



# The CallMiner Churn Index 2020

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# The CallMiner Churn Index 2020

## Executive Summary

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Two years ago, we commissioned a survey to find out why US consumers leave providers. What we uncovered was a switching epidemic – with call centers playing a pivotal role in whether consumers stay loyal or decide to switch.

This year, we decided to repeat the exercise to see what's changed. We hoped that providers had changed their behavior, and we expected to see increasing levels of automation and a decline in the use of the phone to contact providers. But what we found was very different.

Consumers would rather stay loyal to their providers but are forced to switch because of bad service. The message from consumers to providers is clear:

***'Please use the billions you spend trying to attract new customers on delivering a better and fairer service instead.'***

— — —

***'If I have a problem that needs solving, I want to talk to an intelligent human being to do so.'***

— — —



When we analyzed the results, we identified five significant takeaways for US executives:

**1. Providers are suffering from completely avoidable levels of churn that are costing them billions and frustrating and annoying consumers.**

Although the general rate of churn increased by just over 12% from 1.81 to 2.04 provider switches per person per year, consumers are making it clear they would stay loyal if they were treated fairly.

***This year's survey has uncovered that providers are pushing consumers away through completely avoidable bad customer experiences, and ineffective automated self-service channels that frustrate and annoy.***

While it may not be possible to eliminate the full \$168 billion<sup>1</sup> cost of churn, it's clear that the providers should be able to save the \$35.3 billion<sup>2</sup> associated with unplanned switching.

**2. Price as a driver of churn declined while customer service and fair treatment are becoming increasingly important in the battle for loyalty.**

Although price is still the #1 driver of churn, the number of consumers who cited it as a reason for switching has declined by 8% since 2018.

In marked contrast, all the service issues related to customer experience have increased in importance, with unfair treatment as the common denominator.

**3. The importance of a human service is now paramount. The role of the 'super-agent' – one who is intelligent, empathetic and empowered – is becoming business-critical and a driver of brand positivity.**

If consumers have a problem, they want to speak to a knowledgeable agent who will listen to them and provide a solution. When agents are empathetic to their needs and issues, callers leave feeling positive and heard, with a desire to stay loyal.

Consumers are telling providers that emotions have a big impact on loyalty. The results of the survey show that the way call centers are operated has a binary impact on a consumer's loyalty decisions. If they are served by a super-agent, they are not only extremely likely to stay loyal but also post positive comments on social media.

If they are served by an agent that doesn't listen and doesn't solve their problem, they are extremely likely to switch and may post negative comments too. If providers want to improve customer loyalty, they need to be focused on creating these super-agents who are skilled, empathetic and empowered.



1. According to the United States Census Bureau there were estimated to be 254,713,870 adults in the United States in 2019. A conservative estimate of the cost of acquiring a new customer across all the main sectors in the survey is \$400 per person. This is based on the level of incentives applied to attract new customers and a conservative estimate of associated sales and marketing costs. In the last 12 months 81% of US adults (206.32m) switched 2.04 providers each.  $206.32 \times 2.04 \times 400 = \$168B$

2. The difference between those who are planning to switch and those who switched is 17% of the adult population = 43.3m people. 43.3m people switching 2.04 times at \$400 per switch = \$35.3B. The total cost of avoidable churn is therefore at least \$35.3 billion.

**4. Ineffective efforts to provide automated service are frustrating and annoying consumers and putting call centers under pressure with 586<sup>3</sup> million unnecessary calls.**

If consumers don't have problems or questions to be solved, they are very happy to serve themselves. If they are looking for information or want to make a payment, then they want to be provided good self-service and automated options.

***Currently, where automated channels are offered, they aren't delivering what consumers expect.***

This means that more consumers are arriving at call centers frustrated, angry and annoyed. This is completely avoidable if providers analyze consumer behavior and optimize the automated channels accordingly.

**5. It's time for a change in strategy. Stop prioritizing attracting new customers and invest in human and automated service channels that perform the way consumers expect.**

US providers are shooting themselves in the foot by not listening to their customers and avoiding the primary sources of churn.

The cost of not listening is increased by not optimizing self-service channels where consumers want them. As a result, not only are the benefits of automation not accrued but automated channels are increasing the cost of churn.

Rather than investing heavily in expensive campaigns to attract new customers, the default strategy should be to use some of that money to invest in a combination of super-agents and automated channels that create loyal, satisfied customers. In fact, our conservative calculation shows that providers could be saving \$35.3 billion per annum by focusing on keeping existing customers happy.



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3. If we look at the usage of the phone just by the number of customers who switched providers in the last 12 months this equals 76.5% of 206.32m x 2.04 switches i.e.414.77 million. So, of the 414.77 million customers who telephoned a call center in the last year, 41.3% (171.3m) called to make a payment, 39% called to get information about a product/service (161.76m), 36.1% called to cancel/close the account (149.73m) and 25.0% (103.69m) to get information. The combined total of calls is 586.48 million.

Section 1 – Consumers’ desire to stay loyal is being ignored – which is an error that costs providers billions.

1.1 – More people switch than plan to switch – representing \$35.3 Billion of avoidable churn

We asked respondents which services they were planning to switch in the next 12 months. Almost two thirds (63.9%) said they had plans to switch – up 13% since 2018. And they are planning to switch more providers than they planned to in 2018 – with all sectors apart from telephone providers seeing an increase from 2018.

However, just as we saw in our last survey, significantly more (81.0%) people actually switched than say they are planning to switch (63.9%). This represents 43.3 million people and over 88.3 million switching occasions. The cost of this ‘unplanned’ churn is a massive \$35.3 billion with many of the triggers for switching being completely avoidable.

The difference between planned and actual switching should be a wake-up call for providers to improve their human and automated service channels. Doing so effectively would deliver an immediate ROI by eliminating the cost of unplanned churn.

1.2 Clear advice from consumers on how to keep them loyal – treat them fairly and like a valued customer

Many of the triggers for switching are completely avoidable. When we compared the reasons for switching with our 2018 survey, we identified some interesting trends – see Table 1:

- Price, while still the highest source of churn, declined in importance by 8% whereas all the other main reasons increased
- Feeling fairly treated moved from the #4 to the #2 reason to switch (up 24% to 34.6%) and is the theme that links three of the top four reasons
- Customers want to be rewarded for loyalty (up 8% to 32.4%) and, at the very least, treated the same as new customers (up 14% to 31.0%)

Table 1	Reasons for Leaving	
2018	2020	% change
Prices, rates or fees are too high or increased (65.6%)	Prices, rates or fees are too high or increased (60.2%)	-8%
Feeling like I am not being treated fairly (28.0%)	Feeling like I am not being treated fairly (34.6%)	+24%
There is no reward for contract renewal i.e. no reward for my loyalty (30.1%)	There is no reward for contract renewal i.e. no reward for my loyalty (32.4%)	+8%
Discounts offered to new customers are not automatically applied to my existing account (27.2%)	Discounts offered to new customers are not automatically applied to my existing account (31.0%)	+14%

\*\* Items in orange signal the desire to be fairly treated and valued as a customer

The survey reveals that consumers feel even more strongly than two years ago that new customers are treated better than existing ones and that providers are focusing more on acquisition than retention. The advice consumers provide on how to keep them loyal matches the top three reasons for switching. It also accentuates their desire to be treated fairly and valued as a customer.

- Over half (56.1%) say keep prices rates or fees the same or better than for new customers
  - A third (33.0%) say automatically apply new discounts to my account
  - A third (32.4%) say reward me for renewing my contract
- Providers who don't listen to this feedback will lose customers that would otherwise stay loyal.

## Section 2 – The human service delivered by the call center has become even more important in the last two years

### 2.1 – Consumers see call centers as problem resolution centers – and they care about the way their problems are handled

When asked why consumers contact a call center agent, the top two answers – both for over half of respondents – were to resolve problems with the service or with the bill. Most other reasons for contacting a provider, consumers would rather handle themselves (see Section 3).

Serious problems with the service declined in importance as a reason to switch by 22% to 24.5%. But, resolving problems, and the way they are resolved, grew in importance. Failing to solve the problem on first contact became the #5 reason to switch – up 11% to 27.0%.

Also, resolving problems is key to keeping people loyal. In fact, almost half of customers (44.1%) said they wanted providers to make sure customer service/support resolves their issues effectively and efficiently.

Two other reasons for switching combine to give a clear signal to suppliers that they need to create super-agents that are genuine problem solvers – see Table 2. These are:

- Using call center agents who are inexperienced and not knowledgeable – up 26% to 25.0%.
- Call center agents failing to follow-up as promised – up 32% to 18.5%

Table 2	Reasons for Leaving	
2018	2020	% change
Failure to solve problems on the first contact (24.4%)	Failure to solve problems on the first contact (27.0%)	+11%
Failure to respond in a timely manner after reporting a problem (24.5%)	Failure to respond in a timely manner after reporting a problem (26.9%)	+10%
Call center advisers that serve me are inexperienced or not knowledgeable (19.9%)	Call center advisers that serve me are inexperienced or not knowledgeable (25.0%)	+26%
There is a serious problem (mistake, error or failure) with the service (31.5%)	There is a serious problem (mistake, error or failure) with the service (24.5%)	-22%
Failure of a call center agent to follow up as promised (14.0%)	Failure of a call center agent to follow up as promised (18.5%)	+32%

## 2.2 – Call center interactions are pivotal to loyalty

Call centers agents are pivotal to customer loyalty, in fact their impact is even higher than in 2018. Call center agents being inexperienced and not knowledgeable is the second biggest riser for reasons for churn (up 26%) while call center agents failing to follow up as promised is up 32% to 18.5%.

In addition, the number of consumers likely to stay loyal after a positive call center experience has increased by 8% to a massive 90.0%. It pays to deliver a positive call center experience, but agents have a tough job.

Not only are the majority of contact center calls problem related, but consumers with problems are more emotionally charged – see Table 3. This means agents need to be able to handle complex issues and manage emotional customers at the same time.

Combine this insight with the fact that reasons for switching have shifted from 'hygiene' factors like price to emotional factors such as the quality of the agent, and the need for skilled, problem-solving super-agents emerges.

## 2.3 – The binary impact of contact center agents – The rise of the super-agent

The survey measured customer emotions before and after a call to a contact center – see Table 3. The results show that the way contact center agents handle calls has a binary impact on the way customers feel.

**Agents who excel at handling emotionally charged situations – super-agents – are very good at taking the heat out of the situation and delivering a successful call outcome.**

For example, 38.0% of customers say they left their call satisfied – see Table 3. And, almost half (47.7%) said their emotional state switched from negative to positive after a call to a call center – see Chart 1.

## Other indications of super-agents in action are:

- The number of frustrated customers fell by 40% as a result of the call
- The number of annoyed customers fell by 50%
- The number of confused customers fell by 35%
- The number of upset customers fell by 36%
- The number of angry customers fell by 28%

**Table 3 - The impact of call center agents on customer emotions**

Emotion before a call	%	Emotion after a call	%	% Change
		Satisfied	38.0%	
Frustrated	40.5%	Frustrated	24.3%	-40%
Hopeful	23.8%	Hopeful	22.6%	-5%
Annoyed	41.0%	Annoyed	20.5%	-50%
Upset	22.2%	Upset	14.2%	-36%
Wanting to be listened to	23.2%	Feeling listened to	13.5%	-42%
Angry	17.4%	Angry	12.6%	-28%
Confused	17.5%	Confused	11.4%	-35%
Ready for an argument	7.5%			
		Appreciated	14.7%	
		Grateful	14.1%	
		Ignored	8.2%	

So, it's clear that many agents are failing to provide good customer experience. Agents failed to change emotions for about a third of consumers (33.1%).

What's more worrying is that almost one in five (19.3%) say their emotional state shifted from positive to negative as a result of their call.

**With 73.7% of consumers likely to switch after a bad call center experience, this represents a huge opportunity for providers to make significant changes to their customer experience and significantly impact their churn rates.**

**Table 4 - How emotional state changed on the last call to a call center**

It changed from positive to negative	19.3%
It changed from negative to positive	47.7%
It stayed the same	33.1%

The top two reasons for a negative emotion shift point to the need for knowledgeable super-agents with active listening skills:

- The adviser didn't solve my problem
- I had to repeat myself

***But the good news is that 147% more customers experience a positive shift in emotion than a negative shift.***

When looking at the reasons for a positive shift, the top four show that these are super-agents handling complex issues and emotions well:

- The problem was resolved by someone who was very knowledgeable
- The adviser showed he/she understood my problem
- The call center adviser listened to me
- The adviser got help from a colleague so my problem could be resolved



When consumers were asked what they found annoying when they contact a provider's call center, five out of the six issues that decreased from the last survey all relate to agent performance – the super-agent is on the rise.

The largest reduction from 2018 relates to call center agents who don't have access to account information. This fell by 38% to just 9.7%. Consumers also value the treatment they get from contact center agents more than money.

All the top four reasons for changing emotions have to do with agent performance.

**Receiving monetary compensation like refunds is low on the list at only 7.5%**

(see Section 5 for our advice on how to create and support super-agents).

## 2.4 - Showing empathy matters

Almost half (42%) of the people who wanted to be listened to before a call leave it feeling that this had not happened. And the number who feel listened to has fallen by 41% since 2018 to just 13.5%. Furthermore, one in 12 leave feeling ignored! Perhaps that's why over a third of people (39.0%) say they want to deal with more polite and caring staff.

This shows that organizations need to focus on improving agent empathy. It has a big impact on changing emotions from negative to positive. In fact, 24.5% of consumers said that agents showing empathy was the reason their emotional state changed. Similarly, showing understanding of a problem – the #2 reason for an emotion shift – was 25% higher for people moving from negative to positive. Also, 'the agent listened to me', the #3 reason was 17% higher for those that moved from negative to positive.

Showing empathy is even more important with vulnerable customers. Although companies are getting better at identifying vulnerability (the number of customers who said providers were good at recognizing vulnerability has increased by 20% to 58.2%), it's still not good enough.

A quarter of people (25.5%) feel that organizations are not good at this, rating them 4 and below on a 0–10 scale where 0 = not at all good and 10 = extremely good. The technology exists to help agents identify the callers who may be vulnerable and then provide them guidance on how to act accordingly, making weaknesses in this area avoidable (See Section 5 for recommendations).

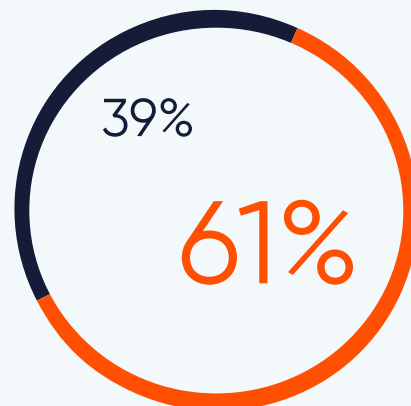
## 2.5 It pays to deliver positive experiences

We asked consumers if they have posted positive or negative comments about providers on social media in the last 12 months.

We expected to see higher numbers for negative commentary, but the reverse was true. In fact, 77% more consumers (39.0%) posted positive comments – see Chart 1 than those that posted negative comments (25.0%) – see Chart 2.

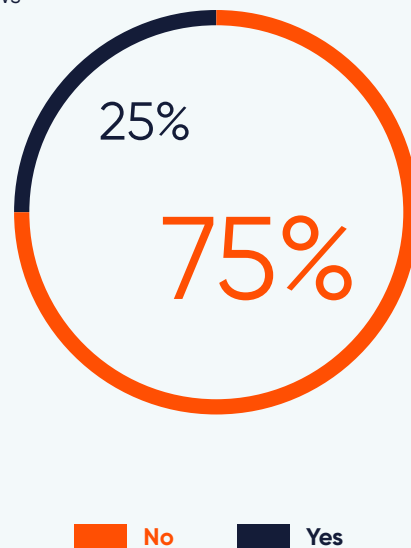
**CHART 1**

Posting Positive Reviews



**CHART 2**

Posting Negative Reviews



Brands should leverage super-agents to generate positive service experiences and feedback as customer buying decisions are directly impacted by what their friends and family post online.

## 2.6 Easy wins in the battle for customer satisfaction and loyalty

We asked people how they want providers to deliver services to keep them loyal – see Table 5. The top answer relates to interactions in call centers. The number one response (at 66.3%) is to make sure call center staff are aware of a customer's service history so it's not necessary to repeat themselves.

- Over a third (36.2%) would like staff to apologize when the service is not satisfactory
- Over a third (39.0%) of consumers want more caring and polite agents
- Half (49.4%) want call centers to be based in their home country

**Providers who aren't listening to this simple advice are losing out on easy wins to fix the call center issues that drive churn.**

(See Section 5 for our recommendations).

**Table 5 – How consumers want providers to deliver services, so they remain loyal customers**

Action to take	%	Change since 2018
Make sure call center advisers are aware of my service history – so I don't have to explain multiple times	66.3%	+6%
Be more proactive in informing me about a problem with my service and how it is being fixed	62.2%	+5%
Keep the call center in my home country	49.4%	-6%
Provide a self-service facility that allows me to create my own service requests online so that I can avoid call centers or help desks	44.7%	+3%
Provide more caring and polite advisers	39.0%	-8%
Apologize when the service is not satisfactory	36.2%	-3%

### Section 3 – Providers and consumers missing out on the benefits of automated self-service. This puts call centers under pressure with 586 million unnecessary calls

The range of contact channels used by consumers shows how important it is for organizations to understand which are used for which reasons, and to optimize them to meet expectations. The results of the survey show that the biggest missed opportunity by providers is an investment in effective automated channels that could remove unnecessary pressure from their call centers.

#### 3.1 – The telephone is king and growing in importance – while other channels decline

In 2018 the telephone was both the most preferred channel and the most used channel. We had expected – with the availability of other channels and the investment in online chat – to see the telephone in decline. However, the reverse is true. It strengthened its position as the preferred channel – up 17% to 52.3% – more than three times the #2 channel, email. Usage of the telephone has also grown by 15% to 76.5%. Only two other channels have any significant level of preference – email and online chat – see Table 6. Websites, social media and letters all declined significantly.

Table 6		The channels consumers prefer to use to contact providers		
Preferred Channel	%	Channel used	% use	Change since 2018
Telephone	52.3%	Telephone	76.5%	+17%
Email	14.4%	Email	46.6%	+11%
Online Chat	10.7%	Online Chat	32.6%	+8%
Social Media	7.4%	Social Media	26.0%	-30%
Website	6.0%	Website	19.6%	-48%
Mobile App	5.1%	Mobile App	16.0%	-11%
SMS	2.0%	SMS	9.3%	-26%
Letter	0.3%	Letter	6.0%	-73%

#### 3.2 – Providers put their call centers under pressure with 586 million calls that could be satisfied by a self-service channel

Consumers have told us that when they have problems, they want them to be resolved by a human being who understands and listens to them. This means they head to the telephone. For most other reasons they want self-service and automation.

In fact, when consumers were asked how they wanted providers to deliver services to keep them loyal, the advice from almost half of consumers (44.7%) is to provide a self-service facility that allows them to avoid call centers or help desks.

Despite this desire for self-service, 17% more consumers used the telephone than in 2018 to contact providers to do things they should be able to do for themselves – see Table 7.

For example:

- 36.1% phoned to cancel the service/close account
- 41.3% phoned to make a payment
- 39.0% phoned to get information about the product/service
- 25.0% phoned to buy something

**Table 7**

Reasons to call a call center	2018	2020	% change
Needing to resolve a technical problem with the product/service	59.7%	62.5%	5%
To resolve issues with a bill or invoice	56.6%	56.0%	-1%
To make a payment	38.9%	41.3%	6%
Needing information about the product/service	36.0%	39.0%	8%
To cancel the service/close my account	38.7%	36.1%	-7%
To agree a payment plan	24.9%	28.1%	13%
To purchase something	22.5%	25.0%	11%

This represents over 586 million calls that could be satisfied by self-service channels such as chat or website. This gives a clear signal to providers that they need to optimize self-service channels to handle simple tasks.

***This will take the pressure off their call centers and enable companies to invest in super-agents to resolve more complex problems.***

But in the meantime, because providers aren't optimizing self-service channels and automating them well enough, more consumers than prefer to are turning to the phone to get the answers they need. This means more consumers are calling a call center frustrated and annoyed.

This also means that providers are suffering a double whammy. They are losing customers that would otherwise stay loyal and they are putting contact centers under unnecessary pressure by sending frustrated customers to their agents.

### **3.3 - Online chat grows in importance, along with customer desire to use it**

Online chat applications have been growing in usage over the last few years and most people are now happy to interact with them.

In fact, 67.8% of consumers are happy to interact via chat – a 21% increase from 2018. When asked about preferred contact channels for specific reasons, online chat grew in every case from 2018. Using online chat for making a payment grew the most, up 298% to 16.3%.

However, consumers also increased the usage of online chat for problem resolution. This represents a future opportunity for providers to take the pressure off their call centers, where most problems are resolved today.

## Section 4 – Consumer switching by sector

### 4.1 – Banks and broadband providers the big risers

While the average rate of churn saw relatively little change, some sectors saw big increases. The banking sector moved to #1 from #3 with the number of customers switching almost doubling from 20% to 35.9%.

Broadband and internet providers also almost doubled – up 93% – and moved to #2 from #4 – see Table 8. Telephone providers have fallen from #1 to #3. Insurance providers rose 26% to #4. Electric companies have remained at #5 but switching has increased by 43%.

### 4.2 – Broadband and banks heading for another big rise in churn

Just as broadband providers saw the biggest rise in actual churn since 2018, consumers are saying that trend will continue in the next 12 months.

In fact, 72% more broadband customers than 2018 are planning to switch in the next 12 months – see Table 9.

The four highest planned churn rates are for the same sectors as 2018 and are 37% higher on average than last year. Banks are close behind broadband with an increase of 69% since 2018.

Table 8	Switched in the last 12 months	
2018 Churn Index	2020 Churn Index	Change since 2018
3. Banks (20.0%)	1. Banks (35.9%)	+80%
4. Broadband providers (16.6%)	2. Broadband providers (32.0%)	+93%
1. Telephone companies (34.9%)	3. Telephone companies (30.7%)	-12%
2. Insurance providers (20.1%)	4. Insurance providers (25.4%)	+26%
5. Electric companies (14.0%)	5. Electric company (20.0%)	+43%

Table 9	Switched in the last 12 months	
2018 Churn Index	2020 Churn Index	Change since 2018
2. Broadband provider (13.8%)	1. Broadband providers (23.8%)	+72%
1. Telephone company (26.6%)	2. Telephone and mobile (22.1%)	-17%
4. Banks (12.2%)	3. Banks (20.6%)	+69%
3. Insurance company (12.9%)	4. Insurance company (18.5%)	+43%
5. Electric company (10.4%)	6. Electric company (12.3%)	+18%

4.3 - Reasons for switching by sector

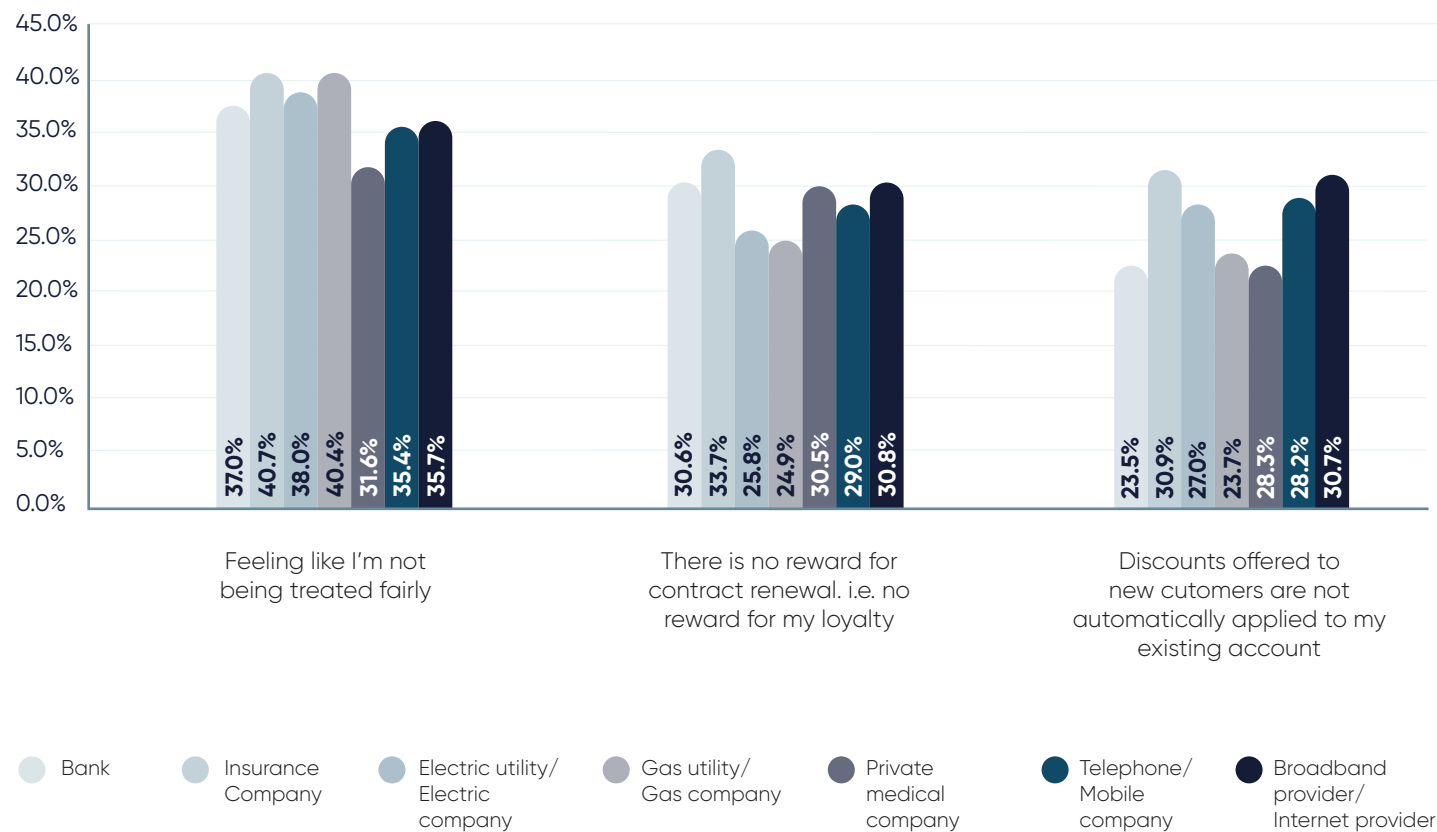
When we analyzed the reasons for switching by sector (see Chart 3) the following results stood out.

Insurance sector worst for treating customers fairly

It's clear from the responses to the survey that insurance customers think that they are not fairly treated and switch as a result. When consumers were asked about their reasons for switching, the insurance sector came highest for: feeling like I am not being treated fairly, no reward for contract renewal and discounts offered to new customers aren't automatically applied to existing accounts.

These responses are further proof that consumers resent the money spent on attracting new customers rather than rewarding them for their loyalty. It's a business culture that creates a very expensive, avoidable revolving door of customers.

Chart 3  
When you change suppliers  
what are your main reasons?



## More consumers switch banks because of call center staff than the other sectors

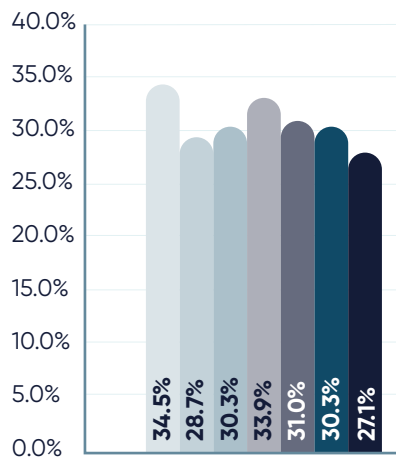
When asked about their reasons for churn, over a third (34.5%) of customers said they left their bank because call center staff were inexperienced and not knowledgeable. This is a completely avoidable source of churn if call center agents are given the insight and coaching needed to meet consumer expectations (see Chart 4).

## Gas customers switch because of unethical behavior

In addition, more gas customers switch because of unethical company behavior than any other sector. Around one in eight consumers switch gas companies because they believe the organization behaves unethically – 44% more than the number of telephone customers who switch for the same reason (see Chart 5). Providers need to be increasingly aware of the changing sources of churn and the way their organization's policies can impact business performance.

**Chart 4**

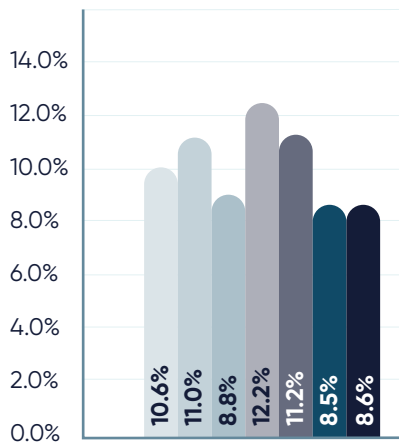
When you change suppliers what are your main reasons?



Call center advisors that serve me are inexperienced or not knowledgeable.

**Chart 5**

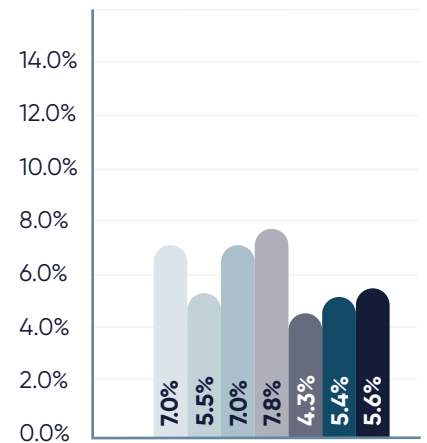
When you change suppliers what are your main reasons?



The company behaves unethically.

**Chart 6**

When you change suppliers what are your main reasons?



The supplier does not have strong policy for addressing climate change



## Section 5 – Recommendations

This year's survey has highlighted that many organizations are missing the opportunity to keep customers loyal by persisting with practices that drive switching.

Most of these are avoidable – particularly those created by the way call centers behave. The solution is clear – stop investing in a switching culture and invest in human and automated service channels that perform the way consumers want them to.

The good news is the results of the survey provide some helpful indicators of how to avoid the sources of churn:

### 1. Automate the services that consumers want to handle themselves

Consumers want to be able to access information and make many transactions themselves. But it's also clear that the way automated channels are currently set up is not meeting consumer needs. As a result, they resort to calling a contact center with issues that need not exist.

To remove this unnecessary cost on the business, and deliver a better customer experience, providers will need to identify where their customers want automated and self-service channels, and identify how the channels need to be optimized to satisfy customers the first time, every time.

To do this, providers will need to analyze all interactions across multiple channels in one system that provides a single point of access to data. This will enable them to identify when customers are using multiple channels to solve a single issue and highlight the shortcomings in the automated channels that triggered the need to contact a call center.

***Armed with this information, it will be possible to make the necessary changes to ensure that customers are able to satisfy their needs via their preferred channel.***

### 2. Invest in super-agents who are effective and empathetic problem solvers

The majority of customers contact a call center with a problem. Many of these problems are created by ineffective automated or selfservice channels. As a result, many call center agents must deal with customers who arrive in a negative frame of mind.

Managing a call in a way that converts an unhappy customer into a happy one is therefore incredibly valuable, but this does not happen every time. When it does, customers are extremely likely to remain loyal and post positive comments on social media.

***It is vital that organizations staff their call centers with knowledgeable, empathetic and highly trained agents who can resolve problems on the first call.***

These super-agents are not just the first line of defense, they are profit generators because they reduce the cost of churn and increase the lifetime value of a customer.

Agents need easy and timely access to all the information required to resolve customer queries, so customers leave the call feeling satisfied with the outcome. Interaction analytics solutions can provide real-time call monitoring and performance feedback to agents during the call.

For example, if the analysis detects a change in the acoustics of a customer's voice that suggests the call is deteriorating, an alert can guide the agent to adjust their vocal style or approach to be more empathetic.

It can also alert a supervisor who could provide support if needed. Interaction analytics technology also provides each agent with a personal scorecard that enables them to self-improve by identifying where they need to adjust and asking for the coaching required to make the desired improvement.

### 3. Measure and track emotions

Customers experience a range of emotions before and after a call. The results show that some agents (super-agents) are very effective at turning negative emotions into positive feelings.

This ability is incredibly valuable to an organization in the battle for loyalty and for strengthening a brand's reputation through positive comments.

However, a quarter of consumers leave a call frustrated, about one in five leave annoyed and one in eight leave angry. And, only 60% of the people who wanted to be listened to before a call felt listened to after a call.

***This shows a need to train/coach agents to be better listeners. It also shows the need to identify, track and measure emotions. Only by tracking emotion will it be possible to direct coaching where it is needed.***

Interaction analytics solutions can create specific emotion categories (such as ignored, annoyed, angry, satisfied) so that the emotions can be tracked, measured and addressed.

### 4. Make reducing wait times your priority by using analytics to identify and eliminate annoying call center processes

As indicated above, most callers arrive to your call center in a negative frame of mind. So, anything that makes this worse should be avoided if providers want to achieve a successful call outcome and keep customers loyal.

However, our survey results show there are many call center processes that annoy a huge proportion of customers. The chart below identifies 12 behaviors that cause annoyance. All of them are avoidable if providers have access to the right insight to help take the right action.

The top five answers also include the scores that have increased the most from 2018 – demonstrating that organizations have not acted on the insight provided by our last report.



## Contact center behavior that consumers find annoying

Position	Behavior to avoid	Percentage	Ways to avoid the issue
1	Long waiting times – This is up 50% from 2018 and is over 50% higher than the #2 issue	60.9%	The first step is to identify the problem. Analysis of all calls will bring this problem to the surface immediately. This will enable much better resource planning.
2	Failure to resolve your issue on the first call – This is up 42% from 2018	38.7%	Identifying how often this happens, and why, will enable management to understand if there are agent training issues or whether a change of approach is needed. For example, management could decide to reward agents for first call resolution rather than for the brevity of a call.
3	Call routing options that don't include what you need – This is up 112% from 2018	38.3%	Identifying how often this happens by analyzing the content of every call will enable providers to change routing options to meet customer needs.
4	Having to repeat yourself from one contact channel to the next or from one agent to the next. This declined by 10% but remains a significant problem.	31.6%	Identifying how often this happens, and for which interactions, by analyzing every interaction will enable providers to design an appropriate solution.
5	Calls that are cancelled/drop out after holding. This issue increased by 53%	30.2%	Identifying how often this happens, and why, will enable providers to understand if there is an agent problem or issues with their technology. Then they can eliminate or minimize the issue.

## Contact center behavior that consumers find annoying

Position	Behavior to avoid	Percentage	Ways to avoid the issue
6	Calls that are mis-routed after speaking to a call center adviser. This increased by 2% which shows a need to invest in agent training and coaching.	20.9%	Identifying how often this happens by analyzing the content of every call will enable management to change routing options to meet customer needs and ensure that agents are armed with the right insight to route customers appropriately.
7	Failure to follow-up as promised. This increased by 6% and is a significant source of churn. Addressing it should be a priority.	16.7%	Identifying how often this happens and by which agents, and for which issues, will enable providers to optimize methods and coach agents as necessary. It will help to understand how much after call work is required for each type of transaction so that resources can be planned accordingly.
8	Long messages before being routed to the right person, this reduced by 29% which is good, but it remains a problem for one in six people.	15.5%	Identifying how often negative language and negative emotions (through acoustic analysis) are recorded after routing will enable providers to optimize their messages. This could include explaining why the messages need to be there for compliance reasons and to protect consumer' rights/ shorten the call once routed – so that customers view them less negatively.
9	Call center staff that work to a script that means they ask silly questions which have no relation to the conversation. This reduced by 27% which is very encouraging. It shows that call centers are empowering more of their agents to manage the call themselves.	14.1%	Identifying how often this happens and by which agents, will enable providers to optimize scripts and provide coaching to the agents that need it. Management may decide to make scripts more flexible. Another option could be to guide agents during the call on what would be 'the next best action' to take.

Contact center behavior that consumers find annoying			
Position	Behavior to avoid	Percentage	Ways to avoid the issue
10	Call center staff that don't ask the right questions or can't answer your questions. This reduced by 35% which shows that some organizations are already creating super-agents.	11.6%	Identifying how often this happens by which agents, and for which issues, will enable providers to take steps to remove the issue. Prompting agents with the correct answer in real time will help them to appear more expert.
11	Call center staff that don't seem to have access to your account information and your recent interactions. This reduced by 38% - another positive improvement.	9.7%	Identifying how often this happens and by which agents, will help providers to decide if there is an agent problem or issues with the technology.
12	Call center advisers who don't show empathy or understanding when they deal with problems. This reduced by 34% which is encouraging but this remains an issue for one in 10 people.	9.7%	Identifying how often this happens by which agents, and for which issues, will enable management to alert agents of the need to be more empathetic on a call and then coach them after the call.

## Section 6 – Methodology

CallMiner commissioned an independent research company – 3Gem Research and Insights – to gather responses via an online survey in the US. This produced responses from 2000 adults who had contacted a provider in the previous 12 months.

### Demographic Splits

The following demographic details were collected as part of the methodology.

Gender	% Age
Female	51.3%
Male	48.2%

Age – Participants were grouped in these age ranges:	% Age
18-24	14.1%
25-34	19.4%
35-44	22.6%
45-54	19.3%
55-64	14.1%
65+	10.6%

Region – US	% Age
Midwest	21.7%
Northeast	17.9%
Southeast	19.8%
Southwest	18.0%
West	22.8%

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## About CallMiner

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CallMiner is the global leader in conversation analytics to drive business performance improvement. Powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning, CallMiner delivers the industry's most comprehensive platform to analyze omnichannel customer interactions at scale, allowing organizations to interpret sentiment and identify patterns to reveal deep understanding from every conversation. By connecting the dots between insights and action, CallMiner enables companies to identify areas of opportunity to drive business improvement, growth and transformational change more effectively than ever before. CallMiner is trusted by the world's leading organizations across retail, financial services, healthcare and insurance, travel and hospitality, and more.



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