EXCEPTIONAL
CUSTOMER
SERVICE

How Contact Centres Are Delivering Exceptional Customer Service

(2016 Edition)

Find out how your contact centre compares
to the rest of the industry...

A Call Centre Helper Research Paper

Sponsored by

Genesys   Netcall   NICE sabio

Acknowledgements

What We Did

Throughout March 2016, Call Centre Helper readers were invited to take part in an 'Are You Delivering Exceptional Customer Service?' survey, run in partnership with Netcall, NICE, Genesys and Sabio.

The aim of the survey was to capture a snapshot view of exactly what contact centres are doing to meet the ever-increasing demands of the modern customer.
Over 350 contact centre professionals took part, and we're delighted to share the results with you.

This report provides valuable insight into levels of agent empowerment across the industry, as well as benchmarking figures on agent-to-Team Leader ratios and how long it takes most organisations to respond to a customer complaint.

The findings also look at other key areas of customer service, including cost-per-call, commonly used metrics and how contact centres are capturing the Voice of the Customer.

Executive Summary

Delivering an exceptional customer experience requires the core elements of any contact centre to work effectively alongside each other. These influential areas include customer touchpoints, technology, metrics, processes, and agent management.

An in-depth look at how the industry is performing in each of these areas has revealed that some contact centres are making great strides in delivering exceptional customer service, but there is still some way to go before this becomes the norm.

17% of contact centres schedule training once a week

It has been really inspiring to see 17% of contact centres putting the customer at the heart of what they do, by scheduling training for their customer service teams once a week.

With a further 42% scheduling training once a month, the industry is really showing signs of a dynamic and adaptable approach to training.

The majority of the industry has embraced a multi-skilled workforce

It is also compelling to see that around 80% of contact centres are already realising the benefits of a multi-skilled workforce – with half of the industry multi-skilling "nearly all" of their agents.

18% set aside more than one day each month for problem-solving activity

Contact centre professionals are also making time to strategise and problem-solve by scheduling time to step away from "firefighting" on the floor.

The findings revealed that 34% set aside 2–4 hours per month, while 17% set aside one day, and a further 18% set aside more than one day each month for problem-solving activity.

More than half are still reluctant to empower their front line

Unfortunately, the findings also showed that all-too-familiar problems are still rife across the industry.

More than half of contact centres are not currently empowering their agents, and have no plans to do so, supporting the common assumption that contact centres often treat their frontline agents like children.

Management buy-in is still a huge barrier to improvements

Almost half of industry professionals also stated that they struggle to gain board approval when trying to improve their contact centre or customer experience – with 18% "always" struggling and a further 21% "mostly" struggling.

Additional findings revealed that management buy-in was the single biggest barrier to cloud adoption – with 32% stating this as the reason they haven't yet transitioned to a cloud solution.

Only 15% of the industry know their customers' lifetime value

Only 54 of the 351 people who took part in the survey were able to answer the question "what is your customer lifetime value?".

This suggests that the industry has yet to embrace the power of taking the customer's life time value into the board room in support of a business case – and could explain why many contact centres are still failing to deliver an exceptional customer experience.

How Are Agents Supporting the Delivery of Exceptional Customer Service?

What percentage of your agents are multi-skilled?

Multi-skilling can increase employee engagement and decrease response times

With customers now expecting to contact an organisation using their channel of choice, it has become increasingly important for agents to be multi-skilled.

A multi-skilled workforce can better enable contact centres to manage peaks in demand – and decrease response times – by switching agents between channels. This strategy is also thought to increase employee engagement by keeping the agent role varied and interesting.

Implemented properly, both of these benefits can have a positive impact on the overall customer experience.

The majority of the industry have embraced a multi-skilled workforce

It is compelling to see that around 80% of contact centres are already realising the benefits of a multi-skilled workforce – with half of the industry multi-skilling "nearly all" of their agents.

What percentage of your agents are multi-skilled?
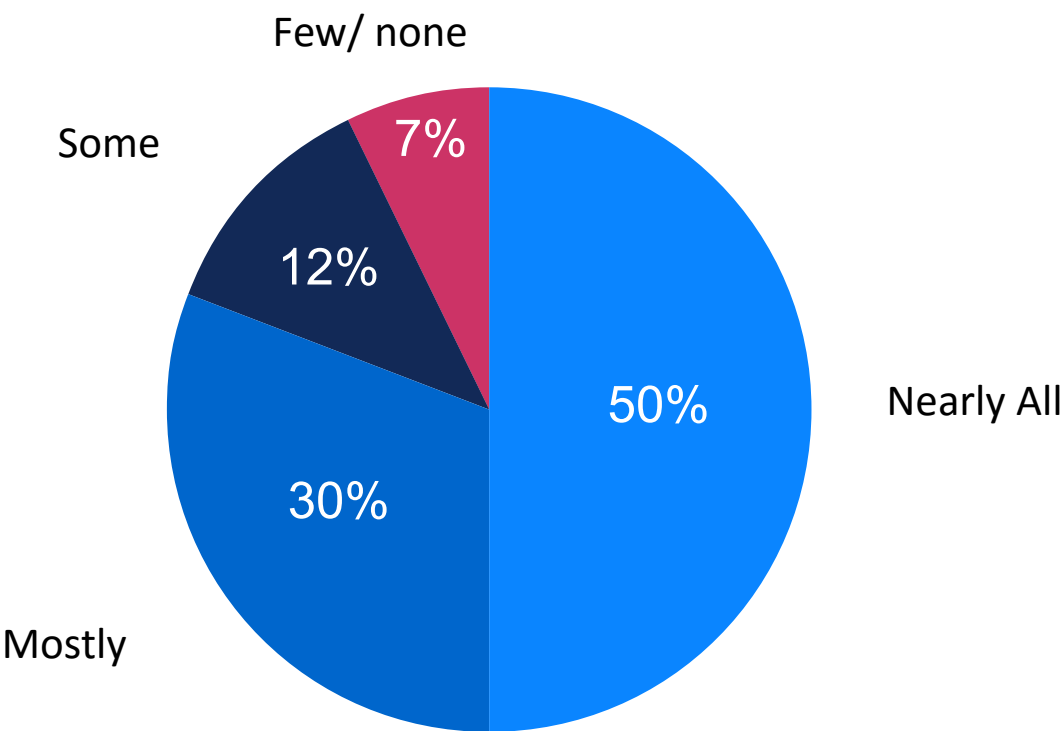
However, a number of contact centres have yet to catch on to the trend – with 12% stating that only "some" of their agents are multi-skilled, and a further 7% stating that "few or none" of their agents are multi-skilled.

How many agents do your Team Leaders look after?

A definitive answer doesn't exist in the contact centre industry

Good agent–Team Leader relationships have the power to boost employee engagement and reduce churn, while poorer ones could see you replacing whole teams every few months.

Despite so much being at stake, there seems to be no strong agreement across the industry as to a definitive agent-to-Team Leader ratio.

There is a wide disparity between different organisations

What is most surprising in these findings is the extent of the disparity between different contact centres.

On average, how many agents does a Team Leader look after?

Average (Median) = 10   Lower Quartile = 8   Upper Quartile = 15

Range	Percentage
0 to 5	11.2%
6 to 8	19.2%
9 to 10	22.2%
11 to 12	13.6%
13 to 15	16.6%
16 to 20	12.7%
21 to 25	2.1%
25+	2.4%
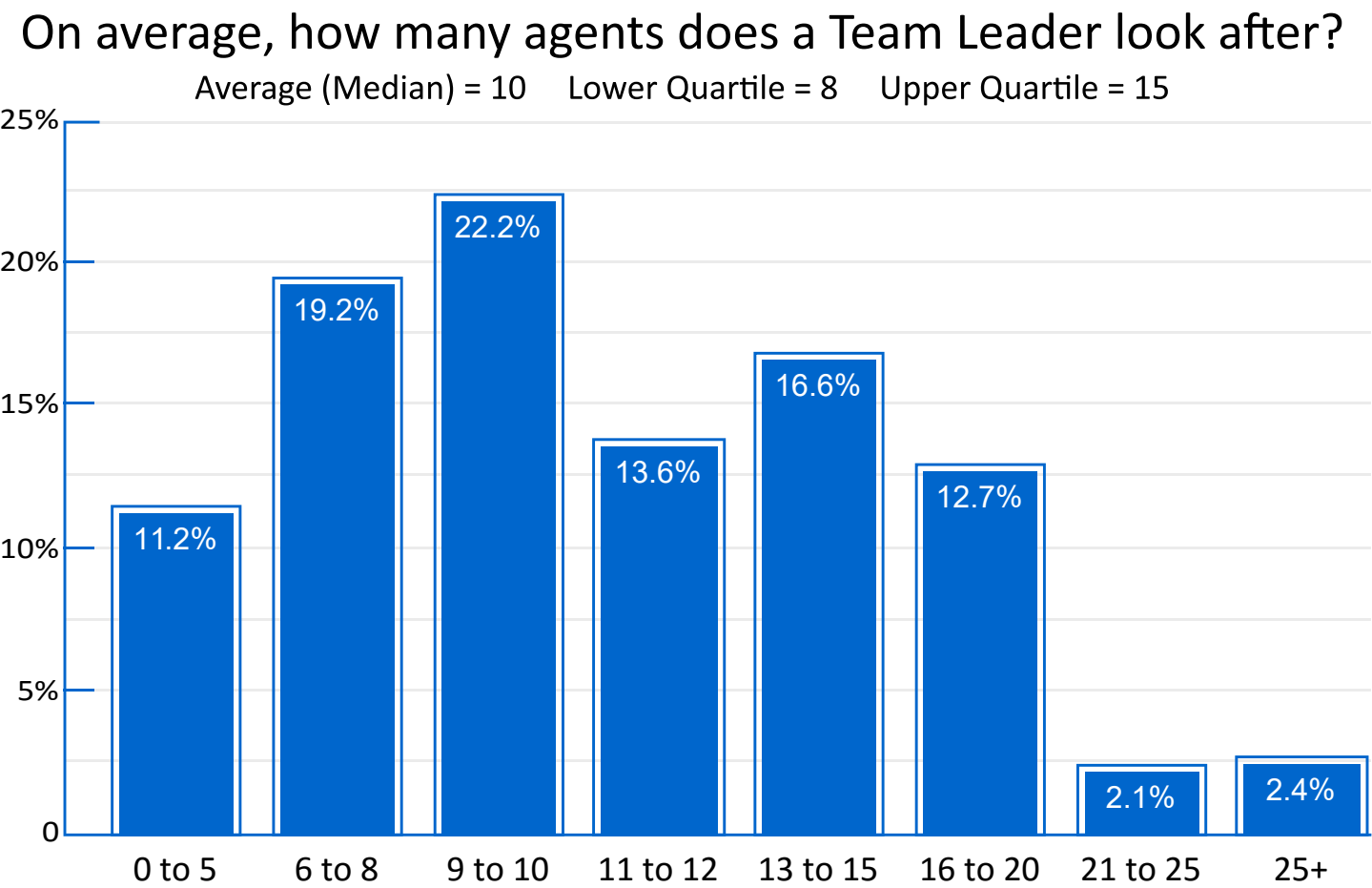
Some industry professionals reported an agent-to-Team Leader ratio of below 6:1, while others reported ratios of 25+:1 – a massive 19-head difference!

This sharp disparity was evident even when comparing the lower and upper quartiles of the data, which showed a difference of 7 agents.

Exceptionally small or large organisations may be able to support bigger ratios

Given that the median average of the data was revealed as a 10:1 ratio, it is easy to draw assumptions that those operating with a 25+:1 ratio must be doing something wrong.

Yet the size of an organisation could be a contributing factor to these findings.

For example, in larger organisations with bigger Quality Monitoring and Training teams, there may be less need for one-to-one support from the Team Leader.

At the other end of the spectrum, an organisation of perhaps only 25 employees may also not see an inherent need for multiple Team Leaders on the floor.

How do you measure agent performance?

Measuring agent performance against KPIs is the most common

The vast majority of contact centres measure agent performance "against KPIs to optimise skills-based routing" – with 69% of industry professionals stating this as their preference.

How do you measure agent performance?

Against KPIs to optimise skills-based routing	69 %
Compare quality scores with operational performance	55 %
Engagement in conjunction with customer satisfaction data and surveys	37 %
Calculate our joined-up performance manually	20 %
We do not link outcomes based on levels of performance	8 %

Contact centres are combining multiple sources to gain performance insight

Combining data sources also proved to be a popular method for measuring agent performance in the contact centre.

This is evident in the 55% of professionals who stated that they "compare quality scores with operational performance", and the 37% who stated a preference for "engagement in conjunction with customer satisfaction data and surveys".

This highlights an industry focus on delivering a quality customer experience.

20% of contact centres are still relying on manual methods

The findings also revealed that 20% of contact centres are still using manual methods for reviewing agent performance.

This suggests that there is room for many to embrace the latest performance-management tools, and identify key areas to further improve the customer experience.

Are your agents empowered to offer a refund or send an apology gift without escalating the call to a supervisor?

A third of contact centres already empower agents to issue refunds

Empowering agents to issue refunds and send apology gifts can have a positive impact on employee engagement, as well as free up supervisors and other senior staff to drive improvements in the wider business.

It can also have a positive impact on the customer experience, as agents won't have to put an upset customer on hold while they gain approval.

Are your agents empowered to offer a refund or send an apology gift without escalating the call to a supervisor?

Can refund more than £20 — 15%
Can refund less than £20 — 20%
Working on it — 13%
No — 52%
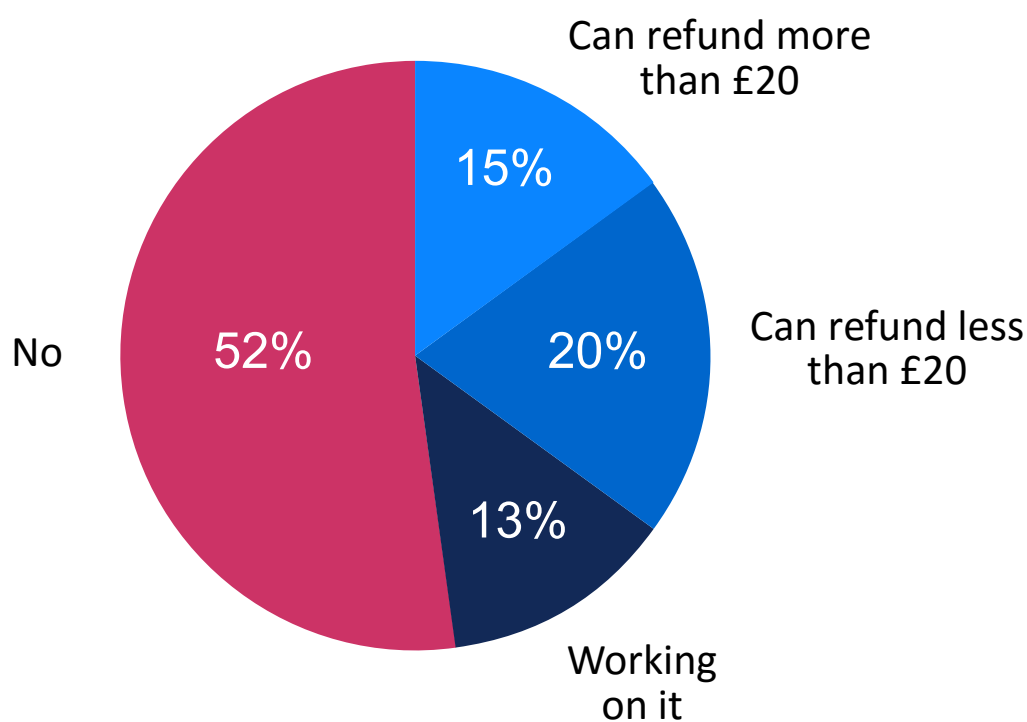
The good news is that roughly a third of contact centres have already embraced the positive benefits of empowerment – with 15% empowering agents to offer a refund of more than £20, and a further 20% empowering their front line to issue refunds less than £20.

A number are beginning to consider the positive benefits of empowerment

It is also inspiring to see that a number of organisations are starting to think about the benefits of empowering their front line.

This is supported by the 13% of industry professionals who are "working on" empowering their agents.

More than half are reluctant to empower their frontline

Unfortunately, more than half of contact centres are not currently empowering their agents, and have no plans to do so.

This supports the common assumption that contact centres often treat their frontline agents like children, telling them what to do rather than giving them the freedom to develop in their role.

With customer service increasingly being considered as a key differentiator in business, hopefully this will change, as the need to please customers begins to override the regimented agent experience.

How do your frontline agents (customer experts) communicate with the rest of the business?
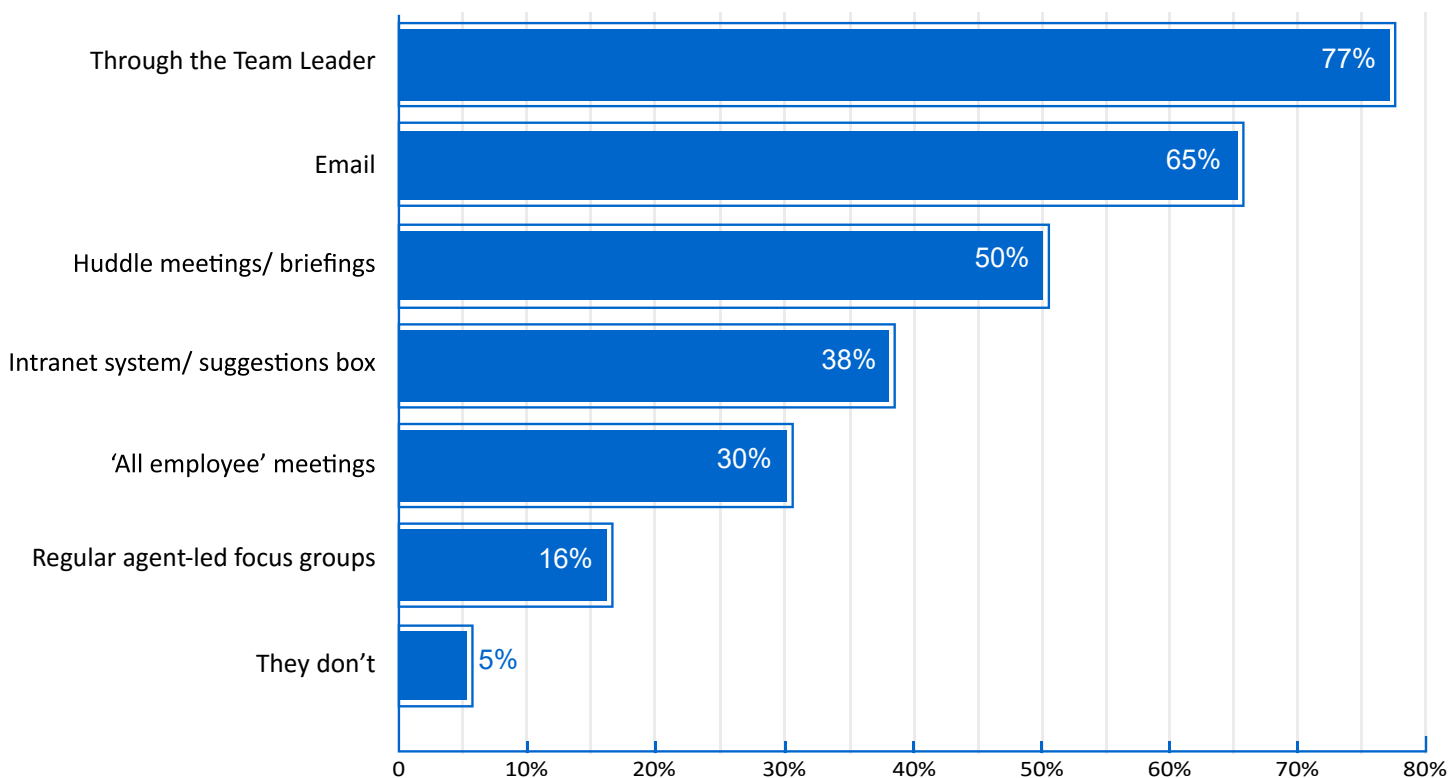
Team Leaders represent the views of their agents in most contact centres

The findings showed that in 77% of contact centres, agents communicate their views through the Team Leader.

In a large operation with several layers of middle management, this isn't surprising to see. Yet this filtering could see valuable ideas and insight being lost in the shuffle – stifling the customer experience.

Team huddles (50%) and all-employee meetings (30%) were also listed as popular options for enabling agents to communicate with the rest of the business.

How do your frontline agents communicate with the rest of the business?

Category	Percentage
Through the Team Leader	77%
Email	65%
Huddle meetings/ briefings	50%
Intranet system/ suggestions box	38%
'All employee' meetings	30%
Regular agent-led focus groups	16%
They don't	5%

Less than half of contact centres provide suggestions boxes for their agents

A key way organisations can improve the delivery of their customer experience is by listening directly to their agents, who deal with customers every day.

A suggestions box – either on an intranet system or physically on the contact centre floor – is a good way to capture this insight.

Not all ideas will be good ideas, but offering agents the chance to have their say can help to address customer experience challenges as witnessed directly from the front line.

How do your frontline agents communicate with the rest of the business?

Through the Team Leader	77 %
Email	65 %
Huddle meetings/ briefings	50 %
Intranet system/ suggestions box	38 %
'All employee' meetings	30 %
Regular agent-led focus groups	16 %
They don't	5 %

16% hold agent-led focus groups

Another way to get to the heart of customer issues is to organise agent-led focus groups. This method is already in operation in 16% of contact centres.

Only 5% of agents don't have a voice

The findings overall showed that the industry is taking positive steps to give their front line a voice, as only 5% of agents have been given no means to communicate.

Perhaps in the near future, all agents will be seen as valuable assets when it comes to improving the customer experience.

How often do you schedule training for your customer service team?

The frequency of training exercises can make or break the customer experience

The frequency of training exercises is another key area that can make or break the customer experience.

An agent who knows all the answers and can confidently resolve a problem will deliver an easy, if not memorable, experience for almost every customer.

How often do you schedule training for your customer service team?

Never 10%
Once a Year 5%
Once a Week 17%
Once a Month 42%
Once a Quarter 26%
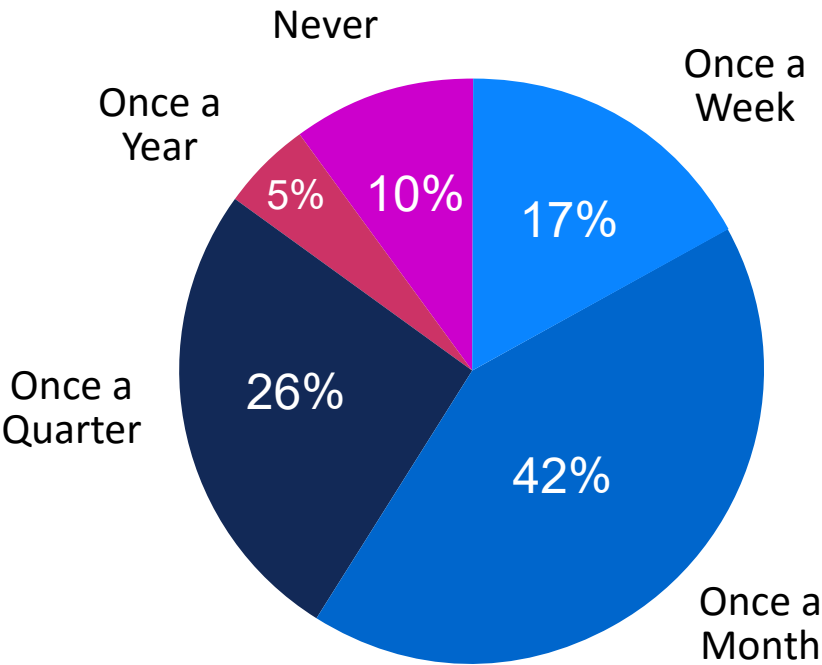
17% of contact centres schedule training once a week

What is really good to see is that 17% of contact centres are putting the customer at the heart of what they do, by scheduling training for their customer service teams once a week.

With a further 42% scheduling training once a month, the industry is really showing signs of a dynamic and adaptable approach to training.

It looks like the annual "sheep dip" is becoming a thing of the past

The annual "sheep dip" method of training agents can lead to lengthy, dull sessions that everyone sits through out of obligation.

It is inspiring to see that the vast majority of contact centres are taking positive steps to ensure their agents receive training on a regular basis – with just 5% admitting to training their customer service team once a year.

The disparity in the findings highlights that there is still progress to be made

Alongside these positive findings, however, 10% of contact centre professionals admitted to "never" scheduling their agents for training.

This disparity highlights that the industry still has some way to go before regular training is the norm in all contact centres.

How Are Your Customer Touchpoints Supporting the Delivery of Exceptional Customer Service?

Which self-service options do you currently offer to your customers?

The future of the industry could see self-service for all simple transactions

Speculations about the future of the industry lean towards a vision of self-service and automation options being available 24/7 for all simple transactions, while agents only handle more complex queries.

Such a scenario would completely remove the need for customers to wait in a call queue just to change their password, see where their delivery is, or check that a bill has cleared.

It is therefore positive to see that the majority of contact centres are embracing self-service options for their customers.

Self-service options focus on giving customers access to information

Information-based self-service was shown to be the most popular method of self-service, with 65% of contact centres having answers to FAQs on their website.

A further 19% offer information in the form of how-to and YouTube videos on the website.

Which self-service options do you currently offer to your customers?

FAQ answers on the website	65 %
Self-service IVR	44 %
Report a problem	35 %
Lost password	30 %
Account balance	23 %
Status update	23 %
YouTube channel/ How-to videos	19 %
We don't currently offer self-service	15 %
Track delivery	14 %
Other	9 %
Meter reading	1 %

Many customers can complete simple transactions themselves

There is also a visible trend in contact centres offering transaction-based self-service options.

In approximately one third of contact centres, customers can take care of the little things themselves without having to join a call queue.

These options include Lost Password (30%), Account Balance (23%), Status Update (23%) and Track Delivery (14%).
This focus on simple transactions is also evident in the popularity of the self-service IVR, which can allow customers to complete their own transaction such as paying their bills without ever talking to an agent.

Some survey participants also reported offering their customers the ability to view their own documents online, add extra items to an existing booking, and access an E-portal.

Only 15% of contact centres don't offer any form of self-service

The findings also showed that only 15% of contact centres don't currently offer any form of self-service.

This may be due to the individual nature of these businesses, but it is most likely that these contact centres need to reassess the reasons their customers are contacting them – and adjust accordingly.
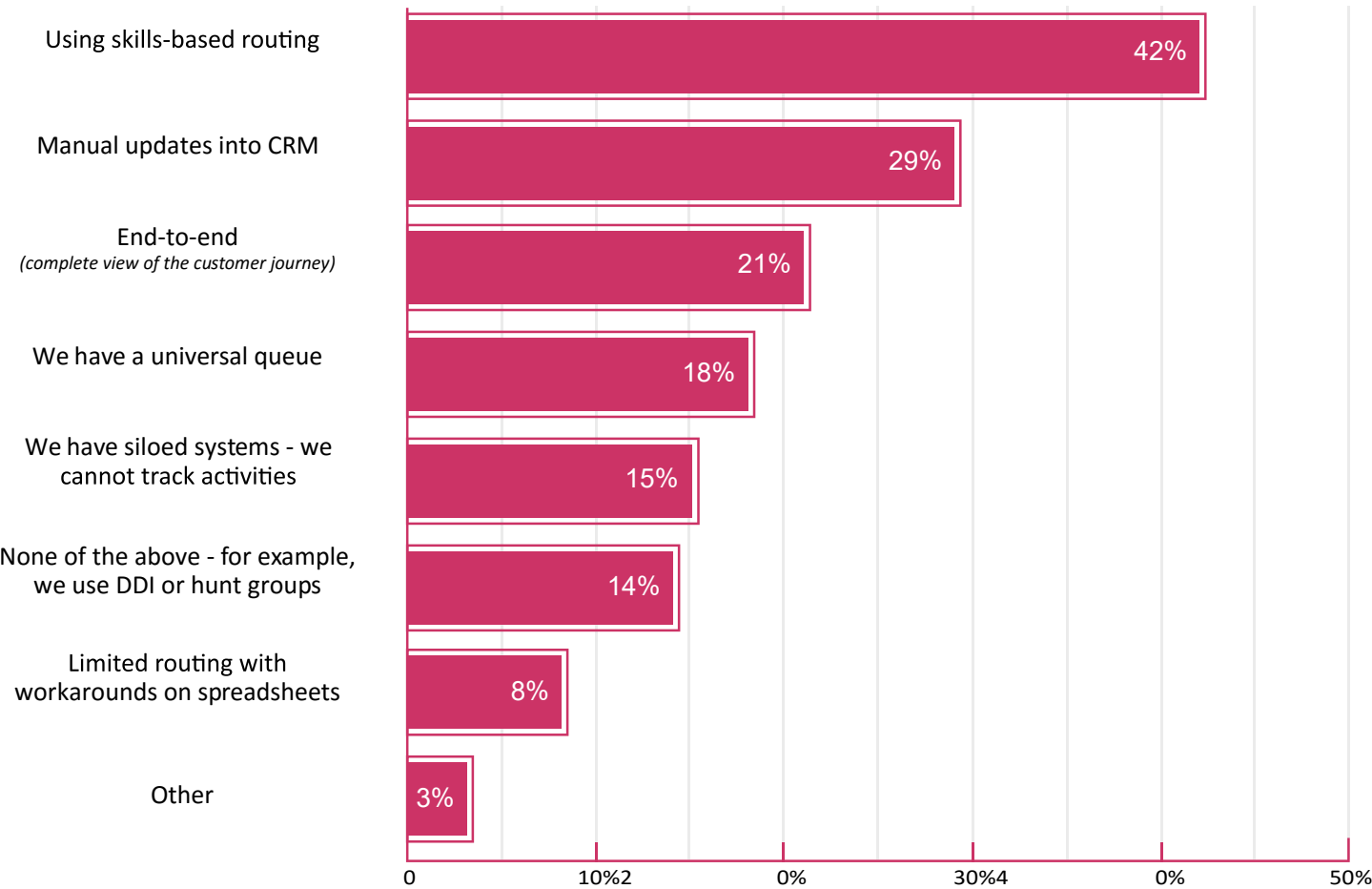
How do you track and manage multichannel customer contact?

Some contact centres have already adapted to the multichannel environment

It is clear from the findings that some contact centres are stepping up to the mark of delivering exceptional customer service in a multichannel environment – with a fifth of contact centre professionals stating that they can track multichannel contact "end-to-end, providing a complete view of the customer journey".

Alongside this, 42% are "using skills-based routing", and a further 18% "have a universal queue".

How do you track and manage multichannel customer contact?

Category	Percentage
Using skills-based routing	42%
Manual updates into CRM	29%
End-to-end (complete view of the customer journey)	21%
We have a universal queue	18%
We have siloed systems - we cannot track activities	15%
None of the above - for example, we use DDI or hunt groups	14%
Limited routing with workarounds on spreadsheets	8%
Other	3%

A number of contact centres are still struggling to keep up with multichannel

However, a considerable number are still struggling to get their systems in line with delivering a multichannel customer experience.
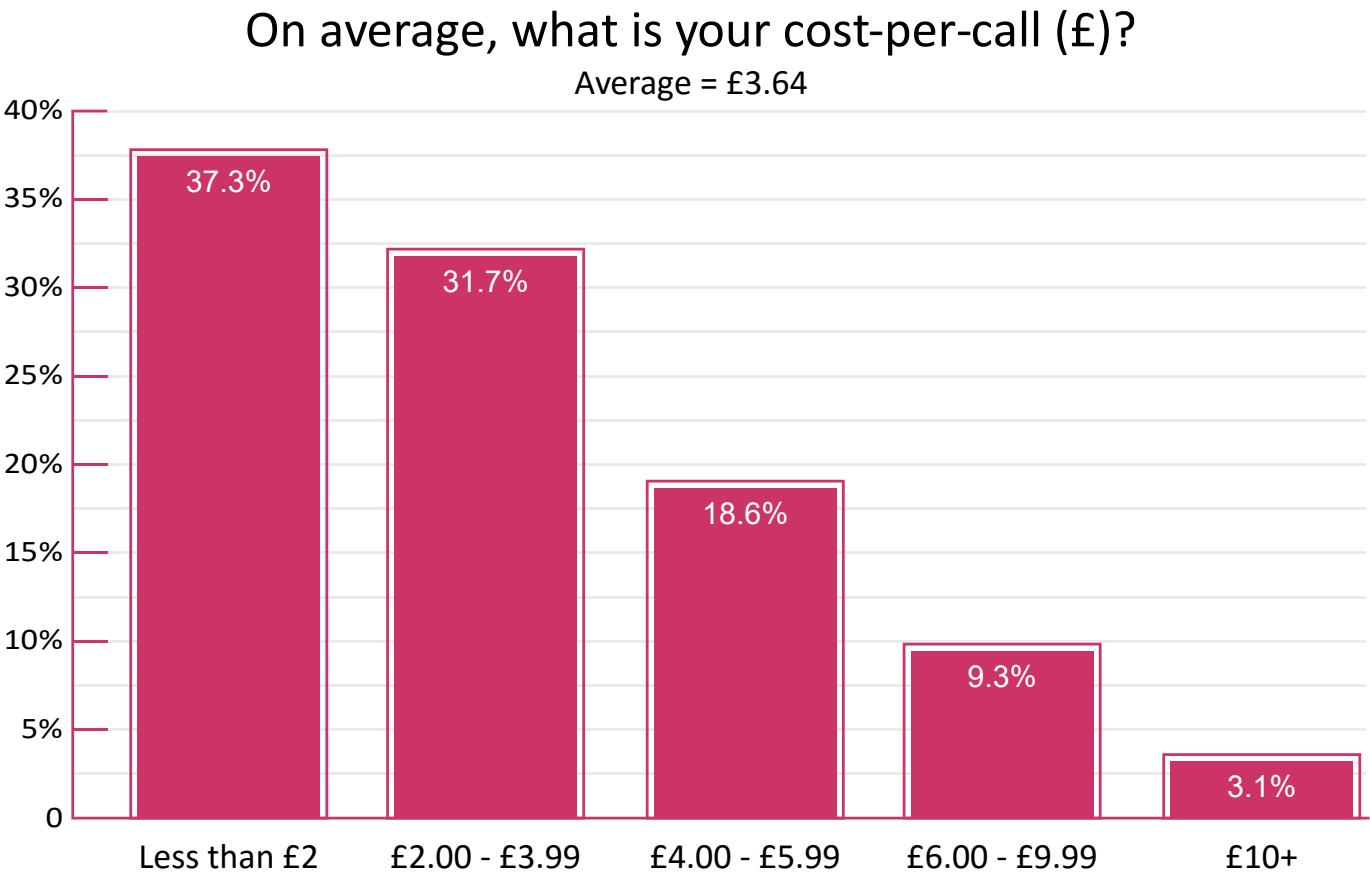
This is evident in the fact that 29% of contact centres input manual updates into the CRM, while 15% of contact centres "have siloed systems and cannot track activities", and a further 8% have "limited routing with workarounds on spreadsheets".

On average, what is your cost-per-call (in British pounds)?

The average cost-per-call is £3.64

The findings revealed that the average cost-per-call is £3.64.

However, 37% of industry professionals reported that their cost-per-call was less than £2 – compared to just 3% who reported that their cost-per-call was over £10.

On average, what is your cost-per-call (£)?
Average = £3.64

Cost-per-call	Percentage
Less than £2	37.3%
£2.00 - £3.99	31.7%
£4.00 - £5.99	18.6%
£6.00 - £9.99	9.3%
£10+	3.1%

This disparity in the findings could be driven by the sector the contact centre is operating in.

For example, customer service teams working for a technology company may experience longer calls on average – as they talk individuals through fixing or setting up their computer – resulting in a higher cost-per-call.

By comparison, customer service teams working for a delivery company may take a series of shorter calls throughout the day, as customers predominately call in to check the delivery status of an order – resulting in a lower cost-per-call.

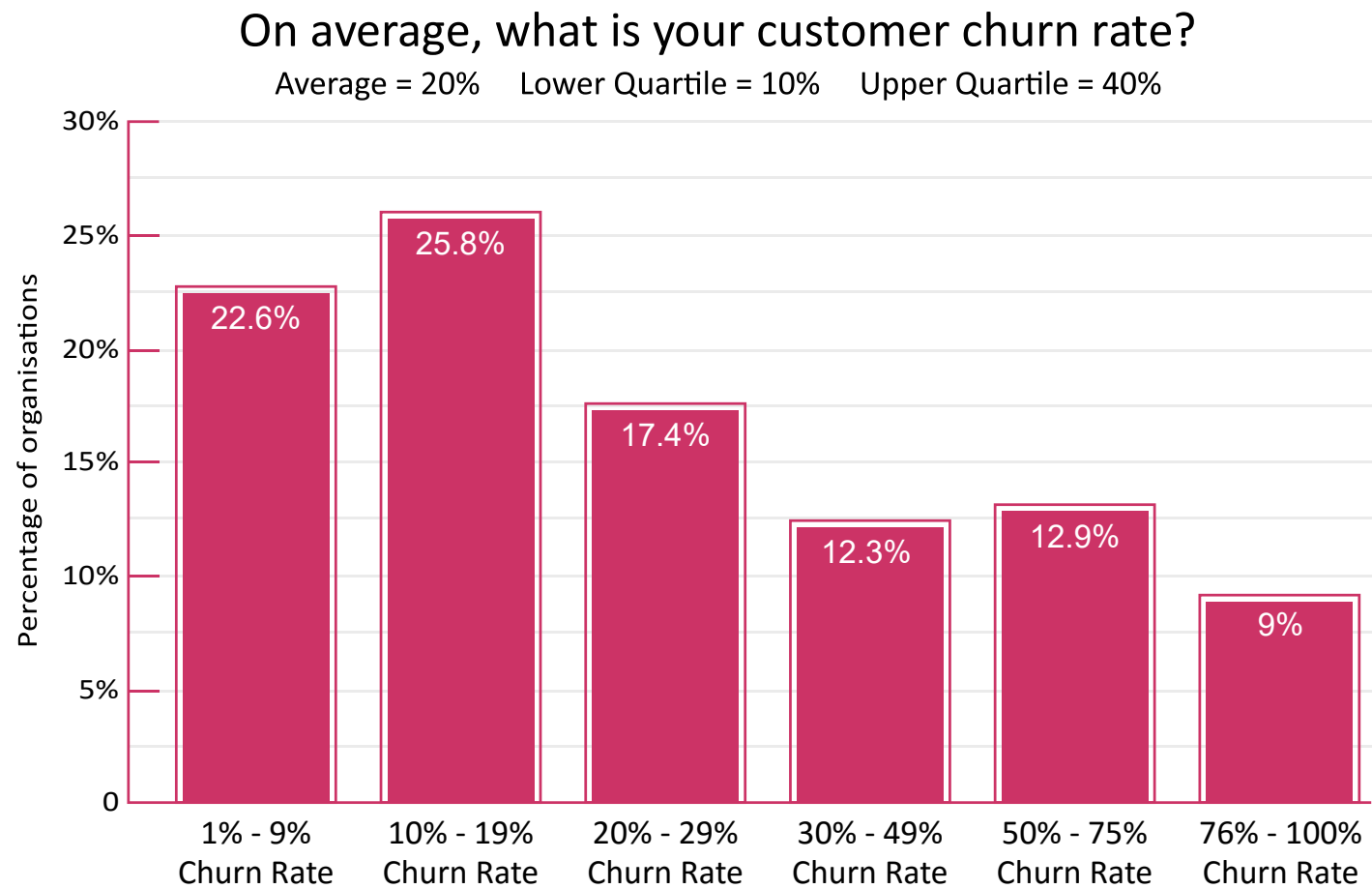# On average, what is your customer churn rate?

Customer churn rate is a key indicator of where things are going wrong

The level of customer churn in any contact centre is a good indicator of how well an organisation is looking after its customers – with low levels of churn indicating loyalty and high levels suggesting serious process errors.

The average customer churn rate is 20%

The overall findings revealed that the average customer churn rate in the contact centre industry is 20% – with lower quartile findings showing 10% and upper quartile findings showing 40%.

With 22% stating a customer churn rate of less than 10%, some members of the industry are clearly stepping up to the mark of delivering exceptional customer service.

On average, what is your customer churn rate?
Average = 20%   Lower Quartile = 10%   Upper Quartile = 40%

Churn Rate Range	Percentage
1% - 9% Churn Rate	22.6%
10% - 19% Churn Rate	25.8%
20% - 29% Churn Rate	17.4%
30% - 49% Churn Rate	12.3%
50% - 75% Churn Rate	12.9%
76% - 100% Churn Rate	9%

Percentage of organisations

One fifth of the industry are regularly losing half of their customers

Worryingly, one fifth of contact centres revealed that they are regularly losing over half of their customers per year – with almost 13% stating a churn rate of 50–75% and a further 9% admitting to 76–100% churn rates.

Do you struggle to get board approval when trying to improve your contact centre or customer experience?

Almost half regularly struggle to get board approval

Securing board approval and funding for key contact centre initiatives is key to running an adaptable and successful operation.

However, almost half of industry professionals struggle to gain board approval when trying to improve their contact centre or customer experience – with 18% "always" struggling and a further 21% "mostly" struggling.

Do you struggle to get board approval when trying to improve your contact centre or customer experience?
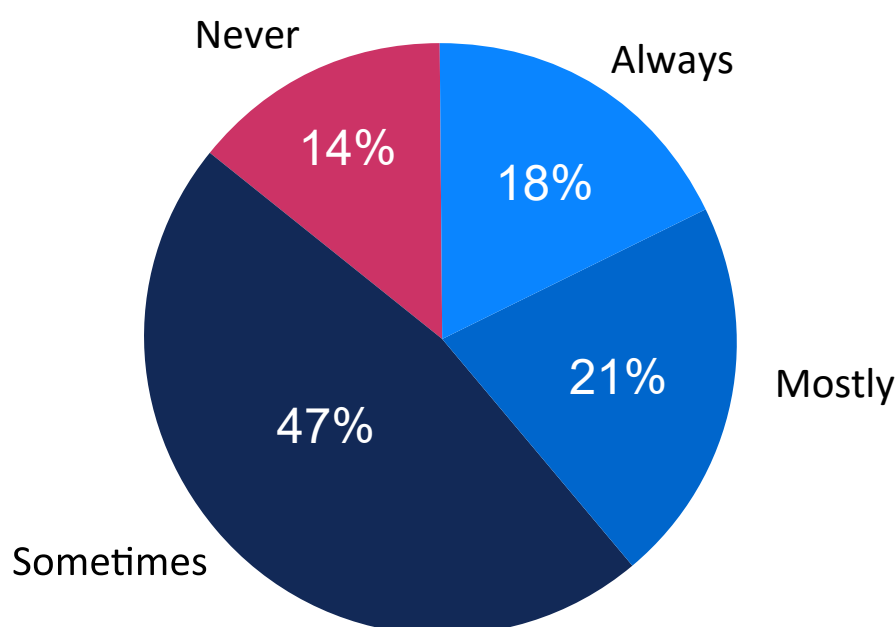
Yet 47% only view it as an occasional issue

Yet the problem isn't as rife as some naysayers would expect, as some contact centre professionals have clearly cracked the code to getting their own way in the boardroom.

This is evident in the 14% who never struggle to get board approval, and the 47% who only view it as an occasional "sometimes" issue.

On average, what is a customer's lifetime value?

The average customer lifetime value in the industry is £1,000

The findings revealed that the average customer lifetime value in the contact centre industry is £1,000.

However, roughly 48% of contact centres claimed that their customer lifetime value is less than £1,000 – with 25% stating their value is below £99.

13% stated a customer lifetime value of over £50,000

Meanwhile, approximately 13% of survey participants stated an average customer lifetime value of above £50,000.

It is interesting to see that a range of figures have been put forward in these findings – from pounds to thousands of pounds – suggesting that no matter what size the business, there is perceived value in calculating a customer's lifetime value.

On average, what is a customer's life time value? (£)
Average = £1000   Lower Quartile = £98   Upper Quartile = £6250
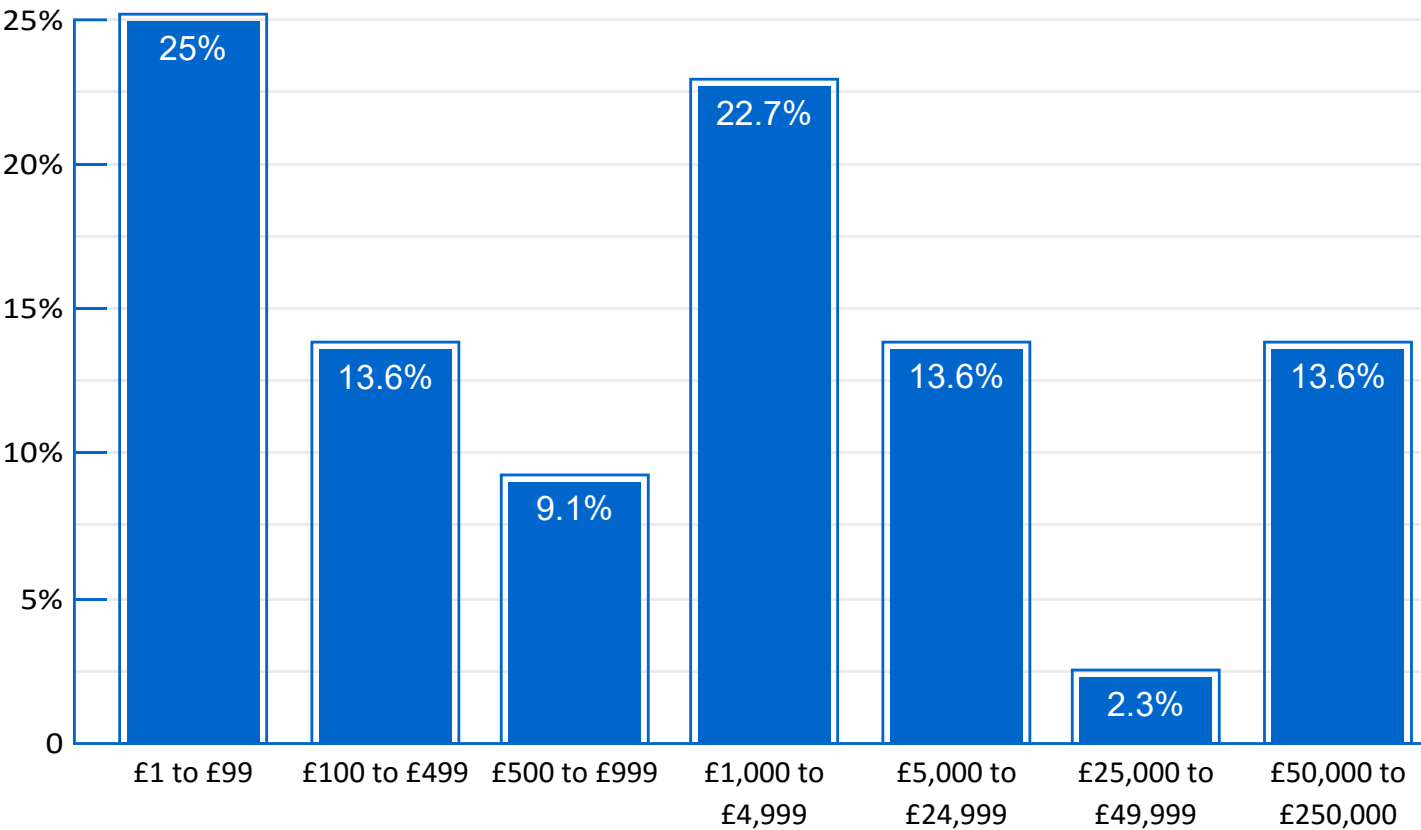
Do you know your customer lifetime value?

Yes	15 %
No	85 %

Only 15% of the industry know their customers' lifetime value

Only 54 of the 351 people who took part in the survey submitted a valid answer to this question.

This suggests that the industry has yet to embrace the power of taking the customer's life time value into the boardroom as a support for a business case – and could explain why many contact centres are still failing to deliver an exceptional customer experience.
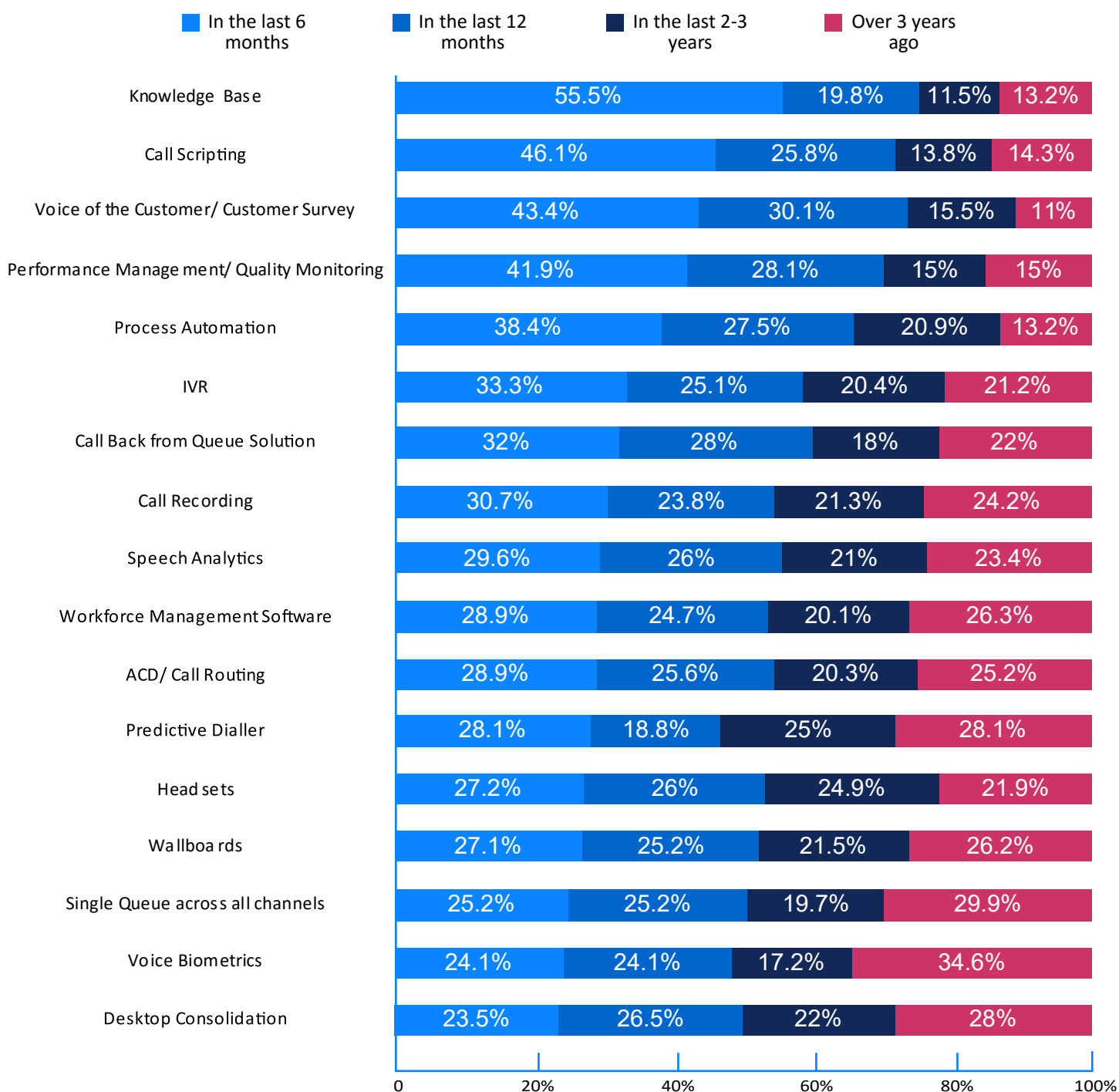
How Is Technology Supporting the Delivery of Exceptional Customer Service?

When did you last update your technology?

Out-of-date technology can harm agent morale and the customer experience

Slow, out-of-date technology can frustrate everyone involved in the customer service experience, from the agent who has to constantly apologise, to the customer having to sit through lengthier queuing and resolution times.

When did you last update your technology?

Legend:
- In the last 6 months
- In the last 12 months
- In the last 2-3 years
- Over 3 years ago

Technology	In the last 6 months	In the last 12 months	In the last 2-3 years	Over 3 years ago
Knowledge Base	55.5%	19.8%	11.5%	13.2%
Call Scripting	46.1%	25.8%	13.8%	14.3%
Voice of the Customer/ Customer Survey	43.4%	30.1%	15.5%	11%
Performance Management/ Quality Monitoring	41.9%	28.1%	15%	15%
Process Automation	38.4%	27.5%	20.9%	13.2%
IVR	33.3%	25.1%	20.4%	21.2%
Call Back from Queue Solution	32%	28%	18%	22%
Call Recording	30.7%	23.8%	21.3%	24.2%
Speech Analytics	29.6%	26%	21%	23.4%
Workforce Management Software	28.9%	24.7%	20.1%	26.3%
ACD/ Call Routing	28.9%	25.6%	20.3%	25.2%
Predictive Dialler	28.1%	18.8%	25%	28.1%
Headsets	27.2%	26%	24.9%	21.9%
Wallboards	27.1%	25.2%	21.5%	26.2%
Single Queue across all channels	25.2%	25.2%	19.7%	29.9%
Voice Biometrics	24.1%	24.1%	17.2%	34.6%
Desktop Consolidation	23.5%	26.5%	22%	28%

Just as many have been updated "in the last 6 months" as "over 3 years ago"

Despite the negative fallout, the findings are surprisingly diverse – with the number of core technologies being equally weighted between those who had updated in the last 6 months and those who had not updated for over 3 years.

Speech Analytics, Workforce Management Software, ACD / Call Routing and headsets all fall under this category.

When did you last update your technology?

	Last 6 Months	Last 12 Months	Last 2-3 Years	Over 3 Years
Knowledge Base	55.5 %	19.8 %	11.5 %	13.2 %
Call Scripting	46.1 %	25.8 %	13.8 %	14.3 %
Voice of the Customer/ Customer Survey	43.4 %	30.1 %	15.5 %	11 %
Performance Management/ Quality Monitoring	41.9 %	28.1 %	15 %	15 %
Process Automation	38.4 %	27.5 %	20.9 %	13.2 %
IVR	33.3 %	25.1 %	20.4 %	21.2 %
Call Back from Queue Solution	32 %	28 %	18 %	22 %
Call Recording	30.7 %	23.8%	21.3 %	24.2 %
Speech Analytics	29.6 %	26 %	21 %	23.4 %
Workforce Management Software	28.9 %	24.7 %	20.1 %	26.3 %
ACD/ Call Routing	28.9 %	25.6 %	20.3 %	25.2 %
Predictive Dialler	28.1 %	18.8 %	25 %	28.1 %
Headsets	27.2 %	26 %	24.9 %	21.9 %
Wallboards	27.1 %	25.2 %	21.5 %	26.2 %
Single Queue across all channels	25.2 %	25.2 %	19.7 %	29.9 %
Voice Biometrics	24.1 %	24.1 %	17.2 %	34.6 %
Desktop Consolidation	23.5 %	26.5 %	22 %	28 %

75% have updated their Knowledge Base technology within the last 12 months

Some technologies were skewed more positively, however.

The findings showed that over 75% of professionals have updated their Knowledge Base in the last 12 months, with 55% updating within the last 6.

Similarly, around 70% of contact centres have updated their Call Scripting, Voice of the Customer and Performance Management technologies in the last 12 months, with around 40% updating in the last 6 months.

By contrast, Voice Biometrics, Desktop Consolidation and a Single Queue across all channels were the most negatively skewed findings – with more professionals having updated over 3 years ago than within the last 6 months.

Do you have a digital transformation roadmap?

**20% of contact centres already have a digital transformation roadmap in place**

Most customers now expect to be able to contact an organisation via their smartphone, if they so wish.

It is promising to see that 20% of contact centres are reacting to this and have a digital roadmap in place to better meet the digital demands of their customers.

(A digital transformation roadmap provides a detailed analysis of how an organisation can execute a digital strategy, offering online and mobiles services to their customers.)

It is also good to see that 22% are in the process of developing one, while a further 23% are thinking about it.

Do you have a digital transformation roadmap?

What's a digital transformation roadmap? **35%**

Yes **20%**

We're in the process of developing one **22%**

No, but we're thinking about it **23%**
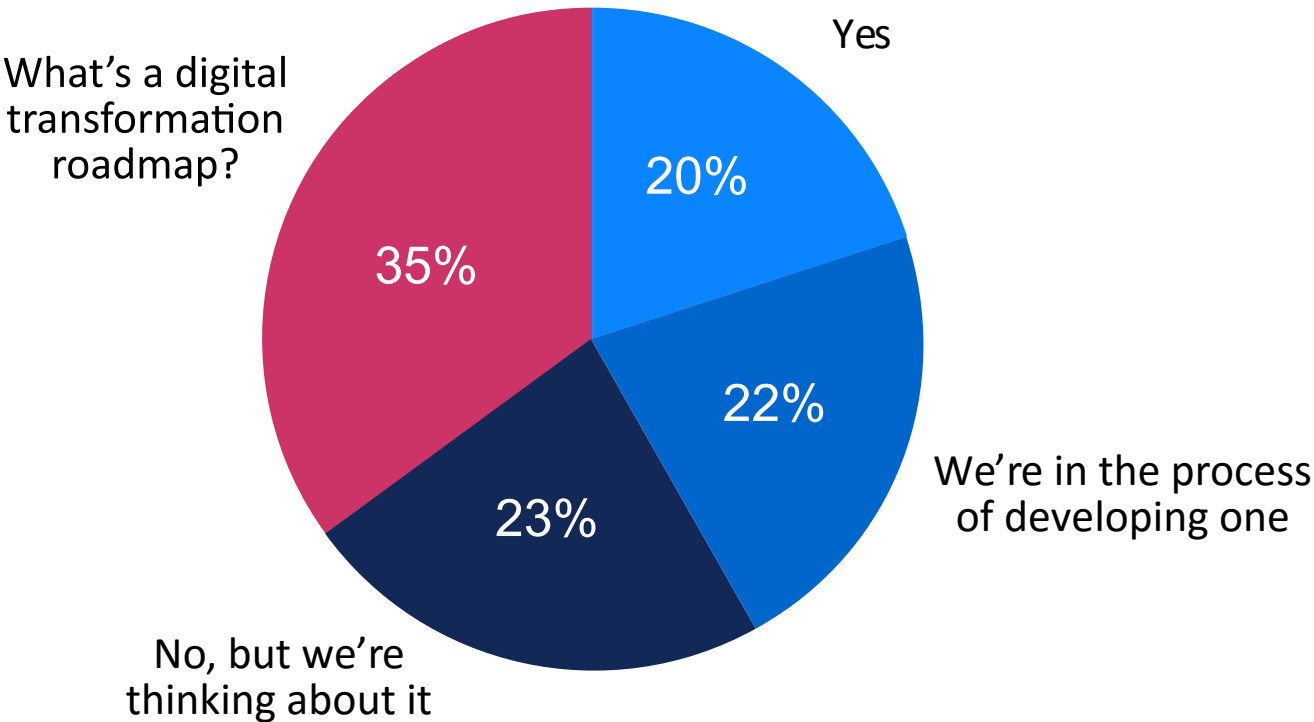
A third of organisations don't know what a digital transformation roadmap is

However, 35% don't know what a digital transformation roadmap is.

This suggests that many organisations have a long way to go before they are offering the digital service a modern customer expects.
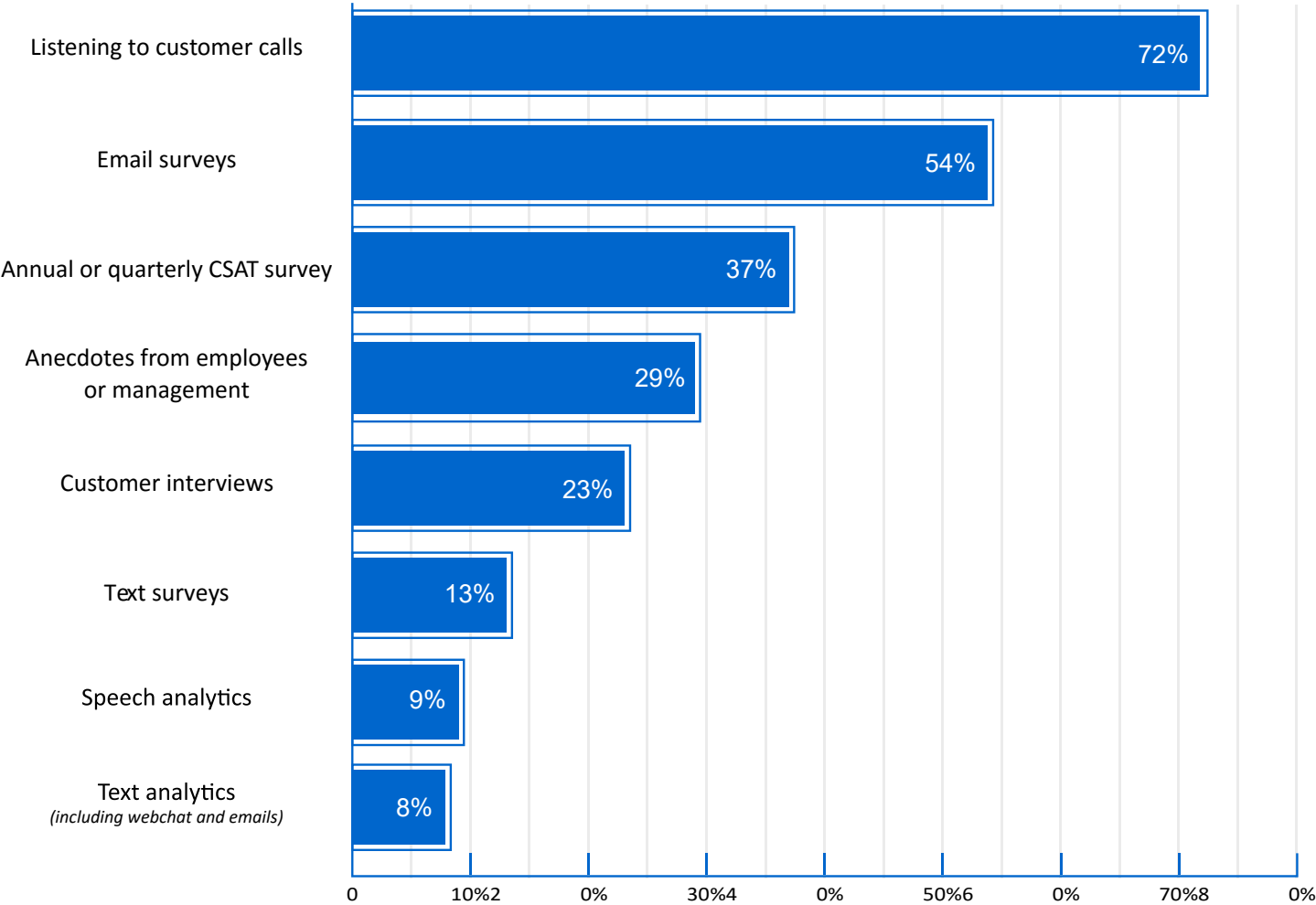
Capturing the Voice of the Customer

Listening to customer calls takes a clear majority

Listening to customer calls was revealed to be the popular method of capturing the Voice of the Customer, with 72% of industry professionals using this in their contact centres.

A significant number of industry professionals also showed a preference for verbatim data – with 29% collecting anecdotes from employees or management, and a further 23% conducting customer interviews.

To capture the Voice of the Customer, which methods do you employ?

Method	Percentage
Listening to customer calls	72%
Email surveys	54%
Annual or quarterly CSAT survey	37%
Anecdotes from employees or management	29%
Customer interviews	23%
Text surveys	13%
Speech analytics	9%
Text analytics (including webchat and emails)	8%

Surveys are also a popular method for collecting Voice of the Customer data

Email surveys (54%) and CSAT surveys (37%) also scored relatively highly in the findings.

Interestingly, only 13% of contact centres use text surveys, compared to the 54% using email surveys – highlighting a clear channel preference for collecting this type of data.

Interaction analytics is still finding its feet

Interaction analytics is the least commonly used method for capturing the Voice of the Customer – with just 9% of contact centres using Speech Analytics, and only a further 8% using Text Analytics.

These findings suggest that interaction analytics solutions still have some way to go before they are considered the industry norm.
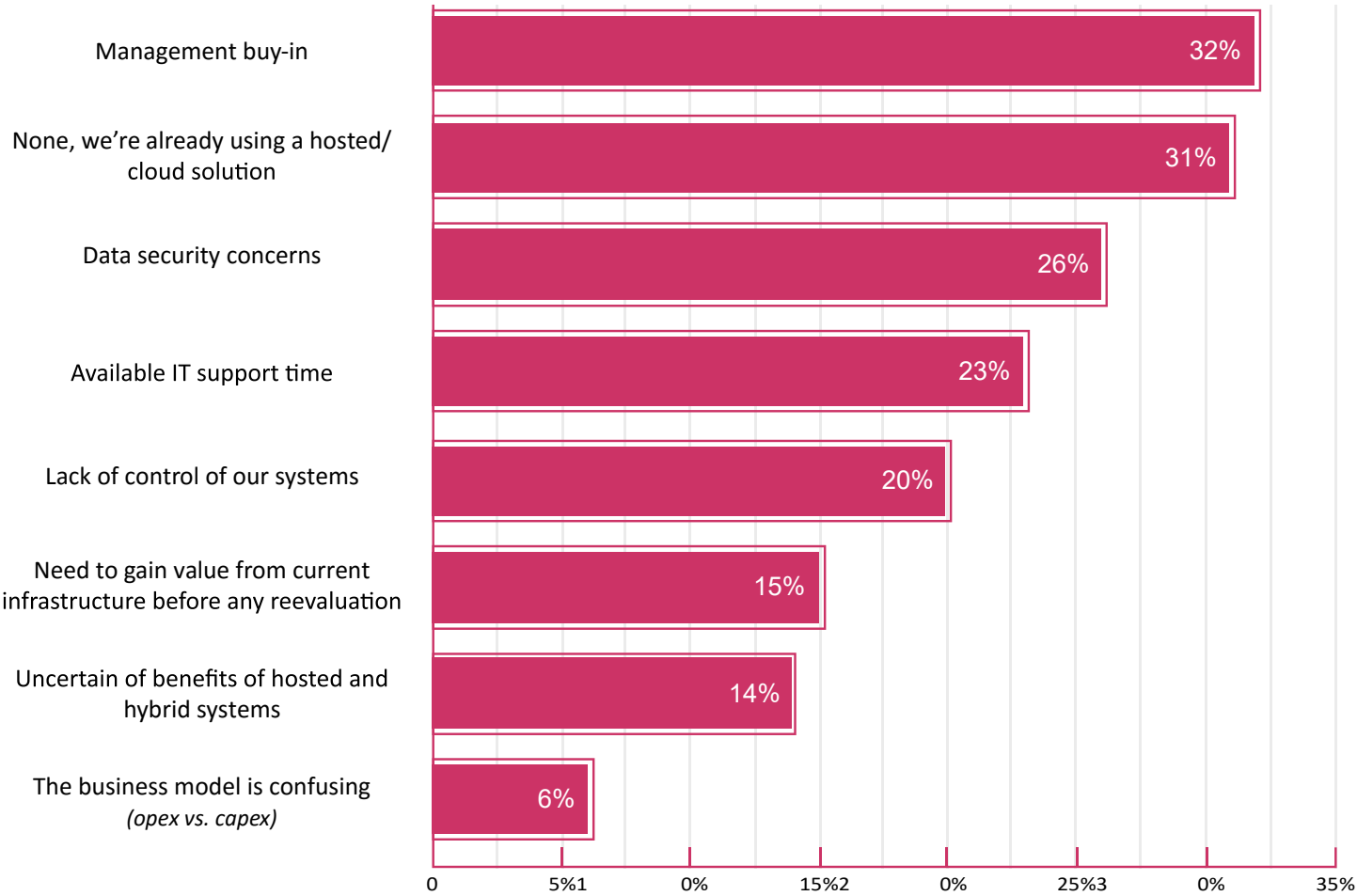
What barriers are currently stopping you from adopting a hosted/cloud solution in your customer service department?

Only a third of contact centres are using a cloud solution

The cloud is one of the biggest disrupters to the contact centre industry, with early adopters reaping the benefits of cheaper and more efficient service delivery.

With such a big competitive advantage on the table, it is interesting to see that now 31% of contact centres have adopted a hosted/cloud solution.

What barriers are currently stopping you from adopting a hosted / cloud solution in your customer service department?

Barrier	Percentage
Management buy-in	32%
None, we're already using a hosted/ cloud solution	31%
Data security concerns	26%
Available IT support time	23%
Lack of control of our systems	20%
Need to gain value from current infrastructure before any reevaluation	15%
Uncertain of benefits of hosted and hybrid systems	14%
The business model is confusing (opex vs. capex)	6%

Management buy-in is the single biggest barrier to cloud adoption

The findings revealed that management buy-in is the single biggest barrier to cloud adoption – with 32% stating this as the reason they haven't yet transitioned to a cloud solution.

The industry has long struggled with fighting its corner in the boardroom and this is evident all the more in the slow uptake of cloud solutions.

What barriers are currently stopping you from adopting a hosted / cloud solution in your customer service department?

Management buy-in	32 %
None, we're already using a hosted/ cloud solution	31 %
Data security concerns	26 %
Available IT support time	23 %
Lack of control of our systems	20 %
Need to gain value from current infrastructure before any reevaluation	15 %
Uncertain of benefits of hosted and hybrid systems	14 %
The business model is confusing *(opex vs. capex)*	6 %

Concerns and uncertainty are also holding back cloud adoption

The findings also highlight a number of additional barriers to cloud adoption.

These are focused around concerns and uncertainty – with 26% expressing data security concerns, 14% being uncertain of the benefits of hosted and hybrid systems, and 6% thinking that the business model (opex vs. capex) is confusing.

Further barriers include available IT support time (23%), lack of control of systems (20%) and needing to gain value from current infrastructure before any re-evaluation (15%).
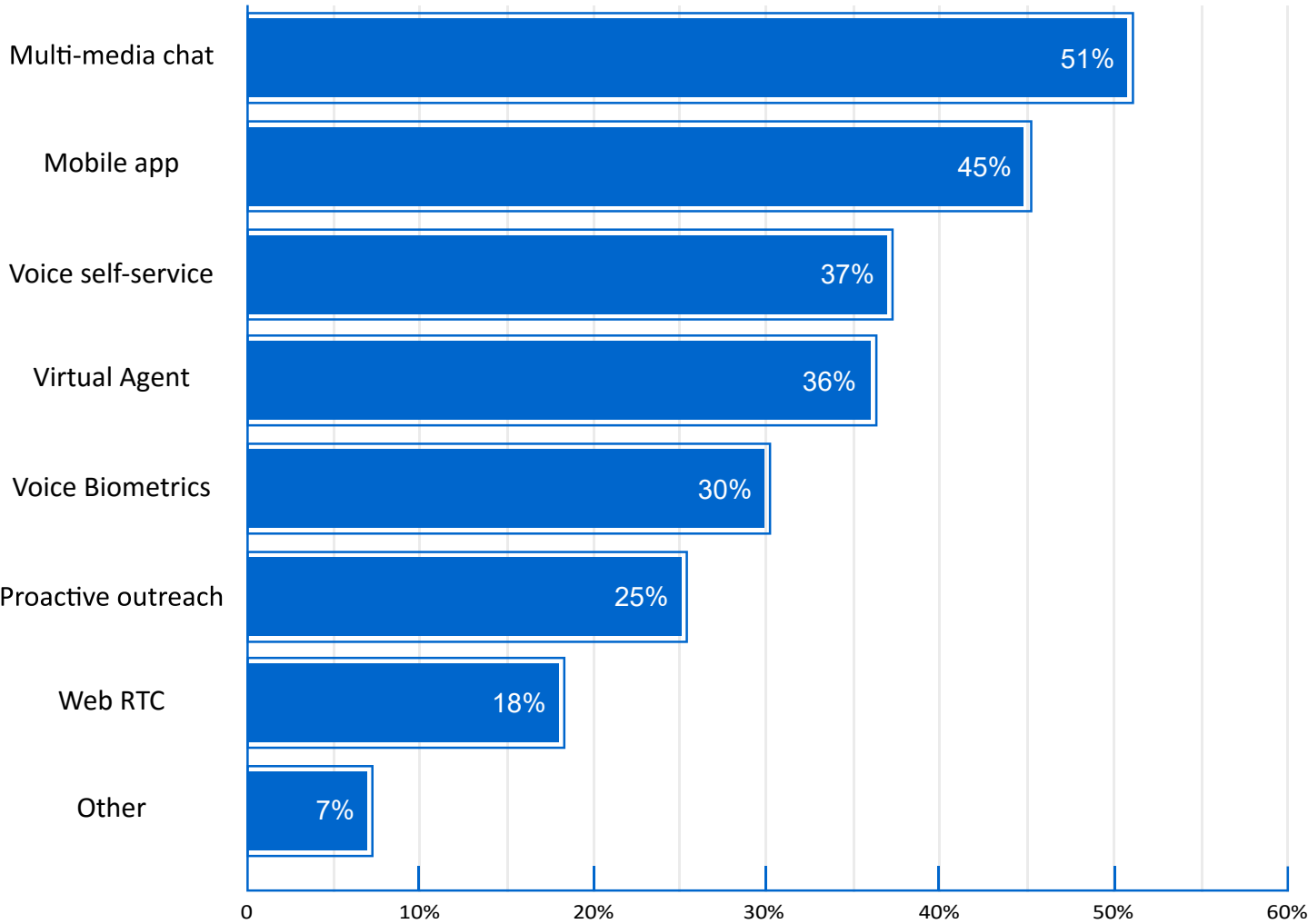
What newer technologies do you think make (or would make) your organisation easier to do business with?

Multi-media chat and mobile apps are high on the wish list

51% of contact centre professionals think that multi-media chat would make their organisation easier to do business with.

Multi-media chat enables the user to send images, audio and video links alongside standard text – giving webchat agents more tools to better support the customer in resolving their query.

What newer technologies do you think make your organisation easier to do business with?

Technology	Percentage
Multi-media chat	51%
Mobile app	45%
Voice self-service	37%
Virtual Agent	36%
Voice Biometrics	30%
Proactive outreach	25%
Web RTC	18%
Other	7%

Mobile apps are also fast becoming a differentiator in customer service, with many customers going elsewhere if they can't access core services via their smartphone.

45% of industry professionals think that a mobile app would make their organisation easier to do business with, highlighting that many contact centres are still "playing catch up" in meeting the expectations of the modern customer.

36% can see a demand for virtual agents in their contact centre

Over the past year, there has been much talk about automation and the rise of the virtual agent.

It is interesting to see that 36% of industry professionals can see a demand for virtual agents in their contact centre as a means to enhance the customer experience.

There is also substantial demand for voice self-service (37%), voice biometrics (30%), proactive outreach (25%) and WebRTC (18%).

Bluetooth headsets and Speech Analytics were also on the wish list

Additional technologies listed include call-back technology, Bluetooth headsets, Speech Analytics and webchat solutions.

A number of survey participants also listed a CRM system, suggesting some contact centres are still trying to get the basics in place to deliver an improved customer experience.

How Are Your Metrics and Measurements Supporting the Delivery of Exceptional Customer Service?

What metrics are you using to measure the performance of your customer service teams?

Customer service teams are most concerned with quality and customer satisfaction

The findings show that the majority of customer service teams are being measured against Quality Scores (72%) and Customer Satisfaction (63%).

Almost half of contact centres are also using First Contact Resolution (FCR) to measure the performance of their customer service teams, suggesting further emphasis on the delivery of in-depth, quality interactions.

What metrics are you using to measure the performance of your customer service teams?

Quality Scores	72 %
Service Level *(% answered within a time)*	69 %
Customer Satisfaction	63 %
Average Handling Time *(AHT)*	59 %
First Contact Resolution *(FCR)*	45 %
NetPromoter Score	23 %
Sales Value	15 %
Cusomer Effort	13 %
Other	10 %
NetEasy Score	3 %

Customer Effort is low on the agenda

Alongside these findings, it was surprising to see Customer Effort so low on the customer service agenda.

Just 13% of contact centres measure Customer Effort, while only 3% are using the NetEasy Score.

Time-pressure metrics are still widely used across the industry

Time-pressure metrics are still prevalent in measuring agent performance – with 69% of contact centres using Service Level (% answered within a time), and 59% using Average Handling Time.

This suggests that strict time constraints are still being placed on agents, potentially limiting their ability to offer a quality customer experience.

What metrics are you using to measure the performance of your customer service teams?

Metric	Percentage
Quality Scores	72%
Service Level (% answered within a time)	69%
Customer Satisfaction	63%
Average Handling Time (AHT)	59%
First Contact Resolution (FCR)	45%
NetPromoter Score	23%
Sales Value	15%
Cusomer Effort	13%
Other	10%
NetEasy Score	3%
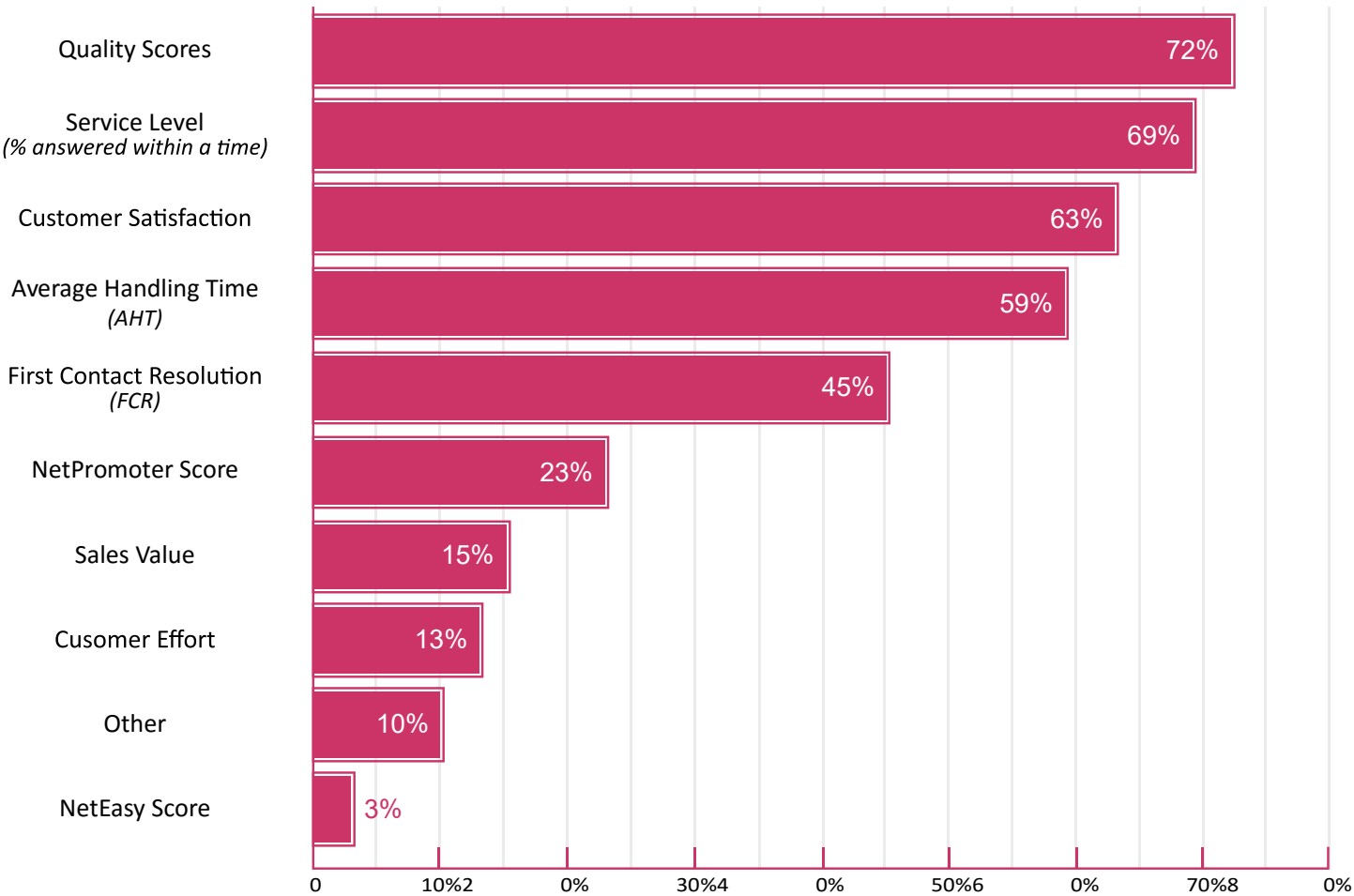
Avoidable contact and product knowledge are also in the mix

The findings also showed that a number of additional metrics are in place across the industry. These included call abandon rate, product knowledge and error rate.

Some contact centre professionals also listed avoidable contact, script adherence and empathy.

Are you able to recognise customers and understand their business context across all communication channels in your contact centre?

Just 14% aren't able to recognise their customers across all channels

The findings revealed that 47% of contact centres are able to recognise customers and understand their business context across all communication channels in their contact centre, with a further 39% being able to do so partially.

Are you able to recognise customers and understand their business context across all communication channels in your contact centre?
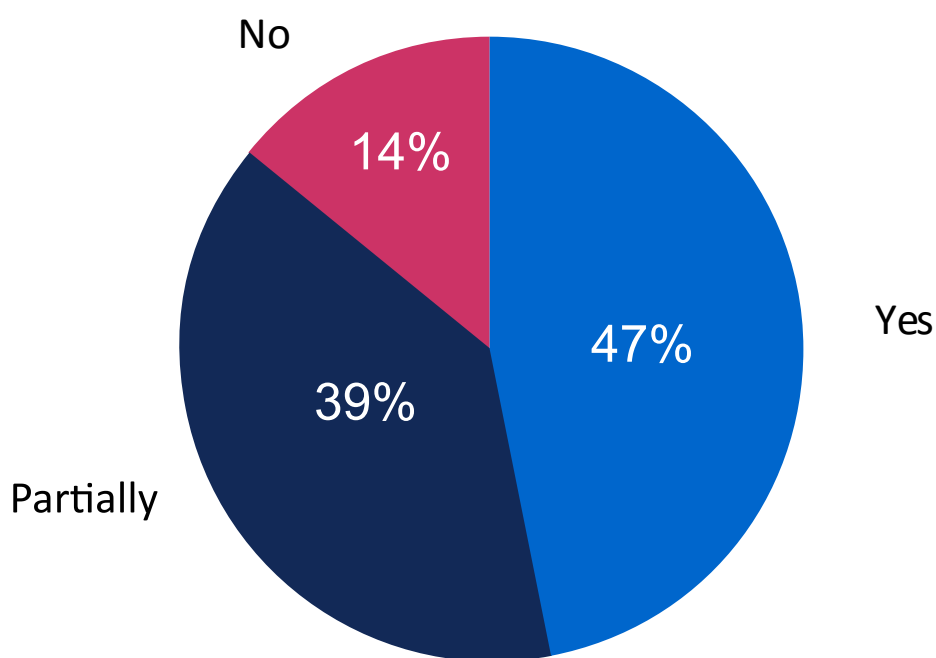
By contrast, just 14% of contact centres aren't able to do this. This suggests that, on the whole, the industry is adapting well to managing a variety of incoming contacts.

How are you currently mapping the customer journey?

Internal tools are the most common way to map the customer journey

For an overwhelming majority, internal tools were cited as the most common method for mapping the customer journey – with 42% of industry professionals claiming to use them.

This was followed by the use of a dedicated application by a technology vendor (9%) and the use of a consulting firm or agency (8%).

How are you currently mapping the customer journey?
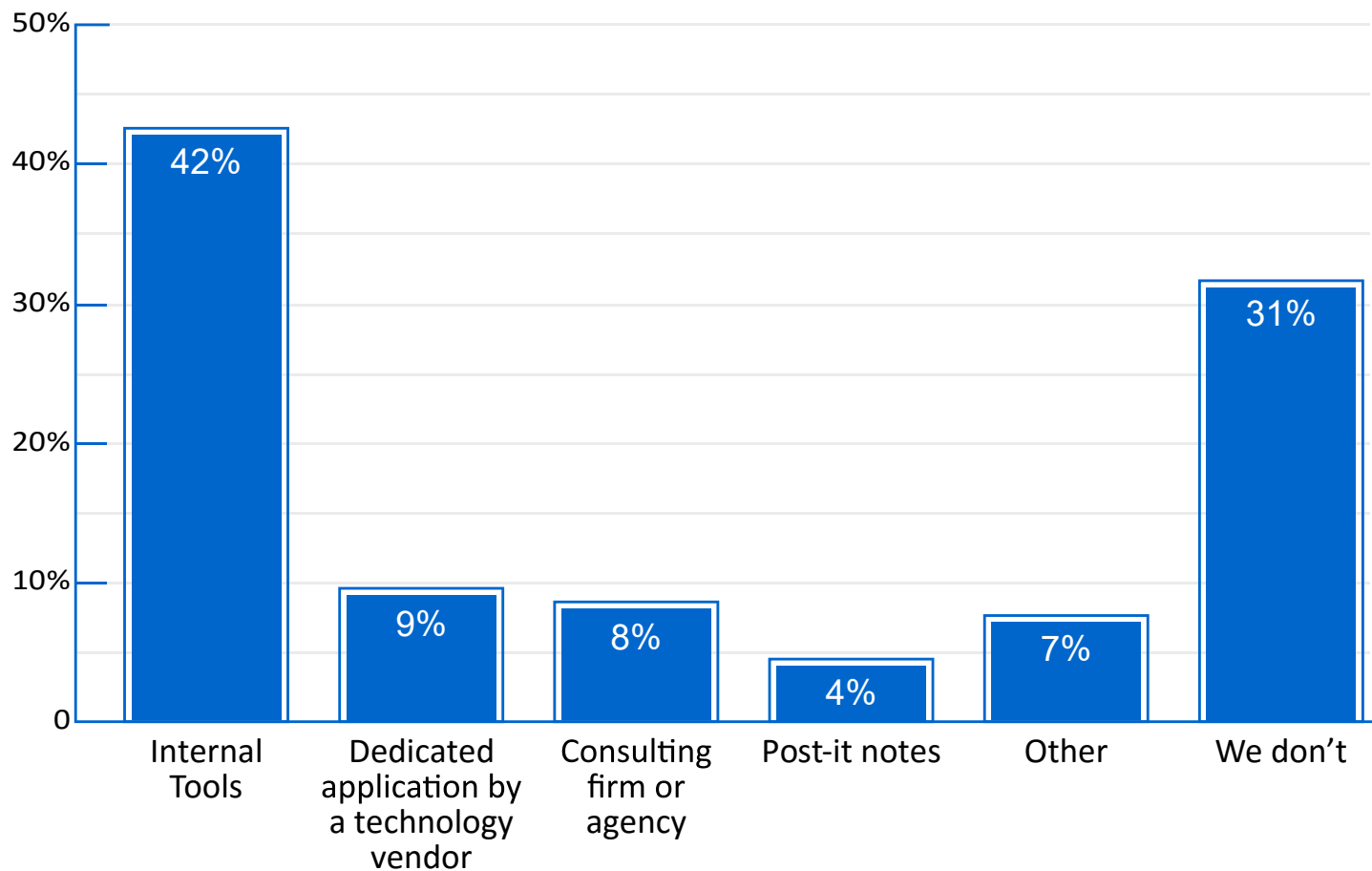
4% of contact centres are using post-it notes

The findings also revealed that 4% of contact centres are using post-it notes to map the customer journey.

While this does show a degree of resourcefulness, it is likely just a temporary stop-gap, which will be used to support their business case later on for investing in a more appropriate solution.

31% aren't mapping the customer journey at all

Meanwhile, a third of contact centre professionals have admitted that they aren't mapping the customer journey at all.

This is slightly alarming, given that this exercise can provide valuable insight into key pain points and bottlenecks – information that can be used to improve the overall customer experience.
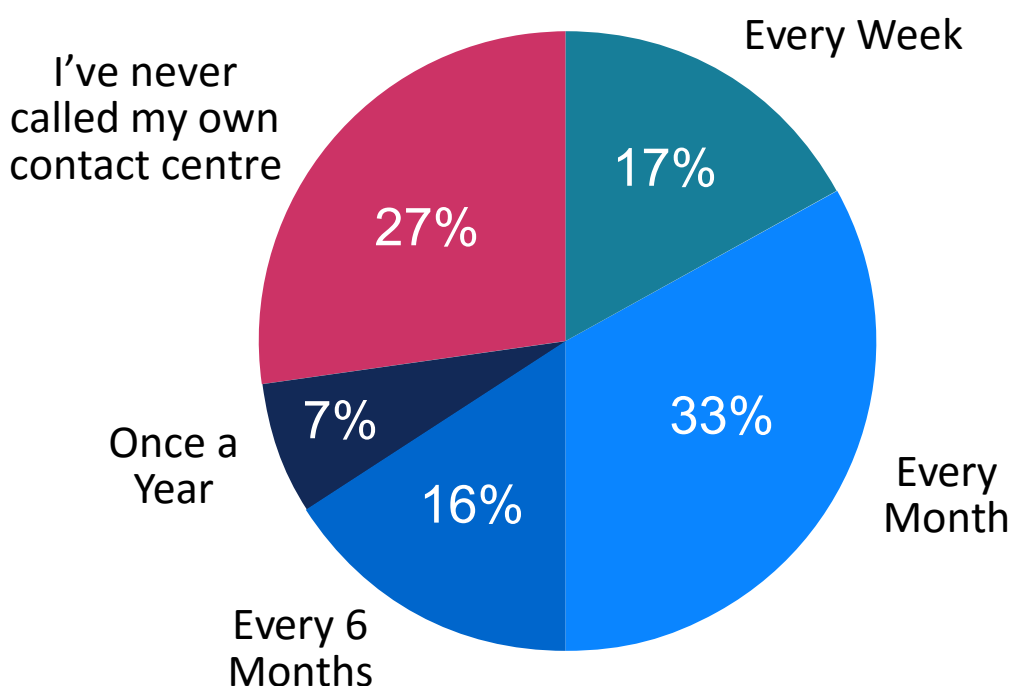
How often do you ring your own contact centre and experience the customer journey?

Calling your own contact centre can help you spot key customer pain points

Calling your own contact centre is a simple exercise which can help you to identify where your customer pain points might be.

It can also help you to spot IVR options that are no longer relevant, as well as inaccuracies and annoyances in your call-waiting messages.

How often do you ring your own contact centre and experience the customer journey?

Pie chart:
- Every Week: 17%
- Every Month: 33%
- Every 6 Months: 16%
- Once a Year: 7%
- I've never called my own contact centre: 27%

17% call their own contact centre every week

The findings showed that over half of contact centre professionals are seriously invested in the exercise of ringing their own contact centre – with 17% calling every week and 33% calling every month.

This was followed by 16% who call every 6 months, and a further 7% who make a habit of calling once a year.

27% have never called their own contact centre

Yet over a quarter of industry professionals have never called their own contact centre.

This worryingly suggests that a fair number of organisations are operating with little idea of how their contact centre experience really impacts their customers.

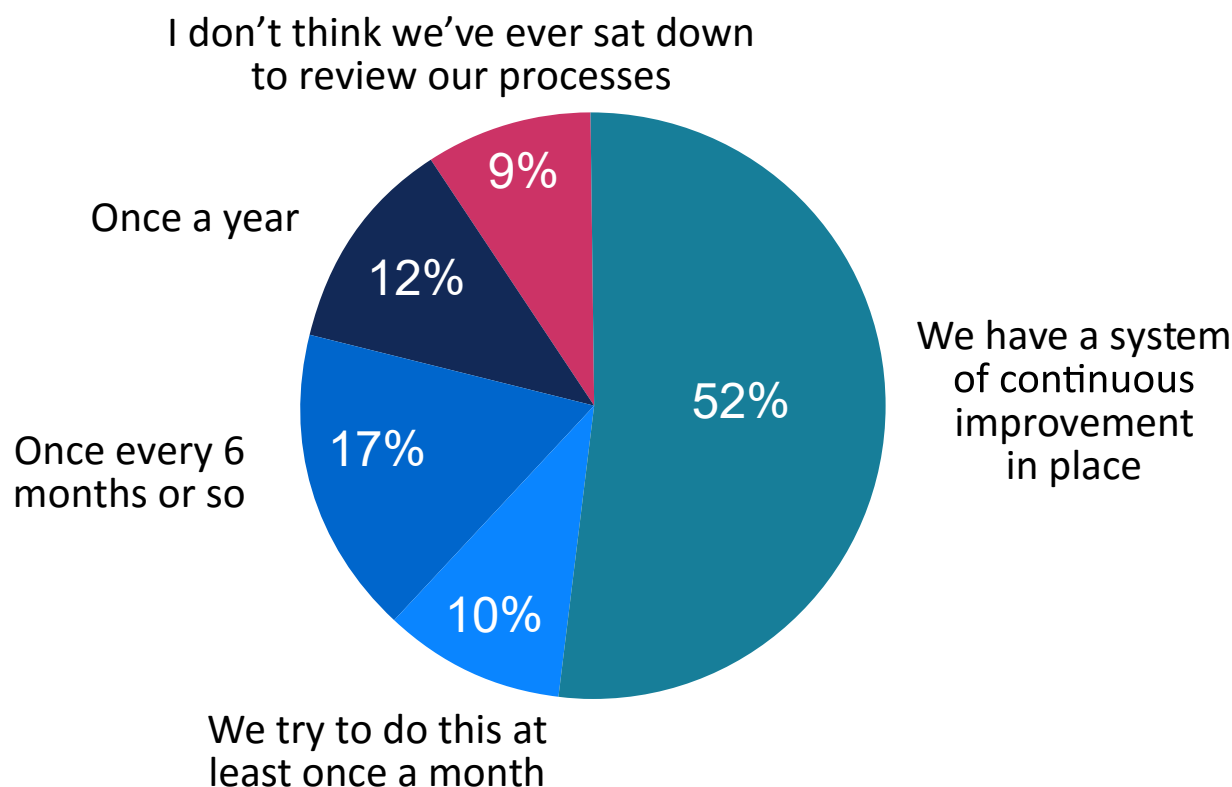# How Are Your Processes Supporting the Delivery of Exceptional Customer Service?

How often do you review and update your processes?

The industry has a proactive approach overall

Inefficient and broken processes can have a detrimental impact on the contact centre, costing time, money and (in the worst cases) customers.

The good news is that, overall, the industry seems to have a proactive approach to keeping processes up to date – and customers happy!

How often do you review and update your processes?

I don't think we've ever sat down to review our processes — **9%**

Once a year — **12%**

Once every 6 months or so — **17%**

We try to do this at least once a month — **10%**

We have a system of continuous improvement in place — **52%**

52% have a system of continuous improvement in place

The findings revealed that 52% of contact centres have a system of continuous improvement in place.

A further 10% try to review their processes at least once a month, while 17% complete the exercise once every 6 months or so.

9% have never sat down to review their processes

By contrast, 9% of industry professionals have never sat down to review their processes, and a further 12% admit that they only review their processes once a year.

In what time frame do you normally respond to customer complaints?
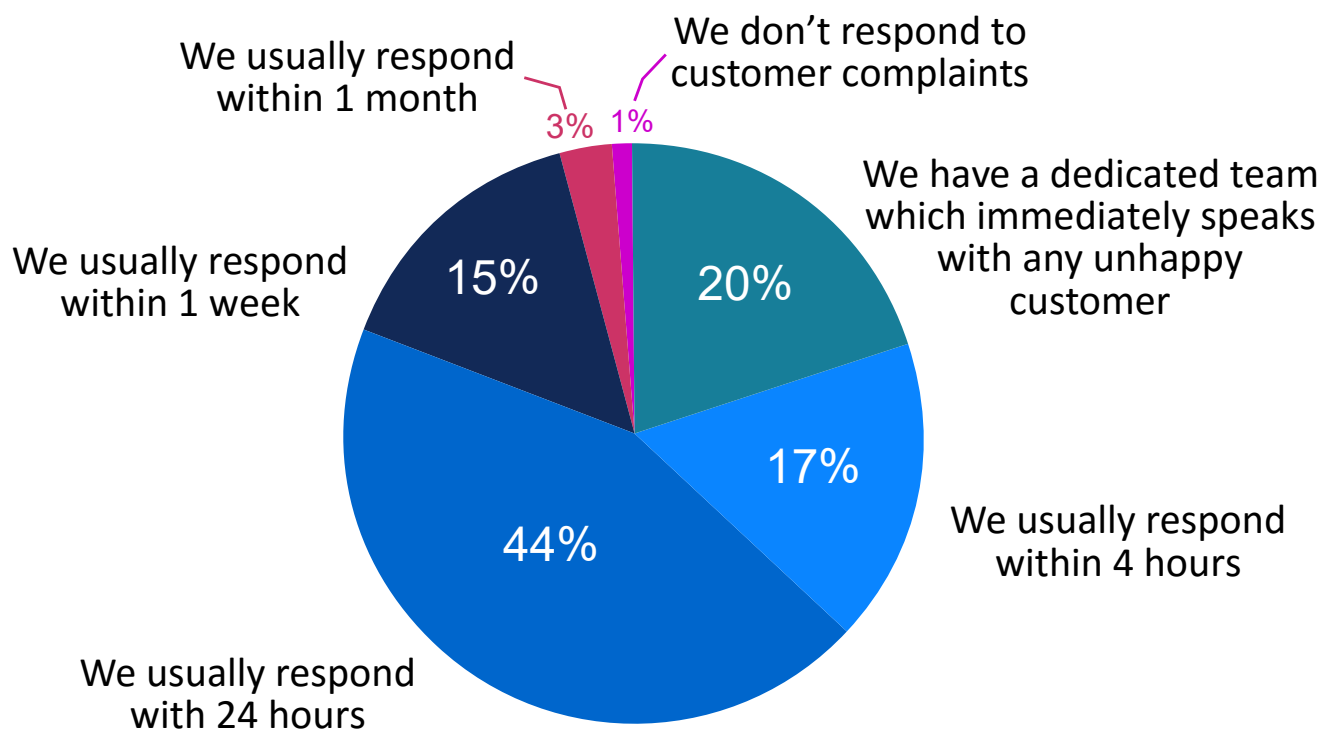
Fast response times are key to keeping loyal customers

It is near impossible to get everything right 100% of the time, what counts is what happens when things do go wrong.

The speed with which an organisation responds to a customer complaint can therefore make or break the customer experience (and their loyalty).

A fast response can also limit reputational damage, if you can get to the customer before they decide to air the issue on social media.

In what time frame do you normally respond to customer complaints?

- We usually respond within 1 month — 3%
- We don't respond to customer complaints — 1%
- We have a dedicated team which immediately speaks with any unhappy customer — 20%
- We usually respond within 4 hours — 17%
- We usually respond with 24 hours — 44%
- We usually respond within 1 week — 15%

The majority reply within a 24-hour time frame

The industry seems to have a firm grasp of this concept, with the majority replying to customers at some point within a 24-hour time frame.

The findings showed that 20% have a dedicated team which immediately speaks with any unhappy customer, while 17% usually respond within 4 hours, and a further 44% usually respond with 24 hours.

A fifth are being far too blasé about their response times

Unfortunately, around a fifth of the industry are being comparatively blasé about the matter – with 15% usually responding within 1 week, and a further 3% usually responding within 1 month.

1% of industry professionals even admitted that they don't respond to customer complaints at all!

How much time do you personally set aside each month to think and problem-solve (away from the day-to-day stresses of the contact centre)?

Constant "firefighting" against call volumes can lead to errors

Working in the heat of the contact centre floor, it is easy to get sucked into "firefighting" against call volumes all day, every day.

This type of behaviour can result in contact centre professionals making rash decisions (and mistakes) when problems arise.

A good way to avoid this is to schedule time into the week to step away from the contact centre floor and think through possible solutions.

How much time do you personally set aside each month to think and problem-solve *(away from the day-to-day stresses of the* contact centre)?

I don't — 18%
Less than an hour — 13%
More than one day — 18%
2 - 4 hours — 34%
One day — 17%
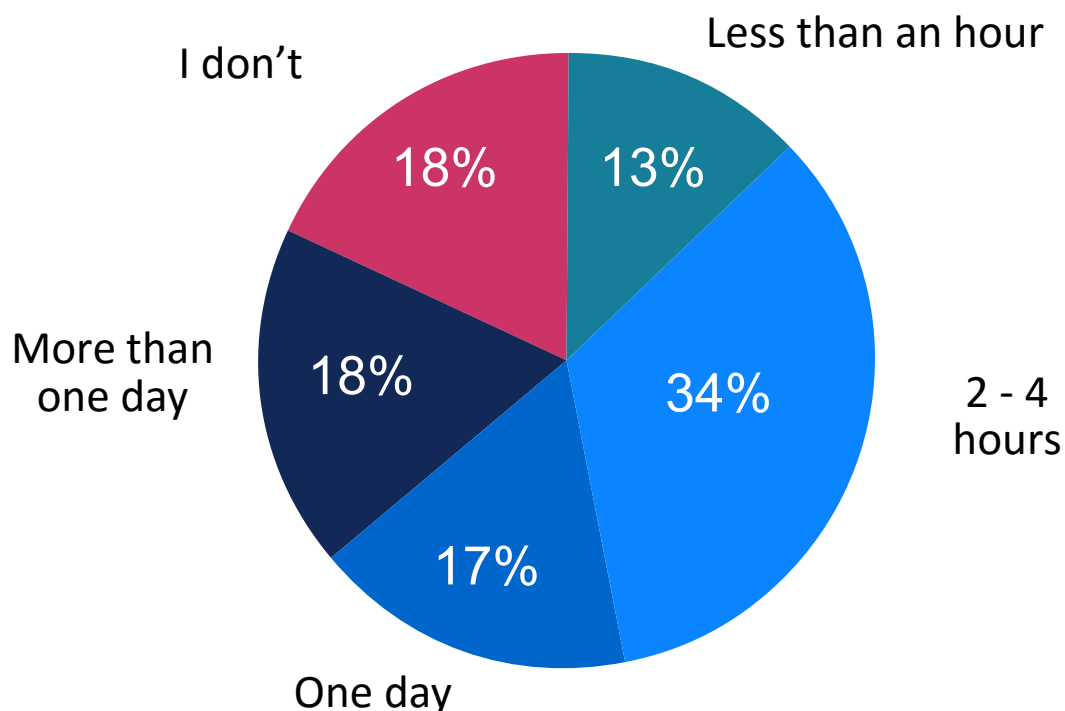
13% set aside less than an hour each month to problem-solve

Unfortunately, the findings showed that 13% of contact centre professionals set aside less than an hour per month for problem-solving activity, while 18% (almost a fifth of the industry) don't set aside any time for problem-solving at all.

This visible lack of strategic thinking time suggests that many organisations are surviving on a day-to-day basis – and not giving much thought to improving the customer experience they are delivering.

18% set aside more than one day each month for problem-solving activity

On the other end of the spectrum, some contact centre professionals have already built this thinking time into their routine – and are likely delivering a better customer experience as a result.

The findings revealed that 34% set aside 2–4 hours per month, while 17% set aside one day, and a further 18% set aside more than one day each month for
 problem-solving activity.

What key changes does your contact centre need to make in order to deliver exceptional customer service?

There is a recognised need to offer more channels

Contact centre professionals are clearly recognising the need for additional channels in their contact centre.

Here is an extract of these comments:

- "More channels of choice for the customer and advertise what we have at the moment to make customers aware."

- "We need to have all channels linked and talking with each other. So whatever channel a guest uses to contact us we can see a trail."

- "Channel of choice."

- "Start changing with the times, offer more social media options."

- "More customer self-service with an improved online presence."

- "Integrating all the media types like voice, email, and chat together, and keeping the agent updated about it before they address the customer."

- "More self-service, plus extra channels such as video."

- "Introduce social media and live chat."

Contact centres need better-trained staff to help them deliver their goals

A number of contact centre professionals also expressed the need for better-trained and more empowered staff to help them deliver exceptional customer service.

Here is an extract of these comments:

- "Internal training across all departments."

- "Upskilling the team."

- "Better, formal customer service training and development."

- "We need to prepare the employees and equip them with tools to make their job easier and have the ability to handle more complex tasks."

- "We need a cultural change driven by changing management styles."

- "We need to provide the agents with additional training and authorisation to offer the customers goodwill gestures such as a gift card."

- "Continuous agent training and increased quality assessment."

- "More investment in middle management."

- "Review quality regularly, raising the bar where appropriate and keeping a focus on First Contact Resolution (FCR)."

- "We need to focus on hiring people who are more equipped from the get go."

- "Improve frontline career paths to improve staff retention rates."

- "Spend more time on training."

- "Psychometric Assessment for placing agents."

- "We need to invest in the tools and systems to better coach and mentor agents."

- "Allow extra development time to improve internal systems to empower agents to be able to service customers to a much higher standard than they currently can."

Updated technology and processes will help improve the customer experience

Many contact centre professionals also expressed a need for updating their technology and processes to streamline their services and deliver a proactive customer experience.

Here is an extract of these comments:

- "Making sure each customer interaction is valued by all employees, from frontline agent to lead, to supervisor to manager."

- "Real-time in data and access."

- "Become more predictive of customer concerns and more responsive when they arise."

- "More Intelligent systems that speak to each other to handle all customer contacts, including social media."

- "Put more money into the technology."

- "Make contact with customers via apps or social media."

- "Embed a new CRM system across all products and services then link this to new contact centre technology to enable single customer view and automatic journey tracking."

- "Agility in technology transformation."

- "Keep moving forward with technology to support our customers' changes in their interaction with our business."

- "Complete WFM system incorporating workload allocation."

- "We need a complete cloud system, an 'all in one place' system."

- "Move towards omnichannel with fully integrating technology."

- "We need a better survey solution which focuses on the Voice of the Customer (VoC)."

- "Invest in technology to allow agents to have more meaningful conversations with customers."

- "Better website, mobile, chat, robust reporting, knowledge base and integration of tools."

- "We have too many outdated and independent programs for agents to use. We need a consolidated agent workstation."

- "We need to be keeping up with IT changes."

- "Personalisation and increasing speed of response and resolution times."

- "Upgrade technology and integrate the call centre into the rest of the organisation."

- "We need to simplify our processes."

- "We need skills-based call routing, omnichannel queuing, source-based routing to the same agents, as well as improved internal communication to engage our employees more."

- "Give more compelling data to other departments so that they can see how their decisions affect the customer,"

- "Overhaul and rebuild our IVR set-up."

- "More automation."

- "Integration of the various systems that are currently being used to provide a single customer view for the service agent. Also remove siloes as far as possible and simplify the structure of the call centre."

- "More internet service options for the customer who does not have time to pick up the phone."

- "Predictive analytics, data mining, and self-serve IVR."

Acknowledgements