Zendesk CX trends 2024.
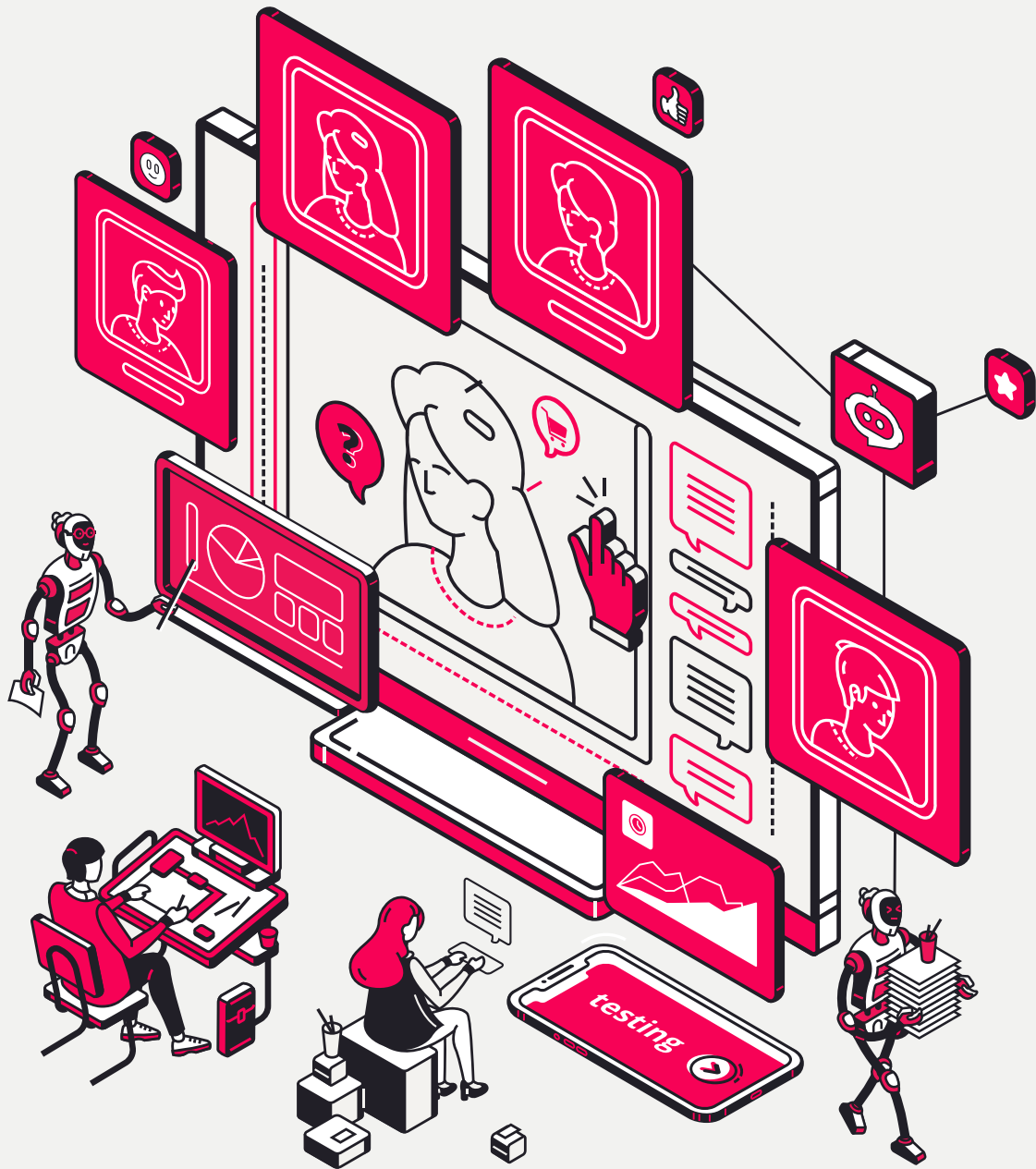
More than two centuries ago, Benjamin Franklin observed that "when you are finished changing, you are finished." While Franklin could hardly have foreseen the modern world we live in today-shaped by the Internet, the rise of artificial intelligence, and the James Webb space telescope, to name just a few developments-his words still ring true.

We live in an era of ever-accelerating change, a time when agility in thought and action means the difference between success and failure. And in the world of customer experience, we're undergoing the kind of rapid transformation that is creating an entirely new landscape right before our eyes: the age of intelligent CX.

Let's be clear: while intelligent CX certainly includes AI, automation, and data analytics, it's important to think of those advances not as discrete, standalone elements but as parts of a greater whole. These tools must work together across a business's experiences.
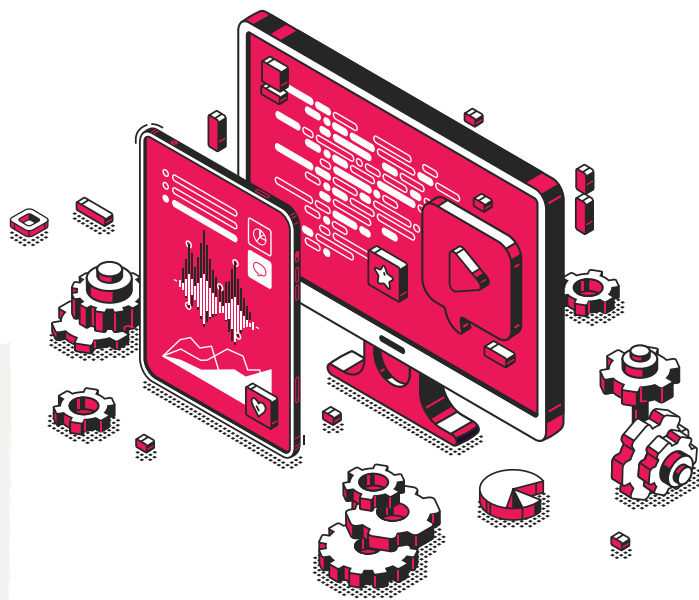
For many leaders, this rapid change can be unsettling. The temptation to sit back and wait to see how these technologies evolve and change the customer experience will be powerful, but it must be resisted. Those who hesitate will be left behind, and their competitors-and vitally, their customers-will reap the rewards.

But for those leaders who stand ready to embrace these seismic shifts, the future is bright. Zendesk is here to help you understand and act on these developments so you can exceed customer expectations-and protect your bottom line-with agility and efficacy. In our sixth CX Trends report, Zendesk has identified the key trends driving the era of intelligent CX so your business can be at the vanguard of change.

These ten distinct trends land in three areas: AI and intelligent experiences; data and trustworthy experiences; and next gen and immersive experiences. The roadmap we're providing here will give you the tools to unlock the power of intelligent CX.

Methodology
How we ran the research: data in this report comes from two sources, which include a global survey of 2,500 consumers across 20 countries and a second global survey of nearly 4,500 business respondents.

CX trends 2024.

AI and intelligent experiences

Trend 1.
Generative AI will accelerate the delivery of a more humanised journey that feels personable and interactive

Trend 2.
Chatbots are rapidly transforming into digital agents that have the capacity to do more

Trend 3.
Disconnect grows between CX leaders and agents on everything related to AI: strategy, tools, and role impact

Trend 4.
AI transparency and decisioning are now the rule, not the exception

Data and trustworthy experiences

Trend 5.
Businesses are heavily focused on being able to instantly modify user experiences, putting increased pressure on leveraging data in real time

Trend 6.
CX leaders are the new drivers of data privacy as AI and personalisation take on a greater role

Trend 7.
Security is no longer an add-on but is seamlessly incorporated throughout the customer journey

Next gen and immersive experiences

Trend 8.
Live and immersive experiences are now heavily influencing the future of online shopping

Trend 9.
Voice is carving out a more advanced role focused on handling complex and escalated issues

Trend 10.
Predictive agent management tools are finally eclipsing traditional methods

AI and intelligent experiences

Trend 1.

Generative AI will accelerate the delivery of a more <u>humanised</u> journey that feels personable and interactive.

2023 was when generative AI captured the world's attention, and millions of people and businesses raced to explore the technology's potential. From software coding to audio transcriptions to improved chatbot performance, generative AI proved to be a startlingly powerful technology, albeit one that's still in its infancy. CX leaders understand that generative AI will become increasingly effective, and soon it will be so thoroughly integrated into the customer experience that support teams will work in ways that could only have been imagined a decade ago.

While generative AI harbors vast potential across industries and applications, in CX it will drive hyper-personalisation, and it will help businesses offer more humanised and personable interactions. That's exactly what customers expect and welcome—they've made it increasingly clear that they want businesses to use the mountains of personal data they possess to offer warm, personalised experiences.

So are CX leaders and their teams listening? As Zendesk discovered, the answer is a resounding yes. Seventy percent of CX leaders say that generative AI has led their organisations to take a step back and re-evaluate their entire customer experience. Right now those leaders and their

> **70% of CX leaders plan to integrate generative AI into many of their touchpoints in the next two years**

teams are in exploration mode, conducting wide-ranging experiments in how generative AI might be used to provide more personalised and satisfying experiences for their customers.

That said, with every new technology comes uncertainty and stress. Sixty-two percent of CX leaders attest to their teams feeling pressure to use generative AI. But that stress is offset by the vast potential of the technology, specifically in how it promises to enable companies to offer faster, conversational, and more personable experiences to customers. And as we've seen over the past six years, customers are demanding those personalised experiences: they want the companies they patronise to truly understand them, to offer interactions that feel honest, informed, and friendly.

But can generative AI help businesses provide the kind of warm, human service that feels like

interactions with local, family-owned businesses? More than two-thirds of CX organisations think that it will help their business provide that warmth and familiarity, even if they serve millions of customers.

One of the key ways generative AI will help companies get there is by improving the efficiency of agents. Seventy percent of CX leaders believe generative AI is making every digital customer interaction more efficient, from search functions to voice assistants.That expectation of increased agent efficiency is mirrored by what consumers told Zendesk: 59
percent believe that generative AI will completely change the way they interact with companies in the next two years, and for those who have already experienced the technology first-hand, that number jumps to 75 percent.

What do these data points mean for businesses? It's clear that they should continue their experiments with the technology, with an eye on implementing generative AI tools directly into their customer experiences and related agent tools. Fifty-six percent of CX leaders are already exploring new generative AI vendors for CX, a figure that is sure to rise as the technology's implications become inescapable.

Aspects of customer-facing touchpoints CX leaders anticipate being heavily influenced by generative AI in the next two years:

57%
Chat-based customer support

53%
Email communications with customers

45%
Search functionality

42%
Voice-based interactions

"I really believe that there's a balance between empathy and efficiency where there can be an excellent result that meets the needs of the business but also meets the needs of the team that's working on the front lines with the customers."

Emily Sarver, Vice President of Customer Experience

LOVEVERY.

Trend 2.

Chatbots are rapidly transforming into digital agents that have the capacity to do more.

Perhaps no tool represents the massive shift in how companies deliver compelling customer experiences as the humble chatbot. Ever since the dawn of the chatbot, customers have harbored rather dim views of what they can offer. However, what was once seen as not ready for primetime has quietly been undergoing a supercharged transformation, with the most advanced models offering far more than a few self-service links and stilted, unnatural language.

Now, these super chatbots have begun to feel increasingly like digital agents—able to convey brand traits in a personable way while resolving a wider range of issues that would otherwise be fielded by a human being. They've become much more adept at analysing customer intent and sentiment and reacting accordingly, which is nothing short of revolutionary.

The ability of new chatbots to adopt a tone that falls in line with their company's brand is something CX leaders place great importance on; 72 percent believe that the bots they employ should be an extension of the brand's identity, reflecting its values and voice.

But the transformation of chatbots into digital agents goes far beyond simply doing a better job

adhering to a company's brand voice. Chatbots are doing a better job at surfacing information quickly, and they're also improving their ability to tailor responses to better fit where customers are in their journey. That means stronger relationships with customers, something 67 percent of CX leaders see happening.

And that's just what consumers want. While customers think that chatbots still have room for improvement, they're eager to see them evolve. Meanwhile, consumers see the current best-in-class chatbots as helpful companions, ones that present interesting products and actionable information.

Yet there's a gap to be acknowledged here-many CX leaders know all too well that their current chatbots fall short of both their potential and customer expectations. Just 22 percent of leaders say their chatbots are akin to digital agents, but a significantly larger number-58 percent-expect that to change in 2024.
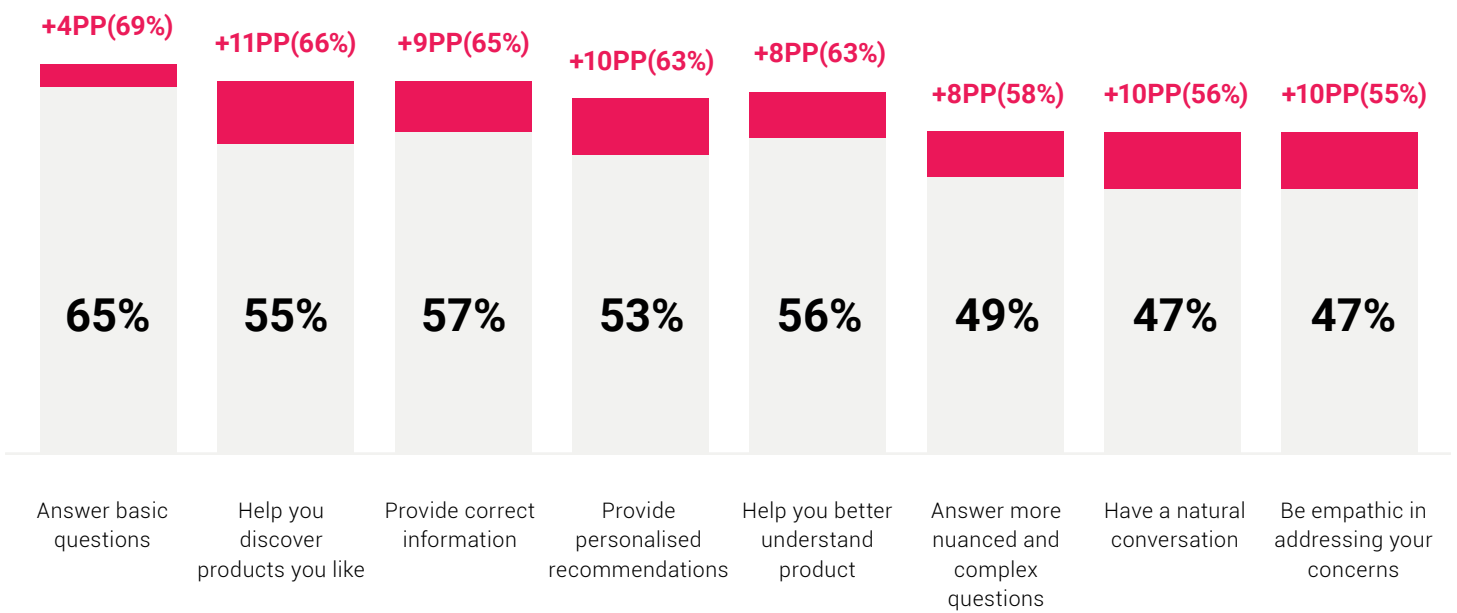
So how do those leaders plan to speed up that transformation? They told Zendesk that increased investments in AI (and other related technologies) will accelerate the process, and 64 percent plan to do so within the next year.

70% of CX leaders believe that bots are becoming skilled architects of highly personalised customer journeys.

Current and expected rating of bot perfomance in typical CX interactions by consumers

Within the next two years, consumers expect chatbot abilities to significantly improve. They anticipate bots will offer personalised suggestions, handle complex queries with ease, and engage in more human-like conversations at improved levels.

+4PP(69%)	+11PP(66%)	+9PP(65%)	+10PP(63%)	+8PP(63%)	+8PP(58%)	+10PP(56%)	+10PP(55%)
65%	55%	57%	53%	56%	49%	47%	47%
Answer basic questions	Help you discover products you like	Provide correct information	Provide personalised recommendations	Help you better understand product	Answer more nuanced and complex questions	Have a natural conversation	Be empathic in addressing your concerns

■ Percentage of consumers expecting bot ability to be good in **two years**

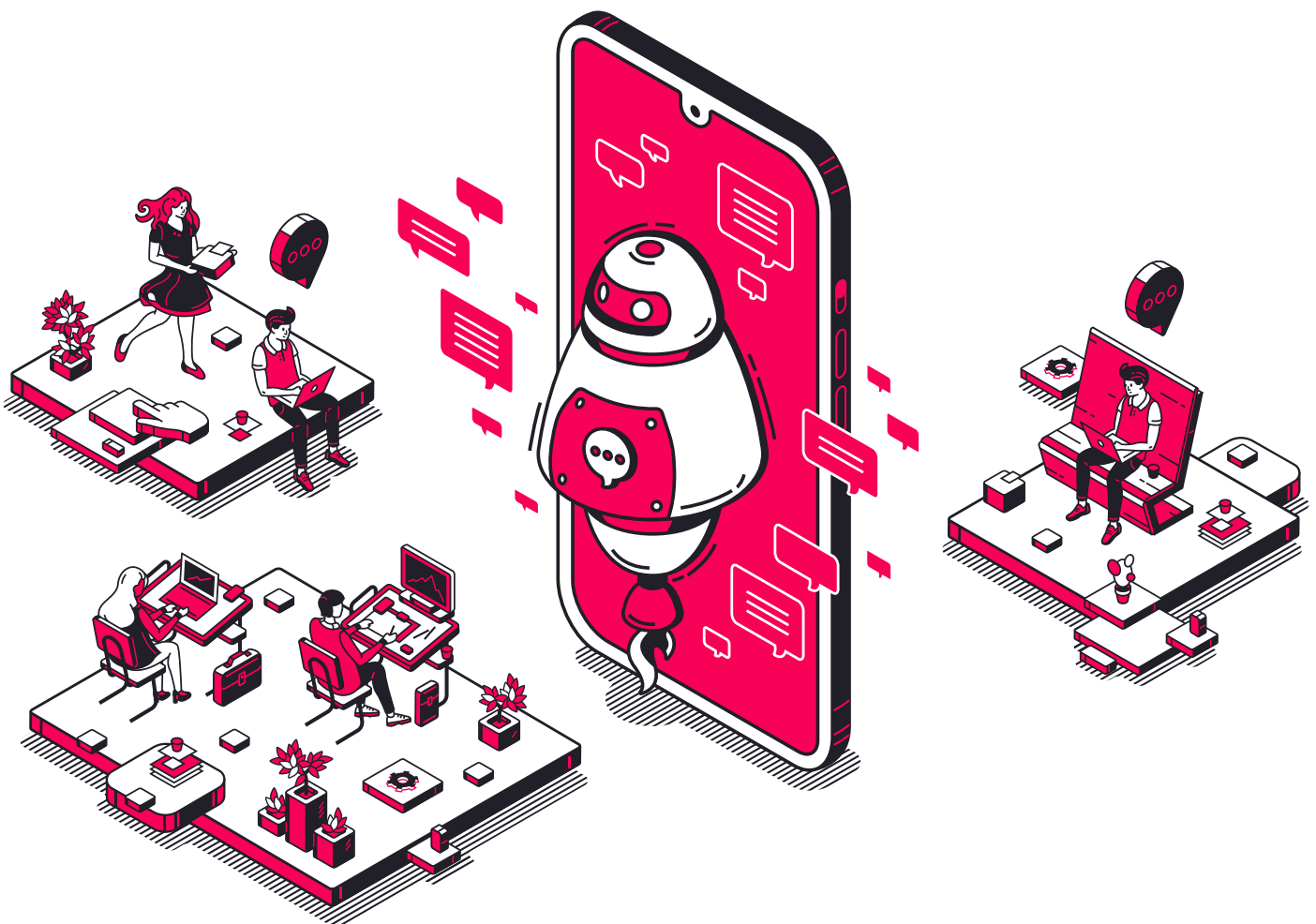■ Percentage of consumers who **currently** rate bot ability as good

"In the past, I was always quite nervous of bots because we want to deliver a personal service, but what I've seen in the past six months is that we can use AI to enhance the delivery of personal service."

Ian Hunt, Director of Operations and Customer Services

LIBERTY.

The trend is clear: businesses that want to remain competitive must put resources into chatbot enhancement, and the success of those efforts will hinge on how much thought goes into the process. In the end, chatbots must seamlessly fuse brand identity while being able to analyse customer intent and sentiment.

As the era of intelligent CX matures, these supercharged chatbots will play a central role in elevating customer experiences.

Trend 3.

Disconnect grows between CX leaders and agents on everything related to AI-strategy, tools, and role impact.

Anytime a new technology emerges, disruption - and the intense emotions and effects that it spawns-follows. While CX leaders have largely embraced the emergence of AI and expect it to change the rules of the game, they also think that the agents on the front lines have the means to use this new technology successfully.

The problem is that many agents aren't so sure. They look at the new tools with a mix of wariness and deflation, fearing what AI will mean for their job security. Yet they also think that AI tools just aren't ready yet, and the training needed to use those tools is lacking.

That hasn't stopped CX leaders from forging ahead, however. Sixty-five percent see AI not as a passing fad but as a strategic necessity and reality, one that has effectively made previous CX operations obsolete and dated. Those same leaders think the AI tools they've implemented—and the training that has accompanied those rollouts—have been more than enough to transform operations and seize the initiative in the era of intelligent CX.

But here is where Zendesk sees a serious disconnect. Only a quarter of agents surveyed think the AI tools they have actually help them provide better service. And while CX leaders strongly believe that AI will fundamentally change how agents work-shifting their focus to more specialised issues and on building and nurturing human relationships with customers-a third of agents think that's premature.

So what are the roots of this disconnect in expectations? It's becoming clear that the problem stems from a host of causes: inadequate training, tools that aren't yet effective, unclear guidelines, and expectations in leadership that perhaps aren't in line with where the technology and agents are at the moment.

> **Only 34% of agents say they understand their department's AI strategy.**

What's troubling about this disconnect between CX leaders and their teams is the potential for AI tools being implemented haphazardly, which raises the specter of these efforts actually undermining and degrading the customer experience. Drilling down into the data reveals that the widely differing views extend to training: while 72 percent of CX leaders say they've provided adequate training in

generative AI tools, more than half of agents contend that they've received no training at all. And of the 45 percent who can attest to receiving training, only 21 percent are actually satisfied with that instruction.

It's not all doom and gloom, however. Agents clearly want more AI training, and they're ready to embrace tools that will help them do a better job. While they may still harbor very real fears about job stability, it's telling that 75 percent of CX leaders see AI as a force for amplifying human intelligence, not replacing it.

Of those leaders, 71 percent believe that generative AI tools must be embedded directly into the tools agents already use, and 81 percent say that in the coming year their teams will have this functionality at their fingertips. That means rapid implementation, however, since only one-fifth of agents attest to having generative AI tools at their disposal.

These disparate responses serve as warning signs. As CX leaders and their teams grapple with the implications (and potential) of AI, they must first resolve gaps in perception and implementation. Failing to do so will squander the opportunities promised by generative AI.

Agent perspectives on what would help them do their job better

More training	**65%**
Single view of a customer's interactions across all channels	**64%**
Having access to data that allow me to personalise interactions	**62%**
Switching to a tool that's easier to use	**56%**
AI tools that would help me find information quicker	**52%**
Having automated bots handle more basic requests	**44%**
AI tools that help me communicate with customers more efficiently	**44%**

"Be clear with how you are using AI. Use AI as a tool to help make your team's role easier and more efficient, not as a looming threat to their employment. Help them to understand exactly where in their workflow it is helping, and ask them to contribute ideas to where it can relieve their pain points. What we as leaders may think is useful, may be inconsequential to those on the ground."

Naomi Rankin, Global Customer Care Manager

LUSH

AI and intelligent experiences

Trend 4.

AI transparency and decisioning are now the rule, not the exception.

With the rapid changes being brought on by AI, it's no surprise that companies and consumers have made transparency a key priority. Because the technology affects data collection and the customer experience as a whole, consumers now rank transparency as a factor in brand selection.

That focus has real-world implications for businesses as they ramp up their AI capabilities. Going forward, being transparent about the data that drives AI models and decisioning will be a defining element in building and maintaining trust with customers.

> 75% of organisations believe that a lack of transparency could lead to increased customer churn in the future.

Considering that 48 percent of customers report increased difficulty telling the difference between AI and humans, there's an urgent need for businesses to treat AI transparency as an essential element in communicating with consumers. Those who fail to heed this call will find themselves on

the outside looking in, since consumers will decide who they can trust with their data and their dollars. That need for trust through transparency becomes especially important when dealing with sensitive information that reveals a person's identity, their health history, and their financial status. No customer wants to feel like AI is snooping on them or making their data available to bad actors. And as 58 percent of consumers told Zendesk, knowing how their data is collected, stored, and used plays an outsize role in whether they'll purchase a product or service from a company.

In other words, transparency in AI is simply non-negotiable. Companies must be clear about the customer data they use, their commitment to preventing inherent biases, and their approach to comparing AI performance versus controls. It's not that customers need highly complex details about AI models, but they do need a high-level understanding of what's being used and how. If your AI recommends something to a customer, that end user needs to know how that decision came to be.

Since AI is trained on large sets of data-information created by humans with all of their frailties and flaws—there's a very real danger of tools exhibiting bias or discrimination. There have already been

widely publicised incidents of AI veering into racism and misogyny, and consumers have taken notice. As 63 percent of consumers told Zendesk, they are concerned about potential bias and discrimination in AI algorithms and decision-making. It behooves companies to be clear about what data is included and excluded in their AI models so customers feel safe.
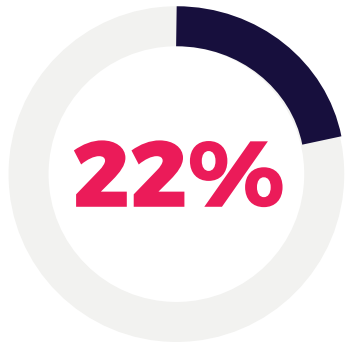
22% of consumers say AI and bots do an excellent job of explaining why a suggestion was made.

Breakdown of CX leaders by company size who see the need for AI transparency becoming paramount as customers and regulators demand insight into automated decision-making
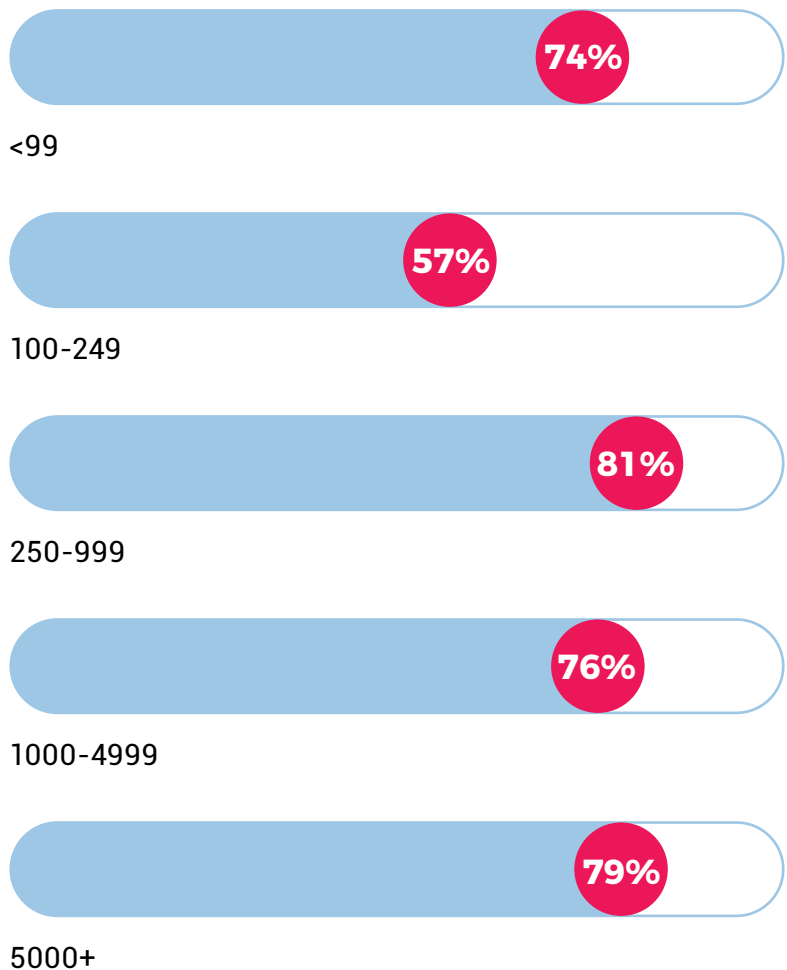
74%

<99

57%

100-249

81%

250-999

76%

1000-4999

79%

5000+

Trend 5.

Businesses are heavily focused on being able to instantly modify user experiences, putting increased pressure on leveraging data in real time.

It's not breaking news that customers want immediate results—anyone who has worked in customer support knows all too well that consumers have fuses that get shorter by the year. And with the advent of AI, customers keep expecting more: lightning-fast responses coupled with tailored information that give a sense of being known and seen.

An even more challenging expectation has arisen- that companies anticipate and ameliorate problems before customers experience them. However, the expectations of speed, anticipation, and hyper-personalised delivery of relevant information go hand-in- hand with the demand for quality experiences. In other words, it's not enough to be fast.

Here's what CX leaders told Zendesk: while they feel like they're behind in providing more instant experiences, they have plans to remedy that gap by leveraging AI tools. And customers are increasingly in sync with what those CX leaders plan to do: 51 percent say they prefer interacting with bots over humans when they want immediate service.

That preference means companies must focus on boosting their bot capabilities via AI, specifically using its power to capture and analyse sentiment and intent. Doing so will help businesses predict customer needs and resolve issues quickly and efficiently (including knowing when a bot needs to hand over an interaction to a human agent).

However, while being able to track and act on customer intent plays an important role in helping deliver predictive and immediate experiences, it's a steep hill to climb. Most businesses recognise the value in it, but actually implementing scalable, automated intent tracking systems has proven to be quite difficult.

> 62% of CX leaders feel they are behind in providing more instant experiences consumers expect.

The gap between knowing what's necessary and actually doing it is stark. Just 30 percent of CX leaders indicate that they automate identification of customer's intent through AI or machine learning. While they also state that they recognise the need to improve in this area to enable real-time decision-making and more instant experiences, it's clear that much work needs to be done.

But the writing is on the wall: the shift toward predictive, instant experiences-powered by AI-is reshaping the customer experience in profound ways. Whether it's enhanced personalisation, proactive service, increased efficiency, or a greater focus on robust data management practices, the entire fabric of the customer experience is undergoing sweeping changes.

Fortunately, CX leaders see that change coming and welcome it. They see clear benefits to delivering more instant personalised experiences: better customer service and experiences, enhanced customer loyalty and satisfaction, and an improved bottom line stemming from highly individualised and relevant recommendations. The question remains, however: will CX leaders have the vision and commitment to take full advantage of these tantalising opportunities?

70% of organisations are actively investing in technologies and tools that automatically capture and analyse intent signals.

Planned change in investment in tools that allow for predictive instant experience in the next year:

	Somewhat increase	Greatly increase
Total	38%	28%
Company size		
<99	28%	15%
100−249	41%	21%
250−999	40%	30%
1,000−4,999	40%	33%
5,000+	36%	34%
Region		
North America	36%	28%
Europe, Middle East, and Africa	40%	27%
Latin America	43%	32%
Asia Pacific	38%	28%

Data and trustworthy experiences

Trend 6.

CX leaders are the new drivers of data privacy as AI and personalisation take on a greater role.

Customers have been urging companies for years to mine the mountains of data they have to provide more personalised experiences, as long as those businesses are transparent about how they use that information and put robust security measures in place. Yet they also are concerned about how that data gets used and protected from an increasingly tech-savvy criminal underworld. That's a delicate line to walk, and CX leaders understand their responsibility here.

As 77 percent of CX leaders told Zendesk, they realize the responsibility to safeguard customer data has landed on their plates (interestingly, of those leaders, the ones who see positive ROI on CX tech are even more likely to embrace this). And those CX leaders have taken the lead in their organisations, exhibiting a clear understanding that with AI driving personalisation, the importance of securing data privacy for customers is paramount.

As a result, CX leaders are working more closely with their IT counterparts to ensure a holistic approach to data security, and they're taking steps to gain the expertise in both data management and regulatory requirements to make sound decisions for their companies and customers. However, while leaders have begun to educate themselves, 61 percent report experiencing trouble keeping up, a nod to the complex and fluid state of regulation and the technical challenges inherent to data management.

Thankfully, they're not alone in this battle. Seventy-five percent of CX leaders tell Zendesk that external partners and vendors play a crucial role in helping them gain knowledge and implement solutions. Despite eagerly partnering with vendors, CX leaders still face the tough challenge of selecting tools that both safeguard customer data and enable personalised experiences (with, of course, AI features). They know that it's not good enough to simply have AI tools for personalisation; those solutions must keep customer data secure.

83% of CX leaders say data protection and cybersecurity are top priorities in their customer service strategies.

"Having at least one person on the team whose primary responsibility is data protection is table stakes in 2024. CX leaders must critically think about their entry and exit points, and actively workshop scenarios wherein a bad actor may attempt to compromise your systems. What is your level of exposure? What will you do if there is a data breach? Have you backed up your data lately? These questions need to be asked now, before there is an active threat."

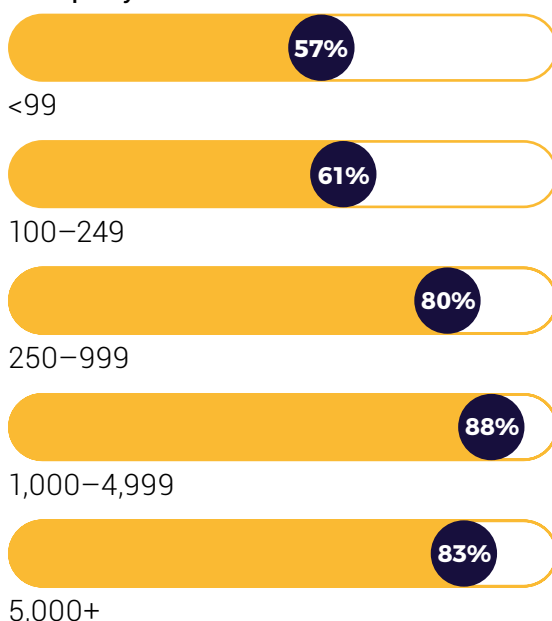Brandon Tidd, Lead Zendesk Architect

729SOLUTIONS

That said, just 28 percent of CX leaders report that their teams have advanced knowledge about data privacy best practices. Those gaps in expertise could pose serious problems for CX organisations who are implementing AI tools-it's one thing for a team leader to have a clear understanding of data privacy best practices, but ultimately it's the front line agents who must fiercely guard consumer data.
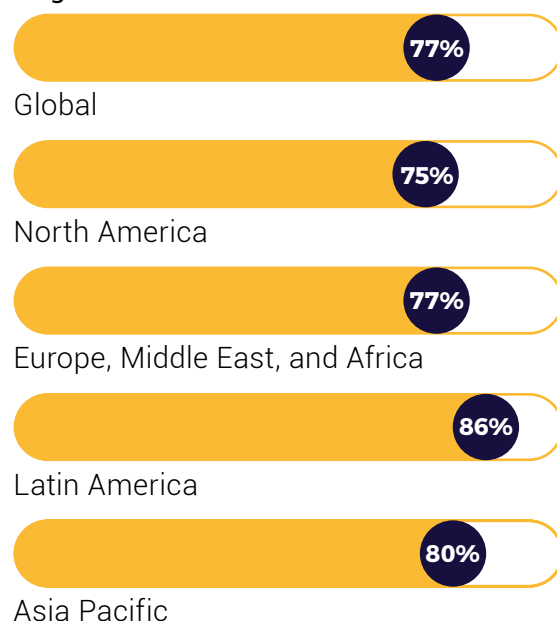
75% of CX leaders are actively collaborating with external partners or vendors to evolve customer data privacy in their CX operations.

Percentage of CX leaders who believe they are responsible for making sure customer data is safe

Company size

57%
<99

61%
100−249

80%
250−999

88%
1,000−4,999

83%
5,000+

Region

77%
Global

75%
North America

77%
Europe, Middle East, and Africa

86%
Latin America

80%
Asia Pacific

16

Data and trustworthy experiences

Trend 7.

Security is no longer an add-on but is seamlessly incorporated throughout the customer journey.

Every year, consumers lose billions of dollars due to fraud. Whether it's breached accounts, stolen identities, or scams, most consumers have been victimised at least once in their life. It's an unfortunate and maddening reality-likely to become even worse with deep fakes-and as a result, consumers have rightly become suspicious of the businesses that are charged with protecting their data.

74% of CX leaders say they have detailed strategic plans to counteract digital deception and fraud in their CX operations.

While fraud will always be an issue, companies now understand that security measures can't be ad hoc afterthoughts. All it takes is one breach of security, and your company's reputation-and client base-will take a serious hit. However, by integrating stronger security measures into the customer experience, businesses are beginning to tighten their defenses without compromising the fluidity customers demand.

Those efforts have yet to resonate with consumers, though. While 83 percent of CX leaders think their customers trust their data security efforts, six in ten consumers believe companies are falling short. That gap in trust is problematic on its own, but as 73 percent of CX leaders note, criminals keep getting better at what they do, making it harder to safeguard customer data.

78% of CX leaders agree that ignoring encryption in customer service exchanges leaves customer data vulnerable.

These challenges give CX leaders little choice but to revamp and strengthen their CX security strategies, with the understanding that those efforts must be seamlessly integrated into the customer journey without compromising the effortless experiences consumers take for granted. While that's certainly a vexing challenge, it's one that must be solved given that 70 percent of consumers won't purchase a product or service from a company they view as having lackluster security measures.

Thankfully, CX leaders have options for seamlessly integrating security measures into customer experiences, most of which aren't new: multi-factor authentication, encryption of service interactions, and being transparent with customers about security and data privacy practices. (In the near future, biometric verification will likely be in use for highly regulated and high-risk categories.) And now companies can leverage AI for proactive fraud detection, as well.

But let's focus on transparency for a moment. It's a key element in building trust with customers, and as 80 percent of CX leaders state, "If our customers don't understand how we use their data, they may feel violated and opt for brands they deem more transparent."

The first step to achieving that much-needed transparency is to be clear with customers about how you handle and protect their data.

Beyond that, your company must make it easy for customers to opt out of data collection-it can't simply be, "Your data is ours, trust us." And because criminals continually find new ways to compromise networks-often by capitalising on human error-every business needs to implement the latest security measures.

Staying vigilant about security takes resources and commitment, and for some CX leaders, it might not be second nature quite yet. But failing to weave strong security measures throughout the customer experience is a recipe for disaster. However, with some forethought and dedication, you can implement security measures in ways that boost the quality of the experience and build trust.
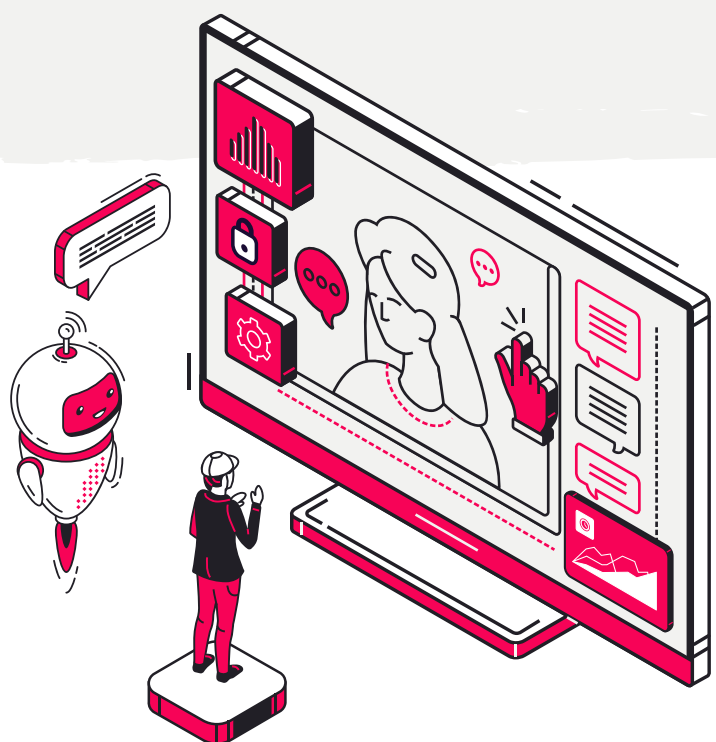
"Adopt a policy of transparency regarding how personal information is to be used in relationships to conduct business as well as how it is protected from those who would use it differently. Be able to verify a customer identity without having to follow verbal verification procedures."

Steve Lacoss, Supervisor of Production

Dorm Room Movers

56% of CX leaders admit their organisation experienced a data breach or a cyber attack targeting customer data in the past year; here's how that figure breaks down by company size.
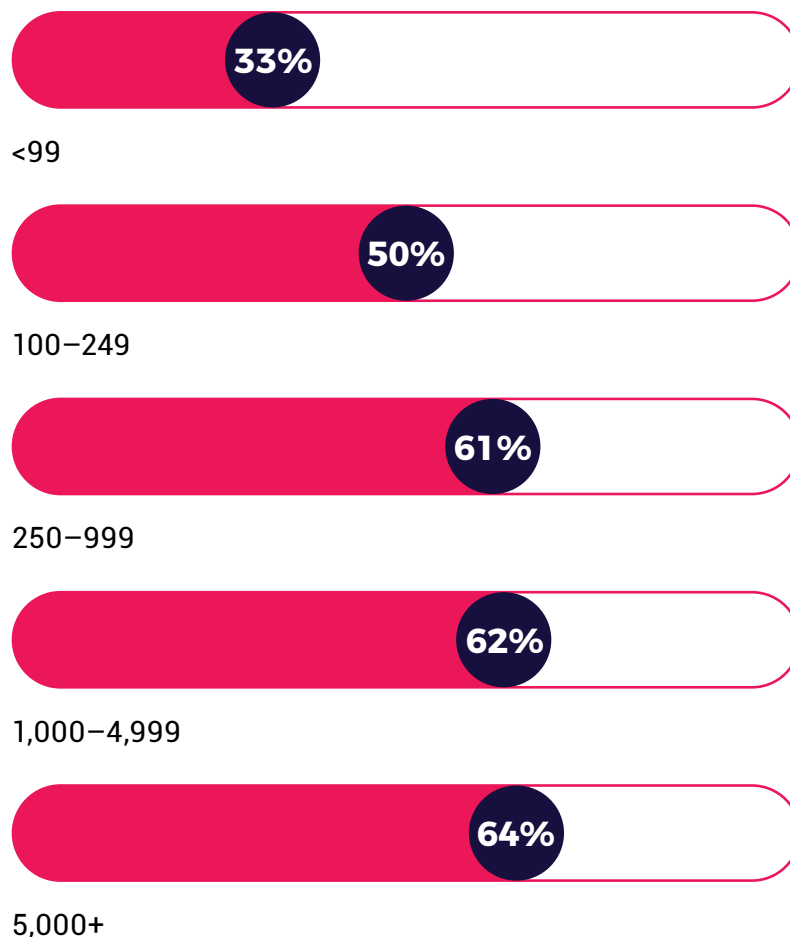
33%

<99

50%

100−249

61%

250−999

62%

1,000−4,999

64%

5,000+

Next gen and immersive experiences

Trend 8.

Live and immersive experiences are now heavily influencing the future of online shopping.

Years after the advent of e-commerce, customers take convenience as a given. Almost anything can be ordered online and delivered to your doorstep in a matter of days (if not minutes). But consumers aren't content with the status quo: they want more. They're asking for conversational commerce and the ability to buy products within chat interactions. In fact, they'll even watch live-streamed sessions to gain shopping advice.

Immediacy and engagement now rule, driven partly by the lockdowns of the pandemic and the rise of new technologies. It's not enough for transactions to be seamless—they must also be more engaging and feature real-time guidance and tailored information. Customers need to complete a purchase with a sense of really understanding the product or service, and feel a matching level of confidence.

Now, 80 percent of consumers expect chat agents and support representatives to assist them with everything they need. The line between support and sales has begun to blur.

Conversational commerce, in which customers can make seamless purchases via chat or messaging, has quickly become the new standard in online shopping. In a single conversation-and make no mistake, the word conversation is key-a customer

might open a chat session to get support for a previously purchased product, and through intelligently divined suggestions, that consumer will be served relevant product options for additional purchases.

> Consumers report they are only able to make purchases directly within chat-based conversations with agents 34% of the time.

While companies see the potential here, they're lagging behind in terms of implementation. Investments are being made, but as it stands, just 33 percent of businesses have implemented conversational commerce. However, 56 percent plan to explore conversational commerce and make it available to their customers in 2024.

While businesses make slow gains in offering conversational commerce, there's another element on the rise: live-stream shopping coupled with real-time purchasing guidance. This is particularly pronounced in Asia, but it's making inroads in other parts of the world. Its interactive and dynamic 20

nature resonates with consumers, and with it comes a host of benefits: a more human touch, better product knowledge, immediate expert advice, and an overall more compelling shopping experience.

To take advantage of this development, businesses need to strategise. While setting up live-streaming capabilities will require financial commitments, 74 percent of CX leaders see those expenditures as justified. To get there, 72 percent of leaders say they plan to partner with external vendors and partners.

With the implementation of live-stream shopping experiences and conversational commerce comes the need for organisational changes. CX leaders told Zendesk that they expect a need for updating or modifying data privacy policies, as well as new training programs for customer service teams. And, importantly, these CX leaders see AI playing a role in handling automated responses and personalisation.

> "Our revenue per user is higher when a customer is chatting with us versus browsing the site on their own. And our conversion rate in chat is nine times higher than the standard conversion rate for customers using the site."
>
> Michelle Swart, Zendesk Administrator and Data Analyst
>
> ## Spoonflower

The evolution in online commerce will only accelerate, with conversational interactions and live-streaming events becoming the norm. And as two-thirds of CX leaders recognise, failing to embrace this change in the marketplace will mean losing valued customers to those who do.
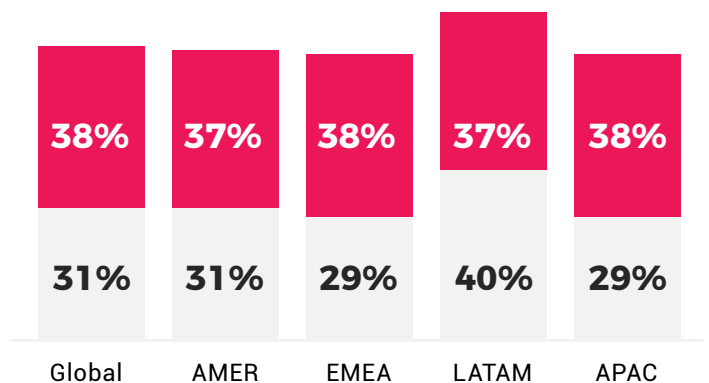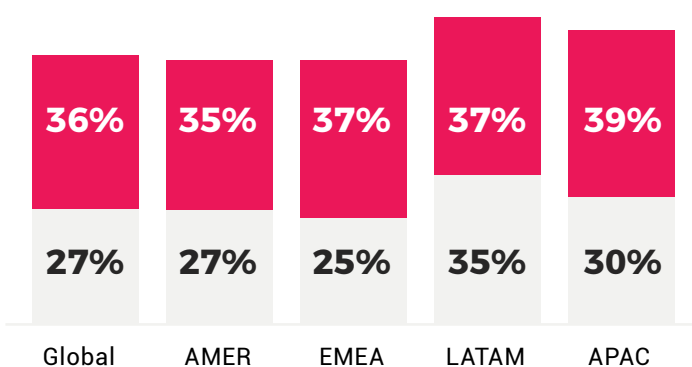
Live-streaming shopping investment in the next year

	Global	AMER	EMEA	LATAM	APAC
Somewhat increase	36%	35%	37%	37%	39%
Greatly increase	27%	27%	25%	35%	30%

Conversational commerce planned investment in the next year

	Global	AMER	EMEA	LATAM	APAC
Somewhat increase	38%	37%	38%	37%	38%
Greatly increase	31%	31%	29%	40%	29%

■ Somewhat increase ▢ Greatly increase

Trend 9.

Voice is carving out a more advanced role focused on handling complex and escalated issues.

For many years, customer support teams worked in what were deemed "call centres," a nod to the primary way customers contacted companies for help with products or services. However, businesses have moved decisively toward a digital-first contact approach—chatbots, messaging, and of course that old standby, email—with customers going along for the ride, albeit cautiously.

While most customers harbor no complaints about this shift, they still want the option to talk to a real human being. So despite digital-first becoming the new standard in customer service, customers expect voice to remain a viable channel, one that serves as a source of nuanced and tailored support.

71% of organisations use digital channels primarily for first contact and voice for resolving complex customer issues or escalations.

That said, customers expect more when they do reach out via phone. If they're going to the trouble of navigating a phone tree and waiting on hold, consumers expect their issue to be resolved without needing a second call. And considering that 60 percent of consumers report being frequently transferred to another agent or department on those calls, it behooves companies to ensure that support representatives are armed with context about the customer's problem.

That presents a problem for companies, as CX leaders attempt to balance their digital-first strategies with consumers' demand for voice options. Forty-one percent of CX leaders say they plan to increase their budgets for phone support in 2024, and that's a reflection of meeting customers where they are.

Yet businesses must also ensure that their digital-first channels deliver exceptional service by leveraging advanced AI tools and personalisation techniques. If customers can find answers easily via digital channels—most notably self-service content—that in turn reduces the amount of phone traffic for common issues.

When companies create a seamless transition from digital to voice channels for handling complex issues, consumer confidence in the former rises. That in turn becomes a virtuous cycle in which customers feel increasingly satisfied with reaching out via digital channels, thus lessening demand for phone options.

For those CX leaders who see significant ROI on their CX tools, 54 percent are more likely to be actively exploring integration opportunities between voice and digital channels; that points toward the creation of seamless omnichannel experiences in which customers can move from channel to channel easily, without having to repeat themselves.

When customers do reach out over the phone, it will be crucial to have those calls answered by agents with more training, since they'll be expected to provide personalised and nuanced help for complex issues. Meanwhile, to ensure those agents aren't spending time on low-complexity issues, CX leaders will need to invest in technologies that make their digital channels more effective at solving a wide range of problems.

71% of organisations use digital channels primarily for first contact and voice for resolving complex customer issues or escalations.

Here is where voice AI capabilities will play an important role. CX leaders who see high ROI on their support tools are 62 percent more likely to prioritise the enhancement of their voice channel by using speech analytics, natural language processing, and voice AI.

While voice channels aren't going away anytime soon, they are rapidly evolving. CX leaders seeking an edge should adopt a dual approach: implementing advanced technologies to boost their digital channels while upleveling their agents' soft skills, which will pay off with higher customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Preferred customer service channels for general issues vs. complex problems

	General issues	Complex or nuanced problems
Phone calls	**16%**	**29%**
Email	**16%**	**13%**
Self-service options	**15%**	**5%**
Live chat on the company's website	**12%**	**10%**
In-person	**6%**	**13%**
Social media platforms	**5%**	**3%**

This visualisation omits channels with a percentage below 3% and instances of 'no preference'.

Trend 10.

Predictive agent management tools are finally <u>eclipsing</u> traditional methods.

CX leaders have long struggled with agent management. How many agents are needed now, and how many will the business require later in the year? When will demand spike, and should the company contract with a business process outsourcing (BPO) agency for flexibility? Poorly reasoned decisions about staff levels and training can wreak havoc on a support operation and have downstream effects that can harm the bottom line.

However, leaders now have agent management tools at their disposal that can take a lot of the guesswork out of running a support operation. These tools can offer both operational and strategic foresight, helping managers make better staffing and training choices. But as 66 percent of CX leaders state, the transition from an operational view to a more strategic approach is proving painful. To ease this rocky transition, 79 percent of CX leaders plan to increase their budget for more strategic agent management tools. And of the 75 percent who already use more strategic tools, the positive ROI has been notable.

> 69% of CX leaders say that forecasting future labor requirements accurately remains a significant challenge.

That ROI comes in the form of more precise staffing forecasts, which leads to improved operational efficiency. There's a direct correlation between those gains and better customer experiences (reduced wait times, less organisational stress). These advanced agent management tools also provide key insights into skill development, which reveals clear training paths for improved agent performance. The value of those insights cannot be overstated—with customer expectations on the rise, companies must field a team of agents that are highly trained in both technical and soft skills.

Agent management tools also promise to boost a company's ability to respond promptly to customer needs-ot simply due to more accurate staffing, however. The targeted training paths it reveals will help agents understand how to resolve a customer's issue more quickly and greatly decrease the chance that a customer will have to reach out again to get the problem fixed.

"Tymeshift has helped us become better staffed. Previously, we were guessing almost, based on some of the numbers that we had. But now we have specific numbers, and Tymeshift helped us figure out exactly the head count that we need for each part of the seasons that we go through."

Erik Jansen, Support Team Supervisor

peek

As CX leaders lean into advanced agent management tools such as Tymeshift, they'll be empowered to refine their strategies in ways that align perfectly with both business objectives and customer demands. As a result, CX leaders stand to upend a long-running narrative about support operations being cost centres, not profit centres. Agent performance tools will lead to better customer experiences, increased customer retention, and crucially, higher profitability.

79% of organisations recognise the need for strategic agent management and are collaborating with external partners or vendors to facilitate this.
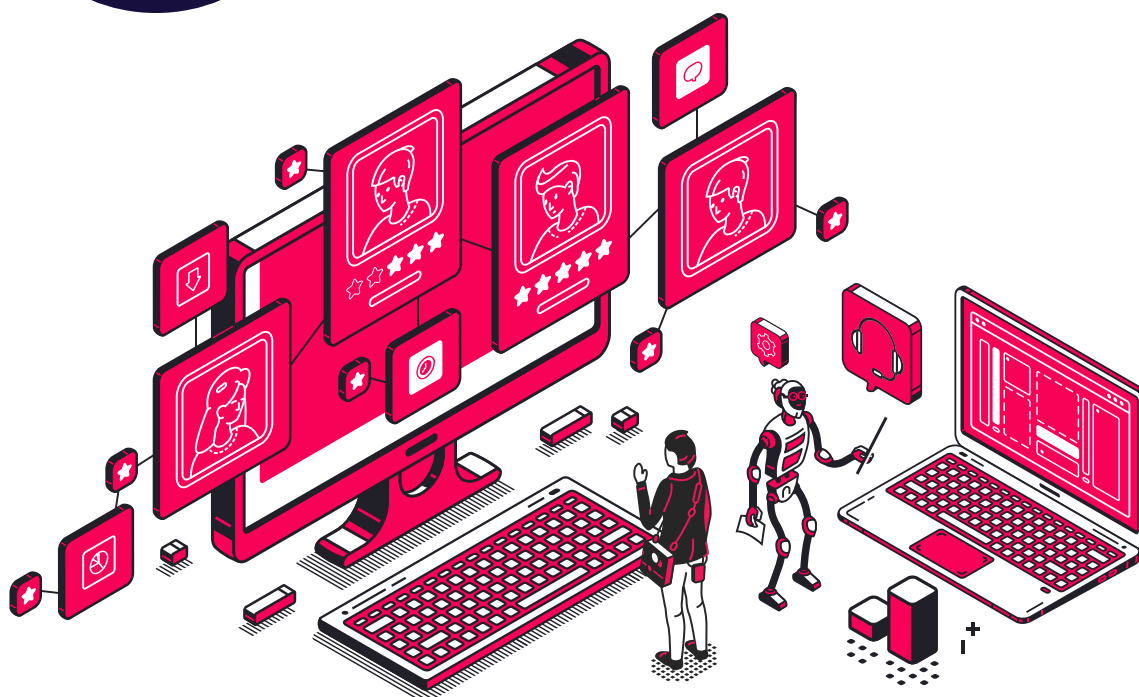
Closing words.

In this sixth CX Trends report, we dove into three distinct trend areas: AI and intelligent experiences; data and trustworthy experiences; and finally, next gen and immersive experiences. These 10 trends bring intelligent CX to life in new and vivid ways, marking the next step in the evolution of customer experiences.

CX leaders cannot ignore these developments—to do so is to cede ground to the competition, to watch trust and customer loyalty fade. The ramifications for profitability and company longevity cannot be overstated, and the businesses that come out on top will be the ones that recognised these shifts and planned accordingly.
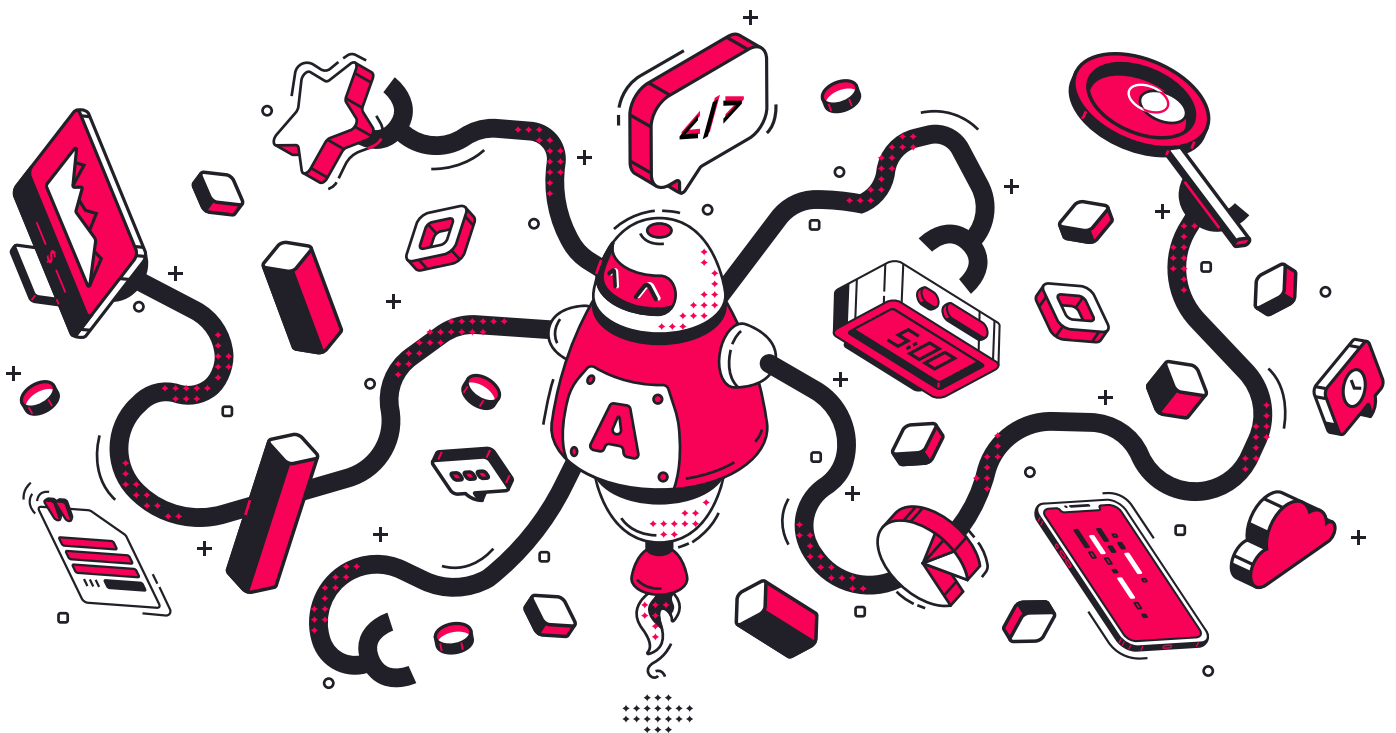
Advanced methodology

Data from CX Trends comes from two survey sources: one global survey (20 countries) of 2,818 consumers and another global survey (20 countries) of nearly 4,441 business respondents. The organisations surveyed ranged from small businesses to enterprise-level companies. Results from each survey were weighted to remove bias from the survey samples. Surveys were conducted in July and August 2023.

Business survey countries:

Australia (4.9%)	Mexico (8.4%)
Brazil (8.1%)	Netherlands (2.9%)
Canada (6.1%)	Philippines (1.5%)
Denmark (2.1%)	Singapore (4.5%)
France (5.7%)	South Korea (5.4%)
Germany (5.1%)	Spain (5.9%)
India (5.2%)	Sweden (2.2%)
Italy (5.5%)	Thailand (1.7%)
Japan (5.0%)	United Kingdom (5.1%)
Malaysia (1.6%)	United States (13.2%)

Consumer survey countries:

Australia (6.1%)	Mexico (6.4%)
Brazil (6.0%)	Netherlands (3.1%)
Canada (6.0%)	Philippines (1.5%)
Denmark (3.0%)	Singapore (3.2%)
France (5.9%)	South Korea (6.4%)
Germany (6.2%)	Spain (6.4%)
India (6.5%)	Sweden (3.5%)
Italy (6.6%)	Thailand (1.1%)
Japan (6.3%)	United Kingdom (6.2%)
Malaysia (1.5%)	United States (8.1%)

Business survey roles:

Agents (22.0%)
Business Leaders (78.0%)

Consumer survey age groups:

18–24 (19.9%)
25–39 (27.4%)
40–54 (27.0%)
55+ (25.8%)

About us.

About Connect

Connect combines global contact centre and customer experience (CX) expertise, deep domain knowledge, and unparalleled industry skills to make the complex, simple. Since 1990, we have leveraged our vendor-independent managed services approach to digitally transform how organisations communicate, both internally and externally.

We specialise in combining the most relevant technologies and services from leading vendors and platform providers to create opti-channel engagement solutions, orchestrating frictionless experiences and simplifying complex communication challenges.

We offer exceptional capabilities in extracting unparalleled value from data and AI, paving the way for deeply connected, personalised end-to-end customer and agent experiences.

Our collaborative ecosystem ensures seamless data sharing, advanced analytics, and workflow automation, ultimately positioning Connect as the preferred technology partner for organisations seeking to drive innovation and create truly frictionless journeys.

Connect stands out for our proven track record: implementing solutions that they consistently earn industry accolades, showcasing our commitment to excellence and innovation.

With a footprint in key markets such as the UK, US, and SA, we bring global expertise to organisations seeking transformative solutions.

Premier
Partner

About Zendesk

At Zendesk we're on a mission to simplify the complexity of business and make it easy for companies and customers to create connections. We show companies how to unlock the power of everyday customer interactions so they can make those experiences extraordinary.

And you know what? This work is important, because we're all customers. We believe life is a little bit better when the customer experiences we all share are painless, frictionless and more helpful.

This eBook is authored by Zendesk. Visit the website: Zendesk.com
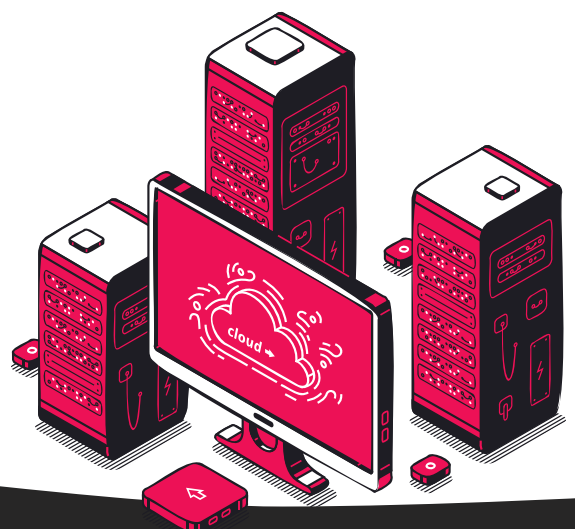
Connect with us.

To discuss a communications challenge or find out more about our capabilities, get in touch with us today.

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