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Thought Leadership Paper
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Transform The Agent And Customer Experience Using Contact Center Solutions With Embedded CRM Capabilities



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7 out of 10 contact center decision-makers said their contact center platform does not have all the relevant customer information and interaction history at the moment of engagement.



The majority of firms said they would be more likely to purchase a contact center platform with its own CRM that easily integrated to their legacy CRM and other platforms, assuming budget was not an issue.

Executive Summary

The contact center industry has been slow to change. Today, firms struggle to track and understand customers across various channels, making the agent experience, and therefore, the customer experience (CX) frustrating and difficult. As firms strive to improve customer and agent satisfaction, they are turning to cloud-based integrated contact-center-as-a-service (CCaaS) and native CRM solutions.

Key challenges around tracking the customer journey, serving customers on their channel of choice, and integrating with other systems are creating costly barriers to agent and customer experience excellence. Contact center decision-makers are eager to overcome those barriers with a contact center platform solution featuring its own CRM that easily integrates to their organization's legacy CRM and other platforms.

LiveVox commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate how integrated contact center solutions help firms with their business operations, customer needs, agent performance, and business outcomes. Integrated contact center solutions accomplish several goals. First, they offer a more streamlined and effective agent desktop. Second, they allow for consolidation of formally disparate data sets spanning contact center operations, customer journeys, and customer records. Third, they provide a more simplified approach to serving customers on their channel of choice. Fourth, they serve as a base upon which organizations can enable a wide range of AI applications that would otherwise be difficult to do on top of separate and disparate systems. And finally, they offer a more streamlined integrated suite that reduces overall expense to acquire and manage. To explore this topic, Forrester conducted an online survey with 269 US contact center decision-makers who hold a title of director or above. We found that firms struggle to track customers across various channels, resulting in a poor agent and customer experience.

KEY FINDINGS

- › **Integration with other systems is the top issue in managing CRM and contact center technology.** Three-quarters of surveyed decision-makers said it is challenging to manage upgrades and integrations for their CRM and contact center platform and between them. These integration challenges persist across other systems within the organization, as decision-makers ranked this as their top challenge in managing their CRMs and contact center technology.
- › **Contact center platforms are not given a full picture of their customers, and that frustrates agents.** Integration challenges restrict agents from accessing and synthesizing all relevant customer information and interaction history. This leads to clunky workflows, and it hinders the agent's ability to quickly resolve customer issues and provide exceptional service. Customers can become frustrated with the time an interaction takes while agents are frustrated because they can't do their job efficiently through no fault of their own.
- › **Firms struggle to serve customers on their channel of choice.** Only forty-four percent of respondents believe their firm can orchestrate customer journeys across all channels. Why is this? It's because nearly 60% of firms support their channels on different systems, making it difficult to capture and utilize customer data. And a lack of real-time, channel-specific information adds to the challenge of accessing and using customer data on the channel of their choice.

Customer And Agent Experiences Are Falling Short

As consumer behavior changes, contact center decision-makers need to try to keep up. Firms struggle to support all the voice and digital channels their customers use, and it's difficult to track and identify customers with consistent IDs to take advantage of the capabilities on their customers' preferred channels. In surveying 269 contact center technology decision-makers, we found that:

- › **Orchestrating across all channels is a challenge for most firms.** Contact centers today support a lot of channels, but they're not always the channels their customers prefer. The most commonly supported channels are email and voice. Surveyed contact center decision-makers also said their firms support chat, messaging apps, and SMS (see Figure 1). Agents accessing channels via different systems that do not easily integrate together can lead to an inability to serve customers on their channel of choice.
- › **Agent desktops are inefficient.** The agent experience can be difficult and needlessly frustrating due to inefficient desktops that create clunky workflows. Agents often must hunt across multiple channels and applications to identify customers and to see their full histories. Only 39% of decision-makers said their firm uses tailored desktops and workflows to augment their agents' capabilities.

IDENTIFIED GAPS

As contact center decision-makers prioritize use cases that support self-service and the optimization of customer journeys, they also need to improve their workforce optimization capabilities to better identify customer and agent experience issues. In our survey we found that:

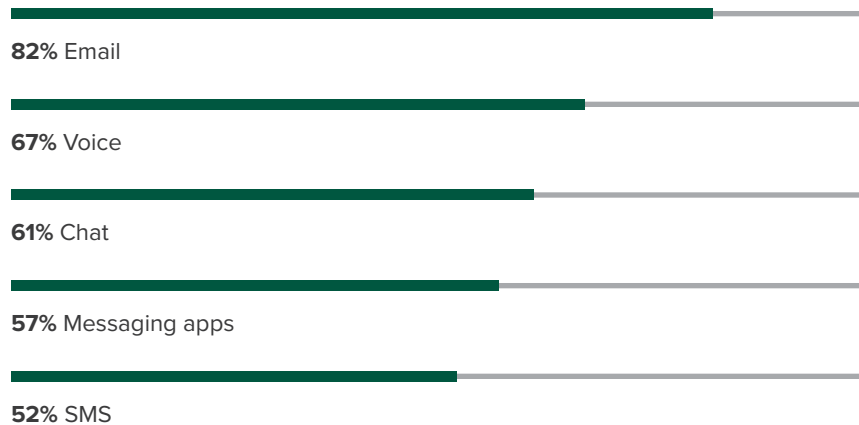
- › **Agent performance analysis leaves gaps.** Contact center decision-makers use a range of tools and techniques to assess and analyze their agent performance. The top three techniques are ensuring agents meet training requirements, call/interaction scoring, and call/screen recording. These assessment techniques are important, and they can lead to improved agent performance. However, less than half of firms use key assessment techniques such as speech and text analytics, KPI analytics, and competitive benchmarking. These more advanced analytics can provide deeper insights into agent performance and drive more focused coaching and training. In addition, firms can use them to spot areas of improvement for agent tools, business processes, and products. Similarly, tools to augment agent capabilities like internal chat, seamless channel switching, and tailored desktop workflows are the least used today.
- › **Customer experience analysis also leaves gaps.** Nearly three-quarters of firms use customer satisfaction surveys to assess the quality of their customer experience. While customer satisfaction is important, it only tells part of the story. Firms can gain deeper insight by assessing KPIs, sentiment analysis, and Net Promoter Scores more than they do today.¹



2 out of 3 firms cannot orchestrate customer journeys across multiple channels.

Figure 1

“Which of the following channels does your contact center support today?”



Base: 269 US contact center director+ decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of LiveVox, December 2020

Integration Challenges Block Progress

Contact center decision-makers can't wait for an ideal moment to make upgrades to their systems; an ideal moment may never come. Meanwhile, challenges stack up against agents. Integration with other systems is the top issue in managing CRM and contact center technology today. Integration issues create a ripple effect across the contact center, making it more difficult to manage upgrades and to view data across all channels. They also complicate setup and support.

The study found:

- › **Contact center decision-makers identified key use cases for integrated customer journey data.** First, they would assist customers with better self-service options. They would support agents with more specific information about the customer's identity and intent. And they would help business analysts by optimizing and enhancing the customer journey.

Currently, agents assisting customers must search across four to six applications during a typical interaction, and this drives down efficiency and time-to-resolution (see Figure 2). Relying on so many applications leads to inefficient workflows, and it hinders the agent's ability to quickly resolve customer issues and provide personalized service.

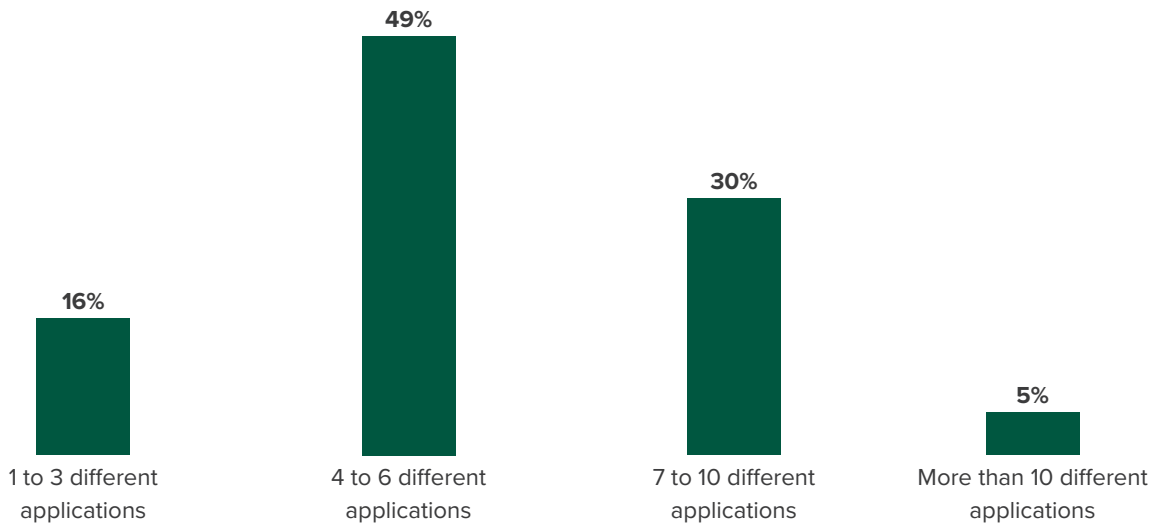
- › **Data challenges impact the customer experience.** Data in the CRM and contact center is not unified. This makes it even more difficult for contact center leaders to identify inefficiencies or gaps in the customer journey across channels and to make improvements accordingly. Firms waste time and money by bringing data together from multiple systems. Additionally, 43% of firms lack channel-specific data in real time, leaving agents frustrated and without a comprehensive view of the customers they are trying to serve. Overcoming these integration challenges is key to capturing, unifying, and utilizing customer journey data.



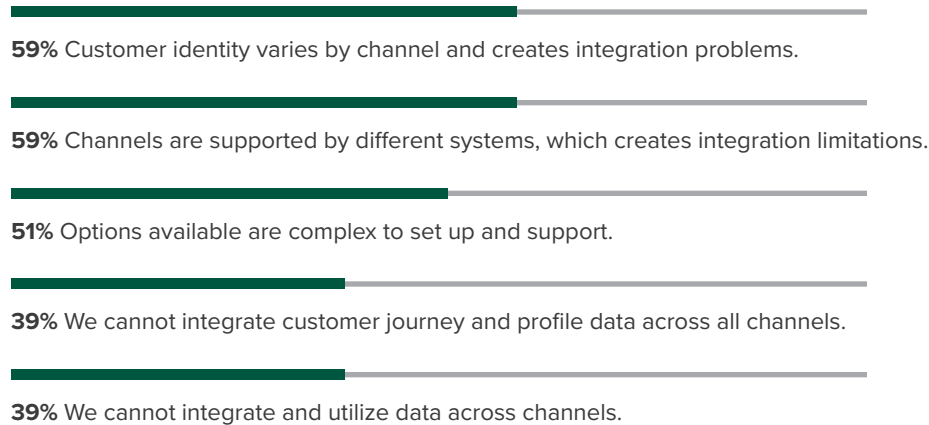
Most decision-makers said it is mildly to very challenging to add applications to their firm's existing CRM or legacy platform.

Figure 2

“How many applications do your agents have open during a typical interaction with a customer?”



“What limitations do you have capturing and utilizing customer journey data?”



“How challenging is it for your organization to manage upgrades and integrations for your CRM?”

75%

Mildly to very challenging

“How challenging is it for your organization to manage upgrades and integrations for your contact center technology?”

76%

Mildly to very challenging

“How challenging is it for your organization to manage the integration between your CRM and contact center technology?”

77%

Mildly to very challenging

Base: 269 US contact center director+ decision-makers

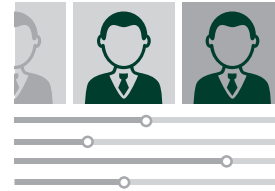
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of LiveVox, December 2020

INTEGRATION CHALLENGES CREATE POOR EXPERIENCES

- › **Firms struggle to see the complete customer journey.** The top challenge for contact center decision-makers is integration with other systems in their technology stacks. This is followed closely by challenges with viewing data across all channels. Moreover, contact center decision-makers struggle with varying customer identities across channels (see Figure 2). An inability to track customers across channels leaves agents without the relevant customer information and interaction history they need to serve customers on their preferred channel and in their moment of need.
- › **Managing upgrades and integrations is challenging across the CRM and contact center platforms.** Three-quarters of contact center decision-makers said it is mildly to very challenging to manage upgrades and integrations for their firm's CRM (see Figure 2). It is even more difficult with contact center technology. Firms waste a lot of effort, time, and resources due to complex systems that do not easily communicate across the ecosystem — not even with IT effort.

INTEGRATION CHALLENGES CAUSE IT INEFFICIENCY

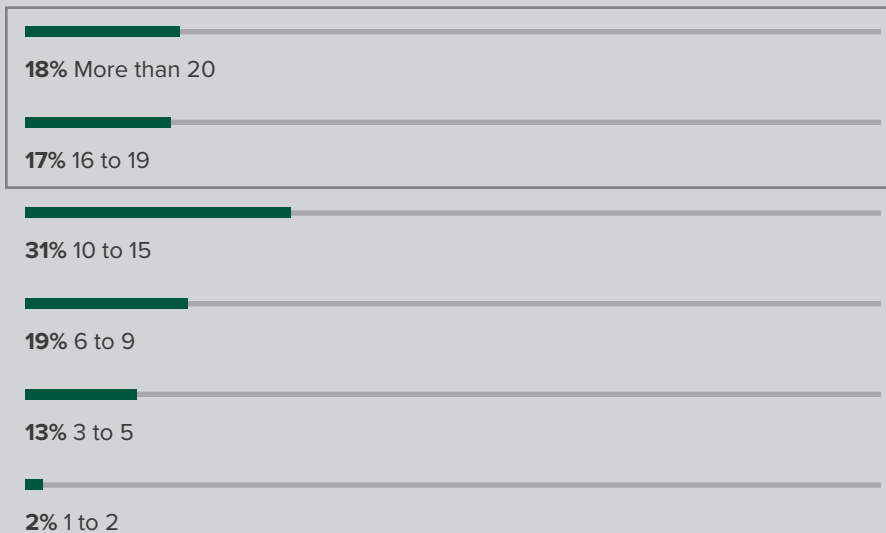
- › **Disparate systems drive the need for large IT teams.** IT teams often have the complex and thankless job of supporting the contact center. Firms struggle to effectively use their customer journey data because their channels are supported by different systems that IT teams must maintain and integrate separately. Most firms have a minimum of 10 to 15 IT staff members currently supporting their contact center, while nearly a quarter of firms have more than 20 IT staff members who keep the contact center running (see Figure 3).



Nearly three-quarters of respondents said a lack of relevant customer information and interaction history in their firm's contact center platform is a limitation to trialing and deploying customer journey history at the moment of interaction.

Figure 3

“How many IT staff members currently support your contact center?”



Base: 269 US contact center director+ decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of LiveVox, December 2020

- › **Barriers impact a typical interaction with a customer.** Let's pause and think about how these integration challenges affect a typical customer interaction. Here's a scenario: A customer calls the contact center to check on a service. That customer was added through a merger. The agent tries to bring up the customer's information and history, but they can't access that data. This requires the agent to open the application with the merged company's data to see the customer's history. But the agent is unfamiliar with the application, and the customer has a different ID in that system. Along the way, the customer has to repeat themselves multiple times. The customer is frustrated about the time the interaction takes and they do not feel validated by the agent. The agent is frustrated because they can't do their job efficiently through no fault of their own.

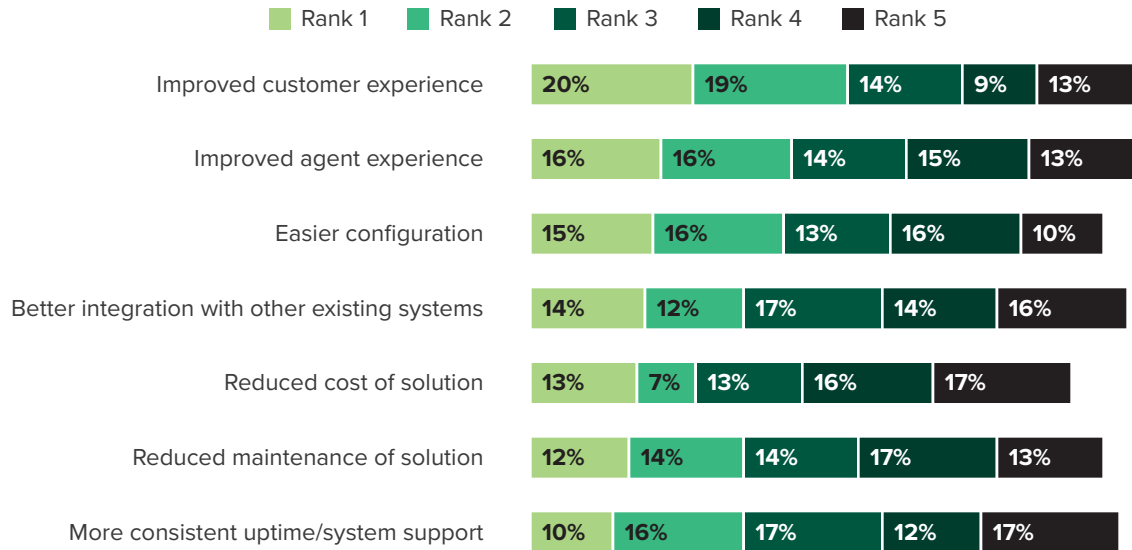
Agent And Customer Experiences Improve With Integrated Contact Center Solutions

Today's vibrant contact center market is defined by the need to shift to multitenant, integrated suites that overlay customer interaction management, self-service, embedded AI, and enhanced workforce optimization. These elements have come together to lay the groundwork for change and differentiation in the CCaaS market.² Contact center decision-makers in our study were clear that they are ready for an integrated solution that has a built-in CRM and external CRM integration capabilities. The study found:

- › **Improving agent and customer experience is top of mind.** In order to win, serve, and retain customers, firms must adopt a customer-obsessed mindset. They need to serve their customers on their channel of choice and in their moment of need. As self-service capabilities improve due to AI, it puts increased pressure on agents to deal with the remaining issues that are more complex and difficult. When this is handled well, it boosts customer satisfaction. This can only be accomplished if agents have the technology in place to seamlessly serve customers across all channels with relevant and comprehensive data in real time. This requires integration across the CRM, a contact center platform with more consistent uptime, and system support (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

“Please rank the top 5 most critical benefits from having a CRM and contact center solution from the same vendor?”



Base: 269 US contact center director+ decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of LiveVox, December 2020

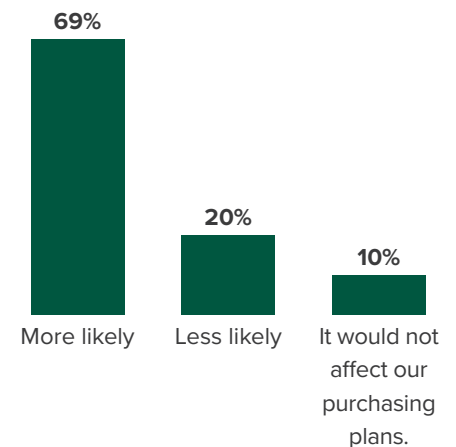
› **If the budget is available, decision-makers will invest in integrated contact center solutions.** Assuming budget isn’t an issue, most respondents said their firm would purchase an integrated CCaaS solution with its own built-in CRM that is then integrated with an external CRM (see Figure 5). Though contact center decision-makers typically wait for compelling events before making major upgrades, the cost of waiting may be too high. Agent time and resources are not being used efficiently, customer satisfaction scores decrease, and complexity increases. More consistent uptime and reduced maintenance costs can help offset the up-front cost of an integrated contact center solution.

Cloud-based solutions ease the challenges firms experience with software upgrades, integrations, and the up-front expense of infrastructure needed for on-premises systems. They are also more cost-effective, making the up-front investment less of a burden in the long run.

› **An integrated contact center solution is the ideal scenario.** Integrated contact center solutions have many critical benefits. Most importantly, they improve agent and customer experiences (see Figure 6). Customers can be served on their channel of choice more efficiently as agents can access their information from a centralized system. An integrated contact center solution provides a smoother workflow for agents, and that allows them to reduce call avoidance and improve on KPIs like average handle time. Select a CCaaS vendor that meets your needs for service, support, and integrations.

Figure 5

“Which of the following best matches your likelihood to purchase if you had access to a contact center platform with its own CRM that easily integrated to your legacy CRM and other platforms (assuming budget is not an issue)?”



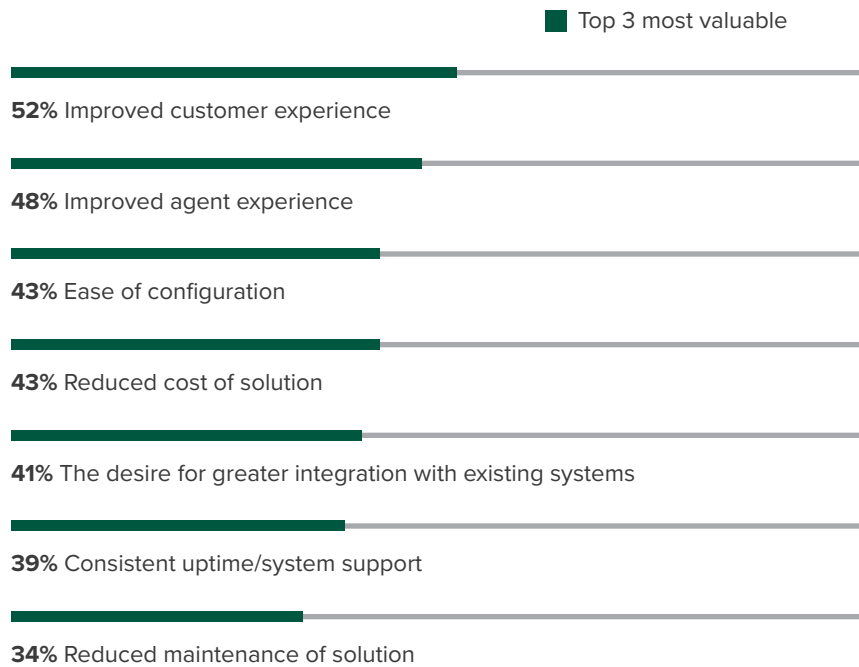
Base: 269 US contact center director+ decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of LiveVox, December 2020

Using an integrated CCaaS solution with its own built-in CRM and external CRM-integration capabilities is a key step to having a comprehensive omnichannel approach. It allows customer-service leaders to trial and implement new and efficient contact flows. On the other hand, the cost and complexity of trying new contact flows with legacy on-premises systems would cause many firms to simply forgo the effort. To adapt to changing consumer appetites for digital interfaces, they'll need flexible, cloud-based solutions for seamless cross-channel interactions.³

Figure 6

“In an ideal scenario where your organization had an integrated contact-center-as-a-service (CCaaS) and CRM system, please rank the following attributes from most valuable to least valuable.”



Base: 269 US contact center director+ decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of LiveVox, December 2020

Key Recommendations

Contact center decision-makers need to break down the old mindset of making slow and steady progress to win customers. Prioritizing cloud-based solutions that simplify and streamline agent and customer experiences is critical. Using an integrated CCaaS with built-in CRM capabilities gives contact center leaders the flexibility to more rapidly test and deploy customer journey improvements, agent tools, and management applications.

Forrester's in-depth survey of US contact center decision-makers about integrated contact center solutions yielded several important recommendations, including:



Assess your contact center's current state of people, process, and technology. Any technology upgrade requires a firm baseline to ensure a solid plan for investment and improvement. It is important to capture feedback from agents, supervisors, and contact center leaders along with key drivers for customer satisfaction.



Identify key use cases, capabilities, and improvements to anchor your business case. A whole-scale shift to a cloud contact center platform with embedded CRM capabilities can support a wide range of improvements. However, you should initially choose a set of improvements that provide not only clear ROI, but also visibility to key stakeholders to ensure ongoing leadership support. Supporting a new channel, enhanced analytics, or increased automation are all good candidates to drive ROI and to improve customer satisfaction.



Lift and shift or transform? Migrating a contact center is like rebuilding a plane mid-flight. This is why a significant percentage of contact center decision-makers choose to simply migrate existing processes elsewhere and defer major transformations until a later time. This is perfectly understandable to ensure the new system is stable and that all contact center workers are confident and comfortable with it. But don't lose sight of the transformation projects the new system was intended to support.

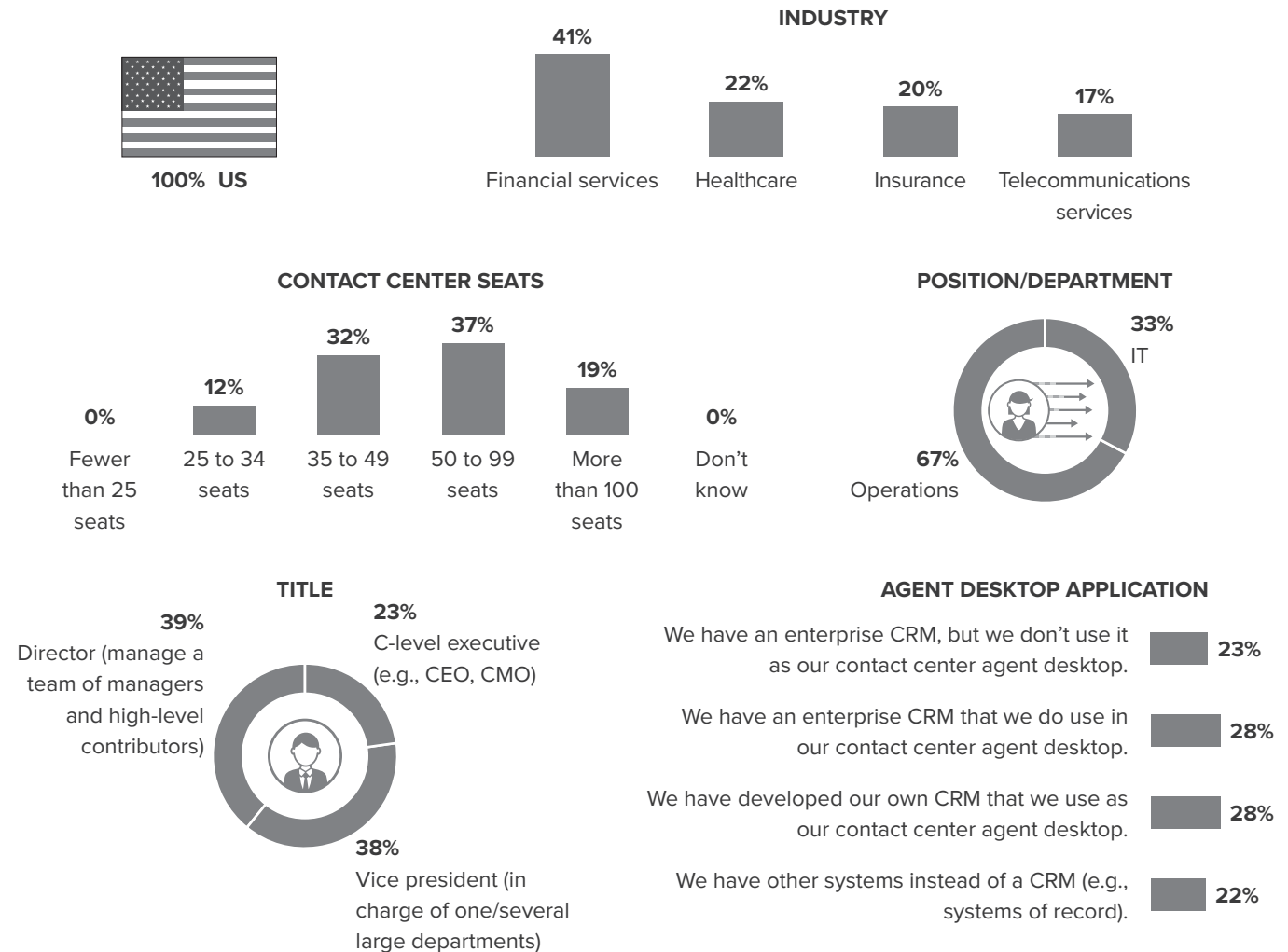


Shift to a continuous improvement mentality and approach for your contact center. One of the key benefits of using an integrated CCaaS with native CRM solution is having the ability to more readily identify potential improvements in customer journeys and the performance of agent tools. This is coupled with a more agile system that allows for improvements to be rolled out rapidly, at less cost, and with more immediate feedback. Leading contact centers have dedicated teams that focus on continuous improvement.

Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of 269 contact center decision-makers in the US who hold a title of director or above to evaluate how integrated contact center solutions help firms with their business operations, customer needs, agent performance, and business outcomes. Questions provided to the participants asked about challenges with contact center and CRM technologies, use cases for customer journey data, and benefits expected from a CCaaS solution. The study began in December 2020 and was completed in December 2020.

Appendix B: Demographics



Base: 269 US contact center director+ decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of LiveVox, December 2020

Appendix C: Endnotes

¹ Net Promoter and NPS are registered service marks, and Net Promoter Score is a service mark, of Bain & Company, Inc., Satmetrix Systems, Inc., and Fred Reichheld.

² Source: "The Forrester Wave™: Contact-Center-As-A-Service (CCaaS) Providers, Q3 2020," Forrester Research, Inc., August 26, 2020.

³ Source: "Now Tech: Cloud Contact Center Vendors, Q2 2020," Forrester Research, Inc., June 2, 2020.