



LiveVox Work From Home Report | 2nd Edition

The Remote Tipping Point

June 2021



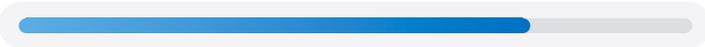
LIVEVOX



Key Takeaways

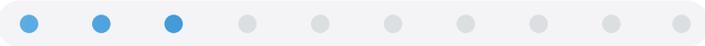
Our survey highlights a gap between how managers view work from home and the reality that overall it has been successful.

75%



75% of respondents experienced **increased contact volumes** on all channels. **20%** reported a dramatic volume increase of **over 50%** compared to the previous year.

3 out of 10



3 out of 10 contact center decision-makers still plan to keep at least **25% of their workforce remote**. That's a sharp decline from the **6 out of 10** that said they **planned to keep agents remote in April 2020**.

49%



49% feel that the biggest benefit to working from home has been the ability to **provide agents greater flexibility**.

48%



48% surveyed saw **no change to agent attrition** as a result of the shift, while **30%** experienced a combination of **high agent turnover, layoffs, or hiring freezes**.

About the Survey

- LiveVox interviewed over **300 contact center executives** from across North America and more than **5 industries** to understand their challenges and successes while working remotely.
- All survey participants **make or influence decisions** within their organization and oversee the management and selection of teams and tools for customer service.



of the participant pool has over 100 agents in their contact center.

- All participants **directly oversee customer service and contact center operations**. Represented industries include financial services, healthcare, business process outsourcing, telecommunications, and customer care.
- We maintained the consistency of our survey methods and compared the first edition of this report against new data for a deeper dive into industry trends.

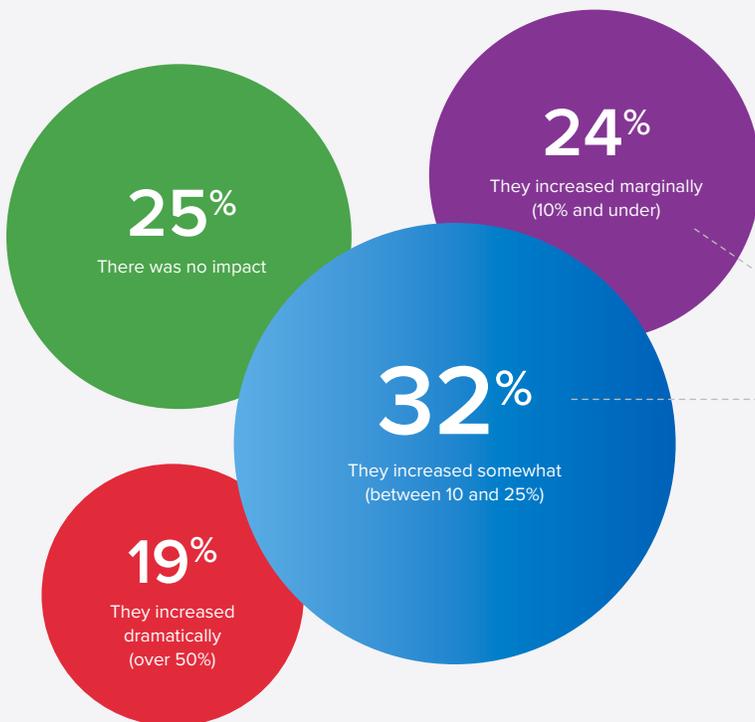


Biggest Challenges

The **biggest challenge** in 2021 is **managing agent productivity** (39% selected). In 2020, limited management oversight was not the greatest reported challenge when migrating to work from home. Instead, a year ago many managers were struggling to equip agents to work from home.

> What has been your biggest challenge so far in 2021?

- Handling high inbound call volumes
- Increasing outbound call volumes with limited agent resources
- Managing remote agent productivity
- Ensuring script adherence and compliance in a remote setting
- Lack of automation/AI/RPA (Robotic Processing Automation)

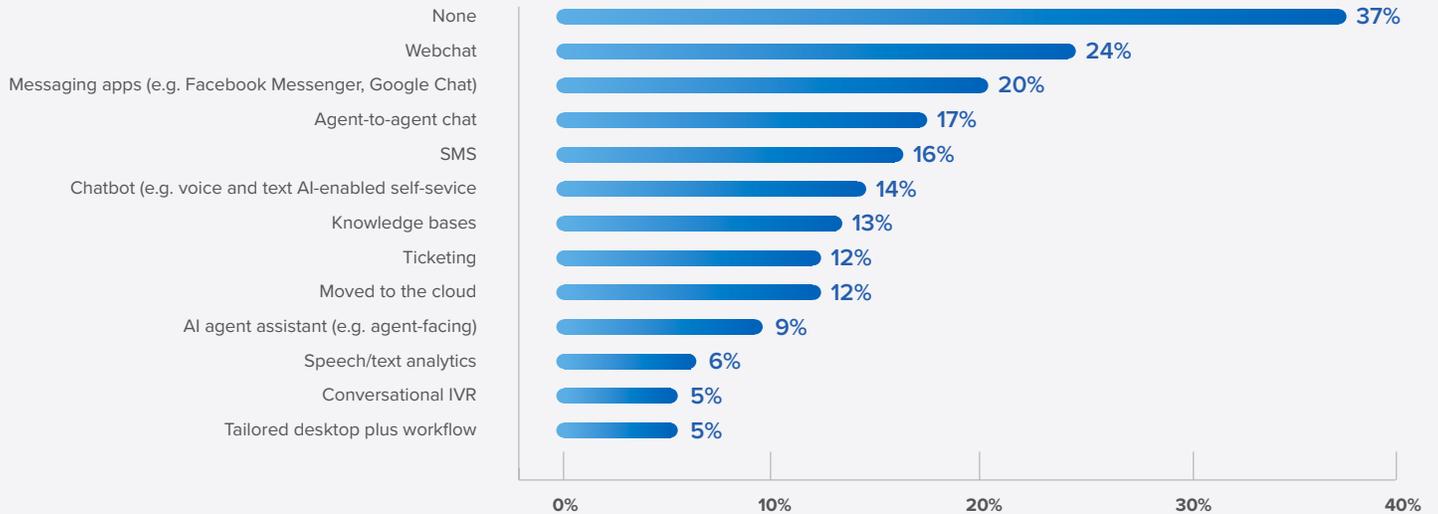


> How were inbound voice volumes impacted during the pandemic?

56% reported up to a 25% increase in call volume.

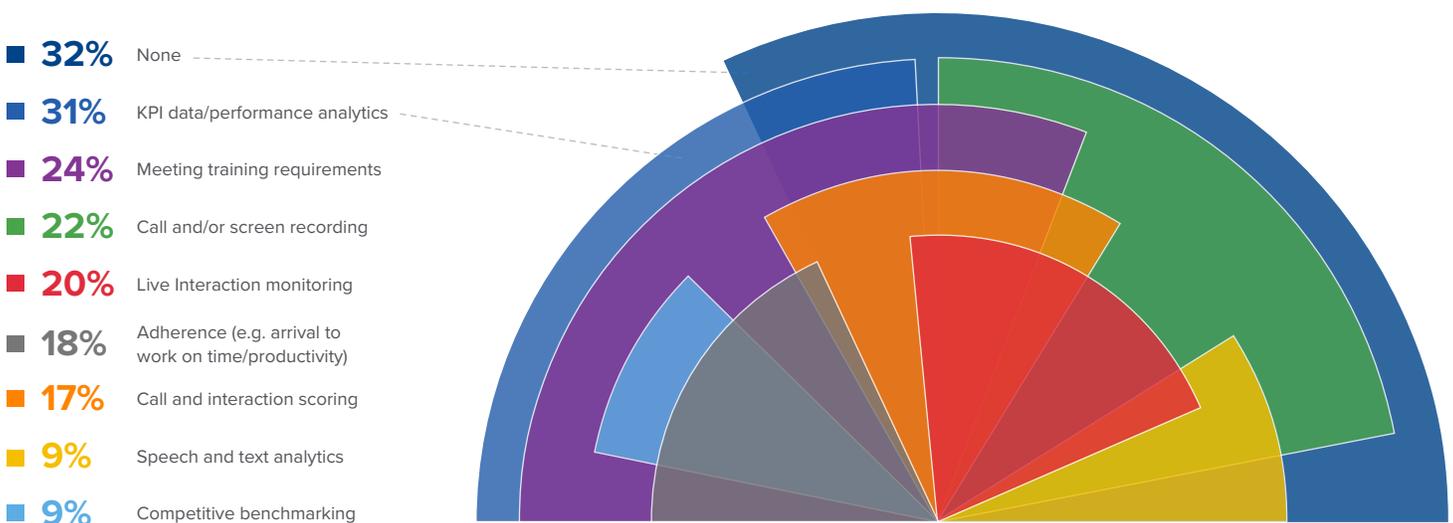
37% of respondents did not adopt any new digital communication channels despite high increases in customer demand. For those that did add new channels, the most commonly selected capability was webchat (24%).

> Did you adopt any new communication channels or functionality to accommodate remote work? Please select all that apply.



At the same time that a need for increased training and coaching emerged, 32% of survey participants did not make any accommodations for remote onboarding and agent monitoring while another 31% did invest in KPI Data/ Performance Analytics capabilities.

> After shifting to remote work, did you add any of the following to understand your training and coaching needs (multi-select)?



A Look Behind the Curtain •

The results of our survey provide a peek behind the curtain into what contact center decision-makers are thinking on the heels of an abrupt about-face toward remote work. Over 300 participants shared their perspectives on what's important, what keeps them up at night, and the lasting impact of a year at home. In addition to understanding how they retrofitted their organizations to stay afloat, we also uncovered how they're keeping pace with the demands of this new business environment, evolving customer expectations, and advances in contact center technology.

Our findings can be classified across three themes:

1 **Agent satisfaction** correlates to **increased customer engagement**.

2 The **use of remote coaching and monitoring tools** equals a **greater likelihood of work from home** success and continuation.

3 The use of **eLearning** correlates with a **reduction in agent monitoring issues**.





Agent Experience is a Key Strategic Priority

The focus on agent experience (AX) has moved to the forefront of key strategic initiatives for contact center executives who clearly understand the impact AX has on the success of the customer service their business delivers.

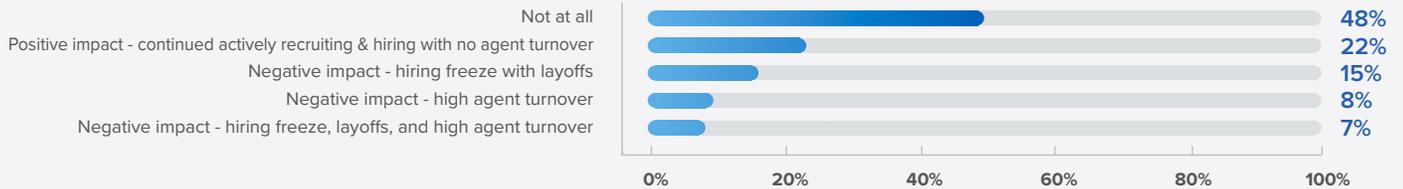
Studies by industry analysts like [Frost & Sullivan](#) and [Forrester](#) indicate that the manner in which a contact center instruments its agent experience is directly tied to the quality of service its customers receive. **Bottom line: 2020's shift to remote work showed leaders that AX is as important—or even more important—than what is delivered to customers.**

But this is easier said than done. Adopting agent-friendly processes and technology is challenging for most companies. Fragmented agent experiences, siloed systems, and poor internal communications across contact center organizations remain some of the top challenges for contact centers in achieving their AX goals.

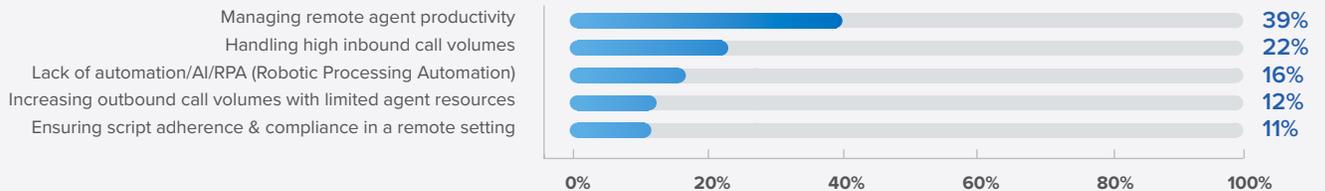
Turning to the survey data, **of the 15% of participants who saw call abandonment rates drop, we were curious about whether there was an overlap with this outcome and the adoption of new digital channels, increased hiring, or the use of Quality Management (QM) tools.** We compared the responses with abandonment rate percentages and agent attrition impact. The comparison showed that **33%** of participants saw decreased call abandonment rates after adding any or a combination of the three tools, while another **33% reported** no change to abandonment rates and increased agent attrition of **20%**. Conversely, another cohort reported increased abandonment rates even with the use of all or some of these tools with an agent attrition rate of **16%**.

Overall, **48% reported no impact to agent attrition and abandonment rates** consistent with pre-pandemic levels after layering in QM, digital channels, or an increase in hiring.

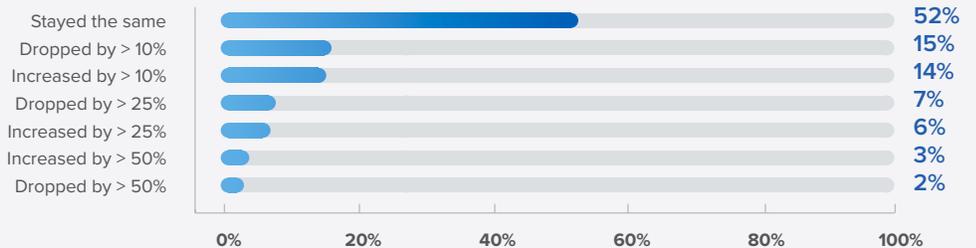
> How has COVID-19 impacted agent attrition in your contact center?



> What has been your biggest challenge so far in 2021?



> How have call abandonment rates tracked with pre-pandemic levels in your contact center since March 2020?





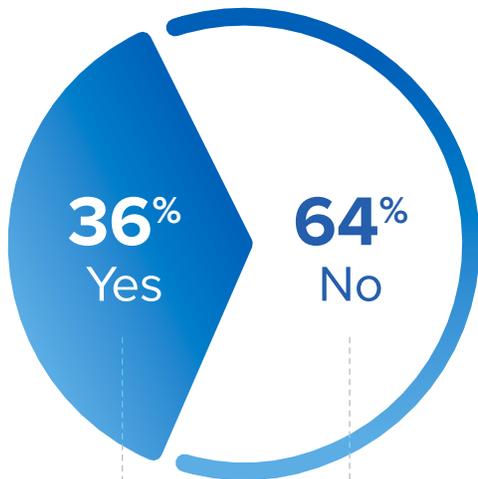
Agent Flexibility Translates to Greater Productivity for Some

36% of survey participants reported a **positive relationship between working remotely and improved speed to answer**. For this analysis, we did not factor in digital channels, AI, or automation usage. Instead, we sought solely to understand whether an increase in agent flexibility had an impact on productivity levels.

Elsewhere in the data, we noted an expansion of internal alignment and agent engagement efforts, with managers citing concerted attempts to communicate regularly and clearly using internal chat in addition to holding more frequent team meetings.

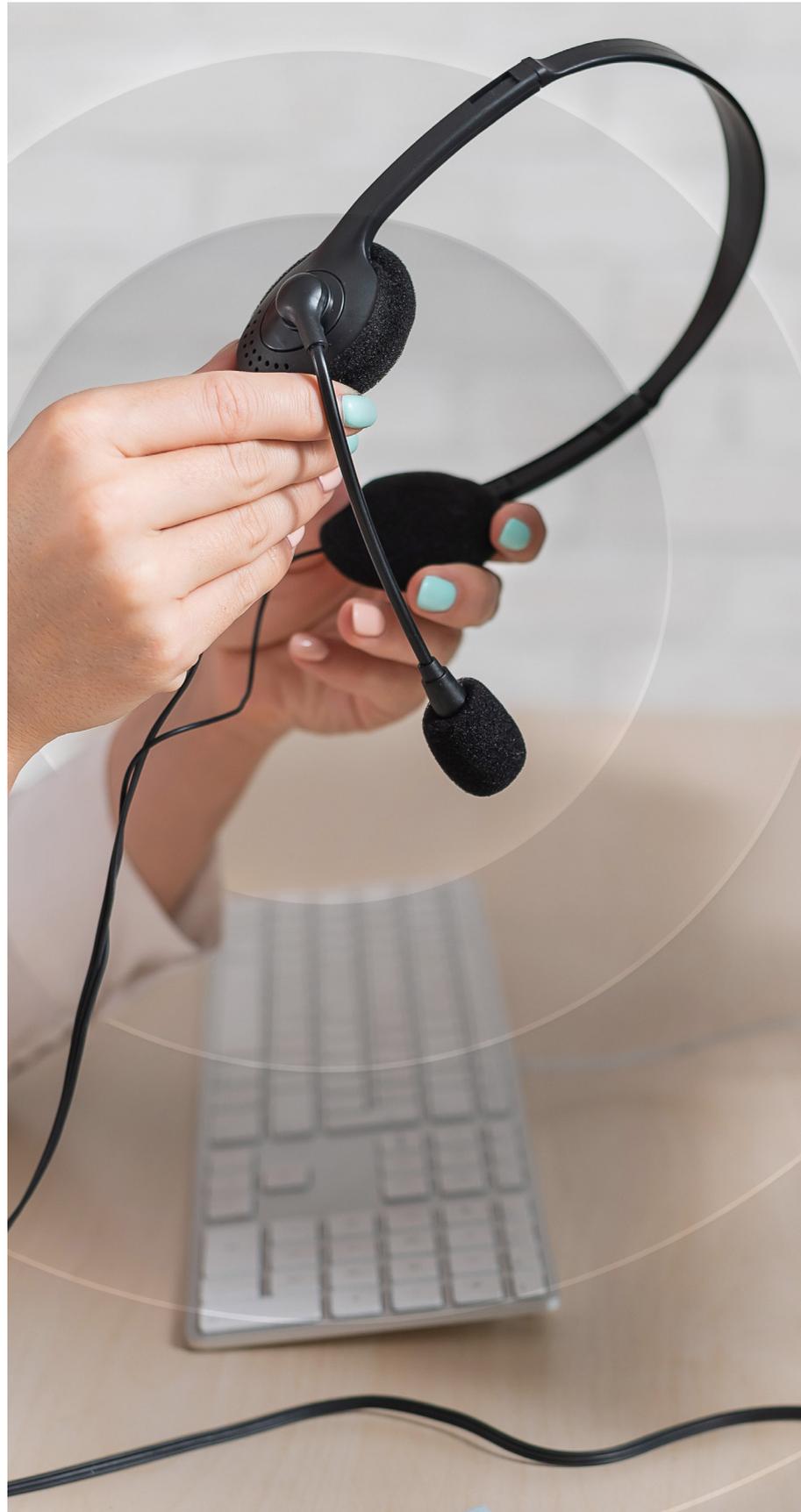
The productivity gains associated with such cultural shifts are supported by other research as well. Analytics and advisory firm [Gallup](#) found that the companies with the most engaged employees were 23% more profitable and saw a 66% lift in employee well-being.

> Was your average speed to answer rate affected by shifting to a remote work setup?



Yes, there was an improvement in speed to answer time with remote agents

No, there was no improvement in speed to answer time with remote agents





Innovations in Coaching & Monitoring are Critical

Our respondents indicated that improving agent morale and job satisfaction has led to reduced turnover throughout the year. However, the data shows an incongruity in how managers view the success of working remotely when compared with their willingness to invest in the necessary tools to make remote work really work.

This is evidenced by the drastic decline in managers who now plan to keep agents at home (**3 in 10**) compared to April 2020 (**6 in 10**).

Second, of the **31%** who answered that they **added more KPI tracking and performance capabilities**, we wanted to understand whether these additions correlated to a preference for hybrid models or continuing to work solely from home. We found that those who selected that they recently added KPI Data/Performance Analytics to their spectrum of tools were **50% likely to stay remote**; while the 47% who didn't select KPI Data/Performance Analytics were only **39% likely to keep some or all agents remote**.

> After shifting to remote work, did you add any of the following to understand your training and coaching needs? Please select all that apply.





eLearning Benefits are Clearly Understood

But some implementation inconsistency exists.

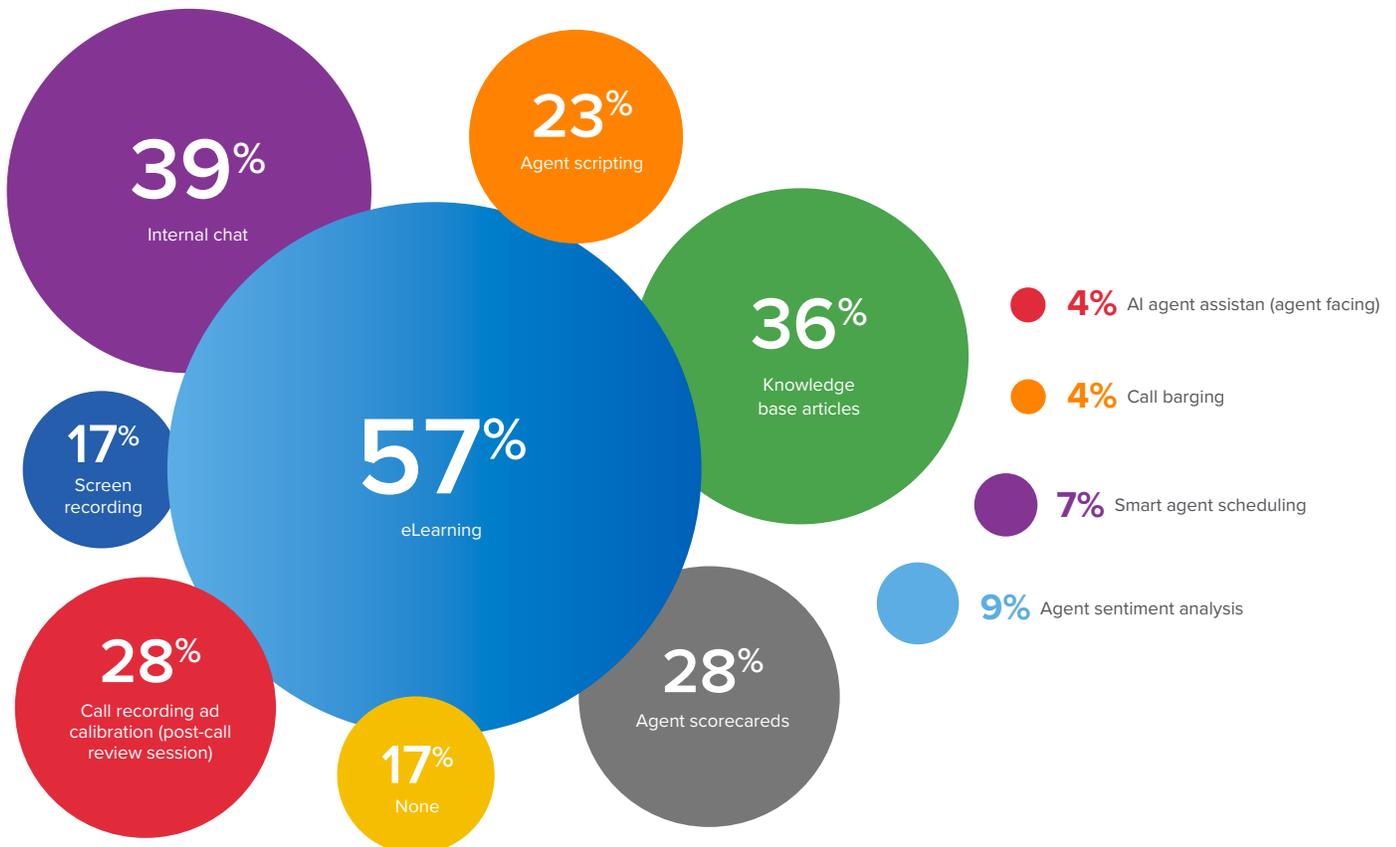
Across organizations, the top three coaching and training tactics selected were more focused on equipping agents with resources in order to encourage greater self-sufficiency. Capabilities such as eLearning, internal chat, and knowledge base articles were cited as more crucial over the last year of remote work than manager-monitoring features like call recording, screen recording, and agent scorecards. This last finding is **somewhat contradictory** in that most managers (39%) indicated that their biggest challenge to working remotely has been monitoring agent performance. **The discrepancy might suggest that while companies have found it easy to provide agents ways to optimize their independence, managers are struggling to**

incorporate this new model of working into their larger operational blueprint.

To the degree that inconsistency of eLearning implementation exists, we wanted to explore whether the **57%** who increased the use of some form of eLearning correlated with a lower rate of experiencing managing remote agent productivity as a pain point.

38% of managers selected implementation of some form of eLearning and reported a lower rate of difficulty when managing agent productivity, while **41%** didn't select eLearning and cited managing remote agents as a challenge.

> What kind of training and coaching tactics did you provide to remote agents in the past year? Please select all that apply.





What People are Saying

“

“Overall we view remote work as having a positive impact on employee engagement. We would have had much more turnover had we not been able to offer remote work. Our staff has found alternative ways to stay connected and managers made more effort to team-build and focus on clear communication. These were things we found challenging before but WFH has provided new opportunities that they didn’t take advantage of when we were on site.”

“Working remotely has positively impacted our employee engagement, the company is growing and employees are enthusiastic about work.”

“Our agents are 10 times better working from home! They collaborate more in chat and even work longer hours since they aren’t in a rush to beat the traffic!”

“The impact of remote work has been a net positive. We have more online collaboration and increased usage of our online tools like online chat.”

“There’s more freedom and higher motivation when working from home.”

“WFH has positively impacted our employee engagement; employees have a better work/life balance. Employees are now more attentive and have higher answer rates than prior to the COVID pandemic.”

“While no significant systemic impact, the lack of in-person observation presented a problem in that employee schedules were dependent on management updates that were not always timely. This was remediated by improved software and training.”

“Hiring and retention remain at higher levels than when we were on site. Associates definitely appreciate the work-from-home flexibility.”



Contact Center Leaders See Strong Incentives to Continue Remote Work

But they're torn on whether to keep at it.

100% of our respondents reported that **working from home had no deleterious impact on their workforce or on service operations more broadly**. In fact, many experienced greater productivity, lower abandonment rates, and accelerated digital transformation.

It's important to note that some incongruities exist in relation to how managers took action against their biggest pain points, but the universal attributes of their experiences are just as significant and interesting as what makes them unique. In addition to streamlining agent workload and hastening digital transformation, working remotely has shed a light on the need for organizations to build strong team bonds, form connections within their workplace, and foster learning cultures where agents are continuously upskilled, especially when face-to-face isn't an option.

When it comes to the net benefits of remote work, smaller contact centers (250 or fewer agents) selected agent flexibility as the biggest boon to working remotely at a much higher rate compared to contact centers with more than 250 agents. For those larger agencies, digital transformation acceleration was weighted at a higher rate.

Another key benefit seen by organizations large and small has been agent retention. Retaining top talent isn't easy—the contact center industry has some of the highest turnover rates of any sector.

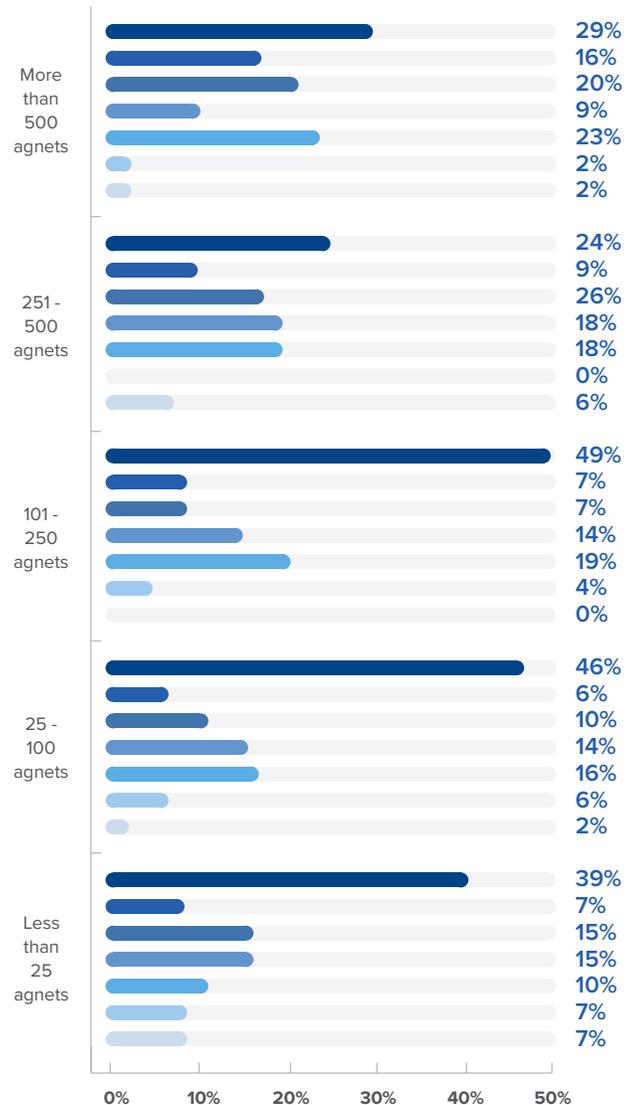
To solve this problem, decision-makers need to continue to empower agents to do their best work and ensure job satisfaction by simplifying tools and processes—an end they've made great progress toward over the last year.

Doing so will, and has, increased their productivity.

Yet to work productively, agents need to be on the same page with leaders.

Pivotal elements of remote work are collaboration and interoperability. Contact center systems need to speak to each other and teams need to share information. But, most importantly, the systems used need to streamline the ability of agents and managers to take control—of campaigns, of customer requests, and even of their own schedules.

➤ What has been the biggest benefit to your contact center since working remotely? Select the most accurate description for your experience.



- Providing agents the ability to have a flexible schedule (agent experience)
- Increased productivity due to greater coaching and training efforts
- Digital transformation acceleration (business operations)
- Overhead reduction (business operations)
- Staffing flexibility and access to a wider talent pool (business operations)
- Improved ability to handle unexpected contact volumes
- Customer service requirements (customer operations)



The Takeaway

While working from home has become steadily more normal for employees worldwide, no one was expecting the trend to accelerate so rapidly and at such short notice. The industry pulse indicates we've arrived at a tipping point, though we don't yet know which way it will go— a full return to the office, a permanently remote environment, or something in between? Now the task is figuring out how to align systems and staff and improve automation.

Luckily, there are many innovative **workforce optimization and AI solutions** that can enhance productivity, foster a sense of agent community, and also mitigate security and

compliance risks. Check out our [tipsheet](#) on optimizing remote agent workforces for additional guidance.

From a tactical standpoint, **operational tips for remote teams** pivot on setting and measuring the right goals. Beyond the ability to evaluate performance, identifying successes and areas that need improvement, and having the capacity to fill gaps, where teams fell short, is a key area of opportunity. Using virtual agents to improve human productivity, integrating a workforce management solution, and automating rote tasks is a good first step. For more on what metrics to measure, we've provided a free resource guide [here](#).

About LiveVox

LiveVox is a next-generation contact center platform that powers more than 14 billion interactions a year. We seamlessly integrate omnichannel communications, CRM, AI, and WFO capabilities to deliver an exceptional agent and customer experience while reducing compliance risk. Our reliable, easy-to-use technology enables effective engagement strategies on communication channels of choice to drive contact center performance. Our battle-tested risk mitigation and security tools help clients maximize their potential in an ever-changing business environment. With 20 years of cloud experience and expertise, LiveVox's CCaaS 2.0 platform is at the forefront of cloud contact center innovation. Our more than 500 global employees are headquartered in San Francisco, with offices in Atlanta; Columbus; Denver; New York City; St. Louis; Medellin, Colombia; and Bangalore, India. To learn more, visit livevox.com today.