



# The UK Contact Centre Decision-Maker's Guide 2022

(19<sup>th</sup> edition)

The Multichannel Workforce Management Chapter

Sponsored by



“The 2022 UK Contact Centre Decision-Makers’ Guide (19<sup>th</sup> edition)”

© ContactBabel 2022

Please note that all information is believed correct at the time of publication, but ContactBabel does not accept responsibility for any action arising from errors or omissions within the report, links to external websites or other third-party content.

# puzzel. Digital Engagement

▶ Book a demo



## Deliver customer service and buying experiences for the digital world

With Digital Engagement, you can engage visitors from the moment they land on your site and nurture them with proactive, personalised customer support in real-time and at scale.

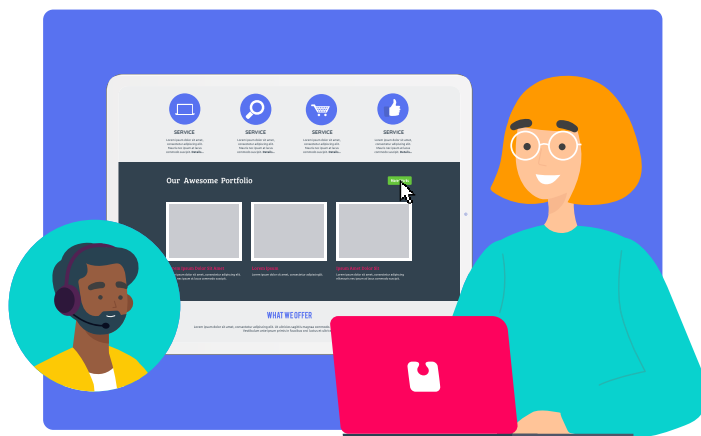


## Convert and nurture web visitors

Create triggers to proactively engage customers with the right offers, at the right time, to increase sales conversion and customer satisfaction.

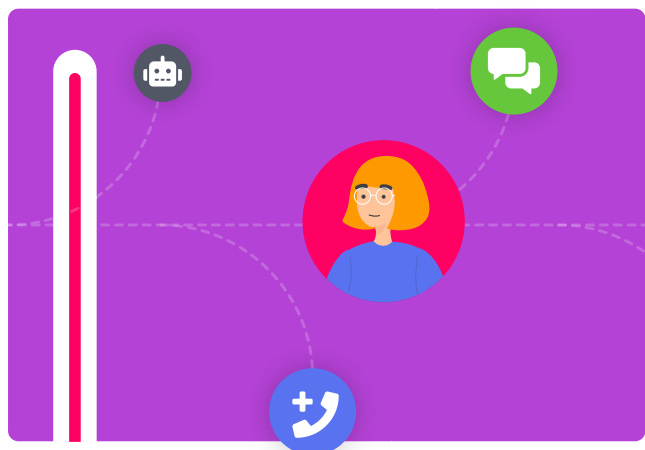
## Deliver visual support

Video chat with customers and share web sessions to assist them with complex tasks and deliver a more personalised digital experience.



## Manage contact volumes

Stay in control of inbound contact volumes by guiding online customers to the most efficient channel for their enquiry based on your own business rules.



Learn more at [puzzel.com](https://puzzel.com)

**puzzel.** When every moment matters

# **puzzel.**

When every moment matters

Puzzel is the leading European provider of cloud contact centre solutions.

Every day, more than 1,100 organisations across 40 countries use our software to deliver smart customer experiences, blending the powers of people and technology to serve customers efficiently, effectively and with empathy.

The Puzzel Platform enables organisations to create rich journeys for their customers, with a mix of live and self-service experiences that give people the freedom to choose when, where and how they get help.

Artificial intelligence is harnessed at every touchpoint to automate tasks, provide insight, and personalise service and support. Puzzel also includes a suite of productivity and planning tools to empower managers and agents to reach their goals and continuously improve performance.

With 20+ years of experience in the industry, Puzzel is the CCaaS provider organisations trust when every moment matters.

For more information, visit [www.puzzel.com](http://www.puzzel.com).

## MULTICHANNEL WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

Workforce management solutions (WFM) can perhaps be seen as the core element to the workforce optimisation suite, and has developed over time into a sophisticated tool for forecasting interactions across multiple channels and scheduling based on agent skill-sets and diverse locations, reacting automatically in near-real-time to allocate resource to where it is needed most.

Recent years have seen a resurgence in investment in workforce management solutions, often driven by the increasing requirement to handle ever-growing volumes of digital interactions, as well as a rise in remote working and managing employees' greater expectations of flexible working patterns.

The acknowledgement that the customer journey is not only restricted to the boundaries of the contact centre has encouraged vendors and organisations to look at extending workforce management capabilities into the back office, branches and the mobile workforce as well.

Workforce management solutions have to deal with environments which have become much more complex, in order to cope with the reality of the work that is being presented to agents.

For example, all agents require good listening ability, familiarity with keyboard and IT skills and a knowledge of the business they are working in, but more now need a pool of in-depth and specific skills to be available in order to satisfy customers fully, including:

- Familiarity with either specific customers (e.g. account management) or customer sub-sets (e.g. commercial vs. domestic products)
- Specific product or technical knowledge
- Right level of experience and empowerment for the customer (e.g. "gold-card" customers may demand single-call resolution, meaning senior agents should be available to take the call)
- Language skills (both in domestic and international markets)
- Ability to deal with multichannel interactions (either in real-time - such as web chats - or offline, such as emails).

Fulfilling service levels while managing costs is an iterative cycle, requiring several key processes to be completed. Feedback from each stage means that the enterprise can continually improve its efficiency and become more confident in future predictions.

The modern contact centre not only requires the basics of having enough people to answer interactions in a reasonable amount of time, but is increasingly demanding more sophisticated functionality such as the ability to forecast and schedule agents in near-real time, handle virtual contact centre, mobile and homeworking resource, accurately allocate staff resource across both digital and voice interactions, consider how the use of voicebots and chatbots will impact on interactions requiring a live agent, and increasingly include back office activities within scheduling as well where relevant.

---

## FORECASTING

Before any staff planning can be done, an enterprise first needs to understand what has happened in the past. A solution which provides historical data from entire customer contacts including those across multiple channels means that scheduling can take place in a more realistic way. Enterprises should also be able to factor in exceptions such as advertising campaigns, training and public holidays, view when the best time for a meeting or training session will be, and measure the impact on the rest of the contact centre. Running regular hypothetical 'what-if' scenarios can show a scheduler how alterations to shift-patterns would impact performance.

A great deal of unnecessary agent work can be removed by identifying the types of calls that are being received, and determining whether these could be reduced further up the line, in the departments whose work actively affects the volume and type of calls received, e.g. marketing or IT (for the website), or through the use of bots to handle relatively simple enquiries. As such, workforce management is often used as part of an overall workforce optimisation suite, which can include quality monitoring, interaction analytics, HR management and training as well as the traditional workforce management roles of forecasting and scheduling, as all of these factors affect each other.

For example, understanding when and how other departments will be operating means that workforce management tools can be used to forecast and schedule accordingly (e.g. a new TV advert may trigger a wave of specific calls). Additionally, contact centre management is able to brief agents – via a desktop broadcast or smartphone alert at short notice – about the correct responses and issues, as well as changing IVR prompts and messages to provide answers to the simpler questions and managing agent skill-sets for relevant call groups.

Businesses should look for flexibility in forecasting functionality: situations can develop very quickly which mean that forecasts can become useless without the ability to alter schedules dynamically at an intraday level to reflect reality. (Intraday is considered in more depth later in this report). As around 25% of a typical contact centre's activity is now through digital channels, a demonstrable and sophisticated understanding of email, chat and social media volumes is critical in a solution.

Resource planning applications, which typically look at requirements over a longer term than the typical WFM solution, should also be considered within the forecasting functionality. Understanding how the business will change some months in advance – perhaps for seasonal reasons, or with the launch of a new product – will certainly impact on resourcing, and close communication and integration between resource planning and day-to-day WFM is desirable.

---

## SCHEDULING

Scheduling has moved far away from the traditional approach of simply making sure that approximately the right number of agents are available based on forecasts.

While the correct resource allocation is obviously still key to successful scheduling, the enlightened enterprise takes agent preferences and skill-sets into account. The “standard agent” approach to solving resource issues (i.e. treating one agent the same as any other) will cause problems with both agent satisfaction and customer service levels. Most companies using advanced workforce management software will have between six and nine skill-sets to work with, although a few contact centres use as many as 50.

A scheduler will have to find the best way to match the company’s requirements with those of its employees, and agent self-scheduling functionality – which allows an agent to bid for and choose specific shifts and vacations – is not only helpful in terms of forecasting but has a demonstratively positive effect on agent morale and attrition rates as well.

Scheduling can get particularly complicated in an omnichannel environment which usually has agents with multiple media-handling skills (e.g. voice, email, web chat etc.) and multiple business abilities (e.g. sales, service, product knowledge, languages etc.), and which may well be operating within a blended inbound/outbound environment, possibly spread across various locations.

An increasing number of contact centre operations no longer work on strict shift patterns of a fixed length, as flexibility can be of benefit both to the organisation and the agent: the organisation can resource peak hours without risking high levels of idle time outside of this, and shorter shifts may fit in better with the work-life balance of the agent. The recent enforced rise of remote working gives an opportunity for agents to work more of the hours that suit them (for example, in the evenings, or split-shifts around childcare), flexibility which contact centres can then use to extend their opening hours without paying excessively for anti-social hours or full shifts in times of lower volumes.

Many WFM solutions now offer a self-service function to allow agents to state their preferred shift patterns, request time off, swap shifts and request overtime, leading to more engaged and empowered agents and much less manual work for the scheduler. The advent of cloud-based solutions and mobile smartphone apps means that agents can make requests wherever they are, improving employee satisfaction and keeping the WFM system more up-to-date than if they were restricted to doing this within the physical contact centre within their own working hours.

---

## ADHERENCE AND REPORTING

Adherence is the ability to compare forecasts with reality and learn from mistakes, and “adherence to schedule” is one of the most valued metrics within the contact centre environment. Sophisticated scheduling and forecasting is useless without the opportunity for improvement brought about by adherence monitoring. Real-time adherence allows managers to see exactly what is happening, and can alert them to deviations from the expected activity, allowing them to make changes before problems occur, or even for the WFM system to do so automatically. Adherence allows a business to fine-tune its contact centre activity, and the more it is used, the more accurate forecasts and schedules become.

This is another area where the cerebral activity of traditional workforce management has become more dynamic. Real-time reporting on schedule adherence, and the ability to access this information through a web browser or smartphone app means that dynamic changes can be made to the system, with automated intraday changes being used increasingly, taking away the need for human intervention.

WFM solutions enable contact centre managers to monitor and manage agent performance in real time by monitoring the status of an agent's activity (for example, time spent logged on, against planned work schedules), even if the agent is working remotely. Agent adherence and non-adherence can then be acted upon quickly, and used to support performance appraisals.

---

## INTRADAY

In older versions of WFM, once the forecasts and schedules were set based on historical data and expectation, the opportunity for change was extremely limited and restricted to moving agents between queues and tasks manually: more of an art than a science. Today, many WFM solutions support rapid changes driven by actual interaction volumes. This is often known as ‘intraday’, a near-real time scheduling system based on actual demand for service and supply of agent availability, and relies upon flexibility from the agent and the enterprise, working together for the benefit of all .

For example:

- the WFM system forecasts the likely volume of interactions through each channel
- resource requirements are forecasted, based on the agent skills required
- agents submit their preferences for working hours (they have contracted to work a certain number of hours each month)
- shift patterns are scheduled and communicated to agents, who have the opportunity to arrange shift swaps with other agents. Businesses may wish agents to be contactable outside of their shift, possibly through SMS or an app, so that any requested schedule alterations or short-notice requests to login can be implemented in a timely fashion
- the WFM system alters schedules accordingly throughout the day, based on real volumes and service levels.



Intraday goes some way to resolving the underlying tension between employee and organisation concerning workforce scheduling, and as such can be seen as part of the broader move towards agent-centric WEM. It is in the enterprise's interest to have strictly calculated forecasts and exact allocation of resource, regardless of how this impacts upon the employee. Unsurprisingly, this leads to resentment amongst the workforce, increasing attrition and absence rates. Intraday goes some way to empowering the employee, without putting the enterprise at a disadvantage. WFM solutions that are built with a flexible architecture capable of scheduling in small time-increments (e.g. minutes rather than hours) will support employees' needs without damaging service levels.

It is important to understand that greater empowerment of agents over their working patterns is greatly beneficial to morale: rather than have to ask a supervisor or manager, they are to a great extent choosing their own hours, with the resulting benefit that they have greater buy-in to the process and are less likely to be absent, as well as reducing the time spent by supervisors in changing schedules manually.

There are a number of workforce management solutions that use their forecasting and scheduling functionality to identify periods in the working day where agents are likely to be underutilised and experience high levels of idle time. The identification of idle time is one thing: being able to recover unproductive time in the agent's daily routine and use this otherwise-lost capacity is quite another. A workforce management solution that has intraday capabilities can recover these small pockets of fragmented agent idle time as the day goes on, aggregating this time into larger blocks that can be allocated to other productive activities such as training, coaching, back-office tasks, answering asynchronous communications such as email, or catching up on administration. This can go a long way towards using the agent time that businesses already pay for, but which could not previously be accessed.

Having a more flexible WFM system should also widen the available pool of labour: whereas in the past, the nature of scheduling meant that full-time employees were preferred, being able to schedule in shorter time periods in near-real-time supports part-time workers, homeworkers, employees based elsewhere in the enterprise and seasonal workers.

---

## REMOTE WORKING

Homeworking provides companies with the opportunity to add greater flexibility into planning and scheduling, such as split-shifts (over the course of a day), 'micro-shifts' (where agents come online for an hour or less at peak times) and in the evening when children are in bed (potentially allowing longer opening hours for the contact centre).

'What-if?' scenario planning can help contact centres model and predict scenarios where for example the absence rate quadruples, enabling the organisation to see what would happen with service levels and scheduling, and potentially lining up business continuity solutions such as overflow to outsourcers. Workforce planners can also use this to model the likely effects of increased call lengths caused by queries that are outside the norm, a new agent's lack of familiarity with systems or other factors that may be being faced by contact centres being affected by the coronavirus crisis.

Some key WFM action points for remote workers and their managers:

- make sure that agents' contact information is up-to-date and available to management in both online and offline modes
- ensure agents understand how they clock on / clock off their shifts, as well as how management will supervise that they are doing so
- agents should check their schedule for the next day before they log off for the evening
- any WFM tools should be flexible enough to handle agent absences at very short notice without having to recreate the schedule manually.

Any workforce management system needs to be able to take full advantage of the flexibility of remote working agents, while providing the same level of real time management and support available to the centralised contact centre model. Remote working necessarily encourages agents to develop independence and take control of their work, and businesses should consider implementing the tools to support this.

It can be beneficial for everyone to allow agents to change their breaks themselves, bid for shifts and choose their own vacation period through an app without having to run everything through the workforce planning team first. Of course, the service level must be protected and any changes only ratified if this is the case. Giving remote working agents access to these sorts of tool will promote trust and do away with any issues such as perceived favouritism, as well as protecting the performance of the contact centre.

Contact centre management is often concerned that visibility into what agents are actually doing will be decreased in remote working environment. This does not necessarily have to be the case: tools exist that can check adherence to schedule (including breaks) and which can nudge agents into adherence by giving them reminders that a break is almost ending or that they are a little late logging back on. Key to this is that any change impacting upon the performance of the contact centre is immediately taken into account by the workforce management system which can then react accordingly, rather than there being delays of some hours before schedules can be changed.

The flexibility, agility and granularity of such automated tools can allow agents who work even a couple of minutes longer than their shift to group these minutes into a 'time bank' which can then be taken as flexitime: the opposite also exists for those agents who may be late logging onto their shift as they can work the time back later when it's needed by the business.

## CURRENT AND FUTURE USE OF WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

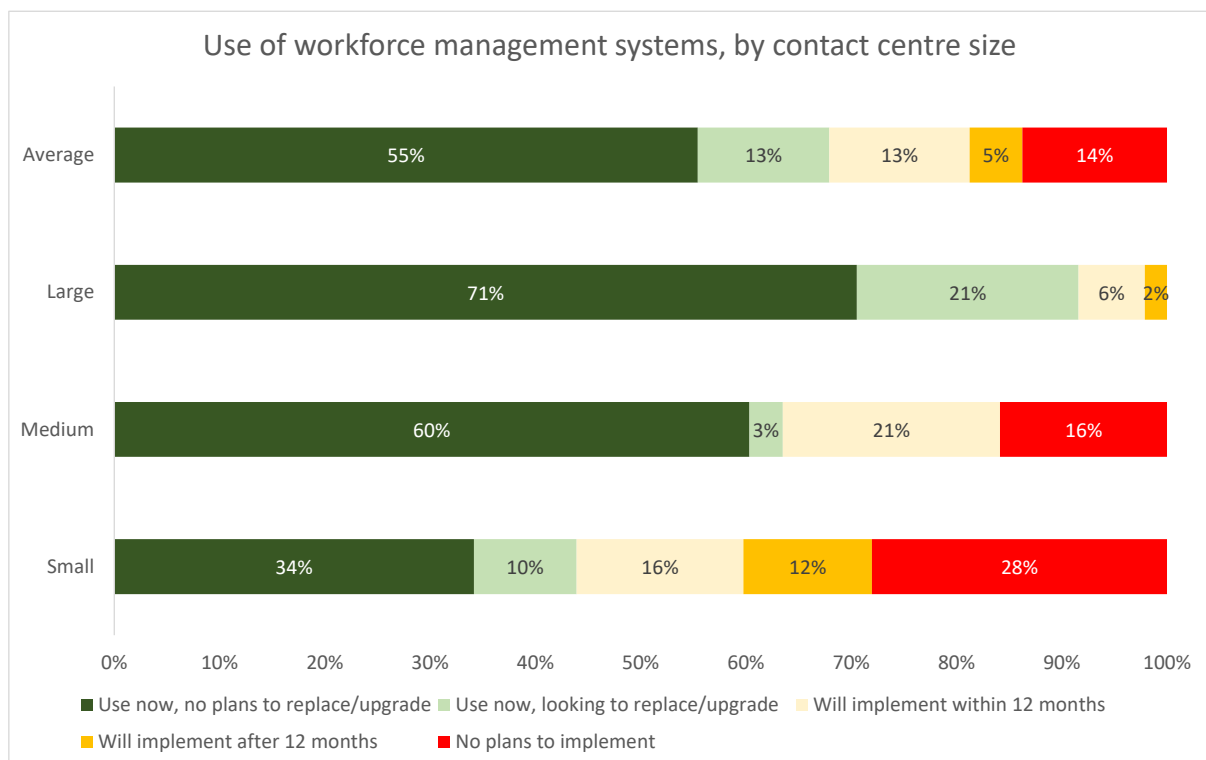
Until relatively recently, small contact centres were still very heavily involved in manual workforce management, which offers extremely limited opportunities for doing anything other than a static schedule that cannot easily be changed. In fact, forecasting and scheduling in this scenario is more of an art than a science. The low take-up of third-party workforce management tools was almost certainly down to cost, the fact that the time taken to create a manual schedule for 10 agents is far less than for 100 agents, and that the manager of a small contact centre does not need the flexibility or capabilities that a large operation can benefit by, as their labour and skills pool is so much more shallow to begin with.

However, there has recently been a significant uplift in the use of workforce management solutions in small contact centre sector, probably as a result of the increasing number of solutions – usually offered through a cloud-based deployment – aimed at the smaller end of the market by solution providers. These solutions offer relatively simple functionality, but will also have an easy-to-use interface for non-specialist users.

Workforce management systems are now common in contact centres, with a penetration rate of 68% amongst our survey respondents.

Of the current WFM users, 19% are actively looking to replace their WFM solution, and 13% of respondents indicate that they are likely to implement a system for the first time in the next 12 months.

Figure 1: Use of workforce management systems, by contact centre size

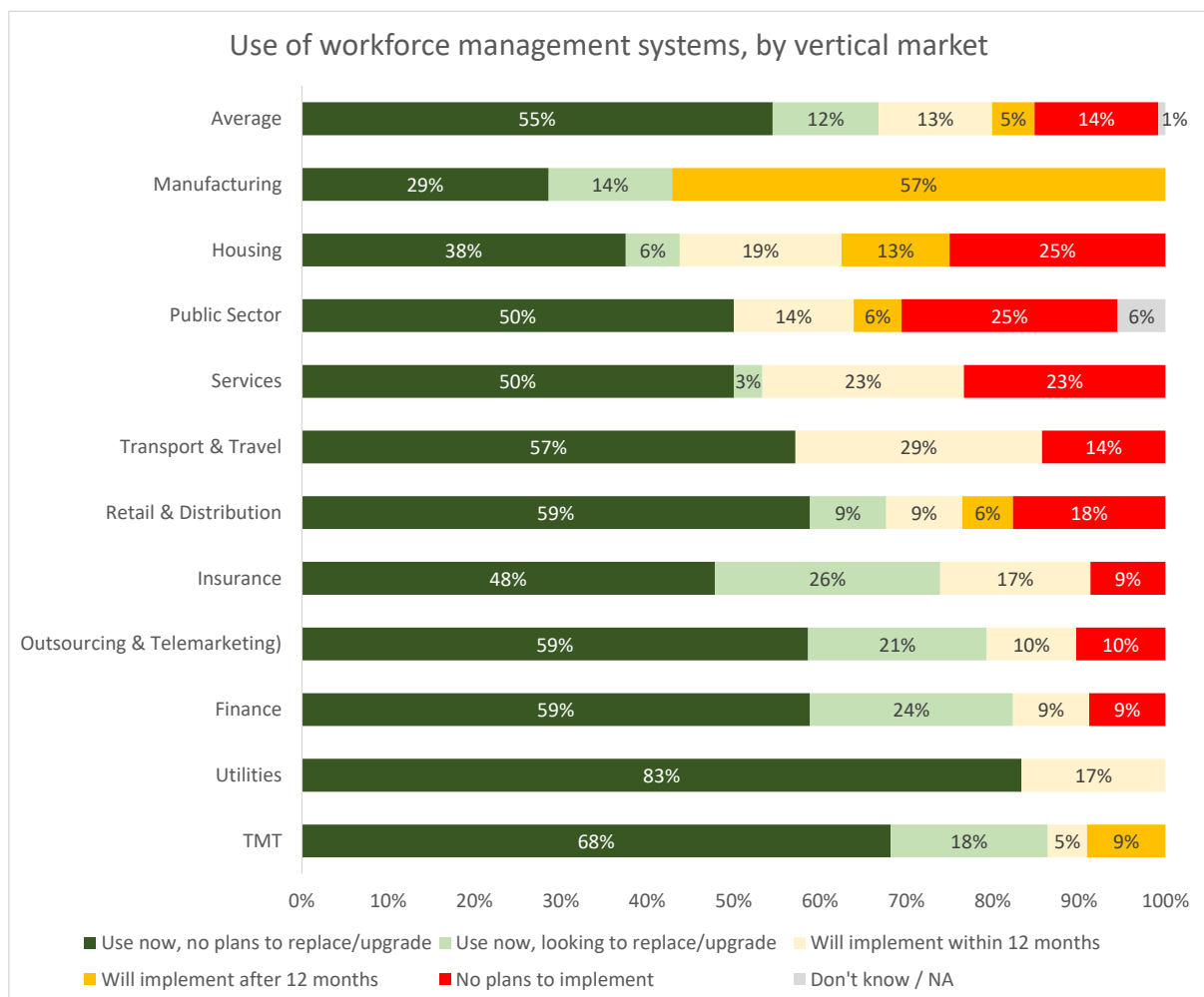


Large operations are far more likely to use dedicated third-party workforce management applications into which historical data can be fed to provide a far more accurate schedule. Small contact centres have traditionally been less likely to have implemented workforce management, due to issues over cost, complexity and whether it was even necessary in small operations. Recent years have seen opportunities via the cloud model, as well as subscription-based pricing alternatives, which enable accurate forecasting and scheduling options for smaller contact centres.

As the likelihood of workforce management system usage is far more of a factor of size and call volume, rather than the business type, care should be taken with the following chart which shows respondents' WFM penetration rates by vertical market.

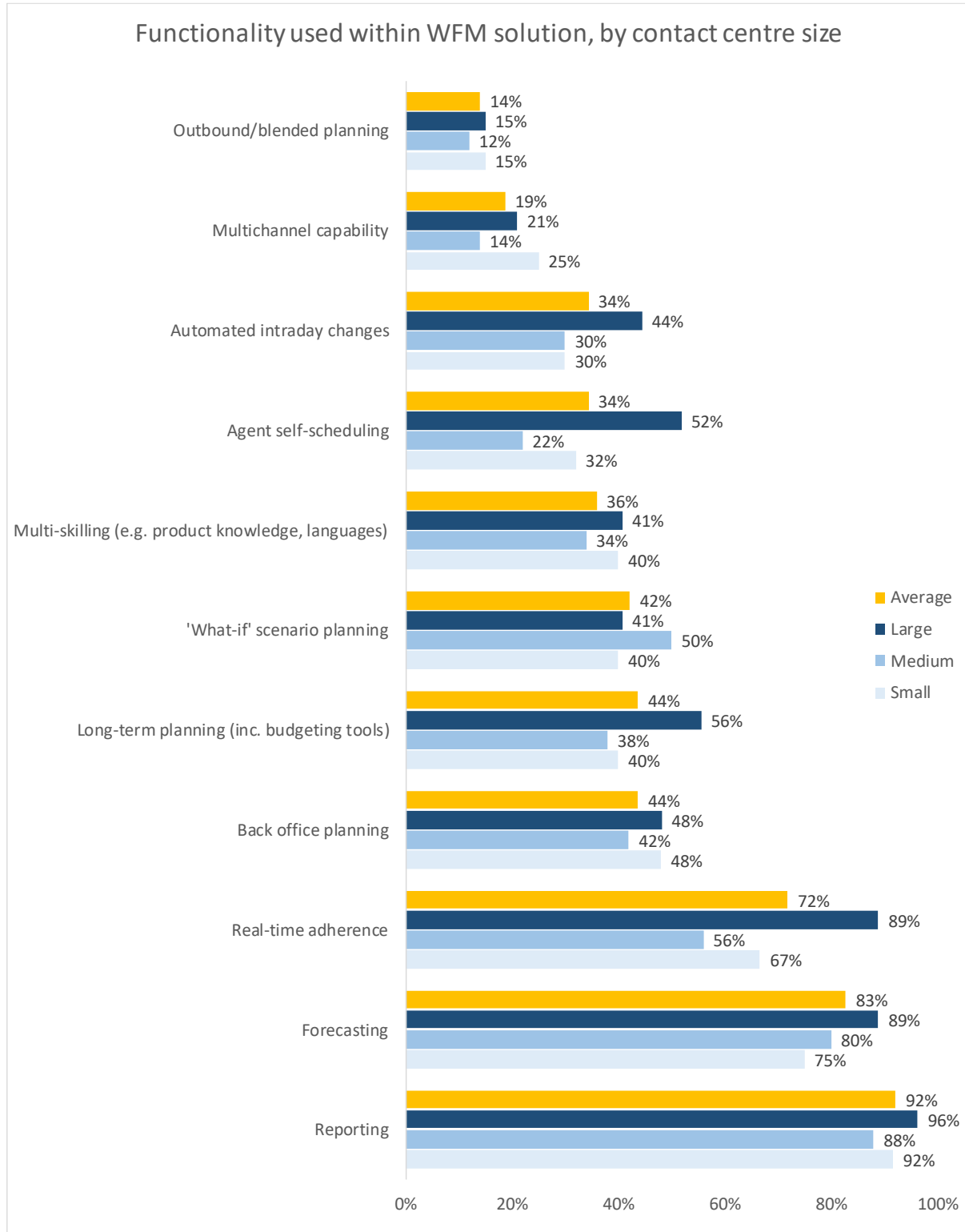
Those respondents in the outsourcing, insurance and finance sectors seem most likely to be looking to upgrade their WFM systems, with those in the transport & travel sector most likely to implement the solution within the next 12 months.

Figure 2: Use of workforce management systems, by vertical market



Respondents who said that they used workforce management solutions were asked which functionality they actually used (as opposed to what was bundled in with the solution, but which was not used).

Figure 3: Functionality used within WFM solution, by contact centre size



As would be expected, forecasting and reporting scored very highly, with real-time adherence to schedule and agent self-scheduling also seen as being very useful in larger contact centres: functionality which can be seen as a potential win-win for both agent and scheduler, in that it provides a more realistic schedule as well as giving the agent an element of control over when they wish to work.

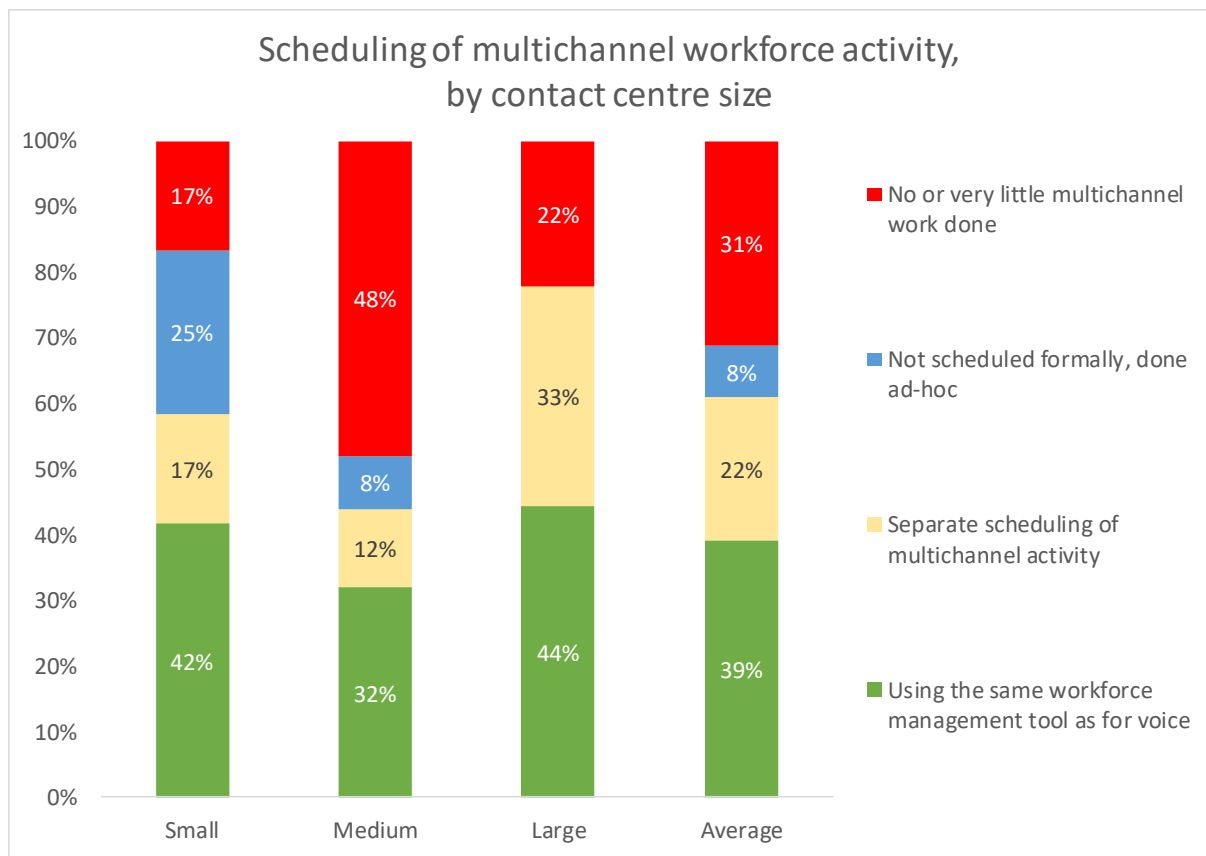
Somewhat less than half of respondents used workforce management solutions for more strategic aims including ‘what-if’ scenario planning and longer term forecasting. Only a minority used more recent forms of functionality such as multichannel scheduling and automated intraday changes, and 1 in 7 respondents use WFM for outbound / blended planning.

Back-office scheduling has grown greatly in recent times, functionality which supports businesses to deliver what the front office has promised, with 44% of respondents using this.

39% of respondents – especially those in larger contact centres – use a combined voice and multimedia workforce management application, with 8% using an ad-hoc approach.

There was a noticeable use of standalone forecasting and scheduling for multichannel activity, mainly in larger operations which may run their non-voice operation as a separate part of the customer contact environment. Smaller operations are most likely to use ad-hoc multichannel scheduling.

Figure 4: Scheduling of multichannel workforce activity, by contact centre size



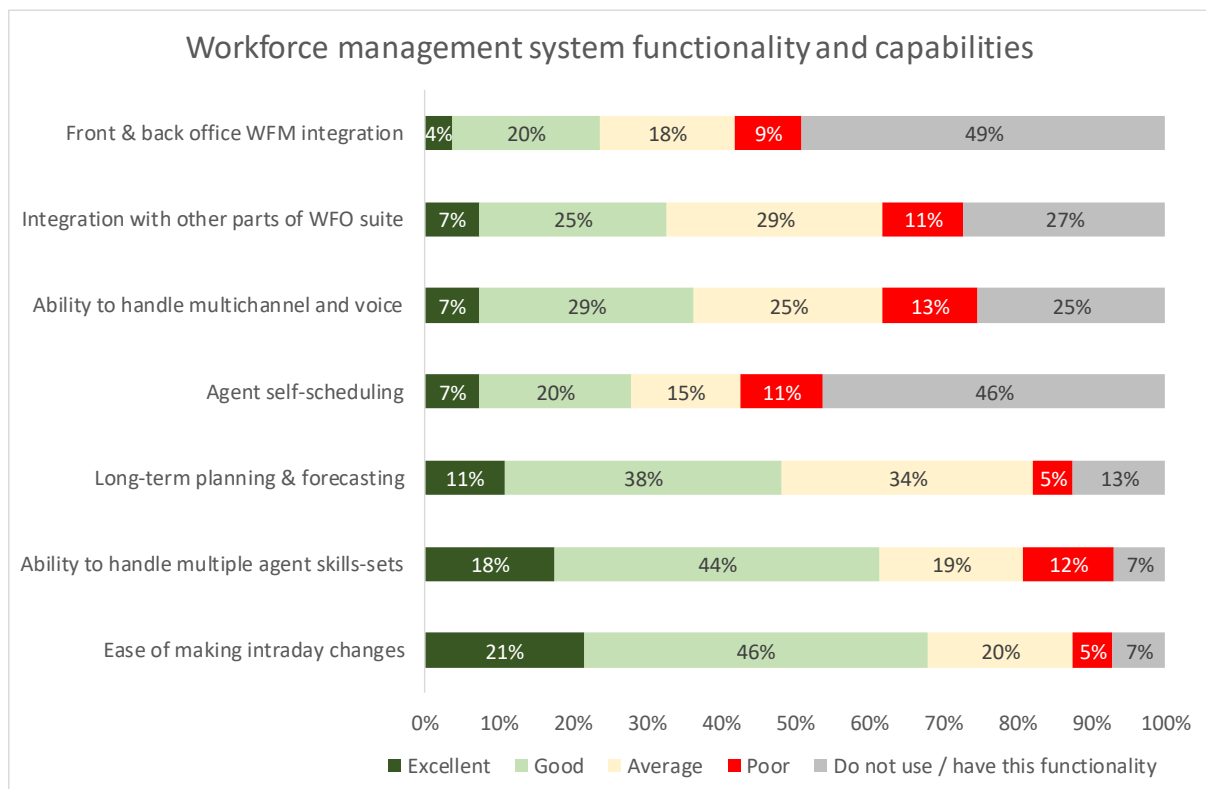
Respondents were asked to comment upon their opinion of the functionality and capabilities of their workforce management system as it stands.

Relatively few respondents commented negatively about any functionality (i.e. actively rating it as ‘poor’): multichannel capabilities in particular are seen as having improved greatly in recent years.

However, it can be viewed that functionality graded as being ‘average’ could be seen in a similar context to ‘poor’, in that no organisation or business should be satisfied if their products or services are merely rated as average by their customers, in which case there is still significant room for improvement in long-term planning, integration with other parts of the WFO suite and multichannel capabilities.

Only the ease of making intraday changes is generally seen as delivering what is needed by most respondents.

Figure 5: Workforce management system functionality and capabilities

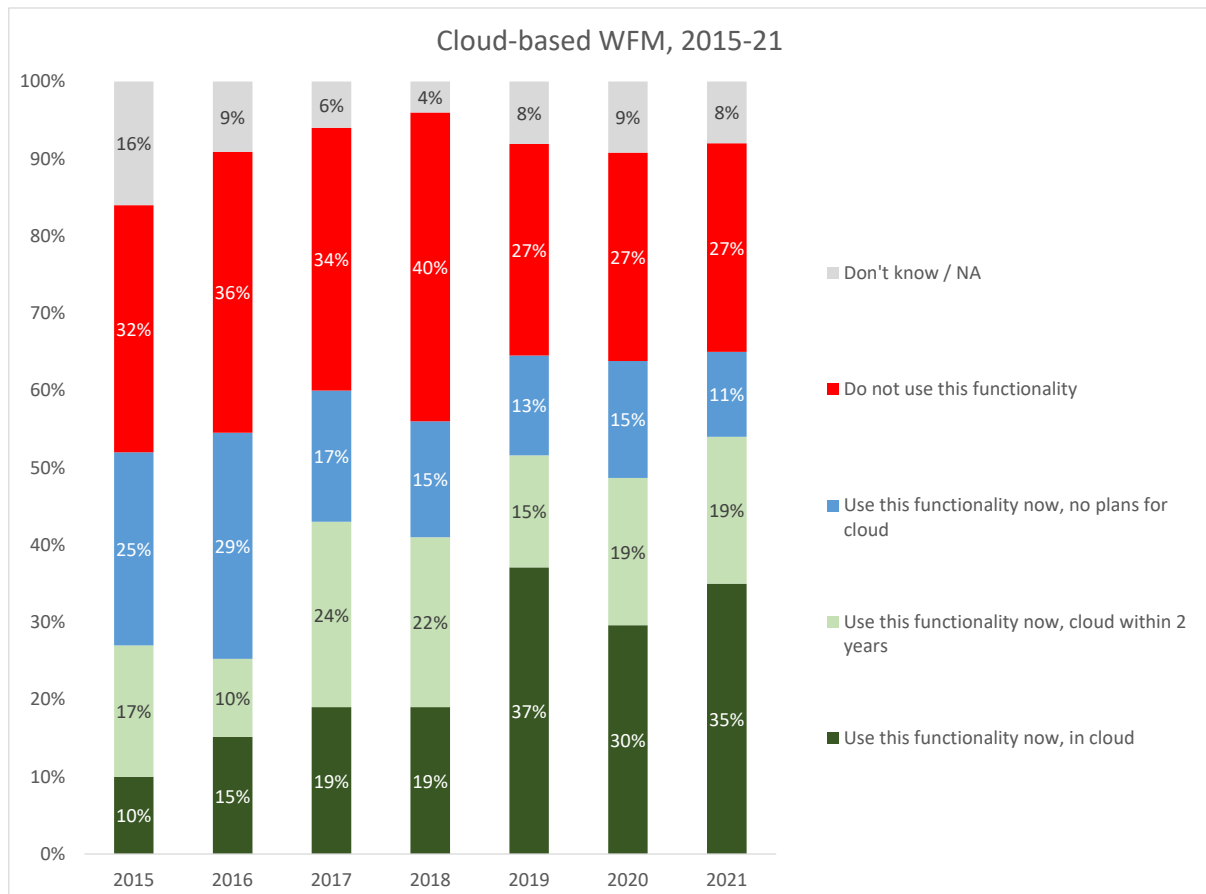


## THE FUTURE OF WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

Agents account for around 75% of contact centre costs, and as effective workforce management solutions have such an impact on efficiency, productivity and expense of the operation, workforce management will continue to be amongst the most important tools of the contact centre’s disposal. This is a very interesting time for those involved in WFM, as many disruptive influences – cloud, flexible working, analytics, multichannel / omnichannel and back office WFM – are coalescing simultaneously, driving vendors to expand and develop their functionality.

Cloud-based solutions don’t just offer financial benefits: as the time taken to roll out new releases is so much less than the traditional CPE model, vendors can bring out new versions much more frequently, and experiment with offering cutting-edge functionality far sooner than they would in a traditional premise-based deployment environment. The continued rise in homeworking, virtualisation, and mobility in general will be a major driver for the uptake of cloud-based solutions. This model also encourages smaller operations to implement WFM, or experiment with functionality that was previously out of their price range. The chart below shows the significant movement towards cloud-based WFM in the past five years, with a major jump in 2019 that has been sustained in the past two years.

Figure 6: Cloud-based WFM, 2015-21





# Hybrid Experiences

## Blending the best of digital and physical customer care

Discover why 75% of global executives are investing in hybrid experiences this year<sup>[1]</sup> and why your business should be too.



Covid-19 has changed the way we live, work and shop.

Everyday activities that once took place in person – from GP appointments to gym classes, university classes, work meetings and grocery shopping – can now take place online.

This has given rise to a new hybrid way of life, where we can connect, work and share experiences with others no matter where we or they are.

### What is hybrid customer service?

For businesses, this new hybrid world has opened up new ways to serve customers.

Contact centres and customer service teams can now blend the best of their physical and digital customer care to create highly efficient, personalised, and empathetic customer service experiences both in-store and online.

Imagine, for example, that you want to upgrade your coffee machine.

Like most consumers today<sup>[2]</sup>, you begin your search online and check out the latest models on your favourite brand's website.

After a few scrolls, a chatbot pops up: "Hi there! Would you like to see these models in action?" You accept and receive a live video call from a customer service agent who walks you through the products and helps you determine the best model for you.

Discover how Puzzel can help you deliver exceptional hybrid experiences. Visit us at [puzzel.com](https://puzzel.com)

“



Hybrid experiences are the core of our mission at Puzzel. We help brands to deliver exceptional customer experiences by combining people and technology. We automate when it makes sense and enable your people in the moments that matter, to help you build customer relationships for life.

Frederic Laziou, Puzzel CEO

”

Satisfied, you end the call and head straight to checkout. In just a few clicks, you've purchased your new machine and a new flavour of coffee pods recommended to you based on your previous purchases. You've also opted in to receive monthly reminders on WhatsApp to top up your supply.

This is the power of hybrid experiences and the future of customer service.

### Three tips for delivering hybrid experiences

#### 1. Orchestrate your channels

Hybrid experiences require a mix of live and self-service channels. But crucially, these channels need to connect and work seamlessly together.

When channels don't connect, customers can get stuck in loops and data gets lost in silos. So make sure your channels are well orchestrated so customers and information can move freely between them.

#### 2. Avoid technology traps

Don't fall into the trap of thinking you need every technology under the sun to deliver great hybrid experiences.

Research shows the average contact centre agent uses 8.2 different systems and tools to resolve customer enquiries every day<sup>[3]</sup>. So consider what technologies are crucial for your customers' success and how they can be integrated and unified to streamline your agent experience.

#### 3. Test, learn and refine

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that contact centres can be agile.

Experiment, learn fast and adapt your hybrid customer service strategy to find the best solution for your customers, agents and business. Make decisions based on data, not gut feel, and listen to feedback.

[1] Deloitte

[2] Salesforce

[3] Gartner

---

## THE FUTURE OF WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

Workforce management solution providers are keen to expand out of the traditional contact centre, with the **back offices and branches** of large organisations being seen as potential goldmines. Far more employees work in these spaces than in the contact centre, although many back offices lack the same focus upon efficiency and the tools to improve it. With the increased focus on the entire customer journey – and the understanding that this is where many processes fail, making more work for the contact centre in terms of call-backs – back-office processes are starting to fall within the remit of customer experience professionals, who are likely to take their knowledge of contact centre workforce management and apply it in these new areas. The industry is likely to see back office and contact centre workforce management systems will see ever-closer integration, or even to work as a single centralised function that can track and analyse the effect of different departments and processes on others throughout the customer journey. It is certainly noticeable that the use of back-office WFM functionality had grown greatly in the past few years, and elements such as intraday are often included within this.

This is not to say that selling back-office workforce management solutions is a simple matter of repackaging existing contact centre functionality, as the back office has somewhat different requirements to the contact centre – for example:

- lack of automation for tracking inbound/outbound work
- handling deferred workloads
- the assumption that forecasts built on contact centre events and volumes are similar to the back office
- longer service levels
- different resource requirement calculations
- manual and complex tasks
- more likely to be based at multiple sites
- adherence to schedule without data from an ACD
- identification of bottleneck processes.

Yet the opportunity exists and contact centre workforce management vendors are in a prime position to make the most of it.

**Omnichannel/multichannel** forecasting and scheduling will become even more important, not just as overall digital interactions grow generally across the industry, but also as those operations that have been struggling to handle a small proportion of emails recognise that the problem is not going to go away, and look to invest in new workforce management solutions. The recent issues around moving contact centres to a remote working scenario meant that some businesses decided on a digital-first strategy, and the huge increase in voice calls seen by some businesses meant that call queues were intolerable for many customers who then tried digital channels instead: digital channels have seen a major increase in volumes as a result, and this is unlikely to sink back to pre-pandemic levels, so businesses will certainly need to factor this into any forecasts and schedules. Additionally, the rise of chatbots and voicebots means that the interactions that AI carries out instead of agents should be considered in longer-term planning at the least.

While a considerable proportion of organisations still have dedicated digital teams, many small and mid-size operations have a much more flexible approach to omnichannel, and the ability to move agents between channels in the near-real-time capacity will be highly prized. It is noticeable in previous charts in the chapter that the majority of operations are less than happy with current omnichannel WFM functionality, so we can expect to see further efforts from solution providers into improving this.

It's important to understand that the number of channels will continue to increase: even traditional media such as letters and faxes still have their place in many contact centre operations, and next-generation social media such as WhatsApp and Messenger are positioning themselves in the customer contact space, and the recent wave of new video users (e.g. through Zoom) means that customers will be familiar with this channel if businesses decide to use it. Next-generation WFM solutions need to be flexible enough to handle any number of new channels, taking into account their nature and customers' expectations of service level when using them. It is also likely that more sophisticated workforce management systems will be able to predict with a reasonable level of accuracy those interaction types which are likely to require more than one channel in order to handle them successfully, and forecast and schedule appropriately.

It is not only the changing mix of channels that should be considered, but also the type of interactions coming through each. It is fair to say that easier work will continue to move to self-service and AI-enabled digital channels, and it should also be noted that in the pandemic crisis, call lengths went up considerably: queries were more difficult; agents had less familiarity with these issues; remote agents often did not have the same access to their usual knowledge bases or support systems; customers who had waited a long time in a queue may want to ask more questions or receive greater reassurance so that they won't have to call back. When the dust has settled, WFM planners should consider what interactions look like in pandemic or other emergency situations, and use this to model future resourcing.

There has been significant investment made in recent years to improve the **WFM user interface** without sacrificing the sophistication of the solution, in order to offer the benefits and capabilities to a wider audience than dedicated technical WFM professionals. This will accelerate, as it is in the interests of both the vendor and the business to be able to use more advanced functionality: on the one hand to justify the extra expense of the solution compared to basic workforce management; on the other to gain competitive advantage without having to employ more WFM specialists.

Contact centres as a whole are now certainly less centralised than in the past: **virtualisation and homeworking** have recently become well-entrenched in many organisations, with knowledge workers also being used more frequently. Users of WFM may also need to consider how any crowdsourced customer support resources will affect the demand for agents' services. The power and ubiquity of smartphones and tablets have led to an increase in mobile working – no longer do supervisors or managers have to be at their desks in order to monitor performance and react accordingly – and the new generation of workers have an expectation, both culturally and supported through regulation, that their employment will be treated as flexible by the business as well as themselves. This attitude towards work, and the increased empowerment of individuals will mean WFM functionality that allows shift-swapping, vacation bidding and short-notice shift changes are now required, with smartphone apps supporting this. The term 'intraday' – referring to dynamic scheduling and resourcing in response to rapidly changing conditions – is so useful and necessary that intraday capability has become standard functionality in many WFM solutions.

It is also likely that increased agent self-responsibility will lead to a situation where they are more empowered and aware of their own performance and skills gaps, allowing them to take control of their education and training rather than waiting for a team leader or trainer to tell them what to do.

The technological strides being made in **analytics** are leading to advances in data modelling and analysis that are finding their way into current and future workforce management offerings, including the use of artificial intelligence to improve forecasting and scheduling in difficult-to-optimize areas such as call blending. Customer journey analytics, which includes looking at workload necessary in back office operations to fulfil the overall transaction, will be supported through the use of artificial intelligence which will be able to use data from multiple sources throughout the enterprise in near-real-time to predict demand, forecasting and scheduling resource based upon far deeper data than simply historical ACD statistics.

WFM will continue to **integrate** more deeply with other elements of the WFO suite: analytics is an obvious area where business intelligence and contact centre performance meet closely, but also the performance management and QA modules, identifying best practices and singling-out agents skilled in particular types of interaction or channel. This will enable contact centres not just to have enough agents at the right place at the right time, but enough of the **right** agents. This insight will also feed into coaching and eLearning functionality, sharing best practice and identifying training opportunities. This focus on putting the right agents in the right place at the right time can go a step further by looking at agent personas, which are based on past performance and biodata, as well as their personalities, behaviour and motivations in order to match agents with the predicted type of work and customers that they would be best at handling.

## ABOUT CONTACTBABEL

ContactBabel is the contact centre industry expert. If you have a question about how the industry works, or where it's heading, the chances are we have the answer.

We help US and UK contact centres compare themselves to their closest competitors so they can understand what they are doing well, what needs to improve and how they can do this.

The coverage provided by our massive and ongoing primary research projects is matched by our experience analysing the contact centre industry. We understand how technology, people and process best fit together, and how they will work collectively in the future.

If you have a question about the contact centre and CX industry, please get in touch.

Email: [info@contactbabel.com](mailto:info@contactbabel.com)

Website: [www.contactbabel.com](http://www.contactbabel.com)

Telephone: +44 (0)191 271 5269

**Free research reports available from [www.contactbabel.com](http://www.contactbabel.com) (UK and US versions) include:**

- The Inner Circle Guide to Agent Engagement & Empowerment
- The Inner Circle Guide to AI, Chatbots & Machine Learning
- The Inner Circle Guide to AI-Enabled Self-Service
- The Inner Circle Guide to Cloud-based Contact Centre Solutions
- The Inner Circle Guide to Contact Centre Remote Working Solutions
- The Inner Circle Guide to Customer Engagement & Personalisation
- The Inner Circle Guide to Customer Interaction Analytics
- The Inner Circle Guide to Fraud Reduction & PCI Compliance
- The Inner Circle Guide to Omnichannel
- The Inner Circle Guide to Omnichannel Workforce Optimisation
- The Inner Circle Guide to Outbound & Call Blending
- The Inner Circle Guide to Video & Next-Generation Customer Contact
- The Inner Circle Guide to the Voice of the Customer
  
- The European Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide
- The UK Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide
- The US Contact Center Decision-Makers' Guide
- The UK Customer Experience Decision-Makers' Guide
- The US Customer Experience Decision-Makers' Guide
  
- UK Contact Centre Verticals: Communications; Finance; Insurance; Outsourcing; Retail & Distribution; Utilities
- US Contact Center Verticals: Communications; Finance; Healthcare; Insurance; Outsourcing; Retail & Distribution.

**To get the full “2022 UK Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide” for free, please visit [www.contactbabel.com/research](http://www.contactbabel.com/research)**