

2020/21 CONTACT CENTRE

BEST PRACTICE REPORT





James Witcombe

Director
SMAART Recruitment
james@smaart.com.au

2020 won't be forgotten. All industries experienced huge disruption, but not many had to deal with a tsunami of changes like the contact centre industry. For all of us, it was nothing we had experienced before and nothing that we could have prepared for.

Our industry is resilient. It is also adaptive and innovative. When a time of crisis arose, across the industry contact centres responded rapidly to ensure the disruption to our customers and organisations was minimal. Three year plans of introducing work from home were pushed through in 24-48 hours. What we never thought was possible actually was, and our team members embraced the challenge and rode the bumps.

Over 76% of contact centres felt that they responded “very effectively” to the pandemic, and the remaining 24% still “somewhat effectively”. We’ve set a new standard for ourselves in terms of our ability to change, adapt and respond under pressure. This report includes vital information on how contact centres are going to look as we move out of the pandemic.

This report also takes a deep dive into the areas that are of great importance to contact centres at the moment – the role of the team leader, approaches to mental health, modern ways of working and the role of customer experience (just to name a few).

In reading this report you can be confident of its accuracy as the responses were compiled from over 150 Australian contact centres. We have partnered with trusted industry suppliers to bring you this report. They have provided no financial incentive to be involved and were chosen on merit.

As a leading supplier of recruitment and consulting services to the contact centre industry, SMAART are passionate about being able to provide valuable market insights. We trust that you will get great value out of our report.

CONTRIBUTORS

Over 150 Australian contact centres contributed to this report. The majority of them contributed anonymously however the following were happy to be named.

AGL - Connectnow
Aimia
AIOW Nissay Dowa Insurance
Anglicare Community Services
Australian Unity
BGIS
Big Post
Bridged Group
CBLA
CBM Australia
Community Alliance
Compassion Australia
Department Of Communities
Diabetes Victoria
Easy Weddings
ESSSuper
Flexigroup

Frizelle Sunshine Automotive Group
HIC
Hostopia Australia
Hostplus
ING
LGIAsuper
Life Insurance Comparison
Lion
LUCRF Super
Mazda Australia
Medibank
Miele
MLC
Momentum Energy
MyBudget
MYOB
myWorld Aus

NEC Australia
NewsCorp
OpenCorp
Optus
Powercor
Programmed Facility Management
Red Energy
Relationships Australia Queensland
Royal Automobile Association
of South Australia
SA Water
Smart Health Australia
Social Research Centre
Spotless Group

Spotlight Retail Group
St Vincent's Hospital
Sumo
Super Retail Group
Superloop
Tabcorp
The MedicAlert Foundation
Toshiba Australia
Unisuper
UTAS
Water Corporation
WINconnect
World Vision Australia

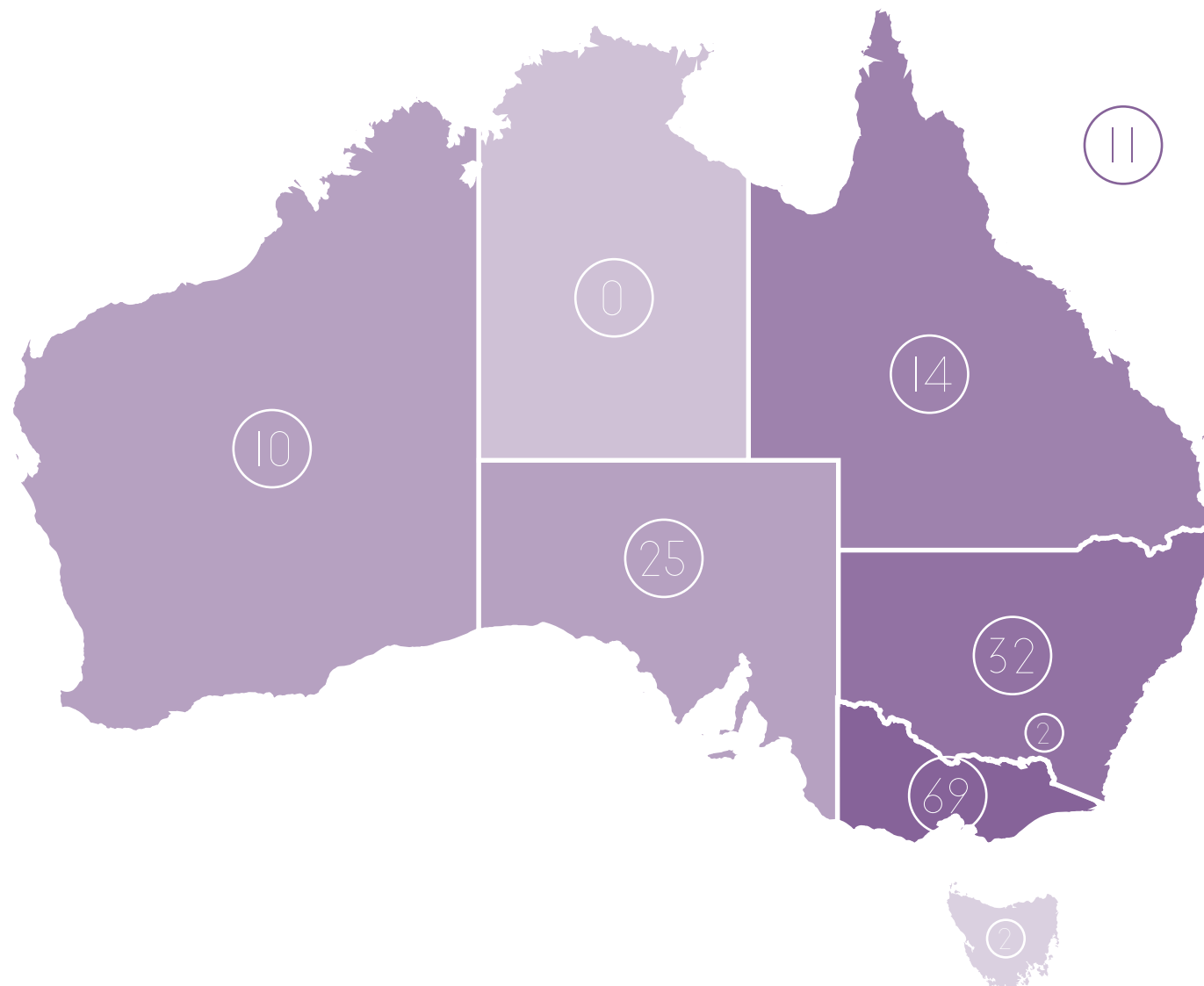


LOCATION

WHERE IS YOUR CONTACT CENTRE LOCATED?

STATE	# OF CENTRES	% OF CENTRES
VIC	69	42%
NSW	32	19%
SA	25	15%
WA	10	6%
ACT	2	1%
QLD	14	8%
TAS	2	1%
Offshore	11	7%
WFH (Dedicated)	1	1%
TOTAL	166	100%

The majority of contact centres in Australia are located on the Eastern seaboard, with a strong participation from Melbourne in this study influenced by our market presence. The exact location of contact centres is much cause for discussion, with many organisations constantly weighing up whether city, suburban or outside a capital city is the best option.



DEMOGRAPHICS



DEMOGRAPHICS

WHERE DO YOU HAVE CONTACT CENTRE(S) LOCATED?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Capital city - CBD	57%
Capital city - Suburb	36%
Outside of a capital city	12%



57% CBD



36% Suburb



12% Outside of Capital City



Majority of Contact Centres are located in the CBD of major capital cities, however, there is growing data suggesting that the number of suburban contact centres are increasing across the country. This opens up a wider talent pool and gives staff a greater work-life balance.

WHAT TYPE(S) OF CONTACT CENTRE(S) DO YOU HAVE?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Inhouse	77%
Outsourced / BPO	6%
Both inhouse & outsourced / BPO	14%
Other	5%



77% Inhouse



6% Outsourced



14% Both



Nearly 80% of respondents run their own in-house Contact Centre, however, the number of BPO/Outsourced Contact Centres in Australia is on the rise. The impact of COVID-19 is seeing an increase in BPO usage onshore as offshore options become more challenging and limited.

DEMOGRAPHICS

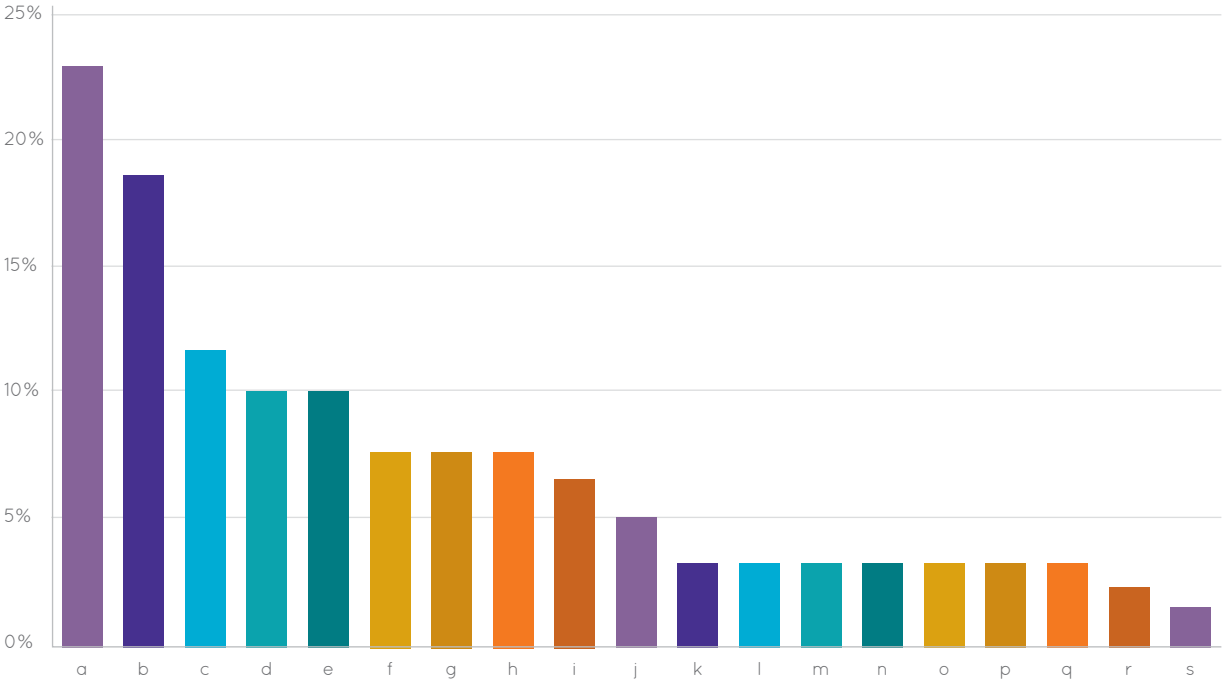
WHAT INDUSTRY (OR INDUSTRIES) DOES YOUR CONTACT CENTRE WORK IN?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSE
a	Banking And Finance	23%
b	Utilities	18%
c	Insurance	12%
d	Public Service	10%
e	Not For Profit	10%
f	IT Support	7%
g	Education	7%
h	Retail/FMCG	7%
i	Other	6%
j	Automotive	5%

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSE
k	Fundraising	3%
l	Advertising	3%
m	Collections	3%
n	Entertainment	3%
o	Facilities & Property Mgt	3%
p	Healthcare	3%
q	Transport & Logistics	3%
r	Manufacturing	2%
s	Wagering	1%

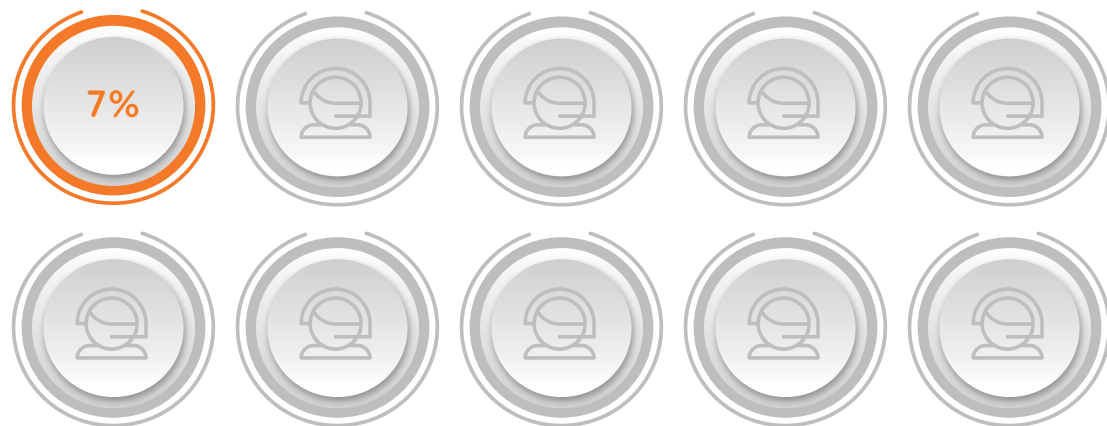


53% of survey respondents work in the Utilities, Insurance or Banking and Finance sector.



DEMOGRAPHICS

BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, WHAT % OF YOUR CONTACT CENTRE WORKFORCE WAS WORKING-FROM-HOME ON ANY GIVEN DAY?



Prior to the pandemic around 7% of survey respondents had their staff working from home on any given day. Post the pandemic that number is expected to jump to 58%. The pandemic has caused centres to re-evaluate how they work, what's possible and expedite work-from-home transition plans by up to 2 years.



PANDEMIC RESPONSE

AFTER THE PANDEMIC, WHAT % OF YOUR CONTACT CENTRE WORKFORCE DO YOU EXPECT TO BE WORKING-FROM-HOME ON ANY GIVEN DAY?



TEAM LEADERS



TEAM LEADERS

ARE YOUR TEAM LEADERS REQUIRED TO TAKE CALLS?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	21%
No	6%
Only occasionally (once or twice a quarter)	19%
Only during rare occasions (once or twice a year)	6%
Only escalations	48%



YES

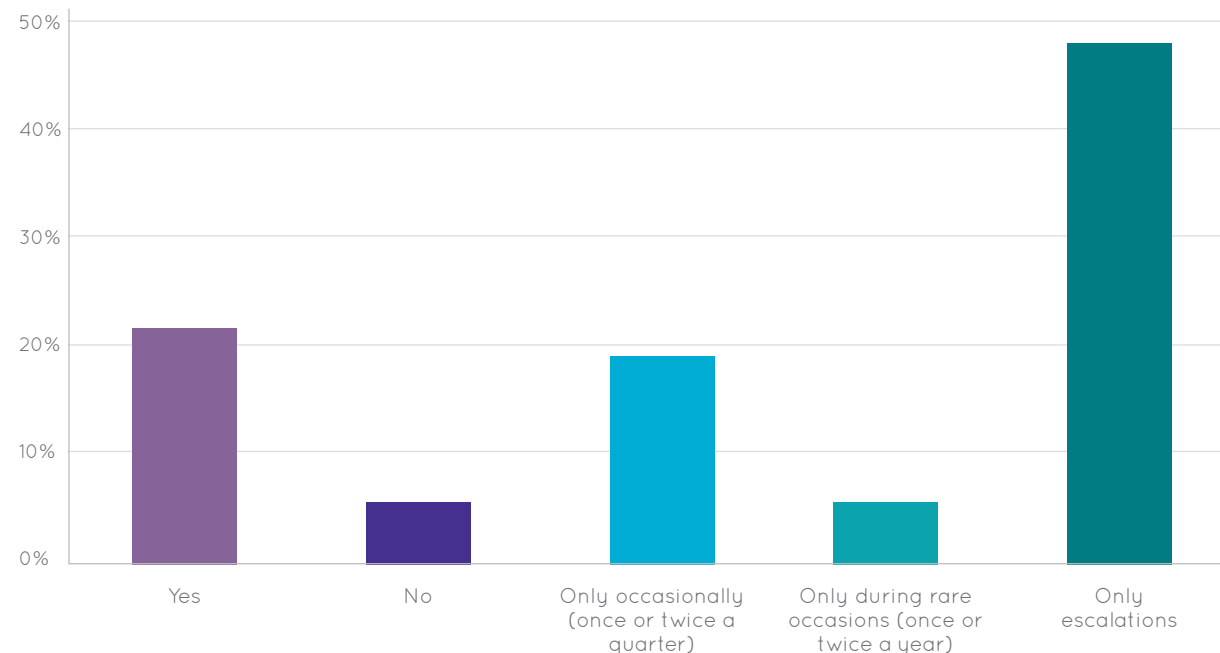
NO

IF YES, WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THEIR TIME
IS ALLOCATED TO TAKING CALLS?

27%



While one in five Team Leaders (21%) are required to take calls on a regular basis, an additional 73% are required to take calls in some capacity (once or twice a quarter, once or twice a year or escalations).



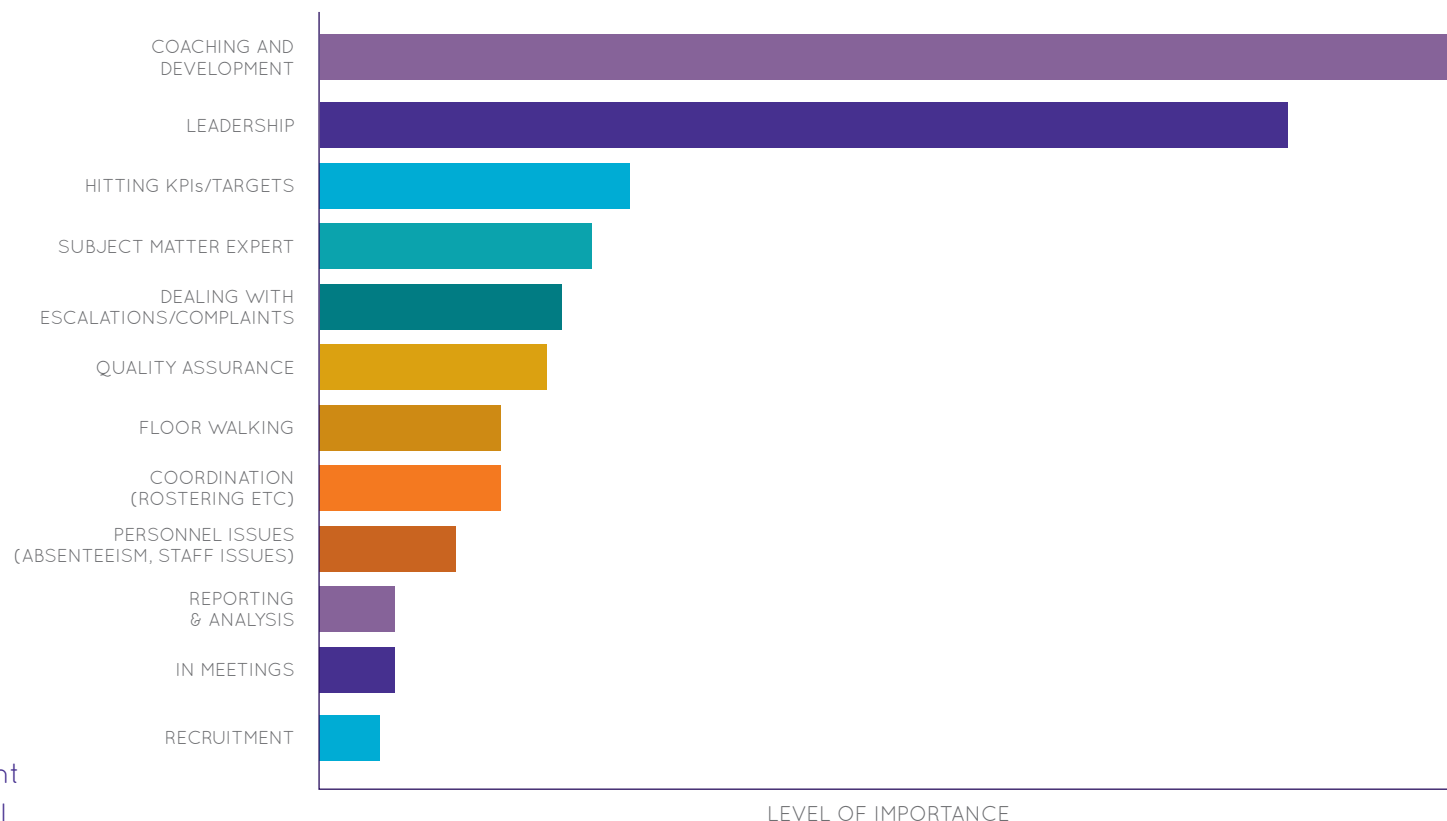
TEAM LEADERS

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT TEAM LEADER DUTIES?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Coaching and development	75%
Leadership	64%
Hitting KPIs/targets	21%
Subject matter expert	18%
Dealing with escalations/complaints	16%
Quality assurance	15%
Floor walking	12%
Coordination (rostering etc)	12%
Personnel issues (absenteeism, staff issues)	9%
Reporting and analysis	5%
In meetings	5%
Recruitment	4%



Three in four contact centres (75%) ranked Coaching and Development in the top two most important Team Leader duties, followed by overall Leadership (64%). Time spent in Meetings, Reporting and Analysis and Recruitment were ranked least important.



TEAM LEADERS

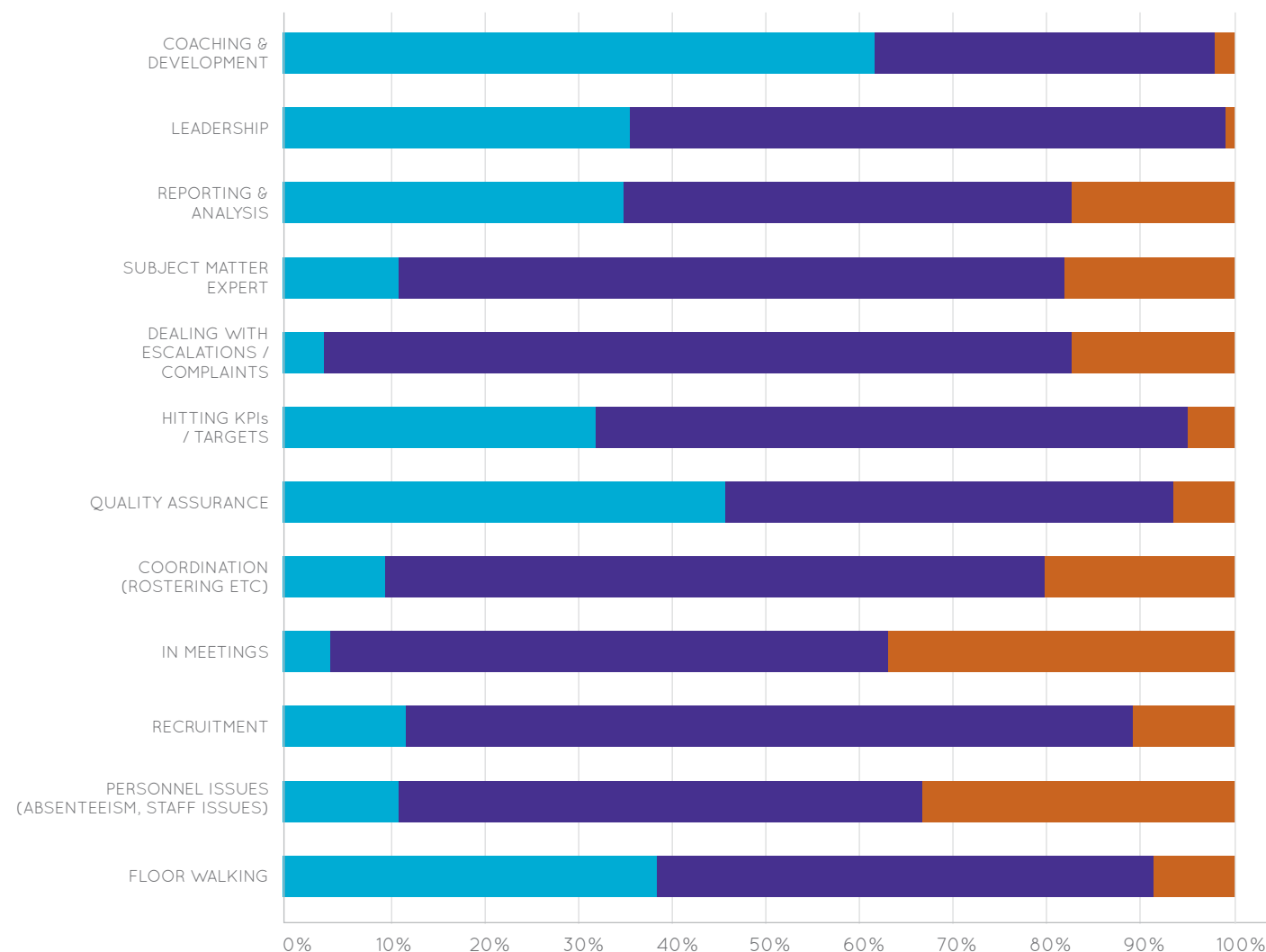
HOW MUCH TIME DO YOUR TEAM LEADERS SPEND ON THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES?



While Coaching and Development is considered the most important Team Leader duty, 61% of respondents state that there is not enough time spent on Coaching and Development. More than 1 in 3 (37%) state that Team Leaders spend too much time in meetings.

■ NOT ENOUGH ■ THE RIGHT AMOUNT ■ TOO MUCH

2020/21 CONTACT CENTRE
BEST PRACTICE REPORT



TEAM LEADERS

IF YOU COULD RELIEVE YOUR TEAM LEADERS OF TWO DUTIES,
WHICH WOULD THEY BE?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
In meetings	38%
Coordination (rostering etc)	35%
Reporting and analysis	28%
Dealing with escalations/complaints	18%
Subject matter expert	18%
Recruitment	17%
Personnel issues (absenteeism, staff issues)	16%
Quality assurance	12%
Floor walking	9%
Hitting KPIs/targets	7%
Coaching and development	2%
Leadership	1%



One in two (50%) would relieve Team Leaders of In meetings, Coordination, or Reporting and Analysis. In alignment with the most important duties, only 2% of respondents would relieve Team Leaders of Coaching and Development or Leadership.



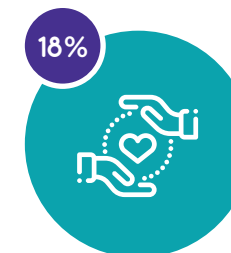
In meetings



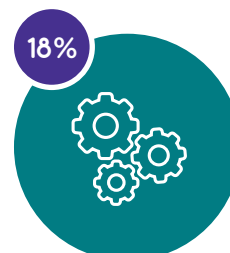
Coordination
(rostering etc)



Reporting and
analysis



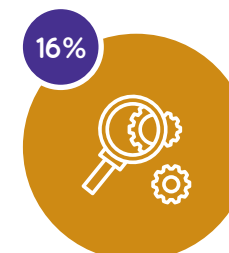
Dealing with
escalations/complaints



Subject matter
expert



Recruitment



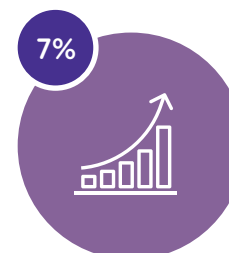
Personnel issues
(absenteeism, staff issues)



Quality assurance



Floor walking



Hitting KPIs/targets



Coaching and
development



Leadership

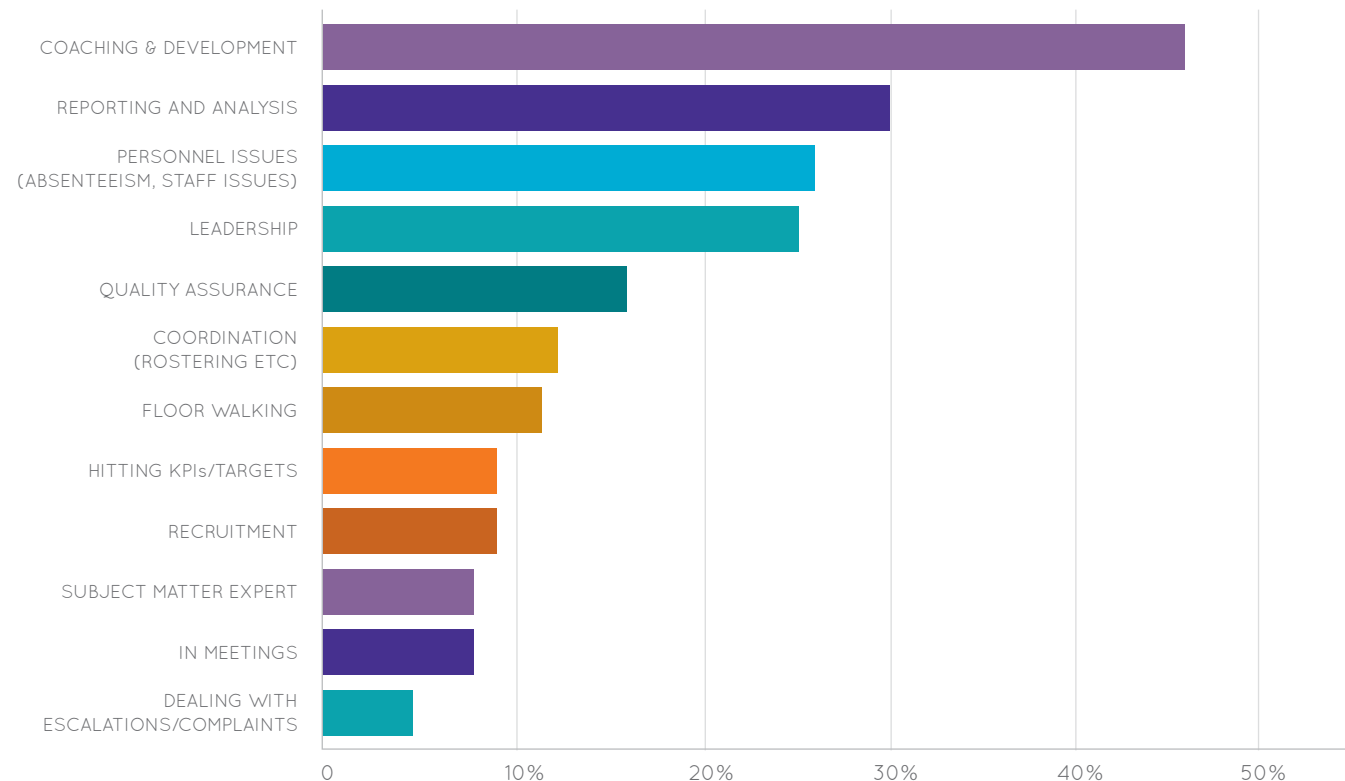
TEAM LEADERS

WHERE ARE YOUR TEAM LEADERS' GREATEST WEAKNESSES?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Coaching and development	45%
Reporting and analysis	30%
Personnel issues (absenteeism, staff issues)	26%
Leadership	25%
Quality assurance	17%
Coordination (rostering etc)	12%
Floor walking	11%
Hitting KPIs/targets	9%
Recruitment	9%
Subject matter expert	8%
In meetings	8%
Dealing with escalations/complaints	4%



There is a misalignment between duties which are considered important and Team Leaders' capability. Coaching and Development is considered the most important duty but is also the duty that Team Leaders need to spend more time on AND is considered their greatest weakness.



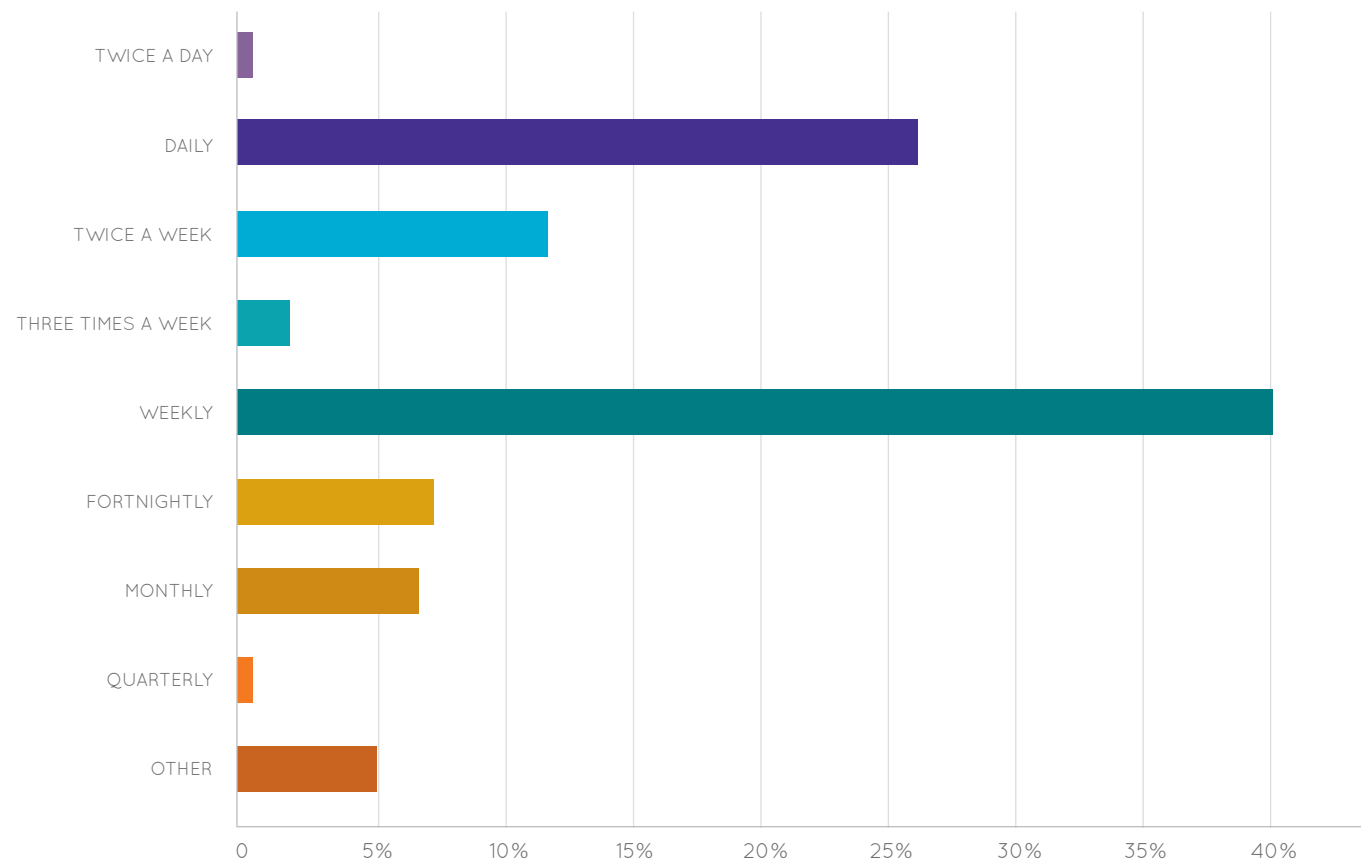
TEAM LEADERS

HOW REGULARLY DO YOU HAVE TEAM LEADER GROUP MEETINGS?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Twice a day	1%
Daily	26%
Twice a week	12%
Three times a week	2%
Weekly	40%
Fortnightly	7%
Monthly	6%
Quarterly	1%
Other	5%



Two in three (67%) conduct Team Leader group meetings either Weekly or Daily. Around 1 in 10 (11%) have Team Leader group meetings Monthly or less frequently.



TEAM LEADERS

DO YOUR TEAM LEADERS HAVE KPIS?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	82%
No	18%



Yes



No



Close to two-thirds of Team Leaders (63%) have one-on-ones with their managers at least once a fortnight (see page 20) with 82% of Team Leaders having KPIs. The three most common KPIs (Quality & Coaching, Financial, and Voice of Customer) account for 55% of KPIs provided.

TOP 10 TEAM LEADER KPIs:



Quality & Coaching



Financial (Sales/Revenue/Lead Gen)



Voice of Customer (NPS, CSAT, CES etc.)



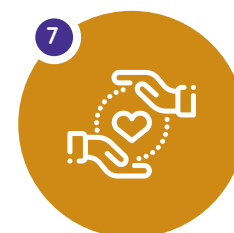
Efficiency (AHT, ATT, ACW etc.)



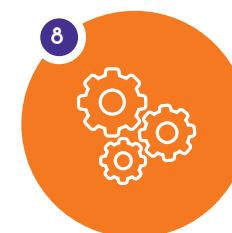
Service Level / GOS / ASA / ABN



Adherence



Employee Experience (ESAT)



Resolution (IR / FCR)



Absenteeism & Attrition



Promoting Self-Service

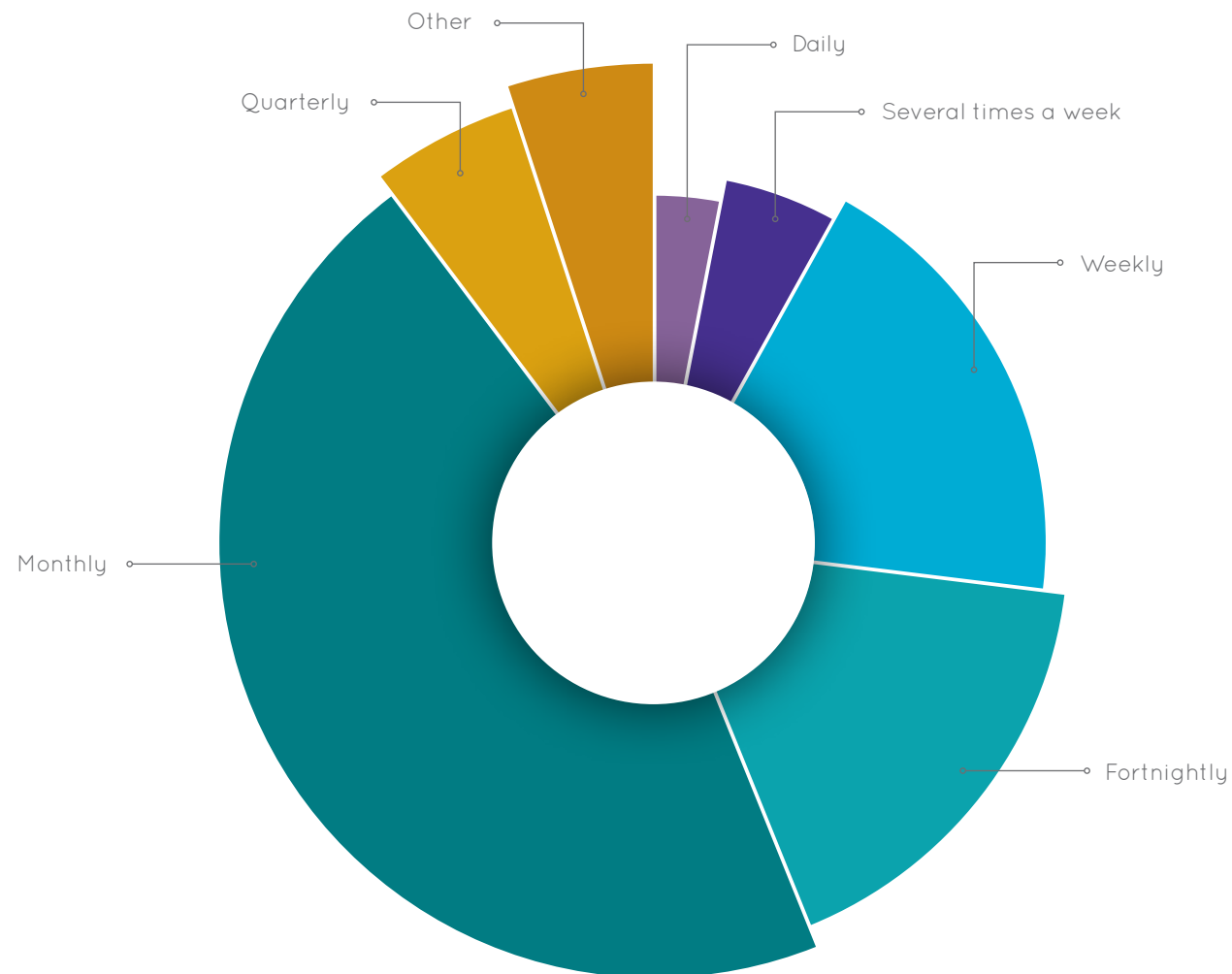
TEAM LEADERS

HOW OFTEN DO YOUR TEAM LEADERS CONDUCT ONE-ON-ONES WITH THEIR AGENTS

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Daily	3%
Several times a week	5%
Weekly	19%
Fortnightly	17%
Monthly	46%
Quarterly	5%
Other	5%



Almost one in two (46%) of Team Leaders conduct one-on-ones with agents each month, a slight increase from 41% in the 2019 report. Nine out of ten (90%) conduct agent one-on-ones monthly or more frequently.



TEAM LEADERS

DO YOU HAVE A STRUCTURED AND ONGOING LEARNING
AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR TEAM LEADERS?

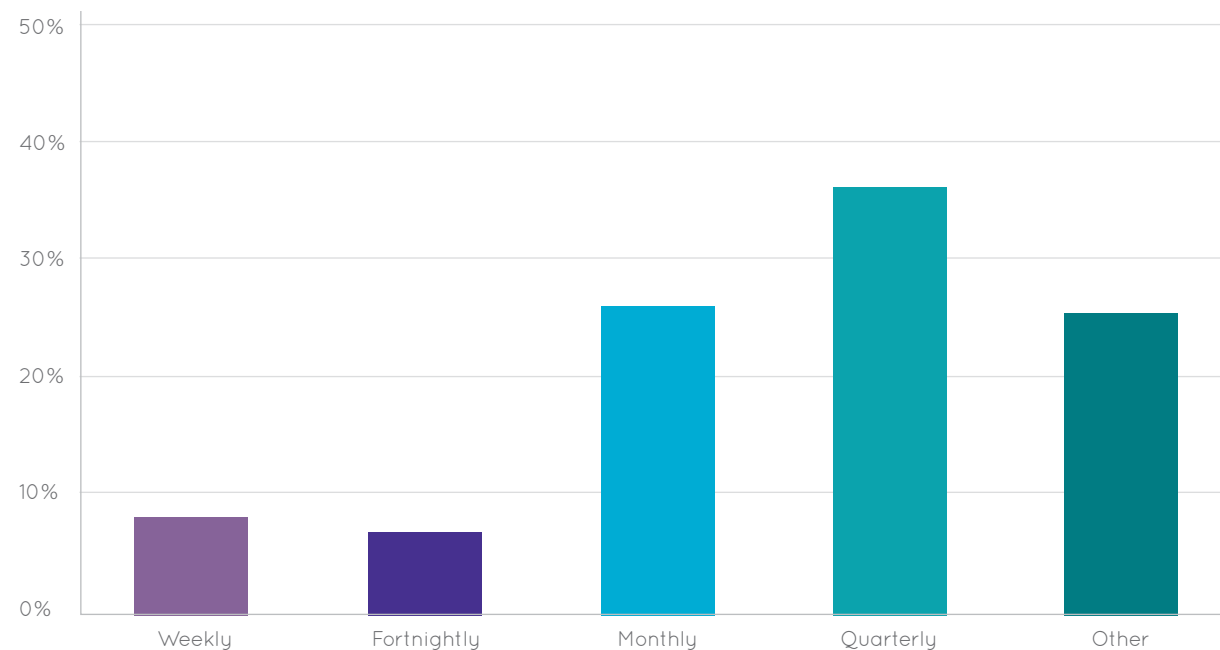
Average
Team Leader
L&D yearly budget?

\$3,154



While budget is allocated to Team Leader learning and development (L&D) and 76% of Team Leaders receive training at least quarterly, only two in five (40%) have a structured and ongoing L&D program. Team Leaders are one of the most critical roles in any operation. The lack of structured and ongoing L&D programs represents a significant opportunity for improvement.

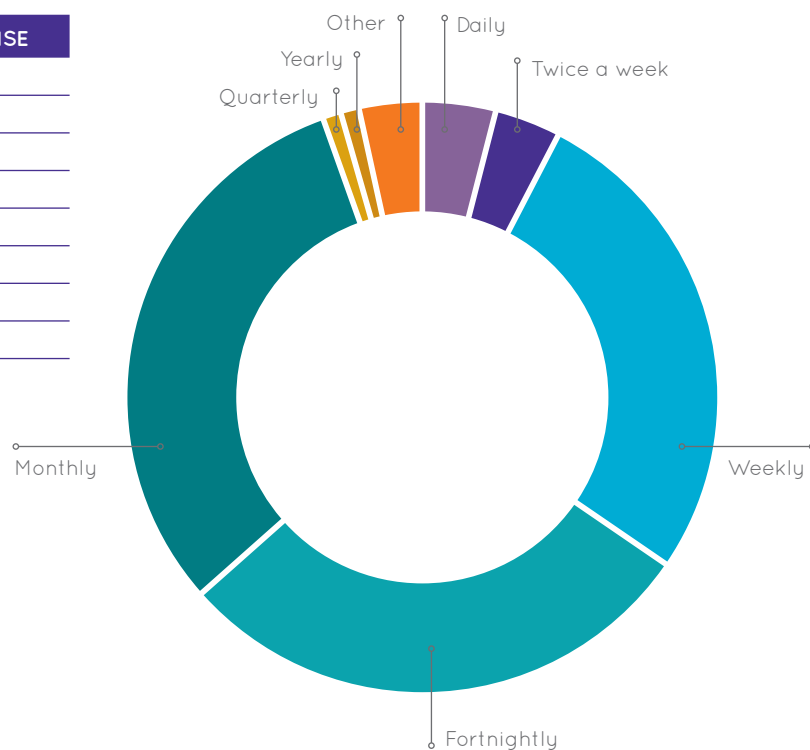
HOW REGULARLY DO YOU HAVE TEAM LEADER TRAINING
SESSIONS, TO INCREASE THEIR SKILLS AS A TEAM LEADER?



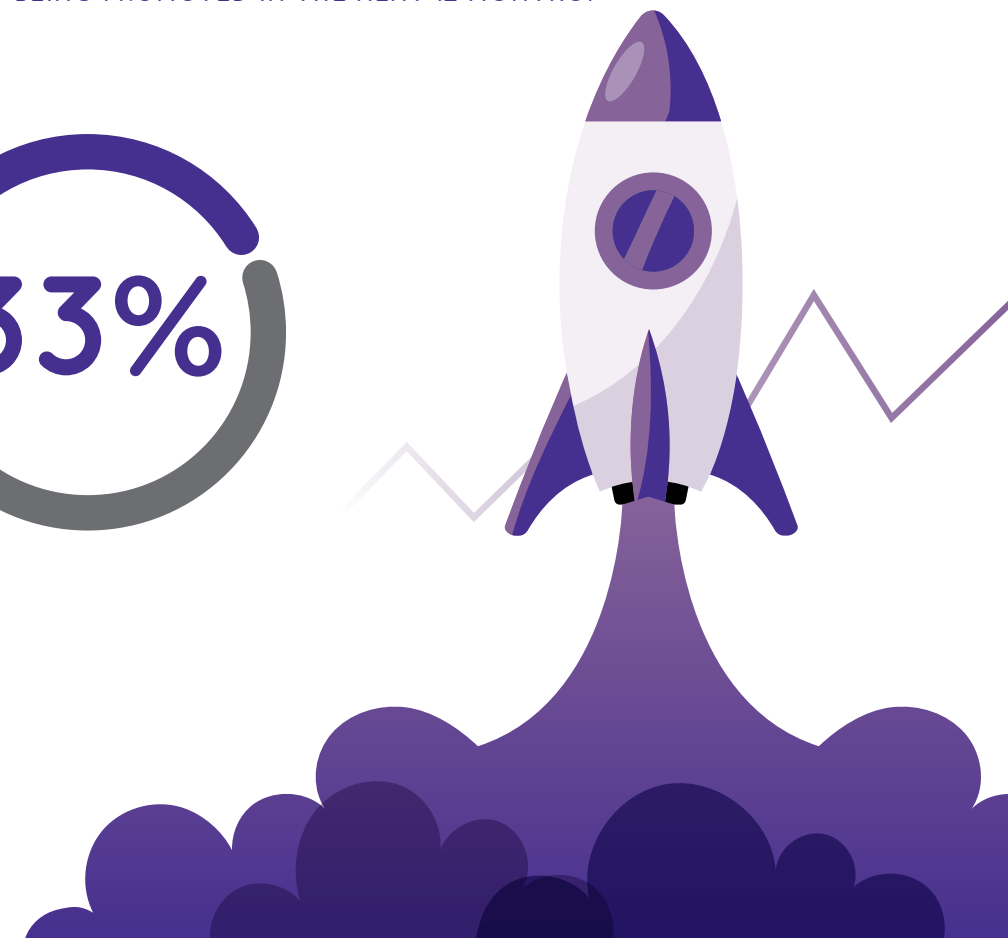
TEAM LEADERS

HOW REGULARLY DOES YOUR TEAM LEADER HAVE A
ONE-ON-ONE WITH THEIR MANAGER?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Daily	4%
Twice a week	3%
Weekly	27%
Fortnightly	29%
Monthly	31%
Quarterly	1%
Half yearly	0%
Yearly	1%
Other	4%



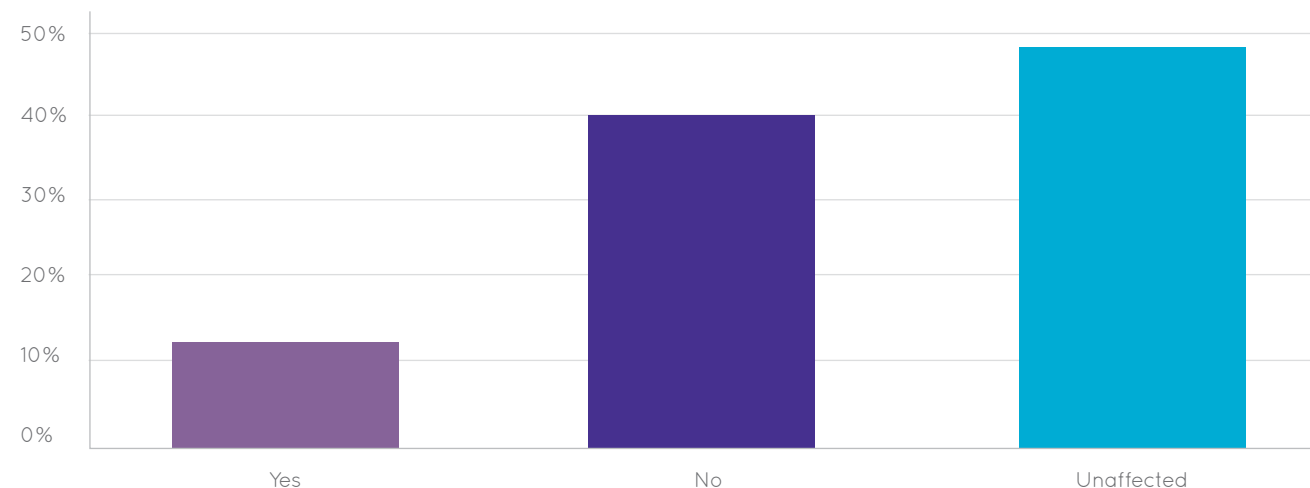
WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR CURRENT TEAM LEADERS DO YOU
FEEL ARE CAPABLE OF BEING PROMOTED IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?



TEAM LEADERS

DUE TO THE FINDINGS OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION, DID YOU ALTER THE BONUS / COMMISSION STRUCTURE THAT YOUR TEAM LEADERS WERE ELIGIBLE FOR?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	12%
No	40%
We had no structure in place anyway	48%



Around one in ten (12%) of Team Leaders had their bonus/ commission structure altered as a result of the Royal Commission. Almost half (48%) of Team Leaders were unaffected as they had no bonus/commission structure in place.



Finding the right bonus or commission structure for Team Leaders is a challenge – they are typically tied to an outcome and are performance based. Linking coaching and development as well as leadership performance to any bonus or commission is best practice.

Learn more about Team Leader salaries on page 92.

TEAM LEADERS

APART FROM NOW NEEDING TO MANAGE STAFF REMOTELY, WHAT HAS BEEN THE MAIN CHANGE TO YOUR TEAM LEADER'S ROLE DURING THE PANDEMIC?

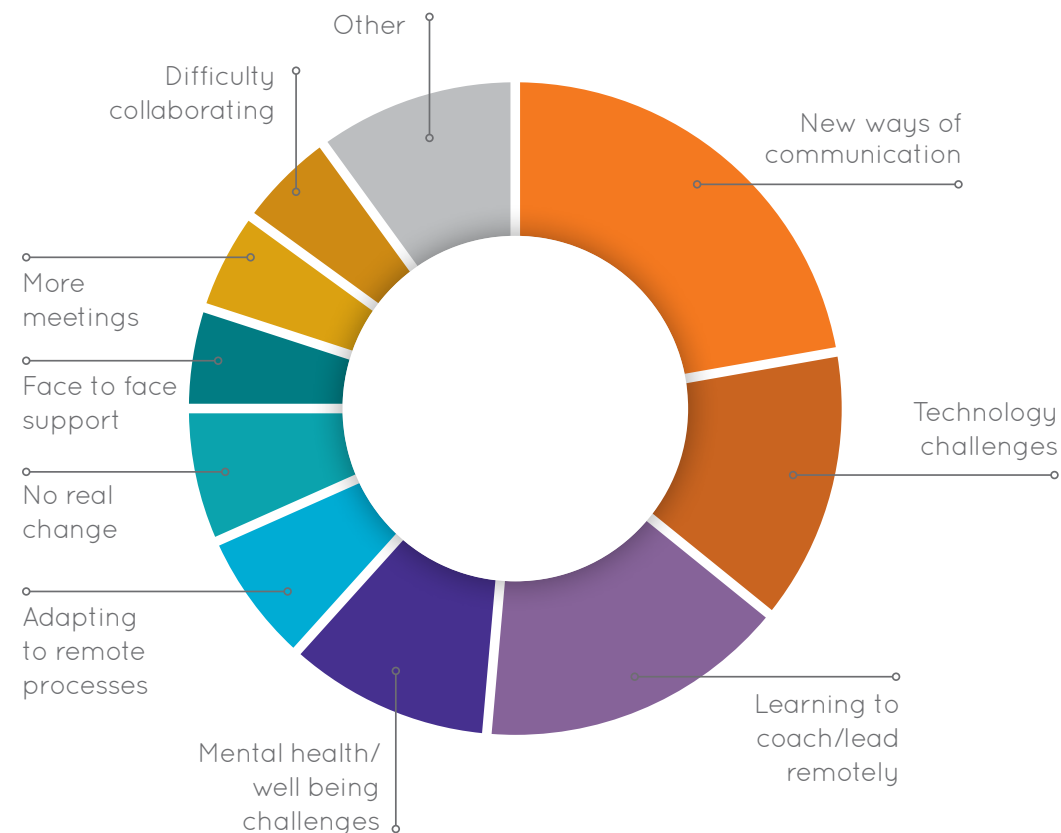
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
New ways of communication & engagement with agents	22%
Technology challenges	14%
Learning to coach/lead remotely	16%
Mental health/well being challenges	10%
Adapting to remote processes	7%
No real change	7%
Replacing agent face to face support with digital support	5%
More meetings	5%
Difficulty collaborating	5%
Other	9%



COVID-19 impacted Team Leaders in a variety of ways. Respondents indicated that many duties did not change but the focus and method of completion was impacted. Additional focus was given to employee engagement and caring for their teams. There was a specific focus on communication, connection and mental health.



PANDEMIC RESPONSE



TEAM LEADERS – SUMMARY



Alex Boland

Director
ANZ Operations COPC Inc.
copc.com



Team leaders are perhaps the most important role in any customer contact operation. Through the training, feedback, coaching and mentoring that they provide, they can have a large impact on all frontline staff. Fantastic team leaders have a huge positive impact on otherwise poor operations, whereas less capable or less motivated team leaders have the potential to destroy a company's reputation.

The findings from this report reveal that one in five team leaders spend, on average, 1.5 days per week handling calls. This time spent handling calls restricts the amount of time they have available for coaching, mentoring and guiding their teams.

The report explores twelve of the most common team leader duties and finds that too much Team Leader time is being spent in meetings, in coordination activities and carrying out reporting whilst not enough time is being spent on coaching and quality assurance (QA).

The report also uncovers an interesting paradox: whilst coaching and development duties are considered to be team leaders' "most important" activities they are also considered to be their "greatest weaknesses".

The report highlights gaps with regards to the management and development of team leader capabilities. One in five team leaders have no formal key performance indicators (KPIs). We believe that this limits organisations' abilities to provide clear direction to their team leaders, and through them, to the wider operations.

Successful team leaders need to be agile and adaptable. This is especially true now during the 'COVID new-normal' era but it will also remain so into the future with the rise of automation and changing customer expectations.

As automation handles an increasing proportion of simple transactions, the complexity of transactions handled by frontline staff will increase. The organisations that will be successful in this new environment will be those that set clear expectations for their team leaders, provide structured and ongoing learning and development (L&D) programs and enable their team leaders to invest more of their time in coaching and developing their staff.

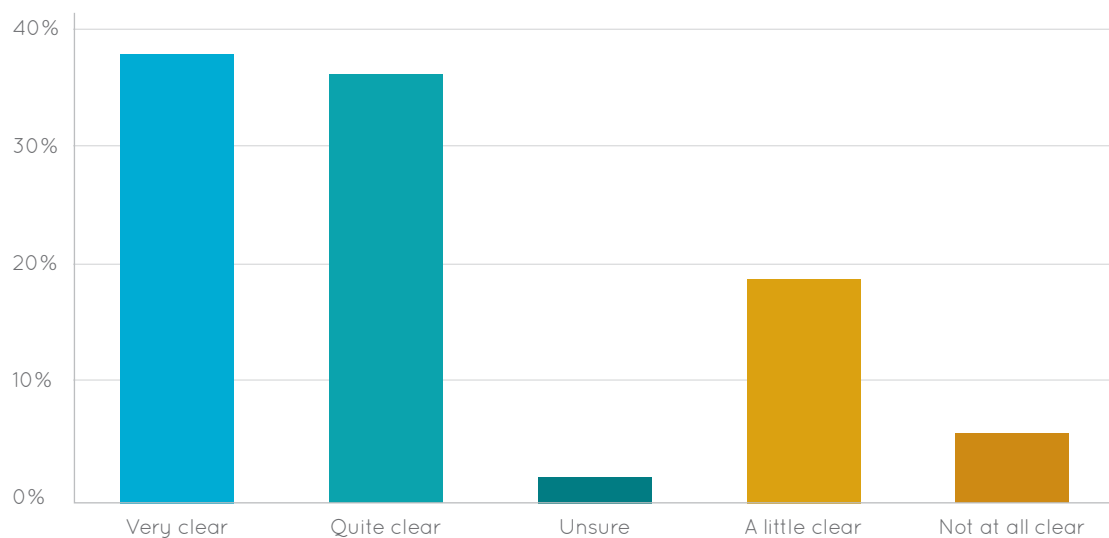
MODERN WAYS OF WORKING



MODERN WAYS OF WORKING

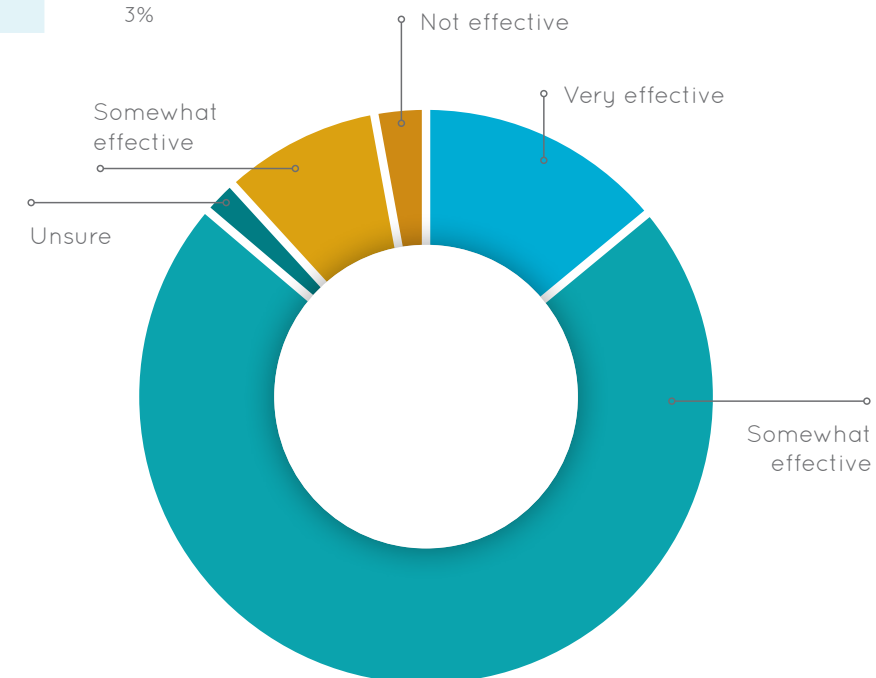
HOW CLEAR IS YOUR ORGANISATIONS' PURPOSE TO YOUR TEAMS?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Very clear	38%
Quite clear	37%
Unsure	2%
A little clear	19%
Not at all clear	4%



HOW EFFECTIVELY DO YOU FEEL YOUR TEAM IS AT GETTING ALIGNMENT ON THEIR PRIORITIES AND GETTING THEM DONE EFFECTIVELY?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Very effective	14%
Somewhat effective	72%
Unsure	2%
Somewhat ineffective	9%
Not effective	3%



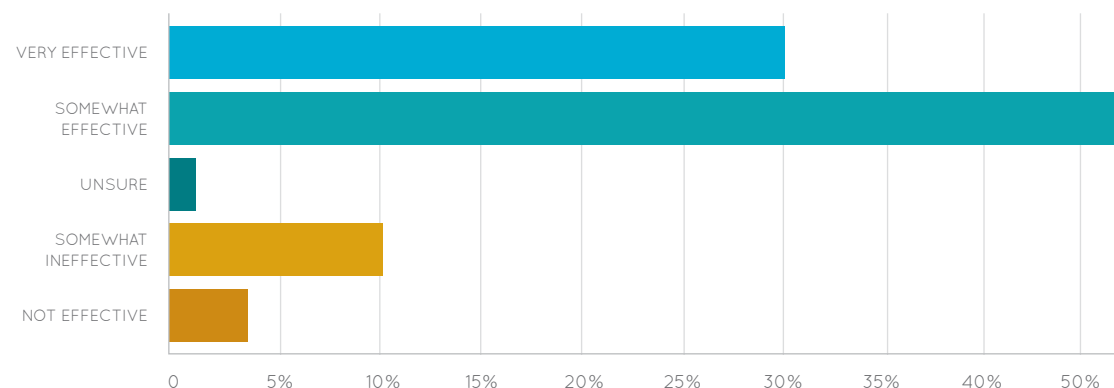
MODERN WAYS OF WORKING



PANDEMIC RESPONSE

HOW EFFECTIVE DO YOU FEEL YOUR TEAMS ARE AT RESPONDING TO CHANGE THAT OCCURS WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Very effective	30%
Somewhat effective	56%
Unsure	1%
Somewhat ineffective	10%
Not effective	3%



Pre-pandemic only 30% of contact centres felt they were “very effective” at responding to change. As our COVID Impact analysis shows though we significantly underestimated our ability as an industry to respond to change.

OVERALL, HOW EFFECTIVELY DO YOU FEEL YOUR CONTACT CENTRE HAS RESPONDED DURING THE PANDEMIC?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Very effective	79%
Somewhat effective	21%

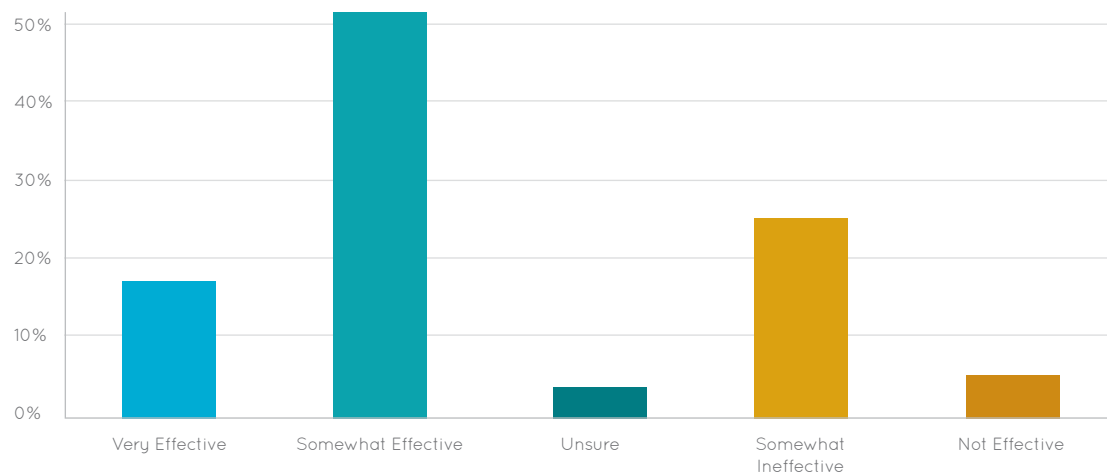


100% of survey respondents feel the pandemic response was at least effective, however 79% of respondents have said their response was very effective.

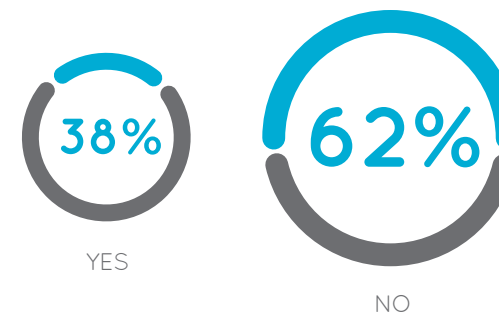
MODERN WAYS OF WORKING

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN YOUR TEAMS AND THE REST OF THE ORGANISATION WHEN IT COMES TO DELIVERING CHANGE SUCCESSFULLY?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Very effective	17%
Somewhat effective	51%
Unsure	3%
Somewhat ineffective	25%
Not effective	4%



ARE YOU SPENDING AS MUCH TIME WORKING 'ON THE BUSINESS' (NEXT 1-3 YEARS STRATEGY) AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO?

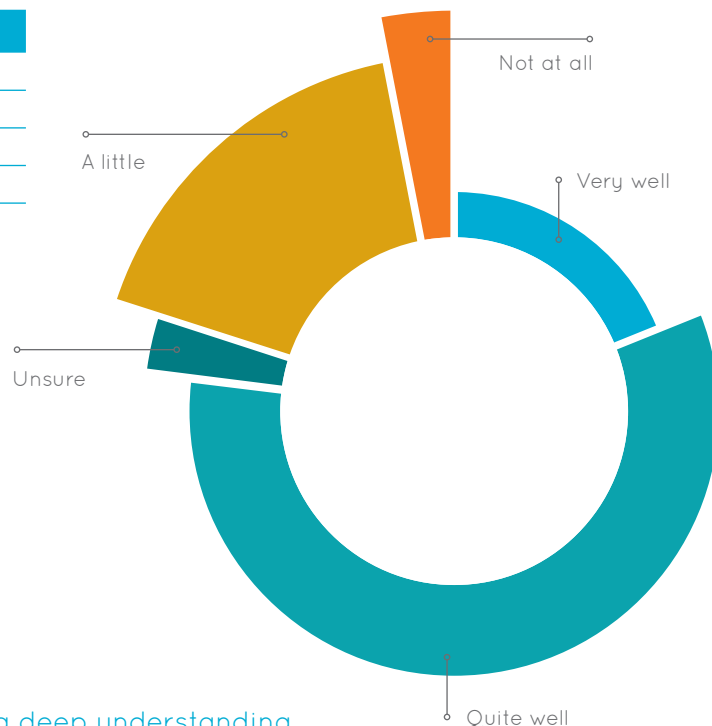


A challenge for all contact centre leaders is being able to find time away from their day-to-day roles to strategise and plan for the future.

MODERN WAYS OF WORKING

HOW WELL DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE SOURCES OF WASTE IN YOUR OPERATION? (E.G. SUB-STANDARD PROCESSES, HAND-OFFS, REWORK, REPEAT CALLS)

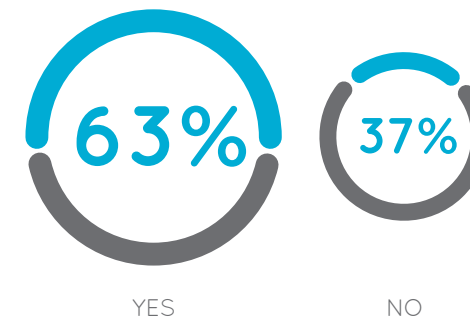
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Very well	19%
Quite well	58%
Unsure	3%
A little	17%
Not at all	3%



When a contact centre has a deep understanding of its sources of waste it allows it to start the process of change and improvement to minimise – or better still, remove – those sources of waste.

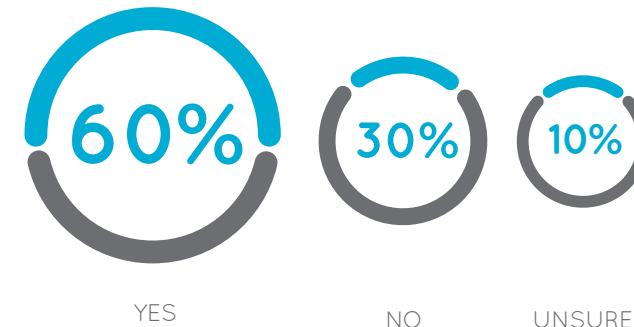
DO YOU HAVE A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT (CI) PROGRAM IN YOUR CONTACT CENTRE?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	63%
No	37%



DO YOU HAVE A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT (CI) PROGRAM IN YOUR BROADER ORGANISATION?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	60%
No	30%
Unsure	10%



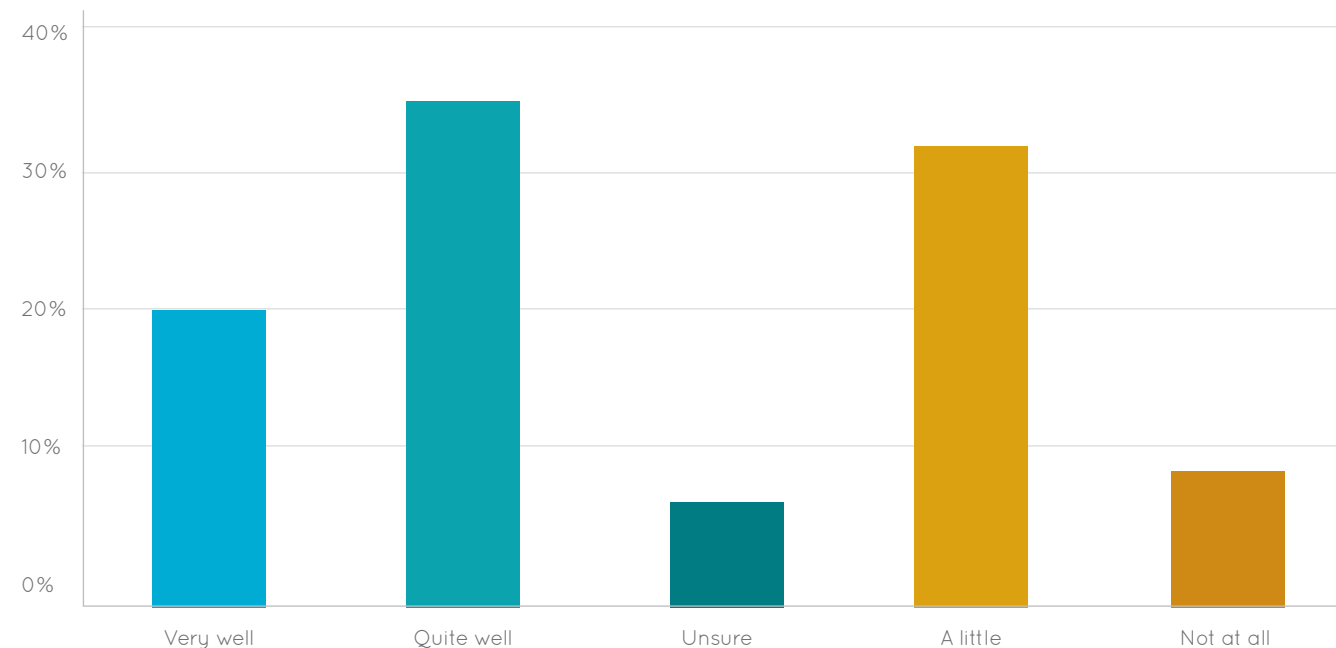
MODERN WAYS OF WORKING

HOW WELL DO YOU FEEL THE VALUE OF YOUR CONTACT CENTRE IS UNDERSTOOD BY THE BROADER ORGANISATION?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Very well	20%
Quite well	34%
Unsure	6%
A little	31%
Not at all	9%



Only 20% of contact centres feel that their value is very well understood by their broader organisation, with 46% of contact centres needing to significantly improve in communicating their value.



MODERN WAYS OF WORKING – SUMMARY



Sean McGinn

Director

The Agile Contact Centre
theagilecontactcentre.com.au



In the modern contact centre the role of Team Leaders is critical, it's the connection between the service delivery where the rubber hits the road and middle and upper management roles that set the vision and bring important context to the daily operation of the contact centre.

Most Team Leaders have been 'on the phones' so they are called on to play a customer service role during demand spikes, in fact one in two TLs is asked to do this and of those that do, they report spending 25% of their day responding to customer enquiries.

This equates to approximately 20 hours a month, and this time is coming from Coaching and Development, with two-thirds of respondents saying they would like to spend more time on this critical activity. A further one-third say they would like to spend more time on Leadership and helping their teams achieve their KPIs.

Most demand spikes can be proactively managed by reducing unnecessary interactions from occurring in the first place, a focus on continuously improving processes and systems in one very effective way of seeing these opportunities and then delivering solutions.

While most contact centres have a continuous improvement program in place, 37% do not and it's not only TL time that is impacted when demand spikes. This report shows that 33% of absenteeism is caused directly by high volumes of work or the more challenging nature of the work associated with these spikes.

One in three leaders categorise this as a 'significant challenge' and the same proportion of them saying they don't have a plan on how to solve it.

Respondents also report that 20% of attrition is attributable to being dissatisfied with the work and one in two leaders grappling with where to start in addressing this issue.

The good news is 75% of contact centres are clear on how their roles align to the organisations purpose, with one in four seeing an opportunity to be better connected.

Aligning the team's priorities presents a huge opportunity for nearly all contact centres, 85% say this is an opportunity for them. Focusing on the right work and having a mechanism to getting it done is the first step.

Nearly all change that happens in an organisation will impact the contact centre in some way, with 70% of leaders say their ability to respond to change could be more effective.

When done poorly it requires intervention and re-work and this distracts leaders from working on the business and building strong collaborative relationships with their peers.

62% of leaders say they don't have enough time to do the strategic work on the future of the contact centre and 82% say collaboration could be better when delivering change.

On the question of how well the organisation understands the value of the contact centre it's clear that the industry has some work to do with almost half of all respondents giving a less than desirable response.

In 2020 the contact centre landscape changed, and it will never be the same again. Previous technology constraints have been overcome and teams now have the capability to work from home, at scale, and collaboration tools like Teams have quickly become the norm.

The value of the contact centre has been brought into sharp focus with many customers in need of support to get them through these tough times leading to high demand.

By far and away the biggest challenge we see is leadership. Leaders need to build connected, engaged and productive teams remotely. Leading with trust and purpose will be the hallmarks of these leaders, empowering the people that do the work to own the work and work relentlessly to remove the barriers that prevent their teams from delivering amazing customer experiences.

MODERN WAYS OF WORKING – SUMMARY



Sean McGinn

Director

The Agile Contact Centre
theagilecontactcentre.com.au



This report recommends these best practice tactics:

LEADING WITH PURPOSE AND TRUST WILL DRIVE PRODUCTIVITY

- Set high standards based on trust, rather than monitoring people with numbers. People will rise to meet these standards because they want to take advantage of the flexibility and control that comes with it.
- Align your teams to your purpose through storytelling. Tell simple stories about how people have delivered great customer experiences and supported each other. This builds important social connections within your team.
- If your team doesn't have a purpose it might be time to get them together to create one. It has been shown to reduce absenteeism, attrition and dramatically improve productivity.

TEAMS THAT RALLY AROUND THE WORK HAVE MORE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE WORK

- Get aligned around the behaviours you expect from one another, team charters are a good way to establish these norms and gives permission for people to call out poor behaviours.
- Connect people to the work they do by visualising key CX metrics and run stand ups so they have an opportunity to get involved in deciding how they run their day. Start small with a daily temperature check to see how the team is feeling and build from there.
- This frees up leaders to be able to work on the strategic priorities of the centre rather than having to direct and organise the work every day.

ELEVATING THE VOICE OF THE CONTACT CENTRE FROM A COST CENTRE TO VALUE CENTRE

- Position your centre as a critical CX player by visualising the waste that your teams see every day.
- Visualise the top customer pain points, quantify the customer impact and then the impact on SLAs and operating costs and you'll have a powerful message to share with the rest of the organisation.
- Removing this waste will create much needed capacity, reducing occupancy, absenteeism and reduces the need for TLs to take calls so they can focus on coaching and developing their teams.
- Educating the right people about the impacts to customers and your teams, puts you in the driving seat to influence the design and delivery of projects and change.

BECOMING AN AGILE CONTACT CENTRE



Anand Rego

Head – Sales
Open Universities Australia
open.edu.au



The transition to becoming a lean and agile contact centre is a fascinating journey. It's one that requires brave leadership, vision and a steadfast commitment to holding true to the course even when experiencing some moments of pain and doubt.

Contact centres are traditionally “anti-agile” environments. Numerous KPIs, individual targets and incentives, old school structures, and processes and procedures that have remain unchanged and unchallenged for years. So applying agile methodology into a contact centre is always going to be challenging – if not for the above reasons than purely for the fact that it requires buy in from all contact centre staff at all levels.

So how does it look two years into a transformation? Significantly different.

“We’ve moved from front line agents having individual targets, to team based targets” says Anand Rego, Head of Sales. Even in 2020, this is still quite radical for a sales based contact centre. “This ties into our whole agile philosophy – and it provides a better outcome for our customers. When you incentivise staff around individual performance, it means their motivation is normally centred around themselves.” Removing the individual targets has allowed the agents to relax more and focus solely on assisting the customer rather than worrying about making a sale.

Teams have moved from focusing on individual call types to “blended” calls. Each team handles new enquiries, inbound and outbound sales, messaging, retention, general enquiries and emails. Who takes what call types on what day is decided by the team itself, normally at a huddle meeting before the shift starts. Individuals can play to their strengths and move between calls. The team has a collective focus on getting the work done, rather than on individual performance.

Continuous change and improvement is core to adopting agile methodology. OUA has fostered a culture where collaboration is key and new ideas aren't just asked for, they are actively sort. Responsibility for outcomes becomes the responsibility of everyone – everything is shared together. This requires a

change too for Team Leaders and Senior Managers who need to allow teams to self-direct as much as possible, and resist stepping in too often. This can be a challenge to unlearn.

Two years into their agile transformation and Rego is more than pleased with their progress. There is a stark difference when listening to Rego speak compared with leaders from other contact centres. The word “transformation” gets thrown around lightly, but at OUA their agile methodology is present in everything they do and every conversation they have now – whether they realise it or not.

So what do the results look like?

- An increase in new student enrolments (sales) in every quarter between June 2017 and June 2020 (at time of writing).
- Significant decrease in staff turnover.
- Significant increase in staff engagement scores. A notable improvement is that contact centre engagement is now similar and in some elements higher than the average for all OUA staff. This used to be significantly lower 3-5 years ago.

“I'm so glad to be in the position we are in now, says Rego. At first it wasn't easy, and there have been many challenges but the change has been the best thing we've ever done for our staff, our centre, and importantly our customers.”

MENTAL HEALTH

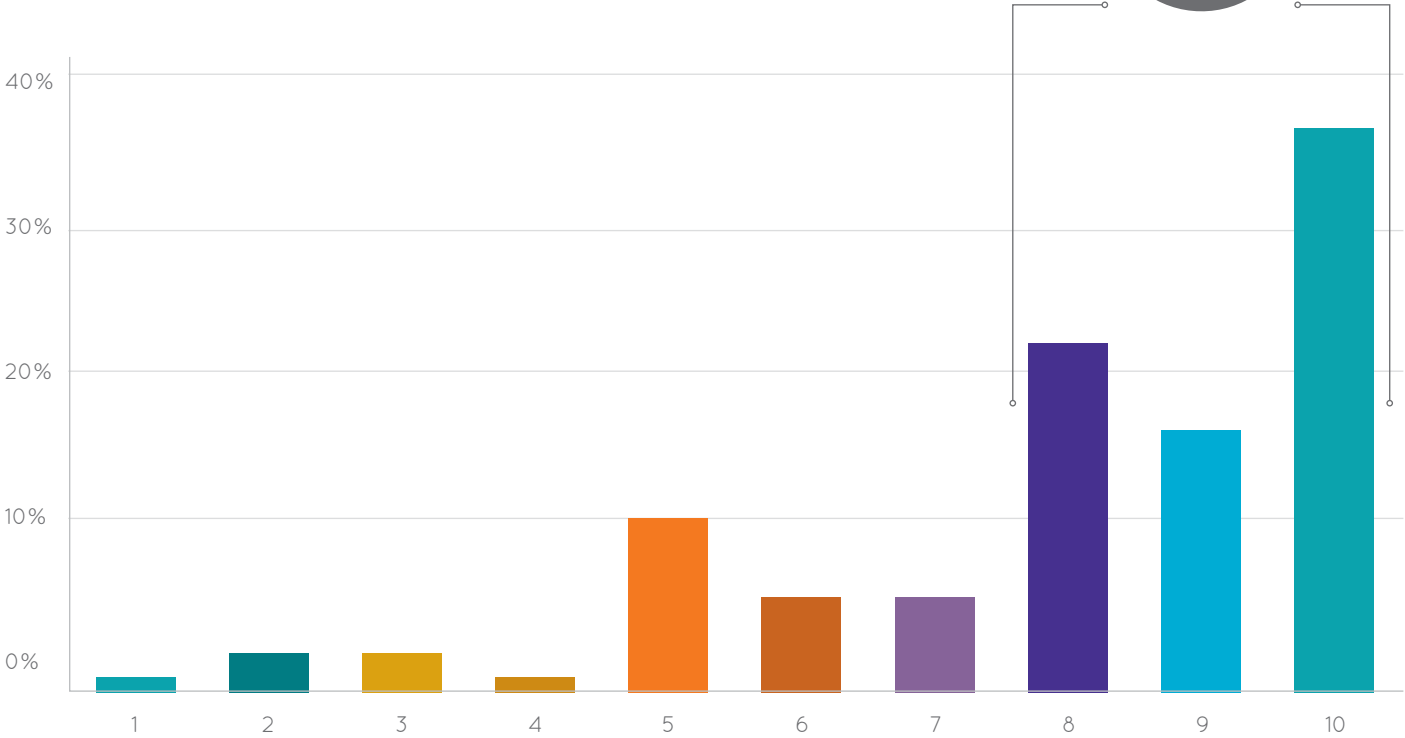


MENTAL HEALTH

HOW IMPORTANT DOES YOUR ORGANISATION BELIEVE IT IS TO HAVE
A MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKFORCE?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1%	2%	2%	1%	10%	5%	5%	21%	16%	37%

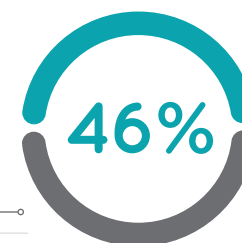
OVER 74% of contact centre leaders
rated mental health with an 8 or higher



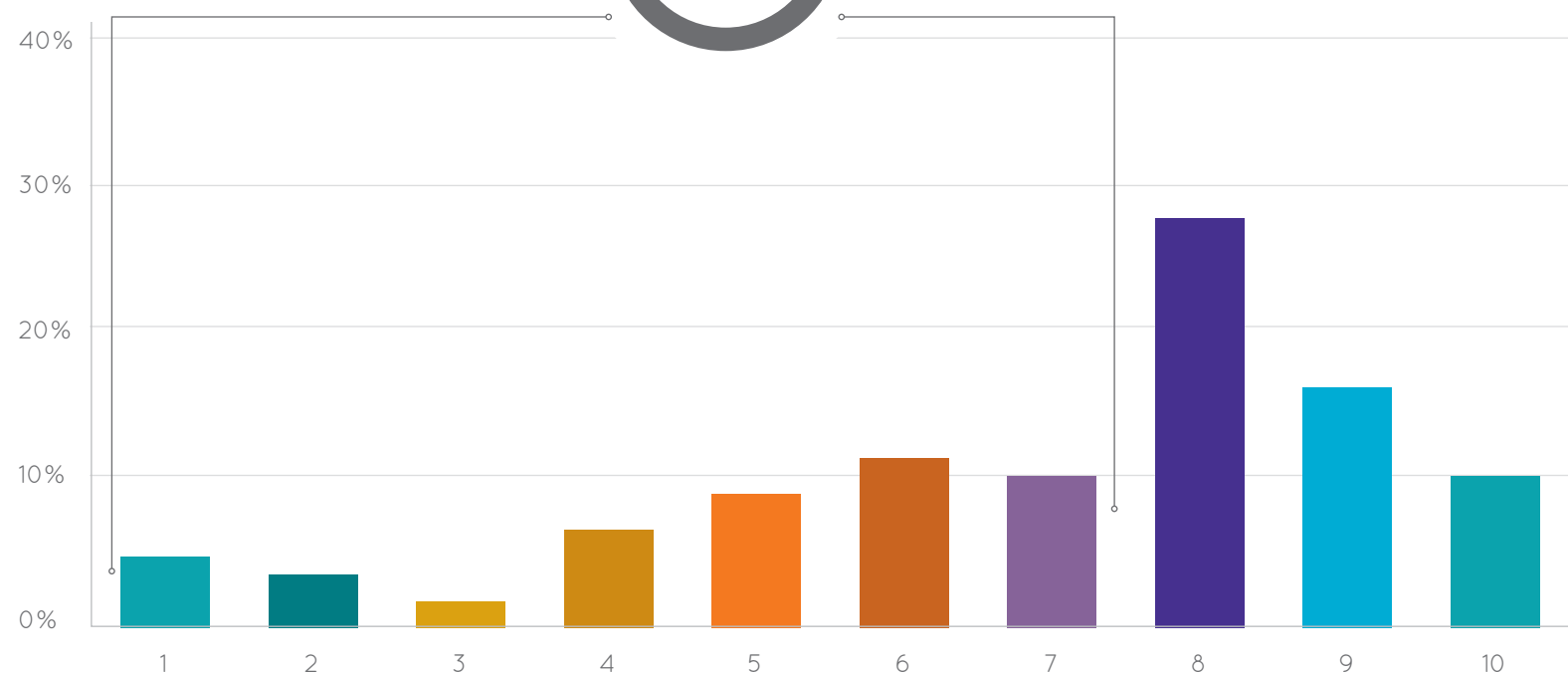
MENTAL HEALTH

HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU IN YOUR ORGANISATIONS' CURRENT CAPABILITY TO ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS IN THE WORKPLACE?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4%	3%	2%	7%	9%	11%	10%	28%	16%	10%



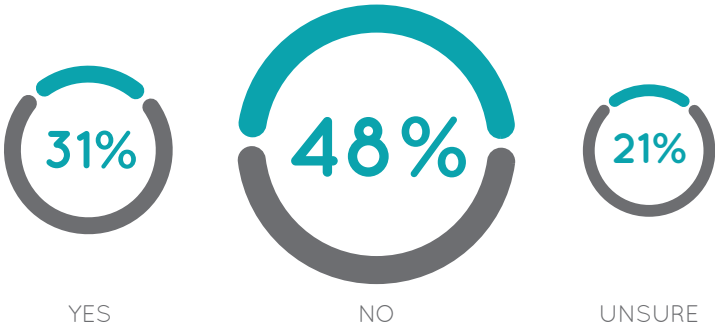
AROUND 46% of respondents indicated they are not completely confident in their organisations' ability to address mental health concerns in the workplace



MENTAL HEALTH

DO YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC BUDGET TO ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUR WORKFORCE?

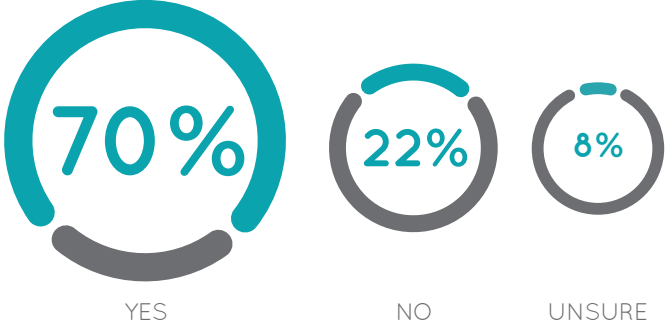
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	31%
No	48%
Unsure	21%



Only 31% of contact centres were aware that they have a specific budget to address mental health in their workforce. We expect this number to increase significantly in the coming years.

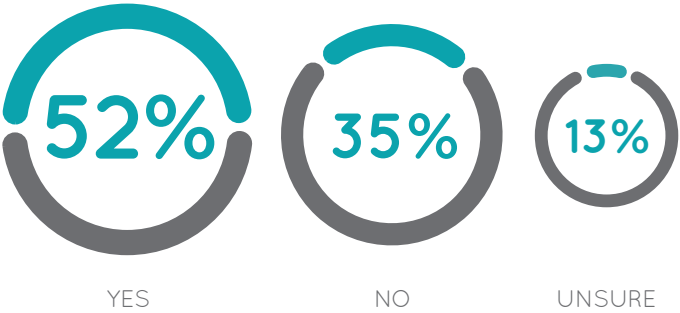
DO YOU HAVE PROGRAMS AND/OR STRATEGIES IN PLACE TO DEVELOP THE CONFIDENCE AND CAPABILITY OF LEADERS, TO ASSIST IN CREATING A THRIVING WORKPLACE?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	70%
No	22%
Unsure	8%



DO YOU MANAGE & DESIGN WORK (TASKS, RESPONSIBILITIES, PROCESSES ETC) TO ENHANCE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY OF EMPLOYEES?

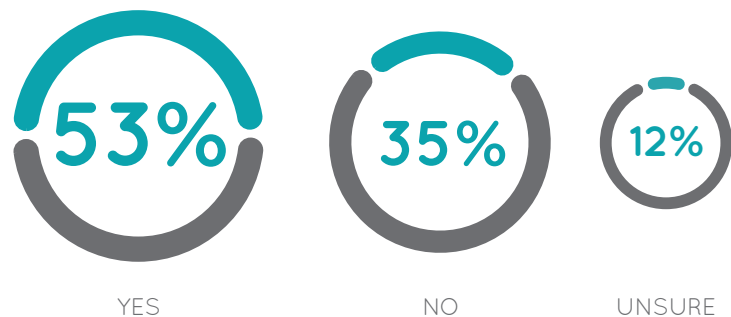
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	52%
No	35%
Unsure	13%



MENTAL HEALTH

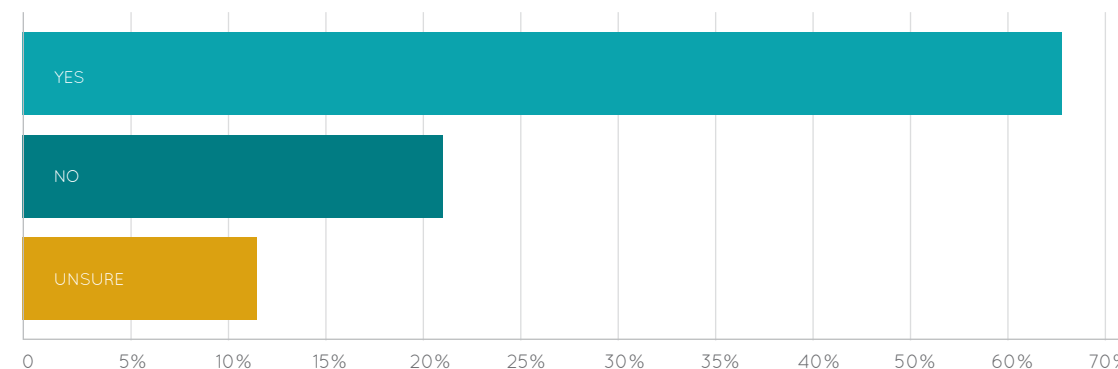
DO YOU HAVE RELEVANT & TARGETED SUPPORT MECHANISMS IN PLACE TO ENHANCE PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE OF EMPLOYEES?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	53%
No	35%
Unsure	12%



DO YOU PROMOTE & FACILITATE THE EARLY IDENTIFICATION, MANAGEMENT & RESOLUTION OF KNOWN PSYCHOLOGICAL RISK FACTORS & ENCOURAGE HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR?

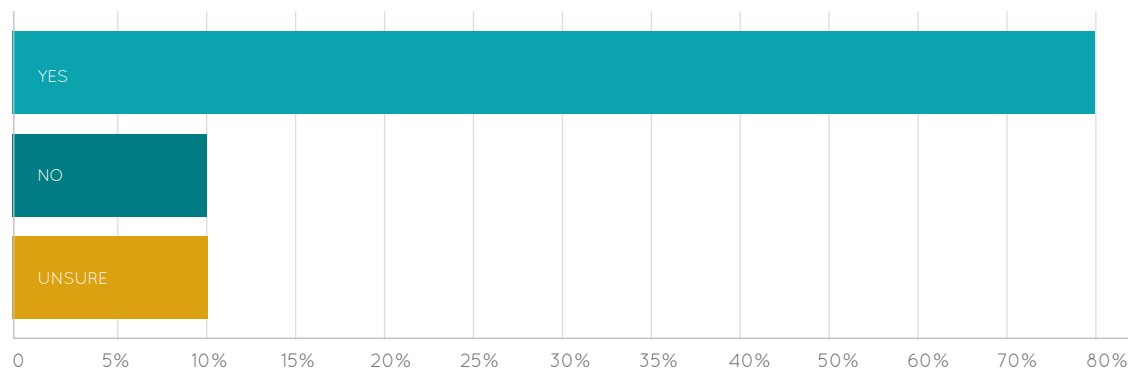
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	67%
No	21%
Unsure	12%



MENTAL HEALTH

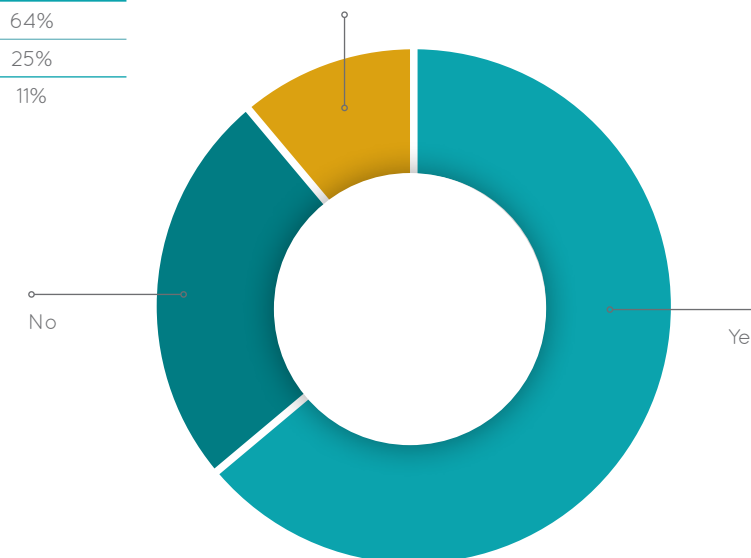
DO YOU HAVE SUPPORTS IN PLACE TO ENGAGE AT THE ONSET OF PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH CONCERNS, SUCH AS DEPRESSION, ANXIETY OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	80%
No	10%
Unsure	10%



DO YOU PRO-ACTIVELY INCREASE AWARENESS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE POSITIVE COPING, WITH THE AIM OF REDUCING STIGMA AND PROMOTING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH PRACTICES?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	64%
No	25%
Unsure	11%



MENTAL HEALTH

DO YOU HAVE STAFF THAT HAVE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	54%
No	34%
Unsure	12%



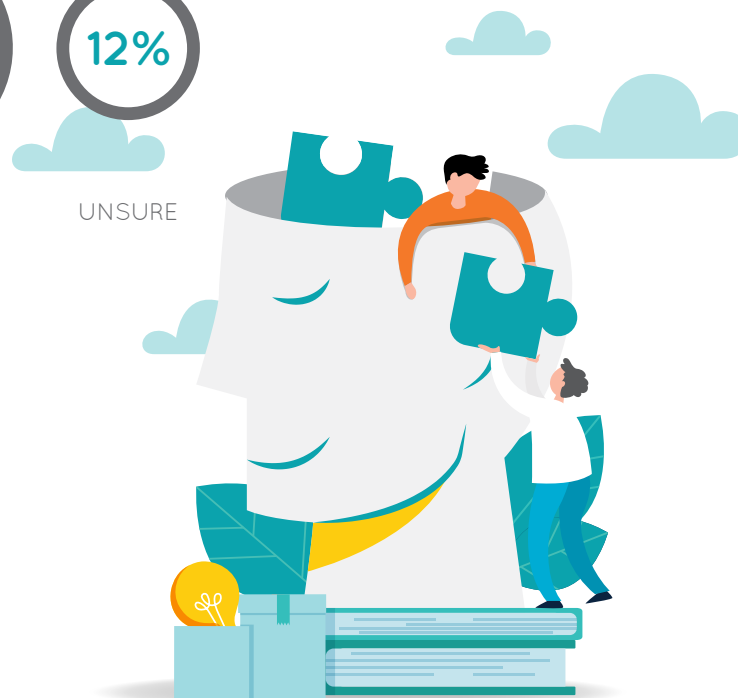
YES



NO

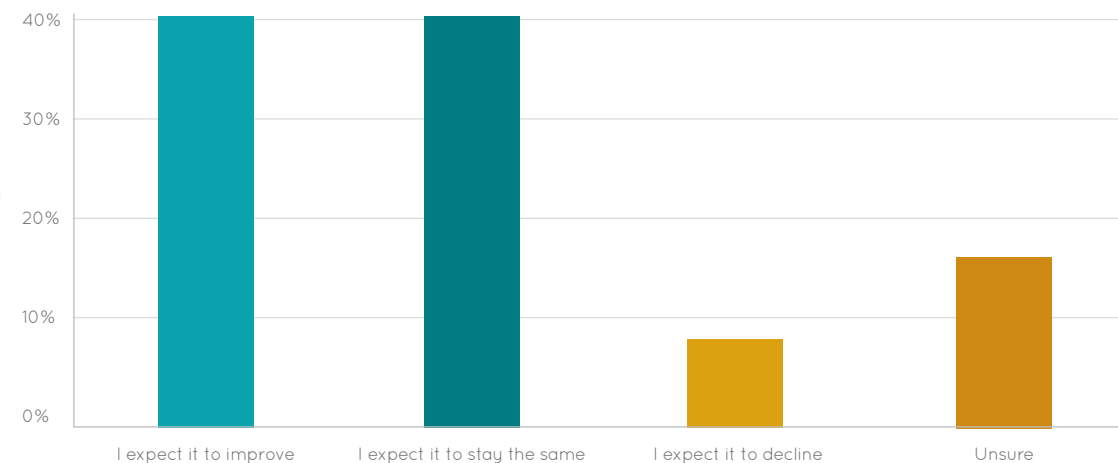


UNSURE



HOW DO YOU EXPECT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUR CONTACT CENTRE TO CHANGE IN 2020?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
I expect it to improve	41%
I expect it to stay the same	41%
I expect it to decline	6%
Unsure	12%



The responses to this question were collected pre-pandemic. At that stage there was a healthy level of optimism that mental health within contact centres was unlikely to decline, with many contact centres believing it would improve over the coming year.

MENTAL HEALTH



PANDEMIC RESPONSE

HAS YOUR CONTACT CENTRE PROVIDED EXTRA MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES/ASSISTANCE TO STAFF DURING THE PANDEMIC?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	79%
No	21%



YES



NO



MENTAL HEALTH – SUMMARY



Tom Ruijs

AP Psychology and
Consulting Services

psychology-consulting.com



As we navigate through a challenging and uncertain period, emerging data on the mental health of our workforce is now empowering organisations to apply interventions and controls that can support the psychological safety of their employees.

Pre-COVID data from the 'State of Workplace Mental Health in Australia' highlighted 90% of Australian employees believe mentally healthy workplaces are important but that only 50% of Australians believe their workplace is mentally healthy. With \$12.8 billion each year being the estimated cost of poor mental health for Australian workplaces (Mental Health Australia, KPMG 2018), we know there is an equally strong business case supporting the beliefs held by 90% of our employees.

It is therefore encouraging to see the results from the SMAART 2020 Best Practice Report show that almost 75% of respondents answered the question 'How important does your organisation believe it is to have a mentally healthy workforce?' with an 8 or higher (on a 10 point scale with 10 being extremely important). However, at the same time almost 50% of those same respondents also indicate they were not completely confident in their organisations' ability to address mental health concerns in the workplace. In addition, only 30% of respondents indicated they have a specific budget available to address mental health in the workplace.

The results suggest that across the contact centre industry there is strong awareness regarding the importance of creating mentally healthy workplaces. However, in line with only 50% of Australians believing their workplace is mentally healthy, they also suggest there is still work to be done for many employers when it comes to bridging the gap between the current state and the required state of organisational capability to create mentally healthy workplaces.

Whilst it is hard to predict the exact ramifications of the pandemic for our employees, there is broad community and business acceptance of its impact on mental health. Research from the Black Dog Institute shows that 30% of the community experienced high levels of worry and anxiety during similar pandemics. Addressing the state of mental health more broadly, our baseline

ABS data highlights 1 in 5 Australians experience a mental health condition each year, which is likely to increase across Australia as we navigate through the pandemic.

As Contact Centres navigate through the current pandemic there will be foreseen and unforeseen challenges and opportunities for workplaces with regards to the mental health of their employees. The survey results in this report suggest that the Contact Centre Industry are in a good position to leverage the inevitable changes to how we all work and live as the catalyst to drive the transition from great awareness to innovative and strategic action as part of a systemic approach towards creating mentally healthy workplaces. A good starting point for any organisation is to assess the levels of psychological risk in their workplace against the five workplace psychological risk factors which look at the interplay between Individual Circumstances, Home and Work Conflict, Team/Group Dynamics, Job Design Factors and Organisational Systems.

AP Psychology and Consulting Services is proud to have worked closely with contact centres and will continue to support the industry in the future.

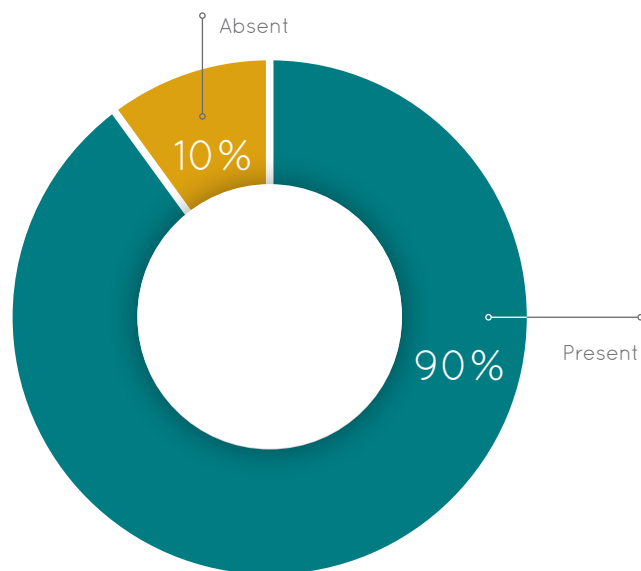
"The results suggest that across the contact centre industry there is strong awareness regarding the importance of creating mentally healthy workplaces. However, in line with only 50% of Australians believing their workplace is mentally healthy, they also suggest there is still work left to do for many employers when it comes to bridging the gap between the current state and the required state of organisational capability required to create mentally healthy workplaces."

ABSENTEEISM & ATTRITION



ABSENTEEISM & ATTRITION

WHAT IS YOUR AVERAGE AGENT ABSENTEEISM OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS?

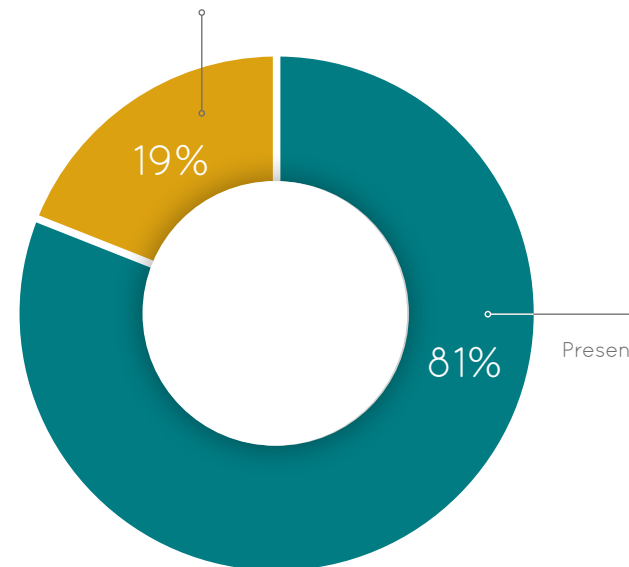


10% is the average agent absenteeism across the industry.



21% of contact centres are really struggling with average absenteeism at 15% or above, however 28% of contact centres have “best practice” absenteeism of 6% or less.

DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS, HOW HIGH DID AGENT ABSENTEEISM REACH AT ITS WORST?

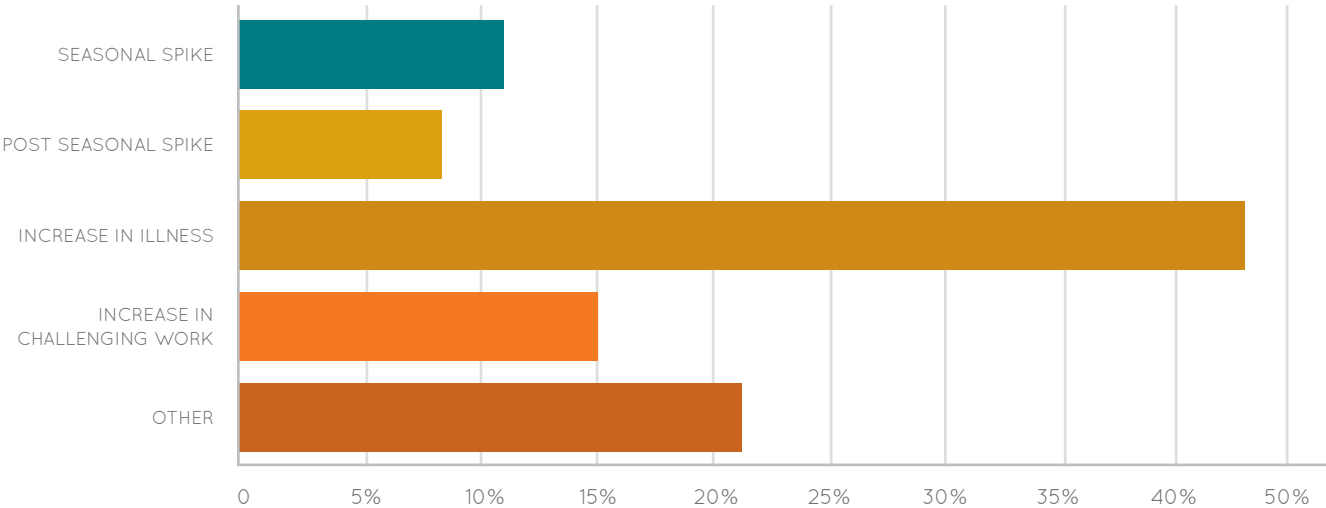


At periods of peak absenteeism, 1 in 5 agents are absent, however 20% of contact centres experience absenteeism of 30% or more at some stage during the year.

ABSENTEEISM & ATTRITION

WHAT LED TO THAT PARTICULAR SPIKE IN ABSENTEEISM?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
A seasonal spike in work	11%
Post a seasonal spike in work	7%
Increase in illness due to winter etc	46%
An increase in the challenge of the work	15%
Other	21%



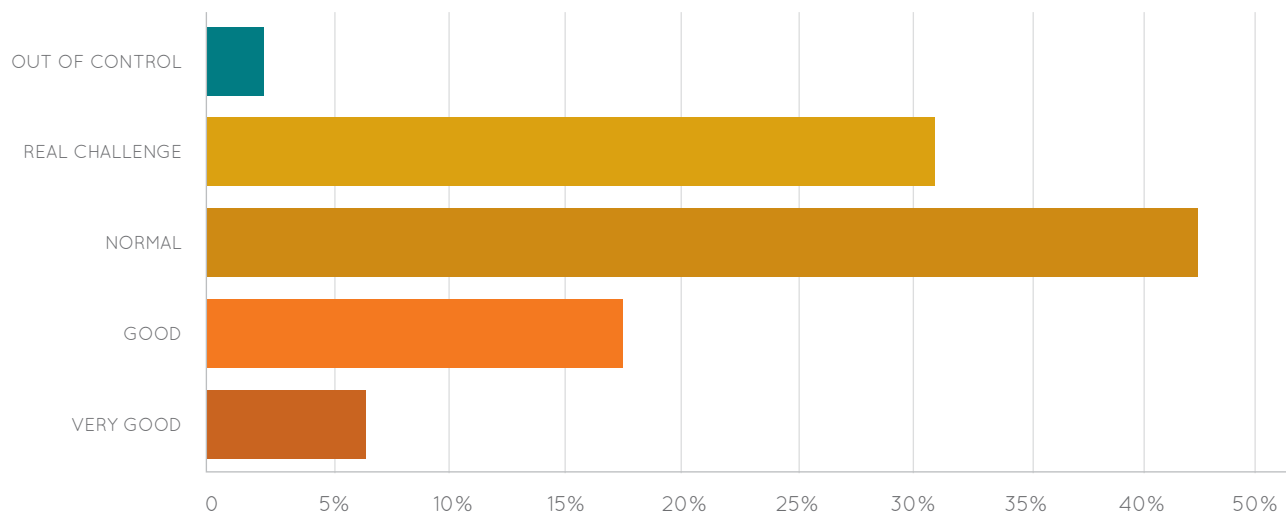
An increase in absenteeism due to an illness associated with winter accounts for nearly half of all peak periods of absenteeism.

It is with some interest therefore that during the pandemic 76% of contact centres reported that their absenteeism levels have been lower than normal (Click on the Pandemic Response icon below to jump to page 46 for results)

ABSENTEEISM & ATTRITION

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR OVERALL LEVEL OF ABSENTEEISM?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
It is out of control and we really don't know how to reel it in	2%
It's a real challenge that we are struggling with	31%
It's about normal	44%
We feel our level of absenteeism is good	17%
We feel it is very good	6%



1/3

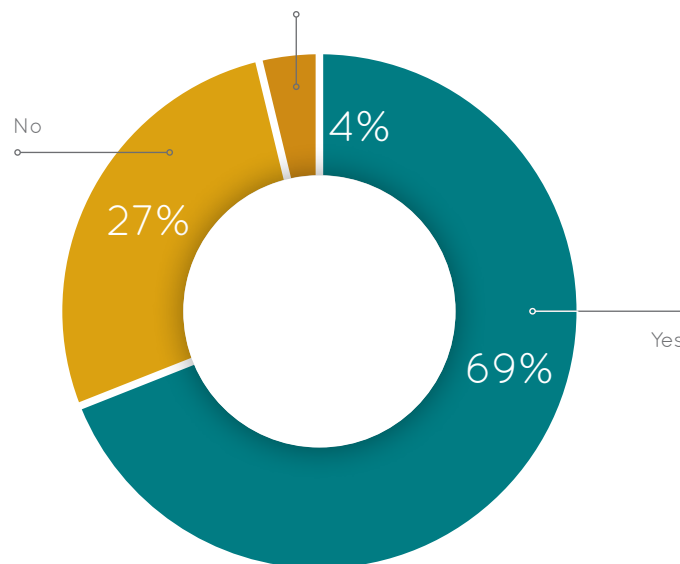
1 in 3 contact centres are really struggling with their overall level of absenteeism, with many of them admitting that they currently don't have a plan in place to reduce it.



ABSENTEEISM & ATTRITION

DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE A PLAN IN PLACE TO REDUCE ABSENTEEISM?

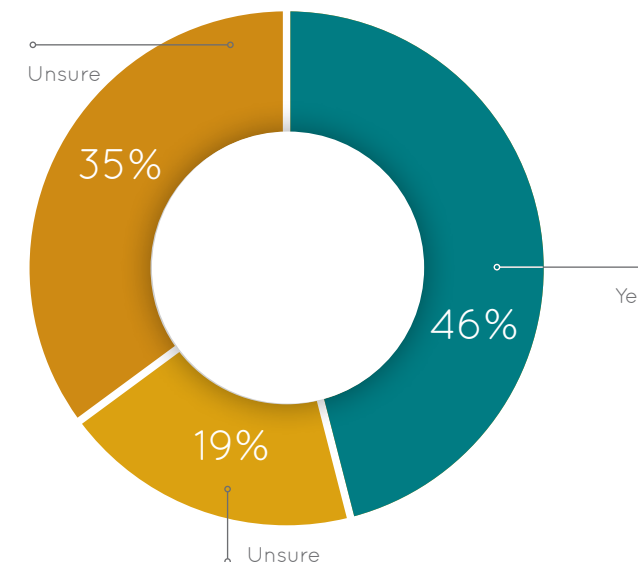
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	69%
No	27%
Unsure	4%



While putting a plan in place is in itself no guarantee, the responses to this survey indicate the outcome is more often than not a positive one.

HAS YOUR ABSENTEE PLAN BEEN EFFECTIVE?

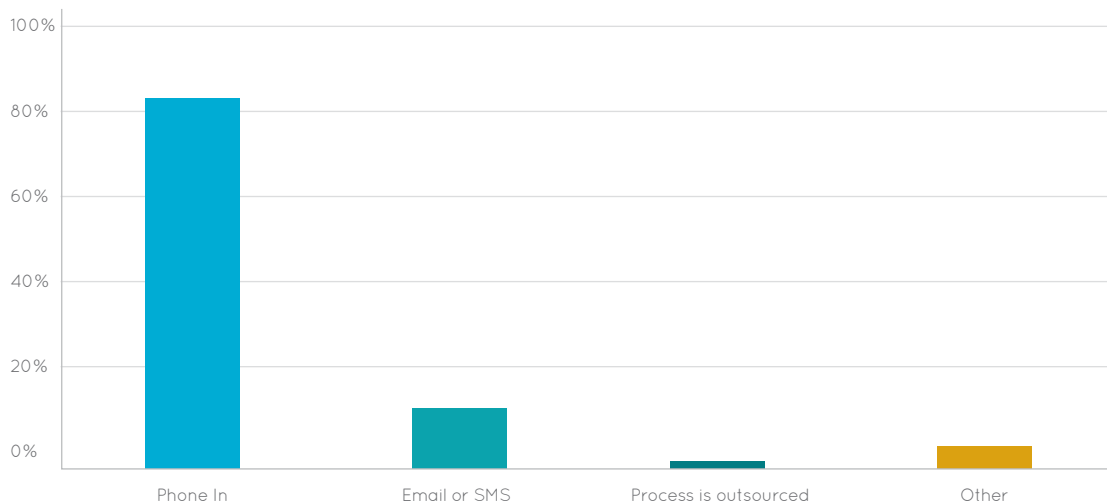
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes	46%
No	19%
Unsure	35%



ABSENTEEISM & ATTRITION

WHAT IS THE CURRENT PROCESS FOR TAKING A SICK DAY?

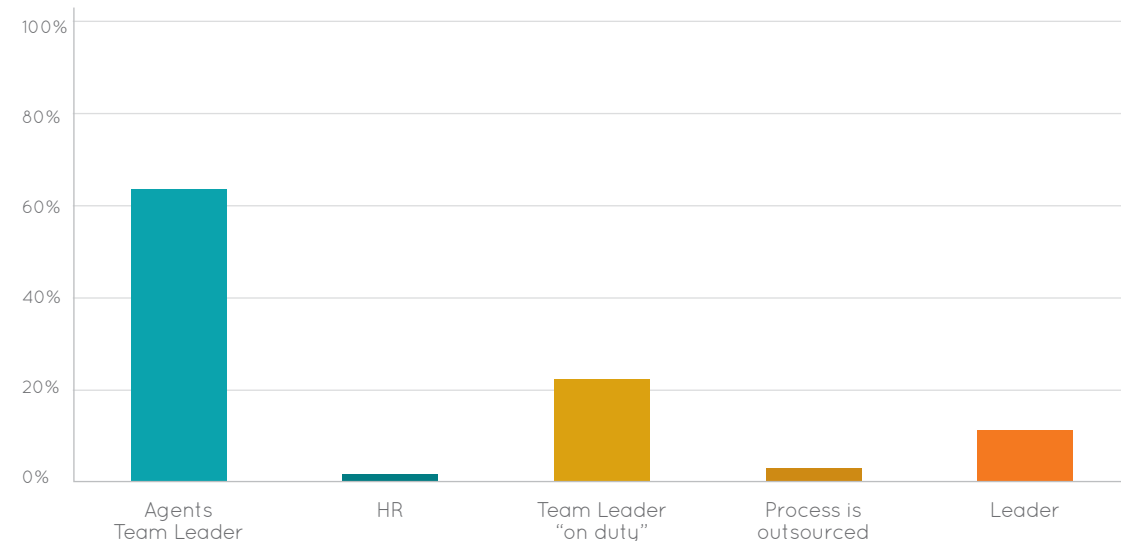
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Agent must phone in	82%
Agent is allowed to email or SMS	13%
Process is outsourced	2%
Other	3%



Team Leaders often identify having to deal with sick agents as one of the worst parts of their jobs. Relieving Team Leaders of this duty at the start of their shift can leave them in a better frame of mind.

WHO IS THE FIRST POINT OF CONTACT FOR TAKING A SICK DAY?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Agents Team Leader	63%
HR	0%
Team Leader "on duty"	23%
Process is outsourced	2%
Other leader	12%



ABSENTEEISM & ATTRITION

WHEN AN AGENT LEAVES YOUR CONTACT CENTRE, WHERE DO THEY GO?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
% Move internally (to another department)	44%
% Move externally (leave the organisation)	56%



INTERNALLY

EXTERNALLY

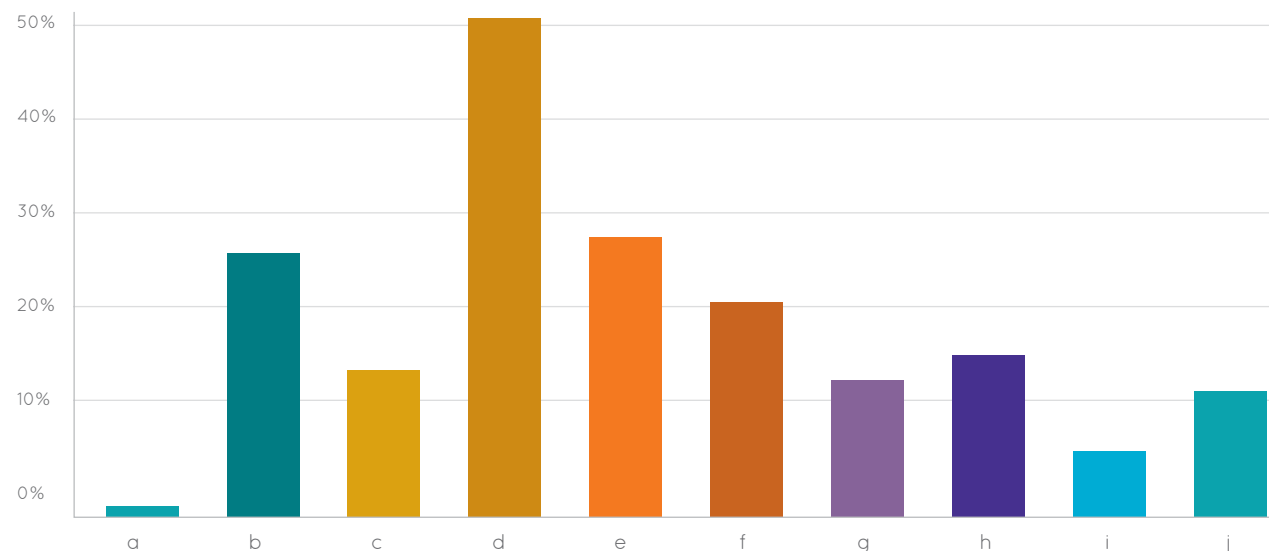


On average a contact centre will lose around 45% of its staff annually. However just under half of those that leave the contact centre move to another position within the organisation.

WHAT ARE THE TWO MOST COMMON REASONS FOR AGENTS LEAVING?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Their relationship with their Team Leader	a 2%
Financial reasons	b 27%
Only a short term position	c 13%
Career reasons	d 52%
Personal reasons	e 29%

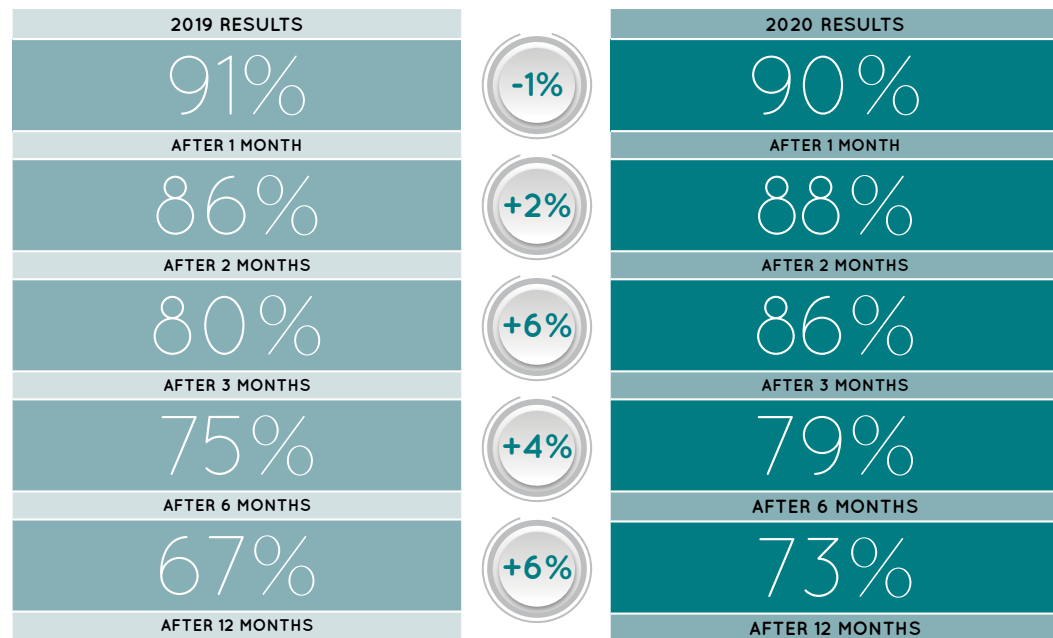
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Dissatisfaction with the work	f 21%
Cultural mismatch	g 12%
Not aligned with organisational purpose	h 13%
Too hard to tell	i 5%
Other	j 11%



Career reasons (progression) continues to be the main reason contact centres feel agents leave. This is also backed up by SMAART Recruitment's view, as is dissatisfaction with the work. Somewhat under reported here though is that an agents relationship with their Team Leader is often mentioned at interview as a reason for leaving.

ABSENTEEISM & ATTRITION

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF NEW FRONT LINE AGENTS WERE STILL EMPLOYED AFTER:



There has been a slight but steady increase year on year in the retention of frontline agents at the 3, 6 and 12 month mark, resulting in an average retention of 73% of agents at the 12 month mark. This may come as a surprise to many. While an increase of 6% may not necessarily seem significant, particularly for large contact centres, this results in significantly less costs in recruitment, onboarding and training and means that the average agent is more experienced.

BEST PRACTICE

2019 RESULTS	2020 RESULTS	2019 RESULTS	2020 RESULTS	2019 RESULTS	2020 RESULTS
AFTER 1 MONTH		AFTER 3 MONTHS		AFTER 6 MONTHS	
38%	53%	23%	36%	16%	23%
OF CONTACT CENTRES HAVE 100% RETENTION					

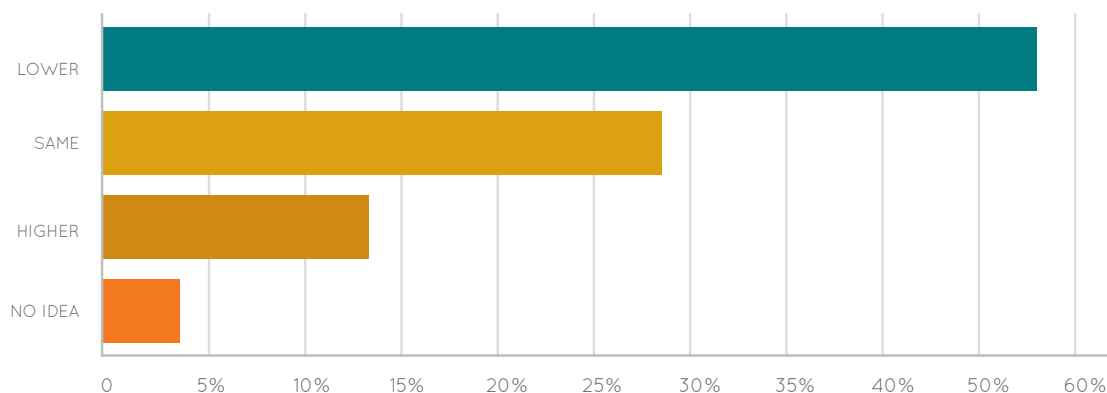


Significant increases across the board in contact centres reaching “best practice” levels for the retention of new agents, with almost a 50% increase in the number of contact centres retaining 100% of their new agents through to the 3 month and 6 month mark.

ABSENTEEISM & ATTRITION

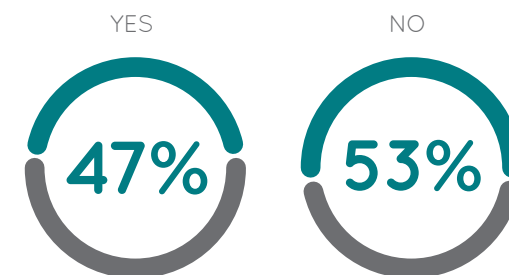
WHAT IS YOUR PERCEPTION OF YOUR ATTRITION COMPARED WITH OTHER CONTACT CENTRES?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
It's lower (our attrition is better than the average)	56%
It's about the same	27%
It's higher (our attrition is worse than the average)	13%
I have no idea	4%



More than half of contact centres think their level of attrition is better than average, with only a handful (13%) believing their attrition is worse than average. With contact centre absenteeism being far worse than other industries, it's important contact centres aren't complacent and say "there's nothing we can do about it" as there are many contact centres exhibiting best practice in this area.

DO YOU HAVE A PLAN IN PLACE AT THE MOMENT TO REDUCE ATTRITION?



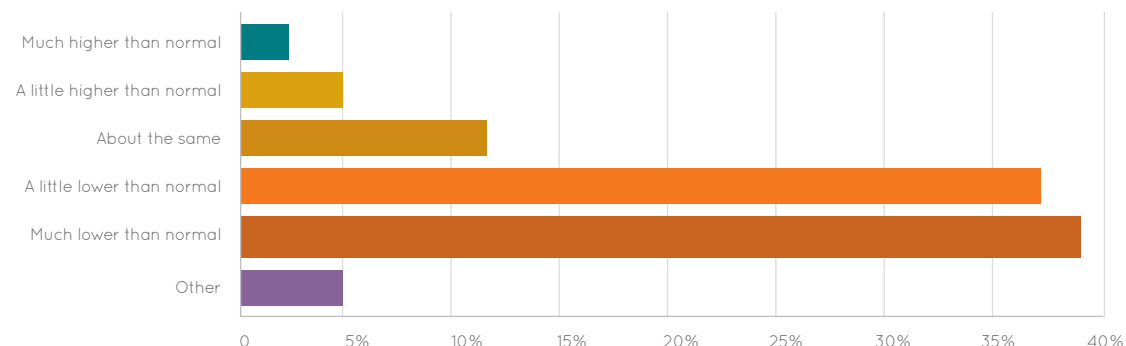
ABSENTEEISM & ATTRITION



PANDEMIC RESPONSE

DURING THE PANDEMIC, HAS ABSENTEEISM BEEN?

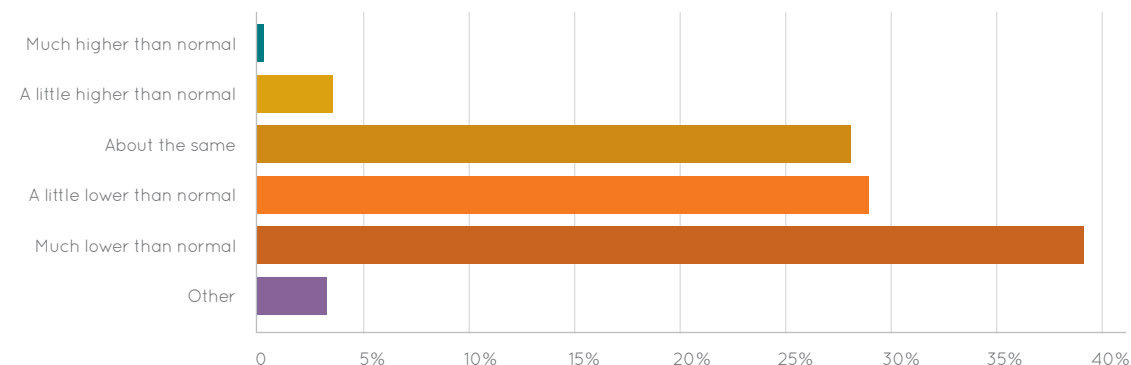
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Much higher than normal	2%
A little higher than normal	5%
About the same	12%
A little lower than normal	37%
Much lower than normal	39%
Other	5%



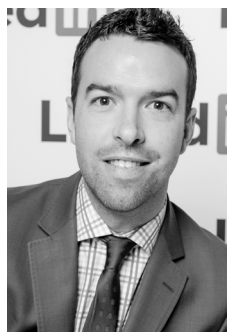
Several contact centres noted that while absenteeism has been lower than normal, it has started to increase in the recent months. This may be the natural seasonal (winter) cycle or it may be to do with the cycle of the pandemic and how people have adjusted.

DO YOU HAVE A PLAN IN PLACE AT THE MOMENT TO REDUCE ATTRITION?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Much higher than normal	0%
A little higher than normal	3%
About the same	27%
A little lower than normal	28%
Much lower than normal	39%
Other	3%



ABSENTEEISM & ATTRITION – SUMMARY



James Witcombe

Director
SMAART Recruitment
james@smaart.com.au

Absenteeism and attrition. Two words that can have a dramatic impact on the successful operation of a contact centre, and ones that can be elusive to get a handle on. Wise contact centres have learnt from experience over time that achieving “good absenteeism” and “low attrition” is not a destination – it’s a journey. Many contact centres that do well in either area have seen all that good work come undone in a matter of weeks and then take many months to improve again.

The industry average for absenteeism of 10% will sound about right to some, terrible to others and a pipedream to a few. As an industry we are getting better with understanding the causes of “spikes” in absenteeism with seasonal health spikes being somewhat unavoidable. However an industry average of around 19% absenteeism during these spikes is still much higher than it should be, causing many flow-on problems. One in three contact centres admit that absenteeism levels are a real challenge for them.

The pandemic has seen a dramatic decrease in absenteeism and it has caused many people to ask, is the decrease in absenteeism because agents are worried about keeping their jobs, or is it because they are now working from home? Are agents less likely to “take a sickie” because they can work from the comfort of their own home on that particular day? (And is this a good or bad thing?) As this report shows, working from home will permanently increase as a result of the pandemic, so it will be fascinating to see how this impacts absenteeism over the next 12-18 months.

This report shows a small but pleasing decline in staff attrition pre-pandemic across the industry. During the pandemic attrition has further and more significantly declined, and this is likely due to the same reasons that absenteeism has dropped off. However the industry needs to be prepared that attrition may spike for a period of time post-pandemic. Employment is more highly valued at present, however we expect that when some economic stability does return there will be a backlog of agents who have been planning on resigning for some time.



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



ANZ CASE STUDY



Tanya Eglinton

Head of Every Day Banking
ANZ Contact Centre



TRANSFORMING CONTACT CENTRE CULTURE

In early 2020, ANZ won “Best Contact Centre Culture” at the Customer Contact. We caught up with Tanya Eglinton, Head of Every Day Banking ANZ Contact Centre to ask her about why ANZ were given this great award.

TANYA, WHERE DID THIS AWARD WINNING JOURNEY START?

I joined ANZ just over 18 months ago. At the time the contact centre was a siloed work environment. After reading through some survey results of staff we felt there was an opportunity for us to really improve. It was really clear that we were not connecting as a business at all layers and we felt we needed to connect the business closer to the front line.

WHAT DID YOU DO TO GET STARTED?

It sounds boring but we formed a committee. We called for peer nominations across the business. We wanted a diverse mix that was reflective of the organisation. We empowered the group and the Pride Of Place idea was formed.

WHY WAS IT CALLED “PRIDE OF PLACE”?

In many ways the title is reflective of what we were lacking and what we wanted our workplace to be like. The physical building itself was tired, outdated. It hadn't been touched up in a long time. Nobody seemed to care... we had no “pride of place”. That's how many felt about our environment. Some of the small early changes were choosing new cleaners and empowering the staff to take back ownership of their work place.

AS THE “HEAD OF” TANYA, WHAT ROLE DID YOU PLAY?

I didn't want this to be lead by me, I wasn't the chair. It was an open environment that was diverse and genuine. I knew that the buy in for other staff would be the most powerful force.

So the Pride of Place Charter was created, it came to life and from there it took off. We asked our colleagues “What is pride of place?” We wanted to know what it meant to them.

We had a week of launch events and a “working bee” to clean up the centre. It was a real visual statement that we wanted to make a difference. Actions speak louder than words! This wasn't just a one off token gesture – we wanted to show everyone that we were really going on a journey. A massive whiteboard was set up for the frontline team to share their ideas.

As momentum grew we started to implement and introduce the suggestions from the staff. We had a Career Expo, a Zoo day, built a sanctuary room. We fought for budget and got a massage chair. By now it wasn't just the start of an idea, it was happening and the staff could see it.

It wasn't all just about events and excitement though. We created communication at a layer that had never been given a voice before. Our centre has taken on a life of change and it's been noticeable to many areas of the business.

HOW DO YOU PROTECT THE CULTURE AND MAKE SURE YOU DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF THE PURPOSE AMONGST ALL THE CHANGE?

It begins with role clarity. We created a charter that said how we would and wouldn't do things. So we have agreed on how we would conduct ourselves.

WHAT HAVE THE MAIN TANGIBLE RESULTS BEEN?

There's no doubt there has been a significant increase in people engagement as well as a huge drop in absenteeism.

ANZ CASE STUDY



Tanya Eglinton

Head of Every Day Banking
ANZ Contact Centre



IN SHORT, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CULTURE IN YOUR CONTACT CENTRE?

There's a connection. A sense of family.



WHAT IMPACT HAS COVID HAD ON THE CULTURE, AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING DIFFERENTLY NOW?

Well we can't have pilates classes anymore! We have tried it virtually though but it didn't work that well. It's a bit of experimentation still. The whole organisation did a retrospective exercise on what we have done differently and what we should keep. This has broken down some of the barriers to change.

The next phase we will need to be creative. It's been adhoc so far because we were all thrown in it and had to react. Routine is really important. Coaching, huddles. We have a planned routine for 80% of time at the moment and it is working well.

IF A CONTACT CENTRE IS WANTING TO IMPROVE THEIR CULTURE, WHERE WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THAT THEY START?

Ask your people! That is what we did.

"I joined ANZ just over 18 months ago. At the time the contact centre was a siloed work environment. After reading through some survey results of staff we felt there was an opportunity for us to really improve."

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

WHAT WAS YOUR LATEST EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SCORE (OUT OF 100%)?

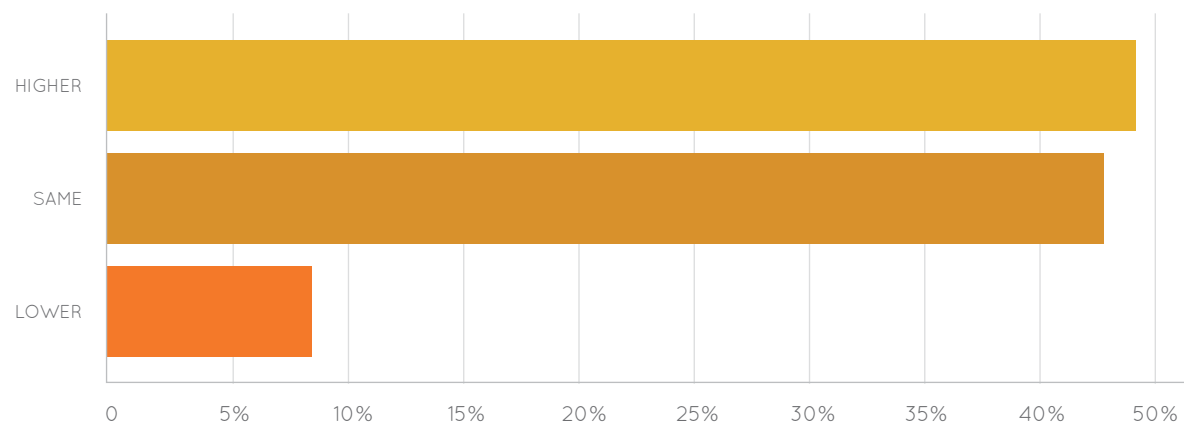


HOW DOES YOUR LATEST SCORE COMPARE TO THE PREVIOUS SCORE?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
It's higher (our employee satisfaction is improving)	48%
It's about the same	45%
It's lower (our employee satisfaction is worsening)	7%



Only 7% of respondents recorded a decrease in their employee engagement score with 48% saying their employee engagement has improved.



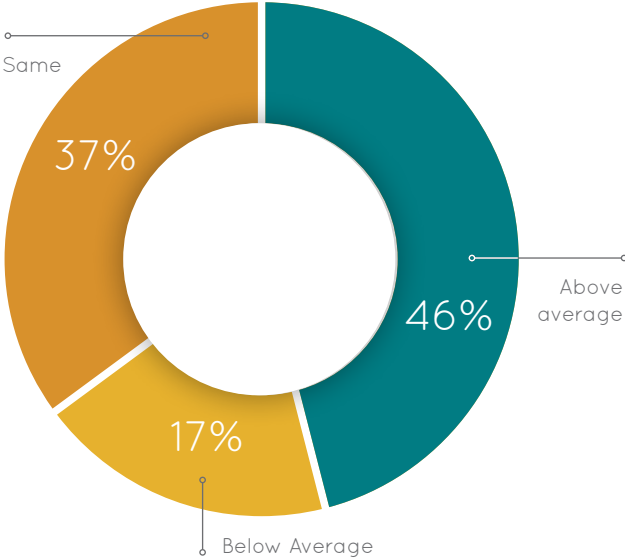
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SCORE COMPARES WITH OTHER CONTACT CENTRES?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
I think our score is above average	46%
It's about the same	37%
I think our score is below average	17%



46% of Contact Centre leaders felt their employee satisfaction score was higher than other contact centres.

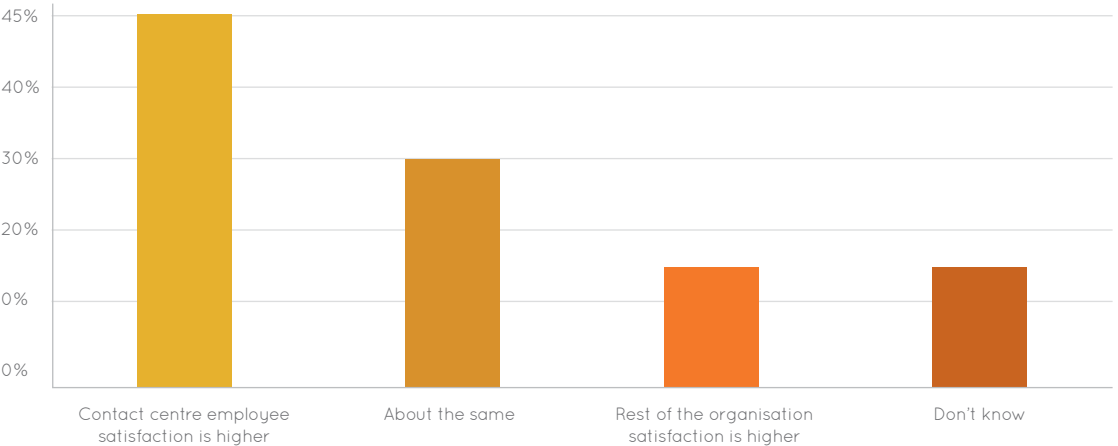


HOW DOES YOUR CONTACT CENTRE EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SCORE COMPARE TO THE EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SCORE RECORDED BY THE “REST OF THE ORGANISATION”?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
The contact centre employee satisfaction score is higher	44%
It's about the same	30%
The “rest of the organisation” satisfaction score is higher	13%
Don't know/unsure	13%



44% confirmed their Contact Centre employee satisfaction results were higher than the rest of the organization. A further 30% saying they were about the same. Contact centres should be proud of these results and use them to promote their centre as a “great place to work” both internally and externally.



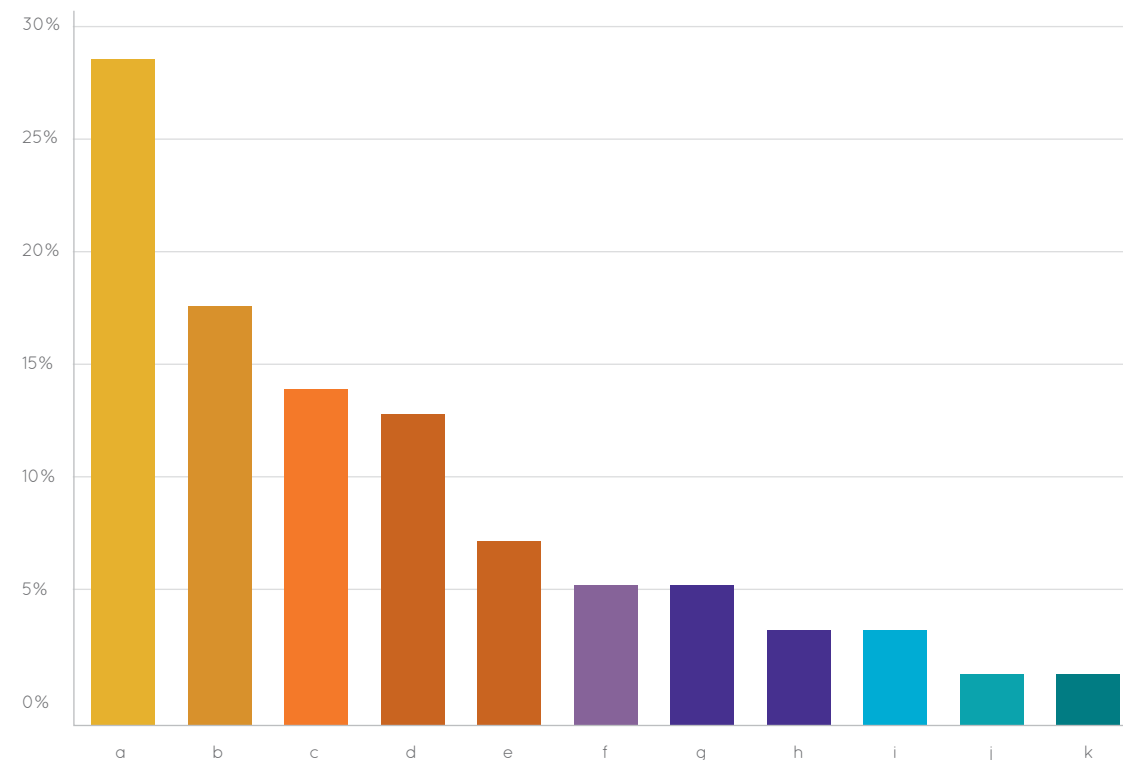
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

WHAT EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE(S) HAVE YOU INTRODUCED IN THE LAST 1-2 YEARS THAT HAS HAD THE MOST POSITIVE IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSE
Incentives / R&R	a	28%
Culture / Fun	b	18%
Staff Development	c	14%
Communication	d	13%
Leadership	e	7%
Onboarding / Recruitment	f	5%
Flexible working	g	5%
Technology	h	3%
Agile working	i	3%
Wellness	j	2%
Structural Change	k	2%



The majority of investment in employee engagement is still related to initiatives that directly impact staff. For example, culture/fun, staff development and training, communication to staff and reward and recognition are among the most popular incentives. Many contact centres are now starting to consider longer term changes to workplace structure and the way work is done which is also having a positive impact on employee engagement.





PANDEMIC RESPONSE

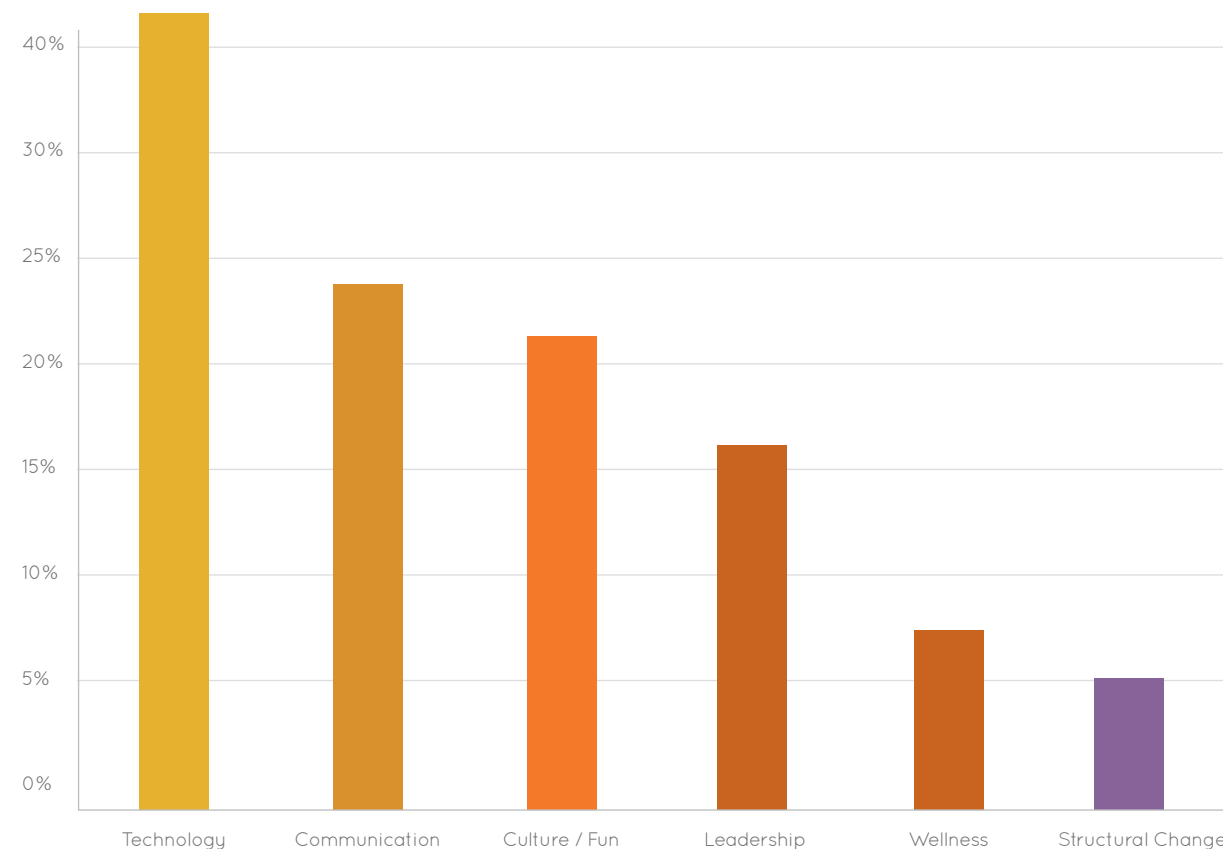
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

WHAT NEW INITIATIVES HAVE YOU INTRODUCED TO IMPROVE (OR MAINTAIN) EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Technology	42%
Communication	23%
Culture / Fun	21%
Leadership	16%
Wellness	7%
Structural Change	5%



There has been significant investment into technology to be able to keep teams connected when working remotely. Greater exposure and access to leadership, increased transparency and communication for all staff and ensuring fun and culture building activities are at the forefront was fairly consistent amongst all respondents. Some centres have also invested extra resources into mental health and well-being services.



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY



Matthew Dew

General Manager SA & WA
SMAART Recruitment
smaart.com.au

Employee engagement is a true challenge for all contact centres. The results of having a highly engaged contact centre speak for themselves: happy and motivated staff who consistently produce high quality work. Low engagement leads to high absenteeism and turnover, poor work, unhappy customers and a flow on effect that drains the resources of any contact centre.

Contact centres are continuing to broaden their horizons to understand what keeps employees “engaged”. Years ago it was a weekly prize and free Friday drinks every fortnight. Now employees are wanting more meaningful and engaging work in a structure that supports them and offers a future.

It’s only early days but the pandemic has already had a big impact on employee. Different tools are now required to simply communicate with one another and stay connected, so how to further engage with them will be a tremendous challenge not only over the next 12 months but beyond, as so many staff will continue to work-from-home. Staff wellness and mental health as initiatives that have grown in importance and popularity within physical contact centres will now need to be re-considered and offered in a different way.

By the end of 2021 we expect to see significant innovation in the way that all organisations try to engage their staff.



CAREER DAY AT DOMAIN GROUP



Dusan Radonanovic

Director of
Customer Service
Domain Group



Domain Group listened closely to their contact centre agents before coming up with a unique program to improve employee engagement.

After surveying their staff, it was clear that there was a desire for a unique career progression program in-house for contact centre employees, in addition to Domain's talent development program.

"We learnt pretty quickly that front-line staff didn't see career progression at Domain the same way we thought they did. They weren't asking for it to happen more quickly, but to be more structured around 'experience' days," said Dusan Radonanovic, Domain's Director of Customer Service.

The 'Career Day' program was created to allow staff to spend one whole day per quarter in a different department. Marketing, finance and sales are just some of the departments that have taken part. For some staff, spending a 'day in the life of' another role has changed their perception or confirmed their interest in another department.

Key to the success of Career Day has been getting the buy-in of the Heads of Business, and the allocated team spending time showing the contact centre staff the ropes. Position Descriptions were created for each role, which allowed the employee to get a greater sense of the duties and responsibilities.

Getting buy-in wasn't too challenging though, as many business units see the contact centre as a talent pool. Other units saw it is a good way of giving back to the centre and increasing knowledge in the team, whilst also having the opportunity to take a closer look at a future potential hire.

To qualify for the program, staff need to have nine months of tenure. Uptake has been high, with 80-85% of contact centre employees going through the program.

The result? A more engaged workforce. Domain Group is currently averaging less than 5% external attrition per annum. The program hasn't seen a sudden spike in internal attrition but allowed for more considered transitions. Career Day isn't the sole reason for such lower attrition, but it's been a key driver.

Added benefits include improving cross-functional engagement and providing contact centre staff with further insights into another area of the business that can be shared with the rest of the team. The program has also seen a significant improvement in raising the profile of the contact centre and ensuring it is involved and considered in many key meetings.

"Staff love it, they plan and prepare for their Career Days", said Radonanovic, "it gives them something to look forward to and a real sense that they are getting variety and development."

Internal departments also get a strong insight into whether the contact centre has some talent "ready to go" for them. Ideally staff must complete 12 months before they are allowed to move departments, so the contact centre is protected from staff leaving too soon.

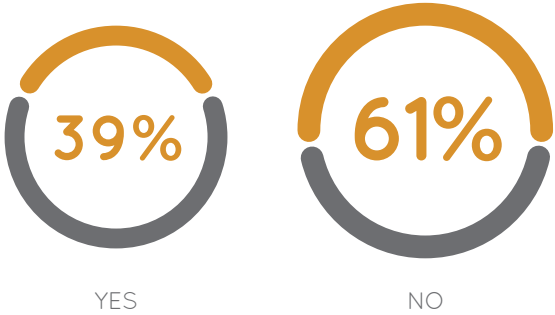
"We try to instil into my Team Managers that you recruit for the business, not just for the role. We love seeing our staff grow and we want to see them keep moving onwards and upwards."

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



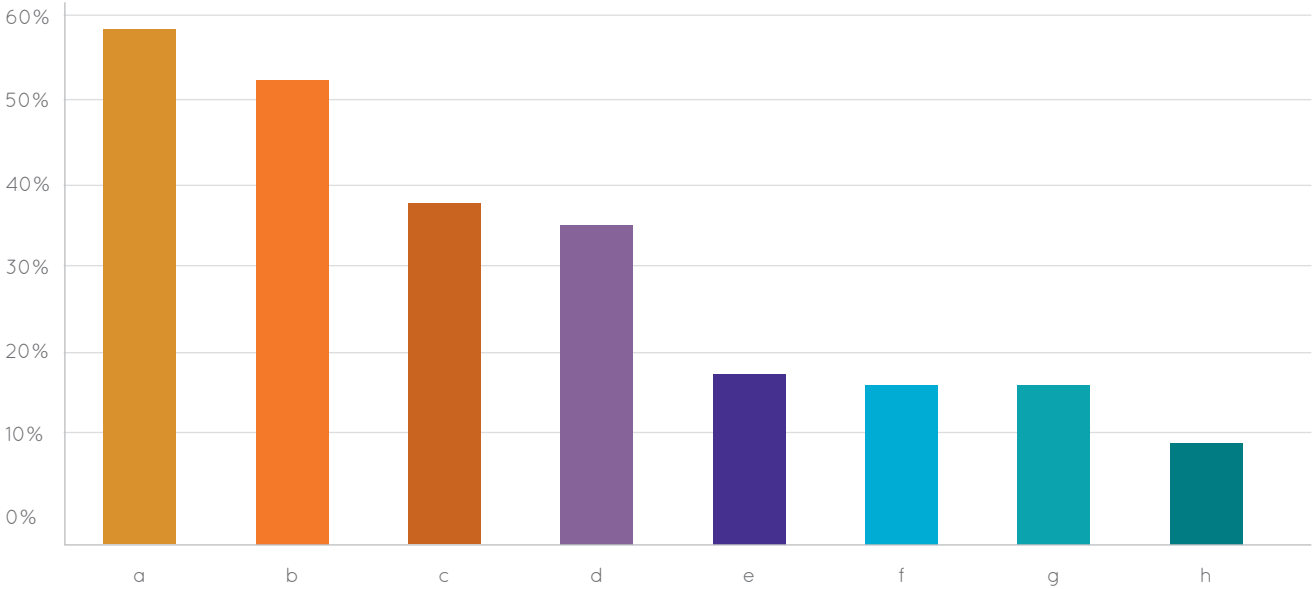
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

DO YOU HAVE A CUSTOMER SERVICE VISION THAT IS SEPARATE TO YOUR CORPORATE VISION?



WHAT TYPE OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE METRICS/KPIS ARE USED BY YOUR COMPANY?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSE
Net Promoter Score (NPS)	a	58%
Customer Satisfaction (CSAT)	b	51%
Internally developed metrics	c	38%
Retention rate	d	34%
Customer Lifetime Value (CLV)	e	18%
Customer Churn	f	15%
We aren't using any	g	15%
Customer Effort Score (CES)	h	9%



NPS (Net Promoter Score) using the “On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to recommended <company> to your family or friends” question remains the most common way to measure customer satisfaction with over 58% of businesses using it, followed closely by 51% using CSAT scores (Customer Satisfaction). More advanced metrics like Retention Rate (34%), Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) (18%) and Customer Effort Score (CES) score are in use by some companies and reflect a more mature approach to CX.

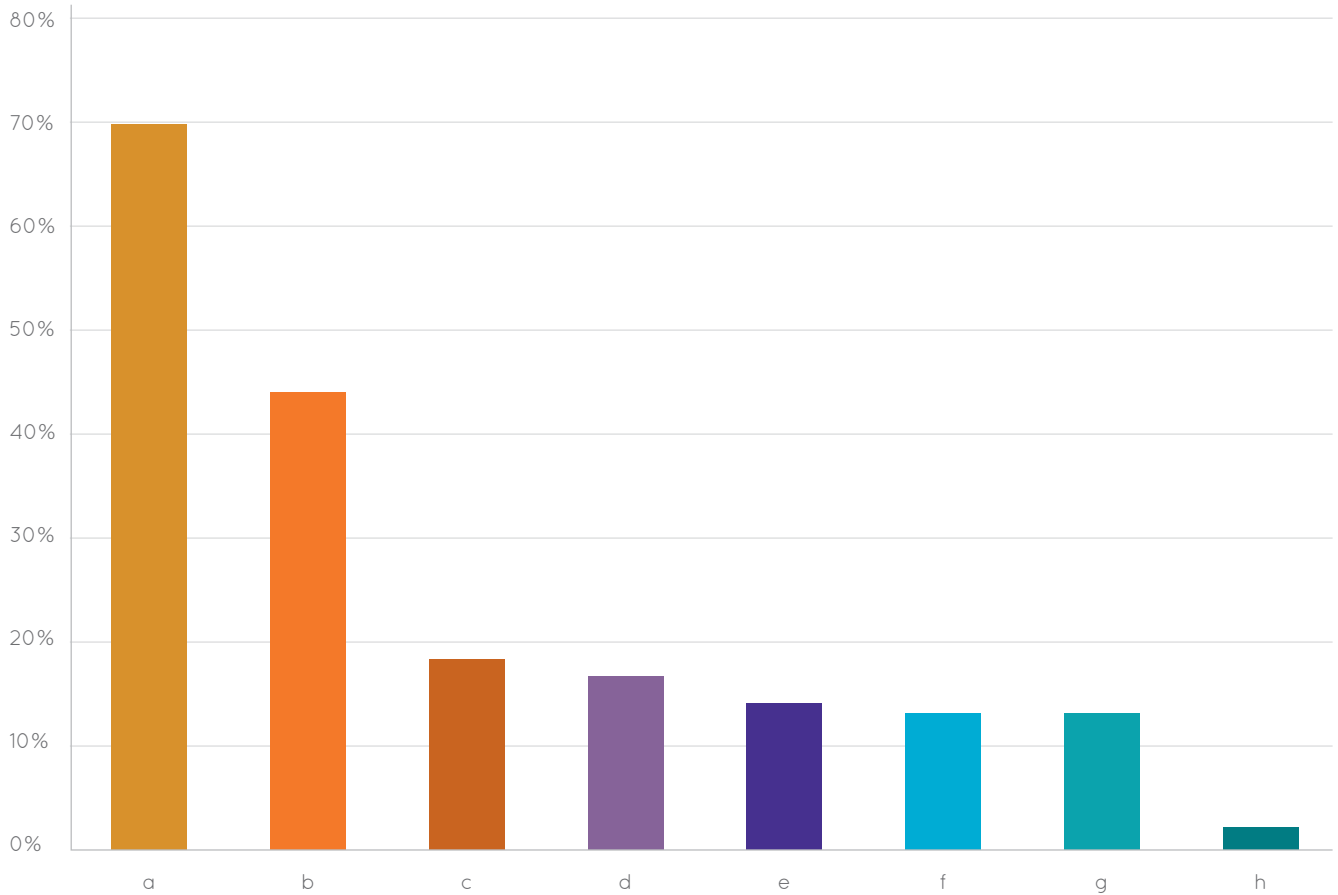
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

WHAT METHODS DO YOU USE TO CAPTURE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSE
Email survey	a	70%
Post-call survey	b	42%
Website survey	c	18%
We don't do any	d	16%
SMS	e	13%
Mystery Shopping	f	12%
Outbound Call	g	9%
During the call survey	h	2%



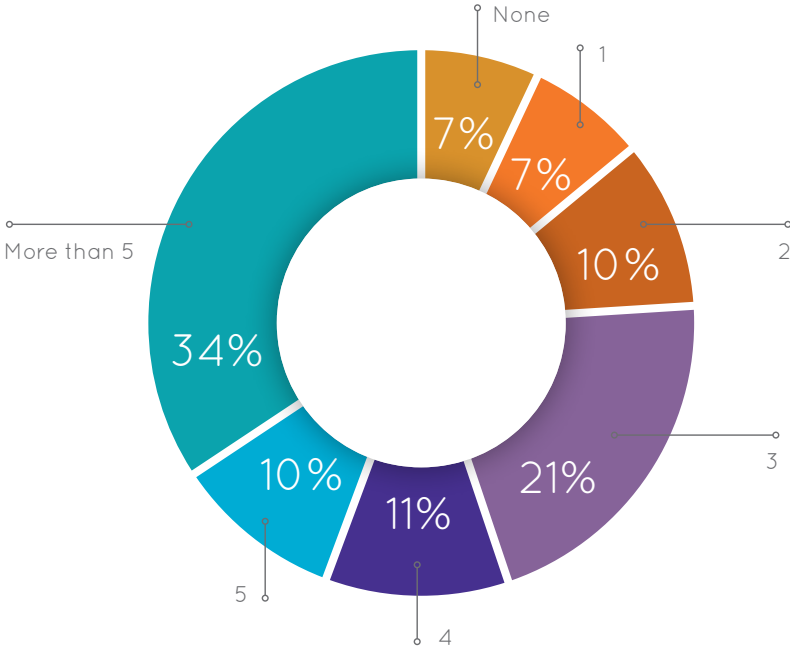
Email is by far the most popular, used by 70% of businesses. Post call surveys are also widely used with 42% of companies using them.



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

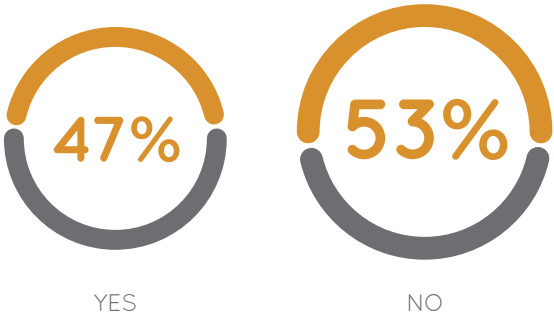
HOW MANY OF YOUR CONTACT CENTRE METRICS ARE REPORTED TO THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE TEAM/BOARD ON A REGULAR BASIS?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
None	7%
1	7%
2	10%
3	21%
4	11%
5	10%
More than 5	34%



The performance of the contact centre is becoming increasingly important to senior executives with more than 34% of contact centres now reporting on more than 5 metrics to a senior executive or board on a regular basis, with 56% reporting on at least 4 metrics.

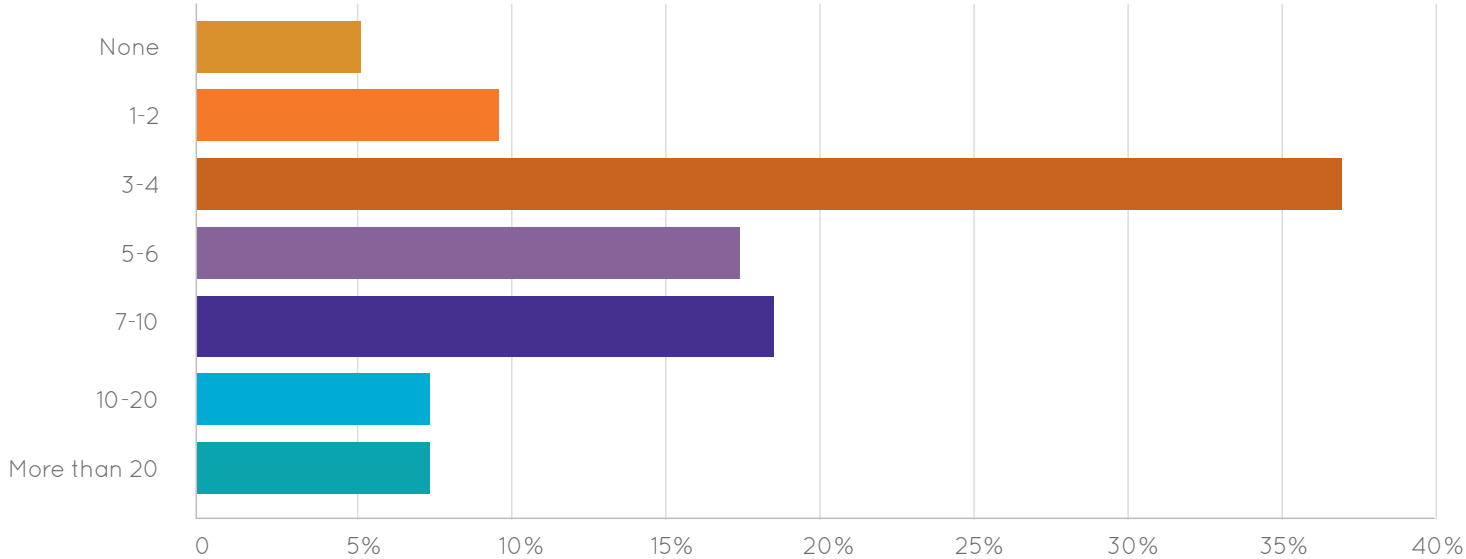
DOES YOUR BUSINESS HAVE A DEDICATED SENIOR ROLE WITH ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE ACROSS YOUR ENTIRE BUSINESS? E.G. CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

HOW MANY CALLS PER AGENT PER MONTH ARE ASSESSED FOR QUALITY?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
None	5%
1 – 2	9%
3 – 4	37%
5 – 6	17%
7 – 10	18%
10 – 20	7%
More than 20	7%

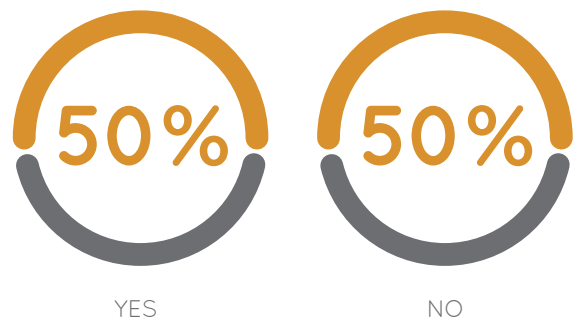


The most common number of calls recorded and assessed for quality each month per agent is 3 with over 37% of contact centres. 5% of contact centres do not assess any calls. Over 14% of contact centres assess more than 10 calls per month.

There is still a lot of confusion surrounding the measuring of quality on a call though – many contact centres use it more as a compliance check (did they say the customers name three times etc.) rather than calibrate standards (measuring how well something was done).

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

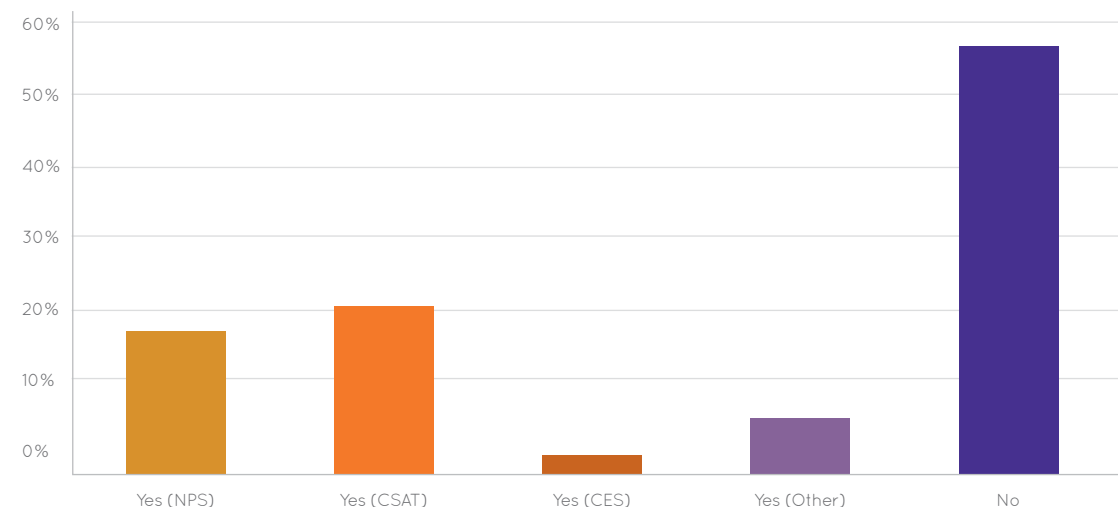
DO YOU CURRENTLY USE A KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM TO PROVIDE SCRIPTING AND PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE IN REAL TIME TO AGENTS?



Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) act as the single source of truth for your organisation's knowledge; they retain and improve that truth with built-in user feedback loops and they enable every employee and customer to have their query answered quickly, consistently, and accurately by making that truth accessible.

DO YOU USE ANY FORM OF IMMEDIATE AFTER-CALL SURVEY?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes - Net Promoter Score (NPS)	18%
Yes - Customer Satisfaction (CSAT)	20%
Yes - Customer Effort Score (CES)	2%
Yes - Other	5%
No - We don't use any form of immediate after-call survey	55%



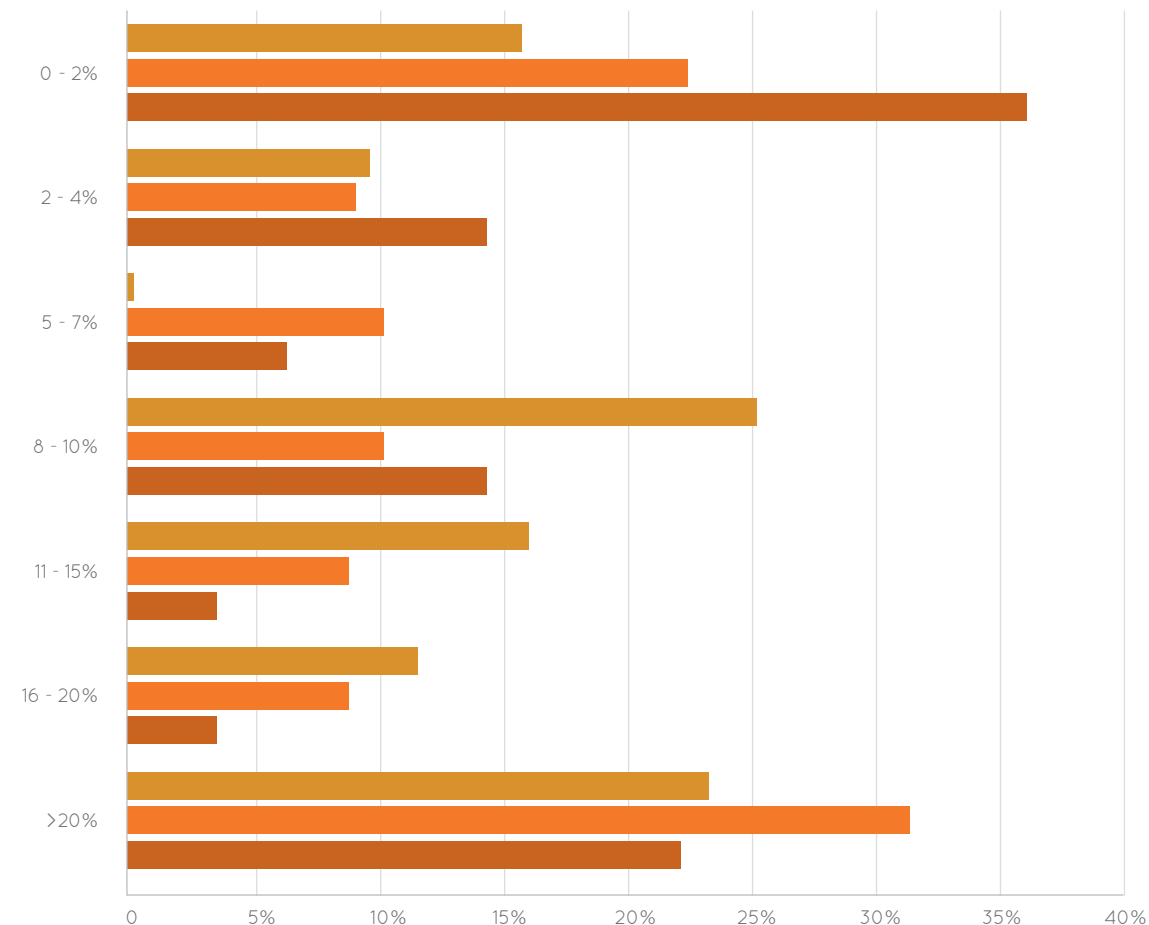
55% of respondents do not use any immediate post call survey. Of those that do, 40% use NPS and 45% use CSAT.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

WHAT IS THE TYPICAL RESPONSE RATE TO THE FOLLOWING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS:

ANSWER CHOICES	0 - 2%	2% - 4%	5% - 7%	8% - 10%	11% - 15%	16% - 20%	>20%
Email	16%	9%	0%	25%	16%	12%	23%
Post Call Survey	23%	8%	10%	10%	8%	8%	31%
SMS	36%	14%	6%	14%	3%	5%	22%

EMAIL
 POST CALL SURVEY
 SMS

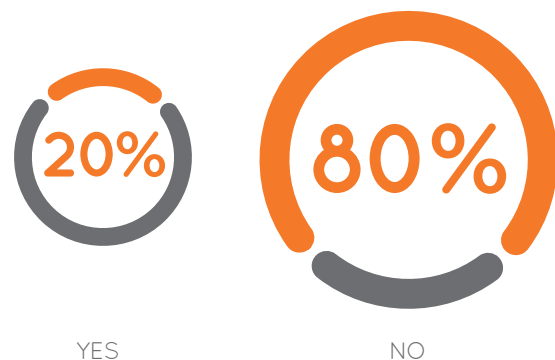


CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

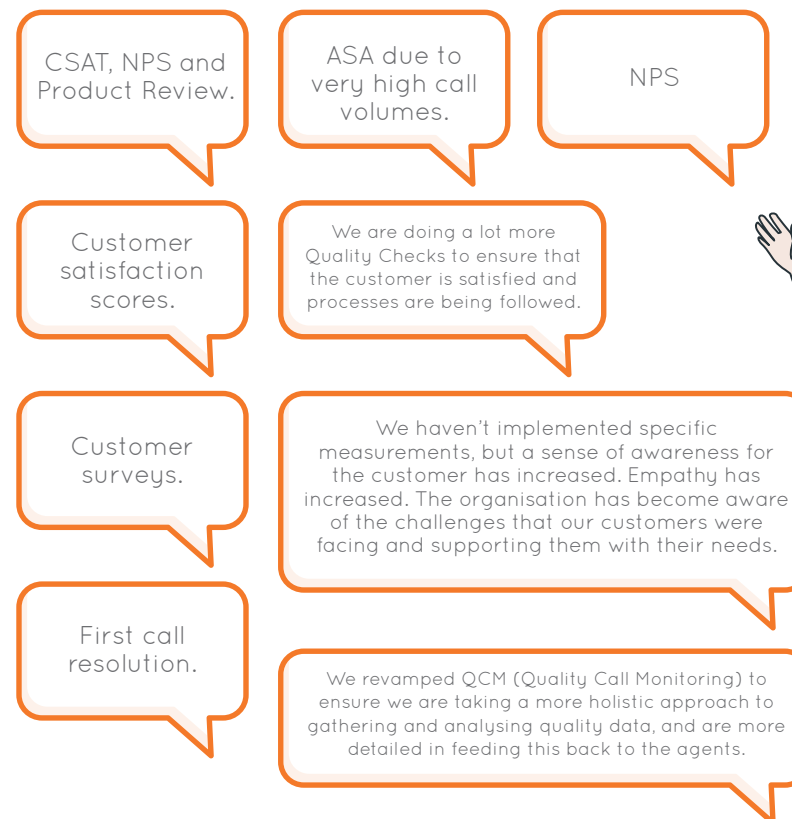


PANDEMIC RESPONSE

HAS THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE METRICS
CHANGED AT ALL DURING THE PANDEMIC?



WHICH CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE METRIC HAS INCREASED IN
ITS IMPORTANCE THE MOST DURING THE PANDEMIC?



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE SUMMARY



Justin Tippet

Founder & Chief Editor
CX Central



Customer Experience (CX) is becoming an increasingly important battle ground for companies looking to find ways to increase market share, profitability and so on and over 53% of the businesses that responded now have a single role within their organisation that is accountable for driving the customer experience across the whole organisation.

For way of clarity though, customer experience (or “CX”) typically encompasses all customer touchpoints. From the website, retail store, marketing and advertising, delivery and distribution – essentially anywhere the customer interacts with your brand.

The contact centre is just one part of that customer journey, albeit an important one. That importance can depend on many things given the diversity of the contact centres out there – from inbound sales, outbound telemarketing, phone account management, customer service and so on, there are many ways customers can interact with a contact centre. And for some business, the contact centre may be the only point a customer even speaks to a human being.

But that still doesn't mean the entire CX rests on the contact centre. Even if the sales order was made over the phone and that's the only person a customer ever speaks to, how the delivery driver behaved, the time it took for delivery, the quality of the goods, the packaging, the instructions and so on all contribute to the overall customer experience.

40% of contact centres now use their own 'Customer Service Vision' that whilst it is still linked to the overall Corporate Vision, it gives additional clarity and guidance for those that work in the contact centre to help keep everyone working in the same direction.

The role of capturing CX feedback isn't just the responsibility of the contact centre either – in fact only 17% of contact centres perform this function with

42% of businesses having either a dedicated individual (8%) or team (34%) accountable for measuring customer satisfaction.

Email is still the preferred method of capturing customer feedback with over 70% of businesses using email to capture customer feedback with Net Promoter Score (NPS) the most popular metric being used.

Immediate post call surveys are used by 45% of contact centres with CSAT and NPS the most common methods used.

In the age where compliance and fast, accurate information is becoming increasingly critical, 50% of contact centres are using a knowledge management platform to ensure their agents have the right information, script guidance and so on at their fingertips.

Perhaps signifying the increasing role of the contact centre in the organisation, over 34% of contact centres now report on the performance of 5 or more KPIs to senior executives/board level.

BEST PRACTICE

It's advisable that contact centres have a Customer Service Vision that makes things a lot clearer for the contact centre team and over 40% of contact centres already have this in place.

For the contact centre practitioners that haven't heard of this before, a Customer Service Vision is a shared definition of outstanding customer service that points everyone in the same direction. For example, “Supporting our customers and each other in a manner that is effortless, accurate and friendly”.

This helps provide guidance on the right values, culture and KPIs you strive to achieve in your contact centre.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE SUMMARY



Justin Tippet

Founder & Chief Editor
CX Central



Speaking of metrics, there is certainly no shortage of metrics available in the contact centre but ultimately just reporting on a Grade of Service metric or Average Speed of Answer metric doesn't really mean much to anyone outside of the contact centre.

But if you can show how those metrics correlate to Customer Experience metrics and ultimately an increase in profit or a reduction in expenditure trust me, you'll get some attention.

Some quick tips on how to make CX more important in your business:

- Prove the Centre's impact on customer satisfaction and related loyalty metrics.
- Present logical business cases to senior management in the language of numbers & defined outcomes.
- Provide useful business intelligence to other departments & functions.
- Ensure regular and frequent sharing of customer successes and failures.

COVID IMPACT

The COVID pandemic has forced enormous transformation across all industry sectors and placed an unprecedented load onto contact centres where customers are craving human interaction and reassurances that automated processes either cannot provide or cannot keep up with.

Many companies appear to have relaxed standard metrics such as Average Speed of Answer or Average Talk Time and allowed their agents to focus on empathy and 'doing the best they can' as call volumes hit unprecedented levels all whilst many agents have been forced to work from home or in new settings.

With a robust CX program however, businesses should always be seeking feedback, listening to that feedback and taking action on that feedback and one could argue that this is even more critical during a pandemic.

For those with CX metrics already in place, their appears to be a heightened focus across all metrics including CSAT, NPS and FCR.

FUTURE PREDICTIONS

We could write a whole book on future predictions for CX and many already have. But a few bullet points for you:

- The correlation between a good customer experience and increased profitability will continue to become clearer no matter which way you measure it.
- Technology will continue to have a positive impact on the CX.
- Customers will crave a more and more personalised experience.
- Customers will expect you to know about them regardless of what channel they engage with you (and they'll expect you to be available on whatever channel is important to them).
- Empowering your team with the right skills, systems and processes has, and always will be, essential to delivering a great CX.

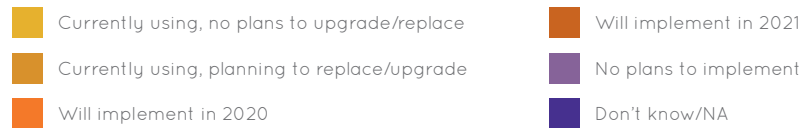
“ Speaking of metrics, there is certainly no shortage of metrics available in the contact centre but ultimately just reporting on a Grade of Service metric or Average Speed of Answer metric doesn't really mean much to anyone outside of the contact centre.”

TECHNOLOGY FOR BETTER STAFF PERFORMANCE

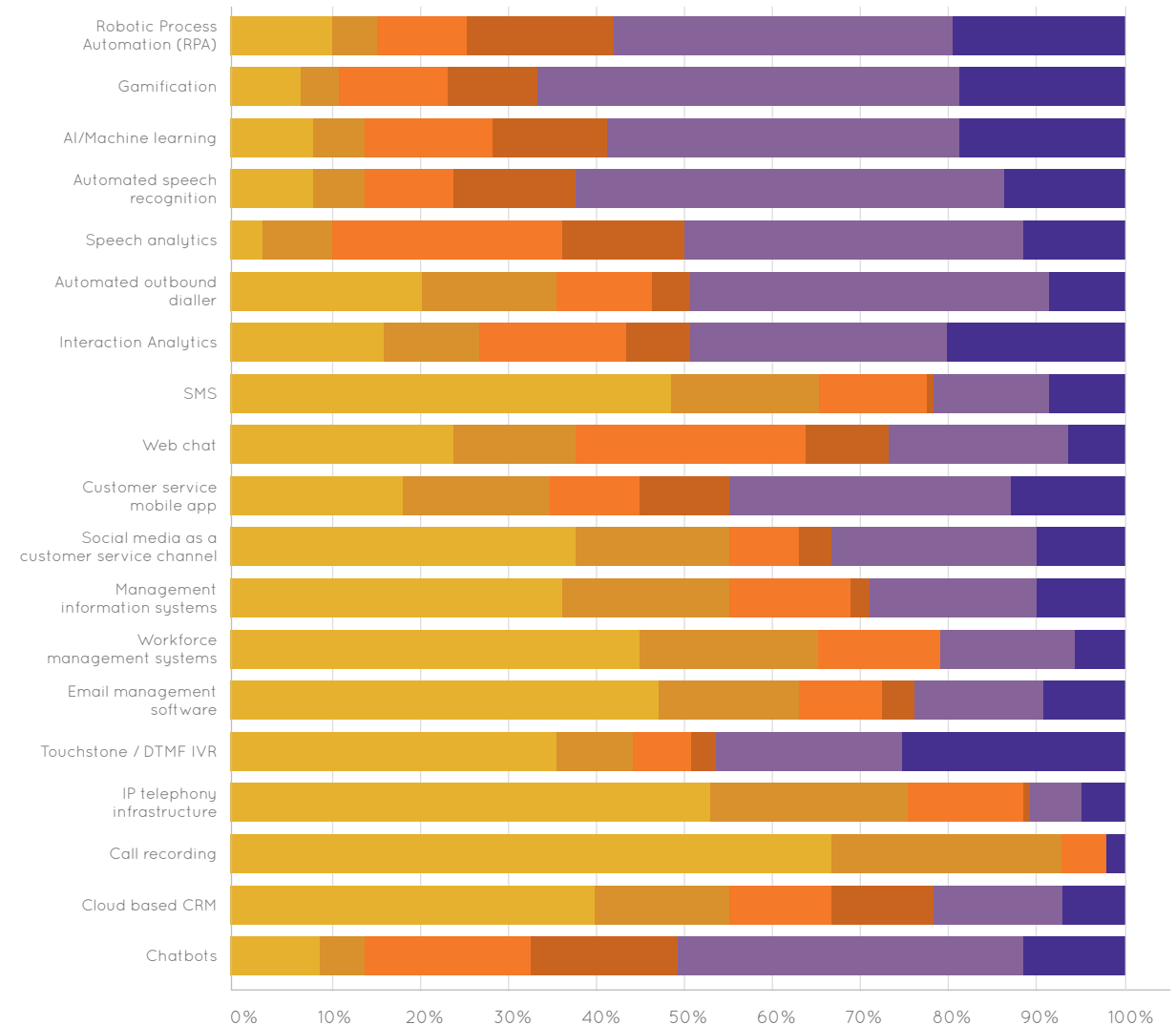


TECHNOLOGY FOR BETTER STAFF PERFORMANCE

FOR THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR LEVEL OF TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION



2020/21 CONTACT CENTRE
BEST PRACTICE REPORT





PANDEMIC RESPONSE

TECHNOLOGY FOR BETTER STAFF PERFORMANCE

WHICH TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS/SOFTWARE HAVE YOU INTRODUCED
OR STARTED USING SIGNIFICANTLY MORE DUE TO THE PANDEMIC?



MICROSOFT TEAMS



ZOOM



Overwhelmingly, tools for internal communication have become significantly more important due to the pandemic. Microsoft Teams (48%) and Zoom (30%) are the most common choices.

Other respondents to this question noted an increase in tools like Slack for internal collaboration.



For customer interaction, contact centres have looked to direct customers towards websites, mobile apps and SMS servicing to deal with the significant increase in calls. As a result this has led to some technology implementations and adjustment.



TECHNOLOGY FOR BETTER STAFF PERFORMANCE – SUMMARY



**Adam
Spence**

Director Digital
Enablement
Verint



Ian Harrison

Director Customer
Experience Optimisation
Verint

VERINT

No real surprises in terms of the order and priority that respondents came back in terms of their priorities of investment with Speech Analytics, Webchat and Chatbots coming through as the top three and in that order.

30% of the recipients are interested in significantly bolstering their use of speech analytics over the coming years (2020 and 2021). This is reassuring when considered the data also shows participants are also expecting an increased focus on chat bots (21%) and AI machine learning (16%). If implemented concurrently these three technologies (analytics, chat and AI) form a very solid Conversational AI and Analytics self-service strategy.

The percentage of survey participants who had no plans to invest in these same three areas was also surprising as it is these platforms/tools that will enable the automation of the simple transactional tasks and concurrently provide insights and agent assistance to the long running problem solving tasks that challenge both agents and customers and where experience debt is most likely to occur.

For many years speech analytics has been a valuable tool to help drive contact centre and business efficiencies. Today's leading deployments of speech analytics should also provide critical insights on what to automate in your Chatbot solution, which of course goes hand in hand with the build out of your chat and messaging channels. We believe that this shows a maturity in thought process as hopefully it was the same respondents there were putting their efforts behind these three initiatives in that order.

Somewhat puzzling were the responses regarding speech recognition and social media as a contact channel where priority was rated lowly. With the ubiquitous nature, and traction, of both smart speakers (Amazon and Google), we believe there is an opportunity for innovative organisations to take their brand to both of these channels as effective provisioning and service channels. Perhaps this a reflection of Speech Recognition being seen as a capability within the IVR for routing as opposed to a being a means of digital self-service linked to smart speakers.

The post Covid responses focus primarily on internal productivity tools such as Teams/ Slack/Google Hangouts, rather than the implementation of alternative channels and technologies to support customers during the pandemic, during which we would have expected a large push towards leveraging Chat, Chatbot, Knowledge Management and Communities forums. Additionally, we would have expected an increase in the utilisation, or implementation, of quality management tools and automated call quality compliance technologies.

Other highlights noted are:

- A reasonable percentage of contact centres have no plans to implement SMS, web chat, mobile apps and social media as a customer channel. When assessing communication tools it's important contact centres interact with their customers in their "channel of choice".
- Call recording, IP telephony infrastructure and Workforce management systems are the technologies that are most likely to be upgraded and replaced in the near future.
- While only 12% of contact centres use AI/Machine learning at present, a further 27% plan to implement it during 2020/2021.

Technology upgrades, implementations and improvements remain critical decisions for all contact centres. Heightened importance and change in the role of the contact centre as a result of the pandemic puts further importance on contact centres to be making the right decisions.

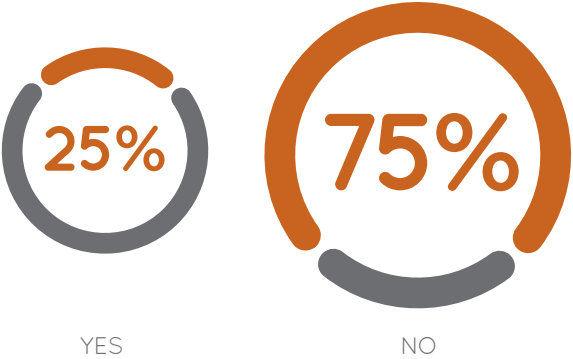
"For many years speech analytics has been a valuable tool to help drive contact centre and business efficiencies. Today's leading deployments of speech analytics should also provide critical insights on what to automate in your Chatbot solution which of course goes hand in hand with the build out of your chat and messaging channels."

OFFSHORING



OFFSHORING

DOES YOUR ORGANISATION CURRENTLY HAVE ANY WORK BEING PERFORMED IN OVERSEAS CONTACT CENTRES FOR AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMERS?



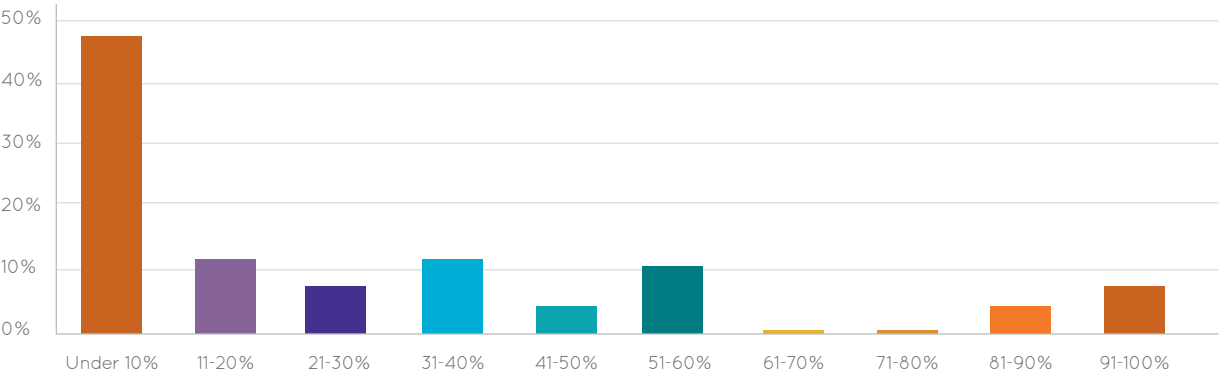
OF THE WORK CURRENTLY BEING PERFORMED OVERSEAS, WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THIS WORK WAS PREVIOUSLY HANDLED ONSHORE?



The survey responses suggested that companies are only shifting existing work to offshore destinations where processes, systems, FAQ's and a baseline performance are already established to minimise risk.

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PHONE CALLS TO YOUR ORGANISATION ARE CURRENTLY HANDLED OVERSEAS?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE	ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Under 10%	48%	51-60%	10%
11-20%	11%	61-70%	0%
21-30%	7%	71-80%	0%
31-40%	11%	81-90%	3%
41-50%	3%	91-100%	7%

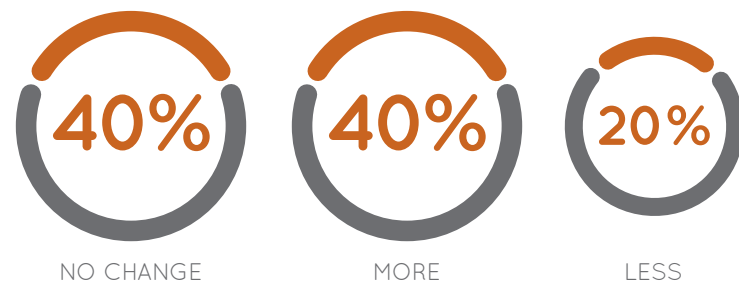


For those that do use offshore call centres, their majority (48%) send less than 10% of their overall call volumes to the offshore destination. 10% of call centres send between 81 and 100% of their calls overseas. For those that do use offshore call centres, the Australian benchmarking report and companies that outsource 100% of the calls to offshore are most likely not captured in this report.

OFFSHORING

IN THE NEXT 18 MONTHS, WILL YOU BE OFFSHORING MORE OR LESS WORK?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
No change	40%
More	40%
Less	20%



Pre COVID, 40% of Australian contact centres said they would be offshoring more, 40% no change and 20% plan on offshoring less work. These results are reflective of companies chasing different expenditure and quality goals.

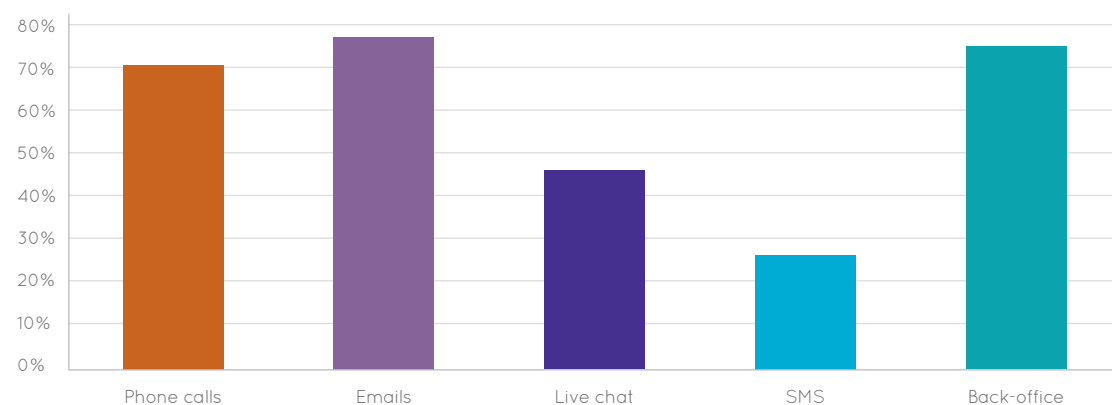
WHAT WAS THE MAIN REASON YOU ARE BRINGING WORK BACK TO AUSTRALIA?

- 1 Customers in Australia prefer to be contacted by other Australians or native English speakers they can relate to.
- 2 Customer satisfaction was poor.
- 3 The non value adding processes were outsourced and are now moving to digital solutions.
- 4 Performance and political situation.
- 5 Other reasons.

OFFSHORING

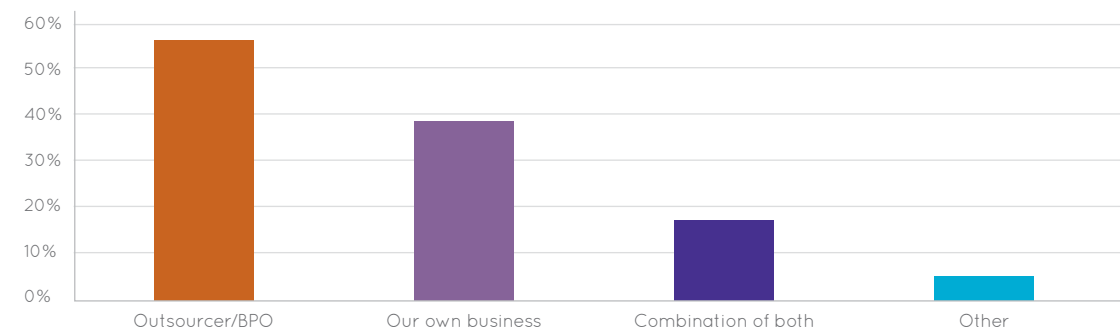
WHAT TYPE OF WORK (CHANNELS) ARE CURRENTLY HANDLED OVERSEAS?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Phone calls	70%
Emails	78%
Live chat	44%
SMS	26%
Back-office (non customer facing)	74%



IS YOUR OVERSEAS WORK HANDLED BY A CALL CENTRE OUTSOURCER/BPO OR AN EXTENSION OF YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Outsourcer/BPO	56%
Our own business	37%
Combination of both	15%
Other	4%

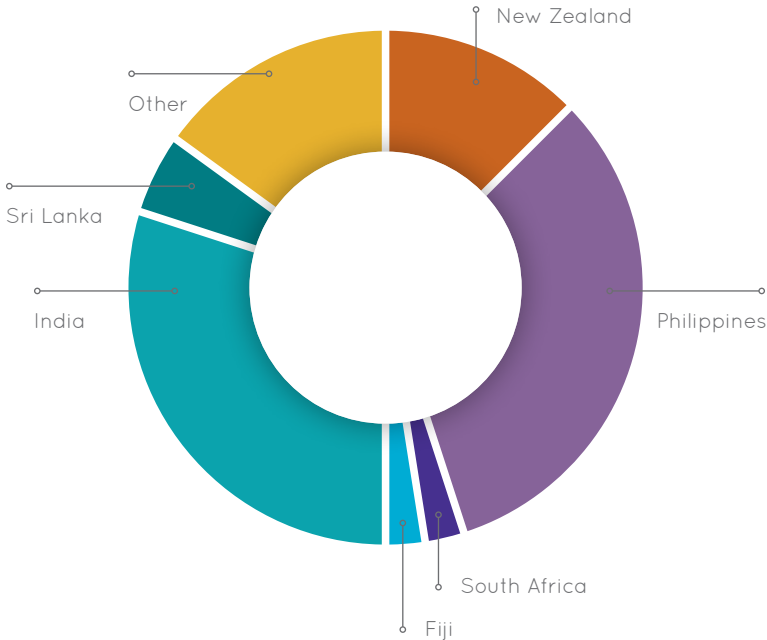


Tip! Using internal and external teams is often a popular model as it enables you to easily benchmark performance and create some healthy competition.

OFFSHORING

WHEN OUTSOURCING YOUR WORK OUTSIDE OF AUSTRALIA, WHICH LOCATIONS DO YOU OUTSOURCE WORK TO?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
New Zealand	19%
Philippines	48%
South Africa	4%
Fiji	4%
India	44%
Sri Lanka	7%
Other	22%



Philippines is the most popular offshore destination 48% followed by India 44% and New Zealand 19%. Whilst the Indian percentage is quite high, it is primarily used more for back-office functions. 'Other' countries included Hong Kong, Egypt, Sri Lanka and UAE.

WHEN THINKING ABOUT THE COMPLEXITY OF THE CALLS THAT ARE HANDLED OVERSEAS, ARE THEY GENERALLY?



THE EASIER
TYPES OF CALLS



THE SAME AS OUR
ONSHORE TEAM

DO YOU APPLY ANY TYPE OF CUSTOMER SEGMENTATION TO DETERMINE THE CALLS THAT ARE ROUTED OVERSEAS?



YES



NO

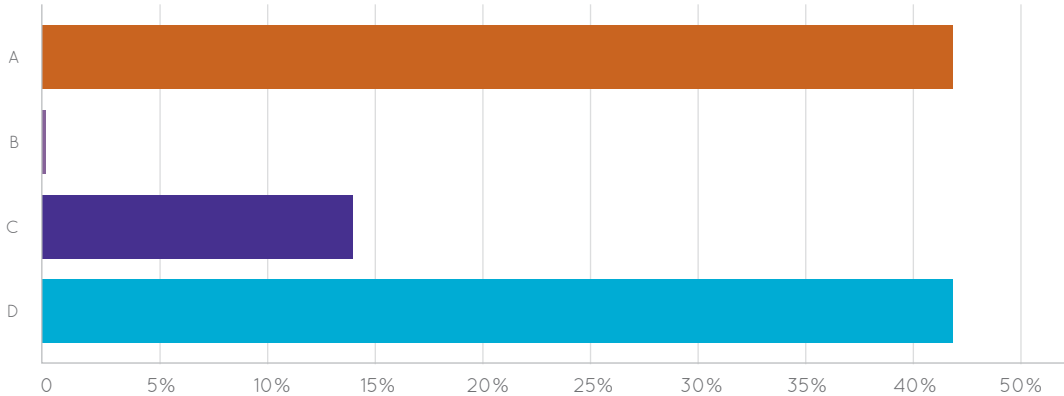


75% of companies that offshore centres are not using any form of customer segmentation to determine which calls are transitioned offshore. Of those that do, 43% route calls based on the value of the customer (with high value clients retained onshore), 14% use customer personas and 43% are related specifically to a certain product or brand, or where there is a high potential for a purchase.

OFFSHORING

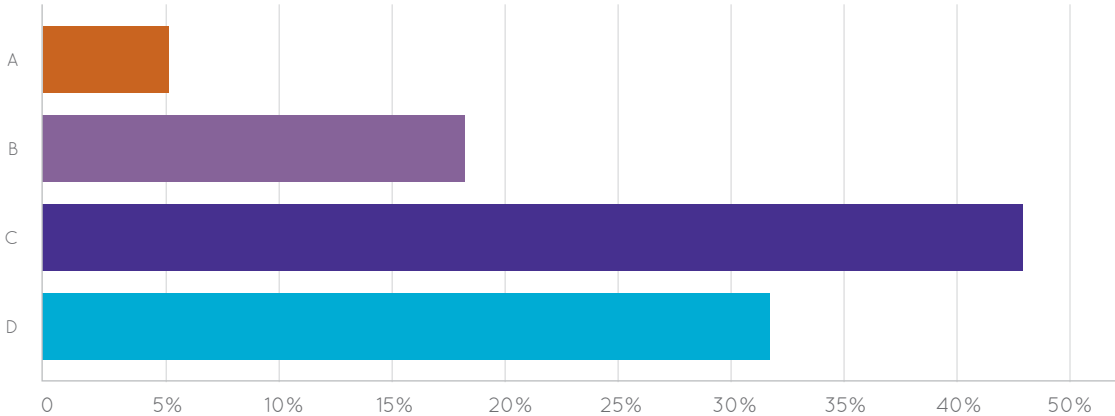
WHEN THINKING ABOUT THE TYPE OF SEGMENTATION
YOU USE TO SEND CALLS OFFSHORE, IS IT:

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSE
Based on the value of the clients (e.g. low value sent offshore, high value remains onshore)	a	43%
Customers calling for the first time about an issue versus customers with prior contact	b	0%
Customer personas	c	14%
Other	d	43%



FOR CUSTOMERS DEMANDING TO STILL SPEAK TO AN AUSTRALIAN BASED AGENT

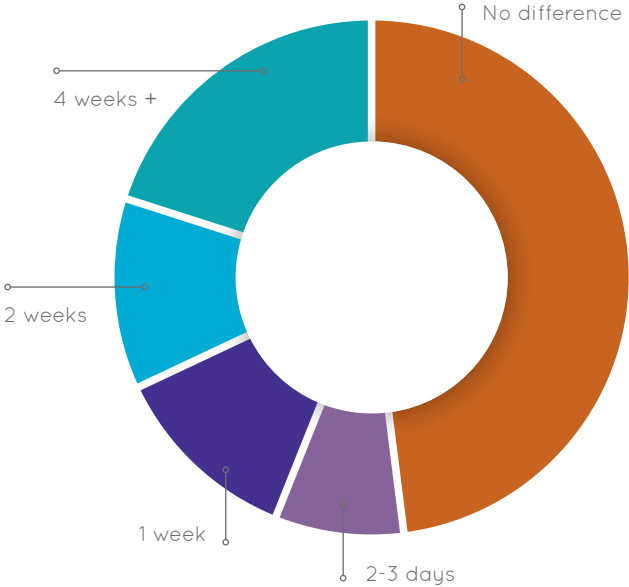
ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSE
We don't have an onshore team so it's not possible	a	5%
We refuse or disable the functionality so it's not possible to transfer calls back to Australia	b	18%
Allow a transfer back only under specific circumstances	c	45%
Transfer immediately whenever it is requested by the customer	d	32%



OFFSHORING

HOW MUCH ADDITIONAL TRAINING IS REQUIRED FOR OVERSEAS AGENTS COMPARED TO ONSHORE ONES (TO ALLOW FOR CULTURAL TRAINING, DIFFERENT LEARNING SPEEDS ETC):

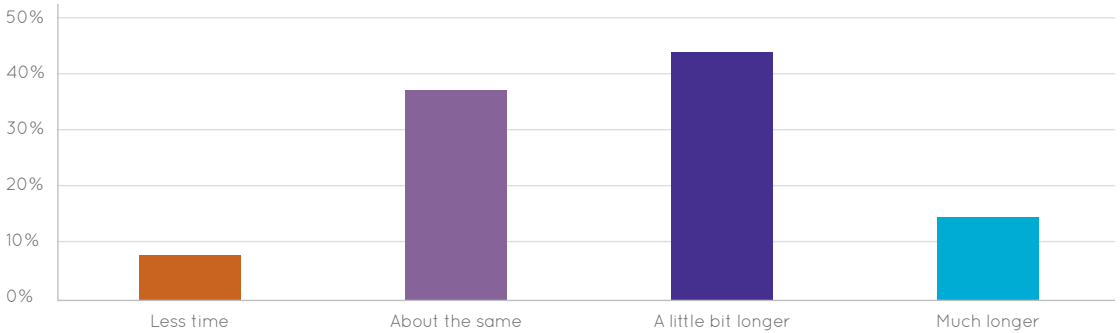
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
No difference	48%
1 day	0%
2-3 days	8%
1 week	12%
2 weeks	12%
3 weeks	0%
4 weeks or more	20%



52% do offer more training with 20% of centres training overseas agents for an additional 4 weeks or more. This can often consist of cultural training – teaching Australian slang, cultural differences and so on.

IN THINKING ABOUT THE SPEED TO COMPETENCY FOR OVERSEAS AGENTS, HOW MUCH ADDITIONAL TIME DOES IT TAKE THEM TO REACH THE SAME PERFORMANCE LEVELS AS AN ONSHORE AGENT?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Less time	8%
About the same	38%
A little bit longer	42%
Much longer	12%



OFFSHORING

WHAT IS THE MAIN BUSINESS DRIVER FOR USING AN OFFSHORE LOCATION?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Reduce costs	61%
Improve service levels	4%
Be open for longer	23%
Reduce business risks	12%



REDUCE COSTS



IMPROVE SERVICE
LEVELS



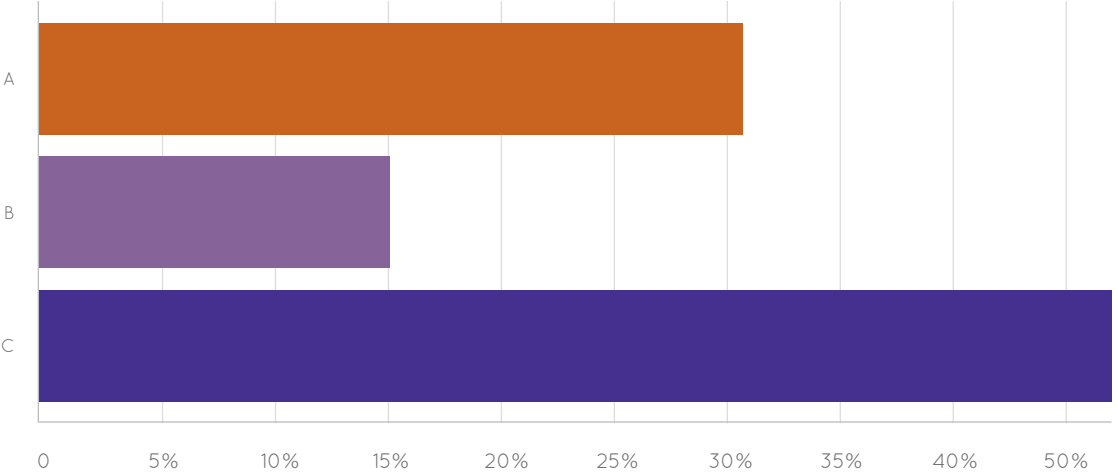
BE OPEN
FOR LONGER



REDUCE BUSINESS
RISKS

WHEN RECRUITING FOR OVERSEAS AGENTS, DO YOU:

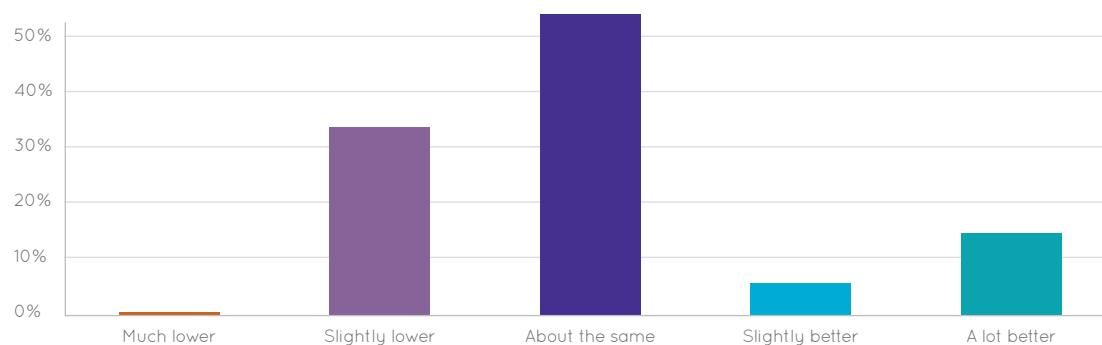
ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSE
Have someone present in all stages of the recruitment process	a	31%
Only have someone attend the final interview	b	15%
Leave it up to the overseas team to make all the hiring decisions	c	54%



OFFSHORING

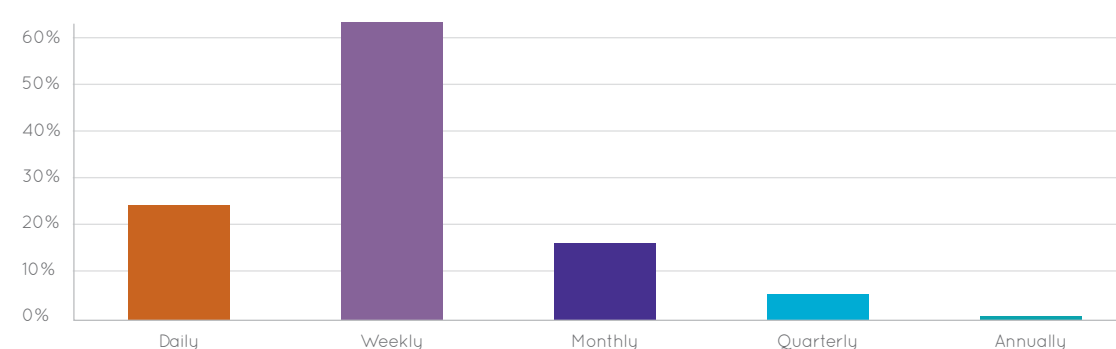
IN THINKING ABOUT THE QUALITY OF YOUR OFFSHORE TEAM COMPARED TO THE ONSHORE TEAM, WOULD YOU SAY IT IS:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Much lower	0%
Slightly lower	32%
About the same	52%
Slightly better	4%
A lot better	12%



HOW OFTEN DO YOU HAVE OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR OFFSHORE TEAM?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Daily	23%
Weekly	62%
Monthly	12%
Quarterly	3%
Annually	0%

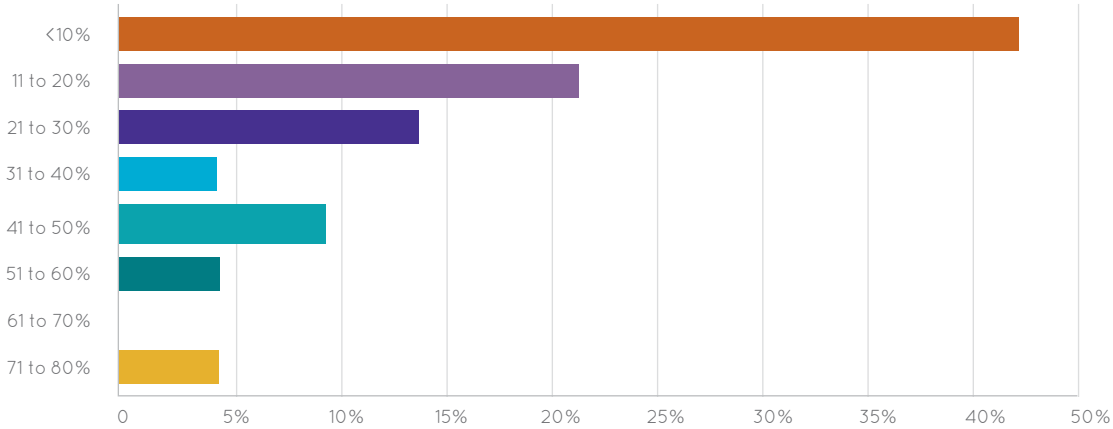


Consistent communication is an important component in successful offshore relationships and the majority (85%) of centres have at least daily (23%) or weekly (62%) operational performance discussions with their offshore teams.

OFFSHORING

IN THINKING ABOUT THE ANNUAL TURNOVER OF STAFF
IN YOUR OFFSHORE FACILITY, IS IT:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE	ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Under 10%	44%	41% to 50%	9%
11% to 20%	22%	51% to 60%	4%
21% to 30%	13%	61% to 70%	0%
31% to 40%	4%	71% to 80%	4%



High turnover has often been associated with offshore call centres. However just like onshore, they are focussed on keeping their employees engaged resulting in longer tenures and figures suggest this work is paying dividends.

DO OFFSHORE AGENTS HAVE THE SAME SYSTEM
ACCESS AS YOUR ONSHORE TEAM?



YES, IT'S EXACTLY
THE SAME



NO, ACCESS IS LIMITED TO ONLY THE
SYSTEMS THEY NEED TO ACCESS

OFFSHORING

HOW HAS THE PANDEMIC IMPACTED THE WORK PREVIOUSLY DONE OFFSHORE?

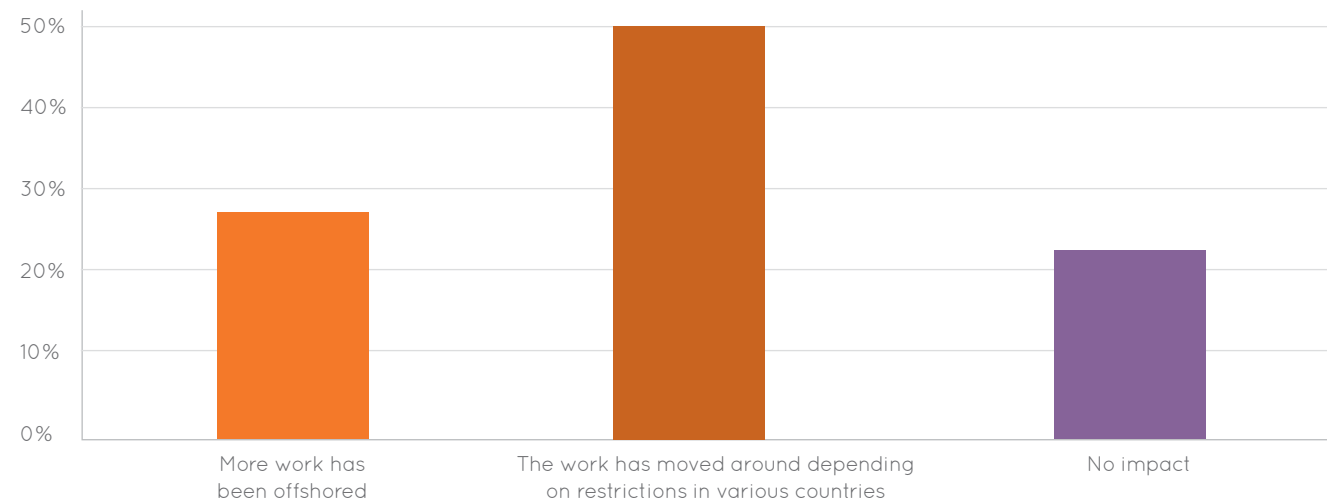
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
More work has been offshored	28%
The work has moved around depending on restrictions in various countries	50%
No impact	22%



The Australian outsourcing industry has been quite vocal in their expectations more work will continue to be brought back to Australia as companies look to minimise their reliance on offshore destinations. However, a change in sentiment is also being reflected in private enterprise with Telstra recently announcing they will be bringing all offshore work back to Australia with others expected to follow.



PANDEMIC RESPONSE



OFFSHORING – SUMMARY



Justin Tippet

Founder & Chief Editor
CX Central



In this year's Contact Centre Best Practice Report, we wanted to dig deeper into the drivers behind companies offshoring (moving customer support functions overseas) and how their offshore teams are performing and how they compare to onshore capabilities.

The reliance on offshore call centres reduced slightly (down 6%) with only a quarter (25%) of Australian call centres now relying on some form of overseas support (down from 31% in 2019). With its low costs, similar time zone and a native English speaking population the Philippines continues to be the most popular destination (48%) with India (44%) and New Zealand (19%) the other key destinations.

The main driver for sending work offshore continues to be cost savings (62%) with 23% citing the benefits of allowing longer opening times, 12% to reduce business risk and 4% to improve service levels.

Most commonly, businesses are using external outsourcers (56%) to handle their offshore work that has either the same (50%), or lower complexity (50%) than their onshore teams with (in order) emails, back office functions (e.g. no customer interaction like claims processing), phone calls, live chat and SMS channels being supported.

52% of offshore agents receive more training than the onshore teams and 54% said the speed to competency takes either a bit longer (42%), or much longer (12%) however this doesn't always relate to better quality. 32% of those surveyed felt the quality of work was still slightly lower than the onshore teams and quality and customer satisfaction are the primary drivers as to why work is re-shored back to Australia.

One trend that did seem prevalent was that all work sent offshore was previously work being done in Australia – no new functions or work commenced overseas.

This is typically to reduce risk enabling baseline performance, processes, FAQs and so on to be established before the work was transitioned.

For context, it should also be noted that this is an Australian benchmarking report only and companies that outsource 100% of their calls to offshore are most likely not captured in this survey.

Best Practice

With the cost differential continuing to remain high (you can typically save between 30% to 70% by offshoring) there will always be a space for offshoring in the near to mid-term future as companies look for ways to slash costs.

And just because it's cheaper offshore doesn't mean it has to be lower quality with many companies having successful offshoring operations – 16% of this year's survey said the quality of the offshore team was either slightly better (4%) or a lot better (12%) than the onshore team.

So what are the companies that are getting it right doing differently?

Whilst there are different drivers for businesses sending work offshore, customer segmentation strategies are different and approaches differ from an in-house centre versus an external outsourcer, there are some key themes that emerge amongst the top performers:

- Be clear on what good looks and sounds like
- Be consistent and clear with your communications
- Empower the agents with the right training, systems and processes to succeed
- Coaching and ongoing training shouldn't stop once the induction is finished
- Provide mechanisms for customers who aren't satisfied to escalate back to onshore

OFFSHORING – SUMMARY



Justin Tippett

Founder & Chief Editor
CX Central



Ultimately what is successful will look different for every company – if you can save 40% off your operational costs and maintain or have a slightly lower level quality of service that may be considered a huge win for many businesses. For others, any decrease in quality is non-negotiable.

For those that do opt for engaging an outsourced provider, do your due diligence in finding the right partner, have clear expectations on communication and performance (linked to KPIs) and start with a small pilot to bed everything in before ramping up your volumes.

Future Predictions

As businesses continue to focus on their customer experience as a key point of differentiation, I expect customer segmentation will become more commonplace in the offshoring strategy (currently only 25% of businesses apply any form of segmentation) with the expectation that higher value transactions will remain onshore and the lower value transactions will be handled offshore.

The broader challenge for offshore destinations however is that automation will continue to erode the lower value transactions – the very ones typically sent offshore. This will force offshoring destinations to either upskill their workforce to handle higher value transactions or perhaps shift their focus to back office functions and non-voice channels like live chat, SMS and emails where the language and communication difficulties are typically less of a concern.

COVID Impact

As prefaced earlier – companies that have 100% of their operations overseas were most likely not included in this survey and they would have been the most exposed.

For those with some offshore presence, there is no question that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on how contact centre resources are distributed and managed with most centres moving to a work-from-home model where possible.

Perhaps reflective of the different approaches companies are using offshoring teams for, along with the different conditions in Australia (e.g. Victorian lockdown), the latest data reveals there has been some movement each way – some companies have shifted more work offshore and some are bringing more work back to Australia as many offshore centres have struggled to mobilise their workforce to work-from-home models and have been forced to reduce capacity or close.

Mid to longer term, the Australian outsourcing industry is certainly gearing up for more work to come back to Australia and with companies like Telstra also announcing a 100% withdrawal from using offshore call centres you can expect more to follow.

One thing is for sure though, having a robust business continuity plan with contact centre resources split between different geographical locations and work-from-home capability has never been more important.

SALARIES



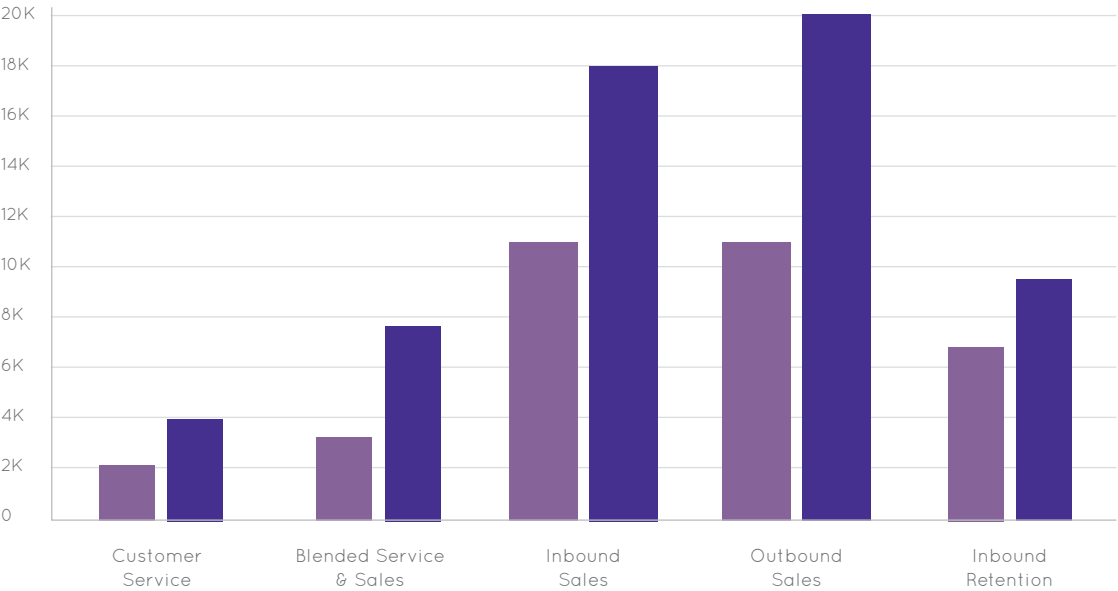
SALARIES

FRONTLINE AGENT SALARY & BONUS/COMMISSIONS

In our 2019 report we undertook a detailed analysis of base salaries across the industry, and we've updated that information here based on market trends and movements. With regards to bonus and commission information we've taken a deep dive into those as well, and provided information not only as averages, but to whether contact centres are paying individual or team based bonuses too.

	Average Base Salary	Pay individual bonus	Pay combined team & individual bonus	Average Performer Bonus	Top Performer Average Bonus
Customer Service	\$53,066 + super	34%	8%	\$1,999	\$3,547
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">75% of base salaries fall between \$46,000 - \$57,000 + super.12% of contact centres pay their Top Performers \$10,000 or more in annual bonuses / commissions.				
Blended Service & Sales	\$53,450 + super	20%	12%	\$3,156	\$6,678
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Blended sales and services teams have the highest % of combined team & individual bonuses.				
Inbound Sales	\$55,716 + super	29%	7%	\$10,644	\$17,890
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Base salaries for inbound sales is higher than for outbound sales roles.35% of contact centres pay their Top Performers \$25,000 or more in annual bonuses/ commissions.				
Outbound Sales	\$53,758 + super	38%	9%	\$10,528	\$19,925
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">23% of base salaries are \$60,000 + super or above.Unsurprisingly, outbound sales has the highest percentage of individual bonuses out of all roles. Surprisingly though, more centres are not paying bonuses than are paying them.25% of contact centres pay their Top Performers over \$45,000 annually in bonuses/commissions.				
Inbound Retention	\$56,230 + super	21%	3%	\$6,363	\$8,610
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inbound retention bonuses and commissions are the third highest of all role types.				

FRONTLINE AGENT BONUS/COMMISSIONS



Average performer bonus

Top performer average bonus

SALARIES

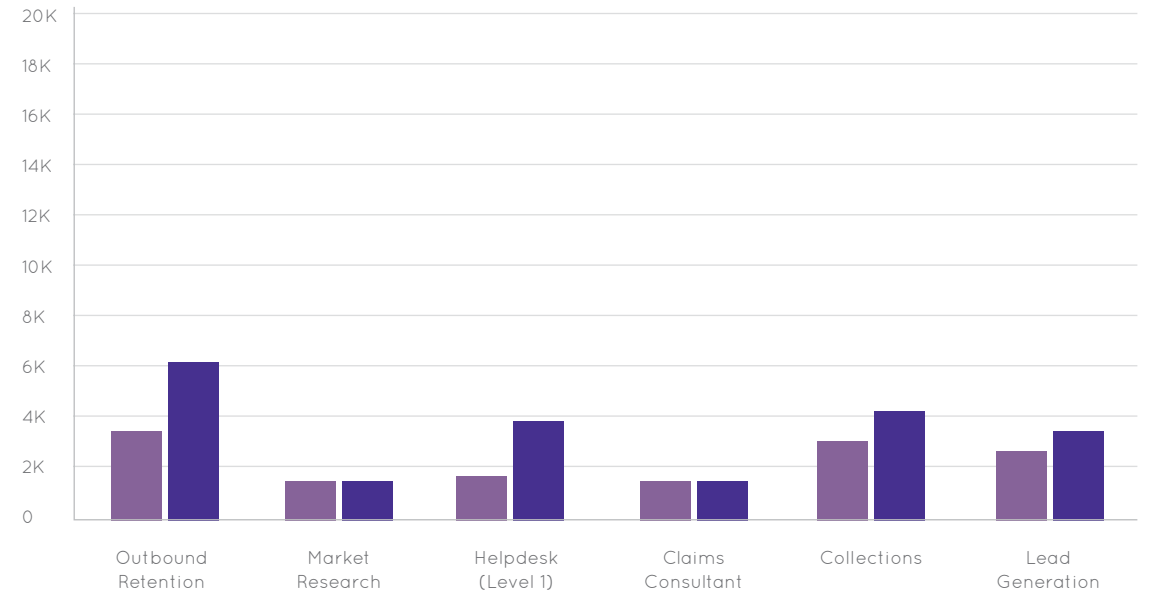
2020/21 CONTACT CENTRE
BEST PRACTICE REPORT

FRONTLINE AGENT SALARY & BONUS/COMMISSIONS

	Average Base Salary	Pay individual bonus	Pay combined team & individual bonus	Average Performer Bonus	Top Performer Average Bonus
Outbound Retention	\$55,115 + super	19%	0%	\$2,888	\$5,875
Market Research	\$47,380 + super	4%	7%	<\$1,000	<\$1,000
Helpdesk (Level 1)	\$56,313 + super	10%	3%	\$1,625	\$2,563
Claims Consultant	\$52,100 + super	13%	3%	<\$1,000	\$1,010
Collections	\$58,906 + super	16%	0%	\$2,555	\$3,929
Lead Generation/ Appointment Setting	\$53,325 + super	19%	3%	\$2,182	\$2,600

Average performer bonus
 Top performer average bonus

FRONTLINE AGENT BONUS/COMMISSIONS



SALARIES

TEAM LEADER SALARY AND BONUS

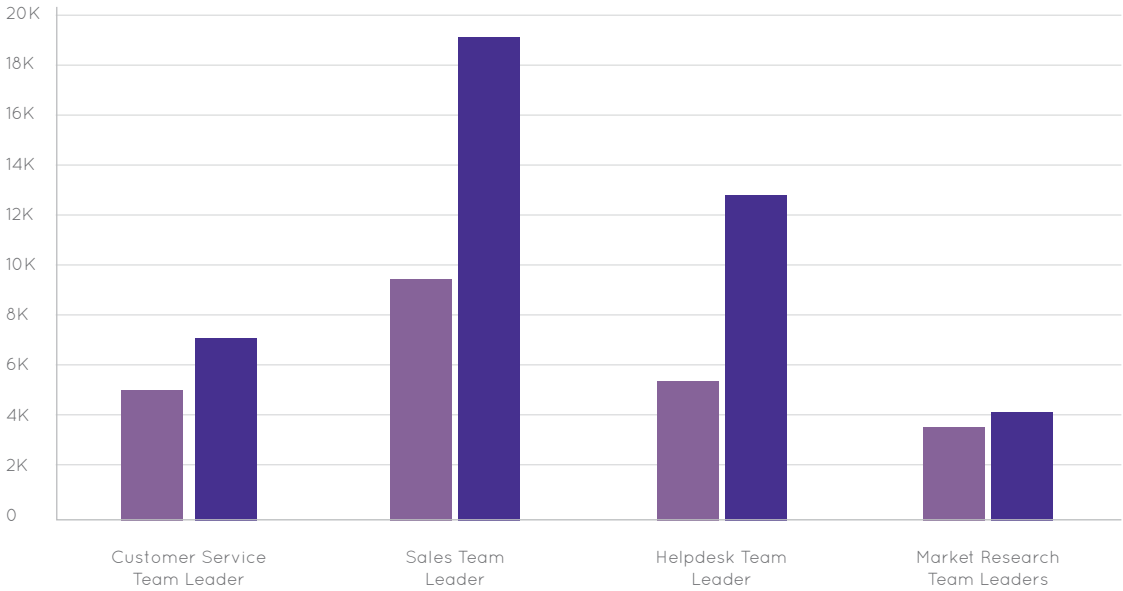
	Average Base Salary	Average Performer Bonus	Top Performer Average Bonus
Customer Service Team Leader	\$74,500 + super	\$4,500	\$7,000
	■ 30% of base salaries are over \$80,000 + super.		
Sales Team Leader	\$74,800 + super	\$9,800	\$18,500
	■ Experienced Sales Team Leaders remain the most challenging Team Leader role to recruit for.		
Helpdesk Team Leader	\$76,500 + super	\$5,000	\$12,500
Market Research Team Leader	\$71,000 + super	\$3,750	\$4,000

■ Average performer bonus ■ Top performer average bonus



Recruitment of high quality Team Leaders is a real challenge. Sales and Helpdesk Team Leaders are in short supply, and while Customer Service Team Leader application numbers are higher many contact centres struggle to determine a candidates’ coaching, development and leadership skills.

TOP PERFORMER AVERAGE BONUS



SALARIES

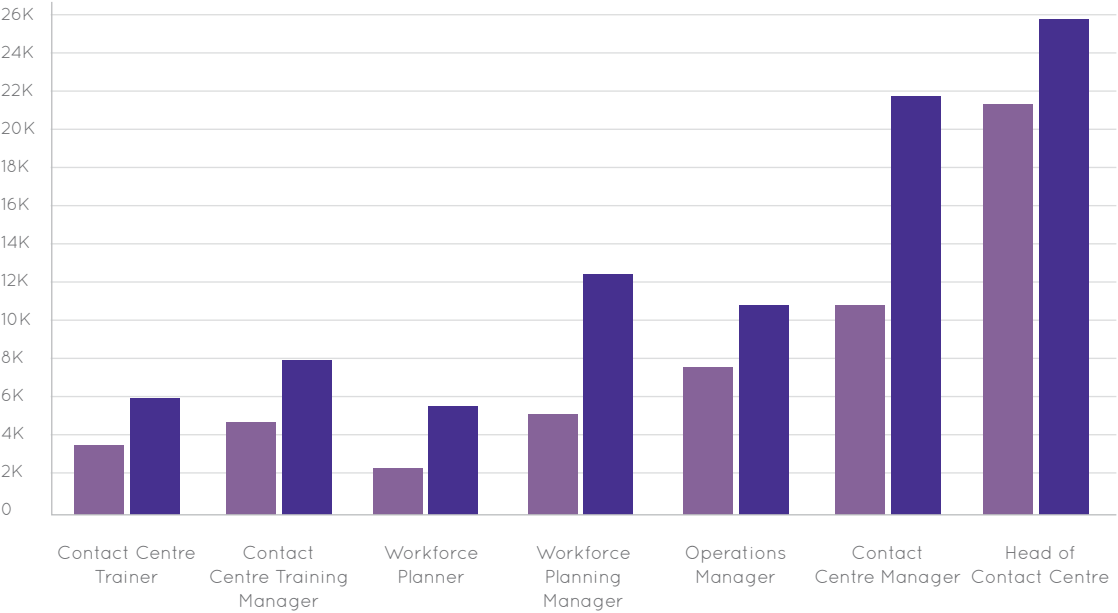
LEADERSHIP & SPECIALISED ROLE SALARIES

	Average Base Salary	Average Performer Bonus	Top Performer Average Bonus
Contact Centre Trainer	\$76,000 + super	\$3,500	\$5,700
Contact Centre Training Manager	\$96,200 + super	\$4,100	\$7,300
Workforce Planner	\$90,000 + super	\$2,000	\$4,400
Workforce Planning Manager	\$130,000 + super	\$4,900	\$11,000
	■ Workforce Planning Managers (and Workforce Planners) have been in extreme demand over the last 18 months, significantly driving up the average salary by around 20-25%.		
Operations Manager	\$109,700 + super	\$7,000	\$9,900
Contact Centre Manager	\$132,300 + super	\$10,300	\$19,000
	■ Over 90% of Contact Centre Manager base salaries fall between \$120,000 - \$140,000 + super.		
Head of Contact Centre	\$178,300 + super	\$21,000	\$25,500
	■ There is a broad range of base salaries for Head of Contact Centre, ranging between \$150,000 - \$250,000 + super. The top 35% of performers received a bonus exceeding \$40,000.		

Average performer bonus

Top performer average bonus

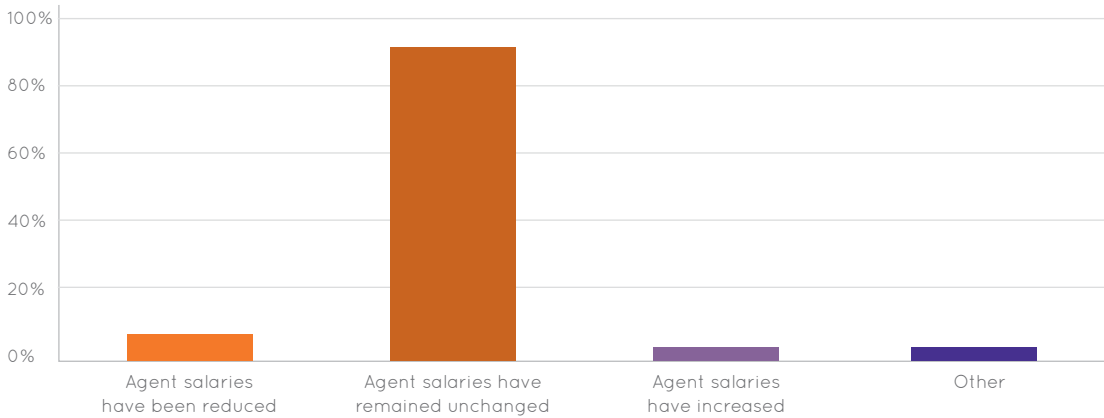
TOP PERFORMER AVERAGE BONUS



SALARIES

HOW HAS THE PANDEMIC IMPACTED AGENT SALARIES?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Agent salaries have been reduced	5%
Agent salaries have remained unchanged	89%
Agent salaries have increased	3%
Other	3%



Compared with the broader community, frontline agent salaries have remained resilient during the pandemic. The few contact centres that have reduced salaries have also reduced hours/days worked to mirror the cut.

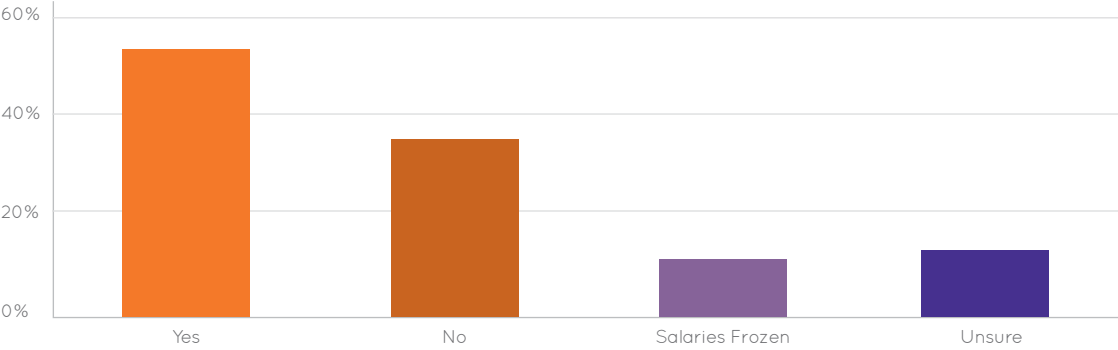


PANDEMIC RESPONSE

2020/21 CONTACT CENTRE
BEST PRACTICE REPORT

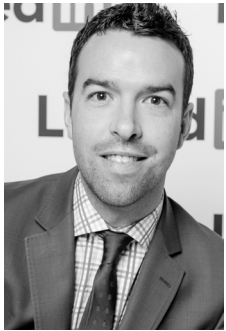
DO YOU EXPECT YOUR AGENT SALARIES TO CHANGE OVER NEXT 12 MONTHS?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
Yes - a normal/annual type increase will occur	48%
No - salary increases are unlikely over the next 12 months	33%
All salaries are currently frozen with no fixed end date to the freeze	8%
Unsure	11%



SALARIES SUMMARY

2020/21 CONTACT CENTRE
BEST PRACTICE REPORT



James Witcombe

Director
SMAART Recruitment
james@smaart.com.au

Salaries across the contact centre industry experienced steady growth pre-pandemic as demand for talent across all levels remained strong. Frontline agents continued to be keenly sort after in the market with many spoilt for choice. As this report shows employee engagement remains a pivotal tool for contact centres to attract and maintain staff, particularly frontline agents.

Salaries during and post-pandemic look to remain strong when compared with the broader community. 89% of salaries remained unchanged during the pandemic and almost half of all contact centres are still expecting a normal/annual increase to occur in the coming 12 months. Whether this actually occurs or becomes delayed as the time approaches only time will tell.

Bonus and commission structures continue to vary significantly across the industry. The Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry has seen a significant overhaul to bonuses in those industries, with many being removed and salary packages restructured. For other industries there is still great opportunity for top performing staff to be handsomely rewarded.

Sales Team Leaders, Workforce Planning Managers and those with senior management experience in the collections industry remaining highly sort after. Contact centres and recruiters alike will continue to experience a shortage of candidates in these key roles in the coming year.

Attracting top talent post-pandemic when job security is key will be a challenge for all contact centres.

“Salaries during and post-pandemic look to remain strong when compared with the broader community. 89% of salaries remained unchanged during the pandemic and almost half of all contact centres are still expecting a normal/annual increase to occur in the coming 12 months.”

CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2020/21 CONTACT CENTRE
BEST PRACTICE REPORT

As this report goes to print in the latter half of 2020 our industry is still in an environment of flux in Australia and will be for some time. We have many questions about what our future contact centres will look like – we trust that this report will be a tool to help you on your journey.

The role of the leader of the contact centre is to set the direction. Through challenging times this can be more difficult than it normally is. The responsibility is large, but the opportunity to make a real impact has never been more available.

What was best practice last year, what best practice is at the moment and what it will be in the future is the result of our industry continuing to adapt, evolve and improve.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of our partners:

- Sean McGinn, The Agile Contact Centre
- Alex Boland, COPC
- Justin Tippet, CX Central
- Adam Spencer, Verint
- Tom Rujis, AP Psychology

All contributors to this report are passionate about the contact centre industry. They want to see our industry thrive and flourish in Australia – we encourage you to seek their guidance, support and expertise.

“2020 was a year of dramatic change in the contact centre industry. 2021 will hopefully be a year where we return to some stability. Our industry has changed forever, and this brings opportunity to better serve our customers, our staff and our organisations.”



ABOUT US

We are Australia's leading contact centre recruitment agency. From high volume bulk agent recruitment drives through to senior and executive placements, we pride ourselves on being able to deliver exactly what Australian contact centres need. Be it for sales, service, specialist support, collections, helpdesk or processing we know how to attract the best candidates for you.

Producing the Contact Centre Best Practice Report is one way we demonstrate our deep understanding of the industry, and it's this deep understanding that allows us to recruit for you with confidence. We are able to work closely with our clients to not only advise and guide on recruitment, but on many other operational aspects of running a successful contact centre. Our networks and support are truly valued by our clients.

We are proud to be recognised across the recruitment industry for multiple awards over the past three years, including:

- Winner** Excellence In Client Service 2020 (RCSA Industry Awards)
- Winner** Best Recruitment Agency For Candidate Experience 2019 (RCSA Industry Awards)
- Runner Up** Most Innovative Recruitment Agency 2019 (Seek SARA Awards)
- Winner** Best Recruitment Brand 2018 (RI Awards)
- Winner** Corporate Social Responsibility 2018 Award (RI Awards)

Across Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide & Brisbane nobody knows the contact centre industry better than we do. When you are next looking to recruit staff we would love the opportunity to discuss with you how we can partner with you and give you the best recruitment experience you have ever had.

For more information visit [smaat.com.au](https://www.smaat.com.au)



CONTACT CENTRE MENTORING PROGRAM 2021

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A MENTOR IN 2021? OR WOULD YOUR TEAM LEADERS BENEFIT FROM HAVING A MENTOR?

Our 2020 Program saw 120 industry leaders gain valuable experience through mentoring, networking and growing together. The program is fully funded by SMAART Recruitment.

The Contact Centre Mentoring Program is designed to provide those who are in a junior to midlevel leadership position (such as a Team Leader) the opportunity to learn from peers within the industry to develop leadership, communication and decision making skills.

Mentors and Mentees are matched together based on their goals, objectives and professional background, who then meet on a regular basis over 10 months to discuss and plan how to actualise these goals. Participants are given the required skills through an initial induction training session and are guided through the course.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- Mentors and Mentees are matched based on application details submitted.
- Mandatory separate inductions for both Mentors and Mentees are run in the first month, at which time the details and objectives of the program are outlined (Induction Training provided).
- Monthly mentoring commences between matched Mentor and Mentee pairs.
- Ongoing program support provided by SMAART Recruitment.

TIME EXPECTATIONS AND DATE COMMITMENTS

- Commencement – 2 hour group induction.
- Participants commit for 10 months, meeting monthly for 1 hour.

ELIGIBILITY

- Mentees need to have at least 6 months of experience in a leadership position (e.g Assistant Team Leader, Team Leader so on). Mentees may also be Operations Managers or Contact Centre Managers wanting a Mentor.
- Mentors need to have at least 3 years of experience in a senior leadership position (e.g Contact Centre Manager, Head of Contact Centre, Head of Sales/Customer Service).

SMAART Recruitment will work closely with all participants to pair mentees and mentors together appropriately. This includes understanding industry competitors and ensuring that all pairs can work together in an open and honest way.

To learn more and get involved visit: smaart.com.au/mentoring

