



## NOT ANSWERING THE PHONE? DON'T EXPECT CUSTOMERS TO WAIT AROUND



All businesses want their customers to have a positive experience. Whether that's visiting a website, speaking with a representative on the phone or even visiting a high street store. But how would you feel if you convinced a customer to come to your company but they were greeted with an empty room? Or they called to buy something over the phone but they couldn't get through to anyone? Well currently only one in five are getting through and the rest are more than likely dialling the number of your competitor. By Kevin Scott-Cowell, UK MD, 8x8.

Our research found that the majority of customers aren't getting through to businesses over the phone. What's worse is that 35% of those who couldn't get through to someone are new customers looking for information on products, trying to open an account or make a purchase. Businesses are therefore missing a large number of inbound enquiries from potential customers who have taken the trouble to call them directly.

The message for businesses is clear: make sure someone picks up the phone when a customer calls. It can be tricky for assistants in a frantic office or a busy contact centre, but having the right technology in place can ease the strain. This would help route calls to the first available person who can deal with the enquiry, whether they're based in another office, another country or even another continent.

By using a cloud-based communications system, businesses can also track and monitor inbound calls allowing the team to plan capacity according to the volume of incoming calls throughout the year. This gives businesses more flexibility whilst also planning for busier seasons. As well as customer retention, businesses would see benefits in cost savings that can be gained from cloud-based communications systems.

But the research also revealed that even when customers do manage to get through

to someone, bad service means businesses are at risk of losing them to a competitor even while they're on the phone. One in eight say they have started searching for competitors online during a call and a tenth have actually posted live on social media to name and shame a company during a poorly handled call.

Some government departments and high profile businesses are coming under the spotlight for poor customer service and callers being left on hold for up to an hour. It's maybe therefore unsurprising to see that customers rated governmental and utilities organisations as the worst for service on the phone. As well as despite being more tech-savvy, both telecoms and IT companies came in the bottom five for customer service. At the other end of the spectrum, property, travel and tourism, and media companies were rated as some of the best.

A business has only one chance to make a great first impression and getting off on the wrong foot can destroy a customer relationship for good. That's why it's crucial to make every interaction count and having the latest technology in place is the first step. Making sure customers are directed to an

appropriately skilled agent who is able to handle their call stops them being passed around multiple agents and ultimately, getting frustrated with the whole experience. And when they're frustrated, they're more likely to turn to a competitor.

