Aspect Software’s 2nd annual agent experience survey examines what factors motivate, encourage and satisfy customer service agents to become more loyal, more engaged and ultimately, provide better customer service experiences.
The macro objective of this specific study was to investigate, from a variety of different perspectives (age, gender, size of customer support center, levels of engagement) the differing and similar attitudes, preferences and behaviors customer service representatives have regarding their workplace priorities and perceptions, the contact management software they use (or don’t use), the advance of intelligent assistants and chatbots into customer service, and on the developing trend of the “gig economy” and independently-contracted customer service representatives.

This study took place in March/April 2018.
PROFILE OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE AGENT POPULATION

Over half of current agents have three or more years of experience and most work in medium-sized contact centers.

- **Small contact centers:** 100 seats or less
- **Medium contact centers:** 100-1,000 seats
- **Large contact centers:** 1,000+ seats

**Contact Center Size**
- 31% Small
- 23% Large
- 46% Medium

**Employment Status**
- 57% On-Site Agents
- 28% Remote Agents
- 16% Gig Agents

**Years of Service**
- 54% 3+Years
- 28% 1-3 Years
- 21% 3-12 Months
PROFILE OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE AGENT POPULATION

With a third of the agent population feeling unsatisfied in their work and over 40 percent of agents still feeling unempowered, there is work to be done to improve the agent experience.

The number of contact center agents who say they are **satisfied** where they work. Fairly stable, rising 2% from 2017.

The number of contact center agents who say they are **engaged** where they work. Up 4% from 2017.

The number of contact center agents who say they are **empowered** where they work. Up 3% from 2017.

Agent attitudes at work improved slightly from 2017 indicating that there are some good things going on to make contact center agents feel more positive about what they do. Satisfaction, empowerment and engagement all ticked up.
Agents' sense of opportunities for growth in their jobs increased significantly from 2017.

The optimism for opportunities is clear. Agents in all demographics and contact center sizes are more positive about the growth opportunities where they work versus last year.

**Profile of the Customer Service Agent Population**

### Contact Center Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Center Size</th>
<th>Sense of Opportunities in the Contact Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;100 Agents</td>
<td>+18pts From 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-1,000 Agents</td>
<td>+16pts From 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000+ Agents</td>
<td>+13pts From 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+20% From 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agents from small contact centers feel they have the most opportunities.
of agents say they are getting a competitive wage, up 9% from last year.

of agents say they are in an environment where they feel respected, up 10% from last year.

work/life balance, being a valued part of a team, fun work environment, up an average of 6% from last year.

No notable change in degree of autonomy/responsibility or providing a flexible work schedule.
Agent engagement increased 4 points from 2017.

- Females engagement improved more than males (6 points vs. 1 point) from 2017.
- GenX/Boomers experienced greatest engagement gain: 10 points from last year’s survey.
Empowered/engaged customer service agents rate their employers significantly higher than less empowered/less engaged agents in the important factors they say help them do their jobs; stay happy; and deliver better customer experiences.

**Q:** How important are the following factors to you when it comes to feeling good about, satisfied with, and committed to your work as a customer service representative?

**COMPETITIVE SALARY**
- Empowered: 78%
- Engaged: 72%
- Low Engaged/Empowered: 67%

**ENVIRONMENT WHERE I'M RESPECTED**
- Empowered: 88%
- Engaged: 83%
- Low Engaged/Empowered: 75%

**ABILITY TO MOVE UP IN THE ORGANIZATION**
- Empowered: 55%
- Engaged: 66%
- Low Engaged/Empowered: 71%
### FACTORS AGENTS SAY ARE IMPORTANT TO THEIR ENGAGEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competitive wage</td>
<td>Environment where I am respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment where I am respected</td>
<td>#2 Friendly work environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly work environment</td>
<td>#3 Work/life balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/life balance</td>
<td>#4 Valued part of a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valued part of a team</td>
<td>#5 Competitive wage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible work schedule</td>
<td>#6 Ability to move up in organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun working environment</td>
<td>#7 Flexible work schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to move up in organization</td>
<td>#8 Fun working environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most up-to-date software to service customers</td>
<td>#9 Most up-to-date software to service customers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While 93% of agents say a respectful work environment is the most important workplace factor, an increase of 8 points, having the ability to move up in the organization was the most significant positive move from 2017. The desire for a competitive wage is the only factor to decline significantly vs. 2017.
Large gaps exist between what tools agents say they need and the tools their employers provide them with in order to provide better customer service.

FACTORS AGENTS SAY ARE IMPORTANT TO THEIR ENGAGEMENT

| Training | +26 pts |
| Simple, easy-to-use software | +24 pts |
| Up-to-date software to contact management how they want | +23 pts |
| Competitive salary/hourly rate | +22 pts |
| Ability to move up in the organization | +22 pts |
| Feeling like a valued part of the team | +20 pts |

Agent’s rating of employer | Ranking of agent importance
Lack of customer history and personal information needed to provide personalized customer experiences is sorely lacking for agents.

84% of agents say that it’s important for them to have all the necessary customer data to provide personalized customer experiences.

Yet only 27% of agents say they have ALL the information they need to provide a personalized customer experience, quickly and accurately, every time.
FACTORS AGENTS SAY ARE IMPORTANT TO THEIR ENGAGEMENT

Lack of customer history and personal information needed to provide personalized customer experiences is sorely lacking for agents.

80% of agents feel it’s important for them to have intuitive, easy-to-use software to manage customer interactions.

Yet only… 35% of agents say that this is fully available to them.
YOUNG MILLENNIAL/ GENZ AGENTS (18-24)
FACTORS AGENTS SAY ARE IMPORTANT TO THEIR ENGAGEMENT

Agents feel goals set by management are more effective to help them increase their success meeting objectives vs. gamification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gamification</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL AGENTS</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUNG MILLENIAN/GENZ AGENTS</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL AGENTS</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUNG MILLENIAN/GENZ AGENTS</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### THE RESTLESS YOUTH

Young Millennial/GenZ agents are the most unstable demographic in terms of working in the customer service industry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Most likely to want to leave the company where they currently work</th>
<th>Most likely to look for a job outside customer service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Millennials/GenZ</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Millennials</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GenX/Boomers</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q:** Which of the following best applies to you: *Intend to stay where I'm currently employed*

- **Job Satisfaction Trend 2017-2018**
  - Young Millennials/GenZ: Decreased by 5 points
  - Older Millennials: Increased by 1 point
  - GenX/Boomers: Increased by 6 points

**Q:** Which of the following best applies to you: *Looking for another job in another sector*
**YOUNG MILLENNIAL/GEN Z AGENTS (18-24)**

Young Millennial/GenZ agents are the most likely to want to handle **EASY** questions/tasks, least likely to want to handle **MODERATELY COMPLEX** and **COMPLEX** questions/tasks.

Desire to handle **EASY** questions:
- Young Millennials/GenZ: 40%
- Older Millennials: 35%
- GenX/Boomers: 31%

Desire to handle **MODERATE** questions:
- Young Millennials/GenZ: 50%
- Older Millennials: 54%
- GenX/Boomers: 55%

Desire to handle **COMPLEX** questions:
- Young Millennials/GenZ: 10%
- Older Millennials: 11%
- GenX/Boomers: 14%
Young Millennial/GenZ agents are MOST LIKELY to say handling more COMPLEX and MODERATELY COMPLEX questions/tasks gives them an opportunity to shine.

- **73%** Young Millennials/GenZ
- **70%** Older Millennials
- **59%** GenX/Boomers

And most likely to say it makes them feel more satisfied/committed in their jobs when they do.
AGENTS WANT SELF-SERVICE, TOO

Of Young Millennial/GenZ agents say self-service contact with management is more important than a good salary.

58% Young Millennial/GenZ agents prefer self-service contact with management vs. speaking with them directly.

It’s no surprise that agents act like consumers when it comes to interaction preferences. 80% of agents say that being able to communicate with contact center management any way they want is important to their work engagement.
WORK ENVIRONMENT

Young Millennial/GenZ males want to have more fun than Young Millennial/GenZ females by a nine point margin but ALL females place more value (vs. males) on a friendly work environment.

HAVE FUN AT WORK

- 86% Males
- 77% Females

FRIENDLY WORK ENVIRONMENT

- 86% Males
- 89% Females
There are some distinct male/female differences in how Young Millennial/GenZ agents rank certain contact center workplace job factors.
GENDER DIFFERENCES

**SALARY**
Salary is less important for Young Millennial/GenZ female agents than males but becomes more important in older generations.

**RESPECT**
Respect is the most important of the 14 options in the survey question for Young Millennial/GenZ females.

**FRIENDLY WORK ENVIRONMENT**
2nd highest factor in terms of importance for Young Millennial/GenZ females. This grows in importance in older generations.

**SOFTWARE TOOLS**
Every female demographic places a higher importance on software to manage customer interactions, contact management than males.

**FUN WORK ENVIRONMENT**
In the contact center, Young Millennial/GenZ males want to have more fun than Young Millennial/GenZ females by a nine point margin.

**GIG WORK**
Younger males have a slightly (4 points) greater interest in their contact center employer offering on-demand opportunities than do young females.
IMPORTANCE OF SALARY INCREASES

The value of wages/salary increases the older the agent and the longer they’ve been on the job.

How important is a competitive wage to you when it comes to your workforce engagement?

Q: How important is a competitive wage to you when it comes to your workforce engagement?
Desire to have access to key software and smartphone communication tools is more important to females than males.

**SOFTWARE TOOLS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having the most up-to-date software to contact management</td>
<td>80% (Females)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to use simple, easy-to-use software to service customers</td>
<td>73% (Females)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Females place a higher importance on software to manage customer interactions and contact their management than males.
RESPECT
Respect is the first or second most important factor for workplace engagement for females.

### Young Millennials/GenZ
1. Environment where I’m respected *
2. Flexible work schedule
3. Work/life balance

### Older Millennials
1. Work/life balance
2. Environment where I’m respected
3. Friendly working environment

### GenX/Boomers
1. Feeling like a valued part of the team
2. Environment where I’m respected
3. Friendly working environment

* Most important for females age 18-24.
EMERGING TRENDS
THE STATE OF AGENT ENGAGEMENT: AGENTS AND AI

The rise in self-service is changing the question mix. The amount of easy questions received is down 3% from last year while the number of complex questions is up 3%. Good news: significant jump from 2017 in agent desire to HANDLE more complex questions.

Q: What percentage of the total number of customer questions and issues you handle in a typical week are easy, moderate and complex?
Agents are even more positive on the impact of handling more complex questions.

- Improves my skills: 81% (+2%)
- I can make a bigger impact in the company: 76% (+4%)
- I’m more satisfied in my job, more committed to the company: 68% (+9%)
- Improves my prospects of moving up: 70% (+13%)

* Since 2017

Q: How much do you agree with the following statements about handling more complex customer questions?
“ON DEMAND” OPPORTUNITIES ARE IN DEMAND

The appeal of making additional income, being in control of schedules and better work/life balance are driving the appeal for on-demand contact center work.

Gig work interest in the contact center driven by younger workers

- Young Millennials/GenZ: 51%
- Older Millennials: 43%
- GenX/Boomers: 37%

The longer agents are in the industry, the less the appeal

- 3 – 12 Months: 51%
- 1 – 3 Years: 48%
- 3+ Years: 37%

Q: Would you rather be a full time customer service representative OR work as an independent contractor working in a variety of customer support or customer service centers?
THE STATE OF AGENT ENGAGEMENT

PROVIDE SELF-SERVICE MANAGEMENT
Agents would prefer to have self-service options to manage schedules and time off. In addition to improving their work engagement, 76% of them feel it will improve their customer service delivery.

CHALLENGE THEM
All agents note that handling moderately complex or complex questions/tasks will improve their skills and their value to the organization. The Young Millennial/GenZ agent demographic is the group with the highest number of agents to say it gives them an opportunity to shine.