Preparing for the Unexpected:

Is your customer care team as ready as you think?

The Premise

Every week, the headlines seem to be filled with new cases of **poor customer care** and another company (or industry) that is finding itself in hot water.

And this is **especially true during the busiest times of the year**. Whether it be airlines in the summer, energy providers in the autumn, or retail at Christmas, there are always winners and losers.

But is this fair? Are brands actually failing, or are they victims of **ever-increasing demands and expectations**? We spoke to some companies to see how the service they offer is really shaping up.

sky news

Thousands of customers given 'unacceptable service' after Storm Arwen, energy watchdog Ofgem finds

DAILY EXPRESS

End this farce! Three hours on hold for tax office

The Telegraph

P&O Ferries will go down in history as a masterclass in customer service disaster

INDEPENDENT

Energy firms' customer service plummets at worst possible time

BBC

Oxfordshire County Council 'not answering calls quickly enough'

The Landscape

We spoke to **companies from across the UK** and found that, by far, **exclusively in-house teams were the most popular** way to deliver customer care. But is this the right choice? Do brands suffer from not seeking **help from external experts**?

Offshored

Combo of all 3

UK Outsourced

5%

5%

20%

70%
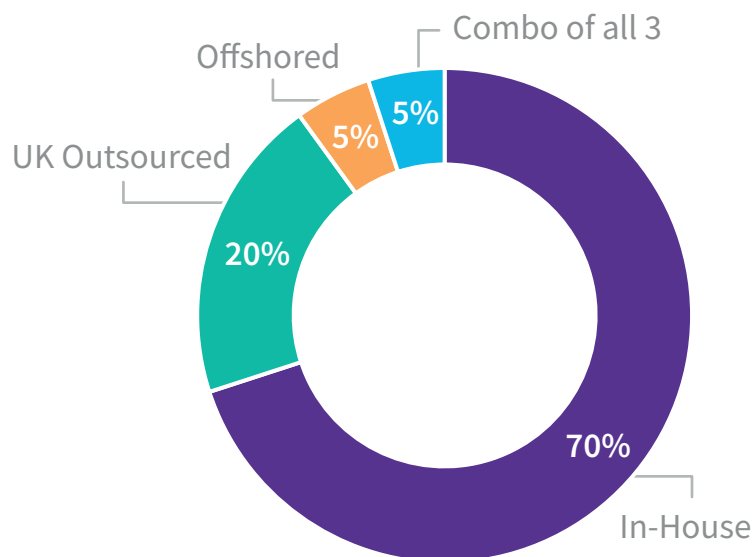
In-House

When we asked about their customer service offering, we realised that most in-house teams were **struggling to provide basic expectations of customer care**.

But how does this affect their brand during busy times?

Does it affect them at all? Of all the companies we talked to, **63% had experienced an influx of customer contacts**. We took a look at how they handled the sudden increase in volume and what the outcomes of succeeding or failing were for each business.

Is your company's customer service...?*

50%

25%

0%

24/7

Omnichannel

AI/Automation

Multilingual

*Companies with in-house teams
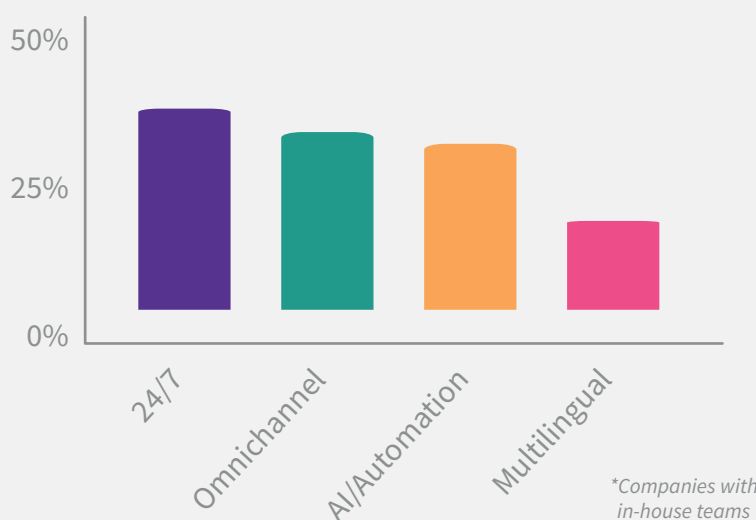
The Winners

Of all the companies we spoke to...

50% did not struggle when faced with a sudden rise in contact volumes.

56% said their **current offering was enough** to cover the rise in contact volumes.

44% were able to **scale up their customer care** team effectively.

Only 19% of those that expanded their customer service team were **in-house teams**.

87% agreed that scaling up helped **minimise the negative impact** of this sudden increase!
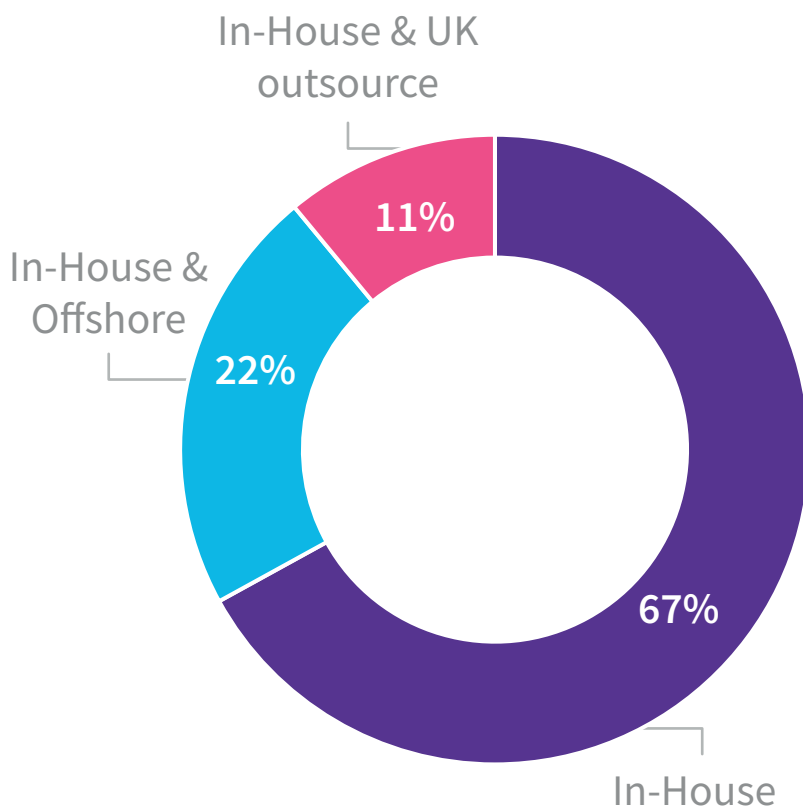
The Losers

Of all the companies we spoke to...

23% struggled to scale effectively when faced with a sudden rise in contacts.

Of these, **67%** were **exclusively in-house teams**.

only 11% of brands with a combination of **in-house and UK outsourced teams had difficulty**.

And **none of the outsourced teams struggled** at all.

In-House & UK outsource

11%

In-House & Offshore

22%

67%

In-House

The Untested

But what about the companies that said they had yet to face a sudden influx of customer contacts? Well, we spoke to them too, just to see if they felt prepared.

37% of companies **haven't dealt with a large influx** of contacts.

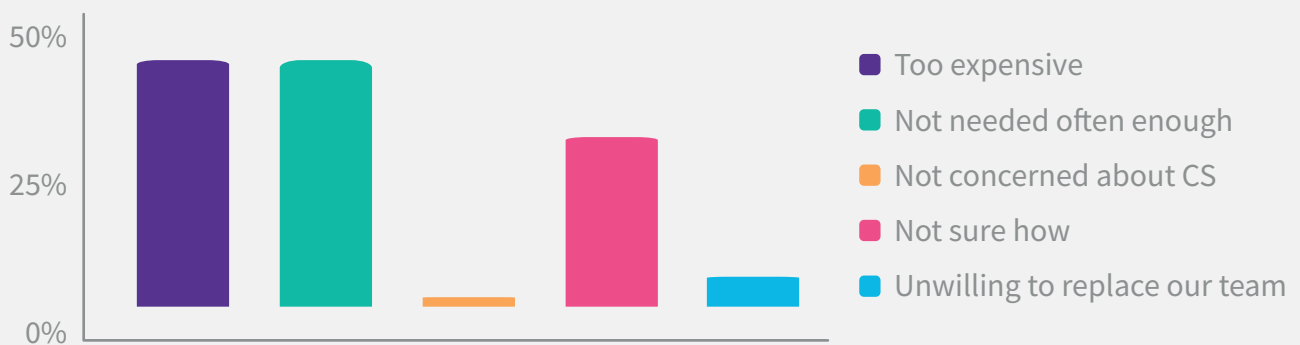**41%** are **uncertain** if they could handle a sudden influx in contacts.

47% believe their **current team could handle** an increase in volume.

Only **12%** think their customer service team could **scale up effectively**.

The Scale-Up

We spoke to the brands that **struggled to increase the number of advisors on their customer care team**. These brands care about the service they're providing, with **96%** agreeing that **customer service (CS) is a big concern** for them. And **83%** of those businesses would even be **willing to replace their in-house team** if necessary. So why didn't they scale up when it was needed?

Why can't your business expand its customer care team?

Legend:
- Too expensive
- Not needed often enough
- Not concerned about CS
- Not sure how
- Unwilling to replace our team

With most brands saying that scaling up their team is either **too expensive or not needed often enough to warrant the cost**, it's not surprising that these businesses were unable to deal with a rise in contact volumes.

And, with **33% of businesses unsure how to even arrange cover**, finding the right customer care partner is vital. Remember, those teams that were outsourced in the UK faced no problems providing extra coverage!

43% of businesses were **unable to scale** up. Only **11% could scale up** at short notice.

The Consequences

As many as **95%** of companies that failed to scale their customer care team **reported some kind of adverse effect**. **70%** of those were **exclusively in-house teams**. The only businesses that reported no direct adverse effects were using a combination of in-house and outsourced UK teams.

Of all the outcomes, **unhappy staff** tops the chart with **82% of companies affected**. This could cause problems if it leads to a high turnover or a **lack of motivation within the team**.

Beyond unhappy staff, businesses also suffered high rates of **negative reviews**, **reduced brand sentiment**, and even **negative media coverage**.

82% of companies said their **staff were unhappy due to the increase in demand**.

What were the results of failing to handle the increase in contact volumes?

Legend:
- Negative reviews
- Less customer spending
- Reduced brand sentiment
- Customer migration
- Negative media coverage
- Unhappy staff
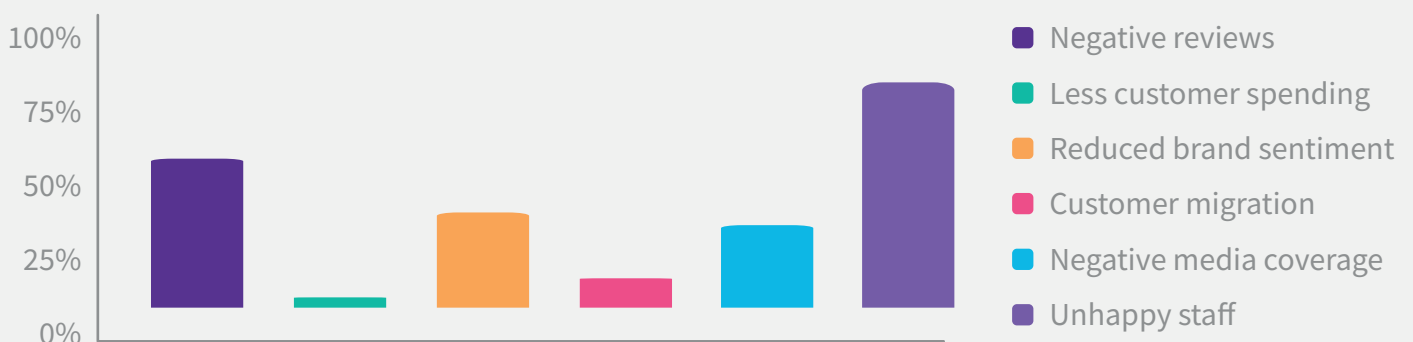
The Conclusion

It's clear that although some brands were able to handle an increase in customer contacts, **many are as yet untested or simply unable to scale effectively**.

Despite 96% of companies caring about their customer service offering, **they still feel that implementing emergency cover doesn't warrant the cost**. Or, as 33% of companies reported, they're **unsure how to even scale at all**.

And the consequences of failing to help customers effectively during busy times aren't small. With frustrated staff and negative attention in the form of reviews and media coverage, **can brands really afford *not* to spend the money** when it becomes necessary?

And is it possible that companies are simply **misinformed about those costs**? After all, **companies that outsourced** their customer care to a trusted UK provider **were more than capable of handling an increase in contacts**. It all comes down to finding the right partner that can help companies **swiftly scale up and down at short notice**.