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**EMPOWERING CONTACT
CENTER AGENTS WITH AI**

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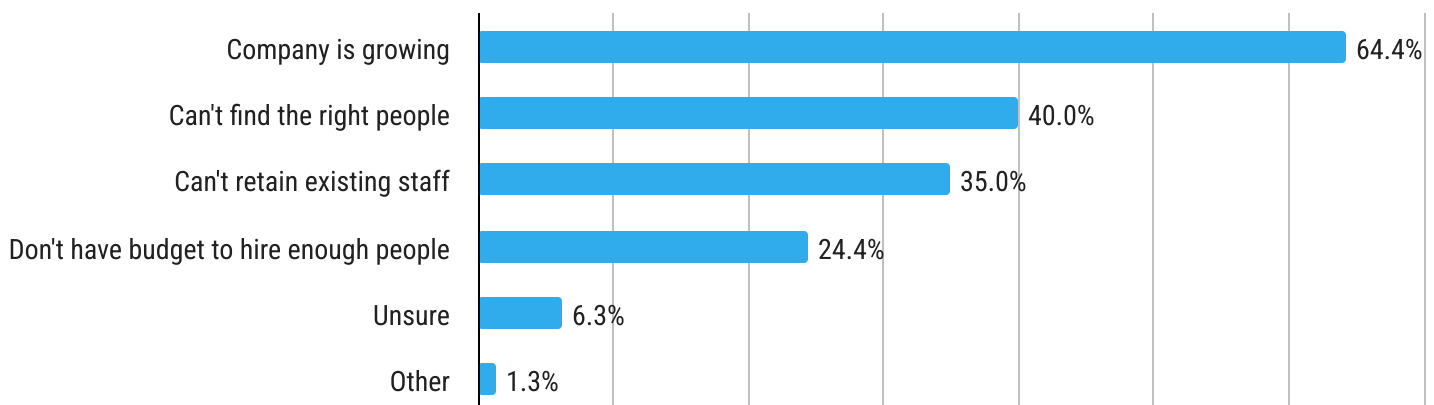
Inside the Agent Workplace

Contact center agents comprise 11.5% of a company's workforce, on average, today. Historically, this is a highly volatile workforce, characterized by high turnover that oftentimes leaves a contact center short-staffed and unable to handle customer interactions in a timely fashion. After a dip from 30.5% in 2021 to 21.8% in 2022, the agent turnover/attrition rate is on the rise... to 28.1% in 2023 and a projected 31.2% in 2024.

In some companies, attrition is driven by layoffs because AI is automating more customer interactions and making agents more productive. In other companies, agents are leaving for other reasons, ranging from burnout to competitive offers from other companies and career changes—leaving 37% of companies with agent shortages.

Not only are agent shortages driven by layoffs or voluntary departures, but they're also driven by company growth and issues with finding, retaining, and paying for new staff members.

Why are you experiencing a shortage in contact center agent staffing?

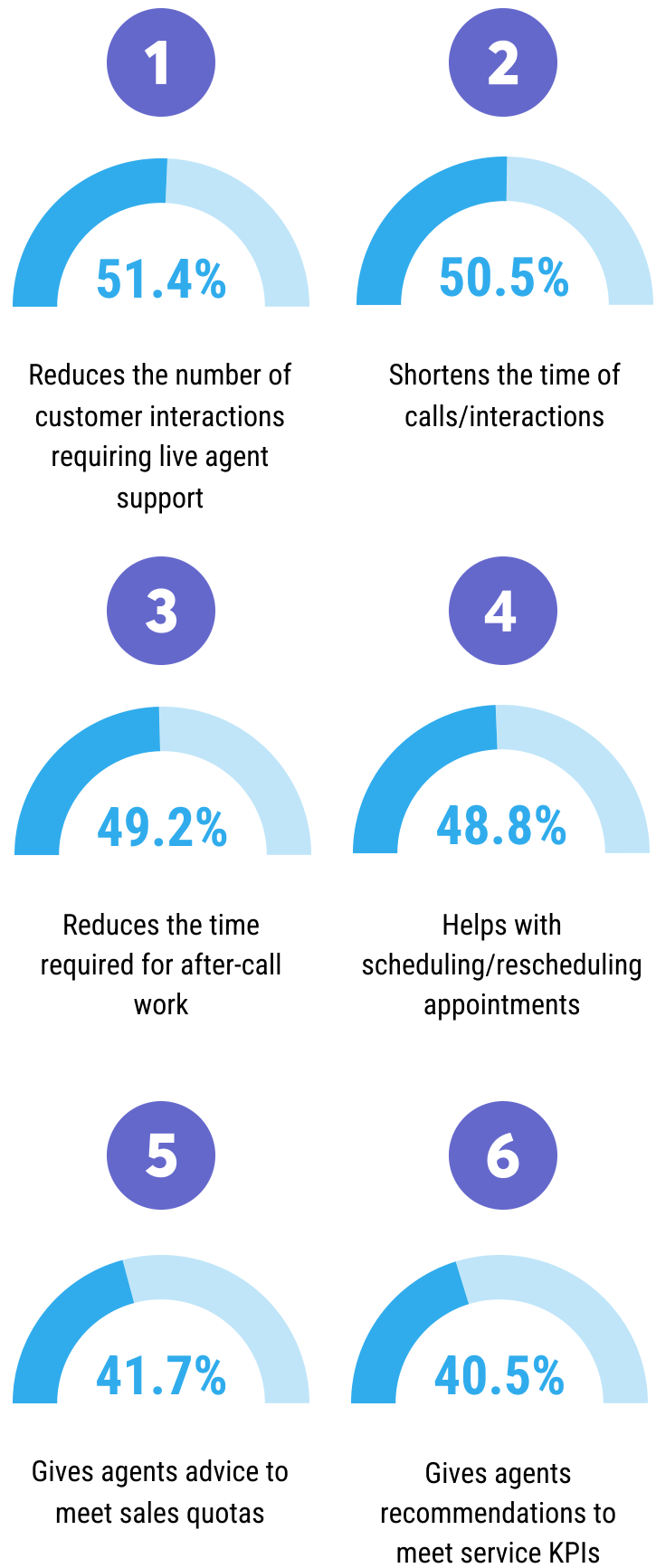




6 Ways AI Augments the Agent Workforce

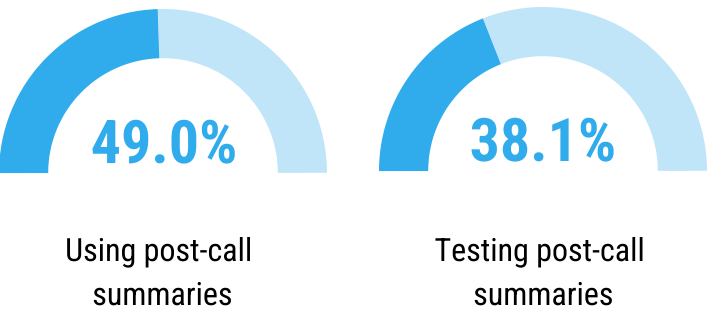
As shown on the preceding page, more than 64% of companies with agent shortages attribute them to an inability to hire in line with company growth. Not so long ago, many companies would have found themselves in the desperate situation of needing agents so they could keep their newfound customers happy but not being able to find them. Today, AI is making staffing shortages less dire. To wit: **More than 84% of companies say AI allows them to fill their gaps in agent staffing.**

How so? These are the top six ways:



Easing the Chore of After-Call Work

As noted on Page 4, nearly half of companies studied are using AI to reduce the amount of time agents spend on after-call work—a historical pain point within the contact center. Toward this end, most companies already have offloaded or are planning to offload the task of writing post-call summaries from agents to generative AI:



Applying AI in this and other ways is enabling companies to save an average of 35% of time spent on after-call work (in addition to making calls 35% to 39% shorter). This is how this looks in terms of time spent:

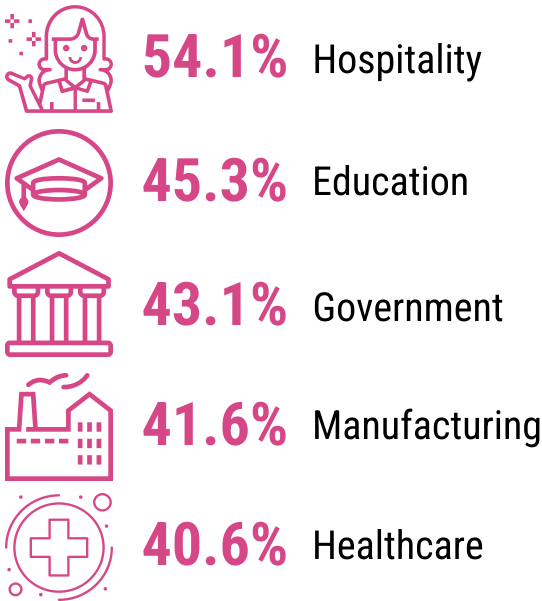


Or

6 minutes less per call, on average, for those using AI for after-call work



Top After-call Time Savings, by industry





Reducing Agent Workloads

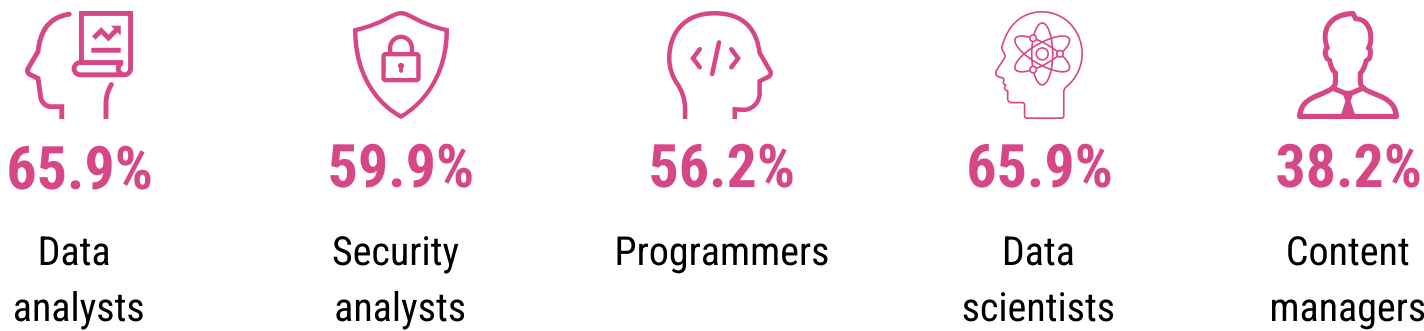
Regardless of what is happening with the agent workforce—high turnover and staffing shortages, for example—workload demands don’t diminish. In fact, in most cases, the demand keeps increasing.

Fortunately, AI is making the situation more tolerable for many companies. Nearly 56% of companies studied say adding AI to the contact center has resulted in the need for fewer new agent positions. In 2023, that meant **those who did not use AI hired 89% more new agents than those who used AI.**

Agents looking to advance their careers have an opportunity in light of these trends. As companies revamp their hiring and staffing numbers around AI, agents who have expertise on a company, products and services, or other area will find themselves increasingly in demand for positions in content and bot management, along with prompt engineering. At the same time, AI will increasingly handle routine requests, and knowledgeable agents will help customers solve their trickier, more complex inquiries.

What’s more, the type of employee working within the CX discipline will change with AI’s rise, too. Data analysts, security analysts, programmers, data scientists, and content managers (for all that generated material) will be important personnel going forward.

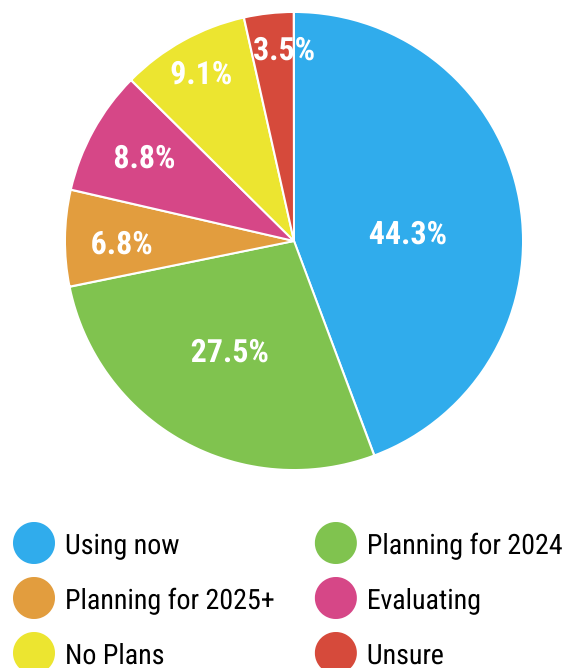
Positions Companies Plan to Increase Because of Their AI Strategy





An additional 15.6% have agent assistance on their roadmaps for as early as 2025 or are evaluating their adoption plans.

State of Adoption - Agent Assist



Helping Agents with AI's Assistance

Agent assist is one of the foremost ways companies deploy technology to create a better agent experience—in large part because they're able to excel at meeting customer needs. Agent assist software leverages various types of AI to provide agents in-the-moment advice, information, and context to deliver the best possible service, with information often delivered in the form of screen pops. The types of AI include natural language processing/natural language understanding, sentiment analysis, speech/text analytics, transcription, and workflow analytics.

In Metrigy's *Customer Experience MetriCast 2024* global market research study, nearly 72% of the 1,558 participating companies have already adopted or plan to adopt agent assist software by the end of 2024.

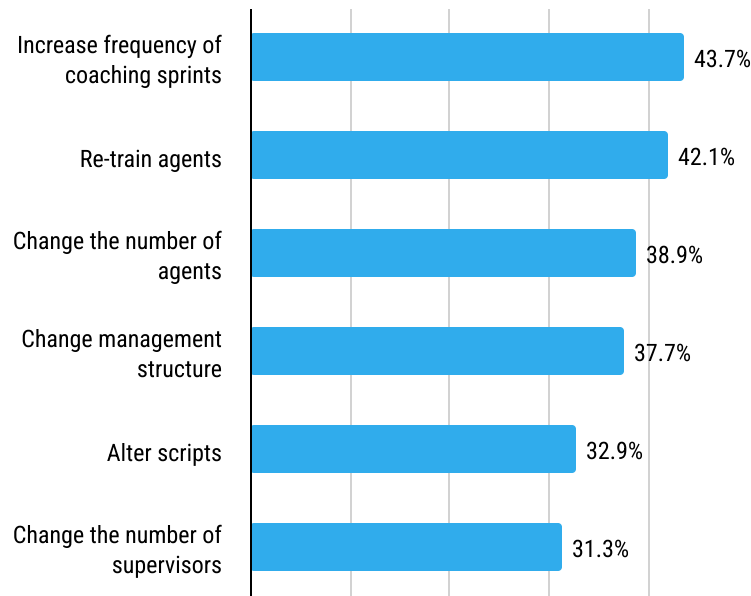
As agents engage with customers, there are four primary ways most companies apply agent assist software. They are:

- 1 Provide next-best-action recommendations
- 2 Provide context about the customer or a topic
- 3 Transcribe the interaction to reduce after-call work
- 4 Help agents upsell/cross-sell

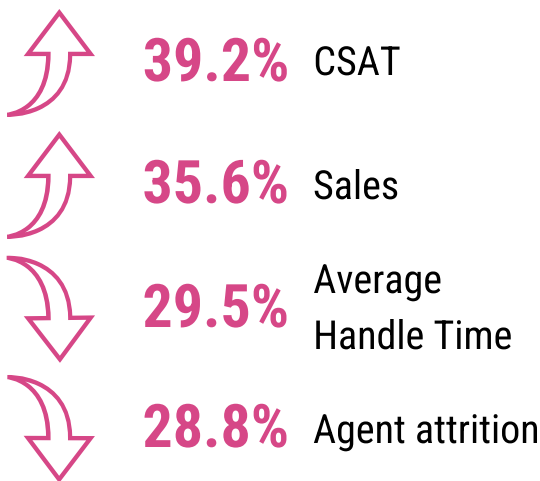
Reaping the Full Value from Agent Assist

The use of agent assist is proving of value in fine-tuning the contact center workforce, too. For example, should agent assist software using sentiment analyst detect a negative turn in a customer’s attitude during the call, it might trigger real-time coaching or agent training. And, as previously noted, use of this AI-based technology can lead to an upleveling of agents and other staffing changes in the contact center.

Has the introduction of agent assist caused you to do any of the following?



And, use of agent assist can lead to significant improvements in key business success metrics. For agent assist, this includes:





AI Assists Supervisors, Too

Akin to agent assist, supervisor assist software leverages AI to populate reports, charts, tables, and screen pops to provide supervisors the context and analytics they need for improving agent performance and overall contact center efficiency. For supervisor assistance, AI works with workforce optimization/ workforce engagement management (WFO/WEM) applications, such as quality management and workforce management, to help in two primary ways:

- Analyze agent performance on all calls
- Improve accuracy of schedule and capacity management requirements

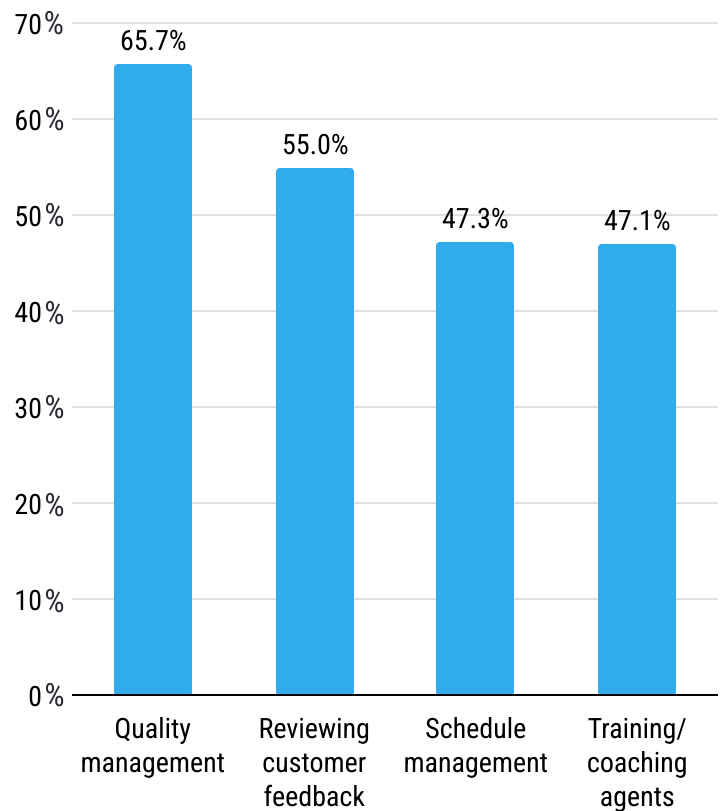


119
minutes

time supervisors save per week via the use of AI for agent scheduling and capacity planning

Of those companies using AI-enabled apps to manage agent teams, most are either doing so for quality management or to review open-ended comments from customer feedback.

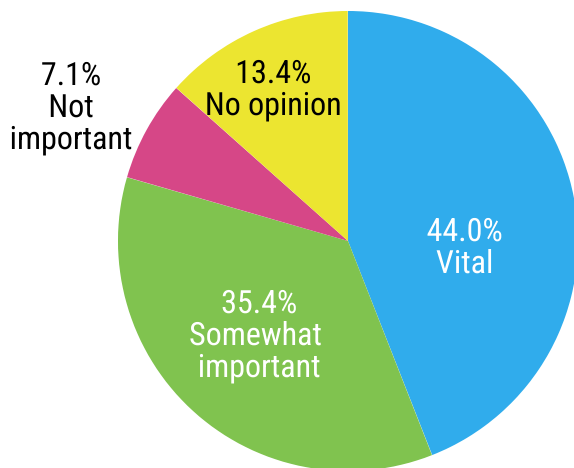
How are supervisors using AI-enabled apps to manage teams?



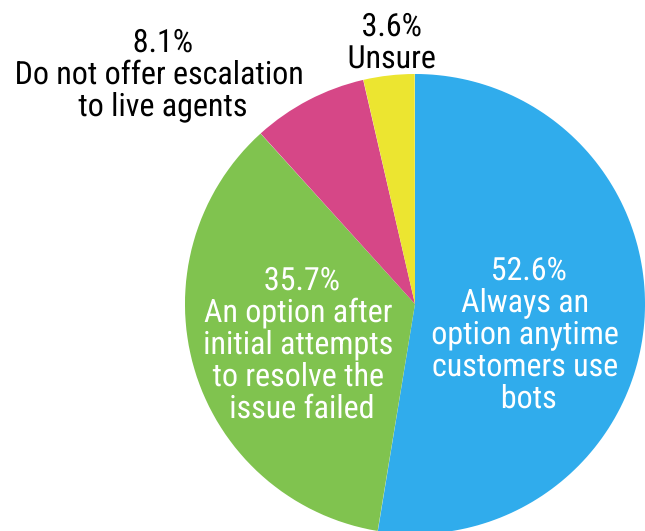
Easing Agent Workloads with Bot Help

The complexion of the agent workforce is changing, as companies increasingly look to blend human agents and bots into a cohesive whole. Nearly 48% say they already consider bots to be part of workforce, with close to another 46% saying that will be their perspective in the future. This is not to say companies see a diminished need for the human connection. We see this in two ways: First, many companies want bots to appear to be human and, second, human agents must be at the ready for when bots can't complete a customer interaction without live assistance.

How important do CX leaders think it is for bots to appear human, in how they sound, type, and show empathy?

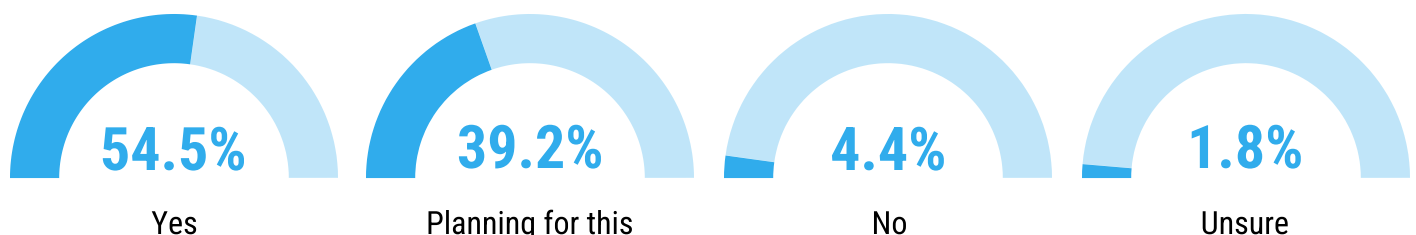


What's your design for allowing customers to leave a bot and go to a live agent?



Metrigy's research shows the **average annual spending per bot about 5.5%**. (This will increase over time, as 64.8% of research participants say a fair bot cost is between 10% and 25% of an agent's compensation.) As companies bring on more bots, in part for cost savings, we may see the rise of a new role within the contact center—a bot manager, if you will. Nearly 94% say they'll require dedicated staff to keep bots on track. And, should a bot not be able to address a customer's inquiry, handing off to a live agent is a must for most.

Will staff be dedicated to keep bots on track?



Recommendations

- 1** Don't be stymied by empty seats in your contact center. Rather, explore how to use AI to fill your gaps, including—but certainly not limited to—reducing the number of customer interactions needing live agent support in the first place.
- 2** Use generative AI to address one of the biggest pain points for agents: after-call work. In particular, offload the task of writing post-call summaries or assigning tasks from agents to generative AI—there are considerable time savings to be gained by doing so.
- 3** Reassess hiring and staffing requirements around AI, but don't think simply about shrinking the agent budget. Rather, encourage agents to uplevel their skills so they increase their value to the organization while better serving customers with complex service requirements.
- 4** As CX becomes more AI-driven and data-centric, your contact center will require a blend of new expertise. Evaluate your needs for professionals such as data analysts, security analysts, programmers, data scientists, and content managers (for all that generated material).
- 5** Empower your agents with the information they need, when needed and without asking for it, via the use of agent assistance software. They'll have a more positive experience, which means customers will, too.
- 6** Likewise, tap into supervisor assistance software to help improve the agent environment. How so? Use supervisor assist to analyze agent performance and provide guidance for scheduling and capacity management improvements.
- 7** Build a blended workforce of human agents and bots... but don't forget to include bots in your management oversight!