THE CX JOURNEY:

Strategic and Operational Insights

Customer Experience Management Benchmark Series
2017 Corporate Edition, Published March 12, 2018

Execs In The Know

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Strategic and Operational Insights

Preface

Customer experience (CX) has been center stage for several years; but in 2017, CX lived in the spotlight. In fact, 2017 began with Harvard Business Review declaring that 86% of business leaders agreed that CX was vital for success.

Into this environment we introduce a CXMB Series Corporate Edition report with new questions, more content and deeper analysis than ever before — all aimed at providing an unrivaled understanding of the CX landscape. Specific areas of expanded exploration include channel consistency, quality programs and CX priorities.

Best of all, the CXMB Series provides insights from both the consumer and corporate points of view, delivering a unique level of depth. Featured again in this year's report is the Consumer Edition Comparisons section, beginning on page 67. As in past volumes, the Consumer Edition Comparisons section serves as a bridge between corporate and consumer viewpoints, exposing both congruences and differences.

As always, the CXMB Series of reports are organized around the below channel definitions — please keep these definitions in mind as you review this year's results:

Traditional Care: Phone, Email and In-Person
Interactive Care: Online/Video Chat, FAQ and Self-Help
Social Media Care: Twitter, Facebook, Forums, etc.
Mobile Care: SMS/Text, Apps and Mobile Chat

Highlights from this year's CXMB Series Corporate Edition report:

- Only 50% of respondents answered "Yes" when asked, "Is your company's leadership fully committed to a customer-first strategy?" (Page 11)

- Thirty-four percent of respondents didn't believe their company had a good understanding of which channels their customers preferred, nor how these preferences differed from current channel offerings. (Page 9)

- Interest and investment in chatbots and artificial intelligence (AI) exploded in 2017, with more than a threefold increase in the percentage of brands naming chatbots and AI as the technology of most interest and/or investment. (Page 14)

- Only 14% of respondents felt their brands were doing a good job of providing a consistent customer experience across channels and solutions, while only half of brands (51%) had any initiatives to create greater consistency. (Page 17)

A Note From The Study's Authors

Dear Reader,

We are delighted to bring you this, the 2017 CXMB Series Corporate Edition report, titled *The CX Journey: Strategic and Operational Insights*. The eleventh volume in the series, this year's report contains many new questions across a broad array of topics, expanded trend lines and deeper insights into industry priorities and challenges.

This report is only made possible by the survey data that undergirds the results, and for this we thank the many individuals who so generously contributed their time, knowledge and expertise. In truth, this report is nothing more than an expression of the industry's hard work and dedication to improving the customer experience. We are honored to play a role in aggregating, cataloging and sharing these enormous efforts.

It takes a certain kind of person to make a career out of helping others. Those of us in the customer care industry are driven by one desire: to make every experience exceptional. It is our hope that the information provided in this report can inform, inspire and ignite, helping us all go further for our customers.
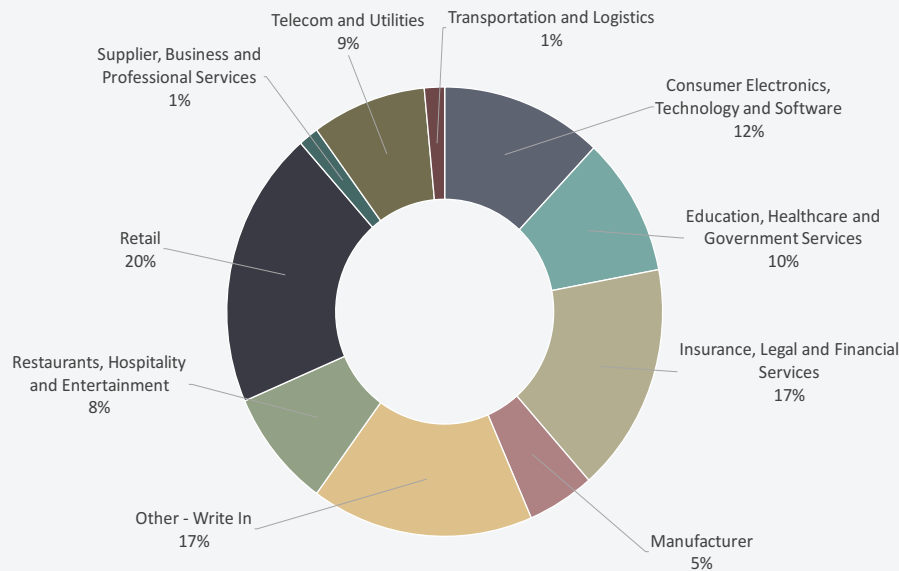
Kind Regards,

Survey Participants

Among this year's survey participants, Retail, Financial and Technology sectors were especially well-represented. The reported revenues of this year's cohort also skewed slightly smaller compared with those of previous years, with a higher concentration of brands providing both B2C and B2B services and products.

Breakdown of Survey Participants By Industry

Telecom and Utilities — 9%
Transportation and Logistics — 1%
Supplier, Business and Professional Services — 1%
Consumer Electronics, Technology and Software — 12%
Retail — 20%
Education, Healthcare and Government Services — 10%
Restaurants, Hospitality and Entertainment — 8%
Insurance, Legal and Financial Services — 17%
Other - Write In — 17%
Manufacturer — 5%

Breakdown of Participant 2016 Revenues*

$1B or Less – 42%
$1B to $10B – 30%
$10B to $50B – 11.5%
$50B or More – 5%
Don't Know – 11.5%

Breakdown of Participant by Business Type

B2C and B2B — 74%
B2C — 18%
B2B — 8%

A special thank you to these and the many other brands
that contributed their time and effort to this year's benchmark results:

Survey Results

Strategic Insights

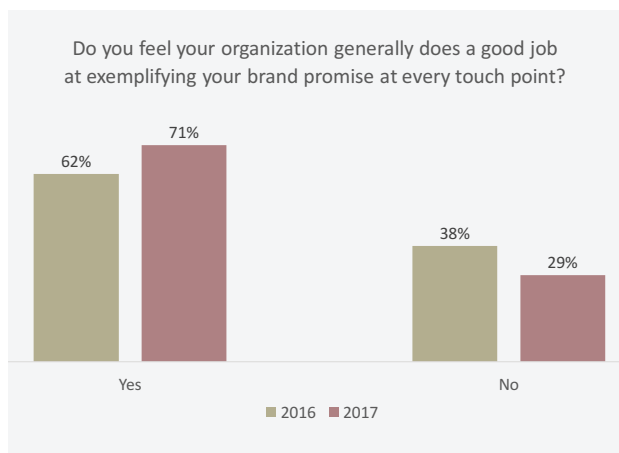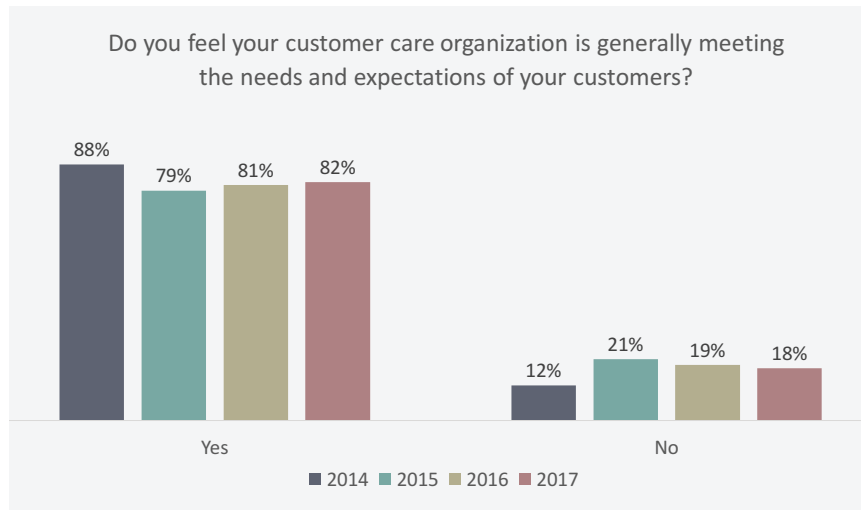- Perception
- Priorities
- Initiatives
- Program Structure

Perception

Fulfilling Expectations and Channel Strategy

Strategic Insights — Perception

In a critical question about service delivery, brands continue to give themselves high marks, with four out of five brands indicating they are generally delivering on customer needs and expectations. This result still strongly contrasts with consumer opinions. To see what consumers had to say, check out the Consumer Edition Comparisons section on page 68.

Do you feel your customer care organization is generally meeting the needs and expectations of your customers?

Yes: 2014: 88%, 2015: 79%, 2016: 81%, 2017: 82%
No: 2014: 12%, 2015: 21%, 2016: 19%, 2017: 18%

2014 ■ 2015 ■ 2016 ■ 2017

Do you feel your organization generally does a good job at exemplifying your brand promise at every touch point?

Yes: 2016: 62%, 2017: 71%
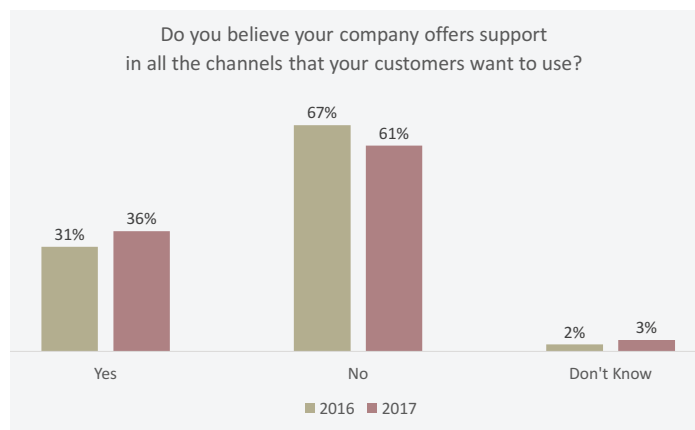No: 2016: 38%, 2017: 29%

■ 2016 ■ 2017

Compared to 2016, 2017 saw a 15% increase (+9 points) in the percentage of companies that felt they were doing a good job at exemplifying their brand promise at every touch point. Delivering on brand promise is becoming increasingly important, especially as brands search for ways to differentiate themselves in markets that are rife with competition and innovation.

In a new question for 2017 (below, left), nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated a belief that their company has a good understanding of their customers' channel preferences, and how those preferences differ from what is offered. Furthermore, only about one-third of respondents felt their company offered support in all the channels their customers want to use (bottom, right) — a slight increase over 2016 results. When it comes to channel strategy, these results, taken together, demonstrate plenty of opportunity for brands.

Do you believe your company has a good understanding of which channels your customers prefer to use, and how this may or may not differ from what your company offers?

Yes: 61%
No: 34%
Don't Know: 5%

Do you believe your company offers support in all the channels that your customers want to use?

Yes: 2016: 31%, 2017: 36%
No: 2016: 67%, 2017: 61%
Don't Know: 2016: 2%, 2017: 3%

■ 2016 ■ 2017

Challenges to Providing Exceptional CX

Strategic Insights – Perception

In a new question (below) aimed at understanding the challenges faced by brands in providing an exceptional customer experience, several themes emerged among the open-ended responses received. Chief among these: **delivering higher quality at a lower cost, managing technology upgrades, consistency, connecting organizational silos and striking a balance between meeting the needs of customers and the business.**

Generally speaking, which challenge is your company struggling with most in its pursuit to provide an exceptional customer experience?

VERBATIM RESPONSES:

"We are trying to transition from archaic communication and tracking systems to something more technologically advanced."

"Meeting the changing channel needs of our customers while maintaining aggressive, phone-based service levels — all at a 'reasonable' cost!"

"Trying to connect the silos of CX information that each department has (Web, Marketing, Sales, CS, etc.)."

"Balancing quality and cost. How much is too much, and to what extent is paying a premium for service sustainable over time?"

"Complexity of provisioning systems, competitive pricing market and consistency in delivering services."

"Balancing growth objectives with the consumer experience."

"Understanding customer needs and applying this within our internal business strategy."

"Striking a proper balance between great customer experience and costs."

"Correlating an increase in investment in compensation to call center folks back to customer experience."

"Legacy processes and policies; departments working to create their own processes and not always taking in consideration the customer experience. Technology enhancements happening at such a very fast pace, that they sometimes inadvertently hurt the customer experience."

"Competing technologies and priorities on the corporate road map."

"Transitioning traditional call center customer service to online customer experience."

"Multiple companies with multiple objectives, technology and experience."

"Company is revenue focused first, and often unwilling to accept that there are second order benefits to doing the right thing for a customer."

"Providing a consistent experience across all touch points (brick & mortar, online and call center)."
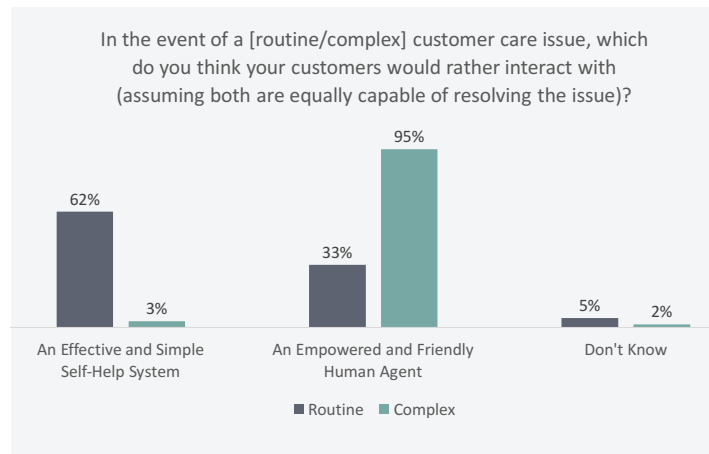
Committing to the Customer and Customer Preferences

Strategic Insights – Perception

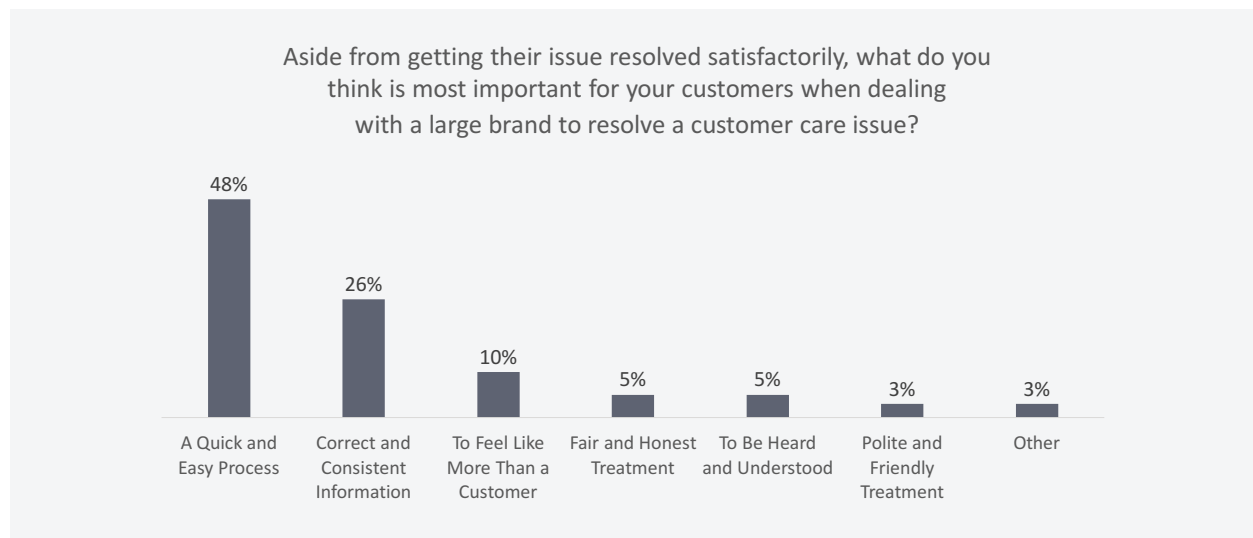Is your company's leadership fully committed to a customer-first strategy?

Yes: 50%
Somewhat: 50%
No: 0%

In a new question for 2017, survey participants were asked whether they felt their company's leadership was fully committed to a customer-first strategy. Although all respondents indicated their leadership had some level of commitment to a customer-first strategy, only half indicated their leadership was "fully" committed. These results suggest customer care groups still have a lot of work to do internally in convincing their organizations of the importance of putting the customer first.

For several years now, the CXMB Series Consumer Edition has investigated whether consumers prefer to interact with agents or self-help systems. New for this report, we also asked corporate survey participants about their perceptions of consumer interaction preferences. In comparison to consumer results, corporations overestimate consumer preferences for assisted interactions when it comes to complex issues, and underestimate those same preferences for routine issues. For the latest in Consumer Edition results, see the Consumer Edition Comparisons on page 72.

In the event of a [routine/complex] customer care issue, which do you think your customers would rather interact with (assuming both are equally capable of resolving the issue)?

	Routine	Complex
An Effective and Simple Self-Help System	62%	3%
An Empowered and Friendly Human Agent	33%	95%
Don't Know	5%	2%

Like the question above, the question below has also been posed to consumers as a part of the CXMB Series Consumer Edition. When presented to corporate respondents, nearly three-quarters felt either "A Quick and Easy Process" or "Correct and Consistent Information" were most important to their customers. Consumers mostly agreed, but they also placed a lot of value on fair and honest treatment. To understand how these results compare with actual consumer results, check out the Consumer Edition Comparisons section on page 69.

Aside from getting their issue resolved satisfactorily, what do you think is most important for your customers when dealing with a large brand to resolve a customer care issue?

A Quick and Easy Process	48%
Correct and Consistent Information	26%
To Feel Like More Than a Customer	10%
Fair and Honest Treatment	5%
To Be Heard and Understood	5%
Polite and Friendly Treatment	3%
Other	3%

Priorities

Top Customer Experience Priorities

Strategic Insights – Priorities

In the second year of asking the question below, "Improve the Customer Experience" extended its lead as being a top priority, claimed by nearly two-thirds of all respondents. At the same time, "Reduce Costs" received zero responses, as did "Shift Care to Newer Platforms." On the flip side, both "Solidify Brand Reputation" and "Increase Revenue" saw substantial increases in response rates compared to 2016 results. See below to understand how these past priorities compare with the priorities of the coming year.

What was the top priority of your company's leadership regarding customer experience management over the past 12 months?

Category	2016	2017
Improve the Customer Experience	56%	63%
Reduce Costs	17%	0%
Increase Effectiveness	11%	12%
Solidify Brand Reputation	8%	13%
Improve Productivity	5%	5%
Shift Care to Newer Platforms	3%	0%
Increase Revenue	0%	7%

■ 2016 ■ 2017

While the question above asks about the priorities of the past year, the question below is forward-looking, investigating the priorities of the coming year. While "Improving the Customer Experience" remains a top priority for the majority of brands, "Increase Effectiveness" and "Increase Revenue" also received some attention, combining to account for more than a quarter of all responses. Interestingly, about two-thirds of all brands had customer-focused priorities (improving CX and program effectiveness), while the balance had business-focused priorities (increasing revenue, shifting care, solidifying brand reputation and reducing costs).

What will be the top priority of your company's leadership regarding customer experience management in the coming year?

Category	Percentage
Improve the Customer Experience	53%
Increase Effectiveness	15%
Increase Revenue	12%
Shift Care to Newer Platforms	8%
Solidify Brand Reputation	7%
Reduce Costs	5%
Improve Productivity	0%

Change, Alternative Channel Integration and Emerging Technology

Strategic Insights – Priorities

In 2017, there was a slight year-over-year uptick in channel changes that took survey participants by surprise (below, left). Virtually all of the "surprises" mentioned dealt with alternative channels. Specifically, several companies found higher than expected volumes and greater complexity within the social media channel. Two additional "surprises" worth noting: unwavering consumer preference for live interactions and strong customer satisfaction (CSAT) results within chat.

As for alternative channel integration (below, right), Interactive Care continues to experience less prioritization, while the prioritization of multiple channels (and, to a lesser extent, Social Media Care) continues to increase. Additional alternative channel integration information can be found in the Initiatives section on page 18.

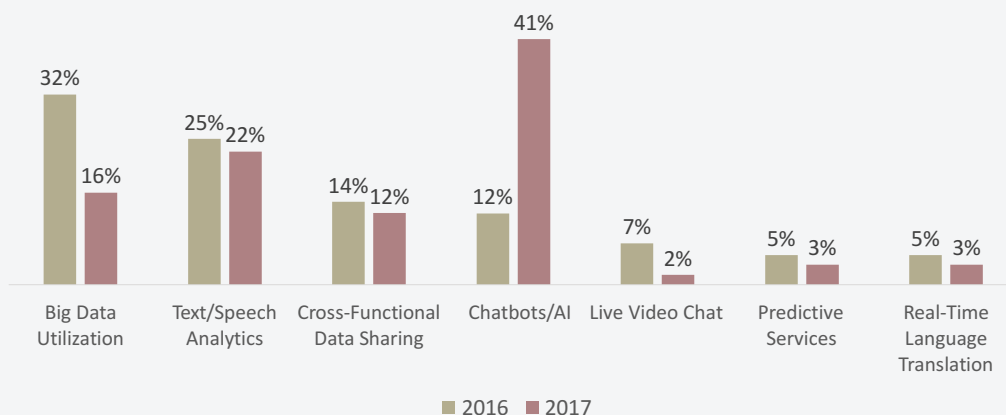Has there been a substantial change in any channel that has taken you by surprise?

2017 – Yes: 8%
2016 – Yes: 5%
2015 – Yes: 6%

Which alternative channel does your company prioritize when it comes to integration with the Traditional Care channel?

	Interactive Care	Multiple Channels Prioritized	Social Media Care	Mobile Care
2015	46%	19%	21%	14%
2016	35%	25%	22%	18%
2017	32%	30%	26%	12%
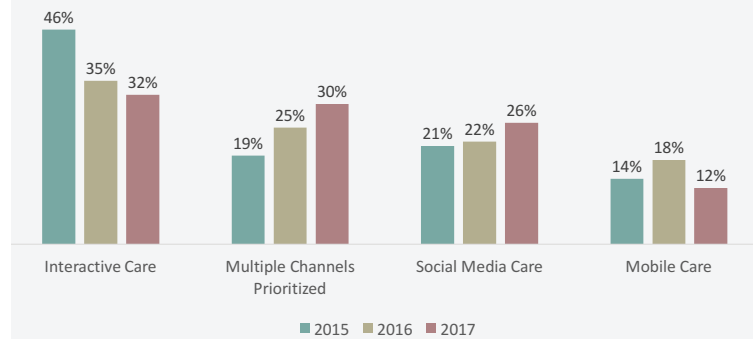
In 2017, there was an explosion of interest and investment in chatbots and artificial intelligence (AI), with decreased prioritization across all other categories, particularly Big Data Utilization. Although chatbots and AI have been on the scene to one degree or another for several years, the industry underwent a real transformation from the theoretical to the practical in 2017. Where conversations about these technologies were once exploratory, brands — both big and not so big — are finding success in direct application, especially when it comes to internal tools that assist agents who are assisting customers. These trends are sure to extend in 2018.

Which of these emerging technologies is your organization most interested and/or invested in?

	Big Data Utilization	Text/Speech Analytics	Cross-Functional Data Sharing	Chatbots/AI	Live Video Chat	Predictive Services	Real-Time Language Translation
2016	32%	25%	14%	12%	7%	5%	5%
2017	16%	22%	12%	41%	2%	3%	3%

Initiatives

Shifting Care and the Impact of CX Initiatives

Strategic Insights – Initiatives

Of all survey respondents, fewer than a quarter indicated an imminent change in their customer care strategy and/or setup. Among the changes mentioned: greater focus on the customer, increased outsourcing and offshoring, a greater push to self-service and digital solutions and deployment of new technologies like AI and chatbots.

Does your company have any plans to shift customer care away from its existing strategy and/or setup?

2017 – Yes: 23%
2016 – Yes: 24%
2015 – Yes: 34%

In a brand-new inquiry (below) designed to explore upcoming initiatives, we received a wide range of answers, touching on multiple areas of the customer experience. Recurring topics included **simplification of the customer care process, centralization of teams and tools, agent empowerment, quality assurance revamp, IVR enhancements (such as natural language processing) and increased functionality across channels.**

Of all your company's upcoming customer care initiatives, please briefly describe the one that you think will have the most positive impact on the customer experience.

VERBATIM RESPONSES:

"We're rolling out more channels, including self-service, as well as omnichannel with a greater focus on simplifying interactions."

"Being able to identify customers and see their history, value to the company, etc."

"Proactively reaching out to remedy issues reported by customers through online and email surveys (if they have not contacted us through traditional channels)."

"Moving tools, training, and capabilities from areas of the company that are multiple hops from the first customer interaction to the agents that are handling those interactions."

"Empowering employees to take care of the customer and work outside of guidelines to find creative solutions on the first interaction."

"Launch of a more comprehensive and systematic QA process."

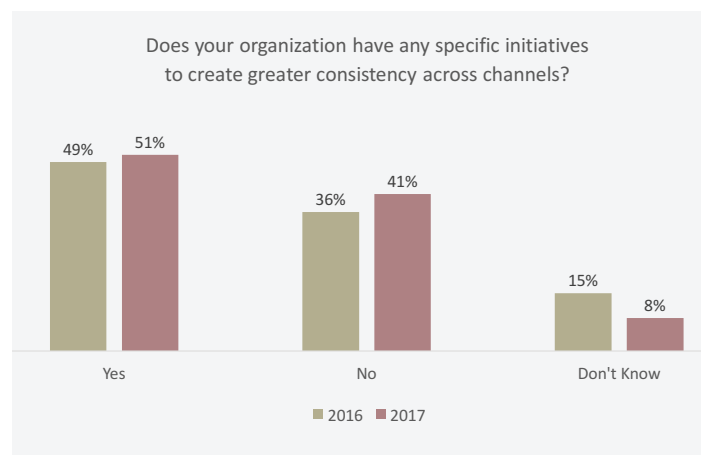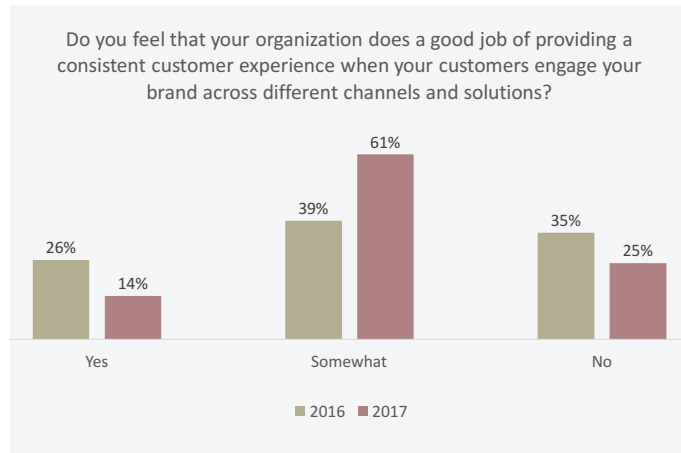*"Increasing digital functionality and making it simpler to use."*

"Centralizing the team with view to standardizing ALL processes and procedures."

"Bringing natural language and other technology into our IVR."

Consistency Across Channels

Strategic Insights – Initiatives

Results from this year's survey showed a steep decrease (-46%) in the percentage of respondents who felt their organization was doing a good job at providing a consistent customer experience across channels and solutions. The good news is, most of this decline fell into the "Somewhat" bucket, as the percentage of brands that answered "No" to this question also declined (-29%).

Do you feel that your organization does a good job of providing a consistent customer experience when your customers engage your brand across different channels and solutions?

	Yes	Somewhat	No
2016	26%	39%	35%
2017	14%	61%	25%

■ 2016 ■ 2017

Does your organization have any specific initiatives to create greater consistency across channels?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2016	49%	36%	15%
2017	51%	41%	8%

■ 2016 ■ 2017

As in 2016, about half of 2017 respondents indicated their organization has specific initiatives to create greater consistency across channels of care.

Although there are few open-ended questions as a part of the CXMB Series Corporate Edition survey, the answers received are usually wide-ranging. That wasn't the case when it came to channel consistency initiatives, where the overwhelming majority of responses dealt with updating and consolidating CRM systems to integrate data from multiple sources, creating a single depository for contact histories, customer data and knowledge databases.

Please briefly describe the initiative to create greater consistency across channels.

VERBATIM RESPONSES:

"Trying to integrate all data into CRM with visibility for all agents to handle through all channels."

"A multi-departmental group is reviewing CRMs that would tie all information together."

"Establishing playbooks and centralized processes that all teams must adhere to in addition to organizational consolidation."

"Currently mapping to identify the areas where we need to increase consistency."

"Better access across channels to the same customer data by improving our existing access to customer notes."

Alternative Channel Resolution Rates and Integration

Strategic Insights – Initiatives

Does your organization have any specific initiatives to increase the resolution capabilities of alternative channels (i.e., Interactive Care, Social Media Care and Mobile Care)?

Yes: 50%
No: 37%
Don't Know: 13%

For several years, CXMB Series Consumer Edition results have indicated lower resolution rates within alternative channels in comparison to rates from Traditional Care and multichannel. The introduction of the question at left is in response to these findings. The fact that only half of survey respondents are actively working to raise alternative channel resolution rates should give brands pause. As use of alternative channels continues to grow, particularly as a result of intentional channel-shifting, it will becoming increasingly important for brands to provide comparable resolution rates across all channels.

Please briefly describe the initiative to increase the resolution capabilities of alternative channels (i.e., Interactive Care, Social Media Care and Mobile Care):
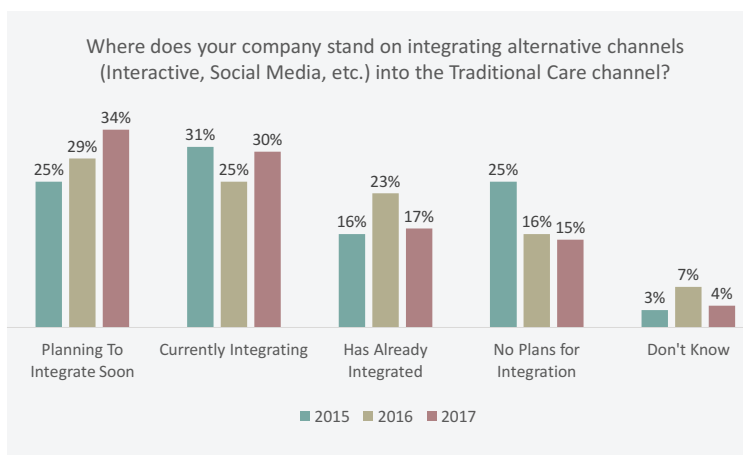
Among the initiatives described to increase the resolution capabilities of alternative channels, a central theme arose, and that theme can be described as, "Technology will solve all our problems." While technology can go a long way in helping companies solve problems, brands have to be careful not to overlook their people and their processes. Empowering agents (which was mentioned by a few respondents) and building efficient and effective processes are also key to boosting and maintaining resolution rates within alternative channels. Below is a snapshot of some of the specific answers received:

"Improving our internal knowledge base to allow for more online self service."

"Convergence to self help as opposed to traditional reliance on care channel."

"Empower care agents to do more — more tools, more permissions."

"Using chatbots in our interactive chat-based channels and increasing the volume of video chat support."

Where does your company stand on integrating alternative channels (Interactive, Social Media, etc.) into the Traditional Care channel?

	Planning To Integrate Soon	Currently Integrating	Has Already Integrated	No Plans for Integration	Don't Know
2015	25%	31%	16%	25%	3%
2016	29%	25%	23%	16%	7%
2017	34%	30%	17%	15%	4%

The percentage of brands that have integrated, are integrating or plan to integrate has steadily increased since 2015, with a high water mark of 81% in 2017. Integration of alternative channels is seen as a key step in providing a consistent omnichannel experience.

Percentage integrated, integrating or planning to integrate one or more alternative channels:

2017 – 81%
2016 – 77%
2015 – 72%

Channel-Shifting and Millennial Initiatives

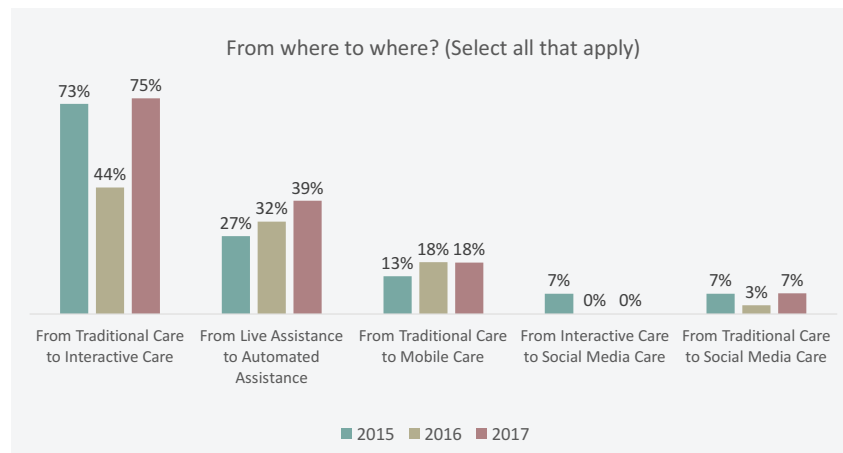## Strategic Insights — Initiatives

A majority of organizations (52%) continue to actively shift traffic from one channel to another, primarily from Traditional Care to alternative channels, and from live assistance to automated assistance. While there are no shortages of business-related drivers for these shifts, brands need to be aware of the potential consequences of pushing their customers from one channel to another. This is especially true if the destination channels are not necessarily the preferred channel, or if the destination channel isn't equipped to effectively handle the sort of issues being pushed toward it. CXMB Series Consumer Edition data also suggests forced multichannel engagements, ones that result from issue complexity or process paths, can have dire consequences for both resolution and customer satisfaction rates. Brands should keep all of this in mind as they develop their channel-shifting strategies.

Is your organization actively trying to shift engagement traffic from one channel to another?

2017 — Yes: 52%
2016 — Yes: 61%
2015 — Yes: 47%

From where to where? (Select all that apply)

	From Traditional Care to Interactive Care	From Live Assistance to Automated Assistance	From Traditional Care to Mobile Care	From Interactive Care to Social Media Care	From Traditional Care to Social Media Care
2015	73%	27%	13%	7%	7%
2016	44%	32%	18%	0%	3%
2017	75%	39%	18%	0%	7%

Do you feel your company is beginning to divert focus away from traditional avenues of assistance into autonomous (self-help) options?

2017 — Yes: 53%
2016 — Yes: 60%
2015 — Yes: 63%
2014 — Yes: 55%

Like active channel-shifting, diversion away from Traditional Care and into self-help options remains pervasive among survey participants, with 53% indicating such practices. Similarly, brands need to be aware of the consequences of such actions — especially the impact on satisfaction. The fact is that consumers, by and large, continue to prefer human assistance to self-help, regardless of issue type or complexity. For more information regarding these preferences, see the Consumer Edition Comparisons section on page 72.

Does your organization have any customer experience initiatives aimed specifically at your Millennial customers?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2016	32%	60%	8%
2017	25%	68%	7%
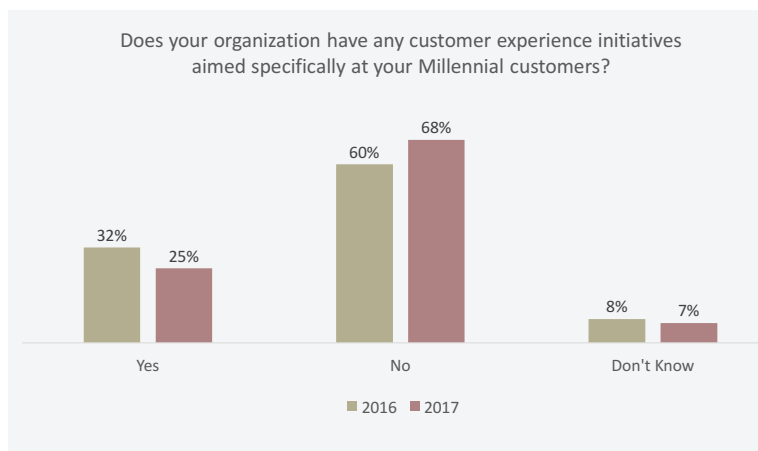
The percentage of organizations engaging in millennial-specific initiatives slipped year-over-year, with a quarter of survey participants indicating the presence of such initiatives, down from one-third in 2016. Of the initiatives that were cited in an open-ended follow-up, almost all fell into two distinct buckets: marketing-related initiatives aimed at outreach and/ or retention, and expansion of customer care into alternative channels, like Social Media and Mobile Care.
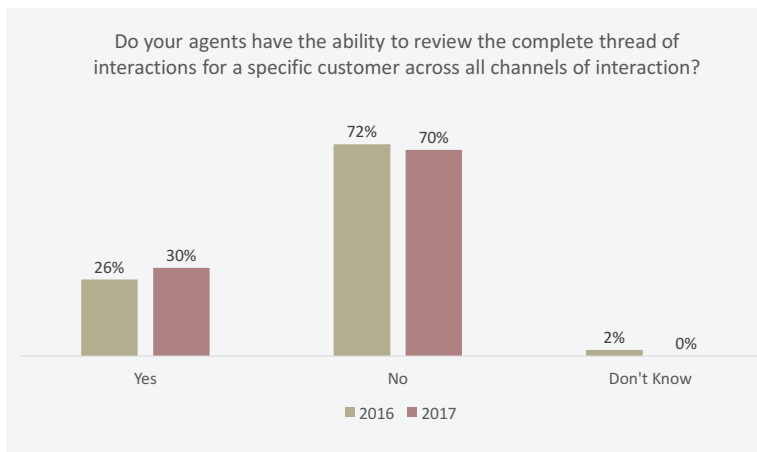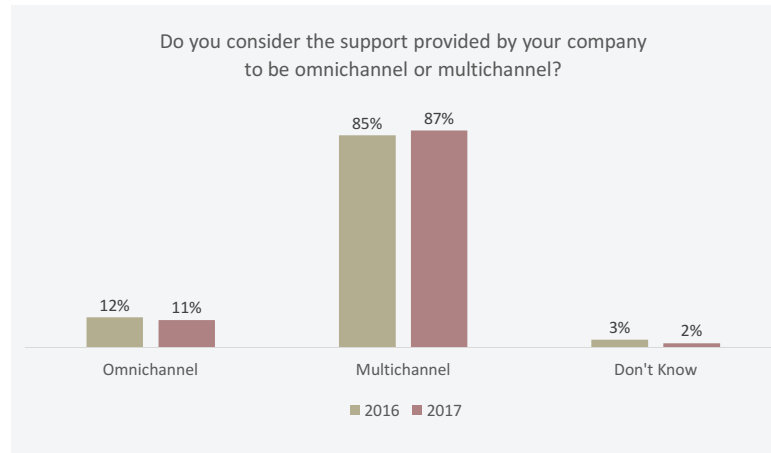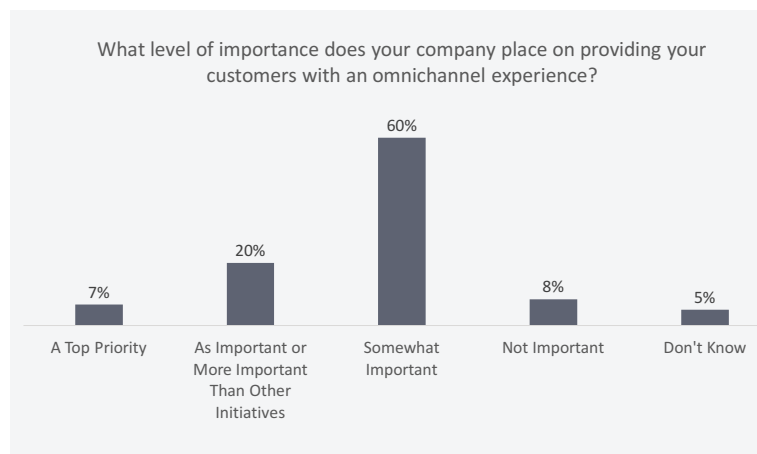
Program Structure

Omnichannel Support
Strategic Insights – Program Structure

Like last year, few companies consider themselves to be providers of omnichannel support, with about one in ten survey respondents describing their support as such. Although omnichannel support remains as an aspirational goal for many organizations, it has recently taken a back seat to other, more pressing priorities. Furthermore, some organizations are questioning the benefits and associated costs with going omnichannel, especially considering the complexity and scale of such an initiative. Before committing to such a transformation, businesses should seek to understand the impact on both their customers and the organization.

Do you consider the support provided by your company to be omnichannel or multichannel?

	Omnichannel	Multichannel	Don't Know
2016	12%	85%	3%
2017	11%	87%	2%

Do your agents have the ability to review the complete thread of interactions for a specific customer across all channels of interaction?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2016	26%	72%	2%
2017	30%	70%	0%

While not the end-all, be-all of an omnichannel program, cross-channel threading is nonetheless a critical component of providing a seamless, end-to-end experience. While only one-tenth of organizations describe themselves as omnichannel (above), nearly one-third of organizations indicate a cross-channel threading capability. An increase in this percentage is good news for consumers, as cross-channel threading reduces miscommunication and frustration, and makes it easier for customers to navigate across channels.

What level of importance does your company place on providing your customers with an omnichannel experience?

A Top Priority	As Important or More Important Than Other Initiatives	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know
7%	20%	60%	8%	5%

In a new question for 2017, few survey respondents (7%) indicated provision of an omnichannel experience as a "Top Priority," while only one in five indicated omnichannel was "As Important or More Important Than Other Initiatives." This sentiment seems to be pervasive throughout the industry, particularly as companies focus on newer CX trends, such as deployment of AI and chatbots. This is also the case with other projects aimed at improving the customer experience, like customer journey mapping, channel strategy and quality program redesign.

The CXO Role and CRM Systems

Strategic Insights — Program Structure

In comparison to 2016 results, fewer 2017 respondents indicated the presence of a Chief Experience Officer (CXO) or similar role within their organizations. This could be due to the slight difference in the makeup of survey participants, with the 2016 survey pool displaying a slightly larger revenue profile. For some organizations, including the CXO position in their organizational chart can lead to greater accountability, focused efforts and an improved CX for both internal and external customers.

Does your organization have a Chief Experience Officer (CXO) or similar role dedicated to improving the customer experience?

Yes — 2016: 38%, 2017: 25%
No — 2016: 62%, 2017: 75%

■ 2016 ■ 2017

Does your organization utilize a shared CRM system that combines information from all contact channels?

## 2017 — Yes: 50%
2016 — Yes: 49%
2015 — Yes: 49%

Like cross-channel threading, a shared CRM system is often an important step in creating a seamless, end-to-end omnichannel experience. A well-implemented, shared CRM system can unlock data across an organization, simplifying processes and opening the door to higher levels of consistency and interdepartmental cooperation.

Which CRM system does your organization use?

Self-Developed, 36%
Salesforce, 25%
Other, 26%
Zendesk, 4%
Siebel, 4%
Oracle, 6%
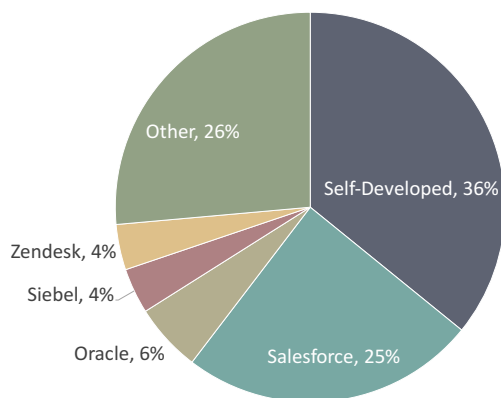
Among "Other":

Epicore
Sage
Teradata
Pivotal
Boomtown Relay
Blackbaud
SugarCRM
Microsoft Dynamics
TouchPoint

There was great variety among the 53 survey respondents that named their current CRM system. Interestingly, the largest contingent (36%) described its current CRM system as homegrown. Of the non-homegrown variety, Salesforce was most often named (25%), followed distantly by Oracle/Siebel (10%) and Zendesk (4%).

Customer Feedback, Negative Follow-Ups and Artificial Intelligence
Strategic Insights – Program Structure

Results from this year's survey showed a significant year-over-year drop in the percentage of brands utilizing customer feedback for the purposes of improving the customer experience. Utilization of customer feedback is essential, and it presents an opportunity unlike any other when it comes to companies gaining valuable insights about their customers. As Bill Gates once succinctly put it, "Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning."

Does your organization have a system for utilizing customer feedback to improve the customer experience?

2017 – Yes: 77%
2016 – Yes: 92%

Following a negative customer care experience, does your organization proactively follow up with customers to help remedy the situation?

Yes: 83%

In a new question for 2017, survey participants were asked whether or not their brands proactively follow up with customers following a negative experience. A great majority (83%) indicated they did, which is good news for customers. In a related series of questions posed to consumers as a part of the CXMB Series Consumer Edition report, it was discovered that proactive follow-ups after a negative experience can reduce negative impacts on future purchase decisions by as much as 13%.

Has your company applied the use of artificial intelligence (AI) within your customer care business?

Yes: 17%

In another new question for 2017, survey participants were asked whether or not they were applying AI within their business and, if so, how. Fewer than one in five survey respondents indicated the use of AI within their customer care business. Among the most commonly cited use cases were response automation, natural language recognition and processing, machine learning and predictive issue resolution.

Strategic Insights – Conclusions

Key Findings:

• Only 50% of respondents feel their company's leadership is fully committed to a customer-first strategy. (Page 11)

• Thirty-four percent of respondents indicate they don't have a good understanding of which channels their customers prefer to use, nor how these preferences differ from what's currently offered. (Page 9)

• Only 36% of respondents believe they offer customer care support in all the channels their customers want to use. (Page 9)

• There was more than a threefold year-over-year increase in the percentage of brands naming chatbots and AI as the technology of most interest and/or investment, yet only 17% of survey participants indicated they have applied the use of AI within their customer care business. (Pages 14 and 23)

Results from this year's Strategic Insights section provide readers with plenty of food for thought in several key areas. A big eye-opener: customer care organizations definitely have their work cut out for them when it comes to gaining full leadership buy-in on a customer-first strategy, with only half of respondents reporting that they have such support. Without this support, customer care organizations are fighting an uphill battle. This is especially true as consumer expectations are constantly being shaped by the top-notch experiences consumers are having with brands like Amazon.com, Apple and many others.

Also worth consideration are areas where brands need to better understand consumer preferences. Two specific areas in need of deeper understanding: channel and interaction preferences. Brands needn't be shy about investing resources into understanding which channels their customers prefer, and also when they prefer interacting with a human versus an automated system. After all, understanding customer wants and needs is the first step in delivering on customer wants and needs.

Critical Questions Brands Should Be Asking Themselves:

Are the financial implications of providing a positive customer experience well understood throughout the organization? Is our leadership fully on board?

Are we investing enough time and energy to understand the channel preferences of our customers, and are we delivering on those preferences?

Do we understand the capabilities and limitations of technologies like AI, and do we have a plan for using these technologies to improve the experience of our customers?

Operational Insights

- Volumes and Growth
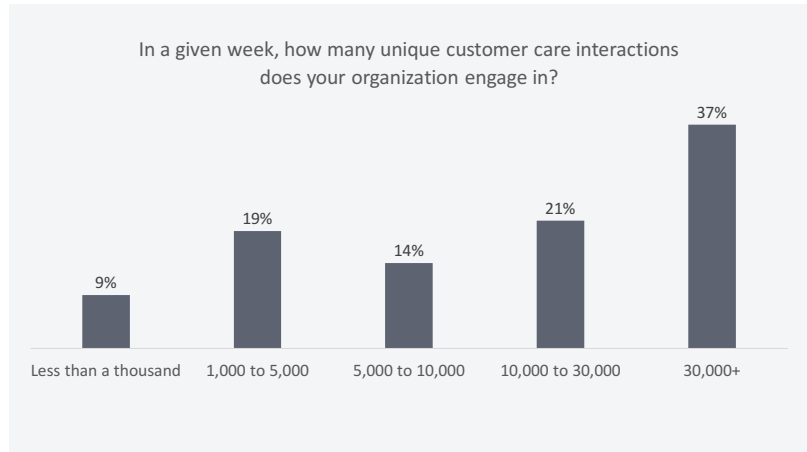- Monitoring, Measuring and Performance Improvements
- Staffing

Volumes & Growth

Volume and Channel Breakdown

Operational Insights – Volumes and Growth

As in past years, survey respondents were asked to describe their customer care operations in terms of volume. These results are intended to help readers better understand the size and scope of the customer care operations of this year's survey participants, which reported slightly lower volumes in comparison to last year's survey cohort.

In a given week, how many unique customer care interactions does your organization engage in?

Less than a thousand	1,000 to 5,000	5,000 to 10,000	10,000 to 30,000	30,000+
9%	19%	14%	21%	37%

Results depicting the distribution of customer care volumes across channels were highly consistent with results from previous years, with the bulk of interactions (an average of 73%) continuing to flow through Traditional Care. Essentially, three out of every four interactions occur within the Traditional Care channel. It's been hypothesized (and, at times, refuted) that the expansion of alternative channel solutions would have a reductive effect on Traditional Care volumes. So far, this hypothesis has not been overtly supported by the data, although about a third of brands did indicate a decrease in Traditional Care channel traffic (page 44). Either way, the Traditional Care channel remains at the center of customer care operations, fulfilling an (as of yet) entirely indispensable role.

In your estimation, which percentage of total consumer interactions at your organization occur in each specific channel of care?

	Traditional Care	Interactive Care	Mobile Care	Social Media Care
2015	71%	17%	6%	6%
2016	73%	16%	4%	7%
2017	73%	18%	4%	5%
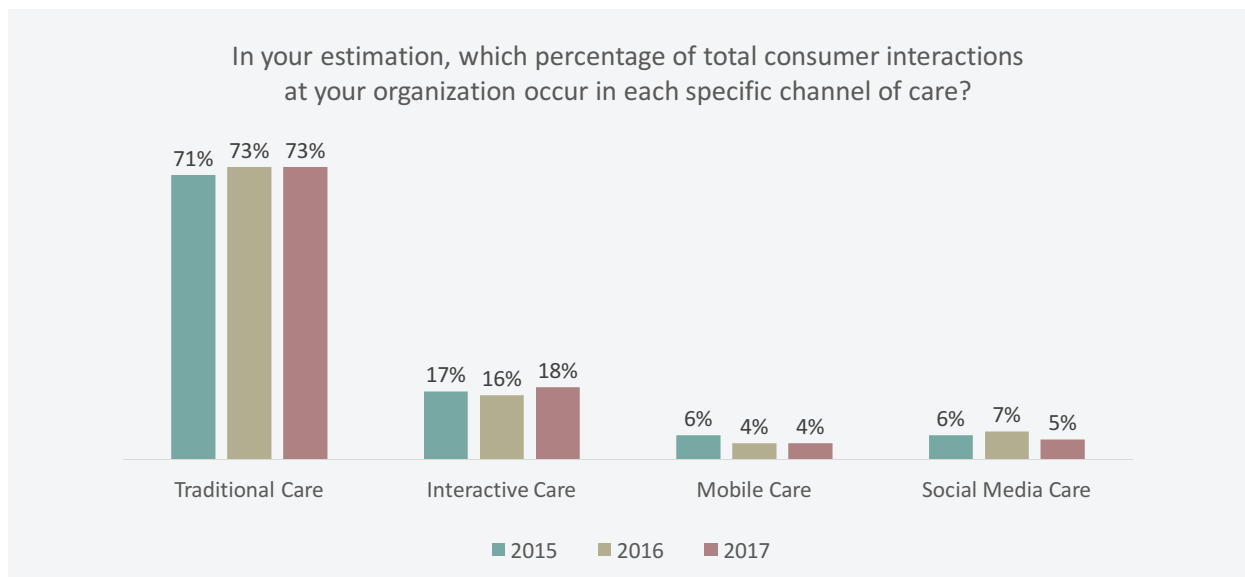
Automation and Channel Growth

Operational Insights – Volumes and Growth

The ratio between automated to human-to-human engagement remained relatively flat year-over-year. Although 2017 marks two consecutive years of flat to minimal growth in the percentage of human-to-human engagements, the increases are likely due to growth in overall contact volumes versus any specific shift from automated to assisted. This is especially true as many companies (for better or worse) continue to actively shift contacts away from Traditional Care and into self-help solutions.

What percentage of your organization's total engagements are automated (such as IVR, Self-Help, etc.) versus human-to-human (such as Phone, Chat, etc.)?

	2015	2016	2017
Human-to-Human	69%	72%	74%
Automated	31%	28%	26%
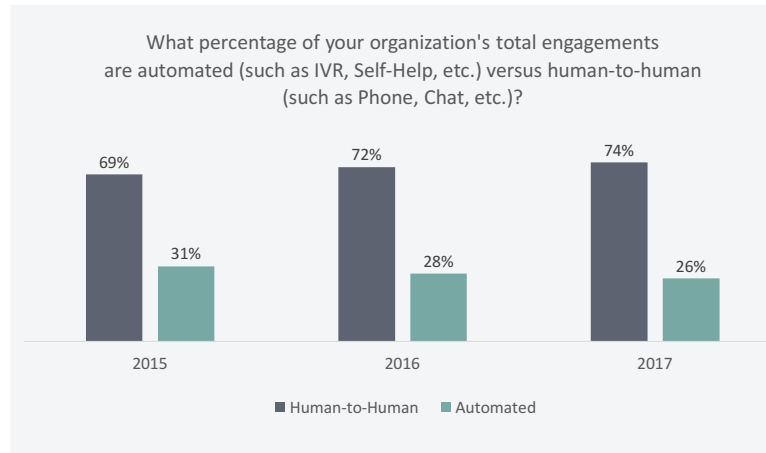
For three years running, most growth within contact channels has been seated in the areas of Traditional and Interactive Care. In 2017, 80% of companies named either Traditional or Interactive Care as the channel with the most growth, closely aligning with the 79% that indicated the same in 2016. Also, for the second consecutive year, growth within the Mobile Care channel was little more than a blip.

In which customer care channel have you seen the most growth during the past 12 months?

	2015	2016	2017
Traditional Care	38%	48%	34%
Social Media Care	23%	18%	17%
Interactive Care	28%	31%	46%
Mobile Care	11%	3%	3%
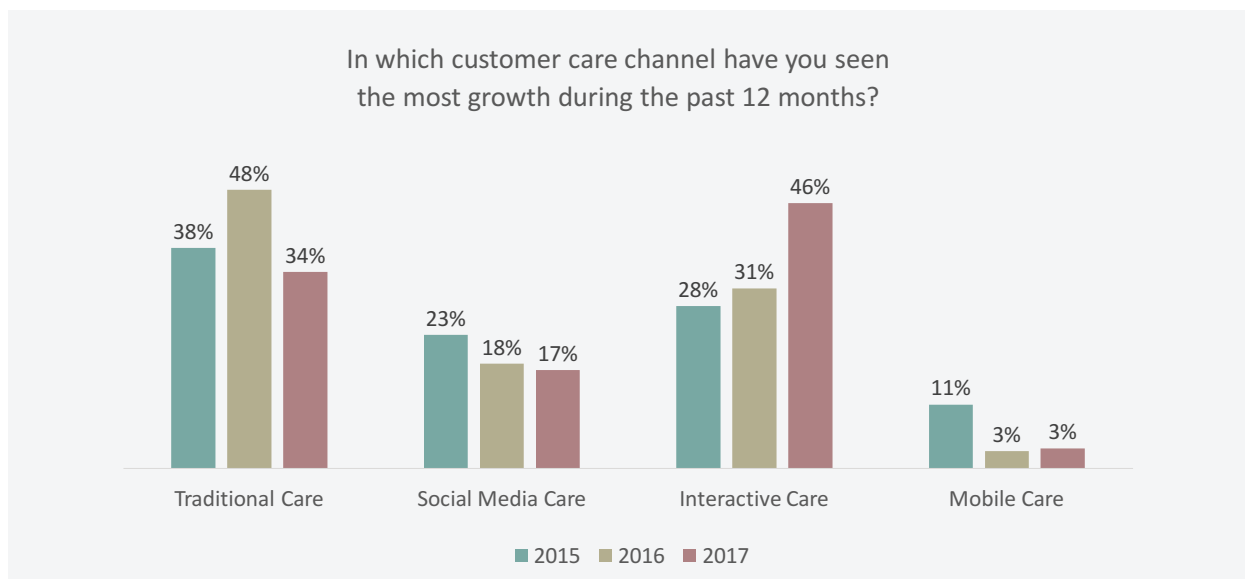
Traffic Changes By Channel

Operational Insights – Volumes and Growth

In looking at traffic changes among individual channels, Traditional Care stands out as a bit of a contradiction. Although Traditional Care is often cited as the channel with the mo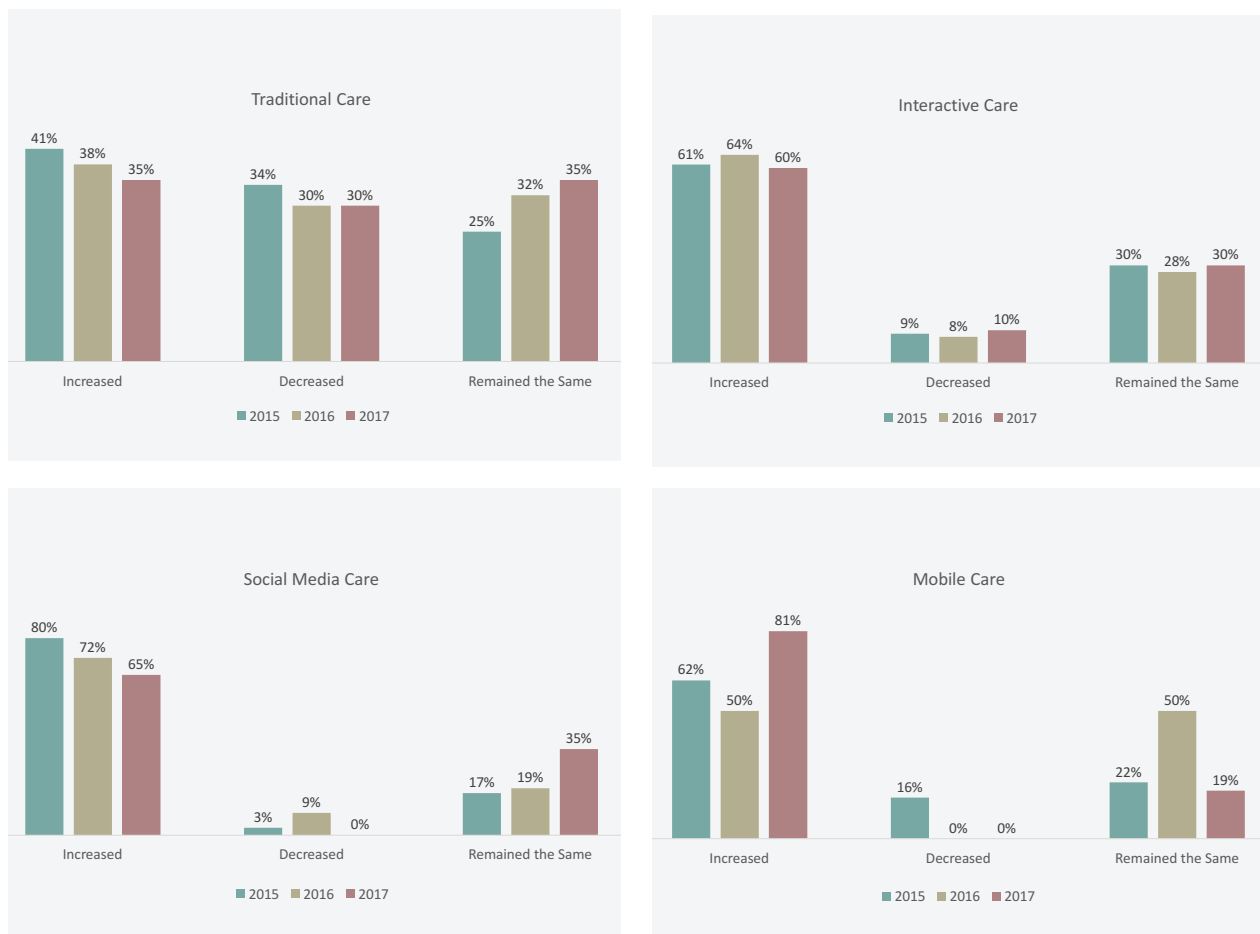st growth by many organizations (bottom of previous page), it's also the only channel to experience a decrease in traffic volume among a significant number of survey respondents. In fact, in 2017, almost as many brands saw a decrease in Traditional Care traffic (30%) as those brands that named Traditional Care as the channel with the most growth (34%). Based on the available data, what is not fully understood is whether or not the reduction in Traditional Care volume is the result of shifting care to other channels or some entirely different cause.

Changes in channel traffic over the previous 12 months (by channel):

Traditional Care

	Increased	Decreased	Remained the Same
2015	41%	34%	25%
2016	38%	30%	32%
2017	35%	30%	35%

Interactive Care

	Increased	Decreased	Remained the Same
2015	61%	9%	30%
2016	64%	8%	28%
2017	60%	10%	30%

Social Media Care

	Increased	Decreased	Remained the Same
2015	80%	3%	17%
2016	72%	9%	19%
2017	65%	0%	35%

Mobile Care

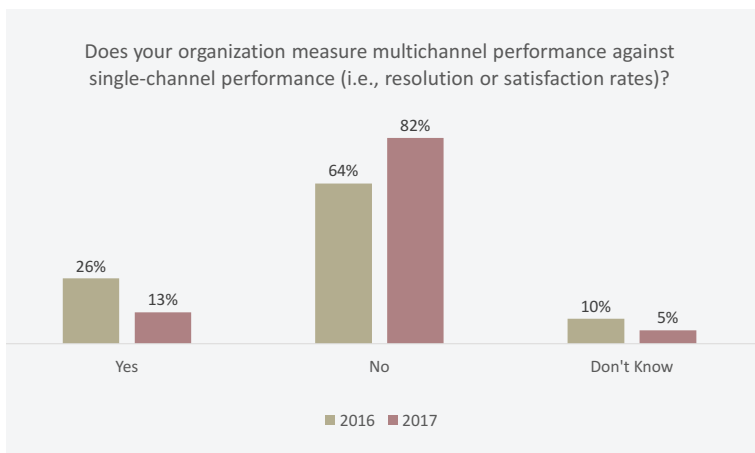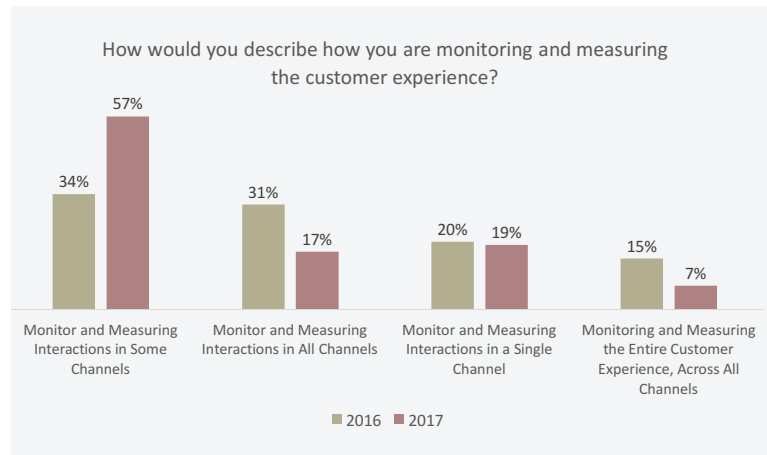|	Increased	Decreased	Remained the Same
2015	62%	16%	22%
2016	50%	0%	50%
2017	81%	0%	19%

Monitoring, Measuring & Performance Improvements

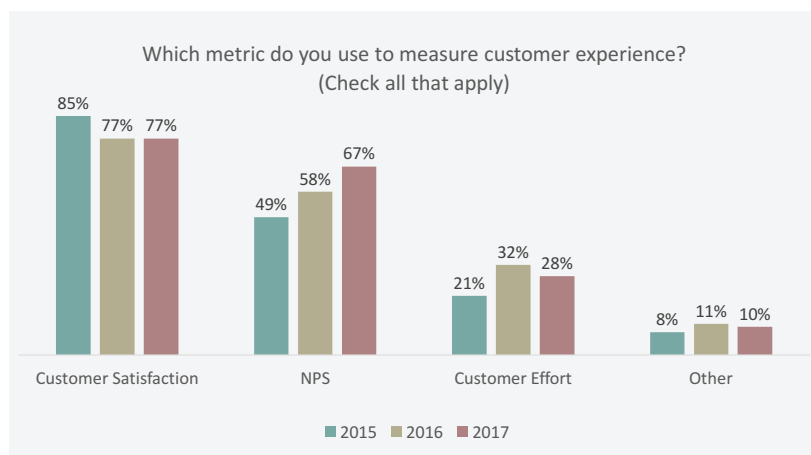# Monitoring, Single vs. Multichannel and Metrics

Operational Insights – Monitoring, Measuring and Performance Improvement

Roughly a quarter of all survey respondents indicated they were either measuring and monitoring the entire customer experience (7%) or monitoring and measuring in all channels (17%). Although measuring and monitoring the customer experience across the entire journey is ideal, companies shouldn't let perfection be the enemy of good. In other words, brands need to at least start measuring within each channel, then expand to measuring across channels.

How would you describe how you are monitoring and measuring the customer experience?

	2016	2017
Monitor and Measuring Interactions in Some Channels	34%	57%
Monitor and Measuring Interactions in All Channels	31%	17%
Monitor and Measuring Interactions in a Single Channel	20%	19%
Monitoring and Measuring the Entire Customer Experience, Across All Channels	15%	7%

Does your organization measure multichannel performance against single-channel performance (i.e., resolution or satisfaction rates)?

	2016	2017
Yes	26%	13%
No	64%	82%
Don't Know	10%	5%

In 2017, half as many organizations as in 2016 indicated they were measuring multichannel performance against single-channel performance. Results from the CXMB Series Consumer Edition continue to depict broad use of the multichannel approach among consumers. These numbers are likely to grow at an ever-increasing pace as more and more brands add additional channel capabilities and technology like cell phones and tablets become more ubiquitous.

Customer satisfaction (CSAT) and Net Promoter Score (NPS) use remains high among survey respondents, with two consecutive years of strong growth for NPS use. Among other customer experience metrics mentioned: simplicity, agent satisfaction and quality.

Which metric do you use to measure customer experience? (Check all that apply)

	2015	2016	2017
Customer Satisfaction	85%	77%	77%
NPS	49%	58%	67%
Customer Effort	21%	32%	28%
Other	8%	11%	10%

Customer Satisfaction By Channel

Operational Insights – Monitoring, Measuring and Performance Improvement

Across three years of data, there has been little change in which channels brands measure CSAT. CSAT measurement within Traditional Care is nearly universal, while about half of all brands also measure CSAT within one or more of their Interactive Care solutions. Measurement of CSAT within Mobile and Social Media Care channels continue to lag far behind the measurement of the same within both Interactive and, especially, Traditional Care.

In which channel(s) do you measure Customer Satisfaction (CSAT)? (Check all that apply)

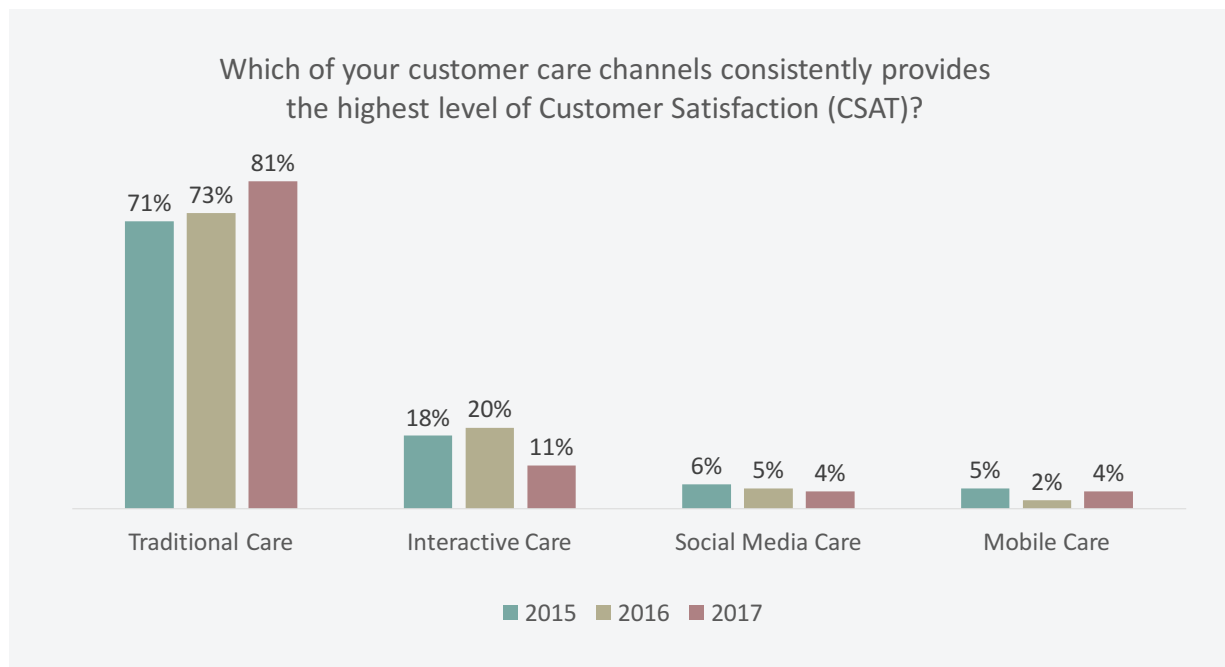|	2015	2016	2017
Traditional Care	96%	94%	98%
Interactive Care	54%	49%	49%
Mobile Care	25%	18%	20%
Social Media Care	22%	31%	29%
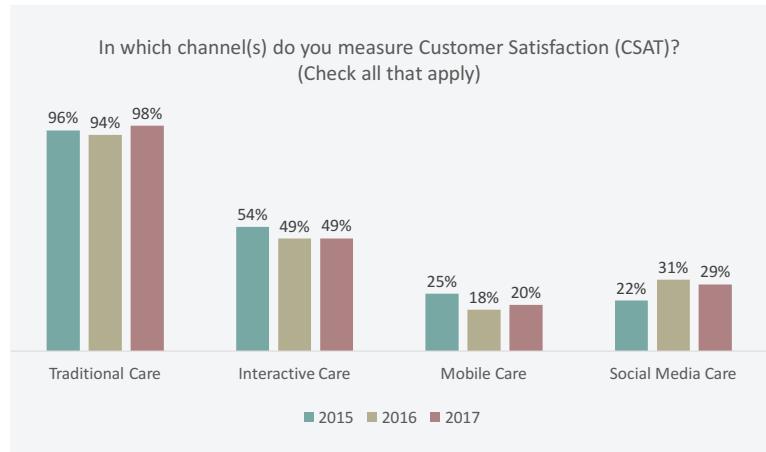
Although most brands (81%) peg Traditional Care as their best-performing channel (at least in terms of CSAT), CXMB Series Consumer Edition data is not as clear-cut on the issue. From the consumer's perspective, when it comes to CSAT, Interactive Care consistently edges out Traditional Care, although the margin of victory is reliably thin. It should also be noted that performance comparisons between channels are often challenging, since so few organizations measure CSAT across all available channels, often awarding Traditional Care the CSAT crown by default.

Which of your customer care channels consistently provides the highest level of Customer Satisfaction (CSAT)?

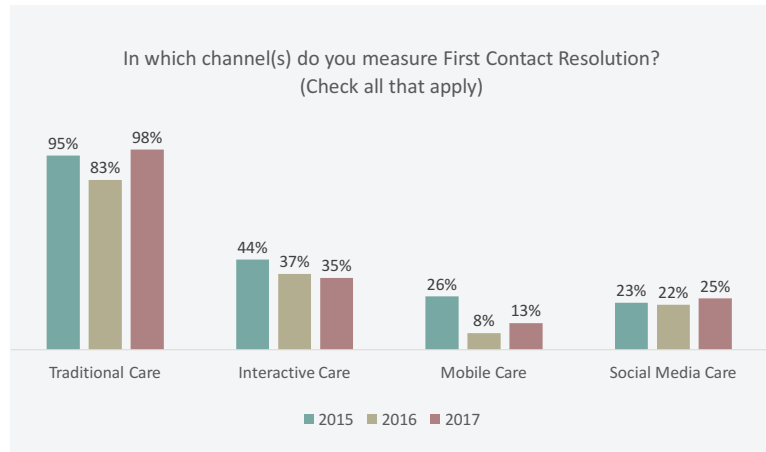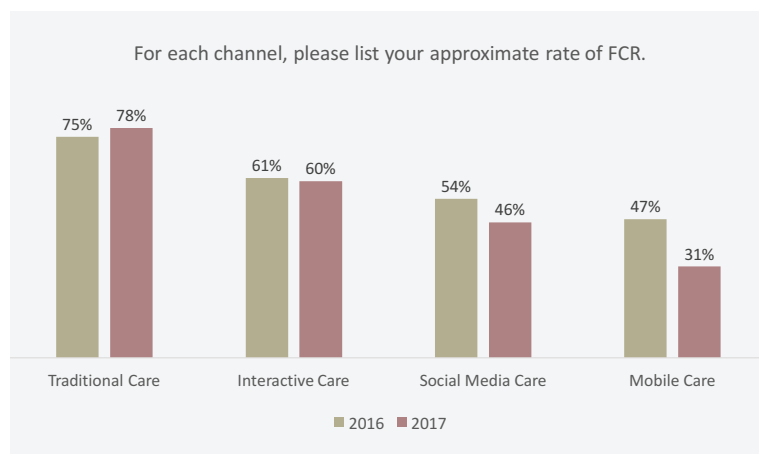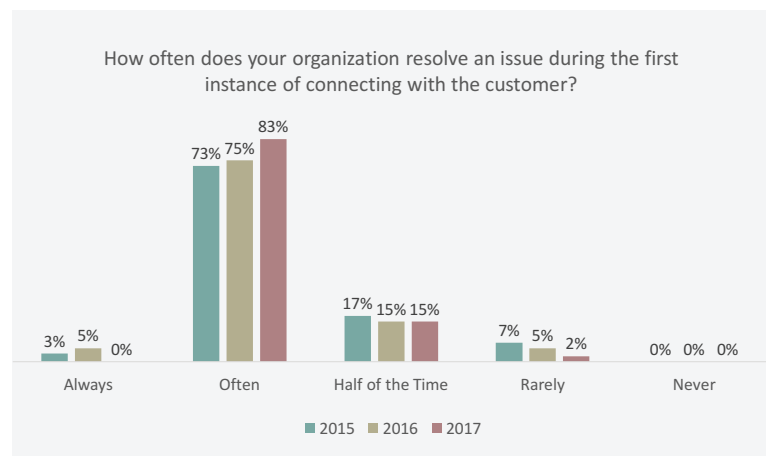|	2015	2016	2017
Traditional Care	71%	73%	81%
Interactive Care	18%	20%	11%
Social Media Care	6%	5%	4%
Mobile Care	5%	2%	4%

First Contact Resolution (FCR)

Operational Insights – Monitoring, Measuring and Performance Improvement

Like CSAT, FCR is most commonly measured in Traditional Care, with nearly all brands (98%) measuring FCR in their Traditional Care channel. This compares with only 35% of brands for Interactive Care, 25% of brands for Social Media Care and a paltry 13% of brands for Mobile Care. As consumers become more familiar with multichannel solutioning, increasingly navigating across channels purely for the purpose of convenience, brands may find themselves taking another look at where FCR fits into the monitoring mix.

In which channel(s) do you measure First Contact Resolution?
(Check all that apply)

	2015	2016	2017
Traditional Care	95%	83%	98%
Interactive Care	44%	37%	35%
Mobile Care	26%	8%	13%
Social Media Care	23%	22%	25%

More than 80% of survey respondents indicated that their organizations "Often" resolve issues on the first instance of connecting with the customer. Occurrence of FCR is another area where corporate respondents and consumers have vastly different purviews, with only 48% of consumers claiming they receive an FCR "Always" or "Often." For greater detail on how corporate and consumer views differ in this area, please see the Consumer Edition Comparisons section on page 71.

How often does your organization resolve an issue during the first instance of connecting with the customer?

	2015	2016	2017
Always	3%	5%	0%
Often	73%	75%	83%
Half of the Time	17%	15%	15%
Rarely	7%	5%	2%
Never	0%	0%	0%

For each channel, please list your approximate rate of FCR.

	2016	2017
Traditional Care	75%	78%
Interactive Care	61%	60%
Social Media Care	54%	46%
Mobile Care	47%	31%

Not surprisingly, Traditional Care received the highest results when it came to approximating FCR, with survey respondents indicating an average Traditional Care FCR rate of 78%. At the opposite end of the spectrum, respondents provided an average FCR rate of 31% for Mobile Care — a steep drop from 2016. As alternative channels gain in use, brands will be hard-pressed to raise not only the FCR rates of channels, but also the resolution capabilities, particularly for Social Media and Mobile Care channels.

Quality Assurance

Operational Insights – Monitoring, Measuring and Performance Improvement

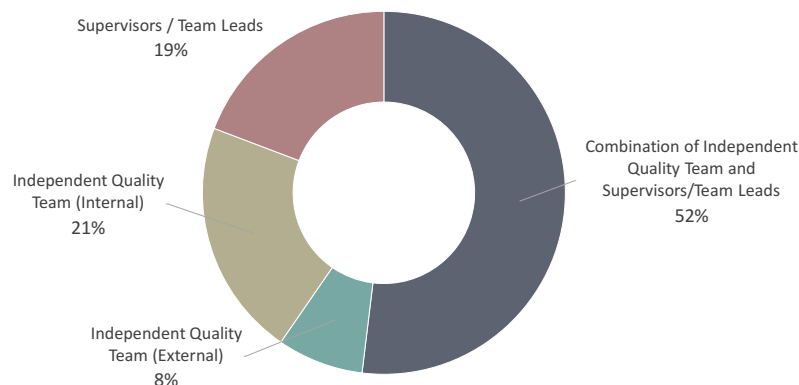Like the presence of FCR and CSAT measurement, Quality Assurance (QA) Programs within the Traditional Care channel were nearly universal among 2017 survey respondents, with 98% indicating such. Conversely, alternative channels told an entirely different story. The presence of QA within the Mobile Care channel was almost nonexistent, while only a quarter of all organizations had a QA program in place for their Social Media Care channel. If brands want to get serious about improving CSAT and resolution rates within their alternative channels, installment of an effective QA program is a powerful first step.

Does your organization have a Quality Assurance Program in place for any of the following channels? (Check all that apply)

Channel	2016	2017
Traditional Care	91%	98%
Interactive Care	38%	42%
Social Media Care	34%	26%
Mobile Care	6%	11%
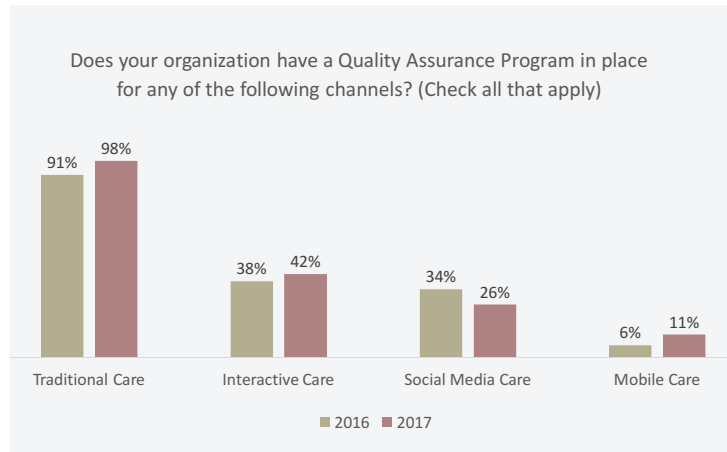
Who conducts your Quality Assurance Monitoring?

- Supervisors / Team Leads 19%
- Independent Quality Team (Internal) 21%
- Independent Quality Team (External) 8%
- Combination of Independent Quality Team and Supervisors/Team Leads 52%

In a new question for 2017, we asked survey respondents to indicate which people/teams were responsible for conducting their QA monitoring. About half of all respondents indicated that QA monitoring was a combined effort involving an independent QA team, along with supervisors and team leads. A blended approach is popular among many high performing organizations, with an independent QA team conducting business-level monitoring, while supervisors and/or team leads conduct agent-level monitoring.

Which systems or tools do you use to conduct your Quality Assurance Program?

Both Manual and Software: 37%
Quality-Specific Software: 25%
Manual (i.e., Excel): 38%

When properly designed and managed, an organization's QA program can be a valuable source of business-critical insights, and a key initiative for improving the customer experience. It's interesting, then, to discover that three-quarters of organizations are, in part or in full, manually conducting their QA programs. Furthermore, 38% of organizations are not utilizing QA-specific software of any kind. QA-specific software can help organizations organize data, conduct analysis and build useful processes.

Quality Assurance and Customer Journey Mapping Projects

Operational Insights — Monitoring, Measuring and Performance Improvement

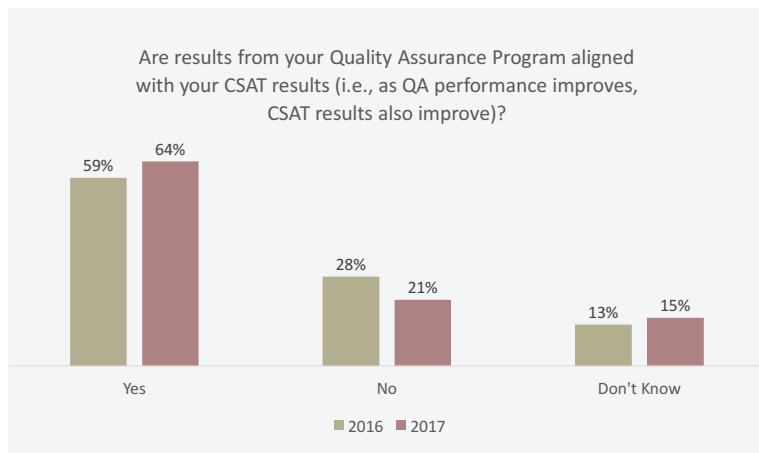Most organizations would hope that their QA programs would help monitor and improve both resolution and satisfaction rates. The fact that only 41% of brands are currently getting this out of their QA programs demonstrates opportunities for improvement among a wide swath of QA programs. If a QA program isn't contributing in such ways, the program is likely not as maximized nor effective as it can — and should — be.

In general, do you think your Quality Assurance Program(s) is helping to monitor and improve resolution and customer satisfaction rates?

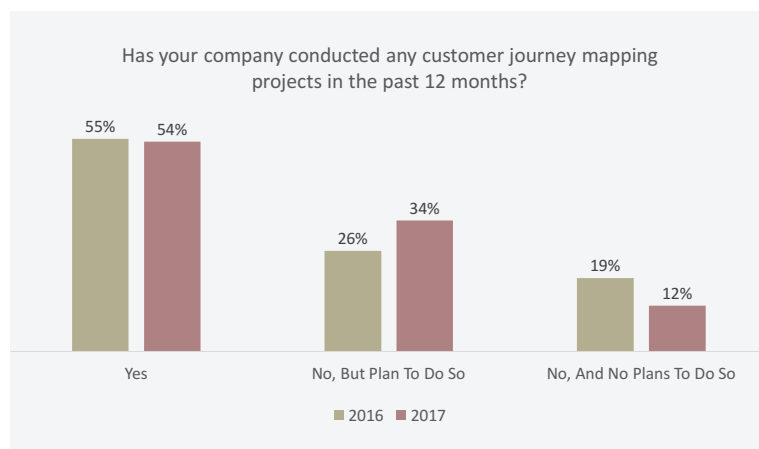|	2016	2017
Yes	38%	41%
No	9%	10%
Somewhat	53%	49%
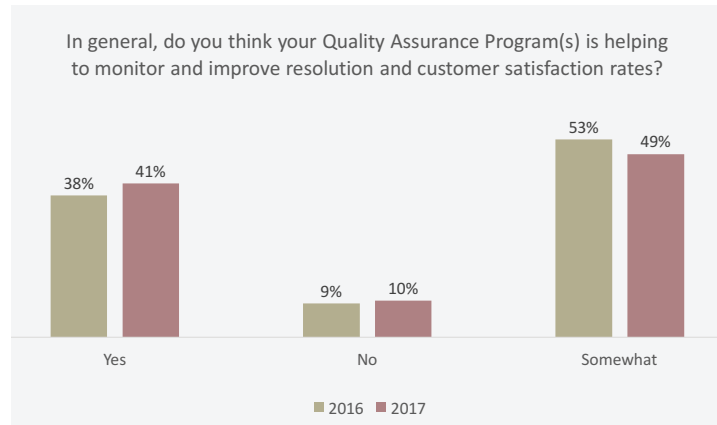
A common issue in the industry with regard to QA is the fact that quality scores don't always align with CSAT results. In other words, improving quality scores doesn't always correlate with improving CSAT results. In 2017 (below, left), only 64% of survey respondents indicated such a correlation. Although this does represent an 8% year-over-year increase (+5 points), it leaves far too many brands with QA programs that aren't producing quality results that provide an accurate view of the customer experience. This is compounded by the fact that only 41% of brands are using their QA programs to produce business intelligence which can be used to make improvements throughout the organization.

Are results from your Quality Assurance Program aligned with your CSAT results (i.e., as QA performance improves, CSAT results also improve)?

	2016	2017
Yes	59%	64%
No	28%	21%
Don't Know	13%	15%

Are you utilizing your Quality Assurance Program to produce business intelligence for use throughout the organization?

Yes: 41%

Has your company conducted any customer journey mapping projects in the past 12 months?

	2016	2017
Yes	55%	54%
No, But Plan To Do So	26%	34%
No, And No Plans To Do So	19%	12%

Customer journey mapping has caught a lot of the industry's attention over the last several years, and for good reason. In 2017, only 12% of respondents indicated no customer journey mapping activity in the past 12 months, nor any future plans for a customer journey mapping project, down from 19% in 2016. This is a decisive move in the right direction. For organizations that want to emphasize a customer-focused strategy, customer journey mapping can provide an objective and actionable insight into the customer experience, revealing successes and opportunities with unique clarity.

Staffing

Employee Counts, Third-Party Providers and Staffing Changes

Operational Insights — Staffing

The results at right provide some insight into the size and scale of the customer care programs of this year's survey participants. About 60% of survey respondents field customer care organizations with 500 or fewer FTEs, with the balance fielding customer care organizations with 500+ FTE, both internal and external. This compares to 2016 results where 46% of respondents had 500 or fewer FTEs, with 54% of respondents having 500+ FTEs.
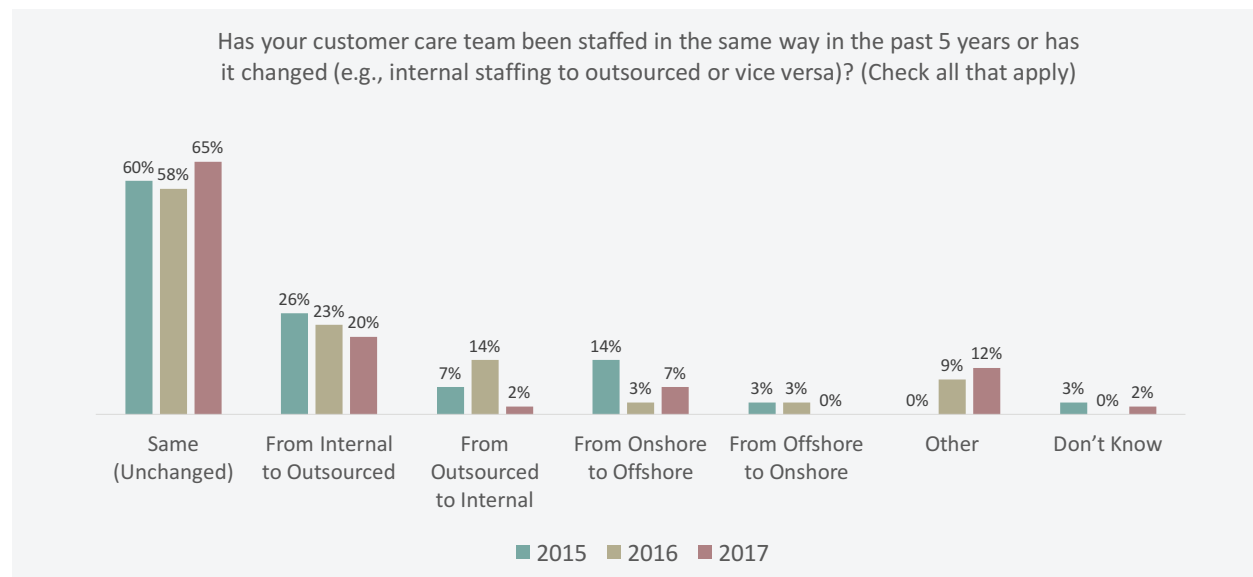
How many Full-Time Employees (FTEs), both internal and external, are employed by your company's customer care organization?

1 to 100	101 to 500	501 to 1,000	1,001 to 5,000	5,000+
28%	30%	17%	13%	12%

Are the bulk of your customer care engagements carried out by company employees or an outside provider?

	Company Employees	Outside Provider	Even Mix
2015	63%	37%	0%
2016	55%	34%	11%
2017	65%	23%	12%
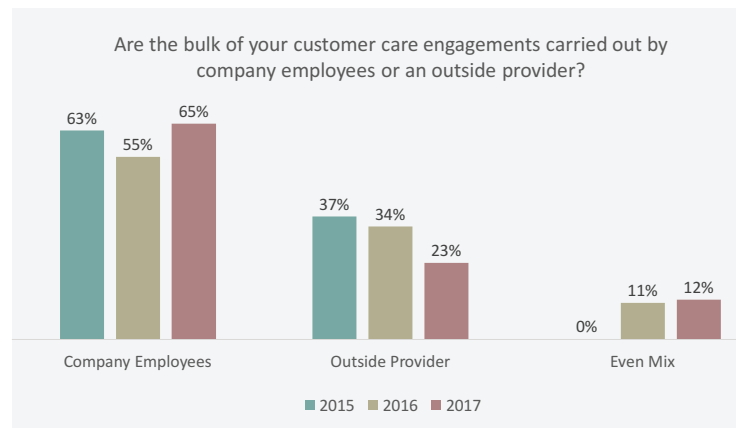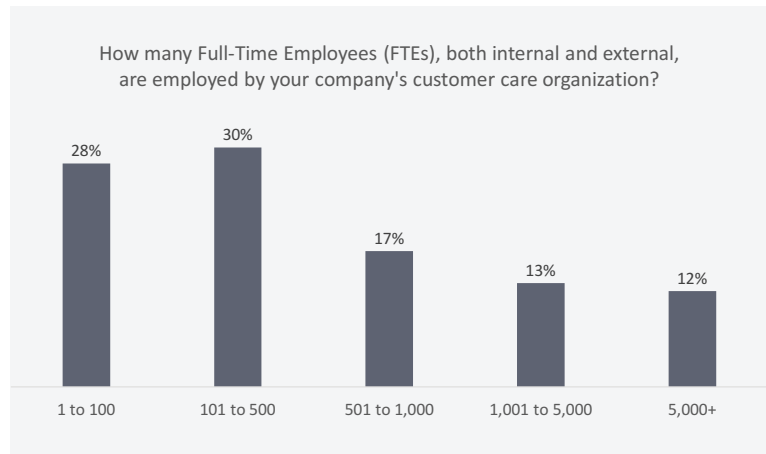
The majority of companies continue to rely mostly on internal employees for conducting customer care engagements. Across the entire pool of respondents, fewer than a quarter of companies strictly rely on an outside provider for their customer care agents. This is the fewest number of companies relying on outside providers since this question was first asked back in 2015.

In addition to seeing the lowest percentage of companies using an outside provider for customer care engagement (above), 2017 also marked the least amount of change in how customer care teams are staffed. Although moving to an outsourced model was the most common change, such change has seen two consecutive years of decline. Near shoring was also mentioned several times in the "Other" bucket, adding to the strong year-over-year growth in the percentage of companies that moved from onshore to offshore.

Has your customer care team been staffed in the same way in the past 5 years or has it changed (e.g., internal staffing to outsourced or vice versa)? (Check all that apply)

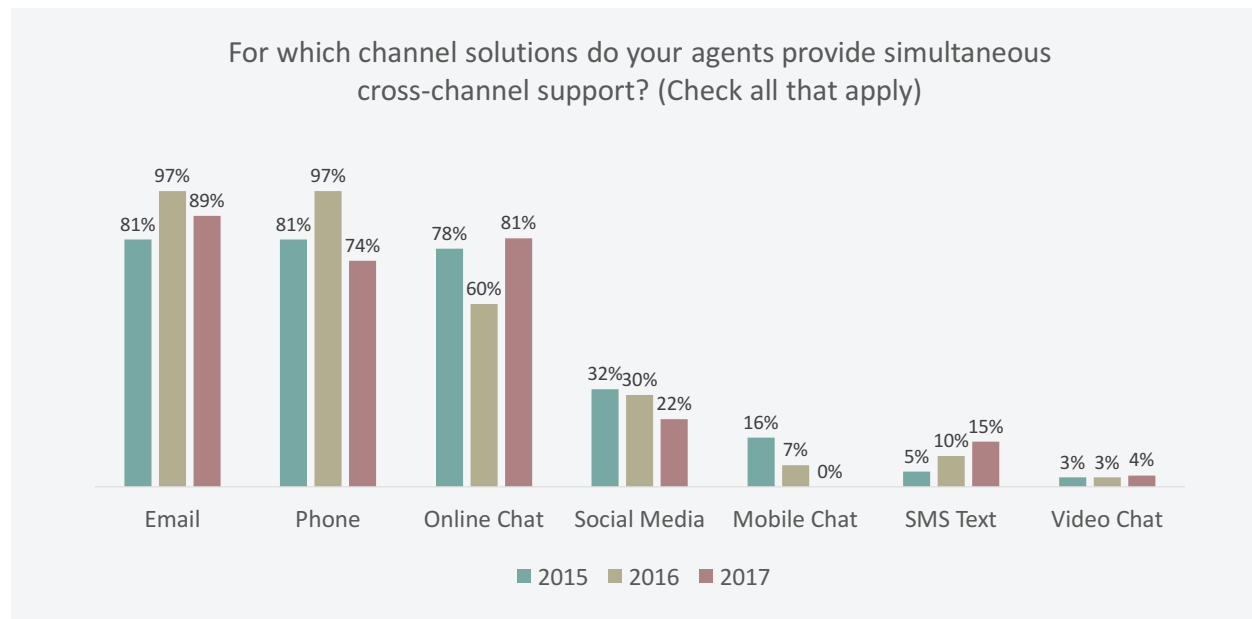|	Same (Unchanged)	From Internal to Outsourced	From Outsourced to Internal	From Onshore to Offshore	From Offshore to Onshore	Other	Don't Know
2015	60%	26%	7%	14%	3%	0%	3%
2016	58%	23%	14%	3%	3%	9%	0%
2017	65%	20%	2%	7%	0%	12%	2%

Multichannel Agent Support
Operational Insights — Staffing

When it comes to deploying agents who provide care across multiple channels, results have been evenly split over the past three years, with **54%** of 2017 survey respondents indicating the deployment of "multichannel" agents. While not a primary driver of changing hiring requirements (next page), the ability for agents to navigate across channels is frequently cited as a desirable agent characteristic.

Does your organization deploy agents who provide customer care via multiple channel solutions simultaneously (i.e. via Phone and Chat)?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2015	52%	47%	1%
2016	46%	52%	2%
2017	54%	46%	0%

Email, Phone and Online Chat continue to lead the mix of channels supported by multichannel agents. Among these, Online Chat saw a sizable year-over-year bump, moving from 60% in 2016 to 81% in 2017, an increase of 21 points. Conversely, deployment of multichannel agents covering Phone fell from 97% to 74%, a decrease 23 points. Also of note is the steady increase in multichannel support for SMS Text, increasing threefold since 2015.

For which channel solutions do your agents provide simultaneous cross-channel support? (Check all that apply)

	Email	Phone	Online Chat	Social Media	Mobile Chat	SMS Text	Video Chat
2015	81%	81%	78%	32%	16%	5%	3%
2016	97%	97%	60%	30%	7%	10%	3%
2017	89%	74%	81%	22%	0%	15%	4%

In your estimation, which percentage of consumer interactions resulting in a resolution are conducted across multiple channels?
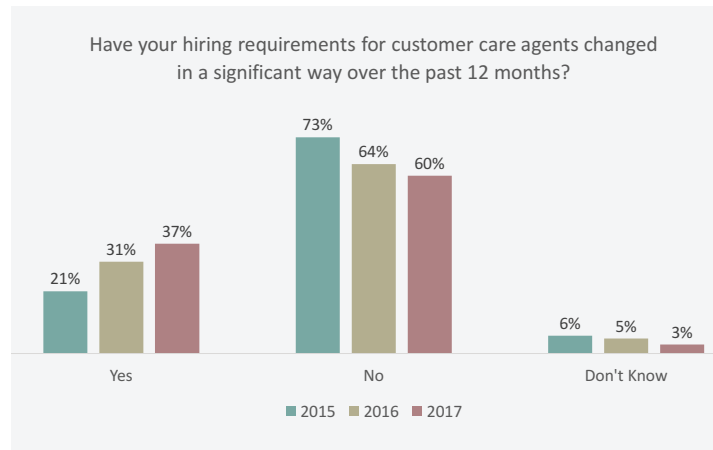
2017: 30%
2016: 31%
2015: 28%

In CXMB Series Consumer Edition results, the percentage of consumers who had used multiple channels to resolve a single issue has remained range-bound since 2015, coming in between 64% and 67%. Corporate Edition responses have also held to a tight range since 2015, with survey respondents indicating an average of 30% of engagements passing through multiple channels on their path to resolution.

Changing Hiring Requirements and Topics of Interest

Operational Insights – Staffing

Have your hiring requirements for customer care agents changed in a significant way over the past 12 months?

	2015	2016	2017
Yes	21%	31%	37%
No	73%	64%	60%
Don't Know	6%	5%	3%

Hiring requirements for customer care agents continue to evolve at a growing number of organizations. When the question at left was first asked in 2015, only 21% of companies indicated a significant change in hiring requirements. In 2017, the number of respondents indicating a significant change in hiring requirement increased to 37%, up 76% in two years. Some of the changes cited in 2017 include greater focus on proficiency with technology, remote workers, heightened critical thinking and greater adaptability among newly hired customer care agents.

In an open-ended question that has been asked since 2014 (below), technological transformation and cost containment were two common themes to the responses received. Either chatbots and AI were mentioned in about half of all responses received, while managing and understanding costs and/or revenue generation were of interest to about a third of all respondents. In addition to these two areas, there was also mention of learning more about alternative channel solutions (such as text, social media and mobile applications), omnichannel, customer journey mapping and process best practices.

As a customer experience professional, on which topics would you like more education and development?

VERBATIM RESPONSES:

"Turning cost centers into profit centers to create a stronger business case for omnichannel expansion."

"Understanding the proper balance between human and automated customer service."

"Mobile applications and overall digital transformation for contact centers."

"Measuring the ROI of customer service."

"AI 101. Cost and benefit for AI and how to make the necessary steps to test it."

"How to avoid Customer Experience being equated with Customer Service, which can threaten much of the work we do."

"Financial information would be good. I want better understand success criteria for how to manage expectations around the financial performance for a cost center."

Operational Insights — Conclusions

Key Findings:

• Channel traffic growth remains strong across all alternative care channels, which include Interactive, Social Media and Mobile Care channels — 10% or fewer respondents indicated a decrease in traffic to these channels over the previous 12 months. (Page 29)

• Only 7% of survey respondents said they were monitoring and measuring the entire customer experience, across all channels. (Page 31)

• Ninety-five percent of survey respondents measure customer satisfaction in their Traditional Care channel, while only 20% and 29% do the same for Mobile and Social Media Care, respectively. (Page 32)

• Only 41% of survey respondents are utilizing their Quality Assurance program to produce business intelligence for use throughout their organizations. (Page 35)

• Changes to hiring requirements continue to accelerate, with 37% of survey respondents indicating a significant change in requirements over the previous 12 months, now climbing up for two consecutive years. (Page 39)

Of all the results to come out of the Operational Insights section, perhaps the most actionable comes in regards to monitoring practices. Although it's a challenging proposition to be sure, far too many companies are failing to monitor and measure the customer experience across the entire journey. Alternative channels (Interactive, Social Media and Mobile Care) are especially under-served when it comes to key measurements such as customer satisfaction, FCR and Quality Assurance monitoring.

Regarding Quality Assurance (QA), results also illustrated the fact that many brands could be getting far more value out of their QA programs. Fewer than half of survey respondents reported that they were utilizing their QA programs to produce business intelligence for use throughout their organizations, while 21% admitted that their QA results are not aligned with their customer experience results.

Critical Questions Brands Should Be Asking Themselves:

Given the growing importance of alternative channels, are we doing enough to monitor and measure CX across these channels and across the entire customer journey?

Are we getting the maximum value out of our Quality Assurance program? Is our QA program delivering value beyond the confines of the customer care organization?

Do our hiring requirements reflect the current climate of increased issue complexity, evolving technology and heightened consumer expectations?
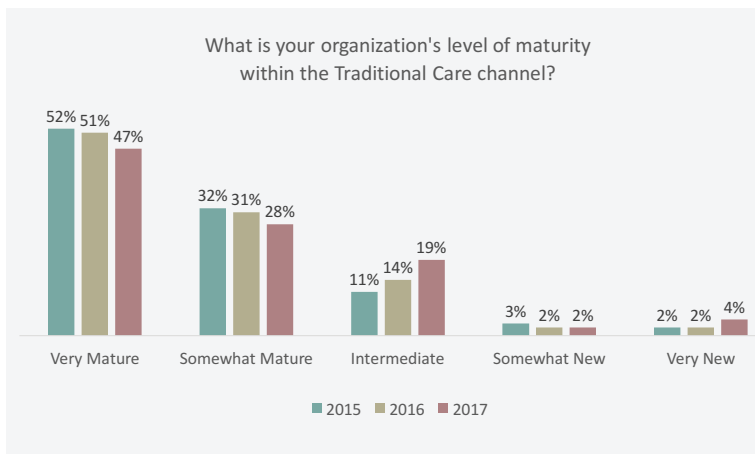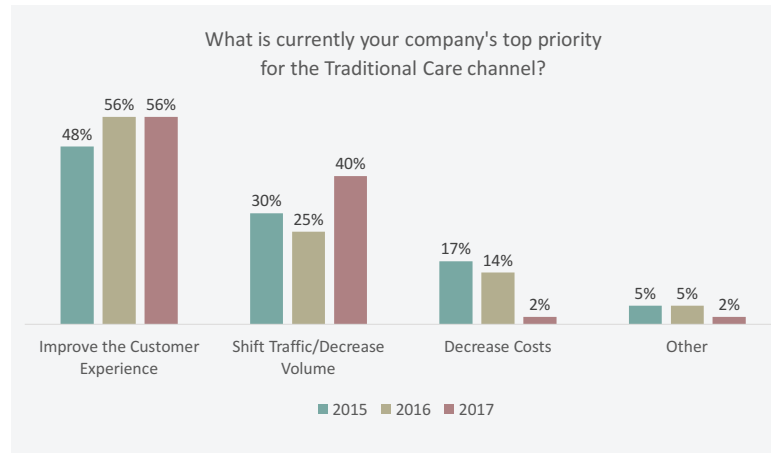
Channel
Results

- Traditional Care
- Interactive Care
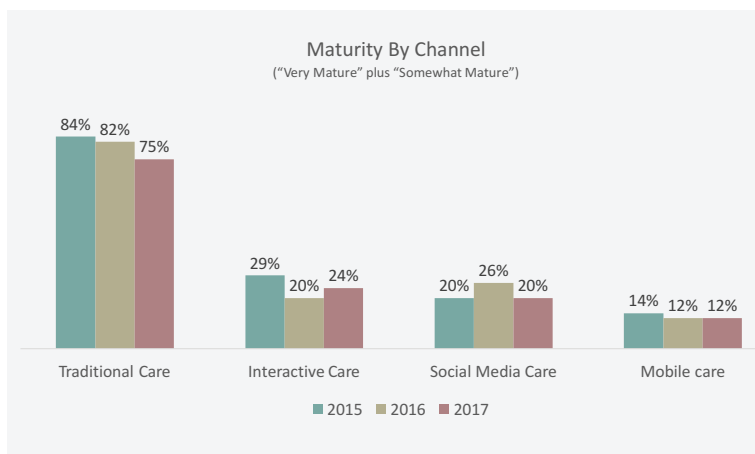- Social Media Care
- Mobile Care

Traditional Care

Channel Priorities and Maturity

Channel Results – Traditional Care

Decreasing assisted engagements and shifting traffic (mostly from Traditional Care to alternative channels) have both been longtime features on many roadmaps. 2017 was punctuated with an even greater move in this direction, with a 15-point increase in the percentage of respondents naming "Shift Traffic/Decrease Volume" as a top priority. This represents a year-over-year gain of 60%. Meanwhile, "Improve the Customer Experience" remained steady, while "Decrease Costs" plummeted; although it can be surmised that some of the brands that are shifting and reducing volume are doing so for the purposes of reducing costs.

What is currently your company's top priority for the Traditional Care channel?

	2015	2016	2017
Improve the Customer Experience	48%	56%	56%
Shift Traffic/Decrease Volume	30%	25%	40%
Decrease Costs	17%	14%	2%
Other	5%	5%	2%

What is your organization's level of maturity within the Traditional Care channel?

	2015	2016	2017
Very Mature	52%	51%	47%
Somewhat Mature	32%	31%	28%
Intermediate	11%	14%	19%
Somewhat New	3%	2%	2%
Very New	2%	2%	4%

In a somewhat puzzling trend, maturity levels within the Traditional Care channel have slipped in two consecutive years. With the moves as slight as they are, it's difficult to decipher if the year-over-year changes are the result of the changes in the survey makeup or something else entirely. At any rate, it will be worth watching.

Maturity By Channel
("Very Mature" plus "Somewhat Mature")

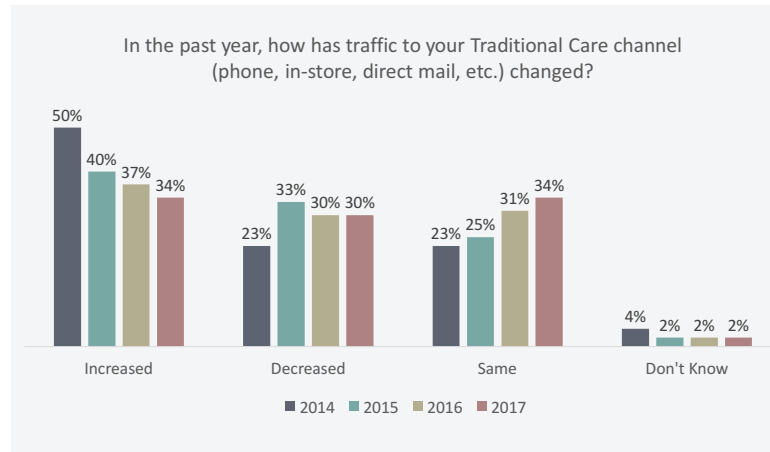|	2015	2016	2017
Traditional Care	84%	82%	75%
Interactive Care	29%	20%	24%
Social Media Care	20%	26%	20%
Mobile care	14%	12%	12%

Here's how the maturity of the various channels compare. The results in this graph reflect the sum of participants indicating "Very Mature" and "Somewhat Mature" among the various channels.
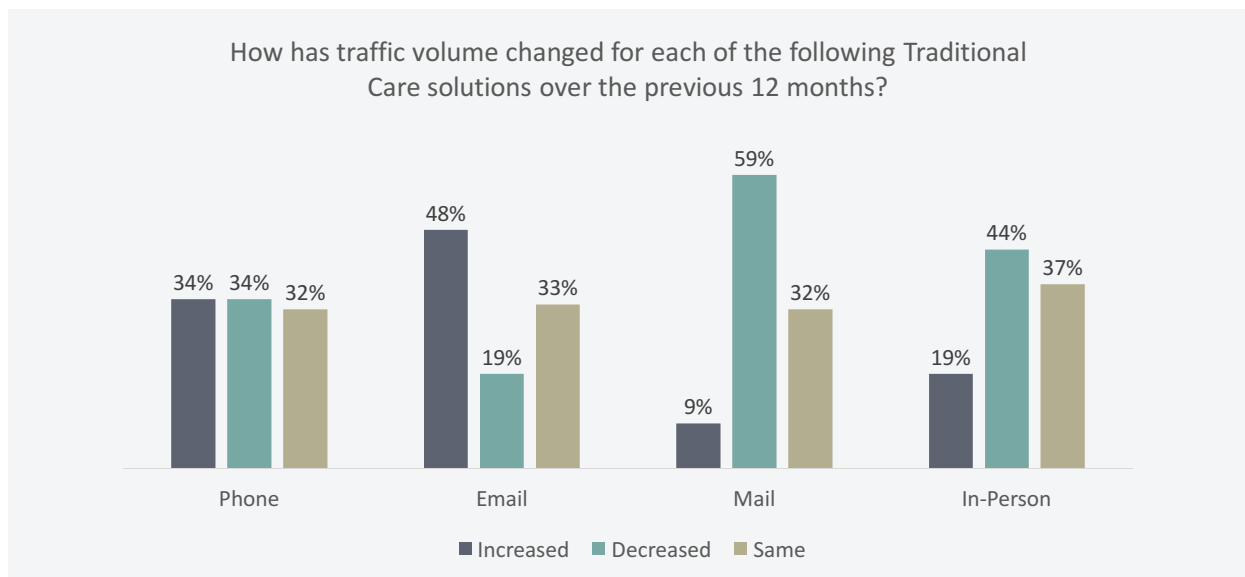
Channel and Solution Traffic Changes

Channel Results – Traditional Care

Unique among all channels of care, a significant percentage (30% in 2017) of survey respondents continue to indicate decreases in Traditional Care volume. In fact, Traditional Care is the only channel where growth shows little to no volatility, particularly in comparison to a channel like Mobile Care. For a complete view of traffic changes among all channels, see the Volumes and Growth section on page 29.

In the past year, how has traffic to your Traditional Care channel (phone, in-store, direct mail, etc.) changed?

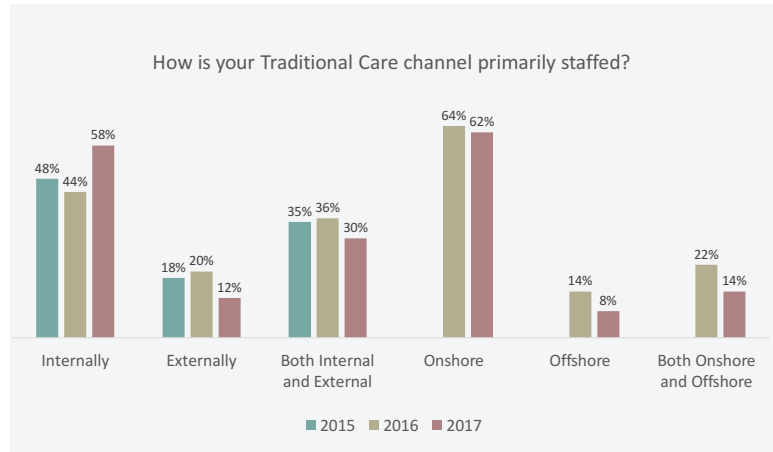|	Increased	Decreased	Same	Don't Know
2014	50%	23%	23%	4%
2015	40%	33%	25%	2%
2016	37%	30%	31%	2%
2017	34%	30%	34%	2%

While Phone traffic appears to have remained mostly flat in 2017, Email went off in a totally different direction. Nearly half of all respondents indicated growth in their Email traffic, while at the same time, only one in five indicated a decrease in Email traffic volumes. These results are especially interesting, as they come at a time when many brands are targeting their email channel for elimination. When combined with CXMB Series Consumer Edition findings that show consumers have an affinity for email, these results should serve as an opportunity to give greater consideration to plans that involve elimination of email support.

How has traffic volume changed for each of the following Traditional Care solutions over the previous 12 months?

	Phone	Email	Mail	In-Person
Increased	34%	48%	9%	19%
Decreased	34%	19%	59%	44%
Same	32%	33%	32%	37%

Channel Staffing

Channel Results – Traditional Care

Among 2017 survey participants, Traditional Care channels were mostly structured with internal, onshore resources. Compared to last year's survey group, 2017 survey participants indicated significantly higher levels of internal staffing (up 32%), and lower levels of external staffing (down 40%). Although these results don't speak to change within an organization, they do help shape a picture of this year's survey participants.

How is your Traditional Care channel primarily staffed?

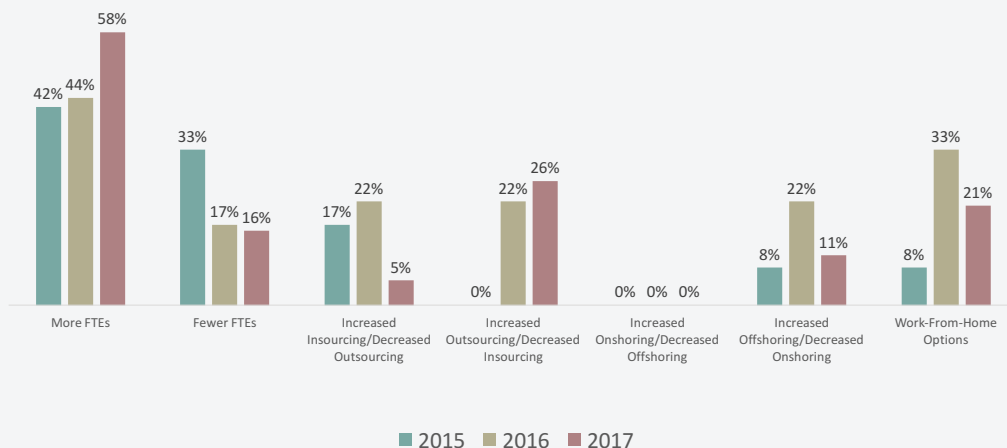|	2015	2016	2017
Internally	48%	44%	58%
Externally	18%	20%	12%
Both Internal and External	35%	36%	30%
Onshore		64%	62%
Offshore		14%	8%
Both Onshore and Offshore		22%	14%

Has the staffing of your company's Traditional Care channel changed in a significant way over the past twelve months?

2017 – Yes: 36%
2016 – Yes: 33%
2015 – Yes: 19%
2014 – Yes: 31%

Among four years of data, 2017 saw the highest level of significant staffing change within the Traditional Care channel. More than a third of brands indicated significant staffing changes, with most companies naming "More FTEs" as one of changes. Other areas of significant change include "Increased Outsourcing/Decreased Insourcing" and "Work-From-Home Options."

In what way has it changed? (Check all that apply)

	2015	2016	2017
More FTEs	42%	44%	58%
Fewer FTEs	33%	17%	16%
Increased Insourcing/Decreased Outsourcing	17%	22%	5%
Increased Outsourcing/Decreased Insourcing	0%	22%	26%
Increased Onshoring/Decreased Offshoring	0%	0%	0%
Increased Offshoring/Decreased Onshoring	8%	22%	11%
Work-From-Home Options	8%	33%	21%

Interactive Care

Channel Availability and Investment
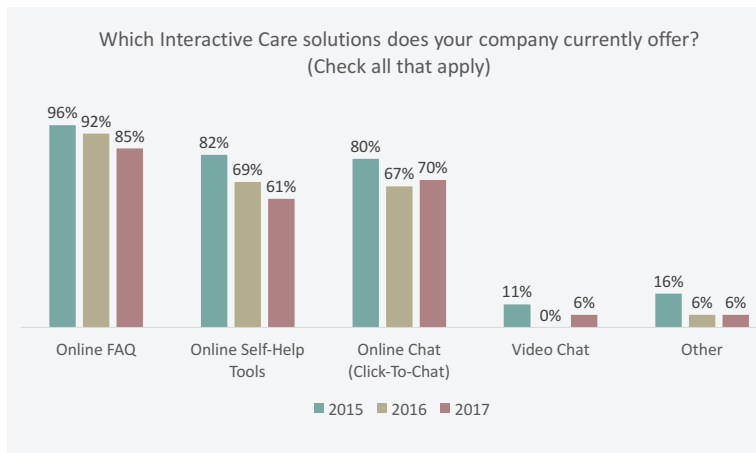
Channel Results – Interactive Care

Availability of Interactive Care among survey participants hung within range of the previous two years, with 72% of respondents offering one or more solutions within the channel. This compares favorably with its alternative channel counterpart, Mobile Care, which is offered by only 40% of 2017 survey respondents. Interactive Care remains a vital alternative channel; in recent CXMB Series Consumer Edition research, Interactive Care was favored above all other channels by 23% of consumers.

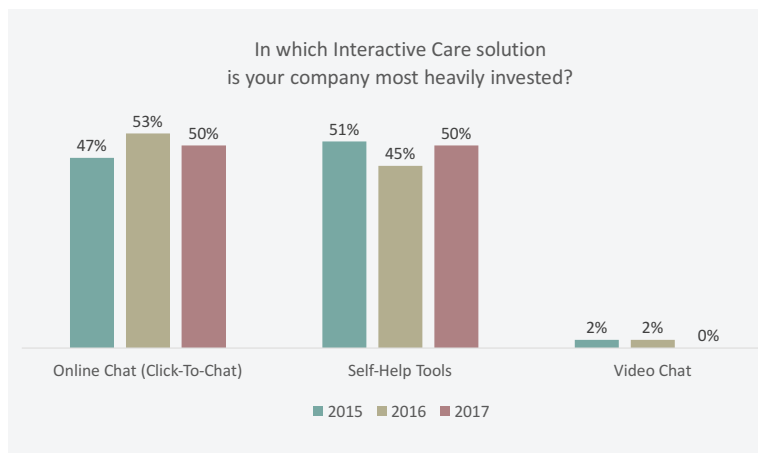Does your company provide Interactive Care support, including online/video chat, FAQ and self-help tools?

2017 – Yes: 72%
2016 – Yes: 67%
2015 – Yes: 75%

Which Interactive Care solutions does your company currently offer?
(Check all that apply)

	Online FAQ	Online Self-Help Tools	Online Chat (Click-To-Chat)	Video Chat	Other
2015	96%	82%	80%	11%	16%
2016	92%	69%	67%	0%	6%
2017	85%	61%	70%	6%	6%

■ 2015 ■ 2016 ■ 2017

Online FAQ, Online Self-Help Tools and Online Chat all remain popular Interactive Care solutions, although Online FAQ remains the most popular. Results from 2017 also mark the first year in which Online Chat was more widespread in availability than Online Self-Help Tools. Based on CXMB Series Consumer Edition results, Online Chat is quickly becoming a consumer favorite.

In which Interactive Care solution is your company most heavily invested?

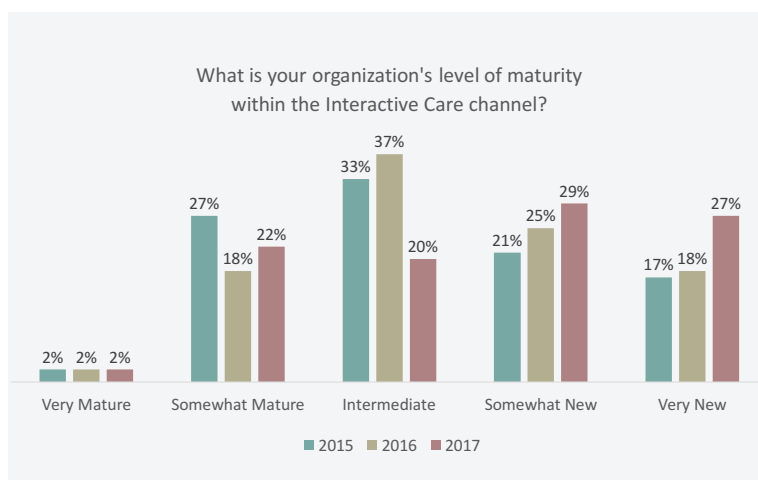|	Online Chat (Click-To-Chat)	Self-Help Tools	Video Chat
2015	47%	51%	2%
2016	53%	45%	2%
2017	50%	50%	0%

■ 2015 ■ 2016 ■ 2017

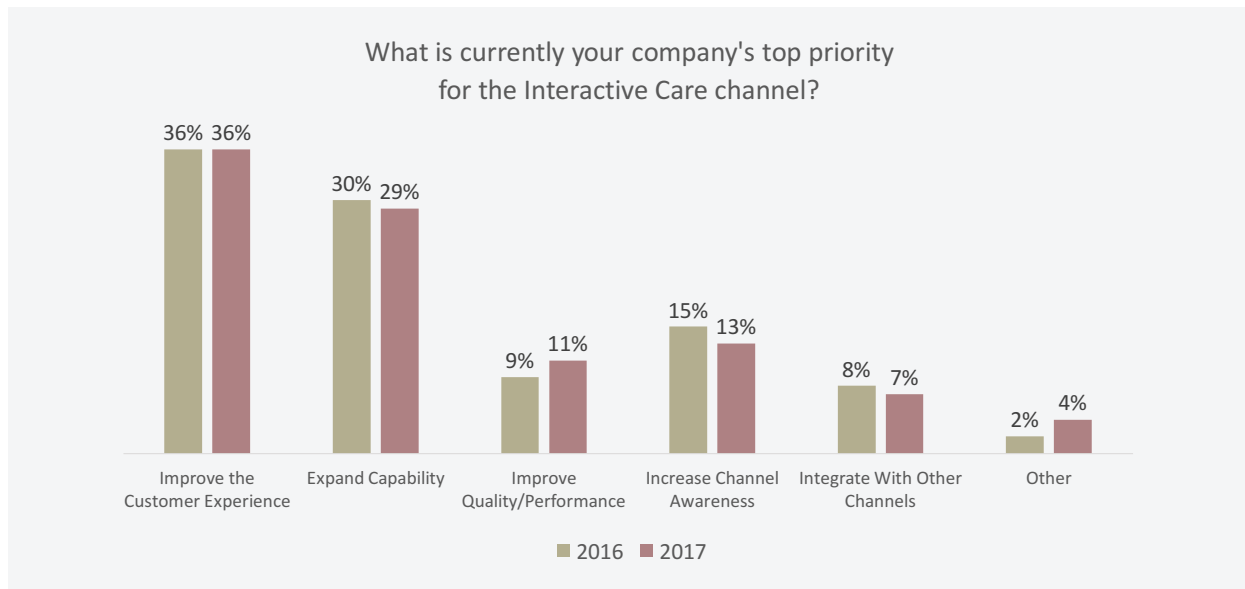As one might imagine — and especially based on the above results — online chat and self-help tools command large portions of the Interactive Care budget. While self-help tools often require hefty investments in IT and software development, Online Chat brings with it a variety of costs associated with staffing. Even with the accompanying costs, many companies are accelerating their moves into the Interactive Care space.

Channel Priorities and Maturity
Channel Results – Interactive Care

In terms of channel priorities, 2017 results closely align with those from 2016. "Improve the Customer Experience" continues to lead the way, closely followed by "Expand Capability." Expanding channel capabilities will become increasingly important as more consumers find their way into alternative channels (such as Interactive Care), bringing with them expectations molded from their experiences with more capable forms of care, like phone or email.

What is currently your company's top priority for the Interactive Care channel?

Priority	2016	2017
Improve the Customer Experience	36%	36%
Expand Capability	30%	29%
Improve Quality/Performance	9%	11%
Increase Channel Awareness	15%	13%
Integrate With Other Channels	8%	7%
Other	2%	4%

What is your organization's level of maturity within the Interactive Care channel?

Level	2015	2016	2017
Very Mature	2%	2%	2%
Somewhat Mature	27%	18%	22%
Intermediate	33%	37%	20%
Somewhat New	21%	25%	29%
Very New	17%	18%	27%

Compared to 2016, this year's survey respondents indicated a greater amount of "newness" to the Interactive Care channel. This could be due to the relative size of this year's survey participants in comparison to those from previous years, or it could be due to a recent expansion into the Interactive Care space by a number of this year's survey respondents.

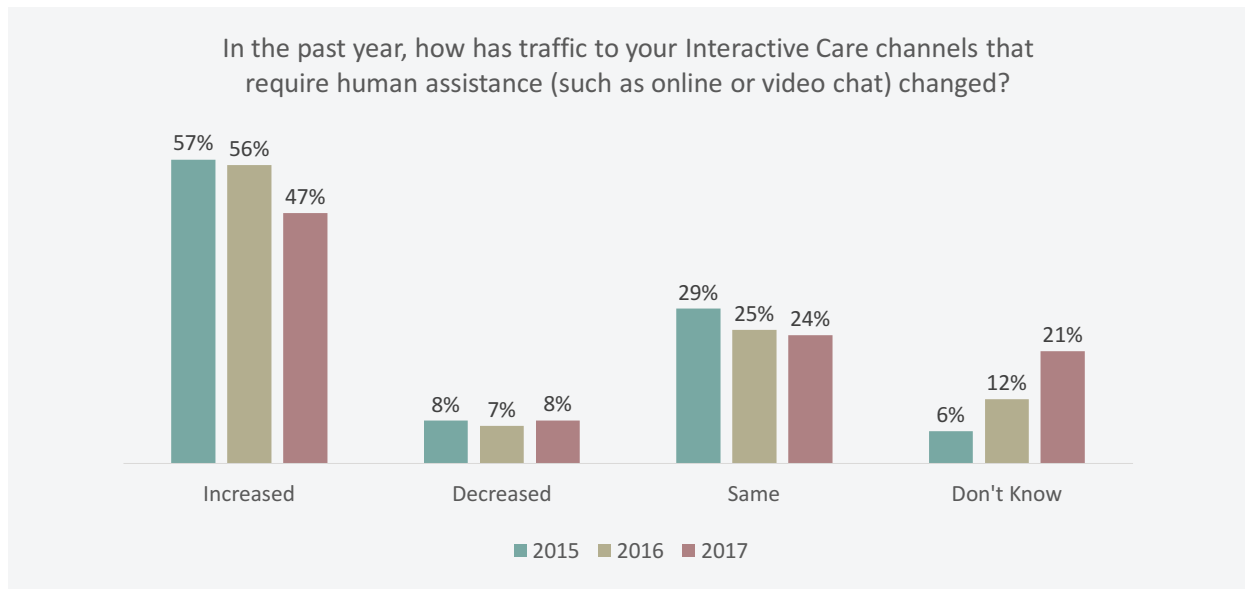Here's how the maturity of Interactive Care compares with that of other channels ("Very Mature" plus "Somewhat Mature"):

Traditional Care: 75%
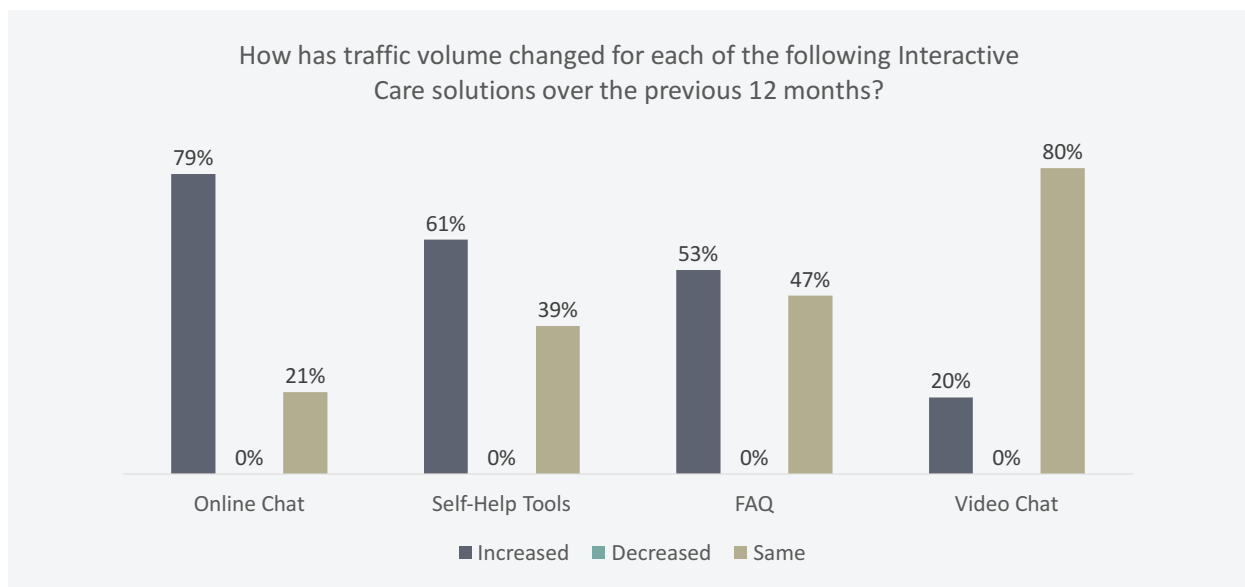**Interactive Care: 24%**
Social Media Care: 20%
Mobile Care: 12%

Channel and Solution Traffic Changes

Channel Results – Interactive Care

The growth story is still broadly positive for Interactive Care. Although the percentage of brands indicating an increase in channel traffic fell nine points year-over-year (below), this change is likely to be offset by the nine-point increase in those answering, "Don't Know." And, while eight percent of respondents did indicate a decrease in channel traffic, these decreases failed to find their way into the solution results at the bottom of the page, diminishing their impact.

In the past year, how has traffic to your Interactive Care channels that require human assistance (such as online or video chat) changed?

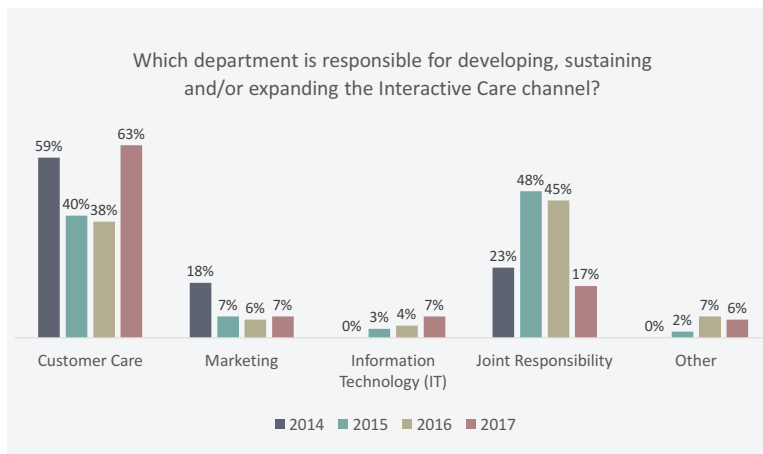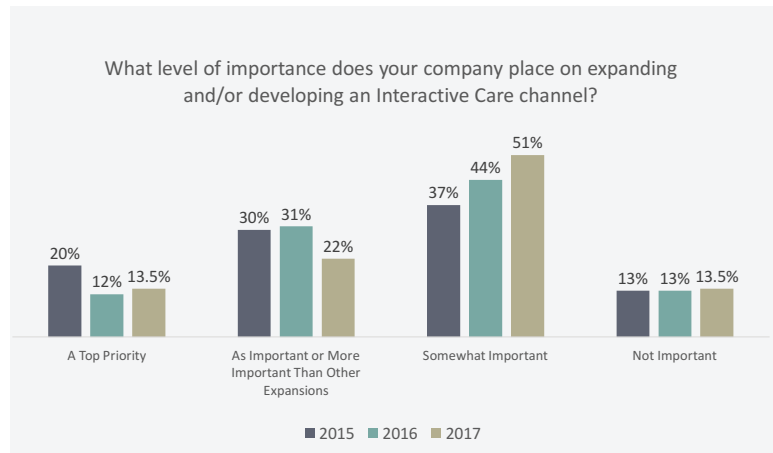|	Increased	Decreased	Same	Don't Know
2015	57%	8%	29%	6%
2016	56%	7%	25%	12%
2017	47%	8%	24%	21%

As also suggested by budget allocation and availability, Online Chat experienced widespread growth in 2017. There was an increase in traffic volume among 79% of the survey participants that offer Online Chat as a solution. Interestingly, Interactive Care was also the only channel where no volume decreases were indicated within any individual channel solutions, although this should be taken with a grain of salt, as an overall channel decrease was indicated by at least eight percent of survey respondents (above). At any rate, growth with the Interactive Care channel is steady and broad.

How has traffic volume changed for each of the following Interactive Care solutions over the previous 12 months?

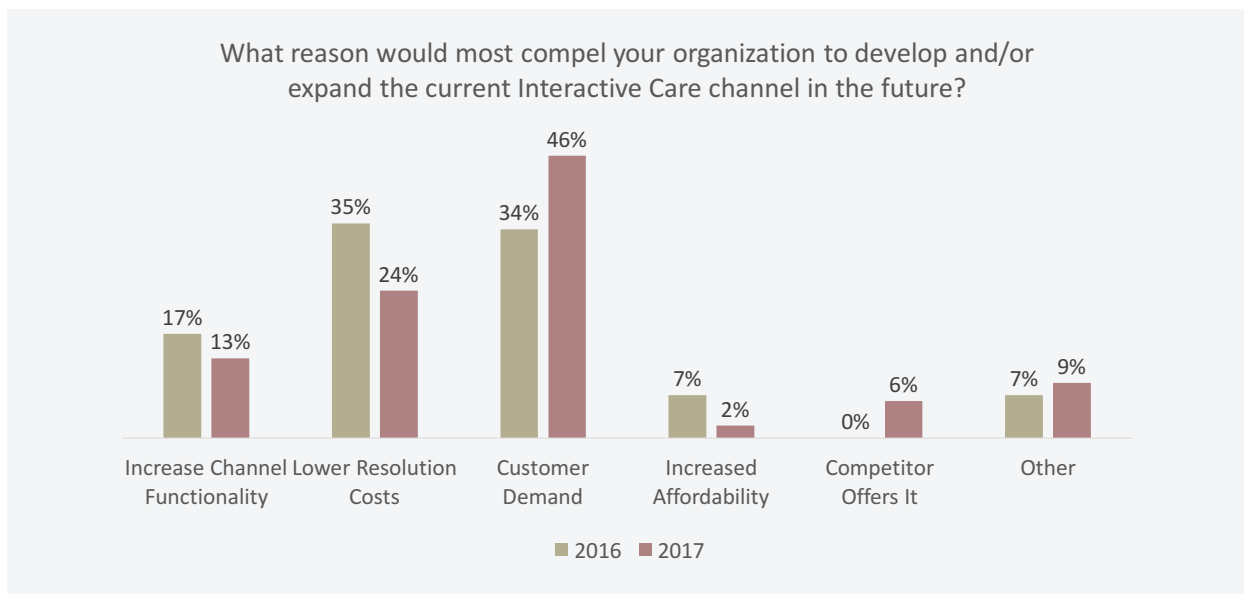|	Online Chat	Self-Help Tools	FAQ	Video Chat
Increased	79%	61%	53%	20%
Decreased	0%	0%	0%	0%
Same	21%	39%	47%	80%

Channel Expansion and Development

Channel Results – Interactive Care

The importance leveled at expanding and/or developing an Interactive Care channel has diminished since 2015. In examining just those companies that name Interactive Care expansion or development as "A Top Priority" and "As Important or More Important Than Other Expansions," the numbers have fallen from 50% in 2015 to 43% in 2016 and 35.5% in 2017. Somewhat balancing this out is the fact that there has been no movement in "Not Important" across all three years of data.

What level of importance does your company place on expanding and/or developing an Interactive Care channel?

	A Top Priority	As Important or More Important Than Other Expansions	Somewhat Important	Not Important
2015	20%	30%	37%	13%
2016	12%	31%	44%	13%
2017	13.5%	22%	51%	13.5%

Which department is responsible for developing, sustaining and/or expanding the Interactive Care channel?

	Customer Care	Marketing	Information Technology (IT)	Joint Responsibility	Other
2014	59%	18%	0%	23%	0%
2015	40%	7%	3%	48%	2%
2016	38%	6%	4%	45%	7%
2017	63%	7%	7%	17%	6%

In comparison to survey groups from the previous two years, a significantly larger percentage of respondents named Customer Care as the department responsible for the management of the Interactive Care channel. Almost all of this increase came from "Joint Responsibility," which was indicated by just 17% of 2017 respondents.

While "Lower Resolution Costs" and "Increase Channel Functionality" remain factors, "Customer Demand" was named as the primary driver of channel development decisions in 2017. As for that customer demand, it remained strong in 2017; in 2017 CXMB Series Consumer Edition research, 23% of consumers named Interactive Care as their preferred channel.

What reason would most compel your organization to develop and/or expand the current Interactive Care channel in the future?

	Increase Channel Functionality	Lower Resolution Costs	Customer Demand	Increased Affordability	Competitor Offers It	Other
2016	17%	35%	34%	7%	0%	7%
2017	13%	24%	46%	2%	6%	9%

Channel Staffing

Channel Results – Interactive Care

About one-third of survey respondents indicated a significant staffing change in the previous 12 months, very much in line with 2016 results. Those increasing their FTE count outnumber those decreasing their FTE count by ten to one. Other changes that occurred in the previous year include increased outsourcing and additional work-from-home options.

Has the staffing of your company's Interactive Care channel changed in a significant way over the past twelve months?
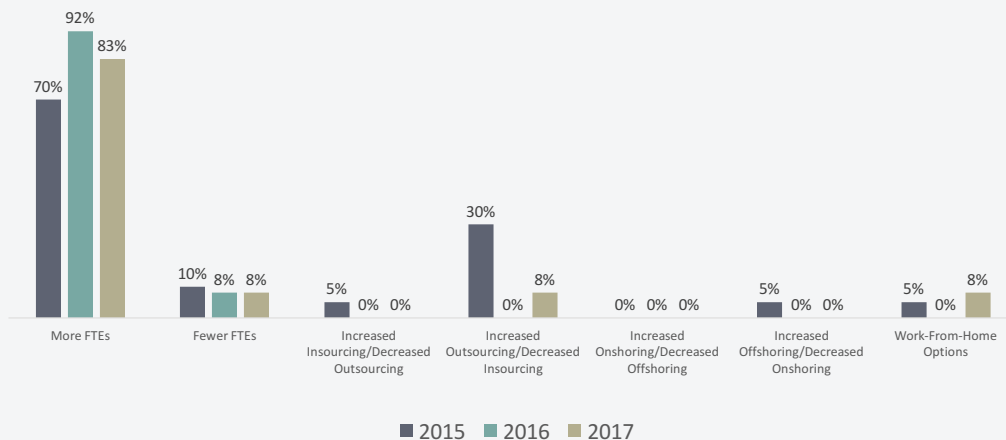
2017 – Yes: 32%
2016 – Yes: 29%
2015 – Yes: 38%
2014 – Yes: 39%
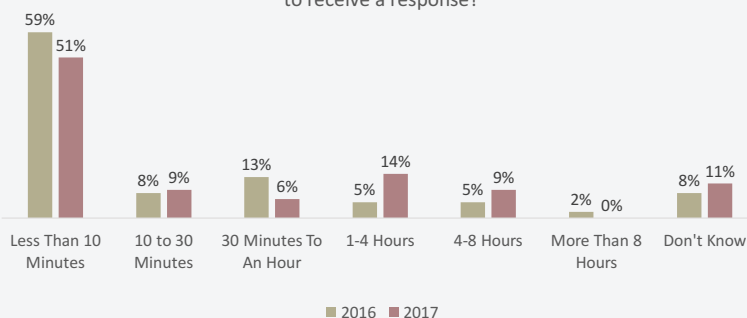
In what way has it changed? (Check all that apply)

	More FTEs	Fewer FTEs	Increased Insourcing/Decreased Outsourcing	Increased Outsourcing/Decreased Insourcing	Increased Onshoring/Decreased Offshoring	Increased Offshoring/Decreased Onshoring	Work-From-Home Options
2015	70%	10%	5%	30%	0%	5%	5%
2016	92%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2017	83%	8%	0%	8%	0%	0%	8%

■ 2015   ■ 2016   ■ 2017

In comparison to last year's pool of survey participants, Interactive Care (i.e., online chat) response times lengthened in 2017. This came as a result of a significant decrease in the percentage of organizations responding with "Less Than 10 Minutes" and "30 Minutes to an Hour." In 2017 CXMB Series Consumer research, an average of 72% of alternative channel users expected a response time of one hour or less.

For Interactive Care solutions that require human assistance, on average, how long does it take for your customers to receive a response?
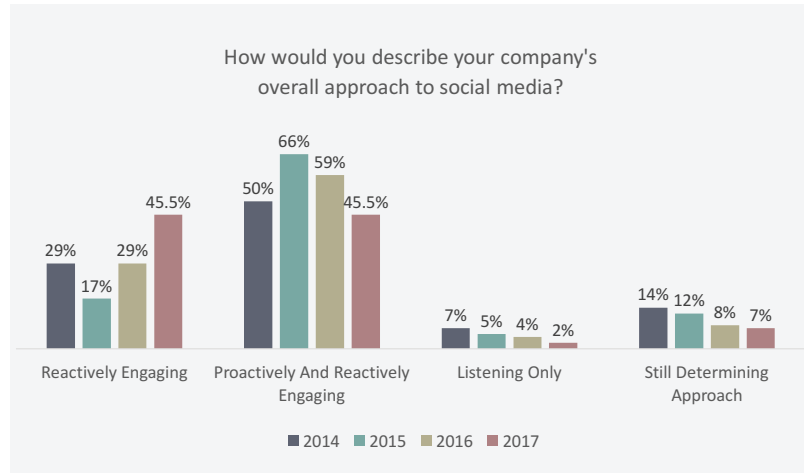
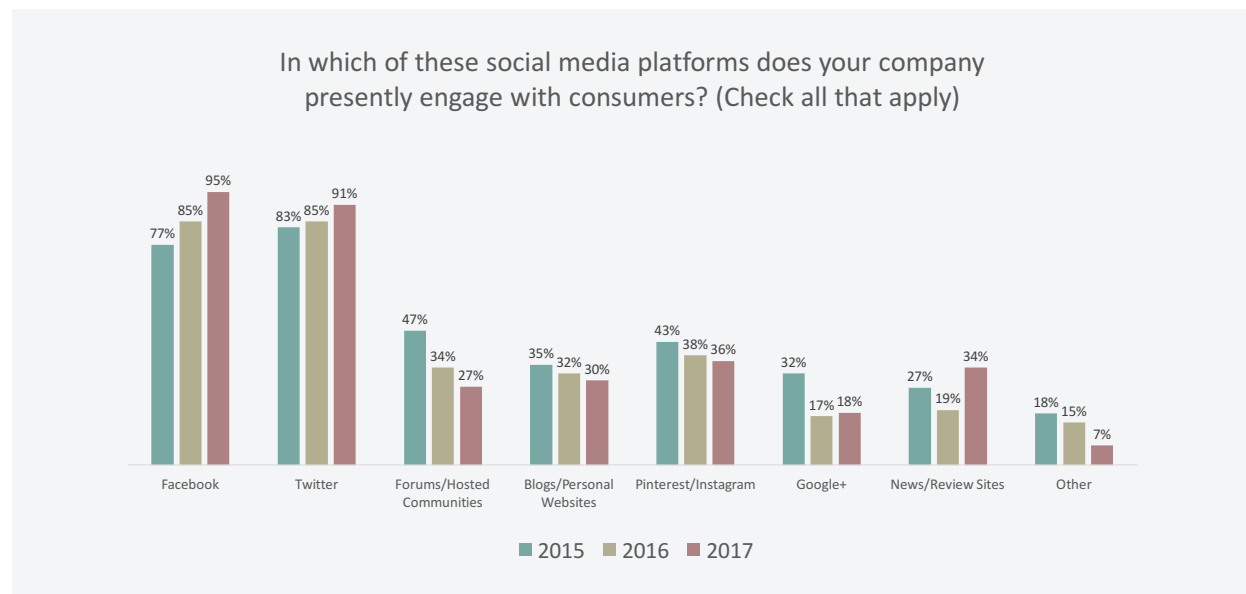|	Less Than 10 Minutes	10 to 30 Minutes	30 Minutes To An Hour	1-4 Hours	4-8 Hours	More Than 8 Hours	Don't Know
2016	59%	8%	13%	5%	5%	2%	8%
2017	51%	9%	6%	14%	9%	0%	11%

■ 2016   ■ 2017

Social Media Care

Channel Approach and Platform Presence

Channel Results – Social Media Care

In 2017, 91% of survey respondents indicated an active social media presence. While this is the highest active presence result since this question was first asked in 2012, it marks the first time reactive and proactive engagement have been on par with each other. It remains to be seen whether or not this is representative of an industry-wide trend away from proactive social media engagement. That said, brands should seek to understand the benefits and challenges of a proactive approach.

How would you describe your company's overall approach to social media?

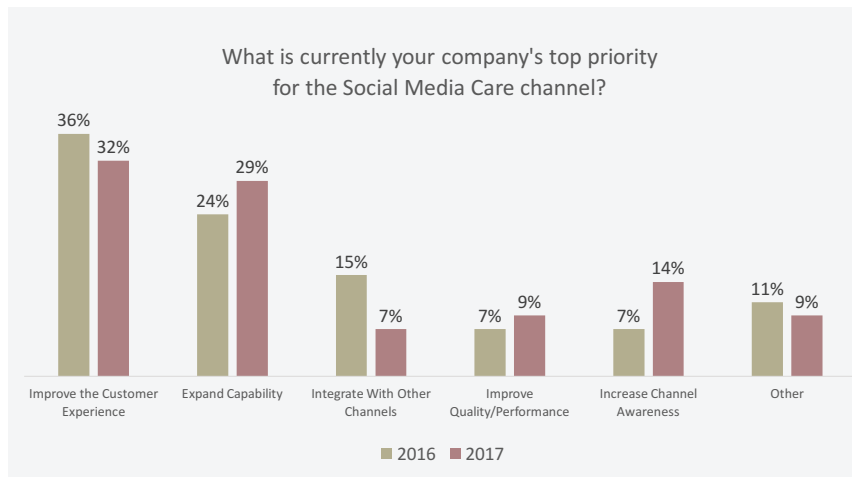|	Reactively Engaging	Proactively And Reactively Engaging	Listening Only	Still Determining Approach
2014	29%	50%	7%	14%
2015	17%	66%	5%	12%
2016	29%	59%	4%	8%
2017	45.5%	45.5%	2%	7%

The presence of brands within Facebook and Twitter reached greater highs in 2017 for the second consecutive year. Conversely, the presence of brand engagement fell within forums, hosted communities, blogs, personal websites, Pinterest and Instagram. It maybe be that the era of testing and exploring is coming to an end, and businesses have realized that Facebook and Twitter provide the biggest bang for the buck. Even if this is the case, businesses should remain vigilant in understanding where their customers are on social media, while also understanding what the engagement expectations might be across various social media platforms.
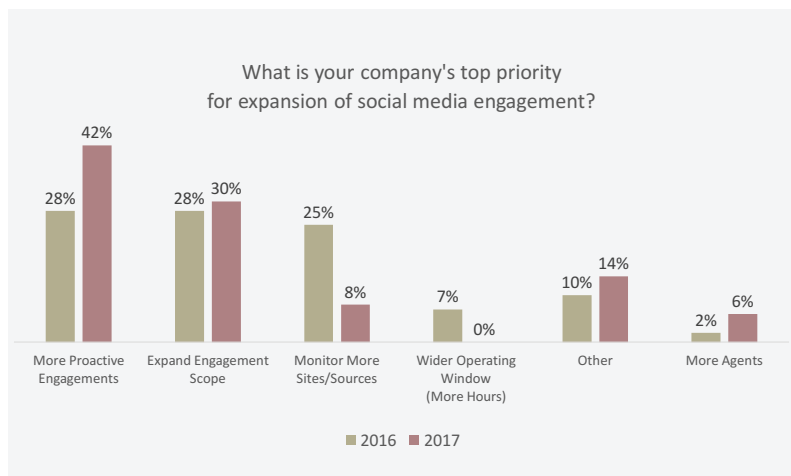
In which of these social media platforms does your company presently engage with consumers? (Check all that apply)

	Facebook	Twitter	Forums/Hosted Communities	Blogs/Personal Websites	Pinterest/Instagram	Google+	News/Review Sites	Other
2015	77%	83%	47%	35%	43%	32%	27%	18%
2016	85%	85%	34%	32%	38%	17%	19%	15%
2017	95%	91%	27%	30%	36%	18%	34%	7%

Channel Priorities, Expansion and Maturity

Channel Results – Social Media Care

What is currently your company's top priority for the Social Media Care channel?

	2016	2017
Improve the Customer Experience	36%	32%
Expand Capability	24%	29%
Integrate With Other Channels	15%	7%
Improve Quality/Performance	7%	9%
Increase Channel Awareness	7%	14%
Other	11%	9%

"Improve the Customer Experience" remains the top Social Media Care priority, but "Expand Capability" comes in at a close second. Combined with expanding capabilities, a significant percentage of respondents (14%) are also looking to increase awareness of the channel. This likely goes hand-in-hand with widespread initiatives to shift traffic to Social Media Care from more traditional avenues of care.
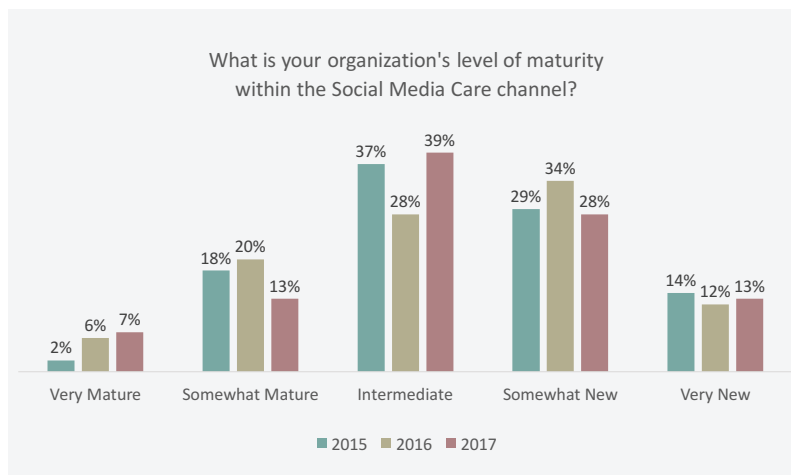
Given the results on the previous page that show a neck-and-neck tie between proactive and reactive approaches to Social Media Care, it's assuring to know such a large percentage of survey respondents (42%) are prioritizing an increase in proactive engagements. Proactive engagements cut down on customer effort and, if done well, provide a good opportunity for surprising and delighting customers.

What is your company's top priority for expansion of social media engagement?

	2016	2017
More Proactive Engagements	28%	42%
Expand Engagement Scope	28%	30%
Monitor More Sites/Sources	25%	8%
Wider Operating Window (More Hours)	7%	0%
Other	10%	14%
More Agents	2%	6%

Social Media Care channel maturity levels were slightly down in 2017. This was mostly due to the 35% decline in those responding, "Somewhat Mature" from 20% in 2016, down to 13% in 2017.

Here's how the maturity of Social Media Care compares with that of other channels ("Very Mature" plus "Somewhat Mature"):
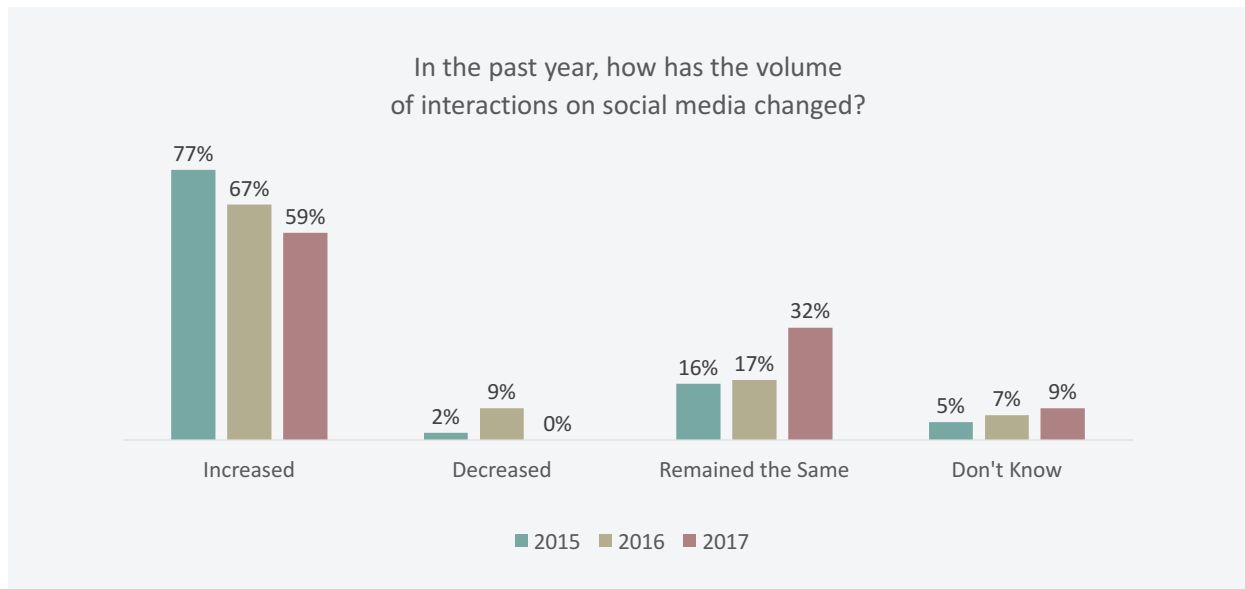
Traditional Care: 75%
Interactive Care: 24%
Social Media Care: 20%
Mobile Care: 12%

What is your organization's level of maturity within the Social Media Care channel?

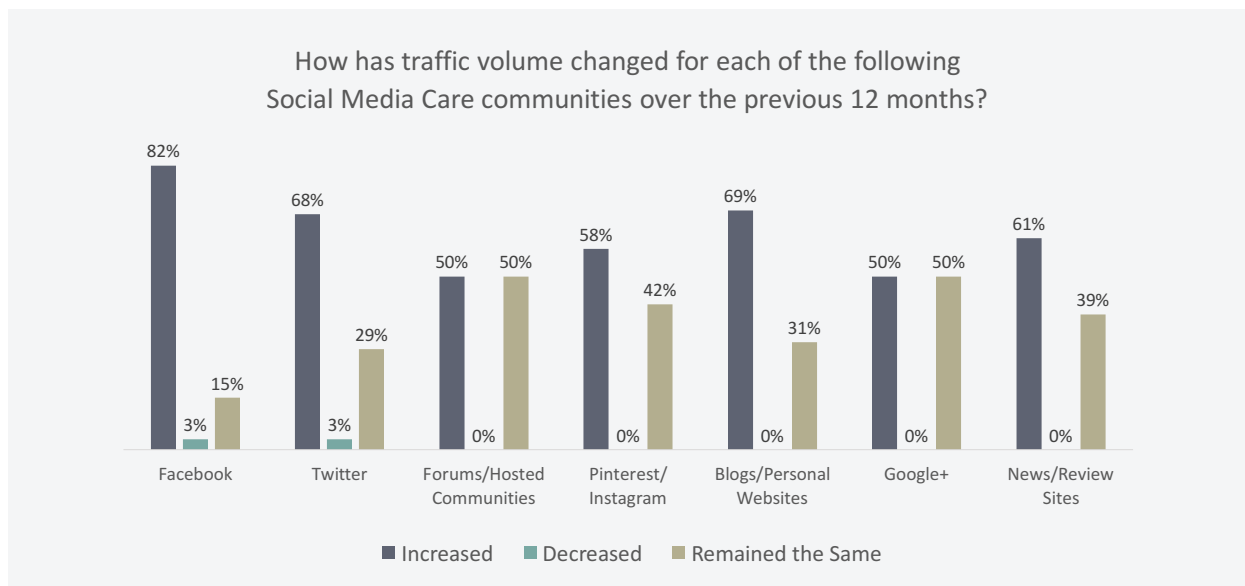|	2015	2016	2017
Very Mature	2%	6%	7%
Somewhat Mature	18%	20%	13%
Intermediate	37%	28%	39%
Somewhat New	29%	34%	28%
Very New	14%	12%	13%

Channel and Platform Traffic Changes

Channel Results – Social Media Care

While it's true that the Social Media Care channel continues to tell a story of strong growth, channel growth is not as widespread as it was back in 2015 or, for that matter, in 2016. About a third of respondents reported flat volumes over the previous year, while there was no decrease indicated in Social Media Care by any brands in 2017. Based on previous results that hint at a greater shift to reactive engagement, it's a sensible assumption that volume growth could — and would — slow.

In the past year, how has the volume of interactions on social media changed?

	Increased	Decreased	Remained the Same	Don't Know
2015	77%	2%	16%	5%
2016	67%	9%	17%	7%
2017	59%	0%	32%	9%

■ 2015 ■ 2016 ■ 2017

The traffic changes within individual social media communities tell a story similar to the one told by the results above. Although the percentage of brands indicating an increase in volumes has slipped year-over-year, indication of decreases were practically nil. And while the corporate presence in social media communities like blogs, Pinterest/Instagram and forums has slipped (page 53), for those brands that do participate, growth has been strong.

How has traffic volume changed for each of the following Social Media Care communities over the previous 12 months?

	Facebook	Twitter	Forums/Hosted Communities	Pinterest/Instagram	Blogs/Personal Websites	Google+	News/Review Sites
Increased	82%	68%	50%	58%	69%	50%	61%
Decreased	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Remained the Same	15%	29%	50%	42%	31%	50%	39%

■ Increased ■ Decreased ■ Remained the Same

Team Structure and Tool Use

Channel Results – Social Media Care

Like the percentage of brands with an active social media presence (page 53), the percentage of brands fielding a social media response team specifically for customer care hit a dataset high in 2017, coming in at 76%. While social media is often the domain of marketing, customer care offers an invaluable set of skills when it comes to customer engagement. At the end of the day, brands need to consider their objectives for the channel, and resource accordingly.

Does your company have a social media response team specifically for customer care?

2017 – Yes: 76%
2016 – Yes: 68%
2015 – Yes: 62%

As has been the case historically, Marketing continues to take the lead when it comes to social media engagement. Granted, in this context, engagement doesn't necessarily mean customer care. Social media engagement could be something as simple as thanking someone for a compliment about a product. Even still, it may be the case that some organizations have customer care engagement teams that report to Marketing instead of Customer Care. In such cases, brands need to ensure clear and effective lines of communication in order to meet the constantly evolving expectations of tech-savvy consumers.

Which department of your company is primarily responsible for social media engagement?

	Marketing	Customer Care	Joint Responsibility	Public Relations/Communications
2015	37%	19%	35%	9%
2016	40%	30%	21%	9%
2017	44%	25%	19%	12%

■ 2015 ■ 2016 ■ 2017
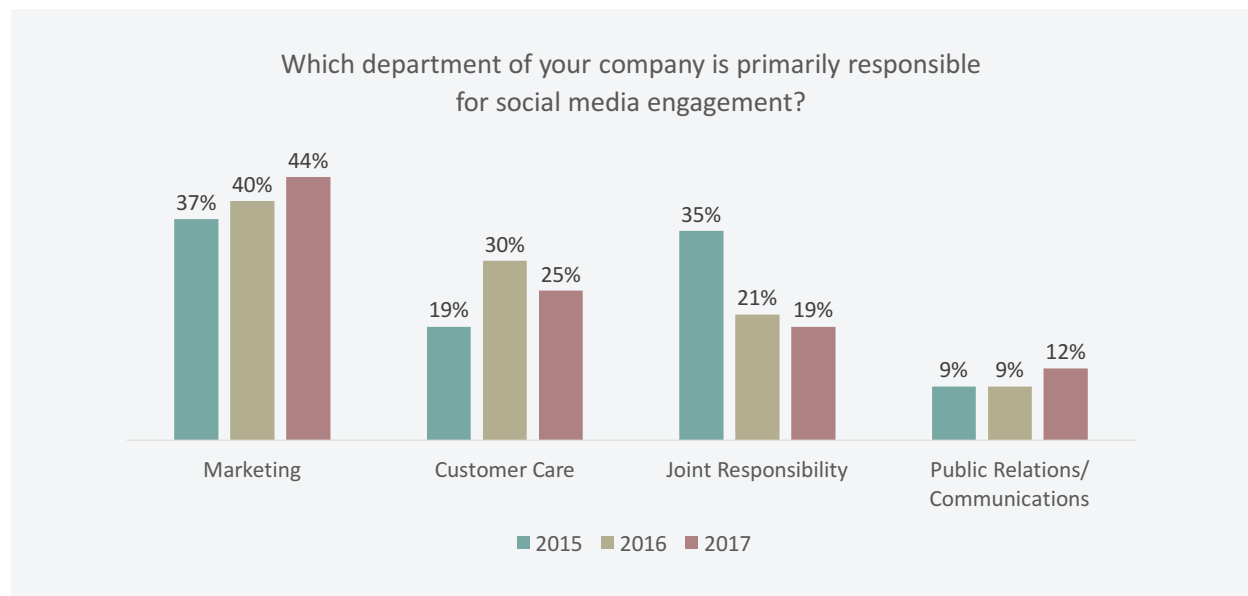
Does your company use a social media engagement tool(s)?

2017 – Yes: 76%
2016 – Yes: 83%
2015 – Yes: 77%
2014 – Yes: 72%

About three in four survey respondents indicated they were using a social media engagement tool. This result was slightly down from the previous year, but within historical norms.

The social media engagement tools most commonly cited include:
• Sprinklr
• Lithium
• Salesforce Social Studio
• Spredfast
• Sprout Social

Channel Staffing

Channel Results – Social Media Care

Third-party staffing within social media engagement teams reached an all-time low in 2017, with just 16% of respondents indicating they were using a third-party staffing provider. It may be the case that more and more organizations are adopting a multichannel agent model, in which agents engage with customers across multiple channels, not just on social media. In this year's results, 54% of organizations indicated that they fielded multichannel agents (page 38). Furthermore, 22% of the companies that fielded multichannel agents named social media as a covered channel.

Does your company utilize a third-party staffing provider for its social media engagement agents?

2017 – Yes: 16%
2016 – Yes: 30%
2015 – Yes: 38%
2014 – Yes: 23%

Has the staffing of your company's social media engagement team changed in a significant way over the past twelve months?

2017 – Yes: 20%
2016 – Yes: 38%
2015 – Yes: 33%
2014 – Yes: 20%

Following two consecutive years of growing change, 2017 results represented a reversion when it comes to staffing changes. Only one in five brands indicated a significant change to their engagement teams. Like other alternative care channels, the most common type of staffing change within the Social Media Care channel was more full-time employees and the addition of work-from-home options.
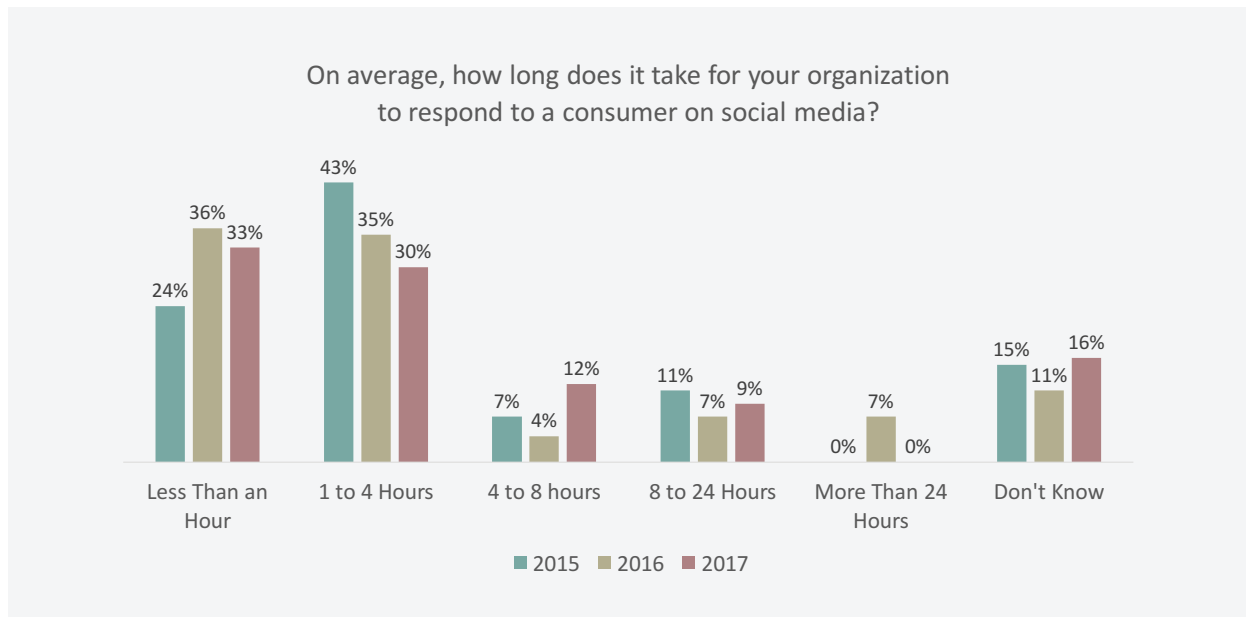
In what way has it changed? (Check all that apply)

Category	2015	2016	2017
More FTEs	67%	88%	100%
Fewer FTEs	6%	6%	0%
Increased Insourcing/Decreased Outsourcing	6%	0%	0%
Increased Outsourcing/Decreased Insourcing	39%	6%	0%
Increased Onshoring/Decreased Offshoring	0%	0%	0%
Increased Offshoring/Decreased Onshoring	6%	0%	0%
Work-From-Home Options	11%	6%	13%

■ 2015 ■ 2016 ■ 2017
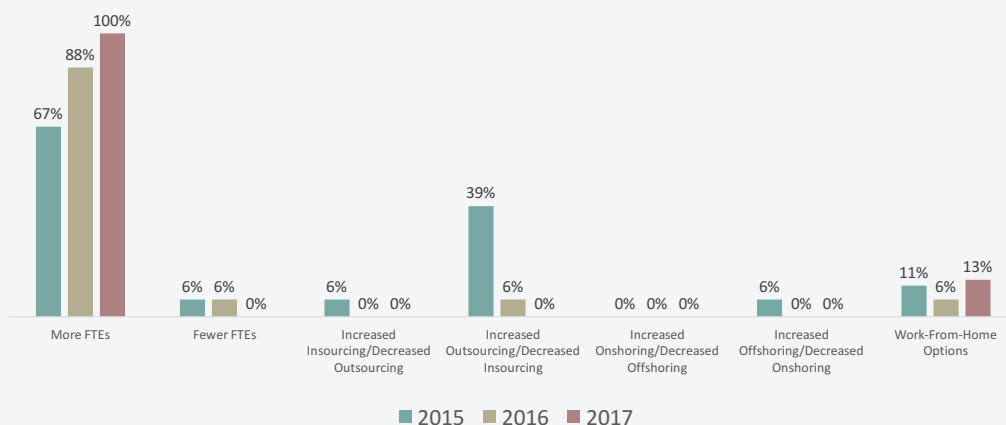
Channel Response Time

Channel Results – Social Media Care

While true that social media doesn't command the immediacy of a channel like phone or live chat, consumer expectations still run high. In 2017 CXMB Series Consumer Edition research, 60% of consumers expected a response with an hour or less, increasing from 51% in 2016. In all likelihood, consumers will continue to expect faster and faster response times. Striving to meet greater response time expectations is important, but brands should also understand the balance between improving responsiveness and the overall impact on customer satisfaction when response time expectations aren't met.

On average, how long does it take for your organization to respond to a consumer on social media?

	Less Than an Hour	1 to 4 Hours	4 to 8 hours	8 to 24 Hours	More Than 24 Hours	Don't Know
2015	24%	43%	7%	11%	0%	15%
2016	36%	35%	4%	7%	7%	11%
2017	33%	30%	12%	9%	0%	16%

Mobile Care

Channel and Solution Availability

Channel Results – Mobile Care

Although 2017 results closely match those from last year, overall, CXMB Series data suggests fewer companies are offering Mobile Care solutions than were just a few short years ago. This conclusion is also supported by the results below, which show the availability of human-assisted solutions lower than levels seen in 2015 and 2016. It might be the case that more investment is finding its way into chatbots, AI or other advanced technology solutions.

Does your company provide Mobile Care support, including mobile apps, SMS text and mobile chat?

2017 – Yes: 40%
2016 – Yes: 39%
2015 – Yes: 48%
2014 – Yes: 56%

Does your company provide Mobile Care support that requires human assistance, such as mobile chat or SMS text?

2017 – Yes: 18%
2016 – Yes: 20%
2015 – Yes: 30%
2014 – Yes: 29%

In 2017, about one in five survey respondents said they offered a Mobile Care solution that involved human assistance. This amounts to about half of all companies offering any sort of Mobile Care solution. Although these results were in line with those from 2016, they were significantly below levels from both 2014 and 2015. This could be due to those years representing a boom in mobile app development, while recent years have seen a steady contraction in the availability of brand apps.
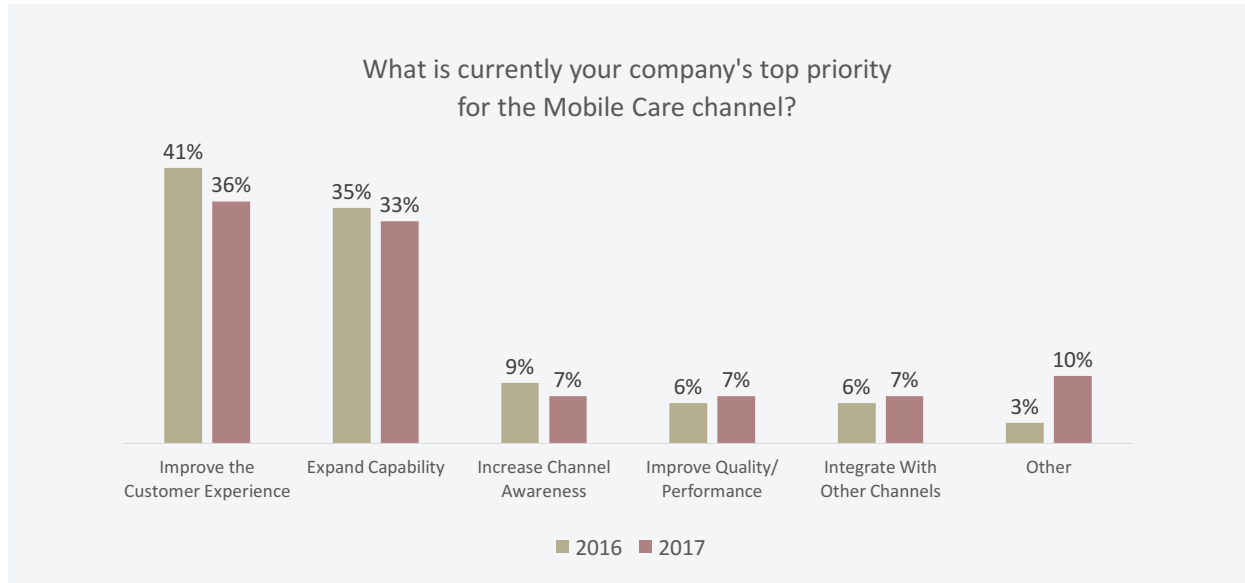
As highlighted on page 64, mobile applications still command the most investment dollars when it comes to Mobile Care solutions, but the lead has lessened over recent years. It could be that the novelty of mobile applications have eased, IT groups have moved on and technologies like AI and chatbots are grabbing more of the spotlight. Moreover, the importance of developing new Mobile Care solutions has diminished, as evidenced by results on page 63.

Which Mobile Care solutions does your company currently offer?
(Check all that apply)

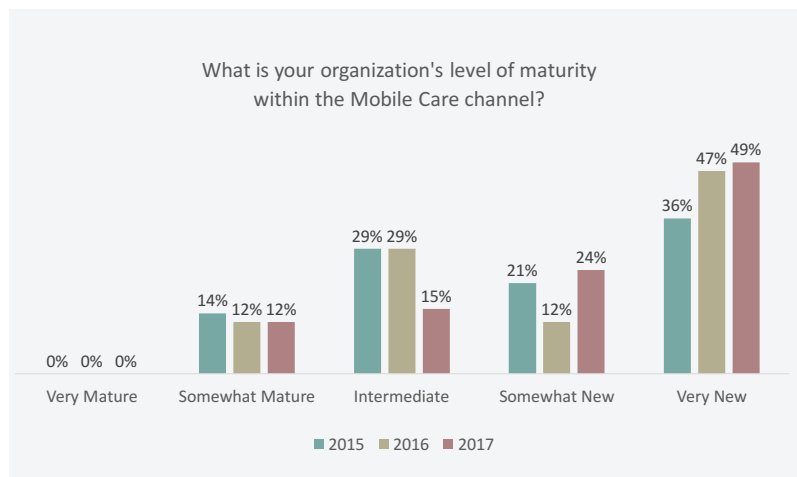|	No Mobile Care Offered	Mobile App	Mobile Chat	SMS Text	Other
2015	45%	45%	10%	20%	3%
2016	55%	31%	10%	20%	2%
2017	48%	20%	15%	15%	2%
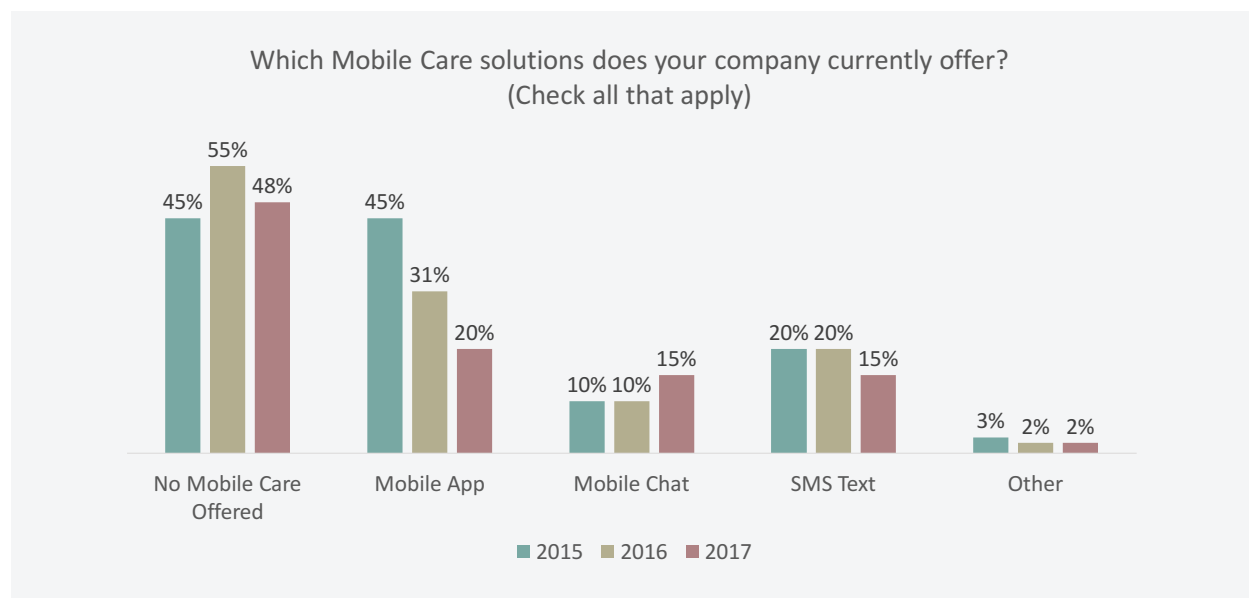
Channel Priorities, Maturity and Capabilities
Channel Results – Mobile Care

Priorities for the Mobile Care channel remain firmly affixed on improving the customer experience and expanding channel capabilities. These results closely align with those from other alternative channels, and rightly so. One of the challenges that all alternative channels have in common is channel capability. In 2017 CXMB Series Consumer Edition results, an average of only 55% of consumer were able to get a resolution using their alternative channel of choice. Contributing to this result: lacking capability across alternative care channels.

What is currently your company's top priority for the Mobile Care channel?

	2016	2017
Improve the Customer Experience	41%	36%
Expand Capability	35%	33%
Increase Channel Awareness	9%	7%
Improve Quality/ Performance	6%	7%
Integrate With Other Channels	6%	7%
Other	3%	10%

Among all channels, Mobile Care remains the most immature, as has been the case since 2015. For a historical perspective on channel maturity, see page 43. Here's how the maturity of Mobile Care compares with that of other channels in this year's results ("Very Mature" plus "Somewhat Mature"):

Traditional Care: 75%
Interactive Care: 24%
Social Media Care: 20%
Mobile Care: 12%

What is your organization's level of maturity within the Mobile Care channel?

	2015	2016	2017
Very Mature	0%	0%	0%
Somewhat Mature	14%	12%	12%
Intermediate	29%	29%	15%
Somewhat New	21%	12%	24%
Very New	36%	47%	49%

The percentage of survey participant brands with a text-enabled 1-800 number (right) remains below 10% for the second consecutive year. This could be related to the SMS two-way communication solution result (far right), which indicates an uptick in SMS investment. It may be the case that as more businesses invest in the introduction and evolution of SMS, the need for a text-enabled 1-800 number falls by the wayside.

Is your company's 1-800 number text-enabled?
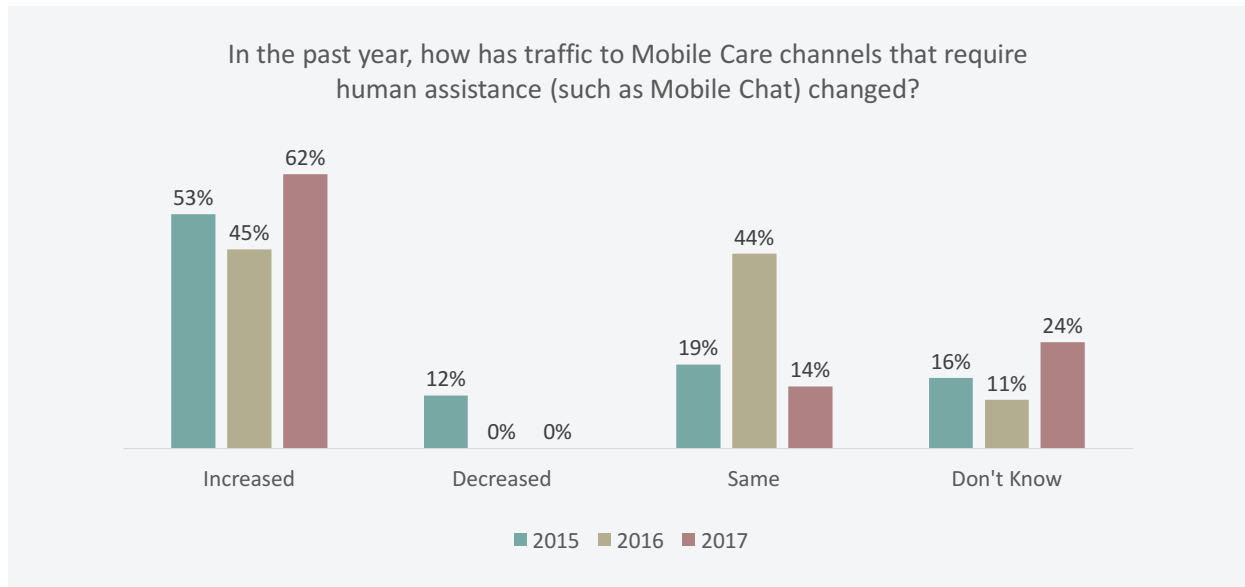
2017 – Yes: 8%
2016 – Yes: 8%
2015 – Yes: 10%
2014 – Yes: 15%

Does your organization provide an SMS solution that utilizes two-way communications?

2017 – Yes: 13%
2016 – Yes: 5%
2015 – Yes: 12%
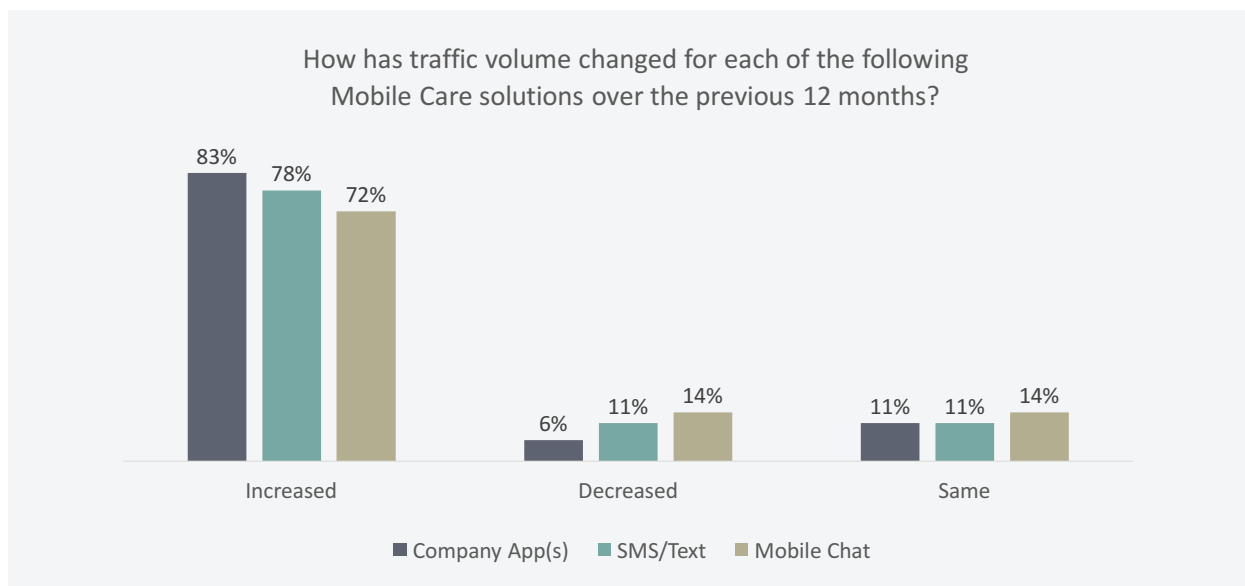
Channel and Solution Traffic Changes

Channel Results – Mobile Care

Among brands offering Mobile Care solutions that require human assistance, increases in traffic volumes were commonplace over the past year. Not only did 62% of respondents indicate an increase in Mobile Care traffic (82% with the removal of "Don't Know" responses), but for two years running, not a single survey respondent indicated a decrease in volume.
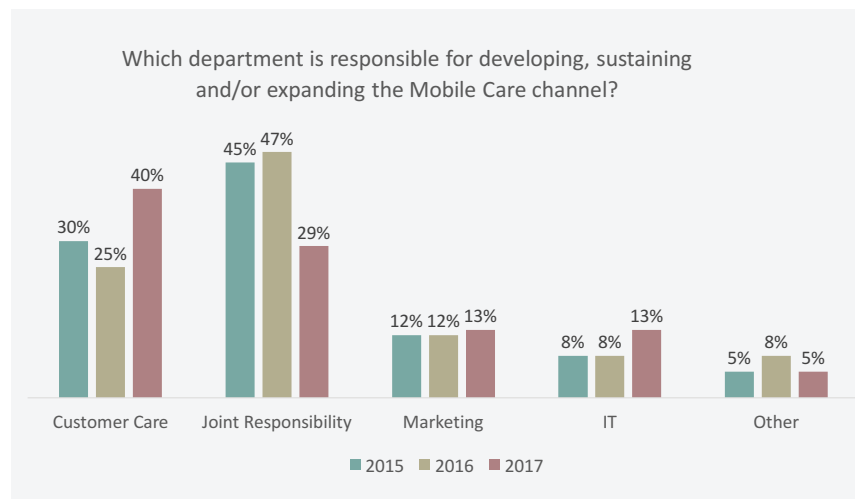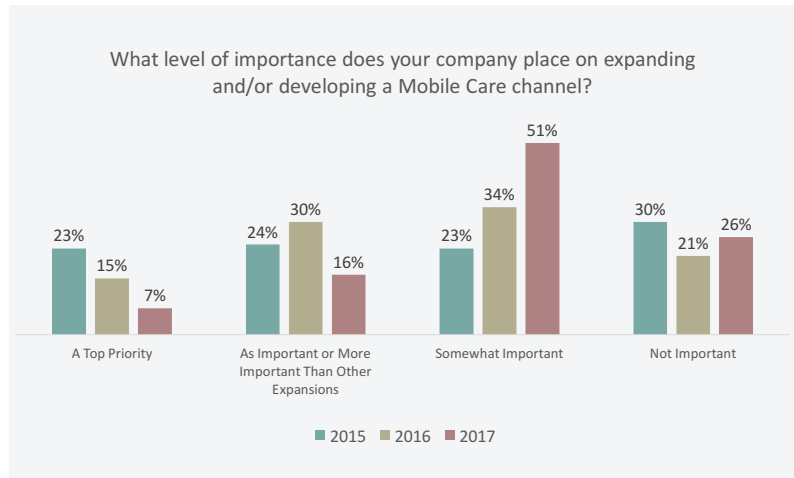
In the past year, how has traffic to Mobile Care channels that require human assistance (such as Mobile Chat) changed?

	Increased	Decreased	Same	Don't Know
2015	53%	12%	19%	16%
2016	45%	0%	44%	11%
2017	62%	0%	14%	24%

As illustrated above, not a single company saw a net decrease in Mobile Care channel volume, but there were some decreases in traffic among individual solutions. Mobile Chat and SMS/Text saw the highest level of decrease, although in either case, fewer than 15% of survey respondents noted any sort of decrease. Conversely, volume increases were roundly noted for all three primary channel solutions, indicating strong and continued growth for the Mobile Care channel.
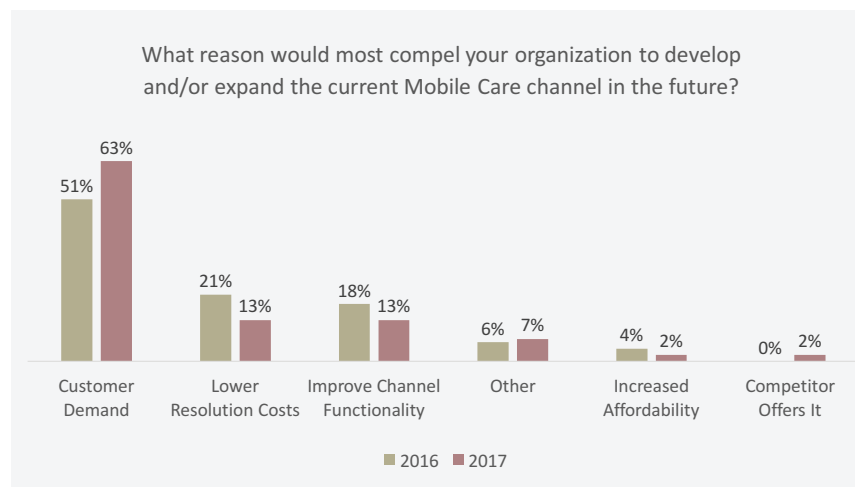
How has traffic volume changed for each of the following Mobile Care solutions over the previous 12 months?

	Increased	Decreased	Same
Company App(s)	83%	6%	11%
SMS/Text	78%	11%	11%
Mobile Chat	72%	14%	14%

Channel Expansion and Development

Channel Results – Mobile Care

The importance of expanding and/or developing the Mobile Care channel may have waned from 2015 to 2016, but it plunged from 2016 to 2017. Only seven percent of respondents described Mobile Care expansion as "A Top Priority," a year-over-year drop of more than 50%. The percentage of individuals naming Mobile Care expansion "As Important or More Important Than Other Expansions" also fell significantly, from 30% to 16%. Taken with other results from this year's research, Mobile Care appears to be less of a priority than in years past.

What level of importance does your company place on expanding and/or developing a Mobile Care channel?

	2015	2016	2017
A Top Priority	23%	15%	7%
As Important or More Important Than Other Expansions	24%	30%	16%
Somewhat Important	23%	34%	51%
Not Important	30%	21%	26%

Which department is responsible for developing, sustaining and/or expanding the Mobile Care channel?

	2015	2016	2017
Customer Care	30%	25%	40%
Joint Responsibility	45%	47%	29%
Marketing	12%	12%	13%
IT	8%	8%	13%
Other	5%	8%	5%

As was seen with Interactive Care (page 50), 2017 brought a sharp shift in departmental responsibilities for the development, sustain and/or expansion of the Mobile Care channel. Customer Care is now the primary channel lead when it comes to Mobile Care management, while "Joint Responsibility" has retreated greatly year-over-year. In 2017, only 29% of organizations assigned joint responsibility for Mobile Care management, down from 47% in 2016.
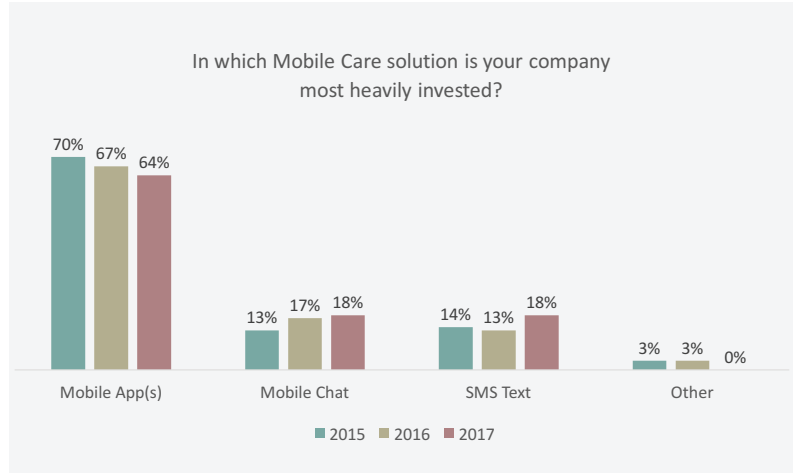
What reason would most compel your organization to develop and/or expand the current Mobile Care channel in the future?

	2016	2017
Customer Demand	51%	63%
Lower Resolution Costs	21%	13%
Improve Channel Functionality	18%	13%
Other	6%	7%
Increased Affordability	4%	2%
Competitor Offers It	0%	2%

Companies continue to look to customer demand when it comes to developing and/or expanding a Mobile Care offering. "Lower Resolution Costs" and "Improve Channel Functionality" also registered as reasons for actively investing in Mobile Care. Since technology changes at an ever-quickening pace, brands need to remain vigilant in monitoring the channel preferences and expectations of their specific customers.

Channel Investment and Staffing
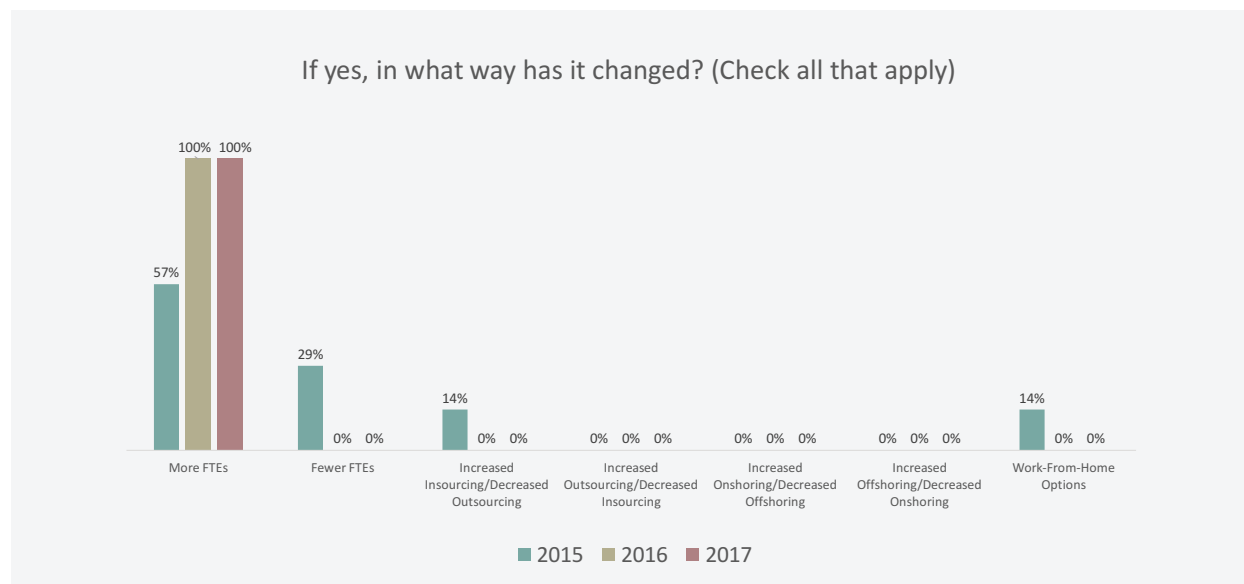
Channel Results – Mobile Care

Investment in mobile applications continues to overshadow other investments in the Mobile Care space. But this lead has been steadily slipping, from 70% of brands naming mobile apps as their top investment in 2015, down to 64% in 2017. Most of this change in investment has been funneled into SMS/Text. As of this year, almost one in five survey respondents indicated they were most heavily invested in SMS/Text.

In which Mobile Care solution is your company most heavily invested?

	Mobile App(s)	Mobile Chat	SMS Text	Other
2015	70%	13%	14%	3%
2016	67%	17%	13%	3%
2017	64%	18%	18%	0%

Has the staffing of your company's Mobile Care channel changed in a significant way over the past twelve months?

2017 – Yes: 6%
2016 – Yes: 13%
2015 – Yes: 21%
2014 – Yes: 12%

Staffing changes within the Mobile Care channel were muted in 2017, with fewer than one in ten survey respondents indicating any sort of significant change. This level of change marks a low for the CXMB Series dataset. Furthermore, of the few brands that acknowledged there was significant change to their staffing, 100% identified the change as adding more FTEs. No other type of change was indicated in 2017.

If yes, in what way has it changed? (Check all that apply)

	More FTEs	Fewer FTEs	Increased Insourcing/Decreased Outsourcing	Increased Outsourcing/Decreased Insourcing	Increased Onshoring/Decreased Offshoring	Increased Offshoring/Decreased Onshoring	Work-From-Home Options
2015	57%	29%	14%	0%	0%	0%	14%
2016	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2017	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Channel Response Time
Channel Results — Mobile Care

Response times for live interactions within the Mobile Care channel improved greatly year-over-year. When omitting "Don't Know" from the pool of responses, 55% of survey participants said they provide a response in ten minutes or less. This compares with a 2016 result of 38% when also removing "Don't Know" responses. Quick response times give customers one of the things they consistently value most — a quick resolution.

For Mobile Care solutions that require human assistance, on average, how long does it take for your customers to receive a response?

Category	2016	2017
Less Than 10 Minutes	29%	38%
10 to 30 Minutes	0%	15%
30 Minutes To An Hour	18%	8%
1-4 Hours	6%	8%
4-8 Hours	12%	0%
More Than 8 Hours	12%	0%
Don't Know	23%	31%

Channel Results Conclusions

Key Findings:

• While Traditional Care remains a strong and vital channel of engagement, increases in channel traffic have slipped in each of the last three years. (Page 44)

• Customer care organizations have taken on greater responsibility for developing, sustaining and/or expanding alternative care channels, especially for Interactive and Mobile Care. (Pages 50 and 63)

• Ninety-one percent of respondents indicated their organizations had an active social media engagement presence, the highest rate seen in CXMB Series research, dating back to 2012. (Page 53)

• Mobile Care had the lowest level of channel maturity, with only 12% of respondents describing their level of maturity within the channel as "Very Mature" or "Somewhat Mature." (Page 61)

The rate of channel traffic increases within the Traditional Care channel have slowed in recent years. In fact, this year's survey results saw just as many companies report an increase in Traditional Care traffic as those who reported no change at all. Furthermore, the percentage of companies indicating an increase in Traditional Care channel traffic (34%) is nearly matched by the percentage of respondents that saw a decrease in traffic to the Traditional Care channel (31%).

As one might expect given the above scenario, alternative channels continue to see widespread growth, with fewer than 10% of respondents indicating contracting volumes in any single alternative channel. Moreover, participation in Social Media Care spiked in 2017, with more than 90% of respondents reporting an active social media engagement presence ... higher than any previous result dating back to 2012. While Traditional Care is still very much front and center as a contact channel for most brands, companies should consider the advantages of ramping up their maturity across the alternative channel spectrum.

Critical Questions Brands Should Be Asking Themselves:

Are we providing the right level of resources and support for our respective channels? Are we adequately supporting Traditional Care, even as some traffic migrates to alternative channels?

Does our model for channel responsibility provide the best chance for success? Have we considered the implications for the customer when channel responsibility is in silos?

Are we making strides in alternative channels, particularly in Mobile Care? Is our level of maturity in these channels enough to meet or exceed customer expectations?

Consumer Edition Comparisons

Ongoing Disconnect In Meeting Needs and Expectations

Consumer Edition Comparisons

When it comes to meeting customer care needs and expectations, 2017 results extended a disconnect first uncovered in 2014. And although this disconnect persists at 42%, it's worth noting that the delta between consumer and corporate results has closed considerably in recent years. This is mostly due to the steady rise in consumer opinion. In 2014, only 22% of consumer survey respondents felt customer care was generally meeting their needs and expectations. Fast-forward to 2017, and that number has risen to 40%. This means brands are succeeding at providing an improved experience. But this result also means that the majority (60%) of surveyed consumers think brands are not generally meeting needs and expectations. This group should serve as a compass to brands, directing them to the types of changes that need to take place to meet the needs and expectations of the vast majority of customers.

2017 CXMB Series Corporate Edition Result

Do you feel your customer care
organization is generally meeting the needs
and expectations of your customers?

2017 – Yes: 82%
2016 – Yes: 81%
2015 – Yes: 79%
2014 – Yes: 88%

2017 CXMB Series Consumer Edition Result

Do you feel the customer care departments of
today's companies are generally meeting your
customer service needs and expectations?

2017 – Yes: 40%
2016 – Yes: 41%
2015 – Yes: 33%
2014 – Yes: 22%

Understanding What Is Most Important

Consumer Edition Comparisons

In a pair of entirely new questions for both editions of the CXMB Series, survey respondents were asked what was most important when working with a large brand to resolve a customer care issue. Among both consumers and corporate respondents, "A Quick and Easy Process" ranked highest. That said, corporate respondents completely misjudged the importance of "Fair and Honest Treatment," which was indicated by only 5% of corporate respondents, but 25% of consumers. Another notable disconnect is "Polite and Friendly Treatment," which 18% of consumers noted as most important, compared to only 3% of corporate respondents. While different things might be important to different groups of consumers, brands should dedicate themselves to knowing which aspects of an interaction are most important to their specific customers. This can be done through surveys, key driver analysis and focus groups.

2017 CXMB Series Corporate Edition Result

Aside from getting their issue resolved satisfactorily, what do you think is most important for your customers when dealing with a large brand to resolve a customer care issue?

Category	Percentage
A Quick and Easy Process	48%
Correct and Consistent Information	26%
To Feel Like More Than a Customer	10%
Fair and Honest Treatment	5%
To Be Heard and Understood	5%
Polite and Friendly Treatment	3%
Other	3%
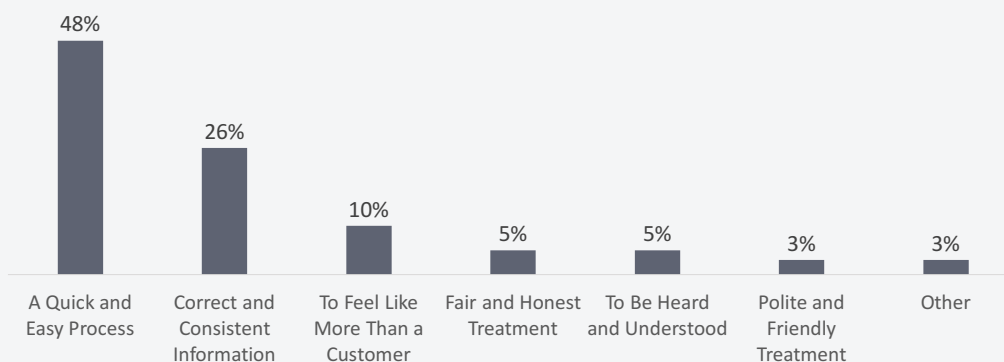
2017 CXMB Series Consumer Edition Result

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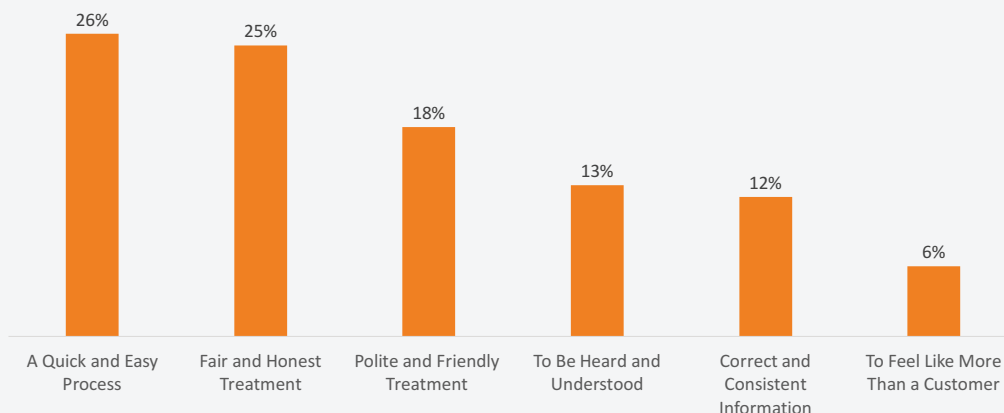
Consensus on Providing A Consistent Experience

Consumer Edition Comparisons

Although there are disconnects worth highlighting between CXMB Series Corporate and Consumer Editions, there are also congruities. One such congruity is channel consistency. For three straight years, consumers were generally split down the middle when it came to channel consistency, with half of multichannel users indicating a consistent customer care experience as they navigated across channels. This roughly aligns with Corporate Edition results, where about 30% of participating brands said they were not doing a good job at channel consistency, while 61% thought they were providing a consistent experience some of the time. This is good news, as it underscores the fact that brands know they can get better at consistency. What brands should also know is that providing a consistent experience, regardless of channel or solution, is an opportunity to enhance brand opinion, build loyalty, lower consumer effort and reduce costs by avoiding unnecessary repeat contacts.

2017 CXMB Series Corporate Edition Result

Do you feel that your organization does a good job of providing a consistent customer experience when your customers engage your brand across different channels and solutions?

	Yes	Somewhat	No
2016	26%	39%	35%
2017	14%	61%	25%

■ 2016   ■ 2017
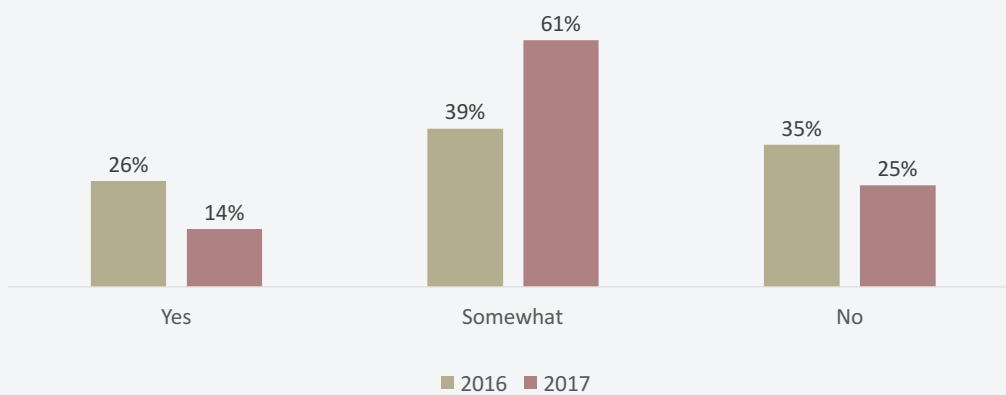
2017 CXMB Series Consumer Edition Result

Was your interaction with customer care consistent across all channels?

	Yes	No
2015	53%	47%
2016	53%	47%
2017	51%	49%

■ 2015   ■ 2016   ■ 2017
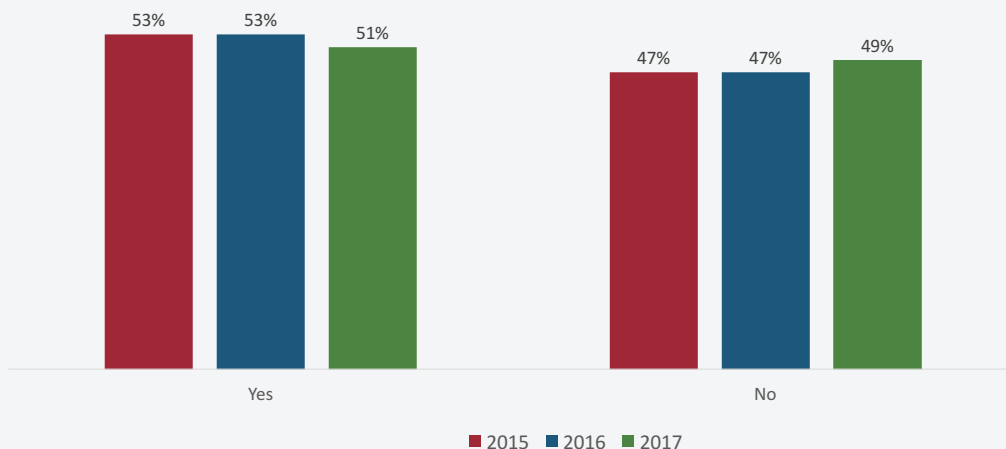
Mismatched Perception on FCR

Consumer Edition Comparisons

Beginning in 2015, both the CXMB Series Corporate and Consumer Edition surveys have asked about first contact resolution (FCR) rates. Since then, there has been a bulging disconnect between how often brands say they are providing an FCR, and how often consumers say they are getting an FCR. In comparing 2017 results, 83% of brands indicated they were providing an FCR "Often." This compares with a consumer survey result in which only 48% of consumers felt they were receiving an FCR "Always" or "Often." Which is more accurate? And an even more important question: How much do consumers value FCR in an environment where channel-shifting is becoming commonplace?

2017 CXMB Series Corporate Edition Result

How often does your organization resolve an issue during the first instance of connecting with the customer?

	Always	Often	Half of the Time	Rarely	Never
2015	3%	73%	17%	7%	0%
2016	5%	75%	15%	5%	0%
2017	0%	83%	15%	2%	0%
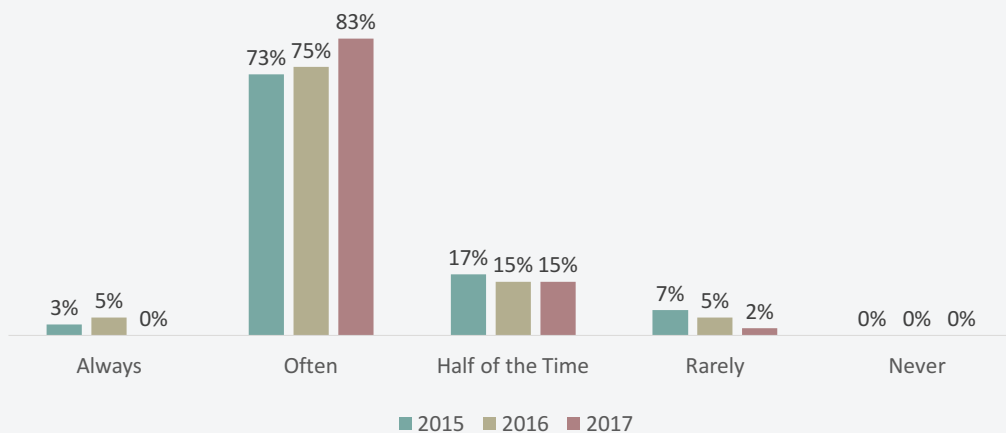
2017 CXMB Series Consumer Edition Result

How often are your customer care issues resolved during the first instance of contacting a company's customer care department?

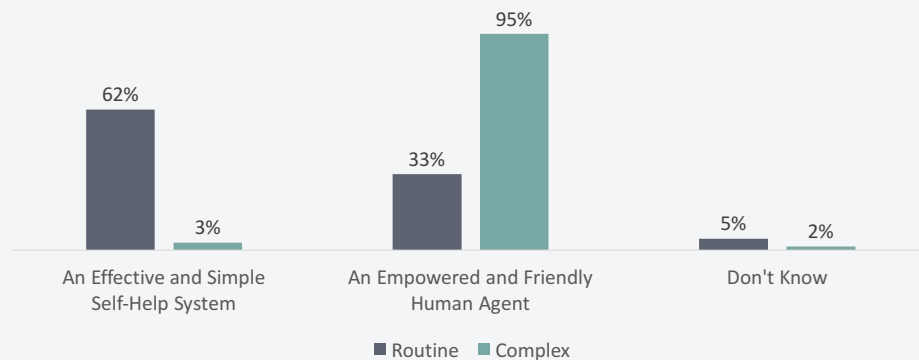|	Always	Often	About Half the Time	Rarely	Never
2014	7%	29%	22%	11%	31%
2015	13%	36%	23%	12%	16%
2016	9%	37%	27%	14%	13%
2017	11%	37%	26%	12%	14%
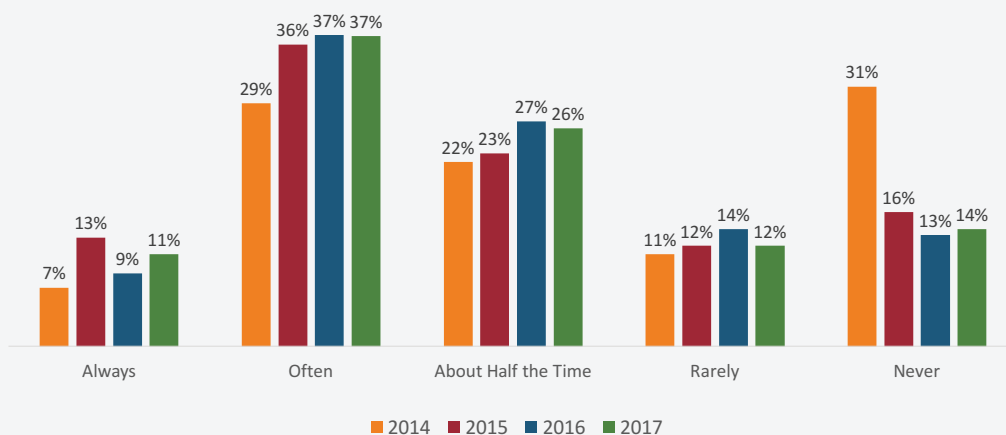
Engagement Preferences
Consumer Edition Comparisons

In 2017, a new question was introduced as a part of the CXMB Series Corporate Edition survey, asking about customer engagement preferences, particularly as it applies to live versus self-help interactions. In those results, corporate respondents were certain their customers wanted live assistance in the event of a complex customer care issue. But when it came to routine issues, results were far more mixed, with 62% of respondents indicating their customers would rather use a self-help system. And it's with these routine interactions that the disconnect emerges.

Since 2016, the CXMB Series Consumer Edition has been investigating consumer preferences between live and automated assistance. In that time, consumers have been consistent in their preference for human-based assistance, regardless of engagement type.

2017 CXMB Series Corporate Edition Result

In the event of a [routine/complex] customer care issue, which do you think your customers would rather interact with (assuming both are equally capable of resolving the issue)?

	Routine	Complex
An Effective and Simple Self-Help System	62%	3%
An Empowered and Friendly Human Agent	33%	95%
Don't Know	5%	2%

2017 CXMB Series Consumer Edition Result

In the event of a (routine/complex) customer care issue, which would you rather interact with (assuming both are equally capable of resolving the issue)?

	Routine	Complex
An Effective and Simple Self-Help System	41%	32%
An Empowered and Friendly Human Agent	59%	68%
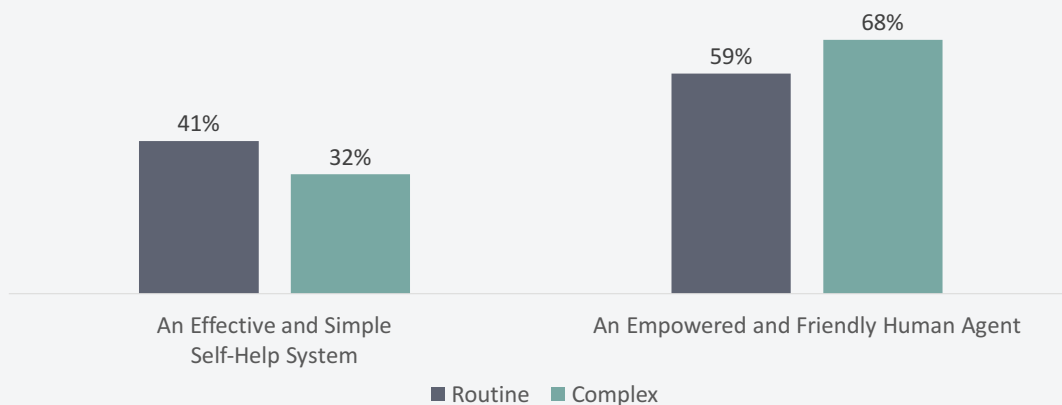
Following Up and Follow-Ups

Consumer Edition Comparisons

In a new CXMB Series Corporate Edition question, 83% of corporate survey respondents indicated that their organization proactively followed up in the wake of a negative customer care experience. This result stands in stark contrast to 2017 CXMB Series Consumer Edition results, where only 20% of consumer survey respondents said a brand took the time to proactively follow up with them after a negative experience.

Highlighting this disconnect isn't meant to diminish the value of proactive follow-ups. In fact, CXMB Series Consumer Edition data demonstrated that proactive follow-ups can help dampen the damage done by a negative experience, especially as it applies to future purchase decisions. Consumers who received a proactive follow-up following a negative experience were 13% less likely to have their future purchase decisions negatively shaped.

Given the influence of proactive follow-ups, companies owe it to themselves to develop a plan, process and tracking mechanism for proactive follow-ups. Only then can they understand what proactive follow-ups are worth, both for their brand and their customers.

2017 CXMB Series Corporate Edition Result

Following a negative customer care experience,
does your organization proactively follow up with
customers to help remedy the situation?

Yes: 83%

2017 CXMB Series Consumer Edition Result

Following the negative experience, did the brand proactively
contact you to try to remedy or apologize for the situation?

2017 – Yes: 20%
2016 – Yes: 15%

Methodology

The 2017 Corporate Edition of the Customer Experience Management Benchmark Series was developed using the results of a custom online survey. Consisting of 122 questions, the survey was privately and exclusively solicited by email invitation. These invites targeted individuals responsible for managing the customer experience and customer care programs of large B2C and B2C/B2B organizations in the U.S. and Canada, with the majority of survey participants holding the title of Vice President or higher. Survey answers were gathered from October 4 through December 6, 2017.

About the Study's Authors

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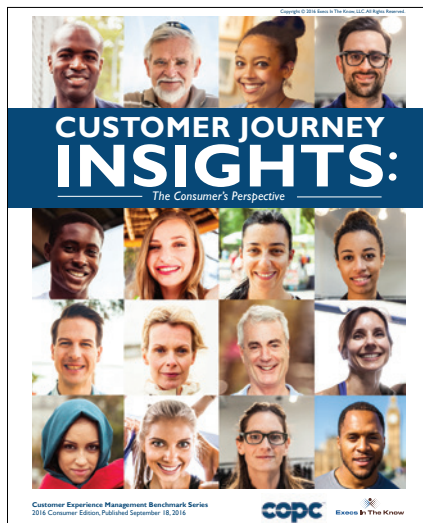
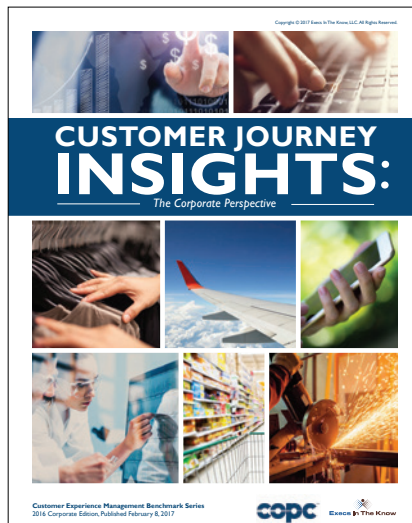*To learn more about COPC Inc., visit www.copc.com.*

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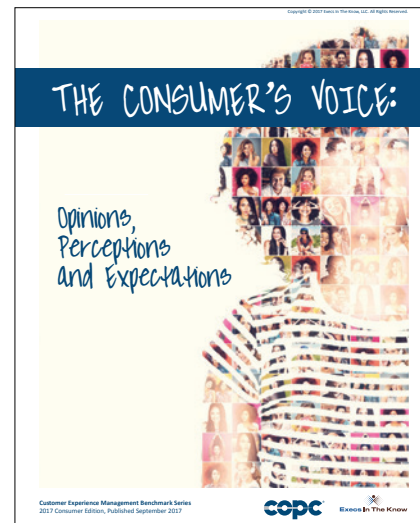**Looking for previous Consumer and Corporate Editions
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