

The logo features the text "CX" in a dark blue, sans-serif font, followed by "TODAY" in a white, sans-serif font inside a red speech bubble shape. The background of the slide is split diagonally from the top left to the bottom right, with a red upper section and a dark blue lower section.

CX **TODAY**

AI in Customer Experience:

Where Are We Now, and
Where Are We Going?

TECH **TELLIGENCE**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CX leaders face increasing pressure to implement AI as a solution to cost challenges.

That trend extends beyond CX, with 87 percent of global executives feeling rushed into implementing AI technology – according to a Juniper Networks study.

In CX, that trend is particularly pronounced. Gartner even suggests that 47 percent of businesses have pumped more generative AI (GenAI) investment into a single customer-facing function – i.e., sales, service, or marketing - than anywhere else in the business.

But which AI use cases are CX teams leveraging with that investment, and how are attitudes toward AI beginning to change?

This study utilizes the perspectives of 216 global CX leaders to uncover the answers. In doing so, it gets under the skin of CX Today's headlines to discover how sales, service, and marketing teams are harnessing the latest AI solutions.

That includes generative, conversational, and various other forms of AI innovation.

Moreover, the report goes behind the scenes to inspect the data management practices and strategies CX teams have in place to secure the most value from their deployments.

In doing so, it uncovers many noteworthy findings, including the seven briefly summarized below.

- 1. Customer Service is the Focal Point of AI Investment:** 46 percent of enterprises invest more in AI for customer service than commerce, sales, or marketing. While the opportunity to cut support costs is likely a key driver, it's perhaps seen as less risky to experiment across this function.
- 2. Customer Service, Sales, and Marketing Teams Are Collaborating on AI:** Over 90 percent of CX teams have a strategy to centralize service, sales, and marketing data. That's critical to ensure that AI applications can access the full context of a customer's journey.
- 3. Auto-Summarizations Are Not the Most-Utilized Use Case for GenAI:** Many CX vendors launched auto-summarization as their first GenAI capability, lauding its ease of implementation. Yet, across service and sales, there are other more widely-implemented use cases.

4. **Virtual Assistants Are Well-Received:** Over 80 percent of businesses leverage a virtual assistant or “copilot” somewhere within their customer experience operations. Of those businesses, over three-quarters are already generating a ROI.
5. **Confidence in Autonomous AI Agents is High:** Almost four in every five CX leaders would trust an autonomous virtual agent – tied to their internal knowledge sources - to engage with their customers without prior training. That bodes well for innovations like Agentforce by Salesforce.
6. **Knowledge Management Becomes Less of a Concern:** Maintaining an accurate knowledge base has proven a long-term challenge for CX teams. Yet, over 90 percent consider their base either “somewhat” or “highly” accurate. That’s encouraging for autonomous AI applications.
7. **Contact Centers Are Ready for Machine Customers:** CX teams aren’t the only ones experimenting with AI; customers are, too. Thankfully, 83 percent of businesses have a strategy ready or in the works to handle this new type of customer, which presents both challenges and opportunities.

Empowering Tech Leaders with Peer-generated Data Insights

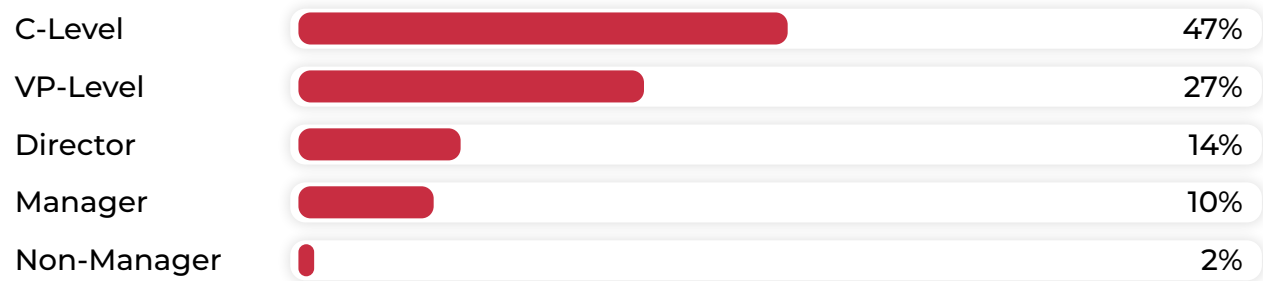
Participate in our future surveys and receive a complimentary copy of our insightful reports at no cost. Your input drives the knowledge we share - join us today, visit techtelligence.com/join



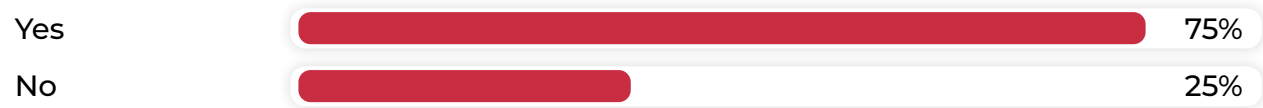
Respondent Demographics

The findings featured in this report stem from a survey of CX Today's top community members and readers, including over 200 industry professionals.

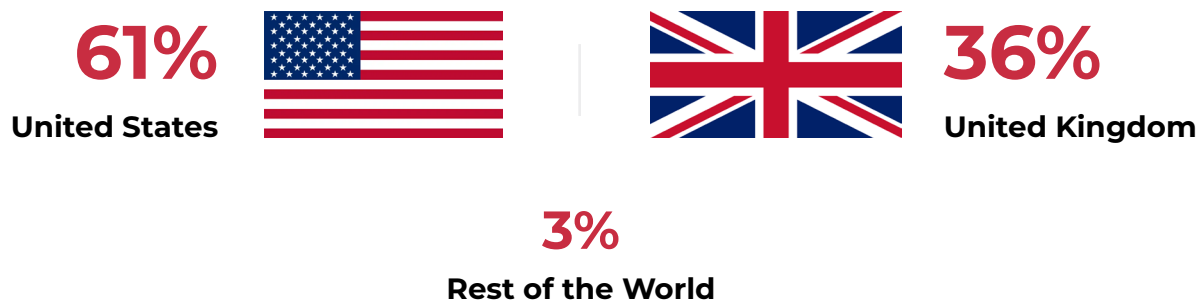
Seniority Levels



Do you make technology buying decisions for your company?



Geographic Distribution



Organization Size



Generative AI In Customer Experience

Have You Implemented Any of the Following GenAI Use Cases in Customer Service?



More than half of contact centers (50 percent) are utilizing GenAI to auto-generate replies for agents.

To do so, they typically leverage a virtual assistant or “copilot” that can understand customer intent, search for relevant information across knowledge sources, and harness that to recommend responses in an appropriate tone.

From there, agents can review, edit, and send those responses, saving them from writing out replies and creating their own (possibly non-authorized) templates.

Many contact centers leverage this capability to test GenAI with a human-in-the-loop and gain confidence in the tech before deploying an AI Agent and putting it directly in front of customers.

Interestingly, auto-generating knowledge articles – to fill the gaps within knowledge sources – is the third most widely utilized use case. That may highlight how contact centers are enhancing their knowledge management strategy to improve the quality of auto-generated responses.

It also underlines a fascinating example of AI improving the data and insight that powers other AI use cases, setting the scene for a more autonomous contact center.

Elsewhere, Auto-QA is the second most utilized use case, which is unsurprising given how many contact centers already automated their quality program with natural language processing (NLP) before the GenAI boom. However, vendors now leverage GenAI to augment their solutions and enable new possibilities, such as auto-generated coaching and positive recognition opportunities.

More surprising is that only 38 percent of contact centers have automated agent post-contact processing, a low-touch use case that can shave seconds from every customer conversation.

Nevertheless, the results underline the industry-wide impact of this technology, with just 22 percent of customer service teams not yet leveraging a GenAI use case.

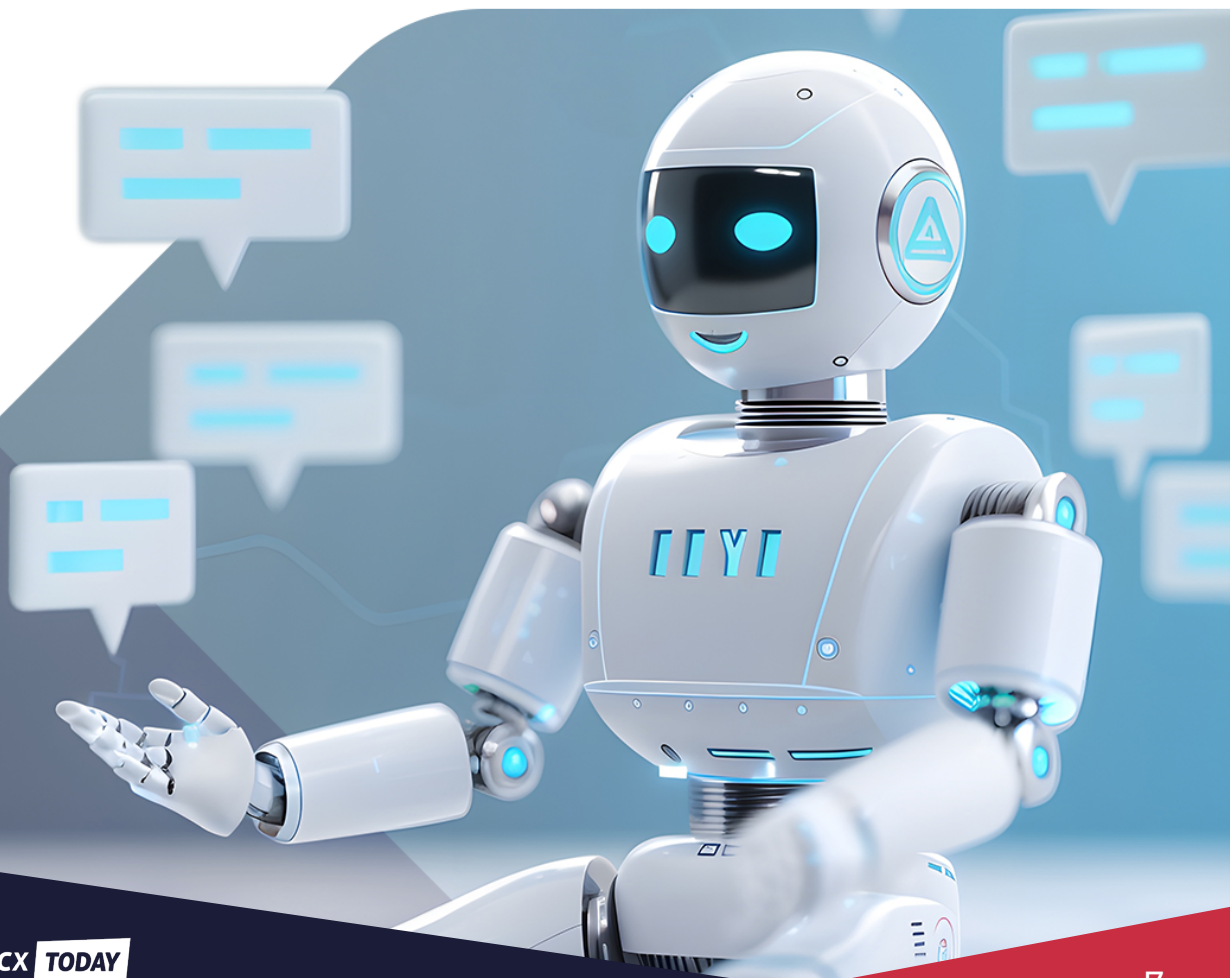
Further Reading



ARTICLE:
25 Use Cases for Generative AI In Customer Service



VIDEO:
Generative AI for Contact Center Agents: Demos and a Discussion



Have You Implemented Any of the Following GenAI Use Cases in Sales?



42 percent of sales teams are using GenAI within their lead generation initiatives.

One of the ways they might do so is by automating prospecting. Popular in the B2B space, this involves having GenAI analyze the business's ideal customer profile before determining which companies match it based on location, news, market trends, etc.

Other possible examples of using GenAI in lead generation include utilizing the tech to build that ideal customer profile and predicting the likelihood of lead conversion.

Back to the charts, and just behind lead generation, is auto-generating personalized customer communication, with 41 percent of sales teams utilizing GenAI here.

In doing so, they can leverage the tech to trawl through a customer's data and recommend relevant content to link to in outreach emails. That may include a blog focusing on news relevant to them, a pertinent case study, or updates on a product they've shown interest in.

Moreover, GenAI can also assist in writing those outreach emails, recommending personalized email openers, and suggesting possible customer objections.

Meanwhile, over a third of sales teams (35 percent) have harnessed GenAI to auto-summarize sales meetings and automate customer onboarding activities, such as processing documents and mechanizing data entry.

Finally, some "other" use cases could include dynamically updating sales materials, recommending up/cross-sell opportunities, and in-call coaching suggestions.

Further Reading

GARTNER MAGIC QUADRANT
for Sales Force Automation (SFA)
Platforms 2024: The Rundown



ARTICLE:
Oracle Brings More AI Capabilities to
Service & Sales Teams



Have You Implemented Any of the Following GenAI Use Cases in Customer Service?



45 percent of marketing teams are using GenAI to auto-generate copy for adverts. In doing so, they're developing ideas for headlines, tags, and video ad scripts.

Meanwhile, 45 percent of brands are auto-generating other forms of content, including blogs, posts, and even images.

For the latter, models like Adobe Firefly have helped capture the imagination of what's possible. Additionally, Adobe made auto-generated video available in beta - via Firefly - during its 2024 Max event, highlighting the next frontier for this use case.

Next, 40 percent of marketing teams are using AI to automate social media management processes. Such processes include updating posts in real time based on audience engagement, monitoring social analytics, and spotting hot topics to post about.

Elsewhere, fewer than a third of brands are harnessing GenAI to auto-generate outbound campaigns (31 percent) and customer segments (29 percent).

These use cases can work well together. For instance, a marketing team might create a segment of low-sentiment customers and then help build a campaign to secure retention.

Lastly, some "other" use cases could include SEO analysis, copy translation, and ideation when devising new marketing strategies.

Further Reading

ADOBE MAX 2024:

3 Top Takeaways from the Creativity Conference



ARTICLE:

HubSpot "Reinvents" Content Marketing, Takes Commerce Hub Global



Have You Implemented Any of the Following GenAI Use Cases in Customer Service?



Businesses can action many of the GenAI use cases above by deploying a virtual assistant to assist employees in their daily tasks.

It appears that many are, too, with 82 percent of CX teams using a “copilot”. Some of these assistants have endured negative press, with Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff referring to Microsoft Copilot as “Clippy 2.0”.

Nevertheless, more than three-quarters of the CX teams utilizing such a Copilot report that “it’s working great” and achieving ROI.

However, the next frontier for these virtual assistants is close, with vendors expanding their capabilities beyond human-in-the-loop duties to human-at-the-helm tasks.

Brands such as Microsoft, Salesforce, and SAP have embraced this change, providing autonomous AI Agents that automate tasks with human oversight but without involvement.

Some of the new wave use cases these brands are putting forward include:

- An AI Agent for Customer Service that resolves queries without prior training by leveraging trusted knowledge sources. It may also triage the customer to the best-placed agent.
- An AI Agent for Sales trained on in-house best practices that joins sales calls with new reps to provide real-time guidance and help them overcome objections.
- An AI Agent for Marketing that harnesses decades of domain knowledge to analyze a webpage URL and offer suggestions to improve call to actions (CTAs), phrasing, imagery, etc.

For brands like Microsoft and SAP, their Copilot and Joule solutions will play a significant role in enabling these AI Agents.

In the case of Microsoft, brands may build custom agents inside Copilot Studio. Meanwhile, SAP will make AI Agents available soon within Joule that can work together to complete workflows across SAP solutions and functions.

Further Reading

ARTICLE:

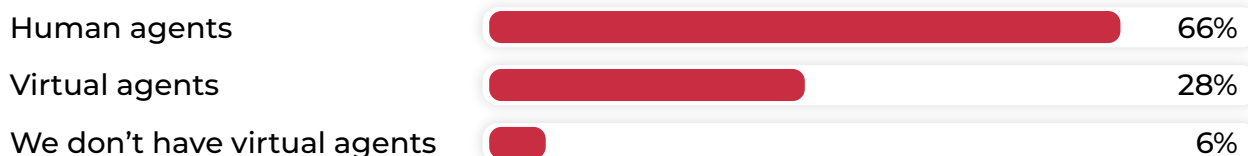
Salesforce CEO Keeps Taking Potshots at Microsoft Copilot: Why? ▶

ARTICLE:

SAP Introduces AI Agents That Collaborate Across Business Functions ▶

Conversational AI In Customer Experience

Which Type of Agent Do Your Customers Prefer Interacting With?



It's official: human agents are still more popular than virtual agents, with almost two-thirds of brands confirming their customers' preference for the former. Much of this likely stems from historical bots being cumbersome, rigid, and – frankly – dumb.

Of course, the rise of AI Agents promises to change this, understanding the customer's tone, tracking changes in intent, and crawling more knowledge systems.

Yet, brands shouldn't necessarily assume that GenAI is the silver bullet. There are still many conversations where the customer needs more reassurance and consultation.

As such, more brands are considering how to best blend human and virtual agents to deliver the best-placed experience. That includes brands like Nationwide Insurance.

Indeed, Torrin Webb, a CX Strategist at Nationwide Insurance, told CX Today about his mission to balance the customer's desire for speed in some cases and authentic connection in others.

To do so, he split customer intents into two categories: "consultative" and "authentic".

By doing so, his team could consider how to optimize each contact center journey, either through opportunities for human-to-human interaction or automation and digitization.

After implementing the low-hanging use cases for GenAI – like auto-summarization – such AI orchestration conversations will likely gain momentum in the contact center.

Further Viewing



VIDEO:

Blending AI, Digital, and Humans Experiences: Lessons from Nationwide's CX Strategist



VIDEO:

Will AI Agents Take Over Customer Service? Likewize's CXO Has His Say



Would You Trust an Autonomous Virtual Agent to Engage With Your Customers Without Prior Training?



Almost four in every five CX teams (79 percent) would completely trust an autonomous AI Agent to engage with their customers without prior training.

The result is surprising, given the high-profile failures of this technology earlier this year.

For instance, an AI Agent developed by New York City instructed small business owners to break the law. Meanwhile, an Agent deployed by DPD swore at a customer and wrote a poem describing the delivery company as “useless”.

However, the findings demonstrate that CX leaders believe providers have pushed past these teething issues, as they seem prepared to put autonomous AI Agents in front of customers.

Even more surprising is that 43 percent would do so without a proper escalation strategy. After all, sometimes customers will ask AI Agents unexpected questions that go beyond their training. That's where human creativity must play a role. Otherwise, brands risk putting their customers through CX “doom loops”.

Thankfully, the technology is able to offer seamless escalation paths. For instance, AI Agents can calculate the likelihood that their response is accurate and helpful. If that calculation is uncertain, they can pass the contact to a human. That human may then answer and update the AI Agent's knowledge sources so they are more confident next time.

However, as metrics like containment and deflection rates remain widely utilized in customer experience, the temptation to limit escalation paths may prove too compelling.

Further Viewing



ARTICLE:

New York City's Microsoft-Powered Chatbot Tells Business Owners to Break the Law

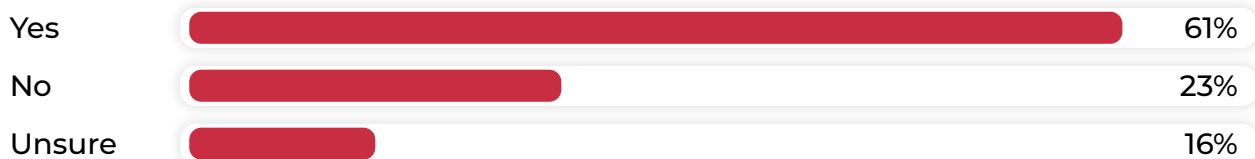


VIDEO:

Challenges & Opportunities: What Has 2024 Taught Us About AI in Contact Centers?



Should Governments Mandate the Right to Speak to a Human in Customer Service?



More than three-fifths of CX professionals believe governments should mandate the right to speak to a human in customer service.

The topic has become red-hot across the space in recent months, with President Biden railing against customer service “doom loops”. Going further, he added that he was “tired of seeing hardworking Americans get played for suckers.”

Yet, while most industry professionals agree, go back a question in this report, and it seems that 43 percent of CX teams are willing to deploy an AI Agent without a proper escalation path. That greatly increases the chance of those pesky “doom loops”.

The divergence here is a concern and may suggest that many will not implement an escalation unless governments enforce it.

In the US, that seems on the cards. After all, according to the President, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFBP) “is working to help consumers talk to a real person by pressing a single button.” As is the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Meanwhile, Gartner predicted earlier this year that the EU will mandate “the right to talk to a human” in customer service by 2028.

However, the analyst stressed that the conversation shouldn’t fixate on whether the contact center may breach future regulations. Instead, it urged teams to focus on what’s best for the customer.

Further Reading



ARTICLE:

President Biden Announces New Customer Service Actions, Targets Subscriptions and ‘Doom Loops’



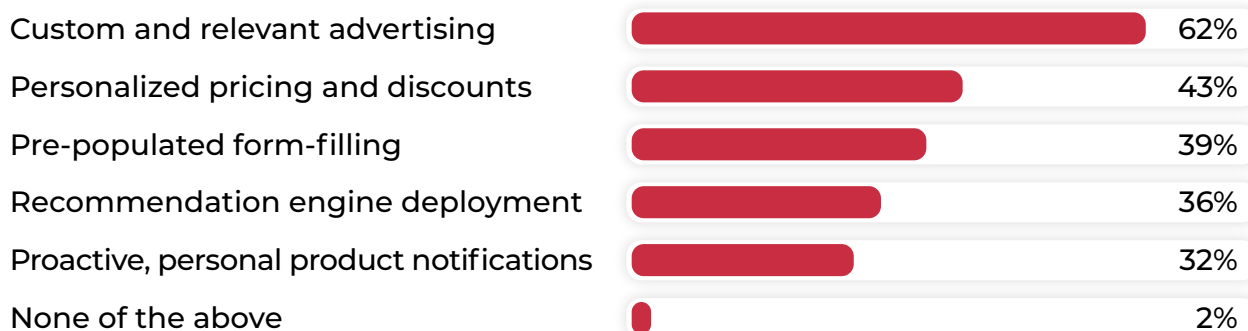
ARTICLE:

By 2028, the EU Will Mandate “the Right to Talk to a Human” In Customer Service, Predicts Gartner



Other Forms of AI in Customer Experience

Which Hyper-Personalization Techniques Have You Deployed Within the Customer Experience?



In recent years, businesses have shifted their definition of personalization, from segments to focusing more strategically on the individual. That's evident in the chart above, which underlines the high utilization of hyper-personalization use cases.

Of course, tactical segments still play a part in campaigns. Yet, combining customer data and AI to generate insights and initiate changes to the customer journey – often in real-time – is critical in providing more individualized experiences.

The most common use case is leveraging cookies to deliver custom and relevant advertising on the company website, which 62 percent of CX teams do.

However, several other hyper-personalization tactics are becoming commonplace. Indeed, 43 percent of businesses now offer personalized prices and discounts.

Again, sales and marketing teams can do this via cookies to change online prices dynamically. However, implementing workflows - like those that track signs of when a customer is likely to churn and trigger a proactive alert with a personalized discount - can work well.

Already, 32 percent of brands are leveraging proactive tools to deliver personalized product notifications, while 36 percent have deployed a recommendation engine.

Finally, 39 percent of CX teams support customers by pre-filling forms, a use case that has become more accessible since the advent of GenAI.

Further Reading

ARTICLE:

Gartner Magic Quadrant for Personalization Engines 2023



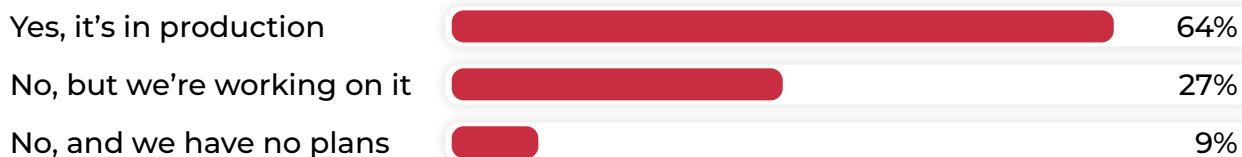
ARTICLE:

How Amazon Connect Delivers Contact Center Personalization At Scale



Data Management

Do You Have a Customer Data Strategy That Centralizes Service, Sales, and Marketing Data?



Most customer service, sales, and marketing teams house customer data inside a CRM system. Now, 64 percent of businesses have connected the data within these platforms with a centralized strategy, likely by laying over a customer data platform (CDP). These platforms extend across other systems, including CCaaS, conversational intelligence, social listening, point of sale, and various CX tools to create and consolidate individual customer profiles.

Yet, they must also activate that data so it passes between customer-facing functions, filters into dashboards, and powers AI engines. By doing so, CX leaders can begin to overcome a common customer grievance: not being recognized across business silos.

Additionally, they may align goals, improve communication, and collaborate to drive more value from customer communications. For instance, whether someone in service is upselling or someone in sales is solving a problem, they all contribute to the customer's journey.

That unified data will also help ensure clean handovers between teams, especially in omnichannel environments. As such, sales teams may better understand marketing campaigns and service teams know what has been promised to the customer.

Finally, consider the opportunity for AI. With this larger data set, it can distill actionable insights, helping teams understand customer behavior and preferences. Meanwhile, it can help condense complex information, like long email threads or detailed reports, into concise summaries. This is invaluable for team handovers and decision-making.

Then, consider the hyper-personalization techniques noted previously. With access to more data, these will be more accurate and drive greater ROI.

Further Reading

ARTICLE:

The Forrester Wave for Customer Data Platforms 2024: Top Takeaways

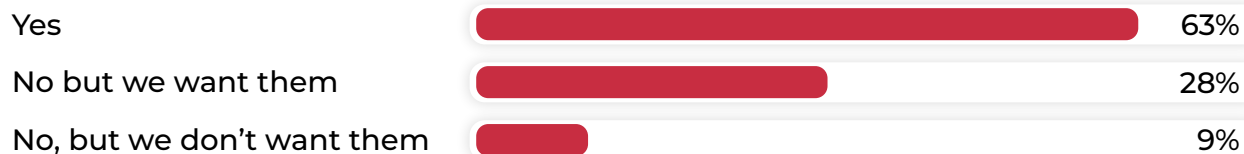


CX TRENDS:

Service, Sales, & Marketing: How to Unite Your Customer-Facing Teams



Do You Have Plans to Invest in Data Integration or Enrichment Tools?



63 percent of CX leaders plan to invest in data integration and enrichment tools.

Moreover, a further 28 percent want to do so but haven't yet secured the necessary resources.

These figures highlight how data integration projects are placing high up on the CX agenda as brands reimagine customer experiences with AI.

For many, an excellent place to start is by running an audit, mapping out critical data points, identifying who owns that data, and understanding what's already integrated and what's missing.

Early on, it's often also critical to build relationships with key stakeholders, like IT, data architects, and FP&A (financial planning and analysis). Collaborate with them and conduct small pilots.

If these stakeholders don't allow full data access, work with a subset. This shows proof of concept and builds trust.

Yet, it's not all about data integration; data enrichment is also a growing initiative, particularly within sales and marketing teams.

After all, data enrichment proves particularly helpful in scouring the web to add information about prospects to help close more deals.

That extra data may inform predictive AI engines, which can then suggest better conversation starters, pertinent content, and relevant products. Just be careful not to cross the creepy line...

Further Viewing



VIDEO:

Ground Your AI Strategy on Data, Says Salesforce Exec

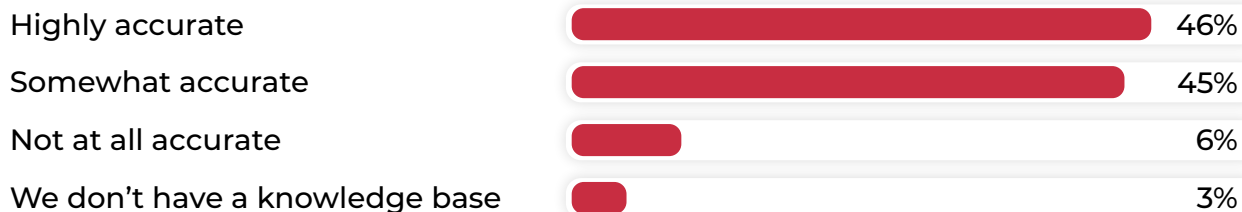


VIDEO:

Harnessing the Power of Data in Contact Centers



How Would You Rate the Accuracy of Your Knowledge Base?



For decades, managing knowledge base content has proven tricky, especially in contact centers.

With ever-changing processes, emerging customer contact reasons, and clashing articles, a knowledge base requires constant analysis and optimization.

However, knowledge management has seemingly come on leaps and bounds since the rise of GenAI. That's critical as many virtual agents dive now into the knowledge base to automate customer responses. These will not be accurate if the knowledge base grows stale.

Thankfully, just 6 percent of CX teams admit their knowledge base is “not at all accurate”.

Of course, there is still room for improvement, with more respondents reporting that their knowledge base is “somewhat accurate” than “highly accurate”.

Nonetheless, the positive results perhaps highlight the impact of new GenAI tools that support knowledge base optimization and lay the foundation for autonomous agents.

Consider the knowledge-tuning tools available within Copilot Studio. These spotlight the knowledge articles virtual agents leverage, isolate opportunities for improvement, and identify content gaps.

There is also a use case for an AI Agent to analyze how live reps handle a particular contact reason, learn how to resolve it, and auto-generate new knowledge articles – as highlighted previously.

Microsoft and Salesforce have already released AI Agents capable of this. Expect others to follow.

Further Reading

ARTICLE:

Microsoft's Autonomous Agents Are Now Available In Public Preview



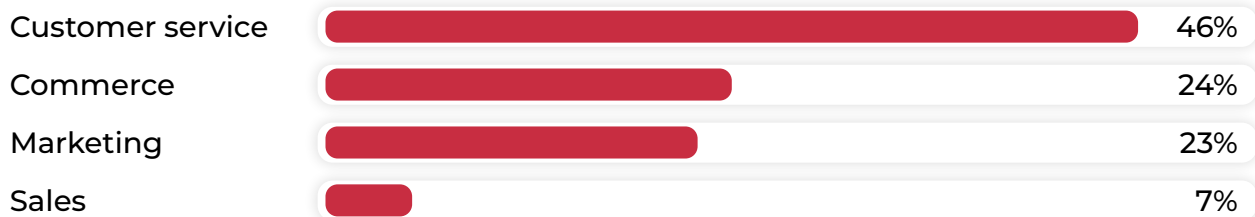
ARTICLE:

Proactive Knowledge Management: Improving Customer and Agent Experiences



AI in Customer Experience: The Strategy

Which Customer-Facing Function is Currently Receiving the Most AI Investment?



46 percent of organizations are funneling more AI investment into customer service than any other customer-facing function. There are two lenses to view this statistic: one cynical and one optimistic.

The cynic would argue that many business leaders still see contact centers as “cost centers”. As such, they may suggest that AI offers an unprecedented opportunity to lower labor costs.

Moreover, they may argue that CIOs view the contact center as a “less risky” testing ground for AI, where they can learn lessons and apply them elsewhere. Understandable. However, a more optimistic take is that contact centers house the richest data repositories in the enterprise, making them the ideal ground zero for AI.

Moreover, many contact centers have leveraged various forms of AI over the years, from NLP-based conversational analytics to first-generation NLU-fueled virtual agents. The optimist may also add that AI in the contact center is critical for taking simple tasks off live agents’ plates and serving up more complex, thought-provoking cases.

Nevertheless, those that peddle that narrative must consider upleveling their coaching plans, offering swarming capabilities to connect with external experts, and lowering occupancy rates. After all, agents often use these simple contacts as a breather. Take these away, and burnout is a risk.

Lastly, almost 4 times the amount of companies selected commerce as their number one CX investment area over sales. That suggests a need for sales CRM and enablement providers to build a better narrative around how AI is changing the market.

Further Reading

ARTICLE:

Contact Center AI Investment Is Surging. Here’s Why & Where It’s Being Deployed



ARTICLE:

Balancing Human & AI Contact Center Agents: Lessons from JetBlue



What's the Next AI Use Case You'd Like to Implement Within Your CX Operation, and Why?

In response to this question, the survey participants shared the following responses:



Despite receiving hundreds of answers, one word stood head and shoulders above the rest: **“bot”** – alongside all its variations, from virtual agent to automated customer assistant.

Most specified that the bot would provide customer service, but some added extra detail. For instance, one respondent noted that their business first wants to implement a virtual agent for triage. By doing so, they can better decipher customer intent before adding self-service capabilities.

Yet, beyond bots, few other use cases seem to have mass appeal. Language translation is one possible exception, allowing sales and marketing teams to bring materials to a broader audience. Additionally, translation is a burgeoning use case in customer support, with Google reportedly close to releasing a real-time translation tool for voice.

Meanwhile, anything **“GenAI”** proved popular, with touted use cases covering everything from meeting, report, and contact summaries to **“AI filmmakers”**.

However, applications of predictive AI are higher on the wish list for many, as brands aim to forecast purchases, churn, and the need for support. Matthieu Houle, CIO of ALDO Group, recently featured in CX Today, discussing the potential predictive AI offers to differentiate, especially compared to GenAI use cases that vendors are bringing to everyone.

Finally, **“customer feedback analysis”** proved another often-repeated response, with some highlighting that they’re considering AI as a tool to centralize multiple sources of feedback. These include online reviews, social media, chat logs, emails, etc.

Although, behind “bots”, the second most popular response was N/A or **“none”**, highlighting that there is still a reluctance from many CX professionals to onboard AI...

Further Reading

ARTICLE:

Google Teases Real-Time Translation for Contact Centers, Releases an AI Playbook

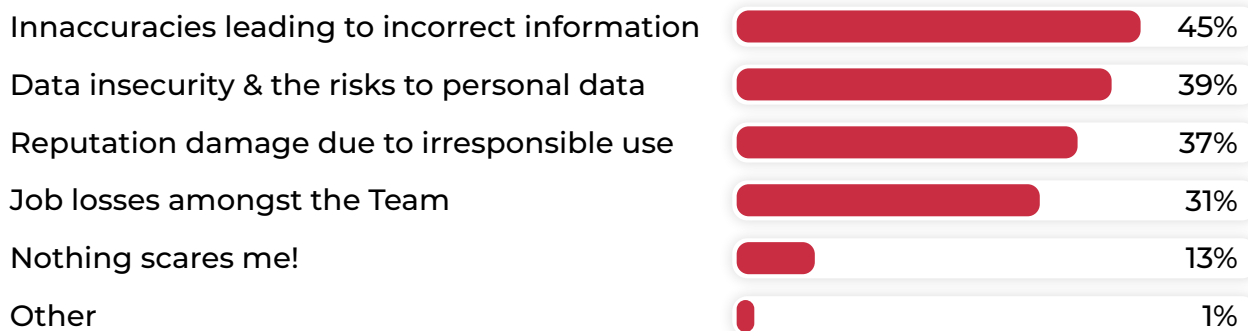


ARTICLE:

ALDO Group Prioritizes Predictive AI Over Generative AI. Here's Why



What Scares You About AI Adoption in CX?



As previously highlighted, most CX teams leverage AI in some way, with 82 percent of participants implementing a copilot or virtual assistant.

Despite this, 87 percent of respondents also admit to having at least one fear over the possible negative consequences of AI adoption within their operations.

The most common fear is of inaccurate AI. Indeed, 45 percent worry about AI applications delivering incorrect insights.

Of course, there are several stories of virtual agents “hallucinating” and passing these on to customers. Meanwhile, virtual assistants may share false information with employees, lowering their trust in the technology and hampering buy-in.

Nevertheless, perhaps most worrying is an AI application that shares incorrect insights with CX leaders, causing them to make ill-informed decisions and innovate in the wrong spots. Given this margin for error, it’s obvious why “guardrails” has become the biggest buzzword in CX.

Elsewhere, concerns around data insecurity (39 percent) and organizational reputation damage (37 percent) also appear widespread.

However, more surprising is that only 31 percent of businesses fear job losses, despite its potential – in many cases – to cause both voluntary and involuntary departures. Those voluntary departures could stem from AI making employee roles more challenging, comprehensive, and possibly less interesting.

Given this, “buy-in” will – hopefully - become much more of a buzzword in 2025.

Further Reading

ARTICLE:

“The Tip of the Iceberg”: Analysts React to the Contact Center AI Lawsuit Against Patagonia

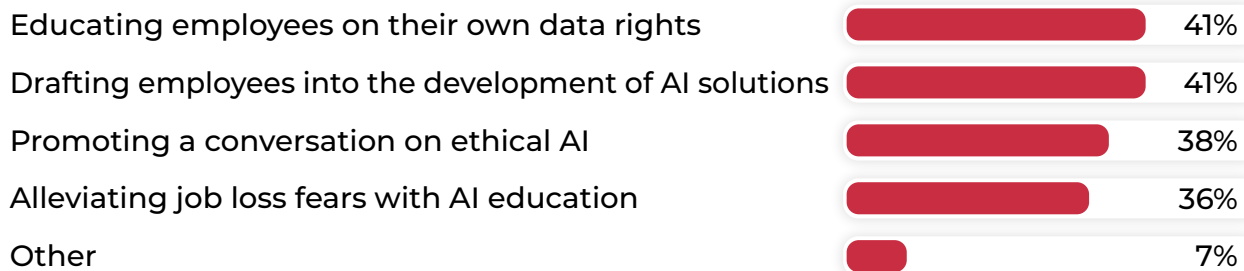


VIDEO:

Friend or Foe? AI & the Contact Center Agent



How Are You Achieving Employee Buy-in with AI?



As CX teams utilize AI to monitor their employees' productivity, work patterns, and sentiment, more are educating employees on their data rights. Indeed, 41 percent are now doing this and building employee trust that these AI applications serve a broader purpose than "surveillance".

In contact centers, this is a particularly sensitive topic, as many excellent use cases hinge on this data. For instance, a supervisor able to monitor agent sentiment can spot the opportune moment to offer support by "barging" in on the call or "whispering" advice.

Get this right, and the impact on customer and employee experiences can be significant. Get it wrong, and supervisors can appear as the enablers of a Big Brother culture.

To educate employees, CX teams should clearly define how they collect employee data, communicate their purpose, and recognize the employees' right to increase their awareness about how their data is harvested.

Promoting a conversation around ethical AI can support this, something that 38 percent of CX operations do.

Another prominent tactic for gaining employee buy-in is actively involving the team in developing virtual agents. Businesses that do this can expect employees to be more enthusiastic about changing the everyday flows they've become comfortable with.

Additionally, by co-creating solutions, CX teams may also allay fears regarding the inaccuracy of AI.

Finally, over a third of these teams (36 percent) are gaining buy-in through AI education to alleviate job loss concerns and communicating context to overcome the fear of the unknown.

Further Reading

ARTICLE:

Contact Center Agents Are Avoiding New Tech – Gartner

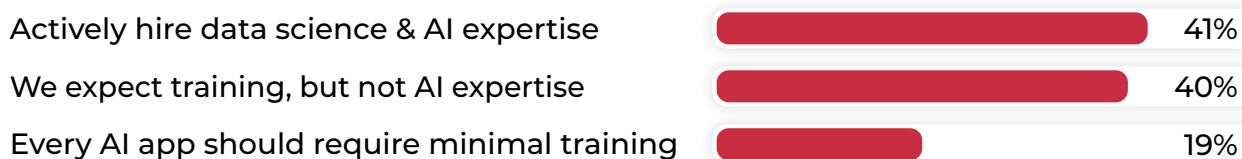


ARTICLE:

Swisscom Snaps Agent Workloads In Half After Running These Two Projects



What Level of Training Is Your Business Prepared to Give AI?



Although they might not realize it, most CX teams will already leverage AI in some way or another.

For instance, if they use Microsoft Teams, they will benefit from real-time transcription, intelligent recaps, and smart recommendations. All of these features utilize AI.

Recognizing this, 19 percent of contact centers seem content with only securing low-hanging fruit use cases, perhaps sitting back and waiting for their vendors to make these more accessible.

Yet, many more are pushing the needle, with 41 percent of CX teams planning to hire data scientists and AI experts to secure maximum benefit from the technology.

Data scientists can help in various ways. For instance, they can clean and consolidate data, identify broader CX trends, and translate those into opportunities.

Moreover, AI experts may build custom models, orchestrate blended experiences, and scale successful AI use cases from one department into others.

Nevertheless, these findings prompt a critical conversation around AI readiness. That's essential because - as forms of AI and automation become increasingly intuitive - they may offer the illusion that the team can "switch it on and walk away". But that can be a significant mistake.

Again, consider knowledge management. It's a stalwart contact center activity, yet it's still challenging to maintain.

As such, CX leaders must appoint a dedicated, agile team behind their AI transformations, continually monitoring, optimizing, and turning the screw. Without that, AI won't achieve its potential.

Further Reading

ARTICLE:

AI In the Contact Center: 5 Starting Points

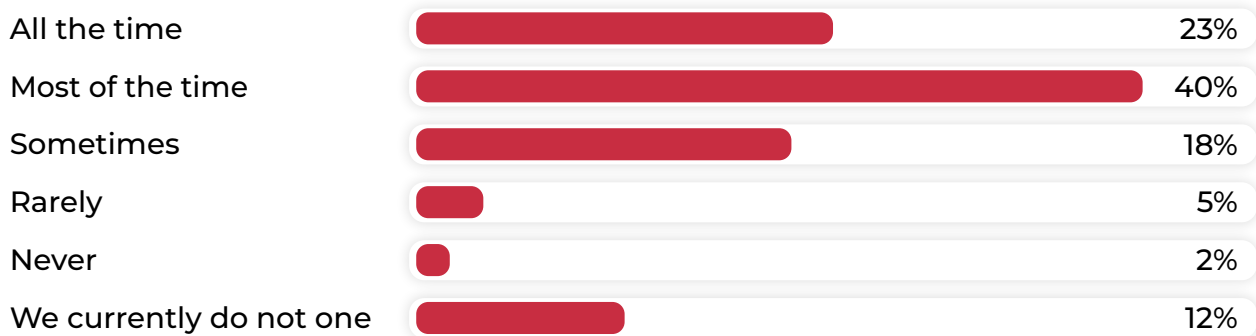


ARTICLE:

AI Training AI: Welcome to the Intelligent Contact Center



Think of Your Most Critical CX AI Provider. Do They Deliver on Their Promises?



Retention rates are often a challenge for CX vendors. Indeed, the topic recently hit the CX Today headlines as NICE boasted that it displaced 45 competitive CCaaS offerings at “leading brands” in less than a year.

There are numerous possible reasons for such displacements. Yet, vendors not keeping their promises for continued support post-implementation is a widely acknowledged problem.

While some do, others may slap on an unexpected, hefty price tag for professional services.

When it comes to AI, customers need to be wary of such practices. They need tech partners to work with them over the long term and help evolve their proposition, not just to deploy something and move on.

As such, it’s promising to see that AI vendors are excelling here, with 40 and 23 percent of respondents – respectively – noting that their provider delivers on their promises “most of the time” or “all the time”.

That’s not to say that the landscape is all sunshine and rainbows, however. Indeed, 5 and 2 percent of participants – respectively - suggested that their providers do so “rarely” or “never”.

Nevertheless, these findings highlight how buyers should review more than just case studies when evaluating providers. Instead, they should ask to speak with other customers and discuss “warts and all” stories from those who’ve experienced the product. That referenceability is crucial.

Further Reading

ARTICLE:

NICE Has Displaced 45+ Competitive CCaaS Deployments for “Leading Brands” This Year



ARTICLE:

The State of the CCaaS Space: 5 Uncomfortable Truths



Do You Have a Strategy for Handling Machine Customers?



While virtual agents have become a central industry talking point, virtual customers – often called “machine customers” – are also on the rise.

Indeed, Gartner predicts that a fifth of all contacts reaching customer service teams will come from machine customers by 2026.

Via applications like Google Duplex, consumers will employ these machine customers to make reservations, schedule assistance, and assist with lost passwords.

Interestingly, brands are employing virtual agents to handle such use cases. As a result, businesses mustn't only plan for human-to-human and human-to-bot conversations but bot-to-bot interactions, too.

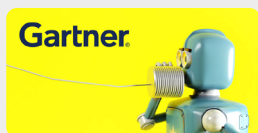
Already, 82 percent of CX teams have started this process, with 47 percent formalizing their strategy. But what does such a strategy look like?

That involves understanding the tasks and conversations customers will strive to self-automate, scaling the conversation automation strategy to cover these, and cautiously monitoring the virtual agent's performance.

In doing so, compare the performance of bot-to-bot vs. non-automated conversations. By building out such a strategy, CX teams can distinguish between human and machine customers and recognize their impact. Those who don't may see performance getting worse and not understand why.

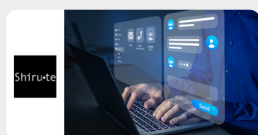
As such, the 18 percent of participants with no plans to create a machine customer strategy may soon reconsider.

Further Reading



ARTICLE:

Gartner: 20 Percent of Contact Center Traffic Will Come from Machine Customers by 2026



ARTICLE:

Why Aren't Customer Service Teams Ready for Machine Customers?



CONCLUSION

by Charlie Mitchell, Senior Editor, CX Today



AI adoption is surging across the customer experience space, with GenAI the catalyst.

Just two years ago came the bombshell launch of ChatGPT-3. Now, almost four in every five customer service teams have implemented a GenAI use case.

Meanwhile, over 80 percent of sales and marketing teams are leveraging GenAI-based solutions.

The main vehicle for GenAI is a virtual assistant, with 82 percent of CX teams implementing such a solution, despite Microsoft 365 Copilot - the most prominent model – only becoming generally available in November 2023.

With this growing use of GenAI comes increasing faith in the technology. Indeed, 80 percent of participants said they trust autonomous AI agents to interact with customers, without prior training.

Despite this, only 13 percent reported that “nothing” scares them in regard to implementing GenAI, with many highlighting concerns over the possibility of inaccurate insights, data insecurity, and organizational reputation damage.

Beyond GenAI, predictive AI is also gaining traction, with many businesses highlighting their intent to purchase solutions that better forecast purchases, churn, and the need for support.

Additionally, hyper-personalization engines are now widespread, with mainstream use cases including custom and relevant advertising, dynamic pricing, and pre-populated form-filling.

Supporting these AI deployments are rapidly more intelligent data strategies. That's evident in how more than nine in every ten contact centers have a plan to centralize their sales, service, and marketing data.

These strategies will continue to evolve, too, with 63 percent of CX teams increasing their investment in data integration and enrichment tools.

As these data strategies expand, CX teams will have more forms of AI to consider. Autonomous agents that go beyond responding to customers will light the touch paper, as they also automate background tasks and augment workflows.

Machine customers also offer food for thought. Yet, many leaders are ahead of the curve, with 83 percent either completing or working on a strategy for handling bot-to-bot interactions.

Yet, perhaps the biggest takeaway from these findings is that while there are many different approaches and attitudes towards AI in customer experience, almost every organization has kickstarted its journey. Now, an exciting road leads ahead.

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