

Chapter

# 2

## The cost/CX high-wire act.

Achieve cost/CSAT balance through  
intelligent self-service and collaboration.

**When times are good,  
contact centers are  
CX-centric.**

**When times are bad,  
contact centers are  
a cost center.**

Sound familiar? Contact center veterans will agree that this has long been the prevailing wisdom. But today, as the world economy struggles to find equilibrium (and the US deals with the greatest financial setback in 80-90 years), the idea of prioritizing dollars over customer experience seems outrageous. The reality is that business leaders must prioritize both.

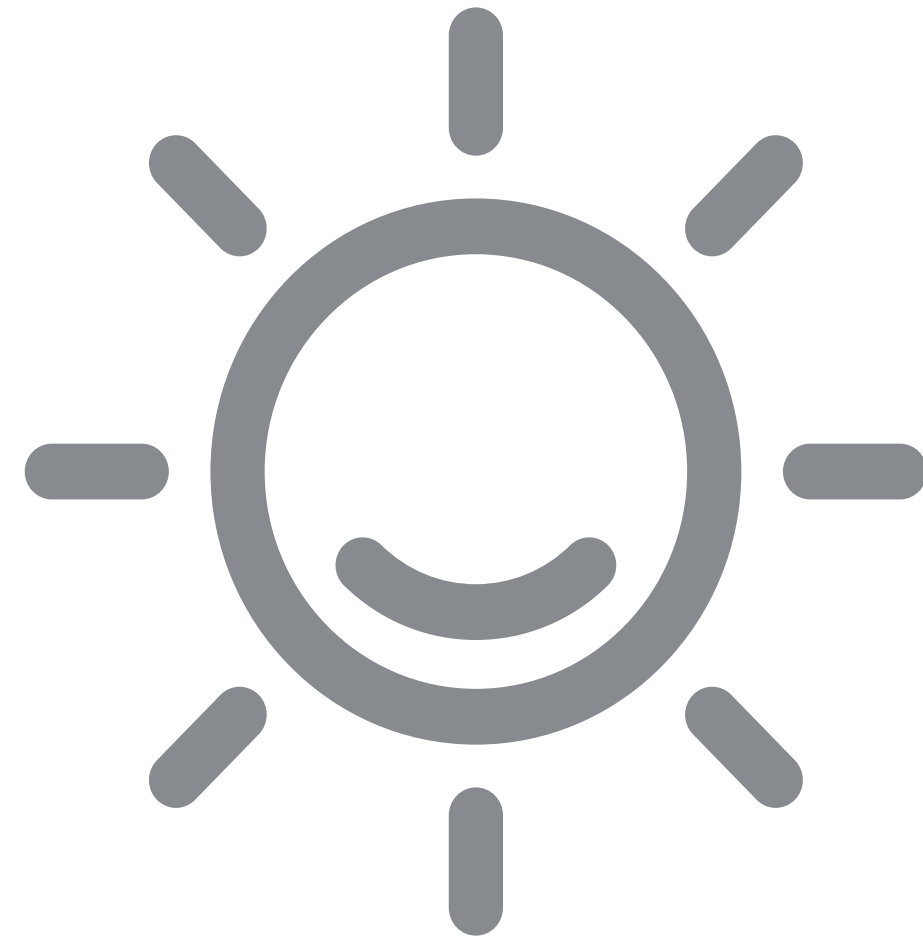
Oh yeah. And do it in a way that's never been done before.

# Nothing but blue skies

In 2019, Gartner published a survey detailing CEO key priorities and objectives for 2019/2020. At the time—in spite of rising, visible economic challenges—there was no real indicator of impending financial crisis

In true CEO fashion, mentions related to revenue growth were present, increasing 53% YoY. Mentions of financial controls and cost management were also up. In that same report, however, mentions related to the prioritization and focus on customers decreased 15%. Briefly summarized, CEOs seemed to be focused on revenue growth, profitability, and—in accordance with prevailing wisdom—a little less worried about keeping customers happy.

Then, everything changed.

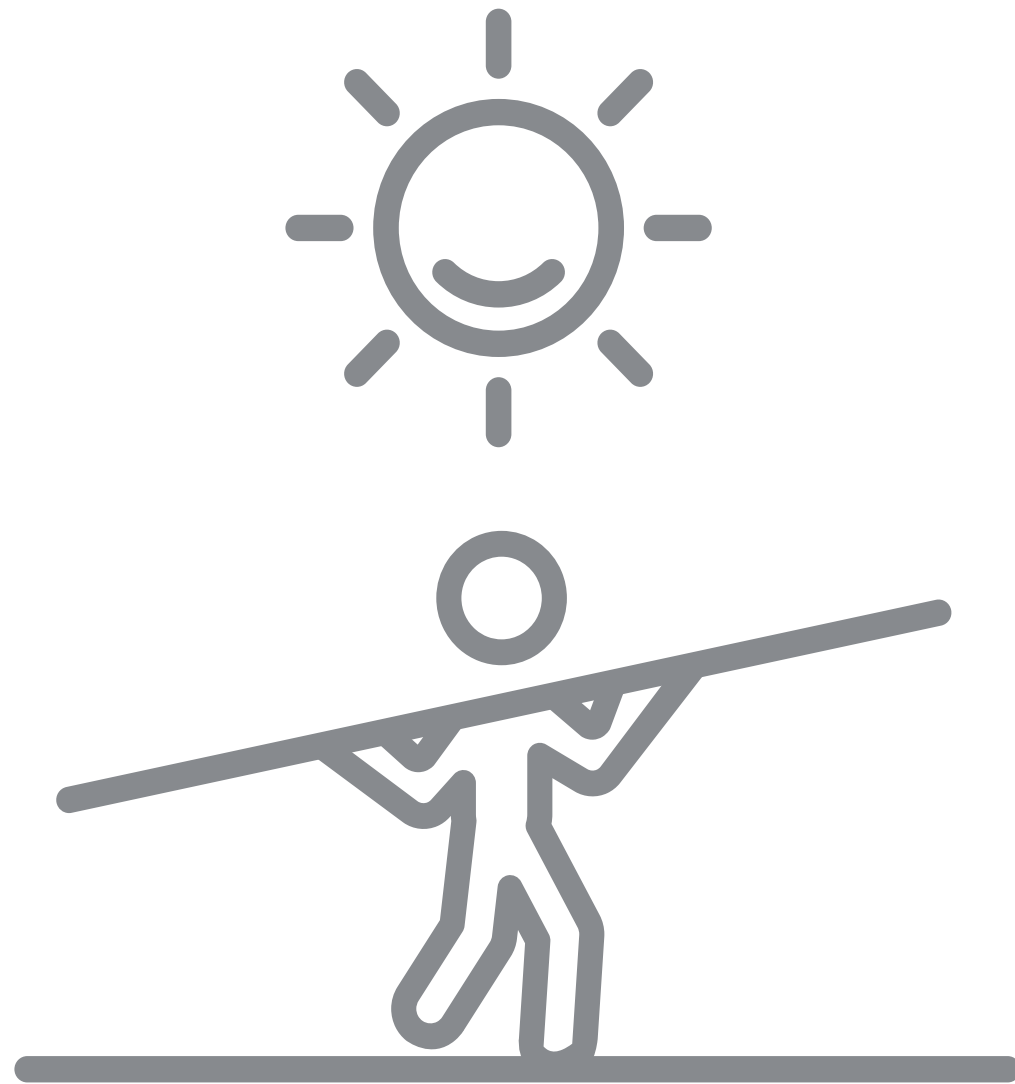


**32%**

**of contact centers had a goal to reduce operating costs without compromising the quality of customer care.**

**Source:** Aberdeen, "The Intelligent Content Center Survey," June 2020

[Read Related Research](#)



# The digital transformation tightrope

No one could have prepared for 2020. But for companies behind on digital transformation, IT leaders found themselves walking a precarious tightrope.

Employees were sent home. Call volumes spiked while reduced staff availability (whether due to layoffs or remote work challenges) resulted in increased wait times. Gaps in business communications, customer support and popular meeting platforms grew into **large chasms**. Overnight, IT leaders found themselves struggling to successfully and securely connect employees and customers. Hybrid models and siloed solutions were pushed to the limits. IT was walking a tightrope, and for many, there was simply no safety net.

**27%**

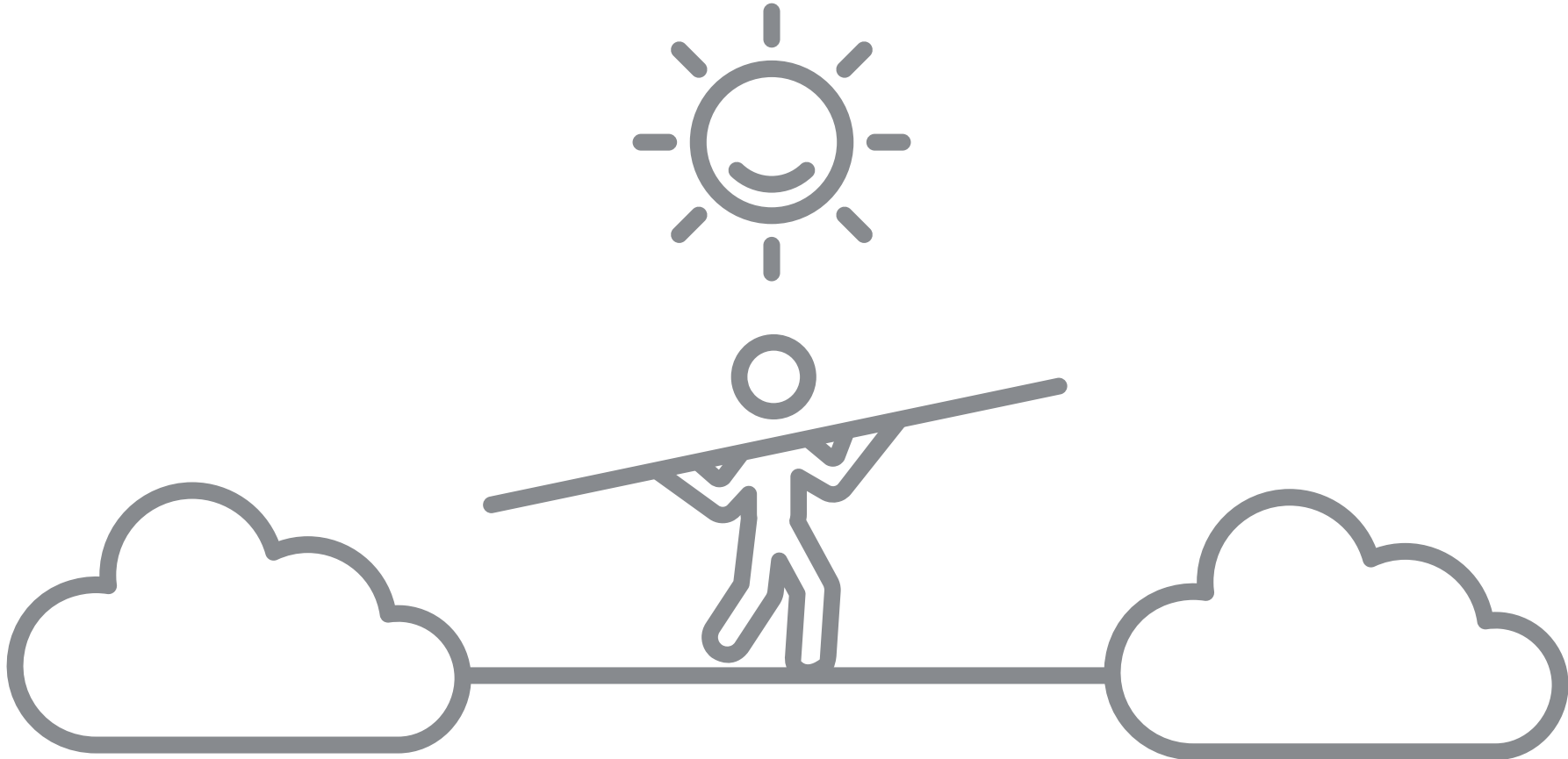
**of those respondents  
cited outdated technology  
infrastructure as a roadblock.**

**Source:** Aberdeen, "The Intelligent Content Center Survey," June 2020

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# The customer experience high-wire act

Customers today expect fast, frictionless, personalized service. In the midst of a global crisis, the stakes are even higher, and businesses recognize this. According to a June 2020 survey conducted by Aberdeen, **66% of contact centers today still rank improving customer experience results and consistency as their top goal.**



Typically, organizations look to tackle this first through automation. Historically, this is not uncommon. **The Brookings Institution** reports that for each of the three recessions that have occurred over the last 30 years, the pace of automation has increased.

Fortunately, we are at a unique time in which self-service and the use of automation no longer detracts from a contact center's ability to provide exemplary customer experience. In fact, self-service is now the preferred form of service.

But self-service of the past is not the same thing as the **AI-assisted self-service options** we see today. We have evolved from auto attendants to basic IVR to a full, intelligent conversational exchange. In June 2020, Gartner

updated its "The Use of Conversational AI for Customer Service" report, projecting that **20% of customer service interactions will be handled by conversational agents** by 2022 and that 30% of all organizations will utilize AI-enabled process orchestration and intelligence.

It's fairly easy to quantify the benefits and ROI of conversational AI technology. It's also easy to understand why IT leaders would feel especially pressured during this time. They were already walking the digital transformation tightrope, when increased pressure to meet customer expectations during a time of crisis elevated that rope to a high wire. AI assisted self-service is all about options; the question is, where to start?



# Customer self-service tipping point

**98%**

**would prefer NOT to have to interact directly with a person.**

Source: Adobe, "The State of Voice Assistants".

**85%**

**will start with self-service in 2022, up from 48% today.**

Source: Gartner, "How to evaluate what customer self-service options your customer want".

# The intelligent answer

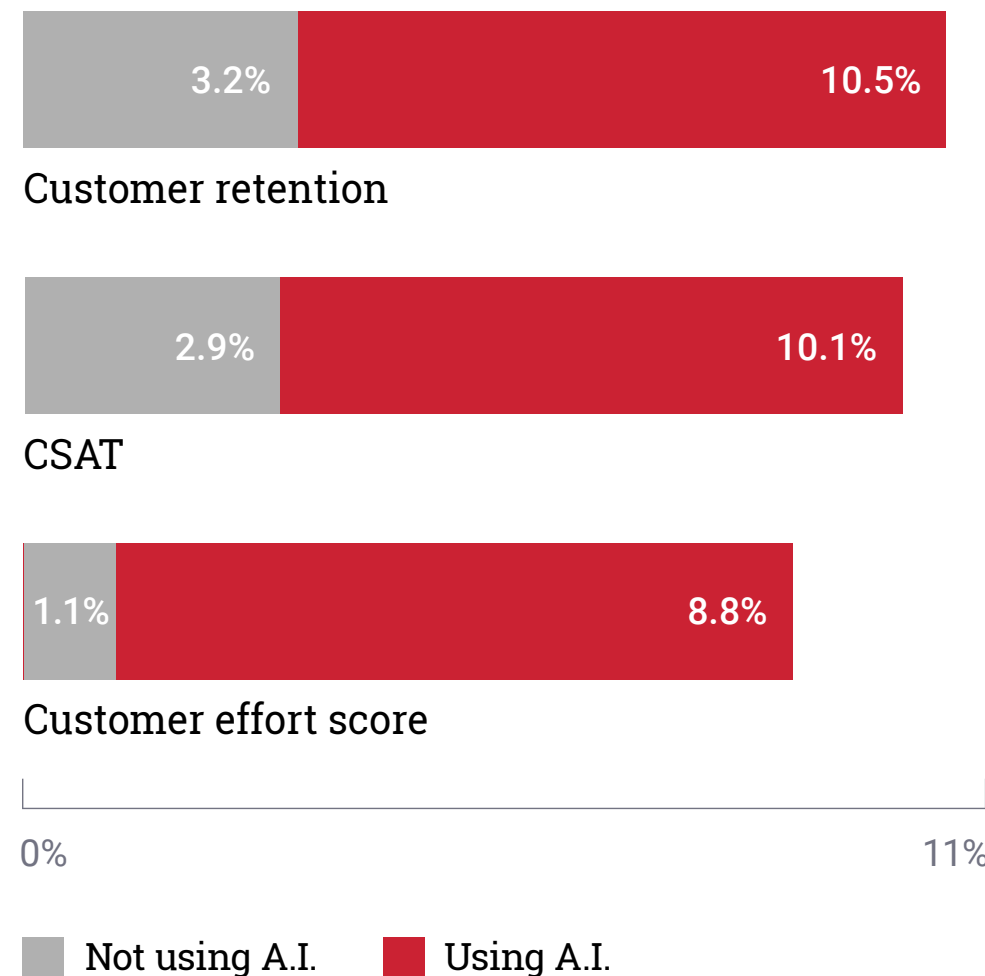
To take advantage of these powerful technologies, you must first start with a **cloud solution**. Establish what problems you are trying to solve and evaluate how, for example, an intelligent IVR or virtual assistant can help: whether that be to enhance current traditional self-service options, ensure 24/7 availability, or improve efficiency by automating routine calls while freeing up agents time for more complex interactions. The operational and financial benefits can be easily quantified.

When it comes to customer experience, Aberdeen's June 2020 research shows that adopters of AI-enabled contact center technologies demonstrate clear improvement in customer retention, CSAT, and customer effort score.

Remember, the use of AI assisted self-service doesn't mean zero live agents, it means better, more effective live agents and faster resolution.

## A.I. Usage in Contact Centers

### Areas of Improvement



Source: Aberdeen, "The Intelligent Contact Center Survey," June 2020

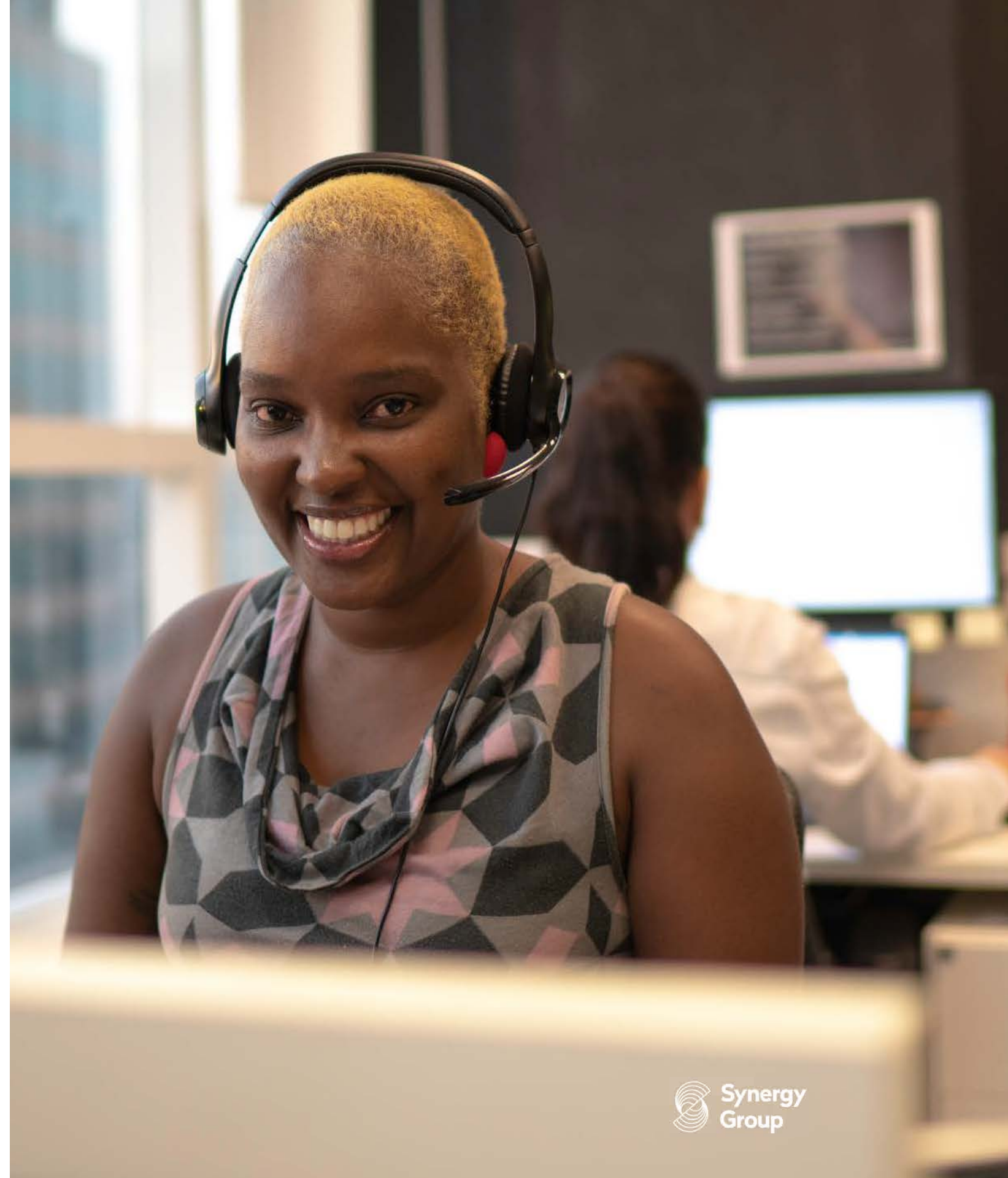
# Beyond the high-wire: The communication- collaboration skywalk

While most customers today first look to self-service to resolve issues, live agents remain a critical second line of defense. Done right, automation frees up those agents to deal with more complex interactions.

# Connecting communication and collaboration

To successfully resolve complex issues, agents often rely on the input and involvement of other individuals, teams and departments within an organization. First call resolution (FCR) is an important **KPI for contact centers** and is directly correlated to CSAT improvements.

Never before has the ability to **communicate and collaborate across an organization** been so important in resolving customer issues. When agents are not working physically side-by-side, rapid knowledge-sharing and collaboration become more challenging. According to Aberdeen, more than one in three research respondents cite the lack of collaboration between the contact center and other parts of the business as a roadblock to achieving their customer experience goals.





So why do so many organizations find it difficult to support collaboration? There is certainly no lack of tools, apps or targeted point solutions. But for IT leaders, success depends on connecting these technologies across the organization in a unified, seamless, and secure way.

This is where a single platform approach to communication and collaboration makes sense. By integrating native voice, video, chat, contact center, and enterprise-class API solutions into one global, secure, reliable **cloud communications platform**, people are more connected, collaborative and productive no matter where they are in the world.



**“Our ticket sales and service team are working at full capacity and function just as if they were sitting next to each other in the offices...”**

**Brian H.**

Senior Director of Tech, **Kansas City Royals**



## Chapter 2 Takeaways

To walk the high wire of cost, quality, and customer experience, IT leaders need to eliminate silos, facilitate collaboration, and provide intelligent self-service. And they need to do this in a secure, reliable, grounded way that supports the unique requirements of remote agents. Bring business communication, collaboration, contact center, and AI assisted self-service **together**, and you can effectively operate from anywhere and ensure long-term business survival.

# Resources

Check out these resources to help you evaluate your current customer service environment:

## Whitepaper

[The ROI of Uniting Unified Communications and Contact Center](#)

## Blog

[Rethinking Video Meetings to Increase Customer Success](#)

## Resource

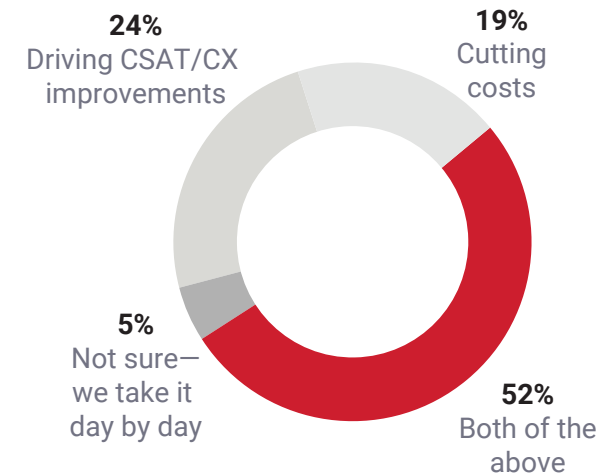
[Contact Center Work from Home Checklist](#)

## Interview

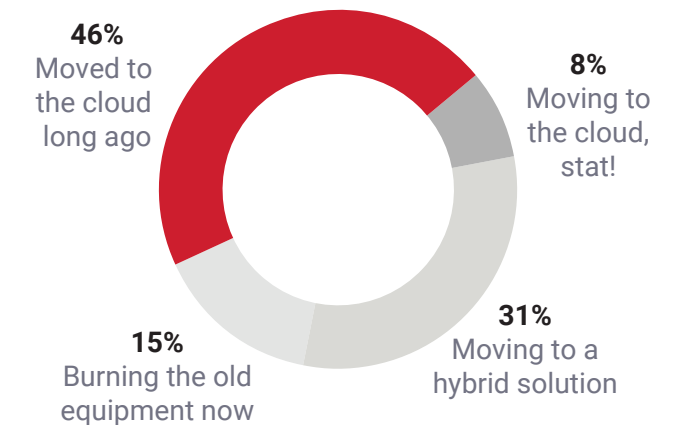
[Acer balances customer experience and costs with 8x8](#)

## 8x8 Poll Results

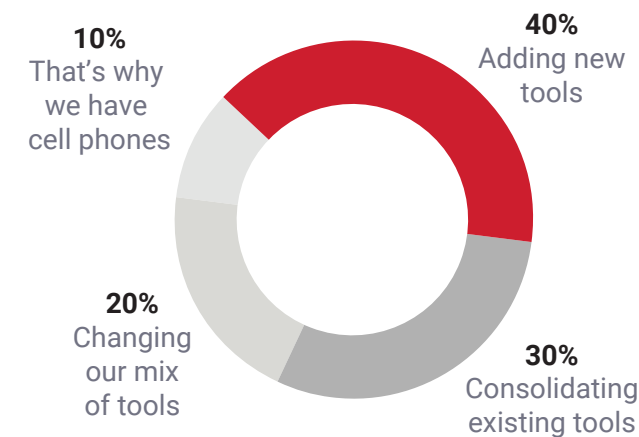
**What's most important to your long-term business survival?**



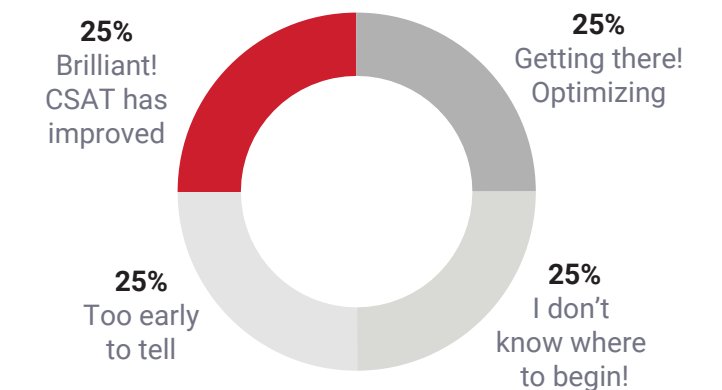
**What is the status of your digital transformation initiatives in 2020?**



**How has your use of collaboration tools changed in 2020?**



**How effective are AI tools in handling your customers' inquiries?**



Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter



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global voice communications capabilities.

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