

2024 November
Market Study

Future of the Contact Center



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Intro

For the customer contact community, 2024 was another sobering year. Consumer unhappiness remained significant, with 55% saying their experiences got worse. Familiar pain points like long wait times and repetitive questions endured, and interactions remained troublingly devoid of personalization and humanity.

But it was also one that spurred ample promise and excitement. Thanks to visible advances in technology, notably the ascent of conversational, generative, and agentic AI solutions, the world seems to be closer than ever to achieving *true* customer centricity and unlocking *real* agent empowerment.

Of course, contact center transformation is not simply about introducing new technology. It is about recalibrating objectives, rethinking performance standards, redesigning customer journeys, and reassessing workflow. It is about creating an environment in which technology can genuinely work its magic.

How are customer contact leaders navigating these strategic imperatives? How are they ensuring the contact center they are building is *actually* the one customers and agents want and need? How are they preparing their operation for an AI-driven tomorrow?

The product of exclusive research, CCW Digital's annual Future of the Contact Center market study provides the answers.



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Methodology & Demographics

To uncover the Future of the Contact Center, CCW Digital conducted a survey in October and November 2024. Reaching a pool of respondents that included contact center, customer service, customer experience, marketing, and operations executives, the survey uncovered critical challenges, priorities, and ambitions for 2025 and beyond.

Example respondent job titles included chief operating officer, chief marketing officer, vice president of member relations, head of client care, vice president of sales and marketing, senior customer service manager, director of customer experience, head of service excellence and operations, vice president of client solutions, director of support services, and vice president of retail.

The respondents spanned organizations of all size ranges and most major industries.

About the Author



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Brian Cantor is the principal analyst and director for CCW Digital, the global online community and research hub for customer contact professionals. In his role, Brian leads all customer experience, contact center, technology, and employee engagement research initiatives for CCW. CCW Digital's articles, special reports, commentaries, infographics, executive interviews, webinars, and online events reach a community of over 170,000.

A passionate advocate for customer centricity, Brian regularly speaks on major CX conference agendas. He also advises organizations on customer experience and business development strategies.



Key Findings

- 1 From a performance perspective, today's contact center leaders know the customer comes first. Moving forward, they will increasingly rely on customer satisfaction, accuracy, customer retention, and first contact resolution as critical operating metrics.
- 2 They will also increasingly emphasize *employee experience* metrics, highlighting employee satisfaction, employee retention, return on learning, and workflow ratio as success indicators.
- 3 Given their emphasis on retention, it is no surprise that leaders are also paying careful attention to potential signs of agent churn. Top warning signs include increased time off, negative "voice of the employee" feedback, and a decline in enthusiasm.
- 4 Aware that they need to know customers in order to connect with them, employees identify enhancing analytics as their #1 priority for 2025 and beyond. Other high-ranking priorities include determining the best AI use cases, improving web and digital self-service options, and improving the employee experience.
- 5 Rather than simply *recommending* investments in new technology and employee initiatives, contact center leaders say they will be increasingly responsible for making these investment decisions. And as they pursue the right analytics and automation solutions, they will pay particularly careful attention to price, reporting and data capabilities, privacy and security, and integration.
- 6 Most contact center leaders feel pressure to be more efficient, but that cannot result in *impersonal* experiences. Nearly all contact center leaders say customers are increasingly demanding tailored, *proactive* journeys.
- 7 As they work to deliver these frictionless, personalized, predictive, and proactive experiences, leaders will account for risks and challenges related to improper AI automation, scalability, and data security and privacy.
- 8 They will also focus on elevating digital experiences, with 88% viewing web and mobile engagement as a clear focus. Just over half will treat digital as a "front door" with the understanding that many customers will still escalate to the phone. The others will look to increase containment within digital channels.
- 9 AI has captured universal interest, but many customer contact leaders are still waiting for meaningful results. Only 8% feel their AI journey is progressing faster than expected; about half feel it is moving disappointingly slowly.
- 10 Nonetheless, these leaders do think AI will eventually drive transformation. When it does, they expect agents to pivot to complex work, client retention and winbacks, knowledge management, and customer feedback management.
- 11 To ensure leaders develop the necessary competencies, 69% plan to modify training in the coming year.
- 12 They will also need to address noteworthy productivity inhibitors, such as too much low value work, insufficient knowledge and CRM systems, and unclear performance standards.



Redefining Customer Expectations

The construct of the contact center has and will continue to change. It will harness the power of new technologies. It will engage customers via new contact channels. It will employ workers in new, highly distributed arrangements.

One thing, however, will always remain constant: its reason for existence. Above all, the customer contact function is the vessel through which a business engages its customers.

The *contact center of the future* must, therefore, align its operations with the *customer of the future*. If the way a leader perceives “good performance” differs from the way a customer defines a “good experience,” all decisions – from technology deployments, to policy implementations, to personnel hiring – could greatly jeopardize business success.

While pursuing this alignment, savvy contact center leaders will re-evaluate the metrics and performance indicators they establish within their organizations. They will ascribe markedly more importance to certain measures, while maintaining or even relaxing their emphasis on others.

Customer satisfaction will command a particularly luminous spotlight, with 94% of leaders saying they will place more emphasis on that score in 2025 and beyond. Other high-priority metrics include accuracy and quality (86%), customer retention (83%), and first contact resolution (80%).

The emphasis on customer satisfaction and retention underscores an acceptance of the contact center’s true purpose: to delight and connect with customers. First contact resolution plays a pivotal role in that effort, ensuring that those who *ask a question* receive the correct answer *on the first try*.

Always foundational to the contact center, accuracy and quality will logically gain even more significance as brands expand into new channels – and increasingly harness the power of artificial intelligence. The introduction of these additional, automated touch points heightens the potential risk of inconsistent, errant communication; by prioritizing quality, brands are expressing their refusal to let that potential risk materialize.

In a sign that they want their contact centers to perform better across the board, there are few major metrics that leaders plan to outright abandon ahead of 2025. Some will, however, command comparatively less attention.

Just over 51% say opt-in and subscription rates will actually become less important, while 41% will reduce their reliance on average handle time. Callback rate will lose prominence in 40% of organizations.

Though understandable, waning interest in these metrics is not necessarily justifiable.

Opt-in rate may not seem as pivotal to the traditional “call center” operation, but it still carries tremendous meaning for the overall experience. Outbound communication is an important way to reduce inbound volume, demonstrate proactive support, strengthen customer relationships, and drive sales. But it can also manifest as overbearing SPAM, which serves to not only frustrate customers but prevent them from engaging in future communication. Holding one’s organization accountable for opt-in rate, therefore, represents a pivotal way to ensure all outbound communication creates value for the customer.

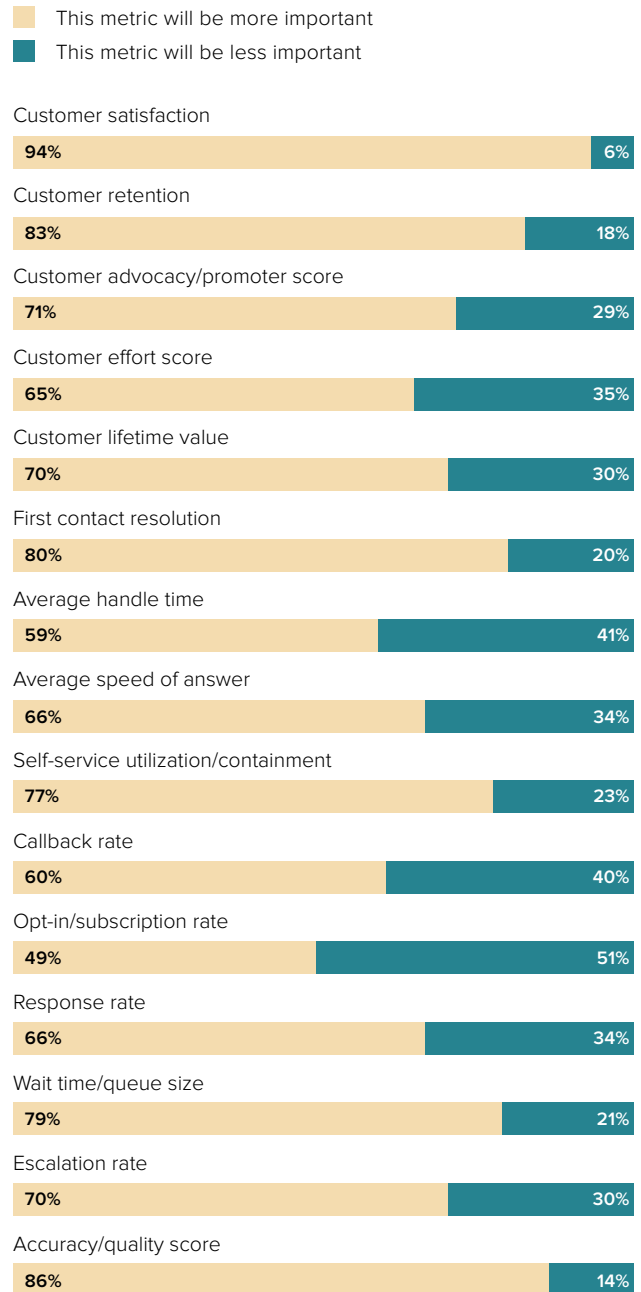
Once the defining contact center metric, average handle time has been losing favorability due to the notion that it forces agents to rush customers off the phone. The rise of AI self-service for “simple issues” further jeopardizes its relevance, as agents will be pivoting to more complex work that, by definition, should take longer to resolve.

However, to reject AHT is to outright ignore the reality that time is money. Customers may not want to be rushed off the phone before their issue is resolved, but they also do not want to spend any longer than necessary. Continuing to rigorously manage against AHT, albeit with more nuance than in the past, ensures agents are doing everything they can (and have access to everything they need) to quickly, easily, and conveniently support customers.

The de-emphasis on callback rate will naturally spur some concern amid the simultaneous increase in focus on first contact resolution. If brands are not ensuring that their initial communication actually sticks and keeps customers from raising the same issue in the future, are they truly measuring (let alone delivering) “first contact resolution”?

Callback rate, moreover, can play a big role in determining whether an answer provided in a low-touch digital channel or automated chatbot is good enough to prevent customers from calling an agent in the future.

Going into 2025, will the following metrics be more or less important for evaluating the customer experience?



THE PUSH FOR PROACTIVE PERSONALIZATION

It may not be fully evident in their approach to metrics, but contact center leaders understand the importance of proactive communication. An astounding 95% of leaders, in fact, say that they believe customers will increasingly expect and evaluate them on an ability to anticipate and proactively meet their needs.

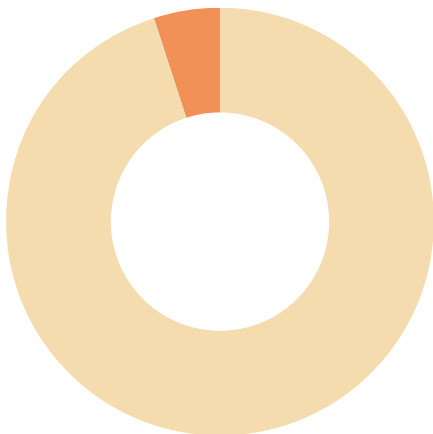
To put it simply, the ideas of “knowing one’s customers,” “predicting their intentions,” and treating them as “people rather than numbers” will no longer be hollow clichés in the contact center of the future. They will become fundamental operating principles.

Granted, achieving these objectives will require some navigation and refinement. Presently, contact center leaders cite numerous factors that prevent them from sufficiently personalizing customer experiences.

Notably, 78% worry that the increasing use of AI will thwart their ability to deliver highly personalized experiences. An alarming 70% do not feel they can maintain personalization at scale, while 69% are concerned about the data privacy and security landscape. The inability to measure personalization (65%) and fear of coming off as “creepy” (53%) are also hindering the personal touch in the majority of organizations.

With so many organizations citing these concerns, one would be hard-pressed to demonstrate significant optimism about the rise of personalization in 2025.

Looking to 2025 and beyond, do you believe customers will expect – and evaluate you based on – an ability to predict/anticipate their needs and proactively address them?



95% Yes
5% No

A glass-half-full individual should, however, point out the fact that each of these concerns is readily addressable.

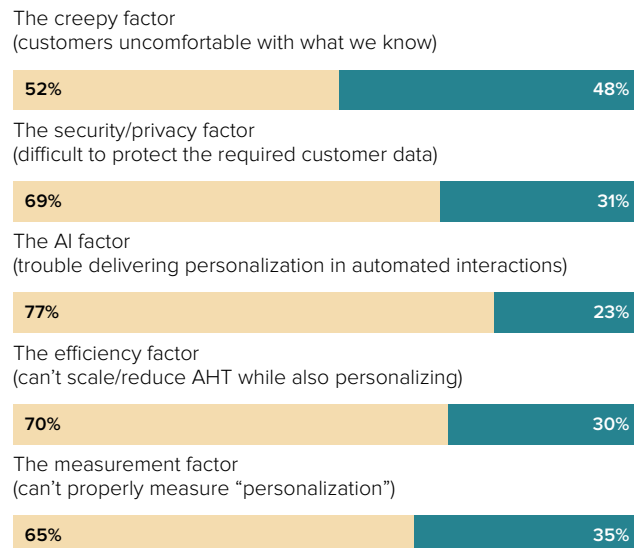
Modern conversational and generative AI solutions enable automated experiences that understand customer language and provide personalized, relevant responses. Although they may not be able to mirror every emotional tenet of the “human touch,” they can certainly create interactions and journeys that are uniquely tailored to individual customers and contexts. And they, notably, can do so at scale!

The best contact center technology vendors take privacy and security very seriously, injecting important guardrails into their customer-facing bots, contact center platforms, analytics solutions, and CRM or CDP systems. Managing customer data may be scary, but it is certainly doable with today’s solutions.

“Scoring” personalization may not be cut-and-dried, but contact center leaders can certainly measure the impact of efforts to personalize experiences. If they are able to demonstrably streamline bot interactions, reduce repetitive questions, improve upsell conversion rates, and preempt future support calls, they are clearly using customer data to enhance experiences. Ensuring that all “personalization” efforts are transparent and drive critical customer experience outcomes, moreover, serves as a way to avoid the “creepy” factor. It is data abuse – not mere data use – that spurs resistance.

Do the following challenges impact your comfort/success in delivering a personalized CX?

- Yes, this is a concern/challenge
- No, this is not a concern/challenge





Establishing Priorities for 2025 and Beyond

Aiming to deliver accurate, consistent, personalized experiences that drive satisfaction and retention, contact center leaders are constantly establishing and revisiting their strategic priorities. They are constantly working to determine which initiatives, technologies, and “best practices” are most important to the contact center of the future.

As they look ahead to 2025, they are paying particular mind to customer data. A whopping 95% say improving analytics, intelligence, and quality capabilities will be a bigger priority.

Other key focuses for 2025 include determining the best AI use cases (90%), better leveraging digital and web self-service options (90%), and growing employee satisfaction (85%).

Emphasizing data is both a testament to the importance of knowing customers and an admission that current intelligence frameworks are lacking.

Throughout 2024, CCW Digital’s market studies have uncovered contact centers’ ongoing challenge to even access a “360-degree view of the customer experience,” let alone democratize that view to agents, supervisors, and other key stakeholders. With new channels emerging, customer expectations growing, and data-driven automation opportunities materializing, a failure to address this problem – and harness the power of real-time, omnichannel analytics – will introduce unprecedented consequences.

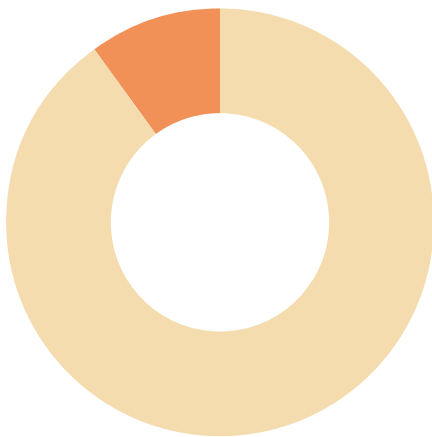
Successfully unifying and democratizing data, on the other hand, can generate unprecedented value – even beyond the contact center. Subscribing to the idea that “data is one of the contact center’s greatest exports,” 90% of contact center leaders believe the intelligence they gather should play a greater role in overall business decisions.

After years of hearing the hype, assessing the risks, and making the investments, it is surely unsurprising that most contact center leaders want to increasingly surface the most valuable AI opportunities. They no longer want to talk about AI; they want to talk about the *results* of AI.

An extension of the AI movement, the hype around low-touch and no-touch digital engagement has introduced a vision for the contact center where employees will only get to focus on high-value, complex interactions. Appealing from both an efficiency and employee engagement perspective, this vision will nonetheless remain a pipe dream if organizations cannot actually deliver compelling self-service experiences. For 90% of organizations, the time has clearly come to actually create those customer-centric self-service interactions.

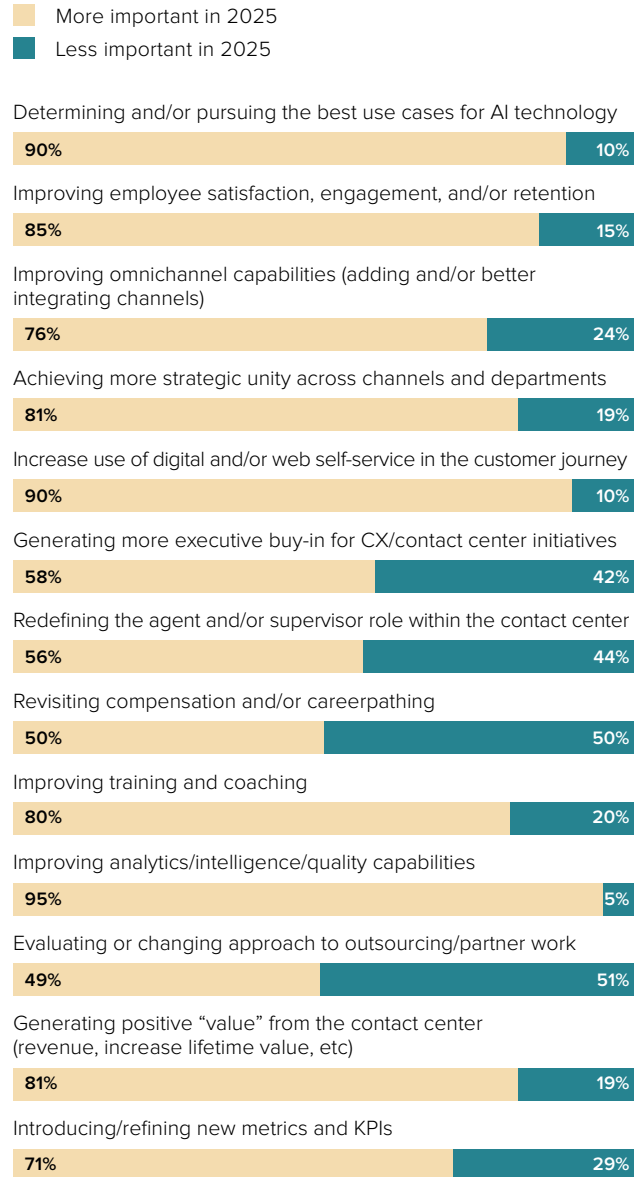
With that “AI for simple issues, agents for complex ones” vision at the top of their minds, leaders know that the connection between “happy agents and happy customers” will be more important than ever. Agent demeanor will be instrumental to the success of these complex interactions, as will the knowledge that comes from a long tenure in the contact center. It is thus utterly logical that contact centers would want to further emphasize the employee experience in 2025.

Going into 2025, do you believe customer data should play a key role in driving overall business decisions?



- 90% Yes, customer data should impact the overall business
- 10% No, customer data is only a priority for the contact center/CX team

Do you expect the following initiatives to command more or less attention in 2025?





The State of AI in the Contact Center

Efficiency remains a driving force behind contact center strategy. Nearly 94% of contact center leaders say they are facing efficiency demands from their executive leadership, with 46% in cost-cutting mode and 48% in responsible growth mode.

Combined with the desire to unlock better intelligence and improve overall performance, this emphasis on efficiency vividly reveals why so many contact centers are looking to identify high-impact AI use cases in 2025.

It also reveals why generative AI is particularly exciting. By empowering more personalized, relevant engagement

in self-service channels, it promises contact centers the chance to have their cake and eat it too. It enables them to reduce inbound call volume without sacrificing experience quality.

Cognizant of those benefits, 80% of contact center leaders are embracing customer-facing generative AI. Nearly 18% are already leveraging the technology, while just shy of 63% have meaningful plans to do so.

THE IMPACT OF AI AND DIGITAL ON CUSTOMER JOURNEYS

Whether focusing on generative technology, different forms of AI, or merely the overarching idea of “digital engagement,” the typical contact center leader acknowledges an opportunity for transformation. Nearly 88% identify digital and AI-driven engagement as a clear focus for their customer experiences.

As they explore opportunities to optimize AI and digital engagement, contact center leaders are generally falling into one of two major camps. Forty-five percent (45%) are, at least for now, content to treat digital options as a “front door” to the customer journey. They expect to see customers increasingly *start* in digital and/or self-service options, but they will continue to accommodate escalations to live phone calls.

Nearly 43%, on the other hand, believe containment is important. They are actively looking to see more resolutions in AI and digital – and thus a quantifiable reduction in phone volume.

Regardless of their specific view, all contact center leaders will be wise to consider customer perception. CCW Digital’s 2024 Consumer Preferences Survey revealed that consumers still resoundingly view the live phone call as their most reliable customer service option. Whereas nearly 70% have confidence in resolving a customer support issue over the phone, less than one-quarter have the same confidence in chatbots or other digital options like messaging or social media.

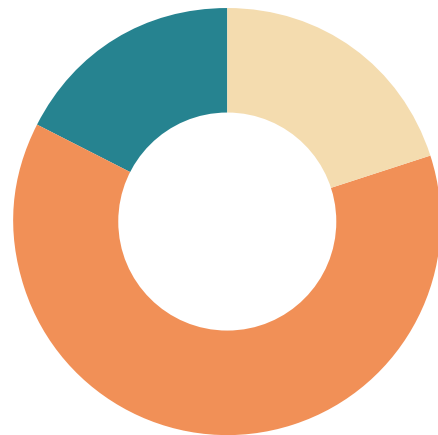
Ultimately, these statistics confirm that today’s customers carry a stigma toward low-touch digital options. This means attempts to force customers into such channels, let alone actively restrict them from going elsewhere, could be met with resistance and even rejection. If brands wish to increase digital utilization and delight, they will have to overcome this conditioning through transparent communication and unwaveringly superb service delivery.

Which best describes executive leadership’s demand for “efficiency” from the contact center/CX function?



- 6%** “Efficiency” is not a major priority; we are not scrutinizing spend/financial impact
- 46%** We are in cost-cutting or containment mode - “do more with less”
- 48%** We are in responsible growth mode - freedom to increase spend, but we must show clear/meaningful ROI

Are you using, or do you have concrete plans to use, generative AI in a customer-facing way?



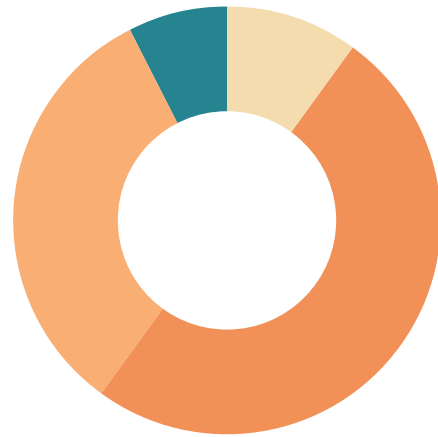
- 20%** No, we are either not using gen. AI at all ... or only using or planning to use it for internal use cases
- 62%** We are not using customer-facing gen. AI right now, but we have clear plans to
- 18%** Yes, we are already using customer-facing gen. AI

With 2025 approaching, which best describes your goal for customer-facing digital and/or AI self-service options?



- **12%** Digital/AI self-service is not a focus for us
- **45%** Phone escalations are still fine, but we want customers to increasingly *start* their interactions in digital/AI
- **43%** We want to see more resolutions in digital/AI – and thus a reduction in live agent phone calls

How would you rate the speed at which you are implementing and/or achieving results with AI technology in the contact center/CX?



- **10%** Not applicable / we are not meaningfully pursuing any AI
- **50%** Our AI journey is progressing slower than we expected/hoped
- **33%** Our AI journey is progressing as expected/hoped
- **7%** Our AI journey is progressing more quickly than we expected/hoped

THE MEANDERING AI JOURNEY

Delivering superb AI-based service may, unfortunately, seem quite daunting for today’s contact center leaders. Thus far, the typical leader has not been blown away by the speed or significance of return on AI investment.

Only 8% say that their AI journey is progressing more quickly than expected.

Just under 33% say it is meeting expectations, with 50% actually confessing that their AI journey is moving *more slowly* than anticipated.

With customer demands rising and business expectations growing by the second, solution providers that can assist with faster, more impactful AI deployments stand to make waves in 2025.





The State of Human Agents in the Contact Center

AI will play a pivotal role in the contact center of the future, but so too will human agents. Responding to CCW Digital studies over the past few years, contact center leaders have *emphatically* trumpeted the idea that the rise of AI is about augmenting rather than replacing humans.

And with 85% of leaders identifying the employee experience as a more crucial priority for 2025, the value they ascribe to their people is clearer than ever.

MEASURING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

To ensure they are creating an experience conducive to both high agent satisfaction and strong productivity, the majority of contact center leaders will prioritize crucial employee-facing metrics.

A substantial 85% of leaders say they will increase their emphasis on employee satisfaction moving forward. Nearly 83% say employee retention will represent a more important metric.

Other high-priority employee experience metrics include return on learning (78%) and employee workflow ratio (76%).

The former two reflect an acceptance that “what gets measured gets managed.” Contact center leaders have long touted the connection between happy agents and customers, and they have often talked about the need to reduce employee churn. Few contact centers, however, have seen *success* at cultivating teams of resoundingly happy, unwaveringly loyal agents. By treating employee satisfaction and retention as critical operating indicators, leaders create accountability around the experience. They send the message that the contact center can only be successful if it is creating happy employees.

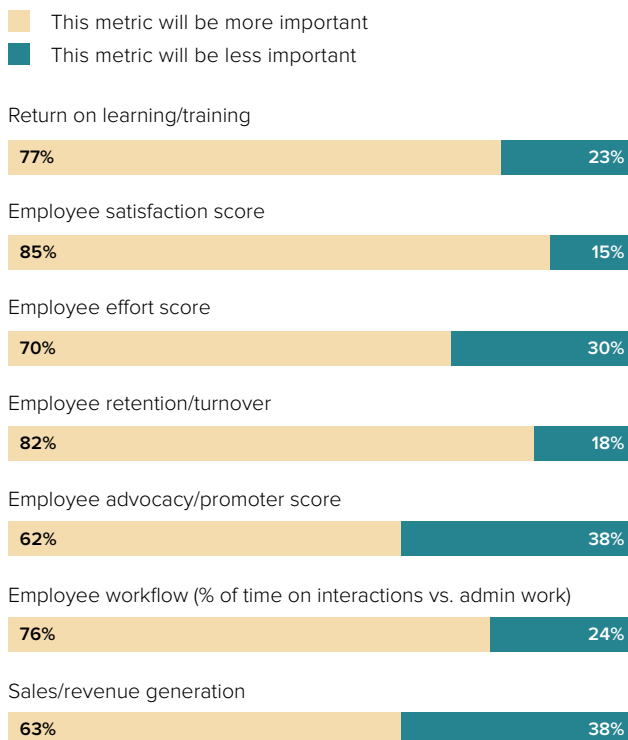
The latter two reflect a commitment to a next-generation contact center, in which agents are focusing on *complex work* rather than simple, repetitive issues. This pivot will, of course, require ample training – recent CCW Digital research confirmed that only 16% of leaders feel their agents currently have the necessary skills.

By actively measuring their training efforts, leaders will create accountability for their upskilling process, while also providing a window into agent indifference or disengagement.

Measuring the amount of time agents spend on high-value work will not only assess progress toward the next-generation contact center but uncover actionable employee experience insights. If employees are spending too much time on low-value work, the likelihood of attracting high-competency talent, let alone retaining and motivating them, will be miniscule.

On the other hand, if employees are spending too much of their days on challenging, high-stakes customer inquiries, they might be facing a significant amount of emotional and mental drain. Without a corresponding investment into wellness and benefit programs, such drain could create its own negative impact on the employee experience and lead to burnout, disengagement, and churn.

Going into 2025, will the following metrics be more or less important for evaluating the employee experience?



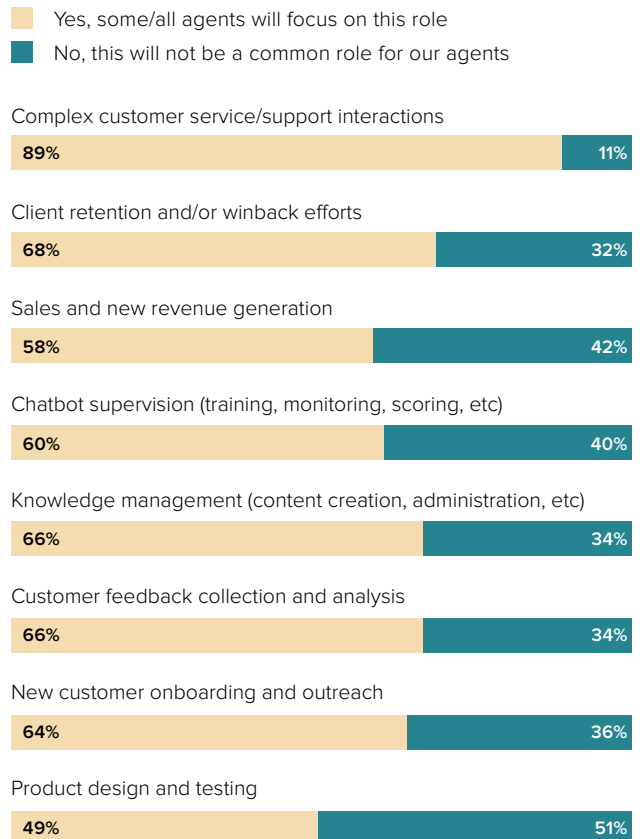
EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES FOR NEXT-GENERATION WORK

Whether by declaring their interest in AI or by emphasizing metrics related to competency and workflow, leaders are transparent in their belief that the role of the agent is evolving. As 2025 arrives, many are beginning to more precisely define what that role will entail.

Nearly 89% say that the typical agent of the future will handle complex customer service and support interactions. Other likely aspects of the role include participating in client retention and winback efforts (68%), contributing to knowledge management (66%), and collecting and sharing customer feedback (66%).

Although one might hope that the typical agent is *already ready* for this type of work, reality says otherwise. The previous section of this report highlighted a CCW Digital finding that only 16% of leaders believe their agents currently possess the competencies necessary for this work.

Moving forward, do you anticipate some or all of your contact center/CX agents taking on the following roles and responsibilities?



That is fundamentally unsurprising; even though agents may theoretically possess the emotional intelligence, sales savvy, and critical thinking needed to thrive in the contact center of the future, they have not been previously hired, trained, or managed for such work. It will take time to help agents transition from being “script readers” to “customer engagement consultants.”

Fortunately, many leaders are actively working to close the competency gap. Almost 69% say they have concrete plans to train agents for more complex work.

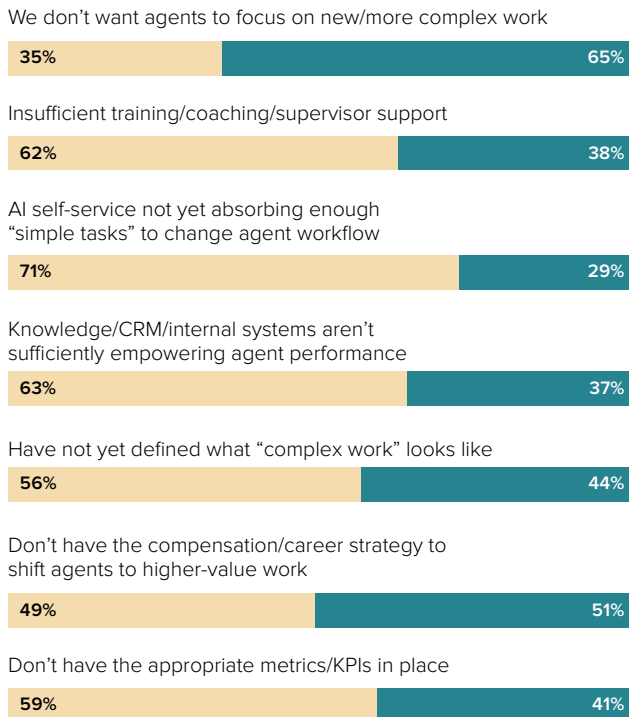
Training, of course, is only part of the battle. Contact center leaders will also have to ensure their environment is actually empowering agents to succeed.

Right now, numerous factors are undermining that culture of empowerment.

More than 71% of contact centers are not automating enough low-value work to help agents pivot to more complex tasks. Upwards of 63% of contact centers subject agents to ineffective knowledge management and CRM solutions, inhibiting their ability to engage in more nuanced, complex, personalized interactions. Nearly 59% are still struggling to establish the right metrics and performance expectations.

Are any of these factors preventing you from empowering agents to focus on more complex or varied work?

- Yes, this is preventing success toward a new agent normal
- No, this is not preventing success toward a new agent normal



For 2025, do you have a concrete plan for training/coaching agents to take on evolving and/or more complex work?



- 69% Yes
- 31% No

PROMISING SIGNS OF AGENT ELEVATION

Although present-day strategies, mindsets, and technologies are hindering agent empowerment, they are providing reason for optimism. Numerous initiatives are starting to move the needle in the right direction, making a favorable impact on the employee experience.

Particularly impactful solutions include modern workforce management solutions and collaboration tools, which are respectively driving agent experience improvements in 73% and 72% of organizations. Both types of solutions are becoming especially critical in the modern customer contact era, in which emerging contact channels and flexible work models are creating less predictable workflow and physical isolation. Modern WFM and collaboration tools will enable businesses to more efficiently staff and plan, while also fostering connections between *physically separated* employees. Both should have a strong impact on employee satisfaction and productivity.

Intelligent knowledge and search (65%), agent assist (63%), modern equipment (63%), and CRM solutions (63%) are also beginning to drive favorable results.

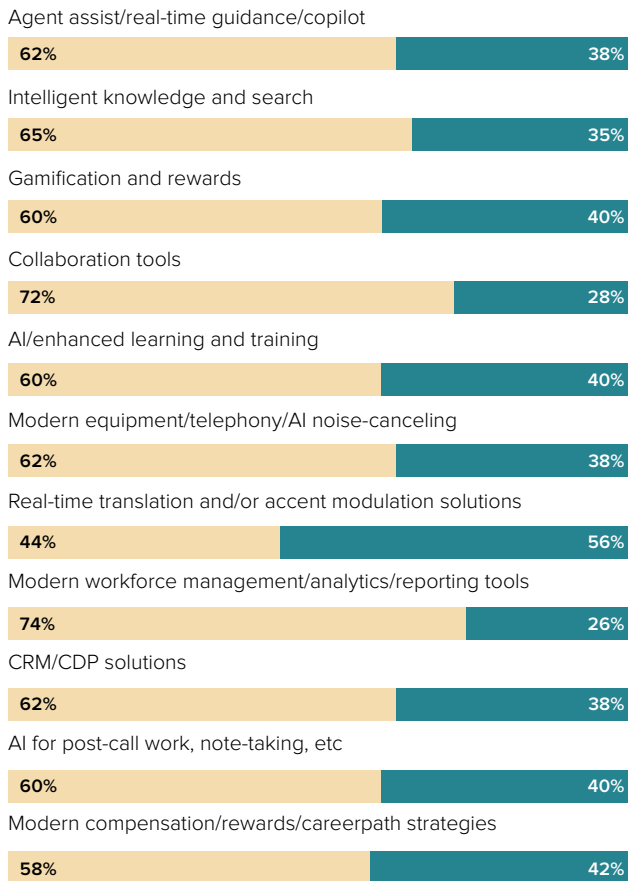
Insofar as knowledge management and CRM also rank as top performance inhibitors, it would be irresponsible to declare “mission accomplished” with regard to these tools. That intelligent knowledge, agent assist, and CRM offerings are *beginning* to improve employee engagement, therefore, is an encouraging sign that brands are approaching this technology correctly.

As organizations look to empower agents to handle even more nuanced inquiries, complex topics, and personalized interactions, doubling down on investment into these tools will prove critical.

The connection between upgraded equipment and employee performance has always existed, and it will mean even more in the contact center of the future. With agents set to spend more time on high-value interactions, their ability to properly communicate with customers will become more pivotal than ever. Noise-canceling technology will ensure agents – and customers – can properly hear each other during every interaction. That audio union will lead to more harmonious, relationship-driven communication, while also enabling analytics solutions to more accurately transcribe, interpret, and glean insights from the speech.

Which best describes your use of the following to improve agent performance and engagement?

- This is positively impacting agent experience/performance
- We are not using and/or seeing much positive impact



FORECASTING EMPLOYEE EXIT

As they work to boost their employee retention rate, contact center leaders will consider all opportunities for elevating employee satisfaction, buy-in, and loyalty. They will leverage automation technology to reduce effort and streamline the workday. They will leverage self-service to optimize workflow. They may also consider compensation overhauls to generate more incentivization and excitement.

But unless they can guarantee every effort will be perfectly successful, these leaders will still have to accept the reality of churn. Savvy ones, however, will proactively look for signs of this churn – and do all they can to remedy those issues in advance.

For today’s leaders, an increase in time off – whether or not it is approved PTO – represents a particularly alarming indicator. Nearly 73% of leaders believe an increase in agent absence helps to forecast potential churn.

Other top churn signals include negative employee feedback (71%), lack of enthusiasm for collaborating and sharing feedback (70%), and a decline in customer-facing metrics (68%).

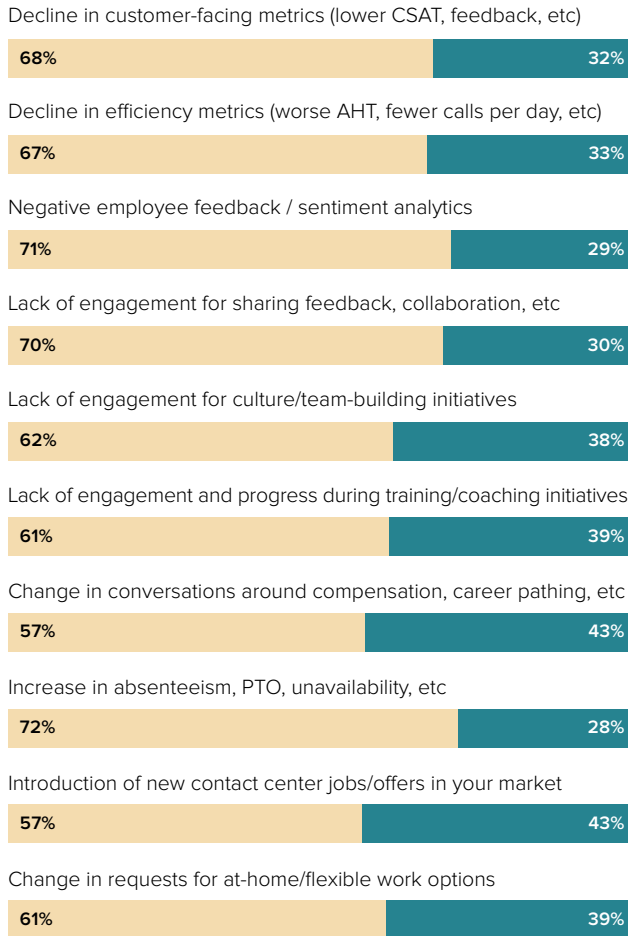
The wariness around time off is sure to generate debate. On the one hand, sudden bouts of absence can absolutely reflect a loss of passion, a disinterest in supporting the overall team, or frankly just a full lineup of job interviews with alternative employers. On the other hand, PTO and work-life balance are critical components of an employee-centric culture. By effectively sending the message that “time off is bad,” leaders may exacerbate engagement challenges.

The other high-ranking indicators either directly confirm disengagement (negative feedback) or are the obvious consequence of dissatisfaction. Those who are “on the way out” are undoubtedly less likely to bring their “A game” to team meetings, brainstorming sessions, or customer interactions. They are undoubtedly less likely to care about capturing and actioning feedback from the front lines.



Are you successfully using the following indicators to predict/address potential agent churn?

- Yes, this helps us forecast churn
- No, this does help us forecast churn



THE FUTURE LOCATION OF THE CONTACT CENTER

It was once a rare perk. During the COVID-driven lockdowns, it became a necessary standard. But as 2025 arrives, where does “work-from-home” fit into the corporate dynamic?

The question is a touchy one. Some argue that workers spent the past four-to-five years *proving* that they could be just as productive without spending time and money traveling to a physical office. Others believe the absence of in-person interaction has resulted in an undeniable loss of collaboration, ideation, and culture.

With 2025 approaching, contact center leaders have their own thoughts on this situation.

Presently, 70% describe their contact center environment as “remote or hybrid.” Over the next year, 36% will maintain that flexibility, while 34% will make a bigger push toward in-office work.

Of the 30% relying primarily on in-office work, 24% plan to maintain that approach in 2025. Just over 6% will increase flexibility.

Ultimately, this means that workplace venue optionality will persist in 2025. There will be plenty of opportunities to work remotely, and there will be plenty of contact centers that exist within four fixed walls.

It is nonetheless worth noting that those currently in a remote or hybrid model are *more likely* to consider switching to the opposing model than those currently operating on-site. This certainly does not mean all agents should expect a return to office memo (42% plan to maintain or increase flexibility, after all), but it does indicate a slight push toward the traditional office.

Will that push intensify or relax as 2025 unfolds?





Evolutions on the Frontlines - and in the Boardroom

As they deliberate over *where* their employees will work, many contact center leaders are also considering *who* will be doing the work. With younger generations joining the workforce and making purchasing decisions, they understand the need to adapt their approaches to staffing and service delivery.

More than 63% of leaders are actively preparing for the next-generation of employees, including those who fit into the Generation Z or Generation Alpha classifications. An even more significant 76% are preparing to engage with these generations of *customers*.

At the high-level, it is encouraging that the typical contact center leader is beginning to tailor their operation to younger generations. These individuals have well-documented preferences for work-life balance, corporate

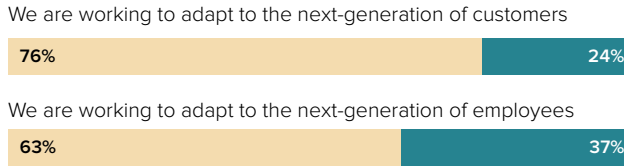
culture, and communication strategy, and no customer- or employee-centric business can succeed by ignoring them.

If there is a concern, it is the fact that businesses are presently focusing more on the changing customer base than the changing employee pool. The customer contact community has long embraced the connection between great employees and great customer experiences, and that connection will only go stronger as agents pivot to more consultative, personalized interactions.

Taking steps to not only cultivate the best, most engaged agents but ensure those agents mirror the changing customer base is thus a pivotal step on the road to success.

Are you or do you have concrete plans to address the impact of younger generations, notably Gen Z and Gen Alpha, on your contact center/ CX operation?

- Yes
- No



THE EVOLVING LEADER

While considering the changing makeup of their customers and teams, leaders are also recognizing the need for individual evolution. Specifically, they are acknowledging that their role is requiring them to wear new hats.

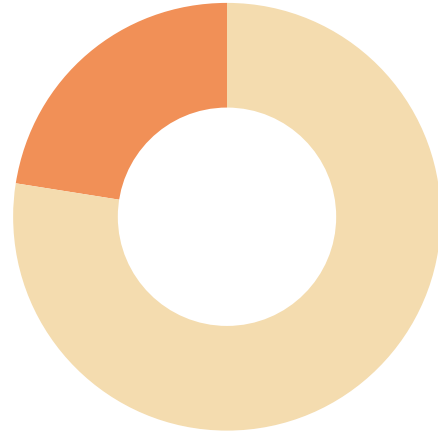
Nearly 78% say their role now requires them to play a bigger role in technology decisions, while 58% say they are more actively involved in talent decisions.

These trends are very encouraging. Since their teams are the ones who will actually be using the technology, leaders playing a bigger role in sourcing should lead to better purchasing and deployment. Leaders, in theory, should guide businesses to make decisions based on usability, customer and employee experience impact, learning curve, and real-world functionality. At a time when there are so many new solutions to consider, this “strategic” voice is incredibly valuable.

And insofar as people are the heart of the contact center, leaders driving the recruiting and onboarding process should lead to better hiring and stronger cultural development.

They, nonetheless, will require the leader to engage in active learning and development. The typical contact center leader is not necessarily a technology expert, which means they will have to amass practical knowledge before making purchasing decisions. And though leaders may know what kind of employees and cultures they want to cultivate, the skills – and time – required to actually bring that vision to fruition are not inherent. Leaders will need to spend time understanding common HR practices and principles.

Over the past year, has your role as a CX/contact center leader grown to include more responsibility for technology decisions and purchases?



- **77%** Yes, I play a heavier role in technology decisions
- **23%** No, I play an equal or lighter role in technology decisions

Over the past year, has your role as a CX/ contact center leader grown to include more responsibility for recruiting, onboarding, training, and other talent focuses?



- **57%** Yes, I play a heavier role in talent initiatives
- **43%** No, I play an equal or lighter role in talent initiatives



Selecting Technology for the Future of the Contact Center

Selecting the right AI use cases represents a pivotal contact center goal, and with more than three-quarters of them gaining responsibility for technology sourcing, it is one that sits on the shoulders of contact center leaders. They will play a crucial role in identifying solutions that make sense for the business while creating value for customers and employees.

Leaders will consider numerous criteria when pursuing technology, but price will remain a defining factor. A whopping 90% say that the price and/or cost model plays a crucial role in their evaluation process.

Other high-ranking components include reporting and data capabilities (89%), privacy and security (86%), integration capabilities (84%), and the user experience interface (84%).

Though it may not be a “noble” criterion, price is obviously going to be fundamental for the many leaders facing efficiency directives.

The emphasis on reporting and data speaks to the dual need to demonstrate ROI and achieve buy-in throughout the organization. Executives will need to know the technology is working in order to assess the overall investment, and practitioners will require performance insights to make vital refinements, process updates, and strategic shifts. Visibility into their own performance benefits, moreover, will help frontline employees become more “bought into” disruptive solutions.

With the concurrent rises of new communication channels and personalization expectations placing an emphasis on customer data, leaders will naturally want to select solutions that mitigate any security or privacy risks. Providers that promise such data protection and expertise, moreover, may signal their ability to *partner* with contact center leaders through AI and digital transformations.

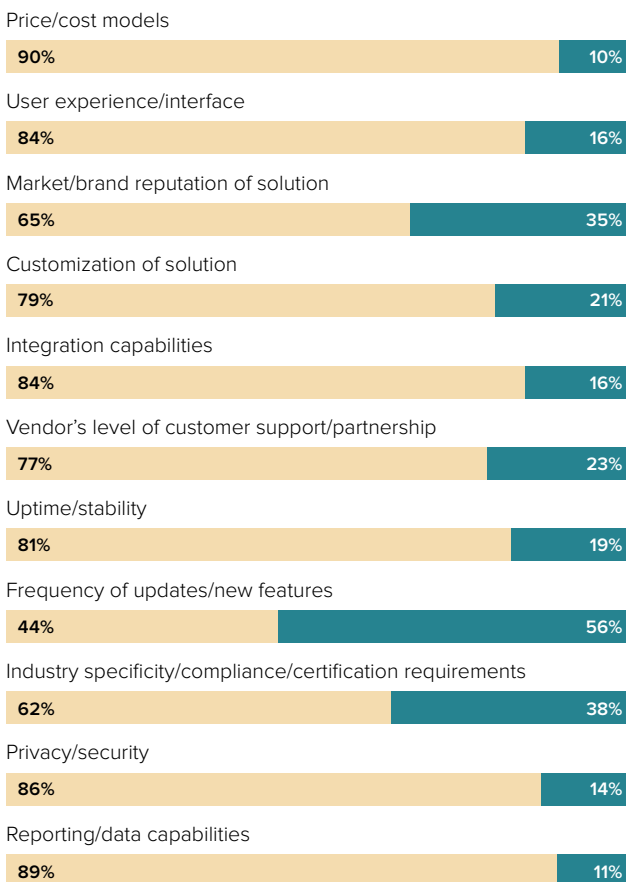
Emphasizing integration capabilities simultaneously reflects a desire to reduce implementation time and prevent the “fragmentation” that has long undermined contact center performance. It also opens the door to intelligent automation; AI solutions cannot truly “work their magic” if they do not have seamless access to all tools, interfaces, and databases.

Insofar as modern contact center technology is being sold on its ability to reduce friction and add value, an intuitive, appealing user interface represents a logical priority. Technology that is difficult to use goes unused, leading to a squandering of the benefits contact centers, customers, and employees need right now.

Although the aforementioned factors represent the *most* critical concerns, the truth is that other considerations like uptime, customization, and vendor’s level of support, weigh heavily on sourcing decisions.

Do the following factors meaningfully impact your contact center/CX tech investment decisions?

- Yes, this is a key factor for us
- No, this is not a key factor for us



The only key factor *not* driving decisions in the majority of contact centers is frequency of updates and new features. This likely speaks to one of three realities:

1. Contact centers are still in “fix-it” mode and looking to address existing pain points before they can think about what is on the horizon.
2. Contact centers are looking for compelling core, out-of-the-box functionality and do not expect to go deep down the well of constant upgrades or refinements. They may also see constant changes – and associated retraining – as a burden.
3. Contact center leaders do theoretically value potential upgrades, but they cannot chase the future at the expense of current cost, integration, or usability.

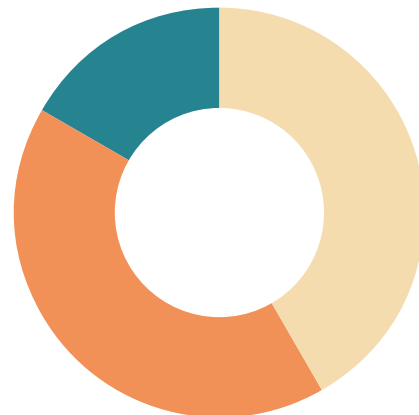
AI = ASTUTE IMPLEMENTATION

Expertly evaluating AI solutions is important, but it is the actual implementation of that technology that will drive results. When it comes to that implementation, leaders have mixed thoughts on the correct approach.

Of the organizations focusing on major AI products, 42% are testing multiple vendors and then going “all-in” with the one they like. By contrast, an equal 42% are already confident in specific vendors – but operating more methodically when it comes to determining the right use cases.

The remaining 17% are rigorously choosing between numerous vendors *and* numerous use cases.

Which best describes your approach to AI implementation/deployment?



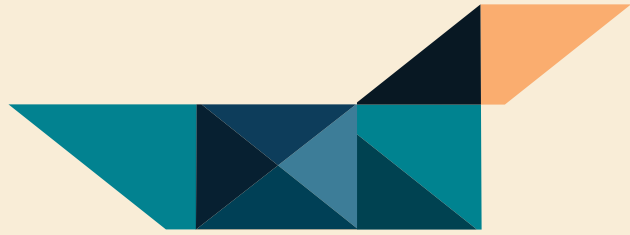
- 42% We are testing multiple products/vendors, then meaningfully deploying the one we like
- 42% We are primarily working with one vendor, but starting with specific use cases before broad deployment
- 16% We are testing multiple products/vendors *and* focusing on select use cases before broad deployment

Industry Insights

Contributor:



Scott D. Clary
founder & host of Success Story
(#1 Entrepreneur Pod)



Q: Throughout the many success stories you have covered and experienced yourself, what sets many of these successful leaders apart?

A: The leaders who truly stand out aren't just decisive - they're calculated risk-takers. They've mastered the art of making bold moves without being reckless. These individuals don't just adapt to change; they anticipate it and position their organizations to capitalize on emerging trends before competitors even notice them.

What's fascinating is how they balance seemingly contradictory traits. They're confident yet humble, visionary yet pragmatic. They have the rare ability to inspire with grand visions while simultaneously drilling down into nitty-gritty details when needed.

One often-overlooked quality? They're master storytellers. They weave compelling narratives that align their teams, stakeholders, and customers around a shared purpose. This isn't just fluff - it's a powerful tool for driving organizational coherence and motivation.

Q: From your perspective, how can we better meet the needs of our customers?

A: Forget traditional customer service - the real innovators are creating customer success ecosystems. It's not about reacting to needs; it's about partnering with customers to co-create value. This means embedding yourself in their world, understanding their challenges at a deep level, and often solving problems they didn't even know they had.

Here's a counterintuitive approach: sometimes, the best way to serve customers is to say no. By clearly defining what you don't do, you create a sharper value proposition and attract the right customers who truly benefit from your core strengths.

Consider implementing "customer advisory boards" with a twist - invite your most vocal critics alongside your fans. This tension creates a dynamic environment for honest feedback and breakthrough ideas.

Q: What insight do you have on accepting losses and using them as fuel to improve?

A: Let's flip the script on failure. Instead of just learning from losses, proactively engineer small failures. Create safe spaces for experimentation where the cost of failure is low, but the lessons are invaluable. This builds organizational resilience and innovation muscle.

Implement "failure Fridays" where team members share recent setbacks and extract insights. This normalizes failure as part of the growth process and crowdsources learning across the organization.

Here's another idea: celebrate your biggest failure of the year. Award the team or individual who took a smart risk that didn't pay off but provided crucial insights. This sends a powerful message about the value of intelligent risk-taking.



Q: Can you share some insight on one of the top 'x factors' that is essential for employees today?

A: Beyond adaptability, the future belongs to those who master “skill fusion” - the ability to combine disparate areas of expertise to create unique value. The next breakthrough might come from a marketer who understands data science, or an engineer with a deep grasp of psychology.

Cultivate “selective ignorance” - the wisdom to know which trends to dive into and which to ignore. In a world of information overload, the ability to focus on what truly matters is priceless.

Develop “empathy at scale” - the capacity to understand and connect with diverse groups across cultural and technological divides. As work becomes more global and virtual, this skill will be a key differentiator.

Q: In a world of 'time-saving' technology like AI, how will this mindset shift? How can (or should) we lean on new technology to maximize our time spent?

A: Don't just use AI to automate existing processes - use it to reimagine them entirely. The biggest gains come from rethinking workflows from the ground up with AI capabilities in mind.

Implement “AI shadowing” - have AI tools analyze your work patterns to identify non-obvious productivity drains and suggest personalized optimization strategies.

Counter to common advice, don't always strive for maximum efficiency. Build in deliberate “inefficiencies” - time for reflection, random exploration, and serendipitous connections. These apparent time-wasters often lead to breakthrough insights.

Q: Do you have any insight on how leaders can best engage their team in 2024?

A: Foster “productive conflict” - create structured debates on key issues where team members are assigned opposing viewpoints. This breaks groupthink and surfaces innovative ideas.

Implement “role fluidity” - regularly rotate team members through different functions. This builds empathy, cross-functional knowledge, and helps identify non-obvious synergies.

Create “micro-cultures” within your organization - allow small teams to develop their own rituals, language, and ways of working. This fosters a sense of belonging and can incubate innovative practices that can later be scaled.

Q: What is one of the most insightful or interesting insights shared on your podcast that shifted your perspective on success?

A: The conversation with Seth Godin didn't just highlight the importance of creating significance - it underscored the need for “productive discomfort.” Godin argued that true growth, both personal and organizational, happens when we consistently operate at the edge of our abilities.

This insight led me to implement a “discomfort quota” in my own work and encourage it in others. It's about regularly taking on tasks or projects that make you feel slightly out of your depth. This constant stretching builds adaptability and prevents stagnation.

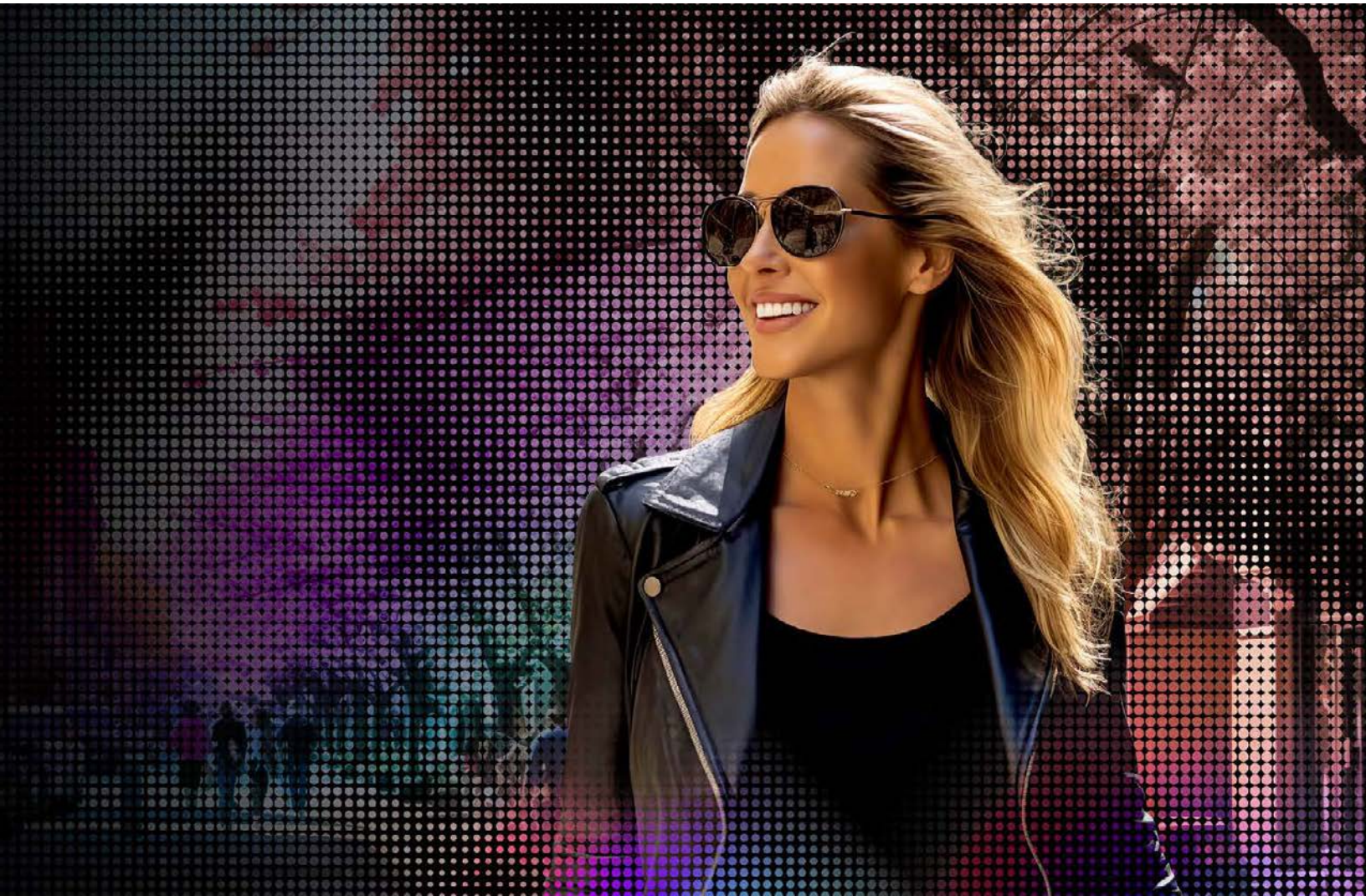
Moreover, it reframed my view of leadership. Effective leaders don't just create a vision - they orchestrate the right level of challenge for each team member, pushing them to grow without overwhelming them. It's a delicate balance, but mastering it is what separates good leaders from great ones.

2024 November
Market Study

Practicality Guide



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New Perspective, New Frontiers, New Experiences

We are living through times of accelerated transformation, led by the powerful forces of cloud, digital, and AI. These technology waves are reshaping the enterprise software market and ushering in a new era of customer experience. CX organizations must embrace a change in perspective to thrive in this new era—one that recognizes the potential of AI to bridge the experience perception divide between consumers and brands.

The path forward lies in harnessing CX-aware AI within a fully converged, cloud-native platform. This recipe

for success enables a seamless fusion of people, processes, and technology, empowering businesses to deliver personalized, contextual experiences that match consumers' expectations. The organizations that master this approach will be the ones that successfully navigate the storm of change and emerge as CX leaders.

This ebook highlights customer success and insights from Interactions 2024, the largest CX event in the industry, showcasing how innovative brands use AI to exceed customer expectations.

TOP 5 INSIGHTS AT A GLANCE:

- 1 Accelerate self-service success with automation developed from the very best conversations.
- 2 Augment employee performance with real-time assistance to achieve optimal outcomes.
- 3 Unlock organization-wide improvements with AI-driven insights from 100% of interactions.
- 4 Reduce customer effort with behavioral coaching and real-time interaction guidance.
- 5 Proactively resolve high-risk customer complaints with AI-powered analytics and targeted outreach.

ACCELERATE SELF-SERVICE SUCCESS WITH AUTOMATION DEVELOPED FROM THE VERY BEST CONVERSATIONS.

PLEASE SUPPLY
SONY LOGO

Sony automated 15 complex intents in just six months by leveraging Enlighten to analyze 60,000 optimal interactions with ideal outcomes across customer satisfaction, resolution, and efficiency.

Why should you care?

In today's fast-paced, digital world, the demand for self-service options is skyrocketing. Customers expect instant, 24/7 access to support, and businesses that fail to meet this demand risk falling behind the competition. Effective self-service automation offers benefits, like round-the-clock availability, reduced operational costs, and increased customer satisfaction.

However, many first-generation self-service providers struggled to deliver effective automation due to a lack of data for training AI models. Without leveraging successful agent-customer interactions, early attempts often fell short of expectations.

Achieving self-service excellence requires integrating automation into your overall CX strategy. By managing both unattended and attended interactions on a unified platform, you ensure a seamless customer experience. This holistic approach allows continuous improvement of self-service offerings through AI and machine learning based on real-world interactions.

Investing in a comprehensive, data-driven solution unlocks automations full potential delivering exceptional customer experiences.

Sony's Tips for Success

- Work as a team
- Alignment = adoption
- Integrate Knowledge Management
- Define & measure real impact
- Refine continuously

CXone Mpower Autopilot: Driving Continuous Self-Service Improvement

CXone Mpower Autopilot's AI-powered automation enables businesses to continuously enhance their self-service capabilities over time. By leveraging insights from real-world interactions and customer feedback, Autopilot optimizes conversational flows and expands its ability to handle a growing percentage of customer queries.

The result is a self-service solution that becomes increasingly effective month after month, as evidenced by the steady rise in contained contacts, ultimately leading to higher customer satisfaction and operational efficiency.

"We believe our products are second to none, and that our support experience needs to be second to none as well. Working with NICE, we've achieved the best customer satisfaction ratings that we've ever seen." - **Roger Brewer, Director of Service Tools & Technology, Sony Electronics**

AUGMENT EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE WITH REAL-TIME ASSISTANCE TO ACHIEVE OPTIMAL OUTCOMES.

PLEASE SUPPLY
CARNIVAL UK LOGO

Carnival UK leverages Enlighten's purpose-built AI to empower employees, enabling smarter, faster work without increased effort, leading to their recognition as a 2024 International CX Excellence Award winner for Outstanding Employee Engagement.

Why should you care?

In today's competitive business landscape, your agents serve as the face of your brand, often being the first and only point of contact for customers seeking assistance. While self-service automation handles straightforward queries, the interactions that require live support are becoming increasingly complex and demanding.

Unfortunately, many agents navigate a fragmented technology stack of disparate systems and data silos. This cumbersome setup diverts their attention from customers as they struggle to find the correct information leading to frustration, longer resolution times and reduced satisfaction.

CXone Mpower Copilot, powered by AI for CX, offers a transformative solution. By providing agents with real-time AI assistance, businesses can empower their frontline representatives to achieve optimal outcomes. Generative AI can quickly produce accurate replies, initiate automated workflows, and offer behavioral recommendations that enhance the quality of the engagement.

Augmenting your employees with Enlighten increases efficiency, reduces handle times, and improves the experience for both customers and agents. Embracing this technology is crucial for brands looking to differentiate themselves through exceptional customer service in an era of heightened expectations and complexity.

"The elements of AI that are embedded in the CXone Mpower solutions meant we were able to advance on our AI roadmap further than we had anticipated." - **Jon Wells, Contact Center Director, Carnival UK**

"We looked at many other vendors before choosing NICE, but none of them could deliver the size and scope that we require to uphold our high standards and provide exceptional guest experiences. Our guests come to us to enjoy our ocean cruises and see the world, and we strive to make every point of that journey as frictionless as possible. From the moment our guests start searching for their desired cruise to the moment they step foot back on land, I am confident our digital transformation will provide them with the experience of a lifetime." - **Paul Ludlow, President, Carnival UK and P&O Cruises**

UNLOCK ORGANIZATION-WIDE IMPROVEMENTS WITH AI-DRIVEN INSIGHTS FROM 100% OF INTERACTIONS.

PLEASE SUPPLY
OPEN NETWORK LOGO

Open Network Exchange's comprehensive approach to leveraging AI-driven insights has yielded impressive results, including a 30% decrease in call volume, a 20% reduction in call escalations, and a 15% increase in revenue per call.

Why should you care?

In today's fast-paced business landscape, organizations struggle to harness vast amounts of data for informed decision-making effectively. Traditional data analysis methods are time-consuming and prone to errors, unable to keep pace with the growing volume of information.

AI-driven analytics revolutionizes the way businesses approach data. By leveraging advanced algorithms and machine learning, AI-powered analytics quickly identifies patterns, trends, and insights that would otherwise go unnoticed. This enables organizations to make accurate decisions based on real-time information.

AI-driven analytics also offers predictive capabilities, helping businesses anticipate future trends and customer behaviors. This proactive approach allows organizations to adapt quickly to changing circumstances and seize new opportunities.

Moreover, AI-driven analytics improves operational efficiency and reduces costs by automating data analysis tasks and providing actionable insights. This frees up human resources to focus on strategic initiatives.

In today's competitive environment, embracing AI-driven analytics is a necessity. Organizations that harness the power of AI to transform data into strategic assets will be well-positioned to drive innovation, improve customer experiences, and achieve sustainable growth.

“Our evaluations weren’t giving us the full picture. Everything was focused on compliance and policies—on protecting the back end rather than our guest experience during those interactions.”

- Alexandria Doucet, CXone Mpower Administrator, Open Network Exchange

Meeting and exceeding targets for stronger customer relationships.

Open Network Exchange recognized the importance of making it easy for customers to manage all types of payment interactions through self-service. To achieve this goal, they implemented CXone Mpower Autopilot, an AI-powered solution that has successfully resolved the payment calls ONE aimed to reduce.

Impressively, CXone Mpower Autopilot has exceeded ONE’s 50% self-service resolution target, deflecting 76% of payment call volume to date.

The key to ONE’s success lies in their innovative approach of leveraging CXone Mpower XO (Experience Optimization) to learn from conversational data. By identifying customer intents, utterances, and optimal resolution workflows, ONE continuously improves Autopilot’s effectiveness. This data-driven strategy not only enhances the customer experience but also streamlines operations, allowing ONE to provide efficient, round-the-clock support. With CXone Mpower Autopilot, ONE has set a new standard in self-service excellence, demonstrating its commitment to meeting customers’ evolving needs in the digital age.

“We knew leveraging CXone Mpower XO would automate various payment processes and deflect calls, but I wasn’t expecting to exceed our goals! Enlighten AI has fundamentally transformed our company’s operations.” - Ryan Romero, Senior Vice President of Global Technology Strategy and Innovation, Open Network Exchange

FIVE WAYS ONE IS WINNING WITH AI IN ACTION

- 1 **Building smart self-service fast:** ONE identifies, prioritizes, and optimizes self-service workflows to increase digital resolutions.
- 2 **Improving CSAT with automated quality:** ONE consistently identifies meaningful coaching opportunities that increase CSAT and streamline the supervisor’s time.
- 3 **Increasing revenue with proven sales effectiveness behaviors:** Analyzing and coaching to sales-focused soft-skill behaviors enables ONE to generate additional revenue on every interaction.
- 4 **Analyzing 100% of interactions to drive business performance:** A holistic view of every interaction enables ONE to improve CX and generate more revenue.
- 5 **Innovating faster on a single platform to realize results:** With CXone Mpower, ONE overcomes interaction complexity and gains compounding benefits that drive digital resolutions, CSAT, and revenue.

“Enlighten AI has **totally changed the way our company operates—for the best.** We’re able to measure how we’re treating our guests while still focusing on sales and driving revenue. What more could we ask for in a sales environment?”
- Alexandria Doucet, CXone Mpower Administrator

REDUCE CUSTOMER EFFORT WITH BEHAVIORAL COACHING AND REAL-TIME INTERACTION GUIDANCE.

PLEASE SUPPLY KAISER PERMANENTE LOGO

Kaiser Permanente has reduced Average Handle Time by over 30 seconds by promoting **positive behaviors, including active listening, being empathetic, demonstrating ownership, and effective questioning.**

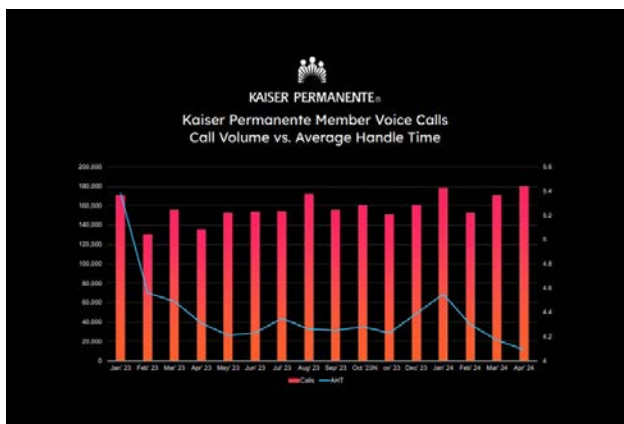
Why should you care?

Positive behavior drives positive results. However, traditional training methods often focus on processes and technical skills, overlooking the crucial role of agent behavior in delivering positive customer interactions. It's not enough to simply tell agents and front-line workers to make customers happy or to shorten call times; you need to focus on the specific behaviors that drive results.

Enlighten takes a data-driven approach to behavioral analysis, providing an objective measurement of customer sentiment and agent behaviors across all interactions, both voice and digital. This comprehensive analysis eliminates the subjectivity and limited sample size of traditional methods, offering a more accurate and actionable assessment of agent performance.

But Enlighten goes beyond just measuring empathy. It identifies dozens of specific behaviors that have been proven to positively impact key metrics such as Customer Satisfaction and Sales Effectiveness. By embedding these behaviors across the CXone Mpower platform, Enlighten powers AI Routing, Real-Time Agent Assistance, and post-interaction quality and coaching, creating a holistic approach to behavioral optimization.

By focusing on the behaviors that matter most, organizations can empower their agents to deliver consistently exceptional experiences, foster customer loyalty, and ultimately drive business growth. In an era where customer experience is the key differentiator, investing in behavioral intelligence is a transformative step towards CX excellence and long-term success.



“It’s amazing to see the kinds of coaching or other interventions possible now with this level of detail, compared to what is possible when you can only manually review two calls per agent per month.”

- Joenil Mistal, Senior Manager, Kaiser Permanente

Positive Agent Behavior Reduces Customer Effort

As agents consistently practice and exhibit behaviors such as active listening, being empathetic, demonstrating ownership, and effective questioning, customers experience a smoother, more efficient interaction. This consistent application of positive behaviors leads to a steady decrease in customer effort, as evidenced by the month-over-month reduction shown in the chart (accommodating seasonality). By focusing on cultivating these positive behaviors, organizations can create a more effortless experience for their customers, improving satisfaction and loyalty in the process.

“Sentiment and behavior scores from CXone Mpower for CSAT and Real-Time Interaction Guidance help us change our workflow processes and ensure that we’re providing excellent customer service.” - Joenil Mistal, Senior Manager, Kaiser Permanente



PROACTIVELY RESOLVE HIGH-RISK CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS WITH AI-POWERED ANALYTICS AND TARGETED OUTREACH.

PLEASE SUPPLY ENLIGHTEN AI LOGO

Hyundai Capital achieved an impressive **36% year-over-year reduction in complaints** by leveraging AI-powered speech analytics to identify high-risk issues and proactively reach out to customers to address and resolve their concerns.

Why should you care?

Unresolved customer complaints pose a significant threat to an organization's success. Not only do they damage brand reputation and customer loyalty, but they can also escalate into costly legal and regulatory issues. In today's competitive landscape, organizations cannot afford to underestimate the financial impact of mishandled complaints, which can lead to millions of dollars in fines, settlements, and lost business.

The challenge lies in the fact that many organizations currently lack a systematic approach to identifying and preventing customer complaints from escalating. This is where AI-powered solutions come into play, providing businesses with the ability to manage complaints at scale effectively.

By leveraging advanced AI technologies to analyze every customer conversation, organizations can proactively identify signs of customer distress and high-risk topics that have the potential to escalate. This enables businesses to intervene early, addressing issues before they spiral out of control and lead to serious consequences.

Investing in AI-driven complaint management is not just a defensive strategy – it's a proactive approach that can transform potential crises into opportunities for growth and success. By demonstrating a commitment to customer satisfaction and promptly resolving concerns, businesses can build long-term customer loyalty and foster a positive brand reputation.

Identifying and Mitigating High-Risk Interactions: Key Drivers

- Low sentiment
- Customer distress
- Frequent contacts
- Executive escalations
- Regulatory mentions
- Social media complaints
- Legal threats

Transform CX with AI-Powered Solutions

Hyundai Capital has set a new standard in customer experience excellence by harnessing the power of AI-driven technologies. The company's strategic implementation of AI-powered solutions has yielded remarkable improvements across multiple key performance indicators, from complaint reduction and first contact resolution to executive escalations and overall net sentiment. These impressive results underscore the transformative potential of AI in revolutionizing customer service and driving unparalleled success in today's competitive landscape.

- 36% complaint reduction YoY
- 6% improvement in first contact resolution
- 16% decrease in executive escalations
- 13% improvement in net sentiment

CX innovators are leading their organizations into an era of AI-driven customer experience using a complete, connected, and intelligent platform. This transformative approach is setting new standards in customer engagement and driving unparalleled business success. **Are you ready to make CX AI a reality?**

How CXone Mpower can help.

NICE CXone Mpower delivers a complete, connected, and intelligent CX platform that equips organizations with everything needed to provide extraordinary service. Designed to help businesses of all sizes deliver exceptional customer experiences, CXone Mpower delivers end-to-end automation across the entire customer service journey. By unifying workflows, agents, and knowledge all on one platform, CXone Mpower transforms traditional customer service into a proactive AI-powered experience at unmatched scale.

CXone Mpower breaks down silos between customer facing and back-office operations, ensuring faster resolutions and greater continuity across all touchpoints. This unified approach meets the ultimate priority of efficiency and elevated customer satisfaction.

As the leader in cloud contact center solutions, CXone Mpower is the platform of choice for organizations looking to make CX AI a reality and achieve measurable results fast. Whether you're just starting your CX transformation or looking to take your customer experience to the next level, CXone Mpower provides the complete, connected, and intelligent platform you need to succeed.

INSIDE OUR ONE-OF-A-KIND APPROACH.

100% of interactions on one platform.

CXone Mpower stands out as the only interaction-centric cloud platform capable of managing 100% of interactions – both attended and unattended, across voice and digital channels. This unique approach breaks down silos between channels, providing consumers with seamless experiences, equipping agents with integrated applications, and relieving businesses from the burden of system integration. We think of CXone Mpower as the operating system for CX, orchestrating interactions effortlessly, creating a solid foundation for applications to run smoothly, and enabling organizations to deliver extraordinary service.

Unmatched convergence power for interaction complexity.

CXone Mpower's unparalleled convergence power is crucial for managing today's complex customer interactions. We've natively unified all channels, data, applications, and knowledge on a single platform. This comprehensive approach integrates our industry-leading workforce engagement, analytics, digital, inbound, and outbound capabilities. CXone Mpower's unified data layer not only combines data from CXone Mpower and external sources but also provides a true 360-degree view of the customer experience. This powers our AI solutions to take actions that extend beyond traditional CX boundaries.

AI purpose-built for CX, driving value from day one.

CXone Mpower's Enlighten AI stands out in the "AI everywhere" market. Unlike others relying on public internet data, Enlighten is purpose-built for CX, trained on actual customer interactions and pre-trained with every CX process. This ensures alignment with brand values and business objectives. Trained on the largest labeled dataset of CX interactions, with over 1,000 prebuilt CX AI models available, Enlighten delivers unmatched precision and immediate value from Day One. Deeply integrated into CXone Mpower, it empowers organizations to deliver intelligent, personalized experiences that drive customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Openness and extensibility for seamless integration

CXone Mpower sets the standard for openness and extensibility, integrating seamlessly with existing technology stacks. With 40+ prebuilt connections, comprehensive platform services, and support for 30+ communication channels, CXone Mpower offers unparalleled flexibility. Our complete WEM suite runs on third-party ACDs for flexible migration. CXone Mpower Embedded Agent for CRMs and UCaaS provides prebuilt integration for company-wide collaboration, while the CXone Mpower Agent Chrome Browser Extension enables CXone Mpower to run on any web app. This openness allows organizations to adapt to specific requirements and future-proof their CX strategy.

SO, WHAT'S NEXT?

Embrace the AI Revolution

The future of CX is being shaped by AI. CX innovators featured in this eBook have leveraged NICE CXone Mpower's capabilities to deliver unparalleled experiences and drive measurable success.

Transform Your CX Strategy

It's your turn to embark on this journey. NICE CXone Mpower's unique approach combines an interaction-centric platform, convergence power, purpose-built AI, and extensibility to make CX AI a reality for your organization.

Seize the Opportunity

Empower your teams with the right tools and skills. Harness AI's potential to deliver exceptional experiences that drive loyalty, growth, and success. With NICE CXone Mpower as your partner, navigate this new landscape confidently.

Launch Your CX AI Journey

Don't wait for the future — shape it. Start your CX AI journey with NICE CXone Mpower today and unlock endless possibilities for your customer, employees, and business.

Ready to make CX AI a reality?

If you've got any questions about the content of this report, or want to know more about how NICE CXone Mpower can support your organization, our experts are always on hand.

[Talk to an expert.](#)



Building a Conversation Intelligence Center of Excellence

Turning customer insights into action can lay the foundation for business success

INTRODUCTION

According to the 2024 CallMiner CX Landscape Report, 91% of contact center and customer experience (CX) leaders believe that AI will help optimize CX strategies. The good news is that organizations are much further along in their AI maturity than a few years ago, thanks in part to advancements in education since the emergence of generative AI in 2022. To that end, 62% have at least partially implemented AI technology, with 24% remaining in the early stages of adoption. Yet, even as more companies adopt AI, 27% still say they are not sure how to measure the ROI of AI technology.

These organizations need to take a step back and assess how to gain practical and quantifiable wins from AI, proving value before progressing in their AI journey. For example, many CX organizations are investing in AI-powered conversation intelligence to help their teams analyze

omnichannel customer feedback at scale. Customer insights are foundational to CX improvements, and, over time, can be leveraged across the entire organization to drive strategic business transformation goals.

To set yourself up for success, a center of excellence (CoE) approach can help ensure you have a strong plan in place that takes you from selecting a solution to implementation to ROI. A CoE can play a centralized role as a decision-making committee in the selection process, carefully considering the needs of multiple departments and key users. In addition, this group can implement a pilot project that can serve as the jumping off point for measuring ROI. From there, a CoE can help to advocate for the use of conversation intelligence across the organization.

Let's explore how to make a CoE approach work for your organization, exploring some examples of successful conversation intelligence rollouts and organization-wide advocacy initiatives.

What is a CoE and why establish one?

CoEs are a panel of internal stakeholders, often cross-functional, to drive organizational change — establishing new technology selection and usage, measuring ROI, and evangelizing success enterprise-wide. For example, Forrester Research advocates for a customer insights CoE, which can look different depending on your organization. These types of CoE groups provide both governance and program management support, ensuring that a technology like conversation intelligence is implemented successfully throughout the organization.

THE RISE OF THE AI BOARD

While not a CoE in name, more and more organizations are forming AI boards and councils. These groups are aimed at centralizing expertise to more effectively adopt and implement AI technology — from developing new policies and considering security implications to providing buying guidance across different areas of the business. According to a poll from Gartner, 55% of organizations have an AI board, while 54% have an AI leader that orchestrates activities.

The intent of these new groups is to protect and guide their organizations through the uncharted waters of AI today. While different from a focused conversation intelligence CoE, these groups can work together to make smart technology investment decisions — and can be instrumental in the successful adoption of AI tools across the organization.

Most often, a CoE originates within the CX or customer success teams, and can expand to include different stakeholders who want to use customer insights to drive departmental improvements.

Ideally this team collectively establishes requirements for a technology solution prior to investment. From there, the CoE:

- Creates an action plan for an initial pilot project
- Determines appropriate KPIs and measures progress against those initiatives
- Advocates for the expanded use of the technology throughout the organization
- Provides support for cross-departmental rollout

ESTABLISHING AN INITIAL PILOT PROJECT

While it can be tempting to tackle everything on your wish list when onboarding a powerful tool like conversation intelligence, refining your initial plan is key. One of the best ways to direct your team's focus down to a common goal is to create a pilot project. Stick to only what's included in the initial project charter and measure the results before expanding into additional areas.

For example, embracing a hybrid approach to quality assurance (QA) automation is a good place to start. QA is an area where the ROI is measurable — most analysts can only review a fraction of interactions, while conversation intelligence can analyze 100% of omnichannel interactions and provide actionable insights for improvements.

However, achieving 100% automated QA might not be practical right away. Focusing on automating agent scorecards for compliance, scripting, or drilling down on certain process improvements can be far more effective.

In certain situations, improving a single customer interaction channel or area of concern is more impactful than deploying a full-scale omnichannel listening strategy all at once. While your mission may be lofty — such as delivering best-in-class CX with every interaction — it's useful to break ambitious statements down into specific, measurable areas of improvement and documenting these in your pilot charter

MEASURING SUCCESS

Choosing a pilot that is specific and measurable is key to evaluating the performance of conversation intelligence, calibrating the system, and making improvements. How can you identify the top areas for improvement? One way is to uncover the drivers behind certain contact center outliers. For example, an initial analysis of the data from a conversation intelligence system may uncover points of friction in your CX.

Or you may already know how to identify areas where your contact center is struggling to meet customers' needs. A conversation intelligence system can help you discover the root cause of certain issues with people, products or processes to fix the problems at the source. For example, the amount of silence can make an immediate impact on average handle times (AHTs) and customer satisfaction scores (CSAT). With that in mind, it's not the silence itself that's the problem. It's finding out the "why" — the root cause or drivers — behind high silence times and empowering the team to focus on specific business improvements.

Once you have measured the initial success of your pilot and shown business value, you can continuously improve your conversation intelligence program, and expand the use of the technology to other channels or areas for CX improvement.



WORKHUMAN: COLLABORATING WITH FRONTLINE AGENTS TO OPTIMIZE SERVICE QUALITY

Essential to the Workhuman customer-focused approach is for the customer success department to gather valuable feedback on interactions between agents and users. This feedback was provided by Workhuman's internal quality team through hands-on quality assurance (QA) audits. What once was a heavily manual approach distributed across a variety of tools evolved into the automation of agent scorecards using conversation intelligence.

Using AI reduced the need for human intervention and shifted the focus towards providing detailed feedback and coaching on aspects crucial for the agents' professional growth.

The Workhuman team has continuously improved its quality audit scorecard, which previously was static and had no way to incorporate changes based on performance trends and changing customer expectations. Now, thanks to the customizability of conversation intelligence, the quality scorecard is reviewed, discussed and optimized every six months incorporating stakeholder input, according to changing quality patterns and behaviors that require focus.

This continuous reiteration of the quality scorecard ensures that Workhuman rises to evolving and increasingly complex customer expectations. The company designed an evergreen framework with the ability to build and evolve two quality scorecards. This agent-led, inclusive program includes constant calibration, embracing contact center inputs to focus on the agent's development — rather than purely on the quality score they achieve.



ADVOCATING FOR THE EXPANDED USE OF CONVERSATION INTELLIGENCE

While conversation intelligence programs often originate with contact centers or CX teams, a centralized CoE comprised of members from across functions and departments can help ensure that customer insights are effectively leveraged across the entire organization:

- **Contact Center:** Driving contact center efficiency and effectiveness, improving compliance/QA outcomes, detecting fraud, improving measurable CX outcomes (NPS, CSAT, CES, etc.).
- **Marketing:** Refining and targeting marketing campaigns, getting one step ahead before an issue becomes a crisis, or staying informed about brand sentiment.
- **Sales:** Improving sales effectiveness and efficiency, identifying cross-sell or up-sell opportunities, revealing new areas of opportunity or coaching.
- **Product:** Improving products or driving product roadmaps based on customer feedback, avoiding recalls or warranty issues, discovering new areas of opportunity or expansion.
- **Board-level:** Evaluating how VoC impacts business operations, strategy, and the bottom line.

The challenge is often demonstrating the initial value of the technology to others in the organization. Once the initial pilot project and CX rollout are successful, the CoE plays a vital role in visibility and advocacy across the organization long after implementation is complete. In other words, cross-functional teams need to know the technology exists in order to use these valuable customer insights at scale. Advocacy and awareness may start by delivering a presentation to the board or cross-functional leaders, providing ideas of how customer insights can be leveraged to drive practical business improvements in other lines of business. The CoE can also provide coaching and training sessions to groups who want to implement conversation intelligence or bring cross-functional team members into the CoE for training and enablement.

Advocacy is an ongoing process; establishing a regular meeting or Slack group can help teams get quick answers to questions or concerns as they expand adoption of the technology throughout the organization.



Top 3 AI Trends Driving the Future of CX

AI has dominated the customer service space over the past year. At a time when experiences are everything to the customer, AI has empowered brands to deliver over the top support. Technology is truly revolutionizing the way companies engage with customers and offers the potential to continuously improve contact center operations, shift workflows and enhance experiences.

This excitement to innovate, however, has been met with some hesitation in the past. While there is so much potential — for some contact center leaders, the actual AI implementation process and rollout has been staggered. Many organizations have taken the last year to better understand the technology and pick priority use cases as they embark on their AI journey.

Although they may have been inevitable at first, these hesitations have actually set some companies back — 50% of leaders say their AI journey is progressing slower than they expected or hoped for. While moving at a cautious pace may be helpful in making intentional changes, many brands realize they need to accelerate their pace of adoption in order to compete while driving improvements in operational workflows..

Toussaint Celestin, Principal, AI Product & Industry Marketing at Talkdesk shares his insights on the state of AI, “As AI adoption becomes more pervasive, organizations are widening the scope of AI adoption beyond singular isolated interactions to multi-touch omnichannel use cases that require end-to-end integrated and scalable solutions to provide better experiences across the entire customer journey and boost brand loyalty.”

As we look to 2025, it is critical to understand how the latest AI applications - including generative and agentic AI - can support a more robust and hyper personalized customer service strategy. By taking this moment to unpack different AI solutions and how they fit into the contact center, leaders will be equipped to build more effective experiences that exceed expectations.

HERE WE BREAK DOWN THE TOP 3 AI TRENDS DRIVING THE FUTURE OF EXPERIENCES.

1. Generative AI and the End of Frustrating Automation

According to CCW's latest consumer preferences survey, antiquated solutions such as IVR menus and static chatbots ranked among the top points of frustration and dissatisfaction among consumers in 2024.

Only 17% of customers stated that they trust these old-school legacy self-service mechanisms to solve their problems.

In this age of voice-enabled shopping and self-driving cars, modern customers expect more and often vote with their feet if brands can't deliver. As they see innovation across industries, they expect brands to iterate and improve experiences. Technology is meant to enhance their interactions and make their lives easier, so when the opposite is true frustration is often followed by poor CSAT scores, brand abandonment, and worse still, negative social media reviews.

Customers, from Baby Boomers to Gen Z and Echo Boomers, no longer fear technology, they want to engage with smart tools so long as they actually work. Complex and confusing automation and chatbots are being replaced by advanced generative AI and agentic AI solutions that can act autonomously with speed and accuracy to deliver delightful virtual and live-agent interactions.

Toussaint Celestin shares, "The death of the IVR is upon us, thanks to generative and agentic AI. Gone are the days of navigating endless phone menus. Generative AI makes interactions feel natural and intuitive, letting customers skip frustrating menu selections and get straight to the help they need. And, on the back-end, these next-gen AI applications simplify the process of designing and deploying pre and post-call automation workflows."

With so few customers currently trusting chatbots and self-service mechanisms, it is clear that they are looking for a more personalized, intuitive interaction. Generative AI offers a truly seamless and conversational approach to self-service. By leveraging the power of large language models and real-time conversational analysis and topic detection, customers are met with the most relevant and human-centered responses.

"Generative AI powers interactions that feel more natural and relevant, providing contextually appropriate, emotionally-aware responses that adapt to each customer's specific situation. Customers receive not only faster responses but ones that feel genuinely personalized, creating a deeper sense of engagement with the brand," Celestin states.

This deeper engagement will power long-term loyalty and strengthen customer relationships. By giving customers the confidence to engage on their terms, brands will establish trust and enhance autonomy.

2. Agentic AI and Autonomous Agents

To begin offering a more proactive AI-led experience, organizations are leaning into agentic AI. Going a step further than conversational capabilities, agentic AI offers a more autonomous approach. Autonomous agents are able to achieve human-like cognition, empowering them to problem-solve in a way that has never been done before.

Unlike generative AI that lacks independent action, agentic AI can independently analyze real-time data and make proactive decisions. With this ability, the technology operates autonomously and makes decisions based on learned behaviors.



Celestin states, “Agentic AI has emerged as the game-changer, enabling AI to not just respond, but actively think and decide. This breakthrough allows for hyper-personalized, autonomous customer interactions that evolve with customer needs.”

With 95% of contact center leaders stating that customers will expect brands to predict and proactively address their needs in 2025, this technology is critical. Agentic AI gives organizations the ability to track customer emotion and engagement trends in real time, and make proactive recommendations, to guide agents effectively.

This level of autonomy has the potential to shift the agent role as we move forward. Celestin adds, “As these AI capabilities continue to evolve, we foresee agents becoming less tied to traditional script-based work and more focused on using their expertise and emotional intelligence to resolve complex issues and provide highly personalized service. In the future, agents will no longer be burdened by managing workflows, retrieving information, or interpreting every sentiment manually; instead, they will be empowered by AI to deliver uniquely human experiences at scale.”

By shifting to a proactive approach, organizations will be in the position to solve problems before they arise and give agents the space to engage with customers in a more meaningful way. All of these changes will drive trust and reduce frustration as customers secure a more seamless end-to-end experience.

3. Multi-Modal AI and Comprehensive Support

At a time when 86% of contact center leaders believe that accuracy and quality scores will be the most critical metrics moving forward, it is necessary to ensure that AI performance is supported with insightful and comprehensive data.

With multimodal models, organizations can process a wide variety of inputs, including images, and audio, as prompts. From there, the technology can convert those prompts into various outputs. By combining different modalities, AI will be powered by a richer set of information, enhancing accuracy and quality.

Celestin shares, “Multimodal AI is breaking barriers by integrating text, voice, images, and video into a single, fluid customer service experience. This enables richer, more context-aware interactions that meet customers where they are, delivering tailored support on any channel.”

With multimodal AI, organizations can leverage different inputs of data and recognize patterns throughout. This creates a more natural output and offers context that may not have been available with traditional AI.

For example, a customer can upload a photo of themselves wearing a product and get feedback on what size might fit better. In the healthcare space, the technology can be used to diagnose a medical condition by analyzing imaging. By interpreting multimodal data, organizations have the potential to better understand and communicate with customers by getting a comprehensive view of their concerns and challenges.

NEXT-STEPS FOR 2025

With the majority of leaders admitting that they are markedly behind in their AI journey, it is time to move forward to remain competitive in 2025 and beyond. Agentic AI is poised to transform contact center operations and offer an autonomous support system for both the agent and the customer.

According to CCW Digital research, 44% of customers stated that they were fearful of customer service becoming too automated and generic, and overall less personalized to their needs. In the past, this may have been a realistic concern, but tools like multimodal and agentic AI are powering interactions that feel natural, human-centered and personal.

Celestin shares Talkdesk’s vision for the future of experiences, “AI will also make the customer experience less about transactional exchanges and more about ongoing relationships. With AI continuously learning from each interaction, customers will receive increasingly sophisticated and personalized service over time. This creates a new paradigm where customer support isn’t just about fixing problems—it’s about creating seamless, frictionless interactions that make customers feel understood and valued at every touchpoint. Ultimately, generative and agentic AI will help contact centers shift from simply solving issues to delivering exceptional, human-like experiences that build lasting customer loyalty.”

Customers are clearly looking for a more personalized and meaningful experience today. By leveraging AI that can support a more nuanced relationship, brands will be in the position to connect with customers on a deeper level.

While companies are always working to enhance efficiency and improve outcomes, relationship building is key in the era of experiences. Moving forward, lasting customer loyalty will be the differentiator that keeps companies at the forefront.

COMPANY	CHALLENGE	SOLUTION/RESULT
Checkr	Low containment rate, increasing volume, inability to scale	Talkdesk Ascend AI / 85% self-service rate, 56% drop in AHT
CAI	Legacy technology that lacked innovation - no ability to bring in AI solutions; performance reliability	Talkdesk Ascend AI / 70% QA activities fully automated, 50% reduction in after call work





From Excitement To Execution: Making An Impact With Contact Center AI In 2025 & Beyond

Customer contact leaders have spent the past few years admiring the transformative potential of artificial intelligence. They have marveled at its ability to improve customer and employee experiences, and they have contemplated what it could mean for the future of contact center operations.

With 90% of leaders calling the pursuit of valuable AI use cases a top priority for 2025, it is time to shift from aspiration to action and from excitement to execution. It is time to explicitly identify the right use cases and actively pursue the best initiatives.

“2025 is going to be a pivotal year for generative AI in the contact center, specifically around bot replacement. In addition, [businesses] will begin to launch generative agent tech for a limited set of use cases, making it a year of testing and validation of value.” - **Dan Rood, ASAPP**

Customer demands are greater than ever, with 95% of contact centers acknowledging that highly personalized, proactive care has become a cornerstone demand. Taking steps to better understand these customers, while finally cultivating the happy, empowered agents who can thrive on the frontlines, is utterly foundational to success.

Fortunately, advances in AI technology provide ample reason for optimism. Modern AI solutions, including the aforementioned generative agents, *can* help organizations simultaneously increase efficiency and humanity. The key will be to set the right objectives, pursue the right use cases, avoid common pitfalls, and design a robust framework for success.

What does that journey entail? How can you ensure your AI initiatives are best-suited for today's customers and employees? This briefing provides the answers.

Focus #1 | Elevate self-service with Generative AI Agents

Self-service has long consumed contact center dialogue, and the hype is understandable. Frustrated with the long wait times, frequent transfers, and limited support hours traditionally associated with agent-led care, more than 60% of consumers are even willing to address *complex issues* in self-service channels.

Unfortunately, previous self-service experiences have not lived up to the hype. Slow, unintuitive, impersonal, and non-conversational, the IVRs, bots, portals, and FAQ pages of yesterday have not represented viable alternatives to traditional human support. And so while the majority of customers *want* to use self-service, only 17% are presently confident that they *can* solve their problems using chatbots.

By harnessing the power of conversational, generative, and agentic AI, you can directly confront all these challenges. You can make self-service experiences easier, faster, more relevant, and more resolute, leading to considerably more customer trust and operational efficiency.

“The promise of bots over the past 10 years was that they would increase speed to resolution, reduce the number of tier 1 interactions being serviced by live agents, and cut interaction costs. These promises have only been partially fulfilled because of the limitations in a bot’s intelligence. Generative AI has changed that paradigm.” - **Dan Rood, ASAPP**

When customers begin to adopt, trust, and outright *prefer* AI-powered self-service options, brands unlock numerous benefits. They scale their support offering, giving customers the option to get meaningful help, at all times, on their own terms. They reduce frustrating inbound contact volume, enabling agents to focus on more rewarding, meaningful work.

They also gain access to powerful intelligence, since customers will actually be engaging with bots – and thus providing meaningful insight into how they frame their questions, and how they respond (in terms of sentiment and behavior) to certain policies and answers.

The key, of course, is to provide a self-service experience that is about customer empowerment rather than dismissive deflection. This means enabling your self-service platforms to provide real resolutions and not simply regurgitate policies. It means empowering bots to understand and respond in natural language and not simply repurpose FAQ content. It also means training the underlying AI on *nuanced business use cases and lexicon* and not simply open-source large language models.

“An open-source LLM alone cannot manage the complexity of your customer interactions, but a system of models where some are fine-tuned on your business lexicon and integrated with the company’s backend systems is incredibly powerful at achieving first contact resolution. Companies will be well served to get started now by finding a great AI partner and deploying use cases of increasing complexity over the next couple years.”

- **Chris Arnold, ASAPP**

Focus #2 | Transform the role of the agent to focus on high-value work

Employee engagement and retention represent perennial challenges, and with good reason: the typical contact center does not provide an empowering agent experience. Rather than enabling agents to think critically and empathetically as they connect with customers, it forces them to fumble through convoluted systems and processes while focusing on repetitive, cumbersome tasks.

While undermining contact center culture and ballooning recruiting and training costs, this poor work experience directly hurts customer-facing performance.

“Contact centers are on a 5-year increase in agent churn and absenteeism. This challenge is proving to have a direct correlation to FCR and CSAT because of the culture of low-tenured employees it creates.”

- **Chris Arnold, ASAPP**

Leaders have long trumpeted AI as a solution to this problem, professing their desire to “automate simple issues so agents can focus on complex ones.” They have long intended to transform the role of the agent from “script reader” to engagement consultant.

The problem is that past AI deployments have not successfully brought this vision to life. Going into 2025, 83% of leaders feel agents are still spending too much time on low-value customer interactions. The majority also acknowledge the undue effort of knowledge searches, customer data lookups, and accessing key tools.

Thanks to the generative AI-powered solutions of innovators like ASAPP, brands can meaningfully eliminate these sources of effort.

“We currently focus on two primary objectives. First, we provide contact centers a new means of delivering end-to-end customer service with our GenerativeAgent solution that increases the speed to resolution for customers and reduces the spend on labor to support tier one interactions. Second, ASAPP continues to pursue our passion for agents by offering the most advanced AI solution to support agents with automation, transcriptions, insights, and an end-to-end platform for digital service.” - Dan Rood, ASAPP

While boosting customer satisfaction and improving operational efficiency, such AI solutions *finally* transform the role of the agent. Contact centers can actually reduce frontline headcount and enable agents to take on more consequential work.

“The impact [of generative AI] on the contact center will be profound, as it will allow CX leaders to truly reimagine the automation vs. agent mix. Customers will find faster and more accurate resolution from generative AI agents. Businesses will see a reduction in the need for live agents, which will force a conversation about how we realign an agent’s role toward more complex and (hopefully) more meaningful customer engagement.”
- Dan Rood, ASAPP

“With this elevated role, we’ll see dramatically lower absenteeism and attrition. For the first time in contact center history, there won’t be a need to constantly replace front-line agents. The OPEX saving for tightening contact center budgets will be truly significant.” - Chris Arnold, ASAPP

Not simply a way to retain and elevate today’s agents, the AI-driven contact center will stand a better chance of attracting top talent. It can offer jobs – and long-term career paths – that resonate with highly analytical, creative prospects that, while well-suited for engaging with customers, have no interest in traditional “call center work.” Welcoming employees of this caliber will ultimately lead to better experience design, more informed technology deployments, and more innovative corporate ideation.

Focus #3 | Make humanity a contact center reality

When it comes to contact center agents, the right AI initiative will not simply free them from cumbersome processes and low-value work. It will also unlock their truest potential, enabling them to better deliver results and more consistently wow customers. Coupled with the positive impact on self-service, a successful AI transformation will fundamentally *increase humanity* at a time when so many competitors are settling for a transactional approach.

On the front line, generative and agentic AI technologies bring human-level understanding, relevant conversational capabilities, and intelligent decision-making to automation. This means that moving a conversation from “agent to bot” no longer has to feel like a drop from “human to inhuman.”

Behind-the-scenes, this same technology will not only *streamline* agent workflow but actively surface relevant insights that make them better capable of connecting with customers. Providing guidance rather than scripts, this intelligence will enable them to actively humanize and tailor conversations – and actively build connections with customers.

Given that only 16% of contact center leaders feel their agents are *currently* ready for next-generation work, and that 63% say existing contact center systems thwart high performance, leveraging AI to improve training, highlight performance gaps, and provide real-time guidance will clearly be the key to creating agents who are not only more available but more exceptional.

Beyond deploying the right technology, the key will be to cultivate a human-centric culture within the contact center. This, first and foremost, involves ensuring employees play

a custodial, human-in-the-loop role in AI technology to ensure it is functioning the way it should. It also involves updating training to focus on technological fluency and vital soft skills, ensuring agents can actually use their additional focus and insights to drive better bots and create more memorable experiences.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS ON THE ROAD TO AI TRANSFORMATION

For those seeking meaningful contact center transformation, the technology is undoubtedly here. Today's AI solutions are capable of elevating self-service, uncovering actionable intelligence, automating cumbersome processes, and augmenting agents' ability to make connections.

True success, however, hinges on approaching this technology with a thoughtful, customer- and agent-centric mindset. A critical step involves identifying appropriate, proof-of-concept test cases, providing you a way to best assess the AI's strengths and weaknesses.

"Many are approaching generative agent technology in a 'use case' approach, testing interactions typically reserved for tier one agents and then moving to more complicated use cases. This fulfills their desire to see the success of use cases while testing the safety and accuracy of AI solutions."

- Dan Rood, ASAPP

"Don't be afraid to start small with a plan to learn and iterate quickly. In the contact center, small changes can lead to massive outcomes. Be very proactive and thoughtful in choosing the right use cases when you get started."

- Chris Arnold, ASAPP

Along with reducing the risk of inaccurate communication, this methodical approach helps businesses understand what the particular AI solution does best. That knowledge will foster a more intelligent approach to future deployments; instead of forcibly automating "the most boring work" or "the most common calls," you can pinpoint precisely where AI can best elevate the customer experiences or employee engagement. This will provide the much-desired duality of efficiency *and* customer satisfaction.

"Consider where the AI is strong out of the box, what data sources are available, and where pain points can be quickly eliminated. This requires more thought than simply looking at the top 5 call drivers. You will get there more quickly if you leverage the inherent strengths of the AI and invest the time and energy into creating space for the solution to learn and do what it's built to do – meet the needs of your customers in the most effective and efficient manner possible." - Chris Arnold, ASAPP

The right technology partner will play a crucial role in this process, guiding you on the optimal deployment journey and collaborating on future AI training and customization.

Successfully defining and cultivating the "agent of the future" will also affect the speed and impact of the AI journey. By building a team that can provide custodial guidance *for bots* and expertly handle the interactions that are *not being automated*, you will build a human-centric, performance-minded culture in your contact center. Employee engagement will grow, and customer satisfaction will rise.

About the Contributors

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For over 12 years Dan has been leading marketing organizations within the CX space with special emphasis on narrative frameworks to transform product positioning. Dan spent the first part of his career in B2B SaaS sales at companies like Microsoft, Amazon, Expedia, and American Express. Dan's primary passion is his wife and four kiddos. His life purpose is to perfect the smoking of a beef brisket, which has eluded him for over 5 years.

Chris Arnold, VP Contact Center Strategy, **ASAPP**

Prior to ASAPP, Chris spent 20 years leading contact center strategy and technology implementation for Verizon and Alltel, leading staff operations, and managing desktop automation and augmentation



“Can you repeat that?” The \$5.5B Impact of Language Barriers on Offshore Agents & Contact Centers

Many companies use offshore contact centers to provide cost-effective service solutions. A major challenge for these offshore operations is that regional accents create poor comprehension and caller frustration, higher staffing and labor costs, and lower customer satisfaction.

ContactBabel, a trusted contact center industry research firm, conducted proprietary research in June 2024 to explore these issues in-depth.

This study examines how accents affect offshore contact center operations and provides practical insights for improving the overall customer and agent experiences and the corresponding business outcomes.

Conflicting Views Between Contact Centers and Customer Experience

The survey revealed a major difference in opinions between U.S. customers and offshore contact centers regarding repetition frequency during calls. When asked how often they had to ask agents to repeat themselves, 79% of U.S. customers said they experienced this at least

once per call. In contrast, only 33% of offshore contact centers believed that their agents were asked to repeat themselves once or more per call.

The gap widens when looking at repeated requests within a single call. While 54% of U.S. customers reported needing to ask agents to repeat themselves multiple times during a call, none of the contact centers believed this was happening.

This data suggests a clear disconnect between what offshore contact centers think is happening and what U.S. customers are actually experiencing. Contact centers may be underestimating the extent of the issue, which could lead to ongoing problems in customer satisfaction and service quality.

This misunderstanding can also lead to poor resource allocation and training. If contact centers don't recognize the importance of speech comprehension and the potential negative impacts of accents on the overall efficiency and effectiveness of communication, they might not invest in the right training or technology to reduce misunderstandings.

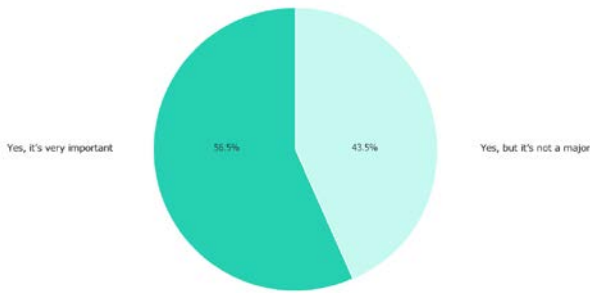
Figure 1: Business and customer views on how often agents are asked to repeat themselves



Accent-Related Recruitment Challenges

Accents also significantly affect how offshore agents are recruited. One hundred percent of BPOs in the study said that the strength of an agent’s accent affects hiring decisions in some capacity. This focus on accents can lead to a smaller pool of potential hires, often excluding otherwise qualified candidates. As a result, BPOs might miss out on talent that could contribute to strong customer service, simply because of the way someone speaks.

Figure 2: Accent influence on recruitment



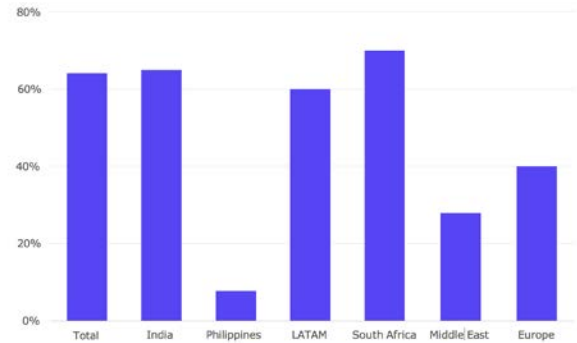
Limited Talent Pools and Lack of Inclusivity

The pressure to reduce or neutralize accents can harm agent morale. Agents who feel they must change how they naturally speak might feel undervalued, leading to job dissatisfaction and higher turnover rates. This focus on neutralizing accents can also hurt diversity and inclusion efforts, as it suggests that some accents are less acceptable or professional.

This issue is particularly severe in places like India, where large volumes agents are disqualified because of their accents. Agents who know their accent is a barrier may be discouraged from pursuing a career in customer service, which reduces the overall quality of the workforce.

On average, 64% of potential agents across different regions are not hired because of their accents. In India and South Africa, this number is even higher.

Figure 3: Agent disqualification due to accents

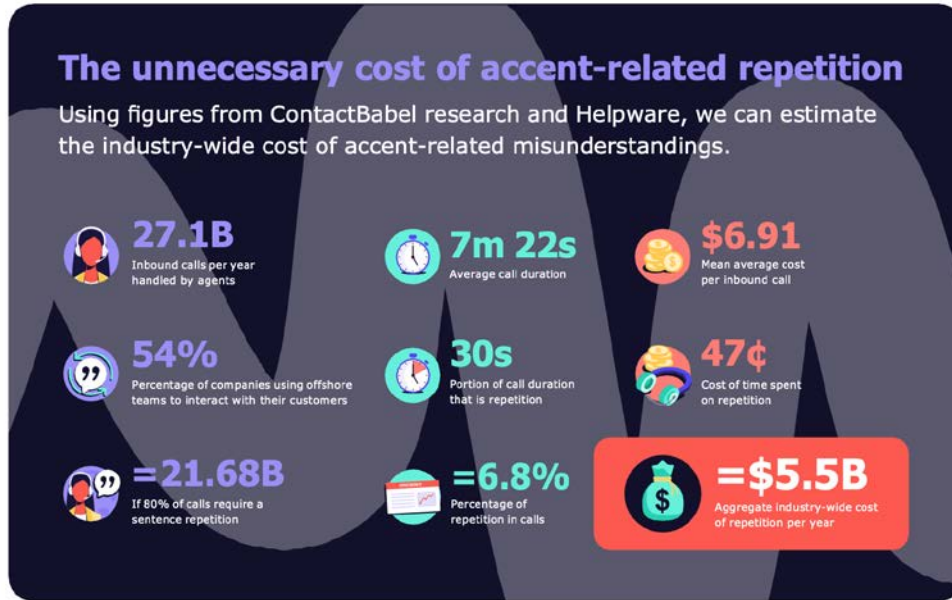


This focus on accents during hiring limits the talent pool and keeps out many qualified candidates. It also reinforces a bias that only agents with certain accents can do the job well, which isn’t necessarily true.

Costs of Accent-Related Misunderstandings

Misunderstandings caused by accents lead to longer call times and increased costs. The study found that 50% of U.S. consumers feel uncomfortable asking offshore agents to repeat themselves. This discomfort often means calls last longer, as agents spend more time clarifying and solving issues.

Longer calls increase operational costs. If each call with a repetition request is extended by even 30 seconds, and a call center handles thousands of calls a day, the added cost can be significant. These misunderstandings also lower customer satisfaction and can frustrate agents, leading to higher turnover rates.



The Role of Accent Neutralization Training

Accent neutralization training is common in contact centers but is often expensive and ineffective. The study showed that training can help agents speak more clearly, it is costly and doesn't always solve the problem. Some BPOs spend up to \$30,000 annually on training, but many still struggle with accent-related misunderstandings and repetition.

Training also takes time and may not produce noticeable improvements. Agents might lose confidence if they feel their natural way of speaking isn't good enough.

Impact on Agent Morale and Productivity

Repetition due to accents doesn't just affect the customer experience; it also takes a toll on agent morale and engagement. Agents who handle over 100 calls a day can quickly become demoralized if they are frequently criticized for their accents and clarity. This ongoing criticism can lead to lower productivity, reduced self-confidence, and eventually, burnout.

Traditionally, BPOs have tried to address this issue by putting agents through accent neutralization training, often combined with cultural training to teach a more Western style of communication.

However, this approach has mixed results. It's costly to onboard and continually train large numbers of agents, and the process can be demeaning, making agents feel like they need to change who they are to fit the job. Moreover, ongoing refresher courses pull agents away from their primary task—handling calls—further reducing productivity.

There's also a broader issue: asking offshore agents to change their accents to cater to Western expectations raises cultural and ethical questions. While clear communication is essential, it's important to consider the impact on agents. If customers struggle with understanding certain accents, companies may choose to shift their operations to regions with more neutral accents, potentially hurting BPOs in areas with stronger local accents.

The challenges of poor accent comprehension include:

- Frustration for both agents and customers
- Lower agent morale and higher turnover rates
- Decreased customer satisfaction (CSAT) and customer experience (CX)
- Longer call and queue times
- Increased risk of errors and misunderstandings, leading to repeat calls or lost business
- A smaller talent pool for offshore BPOs to draw from

Recently, AI-driven accent localization solutions have been developed to address these issues. These tools can modify an agent's accent in real-time, making it easier for customers to understand them. These solutions are easy to implement and don't require agents to undergo additional training, reducing both onboarding time and costs. This technology could help improve the customer experience when interacting with offshore agents.

While offshore contact centers recognize that accents can be an issue and have established processes to address it, the ultimate judge—the U.S. customer—remains unconvinced.

The Need for Better Solutions

Instead of relying on traditional training methods, contact centers should consider using advanced technology, like real-time voice AI, to reduce misunderstandings. This technology helps agents communicate more clearly, improves customer satisfaction, and boosts agent morale—all while allowing contact centers to scale their offshore operations.

By removing language barriers with technology, contact centers can lower costs, improve the customer experience, and create a more inclusive work environment for agents. Accents are a natural part of global communication, but they shouldn't stand in the way of effective customer service. With the right solutions, contact centers can continue to provide high-quality service in a competitive market.

About CONTACTBABEL

ContactBabel is the contact center industry expert. If you have a question about how the industry works, or where it's heading, the chances are we have the answer.

We help US and UK contact centers compare themselves to their closest competitors so they can understand what they are doing well, what needs to improve and how they can do this. The coverage provided by our massive and ongoing primary research projects is matched by our experience analyzing the contact center industry. We understand how technology, people and process best fit together, and how they will work collectively in the future.

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About Krisp

Krisp pioneered the world's first AI-powered Voice Productivity software to help call centers worldwide maximize the impact of every digital voice conversation with:

- Accent Localization
- PII-redacted Speech-to-Text
- Insights and analytics
- Audio cleansing
- Noise and echo cancellation
- Background voice elimination

Krisp's Voice AI technology processes more than 75 billion minutes of conversations per month, improving the productivity and efficiency of call centers everywhere.

Krisp customers experience:



“Krisp’s technology supports our vision of leveraging AI to deliver better experiences for our clients’ customers. Our group is committed to driving grounded innovation through partnerships that empower CX improvement, and Krisp is a valued partner on this roadmap. - **Olivier Camino, Global COO, Foundever**”

Appendix



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 [10 Ways Conversation Intelligence Empowers the Enterprise](#)



 [Next-Gen Care Customer Engagement Strategy](#)

 [Next-Gen Care](#)



 [Affordable Care Case Study](#)

 [4 Winning Strategies for GenAI-Powered Conversation Intelligence Implementation in Contact Centers](#)



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Future of the Contact Center

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