



# The Health of the Contact Center: Agent Well-Being in a Customer-Centric Era

New study reveals heightened complexity of customer experience increases pressure on the front line

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The number one priority for businesses today is delivering the right customer experience and it shows no signs of slowing down. Brands like Sephora are racking up accolades both in-store and online with corresponding benefits in the form of increased market share and revenue. Take, for example, British Airways' recent allocation of just over \$500 million to revamp the in-flight experience for its customers and improve customer relations in the contact center, showing that brands are willing to do—and spend—what it takes to create loyal customers.

However, spending doesn't necessarily equal success. Eight out of 10 consumers will pay more for a great customer experience, but 56 percent of consumers still switched service providers in the last year alone. Many brands aren't meeting customer expectations, so where is the disconnect?

Every day, contact center agents act as brand ambassadors during their hundreds, if not thousands, of customer interactions. Given the high demands of today's customers, if agents fail to meet service expectations, customers quickly take their business elsewhere.

Yet, many brands still don't value the people on the front line as critical assets of the customer experience. As demands from the customer on the business become increasingly complex, what matters is the impact on agents, the experience they provide and how that ultimately affects the success of the business. This report details the opinions of over 1,000 contact center employees in the US and the UK, the confidence they have in succeeding at their jobs, the challenges they face and how technology will dictate the future of the contact center.

As the research finds, brands aren't focused enough on the agent experience. In order to be successful in today's always-on, multichannel world, brands must address these issues or they risk losing employees and customers.

# AGENTS CARRY THE BURDEN

## SECTION 1



Self-service communication options do little to quell the intricacies surrounding customer problems, and customer inquiries only continue to grow.



Meanwhile, agents feel ill-equipped to resolve customer issues and disconnected from the rest of the business, leaving them alone in a sea of problems.



## SECTION 1: AGENTS CARRY THE BURDEN



**MORE CALLS,  
BETTER EXPERIENCE**

**SECTION 2**



**CALABRIO™**

As customers expect a personalized experience that meets their complex needs, agents must manage call volume better and faster.



Customers want more, they want it now and they're picking up the phone to get it. Unfortunately, agents are in a pressure cooker of call volume and expectations, and the forecast shows no relief.



## SECTION 2: More Calls, Better Experience



Everything is increasing: expectations, the emphasis on customer experience, the complexity of issues and call volume. The pressure is mounting, and brands risk agent burnout and customer churn if they fail to understand the reasons why these interactions continue to increase.

Thirty two percent of contact center employees believe that customer queries and demands will become more complex over time. On top of that, 45 percent of agents believe that customers will continue to expect more from the company, and they'll expect it faster than ever. In addition, they overwhelmingly agree that these expectations will continue to increase over the next two to three years. **Sixty five percent of agents believe call volume has increased over the last 18 months.** And it's true: the report data also shows that call volume increased by 39 percent.

By asking the right questions and looking for answers in customer interaction data, companies can uncover the root of the problem and take appropriate action to equip and prepare agents to meet new customer expectations.

## Getting to the root of call volume

Do customers want a more personal touch?

Are they turning to the phone after not getting a resolution on social or email channels?

Are the people who prefer alternate communication channels already using these methods?

**GET AGENTS THE  
RIGHT TOOLS,  
DISRUPTION IS  
COMING**

## SECTION 3



Technology and tools are key to addressing customer and agent challenges and critical to the future success of the contact center.



Many contact center agents are unable to resolve customer issues or requests because they're ill-equipped with technology and training.



## SECTION 3: Get Agents the Right Tools, Disruption is Coming

# Get Agents the Right Tools, Disruption is Coming

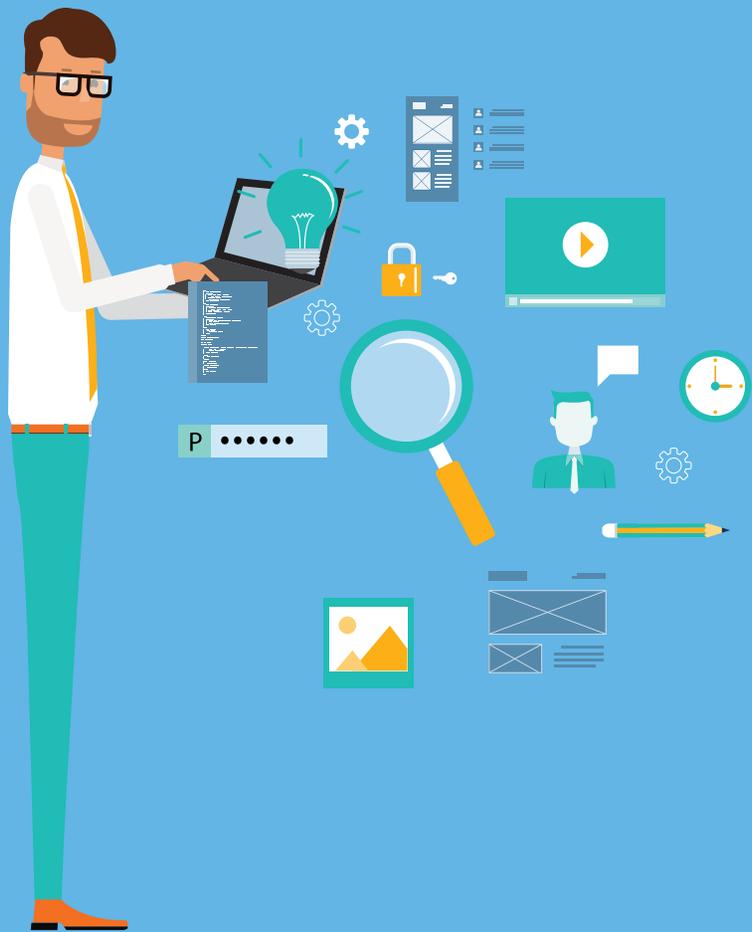


When it comes to contact center technology, most companies simply aren't doing enough to provide agents with the right tools to effectively resolve customer issues.

In fact, 60 percent of agents agree that their company doesn't always provide the technology that staff need to address the challenges they face when helping customers.

In the next few years, the technology landscape will continue to change and grow, and if brands don't lay the right groundwork now, they risk falling even further behind.





As virtual reality, Internet of Things (IoT), voice search and other communication methods become mainstream, there is an opportunity to modernize contact centers. For employees, it's a welcomed change. Contact center agents believe that technology innovations in the next two to three years will positively affect their jobs, with 17 percent naming speech analytics as the tool that will have the biggest impact.

Using speech analytics, contact centers can translate speech to text so analysts can quickly search and drill down into conversations on both an individual and aggregate level. With these insights, contact centers can share knowledge across the department and the organization, giving agents—and the company as a whole—the ability to better understand customer wants and needs.

What's exciting is that many contact center employees understand the importance of new technology and view it in a positive light: 41 percent agree that new technology implementations will mean that humans will have less administrative and routine tasks, and 29 percent agree that humans will have more interesting and varied work.

## What other technology will impact agent jobs?



**16%**  
VIDEO



**15%**  
ARTIFICIAL  
INTELLIGENCE



**13%**  
CHATBOTS



**12%**  
MOBILE



**12%**  
MONITORING  
TOOLS

# PUT PEOPLE FIRST

## SECTION 4



Agents are stressed, and feel isolated and abandoned; companies must find ways to re-engage these agents and make them a priority.

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## SECTION 4: Put People First





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# PUT PEOPLE FIRST

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Contact center agents are overloaded and, rather than taking action, many brands are simply choosing to remain idle. A quarter (25 percent) say they feel stressed multiple times a week, while 12 percent say they feel stressed all the time. **Tellingly, more than half (52 percent) of contact center staff agree that their company isn't doing enough to prevent their teams from burning out.**

These stress levels not only bleed into customer interactions, but it also means that agents are leaving their positions in droves. In fact, 35 percent of staff are considering leaving their jobs in the next 12 months. Many (43 percent) are simply unhappy in their roles, while others (39 percent) say they want to make more money and some (11 percent) admit to using the contact center to launch a different career.

# LISTEN UP. WHAT DO CONTACT CENTER AGENTS REALLY WANT?

34%

a more flexible working environment

33%

better technology that provides a single view of the customer

21%

more training

10%

data-driven feedback from their managers

# HOW TO IMPACT AGENT EXPERIENCE TODAY: THE PATH TO ZERO ATTRITION

## SECTION 5



Given the emphasis on customer experience, it's important for brands to rethink their contact center strategies and put the focus squarely on one thing: people. By focusing on people and mapping the path to zero attrition, brands can elevate the role of contact center staff to quickly make informed decisions about customers and deliver on the brand promise that customers have come to expect.

Here's how companies can lay the groundwork to deliver the ultimate agent and customer experience.

SECTION 5: How to Impact Agent Experience Today: The Path to Zero Attrition

**Rethink Metrics:** Traditional call center metrics include average handle time (AHT) and first call resolution (FCR), but these static metrics do little to address the heightened needs of customers, and leave agents feeling that they're operating on a timer. Contact centers are notorious for agent attrition which can wreak havoc on a brand, both financially and in the eyes of the customer. Not only does it cost money to train a new employee, customers will question a brand's credibility if the contact center is inconsistent due to constantly onboarding new staff. Many brands don't view attrition metrics as a path to success, but it's time for that to change. To be effective, brands must rethink stale metrics and focus squarely on implementing the right tools and hiring the right team to reduce employee turnover. When success is benchmarked against employee longevity, customers can have a great experience—every single time.

**Find the Bottlenecks:** Between spreadsheets and antiquated systems, many contact centers are missing the insights that will give agents the necessary information to make fast and informed decisions. Often, if customers can't get quick answers using self-service tools, they escalate their concerns to the contact center, meaning agents are handling the complex problems. For many brands, customer communication channels are managed in silos so agents never gain a complete view of the customer. However, when brands take the time to figure out agent workflow and identify bottlenecks and frustrations, they can have open discussions to map solutions and tools to break those bottlenecks.

**Equip and Empower:** Contact center positions are not necessarily known for flexibility and employee empowerment, leaving many agents feeling disenfranchised from their company and their work. More often than not, those sentiments show up in conversations with customers. However, when agents are empowered and given the feedback and training to succeed, something magical happens: agent turnover goes down and customer satisfaction goes up. Decreasing that turnover requires a more flexible working environment, better training, and data-driven feedback—and all of that starts with the right technology.

## SECTION 5: How to Impact Agent Experience Today: The Path to Zero Attrition

# ABOUT CALABRIO

Calabrio is a customer engagement software company that provides analytic insights to catalyze growth through customer service contact centers. The Calabrio ONE<sup>®</sup> software suite empowers everyone in an organization, from contact center agents to the CEO, with easy-to-use tools that provide a better understanding of the customer. Every customer interaction yields insights that expand customer consciousness, which is how leading companies now drive growth and long-term corporate prosperity.

Calabrio ONE is a unified workforce optimization (WFO) software suite—including call recording, quality management, workforce management, voice-of-the-customer (VoC) analytics and advanced reporting—that transforms the contact center into a customer engagement center and a valuable source of customer insight.

Find more at [calabrio.com](https://calabrio.com)

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