



# A LOOK AHEAD: 2020 BUSINESS PROCESS OUTSOURCING TRENDS

CAN TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORM CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE?



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# INTRODUCTION

We anticipate that 2020 will be a pivotal year for organizations as they focus on a single imperative: *the Customer Experience (CX)*. The definition of a customer may include clients, patients, employees or government entities, but organizations that are hyper-focused on their core base will remain competitive.

How will they achieve this goal? Through technologies that include Robotic Process Automation (RPA), chatbots and Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications that directly interact with customers. Firms of all sizes are also challenged to migrate from server-based to cloud-based applications while also maintaining data security, improving infrastructure and providing consistent delivery of IT services.

Readers of our annual report *A Look Ahead: 2020 Business Process Outsourcing Trends* echoed these imperatives. Every size business, from mid-sized growth-oriented firms to global leaders, responded to our survey, indicating that customers, and cost-effective delivery, are their #1 focus for the coming year.



# TOP 5 TRENDS

## **TREND 1: FOCUS ON THE CUSTOMER AND COSTS**

Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) offers companies access to critical business functions that fill gaps in expertise, technology or service. For the third consecutive year, our respondents cited their two top reasons for outsourcing are **servicing the customer** and **cutting costs**.

For companies with 1,000 to 50,000 employees, CX is their #1 business goal for 2020, while firms greater than 50,000 employees rank CX in their top three objectives.

Companies understand that CX is closely tied to the bottom line and are increasing their efforts to attract, acquire, and retain their customer base through improved technology.

## **TREND 2: HEIGHTENED FOCUS ON DATA SECURITY**

Customer data security and fraud prevention was the #1 challenge from smallest to largest companies, with all but the largest (100,000+ employees) citing this risk as their top issue. Fraud schemes have recently targeted small- to medium-sized companies that tend to have fewer security protocols in place

According to Cisco, companies with less than 10,000 employees struggle the most with cybersecurity and related data issues.<sup>1</sup> Alleviating security risks is a common reason companies outsource to BPO vendors.



Companies must stop pretending to do CX while focusing only on what they want. **CX isn't about improving short-term acquisition or lifting conversion rate.**

**Too few CX programs focus** on improving the customer and understanding how that also improves the brand.

- **Augie Ray**, VP Analyst of Customer Experience, Gartner

## **TREND 3: CX AND COSTS ARE DRIVERS OF CHANGE**

Our respondents were vocal in their need to achieve their business goals, including lower costs and improved CX. An increased percentage of respondents are bringing services back in house because they did not achieve their desired cost/benefit goals.

Companies are also focusing on their core competency of customer care and technical support, often by adding technology like AI, chatbots and RPA that improve efficiency and customer service. Firms must meet customer and bottom line demands and BPO vendors must continue to deliver. More than half of respondents will keep their current plan or increase outsourcing in 2020, down 10% from 2019.

But do companies truly understand what CX means? Industry leaders are vocal about what companies must do to deliver on the CX promise.<sup>2</sup>

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#### **TREND 4: CHANGING IT INFRASTRUCTURE**

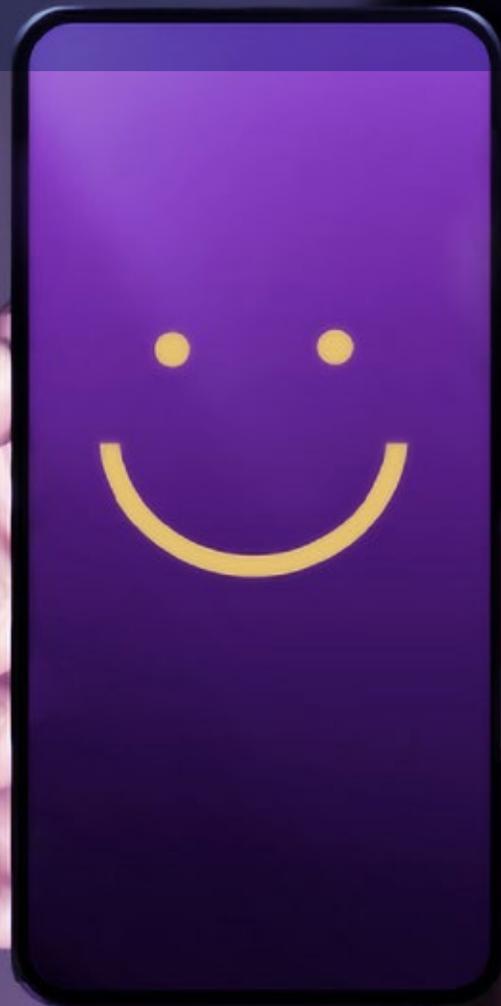
IT leaders are intent upon delivering better and more-effective IT services as they are challenged with increasing data security demands. But firms may find their IT foundation shifting as industries move from server-based to cloud-based applications that require a new technical infrastructure. C-level and IT leaders alike list this shift as their primary challenge, requiring talent, innovation and investment. BPO vendors will help clients be successful by filling this gap with emerging technology and industry expertise.

#### **TREND 5: SHIFTING TECH INVESTMENTS**

Chatbots, virtual assistants and AI tools entered the top three focus areas for increased investment for over 40% of our respondents. Only 21.6% of respondents are choosing not to invest in these areas yet. As a customer service tool, visual IVR appears to have entered the mainstream as the percentage of companies that are not investing in it has continued to decline for three years.

Where are companies choosing to invest their tech budget? Analytics. Our survey found nearly half of the participants are investing in advanced analytics and tools for quality monitoring and management.

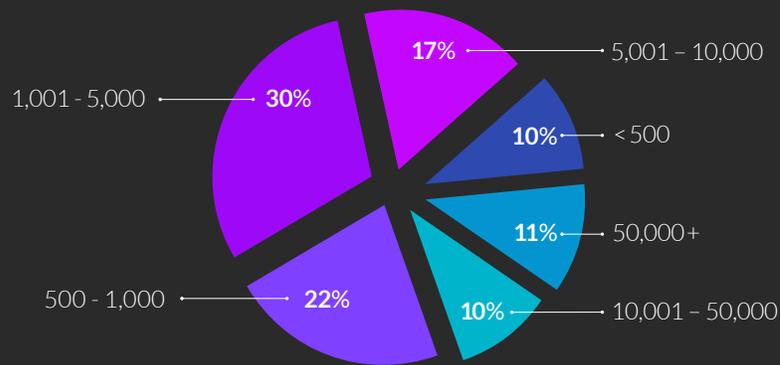
**THESE FIVE TRENDS HIGHLIGHT THE EVOLUTION OF BPO SERVICES IN THE COMING YEAR.** Our findings indicated that firms will be challenged to meet customer expectations by leveraging technology to deliver an outstanding experience.



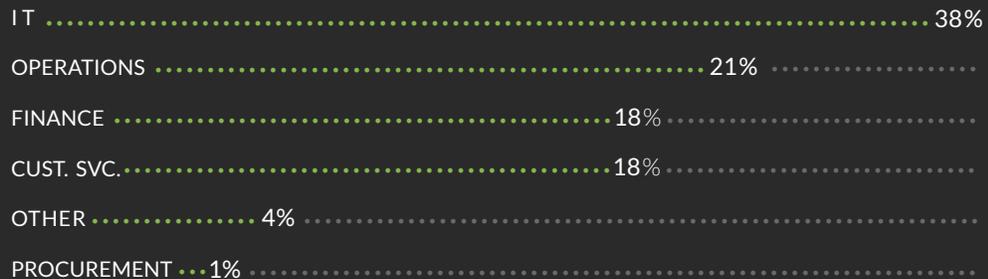
# SURVEY / RESPONDENT OVERVIEW

Over 30 industries are represented in our annual survey with the five largest groups being Financial Service, Banking and Insurance; Technology and Software; Hospitals and Healthcare Providers; Business, Professional, Nonprofit and Membership Associations; and non-apparel Manufactured Goods sectors.

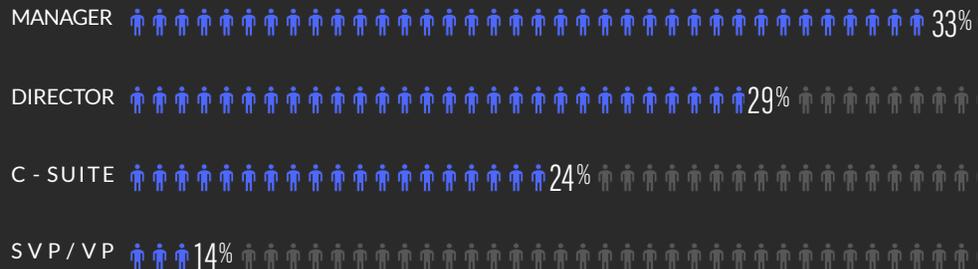
## COMPANY SIZE BY HEADCOUNT



## DEP'T. LEVEL



## ROLE / STANDING

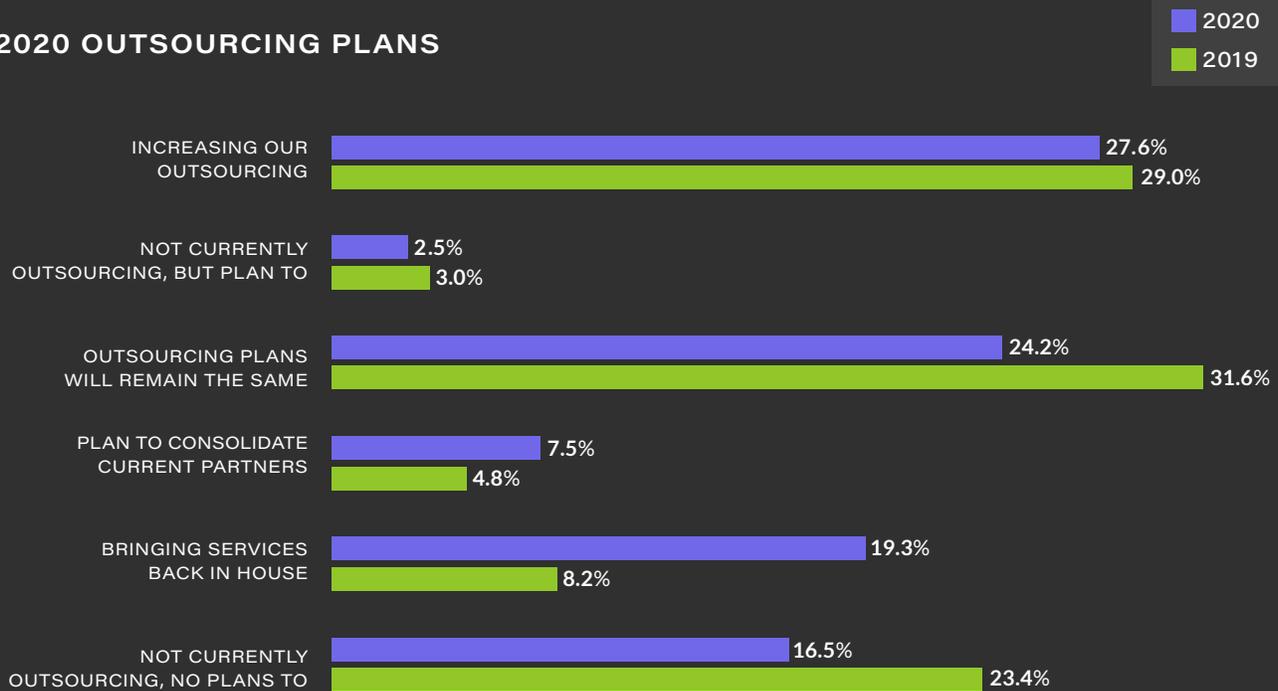


# HOW OUTSOURCING PLANS ARE CHANGING

Companies continue to evaluate outsourcing plans to ensure they align with their business goals. For 2020, 24.2% of respondents' outsourcing plans will remain the same, a decrease of 7.4% from 2019. In 2019, 29% of organizations planned to increase outsourcing while only 27.6% plan to do so for 2020. Respondents who plan to outsource for the first time has decreased slightly, from 3% for 2019 to 2.5% for 2020.

However, a higher percentage of respondents plan to consolidate outsourcing vendors, as shown by 7.5% for 2020 versus only 4.8% for 2019. The number of organizations planning to bring services back in-house has more than doubled, from 8.2% for 2019 to 19.3% for 2020. Finally, the percentage of firms that have no plans for outsourcing decreased from 23.4% to 16.5% for 2020.

## 2020 OUTSOURCING PLANS

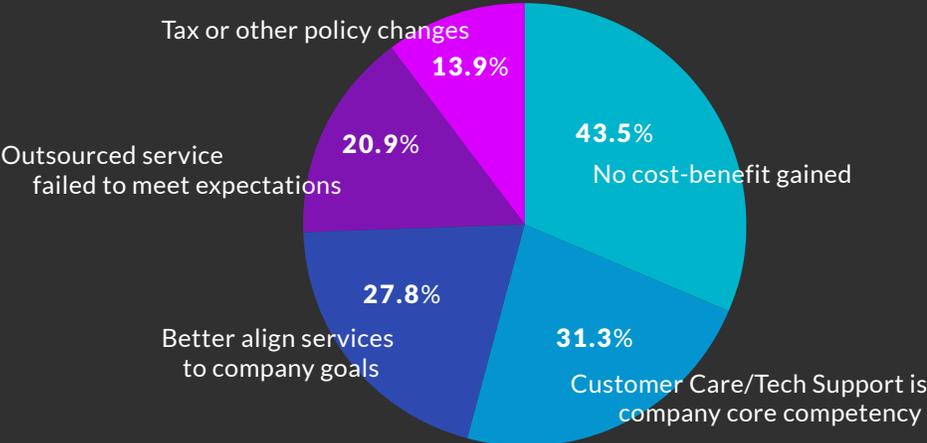


Outsourcing plans vary by company size, role, and department. **Companies with 10,000-50,000 employees were most likely to increase their use of outsourcing, as shown by 68.8% of respondents in this demographic.**

Companies with 500 to 1,000 employees (55.6%) and organizations with 1,000 to 5,000 (54%), many of which may be fast-growing, are also considering outsourcing. Directors (47.8%) were most likely to report they are increasing their outsourcing or are outsourcing for the first time, followed by C-Level (46.5%) respondents, who both exceeded the average response of 30.1%.

Department-specific responses also revealed the desire for outsourcing. **Customer Service departments were most likely to report that they are either increasing outsourcing or outsourcing for the first time, (41.9%), followed by IT (39.8%), exceeding the average response of 30.1%.**

### REASONS TO KEEP OR RETURN SERVICES IN-HOUSE



When we asked why respondents would either keep or return services in-house, the majority (43.5%) said it was a cost-benefit decision up from 31% in 2019. This took the top spot from the previous year when 46% of respondents reported to be better able to align services to company goals when keeping services in house, which dropped to third place at 27.8% for 2020.

Nearly 31.3% said customer care and tech support are core competencies, up from 20% in 2019. Finally, 20.9% felt that outsourcing failed to meet expectations and the remaining 13.9% cited tax or other policy changes as the reason for their in-house service focus.

# STRATEGIC GOALS: FOCUS ON CUSTOMERS, COSTS

Our findings indicated consistent responses for the benefits of outsourcing. For the last three years, the majority of survey participants said outsourcing can provide a better experience and reduce costs. **Participants also indicated that outsourcing enhances cybersecurity and privacy compliance measures, indicating that risk mitigation is still top of mind for business leaders.**

Process standardization is also a key benefit, now in fourth place. In general, larger organizations focus more on reducing costs while mid-sized companies concentrate on providing better CX and enhanced security.

## TOP STRATEGIC GOALS FOR OUTSOURCING

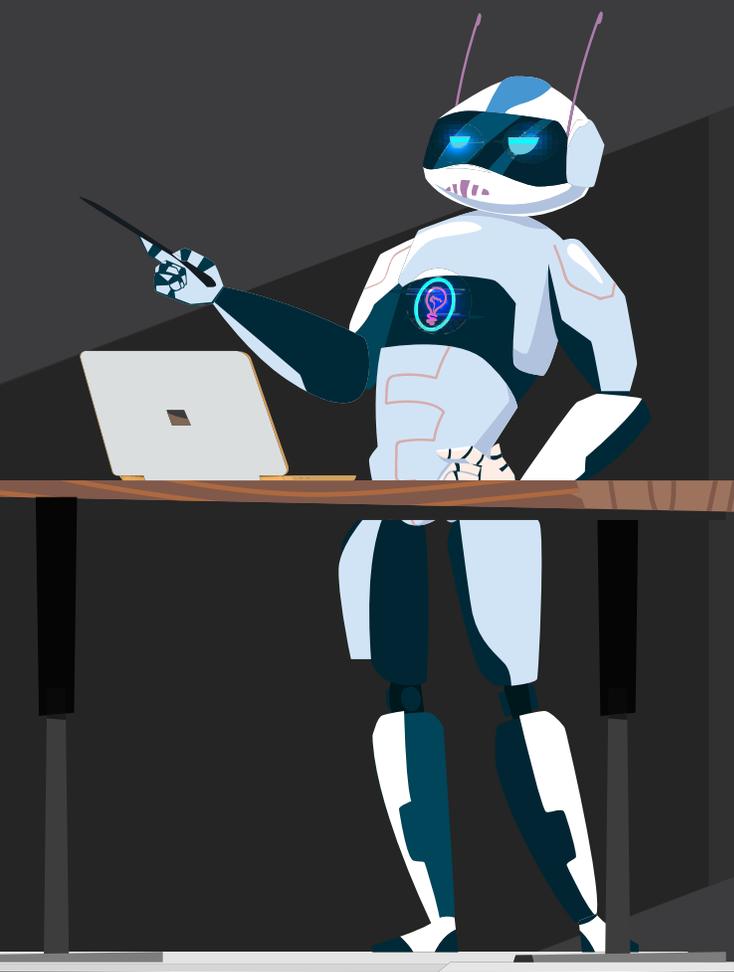
- **Improve customer experience** ..... **47.8%**
- **Reduce costs, more predictable costs**..... **43.0%**
- **Enhance cybersecurity, privacy compliance measures**..... **37.6%**
- **Process standardization, improve efficiency and ensure more consistent delivery** ..... **36.5%**
- **Upgrade IT, more current /effective**..... **31.7%**
- **Improve ROI, business outcomes**..... **31.2%**
- **Focus on core capabilities, reduce management oversight** ..... **31.2%**
- **Reduce risks, handle transaction demand variability** ..... **26.9%**
- **Simplify, consolidate support queues** ..... **13.4%**
- **Standardize processes across offices** ..... **0.5%**

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Providing a better customer experience ranked in the top for all company sizes. Companies at 1,000-50,000 included enhancing cybersecurity and privacy compliance measures in their top three while companies over 100,000 ranked cost reduction, predictability and getting a better handle on transaction demand as top goals.

While the size of the organization provides a general glimpse of their priorities, we find goals that align with departmental objectives are a primary imperative. Customer Service department leaders cite providing better CX as their primary goal. Finance leaders look to process standardization to improve efficiency and consistent delivery while IT departments strive to provide more current and effective IT services. Operations leaders, whose primary goal is serving customers, look to providing a better CX as their goal for 2020.

Technology is closing the gap for small, medium and large enterprises, and may offer new opportunities soon. <sup>3</sup>



**"In 2020, AI will help to close gaps in merchant capabilities that many small businesses with limited resources face.**

**With AI, small businesses can manage their stores seamlessly and efficiently, both by automating work processes (i.e. employee management, IT service administration, or compliance regulation mgmt.) and enabling better inventory and delivery management.**

**AI-based chatbots and virtual assistants further streamline business transactions and increase operational efficiencies, while also providing an optimal customer experience"**

- **Phil Grier**, Commerce Engineer,  
Yahoo Small Business

# 2020 TOP BUSINESS CHALLENGES

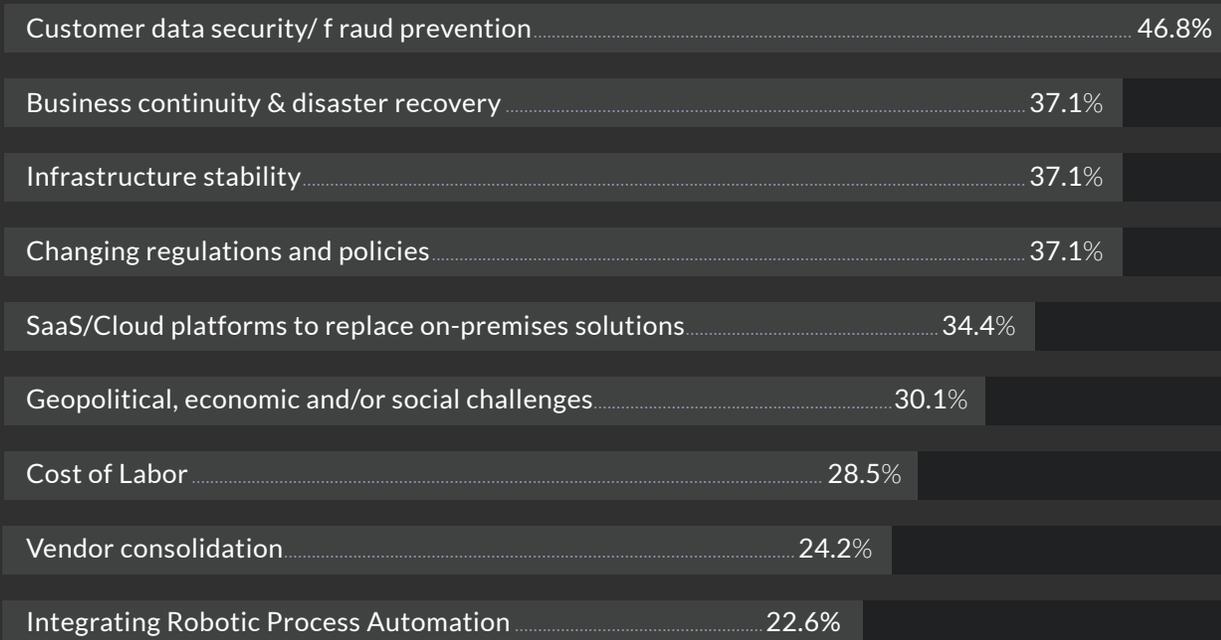
The security firm Norton estimated that over 4 billion records had been breached in the first 6 months of 2019, a 54% increase from the previous year.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is not a surprise that customer data security is still the #1 challenge faced by business leaders.

**While many companies still face a competitive job market, our survey indicated that the cost of labor fell near the bottom in importance, ranking #7 of 9 separate business challenges.** While the cost of labor had a lower ranking overall, it was of top concern for smaller companies as they try to compete for top talent. Only 10% of larger firms cited labor costs as a top concern.

Company size did influence the importance of the business challenge. Large businesses face growing geopolitical and social issues resulting from their large footprint. Mega firms were also the only sector where RPA implementation was a top challenge. For companies with 1,000 to 5,000 employees, customer data, business continuity and infrastructure stability (including SaaS and cloud platform replacement) were top challenges.

For companies with 5,000 to 10,000 employees, they also faced data security and platform replacement challenges but cited changing regulations as one of their top concerns. Firms with 10,000 to 50,000 employees indicated that changing regulations, data security and disaster recovery would be their top challenges for 2020. The largest firms with 50,000 to 100,000 employees remain IT-focused, with SaaS/Cloud replacement and data security as their top concerns.

## BUSINESS CHALLENGES



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Finally, companies with over 100,000 employees had a unique set of challenges that included disaster recovery, geopolitical, economic and/or social challenges, changing regulations and policies, and integrating RPA as their top four challenges. These organizations face a pressing challenge that may not exist in smaller firms. While increasing regulations can affect all businesses, these mega-firms also face geopolitical, economic and/or social challenges because of their broad national and international presence. They often turn to BPO vendors to leverage a core competency or to mitigate risk. According to Deloitte, BPO vendors can offer compliance talent, resources and international compliance insights that they don't have in-house, providing a valuable and cost-effective service.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to company size, challenges at a departmental level also exist. Customer Service departments remain highly focused on CX and the factors that impact customer satisfaction. Downtime and disaster recovery, security breaches and social climate are all factors they must think about in 2020.

Finance departments, while concerned with costs, also focus on the impact of changing regulations, data security and integration of new technologies like RPA and the effect it will have on the organization. IT departments face challenges with cloud-based infrastructure issues as they must provide a stable environment while simultaneously providing optimal data security protocols. Operations departments will continue to be tasked with streamlining processes while being cost-effective, at the same time enduring the impacts of changing regulations, a tight labor pool and data security issues.



Many companies will have a continued challenge as they cope with the reality that **an estimated 85% of consumer interactions are anticipated to be non-human within the coming year, according to Gartner research.**<sup>6</sup>

The human-technology interaction is now an ingrained part of customer interactions as more people become accustomed to chatbots, virtual assistants and AI and ML applications.

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# CURRENT STATE OF BPO RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between a BPO partner and its customer is interdependent as clients are reliant on their vendor's technology and expertise. We surveyed our respondents about their relationship with their BPO partners to find out what is working well in today's outsourcing environment and what pain points still need to be addressed.

Our survey addressed five areas and our questions addressed if outsourcing lowered costs as anticipated, improved business outcomes, provided access to emerging technologies (like AI and ML), standardized and consolidated services, improved the customer/employee experience, and automated processes.

Lowering costs was the top area in which 70.5% of respondents were either very or moderately satisfied. This was a significant jump over 2019 survey responses where only 58% achieved satisfaction. There was also a positive shift in satisfaction with improving business outcomes, with 69.9% of this year's respondents indicating they were very satisfied or moderately satisfied with their outsourcing vendor's efforts to achieve this goal. This was an increase of 6.9 points over the previous year's responses. Improving the customer/employee experience satisfaction also rose 6.5 percentage points, from 55% for 2019 to 61.5% for 2020. Satisfaction levels remained relatively stable for accessing emerging technologies (59.8% for 2020 versus 57% for 2019) and standardizing and consolidating services (60.3% for 2020 versus 58% for 2019).



On the other hand, respondents showed a marked increase in dissatisfaction with standardizing and consolidating services. For 2019, only 5% were either moderately or very dissatisfied with this goal, but 15.4% gave negative responses for 2020, indicating a need for improvement. Access to emerging technologies like AI and ML was also an area where respondents were either moderately or very dissatisfied, jumping four percentage points from 6% in 2019 to 10.1% for 2020. Improving customer/employee experience dissatisfaction also rose nearly four percentage points, from 10% to 13.7%. Achieving business goals and improving business outcomes maintained stable levels of dissatisfaction of nearly 10% of respondents year over year.

We added a new question for 2020 that addressed client satisfaction with automating processes. More than half (56.8%) of the respondents indicated that they were very or moderately satisfied with their outsourcing vendor in this area and only 12.5% were either moderately or very dissatisfied. This is certainly an area of opportunity for BPO providers to support their partners' goals to deliver a higher quality experience at a lower cost.

## PAIN POINTS REMAIN

Our survey showed overall progress, especially in the ability to lower costs, but there is still ample room for improvement. Respondents revealed their pain points, including poor communication between them and their outsourcing vendors, a need for greater data security and privacy measures, increased management oversight and continuing innovation.

These four areas show a consistent trend for the last three years, revealing the need for enhanced solutions.

### Comments included:



Innovation, new technologies and efficiencies are top priorities for business leaders. RPA, chatbots, AI, and similar applications have greatly matured and have proven their efficiency in customer service, operations and finance departments. **One report by Deloitte indicates that RPA speeds up the average transactional time in a back office by about 60-80%.<sup>7</sup>**

Chatbots allow companies to redirect valuable labor toward important customer-related issues and away from routine tasks that are ripe for automation, at a reduced cost. AI solutions complement chatbots and RPA and are growing in maturity and acceptance by capturing caller information, routing it to the correct contact center team, and efficiently managing high-call volumes.

**In 2020, we will see more enterprises getting bolder with their AI ambitions and requiring their vendors to support large deployments.**

- Sudhir Jha, Senior Vice President and Head of Brighterion, Mastercard.

AI and chatbots are not a cure-all for every contact center interaction, but they can be part of an effective CX strategy in 2020 and beyond.<sup>8</sup> The demographics of today's customers vary dramatically, and each organization must have an omnichannel approach to serve customers from ages 8 to 98. Outsourcing partners provide valuable assistance in helping companies design and execute their CX strategies using technology such as RPA, chatbots, AI and other applications that are right for the customer and their business goals.

But for the longer term, companies will be asking more from their BPO vendors, focusing on AI capabilities.<sup>9</sup>

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# CHOOSING THE RIGHT OUTSOURCING PARTNER

## **Choosing the right outsourcing partner takes enterprise-wide effort and significant financial investment. How do our survey respondents go about making this all-important decision?**

The first step is researching vendor capabilities, services and reputation. BPO is a global industry, with an estimated growth rate of 7.75% through 2025.<sup>10</sup> With a growing number of outsourcing companies, it is imperative to partner with a BPO firm that aligns with a company's vision and goals.

Our survey respondents looked to leading research firms for industry information and trends. Gartner Market Guides were the leading source of information chosen by 44.4% of our respondents. Frost & Sullivan's *Contact Center Buyers Guide* was the choice of 37.5% and IDC MarketScapes was cited by 31.3% of respondents. Finally, IAOP's Global Outsourcing 100 List was the choice of 28.8% of participants.<sup>11</sup>

Next, business leaders look at a vendor's capabilities. For 2020, our respondents chose three areas of expertise that included a vendor's technology platform and capabilities, experience with the client's industry and the specific type of work they desire to outsource, and quality of the BPO partner's employee onboarding and ongoing training programs.

Of interest is that a vendor's technology capability was of more importance than its previous experience. While the cost to work with a BPO provider is still a factor in choosing which one to work with (our survey showed a nearly 70% satisfaction level with outsourcing costs), many companies lack the in-house tech capabilities needed for digital transformation and are willing to invest with their BPO partner to fill that gap.

Our findings indicate that technical and training expertise is critical, along with industry proof of these capabilities. Potential clients are looking for an outsourcing partner that aligns with their business strategy, improves efficiencies, lower costs and delivers on CX goals. Given these outcomes, how do companies choose a vendor that can achieve these diverse standards?

After companies perform their research due diligence, they need to make a list of questions for their potential outsourcing vendor. What technologies do you use? What are your integration and migration plans? Can you provide use cases and case studies from previous or existing clients? Who will manage the account and are they a good fit with our organization? Asking targeted questions is a proven way to vet potential vendors for not only strategic but CX, financial, technical and operational alignment.

Once an outsourcing partner is chosen, the work begins. Continuous monitoring and reporting are key to prove that purchased services deliver as promised. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and related metrics will ensure that vendors perform as anticipated and make proactive course corrections. Finally, ongoing communication, as cited by our respondents, is a vital component of building a trusted, long-term relationship.

# INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Outsourcing can fill necessary gaps in an organization, but it does come at a cost. Are client investments changing to address continuing challenges?

At the top of the list for increasing investment is advanced analytics, as reported by 49.2% of respondents, flat to 2019's response of 48%. For 2020, companies are also investing more heavily in tools for quality monitoring and management (45.9%) and chatbots, virtual assistants and AI (42.7%). These responses indicate a slightly decreased investment in tools for quality monitoring of nearly three percentage points, while 2019's investment in immersive/virtual/e-learning training and coaching for agents (cited by 43% of 2019 respondents) did not make the top three for 2020.

## CONTACT CENTER INVESTMENTS 2020

	 INCREASE	 KEEP SAME	 DECREASE	 NO 2020 SPENDING
Advanced Analytics	49.2%	40.0%	5.4%	5.4%
Tools for quality monitoring & mgmt.	45.9%	43.2%	7.6%	3.2%
Chatbots / virtual assistants / AI	42.7%	35.7%	4.9%	16.8%
Immersive/virtual/e-learning, training & coaching for agents	40.5%	40.0%	11.4%	8.1%
Visual IVR	38.9%	41.1%	2.7%	17.3%
Robotic Process Automation	36.8%	37.8%	7.6%	17.8%
CRM Tools	35.1%	52.4%	5.4%	7%

While many understand the value of technology, some companies are reducing or just not planning to spend on certain tech areas in 2020. Approximately one-quarter (25.4%) will not be spending or will decrease investments in RPA. While the exact reasons are not clear, it could be that they are expecting their technology partners to provide these tools or they have yet to embrace RPA benefits. About one-fifth (21.6%) are reducing or not spending on chatbots, virtual assistants and AI, seen though a significant number of companies continue to invest in these technologies.

This is a smaller group than in 2019 when 27.6% of respondents either decreased their spend or did not plan to spend on chatbots or virtual assistants. Finally, the percentage of respondents that don't plan to invest or will reduce investments for visual IVR has been steadily decreasing for the past three years, dropping to 20% in 2020 compared with 31.9% in 2019.

In addition to investments in technology, companies are redirecting their spending in advisory services. A significant number of our respondents (58.4%) are seeking help with implementing cloud technologies, representing an eight-percentage point spike over 2019's 50% of respondents. Similarly, 55.1% need advisors' help to integrate new technologies such as Augmented and Virtual Reality and AI into their CX strategy and 42.7% reportedly need help understanding how to take advantage of RPA.

On the other hand, companies seem to be getting a handle on harnessing data analytics to improve performance, with fewer organizations seeking help in 2020 (54.1%) versus (62%) in 2019. It's clear between advisory services and the capabilities that companies are seeking from BPO partners, that going into 2020 technology transformation is an area of great opportunity but also one that creates unease.

As indicated from earlier results, CX is paramount, so it's no surprise to see that respondents also need more advisory services around customer journey mapping, resulting in a 14-percentage point jump from 38% in 2019 to 52.4% in 2020. Our survey found that 54.1% are also seeking help with customer experience transformation and 42.7% with implementing or changing CRM systems.

#### TOP AREAS FOR ADVISORY SERVICES SPENDING

Implement Cloud Technologies .....	<b>58.4%</b>
Implement new technologies [AR/VR/AI] .....	<b>55.1%</b>
Data analytics. Improving performance .....	<b>54.1%</b>
Customer experience transformation .....	<b>54.1%</b>
Customer journey mapping .....	<b>52.4%</b>
Implement Robotic Process Automation (RPA) .....	<b>42.7%</b>
Implement / change CRM systems .....	<b>42.7%</b>

*"As 2020 planning and budgeting are now top of mind, don't forget that without customers, you don't have a business.*

*Make sure customer experience efforts are fully funded and resourced to provide the best experience possible in a competitive marketplace."*<sup>12</sup>

DAN GINGISS, keynote speaker and author of *Winning at Social Customer Care: How Top Brands Create Engaging Experiences on Social Media*

What can we take away from these investment priorities? Cloud applications provide improved security and infrastructure stability, which is top-of-mind for most business leaders. Secondly, CX is of paramount importance, so investments in CRM, journey mapping and supporting systems will help respondents meet their business goals and relieve pain points in the years ahead.

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# CONCLUSION

Our respondents are a microcosm of the immense challenges we will see 2020. They are willing to invest in technologies that serve their customers while simultaneously achieving bottom-line targets.

BPO vendors that can meet these challenges by employing automation to free up agents to provide unique customer experiences at predictable costs, while creating a trusted brand experience and long-term partnership through ensuring the privacy and security of their clients' and their customers' data, will excel in 2020 and beyond.



#trends2020

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- 2..... 30 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE EXPERTS: HERE'S WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2020  
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# ABOUT CGS

**CGS is a leading global provider of business applications, enterprise learning, and outsourcing services that support clients' most fundamental business activities.**

With optimized call center resources to serve global clients, CGS offers a unique hybrid approach through automation and live agents in its contact centers located in North America, South America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Its AI-enriched chatbot and RPA technologies complement the customer support services provided by thousands of multilingual call center agents.

CGS supports many of the world's industry-leading global brands in retail, hospitality, healthcare, technology, and telecom industries. The company's innovative, scalable and flexible business process outsourcing (BPO) solutions include technical and customer support, tele sales, channel enablement and back-office support.

TRUSTED BY THESE AMAZING COMPANIES

transbank.

United Rentals

WORLD SYNC

e) entel

Sprint

unicef

xylem

movistar

The CGS BPO division is proud to showcase the value of outsourcing for our clients and it shows! We've been included in Gartner's 2019 annual "Market Guide for Key Customer Management BPO Service Providers," named to the 2019 Best of Global Outsourcing 100® list for the third-consecutive year and named the gold winner of the 2019 Stevie® Award for Contact Center/Customer Service Outsourcing Provider of the Year.

50 MILLION+

Interactions with customers every year

25+ LANGUAGES

Our agents speak the languages of over 2.25 billion people worldwide

70%

70% of employees hold college degrees and/or advanced certificate in their field of support

We're handling over 50 million customer interactions per year and continuously working on projects that enhance the ROI and exceed the goals that executive management teams are seeking.

To learn more, visit [CGSINC.COM](http://CGSINC.COM).