European Customer Contact Alliance

Visionary Voices

How Are European Organisations Changing Their Sales Approach in the Contact Centre?



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Points of Difference

Driving revenue growth using contact centres has been a sales method for decades. It's a mechanism that has seen fundamental shifts over the years, such as the use of diallers and the elimination of silent calls. And customers are much more aware of sales tactics. So what does the future hold? ECCA set out to understand how sales and selling approaches using contact centres are changing.

To gather a range of perspectives, we hosted a series of focus groups in March 2026, speaking with 16 contact centre leaders representing an array of verticals and contact centre types, many of whom have customers in multiple European markets. Their viewpoints and expertise have guided the findings in this report, alongside quantitative and qualitative market data and trends taken from a range of credible sources.

Contact centre and sales leaders looking for inspiration and direction will find it here, with numerous relevant themes explored and contextualised:

- **How the contact centre's role in sales is evolving**
- **The future of outbound selling**
- **The blurring of lines between sales and service**
- **Human vs digital selling and the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in sales**
- **Customer lifetime value and how loyalty differs across sectors**
- **The importance of data in sales**

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The Art and Science

It's a truly fascinating time to take a deep-dive into the way European organisations sell through their contact centres, with the art and science of selling just as vital as ever, and increasingly complex. Shifting customer expectations, the rapid advancement of AI, diverging regulatory landscapes and sustained macroeconomic pressure are all bearing down on most commercial operations simultaneously – at a moment when the contact centre's role in revenue generation is actively evolving.

In this report we've combined key industry analysis with the voices of European organisational leaders who live and breathe their contact centre sales operations every day. The leaders contributing to this study span multiple industries, markets and contact centre models, from financial services in Greece to aviation in France and telecoms in the UK. This variety has been deliberate. No single market tells the whole story and no single sector has all the answers. However, collectively their viewpoints paint a rich and honest picture of where European contact centre sales approaches stand today – and point clearly toward where they are heading.



Leigh Hopwood,
Chair, ECCA

Connecting the Dots

Across industries, organisations are rethinking how revenue is generated, protected and grown within the contact centre. What this research makes clear is that the shift is not simply about improving sales performance, but about redefining how the full customer lifecycle is managed.

At TTEC, through our work with leading organisations across sectors, we consistently see that sales, service and account management have historically operated as separate functions, often creating fragmented experiences and missed commercial opportunities. That fragmentation is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain as customer expectations rise and acquisition costs increase.

Leading organisations are beginning to move toward more connected, insight-led engagement models – where data, AI and human expertise combine to enable more proactive outreach, earlier identification of churn risk and more relevant, timely commercial conversations.

The challenge is not recognising this shift but operationalising it consistently at scale. This research report captures how organisations across Europe are beginning to navigate that transition, and where the most significant opportunities lie.

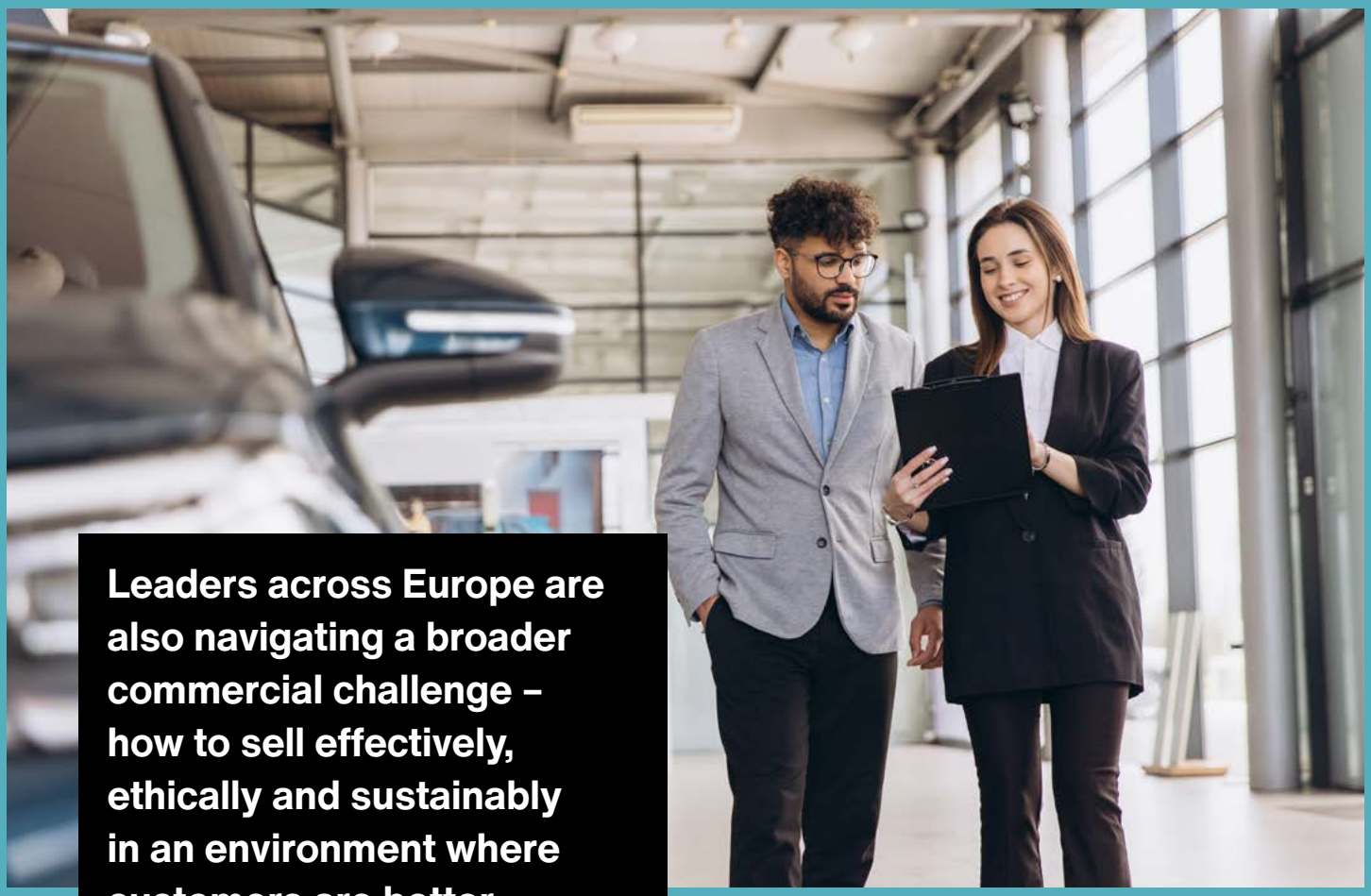


Simon Dillsworth,
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Redefining What Sales Means

There's no more important time than now for analysing the way European organisations sell via their contact centres, with most operations having to combat shifting customer expectations, new technological capabilities, differing regulatory requirements, macroeconomic pressure and increasingly complex customer journeys.

Leaders across Europe are also navigating a broader commercial challenge – how to sell effectively, ethically and sustainably in an environment where customers are better informed, more empowered to switch, more fatigued by friction and more sceptical of approaches that prioritise revenue over relationship. The contact centre is one of the primary arenas in which these challenges are being faced, and where key operational questions are being asked.



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The Role of the Contact Centre

For decades, the contact centre has occupied a unique position in the sales architecture of many organisations – either as a dedicated sales channel running independently of service, or as part of a service function with tangential involvement in commercial activity.

Digital and self-service channels have undoubtedly impacted the status quo. In some European banking organisations, as an example, contact centres are now supporting hybrid digital journeys - stepping in when customers need assistance completing an online product application or when a service interaction naturally surfaces a specific product fit.

In other industries, contact centres provide the primary interaction point for retention, for plan management and the kind of contextual upselling that digital journeys cannot replicate. In logistics, they serve as a differentiating capability in a market where competitors have largely commoditised on price and speed, making the quality of human contact and the delivery on urgent requests a genuine commercial advantage.

In automotive, where the contact centre very rarely sells directly, its impact on the repurchase journey is nonetheless quantifiably measurable. A positive resolution of a service issue, for instance, demonstrably increases the probability of a customer returning for their next vehicle.

Industry analysts have noted that organisations are beginning to transform their contact centre data into 'profit and insight engines', fuelling smarter commercial decisions across the entire organisation.

This redefinition extends to sales concepts such as 'down-selling' and 'right-sizing', which both involve proactively moving customers onto long-term plans that suit them better, even if it incurs a short-term commercial hit for the business.

The logic is clear - a customer on the right plan is more loyal, less likely to defect and more receptive to future commercial conversations. This has not historically always been easy to argue from a commercial standpoint, yet research highlights that trust is increasingly a prerequisite for loyalty. The contact centre's commercial role, therefore, is to help compound trust through its interactions, whether that's through personalised offers or ensuring customers are given the best option to suit their needs.

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In Focus:

Right-Sizing

During the focus groups, European leaders across industries with more of a reliance on subscription models reported increasing their 'right-sizing' sales approach:

- Leaders in financial services and insurance describe data analytics-driven outreach designed to move customers onto accounts and plans better aligned with their actual usage or financial requirements.
- In mobile telecoms and broadband, in countries where switching providers is easy such as France, Germany and the UK, leaders reported a focus on directing customers to plans based on their historical data, even when that means a lower monthly spend.

Sale Through Service and Outbound Decline

McKinsey has identified the contact centre as an under-optimised sales channel, particularly for retention and cancellation prevention. Leaders are acutely aware of this gap and where value can be added.

Success through outbound sales is becoming increasingly challenging, across Europe. Using the UK as an example, 48% of people never answer unidentified calls, and a further 33% rarely do.

As a result, organisations have expanded their scope, deepening capabilities and taking on a role that is more strategically significant than it has ever been. European organisations are selling differently. They are selling through service interactions as well as dedicated sales moments. They are using data to anticipate commercial opportunities rather than simply responding to inbound demand.

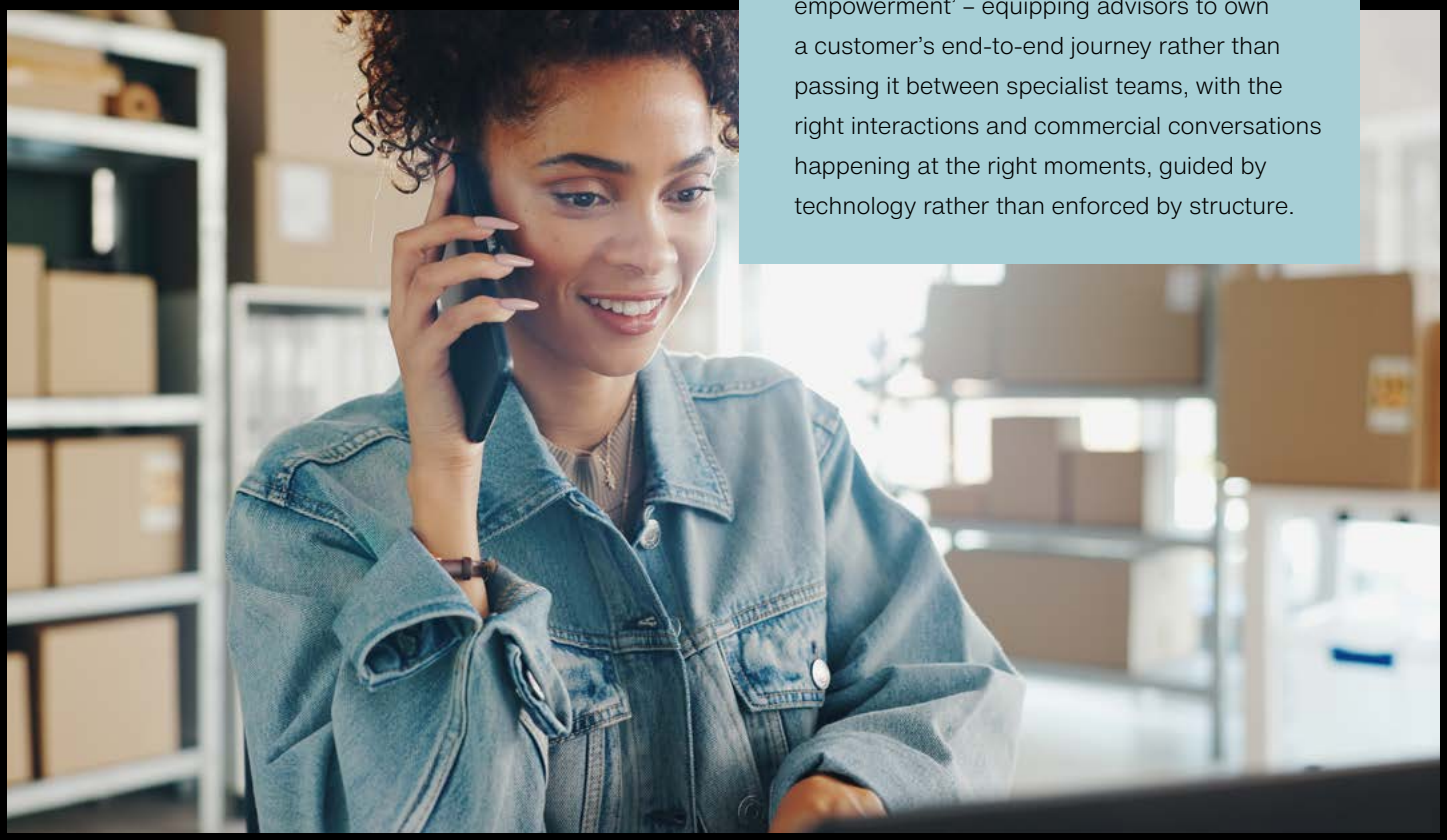
One B2C example is IKEA, which implemented AI to handle nearly half of its customer service contacts, and then retrained its 8,500 contact centre workers as interior design advisers – a clear upselling opportunity.

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In Focus:
Making Service Count

During the focus groups, European leaders increasingly talked about the blurred lines between sales and service:

- Several leaders described training care teams to handle commercial transactions when the context is right – so that a service conversation that involved an upgrade could be delivered without a handoff to a separate sales team.
- Others described a shift toward 'advisor empowerment' – equipping advisors to own a customer's end-to-end journey rather than passing it between specialist teams, with the right interactions and commercial conversations happening at the right moments, guided by technology rather than enforced by structure.



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Human Versus Digital

The tension between human and digital sales interactions is one of the most actively debated questions in European commercial operations. The picture is nuanced, but a clear direction of travel has emerged.

Digital channels are improving. Online journeys are becoming more sophisticated, basket sizes in digital transactions are growing, and customers - particularly younger demographics - are increasingly comfortable beginning commercial interactions without speaking to a person.

Research from Salesforce suggests that 73% of customers expect brands to understand their unique needs and preferences, and AI tools are helping organisations meet this demand through more personalised digital journeys.

And yet the human element in sales remains not just relevant but critical - and in some commercial moments, even more so than ever before. Sales interactions involving complexity, significant financial commitment, emotional investment or uncertainty about the right choice still depend on human judgment, empathy and the ability to hold a nuanced conversation.

As ECCA's 2025 Future Contact Centre research highlights, where digital experiences are easy to copy, human touch becomes more important rather than less, because humans still rely on humans to buy.

75% of buyers will still prefer sales experiences that prioritise human interaction.

Demographic variation shapes this picture significantly. Older customers prefer voice for significant commercial interactions and show lower tolerance for digital-first journeys that feel impersonal or opaque. Younger customers are more comfortable in digital environments but are not immune to wanting human support when complexity arises or when the stakes feel high. 2026 research from the CCMA in the UK reinforces this - when customers face an urgent query, the vast majority still reach for the phone, regardless of age.

In B2B, Gartner research suggests that even with the advent of AI, 75% of buyers will still prefer sales experiences that prioritise human interaction.

However, the channel strategy that is emerging in European organisations is not a competition between digital and human. It is a recognition that they serve different moments and different customer profiles - and that the contact centre's commercial value is maximised when it focuses on the interactions where human skill and judgment make the decisive difference.

In Focus:

Humans in the B2B Sale

During the focus groups, European leaders in B2B sectors were strongly aligned with the view that buyers still prefer the human interaction in sales, reporting:

- Clients do not want to be sold to by an algorithm, they want a human who understands their business, their context and their specific situation - and who makes a recommendation they can trust.
- AI's role in B2B sales, for now, is to make that human better equipped, to be smarter, faster and better informed.

The Role of AI

Artificial intelligence is present in almost every commercial conversation happening in European contact centres right now. Where it adds most value, where it introduces risk and how organisations should govern its use are among the most live and contested questions in the industry.

In the sales context, leaders across Europe state AI is delivering value in several distinct ways. Lead generation and qualification has perhaps the greatest proven impact in the B2B environment. AI tools that identify, score and prioritise prospects are eliminating manual prospecting work that previously absorbed significant advisor time, with leaders reporting substantial uplifts in return on investment as a result. Sellers spend more of their time in genuinely productive conversations rather than fruitless ones.

Quality and coaching applications are also significant. AI-powered quality management tools can monitor all interactions and flag patterns, giving sales leaders a far more granular picture of what is working and where intervention is needed.

Adobe's 2026 AI and Digital Trends research found that customers appreciate the conveniences and personalisation offered by AI-generated interactions, but are not ready to cede control of sensitive information or important decisions. Most sales leaders report the same dynamic. Customers are comfortable with AI when it serves them unobtrusively and accurately, and become commercially disengaged when it feels intrusive, impersonal or inadequate to the complexity of their situation.

Looking ahead, the emergence of agentic AI - systems capable of taking autonomous actions on behalf of customers - introduces both new possibilities and new responsibilities. Some organisational leaders say they are already exploring AI as a front-end filter in outbound processes, using it to identify and pre-qualify leads before escalating to a human seller. Others are proceeding more cautiously, aware that the technology is advancing faster than their governance frameworks, data infrastructure or customer trust in it.

The human-in-the-loop model is expected to remain dominant in sales for the foreseeable future, despite the rise of agentic AI.

In Focus:

The AI Opportunity

During the focus groups, across both B2B and B2C industries, leaders reported an increasing use of real-time call assistance as an AI tool of value to:

- Transcribe conversations and surface customer history
- Prompt upsell or cross-sell opportunities at appropriate moments
- Automate post-call administration and prepare follow-up communications for sending.

The effect is sales advisors who are better prepared, better informed and better able to have a conversation that feels personalised.

Loyalty and Customer Lifetime Value

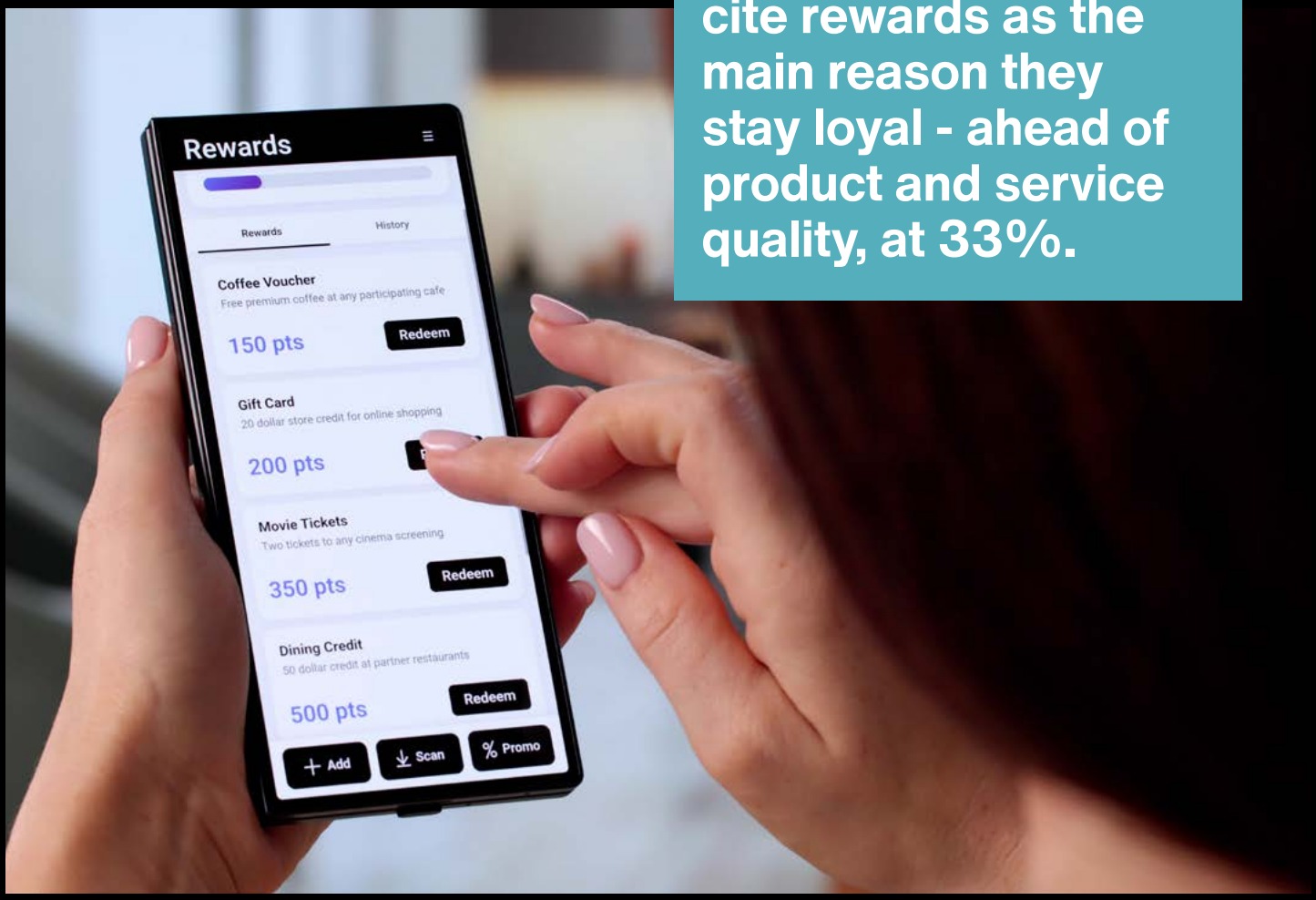
Leaders are redesigning incentive structures around this understanding. Some organisations now link advisor bonus eligibility to customer satisfaction metrics rather than pure sales volume, while others use customer lifetime value data to guide which products are prioritised in cross-sell conversations and where commercial investment is most likely to generate a sustainable return.

Despite this, revenue leakage at key lifecycle moments remains a persistent challenge. Handoffs between sales and onboarding, between onboarding and account management, and between service and commercial teams are consistently identified as points where customers are lost or relationships damaged.

The most acute leakage tends to occur at two specific moments - the price presentation stage, where customers drop off without completing a transaction, and the onboarding-to-account-management transition, where context and relationship continuity are lost between teams. Research by Braden Kelley underlines this, identifying fragmented handoffs as among the highest-value intervention points available to sales and service organisations.

Organisations are responding by revisiting and collapsing team structures, shortening handoff chains and embedding commercial and service capabilities within the same function - reducing the friction that causes customers to disengage at critical moments.

41% of consumers cite rewards as the main reason they stay loyal - ahead of product and service quality, at 33%.



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Sales success is often defined by customer loyalty in the modern day, yet loyalty is not a single concept and varies depending on sector. Increasingly, customers who hold more than one product or service with a brand are substantially more loyal, and more likely to recommend and be resistant to competitor offers, making cross-selling not primarily a revenue tactic, but a loyalty strategy in its own right.

As a result, if there is a single metric shift characterising the evolution of a sales strategy through the contact centre, it is the move from acquisition-focused measurement toward a model centred on customer lifetime value.

The competitive pressures driving this shift are well understood. Customer acquisition cost is high and churn is expensive. The compounding value of a retained customer - particularly one who holds multiple products or services - is significantly greater than any single transaction.

EY research has found that loyalty programmes are now a primary retention lever, and 41% of consumers cite rewards as the main reason they stay loyal - ahead of product and service quality, at 33%.

Loyalty programme mechanics alone are insufficient, however. European leaders say loyalty is often built around whether the customer is listened to, whether their problem or needs are being met, and whether their organisation treats them as an individual rather than an account number. As the CCMA's Contact Centre: 2030 research notes, the question customers increasingly consider is how an interaction makes them feel.

In Focus:

Loyalty by Sector

During the focus groups, leaders' approaches to loyalty varied depending on sector:

- In telecoms and broadband, leaders reported investing in AI-driven churn prediction - using behavioural signals to identify at-risk customers and intervene with personalised offers before a cancellation is initiated.
- In financial services, volume-driven sales incentives have largely been retired in recognition of regulatory and reputational risk, with commercial activity increasingly tied to service quality metrics and outcome-led conversations.
- In logistics and express delivery, loyalty is measured less in sales conversions and more in the depth of commercial relationships – with the contact centre playing the role of trusted partner for customers navigating complex and rapidly-changing global trade environments.

Data-Driven Selling

The ability to use data intelligently in sales conversations is increasingly what separates effective operations from ineffective ones. The role of analytics - predictive, behavioural and real-time - in shaping how and when sales conversations happen is now a primary strategic concern across sectors.

Quality data enables personalisation at scale, but this still remains an aspiration for many. EY research says that only 16% of organisations have achieved 'hyper-personalisation' – an advanced strategy that uses real-time data, AI and machine learning to deliver highly individualised content, products and experiences.

The primary blocker for hyper-personalisation is operational rather than intentional. Most organisations lack the integrated platforms, governance and real-time decisioning required to turn ambition into consistent outcomes. Data quality, system fragmentation and the challenge of unifying customer insight across touchpoints are cited consistently as barriers.

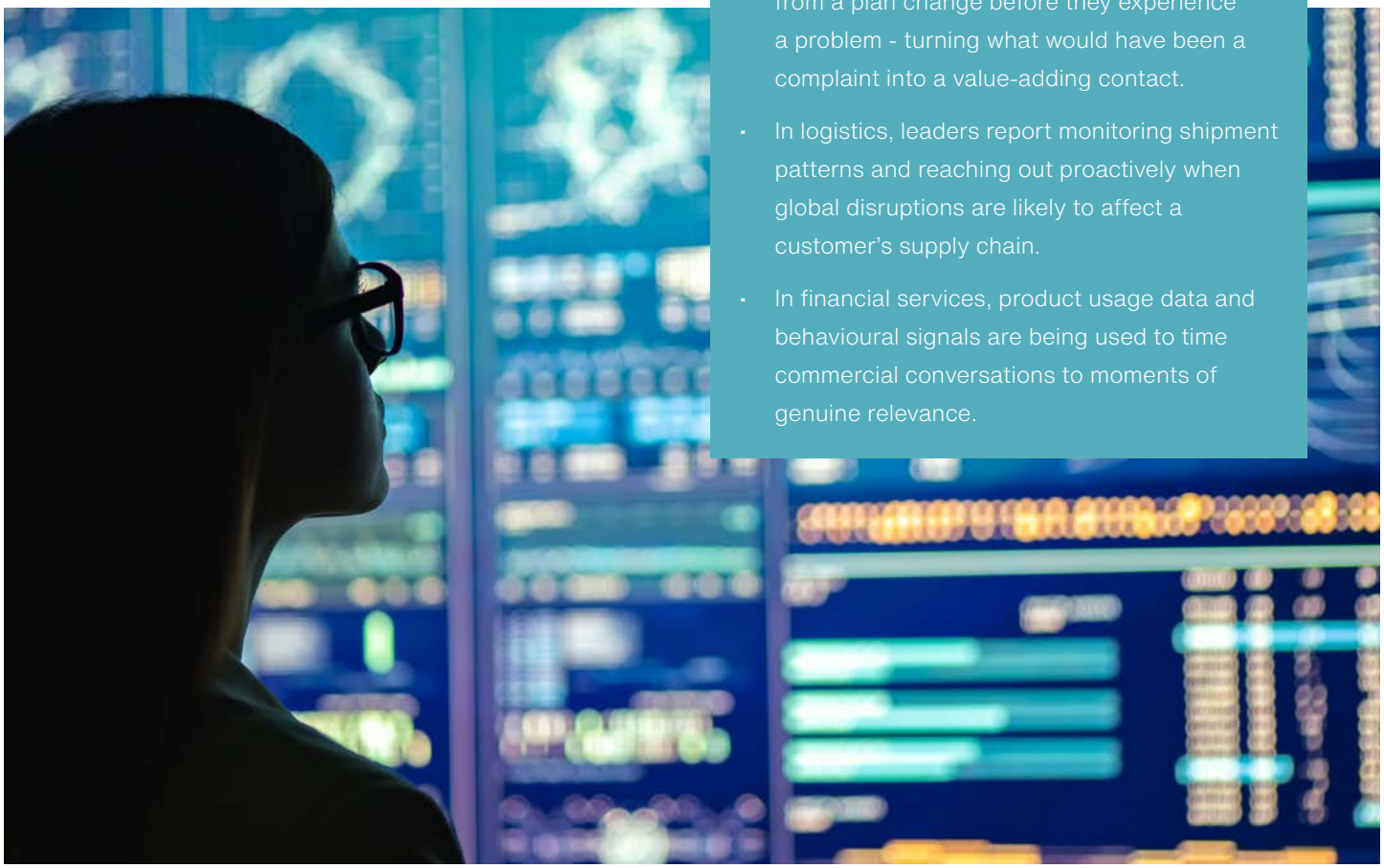
The practical implications are significant. The contact centre advisors and sales teams most likely to have effective commercial conversations are those who have access to a more complete and current picture of the customer - their history, their products, their recent interactions, their usage patterns and their preferences. Building the data infrastructure to make this picture clearer is an important investment discussion for many European sales functions.

In Focus:

The Proactive Approach

Using advanced data analytics to shift to a more proactive, personalised approach to selling is advancing in several industries, as outlined during the focus group discussions:

- In telecoms, network and usage data is being used to identify customers who would benefit from a plan change before they experience a problem - turning what would have been a complaint into a value-adding contact.
- In logistics, leaders report monitoring shipment patterns and reaching out proactively when global disruptions are likely to affect a customer's supply chain.
- In financial services, product usage data and behavioural signals are being used to time commercial conversations to moments of genuine relevance.



Looking Forward, Selling Differently

The contact centre is by no means under threat from digital disruption or AI displacement, as is this common narrative and wider public perception. It is investing in AI to make its sales teams and advisors more effective, and measuring commercial success increasingly through the lens of long-term customer value rather than short-term transactional volume.

The challenges are real. Data infrastructure, integration between sales and service functions, training investment, governance of AI and the management of generational differences in digital use and channel preference all present ongoing operational difficulties.

But the organisations furthest along the journey share a common characteristic - they have built a commercial culture in which every customer interaction is understood to carry both relational and revenue significance and they are working to ensure their people have the tools, training and empowerment to act on that understanding.

Five key takeaways from this research:



1
The contact centre's commercial role is expanding

The contact centre is becoming a more strategically central commercial asset - playing a role across the full customer lifecycle rather than only at discrete moments of acquisition or renewal.



2
Human interaction in sales remains critical

Whether in B2B or B2C, leaders consistently report that complex, high-stakes and emotionally significant sales interactions still require a human - with AI most valued when it makes that human smarter, faster and better informed.



3
The metric that matters most is shifting from acquisition to lifetime value

Leaders across sectors are redesigning incentive structures, cross-sell strategies and data investments around the compounding value of a retained, multi-product customer.



4
Revenue growth is coming from selling through service

As outbound effectiveness declines and digital self-serve handles simpler transactions, the most commercially significant interactions are often those that arise from a service need.



5
Data is the foundation of effective selling

System fragmentation, data quality and governance gaps continue to provide primary barriers to the most effective selling - meaning the competitive advantage available to those who solve this problem first is substantial.

The organisations furthest along the journey share a common characteristic - they have built a commercial culture in which every customer interaction is understood to carry both relational and revenue significance.

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About ECCA

The European Customer Contact Alliance (ECCA) is a network of customer contact associations across 14 countries, working together to raise the profile and modernise the reputation of our brilliant industry. Built on strong relationships between national associations representing contact centres, ECCA is united by a shared mission to enhance customer contact and employee experiences for the benefit of society. We support the growth of the industry through the exchange of best practice and insights, the development of a robust network of professionals across Europe, and by adding value to our national Association Partners to help grow and strengthen their local membership communities.

Its flagship event is the celebration of excellence at the European Contact Centre & Customer Service Awards, which has been recognising contact centre and customer service operations since 1999. The winners of these awards share their stories through The Exchange, a conference that takes place in the Spring, and we host Sites of Excellence across Europe.

www.europeancustomercontactalliance.com

About TTEC

TTEC Holdings, Inc. (NASDAQ: TTEC) is a leading global consulting, technology, and managed services company delivering solutions at the intersection of data, AI, and customer experience. Serving iconic and disruptive brands, TTEC's outcome-based solutions span the entire enterprise, touch every virtual interaction channel, and improve each step of the customer journey. Leveraging next-gen digital technology, the Company's TTEC Digital business designs, builds, and operates omnichannel contact centre technology, CRM, AI, and analytics solutions. The Company's operational business delivers AI-enhanced customer engagement, customer acquisition and growth, tech support, back office, and fraud prevention services. Founded in 1982, the Company's employees operate on six continents and bring technology and humanity together to deliver differentiated business results.

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