

2015

# State of Service

Insights on customer service trends  
from over 1,900 industry leaders



Salesforce Research surveyed more than 1,900 global customer service leaders to discover:

- The most common goals, obstacles, and success measures for today's service teams
- What sets high-performing service organizations apart
- The areas in which service is supercharging efforts to grow business in 2015 and beyond

This report highlights service trends in 2015, including the central role of service in an integrated customer success platform. Throughout the report, data is examined relative to service performance to identify patterns for overall success.

In this report, we define high-performing service teams as those that most consistently keep up with customers' changing expectations. Additionally, high-performing teams are far more likely to rate their service capabilities as outstanding or very good, and nearly 60% are increasing the size of their service teams in the next 12–18 months.

Conducted in early 2015, this survey generated responses from 1,912 full-time global service leaders from the U.S., Canada, Brazil, U.K., France, Germany, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. Due to rounding, not all percentage totals in this report equal 100%. Respondents included customers and contacts who had opted in as well as third-party panelists.



*Salesforce Research, part of Salesforce, provides data-driven insights to help businesses transform how they drive customer success.*



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# Executive Summary

Four key takeaways

Customers today expect service on their own terms: whenever they need it, in whichever digital channel they inhabit. How does this growing expectation impact the role of customer service, and more broadly, the overall customer experience? And what new habits are emerging among top-notch service organizations to meet the demand? Here are four prominent findings from our research:

## 01 | **Omni-channel customers drive a service sea change.** (see page 7)

Today's customers demand seamless, individualized service across all devices and channels. The best service teams know they need to personalize that service, connecting with customers wherever they are. More than one-third of high-performing service teams are already delivering customer service via mobile apps, with an expected 67% growth over the next two years. Among all service leaders surveyed, the use of social media monitoring technologies will increase nearly 2x in the next 12–18 months.

## 02 | **Agent empowerment is a mark of top teams.** (see page 11)

Creating a great customer experience starts with creating a great service agent experience. Top teams are nearly 3.5x more likely than underperformers to say their service agents are completely empowered to make customers happy. Giving service agents the right tools goes a long way toward helping them feel empowered, and high-performing teams embrace technology. Top performers are 2.5x more likely than moderate performers to be heavy tech adopters.

Four key takeaways

## 03 | **Proactive service emerges, fueled by smart technology.** (see page 14)

Top-performing teams are already working toward providing more proactive service for their customers. In fact, 55% of high-performing service teams say they're able to predict customer service needs more than 80% of the time. Emerging smart technologies are helping service organizations glean actionable insights, anticipate customer needs, and provide everything from more efficient call routing to faster case history access.

## 04 | **The changing customer mindset triggers a surge in self-service.** (see page 17)

Tapping into crowdsourcing and self-service trends, top service teams are nearly 11x more likely than underperformers to create and manage online communities and 4x more likely to maintain a self-service portal. Because high performers understand the need for speed and efficiency, they're ramping up use of these functionalities by 89% and 115%, respectively, over the next 12-18 months.

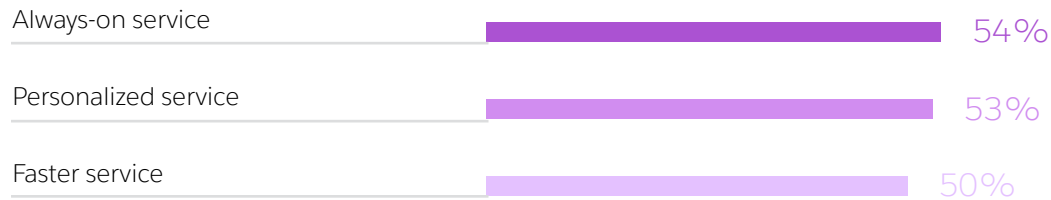


# Introduction: Defining Success for Today's Service Teams

The "2015 State of Service" survey asked more than 1,900 global service leaders about their priorities, measures of success, and strategies for the year. Here's a quick look at the current state of service.

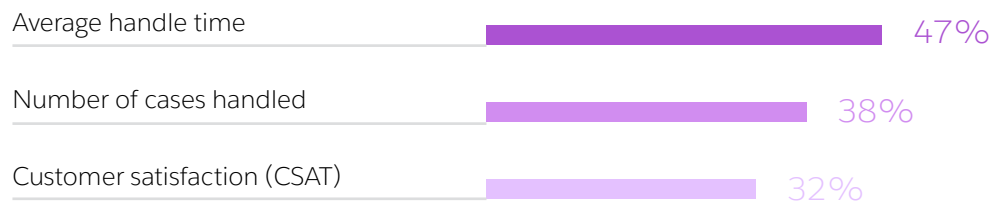
## Top 3 Service Priorities

**Teams strive to provide quick service anytime, any place.** *Service professionals' most sought-after qualities center around creating convenient, customized, and efficient customer experiences.*



## Top 3 Service Success Metrics

**Efficiency is king.** *Service teams are increasingly measuring their performance in terms of case efficiency, striving to drive down costs while keeping customers happy.*



See Appendix A for a deeper dive into topline data.

## Top 3 Service Challenges

**Customers demand fast, easy resolutions.** *Customer service teams are challenged with providing smarter, faster service and self-service solutions to meet the evolving expectations of today's customers.*

51%

Customers having to re-explain the issue

46%

Customers expending moderate to high effort to resolve an issue

40%

Customers failing to find answers on their own (self-service not available)

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# 01 | Omni-Channel Customers Drive a Service Sea Change

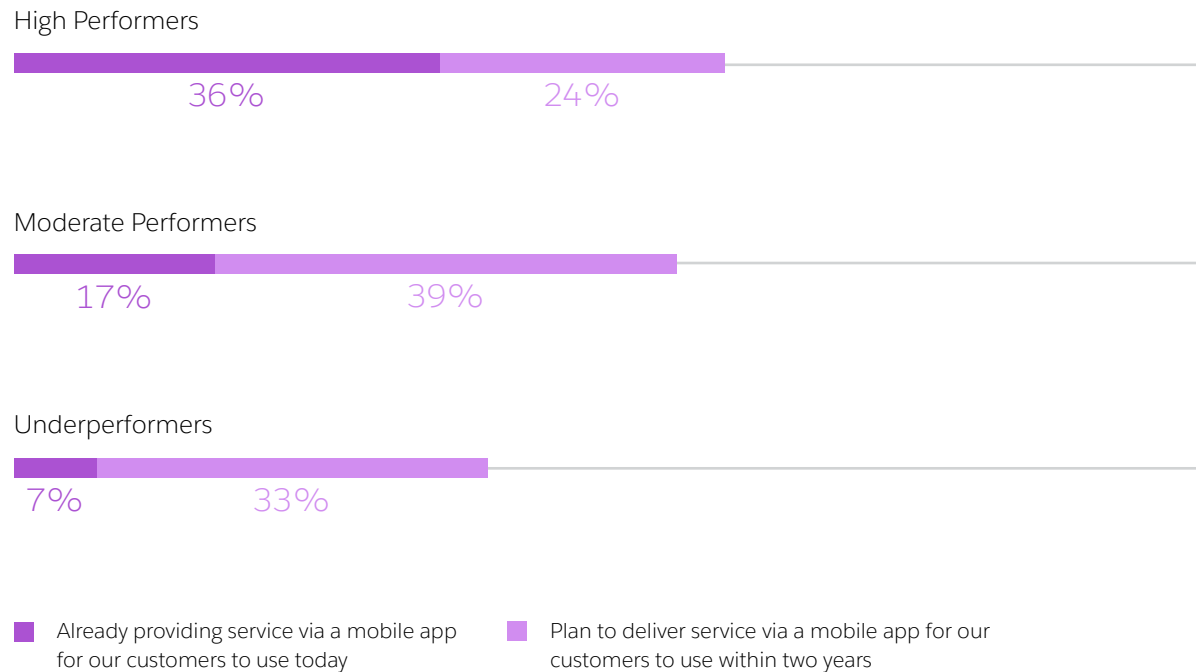
Today's customers demand seamless, individualized interactions across all devices and channels. This "new normal" creates an expectation for customer service to be equally nimble and responsive.

High performers are rising to this challenge, personalizing service by meeting customers where they are – whether connected via mobile app or social network. More than one-third of high-performing service teams are already delivering customer service via mobile apps, with an expected 67% growth over the next two years. In an effort to close the gap, underperformers will double down on delivering service via mobile apps, with 475% growth expected over the next two years.

Among all service leaders surveyed, 56% are providing or plan to provide service, support, or both via a mobile app for customer use within the next two years.

## High Performers Lead the Shift to Service via Mobile Apps

*The best service organizations know that embedding service in mobile apps creates a more personalized and efficient customer experience. Here we see the percentage of teams providing or planning to provide service via a mobile app.*



See Appendix B for a deeper dive into omni-channel customer service data.

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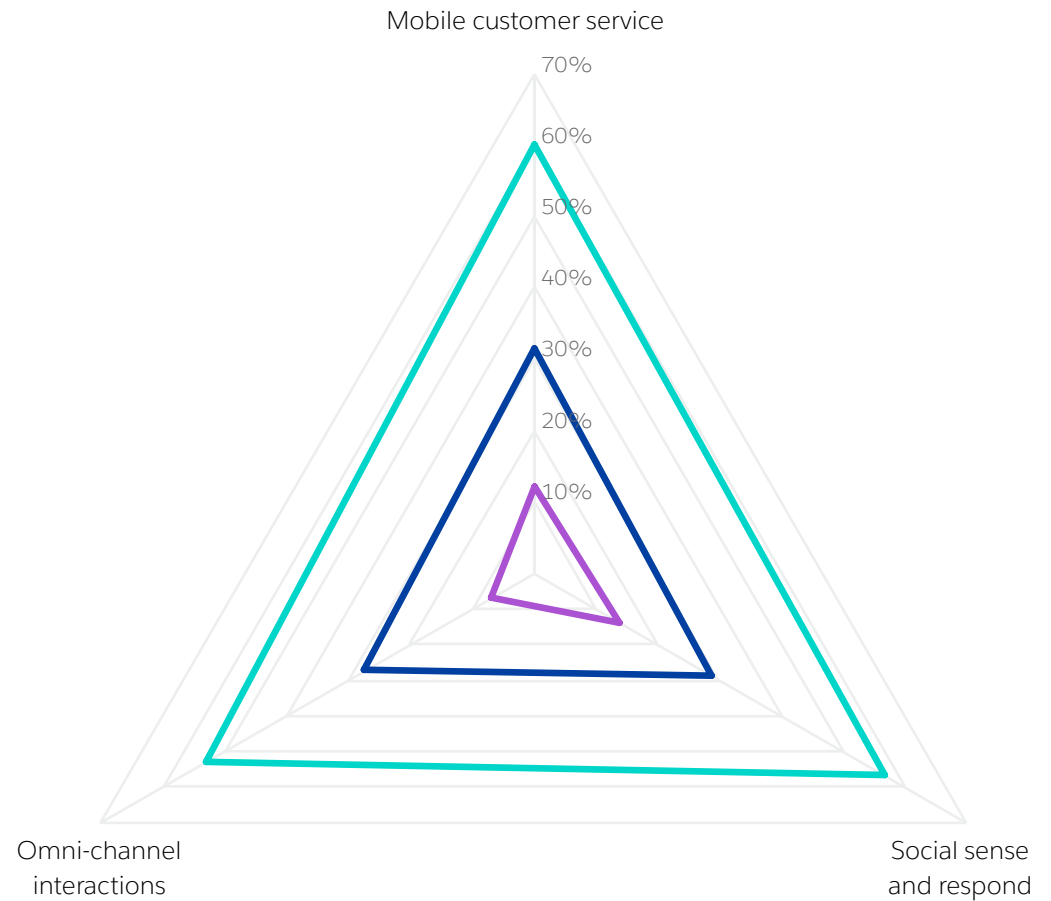
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## Leading Service Teams Are Skilled at Meeting Customers on Their Own Turf

High-performing service teams are at least 4x more likely than underperformers to have outstanding or very good capabilities in mobile customer service, social sense and respond, and omni-channel interactions. Meeting customer needs within a particular channel helps create a more efficient service interaction.



High Performers vs. Underperformers

**7.6x** More likely to rate capabilities as outstanding or very good

- High Performers
- Moderate Performers
- Underperformers



# 01 | Omni-Channel Customers Drive a Service Sea Change

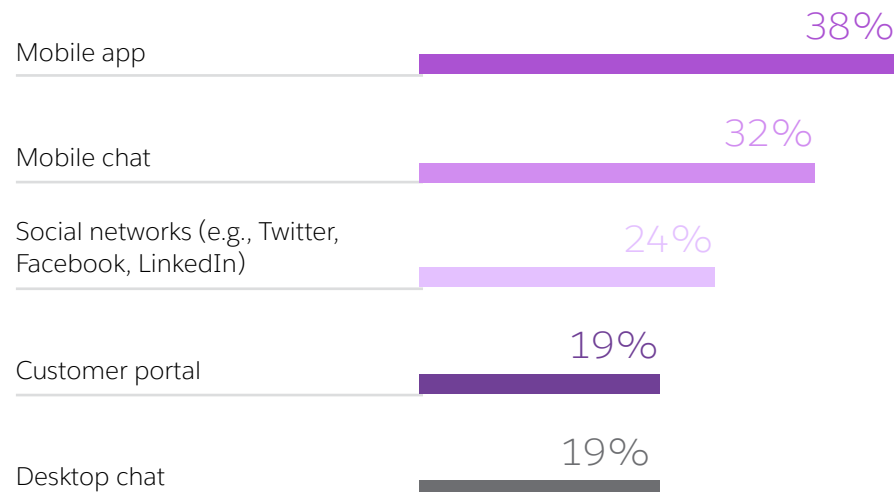
Overall, service leaders expect landline phone inquiries to decrease by approximately 9% over the next 12–18 months, further fueling the need for omni-channel interactions to deliver customer success.

Among service teams at all performance levels, mobile and social channels are expected to garner the most significant gains for customer service exchanges.

Over the next 12–18 months, inbound service requests will increase more than 20% across mobile app, mobile chat, and social networks.

## Mobile and Social Top the List of Growing Service Channels

*Organizations must personalize and adapt the service approach to catch up with customer behaviors. Here we highlight growth in the top customer service channels in the next 12–18 months.*



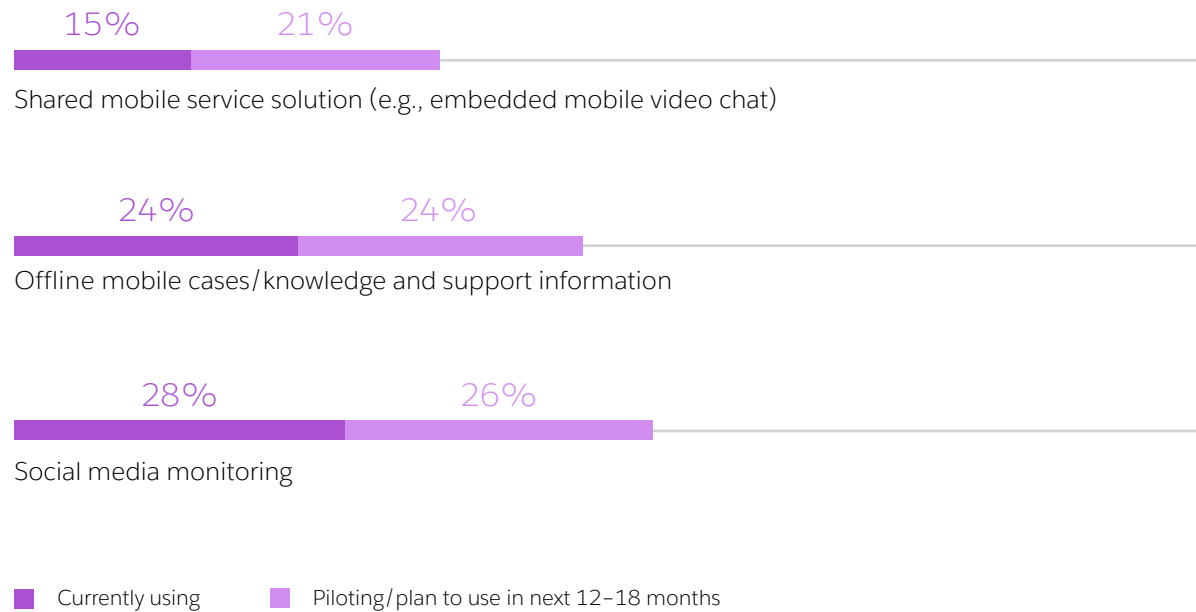
# 01 | Omni-Channel Customers Drive a Service Sea Change

With the spike in service interactions via mobile apps, mobile chats, and social networks, service professionals anticipate a similar uptick in technology to manage this inbound volume.

Features such as embedded mobile video chat, offline mobile cases, and social media monitoring will grow exponentially in the next 12-18 months.

## Service Teams Double Usage of Technology to Manage Mobile and Social Customer Interactions

*A seamless customer experience from channel to channel requires a modern, integrated system of engagement that simplifies the agent experience. Here's how a few of these service technologies are expected to grow.*



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## 02 | Agent Empowerment Is a Mark of Top Teams

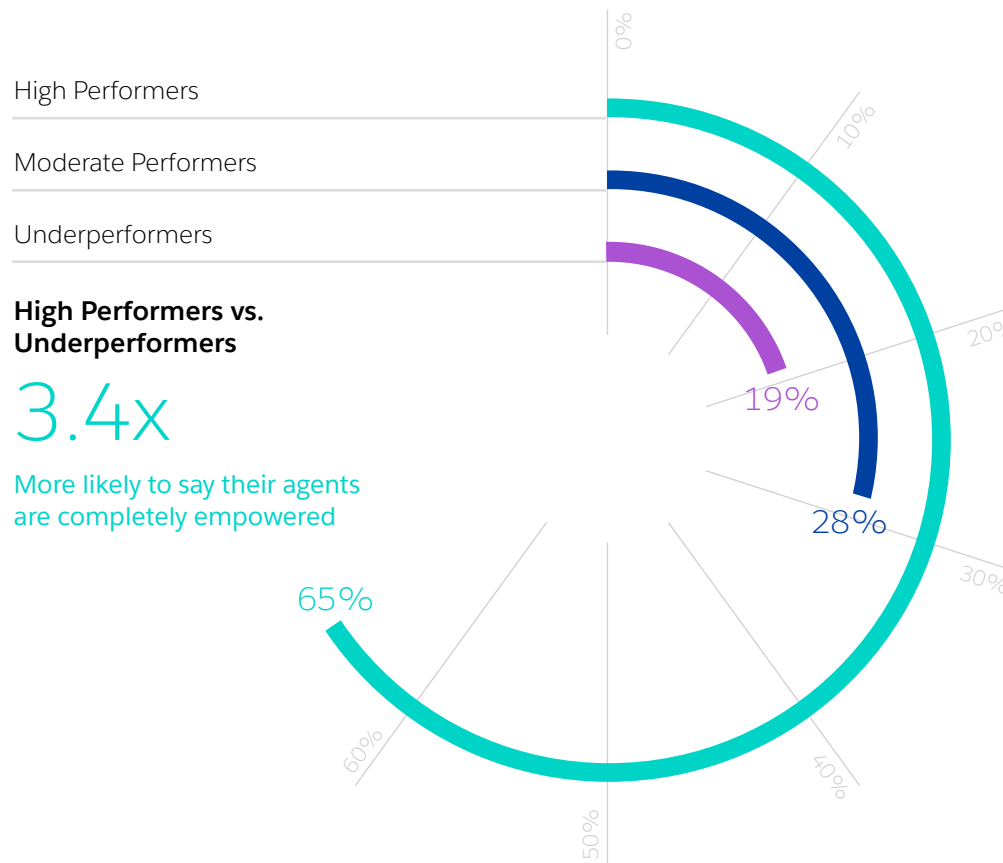
A better customer experience begins with a better service agent experience.

**Top-performing teams tend to fully empower their agents to keep customers happy.**

By arming agents with easy access to the information they need and the power to quickly resolve issues, leading organizations are setting the stage for more efficient customer interactions.

### High Performers Fully Empower Service Agents to Ensure Customer Success

Sixty-five percent of high-performing service teams say their agents are completely empowered to make customers happy. Compared with underperformers, winning teams are 3.4x more likely to completely empower service agents.



See Appendix C for a deeper dive into agent empowerment data.

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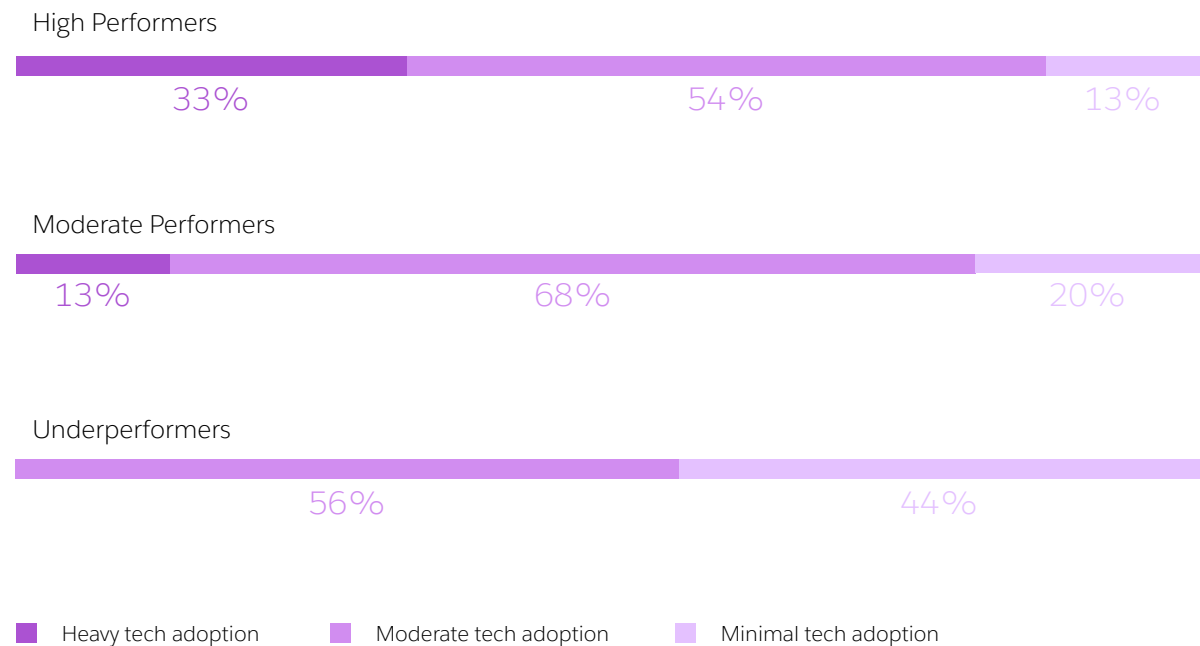
# 02 | Agent Empowerment Is a Mark of Top Teams

Another key part of empowering agents and improving the customer experience is providing the right tech solutions. Top teams are embracing technology to get the job done and create a culture of customer success.

Our research shows that high performers are 2.5x more likely than moderate performers to be heavy tech adopters.

## Tech Adoption Fuels Top Service Teams

Thirty-three percent of high-performing service teams qualify as heavy tech adopters,\* while no underperformers fall into this category. Here we see the split of service teams' tech adoption levels.



\* Heavy and minimal tech adoption is defined as above or below 1 standard deviation from the average number of functionalities currently being used. More information on the distribution of tech use can be found in the Appendix.

## SPOTLIGHT

### Wearable Tech and Embedded Service Will Evolve the Customer Experience

Customer service embedded in a watch, a car, or an item of clothing? It's no longer a futuristic ideal. It's happening now, and it's changing the face of traditional customer service outlets.

To understand how this will impact customer service, we turn to a recent Salesforce Research report detailing wearable tech in the workplace. This data focuses on responses from service professionals who were part of a 2015 survey of 500 wearable tech adopters who said they were currently using, piloting, or planning to implement wearable technology in the enterprise.

For more in-depth coverage of wearable tech use, get the full report, "Putting Wearables to Work," at [www.salesforce.com/wearablesreport](http://www.salesforce.com/wearablesreport).

69%

of service teams say that wearables are or will be strategic to their company's future business success.

81%

of service teams are currently using or plan to use wearables in some form in the next two years.

71%

of service teams using or planning to use wearable tech will increase spend in the next 12 months.

*Service teams are already focusing on use cases such as customer service escalation and routing, workplace security access, and loyalty/rewards programs. Here we see the percentage of service teams currently using wearables for these purposes.*

20%

Customer service escalation and routing

19%

Workplace security access

19%

Loyalty/rewards programs

19%

Integrated shopping experience

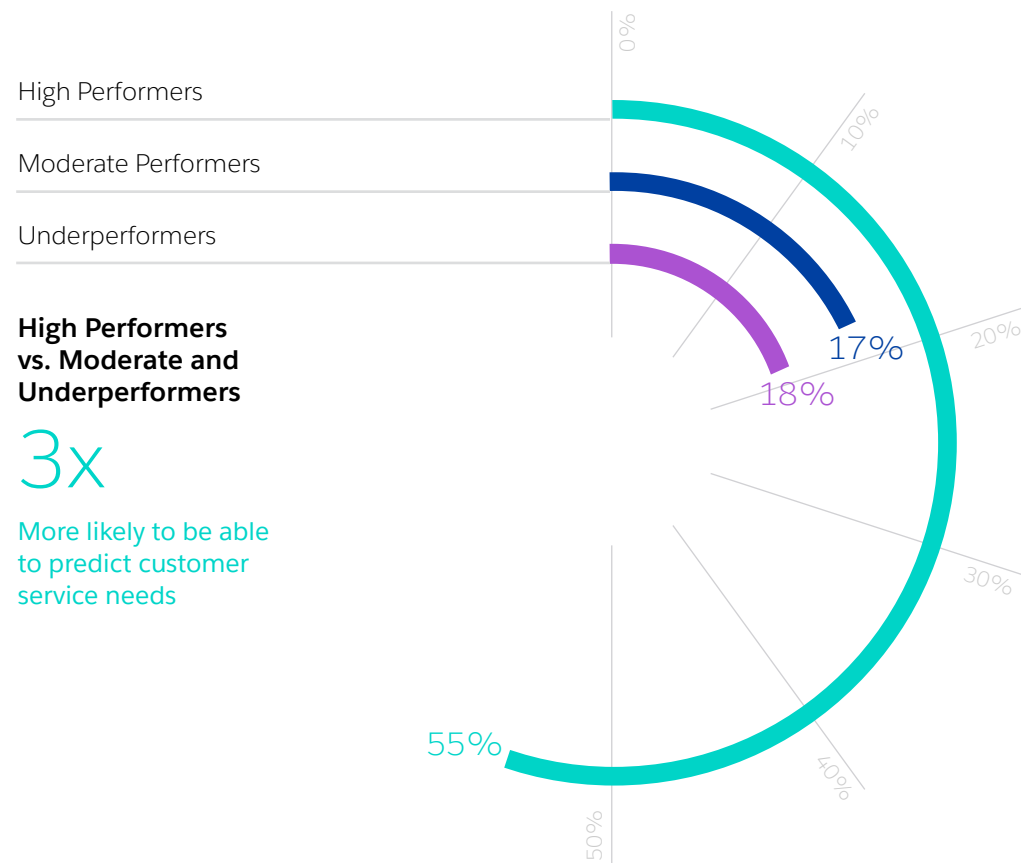
# 03 | Proactive Service Emerges, Fueled by Smart Technology

Service organizations are increasingly using innovative technologies to glean actionable insights, anticipate customer needs, and provide everything from more efficient call routing to faster case history access. A proactive approach results in smarter pairing of service issues with service agents, better-informed agents, and in turn, more personalized customer interactions.

High-performing service teams are more advanced when it comes to anticipating customer service needs. **The bottom line: they understand that proactive customer service drives success.**

## Top Teams Excel at Predicting Customers' Service Needs

High-performing service teams are capitalizing on the opportunities of predictive customer service. In fact, 55% of high performers say they can predict customer service needs more than 80% of the time – 3x more often than the rest.



See Appendix D for a deeper dive into proactive service data.

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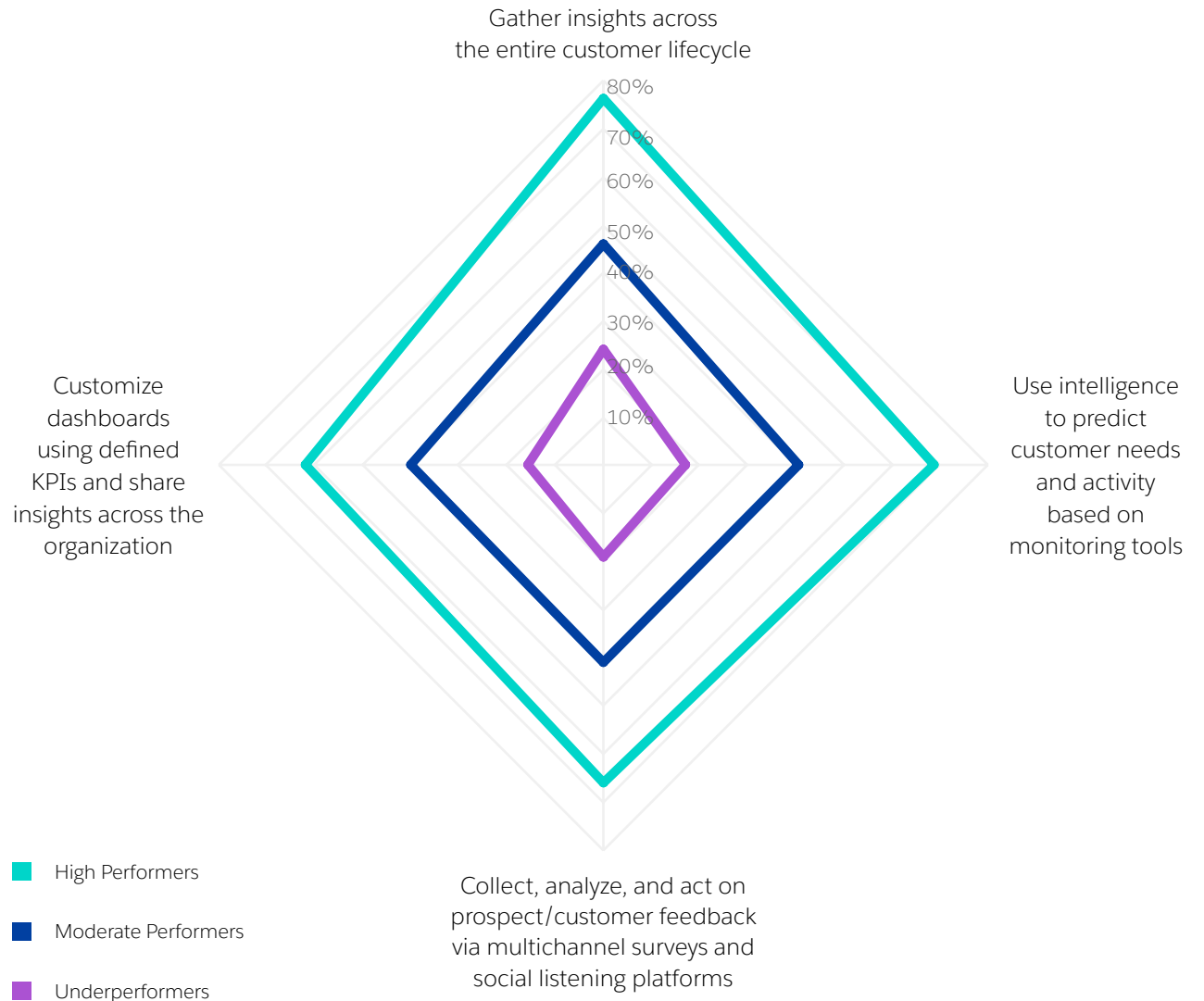
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## Analytics Improves Service Agent Insights

*Compared to underperformers, the best service teams are 3x more likely to be outstanding or very good at using analytics. They're also 3.9x more likely to be outstanding or very good at customizing dashboards to track KPIs, aligning performance metrics across the organization from executives to frontline agents.*



# 03 | Proactive Service Emerges, Fueled by Smart Technology

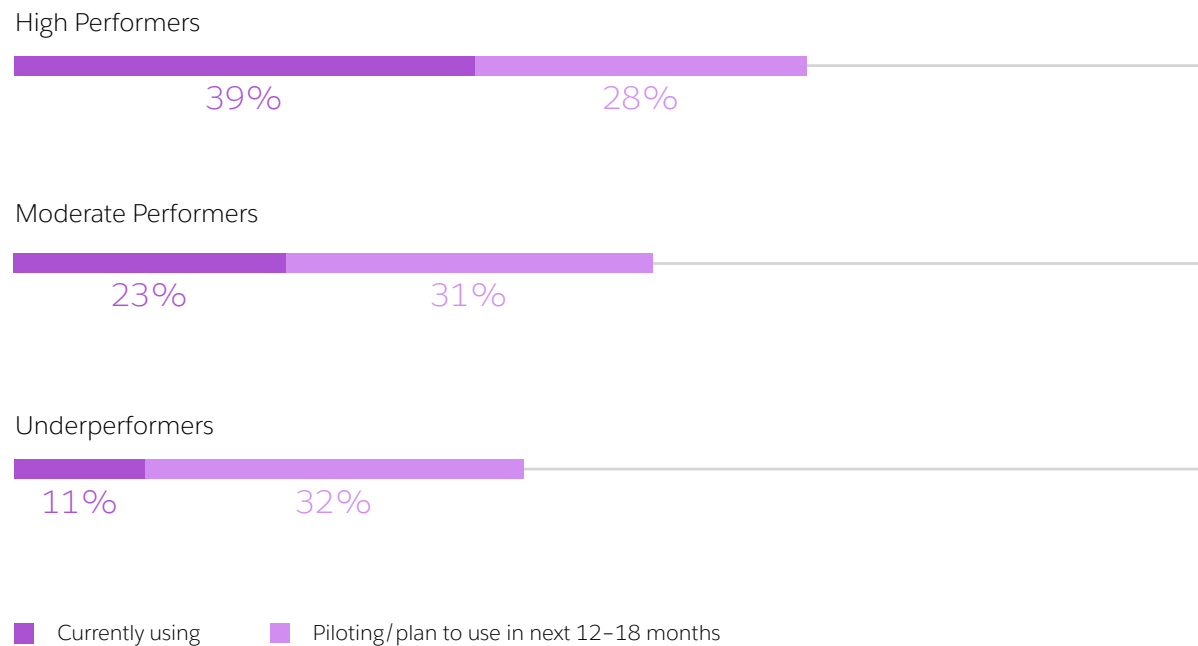
The best service teams understand that analytics not only helps to reveal a 360-degree view of the customer to the entire organization, it also enables service teams to work faster and smarter.

High performers are 3.6x more likely than underperformers to use smart technologies like predictive analytics in their service organization.



## High Performers Are Using Emerging Tech to Provide Proactive Customer Service

Top service teams are gaining actionable insights with predictive analytics or next-best action tools. Underperforming service teams are playing catch-up, with an intended 287% jump in use of technologies like predictive analytics over the next 12-18 months.





# 04 | The Changing Customer Mindset Triggers a Surge in Self-Service

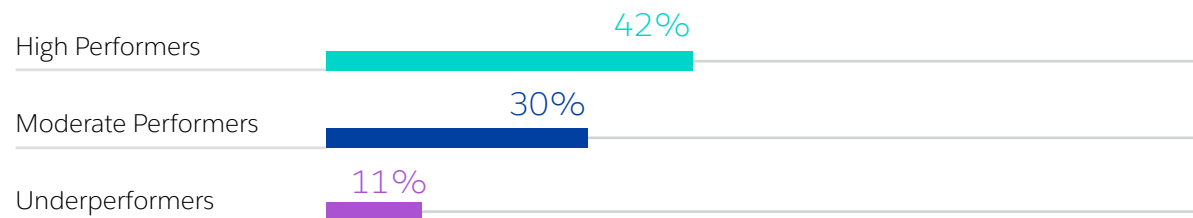
In the age of omnipresent search engines, customers are accustomed to quickly getting answers online to almost any question. When today's empowered customers have service inquiries, the same DIY mindset often applies. Yet, as noted in the Introduction, lack of a self-service offering is the third biggest challenge facing customer service teams (40%).

What high-performing teams already know is that helping customers help themselves creates a two-fold benefit. For customers, they find answers quickly without exerting much effort. And for service agents, call volume drops, which frees up their time to focus on more complex cases.

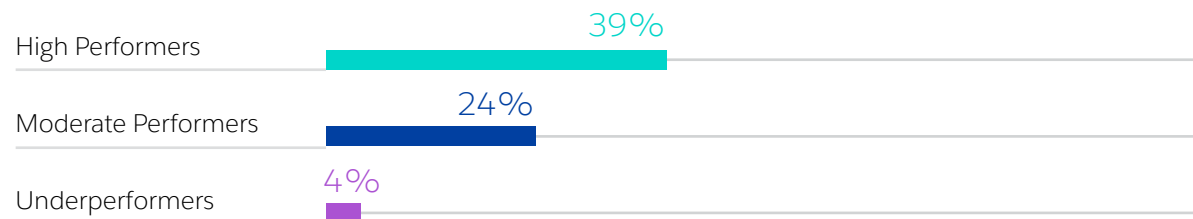
## High Performers Are Tapping Into the Power of Community Management and Self-Service Portals

*Today's customers want the ability to find answers on their own without reaching out to a contact center. Top service teams are 4x more likely than underperformers to maintain a self-service portal and nearly 11x more likely to create and manage online communities.*

### Self-Service Portals: Percentage Currently Using



### Community Creation and Management: Percentage Currently Using



See Appendix E for a deeper dive into self-service data.

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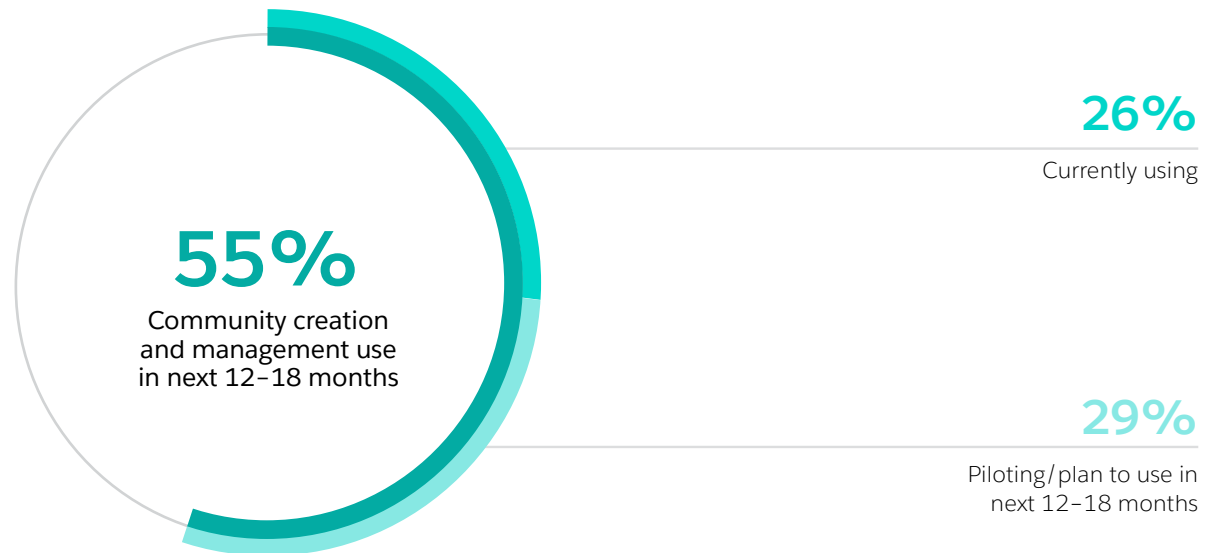
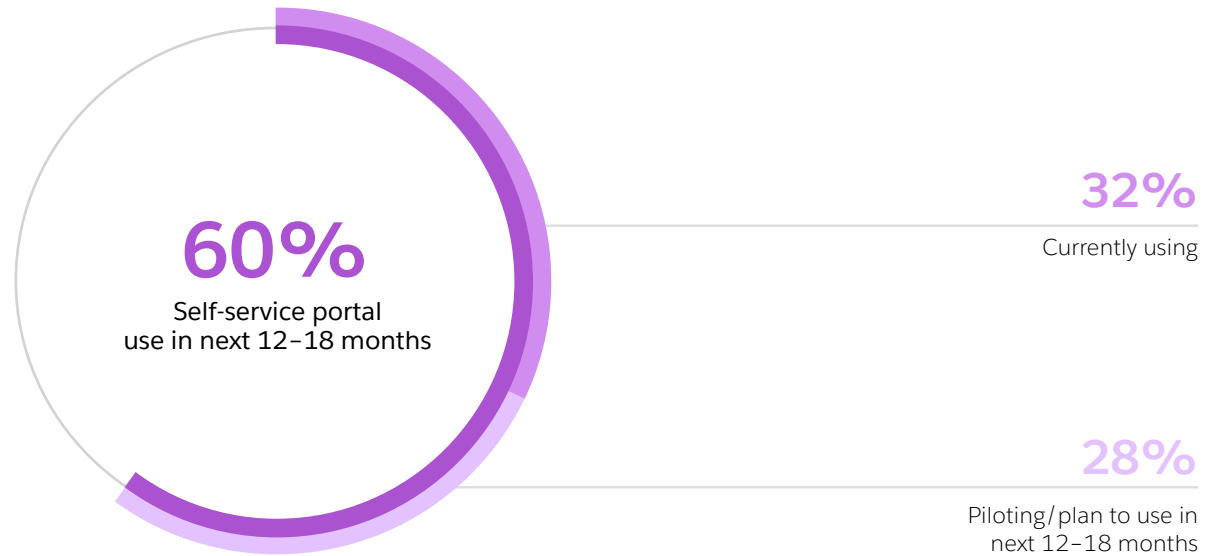
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# 04 | The Changing Customer Mindset Triggers a Surge in Self-Service

## Service Teams at All Levels Are Dialing Up Self-Service Customer Communities

The use of self-service portals and community creation/management is expected to jump 89% and 115%, respectively, over the next 12-18 months. Communities tap into the power of collaboration and crowdsourcing that are already a natural part of consumers' daily lives online.



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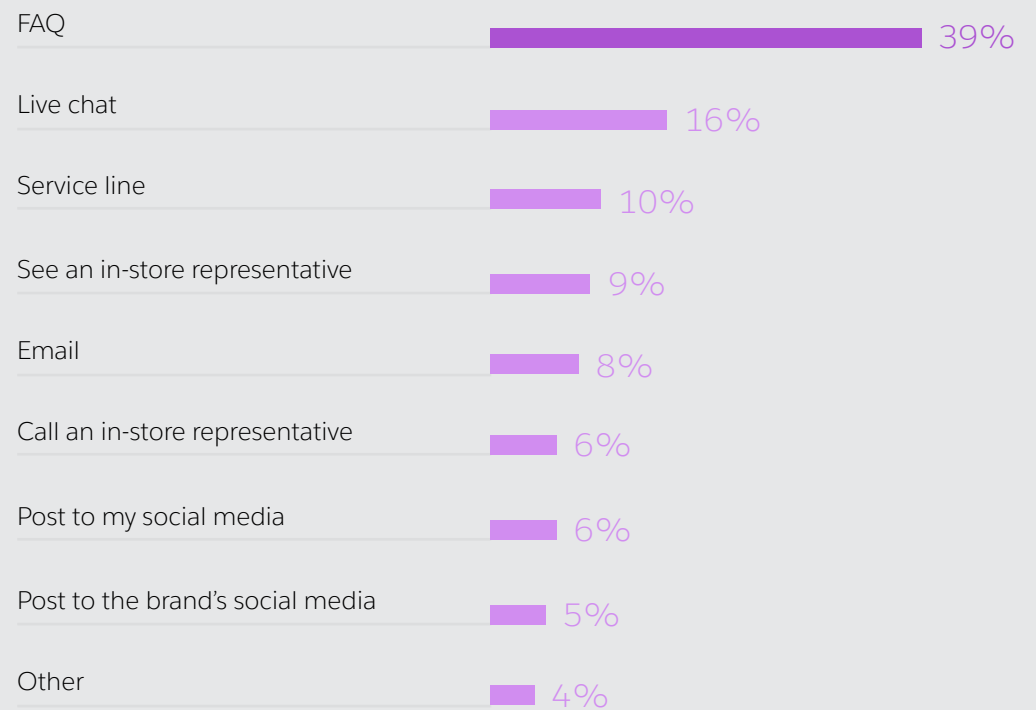
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## SPOTLIGHT

### Millennials Prefer Self-Service and Online Support

Thirty-four percent of millennials say they'd rather get their teeth cleaned at the dentist than call a customer service line. This comes from a recent report by Desk.com from Salesforce, ["Crossing the Generational Divide: Providing Customer Service for Today's Consumers."](#) The study found that 39% of millennials check a company's FAQ first when they have a question, showing a clear preference for finding answers on their own.





## Empower Agents with Tech

High performing service teams understand that the agent experience drives the customer experience. As such, they place an emphasis on giving agents the tools they need to succeed, knowing it sets the stage for happier customers.



## Provide a Self-Service Solution

High performing service teams know that speed is the name of the game, and they play to win. They're putting power back in the hands of customers so they can find answers quickly.



## Meet Customers on Their Own Turf

High performing service teams provide service exactly when and where their customers expect it, regardless of device. Instead of the old-school "if you build it, they will come" mindset, high performers know they have to be nimble and play by modern customers' rules.



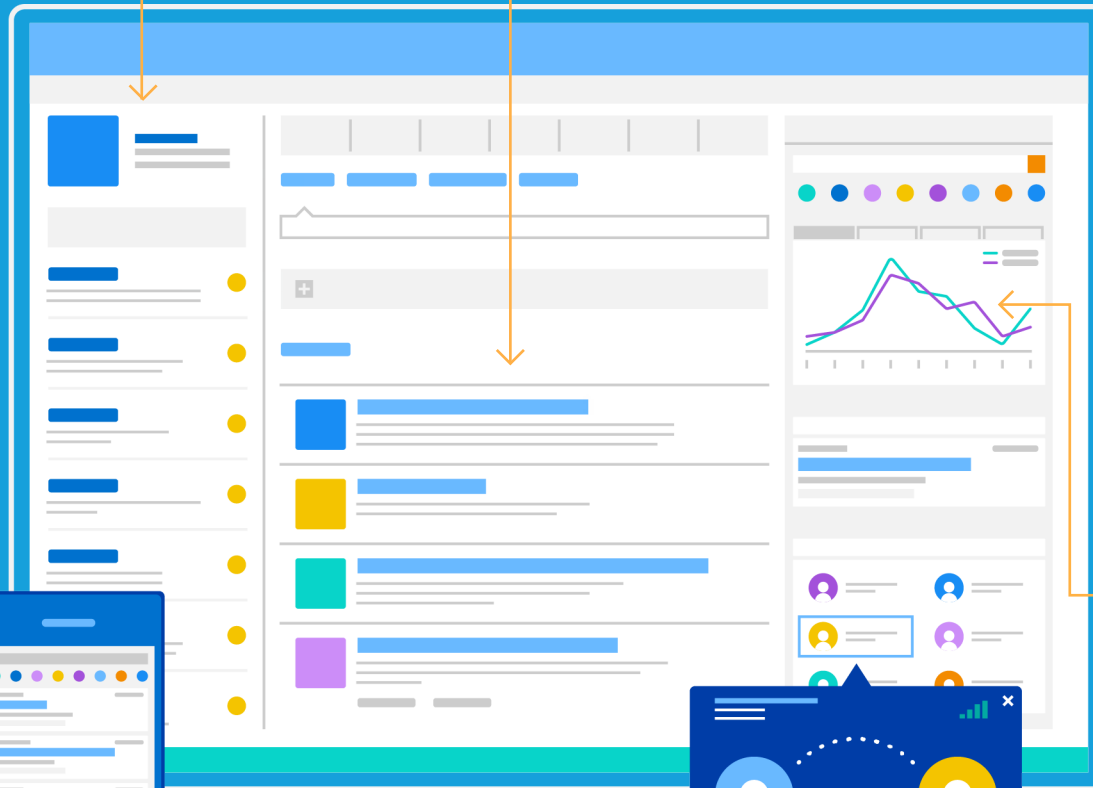
## Get Smart About Service

High performing service teams invest in analytics tools to deliver smarter pairings of service issues with service agents, ultimately giving agents more efficiency and customers a more personalized experience.



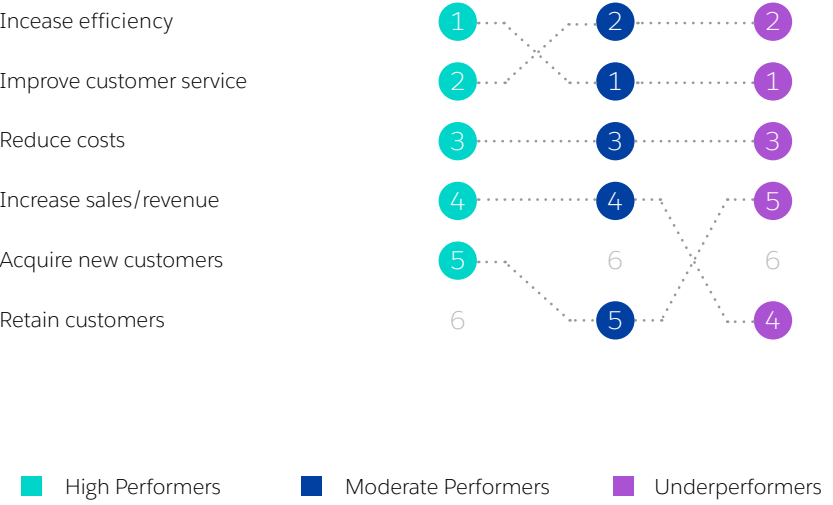
## Take a Team Approach to Ensure Success

High performing service teams are nearly 2x as likely to say that customer service is 100% the responsibility of the entire company.

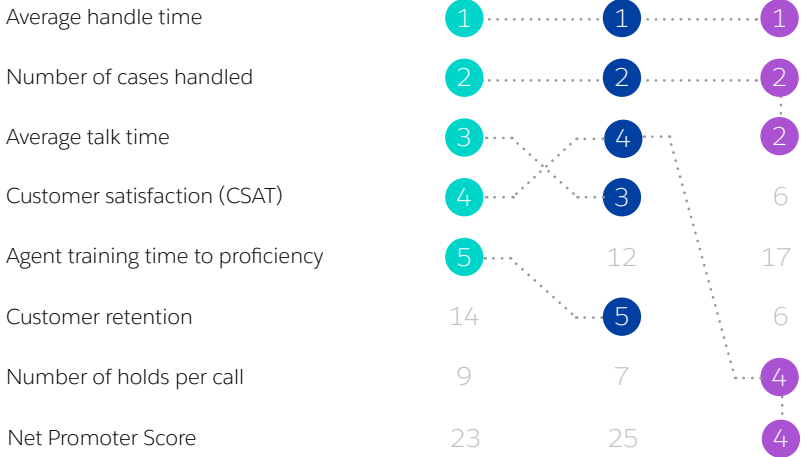


# Appendix A: How Today's Leaders Define Success

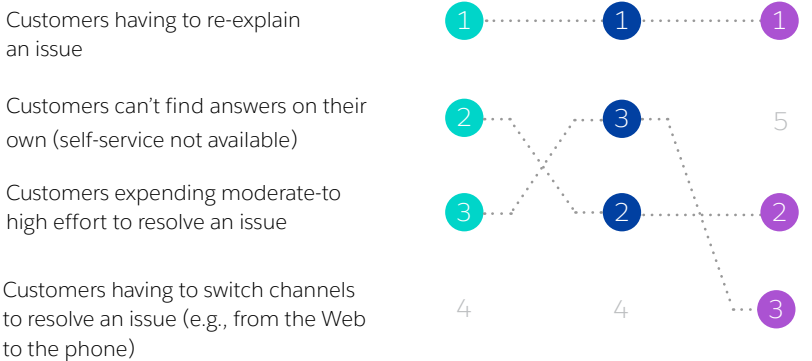
**Increasing efficiency and customer service are top priorities.** Here's how service leaders at each performance level rank top objectives.



**Handle time matters most.** Here's how service leaders at each performance level rank their top metrics.

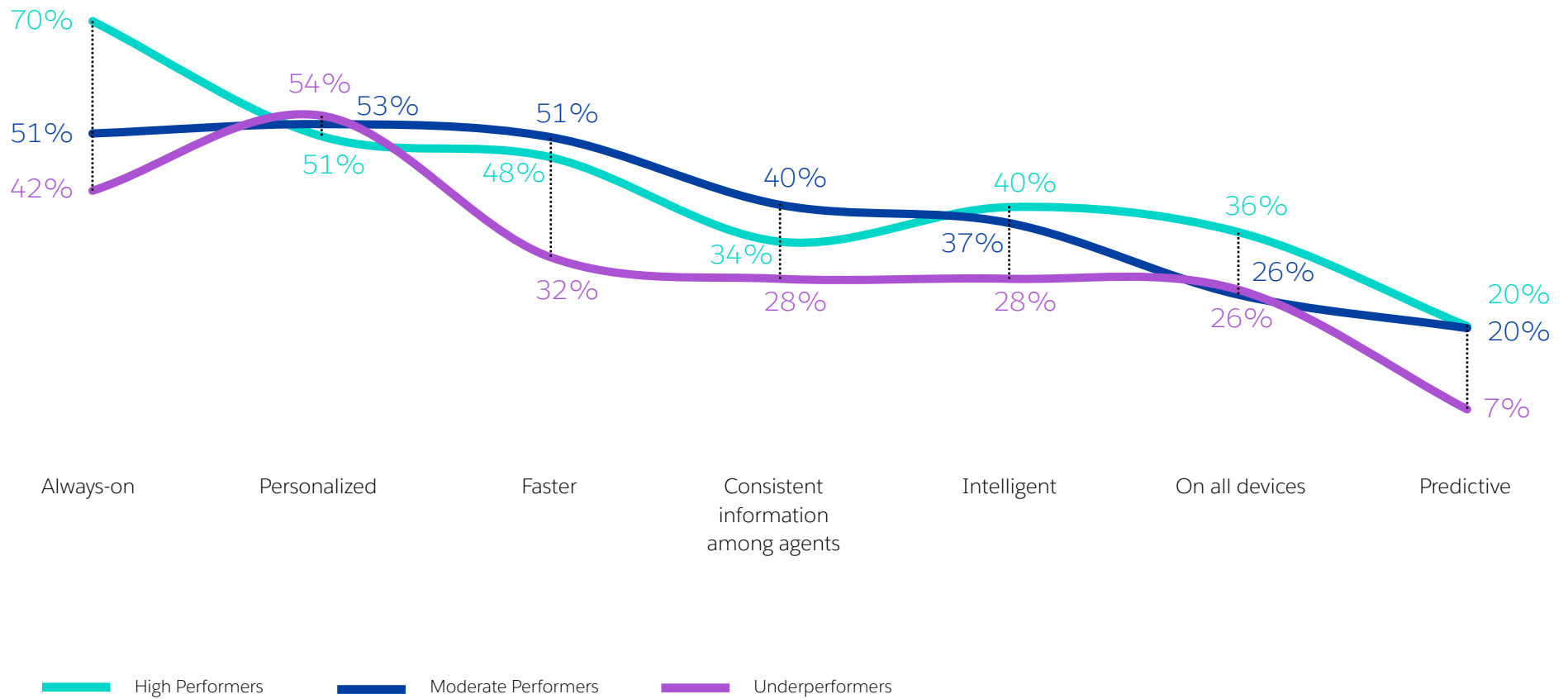


**Service leaders strive for more efficient issue explanation and resolution.** Here's how sales leaders at each performance level rank their top challenges.

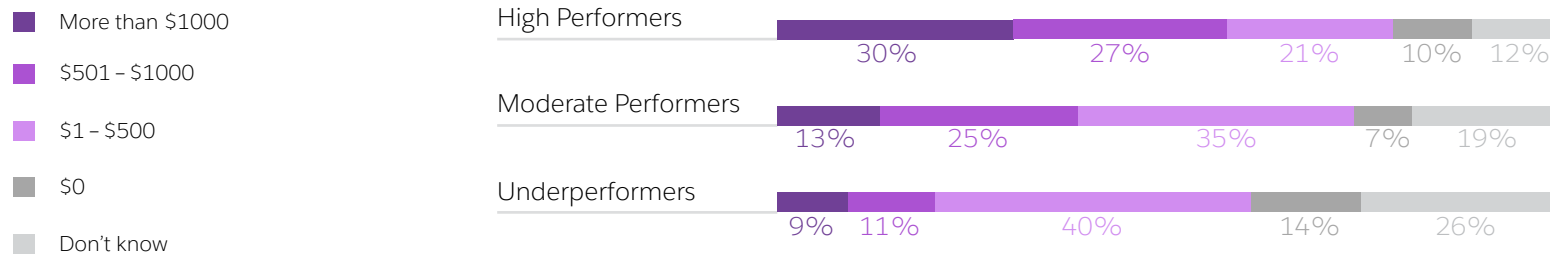


# Appendix A: How Today's Leaders Define Success

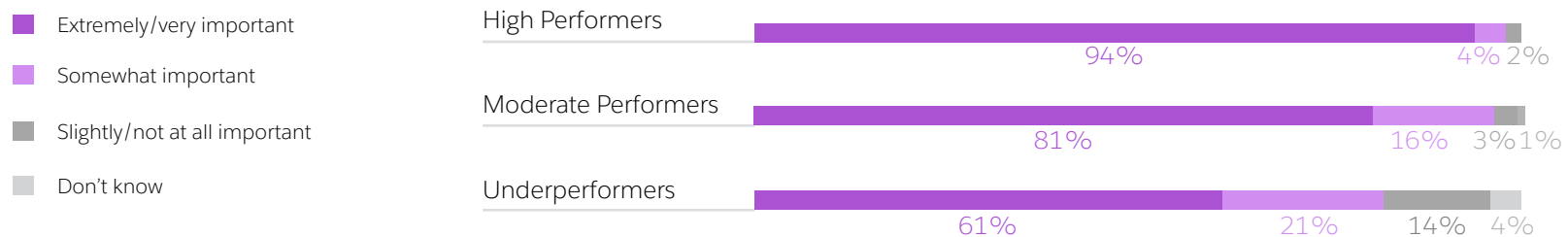
**Creating a customer experience is a high priority.** Service teams who have prioritized always-on, personalized, and faster service understand the importance of creating a customer experience. Below is a snapshot of service priorities by performance level.



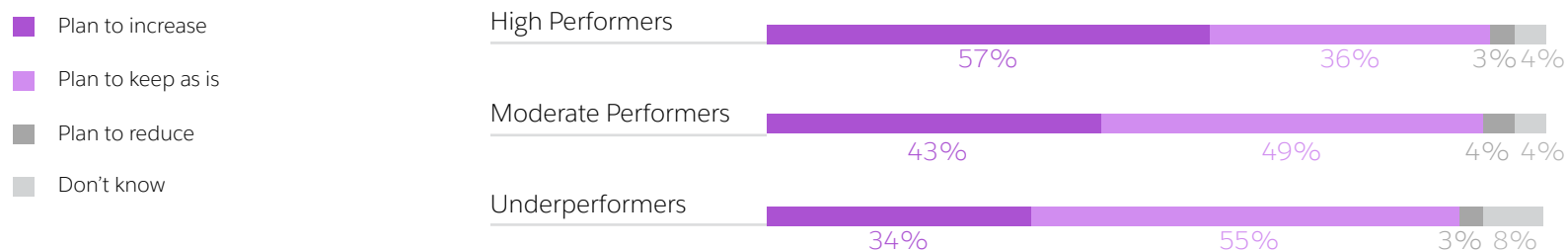
**High performers invest in training.** Companies with high-performing service teams are 3x more likely than underperformers to invest \$500 or more in annual training. Below is a snapshot of training budgets by performance.



**High performers care about employee satisfaction.** Here's how leaders at each performance level value employee satisfaction.

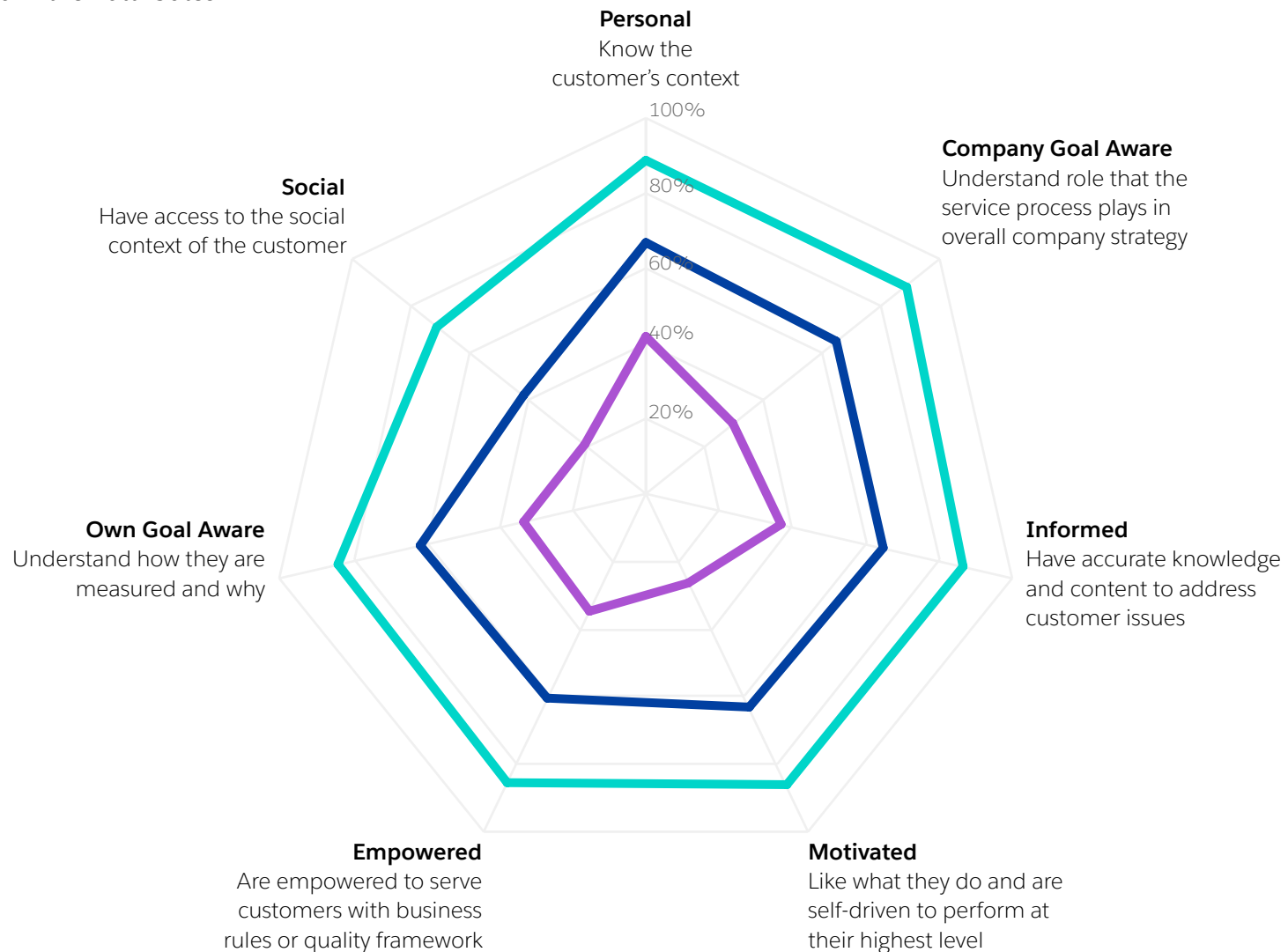


**More than half of top performers plan to grow their teams.** Here's how service leaders at each performance level plan to grow their service teams.



# Appendix A: How Today's Leaders Define Success

The best teams cover their bases with informed, motivated, and empowered agents. Here's how service leaders at each performance level rank their attributes.



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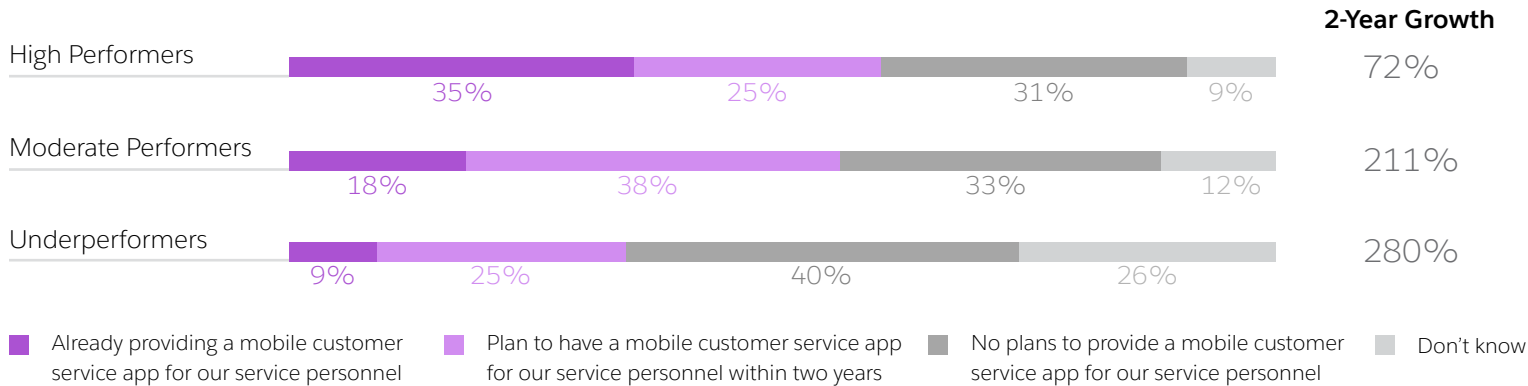
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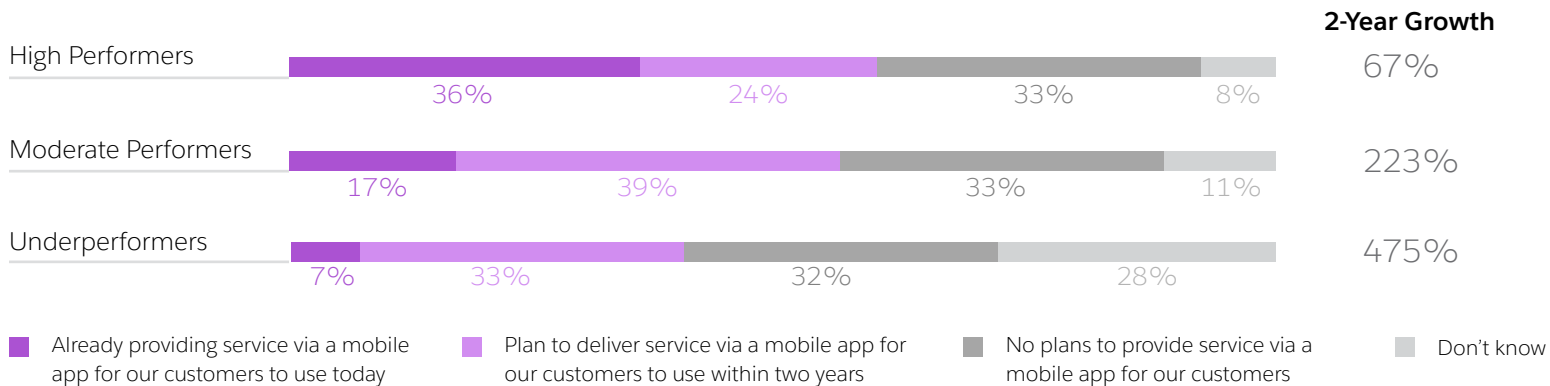
# Appendix B: Omni-Channel Customers

## Drive a Service Sea Change

**Service teams plan to arm service reps and field techs with mobile apps to deliver more efficient support.** In total, 56% of service professionals say they currently provide or plan to provide mobile apps for their customer service and/or field tech personnel within two years. We anticipate an incredible uptick over the next two years with moderate and underperforming service teams seeing more than 200% growth, as seen below.



**Mobile service apps will grow exponentially over the next two years.** Here's how service leaders plan to expand the use of mobile service apps by performance level.



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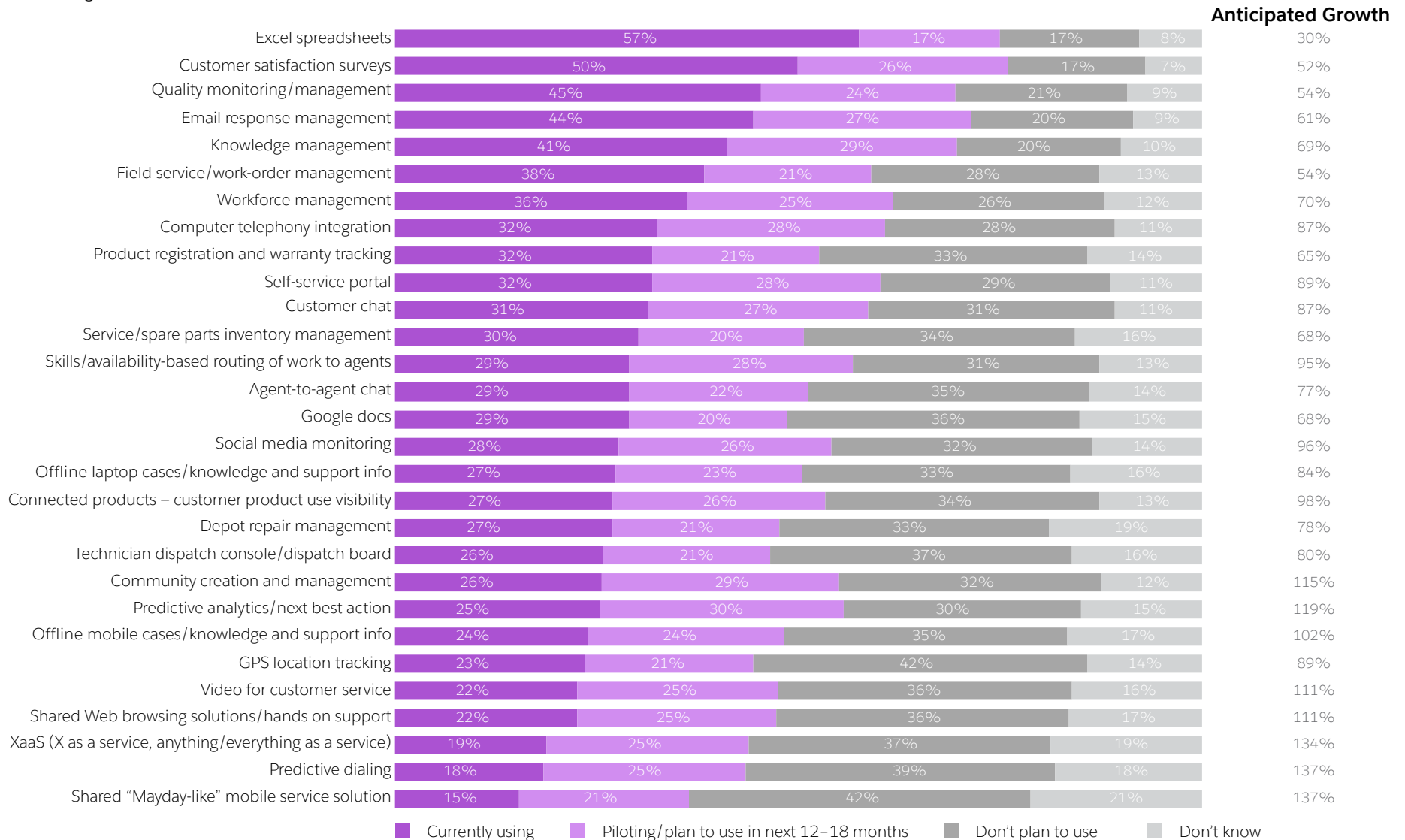
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# Appendix B: Omni-Channel Customers Drive a Service Sea Change

## Service leaders anticipate double-digit growth for features that accelerate 1-to-1 customer interactions.

Top areas for growth in the next 12-18 months include predictive capabilities, mobile solutions, shared Web browsing, communities, and cloud services, as noted below.



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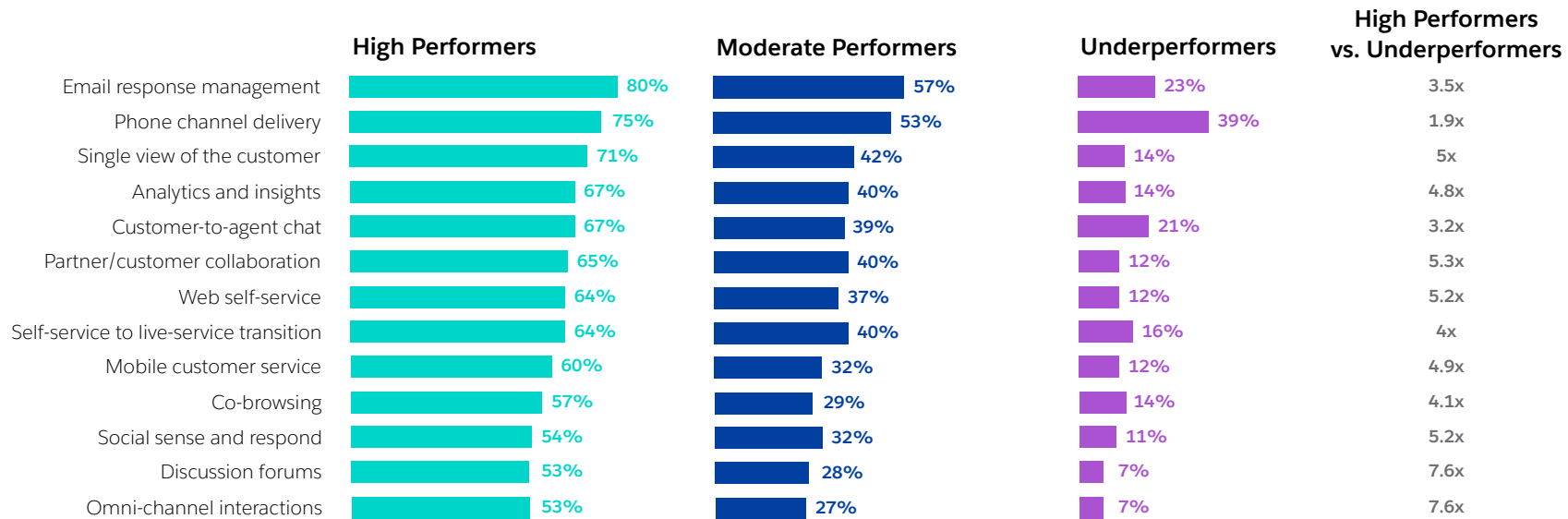
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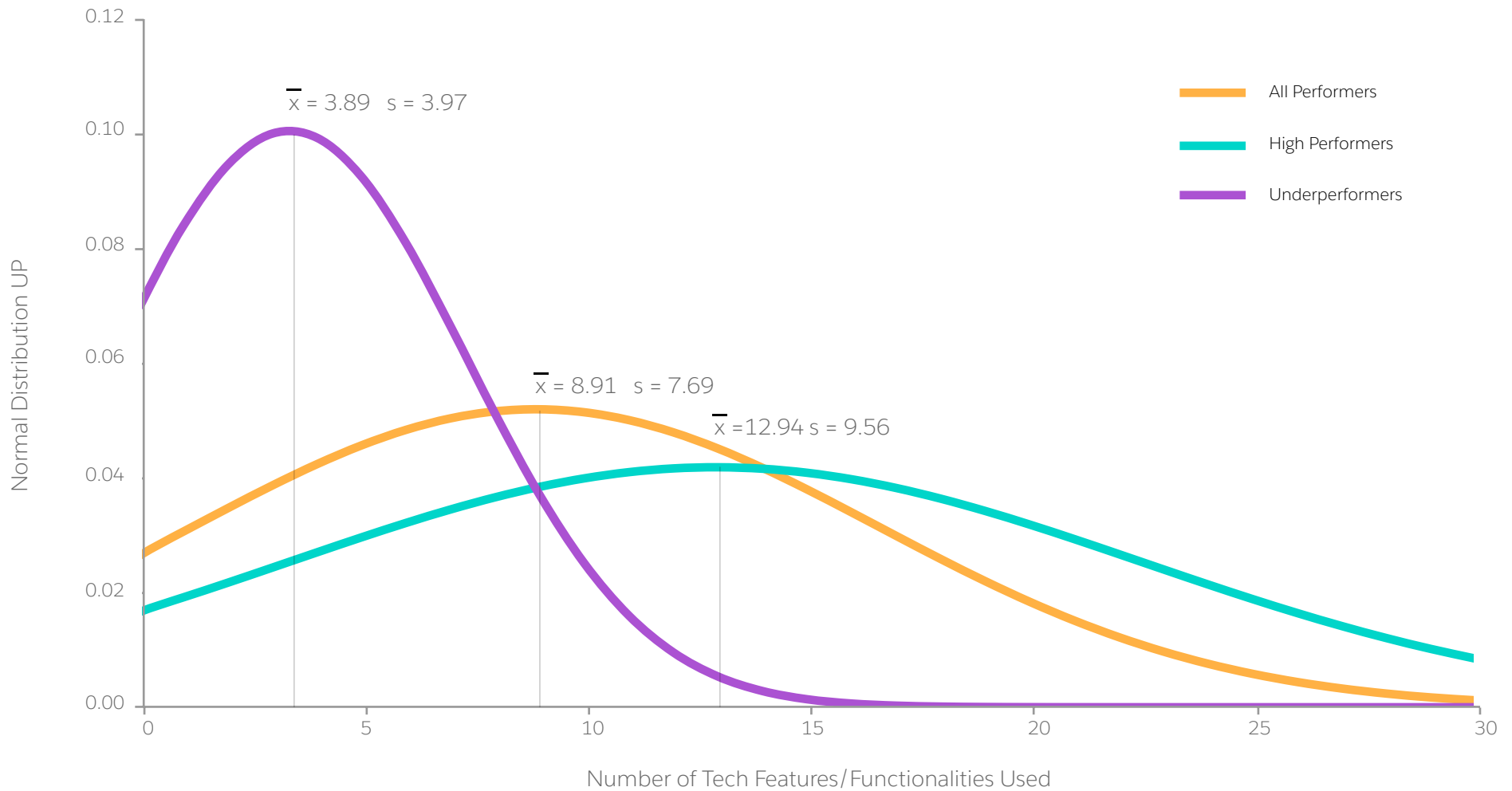
# Appendix B: Omni-Channel Customers Drive a Service Sea Change

**With so many ways to connect with customers, service teams often focus performance on one or two capabilities while letting the others fall by the wayside. High-performing service teams are nearly 8x more likely than underperformers to rate discussion forum and omni-channel interactions as outstanding or very good.**



# Appendix C: Agent Empowerment Is a Mark of Top Teams

**High performers are more likely to be heavy tech adopters.\*** Here we see the distribution of tech adoption by performance level.



\* Heavy and minimal tech adoption is defined as above or below 1 standard deviation from the average number of functionalities currently used.

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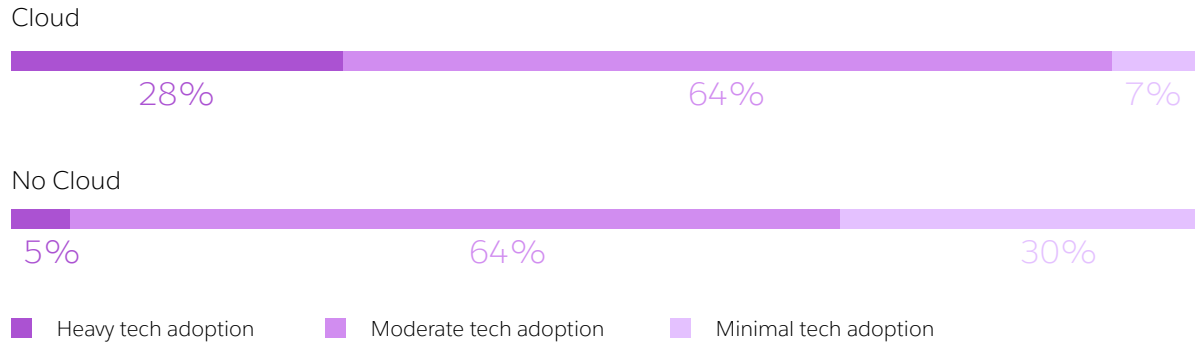
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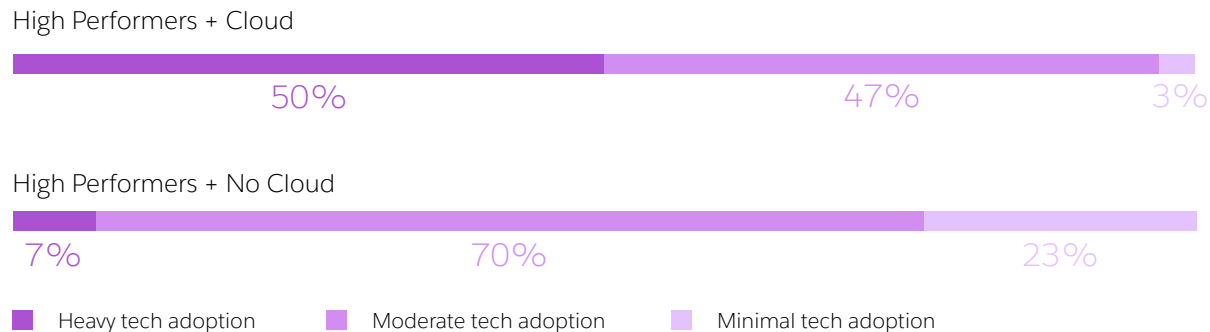
# Appendix C: Agent Empowerment Is a Mark of Top Teams

**Teams using cloud solutions are more apt to be heavy tech adopters.\*** *Cloud users are 5.2x more likely than non-cloud users to be heavy tech adopters.*



\* Heavy and minimal tech adoption is defined as above or below 1 standard deviation from the average number of functionalities currently being used.

**Cloud solutions give high-performing teams greater access to service features.** *Here we see the difference in tech adoption between high performers using mostly cloud solutions vs. high performers using no cloud solutions. Among top service teams, cloud users are 12x more likely than non-cloud users to be heavy tech adopters.\**



\* Heavy and minimal tech adoption is defined as above or below 1 standard deviation from the average number of functionalities currently being used.

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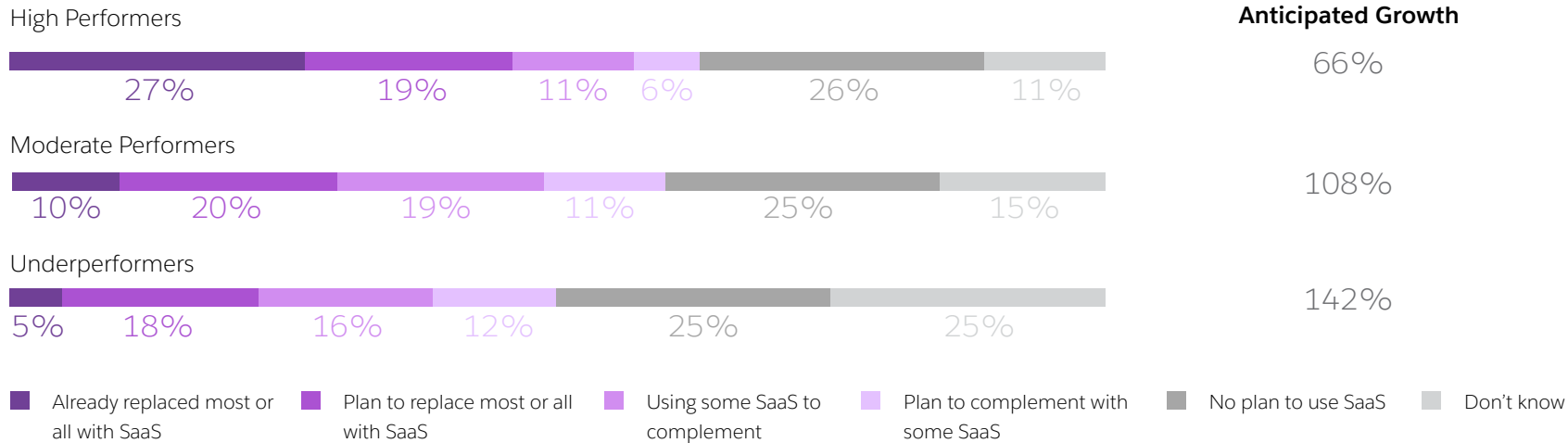
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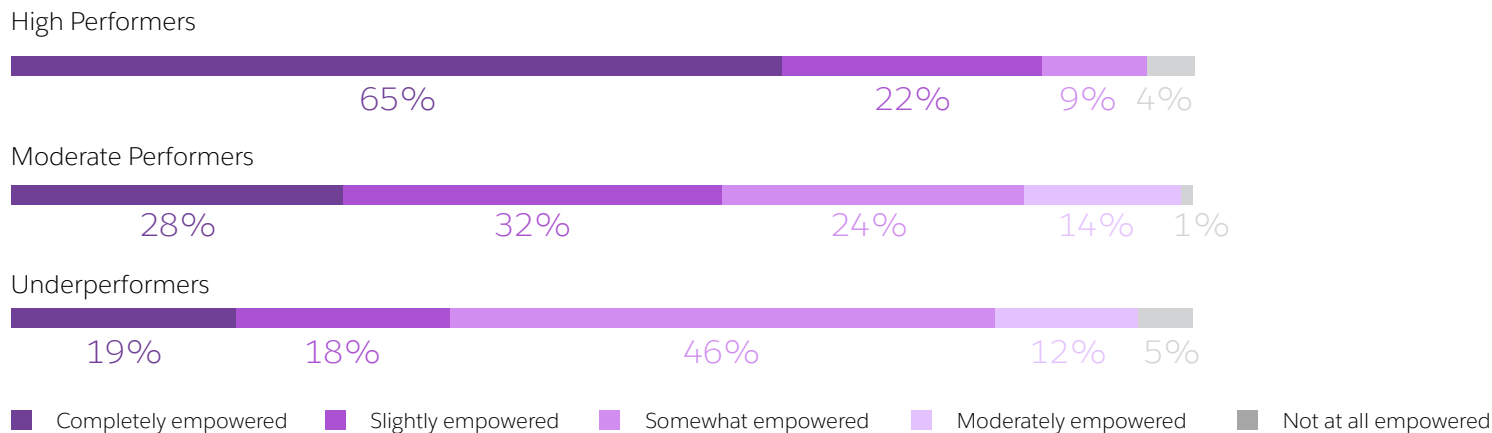
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# Appendix C: Agent Empowerment Is a Mark of Top Teams

**Cloud usage is on the rise.** High performing teams are 5.1x more likely to use mostly cloud solutions, but cloud usage is expected to grow significantly for underperformers and moderate performers over the next two years, as seen by performance level below.



**High performers fully enable agents to ensure customer success.** Here we see how empowered customer service leaders feel, by performance level.



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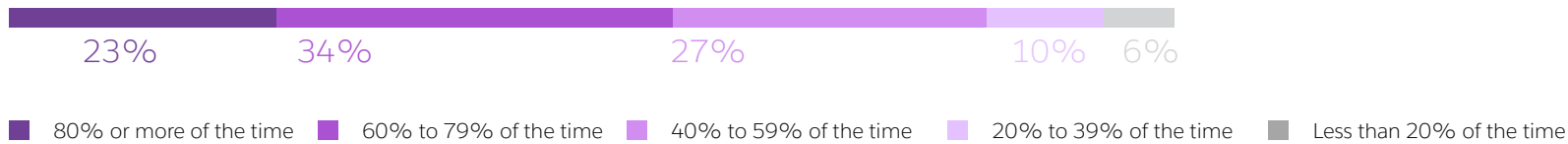
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# Appendix D: Proactive Service Emerges, Fueled by Smart Technology

**Understanding needs before they arise can lead to higher customer success rates.** *Currently, only 23% of service teams are able to predict customer service needs before they arise 80% or more of the time, based on data, experience, and analysis. Below is how service teams rate their ability to predict customer service needs before they arise.*

All Performers



**Top-rated analytics capabilities better equip teams to predict customer needs.** *Here is a snapshot of how service teams are able to predict customer needs before they arise, by performance level.*

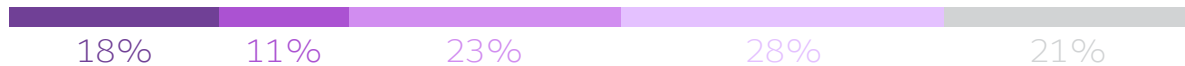
High Performers



Moderate Performers



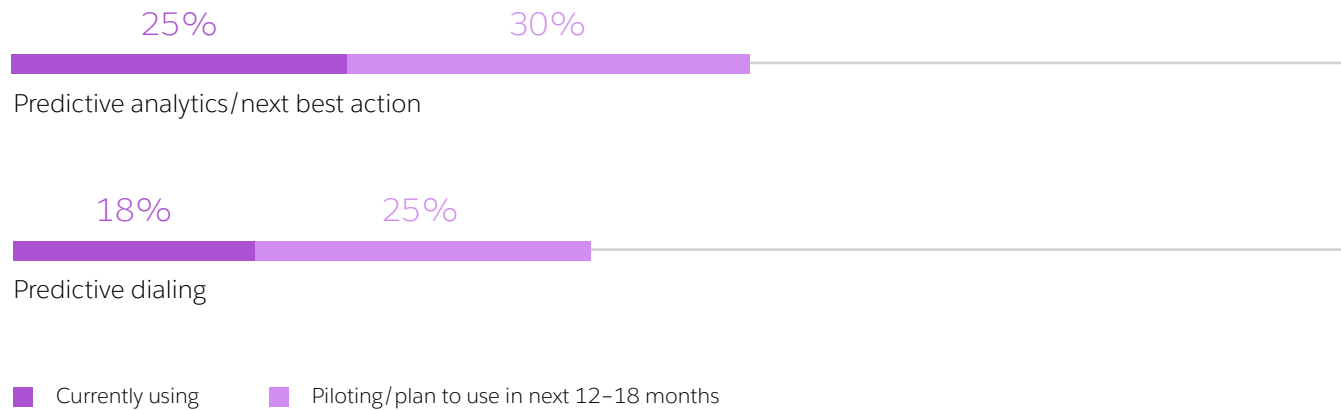
Underperformers



80% or more of the time 60% to 79% of the time 40% to 59% of the time 20% to 39% of the time Less than 20% of the time

# Appendix D: Proactive Service Emerges, Fueled by Smart Technology

**Service teams are doubling down on predictive technologies to build smarter systems.** *In the next 12–18 months, service organizations' use of predictive analytics and predictive dialing will more than double. As companies further leverage intelligence – whether for more effective case-routing or serving agents with in-context information – productivity will skyrocket.*





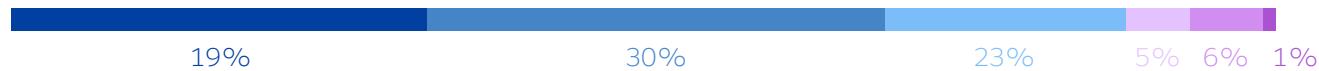
# Appendix D: Proactive Service Emerges, Fueled by Smart Technology

**At leading companies, the entire organization is empowered to provide customer service.** High performers are nearly 2x more likely than underperformers to say that customer service is 100% the responsibility of the entire company.

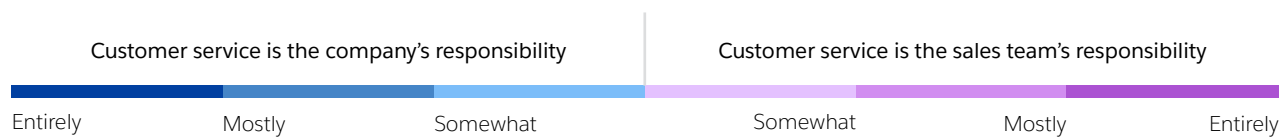
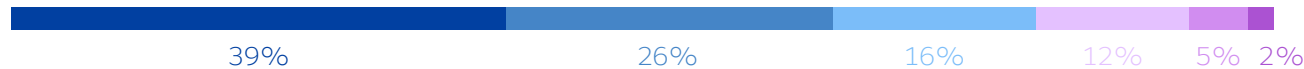
High Performers



Moderate Performers



Underperformers



# Appendix E: The Changing Customer Mindset Triggers a Surge in Self-Service

**Top teams show skill in building communities and self-service portals.** *High performers are 3x more likely than underperformers to have outstanding capabilities in self-service and communities.*

