



# The Work from Home Supervisor:

How Speech Analytics Can  
Improve Remote Agent  
Management, Coaching  
and Decision Making



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In the age of remote work, most of the focus has been paid to how agents – especially those who have never worked remotely before – are adapting. But agents aren't the only people who have had to navigate this new reality. Supervisors have had to completely transform how they work. In the call center, it's critical they have the tools to navigate a new remote world while empowering teams, driving value and improving business performance.

There's been no shortage of adjustments made to navigate the challenges of COVID-19. For those in the contact center the impact has been even more extreme. Before the pandemic, the ratio of work-from-home agents was 1:7. Now, it's almost 1:2<sup>1</sup> as some agents who moved remote are continuing to operate that way, and others are transitioning to a hybrid model. With these changes here to stay, optimizing remote operations can no longer be considered a temporary mainstay – it's a defining factor of business success.

Despite agents trading the office for the dining table, kitchen counter or even their favorite spot on the couch, consumers still expect responsive customer experience (CX), **especially as their needs intensify, preferences shift and behavior changes.**

And executives still demand strong call center agent performance as frontline workers are directly responsible for shaping brand perception and improving overall loyalty.

But what about supervisors? In a new environment of their own, many are left wondering: How can I keep agents engaged? How can I help them navigate the new challenges they face? How can I ensure they stay compliant? How can I manage their performance from a distance?

Armed with the right tools and strategies, supervisors can elevate the remote employee experience (EX) and empower their agents. And when empowered agents deliver better CX, supervisors can help drive ROI well beyond the contact center.



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1. Contact Babel, 2020. The Inner Circle Guide to Contact Center Remote Working Solutions (US edition).

"Work-from-home supervisors must take a specialized approach to managing remote agents. As they deal with employees' shifting needs, wants and concerns, they need tools and strategies that enable them to understand these new dynamics and stay connected to their teams."

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**Steve Chirokas**, Director of Product and Channel Marketing at CallMiner

## The EX of CX: Addressing Your Agents' Remote Challenges

With very few virtual contact centers in existence before the pandemic, agents won't automatically be efficient, engaged and productive while working from home. It also means that they face a new world of technology challenges, including challenging communication technology, new security requirements, systems that haven't been optimized for remote connections and more. Supervisors, facing their own set of challenges, are also tasked with managing under entirely new circumstances.

Nearing a year into the pandemic, many supervisors continue to struggle with how to keep remote teams engaged, ensure consistency on brand voice and extract intelligence from customer interactions.

### Challenge One: Remote Workforce Engagement

Aspect's 2020 Agent Experience Index Survey<sup>2</sup> revealed that 68% of remote workers highly value the ability to reach management whenever needed. However, with teams no longer face-to-face, it's hard to keep the doors of communication open. When this happens, it's easy for productivity to falter as employees experience WFH distractions and challenges from family responsibilities to technical obstacles. What's more? Daily team interactions can fail to produce the same effect as they would in-office – even team huddles are less effective as employees struggle to feel connected through virtual systems. Supervisors need to close the gap, and keep employees empowered and engaged.



"A work-from-home workforce, if managed and nurtured properly, can raise productivity, engagement and employee retention. Overseeing a team of work-from-home employees doesn't come naturally to many leaders who are accustomed to engaging with service reps frequently throughout the day. This will require changes in leadership and management approaches to ensure engagement and productivity, but service leaders should understand that most day-to-day functions will remain relatively the same."

**John Quaglietta**, Sr. Director Analyst in the Gartner Customer Service & Support Practice<sup>3</sup>

### Challenge Two: Uniformed Brand Voice

Agents are the face of your brand. What they do and say directly influences customer perceptions, loyalties and decisions. Supervisors must align their teams on messaging and communications. They can't afford to be in a position where they realize: "We said THAT to a customer?" Supervisors must work to help agents maintain – and present – the voice of the brand.

This starts with providing training, coaching and performance metrics that account for the ongoing pandemic. Remote supervisors must ask themselves, "Do we need to increase 1:1 or team coaching to help agents adjust to new challenges? Do we need to revamp our KPIs to account for things like increased handle time and silence as a direct result of at-home challenges?"

<sup>2</sup>. Aspect, 2020. Aspect's 2020 Agent Experience Index Survey: Understanding What Your Agents Are Thinking.

<sup>3</sup>. Customer Experience Insight, June 2020, 3 keys to help your remote CX employees thrive, Retrieved November 2020 <https://www.customerexperienceinsight.com/3-keys-to-help-your-remote-cx-employees-thrive/>

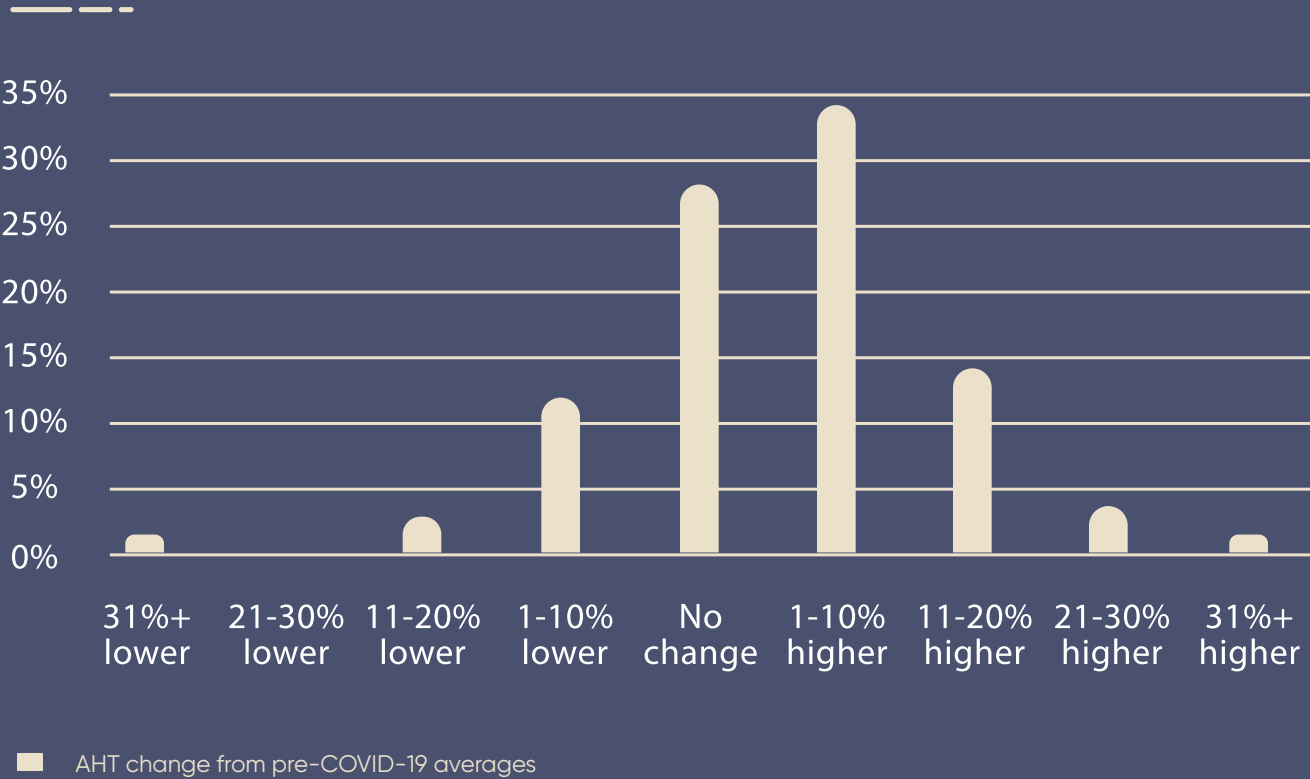
Challenge Three: Extracting Intelligence

Delivering strong CX that is built on data-based insight isn't easy regardless of where agents are located, but nuances of at-home work has presented new issues.

For example, limitations in remote technology can contribute to making calls more difficult to complete, due to issues around connectivity, distractions and more. According to a recent study by J.D. Power on the work-from-home customer service model, the average handle time (AHT) for calls increased for 55% of companies during the pandemic.<sup>4</sup>

When calls take longer, CX and EX are impacted. Therefore, the same tactics and KPIs that worked when agents functioned from an in-person call center don't necessarily hold up in this new remote environment. Shifts in call times, call complexity, customer needs and more can leave agents searching for answers and next best steps that, in the past, supervisors had ready and on hand. The good news? These seemingly complex problems can all be solved with technology that enables more effective processes in a remote world. Enter: speech analytics.

AHT change from pre-COVID-19 averages



<sup>4</sup>. J.D. Power, 2020. Work-at-Home Customer Service Model is Holding Up Now, But Dark Clouds are Forming on the Horizon.



## Speech Analytics: The One Solution Every WFH Supervisor Needs

The right speech analytics tech enables supervisors to guide how they coach, manage and handle their remote agents. With speech analytics, supervisors can tap into data and insights from every agent-customer interaction and extract intelligence that helps them adjust their management styles (as needed) and get the responses they need from their agents.

Speech analytics can also serve as a collaboration tool that offers two-way insight and communication. This means that supervisors, even as they sit at their kitchen table, can connect with their agents and gain visibility into their performances just as they would in the call center. By having real-time insight into how agents are doing, supervisors can guide agents' decision making even while remote.

**"Even now, there are many challenges WFH supervisors must solve for their agents before peak productivity and efficiency can be achieved. We have found that the right speech analytics solution can offer an invaluable leg up over competitors. It allows supervisors to provide their agents with the level of training and coaching they would receive if they were face-to-face. The real-time collaborating and connectivity keeps employees motivated and engaged."**

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**Steve Chirokas**, Director of Product and Channel Marketing at CallMiner

They can also leverage speech analytics software to foster a team approach and culture of engagement and optimization. The right technology elevates virtual huddles to a level that mirrors in-person ones by providing supervisors with the ability to share positive audio examples of team members' customer interactions.

Supervisors can use these to encourage agents to collaborate with teammates and directly share best practices and learnings on what works. Supervisors can even use the data to tap into which agents are struggling with the feelings of isolation that can often occur in a remote environment and provide them with more individualized coaching and 1:1 conversations.

Additionally, speech analytics helps supervisors identify where and when reporting processes need to be adjusted while remote. It can show them how to modify KPIs for things like handle time and silence to account for at-home challenges being experienced by them and their agents, as well as any pandemic-related volatility that is influencing both customer and agent behavior.



This data can be used by supervisors, in real time and post-call, to identify opportunities for training agents on how to deliver the most impactful responses to customers. For example, if an agent must escalate or transfer a call to a supervisor, the speech analytics technology makes things more seamless and effective by giving the supervisor a full view of the call history and issue, and the supervisor then has the context necessary to make informed and valuable training recommendations once the interaction is complete.

Empowered with the insights and top-down visibility from speech analytics, supervisors can prioritize what matters most in terms of customer and agent needs, improving both CX and EX. They can also make more informed decisions for their teams, as well as inform other business leaders as to what's working and what's not in the contact center to influence enterprise-wide decisions.

## Supervisors Have the Power

Whether in-office or at home, supervisors are responsible for managing and training agents, and that starts by empowering them with speech analytics. It monitors 100% of interactions and empowers supervisors to deliver the insights needed to create a culture of optimization and drive improved decisions via remote agent engagement and coaching, which ultimately benefits the entire organization. Speech analytics allows supervisors to spend less time searching for data, and more time learning from it and acting on it.

The contact center is the customer and employee experience battleground and supervisors are the secret weapon for success. When they are given the tools to execute in our remote or hybrid future, they have the power to drive business results and help achieve enterprise-wide goals, from improved marketing and sales performance to improved CX and retention.

## Want to empower remote call center supervisors with a leg up over competitors?

Teach them how to use AI to facilitate emotional connections with customers through our latest report:

**Leveraging AI to Make Humans More Humane**



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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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