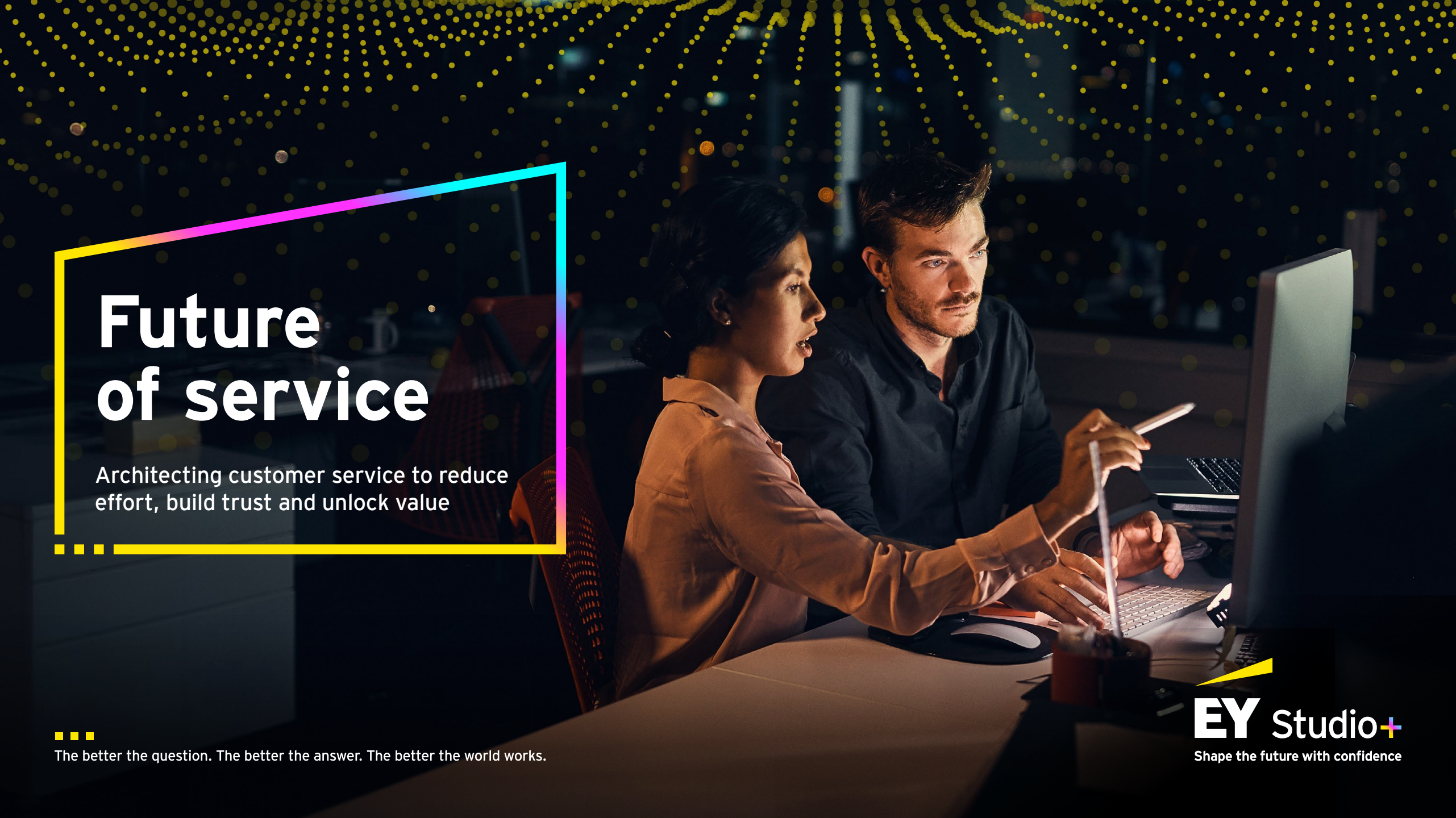




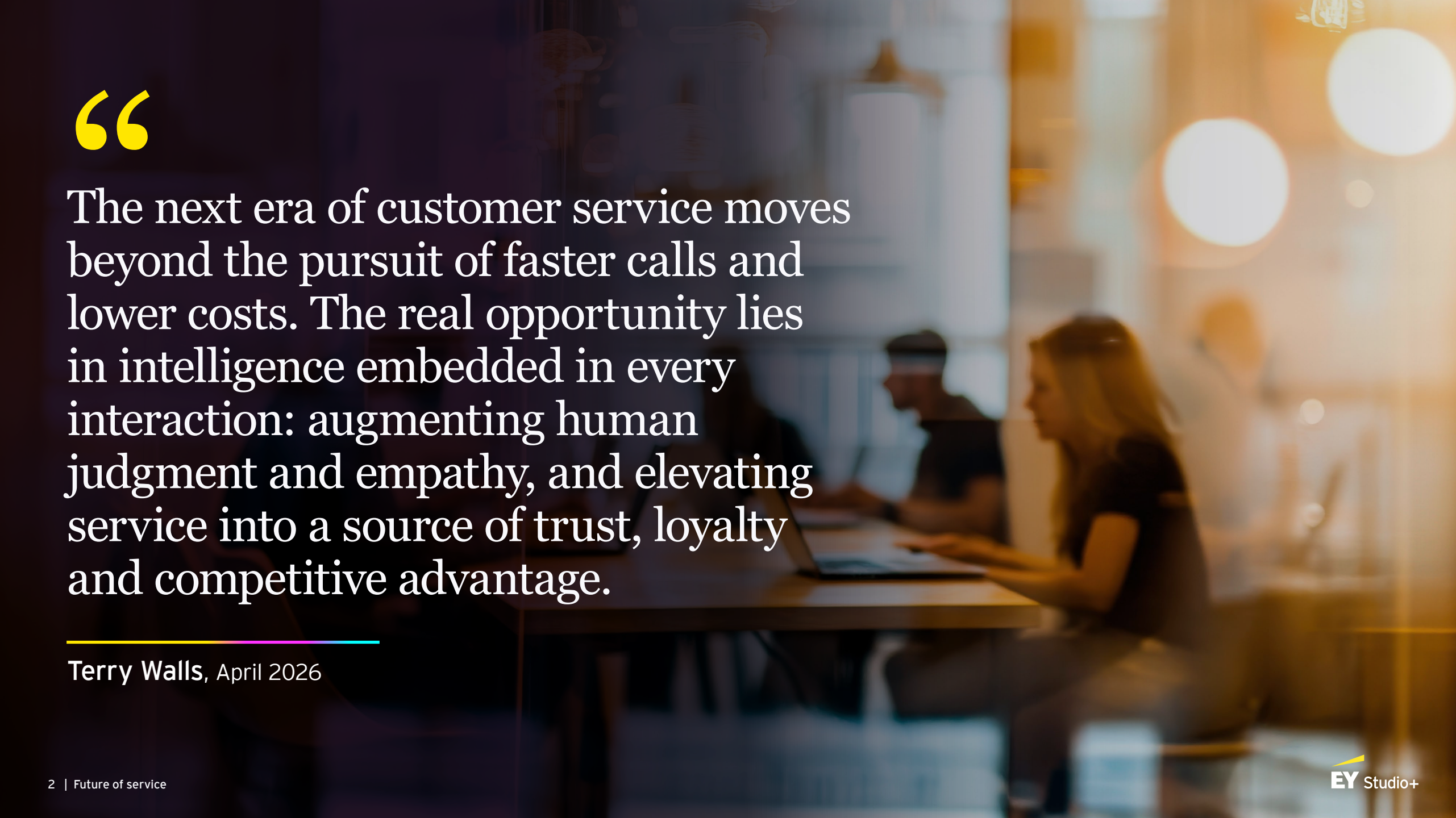
Future of service

Architecting customer service to reduce effort, build trust and unlock value



The better the question. The better the answer. The better the world works.

EY Studio+
Shape the future with confidence



“

The next era of customer service moves beyond the pursuit of faster calls and lower costs. The real opportunity lies in intelligence embedded in every interaction: augmenting human judgment and empathy, and elevating service into a source of trust, loyalty and competitive advantage.

Terry Walls, April 2026

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The imperative for change

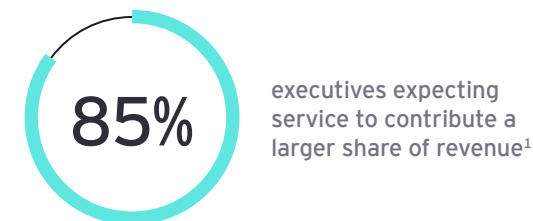


Winning organizations will transform service from an “afterthought” cost center to an “insights-driven” asset that reduces customer effort, delivers business value and drives profitable growth.

Reducing costs and driving efficiencies will continue to be a customer service priority, but growth is on the C-suite agenda for 2026, and organizations are aggressively seeking new sources to achieve it, often turning to AI investments.

Yet many overlook **customer service as a powerful growth engine**. With 85% of executives expecting service to contribute a larger share of revenue,¹ the imperative is clear: winning organizations will unlock the untapped treasure of first-party data and behavioral insights to deliver personalized experiences that **feel authentic, not intrusive**.

By leveraging AI to reduce cognitive load for representatives, businesses will free their teams to build deeper human connections, anticipating needs, strengthening relationships and driving sustainable growth. Customer service isn't just a cost center; it's the **next frontier for competitive advantage**.



Winning starts now – and few are prepared

1

Traditional customer service is regressing

- 26% Of consumers feel experiences are convenient²
- 17% Feel customer service experience is consistent²
- 16% Feel experiences are personalized²
- 59% Feel experiences are getting worse²

2

Human representatives are not making connections

- 23% Of consumers feel representatives are knowledgeable²
- 19% Feel representatives are focused on solving the problem²
- 16% Feel representatives are emotionally intelligent²
- 86% Say that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to reach a live agent and believe it will get worse²

3

Customer reluctance with AI is real

- 45% Of consumers feel bots improved last year²
- 22% Believe AI-driven experiences are adding value²
- 17% Trust chatbots to solve problems²
- 91% Customer service leaders are under pressure to implement AI in 2026³



Outdated service loses customers and destroys value

- 53% Of consumers will leave or stop doing business because of a bad service experience²
- 90% Of business leaders are facing pressure to drive efficiencies²

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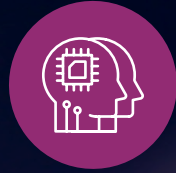
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Envision the future of service



Imagine a future where ...



a customer support agent instantly receives AI-generated insights during a complex billing dispute, **allowing the agent to focus on judgment and empathy while AI handles data retrieval and classification.**



a customer calls about a service outage, and **AI detects frustration in the voice tone, escalates the issue automatically and provides real-time translation** so the conversation flows naturally in any language.



organizations use predictive analytics from past service interactions to launch personalized upgrade offers, **turning routine support calls into opportunities for revenue growth and customer loyalty.**

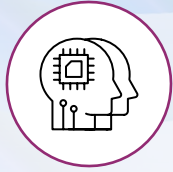


AI coordinates inventory checks, payment approvals and delivery scheduling behind the scenes, while **human agents focus on resolving exceptions like special shipping requests or compliance issues.**



every interaction – whether through chat, voice or in-store – is powered by a single **AI-driven system that ensures consistent experiences, tracks performance metrics and continuously improves service quality.**

Five core themes shaping the future of service



Human-AI accelerated collaboration

Human agents shift from task execution to judgment, coaching and exception handling.

AI manages classification, summarization and knowledge retrieval while providing real-time coaching, enabling humans to focus on nuanced interactions.

The model learns from every interaction, improving workflow and quality over time.



AI voice-led customer engagement

AI interprets tone, intent and sentiment to resolve issues faster and escalate smarter.

Voice agents become a branded service layer that feels consistent and personalized across phone, app and in-store devices.

Eliminates language friction through instant translation and accent-neutral interactions, enabling true global support.

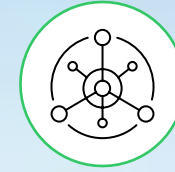


Service as currency for growth

Anticipates customer needs using AI models trained on behavior and service history to deliver proactive and preemptive care that eliminates repeat contacts.

Builds hyper-personalized journeys using contextual, real-time understanding.

Converts support signals into commercial actions and marketing campaigns that fuel growth.



Agentic service orchestration

AI orchestrates actions, data and decisions to deliver faster, smarter service on behalf of humans.

Humans focus on AI monitoring, critical decisions and exceptions, while AI handles the operations.

Service becomes more consistent, efficient and scalable across every channel.



Unified service operating system

AI-powered service organization focused on human-AI hybrid teams that delivers efficiency and personalized experiences.

A unified intelligence layer powers every moment of the service journey.

Service metrics focus more on AI-driven experiences.

Customer service will become AI-first and proactive, augmenting human agents to deliver **personalized, faster, trusted, outcome-driven experiences**

Today



Inefficient agent processes and limited automation; cumbersome knowledgebase and canned responses



Pre-programmed complex menus, limited voice recognition misinterpreting speech; frequent transfers and repeats due to ineffective call routing



Reactive, lack of real-time personalization and non-harvested customer insights and cross-enterprise collaboration



Human-to-bot or human-to-human interactions



Fragmented tools and systems and limited cross-partner orchestration today

Tomorrow

AI-augmented agent processes and experience through summarization, agent assist and next-best experience

Real-time translation, accent neutralization, conversational AI and intelligent routing to human agents

Predictive and proactive, dynamic hyper-personalization across the customer journey and integrated cross-enterprise collaboration

Mature, agentic systems enable safe, end-to-end AI-agent-to-AI-agent collaboration

Integrated partner networks and systems orchestrate seamless, end-to-end multi-vendor customer journeys

Benefits

Higher agent productivity, faster handling and improved resolution accuracy

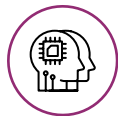
Faster resolution, higher accessibility and reduced call escalations

Higher revenue growth through increased conversions, Net Promoter Score (NPS) and customer lifetime value (CLV) improvement

Faster fulfilment, lower customer effort and scalable automated commerce

Unified experiences, faster resolution and reduced customer friction

Industry proof points and statistics show the **future of service** is underway



Human-AI accelerated collaboration

efficiency meets empathy to deliver effective service at scale

43%

productivity increase with AI use⁴

60%-80%

customer support inquiries resolved by AI⁵



AI voice-led customer engagement

transforming high-volume, low-complexity contacts through faster, AI-enabled conversations

39%

projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in voice AI market through 2033⁶

30%

reduction in customer support cost with voice AI⁷



Service as a currency for growth

the insights engine for engagement that drives loyalty and customer lifetime value

20%

customer retention increase from predictive analytics⁸

15%

revenue increase from personalized targeting⁹



Agentic service orchestration

powering autonomous, AI-driven transactions across the customer journey

30%

projected CAGR in AI commerce through 2031¹⁰

20%

of e-commerce may flow through agentic channels by 2030¹¹



Unified service operating system

outcomes require a holistic approach, not a collection of point solutions

20%

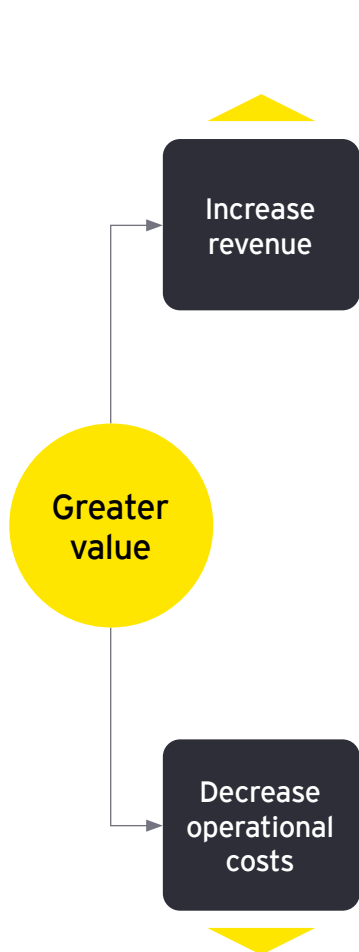
increase in NPS with agentic service orchestration¹²

12%

decrease in customer churn¹³

AI-driven service creates new revenue opportunities and more efficient operations

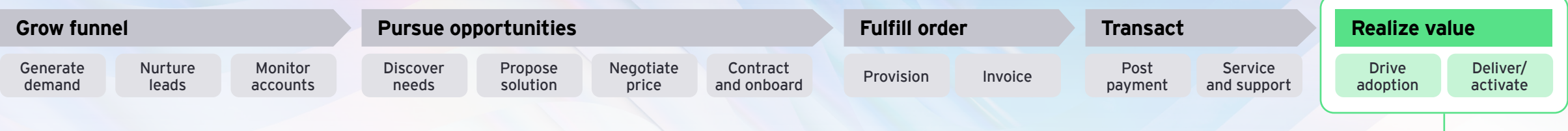
Smarter journeys improve targeting, lower cost-to-serve and enhance operational efficiency end to end



Value source	Example	Human-AI accelerated collaboration	Voice-led customer engagement	Service as currency for growth	Agentic service orchestration	Unified service operating system
Personalized customer experiences and new service or product offerings	AI analyzes service interactions to reveal intent and preferences, enabling customized service offerings that increase sales conversion.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Turns service interactions into actionable insights for targeted campaigns and new offerings	Service interactions become 1P data, powering targeted marketing campaigns that transform support into commercial value.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Improves customer satisfaction and loyalty, increasing customer retention and CLV	AI analyzes customer interactions and sentiments to predict churn and recommends resolutions that strengthen trust and improve long-term retention.	✓		✓	✓	✓
Improved operational efficiency and agent productivity	AI automates routing and knowledge retrieval, reducing handle time and improving service consistency across every channel.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eliminates redundant systems and manual data reconciliation	A unified intelligence layer removes redundant systems and manual reconciliation, lowering cost-to-serve and simplifying workflows at scale.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Intelligent AI-powered service teams, optimizing workforce, quality and agent experience	Real-time workforce management through dynamic staffing and personalized agent training and coaching.	✓				✓

Future customer service trends will unlock new key capabilities to engage with customers and win in the market ...

EY Customer Engagement Model



Pre-contact				During contact				Post-contact			
Contextual knowledge search and chatbots	●	Virtual assistants	●●	Proactive issue resolution	●●●	Auto-case ticket creation	●	Real-time agent assist	●●	Multimodal intelligent troubleshooting	●●
Intent-based routing	●	Voice AI	●●	Remote diagnostics and fixes	●●●	Contextual customer 360	●	Real-time sentiment analytics	●●	Real-time translation, accent neutralization	●●●
Customer portals for self-service	●	Proactive monitoring and alerts	●●	Auto commercial taxonomy dispute monitoring and fix	●●●	Workflow automation	●	Case diagnostics	●●	Autonomous task execution using agentic AI	●●●
Automated workflows and smart forms for self-service	●●	Self-help automation	●●	Self-healing systems	●●●	Intelligent knowledge retrieval	●●	Next-best action	●●	Agent coaching interventions	●●●
AI operations				Customer engagement				Channel/ecosystem partner support			
Model monitoring and performance management	●●	Data privacy, AI risk management and governance	●	Predictive sentiment monitoring	●●	AI-driven customer persona generation	●●	Integrated view of case/customer/product	●●	Integrated scheduling and routing	●●
AI portfolio management	●	Value realization	●	Churn and retention trigger monitoring	●●	Personalized support journeys	●●	Joint knowledge bases and diagnostics	●●●	Multimodal agent support for field techs	●●●
Compliance and workforce				Service insights monetization							
Automated risk/compliance monitoring	●●	AI-driven digital/human workforce planning	●●●	AI-driven personalized training	●●●	AI-driven QA monitoring	●●	Contact driver root-cause elimination	●●●	Campaign triggers from support signals	●●
								AI-driven product feedback loop	●●	AI-driven value-add services opportunity identification	●●●

Use cases are not exhaustive

● No regrets ●● Meaningful improvements ●●● Transformational changes

... and will optimize and transform each key function of the EY Unified Service Operating System

EY Unified Service Operating System

1.0

Service strategy/ planning/governance

Contact center strategy and planning

Customer experience, segmentation and treatment strategy

Governance and organization design

Strategic sourcing

Benchmarking and key performance indicator (KPI) definition

Vendor management

Business continuity

2.0

People/human capital

Recruitment

Career path/progression

Training and learning

Culture, wellness, employee engagement

Compensation/incentives

Performance management

3.0

Operations and process

Workforce management

Communications

Methods and procedures

Quality assurance

Case management

Command center

Knowledge management

Escalations and complaints

Service-to-sales and enterprise value creation

4.0

Empowering technology

AI-enabled customer engagement

Voice/IVR with CTI integration

Proactive outbound

Enterprise app integration

Digital engagement/virtual agent

Contact management

Intelligent routing

AI-enabled agent support applications

CRM agent desktop

Customer 360

Agent assist/next-best action

Workforce optimization (WFO) suite

Contextual knowledge

Intelligent automation

5.0

Measurement/ insights/compliance

Voice of the ecosystem

Customer experience (CX) and customer satisfaction (CSAT) analytics

Executive scorecards

Operations dashboards

Customer/vendor relationship scorecards

Compliance management

Regulatory reporting

Data analytics and business intelligence

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Use cases and capabilities



Taking a closer look
at the five future
of service themes
that will **boost
agent productivity,
augment customer
experiences and drive
organizational growth**

Introducing Jessica

Jessica is recognized for her patience, empathy and skill in resolving high-friction customer interactions. She is technologically proficient and stays updated with the latest advancements. She offers support in the English language only.

Currently, she manages hundreds of customer interactions weekly. However, she encounters **difficulties in understanding customer history and determining the appropriate next steps required to resolve customer issues** and deliver prompt, consistent support across multiple channels.

Jessica is faced with **fragmented internal and external workflows, disconnected systems and technologies, outdated knowledge bases** and time-consuming manual tasks that detract from her ability to focus on effective problem-solving.

As customer expectations continue to rise, it has become increasingly **challenging for Jessica and her organization to provide proactive and personalized support** and meet customers' ever-changing demands.



AI agents will strengthen human representative interactions with listening, learning and real-time intelligence



Major Asia-Pacific telco

AI agent assist tool enables agents to instantly access knowledge bases and call histories, cutting repeat calls by 20% and boosting agent effectiveness by 90%¹⁴

Global beauty brand

Uses AI-powered email assistant to increase email processing productivity by 49% and improve CSAT by 10% with faster, more consistent replies¹⁴



AI agents will empower Jessica to deliver exceptional service.

Reduces friction and speeds resolution time for Jessica by handling intake, triage and routine tasks prior to human engagement.

Allows Jessica to focus on responding with empathy, resolving emotionally complex issues and building customer relationships.

Equips Jessica with real-time insights (customer history, sentiment, next-best action) for personalized interactions.

Drives consistency and accuracy for Jessica through automated documentation, summarization and knowledge retrieval.

Creates continuous learning loops that improve both AI and Jessica's performance over time.

Human-AI accelerated collaboration



AI will automate routine work and provide real-time insights, enabling Jessica to deliver personalized, empathetic service.



Capabilities unlocked

Next-best experience

Real-time knowledge

Real-time analytics

Sentiment analysis

Predictive support

Automated workflows

Voice AI will remove language barriers and provide more immersive, human-centric experiences



Digital health services provider

AI voice agents streamline health plan selections, improving first-call resolution and reducing wait times¹⁵

Global cloud-based CRM provider

Voice-trained AI-agent simulation now handles 80% of billing inquiries, reducing wait times and freeing staff for complex cases¹⁶

Voice AI will reshape how voice is used in customer service.

Replaces outdated interactive voice response systems (IVRs), providing human-like conversation capabilities to autonomously solve routine inquiries, enabling 24/7 service.

Understands context and customer tone and recognizes sentiment, personalizing responses accordingly.

Provides seamless transfer to a human agent without disruption to the conversation.

Real-time language translation, down to the distinct dialect, in the preferred language on each end of the line.

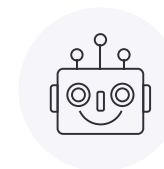
Dual-accent neutralization promotes clear understanding, eliminating frustration and/or guessing.

Multimodal and embedded into apps and websites, enabling seamless access to customer support.

AI voice-led customer engagement



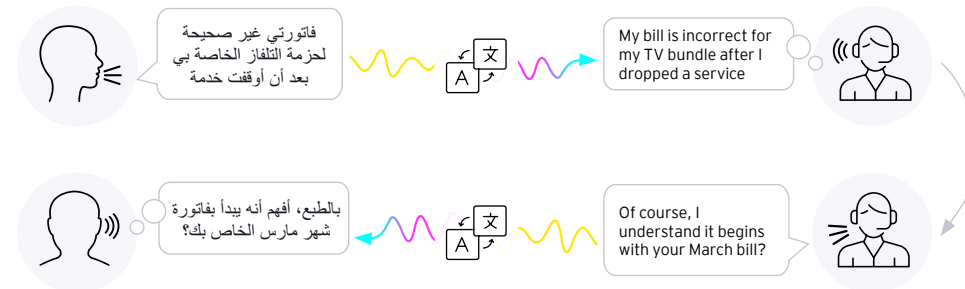
Voice AI enables real-time, contextual self-service, identifies complex customer issues and routes calls to Jessica with the appropriate context.



Voice AI provides zero latency and large-scale language translations in a neutral accent so Jessica can effortlessly speak to any customer in any language.

Customer

Human agent



Capabilities unlocked

Contextual awareness

Zero latency

Large-scale translations

Accent neutralization

Empathy simulation

Human-like interactions

AI agents will create smarter, more personalized journeys with **dynamic learning, richer context and predictive decisioning**



Global streaming service

Offers partial refund to high-churn customers experiencing outage, prior to call-in or cancellation, to build trust and loyalty¹⁷

Global auto OEM

Offers personalized, proactive care via AI-led diagnostics to lower repair costs and build loyalty¹⁸

Predictive and proactive care with richer 1P (first-party) data that fuels better service and enterprise innovation.

AI anticipates, diagnoses and resolves issues based on behavioral signals and usage patterns before customers are even aware.

Self-healing ecosystems use real-time data and orchestration engines to deliver proactive care - creating effortless experiences and reducing support costs.

Each interaction enriches the customer's 1P profile with clearer intent signals, preferences and contextual details.

Marketing systems receive continuous updated customer information, enabling more relevant and customized campaigns or new offerings.

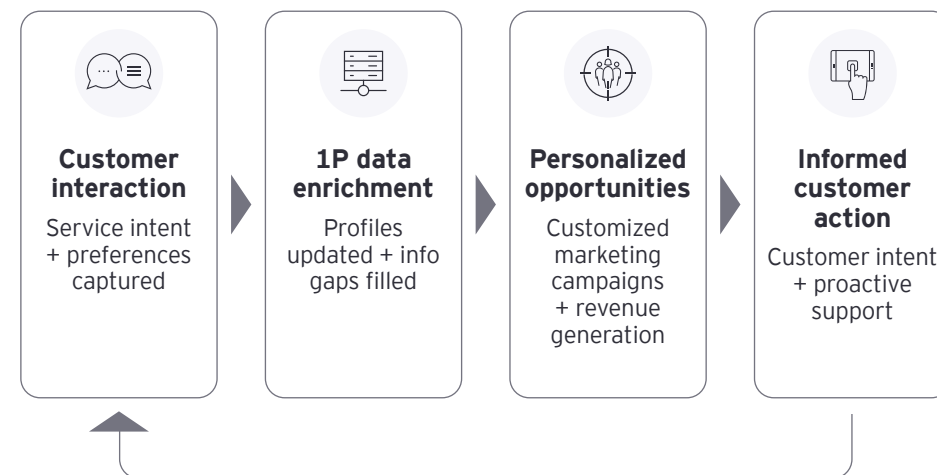
Jessica is upskilled to be an "AI custodian" who monitors and continuously provides feedback to improve AI models/responses.

Service as currency for growth + Unified service operating system



As the system learns from each interaction, it delivers more accurate answers, anticipates customer needs and handles issues proactively, reducing repeated queries and effort for service teams.

Service as a currency for growth



Capabilities unlocked

Predictive analytics

Real-time telemetry

Next-best experience

Knowledge orchestration

Dynamic delivery

Self-healing workflows

A rapidly emerging frontier: agentic service orchestration will advance intelligent customer service



Global e-commerce retailer

Testing “buy-for-me” feature where AI agents purchase items across third-party sites without leaving the app¹⁹

Global payments network

Introduced intelligent commerce application programming interfaces (APIs) and agent pay, enabling bots to complete secure transactions using tokenized cards²⁰

Autonomous agent-to-agent orchestration drives consistent, effortless service.

A customer’s agentic agent initiates a fully coordinated journey to handle the intent on their behalf.

The company’s agentic agent handles agentic requests, anticipates next steps, manages fulfillment and resolves issues autonomously.

When something goes wrong, it diagnoses and resolves the issue automatically.

Human agents, monitoring and supervising agentic interactions, contribute where human intervention or contextual judgments matter.

The system learns from every interaction, creating faster, more personal experiences.

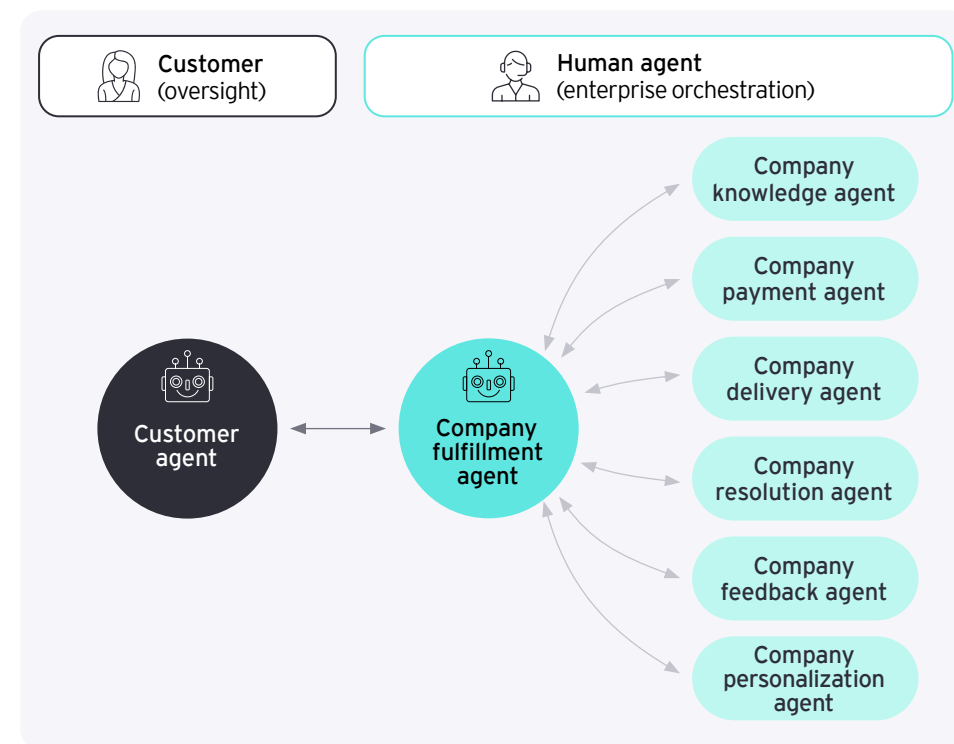
Service teams shift toward oversight, insight and optimizing AI-powered operations.

Agentic service
orchestration

+ Unified service
operating system



With agentic workflows handling operations, Jessica focuses on nuanced cases while the system runs end to end.



Capabilities
unlocked

Predictive
analytics

Real-time
telemetry

Next-best
experience

Knowledge
orchestration

Dynamic
delivery

Self-healing
workflows

Service organizations will emerge as hybrid human-digital teams focused on rich customer insights to fuel organization innovation and growth



Contact center business process optimization (BPO)

Uses AI-certified agents who allocate time off phone calls to tune, train and optimize AI digital agents to improve AI performance²¹

Global retailer

AI in the customer journey covers conversational search, text-to-shop and voice-led ordering tying to the same data and personalization logic across channels²²

Unified service operating system



Today

Service strategy

Focused on efficiency, mostly reactive, transactional, generalized service; large service teams handling labor-intensive tasks; outsourcing is evaluated on cost takeout

People/human capital

Agents hired for basic skills and routine tasks; training is often generalized and career progression is limited to customer service management

Operations and process

Static methods to forecasting and agent scheduling; limited QA on agent interactions; reactive methods of training and coaching evaluated on cost takeout

Empowering technology

Fragmented and disjointed technologies leading to manual processes; limited automation and AI-powered technologies evaluated on cost takeout

Measurements/insights/compliance

Customer data from service interactions primarily used for operational efficiency and customer experience tracking, with limited use to drive enterprise growth

Tomorrow

Focused on faster, effortless, personalized and proactive service. Service teams will manage a hybrid workforce of human and digital agents; outsourcing companies evaluated based on AI-driven outcomes with gain-share models

AI-savvy skilled agents hired to manage complex interactions; training is customized to focus on handling complex issues; personalized career paths by using AI analytics to identify strength to unlock more AI-oriented human agent roles

Personalized career paths by using AI analytics to identify an agent's strengths, with AI-enabled operations leading to new attractive AI-oriented roles; forecasting is dynamic, and QA extends to all agents

AI-powered and agentic orchestration layers that enable seamless, personalized, proactive interactions and agent-to-agent-interactions

Customer data from service interactions routinely analyzed to improve quality of service and identify growth and innovation opportunities for the business



Capabilities unlocked

Human-digital teams

AI-skilled human roles

Agentic orchestration layers

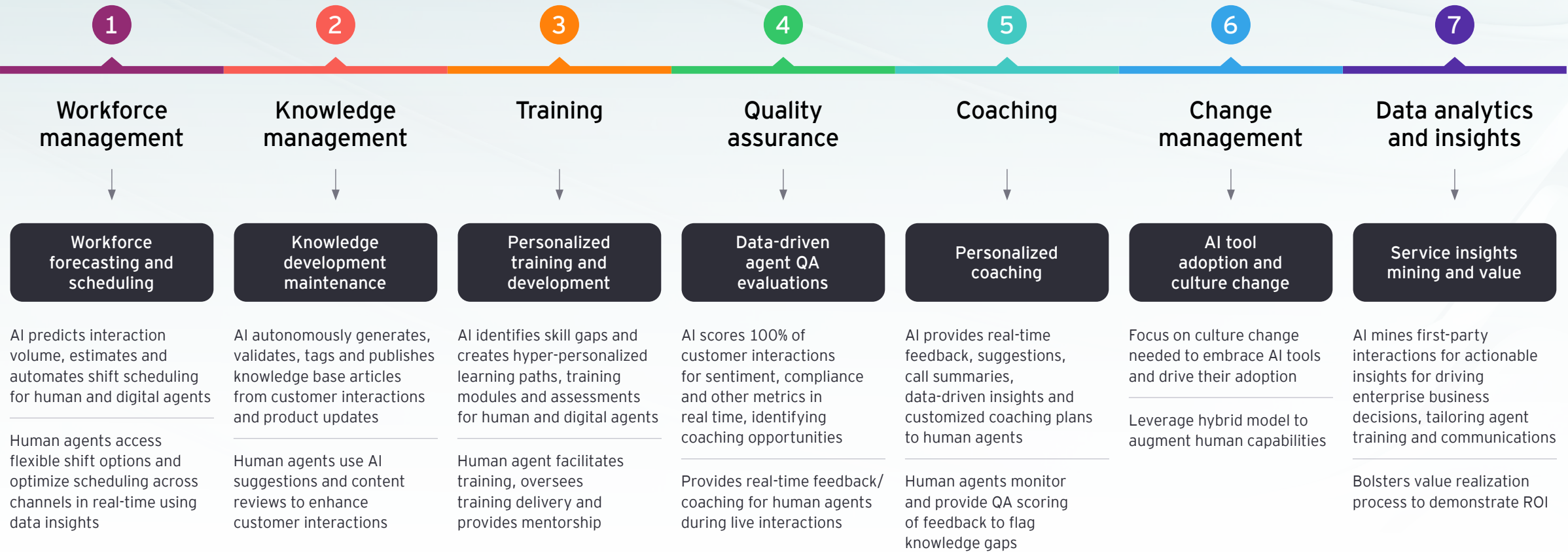
Personalized career paths

Dynamic WFM models

Real-time analytics

Existing functions will be augmented by AI and bolstered to enhance operational efficiency and increase productivity

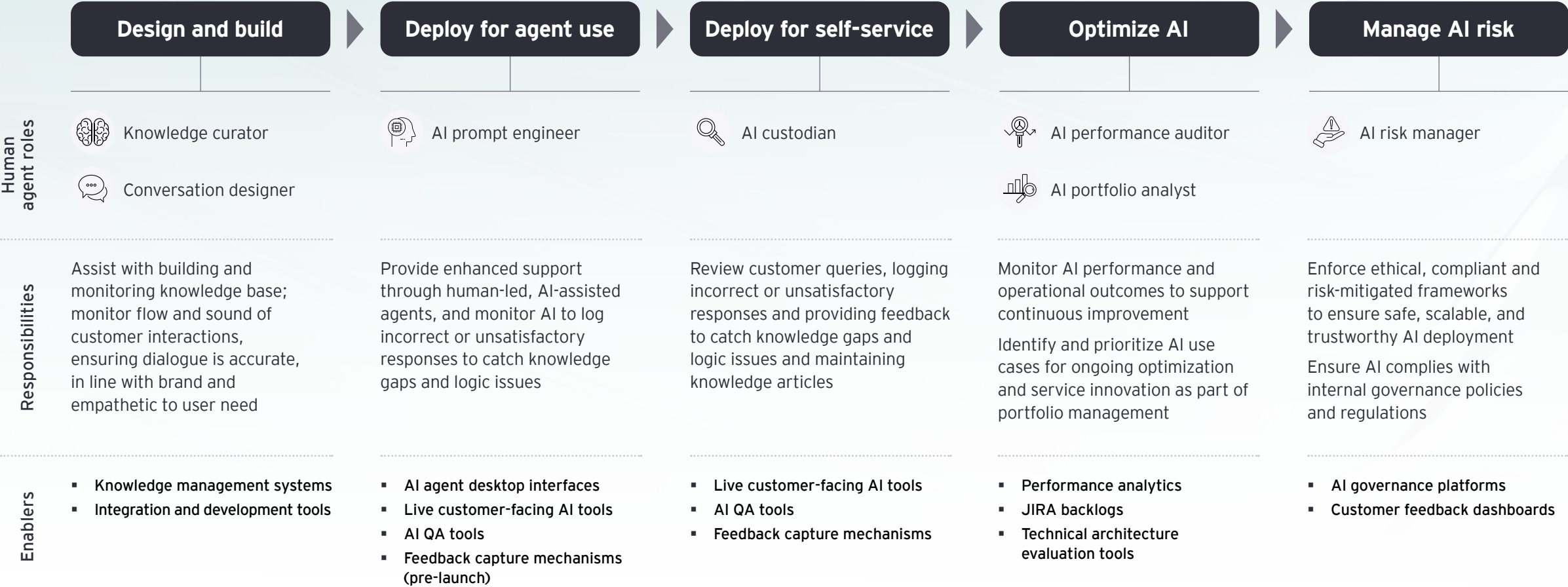
TRANSFORMING EXISTING FUNCTIONS



Human agent roles will evolve to be key contributors to the success of AI implementations across the service organization



As companies deploy AI agents, new roles and responsibilities will be created across the service organization to support the AI implementation lifecycle and ongoing optimization



Service metrics will shift from disjointed “factory” metrics to AI-driven experiences that holistically measure efficiency, customer experience and strategic value

Unified service operating system



Focus area

What we track today

What will matter tomorrow

Operational efficiency



- Average handle time
- Contact deflection rate
- First-contact resolution rate
- Cost/contact
- Service level agreement (SLA) compliance

- AI deflection rate
- AI resolution rate and average bot handle time
- AI-human handoff rate and escalation frequency
- Cost per resolved interaction (automated vs. human cost of AI-resolved vs. human-resolved case)
- Training time reduction

Customer/agent experience



- Post-call customer satisfaction
- Quality scores based on human agent's adherence to a robotic script
- Overall agent productivity (utilization)

- # of prevented contacts (due to proactive/predictive care)
- Customer-AI agent engagement rate
- AI answer accuracy
- AI utilization rate (frequency of agents using AI tools)
- Automated dispute resolution rate (agentic service orchestration)

Business/strategic value



- Churn rate
- Upsell/cross-sell revenue

- Revenue uplift via service insight-driven targeted campaign
- Customer lifetime value (due to AI-powered service quality)
- Revenue from enterprise optimization/innovation efforts and value-added service identified via service insight

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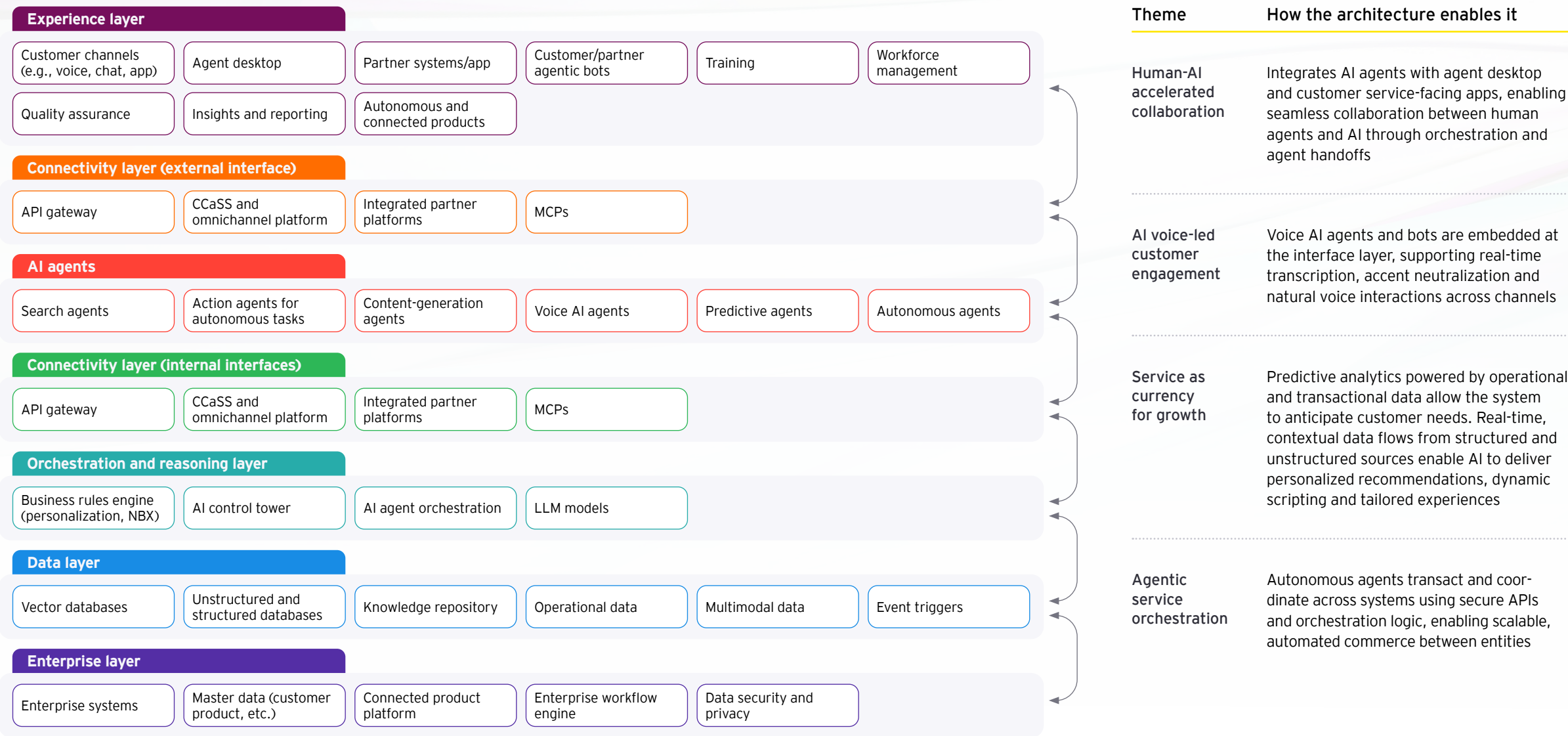
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Technical architecture and feasibility

Building the AI-enabled customer service of tomorrow



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Getting started

Several obstacles must be addressed to unlock the future of service



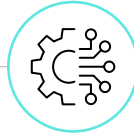
Availability and reliability of data

Inaccurate or incomplete data can lead to misguided information that can result in loss of trust among employees and customers, poor experiences and ultimately brand erosion. As service organizations move toward AI-powered customer service, the need for high-quality, trustworthy data becomes paramount.



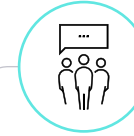
Balancing the duality of growth

The delicate balance of investing in future technology with the need for operational efficiency presents a significant challenge. Organizations must develop a strategic approach that integrates technology investments with ongoing operational improvements, ensuring that both aspects work in harmony to support sustainable and scalable growth.



Taking a technology-first approach

Rushing to implement new technologies rather than considering thoughtful design of customer experiences leads to failures. Organizations must take an experience-led approach by recognizing the right AI use cases that meet customer and business needs. Value can be gained.

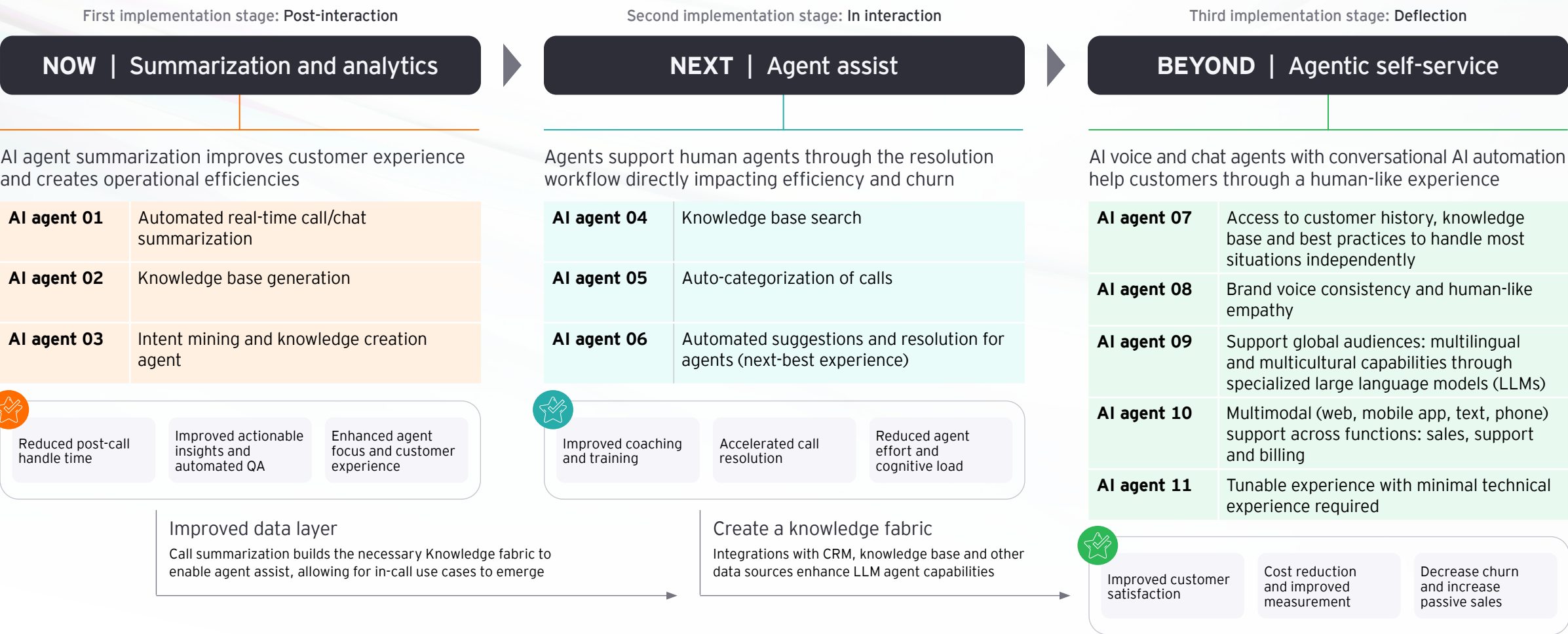


Resistance to change

Resistance to change, skill gaps and data overload may hinder the adoption of new technologies. Employees may struggle to trust data and relinquish control of their current processes, leading to cultural shifts and communication barriers. Organizations must communicate, engage and upskill employees and incorporate feedback early to establish trust and ensure successful change.

The path to agentic maturity and AI transformation in customer service requires purposeful “building blocks”

Laying the foundation is key to scalable and more complex AI use cases while achieving meaningful ROI at each stage



Value realization starts with asking the right questions no matter where you are in your AI journey



Educate

What is the best AI strategy for my business?

How should I be thinking about implementing AI to achieve organizational goals?

Quantify

Which specific business processes/functions can benefit most from AI implementation to drive value?

How do we quantify the potential ROI of AI initiatives in our organization?

Evaluate/Prioritize

What is the current quality and availability of our data?

What is the current maturity level of our existing technology and employee skills?

Which AI use cases should we prioritize?

Design

How do we convert prioritized AI opportunities into thoughtful design?

What are my technology options? Should I buy vs. build?

How should I set up my AI architecture that also ensures ethical guidelines?

Deploy

How do we effectively operationalize our AI pilots from proof of concept (PoC) to scale?

What governance frameworks should we establish to ensure responsible AI usage?

Optimize

How do we establish effective measures of success and feedback loops to monitor AI performance?

What processes should we implement for continuous improvement of AI adoption and usage?

Sample questions are not exhaustive

Let's talk

Our transformation team
can help you execute
your business-led,
experience-driven and
AI-enabled transformation



Terry Walls

EY Studio+ Americas Service
Transformation Leader
terry.walls@studio.ey.com



Brian Smith

EY Studio+ Americas Leader
brian.smith@studio.ey.com



Kevin Salsberry

EY Studio+ Americas
Commercial & Markets Leader
kevin.salsberry@studio.ey.com



Jonathan Kazemai

EY Studio+ Americas Service
Technology Leader
jonathan.kazemai@studio.ey.com



Anthony Melton

EY Studio+ Service Transformation
anthony.melton@studio.ey.com



Anthony Hayer

EY Studio+ Service Transformation
anthony.hayer@studio.ey.com



Yoann Michaux

EY Studio+ Americas FSO Leader
yoann.michaux@ey.com



Joanne Campbell

EY Studio+ Service Transformation
joanne.campbell@studio.ey.com



Derek Thomas

EY Studio+ Service Transformation
derek.thomas@studio.ey.com

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Contributors

Terry Walls
Jonathan Kazemai
Vamsi Duvvuri
Brian Smith
Duncan Avis
Aparna Betigeri
Christopher Trice
Alek Catlett
Sanjay Balodi
Savina Jose
Amir Badawi
Sean Calvin
Anna Worrell
Kaitlyn Commes
Satyaki Dutta
Simon Hou
Addison Greening
Laura Pesanello
Hailey Lowe
Tasneem Ezzy
Sean Kasakian
Anusha Kamath
Kim Diaz
Kendyl Johnson
Drew Geisler
Esther Garcia
Karin Lin
Sahil Bhat
Terry Tan
Jordan Alvarado

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