PHONEXIA

The Biggest Problems of Inbound Call Centers

And How to Solve Them with Modern Technology

Contents

Introduction

The world has seen huge shifts in recent years. We have all moved rapidly into massive digitalization, and it seems that these **changes will be permanent**[1].

As a direct consequence, **calls to inbound contact centers are surging** more than ever. Call volumes are up and call center employees are spread thinly amid a deluge of spiking call volumes – very often calls of a complex and anxious nature. In dedicated call centers, the handling of sensitive data requires that the authentication of callers has to be thorough and effectively managed.

We now look out on a whole new landscape of digital opportunity. For contact center operators, this represents a new, exciting frontier of advanced technological options to **increase efficiency and reduce costs**.

In this whitepaper, we have collected a list of the biggest challenges, and expanded and combined them with an exploration of their possible solutions to help modern call centers overcome the challenges posed by the world today.

1

Increases in Average Handling Time Are Huge

Over the last year, call center average handling times (AHT) have skyrocketed – from 18 seconds to 20 minutes, in some cases[2].

The Problem

Lengthy caller authentication, inundated or insufficiently prepared staff (already troubled by the necessity of remote working), and call center system usability are all common contributing factors to increased AHT. The old adage that 'time is money' has never been more true, and in our 'always-on' world, it should be more than possible to reduce both of those parameters simply – it is an absolute *necessity*.

More than 60% of contact centers now report having a problem with obtaining sufficient budget for their needs[3].

It is essential, therefore, for contact center management to **reduce AHT**, and to mitigate the immense task of handling huge call volumes. All while delivering the most cost-effective options within the budget restrictions faced in the current climate, which are a common reality.

Amid the push into a total digital transformation, there is a necessity to deploy ever more advanced and sophisticated solutions. And yet be cost-effective, efficient, and cause the least amount of disruption to the overall customer experience.

The Solution

According to a Forrester Research report, speaking to a live agent can cost between $6 & $12 per interaction, with automated interactions costing as little as $0.25[4].

Forward-thinking digitalization is essential, and call center innovations featuring enhanced automation of processes, AI learning solutions and cloud systems are all enabling the contact centers of now to become the streamlined, hyper-productive and cost-effective customer support mavens of tomorrow.

Here are some of the very best technologies available today to help reduce costs and save significant time in your call center.

Voice Biometrics Authentication

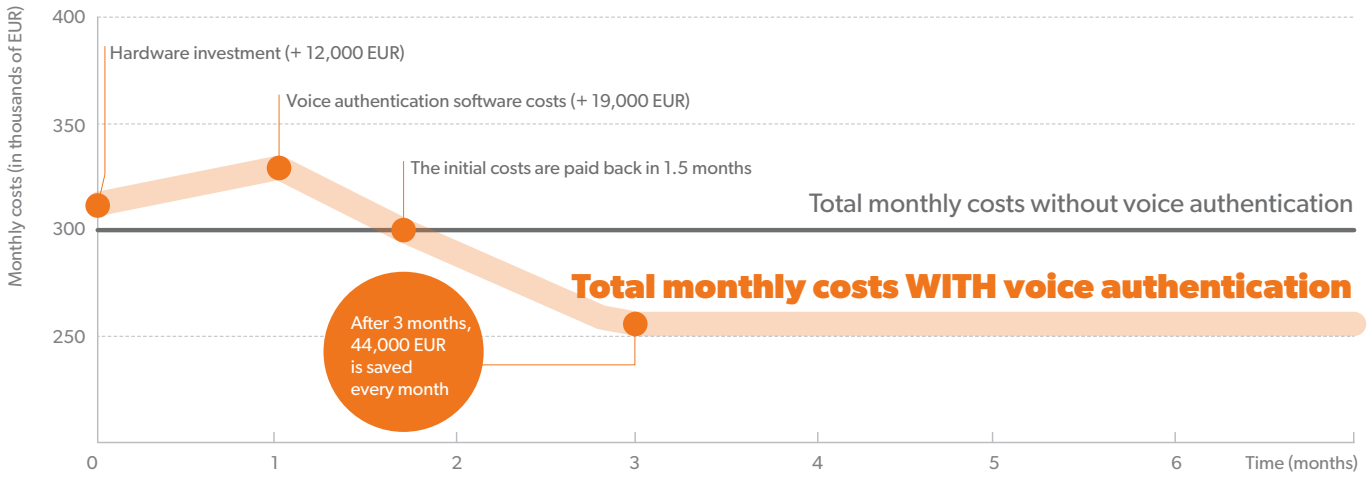
Of primary concern among modern common call center issues, caller authentication can be a lengthy process, usually relying on knowledge-based verification (KBV). Voice biometrics authentication uses **advanced speech recognition** to analyze the unique features of a caller's voice.

Using a voice biometric system for caller verification is a desirable option that massively benefits both customers and call center operators: the former by receiving a rapid and **password-free experience** (also without the need to remember the oft-forgotten answers to strange security questions); the latter by significantly **reducing call handling time**, and lightening the workload of the customer support team.

Modern voice biometrics solutions are simply the fastest and most secure way to verify the identity of callers. There is no need for the caller to recite specific phrases or a password. Enrolling the customer is also fast and totally painless, requiring *no more than 20 seconds to create their initial voiceprint*[5].

A typical call can easily be reduced by over 30 seconds, with the verification of clients taking only 3 seconds of natural speech to complete[5].

How Much Can You Save with Voice Authentication?



Common Myths of Biometric Voice Recognition

"It's too complicated to implement properly."

Not true, it can be easily added to any system, whether in the cloud or as part of dedicated hardware. And once set up, enrollments of voiceprints take very little time at all.

"But it is too expensive."

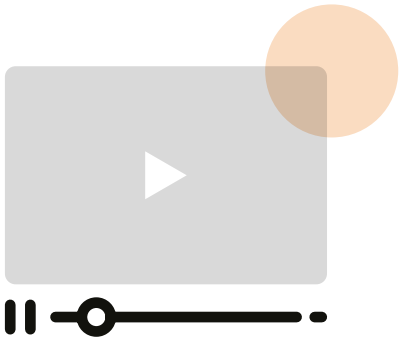
Again, simply not true: the market for voice biometrics is forecast to grow to almost $4 billion by 2026, bringing with it increased awareness and customer options. Adding a voice biometrics solution now can only add value to your security, while saving time and expenditure[6].

"Voices could be impersonated."

This won't work simply because while an impersonated voice could sound the same to the human ear, the system can identify and analyze many more frequencies that are inaudible to us. The algorithm also compares many other characteristics and is not based solely on how the voice sounds.

"User voiceprints could be hacked into, stolen, and taken advantage of."

Voiceprints are not saved as pure audio – rather, they are encrypted and saved as sets of numbers. Even if this data was somehow captured in a security breach, it would be completely useless to the attackers, and they could make no practical use of it.



Self-service Channels

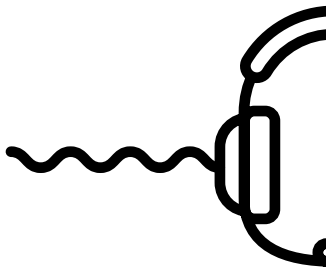
81% of customers have reported that they prefer to seek answers to their queries online by themselves before considering contacting customer support[7].

The most effective way to reduce call volume is to have customers not call at all; they simply prefer convenience and personal autonomy. It is clear that customers will take a self-service option, if it is available, almost every time. Customers will be more satisfied with a service if they can easily find information and support that is freely available and simple to understand.

Modern methods of self-service utilization:

- **An online knowledge base and FAQs** are a great way to start with self-service channels. For it to be truly effective, a knowledge base should be meaningful and relevant, constantly updated, and escalation options should be clearly accessible. Search terms can then also be monitored closely to identify potential improvements to the overall customer experience.
- The impact of **friendly video content** cannot be overstated: according to a Wyzowl survey, 96% of respondents reported having watched an explainer video to find out more about a product or service. Furthermore, 69% said that watching short videos was their preferred method of learning about a product or service[8].
- According to a Demand Metric report, 50% of participants reported a moderate or significant increase in revenue due to having an **online community** as part of their customer support process. Customers get fast and easy access to answers to common queries and it also enables analysis of the most commonly discussed issues – invaluable data for identifying and solving the most frequently encountered problems among a user base[9].

IVR



Voice Controlled IVR

If a customer cannot find the answer they require through self-service channels, their next step will be to call a customer support contact center. Their initial contact will undoubtedly be with an **Interactive Voice Response** (IVR) system. IVRs, especially when controlled by the voice, can enable **rapid responses**, and have become an essential component of the modern call center.

If you do not already utilize voice controlled IVR in your call center, then now is most certainly the time to put that right. For cost-effective and effortless routing and segmentation of callers, there really is no better alternative. AHT and costs can be further reduced thanks to the ability of IVR to offer **pre-recorded answers** to common queries.

How IVR contributes to reducing AHT:

- IVRs are **'always on'** – they can operate 24/7, enabling real-time customer support, even outside of regular operating hours.
- With IVR, there is a significantly increased chance of obtaining a **first call resolution**.
- By supplying automated answers to common queries and simple issues, **IVR can deflect the caller satisfactorily**, without the need to speak directly to an agent.
- And of course, IVR can ensure that **customers are directed immediately** to the most suitable live agent for their query, if it is then necessary to do so.

Voicebot Implementation

A natural evolution, and a potential first layer of IVR services, intelligent voicebots are becoming increasingly popular in many facets of modern life. As a result, people have become much more comfortable with voice activated technology.

Speaking to a voicebot is now a natural experience for many people and is recognized as a much more nimble and intuitive process, saving a significant amount of time. Intelligent voicebots will play a significant and vital role in the customer support centers of tomorrow, and now is a great time to embrace this technology.

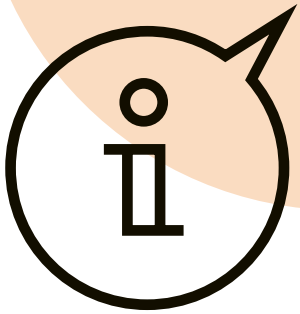
How voicebots can help you save time, cost-effectively:

- Voicebots are **available at any time** of the day or night, opening up a wider range of possibilities for dedicated contact centers, negating the need for night-shift workers and lowering the demand for localized outsourced customer service.
- Voicebots sound human and are **capable of close to natural dialogue**, maintaining two-way conversations with customers.
- **No wait times** – if a customer is in a hurry and is faced with either waiting in a long hold queue or immediate discourse with a virtual assistant, most customers will choose the latter option.

TOP 5 Voicebot Solutions
(by AIMultiple.com[10])

1. Zaion Callbot
2. Amazon Lex
3. Sayint
4. Zaion Voicebot
5. Agara

Of course, there is no voicebot solution in the world that can solve 100% of queries. They excel when called upon to query knowledge bases and FAQs to provide responses and to handle low priority tickets, but they are also intelligent enough to route the caller to a live agent if and when they need to.



Caller Segmentation and Language Identification (LID)

Language identification enables rapid automatic segmentation, taking only around 5 seconds[11].

As more and more businesses expand their reach into foreign markets, customer support is expected to be operational 24/7 to accommodate the needs of callers on a much larger scale.

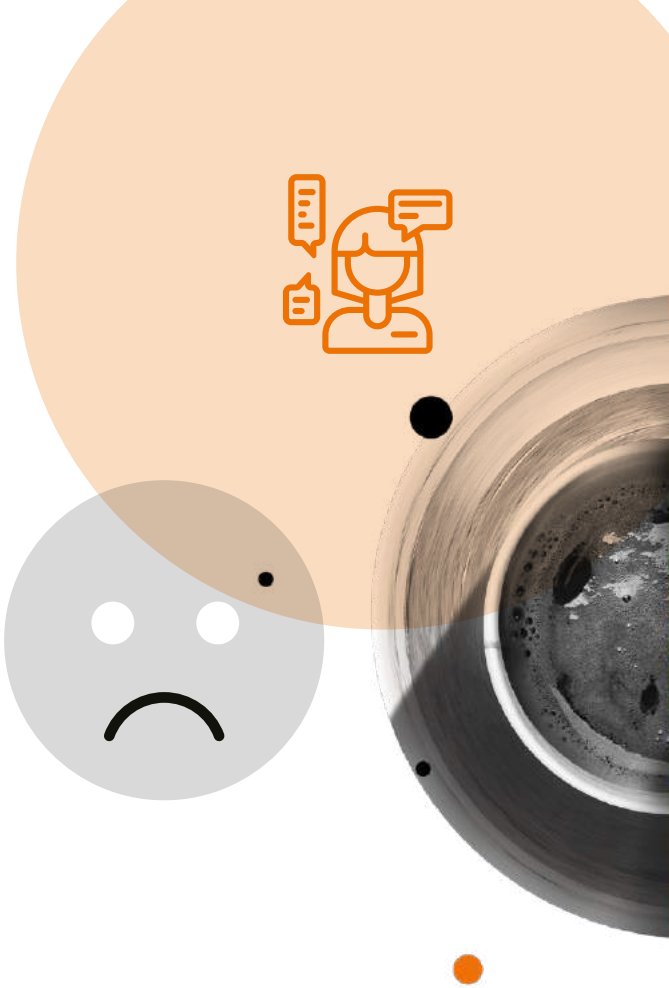
Maintaining a fully **multilingual call center** to accommodate all customers can be a real challenge. All too often, asking every caller "Hi, do you speak English?", only to then transfer the call to another agent that speaks the caller's language, is frustrating and ineffective.

LID categorizes callers based on their language and dialect, and routes them to the appropriate language-fluent operative. Frictionless and efficient, the call is dealt with quickly and with minimum frustration for the customer and the agent. Such technology combines well with an intelligent voicebot system, allowing the bot to quickly identify, and seamlessly switch to, the caller's native language.

2

Customers Expect a Smooth Experience

Customers have come to expect rapid responses and swift first call resolutions, and, at the same time, are changing the primary ways in which they wish to interact.



The Problem

Customers want *convenience*, *simplicity*, and *satisfaction*. They now depend more heavily than ever before on online and phone support, and have most certainly become more demanding over time – a fact reported by 37.2% of industry professionals[12].

41% of customers say that they have partially or completely stopped using two brands or more in the last year, purely because of poor customer experience or problems with the service they had received[13].

The customer's journey begins with a problem, often born of frustration or confusion. When such strong emotions are invoked, and after failing to find a suitable answer through the usual self-service channels, the customer is left little option other than to call customer support.

Here is the worst case scenario for initial contact: a customer is faced by an automated system that sends them into almost endless loops, and when they finally reach a live agent, they are subjected to a barrage of hard-to-remember security questions.

What is worse, our customer could then be passed around multiple agents, even during the same single call, and have to verify their identity each time. They must then restate their issue, often because the agent handling the call is not fully prepared or properly qualified to handle the query.

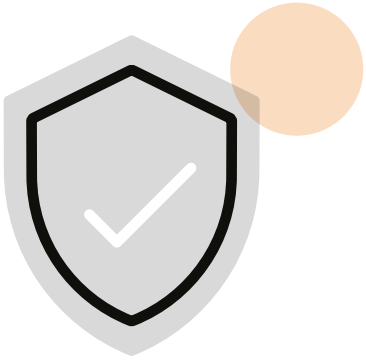
All the while, customers can perceive a lack of empathy and understanding in the agents they interact with. If the staff has no prior information about a caller, it becomes much more difficult for them to build a rapport. This then returns us to the beginning of the customer's journey, with the end result being that they will now be more frustrated and confused than ever before.

Around 15–35% of calls to customer support centers are repeats[14].

The Solution

Ever-evolving needs are the drivers of innovation. It is important to invest in the right digital engagement technology to satisfy the current or anticipated needs of your business, rather than purchasing advanced tools and trying to work out how to fit them in later.

Let's take a closer look at what solutions we can use to give the customer a well-handled, personal, and perfect experience every time, and eradicate the need for repeat calls.



Voice Verification

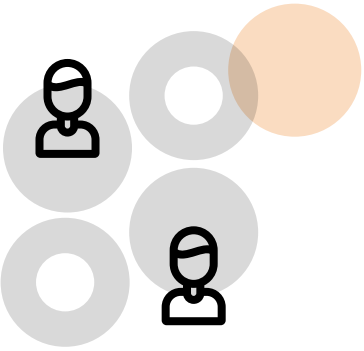
Knowledge-based authentication is nowhere near foolproof, failing to verify up to 30% of legitimate callers[15].

Imagine if you only had to call customer support once or twice per year and were faced with questions that you might not even recall setting up. For instance, your favourite food could have changed, and many people owned multiple first pets. So, was it the cat's, the dog's, or the goldfish's name that you gave when you set up your security questions…?

Just as voice biometric authentication is a sure-fire way to reduce AHT, it also greatly enhances the customer's overall experience. The speed at which callers are verified at each point of contact is incredibly fast, and the whole process is effortless for them and for the agent, but the benefits don't end there.

Enrolment is also surprisingly fast, taking *as little* **as 20 seconds of normal conversation** to produce the initial voiceprint. This creates no extra inconvenience for the customer and is a huge advantage when aiming to create a seamless experience for them, with no discernible delays[5].

Segmentation



Call routing has, historically, been handled by many different solutions – from **IVR number pad** data entry, to simple (usually single word) **voice commands**. These methods can be ungainly, however, and it can take time for the customer to process the available options before making a choice.

Calling Line Identification (CLI) is one option. The system simply identifies the caller by their phone number, allowing the call to be routed automatically, with no input from the caller. However, there can be no guarantee that the customer is calling regarding a previously known issue.

Speech recognition is a far more modern and desirable approach. When a caller first speaks with your IVR, they can voice their issue in plain speech, rather than choosing from forced options. Speech analytics can then discern the issue and route the call based on several key factors:

- **Keyword detection:** automatically identifies the topic of calls based on the appearance of specific keywords and keyphrases in the speech.
- **Language identification (LID):** categorizes callers based on their language and dialect, assuring the caller that they will be able to discuss their issue freely with an appropriate language-fluent agent.

After the call is routed to a suitable agent, fast and with little effort, the operative will be better prepared for the call, and tailor their responses accordingly. The customer is thus more comfortable with the agent, and will have a far more wholesome and satisfying experience.

An ideal scenario is for the caller to be routed to an appropriate agent instantly, or as close as humanly possible.

Improving Agents' Skills

When we speak about 'suitable agents', we primarily mean those staff that can proficiently handle specific queries and situations. But, of course, *all* contact center staff should be well-trained, knowledgeable, and adaptable to new work processes and technologies.

However, **70% of agents report feeling that they lack the appropriate skills** to do their jobs effectively, so it is imperative to *monitor, identify*, and *learn* from those areas where agents often go wrong. For instance, they might[16]:

- Go off-script
- Lack flexibility (only comfortable handling familiar and menial queries)
- Put customers on hold too much, or for too long
- Pass customers to other agents too often

A complete, centralized, and **automated QA** process is essential for identifying these errors and optimizing the work agents do. It allows us to identify specific KPIs, measure and evaluate interactions, and to ultimately train and retrain staff. It is highly important to prioritize specific QA data that focuses on agents' individual strengths and weaknesses, and ensure that the data they need is easy to understand and available *when they need it*.

Using **speech analytics**, we can take a closer look at every problem call retrospectively, or even do so in *real-time*. Speech analytics enables us to quickly get to the bottom of abandoned and repeat calls. Monitoring calls automatically, the sophisticated algorithms involved can analyze agents' tone and sentiment, their engagement with the caller, script alignment, and can identify any knowledge gaps they may have.

Call scoring can be applied to assess and measure various performance indicators, such as overall agent quality, first contact resolution, and customer satisfaction (CSAT). Actionable data can be shared with agents through detailed reports and integrated in their desktop dashboard.

Real-time speech analysis leverages blazing fast dictionary based analytics, which can provide agents with automated alerts, and pop-ups based on specific user-defined triggers. In real-time, the operative receives feedback and can adjust the course of the call appropriately, for example, by altering their tone of voice. The system can also identify if the agent is going off-script and recommend a return to it, and using keyword detection, can assess the operative's overall script alignment.

Such effective speech analyses greatly accelerate agent training and continuous development more than almost any other call center software solution as the AI-assisted comprehensive feedback is based on *all of their calls,* not just on a randomly selected and limited selection of them.

Personalization

A 47% increase in customer retention and satisfaction has been reported by those businesses that utilize a CRM system[17].

Once calls are patched through to the appropriate operative, an efficient and comprehensive database of customer knowledge is necessary to enable the agent to offer the most thorough **and personal customer support experience**.

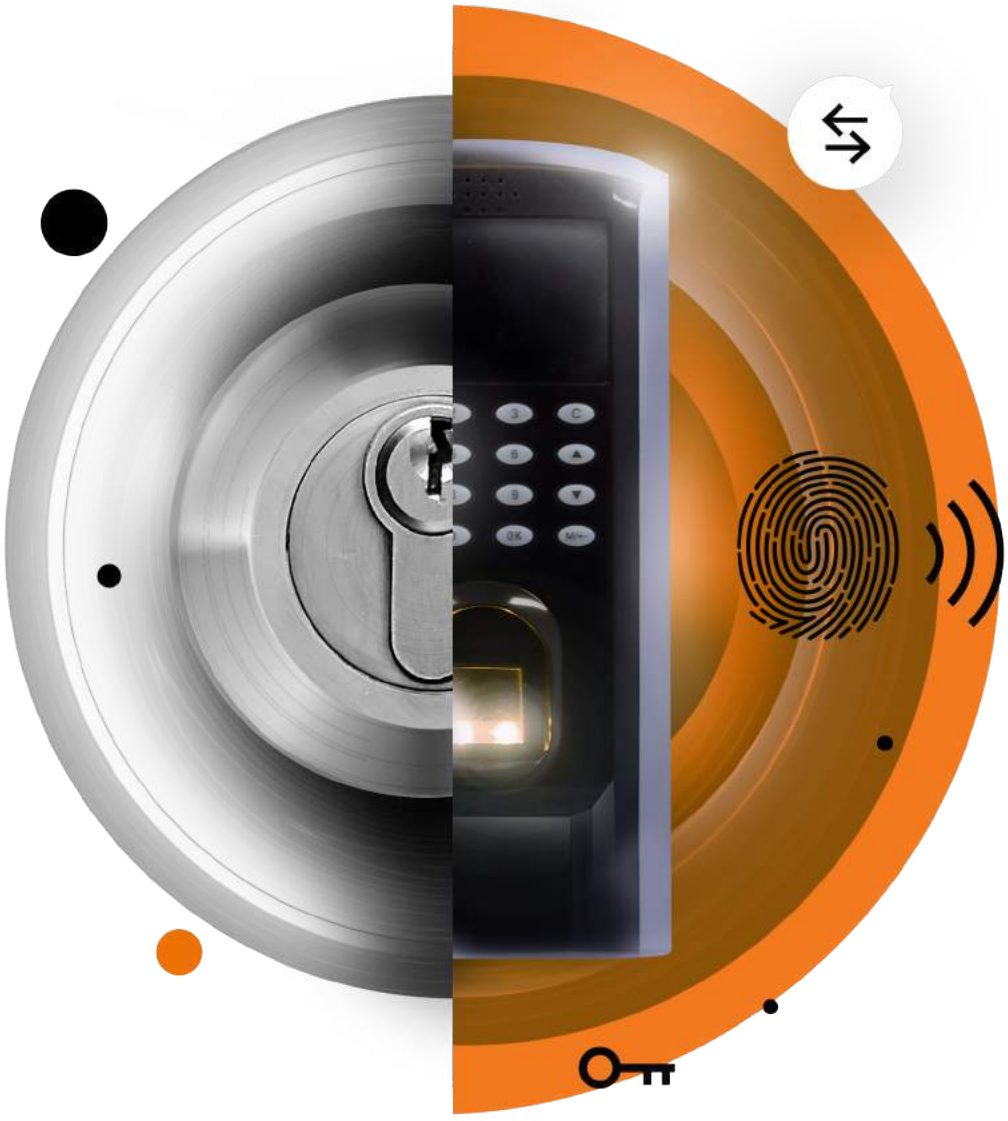
Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software solutions represent the ideal approach to improve and fully personalize a customer's experience. A solid CRM solution allows you to retain and maintain an up-to-date threaded database of knowledge about the customer, pulling in information from various sources (call, email, text), and providing all relevant tools to agents in one unified application.

Such important data could pertain to previous orders, previous chat and call transcripts, open tickets, and current contact information. Agents are then in confident control of the call from the outset, supplied with each **caller's history** and all the information they will require to fully understand the customer's needs.

Of course, *obtaining* and *analyzing* customer data is essential, but we can go one step further with how we capture the data, and how deeply we can dive into it. By using speech analytics and machine learning within a CRM to glean information and look deeper into existing customer data, we can gain extra, invaluable insights.

Speech analytics, when used within a modern CRM system, automatically scans interactions for specific language patterns and tags or categorizes contacts that contain particular language or characteristics. Full transcription of calls allows for a searchable body of text, and the analytic possibilities are much more nuanced.

Customer data held within the CRM can then be given a boost with the implementation of **machine learning**. AI can turn the captured information into a fully personalized experience by recalling previous requests and proactively making valid suggestions. As the system can keep agents updated with customer expectations, as well as their previous account issues, operatives can deliver a much improved and satisfying customer experience.



3

Identity Theft and Fraudulent Activity

57% of companies have reported an increase in fraudulent attacks in their call centers since the start of 2020, and consider it as an ongoing issue[18].

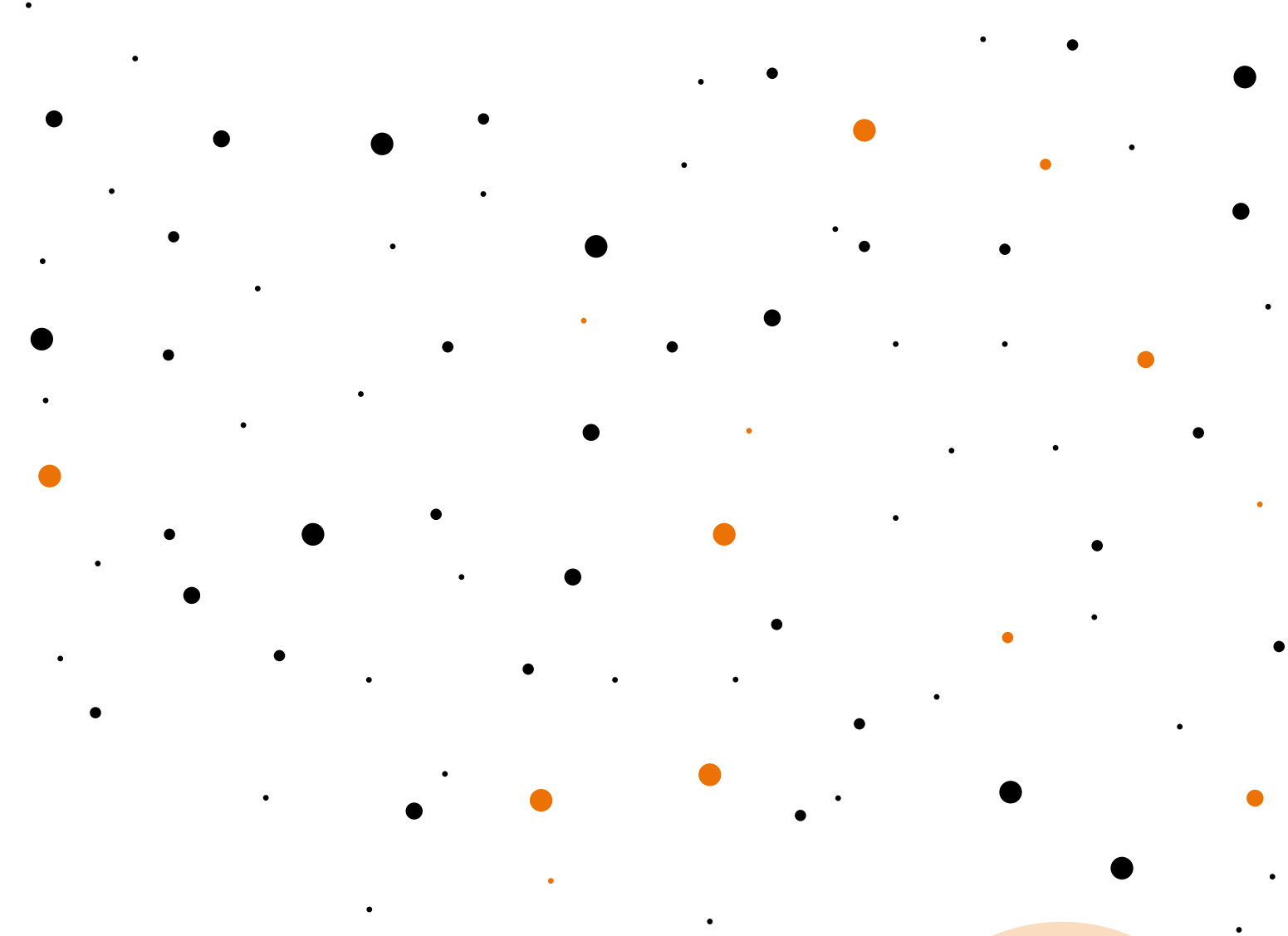
The Problem

The battle against fraudsters in modern call centers is intensifying. Before us now is a veritable 'tech war' that sees contact centers employing ever more advanced tools to mount a defence, just as fraudsters do likewise to mount an attack. The primary goal for the majority of **attacks is account takeover (ATO)**, which is then used for the attackers' monetary gain. Therefore, financial enterprises and the customer support centers directly associated with them are particularly susceptible.

ATO is growing at an ever more alarming rate, increasing by 72% in 2019, according to the 2020 Javelin Identity Fraud Study[19].

Customers need to be able to trust that their personal information is safe. However, just because one company's data storage is locked tight, this does not mean that they are impervious to attack. If **personal identifiable information** is stolen from a database held by a different business that has much weaker security, then that data can be used by fraudsters to circumvent identity verification *anywhere*.

The over-reliance on **knowledge-based authentication** (KBA) has led to imperfect identity verification practices. The information required to answer these kinds of security questions is often easy to obtain from various sources, such as previously leaked or hacked databases, social engineering hacks, or even simply found on social networking sites.



It has been estimated that up to 90% of users of social networking sites simply keep the default privacy settings – allowing strangers to view their profile information[20].

Call centers are seen as a prime target for attack because they are susceptible to **social engineering** scams. In recent years, **phishing scams** have also targeted customers directly, with an eye to steal their personally identifiable information[21].

Another problematic aspect to consider is the activity of **rogue insiders**. According to a 2020 Cybersecurity INSIDERS report, internal actors were responsible for **50% of critical data loss**. The agents themselves may not always be to blame, as social engineering and even blackmail schemes are known to have been used against them[22].

The Solution

Attack vectors vary wildly and are not localized to one mode of attack. Due to the increase in the countless **vulnerable points** each enterprise has, there have been increasing advantages for hackers and attackers, as they only need to find one vulnerable point to succeed in their attack.

It is the responsibility of customer support centers to integrate the strongest security tools for the verification of callers. And customers must learn the best practices to get the most out of the tools they have at hand, and use them as they were intended, to stay fully secure from **identity theft** and fraudulent activity.

Whatever the root cause, it is plain to see that the technology and tools used to mitigate attacks only constitute a part of a wider necessary solution.

KBV

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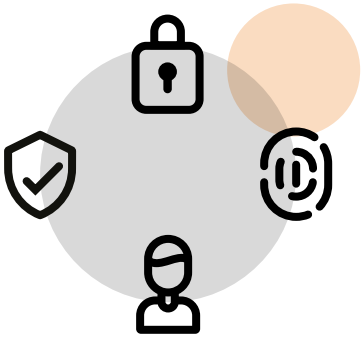
The End of Knowledge-Based Verification Is Nigh

It must now be widely accepted, among all those service providers that enforce identity authentication, that **knowledge-based verification (KBV)** methods, when used alone, provide a weak defence against an enterprising hacker. In a 2019 report, the US Government Accountability Office officially recommended the *complete elimination of KBV* in federal agencies and other entities, due to its consistent failure to protect citizens' most sensitive data[23].

KBV is *inherently unsafe*, not only because the information required to pass verification can be illicitly retrieved from data breaches, but also because it represents only *one* of the great tenets of multi-factor authentication (MFA) security: namely, it consists solely of something the customer *knows*. Passwords and security questions *can* be effective, but only when used in conjunction with at least one other form of authentication.



MFA: The Right Choice for Call Centers?

Recent research by Twilio found that, out of 35 different US call centers contacted, only one company even bothered to ask for an answer to a secret question[24].

The next step in enabling **solid MFA** is to use something that you *have* (a 'possession factor'). This means something physical, and more often than not, the simplest device to use is a customer's mobile phone. Several methods are common, like receiving one-time SMS tokens or generating the same kind of token with an authenticator app. This form of verification is more commonly referred to as **two-factor authentication** (2FA).

The sad truth is that while **2FA** is now becoming more widely used online to authenticate logins, it is nowhere near as widely supported in call centers. No online service would allow a person to log in to their website using only a phone number or email address, and certainly wouldn't rely only on security questions alone to do it. So why is this still the case in a lot of call centers today?

To become *truly secure* and be able to provide customers with real peace of mind, **systems** have to be put in place that can enable fast 2FA verification in the call center and mirror the same rigor that people are becoming used to when logging in online. Unfortunately, most available methods of 2FA (one-time code apps, SMS codes, hardware keys) require *active participation*, and this can represent a high entry barrier for a lot of customers.

Modern Verification Approaches and Biometrics

Some companies are even coming up with their own unique verification methods for customer support, and these are a definite step in the right direction. For example, Netflix supplies account specific 'service codes' that refresh every 24 hours and can only be accessed through a user's settings after logging in online. When customers have a query, they then give the service code over the phone to the call center agent to verify their account identity[25].

Luckily, there is a third and even more secure factor in the war against fraudsters, and it is by far *the most easily applicable* within the call center industry: the something that we *are*. In other words, a **biometric factor**.

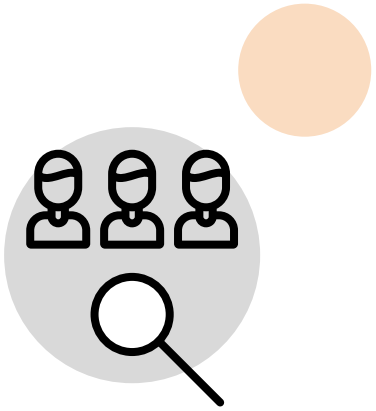
Most people are used to using *fingerprint or facial recognition* scanning in their daily lives now; almost all modern smartphones have a fingerprint or face ID lock. While an accessible and frictionless method of verifying identity for phone apps, utilizing this kind of scanning in the call center is not as effective as it is still an extra step that customers have to be prepared for.

They would need an extra app on their phone or computer that could verify their biometric data and send an appropriate response (of approval or rejection) to the call center operative. This represents an obstacle that a lot of customers may not be ready to use, and may prove difficult for contact center management to implement properly – and, of course, any obstacle only serves to extend AHT.

What is needed is a **seamless approach** – a way of verifying the biometric information of every caller with the least amount of friction and the highest accuracy. In the customer support call center industry, there is nothing more effective and frictionless than voice *biometric authentication*.

Our voices are a unique and natural part of every conversation, and so are an intuitive match for a sector built on verbal communication. It is worth remembering that a caller's voice is always present during a phone interaction, and so verification is always persistent and convenient.

Imagine if every caller to a customer contact center, within only **a few seconds** of opening their mouth to speak, was fully identified and accurately verified. There would never be a need for intrusive security questions or special operative training. Fraudulent activity in the call center could become a thing of the past, and customers and agents could *genuinely interact* without further ado.



Advanced Techniques for Specific Scenarios

Voice biometrics identification can also be leveraged to enable more advanced security techniques, moving beyond identification and verification, helping to defend against more specific scenarios. For instance, a **database of fraudulent callers** can be maintained. When an attacker calls and fails voice biometrics identification, their voiceprint can be stored and their identity blacklisted. If they then continue to call, even from different phone numbers, they will be identified effortlessly and immediately.

There is also a need to stop illicit callers abusing the system and creating **multiple accounts**. If your call center supports an enterprise that often onboards new customers through desirable promotions, then it might benefit such callers to create multiple accounts with your service. Just as with blacklisting persistent bad actors, voice biometrics identification stops this 'multi accounting' behavior completely by matching the callers' voiceprint to the accounts they create. If each unique voiceprint is only allowed to create one account, then this problem is *completely solved*.

Another scenario: imagine a terrifying situation in which a **customer is physically forced to verify** their identity at the beginning of a call, with the assailant intending to continue the conversation after successful voice verification. Even a situation as dramatic as this can be mitigated because passive voice biometrics verification can run continuously in the background of a call, and the agent handling the call will be alerted that the speaker has switched and can then take action accordingly.

Actively providing and enforcing a combination of security factors in the modern call center are absolute necessities, making those factors as frictionless and as seamless as possible is just as important. **Combining identification factors** doesn't have to represent a barrier for customers and call center management. Customers will use methods deployed by contact centers, especially if they are easy, natural, and intuitive for them to use.

4

Agents Are Working Remotely

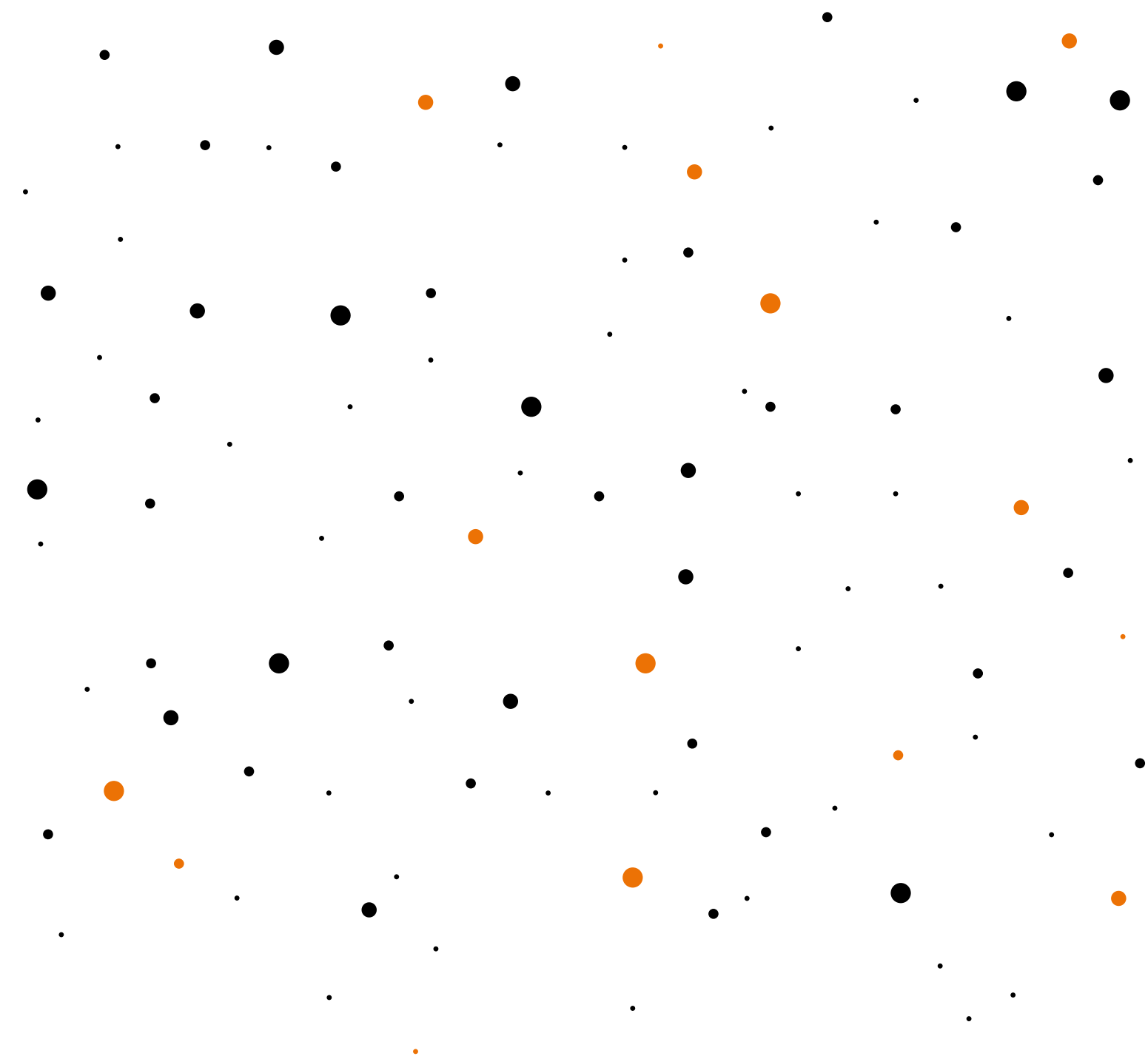
According to a recent Forrester research report, since March 2020, 47% of respondents have moved at least half of their workforce into remote work[26].

The Problem

We all know that working from home has become a necessity for those industries that can support it. Considering how quickly businesses have had to prepare their staff for full-time remote working, it is perhaps surprising that many companies are now reporting a **significant increase** in the *happiness* and *productivity* of their workers. This trend can be seen in many sectors, and certainly not least within the customer support contact center industry.

Recently, it was reported that HSBC bank, among other institutions, in the UK would switch the majority of its 1200 call center staff to be **permanently remote** after 70% of them opted not to return to the office environment. Salesforce have even gone as far as to declare the usual 9-to-5 workday officially dead. A big step for a large workforce, and indicative of the **wider trend** taking a grip on the industry. It is clear there will be a need for further shifts into completely remote call centers, or at least into hybrid workspaces[27,28].

However, this presents some real problems for many contact centers as it can cause **major obstacles** in properly *training*, *motivating*, and *monitoring* agents when the time spent working together personally is minimized. The agents themselves may prefer to work from home because of the perceived improvement to their **work-life balance**, but their working experience may still become degraded in the face of extra domestic distractions.



Their ability to have **constant access** to all relevant customer data must be uninterrupted and up-to-date, or their work will be seriously impacted. And to avoid confusion with ever-evolving guidelines, rule changes, and regulations, communication channels between the management and the agents must be constant and open.

Another consideration is **security**. Agents are responsible for the protection of their devices, and as they log into corporate networks from their potentially unprotected home networks, security risks can become prevalent. There are also other opportunities for fraud to abound. For instance, if operatives' home systems aren't secure, they run the risk of having their credentials stolen and fraudsters impersonating them within the call center environment.

The Solution

Luckily, these relatively new types of problems, introduced by the necessity of remote working, are being addressed by **new waves of online technology** suitable for our digitalized world.

Even though working from home has many advantages for the modern global office, it is a new phenomenon for many employees. The period of adjustment has been demanding, while necessarily fast.

Thankfully, next-gen developers have risen to the challenge, producing solutions and opening greater opportunities for remote workers, allowing them to adjust rapidly, and enabling them to work from home to the best of their ability.

Virtual Call Center Software Solutions

Whether your business is a fresh start-up or a large and long-established enterprise, virtual call center software solutions pull together so many facets of the business that for remote work, they are truly indispensable. They make perfect sense for many valid reasons. First and foremost, these solutions enable the total *continuity* of business: they **eliminate interruptions** in the flow of support, even during times of crisis.

The **cost savings** for companies also cannot be ignored. Amounts spent on expensive office leases can be reduced or eliminated entirely, and remote call center agents require much less overhead investment and almost no additional hardware. There is no need for on-site IT staff, and there are minimal maintenance costs.

A cloud-based virtual call center environment ensures that updates are handled fast and easily. New technology and channels can be added seamlessly and without interruption to service. Customers can be served across **multiple channels** all from one interface, and they help to generate valuable business insights.

Furthermore, the virtual environment can be **flexible** without bounds – perfect for those companies that experience seasonal peaks and drops, as the number of required agents can be increased or decreased swiftly, as needed.

TOP 5 Call Center Software

(by techradar.com[29])

1. RingCentral Contact Center
2. channels
3. Freshcaller
4. Five9
5. ZenDesk

Improving Agents' Experience

While technological solutions abound for managing the modern contact center, it is the agents who are the lifeblood and the backbone of every customer support system. When asking them to work from home, it is imperative to ensure their experience is as optimal as it can be, and that they can perform to the best of their abilities.

This also means that key processes, previously carried out in person, have to be performed remotely too. These include:

Training

Training staff remotely can seem like a daunting task, but with the right tools it can be a breeze. These days, **virtual instructor-led training (VILT)** is fast becoming the norm as it allows for a near personal touch, and is designed to emulate a traditional classroom or learning environment. Also, the training can be delivered synchronously or asynchronously, giving agents more flexible options for when to take part.

Another option to build on skills learned through VILT is e-learning solutions like **scenario-based training**, which can be undertaken by agents through online document databases or by utilising an existing knowledge base. This form of training entails anticipating common scenarios that agents will find themselves in and configuring the correct scripted procedures for them to follow.

TOP 5 eLearning Tools with Branching Scenario Features

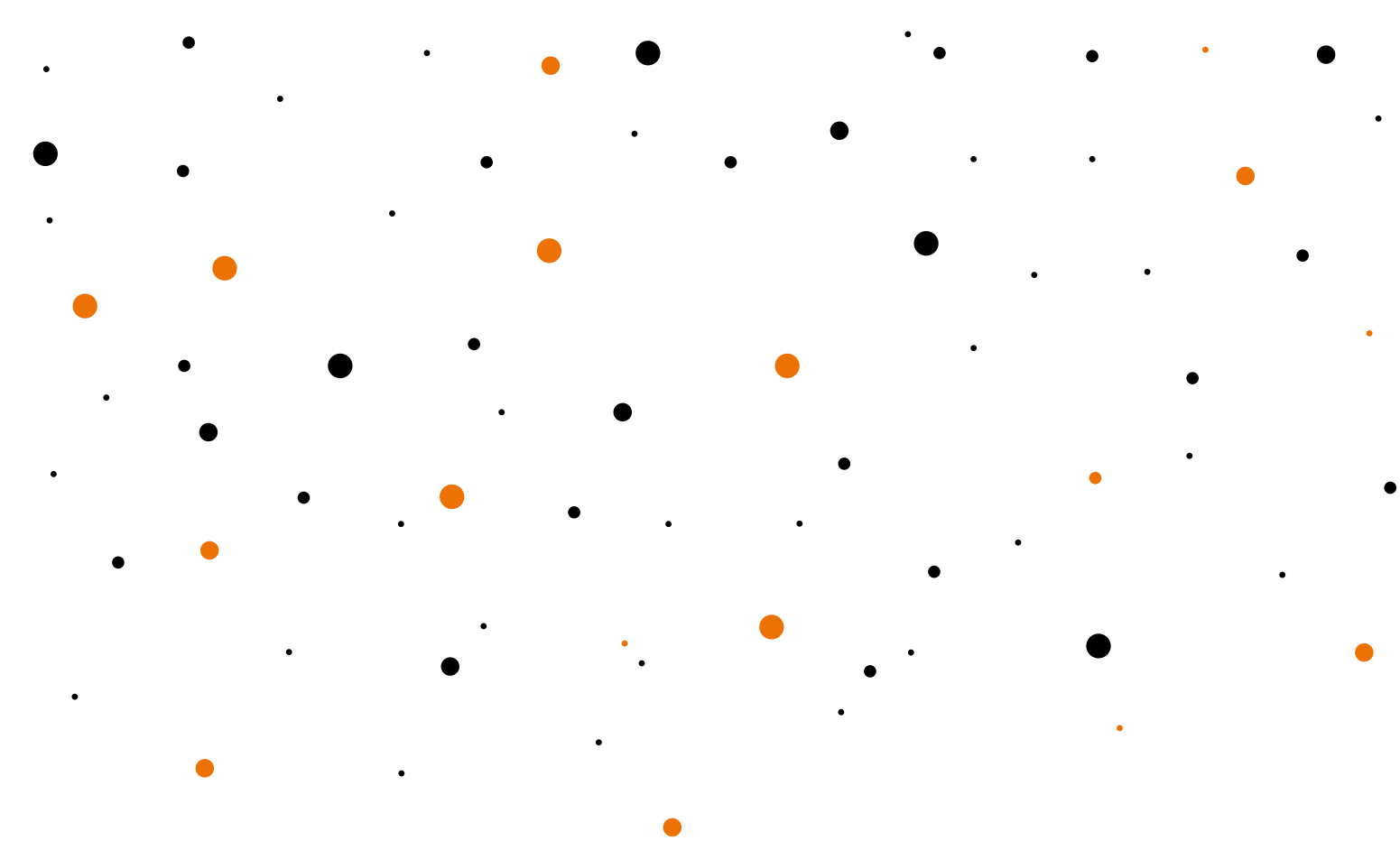
(by AIMultiple.com[30])

1. iSpring Suite
2. Elucidat
3. Lectora
4. isEazy
5. Sleave

Motivation

Effective employee engagement can seem like an impossible task when the workers are all at home, but there are certain methods call center managers can use to keep the spirits of employees up.

Firstly, make sure that all relevant workers have access to **internal communications channels**, through tools like Slack, Microsoft Teams, or Google Chat. Making all remote staff feel connected is a simple enough step, but one that allows all business communication to be centralized and simplified, and gives agents a direct line to management and their colleagues whenever they need to reach out.



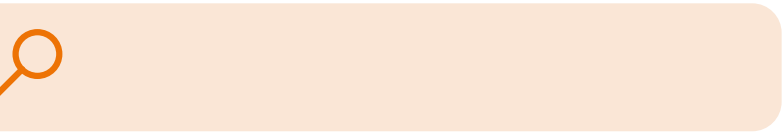
These communication tools then enable a greater variety of communication and create opportunities to motivate staff further. For instance, employee successes can be **shared** among the whole staff, acknowledging successes and recognizing agents for a job well done, thus creating a higher sense of purpose among them. **Internal surveys** and feedback channels can be constantly open, encouraging the remote staff and making them always feel welcome.

And remember, **unserious communication** also has its place in the workspace; everyone needs a breather from intense concentration and serious calls once in a while.

Monitoring

Maintaining **Quality Assurance (QA)** is a core KPI for the call center industry, and it does not need to suffer simply because staff are working from home. Quality monitoring can still be performed as effectively as it has always been done, allowing us to identify **coaching opportunities** and ensuring that staff performance remains consistent. Many modern virtual call center software solutions have call monitoring capabilities built in, and can help management better understand employee behavior by identifying many problematic areas.

For instance, modern call monitoring solutions can look for instances of employee exhaustion, as well as identifying inefficiencies in active workflows. **Time tracking** is an essential feature, as is keeping an eye on suspicious behavior. Some solutions allow for even more granular monitoring of problems, such as monitoring the battery life of agents' devices (and flagging it to a supervisor to take action to ensure zero interruptions) or allowing for remote wiping of **sensitive data** if the device is compromised.



Knowledge Bases

We looked at knowledge bases (KB) in a previous chapter in relation to customer experience and how they can help customers get answers to their queries without having to pick up the phone. However, an accurate and constantly updated knowledge base is just as effective at improving call center **agents' experience** too, and can truly empower them to handle their calls effectively, even with minimal training.

Modern KB solutions specifically targeted at the call center industry (e.g., ScreenSteps) feature everything a remote agent should need, from **troubleshooting guides** to call flows, and self-managed content creation to context specific help.

Above all, for the optimum working experience, it is important to ensure that a knowledge base for remote call center operatives satisfies these three main criteria:

- **Searchable and fast:** agents often need immediate answers to their queries, and the information must be at their fingertips and easily found when needed.
- **Constant access:** it goes without saying that the modern call center is open for business 24/7, so agents need constant access to the knowledge base, and often across different devices.
- **Incisive reports:** giving management the ability to track the performance of the knowledge base, allowing insightful reporting of popular search terms and constantly assessing the efficacy of it.

Securing Agents' ID

As we have already mentioned, most remote call center agents are required to use their own devices, which they are expected to harden and secure by themselves. Furthermore, financial services have seen a sharp spike in the number of incidents of identity theft and account take-overs[31].

In the previous chapter, we looked at how identity theft and social engineering scams are often perpetrated by fraudsters pretending to be genuine customers. However, it is not only customers that have to remain vigilant and pass thorough identity screening to combat this worrying trend. Call center management has to be now also aware that **hackers and bad actors** are attempting to emulate call center agents themselves, primarily to gain access to customer account databases and payment information.

Voice biometrics verification can be a two-way street. While the more well-known use case for this technology is to identify and verify callers, it can also be put to great use doing the same for remote workers. Supervision of remote employees isn't always strictly possible outside of automated monitoring systems, so using voice verification is a surefire way to ensure that only fully **authorized agents** are speaking to your customers.

The only efficient way to be completely at ease when discussing sensitive information is to have the agents successfully verified by their voice as they enter the call, making voice biometrics the top choice for **flawless security** in the truly modern and fully digitalized remote workspace.

PHONEXIA

About Phonexia

Phonexia is an innovative software company, founded in 2006, with the vision to provide the world with cutting-edge **speech and voice biometrics technologies**. Through its close cooperation with the Brno University of Technology, Phonexia is transforming the latest science into the everyday reality of highly accurate speech and voice recognition commercial solutions, such as voice verification and call transcription for call centers, as well as governmental solutions used in more than 60 countries.

About Phonexia Voice Verify

Phonexia Voice Verify is a market-leading voice verification solution for conversational AI and contact centers in banks and insurance, telco, and utilities companies. Powered by state-of-the-art deep neural networks, it can verify clients with over **96% accuracy out of the box after only 3 seconds of free speech** (tested on a real bank's contact center data). The solution is quick to evaluate via a free online demo, and a Proof of Concept (PoC) can be finished in a matter of weeks.

Interested in Voice Biometrics?

See for yourself how fast and accurate voice authentication is with **Phonexia Voice Verify**.

Create a voiceprint of your voice and test the voice verification for yourself with the Phonexia Voice Verify demo.

Try Online Demo

Want to know more?

Visit us at: www.phonexia.com/voice-verify.
Or feel free to contact us at any time at info@phonexia.com

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