

# The CX Shift

A study of customer expectations in the AI era





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# Transform CX. Accelerate Growth.

Across industries leaders agree customer experience (CX) is where growth is won or lost. It is one of the most powerful differentiators in the market. Technology has made incredible progress enabling speed, scale, and personalization that wasn't possible a few years ago. Yet, for many organizations, customer experiences aren't meeting expectations. Disconnected systems slow teams down. Fragmented data creates friction. And that complexity leaves little room for the human moments that matter most.

That's why we conducted one of the most comprehensive customer experience studies to date – surveying more than 34,000 executives, service professionals, and customers globally to understand where the experiences fall short and what it takes to fix them.

What we found is striking. Customers aren't getting what they value most. Service teams are burdened by busy work and forced to navigate multiple systems to complete simple tasks. And executives' investments are misaligned to customers' expectations. The result is a widening experience gap – one that directly impacts growth, loyalty, and competitiveness.

We're also at an inflection point. AI has moved from pilots to production, freeing people to focus on building relationships, solving complex problems, and delivering empathy customers value. But unlocking that potential requires more than adding AI to existing systems. It requires reimagining how customer relationships are managed. That means treating CRM as an experience platform - a connective layer bringing together data, workflows, and AI to orchestrate every interaction across the enterprise.

Leading organizations are breaking down data silos, using AI agents to automate routine work and empowering their people to deliver more human experiences at every touchpoint. I've seen the impact firsthand. A global telecom company unified 26 systems and 8,800 data silos on a single platform – eliminating 500,000 customer calls and automating 90 percent of dispatch tasks. The outcome wasn't just efficiency. It was growth in customer lifetime value and market share.

The stakes are high. Organizations that excel at customer experience will drive greater results and earn sustained competitive advantage. Those that don't will continue to see churn, inefficiency, and erosion of trust. The path forward: treat CRM as a strategic platform, deploy AI to augment – not replace – human capabilities, and build the connected infrastructure that makes great experiences possible.

The question isn't whether AI will transform customer experience – it already has. It's whether your organization is ready to lead. This study offers a blueprint forward. Because when your customers win, your people thrive. That's how you redefine what's possible in the AI era.



**Paul Fipps**

President, Global Customer Operations  
ServiceNow



# The CX shift

# The changing CX landscape and what's at stake

## What 34,000+ voices revealed about the future of CX

To understand how AI is reshaping CX, ServiceNow partnered with research firm ThoughtLab to conduct an extensive global study across 18 countries and eight industries, including:

- 27,250 customers
- 3,515 customer service representatives
- 3,900 executives

## Three critical tension points were uncovered

- What customers expect versus their lived experiences
- What service reps need and what holds them back
- Where executives invest versus what customers value

## Getting CX right is nonnegotiable

Organizations that excel at it capture market share from those that don't. Our research proves it: Customers walk away from poor service, and organizations that deploy AI effectively see concrete improvements in both revenue and retention.

## The promise of AI has raised the bar for customer expectations—and there's no going back

Customers expect speed: instant responses, 24/7 availability, and transactions completed in seconds. They are starting to experience hyper-personalization and recommendations that anticipate their needs, content tailored to their preferences, and service that remembers their history. But is that enough?

## Organizations must treat AI as a multiplier of human potential—not a replacement

They're using it to do more with less, when they should be using it to enable service reps to do what only humans can do: Build trust, demonstrate empathy, and create emotional connections that drive lasting loyalty.

## A widening gap has emerged between what customers want and what they get

While customers say AI has improved their experiences, they're simultaneously frustrated by systems that feel faster yet less understanding, more responsive yet less empathetic.

As organizations race to deliver on AI-enabled capabilities, they're solving only half the equation. Out-of-balance solutions are optimizing for efficiency at the expense of human empathy and emotional connection. And frontline service reps, caught in the middle, are being asked to deliver human connection while trapped in systems that make genuine customer engagement challenging.

# The gaps



## WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT

### Customers want both speed and empathy

Customers expect both efficient solutions and genuine understanding, yet most organizations struggle to deliver on both fronts.

Fifty-three percent of customers expect improved speed and efficiency as the top benefit of AI in the future, yet nearly half (48%) rate their service experiences as average or worse. Their top frustration? Lack of empathy (cited by 50% of customers).

## WHAT SERVICE REPS NEED

### Service reps want to help, but they're trapped in systems that hinder them

While service reps are responsible for building customer relationships, efforts are often hampered by their own technology.

Only 45% of their time is spent addressing customer issues and follow-ups. The rest is consumed by administrative tasks, toggling between three to five systems (reported by 80% of reps), and wrestling with inconsistent customer data (a top challenge for 43%). Additionally, just 39% agree their organization has provided the tools and training needed to deliver superior experiences.

## WHAT EXECUTIVES MISS

### Executives are investing in AI, but they're missing what matters most to customers

Executives are solving for efficiency while customers are demanding empathy. They're prioritizing advanced digital channels while customers prefer familiar ones with human support.

Organizations are lagging in the area customers value above all else: emotional connection. Only 16% of organizations report meaningful AI progress in building emotional connections with customers. This is a high customer priority, but it's the lowest area of organizational investment.

# The CX imperative

## Win loyalty in an AI-driven world

CX disconnects are costly. Forty-six percent of executives report high churn from poor experiences, and nearly half of customers say they would switch to a competitor because of slow or inadequate service. The issue isn't AI itself; it's how it's deployed. The critical question is simple: Are you using AI to replace human connection or enable it?

While many organizations race toward automation, our research shows customers want more than speed. They want to feel understood. Service reps don't need replacing; they need empowering. And executives who invest in efficiency alone miss the bigger opportunity: loyalty.

Winning organizations use AI to handle what machines do best—speed, accuracy, and administrative tasks—while freeing humans to do what only humans can: build trust and create emotional connections.

## Put AI to work for people

Success begins with measuring what truly matters, things such as empathy, trust, and emotional connection alongside speed and efficiency. It means deploying AI not as a substitute for human interaction, but as an enabler that automates routine tasks and surfaces insights so teams can focus on relationships.

Organizations must also invest in autonomous AI that resolves issues through self-service, while preparing their workforce with the training, tools, and interpersonal skills needed to thrive. Additionally, CRM should evolve into an experience platform that orchestrates seamless workflows across every function, powered by unified data that treats each customer as an individual.

By taking these steps, organizations can eliminate the disconnect between customer expectations, service capabilities, and executive priorities, delivering experiences that are more efficient and more human.



# What customers want

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It just feels like no one really listens or takes ownership of the issue, and that lack of empathy and connection is just what makes me walk away with a bad impression of the brand.

Consumer, U.S.

# My take: Putting the 'wow' in CX

## Driving enterprise outcomes with AI

We've all been enticed by large language models and the conversational nature of AI, but we're missing AI's true potential: driving actual enterprise outcomes.

Everyone talks about contact center call deflections and answering simple questions. Those are valuable, but in two years we'll see them as relatively immature. To achieve AI's real potential, you need an underlying system of action where AI can do things on behalf of the enterprise, the way humans do today.

At Bell Canada, we started by asking: what's the size of an AI agent? Think about a backup camera in your car. That microchip is mission-specific but does one thing brilliantly. Should you have one dispute resolution agent, or one for cell phone bills in Ontario?

We've built agents that do exactly that. One handles loyalty points disputes, validating transactions to resolve issues almost instantly. Another handles complex disputes, surfacing missing data to pull signal out of the noise and trigger the right workflows.

Crucially, we've embraced a human in the loop paradigm—one that remains deeply human but is AI assisted. We transcribe every call in real time. While the human agent

focuses on empathy, AI prompts reps and digs through transactions in the background. No more frustrating "give me a moment" pauses.

None of this works without the right foundation. We're increasingly handing off to specialized agents on an integrated platform. AI doesn't achieve its full potential if you're federating disparate systems. You need consistent data models and unified systems of action.

My advice? Start small and stay focused on business outcomes you're trying to achieve. Focus on use cases where you have data and workflows. Think in continuous iterations, not perfect end states. And listen—I'm constantly surprised by people saying "we could do this." Let people pick up the rocks and see what's underneath. That's where real innovation happens.



**Lukas Lhotsky**

President  
Ateko, Bell Canada

# Customers want speed and empathy

## Speed is table stakes, but empathy wins

Customers expect responsive service, but they value being treated as humans, not transactions. For many organizations, the balance between speed and empathy is off. While 40% of customers report experiencing improved speed and efficiency from AI in customer service, their No. 1 frustration is clear: lack of empathy.

Simultaneously, AI is raising the bar for resolution speed. Fifty-three percent of customers say improved speed and efficiency are the top benefits they expect from AI in the future—creating a compounding challenge for organizations that haven't mastered the empathy equation.



**If it's a simple issue...I'm totally fine with using AI, because it's actually quicker and it'll be more efficient.**

Consumer, U.S.



**Because humans have immersion, they...can tell when you're frustrated. ...I just don't think AI would have the same amount of empathy.**

Consumer, Australia

## Emotional connection matters

**50%**

of customers cite lack of empathy as their top frustration

## Getting it wrong is costly

**47%**

would switch to a competitor due to poor or slow service

# Customers want tech and humans

## Blend high tech with high touch

Most customers prefer self-service for simple tasks such as making a purchase, but they demand seamless escalation to a human for complex interactions.

## When customers prefer a human

- Engaging in a client relationship
- Obtaining advice and recommendations
- Making an inquiry

## When customers prefer technology

- Making purchases or payments
- Receiving loyalty and reward offer
- Getting offers for products and service

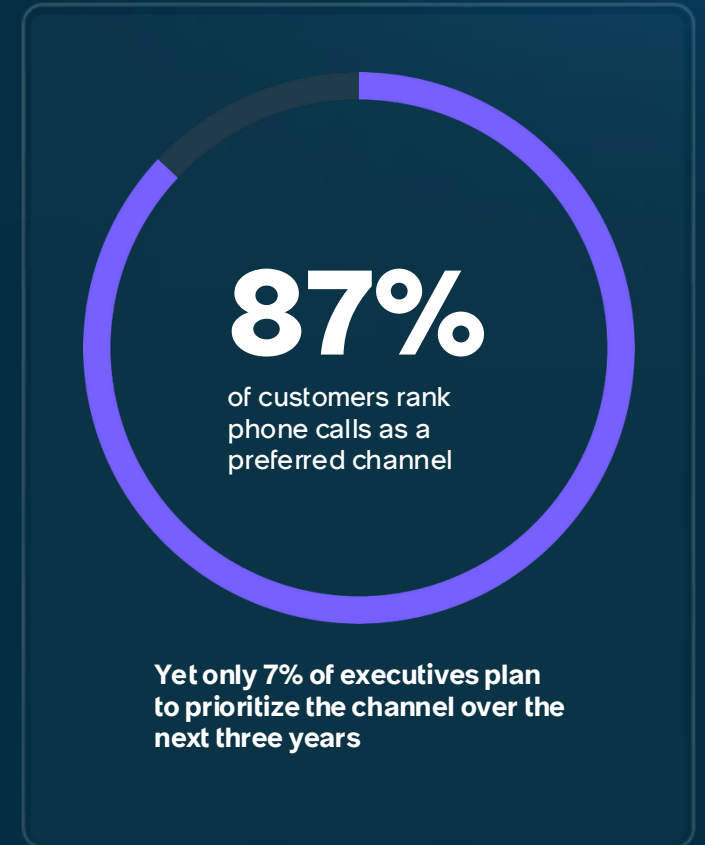
## Customer preferences must drive channel strategy—not the other way around

There is a clear mismatch between customers' communication preferences and organizations' priorities. Customers prefer familiar channels often with human support—phone calls, mobile apps, live chats, basic chatbots, and email messages—while executives are prioritizing more advanced digital channels, such as social media, self-service tools, rich communications, and intelligent chatbots.



**I can easily solve my simple problems with an AI chatbot...but when it comes to complex matters, I prefer human contact.**

Consumer, Germany



# Customers are willing to use self-service tools when they work.

**But they still want human connection.**

## Preferences are nuanced

While phone calls are a top customer preference, our research also shows that 75% of customers prefer to use self-service first before calling a service rep. And only 32% prefer receiving service from a human rather than a machine. But at the same time, 46% say that current chatbots don't understand their questions and concerns.

## The problem is clear

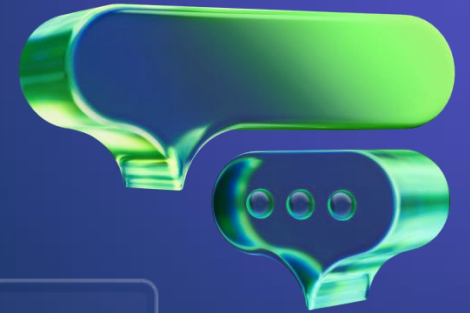
Organizations need to strike the right balance between humans and technology.

Customers have not fully embraced leveraging self-service driven by AI, but as these technologies improve, customers may be more willing to use self-service for complex issues.

A customer in India underscores this sentiment, sharing, "I think AI will be more intelligent and actually try to understand the uniqueness and complexity of different situations and maybe help just like a human does."



# Customers want the right help—right now



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**If my issue is very simple, I can usually search it up, but if it's complex and there's not a specific answer for it, I know for a fact an AI chatbot's not going to be able to fix that.**

Consumer, UK

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**The AI, clearly acknowledged my issue and responded in a natural, humanlike tone. The small movement of understanding made the interaction feel smoother and more personal.**

Consumer, India

//  
**The AI chatbot could not help me with my query, and there was no option to be referred to a human. So I, I didn't have a good experience with it.**

Consumer, Singapore

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**If I have a very basic question...I can just easily ask the AI and feel confident that it will be able to answer basic troubleshooting questions.**

Consumer, U.S.

# What service reps need

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[What makes me feel understood by a brand] is where they went above and beyond, they rectified the issue, then called me up a few days later to check that everything was working fine and everything was OK.

Consumer, UK

# Service reps need time—and training

## Reps aren't spending time where it matters most

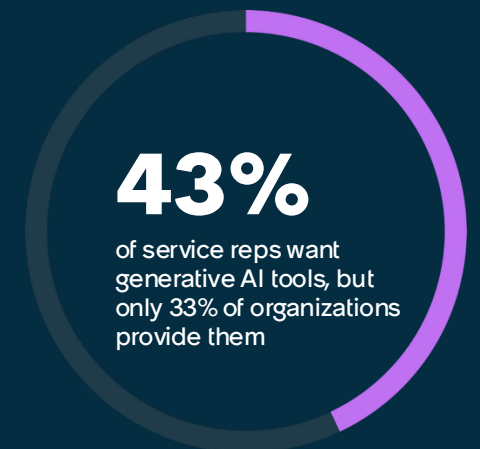
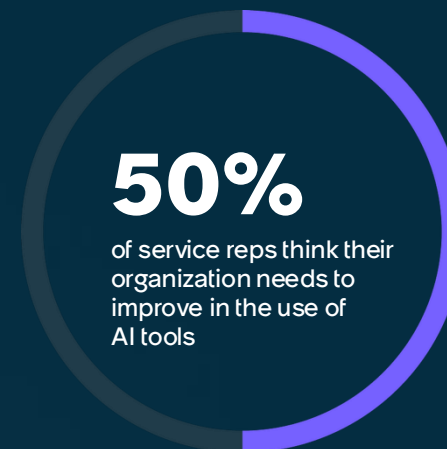
High call volumes is the top challenge for service reps, hindering their ability to provide the personalized, human connection that customers demand.

Furthermore, less than half of their time is spent addressing customer questions and issues. Instead, reps are focusing on handling administrative tasks, summarizing call notes, and chasing teams for information, taking time away from what customers want most: building human connections.



## Training and tools are lacking

Service reps don't feel prepared for the AI era. Better training emerged as the most critical improvement area, with 59% of service reps identifying it as necessary for superior CX. Additionally, 42% report that customer requests require escalation due to needing specialized knowledge or expertise, suggesting skill gaps that training could address.



# Service reps need connected systems

Customer service reps face fragmented systems that cause friction and data inconsistency. It prevents them from efficiently and effectively helping customers. But executives often underestimate the challenges their teams face.



# My take: Transforming CRM into a system of action

I've spent a significant part of my career in CRM, watching systems evolve from sales contact databases into sprawling platforms. Throughout the journey, I've recognized that CRM systems could genuinely deliver better customer relationships and experiences. But the truth is, they have fallen short. The failure wasn't just about execution either. It was solving the wrong problem from the start, as the systems were designed to drive sales productivity and track deals, not deliver superior customer outcomes.

In recent years, we were told that CRM would transform customer experience. But, as it expanded into customer service and added channels and data, it brought the same DNA with it – optimizing for internal metrics, not customer value. The result? It left us with long wait times, bad chatbots, and burned-out service reps trying to navigate systems that were never built with the customer in mind. They were now just sophisticated systems of record, not systems of action.

Now with AI, there is a unique opportunity to right this wrong. But to be clear: AI isn't solving the problem yet, as having the capability and applying it are two different things altogether. Today's conversational chatbots and AI agents can do more than talk—they can act, automating the tedious workflows behind every request: qualifying claims, checking policies, gathering data. Work that took hours can now be finished in seconds.

But transforming your CRM system will not happen overnight. To realize the full potential, CRM must evolve. It requires a solid data foundation and the right leadership and AI tools. Organizations need to layer intelligent workflows and AI on top of that data to create a true system of action. This requires deliberate leadership, the right tools, and a clear strategy.

Start by identifying your top five high-frequency workflows that don't require a human touch. Build those first. But here's the part many miss: while you're automating, work with your team to identify where they can add rich human connection. Where does judgment matter? How can they build real relationships? When you get this balance right—AI handling high-volume, mundane work while freeing people for complex cases that demand human judgment and empathy—only then will your CRM deliver resolution, speed, and humanity at scale.



**Eric Bensley**

VP, Product Marketing - CRM  
ServiceNow

# Human connection makes all the difference



**When I'm trying to solve an issue, speaking to a human just gives me that affirmation, that human touch that you're talking to somebody who's actively thinking the same way you are and is on the same level with you as far as having feelings and understanding your situation.**

Consumer, U.S.



**With a human, I can be more empathetic, provide more details, understand how they are behaving, and can further modify my query or follow-up questions depending upon the interaction.**

Consumer, India



**I prefer speaking to a human, as it tends to always lead to a solution. The human will always try and find workarounds and will even sometimes ask their upper management to find a workaround for me, so I will almost always be leaving with a solution.**

Consumer, Australia



# What executives are missing

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I could only interact with them via a chatbot. ...I was already aware that this problem couldn't be solved via the chatbot but that it could be solved with a human employee, but I still had to go through the chatbot first, which was unnecessarily frustrating.

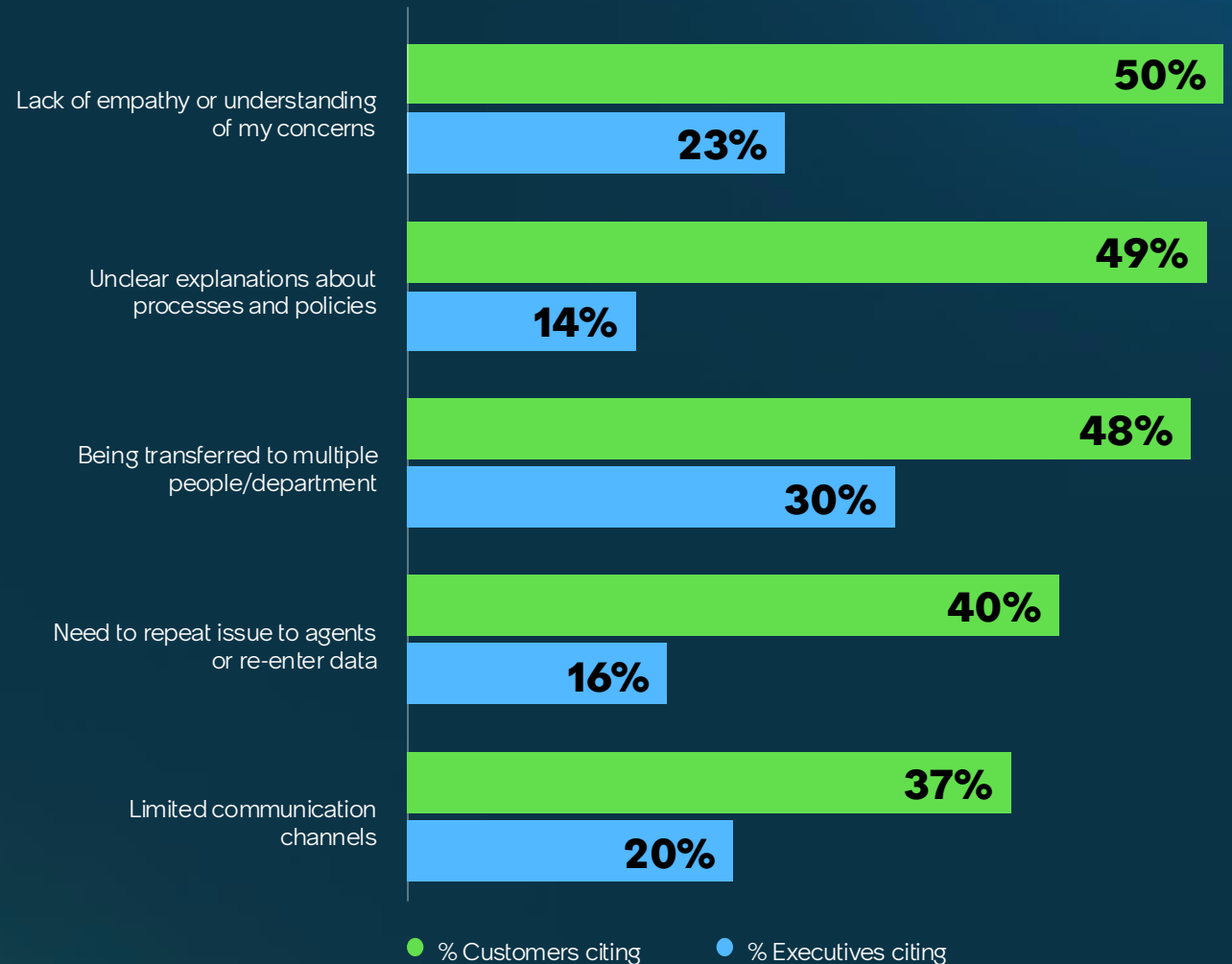
Consumer, Germany

# Executives aren't moving the needle where it matters most

**Executives often misjudge or overlook the challenges their customers face. The consequences can be serious.**

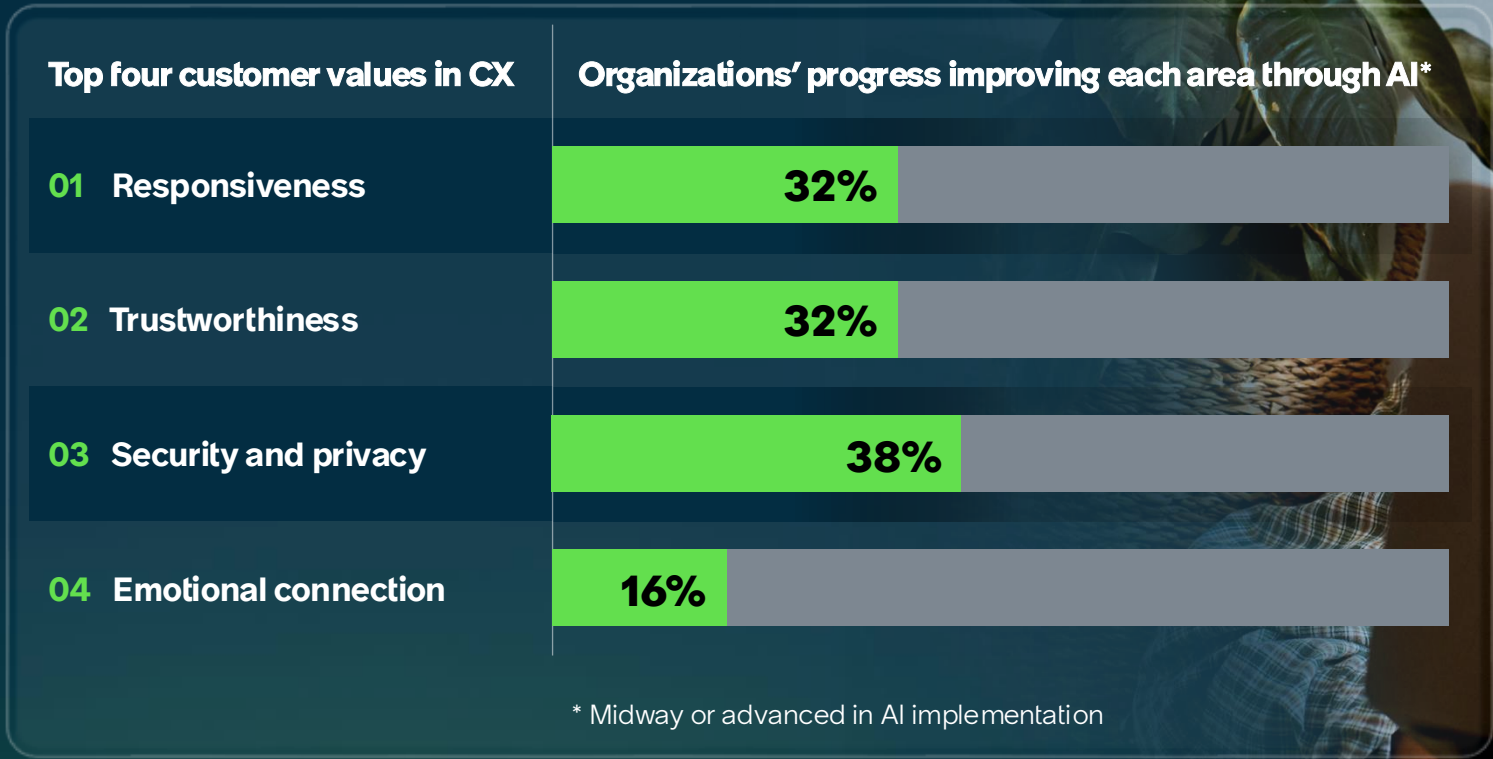
While lack of empathy and understanding is the No. 1 frustration of customers, cited by 50% of them, only 23% of executives see it that way. Executive and customer views are even more divided on challenges such as unclear explanations about processes and policies and the need to repeat issues to service reps. These perception gaps can cause organizations to implement solutions for the wrong problems—and fail to address customers' biggest pain points.

**Executives think they know top challenges. Customers disagree.**



## Executives must do more to align AI strategy with customer priorities

Many executives lack understanding of how AI can be applied to solve human problems. To make their AI investments count, organizations need to align their CX strategies with their customers' needs. Currently, only a minority of organizations have made material progress applying AI to areas their customers value most, particularly emotional connection.



# Executives grapple with siloed enterprises

## Fragmentation blocks AI's true value

AI progress is slow. Customers value responsiveness, trustworthiness, security, and emotional connections most, but less than 40% of organizations have made significant progress improving these areas through AI.

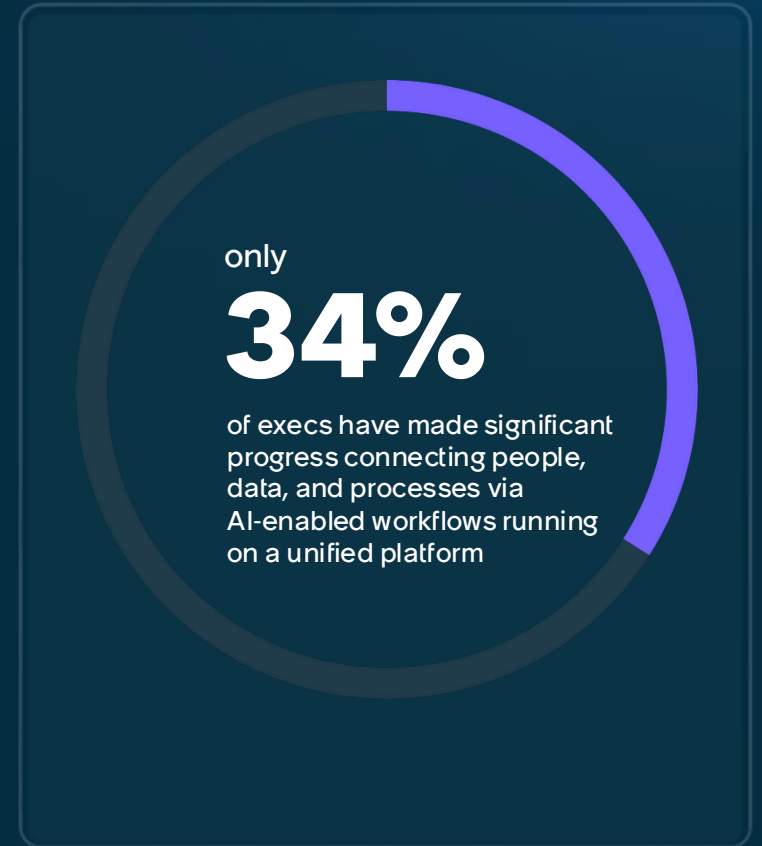
The problem is siloed customer data, systems, and islands of AI that prevent teams from working in sync to resolve customer issues and deliver great experiences. Only 43% of organizations have integrated data across silos into a single source of truth. Just 25% are breaking down silos to enable seamless integration of AI strategies across departments.

This fragmentation doesn't just limit AI's impact; it actively undermines CX. Nearly half of customers (48%) feel frustrated when transferred between multiple people or departments, while 40% are frustrated by having to repeat or reenter information.

## CRM has untapped potential

CRM is often considered the bedrock of customer service. Yet few executives have optimized their CRM platform to hardwire the voice of the customer into every decision and action. This requires more than just a system of record; it demands a system of action powered by AI and workflows that unite the entire customer lifecycle.

Only half (52%) of executives say their organization has deployed an end-to-end CRM platform that provides support across the entire customer lifecycle. Even fewer are optimizing their CRM platform to deliver next-level customer experiences: Just 49% are deploying AI agents, 42% are integrating data across systems, 38% are unifying issue resolution, and 28% are enabling cross-functional collaboration across the lifecycle.



# Solving customer issues means delivering human + AI experiences

CUSTOMERS LOVE AI WHEN IT WORKS



**I was pleased that [the AI] accurately grasped my request and responded in a short time, without any human intervention required.**

Consumer, Japan

**The bot didn't just give me three random options. It actually pulled up my profile details, which must have had my travel preferences stored, and replied with two filtered options that were explicitly shortest total travel time and minimal change of gates.**

Consumer, U.S.

CUSTOMERS ALSO WANT EASY ACCESS TO HUMANS



**If it's a more complex and multistep question or something very personalized to me...then I'd want to talk to a person [to whom] I can...ask questions backwards and forwards to maybe clarify my understanding.**

Consumer, Australia

**The moment [the AI chatbot] automatically shifted to a human without me asking really stood out because it felt like the system understood my frustration instantly.**

Consumer, India

# The building blocks for AI-powered CX



# Six strategies for a human + AI era

Delivering exceptional customer experiences in the AI era requires more than adopting new technologies. It demands a strategic, holistic approach that transforms every aspect of service.

To close the gap between rising customer expectations and actual experiences, there are six best practices organizations can embrace. These strategies show how to harness AI, empower teams, and build connected, responsive service at every step of the customer journey.



**01 Rethink how you measure CX success.**

**02 Go beyond AI copilots.**

**03 Tap into autonomous AI for self-service.**

**04 Prepare CX teams for the agentic AI era.**

**05 Deploy strategic CRM as an experience platform.**

**06 Unite data to fuel AI-driven experiences.**

# My take: Earn autonomy in stages

AI is transforming customer experience from isolated fixes into “total experience”—unifying platforms, people, and AI agents across the full customer journey. To succeed, organizations have to stop treating platforms, AI and human agents, and last-mile execution as separate blocks. Design one seamless 360-degree experience for the customer.

View agentification as a staged journey. Start with assisted AI, where agents capture and summarize issues for humans who provide resolution. Then move to augmented AI, where human and AI agents work together to resolve issues. Finally, graduate to autonomous AI, where AI agents handle most tasks and humans review and refine.

These stages must be sequential. You cannot jump to autonomous without getting assisted and augmented right, because each phase teaches the organization how to design, govern, and trust AI. Develop a strong learning culture to recalibrate the roles of human and AI agents as technology evolves. Treat continuous learning as a core job requirement, redesigning frontline agent roles from transaction handlers to learners and improvers.

As agentic AI grows, organizations will start managing AI agents as part of the workforce—defining their roles, identifying their skills, providing incentives and governance to ensure success. At Cognizant, HR has augmented human agents with AI agents for internal services, and the CHRO is accountable for adoption, experience design, and performance across both.

Don't treat AI as a shortcut or quick fix. Map your journeys, build agents across the lifecycle and create a culture that keeps learning.



**Sriram Kumaresan**

SVP and Global Head of Cloud  
Infrastructure and Security,  
Cognizant

# 01 Rethink how you measure CX success

## Focus on the empathy and experience gaps that matter most

Use AI to transform how the organization measures CX by generating richer analysis than traditional metrics such as NPS and CSA.

AI models can analyze every call, chat, email, and review to produce measurements more attuned to customer needs, such as empathy and responsiveness scores, effort scores in resolving an issue, and sentiment indices that track trust, frustration, or satisfaction. Organizations can also use AI to analyze voice-of-customer data, revealing which factors—such as billing clarity, speed, or frontline empathy—have the greatest impact on CX scores and churn.

Leading companies are already acting on these ideas. Key hospitality groups, for example, use AI-based sentiment analysis on guest reviews and feedback to detect emotions such as disappointment or delight and adjust staffing, room standards, or digital experiences. Retailers and banks mine contact-center transcripts and chat logs to pinpoint friction points, such as confusing authentication flows or slow dispute handling, and then prioritize fixes with the biggest upside.

Just leveraging AI is not enough, though. To turn this intelligence into action, organizations should centralize CX metrics and reporting. A centralized governance framework standardizes definitions, aligns AI and human-reported KPIs, and enables organizations to compare performance consistently by channel, segment, and journey stage.



## Build a KPI framework for measuring AI impact

As AI reshapes CX, traditional KPIs no longer tell the whole story. Unfortunately, only 28% of organizations have figured out how to measure the impact of AI on CX.

To fill this gap, organizations should consider building measurement frameworks that link AI use cases to business outcomes across four dimensions:

- 1. Empathy and trust**, such as AI sentiment scores relating to trust or frustration
- 2. Operational efficiency**, such as the impact of AI on deflection rates in self-service portals and average handle time
- 3. CX outcomes**, such as the impact of AI in improving NPS, CSAT, or customer churn and lifetime value
- 4. Financial impact**, including the impact of AI on profit margins, costs, and incremental revenue



## 02 Go beyond AI copilots

### Give reps the tools to deliver empathy and responsiveness at scale

AI tools do more than free up service reps to interact with customers. They heighten their ability to respond to individual customers with empathy, understanding, and personalized service.



### Use AI solutions to help build emotional connection

- **Generative AI** provides service reps real-time context awareness for customer interactions and helps them communicate in a more natural and authentic way.
- **Sentiment analysis** can help service reps better understand customer emotions and provide personalized support that elevates empathy and trust.
- **Predictive analysis** can help service reps anticipate and proactively address customer problems before they escalate by analyzing historical data, behavioral signals, and predictive models.
- **Agentic AI** supports service reps by dynamically interpreting customer intent and assisting with real-time automation and knowledge retrieval. This collaboration helps reps quickly and accurately resolve complex cases.
- **Recommendation engine** tools can provide real-time suggestions for customer responses and next actions that fit an individual's preferences and circumstances.

### Free time for service reps to focus on customers...

% of service reps who say AI has decreased time spent on key activities



### ...and make service reps more engaged and effective

% of service reps who say AI has impacted areas of their work



# 03 Tap into autonomous AI for self-service

## Resolve self-service cases faster with agentic AI

Build hybrid CX approaches that go beyond using AI to augment human work to give customers what they want. This means harnessing generative and agentic AI to create self-service solutions with a greater ability to understand and respond to customer needs.

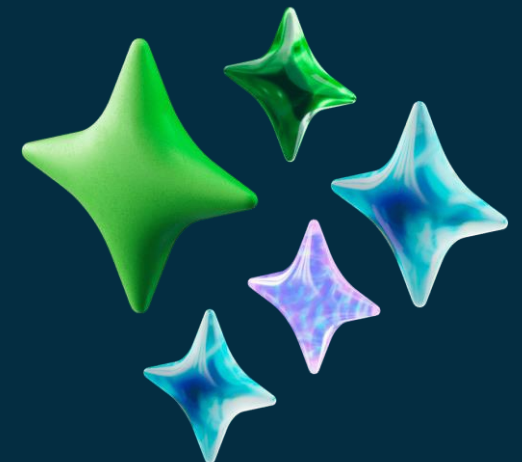
Over the next three years, over eight out of 10 executives will be using technology alone—or together with a human service rep—to offer advice to customers (89%), manage purchasing and onboarding processes (81%), handle complaints (93%), and respond to inquiries (92%). This transition will require effective self-service.

AI agents will become the key—enabling organizations to automate complex processes, uncover bottlenecks, surface customer context and intelligence, and speed up work between departments and systems, thereby reducing response time and streamlining escalations.



**Thanks to AI agent assistance, we support customers at all times with instant help. We rely on AI agent assistance to transform customer reviews into better service strategies.**

COO, UK government agency



### Reduce call burdens on service reps

High call volume is the top challenge for service reps. Intuitive self-service portals can deliver first-call resolution and intelligent routing to reduce this burden.



**68%**

of executives report that first-contact resolution time has improved since they started using AI

### Be responsive to customer preferences



**75%**

of customers prefer self-service before speaking to a service rep



# 04 Prepare CX team for the agentic AI era



## Equip teams for AI-powered work

Start by assessing and filling the AI skill gaps among CX teams and integrating AI tools into service reps' daily workflows. Provide ongoing AI training programs and get input from service reps on the AI tools they need.

## Prepare your workforce for the future

With AI reshaping the future of work, executives will need to redefine the role of service reps, focusing on blending digital and interpersonal skills to stay on top.

Collaboration and communication skills will become critical as service reps collaborate across teams and take on more customer-relationship-building roles. Other priority skills include a continuous learning attitude alongside knowledge of AI and tech, which will be essential for keeping pace with AI innovation and growing customer expectations.



**We deployed an AI coaching engine to upskill over 8,000 field and call center agents [service reps], improving consistency, performance, and customer satisfaction across service teams.**

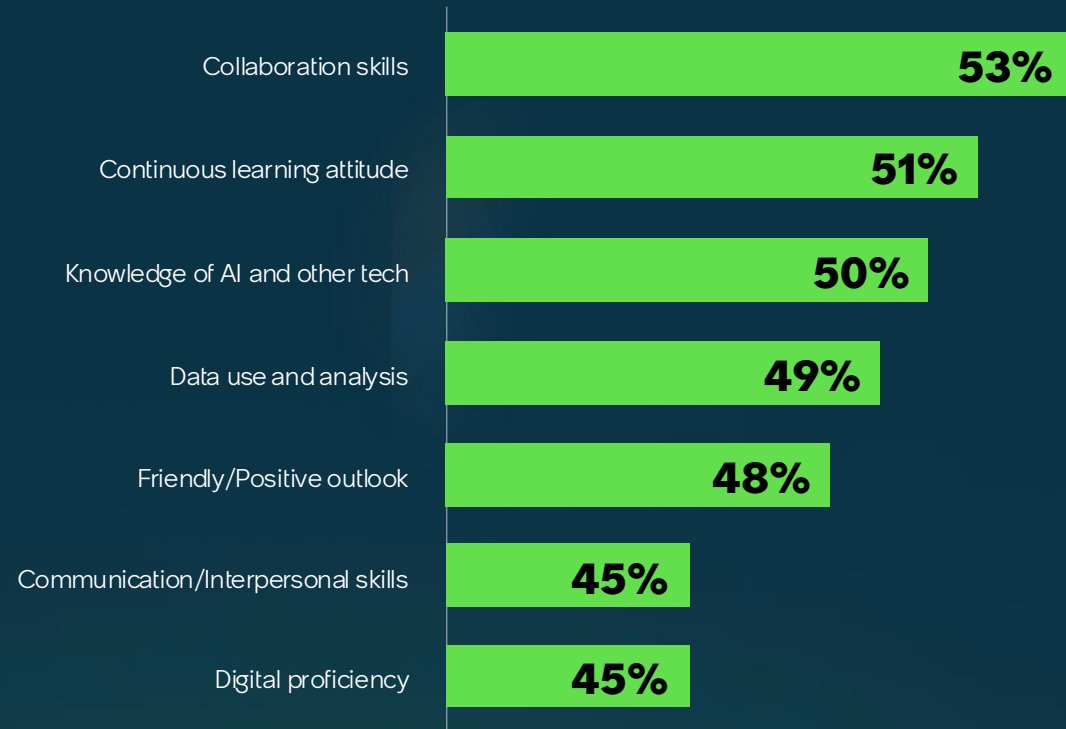
COO, Austrian telecoms firm



**AI-powered training gives agents [service reps] personal guidance so they can develop skills continuously. The tools are designed to help agents improve their performance over time.**

COO, U.S. retailer

### Service rep skills prioritized by executives in the next three years



# The evolving role of a service rep in the AI era

## From: The reactive rep

Managing chaos, not relationships



### The service rep's world

- Firefighting mode, overwhelmed by high call volumes
- Constantly switching between disconnected systems
- More time spent on admin than actual customer care
- Frequent escalations due to missing information

### Skills that are valued

- Speed over quality
- Script adherence over critical thinking
- Multitasking
- Volume handling over relationship-building

### Metrics that matter

- ⊗ Cases closed per hour
- ⊗ Average handle time
- ⊗ Queue clearance rate
- ⊗ Schedule adherence

## To: The customer advocate

Connected systems = empathy at scale



### The service rep's world

- One unified view of the customer; full context, instant access
- Focused on high-quality, empathetic conversations
- Proactive problem-solving before issues escalate
- AI handles routine tasks; reps build emotional connections

### Skills that are valued

- Collaboration and communication
- Emotional intelligence and complex judgment
- Continuous learning and AI fluency
- Knowing when to trust AI versus overriding it

### Metrics that matter

- ✓ First-contact resolution quality
- ✓ Customer lifetime value
- ✓ Issue prevention rate
- ✓ Service rep retention
- ✓ Empathy, trust, and emotional connection

# 05 Deploy strategic CRM as an experience platform

## Combine end-to-end CRM systems with agentic AI to run workflows across the front, middle, and back office

Your CRM should be a real-time experience platform, not a customer database. Whether the task is mitigating a banking dispute or addressing a warranty claim, AI workflows can solve customer issues faster. Modern CRM needs to integrate data, deploy AI agents, unify omnichannel engagement, embed predictive analysis, and enable cross-functional collaboration. The result: Every interaction feels tailored and consistent across all channels, whether the customer is on the web, in-app, in-store, or talking to a human agent.

Turn your CRM into the infrastructure for human and AI collaboration at scale. As agentic AI is deployed more in CRM systems, service reps will shift from operators to supervisors who oversee the day-to-day CRM activities of AI agents. The result: more time to provide customers with the personal support they want.

## Integrate workflows across functions

Connecting key CX workflows in a single platform is essential for fostering cross-functional collaboration and a seamless experience. Integrating marketing, customer service, sales, fulfillment and delivery, and IT workflows onto a single platform will be fundamental to delivering great CX.



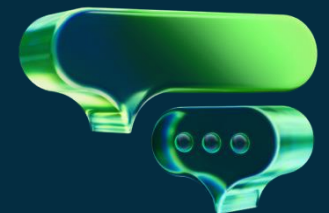
**With CRM and support platforms connected, our agents [service reps] can offer more personalized service using real-time data and AI insights.**

CSO, U.S. technology firm



**AI tools were integrated into our support workflows, allowing agents [service reps] to deliver faster and more relevant responses based on real-time customer information.**

CSO, India technology firm



# 06 Unite data to fuel AI-driven experiences

## Transform rich customer data into rocket fuel for exceptional experiences

Organizations should integrate customer information into a single source of truth, whether it comes from an ERP, billing system, data lake, or legacy CRM. This means deploying tools that instantly gather, cleanse, and harmonize data, ensuring quality and accuracy. This data can't just be a patchwork. It needs to be formatted into a single data architecture providing information service reps can trust.

By integrating all their customer data, organizations can treat each customer as a "demographic of one." Every customer gets tailored offers, service models, and experience designs. Every interaction triggers workflows that solve the specific issue based on what products the customer has.

Embed that intelligence into frontline workflows, arming service reps and digital channels with next-best actions for each customer. The result is faster responses, more relevant interactions, and consistently elevated experiences that deepen customer loyalty and growth.



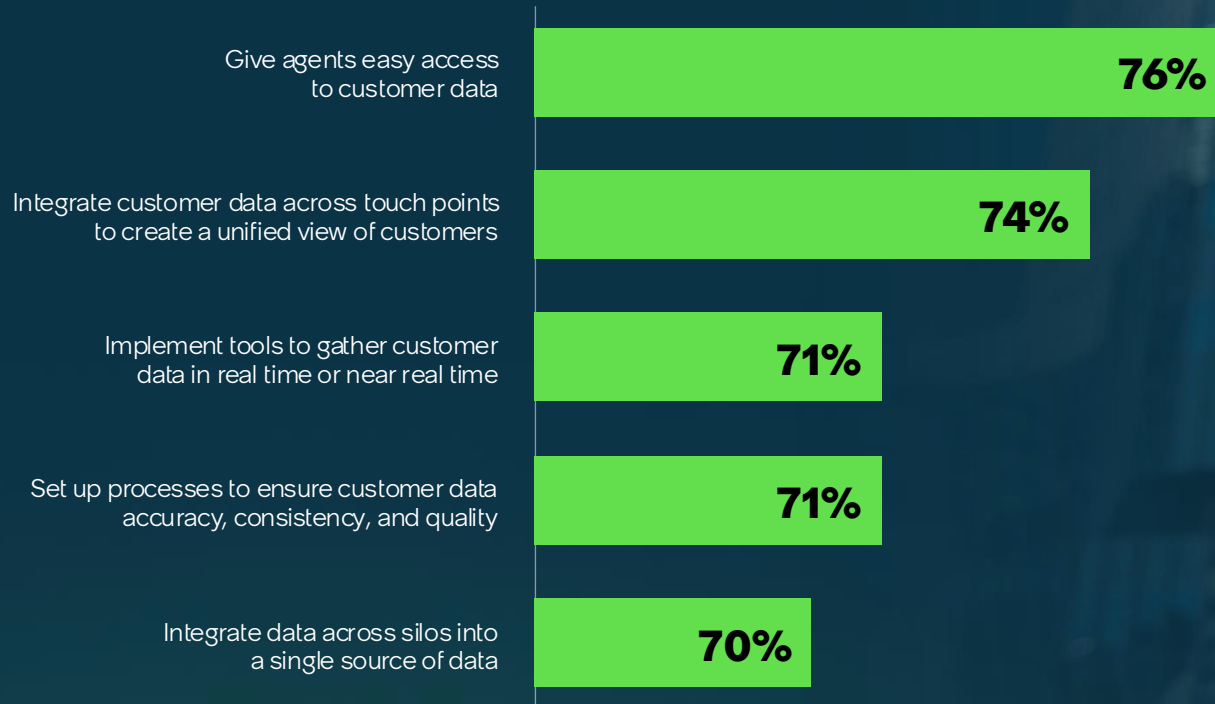
**Our bank harnessed AI-powered customer intelligence and conversational assistants to deliver tailored financial guidance, anticipate client needs, and optimize agent workflows.**

CTO, French bank



## How executives plan to leverage data for next-level CX

### Actions executives will take over the next three years



# The C-suite guide to next-level CX

## CEOS AND COOS: BRIDGE THE DISCONNECT

### Close the executive disconnect by putting CX at the heart of your business strategy

Develop an AI-enabled CX approach that gives customers the responsive, efficient, and empathetic service they want, and equips teams with the resources to deliver it.

### Align the operating model around CX pillars of excellence

These pillars include customer-centric culture, empowered agents, effective data, advanced AI, full-lifecycle CRM, and connected enterprise workflows. Rethink organizational structures, resources, and incentives so cross-functional teams own the end-to-end customer journeys with clear accountability.

### Transform your CRM by integrating workflows across the front, middle, and back offices

Centralize CX activities so your customers receive the same high-quality experience wherever they are in their journeys. Think beyond traditional metrics to succeed in a market that values high touch and high speed.

## CIOS AND CTOS: BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE

### Rally your organization around a single platform as the foundation for CX

Consolidate architectures and data models so every function works from the same real-time customer picture. Move from fragmented systems to one unified system of action that orchestrates end-to-end workflows, with CRM as the connective tissue for every experience.

### Integrate data across the organization to build a unified view of the customer

Implement a data fabric that allows data to flow seamlessly and securely across departments so that service reps have one place to see history, context, what products the customer owns, and next steps.

### Invest in latest AI technologies to elevate CX excellence

Use AI to transform self-service and help service reps deliver the human support that customers want. Draw on agentic AI, sentiment analysis, and other tools that enable technology to better understand and act on customer needs.

## CX LEADERS: EMPOWER YOUR SERVICE REPS

### Audit and simplify CX systems

Expose where service reps lose time jumping between tools and channels. Use journey maps, shadowing, and feedback to pinpoint friction, then prioritize unifying systems so service reps can see the full customer story and next steps in a single view.

### Build a compelling business case that links service rep experience, customer outcomes, and financial impact

Quantify how a unified platform, CRM, and workflow approach can unlock service rep productivity and loyalty and drive customer growth and revenue gains.

### Tap into autonomous AI so service reps can focus on building human connection

Focus on tools that summarize context, suggest next-best actions, guide workflows, and automate routine work. Back this up with the training they need to develop the skills required to succeed in the AI era.

# Humanity scaled

One thing is clear from our research: AI delivers maximum value when it works for people. When routine work is automated, service reps gain the time, context, and confidence to do what humans do best: listen, adapt, and build lasting relationships. Customers notice. Loyalty increases. Growth follows.

Leaders who optimize only for efficiency will struggle to keep pace with rising customer expectations. Those who reimagine CX around connected workflows, empowered teams, and human-centered AI will define the next generation of CX.

The opportunity is clear—and so is the mandate. Build experiences that are fast and human. Use AI to unlock empathy at scale. Make every interaction a moment that generates trust, loyalty, and long-term value.

That's how leaders will pull ahead in the AI era.





# Appendix

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## Acknowledgements

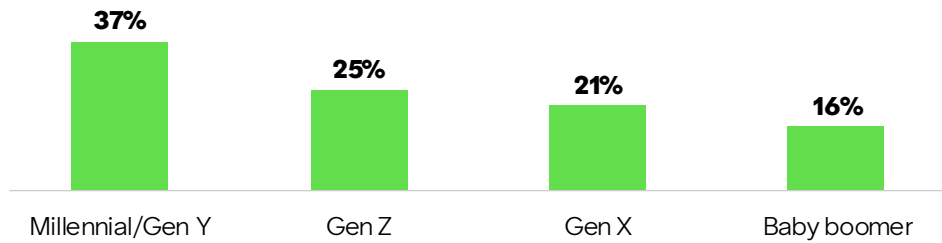
A special thanks to Jessica Buckley, head of brand content, Sheila Dowd, director of thought leadership editorial, Marissa Amendolia Finn, director of brand content experience, and Emma Kieckhafer, director of social media.

Thank you to all the ServiceNow colleagues who helped bring this research to life, especially Tim Catts, Ryan Breen, Laura LeBleu, Abi Hobson, Angela Chen, Ina Chu, Sheryl Domingue, Zoe Gaylard, Mary Silverstein, and Jingsi Chen.

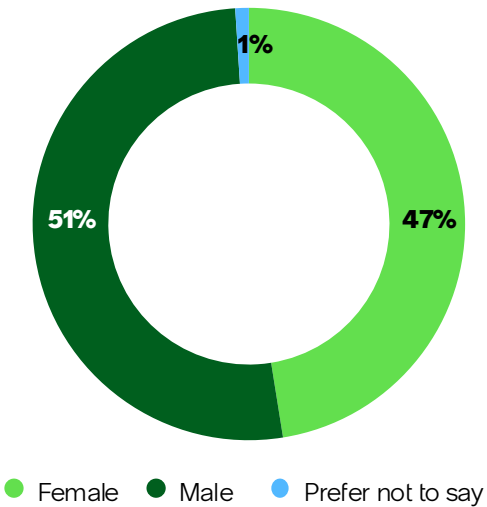
# Customer survey demographics

27,250 customers

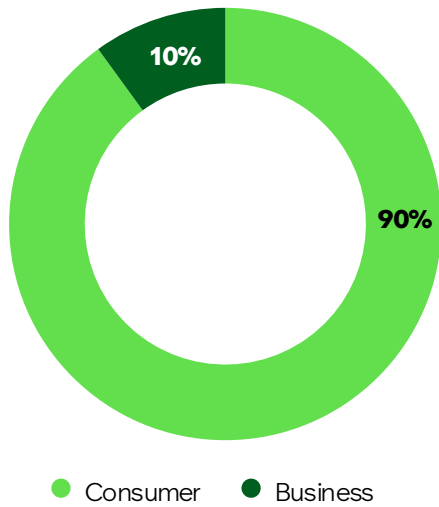
## Age



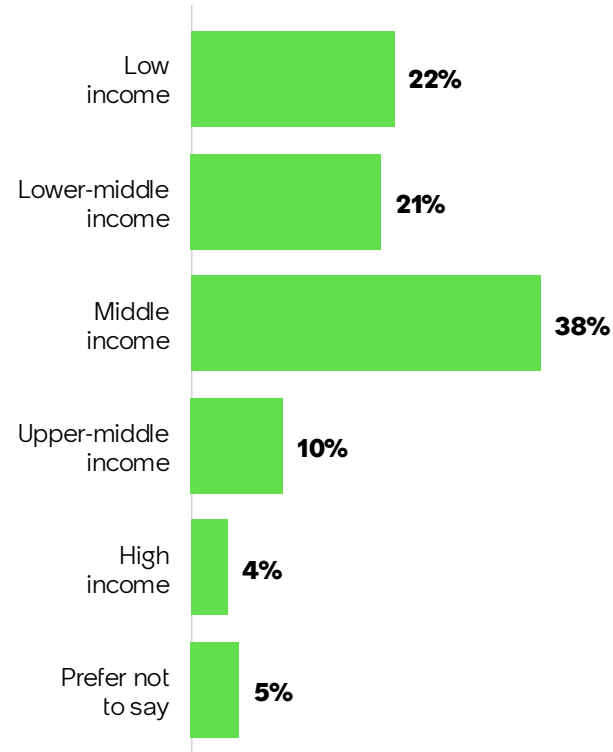
## Gender



## Type



## Income level



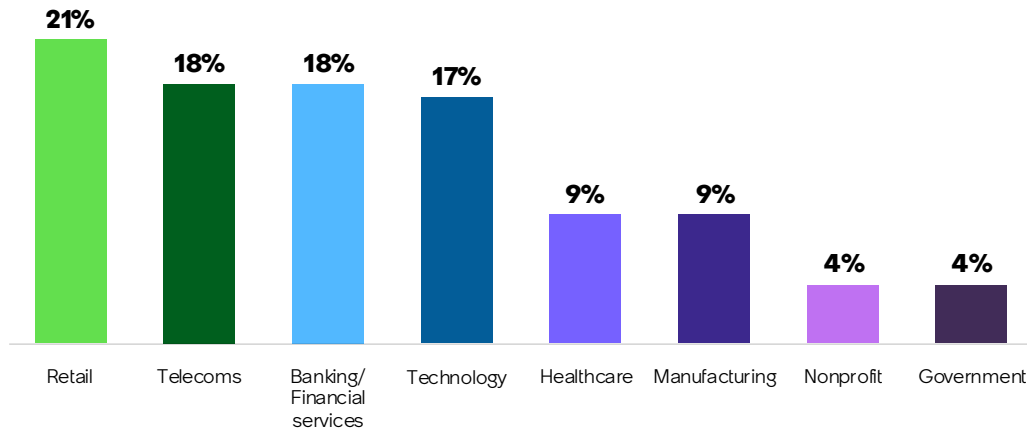
## Regions and countries

<b>APAC and Japan</b>	<b>10,000</b>
Australia	1,000
India	5,000
Japan	2,000
New Zealand	1,000
Singapore	1,000
<b>EMEA</b>	<b>14,000</b>
Austria	1,000
France	2,000
Germany	2,000
Ireland	1,000
Italy	1,000
KSA	1,000
Netherlands	1,000
Spain	1,000
Sweden	1,000
UAE	1,000
United Kingdom	2,000
<b>North America</b>	<b>3,250</b>
Canada	1,350
United States	1,900

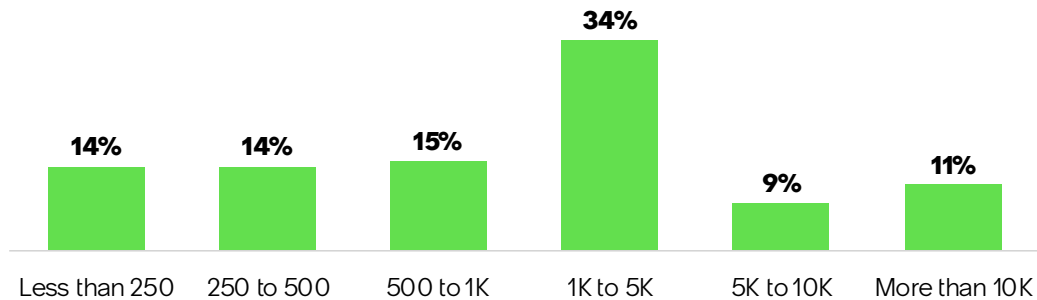
# Service rep survey demographics

3,515 service reps

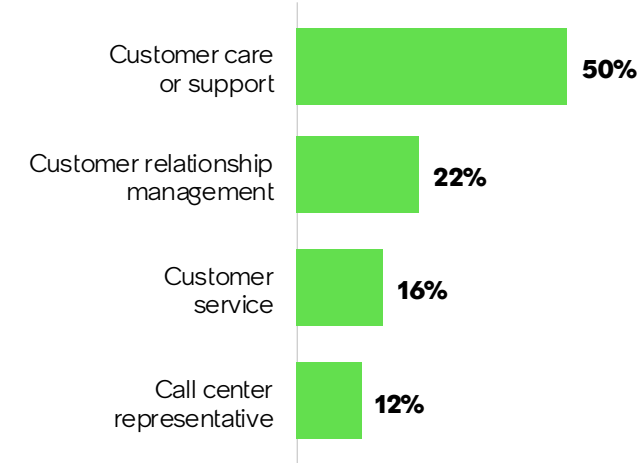
## Industry



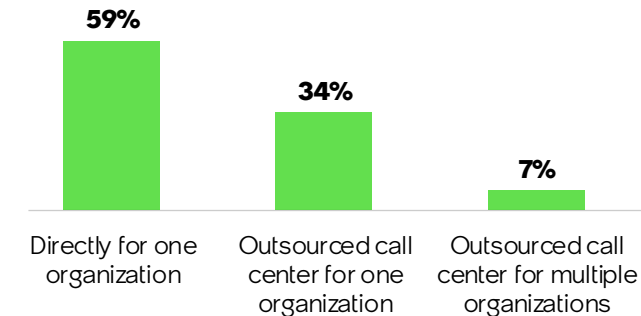
## Organization size (number of employees)



## Title



## Organizational affiliation



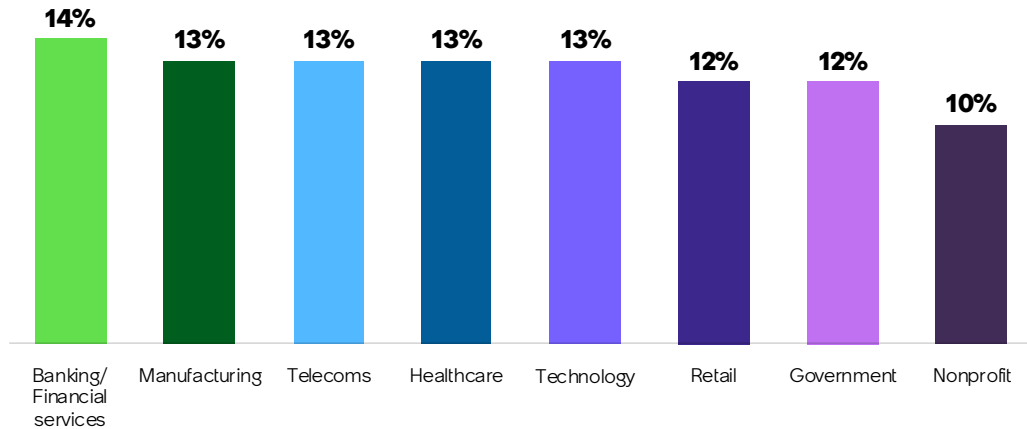
## Regions and countries

<b>APAC and Japan</b>	<b>1,350</b>
Australia	300
India	425
Japan	300
New Zealand	125
Singapore	200
<b>EMEA</b>	<b>1,565</b>
Austria	100
France	200
Germany	215
Ireland	100
Italy	200
KSA	125
Netherlands	100
Spain	100
Sweden	100
UAE	125
United Kingdom	200
<b>North America</b>	<b>600</b>
Canada	300
United States	300

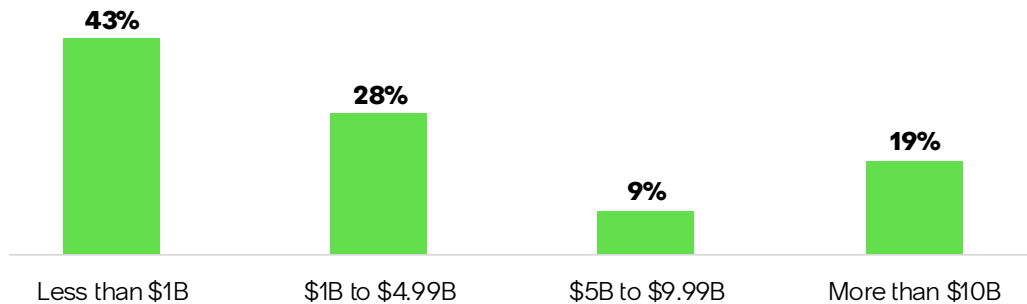
# Executive demographics

3,900 executives

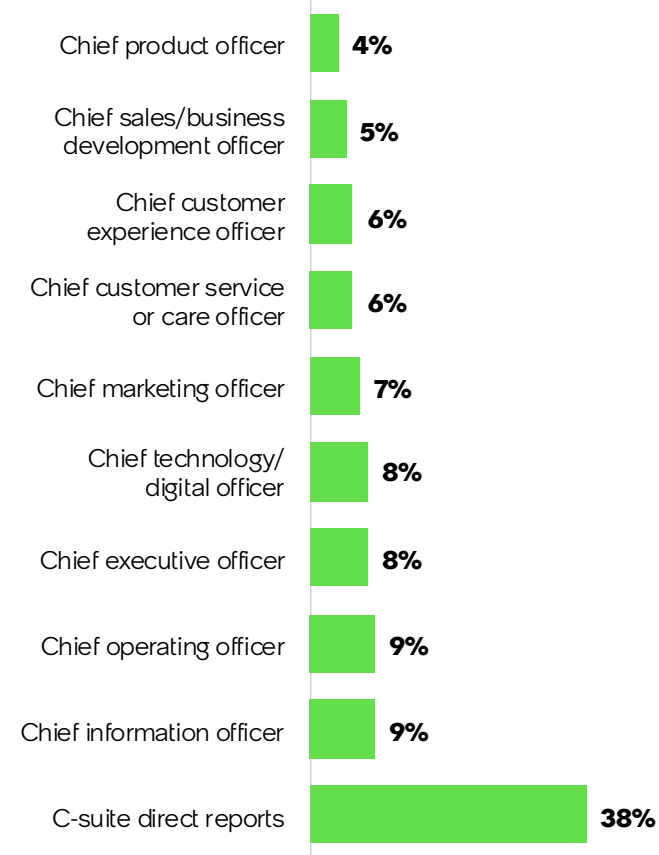
## Industry



## Executives by organization revenue



## Title (plus direct reports)



## Regions and countries

<b>APAC and Japan</b>	<b>1,130</b>
Australia	270
India	280
Japan	295
New Zealand	0
Singapore	285
<b>EMEA</b>	<b>1,770</b>
Austria	110
France	230
Germany	245
Ireland	110
Italy	110
KSA	110
Netherlands	115
Spain	155
Sweden	110
UAE	210
United Kingdom	265
<b>North America</b>	<b>1,000</b>
Canada	195
United States	805



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