

# **The Contact Center in a Profit-Centric Service Organization**

Shoring Up the Foundation of Service Delivery

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## Executive Summary

While newer support channels such as social media and chat dominate the headlines, contact center based interactions still dominate the core of the service and support economy. A significant number of service requests come directly to the contact center and call volumes have increased nearly 8% over the previous five years. As a result, effective resolution of service issues in the contact center becomes extremely vital in driving customer-facing, operational and financial performance. For an organization to aspire to be Best-in-Class in overall service and support, a lack of focus on this bread-and-butter medium could lead to dire consequences.

### Research Benchmark

Aberdeen's Research Benchmarks provide an in-depth and comprehensive look into process, procedure, methodologies, and technologies with best practice identification and actionable recommendations

### Best-in-Class Performance

In March and April 2011, the Aberdeen Group surveyed over 150 service professionals around the management of their service and support contact centers. Those defined as Best-in-Class exhibited the following:

- 92% current performance in customer retention (65% for all others) and a 8% decrease in service costs over the previous 12 months
- 86% level of agent utilization (67% for all others) and a 21% increase in workforce productivity over the previous 12 months
- 87% first-call resolution performance (57% for all others)

### Competitive Maturity Assessment

Survey results show that the firms enjoying Best-in-Class performance are:

- Twenty-two percent more likely (71% vs. 58%) than all others to have standardized escalation protocols in place
- Nearly two times as likely as Laggards to provide their agents with access to customer history and a searchable knowledgebase
- Forty-eight percent more likely (43% vs. 29%) than all others to leverage customer management applications with contact center functionality
- Fifty-four percent more likely than Laggards (57% vs. 37%) to measure contact center employee engagement on a quarterly or more frequent basis

### Defining the Contact Center

For the purpose of this study, the definition of the contact center was limited to the organization that handles incoming service and support requests via the phone or voice-based channels, aka the call center. Newer definitions of the contact center include multi-channel environments encompassing email, chat and social media. Those were not considered in this research, but will be touched upon in upcoming Service Management Research that will publish in the second half of calendar 2011.

### Required Actions

To achieve Best-in-Class performance, companies must:

- Improve and simplify information access for agents
- Equip agents with the necessary tools and Information to recognize and execute on revenue opportunities
- Focus on knowledge effectiveness and continue to integrate knowledge management across all support channels

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## Chapter One: Benchmarking the Best-in-Class

### The Backbone of the Service Organization

In a survey conducted in March and April 2011 by Aberdeen Group of more than 150 service organizations, respondents indicated that nearly 70% of all service and support requests are created within the contact center (Table 1). The average organization polled by Aberdeen employed 350 contact center agents to address more than a million service and support requests generated annually. A majority of these incoming requests were for general customer and product support, with a proportion of interactions being dedicated towards orders, returns or the setting of appointments.

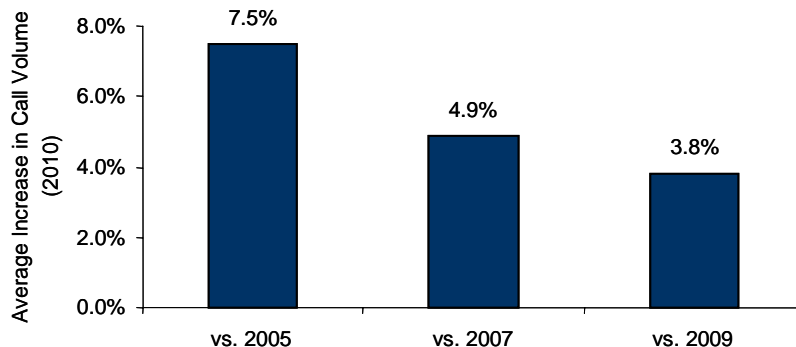
**Table 1: Ignore at Your Own Risk**

Finding	Average for All Respondents
Average Number of Contact Centers Used	3
Average Number of Agents - CURRENT	350
Average Number of Agents - 12 MONTHS AGO	409
Average Number of Support Requests	1.4 m
Percentage of Requests Coming through the Contact Center	69%

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

Beyond the significant proportion of requests that are handled by the contact center, it is also vital to note that the volume of incoming requests has grown significantly over the previous five years. When compared to 2005, annual call volume numbers for 2010 were up more than 7% for the respondents to Aberdeen's survey. When compared to 2009, call volumes were up nearly 4%, further indicating increased reliance on the contact center for the delivery of customer service and support (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: The Rise in Call Volumes Over the Past Five Years**



Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

#### Fast Facts

- √ Nearly 50% of all incoming service calls require escalation, dispatch or go unresolved
- √ 61% of all unresolved calls could have been resolved with better access to information
- √ Organizations indicate that effective resolution of support requests in the contact center is extremely vital to competitive differentiation (4.1 on a 1-5 scale)
- √ Nearly 70% of the Best-in-Class are looking to improve access to service information across the organization as a key action to drive contact center performance

#### Reasons for Incoming Requests (Average for Respondents)

- √ General customer service - 26%
- √ Technical support - 21%
- √ Product support - 19%
- √ Orders - 15%
- √ Repair Appointments - 10%
- √ Returns - 5%
- √ Other Appointments - 4%

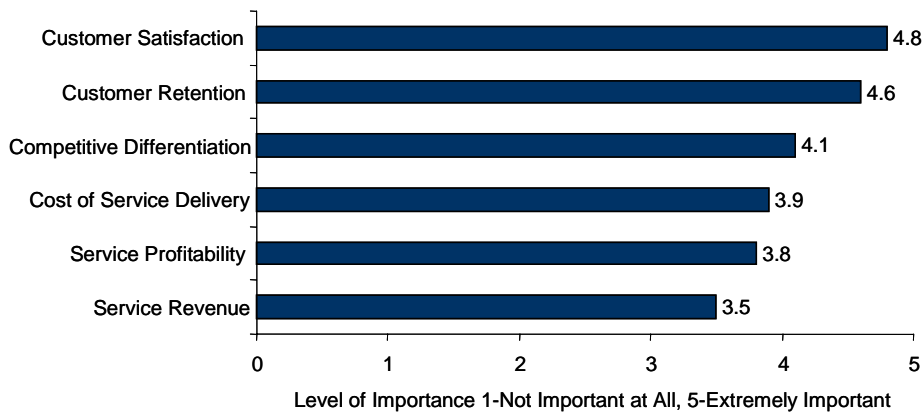
## The Current Assessment - How Do Contact Center Capabilities Stack Up?

Attendees at Aberdeen's 2010 [Chief Service Officer \(CSO\) Summit](#) indicated that the contact center was an area that was prioritized for improvement. In an onsite poll, 22% of nearly 140 attendees indicated that they were looking to invest in the contact center in 2011, prioritized behind investments in field service and overall service strategy. This interest in contact center improvement is warranted given the significant impact that effective call handling in the contact center has on key customer-facing and financial metrics. This is supported in Aberdeen's current survey data which shows that not only are service leaders looking at excellence in the contact center as a means to improve the customer experience and drive down costs, but they are also looking to leverage contact center superiority to differentiate their brand in an already crowded business marketplace (Figure 2).

### CSO Summit 2011

The CSO Summit 2011 will feature breakout sessions touching upon best practices within the contact center. Visit [chiefserviceofficer.com](http://chiefserviceofficer.com) to learn more.

**Figure 2: An Effective Call Center has Big Customer Impact**



Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

“Customer satisfaction is the key metric; if they are not happy they will change vendors, so customer satisfaction is a strategic imperative.”

Paul Ryan, Director – Small European Utilities Company

### Aberdeen Insights — Current State Assessment

For service leaders in Aberdeen's survey base, effective oversight and management of the contact center can be broken into five major areas or functions which fall under the overarching theme of customer management. Aberdeen's research survey provided service leaders with the opportunity to assess their capabilities in each on these areas:

- Workforce management is the appointment and allocation of call center workers and the steps taken to drive retention and engagement

*continued*

**Aberdeen Insights — Current State Assessment**

- Call / incident management includes routing, escalation and resolution procedures that are in place
- Knowledge management includes information available to the front-line contact center agents
- Performance management includes the ability to evaluate the impact of current processes on key metrics
- Automation management includes effectively leveraging tools to drive performance

In most instances, organizations rated themselves at slightly above average in most areas assessed, which is surprising given some of the general performance struggles.

For instance, in call management, survey respondents were favorable in their current performance assessment (3.8 on a 1 to 5 scale with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent), even though results reflect that only 64% of requests on average were resolved on a first-call basis. Of calls that came in to the contact center, approximately 9% were resolved via automation and no live agents, with 45% being resolved by the first agent in direct touch with the customer, indicating that nearly 50% of incoming calls required escalation, further attention or went unresolved.

In knowledge management, once again above average assessment scores (3.5) regarding information availability and accessibility didn't yield above average performance results. In fact, survey respondents indicated that a significant amount of contact center agent time (nearly 20% across all organizations) was spent looking for appropriate information. More so, organizations also admitted that 61% of unresolved calls could have been resolved with access to appropriate information.

However, organizations were more in tune with regards to their overall assessments, identifying significant room for improvement in key performance attributes, directly related to contact center management.

“Having a knowledge management tool that allows agents to access to the most current and accurate information is critical to ensure first call resolution, creates a positive customer experience and boosts agent morale through a job well done.”

~ Customer Service/Support,  
Large North American  
Consumer Packaged Goods  
Company

**Table 2: Performance Management**

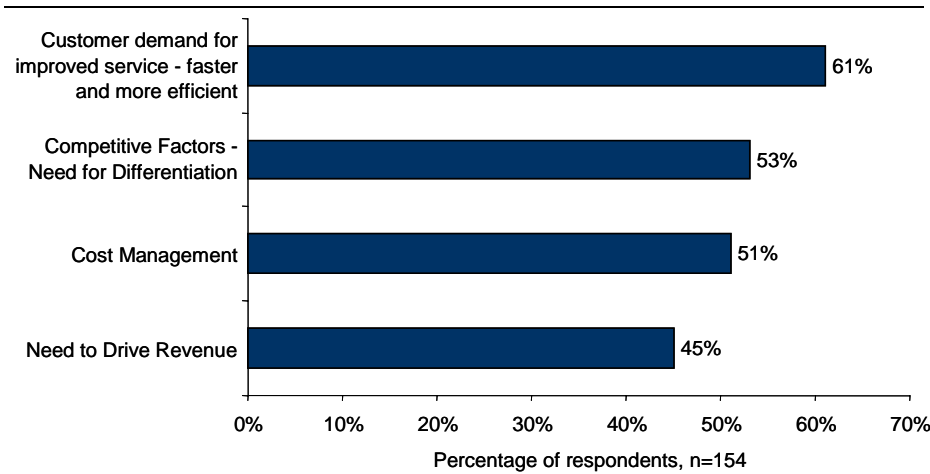
Capability	Average. 1-Poor, 3- Average, 5- Excellent
Minimize unnecessary field visits	3.5
Meet SLA-based response and resolution needs	3.4
Up-sell and Cross-sell within the contact center	2.8

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

### No time for Mediocrity

While responding service organizations might be satisfied with their 'average' contact center performance, their customers certainly aren't, and continue to demand better service performance either from a speed or efficiency perspective. For respondents to Aberdeen's contact center research this customer demand was the most significant market pressure driving improvements in the contact center (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Driving Improved Performance**



Note: Respondents asked to select top three.  
Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

An inability to meet customer demands for service can lead to customer loss in a crowded product and service marketplace, and responding organizations were also feeling the pressure to excel in their customer management capabilities to ward off potential competitors. In fact, for the top performing organizations in Aberdeen's research survey, the need for competitive differentiation was by far the most pressing market factor driving improvement in contact center operations.

Furthermore, organizations are also looking to drive contact center performance in order to curb cost pressures. As noted in Table I, survey respondents have already reduced their contact center workforce over the previous 12 months and are looking to inject further efficiencies in the contact center so as to mitigate rising resource costs.

“As our business became more unpredictable due to rapid growth, we now needed a flexible workforce that could handle fluctuations in support needs. Managing costs while continuing to deliver the service and support customers expected was our focus.”

~ Manager Customer Service / Support, Mid-Size Computer Hardware / Peripherals Company

#### Research Fact

17% of incoming service calls result in a sale. For leading organizations, this proportion stands at 21%.

**Aberdeen Insights — Revenue in the Contact Center**

The increasing focus on revenue has been a consistent theme in all of Aberdeen's recent Service Management research. Once again, in the realm of the contact center 45% of organizations surveyed for this research report indicate the need for service revenue as a pressure driving improved performance within the contact center. In the context of the contact center, most revenue prospects arise from up-sell and cross-sell opportunities while in the process of issue resolution.

More than one-half of organizations (51%) report that they have been focused on increasing up-sell and cross-sell in the service contact center over the previous 12 months. As a result, 35% reflect an increase in the number of service calls resulting in a sale in that timeframe. Still, there is significant work to be done as organizations report a below average score (2.8) in providing their agents with the knowledge and tools to up-sell and cross-sell in the contact center.

**The Maturity Class Framework**

Best-in-Class delivery of customer service requires the effective co-ordination of activities and capabilities pertinent to the key areas of contact center management highlighted above (workforce management, call management, knowledge management, performance management, automation management), resulting in the successful navigation of pressures highlighted in Figure 3. As such, Aberdeen's framework to determine the Best-in-Class (Table 3) is based on a combination of metrics that reveal proficiency in the management of customer needs balanced with measures of efficiency and cost control. As the table reveals, respondents are rewarded not only for the success in current performance but also for their ability to move these metrics in the right direction.

“The critical thing is speed of knowledge in order to achieve resolution of the customer issue or trouble ticket.”

~ Paul Ryan, Director, Small European Utilities Company

**Table 3: Top Performers Earn Best-in-Class Status**

Definition of Maturity Class	Mean Class Performance
<p><b>Best-in-Class: Top 20%</b> of aggregate performance scorers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 87% First-Call Resolution</li> <li>▪ 86% Workforce/Agent Utilization</li> <li>▪ 92% Customer Retention</li> <li>▪ 21% Increase in Productivity over the previous 12 months</li> <li>▪ 8% Decrease in Service Costs over the previous 12 months</li> </ul>

Definition of Maturity Class	Mean Class Performance
<p><b>Industry Average: Middle 50%</b> of aggregate performance scorers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 65% First-Call Resolution</li> <li>▪ 72% Workforce/Agent Utilization</li> <li>▪ 72% Customer Retention</li> <li>▪ 13% Increase in Productivity over the previous 12 months</li> <li>▪ 4% Decrease in Service Costs over the previous 12 months</li> </ul>
<p><b>Laggard: Bottom 30%</b> of aggregate performance scorers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 42% First-Call Resolution</li> <li>▪ 56% Workforce/Agent Utilization</li> <li>▪ 46% Customer Retention</li> <li>▪ 6% Increase in Productivity over the previous 12 months</li> <li>▪ 3% <u>Increase</u> in Service Costs over the previous 12 months</li> </ul>

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

Efficiency is the name of the game for the Best-in-Class. From an operational perspective, these organizations are driving significantly higher productivity and utilization levels for their customer support agents. The Best-in-Class reveal an 86% of agent utilization when compared to a 67% level for all others. At Laggards, the utilization levels are barely above 50%, implying that their workers are idle almost 50% of the time and therefore significantly underutilized.

From an efficiency in resolution and customer management perspective, the Best-in-Class have developed (and continue to develop) the optimal mix of workforce, call, knowledge and performance management practices to ensure that incoming calls are resolved on a first-contact basis. As a result, these organizations report near 90% levels of first-call resolution when compared to 57% levels for all other organizations. In fact, to add automation management to the Best-in-Class mix, these organizations report that nearly 16% of incoming calls are resolved without interaction with a live agent, when compared to 10% for all others.

As Chapter Two of this research report reveals, automation investments by the Best-in-Class are supported with the required information and integration protocols to ensure that customers are provided with the necessary information they require regardless of the type of agent or interaction that they end up using. This is even more pertinent when considering that the contact center is just a single piece of an overall multi-channel support structure.

The focus on efficiency has enabled the Best-in-Class to trim unnecessary cost out of the system as revealed by the 8% reduction in service and support costs over the previous 12 months. It has also supported the provision of excellent customer service which has enabled these organizations to ward off competitive pressures. As a result, leading

**Research Fact: First-Call Resolution**

To add another dimension to the measurement of first-call resolution, it is important to note that nearly 13% of calls coming into the contact center are escalations from other channels. More so, about 20% are initiated as a result of a failed self-service attempt. Therefore while an actual call to the contact center might be logged as a first-call, it isn't always the first-time that a customer has looked for service information.

organizations are retaining more than 90% of their customers year-over-year when compared to a 65% level of retention for all others.

### Case Study — Electric Insurance Company®

Electric Insurance Company® is a premier personal and commercial lines insurance company established specifically to serve GE employees. Today, their insurance services extend to discerning consumers inside and outside of the GE community. Their personal lines focus on providing extraordinary service and competitively priced auto, home, and umbrella insurance.

Electric Insurance employs 500 associates, and nearly 200 are licensed to serve their customers' insurance needs. They have agents in direct sales, service and support, as well as independent agency servicing and claims functions.

Electric Insurance recognized that differentiation in a crowded marketplace required focusing more attention on their core strength – providing exceptional customer service to valued policyholders. “We are always here for our customers. We strive to respond to their needs. This commitment of excellence has gotten us noticed and has earned us the reputation for being Always On®,” stated Kimberly Koury, VP Contact Center Operations.

Transforming the customer experience in order to differentiate the service offering was not an effort that Electric Insurance looked to tackle in a silo. They hired a Lean Six Sigma expert and several process reengineers, and involved various stakeholders in process redesigns to increase engagement and ensure accuracy. The company was able to use the valuable knowledge and experiences from customers, agents and the leadership team to maximize value.

Electric Insurance also uses a three pronged approach to improving the customer experience within customer service: effective recruiting and on-boarding, providing intuitive and comprehensive desktop tools for agents, and ensuring that the leadership team has actionable data and tools to foster desired behaviors. All three are integral to delivering the type of service experience that differentiates Electric Insurance.

Electric Insurance measures customer effort through agent-level and departmental “issue resolution” scores, as well as in post-call surveys. Agents are provided with defect reports outlining real life opportunities where they could have reduced customer effort, and are coached for future improvement.

*continued*

**Case Study — Electric Insurance Company®**

Providing the agent with tools to improve their performance and the management team with visibility in order to increase coaching opportunities has helped Electric Insurance create an environment of continued learning and improvement. The company has improved first-call issue resolution from a level of 73% in 2008 to a current rate of 84%. As issue resolution increases, customer call volume decreases, allowing the redeployment of agents to more value-added responsibilities, such as customer outreach programs and participation in Lean Workouts as subject matter experts.

As Electric Insurance further enhances cross-functional processes and customer experiences, the customer service department will remain focused on training the licensed insurance agents to deliver the level of service they confidently commit to. The company will also continue to leverage call recordings and voice analytics to increase compliance audit capabilities. In turn, this will increase leadership capacity for enhanced coaching of front-line agents. Electric Insurance realizes that with more efficient processes and automation, valuable resources can be reallocated to drive value for the customer.

“We train our CSRs to predict future customer questions. As a company we used to focus on handle time as our primary productivity metric, but now we better understand the ramifications of cutting a call short. Our focus on the ‘right’ combination of metrics has reduced customer effort and improved issue resolution.”

~ Kimberly Koury, VP Contact Center Operations  
Electric Insurance Company®

**The Best-in-Class PACE Model**

Aberdeen’s PACE framework is designed to highlight the key strategies and capabilities employed by firms that attain Best-in-Class status through their excellence in meeting and overcoming internal or market pressures. The framework serves as a roadmap for firms to duplicate the strategies enforced and capabilities developed by Best-in-Class firms to improve their service performance (Table 4).

**Table 4: The Best-in-Class PACE Framework**

Pressures	Actions	Capabilities	Enablers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer demand for improved service - faster and more efficient</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase access to customer and service-specific data across the organization</li> <li>▪ Continue to deploy and focus on standardized escalation protocols</li> <li>▪ Increase frequency of performance measurement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Standardized escalation protocols</li> <li>▪ Contact center agents have increased access to customer and service-specific information</li> <li>▪ Frequent training of contact center agents on issue diagnosis, resolution and escalation protocols</li> <li>▪ Contact center agents have visibility into overall performance on a weekly or more frequent basis</li> <li>▪ Quarterly or more frequent measurement of contact center agent engagement and satisfaction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer Management solutions with contact center functionality</li> <li>▪ Knowledge management solutions</li> <li>▪ Contact center analytics</li> <li>▪ Workforce optimization solutions</li> </ul>

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

## Best-in-Class Strategies

The Best-in-Class strategic roadmap to success in the contact center is built around the contact center management framework prescribed earlier in this chapter. As seen in recent Aberdeen Service Management research reports specific to [Field Service](#) (January 2011) and [Performance Management](#) (March 2011) a key focus for the Best-in-Class is to improve collaboration around captured service performance information, not only among all levels of the service organization but also with function areas outside of service.

In fact, the Best-in-Class in the aforementioned research on performance management were 19% more likely (62% vs. 52%) to share service information and data with their front-line contact center agents on a quarterly or more frequent basis and those organizations that shared data with their front-line contact center agents retained 81% of their customers when compared to a 72% retention rate for those who did so on an ad-hoc basis. Outside the service organization, the Best-in-Class, in the performance management data set, were also much more likely to be sharing information with sales, marketing, product development and manufacturing. As table 8 reveals, this endeavor is ongoing for nearly 70% of the Best-in-Class, particularly as it relates to improving contact center support.

### Service Intelligence and Performance Management (March 2011)

Metrics used to define Best-in-Class

- √ Customer Retention
- √ Workforce Utilization
- √ 12-Month Change in Productivity
- √ 12-Month Change in Service Revenue Generation
- √ 12-Month Change in Service Costs

[Access the Report](#)

**Table 5: Shoring Up Contact Center Performance**

Strategic Actions	Percentage of respondents	
	Best-in-Class	All Others
Increase access to customer and service-specific information across the organization	68%	52%
Continue to deploy and focus on standardized escalation protocols	54%	43%
Increase frequency of performance measurement	46%	40%
Increase focus on training	39%	52%
Upgrade current technology solutions	39%	37%
Invest in technology solutions	39%	36%

Note: Respondents asked to select top five.  
Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

On a process management front, the Best-in-Class are also focused on shoring up and standardizing their escalation and routing protocols, not only to drive better customer satisfaction via improved first-call resolution, but also to drive utilization of their service workers. For these organizations, the goal is to get the customer connected with the right-level service and support agent so as to minimize overall time spent in ineffective interactions and transactions.

“In the near future we are looking to prioritize retention bonus programs, frontline employee sensitivity toward customer experience, and automation of complex processes in order to improve performance in the contact center.”

~ Ershadali Ahmed, General Manager, Reliance Communications

The final steps in the roadmap for the Best-in-Class deal with more frequent performance management which lends to more focused and dedicated training, while enabling these organizations to develop a true understanding of current performance or resource deficiencies in order to make appropriate automation investment decisions.

Chapter Two of this research report will dive deeper into key performance management and technology initiatives being undertaken by the Best-in-Class.

## Chapter Two: Benchmarking Requirements for Success

Along the lines of the contact center management spectrum established in Chapter One, successful service delivery also depends on the supporting cast of organizational capabilities and processes in place. The identification of these vital capabilities, call and customer management, workforce management, knowledge sharing and performance management, and the organizational gaps that need to be overcome to put these in place will help service and support organizations ascend to the status of Best-in-Class.

### Case Study — Mid-size Computer Equipment / Peripheral Company

Take the case of a mid-size computer equipment / peripherals company that offers a broad range of multifunctional digital imaging solutions. The company's customer service support unit handles approximately 3,500 to 4,000 calls per month. In 2008, the company was challenged with a rapidly growing business in Asia, and its current call center capabilities needed to become more flexible as call rates and volumes began to vary. The company needed to ensure that it could continue to offer efficient and quality support even as call volumes to the contact center varied for product, customer type and season.

In order to combat the challenges of an expanding product offering and varying call demand for better, more efficient service resolution, the company looked to leverage both technology and process improvements to positively impact service delivery. "As our business became more unpredictable due to rapid growth, we now needed a flexible workforce that could handle fluctuations in support needs. Managing costs while continuing to deliver the service and support customers expected was our focus," stated the Manager Customer Service / Support. The implementation of enhanced technology has allowed the company to provide its support agents customer and product information in order to resolve issues faster and on the first call. Providing the customer with faster issue resolution is a key to the company driving more value to its overall product / service offering. The company also has the ability to capture customer feedback on every call and store this data / information so that it can be leveraged on future calls and interactions with the customer. Along with these technology enhancements, the company has also moved to a hybrid approach to the call center, using both in-house and outsourced agents to support the customer.

*continued*

### Fast Facts

- √ Service leaders at Best-in-Class organizations are nearly two times as likely as those at Laggards to have real-time access to contact center performance
- √ Best-in-Class organizations are 22% more likely than all others to have standardized escalation protocols in place
- √ Best-in-Class organizations are 48% more likely than all others to leverage customer management applications with contact center functionality
- √ Best-in-Class organizations are 54% more likely than Laggards to measure contact center employee engagement on a quarterly or more frequent basis

**Case Study —  
Mid-size Computer Equipment / Peripheral Company**

The company has been able to improve in a number of key performance indicators that directly impact the service experience and overall profitability. The company is able to answer 80% of calls within 20 seconds with 12% resolved without needing a field engagement. Being able to resolve issues in the call center has allowed the company to re-allocate field resources to service calls that add value to the company and the customer while avoiding unnecessary costs of delivering service via a channel that is not appropriate to resolve the issue. The company has also been able to increase agent productivity and decrease total support costs with the use of improve technology and processes.

As the company continues to expand its operations and offerings, the company will continue to look for ways to provide more information to support agents and the customer through enhanced knowledge management capabilities. The company will also explore opportunities to increase its remote resolution capabilities in order to provide faster, more efficient service resolution at the first-touch. Enhancing knowledge management and remote capabilities will help the company continue to provide the service experience that its customers expect while enabling its support agents to excel in the contact center.

**Competitive Assessment**

Best-in-Class service firms, as determined by their performance in key indicators, exhibit several of the capabilities highlighted in Table 6 that fall into the five categories of Aberdeen's Competitive Framework: (1) **process** (workflows tied to call and customer management); (2) **organization** (corporate focus on having the required resource in place); (3) **knowledge management** (making service data available to stakeholders that can act on the information to impact profitability); (4) **technology** (the selection of appropriate tools and the intelligent deployment of those tools); and (5) **performance management** (the ability of the organization to track / measure performance, and to make service delivery and employee management process changes with the aid of enhanced performance information).

**Table 6: The Competitive Framework**

	<b>Best-in-Class</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Laggards</b>
<b>Process</b>	Standardized escalation procedures in place		
	71%	56%	61%
	Immediate capture of customer feedback following contact center session		
	57%	54%	37%

“In order to improve performance in the contact center we are looking to provide agents with a unified portal for integrated information to all applications and conduct a system upgrade for our current technology system. We are also looking to integrate captured service and customer information with established back-end systems and increase our focus on frequent and regular training for call center agents on accurate diagnosis / resolution on service issues.”

~ Jongkit Lerthanapredakul,  
Manager Customer Service/Support, World Vision Foundation of Thailand

	Best-in-Class	Average	Laggards
<b>Organization</b>	Executive level oversight of all customer service operations		
	75%	71%	34%
	Service leader has real-time visibility into contact center performance		
	75%	57%	45%
	Frequent and periodic training of customer service representatives in accurate diagnosis, resolution and escalation procedures		
	54%	44%	37%
	Organizational focus on driving revenue via the contact center		
	50%	40%	21%
<b>Knowledge</b>	Organization-wide access to online (searchable knowledgebase) of captured service, asset, and customer-specific information		
	57%	46%	45%
<b>Technology</b>	Agents can access all customer information on a single screen		
	71%	47%	39%
	Applications / tools currently in use:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 46% Contact Center Analytics</li> <li>▪ 43% Customer Management with Contact Center functionality</li> <li>▪ 42% Knowledge Management</li> <li>▪ 40% Workforce Optimization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 45% Contact Center Analytics</li> <li>▪ 30% Customer Management with Contact Center functionality</li> <li>▪ 35% Knowledge Management</li> <li>▪ 37% Workforce Optimization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 42% Contact Center Analytics</li> <li>▪ 28% Customer Management with Contact Center functionality</li> <li>▪ 29% Knowledge Management</li> <li>▪ 24% Workforce Optimization</li> </ul>
<b>Performance</b>	Quarterly or more frequent measurement of call agent satisfaction and / or engagement		
	57%	49%	37%
	All agents receive real-time, daily or weekly access to overall performance (via metrics or customer feedback)		
	50%	46%	37%

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

## Capabilities and Enablers

The Competitive Framework (Table 6) highlights that Best-in-Class performance isn't predicated on excellence in one of the support categories.

Best-in-Class organizations exhibit a comprehensive focus on all of the following support structures to execute against planned strategic actions (Table 5). In the case of the customer service and support organization, these capabilities ensure the alignment of the right resources with incoming customer inquiries in order to drive better customer management.

**Process and Knowledge Management**

Best-in-Class organizations are driving to standardize issue escalation protocols, as seen from the discussion around strategic actions in Chapter One. That said, these organizations have already made investments in putting these protocols in place in order to aid and expedite issue resolution. Seventy-one percent (71%) of the Best-in-Class have escalation processes in place and constantly communicate these processes and guidelines across the organization, when compared to 58% of all other organizations. Standardized protocols not only assist in driving improved first-time resolution rates as service issues are directed to appropriate agents, but they also drive agent productivity as agents are aware of the appropriate escalation channels and procedures to rely on in case they are unable to adequately resolve a service issue. From the point of view of the end-customer looking for service, they serve to reduce overall transfers during a call (Table 7). In fact, the Best-in-Class report an average of 1.1 transfers per call for their customers when compared to 1.5 transfers for all other organizations.

**Table 7: Making a Case for Escalation Protocols**

Metric	Average Result		
	Escalation Protocols In Place	Escalation Protocols Not in Place	Best-in-Class
First-Call Resolution	69%	55%	87%
Avg. Number of transfers	1.2	1.5	1.1

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

Agents at the Best-in-Class are not only afforded guidelines to determine the appropriate recipients of and time for transfers, but also they are provided with the tools needed to instantly connect their customers with higher level support. Sixty-one percent (61%) of the Best-in-Class provide their agents with this capability when compared to 47% of all other organizations.

More so, agents (regardless of tier) at the Best-in-Class are much more likely to be provided with pre-populated customer information and history so as to reduce the time that they spend looking for information and increase the amount of time and information they have on the customer (Table 8). Therefore it is not surprising to see that Best-in-Class agents spend nearly one-quarter less of their overall time (16% vs. 21% for all others) looking for information to resolve customer issues.

“The most important tools that we can provide our front line agents to effectively resolve issues in the contact center is up to date information on the specific customer case.”

~ Paul Ryan, Director, Small European Utilities Company

**Table 8: Empowering the Contact Center Agents**

Customer Service Agents Have	Percentage of respondents	
	Best-in-Class	All Others
Access to customer service history	86%	69%
Access to populated fields based on customer records	71%	44%
Access to customer query history	61%	54%
Access to resolution information (searchable knowledgebase)	61%	49%
Ability to connect instantly to higher level support	61%	47%
Ability to add to knowledgebase	54%	45%
Ability to schedule field visits	50%	42%
Access to Up-Sell Cross-Sell Opportunities	43%	37%

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

Beyond access to pre-populated customer fields, agents at Best-in-Class companies are also much more likely to have access to a searchable knowledgebase for appropriate context-based resolution information, which in turn helps drive overall issue resolution rates.

- Organizations that indicate they provide their **agents with access to a searchable knowledgebase reported 27% fewer unresolved calls** when compared to those that don't provide that access (16% vs. 22% of calls unresolved for those without access to a searchable knowledgebase).

Since agents at Best-in-Class companies are reliant on a knowledgebase for resolution information, these leading organizations are more likely than all others (32% vs. 26%) to measure knowledgebase validity and accuracy on a quarterly or more frequent basis. More so, they are also much more likely to provide their contact center agents with the capability to directly contribute to knowledge articles in order to enrich the quality of information available in the resolution knowledgebase.

This maintenance and organization of knowledge becomes extremely important for the Best-in-Class as these organizations are much more likely than all other organizations to share performance data with other functional groups such as sales, marketing, and product development. Nearly 60% of the Best-in-Class provide access to service information across the entire organization as compared to 45% of all other organizations.

To close the loop from a call and customer management perspective, Best-in-Class organizations are also active in seeking customer feedback immediately following a service session to gauge the efficacy and impact of the customer interaction. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the Best-in-Class

immediately reach out to their customer for feedback information after a service interaction when compared to 48% of all other organizations. As a result, these organizations are able to make necessary adjustments to their internal customer handling procedures in order to provide an improved customer experience, leading to better results in customer service and retention. As Aberdeen's results indicate, organizations that pursue customer feedback immediately after a service interaction reflect retention rates that are slightly higher than those that do not (73% vs. 70%).

### Organization and Performance Management

Strategies pertaining to sharing service information across the organization require the foresight of a service leader who understands the impact of available information to employees who may reside outside the walls of the service organization. Such an individual is a vital hallmark of the Best-in-Class, and **75% of these top-performing organizations have a service leader in place who not only has oversight of the contact center but also of the entire service organization.**

- Complete organizational oversight is vital to truly understand and unearth the interdependencies that might exist between traditionally distinct service functions. E.g. Effective call handling for issues in a particular region may enable the reallocation of field resources to meet service issues in higher dispatch-oriented locales. Without oversight of the entire organization the effective call handling may lead to a reduction in the field workforce without appropriate attention to overall service issues.

To gauge the pulse of the entire service and support organization, three-quarters of the Best-in-Class also provide their service leaders with real-time access into service organization and particularly contact center performance. This type of visibility is only available to 53% of the leaders at other service organizations.

- Aberdeen's data indicates that **organizations that provide real-time performance visibility to their service leaders experience a 19% outperformance in workforce utilization (76% vs. 64%)** when compared to those that don't and have therefore seen a greater reduction in service costs over the last 12 months (3% vs. 2% that don't provide their leaders with performance information in real-time).

The metrics that are most vital to Best-in-Class organizations involve a mix of operational, customer-facing and financial metrics (see sidebar). What's important to note is that **these metrics aren't just made visible to the service leaders of the Best-in-Class but also to the front line agents** to help them gain a better understanding of their impact on the final customer. One-half of the Best-in-Class indicate providing their agents with weekly or more frequent access to overall organization and personal performance information. This not only allows the front-line agents to track their overall progress as per incentive or overall performance plans, but also

"The most significant step that our organization is taking to improve request handling within the contact center is more proactive real-time management."

~ Manager, Large Asian Health Medical Services Company

#### Metrics that Matter

- ✓ Customer Satisfaction
- ✓ Service Quality
- ✓ First-Call Resolution
- ✓ Contact Center Costs
- ✓ Cost of Service and Support
- ✓ Call Abandonment Rate

allows them to take ownership of the customer-oriented results being driven within the contact center. Ownership can serve to be extremely empowering and can drive increased accountability for performance, increase creativity in problem solving and yield better performance results (Table 9).

**Table 9: Ownership of Results**

Front-Line Agents Receive Weekly or More Frequent Access to Performance Information	Average Result	
	Yes	No
First-Call Resolution	69%	60%
Customer Retention	73%	70%
12-Month Increase in Productivity	14%	10%

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

As referenced earlier in Chapter One of this report, workforce management is considered an important element of effective oversight and management of the contact center. In support of this, **the Best-in-Class are 30% more likely than all other organizations to measure the satisfaction and/or engagement of their contact center agents on a quarterly or more frequent basis (57% vs. 44% respectively).** With the assistance of engagement and satisfactions scores, as well as overall customer service performance metrics, the Best-in-Class are also able to determine the optimal training and mentorship paths for their contact center agents. More than one half (54%) of the Best-in-Class have frequent and periodic training sessions in place for their Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) to shore up diagnosis, escalation and resolution practices, in comparison to 42% of all other organizations.

Beyond issue resolution, training at the Best-in-Class also touches upon the recognition and pursuit of appropriate up-sell and cross-sell opportunities to generate additional revenue for the organization. **Revenue generation via the contact center is extremely vital to the Best-in-Class** with 36% reporting that contact center performance was 'extremely important' to the generation of revenue.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that 50% of the Best-in-Class reveal that the number of service calls that lead to a sale increased over the previous 12 months. Only 33% of other organizations reported an increase in service-based sales conversions.

“Customers don’t have time to frequently call us as their time is valuable. We can’t afford to add customer effort to an interaction. Training our agents to ensure that we resolve both implicit and explicit needs is integral to enhancing the overall customer experience.”

~ Kimberly Koury, VP Contact Center Operations  
Electric Insurance Company®

### Aberdeen Insights - Workforce Management

While this research touches upon the role of customer service agents in delivering service and support via the channel of the contact center, it should be noted that most organizations utilize their contact center agents for multiple roles and across multiple channels. There are minor distinctions in the workforce allocation strategies between the Best-in-Class and all others, therefore the following results around workforce responsibilities are fairly reflective of the entire survey population.

**Service channels:** Only 21% of the Best-in-Class indicate that their service agents are dedicated to voice-based service channels with 61% indicating that their agents are engaged to deliver support across multiple channels. In the next 12 months, 61% indicate the increasing focus on having agents deliver support across multiple channels.

**Cross functional:** 50% of the Best-in-Class indicate that contact center agents are dedicated to service with the other 50% indicating agents being used across functions such as sales and marketing. In the next 12 months, 43% of the Best-in-Class see increasing cross-functional use for their contact center agents.

**Product alignment:** In this area, 43% of the Best-in-Class report having agents service all product lines with no specialty or dedication when compared to 26% of all other organizations. These other organizations prefer having agents dedicated to specific product lines.

**Outsourced agents:** The Best-in-Class indicate that 13% of all incoming calls are eventually handled by outsourced contact center agents and only 19% indicate that this proportion will increase in the next 12 months. Organizations that indicated that all their calls were taken by outsourced agents reported a 76% first-call resolution performance and a minimal decrease in support costs over the previous 12 months.

**At-home agents:** At this stage only 7% of calls are handled by at-home agents for Best-in-Class organizations, though 21% report the increasing use of these agents in the next 12 months.

### Technology

To support and enable improved contact center management, the Best-in-Class are working with a number of solutions to drive performance. While the usage rates of these solutions might seem similar across the board, the Process and Knowledge Management section of this chapter highlights how the top-performing organizations are actively digging deeper into solution functionality and cross-solution integration to drive a simpler and more educated user experience for the end contact center agents.

- Seventy-one percent (**71%**) of the **Best-in-Class report that their agents have access to all pertinent customer information on a single screen** when compared to 44% of all

other organizations, thereby minimizing the amount of time that agents spend cycling through numerous applications and maximizing the attention being given to the customer.

**Table 10: Enabling Contact Center Excellence**

Solution in Place	Percentage of respondents	
	Best-in-Class	All Others
Contact Center Solution	47%	44%
Contact Center Analytics	46%	44%
Customer Management Solution with Contact Center Functionality	43%	29%
Knowledge Management Solution	42%	33%
Workforce Optimization	40%	32%

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

To support the flow of calls, inquiries and information through the contact center, nearly 50% of the Best-in-Class leverage a stand-alone contact center management solution that in turn is integrated with back-end systems. A similar proportion of the Best-in-Class prefer the pre-integrated approach, opting for the contact center management functionality afforded in a broader customer management package.

In the area of workforce management, 40% of the Best-in-Class are leveraging workforce optimization solutions in the contact center aimed at driving agent utilization rates by minimizing instances of agent overutilization and underutilization. Once these agents are in place, they are provided with access to and the ability to interact with a product and service knowledgebase, as supported by a knowledge management system at 42% of the Best-in-Class. As revealed earlier, this knowledge portal is also made available to other functional areas within the organization, particularly the Best-in-Class, in order to drive improved resolution and better product and service quality.

Overall, Best-in-Class organizations are extremely interested in upgrading and investing in new contact center functionality. Nearly 40% recognize automation investments as key strategic actions in driving contact center performance (Table 5). Twenty-five percent (25%) are looking to make these investments in the next 12 to 24 months as they continue to see the ever increasing role of the contact center in driving service performance.

**Other Contact Center Tools Leveraged (Percentage of all Respondents)**

- ✓ Call Routing - 54%
- ✓ Computer Telephony Integration - 54%
- ✓ Call Recording - 48%
- ✓ Interactive Voice Response - 47%
- ✓ Collaborative Tools - 40%
- ✓ Remote Diagnostics - 39%
- ✓ Screen Sharing - 35%
- ✓ Queuing - 30%
- ✓ Unified Agent Desktop - 26%

“We are currently implementing a new CRM workflow tool to enable our agents to have a single view of the customer. This, we believe will greatly enhance customer experience and create efficiencies in our business. The other outcome will be increased first call resolution rates.”

~ Head of Quality and Customer Experience, Financial Services/Banking Company

## Chapter Three: Required Actions

Whether a company is trying to move its performance in customer service and support in the contact center from Laggard to Industry Average, or Industry Average to Best-in-Class, the following summarized actions will help spur the necessary performance improvements:

### Laggard Steps to Success

Laggards face a difficult task in terms of catching up with Industry Average and Best-in-Class organizations, particularly in resolution and utilization metrics (Table 6). While these organizations are seeing increased productivity, they are experiencing it at increased cost. As a result, Laggards need to:

- **Improve information access for contact center agents.** While agents at Laggard organizations are on par with their Industry Average counterparts in having access to resolution and call handling scripts, they are less likely to have access to basic customer information and customer history. For example, only 63% of Laggards provide their agents with access to customer service history compared to 72% of Industry Average organizations. More so, only 53% help their agents with pre-populated information fields (in comparison to 65% of the Industry Average) so as to reduce the time spent looking for information while on customer calls. It comes as no surprise that agents at Laggard organizations spend 25% of their time seeking better information to resolve customer issues.
- **Increase focus on and frequency of training.** To enable agents at Laggard organizations to take advantage of improved information and tools available, it is imperative that these organizations increase the focus on training agents on diagnosis, resolution and escalation procedures. Currently, only 37% of Laggards have a frequent training regimen in place for their contact center agents when compared to 44% of Industry Average organizations. Those Laggard organizations that did have a focus on frequent agent training outperformed those that didn't with regards to first-call resolution by nearly 13% (45% vs. 40%).
- **Insert leadership with complete service organization oversight.** Fifty-five percent (55%) of Laggards are looking to take strategic initiatives to increase training within their organizations. Another 45% are looking to upgrade current technology systems as a means to improve contact center performance. The execution and success of these initiatives quite often depends on the presence of a service leader who has adequate insight into the planned returns expected from these investments. Currently only 34% of Laggards have a senior executive in place with service organization oversight, when compared to 71% of Industry Average organizations.

### Fast Facts

- √ Agents at Laggard organizations spend 25% of their time seeking improved service resolution information.
- √ Fifty-six percent of Industry Average organizations have standardized escalation protocols in place compared to 71% of the Best-in-Class
- √ Thirty-six percent of the Best-in-Class are looking to implement an integrated knowledgebase across all service channels in the next 12 months

### How Does Your Performance Compare to the Best-in-Class?



- Compare your processes
- Receive a free, personal PDF scorecard
- Benefit from custom recommendations to improve your performance, based on the research

[Take the Assessment](#)

Receive Your Free Scorecard

- **Put feedback capture mechanisms in place.** Laggard organizations also significantly trail their Industry Average counterparts in having customer feedback capture and management programs in place. Only 37% of Laggards actively seek customer feedback when compared to 54% of the Industry Average. Those who do, are able to make necessary process changes to drive an improved customer experience and ultimately drive higher retention rates (48% vs. 45% for those that don't capture customer feedback).

## Industry Average Steps to Success

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While the Industry Average have seen significant success in pushing contact center productivity and lowering overall support costs, these organizations are still plagued with sub-par first-call resolution rates and lower overall customer retention rates. Therefore these organizations should:

- **Standardize escalation processes.** Only 56% of the Industry Average report having standardized escalation procedures in place when compared to 71% of the Best-in-Class. As reflected earlier, this not only leads to ineffective resolution of service calls but can also lead to customers getting caught up in the mire of numerous transfers. Those **Industry Average organizations in Aberdeen's survey that did have standardized escalation protocols in place experienced lower abandonment rates (7% vs. 9% of all calls) and transfer instances (1.3 vs. 1.7 transfers per call) when compared to those in the same maturity class that did not have these protocols in place.**
- **Simplify agent information.** While contact center agents at Industry Average organizations have greater access to customer and service-specific information when compared to the Laggards, they still have to cycle through numerous applications and systems to get to the information that is required. Only 47% provide their agents with access to all pertinent customer information on a single screen when compared to 71% of the Best-in-Class. As a result, agents at Best-in-Class companies spend less of their time looking for pertinent information and more time on the actual customer issue resolution.
- **Open up data to the rest of the organization.** While Industry Average organizations are nearly on par with the Best-in-Class in providing their service agents with access to an information knowledgebase, they are a lot less likely than the Best-in-Class (46% vs. 57% for the Best-in-Class) to share service information with other functional areas in their organizations. Sharing of information with product management teams can help impact product quality and even help in the identification of improved issue resolution procedures. Likewise, sharing of information between service and sales can lead to better up-sell and cross-sell opportunities and therefore to increased service revenue.

“Training is essential. At our firm it starts with rolling out a document we call a process definition guide. This guide details for each client the communication process (if it varies from the standard), specific guidelines for site level work, and specific technology work instructions. The guide is reinforced during monthly meetings/conference calls with all involved (employees and service partners). The monthly communication process is essential to the consistency and reliability of the support process.”

~ Scott Goemmel,  
Partner,  
PMV Technologies

- **Start taking a deeper look at revenue.** Industry Average organizations aren't as focused on generating revenue through up-sell and cross-sell opportunities. Only 40% indicated an increase in the number of support calls that led to a sale in the previous 12 months when compared to 50% of the Best-in-Class. While 59% of the Industry Average indicate an increased focus from their organizations on revenue opportunities through up-sell and cross-sell, they need to take steps to equip their contact center agents with the information and training necessary to identify and take advantage of potential revenue generating opportunities. Improper tools in support of the focus can lead to inappropriate or mis-timed sales forays by support agents, leading to lower customer satisfaction.

### **Best-in-Class Steps to Success**

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The Best-in-Class are hitting on all cylinders with regards to contact center performance, but are looking to take strategic actions to further focus on knowledge sharing, call escalation management, and training. In addition, these organizations should look to:

- **Keep and eye on workforce engagement.** On a 1 to 5 scale, the Best-in-Class rate themselves slightly above average (3.7) on being able to drive engagement within their contact center employee base. More so, nearly 60% of these organizations are focused on measuring metrics such as employee satisfaction and engagement on a quarterly or more frequent basis. These steps are being put in place not only to drive down turnover and the costs associated with hiring and training a new workforce, but also to drive employee ownership of overall contact center performance. The Best-in-Class organizations in Aberdeen's survey that were taking active steps to drive and measure engagement actually experienced a slight outperformance in terms of year-over-year productivity (22% vs. 21%) and cost improvements when compared to those that didn't.
- **Focus on knowledge effectiveness and continue to integrate knowledge management across all support channels.** Given that 61% of the Best-in-Class have agents dedicated to multiple service delivery channels, and that the same proportion see an increasing cross-channel representation of agents in the next 12 months, these organizations would be well served in integrating their knowledgebase across all support channels. Currently only 36% indicate having an integrated knowledgebase in place with another 36% looking to integrate knowledge across all support channels in the next 12 months. These organizations are also looking to increase the frequency with which they measure and analyze knowledgebase accuracy and validity.

### Aberdeen Insights — Summary

The five facets of workforce, call, knowledge, performance, and automation management that govern results in the contact center need consistent oversight to ensure that incoming customer requests are attended to and handled with efficiency. A lack of focus on either of the elements can result to a mismanagement of call volumes, ineffective call escalations and sub-par resolution. Not only does this add a significant cost burden to the entire service organization, but it also is a sure fire way to lose customers who are often able to seek and consume products and service elsewhere. While the rush to expand to multiple service delivery channels is warranted given the expanding presence of customers on these channels, and the cost efficiencies built in, those organizations that are Best-in-Class in service and support are ensuring the strength of their service delivery foundations in order to enable successful service channel expansion.

## Appendix A: Research Methodology

Between March and April 2011, Aberdeen examined the experiences and intentions of 154 service and support organizations in the management of their contact center operations

Aberdeen supplemented this online survey effort with interviews with select survey respondents, gathering additional information on desired service customer support and service delivery plans, strategies and prioritized investments.

Responding enterprises included the following:

- *Job title / function:* The research sample included respondents with the following job titles: C-Level executive (22%); Vice-President or Director (31%); and Manager (27%).
- *Industry:* The following industries had the largest representation in the study:; Consumer Electronics and Computer Equipment (15%); Software (13%); and Telecom (13%); Medical Devices and Services (12%); Financial Services and Insurance (12%); Industrial Equipment/Product Manufacturing (10%).
- *Geography:* The majority of respondents (60%) were from North America. Other respondents were mostly from the Asia-Pacific region (13%) and from EMEA (18%).
- *Company size:* Twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents were from large enterprises (annual revenues above US \$1 billion); 31% were from midsize enterprises (annual revenues between \$50 million and \$1 billion); and 40% of respondents were from small businesses (annual revenues of \$50 million or less).
- *Contact Center Headcount:* Twenty-six percent (26%) of respondents were from large service enterprises (agent headcount greater than 200); 17% were from midsize service enterprises (field technician headcount between 50 and 200); and 57% of respondents were from small field service businesses (agent headcount less than 50).

### Study Focus

Responding service executives completed online surveys that included questions designed to determine the following:

- √ Current and planned workforce and contact center management strategies
- √ The degree to which contact center technology is deployed in their service operations and the financial implications of the technology
- √ The structure and effectiveness of existing automation implementations
- √ The benefits, if any, that have been derived from service organizational improvements and the impact of technology

The study aimed to identify emerging best practices in customer support delivery in the contact center, and to provide a framework by which readers could assess their own capabilities.

**Table 11: The PACE Framework Key**

Overview
<p>Aberdeen applies a methodology to benchmark research that evaluates the business pressures, actions, capabilities, and enablers (PACE) that indicate corporate behavior in specific business processes. These terms are defined as follows:</p> <p><b>Pressures</b> — external forces that impact an organization’s market position, competitiveness, or business operations (e.g., economic, political and regulatory, technology, changing customer preferences, competitive)</p> <p><b>Actions</b> — the strategic approaches that an organization takes in response to industry pressures (e.g., align the corporate business model to leverage industry opportunities, such as product / service strategy, target markets, financial strategy, go-to-market, and sales strategy)</p> <p><b>Capabilities</b> — the business process competencies required to execute corporate strategy (e.g., skilled people, brand, market positioning, viable products / services, ecosystem partners, financing)</p> <p><b>Enablers</b> — the key functionality of technology solutions required to support the organization’s enabling business practices (e.g., development platform, applications, network connectivity, user interface, training and support, partner interfaces, data cleansing, and management)</p>

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

**Table 12: The Competitive Framework Key**

Overview	
<p>The Aberdeen Competitive Framework defines enterprises as falling into one of the following three levels of practices and performance:</p> <p><b>Best-in-Class (20%)</b> — Practices that are the best currently being employed and are significantly superior to the Industry Average, and result in the top industry performance.</p> <p><b>Industry Average (50%)</b> — Practices that represent the average or norm, and result in average industry performance.</p> <p><b>Laggards (30%)</b> — Practices that are significantly behind the average of the industry, and result in below average performance.</p>	<p>In the following categories:</p> <p><b>Process</b> — What is the scope of process standardization? What is the efficiency and effectiveness of this process?</p> <p><b>Organization</b> — How is your company currently organized to manage and optimize this particular process?</p> <p><b>Knowledge</b> — What visibility do you have into key data and intelligence required to manage this process?</p> <p><b>Technology</b> — What level of automation have you used to support this process? How is this automation integrated and aligned?</p> <p><b>Performance</b> — What do you measure? How frequently? What’s your actual performance?</p>

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

**Table 13: The Relationship Between PACE and the Competitive Framework**

PACE and the Competitive Framework – How They Interact
<p>Aberdeen research indicates that companies that identify the most influential pressures and take the most transformational and effective actions are most likely to achieve superior performance. The level of competitive performance that a company achieves is strongly determined by the PACE choices that they make and how well they execute those decisions.</p>

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2011

## Appendix B: Related Aberdeen Research

Related Aberdeen research that forms a companion or reference to this report includes:

- [Service Intelligence and Performance Management](#); April 2011
- [State of Service Management 2011](#); September 2010
- [Multi-Channel Service Delivery](#); June 2010
- [Employee Performance Management](#); May 2010
- [Providing a 360 Degree View of the Customer](#); March 2010
- [The Chief Service Officer's Guide to Service Revenue](#); January 2010

Information on these and any other Aberdeen publications can be found at [www.aberdeen.com](http://www.aberdeen.com).

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