



2026 GLOBAL CONTACT CENTER SURVEY

The future of service is the story of now

Leading contact centers have transformed agentic AI potential into bottom-line performance. Here's how.

June 2026

Executive summary



Consumers reward great service—but experience it less often now.

More than half of surveyed consumers say service quality stayed the same *or got worse* in 2025. When they experience excellent service, consumers go out of their way to advocate, engage and spend more with the brand.



Yesterday's operating models can't serve today's agenda.

Contact center leaders are expected to improve experiences, generate revenues and “do more with less”—but traditional operations remain labor-intensive and difficult to scale. The result? Just 17% of surveyed leaders said their strategies were extremely effective in 2025.



Agentic AI is changing the service narrative *already*.

Contact centers with mature AI capabilities report 85% greater contact center profitability than low-maturity peers, along with significantly stronger outcomes across a range of operational and experience metrics.



Automation is only part of the story. Organizations are strategically leveraging agentic capabilities to create new value across the service ecosystem, from agent assist and virtual assistants to predictive support and omnichannel integration.



A familiar hero returns (now with superpowers). AI-centric organizations are strategically deploying agentic capabilities in ways that multiply the value created by human service representatives. The results? Lower attrition and cost per contact, compared to contact centers with low AI maturity.

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The service narrative has changed. Have you?

Contact center leaders recognize that service is the strategic battleground for customer loyalty and sustained business growth—but *that's hardly news*.

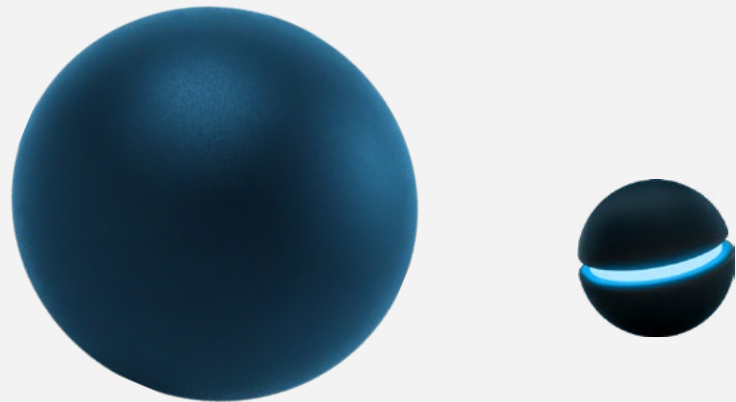
Since we began surveying contact center leaders in 2012, improving customer experiences (CX) has consistently been the #1 strategic priority among respondents. That remained true in our latest survey of contact center leaders, conducted in late 2025 and early 2026.*

Here's another familiar theme that remains true today: Most organizations are struggling to improve service CX without *also* scaling up costs. This is largely because their customers still prefer speaking with a live representative, and often rate their satisfaction based simply on how long it takes to reach a human.

Caught between customer expectations for better experiences, business demands for satisfaction and revenue improvements, and the ever-present expectation to “do more with less,” fewer than 1 in 5 contact center leaders said their contact center strategy was extremely effective in 2025.

That familiar tale has reached a turning point—not because the *goals and priorities* of contact center leaders have changed, but because the *ability to achieve* them has.

Service leaders now face an existential question: ***Do you have what it takes to move the plot forward?***



* Statistics and insights in this report are derived from our global surveys of contact center leaders and consumers, conducted between November 2025 and January 2026. See page 17 for full survey methodologies.

Spoiler alert: Agentic AI is the difference maker *now*

The yearslong impasse between service costs and experience outcomes is breaking thanks to another story that will ring familiar: the rise of agentic AI.

For service leaders, the premise is tantalizing. By dynamically synthesizing and activating real-time data—from purchase histories

and customer sentiment analyses to product inventory and next-best-action recommendations—agentic AI can help human service representatives solve issues faster while selling more and doing more. In many cases, AI agents can handle service interactions autonomously, enabling more scalable, rapid, personalized customer service.

Many service leaders are closely following the story, waiting for the moment when its premise is proven.

That moment has come.

According to our latest survey of contact center leaders, today's most *AI-centric* organizations are today's most *effective and efficient* organizations.¹ Indeed, they're outperforming service organizations with low AI maturity across a range of key metrics that contribute to bottom-line business performance.

In other words: contact centers aren't just turning the page with agentic AI. *They're redefining the narrative.*

AI-centric organizations reported **85% greater contact center profitability**, compared to organizations with low AI maturity.



Service enters its defining chapter

Our most recent surveys reveal the rising consumer demands faced by service leaders, the high stakes of getting it right, and the challenges holding many companies back.

Gone are the days when service excellence was defined by having a global army of service representatives answering phone calls in 30 seconds or less. Consumers seeking support in 2026 expect it to be immediately available, no matter the time of day.

They don't want to hunt across channels or wait on hold to get answers. They want to feel empowered to answer their own questions when and where they

choose—and just as quickly as a live representative can. Indeed, they want answers to *come to them first*, via predictive, proactive service outreach. Oh, and they want it all to feel personal.

Consumers reward the companies that provide the best service with significantly greater spend, advocacy and loyalty. But they won't put up with bad service. And they don't stay quiet about it, either.



Top service expectations among consumers

01.

Easy issue resolution

62%



said **personalization** is very or extremely important

02.

Fast response time

77%



said they want predictive, **proactive service** before they experience issues

03.

Positive experiences

Is CX on the rise? It depends who's telling the story.

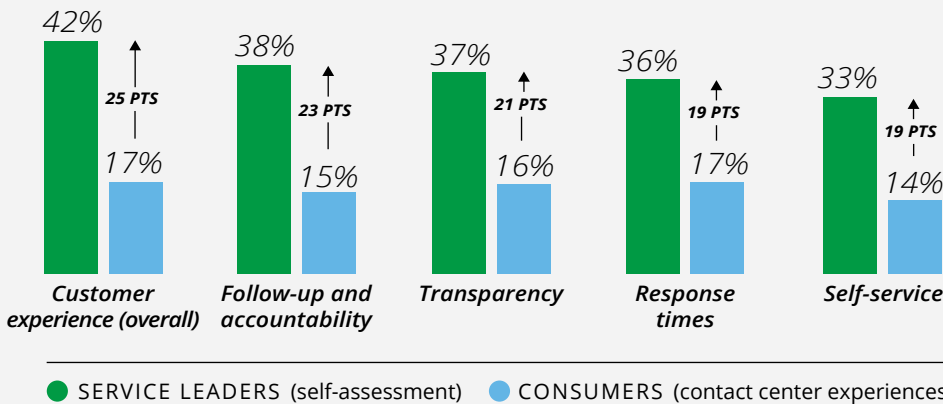
Contact center leaders today believe they're making significant strides on their top priority: improving customer experiences (CX). Since our previous survey in 2024, the overall percentage of respondents who believe their organizations deliver excellent CX rose by 20 percentage points.

Consumers tell a different story.

When asked to compare their service experiences to those a year prior, 40% said contact center CX has *stayed the same*—and 12% said it has *gotten worse*. And that's hardly the only perception gap we identified between contact center leaders and consumers. Across nearly every dimension we tested, consumers were *less than half as likely* as service leaders to rate contact center experiences as excellent. (Please see graphic.)

A tale of two perspectives

Surveyed consumers were much less likely than service leaders to rate their contact center experiences "excellent."



Their story is your outcome

After consumers experienced **great customer service** ...

89%

said their **satisfaction increased**

84%

recommended, engaged more and/or bought more

+36%

Consumers estimate they **spend a third more** with companies that provide great service

After consumers experienced **bad customer service** ...

49%

warned others about the company

34%

spent less money with the company

33%

A third of customers **stop doing business** with companies that provide bad service

FCC CONSIDERS ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CONSUMER FRUSTRATIONS

In March 2026, the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced it will consider rules aimed at improving customer service by reducing the use of offshore contact centers.² In a statement accompanying the announcement, FCC Chairman Brendan Carr said the proposed rules come in response to consumer frustration.

"Too often, foreign call centers have meant confusing service, delayed support, and even security risks," Carr said.

Among the proposals under consideration: requiring English proficiency testing for non-US-based service representatives, and enabling US citizens to transfer calls to a US-based contact center. For companies that remain heavily reliant on phone-based service, such requirements could significantly impact operational costs—making it all the more urgent for service leaders to turn the page on old ways of serving customers.

Old ways of operating can't serve the new agenda

Our latest research reveals that nearly half of contact centers (44%) now operate as revenue-driving businesses—and their leaders are expected to step up and perform.

But traditional contact center operations remain stubbornly labor-intensive and difficult to scale. Legacy contact center technologies, incomplete or siloed data, and integration issues have too often left service reps juggling multiple screens and making on-the-fly recommendations.

Caught between frustrated customers and frustrating systems, service reps are frequently exhausted—and their frustrations create a ripple effect that impacts the whole business. Long phone calls and inconsistent experiences drag down customer

satisfaction, threaten future revenues and elevate business risks. High employee attrition leads to higher labor and training costs, which throttle business efficiency and performance.

In the previous section, we discussed the diverging perspectives of consumers and leaders regarding the state of service. When it comes to the core priority shared by consumers and contact center leaders—better customer experiences—one similarity stands out:

- Only 17% of consumers rated contact center CX as excellent
- Only 17% of leaders said their strategy was “extremely effective” in the preceding 12 months

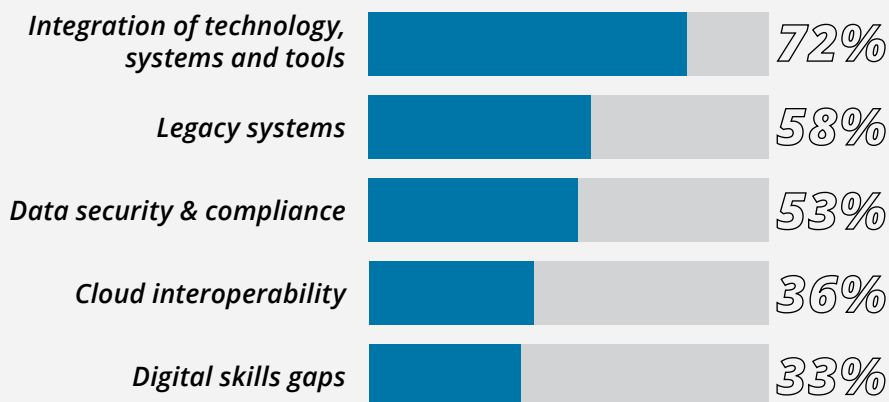
Seventeen percent. Convergence or coincidence? Either way, it reflects the reality of today. Old technologies and

ways of operating aren't just showing their limits. They're simply unsuited to the meet the demands of today and tomorrow.

To address these challenges, forward-thinking contact center leaders across industries are embracing agentic AI in ways that empower service representatives, improve self-service and enable more dynamic scalability. They're strategically rethinking technology architectures to deliver seamless, personalized experiences across channels.

In the following pages we outline the strategies and investments that are paying off among today's AI-centric service organizations.

Top challenges cited by contact center leaders in 2026:



COST PER ASSISTED CONTACT CONTINUES TO RISE:

2024 (AVG.): \$6.70

2026 (AVG.): \$7.80

Catching the next wave

How AI-centric contact centers have turned agentic potential into business reality

In years past, the battleground for growth and loyalty looked much different. Goods and services defined the arena; quality, price and availability were the levers brands used to gain advantage. Customer service served as a defensive backstop—a cost of entering the arena.

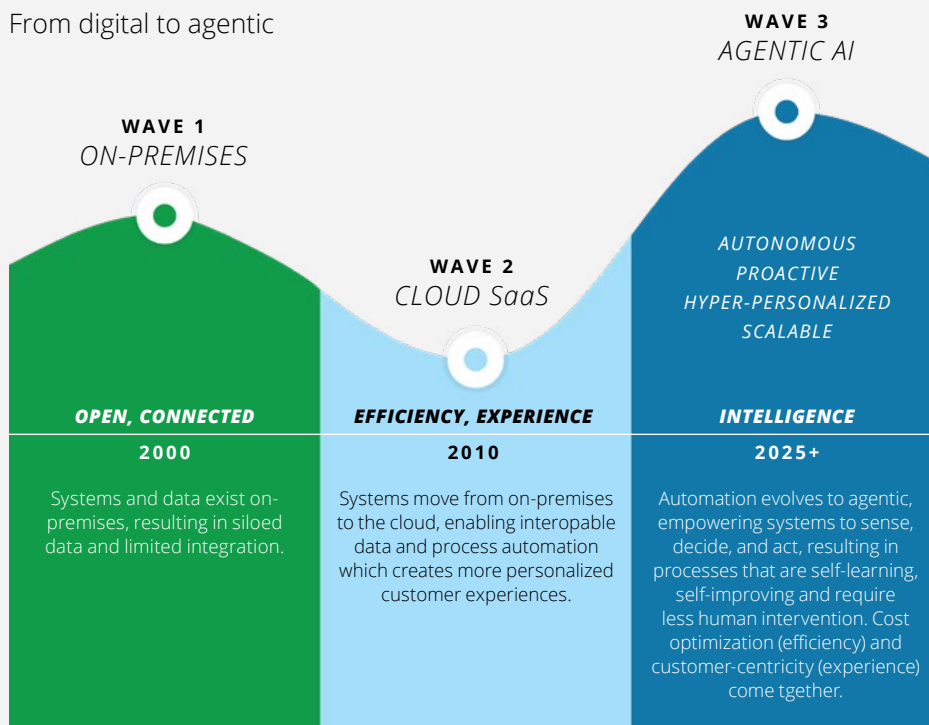
The digital era transformed the landscape (*see graphic*). Growth became less dependent on *offerings*, and more on *experiences*. Contact center leaders soon found themselves on the front lines, tasked to drive revenue growth and customer loyalty. But their ability to lead the charge was too often hobbled due to the limitations of digital-era technologies.

Agentic AI brings a new wave of opportunity—and service leaders recognize the potential. Most have plans to implement the technology.

Look closer. Notice the movement? If it's not you surging ahead, it may be your competitors. And they're riding the wave to new horizons of growth.

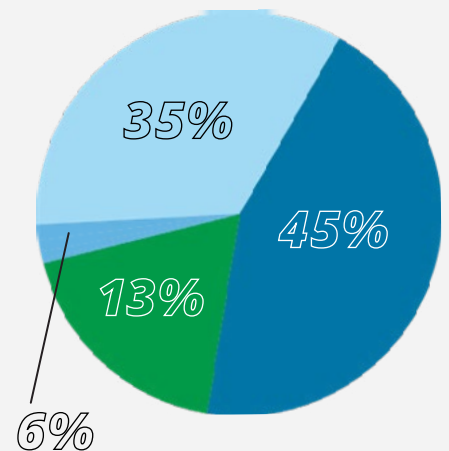
THE THIRD WAVE OF SERVICE

From digital to agentic



THIRD WAVE RISING

- Currently use agentic AI
- Plan to adopt in 2026
- Plan to adopt in future
- No plans



A rising tide of enhanced value

The potential of agentic AI is no longer speculative fantasy. For AI-centric service organizations, it's today's reality. By catching the third wave early, they're seeing improvements across a range of business and operational KPIs.

Leaders of those organizations have found success by recognizing that agentic AI isn't the sole savior of service, nor even the lead character. Instead, leaders are strategically positioning AI agents as *catalysts*—accelerants that help spark change, fuel improvements and forge connections across the service ecosystem.

AI-CENTRIC CONTACT CENTERS DELIVER BETTER EXPERIENCES ...

69%

more likely to rate customer experiences good or excellent*

60%

more likely to rate employee experiences good or excellent*

23%

more likely to deliver personalized experiences*

This approach has paid off not only through new, agent-enabled capabilities, but also in the value delivered by *other* contact center technologies. *(Please see graphic.)*

The results—more loyal and valuable customers, more streamlined and scalable operations, and more satisfied employees who remain in their jobs longer—mean AI-centric contact centers have now taken a lead role in the enterprise growth narrative.

WHILE IMPROVING EFFICIENCIES IN WAYS THAT LIFT THE BOTTOM LINE

76%

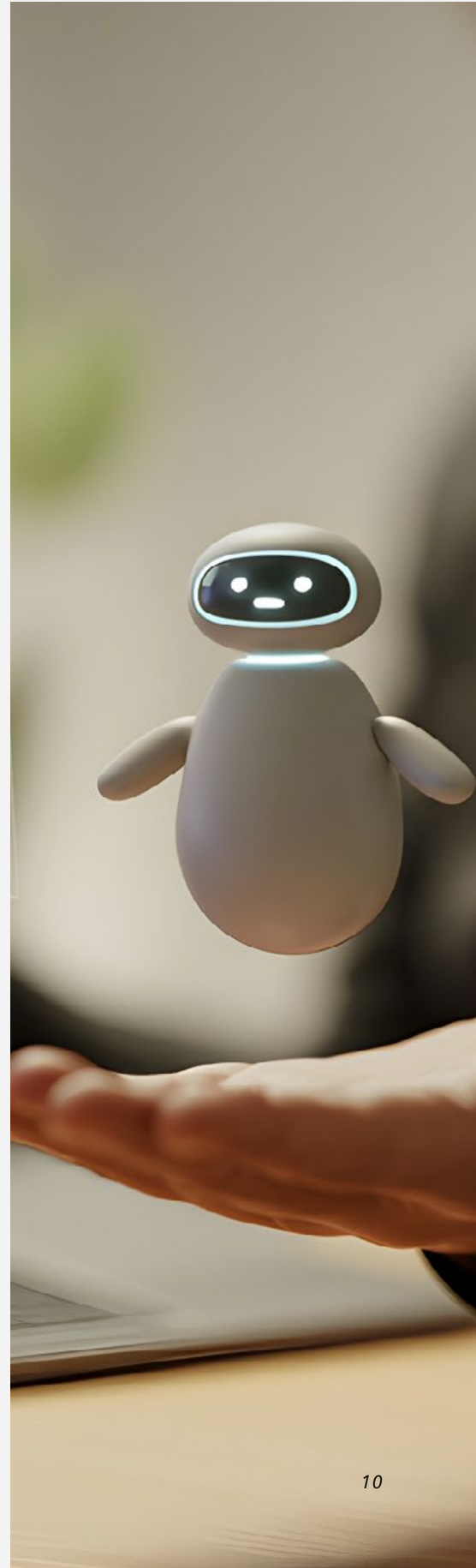
more likely to report lower cost per contact*

31%

more likely to report faster technology implementation*

28%

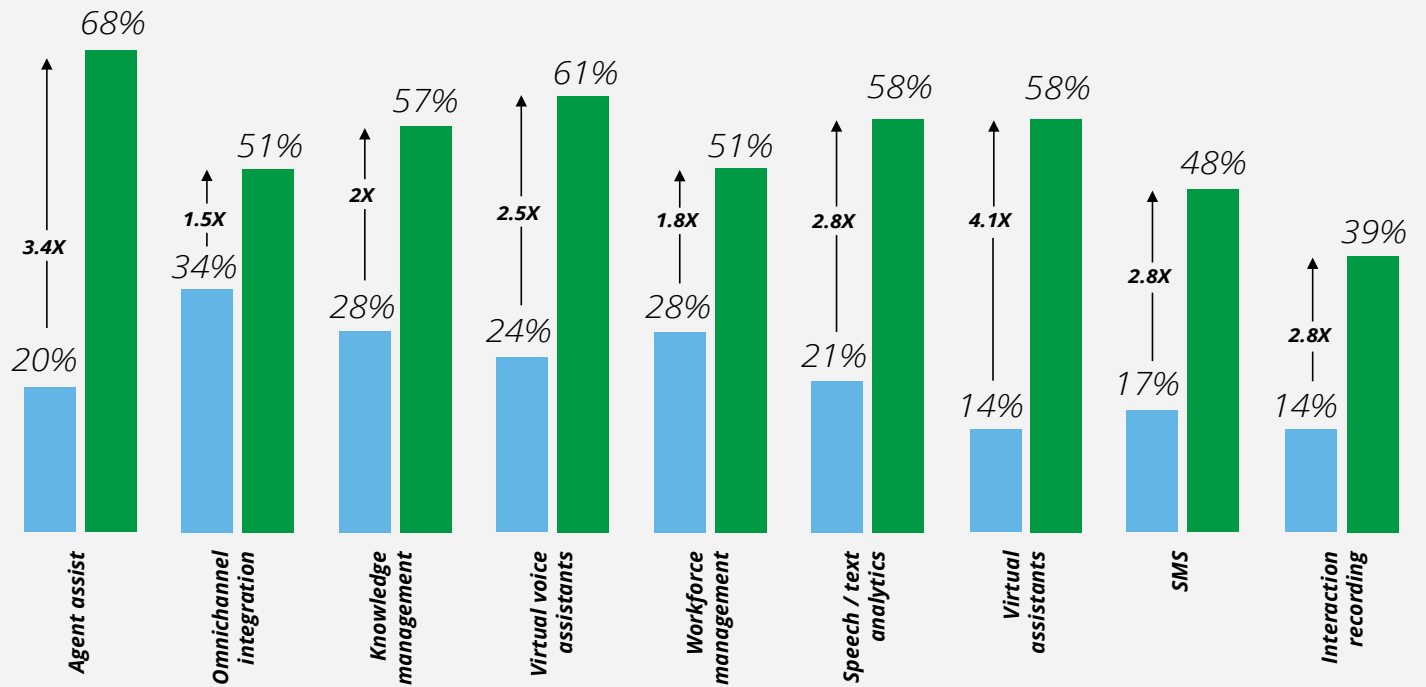
more likely to report improved occupancy rate*



* Compared to low-maturity organizations.

AN AGENT-ENABLED ECOSYSTEM OF VALUE

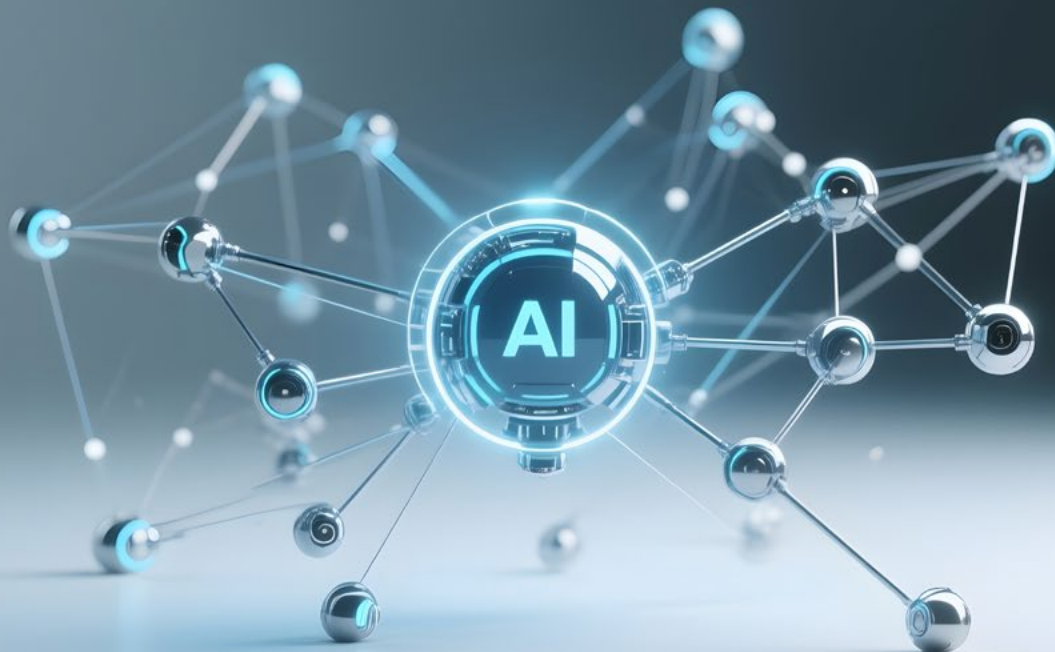
Percentage of respondents reporting very high value delivered by contact center technologies in the preceding 12 months:



● LOW-MATURITY ORGANIZATIONS

● AI-CENTRIC ORGANIZATIONS

* Difference reflects the ratio of AI-centric respondents vs. low-maturity organizations reporting very high value.



Strategic levers to advance the action

Catching the third wave of service means fundamentally changing how contact center operations are designed, built and run. Success depends on building unified, multimodal experience data layers, orchestrating multiagent AI architectures, and integrating governance, risk and responsible

AI from the outset. Working with contact center leaders, chief information officers must pivot to best-fit AI tech stacks and new cost models.

It's a lot to align—not only within the contact center, but across business functions. In [“The future of service: The age of intelligent experience,”](#)

we identified a set of strategic levers that can help activate the potential of agentic AI. In addition to traditional levers of quality, price and availability, these levers are helping AI-centric service organizations deliver the future of service today.

LEVER: AI VIRTUAL AGENTS

WHAT: External-facing AI agents to help improve issue resolution via self-service

WHY: Unintuitive and inflexible self-service solutions can leave customers more frustrated, less trusting—and still seeking answers. AI virtual agents can enable faster, more intuitive, more reliable self-service that customers will notice and trust.

WHAT OUR RESEARCH REVEALS:

- **Consumers seek what self-service *should* deliver ...** Their top priorities are *ease* and *speed of issue resolution*.
- **But it too often *doesn't* deliver.** 70% of consumers said they'd used self-service for support in the prior year. However, those respondents estimated their issues were resolved *less than a third of the time* via self-service.
- **So they look elsewhere.** Even for simple questions and issues, consumers are twice as likely to prefer phone than self-service support. And when the issue feels complex, they're 5.5x as likely to cite phone as a preferred option.
- **Great self-service creates value—and not just for customers.** Compared to low-maturity companies, AI-centric service organizations resolve customer issues through self-service 43% more often and shift 41% more phone calls to less-expensive channels.

LEVER: AI AGENT ASSIST

WHAT: Internal-facing AI agents to help augment the speed, knowledge and performance of human service representatives

WHY: Contact centers will always need human service agents, whether to solve complex customer issues, provide empathy in moments of frustration, or capture opportunities for new sales. Agentic assistants can help service representatives get up to speed faster and perform better, while making service handoffs feel like one seamless experience.

WHAT OUR RESEARCH REVEALS:

- **AI helps make a better assist.** AI-centric service leaders were 2.7x more likely than leaders at low-maturity companies to say agent assist solutions delivered *very high* value over the preceding year.

LEVER: PREDICTIVE, PROACTIVE SUPPORT

WHAT: Agentic solutions to help proactively detect issues, conduct outreach and resolve customer needs

WHY: Consumers increasingly expect companies to recognize and solve problems before they occur. By combining predictive analytics and anomaly detection with AI-enhanced journey orchestration, automation and other capabilities, service organizations can increase customer trust while reducing inbound calls.

WHAT OUR RESEARCH REVEALS:

- **Consumers expect proactive support ...** 77% of consumers said they expect companies to anticipate and solve problems proactively and correctly.
- **But rarely get it.** Just 39% of consumers said they'd experienced proactive support from a brand.
- **When they get it, they reward it.** 80% of consumers said proactive support caused their satisfaction to increase—with 1 in 4 saying their satisfaction increased *significantly*.



LEVER: CONTINUOUS INTENT ANALYSIS AND CHANNEL OPTIMIZATION

WHAT: Agentic solutions that continuously analyze customer intent and feedback for potential process, product and service improvements

WHY: Customer behaviors and expectations change. Market dynamics shift. Service organizations need to constantly adapt to those changes consistently across channels. Doing so means seeing shifts as they happen and identifying opportunities as they appear.

WHAT OUR RESEARCH REVEALS:

- **Many contact centers aren't connecting.** Only 1 in 4 contact centers reported having fully unified omnichannel routing, and just 28% have seamlessly connected data across channels.
- **Contact centers are mostly listening ...** 6 in 10 contact centers reported they route and/or resolve service requests based on customer preferences.
- **But are they effectively responding?** 57% of low-maturity contact centers let customers *choose* their interaction channel, whereas 41% of AI-centric organizations *steer* customers to the channel best suited to their intent—resulting in faster response times and lower cost per contact.

CCaaS on the rise

Adoption of contact center-as-a-service (CCaaS) solutions nearly tripled between 2024-2026, from 11% to 32%. Among other benefits, these solutions allow contact centers to embed AI agents across the service technology ecosystem, while opening a rapid path to operating model transformation.

CCaaS ADOPTION VARIES BY MATURITY



Where does the story lead? Back to the main character.



The cost of automation with AI is now falling faster than the cost of human labor, fundamentally reshaping the economics of service delivery. Does this mean you should start planning to fully replace contact center employees with AI agents? Not if you want to capture the full value that agentic technology can create in the future of service.

Earlier in this report, we discussed how agentic AI can catalyze improvements across the service technology ecosystem. Even greater potential lies in how AI agents can ignite the superpowers of your human workforce. With AI agents handling simple support requests, automating low-value tasks and providing on-the-fly insights and knowledge support, your people can help lead a new story: The future of *resilient growth*.

Already, AI-centric organizations are strategically connecting agentic and human capabilities in ways that not only add value but *multiply* it.

- **They're using the technology for what it does best:** To surface patterns and solutions in real time, connect experiences across time, and streamline processes continuously over time.
- **They're positioning people to do what they do best:** To intuit the real needs that lie behind what customers say, build trust through empathy and judgment, and capture loyalty and spend through emotional intelligence.

AGENTIC AI CAN UNLEASH HUMAN POTENTIAL ...



Among all surveyed service leaders, **77% said AI will elevate workers to higher-value roles in the next three years.**

WHILE DRIVING DOWN EXPENSES ...



On average, leaders believe **AI will reduce their cost base by 28%** in the coming three years.

AND REDUCE WORKER CHURN ...



AI-centric leaders are **74% more likely to report lower employee attrition**, compared to leaders at low-maturity organizations.

BY IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF EACH INTERACTION



AI-centric leaders are **76% more likely to report lower cost per contact** and **28% more likely to report improved occupancy rate**, compared to leaders at low-maturity organizations.

Conclusion

The ability to generate profitable growth through AI-enabled customer service isn't just a storyteller's yarn. AI-centric service organizations have proven it's the story of now.

They're delivering greater value from existing technologies, unleashing the potential of human service representatives, and delivering personalized experiences at scale, across time and channels.

As a result, they've broken the age-old tension between improving CX and controlling costs. And they're breaking away from their competitors.

For AI laggards, that means there's only one tension that really matters now: *How to maintain strategic discipline ... while racing to catch up.*

AS YOU ACCELERATE INTO THE FUTURE OF SERVICE, ASK YOURSELF:

- What shifts in mindsets, strategies and/or operating models are needed to help us turn service from a cost we manage into growth we can measure?
- Which service moments should we reinvent first with agentic AI to lift loyalty, advocacy and spend?
- Where should agentic AI resolve needs on its own, and where should it amplify human judgment, empathy and commercial instinct?
- What customer signals or business information are we not using well enough to let AI anticipate needs, trigger proactive support and prevent avoidable contacts?
- Do customers agree with our assessment of the service experiences we provide—and if not, what can we learn from the perception gaps?
- Where are fragmented channels, disconnected data and legacy technology still breaking the experience and slowing AI's impact?
- What foundation do we need now to scale agentic AI in ways that will be trusted, compliant and built to compound value over time?

Methodology

Statistics cited in this report are based on two blind surveys commissioned by Deloitte Digital and conducted by Lawless Research between November 2025 and January 2026:

B2C service leader survey

720 total respondents: 360 in the US and 60 each in Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, Mexico and the UK who met the following criteria:

- Full-time employee of a company with 1,000 or more employees and \$100 million or more in annual revenue; all companies had a B2C contact center with in-house service representatives

- Senior manager or above with responsibility for contact center strategy in one of the following departments: contact center, customer service or support, IT, sales, or strategy and planning
- Represented one of the following types of businesses: automotive; banking & capital markets; oil & gas; electric services; health care; life sciences; insurance; retail & consumer products; technology; telecommunications, media & entertainment; transportation, travel & hospitality

Consumer survey

3,000 total respondents: 1,000 in the US, 500 in the UK, and 300 each in Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan and Mexico who met the following criteria:

- 18 to 79 years old
- Received customer support or service in the prior three months from one of the following types of businesses: automotive; banking & capital markets; oil & gas; electric services; health care; life sciences; insurance; retail & consumer products; technology; telecommunications, media & entertainment; transportation, travel & hospitality

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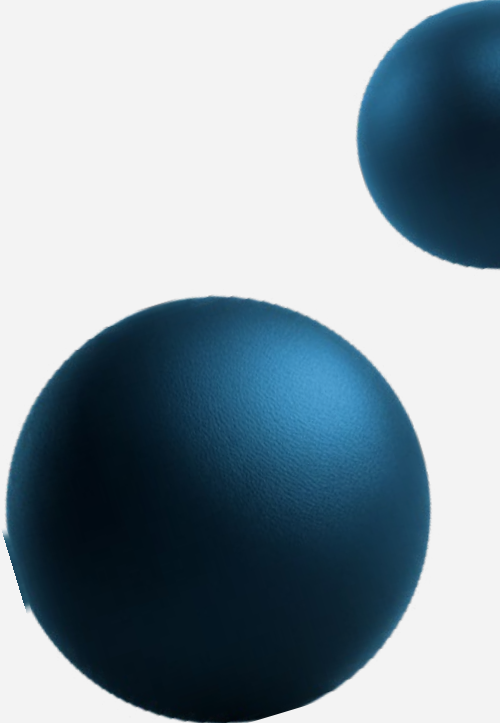
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Endnotes

1. In this report, “AI-centric” refers to the 160 respondents in our B2C service leader survey whose contact centers already use agentic AI as part of operations; have advanced capabilities in omnichannel routing, self-service and customer data management; and report the highest customer and employee experience ratings.
2. Federal Communications Commission, [“FCC Proposes Call Center Onshoring, English Proficiency Requirements,”](#) press release, March 26, 2026; accessed May 5, 2026.

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