



THE UK CONTACT CENTRE
DECISION-MAKERS' GUIDE
(8TH EDITION - 2010)

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Jacada is a leading provider of unified desktop and process optimisation software solutions for the customer service and support market.

Jacada's solutions simplify and automate complex customer service processes - bridging disconnected systems into a single, intelligent workspace, without requiring modification or replacement of existing systems. Contact centres worldwide use Jacada solutions to improve customer satisfaction and retention, reduce operational costs, and enforce compliance with regulatory policies and procedures. Our solutions empower customer services operations to "deliver the perfect interaction."

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The "*UK Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide (2010 - 8th edition)*" is the major annual report studying the performance, operations, technology and HR aspects of UK contact centre operations.

Taking a random sample of the industry, a detailed structured questionnaire was asked to 205 contact centre managers and directors between April and June 2010. Analysis of the results was carried out in Summer 2010. The result is the 8th edition of the largest and most comprehensive study of all aspects of the UK contact centre industry.

ContactBabel is very grateful to the support which it has received from all of the sponsors of the report. However, complete editorial independence has been insisted upon and given at all stages, and readers can be confident about the objectivity of the report's findings.

The entire 300-page report can be downloaded free of charge from www.contactbabel.com/reports.cfm

HOW TO USE THE REPORT

Unlike previous reports, which looked at discrete solutions without prior reference to the commercial and operational issues which they address, the UK Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide first identifies seven of the major pain points and issues that affect the contact centre industry:

- Improving quality and performance
- Maximising efficiency and agent optimisation
- New media and the customer of the future
- Increasing profitability
- Choosing a location
- HR management
- Strategic directions.

Within each section, specific solutions are identified that can be used to solve these issues, along with the analysis of the primary research data that are relevant to this area, including a comprehensive statistical analysis in graphical and tabular form.

Third-party White Papers, case studies and thought leadership pieces may also be used to assist readers who may wish to look more in-depth at specific areas or gain another viewpoint.

The report also contains a Supplier Directory, of organisations which provide services, products and solutions to the UK contact centre industry, divided by discrete category.

An Interactive Supplier Matrix, which allows readers to cross-reference specific commercial issues with the solutions available can be downloaded from www.contactbabel.com as an Excel spreadsheet.



INCREASING EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS WITHIN THE CALL

There is a balance between dealing with calls efficiently (i.e. without spending too long on them) and effectively (making sure that the customer is served well, and that the business gains what it can from the interaction as well). This section looks at ways in which the 'dead time' that occurs in an interaction can be reduced, with improvements for both customer and business.

THE UNIFIED DESKTOP

Many of today's contact centres use complicated, multiple applications, often only loosely-linked, which require skilled and experienced agents to navigate, let alone to manage interaction with customers successfully at the same time. Even after the call is completed successfully, each system may need specific inputs from the agent in order to start the required back-office processes, or to keep each database consistent with the others.

Figure 1: Use of multiple applications across vertical markets

Vertical market	Use of multiple applications
Finance	Customer accounts, CRM, product database, payment systems, email, quotation system (esp. insurance), complaints, other sister companies' systems (often through merger and acquisition), legal and compliance scripts, insurance claims
Outsourcing	Multiple screens and applications depending on customer requirements, not all of which will be familiar to agents
Retail & Distribution	Supply chain systems, distribution and shipping history, warehouse stock systems, CRM, customer history, pricing applications, payment systems, complaints, email
Telecoms	Customer accounts, cross-selling/upselling applications, CRM, field maintenance booking systems, real-time network status screens, complaints, payment history, credit/debit card applications, fulfilment systems, email
Utilities	Customer accounts, payment systems, utilities status systems (e.g. scheduled or emergency work being done on water, gas, electricity supplies), cross-selling/up-selling prompts, product information, maintenance and booking systems, complaints, email

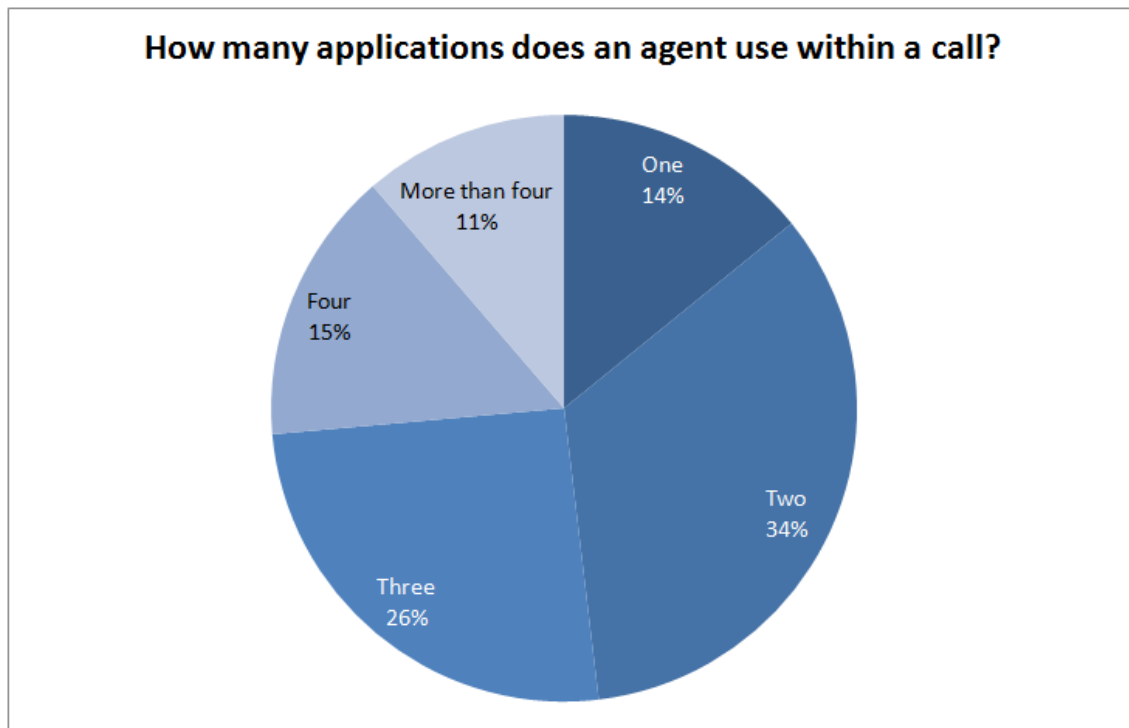
The result is that even though a contact centre may be staffed with experienced, hard-working and skilled staff, its overall performance is disappointing, leading to low customer satisfaction, unnecessary costs and decreased profits.

Figure 2: Agent activity as it relates to the unified desktop

Do your agents...	% of respondents
...have to access more than one screen within a call?	75%
...have to log-in separately to each desktop application?	63%
...have access to all of the customers previous interactions, including email?	50%
...start back-office processes manually?	40%

With 86% of contact centres requiring their agents to use multiple applications within a call, there are significant dangers around forgetting to key in information, start the correct processes or failing to type in consistent information. The use of multiple applications will have a negative effect on training times for new agents as well.

Figure 3: How many applications does an agent use within a call?



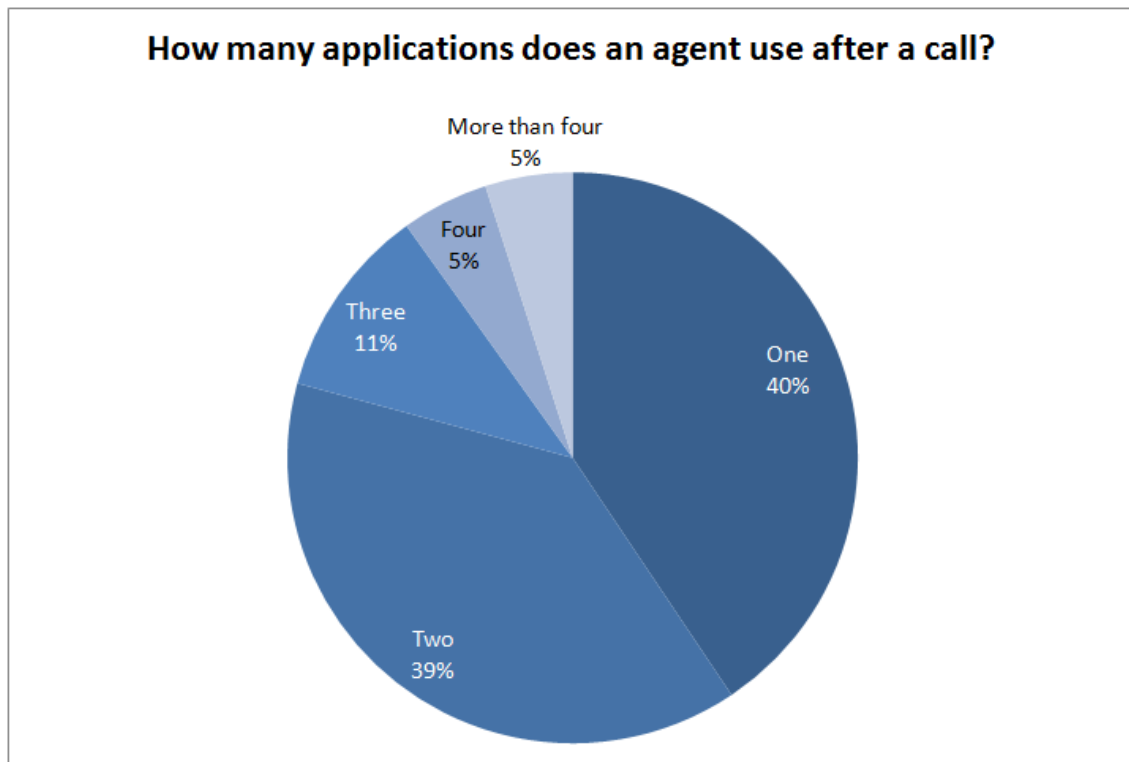
In most cases where complex, multiple applications are used, they are necessary for the agents to do their job, so the question is not “How can we reduce the number of applications?”, but rather “How can we improve how the agent uses the applications?”. At the moment, due to complexity, expense and the sheer weight of constant change, applications are either integrated very loosely, or not at all. Agents are “trained” to switch rapidly between applications, relying on their experience to make sure they don’t forget to do everything.

Such an approach can have severe primary and secondary effects:

- Increased training costs
- Higher staff attrition caused by inability to complete tasks successfully
- Inconsistent data caused by keying errors or missed procedures caused by manual wrap-ups
- Increased call handling times
- Lower customer satisfaction caused by long queues and unnecessarily long calls
- Missed opportunities to cross-sell and up-sell
- Multiple open applications on the agent desktop can lead to system instability and lower performance.

The bottom-line is that using complex, multiple applications without any specific agent support usually leads to longer calls. However, this is not the end of the problem, as this type of work also tends to initiate requests for processes to be carried out within the back-office (e.g. initiating an engineer or sales visit, sending out literature, moving a customer request onto the right department with the right information, flagging a customer as a hot prospect for a specific marketing campaign, etc.). This, as well as the need to enter information in multiple applications (below), will tend to increase post-call wrap-up to a point where the agent spends a great deal of their time unavailable to take more calls. Currently, an average of 12.5% of an agent's time is spent on post-call wrap-up.

Figure 4: How many applications does an agent use after a call?





Additionally, manual inputs involved in transferring data during wrap up commonly lead to data entry and processing errors, causing an adverse effect on operational efficiency, contact centre cost, performance and customer satisfaction. Cost per call rises, and productivity per agent declines first-call resolution rates slip as more calls are escalated due to the complexity of the systems hindering agents, rather than helping them. So we can see that poor application integration and presentation at the desktop level has a direct and negative effect on those long-term contact centre strategies deemed most important and desirable, such as customer satisfaction, lower first-time resolution and higher escalation levels.

It is in the wrap-up stage that a lot of time and effort is wasted by sub-optimal manual processing of data. For example, a simple change of address request could take many minutes in a non-unified environment, with several separate databases having to be altered, which is itself a process prone to error, with a negative impact on the customer and business, as well as at least one extra unnecessary future phone call from the customer. Reducing wrap-up time through optimising the agent desktop is not simply a matter of writing consistently to the correct databases, although this is a key element. The contact centre also kicks off a number of processes elsewhere in the enterprise: it is the prime mover for sending out documents, instructing the warehouse to release goods, arranging deliveries, taking payment and many other key elements to a successful customer-business transaction.

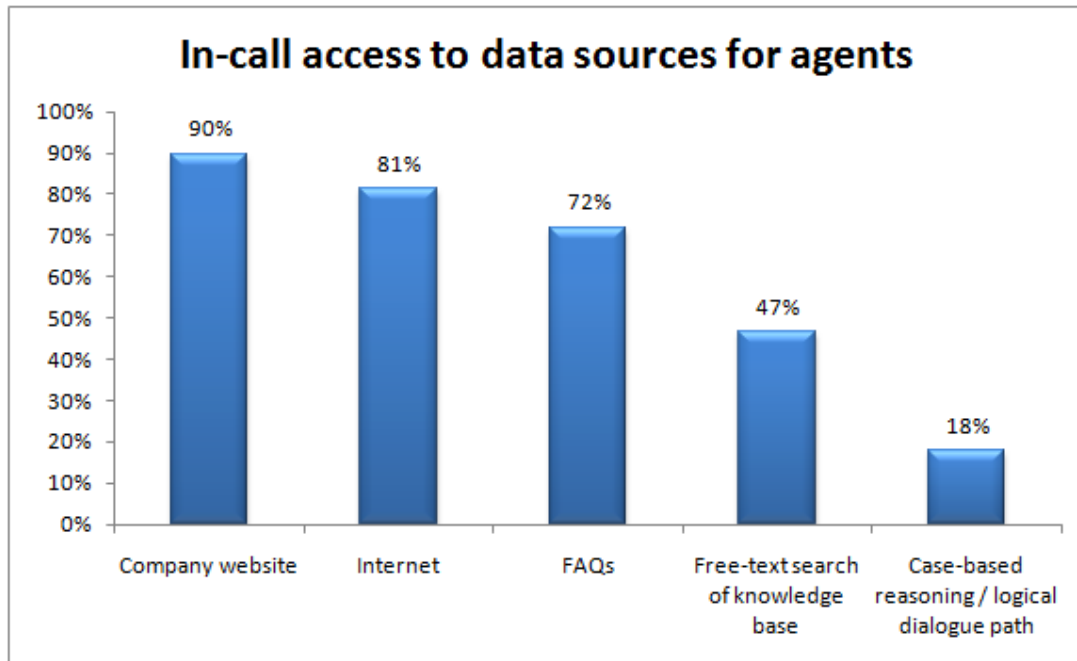
Businesses can usually focus either on cutting costs or improving quality. However, there is a third way, which allows desktop solutions for users to be developed separately from the underlying applications, re-using existing logic and interfaces rather than replacing them. The agent works with a single desktop application which is tailored to their specific needs, pulling in only the right data and applications from disparate systems and presenting them on a single screen. In the background, business rules and workflow make sure that the right back-office processes happen without agent intervention, thus reducing wrap-up costs.

This unified desktop approach also supports the availability of a higher level of business intelligence, as every aspect of the call, including the outcome, can be viewed holistically during and after the call. This is especially useful for gauging first-call resolution rates, which are growing in importance every year - there being a very strong positive correlation between first-call resolution, lowering costs and improving customer satisfaction – yet few contact centres measure it accurately.

An application which supports less experienced agents, and helps them to learn means that staff attrition rates can be managed more effectively. High attrition rates and poor knowledge bases mean that people take away the knowledge as they leave. By having a user interface which provides the right information dynamically – and which increases the amount of leeway an agent has as they become more competent – means that agents can find the right balance between being too tightly managed and feeling cast adrift by the system's lack of user-friendliness.

The following table shows the knowledge resources that agents have within a call. Finding, reading, assimilating and using information actually within a call as very difficult and is rarely done seamlessly. An application such as case-based reasoning, which prompts the agent to ask specific questions, drilling down to find the right answer, is very useful but only 18% of agents have access to this sort of dynamic application. Most have to search around on a company website or FAQ page, or rely on a wide, unsupported search of knowledge bases or the wider Internet, hoping to get lucky.

Figure 5: In-call access to knowledge sources for agents



White Paper: "The Top Six Reasons to Simplify Your Customer Service Desktop" (Jacada)

Synopsis: Desktop complexity presents one of the biggest obstacles to call centre success and it resides on nearly every agent's desk and pervades every call. Learn the top five reasons why simplifying the agent desktop should be your highest priority.

[Download White Paper >](#)



Apart from the solution providers whose main products simplify and automate the agent desktop, some of those that operate in the multimedia space also offer a unified desktop solution which can include dynamic scripting and a single view of the customer.

The cost of excessive wrap-up

Although few contact centre managers would say that excessive wrap-up times cause the same level of concern as attrition or customer satisfaction, the 12.5% of time that contact centre agents spend each hour in after-call work adds up to an enormous cost.

The overall expenditure of the contact centre sector - salaries, IT, telecoms, building, rent, utilities, etc - comes to around £21bn each year. Wrap-up time accounts for 12.5% of the time spent by the industry: slightly less in larger contact centres, which account for the bulk of the jobs. As such, wrap-up costs the industry around £2.6bn each year. This is not to say that all wrap-up is wasted and unnecessary, but this is a segment of expenditure that is ripe for efficiency-enhancement.

As an example, a 500-seat contact centre, processing 5m calls per year, would spend almost £2m each year just on wrap-up. A 20% reduction in wrap-up time would save around £400,000, quite apart from the savings in training and lower attrition, as well as the benefits of shorter queues and simpler applications.

Some suppliers of unified desktop solutions state that they will not charge clients unless they see a better than 20% improvement on wrap-up times, with additional benefits coming from reduced training times (as agents are learning one system, not many); processing the call quicker (by hiding slow legacy applications or posting information to multiple systems in one go without replicated effort) and improved customer satisfaction / conversion rates (as the agent can concentrate on the customer and is supported by knowledge bases).