THE STATE OF AI IN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE (CX)

A VALOIR REPORT

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Pressure on customer service and contact leaders has intensified from customers that want faster, more personalized service, and from boards and C-level executives that want real results from artificial intelligence (AI). At the same time, organizations have moved from artificial intelligence (AI) FOMO to FOMU (fear of messing up), with customer experience (CX) leaders hesitant to move autonomous AI into production. In Valoir's latest research on AI and CX, we found that while adoption is accelerating, data is the biggest hurdle to successful outcomes, and only 35 percent of organizations' knowledge bases are ready for agentic AI. Organizationally, customer service and context center leaders are still navigating what new skills, metrics, and job roles look like for their human service representatives: While roughly 40 percent of service organizations have reduced or plan to reduce headcount this year because of AI, only 20 percent are changing their compensation structures to reflect the higher-level work many are now asking of human service representatives.

The past 12 months have marked significant evolution in enterprise artificial intelligence (AI) from FOMO to FOMU (fear of messing up) and from experimentation to expectations. What began as a wave of pilots with often questionable results has matured into pressure on operational leaders to show real outcomes, and nowhere is that pressure more acute than in customer service and contact centers. Service and contact center face pressure from multiple directions simultaneously: from chief financial officers (CFOs) demanding cost reduction, from customers expecting faster and more personalized service, and from boards that want to see real AI results beyond a few call deflections in limited pilots.

However, moving beyond technical pilots and limited usage requires more than technology; it requires clean data, integrated systems, a workforce that understands and accepts AI and how it's transforming work, and leadership willing to rethink operations rather than simply "bolting on" some AI.

To better understand the current state of adoption of AI in customer service and contact centers and how it is changing how customer support and service teams are being hired and managed, Valoir surveyed more than 150 contact center and customer service managers across a variety of industries and company sizes in North America. We further validated the data with in-depth interviews with more than 20 contact center and customer service managers in North America and Europe.

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Key findings

We found that customer service and contact center leaders are facing enormous pressure to implement AI solutions and deliver results. Key findings from our study include:

- Adoption is accelerating. More than 95 percent of organizations are running at least one AI or automation capability. AI agents lead all categories at 61 percent, followed by copilots at 55 percent, knowledge search at 54 percent, traditional chatbots at 50 percent, and automated summarization at 48 percent. Organizations are not choosing a single technology: they are layering multiple capabilities simultaneously, often before the underlying data infrastructure can support them reliably.
- Data integration is the biggest hurdle to success. The single biggest challenge to AI agent adoption, cited by roughly 30 percent of respondents, is data integration. Cost (27 percent), technology limitations (24 percent), and trust (17 percent) follow. Together, these four barriers describe an environment where the technology is ready before the organization is.
- Nearly one in five organizations have already begun workforce restructuring. Nineteen percent of organizations have already reduced customer service headcount because of AI, and another 22 percent plan to do so within the next year.
- Customer service jobs are changing. Thirty-four percent of organizations are revising agent skill requirements and wage bands because of AI, 30 percent are changing key performance metrics, and 20 percent are overhauling their compensation structures. As AI handles routine interactions, the human agent role is being repriced and redefined around higher-complexity work.
- There's still a gap between operational readiness and adoption ambitions. Only 35 percent of organizations' knowledge bases are ready to support AI, meaning nearly two-thirds of CX leaders are deploying AI agents on a foundation they acknowledge is not fully prepared.

Data integration is the biggest hurdle to AI success. Only 35% of organizations' knowledge bases are ready to support AI.

Hurdles to AI adoption

Valoir found that – not surprisingly – the biggest hurdle to AI agent adoption for CX leaders today is data integration. AI agents do not fail because the models are inadequate, they fail because the data feeding them is fragmented, siloed, and inconsistent across systems. This surfaces in two main areas in CX:

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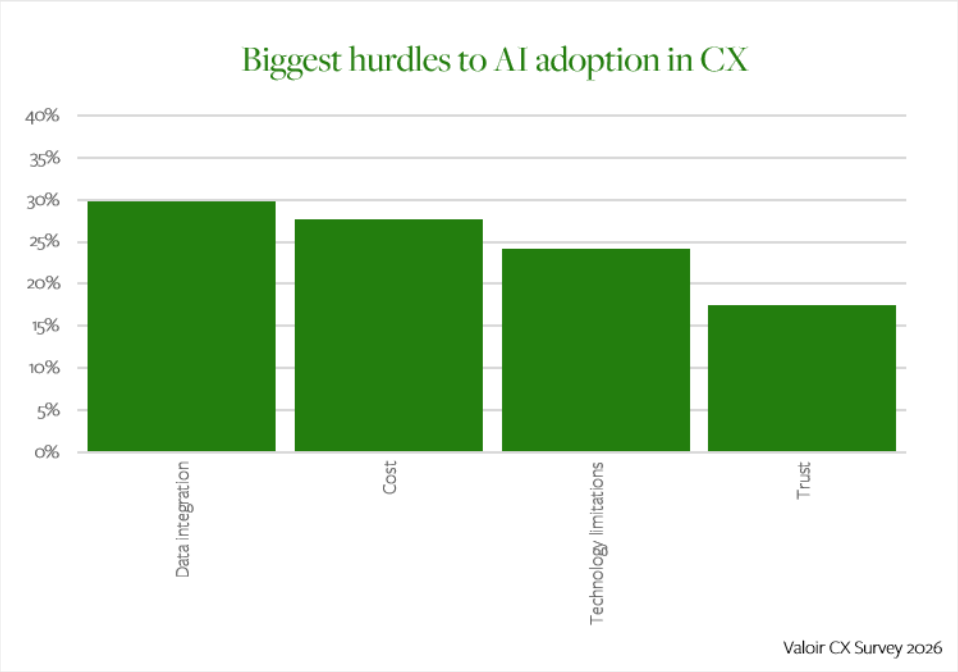
- Customer data. If agentic AI can't access a current unified view of a customer and its interaction history, it can't effectively tailor its response or resolution to that customer.
- Organizational data. If agentic AI doesn't have the appropriate and current product, finance, supply chain, or inventory data to inform a transaction or information request, it cannot respond reliably.

In Valoir's recent study on the cost of disconnected CX, we found 87 percent of contact center and customer service leaders believed a 360-degree customer view was unattainable – even after piecing together an average of 20 different application integrations (*Valoir Report – The cost of disconnected CX*, March 2026). The story becomes even more complicated when organizational data needs to be integrated as well.



Beyond data as a hurdle to effective AI, cost comes second at approximately 27 percent. This reflects the real costs of implementation, training, and tuning as well as the fear of moving to more unpredictable consumption-based models without a clear understanding of how many tokens a given task or interaction will consume. This also reflects how early DIY efforts – or even packaged applications – that often went over budget without tangible results have colored perceptions of AI's relative value to the business.

87% of contact center and customer service leaders believe a 360-degree view of the customer is unattainable.

Technology limitations rank third at roughly 24 percent, suggesting that even motivated, well-funded organizations encounter integration friction

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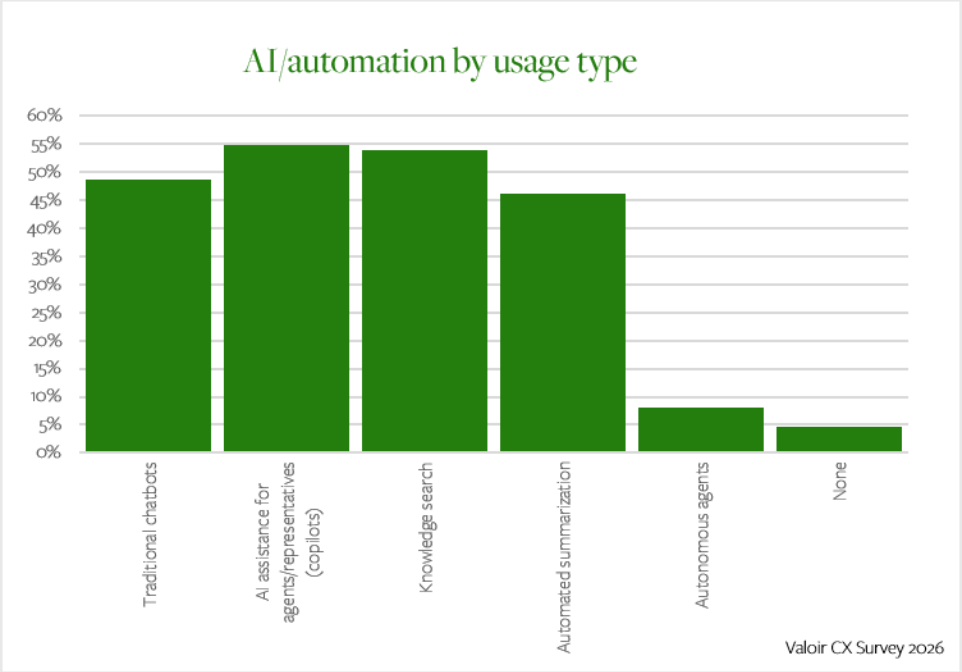
and challenges with bringing together the right data and context with the right AI tools and platforms.

Trust, at approximately 17 percent, ranks last but should not be dismissed, as it's arguably the most durable of the four barriers. Data integration problems can be engineered away, costs will come down over time, and technology matures, but trust (or lack thereof) depends on changing human sentiment and behavior. The early days of generative AI and do-it-yourself (DIY) efforts eroded many early adopters' trust in the solutions' ability to deliver accurate results. Customers and employees skeptical of AI interactions and organizations uncertain about autonomous decision making will need to be convinced.

AI and automation in use

Valoir found that organizations are applying AI and automation most often to four main customer service processes and customer interactions: traditional chatbots, copilots, knowledge search, autonomous agents, and case summarization.



What is interesting is how little difference there is between percentages between most of the categories, suggesting that organizations are hedging their bets and investing in multiple different AI and automation projects at the same time.

AI assistance for agents, commonly called copilots, leads at roughly 55 percent adoption, followed closely by knowledge search at about 54 percent. Traditional chatbots, the oldest technology in the stack, sit at approximately 48 percent, and automated summarization trails slightly at

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around 45 percent. Only about 5 percent of respondents reported using none of these capabilities.

The narrow spread across the top four categories, all clustered between 45 percent and 56 percent, signals that organizations are deploying multiple capabilities simultaneously, layering them into existing workflows rather than replacing one approach with another, and that they are not yet replacing traditional chatbots wholesale with AI. A contact center running copilots is very likely also running knowledge search and automated summarization alongside it.

It's also worth noting that autonomous AI agents as a standalone category has been adopted by fewer than 10 percent of organizations today. Although organizations are comfortable with agents assisting customers with knowledge searches, for the most part, when it comes to autonomous agents that do more than just answer questions and obviate the need for search, very few organizations have gone beyond limited pilots. This has to do with FOMU but also with the fact that they recognize their data and knowledge is not at the point of currency, consistency, and quality needed to ensure autonomous agents can perform effectively.

At roughly 5 percent, organizations running no AI or automation in customer service at all are almost extinct. The question for customer service leaders is no longer whether to deploy AI, but how to integrate an expanding portfolio of overlapping capabilities including copilots, search, summarization, and agents into a coherent operational model.

AI and CX staffing levels

Despite the tremendous board-level and C-suite pressure to "do things with AI," and the use of AI and automation for chatbots, copilots, knowledge search, and summarization, we have yet to see the mass "saaspocalypse" some have predicted about enterprise software and the jobs built around it.

The biggest category here is deceptively reassuring: nearly 60 organizations have no plans to reduce service representative headcount because of AI. However, the other half of the chart tells a more urgent story. Nineteen percent have already cut agent jobs because of AI, and 22 percent plan to do so within the next year. That means roughly 4 in 10 organizations are actively reducing or about to reduce their customer service workforce – not someday, but now.

The saaspocalypse framing is worth noting here because customer service has historically been one of the largest employment categories of end users of enterprise software products. CRM platforms, ticketing systems, and workforce management tools were all built on the assumption that human agents would be doing most of the work. As AI agents increasingly handle inquiries end to end, not just routing or suggesting responses, but resolving

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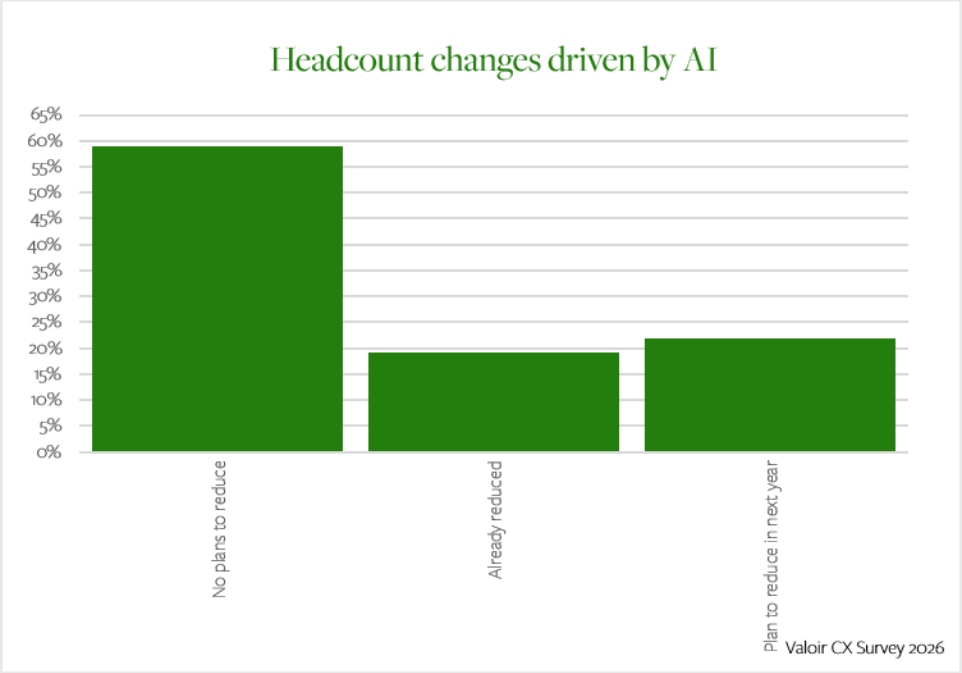
cases, that assumption erodes, and so does the headcount model underneath it.



What makes the 22 percent "plan to reduce" figure particularly significant is its forward momentum. These are not organizations reacting to AI disruption after the fact; they are actively planning workforce reductions as a strategic consequence of deployment decisions already made. The positive spin on this news is that many organizations are focused on reskilling human service representatives to take on more complex and proactive activities like customer success and product adoption rather than rote level-one and level-two customer queries.

41% of organizations have already made or will make customer service and/or contact center staff cuts in 2026 because of AI.

AI impact on compensation and metrics

If we look at the headcount data along with the data about metrics and skills, the picture is of an industry not just automating tasks, but systematically repricing and downsizing the human role in customer service. The saaspocalypse, it turns out, is also a job description rewrite. We found that more than a third of organizations are changing agent skill requirements and wage bands because of AI.

This suggests that as AI handles more routine interactions, organizations are redefining what they expect from human agents, likely shifting toward higher-skill work such as complex problem resolution, emotional support, and exception handling. That shift carries job re-pricing implications, but

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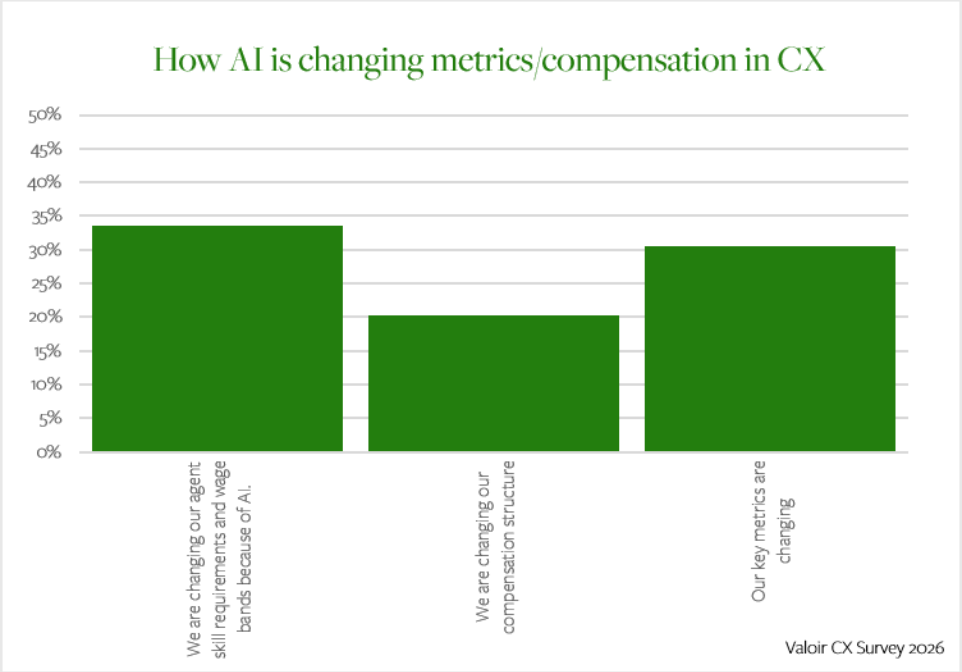
unfortunately there may not be much upside – yet – for human service representatives, as only 20 percent of organizations are really changing their compensation structure. This means that while they may be rethinking the skills and pay grades that define agent roles, far fewer organizations are overhauling the underlying architecture of how service representatives are paid, such as moving from hourly to performance-based models.

Thirty percent of respondents said their key metrics are changing because of AI. Traditional contact center metrics such as average handle time and call volume were built around human agent performance. As AI agents take



on a growing share of interactions, those benchmarks become less meaningful, and organizations are building new frameworks to measure outcomes that blend human and machine performance (*Valoir Insight Brief – CX metrics in the age of AI*, October 2025).

Taken together, the three figures describe a workforce in transition. A third or more of organizations are actively renegotiating the terms of the customer service job and what skills it requires, how performance is measured, and what it pays even as AI deployment is still in relatively early stages. The gap between the 34 percent changing skill requirements and the 20 percent changing compensation structures likely reflect the lag between redefining a role and formally repricing it.

Looking ahead

As CX leaders face increasing pressure to implement AI in a meaningful way, it is clear that most still face hurdles in effectively moving from pilots to production. Although the majority of contact centers and service operations

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are using AI in some fashion, to truly take advantage of the potential of AI, organizations need to address the data inconsistencies and siloes, trust deficits, and organizational structures that keep them from turn promising pilots into enterprise-grade AI.

Closing the gaps between pilot and production with AI, most importantly, is not about technology or data, but about trust – and technology vendors have a role to play in helping CX leaders build that trust. Although forward-deployed engineers, pre-built agents, and agent builders have accelerated initial time to value for AI experiments, to bring them to production vendors will need to address the real FOMU in the market with:

- Guidance and documentation that helps organizations build the most cost-effective agents possible, recognizing that in many cases a deterministic workflow may be a more cost-effective and less-risky path than a probabilistic one.
- Solutions that go beyond testing and monitoring to predict how autonomous agents will function and make CX and IT leaders comfortable they are in control, with "kill switches" and granular controls as well as threat prevention.
- Dashboards and alerts that help CX and IT leaders understand the relative value their AI is delivering versus the cost of the tokens it's consuming in real time so they can avoid unexpected runaway token costs.

It's these kids of security measures, proactive monitoring, and trust controls that will enable CX leaders to move beyond FOMU and lead the organizational and behavioral changes that will be needed to maximize the potential benefits of AI for CX.

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