



What Contact Centres Are Doing Right Now

(2017 Edition)

How Do You Compare?

A Call Centre Helper Research Paper

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What We Did

Throughout October 2017, Call Centre Helper readers were invited to take part in our annual contact centre survey.

In fact, we asked 39 questions to our industry professionals, to gather our greatest ever overview of the contact centre industry. This was done in partnership with: CallMiner, Genesys, NICE, Plantronics, Sabio and Serenova, who have all sponsored the report.

The aim of the survey was to capture a snapshot view of what contact centres are doing right now.

We also took the opportunity to compare the data with that collected in our 2014, 2015 and 2016 surveys.

Each year, the survey provides the latest and most valuable insights into the fundamental framework of the contact centre. In doing so, it covers everything from the most widely used initiatives and metrics to the technologies that have made it on to every manager's wish list.

Over 380 contact centre professionals took part, and we are delighted to share the results with you.

Fewer Contact Centres Are Multiskilling Advisors

For the second year in a row, the percentage of contact centres that multiskill advisors has decreased, dropping from 90.5% in 2015, to 80.4% in 2017.

These statistics are surprising, as many consider multiskilling advisors to be a good method of increasing advisor engagement, because switching channels takes away some of the repetitiveness that is so often associated with the advisor role. In addition, multiskilling adds flexibility to the contact centre operation, as advisors can be moved around to deal with varying contact volumes.

However, our findings suggest that contact centres perhaps lack the resources and time to conduct the necessary training. Or maybe more are preferring to designate separate teams to individual channels.

Email Is on the Rise, With Fewer Customers Using the Inbound Voice Channel

Since our annual survey began in 2014, every year has seen a rise in the percentage of contacts within the industry made via email.

This rise previously came after a decrease in use of other contact centre channels, such as webchat, letters and outbound voice. However, this year was different, as those channels held firm and the percentage of inbound voice contacts decreased.

This trend has been predicted within the industry for many years and signals that more people are becoming comfortable with using other channels.

Most Contact Centres Have Not Moved to the Cloud – But It Won't Be Long

Our survey suggests that a little over a fifth, 21.0%, of contact centres have moved to the cloud. But almost three times the number are either in-process, in-planning or considering implementation.

This leaves just 40.9% of contact centres that are not considering the transformation from an on-premise solution.

Contact Centres Are Often Ignored During Digital Transformation Efforts

Less than a fifth of our participants consider their contact centre to be an integral part of corporate digital transformation efforts, 18.3% to be exact.

In fact, almost 14% confessed that their organisation has never involved or even consulted their contact centre in the process, despite the potential knock-on impact on operations.

This is also interesting because the contact centre is essentially a hub for the Voice of the Customer (VoC). By communicating with customers day-in, day-out, it is those in the contact centre who are likely to have the greatest insight into customer expectations, desires and behaviours. So ignoring this “resource” seems questionable.

The Take-Up of Interaction Analytics Is Expected to Rise

Over 80% of our contact centre professionals expect the presence of interaction analytics to increase within the industry over the next five to ten years.

The majority of the 80% thought that this would “definitely” be the case, while the others agreed, but only “to some extent”.

If this were to be the case, it would fit the current trend, as the take-up of the technology has increased from 9.2% to 13.4% in the past year.

Last-Minute Time Off Is Continuing to Frustrate Schedulers

There are a number of issues that make life harder for the Workforce Management (WFM) team when scheduling, such as accommodating schedule preferences, covering night shifts and shift swaps.

However, the biggest gripe that our contact centre professionals reported was having to handle last-minute time-off requests, with 55.0% having a problem with the issue.

This could be why more contact centres are turning to more innovative ways of scheduling staff. For instance, there are now over 15% more contact centres using annualised hours than there were two years ago.

Over Three-Quarters of Contact Centres Now Use Customer Journey Mapping

According to our survey, 76.6% of organisations are now mapping out the customer journey, in an effort to enhance the overall customer experience.

While this is good in terms of designing great customer service at every journey touchpoint, it was surprising to find that only 20.9% of organisations use personas, given the high percentage now mapping customer journeys.

Personas can help to bring the customer journey to life and provide more of an understanding of the emotional experience at each touchpoint.

Background Noise Is Becoming Less of an Issue

In a 2014 poll, we found that only 11% of contact centres received no complaints – from advisors, customers and the quality team – about background noise. However, this seems to have changed.

In the space of just three years, this figure has risen to 55%, a significant improvement.

This is great in terms of customer service quality, and it either corresponds with the developments in headset technology or signals that contact centres are doing more to improve acoustics.

How Does Your Contact Centre Compare?

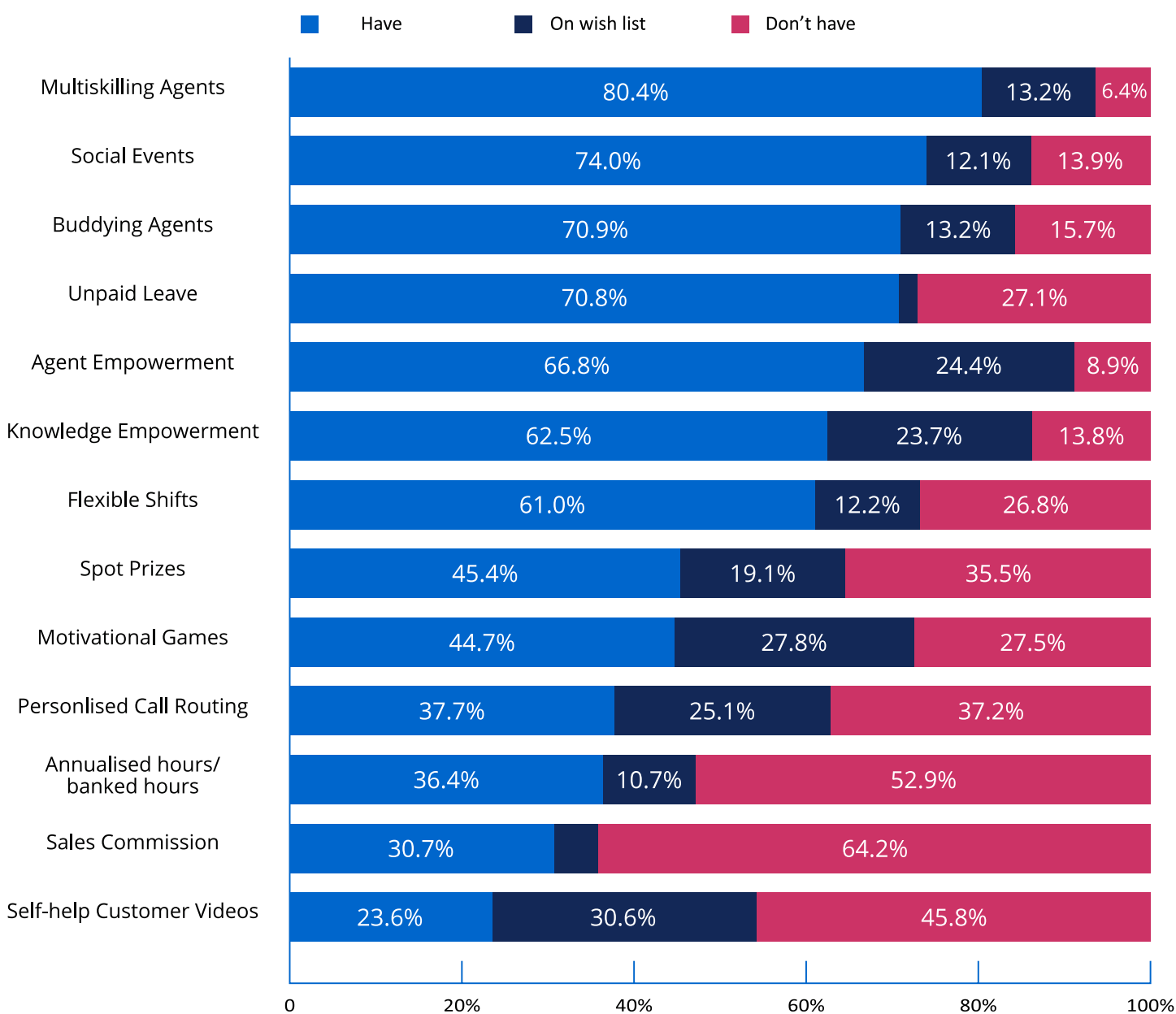
What Initiatives Do You Currently Have in the Contact Centre?

Focus Continues to Shift Towards Agent Empowerment

The results also show that the industry is doing more to boost advisor empowerment, with over 5% more contact centres believing that they actively boost agent authority, compared with 2016/2015.

2017 Results

What initiatives do you currently have in the contact centre?



This could involve anything from giving advisors the freedom to apply common-sense script adherence on the phone to involving the team in big decisions within the contact centre environment.

2015 and 2016 Results

What initiatives do you currently have in the contact centre?

	2017	2016	2015
Multiskilling Agents	80.4 %	88.2 %	90.5%
Social Events	74.0 %	77.1 %	77.3%
Buddying Agents	70.9 %	71.0 %	71.5 %
Unpaid Leave	70.8 %	65.2 %	66.4 %
Knowledge Champions	66.8 %	63.3 %	66.2%
Flexible Shifts	62.5 %	61.0 %	59.7%
Agent Empowerment	61.0 %	61.0 %	61.6%
Spot Prizes	45.4 %	51.5 %	52.8%
Motivational Games	44.7 %	50.2%	47.1%
Annualised / banked hours	37.7 %	36.0 %	30.9 %
Personalised Call Routing	36.4 %	33.2 %	38.2%
Sales Commision	30.7 %	26.7 %	36.0%
Self-help Customer Videos	23.6 %	23.0 %	23.8 %

However, while agent empowerment initiatives are on the rise, other schemes to boost engagement are not as popular in 2017 as they once were. These include: buddying advisors, knowledge champions and motivational games.

Annualised Hours Is Becoming an Increasingly Popular Method of Scheduling Advisors

The percentage of contact centres that schedule staff using an annualised hours scheme has jumped from 30.9% to 36.4% in just two years.

Annualised hours is an initiative where the number of hours that an advisor works is contracted on a yearly basis, instead of each week. This helps to limit overtime costs, reduce the cost of temporary resources and enhances advisor advocacy.

The use of other initiatives including personalised call routing, flexible shifts and unpaid leave has also increased over the last couple of years.

The Number of Contact Centres Arranging Social Events Is Decreasing

Organising social events for the contact centre team can be a great way of building morale and cohesion. However, the number of contact centres doing so has decreased in the past year.

3.1% less contact centres are running social events than in 2016, which signals a drop for the second consecutive year. These statistics are surprising, as social events can help to contribute to an improved working atmosphere.

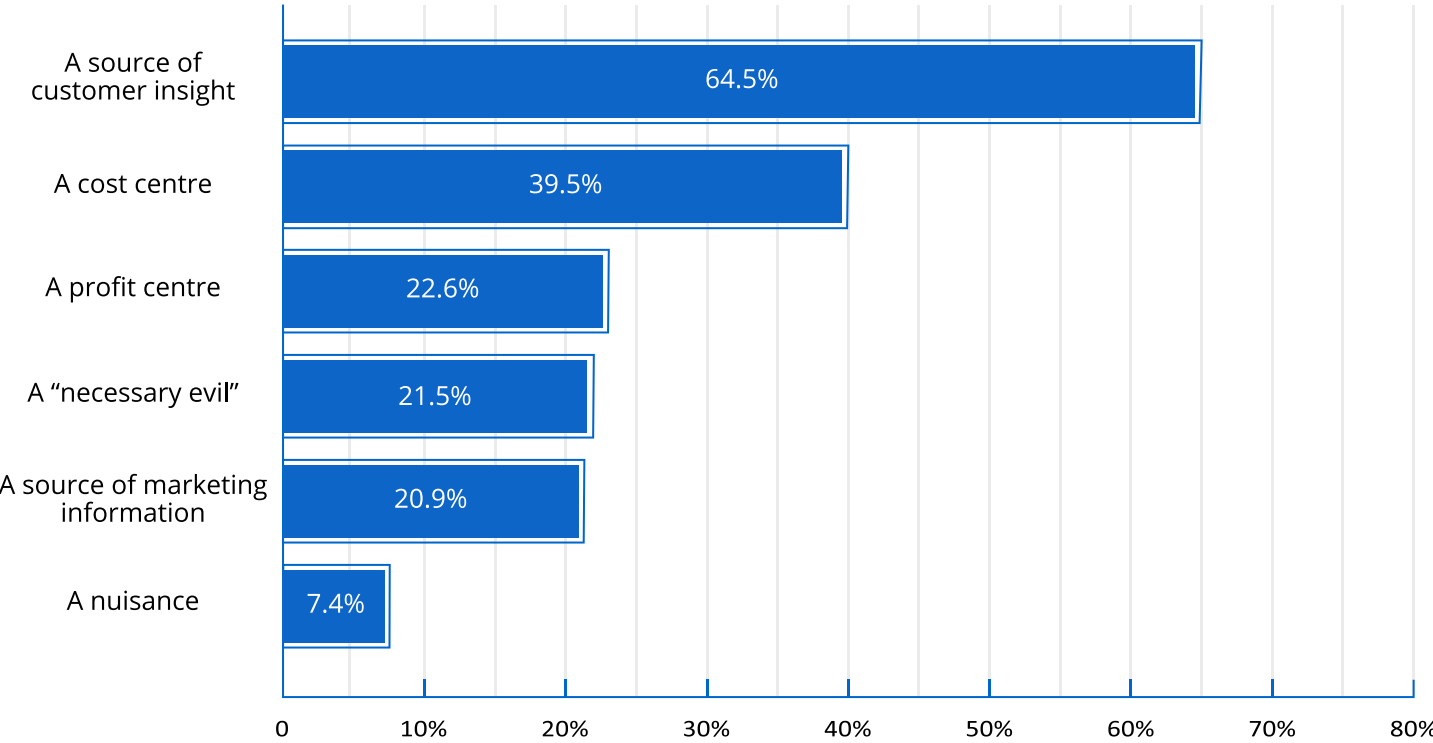
How Is Your Contact Centre Perceived by the Rest of the Business?

Most Companies Acknowledge That the Contact Centre Is a Great Source of Customer Insight

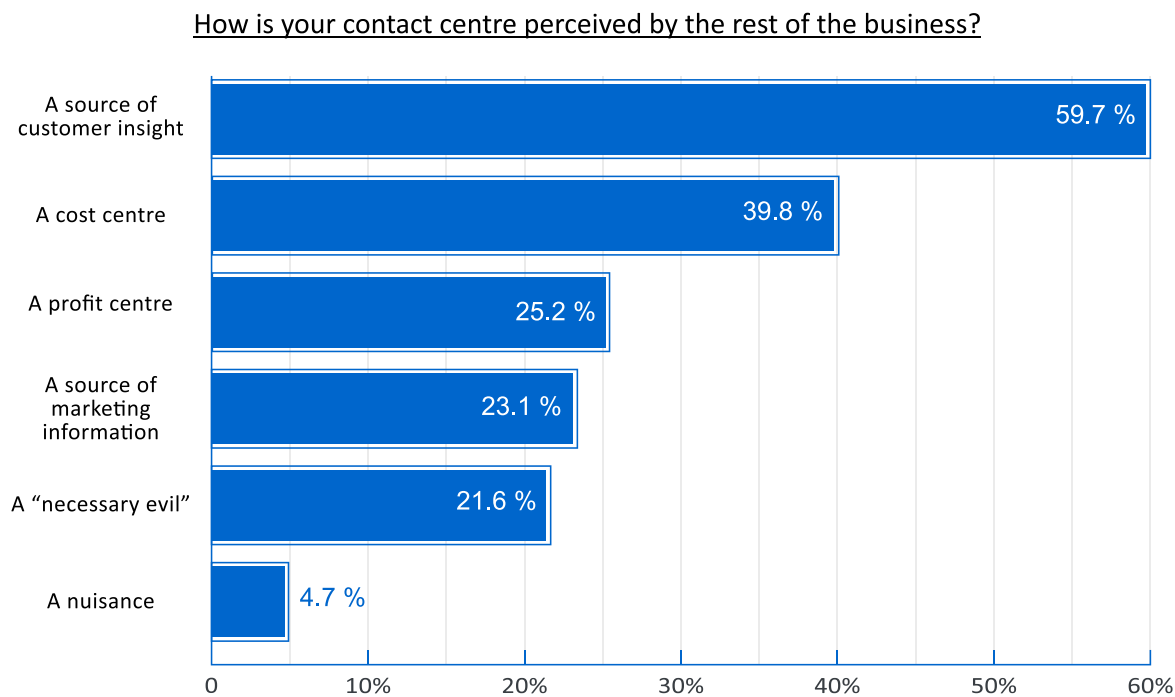
64.5% of organisations view the contact centre as a source of customer insight, a slight increase on last year’s figures.

2017 Results

How is your contact centre perceived by the rest of the business?



2016 Results



While it is good to see this figure increasing, it is still surprisingly low considering that is in the contact centre where most customer interactions take place. It is advisors who are speaking to callers, getting to know their valuable preferences.

More Organisations View the Contact Centre as a “Cost Centre” Rather Than a “Profit Centre”

In keeping with last year’s results, almost 40% of industry professionals believe that their contact centre is viewed as merely a compulsory expenditure by the wider business, believing it to be a “cost centre” rather than a source of profit.

While this isn’t a surprise, it does highlight that some businesses may be ignoring the valuable insights that the contact centre could bring to a company.

Negative Perceptions Are Still Being Associated With the Contact Centre

The feedback from this year’s results highlights that negative perceptions of the contact centre still circulate in many companies, and may even be rising.

For example, in just one year, the percentage of people who stated that their contact centre was viewed as “a nuisance” grew from 4.7% to 7.4%. This is all while the number of those who stated that their contact centre was viewed as “a necessary evil” stayed much the same as in 2016.

This ill-feeling could contribute to the lack of budget that impacts many contact centres, as will be discussed on page 17.

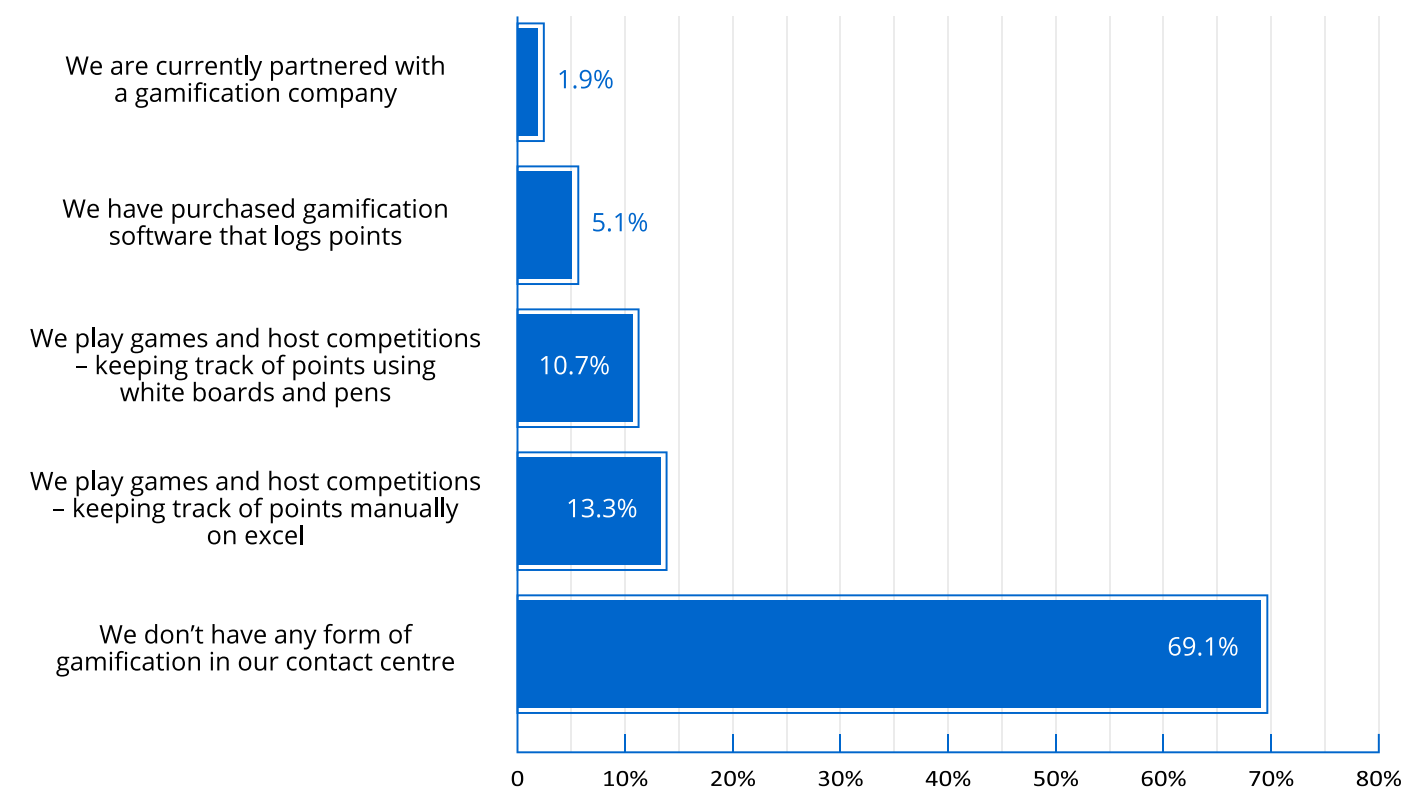
Are You Using Gamification in Your Contact Centre?

The Majority of Contact Centres Are Not Using Gamification

As is evident in the table below, 69.1% of contact centres do not use any form of gamification to help motivate, engage and energise advisors.

2017 Results

Are you using gamification in your contact centre?



However, 5.1% of contact centres have purchased gamification software that logs points, and a small percentage (1.9%) have even partnered with a gamification company.

Gamification software helps to monitor an advisor’s performance while rewarding them with instant feedback when tasks have been completed. By logging points, the software also indicates which advisors deserve rewards and recognition and which may require additional training.

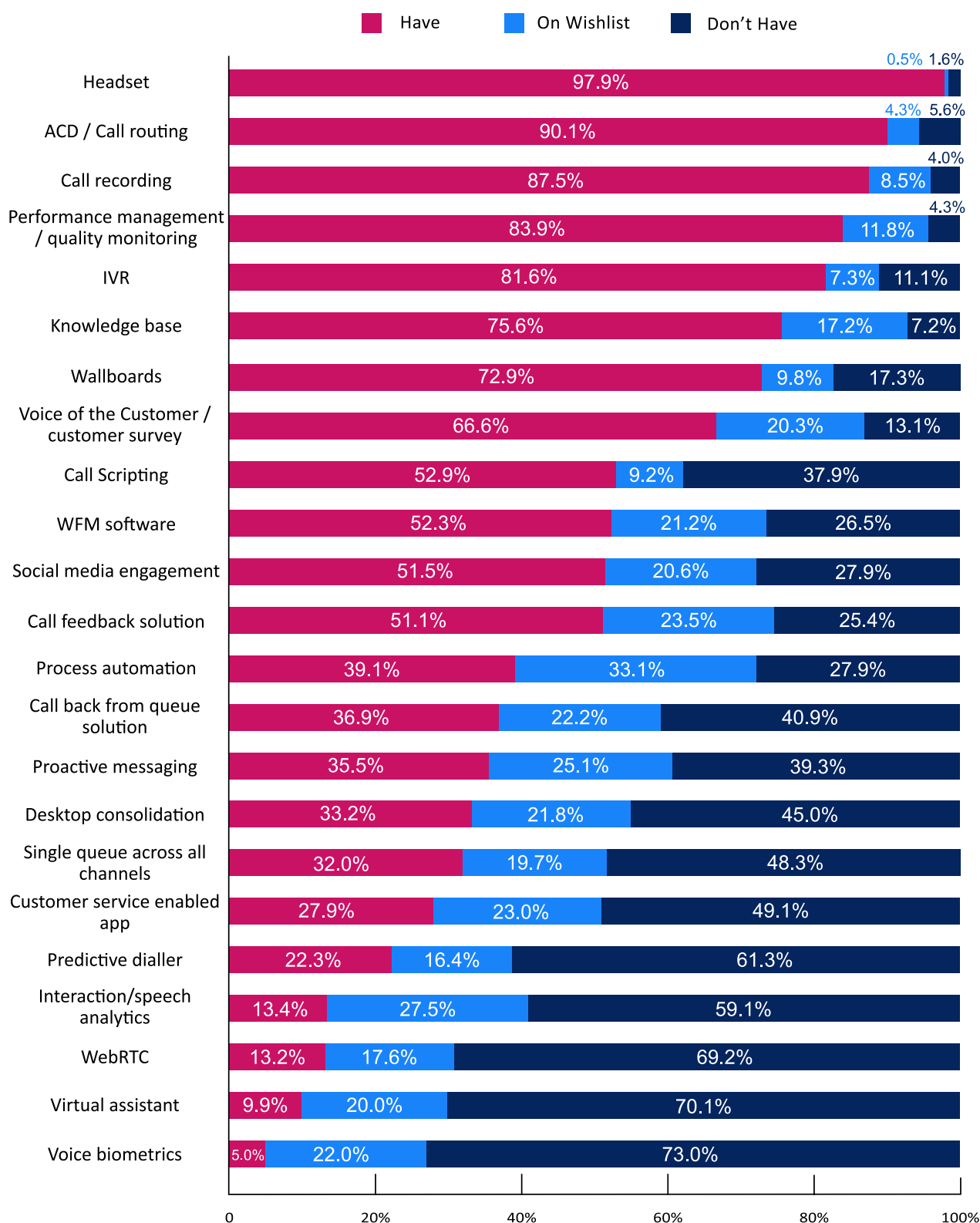
What Technology Do You Have in Your Contact Centre?

Almost 40% of Contact Centres Have Now Installed Process Automation Technology

Last year, we reported that process automation was high on the wish list of industry professionals, and it appears that, in many cases, those wishes have come true.

2017 Results

What technology do you have in your contact centre?



2017 and 2016 Results

What technology do you have in your contact centre?

	2017	2016
Headset	97.9%	98.5%
ACD / Call Routing	90.1%	90.0%
Call recording	87.5 %	85.8 %
Performance Management / quality monitoring	83.9%	82.3%
IVR	81.6 %	79.5%
Knowledge base	75.6 %	71.6%
Wallboards	72.9 %	68.6%
Voice of the customer / customer survey	66.6 %	59.8 %
Call Scripting	52.9 %	48.3%
WFM Software	52.3%	46.9%
Social media engagement	51.5 %	N/A
Call feedback solution	51.1 %	N/A
Process automation	39.1 %	36.3%
Call back from queue solution	36.9 %	31.4 %
Proactive Messaging	35.5 %	N/A
Desktop consolidation	33.2 %	22.3%
Single queue across all channels	32.0 %	24.1 %
Customer service enabled app	27.9 %	N/A
Predictive dialler	22.3 %	22.0%
Interaction / speech analytics	13.4%	9.2%
WebRTC	13.2 %	N/A
Virtual assistant	9.9 %	N/A
Voice biometrics	5.0 %	5.0%

In just a year, the figures of those who have implemented process automation in their contact centre has risen from 36.3% to 39.1%.

Other technologies that have gained in popularity over the past 12 months include interaction analytics, a call-back from queue solution and desktop consolidation.

More Contact Centres Are Using Call Scripting

While contact centres are often encouraged to give advisors more freedom on the phone, there has been a contradictory increase in those using call scripting.

In fact, the percentage of contact centres using call scripting has risen from 48.3% to 52.9% – a rise of almost 5%.

A Customer Knowledge Base Is Now a Common Contact Centre Practice

One technology that has seen a large increase in implementation is the contact centre's knowledge base.

In 2016, 68.6% of contact centres reported to have installed such technology, a figure that has risen to 75.6 in just a single year.

This perhaps coincides with the increased focus on personalising the customer experience within the industry.

What Barriers Stop You From Running Your Dream Contact Centre?

Lack of Budget Is the Main Barrier to Improving the Contact Centre... Again

Over three-quarters of contact centres reported that budget is holding them back from running their ideal operation.

What barriers stop you from running your dream contact centre?

	2017	2016	2015
Budget	76.8%	80.0%	67.4%
Need new technology	46.9%	42.0%	39.9%
Conflicting business priorities	40.7%	39.7%	31.3%
Unpaid Leave	39.1%	N/A	N/A
Broken processes	38.0%	31.5%	27.9%
Technology not joined up	36.4%	35.9%	35.4%
Management buy-in	36.1%	35.9%	28.1%
Lack of time / human resources	29.9%	27.8%	24.5%
Lack of skills / it's too complicated for our existing team	23.2%	20.3%	15.0%
Agent buy-in	18.6%	14.2%	16.5 %
Floor space	18.3%	N/A	N/A
Dealing with new channels	16.4%	10.5%	10.7%
Writing a business case	14.3%	N/A	N/A
Wrong agent targets	10.8%	N/A	N/A

This, combined with the second biggest hindrance reported, the need for new technology, signals that many contact centres are struggling to evolve.

However, the percentage of industry professionals that reported budget as being a significant issue in the contact centre has decreased.

Broken Processes Are a Growing Issue in the Contact Centre

While the issue of budget may be fading, slowly, almost every other suggested barrier appears to have become more prominent within the industry over the past twelve months.

In particular, the number reporting broken processes is growing. Now 39.1% of our survey participants report this as an obstacle, compared to just 31.5% in 2016 and 27.9% in 2015.

Other hurdles that frustrate our contact centre professionals include: conflicting business priorities, management buy-in and the lack of skills available.

Staff Shortages Continue to Rise

For a second consecutive year, the percentage of contact centres reporting that low staff numbers are acting as a hurdle to providing great customer service has increased.

Since 2015, the reported figure has risen by over a sixth, from 24.5% to 30.0%, which is particularly surprising given the increase in uptake of WFM technology. If implemented correctly, this should provide the contact centre with an accurate figure for the number of advisors needed.

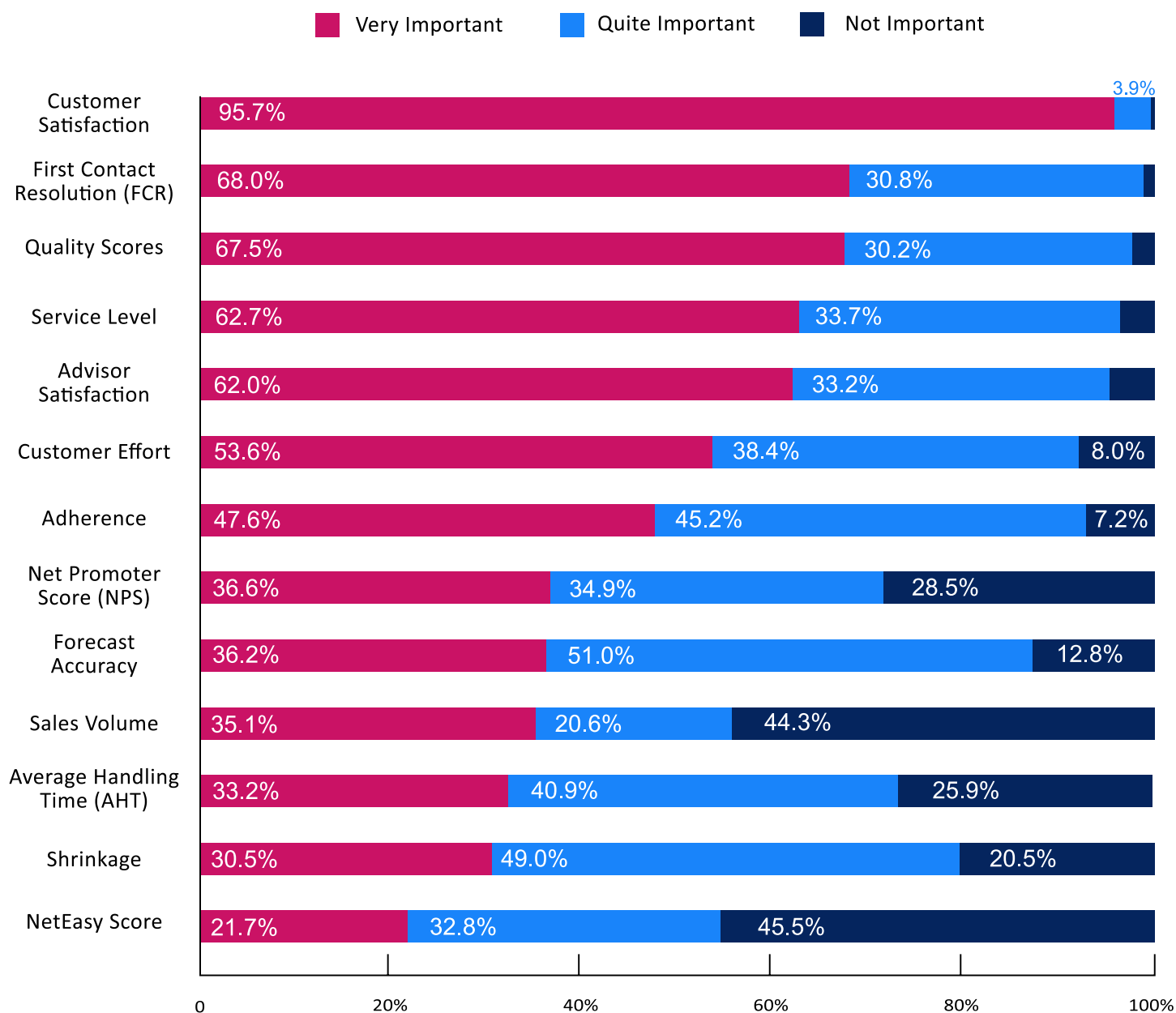
What Are the Most Important Contact Centre Metrics?

Customer Satisfaction Remains the King of Contact Centre Metrics

Despite the fact that Customer Satisfaction (CSat) is a very old metric, the vast majority (95.7%) of contact centre professionals believe it to be a “very important” metric.

2017 Results

What are the most important contact centre metrics?



2017, 2016 and 2015 Results

What initiatives do you currently have in the contact centre?

	2017	2016	2015
Multiskilling Agents	80.4 %	88.2 %	90.5%
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Spot Prizes	45.4 %	51.5 %	52.8%
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Self-help Customer Videos	23.6 %	23.0 %	23.8 %

In fact, the number of those who asserted this has grown by almost 5% since 2015, with an even smaller percentage of participants saying that it was “not important”.

Other metrics that have grown in popularity since last year include First Contact Resolution (FCR), Net Promoter Score (NPS) and Customer Effort.

Fewer Industry Professionals Believe That Service Level Is a “Very Important” Metric

The number of contact centre professionals who said that they would consider service level as a “very important” metric has decreased from 70.0% to 62.7% in just twelve months.

While many contact centres view the industry standard service level of 80% of calls answered in 20 seconds as a standard industry expectation, these findings suggest that others are beginning to think otherwise.

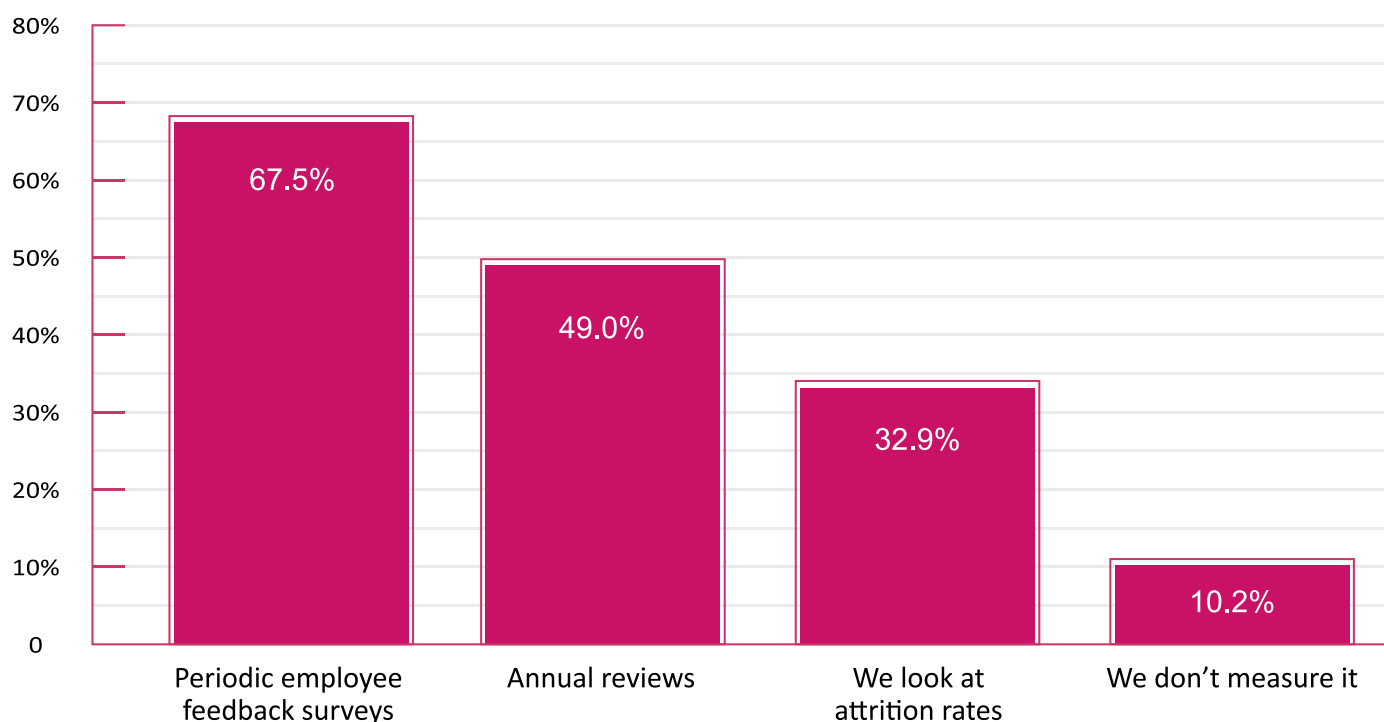
Those who are thinking in this way question the impact of service level on CSat and could argue that spending more time on correctly handling a call would please customers more.

How Are You Measuring Employee Engagement?

Two-Thirds of Contact Centres Use Periodic Employee Feedback Surveys to Measure Engagement

As highlighted in the graphic below, 67.5% of contact centres use periodic employee feedback surveys to measure employee engagement.

How are you measuring employee engagement?



However, many contact centres don't stop there, combining these periodic surveys with annual reviews (49.0%) to gain insight into engagement on an individual basis.

Some contact centres may also be looking at attrition rates alongside other methods of measuring engagement. This will provide some "hard evidence" into how varying advisor engagement affects staff turnover.

Over 10% of Contact Centres Don't Measure Employee Engagement at All

With the percentage of industry professionals categorising advisor satisfaction as a "very important metric" growing by 13.6% in the past year, it is surprising that some contact centres don't measure employee engagement.

In fact, 10.2% of contact centres don't gauge or measure employee engagement at all, not even by checking attrition rates.

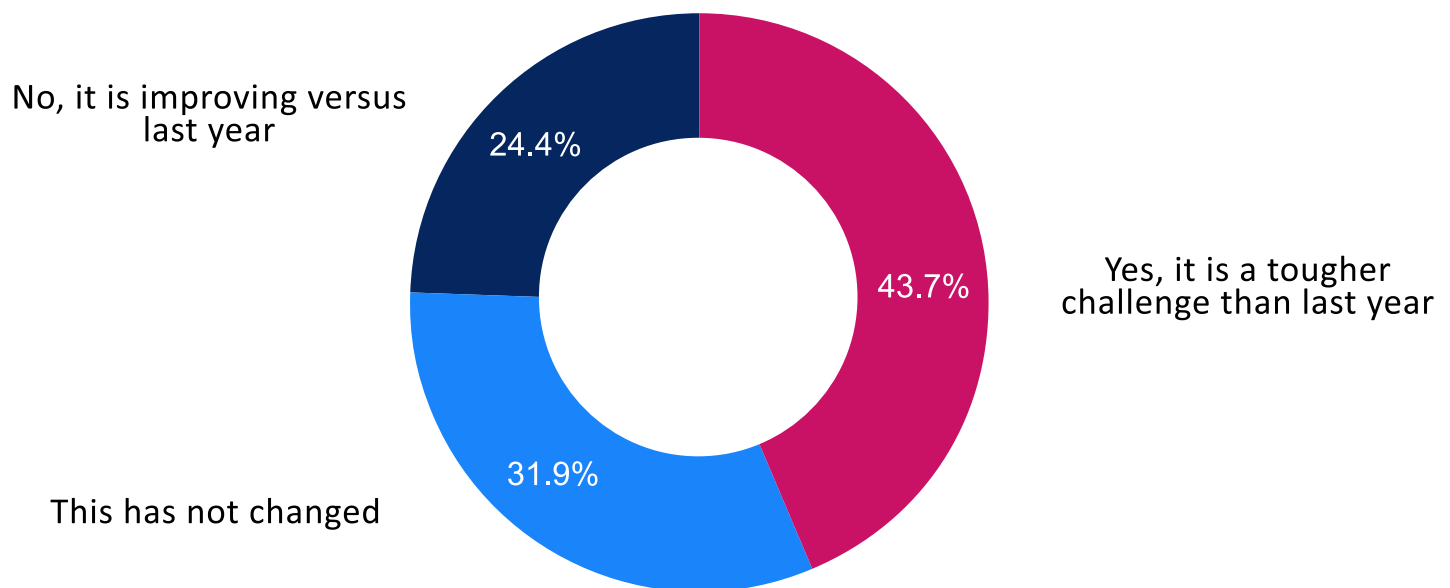
It is surprising that so many contact centres choose not to do this, as measuring engagement and checking how the team has reacted to certain changes on the contact centre floor provides insight into advisor motivation and service quality and can be an indicator of future behaviour.

Is Advisor Recruitment and Retention an Issue for Your Organisation?

Recruitment Is Becoming More Challenging

43.7% of our industry professionals reported that recruitment was becoming an increasing problem in their contact centre, as shown below.

Is advisor recruitment and retention an issue for your organisation?



While a high percentage stated that there hadn't been a change (31.9%), the volume of participants who state that recruitment is a growing issue is concerning.

Ideally, contact centres should look for advisors who already have strong social skills, are emotionally intelligent and are good problem solvers.

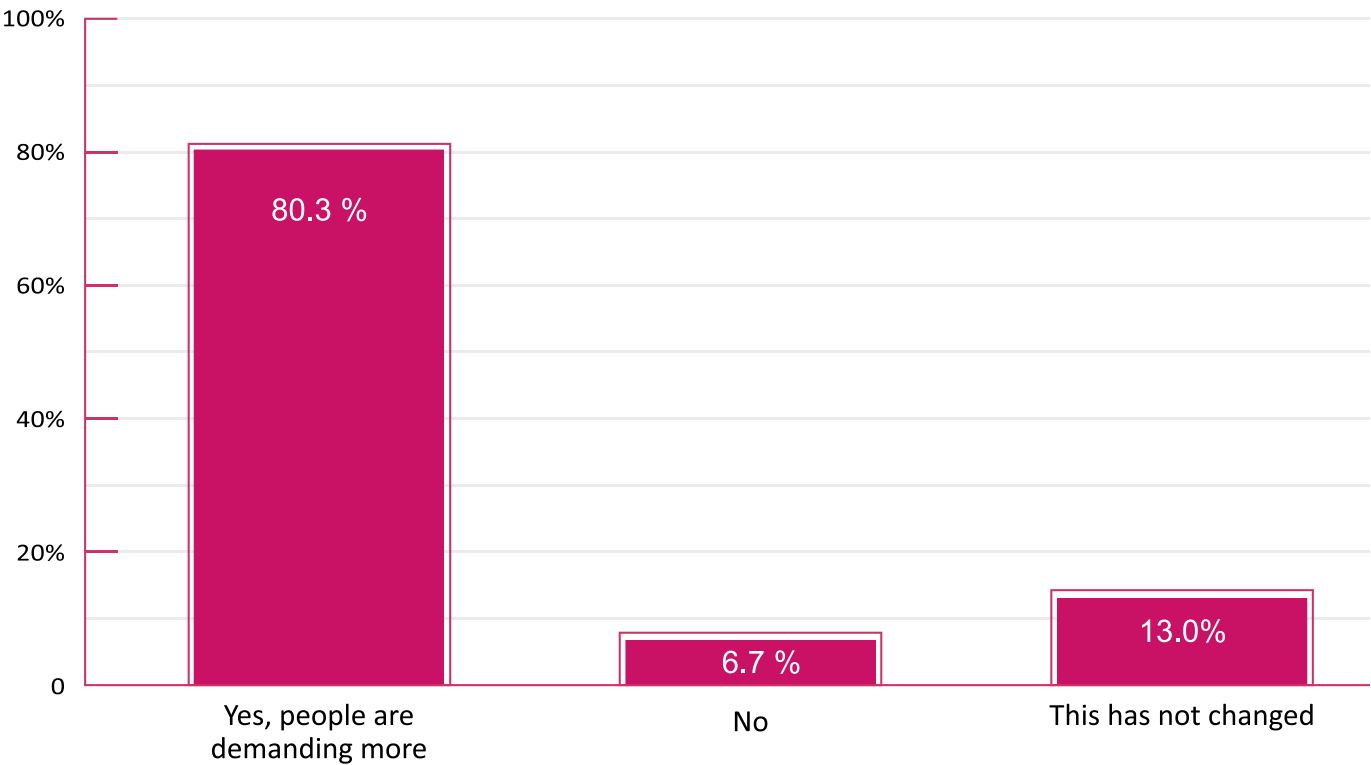
However, if the pool of potential advisors is shrinking, contact centres might have to begin to increase their focus on retraining staff and continuous advisor coaching.

Do You Find That Your Customers' Expectations Are Growing? And Are Bad Experiences More Magnified Than Before?

Customers Are Demanding More From Contact Centres, Say Industry Professionals

Over four-fifths of our survey participants believe that customer expectations are growing, which has increased demand on their contact centre.

Do you find that your customers' expectations are growing?



This is likely because when certain brands do one thing exceptionally well, customers begin to expect others to do the same.

However, this does not seem to be a contact centre-specific issue, as it affects the entire organisation. For example, offering a one-day delivery was once a good way to exceed customer expectations, but now many see it as standard practice.

Furthermore, when it comes to social media, most believe that bad experiences are now more magnified than ever.

Omnichannel

The omnichannel chapter is sponsored by Genesys



Genesys powers more than 25 billion of the world's best customer experiences each year.

Over 10,000 companies in more than 100 countries trust our #1 customer experience platform to drive great business outcomes and create lasting relationships. Genesys believe their success comes from connecting employee and customer conversations on any channel, every day.

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Experience communication as it should be: fluid, instinctive and profoundly empowering.

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What Is Your Mix of Contact Channels?

Inbound Voice Contacts Are Beginning to Decrease

For the first time since this survey began in 2014, the percentage of inbound voice contacts that make up the overall number of contacts in the contact centre has decreased.

What is your mix of Contact Channels?

	2017	2016	2015	2014
Voice - Inbound	55.9 %	62.0 %	55.7 %	50.0 %
Email	18.8 %	15.2 %	14.8 %	12.8 %
Voice - Outbound	14.3 %	14.0 %	17.0 %	18.2 %
Webchat	3.9 %	3.0 %	3.0 %	4.2 %
Social Media	2.4 %	1.6 %	1.8 %	2.7 %
Letters	1.8 %	1.6 %	3.6 %	5.2 %
SMS	1.1 %	0.9 %	1.2 %	3.4 %
Video Chat	0.1 %	0.2 %	0.2 %	0.2 %
Other	1.7 %	1.5 %	2.7 %	3.3 %

In fact, in the past 12 months, inbound voice contacts have decreased by 6.1%. This now shows a clear shift, as customers start to move from voice to digital channels.

The case for this grows stronger when it is considered that contact volumes as a percentage of overall contacts grew on email, webchat, social media and SMS.

The Rise of Email Continues

Despite all the hype around webchat, email has seen the biggest growth of all digital channels.

In fact, the percentage of the overall contact volumes taken up by emails has grown by 3.6% over the most recent 12-month period.

This highlights how customers are continuing to enjoy the privacy and convenience of email, while it doesn't require too much effort on the customer's part and can be read and answered at a convenient time.

Video Chat Is Not Becoming a Mainstream Channel

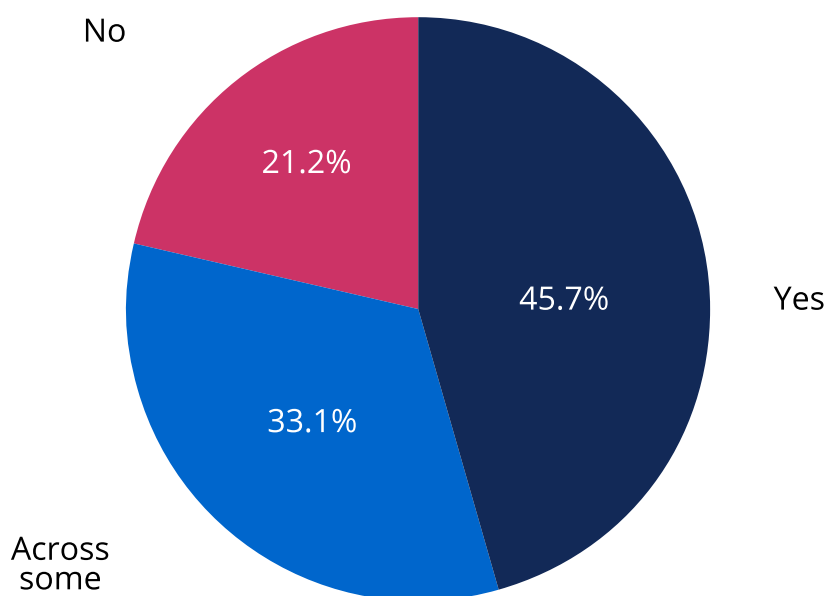
From 2014 to 2016, the popularity of video chat seemingly didn't grow, taking up just 0.2% of overall contact volumes, and now it seems to be decreasing.

Do Your Customers Receive Consistent Service Across All Contact Centre Channels?

Less Than Half of Contact Centres Provide Consistent Service Across All Channels

Our results show that just 45.7% of industry professionals believe that their contact centre currently provides consistent service across all its channels.

Do your customers receive consistent service across all contact centre channels?



While this figure may seem low, with the fall in multiskilling advisors, it is not surprising. After all, a successful multichannel experience is only possible with the right talent in place.

In addition, more than a fifth of our contact centre professionals believe that the service they provide is not equal, in terms of its quality, across any of its channels.

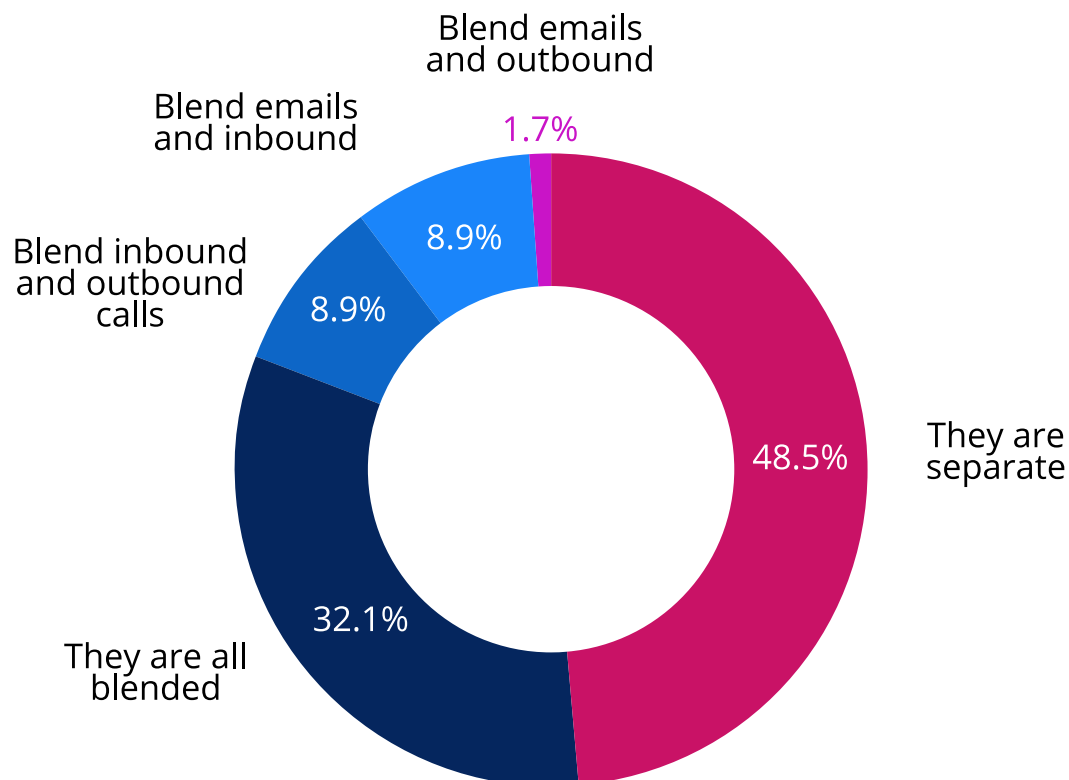
This impacts on the consistency of the customer experience and could damage the reputation of a brand. These contact centres could therefore consider simplifying customer interactions with a unified queue, aligning targets across all channels to a single organisational goal and/or promoting self-service at key customer touchpoints.

Are Emails, Inbound and Outbound Calls Blended in Your Contact Centre?

Almost Half of Contact Centres Don't Blend Channels

Despite the growing focus within the industry on blending channels to improve the overall customer journey, just shy of half of contact centres (48.5%) keep these emails and inbound and outbound calls separate.

Are emails, inbound and outbound calls blended in your contact centre?



This figure is much greater than the 32.1% that do blend the channels and are therefore able to improve productivity and efficiency.

Although this may not be a key function in larger contact centres, which have separate teams in place to handle only one specific call type, this can be useful in smaller centres.

Little More Than 40% of Contact Centres Blend Inbound and Outbound Calls

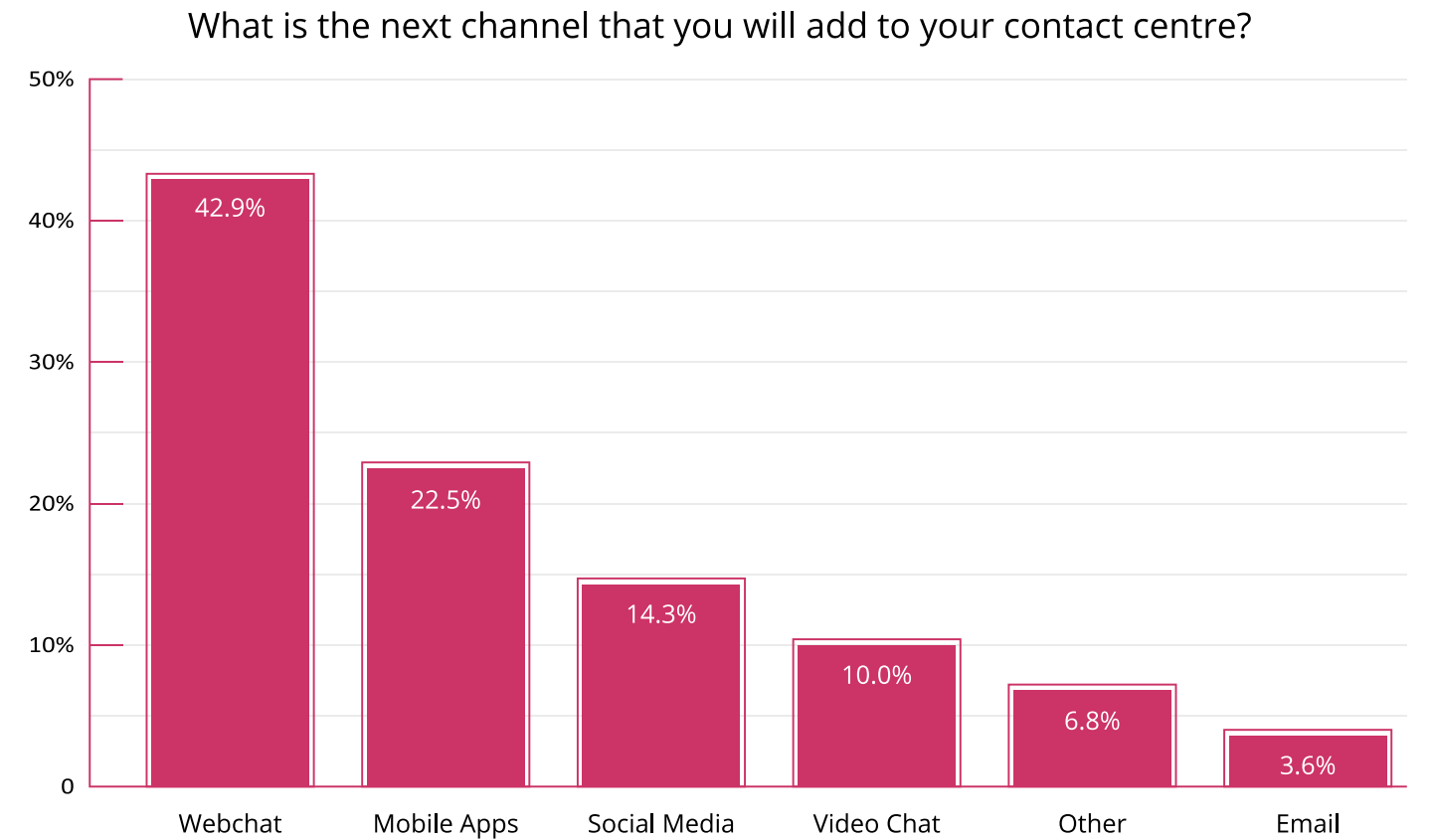
If the figures for the percentage of contact centres that blend all three channels and the percentage that just blend inbound and outbound are combined, our results show that only 41% blend these two key voice channels.

This is surprising, as the software used to blend these channels can also help the contact centre to automate call routing and synchronise tracking and reporting.

What Is the Next Channel That You Will Add to Your Contact Centre?

Webchat Is on Course to Be the Next Mainstream Channel

Over 40% of contact centres reported that webchat was going to be the next channel that they would implement.



This was no surprise as webchat has often been touted as the next mainstream channel. The reason the figure is not even greater is likely to be that many contact centres have not yet installed the required technology.

It is most likely that this is the case for the email channel, which, as referenced on page 20, over 90% of the contact centres surveyed already have.

Mobile Apps and Social Media Are Also Popular Choices

With there being a strong uptake of messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Messenger, it is no surprise that 22.5% of contact centres are looking to install such platforms as their next channel.

Also, as social media gives organisations the chance to publicise good customer service and tackle online complaints, it is understandable that 14.3% are considering this as an option.

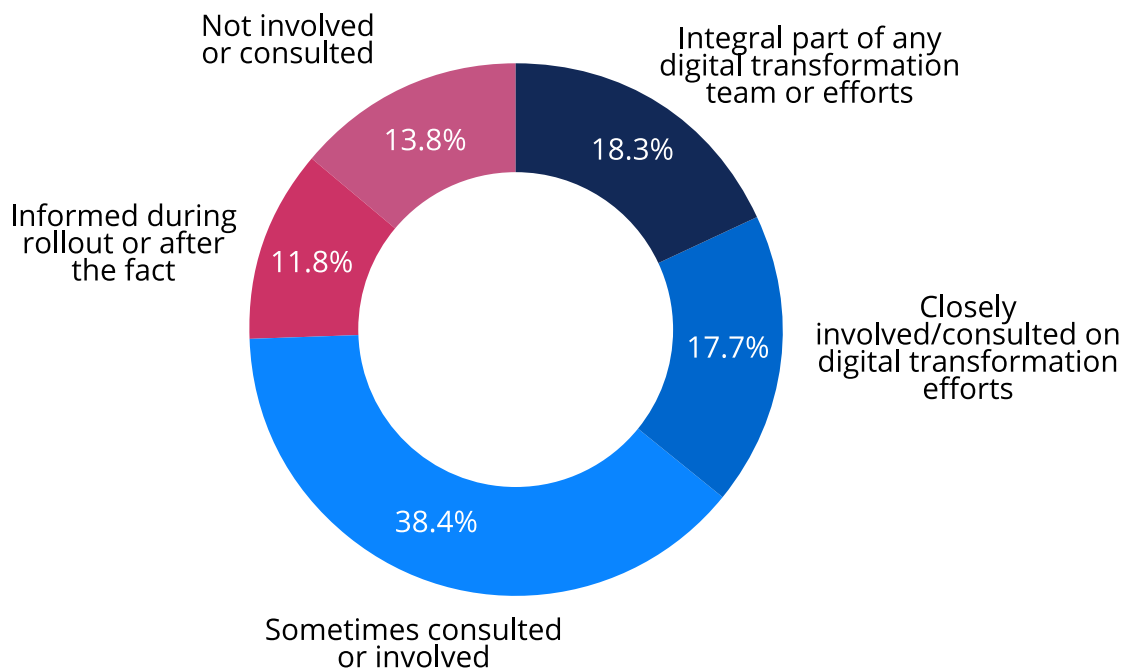
There was also a small percentage of survey participants who answered that they are looking at channels that were not included on our list. These include self-service and SMS.

How Involved Is Your Contact Centre in Any Corporate Digital Transformation Efforts?

Less Than a Fifth of Contact Centres Are an Integral Part of Digital Transformation Efforts

Only 18.3% of contact centres considered that they were an integral part of corporate digital transformation efforts.

How involved is your contact centre in any corporate digital transformation efforts?



Considering that any changes to the digital nature of a brand will have a direct effect on the contact centre, whether through a change in contact volumes or a bigger impact within customer service, this seems surprising.

However, an additional 17.7% signalled that they consider themselves to be “closely involved/consulted on digital transformation efforts”.

Contact Centres Appear to Be a Forgotten Source of Useful Information

With more than a quarter of contact centres not being consulted about digital resources before roll-out, it seems that in many companies, contact centres are a disregarded source of customer insight.

The Voice of the Customer (VoC) data that contact centres harness, in terms of buying habits, complaint habits, customer demands and so on, can be useful information in any digital transformation progression.

With this being the case, it was also surprising that “sometimes consulted” was the most frequently selected option, as it seems that contact centres could have a key role to play in this activity.

Interaction Analytics

The interaction analytics chapter is sponsored by CallMiner



CallMiner is a leading cloud-based customer interaction analytics solution provider.

With the tagline “Listen to Your Customers, Improve Your Business”, CallMiner’s goal is to help companies automate the overwhelming process of extracting all possible insight from within the contact centre. This includes insight from phone calls, chats, emails and social media, to dramatically improve customer service and sales, reduce the cost of service delivery, mitigate risk, and identify areas for process and product improvement.

When contact centre advisors and others responsible for customer engagement are empowered by insight and feedback in real time, they can dramatically improve the rate of positive outcomes.

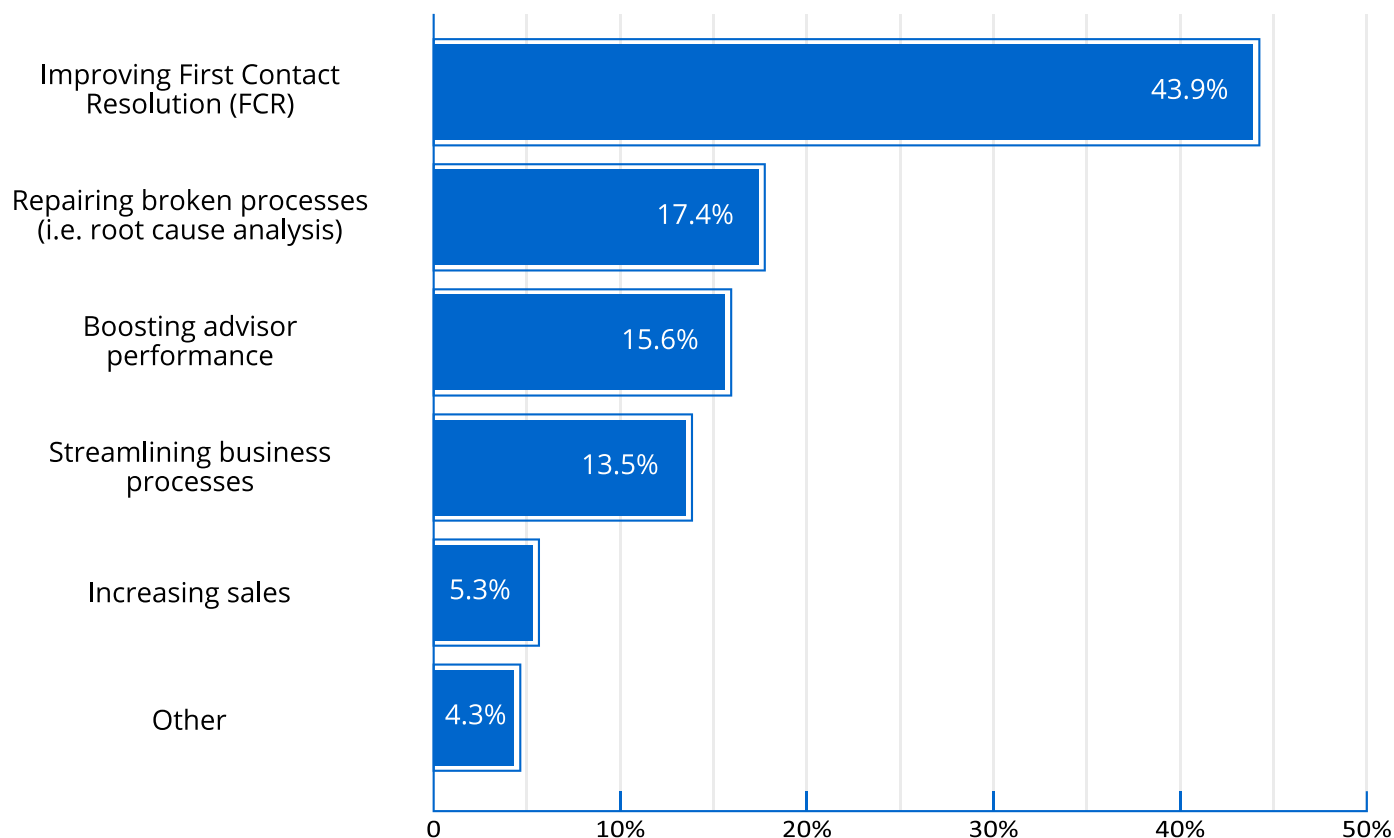
www.callminer.com

What Is the Greatest Benefit of Interaction Analytics?

Improving First Contact Resolution (FCR) Is Viewed as the Greatest Benefit of Interaction Analytics

As the results below show, our contact centre professionals view improved FCR as the greatest benefit of interaction analytics, with 43.9% of the vote.

What is the greatest benefit of speech analytics or interaction analytics?



Interaction analytics can help contact centres to get to the root cause of repeat calls, while giving insight on how advisors can better handle problematic call types. This can bring benefits of lowering call durations, reducing costs, boosting service quality and increasing customer satisfaction.

Other benefits that our survey participants recognised include repairing broken processes (i.e. root cause analysis), boosting advisor performance and streamlining business processes.

There Are Other Benefits of Interaction Analytics Too

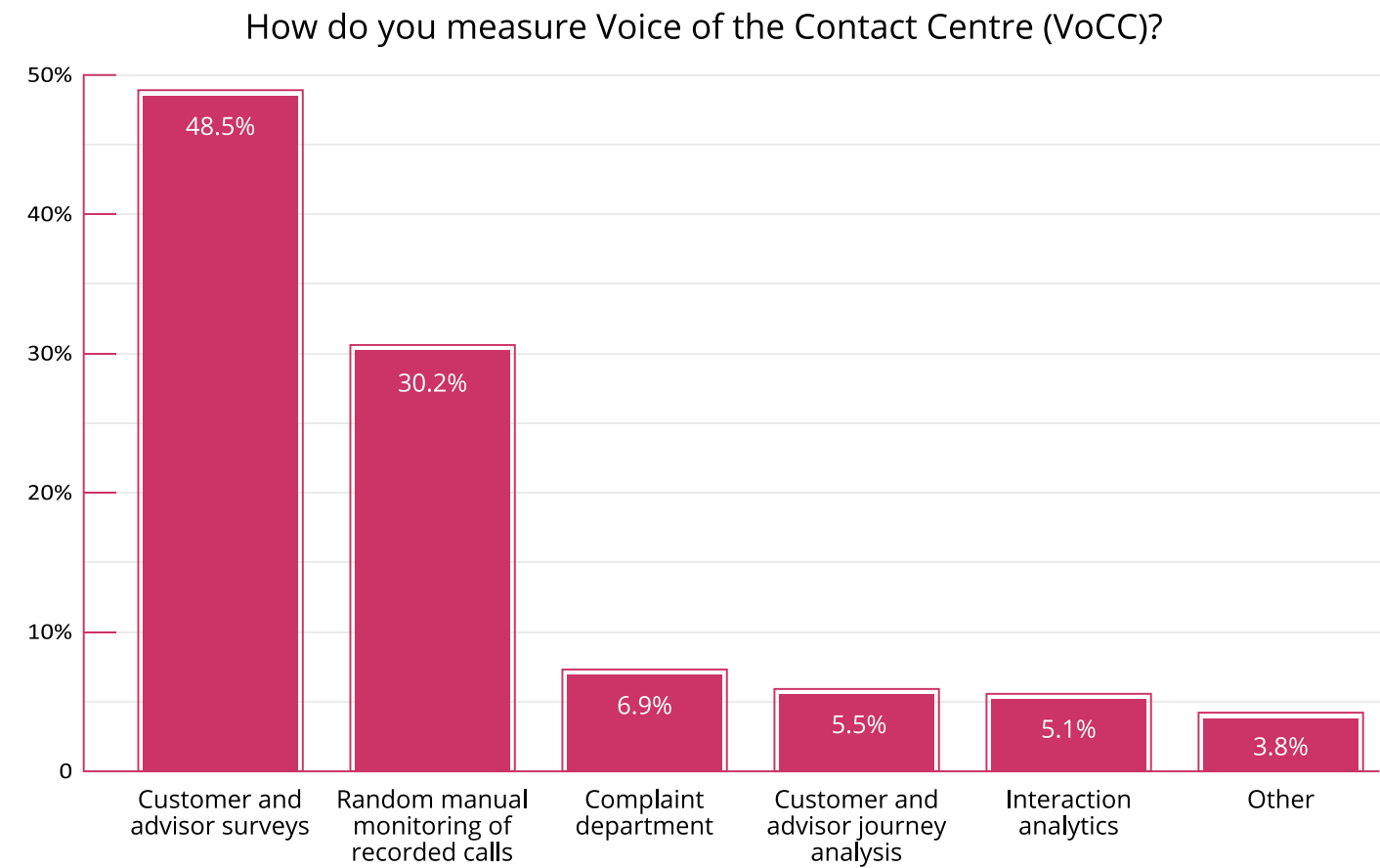
Our readers found a number of other benefits of using the technology. These included:

- Identifying training needs
- Reducing customer effort
- Highlighting key trends
- Advisor scoring
- Automated feedback

How Do You Measure Voice of the Contact Centre (VoCC)?

Surveying Customers and Advisors Is How Most Measure the Voice of the Contact Centre (VoCC)

As highlighted in the chart below, the most common way of measuring the VoCC is to survey customers and advisors, as almost half (48.5%) of contact centres do.



While this is cost-effective in the short term, it is a method that may risk survey fatigue.

Random monitoring of recorded calls is the second most popular way of measuring VoCC, and is used by 30.2% of contact centres.

Some Contact Centres Still Use the Complaints Department to Measure VoCC

While surveys and random monitoring are by no means flawless VoCC measurements, these techniques will give greater insight than simply relying on the complaints department, which 6.9% of contact centres still do.

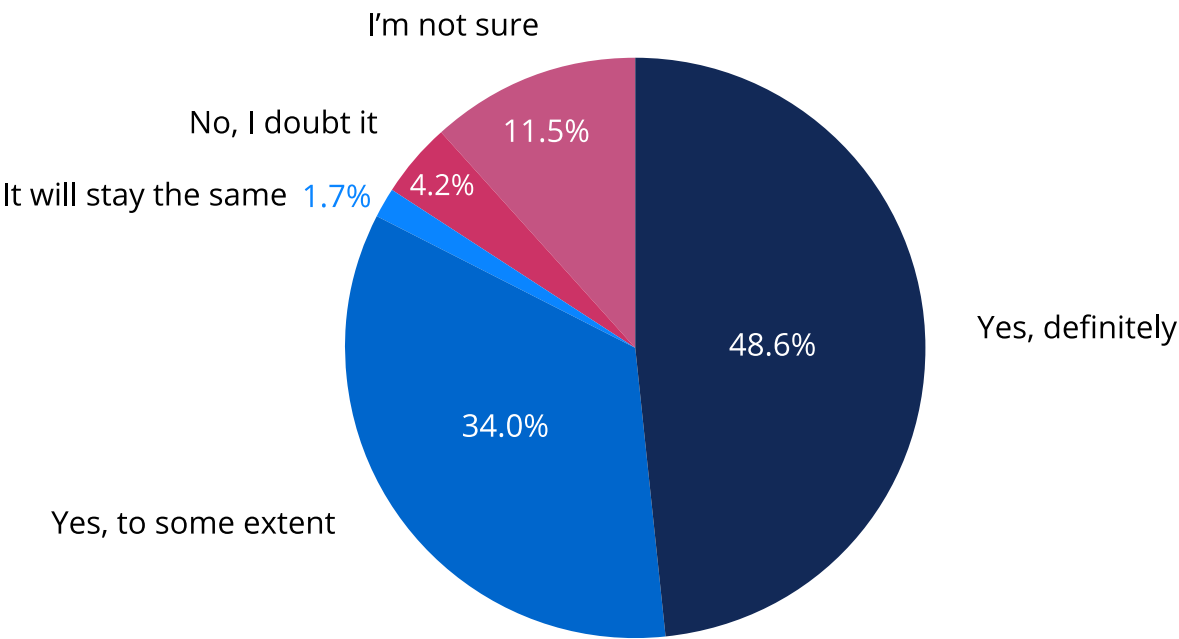
Other ways to measure the VoCC in finer detail include customer and advisor journey analysis and interaction analytics, techniques used by over 5% of contact centres.

Will the Take-up of Interaction Analytics in the Contact Centre Industry Increase Over the Next 5–10 Years?

Surveying Customers and Advisors Is How Most Measure the Voice of the Contact Centre (VoCC)

As highlighted in the chart below, the most common way of measuring the VoCC is to survey customers and advisors, as almost half (48.5%) of contact centres do.

Will the Take-up of Interaction Analytics in the Contact Centre Industry Increase Over the Next 5-10 Years?



Almost half of our overall survey recipients predict that this rise will be rapid. A further 34.0% believe that interaction analytics will grow in popularity, but only to some extent.

As found earlier, the adoption of interaction analytics has grown to the stage where 13.6% of contact centres have implemented the technology, compared to just 9.2% in 2016. This could perhaps be an indicator of future growth.

Little More Than 5% of Industry Professionals Don't Expect Interaction Analytics Take-up to Rise

Just 5.7% predict that there will not be an increase in the take-up of interaction analytics, despite the developments and cost reductions that are likely to be seen in the next five to ten years.

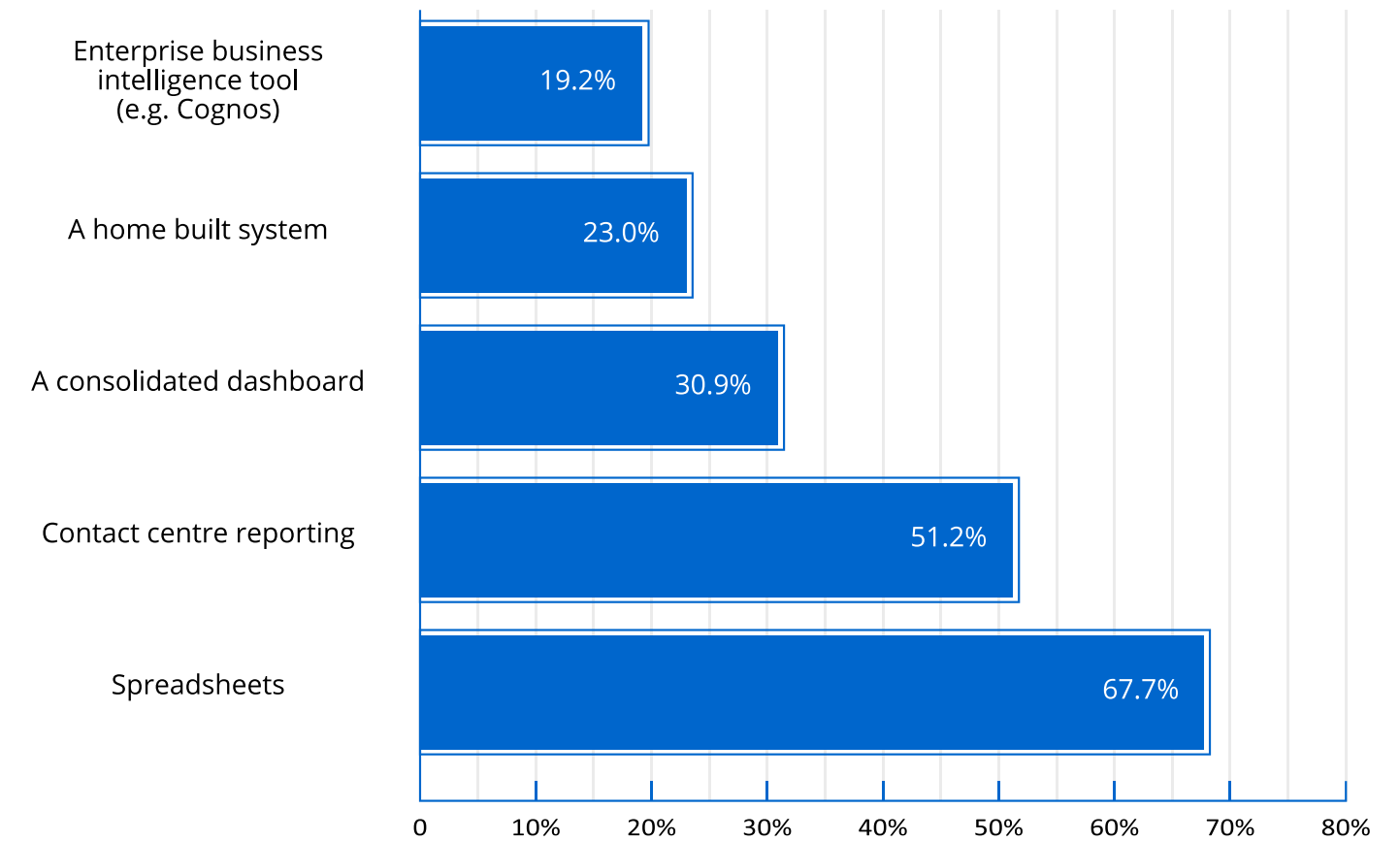
However, almost a third of this 5.7% did expect take-up to stay around the same as it is now.

What Do You Use to Produce Your Metrics?

Spreadsheets Are Still the Most Common Way to Produce Metrics

Over two-thirds of contact centres (67.7%) are still using spreadsheets to produce metric results and provide key performance insights into the life of the contact centre.

What do you Use to Produce your Metrics?



However, the contact centres that are using spreadsheets are likely to be doing so in conjunction with one of the other methods included in the poll above.

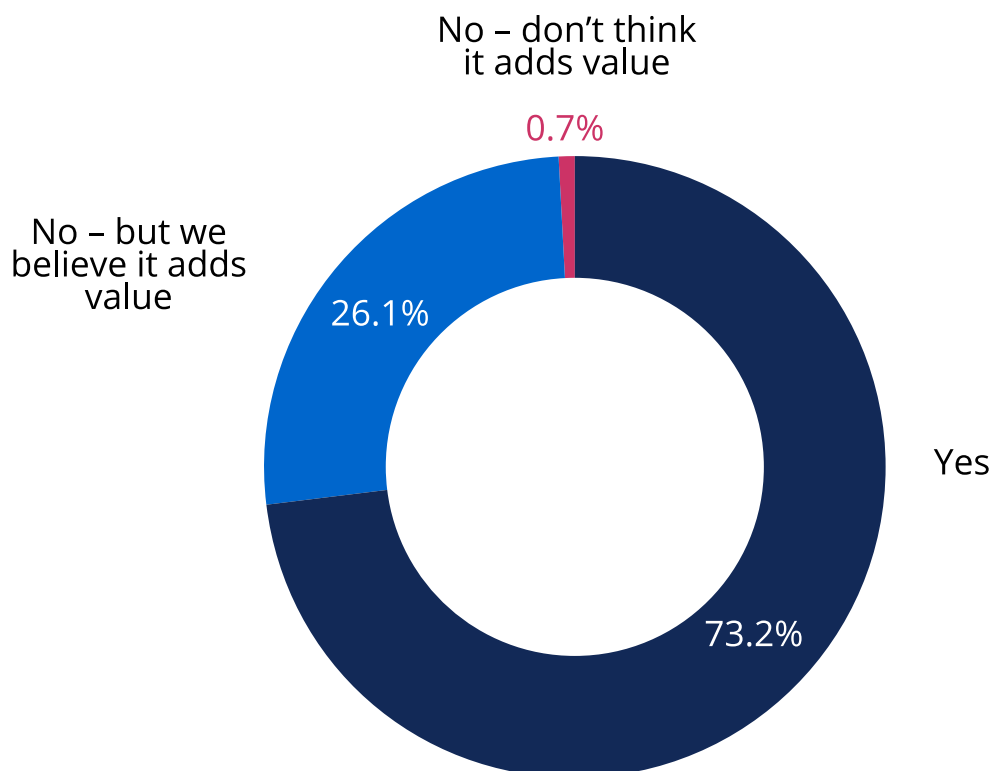
For example, spreadsheets are often used in conjunction with contact centre reporting, and many may choose to transfer data from consolidated dashboards to spreadsheets as well.

Do You Have a Strategy in Place to Adapt Coaching and Learning to Individual Employees?

Over a Quarter of Contact Centres Do Not Adapt Coaching to Each Individual Advisor

26.8% of contact centres do not tailor coaching and learning to the needs of each advisor, according to the findings shown below.

Do you have a strategy in place to adapt coaching and learning to individual employees'?



It is only natural that some advisors will be better than others at key skills such as building rapport, showing empathy and multitasking, so most believe that there is value in training advisors based on their individual needs.

Nearly all of our participants acknowledged this, so it is likely that most of the contact centres that don't strategise on an individual basis are stretched for time and prioritise other tasks.

However, almost three-quarters of contact centres do recognise the benefits of coaching advisors in this way and devise strategies to improve individual performance.

Workforce Management

The Workforce Management chapter is sponsored by NICE



NICE protect people's money, ensure their safety and improve their experiences with their global enterprise software.

NICE is the worldwide leading provider of both cloud and on-premises enterprise software solutions that empower organisations to make smarter and faster decisions based on advanced analytics of structured and unstructured data.

Their portfolio of solutions enable thousands of organisations to transform the way they engage with their customers across all channels and touchpoints in order to improve business performance and customer experience.

Over 25,000 organisations in more than 150 countries, including over 85 of the Fortune 100 companies, are using NICE solutions.

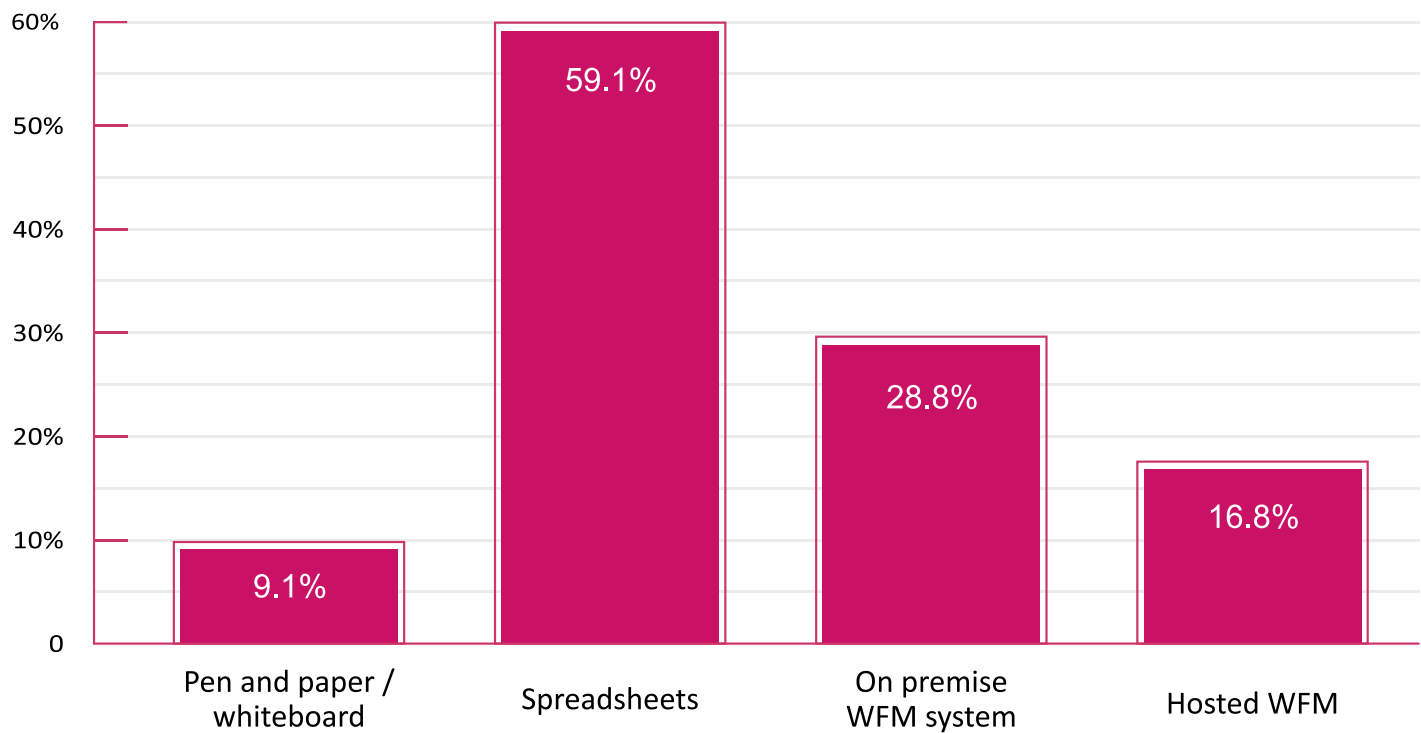
www.nice.com

What Equipment Do You Use to Schedule Staff?

Some Contact Centres Are Still Using Pen and Paper to Schedule Staff

Almost one in ten contact centres are still using either pen and paper or whiteboards to schedule staff.

Which of the following causes the most trouble when scheduling?



While it is still possible to use an Erlang Calculator combined with pen and paper to come up with an accurate number of staff needed for each reporting period, it is tricky and time-consuming to do this across the day and for large numbers of staff.

In addition, the contact centres that do this will be unlikely to offer shift swaps, schedule preferences or be able to work using an annualised hours initiative.

Workforce Management (WFM) Systems Are Yet to Overtake Spreadsheets

Spreadsheets are the most common way of scheduling staff, with 59.1% of our industry professionals doing so in their contact centre.

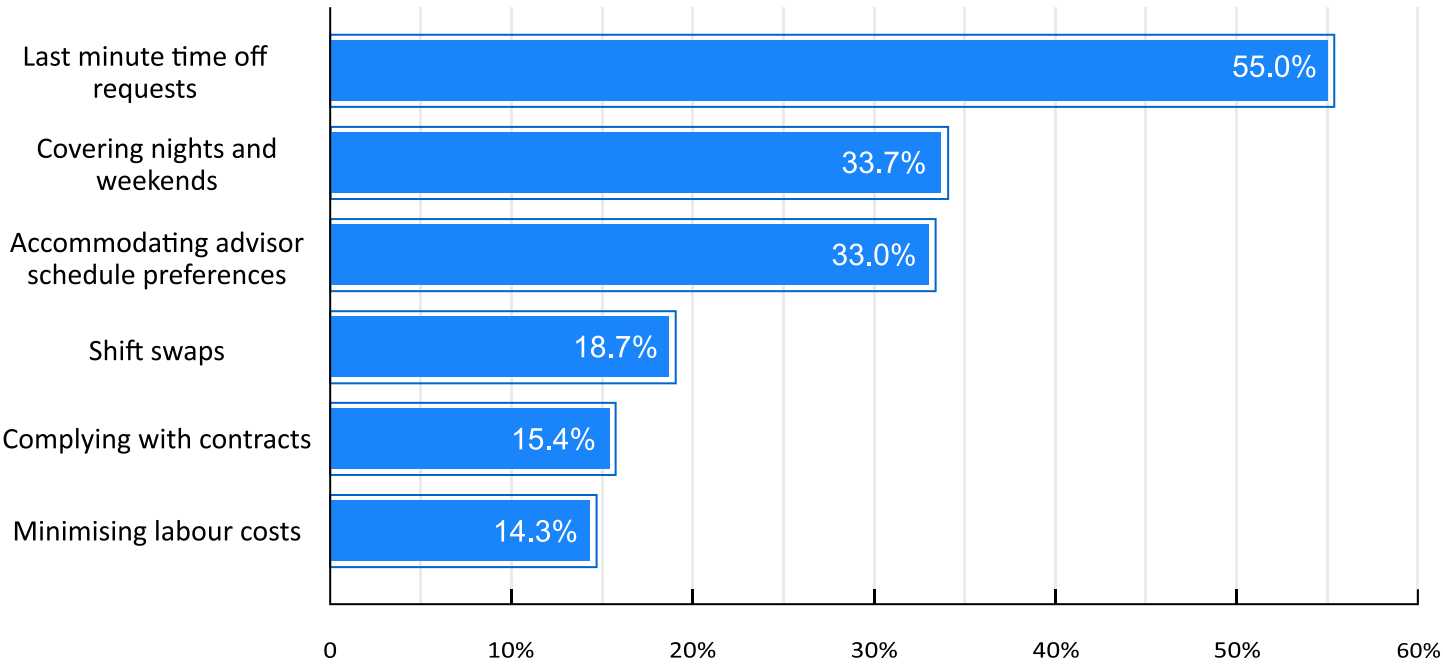
While this method will help the contact centre meet its target service level for a large number of advisors, the schedule will lack flexibility.

Which of the Following Causes the Most Trouble When Scheduling?

Last-Minute Time-off Requests Are a Big Issue When Scheduling

Advisors asking for last-minute time off is a problem for over half of contact centres (54.9%), according to the poll below.

Which of the following causes the most trouble when scheduling?



This is no surprise given the results of the previous questions, as contact centres that use spreadsheets, or even pen and paper, to schedule staff will have to make manual adjustments.

While a WFM solution will make this process easier, it could also be helpful to have a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in place to dictate what should be done when advisors hand in last-minute requests.

Schedules Face a Variety of Issues

Clearly, the issue of last-minute requests for time off is causing trouble in many contact centres. But it is by no means the only problem schedulers face.

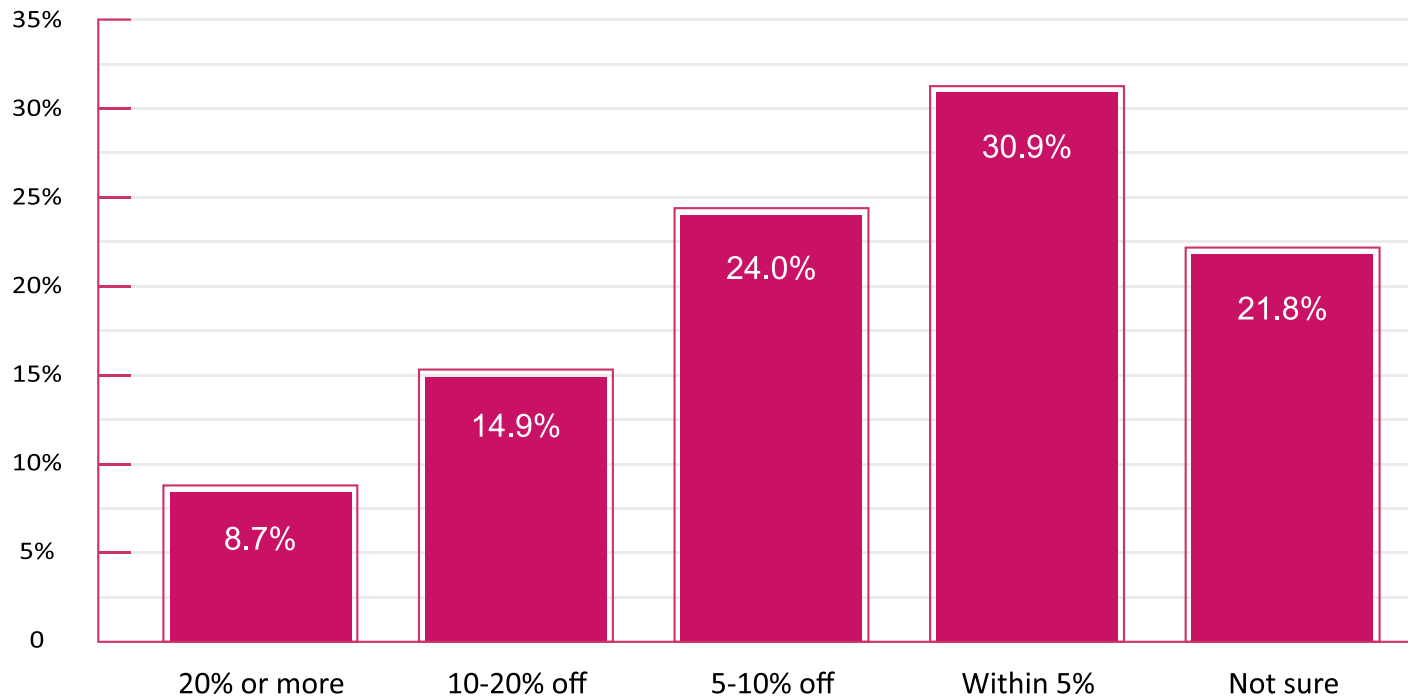
Covering nights and weekends (33.7%), accommodating advisor schedule preferences (32.9%) and shift swaps (18.7%) were also identified as key WFM issues.

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

Over Half of Contact Centre Have a Forecast Accuracy of Within 10%

Most of the industry professionals that we surveyed (54.9%) reported that their contact centre forecasts had, at worst, a 10% accuracy of real contact volumes over the past month.

How far off were your contact centre forecasts in the past month?



Also, it is worth noting that the majority of this 54.9% of contact centres were actually within a 5% accuracy, as evident in the chart above.

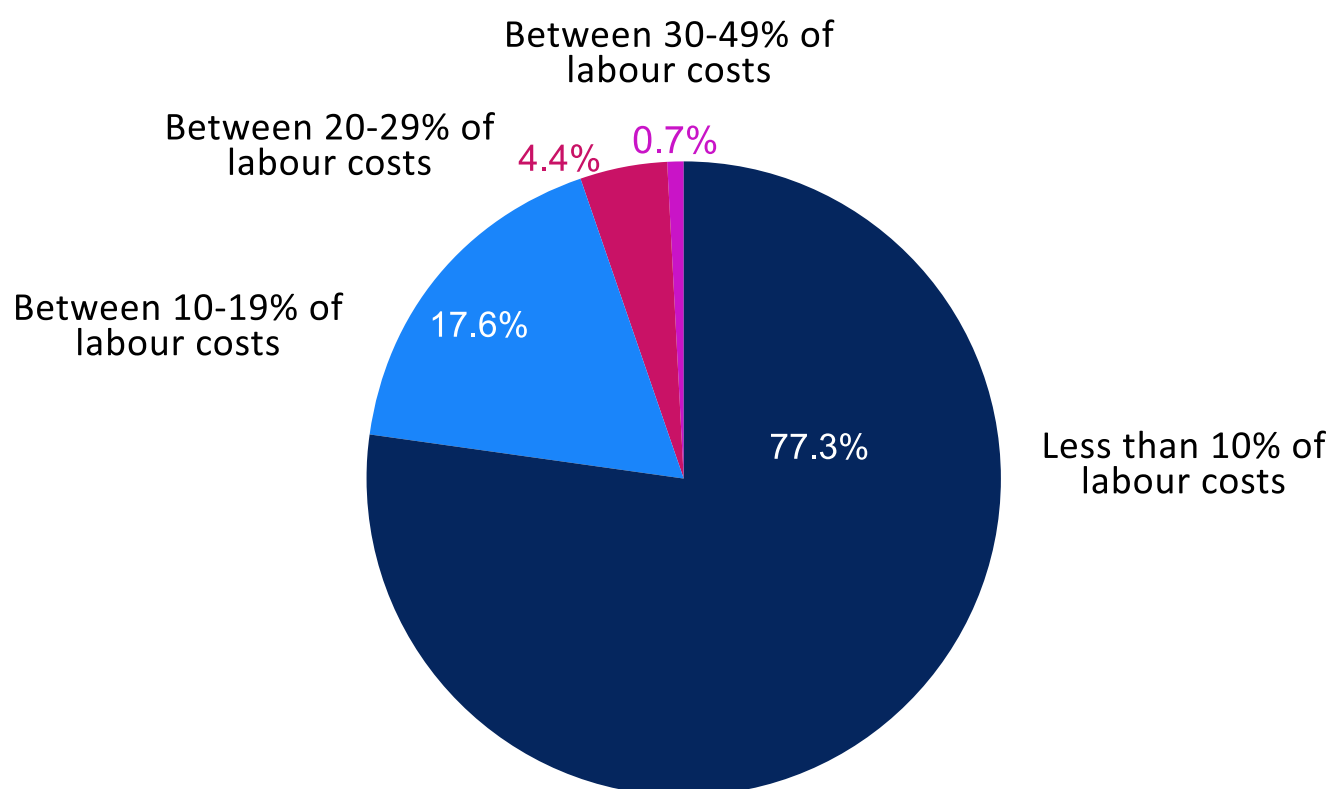
However, 8.7% of contact centres struggle to create accurate forecasts for contact volumes (within a 20% accuracy), which has a knock-on effect in terms of scheduling advisors and consequently meeting service levels.

What Percentage of Your Labour Costs Are Overtime Costs?

Overtime Costs Are Not a Key Expenditure in Most Contact Centres

The findings presented below reveal that 77.3% of contact centres spend less than a tenth of their overall labour expenditure on overtime costs.

What Percentage of your labour costs are overtime costs?



These contact centres are doing well to avoid drafting in advisors for cover during unexpected peaks in contact volumes and over busy holiday seasons, as overtime costs have long been an issue within the industry.

The rise in contact centres using WFM technology and testing out new methods of scheduling, such as annualised hours, could be why most contact centres are spending comparatively little money on overtime staff.

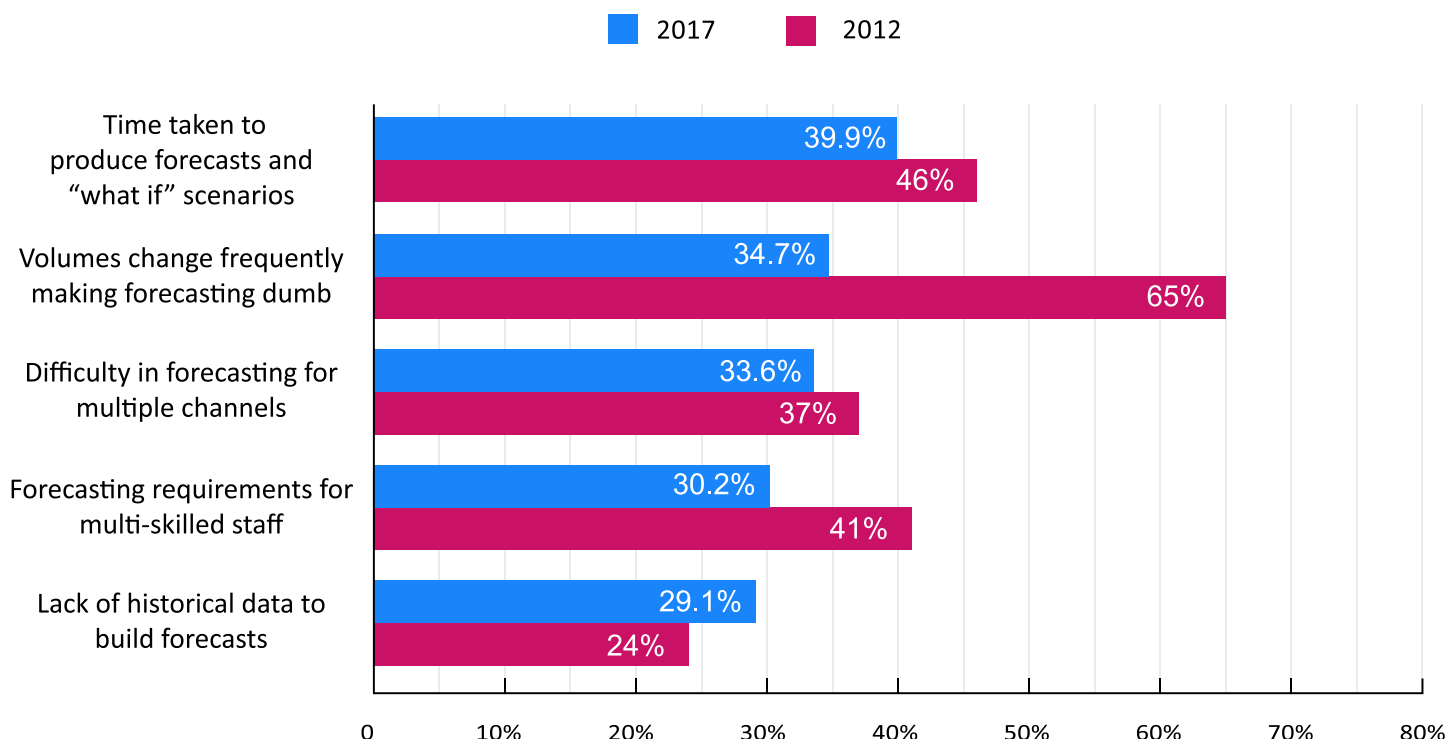
In fact, just 0.7% of contact centres spend more than three-tenths of their labour costs to pay advisors to work overtime.

What Problems Do You Face When Forecasting Using Your Current System or Process?

Taking the Time to Forecast and Planning for “What If” Scenarios Are Key WFM Issues

Almost 40% of our industry professionals report that the time taken to produce forecasts and planning for “what if” scenarios are key problems when forecasting in their contact centres.

What problems do you face when you forecast using your current system or process?



In fact, this was the main bugbear amongst our survey participants when it came to forecasting, proving more problematic than other common issues like changes in contact volumes (34.7%) and forecasting over multiple channels (33.6%).

Overall Forecasting Issues Are Decreasing

In 2012, the results were very different, with frequent changes in contact volumes being the most pressing issue; only half the percentage of contact centres are facing this problem today. This may be because of the increased take-up of WFM software in recent years.

The only exception to this decreasing trend was that 5% more contact centres lack the historical data to build forecasts.

Cloud

The cloud contact centre chapter is sponsored by Serenova



Serenova helps contact centres to harness the power of the cloud for seamless customer experiences.

Serenova drastically reduces the complexity and frustration associated with multiple legacy tools and delivers first-class insights into data and performance.

With the industry's most massively open API architecture, Serenova's customers can effortlessly integrate with existing systems and instantly scale to meet demand, without sacrificing performance, reliability, or security.

Only Serenova lets businesses rapidly deploy an always-on, highly secure, true multi-tenant and instantly scalable contact centre solution using a pay-as-you-go model.

From small shops to global enterprises, Serenova puts organisations in command of the customer experience with a smart, powerful and reliable contact centre platform.

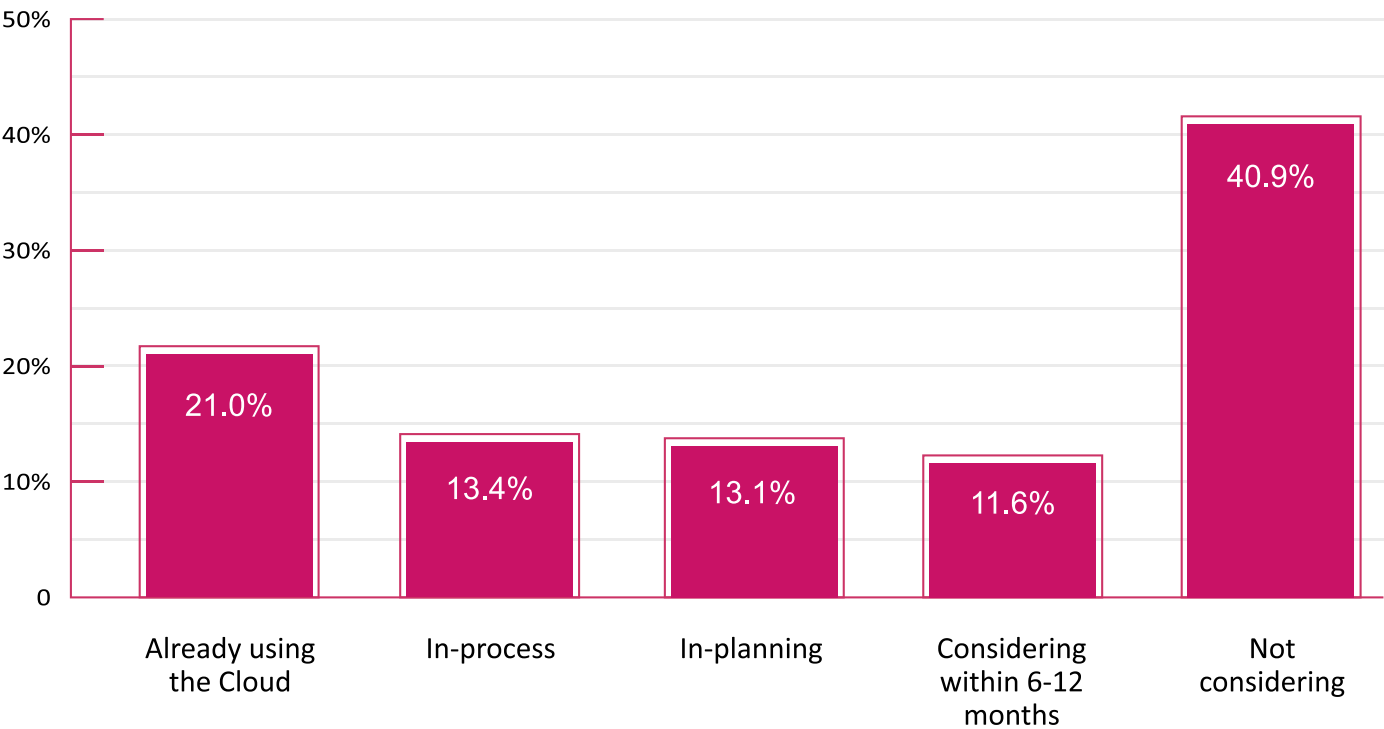
www.serenova.com

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

Cloud Uptake Is Set to Rise Rapidly in the Near Future

While the graphic below shows that only 21.0% of those surveyed operate in a cloud contact centre, this only tells half of the story.

How would best describe your plans for moving to a cloud contact centre?



In fact, over a quarter (26. 5%) have put plans in place to implement cloud technology, being either in the planning stage of operations or currently in the process of installing the technology.

An additional 11.6% are reported to be considering the cloud within the next six to 12 months.

Fewer Than Half of Contact Centres Are Not Considering Cloud

Just 40.95% of contact centres are not considering cloud and instead intend to carry on using legacy-based systems.

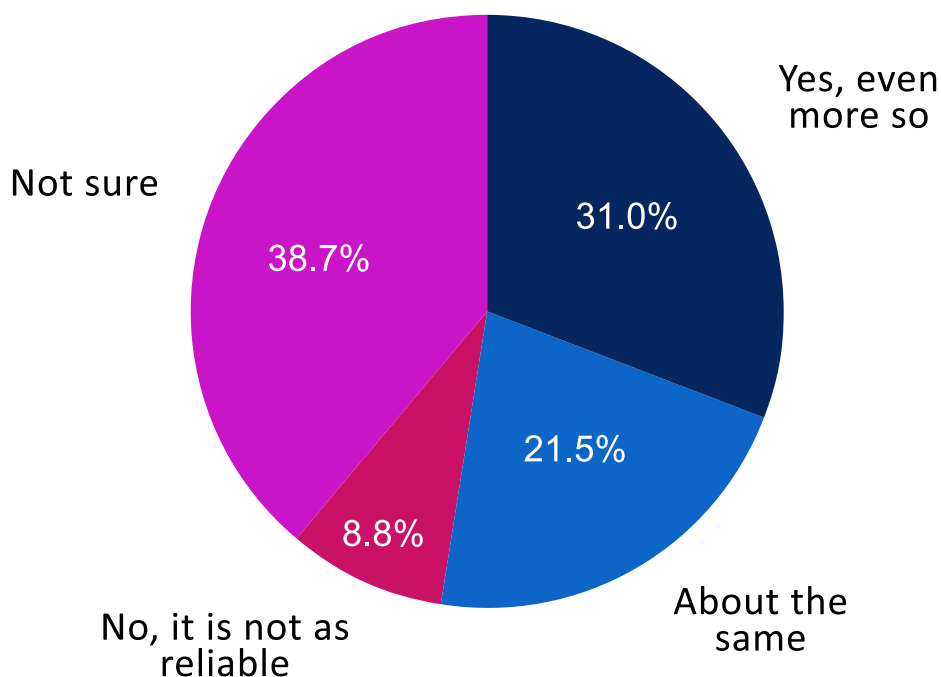
With this being the case, it seems that the number of contact centres moving to the cloud is set to increase by a factor of almost three in the coming years.

Is the Cloud as Reliable as Having the Solution on Premise?

Contact Centres Are Unsure of the Reliability of Cloud

The following findings indicate that 38.7% of contact centres professionals are not sure of the reliability of cloud.

Is the cloud as reliable as having the solution on premise?



However, cloud is often endorsed as delivering a high level of disaster recovery. This is because if the contact centre has to deal with flood, water damage or other structural damage, the cloud allows the business to simply move its operations to another location and log in in the same way. A contact centre using a legacy-based system would be unlikely to have this solution.

The cloud also allows advisors to switch channels if the contact centre suffers from a different type of crisis – a sharp and rapid rise in contact volumes on a specific channel.

Most of Those With an Opinion Believe Cloud Is More Reliable Than On-Premise Solutions

Disregarding the 38.7% of industry professionals who admitted to not having an opinion on whether cloud was more reliable than a legacy-based system, most believed that this was the case.

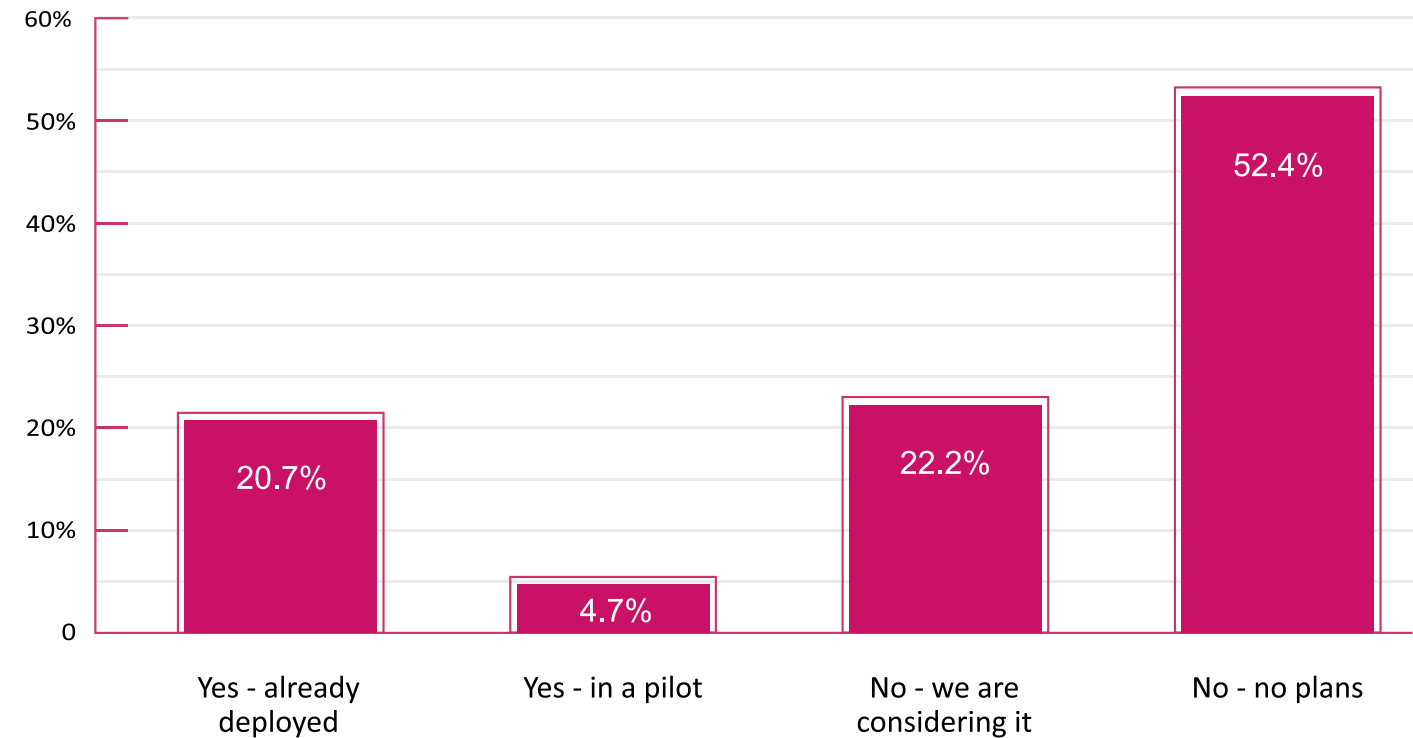
In fact, just 8.8% felt the opposite, with 31.0% stating that they believed cloud to be more reliable, and the remaining 21.5% revealing that they felt there wasn't much of a difference.

Do You Operate With Advisors Working From Home?

More Than a Fifth of Contact Centres Operate With Advisors Working From Home

As highlighted in the chart below, over 20% of contact centres allow certain advisors to work from the comfort of their own homes, with a further 4.7% currently doing so in a pilot scheme.

Do you operate with advisors working from home?



Homeworking is a benefit of cloud contact centres and can be useful in terms of boosting retention rates, improving the work–life balance of advisors and accessing a wider pool of applicants.

However, many contact centres will be wary of doing so, because they may be concerned about endangering the sense of team spirit, risking business continuity and failing to provide advisors with effective support.

Over Half of Contact Centres Are Not Considering Homeworkers

52.4% of contact centres have no plans to allow advisors to operate at home. However, it is likely that this is more to do with lacking the ability to do so successfully rather than weighing up the pros and cons.

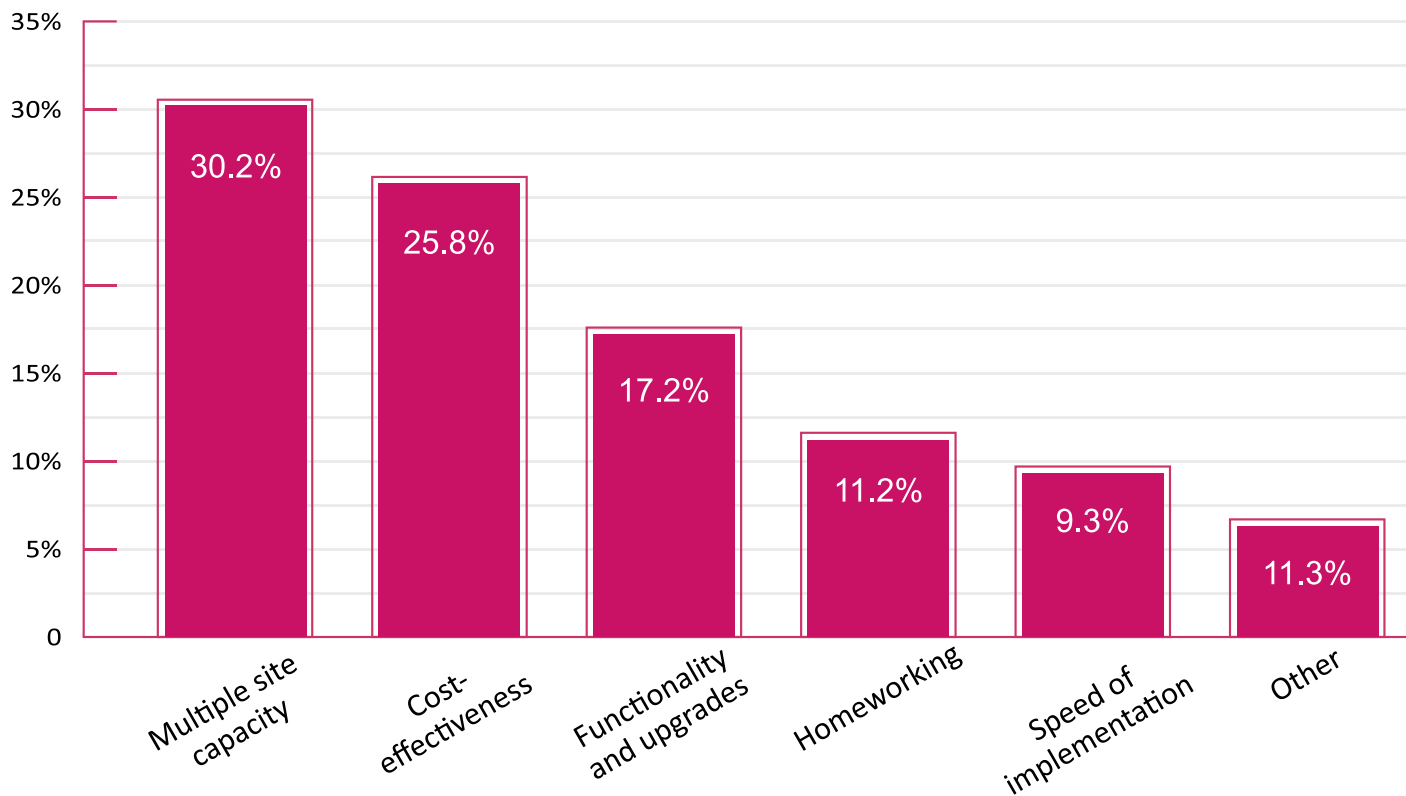
If the growth rate for take-up of cloud continues as expected, it is likely that more contact centres will add homeworking functionality.

What Is the Greatest Benefit of a Cloud-Based Contact Centre?

Multiple Site Capacity Is Viewed as the Greatest Benefit of Cloud

Having the ability to easily connect all contact centres within an organisation together to share customer information and data is seen as the greatest benefit of cloud by 30.2% of our survey participants.

What is the greatest benefit of a cloud based contact centre?



This multisite capacity is also useful in allowing advisors to work from home and, in emergency situations, enabling the transfer of contact centre from one site to another.

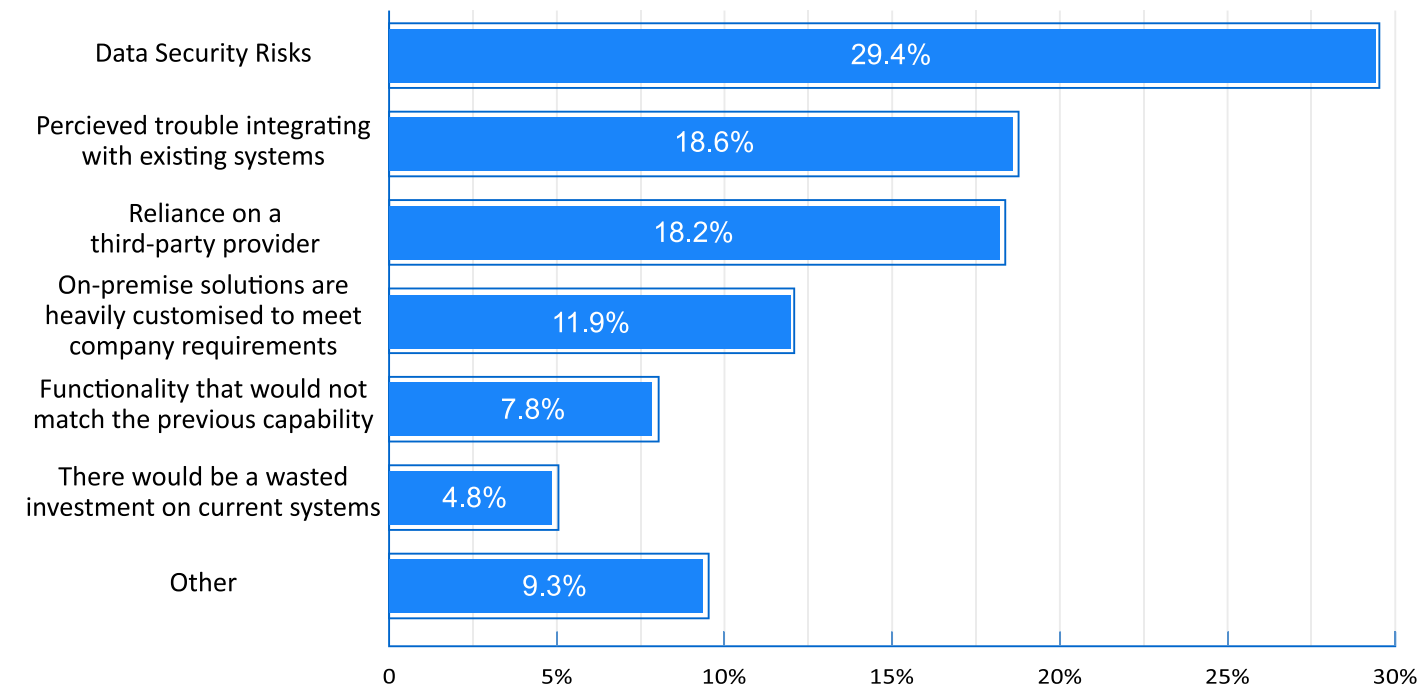
Other benefits noted by some of our other industry professionals included: cost-effectiveness (25.8%), functionality and upgrades (17.2%) as well as homeworking (11.2%).

Which of the Following Is/Was Your Biggest Concern About Moving to the Cloud?

Some Worry About Data Security Risks Before Adopting Cloud

Despite the many benefits of moving to cloud, many contact centres do have their concerns about adopting the technology, with data security appearing to be the greatest worry.

Which of the following is/was your biggest concern about moving to the cloud?



There is no doubt that contact centres worry about security, and putting sensitive customer data onto a cloud platform may seem less secure.

In fact, our survey shows that 29.4% of industry professionals feel this way, perhaps believing that if the security cannot be seen, it cannot be trusted.

There Are Other Widespread Worries About Moving to Cloud

While data security is the biggest concern across the industry, our findings show that others are also worried about: integration with existing systems (18.6%), reliance on a third-party provider (18.2%) and letting go of existing customised equipment (11.9%).

However, with thorough planning and a strong relationship with a trusted cloud provider, most of these issues can be overcome.

The Customer Journey

The customer journey chapter is sponsored by Sabio

sabio

Sabio is a customer contact technology specialist focused on delivering exceptional customer service strategies and solutions.

Sabio is a leading customer experience managed service technology provider, with the proven international reach and ability to deliver transformational customer experience technology and managed service solutions to over 250 enterprise customers worldwide.

Partnering with world-class technology leaders, Sabio helps organisations to create seamless customer journeys, and works with major brands worldwide, including the AA, AXA Assistance, BGL, BNP Paribas, Carlson Wagonlit, Computacenter, DHL, HomeServe, Leeds City Council, Liverpool Victoria, Office Depot, Telefonica and Yorkshire Building Society, to deliver excellent customer experiences.

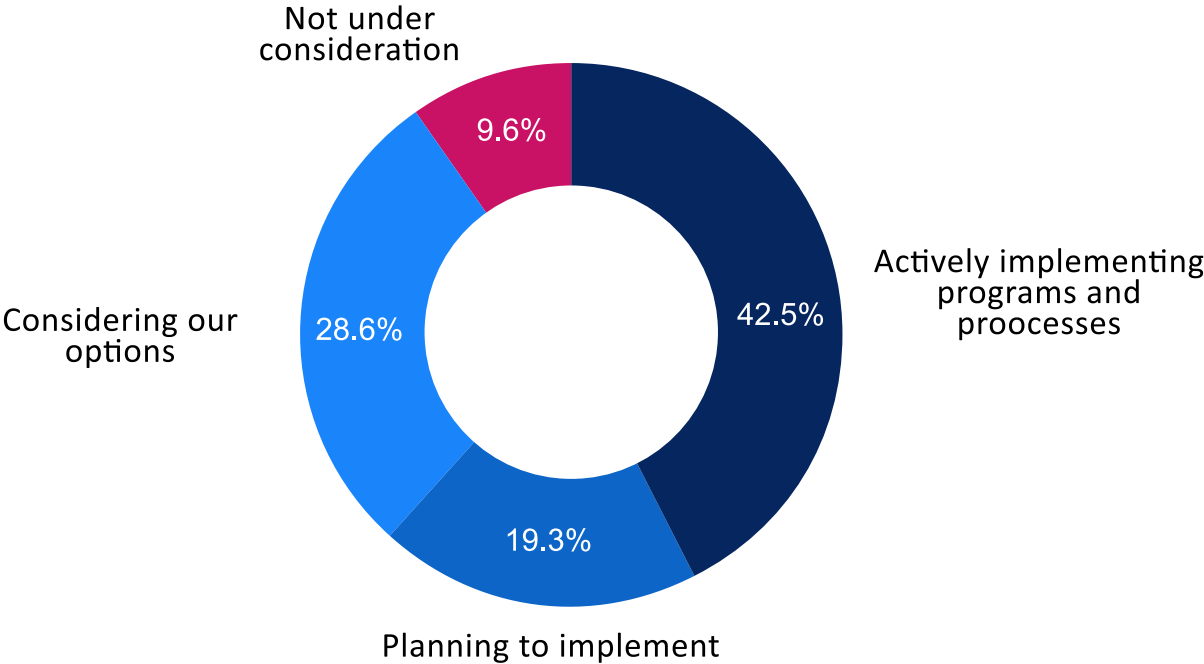
www.sabio.co.uk

What Stage Is Your Contact Centre Currently at With Regard to Customer Experience and Journey Management Strategies?

42.5% of Contact Centres Are Actively Implementing Relevant Programmes and Processes

Over four times more contact centres are actively applying programmes and processes to improve the customer experience and journey management than those who are not considering doing so.

What stage is your contact centre currently at with regards to Customer Experience and Journey management strategies?



This highlights the increased emphasis on improving the customer experience across the whole of the customer journey.

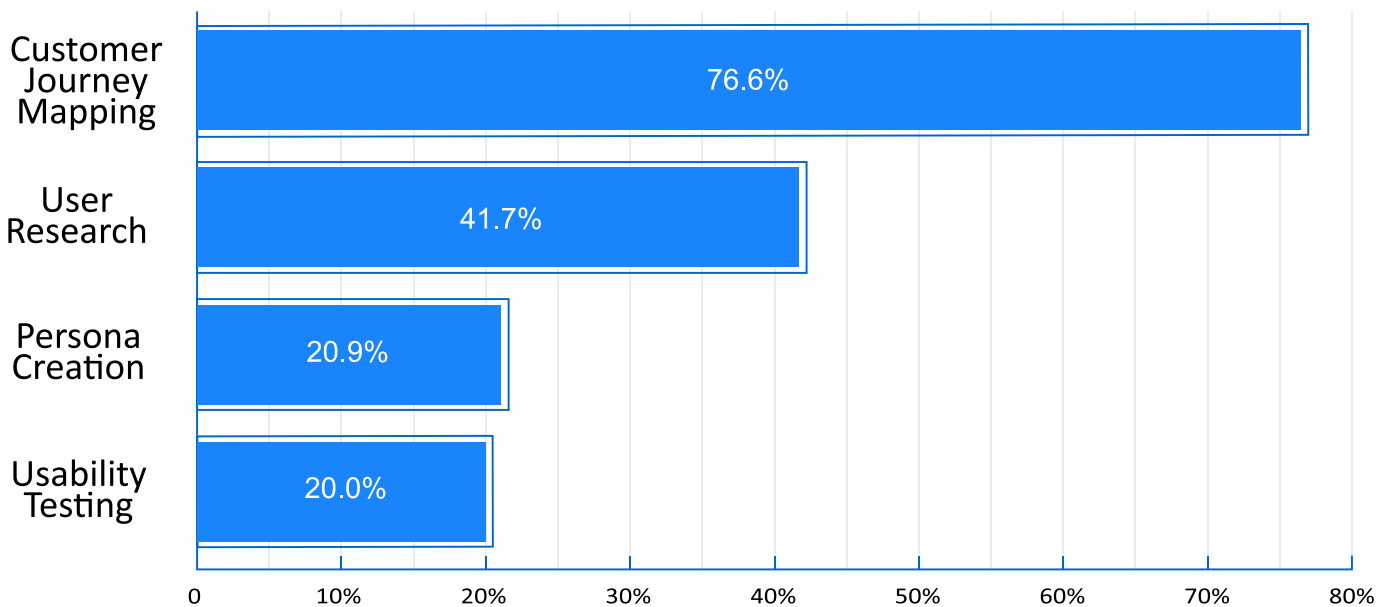
The customer journey is often improved by gaining an understanding of the current customer experience and identifying how service can be improved at each customer touchpoint. This is often done through customer journey mapping, usability testing and user research.

Have You Used, or Are You Considering Using, Any of the Following Techniques to Enhance Your Customer Experience Strategy?

Over Three-Quarters of Contact Centres Are Thinking About Customer Journey Mapping

76.6% of contact centres are now using, or are considering using, customer journey mapping to boost the overall customer experience, according to our findings presented below.

Have you used, or are you considering using, any of the following techniques to enhance your Customer Experience strategy?



This highlights the effort and resources that contact centres are putting into improving the customer experience.

Contact Centres Are Merging These Techniques Together

The results included in the graph above do not add up to 100% because many contact centres are using more than one of the listed techniques in their customer experience strategies.

Two of the techniques that contact centres often merge together are customer journey mapping and persona creation.

Persona creation involves creating segments of an organisation’s customer base, typically 7–8, and creating a character based on the interest, habits and behaviours of that customer segment.

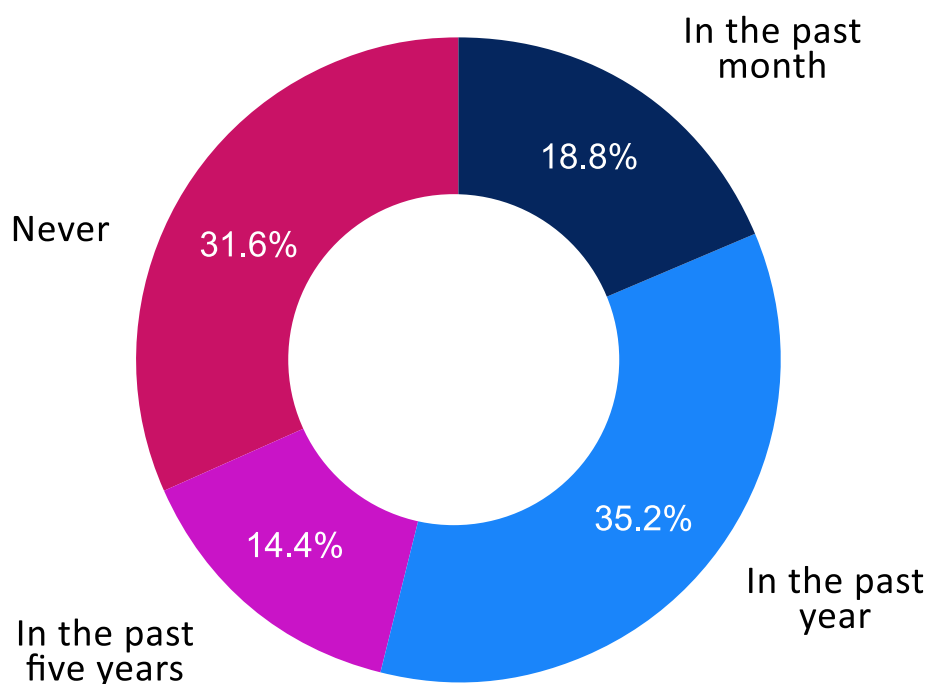
Personas can help when understanding existing customer journeys and designing future ones, as they are a great way of forming an idea of the emotional experience that your customers are going through.

When Did You Last Do Customer Journey Mapping?

Over Half of Organisations Have Done Customer Journey Mapping in the Last 12 Months

54.0% of organisations have tried out customer journey mapping in the last twelve months, with over a third of this 54.0% percent doing so over the past month.

When Did You Last Do Customer Journey Mapping?



These figures highlight the popularity of this technique amongst organisations looking to improve the customer experience.

Over a half of contact centres have done customer journey mapping in the past year. This shows the level of detail organisations are going into to understand and improve the customer journey.

A Little Over 30% of Contact Centres Have Never Tried Customer Journey Mapping

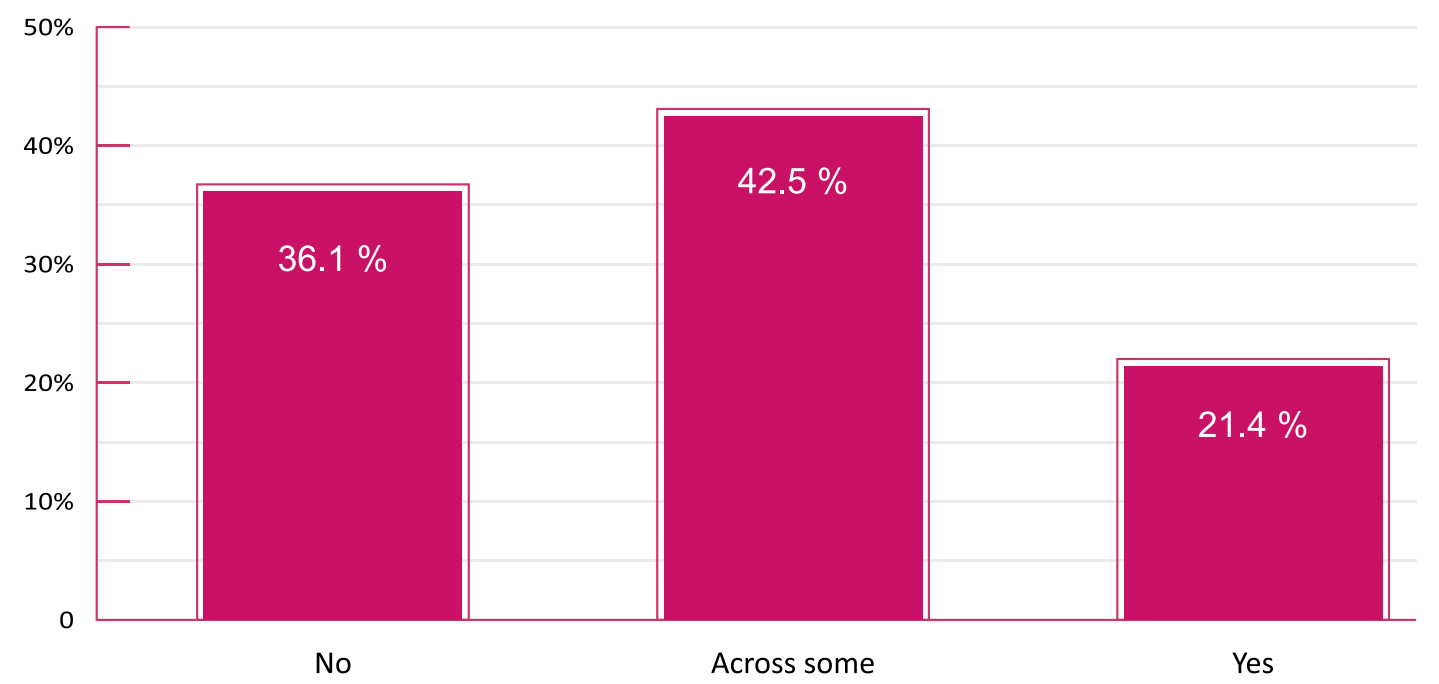
Just 31.6% of contact centres have never done customer journey mapping, a percentage that is considerably smaller than the 37% that responded in this way when we last asked the same question, in 2015.

Do You Find It Difficult to Follow and Understand the Customer Journey Across All Contact Centre Channels?

Most Contact Centres Struggle to Understand and Follow the Customer Journey Across All Channels

63.9% of contact centres find it difficult understand and follow the customer journey across all of the channels that they operate over.

Do you find it difficult to follow and understand the customer journey across all contact centre channels?



It is important to remember that the journey begins at the customer’s start point and not the company’s. Keeping this in mind, it is important to keep focus on the customer’s incentives and preferred outcomes and not the company’s.

Fewer Than 40% of Contact Centres Understand the Journeys of All Their Customers

Just 36.1% of our industry professionals reported that they had no difficulties in following and understanding the journey of their customers across each of their contact centre channels.

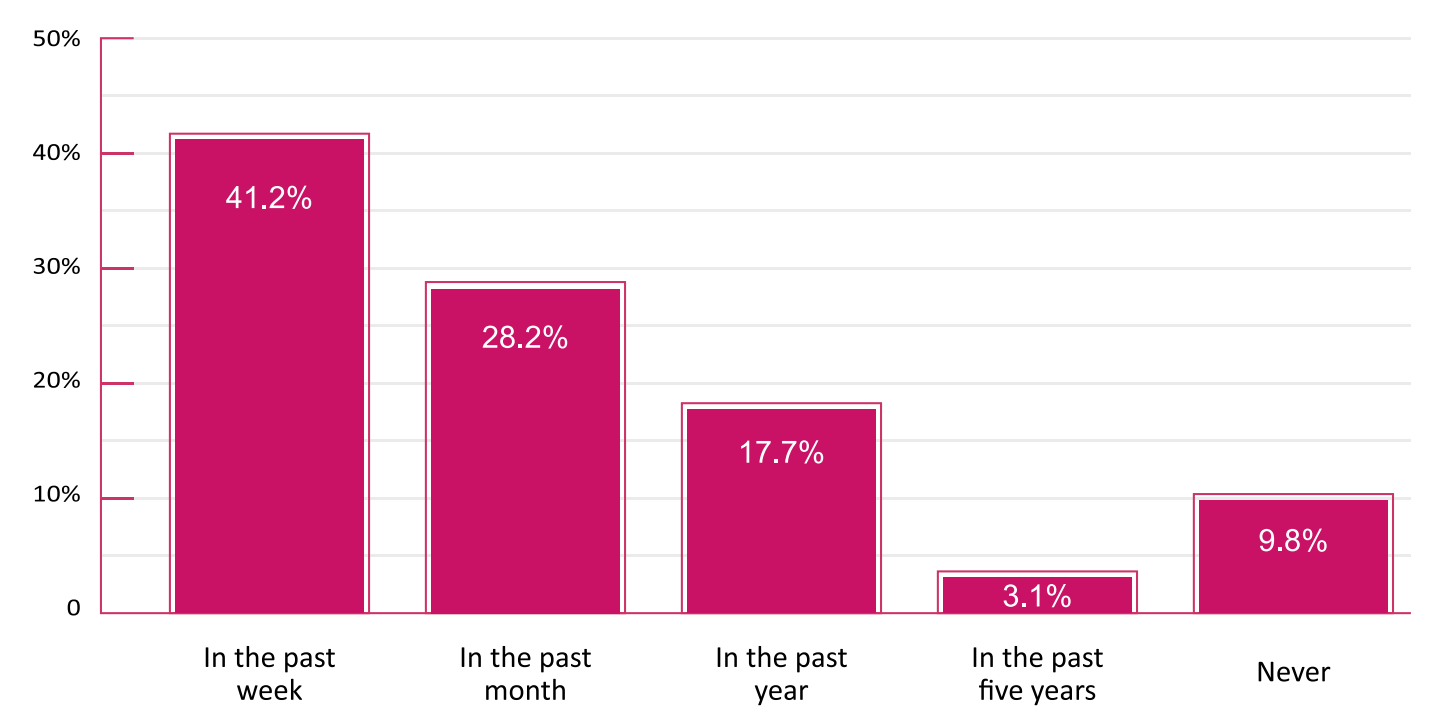
Without this knowledge, it is more difficult to understand why customers who call the contact centre act in the way they do. This makes it difficult to show empathy and build rapport.

When Was the Last Time You Phoned Your Own Contact Centre?

Some Industry Professionals Have Never Phoned Their Own Contact Centre

As presented in the graphic below, almost 10% of those surveyed had never phoned their own contact centre, with a further 3.1% admitting to not having done so in over a year.

When was the last time that you phoned your own contact centre?



The worry here is that contact centre managers may be unsure of how to support advisors properly if they do not run through a customer journey for themselves.

Most Contact Centre Professionals Have Called Their Own Contact Centre in the Past Month

While it may seem worrying that there were industry professionals that had never called their own contact centre, 69.4% had done so in the past month.

In addition, 41% had done so in the past week to get a feel for the experience that their contact centre was offering its customers.

Headsets

The headsets chapter is sponsored by Plantronics

The Plantronics logo, featuring the word "plantronics" in a bold, lowercase, blue sans-serif font, followed by a registered trademark symbol (®).

Plantronics headsets are the first choice for office, contact centre and consumer users all over the world.

The combination of the most advanced noise-cancelling technology available, world-leading industrial design and Plantronics' famous reliability make Plantronics headsets the first choice for contact centre, office and consumer users all over the world.

Plantronics headsets are widely used in many FTSE 100 corporations and have been featured in numerous films and high-profile events, including the historic "One small step for man" transmission from the moon in 1969.

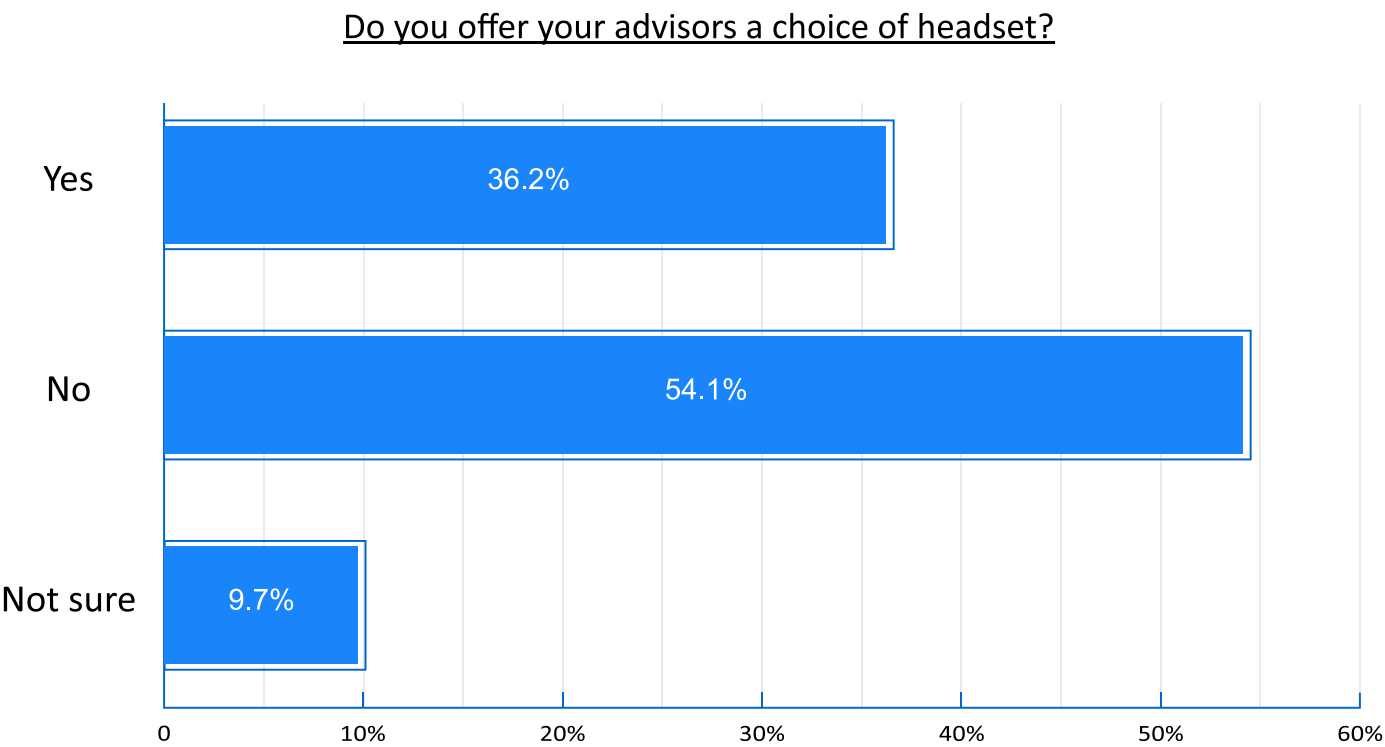
In addition, Plantronics have proved through research that headsets improve productivity, efficiency and wellbeing, with wireless products for unified communications also being made available by the company.

www.plantronics.com

Do You Offer Your Advisors a Choice of Headset?

Most Advisors Are Not Offered a Choice of Headset

Only 36.2% of contact centres offer their advisors a choice of headsets, allowing the team to choose which style suits them best and offers the most comfort.



With it often being a matter of personal choice as to which headset is better, providing advisors with different options can improve their personal satisfaction.

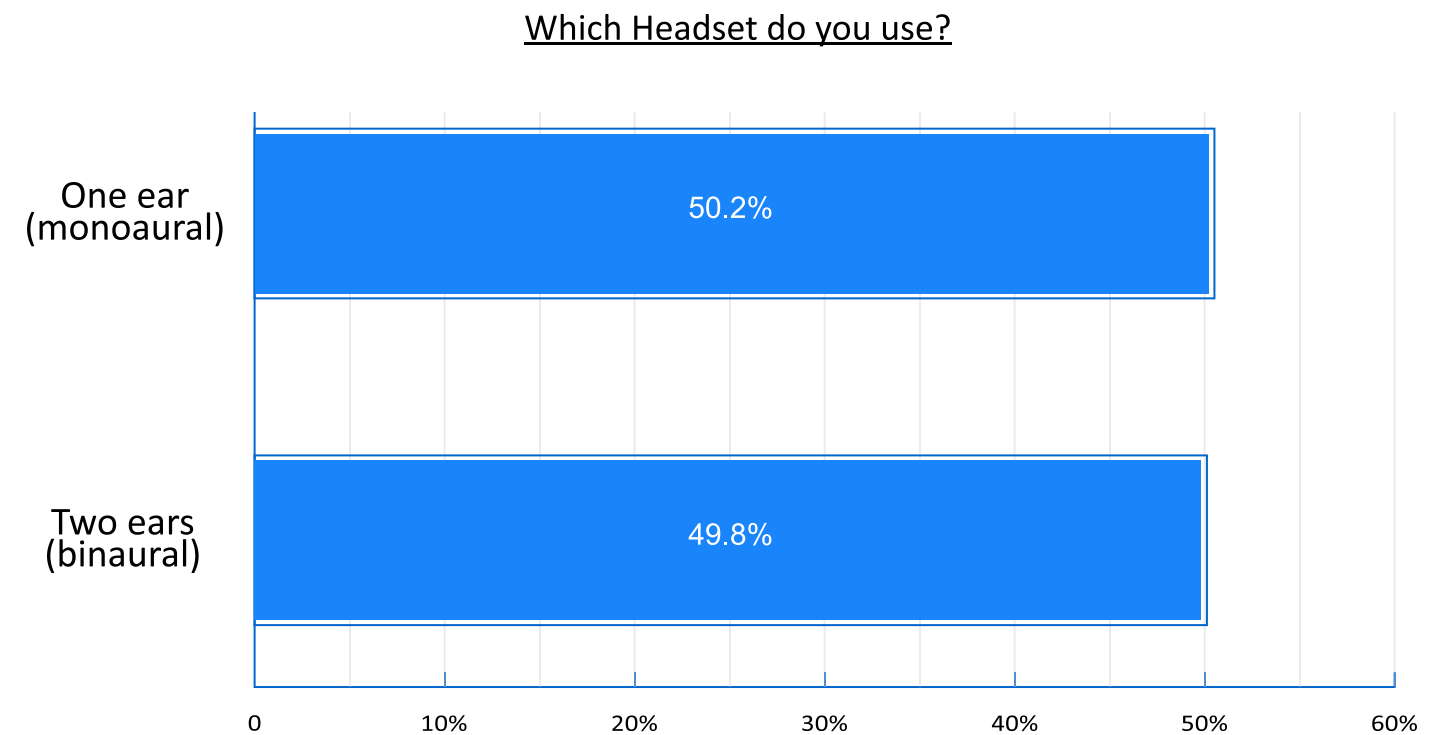
While this may seem to be a minor detail, some staff find that headsets don't meet their needs for functionality or comfort, which can have a direct impact on productivity.

However, while the percentage of contact centres that offer a choice to advisors is still low, it has increased since 2013; when the same question was asked to our readers then, only 27% offered advisors a choice of headset.

Which Headsets Do You Primarily Use?

Almost as Many Contact Centres Now Use Binaural Headsets as Use Monaural Ones

In surprise findings, we have discovered that an increasing number of contact centres are now using binaural headsets, as 49.8% of contact centres now use them primarily, compared to the 50.2% that use monaural.



While, in some environments, where advisors need to be especially aware of their surroundings, monaural is preferred, it used to be the case that more contact centres used monaural because it was the cheaper option.

So why are more contact centres turning to binaural when it is the more expensive option?

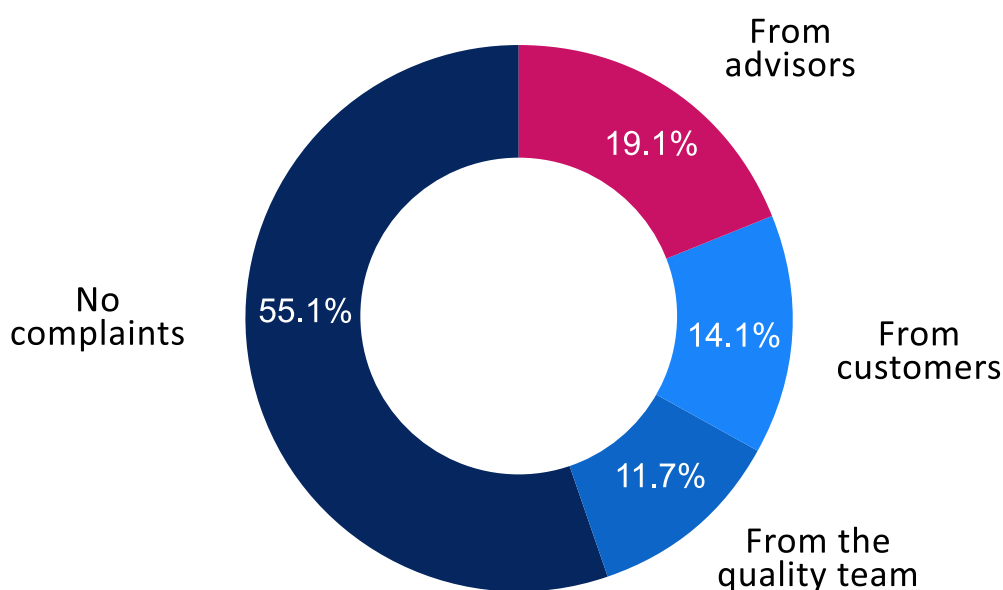
Well, binaural headsets are better at helping advisors to block out all of the other conversations that are taking place around them, so these are often the preferred option in large contact centres. In short, they generally offer a more immersive experience.

Do You Get Complaints About Background Noise?

More Complaints About Background Noise Come From Advisors Than From Customers

Almost a fifth of contact centres (19.1%) receive complaints of background noise from advisors, as highlighted in the graphic below.

Do you get complaints about background noise?



This is higher than the percentage of contact centres that receive noise complaints from customers, which currently only happens in 14.1% of contact centres.

This may seem surprising, but if advisors are complaining about background noise, it may explain why contact centres are increasingly turning to binaural headsets – as found on page 57.

Over Half of Contact Centres Receive No Complaints About Background Noise

Another interesting finding from our results is that 55.1% of contact centres do not receive complaints about background noise, whether that is from advisors, customers or the quality team.

This is particularly interesting when it is considered that in 2014, we found that just 11% of contact centres were not receiving complaints about background noise.

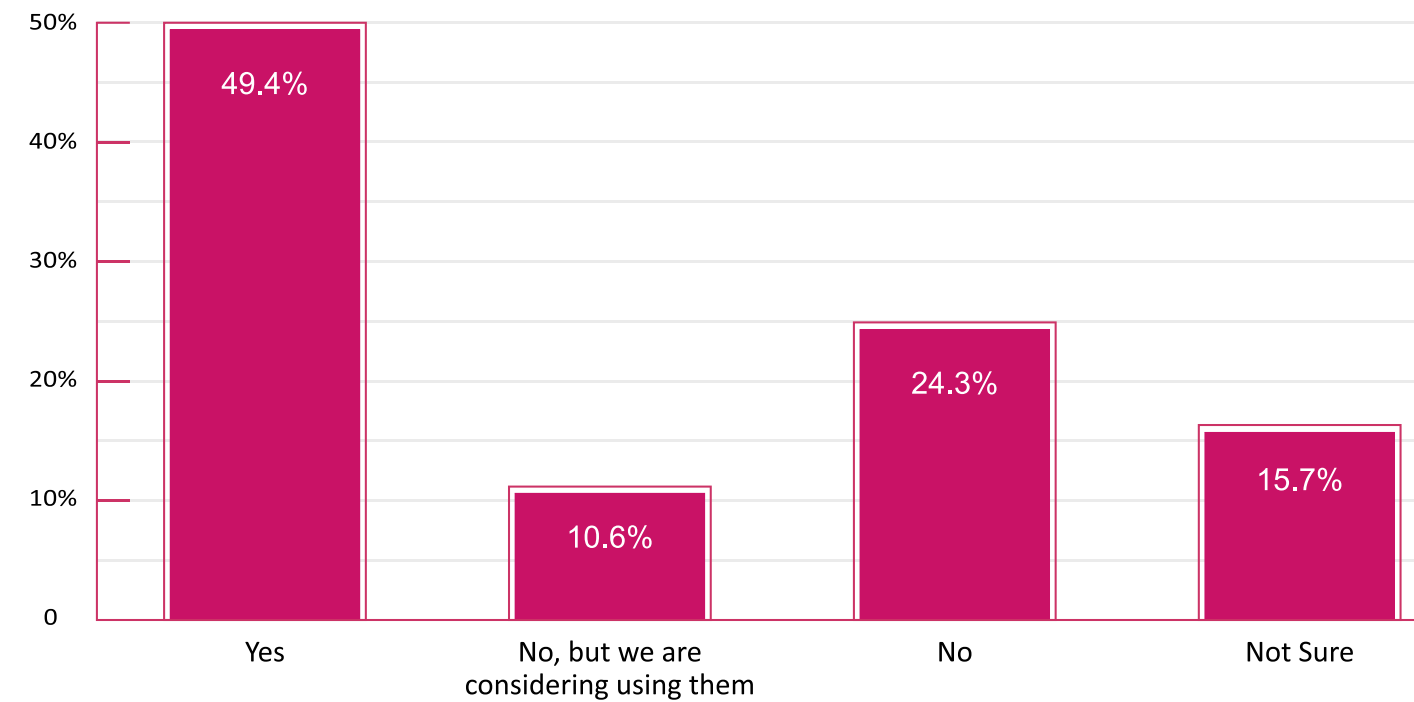
The reduction in complaints is significant and perhaps signals that more advanced headsets are entering the industry or that contact centres are doing other things to reduce background noise.

Are You Using Noise-Cancelling Headsets?

More Contact Centres Use Noise-Cancelling Headsets Than Do Not

49.4% of contact centres are now using noise-cancelling headsets, and this figure could be even greater, as 15.7% of our survey participants were not sure if their contact centre did or not.

Are you using noise cancelling headsets?



This rise in contact centres using noise-cancelling headsets could be a key reason why there has also been a vast reduction in background noise complaints within the industry, as found on page 58.

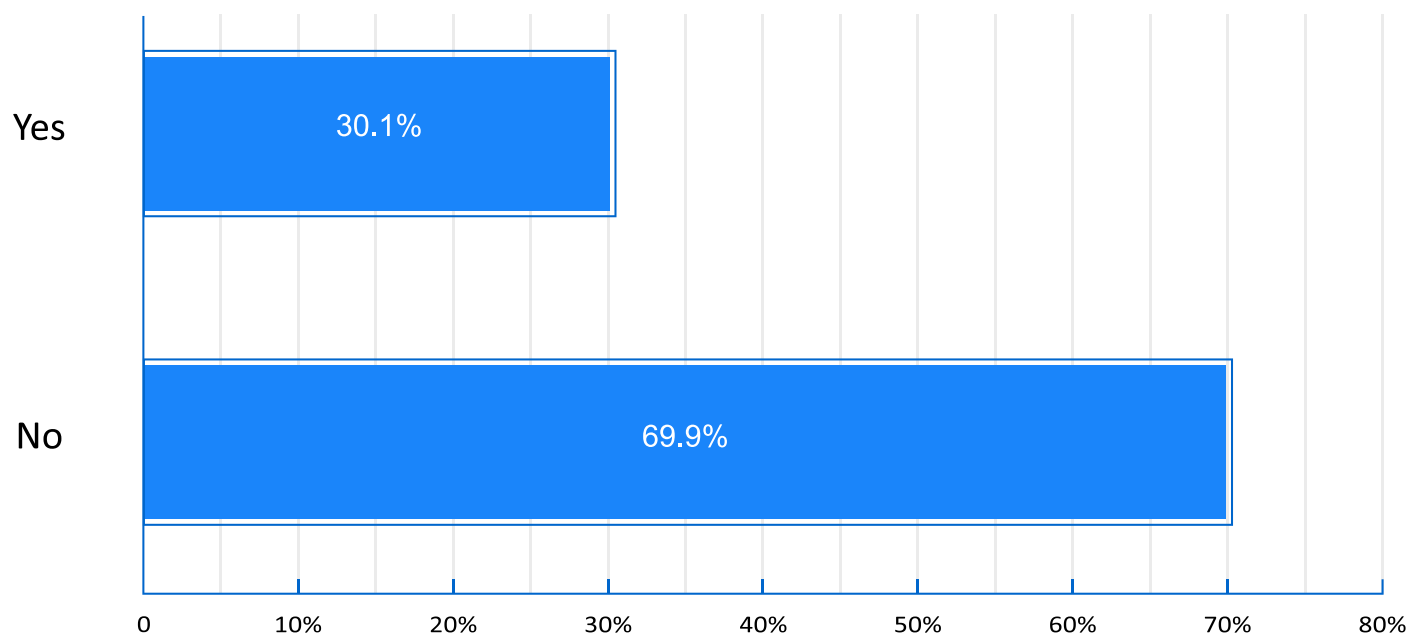
In addition to the 49.4%, another tenth of the contact centres surveyed that currently do not offer noise-cancelling headsets are starting to consider doing so.

Are the Headsets Used in Your Contact Centre Wireless?

Over 30% of Contact Centres Now Use Wireless Headsets

The cords on our devices are disappearing, and it appears that the wireless revolution is finally beginning to make its mark on the contact centre industry.

Are the headphones used in your contact centre wireless?



In fact, as seen above, 30.1% of contact centres now offer advisors wireless headsets, which could boost advisor morale as well as performance.

Why could this improve morale? Because a cordless headset could remove the feeling of being tethered to a desk while at work.

This can also improve productivity, as advisors can use the phone while on the move. This can also decrease customer hold time.

In terms of building rapport, advisors have often been told to stand up to sound more powerful and assertive. A cordless headset allows advisors to do this so they maintain good posture.

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CallMiner is the provider of a leading cloud-based customer interaction analytics solution for extracting business intelligence and improving advisor performance across all contact channels.



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Genesys powers more than 25 billion of the world's best customer experiences each year. Their success comes from connecting employee and customer conversations on any channel, every day.



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NICE is a leading global enterprise software provider that enables organisations to improve customer experience and business results, ensure compliance and fight financial crime.



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