



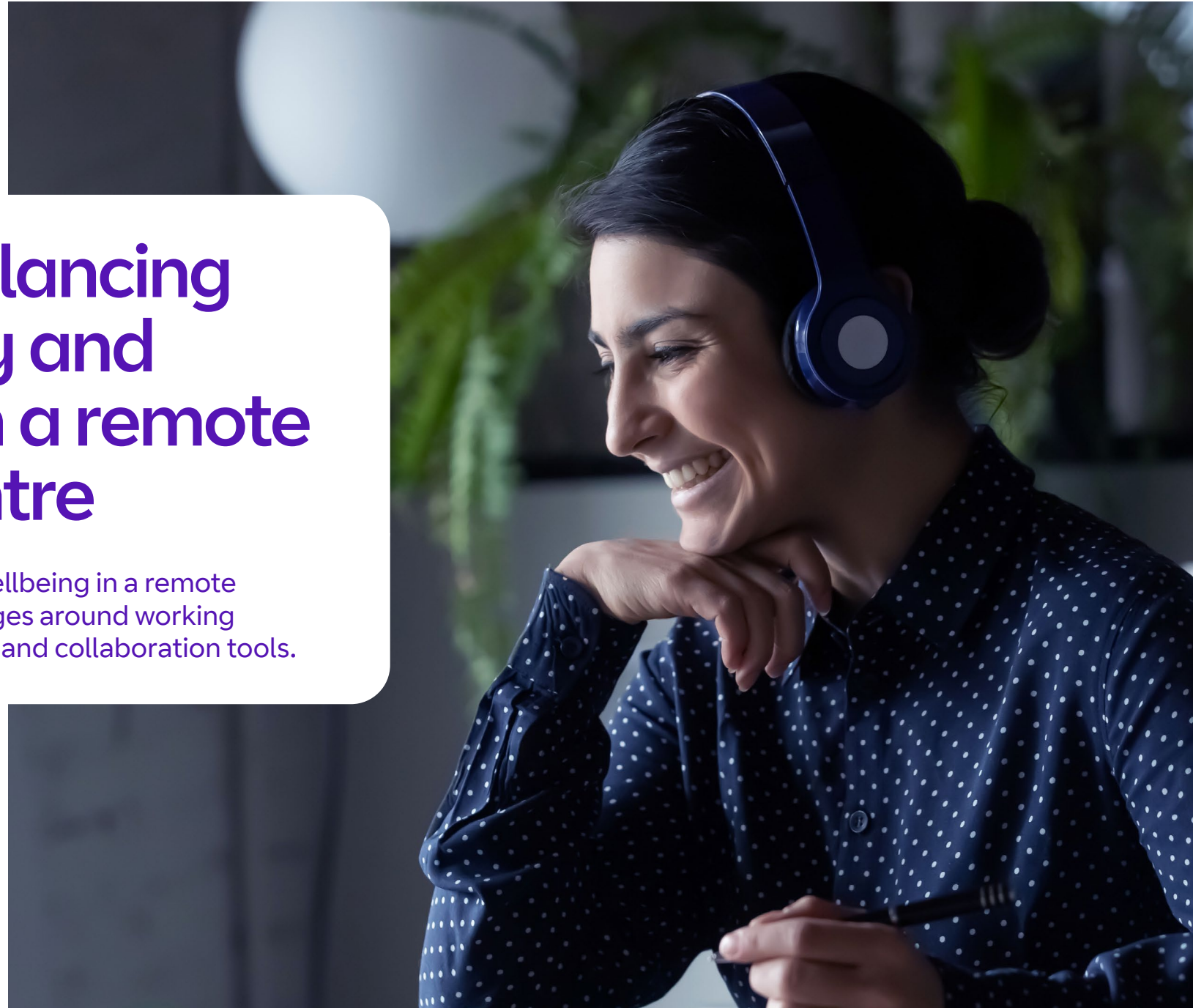
# 3 tips for balancing productivity and wellbeing in a remote contact centre

Balancing productivity and wellbeing in a remote contact centre brings challenges around working practices, agent engagement and collaboration tools.

**It looks like working from home is here to stay.**

Even before the pandemic, [92% of companies were expecting digitisation to change their business model.](#)

And more recently, Gartner has found that [74% of CFOs are intending to shift at least 5-20% of employees to permanent home working.](#)



Contact centre personnel are already part of this change. Our recent [Autonomous Customer 2021 research](#) shows that 88% of agents worked at home at some point during the pandemic, and 38% say their employer will definitely encourage them to work from home in the future. The research gives useful insight into the experience of agents working remotely and it backs up what I'm hearing from customers: managing a distributed team of agents is creating new challenges.

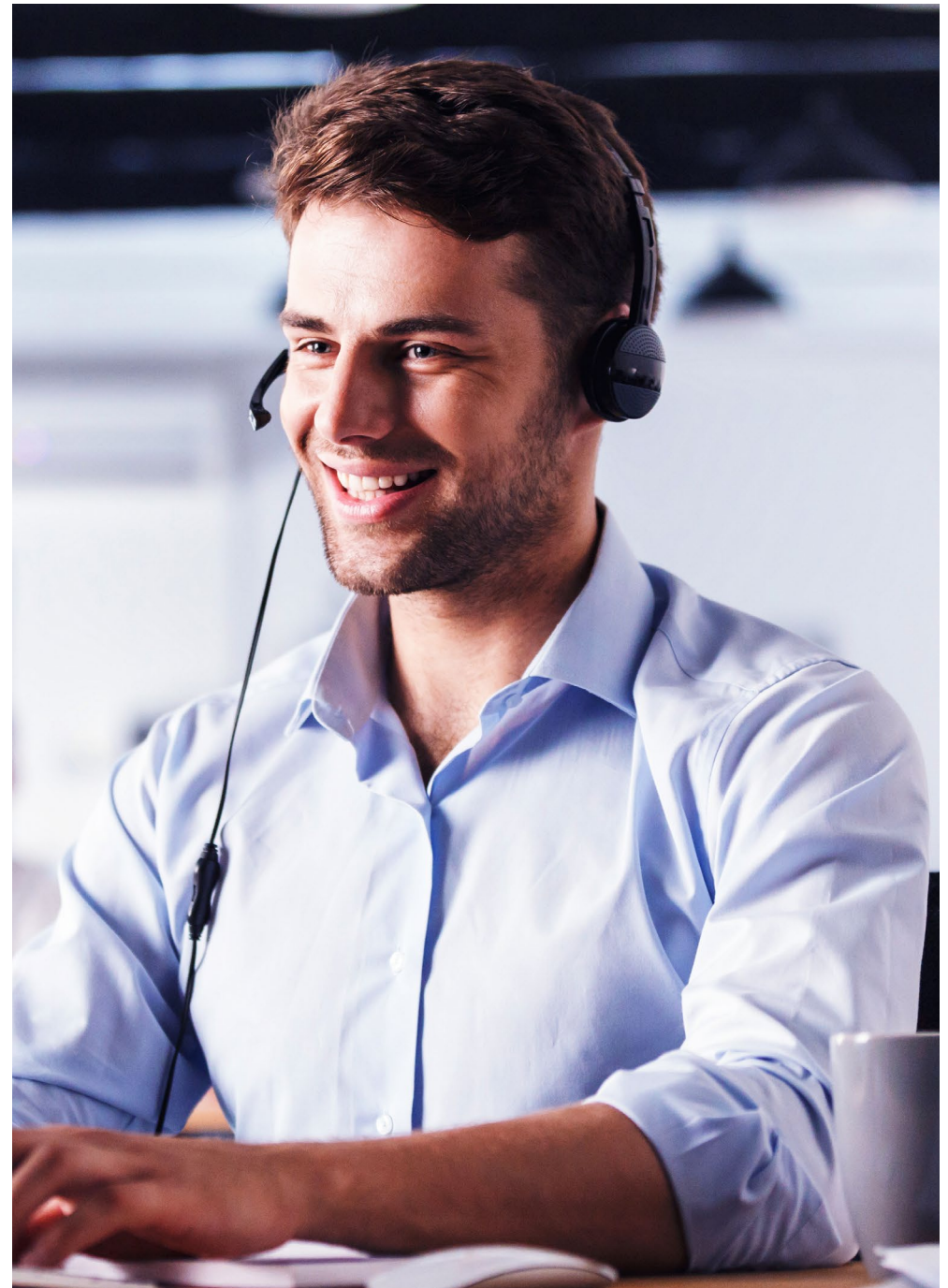
So, what are contact centre managers facing, and how can they help their teams be as productive as possible?

### **Managing a remote workforce brings new challenges**

Managers are leading agent teams that are struggling to cope in difficult circumstances. Like so many people unexpectedly working from home, some agents are suffering from anxiety caused by isolation from the team and this is having a negative impact on their motivation. Potentially, they're dealing with home schooling and the distractions of other adults working in the same space. And, for some, the need to be seen to be 'present' in the digital workplace is leading to burnout, inefficient working habits, and other physical impacts such as trouble sleeping.

On top of this, managers face challenges to team effectiveness. Remotely choreographing the work of agents to deliver on team objectives is difficult, particularly when distance might mean silos develop. Making sure a distributed workforce responds in real-time to customer demands, particularly during seasonal or peak periods, is harder because there's no way to walk the floor and adjust team alignment. Without a manager physically available for guidance, agents might prioritise work queues less effectively and find they can't resolve issues without becoming lost in them.

Managers face operational challenges, too. Many organisations don't have secure collaboration technology they can share customer transaction information over, and this makes getting the job done harder. Our research shows that 59% of agents have to use multiple screens to resolve customer issues and 52% feel they spend too much time trying to find information. Plus, many agents working from home don't have a secure, fit-for-purpose working environment with professional headsets, keyboard, screens, ergonomic furniture and secure access to highspeed connectivity.



## The 3 management levers to balance productivity and wellbeing

Our research and work with contact centre customers shows that organisations that are tackling these issues well are proactive when it comes to agent engagement and wellbeing. Here are my top three recommendations for managers:

### Model the behaviour you want to see

When agents are working remotely, it's easy for them to get distracted by other things going on in their environment. However, if managers and supervisors lead by example and create a strong vertical culture, agents will be more engaged and productive in their work.

Establish personal standards for yourself, talk them through with your team and stick to them. Admitting you don't have all the answers is a strong way to be transparent and build trust. Perhaps start by bringing your full attention to meetings and showing how to set aside multi-tasking to focus on priorities.

Wherever possible, give agents freedom to fit their deliverables around their lifestyle (such as school drop-offs or lunchtime cycle rides) and explore how to build wellbeing practices such as mindfulness and meditation into the working day. And always give thanks and praise for efforts and achievements.

### Only use tested and scalable working practices

Work out which working processes are the most effective in managing customer demand remotely by testing out different methods before rolling out the best to your teams.

Start each work period by identifying the three most important tasks to be done and, throughout the day, orient yourself back to these. Time zones permitting, make an informal connection with team members before you get down to the business of the day. Set realistic expectations as to how long a task will take and make sure your team work in a focused way to achieve this - make the connection between what they do and the wider corporate goals.

Make time for coaching and mentoring and keep these conversations about improving performance and personal development, so don't dilute them by focusing on tasks.

### Get the right collaboration tools in place

Avoid being caught out by not having scalable, secure and auditable collaboration tools up and running. Work with your CIO or IT team to choose the best options, even if the tools are being deployed by local teams.

Start by establishing the outcomes and KPIs your team must achieve and then seek out digital tools that can support them. Use video, but don't exhaust yourself on it. Set clear expectations about when agents will need to use video, and build in break times between one meeting and the next. Make the most of your digital tools and run weekly team get-togethers around a suitable social or recreational theme.

And where you see someone using a digital tool really well, share this best practice with the rest of the team. Perhaps make these people digital ambassadors who can drive up adoption, focusing particularly on those who are struggling.

### Prepare for a successful future

If you and your management team take the time to consider how you will support your agents, foster good habits and deploy the right digital tools, then you'll be in the best position to forge forward as an organisation in a post-pandemic world.

**Get the full picture of what consumers expect from contact centres today, download our [Autonomous Customer 2021](#) [whitepaper](#).**

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