

Investigation into outbound calling to UK consumers

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PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND OF SURVEY

Ofcom is currently reviewing how it uses its powers to take action if a person 'persistently misuses an electronic communications network or service'. This includes considering whether there are any improvements and clarifications that Ofcom could make to its policy, particularly in the area of silent and abandoned calls.

To inform its review, Ofcom wishes to understand the key drivers of silent or abandoned calls, whether any changes to the policy may help reduce the likelihood of silent or abandoned calls being made, and the level of harm they cause; as well as any other developments which may be relevant to the policy. Ofcom also wishes to gather information on the costs and benefits for businesses operating in accordance with Ofcom's policy.

As part of this, Ofcom wished to run a survey of the contact centre industry to gather as much information as possible to ensure that its policy takes into account the real workings and capabilities of the contact centre industry.

The analyst company ContactBabel was commissioned to gather the information on Ofcom's behalf, with this published report being based on this research. In order to encourage respondents to answer as accurately and completely as possible, all data have been anonymised, and where relevant, aggregated.



METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

After a 2-week pilot survey, potential survey respondents were contacted in April & May 2015 and asked to take part in an online survey, with the option to have a phone interview if preferred (as it happened, the latter option was only used where responses were needed to be clarified). The survey was open between March 31st and May 8th 2015.

The pool of potential respondents was drawn from various sources: ContactBabel's own databases of 30,000 industry professionals in 4,000+ UK contact centre operations, and various solution providers (usually dialler manufacturers or outbound service providers). These contacts as well as industry associations, press and websites were very supportive in promoting the survey and the benefits of taking part in the survey to their customers, prospects, user groups and social media circles.

Respondents were asked if they were taking part in business-to-consumer outbound calling activity into the UK, regardless of where their operation was based. If so, they were presented with the questionnaire. If not, they were thanked but informed that they would not be able to take part in the survey, but were given the option to receive the completed report if they so wished.

Not all sections of the survey were relevant to every respondent, as some elements were only presented to those who were using a specific technology or operational practice, for example.

Due to the extremely wide-ranging and sometimes complex nature of the data being asked for, as well as the very significant length of the survey (the average time taken was well over an hour, excluding the time taken to find and prepare the information for input), responses had varying levels of completeness.

Respondents can be grouped and segmented as follows:

- Started survey: 428, of which:
 - o make calls to the UK public (i.e. eligible to take part): 354
 - o did not make calls to the UK public (i.e. ineligible to take part, responses not taken into account): 74
- Eligible to take part (354), of which 159 provided at least some responses to the survey:
 - Completed every question where relevant: 58
 - Completed some questions, but not all: 101.
- The remaining 195 respondents who were eligible to take part and who started the survey, did not provide enough information to be used.

Of those 101 that completed some but not all questions, 50 answered key questions within the survey (such as the use of automation, CLI (calling line identity) presentation and answer machine detection). As such, may be fair to state that there were 108 substantive responses to the survey in total. However, we have used all of the relevant data in the analysis from the 159 respondents above.



As such, the titles of tables and charts are suffixed with a figure showing the number of responses used in the calculation (e.g. n=89), and appropriate caution should be used accordingly.

Where appropriate and possible, segmentations of the dataset were used to bring out any differences, in particular, size and outbound activity type.

Size bands were used as follows, based upon the question "How many FTEs (full-time equivalents) involved in outbound dialling to UK consumers do you have?":

- Small (under 50 seats): 53 respondents
- Medium (50-200 seats): 40 respondents
- Large: (200+ seats): 24 respondents
- Undisclosed (did not answer): 42 respondents.

Outbound activity type was somewhat more difficult to categorise, as many respondents carried out more than one type of calling, or did not answer the question. However, we have tried to place the responses into one of the following primary activity types from the 159 respondent base:

- Cold calling / cold sales: 15 respondents (with full or near-full survey completion)
- Customer service: 5 respondents
- Customer surveys: 8 respondents
- Debt collection: 47 respondents
- Warm sales (i.e. cross-selling, upselling and contract renewals): 15 respondents
- Other / unspecified: 69 respondents.

NB: 'other / unspecified' includes activities such as fraud prevention, billing reminders, charity collections and other outbound activities not offered as a response option, as well as those which did not answer this question, but offered data later in the survey.



Representation

This data is reasonably representative of the UK contact centre industry by size, as overall industrywide ContactBabel data¹ shows.

| Size band | Survey sample | Industry-wide |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Under 50 seats | 45% | 56% |
| 50-200 seats | 34% | 30% |
| Over 200 seats | 21% | 14% |

It is not possible to look at how representative the data is by activity type, as this information is not available on an industry-wide basis.

There were only 2 responses that were not based on UK figures (coming from South Africa and Spain), despite significant efforts to get Indian and South African operations in particular participating. As such, the report should be read as an insight into UK outbound calling in the UK consumer market.

Judging by the nature of much of the respondents' commentary, their positive attitudes towards TPS Telephone Preference Service), and the quantitative data provided around abandoned calls and silent calls, it appears that only those operators who were willing to engage with the regulator took part in the survey.

¹ ContactBabel, "UK Contact Centres in 2015: The State of the Industry"



DIALLING ACTIVITY: THE PURPOSE OF OUTBOUND DIALLING

PURPOSE

In order to provide some structure and segmentation to the survey answers, respondents were asked the proportion of their total outbound dialling to UK consumers that related to a list of outbound activity types.

With 59% of respondents carrying out this activity, debt collection was by far the most well-represented activity in the survey, accounting for over 40% of overall outbound activity.

Sales calls to existing customers (warm calls), sales calls to new prospects (cold calls) and customer service were also well-represented in the survey.

Figure 1: Outbound activity (all respondents) – (n=95)

| Outbound activity | Proportion of outbound activity industry-wide (dialling UK consumers) | Proportion of respondents carrying out this outbound activity |
|--|---|--|
| Debt collection | 40.3% | 59% |
| Sales calls to existing customers (e.g. cross selling, upselling, contract renewal) – known as warm sales | 17.7% | 48% |
| Customer service (e.g. notification of delivery, product recall, etc.) | 11.8% | 39% |
| Sales calls to new prospects – known as cold sales | 11.0% | 35% |
| Consumer surveys (e.g. market research) | 9.3% | 29% |
| Lead prospecting (e.g. gathering details of prospects for resale to a third party) | 2.5% | 14% |
| Charity collections | 2.1% | 8% |
| Billing reminders | 1.8% | 12% |
| Fraud detection and prevention (e.g. checking credit card transactions) | 1.3% | 12% |
| Other | 2.2% | 11% |

NB: "Proportion of respondents carrying out this outbound activity" may add up to more than 100% as multiple choices per respondent are permitted



Financial services was the most well-represented, as not only does this include banks and credit card companies, but also dedicated debt collection agencies, which are a major part of this report. Telecoms is also a significant sector.

NB – only 55% of respondents had a secondary activity.

Figure 2: Outbound sectors (all respondents) – (n=133)

| Outbound sector | Primary activity | Secondary activity |
|---|------------------|--------------------|
| Financial services | 39% | 15% |
| Phone/broadband | 16% | 14% |
| Market research | 6% | 6% |
| Gas/electricity | 6% | 14% |
| Housing | 4% | 0% |
| Insurance | 4% | 9% |
| Retail | 4% | 2% |
| Accident claims/compensation (including personal injury and PPI claims) | 3% | 1% |
| Debt collection (outsourced) | 3% | 1% |
| Water | 2% | 0% |
| Magazine subscriptions | 2% | 3% |
| Automotive | 1% | 1% |
| Charity | 1% | 1% |
| Education | 1% | 0% |
| Energy efficiency e.g. loft insulation, solar panels, etc. | 1% | 4% |
| Estate agency | 1% | 0% |
| Holiday / timeshare sales | 1% | 0% |
| IT sales | 1% | 0% |
| IT support | 1% | 1% |
| Logistics | 1% | 0% |
| Product support customer service | 1% | 0% |
| Service update & complaint handling | 1% | 0% |
| Prize awards | 0% | 3% |
| Other (undisclosed) | 3% | 24% |



In order to understand the cost structure of the industry, and how any alteration to headcount would affect costs, respondents were asked to outline salary and bonus costs.

Basic salaries for outbound staff are very close to the UK industry salary average of $\pm 16,027$ (i.e. including the much larger inbound sector), at around $\pm 16,000$, excluding bonus.

Figure 3: Annualised basic salaries paid to outbound FTEs (n=111)





83% of outbound staff are paid a bonus, which is often around 10-15% of annual salary.

Of those who provided the information (n=74), 54% paid bonuses monthly, 27% annually and 9% based upon weekly or hourly work.





Figure 5: Annualised basic salaries & bonuses paid to outbound FTEs (mean/median/1st & 3rd quartiles) – (n=113)

| | Basic annual salary | Annual bonus | Total annual remuneration |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 1 st quartile | £18,000 | £3,000 | £20,500 |
| Median | £16,000 | £1,562 | £17,911 |
| 3 rd quartile | £14,798 | £600 | £16,000 |
| Mean | £16,394 | £2,192 | £18,554 |

NB: Total annual remuneration is calculated directly from the distribution of total annual remuneration (where both salary and bonus are given, n=107), therefore this is not equal to the sum of the stated basic annual salary and annual bonus).



Figure 6: Bonuses paid to outbound FTEs as a proportion of basic salary (mean/median/1st & 3rd quartiles) – (n=108)

| | Bonus as a proportion of salary |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 st quartile | 17% |
| Median | 10% |
| 3 rd quartile | 2% |
| Mean | 13% |



INITIATOR/CLIENTS

Only 9% of respondents stated that their outbound dialling activity differed greatly between campaigns (e.g. they conducted separate specific and differentiated campaigns), with 91% stating that they had more typical ongoing outbound activities of the same or similar nature. Of respondents that provided detailed data on their outbound activity, only 3% used campaign-specific information, with 97% using general averages or data related to specific time periods. As such, segmenting these data to compare and contrast has not been possible, so all data has been grouped together.

Outbound work was split roughly evenly between in-house and outsourced, with 14% of businesses working both for themselves and a third-party.



Figure 7: Initiator of outbound work – (n=101)



There was little real pattern when considering for whom the outbound activity was being carried out. It is also the case that most companies had more than one outbound activity, so the presentation shown in Figure 8 has a degree of simplification.



Figure 8: Initiator of outbound work by outbound activity – (n=76)



DIALLING ACTIVITY

DIALLING ACTIVITY: AGENT UTILISATION RATES

The majority of respondents calculate agent utilisation rate as a proportion of the time spent talking to end-users, divided by the amount of time available to talk. For example, if an agent spends 30 minutes in the hour talking, and they are logged in to the system for 50 minutes (with a 10 minute break), then the majority of respondents calculate this to be a 60% utilisation rate (30/50).



Figure 9: Agent utilisation rates (n=75)

| | Agent utilisation rates |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 st quartile | 70% |
| Median | 56% |
| 3 rd quartile | 42% |
| Mean | 56% |



Of the 75 respondents answering, 43% (n=32) do not include the time spent before the call looking at contact data, or adding wrap-up notes after the call to be a part of agent utilisation. 19% respondents do so (n=14). The remainder (39%, n=29) were unclear.

Some verbatim examples of how utilisation was calculated include:

- "This is based on the % of time spent in a 'talk' state on the dialler as a % of the total time the agent where in the building. This does not include any time updating customer records or waiting for calls"
- "Talk time divided by total time logged into campaign = talk time %. This is an average for the whole day as if to pick 1 single hour would not be a true representation due to the peaks and troughs in talk time throughout the day"
- "Our data collection platform captures talk time, which excludes wrap-up".

However, most of the higher (70%+) results also include wrap-up time (e.g. Talk + Wrap, as a % of Talk + Wrap + Idle). For most respondents that split out wrap-up time from call time, wrap is usually between 15-20% of the call time.

A respondent explains:

• "The Talk time is the time from the moment the customer is connected to the agent until the moment the call ends or is transferred to a third party. The Wrap time is the time from the moment a call ends until the Agent either becomes available for the next call or logs out. The Wait time is any time the Agent is available to the dialler to be connected to Customers, No periods where an agent is not available to the dialler is counted in the percentages provided above. , e.g. Admin / Lunch etc."



DIALLING ACTIVITY: TARGET AUDIENCE

Only 10% of respondents said that they took the approach of trying to contact as many potential customers as possible. 90% said that they had a specific, targeted set of people that they would try to contact (n=104)

Looking in more depth at the respondents who tried to contact as many customers as possible (n=10), 7 were debt collectors. As these types of business by definition are targeting specific individuals, it may be considered that these respondents answered this questions erroneously, and that they in fact were contacting a specific, targeted set of people, and that only 3 respondents were actually trying to contact as many people as possible (i.e. regardless of who they are).



DIALLING ACTIVITY: TIME OF DAY

Respondents were asked about the hours in which they carry out outbound calling, and to indicate their peak times where they were making most calls.

In the working week, calling tended to start at 0800 or 0900 and carry on for 12 hours until 2000 or 2100. Calling before 0930 was almost always carried out for debt collection.

By 1000, 85% of respondents are making outbound calls, with 72% finishing by 2000. By 2100, all respondents have finished calling.







Figure 11: Cumulative opening and closing hours, Sat (n=30)



Only 30 respondents stated that they carried out Saturday calling, compared to 89 that gave answers for Mon-Fri calling.

Saturday calling was usually carried out in the morning, tailing off after 1300. By 0900, respondents were calling, with around one-third stopping by 1300, with a gradual tailing-off of activity throughout the afternoon, with debt collectors the most active. By 1800, almost all outbound calling had stopped.



The great majority of respondents do not call on Sundays. Of those that do and who specified the hours of calling, calling begins at 1000 and tends to finish between 1400 and 1800. Debt collection was the main activity stated (n=4).





When looking at peak calling hours, this differs somewhat depending on the type of calling being carried out:

Debt collection respondents state that they have an outbound calling peak in the early evening, between 1730 and 2000, with many operations also stating that there are peaks in the morning as well, particularly between 1000 and 1200.

Amongst respondents that carry out sales to existing customers (for example contract renewals, cross selling and upselling), an evening peak is even more noticeable. Many respondents report the period between 1630 and 1930 having more volume, with very few reporting significant sales call volumes before 1200. For respondents carrying out cold calls, there were less obvious peaks, with calls spread out across the day, perhaps as for these types of sales campaign / outbound activity, there are likely to be more targets to aim for.



DIALLING ACTIVITY: MAXIMUM NUMBER OF ATTEMPTS

As might be expected, the maximum number of attempts made to contact a customer or prospect differs significantly depending upon the activity being carried out. Sufficient data on three outbound activities - debt collection, warm calling (sales to existing customers) and cold calling (sales to new prospects) were available to allow detailed analysis of call attempts and the time left between calls.

Those involved in debt collection, as we might expect, are determined to speak to specific individuals, and almost half of them make multiple calls on the same day (with a few making as many as six calls per day to the same individual, although not necessarily to the same number). In the main, they will wait a minimum of four hours between calls, although several mention that if an engaged signal is received, they will ring back within 15-30 minutes as the chances of successful connection is higher. There was an instance of a respondent making up to 100 calls per month to a specific number, although on average, making two or three calls per week is much more common. Several respondents are careful to point out that if a message is left or a call dropped, they are careful not to call back within 72 hours, following Ofcom's policy statement.

| | Maximum calls per consumer per day | Length of campaign / live data (days) | Maximum calls in total campaign time | Time left between calls (if engaged tone) - hours | Time left between calls (if no engaged tone) - hours |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|---|---|
| 1 st quartile | 3 | 28 | 20 | 2.25 | 72 |
| Median | 2 | 21 | 10 | 0.5 | 4 |
| 3 rd quartile | 1 | 7 | 6 | 0.38 | 4 |
| Mean | 2.2 | 21 | 18 | 1.3 | 24 |
| High | 6 | 90 | 90 | 4 | 72 |
| Low | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0.25 | 2 |
| n (number of responses) | 37 | 18 | 18 | 4 | 15 |

Figure 13: Call attempts by activity type (debt collection)



Those respondents involved in calling existing customers, for example in order to cross sell, upsell or renew contracts, are less likely than debt collectors to call as many times, although they have a higher average attempt per customer per day figure (although the research base for this was only 6 respondents, so should be treated with caution).

Typically, calls will be placed every two or three days for a three or four week period, with around 8 calls over this period being average. Having said that, some respondents do indicate that they call more frequently, although none make more than 12 calls in total.

| | Maximum calls per consumer per day | Length of campaign / live data (days) | Maximum calls in total campaign time | Time left between calls (if engaged tone) - hours | Time left between calls (if no engaged tone) - hours |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|---|---|
| 1 st quartile | 3 | 28 | 10 | n/a | 14 |
| Median | 3 | 28 | 8 | 0.5 | 4 |
| 3 rd quartile | 3 | 18 | 8 | n/a | 4 |
| Mean | 3.5 | 22 | 8 | 0.5 | 9 |
| High | 8 | 35 | 12 | 0.5 | 24 |
| Low | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0.5 | 3 |
| n (number of responses) | 6 | 15 | 17 | 1 | 8 |

Figure 14: Call attempts by activity type (warm calling – sales calls to existing customers)



Respondents carrying out sales calls to new prospects will call multiple times in a week - around three or four being average - with a couple of respondents carrying out very significant focused calling, with around 10-15 calls being placed to the same potential customer.

Figure 15: Call attempts by activity type (cold calling – sales calls to new prospects)

| | Maximum calls per consumer per day | Length of campaign / live data (days) | Maximum calls in total campaign time | Time left between calls (if engaged tone) -hours | Time left between calls (if no engaged tone) - hours |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| 1 st quartile | 3 | 32 | 18 | n/a | n/a |
| Median | 3 | 28 | 10 | 0.38 | 4 |
| 3 rd quartile | 2 | 11 | 3 | n/a | n/a |
| Mean | 3 | 25 | 18 | 0.38 | 3.4 |
| High | 3 | 56 | 100 | 0.5 | 4 |
| Low | 2 | 5 | 3 | 0.25 | 2 |
| n (number of responses) | 3 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 5 |



DIALLING ACTIVITY: THE ROLE OF MOBILE

Just over half of calls made by survey respondents (n=82) are placed to mobile phones, which are more expensive² than landlines.

Figure 16: % of outbound dialling carried out to mobile phones, (n=82)

| | % of calls made to mobile phones |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 st quartile | 73% |
| Median | 60% |
| 3 rd quartile | 42% |
| Mean | 58% |

There is little difference between activity types, with 55% of debt collection calls being made to mobiles, and 61% of sales calls.

² "It costs an average of around 3 times more to call a mobile phone than a landline": research findings taken from ContactBabel "The 2014 UK Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide".



DIALLING ACTIVITY: TELEPHONE PREFERENCE SERVICE (TPS)X

51% of respondents (n=91) stated that their calls did not require TPS checking (as they were to existing customers or others who had given permission, or who were allowed to be called through other legislation).

For those who were conducting TPS tests (n=45), checking numbers before they were loaded into the dialler was the most commonly used method by far. (NB – other outbound activity, not shown specifically, was included in the 'average' column).



Figure 17: Methods of checking TPS (n=91)



USE OF TECHNOLOGY

USE OF DIALLERS

83% of respondents used an automated outbound dialler, with those in debt collection and warm sales being most likely to so, and those carrying out outbound customer service least likely to do so.

Figure 18: Use of automated outbound diallers, by activity type (n=122)

| Activity type | % of respondents using automated diallers |
|-----------------------|---|
| Debt collection | 96% |
| Warm sales | 87% |
| Cold sales | 79% |
| Customer surveys | 75% |
| Other / not specified | 74% |
| Customer service | 60% |
| Average | 83% |

Unsurprisingly, those operations with the highest call volumes and most agents were most likely to use outbound calling automation. Only 63% of respondents from small operations used automated diallers.

Figure 19: Use of automated outbound diallers, by contact centre size (n=122)

| Contact centre size | % of respondents using automated diallers |
|-----------------------|---|
| Small (<50 seats) | 63% |
| Medium (50-200 seats) | 86% |
| Large (200+ seats) | 100% |
| Average | 83% |



SUPPLY, DELIVERY AND CUSTOMISATION OF DIALLER FUNCTIONALITY

The majority of respondents' diallers (79%, n=70) are owned and run as CPE (customer premise equipment) despite the strong growth in cloud solutions. There was no real pattern when looking at contact centre size.

Figure 20: Dialler deployment model, by contact centre size (n=70)





72% of respondents (n=67) stated that they reconfigured the dialler settings.

28% of respondents were happy to leave the settings alone as they were.

Looking in greater depth, all of the respondents that had outbound automation delivered by public cloud (i.e. the software was owned and operated offsite by a third party) that answered this question (n=5) had their dialler settings reconfigured, as optimisation of efficiency is one of the main services offered by cloud providers.







DIALLER MANAGERS

Where diallers are used, 95% of respondents use a dedicated dialler manager.

Figure 22: Presence of dialler managers, by contact centre size (only where automated outbound dialling is used) – (n=81)

| Contact centre size | % of respondents using automated diallers that have a dialler manager |
|-----------------------|--|
| Small (<50 seats) | 89% |
| Medium (50-200 seats) | 100% |
| Large (200+ seats) | 94% |
| Average | 95% |



DIALLER MODES

Respondents were asked if they used automated outbound dialling technology in the campaign or outbound activity period which they were providing responses for, and if so, the proportions that each type of dialling made up of this total outbound dialling activity.

The following definitions of automated dialling were provided as guidance, although there is an acknowledgement that some in the industry may refer to these modes differently.

Preview dialling: once an agent has indicated that they are ready for a call, information about the call is presented to them. The number is then automatically dialled after a predefined period; the agent is given time to preview the customer details before the call is launched.

Progressive dialling: once an agent has indicated that they are ready for a call, information about the call is presented to them and the number is then dialled immediately. Call progress is monitored by the dialler technology. Calls that do not result in 'ringing' are automatically and immediately disconnected, whilst 'no answers' are disconnected after a predefined number of seconds.

Predictive dialling: a predictive dialler launches calls at a rate such that the system connects to live callers as soon as an agent completes the previous transaction. The dialling rate for each campaign is controlled by a pacing algorithm, which automatically monitors activity, and calculates when the next contact should be dialled. The dialling rate is automatically adjusted to maintain a contact rate that is synchronised with operator availability.

Respondent were also permitted to enter data referring to dialling done manually or by other automated means not included in the definition.



Respondents were asked to quantify the amount of outbound dialling that was carried out in various modes, as well as showing how manual dialling fitted into the outbound mix (n=65).

Larger operations are more likely to be using full predictive mode, as they will tend to have the agent and data pools deep enough to make better use of this.



Figure 23: Use of dialling modes, by contact centre size (n=65)



When considering dialling mode by activity type (n=65), warm sales and debt collection are somewhat more likely to have been calls made predictively (respectively, 69% and 60% of outbound calls), with customer service being noticeably less so (28%).



Figure 24: Use of dialling modes, by outbound activity type (n=65)

Respondents were asked why they used particular modes of outbound dialling (n=65). Their commentary includes:

Preview dialling was stated to be chosen in cases where:

- there was a danger of breaching Ofcom regulations through imperfect use of predictive dialling
- campaigns were small and/or where data was of good quality with few bad numbers or irrelevant contacts present
- activity involved handling callback requests, where the customer and their requirements could be checked before the call was placed.



Progressive dialling was more often used where:

- there is a blended environment which may need rapid changes between inbound and outbound work, and which thus risk high spikes of abandonment as agents move modes more quickly than a predictive dialler can handle
- campaigns are smaller than those which typically use predictive dialling, but management still wish to gain efficiencies.

Predictive dialling is said to be chosen where:

- there is very high volumes of data in the campaign
- the campaign or data is in a late stage and is the most efficient way to contact hard-to-reach customers
- where data quality is low, so it screens out unusable numbers
- where there is a pressing need to speak with customers quickly (for example, to stop them falling down the debt chain), where non-predictive calling would not support this.

Other automated dialling:

• 'ratio' dialling³ is used by a small number of respondents, when calls are very short and predictive dialling will slow things up especially at the start of the day when contact rates are the best. This method is said to allow a quicker response to increases in call drop rate.

Manual dialling:

• Only one respondent used a majority of manual dialling. They stated that they used predictive dialling to obtain the initial contact with high volumes of cases, thereafter it moves to a careful account managed process with manual dialling only.

³ Ratio dialling: a ratio of lines-to-agent is set, i.e. for each agent, the dialler will have been told to place a number of calls, so a 3:2 ratio will have 3 calls placed for 2 agents. This is a simple method of automated dialling as it does not need a pacing algorithm, but needs close monitoring by the dialler manager as the ratio will not alter unless it is manually changer' and risks making abandoned calls if it is not regularly updated.


AGENT UTILISATION RATES AND DIALLING MODES

Having already asked respondents about the proportional use of automated outbound dialling modes and their agent utilisation rates, the data existed for the analysis of agent utilisation rates against the main dialler mode employed to be carried out.

The purpose of this was to investigate whether the proportion of use of a particular dialling mode has a positive or negative correlation with agent utilisation. For example, as predictive dialling is a highly automated process, a hypothesis to be tested could be that this mode would yield the highest utilisation rates.

Approach to analysis

The open nature of the question asked around agent utilisation (which required the respondents to explain how they arrived at this), and the widespread use of multiple dialling modes means that comparing like with like is challenging. The following approach was taken in order to quantify and categorise responses in a meaningful way for analysis.

Outbound dialling mode:

86% of the respondents answering the question about outbound dialling stated that more than one mode was used, so a simple correlation of utilisation with mode is not possible.

Responses to the question "Please indicate the proportions that each type of dialling made up of your total outbound dialling activity" were categorised for correlation purposes as being one of:

- 'Pure' 100% of stated mode (e.g. 100% predictive)
- 'Majority'- 51-99% of stated mode (e.g. 80% predictive, 20% preview)
- 'Greatest' where the stated mode was significantly larger than any other (e.g. 50% predictive, 25% progressive, 25% preview"
- 'Mixed' where no mode was significantly larger than any other (i.e. 40% predictive, 40% progressive, 20% preview).

The dialling modes used for segmentation were:

- predictive
- progressive
- preview
- other automated
- manual.

So for example, a response detailing 60% predictive, 20% preview, 10% progressive and 10% manual would be categorised as 'predictive/majority'. This method of categorising and correlating data provides some structure through which a greater understanding of dialling efficiencies can be made



Agent utilisation rates:

In order to be correlated, data must be segmented into groups so they can be compared with each other. With open-ended qualitative questions such as agent utilisation rates - which requested a free-form explanation of how the figure had been arrived at - this requires judgement on the categories in which each response should be placed. Stated agent utilisation rates differed very considerably, in part because some respondents included post-call wrap-up time, some did not, while others did not specify, and a way of standardising them was employed.

In order to group responses to the question "What was the average agent utilisation rate?" (n=63), three categories were created, based on respondents' answer to the follow-up question about how the utilisation rate was calculated and what was included, specifically:

- 'talk time only'
- 'talk time plus wrap-up'
- 'unspecified' (i.e. no assumptions about utilisation rate calculation can been made as there was insufficient information provided for this question. These were not used in the correlation calculations).

Further issues with analytical approach:

As can be seen, these factors make it difficult to judge how much difference in agent utilisation rates is due to the change in dialling modes. The following figures should be treated with appropriate caution, but our opinion is that there is value in these results as given the challenges involved, this is the best approach that could be taken.

It should also be noted that correlation does not necessarily imply causation, as there are more variables apart from dialler mode that could affect utilisation rates, and which themselves may encourage an outbound operation to use one mode over another. For example, respondents state that predictive dialling is more likely to be used than other modes in cases where data quality is low, and there have already been multiple attempts made to contact a customer, with the initial attempts made using IVM (interactive voice messaging), and high quality data being originally called in preview or progressive modes. As the quality and age of the data is different depending on the mode used, the fact that there are numerous variables changing should strike an even greater note of caution.



Baseline agent utilisation rate:

After categorisation, quantification and analysis of the data sets described above, the following results were found.

The overall agent utilisation rate (i.e. all responses, regardless of dialling mode and method of calculation) is 57%, or 34.2 minutes per hour (n=63).

- When considering only those respondents who consider talk-time, but not wrap-up in their calculations, this figure is 51% (30.6 minutes per hour) (n=31)
- For respondents who include both talk time and wrap-up in their calculations, the utilisation rate is 68% (40.8 minutes per hour) (n=11)
- Those respondents who did not specify how their utilisation rate was calculated, the utilisation rate was 59% (35.4 minutes per hour) (n=21).

In order to see whether and by how much dialling mode can be said to affect agent utilisation, the utilisation rate were calculated for respondents using particular dialling modes.

First, the agent utilisation rate was calculated for those respondents that had stated they used <u>only</u> predictive dialling (i.e. classified as 'pure predictive') (n=6).

Considering those respondents that used only talk-time (but not wrap-up) to calculate utilisation rates (n=4), it was found that respondents who used only predictive dialling had an average utilisation rate of 62% (37.2 minutes per hour), compared to the respondent base as a whole, who had a 51% utilisation rate. This implies a clear increase in agent utilisation time through predictive dialling.

When the use of predictive dialling is widened to include those who reported that it was used for the greatest amount of time of any dialler mode (n=30), the utilisation rate is 53% for respondents that calculate using talk time only and 73% for those who include wrap-up as well. These figures compare to the overall utilisation rates of 51% and 68% respectively. As such, while utilisation rates are still found to be higher, there is not such a clear difference between those using predictive dialling and the respondent base as a whole when the level of predictive dialling used is not 100%.

While the limited data and the difficulties in correlating confidently mean that analysis is limited, there is another finding worth noting. Analysis of the utilisation rates associated with responses where the progressive dialling mode was greatest (n=4) find those using only talk time in the calculation have a utilisation rate of 39% (23.4 minutes per hour), compared to predictive dialling's 53%, which seems to suggest a jump in utilisation when changing modes.

There is insufficient data to consider preview, manual or other automated dialling in any meaningful way.

The most effective way of gauging the extent to which dialling modes impact upon agent occupancy would be to use the same data set, in the same operation, at the same time of the day, altering only the dialling mode to test the effect of a single variable: clearly, this has not been possible in this case.



It is interesting to note that industry statistics on dialling mode efficiency suggest the following to be reasonable estimates⁴, *ceteris paribus*:

- manual dialling: 12 minutes of talk time per hour (20%)
- preview dialling: 18 minutes of talk time per hour (30%)
- progressive dialling: 25 to 35 minutes of talk time per hour (42% 58%)
- predictive dialling: 35 to 45 minutes of talk time per hour (58% 75%)

We should note that results of progressive and predictive talk times fall broadly within these categories.

⁴ ContactBabel estimates, based on secondary research with dialler manufacturers and primary ContactBabel research



ANSWER-MACHINE DETECTION (AMD)

Just over a quarter of respondents used AMD (n=94), and Table 26 below shows no clear pattern in terms of size band.

Figure 25: Use of AMD by contact centre size (n=94)

| Contact centre size | % of respondents using AMD | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Small (<50 seats) | 21% | |
| Medium (50-200 seats) | 32% | |
| Large (200+ seats) | 20% | |
| Unspecified | 26% | |
| Average | 26% | |

Table 27 below shows that cold sales activities were most likely to be carried out under AMD, but even here it was in a minority.

Figure 26: Use of AMD by outbound activity type (n=94)

| Activity type | % of respondents using AMD | |
|------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Cold sales | 44% | |
| Customer service | 33% | |
| Other outbound | 32% | |
| Warm sales | 27% | |
| Debt collection | 20% | |
| Customer surveys | 0% | |
| Average | 26% | |



AMD USAGE AND THE REASONING BEHIND IT

Even amongst those respondents using AMD (n=24), it is not the case that it is used all of the time, with only 6 from the 12 respondents that answered the question of what proportion of calls were made using AMD doing so. Those respondents that used AMD 100% of the time (n=6), two were involved in PPI / personal injury calling, two financial services, one utilities and one telecoms provider. Two respondents were small contact centres, three were medium and one large. Two were involved in cold sales / cold calling, two in debt collection, one in warm calling and one unspecified.

For the other 50% of respondents who answered this question, AMD tends to be turned off and on as volumes and working hours dictate, as well as taking feedback from dialler statistics into account.



Figure 27: % of calls using AMD (only respondents which use AMD) – (n=12)



Explanations of how respondents decide whether to use AMD are included below (n=12). Those included are verbatim where possible (these are put within quotation marks), with others being amended while retaining the overall sense:

- AMD is not used if the call is to a business account
- Our clients have a say whether AMD is used
- "One of the main reasons we purchased a predictive dialler is for this feature"
- "We use it for call backs that the customer has agreed"
- "We considered the regulations and measured the potential benefit of using the system and weighed this against the potential customer impact. There is minimal usage (of AMD)."⁵
- "Recommendation of the Dialler Manager, which is signed off by the Director of Collections/Director of Compliance".

The survey response below shows how AMD and IVM can be used in tandem to minimise false AMD abandonment:

"If we place an outbound call and within two seconds of line activation we believe it to be a machine we will play an IVM message to ask the recipient to confirm they are the person we are required to speak to, before giving the option to press one and enter the call centre. If the recipient does not press one then they are played the same information as an abandoned call so that the company name and identity has been provided".

In this way, there is a two-step process to determining whether there is a consumer or answer machine at the end of the line, and by giving the consumer the option to speak to an agent, AMD false positives should be reduced.

⁵ Note throughout that where respondents' comments have been quoted verbatim and refer to the regulatory regime they may not be reflective of the actual regulatory position.



AMD EFFECTIVENESS AND ACCURACY

Five questions were asked around AMD effectiveness and accuracy:

- 1. Does your AMD's effectiveness vary depending on whether you are calling a mobile or landline? If so, please describe how.
- 2. Do you estimate the accuracy of your AMD technology? If so, please explain your approach to estimating AMD accuracy.
- 3. If possible, what would you estimate your AMD's accuracy to have been for this activity/campaign?
- 4. If not already covered, please explain your approach to estimating AMD false positives, i.e. calls answered by consumers which are mistakenly classified as being answered by an answering machine.
- 5. Do you include the estimated AMD false positives in your overall abandoned call rate?
- 1. Does your AMD's effectiveness vary depending on whether you are calling a mobile or landline? If so, please describe how.

75% of respondents (n=12) that answer the question of whether AMD's effectiveness varies depending on whether they are calling a mobile or landline state that it does not matter.

2. Do you estimate the accuracy of your AMD technology? If so, please explain your approach to estimating AMD accuracy.

In terms of estimating the accuracy of the AMD, 58% respondents (n=12) test the accuracy by comparing agent or supervisor experience with what the dialler is telling them. For example, a dialler manager may listen to a substantial number of calls each month or quarter, and analyse how many are AMD false positives compared to what the system is stating. In this way, a more accurate view of the accuracy answer machine detection is given. Other respondents switch AMD on, but still pass all calls through to agents for a specific period. The agent marks each call as answer machine or not, and this is then compared to the AMD statistics to see if they match up.

25% respondents do not estimate AMD accuracy but rely on the systems to work.



3. If possible, what would you estimate your AMD's accuracy to have been for this activity/campaign?

When respondents (n=25) were asked to estimate AMD accuracy, results given were:



Figure 28: Estimation of AMD accuracy (n=25)

4. If not already covered, please explain your approach to estimating AMD false positives, i.e. calls answered by consumers which are mistakenly classified as being answered by an answering machine.

Respondents (n=9) explained their approach towards managing the risk of false positives through AMD accuracy:

- "we will play a very short message prior to the answer machine kicking in"
- "due to using in house network technology if we were to hit an activate voice mailbox then the call would be terminated in the network and would not be possible for the customer to answer call as it does not get that far through the network to establish a voice connection, eliminating the chance of a false positive"
- "the system is set to disconnect after small number of rings"
- "we conduct strict compliance checks and discuss the dropped call rate on a regular basis with our directors. We always aim for a figure of below 0.6% in a monthly period"



- "we have measured false positives and we will not allow it to exceed 3%"
- "We use an IVR (interactive voice response) within AMD so if we falsely detect a human they have the option to connect immediately to the contact centre"
- "We use IVM so the worst case is that the consumer hears a message saying who was calling, why, and a contact number to return the call."

5. Do you include the estimated AMD false positives in your overall abandoned call rate?

75% of respondents (n=12) include AMD false positives in their overall abandoned call rate. One explains:

• "estimated AMD false positives are factored into the dialler settings to reduce the maximum percentage of abandoned calls before they occur. The resulting number of abandoned calls can be added to the result set to achieve a true abandonment figure."

One respondent states that they do not include false positives in their abandoned call rate, as playing an IVR message triggered by AMD is the same as choosing to play an IVR to the customer (e.g. through a broadcast message), which being a collections agency, the respondent considered that they are allowed to do. If the customer chooses not to press 1, then that is their decision.



USE OF IVM

Interactive Voice Messaging (IVM) is used to send automated messages to consumers. IVM/IVR involves playing a recorded message which will offer the caller a chance to press a button on the phone to be connected to an agent or join a queue.

36% of respondents (n=111) used IVM, with the table below showing that medium and large operations are somewhat more likely to use IVM than smaller operations, but this was not solely used by these.

Figure 29: Use of IVM by contact centre size (n=111)

| Contact centre size | % of respondents using IVM |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Small (<50 seats) | 23% |
| Medium (50-200 seats) | 38% |
| Large (200+ seats) | 33% |
| Unspecified | 45% |
| Average | 36% |

As shown by Figure 30 below, debt collections operations were most likely to use IVM, in order to give as many people as possible the chance to be connected to an agent before the downstream collections process takes over: unlike calls to new customers (cold sales) for example, there is a limited time period for a debt to be settled at a specific stage before it is escalated. It is also seen as a way to clean lists and collect the easiest debts before the respondent switches dialling mode to predictive dialling.

Figure 30: Use of IVM by outbound activity type (n=111)

| Outbound activity type | % of respondents using IVM |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Debt collection | 48% |
| Warm sales | 27% |
| Cold sales | 16% |
| Customer surveys | 16% |
| Customer service | 0% |
| Average | 36% |



IVM USAGE AND THE REASONING BEHIND IT

How did IVM work?

Respondents were asked how IVM worked on their campaign or outbound activity, for example: was it used all the time?; what did the consumer hear? The following analysis is based on their responses (n=20).

By far the most prevalent use of IVM is where a recorded message is played that asks specifically by name for a particular customer, asking them to press 1 if it is them in order to be transferred to an agent. If no key presses are detected, a message will be left with the caller's name and telephone number, asking them to call back. This may be looped to avoid partial recordings being made. Businesses will ask the customer to identify themselves through their date of birth or account number before any information is shared with them.

75% of respondents indicate specifically that they will make sure an agent is available to take the call if 1 is pressed. Others state that any IVM returns that are abandoned (i.e. instances where a consumer, having pressed a key to be connected to an agent, does not have anyone available to answer) will not be called for another 72 hours at which point a live agent will be made available.

One respondent uses IVM customer satisfaction surveys once the sale has been completed.

Why did you use IVM in this case?

There are a number of reasons for using IVM which were put forward by the respondents (n=19) and some respondents gave more than one reason.

The most frequently-cited were that IVM is better for customers (n=9) and that it was an efficient and effective way for the contact centre to operate (n=7).

Specifically, IVM is seen by respondents as being better for customers. A summary of their views follows:

• IVM is seen as less intrusive than live outbound dialling. It can be personalised, and the customer can choose to interact with the company at that time, advise a better time to contact or simply hang up

For the debt collection industry, a significant proportion of customers that enter collections are able to make a payment to bring their account up to date, exiting the collections process within the same month. IVM enables companies to automate outbound interactions with this segment of customers and thus enable live call centre resources to focus on speaking to customers with more serious financial difficulties or more complex arrears queries, which is beneficial to both customer and company



Respondents considered that IVM's impact on effectiveness and efficiency to be positive because:

- it allows the opportunity to make contact with customers early with a lower FTE headcount requirement
- it is less expensive than employing agents and can be useful in small teams where predictive dialling is not possible due to high drop-rates.

IVM is also noted by respondents to be effective at cleaning data (n=4):

- when attempting a phone number for the first time, IVM helps cleanse the database of bad or dead numbers
- it provides an instant 'opt-out' process for removal of Do Not Contact numbers.

IVM is said by respondents to provide a method of handling answer machines (n=3):

• it allows customers to know the organisation is and press 1 to speak to them if falsely detected by AMD. One respondents said that 'blast messaging' (i.e. large-scale IVM usage) is used as part of their contact strategy, with the aim of lifting inbound volumes.

53% of respondents who used IVM (n=40) work in debt collection, and said that is seen as a particularly useful approach in the early stages of the process, to allow customers to advise that they have paid, to make a payment arrangement, to pay by card or to transfer to an agent to discuss their case. One respondent comments that this is the first thing that they will do with the record, to see what comes of this approach before they enter the predictive dialling phase.

While the number of respondents carrying out fraud prevention and credit card checking is relatively small, they said that IVM is a timely and rapid method of informing the customer that there is a potential problem.



TARGET CONNECTION TIMES AND ACTUAL HOLD TIMES

Respondents were asked when consumers/prospects selected to speak to a live agent after receiving an IVM call, what was:

- The TARGET connection time for this campaign/activity: i.e. the time from the consumer selecting to speak with an agent, to actually speaking with an agent (n=21)
- The ACTUAL average time per call that consumers were on hold (n=20).

If a customer receiving an IVM call indicates they wish to speak to an agent, survey responses show that target connection times have a mean of 15 seconds and a median of only 8 seconds. (n=21)

Responses showed that the actual average time per call that inbound IVM-prompted customers are on hold is a mean of 9 seconds, and a median of 8 seconds, so companies tend to exceed their target.

USE OF BROADCAST MESSAGING

Automated messaging or broadcast messages were defined in the survey as calls made with the sole purpose of making a recorded announcement, rather than to connect a consumer to a live agent immediately. Examples include a recorded sales or marketing message, or a recorded information message which is not an 'Agent Unavailable' message."

Analysis of respondents' answers (n=109) found that broadcast messaging is carried out by far more large operations than small. The main purpose of broadcast messaging was said to be to request the consumer to call back (6 from 10 respondents stated this), and may allow the customer to press a button to initiate an inbound call although most respondents simply provide a phone number.

Figure 31: Use of broadcast messaging by contact centre size (n=109)

| Contact centre size | % of respondents using broadcast messaging | |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Small (<50 seats) | 3% | |
| Medium (50-200 seats) | 12% | |
| Large (200+ seats) | 33% | |
| Unspecified | 25% | |
| Average | 17% | |



Respondents from 'Other' activity types were the greatest users of broadcast messaging by proportion.

Debt collection operations respondents used broadcast messaging to drive inbound calls volumes, as it is seen as another approach to take with customers who are difficult to contact directly.

Figure 32: Use of broadcast messaging by outbound activity type (n=109)

| Outbound activity type | % of respondents using broadcast messaging | |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Debt collection | 20% | |
| Warm sales | 16% | |
| Cold sales | 9% | |
| Customer surveys | 0% | |
| Customer service | 0% | |
| Other | 22% | |
| Average | 17% | |





USE OF CLI

PRESENTING OR WITHHOLDING A CLI?

Respondents were asked whether they presented or withheld their CLI (calling line identity) when making outbound calls. 107 respondents answered.

Calling line identity (CLI) was presented when calling by the majority of respondents in all size bands (93% in small operations, 100% in medium operations and 93% in large operations), and usually included in both the call and any message left.



Figure 33: Presentation of CLI by contact centre size (n=107)



7% of respondents did not present a CLI. There were too few responses (n=2) to discuss in detail why CLIs would be withheld.

A few respondents from cold sales operations (8% of responses from this sector) withheld the CLI, but the largest proportion (22%) was in the outbound 'other' section. There was only one usable response given as to why this was:

• We explain that we present a withheld number before calling to reduce the worry or unknown factor. Limited inbound lines means inbound is hosted in a third party cloud service, and all calls queue through this process. If we are unable to speak with the party at the first attempt, we leave a personalised message from the agent making the call, explaining when we will call back.



Figure 34: Presentation of CLI by outbound activity type (n=107)



RETURNABLE CLIS

Of 73 responses, 96% told us that CLIs were returnable (i.e. if a caller rings the CLI number, they are answered by an agent or message identifying the company). Debt collection operations were very likely to have a returned CLI call routed to an agent waiting to take a call, rather than a recorded message.



Figure 35: Return destination of CLI, by outbound activity type (n=73)

The cost to the business of providing a returnable CLI varied greatly, suggesting that respondents were not all measuring the same thing (n=51).

22% did not know the cost or were unable to quantify it, and 29% said that the cost was either nil or negligible (for example, either because very few calls are made to the number or because they make so many outbound calls that is included within the cost).

Of those 11 respondents that put a specific monthly cost on it, 7 respondents stated that the cost was in excess of £100 per month, and 4 said that it was less than £100 per month. 6 respondents preferred to express the cost in terms of pence per minute, ranging between 1ppm and 5ppm.



4 respondents specifically included the cost of having agents available to take these calls, whereas 10 respondents focused purely upon the telecoms cost, which makes comparing like with like very difficult.

5 respondents pointed out that having a returnable CLI was good practice and worth paying for, and more than paid for itself in terms of avoiding follow-up outbound calls, with 80% of these respondents being in debt collection. 2 respondents stated that this is not a technology based cost as such for them, as the biggest cost is to have an agent spending time listening to the business's answerphone and taking off the people who are requesting to be removed from the system (one respondent estimated the cost of the agent's time at around £100 per week).

Respondents were asked "When the CLI was called by consumer, what did it connect to?" The following diagram shows respondents' answers (n=72). It is segmented by whether the respondent provides only a recorded message with no option to speak directly to the agent ('Recorded', n=24), or who offer the opportunity to speak to an agent and immediately, or after an IVR session ('Live', n=48).

It can be seen that 75% of respondents that offered a recorded option (n=24) stated specifically that the announcement included an explanation of who the company was and why they were calling. Of those respondents who offered a recorded option and specified the message that consumers heard (n=20), 65% explicitly stated that they offered an opt out or removal option. Only 2 respondents used marketing messages on a returned CLI call. Those respondents offering the opportunity to speak to a live agent (n=48) treated a returned CLI call in the same way as they would a typical inbound call.



Figure 36: Customer experience after calling CLI (n=72)



LOCALISED & NON-GEOGRAPHIC CLIS

Respondents were asked how the CLI was presented to the parties being called. 72 respondents answered, with the following table showing that 78% of CLIs were presented as UK-based non-geographic numbers (e.g. 0843 or 0800 freephone) or as a local STD (standard trunk dialling) code relating to where the calls were actually made. 1% were presented as international numbers, 13% as UK-based STDs that did not correspond from the location from which the call was made, and 8% as UK-based STDs that corresponded to the office locations of the business, but not necessarily from the location from which the call was made.

There was no obvious pattern to this at an outbound activity level.



Figure 37: Localised presentation of CLI within the call, by outbound activity type (n=72)



Respondents were asked how CLIs were presented in circumstances when recorded messages were left for consumers (n=69), for example inviting them to call back or if the call was abandoned. 94% of respondents who left a message included a CLI / number for consumers to call, and 6% did not.

The findings for recorded CLI presentation are very similar to the previous chart, with 0843 being the most widespread (32%), with local STD following close behind (29%), and Freephone at 17%. No respondents left an international numbers, 7% left a UK-based STD that did not correspond from the location from which the call was made, and 9% left UK-based STDs that corresponded to the office locations of the business, but not necessarily from the location from which the call was made.



Figure 38: Localised presentation of CLI within the recorded message, by outbound activity type (n=69)



Respondents that answered the question (n=19) as to why their localised CLI did not correspond to the location from which the calls are being made gave various reasons:

- those in debt collection mentioned the improved answer rates that come from local calls which are important for their business
- some respondents emphasised that localised numbers could reassure the customer that the call is genuine and from within the UK
- it was mentioned that the business is currently testing 03 numbers but the success of this would depend on customers realising that this was just a local call cost
- one respondent presented a mobile number if calling a mobile or a number local to the number they were calling (e.g. calling a London based land line would result in 0208 or 0207 being displayed). All numbers if called back would route to their call centre to a live agent if they were open, or a message advising of opening hours. As well as increasing the pickup rate, this is the most cost effective way for clients to call them back (when research was carried out, the calling of freephones was not free to mobile users⁶, and 60% of their calls are to mobiles).

⁶ Ofcom policy comes into effect in July 2015. See <u>http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/telecoms/policy/non-geo-call-services/</u>



USE OF MULTIPLE CLIS

Respondents were asked if they used more than one CLI at an individual contact centre for the same campaign/outbound activity. If so, why was this, and how many CLIs did they use? 72 respondents answered the first question, and 36% use multiple CLIs from calls made from the same location).

The following table shows that half of respondents in the debt collection sector use multiple CLIs, with 40% of respondents carrying out customer surveys, 30% of warm sales respondents and 25% of cold sales respondents also using multiple CLIs.

Figure 39: Use of multiple CLIs by outbound activity type (n=72)

| Outbound activity type | % of respondents using multiple CLIs | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Debt collection | 50% | |
| Customer surveys | 40% | |
| Warm sales | 30% | |
| Cold sales | 25% | |
| Customer service | 0% | |
| Other | 17% | |
| Average | 36% | |

Respondents were asked why they used multiple CLIs, with 32 providing a response.

- The most popular answer given (n=9) was to enable better routing of return calls, whether to a department, specific campaign team within the contact centre, product brand or location.
- 5 respondents involved in debt collection stated that multiple CLIs gave a better answer rate, as the number was less likely to be recognised.
- 5 respondents stated that multiple CLIs were used in order to give a feel of localised service.
- 2 respondents changed CLIs depending on whether they were calling a landline or a mobile, to provide a better return calling option for customers.
- 1 respondent an outsourcer used a different CLI depending on which client they were calling on behalf of, so any return calls came through to the right team.



Respondents were asked how many CLIs they used (n=13):

- 5 respondents used 2 CLIs
- 3 respondents used between 3-5 CLIs
- 2 respondents used between 6-10 CLIs
- 3 respondents used more than 10 CLIs.

Of the 3 respondents using more than 10 CLIs (who stated they used 30, 500 and up to 1,000) CLIs, two were involved in debt collection and one in cold calling.



QUANTIFYING OUTBOUND

RING TIME AND CONNECTION TIME

MINIMUM RING TIME

For calls made using automated dialling with the intention of an agent speaking to a consumer (i.e. not just leaving a recorded message or broadcast call), respondents were asked what the minimum amount of ring time was before the call was terminated (n=72).

The mean average ring time industry-wide is 22 seconds, with cold selling tending to ring the longest and 'other' the shortest. It can be seen that the small sample size of some outbound activity types of skewing the mean results somewhat (particularly in the case of customer surveys), so median averages have been included as well for greater clarity. It seems fair to note that those involved in sales to new customers (i.e. cold calling) are more likely than other sectors to let calls ring longer.

| Outbound activity type | Mean minimum ring time before call termination (seconds) | Median minimum ring time before call termination (seconds) | Sample size |
|------------------------|--|--|----------------|
| Cold sales | 26 | 25 | 8 |
| Customer surveys | 23 | 15 | 3 |
| Debt collection | 22 | 24 | 3 |
| Customer service | 21 | 20 | 30 |
| Warm sales | 20 | 21 | 8 |
| Other | 17 | 18 | 3 |
| Average | 21.9 | 20.0 | 55 |

Figure 40: Minimum mean and median ring time before call termination, by outbound activity type (n=72)



Respondents were asked the reasons for setting this minimum ring time, with 53 answering the question. As an open question, it is difficult to quantify accurately, with some respondents giving multiple explanations (meaning the total may add up to 100%), but the most popular specific reasons given are:

- To ensure compliance with Ofcom regulations of ringing for a minimum of 15 seconds (49% of respondents mentioned this specifically)
- To allow customers enough time to answer the phone (30%)
- Experience has shown there is little or no incremental improvement in increasing the ring time past that used (25%)
- To stop ringing before voicemail picks up as AMD is not used (11%)
- To ring long enough to leave a message (8%)
- To free agents up to take or make extra calls (6%).

Specific verbatim reasons for the minimum ring time, taken from respondents, include:

- "call averages and historical maximum wait times indicate that ringing for longer than 20 seconds rarely results in much improvement"
- "ringing for only 15 seconds means that we can pick up more inbound calls as we are in a blended environment"
- "mobile phones respond better to 18 seconds"
- "we call for 20 seconds as this is conservative: we don't want to get complaints"
- "20 seconds is the highest before network answer machines kick in: we don't use AMD, so we want to avoid these"
- "we call for 26 seconds as we want to hit voicemail"
- "after 26 seconds, we do not get any increase in RPC (right party connections), but instead we get an increased amount of idle time"
- "some telecoms providers have a delay, so we add three seconds to the Ofcom 15 second minimum to ensure compliancy"
- "letting it ring for more than 18 seconds does not put the called party in a positive frame of mind, and many answer phones are set to answer at 19 or 20 seconds".



TARGET AND ACTUAL CONNECTION TIME

Respondents were asked about their target and actual times taken to connect a live agent with a consumer, with 42 respondents answering this question.

Once a consumer has answered the phone, 24% of respondents aimed for an immediate connection on customer pick-up, with 21% achieving this.

31% aimed for a sub-1 second answer, with 48% achieving this. (NB – 2 respondents answered in the 20+ seconds range, so these were discounted as they clearly are not answering based on the question that was actually asked).

Figure 41: Target and actual connection times (n=42) – length of time between call being answered and speaking to agent

| Seconds between connection and speaking | Target | Actual |
|---|--------|--------|
| Immediate / no delay | 24% | 21% |
| < 1 second | 31% | 48% |
| 1-2 seconds | 45% | 31% |

In the case of abandoned calls, respondents were asked the typical amount of time between the call being answered by consumer/the consumer starting to speak, and abandoned call message beginning to play.

The table below shows 86% of respondents answering this question (n=50) state that they achieve a response time of no more than 2 seconds between connecting a call and playing an abandoned call message.

Of the 8 respondents reporting connection times greater than 2 seconds, 2 are from small contact centres (13% of this data subset), 2 from medium operations (12%) and 4 from large contact centres (24%).

Figure 42: Time between call being answered and abandoned calls message played (n=50)

| Seconds between connection and message | % of respondents |
|---|------------------|
| Sub-second | 18% |
| 1-2 seconds | 68% |
| More than 2 seconds and less than 3 seconds | 6% |
| 3 seconds or more | 8% |



CALL VOLUMES

Respondents were asked to provide raw call volume data based around the categories of call outcomes shown in the following diagram. This proved difficult for many, as it involved gathering detailed data from the systems and diallers (sometimes held by third-parties), sometimes in categories which were not part of their standard management information, and which would often



have required respondents to spend significant time and effort on, outside their day-to-day duties.

Figure 43: Number of respondents providing information about specific call outcomes

| Call outcome | Call outcome code | Respondents providing information |
|---|----------------------|---|
| Calls placed | А | 55 |
| Calls answered/not answered | B1/B2 | 53 |
| Calls answered by consumer/answerphone | C1/C2 | 51 |
| Consumer hangs up before agent speaks | E1 | 43 |
| Consumer speaks to agent | E2 | 47 |
| No agent available - recorded message played | E3 | 44 |
| No agent available - consumer hangs up | E4 | 38 |
| No agent available - no message left | E5 | 38 |
| Silent call due to false AMD positive | D3 | 42 |
| Calls answered by answerphone – 'no agent available' message played | D4 | ۵ |



| Calls answered by answerphone - 'no agent available' message not played | D5 | 44 |
|---|----|----|
| | | |

CALLS ANSWERED / NOT ANSWERED (B1 & B2)

Respondents were asked, from the overall number of outbound calls made, how many / what proportion were answered, or not answered (n=53).

Of those respondents who answered this questions, slightly over half of calls made were answered. Those carrying out debt collection activities had the lowest answer rate and those carrying out customer service activities the highest.

Figure 44: Proportion of calls answered (B1), by outbound activity type (n=53)

| Outbound activity type | % of calls answered |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Customer service | 68% |
| Customer surveys | 65% |
| Warm sales | 60% |
| Cold sales | 59% |
| Debt collection | 44% |
| Other | 62% |
| Average | 53% |

Of those respondents that answered this question (n=53), those in large operations reported a lower proportion of calls answered (47%) compared to smaller operations which reported 60%.

Figure 45: Proportion of calls answered (B1), by size (n=53)

| Contact centre size | % of calls answered |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Small | 60% |
| Medium | 51% |
| Large | 47% |
| Undisclosed | 51% |
| Average | 53% |



ANSWERED BY CONSUMER / ANSWERPHONE (C1 & C2)

Of calls answered, responses showed that 49% were answered by a person and 51% by an answer machine / voicemail.

Figure 46: Of the calls that were answered, how many were by a consumer? (C1) by outbound activity type (n=51)

| Outbound activity type | % of calls answered, that were answered by a consumer |
|------------------------|---|
| Customer surveys | 85% |
| Customer service | 64% |
| Cold sales | 57% |
| Debt collection | 41% |
| Warm sales | 38% |
| Other | 65% |
| Average | 49% |

Figure 47: Of the calls that were answered, how many were by a consumer? (C1) by size (n=51)

| Contact centre size | % of calls answered, that were answered by a consumer |
|---------------------|---|
| Small | 51% |
| Medium | 53% |
| Large | 45% |
| Undisclosed | 32% |
| Average | 49% |



ANSWERED BY CONSUMER: SILENT CALLS DUE TO FALSE AMD POSITIVE (D3)

Figures 25 & 26 show that 26% of respondents reported using AMD, with those in cold sales most likely to do so.

Figure 48 below shows the proportion of calls that were believed to be false AMD positives, based on data from all respondents who provided sufficient call volume data (n=42), regardless of whether they themselves use AMD.

Based on data from all respondents who provided sufficient data, 0.4% of calls answered by consumers were believed to be AMD false positives. Although this figure has been segmented by activity type, caution should be applied as the number of respondents offering a figure is low.

Figure 48: Of the calls that were answered by a consumer, how many were silent due to AMD false positives? (D3) by outbound activity type (n=42) – ALL RESPONDENTS

| Outbound activity type | % of calls answered by a consumer, that were silent calls due to AMD false positives |
|------------------------|---|
| Warm sales | 1.2% |
| Debt collection | 0.4% |
| Cold sales | 0.3% |
| Customer service | 0.0% |
| Customer surveys | 0.0% |
| Other | 0.0% |
| Average | 0.4% |



Figure 49 below shows **only** those respondents that used AMD and were able to provide an estimate (n=9).

1.3% of all outbound calls are classed by AMD users as AMD false positives, but the base of data is small and should be treated with the appropriate caution.

Figure 49: Of the calls that were answered by a consumer, how many were silent due to AMD false positives? (D3) by outbound activity type (n=9) – ONLY AMD-USING RESPONDENTS

| Outbound activity type | % of calls answered by a consumer, that were silent calls due to AMD false positive |
|------------------------|--|
| Debt collection | 1.8% |
| Cold sales | 1.1% |
| Warm sales | 0.3% |
| Customer service | 0.0% |
| Customer surveys | n/a (no AMD used) |
| Other | n/a (no AMD used) |
| Average | 1.3% |



AGENT AVAILABLE: CONSUMER HANGS UP / CONSUMER SPEAKS TO AGENT (E1 & E2)

43 respondents answered the question "Of the overall number of outbound calls that were answered by a consumer, how many were hung up by the consumer even though an agent was available? How many resulted in the agent speaking with the consumer?"

1 in 8 of the calls that respondents reported were answered by a consumer were then hung up by that consumer, rejecting the call. This is far higher in those carrying out debt collection and cold sales activities.

Figure 50: Of the calls that were answered by a consumer, how many were hung up by the consumer when an agent was available? (E1) by outbound activity type (n=43)

| Outbound activity type | % of calls answered by a consumer, that were hung-up by a consumer when an agent was available |
|---------------------------|---|
| Debt collection | 22% |
| Cold sales | 10% |
| Warm sales | 2% |
| Customer surveys | 1% |
| Customer service | 0% |
| Other | 3% |
| Average | 12% |



AGENT NOT AVAILABLE: RECORDED MESSAGE PLAYED / MESSAGE NOT PLAYED / ABANDONED CALL (E3, E4 & E5)

This section looks at calls that were answered by consumers, but an agent was not available.

44 respondents answered the question "Of the overall number of outbound calls that were answered by a consumer, how many:

- were silent calls due to AMD false positives?"
- played a recorded "Agent Not Available" message?"
- did not play a recorded "Agent Not Available" message, as the consumer had hung up?"
- did not play a recorded "Agent Not Available" message, as the calling party abandoned the call?"

Of those respondents who answered this question, 1.1% of calls answered by the consumer had a recorded message played as no agent was available.

This figure is the highest for respondents carrying out debt collection and cold sales.

Figure 51: Of the calls that were answered by a consumer, how many had a recorded message is played as no agent was available (E3), by outbound activity type (n=44)

| Outbound activity type | % of calls that were answered by a consumer, and an agent is not available, where recorded message is played |
|------------------------|--|
| Debt collection | 1.7% |
| Cold sales | 0.9% |
| Warm sales | 0.8% |
| Customer surveys | 0.3% |
| Customer service | 0.0% |
| Other | 0.3% |
| Average | 1.1% |



38 respondents answered the question about the number of calls answered by a consumer which were hung up by the consumer before the recorded messages was played.

Respondents report that a tiny proportion of their consumer-answered calls are dropped (0.2% in total).

Figure 52: Of the calls that were answered by a consumer, how many did not have a recorded message played as the consumer hangs up (E4), by outbound activity type (n=38)

| Outbound activity type | % of calls that were answered by a consumer, and an agent is not available, where recorded message is not played as the consumer hangs up |
|------------------------|---|
| Cold sales | 0.56% |
| Customer service | 0.00% |
| Customer surveys | 0.00% |
| Debt collection | 0.03% |
| Warm sales | 0.00% |
| Other | 1.00% |
| Average | 0.20% |

38 respondents answered the question about the number of calls answered by a consumer which did not have a recorded message played despite an agent not being available.

Respondents state that that only 0.13% of calls answered by a consumer were terminated by the calling party as no agent was available, but without playing a recorded message to the consumer.

Figure 53: Of the calls that were answered by a consumer, how many were abandoned by calling party without leaving a recorded message (E5), by outbound activity type (n=38)

| Outbound activity type | % of calls that were answered by a consumer, and an agent is not available, where call is abandoned by calling party without leaving a recorded message |
|------------------------|---|
| Cold sales | 0.63% |
| Customer service | 0.00% |
| Customer surveys | 0.00% |
| Debt collection | 0.00% |
| Warm sales | 0.00% |
| Other | 0.25% |
| Average | 0.13% |



CALLS ANSWERED BY ANSWERPHONE: RECORDED MESSAGE PLAYED / NOT PLAYED (INCLUDES PASSED TO AGENT) (D4 & D5)

41 respondents answered the question "Of the overall number of outbound calls that were answered by an answerphone, how many had a recorded 'Agent Not Available' message played / did not have a recorded 'Agent Not Available' message played?".

15% of calls answered by an answer machine ended in a recorded message being left on the answer machine. Those carrying out debt collection and warm calling activities are the only activity types doing this from the respondent base.

Figure 54: Of the calls that were answered by an answerphone, where a recorded message is played (D4), by outbound activity type (n=41)

| Outbound activity type | % of calls that were answered by an answerphone, where a recorded message is played |
|------------------------|---|
| Debt collection | 25% |
| Warm sales | 17% |
| Cold sales | 0% |
| Customer service | 0% |
| Customer surveys | 0% |
| Other | 0% |
| Average | 15% |

It is interesting to note that 85% of respondents answering this question did not play a recorded message to an answerphone⁷. 80% stated that they did not use AMD and therefore the call will be passed through to an agent who would either leave a message or hang-up.

Of those respondents who answered this question who also used AMD (n=8), 3 left messages and 5 did not. All of those that did so worked in the debt collection sector.

⁷ A few respondents noted the diagram seemed not to show those calls that went through to an answer machine, but which was then passed to an agent (as AMD was not used). These figures should have been put within variable D5, and where these comments were made by respondents along with raw data, the appropriate data has been added to this variable.


IVM AND BROADCAST VOLUMES

From the very small number of respondents which were able to provide information on the volume of IVM calls (n=7), it is reported the 27% of calls were answered by consumer, and 73% by an answerphone. Figure 30 shows that IVM is used more by respondents in debt collection, which includes situations where the consumer is less likely to answer the call (Figure 44 finds that debt collection respondents report the lowest levels of calls being answered).

Of the calls that were answered by consumer, a mean average of 37% were reported to result in the customer speaking to an agent. It should be noted however that even within a small dataset, responses ranged from 4% to 100%, so relying upon a mean average may be misleading.

When analysing the volume of automated broadcast messages (n=17), only five respondents state that they use this. There was no real pattern from such a small sample that could be drawn out. Figures 31 and 32 show that large contact centre operations and those operating debt collection are most likely to use broadcast messages.



ABANDONED CALL RATES AND METHOD OF CALCULATION

Respondents were asked to explain their methods for calculating their abandoned call rate (ACR), and 40 provided responses to this question.

There was a great deal of variation in terms of explanation, detail and in some cases, the actual understanding of the question. The following table quantifies how respondents stated that they calculated their ACR.

Figure 55: Abandoned call rate calculation – respondents' methods (n=45)

| Abandoned call rate calculation options | Number of respondents |
|---|-----------------------|
| Respondents using Ofcom 2010 formula to calculate ACR | 18 |
| Respondents using other formula to calculate ACR | 17 |
| Respondents using a third-party to manage and calculate ACR | 2 |
| Do not calculate | 11 |

Of the 45 respondents that answered the question about their ACR calculation:

- 18 respondents stated that they used the 2010 Ofcom⁸ formula for calculating abandoned call rates, depending on whether or not AMD is used, and the Ofcom/DMA methods are mentioned by name in a number of cases.
- 17 respondents used alternative formulae, which include the older 2008 version of the Ofcom calculation⁹ (which included calls answered by machines that were then passed to live agents).
- 2 respondents used a third-party (their outbound automation cloud provider) to manage and calculate their ACR, as part of the management of their solution.
- 8 respondents did not calculate ACR, as they stated that they did not use predictive dialling.

⁸ http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/silentcalls/statement/silentcalls.pdf

⁹ As detailed in <u>http://www.dma.org.uk/uploads/dma_acr_54059191ce551.pdf</u>



Calculated abandoned call rate

Using relevant call volume data provided by respondents as detailed in figures 44 – 54 (n=30) and the current Ofcom-approved abandonment call rate calculation methods (2010) below, abandoned call rates for respondents were calculated using the call outcome diagram p.65 to describe the relevant categories of call.

Ofcom (2010) ACR calculation method - without AMD:

D2 / (D1 + D2)

Ofcom (2010) ACR calculation method - with AMD:

(D2 + D3) / (D1 + D2 +D3)

Using these calculations, the data provided by respondents (n=30) show the following abandoned call rates for these respondents. The low numbers of the respondents that have provided all of the data required means caution should be applied, especially in the case of AMD users:

Figure 56: Average abandoned calls rates (calculated) where no AMD used, (mean/median/1st & 3rd quartiles) n=22

| | Calculated abandoned call rate |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 st quartile | 0.27% |
| Median | 1.28% |
| 3 rd quartile | 3.63% |
| Mean | 2.22% |
| High | 8.33% |
| Low | 0.00% |

Figure 57: Average abandoned calls rates (calculated), where AMD used, (mean/median/1st & 3rd quartiles) n=8

| | Calculated abandoned call rate |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 st quartile | 0.18% |
| Median | 1.93% |
| 3 rd quartile | 2.89% |
| Mean | 2.69% |
| High | 11.50% |
| Low | 0.00% |



IMPACT OF POTENTIAL CHANGES

In order to understand the effects of any change in policy, respondents were asked for their opinions on how alterations in the use of various technologies, target metrics or business processes would impact their operations, including:

- Abandoned call rates
- AMD (answer-machine detection)
- IVM (interactive voice messaging)
- Minimum ring times / maximum connection time to an agent
- Rotating and localised CLI usage.

ABANDONED CALL RATE CHANGES

Respondents that expressed a definite quantifiable view (n=21) on how reducing the maximum abandoned call rate from 3% to 2% would affect their agent utilisation rates were unanimous in stating that it would be negative. (Figures show expected percent decline, **not** percentage points decline).

The mean expected decline in the agent utilisation rate was 18%, with the median being 14%.

Figure 58: Expected effect on agent utilisation rates of decreasing the maximum abandoned call rate from 3% to 2% (n=21)





65% of the respondents that gave a quantified estimate and that also answered the question on how confident they felt about this (n=20) stated that they were confident, with 35% being neutral and no respondent being unsure.

41% of the respondents that believed a change in maximum call abandonment rates would affect agent utilisation and who also provided answers about what they had found when they had altered their ACR previously (n=22) stated that they currently aim for a smaller abandonment rate than 3% in order to allow a margin for error or buffer, and in cases where data quality is high any abandon could cost a sale. Internally lower thresholds allow for contingency, campaign spikes and 3 respondents specifically noted that the dialler may not always be capable of keeping them under 3% in all cases.

8 respondents note that any decrease in the 3% would mean that the buffer has to change, which would severely impact upon them. 8 respondents note that they are already running to a tight margin, and reducing the abandonment rate could result in making a loss instead of a profit.

27 respondents note that they have actually changed the maximum target call abandonment rate for specific reasons including (NB - non-verbatim):

- various clients of outsourcers have their own reasons choosing to operate with reduced abandonment thresholds so they can compare like with like
- one operation recently reduced their ACR from 2% to 1.5%, and found there was a slight impact to agent wait times between calls, that increased from 17 seconds to 23 seconds on average
- when reducing target abandonment rates at certain times of the day, one respondent noted a drop in connection rates and agent utilisation, and an increase in wait time
- when a respondent reduced the outbound drop rates, the wait times for debt collectors increased, as a collector spends more time waiting for calls and less time talking with customers
- one respondent varied their ACR target between 1% and 2.0%, and noticed that agent utilisation is increased when the ACR is higher
- one respondent notes that they reduced their target maximum abandonment rate from 3% to 2% as the level of complaints they were receiving regarding silent calls went up at the higher level.



AMD CHANGES

Respondents were asked what they believed the effect on the agent utilisation would have been had they not used AMD, however there were too few realistic quantitative assessments to analyse.

One respondent pointed out the difference between utilisation and productivity, noting that utilisation was not necessarily the key aim:

• "Utilisation actually goes up (without AMD) as the agents are fielding more calls - however, productivity decreases as your agents are now dealing with calls they can't sell to. The amount lost is difficult to predict other than it definitely be a negative impact".

When asked, 12 respondents stated what their experience had been when they had restricted or switched AMD off and on to see what the impact was (verbatim comments):

- "Agent morale and performance dropped to the extent we had to switch this back on after a few hours"
- "Not switched off but saw significant improvement in contact rate with AMD in place"
- "Volumes of numbers dialled were lower when AMD was switched off: we use AMD for very brief spells of the day up to 30 minutes to dial more accounts at better contact periods"
- "We do notice an improvement in contact rates over the hour's dialling (with AMD)"
- "We run mainly with AMD off. At the point Ofcom clarified the AMD rules, there was a 23% productivity loss in turning off AMD. Other changes and limited AMD usage has probably brought the loss back to circa 10%"
- "When the change was first announced by Ofcom to revisit the AMD rules we did turn off the function completely for a short trial (days not weeks), and as expected "talk time" went up across the call centres but % of time spent talking to an actual person reduced significantly due to all the answer machines being presented to the agents. With us aiming to do our calls primarily in the evenings, this does help reduce the number of answer machines hit - however it doesn't completely remove the chance"
- "with 'bad penny' (i.e. low quality) data, AMD needs to be on"
- "(AMD on) is much better for the consumer as it allows personalised service."



Respondents that used AMD were asked whether their agent utilisation rate would be changed if the maximum abandoned call rate remained at 3%, but the generation of silent calls via false AMD positives was not allowed, 5 said it would change agent utilisation rate and 3 said it would not. (n=8)

Of the respondents who said their agent utilisation rate would change, (n=5), 2 were unsure of what the rate change would be, and 2 assumed that AMD would be banned in this scenario.

The other respondent stated:

In order to answer this question, we would need to understand what the proposal was to avoid silent calls generated through the use of AMD solutions. It is not possible to be assured that no AMD solution will provide some false positive results, and thus on AMD selected calls, would the dialler be permitted to play an informative message, as it does with all abandoned calls? Would this informative message be allowed to ask the recipient (should they be human and not an answerphone) to (e.g.) press 1 to speak to an agent? If the suggestion is that AMD would not be permitted if false positives could not be 100% eradicated, then productivity would be adversely affected. If there was an approved method of coping with false positives to avoid silent calls then we do not feel productivity would be reduced and would fully support the proposal.



IVM CHANGES

Figure 29 shows that 36% of respondents use IVM, however only 10 respondents have answered the question "If you had not used IVM in your previous campaign/ongoing outbound activity, what would you expect your agent utilisation to have been?". The 3 respondents that provided expected agent utilisation rates were inconsistent with each other (e.g. one respondent's utilisation rate was expected to increase, one to decrease and one to stay the same), so no firm conclusion can be reached.

Although unquantified, two respondents said that the difference in agent utilisation will be negligible, 1 did not know and 4 said it will decrease (verbatim responses):

- "On current utilisation we would require an additional 40 FTE at a cost of £52,840 per month. These agents would increase our overall idle time and have a negative impact on overall productivity as we would have to ensure our compliance was still within the set tolerances outlined in the Ofcom guidelines"
- "Agent utilisation would fall due to the increase in invalid telephone numbers included within the traditional dialler campaigns. It would take the dialler longer to make a connection therefore agent wait times would increase"
- "IVM in our business is used as a supporting function of AMD detection (i.e. a message is played if an answerphone is believed to be present, offering the option to connect directly to an agent if it is actually a consumer on the phone). Therefore the direct impact is minimal, however the downstream effect on consumers is fairly significant".



RING TIME/CONNECTION TIME CHANGES

Respondents were asked to comment what they believe would happen if the minimum amount of time that they ring a consumer before terminating the call was increased to 20 seconds (n=52).

67% of respondents said that it would make no difference to them, as they were already calling for at least 20 seconds. One respondent supported the suggestion stating:

• "Of all the suggested changes - this would probably have the least (negative) impact. I'm actually in favour of this if it's a suggested change".

However, 25% of respondents stated that increasing the minimum ring time to 20 seconds would make a negative impact upon their business (verbatim comments):

- "As we ring for longer than 20 seconds today, there would be no material impact. However where there are capacity concerns i.e. too many records or too few agents, one piece of flexibility would be to reduce the calling time to e.g. 18 seconds, so there could be some ongoing impact if this option were taken away from us"
- "This would increase answer machine rates, which apart from being bad for productivity, would also 'lock out' the record with regard to redial rules"
- "In the case of people with mobile phones, we will hit the answerphone long before 20 seconds. It could also result in people complaining that they are being stalked as they will wonder why people are ringing for so long and when they eventually answer the phone they will be shocked that it is a telemarketing company as they sort of thought it was an emergency"
- "This would create a massive increase in connections to answerphones which would take up agent time and thus reduce connections to live customers, as agents would waste a lot of time processing answerphone messages"
- "Our agent wait time would increase, as we would have to wait for all the no answers, and we would also connect to more answer machines. As we are a blended operation, if we are holding lines up longer to terminate the extra answer machines or wait for no answers, it will cause the inbound customers who actually want to talk to us to have to wait longer for their call to be answered"
- "This would have an adverse effect in efficiency and increase the number of unwelcome calls to consumers. Any call still ringing has an opportunity to be answered and thus agents have to be held in a waiting state in anticipation of those calls being answered. The dialling platform thus would slow and thus decrease efficiency. As a service provider, we monitor the number of positive and negative interactions achieved on the connected calls, and there is a definite increase in negative call outcomes where the dialling duration (before answer) has been greater than 19 seconds, and a negligible number of positive outcomes where the dialling duration (before answer) has been greater than 18 seconds. The average dialling duration for all connected calls is generally between 9 and 11 seconds"



• "We have recently undertaken a test to increase the minimum amount of time from 16 seconds (our current policy) to 20 seconds and a high-level summary shows that the volume of dials would decrease but that that it did not have any impact on our dropped calls".

Respondents were then asked their opinion of how things would change if a call (which is answered by consumer and not an abandoned call) had to be connected to an agent who must speak to the consumer within two seconds (n=43).

63% of respondents stated that this is not a problem for them as they either did this already or did not use predictive dialling. 2 respondents felt that this would actually improve the customer experience, and that an excessive delay was a result of driving agent productivity in lieu of customer quality.

However, 26% of respondents answering this question were concerned about how this might affect their operations. Verbatim comments about the negative impact of this change on AMD usage include:

- "Guaranteeing that the agent must speak within 2 seconds would mean that calls would need to be passed to agents more quickly. If AMD were in use, this would impact the accuracy as less time would be available to make a decision and would adversely impact productivity."
- "It would not be possible to utilise currently dialler technology if Ofcom were to reduce this metric, and it would certainly render current AMD technology obsolete"
- "This would effectively rule out AMD, so impact would be the same as not using AMD"
- "We do believe it would kill the use of IVM calling, and also existing forms of AMD, as we believe it is not possible to achieve any acceptable level of accuracy using cadence technology in under two seconds"
- "We would have to review our approach to AMD, as if we think the active line is a customer then we would route the call to an agent and we would continue our conversation. However any suspected answer machine would receive the IVM message giving the option to connect to an agent within two seconds which would seem not to comply with the approach suggested".



Verbatim comments about the negative impact on agent behaviour and business processes include:

- "You couldn't actually do this. You could only ensure the consumer is delivered to an agent within 2 seconds. It is human behaviour that would then determine if they actually started to speak at 2 seconds. This would be virtually impossible to manage and police."
- "It would require a massive investment in time and technology to police agents conforming to this, as it is human error and not a technology-related matter, as the dialler passes the call to agent within 2 seconds of customer salutation"
- "I am not sure you can guarantee that an agent actually speaks it could be that the customer is speaking at the point of connect"
- "the customer's verbal salutation could last longer than 2 seconds and it would be rude to interrupt them"
- "This would cause unease within the business, as this is normally something outside the control of the operational teams. This requires the dialler and functionality of the server and voice platforms to be maintained at optimum levels: should this slip to 3 seconds, the impact would need to be measured through the proposed controls and the corrective action needed"

There was one verbatim comment on telecoms issues:

• "(The suggested change) should not make a huge difference (to the operation), but connection speeds are never something that the telco will guarantee however".

There was one verbatim comment specifically upon the impact of this suggested change to IVM:

• "On predictive dial usage this would not impact our business. However, the question does not specify if predictive or IVM dialling. If referring to IVM dialling then this would have a significant impact on our business in terms of resource numbers & agents required."



CLI CHANGES

Respondents were asked to comment how they would expect the ongoing outbound activity or campaigns to be affected if they could not have used rotating CLIs for their outbound activity (n=17).

While 18% of respondents do not believe that this would have any major impact upon either their business or their customers, 76% feel this would negatively impact business, and the following verbatim comments state this:

(NB: Many respondents have taken 'rotating CLIs' to mean the same as 'multiple CLIs', so this analysis should be read within this context).

- "This would cause confusion to consumers, and further delays in transfer across departments"
- "more angry ranting and inaccurate information being posted on "WhoCallsMe". Call blocks may increase but these are increasing anyway"
- "Not using a GSM gateway would restrict our ability to cost effectively contact customers on mobile phones and reduce connections as customers may be less likely to answer. Fewer connections will lead to a substantial increase in customer indebtedness"
- "Our dialler is used to generate contact, which acts as an opportunity for the customer to
 engage with us on their personal matters and stop future communication attempts. Rotating
 CLI increases the chance of contact, but from a transparency perspective all numbers are
 listed on our website"
- "Rotating CLI's would not affect us. We do however present multiple CLIs per campaign, based on geographic location of the customer: the CLI each customer is shown will not subsequently rotate and they all terminate to the same IVR. Anything affecting our ability to do this would significantly reduce the volume of customers who call us back and therefore have a very high financial impact and detrimental customer impact as they will potentially move further down the debt collection process"
- "Many consumers do not engage readily on our calls (debt collection) which are all legitimate. In a world where caller ID is becoming easier to access, this is already driving down response rates and meaning that we cannot assist customers"
- "The cost associated with outbound dialling would increase significantly as it would prohibit the use of mobile gateways and thus increase call charges. Customers returning missed calls received on their mobile phones would also be charged more to make a return phone call"
- "This would cause great issues in campaign management, line utilization, costs and also customer experience due to not being able to clearly segment lists"
- "We would have to monitor the returned calls to establish what client they relate to".



Respondents were also asked what effect not been able to use a localised CLIs might have. There were very few responses to this question (n=4), but they included (verbatim):

- "A drop in connect rates and clients not having a cost-effective way to call us back. This may also result in non-compliance with Ofcom regulations"
- "We only use 08 or 03 numbers so would be unaffected".



GENERAL DISCUSSIONS AND OPINIONS

DRIVERS OF SILENT AND ABANDONED CALLS

Respondents were asked to give their opinions and views on what they thought were the main drivers of silent and abandoned calls (n=55).

As many of the 55 responses received were very detailed and contained multiple reasons, six toplevel categorisation of drivers were created as shown below (with mentions of each type placed in order of frequency):

- poor dialler management (26 mentions)
- rogue or offshore operators (16 mentions)
- overly aggressive business techniques (14 mentions)
- agent behaviour (10 mentions)
- lack of clear regulation or enforcement (5 mentions)
- poor data (5 mentions).

Looking at these in further depth, a selection of verbatim opinions from respondents include:

Poor dialler management

- "Silent calls should not happen in this day and age as technologies have advanced to the point where they should not occur. Abandoned calls can happen as a result of dialler pacing being too fast or agents spending too long in unavailable time but with appropriate monitoring the risks are greatly reduced"
- "Dialling too aggressively and not adjusting your dialler rules in line with data performance"
- "Tendency to see 3% as a goal to achieve, not a threshold to stay as far under as possible"
- "System issues can sometimes cause a lack of available operators to pass calls through to at short notice and thus the dialler has to abandon them"
- "Small campaigns often use very low volumes of data within a much wider agent resource pool, this creates higher levels of sub-campaign silent call rates. An example of this would be a campaign that is only dialled at a certain time of day for a short period with extremely low (100 records or less) volumes of data, this means 3 dropped calls could breach the overall percentage for that day for that campaign"
- "A certain number of perceived silent calls are generated by the use of AMD where the system is not connecting the consumer to the agent within 2 seconds. We estimate that 20% of calls can take up to 4 seconds to connect to an agent using this technology"
- "Not warming the dialler up in preview mode would potentially cause dropped calls at the start of shift due to mass logging in of the resource pool"



• "Overuse of AMD equipment especially when the false positive calculation has not been accurately determined."

Rogue operators

- "Companies with poor or simply inadequate telephony controls in place, or who blatantly ignore Ofcom regulations. My supposition would be that most customer detriment comes from the latter who employ non-UK or withhold CLI for spurious marketing reasons and who appear to disregard regulations altogether. All businesses in our sector (debt collection) take our responsibilities seriously and have sufficient safeguards in place to monitor"
- "Companies having the ability to dial from a withheld number and therefore if a silent or abandoned call occurs without naming the caller / return number then the complaint can never be logged. Even though telco companies can track who these "withheld" callers are which would help with complaint levels, they are very reluctant to give this information out (for DPA reasons, I believe)"
- "The main drivers behind both silent and abandoned calls are rogue call centres ignoring the Ofcom guidelines and attempting to operate 'under the radar'."

Offshore operators

- "We believe there is significant impact caused by overseas contact centres that are not regulated and subject to Ofcom's policy. The main driver for this is likely to be excessive pacing in predictive mode which when coupled with lack of presented CLI creates significant consumer detriment that is impossible to police"
- "Cold calling campaigns, mainly operating outside of the UK or through an IVM service often data collection campaigns or free incentives (i.e. loft insulation, PPI claims or accident claims, industrial injury claims)"
- "Offshore call centres trying to sell something or pretending to be Microsoft or generally phishing. The dodgier end of outbound call centres who give the rest of us a bad name as they don't leave CLIs and then companies like us who do, get the grief"
- "The main drivers of silent and abandoned calls are offshore call centres who have no legal obligation to follow Ofcom's policy to tackle silent and abandoned calls. Increasing the restrictions placed on UK based call centres is likely to result in an increase in businesses taking their call centres offshore and dialling into the UK, making things worse."



Overly aggressive business techniques

- "Aggressive cold calling/marketing campaigns that are judged on volumes or attempts per day"
- "Call rooms driven solely on an agent productivity basis, with insufficient agent availability for the calls being made. The remuneration of the centre: if it is paid on results rather than DMCs/RPCs or agent hours etc., the risk is that the focus changes from results to throughput and as soon as that happens, a few silent calls to increase agent productivity is appealing"
- "Companies being driven by volume targets and not the outcome of the customer"
- "In all honesty PPI and aggressive telemarketing calls are the issue. In terms of what we offer as an outsourcer to our clients, we are responsible and take Ofcom regulations very seriously".

Agent behaviour

- "From my personal experience abandon calls are primarily attributable to agent activity i.e. not adhering to training for correct procedures and when logging out for breaks"
- "Lack of constant monitoring and agents going unavailable"
- "Poor line management and patchy outbound quality monitoring allows incentivised staff to 'cheat the system'"
- "Agents not logging out correctly: closing the application rather than requesting that the dialler logs the team off means that there isn't enough time for the dialler algorithm to catch up."

Lack of clear regulation or enforcement

• "The communication channel between business and the regulator (Ofcom) is very restrictive, and companies almost wait for bad news before a reaction occurs. If a more transparent approach to complaints and self-certification across dialler technology was implemented this would help companies understand their responsibility and proactively improve on their platform before the complaints occur."

Poor data

 "Data batches that yield an extremely low contact rate (potentially due to the period of time since consent was given, or the permission box not being read by the consumer/being long winded) and therefore require an extremely large volume of calls to generate a sufficient contact rate to enable new business to be generated."



CHARACTERISTICS OF ACTIVITY THAT WOULD REDUCE SILENT / ABANDONED CALLS

Leading on from the question about the main drivers of silent and abandoned calls, respondents were asked to comment on what they believed were the most important characteristics of a campaign or ongoing outbound activity that would minimise silent and abandoned calls (n=41).

Of the 41 who responded, comments on the most important characteristics can be categorised into the following groups (most popular first, multiple comments per respondent are split into categories):

- improved dialler system management (24 comments)
- better understanding and management of data and calling periods (13 comments)
- agent scheduling and behaviour (10 comments)
- improved management practices (9 comments).

In more depth, verbatim responses include:

Improved dialler system management

- An effective call centre is not going to intentionally make silent calls as this is wasting a potential lead/sale/collections opportunity. Proactively manage dialling campaigns by ensuring a member of staff is responsible for the operation of dialler campaigns at all times to ensure the best results for both consumers and businesses
- Constant monitoring and agent discipline
- Ensure overdial settings are only used where dialler managers are confident that the creation of higher connect rates can be sustained by the agent population. Try to minimise server outages through effective housekeeping and server management functions. Try to dial smaller campaigns in preview mode where possible. Warm the dialler in preview mode at the start of a predictive shift to ensure that dropped calls are low from the offset and should there be no further activity for any reason, the % would be under threshold throughout the shift rather than trying to recover this at the end of a shift
- Knowledgeable dialler administrators poor settings will lead to abandoned and silent calls lack of knowledge of the pertinent regulations management that look at 'penetration' as a KPI, when really effective customer contact is the main driver.
- Understanding your platform is crucial. If you're running an outbound only campaign then contact rate, agent level and AMD configuration can normally allow you to build up a good algorithm for dialling. However when you introduce a blended environment (with inbound) then agent levels become more important as now we have to balance the outbound abandon rate within the regulation whilst answering the inbound calls. Introducing minimum agent volumes to campaigns can normally help manage shortfalls on blended campaigns



• Using a reliable dialler with levels set low enough so it cuts out before allowing nuisance calls to get too high, allowing investigations into why they are being made at all to be carried out before continuing.

Better understanding and management of data and calling periods:

- Agreed timeslots for calling agreed at point of sale or service agreement. Remove outbound bonus / incentives that link to company profits, link instead to abandoned and service quality targets
- Best Time To Dial metrics
- Specific and target-driven campaigns with segmented data that has been analysed using right time to call analysis
- Stable technical environment and accurate call classification
- Targeted call approach on time of day, i.e. less dialling in peak answer periods
- Understand your customer or prospect list to know their preference for contact. Ensure you have permission to call for the purpose of the intended call and know your customer's preferences for call/availability times. Provide customers with a second option for contact
- Varying data quality could lead an organisation to use pacing in order to increase agent utilisation. Peaks and troughs in data quality could explain some abandoned calls.

Agent scheduling and behaviour

- Better technology to avoid unnecessary dropped calls caused by agent behaviour
- Ensuring the staff to volume of work ratio is correct.

Improved management practices

• We believe the key is to proactively manage campaigns using dedicated staff who are trained to understand the impact of their actions in terms of compliance and achievement of a firms contact desired strategy. It is important that these staff have a holistic view of the call centre (inbound activity levels, outbound activity levels) and can ensure that adequate staffing levels are maintained and dialler pacing is set at an appropriate level to the resources available. It is vital that relevant control checks and analytical capability exists within the operation to ensure compliance and effectiveness of outbound campaigns.



There are also some interesting, but less easily categorised comments made by respondents:

• We feel strongly that any reduction to the abandon rate target will not fix silent calls which is the real issue here. The elements of distress should be broken down: there are two main elements to the abandon target 1) AMD false positives and 2) overdialling, causing abandoned calls.

Abandoned calls don't (or at least shouldn't cause any harm or distress), as a carefully thought out message should be played in these cases, and perhaps some further clarity from Ofcom about this message may help. The other element is false positives, and the only way to reduce those would be to enforce AMD removal

• Enforcement of the 2 second rule (including where AMD is used) would minimise the reports of silent calls, thus eradicating up to 4 seconds of silence at the beginning of the call. If a dialler using AMD was required to use IVM to ask the called party if they would like to press 1 to speak to an Agent wherever AMD determined the called party was an answerphone, any false positives would both provide the called party with information rather than a silent call, and give the called party an opportunity to speak to someone. If the dialler were correct, no DTMF tone would be played by the answerphone and thus the call could be safely terminated.

The overwhelming indication of a contact centre not complying with the regulations and thus creating silent calls is undoubtedly those campaigns where the CLI is withheld or a false CLI presented. This indicates a contact centre that wishes to remain anonymous and prevent complaints, presumably as the silent and otherwise nuisance calls that they are generating would result in complaints

- Warm leads with recent consent/current customers, demographic targeting within the contact strategy, AMD to be turned off and agent training
- Not all outbound activity is the same: have different rules for different industries.



MOST APPROPRIATE WAYS TO REDUCE SILENT AND ABANDONED CALLS

Respondents were asked what they believed were the most appropriate ways to tackle silent and abandoned calls (n=46).

The 46 responses can be categorised (in order of popularity) in the following ways:

- fines and punitive action for rogue traders, including offshore (14 mentions)
- changes to regulation (14 mentions)
- operational improvements (12 mentions)
- technological improvements (5 mentions)
- education (4 mentions).

In more depth, verbatim responses include:

Fines and punitive action for rogue traders, including offshore:

- "Explore preventing 'rogue' operations such as those from abroad, 'PPI' and accident spammers"
- "Tackle the PPI and overseas companies that drag the rest of the UK call centre companies down"
- "Ban automated dialling done from outside the UK and improve tracking of non-compliant companies (those who withhold or spoof CLI)"
- "Plant monitored telephone numbers into the industry, and use aggressive tracing and investigation of any contact centre calls where the contact centre has failed to present a valid identifiable CLI Look into the overseas call centres that are employed to call the UK and devise a method to tackle them first"
- "Current Ofcom dialler legislation seems appropriate, but many call centres do not leave CLI's or do not train operatives to answer calls properly (e.g. they have their mute on) and so are therefore flouting this legislation. Clamp down more on the ones breaking the regulations"
- "Fine every company that fails, insist every company has a CLI presented. Also all providers of landlines should have to provide CLI free of charge so we can see the number of who is calling and also have the number to report companies who are in breach of Ofcom / ICTIS"
- "Ofcom need to target rogue traders who do not adhere to Ofcom's guidelines especially those who withhold their CLIs so they are non-traceable."
- "If a company is persistently exceeding the abandoned call limit then they have no respect for the regulations and should be made an example of and fined the full £2million for non-



compliance - if this means a company is made bankrupt, then tough, I believe this will send a wake-up call"

- "Lower the targets. Force companies even international companies to publish their figures"
- "Penalise not just with fines, but have the ability to prevent companies from using outbound for set time periods. Time periods increase say from 1 month to 3 months to annual then permanent ban. Outbound calls to UK residents should be made only from within the UK"
- "Require reporting of outbound calls as part of annual report. Make it public name and shame"
- "Target the companies who are abusing this. The regulation is fine as it is."

Changes to regulation:

- "A lower tolerance approach on silent calls as these cause more harm to consumers, allowing only a very slight margin of error. Abandoned calls cause fewer problems as there should be a recorded information message with a number to call back on in the event of an occurrence. Leaving the 3% tolerance here, but with stiffer criteria around breaches would tackle persistent misusers"
- "All calls being made to a UK based telephone number should be subject to the same legislation irrelevant of where the call was generated"
- "I believe OFCOM are probably doing the best they can do given the sheer volume of companies using diallers in the UK"
- "I think it is right that we cannot try to contact the consumer again for 72 hours, but give them the option to contact us if needed (particularly the case with debt collectors, otherwise there is a risk of unnecessary escalation)"
- "Ofcom should carry out spot checks and regular audits. Dialler suppliers should ensure that their platforms are Ofcom complaint"
- "Random checks on companies who use diallers to ensure they are fully complying with all regulations"
- "Reduction of ability to cold call customers e.g. clearer consent/indication of exactly how the details will be used i.e. "Your details will be passed onto X, Y, Z is this OK?" Consent to 3rd parties or to be contacted to be removed from general terms and conditions and displayed clearly next to permission box so consumers have to read it. An expiry date on data with rule in place that consent must be renewed before the expiry date or data is to be removed from marketing campaigns"



- "The answer to the question is simple, enforce the removal of AMD. It used to be that (pre-2006) over-dialling and voice detection caused silent calls, now thanks to leaving a message in the event of an abandoned call/s over-dialling doesn't cause silent calls. Silent calls cause the most distress to customers, and AMD is solely responsible for this now. The accuracy of the current technology is questionable at best and a "dark art" at worst. Enforce the removal of AMD for the good of the whole outbound industry"
- "The regulators know where the complaints come from (by industry) so for them to put a scale against the complaint volume would help them reach out to the companies in question to look for improvements rather than generally try to introduce standards which are considered unfair on those using their systems fairly. At the moment though the regulator has no oversight of the "number of calls being placed" and therefore trying to put a scale against X complaints is very difficult"
- "We fully support Ofcom's existing measures in place to minimise the impact of silent calls on consumers. We believe the most appropriate way to tackle silent calls in the UK is to agree acceptable levels based on the overall outbound abandon rate. External to this we would welcome Ofcom's views on how the issue of overseas contact centres' contribution to silent calls could be tackled. We would also welcome wider publicity from Ofcom aimed at educating consumers on how to avoid nuisance calls through TPS."

Operational improvements:

- "Abandoned calls should be called back as soon as possible you know that there is someone there, and you can apologise directly almost immediately. You might not get a sale, but you are less likely to get a complaint"
- "Campaign managers with clearly-set targets that they are accountable for, and effective agent scheduling"
- "Ensure process is followed, checked and audited. Have clear guidelines where people across the organisation are aware and managed in what they are responsible for in relation to data management and dialling. Ensure visibility of performance by campaign and sub-campaign daily and ensure it is managed in real time by dedicated dialler managers"
- "Having the relevant resource available when dialling. The agents dialling are aware of the campaigns being run"
- "Controls and procedures to address the occurrence of abandoned calls such as identification, documentation, root cause analysis and action plans where appropriate."

Technological improvements:

• "Better system processes to limit impact of negative agent behaviour"



- "Better technology, i.e. don't allow silent as an option by removing AMD"
- "Better use of technology to disconnect unanswered calls"
- "Call classification accuracy and timeout, and stable technology/dialler/CPA"
- "A change in the way telephone services providers return an answerphone message so AMD can clearly identify the call as an answerphone and AMD can be used accurately."

Education:

- "Agent awareness of best practices on how to correctly use the dialler i.e. correctly answer calls, and correctly code calls after being answered. Continued agent monitoring to ensure good compliance"
- "Education of dialler managers on importance of compliance, regular reviews, submissions for abandonment rates for the bigger companies in the UK"
- "Educational programme for volume ACS users possibly an Ofcom 'stamp of approval'"
- "Provide feedback on complaints data to companies. How can they improve if they are unaware of any issues?"



OTHER COMMENTARY

Respondents were invited to bring up any other issues that had not already been covered (n=24).

There was some repetition of themes brought out by other respondents in earlier questions, particularly around frustration with 'rogue' operations – both UK-based and offshore - which are seen as damaging the whole industry, the use of AMD and the general feeling that regulations and their enforcement should apply equally to all outbound operations.

Verbatim comments include:

- "Clear definitions of what constitutes a 'Campaign' are needed in order to allow contact centres to effectively manage the set up and data dialling strategy. We feel the guidelines are ambiguous and open to interpretation. We feel that the 24 hour rule is something that needs to be revised, often a breach could occur at the back end of a shift where no further dialling could be utilised without being unsociable in order to rectify the breach. Clear guidelines around what constitutes clear miss use of the dialler would be beneficial: is 1 breach on 1 campaign out of 50 campaigns as an example a persistent misuse?"
- "Different guidelines for different industries should be seriously considered by Ofcom. It doesn't seem right that a firm trying to recover outstanding money on behalf of a bank or Government Agency should have to adhere to the same rules as a cold calling marketing firm who have no relationship with that customer prior to the call."
- "Each contact centre operator, undoubtedly, at least mentally established the chances of being caught and fined for ignoring the regulations against the improved productivity they experience by such actions. Any change in the regulations that further reduce the call centre efficiency will result in that balance moving more towards those choosing to favour cost efficiency over legality. Alternatively, a documented and published increase in the number of these rogue contact centres caught and penalised by Ofcom would help to swing the balance in the opposite direction, and see a sharp decrease in offenders and thus consumer complaints. A blanket decrease in efficiency (through regulation) of contact centres currently operating inside of the regulations penalises those that are already generating the fewest (if any) nuisance call complaints. I'd predict that such a change in regulation would result in an increase in rogue contact centres attempting to operate under the radar, potentially offshore, and thus would generate more nuisance call complaints and increase the complexity in tracing the offenders."
- "I have embraced all regulations and see the benefit that they bring keep up the excellent work!"
- "I think that there will always be organisations that deliberately do not adhere to the regulations, specifically those surrounding silent/abandon calls. Those are the companies who will not be impacted by any changes as they will continue to ignore them. I would like to see more action taken against those organisations."



- "I would like to add that my organisation and I are using IVM, but we are doing this in a responsible way both for customers and as a business. We are treating any inbound return calls that abandon, as we would an outbound abandoned call, and, as such will not redial for 72 hours unless there is a dedicated live operator available. If this was enforced it would stop mass over-dialling and reduce complaints and dissatisfaction. In our opinion this should be a new rule to stop misuse of the IVM practice."
- "Large companies are generally compliant. The problem is that the rise of PPI upstarts and shocking Injury Claims Practices has soured the general public to the entire process of outbound contact. These companies are small and by Ofcom's own admission not targeted. This gives the small companies *carte blanche* to do what they want without reprimand."
- "Many of the big ACS users approach the generation of customer contact responsibly it is not in our interest to do otherwise. I do not believe that significant tightening of the regulations will typically improve the position with regards to silent or abandoned calls. It would be good to see the mix of complaints between Sales and Collections and also what proportion are seen as spam."
- "My personal experience is that the organisations generating nuisance calls are not major organisations that are struggling to achieve the current regulation but are organisations generating extremely high volumes of cold calls who remain undetected through continuous change of outgoing numbers, CLI numbers, withheld dialling, dialling for multiple purposes or using IVM messages to offer consumer unspecific products (i.e. industrial injury claims when no history of injury, free loft insulation (government backed schemes) etc.), and it is these types of organisation that need to be targeted first before any changes are made to the current regulation."
- "PPI and personal claim firms have hit the headlines numerous times in the last year, and their rather bullish approach to dialling certainly does not cast dialling equipment in a good light. The more focus on companies causing the issues would definitely help improve the overall image over the technology, but also tracking Directorships across different registrations at Companies House would ensure that reputation follows and therefore prevents a clean slate."
- "It is a cause of frustration that we check and monitor our silent calls daily whilst receiving bad press yet others appear to get away with it because they are outside the UK or just remain anonymous."



- "The biggest challenge to any outbound campaign is the sourcing of leads. There is no real way of controlling or limiting the number of times an individual's personal data is sold. We buy 100% exclusivity over 3 months, but constantly have to police this, with the same data being sold and brokered several times to different agencies. If someone wanted to reduce the "nuisance calls" then someone should look at addressing the market in leads or Opt-Ins. This is where the issue lies, it's just the caller who takes the brunt when an individual has been called by 10 different companies within a week of filling out a survey. If every single company complies with the legislation it is still potentially 20 calls per day and very few consumers have any interest in separating them out."
- "The technology around AMD must improve to keep outbound dialling a viable tool in a contact centre currently using AMD is a non-starter."
- "We do believe that it would be beneficial for Ofcom to differentiate against different industry types in its policy in tackling silent and abandoned calls. In particular we believe that the impact on customers in connection with sales and marketing calls has the potential to cause a higher degree of distress as opposed to debt collection calls. We would also wish Ofcom to reconsider its stance on AMD so that it can be implemented effectively by businesses. The current policy has had a detrimental impact on the ability to adopt AMD technology in the debt collection industry."



ABOUT CONTACTBABEL

ContactBabel is the contact centre industry expert. If you have a question about how the industry works, or where it's heading, the chances are we have the answer.

The coverage provided by our massive and ongoing primary research projects is matched by our experience analysing the contact centre industry. We understand how technology, people and process best fit together, and how they will work collectively in the future.

We help the biggest and most successful vendors develop their contact centre strategies and talk to the right prospects. We have shown the UK government how the global contact centre industry will develop and change. We help contact centres compare themselves to their closest competitors so they can understand what they are doing well and what needs to improve.

If you have a question about your company's place in the contact centre industry, perhaps we can help you.

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Annex: Ofcom Outbound Contact Centre Survey: Questionnaire

Ofcom, the UK communications regulator, is running a survey to engage with the contact centre industry.

Ofcom is currently developing its approach to tackling nuisance calls by reviewing whether the policy it uses to protect consumers could be improved – particularly in the area of silent and abandoned calls. As part of this, Ofcom is now running an anonymous survey of the contact centre industry to establish: the key drivers of silent or abandoned calls; whether any changes to Ofcom's policy may help reduce the likelihood of silent or abandoned calls being made and, the level of harm they cause; the costs and benefits to businesses of complying with Ofcom's regulatory policy; other industry developments which may be relevant to Ofcom's work.

Ofcom wants to gather as much information as possible to ensure that its policy takes into account the real workings and capabilities of the contact centre industry. As such, this questionnaire is extensive, and asks for considerable detail. If you are not able to answer all of the questions, it would still be very useful to understand as much of your business as possible.

The analyst company ContactBabel is gathering the information on Ofcom's behalf. All the responses will be anonymised before being made available to Ofcom. In addition, any published report based on this research will only contain information that is anonymised and in aggregated form. Ofcom wants to engage with as many different contact centres carrying out outbound activities as possible before Friday 8th May. We are interested in all types of outbound call activity (including interactive calls) and the survey contains some questions relevant to each type of activity.

Why is Ofcom doing this research?

Ofcom is currently reviewing how it uses its powers to take action if a person 'persistently misuses an electronic communications network or service'. This includes considering whether there are any improvements and clarifications that Ofcom could make to its policy, particularly in the area of silent and abandoned calls.

To inform its review, Ofcom wishes to understand the key drivers of silent or abandoned calls, whether any changes to the policy may help reduce the likelihood of silent or abandoned calls being made, and the level of harm they cause; as well as any other developments which may be relevant to the policy. Ofcom also wishes to gather information on the costs and benefits for businesses of complying with Ofcom's regulatory policy.

How will Ofcom use the data I give?

Ofcom has commissioned ContactBabel to run this research. ContactBabel has been tasked with gathering data from contact centre operations, to support an evidence-based approach to Ofcom's review process. The information you provide to ContactBabel in the course of this research will only be passed to Ofcom in anonymised and aggregated form.



In addition, any published report based on this research will only contain information that is anonymised and in aggregated form. Ofcom holds, uses and discloses information only in accordance with the applicable legal provisions.

How will my time and data benefit me?

Contact centres are strongly encouraged to provide as full and accurate a picture as possible, in order that Ofcom's review takes into account the reality of the contact centre industry. The final report will be sent to you if you so wish. If you have any questions about this, please email smorrell@contactbabel.com or call 0191 271 5269.



Does your contact centre make business-to-consumer calls to UK customers?

- O Yes
- O No

Please note that you may save, exit and return to the survey at any time by using the option at the bottom of every page.

Your email address (so we can send you the final report based on this survey)

In which country / countries do you have contact centres that make outbound calls to UK customers?

Country in which the contact centre which you are using to answer this survey is based

Number of FTEs involved in UK call handling (i.e. BOTH inbound & outbound in total)

Number of FTEs involved in outbound dialling to UK consumers

What proportion of your total outbound dialling to UK consumers (across all technologies) relates to: (please estimate % of all that apply to you. NB: please do NOT add a '%' sign when entering the values)
Debt collection



| Fraud detection and prevention (e.g. checking credit card transactions) | |
|--|--|
| Customer service (e.g. notification of delivery, product recall, etc) | |
| Consumer surveys (e.g. market research) | |
| Sales calls to existing customers (e.g. cross selling, upselling, contract renewal) | |
| Sales calls to new prospects | |
| Lead prospecting (e.g. gathering details of prospects for resale to a third party) | |
| Charity collections | |
| Billing reminders | |
| Other | |



What is/are the main sector(s) for your outbound calling to UK consumers?

(Please choose primary and secondary if more than one apply).

| Primary sector / | cor / O Gas/electricity | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---|
| activity | 0 | Energy efficiency e.g. loft insulation, solar panels, etc |
| | 0 | Financial services |
| | 0 | Accident claims/compensation (including personal injury and PPI claims) |
| | 0 | Insurance |
| | 0 | Computer maintenance/support |
| | 0 | Phone/broadband |
| | 0 | Home improvements |
| | 0 | Market research |
| | 0 | Prize awards |
| | 0 | Other |
| Secondary sector / | 0 | Gas/electricity |
| activity | 0 | Energy efficiency e.g. loft insulation, solar panels, etc |
| | 0 | Financial services |
| | 0 | Accident claims/compensation (including personal injury and PPI claims) |
| | 0 | Insurance |
| | 0 | Computer maintenance/support |
| | 0 | Phone/broadband |
| | 0 | Home improvements |
| | 0 | Market research |
| | 0 | Prize awards |
| | 0 | Other |

If you have chosen 'Other', please specify (including whether for primary or secondary activity)



Ofcom wishes to better understand costs incurred by contact centres that use different outbound dialling approaches. We anticipate agent costs will be a large part of contact centre costs. As such, what is the average basic salary paid to an FTE involved in outbound dialling? (please specify whether this is a hourly rate, or monthly / annual salary)

What is the average bonus paid to an FTE involved in outbound dialling? (please specify whether this is e.g. weekly, monthly or annual, also whether it is a percentage or £ value)

Thank you for your interest.

However, this survey is gathering information about contact centres that make calls to the UK public. If you would like to receive the final report, please enter your email address below.

Your email address



Campaign / activity-specific information

This section asks about the operational and financial structure of outbound dialling campaigns so we can calculate how any potential changes to Ofcom's policy may impact those carrying out outbound dialling.We would like data on your typical outbound dialling activities. Some contact centres have typical ongoing outbound activity, while others conduct more specific differentiated campaigns.

Do you generally run the same/similar types of outbound dialling campaigns/activities?

- O Yes
- O No

Will you provide answers/data based on general averages for ongoing outbound activity (e.g. weekly or monthly - you will be able to specify the time period later), or for a specific campaign / group of similar campaigns?

- General ongoing averages
- O Specific campaign(s)

Data based on ongoing outbound activity

You have told us you prefer to provide information based on ongoing outbound activities of a similar type. For all subsequent questions, please provide responses relating to your typical activities, on a monthly or weekly basis, as is convenient.

What was the main purpose of this outbound activity? (please indicate a single primary purpose, and any secondary activities if appropriate)

| | Primary activity | Secondary activity/activities |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Debt collection | | |
| Fraud detection and prevention (e.g. checking credit card transactions) | | |
| Customer service (e.g. notification of delivery, product recall) | | |
| Consumer surveys (e.g. market research) | | |



| Sales calls to existing customers (e.g. cross selling, upselling, contract renewal) | |
|---|--|
| Sales calls to new prospects | |
| Lead prospecting (e.g. gathering details of prospects to be passed onto a third party) | |
| Other | |

If you answered "Other", could you please specify?

Was this outbound activity typically carried out...

- O ...for your own company?
- ...on behalf of a third-party?
- O ... for both your own company, and a third-party?

What was the average agent utilisation rate for this activity? (i.e. time spent per hour talking to customers/prospects).Please explain how this is calculated, and what you included within this.

Did the outbound activity typically involve...

- O ...contacting a specific, targeted set of people?
- O ...contacting as many people as possible?

What times of day did you carry out outbound dialling?

(if your contact centre is based outside the UK, please refer to UK time)

What were the peak times of day that you carried out outbound dialling?

(if your contact centre is based outside the UK, please refer to UK time)



What was the maximum number of attempts you made to contact each customer/prospect?Please state over which time period, and the minimum time between each attempt (e.g. "Attempted to contact a consumer 10 times over the course of a week waiting at least 4 hours between each call").

What % of total outbound dialling was carried out to mobile phones?

How did you check whether the recipient was registered with the Telephone Preference Service (TPS)?

- O Automatically checked as dialled
- O Checked before numbers were loaded into the dialler
- O Manually checked before dialling
- O TPS check not required
- O TPS check not carried out

Data based on a specific outbound campaign

You have told us you prefer to provide information based on a specific outbound campaign. For all subsequent questions, please provide responses relating to a campaign for which you have full data.

What was the main purpose of this outbound campaign? (please indicate a single primary purpose, and any secondary activities if appropriate)

| | activity | secondary activities |
|---|----------|----------------------|
| Debt collection | | |
| Fraud detection and prevention (e.g. checking credit card transactions) | | |


| Customer service (e.g. notification of delivery, product recall) | |
|---|--|
| Consumer surveys (e.g. market research) | |
| Sales calls to existing customers (e.g. cross selling, upselling, contract renewal) | |
| Sales calls to new prospects | |
| Lead prospecting (e.g. gathering details of prospects to be passed onto a third party) | |
| Other | |

If you answered "Other", could you please specify?

Was this outbound campaign carried out...

- O ...for your own company?
- O ...on behalf of a third-party?
- O ...both for your own company and for a third-party?

What was the duration of the campaign?

How many FTEs worked on this outbound campaign? (i.e. agents involved in outbound dialling)

What was the average agent utilisation rate for this outbound campaign? (i.e. time spent per hour talking to customers/prospects).Please explain how this is calculated, and what you included within this.



Did the outbound campaign typically involve...

- O ...contacting a specific, targeted set of people?
- O ...contacting as many people as possible?

What times of day did you carry out outbound dialling?

(if your contact centre is based outside the UK, please refer to UK time)

What were the peak times of day that you carried out outbound dialling? (if your contact centre is based outside the UK, please refer to UK time)

What was the maximum number of attempts you made to contact each customer/prospect?Please state over which time period, and the minimum time between each attempt (e.g. "Attempted to contact a consumer 10 times over the course of a week waiting at least 4 hours between each call"). Please explain your approach, and the relevant time period between attempts

What % of total outbound dialling was carried out to mobile phones?

How did you check whether the recipient was registered with the Telephone Preference Service (TPS)?

- O Automatically checked as dialled
- O Checked before numbers were loaded into the dialler
- O Manually checked before dialling
- O TPS check not required
- O TPS check not carried out



Outbound technologies: Automated Dialling

Definitions of automated dialing

Preview dialling: once an agent has indicated that they are ready for a call, information about the call is presented to them. The number is then automatically dialled after a predefined period; the agent is given time to preview the customer details before the call is launched.

Progressive dialling: once an agent has indicated that they are ready for a call, information about the call is presented to them and the number is then dialled immediately. Call progress is monitored by the dialler technology. Calls that do not result in 'ringing' are automatically and immediately disconnected, whilst 'no answers' are disconnected after a predefined number of seconds.

Predictive dialling: a predictive dialler launches calls at a rate such that the system connects to live callers as soon as an agent completes the previous transaction. The dialling rate for each campaign is controlled by a pacing algorithm, which automatically monitors activity, and calculates when the next contact should be dialled. The dialling rate is automatically adjusted to maintain a contact rate that is synchronised with operator availability.

Did you use automated dialling for your outbound campaign/activity?

Automated dialling includes preview, progressive and predictive dialling.

- O Yes
- O No



Automated dialling

Definitions of automated dialing

Preview dialling: once an agent has indicated that they are ready for a call, information about the call is presented to them. The number is then automatically dialled after a predefined period; the agent is given time to preview the customer details before the call is launched.

Progressive dialling: once an agent has indicated that they are ready for a call, information about the call is presented to them and the number is then dialled immediately. Call progress is monitored by the dialler technology. Calls that do not result in 'ringing' are automatically and immediately disconnected, whilst 'no answers' are disconnected after a predefined number of seconds.

Predictive dialling: a predictive dialler launches calls at a rate such that the system connects to live callers as soon as an agent completes the previous transaction. The dialling rate for each campaign is controlled by a pacing algorithm, which automatically monitors activity, and calculates when the next contact should be dialled. The dialling rate is automatically adjusted to maintain a contact rate that is synchronised with operator availability.

Does your operation have a dialler manager?

- O Yes
- O No

You have indicated that you used automated dialling for this campaign/activity.Please indicate the proportions that each type of dialling made up of your total outbound dialling activity.

| Preview dialling % | |
|--|--|
| Progressive dialling % | |
| Predictive dialling % | |
| Other automated dialling % | |
| Manual (i.e. non-automated) dialling % | |

Why did you choose to use this form/these forms of dialling?



Which dialler manufacturer/supplier do you use?

In the case of multiple suppliers, which is your primary one?

Is this an on-premise solution or based in the cloud/delivered as a managed service?

- O On-premise solution owned and run by us
- O Managed service solution/private cloud owned and run by a third-party for our exclusive use
- O Delivered via public cloud i.e. multi-tenancy

Did you use the default settings on the dialler, or reconfigure them?

- O Used default settings
- Reconfigured settings

Outbound technologies: Answer-Machine Detection (AMD)

Did you use Answer-Machine Detection (AMD) for your outbound campaign/activity?

- O Yes
- O No

Answer Machine Detection (AMD): use on this campaign / ongoing outbound activity

On what proportion of calls did you use answer machine detection (AMD) on this campaign/outbound activity? (%)



How did you decide whether to use AMD or not?

Does your AMD's effectiveness vary depending on whether you are calling a mobile or landline? If so, please describe how.

Do you estimate the accuracy of your AMD technology? If so, please explain your approach to estimating AMD accuracy.

If possible, what would you estimate your AMD's accuracy to have been for this activity/campaign?

If not already covered, please explain your approach to estimating AMD false positives, i.e. calls answered by consumers which are mistakenly classified as being answered by an answering machine.

Do you include the estimated AMD false positives in your overall abandoned call rate?



Outbound technologies: IVM (Interactive Voice Messaging) / IVR (Interactive Voice Response)

Did you use IVM (Interactive Voice Messaging) / IVR (Interactive Voice Response) for your outbound campaign/activity?

IVM/IVR involves playing a recorded message which will offer the caller a chance to press a button on the phone to be connected to an agent or join a queue.

- O Yes
- O No

IVM (Interactive Voice Messaging) and IVR (Interactive Voice Response)

Please explain how IVM worked on this campaign/outbound activity.

For example: Was it used all the time?; What did the consumer hear? etc.

Please explain why you used IVM.

For example, how it helped or affected this campaign/activity



Where consumers/prospects selected to speak to a live agent, please state:

The TARGET connection time for this campaign/activity: i.e. the time from the consumer selecting to speak with an agent, to actually speaking with an agent

The ACTUAL average time per call that consumers were on hold





Outbound technologies: Automated messaging (broadcast messages)

Did you use automated messaging (broadcast messages) in your outbound activity/campaign?

Automated messaging or broadcast messages, are calls made with the sole purpose of making a recorded announcement, rather than to connect a consumer to a live agent.

Examples include a recorded sales or marketing message, or a recorded information message which is <u>not</u> an 'Agent Unavailable' message."

O Yes

O No

What was the purpose of these calls? (e.g. information, marketing, request the consumer to call back, etc)

Calling line identity (CLI)

Did you present or withhold your CLI when you made outbound calls?

- O Present when calling, and in any 'Agent Unavailable' message (if applicable)
- O Present when calling, but not provided in any 'Agent Unavailable' message
- O Present in 'Agent Unavailable' message, but not presented when calling
- Withhold all CLIs

CLI Present

You stated that you presented a CLI while making outbound calls, offered one in the 'Agent Unavailable' recorded message, or did both.

For subsequent questions in this section will you answer based on...

- ...the CLI presented when calling?
- O ...the CLI given in an 'Agent Unavailable message?
- O ...both? (i.e. they were the same CLI)



Was the CLI you used for this activity/campaign returnable?

(i.e. if the caller rings the CLI number, they are answered by an agent or message identifying your company)

- O Yes
- O No

When the CLI was called by consumer, what did it connect to?

- A live agent within your own company during business hours, and a recorded message outside business hours or if an agent was unavailable
- O A recorded message within your own company, both within and outside working hours
- O The third party, on whose behalf we were making the calls

What was the cost to you of providing a returnable CLI for this campaign/activity? (e.g. technology, systems/process costs)

For calls made to the CLI during this activity/campaign, what did the consumer hear/experience? (e.g. marketing, information, right to opt-out of future calls)





How was the CLI presented to the parties being called?

- O As an international number
- O As a UK-based non-geographic number (e.g. 0843)
- As a UK-based local STD code that corresponded to the location from which calls were being made
- O As a UK-based local STD code that did NOT correspond to the location from which the calls were being made
- As a UK-based local STD code that corresponds to the office locations of the business but not necessarily directly where the call was made from
- O As a freephone / toll-free number
- O No CLI / identifying telephone number given in call

How was the CLI / identifying telephone number presented in the recorded

message?

- O As an international number
- As a UK-based non-geographic number (e.g. 0843)
- As a UK-based local STD code that corresponded to the location from which calls were being made
- O As a UK-based local STD code that did NOT correspond to the location from which the calls were being made
- As a UK-based local STD code that corresponds to the office locations of the business but not necessarily directly where the call was made from
- O As a freephone / toll-free number
- O No CLI / identifying telephone number given in recorded message

If you used a localised CLI that did <u>not</u> correspond to the location from which calls were being made, why was this?

Do you believe that there are any specific benefits that come from this approach?





Did you use more than one CLI at an individual contact centre for the same campaign/outbound activity (e.g. a rotating CLI)?

- O Yes
- O No

If so, why was this, and how many CLIs did you use?

CLI Withheld

You stated that you withheld your CLI while making outbound calls, and did not offer a CLI in the 'Agent Unavailable' recorded message.

Why did you withhold your CLI?



Ring time and connection time

This section relates to calls that you have made using automated dialling with the intention of an agent speaking to a consumer.

What was the minimum amount of time you rang consumers before terminating the call?

(Please answer either in seconds or number of rings, as appropriate)

What made you choose this figure?





What was the actual typical amount of time between the call being answered by consumer and actually speaking to the agent?

What was the typical amount of time between the call being answered by consumer/the consumer starting to speak, and abandoned call message beginning to play?

Call volumes

In order to fully understand the scale of each type of possible call outcome, including silent and abandoned calls, we would be grateful if you could please provide as much detail as you have on your call volumes. If you do not have the level of detail requested, please complete the following section to the best of your ability in any case, as any data and insight are valuable.

What was the intention when you made outbound calls?

- $_{\mbox{O}}$ $\,$ To connect agents with consumers
- To engage the customer interactively, with option to speak to an agent if requested / required
- O Only to make announcement / leave a recorded message



Call volumes - ongoing outbound activity

Call Outcomes

We now wish to ask you some questions about the volumes of outbound calls.

We are interested in all types of outbound call.

This section covers calls you made where you wanted a consumer to speak directly to a live agent. Calls made via IVM/IVR and automated messages (broadcast messages) should not be included here, but in sections that follow.For calls where you wanted an consumer to be put through to a live agent you may find it helpful to refer to the diagram below.



Explanation of the above diagram:Calls are placed: (A)Calls are**either** answered (B1) or not answered (B2)If they are answered, they are answered**either** by a consumer (C1) or an answerphone (C2)If they are answered by a consumer, an agent is**either** available (D1), not



available (D2) or the AMD incorrectly identifies the consumer as an answerphone and so does not check whether an agent is available (D3) If an agent is available, there are then two choices: they**either** have a conversation (E2), or the consumer puts the phone down (E1). If an agent is<u>not</u> available, there are three choices: there can either be a recorded message played (E3); the recorded message is not played, as the consumer hangs up (E4), or the call can be abandoned by the calling party<u>without</u> leaving a recorded message (E5). If calls are answered by an answerphone, an "Agent Not Available" message is either played (D4) or not played (D5)

Overall number of outbound calls made (in diagram above, this figure is 'A')(Please include the time period you are using for these figures, e.g. per week, per month, etc.)

Of the overall number of outbound calls made, how many...

Please use either % or absolute numbers, as you prefer.

...were answered? (B1 above)

...were not answered? (B2 above)

Of the overall number of outbound calls that were answered, how many...

Please use either % or absolute numbers, as you prefer.

...were answered by a consumer? (C1 above)

...were answered by an answerphone? (C2 above)

Of the overall number of outbound calls that were answered by a consumer, how many...

Please use either % or absolute numbers, as you prefer.

...were hung up by the consumer even though an agent was available? (E1 above)

...resulted in the agent speaking with the consumer? (E2 above)

...were silent calls due to AMD false positives? (D3 above)





| played a recorded "Agent Not Available" message? (E3 above) | |
|--|--|
| did not play a recorded "Agent Not Available" message, as the consumer had hung up? (E4 above) | |
| did not play a recorded "Agent Not Available" message, as the calling party abandoned the call? (E5 above) | |

Of the overall number of outbound calls that were answered by an answerphone, how many...

Please use either % or absolute numbers, as you prefer.

...had a recorded 'Agent Not Available' message played? (D4 above)

| did not have a recorded | 'Agent Not Available' | message played? (D5 |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| above) | | |

Please add any other comments or explanation you wish to make regarding this section







Call volumes - specific outbound campaign

Call Outcomes

We now wish to ask you some questions about the volumes of outbound calls.

We are interested in all types of outbound call. This section covers calls you made where you wanted a consumer to speak directly to a live agent. Calls made via IVM/IVR and automated messages (broadcast messages) should not be included here, but in sections that follow.

For calls where you wanted an consumer to be put through to a live agent you may find it helpful to refer to the diagram below.



of the above diagram :Calls are placed: (A)Calls are **either** answered (B1) or not answered (B2)If they are answered, they are answered **either** by a consumer (C1) or an answerphone



(C2)If they are answered by a consumer, an agent is **either** available (D1), not available (D2) or the AMD incorrectly identifies the consumer as an answerphone and so does not check whether an agent is available (D3) If an agent is available, there are then two choices: they **either** have a conversation (E2), or the consumer puts the phone down (E1). If an agent is <u>not</u> available, there are three choices: there can either be a recorded message played (E3); the recorded message is not played, as the consumer hangs up (E4), or the call can be abandoned by the calling party <u>without</u> leaving a recorded message (E5). If calls are answered by an answerphone, an "Agent Not Available" message is either played (D4) or not played (D5)

Overall number of outbound calls made on this campaign (in diagram above, this figure is 'A'.Please include the time period you are using for these figures, e.g. per week, per month, campaign lasting x days. etc.

Of the overall number of outbound calls made, how many...

Please use either % or absolute numbers, as you prefer.

...were answered? (B1 above)

...were not answered? (B2 above)

Of the overall number of outbound calls that were answered, how many...

Please use either % or absolute numbers, as you prefer.

...were answered by a consumer? (C1 above)

...were answered by an answerphone? (C2 above)

Of the overall number of outbound calls that were answered by a consumer,

how many...

Please use either % or absolute numbers, as you prefer.

...were hung up by the consumer even though an agent was available? (E1 above)

...resulted in the agent speaking with the consumer? (E2 above)





| were silent calls due to AMD false positives? (D3 above) | |
|--|--|
| played a recorded "Agent Not Available" message? (E3 above) | |
| did not play a recorded "Agent Not Available" message, as the consumer had hung up? (E4 above) | |
| did not play a recorded "Agent Not Available" message, as the calling party abandoned the call? (E5 above) | |

Of the overall number of outbound calls that were answered by an

answerphone, how many...

Please use either % or absolute numbers, as you prefer.

...had a recorded 'Agent Not Available' message played? (D4 above)

...did not have a recorded 'Agent Not Available' message played? (D5 above)

Please add any other comments or explanation you wish to make regarding this section

IVM volumes

You indicated that you used IVM on this campaign / ongoing outbound activity.

How many calls were made using IVM?



Of these IVM calls, what proportion...

...were answered by a consumer?



...were answered by an answerphone?



Of the IVM calls that were answered by a consumer, what number / proportion of calls resulted in a customer speaking to an agent?

Automated messaging (broadcast messages)

What number/proportion of outbound calls were made with the <u>sole</u> <u>purpose</u> of making a recorded announcement, and which do not connect a consumer to a live agent?

These may include recorded sales or marketing messages, or recorded information messages other than 'Agent Not Available' messages.

Abandoned call rates

Please explain how you calculate your abandoned call rate.

The call outcome diagram is included above for your reference - you may wish to identify the various 'Call Outcome Codes' used to calculate your abandoned call rate (e.g. E4 + E5+ D3). If you have different approaches to calculating abandoned call rate depending on which outbound technology has been used, please explain how your methodology differs accordingly to technology e.g. AMD, IVM, etc.



Impact of potential changes in abandoned call rates

Ofcom wishes to understand the impact certain changes may have on your outbound activity.

If the maximum abandoned call rate allowed was reduced from 3% to 2%, would this affect your own agent utilisation?

- O Yes
- O No



If "Yes": what would you expect your new agent utilisation rate to be?

How confident are you in the accuracy of your estimate?

- O Confident
- O Neutral
- Not confident

Have you tried operating at a different abandoned call rate before, and if so, what did you find?

Impact of changes in AMD (answer-machine detection)

If you had not used AMD in your previous campaign/ongoing outbound activity, what would you expect your agent utilisation to have been?

How confident are you in the accuracy of your estimate?

- O Confident
- O Neutral
- O Not confident

Have you ever restricted or switched AMD off & on to see what impact this has? What results did you find?



If the maximum abandoned call rate remained at 3% but the generation of silent calls via false AMD positives were not allowed, would this affect your own agent utilisation?

- O Yes
- O No
- O Don't know

What would you expect your new agent utilisation to be?

How confident are you in the accuracy of your estimate?

- O Confident
- O Neutral
- Not confident

Impact of changes in IVM (interactive voice messaging)

If you had not used IVM in your previous campaign/ongoing outbound activity, what would you expect your agent utilisation to have been?

How confident are you in the accuracy of your estimate?

- O Confident
- O Neutral
- Not confident



Ring times / connection to an agent

If the minimum amount of time you rang a consumer before terminating the call was increased to 20 seconds, how would you expect this to affect your business?



If a call answered by a consumer (and not flagged to be an abandoned call) had to be connected to an agent who must speak to the consumer within 2 seconds, how would you expect this to affect your business?

Rotating CLI usage

If you could not have used rotating CLIs for your activity/campaign, how would you have expected this to have affected your business?

Localised CLI usage

If you could not have used localised CLIs for your activity/campaign, how would you have expected this to have affected your business?

General opinion

What do you think are the main drivers of silent and abandoned calls?



What do you think are the most important characteristics of a campaign/ongoing outbound activity that would minimise silent & abandoned calls?

What do you think is/are the most appropriate way(s) to tackle silent and abandoned calls?

Is there anything else you would like to say about this topic which has not been covered here?

Would you be interested in focus groups / workshops to explore any of the potential policy changes in more detail?

- O Yes
- O No

In submitting your responses to this survey, you agree that the information you provide may be made available to Ofcom in anonymized and aggregated form, and that it may be used in an anonymised and aggregated form in a published Ofcom / ContactBabel report.