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The Perpetual Challenges of Inside Sales Teams

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A lot has been written about how organizations are focusing more on creating positive customer experiences (CX) to help drive an increase in sales. However, as found by Forrester in their **CX Index survey**, too much of this focus is put on the rational elements of making processes effective and easy for the customer, rather than putting effort into developing emotional connections.

These findings are backed up by a **Harvard Business Review study**, which uncovered that customers with an emotional connection are twice as likely to purchase, repurchase and recommend to others. On a lifetime value basis, emotionally connected customers are more than twice as valuable as highly satisfied customers.

NewVoiceMedia's (now Vonage Contact Center's) own research validates this with 90 percent of inside salespeople stating that deeper customer connections have a positive impact on the sales process, although most report that they often fail to make that emotional connection. Nearly three quarters feel that having a personal, emotional interaction with a prospect increases the likelihood of them entering the sales pipeline. In short, positive emotions sell.

If you manage an inside sales team, the technology may change, but the core challenges remain. A plethora of technologies take aim at increasing the performance and productivity of inside sales teams, but sales leaders are still dealing with the same frustrating problems of ensuring that the inside sales teams activities are resulting in highly engaged and emotional connections with prospects.

The challenges can
be grouped into

Five Main
Gap Areas

for which it's rare to find an
organization that has answers
to all of them:

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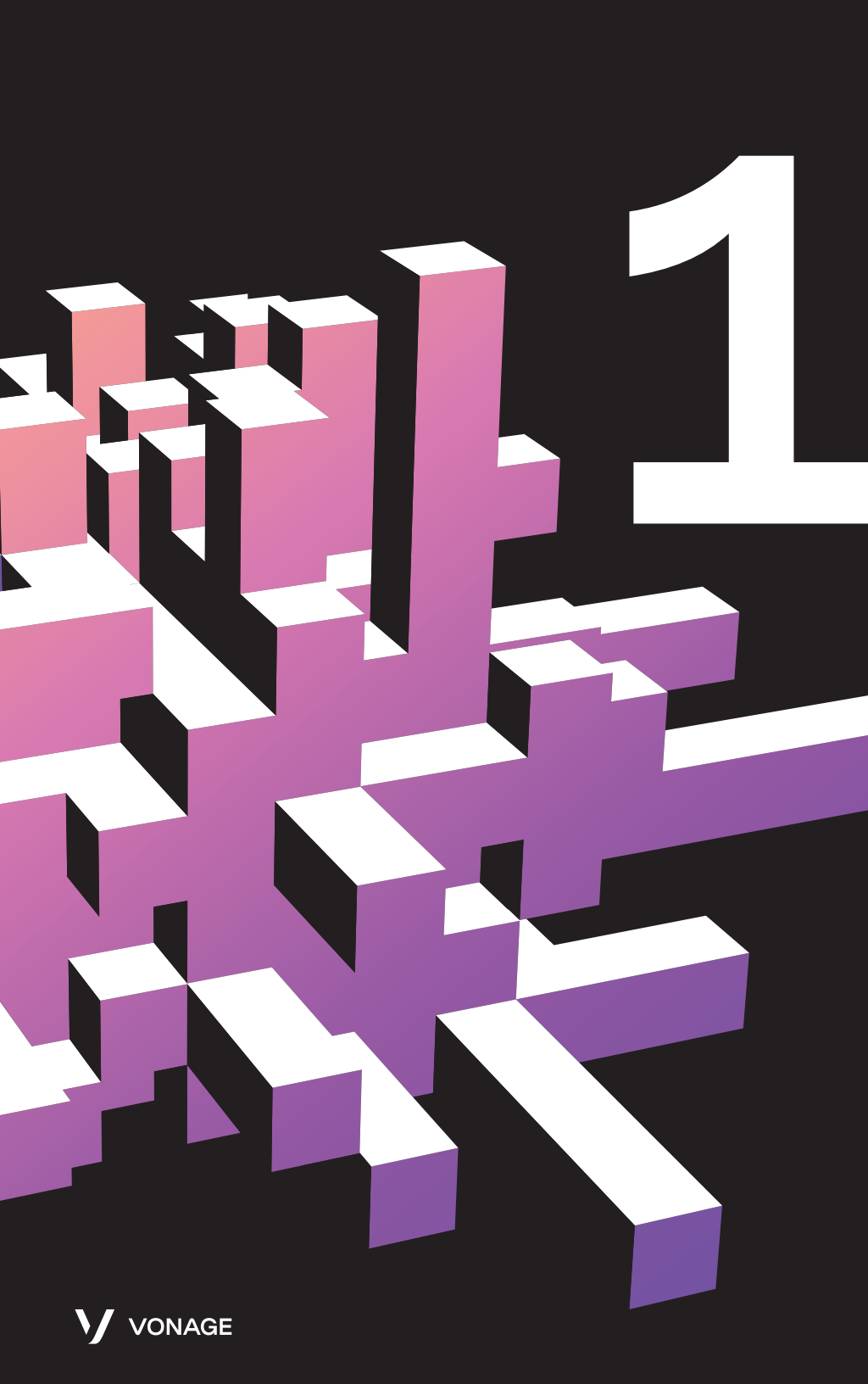
Adoption of CRM
(Customer Relationship Management)

Salespeople are not the best at updating CRM. No matter what incentives or punishments managers apply to encourage the use of CRM, salespeople manage around them. They may keep their pipeline opportunities up to date and present data that represents their forecast, but it's unlikely they will log every touch point with every prospect if they have to do it manually—for inside sales teams, it's all about creating personalized, seamless, consistent and integrated experiences regardless of how contacts with the customer are made.

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Lack of Visibility

Poor CRM adoption leads directly to a lack of data. That makes it impossible to reach strategic decisions about the shape of the inside sales organization, the communications channels to prioritize and it limits the continuous minor course corrections required to foster emotional connections and continually increase lead conversion rates.

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Replicate Top Performers

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Every sales organization has its top performers, who hit their targets month in and month out. Understanding how their behaviors differ from others and replicating these across the rest of the team is the key to increasing inside sales performance. In many businesses, a mere 5-percent increase in performance translates into substantial increases and bookings and revenue. Without intelligence on how to elevate the entire team's performance, these increases are impossible to achieve.

Ramping
New Starters

The period of time between hiring a new salesperson and the point when they become productive is the biggest cost burden on sales organizations. Sales leaders are continually looking at sales enablement approaches that can dramatically cut the "time-to-productivity" for a new hire, but until managers have the data to define what success looks like, this will remain impossible.

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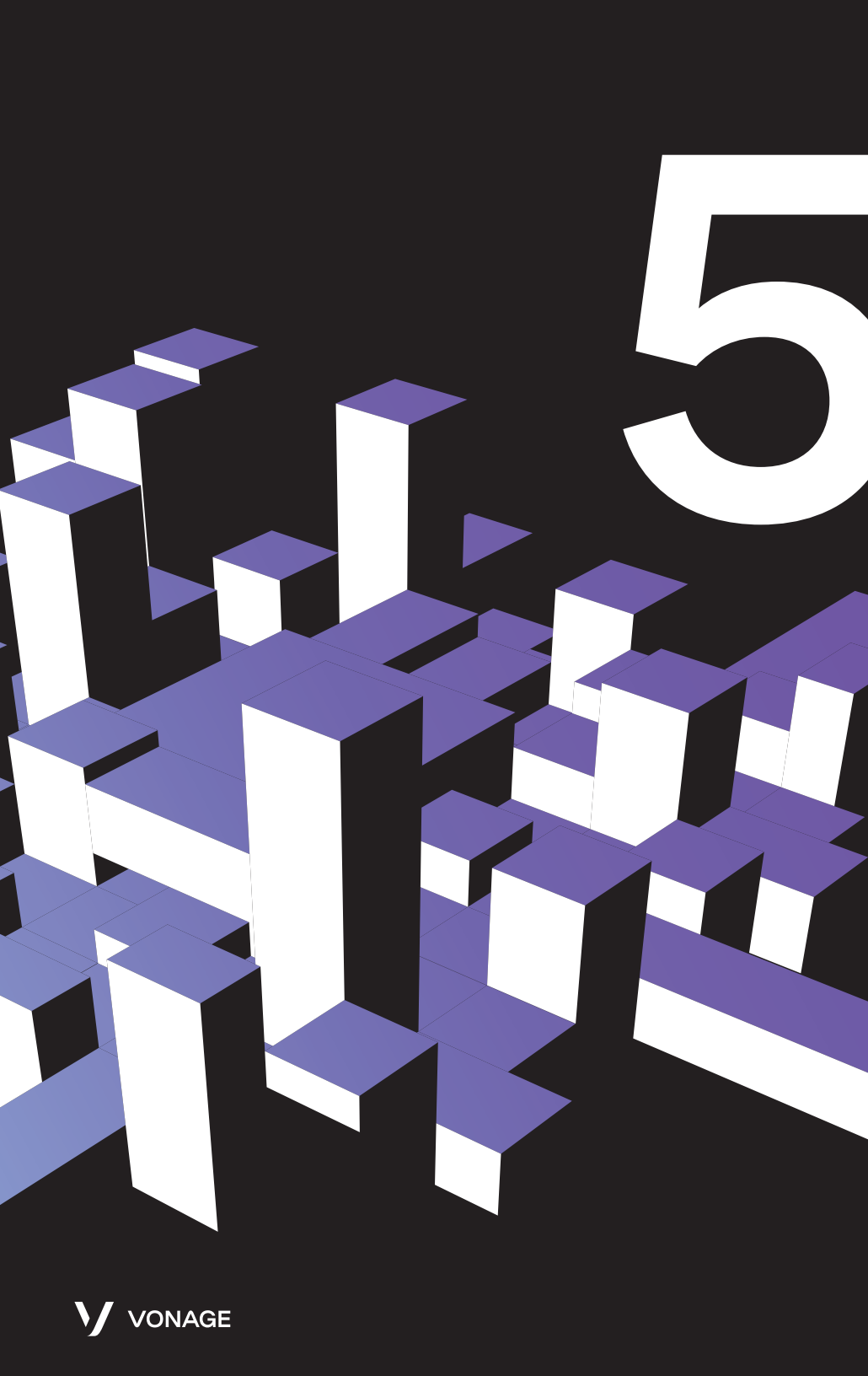
Sales and Marketing Disconnect

The misalignment between sales and marketing translates into constant conflict over inbound-lead quality. Marketing sinks money into developing web traffic, building prospect journeys, and creating compelling website conversion points to generate leads. The inside sales team is then responsible for delivering the required cadence to convert those leads. The cadence that most organizations use is based on gut and not on science, and a lack of visibility makes it difficult or impossible to measure adherence and success. That triggers the internal battles: the CMO calls the VP of Sales asking about the lack of activity for the leads in the CRM, and the sales leader assures the CMO that every lead has been called five times (according to the "science"), but that the lead quality was lacking. Then, two weeks later, a handful of opportunities appear in the pipeline because one of the top performers has used their specific skills—which managers are unable to identify—to make that happen.

This disconnect simply serves to compound all the challenges previously identified.

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Art vs Science

A lot has been written about the Art of Selling vs. the Science of Selling. If the objective is to build and scale a successful inside sales organization, science is a critical factor that cannot be ignored.

Even the best sales leaders with the best sales operations teams are often unable to successfully define and build the inside sales machine until the challenges described are resolved.

The Solution Has Two Parts

First, there must be a desire at the leadership level for the process to be driven by data. Once that is in place, the right technology can drive that data.
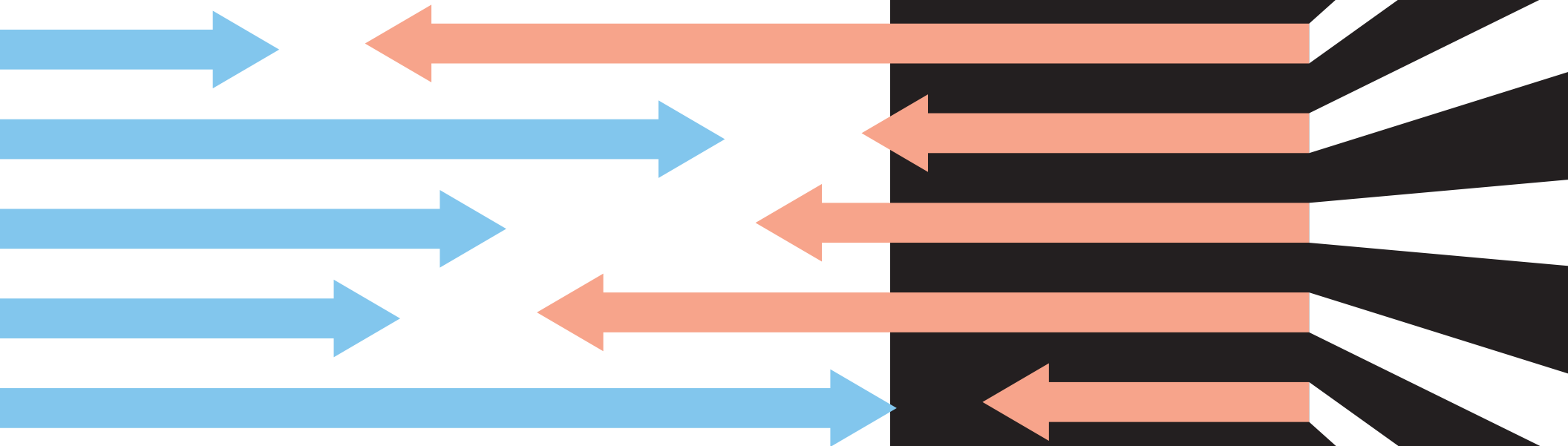
The Solution

The challenges are solved by simply having all the data, across all interactions, automatically captured and stored in the same place. This makes it available to both agents and management to help them do their jobs better.

With many organizations now using Salesforce as their CRM, much of the required data is already stored within this system. By having a cloud contact center platform, such as Vonage Contact Center (formerly NewVoiceMedia), that integrates across the Salesforce.com Sales and Service Cloud suite of products, the missing voice interactions are automatically added. This completeness of data ensures you can make every customer conversation great.

Data is delivered to inside sales managers whilst also making the inside sales team's jobs easier: every phone number in Salesforce is turned into a clickable field that, when clicked, directly calls the prospect.

Salespeople love it because they no longer need to key the phone number into their phone or copy and paste the number into a separate softphone.

Click-to-dial may save a few seconds per call, but that's not where the business case is built. Using Vonage Contact Center within Salesforce.com, as a by-product of the salesperson using click-to-dial, all five challenges described in this paper are all quickly and simply resolved.

Click-to-dial with Vonage Contact Center, automatically creating an activity in Salesforce
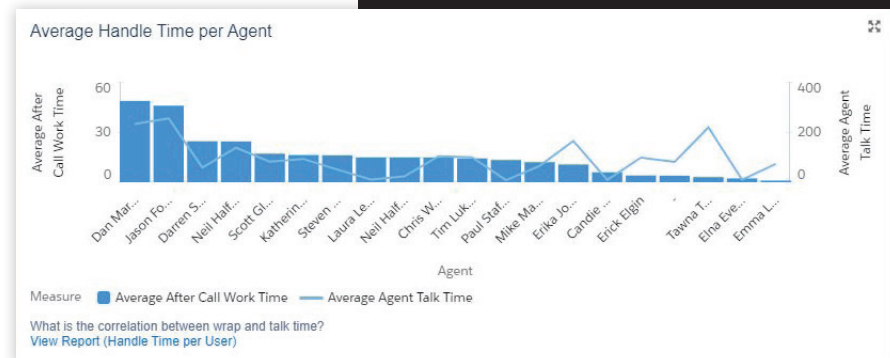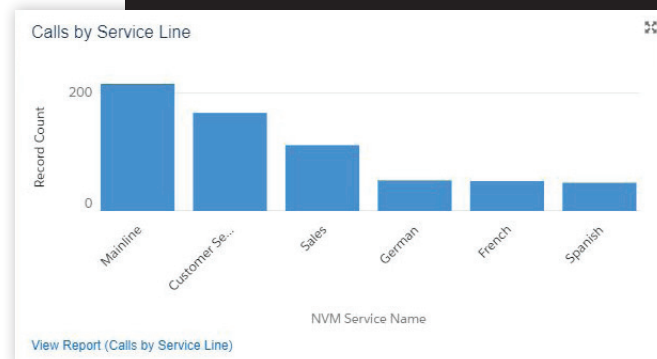

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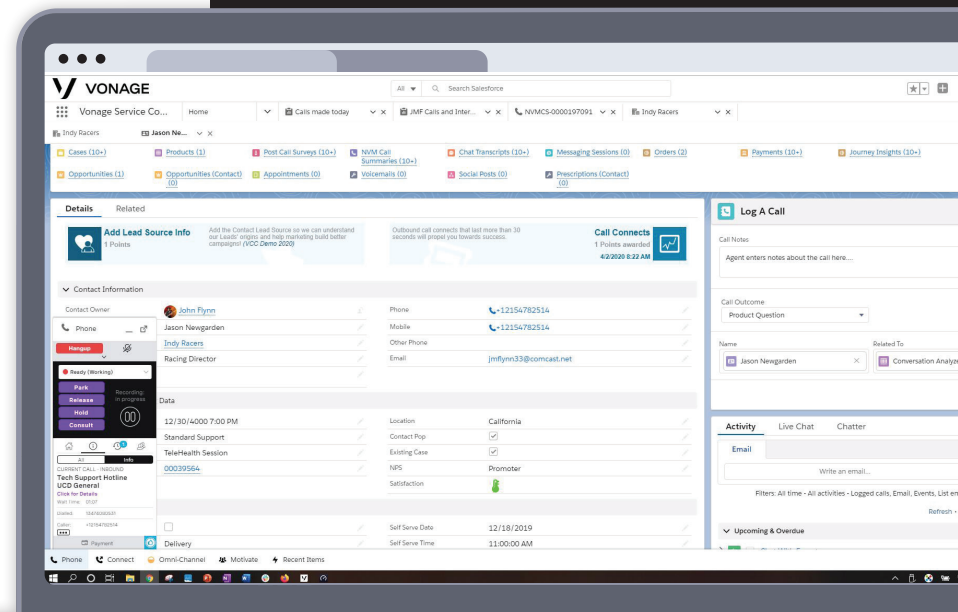
How?

By clicking the phone number link, an activity is automatically created in Salesforce. We now know when the call started, when it ended, how long it was, how long the call rang for, who was called, what the outcome was, and the call can also be recorded for further analysis. All of this rich data is then placed inside Salesforce along with an embedded call recording player.

Convenience for the salesperson is nice, but it's what you can do with the data that's transformational in terms of matching the right people with the right data at the right time to personalize calls. Think about visualizing that data in your core Salesforce system.

Do you really care who made the most calls, or do you care who made the most meaningful calls which resulted in an emotional connection? It's rare for the salesperson who makes the most calls to have the most meaningful conversations. What is the salesperson who has the most meaningful calls doing or saying that is different, and can you use it to up-skill the rest of your team?

In terms of what they are doing, are there certain patterns to when they call, are there times of the day when they make their calls that makes them more successful?

Uncover best practices in calling behaviors

Inbound Calls Per Hour

Out of Hours Calls

Calls Abandoned by Hour vs. AHT
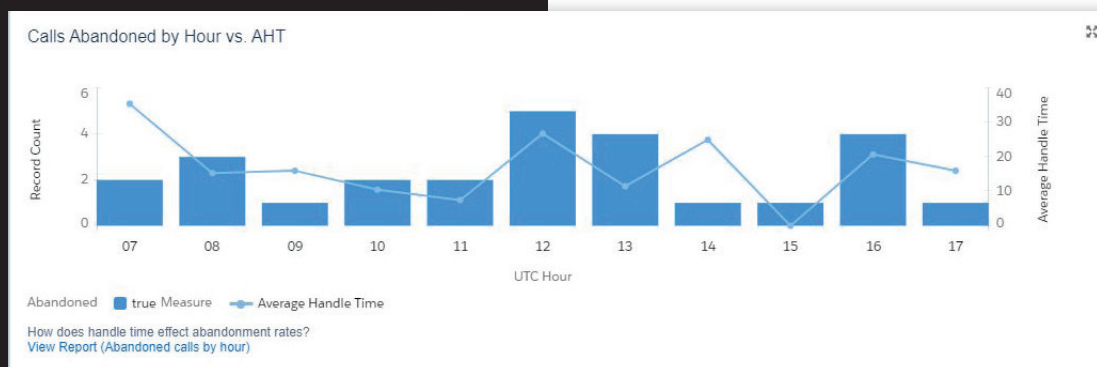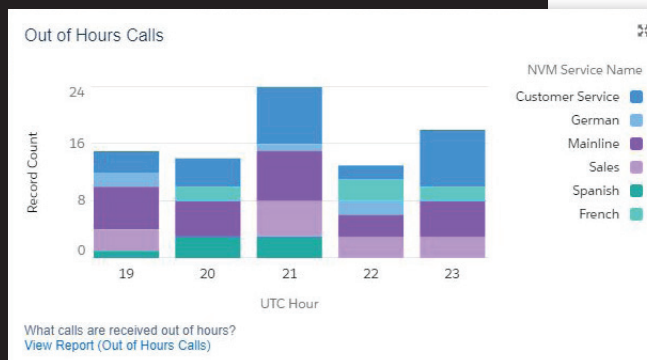
Is there any correlation between how quickly leads are called and their propensity to convert to an opportunity?

In the examples here you can see how we know when the lead arrived into Salesforce. We know through the data Vonage Contact Center places into Salesforce exactly when the first call was made to that lead, as well as how many calls were placed before connecting or converting. This highlights the impact of "Speed to Lead," where very often the propensity for the lead to convert increases dramatically. Don't forget that if a prospect has visited your website they will have probably already visited four of your competitors—and the first to respond wins!

The ability to roll up call counts also brings great insight to sales cadence. Organizations often tell us that they call every lead twice on day one, twice on day two, once on day three and then send an email. Asking who came up with this and why often results in a blank expression and a comment that it has always been done that way.

The intelligence gathered through Vonage Contact Center will enable you to understand your conversation points based on the number of calls. For example, using the Vonage Contact Center solution in our own business, we know that if we call each lead less than eight times then we are leaving money on the table. Can you say you know what the right cadence is for your business, and where good use of sales resources ends and bad use of sales resources starts?

When someone new starts in on the sales floor, the most common approach is for the new starter sits next to someone more experienced. The hire sits and listens to the more experienced salesperson make 50 dials, leave 30 voicemails, speak to 20 receptionists, talk to 10 decision makers but only have 5 meaningful conversations.

All calls can be recorded through Vonage Contact Center and then played back through the embedded player within Salesforce. As these are all accessed via Salesforce, the business outcome data from Salesforce resides in the same place as the call data and call recording.

Contact Owner	First MQL Date/Time	First MQL: 1st Call	First MQL Response Time (mins) ↑	First MQL Response Flag	Handraiser	Contact Status	Calls in MQL/SAL	First Name	Last Name	Title
Employee Band Summary: 2. MID (76/101-499) (36 records)										
George Williams	25/02/2016 10:26	25/02/2016 14:08	222	🚩	☐	MQL	1	Mark	Roberts	Director Business Development
Jack Anderson	25/02/2016 11:28	25/02/2016 14:37	190	🚩	☐	MQL	4	Catherine	Johnson	Head of Customer Support
George Williams	01/02/2016 13:41	01/02/2016 14:14	33	🚩	✓	Opportunity	5			
Chris Butler	02/02/2016 09:26	02/02/2016 10:52	86	🚩	✓	Recycle	3	Matt	Fisher	-
Tim Reed	10/12/2015 12:00	10/12/2015 13:22	83	🚩	☐	Recycle	10	Sam	Kelly	Group Commercial Director
Chris Butler	13/02/2016 16:32	15/02/2016 09:47	2,475	🚩	✓	Recycle	10			
Chris Butler	15/02/2016 14:07	15/02/2016 14:18	11	🚩	☐	SAL	7	Mary	Penner	Customer Services Manager

Handraiser. Initial call within 33 minutes, it took 5 attempts but this has now moved to opportunity

Handraiser. Initial call 2 days later, 10 attempts and moved to recycle

This can revolutionize the new starter process. On day one, the new salesperson gets presented with a report within Salesforce with 20 exceptional calls where emotional connections were made and meetings were booked, and then 20 poor calls where the salesperson struggled to convert.

By lunchtime on day one, new starters are in a position to have an educated discussion with their managers about what they heard and learned, what they would do themselves and the things they would avoid. Inside sales ramp-up time is easily cut in half by deploying this capability.

Having the call recording archive in the context of the business outcome data in Salesforce also enables managers to score the team against a range of skills and knowledge criteria. You'll be able to start understanding the conversations that your top performers are having and why they are being successful. Once the top performers are identified, the details of their best calls (by emotion, skills and knowledge categories) can be shared with other team members who are struggling to score so highly.

This cross pollination of skills and knowledge across the team increases performance and equips all salespeople with the conversations they need to be as successful as the best.

Campaign Call Down Top 5 (All Calls)

| Assigned To: Full Name | Ranked by # Contacts | | |
	Sum of # of Contacts	Sum of # of Activities	Sum of Call Duration in Minutes
Maria González	254	616	636
Trisha Martin	224	441	963
Steven Paterson	179	487	420
Kristan Horn	127	514	463
Miles Schilling	112	491	328

Number of contacts called, number of calls (record count) and total talk time.

Campaign Call Down Top 5 (3+ Min Calls)

| Assigned To: Full Name | Ranked by # Contacts | | |
	Sum of # of Contacts	Sum of # of Activities	Sum of Call Duration in Minutes
Mishka Bhatnagar	41	64	455
Chris Topp	40	72	625
Emily Myers	40	59	388
Trisha Martin	33	42	670
Maria González	33	37	252

Calls vs Connected Calls

| Assigned	Record Count	Sum of Call Connect
Frank Lopez	15	9
Samantha Lee	57	6
Jianyu Huang	9	5
Brian Williams	28	5
Hanima Anand	46	4
Linda Baker	29	4
Kyle Mass	16	3
LeAnn Miller	7	3

Analyze the balance between volume of calls and talk time to get the right conversion ratio

Taking analytics to the next level is the Vonage Contact Center Conversation Analyzer speech analytics module. Typically, organizations have listened to a percentage of sales calls every week for training, coaching or compliance purposes. Unfortunately, most are unable to listen to more than 1-3 percent of the conversations, and finding the nuggets of critical insight relies on pure luck.

Conversation Analyzer is fully integrated into Salesforce and leverages Salesforce Einstein to enable businesses to analyze every conversation with customers and prospects, converting them into text and then analyzing that text. This opens up a whole world of possibilities.

At the most basic level, how much time is your salesperson spending talking versus the customer speaking, and is there any cross talk? Are there any correlations between this data and the propensity for a lead to convert? Are they making that all-important emotional connection?

Maybe you want to filter all calls where a particular competitor was mentioned, or highlight all calls where there could be a compliance risk to your business. Conversation Analyzer allows you to do this and more.
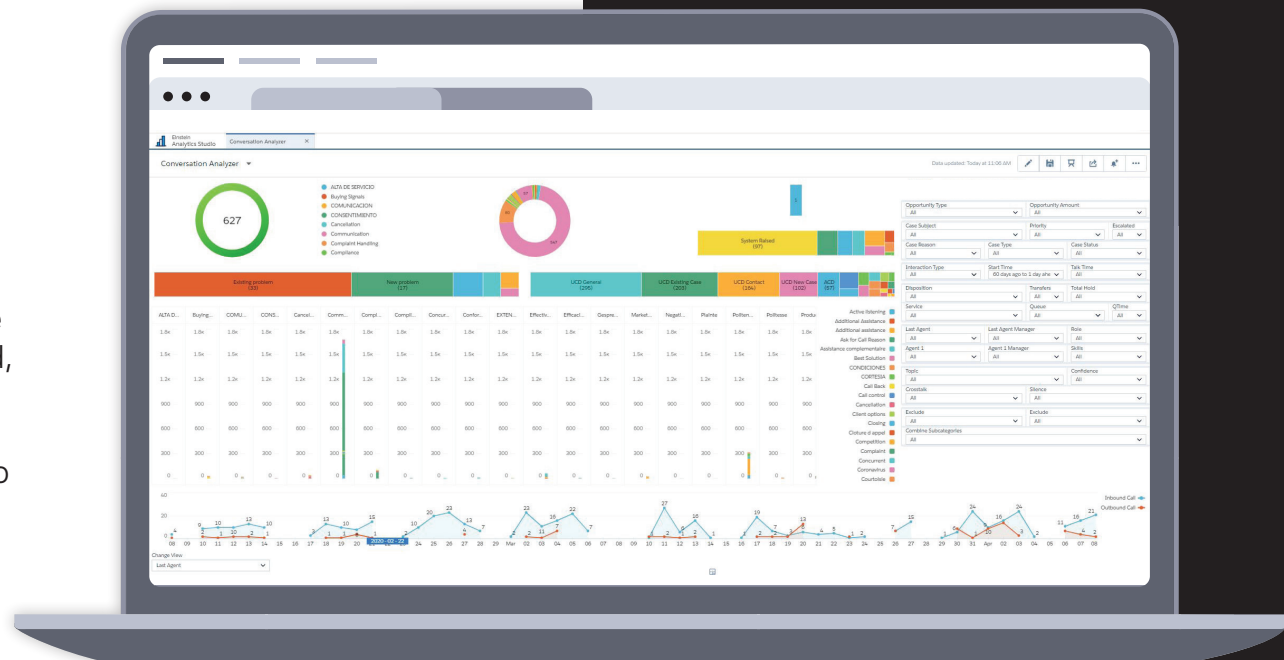
The Vonage Contact Center Conversation Analyzer speech analytics module

More Advanced Sales Funnel Management

Vonage Contact Center also helps boost forecast accuracy by providing management with not only full visibility but also the ability to drill down into any sales interaction. For example, an inside sales rep has a deal forecast to close at the end of the month, however a quick look in Salesforce reveals that there have been no calls to or from the customer in the last three weeks. The probability of that deal closing can be adjusted accordingly.

Summary

The Vonage Contact Center solution is quick and easy to implement, making inside sales professionals' lives easier while simultaneously helping the organization:

- Drive CRM adoption to capture every touchpoint

- Pinpoint key insights from the data to deliver emotional connections

- Understand what success looks like and codify this for new starters

- Personalize all interactions to increase performance

- Ensure every lead is called quickly and that the asset is worked effectively

- Listen to every conversation and pull out critical data points and compliance issues

- Increase forecast accuracy

- Understand the cost to sale (customer touch points from lead to close)

Working together, we can unlock the value of emotive experiences and make every conversation great. Please get in touch to find out more.

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About Vonage

Vonage is redefining business communications once again. We're making communications more flexible, intelligent, and personal, to help enterprises the world over, stay ahead. We provide unified communications, contact centers, and programmable communications APIs, built on the world's most flexible cloud communications platform. True to our roots as a technology disruptor, our flexible approach helps us to better serve the growing collaboration, communications, and customer experience needs of companies, across all communications channels.

INT +44 207 206 8888
UK 0800 280 2888
US +1 855 534 2888
EMEA +32 2 793 3835
APAC +61 285 993 444
www.vonage.com