

# THE CONTACT CENTER: SELF-SERVICE VS. PHONE, CUSTOMERS ON HOLD, AND MORE

A SPECIAL REPORT FEATURING EXCERPTS FROM THE 2024 STATE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE AND CX STUDY



RESEARCHED AND SUMMARIZED BY  
SHEP HYKEN, CUSTOMER SERVICE/CX EXPERT

A SPECIAL REPORT ON CUSTOMER PREFERENCES,  
HABITS, AND WANTS TO HELP YOU CREATE AN  
AMAZING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE.

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# The State of Customer Service & CX

Welcome to the 2024 State of Customer Service and CX study, which we affectionately refer to as our Achieving Customer Amazement research. In addition to our full report, I have also created more detailed content related to some of the topics covered in the research. For this special report, we're going to focus on the stats related to *customers' perceptions of the contact center*.

## The Contact Center Special Report

There is plenty of new information, updated findings, and trends happening in the customer service/CX space in general. Many of the questions we ask in our survey relate to the experience customers have when they need help, have a question, or have a complaint and choose to reach out to a company or brand for support. They do it one of two ways. They call or go the do-it-yourself route with a self-service solution. We neatly packaged this report with the relevant findings.

## B2C Versus B2B

I always like to remind everyone in the B2B world that these findings apply to you, too. Even though our research is focused on consumers, all customers, regardless of industry, are consumers. They compare you to the best experience they've had with any company, and often, those companies are consumer experiences. In the B2B world, the buying process may be different, but the experience shouldn't be.

Enjoy this special contact center report. Throughout the year, I'll be creating additional reports.



Shep Hyken  
CAO (Chief Amazement Officer)  
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P.S. I want to thank RingCentral for sponsoring this year's research. They are a great partner to work with. Learn more about them at [www.RingCentral.com](http://www.RingCentral.com).

## About Shep Hyken and Shepard Presentations

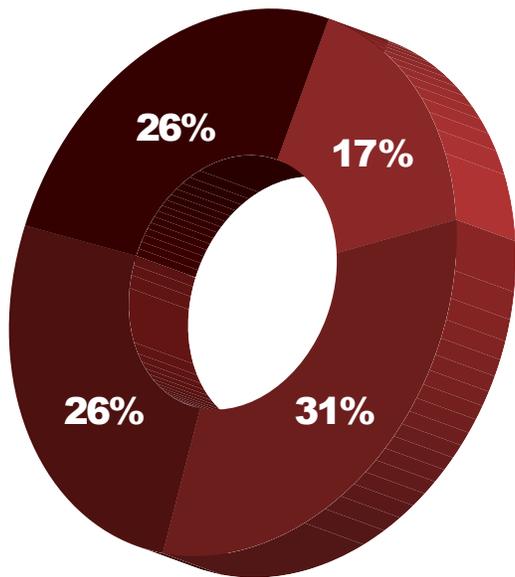
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As the Chief Amazement Officer at Shepard Presentations, Shep works with clients who want to create amazing experiences for their customers and employees. Learn more at [www.Hyken.com](http://www.Hyken.com)

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**REPORT METHODOLOGY:** The sample was weighted to the 2020 U.S. Census for age, region, gender, and ethnicity. Figures are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Margin of error is +/-3.1 percentage points. In an instance that a chart total for a single select question does not add to 100%, please note that this is due to the minimal effect of rounding. The survey was conducted online from January 8-11, 2024.



## CUSTOM QUESTION SURVEY COMPLETED BY

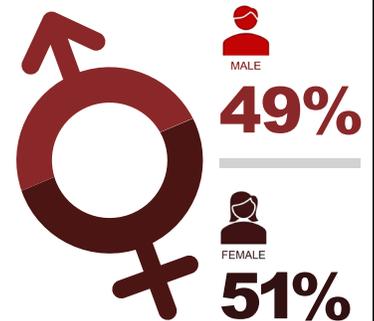
**1,000+** U.S. PARTICIPANTS (AGES 18-65)

**17%** — **GEN Z**  
(AGES 18-27)

**31%** — **MILLENNIALS**  
(AGES 28-43)

**26%** — **GEN X**  
(AGES 44-59)

**26%** — **BOOMERS**  
(AGES 60-65)



## BORING, BUT IMPORTANT!

**DISCLAIMER:** This report is intended for general information purposes only. It is the author’s interpretation of the data. The reader of this report assumes responsibility for the use of this information.

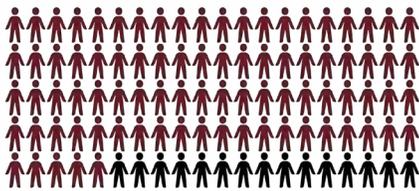
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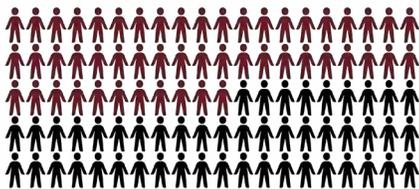
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# The Case for a Great Service Experience

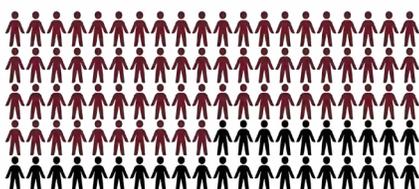
Let's start with some general "state of customer service and CX" findings. There are many compelling reasons to invest in delivering an excellent service experience. The obvious reasons are that customers come back and tell their friends, family members, and colleagues at work. But let's prove it with some of this year's survey results.



**85%** of customers are willing to go out of their way to do business with a company that offers better customer service. The concept of "go out of their way" means they will spend more time, put in more effort, and drive further (if the company has physical locations) if they know the experience is better than the competition.



**51%** of customers say that customer service is more important than price. That doesn't mean you can charge anything you want, but you don't have to be the lowest price, either. When a customer knows they can reach out to a company or brand, either by phone or a digital channel, and the experience will be easy and pleasant, they will pay more.



**70%** of customers say that a convenient experience is more important than price. A company or brand that is easy to buy from must also be easy to get support from. The moment the customer needs support, it becomes "judgment day." The experience must meet or exceed their expectations of easy to do business with. If it does, price becomes less relevant for 70% of the customers we surveyed. Looking at the numbers, convenience is even more important than a generally good customer service experience.

# What's Important to Customers

We wanted to find out how important different areas of the customer experience were. Here they are, in order of importance:

1. Convenience
2. Knowledgeable Employees
3. Employees who are kind and helpful
4. Able to easily reach the right customer support person
5. Fast customer support responses from an email, message, or text
6. Little or no hold times when calling for customer support

Looking at this list, the overarching concept we must consider is convenience. So, ask yourself, "Are we easy and convenient to do business with?" If you answered yes, how can you prove it? If you answered no, it's time to get to work.

## The Top Three Reasons Customers Come Back

**We asked:** What are the top reasons that get customers to come back? Year after year, the same reasons surface. It's really common sense. Customers want:

1. Helpful employees
2. Knowledgeable employees
3. Friendly employees

## The Number One Reason Customers Don't Come Back



81%

said rudeness or apathy would likely cause them to switch companies or leave a brand.

## Other Reasons Customers Don't Come Back

- **72%** said being transferred to different people.
- **68%** said having to repeat the same story again and again.
- **62%** said the issue, question, or complaint required multiple interactions.
- **62%** said not being able to connect with a live customer support agent.
- **51%** said waiting on hold for too long.

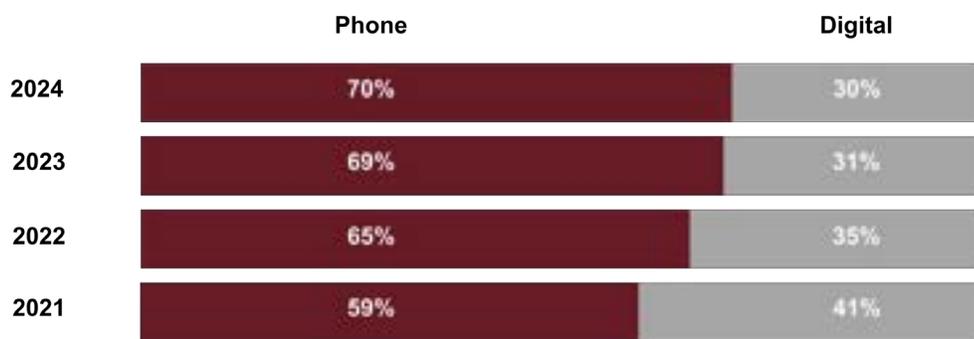
### Conclusion

Let's start with the obvious. How hard is it to have friendly and helpful agents? Rudeness and apathy are the top reasons customers leave – the exact opposite reasons customers come back!

# The Phone Versus Self-Service

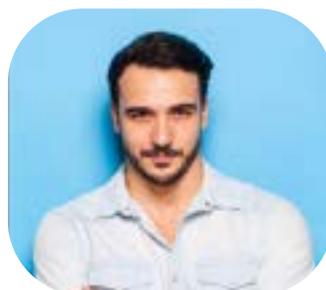
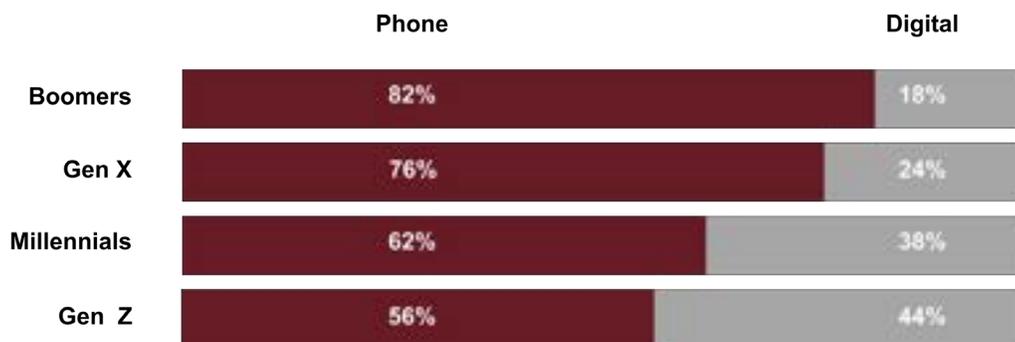
The phone has always been the number one channel for customers to use when reaching out to a brand for support. What surprises me is that with all the hype around self-service and AI, not only was the phone still number one, it increased by a percentage point over last year. Since 2021, the number of customers using the phone versus digital channels has continued to rise.

**We asked:** When you have a problem or issue with a company or brand, which solution do you prefer to help solve your problem (phone or digital self-service)?



## Age Matters

It shouldn't come as a surprise that the older generation embraces the phone more than the younger generation. You must be aware of the different expectations generations have around technology – especially as it applies to customer service and the contact center.



# 100% Self-Service – No Live Customer Support



**67%** of customers would not feel comfortable doing business with a company that doesn't have live customer support. Some companies and brands have decided to go 100% digital/self-service. There is a risk to this. That said...

**26%** of customers stopped doing business with a company or brand because self-service options are not provided. (Of these customers, 35% are Gen Z, and just 20% are Boomers.) Even with the phone being the most preferred channel over self-service, there needs to be self-service options. They don't have to be AI-fueled solutions. Self-service can include a Frequently Asked Questions page on a website. Depending on the type of business, video tutorials work. All that said, keep in mind that the technology to create self-service solutions is coming down in price and rising in capabilities.



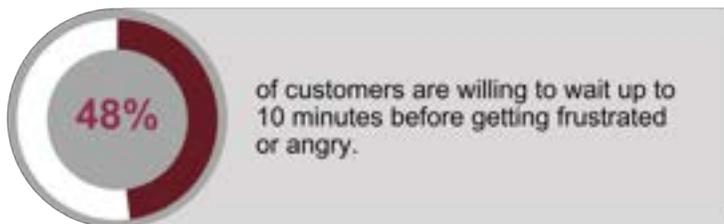
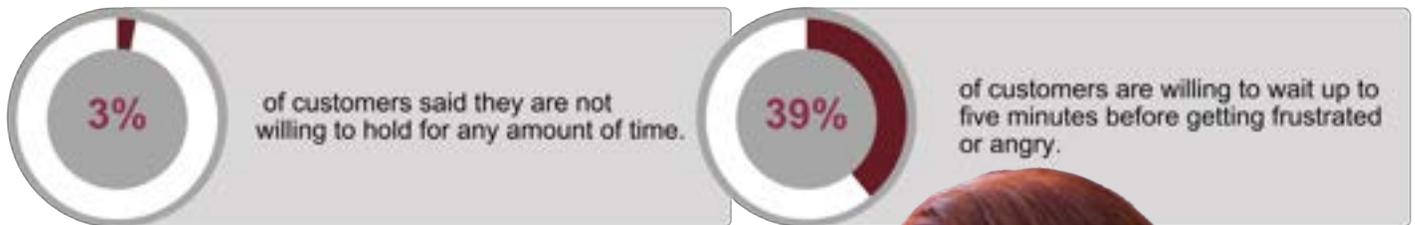
## Don't Give Up on Digital Support



**60%** always try a company's FAQ section on their website or other digital self-service options before calling the company to talk to a human. This is an important and telling finding. Even though the phone is preferred, customers try and find the answers themselves. So, why aren't they comfortable with a company that only offers self-service support? Because these companies haven't invested in a system that gets it right most (if not all) of the time.

# Don't Make the Customer Wait

Wondering how long it will take to get an answer to a question can be frustrating—even to the point that customers could leave to find a company or brand that responds quickly. Let's share some interesting and compelling findings that emphasize the importance of managing how long you make customers wait.



# Angry Customers

60%

of customers have hung up on a customer service/support agent.



34%

of customers admit to yelling at a customer service agent.

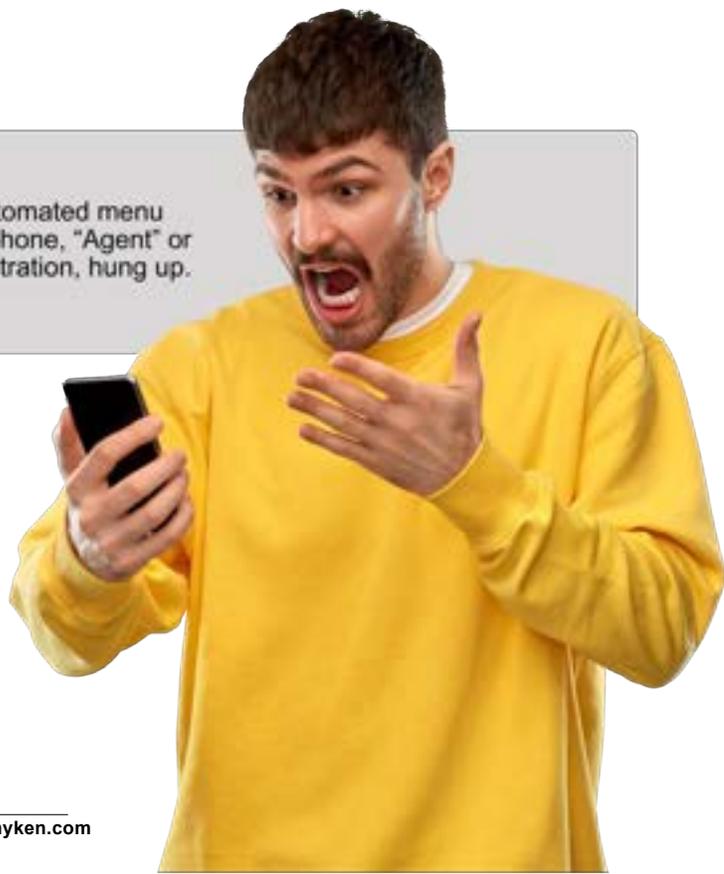


29%

of customers admit to cussing at a customer service agent.  
(Can 71% be lying?)

79%

have called customer support, gotten an automated menu system, and repeatedly screamed into the phone, "Agent" or "Representative," and eventually, out of frustration, hung up.



Our customers are smart when it comes to customer service. They've been taught by rockstar companies that don't make customers wait (or have a callback feature), have friendly and knowledgeable agents, and make it easy and convenient for customers to contact them for support. It's the contact centers that don't do a good job that hurt the reputation of the industry, which is why 43% of customers would rather clean a toilet than call customer support. Ouch!

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