

# CONTACT CENTER WORKFORCE OPTIMIZATION:

HOW TO MANAGE THE AGENT  
WORKFORCE TO DRIVE EFFICIENCY  
AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

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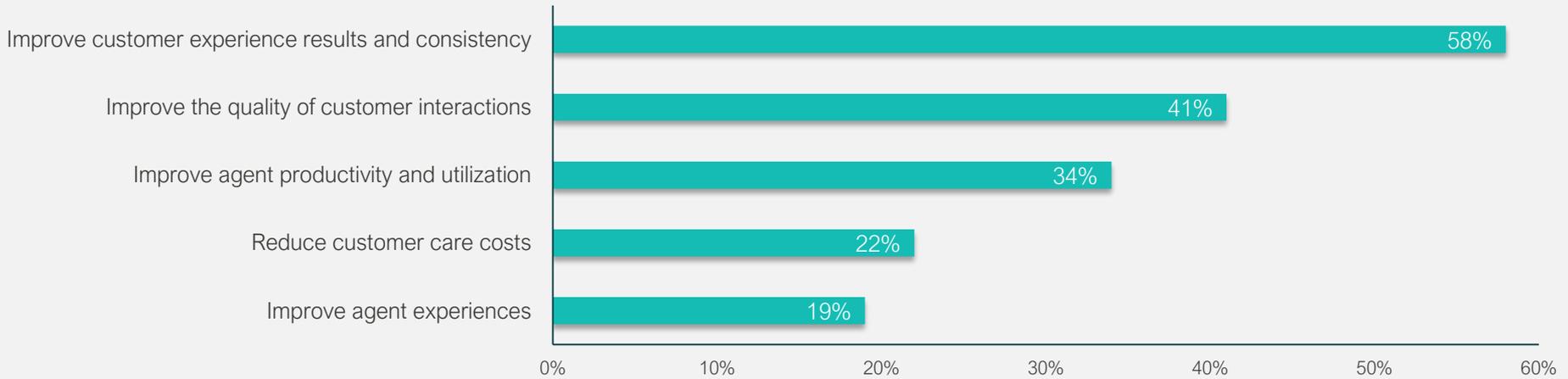
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# Minimizing Customer Effort Is the #1 Priority Driving WFO Programs

➤ Workforce optimization (WFO) programs in the contact center have traditionally focused on driving efficiency like increasing agent productivity. While efficiency remains a key influencer of WFO program success, by itself, efficiency doesn't guarantee customer satisfaction.

➤ Modern WFO programs have transformed to no longer focus solely on efficiency and holding a new primary objective of improved CX results. Prioritizing customer delight and efficiency means modern WFO programs focus on successfully managing activities (i.e., forecasting, scheduling, quality assurance, performance measurement, and performance management) to influence CX results..

## WFO Programs Have Become More Customer-Centric



All Respondents

% of respondents, n=354

Source: Aberdeen, November 2019

# Keeping up with Customer Expectations Is the Top Challenge

- It's not surprising that that improving CX results has become the primary objective of WFO programs. When asked about the top pressures impacting their activities, contact center leaders participating in Aberdeen's WFO survey cited "customer demand for better service" as their top challenge.
- While contact center leaders pursue approaches to address ever-evolving client expectations, they are also hard-pressed to address more traditional challenges, like agent turnover and unpredictable customer volume. Modern WFO programs must balance improving CX results with improving organizational and technology capabilities to retain agents and develop flexibility in addressing customer demand across all channels.

## Top WFO Program Challenges

Top Challenges (n=354)	All Respondents
Customer demand for better service	40%
High turnover of high-quality / top-tier agents	32%
Unpredictable customer traffic resulting in overstaffing or understaffing	29%
Adapting to deliver customer care across multiple channels	26%
Competition for skilled agents	25%

# Best-in-Class Firms Focus on Continuously Improving and Automating Activities

- While all contact center leaders aim to achieve superior performance, research shows that few organizations have established the building blocks necessary to maximize WFO program results. To find those Best-in-Class firms — defined as the top 20% of all contact centers participating in our survey — Aberdeen used the self-reported performance results across the five metrics highlighted in the below table.
- The Best-in-Class enjoy far superior performance across CX and operational efficiency measures as compared to All Others. For example, they achieve 3.5% greater annual increase in customer satisfaction rates and 3.7 times greater annual improvement in agent productivity compared to All Others — which validates the Best-in-Class succeed to improve both CX and efficiency measures.

## Best-in-Class Performance Results

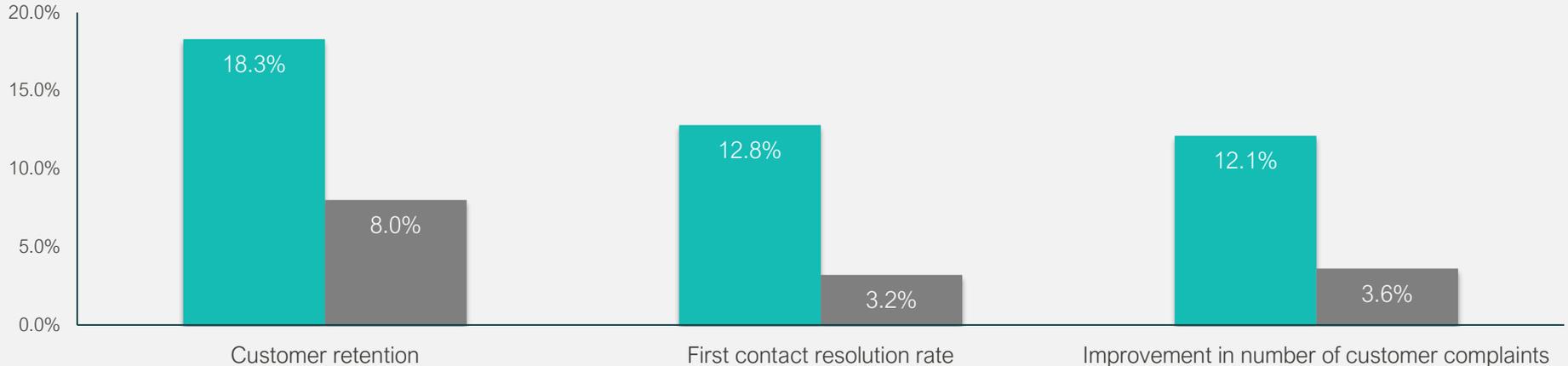
Company Performance (n=354)	Best-in-Class	All Others
First contact resolution rate	76%	39%
Agent utilization rate	71%	37%
Year-over-year improvement in customer satisfaction rate	22.7%	6.5%
Year-over-year improvement in agent productivity	17.7%	4.8%
Year-over-year improvement in average handle time	11.8%	0.9%

# Well-Designed WFO Programs Maximize CX Results

➤ A more holistic look at the self-reported year-over-year performance gains across WFO users shows that Best-in-Class firms outpace their competitors in their primary goal: Improving customer experience results. BOC firms improve (decrease) the number of customer complaints by 3.4 times (12.1% vs. 3.6%) and improve customer retention rates by 2.3 times more widely (18.3% vs. 8.0%) than others.

➤ Reduction in customer complaints isn't just a result of WFO program users aiming to create happy customers. Instead, firms must achieve operational efficiency to handle client issues more seamlessly, which, in turn, helps to decrease complaints and improve customer satisfaction results. Best-in-Class firms achieve significant increase in first contact resolution rates, which affirms the organization's ability to address client issues without the need for repeat customer contact.

## WFO Success Drives Customer Satisfaction



■ Best-in-Class ■ All Others

Year-over-year percent change, n=354

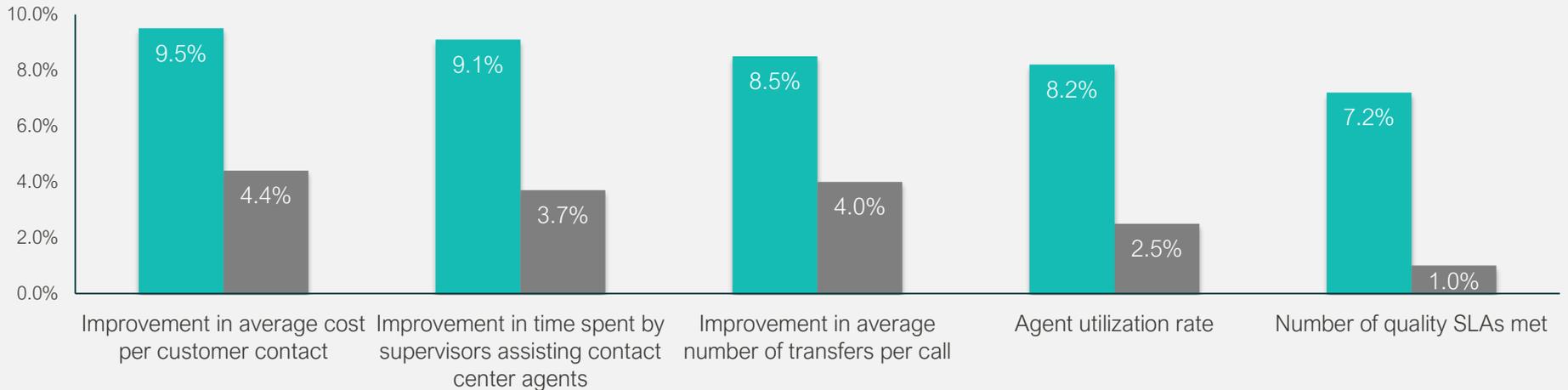
• Source: Aberdeen, November 2019

# Savvy WFO Users Enjoy Greater Efficiency Gains

➤ Traditionally, the contact center is a metric-rich part of the business, meaning that there are various measures contact centers use to gauge their success. This is particularly true for measures that reflect operational efficiency. Research shows that Best-in-Class contact centers achieve far superior annual improvement across each of the below metrics — a testament to their success in refining activities to meet operational needs continuously.

➤ Besides improvement across efficiency metrics, the chart below illustrates that the Best-in-Class also report 2.2 times greater annual improvement (decrease) in average, cost-per-customer contact (9.5% vs. 4.4%). This decrease signals that getting WFO programs the fundamentals right has cascading effects, which allow contact centers to reduce support costs, ultimately, and re-allocate those savings to invest in innovative projects to improve CX results.

## Top Performers Maximize Agent Utilization and Minimize Cost



■ Best-in-Class ■ All Others

Year-over-year percent change, n=354

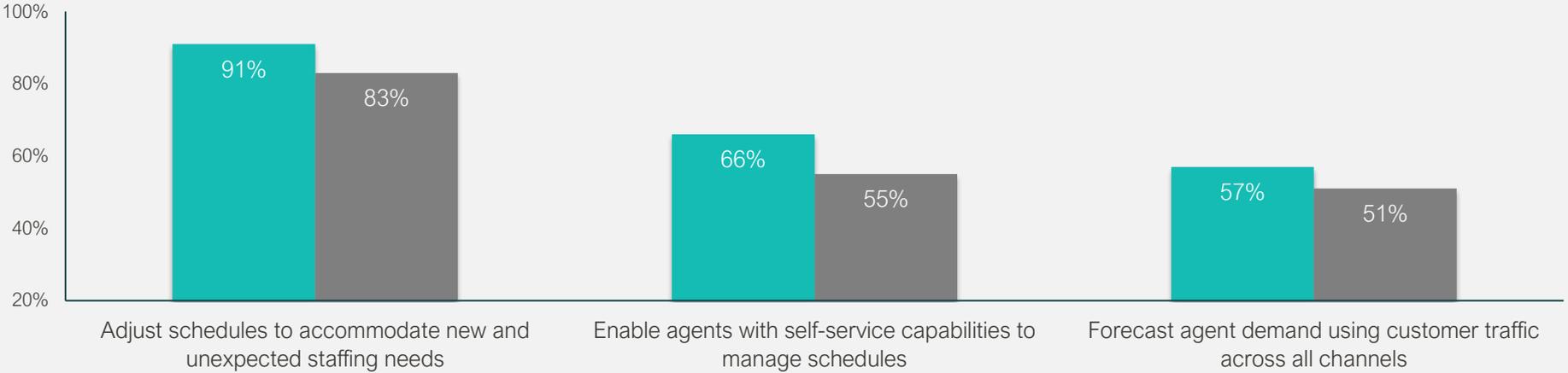
• Source: Aberdeen, November 2019

# Become More Agile in Scheduling to More Easily Respond to Changes in Customer Volume

➤ Among the top five challenges impacting WFO programs is unpredictable customer volume. The chart below shows how Best-in-Class firms address this challenge. Top performers establish processes through which they regularly adjust agent schedules to accommodate evolving staffing needs as dictated by customer traffic.

➤ To align agent scheduling with customer volume, firms must use historical and real-time traffic data across all channels (i.e., phone, chat, self-service, email) and utilize technologies like predictive analytics to predict future volume and ensure greater accuracy in forecasting traffic. Enabling agents to view schedules, bid for schedule swap, and manage their breaks through self-service capabilities helps to streamline the scheduling process further.

## Scheduling Optimization is Key to WFO Success



■ Best-in-Class ■ All Others

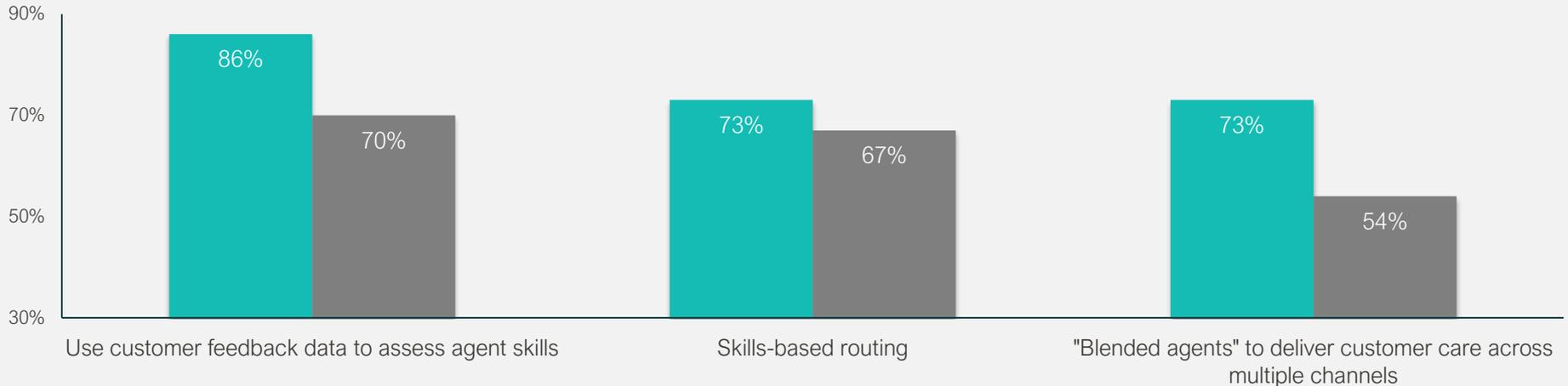
Year-over-year percent change, n=354

• Source: Aberdeen, November 2019

# Top Performers Optimize Routing Based on Customer Expectations and Agent Skills

- Two blocking and tackling strategies needed in any WFO program are forecasting and scheduling. To make these activities successful, firms must ensure customers are connected with the agents who have the necessary skills to address their needs, which requires mapping agent skills using various methods, including performance evaluations, personality tests, and customer feedback.
- Once agent skills are mapped, the Best-in-Class can build and execute workflows routing the right customers to the right agents. It's imperative to refresh agent skills continuously through performance appraisals, customer feedback, and other means that maximize routing activity results. As illustrated below, top performers are far more likely to utilize these building blocks.

## Best-in-Class Master the Science of Routing



Best-in-Class All Others

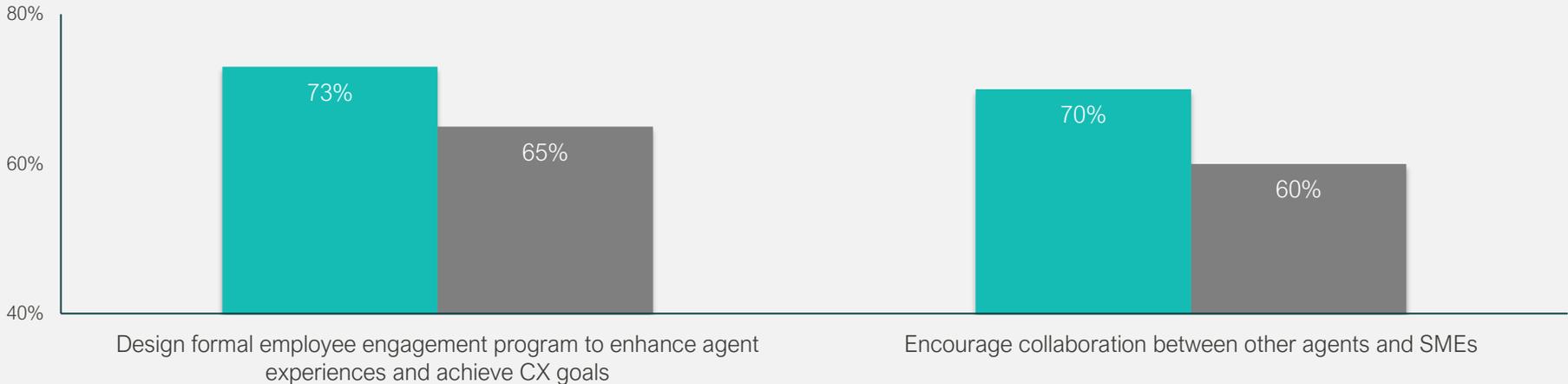
Year-over-year percent change, n=354

Source: Aberdeen, November 2019

# Foster Agent Engagement to Succeed in Customer Experience Results

- Connecting customers with the right agent isn't enough for contact centers to achieve Best-in-Class WFO results. They must also ensure that agents are fully empowered with the right tools to do their job and are emotionally engaged to help the company delight clientele. Research shows that Best-in-Class firms understand the importance of agent engagement and are more likely to have a formalized agent engagement program in place.
- The chart below shows that top performers understand that certain customer needs require agents to communicate and collaborate with others in the business, such as subject matter experts (SMEs). These businesses encourage and facilitate collaboration between agents and other employees, which helps to improve agent productivity, shortens handles times, and improves customer satisfaction.

## Manage the Agent Experience to Successfully Manage Customer Experiences



# Best-in-Class WFO Programs Improve Agent Retention.

- Traditionally, contact centers across many firms have high employee churn rates. There are many contributing factors, but the good news is that firms have found ways to reduce agent attrition rates. Best-in-Class organizations observe 35% agent attrition rate (100% minus 65%), compared to 45% for All Others (100% minus 55%). The Best-in-Class rates also improve year-over-year.
- How do the Best-in-Class retain their agents? The activities noted on the previous page are instrumental in improving agent engagement levels that contribute to them being more successful and committed to their roles and the organization.

## Savvy WFO Practices Boost Agent Retention Rates

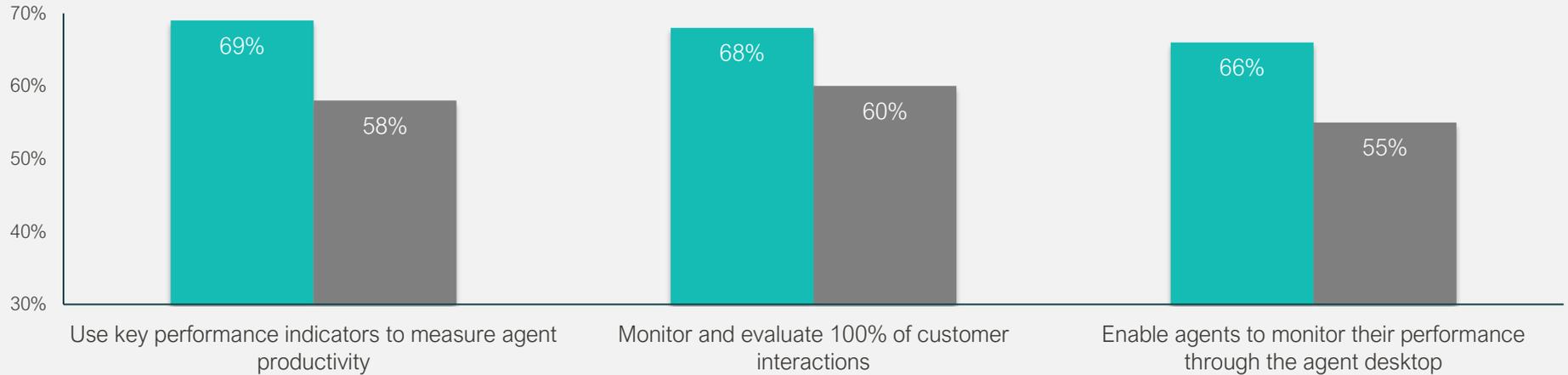
Performance Results (n=354)	Best-in-Class	All Others
Agent retention rate	65%	55%
Year-over-year improvement in agent retention rate	6.8%	4.0%

Source: Aberdeen, November 2019

# Top Performers Lay the Foundation to Maximize Agent Productivity and Performance

- How would a contact center leader know if their WFO activities yielded the desired results? For that, they must have accurate and timely visibility into relevant, key performance indicators (KPIs), such as agent productivity, handle times, and first contact resolution rates. Best-in-Class firms are more likely to regularly track and measure these KPIs.
- Top performers enrich activities to maximize agent productivity and performance by monitoring and evaluating all customer interactions (i.e., phone calls and chat sessions) and utilize AI capabilities, like machine learning, to automatically score interactions. They examine agents with poor scores to determine inefficiencies and take corrective action (i.e., coaching and training) to improve existing business processes.

## Optimize Performance Measurement and Management



Best-in-Class All Others

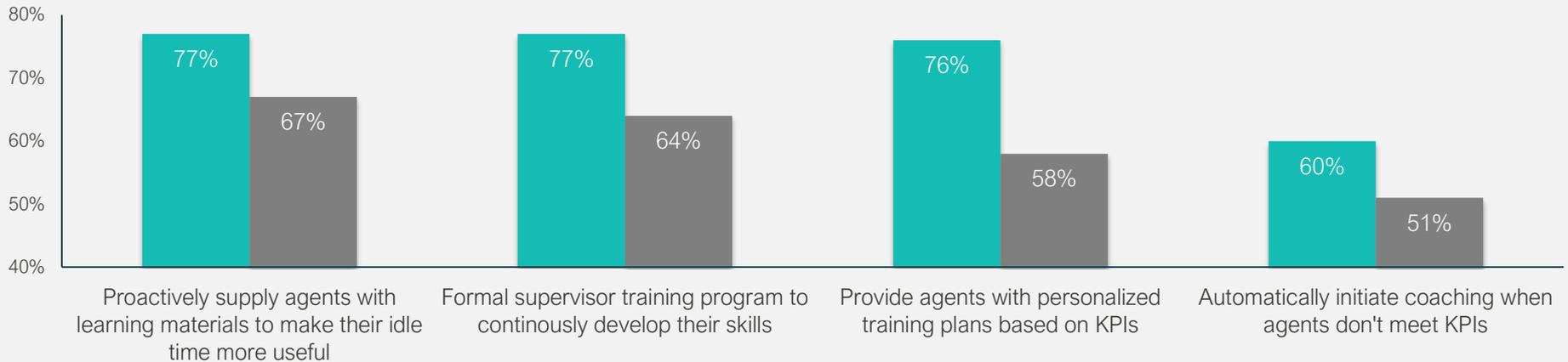
Year-over-year percent change, n=354

• Source: Aberdeen, November 2019

# Continuously Train Agents and Supervisors to Achieve Desired Results

- Using KPIs to measure WFO results empowers contact center leaders with precious insights into agent performance. Since every employee has different skills and pace of learning, onboarding, training, and continuous learning processes should be aligned with individual needs to ensure the most relevant coaching and training to meet KPIs.
- Best-in-Class firms understand the importance of personalized training and are 31% more likely to incorporate it within their WFO activities (76% vs. 58%). In fact, 6 out of 10 of these top performers automate the processes through which they can initiate coaching automatically when an agent falls behind KPIs.

## Use Coaching and Training to Enhance Agent Productivity / Performance



■ Best-in-Class ■ All Others

Year-over-year percent change, n=354

• Source: Aberdeen, November 2019

# A Look into the Best-in-Class Technology Toolbox

- Implementing and executing workforce optimization isn't easy. While some activities, such as monitoring customer conversations for quality assurance, can be done manually, the use of proper technology helps to improve accuracy. Other activities — including regularly analyzing agent skills and automatically matching customers with agents that have relevant skills to address their needs — require dedicated technologies.
- Best-in-Class firms utilize technology more widely than All Others; however, it's important to note that not every top performer has the same technology toolbox. Many factors influence what specific technologies each company uses. Since top performers are more likely to use these technologies noted below, we can infer that use improves the likelihood of contact centers aligning WFO activities and performance with those of the Best-in-Class.

## Key Technology Enablers

Technology Adoption (n=354)	Best-in-Class	All Others
Time and attendance management	78%	72%
Call recording	75%	64%
eLearning tools	75%	58%
Employee engagement surveys	69%	61%
Intraday management	69%	54%
Automated agent routing	65%	55%
Mobile tools that allow registering time-off or scheduling	64%	55%

Source: Aberdeen, July 2019

# Key Takeaways •

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Improving CX results is a top driver of WFO programs.

Gone are the days when reducing handle times or improving agent utilization rates were the sole or primary drivers of WFO programs. Modern contact centers now prioritize achieving customer experience objectives when managing WFO programs, which doesn't mean that operational efficiency is no longer important. An inefficient contact center will struggle to create satisfied customers, which is key to balance efficiency and customer satisfaction to maintain a Best-in-Class WFO program.

Having an agent engagement program improves productivity rates and CX results.

Happy agents make happy customers. When provided with the right tools and environment to achieve, agents engage in their role to help customers. It's important for contact centers to establish clear, measurable, and personalized KPIs and provide each agent with the right tools and training to achieve these goals. If you don't yet have a formalized agent engagement program that includes these building blocks, we highly recommend you establish one.

Adapt WFO activities to your changing customer needs to become more agile, quickly.

The unpredictable nature of customer behavior is one of the complexities impacting WFO programs. Contact centers must rapidly detect changes in customer behavior and other factors — such as the likelihood that a storm will disrupt phone service for clients of a telecommunications company — and must proactively take steps to address the changing needs. Agility distinguishes Best-in-Class contact centers as truly customer-centric businesses and is the reason why top performers enjoy greater customer loyalty when compared to their peers.