

The State of AI in the Contact Center

icmi



An **ICMI** Executive Summary

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents a snapshot of what contact center practitioners are thinking about when it comes to AI-powered technology and its impact on their work.

Among the questions we explore are contact center leaders' overall business and customer experience priorities and which of those priorities are targets for current and longer term application of AI. We also asked about contact center leaders' top concerns and expectations as AI is embedded ever more tightly into contact center operations and how processes and organizational structures are evolving in response.

We wanted to find out if contact center leaders are using AI in the contact center now and, if not, when they expect to begin using it, where they are placing their bets, and who is making decisions about investing in and applying this technology.

We asked our ICMI community to identify the pain points they hope to address using AI. They told us which departments are involved in assessing AI and making investment decisions, where AI investments are being targeted in the near term, where they expect AI solutions to be most effective over time. They shared their people, process, and technology concerns about and hopes for using AI-powered tools to delight their customers.

This report provides a snapshot in time as AI-powered contact center tools emerge from their early, experimental status and take an increasingly central role across all areas of contact center operations.

AI IN THE CONTACT CENTER: FOCUSING FIRST ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

We started with a very basic question to the ICMI community of contact center pros: what are the top priorities among organizations that are currently using AI-powered tools in their contact centers or planning to invest in those tools over the next 12-18 months? When we drilled down, our survey respondents' top five business priorities for AI in the contact center were:

1. Improving the customer experience **(75%)**
2. Improving agent systems, tools, and resources **(53%)**
3. Optimizing workforce operations/productivity **(52%)**
4. Reducing total cost of service **(52%)**
5. Increasing first contact resolution **(45%)**

Opinions and perspectives varied among contact centers of various sizes, but the biggest variations appear where respondents said they have a dedicated team in place to assess AI and make investment decisions. Those organizations' priorities and investment plans differ from their peers in several areas. Size also had an impact, as organizations with larger contact center budgets and workforces focus more investment and effort on workforce management, in line with our expectations.

While we found those minor differences among organizations of different sizes and with different contact center budgets, the top priority across the board was to improve the customer experience, with updating technology and reducing costs running closely at second and third.

A significant minority put improving the agent experience at the top of their priority lists. It's important to keep in mind that investments aimed at improving customers' experience with the contact center and modernizing the technology stack should positively impact agents' day-to-day work experience, as well.

Money, Money, Money

Reducing cost is a driver for all automation efforts. Overall, our respondents said that they spend 25-30% of total contact center budget on technology, with agent development and training and hiring expenses making up a little over 30% of the remaining spend. Hiring and training supervisors and managers consumes about 17% of budget, regardless of the number of agents employed or the size of the overall budget, with the rest taken up by incentives for agents and supervisors.

Contact centers with more than 100 seats rated technology improvements a higher priority than their peers, while those spending more than \$1 million per year (about 60% of our respondents' organizations) and those with more than 500 agent positions (about 40%) were slightly more likely to prioritize cost savings as a top reason to invest in AI.

Those rankings stayed about the same when we asked where organizations are targeting current and planned AI investments.

What Else Is on Contact Center Leaders' Minds?

Rounding out the top ten business priorities, respondents are looking to increase training effectiveness, improve employee engagement, improve or enhance decision-making capabilities, expand capacity (presumably without expanding payrolls), and improving security. Only 16% said they are prioritizing moving legacy, on-premises contact center systems into the cloud.

That likely reflects the success of Contact Center as a Solution (CCaaS) platforms in displacing legacy systems over the last several years. That's been in response to COVID, to an increasingly distributed workforce, and to an ongoing trend, especially in publicly traded enterprises, to shift the cost of running technology from a capital expenditure to an operational expenditure. (At the same time, according to Informa Tech's Omdia industry analysis group, "[reducing OpEx landed in third as a top business priority, with nearly 16% of respondents.](#)").

Still, as AI drives up storage demands and computing requirements, the shrinking group

WHEN IT COMES TO LEVERAGING GENERATIVE AI FOR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES, IT IS IMPORTANT TO WALK BEFORE YOU RUN. SOME ORGANIZATIONS MIGHT HAVE THE TIME, MONEY, AND RESOURCES TO CREATE THEIR OWN LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS, APPROPRIATE GUARDRAILS, AND DATA CURATION STRATEGIES TO HANDLE PUBLICLY SHARED DATA. HOWEVER, THESE TECHNOLOGICALLY SOPHISTICATED COMPANIES ARE IN THE MINORITY. TODAY, MOST SMALL TO MIDSIZE ENTERPRISES WOULD BE BETTER OFF LEVERAGING GENERATIVE AI SOLUTIONS THAT CULL INFORMATION FROM APPROVED DOMAIN-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE FOUND WITHIN THEIR ORGANIZATION'S KNOWLEDGE BASES AND CUSTOMER CONVERSATIONS.

- DAVID MYRON, OMDIA MARKET LANDSCAPE
EVOLVING THE CONTACT CENTER IN 2023 AND BEYOND

of companies willing and able to host their own contact center technology will get even smaller. But that does not mean they can safely give up control over what data feeds these tools and who controls the models they feed.

Compliance was at the bottom of the targets for AI enhancement, perhaps reflecting the mix of departments currently involved in assessing AI solutions and making investment decisions. Among our survey respondents, operations was the part of the organization most commonly identified as driving AI decision making (see our further analysis below), followed by contact center leadership and HR. Legal was dead last across the board.

Compliance should become more of a priority as legislators and regulators rush to craft or adapt regulations around all aspects of AI. Any company selling AI-powered tools into the market should be able to discuss these issues in detail and in the context of specific contact center-related and broader organizational [compliance risks](#).

WHO IS MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT AI IN THE CONTACT CENTER?

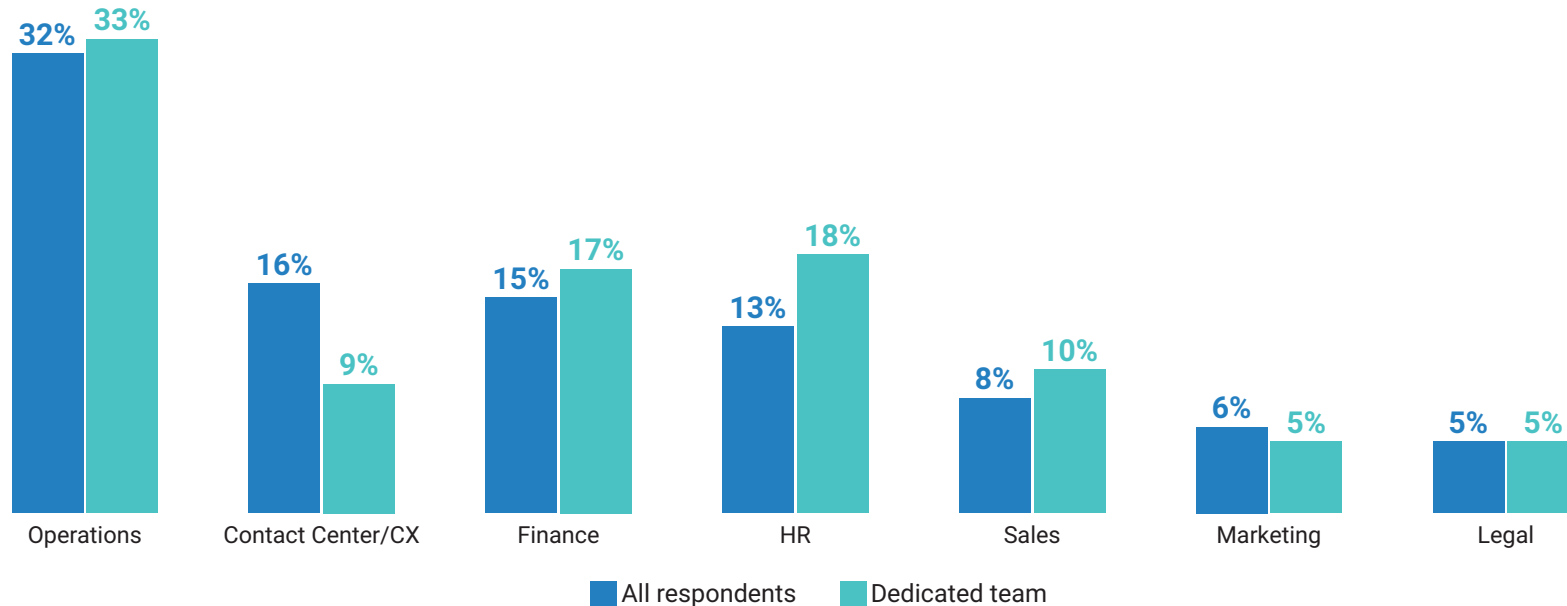
There may be organizations that do not involve IT in assessing and directing investments in AI, but we aren't aware of any. It's safe to assume that 100% of organizations supporting contact centers include IT leadership and their teams in assessing advanced technology (IT service management platforms are a good example). That said, IT is often tasked with deploying technology that they do not have the final say in selecting, even though they will do the heavy lifting as it's selected, deployed, and in place.

Beyond IT and the executive team, operations is the group most frequently represented on the AI planning teams at our respondents' organizations, followed by contact center/CX, and finance.

We strongly recommend that contact center leadership in every organization push hard, now, to secure a seat at the AI decision-making table. Contact center people, process, and technology are already among the most deeply impacted by the possibilities and challenges of AI-powered tools. As AI-powered tools continue to proliferate, contact centers' contributions to the success (and decision-making processes) of every other part of the organization will keep increasing.

That means that contact center leaders must quickly develop a clear, business outcome-focused understanding of AI. They, or an experienced member of their team, should be studying the issues raised by developments like ChatGPT and other highly publicized generative AI tools. They need to be prepared to explain to C-level decision makers how these and future AI-powered tools apply (or don't) to specific contact center use cases and to detail and differentiate the various benefits and trade-offs involved in buying and applying them.

Which departments participate in assessing AI and deciding on investments?



COMPANIES THAT HAVE MUSTERED OR DEVELOPED AI LITERACY THINK THAT THE OVERALL APPROACHABILITY OF GENERATIVE AI HAS IMPROVED SENIOR MANAGEMENT UNDERSTANDING, PROBABLY BECAUSE THEY HAD TRUSTED SUBORDINATES WHO COULD EXPLAIN THINGS. WHERE THE IN-HOUSE SKILLS WERE LIMITED, MANAGEMENT FEARS RAN RAMPANT AND IMPACTED AI PROJECTS OVERALL.

- TOM NOLLE, [ADOVER INTEL](#)

Add to those considerations another critical AI success factor: tearing down siloes. Unless leaders from every department are actively involved in setting AI priorities and guiding deployment once investments are decided, siloed data will remain isolated and obscured. And, in the case of many contact centers, those dark data repositories are full of unstructured data, which is immensely valuable for feeding AI learning models and making decisions based on the insights and analysis that come out of those models. As contact center leaders know all too well, the volume of and poor accessibility to that data makes it incredibly hard to analyze and use for decision support without using AI-powered tools.

WHAT ARE CONTACT CENTERS' GOALS FOR AI?

Data and data analysis drive ever-accelerating decision making in modern organizations. That's a big part of its promised value. We asked where AI-enabled insights appear most valuable at this point in the market's development. Most respondents hope to use the insights these tools can surface to power up unique customer experiences, listing improving personalization as their top expectation. That's followed by staff development.

Contact center leaders urgently seek to unlock insights currently obscured in masses of unstructured data. Regulatory and compliance issues are at the bottom in this category, as well. It is important to remember that many concerns that fall out of the top 10 choices we gave in our survey are nonetheless critical considerations for contact center planners to understand and address.

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What are your top expectations for insights enabled by AI in your contact center?

1. Improve personalization
2. Improve workforce management (staff development)
3. Unlock insights from unstructured customer data
4. Scale to be able to analyze more customer interactions
5. Decision intelligence/decision assistance
6. Improve decision making
7. Identify/optimize investments
8. Improve workforce management (forecasting)
9. Accelerate decision making
10. Meet regulatory or compliance requirements



When asked to prioritize customer experience initiatives, our respondents were more focused on helping agents directly, with real-time agent assistance atop the list. Here again, specific organizational imperatives will determine the order in which these improvements should and will be addressed. Contact center leaders need to understand that all of these target outcomes feed each other and cannot be ignored. The important decisions will be around how to prioritize and time the investments necessary to accomplish those goals.

What top customer experience initiatives do you hope to address using AI?

1. Real-time agent assistance
2. Proactive customer issue resolutions
3. Continuous improvement of customer-facing processes
4. Analyzing agent performance in real time
5. Auto summarization of customer interactions
6. Analyzing customer interactions in real time
7. Integrating critical systems to enable seamless information flow
8. Continuous improvement of customer-facing services/products
9. Enhancing personalization
10. Automating customer journey mapping

Once those priorities are agreed upon, contact center planners should ask vendors to explain how their tools will address their specific business challenges. That will provide insight into how closely a vendor has studied and understood a center's unique people, process, and technology realities and how they add value to the organization.

Alignment between contact center leaders and vendors on those questions is critical in determining how quickly and how well AI investments will pay off.

Contact centers are also looking to add/enhance closely tied capabilities such as continuous analysis of agent performance and automatically capturing and summarizing customer interactions as they happen. Those improvements will help optimize returns on agents' time and effort. If they are going to avoid spending significantly more to add agent seats and hire and train new agents to fill them, organizations need these investments to quickly enable agents to deliver improved customer experiences.

The ability to recognize and resolve customer issues proactively, ideally before the customer is even aware of a problem, and support for continuous process improvement round out the top requirements cited by the ICMI community.

Proactivity and process retooling are both a great fit for AI-powered tools that operate on real-time data capture, pattern recognition, and massive processing power. That will allow contact centers to, for example, correlate changing volume, reason for contact, calendar, and other variables with observed and projected positive and negative outcomes.

One thing that all respondents put at the bottom of the priority list: establishing a C-suite role dedicated to implementing AI in customer experience. This may be because AI, like all contact center tools, is a means to reach the goal of improving CX, rather than a standalone function that warrants dedicated C-suite guidance.



HOW IS AI CHANGING INVESTMENT PLANS?

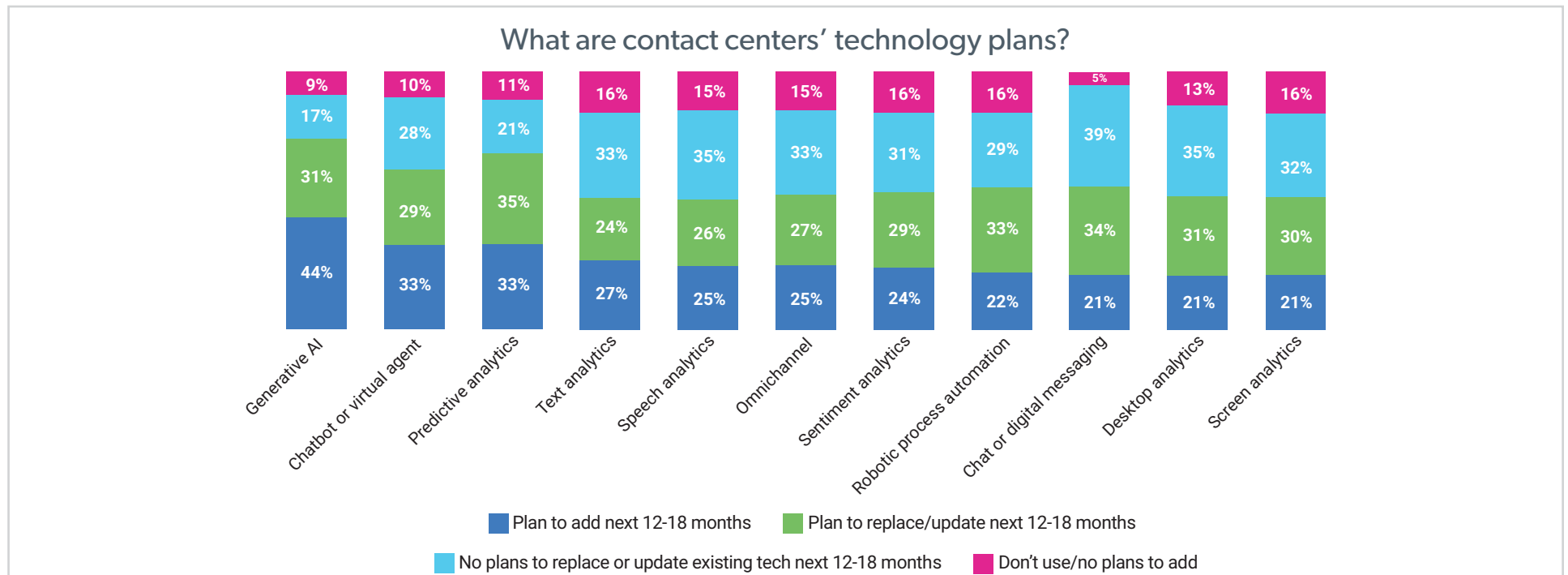
The accelerating technology shift is highlighted in responses to our question about current and planned contact center technology investments. Exactly half of the 22 contact center technology types that our respondents plan to add near-term are AI-powered. (Note that 12-18 months may soon be seen as a long-term planning horizon, given the pace of development in these tools.) Those eleven tools are all at the top of tech investment plans.

Unsurprisingly, generative AI tops our respondents' investment plans. In less than a year since OpenAI and its ChatGPT generative AI technology exploded into public consciousness, every week has brought a new development in the field and the market.

It will be some time before we understand the top applications for generative AI in the contact center, but those applications will impact almost every contact center process to some degree from now on.

In terms of real spending, however, most of the sought-after functionality enabled by generative AI, and other AI-powered tools, is going to be purchased as part of an integrated solution. They will be included in tech purchases, leases, and outsourcing solution contracts, whether or not contact center leaders are actually shopping for those features at the time of contract.

AI is already integrated into a growing number of (most, soon all) contact center solutions and is ready to deliver advanced functionality through those platforms almost immediately. Now is the time for contact centers to examine exactly what they are already paying for. Ask your vendors where AI is already powering their tools and how that is being applied to your operations today.



Good decisions about where to apply the power of AI will be critical to maximizing ROI on both existing and emerging contact center technology. As AI-powered functionality and capability are baked into platforms and CCaaS solutions, maximizing the return or minimizing the sunk costs of already-committed, pre-AI technology investments is going to be challenging but necessary. Poorly informed decisions will cost organizations heavily in time, money, and talent, setting them back as their peers and competitors ride the AI accelerator.

Good decisions around investment in and application of AI-powered contact center platforms and associated data and analysis capabilities will help empower and engage contact center teams now and into the future.

Because of the challenges outdated technology creates for agents and customers,



contact center leaders must address tech debt and new tech investment wisely and quickly. That requires building a fast but accurate catalog of the mission-critical processes supported by installed tech and how those processes and systems depend on and feed each other (note: this is not a list of installed software, hardware, and networks).

Only when those organization-specific process value chains are understood and agreed upon will contact center planners be ready to ask vendors for thoughtful guidance on exactly how AI improves and expands the value created by their teams.

What Contact Centers Planners Need to Ask Their Teams – and Their Vendors

A few of the many questions contact center leaders should be asking right now:

- How will AI investments most improve agent experience and their ability to do a great job?
- Where will these tools enable immediate and ongoing value creation across customer experience and engagement by improving agent experience and their ability to do a great job?
- What criteria will vendors use to design an AI-powered solution to address our specific priorities?
- Is the contact center already paying for AI-enabled capabilities that can be leveraged quickly to address goals and challenges?
- How much new work and money is required to replicate and improve on the outcomes agents produce using existing tools?
- How much training is needed to maximize the value of the tools you are proposing we pay you for?
- How will data produced by existing systems be identified, collected, cleaned up, fed into these tools, shared, and used?
- Who owns the data that AI-powered systems collect and produce, including the learning models? Who decides what is done with that data and those models as they are refined and expanded?
- Are the costs of all of this included in vendors' initial and ongoing investment estimates or does that come out of the contact center's operating budget?

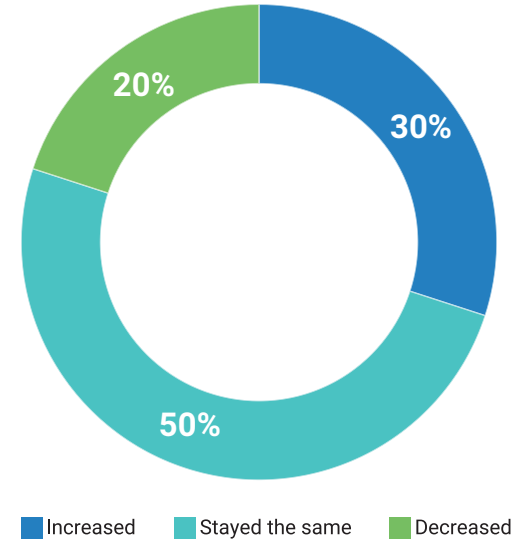
None of those questions can be answered accurately until contact center leadership and organizational decision makers agree on where their tech stack stands today, which desired outcome(s) are top priority, and how quickly they must be realized.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR AI IN THE CONTACT CENTER?

But as organizations research, select and deploy AI-powered tools, what results are they pursuing? So far, the top application for AI investments has been identifying, hiring, and retaining quality employees, a major cost for all call centers, which deal with very high turnover rates.

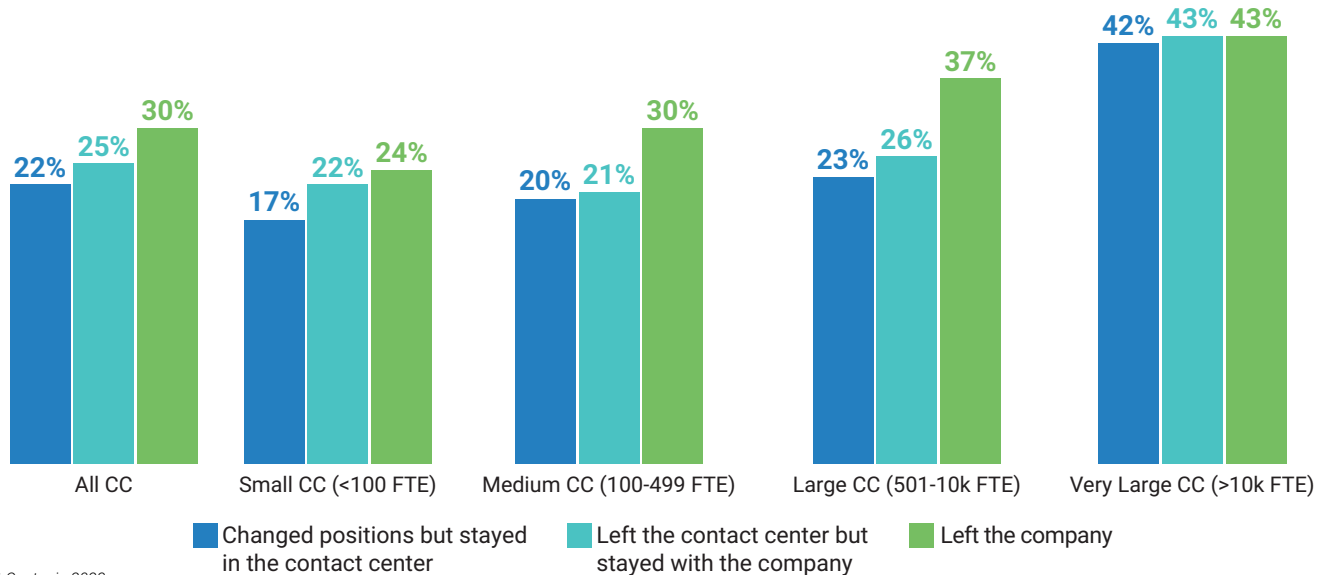
But as organizations assess and rationalize their tech investments to eliminate duplication and improve financial and operational efficiencies, spending on point solutions will shift to increasingly powerful (and more broadly applied) contact center platforms.

How did turnover change overall from 2022 - 2023?



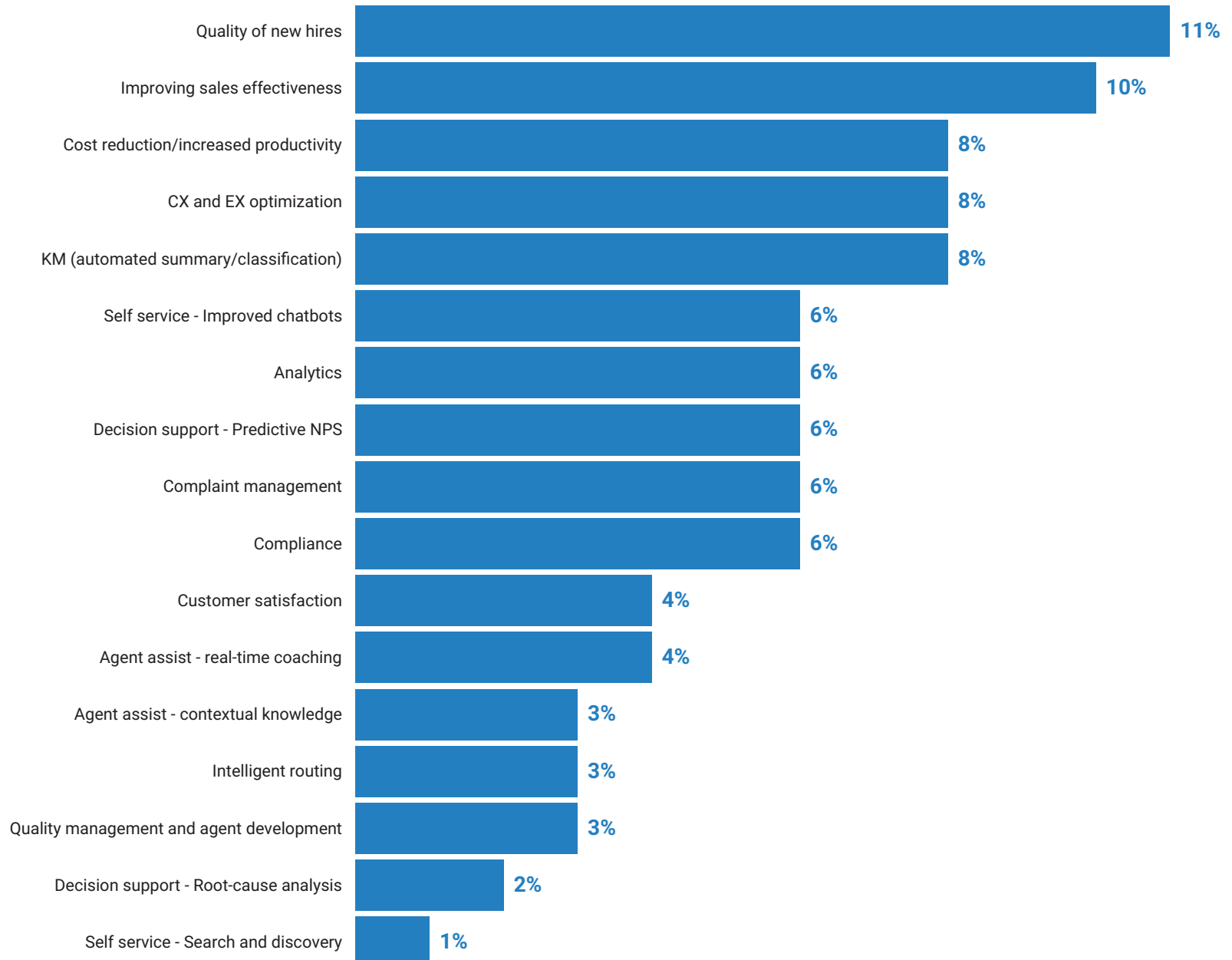
Source: ICMI, The State of the Contact Center in 2023

How did the size of the contact center affect overall turnover from 2022 - 2023?



Source: ICMI, The State of the Contact Center in 2023

Where have AI investments been made to date?



Important Lessons from Past AI Failures

CX leaders should think hard about the lessons they might take from understanding how some earlier-generation AI tools have failed to deliver desired outcomes.

Where have those failures showed up? Primarily in the low-quality, high-friction experience they deliver to the employees and customers using them and in poor decisions based on inadequate, unfocused data and analysis capabilities. Whether your customer is an applicant, a consumer, or internal/external business partner, a poor first interaction with your contact center and its technology creates a lasting, often unchangeable impression of your organization and its brand.

As AI-powered solutions are selected and developed, we recommend that C-level executive and contact center leadership teams experience and test those interactions personally before they are unleashed on customers.

Even more critically, ask the folks who must wield these tools every day. As tools are assessed, proposed, and deployed, ask for their impressions, unfilled needs, complaints, and suggestions. Otherwise, agents and customers perform QA after big investments are committed.

The customers probably just walk away, unhappy and uninterested in providing any insight into what isn't working. Contact center teams are going to be frustrated and defeated, especially if you haven't asked them for input and insight. You'll need AI-powered hiring, talent development, quality management, workforce management and planning, and many more tools to address the resulting attrition spike.

Unleashing the Power of Real-Time Agent Assist

In addition to agent-focused experience management tools that help capture how employees feel about the tools and processes they use and how to improve them, leading AI-powered contact center solutions include tools that capture and analyze agent behaviors and assist them by making immediate suggestions for the next best action based on various aspects of an in-progress interaction, delivering knowledge articles, and capturing and summarizing what the agent and customer said and did in real time. Find out if those tools are already integrated into the tools your team already uses or if there is a firm roadmap to add them.

Those tools help hiring managers and learning and development (L&D) specialists within the contact center team and at the organizational level to better align prospective hires' skills, personalities, and other characteristics with what's required for agents to be successful in your specific contact center and in addressing the full spectrum of your customers' issues.

They should also be helping contact center leadership to identify and share best practices for ongoing training and development (of both human employees and AI models) with new hires and promotions. Where insights can add value elsewhere across the organization, contact center leaders should share them and help their non-contact center counterparts understand how contact center solution data and analysis can be used to improve the services their teams deliver.



LOOKING FORWARD

Looking forward, contact center investment plans support some optimism about changing priorities and who is making decisions about how to use these powerful tools. Improving the hiring process remains priority #1, which, as noted, makes sense given the very high turnover in contact centers, the cost of replacing and training even entry-level agents, and the critical importance of employee experience once they are on the job.

For contact centers, the quality and fit of new hires ties directly to how new agents perceive the quality of the employee experience. Multiple independent studies over many years make it clear: organizations that invest in quality employee experience outperform their peers and the market as a whole.

Drilling Down: How Do Contact Center Tech Choices Help Improve Sales Effectiveness?

Improving sales effectiveness remains high on the list of targets for the ICMI community's future AI investments, as well, and it's important to recognize what our contact center respondents are looking to accomplish there.

Modern contact center platforms and solutions include powerful sales-enablement tools. But it is important to remember that, even outside of contact centers where agents have a direct sales or upsell responsibility, "improving sales effectiveness" covers many important sales-supporting priorities that modern contact center solutions are expected to address. Those include improving communications, capturing, analyzing, and sharing data and analysis, and helping to break down siloes between the contact center and the sales department.

For the reasons discussed throughout this analysis, data analytics, CX and EX optimization/improvement, and customer satisfaction all moved higher as priorities when we asked where AI investments will be focused over the next 12-18 months.

We'll keep saying it: Contact center leaders need to understand which of these capabilities are included in existing tech or in new solutions they are considering (and they likely are or soon will be included in essentially every contact center solution). They need to ask vendors which features will cost extra to turn on or upgrade over time.

It is important to again emphasize that these tools will be integrated into many, if not all, future solution purchases and upgrades. Few, if any, contact center leaders will be writing RFPs for point solutions that address the specific, more granular capabilities represented above.

The Top Challenge in Uncovering Data Insights Is the Data Itself

For AI (or any modern business tool) to unlock the value promised for the contact center, it needs data, data, and more data. Our respondents are well aware of the challenges they already face uncovering data insights, even before AI powers more operations.

Respondents listed the number of data sources, the amount of data, and the variety of data types as their top three challenges to uncovering insights they can use to transform their operations.

1. Number of data sources
2. Amount of data
3. Variety of data types
4. Quality of data
5. Siloed data

Contact center tech vendors are building and refining AI-driven models that use the masses of contact center data their solutions capture and analyze to support specific use cases across the breadth of contact center applications. Many of those models are pre-packaged and trained using proprietary repositories of data from vendors' entire installed base, rather than operating exclusively on individual customers' real-time interaction data.

Using those ready-to-use data sets and the models they feed reduces complexity compared to deploying, training, and managing custom-built AI models. But it is important to keep in mind that some level of customization may be required to achieve, for example, advanced personalization capabilities, a top goal for contact centers serving more bespoke and high-touch brands. Those organizations should set up dedicated AI planning and implementation teams that can work with vendors and consultants to further refine these models.

Determining the quality of data, another top concern, requires contact centers to first identify and locate the right data, either before or while data hygiene and applicability are investigated. Finding data that has been piling up, segregated behind siloed

decision processes, often for decades, is a massive job for even small organizations. The sheer horsepower of AI systems makes them very good at these jobs, assuming effective and well-targeted guidance from leaders across all departments/functions and silo-busting mandates from the top.

Planners are understandably exhausted by the time they stop to consider what they marked as lower priority but still-critical, challenges.

1. Data security
2. Identifying relevant data
3. Velocity of decision making
4. Regulatory or compliance issues
5. Velocity of new data creation and capture

Like most transformational projects, the contact center is rightly concerned with addressing the people, policy, and technology issues that will determine the success of AI investments and implementations.

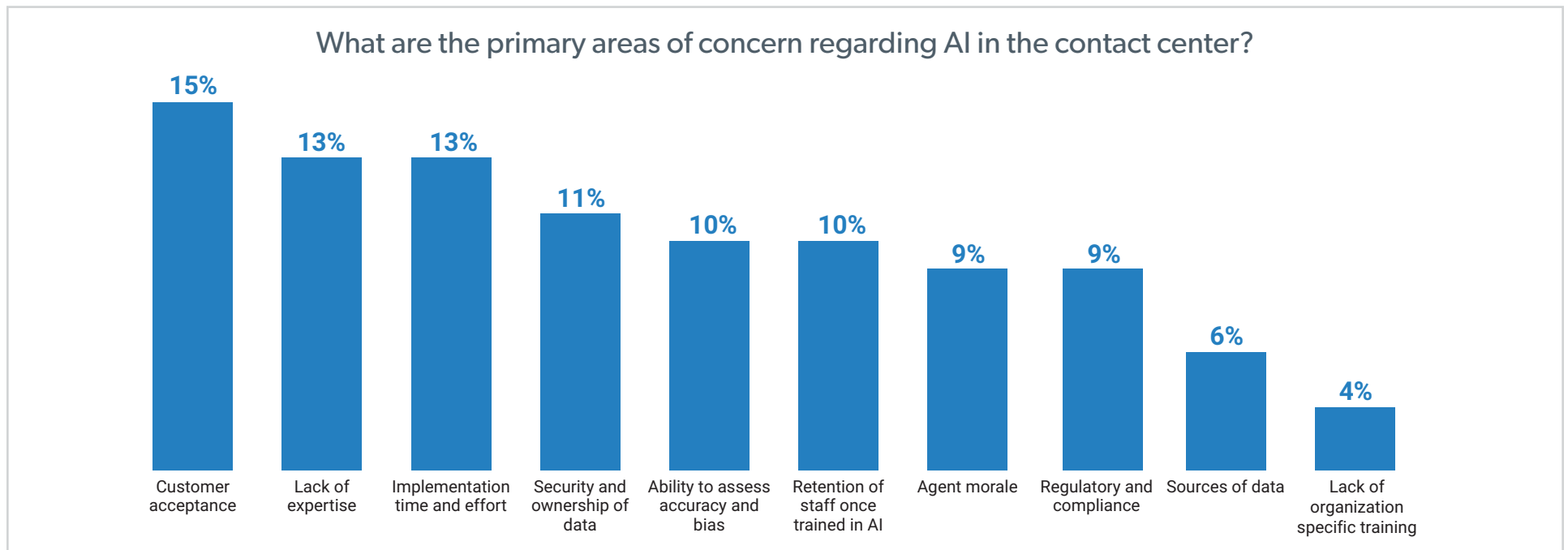
The Top Areas of Concern Around Using AI in the Contact Center

The customer-facing nature of contact centers is clear in our respondents' top areas of concern around the expanding use of AI.

Our community worries about customer acceptance of AI-powered interactions (for example, interacting with AI-powered chatbots). If those interactions are not effective in solving customer issues and making them feel good about your brand, acceptance of AI will be an ongoing problem for contact centers.

On the one hand, contact centers and vendors can only do so much to move the needle in terms of acceptance of AI. Customers' (and contact center teams') perception of AI is evolving just as quickly as the tech itself and news and opinions around the technology are confusing to many.

In the specific case of contact centers, however, customer acceptance is something AI tools can actually help improve. AI tools, specifically generative AI-powered tools, are very good at the previously difficult-to-impossible tasks of listening to, analyzing, and



making suggestions/taking actions during and after every single customer interaction. When those capabilities are closely aligned with a contact center's unique business focus and service quality goals, these systems can quickly improve the overall level of customer experience and eliminate customers concerns (or even recognition) about whether they are interacting with a human or AI agent.

Lack of expertise is a concern, along with related concerns around how much time and effort are going to be required to prepare for and implement AI-powered solutions. Other concerns – data security and ownership, assessing if AI-powered models are delivering accurate analysis, appropriate responses, and bias-free results, retaining and motivating agents as AI is introduced, and regulatory and compliance issues – carry about the same weight for our respondents.

Retention of staff after training in AI is not a top concern for most of our respondents, but it rises all the way to concern #2 for contact centers employing more than 500 agents. That may be because contact centers with that many agents are typically attached to larger organizations with the resources to provide ongoing training. Other very large contact centers, including outsourcers, compete primarily on scale and pricing. Focus on tight margins often means that agents receive less training and have less chance of advancing internally if they do learn new skills.

Workers who are trained in working effectively with AI-powered tools will clearly be more valuable to their current employers and to peers and competitors. Leveraging AI-powered training and coaching capabilities will allow larger centers to deliver better training without exploding training and development budgets. That's critical because no contact center will succeed without training supervisors and managers to effectively leverage AI-enabled teams and training agents to work effectively with purpose-built AI tools. Confidence about using these tools will improve employees' engagement and job satisfaction, helping

reduce turnover among newly skilled agents. The communication and collaboration capabilities built into AI-powered contact center solutions are additional, powerful, tools for organizations committed to hanging on to newly skilled teams.

Of course, keeping agents onboard once trained will also depend on cultural and other factors outside of the scope of contact center technology.

Do Contact Center AI Models Need Highly Specific Data?

Contrary to our expectations, our respondents were not very concerned about a lack of industry- or organization-specific training data. We expect that to quickly become more important to the contact center community. Based on our conversations across multiple verticals, more mature organizations already recognize how much the immediate and long-term value of AI models depends on access to industry, company, and contact center-specific data sets.

While the vast corpus of data underlying these models is incredibly powerful (and unique to each and every vendor's value proposition), contact center- and organization-specific data needs to be part of the mix to maximize that value. Ask vendors to explain what data they are leveraging to build and evolve their AI models and the benefits and limitations of their chosen data sets and methods.

Concerns around data ownership, control, and security also need to be elevated, given the potential scale of exposure as [the amount, value, and sensitivity of data used in training models](#) continues growing at exponential rates. Recent regulatory work in the EU, U.S., Canada and elsewhere will determine much of what contact centers and their parent organizations must do to address these concerns but, here again, each contact center's business is unique, as are the needs and requirements of their specific customers.



A SNAPSHOT TAKEN AS AI EXPLODES INTO THE CONTACT CENTER

Artificial intelligence technology has been making steady inroads into the contact center for close to a decade, most commonly in the form of interactive voice response systems and chatbots. Outside of those relatively primitive early applications, however, AI-powered tools were typically used by specialists performing data analytics or, less commonly, by contact center managers making volume and staffing forecasts. While critical to workforce optimization and the contact center's ability to handle contact volume, those earlier tools did not always have an immediate impact on agents' day-to-day work processes.

Today, it's urgently important to include input from contact center teams as AI strategies come together. No one better understands the unique value delivered by contact center agents and tools as they interact with customers and business partners. Those teams will be even more deeply impacted as these tools evolve and multiply at incredible speed. The challenge now is to assess and prioritize how AI can help contact center agents, managers, and directors deliver maximum value to all of their stakeholders.

This report provides a snapshot of how contact center professionals in the ICMI community understand the challenges and opportunities of AI today and how they hope to use these powerful tools to improve the customer and agent experience going forward. The results of our survey make it clear that, while there are some relatively minor differences across different sizes of contact centers, contact center leaders share many of the same expectations and concerns.

Organizations are looking to these tools to take over some of the work that has been handled by agents since the first customer called with their first complaint or question. The implications go far beyond enabling cost savings as AI drives seismic changes in how contact centers recruit, train, retain, and apply the skills of their workforces.

AI is being embedded deeply into every tool and process agents depend upon to learn and succeed at their jobs and, in many cases, is making suggestions and delivering

knowledge management resources to those agents in real time. They're being used to design and deliver evaluation and training programs, including determining how agents are trained to use AI effectively. And they're raising complex and highly sensitive questions around what data is used to train AI-powered tools, who owns that data, how it will be used to deliver services to customers, and how it will be protected.

The organizations that do the very hard work required to understand and answer those questions are likely to outpace their peers in the short term and thrive in the long term. Those that delay the necessary investments of time, executive attention, and money will find it difficult to deliver the quality of service their customers expect and are unlikely to survive.

How AI is used in contact centers is changing at incredible speed. Those changes require contact center leaders to understand how these tools can help optimize agent experience, in addition to optimizing productivity and costs. Our research for this and many other reports makes it clear that excellent customer experiences – and all the attendant reputation, loyalty, and revenue benefits those experiences unlock – are the result of appropriate and well-timed investments in agent experience.

From this point forward, a majority of those investments will be focused on understanding, selecting, and managing AI-enabled capabilities. Otherwise, when customer service suffers because technology isn't fit for contact center-specific purpose, whole organizations are going to lose competitive ground, some of them losing it forever.





We are all striving to be better. Whether it's being better people, better leaders, or better organizations, improvement and advancement is at the heart of our daily intentions.

For the contact center, this mission of constant improvement is fundamental to every interaction. We need to meet the expectations of our customers in ways that improve their satisfaction and brand loyalty. We need to improve employee engagement as we build their skills, knowledge, and experience in ways that grow their own loyalty and improve retention. We need to improve our organization's operational efficiencies in ways that drive revenue and improve the bottom line.

No one understands the contact center's focus on improvement like ICMI does. We champion contact centers and their people, and our mission is to make both better every day. Through training, consulting, content and events, we unite the community and empower contact centers to serve their customers better, engage their employees more, and improve the customer experience.

ICMI is part of Informa PLC, a leading B2B services group and the largest B2B events organizer in the world. To learn more and for the latest news and information, visit [ICMI.com](https://www.icmi.com) and tech.informa.com.



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