

CRESTA

Good CX, Bad CX:

5 Steps to Close the Contact Center Performance Gap

What does inconsistent agent performance cost your contact center each year? We looked at over **100,000** contact center conversations to quantify the gap between top and bottom performing agents.

This report outlines our findings and steps you can take to start closing the Performance Gap in your contact center today.



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Overview

We looked at over 100,000 contact center conversations to quantify the gap between top and bottom performing agents. This report outlines our findings and steps you can take to start closing the Performance Gap in your contact center today.

On any team, from basketball teams to business teams, amateur to professional, there are top performers and then there's everyone else. It's usually easy to spot the top performers as their results speak for themselves. In fact, a study of more than 600,000 researchers, entertainers, politicians, and athletes found that top performers are 400% more productive than their peers. Other studies of businesses reveal that this gap can grow to 800% for highly complex jobs. And unsurprisingly, this gap also exists in contact centers.

At Cresta, we call this the **Contact Center Performance Gap**, and we think about it a lot! Why? Aside from building AI that bridges this gap, we believe the Contact Center Performance Gap is the most valuable opportunity that modern contact centers can address. Imagine if every employee performed like a top performer? What would that mean for your business, your customers, and your employees?

To find out what the Contact Center Performance Gap costs businesses each year, we dug into our data. At Cresta, we work with contact centers who have thousands of customer conversations every day. We looked at over 100,000 conversations across sales, service, and retention teams to see how much more effective top performers are when compared to their peers in terms of revenue, efficiency, and customer satisfaction (CSAT).

Our Process

We looked at two cohorts, customer service-focused contact centers and sales-focused contact centers and. For each cohort, we identified a set of KPIs and compared top performers and bottom performers against key metrics.

Contact Center Performance Gap

In Customer Service-Focused Contact Centers

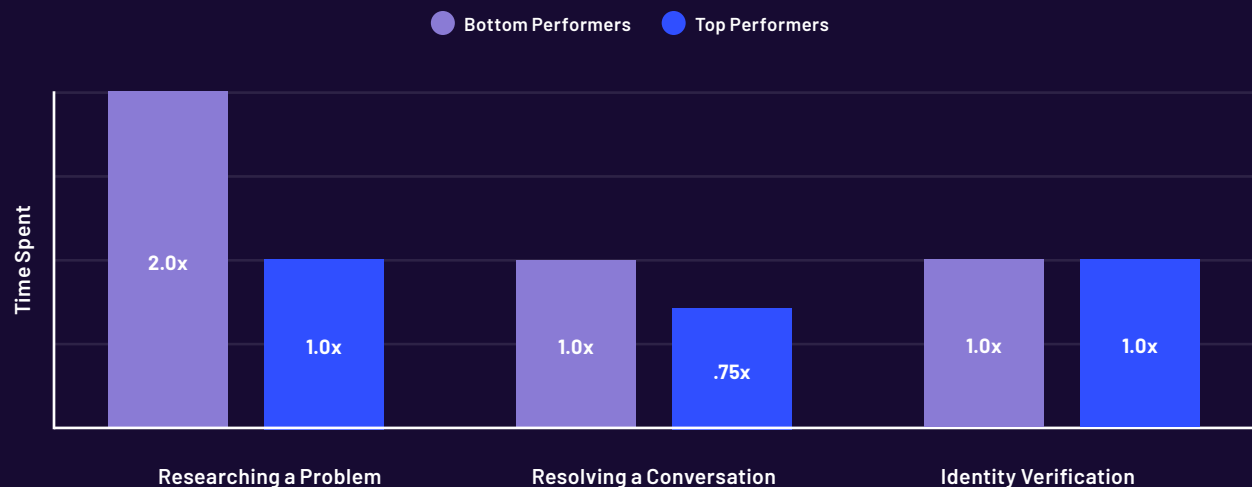
Next we looked at data from customer service-focused teams. Here, we looked at average handle time (AHT), a common measure of agent efficiency. On average, top performers were 33% more efficient than bottom performers. What took a top performer 20 minutes to complete would take a bottom performer 27 minutes to complete. At scale, closing the Customer Service Performance Gap and getting all agents to perform like top performers would reduce operating costs by 14% – 25% per year. For a \$100M customer service operation, that equates to \$14M – \$25M in savings each year!

On average, top performers were 33% more efficient than bottom performers.

Bottom Performers

Top Performers

The Behaviors That Set Top Customer Service Agents Apart From Their Peers

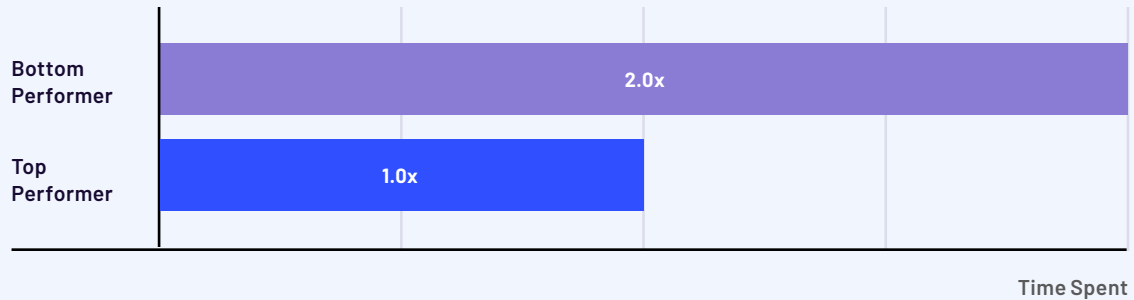


1

Researching a problem

To address a customer problem, agents must first determine the root cause of the problem and then research a solution to the problem. We found top performers were **2x faster** at researching and finding solutions than average performers.

Top performers research problems 2x quicker than their peers

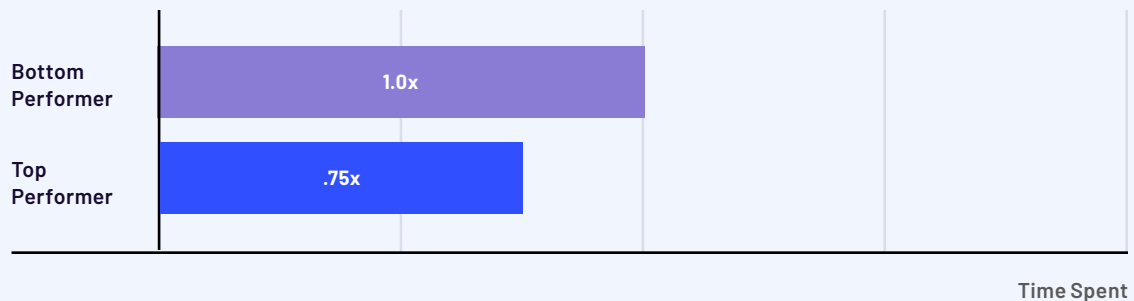


2

Responding to and resolving a conversation

With the solution identified, agents must then walk customers through the solution. Once a solution had been identified, top performing agents were consistently **25% faster** at resolving the customer inquiry.

Top performers resolve customer inquiries 1.3x faster than their peers

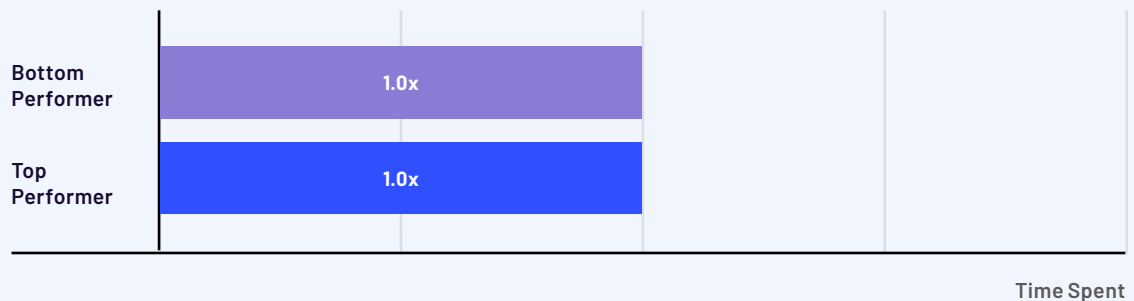


3

Verification

In many cases, the verification process took up to 30% of the conversation. Interestingly, the time spent verifying a customer's identity **did not vary** between top performers and everyone else, highlighting the need for faster and more streamlined verification processes.

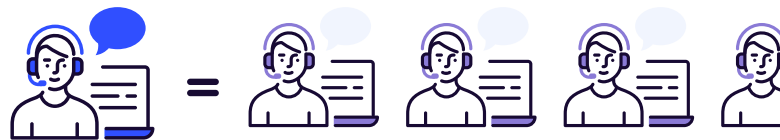
All agents can benefit from more streamlined customer verification processes



Contact Center Performance Gap

In Sales-Focused Contact Centers

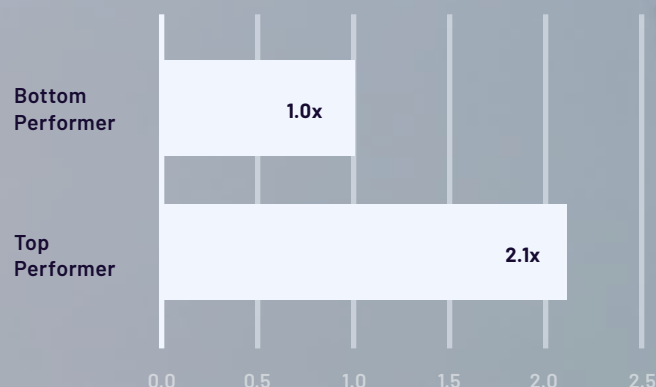
For sales-focused teams, we looked at revenue per agent, a common KPI used to measure sales productivity. We found, on average, top sales representatives outperformed their bottom quartile peers by 2.1x. In some cases, this number was as high as 3.5x. **This means replacing one top performing sales representative would require 2-3.5 full time employees.**



What does this Performance Gap represent in terms of revenue? Looking at our data, getting every contact center agent to perform like a top performer would, on average, grow annual revenue by 25%. For a \$200M business unit, that's a \$50M opportunity!

**Getting every agent to perform like a top performer would, on average, grow annual revenue by 25%.
For a \$200M business unit, that's a \$50M opportunity!**

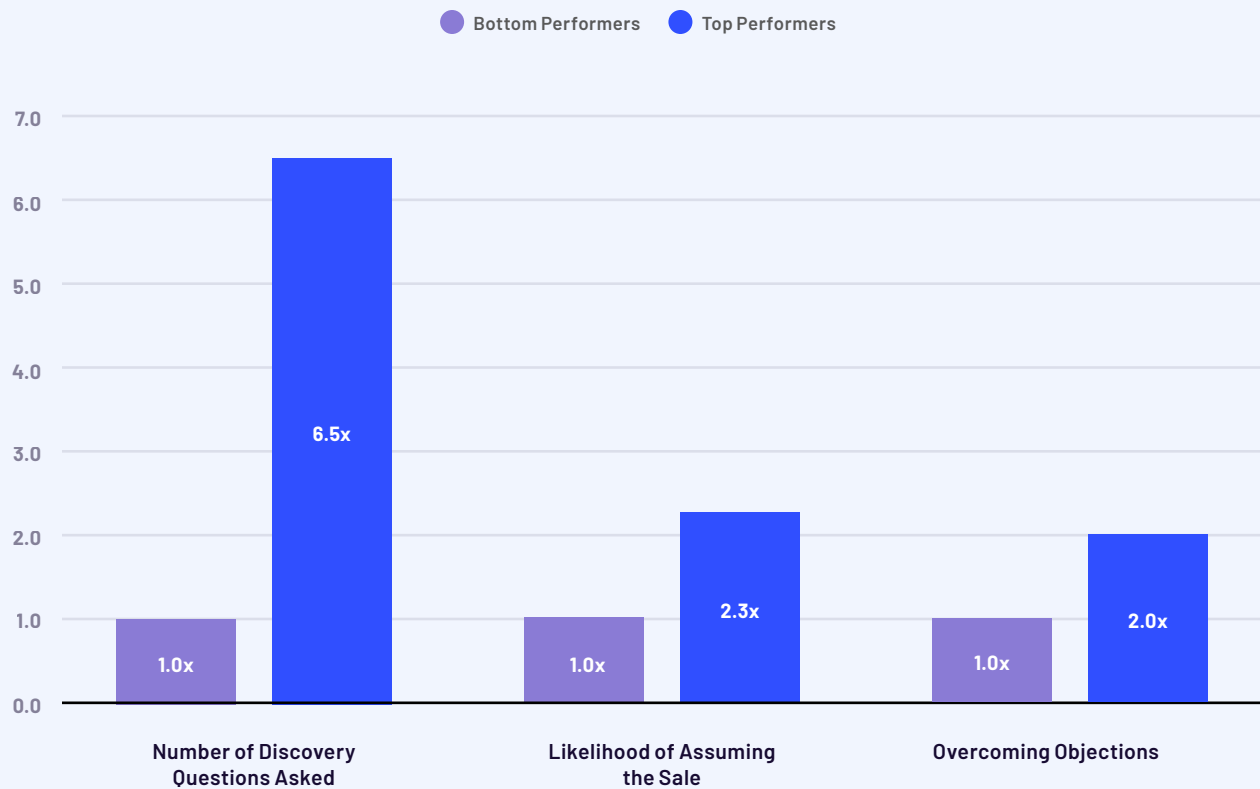
On average, top performers outperform bottom performers by a factor of 2.1x.



Contributing Behaviors

What underlying behaviors contribute to The Sales Performance Gap? In short, top performers stick to the script, adhere to best practices, and follow prescribed sales methodologies. Here were some of our findings.

What Sets Top Performing Sales Agents Apart From Their Peers?

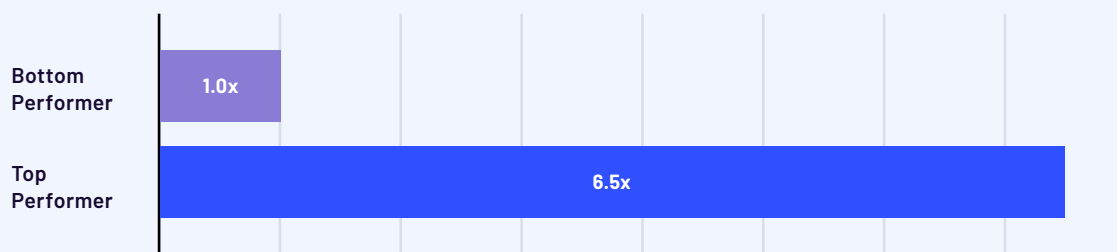


1

Quality Discovery

Discovery questions help a contact center representative understand a customer's inquiry. Businesses often spend countless hours refining discovery questions to ensure they capture critical information. We found top performers followed a repeatable and structured set of discovery questions to get to the root cause of a customer pain point. Top performers asked **6.5x more** discovery questions than their peers. Having this information helped them better service customers and handle objections.

Top performers asked 6.5x more discovery questions than their peers



[The 4 "Magic" Behaviors That Close Sales Performance Gaps](#)

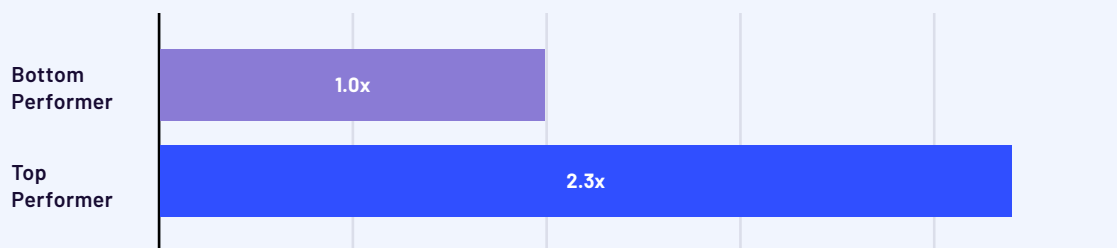
Time Spent

2

Assuming the Sale

While low performers hope a sales opportunity will occur, top performers ensure a sales opportunity occurs. By setting the stage, asking discovery questions, and overcoming objections, top performers have built the rapport and trust to safely assume a sale. They overwhelmingly assume a sale **2.3x more often** than low performers, and they do so from the very first moment of the call.

Top performers assume the sale 2.3x more often than their peers



[The 4 "Magic" Behaviors That Close Sales Performance Gaps](#)

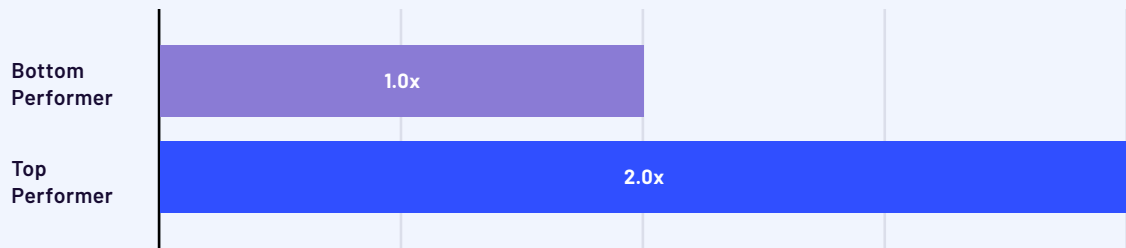
Time Spent

3

Handling Objectives

Last but not least, top performers were better at handling objections. They simply had a better grasp of the product or service they were selling. As a result, they could overcome customer objections **2x more effectively** than their peers. Top performers overcame more than 80% of customer objections they were presented with, whereas the bottom quartile only overcame 40% of the customer objections they encountered.

▶ **Top performers overcome customer objections 2x more effectively than their peers**



[The 4 "Magic" Behaviors That Close Sales Performance Gaps](#)

Time Spent

While these behaviors might be easy to understand and identify, they are difficult to put into action.

"Be better at overcoming objections!" isn't the easiest piece of coaching to process. But more on that later.

5 Steps to Close the Contact Center Performance Gap

Addressing the Contact Center Performance Gap clearly offers significant ROI. Here are a few tactics to start bridging the gap.



Invest in training:

Consistent with our findings, the [Huffington Post](#) found **companies who invest in training can see 24% higher profit margins**. In both sales and service, training is the most direct way to improve agent performance. With more employees placing a premium on skills development, this also leads to a happier and more engaged workforce.



Monitor adherence:

Ensure 'sticking to the script' becomes a core part of performance and quality assurance (QA) evaluations. Teams that are able to adhere to methodologies see improved performance. With one group, we found agents who stick to the script generate 26% more revenue per conversation and have a 21% better conversion rate than their peers.



Make knowledge easier to find:

It's clear that top-performers have a better grasp of the products and services they're selling. To make answers easier to find, invest in grooming knowledgebase articles and software that improves knowledge searchability.



Retention, retention, retention!

As simpler tasks are automated, teams must handle more complex customer interactions. This requires a strong grasp of your customers and your products. With [average ramp times ranging from 3-6 months, average contact center turnover rates between 30-45%](#), and an average tenure of 1 year, it's easy for teams to suffer from the 'Revolving Door' with representatives leaving right as they become fully ramped. Retention is key to driving team performance.

Agents who stick to the script generate **26% more revenue per conversation.**



Invest in Real-Time Contact Center AI

Recent advances in Contact Center AI are helping organizations transform team performance and bridge the performance gap once and for all. Until now, contact centers had to analyze historical conversation data to answer questions like “Who are my top performers?”, “How long does it take my team to answer pricing questions?” or “How is first call resolution trending over time?” While valuable, these retrospective findings are too little too late. The customer experience has already been impacted.

Real-time Contact Center AI is changing that. Contact centers using real-time AI are able to uncover insights from 100% of customer conversations and put these findings into action with real-time coaching that’s delivered to agents live during every interaction.

Real-time, AI-driven coaching resolves the challenges that contribute to the Contact Center Performance Gap - continuous training, next-best-action, faster access to answers. Ultimately, this added support makes for a better agent experience, resulting in improved agent engagement and retention.

Lastly, real-time, AI-driven coaching drives measurable ROI for organizations. For instance, the customer service team for a leading internet service provider [increased](#) their add-on sales conversions by 38% in the first two months by using our own [platform](#), Cresta. Moving forward, they increased add-on sales by 2.8x overall in their next quarter compared to their pre-Cresta performance.

A recent report confirmed the ROI of Real-time Contact Center AI, finding firms using AI capabilities enjoy **2.4x greater** annual increase in agent productivity, **11.5x greater** annual reduction in service costs, and **3.5x greater** annual increase in customer satisfaction rates.¹

¹Aberdeen, “The ROI of Real-Time Agent Guidance” August 2020

Cresta: Real-time Expertise AI for Contact Centers

Wherever you talk to customers – by phone, chat, or digital channels – Cresta helps you deliver business outcomes and a radically better customer experience.

Cresta's Real-Time Expertise AI observes every customer interaction to learn what top performers do differently and amplifies these behaviors using real-time assistance and coaching delivered to agents during every customer conversation. By putting insights into action, Cresta produces measurable ROI in weeks.

Real-Time Agent Assist

Assists sellers with behavioral coaching, recommended responses, and task automations during conversations. Drive adherence to The Magic 4 and help sellers identify renewal and cross-sell opportunities.

Cresta Director

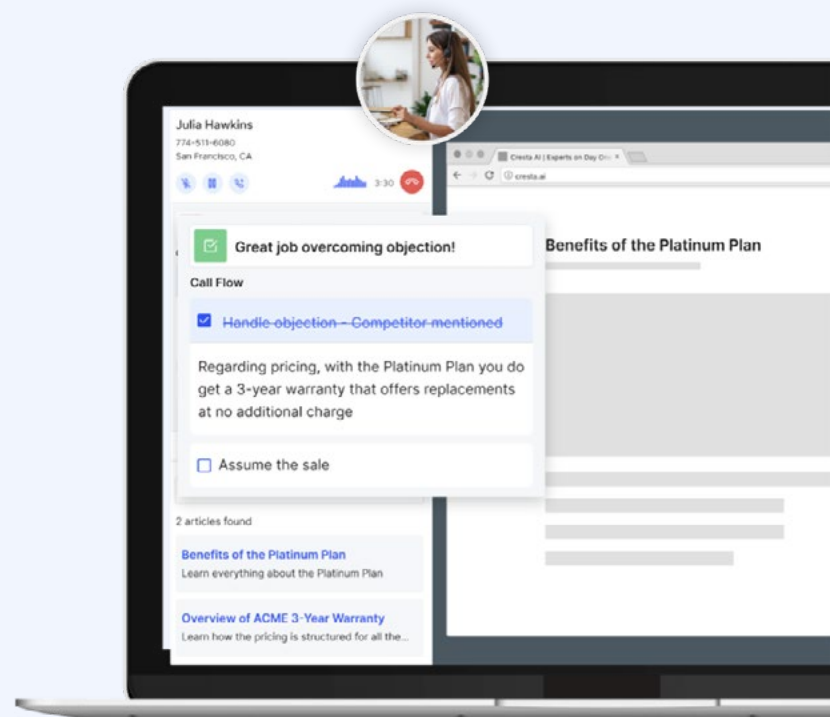
Analyzes 100% of conversations so managers can quickly monitor individual and team performance against key behaviors (such as The Magic 4). Managers can review and send feedback directly to sellers.

Analytics

Cresta ties team behavior to business metrics such as revenue and conversion performance. Understand the economics of adherence and where to focus efforts.

Chatbot

Cresta's Real-time Expertise AI powers chatbots, saving your teams from having to deal with simple and routine customer inquiries and issues.



We hope this report highlights how valuable improving team performance can be for your business. In future blog posts, we'll dig into what to look for when evaluating tools to help you bridge the Performance Gap.

If you'd like to chat, learn more, or quantify what the Performance Gap means for your business, please reach out to us at pro@cresta.ai.

14.7%

improvement in
conversion

F500 SOFTWARE CO.

24%

more revenue
per conversation

LEADING RETAILER

5x

reduction in new
agent ramp time

F500 SAAS PROVIDER

Note on our methodology:

At the beginning of engagements with clients, Cresta conducts a baseline evaluation of a client's Performance Gap to identify key opportunities for improvement. We monitor the improvement in this Performance Gap for our customers. The data represented here is a composite across a subset of our customer and has been abstracted to protect the privacy of our customers.