As our recent noise at work study proves, it is a growing issue. Open plan contact centers only amplify the noise generated by multiple conversations and telephones ringing.

So how big is the problem? Whom does it affect the most? And which headset technologies can you rely on to prevent background noise from adversely affecting the customer experience?
Opinion Matters surveyed organizations employing over 250 employees in the UK, Germany, and France (1000 per region) in February 2015.

Too much noise

- 93% of enterprise workers are adversely impacted by noise.
- 4 in 5 employees consider noise in their office to be distracting.
- 55% of workers have brought at least one noise complaint to the attention of their management.

Most common effects of noise:
- Lower productivity
- Stress
- Physical ailments such as headaches

Top three biggest noise complaints:
1. Noisy colleagues
2. Phone calls
3. Electronic office equipment

Source: Opinion Matters surveyed organizations employing over 250 employees in the UK, Germany, and France (1000 per region) in February 2015.
On your customers.

Empirical evidence shows that voice communication is critical to people understanding each other clearly. A good conversation will leave your customers with a good impression, making them feel they are important to you. Yet organizations continue to expect staff to deal with customers in noisy environments. If customers have to repeat themselves, especially when relaying basic information, the experience can easily turn into a negative one. Frustrated by the time they are wasting, there is every chance callers will become ex-customers as soon as the call has ended.

“The true effects of noise...

“Not all noise is good and not all noise is bad. It’s all about having the right level of speech intelligibility.”

Evan Benway, Product Manager, New Ventures, Plantronics
The true effects of noise...

On your colleagues.

The noise within open plan environments requires employees to strain and raise their voices to be heard. At a time when many customers come to the contact center with complex queries, this has an adverse effect on the overall experience. Raised voices also mean there is a greater chance that confidential information can be overheard—undermining trust in your colleagues and the brand.

“There are dissatisfactions in these ‘open plans’ because people just put them together, without thinking through the acoustic environment.”

Ken Kannappan, CEO, Plantronics
Higher among the hierarchy
Do you believe you would be more productive in a less noisy work environment?

- 75% of companies recognize service as a competitive differentiator (up 18% in two years).
- 57% of companies can relate improving customer experience levels to revenue/profit growth.

Solutions exist

Today, many companies recognize the importance of customer experience to brand experience. Yet not all recognize how a simple issue like background noise during customer calls can undermine all other efforts to improve customer interaction.

By understanding the frustrations and expectations of your customers and employees, you can create a headset strategy to combat unwanted noise.

Knowing which headset audio technologies can help is an important first step.

- Active noise canceling
- Hearing protection
- Microphone design
- Wireless roaming
Active noise canceling (ANC) technology removes the surrounding ambient noise—or lower frequency sound—for the user when wearing the headset. It is best at isolating and canceling out steady ambient noise, such as that in busy contact centers.

Hearing protection
Advanced hearing protection ensures the natural, human qualities of voice calls remain, and safeguards staff from acoustic shocks and loud noises. Check the average A-weighted decibel limit (dBA) on the headset, so you can provide the right level of audio safety to your staff.
Microphone design

Headset microphones are essential to picking up a user’s entire voice range. Look for a multiple microphone array in a single headset device for increased noise cancelation in contact centers. Since everyone is different, the ability to alter the microphone positioning will also increase the chance of capturing a higher level of sound clarity.

Wireless roaming

Some background noise is unavoidable. However, customers still do not want their confidential information repeated loudly within the contact center. Headsets that offer wireless connectivity allow staff to move away from their desks, and find a quieter place to continue the conversation.
Find headsets with the technology to beat noise in your contact center at plantronics.com