2015 global contact centre benchmarking report

summary report

2015

about the global contact centre benchmarking report

The Global Contact Centre
Benchmarking Report

Launched in
1997 by Merchants, Dimension Data's **subsidiary contact centre specialist**

18 years of trends, performance analysis, and best practice techniques

6 core review areas
spanning innovative strategies for operations and technology to self- and assisted-service solutions

Supported by **over 30** of the world's leading industry groups and associations

Annual global research study
of multichannel interactions and the contact centre

Facts about the report

A comprehensive, global overview …

Frequently cited by industry analysts and quoted by the media, the Dimension Data Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report is widely acknowledged to be the most useful, authoritative and comprehensive report of its kind. It's designed to provide a single point of reference on key aspects affecting customer management within today's contact centres. We believe it to be the most extensive global overview of its type.

... based on relevant research

Our Report is based on research conducted via a comprehensive survey. We refresh the survey each year to ensure we're capturing the information that's most relevant to our industry and its future.

... why benchmarking

Benchmarking provides a vitally important reference point. It helps organisations gain insight into future trends, the ways in which their customers are likely to behave, and the performance levels they need to attain or aspire to. But it's also more than that …

… supported by an online portal

Our Benchmarking Comparison Portal complements the Report and allows you to filter data at eight levels, export content, and build your own presentations.

introduction: engagement models – go digital, or die

Contact centres have undergone an irreversible evolution over the last decade. As evidence of that, the results of the 2015 Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report confirm a continued, dramatic change. **Digital contact – in the form of email, web chat, social media, and self-service channels – continues its explosive growth as popular engagement method.**

This change strikes at the heart of tradition. It means that more and more contact centre customers around the world no longer want to use the telephone to communicate with organisations. In fact, should the evolution continue at its current pace, our research shows that **digital will overtake voice-based contact within two years.** Why? Because customers demand it. The new generation of tech-savvy consumers entering the market – mostly Generation Y – use the phone only as a last resort for queries that couldn't be solved in any other way. Customers younger than 40 **would much rather use social media and web chat** than any other way of achieving their desired service outcomes.

So, for contact centres, the message is clear: incorporate digital channels into your overall engagement strategy, or face extinction. That's why our 2015 Report investigates the industry impact of the move to digital, as well as the marked effect it has on the contact centre's DNA.

In addition, we analyse the current state, development gaps, business impacts, and emerging trends driven by **the growing need for an integrated experience in an omnichannel environment.** Customers not only want access to multiple engagement methods, but also want a frictionless, easy, and immediate journey across channels.

This has tightened organisations' focus on the customer. Nearly three-quarters recognise the contact centre as an important competitive differentiator and gauge its performance predominantly by the impact it has on customer experience. The result is greater pressure on data and analysis. **Analytics is seen by the majority of contact centres as the most likely factor to change the industry over the next five years.** But the challenge is that **many aren't measuring the performance of digital channels well enough yet.** It's particularly worrying that four out of ten centres still have no data analysis capability at all. So, if the digital revolution is to be embraced appropriately, there's ample room for improvement and growth.

This is the 18th year since Dimension Data started publishing the Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report and it marks the most important industry change we've seen in the last 30 years: the growing irrelevance of the telephone-centric model. Our findings are based on responses from 901 participants, covering 12 sectors in 72 countries. The Report itself comprises six chapters, 400 data points, and over 90 charts.

The Report provides you with insights into the emerging challenges that affect contact centres as they advance to a new age of digital contact. They'll need to build and operate new technology-enabled environments. But they should also employ and retain motivated and engaged individuals who are skilled across multiple channels and empowered to help customers resolve their requests regardless of the way in which they choose to make contact.

What sets our approach apart is that we don't just observe; we also give answers. Rest assured that our advice is sound. Dimension Data has leading abilities and experience in delivering communications, collaboration, and contact centre solutions to organisations around the world. Our portfolio of solutions and services combines the expertise of our Customer Interactive Solutions business with Merchants' 30-year history of customer management consulting and delivery.

We hope that you enjoy reading this Summary Report as it highlights areas that require your attention and suggests appropriate, practical actions to take. It's also a taste of the value you can look forward to in the full 2015 Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report.

Further information available at: **www.dimensiondata.com/ccbenchmarking**

contact centres – going digital…

The 2015 Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report highlights a dramatic evolution in the industry, as digital interaction continues its explosive growth as contact method. The graph below provides a more detailed breakdown of this shift.

Telephone
IVR touchtone
IVR speech
Email
Web chat
Social media - Facebook, Twitter, etc.
Smartphone application
SMS text / Instant messaging
Video chat
Internet website (peer-to-peer systems)

2015
2013
2006

Ten years ago there was no **web chat, smart phone apps, social media,** and very little **email.** Today, digital interactions account for over **35% of all interactions** and, at the **current rate, will overtake voice in two year's time.**

The shift from voice to digital interactions

Going digital – the industry is massively unprepared:

- Customers want a frictionless, easy, and immediate journey on channels of their choice. They want a connected omnichannel journey across channels.
- Complexity levels are intensifying as contact centres evolve into channel resolution hubs.
- Resource models need a broader approach – cost and effort measures are frequently ignored, with digital as the worst affected.
- Analytics are neglected and information systems are not integrated.
- Customer experience levels are cited as key, yet satisfaction levels are dropping year on year.
- Rising IT dependency is driving cloud and hybrid ownership: technology dependencies will force improved integration across hybrid architecture models (of hosted and owned IT).

Key findings
2015 Benchmark Report

75% of companies recognise service as a competitive differentiator: up 18% in two years. But c-sat levels down **4th year** in succession

Up to 40% say IT doesn't meet current needs
And nearly 80% say current systems won't meet future needs

74% see overall interactions increasing in 2 yrs

42% say voice traffic will decrease

Non-voice to rise in 87%

23% drop in **direct ownership models**
34 % of contact centres are planning for a **hosted solution**

Social media is already 1st choice for **Gen Y (globally)**
Yet 6 in 10 contact centres have no capacity

Omnichannel will become a necessity. It needs a **joined-up approach**

Analytics, will be key in the next 5 years, but 40% have no capability

Highlights of the 2015 Report

strategy and innovation

Not long before digital will dominate

strategy and innovation summary

Most important strategic performance measurement is the 'Customer experience'

Customer experience levels have **dropped** for the **4th consecutive year**

57% of companies can relate improving customer experience levels to **revenue/profit growth**

Efficiency dominates

Call deflection top priority focus for contact centres

The next step is to try **optimise** the experience & benefit

53% highlight **analytics** as doing most to reshape the industry in the next 5 years

Customer demands are forcing strategy rethinks

42% say voice traffic will **decrease**

74% forecast an **uplift** in **overall interactions**

75% of organisations view the contact centre as a **key differentiator**

A quarter retain a **cost centre** mentality

A major change is occurring, not just in the structure of contact centres, but also across the broader service industry. The digital revolution is forcing us to adapt or die. It's time to help your contact centre face the change and take the first steps towards a dawning future.

The telephone-centric contact centre stereotype is no longer valid. In some areas, digital interactions are starting to exceed voice contacts. Strategically, there's a shift in mindset from mass service to mass personalisation. Organisations have started to recognise that, out of all the changes in the market, increased digital interaction offers the most opportunity.

Big Data and analytics tools are predicted to be the biggest trend to shape the contact centre industry over the next five years. Understanding the intricacies of individual transactions, as well as the context of customer behaviour over multiple contacts and channels, is paramount. It will help the organisation address customers' issues, shape their experiences, and enrich the engagement, creating greater value for both parties.

The combination of technology that's creating an omnichannel environment and the ability to analyse and act in real-time provides powerful resources to create a productive, digital customer engagement model.

Customer engagement models are going digital. Can your organisation keep up? In the short term, it may not have a choice. Overall, 41.8% of contact centres forecast a reduction in voice contacts, while 87.0% expect an increase in non-voice interactions. Digital convenience will drive additional contacts, as acknowledged by 73.8% of contact centres that anticipate this increase within two years. This will change the shape of contact centres forever.

Channel management | 2015 Report sample question

What channels are managed by the contact centre? Percentage of contact centres | n = 875

Channel	Available now	Available within 12 months	No plans
Telephone	98.6	0.2	1.0
Email	90.4	3.8	5.5
IVR touchtone	53.6	10.2	35.2
Internet website (incl. peer-to-peer systems)	45.4	16.1	37.7
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	43.2	24.5	31.5
SMS text/ instant messaging	37.6	23.2	38.3
Web chat	33.1	37.0	28.9
Smartphone application	25.9	28.5	44.6
IVR speech	24.2	16.5	58.5
Video chat	8.3	15.2	75.0

- Available now
- Available within 12 months
- No plans

Smart apps to grow to 54% by 2016

Web chat will more than **double** to 70%

Social media already at 43%

Results

Over 50% of organisations will soon be managing a multichannel contact centre, featuring at least eight different forms of contact methods. Seven of these are digital. The mix is malleable and growing. Visual engagement has appeared on organisations' agendas, and 23.5% of contact centres will have a video chat capability within the next year.

A key challenge for contact centres is maintaining integration levels with a view to providing consistent services across channel offerings.

It's no longer enough to provide isolated channels; consumers want an omnichannel experience, that is, to use different media to complete what may be a single enquiry. These interactions need to be frictionless. At this point, the industry appears to be massively underprepared to deliver against a new set of digital requirements.

Recommendations

The increase in channels and applications that customers use for work, home, and play means that the channel strategy needs to be extensible. The capability to produce an outcome for the customer in all areas of the process is critical. Channel silos need to be removed, support strategies using bridging technologies such as web chat and call-back need to be understood and incorporated.

Empowered customer engagement teams require insights and real-time analytics to support the resolution of complex requests. The point of success is when the customer's desired outcome is achieved through an effortless experience.

Adding new channels without considering the omnichannel experience will create a confusion of contact options, which will only frustrate the customer.

customer interaction management

Analytics holds key to creating emotional triggers

interaction management summary

40% of contact centres have **no data analysis tools**

But analytics is voted **top factor to change the shape of the industry** within next 5 years

Just 24% of centres enjoy **full collaboration** on **process design** with with their **enterprise**

52% don't share **customer intelligence** outside of the contact centre

Top voted benefit of business intelligence systems is **customer experience**

50% of outsourcers agree **BIS will reduce operating costs**

75% can now **pre-identify & segment** their customers

One quarter have adopted qualification criteria (e.g. gold cards/user value)

Digital is becoming the **dominant** interaction channel

23% of companies still don't measure cost/time for **phone**

41% of companies don't measure cost/time for **web chat**

47% fail to track **email** work effort

The role of the contact centre has changed. Today, traditional call centres are most often used to support assisted-service channels, or when accessible channels aren't available or have failed. Customers want resolutions. This is where the contact centre can use emotional triggers to create brand differentiation.

Every customer contact is an opportunity to create an emotional trigger. It occurs not necessarily when a customer's issue is resolved, but when the customer is made to feel special and wanted. Customers then connect with the services and perceive the brand's value emotionally.

These triggers also help to maintain the organisation's reputation by improving a customer's perception of the engagement. Ease of resolution is a primary concern that will influence the customer's view of the organisation's services, but it's not where the desired experience should end. Contact centres can either recover, or lose a customer's loyalty. By better personalising offerings, organisations can create more opportunities for emotional triggers.

Beyond multichannel, contact centres want to create a structured omnichannel strategy. They have to determine not just what works for the consumer, but also the impact that each new interaction path may have on the business, and its positive and negative consequences. For example, are sales conversion rates stronger over the telephone, or can an assisted online interaction provide the same value?

A shift in focus is required from the success or failure of isolated customer interactions, to the success or failure of personalised integrated customer journeys. The goal should be creating genuine business value. Enhance that focus by understanding your customers' emotional triggers. Analytics holds the key.

Business information tools available | 2015 Report sample question

What business information tools are available within your contact centre?
Percentage of contact centres | n=775

Tool	%
Agent performance and capability scorecards	78.7
Data presentation – real-time/historic dashboards	69.9
Data analysis (i.e business performance, Big Data, root cause analysis, trending)	60.1
Post-contact survey capability	52.1
Data sourcing (i.e. user profile, social media, quality mgt.)	43.5
Speech/customer voice/ text analytics	22.8
Automated lesson assignment based on agent QA scores?	13.7
None of these	5.7

40% have no data **analysis tools**

But analytics voted the **top factor to change the shape of the industry** within the next 5 years

Results

As many as 40% of all contact centres still have no tools to analyse data. Digital channels are particularly exposed, with social media receiving the least attention. The most commonly adopted business information system is agent performance and capability scorecards, available to 78.7% of contact centres. Despite that, most will struggle to see the bigger picture as only 60.1% can translate these dashboards into true business performance information reports, incorporating big data trend reviews and root cause trend analyses.

Contact centres focused on outbound interactions are more likely to have data analysis systems in place than inbound-centric operations. That's because outbound contact is proactive and needs more initial information to act on, whereas inbound contact is more reactive.

Recommendations

A central challenge in getting the most useful analytics and maximum return on investment from your technology is when your data is isolated into silos. In fact, 40% of contact centre technologies aren't integrated with the wider enterprise at all. This leads to a multitude of disconnected IT systems … and a worrying prevalence of disjointed processes.

When embarking on this journey, think of your contact centre as an integral part of your enterprise architecture. New channels introduced into your contact centre must be integrated with existing channels, as well as wider business processes. Information is power!

multichannel management

Omnichannel – frictionless by design

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multichannel management summary

Social media is joint **1st choice** for **Gen Y** with **web chat, Gen X** not far behind

54% no information passed to agent when customers **drop out** of **self/assisted service**

Deflection targets are not being achieved
Poorly designed solutions, and rushed implementations have hindered uptake levels

Less than 4 in 10 centres have social media capability

28% have recruited a **dedicated team of responders**

19% are listening to customer sentiment

43% don't ever review assisted-service processes

Similar for **self-service,** where 26% who do review, do it less than yearly

Challenges: integration dominates
42% cite **ROI as a key challenge,** undoubtedly linked to common absence of cost/time effort tracking post install

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While digital is fast becoming a preference, the reality is that consumers want outcomes. A continuous and effortless transition between channels will increasingly become a competitive differentiator. In fact, it's this frictionless switching between channels that defines the omnichannel experience. And while it's now expected by consumers, the industry is still slow to catch up.

To date, digital channels have strengthened through either a rush to establish presence, or for the single purpose of cost reduction through call deflection to self-service. Obviously, these are important operational considerations and a significant change of focus is now required. A user-centric and channel-agnostic approach to customer service design has much to offer towards creating a cohesive and continuous customer experience across the organisation.

Operationally, the need for cost reduction as the primary driver for implementing self-/assisted-service channels has almost doubled in the last year. Yet, less than 40% of organisations review self-service and assisted – service channel performance on a regular basis. This means that the return on investment (ROI) is difficult to demonstrate, which impacts future investment decisions.

Organisations that can't measure the experience within digital channels are in danger of losing touch with customer sentiment. This will become a more critical issue with the continuing trend towards digital engagement.

This lack of focus on the customer experience inhibits the adoption of those channels, ironically diluting the realisation of the cost-reduction business case. At the same time, the trend is towards more digital engagement, and significant strategic emphasis is placed on customer experience. Tighter management controls, improved analytics, and more active marketing of the digital capability to customers will quickly result in volume growth which, to date, has fallen below targets.

Popularity of channels by age profile | 2015 Report sample question

Which channels are most popular with your age-profiled customers? Percentage of contact centres | n = 717

% of n	Percentage of centres that track channel popularity by age profile					
	Internet/ web chat	Social media	Electronic messaging (e.g. email, SMS)	Smartphone application	Telephone	Don't know
Generation Y (born 1981–1999)	23.9 (1st choice)	23.9 (1st choice)	20.9 (3rd choice)	19.1 (4th choice)	12.3 (5th choice)	43.5
Generation X (born 1961–1980)	20.6 (3rd choice)	11.6 (4th choice)	28.3 (2nd choice)	11.0 (5th choice)	28.5 (1st choice)	41.8
Baby boomers (born 1945–1960)	7.4 (3rd choice)	2.1 (5th choice)	24.4 (2nd choice)	2.6 (4th choice)	63.5 (1st choice)	41.8
Silent generation (born 1944)	1.8 (3rd choice)	1.0 (4th choice)	6.2 (2nd choice)	0.6 (5th choice)	90.4 (1st choice)	43.4

> **Digital is becoming a dominant contact preference for Gen Y**
>
> Gen X is starting to follow suit

Results

Social media is now the most popular contact option for Generation Y (anyone born 1981–1999, or younger than 34). These customers are our targets as future clients and drive the digital era.

For this group, the telephone is a last resort, that is, after social media, Internet/ web chat, and smartphones. These results validate our 2013/14 findings, and indicate the ever-greater preference across all customer groups for evolving channels that are driving a game-changing digital revolution.

Regionally, the only variation is the channels that Generation Y prefers above the telephone. It's the last choice in every geography and all but one sector.

The gaps are closing elsewhere too and Generation X isn't far behind. For them, electronic messaging is already on a par with the telephone as preferred channel, and Internet/web chat are just a few points behind. If these patterns continue, we'd expect to see the telephone drop to third choice (or lower) for Generation X within the next 12 months.

This trend signals the future of customer management. Yet, the results of this Report solidify past forecasts and concerns by highlighting just how little organisations know about customers leveraging digital channel interaction and how infrequently customers are asked to evaluate their experience.

Recommendations

The increasing popularity of digital channels adds urgency to the need to change channel strategy. User-centric design is crucial in ensuring the adoption of digital channels. Omnichannel is a strategy, not a technology solution – it must be trusted as such.

operations

Ease of resolution is the key to customer satisfaction

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operations summary

Customer experience
is top strategic performance measure

But has now fallen **for four years in a row**

Ease of resolution is key to C-sat

Contact choice important, but less so than being able to have enquiry resolved

91% measure quality on voice contacts
Versus **61%** on **non-voice** interactions
Less again **(51%)** on **back office** functions

75% FCR on voice contacts static for last **4 years**

2/3 (68%) of interactions handled via **non-voice channels are resolved**

Digital response times are **improving fast,** but there remains some way to go

44% of agents aren't **being prompted** to identify sales opportunities

10% have **automated systems in place** as majority rely on manual process

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For service-based contact centres, ease of resolution is ranked the top factor affecting customer satisfaction. Customers say choice is good, but they mainly want their issues resolved. They expect agents to have all the tools to help, should self-/assisted-service channels fail. First aptitude, then attitude, will meet their needs and, if paired, they'll form a significant differentiator.

More proactive management of the causes of caller propensity will improve the customers' perception of ease of resolution and, at the same time, improve cost-to-serve.

Unfortunately, quality of service is still out of sync with both traditional voice and, importantly, today's tech-savvy consumer. This is accentuated by a lack of quality measurement in non-voice channels, despite an improvement on previous years.

As a result, customer satisfaction has fallen to its lowest level since 2011 and it's the fourth consecutive year in which we've seen a drop. During this period, customer experience was consistently ranked high as an important, board-level strategic performance concern. Using more robust metrics such as Net Promotor Score (NPS), which go beyond simple satisfaction scores, is also impacting this trend. Improved customer experience is a moving target: the requirements vary per customer, by interaction, and with time. It's encouraging to see that consumer feedback is used to calibrate internal quality measures.

Another positive result is the sustained high levels of efficiency within contact centre operations. We may have reached a productivity 'sweet spot' for voice, as major changes are neither required nor desired. Digital interactions haven't reached the same standard yet, but pressure is mounting as 87.0% of contact centres forecast growth in digital traffic, while telephone will continue to drop.

Agent productivity levels | 2015 Report sample question

What percentage of an agent's day is spent: Percentage of contact centres | n = 417

	Inbound		Outbound	
	2013/14	**2015**	**2013/14**	**2015**
Handling customer contacts/interactions	70.9	70.4	70.7	69.9
Available (waiting for customers)	21.5	12.1	20.9	12.4
Offline (meetings/briefings/etc.)	7.6	8.5	8.4	8.7
Other (training/unscheduled breaks etc.)	Not asked	9.0	Not asked	9.0

70% productivity level remains unchanged from last Report

Wait (available) time much less – less waste and better scheduled resources

Results

When in the workplace (that is, not absent as a result of illness or approved vacation), an inbound agent will spend 70.4% of his/her scheduled work day handling customer transactions. A further 12.1% is spent 'waiting' and available for work. This is a significant improvement of efficiency since our last review. Of an average day, 8.5% is spent offline at briefings or meetings, while the remaining 9.0% is spent training, or on unscheduled breaks. Our research also shows that agents can expect to receive 5.3 hours of formal training each month and 4.8 hours of coaching. These allowances grow even higher in outsourced operations.

The standards for outbound and inbound agents are on a par.

While the trends are fairly generic across various filters, including geography, sector, and provider types, this is a critical area for contact centres. Even a single point of change in either direction can have a major influence on costs and services.

It's important to note that the above results only account for scheduled work time, and don't incorporate paid vacation and/or paid breaks. Each of these items are crucial to the cost model, as they will impact the availability of the agent and the overall productivity you can expect. For example, assuming a nine-hour day, if you're allowing two 15-minute breaks and one hour for lunch, the scheduled work time is 7.5 hours. Of that, approximately 70% accounts for agents being productive by handling customer interactions.

Recommendations

The results suggest high productivity overall. It would be unwise to push for significant increases, as it's likely to put significant pressure on your people and lead to a lower quality of interaction, poorer engagement/satisfaction, and ultimately a poorer customer experience. Is the extra dollar saved by pushing employees harder really worth the risk?

workforce optimisation

It's time to learn from the telephone-centric legacy

workforce optimisation summary

Just **57%** of centres remain **voice-only**

35% of agents are now multiskilled across voice and non-voice engagement channels

Yearly increase of **32%** on **blending voice and non-voice channels**

29% of contact centres still without **WFM systems**

24% operate without quality management

48% without **agent analytics** systems

37% of attrition occurs within **first 6 months of service**

15% of that occours **during training** as **roles** become **increasingly complex**

Resource-related costs account for **76%** of the full operating budget

10% is being **reserved for technology,** the lowest level in 3 years

79% of competency profiles are **aligned to the actual role**

26% of operations don't regularly review **competency management frameworks**

Operational management is formed around an increasingly complex mix of challenges. Customers and organisations require contact centres to broaden their scope of services and, with the introduction of digital, move out of their comfort zones. Resources and skills levels are being stretched like never before, and in new ways.

Just 56.7% of contact centres remain voice-only, and this percentage will continue to fall. There's been a significant move to upskill agents across different types of voice-only contacts, with 26.2% now doing so. In addition, we're seeing a 31.6% increase in multichannel contact centres which are asking agents to handle voice and non-voice transactions.
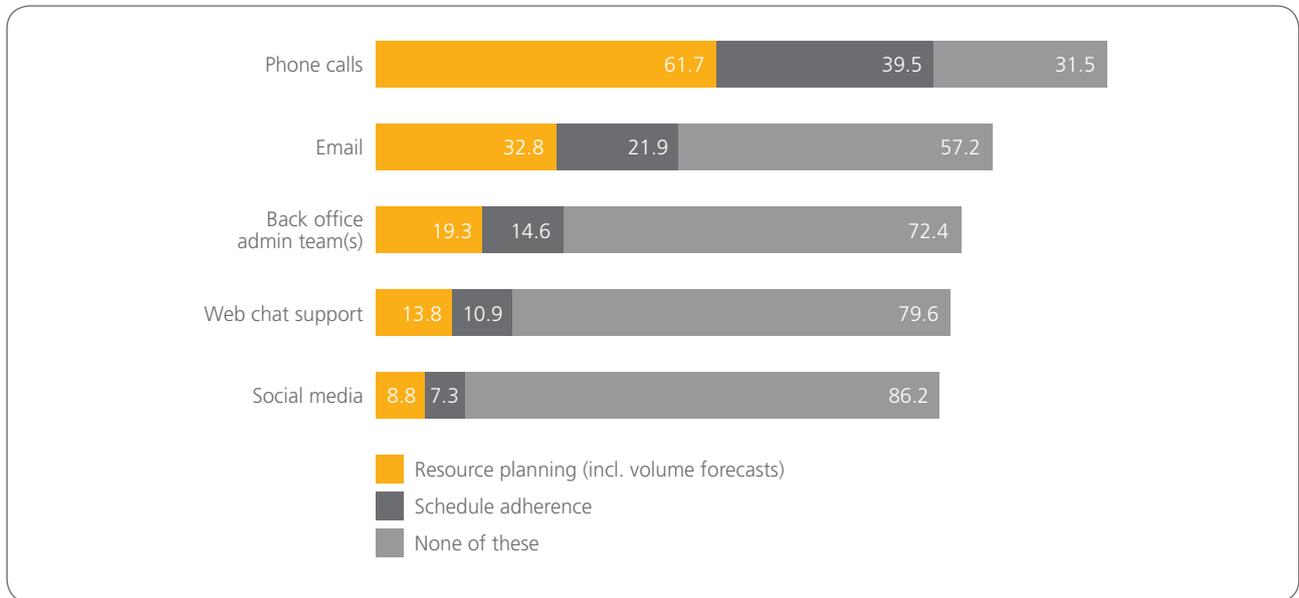
At the same time, we're the number of days spent training has reduced and the recruitment and training budget allocation has been cut by 60.3% compared with the past two years' allowance. To compound the issue, 26.0% of organisations aren't regularly reviewing the required skills and competency levels for the new role profiles.

All of this is an indication that there's more pressure on frontline staff, agents, and team leaders today. The result is consistently high absence and attrition across roles.

Contact centres want frontline staff to do more, because it is the right thing to do from the customer's perspective. But they need to do more for themselves and their people by applying tools and methodologies that are common in traditional telephone channels, across the full spectrum of engagement methods now being handled.

Automated workforce management systems across channels | 2015 Report sample question

Which channels are covered by automated workforce management systems? Percentage of contact centres | n = 658

Channel	Resource planning (incl. volume forecasts)	Schedule adherence	None of these
Phone calls	61.7	39.5	31.5
Email	32.8	21.9	57.2
Back office admin team(s)	19.3	14.6	72.4
Web chat support	13.8	10.9	79.6
Social media	8.8	7.3	86.2

- Resource planning (incl. volume forecasts)
- Schedule adherence
- None of these

Digital channel WFM needs suffer from neglect

Room to improve phone interaction activity

Results

The results indicate a gradual improvement in automated solution techniques among the more traditional contact channels of phone and email, but not for other digital channels. These continue to suffer neglect. Worst are the 86.2% of social media and 79.6% of web chat operations that aren't automating their planning, tracking, and monitoring adherence. This creates inefficiencies in non-voice departments, which we don't see in telephone channels where everything is measured, tracked, and reported.

There's much room for improvement across the board, particularly in channels other than telephone. Consider that 57.2% of contact centres managing email still have no workforce management (WFM) technology solutions in place to help maximise productivity levels. The situation is marginally better for the telephone, at 31.5%.

The effective deployment of WFM systems represents a significant opportunity to boost efficiency at all levels. Most often, every percentage of improved productivity resulting from the efficiencies gained improves the bottom line. You can do more with less.

Recommendations

Workforce management is one area in which the contact centre environment is clearly behind the curve … and losing efficiency. Some centres may be excused for their inability to handle web chat and social media due to the newness of the channels and the volumes they carry, although, we'd recommend that plans are made to implement them better. But the same can't be said for telephone, email, and back office. These are well-established channels, and all organisations – except perhaps the very smallest – should maximise efficiency through the automation of planning and scheduling.

For all of the different media, and the back office, there are systems available to support monitoring, routing, planning, and measuring interactions. There's a strong case for building an ROI model based on current and expected interactions, to justify investment in this area. If not, it's likely that you're overstaffing and suffering from low productivity.

technology

New buying options make new technology possible

technology summary

The no 1 technology trend being prioritised by contact centres is **customer demand for emerging channels**

61% of core BI analytic systems are not yet **integrated pan-company**

Technology challenges indicate **system flexibility issues, integration problems**

Cost to ownership and **upgrading** of **legacy systems a key concern**

89% of **current users** with an opinion agree cloud has **reduced costs**

88% of same highlight it offers **access to new functionality**

A range of **21% to 43%** say IT doesn't meet current needs

Average of **79%** fear systems won't meet future needs

23% drop in **direct ownership models**

34% of contact centres are planning for a **hosted solution**

Today's customers are always online, and are increasingly impatient. Despite clear indications of growing consumer appetite for the use of social channels as a contact medium, contact centres are slow to react. In fact, our results for new media, in conjunction with customer preferences for digital channels, suggest that organisations are massively underprepared for the new digital age.

The biggest blockages to contact centre's advancement of their technology capabilities revolve around flexibility, the ability to integrate, and the costs linked to creating the required architecture. However, the speed at which the digital revolution is affecting contact centres can no longer be ignored. A worrying 78.7% of operations point out that their current, often telephone-centric systems won't meet their future needs, and many are already failing. Add omnichannel aspirations to the mix, and the situation could get worse.

This is forcing vendors and consumers alike to explore new buying options and design innovative technology frameworks. The emergence of cloud technology platforms offers new choices to contact centre providers. We're starting to notice significant changes in how organisations are both provisioning and maintaining their technology systems.
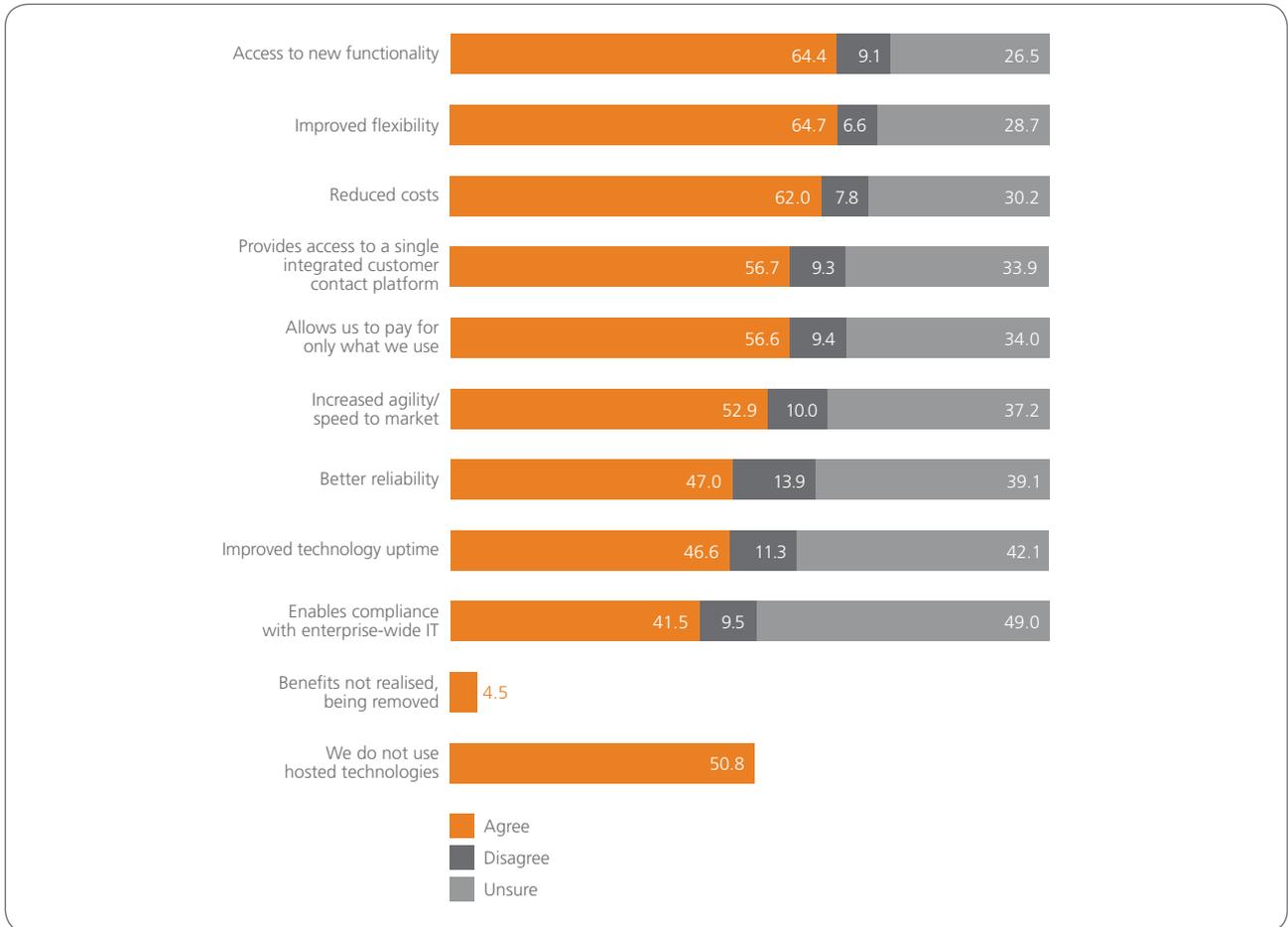
In the last 12 months, contact centres choosing pure ownership models have reduced by 22.6%. Of contact centres that aren't using hosted/cloud solutions yet, 34.2% are considering a hosted technology model in the near future. Add this to the existing user base, and it's apparent that hybrid solutions blending cloud architectures with legacy technologies are gaining popularity across the industry.

These solutions will require integration, and the ability to deliver optimal functionality will greatly depend on the quality of the implementation as you journey towards a connected omnichannel experience. You may need multiple applications to get the result that you want with your customers. But don't get left behind.

Impact of hosted/cloud technologies on the business | 2015 Report sample question

How has the use of hosted/cloud technologies affected your business?
Percentage of contact centres | n = 673

Category	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Access to new functionality	64.4	9.1	26.5
Improved flexibility	64.7	6.6	28.7
Reduced costs	62.0	7.8	30.2
Provides access to a single integrated customer contact platform	56.7	9.3	33.9
Allows us to pay for only what we use	56.6	9.4	34.0
Increased agility/ speed to market	52.9	10.0	37.2
Better reliability	47.0	13.9	39.1
Improved technology uptime	46.6	11.3	42.1
Enables compliance with enterprise-wide IT	41.5	9.5	49.0
Benefits not realised, being removed	4.5		
We do not use hosted technologies	50.8		

Legend:
- Agree
- Disagree
- Unsure

89% of current users with an opinion agree cloud has **reduced costs**

88% of same highlight it offers access to new functionality

Results

Current users of hosted/cloud technologies are reporting a powerful impact on their businesses. As a relatively new model for many, a range of organisations are still undecided about the various influences they can expect as they continue to review the return on investment over a realistic period.

Of users with an opinion, 88.8% agree that they've reduced costs, which are partially linked to the 85.7% saying it allows them to pay for only what they use. As many as 90.8% confirm that it offers improved flexibility, while 84.2% report that it increases agility and speed-to-market.

The most common challenges for hosted cloud solutions are reliability and technology uptime, but concerns and negative experiences fall far short of positive feedback. There are generally four promoters to every negative rating. Of all users, 4.5% have decided pay-as-you-use services aren't for them, that the benefits aren't being realised, and they're having the systems removed.

Recommendations

While there are some compelling results from existing cloud users about the benefits of hosted solutions, it's important to acknowledge that cloud isn't an excuse for having no strategy. So, should you explore a cloud strategy for your contact centre? Yes, but your organisation should understand why you're investigating a cloud solution and ensure that there's a strategy in place. Cloud isn't an all-or-nothing decision. You need to know where, when, how, and why you want to leverage its benefits.

sample specifications and research methodology

Highest participation sample in **18 years** provides a comprehensive **global overview**

Americas
20.3%

UK
19.3%

Europe
16.4%

Asia Pacific
11.6%

Middle East
& Africa
18.8%

Australia &
New Zealand
13.6%

901 participants

balanced representation of **6 regions**

72 countries

12 industries

Representation by industry

1.
26.1%
Financial services

2.
12.9%
Service providers and telecommunications

3.
9.6%
Government (public sector) and education

4.
8.8%
Consumer goods and retail

Other
42.6%
8 additional sectors

Size of company

13.8%
9.4%
15.3%
29.6%
16.3%
15.6%

0-50 51-100 101-200
201-500 501-1,000 1,001+

Contact centre type

85.5%
In-house

14.5%
Outsourced

Service type

66.6%
B2B

18.0%
B2C

9.9%
Sales

5.5%
IT helpdesk

Interaction type

inbound
72.5%

outbound
6.3%

equal split
21.2%

how we've designed our research

The 2015 benchmarking questionnaire comprised 80 key questions that considered all aspects of multichannel contact interactions. We review the benchmarking questionnaire annually, and refresh survey topics, questions, and response options to balance historical reference points with the latest focus areas and emerging trends.

The full Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report is designed to provide context and easy-reference access to the information sets:

- Each chapter begins with a summary overview infographic.

- This is followed by an introduction and expert insights into the findings.

- Feature articles on trending topics enrich the content.

- Detailed analytical findings follow each chart and table, with recommendations on how to implement best practices.

The Report comprises six core chapters from strategy and technology, to operations and multichannel management. We analyse over 400 data points across more than 90 charts.

Typically presented at a global level, all of our data can be filtered by year, region, sector, size, provider type, and for the first time by service type, via our online Benchmark Comparison Portal.

Benchmark Comparison Portal

The online Benchmark Comparison Portal was established to enable a much deeper analysis of the annual benchmarking results. The portal is available to qualifying survey participants, or with the purchase of the Report. You can access it at **http://portal2015.ccbmsurvey.com/preview.asp** to:

- view and filter multiple annual data cuts by region, sector, contact centre size, service, provider, and contact type
- read analysis, context, and headline commentary
- view 400 performance metrics
- convert all of the charts in the Portal to data table format
- export the relevant graphs straight to your desktop
- 'ask an expert' and receive guidance and information from our subject matter experts

If you completed the full survey, you can use the Portal to view your results against selected benchmarks.

New features for the 2015 Benchmark Comparison Portal include:
- improved design and user experience
- a new filter to split out results by contact type
- an added 'Advanced' filter option that offers access to even more regional and country-level data splits

order, participate, subscribe

Ordering a report

To obtain your personal copy of the 2015 Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report, please complete the order form on our website **www.dimensiondata.com/ccbenchmarking** or email us directly, advising us of which version of the report you would like to purchase.

Report pricing

- 2015 Report – USD 1,500 (20% discount for partner association members)
- 2013/14 Report – USD 495
- Benchmarking Comparison Service – from USD 2,950

Participating in next year's survey

If you would like to register your interest in participating in future Reports, or would like to update your contact information, please submit your details to **cc.benchmarking@dimensiondata.com**.

Subscribe to updates

To ensure you receive regular updates such as white papers, opinion pieces and, newsletters please subscribe via our website **www.dimensiondata.com/ccbenchmarking**.

Find out more

If you would like to know more about Dimension Data's Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report and services, please contact **andrew.mcnair@dimensiondata.com** or **richard.holmes@dimensiondata.com**.

Business planning | **Pinpoint and anticipate problems** | **Identify best practice** | **Validate performance** | **Get buy-in to change** | **Business case approval**

Participant benefits

Participation in the Report is free of charge. By completing the online questionnaire, your organisation can gain access to the entire research database, and receive:

- a free electronic copy of the latest Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report, valued at USD 1,500

- access to our online Benchmark Comparison Portal

- access to our year-round benchmarking information updates

about us

About Dimension Data

Founded in 1983, Dimension Data plc is an ICT services and solutions provider that uses its technology expertise, global service delivery capability, and entrepreneurial spirit to accelerate the business ambitions of its clients. Dimension Data is a member of the NTT Group. More information can be found at **www.dimensiondata.com**

Dimension Data's communications services range from strategic consulting, professional services, managed services, and cloud services, to outsourcing and offshoring operations. We have world-leading capability in delivering end-to-end communications portfolios, including collaboration and contact centre solutions that enable your people and customers to connect, engage, and collaborate. Our focus on customer and user experience ensures that we remove the complexity of technology and operations, leaving you to focus on growing the value of your organisation.

About Customer Interactive Solutions

Customer Interactive Solutions forms part of Dimension Data's Communications Business Unit and enables over 7 billion customer interactions a year. We have over 25 years' experience in planning, designing, integrating, and managing contact centres for our clients globally.

Our consulting, professional, managed, and cloud contact centre services make complex customer engagement environments simple and effective, enabling organisations to differentiate and grow the value of their customer base.

Our omnichannel, self-service, workforce optimisation, and analytics solutions integrate the physical, digital, and contact centre worlds, enabling a seamless customer experience which creates organisational engagement and value.

About Merchants

Merchants – a Dimension Data company – is a leading customer management outsourcing solution provider specialising in business process outsourcing (BPO) that delivers customer experience and customer interactions. We focus on people, process, and technology to create exceptional customer experiences.

We're pioneers in the contact centre industry, with over 30 years of experience in creating and managing contact centre operations around the world for blue chip clients. Our services and solutions are built on tried and trusted models, systems, and processes which are based on best practice standards.

We're passionate about people. Our ability to attract the best talent, coupled with our rich history of success and innovation across different industries around the world, is what differentiates us from our competitors.

For more information about Merchants, please visit **www.merchants.co.za**

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