



Mindtree

A Larsen & Toubro Group Company

*Welcome to possible*



## CONVERSATIONAL IVR

# Gateway for Customer Success

### Chapter 1 – Comprehending the stumbling blocks

## Abstract

The growing demand for customer success, and the decision maker's adoption of AI and emerging technologies makes the biggest impact on organizations. Understanding the pain points in the path to customer success is the first step in solving the problem.



Content

## Conversational IVR



Comprehending the  
stumbling blocks

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# Why transforming customer service or the IT service help desk is important

Remember the last time you called customer service support and faced a challenge in selecting the right menu, and later had to wait in queue to speak to a service agent again? As an end customer, most of us would have experienced this multiple times in different context for various types of services.



As per the McKinsey Survey 2020, COVID-19 has accelerated the adoption of Digital Technologies by several years - and that many of these changes could be here for the long haul.

Traditionally, in order to improve customer experience, a service desk plays a key role. According to Gartner's study on CX projects 2019, emerging technologies are expected to have the biggest impact on customer experience projects in the next three years.

According to the research published by Microsoft on the Global Customer Service, 58% of customers feel the importance of Customer Experience (CX), while 61% of them stopped doing business with a brand due to poor CX. In case of End User Computing IT services, customer experience still remains the focused area. In addition, there is a clear focus on increasing service desk efficiency and reducing costs.



People feel customer service is very important

58%

People have you stopped doing business with a brand due to a poor customer service experience

61%

With the proliferation of digital engagement, customer expectations have changed with time. They expect to interact with brands on their fingertips 24x7 across various channels to resolve their problems and queries, in a personalized manner. This drives customer service leaders to re-visit their strategy and look at things differently.

# What is the current challenge in traditional customer service?

One of the key pillars to develop a customer success strategy is 'Customer Service.' Most traditional customer service or IT service desks are managed through agents or IT support teams from different call centers across the globe over voice telephony service. To provide better customer support, many organizations rely on traditional telephony / Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems, supported by live agents.

To gain a better understanding of the challenges in the customer / IT service space, the analysis was carried out based on two aspects -

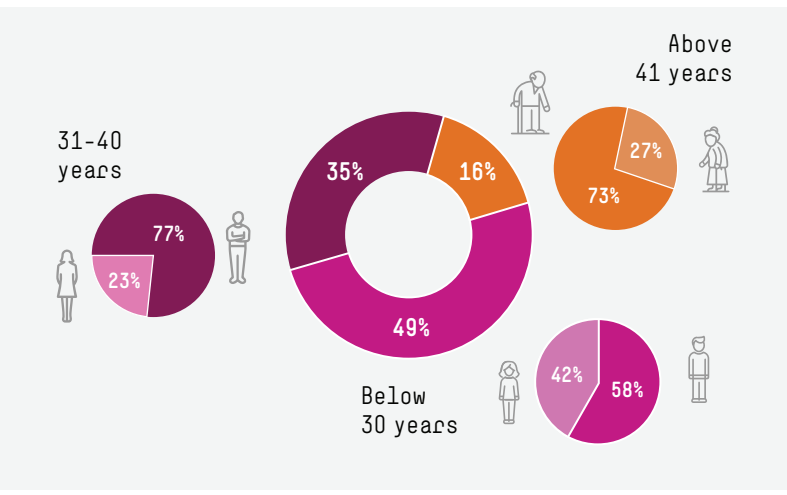
- Customer-centric problems
- Business-centric problems

While customer-centric problems are identified through primary research using a survey, business-centric problems are identified using secondary research.

## Customer-centric problems - research highlights and findings:

The research was carried out through an online survey primarily comprising urban English-speaking users and was targeted at understanding the customer experience on various occasions.

There were 700+ respondents and 84% of them were below the age group of 40. The survey covers different customer behaviors and their expectations during customer support.



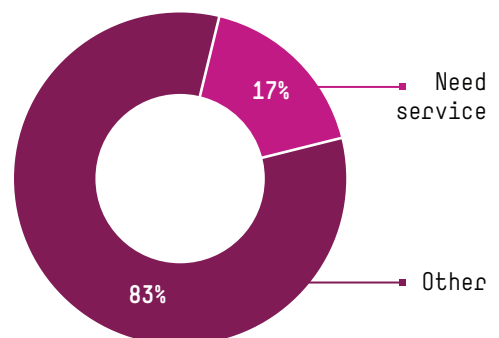
### Uninterrupted customer service

While a majority of customers reached out for customer support during business hours, 17% needed the service during non-business hours as well.

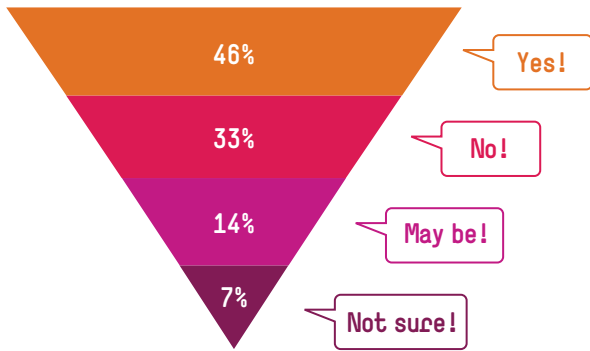
Customers looking for 24x7 service can contribute to negative NPS or CSAT



Customer feel need of service during non business hours



## Sophisticated menu Options



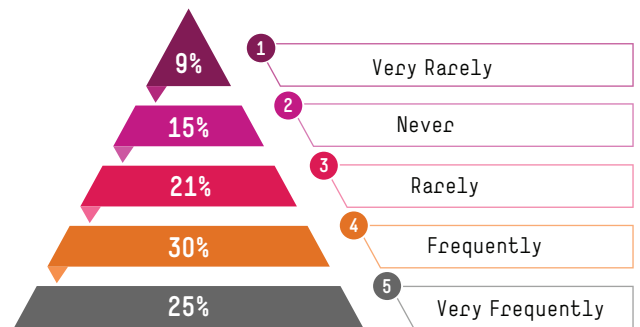
Customers connect to agent as they couldn't find right menu options

55% of customers feel frustrated while dealing with a multi-layered menu option as they feel they are made to jump through a lot of hoops to get their problem resolved.

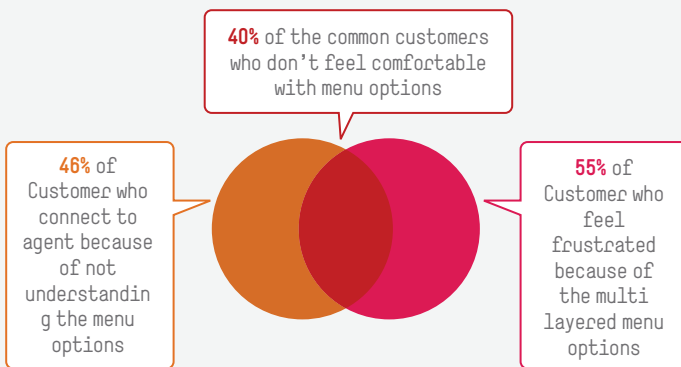
Frustrated customers will impact the NPS / CSAT score.

In the traditional menu-driven IVR, more than 46% of customers, in the age group of 31-50, are facing difficulties in understanding the menu options.

Confused menu options contribute to an increase in load for the service agent and additional wait time, thus affecting customer experience.

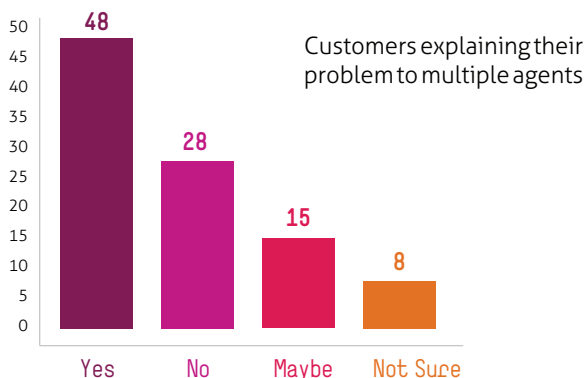


Statistics on customer frustration on multi layered



Overall, 40% of customers have concerns related to menu options. This could be one of the key focus areas to improve NPS / CSAT and the overall customer experience.

## Understanding the Customer's Need



Overall, 48% of customers have had to explain their problem multiple times to different agents during a call. Traditional systems lack effective agent routing and maintenance of customer interactions and contexts. This translates to customers explaining their problems to agents multiple times.

Inefficient routing and lack of customer context, could lead to poor NPS/ CSAT score and increase in AHT

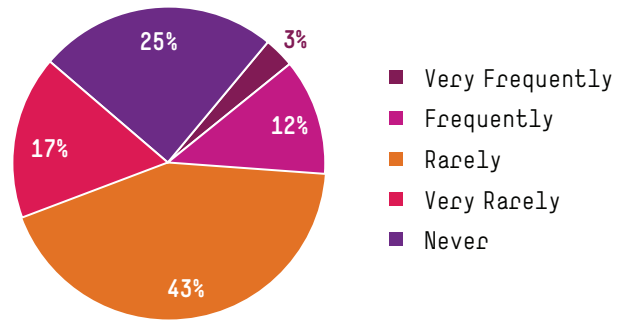
## Customer support on multiple language

In all, 15% of customers feel the need for interacting with agents in their native language.

While customer service leaders strive to maintain the balance to enable support in multiple languages, cost becomes the key factor

Inefficient routing and information on customer context could lead to poor NPS/CSAT scores and an increase in AHT.

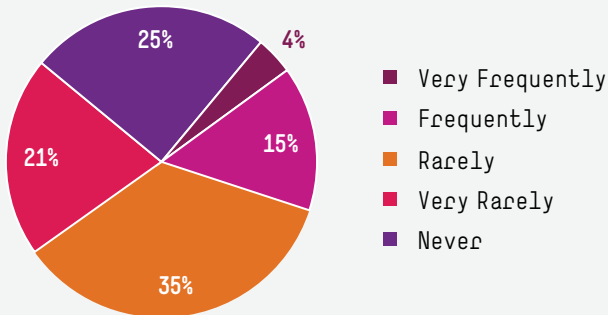
Customer who feel language is a barrier



It is to be noted that this percentage may go up if rural customers are considered.

## Impact due to customer support environment

Problem in understanding due to call center background noise



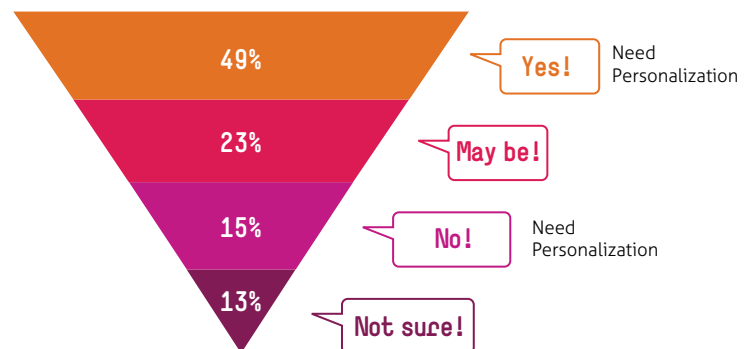
Overall, 19% of the customers face difficulties while following up interactions with support agents. Part of this could be due to ineffective communication from the support agent.

Poor infrastructure and call quality could have an impact on the overall customer experience.

## Personalized response

In all, 49% of customers feel that customer support systems must resolve their problems and give personalized answers to their questions. This trend is not only observed amongst the youth; even middle-aged people are looking for personalized responses to their queries.

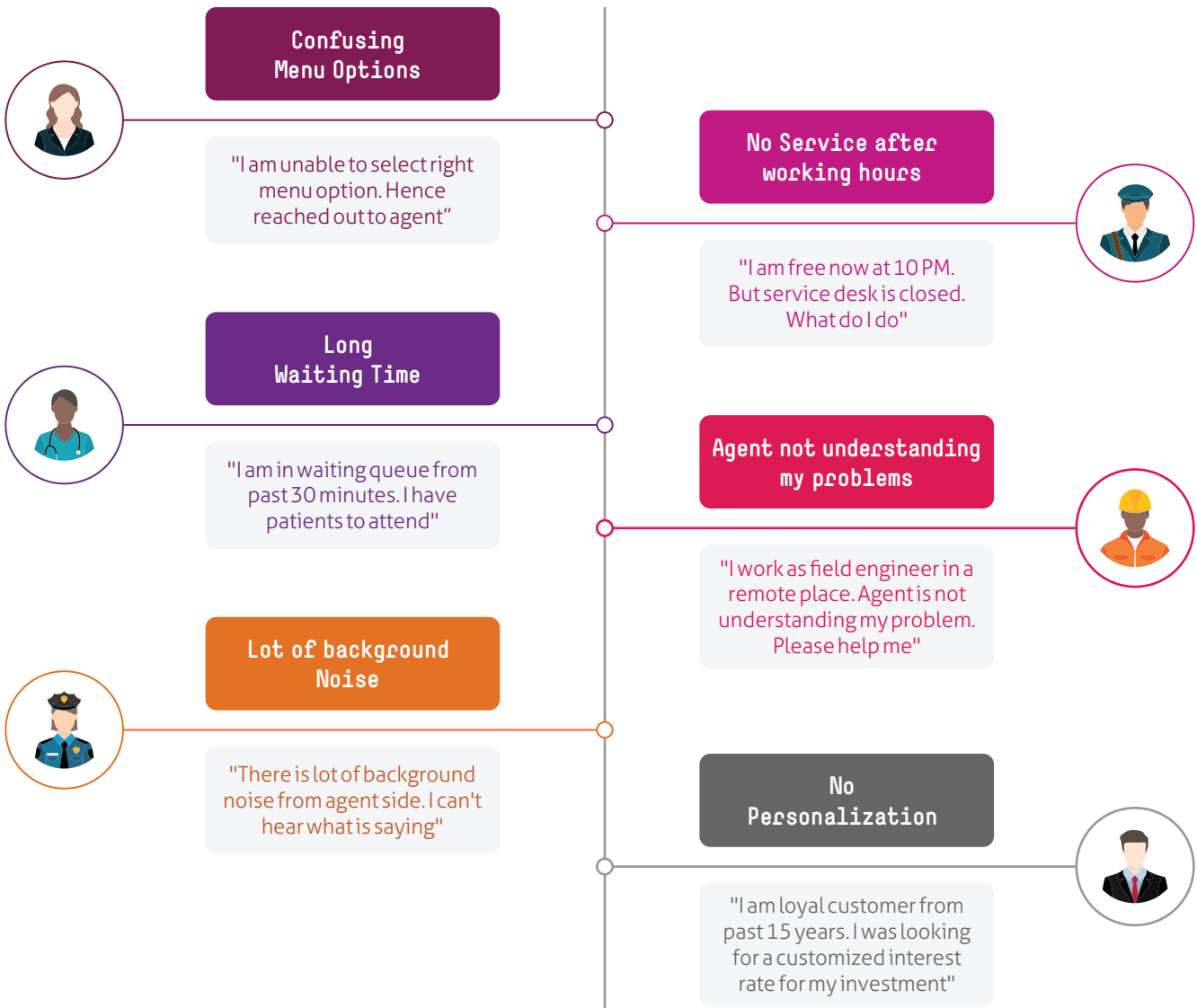
Inefficient routing and information on customer context could lead to poor NPS/CSAT scores and an increase in AHT.



Statistics on customer view on personalization

# Summarizing the customer problems:

Based on the survey analysis and research, it is evident that customers are looking for a better experience while interacting with a traditional IT service desk.



## Business-centric problems – Secondary research findings:

As customer success becomes the center stage for most organizations, customer support plays the vital role to realize the journey. Customer support leaders are continuously dealing with new changes while striving to scale their KPIs, and looking for optimization on their operational costs. The key KPI metrics that a customer support / IT helpdesk service leader always want to improve are –

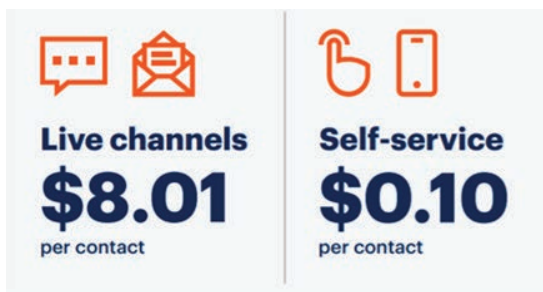
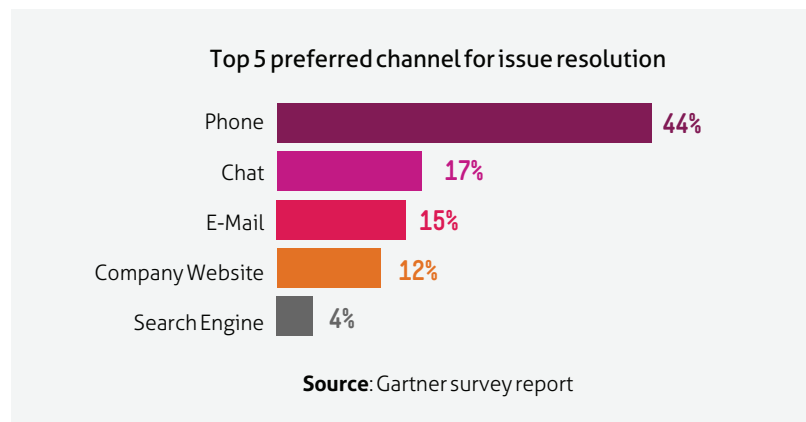
- Average Handling Time (AHT)
- Service Level/Response Time
- First Call Resolution
- Average Abandonment Rate

- Average Time in Queue
- Average Time to Answer
- Call Quality
- Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) / Net Promote Score (NPS)

**As per Gartner’s survey with service executives world wide in 2021**, customer service leaders feel the pressure to meet their customers’ expectations to support multiple digital channels and keep pace with competitors’ service offerings. They end up spending more to support multiple channels without improving the customer experience.

In a traditional customer / IT helpdesk support, the service is managed through live agents. With a growing demand of new channels, it is difficult to meet customer expectations by extending the support through live agents for different channels. IT / service center executives are actively pursuing the self-service option.

While self-service is one of the option to enable support on different channels to reduce the load on service agents, dialing a 1-800-XXX-XXX toll-free number is still the most preferred option for issue resolution for IT service desks / customer service centers based on **Gartner’s survey** of 8,398 customers



Source: Gartner survey analysis

As per Gartner’s 2019 customer service and support leader pool, live channels cost a lot more compared to the self-service.

The analysis also found that 70% of customers are using self-service channels during their resolution journey. The problem is, only 9% are wholly contained in self-service.

While addressing through self-service looks very interesting, realizing its adoption is the key challenge. Customer / IT service leaders have to look at a solution that –

- Helps continuous improvement on KPI metrics
- Reduces development and operational costs
- Works with the existing ecosystem
- Performs self-service, addressing a high volume of queries end-to-end
- Helps to add new functionalities to provide better customer experience
- Provides a seamless transfer to live agent
- Works seamlessly during the COVID-19 era



# Summarizing the customer problems:

## **Key drivers to this problem:**

There are multiple strategies to enable self-service, but our core focus here is the one where the maximum number of customers prefer to get their queries / issues to be served i.e., the phone channel.

The end customer survey result suggests that there is an area of improvement on the traditional customer service system, while secondary research indicates that there is a heavy cost per contact if addressed through live agents. To maintaining balance, a mid-path can be a good option. Customer service / IT service leaders can focus on a solution that can-

- Address the high volume calls that can be fully automated
- Understand the user problem in a natural way
- Introduce personalization for customer interaction
- Route the queries to the appropriate agent

Let us elaborate how this approach can help.

## **Automation of use cases:**

In order to achieve automation on the traditional IVRs, one can introduce voice bots, which can handle simple queries and repeated tasks that an agent receives. With automation, one can provide 24x7 service.

Customer / IT service desk can save lot of agents' time and allow them to address complex problems. System efficiency and Average Handling Time (AHT) can be improved and long waiting times can be avoided for customers' simple queries. Multi-lingual voice bots can be enabled to address a diverse audience in an efficient manner. Geographical barriers can be addressed seamlessly while scaling the customer handling strategy.

## **Conversational IVRs and NLP:**

Conversational IVR systems use voice commands from callers, allowing them to engage with a self-service model when they reach out to a customer / IT service desk for assistance. NLP brings intuitive conversational capabilities to the system, and helps understands the context and content.

Creating a conversational experience for the user makes it easier for them to ask queries, since menu options could be confusing.

## **Personalized solutions to address queries:**

In order to bring about a better and personalized experience, voice bots integrated with the customer's 360 system should be adopted. Voice bots embedded with context awareness can bring about a differential factor in personalization.

## **Skill-based routing:**

Routing is one of the prime features in customer / IT service support. Routing the customer calls to the right queue / agent will help reduce AHT. Explaining the problems to multiple agents can be avoided if the call is routed to the right agent / queue.

Here is a glance of the new customer experience –



"Voicebot was able to provide quick resolution to my query"

"Bot could understand my problem in my language"



"Service desk was reachable post business hours"

"There was no background noise; responses were crystal clear"



The journey from traditional IVR, supported by agents, to a best-of-breed, bolt-in conversational solution is dependent on certain key pillars. Seamless integration with telephony system, call volume drivers and the right NLP platforms are some factors worth considering when embarking on this journey. We have seen how adoption of self-service is pivotal to transforming the customer / IT service support landscape.

However, it is imperative to note that costs associated with the self-service embedded capability could soon be detrimental, and this is where the expertise of service partners come into play. A right partner can not only help you accelerate the process, but also provide better suggestions from experience.

It is not wrong to say that the journey to conversational IVR is the paving stone for contact center modernization.

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# About the authors



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He is the practice owner for Conversational AI at Mindtree. He has over two decades of experience working for customers globally, and has been involved in multiple innovation and Digital Transformation programs to improve customer success. His core focus is enterprise IT automation, self-service for brands and contact center automation using cognitive service, AI/ML and deep learning models.

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