

# THE 'NORMALIZATION' OF SOCIAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

*Research Report & Best Practices Guide*



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & KEY FINDINGS

In 2012, Gartner made a bold statement about social media customer service. “Organizations that refuse to communicate with customers by social media will face the same level of wrath as those that ignore today’s basic expectation that they will respond to emails and phone calls.”

Now, there is no denying that social media is an integral part of our culture. The numbers change so rapidly, but recent statistics show astronomical activity across the social media landscape - 1.23 billion Facebook users, 187 million unique visitors to LinkedIn each month, and 500 million tweets sent daily. Then of course there is the explosive growth across Pinterest, Instagram, Google+, YouTube, WhatsApp... you get the idea.

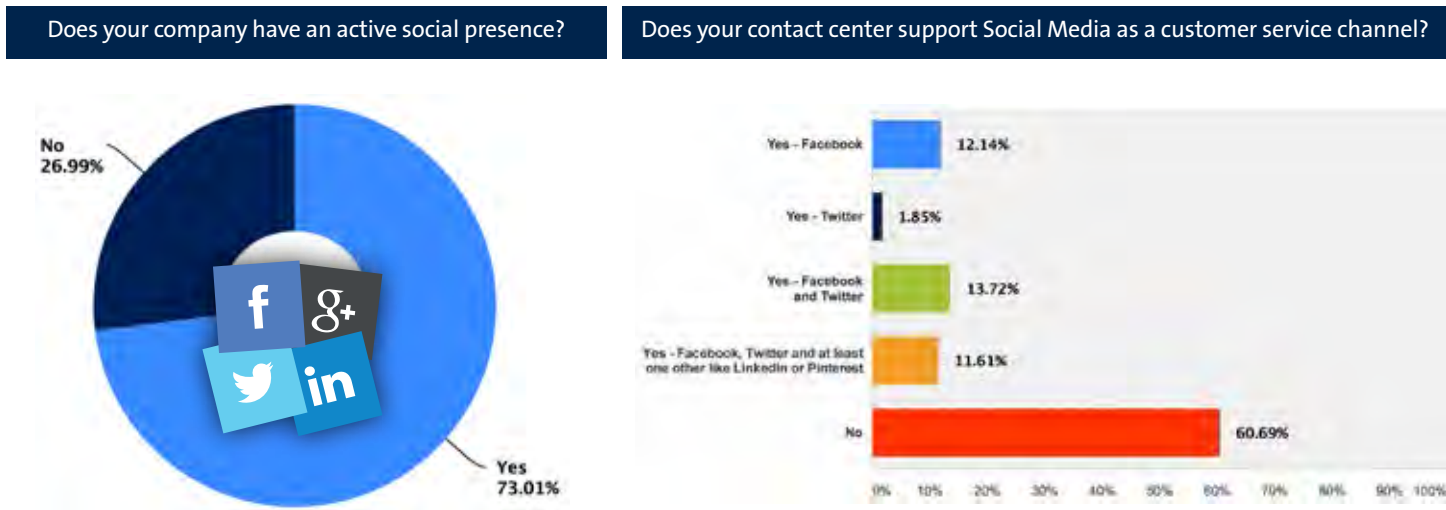
Companies clearly recognize the marketing opportunity that social media provides. Yet in an often-cited study by evolve24, a Maritz Research company that specializes in social media analytics, they found that approximately 70% of customer service complaints are ignored.

In the aforementioned 2012 Gartner article, they went on to say that, “For organizations that use social media to promote their products, responding to inquiries via social media channels will be the new minimum level of response expected.”

Edwin Margulies, the Vice President of Social & Mobile Product Management at Five9 refers to this as the ‘normalization of social’. Essentially, social as a customer care channel is naturally becoming more commonplace.

It sounds like there is a discrepancy happening, as the ‘new minimum level of response expected’ and the ‘normalization of social’ is certainly not social care reality.

In a February 2014 survey on preferences and behaviors of social media customer service, the International Customer Management Institute (ICMI) found that while 73.0% of organizations report having a social media presence, only 39.3% formally supports social media as a customer care channel.



That’s not to say that 60.7% of companies NEVER respond to their customers through social channels. Rather, we see that another 20% are communicating socially with customers, but do so on a sporadic, emergency, or ad hoc basis.

This new ICMI research underwritten by Five9, focuses on an often-overlooked aspect of social customer care. ICMI was interested to compare the preferences of contact center leaders as social media users, against their behaviors as providers of social customer service. Where are the discrepancies? Why are there disparities? And can this knowledge be used to better convince organizations to provide the ‘new minimum level of response expected’ for social media?

With 68.0% saying that social media is a necessary customer service channel and only 39.3% formally offering, it is obvious that contact center leaders still need assistance with social care strategy and implementation.

You will not find this research report to be an intricate practitioner's guide to launch your social media customer service, (there are some great resources out there, including Edwin Margulies' "Social Engagement for Customer Care"). Instead, you'll find real-life examples, high-level direction, customer preferences, case studies, common pitfalls to avoid, challenges to overcome, and guidance to make your new or existing social care strategy successful.

Finally, the ICMI Spotlight accompaniments provide insight from industry experts. Edwin Margulies explains how to get executive buy-in for social listening in his best practice article, *Proving the Value of Listening*. And Sarah Stealey Reed wraps up the structure of social care section with her cautionary tale, *Dangers of Ignoring Social Customer Service*.

### Key Findings:

- 73% of organizations report having a social media presence
- Only 39% formally supports social media as a customer care channel
- A whopping 58% see a connection to increased customer loyalty
- Almost half of social care users (49%) reach out through social for customer service at least once a month
- 64% of consumer respondents said they were more loyal to brands, products, or companies that they followed on social media

## Study Demographics

The ICMI contact center community consists of nearly every role and level within a customer service organization. This not only provides an accurate representation of the sentiments and tactics currently being demonstrated in today's contact center, but also the anticipated trends and focus areas. The 408 respondents to this survey were primarily executives (14.0%), directors (16.7%) and managers (31.5%). Also participating were operational managers and analysts from training, product, human resources, workforce management, and QA (9.4%). Additional insight was provided by contact center supervisors (9.0%), and information technology (8.0%). Industry consultants (5.1%) and a smattering of agents rounded out the respondent mix.

Titles of interest included: Call Center Specialist, Director of Customer Support, Manager – Workforce Management, CEO, Customer Experience Quality Specialist, eMedia Product Manager, Director – Global Support, VP Inbound Sales and Customer Service, Manager - Customer Practice, and VP Customer Care Manager.

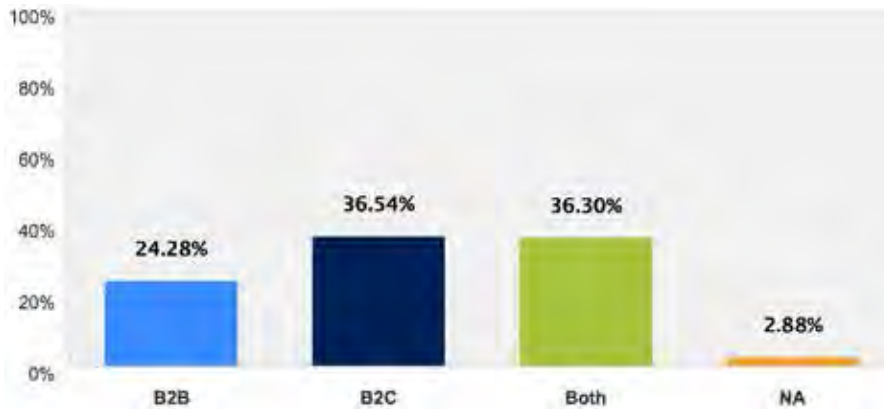
North America and the United States specifically, was the most represented region, although contribution to the study came from all over the world.

Participation spanned across all industries with financial services (banking and insurance), healthcare, and telecom accounting for the top verticals at 19.3%, 8.4%, and 7.2% respectively. Another 5.7% come from consulting firms, 4.5% from software, 4.1% from outsourced service providers (BPO) and 3.8% from retail.

Over 55% of the responding organizations operate primarily within the public sector, with 40.5% in private, and the remaining 4.5% saying they are either non-profits or have equal presence in both public and private.

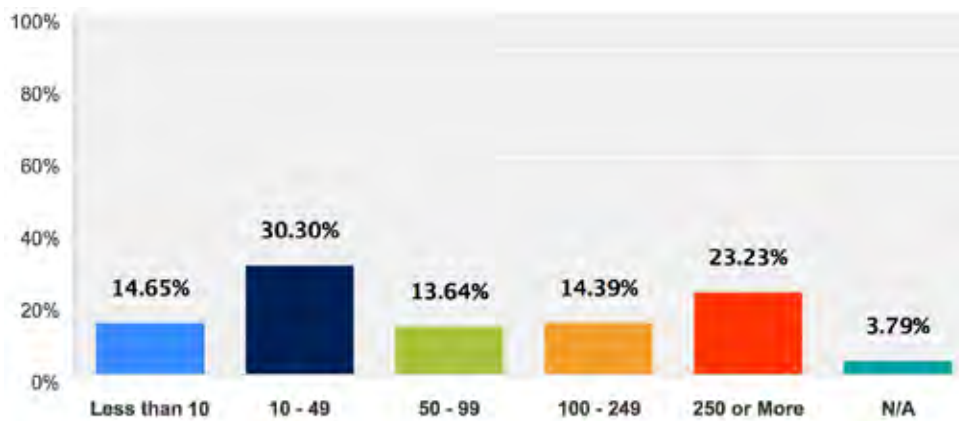
The participating brands equally have end-users in the business-to-consumer (B2C) space or in both B2C and business-to-business (B2B). Almost a quarter (24.3%) are B2B only.

Are your end users primarily business-to-business (B2B) or business-to-consumer (B2C)?



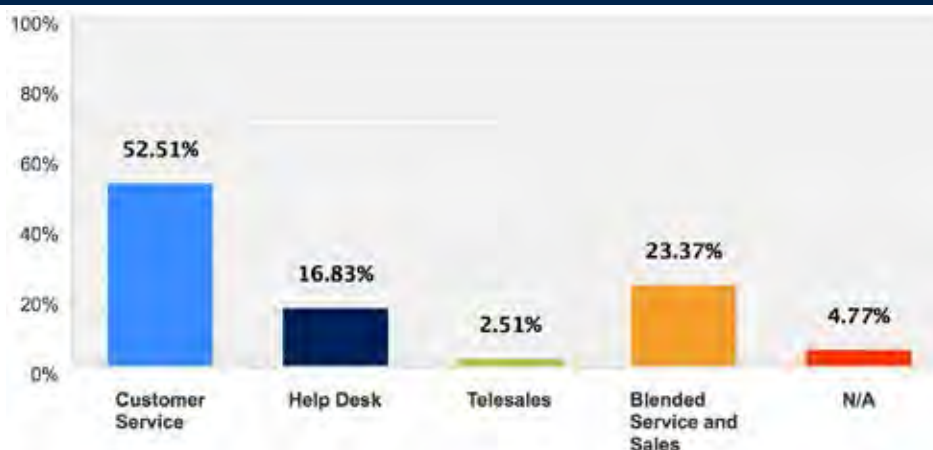
Contact centers of every scope responded for an objective sample size, with those having 10-49 agents (30.3%) and 250 or more (23.2%) representing the majority.

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

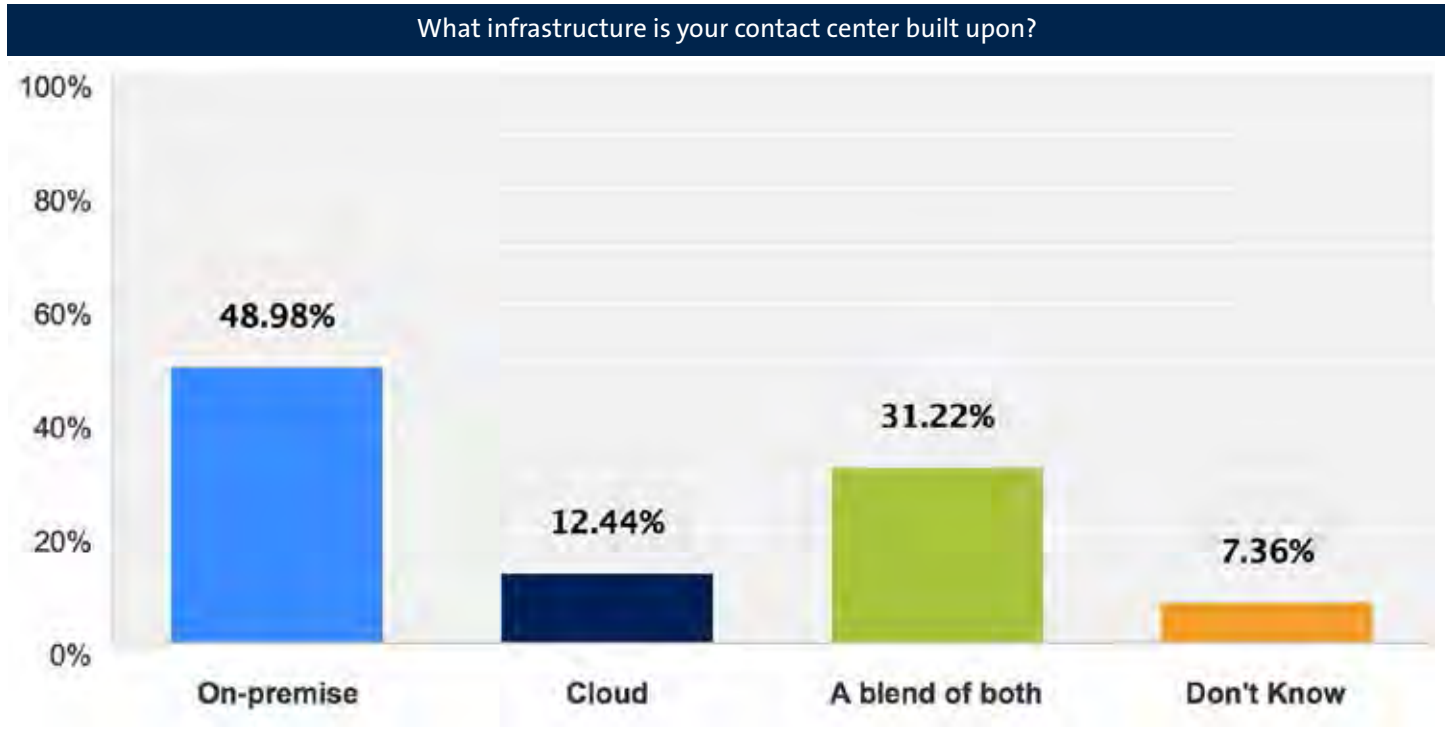


As is typical within the ICMI community, the majority (52.5%) report customer service as their primary function, with another 23.4% a blend of service and sales, 16.8% helpdesk and 2.5% strictly telesales.

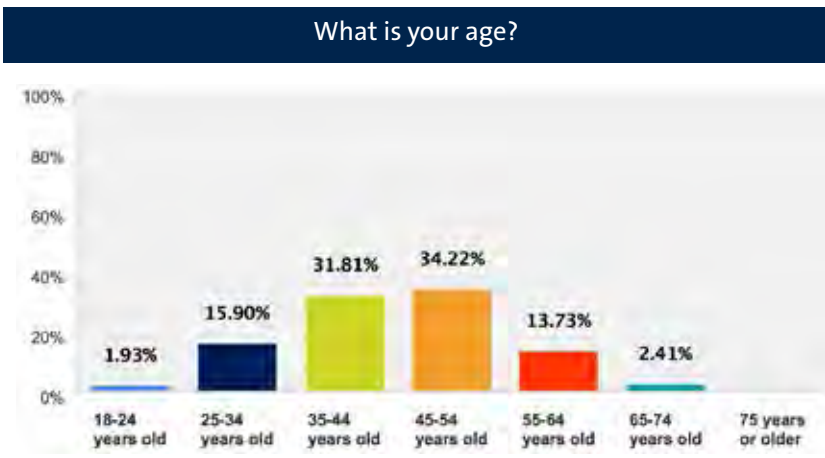
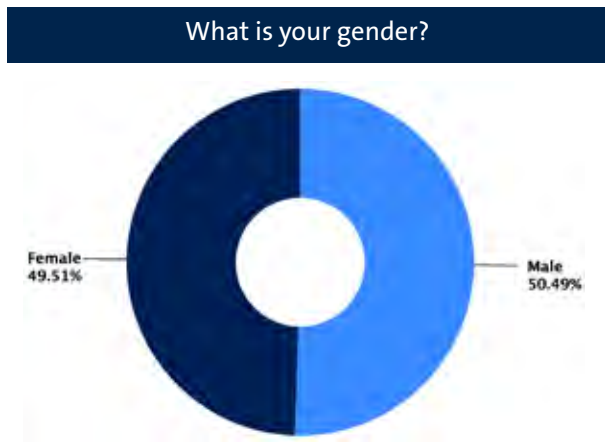
What is your contact center's primary function?



Of the survey respondents, about half (49.0%) are operating on a premise-based infrastructure, while only 12.4% are pure cloud. 31.2% have a blended mix of both and another 7.4% are uncertain.



The respondents were equally split between male (50.5%) and female (49.5%) and spanned widely across the generations. 2/3 fell into the 35-54 year-old age brackets.

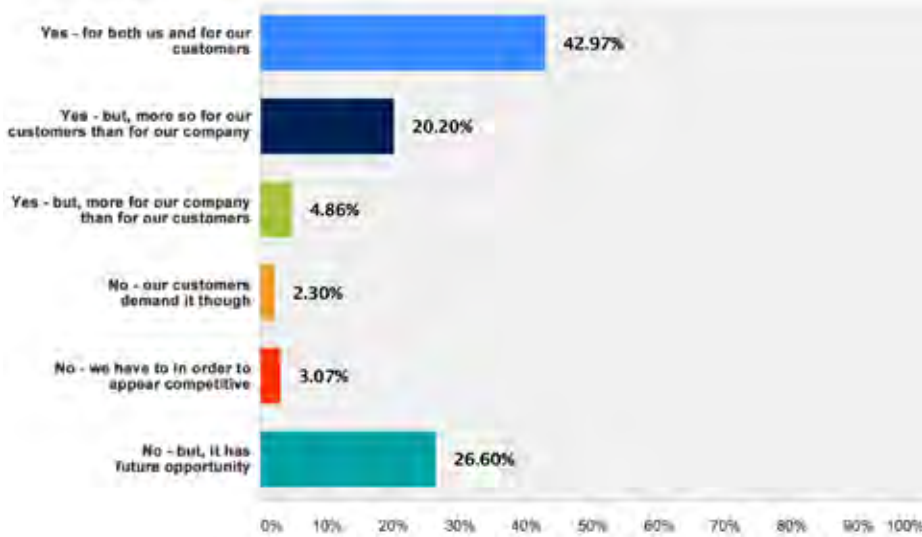


# IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL CUSTOMER CARE

“A year ago [2013], when [consumers] got a social media response from a brand on a customer care issue, they were pleasantly surprised,” said Dennis Stoutenburgh, co-founder of Stratus Contact Solutions. “We’re getting to the point now that if companies don’t respond, they will have a black mark against them.”

As mentioned earlier, 68.0% of companies consider social media to be a necessary customer service channel - 43.0% say for both the brand and their customers. And of those that don't? Over a quarter (26.6%) believes that social care has future opportunity.

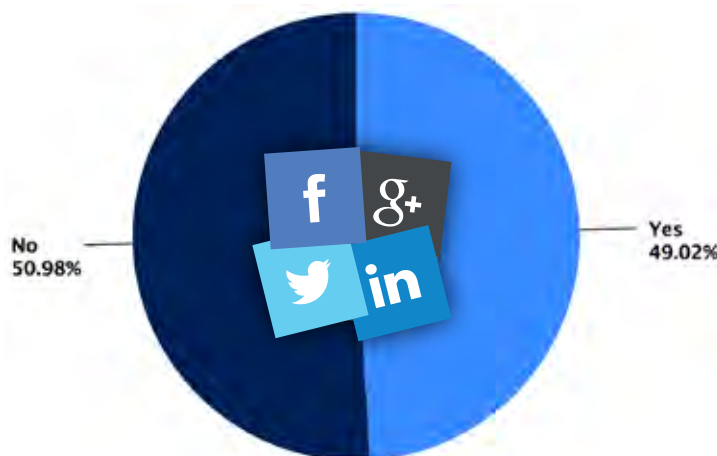
## Do you consider Social Media to be a necessary customer service channel?



While only 37.3% of consumer respondents claim to use social media as a customer care channel, we believe that number to be higher. Of that same population, almost 60% say they’ve read a company, product, or brand blog, while 48.4% have watched a support video. Whether they realize it or not, those too are social care platforms.

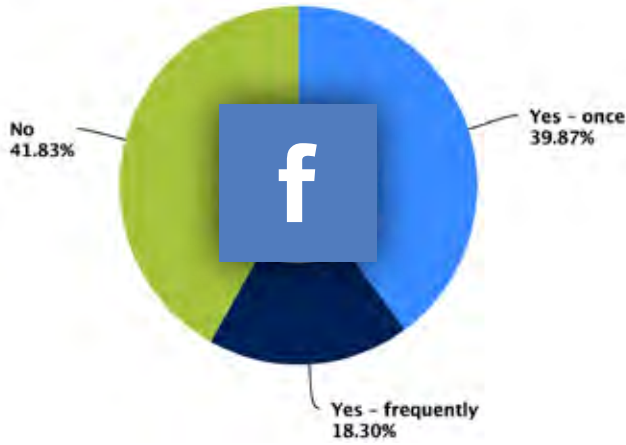
For those that do identify themselves as social care users, almost half (49.0%) say they reach out through social for customer service at least once a month.

## Do you frequently (at least once a month) use social media for customer service?

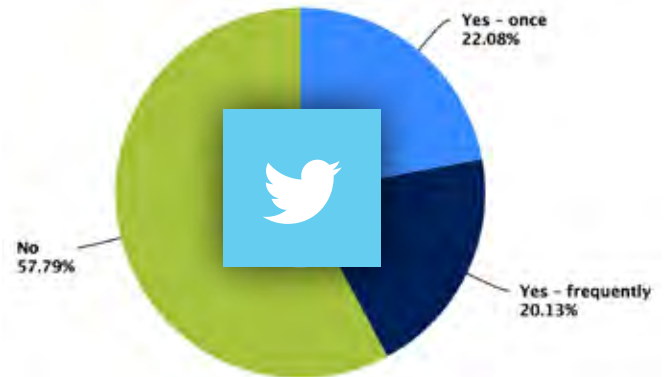


Where are they going for social care? 58.2% have used Facebook for support, while 42.2% have used Twitter.

Have you ever used Facebook to receive customer service?

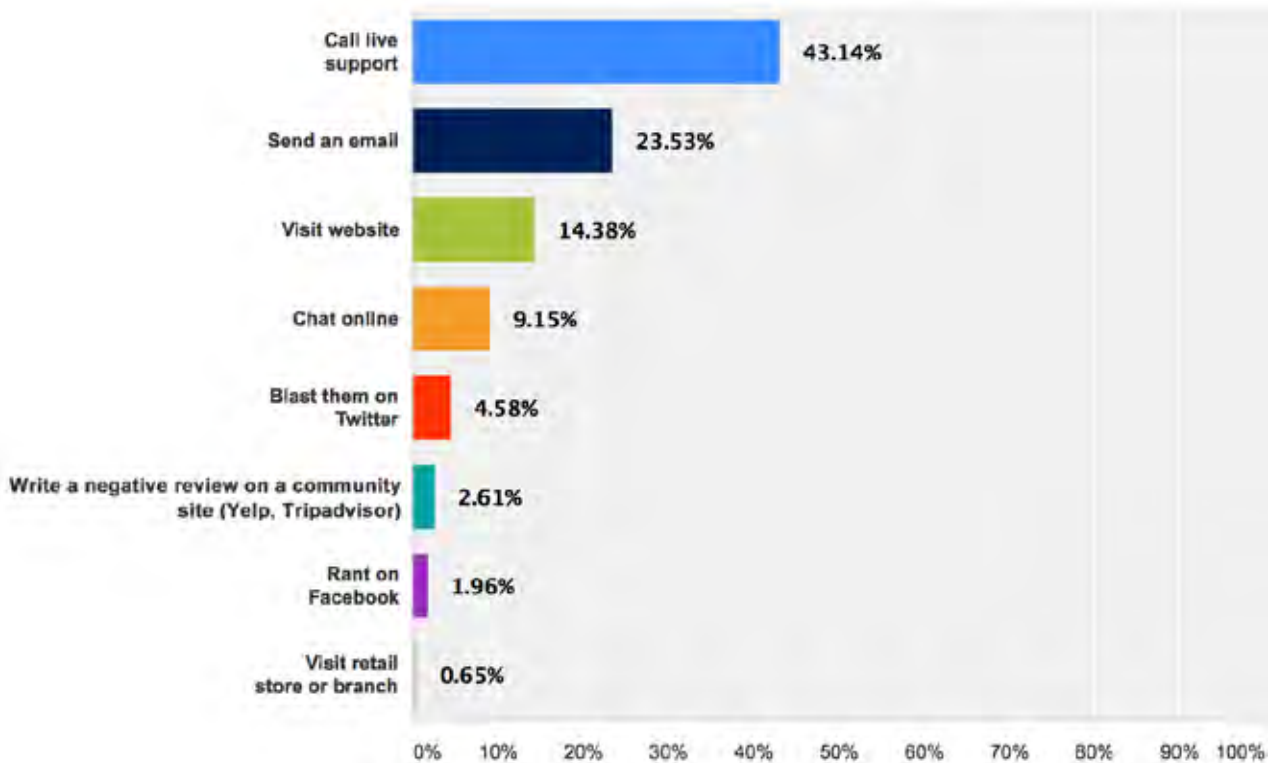


Have you ever used Twitter to receive customer service?



And let's not dismiss the importance of social customer care as a deflection for other channel usage. If customers are reaching out to a brand via social and either don't get their inquiry answered, or it is not resolved in a timely manner, they are bound to use another avenue. 43.1% will then call live support, while 23.5% send an email. It's a pretty sure guarantee that these particular customers will be unsatisfied with support and the overall brand if they are forced to move channels in order to get customer service.

If you are unable to get an inquiry answered or issue resolved in a timely manner via social media, what is your next point of contact with a company?





# Channel Preference

If your organization is on the fence about social care, consider this:

**“Social is necessary, because customers need to be able to get to us in the way they prefer,”** said the director of a large software company.

She raises a valid point here, as channel preference is often a vital component of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

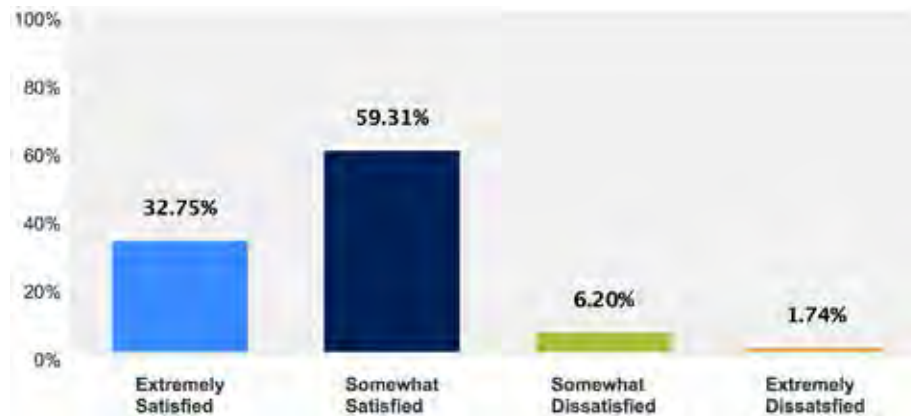
“The phone is not my personal preference,” lamented the Quality Service Coach for a B2B fleet leasing company. “Having to call in means more time, so while I appreciate good service, it’d have to be truly above and beyond phenomenal to outweigh the added time of having to call in, wait, verify info, etc. Calls just take longer.”

Not everyone agreed. “Good customer service should always be the priority for support regardless of the channel. As long as the support I receive is top-notch, the avenue I receive that support is less important,” said an IT support manager for a nationwide chain of retail stores.

59.3% of consumers said they’d be somewhat satisfied if a company didn’t give them their ‘channel of choice’, but they were still able to get good service.

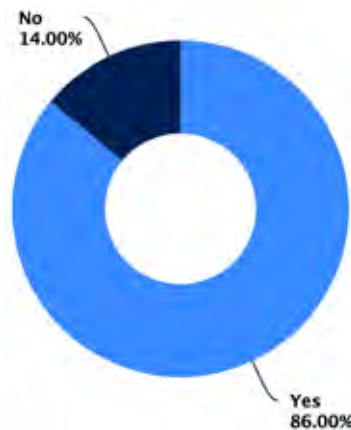
While that number is encouraging, the follow-on responses provided a little more color into the loyalty factor.

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



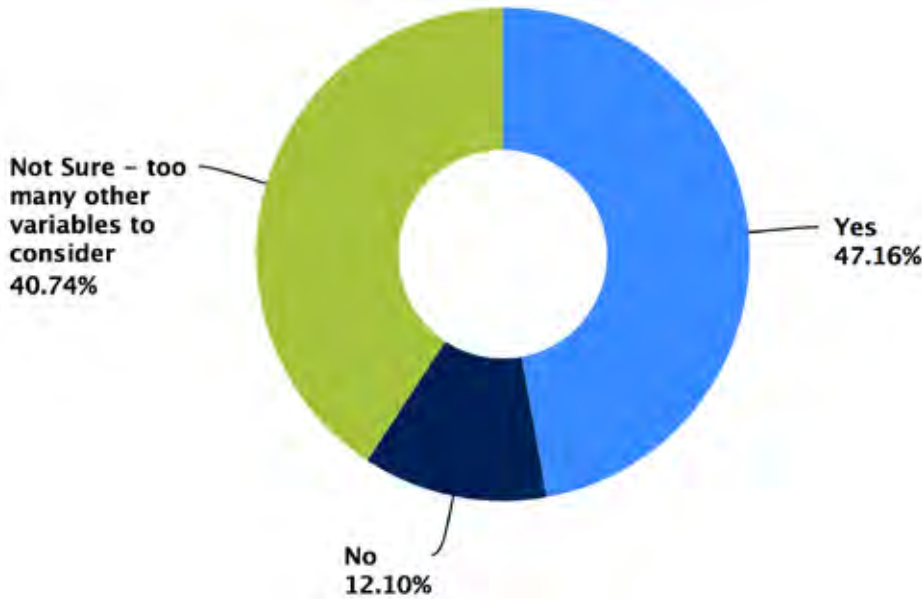
An overwhelming 86.0% admitted that they would be MORE satisfied with the brand if they were also offered their channel preference.

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



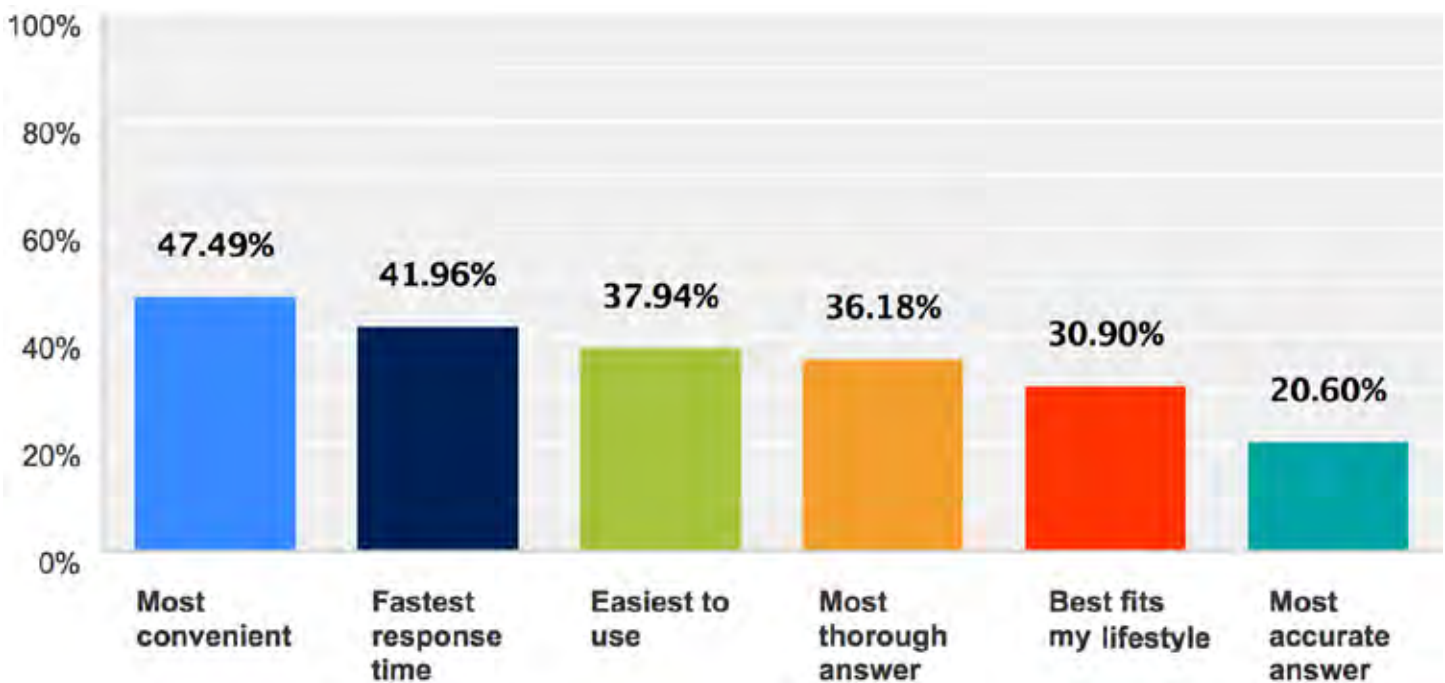
Even more telling was the almost ½ (47.2%) that said they'd be willing to move to a competitor for a product or service if all other things were equal, AND they were offered customer service through their preferred channel. Only 12.1% were certain they would not, while the remaining 40.7% were unsure as they felt other variables also needed to be considered.

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?



While the traditional support channels of phone and email still dominate, it's the reasons behind the channel preference that brands should pay close attention to. Convenience (47.5%) and fastest response time (42.0%) were cited most, followed closely by easiest to use (37.9%) and most thorough (36.2%).

Why do you prefer to use a specific channel?



If a company is able to replicate these reasons with any new channel they roll-out, (including all the social platforms), they will find that customer adoption will be much easier and met with greater satisfaction.

Take chat for example. Although it is the third most-preferred channel, respondents were very vocal about the reasons why they liked chat as a support option.

- “I can ask more than one question at once.” – *easy to use*
- “It allows me to track the agent’s response and keep a record of the conversation. The answers seem better thought-through” – *more thorough*
- “I just don’t want to sit on hold and talk to a representative when I can multitask and chat instead.” – *convenient*
- “I rarely ever wait on hold when I use chat. When I have a question, I want an answer right away. I don’t want to wait in a queue or sit for 24 hours before I get an email.” – *fast response time*

Not surprisingly, customers least prefer automated phone IVRs because they are too slow, inconvenient and not accurate enough. Of the 14.1% that do not like Twitter or the 11.9% that selected Facebook as their least favorite channel, the majority (61.5%) simply said it was because they don’t yet use that platform for customer service. As the customer service dispatcher for a transportation company said, “The new channels aren’t my preferred...yet. They are still too new for most companies and the kinks aren’t worked out.”

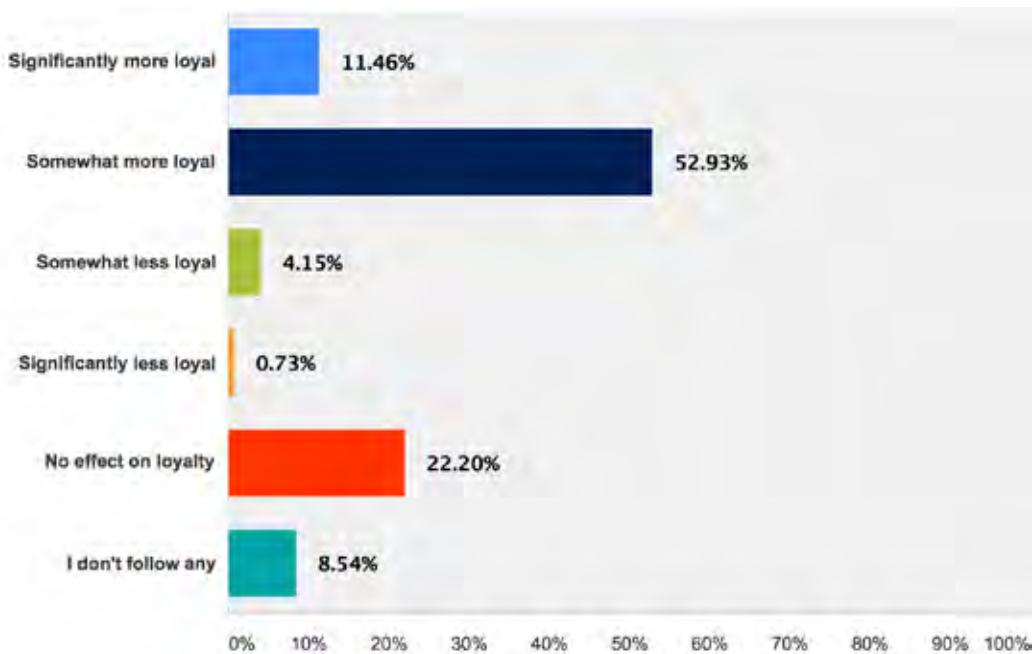
“Enterprises need to embrace social care as just another modality,” says Lance Fried the SVP of Social and Mobile at Five9. “They are the ones experiencing higher brand equity, reduced customer churn, increased sales, and the halo effect of being a leader in their respective vertical(s).”

## Social Media Influence

Let’s jump back to the concept of customer loyalty again, as social media has a very unique influence that other channels do not.

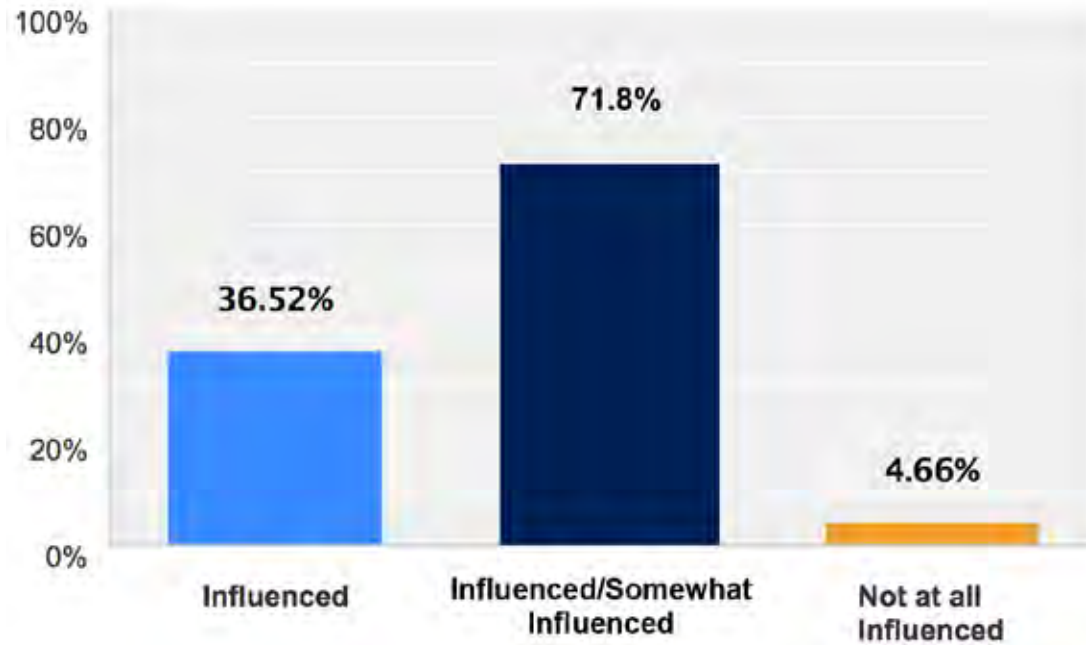
64.4% of consumer respondents said they were either significantly (11.5%) or somewhat (52.9%) more loyal to brands, products, or companies that they followed on social media. Only 22.2% said that social media had no influence on their devotion.

In general, how would you describe your loyalty to the brands, products, and companies you follow on social media compared to those that you don’t?



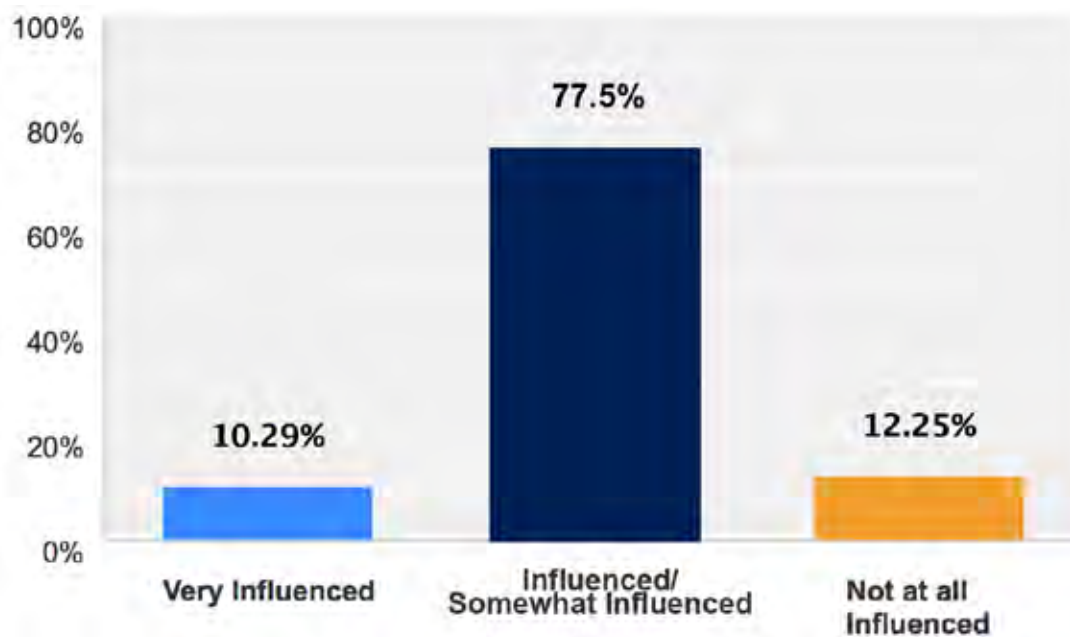
So what's causing this potential loyalty swing? Oftentimes it's commentary or reviews published by other consumers. 95.3% acknowledge that when they are researching a brand or company online, that they are either very influenced (23.5%) or somewhat (71.8%) influenced by peer postings! Sites like Yelp, TripAdvisor, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, or community forums are all possible places where loyalty can be publically influenced.

With brands/companies that you are researching online, how influenced are you by other customer comments/reviews? (Yelp, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, forums)



And even when they know a brand or company well, consumers can still be swayed! Although only 10.3% said they are very influenced by other comments and reviews about their known brands, over three-quarters (77.5%) said they were somewhat influenced!

With brands/companies that you know well, how influenced are you by other customer comments/reviews? (Yelp, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, forums)



Interestingly enough, consumers have a greater influence over their peers through social than experts do. 47.0% said they'd been influenced in the past week by a peer review, while only 34.3% said the same about an expert. Very impactful to organizations is the knowledge that 26.0% of respondents say they've reconsidered a brand, product of service because of a social posting!

It's good to see that organizations realize the value and influence of social care. Over 55% see it as a competitive differentiator and 37.6% feel they will lose customers without social media customer service options.

"Social care is something we are looking to explore in 2014 to set us apart from our competitors," said the Director of Customer Relations for a local utility company.

And perhaps most importantly, 61.3% acknowledge that social care improves the overall experience for social media customers.



"Social offers an opportunity to reach out to customers in a new way. Right now our competitors aren't doing as well with social," says an education EVP. "When 'customers' don't expect a response, it's a huge opportunity to delight them."

## THE SOCIAL CUSTOMER CARE EXPERIENCE

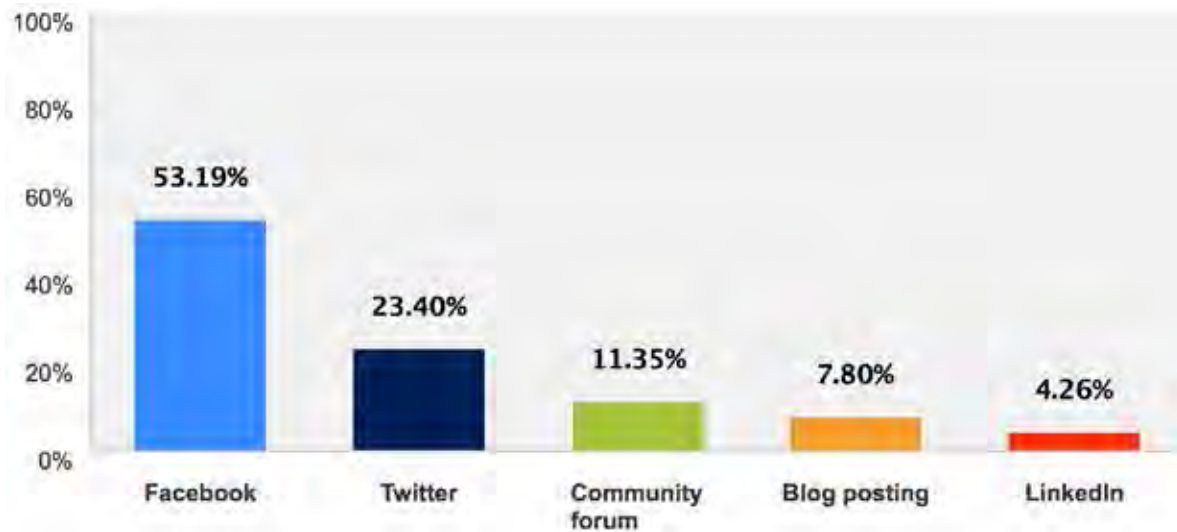
With social engagement growing exponentially, it's crucial for companies to re-evaluate their social media strategy to make sure that they are meeting customer expectations. Currently, "4 in 5 consumer inquiries now go unanswered", and that response rate does not appear to be improving.

"The dissatisfaction stemming from failure to respond via social channels can lead to up to a 15% increase in churn rate for existing customers," said Carol Rozwell, vice president and analyst at Gartner. "It's crucial that organizations implement approaches to handling social media now."

## The Experience From the Voice-of-the-Customer

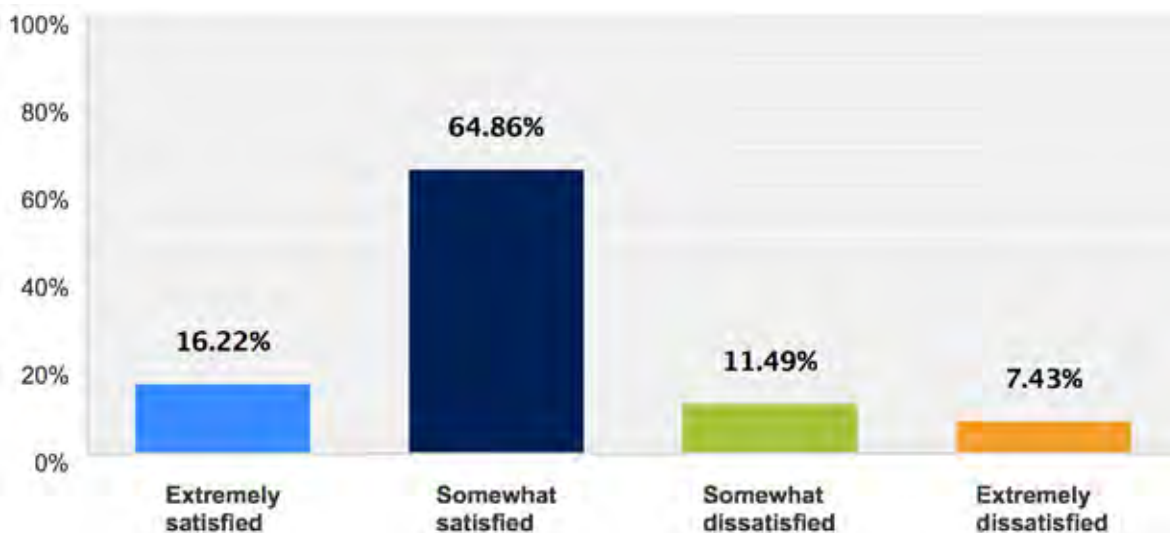
ICMI was very interested in hearing about the social care experience directly from the customer to see if it aligned with the contact center’s interpretation. 53.2% of respondents said they had last used Facebook for a social customer service interaction, while 23.4% used Twitter, 11.4% a community forum, 7.8% a blog and 4.3% LinkedIn.

Which social care channel did you use for this last social customer service interaction?



The majority (81.1%) were either somewhat (64.9%) or extremely (16.2%) satisfied with their social care experience and over half felt that this was the right channel for the inquiry.

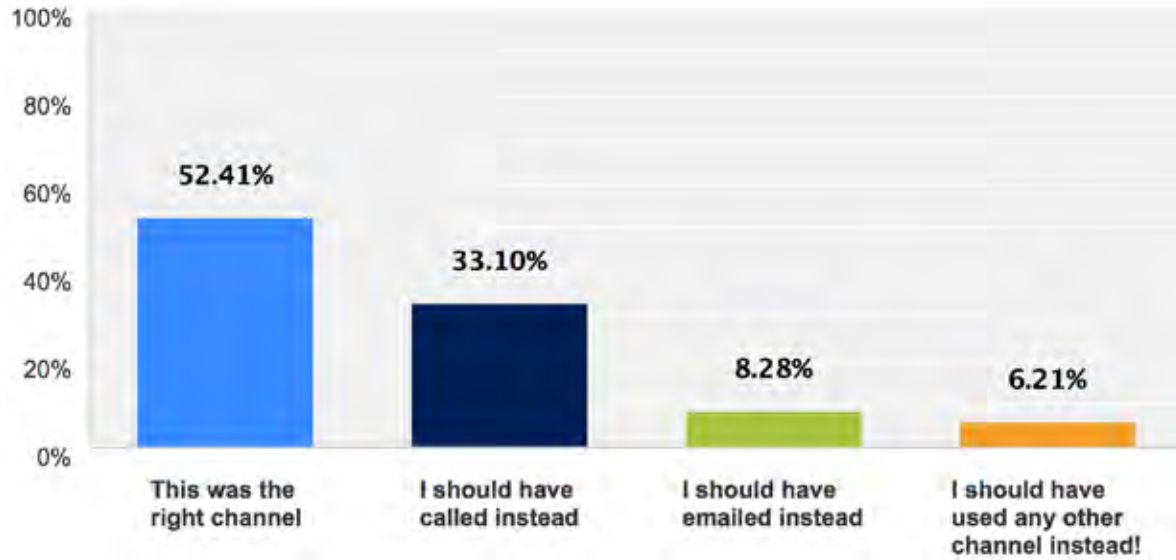
Thinking only about your LAST customer service experience through social media, how satisfied were you with the experience?



For one workforce manager who unsuccessfully used Facebook, she said bad service from social is often symbolic of greater issues within a company. “It wasn’t just a problem with social care,” she explained. “Other channels were equally as unsatisfying - which I think is typical. If a company has a social media service channel and can’t manage it, it’s indicative of their service in general.”

Of those that in hindsight felt a different channel would have been more appropriate, one-third wished they had called instead, while only 8.3% would have chosen email and 6.2% said any other channel would have been better.

**In hindsight, was this the best channel for your customer service inquiry, or should you have used a different one?**

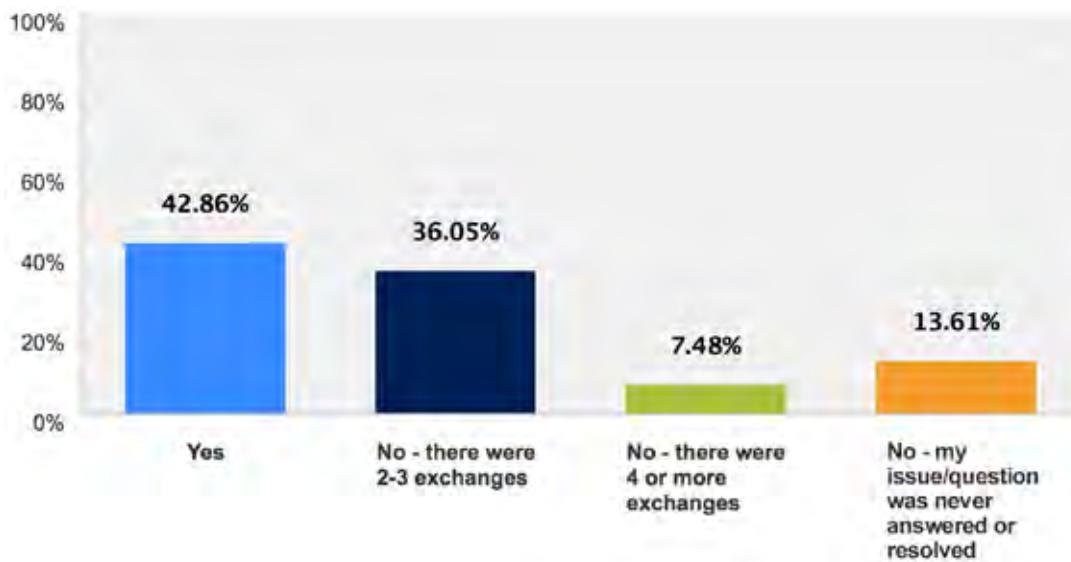


“I actually contacted the company through another channel first and couldn’t get any satisfactory assistance,” said the Business Operations Analyst for a national banking institution. “So I then went to Twitter, and then the company finally resolved my issue...through email.”

One common social care concern for both customers and contact centers alike is the ability (or inability) to resolve a customer service interaction through the original channel choice of the customer. Not only does this potentially disrupt the flow of the conversation, but it also decreases first-contact-resolution (FCR).

In our research, 42.9% had their issue or question resolved within one interaction. Only 13.6%, (although this is still too high), never had their issue answered or resolved at all, and 36.1% had 2-3 exchanges. It’s important to point out that because social is less a real-time conversation and more an exchange-by-exchange dialogue, that multiple interactions to resolve an issue may still be satisfactory.

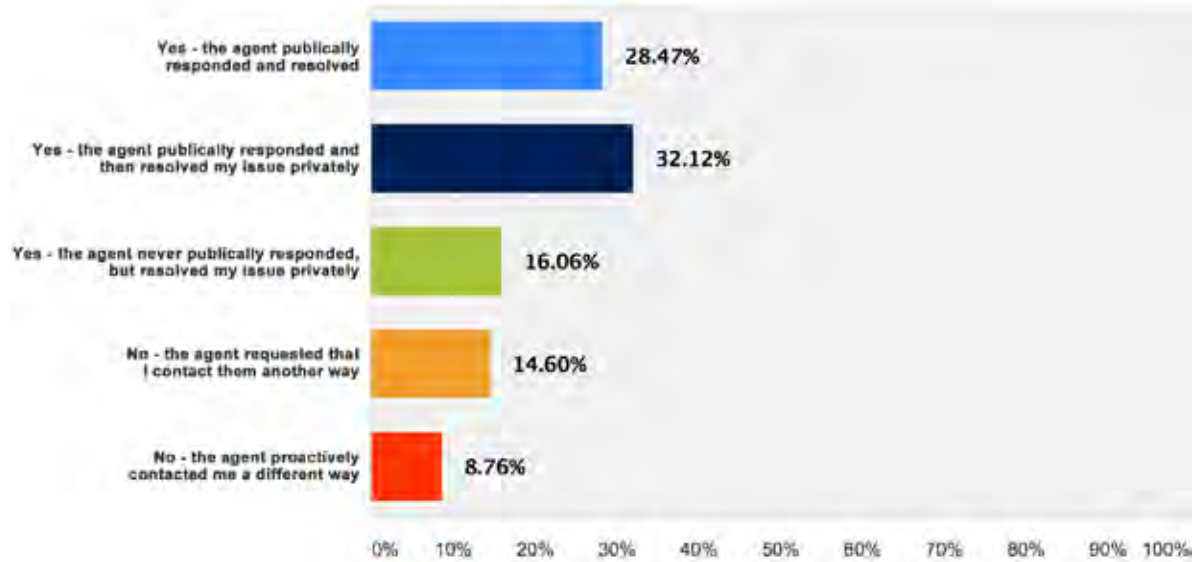
**Was your question or issue resolved with one interaction?**



When we asked respondents if their question or issue was resolved through their original social channel, 76.7% said 'yes'. And here's an interesting point - multiple responses by a social care agent can often still be considered as successful FCR. How? While 32.1% said that the agent resolved their issue privately, (either through Twitter DM or Facebook Messenger), the agent ALSO publically responded to close the loop. So in reality the customer received two responses by the agent that could and should be equated as one means to resolution.

What is the one thing that the customer doesn't want to happen and what will surely lead to dissatisfaction? When the agent requests that the customer contacts them in a different manner, which occurs 14.6% of the time.

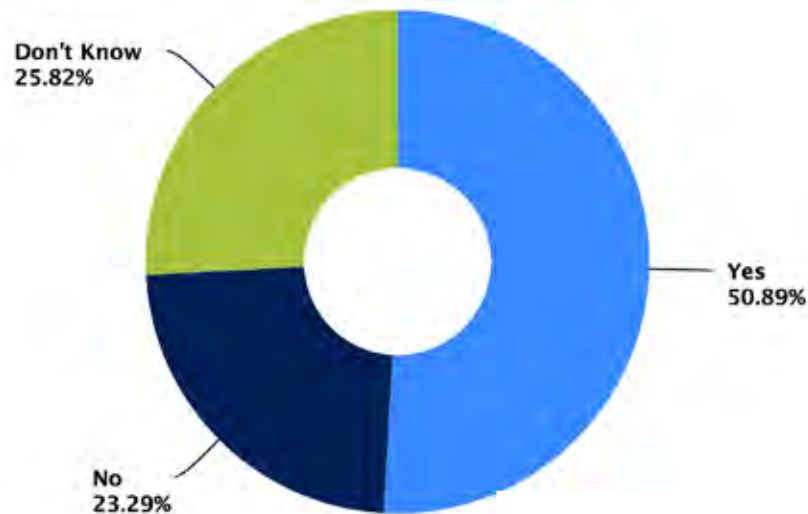
Was your question/issue resolved through your original social channel?



## Customer Response Time Expectations

Do social customers have higher expectations for service than those from more traditional channels? Over 50% of our contact center leaders said 'yes', and that the differences lay in the need for immediacy and speed.

Do Social customers expect a higher level of customer service than those from more traditional channels?





The manager for a national non-profit put it this way, “When we receive comments through our agency’s Facebook and Twitter accounts, there is an expectation of a very quick response. On the other hand, we receive quite a few inquiries by email and our 24-hour response time appears to be adequate.”

Remember that concept of social care normalization from Edwin Margulies? He goes on to say that because social is not yet normalized and brands handle it so inconsistently, that customers sometimes have erratic expectations for social customer care.

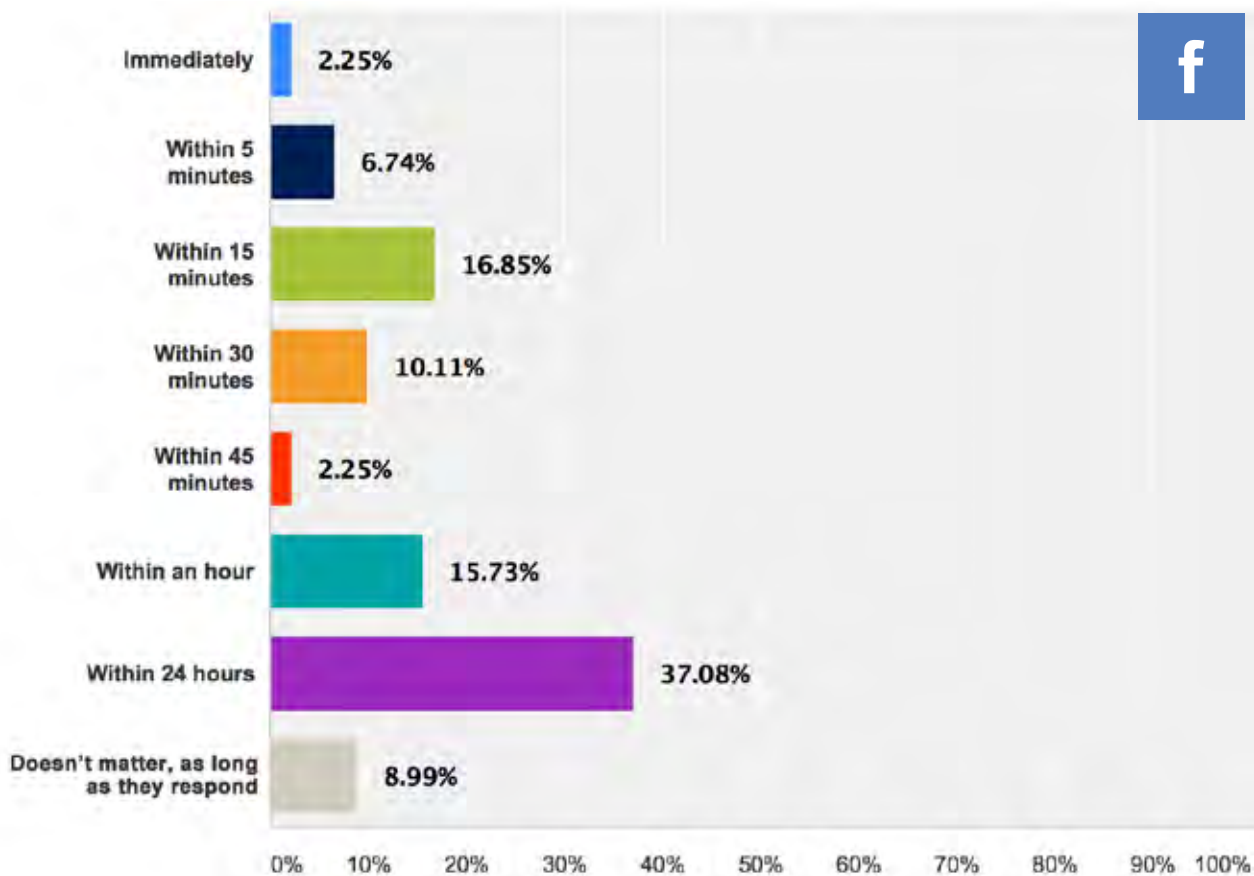
Arguably, the first level of expectation is - WILL I get a helpful response at all?

The second thought that comes to mind expectation-wise is: WHEN will I get a response? “Most customers,” Margulies says, “make the leap of faith on traditional channels like email and phone that they will get a response and that it’s just a matter of time.”

But with social, the “WILL I EVEN?” question is something that consumers still ask a lot. That is to say that not every enterprise has tuned in to social channels. Put more plainly, not every enterprise is even listening on social channels. Listening is a vital component to the success of structuring social customer care, and one that will be discussed in detail further on in this report.

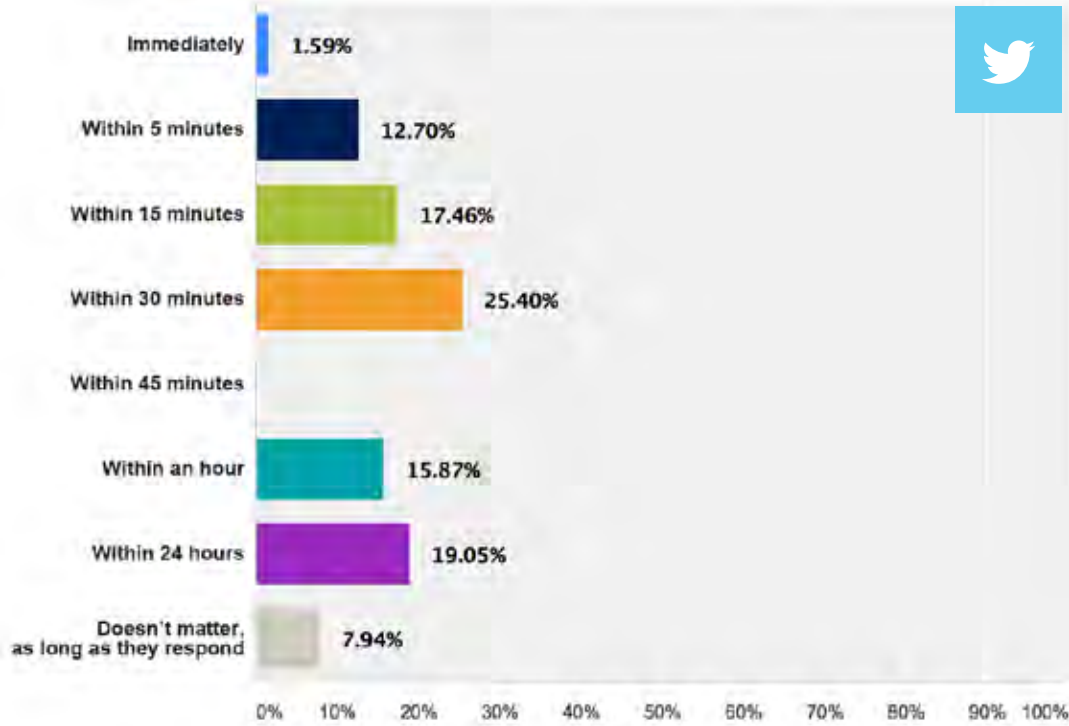
According to our data, 37.1% of customers expect a company to respond to their Facebook posting within 24 hours, while over a quarter (25.8%) say within 15 minutes or less, and 28.1% expect an answer within 30-60 minutes. Only 9.0% said the timing was irrelevant as long as they received an answer.

### How quickly do you expect the brand to respond?



In comparison, Twitter users have a faster expectation for response as only 19.1% are fine with a 24-hour turnaround, while 31.8% expect a brand to respond within 15 minutes or less, and 41.3% within 30-60 minutes.

How quickly do you expect the brand to respond?



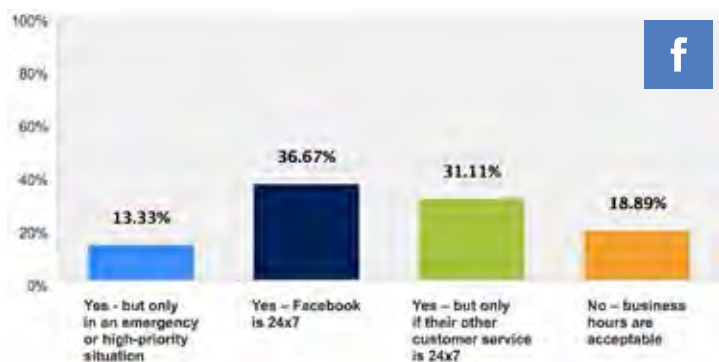
Those enterprises that do listen on social channels are beginning to establish best practices in terms of fulfilling the WHEN part of the expectation, and making best efforts to exceed customer expectations.

12.8% of surveyed companies are answering Facebook inquiries “immediately”, while 14.4% are doing so for Twitter.

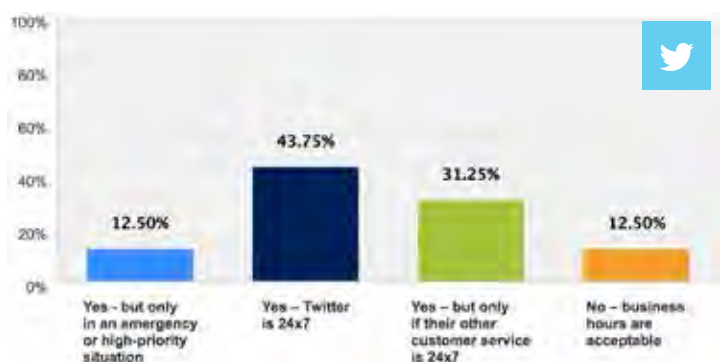
It’s clear that the near-real-time aspects of social do elicit a different response expectation than those for traditional channels. “Customers also expect social care to mirror 800# care hours,” says Fried from Five9. “A year or so ago the 9-5 approach was acceptable.”

Our data reflects that, as 81.1% said they expect a company to respond to Facebook inquiries on nights and weekends, and 87.5% said the same for Twitter.

Do you expect the company to respond to Facebook on nights and weekends?

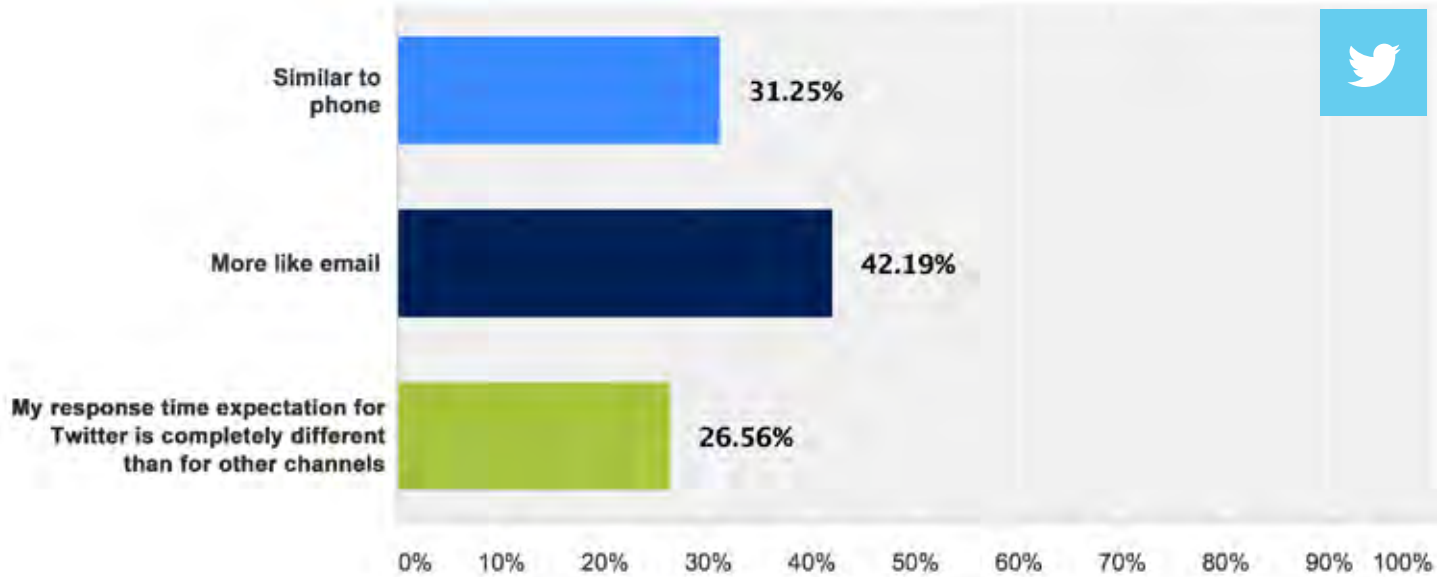


Do you expect the company to respond to Twitter on nights and weekends?



And customers admit, particularly with Twitter, that their expectations for response are either more urgent and similar to phone (31.3%) or completely different than with other channels (26.6%). 42.2% said their response expectations were less urgent and more like email.

Are your Twitter expectations for response more urgent and similar to phone, or less urgent like email?

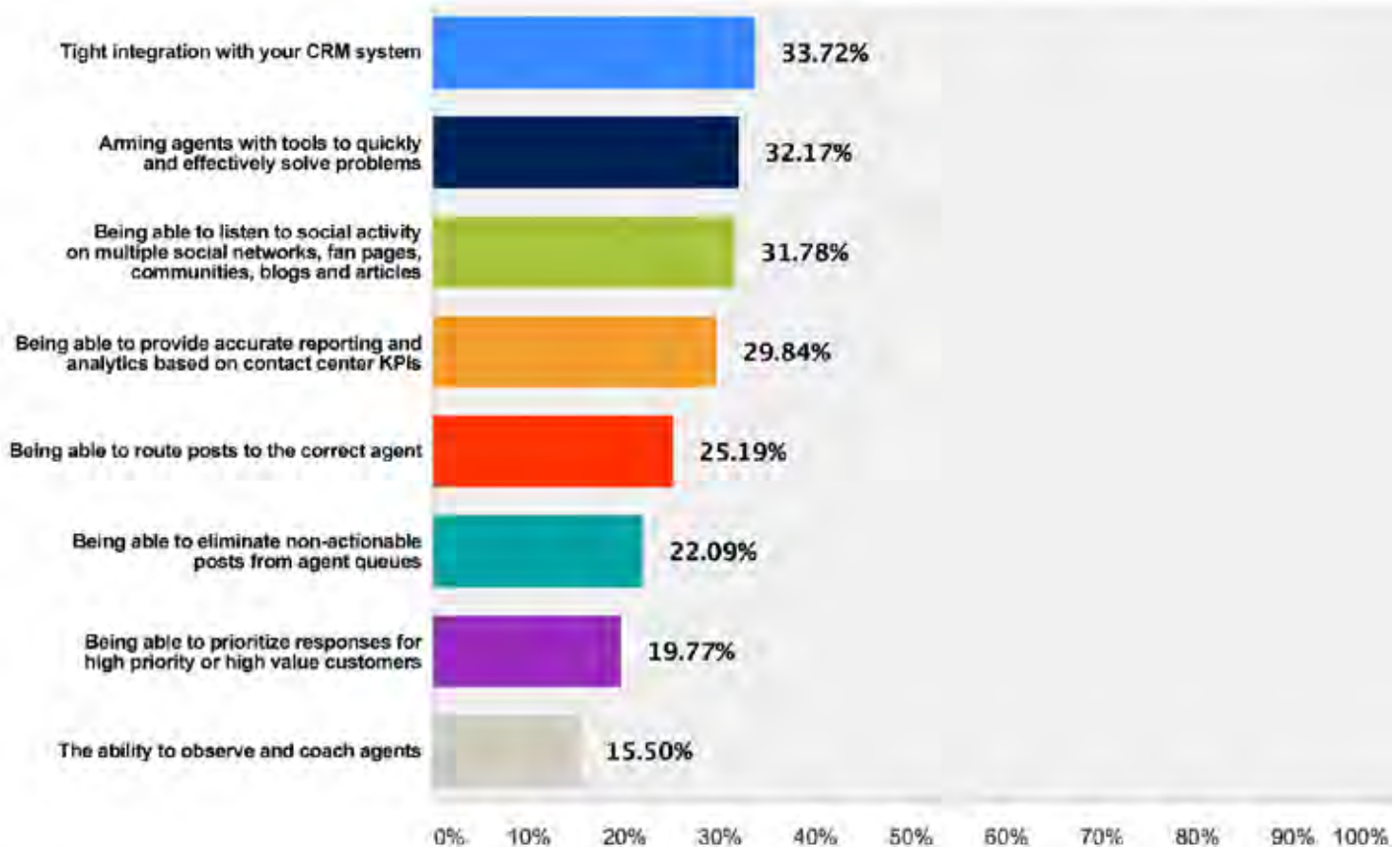


A word of caution to companies in the consideration phase of social support - once customers have recognized that you are in fact listening – they will have high expectations that their questions will be answered consistently in the timeframe and in the urgency that you first establish.

# STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CUSTOMER CARE

Social care often feels daunting to the contact center, in part because of its perceived immediacy, its public voice, and its potential volume of interactions. When we asked the 60.7% of respondents not formally offering social as a customer channel what was preventing them from doing so, over one-third cited a lack of integration with CRM (33.7%), while an almost equal amount (32.2%) claimed challenges with agent tools and being able to listen to social activity on multiple social networks (31.8%).

## Which of the following factors prevent you from offering social care?



Rozwell from Forrester says that social care concerns can be mitigated with relatively simple preparations and a continuously-evolving approach to the channel. “Firstly, participate,” she says. “It’s important that organizations don’t let a fear of someone saying something bad about them stop them from participating in social media. Secondly, don’t assume all comments require the same level of attention — develop an appropriate response for the different types of interaction your business faces. Thirdly, plan for an increase in social commentary and adapt communications practices to cope — this will require changes to job descriptions, performance metrics and business processes.”

ICMI and Five9 have expanded these recommendations out to provide any organization and contact center with a clear structure for social customer care:

1. Create a Strategy
2. Listen
3. Triage Your Customer Service
4. Respond and Follow-Up
5. Monitor, Measure and Optimize

## Step 1: Create a Strategy

The speed in which you need to move on a solid social care strategy often depends on your industry and customers. What are your competitors doing? What are your customers already doing on social? From there, you need to evaluate the importance and intention of social to your organization. What does your company DO with social? Is social support going to be a competitive differentiator and something your company promotes? Or is it a blended solution that will be quietly integrated into your multichannel contact center? There are no 'wrong' answers, but knowing these before you build your strategy will certainly provide clearer guidance.

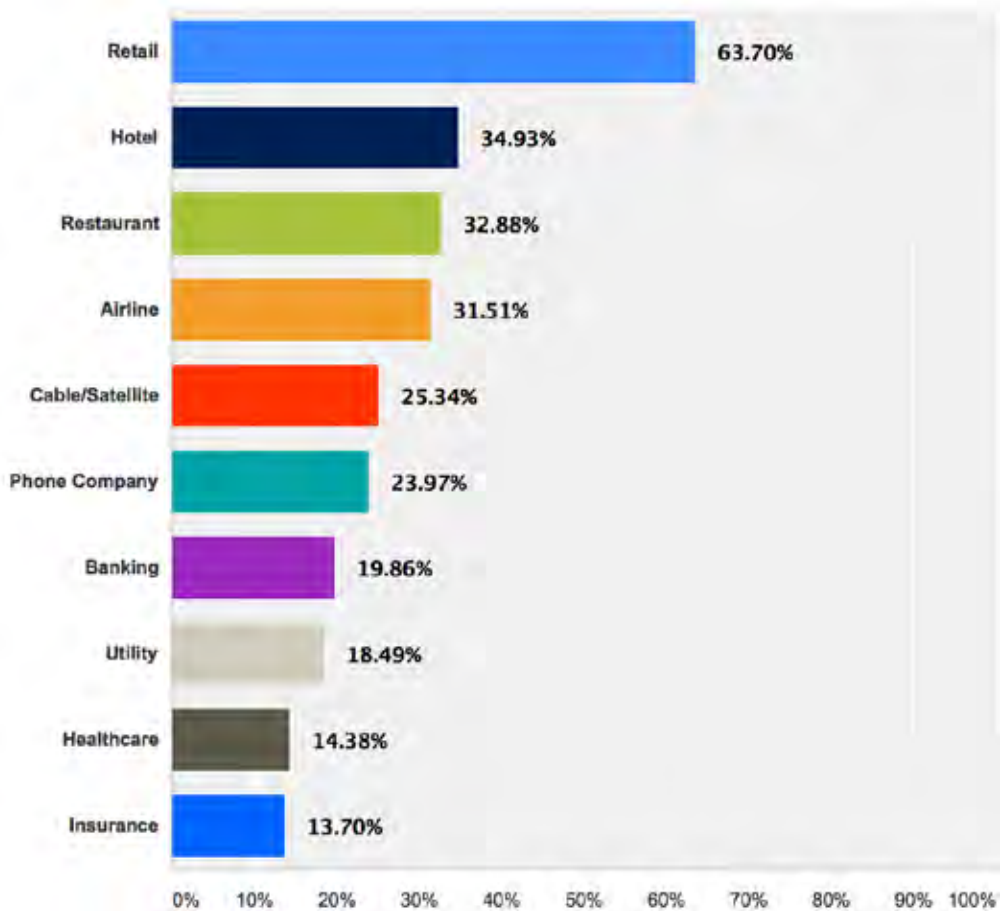
### Know Your Industry

Organizations in particular industries are often ahead of the curve in terms of social care - utilities such as cable, telecom and Internet providers are currently seeing the most inbound engagement from customers.

Highly competitive industries such as retail, travel, automotive, banking/finance, and technology are also leading the way with social customer service.

When we asked our community where they personally seek social customer service: retail, hospitality and travel came out on top, followed by utilities and banking.

For which of the following industries have you sought customer service through social media?

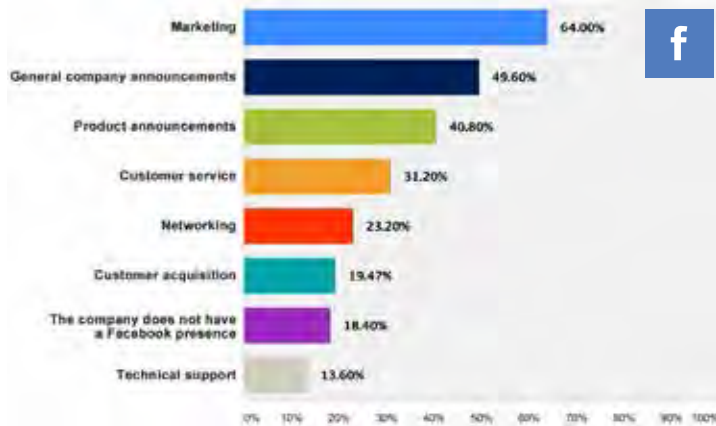


Platform engagement also differs across industries, as research shows that people prefer to use Facebook to engage with automotive and retail brands, while Twitter is the platform of choice for entertainment, government and technology companies.

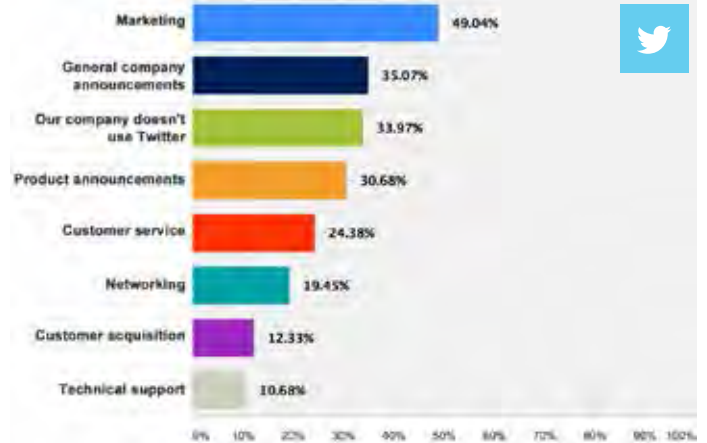
## Know Your Brand

Before jumping into social customer service, the contact center should understand how the company is intending to use or is currently utilizing social media. The most common methods that organizations leverage social media are for marketing purposes, company announcements, product announcements, customer service, and networking. It is worthwhile to note that customer service came in well behind the general corporate announcements for both Facebook (31.2%) and Twitter (24.4%).

How does your company use Facebook?



How does your company use Twitter?



Equally as important is knowing who will 'own' social care in your organization. According to our community, marketing owns social media customer service in 55.7% of organizations, while the contact center does in just over half (52.1%). The PR department responds for 22.7% and human resources in 5.7%. It was encouraging to see so much co-ownership and cross-over between the departments and teams.

Who 'owns' social media customer service?

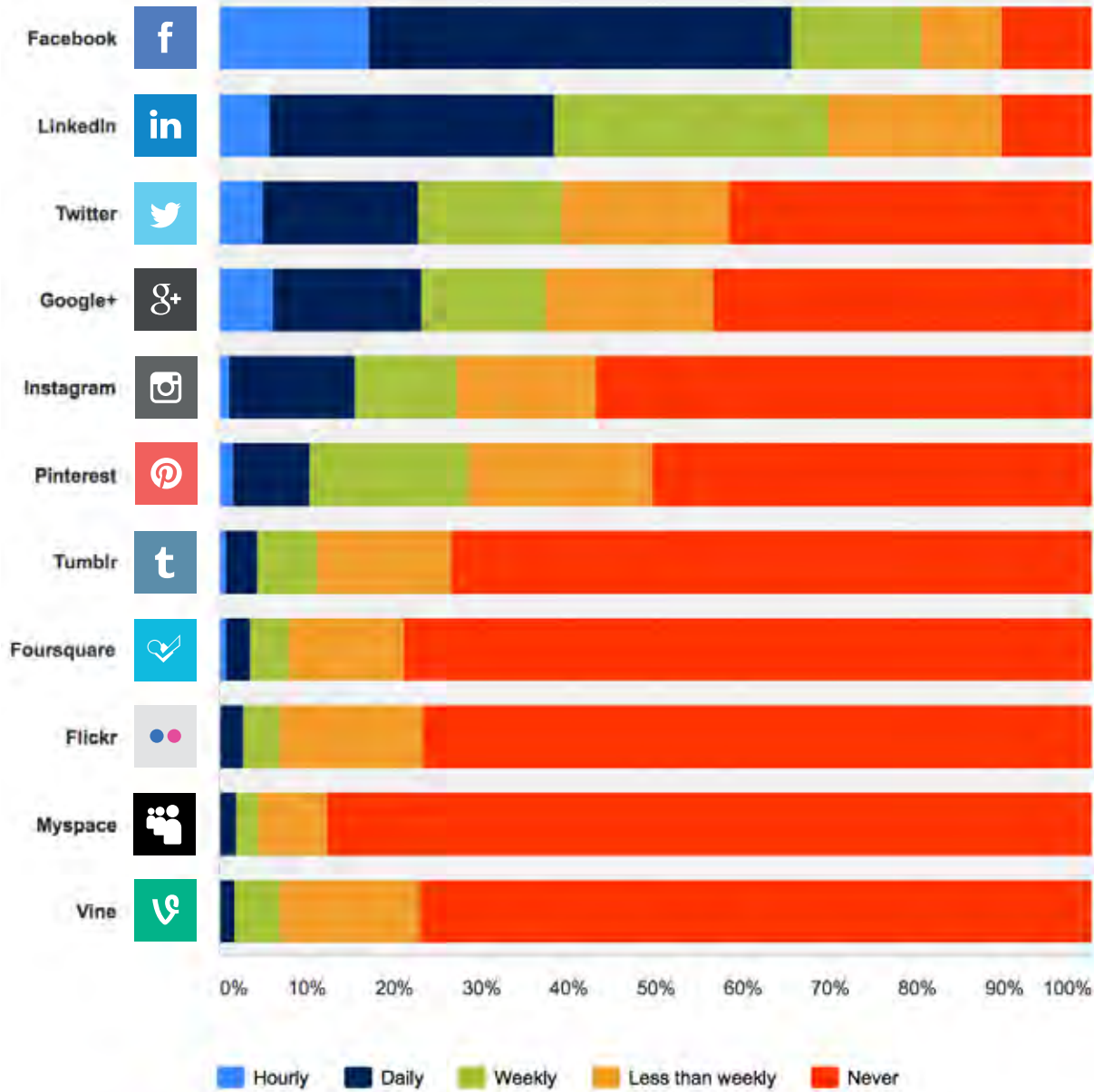


## Where are Your Customers?

“With social, it’s impossible to respond to everything,” says Ashley Verrill the Content Strategist for Software Advice. “So you need to prioritize what platform you’re focusing on. This depends on where your customers are most active.”

Almost ½ of survey respondents say that they are on Facebook daily, with 32.7% on LinkedIn that often and 17.9% on Twitter each day.

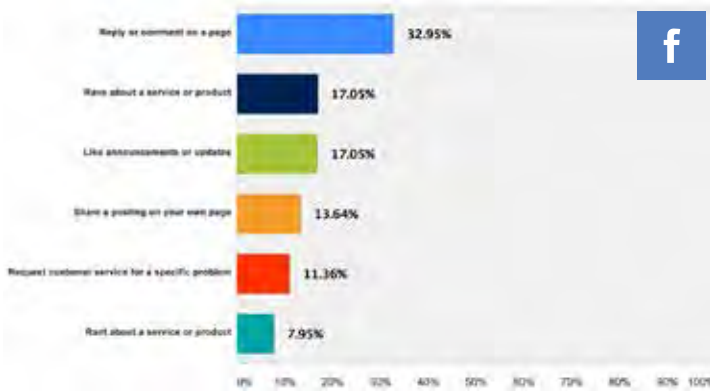
How often do you personally use each of the following social networking sites?



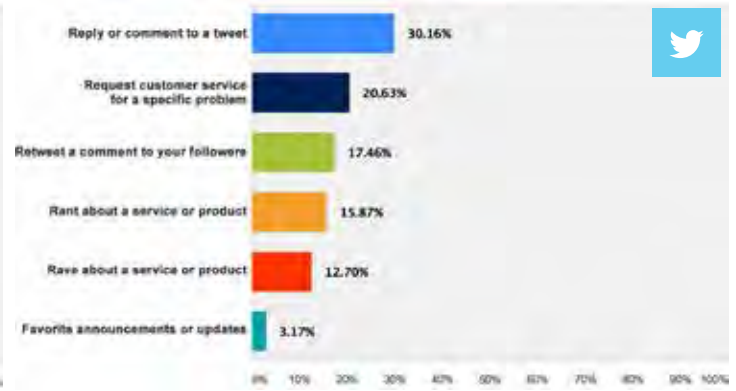
Additionally, it helps to know WHAT they are doing on these platforms.

For the most part, consumers are using Facebook and Twitter as mechanisms for commentary. (And in about ½ of these situations, they are not actually expecting a response.) We also heard that Facebook is more often used to rave about products and services (17.1%) than Twitter (12.7%). And inversely, Twitter is almost twice as likely to be used for requesting customer service for a specific problem.

How does your company use Facebook?



How does your company use Twitter?



**Within the last week, 59.7% of respondents said they had read a product, brand or company blog. Almost half (48.4%) had watched a support video and 41.6% used online message or community boards to solve a problem.**

Interestingly enough, many people don't consider the above activities as social care. While almost 60% have engaged in one or more online social care activities in the past week, only 37.3% said they 'used' social media for customer service. That leads us to believe that the actual number of social customer care users is much higher than typically reported.

Leaders must be cognizant that social media is not limited to specific applications or websites like Facebook or Twitter. Community boards, blogs, and review sites should also be considered components of your social media strategy and may need to be supported, or at a minimum, listened to.

46.0% are monitoring their company blog for potential service issues, while 34.6% pay attention to community forums run by their organization. It's encouraging to see that brands realize they must also take into consideration the social activity on competitor and industry sites – 41.1% monitor industry forums, 38.8% third party blogs, 32.7% third party reviews (Yelp, Tripadvisor), and 29.3% industry communities.

Does your company monitor any community sites for potential customer service issues?





## Social Media Playbook

As with any customer care channel, ICMI recommends putting a comprehensive strategy in place. In the case of social, this is oftentimes known as a social media playbook. The playbook is the organization's charter for social care best practices and provides a comprehensive framework to deal with social media inquiries on relevant topics. The playbook must complement how an organization deals with interactions received through social channels and should address whether a response is warranted, who should respond if it is, and what action is necessary following any response.

68.9% of organizations currently have a social media playbook in place to define the social media strategy and guide customer response parameters. In 32.6% of scenarios the marketing team wrote it, while the contact center was the exclusive author for 11.4%. For a quarter of companies, the playbook was co-written by both marketing and the contact center. A true opportunity exists for the remaining 21.2% that have never drafted a playbook and for the 9.9% that have one, but don't use it.

Do you use a social media playbook to define the social media strategy and guide customer response parameters?



ICMI and Five9 have created a whitepaper accompaniment to this research report, "A Social Playbook to Guide Your Company's Social Strategy," which includes, among other things:

1. Social mission and goals
2. Social in the organization
3. Platforms
4. Processes
  - a. Engagement
  - b. Workflow
  - c. Escalation
5. Reporting
6. Resources

“Every professional enterprise has its best practices and policies that employees are asked to follow when dealing with the public,” says Margulies. “In traditional contact centers, these rules and policies are well documented and part of the agent onboarding process. Why should social be any different?”

One of the large differences, and a core reason for the playbook, is the fact that social is often handled by more departments than just customer support.

“The social playbook should include all responsible parties that handle social,” says Five9’s Fried. “Whether that be Marketing, Customer Care, Brand Management, or Public Relations. All have specific goals and all interact with consumers on disparate topics and inquiries, so it is paramount to have continuity and a macro-strategic approach.”

Margulies iterates the importance of partnership. “The playbook should be used by the entire organization and in fact I’d say that the most evolved organizations will have created the playbook collaboratively between departments before it is put into action.”

It is crucial that the playbook is accompanied by infrastructure that allows the playbook to manifest itself, as the effectiveness and ability for an agent following the playbook is completely dependent upon the social media engagement solution and its capabilities.

Tools and technology that allow the filtering of unanswerable posts or spam will greatly enhance agent efficiency and productivity. Company policies should manifest themselves into Next Best Actions (NBA). These NBA can then be triggered by specific rules with a rules-based engine as part of the platform. Agent scripts and advanced search can be evoked by agents based on the playbook as well. But none of this turns into productivity or efficiency for the agent without advanced filtering, agent tools, and rules-based triggering. These are the enhancements of modern social engagement systems.

While all of this is important, Margulies says that the most crucial aspect of a social playbook is the rules and best practices that apply across the board to all customers. “Customers are just that – customers,” he says. “That some customers have chosen to use Twitter or Facebook or a peer-to-peer community site to ask for support is not what’s important; the media type is secondary – the spirit of engagement and willingness to help a customer is primary.”

## Step 2: Listen

It’s important that all organizations have a proactive social media listening schedule and strategy, regardless if they support social care or not. For enterprises that have products or services that are very volatile to consumer ratings and reviews, this becomes paramount. Just as it is necessary to understand where your consumers are most active on social networks, it is as critical to understand general trending. Ultimately it is the social tool being used by customer care that will dictate a lot of this.

Listening is easily done by using keyword and key phrase search criteria.

### What to Listen For?

What to listen for is highly dependent on the factors and values that are significant to the organization. For example, if it is important for product owners to track the acceptance and the “buzz” on a recent product launch, then what that team should be listening for are brand name mentions and competitive mentions.

Similarly, if the social media initiative includes a customer care aspect, you can create profiles that match the keyword and phrases most likely to be uttered in a support scenario. For example, phrases like “I need help with my new phone” or “my new phone is broken” signify a care opportunity. Likewise, you would want to know if customers are crowdsourcing or seeking alternative opinions about a product or service. Many contact centers will listen for phrases like “I am going to dump my provider” and “I’m looking to switch providers.” Of course these phrases are coupled with argument words that narrow the search such as company names and brand names.

Verrill also recommends listening to combinations of both your brand and your competitors. “Often, when a customer is tweeting both you and your competitor, they are at the moment of making a purchase decision. They might be switching from your brand to your competitor, or vice versa. This is a great opportunity for you to intercept that person and ensure that they become, or stay your customer.”

In terms of how often listening should be done – that depends on the nature of the queries and the motivation to be listening in the first place. In the case of a social support team, the organization should expect a fairly consistent stream of customer dialog, and should be listening ‘all the time’.

## The Listening Approach

Your social team’s listening approach will depend on the types of social listening and on the engagement tools that they have available to them. Margulies has identified two common listening approaches:

- 1)** The first scenario is based on a team that does not have any sophisticated tools available. Here, social agents manually scan identified social networking outlets one at a time. For example, an agent may have a schedule to scan for YouTube comments for an hour and then move to Facebook and scan the company page for an hour and then transition to Twitter, and so on. If you are manually listening to media outlets, sticking to a schedule is of paramount importance so that your likelihood of missing key interactions is diminished. A schedule also ensures that agents do not ‘step on each other’ and mistakenly answer a social post that is already being handled by another agent.
- 2)** The second scenario eliminates the need for a listening schedule altogether and is predicated on the use of an automated engagement platform that has two critical components: a) a broad and deep multi-data source and consolidation routine; and b) a robust agent and supervisor collaboration infrastructure. Here, agents are provided a consolidated feed of pertinent postings. This eliminates the need for agents to individually log on to disparate and multiple social data sources and networks. Instead, the system logs on – on behalf of all the agents – and the system fetches relevant posts constantly and then allows agents to filter and prioritize. In this way, social media posts are treated like any other text channel – be it email or chat.

## Customer Sentiment

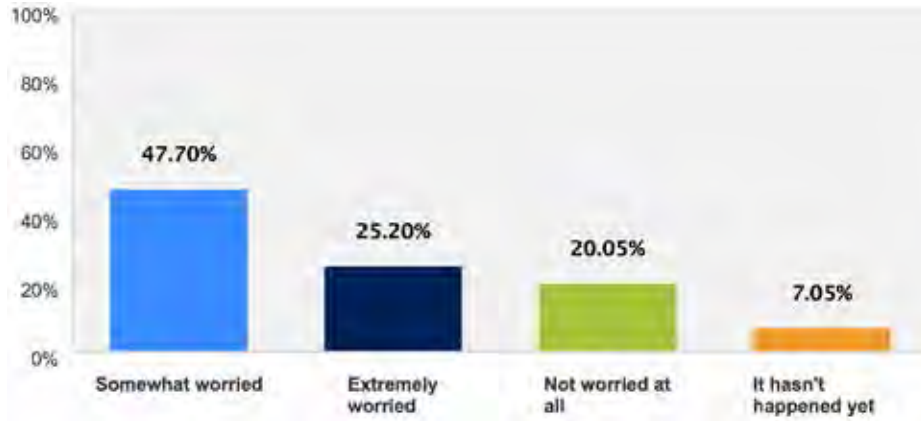
Too often organizations are fearful of what customers may say about their brand in a public forum. As Rozwell from Forrester drove home, “It’s important that organizations don’t let a fear of someone saying something bad about them stop them from participating in social media.”

“I wouldn’t say we are worried,” said one contact center VP. “I would say we are concerned. It concerns us that a customer would ever feel they need to go to social media to post a negative comment because an issue wasn’t resolved to their satisfaction. We strive to do better.”

Another contact center director had a different perspective. “We’re always worried about it!” he said. “One bad review is like throwing gas on fire! It starts up an entire chain reaction, even if a customer bad experience was a year ago. Social frustration never disappears.”

Most contact center leaders (72.9%) report being worried about negative reviews, postings or public sentiment on social media, with 47.7% saying they are somewhat worried and 25.2% being extremely so. Only 20.1% aren't worried at all and 7.1% say it's only because it hasn't happened yet.

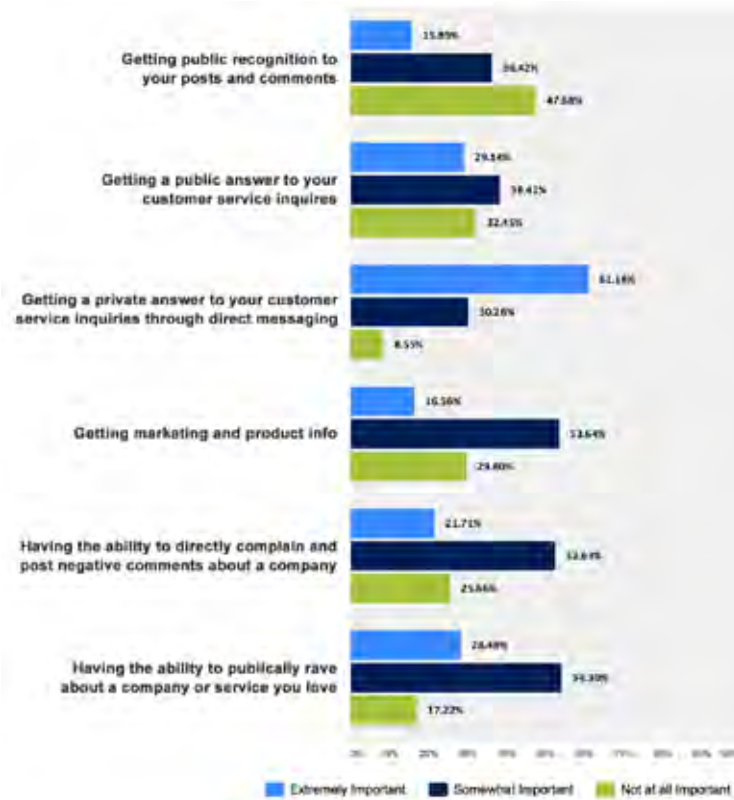
How worried is your company about receiving negative reviews, postings, or public sentiment by customers on social media?



It's absolutely worth listening to customers! Companies need to be looking at the sentiment customers are willing to share through social as an opportunity. It is much less scripted and more genuine in most cases than any other type of customer feedback. It is on the customer's terms and in their time. And chances are, there is more good being shared by customers than bad!

While 74.3% of consumers said that it was either extremely or somewhat important for them to be able to directly complain or post negative comments about a company, 82.8% said that it was likewise important for them to have the ability to publically rave about a company or service that they love.

How important are the following features of Social customer service support to you personally?



## BEST PRACTICE

## Proving the Value of Listening

By: Edwin Margulies, Vice President, Social & Mobile Product Management, Five9

Now that you've convinced your organization of the importance of social media care as a formal channel, you may be faced with a lack of listening resources. Oftentimes listening is perceived as a 'non-productive' activity and doesn't get budget for either headcount or technology. How then do you prove the ROI of listening?

The most generic way to look at ROI is by reviewing effective 'working time' of the agent. While more exact ROI calculations can be done depending on the type of initiative - a service center scored on reducing customer churn or a sales team measured on the number of closed deals - there is one generic measurement you can apply to all disciplines. That measurement is agent occupancy. Why? Because agent occupancy is a time-honored metric that most site managers and contact center professionals understand well.

Agent occupancy is typically expressed as a percentage – as in the percent of time out of a work shift that the agent is directly working on customer interactions or following-up to customer inquiries. If you account for slack time between interactions, bathroom breaks, lunch, and just plain idle time, a good agent occupancy rate is in the 60 to 70 percent range. Of course there will be debate between practitioners as to what is "good." Regardless, you want to avoid low occupancy rates because that describes a group of agents that are hardly getting any work accomplished.

Today, advanced engagement solutions can remove the need to read each and every post to determine actionability by utilizing embedded Natural Language Processing (NLP). NLP can significantly raise agent productivity by 10-15% which brings with it quantifiable ROI.

To put this into context, consider the agent effort required by doing manual listening for social engagement or using tools that do not have a spam filtering capability. In such a scenario, (which is sadly quite common amongst users of first generation listeners), agents will spend upwards of 85-95% of their time hacking their way through spam. Let your CFO know that without the proper, modern filtering technology, agents will spend 85% or more of their time looking at spam instead of engaging with and helping customers!

## Step 3: Triage Your Customer Service

Once you have the listening approach in place, social media leaders must then develop a process for deciding whether or not to respond to customer-prompted social engagements. This should also be a core component of your social care playbook as it helps agents clearly triage and prioritize customer postings.

### The Social Care Team

Through the listening approach and with the help of the playbook, a person or team will be empowered to decide whether a comment is relevant and whether the issue presented is solvable, or if there are simply elements of the engagement that should be recorded and not responded to.

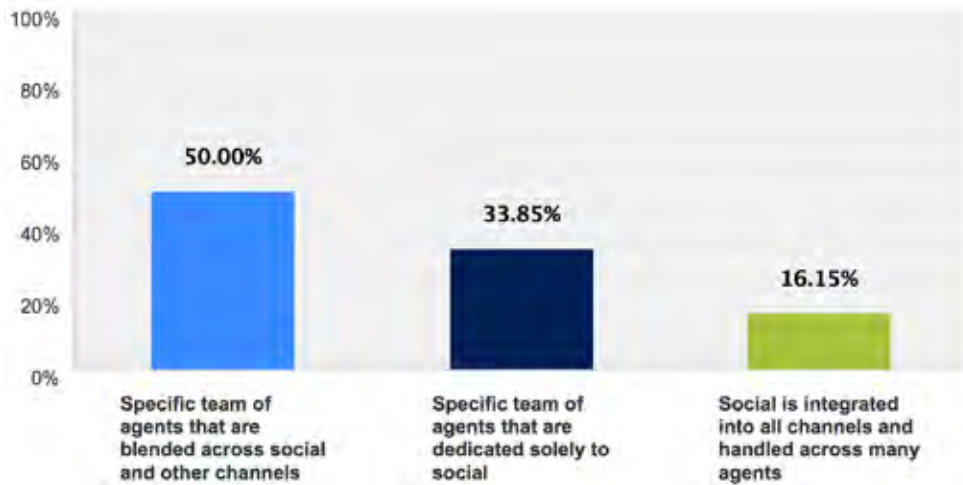
This triage approach should follow similar practices already in place with other channels. This is one reason why many organizations find it better to have the social care team located within the contact center, as the agents are already accustomed to the KPIs, escalation process, and documentation of tickets and cases.

Verrill from Software Advice highly suggests converting social messages into trouble tickets for more efficient triage. "Having the ability to convert your social customer service messages into trouble tickets allows your team to effectively handle that request just like they would issues from any other channel," she says. "This makes the process seamless because it fits into their current workflow. It's not disruptive, and as a result, their productivity isn't impacted."

In order to best control social responses, many contact centers start with a small team of agents before integrating the channel through their entire pool of agents. This is a good idea, particularly if the social playbook is still being rapidly evolved or hasn't been completely adopted yet.

Over 50% of contact centers utilize existing support agents that are part of a specific team to answer social, in addition to other channels. 33.9% have a dedicated team of agents that are dedicated solely to social, and 16.2% are at the stage where social is integrated in with all other channels and is handled across many agents.

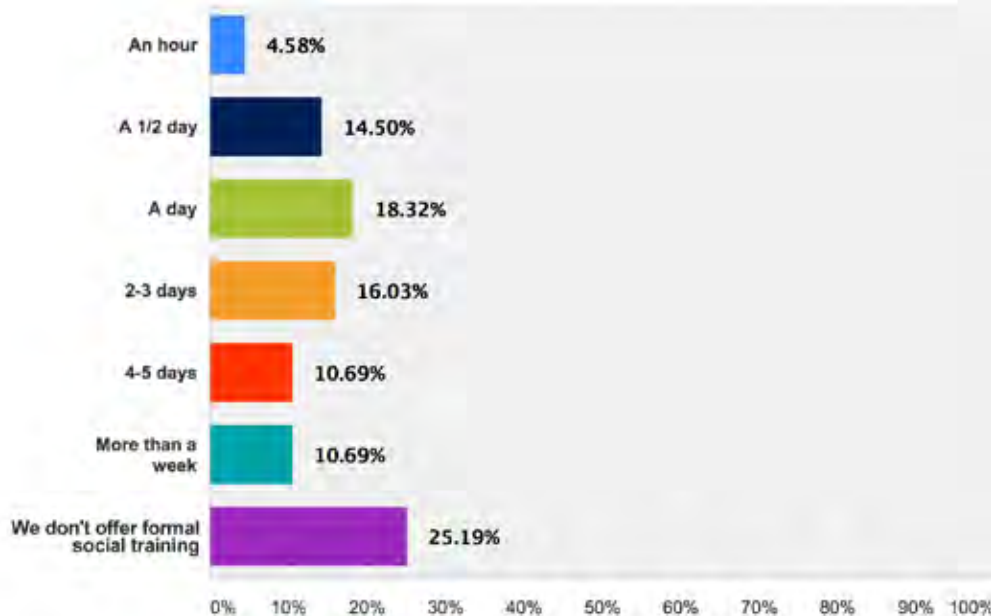
### How is your contact center social team structured?



Regardless of how large your social care team is, it is vital that proper training take place. In a survey that ICMI conducted in 2013, social media training was identified as a shortcoming by both contact centers and agents alike. It was good to see then, that more organizations are realizing the necessity of formal social media customer service training in order for proper social care triage to occur.

Only a quarter of contact centers admit that they are not providing any formal training for the social channel, while the preponderance are typically investing between a ½ day to 2-3 days of training.

### How long is your formal social media customer service training for agents?



## Is this Public or Private?

An often overlooked component of social care triage is the decision to respond publicly or privately to a customer. This is again where the social playbook comes in handy. Certainly, the response by the company is influenced by the nature of the interaction, but in general, over half (55.6%) of Facebook users expect a brand to publicly respond, while over 70% also think some responses should be handled privately.

“If my post was positive, why wouldn’t they respond publicly? It is better PR for them!” exclaimed the Contact Center Training QA Manager for a national retail bank. “On the other hand,” she goes on to say. “If it was negative- I would prefer they come back to me privately.”

Do you expect the brand to **publicly** respond back to you?

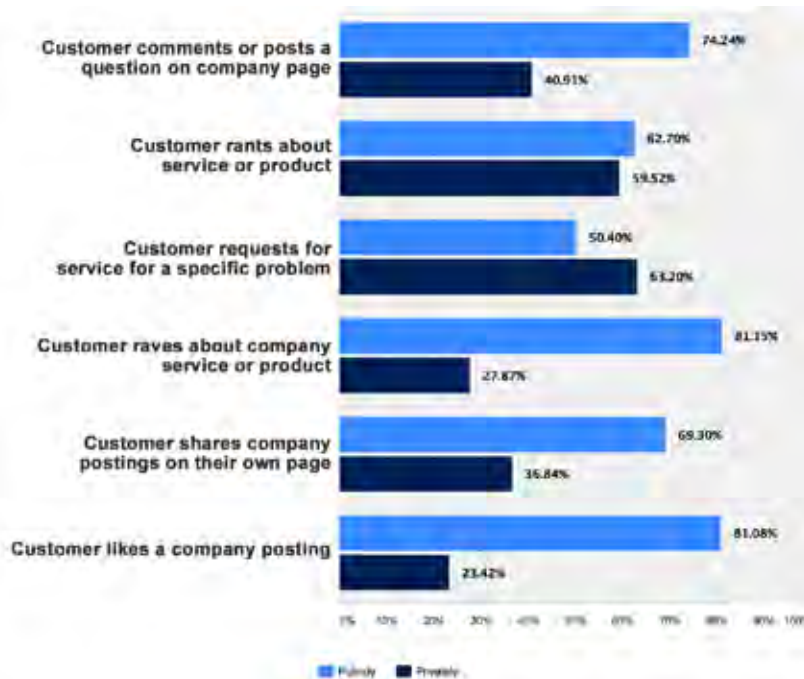
Do you expect the brand to **privately** respond back to you?



Not surprisingly, companies say that their decision to answer publicly or privately hinges on the comment or question. “It depends,” said the Sr. Contact Center Director for a telecom provider. “If it pertains to the customer’s personal account we would not respond publicly. If it was a rant we would publicly acknowledge it but then reach out to them privately.”

In many cases, brands say they respond publicly over Facebook, and most often for customer raves about the company service or product (81.2%), customer likes (81.1%), or customer comments or questions posted on the company page (74.2%). There was a greater division of opinion and approach for customer rants, customer requests for specific problems, or customer shares of a company posting.

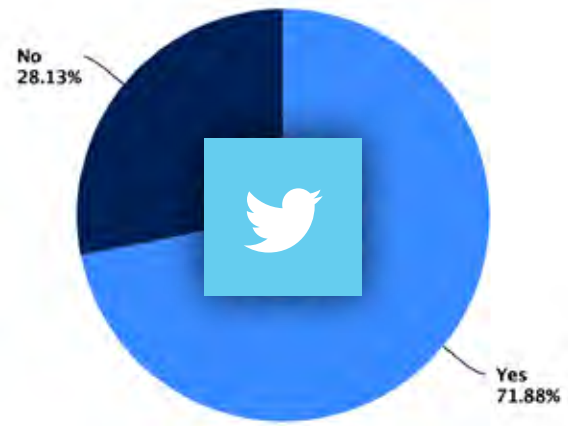
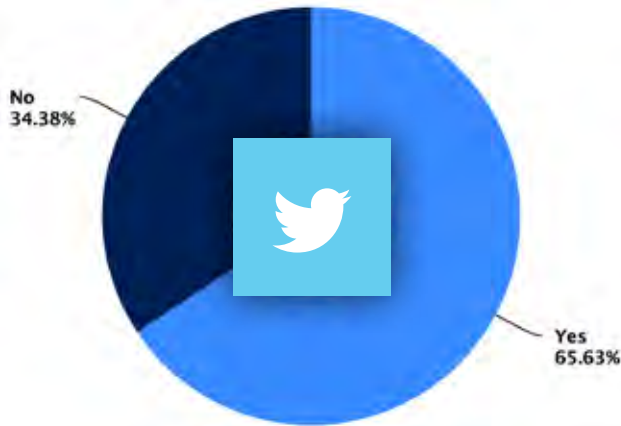
## In which Facebook interactions do you respond to the customer? Publicly or privately?



With Twitter, the expectations by the customer are similar. 65.6% expect public responses, with 71.9% anticipating private, when applicable.

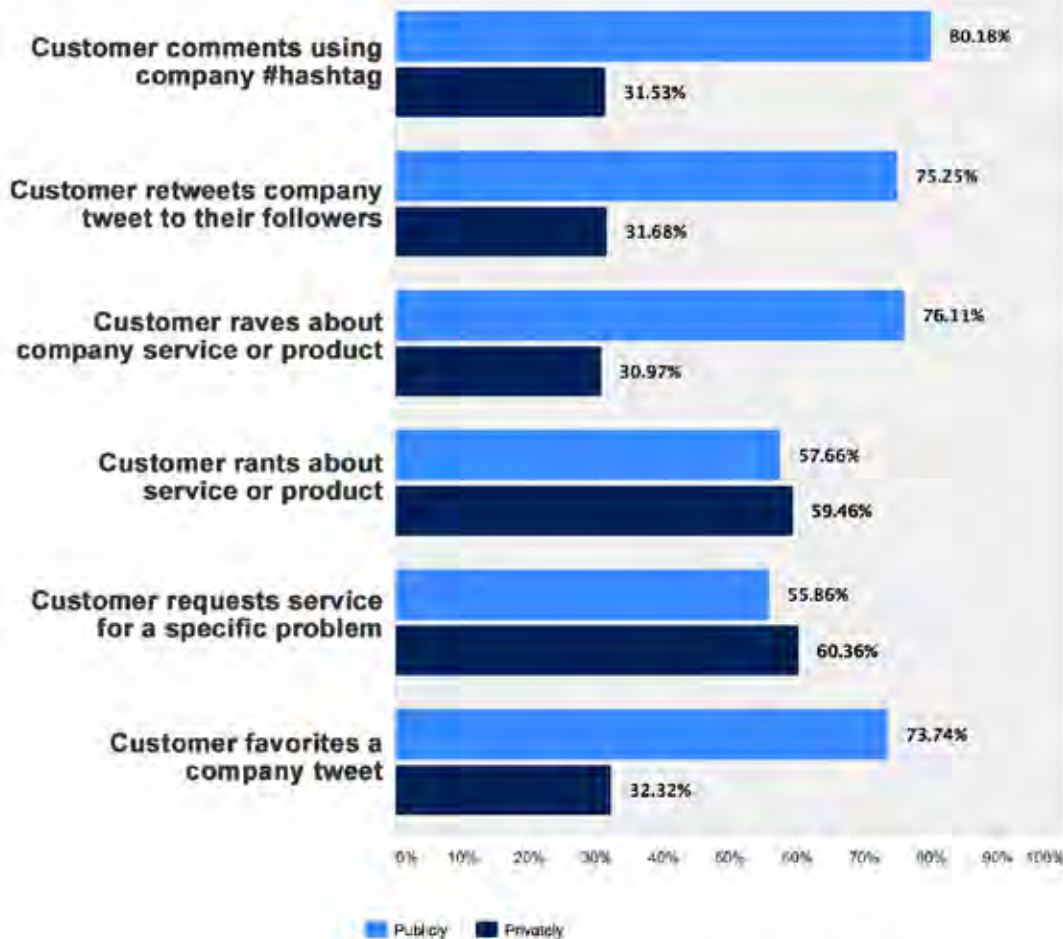
Do you expect the brand to **publicly** respond back to you?

Do you expect the brand to **privately** respond back to you?



Public Twitter responses by a brand follow a similar fashion as with Facebook. 80.2% respond publicly when a customer comments using the company hashtag, 76.1% do so when a customer raves, 75.3% when a company tweet is retweeted, and 73.7% when a company tweet is favorite. Public and private responses are more equal for customer rants or for customer service requests for specific problems.

In which Twitter interactions do you respond to the customer? Publicly or privately?





## Negative Customer Posts

It's also important to accept that it's impracticable and counterproductive in some cases to respond at all. For example, if a comment is inflammatory, it is usually best to leave it be. However, if a person is an existing customer and being harsh but legitimate, the issue must be addressed publicly, promptly and within the same platform it was made in.

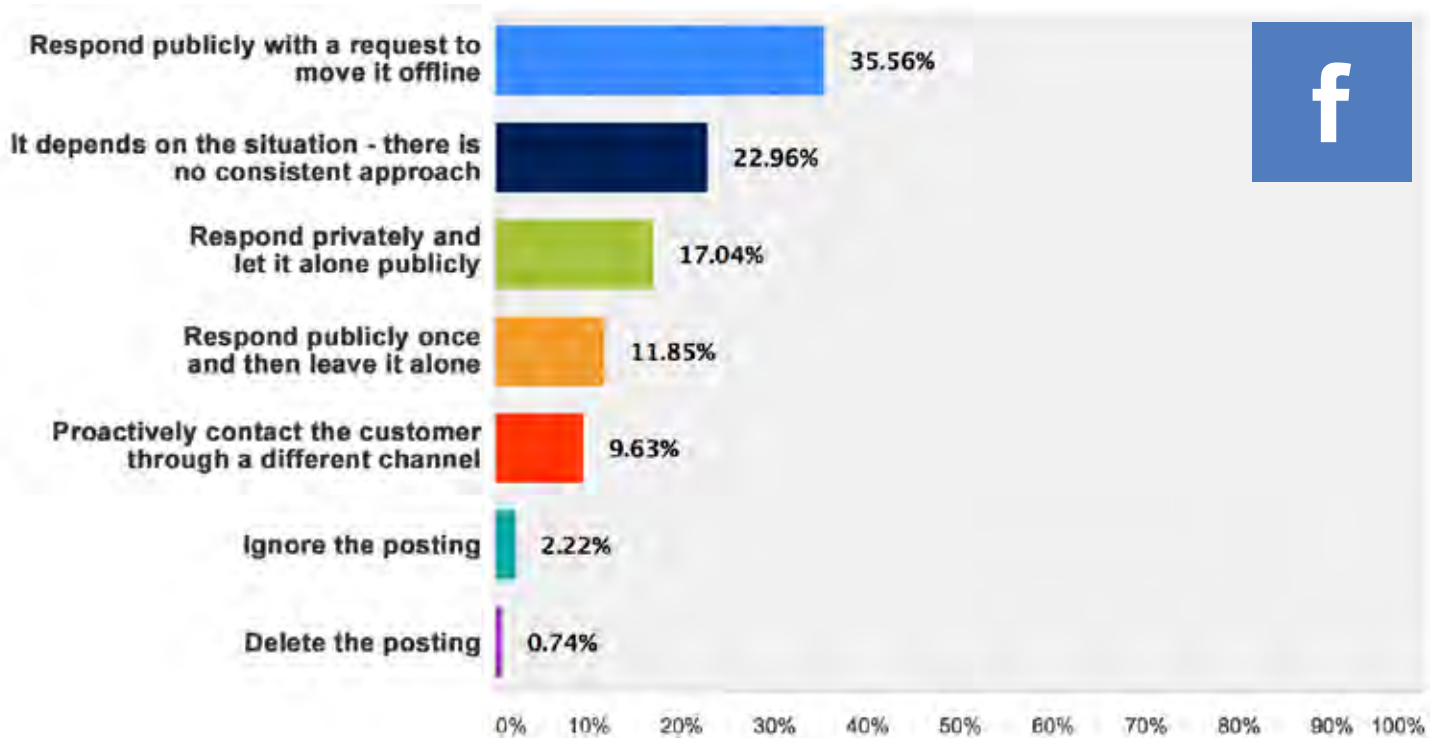
"Generally the best practice is to acknowledge the issue on social media, but to move attempts to resolve the issue offline," said Rozwell from Forrester.

With Facebook, over 35% do exactly that – the agent responds publicly with a request to move the negative interaction offline so that it can be dealt with privately. 23.0% say that it depends on the situation, as they don't have a true consistent approach for negative postings. 17.0% respond privately and leave it alone publicly, 11.9% respond once publicly and then leave the discussion alone, and 9.6% proactively reach out to the customer through a different channel.

"We follow the same practices as we do for our other public channels," said the Director of Customer Experience for a sports retailer. "We respond publicly by stating we will be contact them for more details to work on creating a fix."

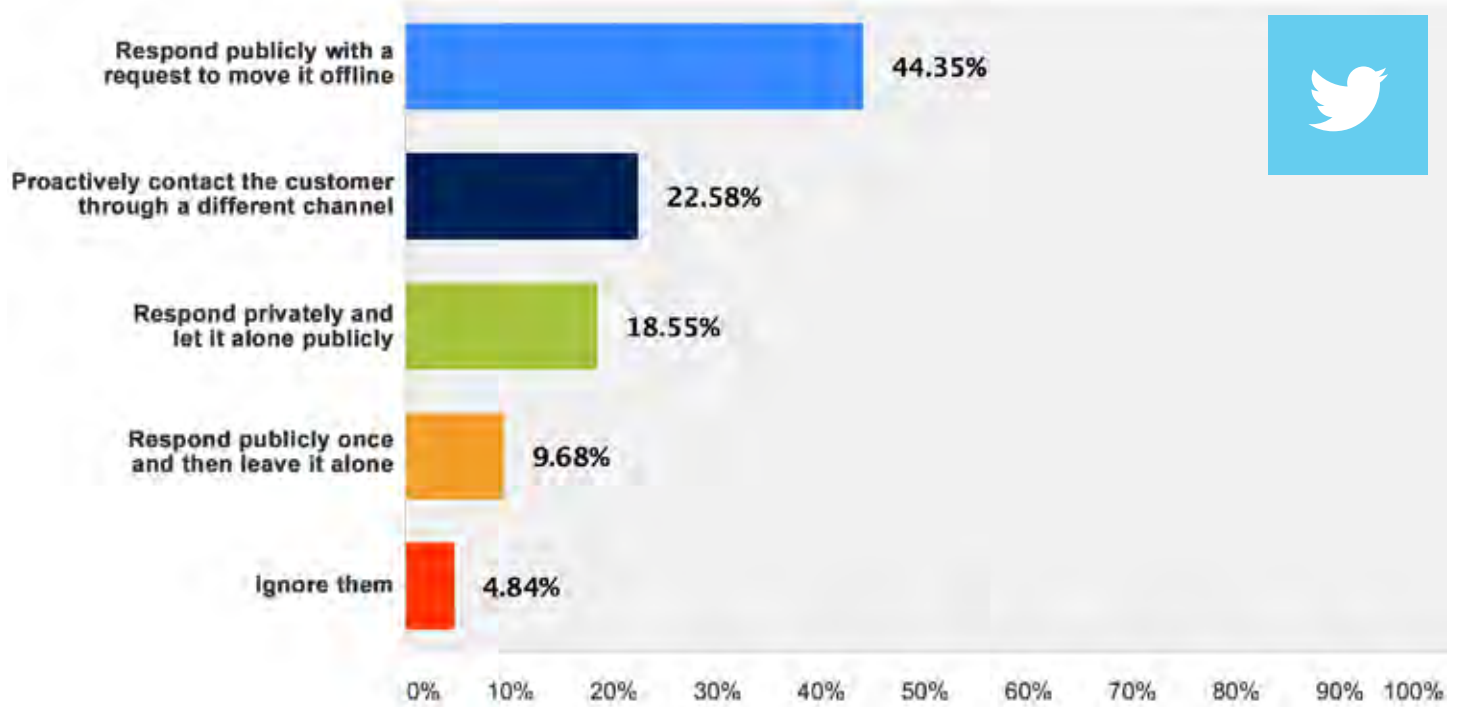
Fortunately only 2.2% elect to ignore negative postings and an even smaller number delete them (0.7%).

How do you usually respond to negative customers on Facebook?



With Twitter, 44.4% respond publicly and attempt to move the negative interaction elsewhere, while 22.6% proactively reach out to the customer through another channel. 18.6% respond privately and 9.7% respond once publicly and then leave the situation alone. Just 4.8% claim to ignore the negative customer.

How do you usually respond to negative customers on Twitter?



Verrill recommends almost always triaging privately and resolving publicly. “Make sure everyone can see you resolved your issue. In the absence of information, people will assume you haven’t handled the issue or ignored it otherwise.”

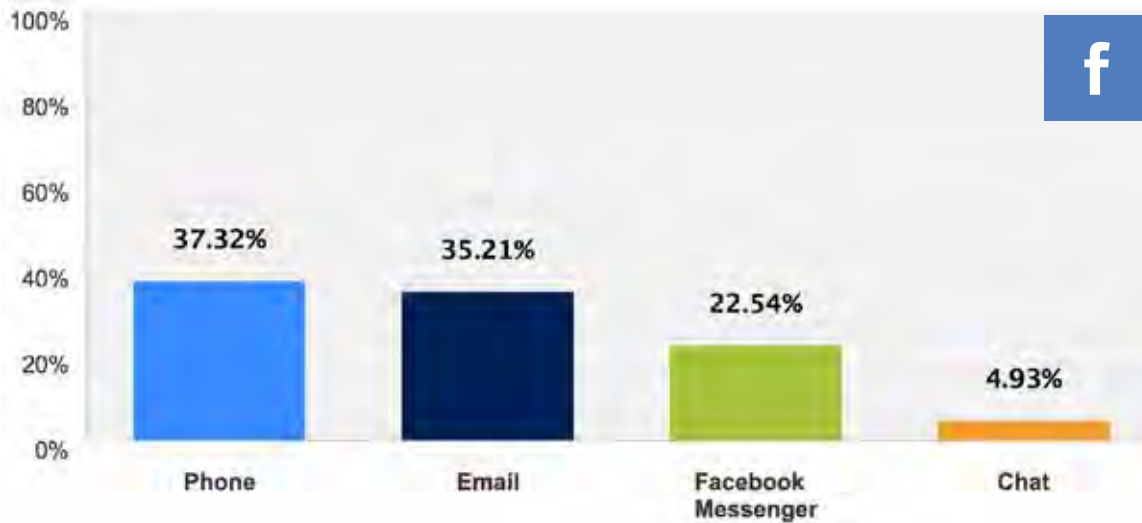
## Step 4: Respond and Follow Up

As we've discussed, every organization needs a set of rules to define who should deal with different kinds of comments, and a process for deciding how a response will be posted to social media. Then the designated social media leader or team must decide how to categorize comments. For example, some comments about a general issue may simply require monitoring and assessment before a general response is issued, whereas others may require an immediate and personal response and further monitoring.

### Where to Respond?

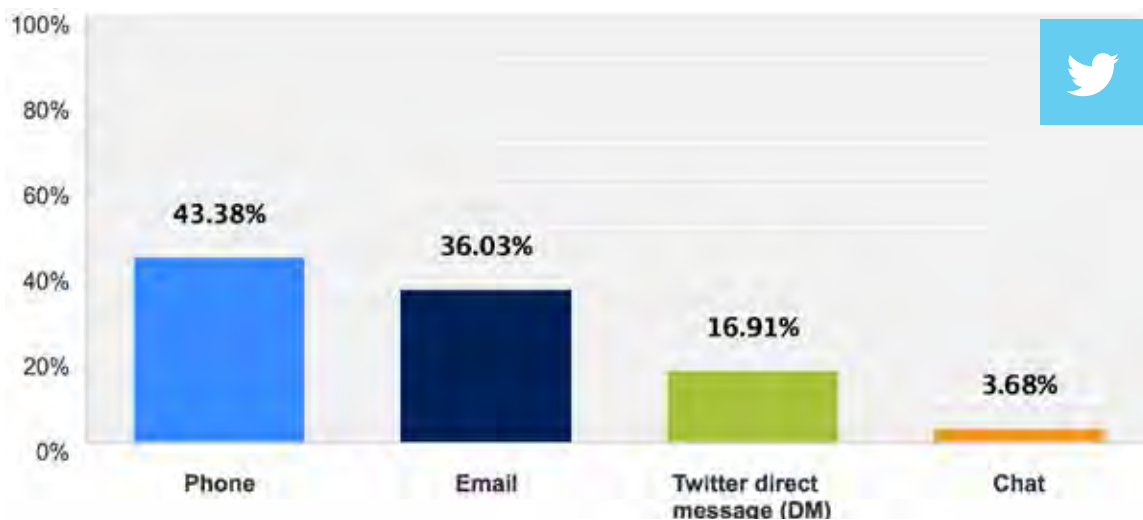
If your triaging leads to a decision to respond privately to a customer, where should you do so? Most contact centers say it depends on how much information they have on the customer or what other contact data is available to the agent. This is where an integrated CRM and multichannel strategy becomes necessary. With Facebook, 37.3% reach out through phone for private conversations, while 35.2% use email, and 22.5% use Facebook Messenger. Only 4.9% transition private Facebook interactions to chat.

Through which channel do you typically conduct private customer conversations?



For Twitter, phone (43.4%) and email (36.0%) are the channels of choice for private conversations. Direct messaging (DM) and chat are less often used.

Through which channel do you typically conduct a private conversation?

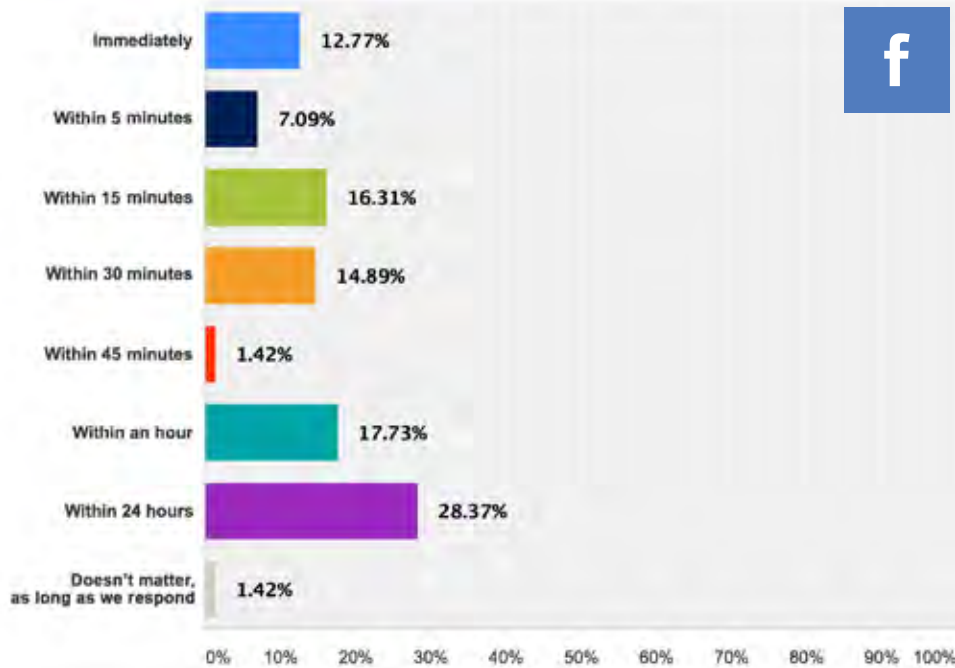


## When to Respond?

Contact center leaders appear to be more patient as consumers, and are likewise exceeding their own social care response time expectations. When we asked respondents to reply as social care users, 37.1% expect a company to respond to their Facebook posting within 24 hours, while over a quarter (25.8%) say within 15 minutes or less, and 28.1% expect an answer within 30-60 minutes. Only 9.0% said the timing was irrelevant as long as they received an answer.

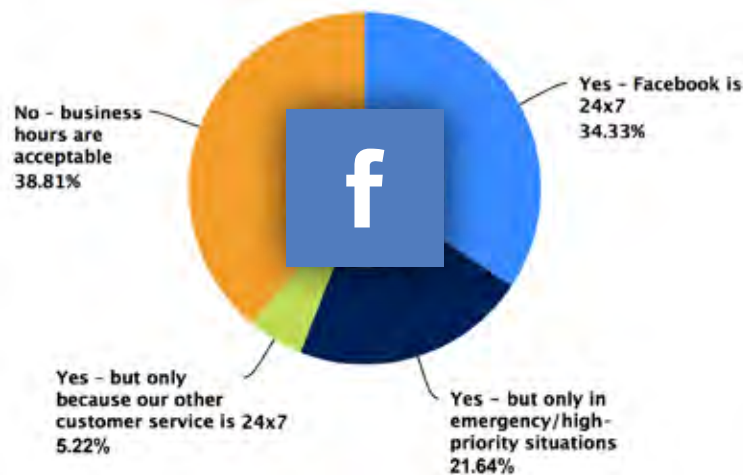
When respondents were asked how quickly their own company/contact center responds to Facebook customer inquiries, 36.2% say they respond within 15 minutes or less, 34.0% within 30-60 minutes, and 28.4% within 24 hours.

### How quickly do you respond to customer inquiries?



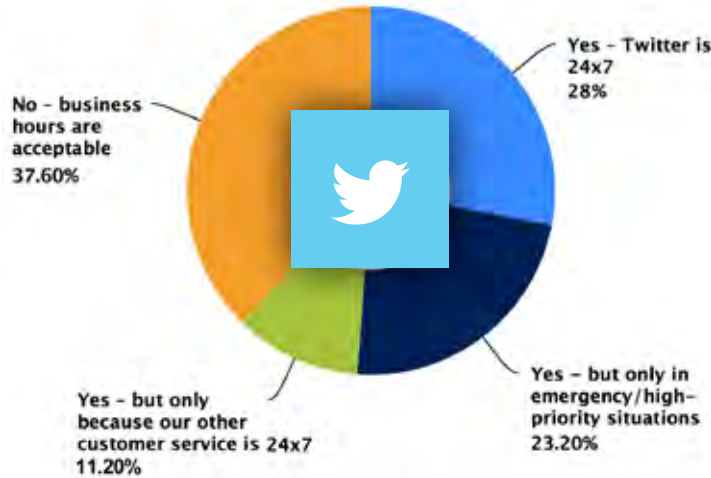
It was mentioned earlier that 81.1% of consumers felt that Facebook required social care responses on nights and weekends. Interestingly enough, only 61.2% of companies acknowledge 24 x 7 support for the platform.

### Do you respond to Facebook on nights and weekends?



Similarly, 62.4% of companies say they respond to Twitter on nights and weekends, while 87.5% of social care users expect a company's responses to be 24x7.

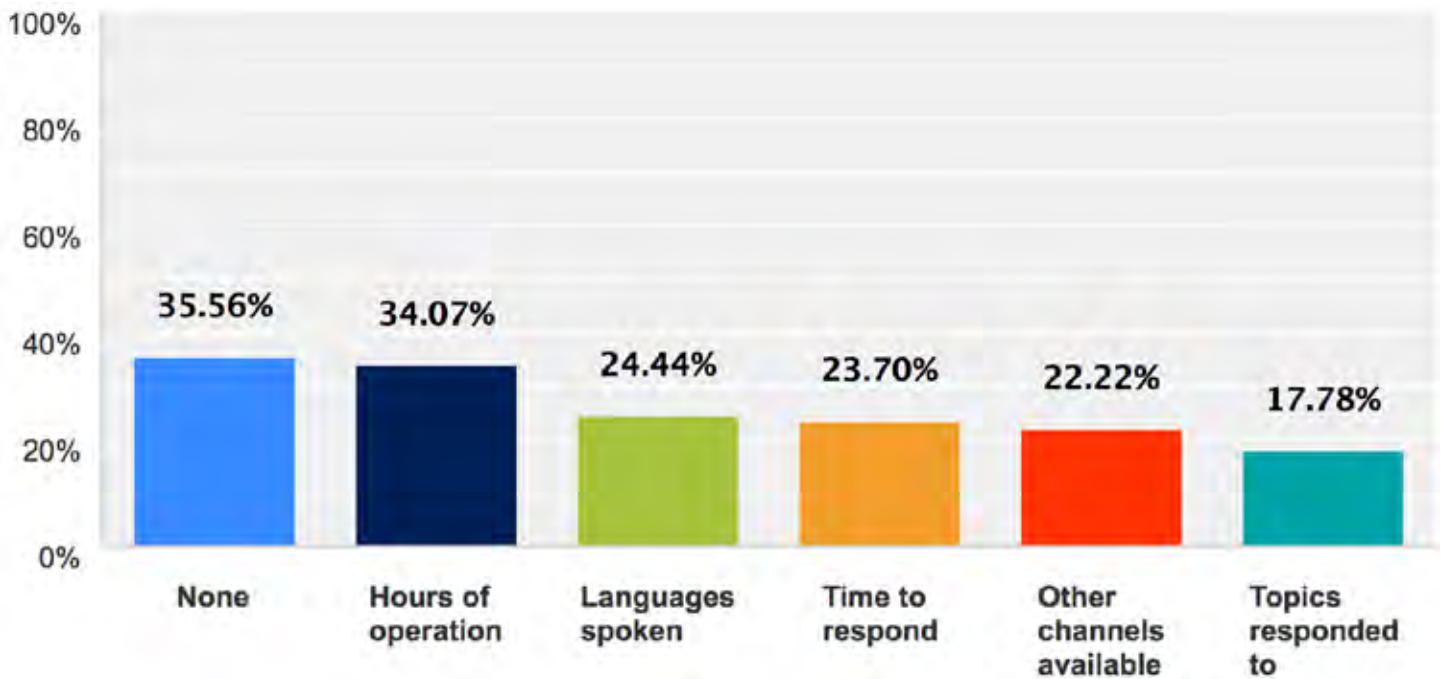
Do you respond to Twitter on nights and weekends?



As we cautioned earlier, make sure that you are upfront with your response times and hours of operation, as customers will have expectations that their questions will be answered consistently in the timeframe and in the urgency that you establish.

The most common expectations to display on your Twitter profile or Facebook page are: hours of operation (34.1%), languages spoken (24.4%), time to respond (23.7%), more applicable channels for the issue (22.2%) and the topics responded to within the social platform (17.8%).

Do you set any of the below expectations for on your Twitter profile or Facebook page?



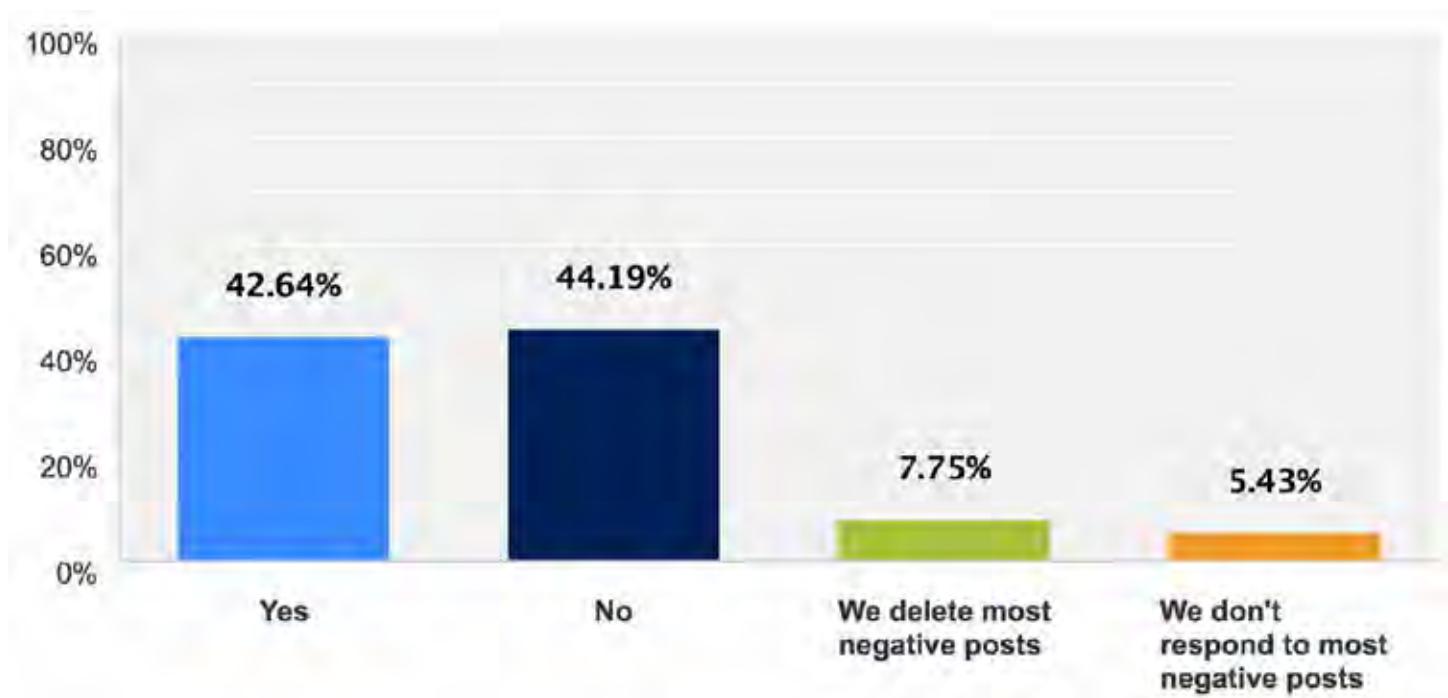
## Recommendations for Responses

Many of your standard social care responses can be housed in the playbook so that they are readily available to all agents. This will give you a consistent 'tone' and ensure that all the applicable postings receive appropriate responses.

Verrill from Software Advice has a simple recommendation for social customer service responses - be human first and foremost. "Canned responses can be useful for efficiency purposes, but they can also be really obvious and feel impersonal. You have to remember that social media is a place for socializing. You need to be human."

Margulies core piece of response advice is a little sterner. "Don't feed the trolls!" he says. This refers to the practice of avoiding public confrontation with people who only want to stir up trouble – regardless of how helpful you are trying to be. Oftentimes a troll can cause other 'innocent' customers to jump on the bandwagon and snowball a somewhat harmless issue. 42.6% of contact center leaders admit to worrying about this.

When responding to negative posts, are you afraid of other customers jumping on the bandwagon and the issue snowballing?



Fried acknowledges that trolls can be problematic, but cautions companies on labeling someone a "troll" too early.

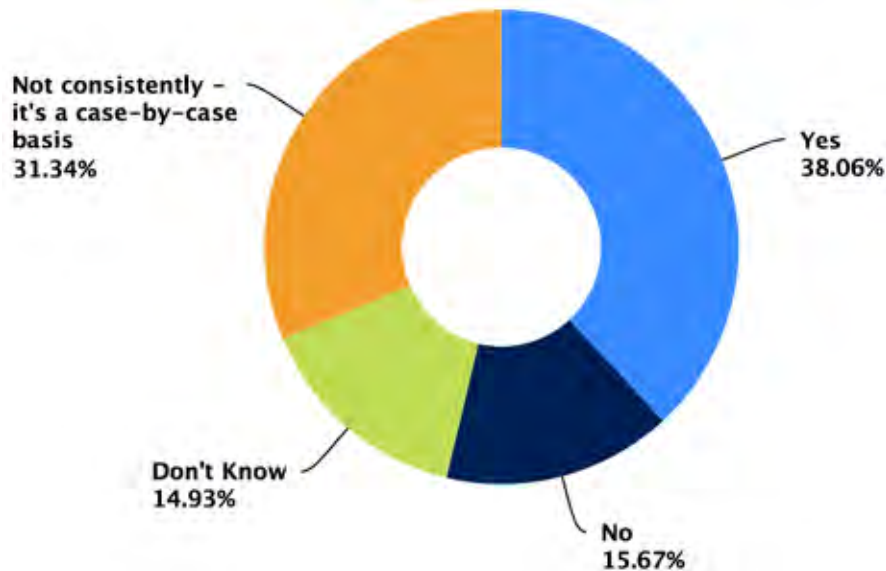
"Don't feed the trolls," is heavily dependent on whether or not your social engagement solution can help you identify who the trolls actually are. It's helpful to see their public influence score, their corporate influence score, and their prior posts about your enterprise, and then balance this with their latest social post.

It is considered a best practice to try to coax someone who is ranting about your company or product off of the public airways and into a private message channel. A typical dialog might be, "We really want to resolve your issue. I am following you, please follow me and send a direct message. I promise a quick response." If the person is sincere and really wants help, they will accept this offer. If the person is not sincere and just wants to vent – they will probably ignore your offer of help. This is when people start getting labeled as trolls.

One last key piece of advice when responding to trolls or challenging customers – make sure that the issue that started socially is closed socially as well. Even if the issue is ultimately resolved through a different channel, the rest of your customers will benefit by seeing that the loop is closed. This can be done by simply posting, "Thank you for talking to me over the phone! Glad we got things fixed!"

Closing the loop between social and other channels is still a big opportunity for most contact centers. For many, it is because of the lack of integration with their CRM systems. Right now, 38.1% report that they publicly comment on social issues that are resolved elsewhere, while an almost equal number (31.3%) say they do so inconsistently. 15.7% don't do so, and 14.9% are unsure.

If an issue that started socially is ultimately resolved through a different channel, do you go back to social and publicly comment to close the loop?



## Step 5: Monitor, Measure and Optimize

So you've started responding to social media inquiries; now what?

Many organizations that are in the first stages of a social media engagement make the mistake of treating interactions as ad hoc. Forrester research says that less than one-quarter of contact centers collect and analyze their social care data. This means that most organizations do not keep CRM records of interactions occurring on social media and do not keep social profiles for people they have engaged with.

### Social Metrics

"It's important not only to keep records of individual conversations, but constantly analyze the interactions to see what insights can be gleaned from them," said Forrester's Rozwell. "Social customer service should be monitored and measured in the same way you have KPIs for other channels," she continued.

Margulies agrees and expounds that while social KPIs are often similar to those from other channels, there are some nuances to the platforms that shouldn't be ignored. "In the social realm, there will be new metrics that agents will be measured by," he said. "For example, the percentage of social posts an agent handles that are of a negative sentiment. Clearly the more negative a social post, the more impactful it can be to a company's brand. This makes sentiment a key metric for social agent KPIs."

Other popular metrics for social measurement include:

- Customer satisfaction (CSAT) – 59.4%
- Net promoter score (NPS) – 40.6%
- Time to respond – 27.1%
- Gratitude – 29.7%

## Customer Satisfaction

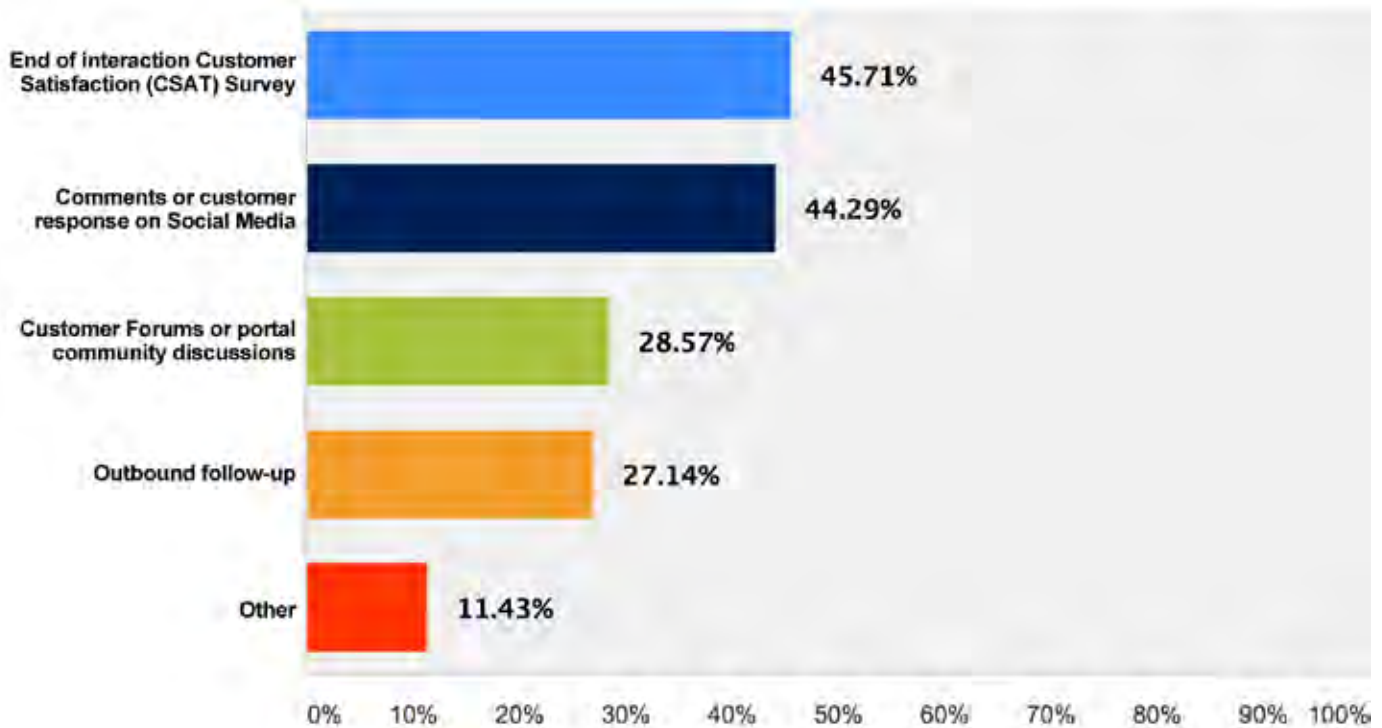
While social does lend itself to some new metrics, the standard measurement of customer satisfaction (CSAT) should not be overlooked. Almost half (48.2%) are measuring, and predominantly do so either with formal end of interaction CSAT surveys (45.7%) or by listening to commentary across social platforms.

Do you measure satisfaction with social media customer service?



Reviewing customer forums or community discussions (28.6%) and placing outbound follow-ups to customers (27.1%) are also popular forms of collecting CSAT data.

How are you currently measuring satisfaction with Social customer service?



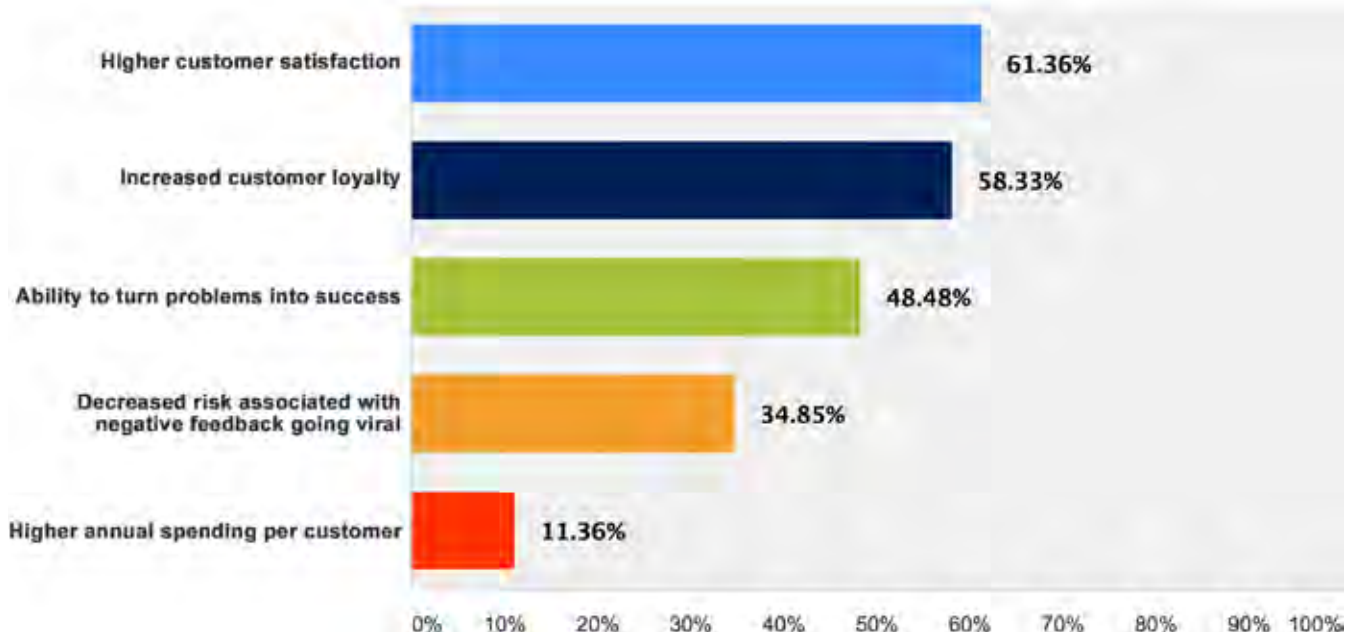


## Benefits of Social Care Optimization

Equally as important as monitoring and measuring, is the optimization of the information that is captured. For those companies already actively engaging in social customer service, the benefits of translating this valuable data into action is clear. 61.4% say they've seen higher customer satisfaction, while 48.5% report using social insight to turn problems into successes and 34.9% are able to decrease the risk associated with negative feedback going viral.

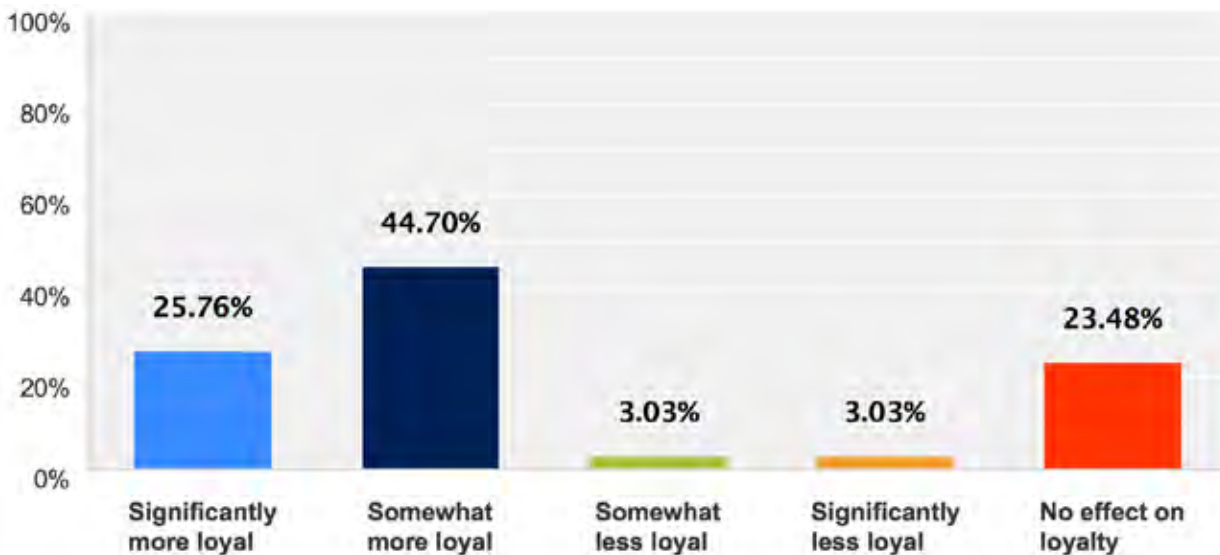
11.4% have linked social care to higher annual spending per customer and a whopping 58.3% see a connection to increased customer loyalty.

Which of the following benefits did your organization receive as a result of offering social customer care?



In terms of loyalty, over 70% say that the customers that follow them on social media are somewhat (44.7%) or significantly (25.8%) more loyal than those that do not!

In terms of loyalty, how do your customers that follow you on social media compare to those that do not?



## EXPERT SPOTLIGHT

## Dangers of Ignoring Social Customer Service

By: Sarah Stealey Reed, Content Director and Senior Analyst, ICMI

'Social Media Will Never Last!' was the subject of the email screaming in my inbox one morning. Now before I panicked that one of my favorite past-times and customer service channels was headed to extinction, I took a moment to read the diatribe. Turns out social media is indeed alive and well, and the "Your Daily Success Tip" written by the wise Dayna Steele, did an excellent job introducing me to an informative piece from Entrepreneur.com – "12 Social Media Mistakes That Entrepreneurs Make." I'd harbor an argument that these mistakes are made by entrepreneurs, corporations and individuals alike. And they are DEFINITELY made within contact centers and with many customer service organizations.

The very first discussion in the article was by Brian Solis of Altimeter Group. He says that the biggest social media mistake companies make is when the channel impact isn't understood and is therefore ignored all together. I couldn't agree more! In fact, that statement alone made me reflect back on two recent situations.

**1)** I was researching a rather expensive product and went out to social media to read reviews, get advice, and get validation that the product and company were worth the investment. I certainly found more than I expected and probably none of what the brand intended. While the company itself didn't have an active social presence, one of their very disgruntled customer service reps did. Perhaps I shouldn't have been dissuaded by the employee's Twitter rants about their customer service practices, and the product...but I was. I ended up not purchasing from them, and went merrily off to a competitor. I did though send the company an email informing them of what I found and what they were unintentionally ignoring. I am happy to say that today they DO have a social media presence and are successful supporting social care. It's great to see them sharing customer experiences and properly exploiting the brand value they want to have.

As Solis says in the Entrepreneur article, "Let's stop talking about social media and start talking about how customers can connect, learn, share. Take the time to really think about how you can use social (and mobile) to deliver value to customers and strengthen your brand promise."

**2)** I was in the process of interviewing finalists for Global Contact Center of the Year and asked a contact center director to expound on his company's social media strategy progression. He said, "We initially ignored social media care, as the value wasn't appreciated. That all changed when we found ourselves in a social media crisis."

He went on to explain that the company had an unplanned situation that resulted in a lot of customers going out to social to complain. At the time, the brand didn't even have a Twitter handle; yet they had over 300 pages of tweets from customers hashtagging their dismay with the company. The contact center quickly partnered with marketing to get control of the situation and they now have a very robust process for social media in place. He clarified that it did take them some time to perfect the strategy, as it was originally born out of duress. "The contact center took over social media during a crisis; innovation is always the worst time when it is in crisis."

In the same Entrepreneur article, Ilise Benun from Marketing-Mentor.com cautions anyone from jumping into social media without a strategy and without knowing the market first.

Brad Cleveland, the cofounder and senior advisor of ICMI echoes the need for a social care strategy in the "ICMI Guide to Serving Customers Socially" eBook. He says, "Having an official presence in key social sites such as Facebook and Twitter is only a first step. Being part of 'the conversation' – listening to customers and appropriately interacting with them where they are and as their needs dictate – is a powerful differentiator."

The bottom line is this - don't fall into the trap of ignoring social media. Don't be innovative only because of a crisis, or jump in without a plan; and don't abandon when it gets hard. As the contact center, you can take control of the social customer service strategy. In the final words of the ICMI eBook, "Social channels are providing a significant opportunity to shape services that differentiate, build the organization's brand, and, ultimately, have a positive impact on customers, employees and shareholders."

# CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL CUSTOMER CARE

Seasoned social care providers have some great advice for those still in the early stages of social customer service, or for those that have yet to begin.

**The top five extremely or somewhat challenging factors that respondents report encountering during their social care implementations are:**

- 1) Being able to provide accurate reporting and analytics based on contact center KPIs – 80.5%
- 2) The ability to listen to social activity on multiple social networks, fan pages, communities, blogs and articles – 73.6%
- 3) Not having a tight integration between social platforms and their CRM system – 72.7%
- 4) Getting real-time visibility into the agent-customer interaction for coaching – 68.3%
- 5) Being able to prioritize responses for high-priority or high-value customers – 65.6%

Other challenges that experienced social care providers want to prepare novices for include: being able to eliminate non-actionable posts from agent queues, arming agents with the right tools to quickly and efficiently solve problems, and being able to route posts to the correct agent.

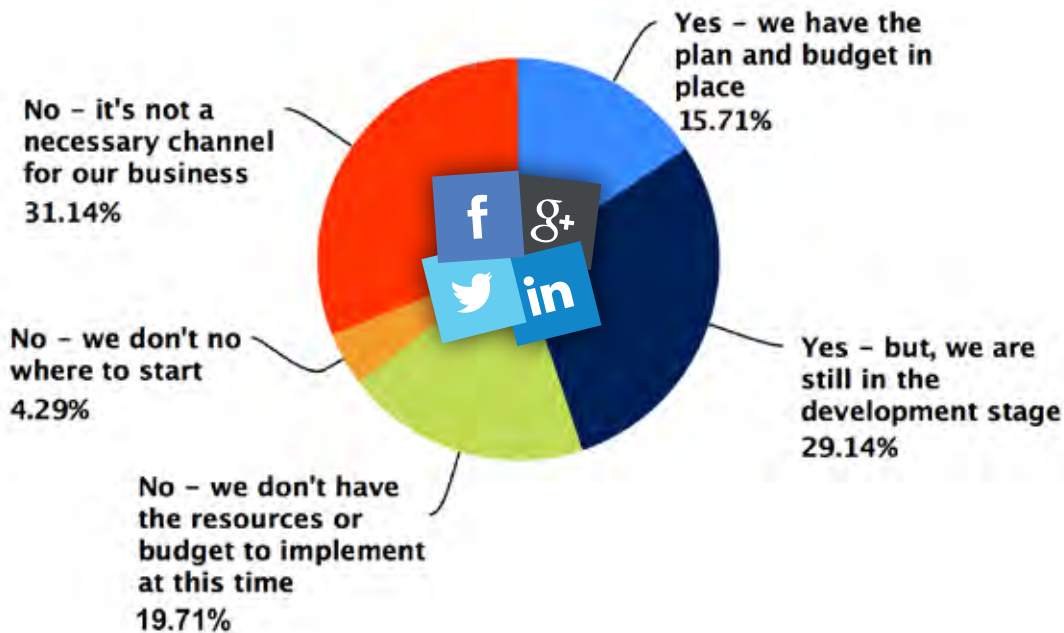
Verrill concurs with the challenge of listening. “Knowing what to listen for and having the ability to pull out the messages that make sense to respond to - these are the biggest challenges I hear companies talking about. The fear of responding incorrectly is another big challenge. There is this worry about trusting agents to be the face of their brand.”

In a January 2014 Knowledge@Wharton article, The Ignored Side of Social Media: Customer Service, Katy Phillips, a senior analyst in social communications for American Airlines feels that it is the monitoring that poses the largest challenge to the contact center. “The sheer volume of conversations out there,” as Phillips put it — to locate discussions about your brand can be daunting. “Even at American, it took us until about the middle of this year to be able to look beyond just mentions to our handle. We have a fairly large team for social customer service compared to most small businesses, and still we were only able to manage what was coming to our handle when we built the team up to 17 people.”

# CONCLUSION

Even with its challenges, social media customer care clearly represents a tremendous and growing opportunity for businesses to foster strong customer relationships. 44.8% of those not currently supporting social are either in the planning stage (15.7%) or in the process of development (29.1%). An additional 24.0% see the value but are unable to secure resources or budget (19.7%) or simply don't know where to start (4.3%). 31.1% say social is not a necessary channel for their business.

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



"We're ready!" said the senior VP of contact centers for a healthcare provider. "We see this as a way of providing an overall better experience for customers. It's time for us to be where our customers, and candidly, our staff are."

Other contact center leaders echo that mentality. When asked why their company was motivated to implement social as a customer service channel, four of the top five responses were directly related to the customer experience.

## Motivators to Implement Social Care:

- 1) To increase customer loyalty – 48.0%
- 2) To improve customer satisfaction – 38.8%
- 3) To give customers a channel they are asking for – 34.8%
- 4) To provide a better customer experience and keep them from switching channels – 34.8%
- 5) To lower customer care costs – 29.5%

Social engagement for customer care will accelerate in 2014 and 2015 because of the forward thinking and leadership of some of the top brands. As senior leaders integrate social channels into their contact centers and position them alongside the traditional channels, the 'normalization' of social care will intrinsically occur.

"This year is the turning point!" said Margulies. "Contact centers are setting up social measurements, incentives and best practices. The tools are available, and the trailblazers have set the stage for the next wave of practitioners to naturally embrace social as a normal customer care channel."

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

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## 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 FIVE9

Five9 is a pioneer and leading provider of cloud contact center software, bringing the power of the cloud to thousands of customers worldwide and facilitating more than three billion customer interactions annually. With extensive expertise, technology, and an ecosystem of partners, Five9 helps businesses take advantage of secure, reliable, scalable cloud contact center software to create exceptional customer experiences, increase agent productivity and deliver tangible business results.

