

WHITEPAPER

# The new normal for telcos in 2021 and beyond

How to thrive in a changed telecoms market.





## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has put telcos under massive pressure.

With employees across the world forced to work from home, millions of people have suddenly started using their home networks to host video calls, make online presentations, transfer files, and carry out ever more bandwidth-intensive tasks. This has led to a surge in demand for contact center support when contact centers themselves are having to run at reduced capacity.

While firefighting this crisis, telcos haven't had much capacity to think about bringing in new tools or processes. But once the pressure eases, many will want to take a step back and see how they can improve their services.

We're settling into a new normal where businesses need employees' home networks to always operate at their best. This will create a demand for stronger, smarter [home network support tools](#) – and an opportunity for you to get ahead of your competitors.



In this whitepaper, we'll explore:

- The state of the telecoms market
- How recent changes will affect the future of telcos in 2021 and beyond
- What you can do to thrive in this new world



## The state of the telecoms market in 2020

Trying to stand out in a highly competitive telecoms market has always been a challenge. And it's not getting any easier.

Telcos are often seen as a utility – a pipe for internet and telecoms services, with little to differentiate them other than pricing. They have tried to shake this perception by offering value-add services. But competition has been heating up from over-the-top services and unified communications providers moving into the value-add space.

Telcos are [less trusted](#) as digital transformation experts among enterprises than other types of ICT providers.

Meanwhile, there have been some big changes in consumer behavior and expectations. People are putting customer experience under greater scrutiny, with [80% of consumers](#) saying it's just as important as products and services.



### Customers are increasingly tech-savvy

They can use [at least 10 different channels](#) to communicate with a company and want all of them to be seamless. And there's a growing demand for self-service. [88% of customers](#) expect a brand or organization to offer an online self-service portal.

### They're time-poor and proactive

It's not just new technology that consumers are after. They don't want to be kept waiting – it's a key factor they'll consider when deciding whether to stay with a brand. More than [60% of consumers](#) agree that even a minute of hold time is too long.

### They won't hesitate to defect

If they don't get an immediate, convenient service, they'll go elsewhere. Telcos already have the highest churn rates of any industry, with [52% of customers](#) citing customer service as their reason for leaving. Poor response times can lead to an up to [15% increase in that churn](#).

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Modern customers don't care what caused the issue they're experiencing. They just want to fix it quickly through a channel that's convenient to them at the time, without having to repeat steps or explain their problem more than once.

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, meeting these needs will become more important than ever.





## How COVID-19 created a new normal for businesses

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused great upheaval and transformation all over the world in a very short span of time. Businesses that hadn't fully embraced home working before the outbreak have had to work harder to survive.

But once the crisis passes and restrictions such as social distancing begin to lift, will life return to how it was in 2019?

Signs suggest this won't be the case. For one thing, many companies have stated publicly that they won't be reverting to pre-pandemic policies. Twitter, for example, is [letting its employees work from home "forever"](#) now they've proven it's feasible. Facebook is also permanently embracing remote work, expecting that [half of its employees](#) will work remotely over the next five to ten years. And [54% of CFOs](#) now plan to make remote work a permanent option.

This raises a question of budgets. Does it make sense to keep investing in office space for staff if they can operate just as effectively from home? [35% of US CFOs](#) are now planning to reduce their real estate footprint. When great savings can be made from cutting back on property, it wouldn't be surprising if many businesses decided to make home working policies core to how they operate.



I spend around £35m on property in a year. I'd much rather invest that in people than expensive offices.

**Martin Sorrel** - WPP founder

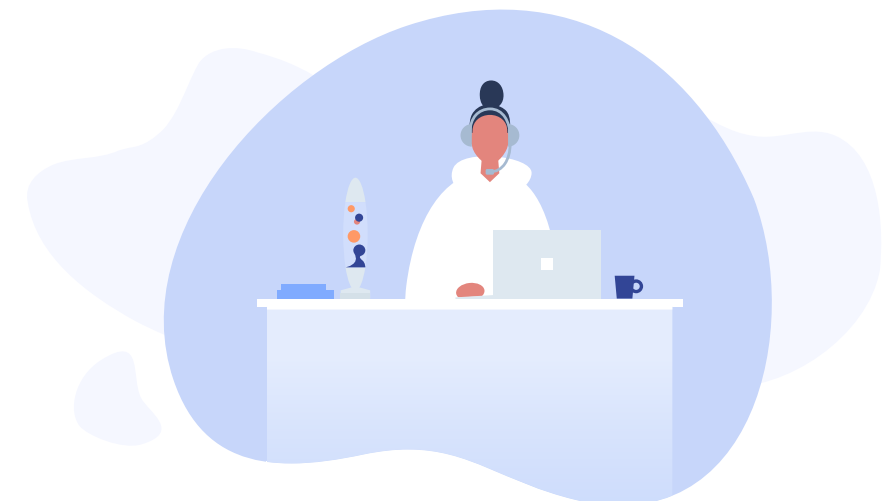
## What does this mean for your customers?

There will undoubtedly still be a need to visit offices from time to time. But for many of your customers, the days of the daily commute are over.

However, they will need to think long and hard about what it means to have flexible working options as part of their company policy. They still have a duty of care to uphold to their employees, after all.

Staff need a suitably ergonomic home working environment that doesn't cause discomfort, including the right desks, chairs, and lighting. And what about security? Is it safe for employees to work over a standard internet connection? Or should they be using a VPN to ensure personal and sensitive information is encrypted?

Then there is service quality to consider. Should employees be using standard home line connections if they're going to be having important client interactions from home as part of the new normal? Or do they need a more reliable, premium connection with guaranteed enterprise-level SLAs and support services?

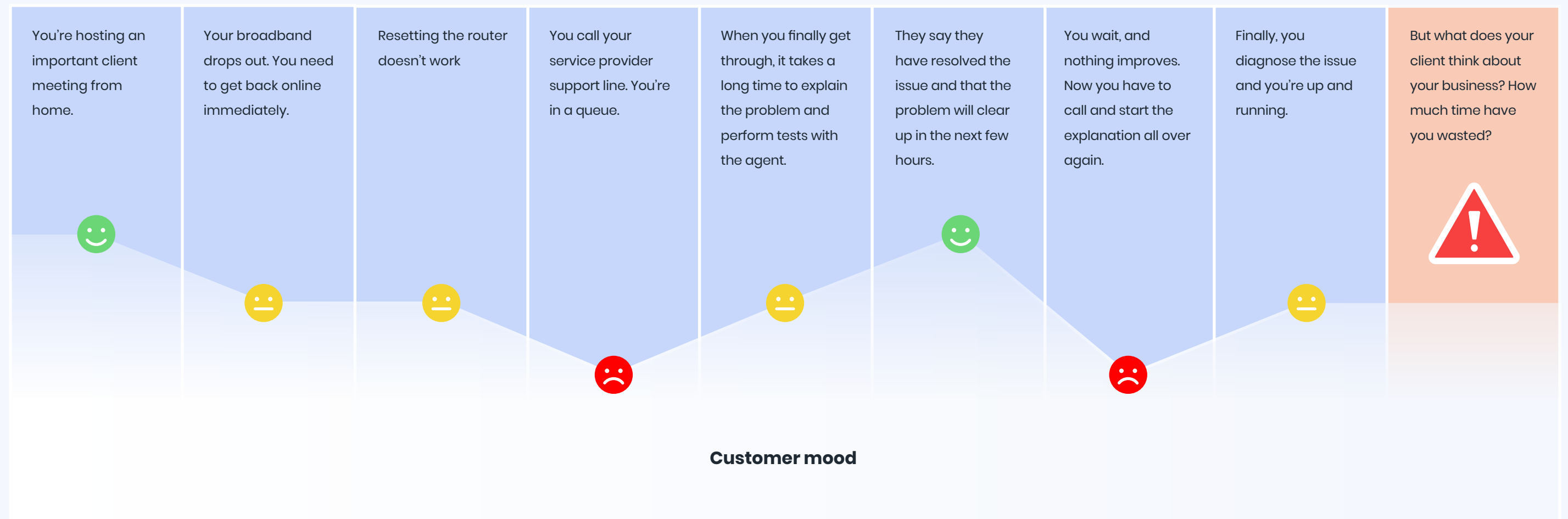


## “Good enough” won’t be good enough

In lockdown, it’s easier to be more forgiving of the inconveniences that come with working off residential Wi-Fi. When the internet slows down because someone’s PlayStation is eating up bandwidth in the next room, people can laugh it off.

But as working from home becomes the new normal, clients and colleagues will stop being able to see the funny side of it. Because it’ll impact your bottom line.

### Picture the scene:



For this new age of normalized home working to be a success, there shouldn't be any parity in service levels between the home and the office. But if you're an SME with no dedicated IT department, who do you turn to for advice on the equipment and services you need? Who will provide and implement them?

This is where you have a golden opportunity to set yourself apart as more than just a utility.



## How telcos can thrive in the new normal

You're in a prime position to provide the key tools and resources your customers need to adapt to the new normal. By working with them directly, you can create a package of business-class services that outmatch what your competitors can offer.

Rather than individual employees working through their residential broadband, your customers can pay to put a better service directly into their homes. Then they'll have the security, guaranteed SLAs, and enhanced support they need to work from home as effectively as possible.

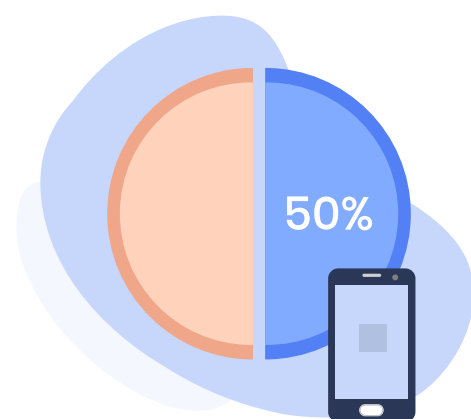
If you can talk to your customers, identify their needs, and offer them a solution before they've had the chance to search the market, you can improve their customer experience while creating new revenue streams. But to do this, you'll need to enhance your customer services, which means harnessing the power of new technology – including [next-generation support tools](#).



**48% of telcos** said improving quality of customer support was one of the most important drivers of automation adoption at their organization.

## Next-gen self-service is an essential piece of the puzzle

Putting pages of technical information onto a website FAQ page isn't good enough for enterprise-level self-service. The customer should be able to access the information they need to resolve issues even when their broadband is down. A detailed FAQ can also be intimidating for people who aren't technically minded.



Only around half of contact centers offer a smartphone app as part of their customer service.

In high-urgency situations where an issue is time-sensitive, a self-service mobile app is by far the most popular channel with consumers, with [47%](#) choosing it as their preferred method for contacting a company. You need to provide an automated, mobile-based solution that anyone can use to quickly diagnose and resolve issues by themselves. With [only around half of contact centers](#) offering a smartphone app as part of their customer service, there's an opportunity here to set yourself apart in the market.

Self-service tools also take some of the strain off your contact centers. If more customers can resolve common issues themselves, it'll reduce the number of calls your agents have to field, freeing up more time for them to focus on the complex queries.

However, your support capability can't rely on self-service alone.

## How advanced tools can enhance remote support

There will always be people that want to speak to a contact center agent when they have an issue. The problem might be too complex to resolve themselves. For high complexity interactions, consumers would [prefer to ring a call center](#) (16%) than use a website self-service or mobile app (12%).

An enterprise-level support service will need to offer the best of both worlds: a self-service mobile app that works seamlessly alongside enhanced agent-assisted support.

When customers contact a business, first contact resolution is the most important factor that impacts their experience.

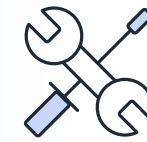




As we've established, customers hate waiting and don't want to explain the details of their issue multiple times. First contact resolution is the [single most important factor](#) that impacts customer experience when they contact a business. So, the more details your agents have about the customer, the issue they're experiencing, and the steps they've already taken to solve it, the more efficiently they can help them. Next-gen self-service tools pass this information on to the agent automatically. This minimizes triage questions and helps them resolve the customer's issue faster.

Mobile support apps can also use the inherent capabilities of a mobile device to improve agent-assisted support. For instance, say the customer has issues with the cabling on the back of their router. Instead of trying to explain the issue to the agent, they can use the phone's in-built camera to take pictures of the cabling, so your support agent can see exactly what the customer sees there and then.

This all adds up to a much smoother support experience, reduced average handling times, and happier customers.



## Smarter support tools are the key to your success

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way businesses work forever – and changed the telecoms market along with it. The future for telcos in 2021 and beyond will not involve going back to the way things were. Nor will it be a continuation of the stopgap measures that many businesses started using in lockdown.

Businesses will demand something better. They'll want an enterprise-quality unified experience that they can put directly in their employees' homes, with smarter, smoother, and faster support services. To retain customers and remain competitive, telcos will have to use innovative technology to evolve their offerings.

Start now, and you can create valuable new packages before your competitors do – and come out ahead in a challenging market.





# About Support Robotics

We know how frustrating today's mobile and broadband support services often are – we've experienced them first-hand.

Self-service is in demand, but usually disappoints, offering little more than online guides. Agents struggle to resolve issues efficiently because of the disparate tools they use. Compliance should be automatic, but processes are often hard to follow, causing needless returns and costly callouts.

Our mission is to fix this whole experience. That's why we developed a smart app and web portal that offers more self-service options, a seamless handover to agents, and the tools to resolve issues faster while reducing costly callouts.

To learn more about how our app and web portal can elevate your home network support services, get in touch today.

## Contact us



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