

Topic: MCAD

A Ringing Endorsement

Feedback from managers of CAD/CAM related functions at mechanical engineering sites on the quality/quantity of telephone support they receive from their CAD/CAM suppliers.

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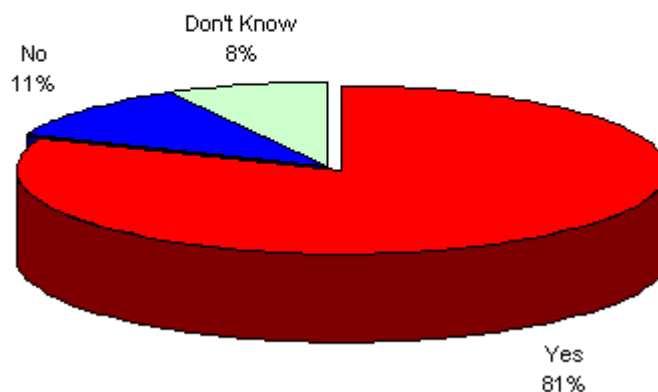
Mention telephone support lines and for many the first thought will be of automated mazes and operators who have turned the phrase 'the customer is king' on its head. In both the consumer and the business-to business world the customer experience in this area is

variable; we have seen however in previous issues of *iCAD* that, among UK CAD/CAM users at least, there is high overall satisfaction with the services provided by CAD/CAM suppliers and little evidence that poor telephone support is an issue. To put this to the test, we interviewed CAD/CAM managers at 252 companies in the UK mechanical engineering sector about their views on the telephone support available to them.

Majority Support

Eighty one per cent of our sample said that their main supplier of CAD/CAM solutions provides a telephone support service; 11% do not have this option available to them, and 8% don't know if one exists or not. Not surprisingly smaller firms are slightly less likely to be able to access this service; three-quarters of companies with less than 250 staff can do so, compared to 88% of companies with more than 250 staff. Smaller companies are more likely to buy from cut-price outfits whose support ends when the box arrives on their customers' desks.

Does Your Main CAD/CAM Supplier Offer A Customer Support Telephone Service?



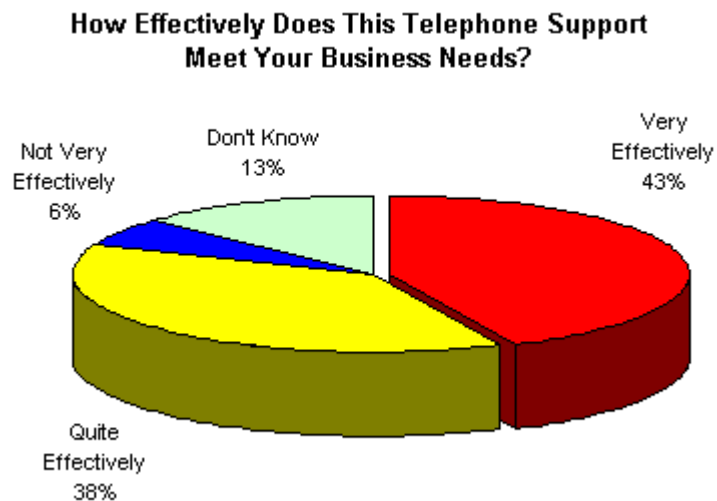


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The number of managers in our sample (27) who do not have access to telephone support from their CAD/CAM supplier is too small for further analysis - but out of interest only a third said they wished this service was available, half said they didn't need it, and a quarter didn't know if it would help or not (presumably because they've never had the opportunity to access the soothing, efficient tones of the software support specialist).

Smooth Operators

Of those managers whose main CAD/CAM supplier does provide telephone support, **43% said this service met their needs very effectively**; 38% said their needs were met quite effectively but with room for improvement, and 6% said the service they received did not really meet their needs.



Thirteen per cent of managers couldn't comment on the quality of the telephone support on offer, in most cases because they had not used it enough to judge.

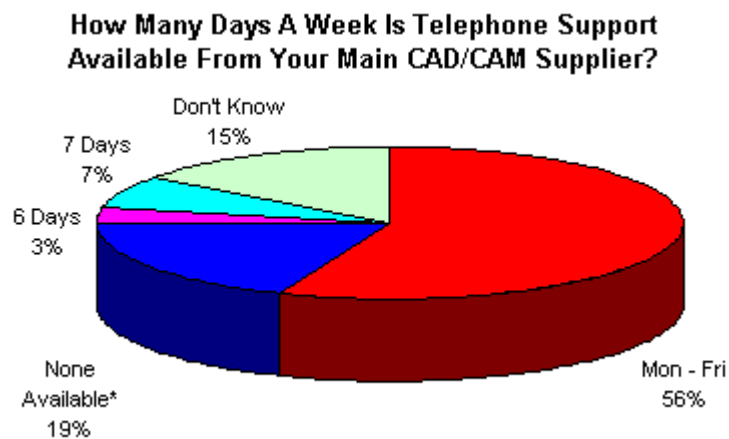


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Opening Times

With ever increasing time-to-market pressures and supply chains extending across different time zones, are suppliers under pressure to extend the availability of their telephone support beyond the 'normal' working day? We can't pinpoint exactly the proportion of CAD/CAM managers in our sample who can access telephone support 24 hours a day, seven days a week because around 15% couldn't tell what hours this service is available. However, 70% of those whose main supplier offers a telephone support service said it was available on Monday to Fridays only; this includes 8% who can access support for between 19-24 hours on these days.

Only 10% of our overall sample of 252 companies said they could access telephone support over the weekend, with three-quarters of this group able to call on both Saturdays and Sundays.



* This 19% includes the 8% who don't know if they have any telephone support available to them.

Seven per cent overall said they could use this telephone support seven days a week, for at least 19 hours a day.

You Want More?

Only 4% (seven managers - corresponding to 3% of our overall sample) of those whose suppliers offer a telephone support service said they would like the times it is available extended. Of these seven managers, three wanted the service extended later in the evening, and four wanted it available 24 hours a day.



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Conclusion

As we'd expect, few CAD/CAM managers are genuinely dissatisfied with the telephone support available from their main CAD/CAM supplier. However, nearly two in five said their needs are met 'quite effectively'; it's important therefore for suppliers to find out how satisfied their customers are with this service and take action as appropriate.

There are no clear signs that 24/7 support is in demand yet ; only 7% of sites in the mechanical engineering sector currently have this available to them, and only an extra 3% said they want it. Nearly one in five sites either have no telephone support available, or don't know if their suppliers offer it. This group is likely to include a high proportion of companies receiving minimal support from any supplier, and are thus a potential target for service-driven VARs.

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