



KMS Lighthouse

Informed Engagements: 2019-20 Contact Center Information Flow Survey

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RESEARCH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY	3
CONTACT CENTER STAFFING AND CAPACITY TRENDS.....	5
CONTACT CENTER METRICS.....	8
CONTACT CENTER INFORMATION CHALLENGES.....	10
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	16



SUMMARY

It's a well-known fact that while organizations are awash in data, it still takes time for employees to find the information they need. Some surveys estimate that employees spend between 30 minutes to two hours hunting for information they need to do their jobs. If they are customer-facing employees, this is unacceptable – the challenge is to make information available at employees' fingertips so they can address customer requests as they come in. At this point, very few executives and managers – barely one in 10 – are satisfied with the availability of pertinent information to their customer contact employees.

This is one of the conclusions of a survey of 251 managers and professionals conducted by Unisphere Research amongst the subscribers of KMWorld magazine, the premier resource for strategies in knowledge, content, document and information management, in partnership with KMS Lighthouse. The survey included business leaders, managers, and contact center directors from a range of industries, with financial services and manufacturing and high tech having the largest representation.

Highlights of the survey include the following key findings:

- Investments in contact center staff are substantial. Staff sized keep expanding, regardless of any moves toward automation. Preparing agents or representatives for the elevated customer engagements requires more than one month of onboarding.
- Typical contact center agents or representatives spend an average of 10 minutes on a call, and 12 minutes in an email or social media engagement. While wait times are minimal, more than one-third still need to escalate customer requests to the next level.
- Being able to access critical information is ranked as the greatest challenge to today's contact centers. While a majority are satisfied with their knowledge management systems, this satisfaction is lukewarm. Artificial intelligence adoption is still nascent, with adoption limited to the largest shops.

Survey respondents hold various degrees of responsibility for their organizations. Close to one-fourth, 22%, are part of their companies' upper management teams, while 16% directly supervise contact centers. Nine percent work directly within contact centers on a day-to-day basis. About half hold various other types of positions, from consultants to knowledge management professionals. (See Figure 1). Respondents also demonstrate a significant degree of experience, with the vast majority, 68%, having been with their organizations longer than five years. (See Figure 2)

Respondents represent a broad range of company sizes and industries, led by financial Services, engineering/R&D, government and educational organizations. (See Figure 3 and 4.)



SUMMARY

Figure 1: Respondents' Job Roles



Figure 2: Length of Time at Current Organization

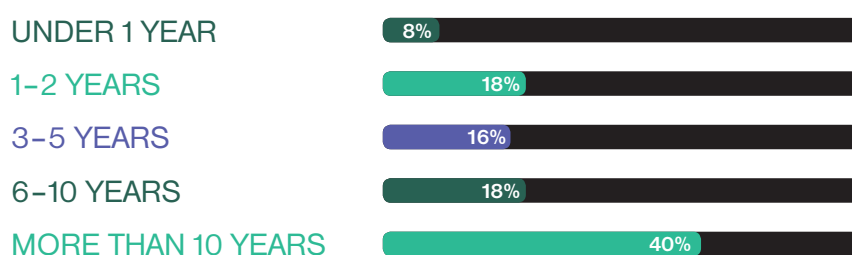
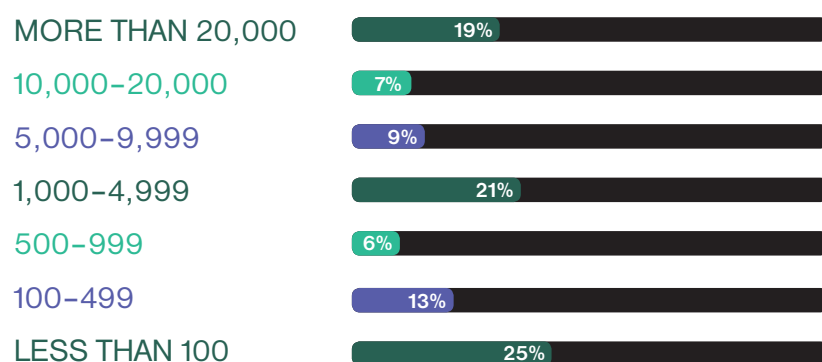
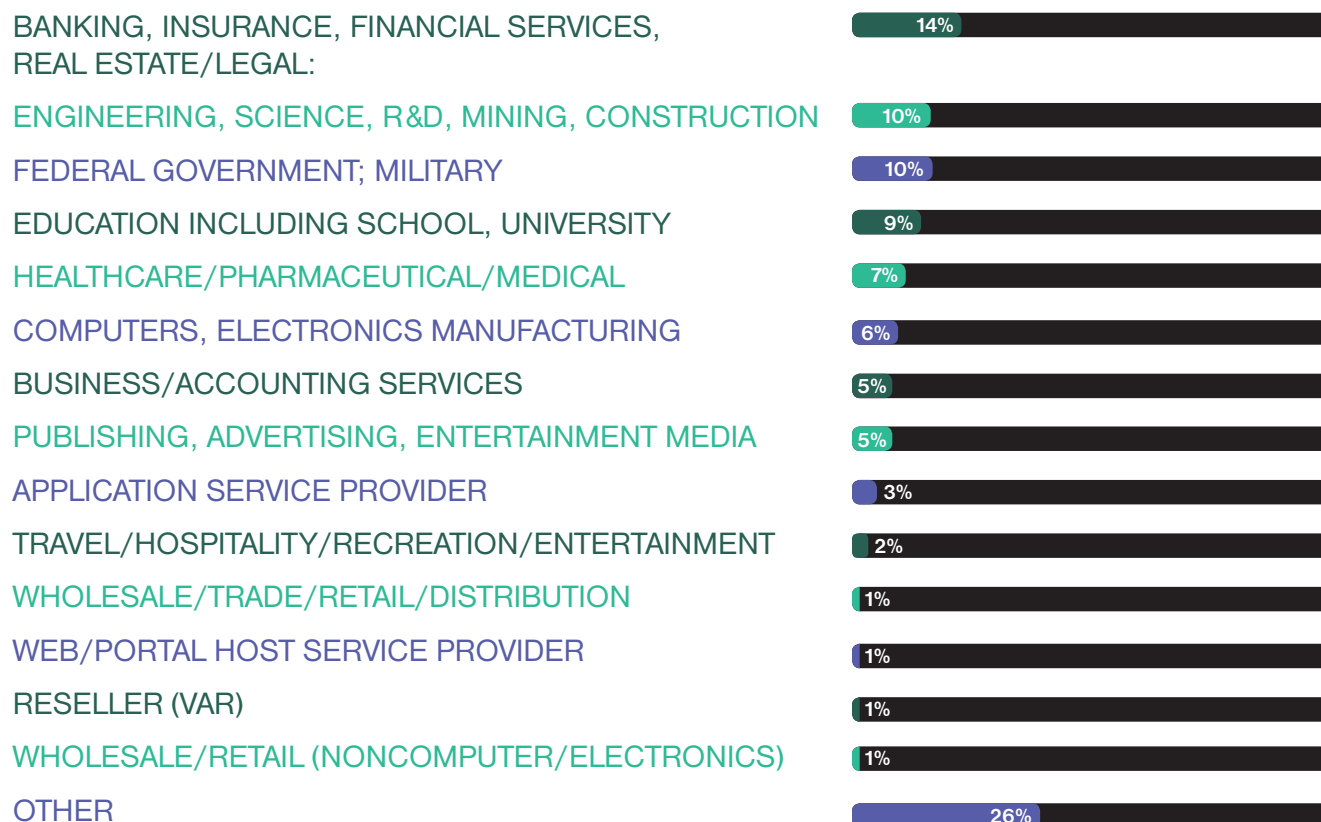


Figure 3: Respondents' Organizations—By Employee Size



SUMMARY

Figure 4: Respondents' Primary Business or Activity



On the following pages are the detailed results and analysis of today's contact center operations. Please note that while this survey report also includes data on specific metrics questions associated with contact center management. Only those able to supply metrics were included in the final calculations.

CONTACT CENTER STAFFING AND CAPACITY TRENDS

Investments in contact center staff is substantial. Staff sized keep expanding, regardless of any moves toward automation. Preparing agents or representatives for the elevated customer engagements requires more than one month of onboarding.

Respondents represent a range of call center sizes. More than half, 53 percent, oversee sites with 50 employees or less. At the other end, close to one in five managers, 19 percent, report having centers with 500 or more employees. (See Figure 5) In addition, half report their contact centers keep growing. (See Figure 6)

Overall, the majority of shops do not go over 10,000 call per month, or roughly 300 calls a day. More than one in ten sites, 13 percent, indicate they are high-volume operations – handling 100,000 or more calls a month. (See Figure 7)

Close to half of the largest contact centers in the survey, 47 percent, indicate they handle more than 100,000 calls monthly, with close to one-fourth reporting their call volume exceeds 1 million.

For the most part, onboarding new agents or representatives is a time-intensive process. One-third of managers overall report it takes a month or longer to get agents and representatives properly situated and trained to take on contact center tasks. Another 42% report the process takes between two to four weeks. (See Figure 8)

For larger contact center operations (250 or more employees), the onboarding process is even more intensive – close to half, 47 percent, indicating the process is one month or longer. This points to the substantial investments organizations make in training and equipping agents or representatives with the tools and expertise needed for customer experience.

Figure 5: Number of Contact Center Employees

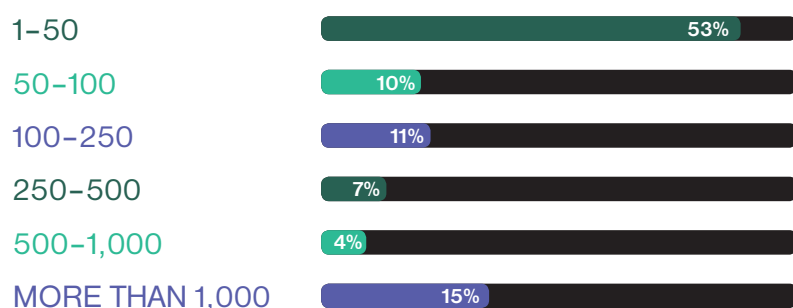
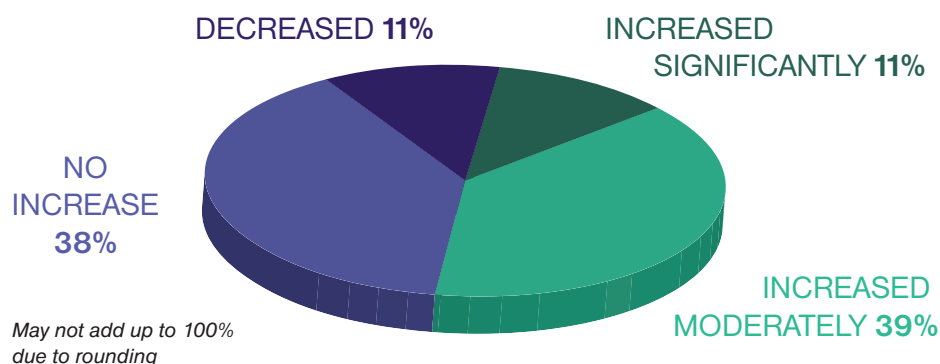
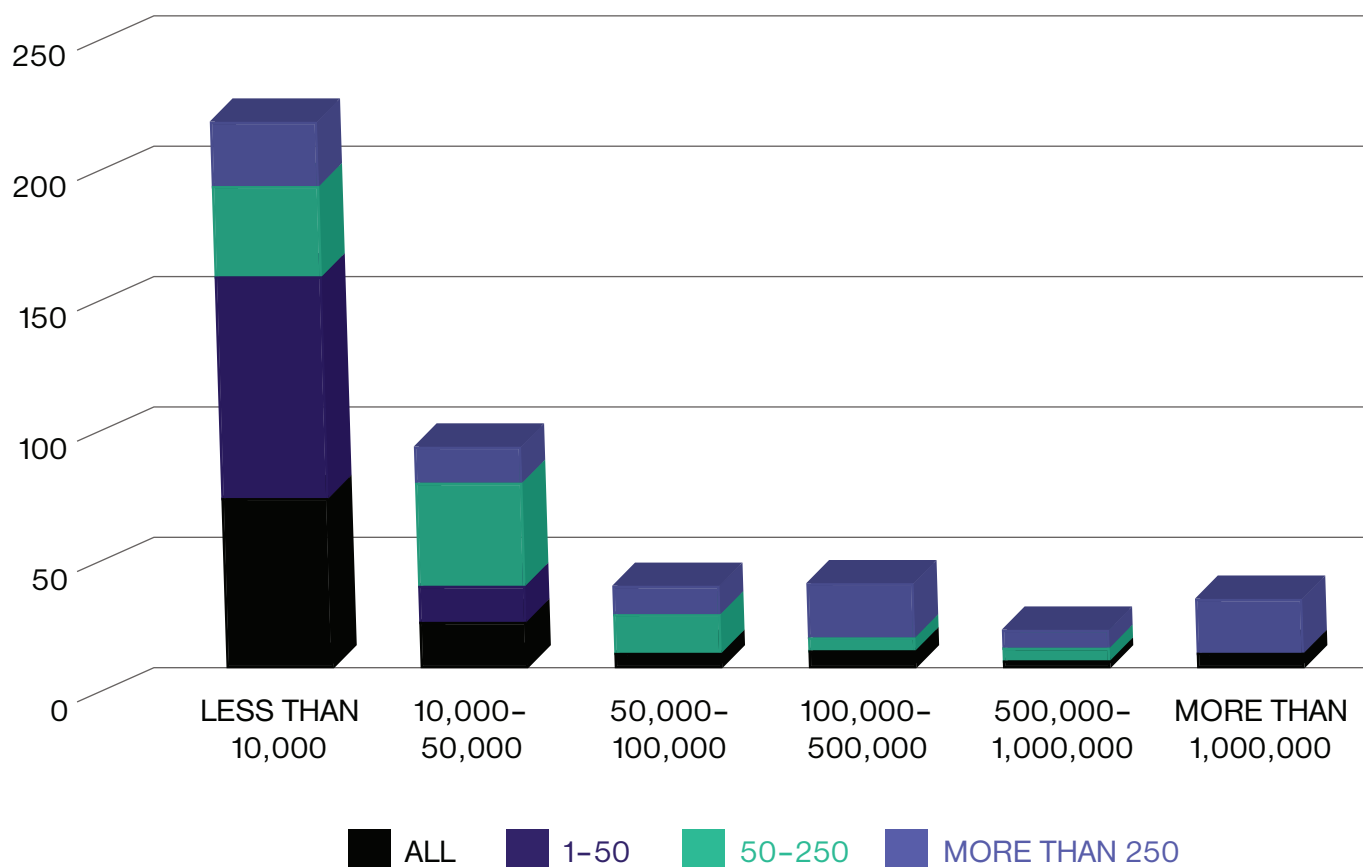


Figure 6: Changes in Contact Staff Size over Past 12 Months



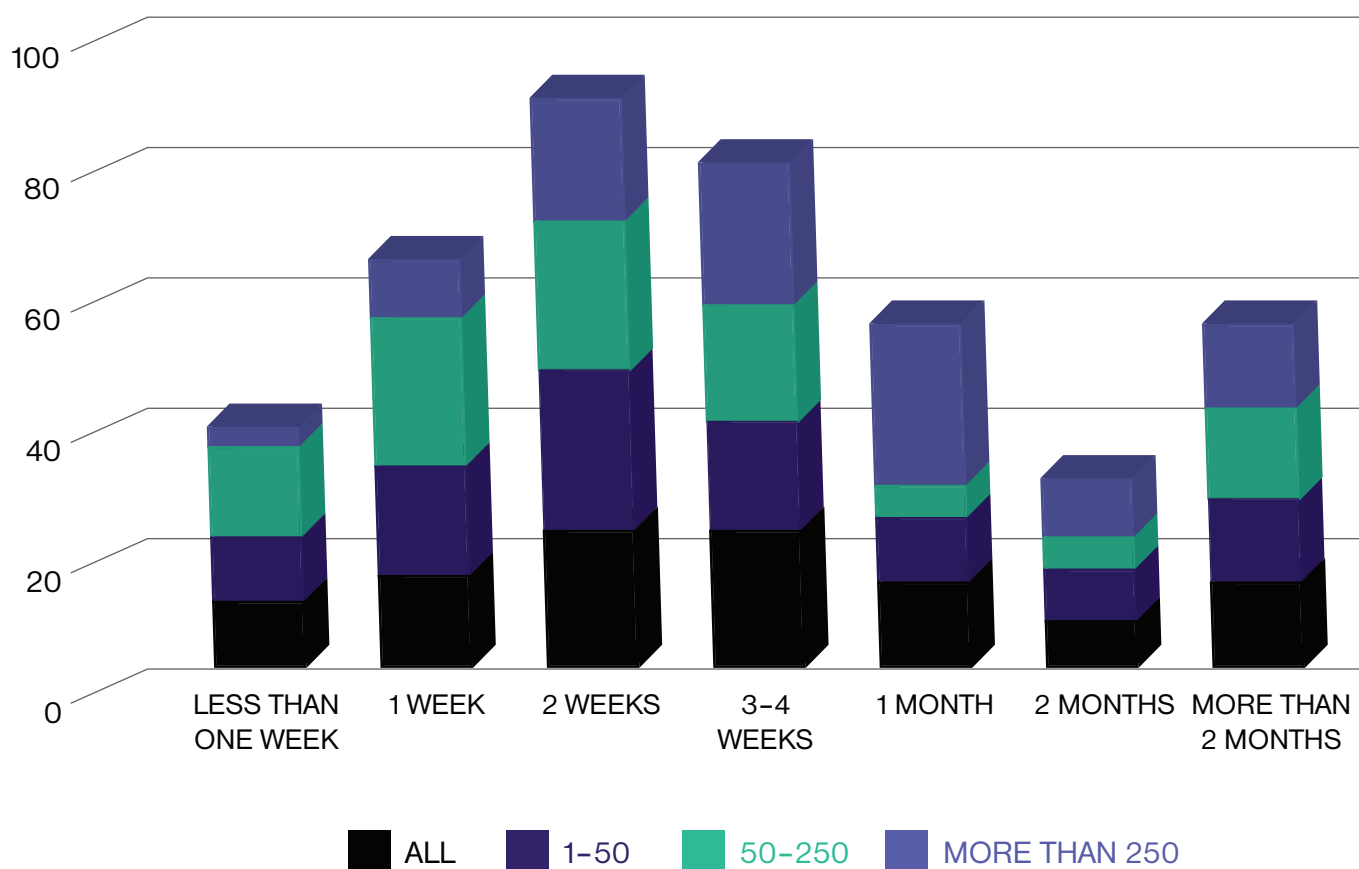
CONTACT CENTER STAFFING AND CAPACITY TRENDS

Figure 7: Calls Handled Per Month



CONTACT CENTER STAFFING AND CAPACITY TRENDS

Figure 8: Length of Time to Onboard New Agents or Representatives



CONTACT CENTER METRICS

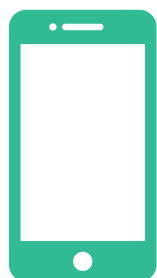
Typical contact center agents or representatives spend an average of 10 minutes on a call, and 12 minutes in an email or social media engagement. While wait times are minimal, more than one-third still need to escalate customer requests to the next level.

While many interactions can be automated through IVR systems and chatbots, that leaves longer, more difficult conversations to human representatives. The average length of time that an agent or representative spends on a single call averages 9.7 minutes, the survey finds. For online engagements (text, social media, email chat), what is the average handling time an agent or representative spends with a customer or prospect is slightly longer, averaging 11.6 minutes. For a contact center receiving 1,000 calls a day, this means 10,000 minutes of time are required. The average person may spend 450 minutes on customer contacts (in a 7.5-hour day), so a staff of at least 22 individuals is required to manage these engagements. (See Figure 9)

Along with the average of 10 minutes a represented will spend with a customer, the customer will likely have spent some time between the time they dialed and when the call is answered. While wait times are another unfortunate aspect of customer experience, and most organizations have pared this down to within a minute. (See Figure 10)

After the initial call, there's a likelihood that agents or representatives will need to escalate the request to more specialized groups within their enterprises. More than one-third of calls, 35%, often require escalation or additional support to complete a customer requires. (See Figure 11)

Figure 9



Average Time Spent on
a Single Phone Call:
9.7 minutes



Average Time Spent Responding
to Social Media or Email:
11.6 minutes

CONTACT CENTER METRICS

Figure 10: Average Customer Call Wait Times

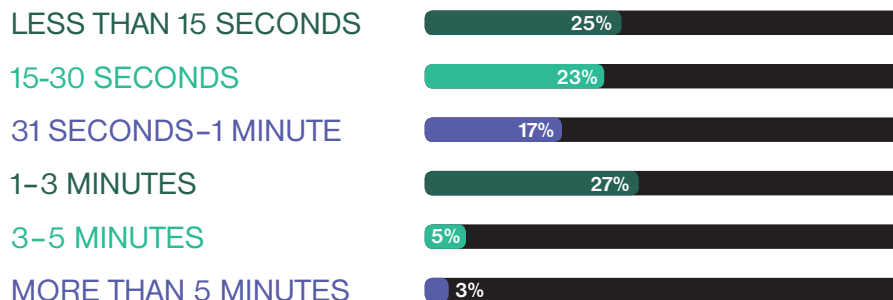
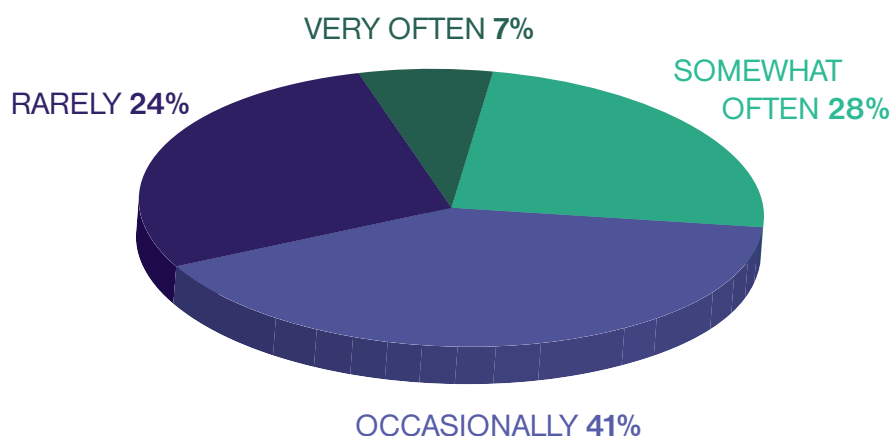


Figure 11: How Often Calls Require Escalation or Additional Support



CONTACT CENTER INFORMATION CHALLENGES

Being able to access critical information is ranked as the greatest challenge to today's contact centers. While a majority are satisfied with their knowledge management systems, this satisfaction is lukewarm. Artificial intelligence adoption is still nascent, with adoption limited to the largest shops.

Information is power, and in the case of contact centers, more powerful customer engagement. Customer experience tops the list of concerns call center managers and consultants face in managing today's operations. The second-leading issue on the minds of contact center managers is the challenge of overcoming information silos that limits their ability to gain a holistic or up-to-date view of their customers, cited by 42 percent. Similarly, access to information is also the third-ranked challenged faced, with 33 percent reporting they are having difficulties providing their agents or representatives with quicker access to the information they need to serve customers. (See Figure 12)

Difficulty accessing information ranks among the top challenges faced by contact center managers, and few would agree that their agents or representatives can get the information they need. While 72 percent indicate that information is available at least "most of the time," this feeling is lukewarm. Only 23 percent say respondents' contact center agents or representatives have access to all the information they need in a timely manner. (See Figure 13)

For larger contact centers, the situation is more acute. Only 17 percent indicate that their staff members have access to the information they need at all times.

Today's enterprise contact centers require data or information from an abundance of sources, inside and outside the organization. For the most part, agents or representatives will dip into their enterprise knowledge management systems and CRM systems, reported by 72 percent and 43 percent, respectively. At the same time, there is an abundance of other sources many contact centers are accessing. These include workforce management systems for internal help desks, and web chat and SMS text data,

as many customers talk to organizations through these channels. Some contact centers will even look at external web data to help customers. (See Figure 14)

For larger contact centers, there's a heightened reliance on data sources such as knowledge management and CRM systems, but less so on external web data. Larger contact centers also focus on providing access to performance metrics as well.

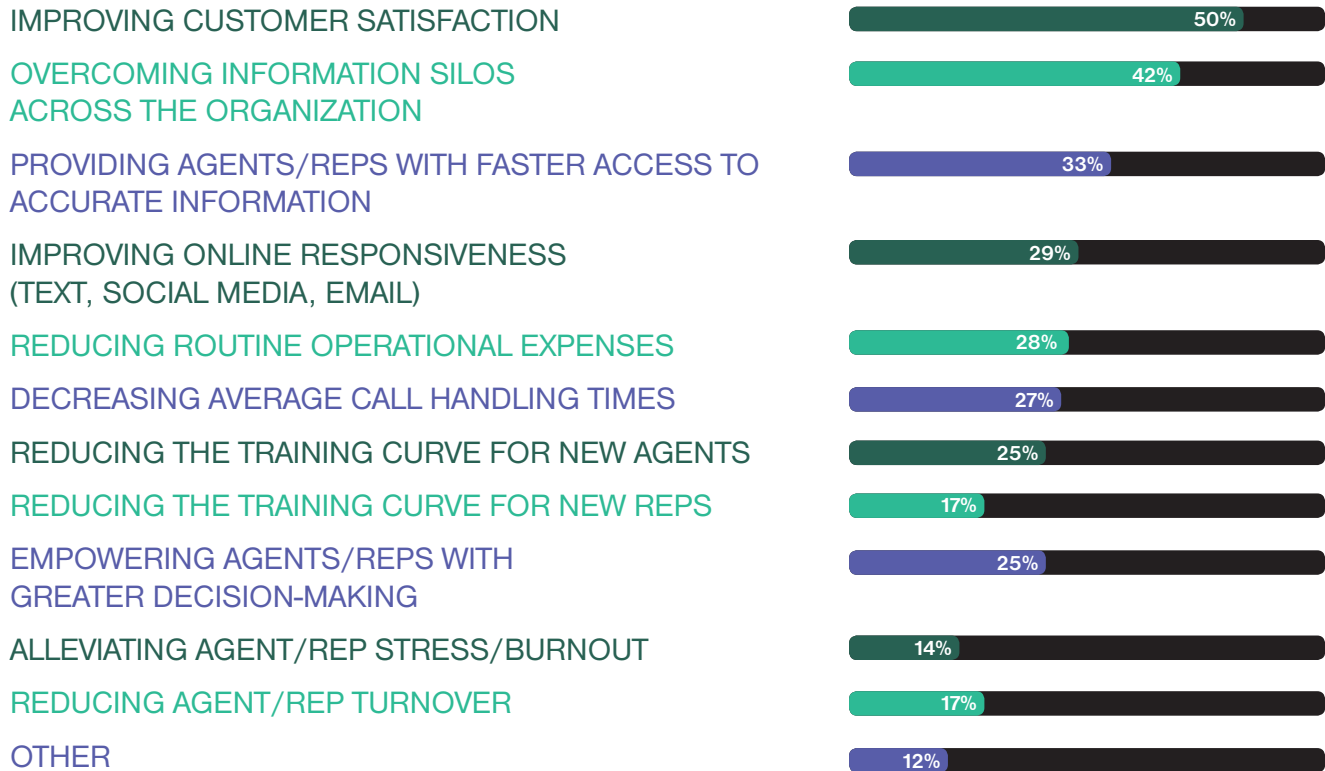
Overall, a slim majority of respondents, 51%, are generally satisfied are respondents with their primary knowledge management solutions. However, this satisfaction is lukewarm at best – only 10 percent say they are "completely satisfied." This suggests that technology solutions are still evolving, and as more types of information are required, contact center managers are looking for more relevant and real-time access to the information they need. (See Figure 15)

AI and machine learning have great potential to take on many of the interactive tasks now performed by humans, as well as to provide real-time information to agents and representatives. Close to half, 45 percent of contact center managers report they are at least interested in applying AI and machine learning to their operations. However, at this time, only 11 percent are actually working with AI solutions to some degree. (See Figure 16) Among those working with or piloting AI, the goal is to enable greater self-service among customers. Many say they are seeing reduced costs with their limited implementations. (See Figure 17)

Larger contact centers are further along with AI deployments. More than one-fourth, 27 percent of large shops are already working with the technology, compared to only three percent of their smaller counterparts.

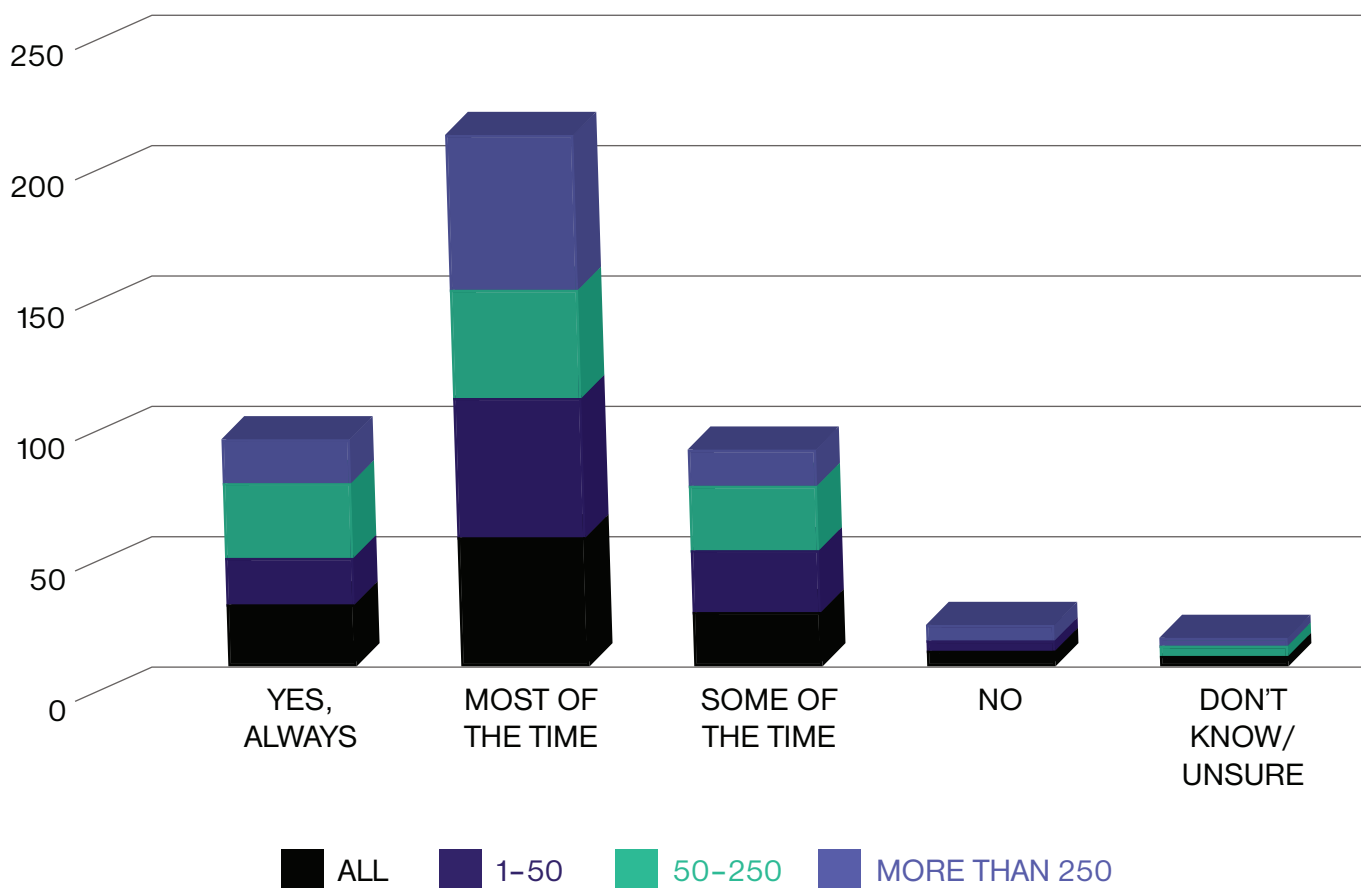
CONTACT CENTER INFORMATION CHALLENGES

Figure 12: Leading Contact Center Challenges



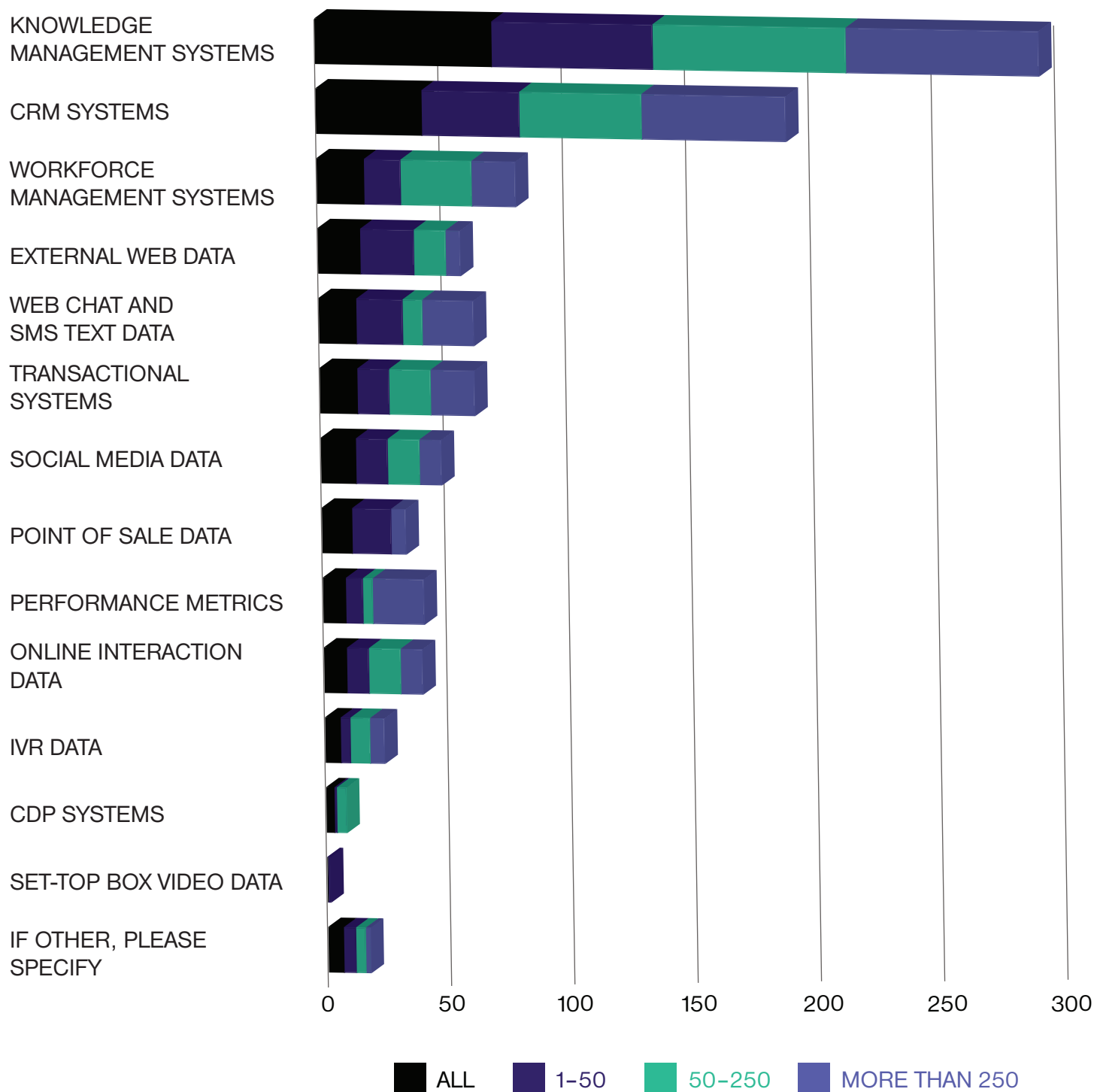
CONTACT CENTER INFORMATION CHALLENGES

Figure 13: Contact Center Agents/Representatives have Access to all Information They Need in a Timely Manner?



CONTACT CENTER INFORMATION CHALLENGES

Figure 14: Primary Sources of Contact Center Information



CONTACT CENTER INFORMATION CHALLENGES

Figure 15: Satisfaction with Primary Knowledge Management Solution

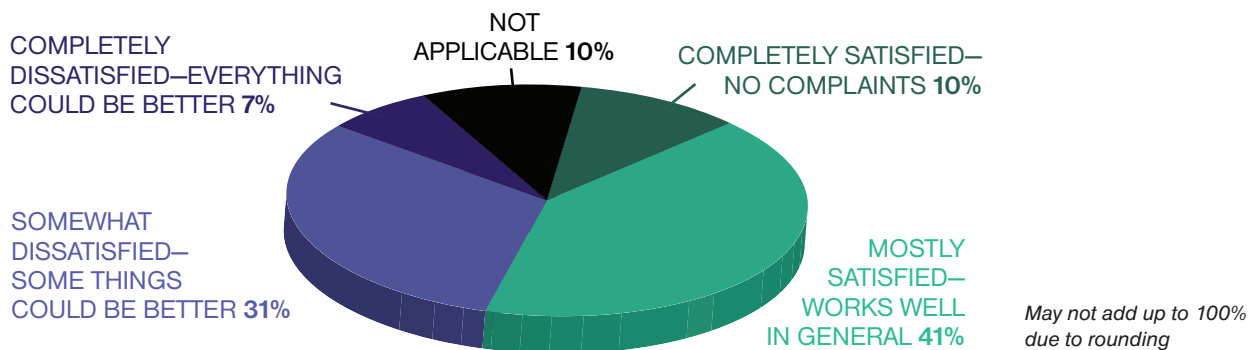
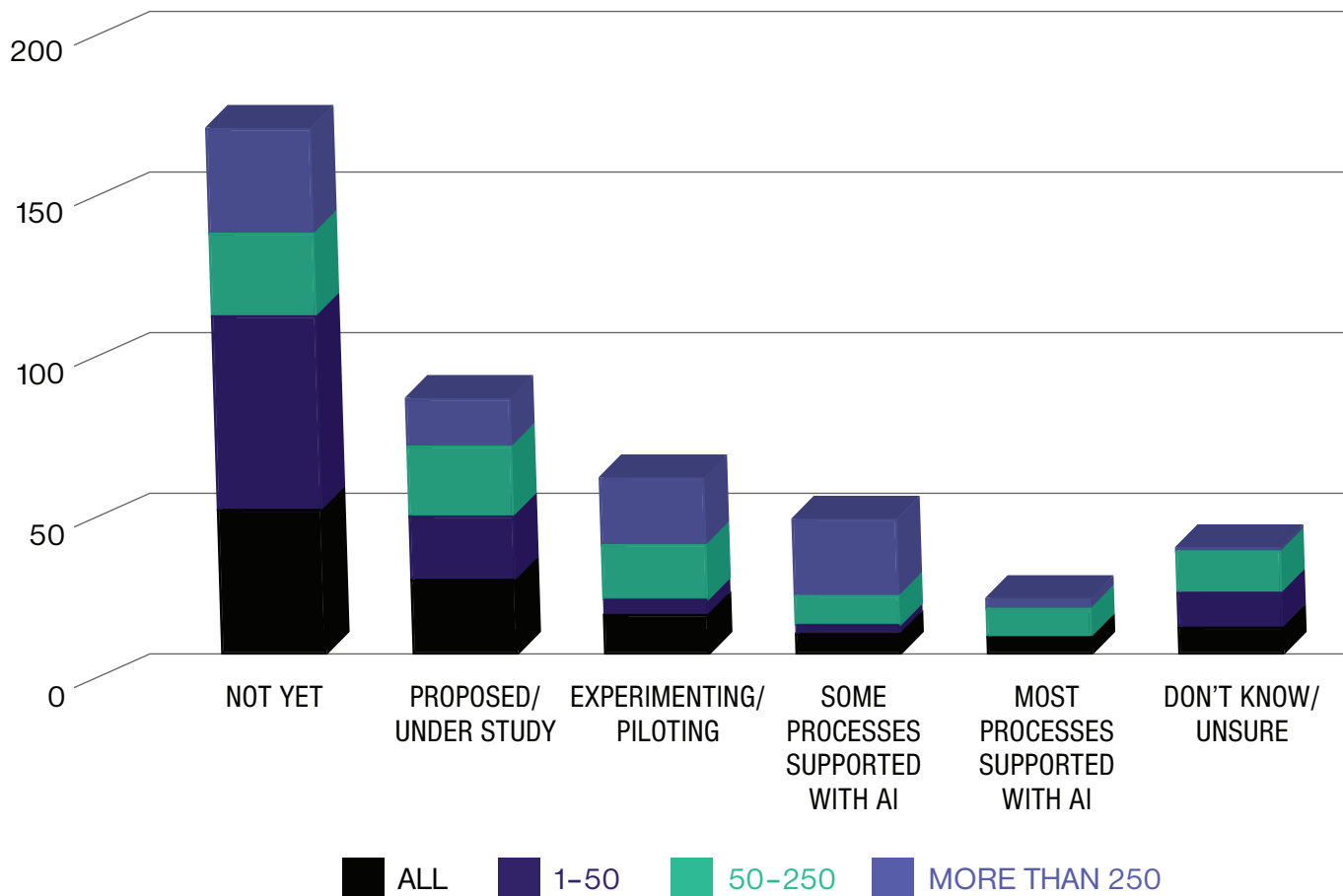
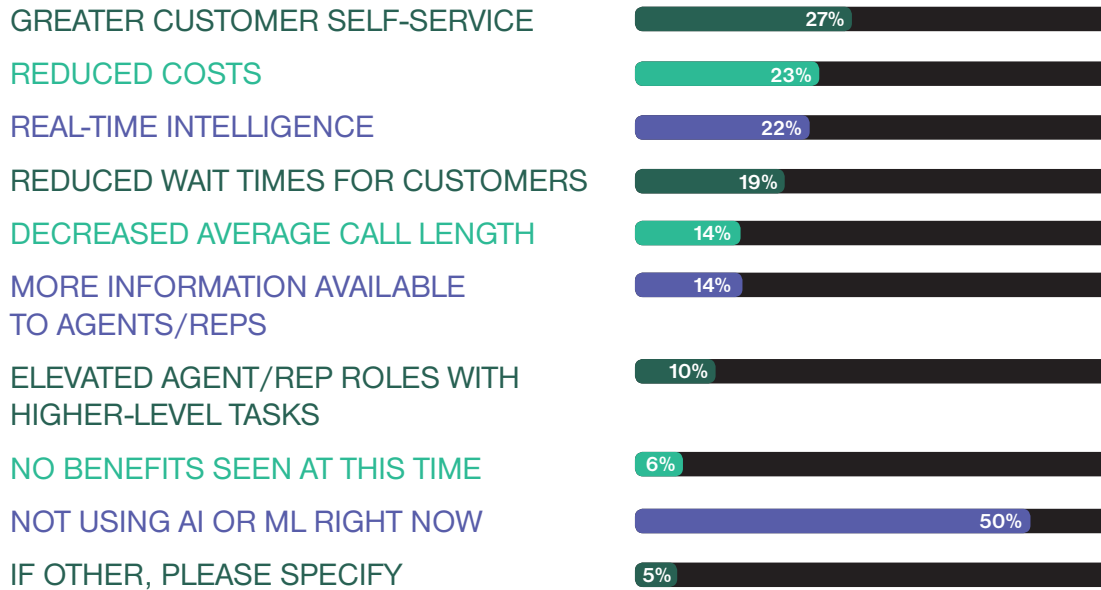


Figure 16: Contact Center Leveraging AI and Machine Learning?



CONTACT CENTER INFORMATION CHALLENGES

Figure 17: Benefits Seen from AI and Machine Learning



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Delivering superior customer experience will always be the differentiator that elevates organizations above the competition, but they must keep evolving to keep up with their customers' preferences and requirements. This consists of supporting omnichannel approaches to serving customers – and today's contact centers are on the cutting edge of this revolution. The challenge is for agents and representatives to have, at the fingertips, the information they need – whether if they're engaging customers by phone call, email, online chats, social media, or any other mode of communicating. Moreover, the necessity to provide employees a centralized location to answer customer questions, access call scripts and follow troubleshooting procedures and guidance is ever more critical to ensure a consistency.

The results of this survey point to a rising need for improving processes technology which in due course will impact on training. Here are some ways to provide value to the organization and deliver superior customer experience:

- Align and collaborate with the business. Contact centers are often the only direct engagements customers have with the business. It's key to have perspective on what customers are seeking from the business.
- Eliminate data and information silos. Contact center agents or representatives need to be able to access varied data sources on a moments' notice. Organizations need to focus on developing an enterprise platform that enables real-time access to data directly or through integrations to additional technologies and make it relatively easier to add data sources as necessary.
- Automate as much as possible. This includes adopting AI and machine learning to not only engage directly with customers, but also to assist contact center agents and representatives in acquiring the right information and insights as needed.
- Provide ongoing training and education. Contact center representatives are increasingly seeing their roles elevated to more difficult customer issues or requests. This requires enhanced people skills, as well as a sharper understanding of business priorities. Adopting a centralized knowledge platform provides employees that same central location available during training and on-the-job vastly reducing on-boarding and ongoing training.



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