

## INABILITY TO GET TO A LIVE PERSON

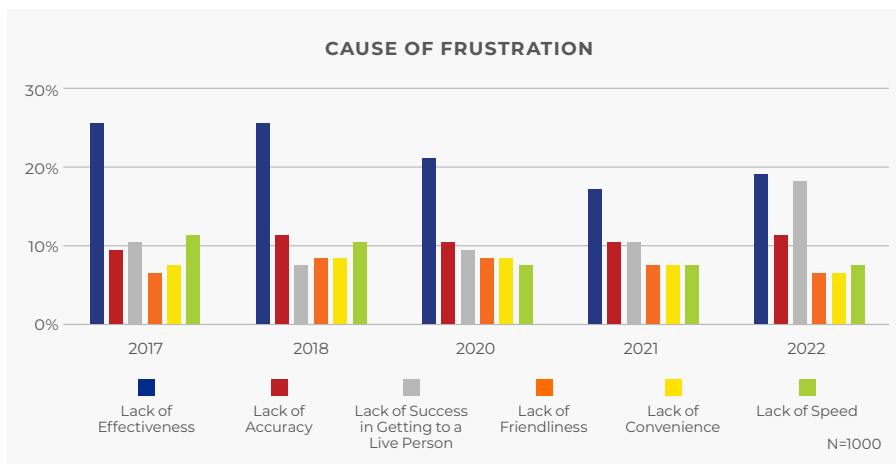
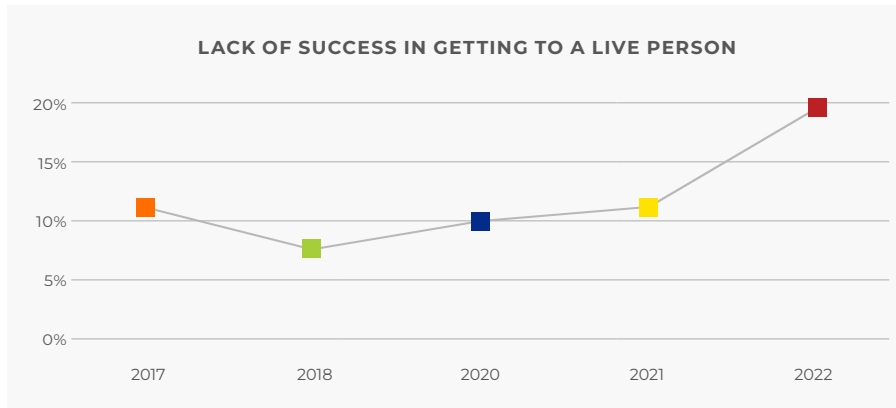
Up 8% year-over-year, consumer frustration is at an all-time high with the lack of success in getting to a live person seeing the biggest upward swing in five years.

### SURVEY QUESTION

From your experience, which of the following has been the most common cause of your customer service frustration in general?

We have asked this question five years in a row and while “lack of effectiveness” consistently comes in first, the significant spike in frustration with getting to a live person is worth investigating. If your customer needs to speak to a person at your organization, what is the level of effort to get them connected? Or have you taken away this option to speak to an agent all together?

Many of the organizations we work with report that labor costs are their biggest expense. According to a Contact Center Pipeline article, “Frontline labor — including agents, team leads, and supervisors — is by far the largest contact center expense, accounting for roughly two-thirds to three-fourths of the overall operating cost.” With numbers that high, it makes good business sense for organizations to make



investments in applications that reduce workload away from agents to self-service applications. The promise of upwards of 40% to 50% call deflection with a modern IVR and other AI-powered self-service applications are enticing, but if not properly deployed could frustrate your customers.

So, the million-dollar question is: are we over-automating the customer experience and losing sight of why the industry exists? Let’s break it down to its simplest definition: customer service

connects problems to answers. If we accept the point of view of Ryan W. Buell’s 2018 Harvard Business Review article, The Parts of Customer Service That Should Never Be Automated,

*“...humans are inherently social creatures who get emotional value from seeing and interacting with one another. Research shows that taking away the opportunity for this kind of connection can undermine service performance.”*

We also must accept that the move to more automated customer service needs to be evaluated and measured against the impact on the end user — it is a delicate balancing act.

This frustration in getting to a live agent is especially concerning because when our respondents were asked their preference or interaction type, live person or self-service, the choice was clear with 73% choosing a live person. Across all preferred modes other than MSG app and automated intelligent assistants (AIA) home, the preference is for a live person (not new), but the intensity for live person, regardless of interface, is now up 9% from last year (73% from 64%). Both email preferers (an outlier group) and MSG app preferers are showing more need for live person vs. last year.

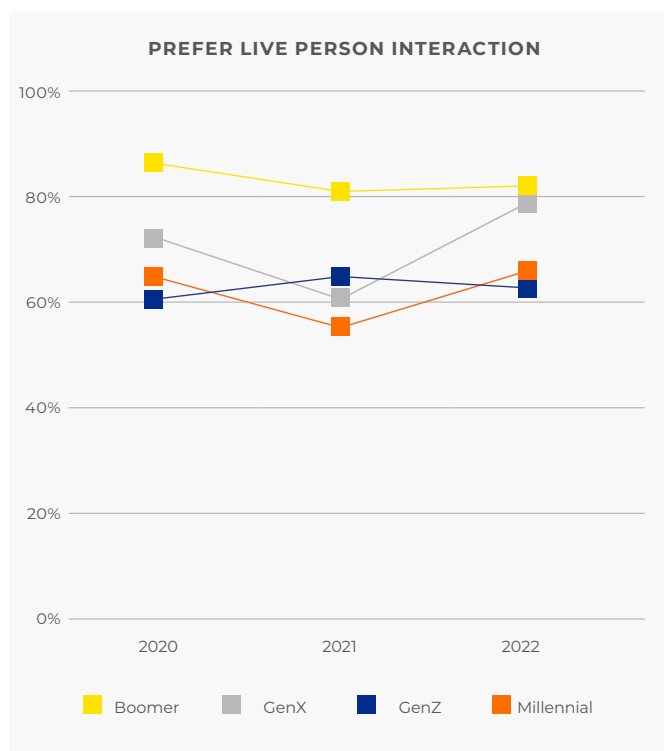
We also looked at the preference across generations. Since 2020 Millennials and Gen X have shown the most flux when it comes to live person preference — their trial of modes matched their population. They are quick to try newer modes, but also quick to revert back to established practices if the newer, more self-directed modes don't deliver the human touch and known interfaces they are looking for.

Another consideration is the overall experience within human interactions. We have determined once again that happy agents inspire happy customers.

**WHAT WE LEARNED:** There are multiple factors that impact the customer experience. An often-overlooked factor is whether the individuals they are interacting with are happy. We've said for years that happy agents equal happy customers and our 2022 findings continue to support this theory. In fact, the impact has been hedging forward year over year. We have seen the strongest acknowledgment of what we have named the "Happiness Vector" in years past — a 9% increase from 2018 and up 5% from last year.

		Total	Voice Call	Chat	Email	SMS/Text	Msg App	AIA Home	AIA Mobile
2020	LIVE PERSON	72%	90%	74%	55%	36%	53%	41%	35%
	SELF-SERVICE	28%	10%	26%	45%	64%	47%	59%	65%
2021	LIVE PERSON	64%	86%	75%	42%	51%	37%	44%	56%
	SELF-SERVICE	36%	14%	25%	58%	49%	63%	56%	44%
2022	LIVE PERSON	73%	89%	77%	52%	53%	45%	41%	52%
	SELF-SERVICE	27%	11%	23%	48%	47%	55%	59%	48%

■ Green: > 50%      ■ Yellow < 50%



**SURVEY QUESTION**

In general, how do you think talking to or web chatting with a happy agent will typically impact your customer service experience? As always, this acknowledgment is gender and generation agnostic.

These numbers alone support the need to ensure your agents exude a sense of happiness and positivity, but it is hard to measure. So, what does a happy agent “get” you? A happy agent will impact the amount of time your customers are willing to give to sort out their issue or question. This “Happiness Vector” continues to be statistically stable. Why is this important? Because time is the one thing you cannot buy.

What about when it comes to proactive outreach? This is increasingly an area of focus for our enterprise customers. It should come as no surprise that despite the ongoing focus on live customer service interactions, the tone remains a decidedly “don’t call me, I’ll call you” when consumers think about being contacted by customer service. Almost 5 in 10 (46%) of American consumers continue to NOT put a priority on their own speedy response back to customer service and want to be in charge of their time. Email is a consistent leader representing the top choice for males and females and across the generations with Boomers leading the way at 76%.

**WHAT WE LEARNED:** The three distinct tiers of outreach importance remain, largely, in place in 2022. However, the scope of lowest importance items, once the domain mainly of “marketing” outreach, has now increased to include some “functional info.” Items like changes in service policies, reaching a certain landmark to unlock benefits and the impact of regulations on you as a client or customer, are becoming less important. Millennials seem to be the only generation that puts a positive outlook on these types of outreach. Could that be a symptom of the “helicopter parent” effect?

