

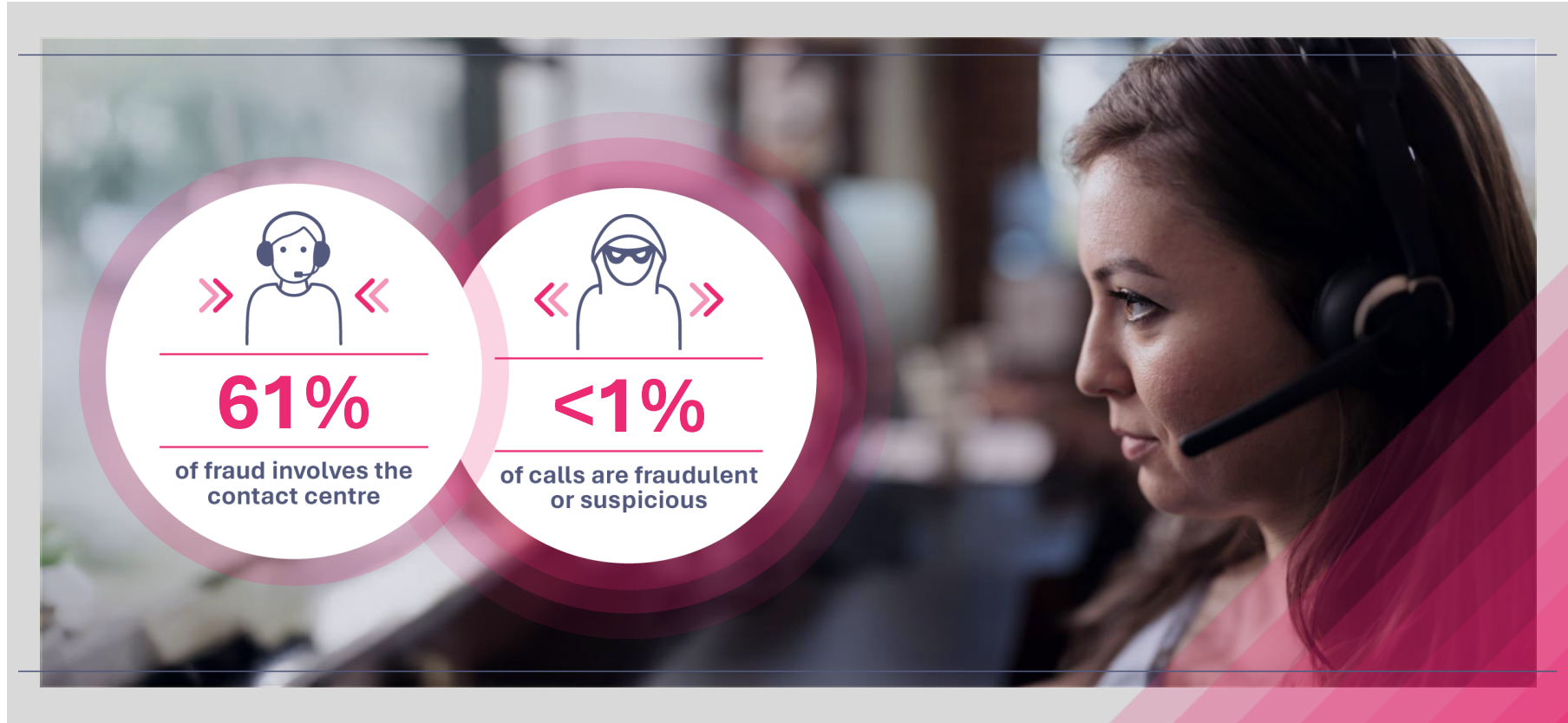


The call before the crime

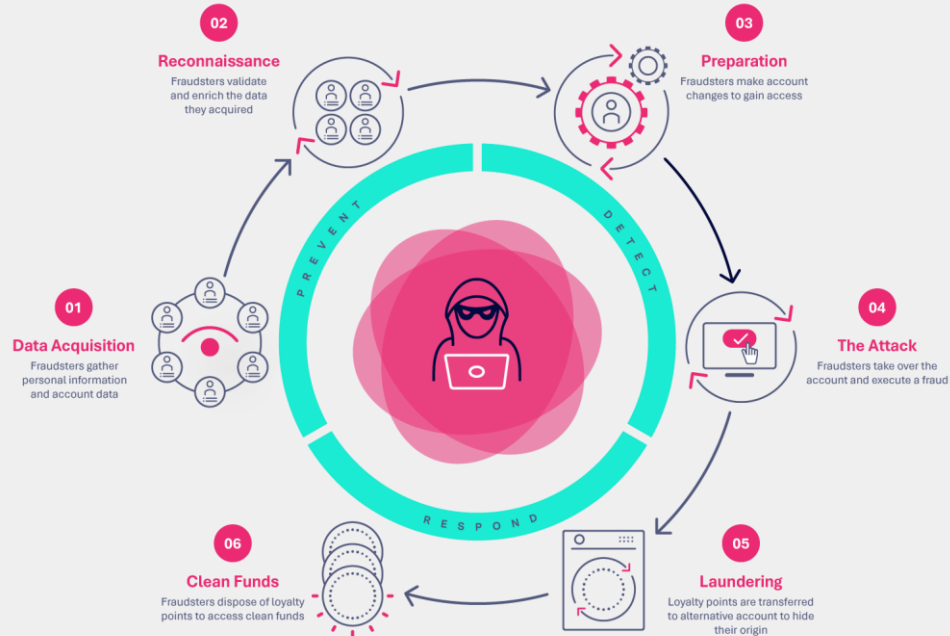
How airlines can stop fraud before it happens

Tim Burton • CPO • Smartnumbers

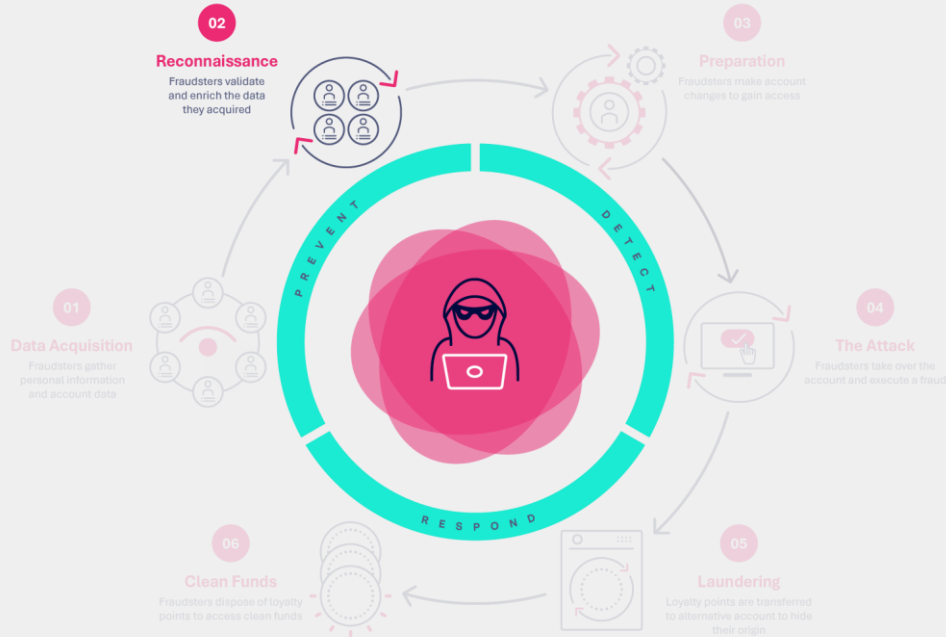
The problem hiding in plain sight



How fraudsters use the contact centre



How fraudsters use the contact centre



02 Reconnaissance

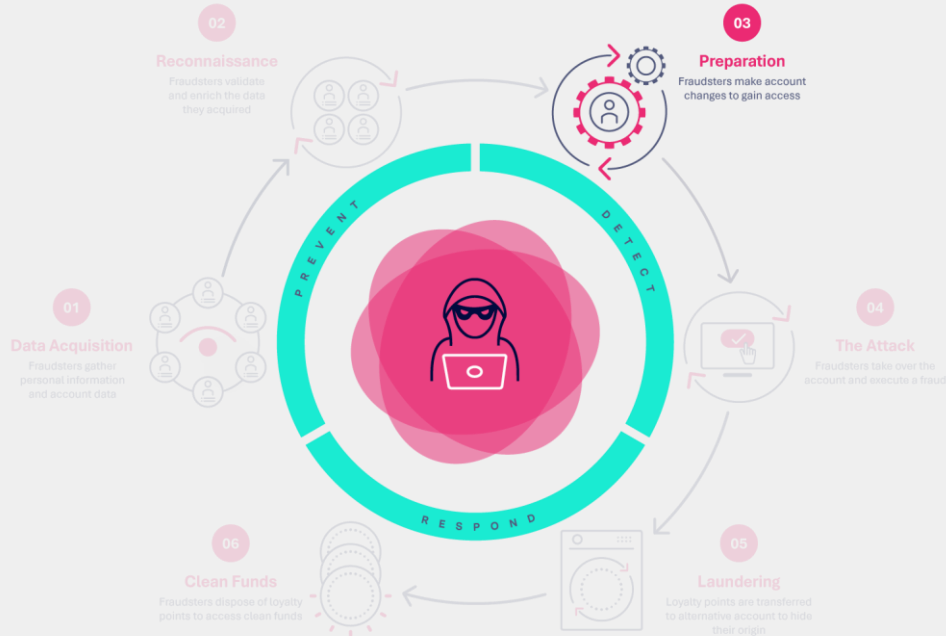
A fraudster calls your contact centre.
They're not booking a flight.

They're confirming whether:

- A passenger's account exists
- An email address is registered
- A loyalty balance is accessible

Your IVR and agent tells them everything they need.

How fraudsters use the contact centre



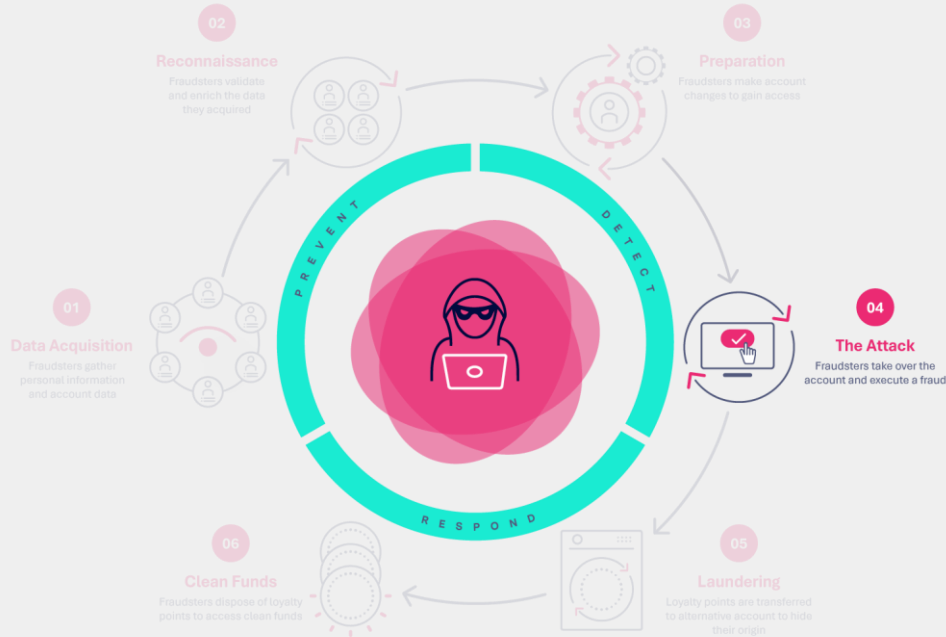
03 Preparation

They call back.

Or they send a bot to call back 31 times in a row.

Why? To validate an existing booking or flight departure time. They ask an agent to update a contact number. They suppress notification emails before an account takeover.

How fraudsters use the contact centre



04 The Attack

Now they transact.

Last-minute ticket on a stolen card.

Loyalty points drained to a mule account.

A fraudulent refund to a different payment method.

By now, the groundwork is complete and the window to stop it has closed.

Why are airlines attractive



High transaction
values



Connected to banking
payments



Loyalty
programmes



Broker
exposure



Service
focus

How Smartnumbers helps

How we do it



Carrier data



AI



Consortium

What we see



1 in 400

calls are
malicious



52%

fraudsters attack
multiple call
centres

The outcomes



10:1+

Return on
investment



1 in 4

False positive
rate

The power of collaboration cross-sector

Timeline of attack:

01



22/01/2026 • 12:15:45

First call from the CLI and marked as fraud by a tier 1 UK bank

02



22/01/2026 • 12:22:58

Second call from the CLI and marked as fraud by another tier 1 UK Bank

03



22/01/2026 • 12:36:35

Third call from CLI to airline

04



16/02/2026 • 17:20:45

CLI calls airline again

The power of collaboration cross-sector

Balance Enquiry (5 mins)

A simple balance enquiry within the IVR revealed insufficient funds on the account. The fraudster moved on to another target

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Third call from CLI to airline

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Balance Enquiry & Notifications (8 mins)

The fraudster performed a balance enquiry; the balance was sufficient and proceeded to suppress notifications to the customer

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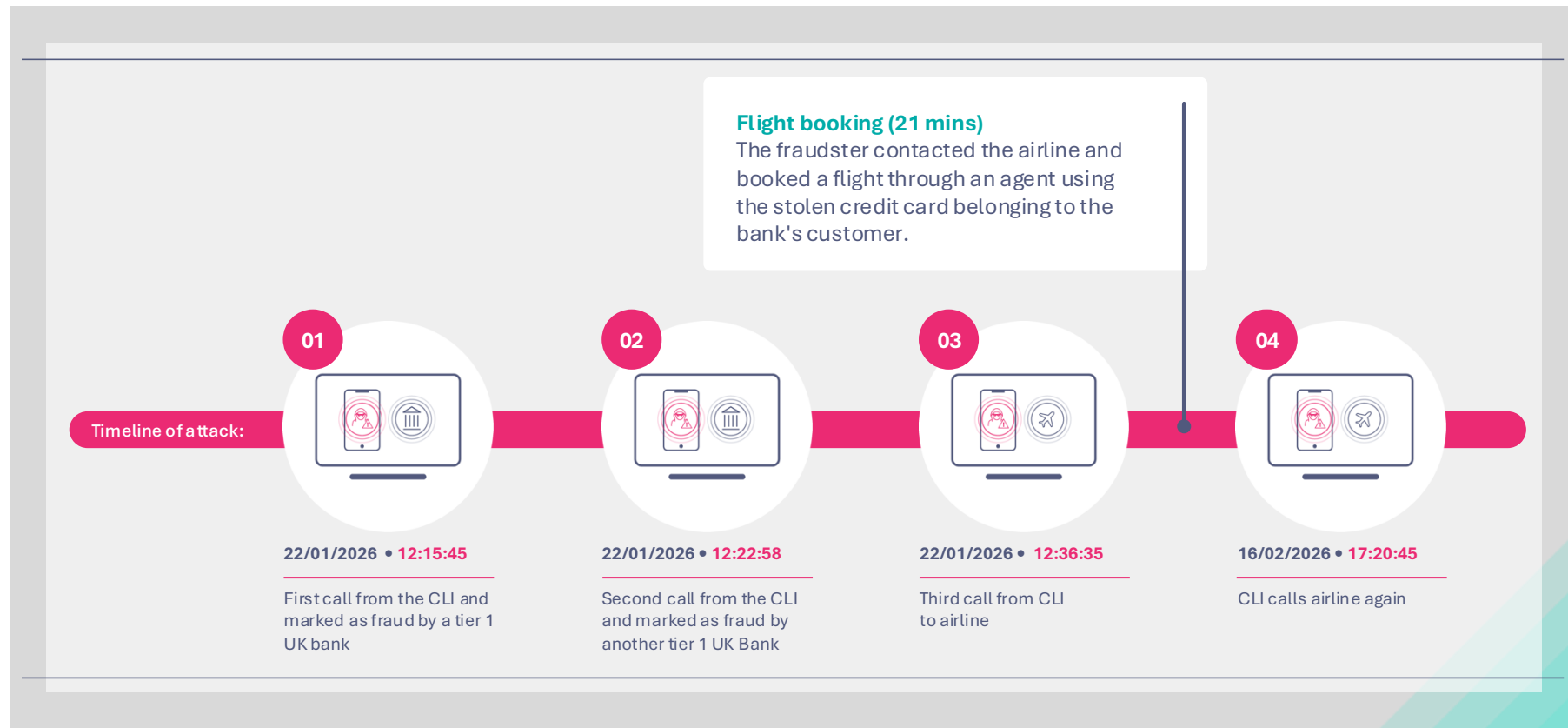
04



16/02/2026 • 17:20:45

CLI calls airline again

The power of collaboration cross-sector



The power of collaboration cross-sector



The power of collaboration cross-sector

Chargeback raised

The bank contacted the victim and confirmed that the transaction was fraudulent. A chargeback was raised against the airline by the bank.

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Refund issued

A refund was issued, preventing a chargeback. The flight was sold to another customer, resulting in no loss to the airline.

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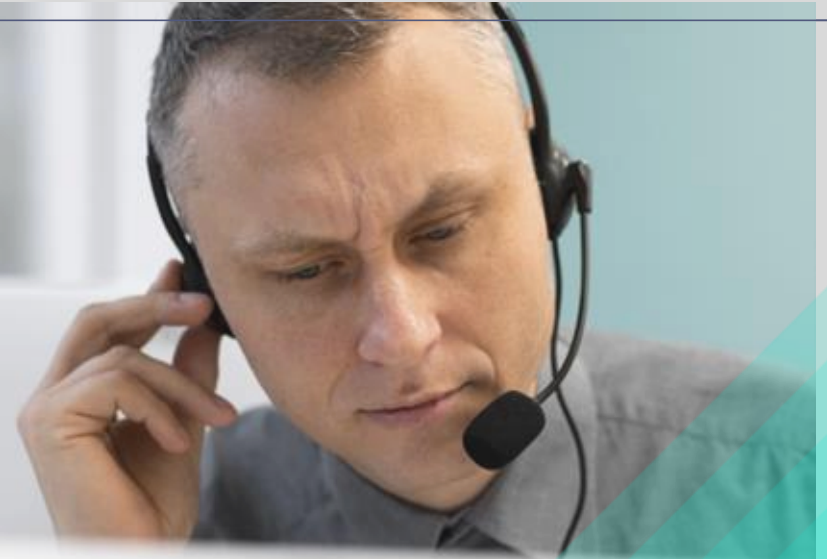
The call before the crime



The fraud your team is focused on preventing has already been enabled by a phone call you didn't know about.

The question isn't whether your contact centre is a target. It is.

The question is whether you're ready to see it.



Want to know more?



Tim Burton
Chief Customer
Officer



Peter Moorhead
Business Development
Manager



Simon Ashton
Pre-Sales
Consultant

Talk to us today

We're here to answer any questions
you may have

<https://hubs.li/Q04dfbHP0>



Book a consultation

Visit our website to arrange
a meeting with us

<https://hubs.li/Q04dfbrL0>



Get the solution

Download our airline
solution guide