



Society of Workforce Planning Professionals Membership Survey (November 2016)

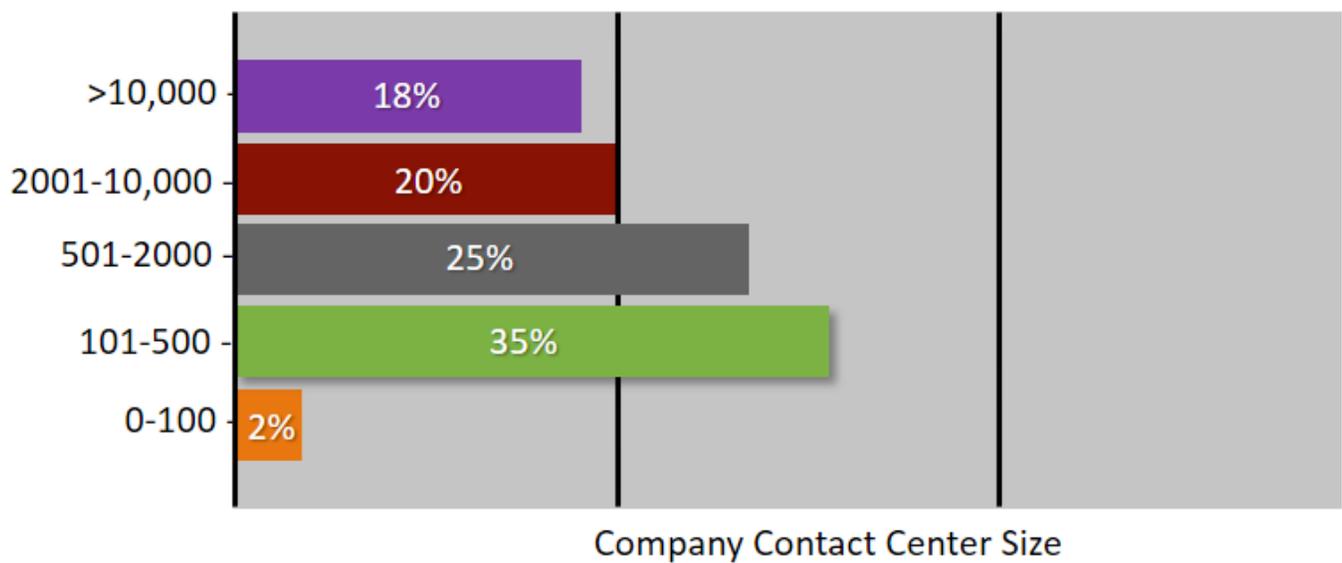
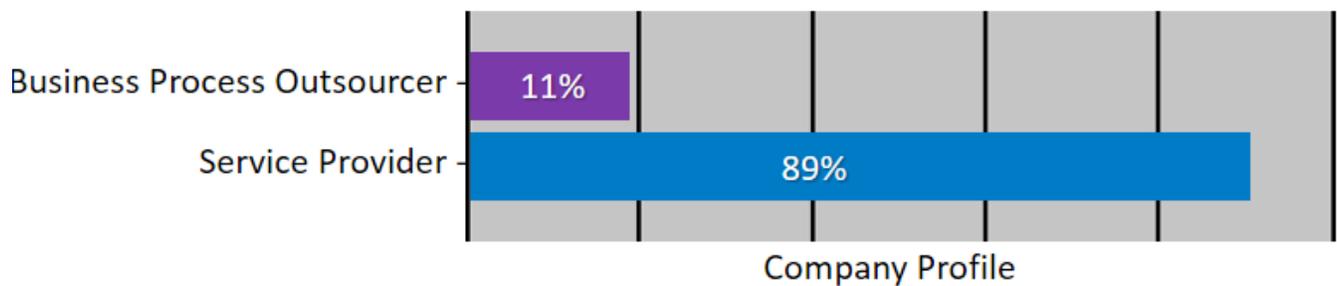
Sponsored by WorkFlex Solutions

What Is Schedule-Change Empowerment Worth?

In November 2016, SWPP conducted a WorkFlex-sponsored member survey to better understand the value of agent schedule-change empowerment as it relates to agent recruiting and retention. The survey asked contact center management professionals their opinions on a number of topics to help better understand the relative effectiveness of pay versus schedule-change empowerment in hiring and maintaining an engaged, productive agent workforce.

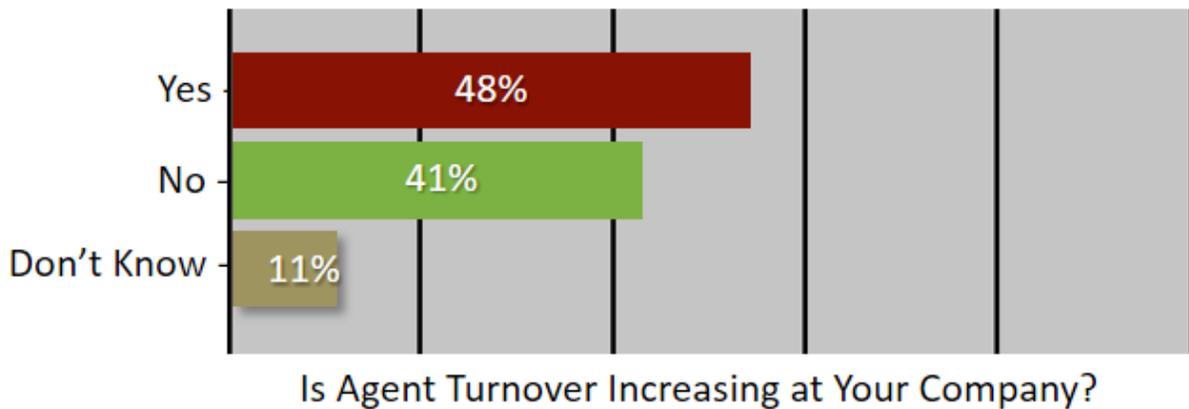
Survey Participants

Eighty-nine percent of respondents work for Service Providers, 11% percent for BPO's. Small, medium and large contact center operations were represented with 37% percent of respondents having centers of 500 agents or below, 25% between 501 and 2,000 and 38% greater than 2000 agents. Diverse industries were also represented, including companies from financial services, healthcare, energy, aviation, retail, and insurance.



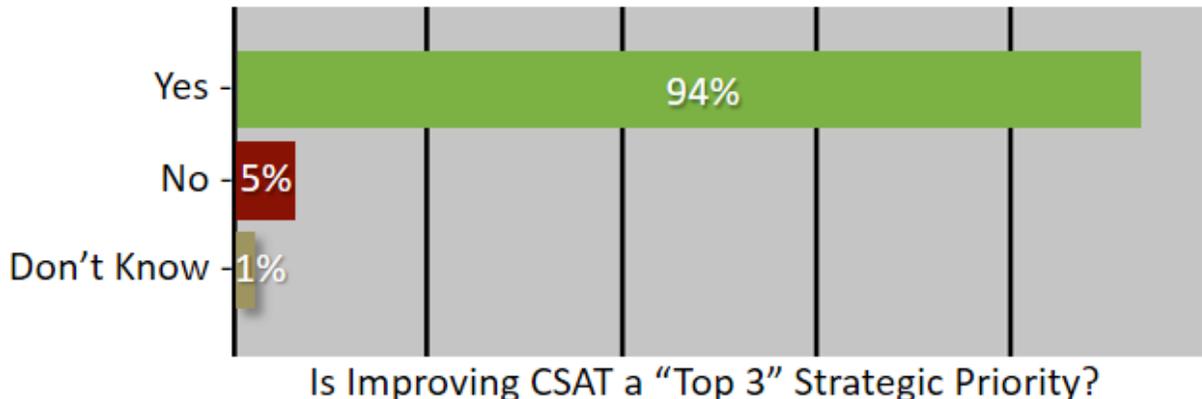
Agent Turnover

The first question inquired whether turnover was increasing at the respondent's company. Almost half of respondents said yes, while just over 40% said no. While there are a number of factors likely influencing this trend, agent turnover is clearly a pervasive challenge, with minimal correlation to any particular industry segment or contact center size.



Company Priorities

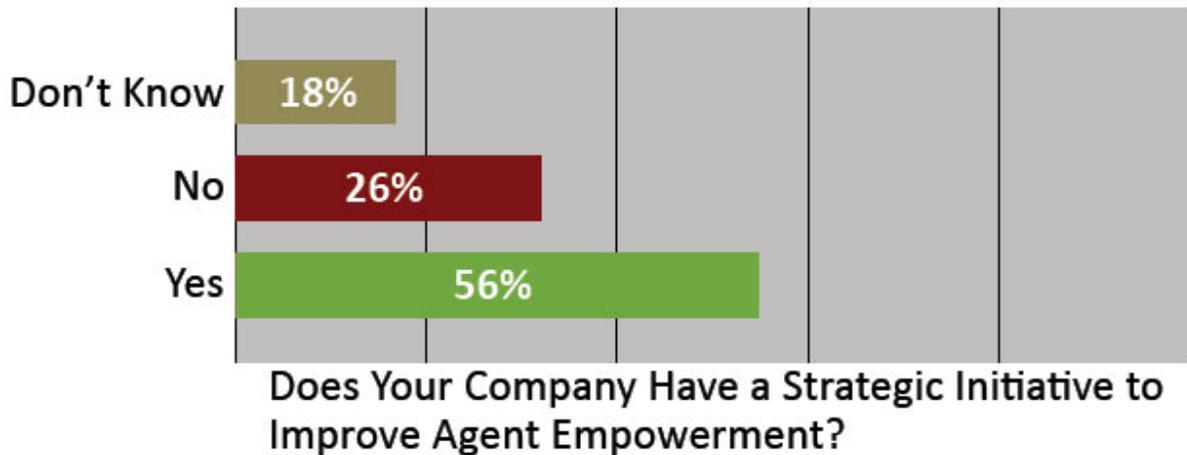
Respondents were asked if improving customer satisfaction is a "top-three" priority for their company. Nearly all respondents answered in the affirmative. It is evident that improving customer satisfaction has become a primary battlefield for competitive differentiation in the marketplace.



Agent Empowerment Initiatives

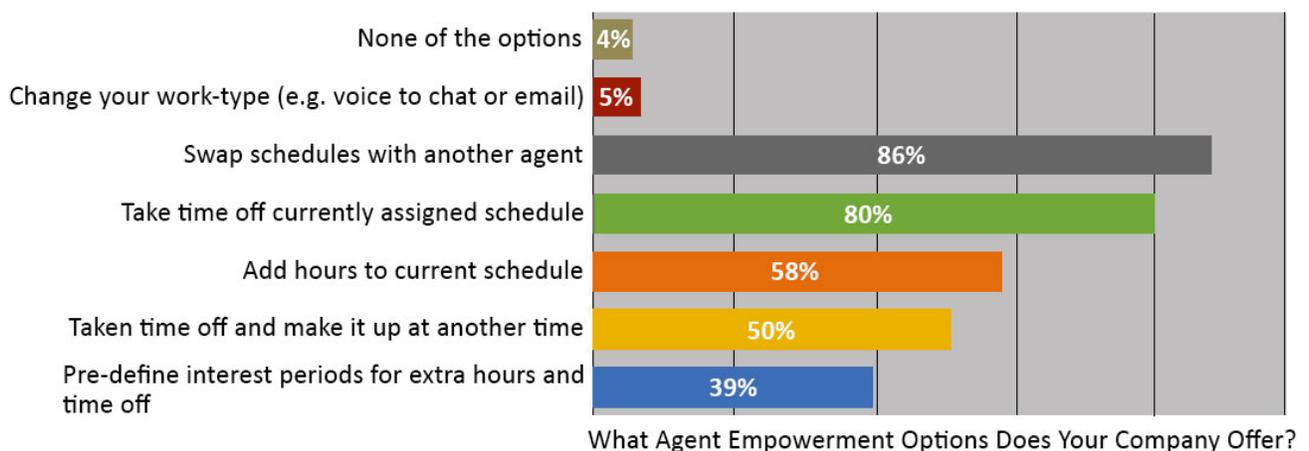
Participants in the survey were asked if their company currently has a strategic initiative to improve agent empowerment. The majority responded yes with just over a quarter saying no. It is likely that many companies see improving agent empowerment as a means of reducing

agent turnover, and/or are recognizing the importance of agent retention in delivering customer satisfaction.



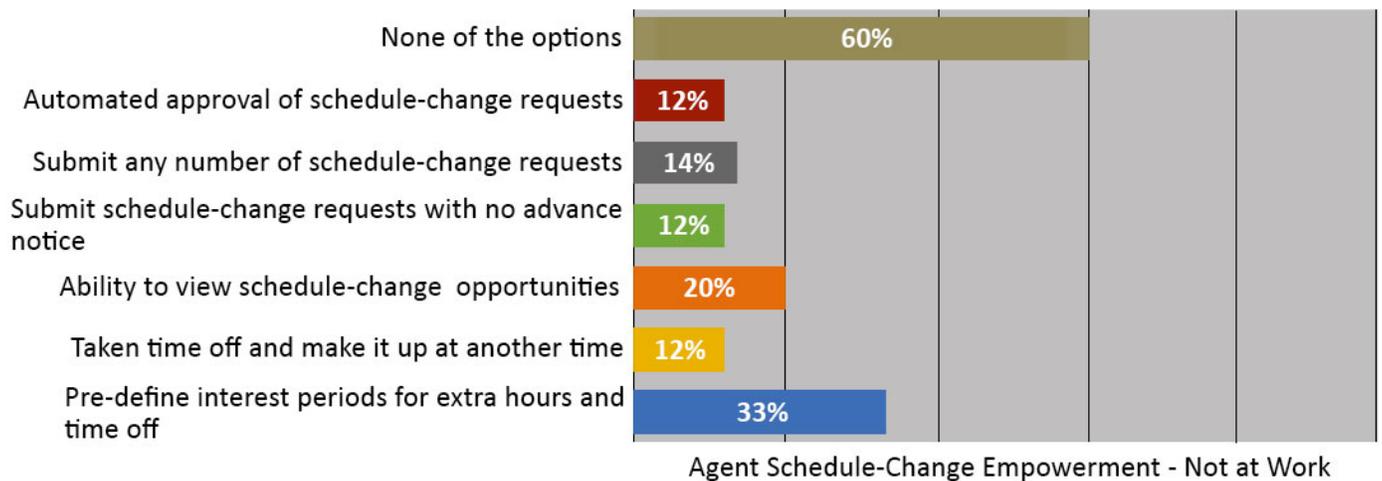
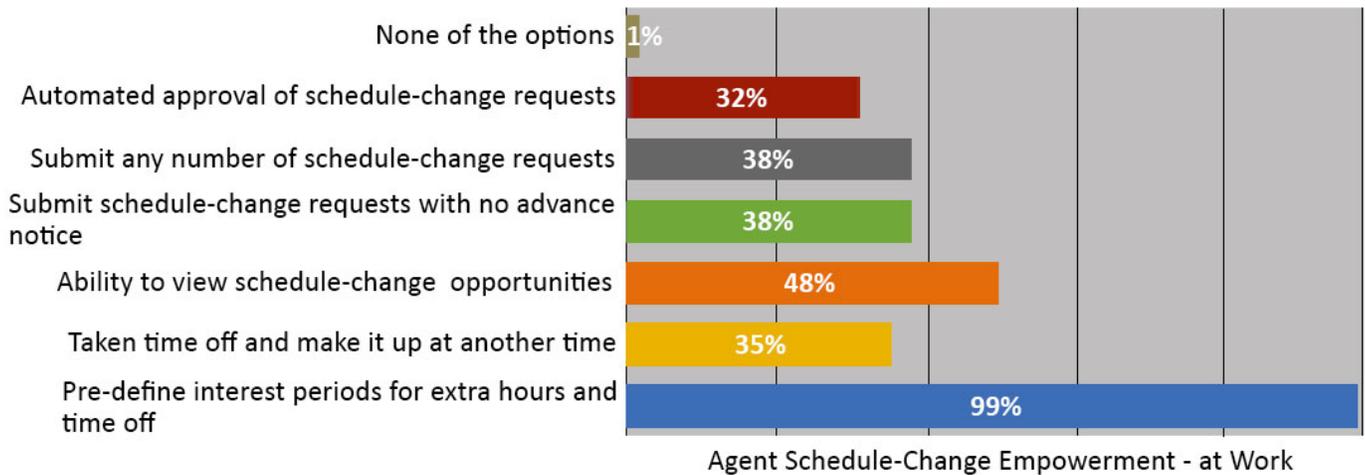
Agent Schedule-Change Empowerment Options

Respondents were asked if their company is offering agents any of six schedule-change options. Eighty percent or more of respondents said their agents are able to swap schedules with another agent and that their agents could take time off of their currently assigned schedule, though only 50% said agents could make those hours up at a different time. Almost 60% indicated that their agents can add hours to their current schedule while just under 40% said their agents have the ability to predefine time periods during which they would like to be eligible for extra hours or time off. Of note was that less than 5% of respondents said their agents have the ability to change work-assignment (e.g., from phone to chat) – something that could become an increasingly important dimension to agent-empowerment, given the growing industry focus on multi-skilling agents.



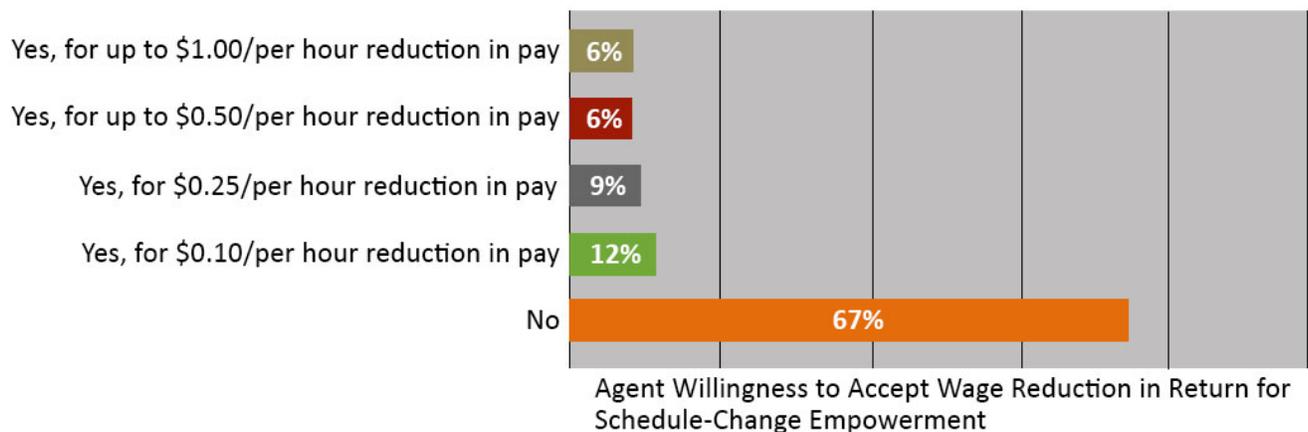
Schedule-Change Empowerment Options While at Work and While *Not* at Work

The ability to view their schedule while at work is something nearly every respondent indicated is available to their agents. The numbers are lower for the rest of the at-work options (the ability to view schedule-change opportunities, submit schedule-change requests with no minimum advance notice, submit schedule-change requests with no maximum request limit, and automate approval of schedule-change requests) with an average of less than 40% of respondents offering these options. The numbers for agents who are not at work was much lower across the board with over 60% of respondents saying that their agents have “zero” access to schedule-change empowerment options when they are not at work.



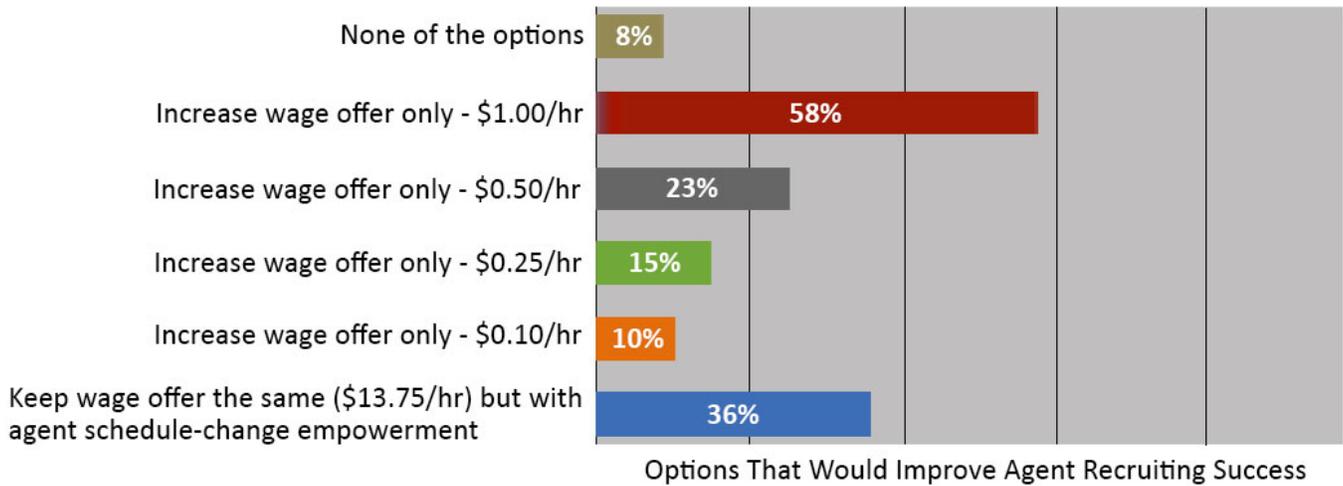
Lower Wages for Higher Schedule-Change Empowerment?

When asked if their agents would be willing to take a lower wage in exchange for schedule-change empowerment, approximately two-thirds of respondents said no; however, about a third said yes and selected varying amounts of wage cuts averaging \$0.38/hour or \$60.00 per month. It is noteworthy that the survey results suggest that approximately one-third of agents would be willing to take an average pay cut of ~3% in return for schedule-change empowerment. It is likely that there is a correlation between the growing number of Millennials in the agent workforce who now represent almost 70% of the agent workforce in the US and the percentage of agents willing to “pay out of their pockets” for schedule-change empowerment. According to the US department of Labor Millennial research study, over 50% of Millennials (or 35% of the US agent population) consider schedule-change empowerment to be more important than pay.



Recruiting Incentive Options

Survey respondents were asked to choose from a list of options that could potentially increase their recruiting success. (They were asked to select all options that apply.) The options all pertained to adding either schedule flexibility or a higher hourly wage to a starting base wage of \$13.75. Consistent with the previous question, around a third of respondents chose the schedule flexibility option with no additional hourly dollar amount added. For respondents that selected a higher pay option, the average starting salary increase suggested was ~\$0.70/hr or about a ~ 5% wage increase. Considering data from respondents with a bias towards increasing pay would suggest that the value of schedule-change empowerment is around \$110/month or \$1300/year.

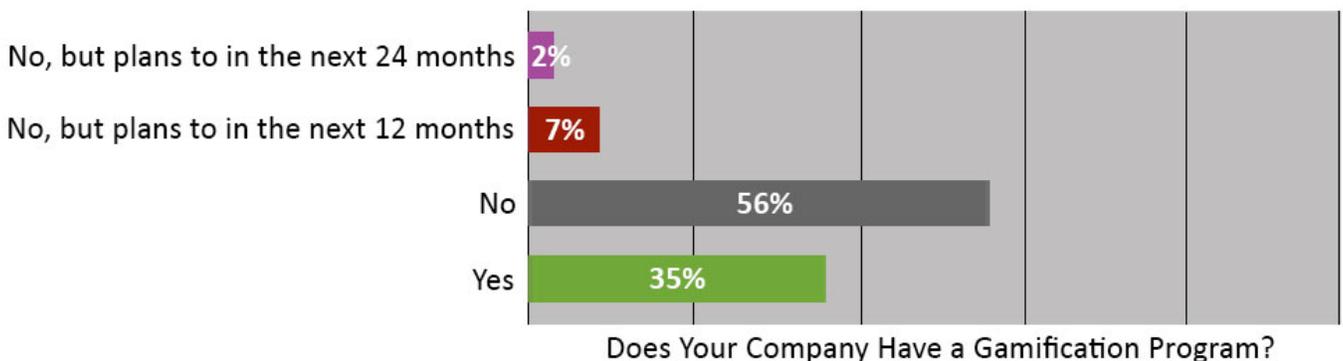


Those respondents who selected the schedule-flexibility option in the preceding question were asked in how much they would have to increase starting wage to make increase of pay a better option than schedule-change empowerment. The average response was \$1.57 or an 11.5% pay increase. Using data from respondents with a bias towards increasing schedule-change empowerment would suggest the value of schedule-change empowerment is around \$250/month or \$3000/year.

Average Response
\$1.57 (\$250/month or ~11.5% wage increase)

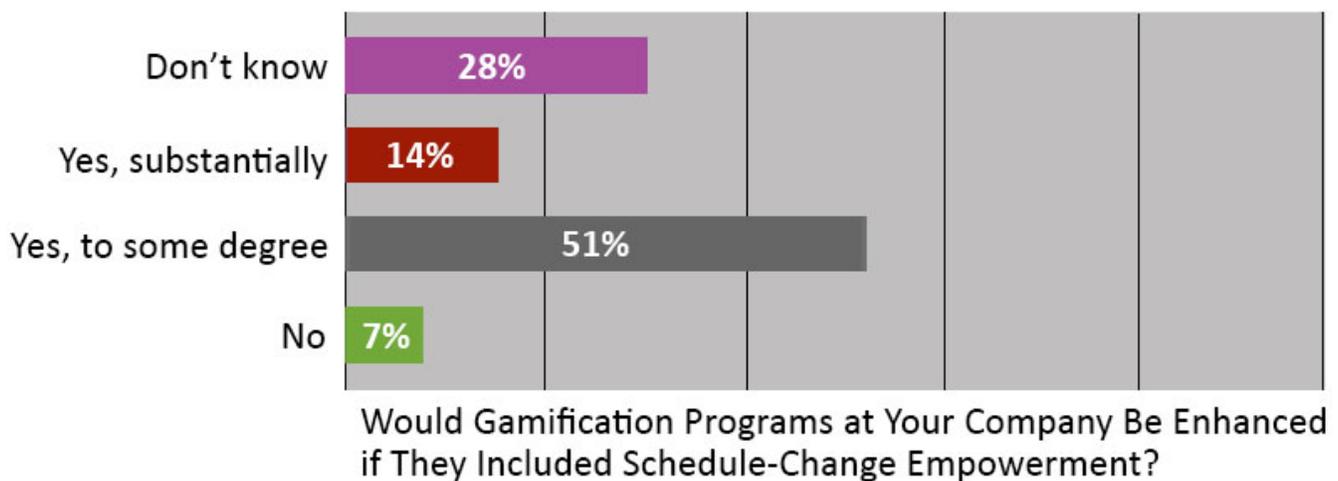
Gamification, Anyone?

Asked if their company offers agents gamification programs (e.g., the ability to earn points for achieving performance objectives and redeem points for rewards), more than a third said yes, they are currently offering such programs, and over 9% planned on introducing them within the next two years. This suggests that gamification, a relatively new offering within the contact center industry, is continuing to grow in popularity as a means of increasing agent-engagement.



Enhanced Gamification?

The final question in the survey inquired whether respondents thought that gamification programs would be enhanced if they included the ability for agents to use points in return for additional schedule-change empowerment (e.g., the ability to take time off at times that would not otherwise be approved). Almost two-thirds of respondents indicated that schedule-change empowerment would enhance gamification programs, suggesting both a high correlation between schedule-change empowerment and agent engagement, and inherent synergies between schedule-change empowerment and gamification.



Conclusions

The results of this survey are illustrative of trends in the contact center industry. It is not unreasonable to assume that the growth today of the Millennial population in the contact center workforce and the 48% of companies in this survey reporting a growth in agent turnover are correlative. As a recent Deloitte study notes, “Many Millennials have one foot out the door.”¹ While there are multiple reasons given for quitting, lack of schedule-change empowerment in the workplace clearly ranks high. In an ICMI study from 2012, contact center agents cited “No flexible work environment” as the impetus for making an exit “very frequently” or “sometimes” over 42% of the time.² Low pay came in as less of a factor than scheduling flexibility!

The changing expectations of the increasingly Millennial-centric agent workforce and the rapid growth of gig-economy employment (which is projected to exceed contact center employment

1 <http://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/millennialsurvey.html>

2 <http://www.icmi.com/~media/Files/Resources/Research/ICMI2012AgentSalaryRetentionProductivityResearchReport.aspx>

in 2017³) may be creating a perfect storm for the contact center industry. Given the cost of agent turnover of between \$15,000 and \$20,000⁴, investment in schedule-change empowerment solutions to combat agent turnover are clearly worth investigating. The survey-indicated value of schedule-change empowerment of between \$60-\$110/month would suggest an inherently strong business case for agent schedule- change empowerment technologies, particularly those that can provide anywhere/anytime access outside of the contact center.

3 <http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2016/02/18/gig-economy-attracts-many-workers-few-full-time-jobs/> iv <http://www.frost.com/reg/blog-personal-index.do?userId=15881>

4 <http://www.frost.com/reg/blog-personal-index.do?userId=15881>



About SWPP

The Society of Workforce Planning Professionals (SWPP) is a membership association designed specifically to facilitate educational and networking among workforce planners and managers in the contact center.

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About WorkFlex Solutions

WorkFlex Solutions, LLC is the industry leader in intelligent empowerment solutions for contact center agents, supervisors and workforce administrators. Our award-winning Intelligent Intraday Automation technology maximizes scheduling flexibility, optimizes intraday performance and reduces administrative overhead. Designed to integrate easily with Workforce Management (WFM) and Automated Call Distribution (ACD) systems, WorkFlex enables clients to leverage their existing enterprise investments, and quickly generate a positive ROI. WorkFlex SaaS deployments span multiple industry sectors including financial services, communications, healthcare, automotive, cable/sat and government. For more information, visit workflexsolutions.com

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