Exploring Chat as a Support Channel

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Service Strategies
Advancing Service Excellence

About Service Strategies

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- *Our consulting, training, standards and certification programs help you deliver better service to your clients*

- Organize community events:

    - Summits and Executive Forums

    - Best Practice Webinars

- Facilitate benchmarks and best practice sharing

Exploring Chat as a Support Channel

- Customers are increasingly comfortable with a wide range of traditional and online options for interacting with vendors.

- Chat has been widely adopted by online retailers for sales, order information and customer service.

- Chat is also widely adopted for consumer based customer support, primarily for low complexity products.

- As an industry, we must strive to deliver support in the channels our customers prefer, not the ones we prefer.

Value Proposition for Chat Support

- **Delivered Synchronously** – Once skills are developed, staff can may handle multiple simultaneous sessions.

- **Personal Interaction** – Chat provides a *presence* to the user and feels like a phone conversation since it is a real time interaction, unlike email or a posting to a forum.

- **Inexpensive Technology** - Generally, Chat technology is not overly expensive and there is very little infrastructure needed, especially in Cloud based implementations.

- **Accent Neutralization** - Chat can help mask and mitigate accent issues when you are leveraging or outsourcing support to countries that have your primary language as their secondary language.

Research Study – Chat as a Support Channel

- The 2013 "Chat as a Support Channel" study was conducted to update the 2011 study on the progress of Chat as a support channel in BtoB technical support.

- Surveyed over 160 companies that deliver primarily Enterprise and BtoB technical support.

- Approximately 60% of the respondents have medium to large organizations with over 100 support staff

- Approximately 89% support moderate to highly complex products

Customer Types Supported with Chat

What type of customers are you or do you plan on supporting with Chat?
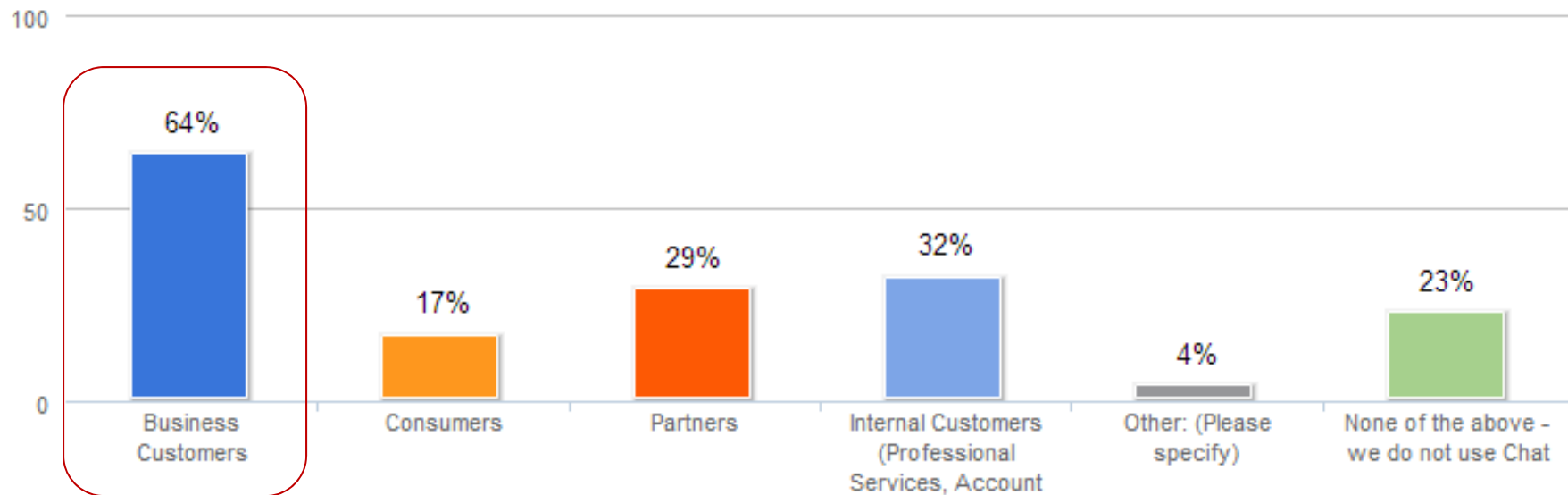
~64% of respondents are targeting business customers, same as 2011.

Study Demographics -
Complexity of Products Supported via Chat

Overall, how would you rate the complexity of the products you support with Chat?

Simple 11%

Highly Complex 45%

Moderately Complex 44%
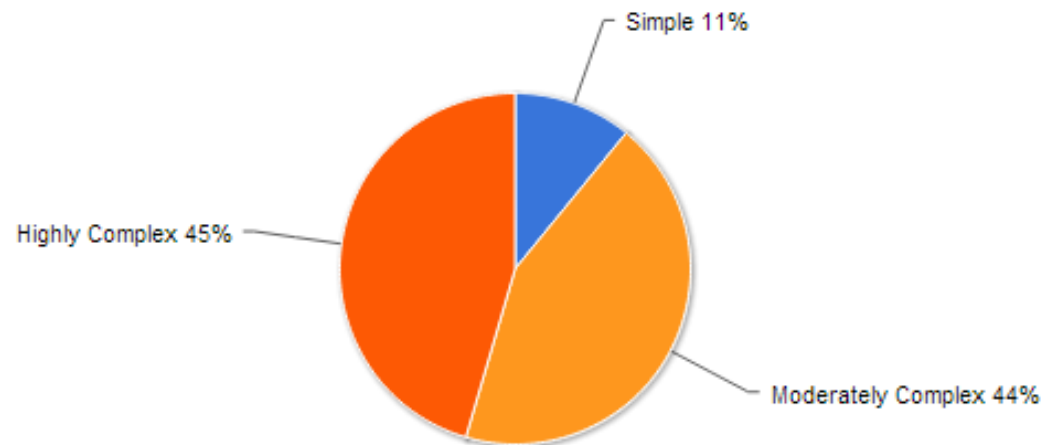
~89% of respondents have moderate to complex products.

Study Demographics -
Number of Staff in Support Organization

How many support reps do you have in your organization?
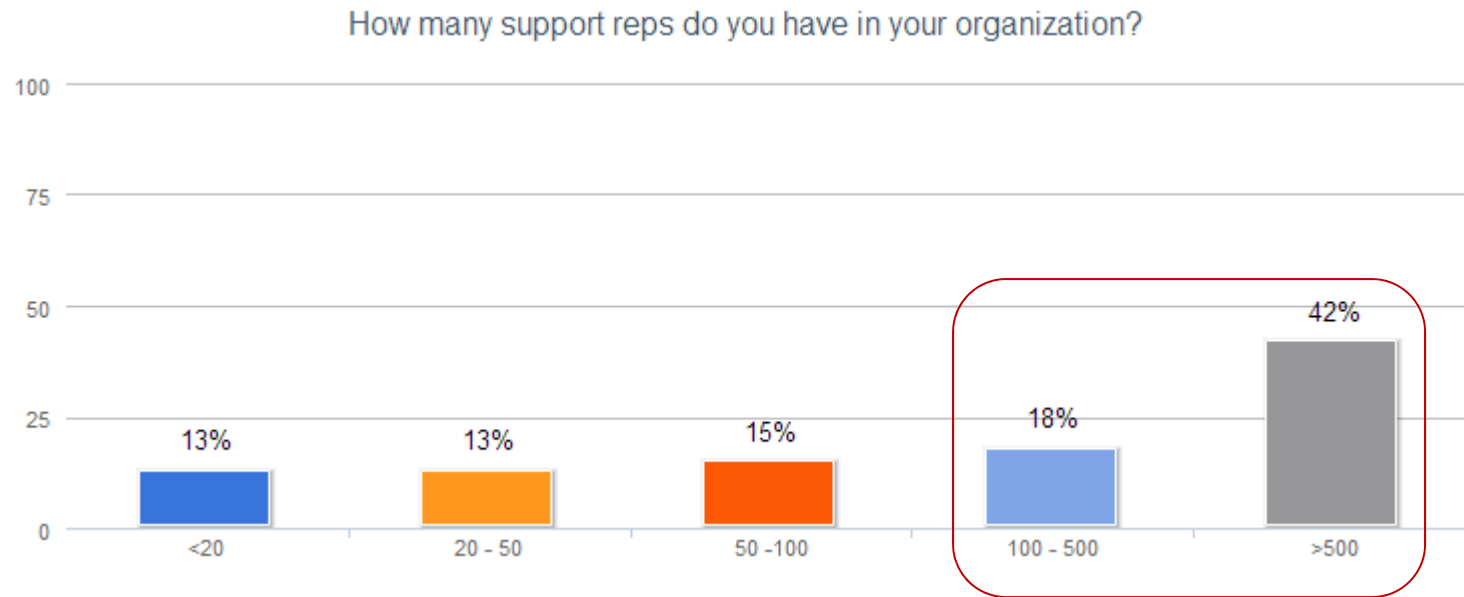
~60% of respondents have more than 100 support staff.

Summary of Findings

- Of the over 160 total respondents, only 31% are actively using Chat as a support channel in their business vs. 27% in 2011.

- The primary motivator for implementing Chat remains to improve the customer experience, followed by faster case resolution and then by support staff efficiency.

- Of those who have implemented chat, over 79% would recommend implementing Chat as a support channel.

- Approximately 45% of respondents who have not implemented Chat are unsure how it would fit into their support model.

Why Have You Chosen Not to Implement Chat?

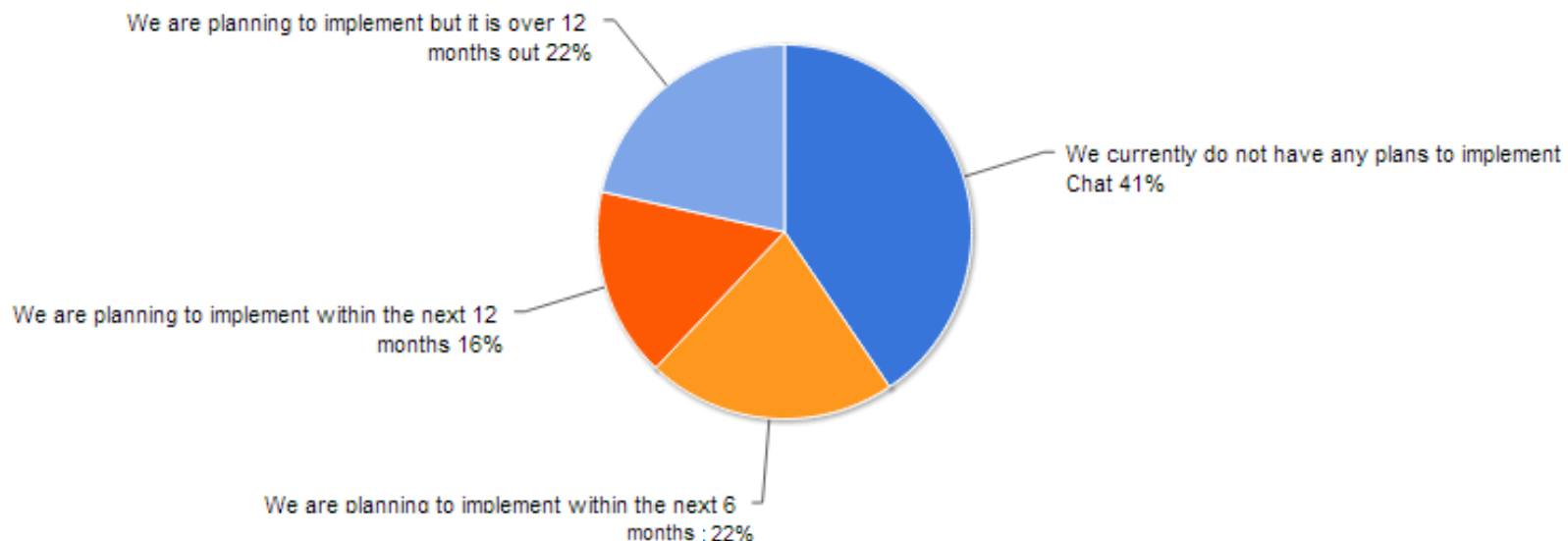Please indicate the reasons you do not offer Chat for support?
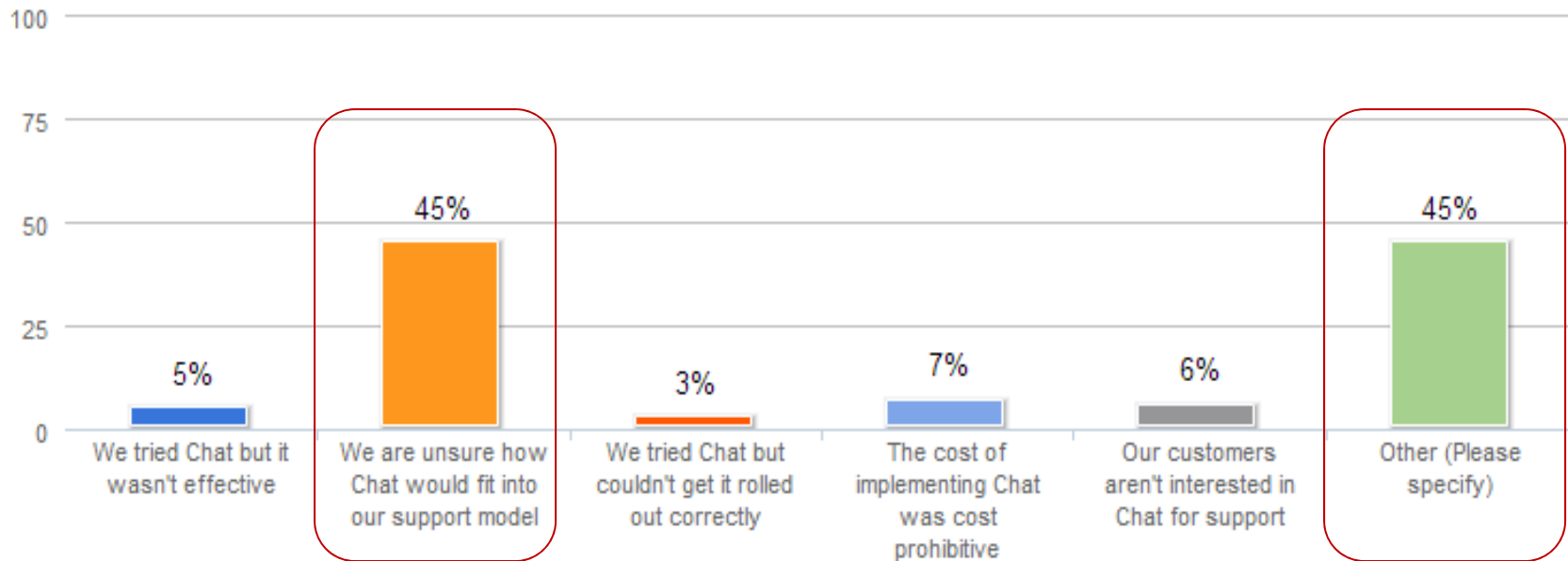
~ 45% of respondents are unsure how Chat fits in their support model.

~ 45% had a wide variety of other reasons for not implementing.

Only 6% indicated customers were not interested in Chat.

# Are Your Planning on Implementing Chat in the Future?

Are you planning on implementing Chat for support in the future?

We are planning to implement but it is over 12 months out 22%

We currently do not have any plans to implement Chat 41%

We are planning to implement within the next 12 months 16%

We are planning to implement within the next 6 months : 22%

59% of respondents who have not deployed chat are planning to in the future.

How Long has Chat been Offered?
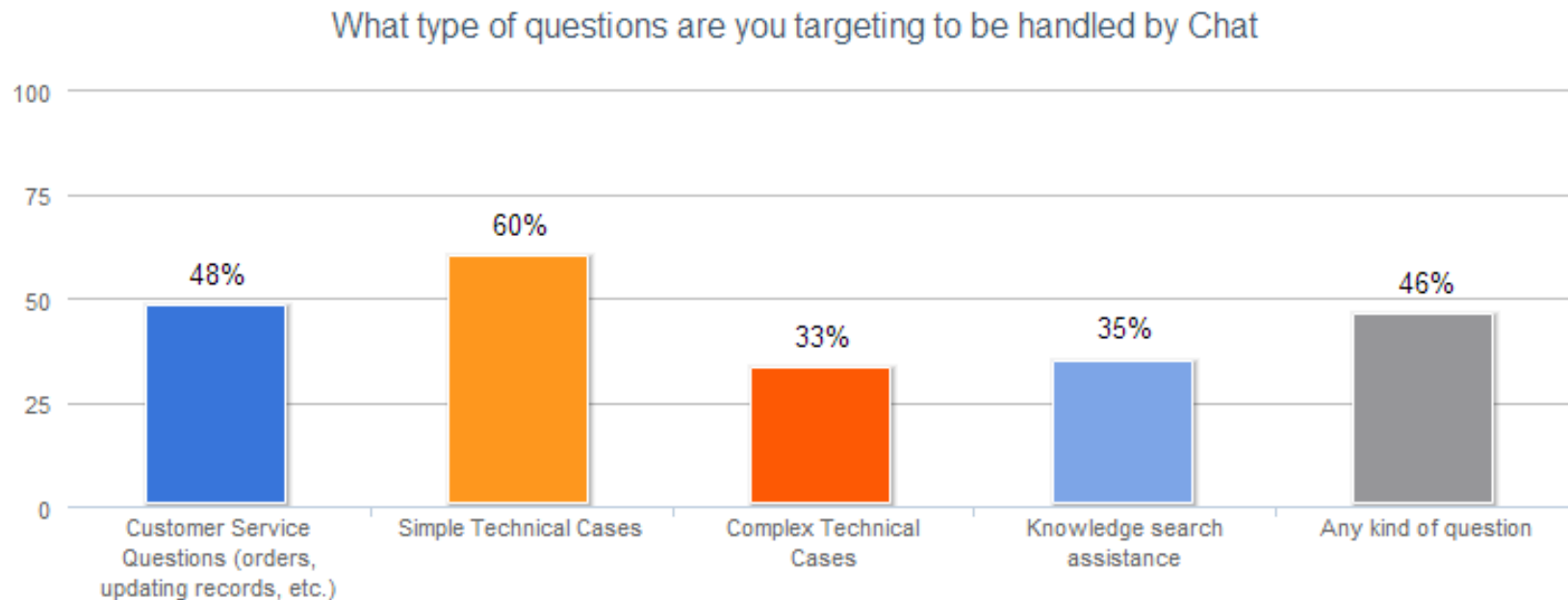
How long have you offered Chat for support?

Less than 1 year 11%

Over 3 years 43%

1 - 3 years 45%
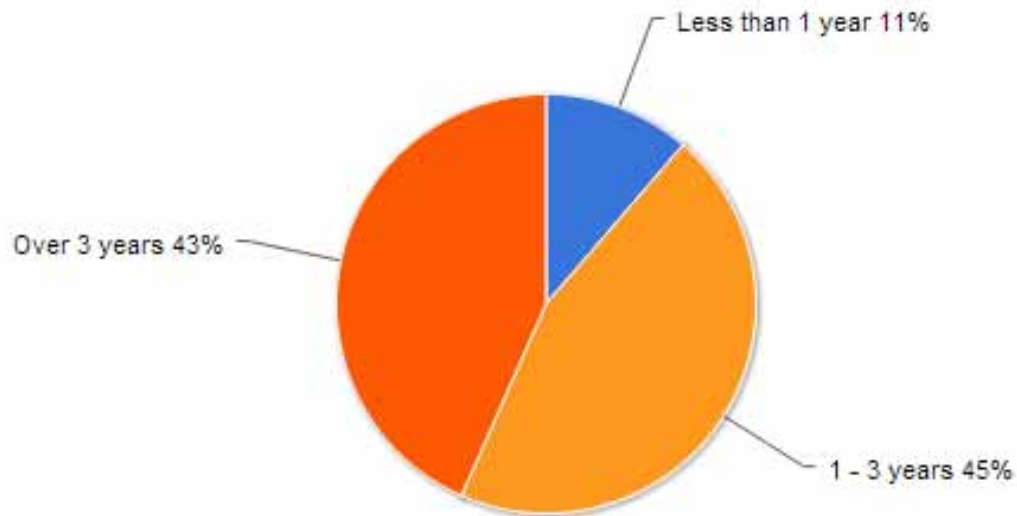
57% of respondents who offer chat have offered it for less than 3 years.

Where Does Chat Fit in the Support Model?

- **Simple Questions -** Initially targeting simple questions with Chat could provide a starting point for a broader implementation.

- **Case Updates -** Customers are often frustrated trying to get open case status updates. Providing a Chat presence to the case owner would improve this common customer complaint.

- **Knowledge Base -** Using Chat to assist customers in finding solutions in the knowledgebase encourages them to do their own searches in the future (i.e. "help me find it" services).

- **Relationship and Presence -** Account managers deliver value through their relationship with the customer. Chat can provide a tangible "presence" to the customer and can provide immediate responses to quick issues that help strengthen the relationship.

What Types of Questions are Targeted for Chat?

What type of questions are you targeting to be handled by Chat

| | 48% | 60% | 33% | 35% | 46% |

Customer Service Questions (orders, updating records, etc.) | Simple Technical Cases | Complex Technical Cases | Knowledge search assistance | Any kind of question

Over 46% of respondents target any kind of question, although simple and customer service questions dominate.

However, the number of respondents targeting complex questions increased from 10% in 2011 to 33% in the 2013 survey.

Customer Segments Targeted for Chat?

What customer segments were targeted for the Chat channel?
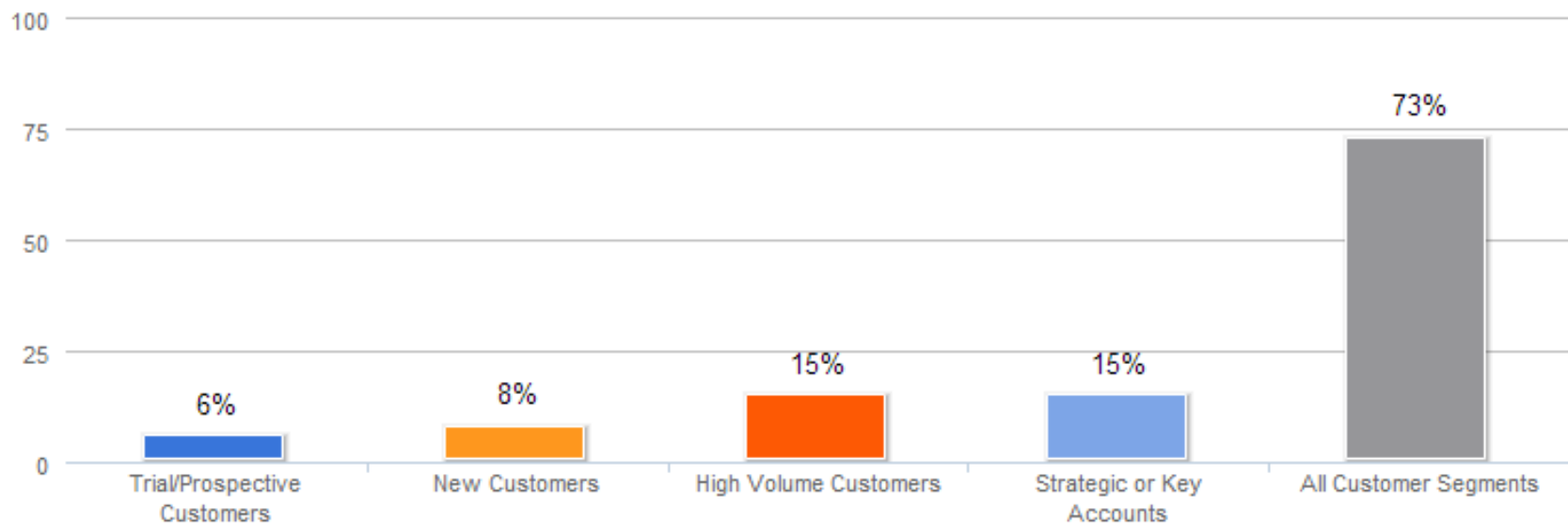
Respondents are rarely targeting specific customer segments.

73% targeted Chat for all customer segments, while only 15% or less indicated targeting a specific segment.
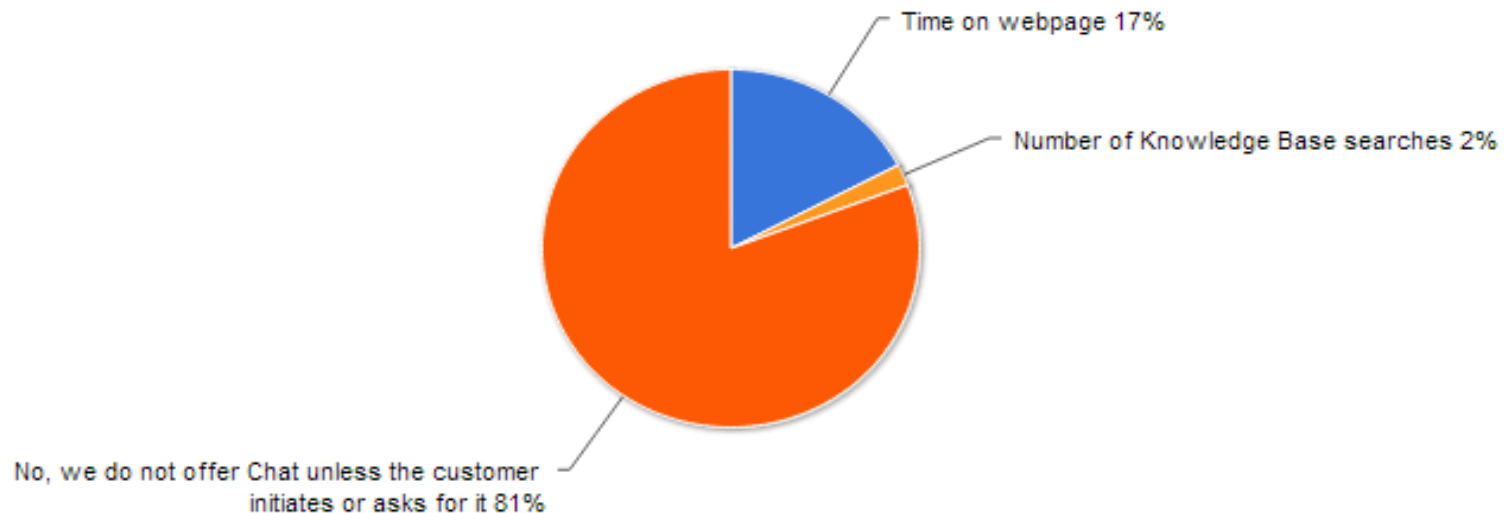
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Where is chat offered from the website?

Where is Chat offered from on your website?
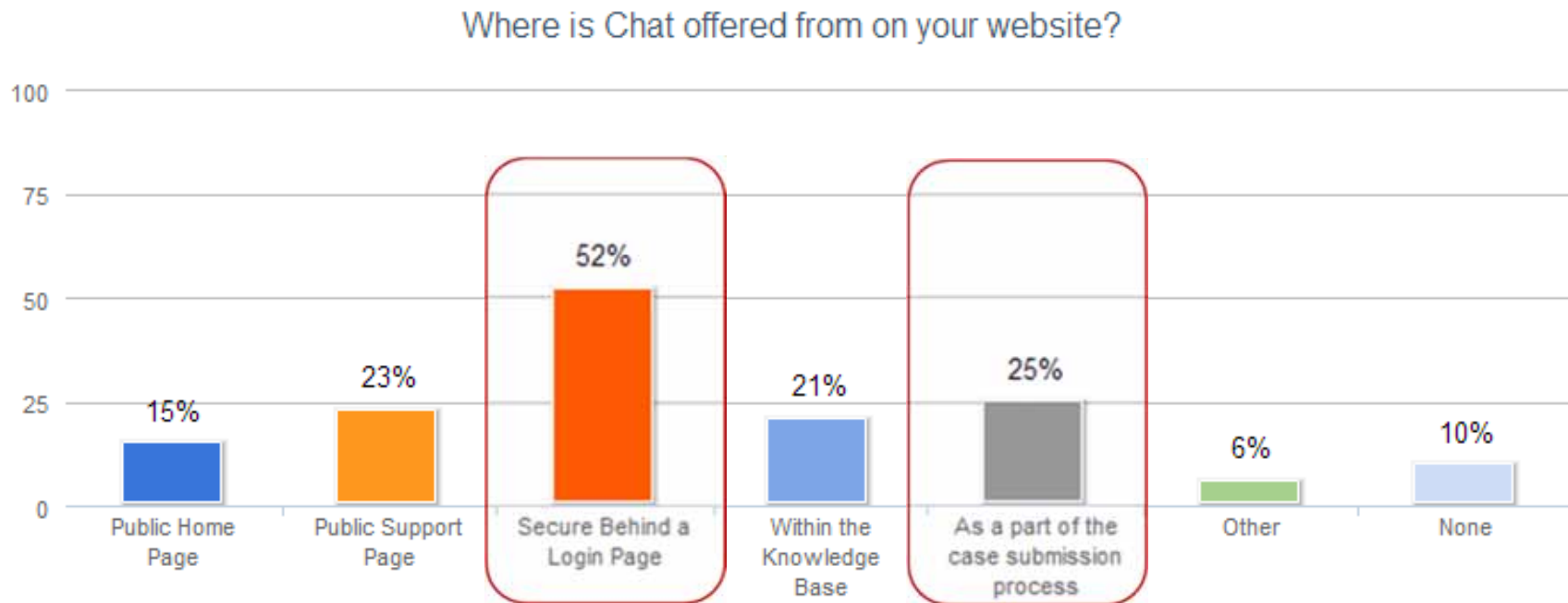
The majority offer chat behind a login or as a part of the case submission process.

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Do you Provide Pop-up Chat?

Do you provide "pop-up" Chat on your website? If you do offer it, how do you decide when the pop-up happens?

- Time on webpage 17%
- Number of Knowledge Base searches 2%
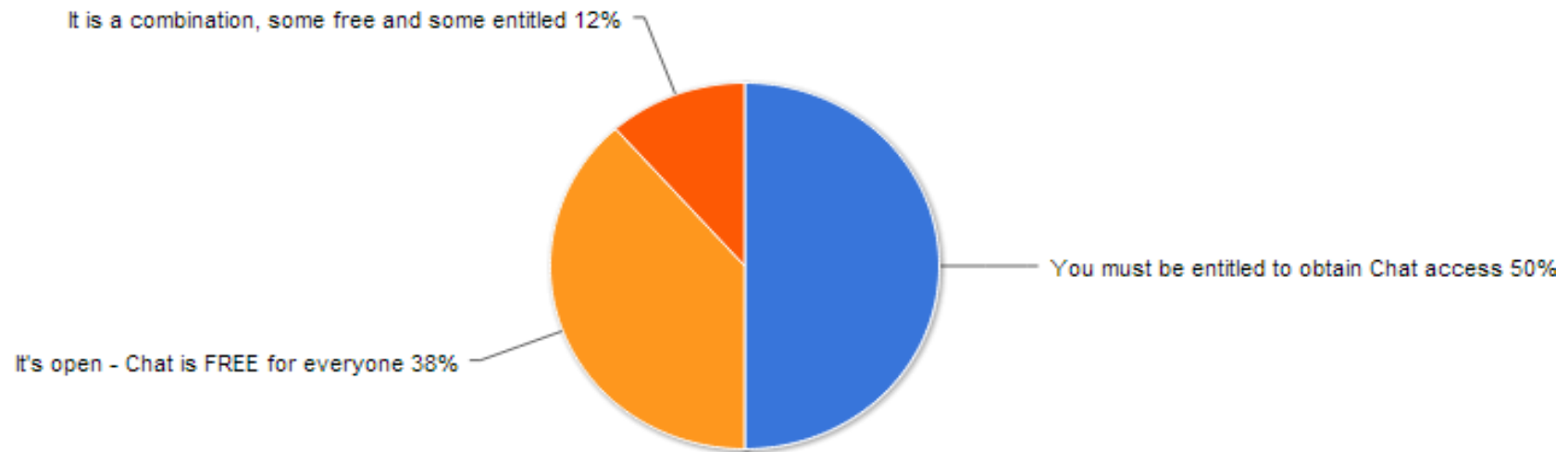- No, we do not offer Chat unless the customer initiates or asks for it 81%

Over 81% of respondents do not offer Chat via a pop-up.

While common among online retailers for sales and online order information, Pop-up chat is not often employed by the respondents.
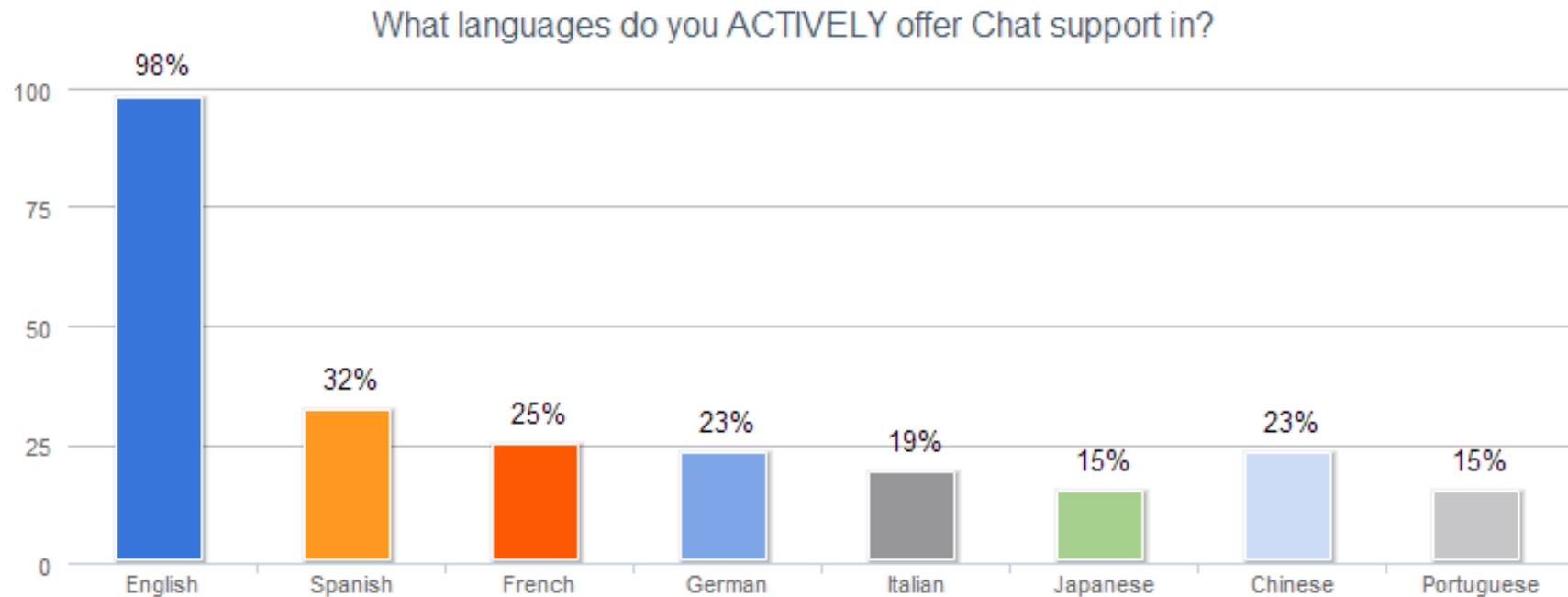
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Do You Entitle Chat?

Do you entitle Chat or is it free for everyone?

It is a combination, some free and some entitled 12%

You must be entitled to obtain Chat access 50%

It's open - Chat is FREE for everyone 38%

Only 38% of respondents provide chat free to everyone, down from 48% in 2011.

Languages Supported via Chat?

What languages do you ACTIVELY offer Chat support in?

| Language	Percentage
English	98%
Spanish	32%
French	25%
German	23%
Italian	19%
Japanese	15%
Chinese	23%
Portuguese	15%

100% of respondents offered Chat in English, with Spanish at 32% and French at 25% being the next most offered languages.

Staffing and Training are Keys to Success

- Chat requires good resource planning to ensure quick response to customers. Slow responsiveness will ensure failure.

- The number of concurrent sessions handled by the staff may not meet your initial expectations.

- Integrated routing can improve your effectiveness by providing a multichannel queuing capability

- Companies need to give staff additional skills to be successful supporting the Chat channel.

- Approximately 88% of respondents indicate that additional soft skills and writing skills training is required for success.

How is the Chat Support Channel Staffed?

How is your Chat channel staffed?
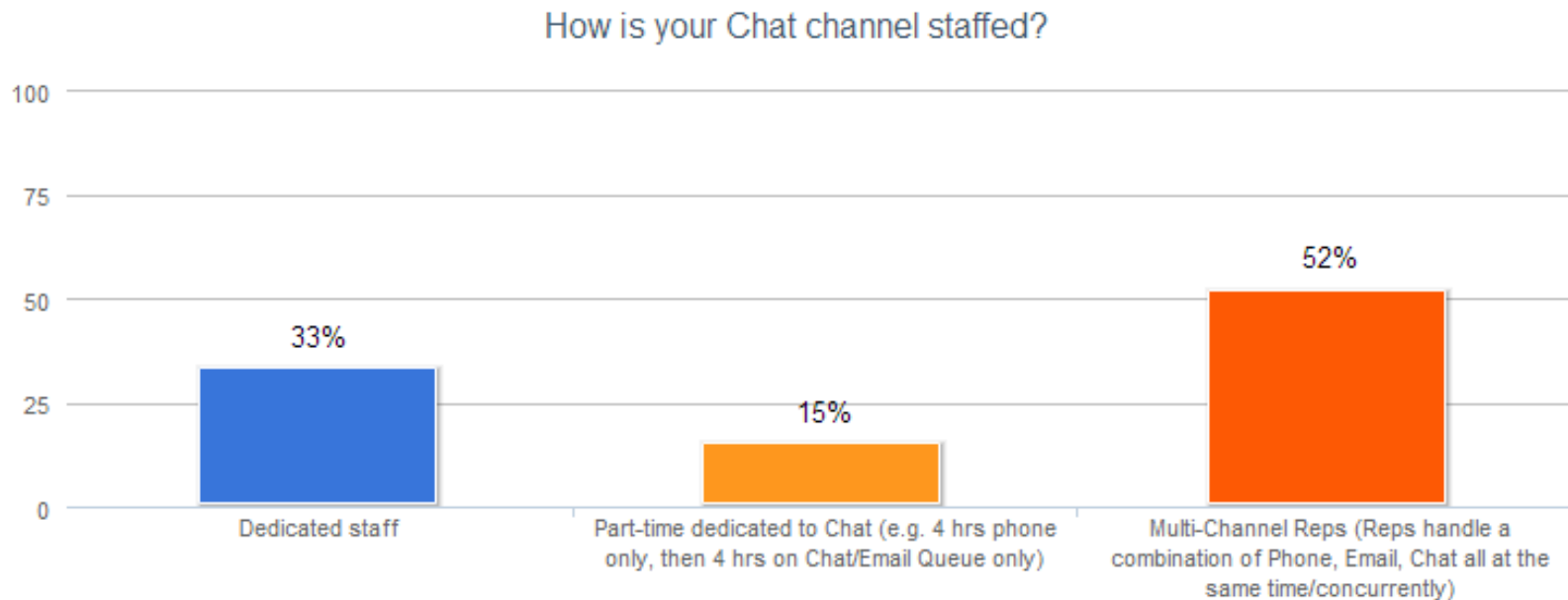
Approximately 33% dedicate full time staff to the Chat channel. Others mix and match resources to staff the Chat function.

Responding quickly is key. If not staffed appropriately, abandon rates go up, which will defeat the effectiveness of the channel.
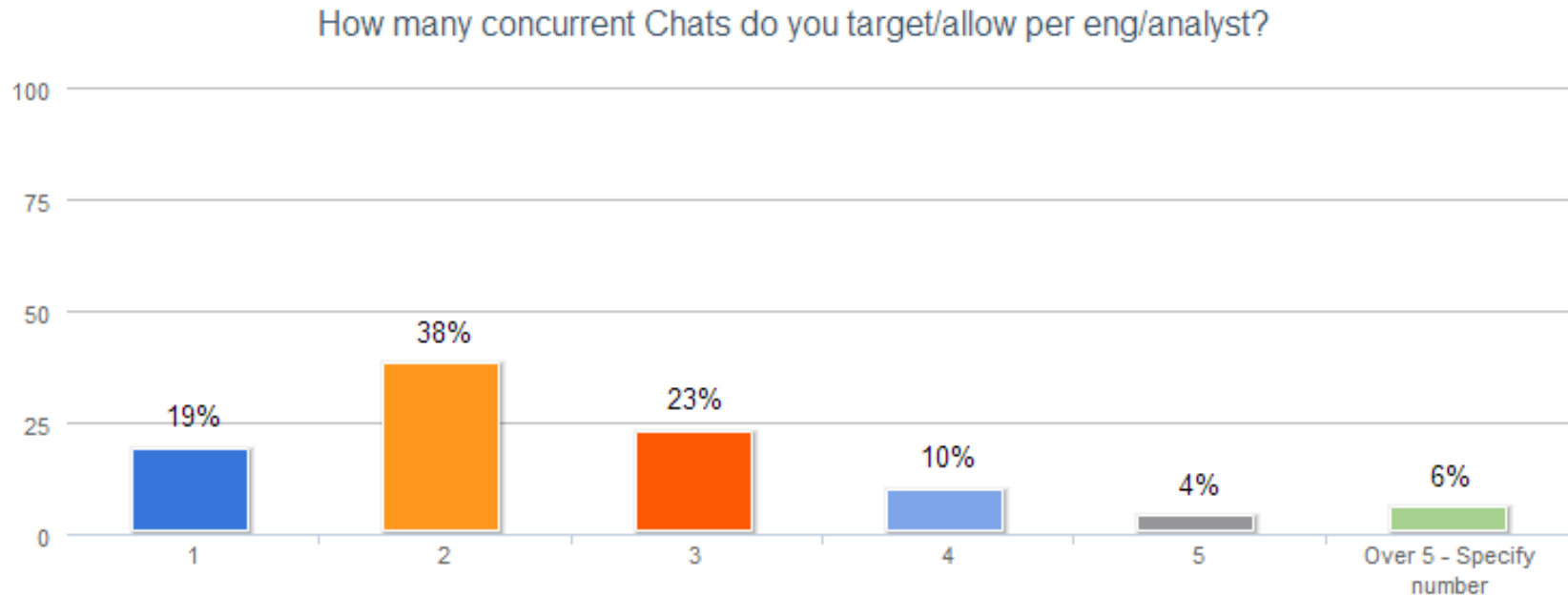
Do you Leverage Multi-Channel Routing (i.e. chat, phone, email)?

Does your ACD system provide multi-channel routing? (i.e. Chat, Phone, Email)

Not applicable 13%

Yes 21%

Yes, but we don't use it 23%

No 42%
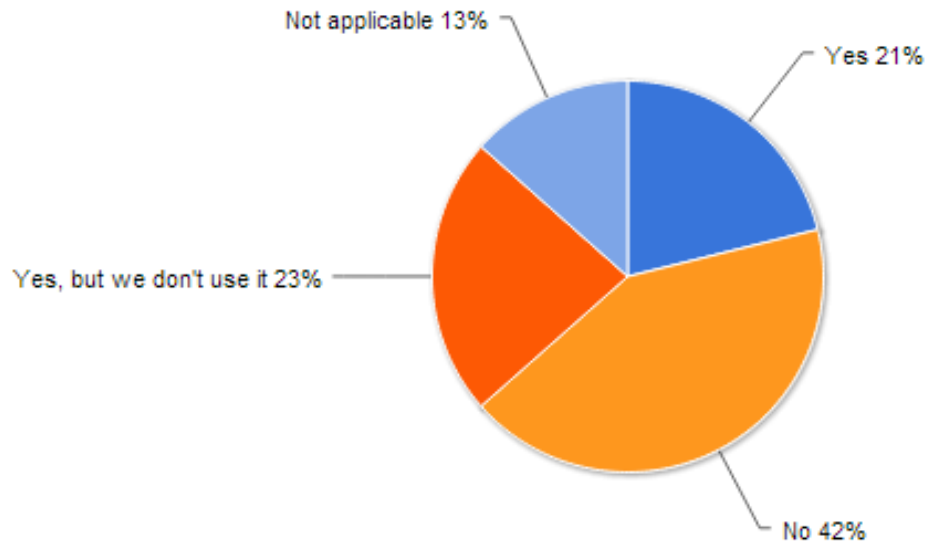
Surprisingly only 21% of respondents make use of universal queuing and an additional 23% have the capability but do not use it.
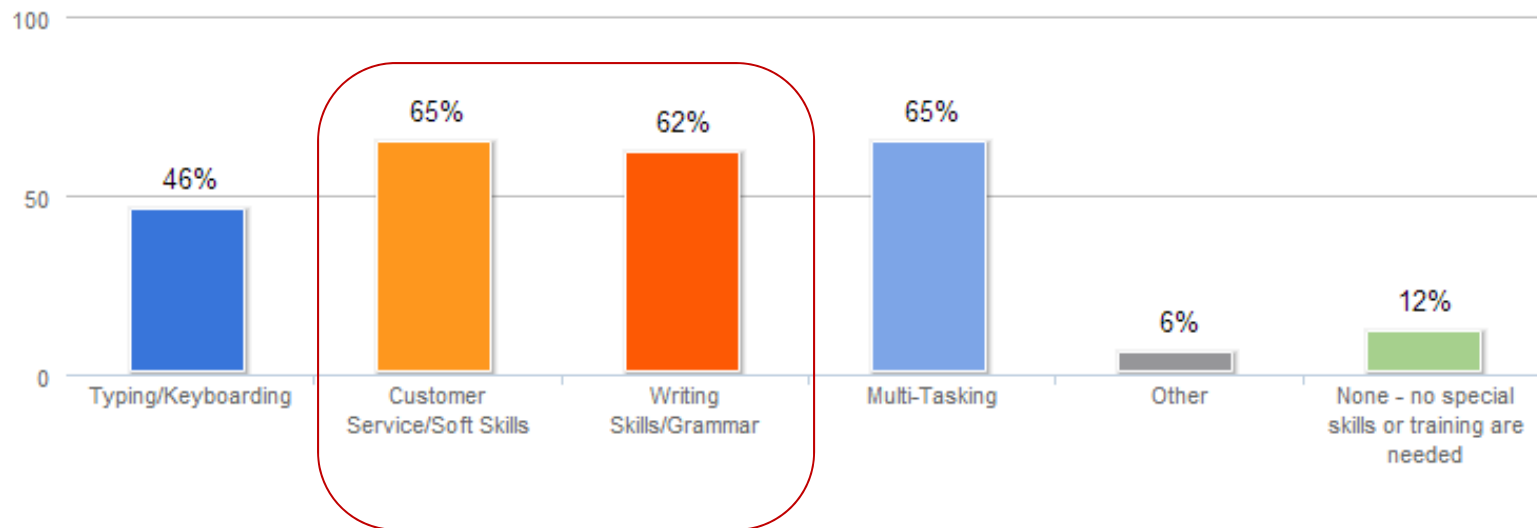
How Many Concurrent Chat Sessions are Targeted?

How many concurrent Chats do you target/allow per eng/analyst?

Category	Percentage
1	19%
2	38%
3	23%
4	10%
5	4%
Over 5 - Specify number	6%

Approximately 19% using Chat are only targeting one Chat session at a time, which minimizes the productivity impact.

The effective number of simultaneous chats reported per engineer is 1-2.

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What Skills are Necessary for Staff to be Successful?

What additional skills/training do Chat eng/analyst need to possess to be successful?

Typing/Keyboarding: 46%
Customer Service/Soft Skills: 65%
Writing Skills/Grammar: 62%
Multi-Tasking: 65%
Other: 6%
None - no special skills or training are needed: 12%

Approximately 65% of respondents using Chat indicate that soft skills and writing skills training are necessary for success. On par with 2011 survey

Another 65% indicate improved multi-tasking skills are needed.

# Guidelines, Quality and Impact on Service Demand

- Generally initial response times for chat should be under one minute.

- Few respondents provide targets for chat handle time or abandoning inactive chat sessions.

- ~87% of respondents indicate that chats result in a CRM case.

- A majority of respondents monitor chat for quality and survey chat customers about their experience.

- Approximately 30% of respondents indicate that service demand increased with the introduction of chat.

Time Limit or Target for Chat Handle Time?

Is there a time limit or time target on Chats?
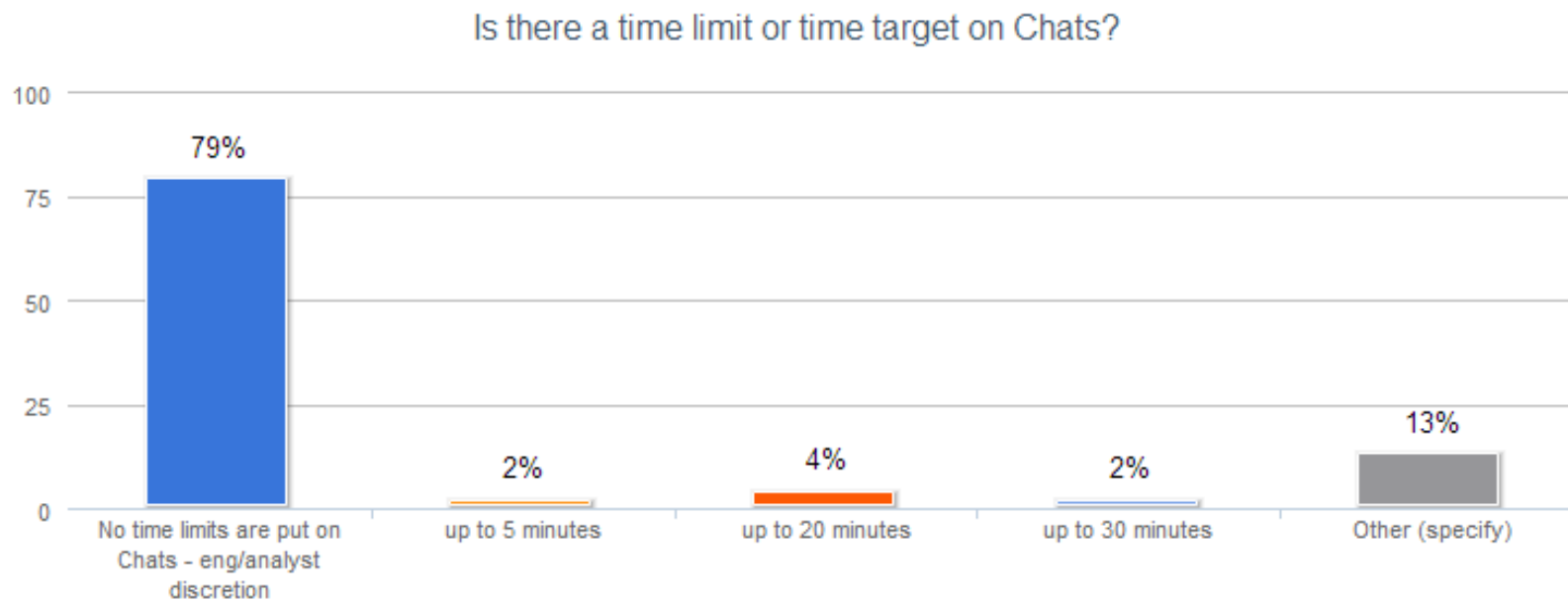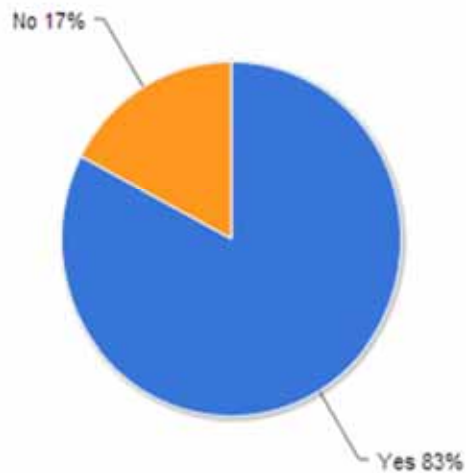
Guideline for Abandoning inactive Chats?

Is there a guideline on when a chat session should abandon due to a lack of user activity?
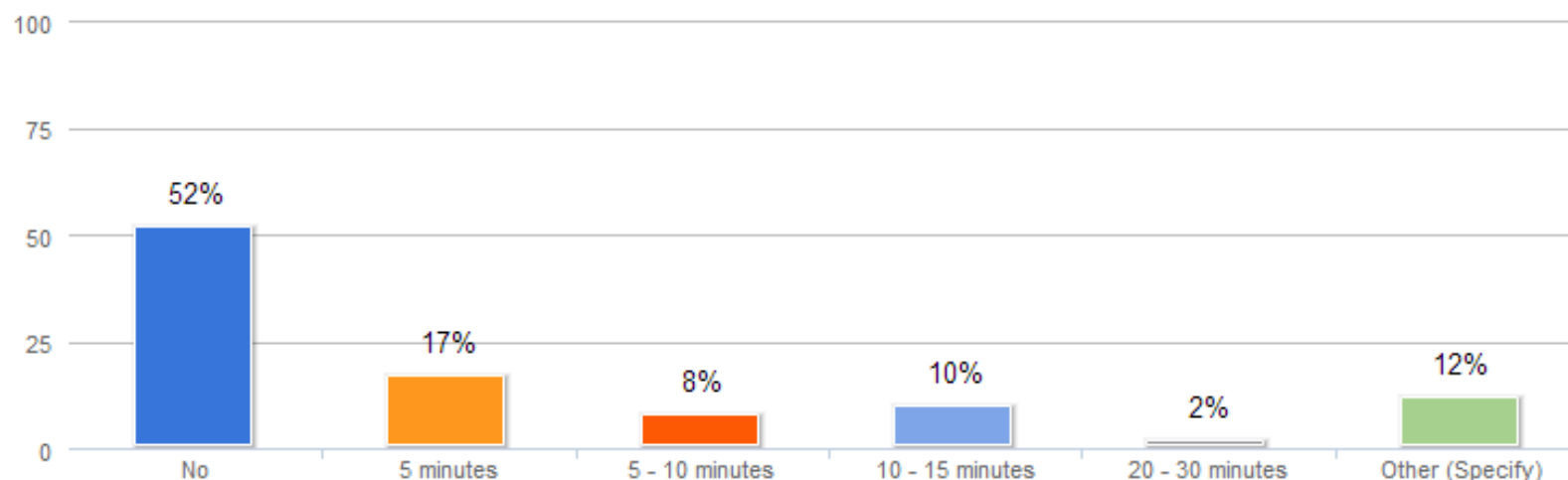
Majority of respondents, 52%% do not provide a guideline for abandoning inactive chats

Chat Quality and Customer Feedback

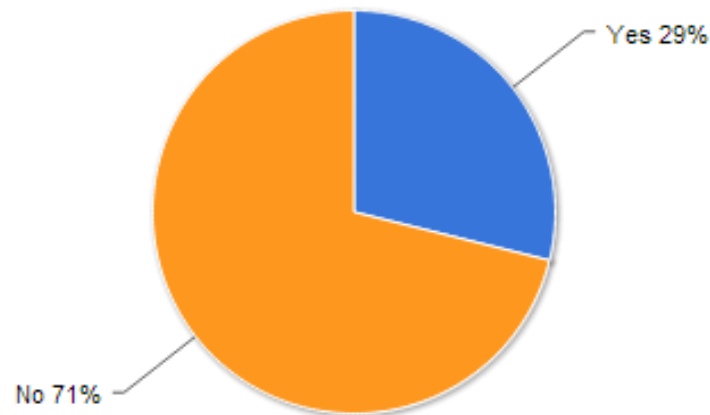Do you review or monitor Chat sessions for quality?

No 17%

Yes 83%

Do you survey your customers about their Chat experience?

No 33%

Yes · 67%

Quality processes for chat are in place for the majority of respondents.

# Has Overall Service Demand Increased with Chat?

Has overall demand for support increased as a result of offering chat?

Yes 29%

No 71%

Only 29% of respondents indicated that overall service demand increased with the deployment of chat compared to 48% in 2011.

How Much Did Service Demand Increase??

By what percentage did your support volume increase?

Less than 5%	Less than 10%	Less than 20%	More than 20%
20%	47%	7%	27%
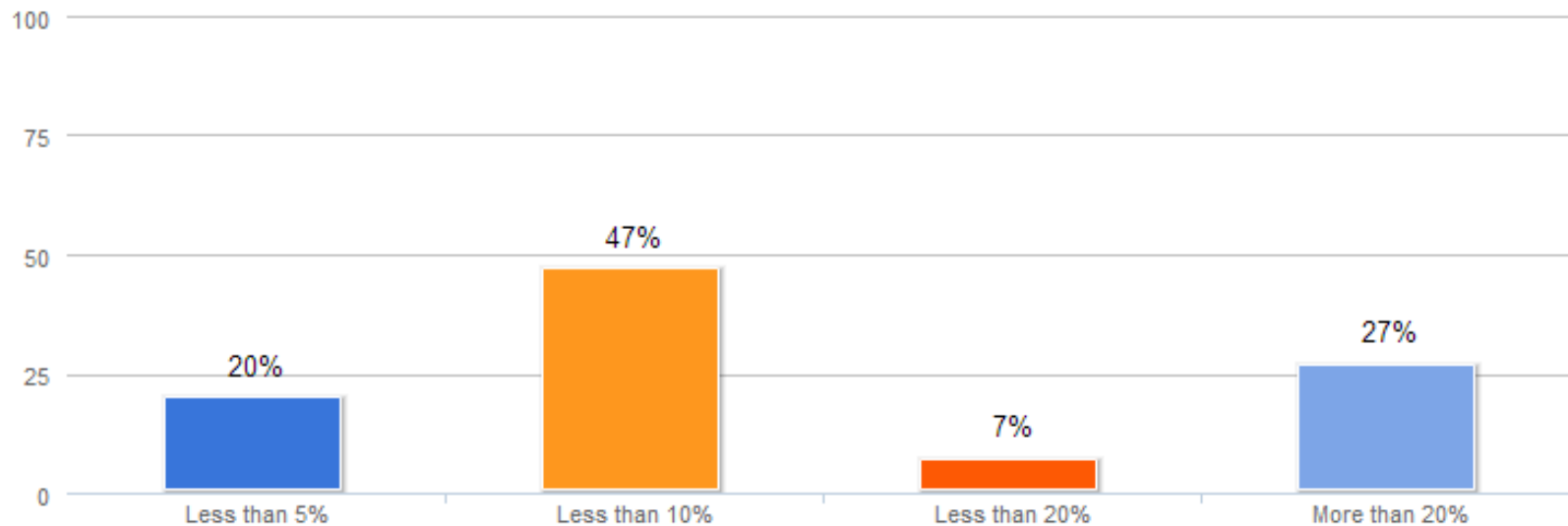
Difficult to forecast what will occur, but if your organization operates in a call back model, expect demand to increase

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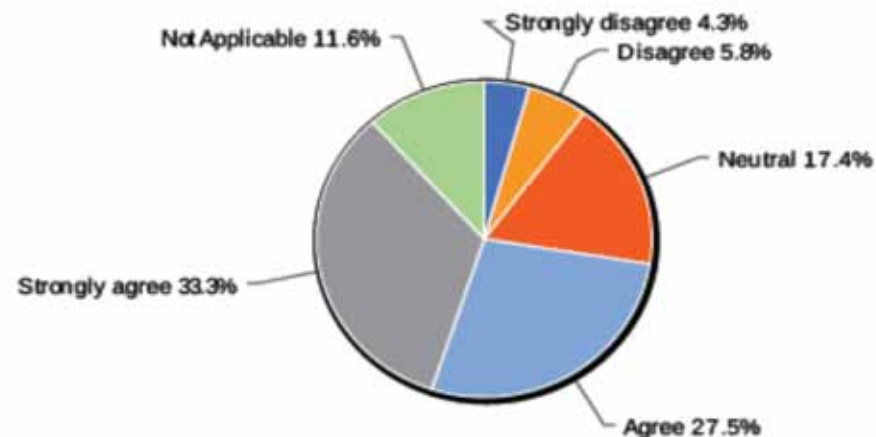Advancing Service Excellence

Conclusion
The Real Value is in the Customer Experience

- If well thought out, Chat can be an effective support tool for simple and complex products alike.

- The real value from Chat is in building brand loyalty through an improved customer experience.

- It's about changing your support model and tools to better fit the needs of your customers as their expectations evolve.

- To be successful, evaluate Chat in the context of an overall support strategy, not as a scheme to drive down costs.

Would You Recommend Implementing Chat in the Future?

Would you agree with the statement "I would positively recommend implementing Chat as a support channel"?

- Not Applicable 11.6%
- Strongly disagree 4.3%
- Disagree 5.8%
- Neutral 17.4%
- Agree 27.5%
- Strongly agree 33.3%

Approximately 60% of respondents would recommend implementing Chat again. This indicates that despite the challenges. Chat can be a very effective support channel.

"Chat has been successful for us by offering more channel options to our customers, enabling faster technical response and faster resolution... I would recommend Chat for the customer satisfaction aspect alone." - Survey Respondent

Thank you, enjoy the rest of the conference!

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