Agent Management Buyers Guide

Software Provider and Product Assessment

ISG Research

Agent Management

Labor has long been the largest ongoing operational expense in contact centers—so much so that managers have had to manipulate the size of the agent pool to account for cost controls. In recent years, however, it has become clear that an explosion of new technology is upending core assumptions about how that labor force should be managed. The development of artificial intelligence (AI) tools for centers has opened a Pandora's box of questions about how many human agents are needed to serve a customer base that is being led toward self-service. The agent experience is made more seamless through better automated scheduling and coaching tools. At the same time, the role of the agent is changing in ways that are still unclear and widely varied across the industry. The toolset used to measure and optimize agent performance is very different when managing a pool of hybrid human and automated service representatives, receiving data in real time and striving to make the center into a revenue driver, all at the same time.

> **The development of AI tools for centers has opened a Pandora's box of questions about how many human agents are needed to serve a customer base that is being led toward self-service.**

ISG Research defines the Agent Management category to include traditional tools and their successors: systems used to schedule, evaluate, motivate and manage contact center agents, including workforce management, quality measurement, agent desktops, agent performance and agent experience. Many of those elements overlap, and all have a significant analytic component. They also bleed over into automation, self-service, customer feedback and knowledge management. Today's agent management toolkit has been heavily influenced by advances in AI. It has been able to directly improve operational performance by automating specific work modes that consume agent time, like creating after-call summaries. It has also changed the way coaching and training are delivered, and how managers can assess the overall productivity and effectiveness of agent behavior. Also included in the agent management definition are software tools used to monitor and train non-human service representatives, i.e., automated bots and "agents" (as the term is used in the AI community). To date, these tools are limited to a handful of software providers, but we expect a huge leap forward in development and deployment over the next 12 to 18 months.

Contact centers were first developed as business entities almost 50 years ago, and for much of that time, core technology and operations remained fairly stable. Well into the digital era, the fundamentals of interaction routing and workforce optimization were standard practices, augmented but not displaced by incremental innovations in expanding the channel landscape, more powerful analysis and better ways to measure performance.

The past three years have seen more disruptive innovation than centers have experienced to date. Much is made of the importance of AI in creating entirely new tools, and indeed, we assert that by 2027, three-quarters of contact centers will have introduced multiple GenAI applications into their service processes for routing, chatbots and agent assistance. But less discussion surrounds the impact of outside providers entering the contact center software space from adjacent markets, especially the hyperscaler giants. When firms with R&D resources in the tens of billions of dollars enter a market, the incumbent players have little choice but to make peace with a changed environment and adapt. The result has been an expansion of choice. In the past, a buyer had to select the core call-routing engine and build a center's tech stack around that software provider's solution. In the new world, hyperscalers have commoditized the routing engine, allowing virtually anyone—buyer or another provider—to build a contact center infrastructure based on whichever software component is most important to them. So, a buyer committed to a particular CRM or case-tracking tool can start with those elements and build the center using the extensive integrations and partnership networks available. Or, they can work with software from the back office or marketing department and conform the center's systems to accommodate those applications.

This means that providers from many origin points can plausibly go to market with a software suite that serves the core needs of contact centers—routing and workforce management. Buyers then distinguish between options based on more broad-based needs, such as data management, back-office integration, conformity with existing legacy tools or something specific to the unique business or vertical market. In 2025, contact center buyers face more—and more complicated—choices than ever.

What enterprises need is assurance of interoperability and clean, easy integrations. Most buyers appear to source technology from as few providers as possible, leaning toward suites for simplicity of administration. Most large and midsized platform providers encourage this by forging extensive partnership networks and app marketplaces that let buyers fill peripheral software needs with best-of-breed niche tools, with the assurance that the platform provider will coordinate the connections.

Enterprises that have not purchased contact center systems since before the pandemic (which is most of them) are experiencing a different world: new providers, providers that have evolved focus and a set of functional capabilities that didn't exist five years ago. Business requirements have not advanced as quickly as technological innovation, so buyers are understandably reticent—even confused—about how to prioritize deployment of a new system. It doesn't help that many contact center buyers are now also sitting side-by-side with CX professionals who have different, parallel goals for software purchases, and are simultaneously under great pressure from executives to stay current on developing AI technologies (if that is even possible).

All of that said, what enterprises really need to do is focus on two things: the foundational elements of yore, meaning routing and workforce tools, and the expanded universe of tools that support and extend its mission. Those would include advanced analytics, conversational AI for self-service, AI tools for automating quality and knowledge resources that feed the customer-facing AI.

Buyers also need assurance that when they take the leap into the realm of the new, they have concrete ROI metrics to back them up. Providers report a consistently high portion of AI-related sales riding atop detailed proof-of-concept trials. Some also indicate that the uptake for certain AI tools is correspondingly slow, as buyers wait for the proof points.

To meet these enterprise needs, today's contact center systems must incorporate key AI applications that make up the current "core" capabilities: information synthesis and delivery to customers and human agents, automating processes within the center and between departments and analyzing customer sentiment more deeply than just at the level of the interaction. Contemporary tools need to be strong in areas that were once peripheral, especially self-service and analytics.

Of all the software areas related to contact center operations, agent management, customer analytics and self-service are the most dynamic and most affected by AI. Agent management, in particular, emerged as one of the key use cases for AI in its early days, with tools like transcription and summarization making a demonstrable, near-instant case based on saving time and shortening interactions. More recently, automating the entire quality assessment process by subjecting 100% of recordings to AI scrutiny is a sea change in operations.

The ISG Buyers Guide™ for Agent Management evaluates software providers and products in key areas, including workforce management, quality measurement, agent desktops, agent performance management and guidance and assistance tools.

This research evaluates the following software providers offering products to address key elements of Agent Management as we define it: 8x8, Aspect, AWS, Calabrio, Content Guru, Eleveo, evaluagent, Exotel, Five9, Genesys, Intradiem, Microsoft, Nextiva, NiCE, Odigo, RingCentral, Sinch, Talkdesk, UJET and Verint.

Buyers Guide Overview

For over two decades, ISG Research has conducted market research in a spectrum of areas across business applications, tools and technologies. We have designed the Buyers Guide to provide a balanced perspective of software providers and products that is rooted in an understanding of the business requirements in any enterprise. Utilization of our research methodology and decades of experience enables our Buyers Guide to be an effective method to assess and select software providers and products. The findings of this research undertaking contribute to our comprehensive approach to rating software providers in a manner that is based on the assessments completed by an enterprise.

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The ISG Buyers Guide™ for Agent Management is the distillation of over a year of market and product research efforts. It is an assessment of how well software providers' offerings address enterprises' requirements for agent management software. The index is structured to support a request for information (RFI) that could be used in the request for proposal (RFP) process by incorporating all criteria needed to evaluate, select, utilize and maintain relationships with software providers. An effective product and customer experience with a provider can ensure the best long-term relationship and value achieved from a resource and financial investment.

In this Buyers Guide, ISG Research evaluates the software in seven key categories that are weighted to reflect buyers' needs based on our expertise and research. Five are product-experience related: Adaptability, Capability, Manageability, Reliability, and Usability. In addition, we consider two customer-experience categories: Validation, and Total Cost of Ownership/Return on Investment (TCO/ROI). To assess functionality, one of the components of Capability, we applied the ISG Research Value Index methodology and blueprint, which links the personas and processes for agent management to an enterprise's requirements.

The structure of the research reflects our understanding that the effective evaluation of software providers and products involves far more than just examining product features, potential revenue or customers generated from a provider's marketing and sales efforts. We believe it is important to take a comprehensive, research-based approach, since making the wrong choice of agent management technology can raise the total cost of ownership, lower the return on investment and hamper an enterprise's ability to reach its full performance potential. In addition, this approach can reduce the project's development and deployment time and eliminate the risk of relying on a short list of software providers that does not represent a best fit for your enterprise.

ISG Research believes that an objective review of software providers and products is a critical business strategy for the adoption and implementation of agent management software and applications. An enterprise's review should include a thorough analysis of both what is possible and what is relevant. We urge enterprises to do a thorough job of evaluating agent management systems and tools and offer this Buyers Guide as both the results of our in-depth analysis of these providers and as an evaluation methodology.

Key Takeaways

Agent management in contact centers is undergoing rapid change as AI redefines how labor is scheduled, coached and evaluated, while expanding agent roles to include hybrid human and automated interactions. Traditional workforce and quality tools are now augmented by transcription, summarization and AI-driven monitoring, delivering measurable efficiency gains and shifting performance benchmarks. With adjacent providers reshaping the market, enterprises require assurance of interoperability, ROI evidence and validated AI use cases, while successful platforms balance foundational reliability with advanced AI-driven capabilities.

Software Provider Summary

The research identifies NiCE, Verint and Genesys as the market leaders, with strengths across multiple categories, while providers such as Content Guru, Dialpad and Five9 demonstrated targeted capabilities. Classification placed NiCE, Verint and Genesys in the Exemplary quadrant alongside providers including Salesforce, Talkdesk, Zendesk and Zoho. Firms such as AWS, Cisco and Microsoft were categorized as Innovative, Twilio and Zoom as Assurance, and vendors such as 8x8, Mitel and Sinch in the Merit quadrant. This segmentation enables enterprises to quickly assess which providers deliver the strongest overall commitment.

Product Experience Insights

Product Experience accounted for 80% of the overall rating, with emphasis on capability, usability, reliability, adaptability and manageability. NiCE, Verint and Genesys led in delivering robust routing, workforce and analytics capabilities, while Five9 and Sprinklr demonstrated breadth but less overall depth. Leaders distinguished themselves with adaptability, usability and strong reliability, ensuring that their platforms can scale across enterprise requirements while supporting modern AI-driven innovations.

Customer Experience Value

Customer Experience represented 20% of the evaluation, focused on validation and TCO/ROI. Verint, NiCE and Content Guru led in this category by demonstrating strong customer commitment, transparent ROI frameworks and consistent lifecycle support. Genesys and Salesforce also performed well, though short of leadership. Lower-performing providers often lacked sufficient customer references or clarity in their engagement approach, making it harder for buyers to justify long-term investments.

Strategic Recommendations

Enterprises should treat contact center software selection as a strategic decision that balances foundational functions such as routing and workforce management with expanded AI-driven capabilities in analytics, self-service and agent support. Buyers should prioritize platforms that ensure interoperability, simplify administration and deliver measurable ROI through proof-of-concept trials. Using the ISG Buyers Guide as a structured framework evaluates providers against both product and customer experience, ensuring investments that improve efficiency, enhance customer satisfaction, and align with evolving requirements.

How To Use This Buyers Guide

Evaluating Software Providers: The Process

We recommend using the Buyers Guide to assess and evaluate new or existing software providers for your enterprise. The market research can be used as an evaluation framework to establish a formal request for information from providers on products and customer experience and will shorten the cycle time when creating an RFI. The steps listed below provide a process that can facilitate best possible outcomes.

1. Define the business case and goals.
   Define the mission and business case for investment and the expected outcomes from your organizational and technological efforts.
2. Specify the business needs.
   Defining the business requirements helps identify what specific capabilities are required with respect to people, processes, information and technology.
3. Assess the required roles and responsibilities.
   Identify the individuals required for success at every level of the enterprise from executives to frontline workers and determine the needs of each.
4. Outline the project's critical path.
   What needs to be done, in what order and who will do it? This outline should make clear the prior dependencies at each step of the project plan.
5. Ascertain the technology approach.
   Determine the business and technology approach that most closely aligns to your enterprise's requirements.
6. Establish software provider evaluation criteria.
   Utilize the product experience: Adaptability, Capability, Manageability, Reliability and Usability, and the customer experience in TCO/ROI and Validation.
7. Evaluate and select the technology properly.
   Weight the categories in the technology evaluation criteria to reflect your enterprise's priorities to determine the short list of software providers and products.
8. Establish the business initiative team to start the project.
   Identify who will lead the project and the members of the team needed to plan and execute it with timelines, priorities and resources.

The Findings

All of the products we evaluated are feature-rich, but not all the capabilities offered by a software provider are equally valuable to types of workers or support everything needed to manage products on a continuous basis. Moreover, the existence of too many capabilities may be a negative factor for an enterprise if it introduces unnecessary complexity. Nonetheless, you may decide that a larger number of features in the product is a plus, especially if some of them match your enterprise's established practices or support an initiative that is driving the purchase of new software.

Factors beyond features and functions or software provider assessments may become a deciding factor. For example, an enterprise may face budget constraints such that the TCO evaluation can tip the balance to one provider or another. This is where the Value Index methodology and the appropriate category weighting can be applied to determine the best fit of software providers and products to your specific needs.

Overall Scoring of Software Providers Across Categories

The research finds NiCE atop the list, followed by Verint and Genesys. Providers that place in the top three of a category earn the designation of Leader. NiCE has done so in seven categories, Verint in six, Genesys in three, Calabrio and Content Guru in two and Talkdesk in one category.

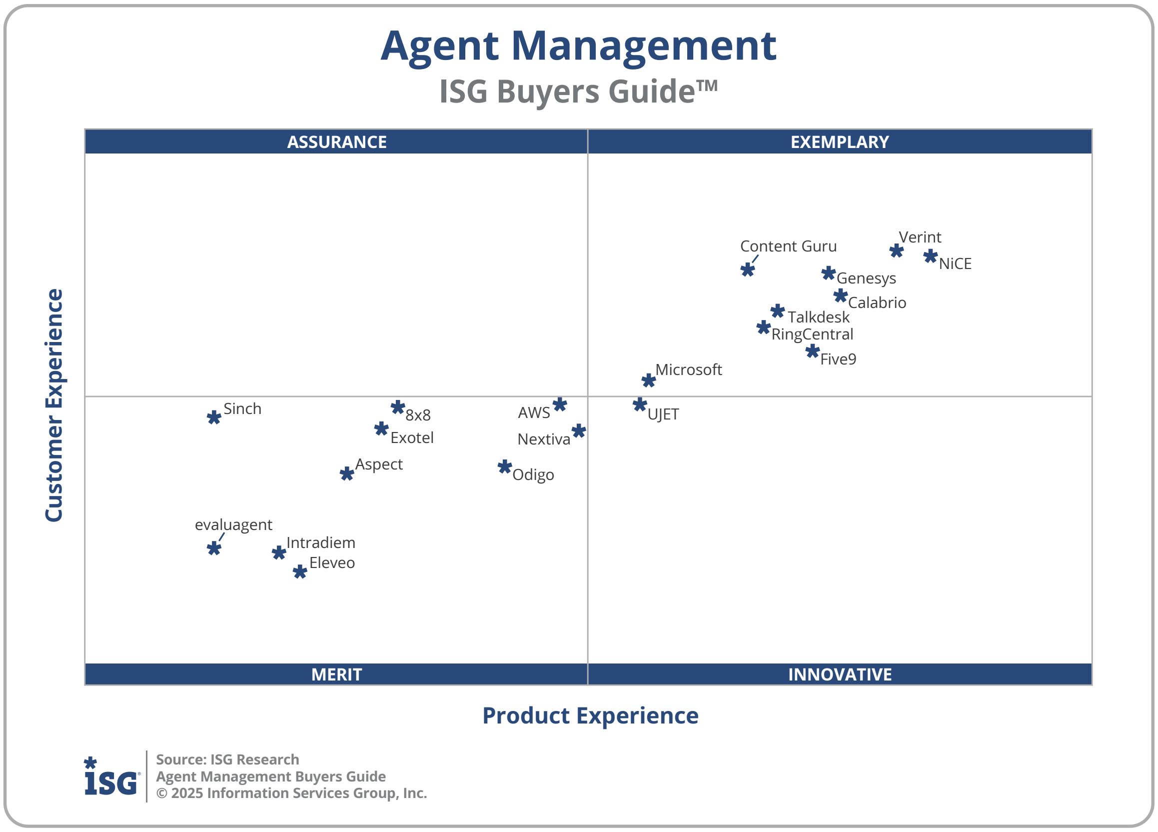
Agent Management
Overall

Providers	Grade	Performance
NiCE	A-	Leader 81.6%
Verint	B++	Leader 80.7%
Genesys	B++	Leader 78.4%
Calabrio	B++	78.2%
Five9	B++	76.3%
Content Guru	B++	76.2%
Talkdesk	B++	76.1%
RingCentral	B++	75.1%
Microsoft	B+	70.7%
UJET	B+	69.6%
AWS	B	67.3%
Nextiva	B	67.0%
Odigo	B	63.4%
8x8	B	63.1%
Exotel	B-	61.2%
Aspect	B-	59.2%
Sinch	B-	56.7%
Intradiem	C++	55.4%
Eleveo	C++	55.2%
evaluagent	C+	47.5%

Source: ISG Research
Agent Management Buyers Guide

The overall representation of the research below places the rating of the Product Experience and Customer Experience on the *x* and *y* axes, respectively, to provide a visual representation and classification of the software providers. Those providers whose Product Experience have a higher weighted performance to the axis in aggregate of the five product categories place farther to the right, while the performance and weighting for the two Customer Experience categories determines placement on the vertical axis. In short, software providers that place closer to the upper-right on this chart performed better than those closer to the lower-left.

The research places software providers into one of four overall categories: Assurance, Exemplary, Merit or Innovative. This representation classifies providers' overall weighted performance.



Exemplary: The categorization and placement of software providers in Exemplary (upper right) represent those that performed the best in meeting the overall Product and Customer Experience requirements. The providers rated Exemplary are: Calabrio, Content Guru, Five9, Genesys, Microsoft, NiCE, RingCentral, Talkdesk and Verint.

Innovative: The categorization and placement of software providers in Innovative (lower right) represent those that performed the best in meeting the overall Product Experience requirements but did not achieve the highest levels of requirements in Customer Experience. The provider rated Innovative is: UJET.

Assurance: The categorization and placement of software providers in Assurance (upper left) represent those that achieved the highest levels in the overall Customer Experience requirements but did not achieve the highest levels of Product Experience.

Merit: The categorization of software providers in Merit (lower left) represents those that did not surpass the thresholds for the Assurance, Exemplary or Innovative categories in Customer or Product Experience. The providers rated Merit are: 8x8, Aspect, AWS, Eleveo, evaluagent, Exotel, Intradiem, Nextiva, Odigo and Sinch.

We warn that close provider placement proximity should not be taken to imply that the packages evaluated are functionally identical or equally well suited for use by every enterprise or for a specific process. Although there is a high degree of commonality in how enterprises handle agent management, there are many idiosyncrasies and differences in how they do these functions that can make one software provider's offering a better fit than another's for a particular enterprise's needs.

We advise enterprises to assess and evaluate software providers based on organizational requirements and use this research as a supplement to internal evaluation of a provider and products.

Product Experience

The process of researching products to address an enterprise's needs should be comprehensive. Our Value Index methodology examines Product Experience and how it aligns with an enterprise's lifecycle of onboarding, configuration, operations, usage and maintenance. Too often, software providers are not evaluated for the entirety of the product; instead, they are evaluated on market execution and vision of the future, which are flawed since they do not represent an enterprise's requirements but how the provider operates. As more software providers orient to a complete product experience, evaluations will be more robust.

The research results in Product Experience are ranked at 80%, or four-fifths, of the overall rating using the specific underlying weighted category performance. Importance was placed on the categories as follows: Usability (10%), Capability (40%), Reliability (10%), Adaptability (10%) and Manageability (10%). This weighting impacted the resulting overall ratings in this research. NiCE, Verint and Calabrio were designated Product Experience Leaders.

Agent Management
Product Experience

Providers	Grade	Performance
NiCE	A-	*Leader* 65.3%
Verint	B++	*Leader* 64.2%
Calabrio	B++	*Leader* 62.4%
Genesys	B++	62.0%
Five9	B++	61.4%
Talkdesk	B++	60.3%
RingCentral	B+	59.8%
Content Guru	B+	59.3%
Microsoft	B+	56.1%
UJET	B+	55.8%
Nextiva	B	53.9%
AWS	B	53.2%
Odigo	B	51.5%
8x8	B-	48.0%
Exotel	B-	47.4%
Aspect	B-	46.3%
Eleveo	C++	44.8%
Intradiem	C++	44.1%
Sinch	C++	40.9%
evaluagent	C+	36.1%

Source: ISG Research
Agent Management Buyers Guide

Customer Experience

The importance of a customer relationship with a software provider is essential to the actual success of the products and technology. The advancement of the Customer Experience and the entire lifecycle an enterprise has with its software provider is critical for ensuring satisfaction in working with that provider. Technology providers that have chief customer officers are more likely to have greater investments in the customer relationship and focus more on their success. These leaders also need to take responsibility for ensuring this commitment is made abundantly clear on the website and in the buying process and customer journey.

The research results in Customer Experience are ranked at 20%, or one-fifth, using the specific underlying weighted category performance as it relates to the framework of commitment and value to the software provider-customer relationship. The two evaluation categories are Validation (10%) and TCO/ROI (10%), which are weighted to represent their importance to the overall research.

Agent Management
Customer Experience

Providers	Grade	Performance
Verint	A-	*Leader* 16.5%
NiCE	A-	*Leader* 16.4%
Content Guru	B++	*Leader* 16.1%
Genesys	B++	16.0%
Calabrio	B++	15.7%
Talkdesk	B++	15.4%
RingCentral	B++	15.1%
Five9	B+	14.8%
Microsoft	B+	14.2%
UJET	B+	13.8%
AWS	B	13.8%
8x8	B	13.7%
Sinch	B	13.4%
Exotel	B	13.2%
Nextiva	B	13.2%
Odigo	B-	12.5%
Aspect	B-	12.3%
evaluagent	C++	10.9%
Intradiem	C++	10.8%
Eleveo	C++	10.4%

Source: ISG Research
Agent Management Buyers Guide

The software providers that evaluated the highest overall in the aggregated and weighted Customer Experience categories are Verint, NiCE and Content Guru. These category leaders best communicate commitment and dedication to customer needs.

Software providers that did not perform well in this category were unable to provide sufficient customer case studies to demonstrate success or articulate their commitment to customer experience and an enterprise's journey. The selection of a software provider means a continuous investment by the enterprise, so a holistic evaluation must include examination of how they support their customer experience.

Appendix: Software Provider Inclusion

For inclusion in the ISG Buyers Guide™ for Agent Management in 2025, a software provider must have a standalone software application (or suite of applications) that serves the operating needs of contact centers, including routing, workforce engagement, analysis and customer data management.

The enterprise must be in good standing financially and ethically, have at least $50 million in annual or projected revenue, more than 50 employees, sell products and provide support on at least two continents, and have at least 25 customers. The principal source of the relevant business unit's revenue must be software related, and there must have been at least one major software release in the past 12 months. To qualify for evaluation in Agent Management, the product should include the following capabilities: tools used to schedule, evaluate, motivate and manage contact center agents, including workforce management, quality measurement, agent desktops, agent performance and agent experience.

The research is designed to be independent of the specifics of software provider packaging and pricing. To represent the real-world environment in which businesses operate, we include providers that offer suites or packages of products that may include relevant individual modules or applications. If a software provider is actively marketing, selling and developing a product for the general market and it is reflected on the provider's website that the product is within the scope of the research, that provider is automatically evaluated for inclusion.

All software providers that offer relevant agent management products and meet the inclusion requirements were invited to participate in the evaluation process at no cost to them.

Software providers that meet our inclusion criteria but did not completely participate in our Buyers Guide were assessed solely on publicly available information. As this could have a significant impact on classification and ratings, we recommend additional scrutiny when evaluating those providers.

Products Evaluated

Provider	Product Names	Version	Release Month/Year
8x8	8x8 Contact Center	9.16	April 2025
Aspect	Workforce Engagement Management	N/A	June 2025
AWS	Amazon Connect	N/A	May 2025
Calabrio	Calabrio One	2508.3.1	June 2025
Content Guru	storm CONTACT	N/A	June 2025
Eleveo	Eleveo Workforce Optimization Suite	9.7	January 2025
evaluagent	evaluagent Platform	Q2 2025	June 2025
Exotel	Exotel Enterprise Contact Center	N/A	June 2025
Five9	Five9 Intelligent Cloud Contact Center Platform	N/A	June 2025
Genesys	Genesys Cloud CX Genesys Cloud EX	N/A	June 2025
Intradiem	Intradiem Dynamic Workforce Orchestration	N/A	May 2025
Microsoft	Dynamics 365 Contact Center	Release Wave 1	April 2025
Nextiva	Nextiva Unified Customer Experience Management Platform	N/A	April 2025
NiCE	NiCE CXone Mpower	N/A	June 2025
Odigo	Odigo Platform	N/A	June 2025
RingCentral	RingCX RingCentral Contact Center Enterprise	25.2	April 2025
Sinch	Sinch Contact Pro	7.0 FP17 (7.0.17.0)	June 2025
Talkdesk	Talkdesk CX Cloud	N/A	April 2025

UJET	UJET Platform	N/A	June 2025
Verint	Verint	2025R	May 2025

Providers of Promise

We did not include software providers that, as a result of our research and analysis, did not satisfy the criteria for inclusion in this Buyers Guide. These are listed below as "Providers of Promise."

Provider	Product	Capabilities	Revenue	Geography	Customers
ASC Technologies	Neo Suite; Recording Insights	No	No	Yes	Yes
Assembled	Assembled Workforce Management	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Avoxi	AVOXI Contact Center	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
CloudTalk	CloudTalk Inbound Call Center	No	No	Yes	Yes
CommunityWFM	CommunityWFM Enterprise	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Gladly	Gladly Platform, Gladly Sidekick	No	No	Yes	Yes
insightful	Workforce Intelligence Platform	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Peopleware	Peopleware Workforce Management	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Puzzel	Puzzel Contact Centre	Yes	No	No	Yes
Sharpen	Sharpen CCaaS Platform	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Vocalcom	Vocalcom Hermes360	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

About ISG Software Research and Advisory

ISG Software Research and Advisory provides market research and coverage of the technology industry, informing enterprises, software and service providers, and investment firms. The ISG Buyers Guides provide insight on software categories and providers that can be used in the RFI/RFP process to assess, evaluate and select software providers.

About ISG Research

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About ISG

ISG (Nasdaq: III) is a global AI-centered technology research and advisory firm. A trusted partner to more than 900 clients, including 75 of the world's top 100 enterprises, ISG is a long-time leader in technology and business services sourcing that is now at the forefront of leveraging AI to help organizations achieve operational excellence and faster growth. The firm, founded in 2006, is known for its proprietary market data, in-depth knowledge of provider ecosystems, and the expertise of its 1,600 professionals worldwide working together to help clients maximize the value of their technology investments.