

Customer Service - Will You Lead From The Front or Lag Behind?

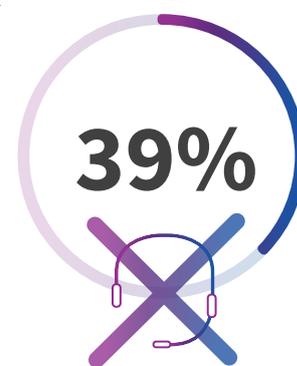
Kura and Inisoft, leading customer service outsourcer and software specialists, have undertaken a series of projects with ContactBabel and CCA Global to understand the challenges in the contact centre. This research aimed to understand the drivers for change within the contact centre industry, how leaders make decisions, and how aligned they are with the advisors delivering the service. ContactBabel surveyed over 100 UK decision makers, and CCA Global put questions directly to over 600 front-end advisors.

In this report, we at Kura and Inisoft offer our advice on addressing some of these challenges and also describe some of the initiatives that we have introduced to address them.

Attrition in the Contact Centre

Industry leaders were asked what the key drivers for change in their contact centres were. From this only 21% stated staff attrition as a key driver. This stat is alarming as in the advisor survey 39% said they didn't believe this was the job for them.

At Kura and Inisoft we found this stat to be astounding. 39% of advisors don't believe they're in the right job, meaning in the short term they will look for a different career – yet only 21% of leaders consider this a driver for change. From our experience, attrition is one of the key challenges a contact centre faces: by not having the correct staff in place, creates a vicious circle of high attrition, which leads to a poor customer experience and constant retraining of staff. Surely, leaders need to address this challenge head on and really see this as a key driver for change?



At Kura we recognise this challenge and are actively trying to tackle it head on. In order to understand how we can reduce attrition, first we need to understand what causes it. Here are some of the ways we do this:

- 2Ms – at Kura all employees receive monthly one to ones with their line manager; we call this process “Managing Myself” (2M). In these sessions we don't talk about “things and stuff” but ask the advisor about them, how they're feeling and what we can do to help them overcome any obstacles that they may be facing in their role. How well are they performing against their objectives. We focus on behaviours and how this can drive their performance. By addressing these issues the employee is empowered as it's a two way process; time for them to raise issues with their manager and time for the manager to feedback and coach on issues that may be preventing them from achieving their goals.
- Bi-annual ENPS surveys – to fully understand how advisors are feeling and to listen to their feedback.
- Advanced induction programmes and regular training to help build an advisor's confidence and provide them with the skills they need to conduct their job well.
- Another big way we try and tackle attrition is having the right relationships with our clients and ensure the targets we set at a leadership level are stretching, but achievable for our people. There's nothing more demotivating than working to something that is unachievable.

At Kura our culture is our business. We are building something unique, our primary focus is on the development of people inside the business. We believe if you focus on people's behaviour, helping them understand what holds them back they will learn and grow faster. We measure the progress we are making through our Culture Index, which is the retention rate of our people. The Culture Index is what drives the whole organisation's bonus from the leadership team all the way down. We have bold plans to reduce our attrition and if we don't achieve these – no one achieves a bonus! Some would say this is a crazy strategy and many would shy away, but we know that if we want to truly achieve our vision of being “unrivalled in developing people”, we need to improve our advisor morale, empower our advisors by giving them the right skills and training, and in doing so hopefully reduce attrition. We believe that by being bold and delivering this strategy, we'll create strong employee engagement and in turn the best customer experience for our clients.

First Call Resolution

The research revealed that 69% of leaders view first call resolution as the most important way they can improve customer experience. Leaders believe “getting it right first time” is critical.

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In our view, this can only be achieved if we equip our people with the problem-solving skills, and provide them with the systems, that will enable them to help our customers. Above all, we must empower our people to make decisions to solve problems. Trusting your people to do the right thing for the customer goes a long way to building loyalty with your staff, but it also enables leaders to harness the thoughts and ideas of the people who talk to customers every day. After all, they are the ones who have most of the answers to your customers' problems.

It's important we provide our advisors with the right tools to do their job. Syntelate XA, Inisoft's omni-channel customer engagement suite, is designed specifically for this purpose. The system guides the advisor to the most appropriate action using a combination of both scripted prompts and artificial intelligence. This ensures the advisors are confident, knowledgeable and helpful while your customers get a quick and efficient resolution to their query. Even with great systems, it is inevitable that some customers will require a subsequent transaction. Syntelate XA can support your continuous FCR improvement initiatives through further empowerment of your agents. With a single source of omni-channel data, we can alert the advisors to repeat contact across various channels and ask them the reason for this repeat contact. Advisors can put forward ideas on how to prevent this in the future.



Too Many Systems to Navigate

The research highlighted astonishing figures:

- 50% of the advisors surveyed used between 4–6 applications to perform their job.
- Even more astounding is 37% required 7–10 applications to perform their job!

It is no wonder that our contact centre advisors really have to concentrate on the process they have to follow. The number of applications organisations ask their people to use and navigate makes it incredibly difficult for people to make the customer interaction authentic, memorable or even easy.

Recently, Kura and Inisoft presented this statistic at a contact centre conference and we were even more surprised at just how many contact centre leaders seemed to accept this as normal. We were, however, greatly encouraged by the fact that almost everyone agreed that this situation, while common, was not really acceptable for either the advisor or the customer experience.

We need to help our people to make it easy for our customers and one way would be to unify applications, providing advisors with a single view of the customer and letting the systems do the hard work, allowing the advisor to focus on listening to and helping the customer. Inisoft's Syntelate XA unifies disparate systems into a single user interface that allows the advisors to stop focusing on the technology and start engaging with customers. It eliminates the advisor time and effort required to switch between systems and search for data and simply presents them with a single application that has been optimised for contact centre rather than back office. This change allows your advisors to do their real job, which is helping your customer in an empathetic manner. The good news is that advisor morale improves along with customer experience – win/win for everyone.

Listen to the Experts – Your Advisors!

The research revealed that 42% of leaders spend no time or very little time in the contact centre speaking to employees or listening to calls. However, they are the ones responsible for making decisions related to the contact centre. What's interesting, though, is 61% of leaders said they could do more to improve employee feedback. This is essential – 35% of advisors stated that they don't feel valued as an employee!



In our opinion, employee feedback is a great way to understand and learn how engaged your workforce are. However, it should only ever be measured if you're going to do something with it! From the research conducted, there was a clear disconnect between what leaders think about morale and what our agents view this to be (85% of leaders believed advisor morale to be good or very good; however, 34% of advisors deemed it poor and 50% stated it was simply okay). No doubt many organisations regularly survey their people to gain feedback, but you have to question what is done with all the data?

At Kura we believe all feedback is good feedback, a learning opportunity, so we encourage it at all levels. We have also designed processes and tools to support this for our advisors, such as our "Ask Brian" tool where anyone in the organisation can ask a question to our CEO and he responds in person (within SLA!). We have processes such as C2K, where we take the top 20 managers offsite every quarter, including our leadership team, and they describe their performance, challenges and suggestions and invite feedback from the group. Our CEO opens the session, and there's complete transparency throughout the session. All feedback is taken on board and actions are based on these sessions.

As part of Inisoft's Syntelate XA solution, we have a unique feature called Voice of the Agent (VOA). This feature pops up on the screen at the end of a call and asks the advisor to rate the success of the call from a training perspective. Our VOA feature helps organisations identify training gaps and to process problems and areas where organisations have not sufficiently empowered their advisors. Based on this vital feedback, improvements can be made that enhance training and efficiencies going forward. It also helps to improve metrics such as average handling times and first call resolution.

Why Kura and Inisoft?

Kura is an award-winning contact centre outsourcer with four locations across the UK. We're in business because we want to help people to develop and reach their full potential. We're building a culture that shifts the mind-set from focusing on "things and stuff" to "people and their behaviour." We call this process "Crossing the Bridge." Our vision is, to one day, be recognised as "Unrivalled in Developing People."

Our software subsidiary, Inisoft, develops contact centre solutions which are sold globally and used by many leading brands. Our core products Syntelate and Syntelate XA were designed specifically with the agent in mind. Syntelate is our award-winning unified agent desktop used broadly with Avaya POM. Syntelate XA is our new omni-channel customer engagement suite that allows your agents to handle calls, emails, web chats, SMS messages, and social media interactions – all from the same easy to use interface. We're backed by a number of partners across the globe; this means when you select us as your provider you'll have cutting-edge technology at your fingertips.

Our unique proposition of combining great people with technology enables us to produce spectacular results for our clients. With a wealth of experience, our customers range from SME to Multinationals and include ScottishPower, esure and Independent Age.

If your organisation is facing contact centre or customer service challenges and you would like to speak to our experts to understand the best strategy to drive your business forward, please get in touch and we'd be delighted to speak with you about our experience and the solutions we have in place.

Appendix - Contact Babel Report - "Are you a Customer Service Leader or Laggard? Part 1: A Leader's Perspective on the Industry". August 2017. CCA Global Report - "The Future Workforce - Leaders are you Listening?". January 2018.

Speak to our team today to learn how we can help you.

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