The Impact and Influence of Analytics and Quality Management on Contact Center Performance

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INTRODUCTION

Delivering a great service experience in today's competitive landscape is difficult for even the most sophisticated of customer service organizations. And yet, however challenging, it is essential: ICMI and other major research organizations have found that most organizations consider their service and customer experiences to be their primary competitive differentiator. For contact centers, quality management is at the core of the most thoughtful and consistent experiences, and well-defined and tracked metrics and analytics are the keys to any successful quality management program.

In 2017, ICMI and NICE fielded a study on the practices, impact, and influence of quality and performance management programs. That study found that contact centers in general suffered from a "quality gap": phone (inbound and outbound) and email were the core channels supported, and yet other than inbound phone, most channels weren't being evaluated by a formal, consistent quality management process.

Further complicating quality management was the amount of manual work required; 33% of organizations identified highly manual processes as the primary challenge to effective quality management. This finding was supported by the high percentage of methods and tools requiring manual work, as well as the relatively small percentage of organizations using analytics (desktop, voice, or text) as inputs to quality management.

In the final assessment, few contact center leaders strongly agreed that their QA program was setting them up for success. Overall, the 2017 study concluded that contact centers and customer service organizations had ample room for improvement when it came to leveraging quality management to deliver exceptional experiences to satisfy customers and employees alike.

To ascertain the extent of progress and developments in the intervening two years, ICMI and NICE once again partnered to re-evaluate the state of quality management in the contact center and shine new light on the state of analytics in general. This executive summary presents the results of that study and identifies new opportunities for improvement.

*Overall confidence of 90% with a margin of error of +/- 5.1%. Note that questions where respondents could select more than one option will total > 100%, while some charts will total < 100% due to rounding.

KEY FINDINGS

- Just 16% of contact center leaders strongly agree that their QA programs are vital to their organizations' success. Overall, just one-quarter of contact centers are truly satisfied with the impact and influence of quality management in the organizations.

- Contact centers continue to be driven by three imperatives, in order: optimizing workforce operations and productivity, improving customer satisfaction and the customer experience, and improving the systems, tools, and resources available to agents.

- Most channels still aren't being evaluated via a formal quality management process. Inbound phone is far ahead of the pack (88%), but email (47%), outbound phone (40%), and chat (32%) are lagging behind.

- Coaching – scheduling (69%), evaluating effectiveness (67%), identifying opportunities (59%) – is the most manual part of a quality program. Quality scoring is also highly manual (45%).

- 40% of respondents are currently using some kind of analytics in their quality management programs.

    - 30% of contact centers are currently using desktop analytics, with no plans to update or replace their solutions

    - Just 15% are using sentiment analytics, but 53% of contact centers have no plans to implement sentiment analytics in the near future

    - 36% of contact centers are planning to add, update, or replace their predictive analytics solution in the next 12 months, followed by text and/or speech at 35%.

CURRENT PRACTICES IN ANALYTICS AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Every organization is defined by a unique mission and driven by goals and imperatives that support that mission. In general, however, they're united by the business initiatives they pursue to meet those larger goals.

These imperatives are somewhat evergreen, in the sense that each of these initiatives is a moving target; there's always more a contact center can do to optimize or improve its operations. Optimizing workforce operations and productivity (50%), however, is a direct outcome of quality management, underscoring why it's critical that all channels offered are also evaluated via a quality management program.

The third most pursued business initiative is improving agent systems, tools, and resources, and as we'll see, our findings relative to manual, homegrown, and automated tools suggest that there is indeed ample room for improvement here. Contact centers that seek to become best-in-class should be making or planning to make investments in the tools and resources that will set them up for success in the future. Providing an exceptional service experience is about meeting your users/customers where they are, and "this is the way we've always done it" isn't good enough anymore; wait too long, and your users/customers will be so far ahead of you, you won't catch up.

There's no denying that providing exceptional service experiences is hard work. To improve your contact center's chances of success, there are a few essential ingredients:
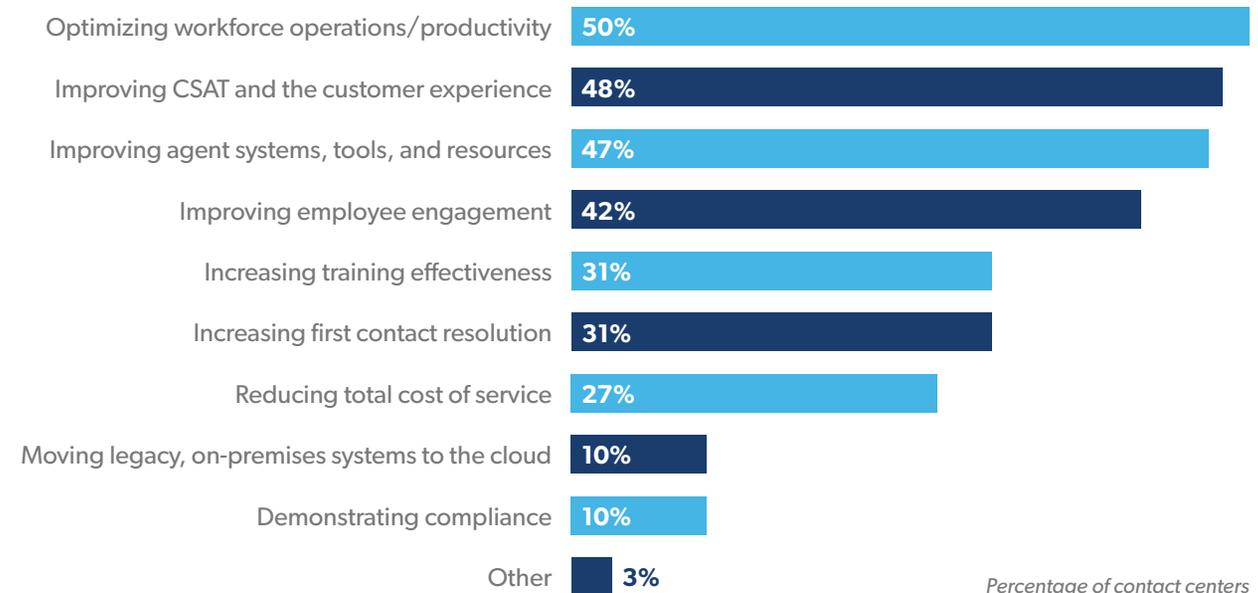
- Engaged, well-trained teams and leaders
- Well-defined and well-tracked metrics
- Effective, efficient processes
- Innovative, fit-for-purpose tools and solutions

People, process, technology: no surprise that these are the keys to great service. They're also the keys to unlocking a great quality management program. But as with so much in the contact center, getting to where you want to be depends on where you start.

Contact channels are the foundation of the contact center. Today, single-channel contact centers are relatively rare; 97% of respondents support two or more channels, and 61% support five or more. Phone, however, still reigns supreme; inbound phone is the most commonly supported channel (94%), followed by email (77%) and outbound phone (61%). Some contact centers are even supporting novel channels, like TTY for deaf/hard-of-hearing users/customers, which could be classified as a form of chat or SMS/text, but is certainly a niche and highly skilled offering.

TOP BUSINESS INITIATIVES

Initiative	%
Optimizing workforce operations/productivity	50%
Improving CSAT and the customer experience	48%
Improving agent systems, tools, and resources	47%
Improving employee engagement	42%
Increasing training effectiveness	31%
Increasing first contact resolution	31%
Reducing total cost of service	27%
Moving legacy, on-premises systems to the cloud	10%
Demonstrating compliance	10%
Other	3%

Percentage of contact centers

CHANNELS SUPPORTED AND CHANNELS EVALUATED USING QUALITY MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

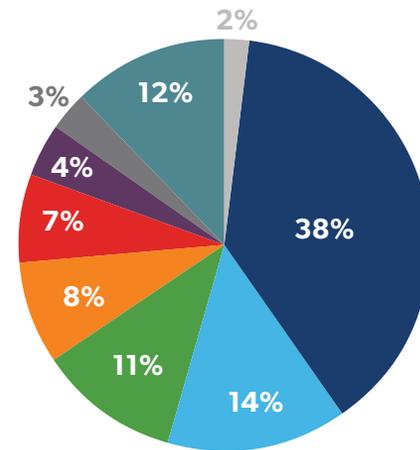| Channel	We support this channel	We use quality management processes to evaluate interactions in this channel
Phone - Inbound	94%	88%
Email	77%	47%
Phone - Outbound	61%	40%
Chat (web-based)	45%	32%
Self-service phone IVR	45%	7%
Offline (fax and/or mail)	42%	10%
Back office (e.g., claims processing)	40%	19%
Self-service portal/ knowledge base	39%	11%
Mobile app	29%	4%
Social media (live agent-assisted)	23%	10%
SMS/text	21%	9%
Social media (bot/ AI-assisted)	14%	4%
Video	7%	3%
Community forum moderation	5%	2%
Other	5%	4%

Percentage of contact centers

■ WE SUPPORT THIS CHANNEL ■ WE USE QUALITY MANAGEMENT PROCESSES TO EVALUATE INTERACTIONS IN THIS CHANNEL

Contact center size doesn't exert an outsized influence on channels offered, but small contact centers (<100 FTEs) are less invested in resource-intensive channels (cost and people), like mobile apps and social media. Large contact centers (>500 FTEs), on the other hand, have expanded into self-service, mobile apps, social media, and knowledge bases at a higher rate than smaller contact centers; these channels are ideally suited for managing high contact volume by distributing interactions and enabling users/customers to serve themselves, instead of relying solely on inbound phone and email.
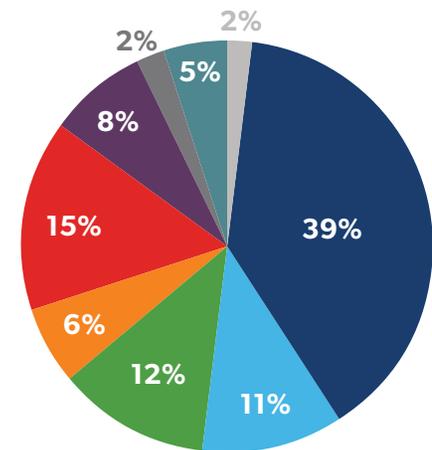
Nevertheless, it's clear that contact centers still haven't bridged the quality gap. As was true two years ago, most channels aren't being evaluated through a formal quality management process. While 88% of contact centers that support inbound phone monitor those interactions via a quality management process, that percentage drops by almost half for email, a channel offered by 77% of contact centers, and trends down from there. Inconsistency is the watchword here: the quality gap is the end result of inconsistent quality monitoring across channels. And, in fact, the contact center leaders who report being most satisfied with the impact and influence of QA – on the company, on agents, on customers – are those whose contact centers have stepped up their game in quality management. In general, as we'll see later in the report, these contact centers are meeting their customers where they are *and* measuring the quality of interactions at a higher rate than contact centers that report being dissatisfied with their quality management programs.

For contact centers that support the major contact channels (phone, email, and chat), one-third to nearly one-half of contact centers are monitoring 1-3% of total interactions for quality. An ambitious 12% and 14% of contact centers are monitoring 100% of inbound and outbound phone interactions for quality, respectively; meanwhile, 15% and 13% of contact centers are monitoring 26-50% of email and chat interactions for quality. But what methods, metrics, and/or KPIs are contact centers using to evaluate quality?

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL INTERACTIONS MONITORED FOR QUALITY, BY SELECT CHANNELS

Phone - Inbound
- 38%
- 14%
- 11%
- 8%
- 7%
- 4%
- 3%
- 12%
- 2%
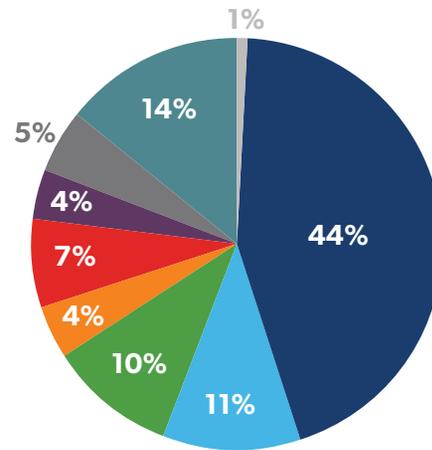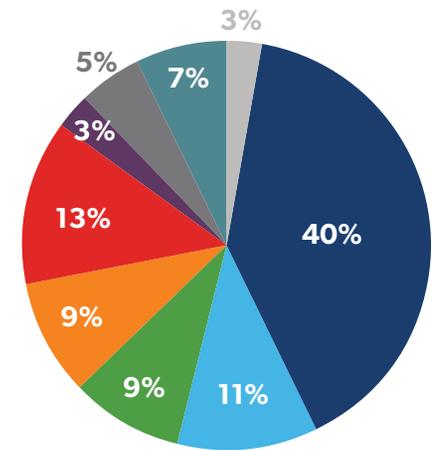
Email
- 39%
- 11%
- 12%
- 6%
- 15%
- 8%
- 2%
- 5%
- 2%

Phone - Outbound
- 44%
- 11%
- 10%
- 4%
- 7%
- 4%
- 5%
- 14%
- 1%

Chat
- 40%
- 11%
- 9%
- 9%
- 13%
- 3%
- 5%
- 7%
- 3%

Percentage of total interactions

Legend:
- 0%
- 1-3%
- 4-6%
- 7-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- 51-75%
- 76-99%
- 100%

METHODS, METRICS, AND/OR KPIs USED TO MONITOR INTERACTIONS FOR QUALITY, BY CHANNEL

Phone - inbound: 86%, 35%, 40%, 39%, 6%, 47%, 7%

Phone - outbound: 87%, 35%, 46%, 32%, 4%, 33%, 6%

Email: 80%, 38%, 34%, 39%, 2%, 37%, 4%

Chat (web-based): 76%, 36%, 45%, 41%, 2%, 52%, 8%
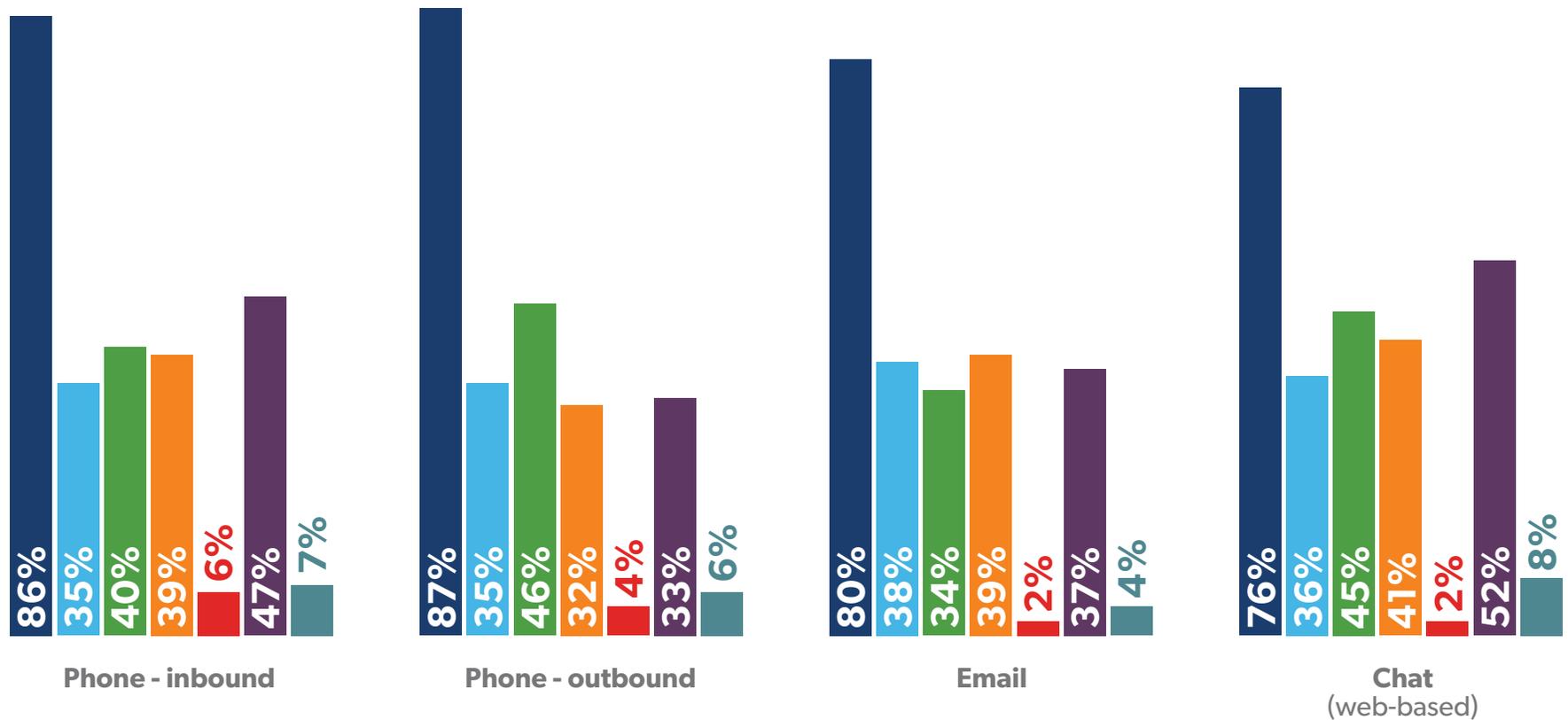
Percentage of contact centers that support each channel

- ■ QUALITY MONITORING
- ■ ACCURACY RATE
- ■ AGENT PRODUCTIVITY
- ■ FIRST CONTACT RESOLUTION
- ■ DEFLECTION RATE
- ■ CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS
- ■ MYSTERY SHOPPERS/EVALUATIONS

METHODS, METRICS, AND/OR KPIs USED TO MONITOR INTERACTIONS FOR QUALITY, BY CHANNEL (CONTINUED)

Self-service phone IVR: 33% 33% 11% 33% 17% 56% 6%

Self-service portal/ knowledge base: 45% 31% 14% 34% 21% 55% 7%

Offline (fax and/or mail): 63% 44% 41% 19% 11% 37% 4%

Back office (e.g., claims processing): 71% 56% 52% 27% 4% 25% 2%

Community forum moderation: 40% 20% 20% 60% 0% 40% 20%

SMS/text: 50% 41% 36% 32% 5% 45% 5%

Social media (live agent-assisted): 72% 28% 44% 56% 8% 32% 12%

Social media (bot/AI-assisted): 27% 9% 27% 45% 9% 36% 18%

Mobile app: 45% 45% 27% 36% 27% 45% 0%
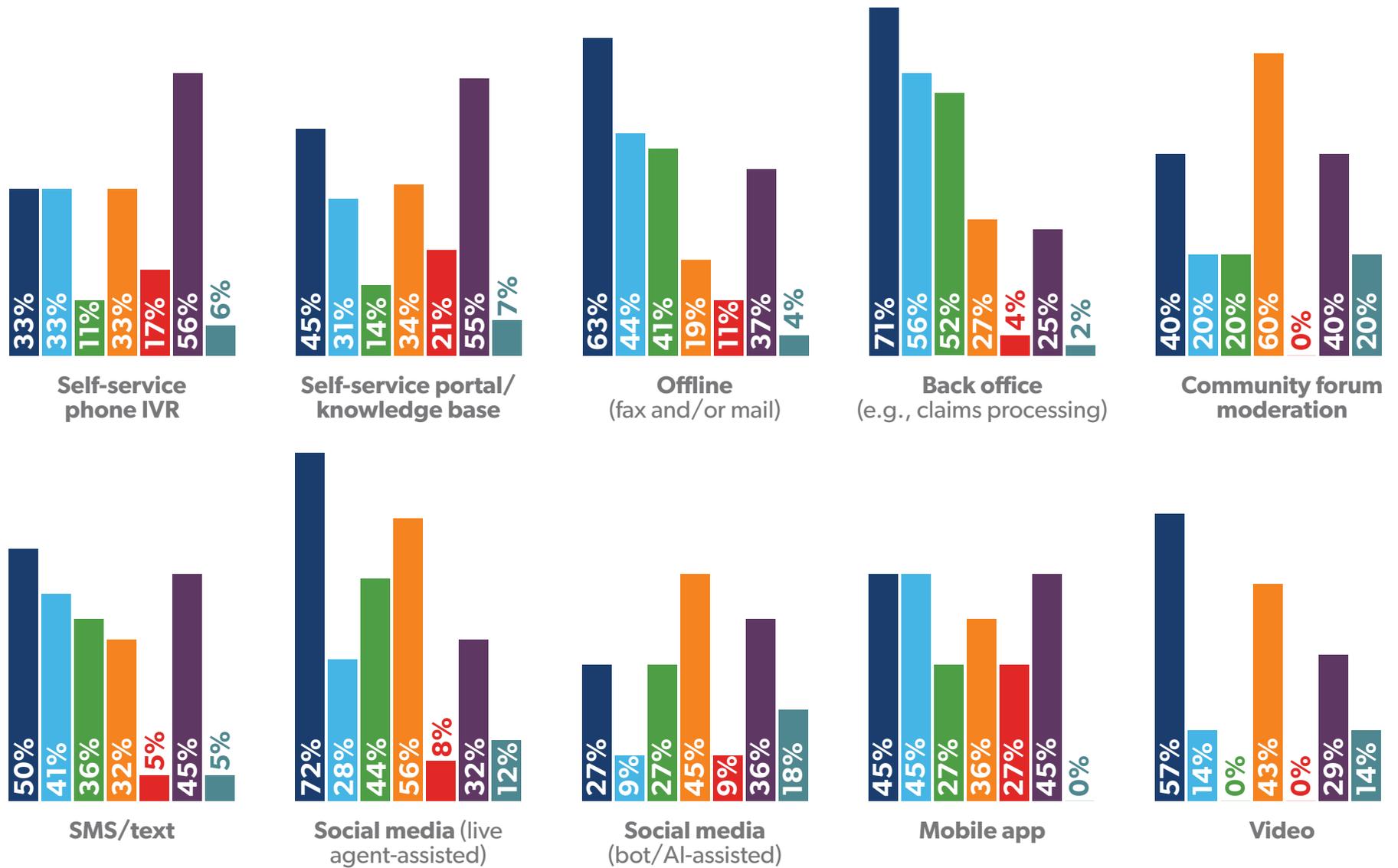
Video: 57% 14% 0% 43% 0% 29% 14%

Percentage of contact centers that support each channel

Legend:
- QUALITY MONITORING
- ACCURACY RATE
- AGENT PRODUCTIVITY
- FIRST CONTACT RESOLUTION
- DEFLECTION RATE
- CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS
- MYSTERY SHOPPERS/EVALUATIONS

Contact centers are using a range of methods, metrics, and KPIs to measure the quality of interactions, from straight scoring to measuring accuracy and deflection, tracking agent productivity and first contact resolution to distributing customer satisfaction surveys and using mystery shoppers. Far and away, when a user or customer is required to interact with an agent directly, quality monitoring and scoring is the most common method; conversely, when evaluating the quality of interactions with self-service (IVR or knowledge base) or AI-assisted social media, contact centers tend to rely on customer satisfaction surveys or first contact resolution. Mystery shoppers/evaluations tends to be less common overall, as it has more niche applications.

Two years ago, our research found that, in general, most quality management methods, metrics, and/ or KPIs were being captured using homegrown or manual tools. While this year's respondents have moved slightly toward more automated solutions, away from homegrown solutions, contact centers continue to spend a lot of time on manual work. And, in fact, 42% of respondents identify highly manual processes as the *primary* challenge to effective quality management. Buy-in from leadership is not a significant obstacle, nor is alignment with company goals; the problems contact centers face have little to do with belief in the value of quality management and far more to do with having the tools, time, and resources to do it well.

TOOLS USED TO MEASURE INTERACTION QUALITY, BY METHOD, METRIC, OR KPI

Method	HOMEGROWN	MANUAL	AUTOMATED	OTHER
Accuracy rate	31%	38%	29%	2%
Agent productivity	20%	24%	55%	1%
Customer satisfaction surveys	26%	20%	50%	4%
Deflection rate	36%	12%	48%	4%
First contact resolution	26%	32%	40%	2%
Mystery shoppers/evaluations	29%	33%	33%	5%
Quality monitoring	28%	47%	23%	2%

Percentage of contact centers that use this method, metric, or KPI

■ HOMEGROWN ■ MANUAL ■ AUTOMATED ■ OTHER

TOP 3 CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Highly manual processes
42%

Lack of dedicated resources
23%

Inconsistent application of quality management across all channels
17%

As we noted in 2017, the high volume of manual work contact center professionals at all levels are engaged in should be concerning to contact center leaders. Manual work is fundamentally more expensive, less efficient, more error-prone, and less effective. Manual work coupled with the limitations of homegrown tools is even riskier. While homegrown tools have the advantages of high customization, that customization often comes at the expense of flexibility and extensibility. While every contact center (and budget) is different, wherever possible, contact centers should be investing in integrated, automated tools to decrease manual workload, improve consistency across channels, streamline the collection of data from disparate sources, and enable data mining. After all, why do by hand what a computer can do for you in a fraction of the time?
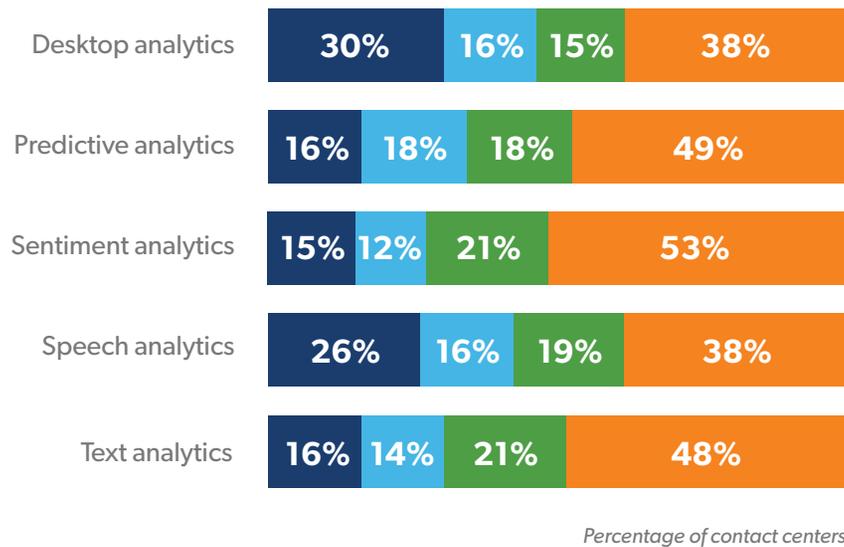
Fortunately, when it comes to analytics specifically (i.e., data collection, data mining, data analysis, etc.), contact centers have a growing range of options, including:

- **Speech analytics:** Broadly refers to analytics applied to speech content (e.g., call recordings).

- **Desktop analytics:** Broadly refers to analytics applied to the monitoring, capturing, structuring, analyzing, and reporting on desktop activity and process workflows.

- **Text analytics:** Broadly refers to analytics applied to text content, e.g., email or calls that have been converted into text documents.

- **Sentiment analytics:** Broadly refers to the use of natural language processing and other analytics applied to identify and categorize opinions expressed verbally or in writing to determine an individual's attitude (positive, negative, neutral) toward a given product, topic, etc.

- **Predictive analytics:** Broadly refers to the use of data mining, data modelling, and machine learning to analyze data and make predictions about a future state.

In 2017, 45% of respondents reported using analytics in their quality management programs, with most using desktop (29%) or speech analytics (23%); few contact centers were investing in text analytics. Two years on, not only are more contact centers invested and investing in desktop and speech analytics, they're investing at a higher rate in text analytics and expanding to include sentiment and predictive analytics.
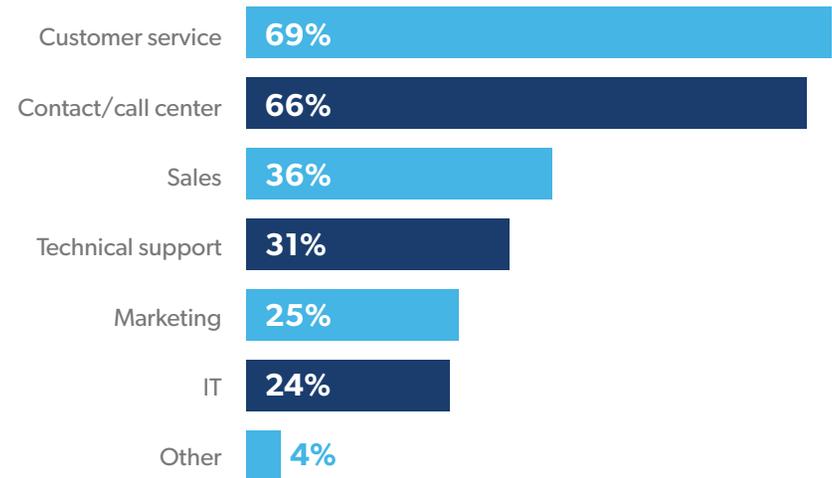
How are contact centers using analytics? Primarily to predict staffing needs, optimize business processes, and reduce customer effort, which are initiatives the entire business can get behind. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, contact centers that have invested in analytics are wisely applying them across the enterprise, beyond customer service (69%) and the contact center (66%). Around one-third of organizations are using analytics to enable sales and technical support, while one-quarter have extended these capabilities to marketing and IT as well.

CURRENT USE OF AND PLANS FOR ANALYTICS, BY TYPE

	CURRENTLY USING	UPDATING OR REPLACING	ADDING	NO PLANS
Desktop analytics	30%	16%	15%	38%
Predictive analytics	16%	18%	18%	49%
Sentiment analytics	15%	12%	21%	53%
Speech analytics	26%	16%	19%	38%
Text analytics	16%	14%	21%	48%

Percentage of contact centers

■ CURRENTLY USING ■ UPDATING OR REPLACING ■ ADDING ■ NO PLANS

AREAS WHERE ANALYTICS ARE BEING USED

Customer service	69%
Contact/call center	66%
Sales	36%
Technical support	31%
Marketing	25%
IT	24%
Other	4%

Percentage of contact centers

INITIATIVES ANALYTICS ARE BEING USED TO SUPPORT

Predicting staffing needs	57%
Business process optimization	54%
Reducing customer effort	47%
Increasing containment (i.e., self-service)	40%
Predicting customer churn	26%
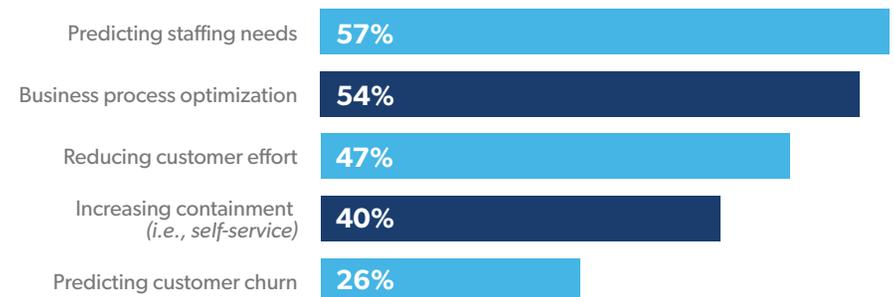
Percentage of contact centers

Nevertheless, for all the potential benefits and applications of analytics, many contact centers are holding back; of the three core types of analytics, 48% of contact centers have no plans to implement text analytics, while 38% have no plans to add speech or desktop analytics to the mix. What's keeping them from investing?

TOP 4 OBSTACLES TO INVESTMENT IN ANALYTICS

Lack of budget
(68%)

Lack of C-suite sponsorship or buy-in
(32%)

Lack of expertise
(29%)

No perceived benefits to the business
(19%)

Overall, the metrics, tools, and technologies that contact centers leverage can have a significant effect on the quality of the service and customer experience they provide. Contact centers that aren't investing in their quality management programs are doing their teams and organization a disservice. While no tool, metric, or technology can *guarantee* success or quality, the right investments in the right places *will* set your team up for both.

THE UPSIDE OF ANALYTICS

Desktop, text, speech, predictive, sentiment: automated analytics are on the rise in today's contact centers. And it's easy to see why: contact centers that are currently using some form of analytics, in general, are more satisfied than their peers with the impact and influence of quality management in their organizations. So, other than investing in analytics, what sets analytics-enabled contact centers apart?

- Prioritizing customer satisfaction and the customer experience (51%).

- Putting customer experience-oriented metrics at the top of their list of KPIs: customer satisfaction (53%), service level/response time (46%), and first contact resolution (31%).

- Investing at a higher rate in nonphone channels and channels that enable self-service: IVR (48%), knowledge base (47%), mobile app (36%), SMS/text (28%), and social media (live agent, 24%; AI-assisted, 13%).

- Evaluating quality in these channels at a higher rate: knowledge base (17%), IVR (12%), SMS/text (12%), mobile app (7%), and social media (live agent, 12%; AI-assisted, 6%).

Crucially, by implementing analytics, these contact centers have started to decrease the burden of manual work on their staff (39%). They've also been able to more efficiently and effectively allocate their resources; just 19% of contact centers using analytics identified a lack of dedicated resources as the primary challenge facing their quality management programs.

The upside of analytics is clear; with some strategic investment and a shuffling of priorities, your contact center could realize these benefits, too.
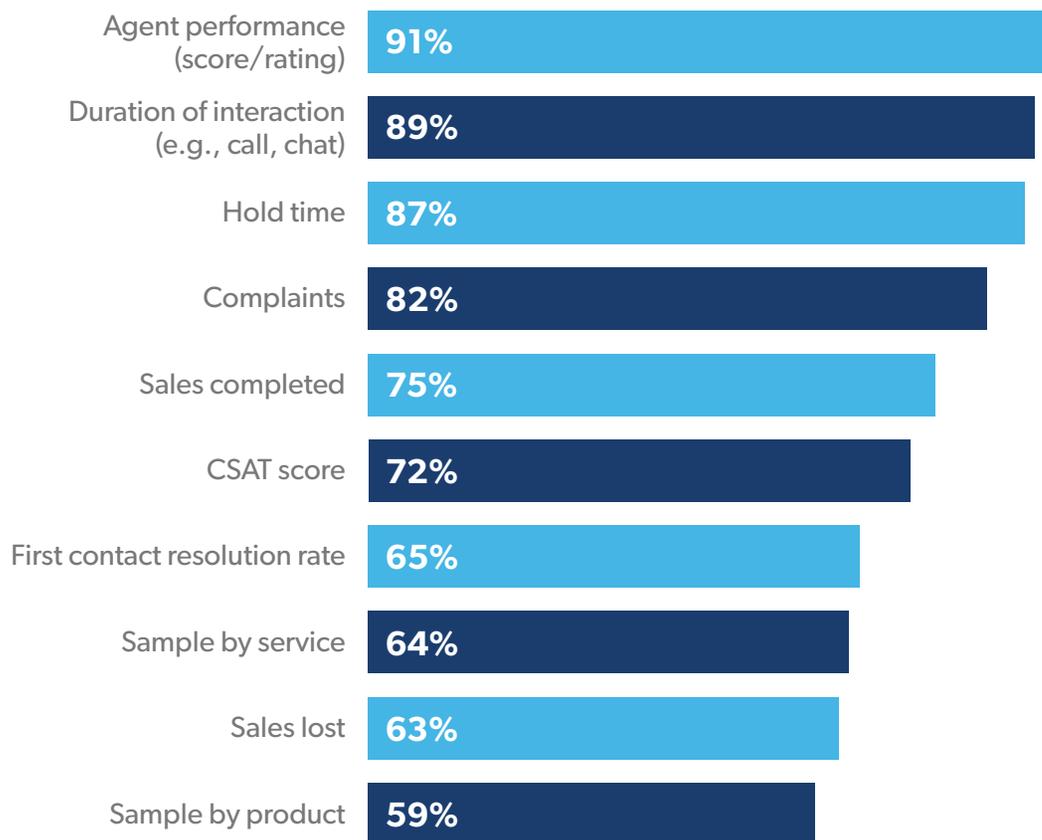
QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN ACTION: MONITORING AND MEASURING PERFORMANCE

A strong quality management program has unlimited potential benefits for both the contact center and its agents. When asked to identify their top three KPIs, respondents once again selected:

1. Service level/response time (53%)
2. Customer satisfaction (41%)
3. Contact quality (34%)

Given the continued dominance of phone and other live-agent channels, it's no surprise that service level and response time continue to top the list; however, going back to the findings on methods for measuring channel quality, as contact centers embrace self-service, automation, and AI-enabled channels, customer satisfaction may top the list in the near future. Measuring CSAT has become more sophisticated in recent years; while the vast majority of contact centers are using surveys to measure satisfaction (85%), many are also using agents' quality scores (46%) and Net Promoter Score (45%) to corroborate survey results. Contact quality is more directly tied to the quality management process, as many of the individual performance metrics contact centers currently track/measure combine to paint a picture of overall quality.

AGENT PERFORMANCE METRICS, CURRENTLY TRACKED/MEASURED

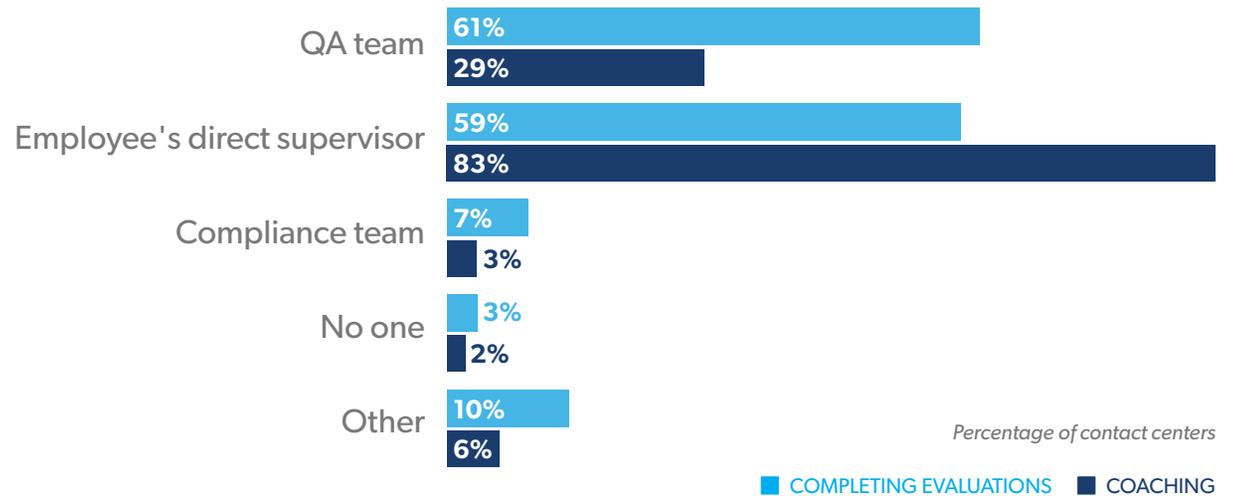| Metric	Percentage
Agent performance (score/rating)	91%
Duration of interaction (e.g., call, chat)	89%
Hold time	87%
Complaints	82%
Sales completed	75%
CSAT score	72%
First contact resolution rate	65%
Sample by service	64%
Sales lost	63%
Sample by product	59%

Percentage of contact centers

Successful quality management is about more than metrics, though. It's about applying the findings to drive and sustain improvements. Quality monitoring is quality management in action, for the benefit of agents and users/customers. As defined in ICMI's *Pocket Guide to Contact Center Management Terms*, quality monitoring is:

> *An evaluation process that appraises the qualitative aspects of handling contacts. Includes the tracking and analysis of data to identify individual agent and overall contact center performance trends, anticipated problems, and training and coaching needs.*

There are several techniques supervisors and managers can use to assess the quality of an interaction: silent monitoring, contact recording, side-by-side monitoring, peer monitoring, mystery shoppers, etc. Often, either a dedicated quality assurance (QA) team or an employee's direct supervisor is responsible for completing QA evaluations.

Small contact centers, by dint of size and budget, are least likely to have dedicated QA teams; in these contact centers, direct supervisors are primarily responsible for QA. Large contact centers (>500 FTEs) are more likely than their smaller counterparts to have a dedicated compliance team to shoulder QA responsibilities, and they certainly need it: in large contact centers, the average ratio of staff tasked with quality monitoring and evaluation to full- and part-time contact center agents is 1:56; in super-large contact centers (>10,000 FTEs), that ratio jumps to 1:83. Medium contact centers (100-500) seem to have found the sweet spot, distributing responsibilities and investing in QA in such a way as to keep the overall QA workload somewhat balanced.

QA RESPONSIBILITIES: COMPLETING EVALUATIONS AND COACHING

	Completing Evaluations	Coaching
QA team	61%	29%
Employee's direct supervisor	59%	83%
Compliance team	7%	3%
No one	3%	2%
Other	10%	6%

Percentage of contact centers

■ COMPLETING EVALUATIONS ■ COACHING

QA EVALUATIONS: SUPERVISOR-TO-AGENT RATIO

Small Contact Center
1:10

Overall QA Ratio
1:33

Medium Contact Center
1:8

Super-Large Contact Center
1:86

Large Contact Center
1:56
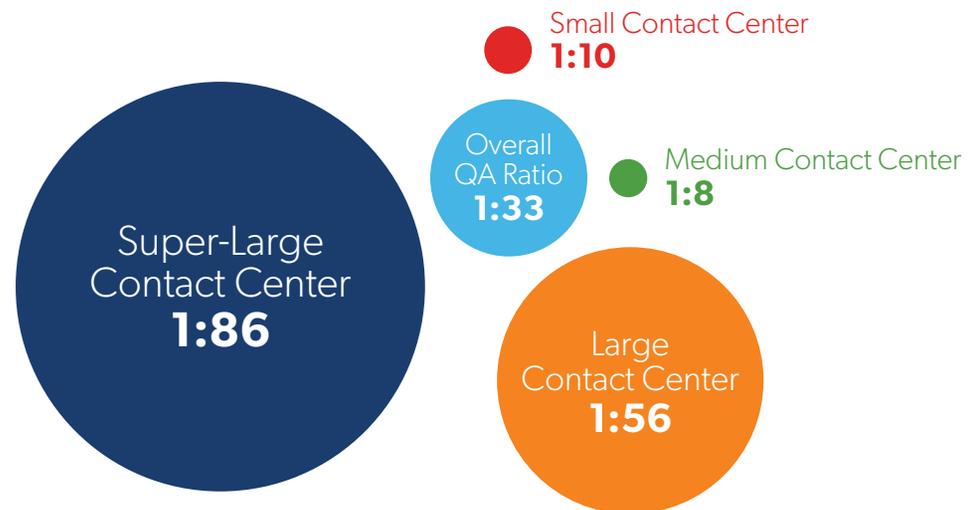
Evaluations are often just one of many responsibilities for the QA team or direct supervisors; when setting goals and targets for, for example, evaluations per agent, contact center leaders should consider total workload, including time to complete evaluations and deliver coaching/feedback. The average target varies depending on the size of the contact center and the frequency of evaluation. Small contact centers, for instance, target slightly fewer evaluations (6), while contact centers that conduct quarterly evaluations target 10 evaluations per quarter on average.

All Periods	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly
7	9	7	7	10

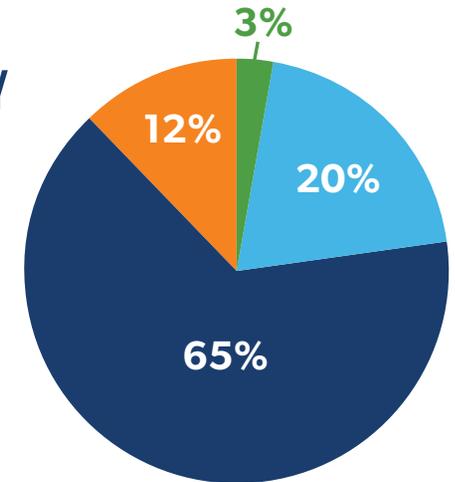*Target number of evaluations per period, average*

Four-fifths of contact centers are randomly sampling interactions for evaluation; however, most of this random sampling is performed manually, by supervisors/managers or evaluators. Just 22% of contact centers are using a tool or solution to automatically select interactions. In a further 19% of contact centers, interactions are selected automatically but not randomly, based on specific data points, like call length, hold time, transfer rate, etc. Random sampling, as distinct from automatic sampling, is not inspiring confidence among contact center leaders; on average, and on a scale from 0-10, respondents' confidence in manual random sampling came in at a 5.93, but automated random sampling inspired only slightly more confidence, at 6.57. This was consistent, regardless of a contact center's size or overall satisfaction with its quality management program.

Regardless of how often or how many evaluations are completed, QA scores are most commonly used to measure agent performance. These scores are more often a percentage than a rating (e.g., Meets Expectations, Exceeds Expectations), and they can carry a heavy weight on an agent's scorecard. However scores are used, it's important for agents and supervisors to remember that the rating isn't the goal. Not only does making a metric or score the goal open it up to manipulation and gaming, focusing too heavily on a score can disincentivize agents and undermine coaching efforts. In the end, QA scores should support skills-building and constructive feedback for an agent's long-term growth and improvement.

QA EVALUATIONS: FREQUENCY

- ■ DAILY
- ■ WEEKLY
- ■ MONTHLY
- ■ QUARTERLY

Percentage of contact centers

3%
12%
20%
65%

QA EVALUATIONS: SAMPLING INTERACTIONS

Random sample - manually selected by supervisors/managers or evaluators	73%
Random sample - automatically selected by a tool or solution	22%
Automatically identified based on speech analytics categories	4%
Automatically identified based on specific data points (e.g., call length, hold time, transfers)	19%
Automatically identified based on desktop analytics categories	4%
Other	3%
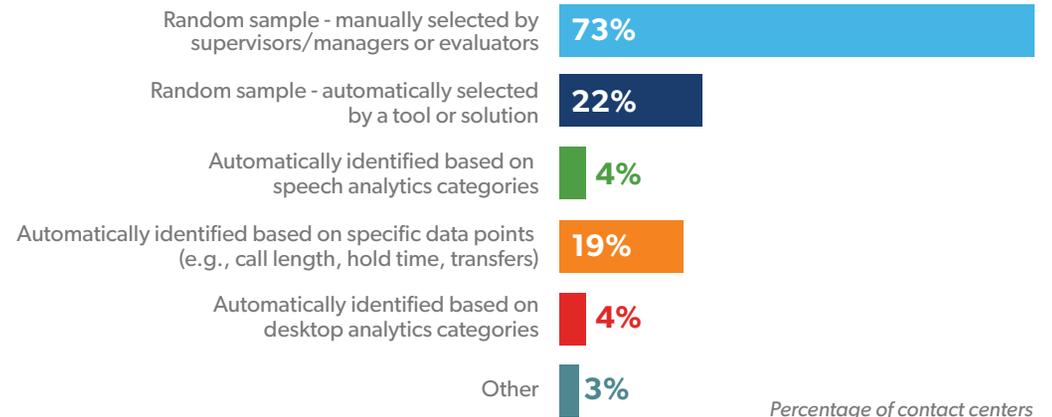
Percentage of contact centers

One-fifth of contact centers use QA scores for coaching only. Coaching, according to survey respondents, is the most manual part of the QA process, and it's a responsibility that falls primarily on employees' direct supervisors.

It should come as no surprise, then, that when sourcing solutions to automate their quality management programs, contact centers are looking for the capability to automate various steps in the coaching process: scheduling (32%), evaluating effectiveness (33%), and identifying opportunities (30%). Equally unsurprising? Contact centers are looking to automate the sampling process, recalling their low level of satisfaction with their current random sampling methodologies (38%).

QA PROGRAM COMPONENTS: CURRENTLY MANUAL VS. POTENTIALLY AUTOMATED

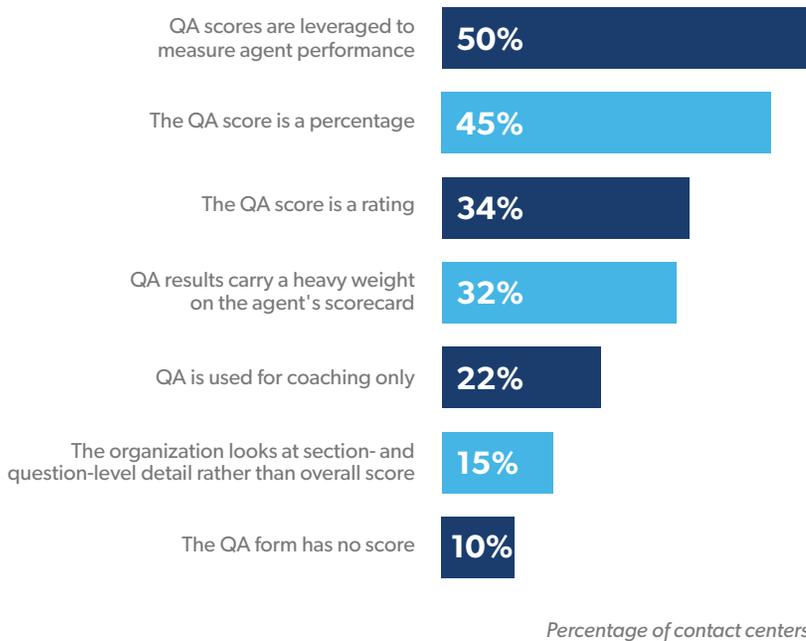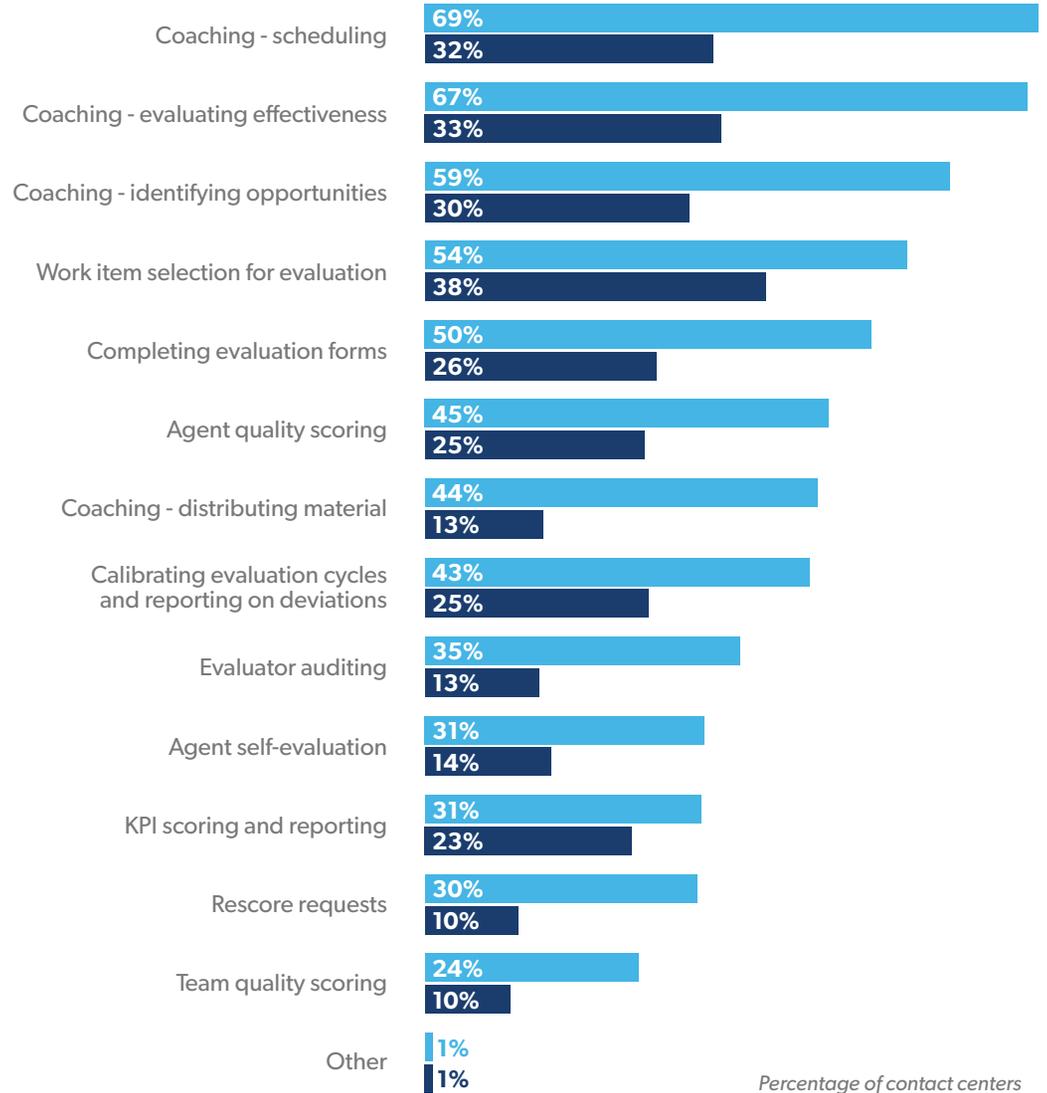| Component	Currently Manual	Seeking to Automate
Coaching - scheduling	69%	32%
Coaching - evaluating effectiveness	67%	33%
Coaching - identifying opportunities	59%	30%
Work item selection for evaluation	54%	38%
Completing evaluation forms	50%	26%
Agent quality scoring	45%	25%
Coaching - distributing material	44%	13%
Calibrating evaluation cycles and reporting on deviations	43%	25%
Evaluator auditing	35%	13%
Agent self-evaluation	31%	14%
KPI scoring and reporting	31%	23%
Rescore requests	30%	10%
Team quality scoring	24%	10%
Other	1%	1%

Percentage of contact centers

QA EVALUATIONS: SCORING

QA scores are leveraged to measure agent performance	50%
The QA score is a percentage	45%
The QA score is a rating	34%
QA results carry a heavy weight on the agent's scorecard	32%
QA is used for coaching only	22%
The organization looks at section- and question-level detail rather than overall score	15%
The QA form has no score	10%

Percentage of contact centers

■ CURRENTLY MANUAL ■ SEEKING TO AUTOMATE

Completing evaluation forms is another manual task that contact centers would like to automate. Again, it's easy to see why: evaluation forms can be long and time-consuming. Nearly 50% of contact centers are using forms with more than 10 questions; 14% are using forms with more than 20. While these forms are weighted toward easily answered objective questions (59%), the balance are subjective questions (41%), and these can add up to considerable time spent completing evaluation forms. Consider this: if, on average, the ratio of evaluators to agents is 1:33, and the time to complete an evaluation form is 6-15 minutes (median), that means that evaluators are spending anywhere from 23-58 hours a month, just completing evaluation forms.
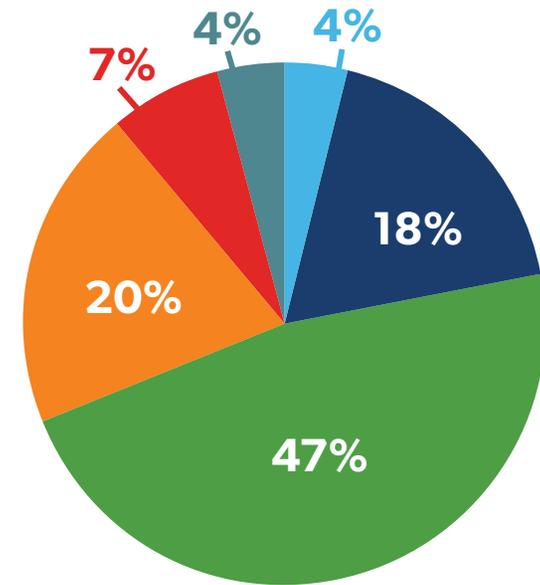
QA EVALUATION FORMS: NUMBER OF QUESTIONS

16%
39%
31%
14%
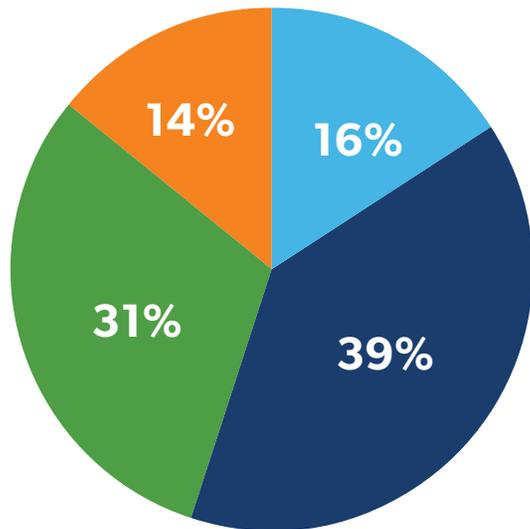
Percentage of contact centers

■ 1-5 ■ 6-10 ■ 11-20 ■ MORE THAN 20

QA EVALUATION FORMS: TIME TO COMPLETION

4% 4%
7%
18%
20%
47%

Percentage of contact centers

■ < 2 MIN ■ 2-5 MIN ■ 6-15 MIN ■ 16-30 MIN ■ 31-60 MIN ■ >60 MIN

Regardless of who conducts QA or how long it takes, monitoring and coaching are essential tools for driving agent performance and improving service quality. However, just as you "can't manage what you don't measure," contact centers can't monitor interactions or provide meaningful coaching in channels where quality isn't being monitored: "you can't optimize what you don't evaluate." As we shall see, more comprehensive quality management has an effect not only on the service and customer experience, in a tangible sense, but also on the perception of satisfaction with the impact and influence of quality management on the organization.

THE IMPACT AND INFLUENCE OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT

In 2017, we found that when it came to perceptions of the impact and influence of quality management on agents and organizations, there was much work to be done. That's still true: just 25% of contact center leaders are very satisfied with some or all effects of the impact and influence of their quality management programs. Which begs the question: what are the most satisfied contact centers doing differently? What can contact centers that aren't completely sold on quality management learn from those that are?

At a high level, this year's results indicate that the most successful organizations are doing a few things better than their peers:

- **Communicating the strategic value of quality management:** Perception is reality, so it's imperative that the contact center communicates the value of quality management by identifying key stakeholders and tailoring results and messaging to their interests and needs. Only by making that information available can the organization use it when making business decisions, delivering training, developing products, aligning customer expectations, etc. Quality management generates a wealth of information and insights, but the contact center must share that information and insights for quality management and those who execute it to be seen as valuable contributors to the organization's overall success.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Supervisors rely heavily on QA results and input for effective coaching and development	19%	45%	20%	13%	4%
There is alignment between QA and training at my company	16%	46%	23%	9%	5%
The QA team is viewed as a key contributor to our company's success	16%	42%	28%	9%	5%
Voice of the Customer results are reviewed when considering enhancements to our program	14%	39%	28%	12%	7%
Training leverages QA data and input regularly	14%	39%	24%	18%	6%
Business processes have been changed, altered, or discontinued based on feedback from QA results	10%	48%	20%	18%	4%
Agents feel that the QA program at our company can help them be successful	9%	37%	37%	13%	4%
Agents are asked to provide input when QA guidelines are renewed	8%	35%	27%	21%	9%
QA results are used when considering business changes	7%	36%	32%	20%	4%
Our overall QA results are generally high with little variation	6%	44%	32%	16%	2%

Percentage of contact centers

■ STRONGLY AGREE ■ AGREE ■ NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
■ DISAGREE ■ STRONGLY DISAGREE

- **Coaching effectively and supporting agents' growth and development:** Effective coaching shouldn't focus exclusively on "bad" QA results; if agents only receive criticism, they'll come to resent the quality management process. The best coaches focus on both positive behaviors and opportunities for improvement, and the best coaching programs support informal and formal coaching opportunities and professional development, using QA results to tailor training to agents' needs.

- **Including agents in the process:** Agents feel the effects of quality management most acutely and directly; to ensure their ongoing engagement with the program, they must believe the program supports their growth and development, that it's working with them and not against them. To increase agent buy-in, include them in the process. Ask for their feedback about how quality reviews could be more effective and meaningful to their performance. Consider having agents review and rate their own calls, or even review and score their supervisors' calls. Rather than coaching to items on a checklist, focus quality reviews on behaviors that agents can hone to be more successful.

- **Implementing quality management broadly, across channels:** As we've already noted, you can't optimize what you aren't evaluating. And, in fact, contact centers with the most impactful and influential quality management programs are both offering a greater variety of channels and, crucially, evaluating those channels for quality at a higher rate than their peers.

  ◦ They're more invested in self-service (IVR, 50%; knowledge base, 42%) and social media (live agent, 28%; AI-assisted, 17%) than the overall sample.

  ◦ They're evaluating even standard channels, like email (55%), at a higher rate than the overall sample.

- **Focusing on the customer and agent experience:** Contact centers with high impact/influence quality management programs prioritize the customer experience (56%) and agent experience (52%) over optimizing workforce operations/productivity (46%). This might mean removing handle time from agent scorecards and instead holding supervisors and managers accountable for coaching behaviors that balance productivity and efficiency. Or, it could mean revising rigid scripts, and instead giving agents templates that grant them guidance, but offer freedom and flexibility to act in the best interests of each customer.

- **Dedicating resources and securing leadership support:** Leadership support and buy-in is just as crucial as agent buy-in, as it's the key to securing funding to ensure you have the right resources with the expertise required to succeed at quality management. Demonstrating the link between quality and satisfaction or quality and retention is a logical place to start.

- **Investing in analytics:** Contact centers with high impact/influence quality management programs are more invested in analytics than their peers, particularly when it comes to upgrading their current solutions or adding new ones. More than one-third are planning to upgrade or add speech (39%) and text analytics (43%), while one-third are planning to invest in predictive analytics (33%) in the near future. As we might expect, given these contact centers' investments in self-service and focus on agent experience, this increase in investment aligns with greater use of analytics to predict staffing needs (67%) and increase containment (43%).

While these high impact/influence contact centers are succeeding in many respects, it's worth noting that they're no less burdened by highly manual processes, budget constraints, and homegrown tools than their peers. Rather, these contact centers are more favorably disposed to their quality management programs because they perceive progress toward a desired end state. Obviously, there is ample opportunity for contact centers to improve their approach to quality management. All it takes is getting back to basics: people, process, technology, and strategy.

- **Strategy:** What kind of service experience do we want to provide?

- **People:** How can we support and invest in our agents to ensure they're providing a quality experience?

- **Process:** How should we assess the quality of interactions?

- **Technology:** How can we reduce the amount of manual work required by investing in automated solutions and analytics?

CONCLUSION

Many contact centers believe they have a cohesive, highly integrated quality management program when what they actually have are disparate, disjointed quality management activities that don't support a discrete goal and don't cohere into a full-fledged quality management program. A clear vision is the key to maximizing the benefits of a quality management program: start by defining your end state (i.e., what kind of service experience do you want to provide?) and work backwards, selecting metrics, processes, and tools/technologies that will help you deliver the highest possible quality. Customers want a great experience and agents want to provide a great experience: the best quality management programs can satisfy both groups, to the ultimate benefit of the organization.
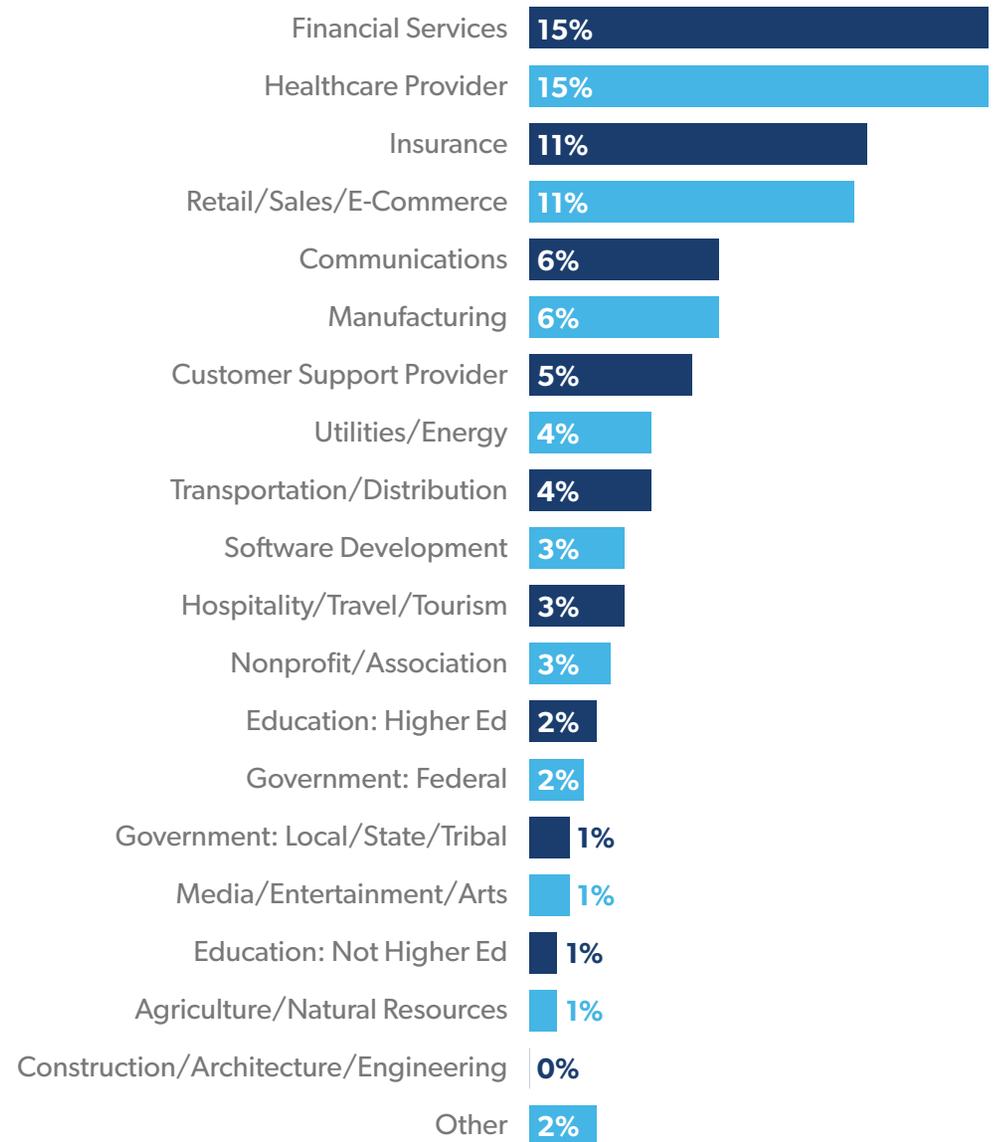
ABOUT THE STUDY

The 258 respondents to this survey represented a range of industries, with the largest representative groups being financial services and healthcare (both 15%), followed by insurance and retail (both 11%). The study participants represented all roles within service and support, including executive/senior management (31%), specialist or midlevel management (45%), and supervisors/team leads (11%).

Contact centers in this study support a wide assortment of channels, with 61% offering five or more different channels of service. With regard to the size of their contact centers, 29% represent small contact centers, those with fewer than 100 full-time equivalents (FTEs); nearly one-third represent medium-sized contact centers of 100-499 FTEs; large contact centers (500-10,000 FTEs) account for 29%, while very large contact centers (more than 10,000 FTEs) account for 11%.
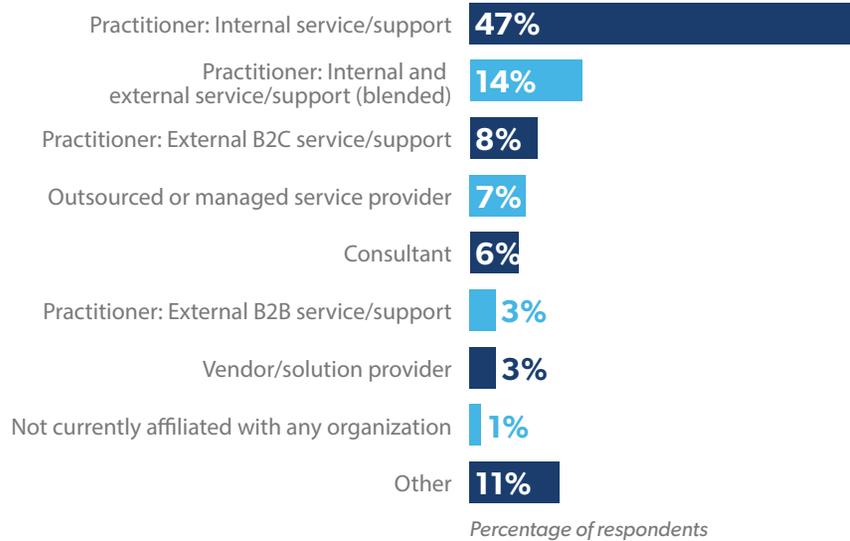
Nearly half of the respondents provide internal service/support exclusively (47%), with 14% providing blended support (internal/external) and 11% providing external (customer-facing, B2B and B2C) support only. The majority of respondents are involved with customer service (78%) and the contact/call center (71%), with one-third involved in technical support (33%) and nearly one-fifth involved with IT (17%). Less than one-quarter are affiliated with sales and/or marketing. Geographically, this study is representative of organizations that are predominantly based in North America, specifically the United States (91%) and Canada (1%).

INDUSTRY

Industry	Percentage
Financial Services	15%
Healthcare Provider	15%
Insurance	11%
Retail/Sales/E-Commerce	11%
Communications	6%
Manufacturing	6%
Customer Support Provider	5%
Utilities/Energy	4%
Transportation/Distribution	4%
Software Development	3%
Hospitality/Travel/Tourism	3%
Nonprofit/Association	3%
Education: Higher Ed	2%
Government: Federal	2%
Government: Local/State/Tribal	1%
Media/Entertainment/Arts	1%
Education: Not Higher Ed	1%
Agriculture/Natural Resources	1%
Construction/Architecture/Engineering	0%
Other	2%

Percentage of organizations

ROLE

Practitioner: Internal service/support	47%
Practitioner: Internal and external service/support (blended)	14%
Practitioner: External B2C service/support	8%
Outsourced or managed service provider	7%
Consultant	6%
Practitioner: External B2B service/support	3%
Vendor/solution provider	3%
Not currently affiliated with any organization	1%
Other	11%

Percentage of respondents

CONTACT CENTER SIZE

Fewer than 50	19%
50 - 99	10%
100 - 499	32%
500 - 999	8%
1,000 - 4,999	17%
5,000 - 9,999	5%
10,000 - 19,999	3%
20,000 - 49,999	4%
More than 50,000	4%

Percentage of contact centers

POSITION

Non-IT executive management (CEO, owner, president, VP)	9%
IT/technical executive management (CIO, CTO, CSO, CISO)	3%
Marketing/customer executive management (CMO, CCO)	1%
Senior management (director)	18%
Mid-level management (manager)	30%
Specialist management (knowledge manager, project manager, workforce manager, trainer, etc.)	15%
Supervisor/team lead	11%
Customer support (analyst, technician, representative)	8%
Other	5%

Percentage of respondents

BUSINESS AREA

Customer service	78%
Contact/call center	71%
Technical support	33%
Sales	25%
IT	17%
Marketing	13%
Other	8%

Percentage of contact centers

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- Raise the strategic value of your contact center
- Optimize your operations
- Improve your customer service

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