2013 REPORT

Extreme
Engagement
in the
Multichannel
Contact Center

Leveraging the Emerging
Channels Research Report
and Best Practices Guide

ICMI

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Productivity Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

Interactive PDF

Navigate to sections with the click of the mouse.

Click Table of Contents at the top of each to return to this page.

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & KEY FINDINGS

In the fall of 2012, Ovum research analyst Keith Dawson contradicted the widely proclaimed view that customers found real value in the new array of customer contact channels. He argued that customers, regardless of age, were still gravitating towards the traditional contact channels – like phone, chat and email – over the 'novel' ones of social, mobile and advanced self-service.
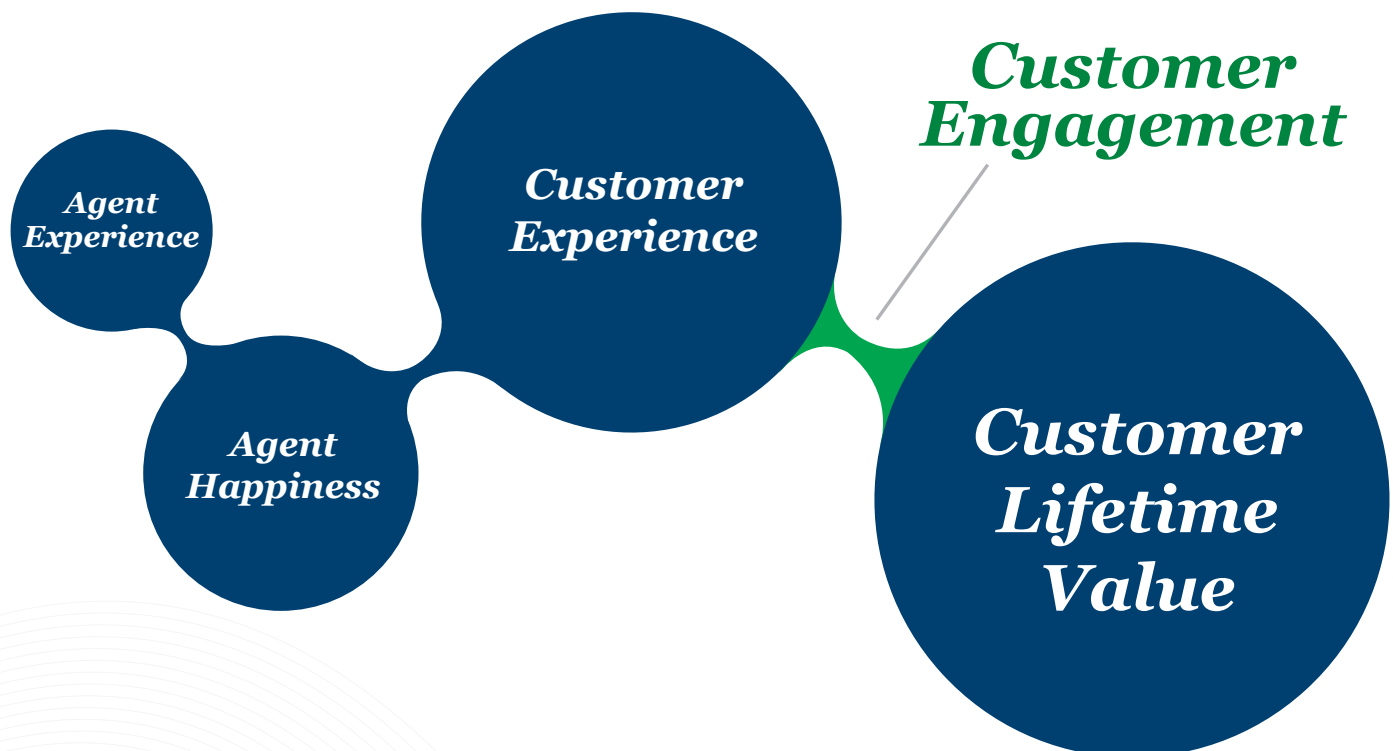
Dawson went on to say that, "In order to influence and optimize the customer experience, enterprises should focus their service efforts on measuring for positive outcomes, rather than maximizing channel choices."

Whether one agrees in part, in totality, or not at all, it is clear when talking to organizations that many are challenged with how to properly integrate the emerging channels into their already crowded contact centers. Couple that with the unique technology platforms that accompany each new channel, and it can be overwhelming. Throw in the question of "are they really worth it?" and one can appreciate why some contact centers choose not to entertain the emerging channels at all.

Here's what we do know - the consideration and planning of a multichannel support structure is mostly being driven by the customer adoption of emerging channels like social, mobile, and advanced self-service. This reactive versus proactive approach is catching contact centers 'off-guard' and not allowing them to harness the true engagement power of the new channels, or of the connected customer. In the second quarter of 2013, the International Customer Management Institute (ICMI) reached out to contact center professionals via the "How Can Emerging Channels be Leveraged to Improve the Customer Experience?" survey to better understand their intended usage of emerging channels. ICMI wanted to know if these channels could improve the overall customer service experience and increase customer engagement. The 361 survey respondents answered questions pertaining to their activities and objectives around supporting customers in a multichannel environment, with additional correlation of each emerging channel back to experience, efficiency and engagement.

With customers having more options than ever, how can contact centers best leverage the emerging channels of social, mobile and advanced self-service? How do these channels impact customer engagement? Do they make the customer experience better, or worse? Do they truly make customer service easier for the contact center agent?

ICMI noticed a distinctive thread when analyzing the data and we will be referencing back to it frequently throughout this report. The thread is rather simple: the agent experience impacts agent happiness which impacts the customer experience which impacts the customer's lifetime value. There is also a vital piece that many organizations miss in their strategy plans – customer engagement - and it is here that we will focus our attention.

Agent Experience · *Agent Happiness* · *Customer Experience* · *Customer Engagement* · *Customer Lifetime Value*

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

Most companies report that their customer engagement is acceptable, with 68.4% saying customers are moderately engaged with their brand. Only 25.2% report extreme (nirvana) engagement, and the remaining feel they have moderate or extremely disengaged customers.

How actively engaged do you consider your customers to be with your company?

Category	Value
Extremely Engaged	25.2%
Moderately Engaged	68.4%
Moderately Disengaged	5.8%
Extremely Disengaged	0.6%
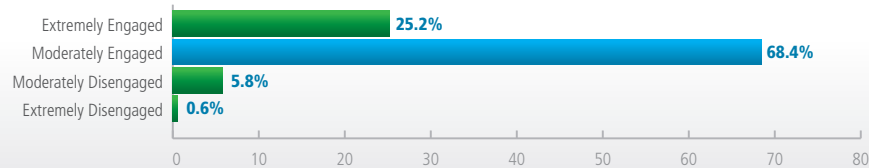
Research outlined in this report is intended to provide contact center professionals with the data they need to understand why and how to use emerging channels in their customer service offerings. Since new project budgets are often a challenge for the contact center, we've pointed out places where the emerging channels increase customer engagement which thereby improves customer lifetime value to the corporate brand. The ICMI Best Practices are an accompaniment designed to aid contact centers with the guidelines and training tools they need on their path to extreme customer engagement.

KEY FINDINGS

Only
25%
of companies feel their customers are extremely engaged with their brand

90%
of customers find the features of social customer service extremely useful or somewhat useful

93%
of customers would be MORE satisfied with customer service if they were offered their channel choice

Self-service is said to increase deflection rate or lower volume to other channels by
57%
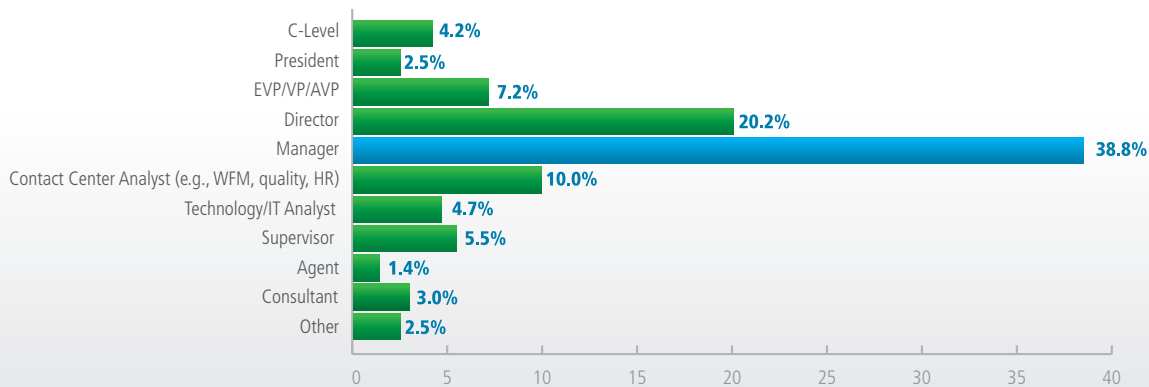of survey participants

Mobile is considered a necessary channel by
72%

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

STUDY RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

The 361 survey respondents represented nearly every level of the contact center, with the majority of results provided by executives (13.6%), directors (20.2%) and managers (38.8%). Also participating were functional team members and managers/analysts from training, product, human resources, workforce management, and QA (12.5%), contact center supervisors (5.5%), and information technology (4.7%). A few agents and consultants rounded out the respondent mix.

Select the role that best describes your work function:

| Role	Percentage
C-Level	4.2%
President	2.5%
EVP/VP/AVP	7.2%
Director	20.2%
Manager	38.8%
Contact Center Analyst (e.g., WFM, quality, HR)	10.0%
Technology/IT Analyst	4.7%
Supervisor	5.5%
Agent	1.4%
Consultant	3.0%
Other	2.5%

Contact centers of every breadth responded for an impartial sample size, with those having 10-49 agents (29.9%), and 250 or more (25.1%), representing the majority.

How many agents work in your contact center(s)?

Agents	Percentage
Less than 10	13.9%
10 - 49	29.9%
50 - 99	16%
100 - 249	12.4%
250 or More	25.1%
N/A	2.7%
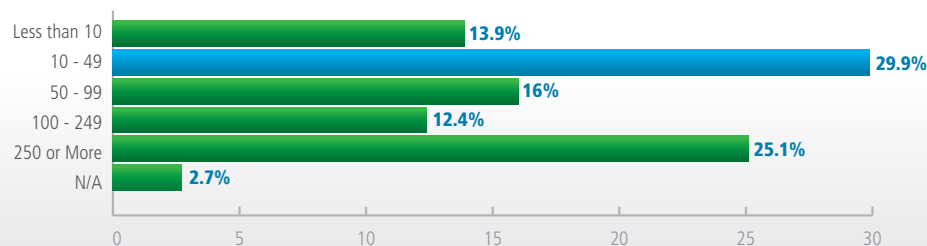
As expected, over half (56.5%) report customer service as their primary function, with another quarter (25.2%) offering a blend of service and sales. The remaining are either help desk centers or telesales.

What is your contact center's primary function?

Function	Percentage
Customer Service	56.5%
Help Desk	11.4%
Telesales	1.8%
Blended Service and Sales	25.2%
N/A	5.1%
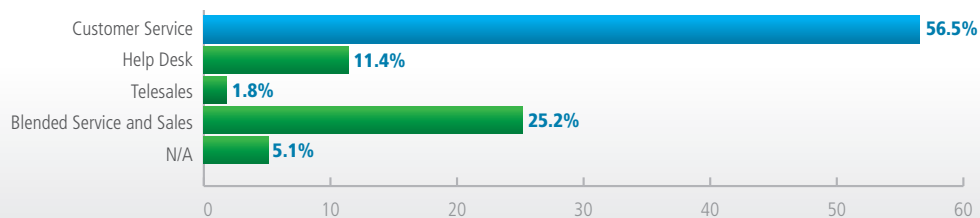
Although North America and the United States specifically was the most represented region, participation in the study came from all over the world.

Participation spanned all industry verticals. Financial services, healthcare, and telecom were the largest groups accounting for 18.8%, 6.7% and 5.4%, respectively. 4.7% are outsourced service providers.

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

MULTICHANNEL IS ALREADY HERE

Whether an organization acknowledges that they officially support a multichannel customer service strategy or not, chances are good that they do. No longer can companies stringently dictate how and when customers can reach them for customer service. Even if the phone queues are closed for the day, the brand is still accessible through social media, mobile, and online. Conversations around a business and their customers are happening 24x7, whether the organization chooses to control them or let them run free. With the emergence of avenues like Twitter, Facebook, and community forums, the former one-to-one dialogue frequently gets replaced with a many-to-many public conversation. This is multichannel.

Multichannel support simply implies that customers can reach an organization for customer service through a wide variety of means. In some cases, the business formally announces that they will provide specific live agent mechanisms, like phone, chat or email during regimented times and days. Multichannel may also include the always-on and always-available self-service channels like FAQs, forums and interactive knowledgebases. With other channels, most notably social media, the customer chooses the time and method in which they would like to communicate. It is now, with the emerging channels, that the lines of true customer service and informal customer conversations are becoming blurred. Contact centers must determine the impact of offering these emerging channels as integrated customer service; as well as what it means to not offer them.

Multichannel also takes into account the newer and currently less utilized technologies such as video and virtual assistants. While we are tracking their progress, it's difficult to yet predict their customer adoption rate, or of the subsequent implementation expectation back onto businesses. Amidst all of this, the traditional channels still comprise the largest portion of today's support interactions.

While the traditional live-agent channels of inbound phone (98.2%), email (89.0%), outbound phone (75.4%), and web inquiries (70.0%) still dominate, the self-help channels showed an increase from an earlier study that ICMI released this year. Self-service IVR (48.9%) and online portals/knowledgebases (42.2%) each reported around a 12% higher usage. Although the direct correlation wasn't asked, this is quite possibly associated with the rise in mobile app usage and built in self-service functionality. Online chat usage remains strong at 39.8%, although it has fallen behind social (47.9%). With the continued momentum around smartphone adoption and app development, it was rather surprising that only 39.3% report supporting it as a channel. Remarkably, almost ½ of centers are still supporting offline activities like fax and mail (48.3%).
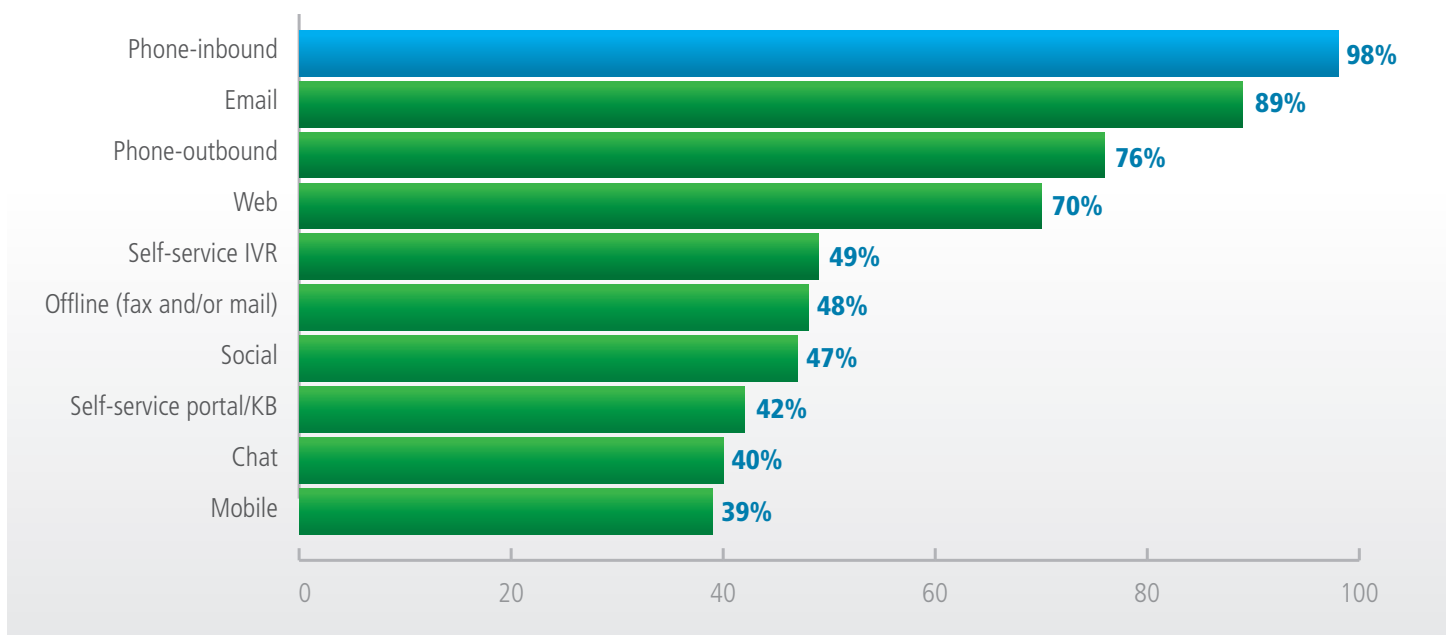
Rather than allow the proliferation of these new channels to be overwhelming, contact center leaders have the opportunity to use them to the advantage of their customers, their company and their agents. If planned out and implemented correctly, the emerging channels can improve the efficiency of support operations, greatly increase customer satisfaction, and generate a renewed sense of customer engagement and loyalty to the brand. If the emerging channels are left ignored, organizations risk being left at a serious competitive disadvantage.

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

WHAT DO CUSTOMERS REALLY WANT?

To better understand what should be done, it's important to first examine what customers really want. Therefore, ICMI approached this research from two different angles in order to compare what the customer says they want, with what the contact center is currently doing or is planning to implement.

When asked to rank their personal channel preference when initially reaching out to a business for customer service, our survey participants choose to talk "directly to a phone agent" most of the time (38.0%). Web self-service was the second most sought after at 28.1%, with the other options not even registering double-digits. SMS was the lowest "first pass" preferred channel at 0.90%, with social media (1.5%) as the second and mobile (6.9%) as the third least favorite.

Rank in order from 1 to 8 (1 being the MOST preferred, and 8 the least), of how YOU as a customer prefer to contact a business for customer service.								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Directly to a phone agent	38.0%	18.6%	12.3%	9.3%	6.0%	6.3%	5.4%	4.2%
Self-service on a website	28.1%	17.4%	11.7%	12.0%	8.1%	5.1%	5.7%	12.0%
Directly to a chat agent	9.0%	15.3%	24.9%	17.1%	15.3%	8.7%	7.8%	2.1%
By an email	8.1%	17.1%	19.8%	18.0%	14.1%	13.5%	6.0%	3.6%
Through an automated IVR	7.5%	15.6%	11.4%	12.6%	17.7%	9.9%	9.9%	15.6%
Self-service from your mobile device	6.9%	11.4%	10.5%	10.2%	10.8%	13.2%	20.1%	17.1%
Via social media	1.5%	2.1%	5.1%	9.9%	11.7%	18.9%	21.6%	29.3%
Through a text message	0.9%	2.7%	4.5%	11.1%	16.5%	24.6%	23.7%	16.2%

In a 2011 report commissioned by Avaya, Forrester Consulting and their research partner callcentres.net echoed this sentiment when they too found that the phone was still the favored channel choice when interacting with customer service.

So what gives? Was Keith Dawson correct when saying the emerging channels are merely novelties? The community responses lead us to say, 'no'. To explain these customer preferences, Forrester asked respondents to then prioritize the components of a positive customer service interaction. Not surprisingly, quick resolution and human interaction topped the list:

• *"I am able to interact with a customer service representative quickly."*
• *"My query is resolved quickly."*
• *"I am able to interact with a person."*
• *"I am able to access the information I need to resolve my query myself."*

So while it's clear that consumers believe phone calls are faster and conceivably more empowering than other channels, phone support alone isn't the answer to increasing support efficiency. In the ICMI research, participants rated web self-service as their second preferred choice, showing that a quicker and more thorough resolution may indeed outshine live agent assistance.

When asked, "What impact does self-service have on your customers?" contact center leaders agreed that quicker response times (45.2%) and increased first-contact-resolution (42.6%) were of the most significant impact.

What impact does Self-Service have on your customers?			
	Significant Impact	Some Impact	No Impact
Quicker response times	45.2%	36.0%	18.7%
Increased first-contact-resolution (FCR)	42.6%	36.3%	21.1%
Increased CSAT	37.0%	44.2%	18.8%
Greater customer loyalty	33.9%	43.2%	22.9%

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

While mobile and social isn't associated with quite the same impact to first-contact-resolution (FCR) as self-service, respondents did say that it significantly (and favorably) impacted response times 37.2% and 44.9% respectively.

What impact does the Mobile channel have on your customers?			
	Significant Impact	Some Impact	No Impact
Quicker response times	37.2%	42.5%	20.4%
Increased CSAT	33.0%	52.7%	14.3%
Greater customer loyalty	31.3%	48.2%	20.5%
Increased first-contact-resolution (FCR)	29.7%	46.8%	23.4%

What impact does the Social Media channel have on your customers?			
	Significant Impact	Some Impact	No Impact
Quicker response times	44.9%	36.0%	19.1%
Greater customer loyalty	38.2%	44.9%	16.9%
Increased first-contact-resolution (FCR)	32.8%	48.2%	19.0%
Increased CSAT	30.9%	47.8%	21.3%

It is important to note that as a present norm, customers are experiencing very inconsistent service across the emerging channels both at an industry-wide level and within a specific company. For example, they may get amazing service through social from Company A, but are then completely ignored on Twitter by Company B. Similarly, Company A consistently delivers top-tier support through social, but then provides a horrid mobile customer experience. With these all-too-common examples, contact centers are 'training' customers to revert back to traditional phone, chat, and email because the expectations are set, the rules are in place, and the anticipated experience is usually met.
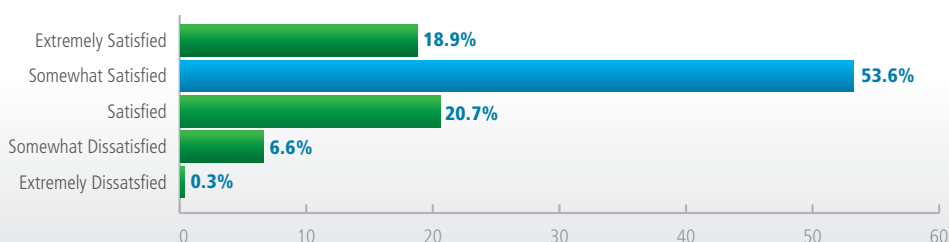
"Today's tech savvy and always-on consumers have high standards when it comes to availability, quality and ease of use", says Ian Hunter, Principal Architect - Emerging Channels at USAN. "In this American Idol/reality show culture, a service provider that doesn't meet a custom-er's needs – even once – can be voted off the island and banished to obscurity. Therefore there is tremendous market pressure to provide a seamless customer experience across channels – every channel – all day, every day. But this is no small task, as many companies have found out when they've attempted to wrangle communications systems and streamline business processes."

Herein lies a new quandary for organizations! When the traditional channel experience is not met these days, one can almost guarantee that it will indirectly cause more volume into the contact center. When many customers do not get the answer they want or are unhappy with the response rate, they go pretty quickly out to social media. This is then requiring the contact center to follow-up either through social or back through a traditional channel escalation path. In either scenario there is frustration with the initial traditional channel interaction and a missed FCR opportunity.

ICMI uncovered an additional reason which may be precluding customers from preferring the emerging channels for customer service. It appears that even when these channels are used by the customer, the company is not always responding in kind. Respondents admitted that rarely if ever did they get a customer service response through social media (68.3%) or SMS text message (64.1%), while almost half said the same for mobile (48.2%).

This then begs the question, "If you are not offered the customer service channel you prefer, but still receive good service, how satisfied are you as a customer?" The answer is somewhat satisfied 53.6% of the time, according to our survey.

If you are not offered the customer service channel you prefer, BUT still receive good service, how satisfied are YOU as a customer?

Extremely Satisfied — 18.9%
Somewhat Satisfied — 53.6%
Satisfied — 20.7%
Somewhat Dissatisfied — 6.6%
Extremely Dissatsfied — 0.3%

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

Contact centers and their organizations shouldn't get too excited with that answer though, because overwhelmingly (93.4%) respondents said they would be MORE satisfied if they were offered their channel choice.

Would you be MORE satisfied if you were offered your channel preference?

6.6% — **No** **Yes** — 93.4%
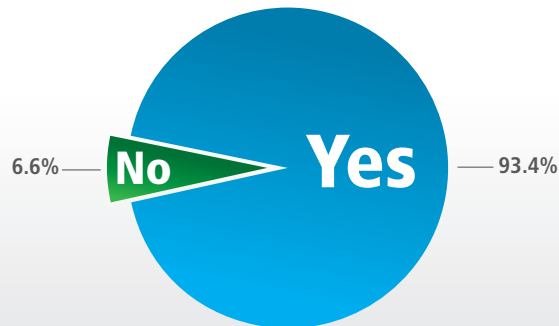
And here is where everyone should pay attention, because this is the implication of not understanding the gaps between what customers want and what is delivered to them. We asked, "Would you be willing to move to a competitor for a product or service if all other things were equal, AND you were offered customer service through your preferred channel?" Almost half (48.8%) responded in the affirmative. Only 9.3% declared no, and the other 41.9% were unsure.

Would you be willing to move to a competitor for a product or service if all other things were equal, AND you were offered customer service through your preferred channel?

41.9% — **Not Sure**
9.3% — **No**
Yes — 48.8%
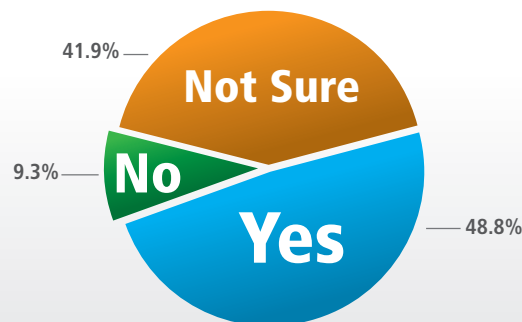
Of those that stated there were too many other variables to consider, they cited good service, length of service, response time, and knowledgeable staff as the predominant reasons they would not switch. Expense and inconvenience were also quoted as major detractors to change. Interestingly enough, brand loyalty was not overtly mentioned as a barrier to exit.

With all that said, it becomes increasingly clear that phone support, as with all the traditional channels, is just a component of a much greater and powerful multichannel strategy.

THE TOP THREE EMERGING CHANNELS OF 2013

While our research, as well as that of others, has shown the customer preference for using the phone is strong, organizations must still understand how the other channels are perceived and where their evolution is headed.
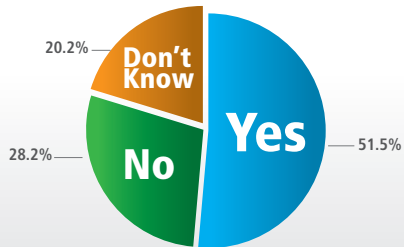
ICMI recognizes that there are many new methods of customer support in the multichannel bailiwick, but that not all are being readily considered at this point. Therefore, while we have inquired about the usage and plans for other channels, our focus has centered on social, mobile (transactional, automated, or live) and advanced self-service (proactive one-way SMS, interactive knowledgebases, or virtual assistants/bots) at this time.

We prioritized social, mobile, and advanced self-service (herein known interchangeably as self-service) because the industry and our research show them to be both necessary channels and competitive differentiators.

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide
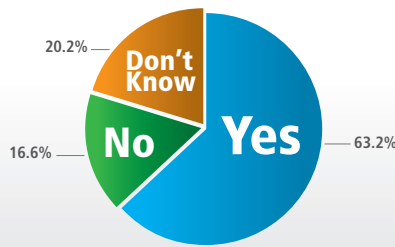
TABLE OF CONTENTS →

When directly asked if the channels were competitive differentiators, over half (51.5%) report social to be, 63.2% said mobile was, and an astounding 81.2% agreed self-service could be.

Only self-service had "Don't Know" in the single digits (8.9%) signifying that some enterprises are still a little unsure with how to use social and mobile as customer service channels.
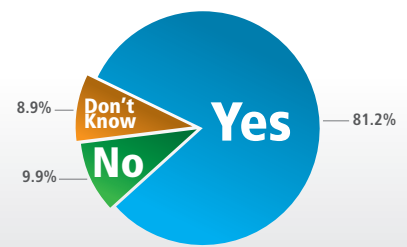
Do you feel that **Social Media** as a customer service channel is a competitive differentiator?	Do you feel that **Mobile** as a customer service channel is a competitive differentiator?	Do you feel that **Self-Service** can be a competitive differentiator?

20.2% Don't Know
28.2% No
Yes 51.5%

20.2% Don't Know
16.6% No
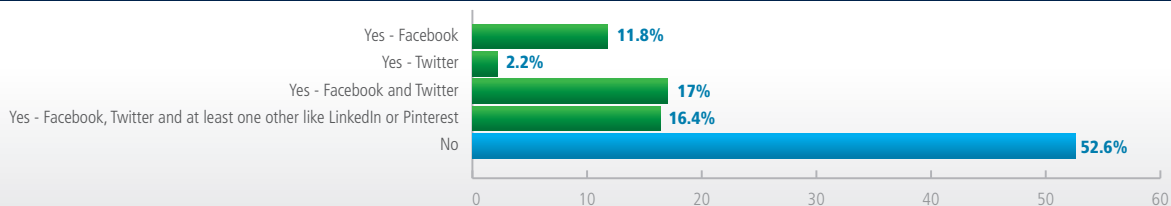Yes 63.2%

8.9% Don't Know
9.9% No
Yes 81.2%

And while there was disparity in exactly who the channels are most necessary for – the organization and/or the customer – there was agreement that all three are needed. 84.1% felt self-service was necessary, 72.2% agreed with mobile, and an equally impressive 67.2% said social.

1. Social Media Customer Service

According to Forrester, social media is at the core of a multichannel strategy because it has such vast impact on an organization's brand.
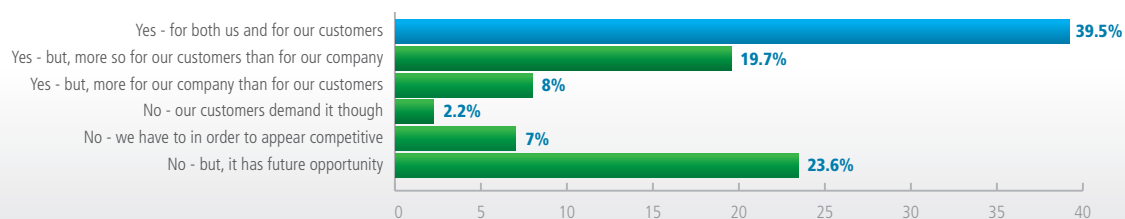
Yet, 52.5% of the ICMI audience is not supporting social as a customer service channel. For those that are, 17.0% are doing so through both Facebook and Twitter, 16.4% have added a third outlet such as LinkedIn or Pinterest, and 11.8% support through Facebook alone. A much smaller number (2.2%) are solely using Twitter as their social media channel.

Does your contact center support Social Media as a customer service channel?

Yes - Facebook	11.8%
Yes - Twitter	2.2%
Yes - Facebook and Twitter	17%
Yes - Facebook, Twitter and at least one other like LinkedIn or Pinterest	16.4%
No	52.6%

Of the 67.2% that acknowledged social media was a necessary channel, 39.5% said that there was mutual benefit for both the company and the customer, 19.8% believe the customer gets more out of social than the organization, and less than 8% feel the inverse is true. For those that don't consider it a necessity, a small amount recognized they need it to be competitive (7.0%) or to meet customer demand (2.2%). Almost a quarter, (23.8%) don't find it necessary now, but think it has future opportunity.

Do you consider Social Media to be a necessary customer service channel?

Yes - for both us and for our customers	39.5%
Yes - but, more so for our customers than for our company	19.7%
Yes - but, more for our company than for our customers	8%
No - our customers demand it though	2.2%
No - we have to in order to appear competitive	7%
No - but, it has future opportunity	23.6%

Social was ranked third amongst the emerging channels for reciprocal necessity behind mobile (45.6%) and self-service (67.2%). This may again signify that the organization is still unsure of the best way to properly integrate social media as a channel, or how to track and harness the power of the social interactions.

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

For those that are not yet supporting social, 70.1% are not planning to add it as a customer service channel within the next 12 months. The majority (39.6%) of those respondents do not feel it is a necessary channel for their specific business, another 27.4% want to but do not have the resources or budget, while a small percentage (3.1%) simply doesn't know where to begin.

Do you plan to add Social Media as a customer service channel within the next 12 months?

Response	Percentage
Yes - we have the plan and budget in place	5.5%
Yes - but, we are still in the development stage	24.4%
No - we don't have the resources or budget to implement at this time	27.4%
No - we don't no where to start	3%
No - it's not a necessary channel for our business	39.6%
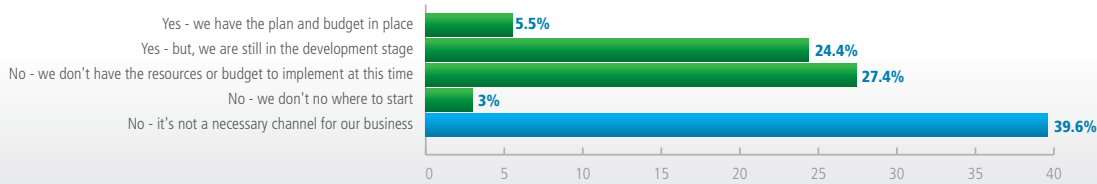
In a late January 2013 online poll, ICMI asked the audience, "What is the reality of social customer service at your center?" 40% said they were doing it, but still trying to figure out how to make it work, 29% said they weren't supporting it yet, 12% said it's easy – 'we got this down', 10% said there were no plans to get involved with social, and 8% said they are doing it and it is hard.

Admittedly, contact center managers are struggling with social media integration in large part because the volume is so small when compared to the traditional channels. Forrester and others reiterate though, that a focus on volume shouldn't be the point; it's about the channel impact and its ability to engage customers publicly.

The contact center can breathe a little easier though, as they are not alone in their confusion. Consumers are also still learning the best ways to use social as a customer service channel. Contact centers that choose to actively engage through social have an unprecedented opportunity to guide their customers appropriately and provide that impact Forrester alludes to. As one community member stated in the survey, "Our analytics have shown that loyalty, churn, and NPS are usually no more statistically successful in social media than other traditional channels for posters or followers. But that changes quickly when we find those right levers that incite the mutual engagement. Customers have to be ENGAGED with us, and not just lurking through social."

The good news is this – when organizations are offering up engaging social media support, customers are finding value in it. On average, all of the options to our question, "How useful do your customers find the following features of your social customer service?" generated an 89.8% acknowledgement that customers found them either extremely useful or somewhat useful.

• *Responses to customer posts and comments*

• *Private answering of customer service inquiries through direct messaging*

• *Ability to directly complain and post negative comments about the company*

• *Delivery of marketing and product info*

• *Public answering of customer service inquires*

How useful do your customers find the following features of Social customer service support?	Extremely Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not at all Useful	We Don't Offer
Responses to customer posts and comments	50.4%	40.1%	3.6%	5.8%
Private answering of customer service inquiries through direct messaging	47.8%	40.3%	3.7%	8.2%
Ability to directly complain and post negative comments about the company	44.4%	44.4%	6.7%	4.4%
Delivery of marketing and product info	42.6%	46.3%	5.9%	5.1%
Public answering of customer service inquires	40.1%	42.3%	8.8%	8.8%

Indeed, the customer experience is the core motivation behind this emerging channel. When asked the three primary reasons a company is motivated to implement social media as a customer service channel, the responses were:

• *To improve customer satisfaction*

• *Better experience for social media customers*

• *A more personalized customer experience*

As with all the emerging channels, organizations need to invest in tools and agent knowledge so that consumers receive a consistent level of experience. With social in particular though, technology can assist with sifting through the massive volume of social media interactions to identify the most relevant postings that require attention and personalized responses.

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

2. Mobile Customer Service

It used to be that customers would start expecting support through their mobile device as soon as a company debuted a mobile web app or native/smartphone app. That is no longer the case. If you have a website that can be accessed through a smartphone, then customers will naturally expect you can service them directly from the device. When asked, "How satisfied will your customers be if they need to exit your mobile web app/smartphone app to contact customer service using traditional channels?" 45.0% said somewhat or extremely dissatisfied. While 27.8% said the transition wouldn't impact their customer satisfaction, another 13.6% answered neutrally and 14.5% said they weren't sure.
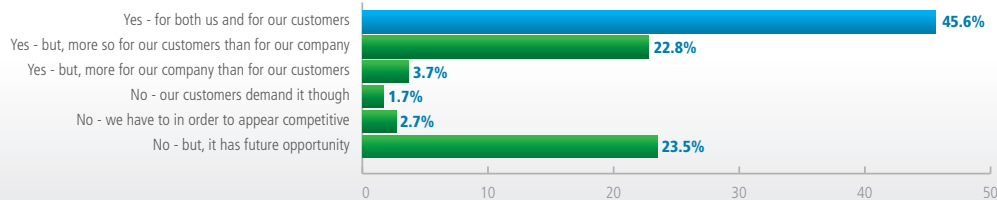
How satisfied will your customers be if they need to EXIT your Mobile web app/smartphone app to contact customer service using traditional channels (phone, chat, email)?

Somewhat or Extremely Satisfied	27.8%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	13.6%
Somewhat or Extrememly Dissatisfied	45%
Don't Know	14.5%
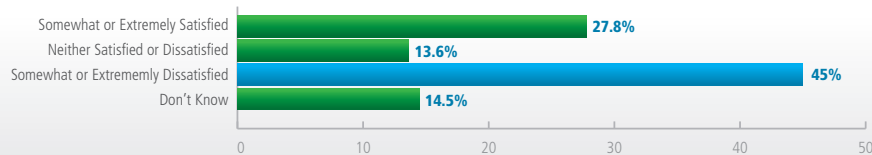
The point is, without "on the glass" support, customers will likely seek other channels and this will impact their satisfaction and thereby their engagement.

The majority of respondents (72.2%) agree that mobile is a necessary customer service channel – 45.6% say for both the enterprise and the customer, 22.8% more so for the customer than for the company, and a very small group feel it is necessary more for the organization (3.7%). Of those that did not find mobile a necessary customer service channel, 23.5% thought it had future opportunity, and very small percentages were only recognizing it for competitive reasons (2.7%) or because customers demand it (1.7%).

Do you consider Mobile to be a necessary customer service channel?

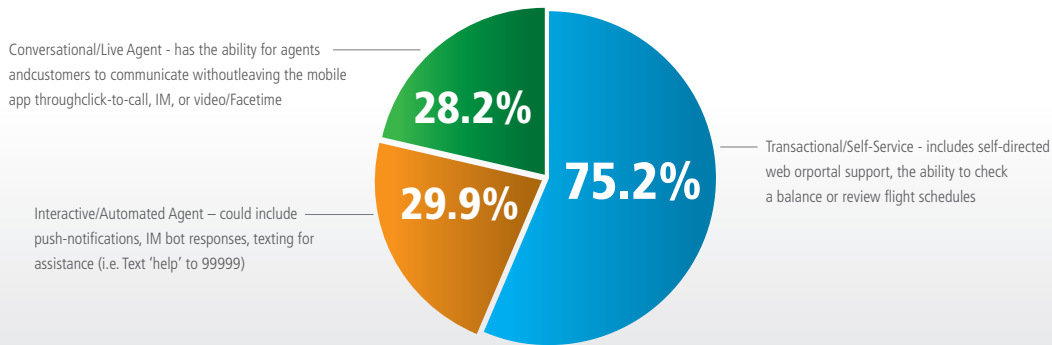|	
Yes - for both us and for our customers	45.6%
Yes - but, more so for our customers than for our company	22.8%
Yes - but, more for our company than for our customers	3.7%
No - our customers demand it though	1.7%
No - we have to in order to appear competitive	2.7%
No - but, it has future opportunity	23.5%

Even with 63.3% of contact center leaders thinking mobile is a competitive customer service differentiator and 72.2% calling it necessary, only 39.3% are actually supporting mobile as a formal channel today.

Do you currently support Mobile as a customer service channel (transactional selfservice, automated self-service and/or live agent)?

No 60.7%
Yes 39.3%
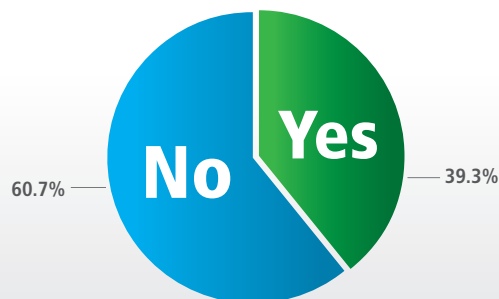
For those that are, three-quarters (75.2%) are offering it via in-app transactional self-service, 29.9% also have more advanced mobile support that includes interactive or automated agents and texting for assistance, and 28.2% utilize live agents for in-app communication through click-to-call, IM, text/SMS, or video/Facetime.
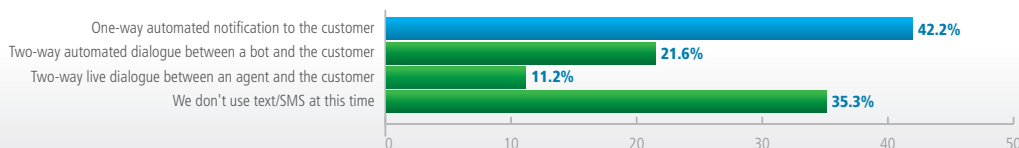
Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

2013 REPORT

Is your Mobile customer service...

Conversational/Live Agent - has the ability for agents and customers to communicate without leaving the mobile app through click-to-call, IM, or video/Facetime

28.2%

29.9%

75.2%

Interactive/Automated Agent – could include push-notifications, IM bot responses, texting for assistance (i.e. Text 'help' to 99999)

Transactional/Self-Service - includes self-directed web or portal support, the ability to check a balance or review flight schedules

When we directly asked those respondents with a mobile solution how their company used text/SMS to communicate with customers, 42.2% said they utilize it for outward one-way notifications, 21.6% facilitate a dialogue between a bot and a customer, and 11.2% consider it a live agent conversational channel. 35.3% of contact centers offering mobile support as a customer service channel do not offer SMS.

Several respondents mentioned that while text/SMS support is being requested by customers, they are unable to provide it at this time due to regulatory restrictions or security concerns.

How does your company use text/SMS as a customer service channel?

One-way automated notification to the customer	42.2%
Two-way automated dialogue between a bot and the customer	21.6%
Two-way live dialogue between an agent and the customer	11.2%
We don't use text/SMS at this time	35.3%

All choices for the question "What are the 3 primary reasons your company is motivated to implement mobile customer service?" generated double-digit percentage responses. The most-selected was that of increasing customer loyalty (39.5%), with improving customer satisfaction (36.5%) not far behind. Rounding out the top 5 were customers requesting the mobile channel (35.7%), a better experience for mobile customers (32.0%), and lower cost (31.6%). It is again clear that the customer experience and engagement is at the pinnacle of the mobile channel implementation impetus.

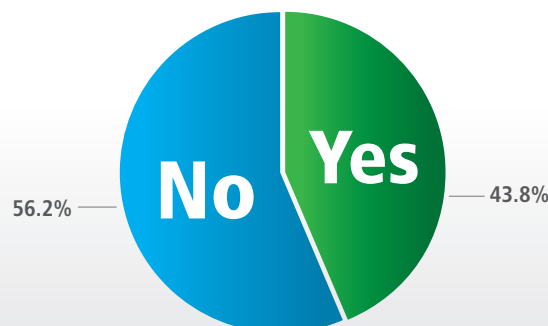*Increase customer loyalty*

Lower cost

Customers are asking for Mobile support

Better experience for Mobile customers

To improve customer satisfaction

Even so, well over half (56.2%) are not planning to provide mobile customer service within the next 12 months.
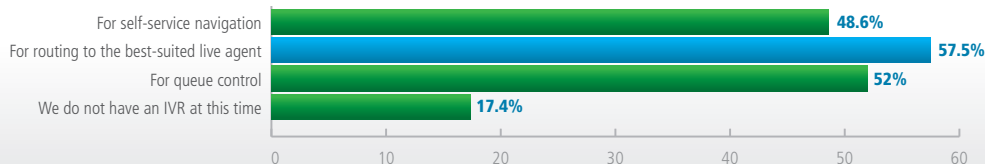
Do you plan to provide Mobile customer service within the next 12 months?

56.2% **No** **Yes** 43.8%

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide
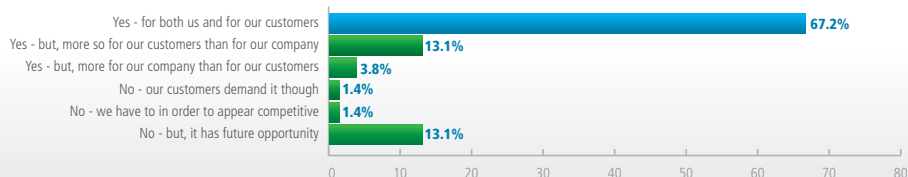
TABLE OF CONTENTS →

3. Advanced Self-Service

For years companies have understood that customers shouldn't always have unstructured access into customer service, which is one major reason IVRs have become so popular. Even now, the IVR is used by 57.5% of the community to route callers to the best-suited live agent and by almost half (48.6%) to function as self-navigation. With the advances in visual navigation and location-based services, mobile self-service should greatly improve the satisfaction level with the IVR experience.

How does your company use their phone IVR system?

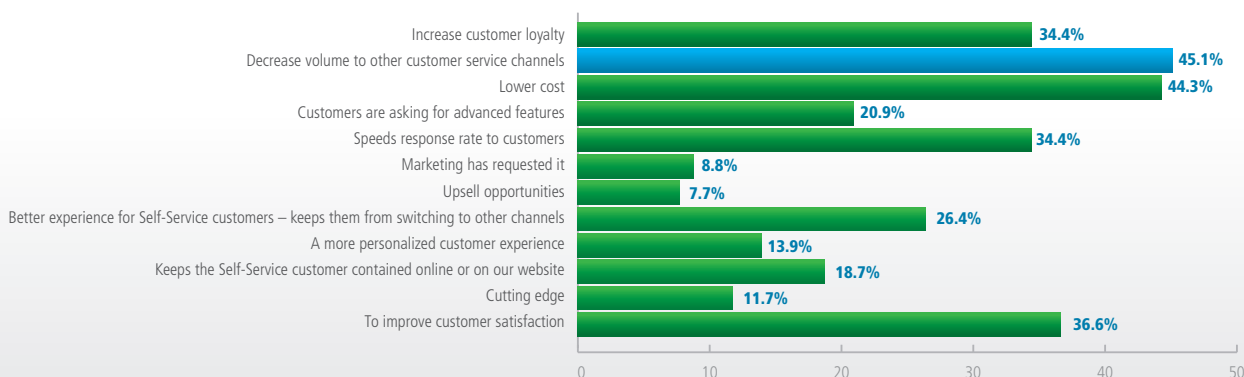|	
For self-service navigation	48.6%
For routing to the best-suited live agent	57.5%
For queue control	52%
We do not have an IVR at this time	17.4%

When asked, "Do you consider self-service to be a necessary customer service channel?" the preponderance (84.1%) answer "yes". The vast majority (67.2%) of those that do, feel it is mutually beneficial for both the company and the customer. Another 13.1% think the value leans towards he customer, while only 3.8% feel the company is the primary beneficiary.

Do you consider Self-Service to be a necessary customer service channel?

Yes - for both us and for our customers	67.2%
Yes - but, more so for our customers than for our company	13.1%
Yes - but, more for our company than for our customers	3.8%
No - our customers demand it though	1.4%
No - we have to in order to appear competitive	1.4%
No - but, it has future opportunity	13.1%

Self-service communication channels are essential for companies looking to reduce contact center costs, and provide innovative options for customers. This is indeed the case for the respondents of this survey, as 45.1% chose "decrease volume to other customer service channels" and "lower cost" (44.3%) as the two primary reasons they are motivated to implement advanced self-service options. Other priorities include improving customer satisfaction (36.6%), increasing customer loyalty (34.4%) and quickening response rates to customers (34.4%).

What are the 3 primary reasons your company is motivated to implement advanced Self-Service options?

Increase customer loyalty	34.4%
Decrease volume to other customer service channels	45.1%
Lower cost	44.3%
Customers are asking for advanced features	20.9%
Speeds response rate to customers	34.4%
Marketing has requested it	8.8%
Upsell opportunities	7.7%
Better experience for Self-Service customers – keeps them from switching to other channels	26.4%
A more personalized customer experience	13.9%
Keeps the Self-Service customer contained online or on our website	18.7%
Cutting edge	11.7%
To improve customer satisfaction	36.6%

These are very different results than when ICMI asked the same question pertaining to social and mobile. In both those scenarios, customer engagement (loyalty, satisfaction, experience) was the principal impetus.

It's important to note, that better usage of proactive self-service notifications can ultimately reduce the dependency on live agents, which again can save costs.

Of course, in some situations, live agents are well-utilized for acting as self-service escalation points, and for follow-up on CSAT and community forum conversations. This is discussed further in a later section, *The Live Agent Impact on Customer Engagement*.

![2013 REPORT]

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

While our research covers a robust spectrum of self-service, we want to focus on a few specific advanced options so that organizations can be aware of trends in this channel. There are so many diverse alternatives for advanced self-service that it can be rather daunting for the contact center and the organization to choose the best path for their customers. Therefore, ICMI asked, "How useful do your customers find the following features of advanced self-service support?"

• *Interactive Knowledgebase*

• *Video/YouTube/Recorded Webinars*

• *Automated Text/SMS Notifications*

• *Virtual Assistants/Bots*

• *Automated Texting for Assistance (i.e. Text 'help' to 99999)*

The interactive knowledgebase is the most widely offered, which is used by 64.6% of the contact centers surveyed, followed closely by video and recorded webinars by 59.9% of the community. Automated texting for assistance is only utilized in 36.5% of the contact centers polled.

Of those that do offer the advanced self-service features, their customers overwhelmingly (96.0%) find the interactive knowledgebase to be either extremely or somewhat useful. Video and recorded webinars are also very highly regarded by 93.3%. Although virtual assistants/bots, automated text/SMS notifications, and automated texting for assistance all received high marks, ICMI must cautiously note that they are utilized in a much smaller percentage of contact centers. The interest here appears high, but more contact centers must prove the effective-ness before those numbers are statistically useful.

It may take ICMI a little more time to generate the customer relevance around all the advanced self-service features as only 39.3% of respondents said they were planning to add any of these functions in the next 12 months. As one participant explained, "We have seen a positive trend in the usage of innovative self-help tools, but the user acceptance is currently changing too quickly with every new technology feature that is rolled out. We need to wait and see what 'sticks'."

Does your company plan to add any advanced Self-Service options (video, SMS notifications, virtual assistants) to your customers in the next 12 months?

39.3% — Yes   No — 60.7%

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →
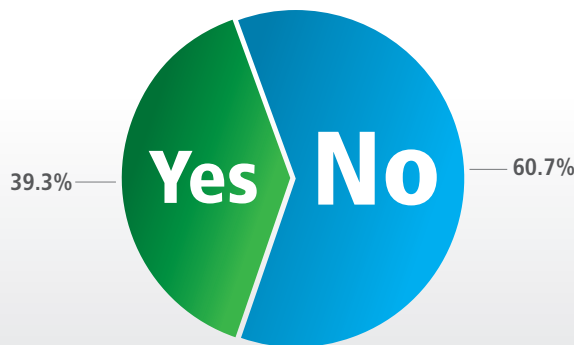
IMPORTANCE OF EMERGING CHANNELS

Quicker response times and FCR directly impact two of the major anxiety points within most organizations today – customer satisfaction and customer engagement. This is where the emerging channels can really shine.

As we discussed earlier in the context of self-service, contact center leaders agreed that quicker response times (45.2%) and increased first-contact-resolution (42.6%) were of the most significant impact to customers. While mobile and social don't carry quite the same punch to FCR, their impact to response times is both significant and favorable.

What impact do the emerging channels have on speed of response?			
	Significant Impact	Some Impact	No Impact
Self-Service	45.2%	36%	18.7%
Social	44.9%	36%	19.1%
Mobile	37.2%	42.5%	20.4%

| What impact do the emerging channels have on FCR?			
	Significant Impact	Some Impact	No Impact
Self-Service	42.6%	36.3%	21.1%
Social	32.8%	48.2%	19%
Mobile	29.7%	46.8%	23.4%

The emerging channels also have a strong association to engagement as they allow the customer to interact through the channel of their choice, and through the channel that they are undoubtedly already in.

A fairly high amount of survey participants recognize that they will probably lose customers if they don't offer the new channel options. 34.7% said customers would attrite without social, 41.9% without mobile, and 59.0% without advanced self-service options. It's the ones that answered 'Don't Know', that should be the most worried, as this uncertainty identifies a lack of understanding and engagement with their customer base. An equal number (21.8%) were unsure about the association of social or mobile with attrition, while slightly fewer (17.4%) for advanced self-service.
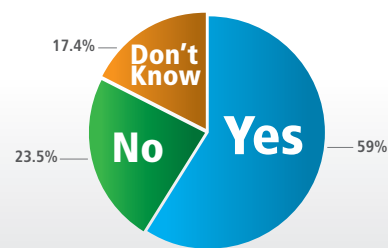

Do you feel you will lose customers without **Social Media** customer service options?
21.8% — Don't Know
43.6% — No
34.7% — Yes
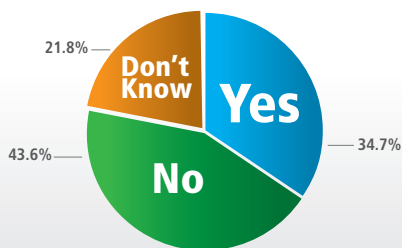
Do you feel you will lose customers without **Mobile** customer service options?
21.8 — Don't Know
36.3% — No
41.9% — Yes
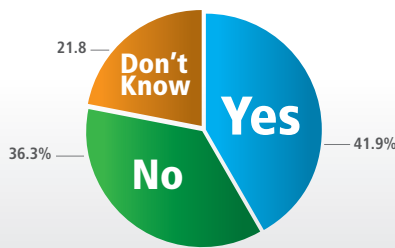
Do you feel you will lose customers if your **Self-Service** options are limited to static FAQs?
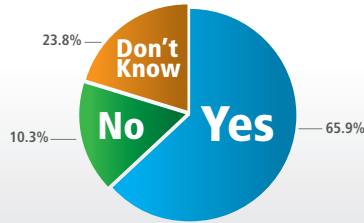17.4% — Don't Know
23.5% — No
59% — Yes

Perhaps the most powerful and simple benefit that contact center leaders will reap from a successful implementation of the emerging channels is a more positive overall customer experience. Essentially, if you have customers already using social, mobile and self-service, then their overall experience is naturally going to be better by also getting support through those channels.

Almost two-thirds of survey respondents (65.9%) answered in the affirmative when asked if "mobile customer service options would improve the overall experience for mobile customers". The same was true for advanced self-service (63.9%) and over half (55.2%) agreed when asked about social. One respondent said, "For a government agency providing a service to stakeholders, social media cannot be counted on as a channel for customer service. However, it is used to enhance the brand and overall customer experience."
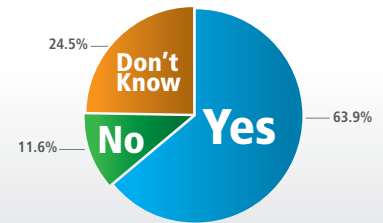
2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →
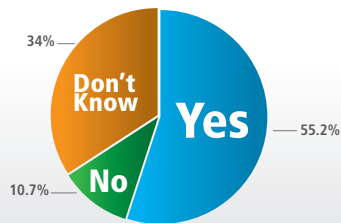
| Do **Social** customer service options improve the overall experience for Social Media customers?	Do **Mobile** customer service options improve the overall experience for Mobile customers?	Does having advanced **Self-Service** options like virtual assistants, automated bot responses, and video improve the over-all experience for Self-Service customers?

Social: Yes 55.2%, Don't Know 34%, No 10.7%

Mobile: Yes 65.9%, Don't Know 23.8%, No 10.3%

Self-Service: Yes 63.9%, Don't Know 24.5%, No 11.6%

ICMI is often asked, "If I can only implement one emerging channel this year, should it be social or mobile?" While there is no single straightforward answer, we do direct companies back to the research. Right now, organizations are more often recognizing the importance of mobile and 52.6% said that customers will get more value out of this channel than they will from social. This is a 10% increase from when ICMI asked this identical question to the community in late 2012. An additional 38.5% said in the 2013 survey that the channels have about the same value, while less than 9% said mobile carried less significance.

Do you think customers get more value out of Social Media customer service or Mobile customer service?

More value from Mobile customer service: 52.6%
About the same value from Social Media and Mobile customer service: 38.5%
Less value from Mobile customer service: 8.9%
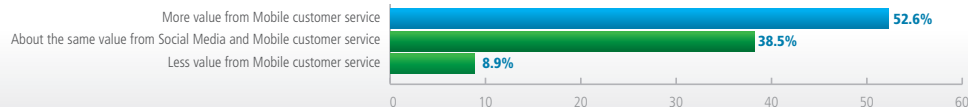
While social media support may not have the same direct ROI as mobile or self-service, it shouldn't be readily dismissed.

Of those that are currently supporting social media as a customer service channel, the preponderance feel that all the primary features of social media are extremely or somewhat important to their company. The ability to monitor customer posts and comments was considered the most important, with over 69% rating it as extremely important. Following very closely behind were the ability to directly react to negative comments and complaints about the company (67.6%), and a swiftness to respond to customer posts and comments (66.0%). Interestingly enough, there is an almost 11% difference in the number of participants that report private messaging/DM (54.0%) of customer service inquires is more important than public responses (43.2%). The delivery of marketing and product information was considered to be extremely important by 47.5%, which although impressive, demonstrates that social is no longer considered as just a one-way marketing tool. The customer service benefits appear to outweigh or at least balance that of marketing, and this alone presents a strong case for the importance of a partnership between the two departments. Finally, 44.3% said it was extremely important for the company to offer social in order to differentiate themselves.

How important are the following features of Social Media customer service to your company?	Extremely Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important	We Don't Offer
Ability to monitor customer posts and comments	69.1%	27.3%	1.4%	2.2%
Ability to directly react to negative comments and complaints about the company	67.6%	26.6%	2.9%	2.9%
Speed to respond to customer posts and comments	66.0%	29.1%	2.1%	2.8%
Private answering of customer service inquiries through direct messaging	54.0%	38.1%	2.9%	5.0%
Delivery of marketing and product info	47.5%	43.2%	4.3%	5.0%
The differentiation of offering the social channel to customers	44.3%	45.0%	5.7%	5.0%
Public answering of customer service inquires	43.2%	42.4%	7.2%	7.2%

In some situations, adding in the less-controllable emerging channels may simply not be feasible due to security or HIPPA compliance restrictions. In others, the contact center may need to accept their confines and look for ways to limit the accessibility. "We are not able to service 'always users' at this time; we are more of a 'when needed' service", said one respondent. Others echoed that concern saying that social and mobile customers will still need to be accepting of the contact center's hours of operation because they are not 24x7, but open only during business hours. As with any channel, companies should be transparent about the contact center's capabilities to reduce frustration and unmet expectations.

THE EFFECT OF EMERGING CHANNELS ON THE CONTACT CENTER

The increasing customer adoption of the emerging channels is understandably placing new pressures on the contact center. ICMI wanted to know exactly in what way, so we directly asked the community "How has the consumer adoption of mobile, social, SMS, or advanced self-service changed your contact center?" While it was expected to see the contact center adding in these new channel offerings (46.5%) as the most significant change, it was enlightening to find that the agents are positively on the receiving end of the new opportunities (31.0%). While it is reported that only 18.1% are correlating an increase in agent morale and happiness to the new channels, the great news is that only 4.8% attribute any morale decrease to mobile, social, or advanced self-service.

The added pressures must be acknowledged, as the brunt may very well be ultimately felt on some of the ancillary components of the contact center, like human resources and training. 37.3% of respondents report having to train agents differently in order to properly handle the new connected customer, while 22.1% say they've actually needed to hire an entirely different type of agent. ICMI recognizes these challenges and has provided five tips to assist in the integration of new channels into the contact center.

Tips for Integrating New Channels

By Justin Robbins, Manager, Training & Development, ICMI

Integrating new and multiple channels into the contact center doesn't have to be as daunting as it may initially seem. With proper planning, you can develop a program that identifies the right type of agents and provides the right type of training and resources to handle these new interactions. Here are a few tips to ensure that your multichannel experience is a success.

1. The first tip might seem obvious, but it's also one that commonly obstructs our ability to successfully implement a new channel(s): Effective and transparent communication is necessary with the entire team. Change in the contact center often has the greatest impact on the agent, yet they are the individuals who are not in the meetings, offering insight, making suggestions, or expressing concerns. I challenge you to alter this and begin by offering your agents the opportunity to provide ideas, insight, or questions in the early stages of considering a new channel. Another area in which we can continue to improve communication is between marketing and the contact center. While integrating a new channel or launching a Facebook campaign may seem innocuous to marketing, the impact on the contact center is often quite significant. As leaders in the contact center, we cannot play the victim in these situations where we are left in the dark. In addition to explaining the impact and implications of receiving information at the last minute (or even worse - from a customer), I implore you to take a proactive approach in seeking information from your marketing peers. Begin by asking them about their upcoming campaigns, current initiatives, and ways in which YOU can best support THEM. Invite them to visit your contact center, swing by and bring them donuts, or do anything you can to maximize on the "Power of Presence". The contact center is often forgotten because people just "didn't think about telling us". Let's make ourselves unforgettable.

2. While we're on the subject of the marketing and contact center relationship, let's talk about tip number two: Social media initiatives should not be owned exclusively by marketing OR the contact center - it's a marriage. Whether you eventually identify a position (or positions) that specialize in social media or you add the responsibility to existing positions within the contact center and marketing, it's important that they have consistent training in the "voice" of your brand(s) and basic social media etiquette. Once you've set their baseline knowledge, develop guidelines in how to identify what postings are answered by which representatives. My recommendation is to keep the guidelines as consistent and similar to the parameters of their current job description. If your marketing team wouldn't typically respond to customer inquiries about service delays, don't have them start answering them on social media. Alternatively, the contact center might not typically be involved in driving contest registrations, so it might not make sense for them to become involved in those conversations. Each department brings specialized knowledge and expertise to the table and, as organizations we should continue to use that to our advantage.
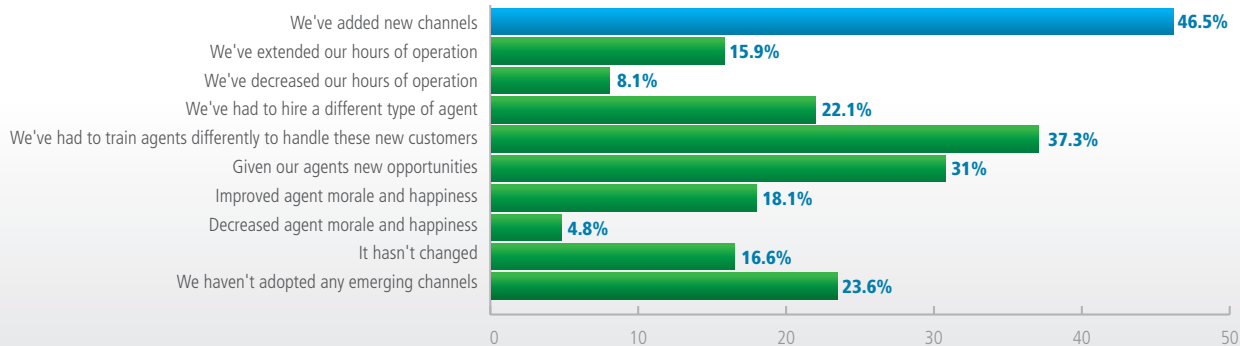
3. Tip three is: Stop making excuses for not being in channels other than phone or email. Let's take a moment and call a spade a spade. We are a species that tends to resist change. Especially when it involves seemingly ambiguous expectations, requires an investment in time and training, and may or may not exist within the capabilities of our current workforce. The reality is that our customers are talking about us online, whether or not we're there, and while that ignorance may seem blissful it is potentially only serving to future damage our brand with no opportunity for us to defend or recover. Today's consumer is incredibly savvy and expects us to serve them in the channel that is most convenient, accessible, or portable. If we want to continue to meet and exceed our customer's expectations and remain in step with the competition, it's time to take the plunge into new channels.

4. Assuming you've already made the realization that you need to be handling multiple channels, this next tip is for you: Identify the necessary skill sets and hire the right individuals. Tip four is to never assume that the millennials in your workforce are, can, or should be your multi-channel specialists. While the fact remains that their generation "grew up" with technology, the skills and type of experience necessary to be successful in multichannel support is not singular to a generation. Critical skills for the ideal multichannel agent include: the ability to multitask, sound judgment and use of discretion, and good spelling and grammar. It's possible that your best phone agents might not be your best chat or social media agents. That's OK, as you may also discover that your agents who struggled over the phone are suddenly the ones flourishing in these new channels.

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

5. My fifth and final tip for going into a multichannel environment is to "Staff Up". Adding more channels will not simply spread your current volume across the channels. If you ask anyone who serves multiple channels they will tell you that by moving to new channels you will only increase the volume of contacts that you handle. But what if you're unable to get more bodies in the contact center? One way to address this concern is to improve accessibility of the IVR or other self-service options, thus reducing the agent's workload. Whether you're looking to improve customer satisfaction, drive your conversion rates, or simply "fit in with the crowd", the future of our landscape only points to more channels appearing, customer expectations increasing, and the expectation of organizations to fulfill these needs rising.

For organizations implementing the new channels to simply save operational costs, they may need to reconsider their budgets and strategy. Only 8.1% of survey participants say that the emerging channels have reduced their hours of operation, while almost double that (15.8%) report having to increase workload in order to handle the new volume. 16.6% said the emerging channels haven't impacted their contact center…yet.

How has the consumer adoption of mobile, social, SMS, or advanced self-service changed your contact center?

Response	Percentage
We've added new channels	46.5%
We've extended our hours of operation	15.9%
We've decreased our hours of operation	8.1%
We've had to hire a different type of agent	22.1%
We've had to train agents differently to handle these new customers	37.3%
Given our agents new opportunities	31%
Improved agent morale and happiness	18.1%
Decreased agent morale and happiness	4.8%
It hasn't changed	16.6%
We haven't adopted any emerging channels	23.6%

While the emerging channels may not be responsible for lowering overall volume, if handled correctly, they can help deflect volume from the more expensive channels. Self-service does this best with 56.5% of survey participants saying it either increased deflection rate or lowered volume to other channels, whereas 40.4% said mobile and 36.8% identified social as an influencer.

Which emerging channels increase deflection rate/lower volume to other channels?

Self-Service	56.5%
Mobile	40.4%
Social	36.8%

A respondent provided an excellent example as it pertains to social media. "The volume of contacts via social channels is typically negligible to contact deflection. There is a big disclaimer here though, as the true benefit is attained around larger scale broadcast problems, like outages. Customers that experience service outages and reach out via social media help deflect contacts from those inquiring about the same issue. The benefit will continue to be greater as customer adoption increases in these additional channels."

Other comments by ICMI community members echo the sentiment of deflection and volume reduction as a 'moving target'.
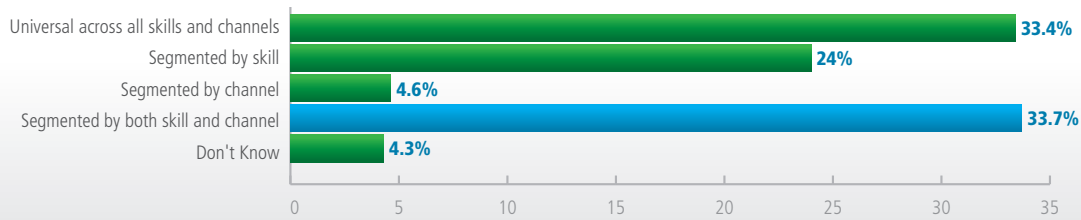
"Our younger customer base prefers receiving help through either social means or the self-service channel. Our phone volume is decreasing specifically for that portion of our base."

"We have experienced an overall improvement in CSAT and reduced call volume for areas where self-service is available. At this time though, this is simply a 'hunch' and not backed by measurements."

Contact centers will have better control over contact deflection and volume once they incorporate a universal queue foundation that integrates the emerging channels. By leveraging routing that is both channel and skills-aware, they will be able to approach service from a more holistic customer-focused manner. This unified approach to multichannel truly harnesses the power of the agent and the channels themselves.

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS→

At this time, only 1/3 (33.4%) responded that they are utilizing a universal queue across all skills and channels. Another third (33.7%) are segmenting by both skill and channel, while 24.0% by skill only and a very small amount (4.6%) solely by channel.

How are your contact center agents skilled?

|	
Universal across all skills and channels	33.4%
Segmented by skill	24%
Segmented by channel	4.6%
Segmented by both skill and channel	33.7%
Don't Know	4.3%

UNIFIED CONTACT CENTER TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENT

Effectively implementing multichannel takes an understanding of how to build and manage customer relationships in an evolving, multi-dimensional communications landscape. It's not enough to simply give customers new ways to interact with your business. Customers expect a unified experience and superior service regardless of the communication channel. A technology best practice is identifying a " design once, deploy anywhere" architecture that eliminates channel and department silos, work duplication and inconsistent customer care.

This will be much easier for organizations if their contact centers are built upon a cloud-based infrastructure. Currently premise is still the predominant framework (57.1%), while 26.0% of survey participants report having a blend of both premise and cloud. Only 10.3% are on a full cloud infrastructure.

What infrastructure is your contact center built upon?

On-premise	57.1%
Cloud	10.3%
A blend of both	26%
Don't Know	6.6%
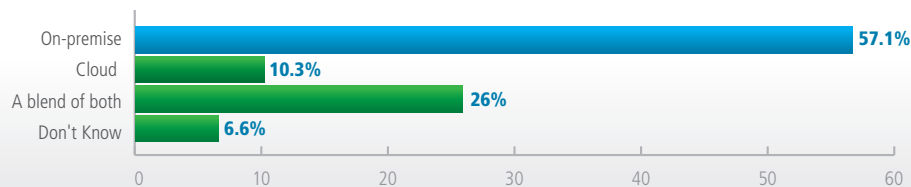
An important technology investment for the multichannel contact center is the unified desktop system. When asked, "Do your contact center agents use one unified desktop platform to handle all customer service channels?" only a third (33.3%) said yes.

Do your contact center agents use ONE unified desktop platform to handle ALL customer service channels?
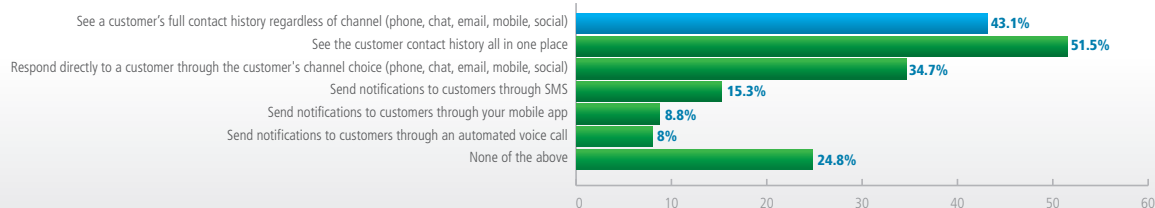
33.3% Yes
7.6% Don't Know
59.1% No
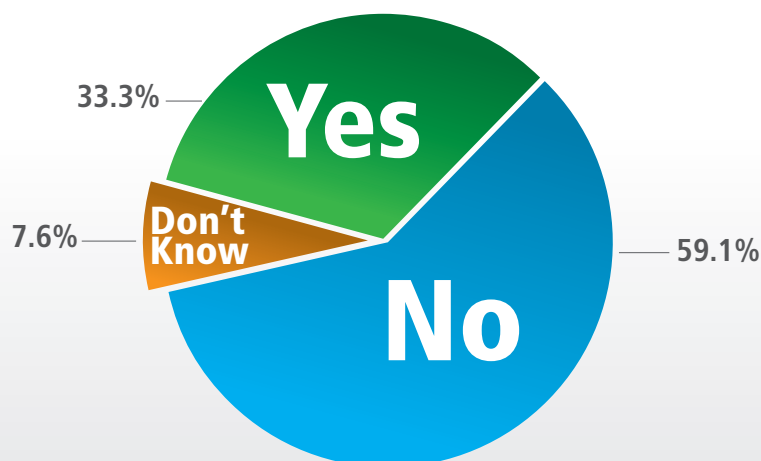
The backend technology platform or suite that an organization deploys within their contact center is possibly even more important than the actual support channels they end up offering. The technology platform will allow companies to employ the six key best practices of multi-channel support that were previously identified by ICMI and subsequently justified by this research:

1. Provide communication channel options

2. Deliver unified tools and processes

3. Uphold a strategy of monitoring and engagement across all channels

4. Establish direct links and easy transitions between the channels

5. Encourage access to free-standing information through automated/interactive self-service

6. Create connections to a live agent directly from the channel, when necessary

When asked if their current technology suite allowed the agent to aid in these multichannel customer service best practices, 51.5% of all survey respondents said that yes, the agent can see a customer's contact history all in one place, 43.1% see a customer's full contact history regardless of channel (although not necessarily in one application), and 34.7% are able to directly respond to a customer through the customer's channel choice. An astounding quarter of respondents (24.8%) say their agents are unable to do any of the above with their technology suite.

When we specifically inquired about notification management, the numbers were significantly less in favor. Only 15.3% can send notifications through SMS, 8.8% through a mobile app, and 8.0% through an automated voice call.

Does your current technology suite (CRM, green screens, web, homegrown apps) allow your contact center agents to…

Category	Percentage
See a customer's full contact history regardless of channel (phone, chat, email, mobile, social)	43.1%
See the customer contact history all in one place	51.5%
Respond directly to a customer through the customer's channel choice (phone, chat, email, mobile, social)	34.7%
Send notifications to customers through SMS	15.3%
Send notifications to customers through your mobile app	8.8%
Send notifications to customers through an automated voice call	8%
None of the above	24.8%

Of the 59.1% that said their agents toggle between multiple applications, the average number is five systems and the breakdown is as follows:

• *2-3 applications - 43.5%*

• *4-6 applications - 36.5%*

• *7-9 applications - 10.6%*

• *10-15 applications- 4.1%*

• *>15 applications - 5.3%*

How many applications do your agents use to manage all customer service channels?

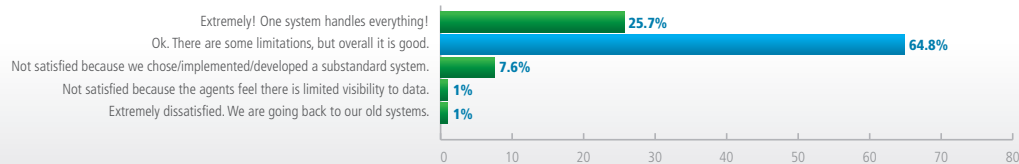| Range	Percentage
2-3	43.5%
4-6	36.5%
7-9	10.6%
10-15	4.1%
>15	5.3%
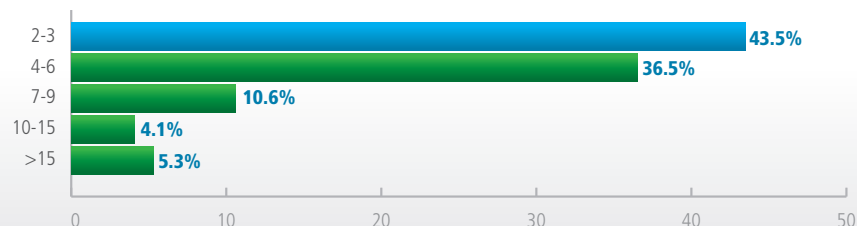
The argument for a unified agent desktop system is strong, and when ICMI asked the community to select their primary reasons for implementing one, those that rose to the top all circled back to agent and customer experience. It's clear that this technology investment is recognized as a tool to extreme engagement.

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

"What are the 3 primary reasons your company was motivated to implement a unified desktop system?"

- *To improve first-contact-resolution (FCR) - 49.1%*
- *To improve the overall agent experience - 44.4%*
- *Speed response rate to customers - 40.7%*
- *To improve customer satisfaction - 37.0%*
- *Increase customer loyalty - 31.5%*
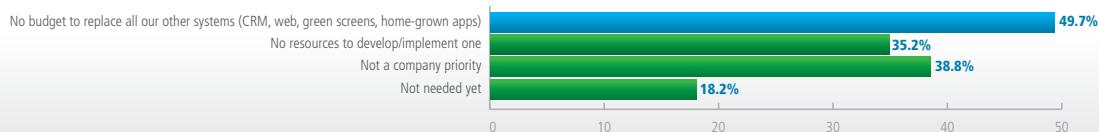- *Create a more personalized customer experience - 26.9%*

The 44.4% of organizations that say they are implementing the unified desktop system in part, to satisfy the agent, should be praised! The agents appear pleased as over a quarter (25.7%) report agents being extremely happy with the single platform. Another 64.7% say that overall the unified desktop system is good, even with some limitations. Of those that are not as satisfied, 8.6% say it is because the organization either chose the wrong system or hasn't properly opened up visibility to necessary data. A very small percentage (0.95%) are extremely dissatisfied.

How satisfied are your agents with the Unified Agent Desktop System?

Extremely! One system handles everything!	25.7%
Ok. There are some limitations, but overall it is good.	64.8%
Not satisfied because we chose/implemented/developed a substandard system.	7.6%
Not satisfied because the agents feel there is limited visibility to data.	1%
Extremely dissatisfied. We are going back to our old systems.	1%

Although it was not a surprise that for half (49.7%) the respondents there is a lack of budget to replace all their systems, that knowledge is still disappointing. Equally as discouraging is the observation that a unified desktop system investment is not a company priority for 38.8% or that there are no resources available to implement one (35.2%). Only 18.2% said that they were not actually in need of the technology.

Why do you NOT have a unified agent desktop to handle all customer service channels?

No budget to replace all our other systems (CRM, web, green screens, home-grown apps)	49.7%
No resources to develop/implement one	35.2%
Not a company priority	38.8%
Not needed yet	18.2%

Several survey participants realize that there would be more buyoff for a unified agent desktop platform if better organizational alignment existed. One said, "From my experience, there is no one single owner of the single customer view. It has to be a combined effort from various teams in the company. It is high time that all departments become enablers for a customer-driven organization."

There is yet another case for simplifying the agent desktop. Not only do the multiple applications cause inconsistency in how an agent supports a customer, research has shown that it is also an incredible time waster. 25-28% of an employee's time can be squandered by the decision process of self-selecting the next task. Additionally, customers and organizations both suffer if tasks are not selected in the most efficient order, based on business prioritization and compliance, or if information is misinterpreted.

USAN's Hunter echoes that a centralized coordination of technology is critical. "Without it, communications are fragmented, change is slow, build-out is expensive, and even once loyal customers will bolt for the exit as the laggards try to figure it all out. For this reason, solutions like our Customer Engagement platform have become perhaps the most crucial component of modern contact center architectures. Call center owners and managers shouldn't be asking whether they should implement a customer engagement platform… they should be asking, 'Which one?'"

As we discussed earlier, the contact center community still appears to be segmenting agents fairly heavily, instead of employing universal channel and skilling queues. This is not a surprise when one considers the lack of unified tools and processes.

The right technology suite will also aid an organization in accomplishing their KPI goals. Metrics like FCR, speed of response and CSAT will be easier to achieve by truly integrating emerging channels into the CRM platform. New metrics such as containment will be possible by using features like location services and proactive automation techniques.

THE LIVE AGENT IMPACT ON CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Ovum's Keith Dawson also stated that there is a direct correlation between the contact center agent and the customer experience. Dawson said that, "We are still in the early days of what will clearly be a years-long revolution in how companies and customers communicate. But what's clear is that agents are still going to be the focal point for the highest complexity (and highest value) interactions."

ICMI couldn't agree more with this statement, and it appears that our community does as well.

When asked, "What impact do the emerging channels have on your traditional customer service channels?" the majority of survey participants declared that phone, chat, and email were now being utilized more for escalations and complex questions, than for the rudimentary and routine. 65.4% felt mobile was responsible for that impact, 61.5% said social, and 54.1% credited self-service.

Which emerging channels direct escalations and more complex questions over to traditional channels?	
Mobile	65.4%
Social	61.5%
Self-Service	54.1%

In addition, live agents are more-and-more likely to be utilized for reviewing customer forums for complaints or issues, acting as self-service transition points, and proactively following up on unhappy CSAT survey customers.
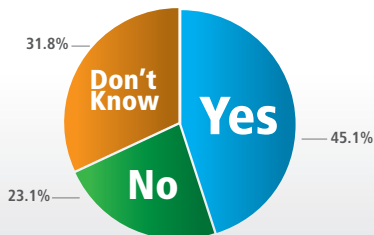
Due to their instant access to information, the connected customer is considered to be incredibly informed and less patient. They are also thought of as less accepting of impersonal service than the traditional channel customer. Higher customer expectations, reshaped by social media channels such as Twitter, make it even harder to satisfy customers. Other demands of the connected customer include:

• *Faster response times*

• *More customization*

• *Personalized service*

• *Immediacy of information*

• *Instant connectivity to an agent when needed*

• *Options for "Their Time, and Their Channel" mentality*
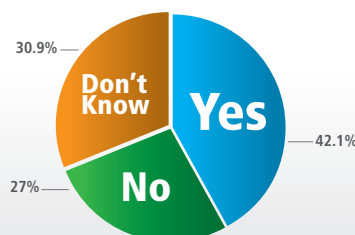
• *Single Sign-in to all channels*

A substantial percentage of respondents agreed that the connected customer has a higher expectation for customer service when using the emerging channels than they do for the traditional. 45.1% said so when referring to social, 44.1% for self-service, and 42.1% for mobile.

"Don't Know" generated rather high responses for all three - mobile (30.9%), social (31.8%) and self-service (23.4%). This leads ICMI to believe that enterprises are not as 'connected' to their connected customers as they are to their more traditional ones.
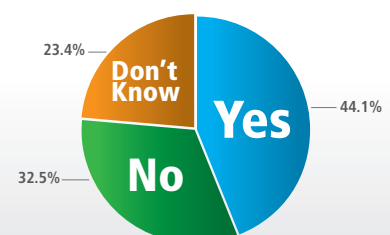
| Do **Social** customers expect a higher level of customer service than those from more traditional channels?	Do **Mobile** customers expect a higher level of customer service than those from more traditional channels?	Do **Self-Service** customers expect a higher level of customer service than those from more traditional channels?

31.8% Don't Know — Yes 45.1% — No 23.1%

30.9% Don't Know — Yes 42.1% — No 27%

23.4% Don't Know — Yes 44.1% — No 32.5%

In the case of mobile for example, live agents are often handling mobile self-service customers through traditional channels if those customers need to go "off-the-glass" for live assistance.

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

Contact centers that are currently providing mobile customer service also rely heavily on their live agents for the measurement of customer satisfaction. While a hefty 51.4% do utilize incoming end-of-interaction CSAT surveys, all other units of computation are using human moderation and response. The other mobile CSAT results are acquired through social media commentary (34.2%), customer forums or portal communities (30.6%), and reviews and rankings on iTunes or other smartphone app stores (26.1%).

How are you currently measuring satisfaction with Mobile customer service?

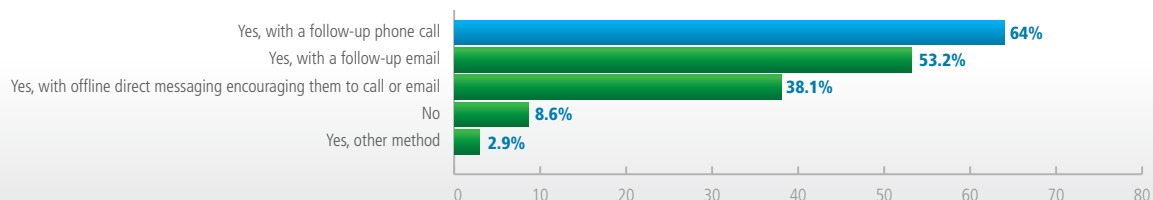|	
End of interaction Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) Survey	51.4%
Reviews and rankings from iTunes or other smartphone app stores	26.1%
Customer Forums or portal community discussions	30.6%
Comments on Social Media	34.2%
Other	14.4%
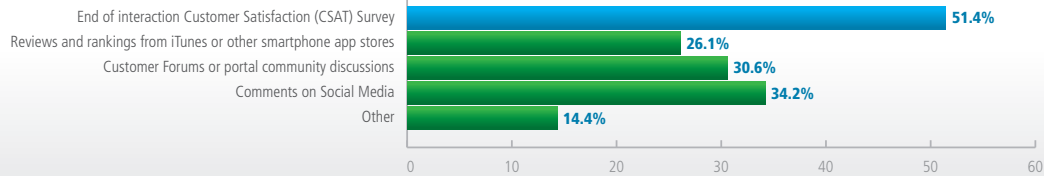
Furthermore, when contact centers were specifically asked how they handled dissatisfied mobile self-service customers, over half (50.9%) responded they follow-up through a phone call, while 40.5% said through an email. 37.1% don't do any other channel follow-up for mobile DSAT, while 6% reach back through another less defined process or method.

Do you proactively reach out to dissatisfied Mobile self-service customers through other channels?

|	
Yes, with a follow-up phone call	50.9%
Yes, with a follow-up email	40.5%
No.	37.1%
Yes, other method	6%
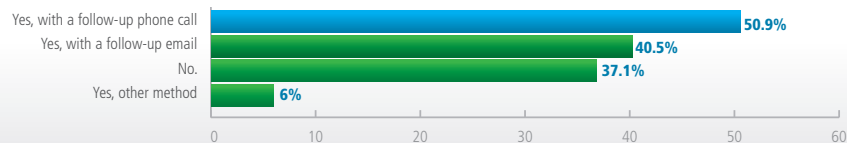
As we referenced earlier, social CSAT measurement is also greatly geared towards human interaction. While the perusal of commentary on social media, forums, and community discussions can be automated, the subsequent responses are requiring live agent intervention. This channel relies even heavier on traditional methods to proactively reach out to dissatisfied customers than mobile does. 64.0% follow-up through a phone call, 53.2% by email, and 38.1% with offline direct messaging that encourages the customer to move the conversation offline. A small single-digit (8.6%) percentage is not proactively following up with customers through any other means.

Do you proactively reach out to dissatisfied Social customers through other channels?

Yes, with a follow-up phone call	64%
Yes, with a follow-up email	53.2%
Yes, with offline direct messaging encouraging them to call or email	38.1%
No	8.6%
Yes, other method	2.9%

Unfortunately, the dissatisfied self-service customer appears to be left within the channel 29.8% of the time and not proactively engaged by a live agent. More encouraging are the 54.1% of contact centers that follow-up with a phone call and 41.9% by an email.

Do you proactively reach out to dissatisfied Self-Service customers through other channels?

Yes, with a follow-up phone call	54.1%
Yes, with a follow-up email	41.9%
No	29.7%
Yes, other method	2.9%
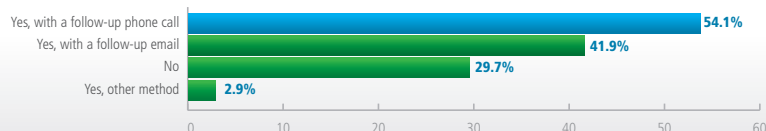
Live assistance in relation to self-service should not just be relegated to dissatisfied CSAT customers. It should also be used as a mechanism for escalations and additional help for more complex issues. While self-service is often enough to resolve a customer's support issue, supplying a real-time (or near real-time) channel – chat, phone, or even Twitter – is becoming more and more important.

Customers who cannot resolve their issue through a self-service option need to be able to reach a human; lest they feel helpless. That helplessness often translates to frustration which is then usually shared publicly across social networks. It's quite easy to see in these scenarios how the multichannel options are intertwined and useful for one another.

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

It's very important, no matter what the channel, for a customer to be able to seamlessly transition over to a live agent, when needed. Not only does it improve that immediate customer experience, but it also positively impacts the perceived significance of the agent. When agents are used less for the mundane and simple, and more for the complex and higher-value, they feel more utilized and valuable. That translates easily into agent happiness, which ultimately impacts customer engagement.

TRAINING AND THE MULTICHANNEL AGENT

According to Dr. Natalie Petouhoff in a recent ICMI webinar, agents are often frustrated with providing emerging customer service because it is so amorphous when compared to the more traditional channels. Contact center leaders have correctly trained agents to be disciplined, follow processes, and be so innately cognizant of metrics, that without this structured guidance the emerging channels are met with internal dissatisfaction. Agents are also asking for multichannel benchmarking and reports to keep track of their progress and these needs are often left unmet.

So even though the agents may be using the emerging channels in their personal lives, they prefer to support customers through the traditional ones.

When we asked contact center leaders to rank the channels that their agents prefer to use when supporting customers, the traditional ones unsurprisingly came out on top. Phone ranked first for the majority, followed by email and chat. The emerging channels barely registered in the ranking for agent preferences.

In an online poll conducted by ICMI in February 2013, 49% of respondents acknowledged that they haven't yet trained or coached their agents to address social media questions. 26% said they are working on it, and only 19% said agents had formal training on the new channel.

It's always been important for enterprises to be cognizant of the correlation between agent training and the success of the channel; and it's even more important now. As contact centers continue to add in emerging channels like mobile, social and advanced self-service, their re-cruiting and training needs are changing too.

THE CORRELATION TO CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Keith Dawson from Ovum did raise a valid point in that organizations should continue their focus on measuring positive outcomes in order to optimize the customer experience. ICMI and the contact center community both agree, as over three-quarters of survey participants have a formal customer experience program, QA process, or other such initiative in place.

Does your contact center have a customer experience program, QA process, or utilize customer experience initiative(s)?

Not Sure — 4.5%
Yes — 77.7%
No — 17.8%
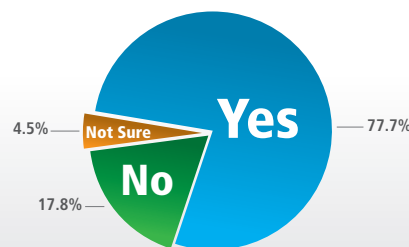
The majority employs customer satisfaction (CSAT) surveys (80.2%) and quality monitoring (76.7%), while a substantial number also conducts employee satisfaction surveys (63.2%). Customer relationship management (CRM) is used by 44.7% of the community, with 32.4% measuring satisfaction through Net Promoter Scores (NPS) and a lesser number by customer engagement tools – both proactive (23.7%) and reactive (22.1%).

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

Which customer experience initiative(s) does your contact center currently have in place?

Initiative	Percentage
Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) surveys	80.2%
Net Promoter Score (NPS)	32.4%
Employee Satisfaction survey	63.2%
Proactive Customer Engagement Tools	23.7%
Reactive Customer Engagement Tools	22.1%
CRM	44.7%
Quality Monitoring	76.7%
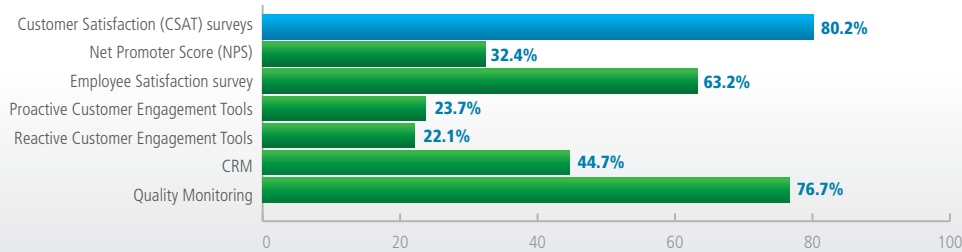
Of the over three-quarters of respondents that have a QA program in place, the preponderance record voice (81.5%), while over half (53.0%) are collecting the correlated screen captures. The QA monitoring is used as feedback for agent coaching (80.3%), feedback for case handling (48.6%), and as closed-loop responses (39.8%) to customers based on CSAT results.

How does your contact center use Quality Monitoring?

Use	Percentage
Voice capture	81.5%
Screen capture	53%
Feedback for agent coaching	80.3%
Feedback for case handling	48.6%
Feedback for customers based on CSAT results	39.8%
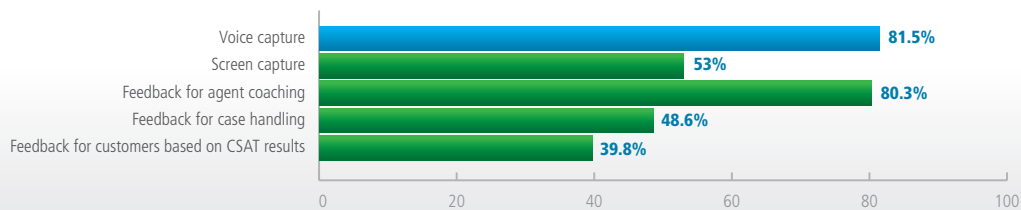
It isn't entirely clear to most contact centers the exact degree in which the emerging channels are impacting their overall CSAT scores. In over half the cases (~53.2%), respondents admit that they simply don't know – mostly because they aren't segmenting out CSAT by chan- nel. In some situations, survey participants said that this consolidation is intentional. "Our NPS improvements are attributed to extensive analytics on root causes and correlated factors, than on specific channels addressing those opportunities. Even though multiple channels are available to customers, the root causes of the issues are the same."
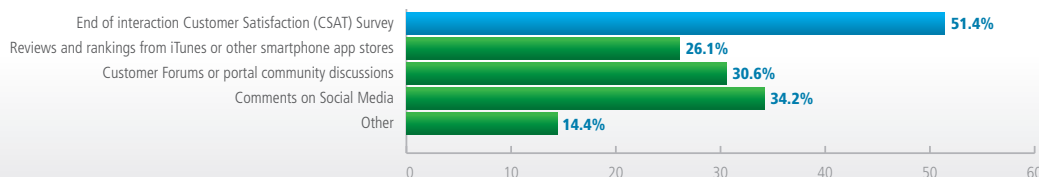
In regards to social, many people stated that it is simply too early to determine if social media is truly influencing their overall CSAT scores. That isn't stopping them though, from finding ways to measure it. 60.6% are associating like-minded comments on social media to determine a score, while 41.6% use a more standard technique like end-of-interaction CSAT surveys. Other respondents report reviewing customer forums or portal community discussions (35.8%), while a few use advanced technology like Radian6 and "tone analytics" to determine CSAT of social. In yet other cases, contact centers analyze metrics like FCR and response time to assume satisfaction levels. In most circumstances however, companies are using multiple methods of CSAT measurement to create a consolidated score.

How are you currently measuring satisfaction with Social customer service?

| Method	Percentage
End of interaction Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) Survey	41.6%
Customer Forums or portal community discussions	35.8%
Comments on Social Media	60.6%
Other	13.9%
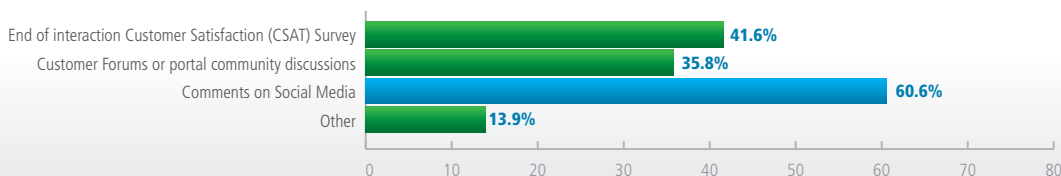
Earlier we looked at the how mobile CSAT was being measured, but let's review it again here. 51.4% utilize incoming end-of-interaction CSAT surveys, 34.2% obtain results through social media commentary, 30.6% by correlating back customer forum or portal community discussions and 26.1% by reading reviews and rankings on iTunes or other smartphone app stores.

How are you currently measuring satisfaction with Mobile customer service?

Method	Percentage
End of interaction Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) Survey	51.4%
Reviews and rankings from iTunes or other smartphone app stores	26.1%
Customer Forums or portal community discussions	30.6%
Comments on Social Media	34.2%
Other	14.4%

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

The CSAT measurement methodology for self-service is a little different. More than half (52.0%) use end-of-interaction surveys, a quarter (25.3%) review customer forums or portal communities, and a large combined amount (55.4%) use analytics - search optimization reports (19.7%), search completion rate reports (18.2%), and online-to-live agent escalation reports (17.5%). Unlike social, or even mobile, only a small number (14.1%) correlate social media commentary to CSAT, and an even lesser percentage measure it through call deflection or NPS.

How are you currently measuring satisfaction with Self-Service?
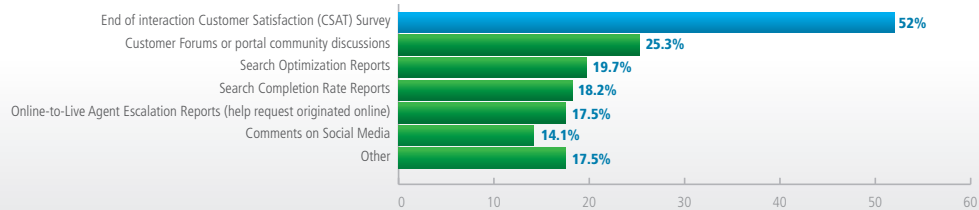
Let's go back for a moment to the question of, "What percentage of your overall increase in CSAT can be attributed to each channel?" In order for ICMI to truly understand the impact of mobile, social and self-service on customer satisfaction, we extracted the "Don't Know" responses from the below computations. This allows us to get an accurate depiction of the CSAT attribution for those that are actually segmenting by channel. This process shows that only 12.1% of respondents feel that their mobile customer service channel is not improving CSAT, compared to 20.2% for self-service and 28.1% for social. When enterprises do experience tangible influence by the emerging channels on CSAT, the results are impressive! On average, mobile, social and self-service raised CSAT by 3-5 percent for 23.9% of survey participants and by 5-10 percent for 27.4%!

What percentage of your overall increase in CSAT can be attributed to each channel?			
	Social	Mobile	Self-Service
0%	28.1%	12.1%	20.2%
1-3%	7.8%	20.7%	19.4%
3-5%	21.9%	24.1%	25.6%
5-10%	29.7%	29.3%	23.3%
>10%	12.5%	13.8%	11.6%

For those that do segment, it's clear that mobile is where most of the momentum lies.

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

CONCLUSION

THE PATH TO EXTREME CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

As we discussed earlier, most companies report that engagement between them and their customers is satisfactory. While this is certainly fine, there is obviously still room for improvement!

Engagement is a byproduct of the customer experience, and it cannot be made stronger without going back to the beginning…all the way to the beginning and the agent experience.

Agent Experience · *Customer Experience* · *Agent Happiness* · *Customer Engagement* · *Customer Lifetime Value*
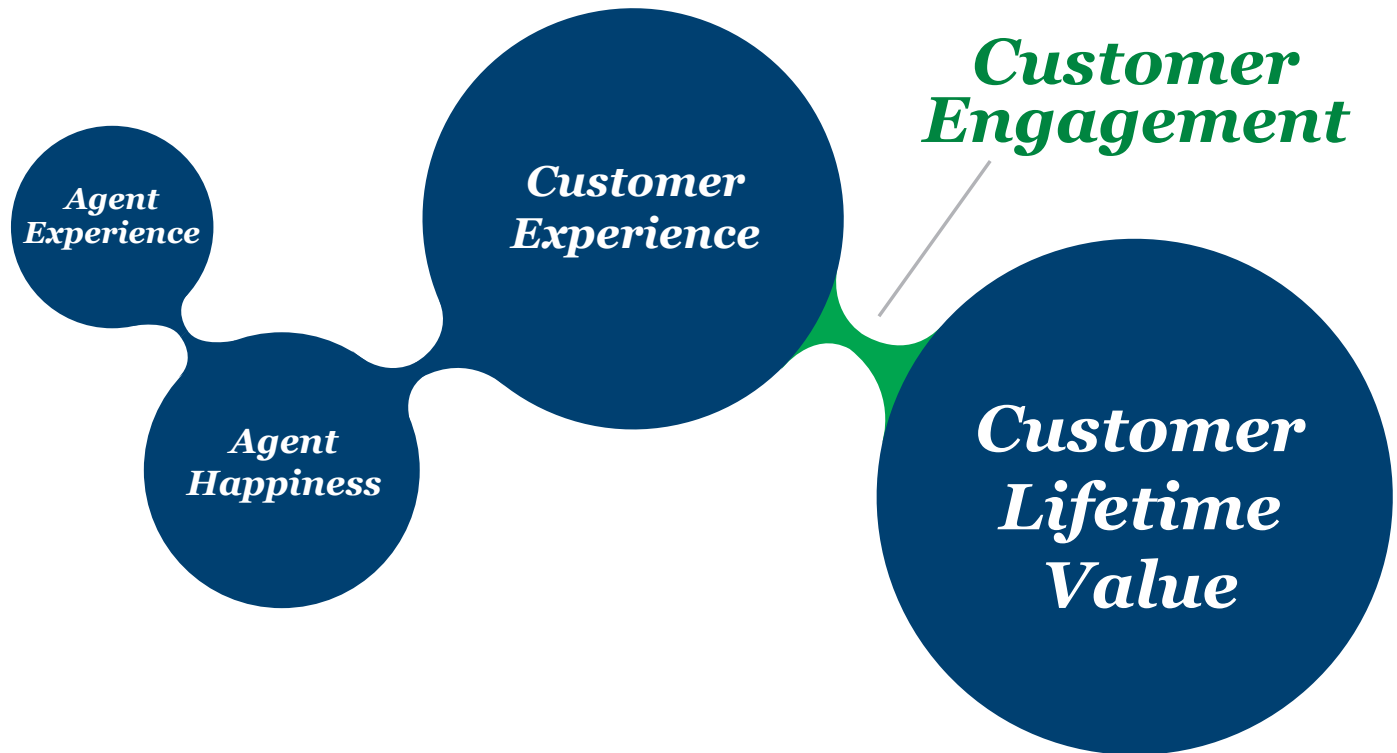
Our contact center community is aware of this, and when asked, "Does your contact center believe that satisfied agents make satisfied customers?" 80.6% of them answered favorably. Of those that did not, 16.4% then said it depended on too many other variables. Only 3.0% did not feel their organization connected the agent experience with that of the customer.

Does your contact center believe that satisfied agents make satisfied customers?

16.4% Depends · 3% No · 80.6% Yes
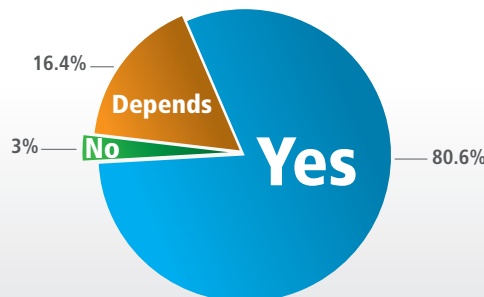
When possible, it is the contact center leader's responsibility to do what they can to make that agent experience as positive as possible, particularly when that experience directly connects to the customer. Training, technology tools, and an optimized multichannel support strategy can make that happen.

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

AN OPTIMIZED MULTICHANNEL SUPPORT STRATEGY

To optimize and benefit from your organization's multichannel support, you need to return to the six best practices that ICMI identified earlier:

1. Provide communication channel options

2. Deliver unified tools and processes

3. Uphold a strategy of monitoring and engagement across all channels

4. Establish direct links and easy transitions between the channels

5. Encourage access to free-standing information through automated/interactive self-service

6. Create connection to a live agent directly from the channel, when necessary

Optimizing Multichannel Support

By Brad Cleveland, Senior Advisor and Former CEO, ICMI

Brad Cleveland provides advice on how best to utilize the six best practices in order to effectively optimize the multichannel support strategy.

1. Provide communication channel options. Give customers choices in how they interact and can access the services they need, including through mobile, social and advanced self-service options. This is becoming the norm in organizations leading the service charge, and is fast becoming an inherent part of customer expectations. Customers don't think about it much when the channels are there—but they notice when they're not. We just don't know which channels are right for each customer in any given situation, and they are significantly more satisfied if they can use the channel they prefer. (Important tip: To put effective services in place, you need an up-to-date plan—a customer access strategy—that encompasses all channels. It should answer questions such as, who are your customers and prospects? How will they want to interact with you? What access channels make sense? What technologies and skill sets are required? Don't wing it—have a plan!)

2. Deliver unified tools and processes. As customers use new channels, they begin to get used to and expect them. They'll quickly learn if service is better in one channel versus another, leading to channel switching, duplicate work and parallel efforts. But where service is consistent, they begin to think far less about the channel they are using. A mobile app, web-based self service, interacting with an agent through chat or phone—it doesn't reach consciousness. They are after the content and the service they need. Unified tools and processes enabling a similar look and feel across channels contribute greatly to simplicity, effectiveness, and the overall experience.

3. Uphold a strategy of monitoring and engagement across all channels. The well-worn practices of monitoring, coaching and quality improvement for traditional channels should also be an inherent part of managing newer channels. We've found that the majority of quality criteria apply across channels—you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Yes, each channel has unique cultural and communication norms, but criteria such as identifying customer needs, delivering the right information and service, accurately capturing need, and useful information are uniformly important. And remember in building your quality approach that the most powerful potential is capturing information that enables you to improve your products, services and processes beyond the contact center. New channels offer powerful additional opportunities for sharing strategic (cross-functional) intelligence.

4. Establish direct links and easy transitions between the channels. Here's a basic premise of effective multichannel service: When you roll out a channel, do it right. As you put options out there, you're implying service promises that impact your brand. Glitchy or feature-poor mobile apps, spotty support in social channels, customer communities that languish without needed input, and other problems can do more harm than good. However, nobody gets it perfect, and direct links and easy access across channels provide critical release valves, and take much risk out of cultivating new access alternatives. Beyond rollout, some channels are more suitable for evolving needs than others (e.g., a general inquiries through social channels that turn into customer-specific transactions; or, agent inquiries that can benefit from links to web resources). Easy transitions across channels boost satisfaction and effectiveness.

5. Encourage access to free-standing information through automated/interactive self-service. Don't make self-service so tightly wrapped under predefined gates that customers can't reach helpful free-standing information. And remember an important tenet of knowledge management: Service is more effective and efficient as you harnesses knowledge gained from any interaction into a body of knowledge that is constantly and inherently being updated and improved (think of Wikipedia in a customer service context). This principle can extend beyond channels and into products, e.g., software programs that provide direct access to user communities or FAQ resources.

6. Create connections to an agent directly from the channel, when necessary. No matter how sophisticated and prevalent your channel options, customers will still need to reach agents at times. It may seem counterintuitive, but easy access to agents builds confidence in and more use of self-service capabilities. (The mobile app of one of the airlines I often fly provides easy alternatives for reaching an agent. I'll always go as far as possible with self-serve, confident help is there if needed. Another carrier I use makes reaching an agent from their app far less intuitive; their intent might be to avoid calls, but I tend to call sooner and more often, not wanting to start from scratch if something gets complicated.) Don't trap customers and don't get too clever in trying to shepherd them along specific paths. They'll notice ease of use, choice and seamless options to transition—and happily, will often migrate to lower cost alternatives.

2013 REPORT

Extreme Engagement in the Multichannel Contact Center:
Leveraging the Emerging Channels Research Report and Best Practices Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS →

We've seen many organizations handle multichannel well, and they are levering the new channels smartly. These enterprises know that the experience from the agent all the way to the customer must be as seamless and consistent as possible, regardless of channel. They also identify that a consistent experience allows the customer to choose their initial path indiscriminately and then escalate or be gracefully transitioned to a more appropriate channel if the issue is too complicated.

A trifecta of the right emerging channels for your audience, happy agents, and a unified multichannel environment can quickly transform moderate engagement into extreme engagement. All organizations should strive for the extreme level of customer engagement that ¼ of survey respondents are already experiencing.

Benchmarking such as this gives contact centers the context they need around emerging channels to determine which ones are right for their organization, their customers and their brand. 86% of customers do expect brands to offer multiple channels, but it is still up to the contact center to decide which ones make the most sense and are utilized most effectively. ICMI agrees that enterprises shouldn't focus solely on maximizing channel choices; rather they should focus on creating the right multichannel experience to create the most extreme customer engagement.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This research was made possible by the underwriting support of USAN (www.usan.com). ICMI research sponsors do not have access to research participant information, including individual survey responses

ABOUT ICMI

The International Customer Management Institute (ICMI), is the leading global provider of comprehensive resources for customer management professionals—from frontline agents to executives—who wish to improve contact center operations, empower contact center employees and enhance customer loyalty. ICMI's experienced and dedicated team of industry insiders, analysts and consultants are committed to providing uncompromised objectivity and results-oriented vision through the organization's respected lineup of professional services including training and certification, consulting, events and informational resources. Founded in 1985, ICMI continues to serve as one of the most established and respected organizations in the call center industry.

ABOUT USAN

USAN helps companies profitably engage customers and deliver amazing cross-channel experiences with the industry's best cloud, premise and hybrid multi-channel customer engagement solution. From traditional telephone interactions to the web, social media and everything between, USAN's portfolio of call center products gives users infinite flexibility in the way they engage customers across channels. In addition to campaign management, back-office integration, and business process automation, USAN's offerings include Hosted IVR, ACD, and Dialers built upon a fifth-generation carrier-grade infrastructure that delivers "five nines" of availability and proven scalability.

Learn more at www.usan.com