



# Customer Contact Focus for **Mid-Sized Businesses**

July 2021

A CCMA Research Initiative

Supporting Partner

**diabolocom**  
Customer interaction. Augmented.

## Introduction

Customers want the same things regardless of whether they are buying from a small or a large provider. The same expectations that apply to the biggest brands, such as being able to use the channel of the customer's choice and receive prompt resolution of queries, apply equally to businesses of all sizes.

According to the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, at the start of 2019 there were 35,600 businesses in the UK with 50 to 249 employees, contributing 15.4% of all UK business turnover. The number of mid-sized businesses (MSBs) has been growing faster than small or large businesses<sup>1</sup>.

MSBs are a critical part of the UK's economy. As with large corporates they often have sizeable customer bases and a regular need to interact with their customers. They do not necessarily have the same level of resources that corporates do but compared with corporates they benefit from being comparatively nimble and in some cases less encumbered by legacy processes and systems which hinder efficiency and customer experience.

In this research we explore the landscape of the medium-sized business in the UK and look at how these businesses are currently serving their customers.

## Research methodology

Led by the CCMA's Research Director, Stephen Yap, this is a quantitative research study comprising n=500 online interviews conducted from 23-28 April 2021.

To be eligible for the study participants fulfilled the following criteria:

- Working full or part-time in a customer-facing role for a business employing 30-500 people within the following sectors: financial services, healthcare, IT, manufacturing, transport and logistics
- Business must have at least 10 different customers.

The composition of the sample was as follows:

### Number of employees

30-49	50-99	100-249	250-500
78	138	169	115

### Region

East Midlands	East of England	London	North East England	North West England	Northern Ireland	Scotland
42	40	98	20	68	8	33

South East England	South West England	Wales	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
48	34	16	57	36

### Sector

Financial Services	Healthcare	IT	Manufacturing	Transport and Logistics
99	151	105	116	29

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2019/business-population-estimates-for-the-uk-and-regions-2019-statistical-release-html>

## Foreword by CCMA

I am delighted to present this latest research which was designed to fill a gap in knowledge when it comes to mid-sized businesses (MSBs) in the UK.

Mid-sized businesses have the same need for constant communication with their customers and the same opportunities and challenges as their larger counterparts, yet not necessarily the same access to resources. In partnership with Diabolocom, we at the CCMA wanted to take the opportunity to put the spotlight on MSBs.

Not all MSBs realise that they have a contact centre. However, regardless of whether customer contact is handled by a dedicated team or distributed across staff who also handle other responsibilities, the distinction actually doesn't matter: customers expect a good experience when interacting with businesses,

and the ability to deliver a superior experience is a source of competitive advantage.

In this research we showcase how often MSBs interact with their customers through a variety of channels. We discover that different industry sectors have different strengths and opportunity areas. Perhaps the most telling of all of the insights packed into this report is the impact that a CRM system makes. In this research we quantify exactly how CRM makes a difference to customer experience and the wider business benefits that CRM brings.



**Leigh Hopwood,**  
CEO, CCMA

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## Forward by Diabolocom

We at Diabolocom, pride ourselves in supporting businesses to build great experiences for their customers. Small-to-medium sized organisations play an important role as so often, they are the companies that provide vital services and products that drive global innovation and local economy – a notion that as a mid-sized business ourselves we are passionate about.

The findings in this research support that which we have long suspected and have built our service around; that good customer experiences are driven by building from a platform that can adapt to your unique business needs, can support your customers preferred channel of communication and has the capability to support vital business processes such as compliant payments and holistic customer views.

Perhaps not unsurprisingly to us here at Diabolocom, the findings support the importance

of using a voice solution. Voice and email remains the most commonly used channel not only for inbound customers to interact with a customer service representative, but also for outbound sales and marketing communications also.

Voice for MSBs becomes arguably more vital when in support of building customer interaction capability, not only because of its innate ease of access for both customers and businesses alike, but also for its ability to be a channel for compliant payments, and when integrated with other tools such as a CRM, we are able to definitively see the positive impact that a platform such as Diabolocom brings to organisations.

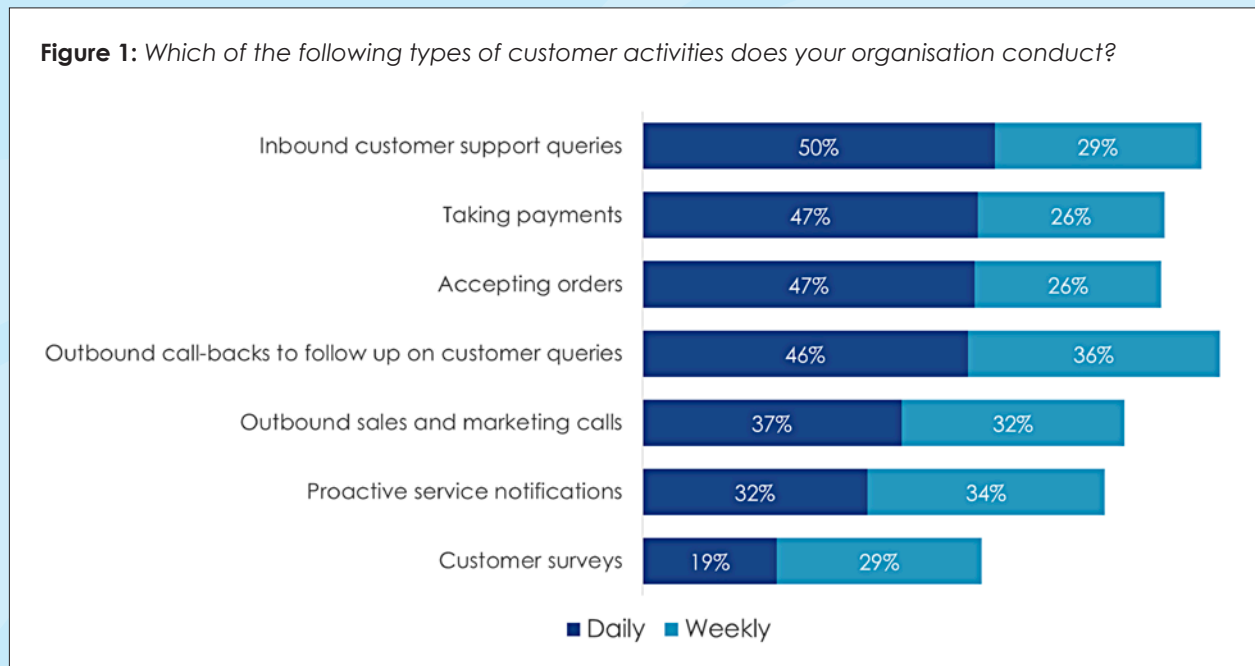


**Frédéric Durand,**  
CEO, Diabolocom

## Handling customer content

### Why do customers contact mid-sized businesses (MSBs)?

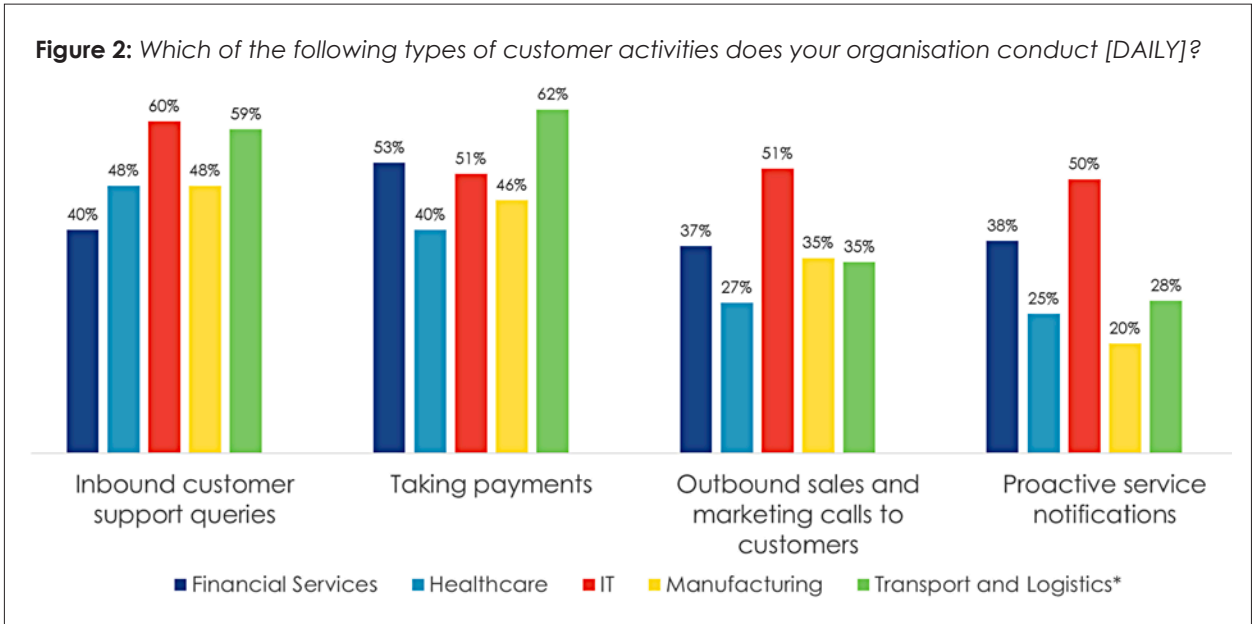
Mid-sized businesses handle a large variety of customer interactions with a high degree of frequency. As shown in Figure 1, half of all MSBs provide inbound customer support on a daily basis, while almost half accept orders, take payments and call back customers every day.



Base = All (n=500)

**Almost half of people working for MSBs say their organisations receive payments (47%), accept orders (47%) and handle inbound customer support (50%) on a daily basis**

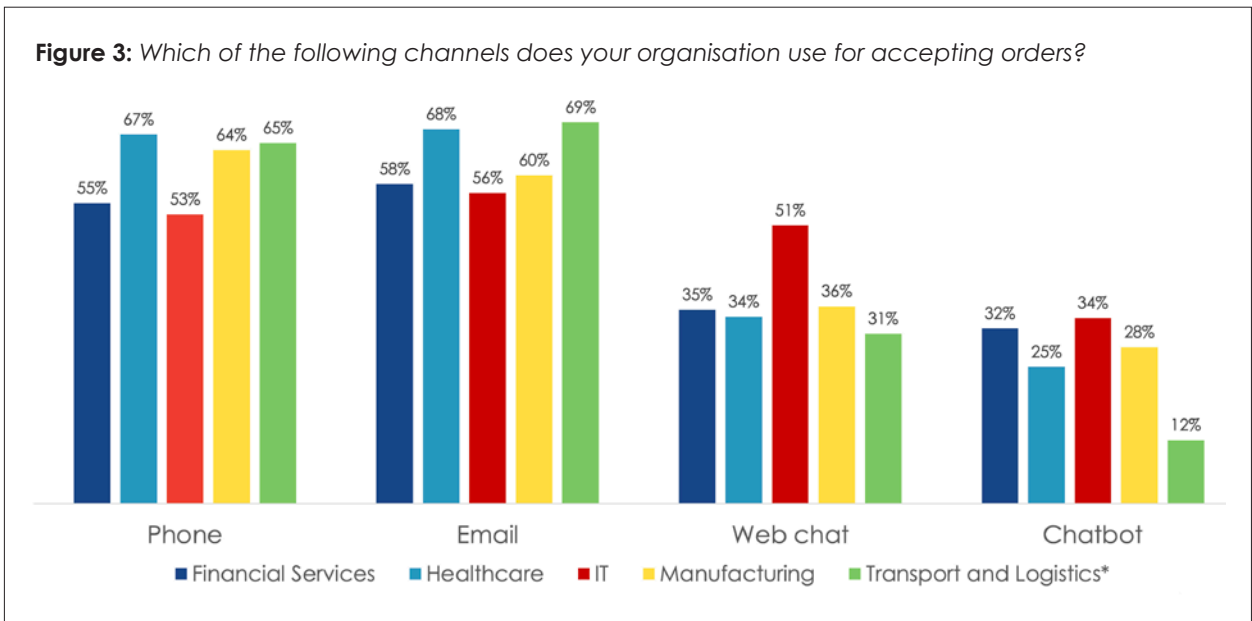
Some differences are observed by sector. Financial Services and Transport and Logistics businesses are most likely to handle inbound customer support on a daily basis. The evidence from the IT sector suggests that they are more likely to conduct outbound sales and marketing calls as well as proactive service notifications.



Base = Financial Services n=99, Healthcare n=151, IT n=105, Manufacturing n=106, Transport and Logistics n=29 (\*small base)

## Which channels do MSBs offer for customer contact?

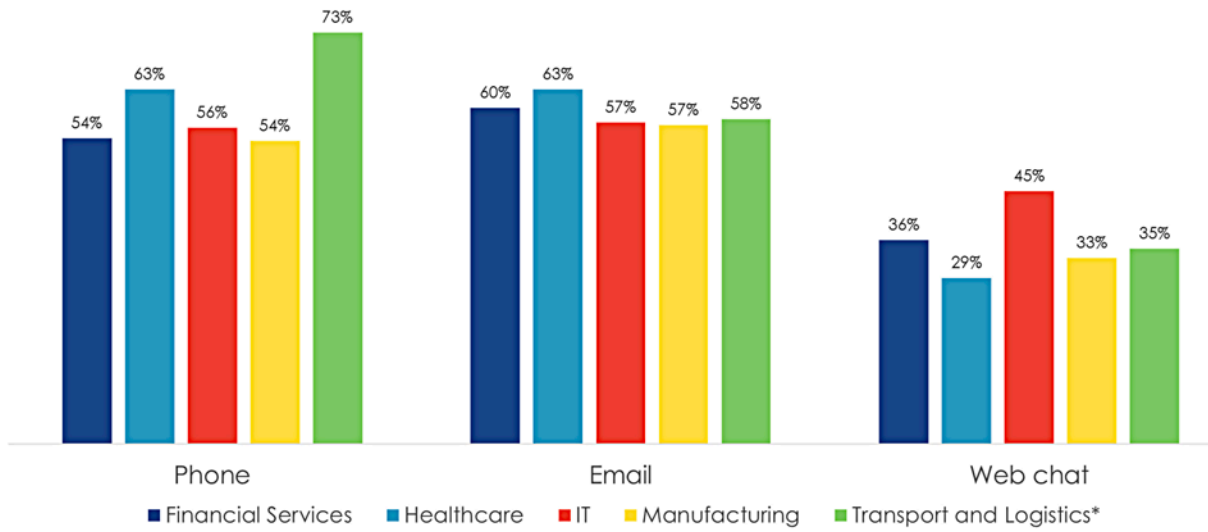
Across all sectors and different types of customer interactions, phone and email are the most commonly-used contact channels as illustrated in Figures 3-5. However web chat is becoming widespread, with the IT industry leading the way in web chat deployment. 51% of MSBs in the IT sector now accept orders over web chat.



Base = Financial Services n=88, Healthcare n=109, IT n=101, Manufacturing n=109, Transport and Logistics n=26 (\*small base)

IT businesses also lead the way in taking payments over web chat, which is offered by 45% of MSBs in the IT sector. The healthcare sector lags behind other sectors in terms of web chat enabled payments but is ahead of most when it comes to taking payments over the phone. The Transport and Logistics sector is further ahead still, with three in every four Transport and Logistics MSBs (73%) able to take payments by telephone.

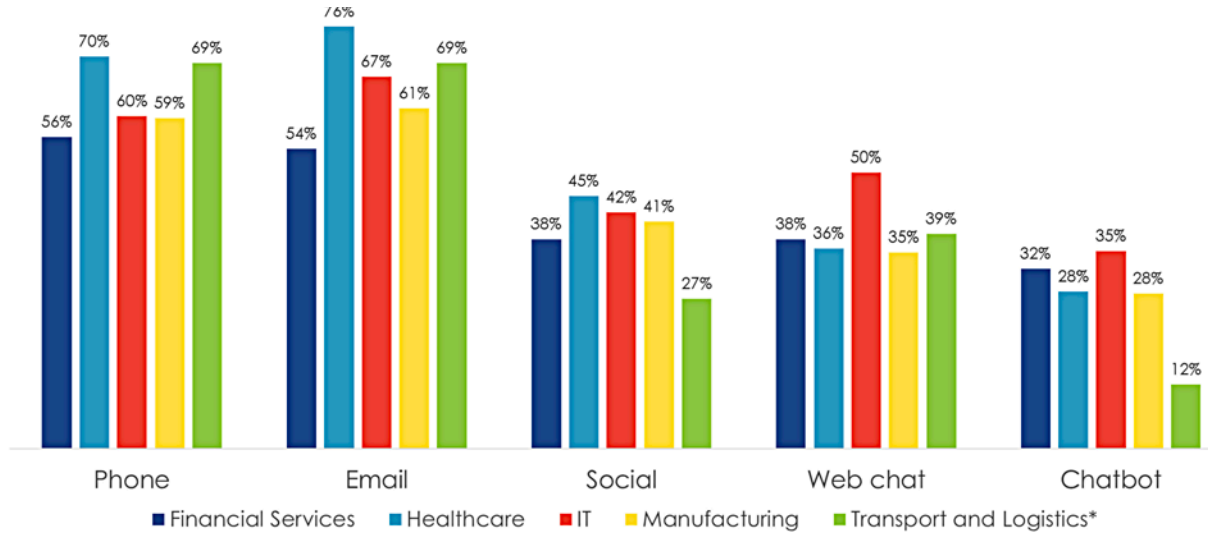
Figure 4: Which of the following channels does your organisation use for taking payments?



Base = Financial Services n=94, Healthcare n=119, IT n=98, Manufacturing n=106, Transport and Logistics n=26 (\*small base)

**Transport and Logistics businesses lead the way in taking payments by phone, which are accepted by 73% of MSBs in this sector**

Figure 5: Which of the following channels does your organisation use for inbound customer support?



Base: Financial Services n=93, Healthcare n=128, IT n=99, Manufacturing n=108, Transport and Logistics n=26 (\*small base)

While phone and email are the most popular channels across all sectors, live web chat is also used by many MSBs particularly in the IT sector.

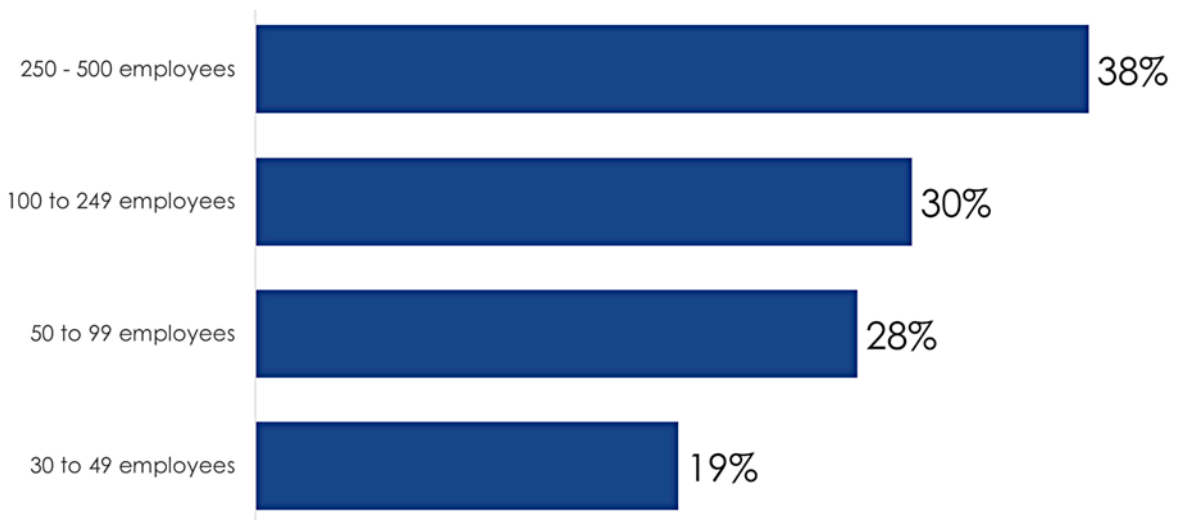
## 50% of people working for MSBs in the IT sector say their businesses offer web chat for inbound customer support compared with 35-39% of people working in other sectors

Healthcare and Transport and Logistics businesses are the most likely to offer phone and email availability to take orders and payments and for customer support, although it should be noted that the Healthcare sector leads the way in offering customer support via social (47% compared with 41% for medium businesses overall).

## 41% of people working for MSBs say their businesses provide customer support over social channels

Given their greater access to resources it is perhaps not a surprise that larger businesses are currently more likely than smaller ones to be deploying digital channels such as live web chat and chatbots. As Figure 6 illustrates, twice as many businesses with 250-500 employees are using chatbots for inbound customer support compared with businesses with 30-49 employees.

**Figure 6:** Which of the following channels does your organisation use for inbound customer support [CHATBOT]?

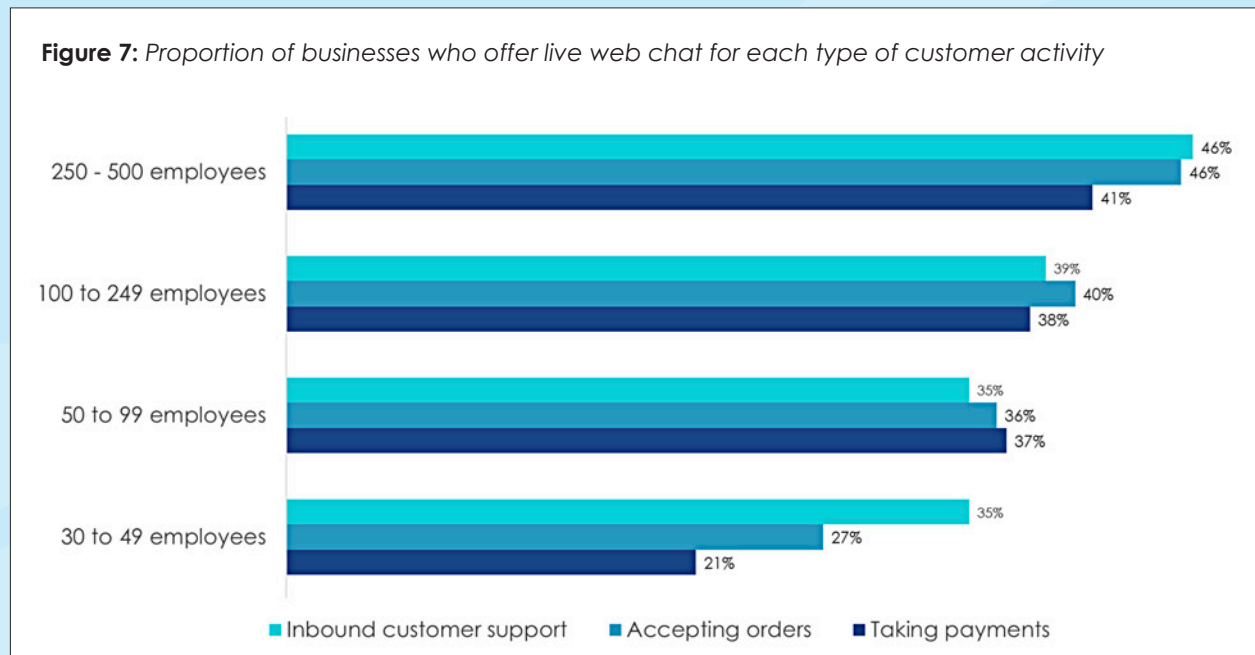


Base: 30 to 49 employees n=72, 50 to 99 employees n=127, 100 to 249 employees n=153, 250 to 500 employees n=102

While chatbots are more established for larger organisations, live web chat is fairly widespread across all businesses regardless of size. As shown in Figure 7, one third (35%) of businesses with 30-49 staff are already

using web chat for customer support. This reflects the cost-effective and accessible provision of web chat solutions within modern contact platforms. However, smaller businesses are less likely than larger ones to be using web chat for payments, which no doubt reflects the extra cost and complexity of offering PCI-compliant payment solutions in the live-chat channel.

**Figure 7:** Proportion of businesses who offer live web chat for each type of customer activity



Base: Businesses who provide each customer activity

**One third (35%) of businesses with 30-49 staff and 46% of those with 250-500 staff are using web chat for customer support**

## Who leads the way in payments processing?

Some sectors are further ahead than others when it comes to payments processing, as rated by staff working in each sector.

As shown in Figure 8, the financial services sector scored the highest by people working in the sector for 'Making it easy for customers to pay' and 'Taking payments in a compliant way'. This may not be a surprise considering the nature of the work those businesses do.

However, ratings for IT and Transport and Logistics businesses (from people working in these sectors) are some way behind the scores for Financial Services, particularly when it comes to 'Taking payments in a compliant way'. Only 31% of people working in Transport and Logistics and 32% of people working in IT rated their employers as 'excellent' in taking payments in a compliant way, indicating there is room for improvement in these sectors in particular.



Base: Financial Services n=94, Healthcare n=119, Manufacturing n=153, IT n=106, Transport and Logistics n=26 (\*small base)

**Just 40% of staff rate their employers 'excellent' at 'taking payments in a compliant way' – there is room to improve**

## MSB contact centre strengths and areas of focus by sector

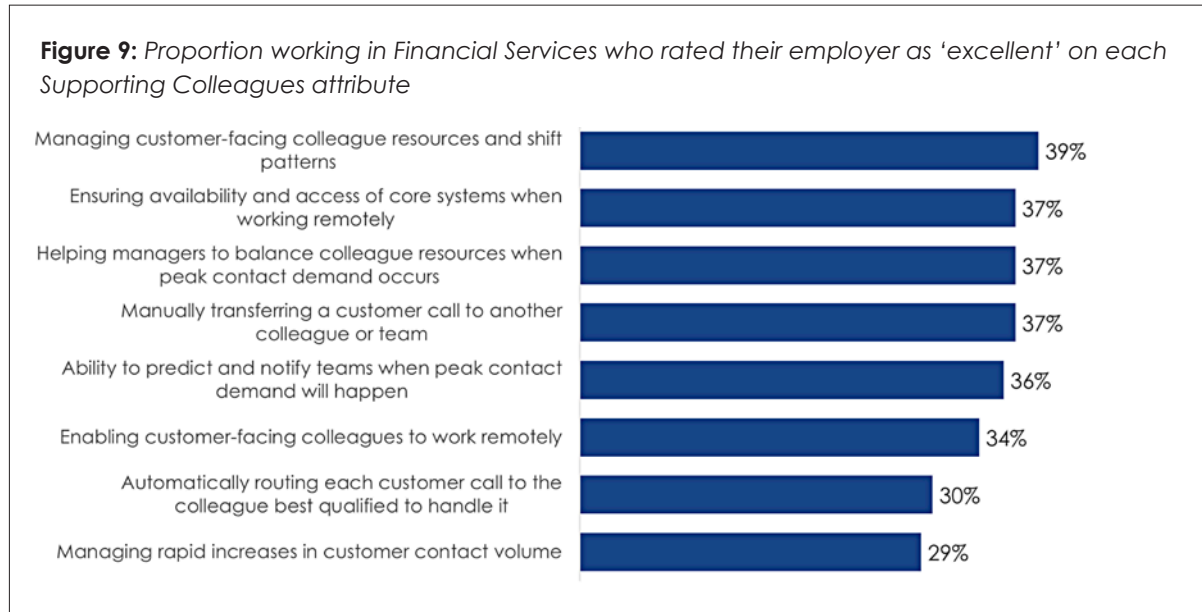
In the following section we deep dive into each sector individually to explore strengths and areas for potential improvements for contact centres in each business sector.

Survey participants were asked to rate their employer across a series of attributes. For comparison purposes these attributes are grouped into two clusters: Supporting Colleagues and Customer Focus. The attributes included in each cluster are shown as follows.

Supporting Colleagues	Customer Focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to predict and notify teams when peak contact demand will happen</li> <li>• Automatically routing each customer call to the colleague best qualified to handle it</li> <li>• Enabling customer-facing colleagues to work remotely</li> <li>• Ensuring availability and access of core systems when working remotely</li> <li>• Helping managers to balance employee resources when peak contact demand occurs</li> <li>• Managing customer-facing colleagues and shift patterns</li> <li>• Managing rapid increases in customer contact volume</li> <li>• Manually transferring a customer call to another colleague or team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collecting and storing accurate and up-to-date information about customers</li> <li>• Enabling all customer details to be viewed in one place</li> <li>• Enabling the customer to use their preferred channels to interact with the organisation</li> <li>• Equipping colleagues with information about customer history and profile</li> <li>• Identify whether customers are new or existing</li> <li>• Joining up different technology platforms so they work in an integrated way</li> <li>• Using customer feedback to improve processes and products</li> </ul>

## Focus on Financial Services

When looking at Supporting Colleagues, the strongest ratings within the Financial Services sector are observed for 'managing customer-facing staff resources and shift patterns.' Financial Services MSBs are weaker when it comes to 'automatically routing each customer call to the colleague best qualified to handle it' and 'managing rapid increases in customer contact volume'.



Base: Financial Services n=94

When it comes to Customer Focus, the strengths of Financial Services businesses are 'using customer feedback to improve processes and products' and 'equipping colleagues with information about customer history and profile.' The greatest room for improvement is 'enabling all customer details to be viewed in one place' and 'joining up different technology platforms so they work in an integrated way'.



Base: Financial Services n=94

## Focus on Healthcare

For the Healthcare sector, Supporting Colleagues strengths include 'manually transferring a customer call to another staff member or team' and 'managing customer-facing staff resources and shift patterns.'

The greatest room for improvement within Supporting Colleagues for MSBs in Healthcare is in 'ensuring availability and access of core systems when working remotely' and 'enabling customer-facing staff to work remotely'.

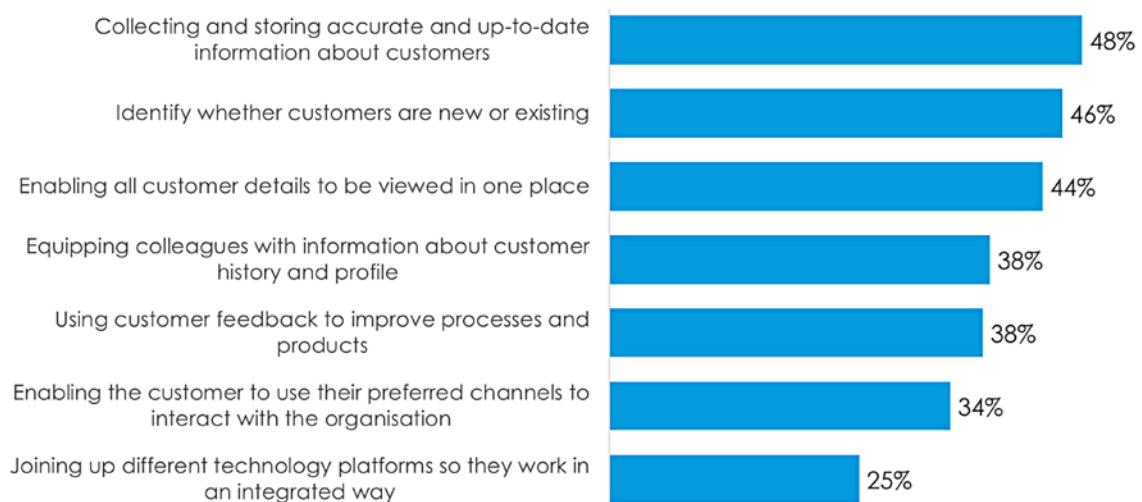
**Figure 11:** Proportion working in Healthcare who rated their employer as 'excellent' on each Supporting Colleagues attribute



Base: Healthcare n=119

Turning to Customer Focus, Healthcare MSBs are strongest when it comes to 'collecting and storing accurate and up-to-date information about customers'. Only 25% of people working in Healthcare rated their employer as 'excellent' at 'joining up technology platforms so they work in an integrated way', which emphasises the ongoing presence of legacy systems in the Healthcare sector.

**Figure 12:** Proportion working in Healthcare who rated their employer as 'excellent' on each Customer Focus attribute



Base: Healthcare n=119

## Focus on IT

In stark comparison to the Healthcare sector where colleague ratings around remote working provision are comparatively weak, 'enabling customer-facing staff to work remotely' is a Supporting Colleagues strength within the IT sector. On the other hand, 'managing customer-facing staff resources and shift patterns', a comparative strength in other sectors, receives the lowest proportion of 'excellent' ratings within the IT sector. This no doubt reflects the unpredictable demand patterns and 'always on' and mission-critical nature of IT contact centres.

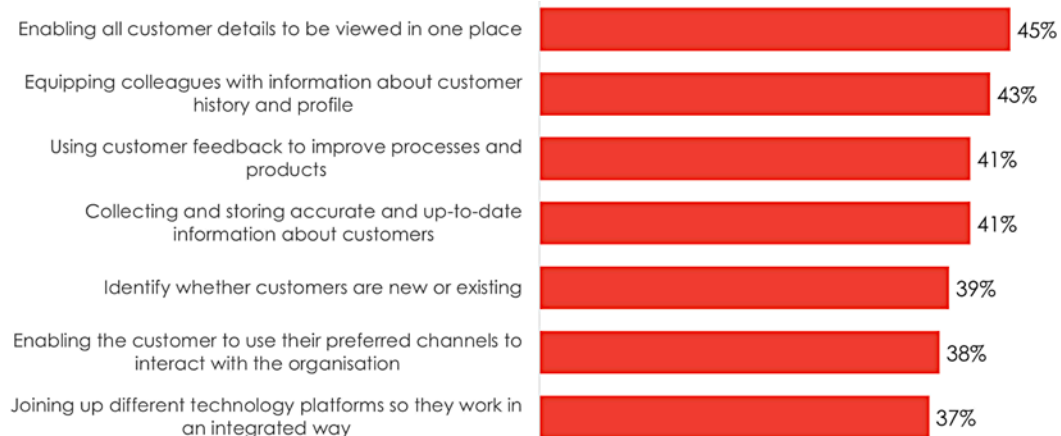
**Figure 13:** Proportion working in IT who rated their employer as 'excellent' on each Supporting Colleagues attribute



Base: IT n=98

In terms of Customer Focus, IT scores comparatively highly for 'enabling customer details to be viewed in one place'. On the other hand, the IT industry also suffers from the same challenges of legacy platforms and silos experienced in other sectors: comparatively lower ratings are observed for 'joining up different technology platforms so they work in an integrated way.' The IT sector also receives relatively lower ratings for 'enabling the customer to use their preferred channels to interact with the organisation'.

**Figure 14:** Proportion working in IT who rated their employer as 'excellent' on each Customer Focus attribute



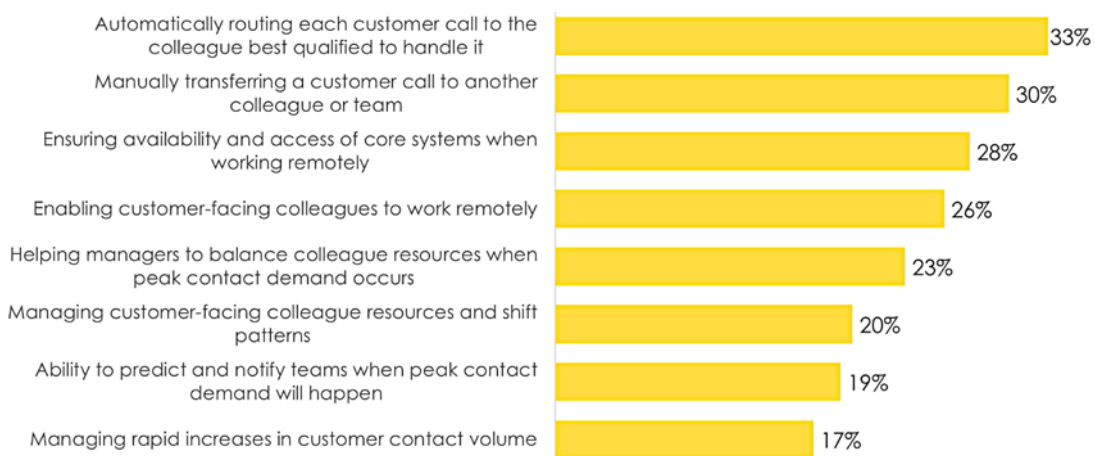
Base: IT n=98

## Focus on Manufacturing

Within Supporting Colleagues, MSBs in Manufacturing perform strongest at 'automatically routing each customer call to the staff member best qualified to handle it' and 'manually transferring a customer call to another staff member or team'.

Supporting Colleagues ratings for Manufacturing MSBs are comparatively lower for 'managing rapid increases in customer contact volume' and 'ability to notify teams when peak contact demand will happen'.

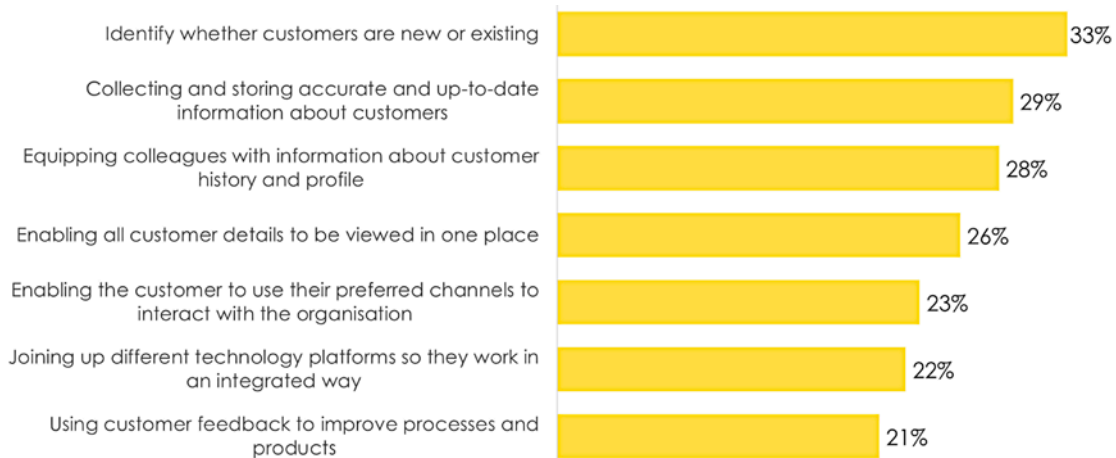
**Figure 15:** Proportion working in Manufacturing who rated their employer as 'excellent' on each Supporting Colleagues attribute



Base: Manufacturing n=153

When it comes to Customer Focus, Manufacturing MSBs are strongest at 'identifying whether customers are new or existing' and weakest at 'using customer feedback to improve processes and products'.

**Figure 16:** Proportion working in Manufacturing who rated their employer as 'excellent' on each Customer Focus attribute



Base: Manufacturing n=153

Across both Supporting Colleagues and Customer Focus, positive ratings for Manufacturing MSBs are lower than for Financial Services, Healthcare and IT, which reflects this sector's reliance on more traditional ways of working.

## Focus on Travel and Logistics

What MSBs in Travel and Logistics firms do best in terms of Supporting Colleagues is 'managing customer-facing resources and shift patterns' and 'managing rapid increases in customer contact volume'. Only 10% of people working in Travel and Logistics rate their employer 'excellent' at 'enabling customer-facing staff to work remotely', which no doubt reflects the face-to-face orientation of the Travel and Logistics sector.

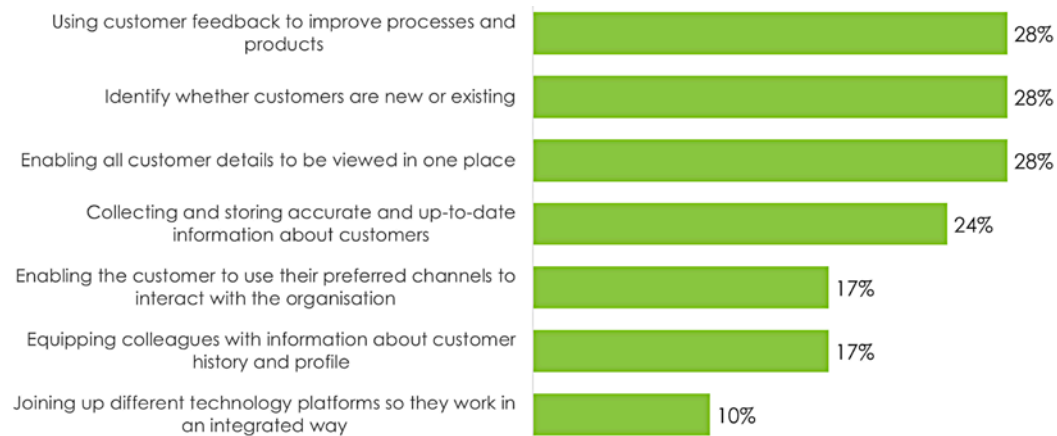
**Figure 17:** Proportion working in Travel and Logistics\* who rated their employer as 'excellent' on each Supporting Colleagues attribute



Base: Transport and Logistics n=26 (\*small base)

Customer Focus strengths for MSBs in Travel and Logistics businesses include 'using customer feedback to improve processes and products', 'identifying whether customers are new or existing' and 'enabling all customer details to be viewed in one place'. However just 10% of people working in Travel and Logistics rated their employer excellent at 'joining up different technology platforms so they work in an integrated way.'

**Figure 18:** Proportion working in Travel and Logistics\* who rated their employer as 'excellent' on each Customer Focus attribute



Base: Transport and Logistics n=26 (\*small base)

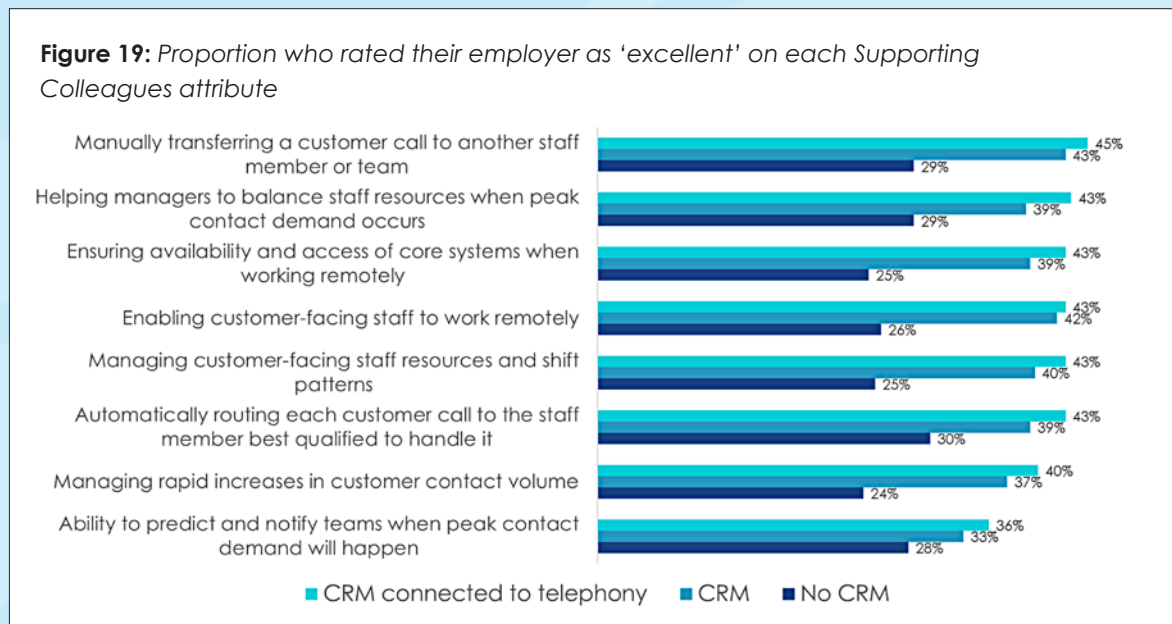
As with the Manufacturing sector, Travel and Logistics MSBs receive lower ratings than the Financial Services, Healthcare and IT sectors, which suggests that Manufacturing and Travel and Logistics firms have not yet fully embraced the potential of digital transformation.

## The impact of CRM systems

In the previous sections we have identified improvement priorities for Supporting Colleagues and Customer Focus, by industry sector. In this section, we answer the question: how would a CRM system help?

Using the same Supporting Colleagues and Customer Focus attributes as before, Figures 19 and 20 illustrate the difference in 'excellent' ratings between organisations with no CRM system, versus those with a CRM system, versus those with a CRM system that is connected to the telephony platform.

It should be noted that other than a slightly higher proportion of smaller businesses within the 'no CRM' cohort, the firmographic profile of businesses with CRM systems and those without are fairly consistent, rendering the comparison meaningful.



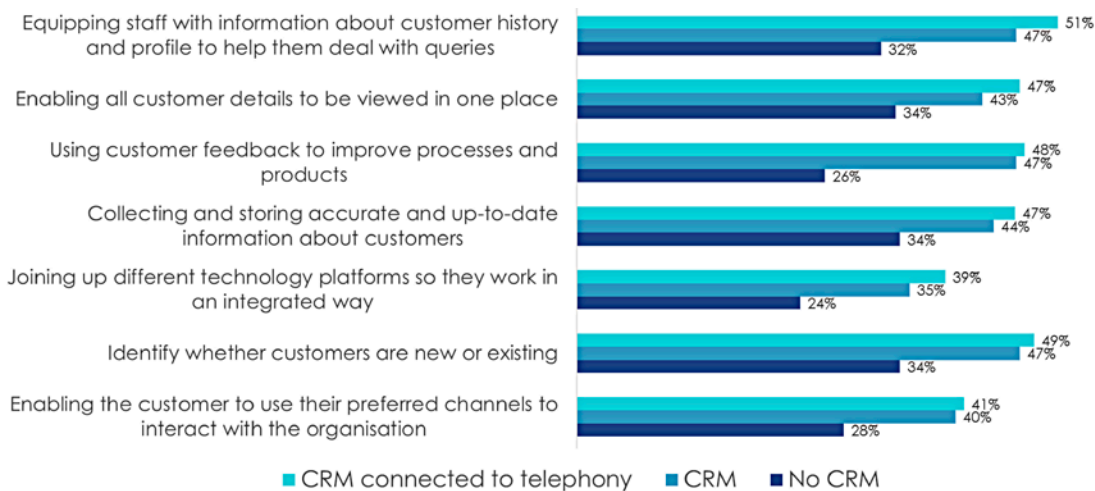
Base: have CRM connected to telephony n=36, have CRM n=202, no CRM n=198

As Figure 19 shows, across all Supporting Colleagues attributes the proportion of employees who rate their employer as 'excellent' is noticeably higher among businesses that have implemented a CRM system, versus businesses that have not. The 'uplift' in positive ratings for CRM-enabled businesses is especially sizeable for the following areas:

- 'Enabling customer-facing staff to work remotely' (42% rated 'excellent' for CRM-enabled businesses versus 26% for non-CRM)
- 'Managing customer-facing staff resources and shift patterns' (40% rated 'excellent' for CRM-enabled businesses versus 25% for non-CRM)
- An additional uplift in 'excellent' scores is observed among those businesses whose CRM system is integrated with their telephony platform.

**40% of people working in MSBs with CRM connected to telephony rated their employer 'excellent' at 'managing rapid increases in customer contact volume', versus 24% among people in businesses with no CRM system.**

**Figure 20:** Proportion who rated their employer as 'excellent' on each Customer Focus attribute



Base: have CRM connected to telephony n=36, have CRM n=202, no CRM n=198

The impact of a CRM system is also observed when it comes to Customer Focus, as shown in Figure 20. The gap in 'excellent' ratings for CRM-enabled and non-CRM capable businesses is noticeable in all areas, but is greatest when it comes to 'using customer feedback to improve processes and products', which is rated as excellent by 47% of people working in CRM-equipped businesses versus just 26% of people in businesses without a CRM system.

Once again, the proportion of 'excellent' ratings is higher still across the board among people working for businesses with a CRM platform that is connected to the telephony system. The uplift is greatest for 'equipping staff with information about customer history and profile to help them deal with queries', 'enabling all customer details to be viewed in one place' and 'joining up different technology platforms so they work in an integrated way', all of which receive an extra 4 percentage points of 'excellent' ratings compared with organisations whose CRM systems are not connected to the contact centre software.

**51% of people working in MSBs with CRM connected to telephony rated their employer 'excellent' at 'equipping staff with information about customer history and profile to help them deal with queries', versus 32% among people in businesses with no CRM system.**

The implication is clear: implementing a CRM system represents a huge leap forward in helping MSBs with Supporting Colleagues and Customer Focus. Taking the additional step of connecting the CRM platform to the contact centre platform results in further incremental gains across the board.

## Summary of findings

We hope you have enjoyed CCMA's exploration of the mid-sized business landscape and have found useful insights to guide strategy and planning for your own business. Key findings from the research are summarised as follows:

- 58% of MSBs take payments over the phone – but only 40% of people working in MSBs rate their employer “excellent” in terms of payments compliance.
- Larger businesses are more likely to have deployed chatbots, but web chat is becoming widespread even among smaller businesses.
- Financial-services businesses are the strongest performing in terms of ease of making payments as well as compliant payments.
- Healthcare businesses lead the way in offering customer support over social channels.
- IT businesses are the most likely to offer live web chat for customers.
- Transport and Logistics businesses lead other sectors in offering telephone payments but lag other sectors in deploying social and chatbots for customer support.
- Manufacturing and Transport and Logistics businesses lag those in other sectors in terms of Supporting Colleagues and Customer Focus.
- Implementing a CRM system represents a huge leap forward in helping MSBs with Supporting Colleagues and Customer Focus.

## About the CCMA

The CCMA is the longest established association representing the call centre industry in the UK. We support contact centre managers through providing opportunities to network; to openly share best practice and to increase their skills and knowledge through specialist training

Our aim is to offer timely and impartial advice to our members; to keep contact centre leaders in touch with changes in their industry; to provide credible benchmarking information and to help individuals maintain an awareness of the latest trends and developments

Our membership association is not for profit, and our board is made up of people who work full time in the industry in operational roles. We are run by our members for our members.

**For more information: [www.ccma.org.uk](http://www.ccma.org.uk) | [@CCMATalk](https://twitter.com/CCMATalk)**

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## About Diabolocom

Diabolocom is cloud-based omnichannel solution for contact centres and sales teams that natively integrates with business tools, such as CRM.

Easy to use and fast to set up, more than 350 companies in 30 countries have boosted their sales and support teams' productivity while offering an excellent customer experience to build brand loyalty. Among them, Solocal, Air Liquide, Biogaran, Essilor, Wonderbox, MeilleursAgents, Seloger and iQera.

**For more information, please visit: [www.diabolocom.com](http://www.diabolocom.com)**

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There is no better time to join us. The industry is changing and we are giving our members more opportunities to learn, to network and to support each other.

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