

FUTURE OF WORK SURVEY

Contact Centres & the Work From Home Challenge



Introduction

A quick pivot to the work-from-home model was essential for business continuity in response to the COVID -19 crisis. But after spending the last couple of months firefighting this unexpected crisis, let's pause for a moment to reflect on **what's next for the contact centre**.

- What challenges do work-from-home contact centre agents face?
- How can these challenges be tackled?
- Are today's transformations a model for the long term?

Ozonetel conducted a survey to better understand these points. Here is a compilation of the results from across contact centres in different verticals.

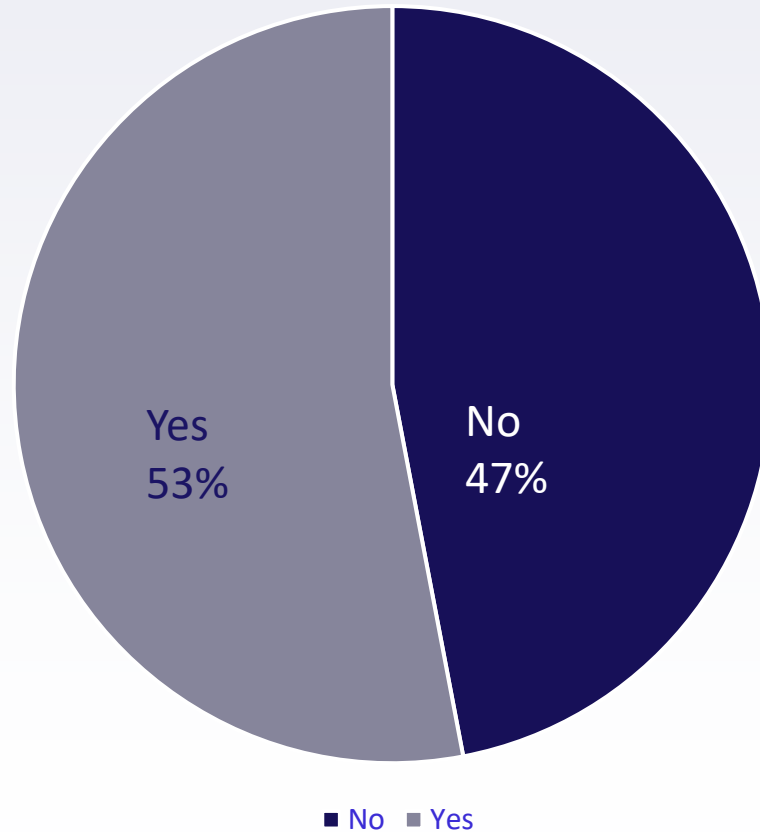
WFH Challenges for the contact centre

The scramble to switch to work-from-home for all non essential services was sudden and unprecedented. Yet, almost all contact centres with cloud telephony solutions were able to make the switch fairly smoothly. Some contact centres had prior experience in situations like this, having previously switched agents to work-from-home during riots and floods.

Agents were mostly quick to pivot. Those who did not have had laptops to log in, logged in via smartphones. Many used the [offline mode](#) to answer and dial calls from their mobiles or even landlines.

Ozonetel's newly launched [mobile application](#) also saw a lot of traction. However, challenges were mostly non-technology related. **How was the workforce coping?** We explored..

Did WFH cause a drop in agent productivity?

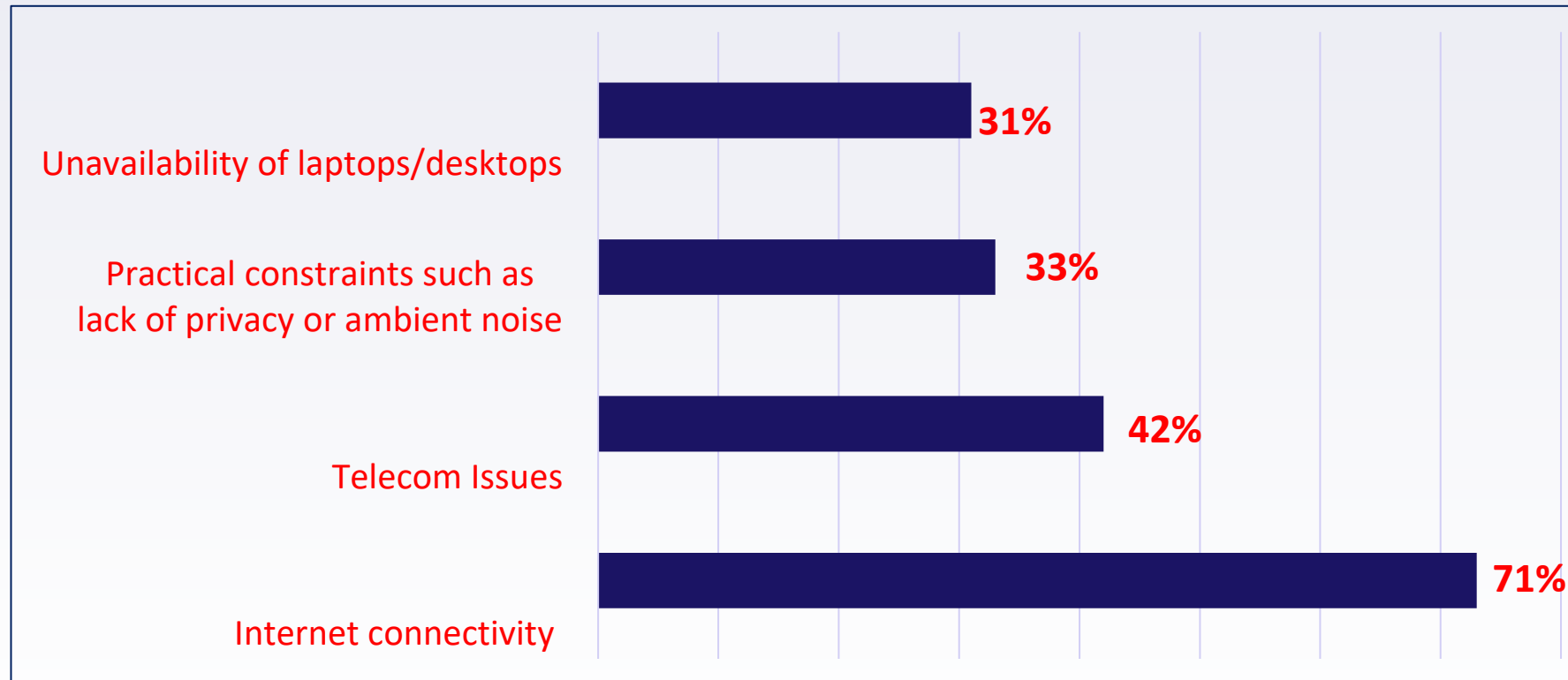


53% businesses **did** report a drop in productivity. Some of the challenges they listed were:

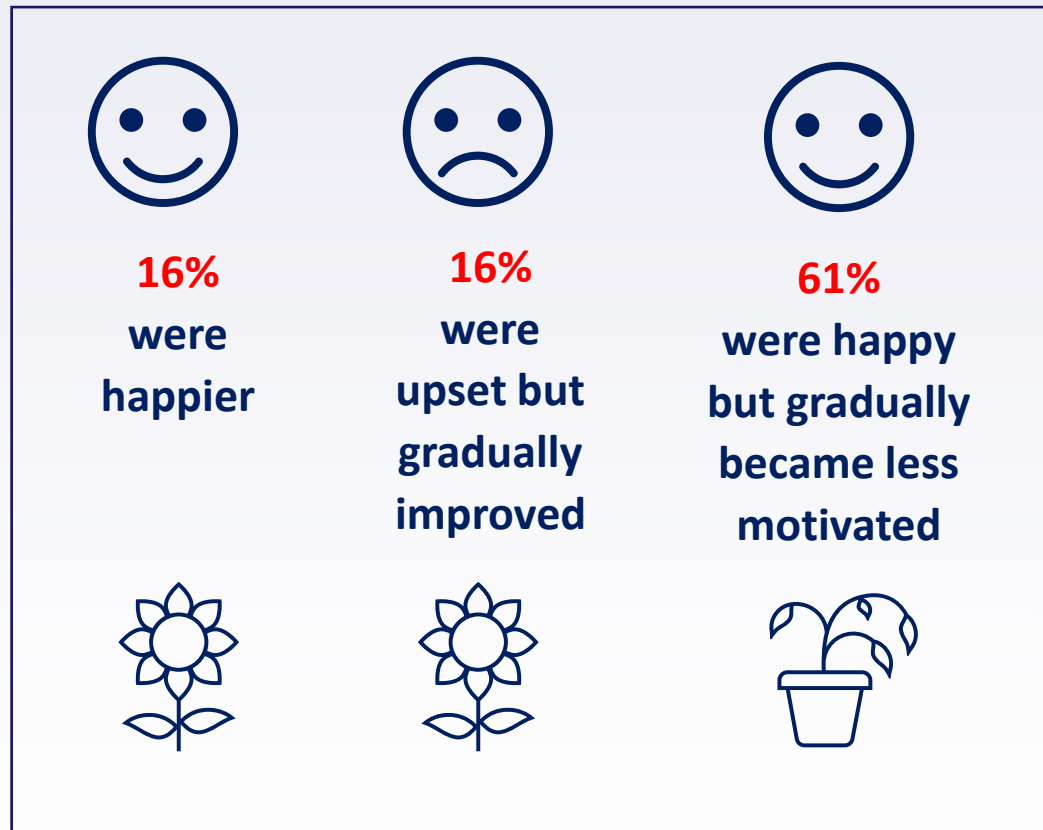
- Internet Connectivity Issues
- Telecom Issues
- Practical constraints within agents' homes such as lack of privacy, space, noise cancellation
- Lack of desktops and laptops was also listed as a hinderance

We now explore these challenges in a little more detail in the next few pages.

The biggest barriers to agent productivity



Was agent happiness a barrier or an incentive?



Did agents prefer to work from home?

There is a lot of talk about how working from home offers better work-life balance and saves on commute time to create happier employees. But how true is it for the contact centre worker?

We found that while **a majority of agents were happy initially, gradually their motivation levels dropped.**

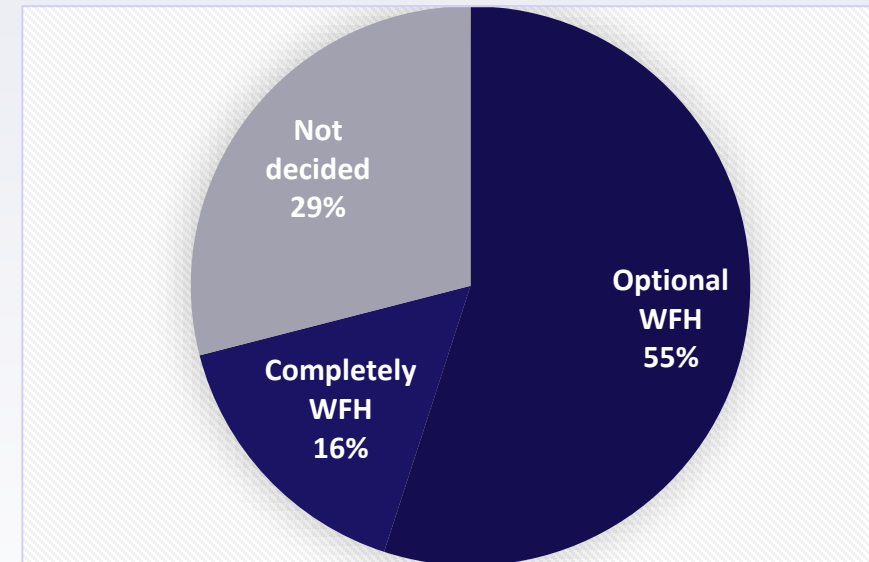
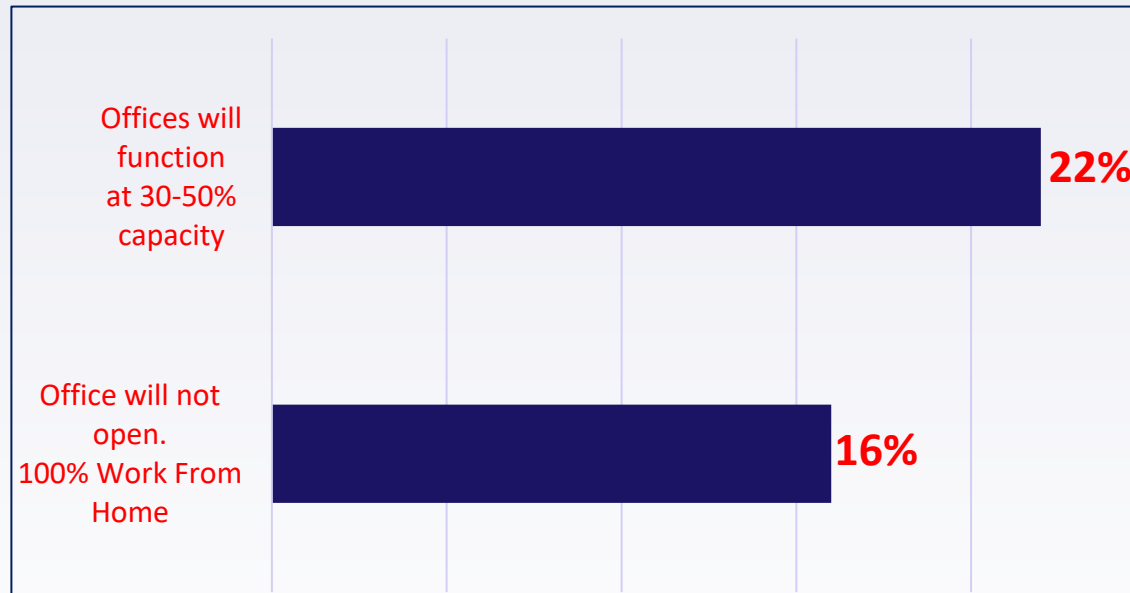
The Way Forward

Although many of us hoped that the measures we put in place to tide over the pandemic crisis would be temporary.

Unfortunately, it wasn't.

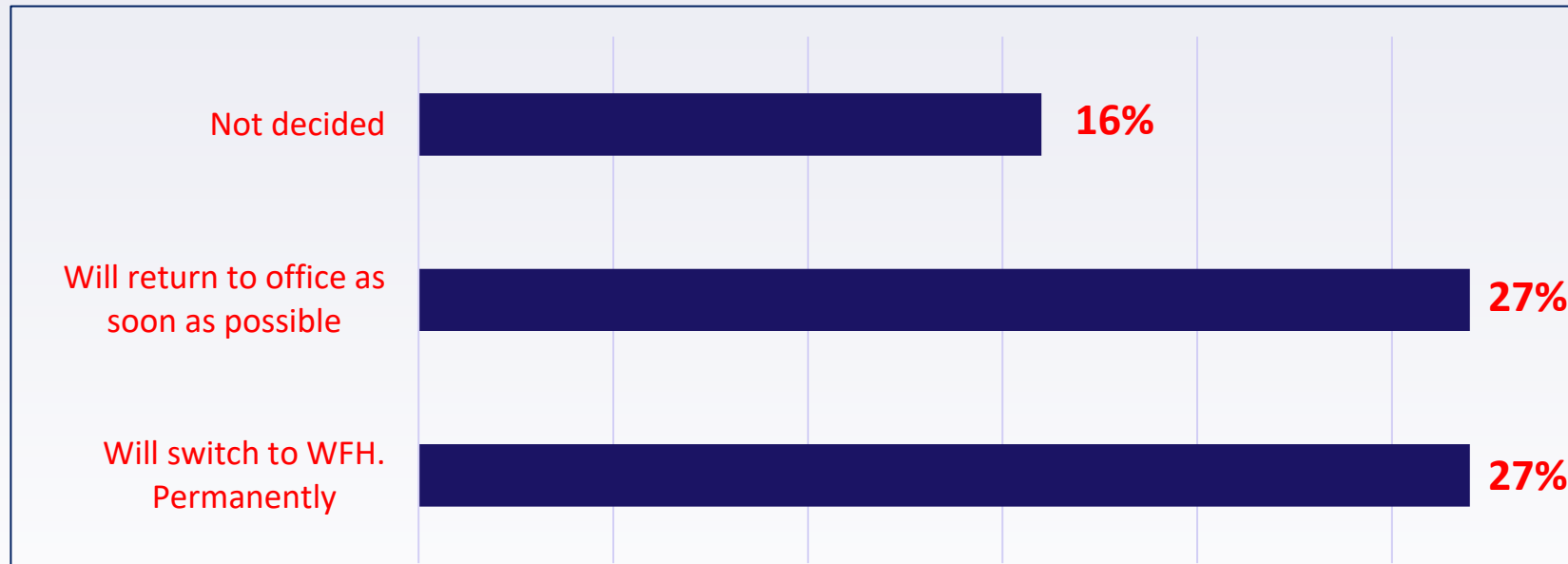
Now, all businesses know that they need to rethink their long term strategies. So lets discuss what steps and best practices that contact centre are planning in the medium to long term.

Working-from-home will continue in the mid term



In spite of all challenges, it seems that most businesses realise the risk that commute and working from office pose. 55% contact centres are letting agents opt for work-from-home while 16% are not opening offices, and keeping work-from-home mandatory.

Some contact centres will permanently switch to WFH



27% contact centres see WFH or work-from-anywhere, as a viable long term strategy and are planning to switch to work from home permanently. What is interesting is that **an equal number want to return to office as soon as possible.**

They do not see 100% WFH as a viable long term solution.

Many will create robust work-from-home processes



**38% contact centres
will create a robust
work from home
process**

Many contact centres have seen the value in creating a robust work-from-home process even if they do not switch to work from home permanently, or if they are still undecided.

Why?

Based on our audience responses, we decided to dig a little deeper into the pros & cons of both working from home and office. Nemertes Research conducted an independent study across multiple countries. According to their research, here is why contact centres are investing in WFH.

- ✓ It will improve quality of life (59%)
- ✓ It will prepare businesses for future disasters. (46%)
- ✓ It will reduce employee attrition. (35%)

Other reasons: Better for the environment (42%), Employees are more productive (26%), Real estate cost savings (25%)

Creating a Robust Work From Home Process

Nemertes research also studied success groups, that is, call centres that successfully generated cost savings and/or 23-25% better agent productivity, to see what they were doing right. We compiled their findings along with some practical tips from our customer support team to help you create a better WFH process. Here are the 2 most critical requirements.

1. Provision more hardware
2. Upgrade Wi-Fi & Reimburse Internet costs
3. Use backup telecom DIDs

Provision More Hardware

A lot of the productivity challenges that agents face can be solved with better hardware.



Better Handsets. Better handsets can ensure better connectivity, even in places where telecom signal is weak. Since many agents are using their mobile Wi-Fi as their primary or only internet source a better handset can ensure uninterrupted signal.



Headsets. With lack of privacy and high noise levels, noise cancellation headsets are critical for ensuring smoother conversations. Nemertes research found that 67.7% businesses who provisioned headsets saw better results.



Laptops/Desktop. For agents using VOIP calling, softphones or for those who have a lot of ACW, laptops or desktops will be useful

Upgrade Wi-Fi

Poor internet connectivity was the #1 cause for poor agent productivity amongst the agents. Some simple steps can prevent this:

- 1. Assess your employees' Wi-Fi**
- 2. Upgrade it.** Or in many cases get Wi-Fi installed.
- 3. Reimburse Wi-Fi.** When companies reimburse Wi-Fi, they have the right to ask their employees to upgrade plans, and demand good connectivity.

These steps can make all the difference. According to Nemertes Research, 58% companies that conducted home Wi-Fi assessment and 48% who upgraded their employees home Wi-Fi's increased agent productivity by 23%

These successful companies were also 2x more likely to have addressed and reimbursed their employees increased Wi-Fi usage.

Backup DIDs

42% contact centres report that telecom issues were causing poor productivity. What happens in this case is that although the contact centre is up and running, calls do not land on the agents mobile because the PRI is down. Depending on an agents home location, some telecom providers' signals may be weak.

Ozonetel found that creating backup DIDs was a simple, practical solution. We simply provide our client with backup DID number from another telecom provider. This way if one signal is down, the agent can receive calls on their other line.

Fallbacks can be created to smoothly route calls, so that it's a seamless experience as far as the customer is concerned.

Working from Office

Our survey found that 27% are looking forward to going back to office. Some of the possible reasons for this could be higher productivity from office, technical limitations or security challenges. For instance, 21% of respondent to our survey said that WFH contact centres pose a security challenge.

After all system and software security is not enough, physical security, that is ensuring that agents' screens cannot be viewed or copied is critical. When agents do not have an enclosed area to work, working from office may be essential.

Working from Office

In any case, whatever your reasons for working from office, here are some precautions to take to create a safe working area:

- Temperature Checks
- Regular sanitisation
- Cubicles at least 6 feet apart and/or plexi-glass separators installed.
- Split shifts
- Individual headsets are better than sharing headsets.
- Hand sanitiser stations

Conclusion

Remember when agents quality of life improves so does CX. Now is the time to take deliberate, concrete steps to shape the future of work for the next 6 months, a year or possibly years to come.

Note: If you need any help with implementing your call center solution, WFH mobile application, Backup DIDs or Self service IVR, do not hesitate to [get in touch with us](#).