



# **Are call centres ready for the new consumer?**

## **Survey results and commentary**

Version 2007.1

**Rostrvm Solutions Limited**  
Dukes Court, Duke Street  
Woking, Surrey GU21 5RT  
United Kingdom

**T:** +44 (0)1483 744500

**F:** +44(0)1483 744447

**E:** [enquiries@rostrvm.com](mailto:enquiries@rostrvm.com)

# **Rostrvm Solutions**

<http://www.rostrvm.com>

# Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. DETAILED RESULTS AND COMMENTARY</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. NOTES</b>	<b>11</b>

## 1. Introduction

The consumer is changing. Mobile technology is being quickly adopted and use of the internet continues to increase. Most notably new communication methods are strongly adopted by young people – the new consumers vital to the continued success of any business.

Ofcom research shows that “for the first time, the number of households with a mobile now exceeds those with a fixed line”.<sup>1</sup>

The same research “estimates that there were 16.6 million residential and SME UK internet connections at the end of 2006. Of these, 78% (13.0 million) were broadband connections, compared to 64% at the end of 2005.”

No-one will be surprised to find that the Ofcom report identifies 18-24 year olds as the greatest users of the internet but data from earlier this year shows that “that women in the 18-34 age range are the most active internet users by time spent. Use falls with age, but over 50s (who make up 41% of the UK population) now account for nearly 30% of all time spent on the internet....over 65 ‘silver surfers’ spend more time online per active user, at nearly 42 hours per month, than any other age group.”<sup>2</sup>

### **But are call centres prepared for changing customer communication preferences?**

Rostrvm Solutions commissioned research during July and August 2007 with the objective of understanding the penetration and plans for supporting non-voice media such as text messaging (SMS), internet and email in the call centre. We also wished to understand propensity to offer other ‘real time’ computer-based communication such as instant messaging and PC telephony.

Given the demographics of new media used we also wanted to establish a picture of how well call centres understand the profile of their customers.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Executive summary

Your customers are beginning to demand multimedia contact but most call centres are far from ready to meet expectations. Our research shows that call centre adoption of new media is under way, customer contact mechanisms are changing, but not at the same pace as consumers.

Our survey revealed strong investment in both 'traditional' call centre technology and new media communication. But we also identified that the different media effectively operate as customer interaction islands, not as an integrated customer experience.

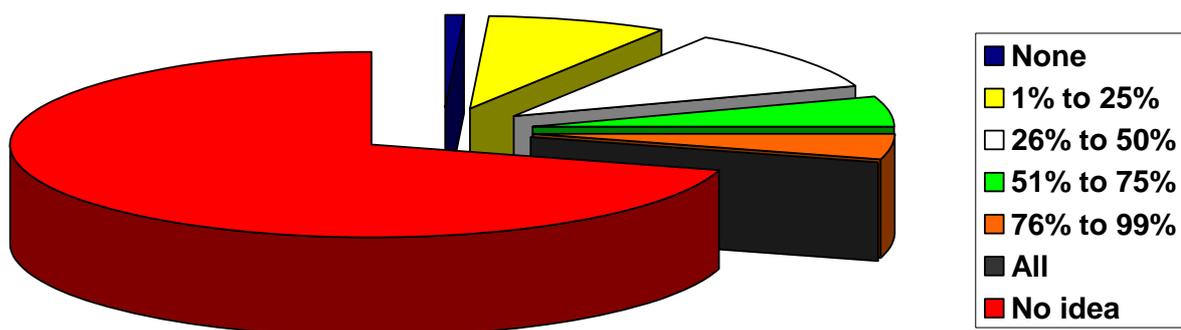
### An opportunity missed? – linking the web and the call centre

The overwhelming majority (98%) of call centres have an associated web presence. Despite general growth in internet activity it is still rare for businesses to complete the majority of transactions on the internet. Capturing customers and prospects with active links to the call centre, such as call-me buttons, is not seen as a priority. Under 15% of call centres have a 'Call Me' presence on the web site growing to less than 25% over 3 years.

### Call centres need be more aware of customer demographics

It is clear from other research that there are demographic drivers to the use of new communication media such as the internet (cited in our introduction). It was notable that call centres are, in general, unaware of their customer profiles.

## Roughly what proportion of your customers are under the age of 35?



**New media adoption is patchy**

The vast majority of call centres have already embraced the email revolution. 97% of call centres already use email to communicate with customers (rising to 98% over the next 3 years).

The newer, more immediate media have significantly less penetration; text messaging has been recognised as an important medium in some areas and already used in around 30% of call centres but this figure is not expected to rise above 50% over the coming years.

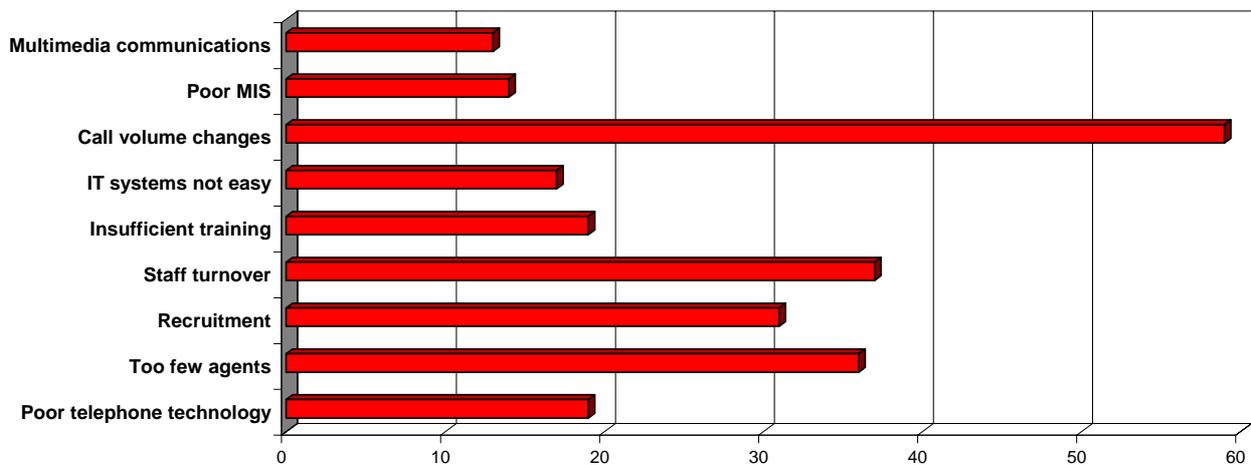
PC based communication - instant messaging such as Messenger and PC Telephony such as Skype – are not widely adopted or planned to have a large impact. Around 11% of call centres currently use Instant Messaging growing to around 24% in three years; less than 8% support PC Telephony building to around 20% over the next three years

**Are call centres focussed on today and forgetting future business?**

Your customers are beginning to demand multimedia communications. 12% of all call centres – rising to 17% in larger call centres <sup>4</sup> – reported that a current problem is that “Customers want to use multimedia communications”.

However the survey revealed that call centres are more troubled by day-to-day operational issues.

**What problems does your call centre face right now?**



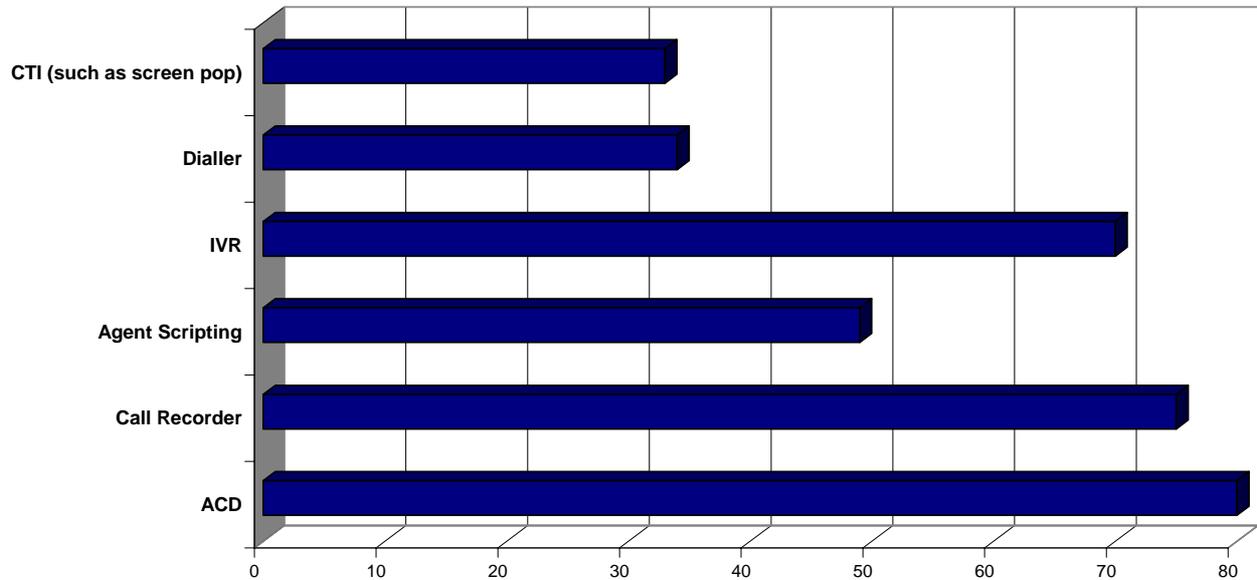
**Rostrvm Solutions commentary:** Resolving today’s issues and addressing the new consumer are not different problems. Linking all communication channels – traditional telephone calls, mobile phones and the internet – in an effective, homogeneous manner can reduce agent workload whilst increasing customer satisfaction. For example, careful migration of service loads from ‘immediate demand’ telephone calls to ‘deferred demand’ contact requests could help solve the key “Call volume changes” challenge.

### 3. Detailed results and commentary

#### Telephone based technology

To establish a base line of call centre telephone technology used the survey identified the systems currently deployed.

#### Do you use these technologies in your call centre?

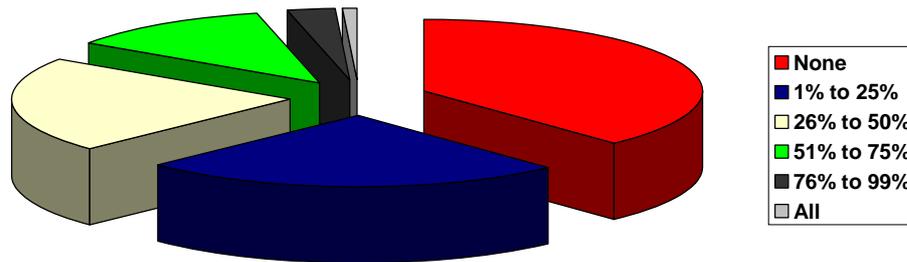


**Rostrvm Solutions commentary:** Call centres are equipped with core call routing technology such as Automatic Call Distribution (ACD). However Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) is the cornerstone technology to bring together telephone-based transactions and computer/text-based multimedia interactions. Under one third of all call centres take advantage of CTI today.

**Call centres and the Internet**

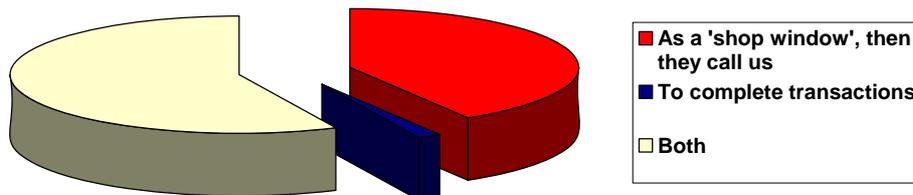
Almost all operations surveyed (98%) have a related web site. Despite the growth in internet adoption amongst consumers and business less than 15% of the surveyed operations have migrated the majority (more than 50%) of transactions fully to the web.

**Proportion of transactions completed via the Internet**



Consumers continue to use the web as a shop window and then ring the call centre.

**How do your customers mostly use your web site?**



**Rostrvm Solutions commentary:** The statistics show that the call centre and the Internet are generally disjointed – customers view the web site and may pick up the phone. Less than 15% of operations offer simple links from the web to the call centre such as call-me buttons yet such straightforward integration can improve business performance and help to smooth workload, call volumes and staffing requirements.

## New media adoption

Email has been widely accepted as an important contact medium with nearly 100% penetration. Whilst there is recognition for other communication methods current deployments and plans for the future are patchy.

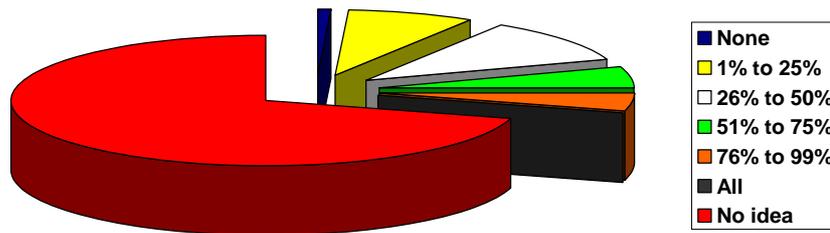
	We use it	Plan to use in the next year	Expect to use within 3 years	No plans to use	Don't know
Email	97%	0%	1%	2%	0%
Text message	31%	3%	13%	36%	17%
Web co-browsing	29%	5%	6%	39%	20%
'Call Me' buttons on web site	15%	2%	7%	49%	27%
Instant Messaging (such as Messenger)	12%	2%	11%	40%	35%
PC telephony (such as Skype)	7%	1%	11%	41%	41%

**Rostrvm Solutions commentary:** Now that the number of UK households with mobile connections exceeds those with fixed lines we expect Text Messages to increase in importance. However, given the Internet demographics reported by Ofcom, other media cannot be ignored.

**Customer demographics**

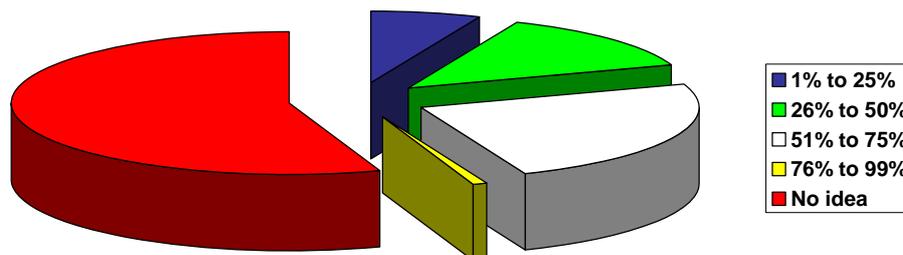
It was notable that call centres are, in general, very unaware of their customer profiles. Respondents were asked to provide a broad profile of customer age range. Over two thirds of the answers were "Don't know"!

**Roughly what proportion of your customers are under the age of 35?**



A similar response was received to our question seeking a customer profile by gender.

**Roughly what proportion of your customers are female?**



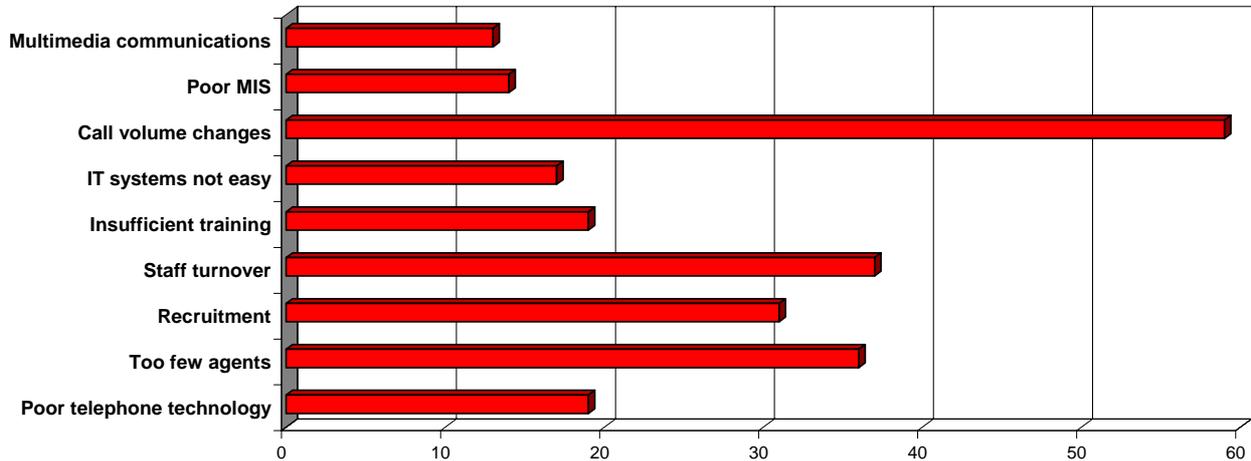
It is notable that smaller call centres have a stronger awareness of customer demographics when compared with larger operations

**Rostrvm Solutions commentary:** The diversity of communication channels available to consumers presents challenges for all call centres. It has been observed that demographics can be important in helping you decide which communication channels are most valuable to you. In making the progression to the new consumer knowing your target audience is crucial.

**What is stopping call centres moving forward?**

This survey is primarily focussed upon how call centres are preparing for the new consumer. But what issues are call centres facing today?

**What problems does your call centre face right now?**



**Rostrvm Solutions commentary:** This final chart exemplifies the challenges met by a large number of call centres. As we have seen earlier that technology has been deployed in the call centre, often it is not deployed in a holistic, agent-centric environment resulting in high staff turnover, and a consequent inability to meet call volume changes and deliver customer satisfaction. Call centres cannot avoid the new consumer. Now is the time to draw all the call centre technology strands together to form a solid platform for diversification.

## 4. Notes

1. Reported in "The Communications Market 2007 (August)" published by Ofcom
2. Original data Nielsen//NetRatings, April 2007, reported in "The Communications Market 2007 (August)" published by Ofcom
3. Our survey questioned 118 call centres with 111 fully completed results. The primary research method was person-to-person telephone surveys supplemented by 14 self-selected direct responses via internet media.
4. The survey segmented responses by call centre size. In general, response results are independent of call centre size.

## Rostrvm Solutions Limited

Designed, manufactured and supported by experts, British company Rostrvm Solutions has been supplying call centre software since 1986.

**rostrvm** offers a full range of CTI-enabled inbound & outbound, multimedia call centres applications to enhance traditional telephone systems and to capitalise on the power of Internet Telephony.

- Inbound and outbound contact
- Data and skills driven call distribution
- Agent support and process management tools with integrated desktops
- Comprehensive, distributed management information

**rostrvm** is used in call centres of all sizes, delivering innovative contact handling applications. To learn how we can help you, visit our web site or contact us at:

Rostrvm Solutions Limited,  
Dukes Court,  
Duke Street  
Woking,  
Surrey,  
GU21 5RT

**T:** 01483 744500  
**E:** [enquiries@rostrvm.com](mailto:enquiries@rostrvm.com)  
**W:** [www.rostrvm.com](http://www.rostrvm.com)

## Contact Information

If you have any questions or comments about this document or require further information about Rostrvm Solutions or our products and services then please contact the person below:

Contact:	Ken Reid – Marketing Director
Company:	Rostrvm Solutions Limited
Telephone:	+44 (0)1483 744429
Email:	ken.reid@rostrvm.com

The copyright in this work is vested in Rostrvm Solutions Ltd and the document is issued in confidence for the purpose only for which it is supplied. It must not be reproduced in whole or in part or used for tendering or manufacturing purposes except under an agreement or with the consent in writing of Rostrvm Solutions Ltd and then only on the condition that this notice is included in any such reproduction. No information as to the contents or subject matter of this document or any part thereof arising directly or indirectly therefrom shall be given orally or in writing or communicated in any manner whatsoever to any third party being an individual firm or employee thereof without the prior consent in writing of Rostrvm Solutions Ltd.

**rostrvm**®, CLIPboard®, Invex®, **rostrvm** Switchless®, **rostrvm** CallManager®, **rostrvm** AdVisor®, **rostrvm** CallGuide®, **rostrvm** ScreenPhone®, **rostrvm** OutBound®, **rostrvm** CallDirector®, **rostrvm** CallBroker®, **rostrvm** ControlCentre®, **rostrvm** InterAct®, **rostrvm** AutoAgent®, **rostrvm** ToneType®, **rostrvm** AuditLog®, **rostrvm** ReportWriter®, **rostrvm** SuperVisor®, and **rostrvm** InterFace® are registered trade marks of Rostrvm Solutions Ltd.

**rostrvm** CLIPboard patent Rostrvm Solutions Ltd (registration number 2290193)

### Rostrvm Solutions Limited

Dukes Court, Duke Street  
Woking, Surrey GU21 5RT  
United Kingdom

All rights reserved. First edition printed 2007.