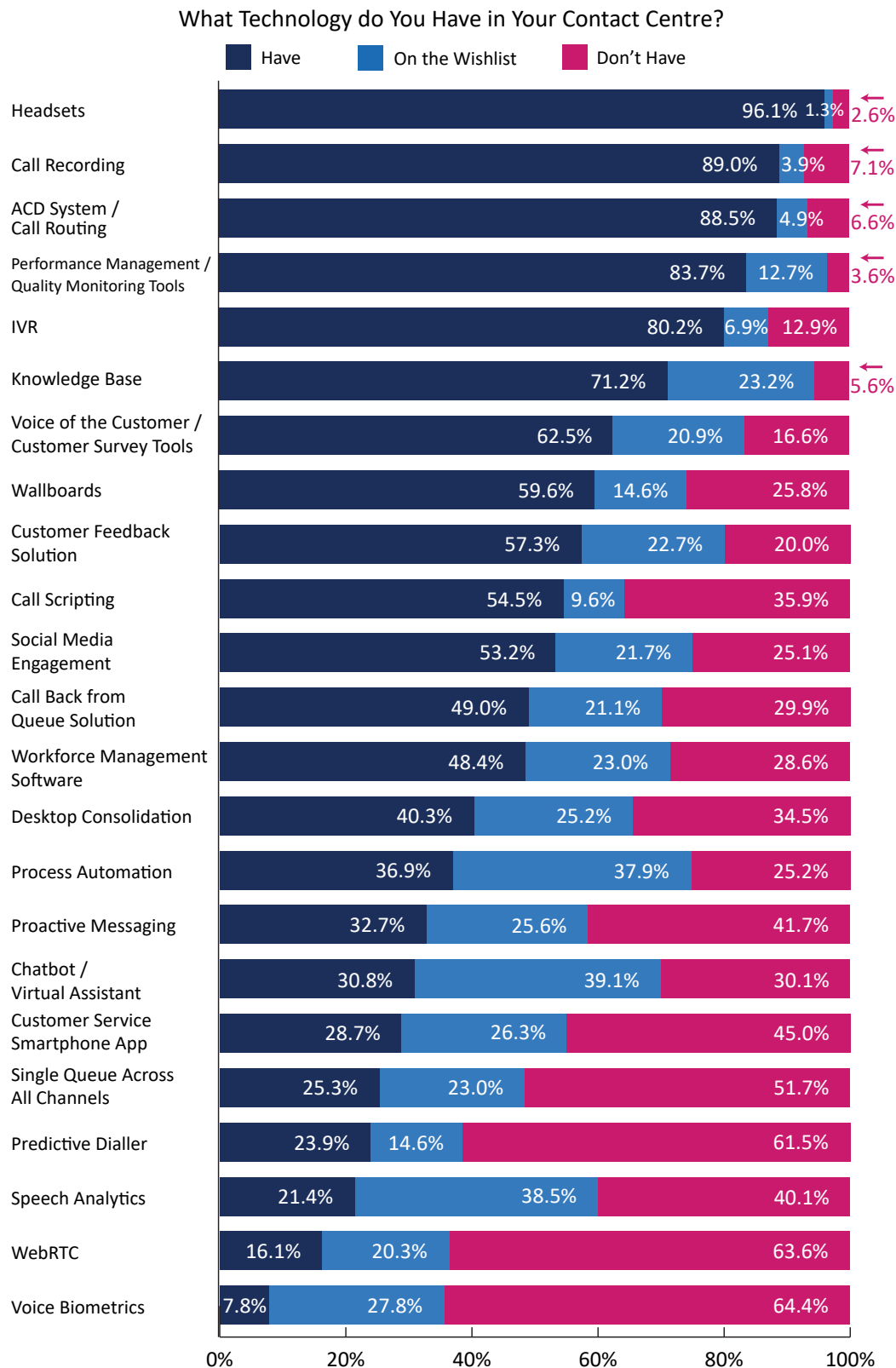
Only 81.7% of contact centres now multiskilling agents, the lowest figure we’ve ever recorded and the fourth year out of five that the percentage has dropped from the previous year.

This trend could well be down to self-service and automation taking away many of the easy contacts from the contact centre, which makes the agent role increasingly difficult. In response, more contact centres seem to be making agents specialists in one specific area.

3. What Technology Do You Have in Your Contact Centre?

The Chatbot and Virtual Assistant Revolution is Upon Us

For years we have been told about the promise of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in the contact centre. Well, it seems that the pandemic has caused these technologies to enter contact centres at an accelerated rate, in the form of chatbots and virtual assistants.



What Technology do You Have in Your Contact Centre?

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Headsets	98.5%	97.9%	98.8%	98.4%	96.1%
Call Recording	85.8 %	87.5%	91.4%	90.3%	89.0%
ACD / Call Routing	90.0%	90.1%	90.9%	89.7%	88.5%
Performance Management / Quality Monitoring Tools	82.3%	83.9%	80.2%	87.0%	83.7%
IVR	79.5%	81.6%	86.1%	82.7%	80.2%
Knowledge Base	71.6%	75.6%	60.5%	70.5%	71.2%
VoC / Customer Survey	N/A	51.5%	48.4%	59.1%	62.5%
Wallboards	68.6%	72.9%	74.7%	63.0%	59.6%
Customer Feedback Solution	59.8 %	66.6%	58.5%	61.9%	57.3%
Call Scripting	46.9%	52.3%	42.5%	51.0%	54.5%
Social Media Engagement	48.3%	52.9%	52.7%	57.4%	53.2%
Call Back From Queue Solution	N/A	51.1%	41.1%	40.2%	49.0%
WFM Software	31.4 %	36.9%	37.2%	49.0%	48.4%
Desktop Consolidation	22.3%	33.2%	26.3%	34.7%	40.3%
Process Automation	36.3%	39.1%	34.6%	31.1%	36.9%
Proactive Messaging	N/A	35.5%	28.0%	29.3%	32.7%
Chatbot / Virtual Assistant	N/A	9.9%	30.7%	14.0%	30.8%
Customer Service Enabled App	N/A	27.9%	20.1%	30.5%	28.7%
Single Queue Across All Channels	24.1 %	32.0%	30.7%	26.3%	25.3%
Predictive Dialler	22.0%	22.3%	22.9%	24.6%	23.9%
Speech Analytics	9.2%	13.4%	13.2%	15.9%	21.4%
WebRTC	N/A	13.2%	36.4%	12.8%	16.1%
Voice Biometrics	5.0%	5.0%	23.6%	5.0%	7.8%

More than twice as many contact centres are using these compared to this time last year – with 30.8% of organizations now implementing either a virtual assistant or a chatbot.

On top of this, other AI technologies are being implemented more too. Well over a third of contact centres have installed process automation technology and 7.8% now use voice biometrics – signalling a big uptake in both AI-based technologies since late 2019.

Contact Centres are Falling Back on Call-Scripting and Knowledge-Base Technology

Since 2018, the use of call-scripting technology has risen by 12.0%, meaning that well over half of contact centres (54.5%) are now using digital call scripts.

While some of this growth might be contact centres moving old-fashioned paper-based scripts to an online setting, it does highlight that more contact centres are feeling the need to provide agents with additional resources to fall back on when calls are not going to plan.

This idea gains momentum when we also consider that 71.2% of contact centres have now implemented knowledge-base technology, which is up from 60.7% in 2018.

These statistics are yet another indicator that the call centre agent role is becoming more challenging.

Customer Feedback Solutions are Falling by the Wayside

One technology that has actually fallen in usage over recent times is customer feedback solutions, as only 57.3% of contact centres are using this technology in 2020, down from 61.9%.

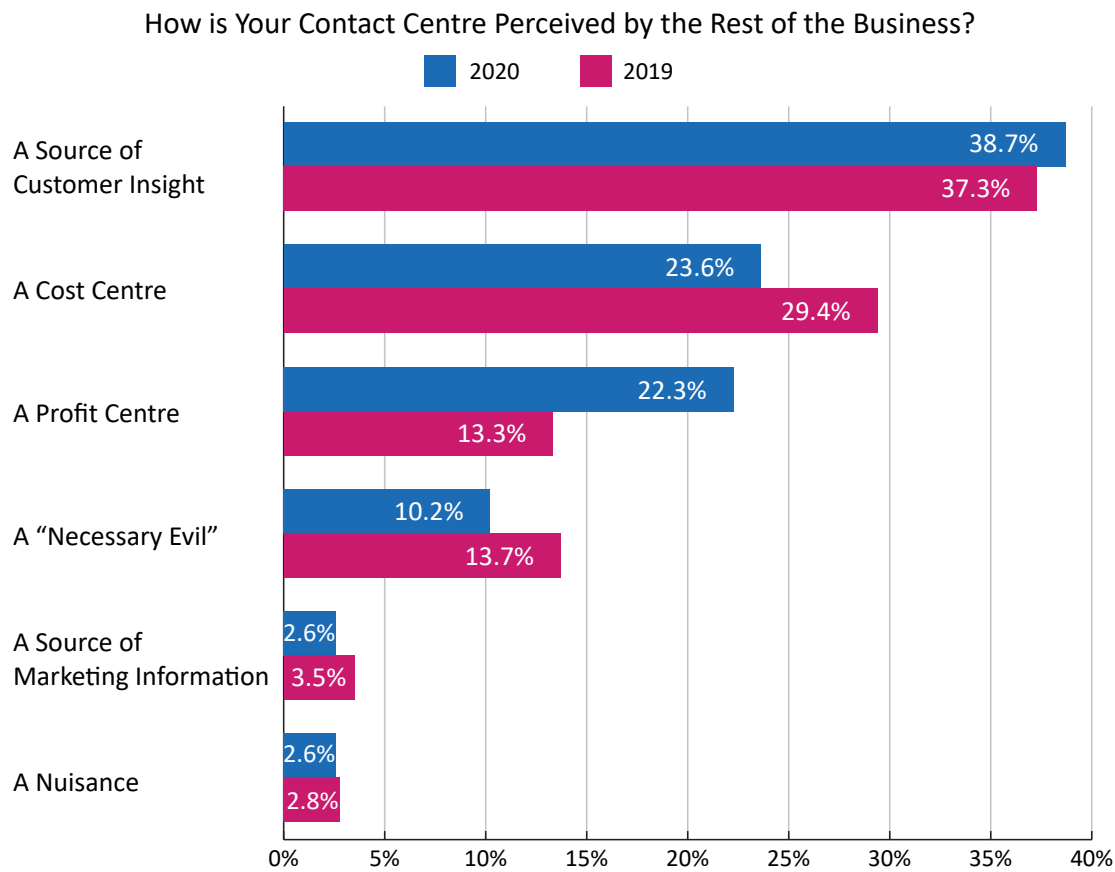
This could indicate that contact centres are looking to gather customer feedback through other methods, and the growth in the uptake of speech analytics technology supports this argument.

Now over one in every five contact centres (21.4%) has speech analytics, which can be used to gather customer insights from the conversations customers are having with agents.

4. How is Your Contact Centre Perceived by the Rest of the Business?

Perceptions of the Contact Centre are Improving

The percentage of industry professionals that believed their organization viewed their contact centre as either a “source of customer insight” or a “profit centre” grew significantly from 2019.



One brilliant statistic is the fact that the number of businesses that view the contact centre as a “profit centre” grew from 13.3% last year to 22.3% this time around. Fantastic!

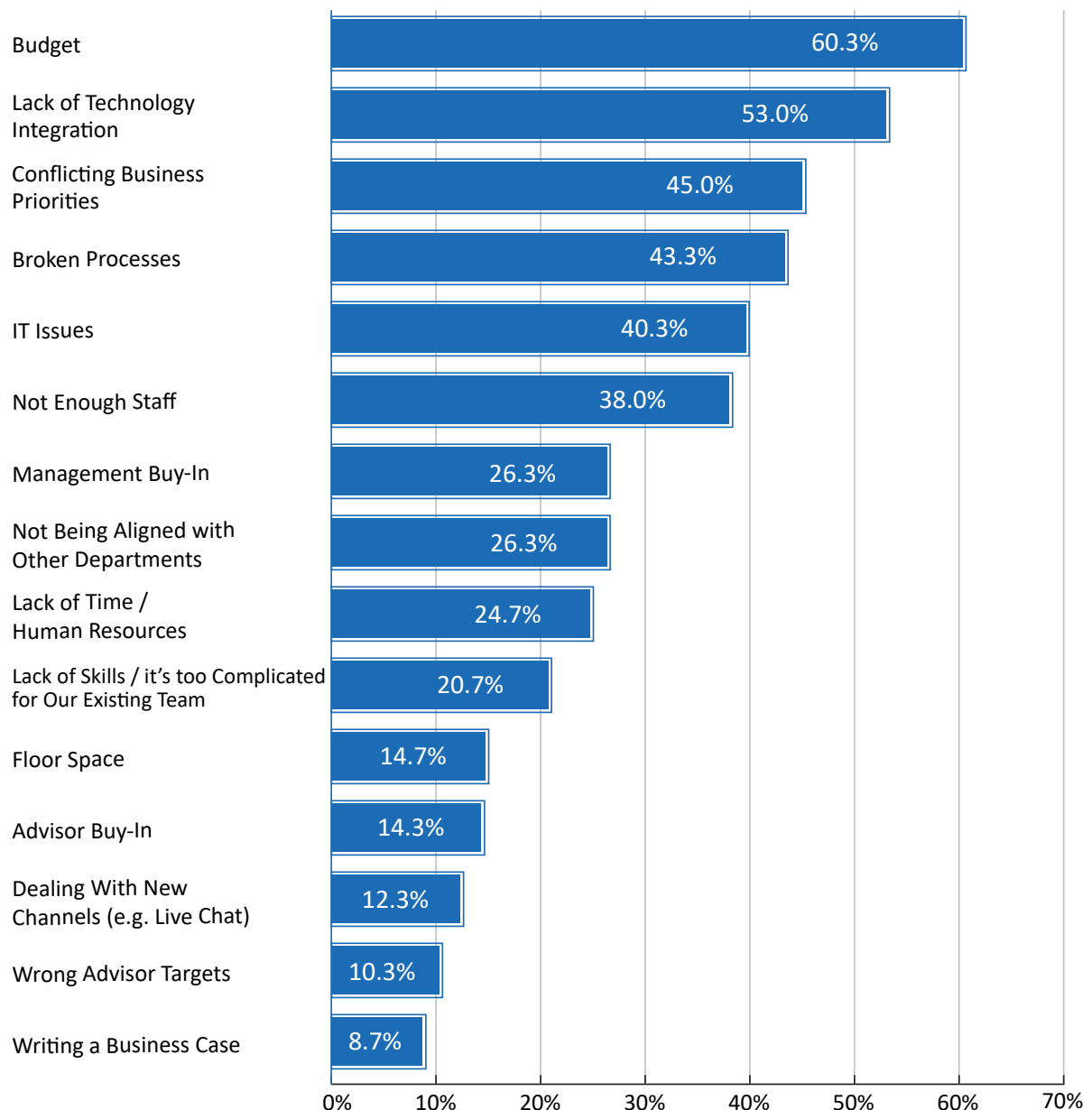
In a time when many organizations have had to cope with increased contact volumes and accelerate their digital transformation projects, it appears that eyes have been opened to the critical role that contact centres play.

5. What Barriers Stop You from Running Your Dream Contact Centre?

Unsurprisingly, Budget is the Biggest Barrier to the Dream Contact Centre

More than six in every ten contact centres (60.3%) have a problem obtaining budget, reporting that the issue is preventing them from running their ideal contact centre.

Which Barriers Stop You from Running Your Dream Contact Centre?



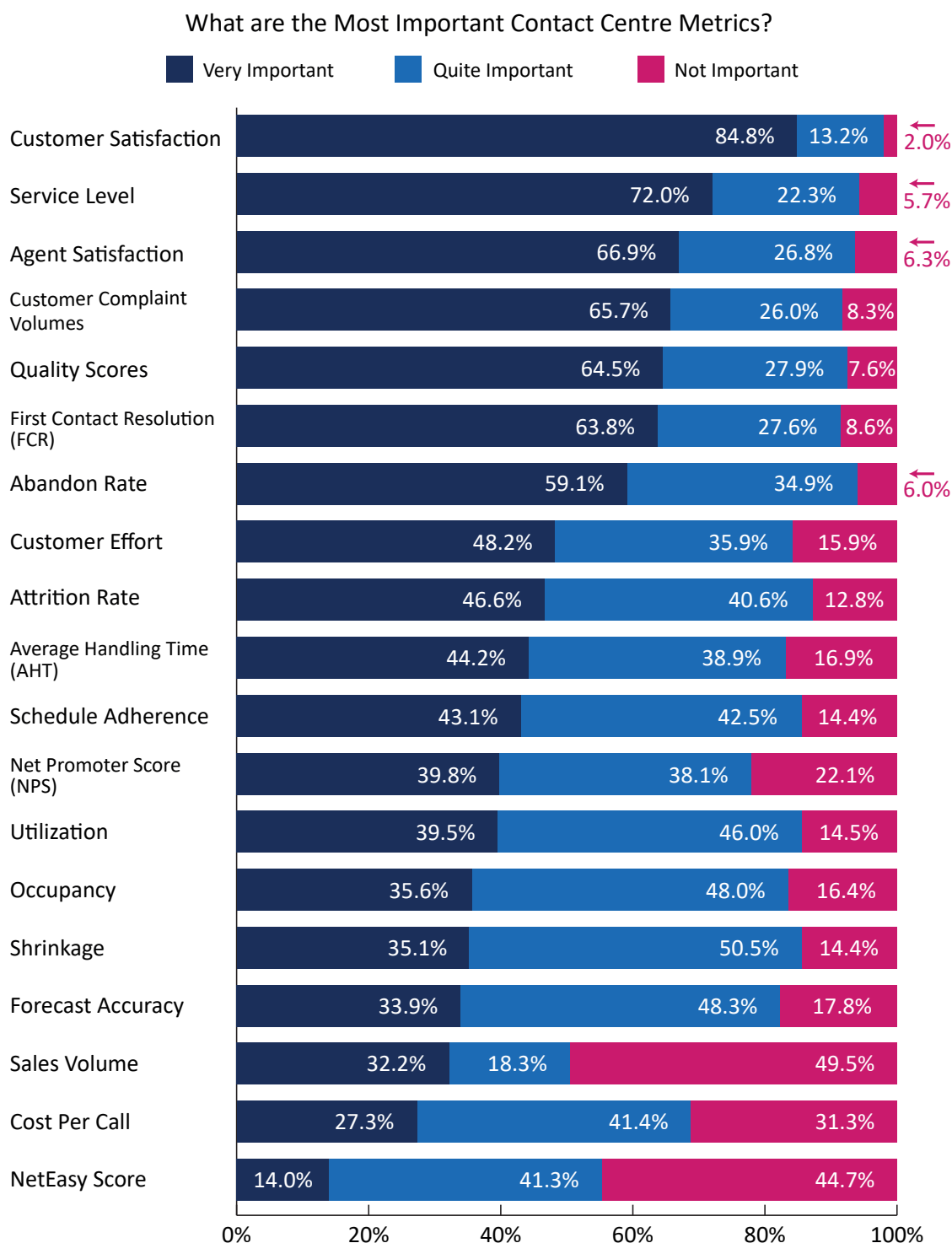
It might be more surprising that only 39.7% of contact centres have no issues with the budget provided to them, as it is quite often the cause behind lots of other problems like the need for new technology, staffing issues and lack of resources.

The second and third most common barriers could also have been easily anticipated: lack of technology and conflicting business priorities.

6. What are the Most Important Contact Centre Metrics?

Customer Satisfaction Remains the Industry's Most Popular Metric

Despite the hype around customer effort, customer emotion and customer loyalty-based metrics, customer satisfaction remains the undisputed king of contact centre metrics.



What are the Most Important Contact Centre Metrics?

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Customer Satisfaction	91.1%	95.7%	93.1%	89.2%	84.8%
Service Level	70.0%	62.7%	61.4%	65.6%	72.0%
Advisor Satisfaction	48.4%	62.0%	63.1%	67.1%	66.9%
Complaint Volumes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	65.7%
Quality Scores	68.4%	67.5%	63.9%	65.1%	64.5%
First Contact Resolution	65.4%	68.0%	69.8%	68.8%	63.8%
Abandon Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	62.0%	59.1%
Customer Effort	35.8%	53.6%	48.9%	47.5%	48.2%
Attrition Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	49.8%	46.6%
Average Handling Time	31.8%	33.2%	31.9%	44.0%	44.2%
Schedule Adherence	37.6%	47.6%	40.2%	48.6%	43.1%
Net Promoter Score	29.6%	36.6%	32.8%	36.6%	39.8%
Utilization	N/A	N/A	N/A	44.1%	39.5%
Occupancy	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	35.6%
Shrinkage	28.5%	30.5%	27.3%	35.7%	35.1%
Forecast Accuracy	33.4%	36.2%	37.1%	40.3%	33.9%
Sales Volume	29.1%	35.1%	27.2%	27.8%	32.2%
Cost Per Call	N/A	N/A	N/A	31.0%	27.3%
NetEasy Score	11.4%	21.7%	19.5%	14.8%	14.0%

(These are the percentages of survey participants that believed each metric to be “very important” year-on-year)

With 84.8% of contact centre professionals believing it to be a “very important” metric, it is, however, not as overwhelmingly “on top” as in previous years.

In contrast, more participants told us that other customer experience metrics like Customer Effort (48.2%) and the Net Promoter Score (39.8%) were “very important” than in 2019.

Average Handling Time (AHT) as a Metric Continues to Rise

The percentage of industry professionals believing that AHT is a “very important” metric has grown to 44.2%. This is up from 31.9% in 2018.

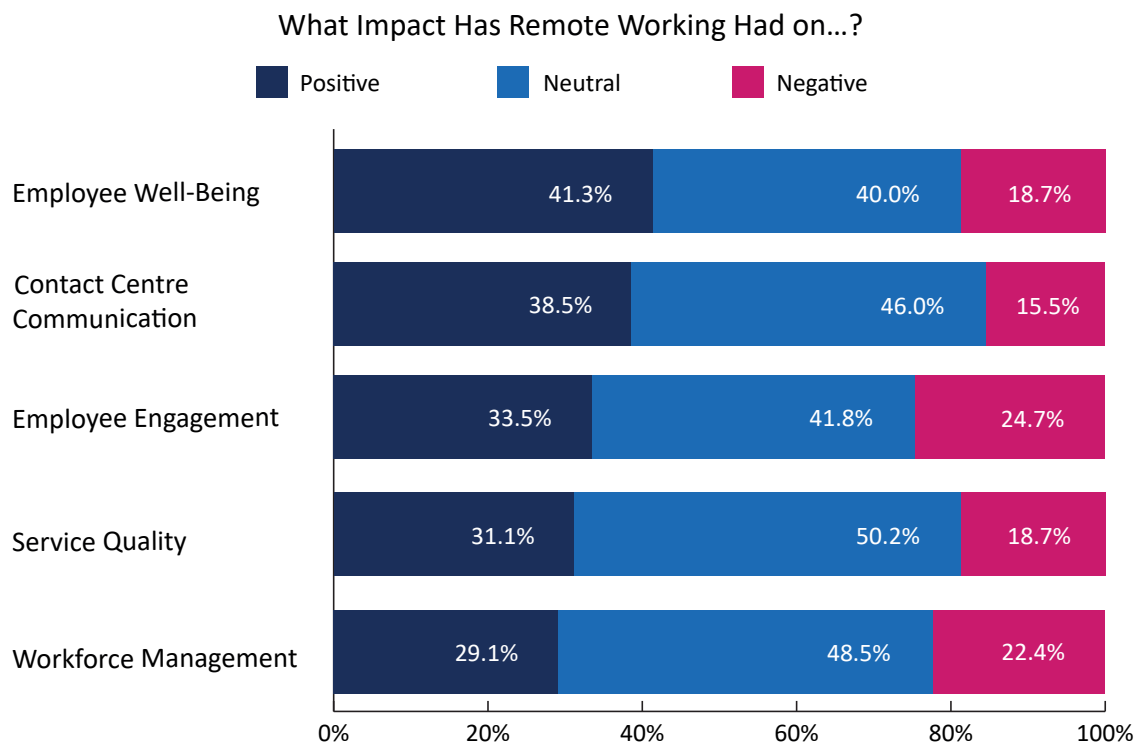
This is likely because of the significant role that AHT plays in staffing calculations. Yet it could also be a signal that contact centres are focusing on lowering the metric as a result of the increased contact centre demand brought on by the pandemic.

Interestingly, service level is now deemed to be of greater importance than last year too, with 72.0% of survey participants now believing it to be a “very important” metric.

7. What Impact Has Remote Working Had on...?

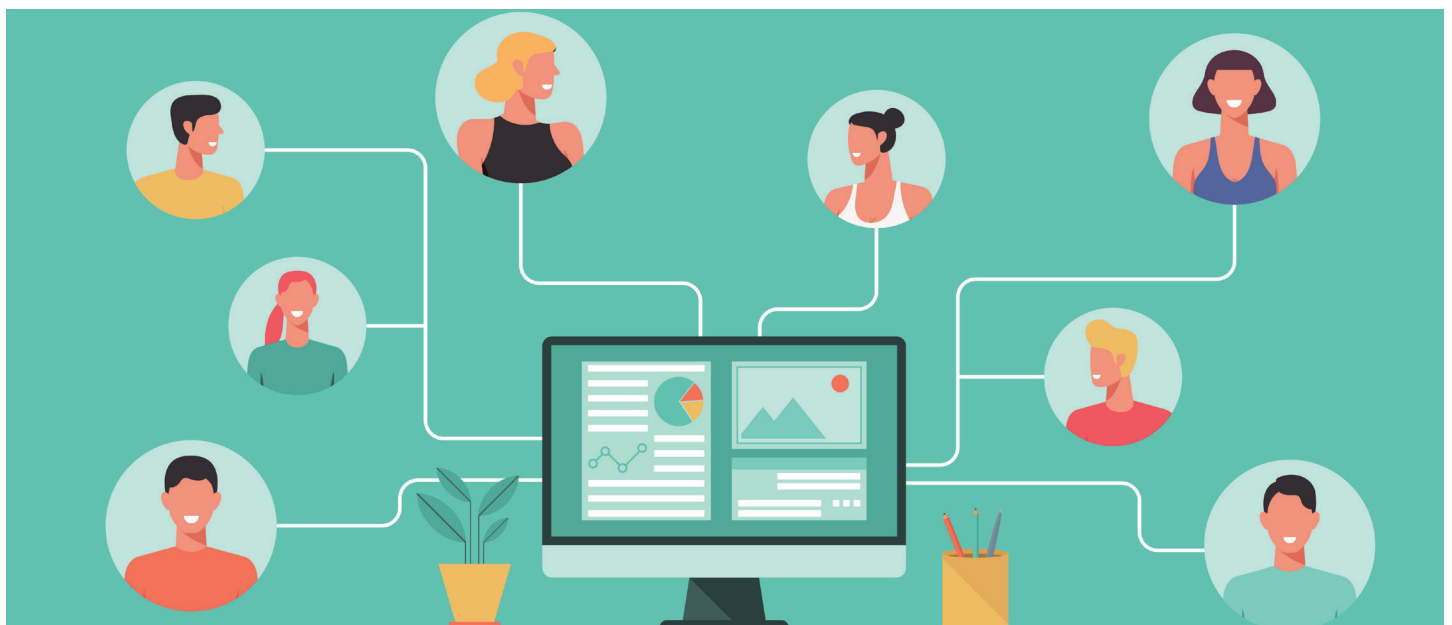
Employee Well-Being and Engagement is Improving

One of the positives from the “new normal” is that the move to remote working has had a largely positive impact on employee well-being and engagement.



41.3% of contact centres believe that their new working arrangement has improved employee well-being, while 33.5% think that it has also benefited employee engagement.

The other area where remote working has had a beneficial impact is in communication – highlighting that contact centres are using virtual communication channels to good effect.





Customer and Contact Centre Trends

The Customer and Contact Centre Trends chapter is sponsored by Jacada.

Jacada helps businesses take an automation-first approach to customer experience and contact centre operations.

Using Jacada's low code automation platform, citizen developers can launch AI and RPA solutions both within the contact centre to boost productivity as well as for customers to reduce customer effort and drive self-service.

Jacada's automation solutions harmonize existing CRM and contact center platforms and deliver best of breed AI capabilities to rapidly launch and scale differentiated customer experiences.

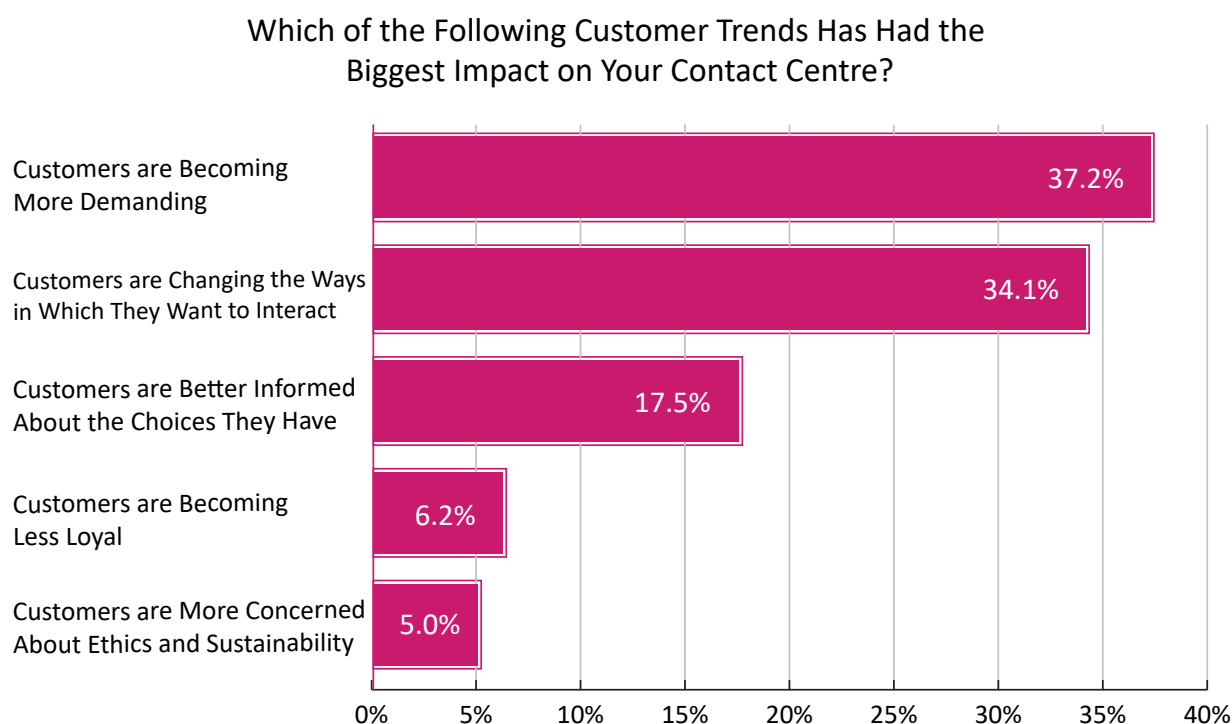
Well known for their unified desktop, agent assist, attended RPA, visual IVR and multimodal virtual agent solutions, Jacada were recently lauded by Gartner in their recent Magic Quadrant reports for Workforce Engagement Management and Robotic Process Automation, as well as by Everest Group for Intelligent Virtual Agent and Robotic Process Automation.

www.jacada.com

8. Which of the Following Customer Trends Has Had the Biggest Impact on Your Contact Centre?

Contact Centres are Dealing With More Demanding Customers

The customer trend which is having the biggest impact on the contact centre industry is that customers are becoming more demanding – according to 37.2% of our readers.



While customer expectations seemed to drop in the spring, when contact centres were rushing into remote working, that patience seems to have run out, and a more demanding customer is something that contact centres must adapt to quickly – even when running a makeshift operation.

Yet contact centres aren't having to work harder just to meet basic customer expectations, they also have to do so to secure customer loyalty. This is another trend that is impacting contact centres, with 6.2% reporting it to be the biggest trend that they must contend with.

Customer Communication Preferences are Changing

Long gone are the days when the contact centre only had to manage voice channels and emails. Customers' communication habits are changing, and this is having a huge impact on contact centres.

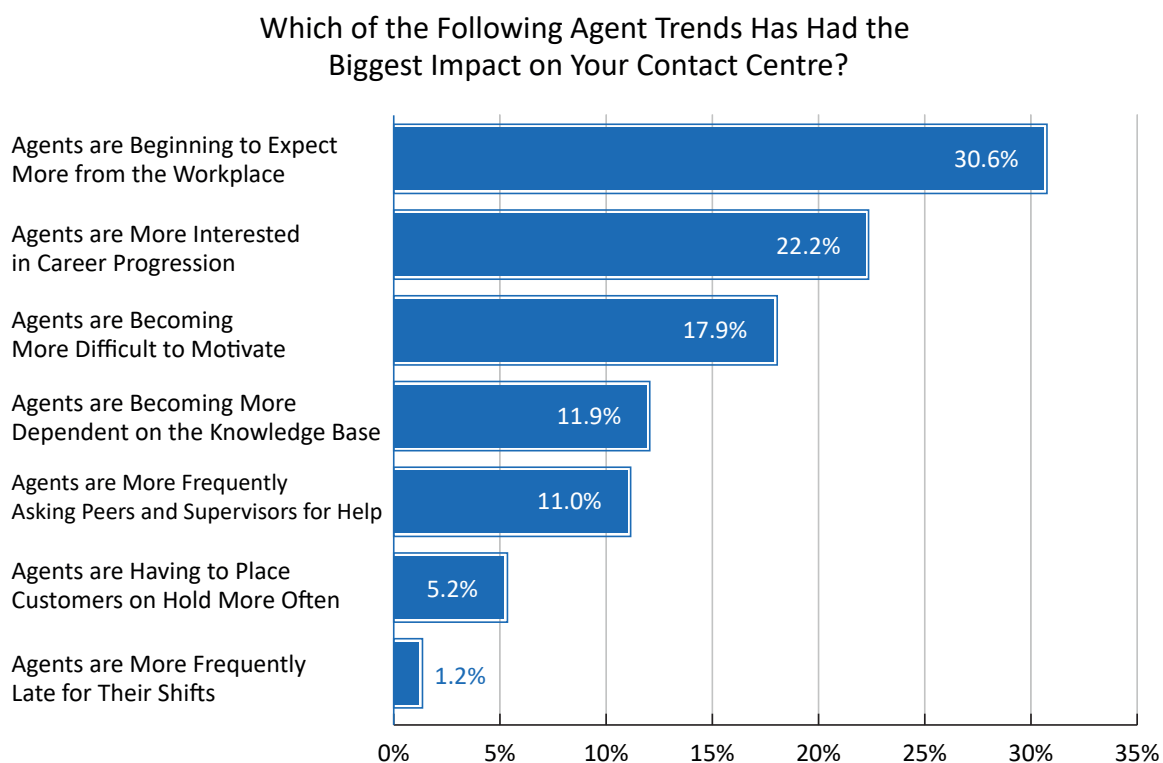
This was the second major trend causing a huge impact across the industry, with over a third of survey participants (34.1%) telling us it was the biggest customer trend impacting their organization.

New channels bring serious people, process and technology considerations – so the increased prominence of messaging apps, video and even voice assistants is giving contact centres a lot to think about.

9. Which of the Following Agent Trends Has Had the Biggest Impact on Your Contact Centre?

Agents Want More From Their Workplace

Young agents are generally not as inclined to just show up at work and get on with it. They want to enjoy their time at work and to feel that the work they do matters.



This is a good thing, because happy agents are normally more productive agents, but it does leave agents expecting more from their workplace. This is the biggest agent-related trend in 30.6% of contact centres.

To get ahead of this trend, it is important to give agents the tools that they need, demonstrate respect and show that you value the work they do. Doing this well will involve big changes to the traditional make-up of the call centre.

Agents Don't Expect to Be in Their Job Forever

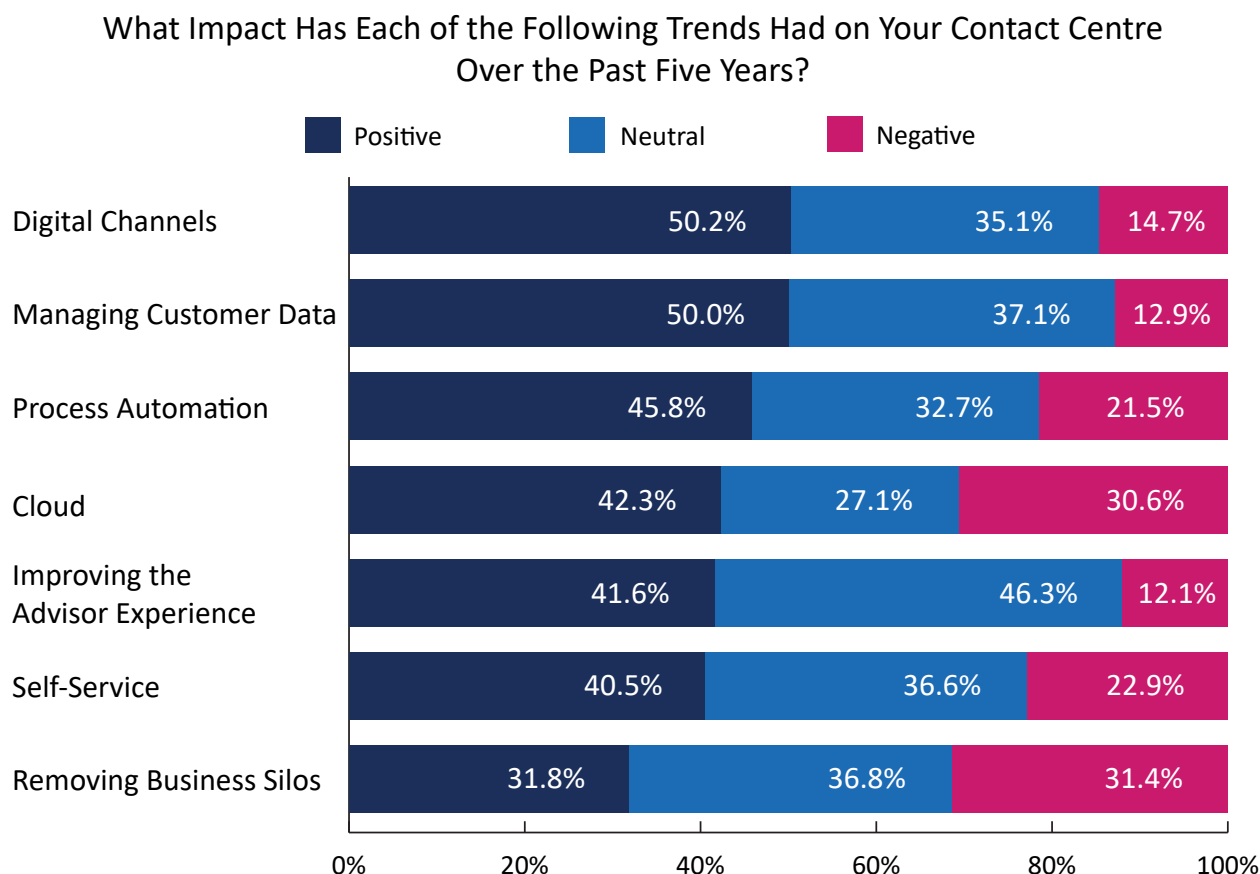
Few agents start working in the contact centre expecting to stay in that position until they retire. This makes career progression the second biggest trend impacting call centres.

It is becoming harder for contact centres to keep hold of their brightest talent, and those that do will likely spend time with agents, mapping out a progression pathway for them within the company.

10. What Impact Has Each of the Following Trends Had on Your Contact Centre Over the Past Five Years??

The Digital Revolution is Causing Chaos

Unsurprisingly, the digital revolution and the prevalence of new digital channels has had a high impact on more than half of contact centres over the past five years (50.2%).



But this is not the only major trend relating to processes and technology that has proved to be a disruptive force amongst the contact centre industry.

For example, managing data (50.0%) and process automation (45.8%) are also proving to be sources of hard work for contact centres. However, all of these trends can make a big difference to customer and agent experience – so hopefully it's all paying off.

Business Silos are Not a Major Priority for Many

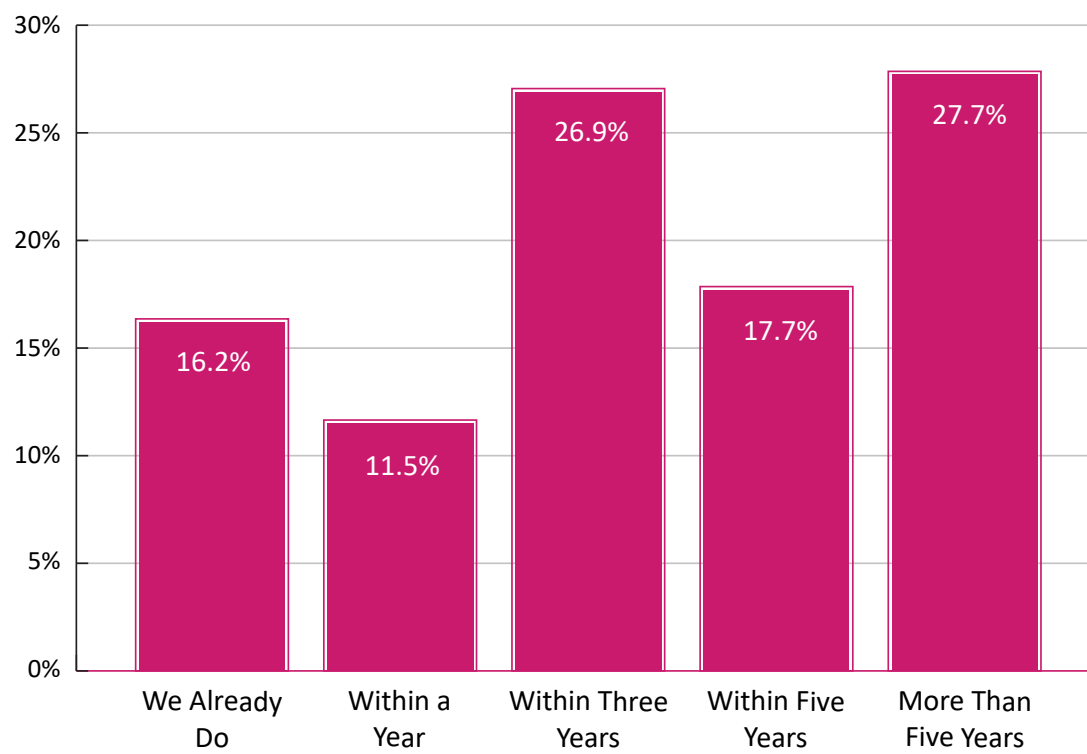
One area which has had a high impact on contact centres – but not as high as expected – is removing business silos, which features at the bottom of our chart.

11. When Do You Expect Your Contact Centre to Have Less Than 50% Voice Contacts?

Voice is Being Superseded, But Slowly

Most of our contact centre professionals are predicting that voice contacts will drop below 50% of all total contacts within five years – but we are definitely not there yet.

When do You Expect Your Contact Centre to Have Less Than 50% Voice Contacts?



While there has been a lot of hype around digital channels like live chat, messaging apps and social media – amongst others – only in 16.2% of contact centres do total digital contacts exceed voice contacts.

However, another 11.5% of contact centres are expected to get to that point by autumn 2021 and a further 26.9% of contact centres will likely reach that point by 2024.

Even by this point, however, voice will likely be the go-to channel – as most of us, no matter what generation we are in, like human support when a problem is complex and emotional.

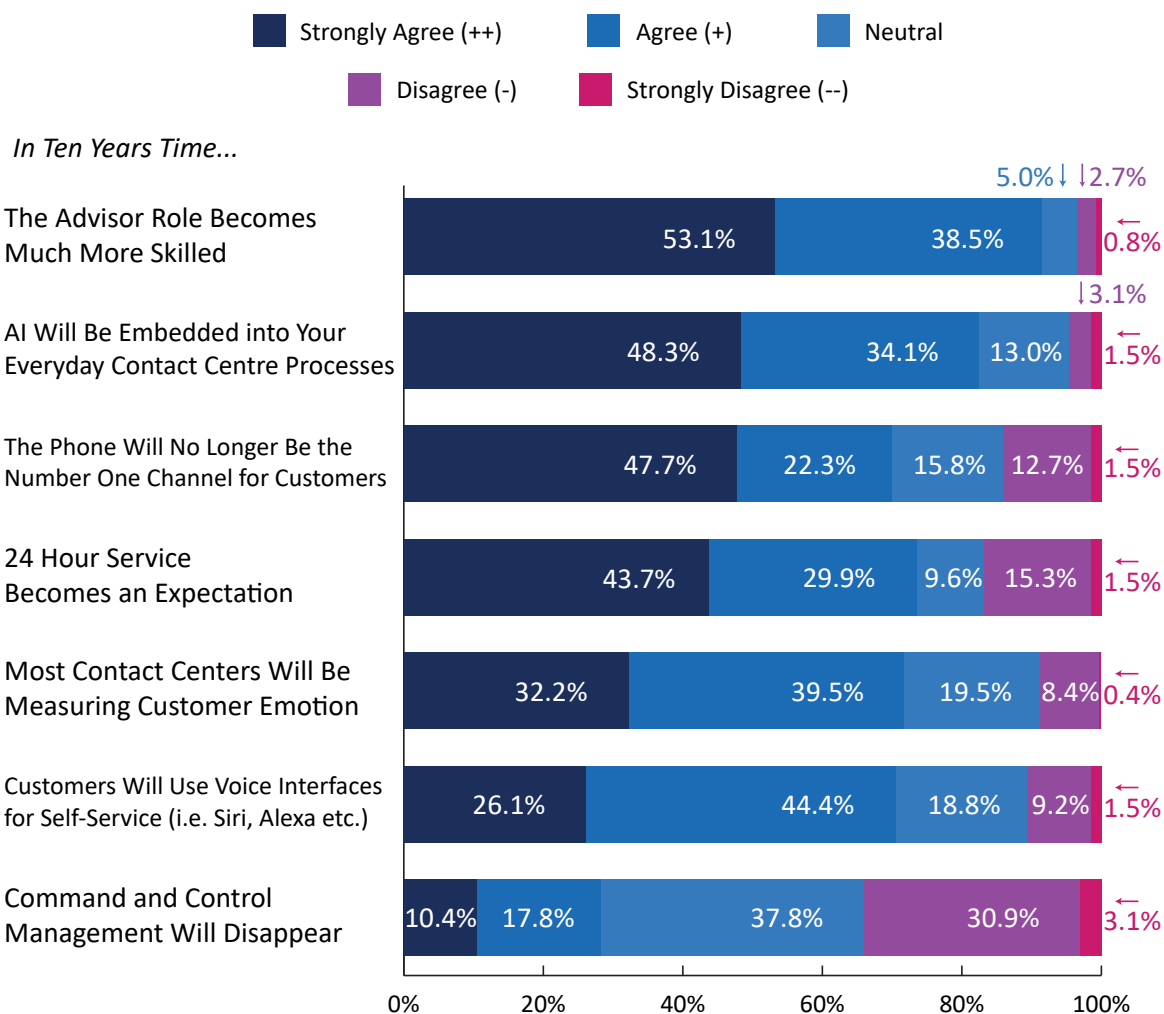
As far as digital channels go, according to our results, we must remember that it’s a marathon, not a sprint.

12. Which of the Following Contact Centre Predictions Do You Agree With?

The Future of the Contact Centre is Complex

An overwhelming 91.6% of our industry professionals believe (i.e. either “strongly agree” or “agree”) that the role of the call centre agent will require a much-enhanced skill set in ten years’ time.

Which of the Following Contact Centre Predictions Do You Agree With?



A further 82.4% of contact centres believe that AI will be embedded into everyday contact centre processes within that time period.

According to these predictions, it seems as though contact centre leaders will spend a great deal of time over the next ten years considering how AI can support agents and, potentially, vice versa.

Yet Command-and-Control Cultures Will Remain

The one prediction that most of our survey respondents did not necessarily agree with was that command-and-control management will disappear.

In fact, more respondents disagreed with this statement than agreed with it.



businesssystems

Workforce Management

The Workforce Management chapter is sponsored by Business Systems

Business Systems is an Enterprise Communications Solutions provider, enabling digital transformations for Contact Centre and public sector customers.

They specialise in three core offerings: Workforce Engagement Management, Cloud Communications and Monitoring & Compliance. Their solutions encompass Call Recording and Customer Interactions/ Feedback, Workforce Management, Quality Monitoring, Speech Analytics, Robotic Process Automation and Back Office Workforce Optimisation.

Business Systems consider every project to be unique so work closely with their customers to propose the best-fit solution, ensuring streamlined integration and deployment so they can quickly realise a fast return on their technology investment.

60% of the company's personnel operate in their Professional Services division which they pride themselves on; offering a 24 hours service facility with a 365 day support capability. Their large team of experienced technical experts are committed to providing a first-class service from multiple locations.

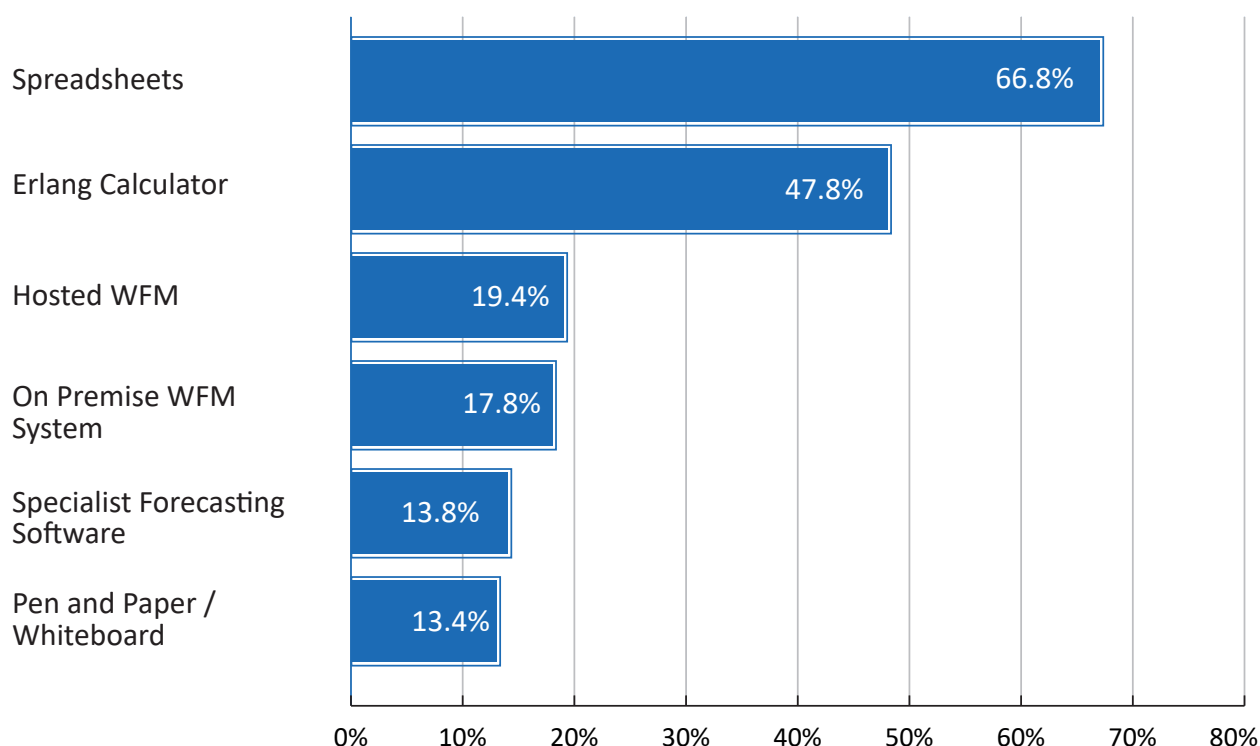
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13. What Equipment Do You Use for Forecasting and Scheduling?

Spreadsheets Still Dominate WFM

Over two-thirds of contact centres (66.8%) are still using spreadsheets for WFM. Many will use these in combination with an Erlang calculator – a tool used by almost half of contact centre operations.

What Equipment do You Use for Forecasting and Scheduling?



While many of these contact centres will be happy to continue using spreadsheets for WFM, it is very tricky for most to add flexibility to schedules, unlike in many modern WFM systems.

Perhaps most surprising is the old pen, paper and whiteboard combination, in use by 13.4% of contact centres. Old-fashioned methods do sometimes work remarkably well.

Many WFM Systems are Still On-Premise

While most agents have moved into remote working and the cloud, many WFM systems remain on-premise, indicating that many contact centres are still perfecting their work-from-home strategies.

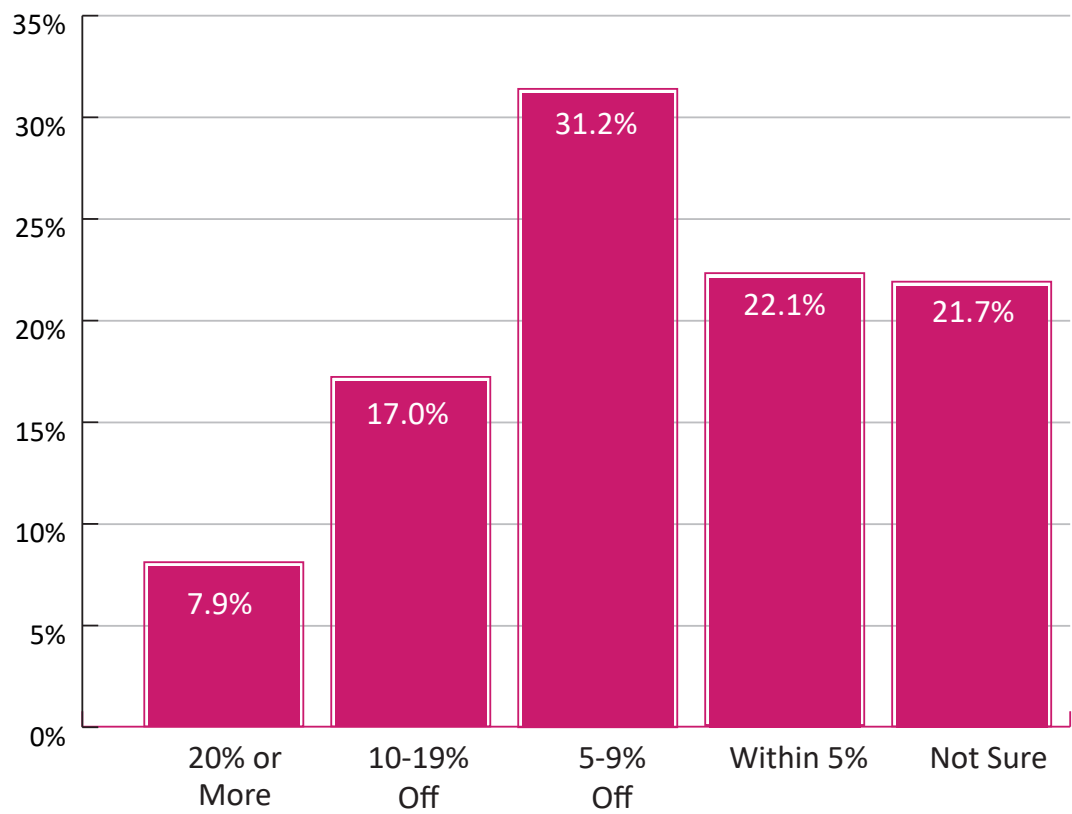
In fact, almost half of contact centres with WFM systems have left their technology on-premise, perhaps highlighting that they plan to move back to the contact centre once the pandemic ceases, either in a hybrid or “full contact centre” environment.

14. How Far Off Were Your Contact Centre Forecasts in the Past Month?

Forecast Accuracy Has Recovered

Despite a hectic start to the year for contact centres, the industry on the whole is back on track in terms of how it is predicting contact volumes.

How Far Off Were Your Contact Centre Forecasts in the Past Month?



Over half of the industry professionals that we surveyed (53.3%) reported that their contact centre forecasts were accurate to within 10% over the past month.

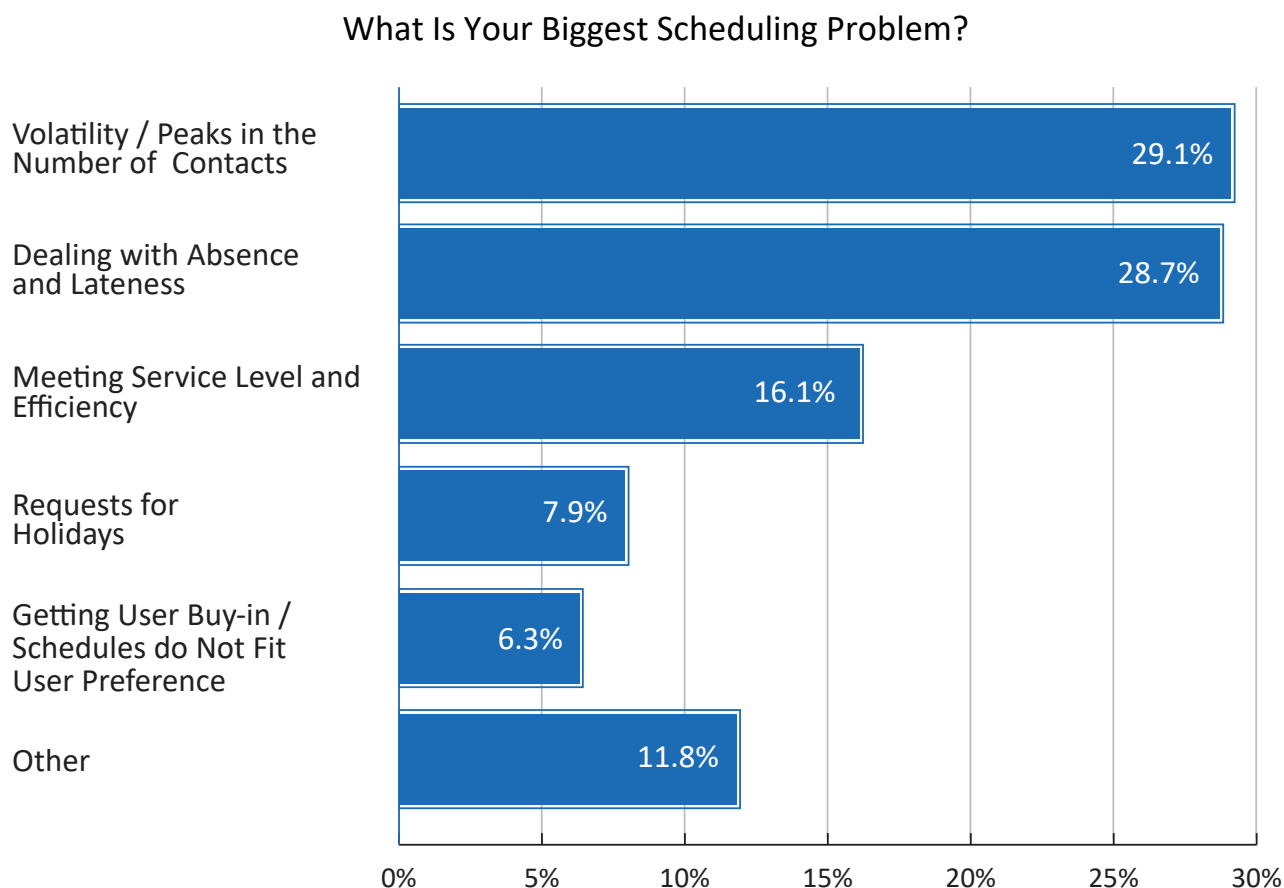
Another positive finding from this poll is that only 7.9% of contact centres had a forecast accuracy that was more than 20% off.

As the future for many companies is very hard to predict due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this is a very positive result, although these 7.9% of contact centres will likely need to experiment more with other forecasting strategies or refine their existing model.

15. What is Your Biggest Scheduling Problem?

Forecast Volatility is Causing Scheduling Chaos

The biggest challenge facing the WFM team in terms of scheduling is forecast volatility and peaks in contact volumes.



If you also consider, from the previous question, that 24.9% of contact centres recorded a forecast accuracy mismatch of above 10% last month, we can see the challenge that COVID-19 has posed to resource planners in certain organizations.

Absence and Lateness is Also a Key Problem

It seems as though the switch to remote working has not removed problems with absence and lateness in the contact centre industry.

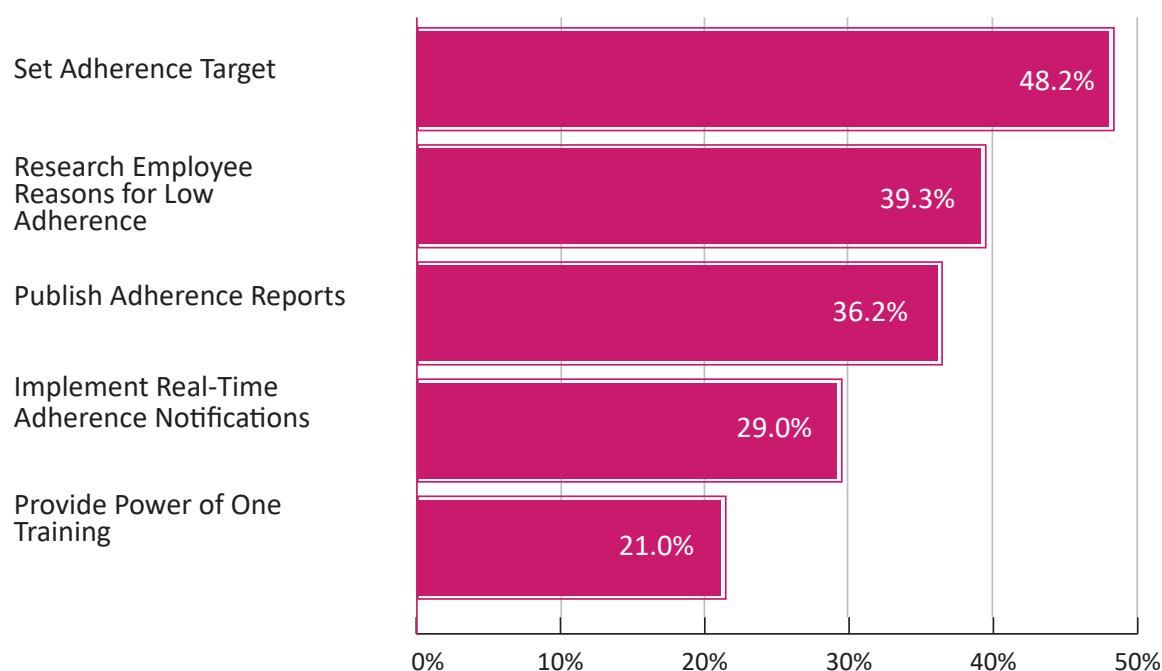
In reality, this age-old problem is still causing headaches across the industry, including for planners, with it being the biggest problem for scheduling in 28.7% of contact centres.

16. What Strategies Have You Implemented to Improve Schedule Adherence?

Contact Centres are Using Multiple Methods to Improve Schedule Adherence

It is great to see contact centres adopting a wide range of measures to improve schedule adherence, with the most popular option being to set targets for the metric – as 48.2% of contact centres do.

What Strategies Have You Implemented to Improve Schedule Adherence ?



This is a classic strategy to help educate agents on the importance of being on time in the contact centre, as is publishing adherence reports – which a further 36.2% of contact centres do.

Yet arguably the most promising finding is that 39.3% of contact centres are researching what is causing low schedule adherence in their centre and acting on the results. This is a great way to move beyond generic advice to uncovering solutions unique to you.

But Power-of-One Training Seems Undervalued

Power-of-one training can be very effective in improving schedule adherence, but it is only being coached in just over one in every five contact centres (21.0%).

This training is often run by WFM professionals, who coach agents about the difference that one absent agent has on everybody else's workload.

17. How Do Employees in Your Contact Centre Engage With Your Planning Team?

Email, Email and More Email

While we put this out to our survey participants as an open question, the same answer kept popping up time and time again: email.

However, there were also some other communication channels that were being used to connect agents with the WFM team. These included:

- WhatsApp
- Video communications
- Slack channels
- Communication platforms
- Specialist HR systems

No one likes to get bogged down in email, so the option to video call or send an instant message to a planner can be a refreshing change.

Also, having a specialized Slack channel or communication platform can work well. Agents can use these to swap shifts with one another, and the WFM team can monitor them instead of responding to every individual request.

Team Leaders are Acting as Middle Men

A surprising number of contact centres reported that agents have no direct communication with the WFM team and that all of their requests go through the team leader.

The WFM team can learn a lot by trading places with leaders and taking on their task – so they can better communicate their key messages with the team. Or they could just automate the process...

There are Also Specialist WFM Systems, of Course

A few of our survey participants told us that their agents can engage with the WFM team through a specialist app, on both their desktops and mobile.

These sophisticated apps allow agents to easily trade shifts, update availability, call in late or sick and ask for holiday, all while seeing how this impacts the contact centre operations.



Speech Analytics

The Speech Analytics chapter is sponsored by Voci Technologies.

Voci Technologies offers an advanced AI-driven speech-to-text engine that powers the future of customer voice analytics.

The technology vendor is committed to delivering innovative solutions that enable you to develop voice data applications designed for the contact centre.

Its deep machine-learning speech technologies feature open APIs that integrate easily with multiple audio sources, telephony providers and call recording technologies.

Voci Technologies prides itself on providing excellent transcription accuracy with the lowest total operating cost available in the market.

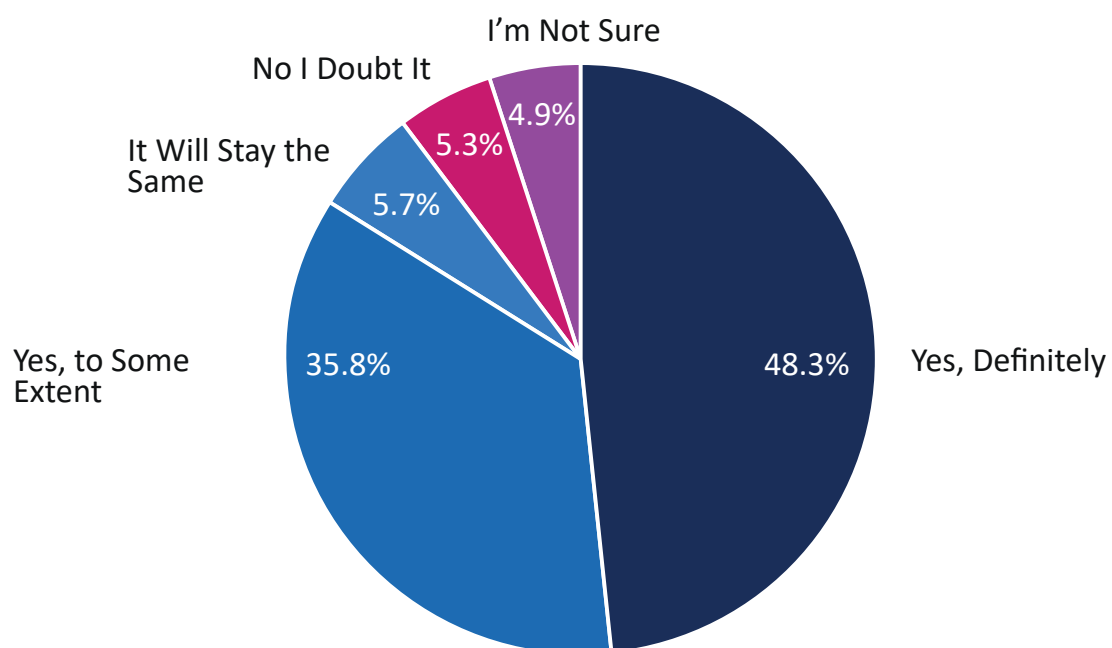
www.vocitec.com

18. Will the Take-up of Speech Analytics in the Contact Centre Industry Increase Over the Next Five to Ten Years?

The Take-Up of Speech Analytics is Set to Continue to Rise

The vast majority of our contact centre professionals (84.1%) believe that the take-up of speech analytics will continue to grow over the next five to ten years.

Will the Take-up of Speech Analytics in the Contact Centre Industry Increase Over the Next Five or Ten Years?



In fact, the majority of this 84.1% were absolute in their response, with more answering “yes, definitely” than “yes, to some extent”.

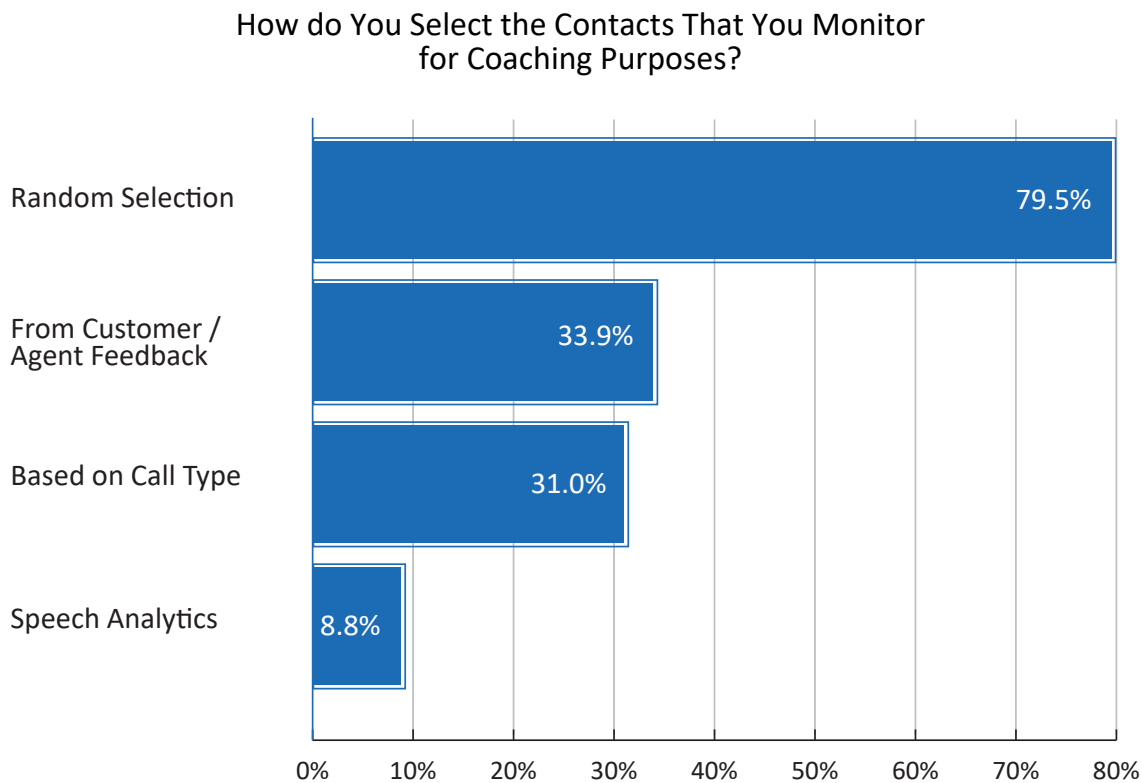
This would fit the growing trend that has seen the uptake of speech analytics grow significantly from 9.2% of contact centres implementing the technology in 2016 to 21.4% in 2020. ([question 3](#))

However, despite the technology's strong progress within the call centre industry, some do doubt that it will become “mainstream” before 2030.

19. How Do You Select the Contacts That You Monitor for Coaching Purposes?

Old-School Call-Selection Methods Reign Supreme

Almost four in every five contact centres (79.5%) are using random selection to select the contacts that they monitor for coaching purposes.



The fact that many more contact centres are doing this than using feedback to target calls or targeting different call types is a slight concern – indicating that many contact centres are basing coaching on “pot luck” alone.

This indicates that some operations are putting a lot of thought into how they can maximize their time, by analysing the contacts that provide the best sources for learning for their agents.

Speech Analytics is Being Underutilized

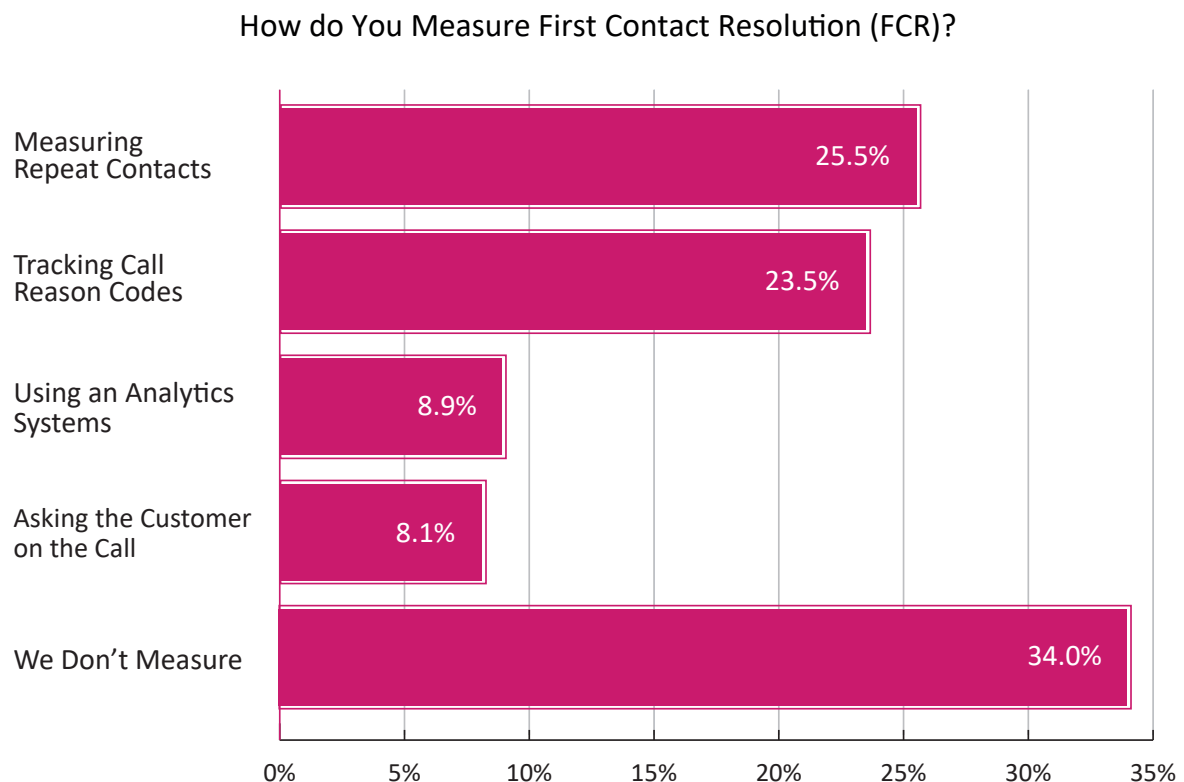
If only 8.8% of operations are using speech analytics to select calls, this would suggest that many organizations are not deploying their system to support manual call centre coaching. This seems strange, as this is an area in which speech analytics can deliver great value.

However, with many contact centres having only recently installed the technology in the past couple of years, it seems that some are still finding their feet with their systems.

20. How Do You Measure First Contact Resolution (FCR)?

Repeat Contacts is the Most Common Method (Controversially!)

25.5% of contact centres say that they measure FCR through measuring repeat contacts – making it the most widespread method of calculating the metric.



But you have to be careful with this because you can never really know if the customer is calling about the same issue or something else. There is also a chance that they will call back so far in the future that it's considered a separate issue.

With that being said, some of the other ways of calculating FCR in the chart are frowned on. For example, if we ask the customer on the call and they indicate that their issue has been resolved, it is still possible that they will discover a problem at a later date and call back. That would then be treated as a new contact.

Tracking Call Reason Codes

The second most popular method, tracking call reason codes, will be more effective, and using an analytics system is an even more effective method.

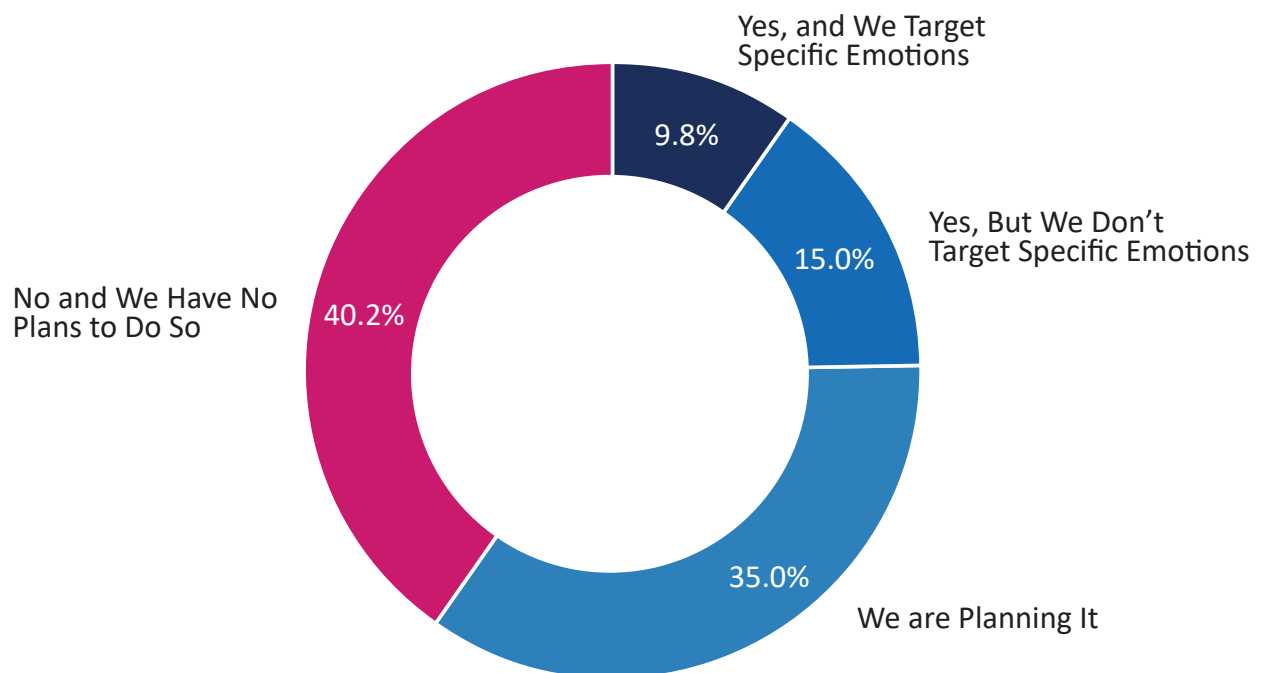
But, as a final word of warning, from all of the methods presented in the chart, we can see that benchmarking FCR externally is an almost impossible task. So it's probably best to avoid that one.

21. Do You Measure Customer Emotion / Sentiment in Your Contact Centre?

Almost a Quarter of Contact Centres are Measuring Customer Emotion

24.8% of contact centres are now measuring customer emotion, with many going one step further by targeting specific emotions.

Do You Measure Customer Emotion / Sentiment in Your Contact Centre?



To target specific emotions this 9.8% of contact centres will likely be using a method called “sentiment analysis”, which is made possible by speech analytics systems.

Many organizations define which emotions drive value for them, and these contact centres will likely be tracking how good a job they are doing in delivering experiences that hit those emotions.

Customer Emotion is a Metric on the Rise

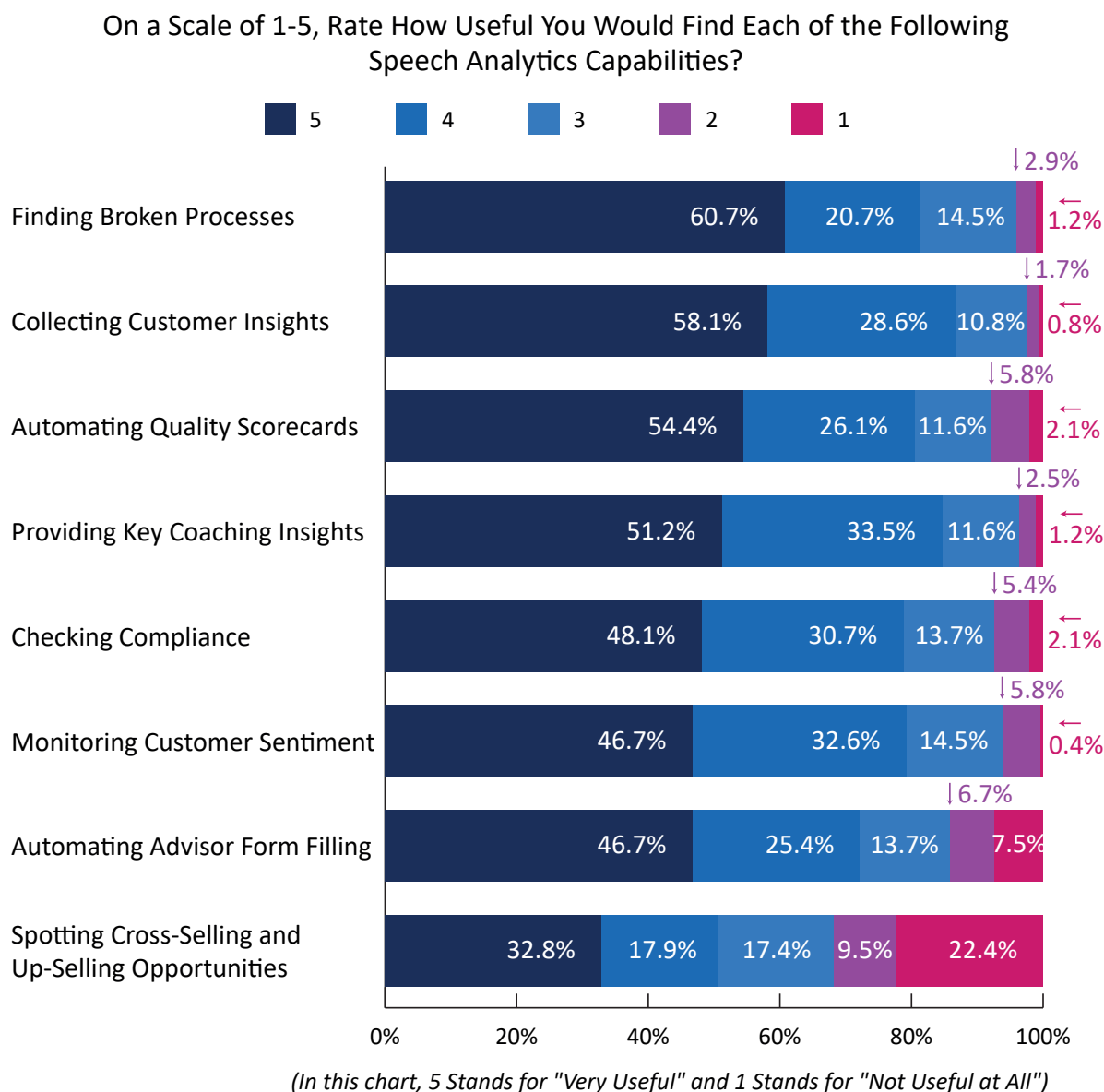
While the percentage of contact centres that are not measuring customer emotions is still well above those that do, that could well soon change. From the chart, we can see that over a third of contact centres are planning to introduce the metric in the future (35.0%).

However, 40.2% of organizations confirmed that they have no plans to introduce a customer emotion measure into their contact centre.

22. On a Scale of 1–5 (Where 5 Is Very Useful), Rate How Useful You Would Find Each of the Following Speech Analytics Capabilities?

Speech Analytics Has Many Useful Capabilities

The chart below shows that speech analytics can provide many capabilities that over half of our industry professionals believe would be “very useful” in their contact centre.



Unsurprisingly, the ability of a speech analytics system to find broken processes came out on top, especially considering that 43.3% of contact centre professionals believe that broken processes are a significant barrier to running their ideal contact centre – as found in [question 5](#).

The other three speech analytics capabilities that would be considered “very useful” by half of our survey participants were: collecting customer insights (58.1%), automating quality scorecards (54.4%) and providing key coaching insights (51.2%).



Cloud

The Cloud chapter is sponsored by Vonage.

Vonage (formerly NewVoiceMedia) helps enterprises use fully integrated unified communications, contact centre and programmable communications solutions via APIs.

True to its roots as a technology disruptor, the company has embraced technology to transform businesses to collaborate more productively and engage their customers more effectively across all communications channels.

With the Vonage Contact Center, organizations get a platform that delivers proven performance, reliability and availability.

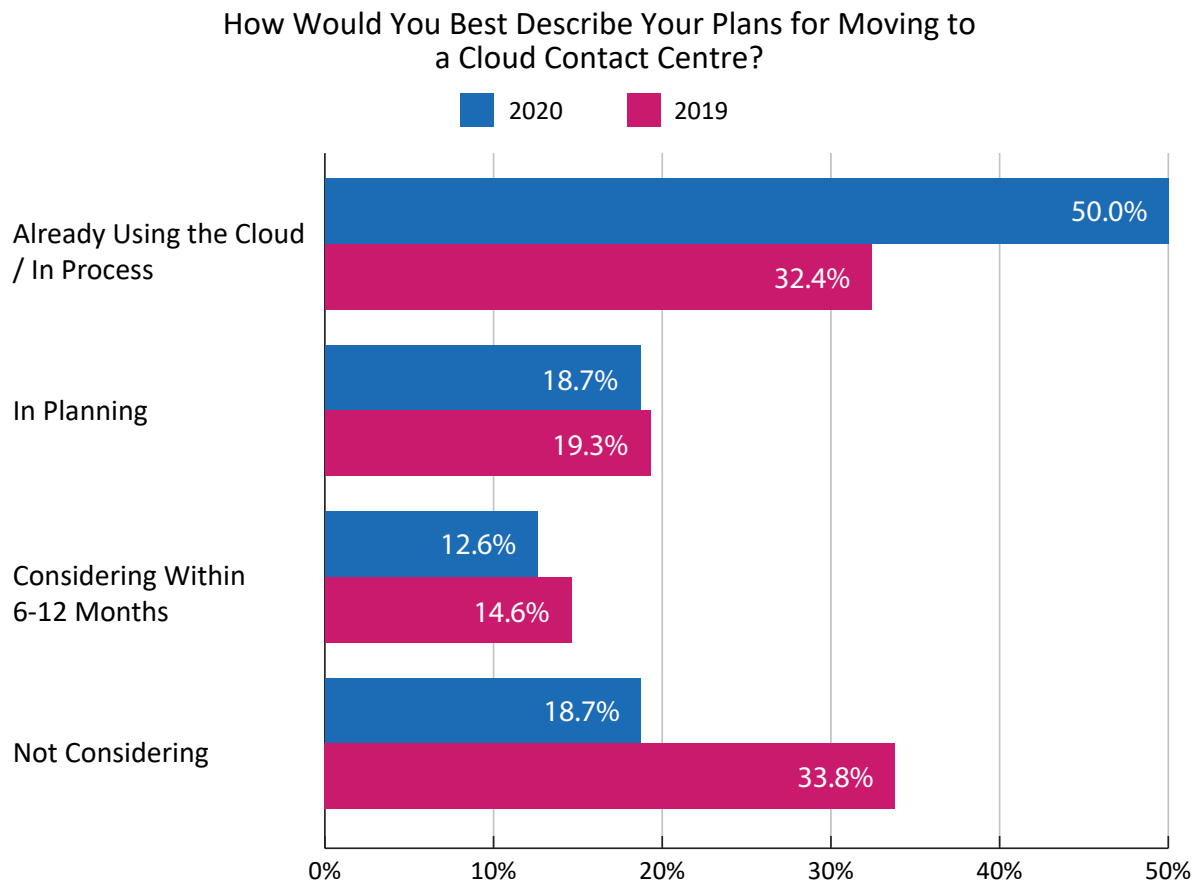
Vonage's cloud-based solution also secures customer data, complies with the standards and regulations that matter most and enables on-demand scalability.

www.vonage.co.uk

23. How Would You Best Describe Your Plans for Moving to a Cloud Contact Centre?

Covid-19 Has Created a Clamour for the Cloud

Half of all contact centres (50.0%) have now moved to the cloud, a sharp increase from the figure of 32.4% that was recorded in our previous survey in 2019.



The switch to remote working is no doubt the catalyst behind this sharp rise not only in cloud installations but also in cloud technology.

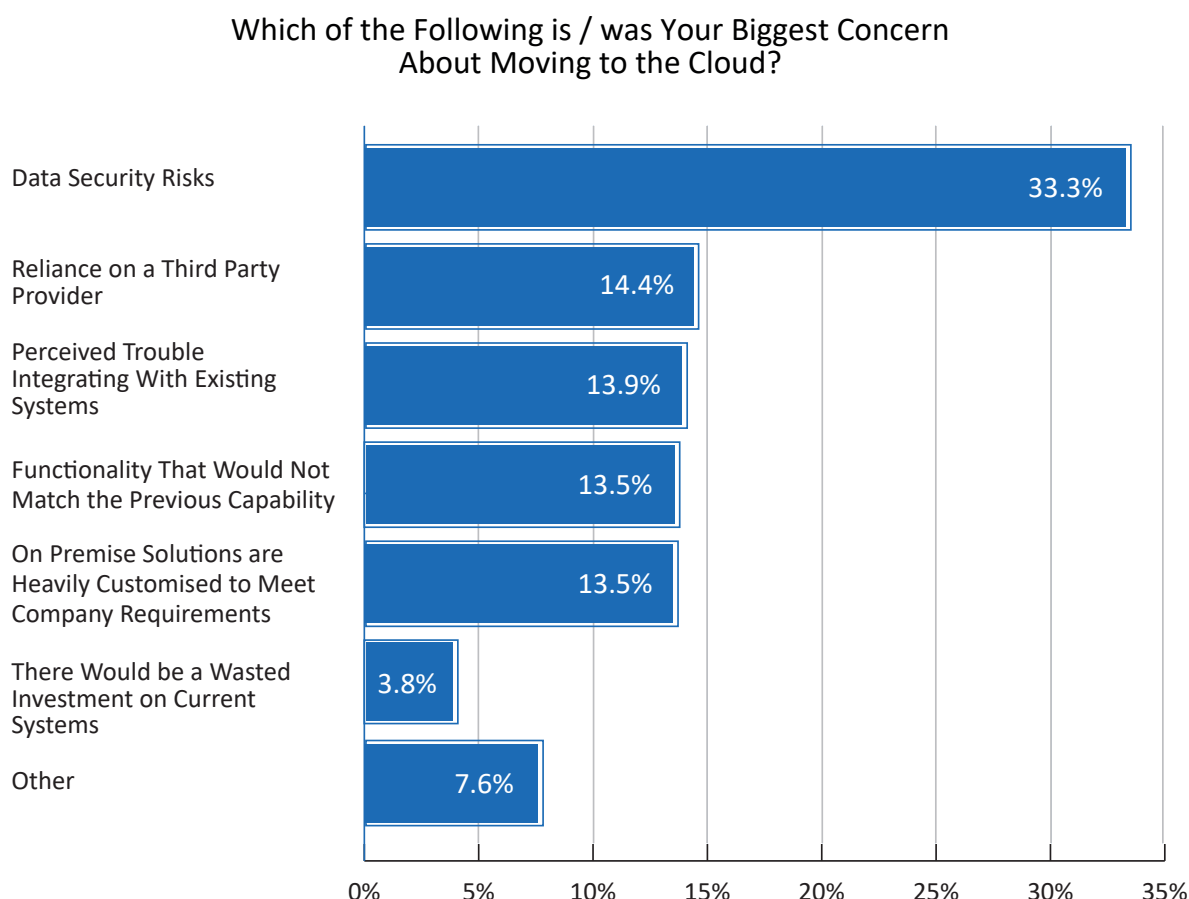
This growth in interest can be seen in the statistic that last year 32.0% of contact centres said that they were “not considering” moving to the cloud. This figure has almost halved in less than 12 months, all the way down to 18.7%.

However, considering that it is much easier to set up remote working in the cloud, many will be surprised that only 50.0% of contact centres have migrated to the cloud.

24. Which of the Following is/was Your Biggest Concern About Moving to the Cloud?

There are Multiple Concerns About Cloud Migrations

While data security risks (33.3%) seem to be the industry's biggest concern about moving to the cloud, there are a number of other factors that worry our industry professionals.



Common other factors include being reliant on a third-party provider (14.4%), perceived trouble integrating with existing systems (13.9%), functionality concerns (13.5%) and having to let go of heavily customized on-premise solutions (13.5%).

Other Cloud Concerns

The major concerns have been covered in the chart above, but there were others that 7.6% of our survey participants told us about. These included:

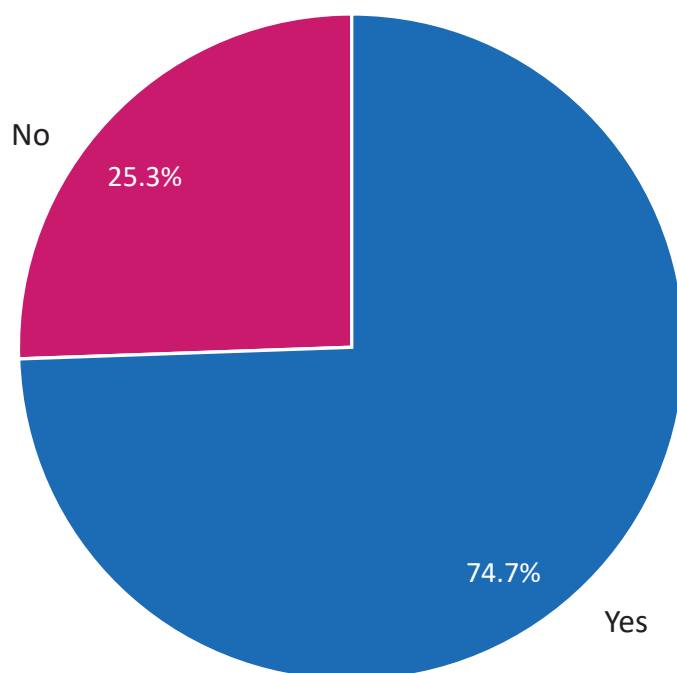
- Getting IT on board and understanding the technology
- Senior management buy-in
- Costs of installing new systems

25. Do You Believe That a Cloud Contact Centre Improves Customer Experience?

Most Believe That Cloud is the Way Forward

Almost three-quarters of contact centre professionals (74.7%) believe that cloud better complements improved customer experience than on-premise systems.

Do You Believe That a Cloud Contact Centre Improves Customer Experience?



However, with cloud being such a quickly growing technology, many might be surprised that 25.3% of respondents did not believe that the technology could enhance customer experience.

Perhaps this is because contact centres rushed to the cloud in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and not yet had the chance to utilize its full capabilities.

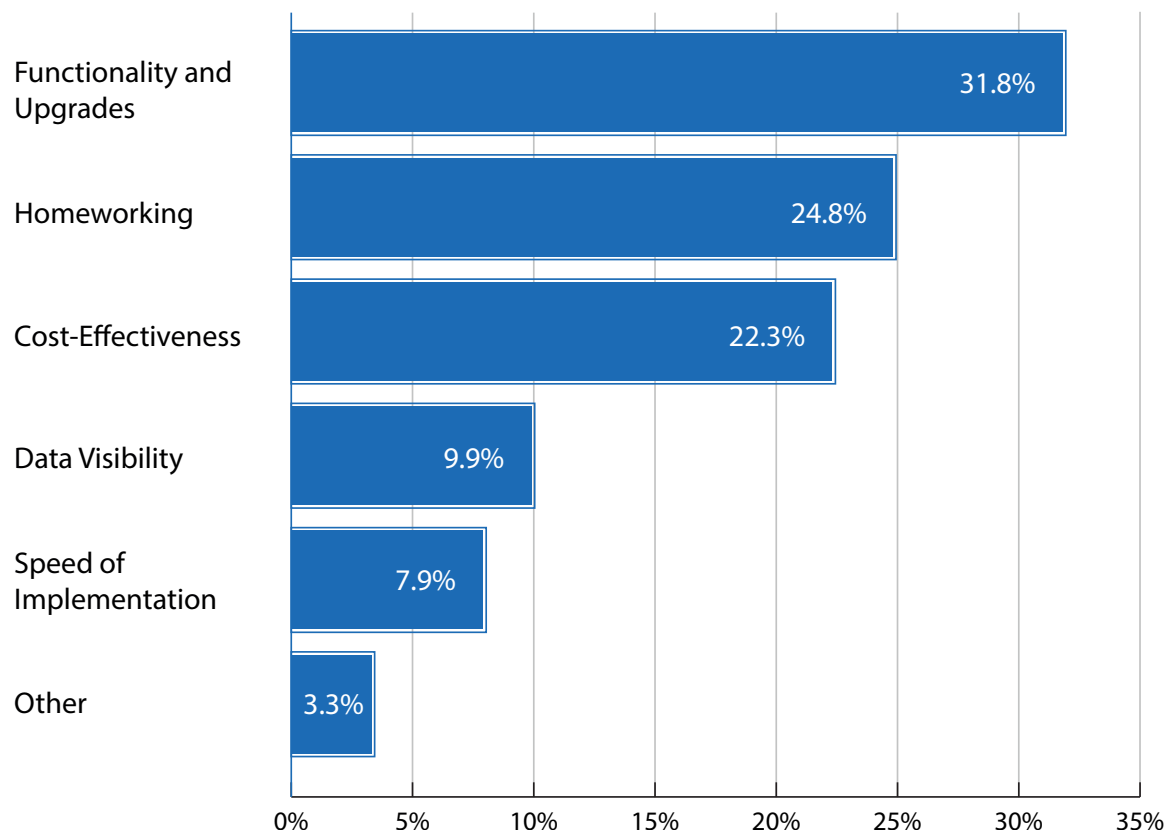
In time, we would expect the 74.7% figure to increase as the technology continues to develop and contact centres get to grips with its functionality, easy upgrades and cost-effectiveness.

26. What Do You Think Is the Greatest Benefit of a Cloud-Based Contact Centre?

Cloud Functionality and Upgrades is a Winner

Not only does the installation and configuration of on-premise solutions take a lot of time but trying to upgrade is no walk in the park either.

What do You Think is the Greatest Benefit of a Cloud Based Contact Centre?



Doing away with this never-ending struggle is therefore unsurprisingly seen as the biggest benefit of cloud technology – with functionality and upgrades (31.8%) taking the top spot in our poll.

This even comes above homeworking (24.8%), which has been the theme of the year, and – within that – cloud's ability to offer multi-site capacity and hybrid working for the future.

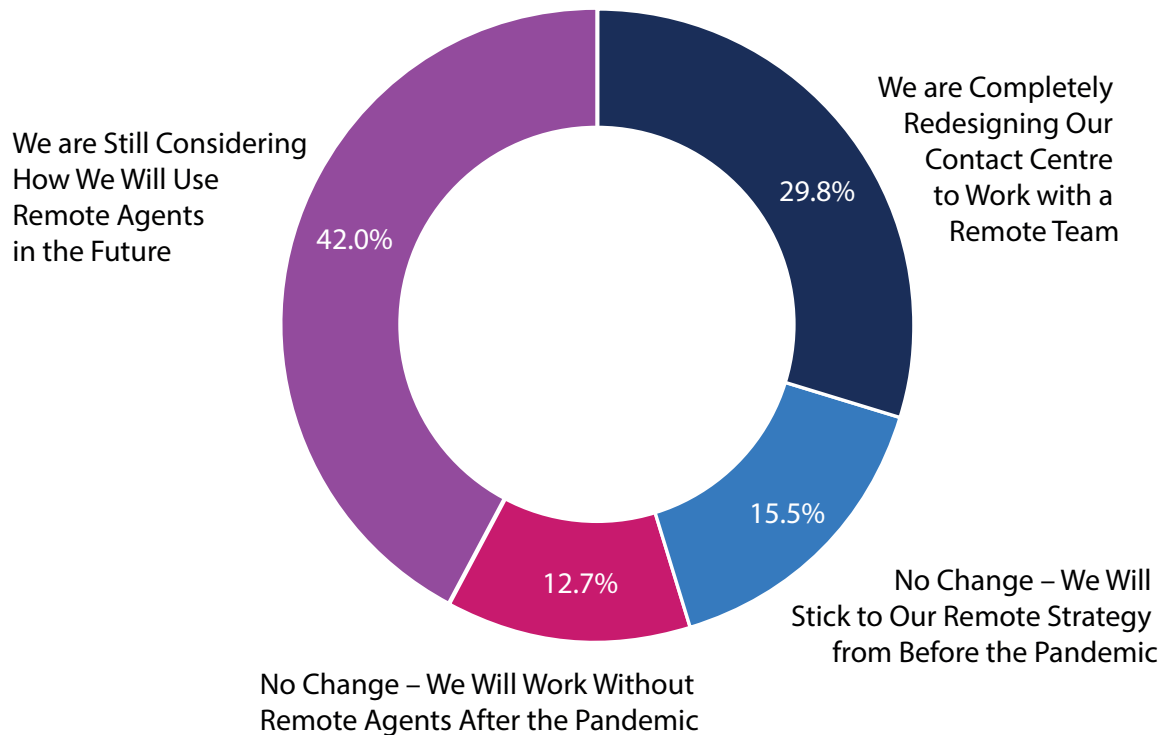
Some other key benefits noted by our readers included: cost-effectiveness (22.3%), data visibility (9.9%) and speed of implementation (7.9%).

27. Has the Recent Pandemic Changed Your View on Agents Working Remotely?

Only 12.7% of Contact Centres Will Go Back to No Remote Working

Little more than one in every nine contact centres have confirmed that they will work without remote agents after the pandemic.

Has the Recent Pandemic Changed Your View on Agents Working Remotely?



While 42.0% of contact centres have not yet confirmed their plans for how they will use remote agents in the future, these statistics will be very encouraging for homeworking's many enthusiasts.

In addition to that, 29.8% of contact centres are currently redesigning their future plans to ensure that their operation works with remote agents – highlighting that they have had some success in their transition to remote working.

A further 15.5%, who were already ahead of the game, will stick to the remote strategy that they had in place before the pandemic.

One Final Question....

28. If There was One Thing That You Could Improve in Your Contact Centre, What Would It Be?

As you might expect, many of the responses to this question included investing in new technology, better communicating with the wider department and obtaining more budget.

Yet there were many other intriguing suggestions, which included:

Improving Remote Work

- Improve connectivity for work-from-home
- Boost schedule adherence rates for remote team
- Develop a new communication system and feedback loop
- Enhance relationships between agents and senior managers
- Improve onboarding process for new remote agents
- Offer more social activities for remote workers
- Hire more agents to share workload

Better Supporting the Team

- Arrange more fun activities for agents
- Build a proper reward programme
- Increase employee engagement and buy-in of processes
- Establish well-being as key business priority
- Improve the ratio of agents to coaches
- Make agent tools easier to use
- Carry out more training and coaching
- Offer great career-progression paths
- Simplify operational processes

Customer Service Strategy

- Align process with other departments
- Create a more personalized experience
- Engage emotionally with customers
- Provide greater consistency in this period of uncertainty
- Improve service levels
- Reduce call abandon rate
- Unify culture between support areas and business operators

Developing Contact Centre Management

- Refocus senior management priorities
- Improve allocation of resources
- Develop better leadership cohesion
- Boost procedural adherence
- Gain buy-in from stakeholders
- Develop customer retention strategies
- Enhance communication between the quality team and operations
- Improve leadership skills
- Improve recruitment strategy
- Move to a fully remote contact centre
- Perfect our staffing levels
- Reduce contact centre attrition

Implementing New Technology

- Apply more process automation
- Integrate the knowledge base better
- Create a single customer view
- Enhance agent desktops
- Fully integrate all customer channels
- Fully integrate the CRM
- Implement a WFM system with shrinkage reporting
- Implement screen-pop
- Improve self-service options
- Introduce a knowledge management system
- Introduce skill-based routing
- Install an omnichannel solution
- Install speech analytics
- Invest in quality monitoring tools
- Reduce manual manipulation of data
- Simplify contact centre reporting



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Vonage (formerly NewVoiceMedia) helps enterprises use fully integrated unified communications, contact centre and programmable communications solutions via APIs.

