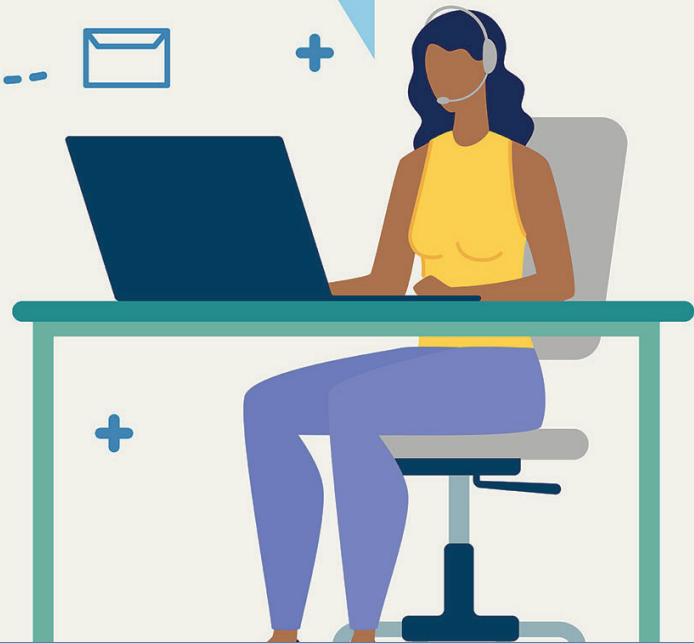


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What Contact Centres Are Doing Right Now

(2019 Edition)

How Do You Compare?

A Call Centre Helper Research Paper

Sponsored by



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What We Did

What Contact Centres Are Doing Right Now – How Do You Compare? (2019 Edition)

Throughout September and October 2019, Call Centre Helper readers were invited to take part in our annual contact centre survey.

We asked 26 questions to over 250 contact centre professionals, to gather an insightful overview of the contact centre industry. This was done in partnership with: Diabolocom, eGain, NICE and Talkdesk.

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 five previous annual surveys, to help detect growing trends within the industry.

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.

We are delighted to share the results with you.



Executive Summary

Fewer Contact Centres Are Multiskilling Advisors

In 2015, 90.5% of contact centres were multiskilling advisors, but, as the years have gone by, this percentage has fallen to 83.9%.

In fact, the percentage has been steadily decreasing, falling in four of the past five years, despite the engagement and resource-planning benefits that multiskilling can bring.

We can theorize that more contact centres are deciding to make advisors specialists in one area, with organizations facing tougher queries as self-service takes more of the simple, transactional contacts.

Call Scripting Is Coming Back Into Fashion

Only 42.5% of contact centres were using call scripting last year, yet this percentage has risen to 51.0% – a higher percentage than when we first asked this question in 2016.

While many contact centres opt not to use scripts, deeming them to take away from the power of “natural conversation”, technology is helping to make them much more engaging.

For example, there are now technologies such as guided scripting and visual flows to better equip advisors with knowledge, while being more engaging than traditional rigid call scripting.

Outbound Call Volumes Continue to Fall

The number of organizations making outbound calls decreased in 2019, with only 68.3% now doing so. This equates to a drop of almost 5% from last year.

While last year’s introduction of new GDPR regulations may account for much of this, it also fits a much wider trend that we’ve been monitoring year after year.

In 2018, we calculated that the number of outbound calls as a percentage of overall contact centre contacts had decreased from the previous year, as it had done in the three preceding years.

Advisor Satisfaction Is a Metric Growing in Importance

The days of an annual survey being the only tool to calculate Advisor Satisfaction seem to be coming to a close, as contact centres place more value on this metric.

In 2016, just 48.4% of operations deemed the measure to be “very important”, but in three years this has risen to 67.1%, as contact centres have decided to track the happiness and engagement levels of their workforce.

This trend has grown year on year, with the only other metric to have seen such a steady rise being Forecast Accuracy.

Two-Thirds of Contact Centres Still Use Spreadsheets for Staff Scheduling

Surprisingly, 67.4% of contact centres are still using spreadsheets for scheduling advisors instead of turning to specialist technologies to automate much of this process.

Perhaps even more unexpectedly, a further 13.8% of contact centres are still using pen and paper or whiteboards to schedule staff.

While contact centres can still use these methods, with the help of an Erlang Calculator, it is very difficult to add flexibility to these types of schedules, especially if your contact centre has more than 30 advisors.

More and More Contact Centres Are Turning to Homeworking

Recruiting good contact centre people is getting harder for many. There is much more career competition in certain areas, as well as conflicts with millennials' job priorities and so on.

For these reasons, an increasing number of operations are turning to homeworking to increase the pool of potential advisors from which they can recruit.

This trend is underlined by our findings, which show that over a third of contact centres (34.4%) already operate with advisors working from home, being either fully deployed or in a pilot scheme.

19.4% of Self-Service Systems Haven't Been Adjusted Since Installation

Almost a fifth of contact centres haven't made any changes to their self-service system since it was first installed.

This is surprising, as it's important to ensure that you have a way of assessing how your self-service system is impacting inbound contacts, to measure its effectiveness and make improvements accordingly.

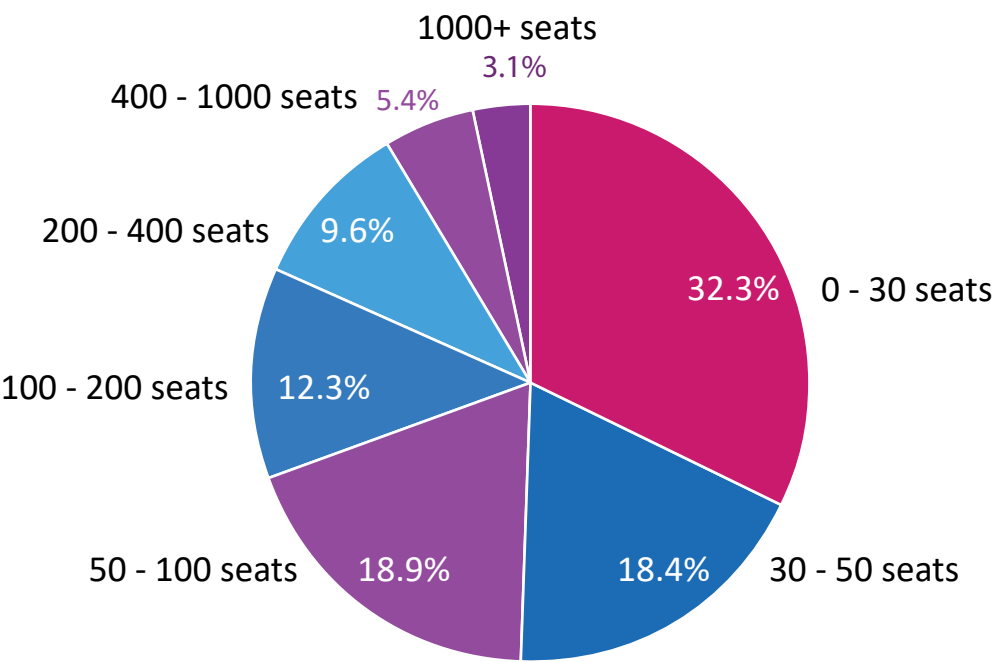
Modern self-service systems also have metrics that will help with this, including insights as to where customers leave the self-service process, so you know where to improve the journey over time and make customers happier.

How Does Your Contact Centre Compare?

1. What Is the Size of Your Contact Centre?

Participants of this year's survey came from a variety of contact centres, of all different shapes and sizes, ranging from 0–30 seats to 1000+.

What Is the Size of Your Contact Centre?



To add context to the results shared in this report, here is the make-up of the different-sized contact centres which took part in our survey.

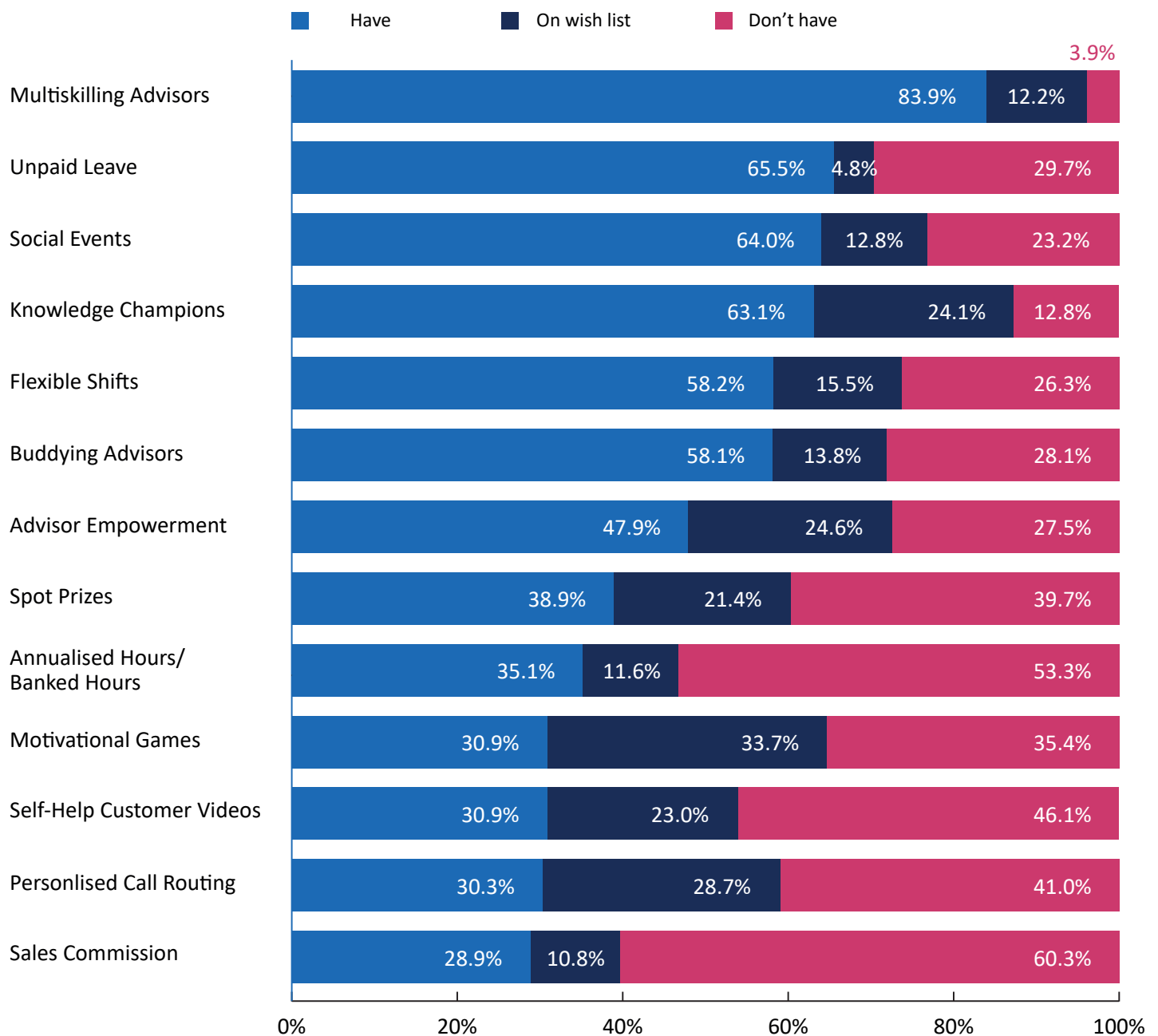


2. What Initiatives Do You Currently Have in the Contact Centre?

The Percentage of Contact Centres Organizing Social Events Continues to Decrease

For the fourth year in a row, the number of contact centres organizing social events for their advisors has declined, with only 64.0% now doing so.

What Initiatives Do You Currently Have in the Contact Centre?



What Initiatives Do You Currently Have in the Contact Centre?

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

In 2015, 77.3% of contact centres were arranging social events, meaning that there has been a drop-off of almost 15% in the past four years.

It's difficult to understand why this is happening, as social events provide a great way for employees to get to know one another outside the work environment, which will likely improve team cohesion.

Advisor Empowerment Is Decreasing

Fewer contact centres are creating initiatives to increase advisor empowerment, despite the growing number of those actively measuring Advisor Satisfaction.

In fact, the percentage of contact centres doing the former has decreased from 61.0% in 2017 to 47.9% just two years later.

Our findings may highlight that contact centres are finding alternative ways to engage advisors, as the use of motivational games and spot prizes has also fallen sharply over the same time period.

Flexible Shifts Are Once Again Growing in Usage

While many traditional initiatives to increase advisor engagement are falling by the wayside, better utilization of shift patterns is one that is instead growing in value.

Now 58.2% of contact centres offer flexibility in their schedules, compared to the figure of 51.8% that was recorded 12 months ago.

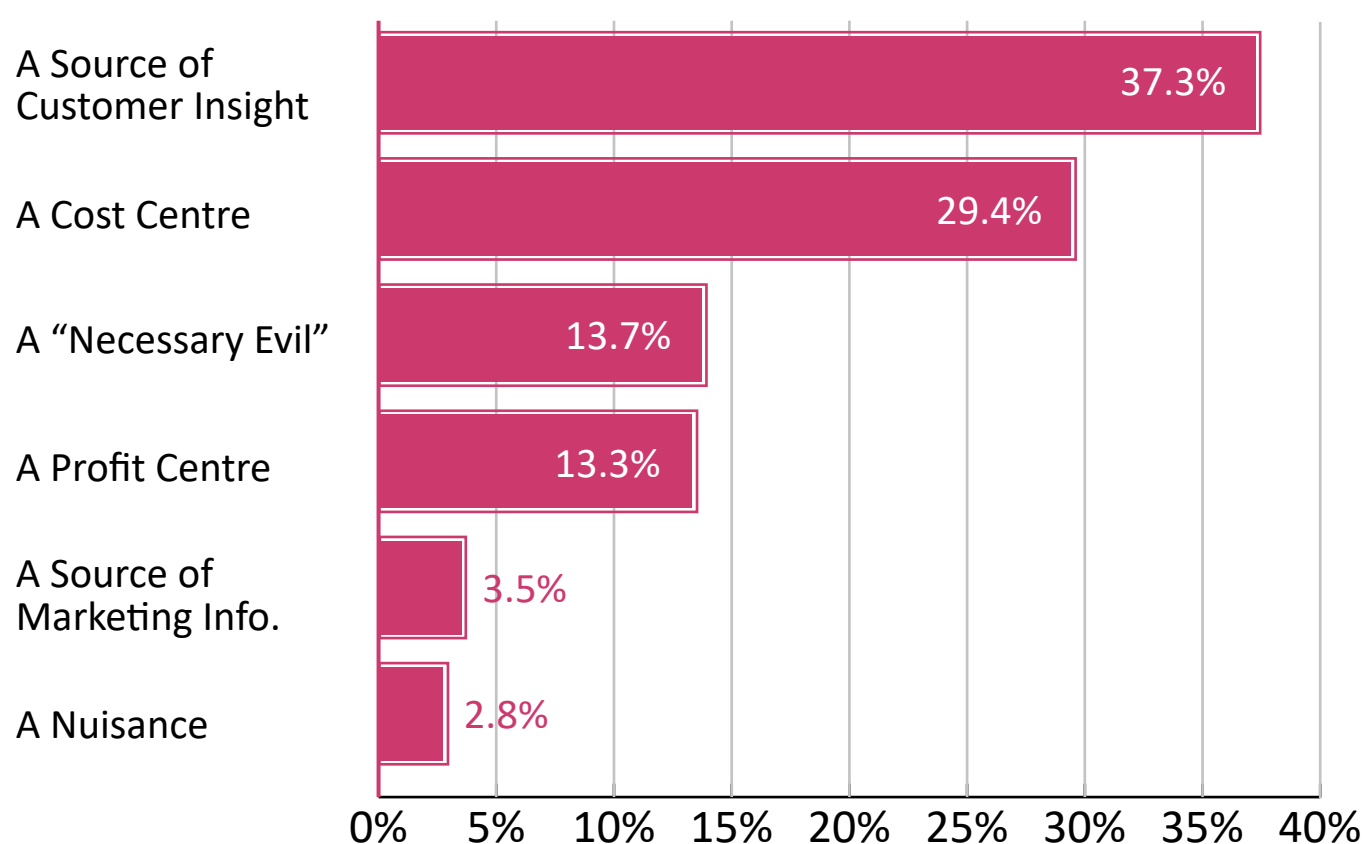
Such flexibility initiatives can vary from simple shift-swapping to much more complex levers like reserve homeworkers.

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

Almost a Third of Organizations View the Contact Centre as a “Cost Centre”

Negative perceptions of the contact centre still seem to be rife within many organizations, with 29.4% of survey participants reporting that they believe their business views them as a “cost centre”.

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



To make matters worse, an additional 13.7% go one step further, naming the contact centre a “necessary evil”, while 2.8% go as far as labelling it a “nuisance”.

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 their company.

More Now View It as a “Source of Customer Insight”, Though

Despite these worrying results, it was good to see that the most common perception of the contact centre was that it is a “source of customer insight”.

There were also those who believed the wider business views their contact centre as a “profit centre” (13.3%) and as a “source of marketing information” (3.5%).

Overall, though, the results show that the contact centre industry can do more to highlight its value by driving customer feedback into the business, in order to help spark real change.

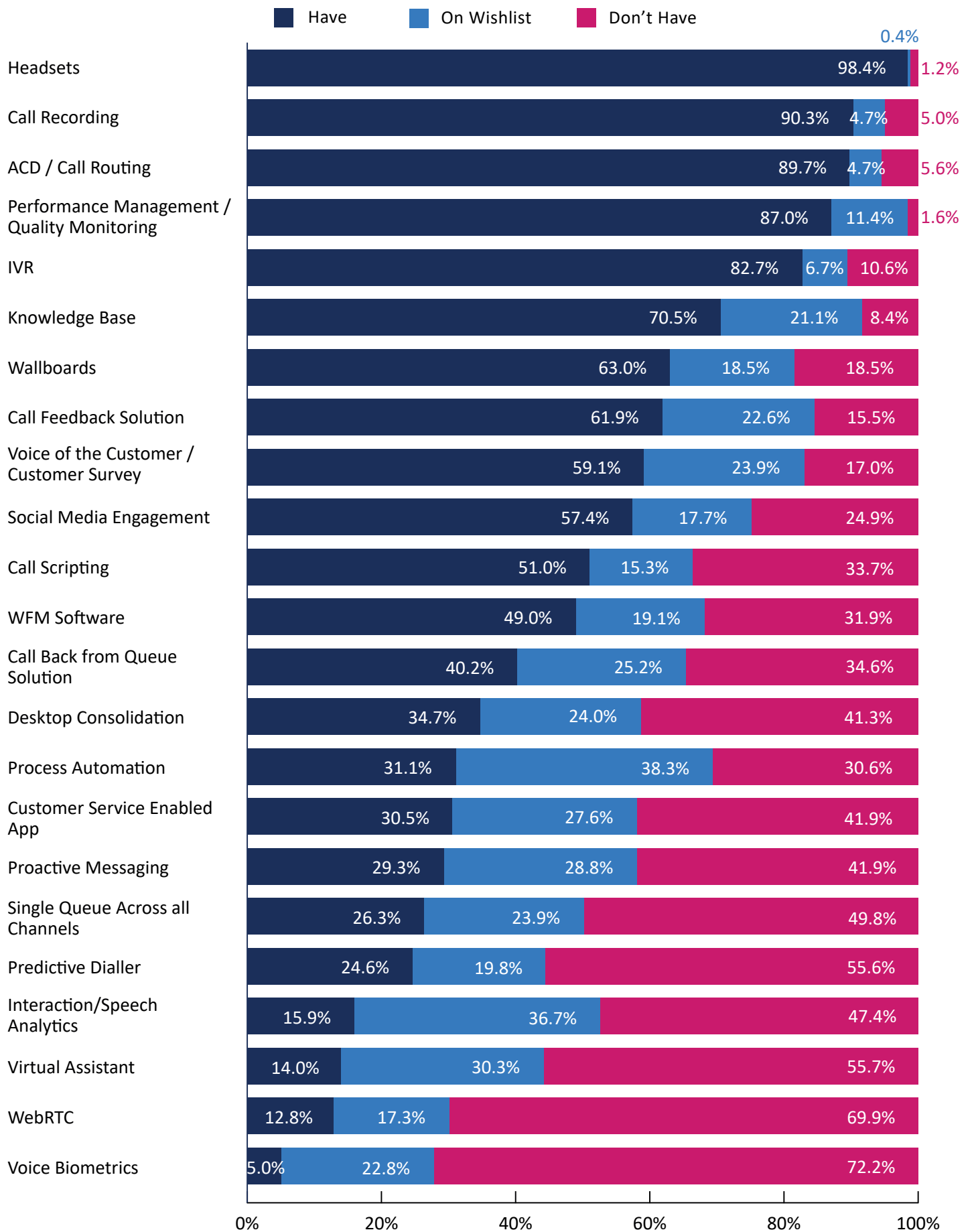
4. What Technology Do You Have in Your Contact Centre?

Quality Monitoring Technology Is Being Implemented by More Contact Centres

Our findings suggest that almost as many contact centres have deployed software to aid their quality monitoring process as have installed ACDs or similar call-routing technologies.



What Technology Do You Have in Your Contact Centre?



What Technology Do You Have in Your Contact Centre?

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

In fact, the use of such quality tools in contact centres has increased from 80.2% in 2017 to 87.0% in 2019.

The implementation of these tools likely shows that more organizations are focusing on creating great conversations as a means of improving the customer experience.

Wallboards Aren't as Popular as They Once Were

While the general trends show that contact centres are installing an increasing number of technologies, the percentage of those using wallboards has dropped significantly.

In just one year, the percentage of contact centres using wallboards has fallen from 74.7% to 63.0%, which is the lowest figure for the technology since our records began.

However, this fall has coincided with the growth in use of desktop consolidation (which has risen by 8.4% in the past year), highlighting that contact centres may be looking for other ways to better present information to their teams – through their desktops.

Workforce Management (WFM) Software Is Growing in Demand

One of the technologies that has been installed by a large number of contact centres in 2019 is WFM software, with 49.0% of contact centres now using the technology.

This is up by almost 12% in one year and fits the trend that we have tracked since 2016, as more contact centres have chosen to adopt the technology year after year.

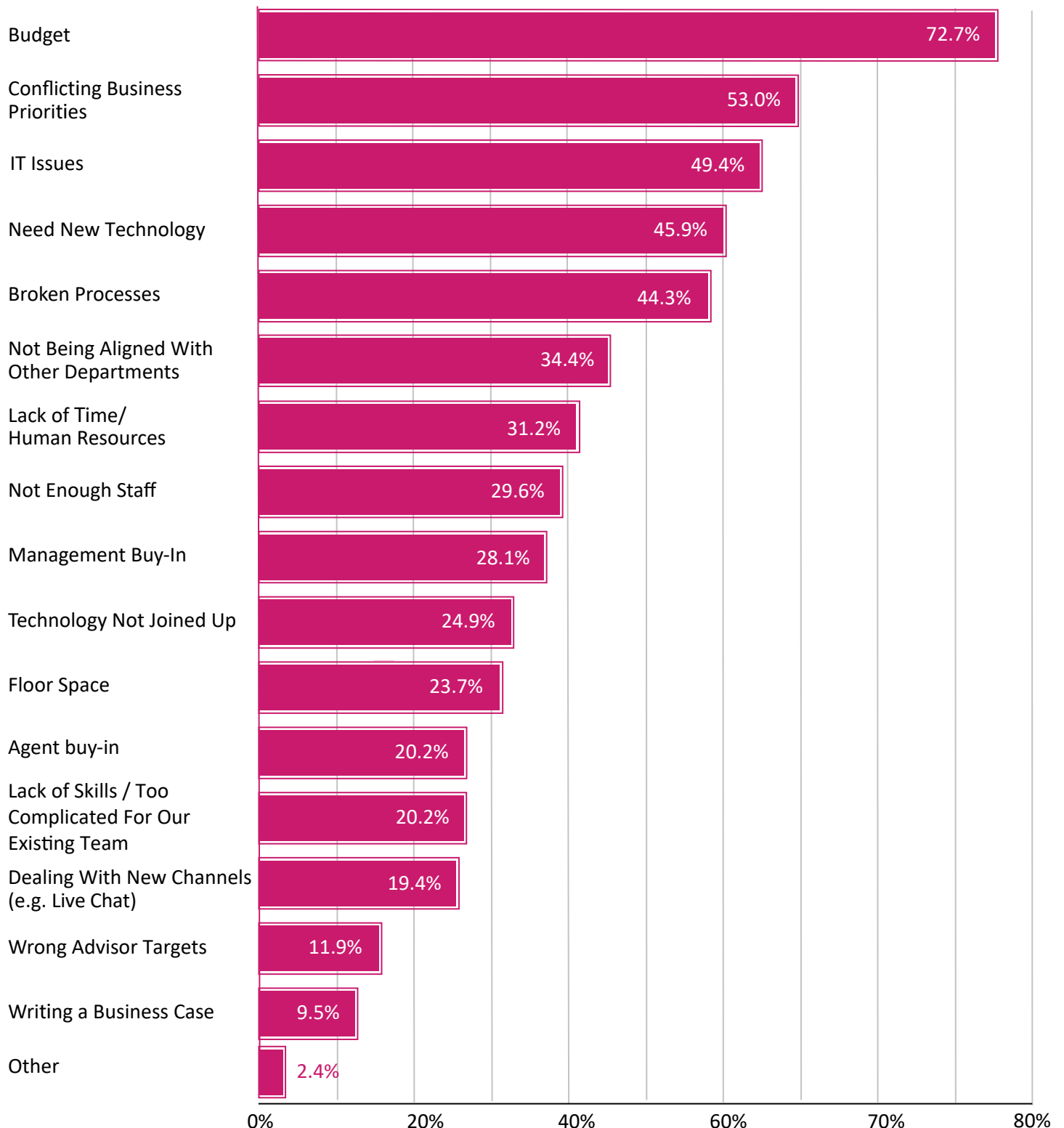
Other technologies that have grown significantly in usage over the past 12 months include social media engagement software, call scripting and speech analytics.

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

Lack of Budget Is the Greatest Barrier to Achieving World-Class Customer Service

Almost three-quarters of contact centres (72.7%) reported that budget is preventing them from running their ideal contact centre.

What Barriers Stop You From Running Your Dream Contact Centre?



This result is unsurprising, as were the second and third most common barriers, which were conflicting business priorities (53.0%) and IT issues (49.4%).

However, we are also finding other big hurdles to offering great customer service, which we may not have seen five or ten years ago...

A Fifth of Contact Centres Lack the Skillset Required to Best Handle Customer Contacts

20.2% of contact centres reported that they did not have the skillset to handle the increasingly complex queries that are entering the contact centre.

This fact, paired with the notion that many contact centres are finding it more difficult to recruit the right people, is likely to be making it harder for managers to run their dream operation.

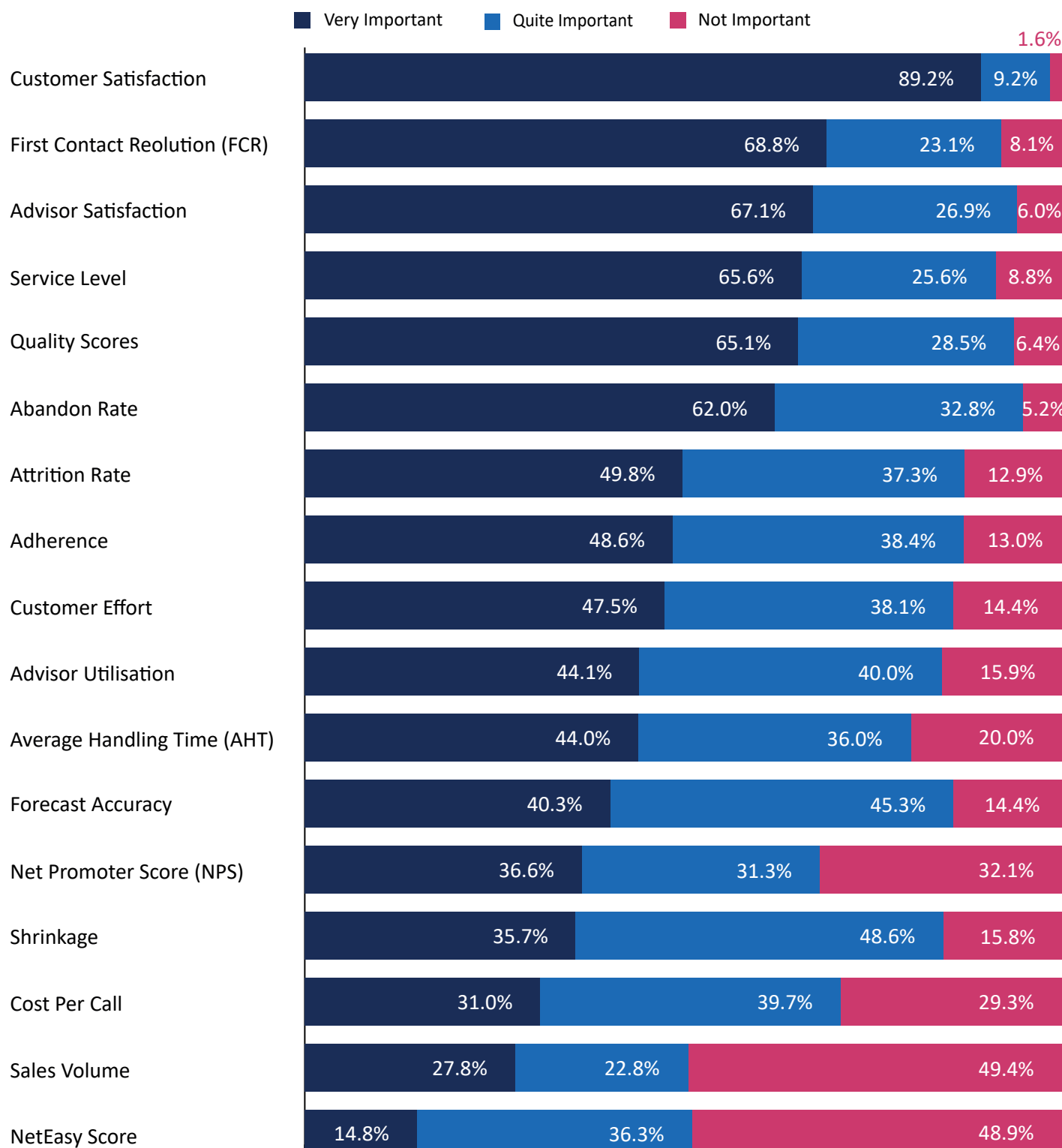
However, this is not the only barrier that seems to be making modern contact centre management more difficult. Issues like dealing with new channels (19.4%) and revising advisor targets (11.9%) are causing problems for many.

6. What Are the Most Important Contact Centre Metrics?

Adherence Is Becoming an Increasingly Important Metric

48.6% of contact centres now view Adherence to be a “very important” metric, a big increase from last year when just 40.2% of survey participants gave the metric this tag.

What Are the Most Important Contact Centre Metrics?



What Are the Most Important Contact Centre Metrics?

| | 2019 | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Customer Satisfaction | 89.2% | 93.1% | 95.7% | 91.1% |
| First Contact Resolution | 68.8% | 69.8% | 68.0% | 65.4% |
| Advisor Satisfaction | 67.1% | 63.1% | 62.0% | 48.4% |
| Service Level | 65.6% | 61.4% | 62.7% | 70.0% |
| Quality Scores | 65.1% | 63.9% | 67.5% | 68.4% |
| Abandon Rate | 62.0% | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Attrition Rate | 49.8% | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Adherence | 48.6% | 40.2% | 47.6% | 37.6% |
| Customer Effort | 47.5% | 48.9% | 53.6% | 35.8% |
| Advisor Utilisation | 44.1% | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Average Handling Time | 44.0% | 31.9% | 33.2% | 31.8% |
| Forecast Accuracy | 40.3% | 37.1% | 36.2% | 33.4% |
| Net Promoter Score | 36.6% | 32.8% | 36.6% | 29.6% |
| Shrinkage | 35.7% | 27.3% | 30.5% | 28.5% |
| Cost Per Call | 31.0% | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Sales Volume | 27.8% | 27.2% | 35.1% | 29.1% |
| NetEasy Score | 14.8% | 19.5% | 21.7% | 11.4% |

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

When advisors adhere to schedule, service level stabilizes and that’s a very important thing in terms of both resource planning and managing costs.

Adherence can also help you to gauge the productivity of advisors, as it’s something that they have a high degree of control over.

For these reasons, it seems that Adherence is becoming a key metric in every contact centre manager’s toolkit.

Customer Effort Hype Is Fading

A few years ago, Customer Effort was gaining momentum as a metric, especially after the *Harvard Business Review* published an article in favour of the metric entitled “Stop Trying to Delight Your Customers”.

However, less than half of contact centres (47.5%) now consider the metric to be “very important”.

In 2017, 53.6% of contact centres reported that it was “very important” to their operations, meaning that the percentage has dropped by over 6% in just two years.

The Average Handling Time (AHT) Resurgence

In the previous three years, AHT's importance to operations has been scrutinized by many contact centre leaders, with just over 30% of survey participants deeming the metric to be "very important" each year.

However, this year we have seen the metric shoot back up to 44.0% as more and more people view the metric in high regard.

We cannot imagine that contact centres have reverted to targeting advisors on the measure, as that might lead to the team rushing through their contacts, which would not be great in terms of quality.

So, perhaps more contact centres are recognizing the value of AHT in resource planning. This would also help to explain why Forecast Accuracy saw a rise in importance in this year's report, as this is primarily a planning metric.



Workforce Management

The Workforce Management chapter is sponsored by NICE

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

Our mission is to help our customers build and strengthen their reputation by uncovering customer insight, predicting human intent and taking the right action to improve their business.

We do this by capturing large amounts of structured and unstructured data (customer interactions, and transactions) from multiple sources. We then apply analytics to this data to provide real-time insight and uncover intent.

Our solutions allow organizations to operationalize this insight and embed it within their daily business processes, empowering them to provide better service, motivate and engage employees and identify potential risk to the enterprise.

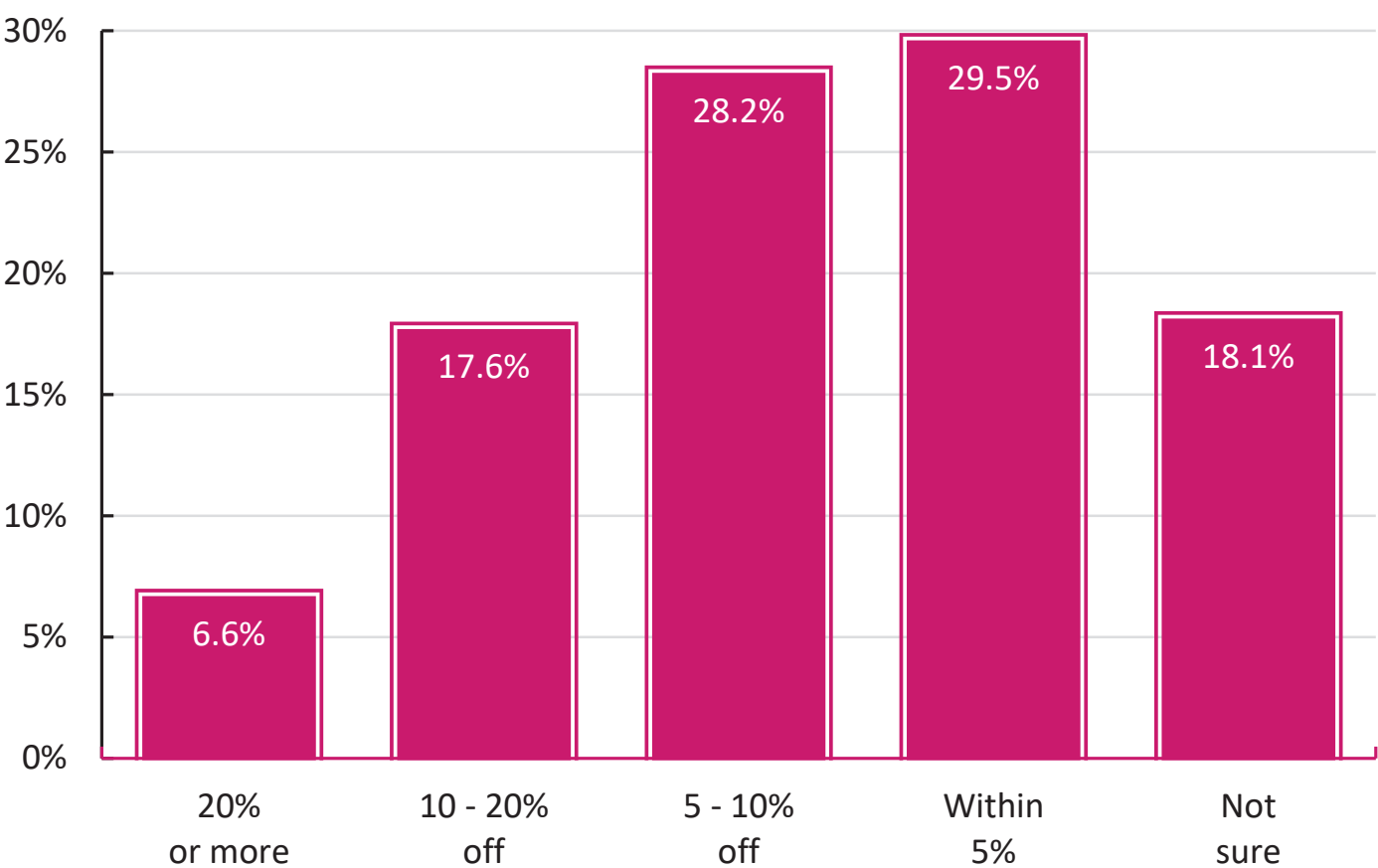
www.nice.com

7. How Far off Were Your Contact Centre Forecasts in the Past Month?

Almost 60% of Contact Centres Have a Forecast Accuracy of Within 10%

Most of the industry professionals that we surveyed (57.7%) reported that their contact centre forecasts had 10%, or better, accuracy in terms of real contact volumes over the past month.

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



In reality, this figure will likely be much higher, given that 18.1% of survey participants could not give an answer.

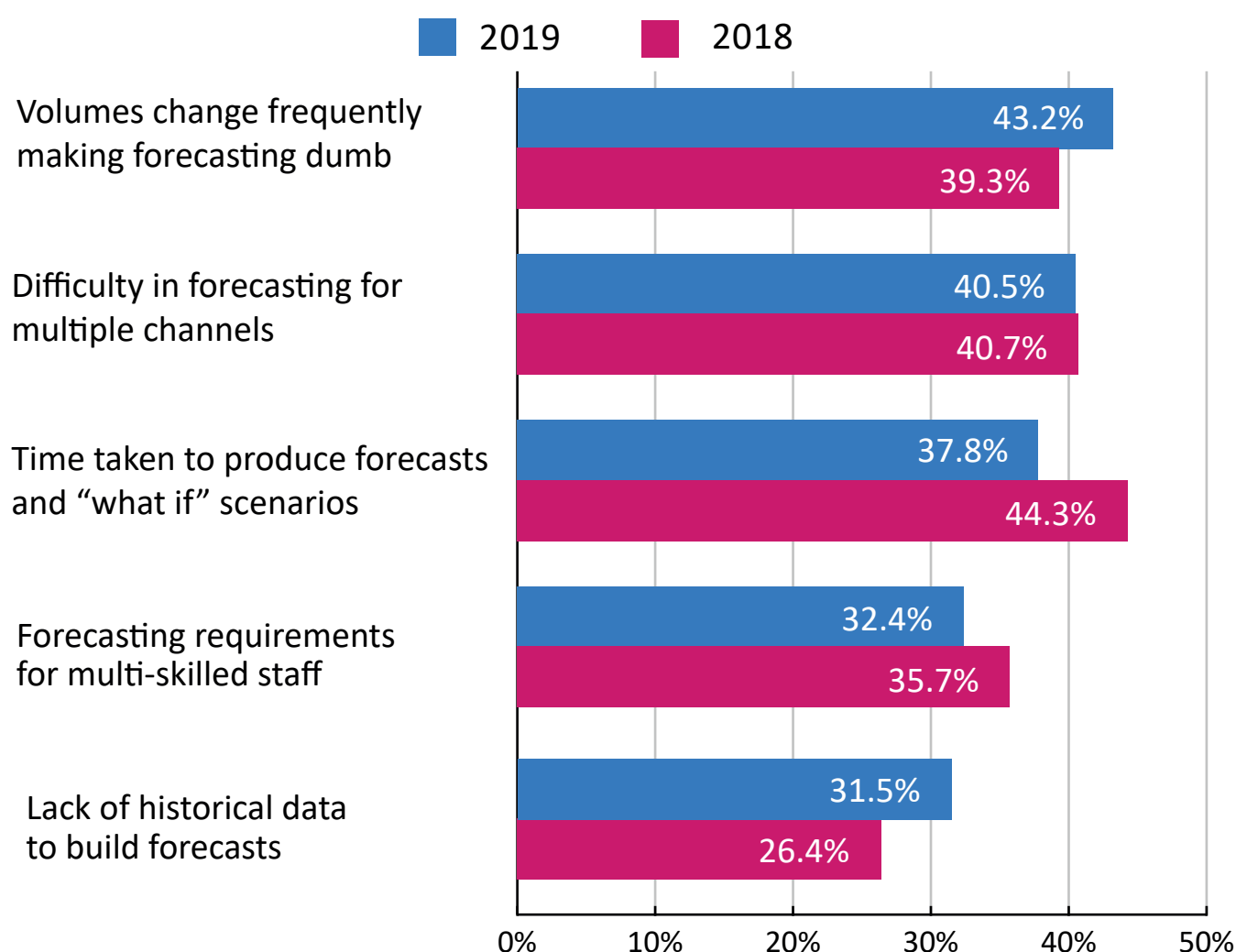
Another positive from this poll is that just 6.6% of contact centres had a Forecast Accuracy of 20% or more. These contact centres will likely need to examine other forecasting strategies or put great effort into refining their existing model, in order to either reduce costs, if overstaffed, or improve the customer experience, if understaffed.

8. What Problems Do You Face When You Forecast Using Your Current System or Process?

Volume Changes Are Becoming More Challenging for Planning Teams

Frequent changes in contact centre volumes making forecasting dumb is the most common forecasting problem. And it's a problem that continues to grow.

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



In fact, there has been an almost 4% increase in the number of contact centres that suffer from the issue since the figure of 39.3% which we reported in 2018.

This perhaps highlights that channel mixes are changing, which makes it more difficult for planners to forecast how customers will contact them.

We can make this assertion by pointing to the fact that more contact centres are now

struggling to obtain historical data, as many of these channels (such as messaging apps and video chats) may be new.

Taking the Time to Forecast and Plan for “What if” Scenarios Is Becoming a Lesser Issue

Contact centres are better at finding the time to forecast and plan for “what if” scenarios than they were this time last year, according to our findings.

Only 37.8% of contact centres now struggle with this problem, compared to 44.3%, the figure that was reported this time last year.

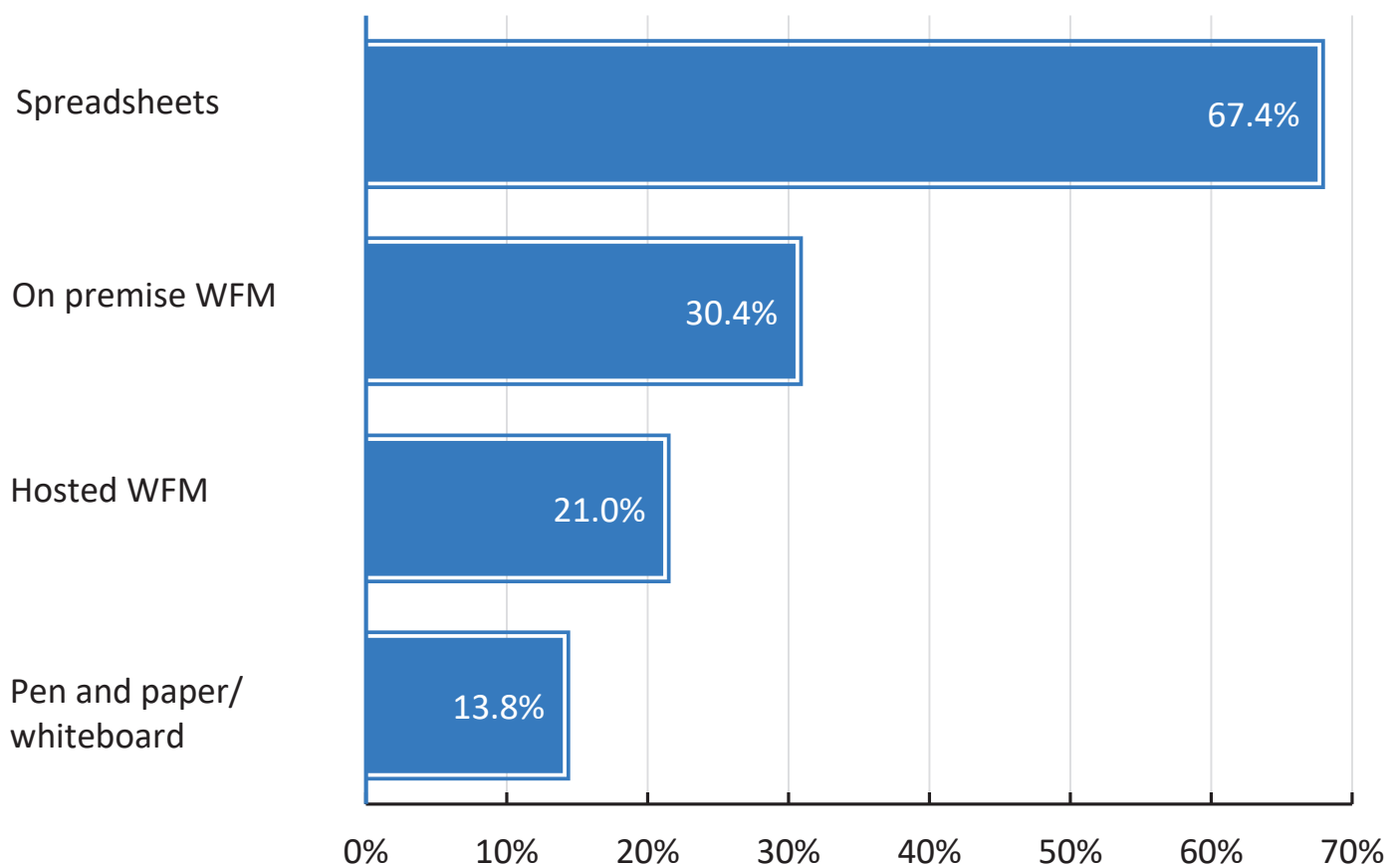
This is great news as contact centres are notoriously stretched for time, so if more are finding time to plan ahead, they can help to reduce future firefighting.

9. What Equipment Do You Use to Schedule Staff?

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

More than one in every eight contact centres (13.8%) are still using either pen and paper or whiteboards to schedule staff.

What Equipment Do You Use to Schedule Staff?



While it is possible to schedule with pen and paper, this method does have its inefficiencies. After all, it is tricky and time-consuming to do this across the day, especially if you have large numbers of staff.

Also, contact centres that do this will be unlikely to offer schedule preferences or shift-swaps or be able to work using banked hours – all of which have been linked to improved advisor engagement.

Spreadsheets Still Monopolize the Scheduling Processes

Spreadsheets are the most common way of scheduling staff, with 67.4% of our industry professionals doing so in their contact centre.

While many contact centres seem happy using spreadsheets for WFM, it is very difficult to add flexibility to such schedules, unlike in many modern WFM systems.

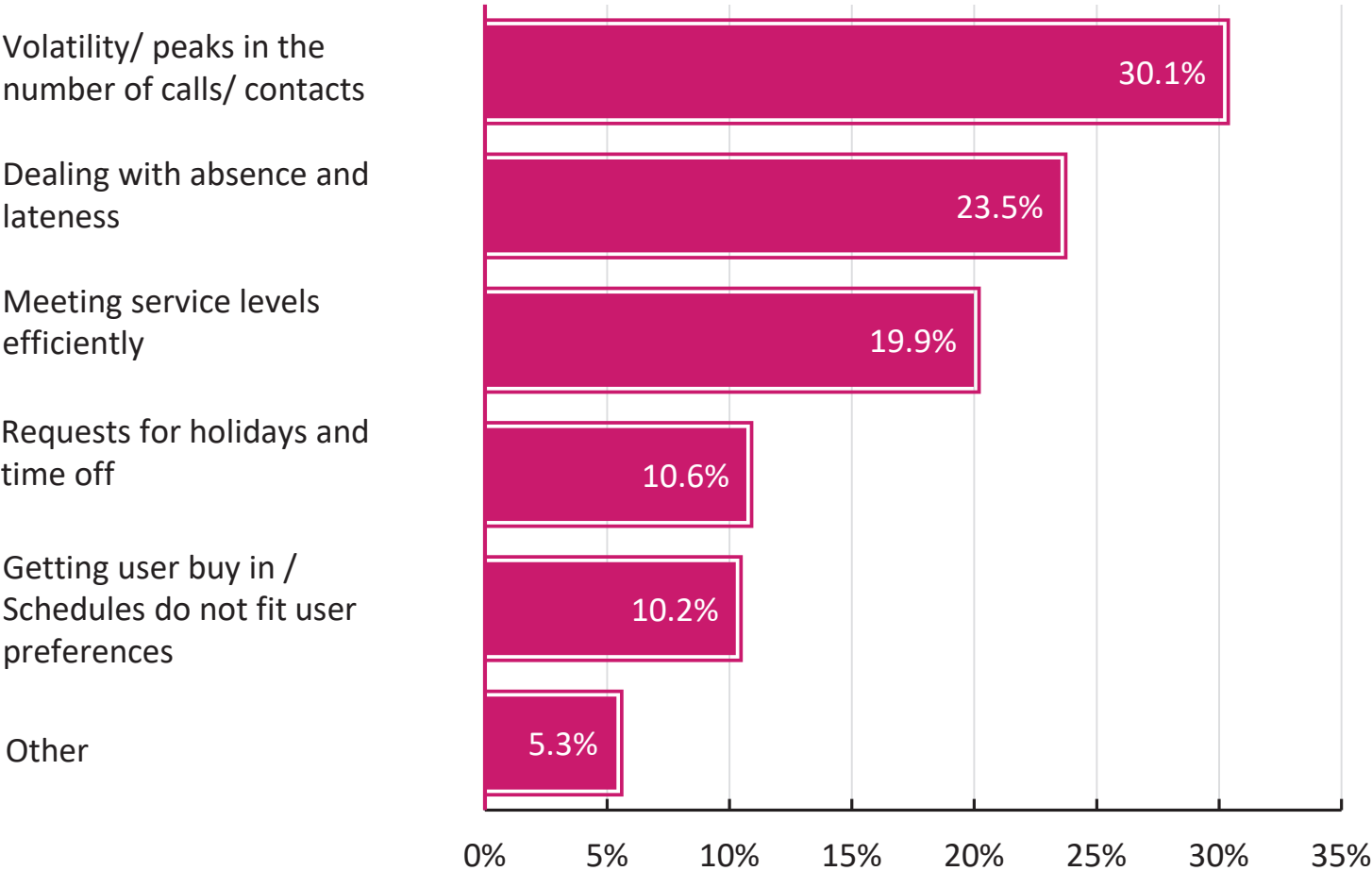


10. What Is Your Biggest Scheduling Problem?

Volatility in Contact Volumes Is Making Scheduling Difficult

With so many contact centres using spreadsheets for forecasting, contact-arrival patterns must be manually created around the forecasts which act as a guide for staff schedules.

What Is Your Biggest Scheduling Problem?



Therefore, unexpected peaks in contact volumes have a huge knock-on effect on arrival patterns, making scheduling difficult for many, as 30.1% of contact centres have noted this issue to be their biggest scheduling problem.

This problem will likely also mean that contact centres struggle to meet service levels, the biggest issue faced by 19.9% of those contact centres surveyed.

Contact Centres Are Also Struggling to Account for Absence and Lateness

The biggest problem that 23.5% of contact centres face when scheduling advisors is dealing with absence and lateness.

While the resource team can predict absence to a certain extent, missing just one or two members from the team can have significant consequences in terms of both service level and occupancy rates.

There Are a Number of Other Scheduling Issues Too

10.6% of contact centres reported that their biggest scheduling problem was handling requests for holidays and time-off, while 10.2% said that getting user buy-in was their greatest challenge.

However, the final 5.3% of our survey respondents told us that their biggest struggle wasn't included as one of the main options in the poll above and that the following were their greatest gripes:

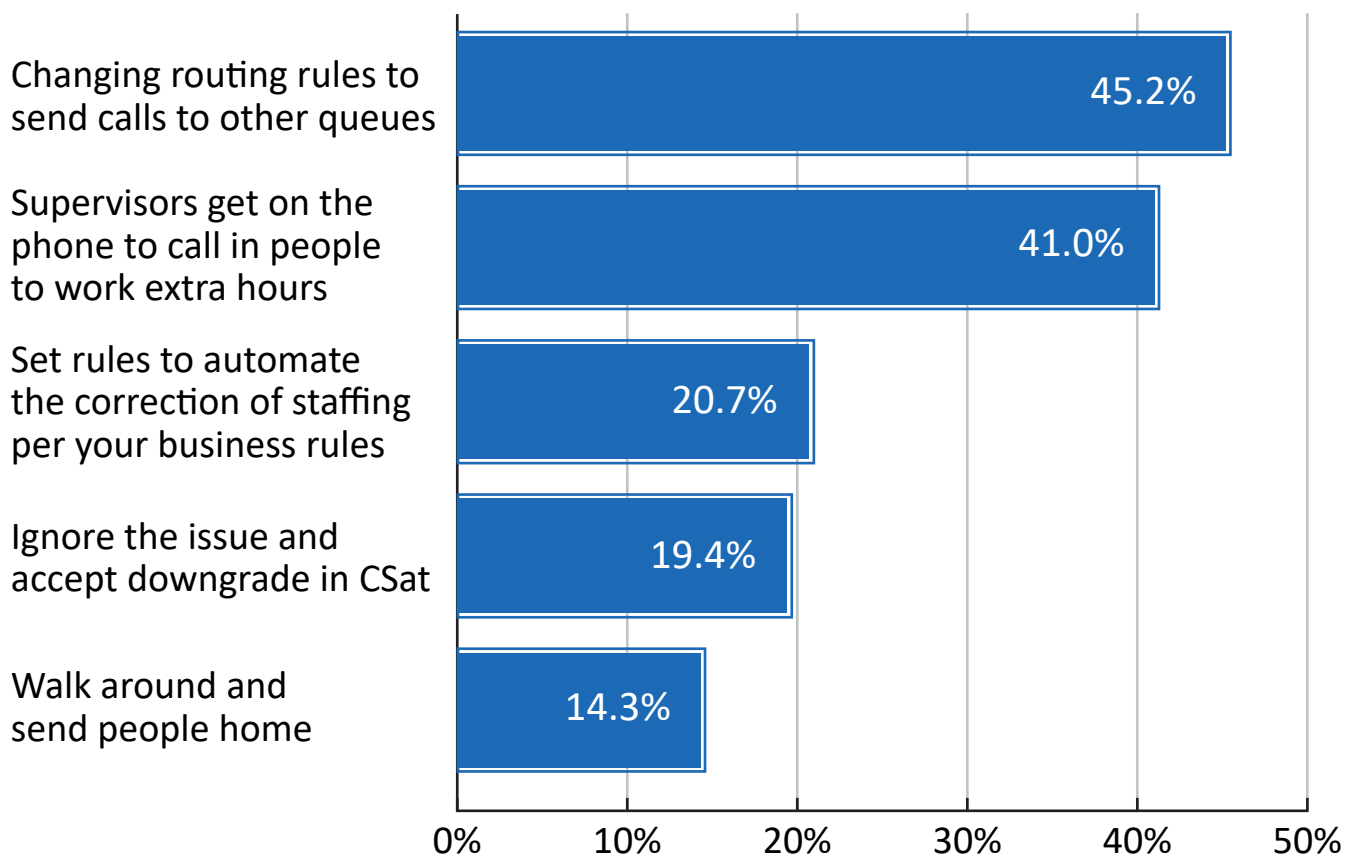
- Quality assurance planning and training colliding with an advisor's day off
- High staff turnover impacting schedule plans
- Scheduling time for advisors to work with the same team leaders
- Scheduling for different advisor skillsets
- Meeting advisor shift-pattern preferences

11. How Do You Handle Intraday Issues With Your Schedules?

Contact Centres Are Becoming Tactical in Dealing With Intraday Issues

It was great to see the two least thoughtful methods of dealing with intraday issues – ignoring the issue and accepting the CSat downgrade (19.4%) and walking around and sending people home (14.3%) – taking up the last two positions in our poll.

How Do You Handle Intraday Issues With Your Schedules?



The most popular method for dealing with unexpected intraday peaks and troughs in call volumes was to change routing rules so that calls join other queues – to better support customers who may have long wait times ahead of them. 45.2% of contact centres now do this.



Another sophisticated method which is used by 20.7% of contact centres is to set rules to automate the correction of staffing – demonstrating proactivity, so everyone knows what to do when intraday issues arise.

Other methods adopted by some of our participants for dealing with intraday issues include:

- Adjusting breaks to fill gaps or pulling people off phones to complete backlog
- Cancelling meetings and prioritizing the schedule
- Posting messages online and on social media to warn of long wait times
- Offering callbacks and drafting in backup advisors
- Using the time for additional one-to-ones and extra coaching

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Customer interaction. Augmented.

Omnichannel

The omnichannel chapter is sponsored by Diabolocom

Diabolocom is a software publisher and telecommunications operator that offers an omnichannel cloud solution for sales, customer service, and contact centres.

Thanks to its speed of implementation, its intuitive interface that is fully integrated in the main CRM on the market and local business support, Diabolocom allows companies to offer benchmark customer experiences and improve their operational performance.

Diabolocom supports the digital transformation of more than 250 companies in 20 countries, including: Engie, Air Liquide, Saint Gobain, Essilor, Dekra, Mister Auto, Meetic Group, Coyote, PhotoBox, Moonpig, Smartbox, Wonderbox, Decathlon, Galeries Lafayette, Carrefour, Bonduelle, Webhelp, Tessi, Comdata... etc.

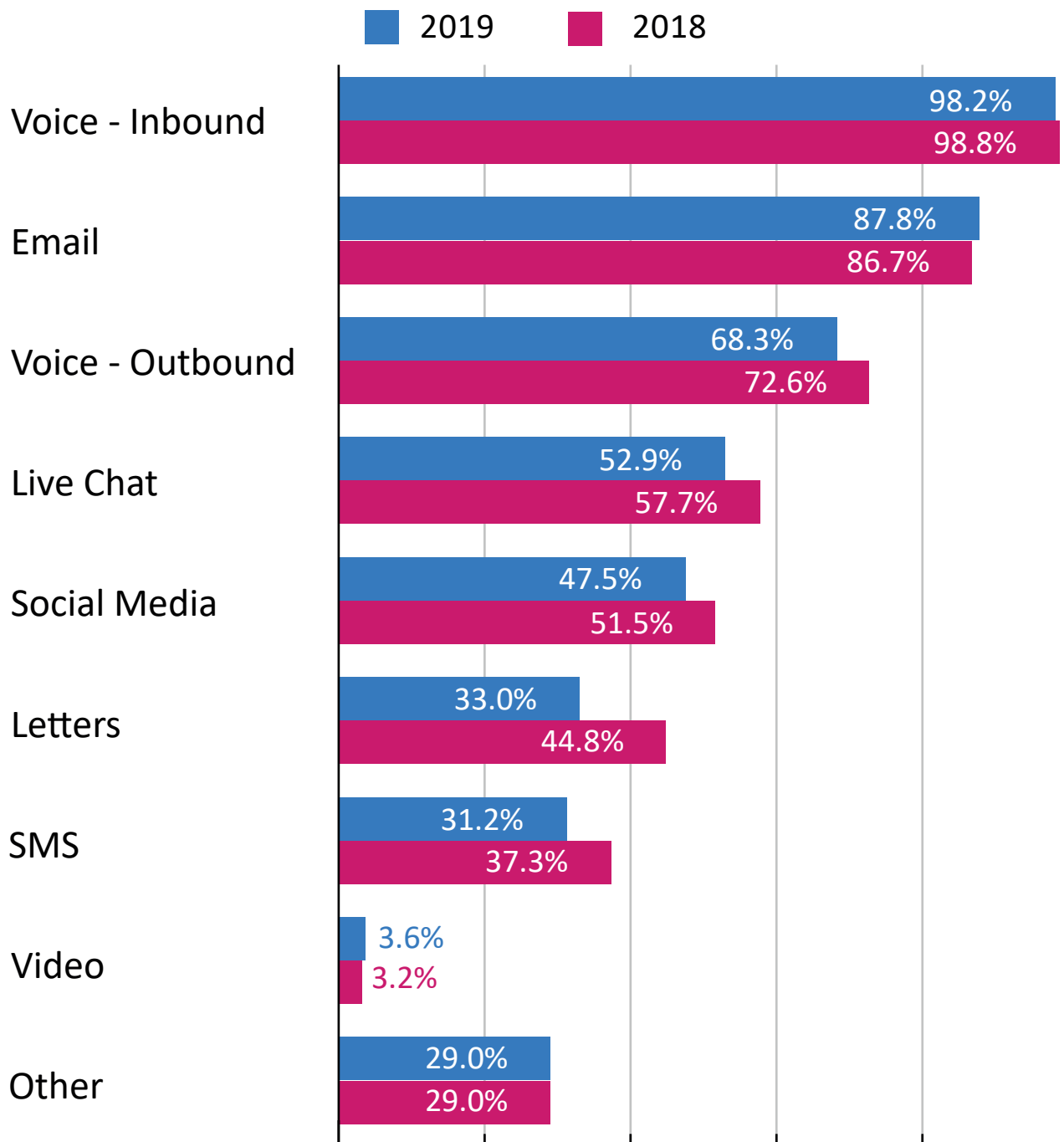
www.diabolocom.com/en

12. Which Channels Do You Offer to Your Customers?

Live Chat Growth Is Stuttering

In previous reports, we have found live chat to be a channel that was growing in popularity. However, in 2019, this growth has turned into a reduction in usage.

Which Channels Do You Offer to Your Customers?



In fact, only 52.9% of organizations now offer a live chat option to customers, whereas 57.7% were offering the channel just 12 months ago.

What has caused this drop is unclear. However, live chat is a notoriously difficult channel for planning and forecasting, while there are many misconceptions regarding the channel which are now being uncovered.

For example, CSat can fall with more than two concurrent chats, and AHT does go up with concurrency, which can counteract any perceived cost reduction.

Email Is Back on the Rise

One of the only mainstream channels to experience any growth in 2019 was email, with 1.3% more contact centres offering the channel than in 2018.

This will surprise many, as typically long response times mean that email can be one of the more frustrating channels, especially if your contact centre also offers alternatives like live chat, social media or messaging.

However, these results signal that email is here to stay. Other channels aren't replacements; it just means our customers have more opportunities for communicating with us.

SMS Is not Becoming a Mainstream Channel

Just 31.2% of contact centres now use the SMS channel, a significant drop from the percentage that was recorded in 2018 (37.3%).

While SMS messages have recently been discussed as a good way of proactively contacting customers, it is likely that more contact centres are employing messaging apps for this purpose.

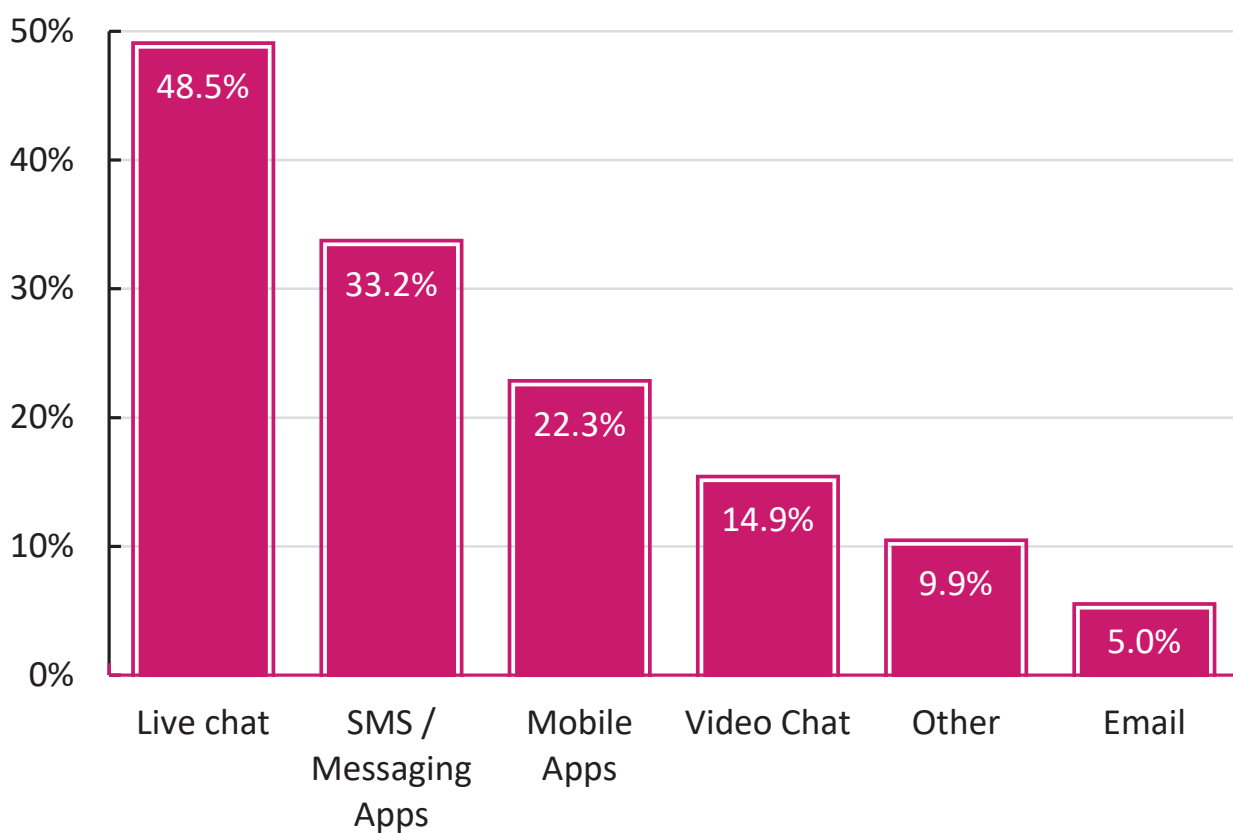
In fact, messaging apps such as Messenger and WhatsApp were the most popular "other channels".

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

Live Chat Growth Will Overcome Its Current Slump

While contact centres seem to be turning away from installing live chat for the moment, as they get to grips with forecasting difficulties and other misconceptions, when we look further into the future, it looks set to once again grow in usage.

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



Almost half of contact centres told us that live chat is the next channel that they wish to implement, ahead of other popular choices like messaging apps (33.2%) and customer service apps (22.3%).

The fact that these were the top three choices is no surprise, as offering customers a quick response without having to call the contact centre makes these channels popular amongst younger generations.

Video Chat Is a Promising Option for Certain Contact Centres

After several years of being the “forgotten” channel, video chat seems to be coming back into the fray, with 14.2% of contact centres reporting it to be the channel that they next want to install.

Coupled with a growth in the number of contact centres using the channel from 2018–2019, 3.2% to 3.6%, video chat is slowly becoming a more popular channel choice.

This growth is great to see, as video can be a great option for technical support contact centres, as customers can show advisors their problems, potentially leading to better and faster outcomes.

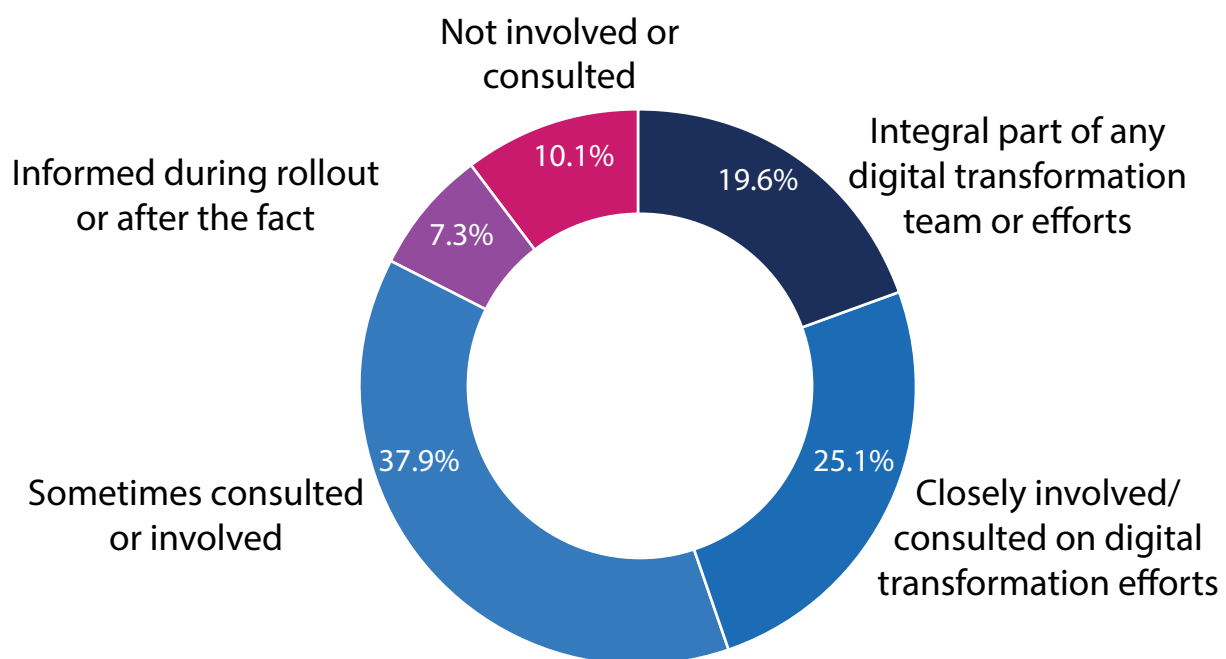


14. How Involved Is Your Contact Centre in Any Corporate Digital Transformation Efforts?

One in Every Ten Contact Centres Is not Consulted in Corporate Digital Transformation

More than one in every ten contact centres (10.1%) revealed that they are not ever involved or consulted in corporate digital transformation efforts.

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



Any changes to the digital nature of a brand will have a direct and likely large impact on the contact centre, making these figures highly surprising.

The impact on the contact centre will most probably come through a change in contact volumes or staffing difficulties, and it may introduce new query types.

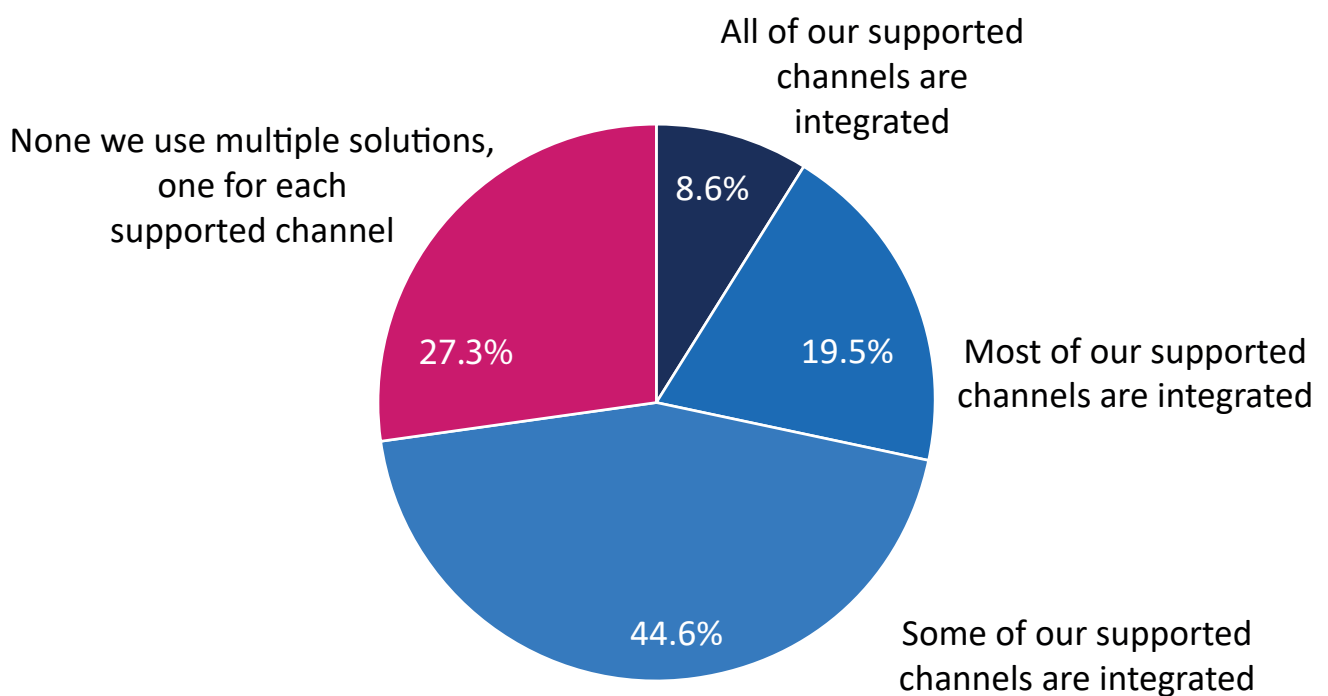
Another worrying sign is that a further 7.3% are only informed during rollout, causing these contact centres to also have to take on a very reactive approach, as opposed to a more considered, proactive, approach.

15. How Many of Your Contact Centre Channels Are Integrated?

Just 8.6% of Contact Centres Integrate All of Their Channels

According to our poll, fewer than 9% of contact centres have integrated all of their channels. These contact centres will probably have lowered AHT and improved efficiency in doing so.

How Many of Your Contact Centre Channels Are Integrated?



Integrating channels helps advisors as they don't have to switch between screens when looking for customer information.

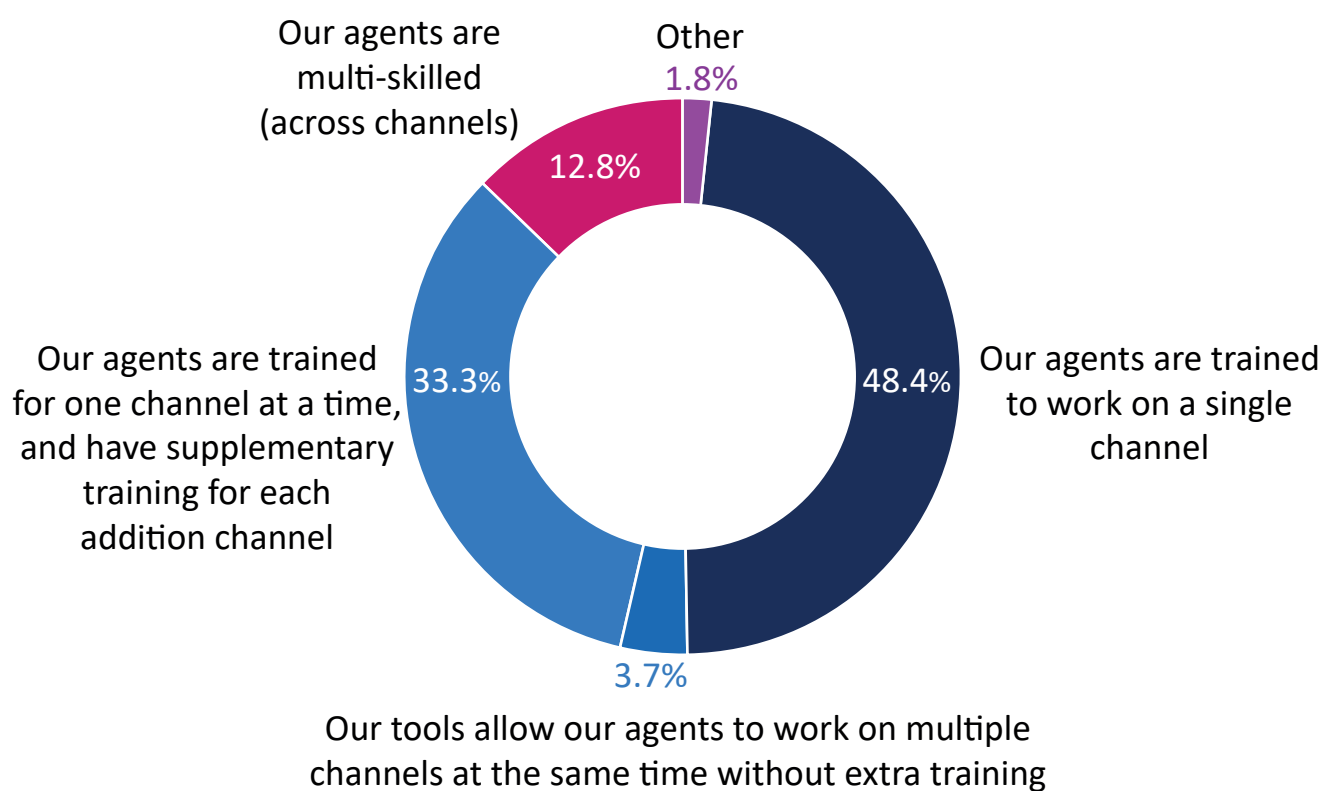
However, 44.6% have so far only managed to integrate some of their contact centre channels, while a further 27.3% have not even got this far, instead using multiple solutions – one for each supported channel.

16. How Do You Manage Your Agents' Cross-Channel Skills?

Most Contact Centres Train Advisors to Work Across Multiple Channels

87.2% of contact centres now train advisors to handle contacts across multiple channels, signalling that the industry is moving away from having separate teams for separate channels.

How Do You Manage Your Agents' Cross-Channel Skills?



Many of this 87.2% are primarily trained for one channel at a time, having supplementary training for each additional channel, which can be a great approach.

Why? Because constantly switching between channels can damage advisor productivity, as they are constantly having to refocus, while we want advisors devoting all of their attention to what the customer is saying.

Yet the danger with this is that advisors may become much better on one channel than another, so it was interesting to see that 3.7% of contact centres are now using tools to aid the growth of multiskilled advisors.

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Cloud

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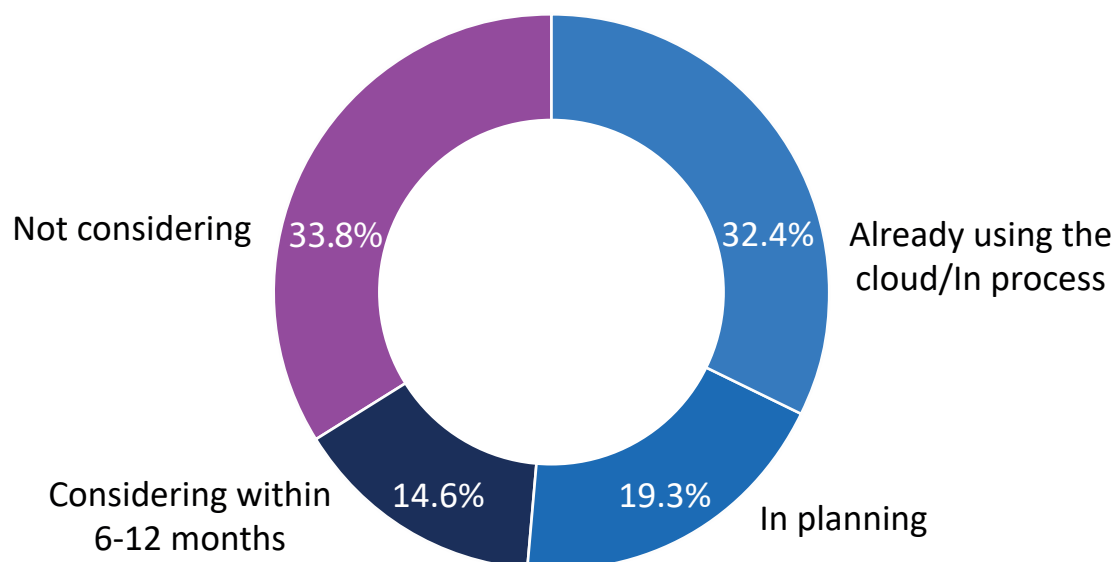
17. How Would You Best Describe Your Plans for Moving to a Cloud Contact Centre?

Almost a Third of Contact Centres Are Using a Cloud Contact Centre

32.4% of contact centres are either already using a cloud contact centre or are in the process of making the transition, as the cloud revolution starts to take shape.

In addition to this, only 33.8% of contact centres are not considering cloud and instead intend to carry on using legacy-based systems.

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



With this in mind, it is clear that most organizations are now accepting that cloud seems to be the future.

Many More Contact Centres Are Planning to Transfer

While the fact that only a third of contact centres have made the move or are in the process of a move to the cloud may not seem like much, our results show that cloud take-up is set to grow much further in the years to come.

In fact, nearly a fifth (19.3%) have put plans in place to implement cloud technology.

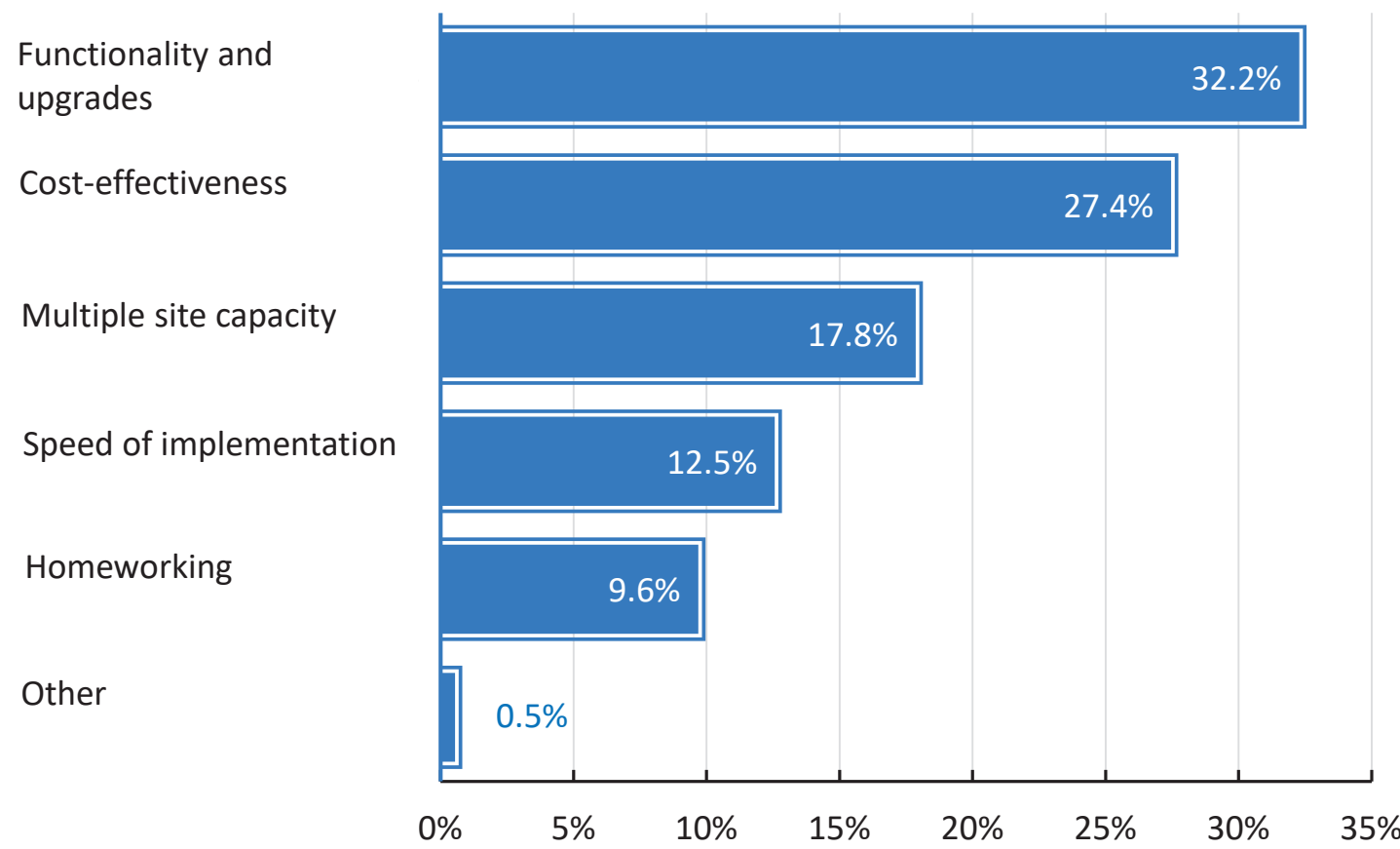
An additional 14.6% are reported to be considering the cloud within the next six to 12 months.

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

Functionality and Upgrades Is Voted as the Biggest Benefit of Cloud

The installation and configuration of on-premise solutions can take several months to complete. In the cloud, however, upgrades – as well as the initial implementation – are much faster to deploy.

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



This fact, in addition to greater functionality, is seen as the greatest benefit of cloud, as reported by 32.2% of our industry professionals.

Other benefits noted by some of our other survey participants included: cost-effectiveness (27.4%), multiple site capacity (17.8%) and speed of implementation (12.5%).

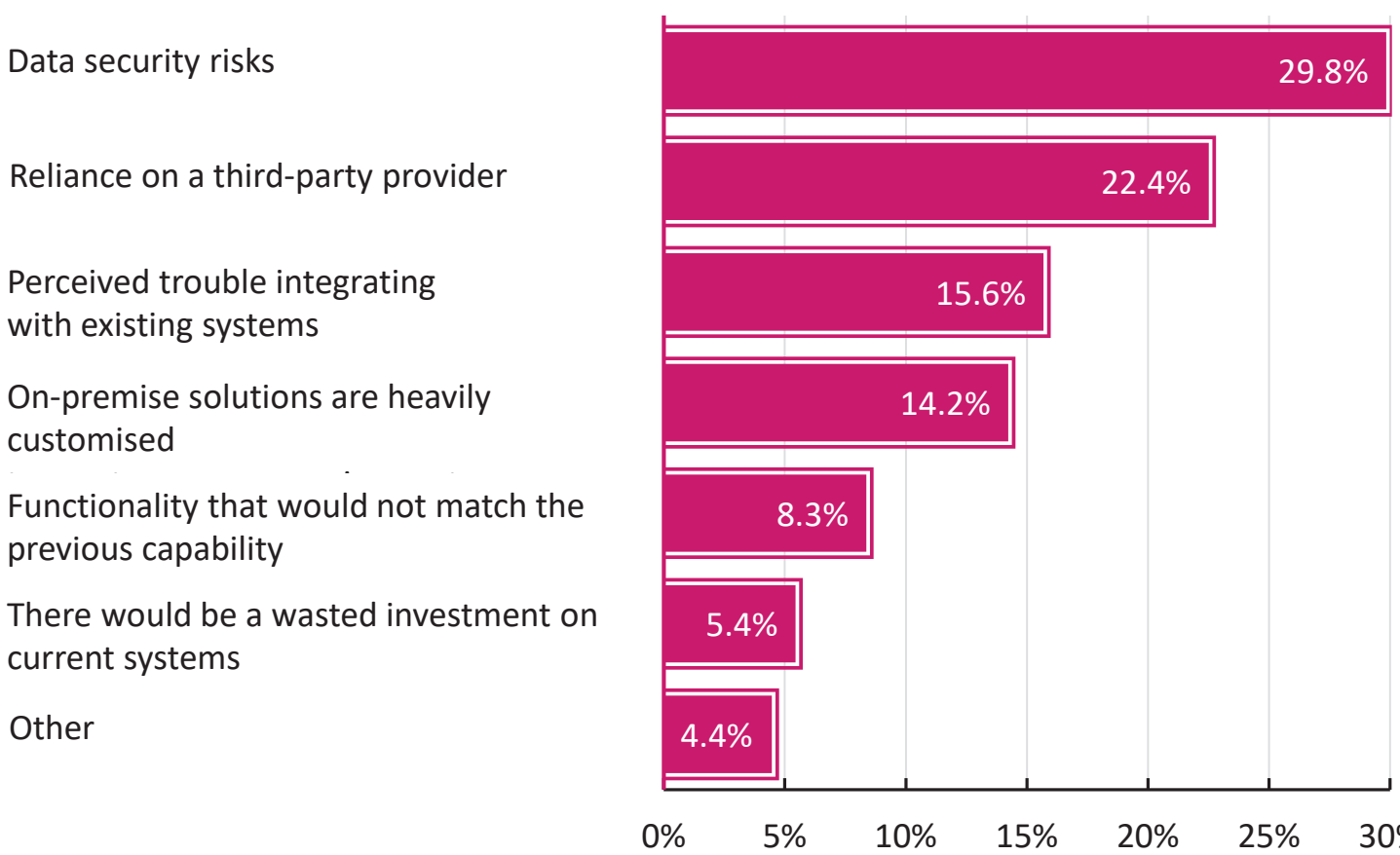
One other benefit, which is not presented in this list, is the ability to share data across the organization, to share valuable customer insight with the rest of the business and better promote the value of the contact centre.

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

There Are a Number of Concerns About the Cloud

While data security risks and reliance on a third-party provider are the two biggest concerns across the industry, our findings show that there are many other issues that contact centres are worried about.

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



These other concerns include perceived trouble integrating with existing systems (15.6%), letting go of existing customized equipment (14.2%) and functionality not matching previous capability (8.3%).

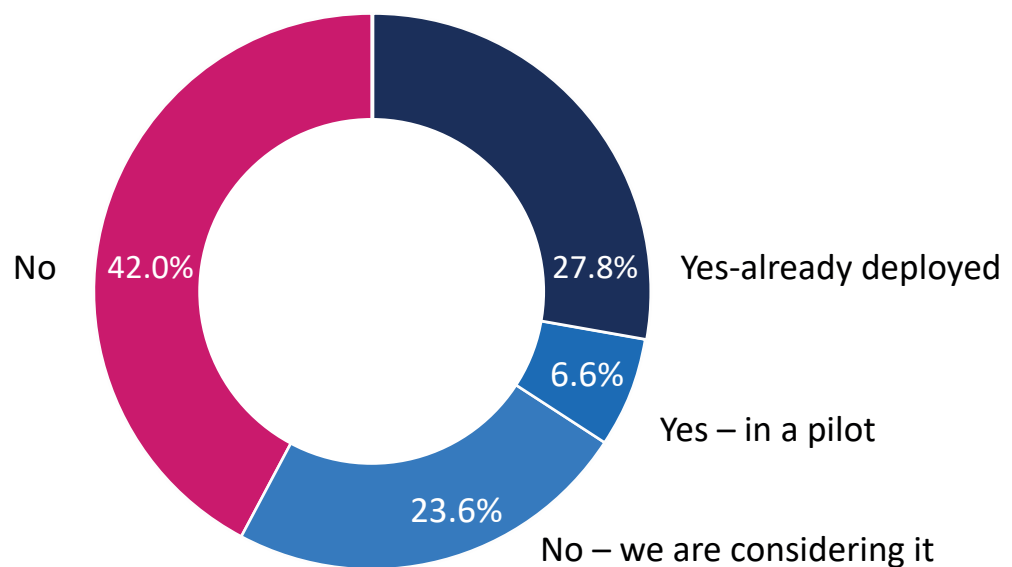
Our findings suggest that while contact centres seem well aware of the benefits of the cloud, vendors need to do more to acknowledge and dispel some of these concerns, particularly around data protection.

20. Do You Operate With Advisors Working From Home?

Over a Quarter of Operations Now Operate With Advisors Working From Home

27.8% of contact centres now allow selected advisors to work from their homes, with a further 6.6% currently doing so in a pilot scheme.

Do You Operate With Advisors Working From Home?



Homeworking is one of the biggest benefits of cloud contact centres and can be useful in terms of widening your advisor recruitment demographic and lowering the costs of business space and other facilities, as well as reducing absence rates.

It is, however, understandable that contact centres are wary of homeworkers, as – without proper planning – managers may face a number of problems.

For example, there may be difficulties in terms of tracking advisor development, supporting advisors properly and ensuring business continuity – if not done correctly.

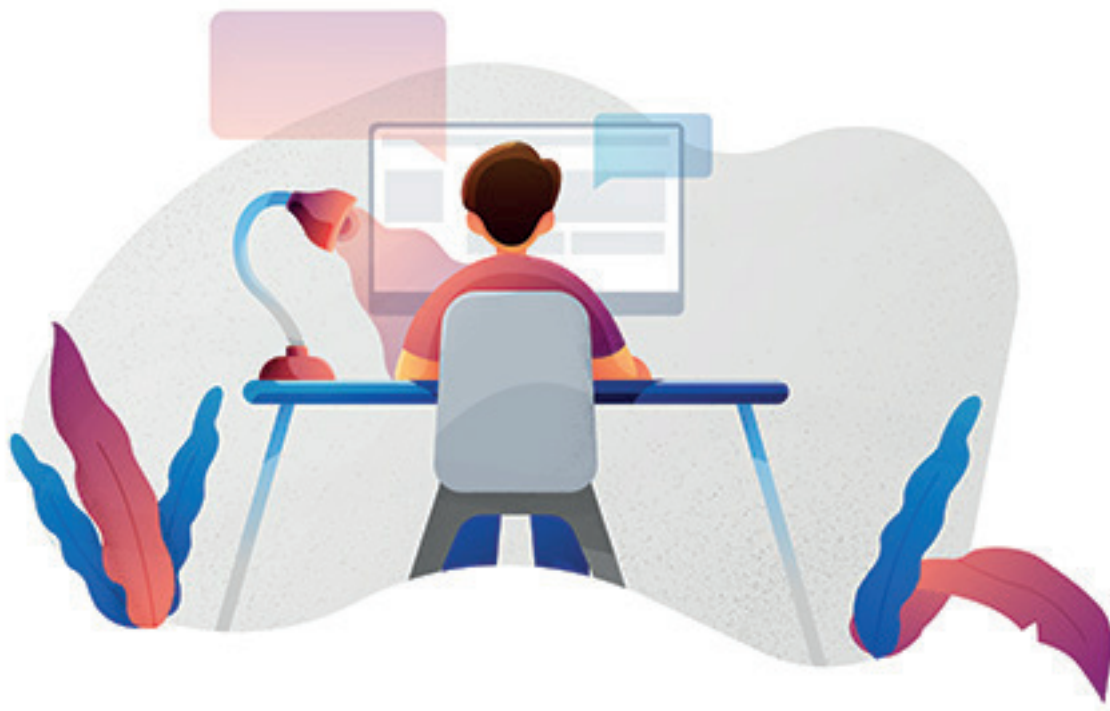
Less than Half of Contact Centres Have Ruled Out Homeworking

Only 42.0% of contact centres have ruled out the possibility of allowing advisors to work from home.

However, many of these contact centres will likely have shunned homeworking because

of other concerns regarding moving to the cloud and, without the cloud, a successful homeworking initiative becomes almost impossible.

However, if the take-up rate for cloud grows as expected, it is likely that more contact centres will begin to pilot homeworking, as the industry continues to evolve.

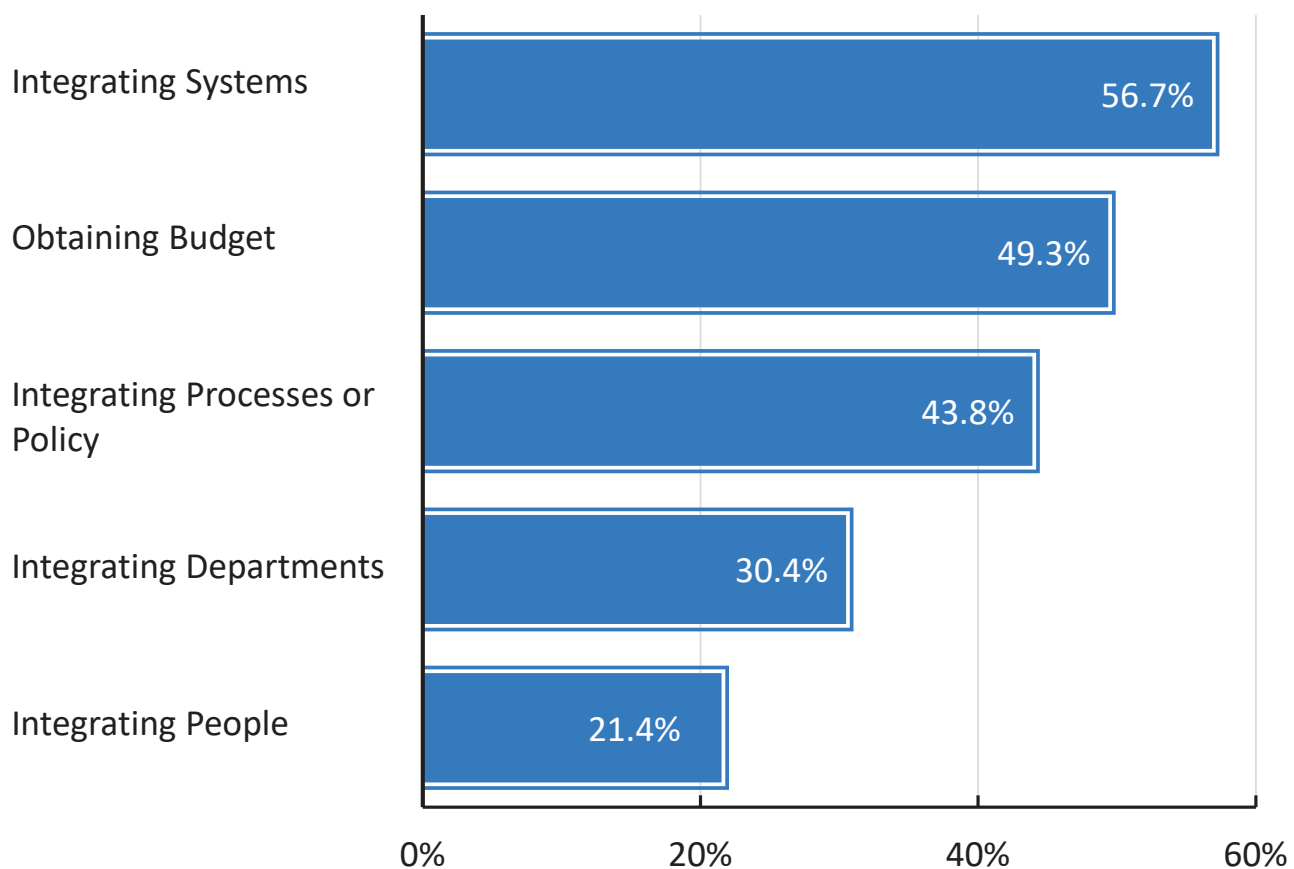


21. What Is Holding Back Your Digital Experience?

Integrating Systems Is Holding Back the Digital Experience

Over half of contact centres (56.7%) have not integrated their contact centre systems, damaging their digital experience more so than other common problems, including obtaining budget (49.3%).

What Is Holding Back Your Digital Experience?



The fact that these are the two highest hurdles in providing customers with a great digital experience indicates that implementing the right, cost-effective technology is the most difficult part of digital transformation. And while cloud may offer the easiest approach for digital transformation, many still have concerns over making the move (according to question 19).

However, when we talk about digital transformation, we are thinking about significant changes to people and processes too, which are causing issues for many contact centres, but not to the same extent.

One positive, however, is that only 30.4% of contact centres struggle to integrate with other departments, as organizations begin to increase communication between departments for the good of the customer experience.



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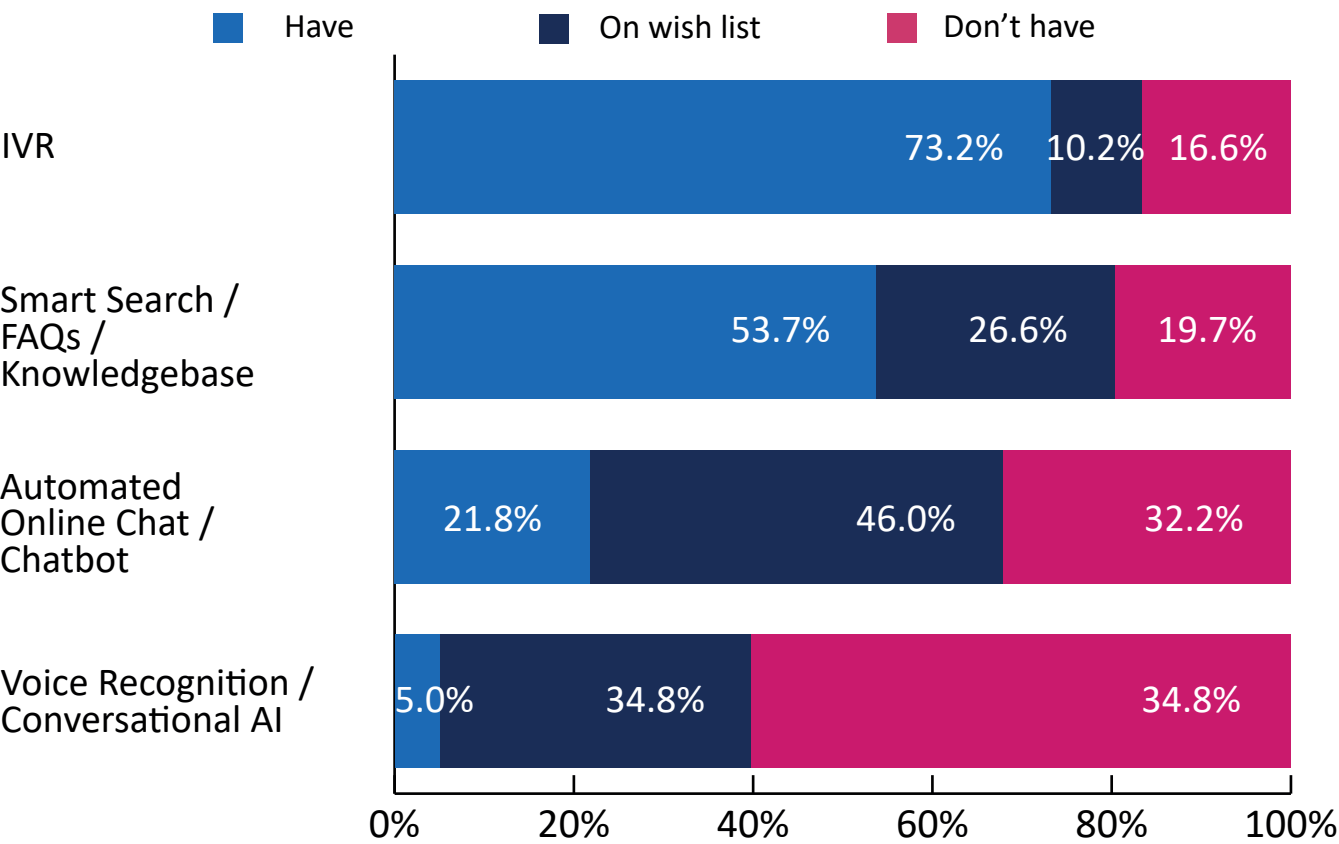
22. Which Self-Service Options Do You Offer for Customer Service?

Contact Centres Are Actively Working on Improving Their FAQs

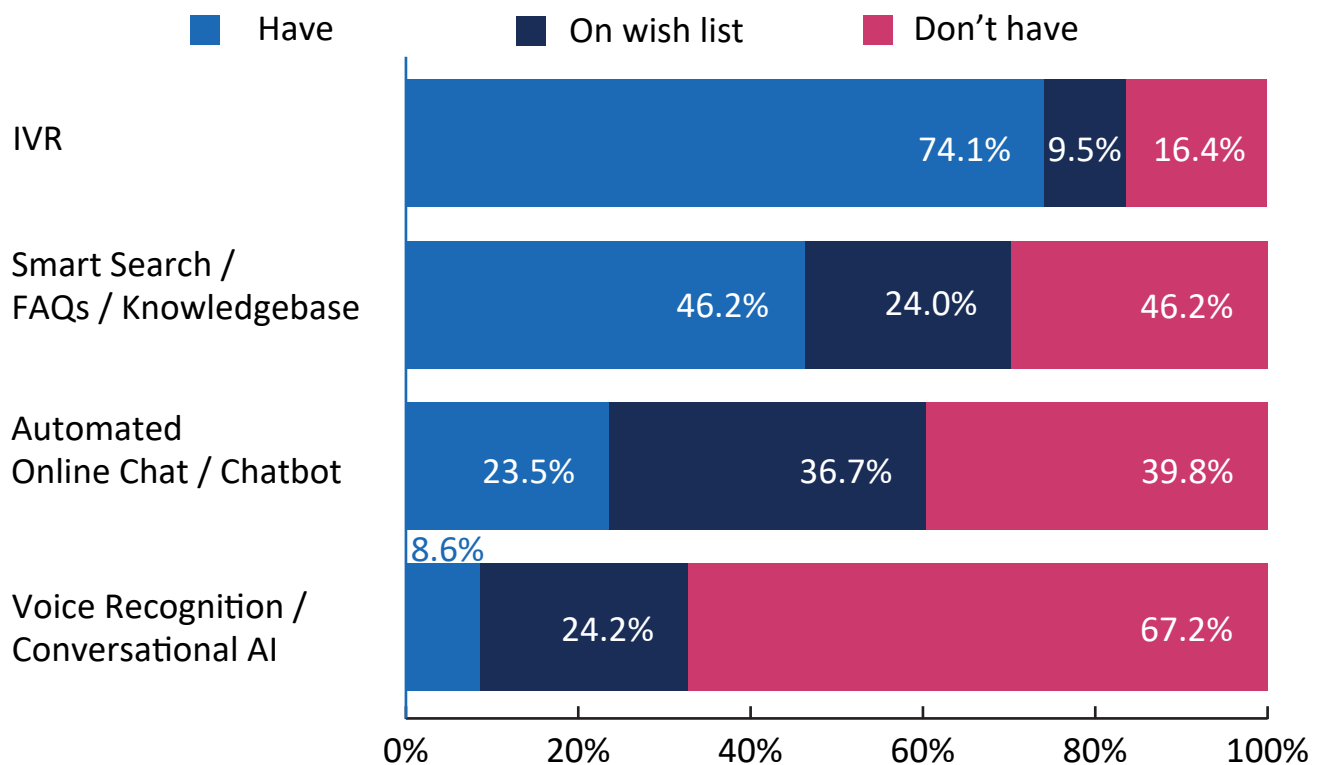
Since 2018, the number of organizations offering smart search, FAQs and/or a customer-facing knowledge base has increased from 46.2% to 53.7%.

2019

Which Self-Service Options Do You Offer for Customer Service?



Which Self-Service Options Do You Offer for Customer Service?



It is good to see more contact centres doing this, as simply having FAQs alone is a cost-effective method of lowering repeat contacts and reducing customer effort. This is because customers can do a simple internet search to find an answer instead of having to phone the contact centre.

Also, the fact that almost three-quarters of contact centres (73.2%) have self-service options available through their IVR is great too. However, this is down on last year's figure of 74.1%.

Self-Service AI Is Set to Soar

While the percentage of contact centres automating online chats and using conversational AI has decreased in 2019, many more of our industry professionals have these technologies "on their wish list" than in 2018.

The dip, which seems only temporary, is likely due to a number of bad installations, where organizations have rushed into putting AI technologies in front of customers, without taking the time to perfect their AI model first.

However, as these solutions become increasingly advanced, the number of contact centres interested in investigating these technologies further is growing.

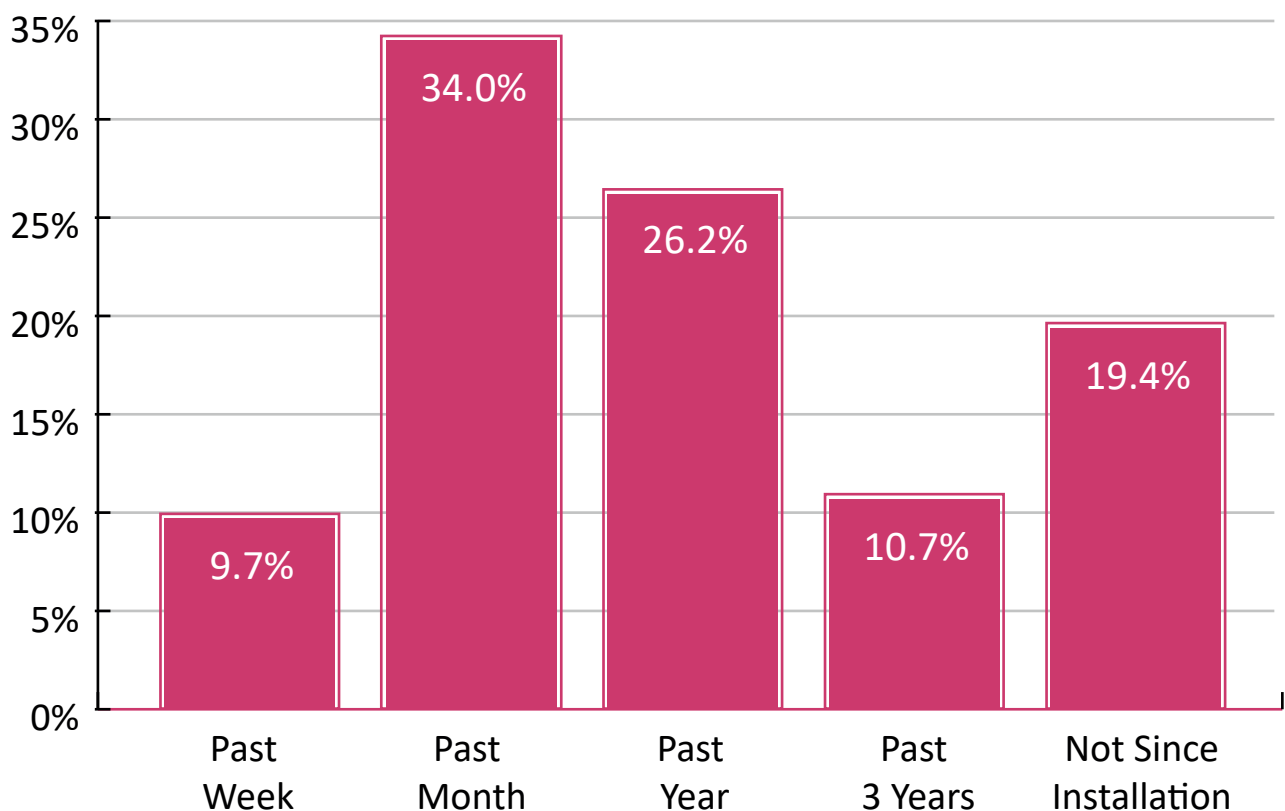
With such an interest in AI technologies, it is possible to conclude that this form of self-service will become increasingly mainstream in the years to come.

23. When Did You Last Make Changes to Your Self-Service System?

Almost 20% of Organizations Haven't Changed Their Self-Service System Since Installation

While some self-service systems may require more maintenance than others, it is important to track the effectiveness of your proposition and the impact it has on the customer experience.

When Did You Last Make Changes to Your Self-Service System?



Despite this, 19.4% of contact centres haven't made any changes to their self-service system since implementation, and a further 10.7% have not done so within the past three years.

Remember, organizational processes and the people using self-service are changing all the time, so you cannot leave self-service systems be, even if your initial tests are very positive. You need to be tracking and monitoring them all the time.

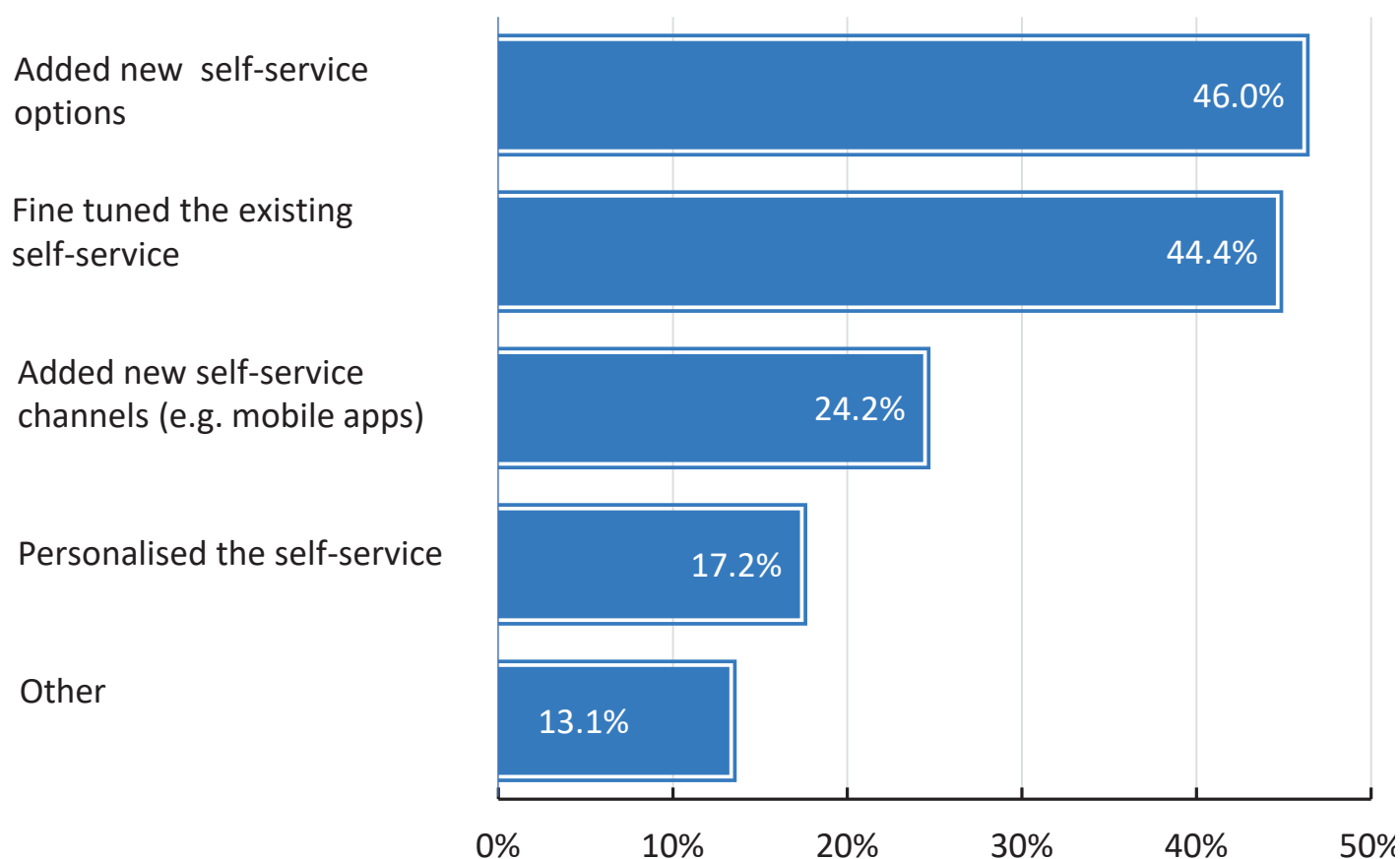
However, there is positive news too. It is good to see that a combined 43.7% of contact centres are tracking and making changes to their self-service systems on at least a monthly basis.

24. What Have You Tried to Do to Increase the Take-Up of Self-Service?

More Than One in Six Contact Centres Personalize Self-Service

17.2% of contact centres are now taking the time to personalize self-service – putting effort into making the most of the customer data they collect.

What Have You Tried to Do to Increase the Take-Up of Self-Service?



It is best practice to create a personalization strategy from scratch, so it's perhaps best to "ignore" your current processes and think about the wider scheme of things. This means that you can create a personalization plan across all contact centre channels, including self-service.

Contact Centres Are Finding New Ways to Increase Self-Service Take-Up

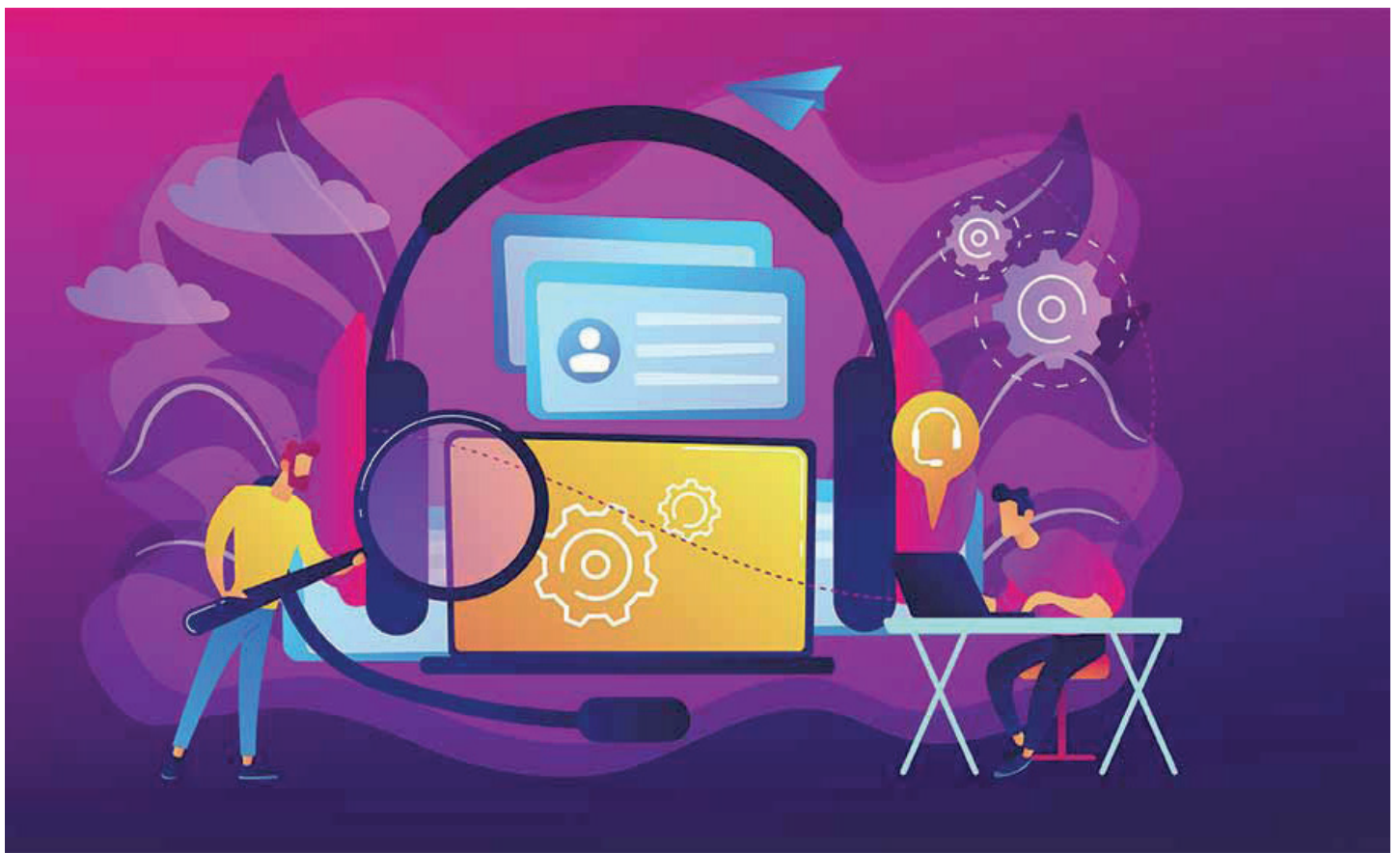
As 13.1% of contact centres have introduced other methods for increasing self-service usage amongst their customer base, we asked our participants what else they have been doing.

Some promote self-service by having advisors make it known to customers during conversations that there is a self-service option.

But you need to be careful how you do this, because many customers will have already tried the online self-serve method, bouncing into the contact centre after a failed attempt.

Other methods for increasing the take-up of self-service include:

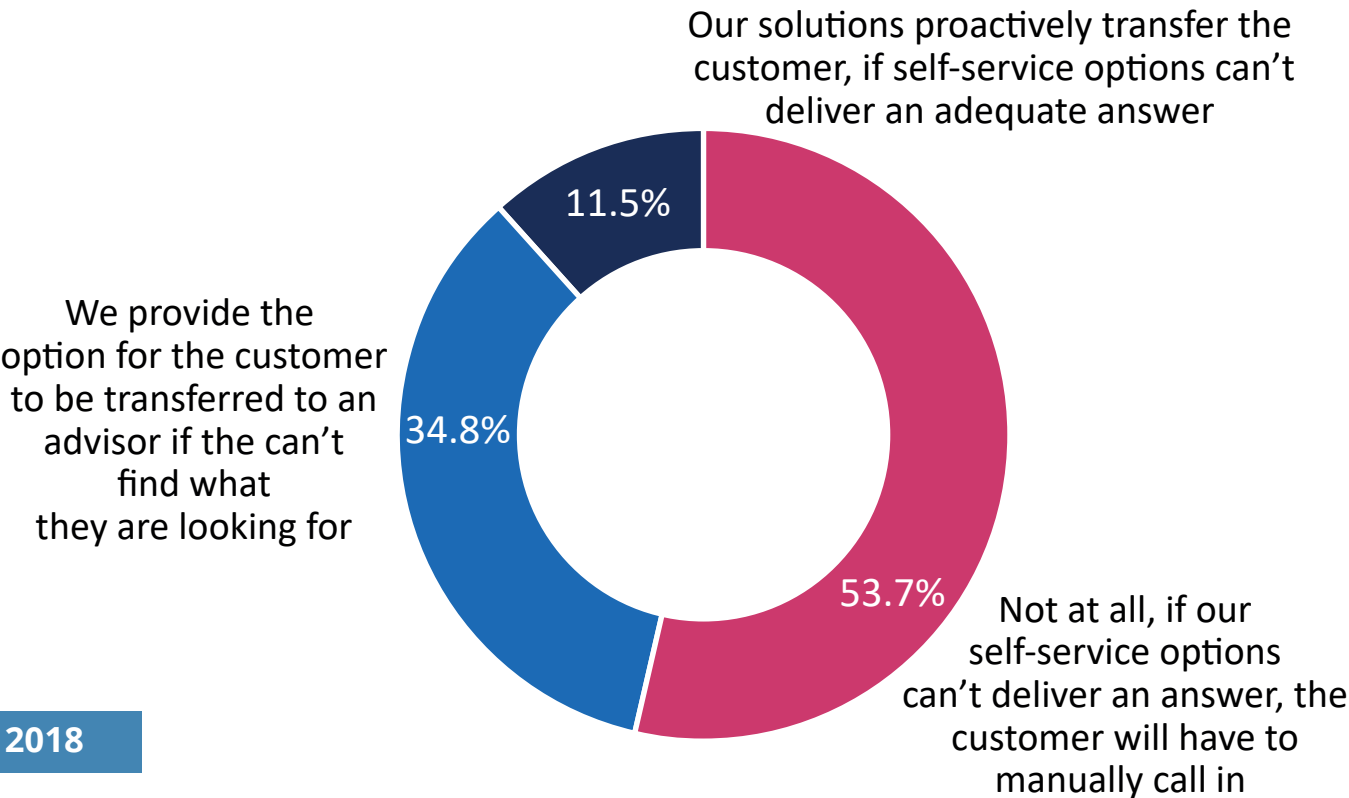
- Added speech recognition technology to the IVR to make self-service more engaging
- Promoted fee-free amendments when using self-service
- Used speech analytics to uncover self-service pain points that customers tell advisors about



25. How Integrated Is Self-Service Within Your Contact Centre?

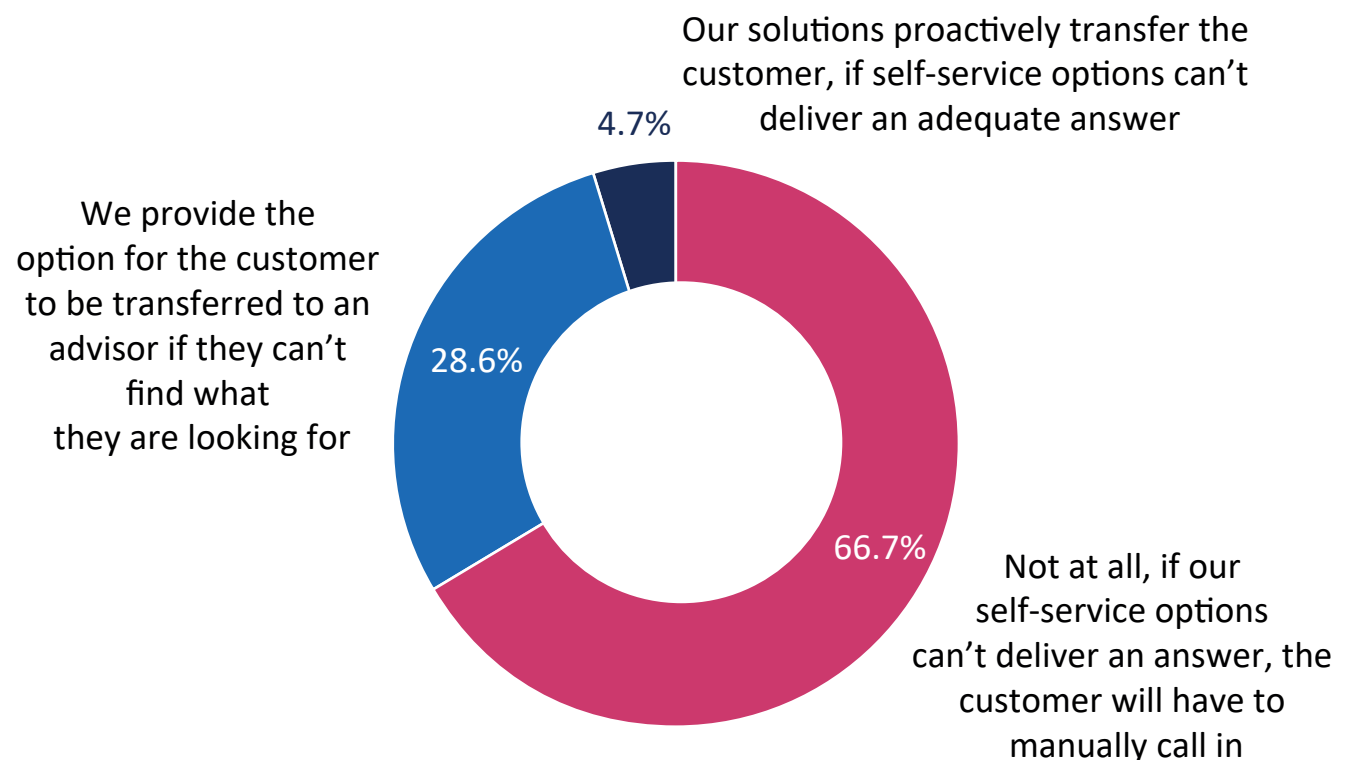
2019

How Integrated Is Self-Service Within Your Contact Centre?



2018

How Integrated Is Self-Service Within Your Contact Centre?



Self-Service Integrations Are on the Rise

In 2018, we reported that 66.7% of industry professionals do not integrate their self-service solution with other contact centre channels.

However, in 2019, this percentage has decreased greatly, with only 53.7% of our survey participants now telling us that if their self-serve options fail, customers have to call in manually.

This is great news as having a clear escalation path in place ensures that there are no “dead ends” within your self-service system, so that the customer is aware of where they can find extra support if required.

So, it was good to see the percentage of companies providing an option for customers to be transferred to an advisor if they can't find what they are looking for rise by more than 6% to 34.8%.

In fact, 11.5% have now gone one step further, implementing solutions to proactively transfer the customer if self-service options can't deliver an adequate answer.

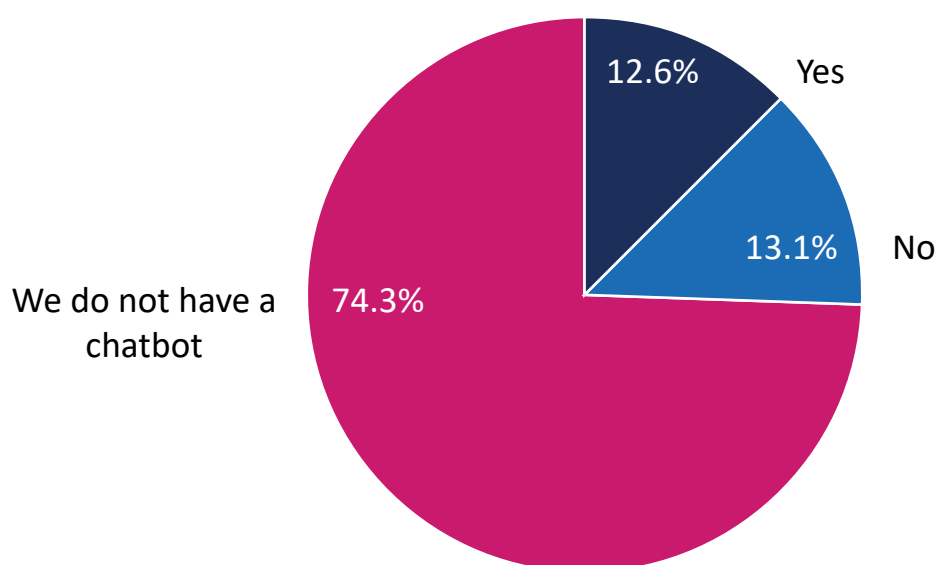


26. Is Your Chatbot Integrated With Self-Service and Other Channels to Transfer Context From the Chatbot to the Agent?

Less than Half of Contact Centres With Chatbots Integrate Them With Other Channels

Of the 26.7% of contact centres that employ chatbots, fewer than half integrate them with self-service and other channels, which is surprising as they need to be fed continuously with real-time relevant information to stay up to date.

Is Your Chatbot Integrated With Self-Service and Other Channels to Transfer Context From the Chatbot to the Agent?



However, many of the 13.1% will use chatbots that contain very little AI and work from a mixture of natural language processing (NLP) and a script, so there may be no need to integrate these chatbots.

If your chatbots are based on a more sophisticated model, though, integrating them and other channels with a centralized CRM helps to provide them with the necessary data to learn and grow.

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