

BEFORE YOU LICENCE · 2026

Do You Have a Queue?

Contact centre software costs three to four times a normal seat. Most businesses quoted for it need it on about a tenth of their staff. Here is how to find out which tenth.

Two businesses, both four hundred calls a day. A wholesaler, where customers ring the main number and are happy with whoever knows the answer. A professional services firm, where clients ring their own adviser and would rather wait until tomorrow than speak to somebody else. Same volume, same headcount. One needs contact centre software and the other would waste every dollar on it. **It is about shape, not size.**

The test, in two questions. Answer for a normal week

1. Do callers ever wait, knowing they are waiting, because everyone who could help is busy? No means you need better ring groups, real hours and an after hours path, not a licence. **2. When they do, is it fine that any qualified person picks up?** No means the software will fight you, because routing that ignores who the customer knows is wrong for a relationship business. Most businesses answer *sometimes*, and that answer means hybrid.

■ Six signs, all observable. Three or more is worth a conversation

- People hold regularly and nobody knows for how long.
- Nobody can say how many callers gave up yesterday. Unmeasured means unmanaged.
- The same question arrives on three channels with no shared history.
- Somebody senior routes calls with their voice. It stops when they take leave.
- You roster according to expected call volume. The clearest structural sign there is.
- "How is today going?" takes a day to answer.

■ Four times it gets sold and is not needed

The situation	The cheaper answer that works better
Three calls arrive together between 8:30 and 10.	A ring group, an overflow rule, an AI answer. Not twelve licences.
Somebody wants to know what the phones are doing.	The report your system probably already has. Ask before assuming.
After hours calls reach nothing useful.	Opening hours and a defined after hours path. Not queueing.
Support has a queue, the other forty do not.	Hybrid licensing. The most common overspend in this market.

Two things that are not signs, despite being used to qualify you

Call volume: six hundred calls a day, each to a named account manager, is not a queue. **Headcount:** forty people each answering their own phone is a phone system, while four sharing one number against a service target is a contact centre. Both are easy questions to ask on a first call, which is why they get asked, and neither describes how the work moves.

■ Count for four weeks before you licence anything

- 1 **Offered.** Every call that arrived, including the ones nobody reached. The demand curve is always spikier than people expect.
- 2 **Answered.** How many reached a person, and how fast. Compare against offered to find the real gap.
- 3 **Abandoned.** Waited, then gave up. Your lost revenue number. When it happens matters as much as how often.
- 4 **Repeat callers within 48 hours.** Tells you whether the answered number is as good as it looks.
- 5 **Then split offered into what AI can resolve and what needs a person, and licence against the second number.** Worth more than any negotiation on the rate.

■ The hybrid split that usually fits

Business	In the queue	Everyone else
Wholesaler, 60 staff	6 to 10 on orders and enquiries	Warehouse, field sales, finance
Medical or allied health, 25	3 to 5 on reception and bookings	Practitioners and admin
Property management, 40	4 to 6 on maintenance	Named property managers
Service provider with SLA, 50	12 to 20 on support	Engineering, sales, operations
Accounting or legal, 80	0 to 2, frequently none	Everyone. Clients ring their own person.

■ Read the licence before you sign

- **Named or concurrent seats.** Named licences everyone who might take a queued call. Concurrent buys the peak. Usually the biggest single difference in the total.
- **Who counts as a seat.** Supervisors, escalation managers, the person who helps on Mondays.
- **Channels bundled or separate.** Chat and email as add ons turn one queue into three line items.
- **Recording retention.** The default is short. Compliance should set this, not budget.
- **Is CRM integration configuration or a project?** In writing, before signing.
- **How seats come off.** Adding is instant. Seasonal businesses find out about removal in February.

What AI changed about the seat count

The volume that justified a big queue was simple repetitive calls: hours, status, bookings, the same six questions all day. Those are exactly what an AI answer now takes end to end. The residual queue is smaller, sometimes by a third, and harder, because what is left is complicated and emotional. Automate first, count second, licence third. Doing it in the other order is how businesses pay for fourteen seats and use six.