

EBook #2:

# NLP challenges in the contact centre industry

What have European organisations learnt from implementing NLP? How do they plan to use NLP in the future?

Customer experience  
inspired by empathy,  
driven by technology



**Jean-Denis Garo,**  
Head of Product  
Marketing,  
Odigo

# The many use cases of NLP

Natural language processing (NLP) has evolved as a revolutionary technology in the field of AI for CX. But it's not a plug-and-play solution. To unleash its full potential today, experts must have a complete understanding of the skills and requirements needed for implementation and ensure agents and customers remain at the forefront of all CX revolutions. This second eBook dedicated to NLP raises the remaining fears but also the lessons learnt and the opportunities.

## The steady progress of NLP

NLP is a technology that allows machines to understand human language. It originated in the 1950s. Today, it's one of the engines of AI. However, proper deployment of an NLP solution takes time and can't be rushed. It is possible to set up a PoC (Proof of Concept) on a well-defined spectrum with an embryo of MVP (Minimum Viable Product) and to obtain satisfactory results (relevance rate). It will require the support of experts though, and the timeline of the project must be considered, as well as the necessary support for change.

An AI project is a living project, it's necessary to both prepare for it and adapt as it evolves. Still, according to the survey\* results in this eBook, while three-quarters of European organisations have invested in an NLP solution for customer experience, for 51% of respondents the results obtained were

different from those they expected. Despite this fact, the majority of respondents say they will continue to invest in NLP over the next two years, because once adopted, the solution is appealing: 74% are looking into possibilities to advance their NLP projects.

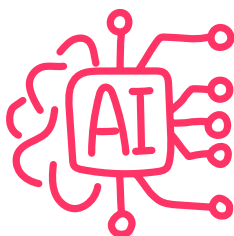
## NLP's multiple use cases

In the field of customer relations, utilising NLP applications makes sense. Today they are used for a wide range of self-service functions for example, offering customers instant answers, the ability to modify details and delivery schedules or declare a lost bank card, all 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. These customers can converse in a natural way with a callbot while the automated contact centre verifies information like identity and records changes with complete fluidity without requiring an agent. This is the most popular use for 53% of users\*.

Another popular application revealed by the survey\* is to automatically identify customer intent. This can happen during a conversation with a bot or through text-based messages (e-mail, social media). The details can then be used to route a request, along with its context, to the most-suitable agent available. NLP also allows, thanks to contextual detail, augmented agent decision-making by providing them with relevant information, draft answers or by giving insights into the customer's state of mind (sentiment analysis).

The fact that the use of NLP is discreet is not a problem, it's rather proof of good integration within a contact centre solution. It's also a sign of technological maturity. The user doesn't care if it's artificial intelligence offering help, what matters is quick resolution, whatever the technology used.

\* Independent market research conducted by Davies Hickman Partners in June 2022 for Odigo among 1,035 European business executives in Belgium and the Netherlands, France, Germany, Spain and the UK.

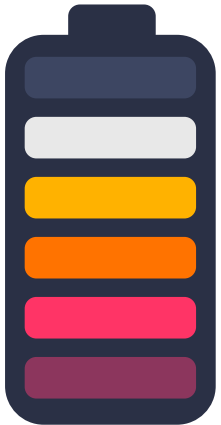


# The top challenge for investing in NLP is having time to make it work

European business executives say NLP requires time to prove it works. Other challenges include overcoming the fear that NLP will replace people, software integration issues and proving ROI. Organisations want fast results when they make investments, so accessing expertise, in-house or through the right technology partner is important.

**The challenges of investing in AI and NLP  
(Answering to a great extent and some extent)**

84%



Needing time to prove AI works

79%



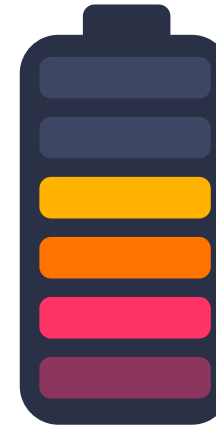
Overcoming fear that AI will replace people

79%



Software integration issues

78%



Proving ROI

# Lessons learnt from those that have invested in NLP

3 in 4 European organisations have now invested in NLP for CX, and the main lesson learnt is that the outcomes and benefits were different to those expected. Some organisations also felt they needed more in-house skills and resources, and a greater time investment than they had anticipated. However, despite this, the majority of European business executives say they will invest more in NLP in the next 2 years.



## Lessons learnt when investing in NLP for customer experience

51%

The outcomes were different to what we expected

38%

There was a shortage of in-house skills and resources

37%

Training the AI model took too much time





## European organisations are implementing a wide range of NLP applications which requires knowledge and expertise

European organisations are using NLP widely and for different reasons. Advanced analytics help understand customer insight trends, while other applications support contact centre agents when providing customer experience. Making a range of applications successful requires a broad range of skills and expertise.

### What is your organisation using/planning to use NLP/AI for?

**58%**

Advanced analytics to identify trends in customer behaviours

**53%**

Automatic interaction handling in self-service mode

**57%**

Assisting agents by providing relevant info to recommend next-best action

**50%**

Real-time insights about agents' performance to supervisors

**57%**

Smart routing of interaction to the right agents

**50%**

Real-time insights to agents through customers sentiment analysis

**55%**

Automatic qualification of customers and interaction reasons

# With so many applications, progressing NLP projects is a priority for European organisations

According to European business executives, most of them are planning to launch NLP projects in the next two years. This reveals the high interest in the technology and the need to support different applications to ensure success.

Thinking generally about projects in your organisation that are based on Natural Language Processing (NLP), would you say the following are true?

We are keen to progress NLP projects

74%

43%

31%

In the next two years, we plan to launch projects based on NLP

72%

45%

27%

● Yes possibly

● Yes definitely



# Organisations see significant opportunities to understand customers with NLP

Identifying, analysing and recognising customers are believed to be good opportunities to use NLP. Caller authentication and verification need to be accurate, while recognising customer emotions and vulnerable callers is increasingly important to organisations.

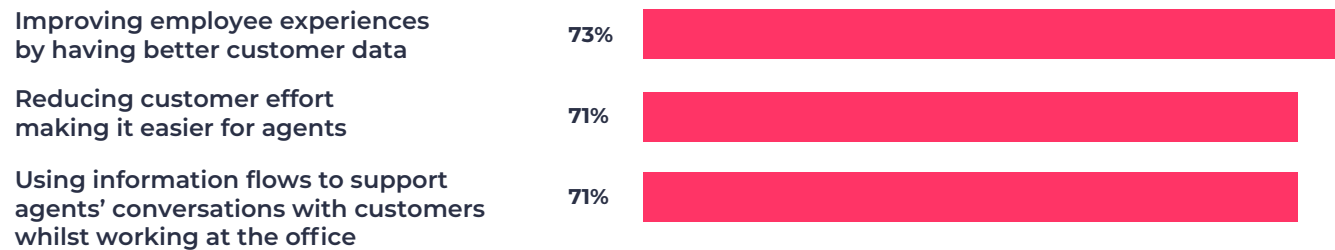
**To what extent do you believe NLP could add value to your customer experiences regardless of whether you use it currently?**  
(Scoring 7 or more out of 10 for adding value to the organisation)



# Supporting the contact centre workforce is another NLP opportunity

'Improving employee experiences by having better customer data' ranked highest for how NLP could add value to the workforce in the contact centre. As recruitment and retention of contact centre agents becomes more difficult, European organisations want to offer a more supportive working environment. This function of NLP can go some way to assuaging fears over AI replacing people, by highlighting how agents and AI can work in synergy.

**To what extent do you believe NLP could add value to your customer experiences regardless of whether you use it currently?  
(Scoring 7 or more out of 10 for adding value to the organisation).**

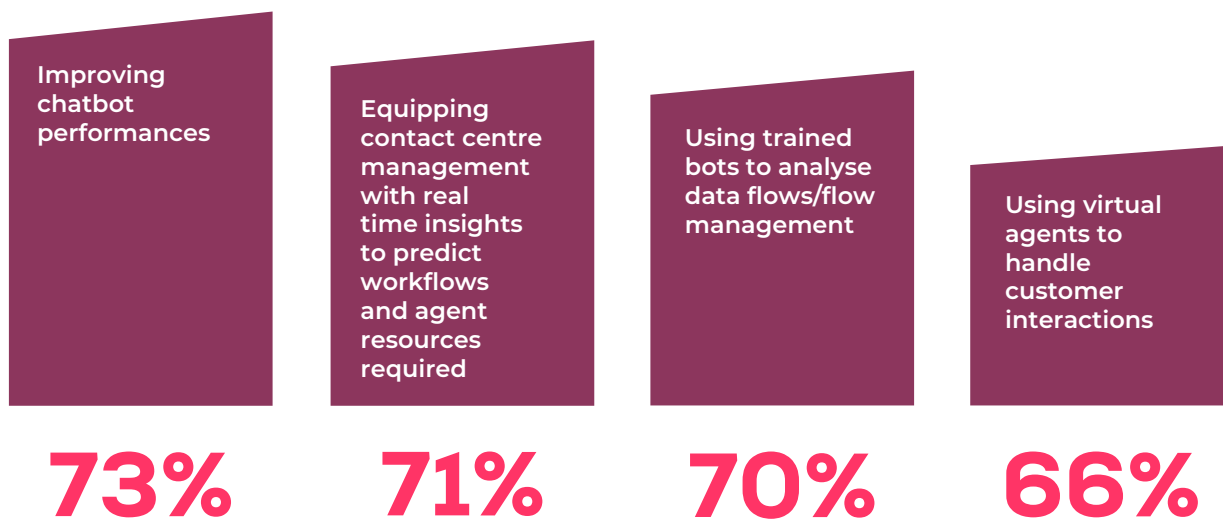




## Also, enhancing contact centre operations with NLP bots has potential

With European organisations investing in NLP, improving chatbot performance is rated by 3 in 4 as a useful way to add value to their operations. Workforce planning, using virtual agents and bots to analyse data flows are also highly rated.

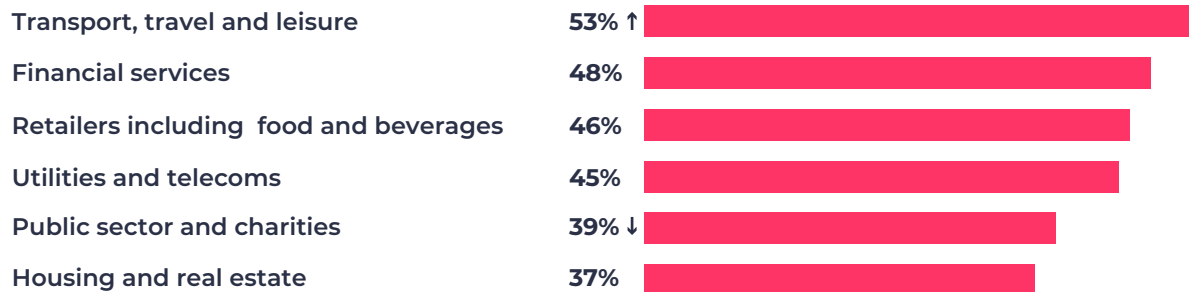
**To what extent do you believe NLP could add value to your customer experiences regardless of whether you use it currently?  
(Scoring 7 or more out of 10 for adding value to the organisation)**



# European business executives influence NLP decisions, by sector

Those working in the transport, travel, leisure and financial services sectors agree the most strongly that Business executives drive NLP decisions.

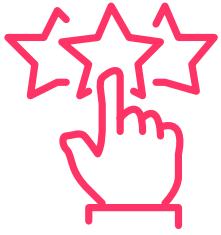
**Business executives drive NLP decisions not IT, answering True**



**47%**

agree that Business executives drive NLP decisions not IT executives.





## Key takeaways and next steps

### Takeaway no. 1

Learning curves are to be expected the first time any organisation adopts NLP. This includes overcoming the hype, half of those who invested in NLP have had different outcomes to those they expected. Crucially though, 7 in 10 are still keen to explore the possibilities for progressing their NLP projects further.

### Takeaway no. 2

Harnessing NLP in contact centres is not a passing trend. 27% of organisations have NLP projects planned in the next two years and 45% are looking into the possibilities.

### Takeaway no. 3

Supporting users is a key function of NLP. By analysing customer speech and text, valuable details and insights help tailor service and augment decision-making.

### Takeaway no. 4

Investing in NLP is increasingly becoming a business decision to drive long-term customer satisfaction. Almost half of NLP decisions are now made by business executives.



## Next steps for the prudent AI for CX investor

An analyst acclaimed, leading global provider of Contact Centre as a Service (CCaaS) solutions, Odigo is a partner for your NLP journey.

- 35 years of CX market experience and over 17 with NLP mean we understand contact centre needs and pain points.
- Omnichannel service, personalised service and self-service are becoming industry-wide standards. By harnessing the details and insights provided by NLP, these strategies can be optimised to further empower agents and customers.
- Active partnerships between providers and clients are crucial to navigating the learning curve that comes with NLP, and Odigo can be there for you.

At Odigo, we believe in human-centric values, which means working with clients to support their agents and customers with advanced technology. AI should replace no one and enable everyone. Find out more and start a conversation with us today.

**contact us  
by clicking here.**



\*Independent market research by Davies Hickman Partners in June 2022 and April 2021:

- In 2022 1,035 business executives answered an online survey in Belgium/Netherlands, France, Germany, Spain and UK. In April 2021 1,007 business executives
- Range of functions: Sales & Marketing, Operations, Logistics, IT, HR, Finance, Leadership, etc.
- Range of seniority: C-level, Director and Manage



## About Odigo

Odigo provides Contact Centre as a Service (CCaaS) solutions that facilitate communication between large organisations and individuals using a global omnichannel management platform. With its innovative approach based on empathy and technology, Odigo enables brands to connect through the crucial human element of interaction, while also taking full advantage of the potential of digital. A pioneer in the customer experience (CX) market, the company caters to the needs of more than 250 large enterprise clients in over 100 countries.

Visit us:  
[www.odigo.com/uk](https://www.odigo.com/uk)

Contact us:  
[contact.uk@odigo.com](mailto:contact.uk@odigo.com)



Odigo



Odigo



@odigo



@odigo\_tm

This document contains information that may be privileged or confidential and is the property of Odigo.  
Copyright © 2022 Odigo. All rights reserved.



Customer experience  
inspired by empathy,  
driven by technology