



1994 - 2019

Celebrating **25 years** in the contact centre industry

Established by contact centre professionals for contact centre
professionals and run by contact centre professionals



25 YEARS

#CCMA25 | www.ccma.org.uk/CCMA25

25 Years: A Contact Centre Evolution



When we first set up the Call Centre Management Association, in 1994, we were already experiencing extreme advances in technology, with the World Wide Web, cable television and the first gene therapy trials all emerging.

The world has changed dramatically over the last 25 years with increasing globalisation and changes in consumer behaviour - so it is no surprise that the contact centre industry has also evolved.

Here at the CCMA we have witnessed, and been privileged to be part of a great leap forward in technology which is changing and shaping all of our lives. To celebrate CCMA's 25th anniversary we have created a timeline that shows some of the significant events from yesteryear to today that have had the greatest impact on life in the contact centre and there are some remarkable facts.

Do you remember when "dial up" was the only way to connect to the internet? It was frustrating at best, but we didn't know any different. Compare that to now where 68% of us use the internet "on the go" and expect instant access.

It's all about the people

As we reach our 25th anniversary, a remarkable milestone, it is the people that I would like to celebrate. The contact centre is a very different place to 25 years ago, but every bit as challenging. Currently, there are more than 6,175* contact centres in the UK and more than 4% of the country's working population are employed in contact centres (1.3 million people), with that number increasing each year.

Whether you are in the boardroom responsible for delivering the latest KPI's in CX or on the front line helping customers with everyday tasks, developing chatbots and AI or looking at new channels of communication, you are part of a huge evolution and the life blood of our industry.

When I think about what our colleagues in the contact centre are doing day in, day out, I can't help but be incredibly proud.

* source: ContactBabel



UK National
Contact Centre
Awards



UK National
Contact Centre
Academy



UK National
Contact Centre
Conference

Some are responding to life threatening situations for the emergency services and NHS, while others are providing guidance to prevent bullying, giving up smoking and bereavement counselling, Some are delivering services in eight languages in online retailing while others are dealing with insurance claims. Gone are the days of simple calls for your bank balance.

Times have really changed for today's contact centre advisors. From taking just voice calls with a broad range of simple to complex enquiries, they now deal with high value transactions across multiple channels, as consumers use the internet to resolve their straightforward questions.

Metrics have evolved from the number of calls answered in a period of time to call quality with the emphasis on customer feedback to continually improve the customer experience.

This evolution is reflected in the real-time way in which people and consumers wish to be served, and how they want to be helped when they have a problem. Consumers are more informed than ever and have high expectations. As a result contact centres are dealing with ever more demanding clients and their efforts so deserved to be recognised.

Always there to help

The increasing need for contact centre professionals to learn and adapt has continued and here at the CCMA we've been able to help through the national conference, site visits, seminars and training. Through the awards programme we recognise the success that individuals, teams and organisations are achieving. These people are changing our industry.

The CCMA is proud to be the longest serving UK association in the contact centre industry, and to have been a part of the industry's evolution for the last 25 years.

Finally, a huge thank you to our members and sponsors for their continued support over the years.

Ann-Marie Stagg, CEO, CCMA

Currently, there are more than 6,175* contact centres in the UK and more than 4% of the country's working population are employed in contact centres (1.3 million people), with that number increasing each year.

In the beginning...



DIRECT LINE®

PABX systems was the technology that started it all! This switching system enabled businesses to redirect inbound calls with ease. Having originated in 1882, it took almost 90 years for this technology to evolve into the foundation of the modern call centre.

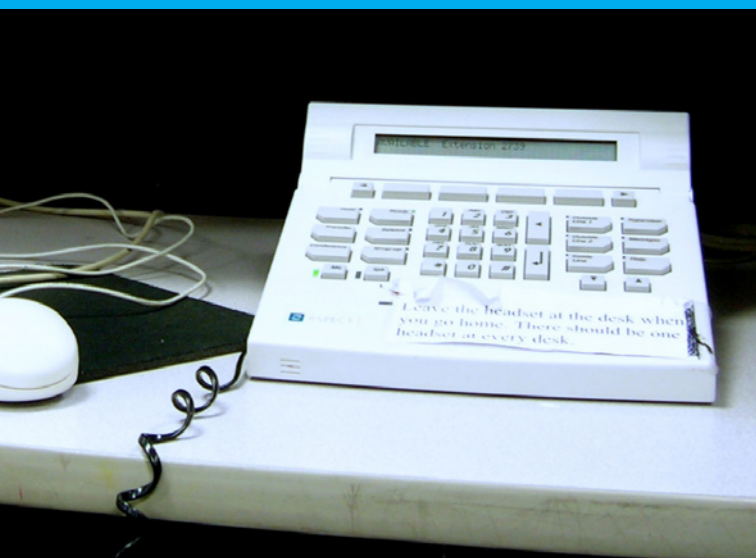
In the 1970s technological advances, such as the ACD, saw call centres emerge with the term 'call centre' being recognised by the Oxford English Dictionary in 1983. By the mid-80's Direct Line had established themselves as pioneers in the call centre industry - they were the first company to sell insurance exclusively via telesales.

The relaxing of regulations on the UK telecoms industry in the late 80s precipitated a boom in call centres, making the UK call centre industry one of the largest in the world - second only to the USA.

By the mid 90's banks were setting up 300+ call centres with 24 hour banking services. With call volumes growing, outsourcers began to become popular and new technologies were emerging including the IVR, call routing and ISDN.

With all of this change there was a huge opportunity to promote best practice and recognise excellence in the industry - and that is why the CCMA was established in 1994.

TSB hit the headlines as it opens a call centre



An Aspect Tel-Set telephone from 2005



TSB banks on the phone

TSB is the latest to offer a 24-hour UK-wide telephone banking service - spending Exyn to set up a call centre in Newport, Gwent. Paul Light reports on how it was achieved, including the complexity of merging existing systems with the new venture.

Roy Bailey



Roy Bailey, one of the original founders of the CCMA, explains how it all started:

“For most of my career I had been involved in the telco industry and as part of that, responsible for running conferences and associations. In 1994 I was at a dinner with the head of the AA's call centre and we reflected that there was no professional association for call centre managers. So we set up the CCMA. We regularly appeared in call centre magazines and gradually built the database. I'm so proud that the CCMA has become the longest serving association serving call centre managers, and continues to support our industry across the UK with networking and learning opportunities.”

“ More people have worked in call centres than ever worked in the mining industry, and I researched that in 1998,” says Matt Thorne, who wrote a novel based on his experiences in a call centre.

Becky Simpson



Fellow founder Becky Simpson recalls what happened next:

“I remember the night we were launching. Roy and I were joined by the other original founders: Tony Murphy (the first Chair), Alan Vaughan, Julie Vindis and David McGregor. And about 20 other colleagues - most of whom I've not seen for years now as many didn't stay in the industry.

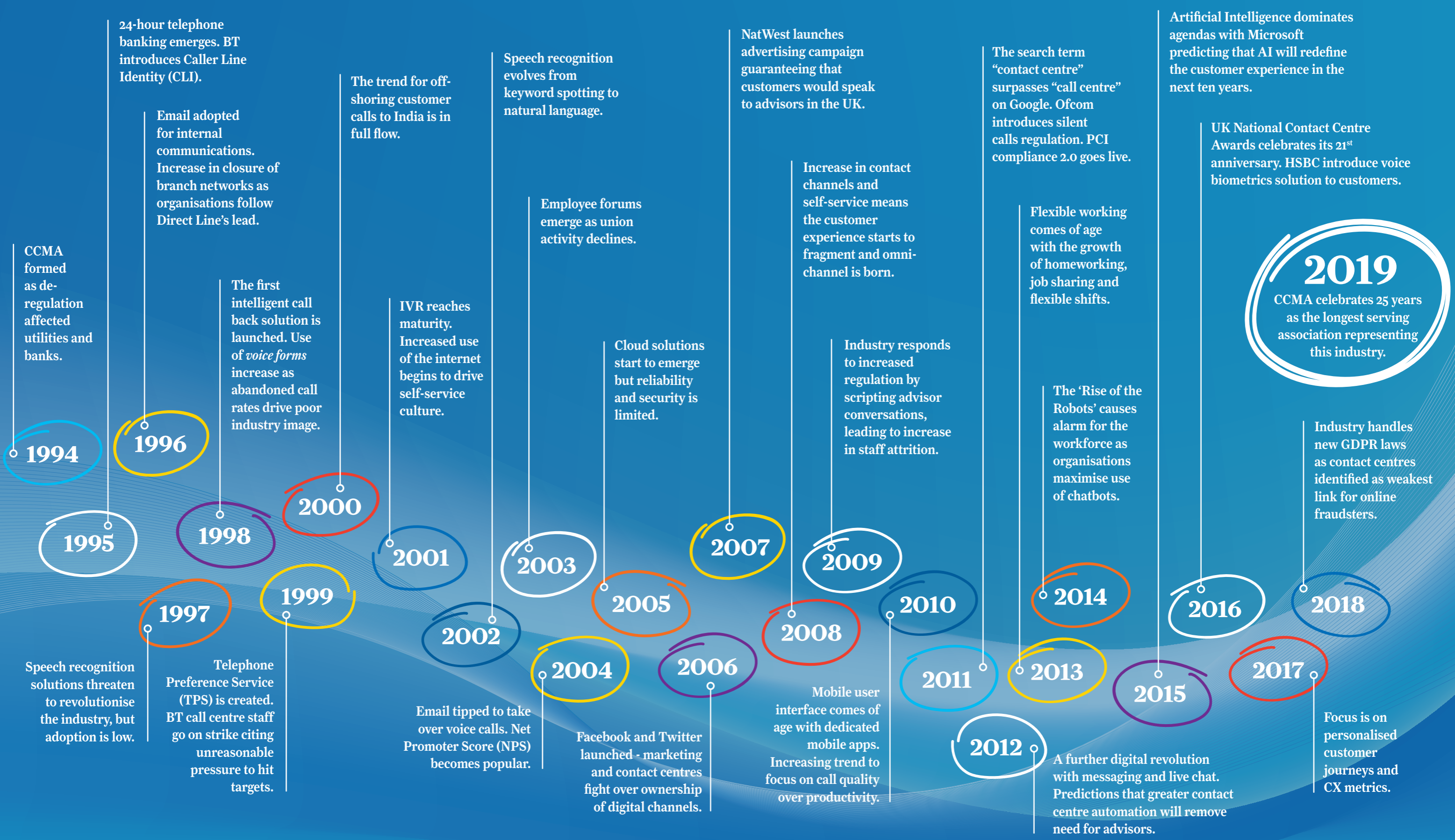
It was such an exciting night - there was lots of enthusiastic discussion about how the association would have its focus on helping call centre professionals and to ensure people could see a career in call centres. We wanted to host regular networking meetings, develop a conference programme and an annual awards event.”

The term 'call centre' was published and recognised by the Oxford English Dictionary in 1983

Source: Wikipedia

1994-2019

25 Years: A Contact Centre Evolution



1994
CCMA formed as de-regulation affected utilities and banks.

1996
Email adopted for internal communications. Increase in closure of branch networks as organisations follow Direct Line's lead.

1998
The first intelligent call back solution is launched. Use of *voice forms* increase as abandoned call rates drive poor industry image.

1997
Speech recognition solutions threaten to revolutionise the industry, but adoption is low.

1999
Telephone Preference Service (TPS) is created. BT call centre staff go on strike citing unreasonable pressure to hit targets.

24-hour telephone banking emerges. BT introduces Caller Line Identity (CLI).

The trend for off-shoring customer calls to India is in full flow.

2001
IVR reaches maturity. Increased use of the internet begins to drive self-service culture.

2002
Email tipped to take over voice calls. Net Promoter Score (NPS) becomes popular.

Speech recognition evolves from keyword spotting to natural language.

Employee forums emerge as union activity declines.

2003
Cloud solutions start to emerge but reliability and security is limited.

2004
Facebook and Twitter launched - marketing and contact centres fight over ownership of digital channels.

NatWest launches advertising campaign guaranteeing that customers would speak to advisors in the UK.

Increase in contact channels and self-service means the customer experience starts to fragment and omni-channel is born.

2007
Industry responds to increased regulation by scripting advisor conversations, leading to increase in staff attrition.

2008
Mobile user interface comes of age with dedicated mobile apps. Increasing trend to focus on call quality over productivity.

The search term "contact centre" surpasses "call centre" on Google. Ofcom introduces silent calls regulation. PCI compliance 2.0 goes live.

Flexible working comes of age with the growth of homeworking, job sharing and flexible shifts.

2012
A further digital revolution with messaging and live chat. Predictions that greater contact centre automation will remove need for advisors.

The 'Rise of the Robots' causes alarm for the workforce as organisations maximise use of chatbots.

Artificial Intelligence dominates agendas with Microsoft predicting that AI will redefine the customer experience in the next ten years.

UK National Contact Centre Awards celebrates its 21st anniversary. HSBC introduce voice biometrics solution to customers.

2019
CCMA celebrates 25 years as the longest serving association representing this industry.

2018
Industry handles new GDPR laws as contact centres identified as weakest link for online fraudsters.

2017
Focus is on personalised customer journeys and CX metrics.

2016

2015

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2013

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1994

The impact of technology



Nerys Corfield,
Chair of Contact Centre
Council at Direct
Marketing Association
and Director, Injection
Consulting

“ We’ve seen organisations really embracing technology, not just for commercial gains, but to enhance the support functions: the learning and development teams, the quality monitoring, and the workforce optimisation part - all of those using technology to best effect to better influence the end customer experience and the employee experience as well. ”



Martin Hill-Wilson,
Industry Commentator
& Visionary

“ I can remember selling the idea that there would be this fantastic unified communication, but in reality the software was so rubbish that we never took it up. It could be argued that messaging platforms have become its modern equivalent. WebRTC, which is the business of mashing up together voice, video and text in a single session, based on SIP, has not become as popular as you might imagine in an omni-channel world. ”



Michael Sherwood,
Head of Customer
Experience, Atom Bank

“ You can’t just automate a customer’s problem away. It’s less of a focus on the cost and more about the value these things can offer. ”



Justin Haines,
Customer Services
Director, OVO Energy

“ Artificial intelligence is where everyone is investing - but it has to be right for customers. Fortunately, AI is being approached with deep consideration. Companies are looking at what the right technology is, how to choose the correct technology partner, how to make sure that they’re delivering something that’s sustainable and that both delivers a financial benefit without annoying customers. ”



Stuart Dorman,
Chief Innovation
Officer, Sabio

“ The technology that’s made the biggest difference to customer experience over the last 25 years is customer feedback. We started seeing people in contact centres being held accountable for it, not just being measured on efficiency. The data collected is enabling analytics to understand what was causing issues, categorise them, and use that to drive change in organisations. ”



Rodney Assock,
Operational Services
Director, LV=

“ When the insurance industry was regulated we had to do things like call recording, but we didn’t have a call recording system at the time. So I remember getting the leads from our headsets, cutting the cables and adding phono cables to the edges to actually record off a tape recorder. ”



Martin Hill-Wilson,
Industry Commentator
& Visionary

“ The technologies that are going to be important in the next 25 years belong to the class of technologies that are associated with AI. They are being reinvented very rapidly year on year, embedded into every way that we do things in the world. What we’re seeing is AI enabling us to understand complexity, become a decisioning tool, make better judgements as a result of that. In the future we won’t be able to entertain the idea that we don’t live in an augmented world, and that augmentation might become very personal and very physical. ”

Focus on customers has changed



Helen Wilson,
Head of Customer
Service, Atom Bank

“ The industry is definitely focusing more on what customers want and also looking at the colleague experience as part of that. We see contact centres looking for opportunities to harness technologies to help the colleague to be able to deliver that great experience to their customers. ”



Daren Homewood,
General Manager,
Co-Operative
Insurance

“ It was very transactional with very different teams. One of the things customers started to hate about call centres was being transferred from one person to another because one person couldn't deal with all of their enquiry. It's very different today. There's a lot of freedom and empowerment for our advisors to talk to a customer, answer all their queries – and not just the query they have today, but to ask the customer and make sure it's resolved in that one call and to find out whether they may call again for any other issues they may have over the next couple of months. ”



Justin Haines,
Customer Services
Director, OVO Energy

“ Everybody has efficiency and cost challenges but they also want to do the right thing for their customers, so contact centres are all trying to work out how to strike that balance between the bottom line and the customer experience. Everybody wants to delight customers but everybody's got targets to hit still. ”



Peter Sinden,
GI Exec Strategy
Director, LV=

“ As a Leader I recognise that colleague engagement is critical and I passionately believe in what I describe as the 'virtuous circle' – putting people first, driving a highly engaged culture which in turn drives a customer centric organisation which can achieve brilliant customer service results. The CCMA with its outstanding award programmes to showcase those doing this and its best practice forums, help today's companies to be the very best. Well done CCMA and congratulations. ”



Michael Sherwood,
Head of Customer
Experience, Atom Bank

“ Everybody is focusing more on the end customer. There's definitely an enhanced focus on outside-in thinking, using insight and not just measuring NPS for the sake of it but NPS with CSAT to collate things that aren't going well and then using that insight to drive change in the business. The whole focus of CX from an internal point of view is also being done well – it's about the customer but it's also about the people. ”



People are still the key...



Fran Corke,
Senior Service Quality
and Engagement
Manager, OVO Energy

“ I got into contact centres because I love the energy but the environment was really different. It was all about driving down the numbers to be as efficient as possible. I remember focusing on average handling times, call queues and longest waits. It really wasn't as much focused around the customer but as around the people. So one of the things I found is that we recognised as an industry that there are real challenges to working in a contact centre. You can't have a down day speaking to customers and being the voice of the organisation that you represent. ”



Martin Teasdale,
Quality Solutions
Director, BPA Quality

“ Back then we had two hours training. So, I joined the company and two hours later I'm on the phone, not really having a clue what I'm doing and not supported by technology. Team leaders can make or break you – in that instance I had someone who supported me and was a big reason why I didn't walk out at lunch time. It's become more professional. It was always a good place for people who were career minded and wanted to progress, but now there's so much more behind it, more structure. ”



Iryna Velychko,
Chair, Ukraine Contact
Centre Association

“ The volume of work will be much higher for agents in the future. And because the levels will be higher, the education must be higher, and their pay must be higher. ”



Michael Sherwood,
Head of Customer
Experience, Atom Bank

“ Agile methodologies have come to the fore again this year – everybody is trying to transform their contact centres, in a bid to be better, faster, more efficient. There's a technical drive behind this, but there's also some operations-based change programmes we've seen adopting agile principles: for instance there has been collaborative working through cross-functional teams that have a shared objective with a timescale to achieve, and lots of 'requirement light' projects with people just getting on with actually activating their change programmes - which is refreshing. ”



Justin Haines,
Customer Services
Director, OVO Energy

“ Everybody thinks there will always be a role for people despite the increase in AI investment; technology can't replace the role of the human, but it's clear that the roles themselves are evolving and changing to meet the demands of new AI-led technology. Will the future role of contact centre agents be training the AI bots themselves? ”



Fran Corke,
Senior Service Quality
and Engagement
Manager, OVO Energy

“ In order for us as a business to be successful and provide great customer service we need great people. And in order to attract and retain great people you need to treat them really well. I don't think the term employee engagement was a thing when I first joined, but now we recognise that investing in our people drives them to do a great job and that translates into great customer service. ”



Martin Hill-Wilson,
Industry Commentator
& Visionary

“ Can we entirely automate a contact centre within 25 years? Yes. The second question is, should we? And the answer is no, because while it might meet the functional requirements it certainly won't meet the emotional requirements. ”

Source: LV= Facebook. The amazing people at LV= raised an impressive £10.5K for BBC Children in Need 2017. Volunteers took over 1.5K calls, which raised £58K, with each volunteer taking on average £975 in donations.



Still supporting you...



Ross Carson,
Customer Services
Director - Europe,
Assurant

“ My main objective is to ensure that the quality and levels of services that Assurant provide, exceed customers’ expectations. The CCMA’s networking and industry events keep us up to date in an ever evolving and connected world, so important for us. Well done CCMA on 25 years in the industry. ”



Sarah Williams,
Head of Customer
Service Centre,
CityWest Homes

“ I won the Contact Centre Manager of the Year award in 2017. And to be recognised by the CCMA was just amazing. For me, in work, it really meant the contact centre was at the front of the organisation. We started to have the ear of the board and the executive team and were able to make some really positive changes for our staff and our customers. ”



Matthew Kemp,
Senior Director of Client
and Customer Services,
DST International

“ As a major BPO, we manage omni channel customer and third party service and support for over 40 of the UK’s major financial brands. Compliance, regulation and best practice underpin our offering ability to help so many brands. The CCMA has been central to what we do and offer. Congratulations on 25 years CCMA. ”



Martin Teasdale,
Quality Solutions
Director, BPA Quality

“ As the CCMA have grown they have managed to maintain the feeling that it is a very comfortable place to engage with people. You don’t feel like you’re being sold to. The community self manages because it’s based on knowledge, it’s based on people wanting to share experiences to help overcome challenges that we’ve all gone through. ”



Justin Haines,
Customer Services
Director, OVO Energy

“ We’ve been members of the CCMA for several years now and signing up was one of the best, most cost-effective things we’ve ever done. Initially we just entered awards, but soon we fully embraced the community and members of the team attended various courses and special interest groups, we’ve attended several best practices visits and have even hosted two such events in Bristol. Well done to the CCMA for all you do for our industry, keep up the great work. ”



Alex Marsh,
Managing Director
(Banking Division),
Close Brothers

“ At CBRF we have transformed retail finance in the UK over the past 4 years. Our focus has always been to help retailers who serve hundreds of thousands of customers, unlock growth. Trust remains a big challenge in the financial services so access to industry best practice is key for us and why being a member of the CCMA is so important. ”





Recognising success!



UK National Contact Centre Awards





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