

# Widespread adoption of AI is shaping next-gen customer service

 By [Linda Saunders](#)

26 Apr 2024

Customer service is in a state of flux. As budgets and staffing levels increase, so have customer expectations, keeping efficiency critical for delivering higher quality of service.

Today's customers demand fast, consistent, and personalised interactions, yet service teams are spread thin, with inefficient processes and manual taskwork monopolising agents' time and jeopardising the customer experience.

This is according to Salesforce's latest State of Service report, a survey of over 5,500 service professionals across 30 countries which reveals how high-performing organisations are exceeding customer expectations and how laggards can improve in an artificial intelligence (AI)-first world.

While widespread adoption of AI may still be in its early stages, benefits are already clear, enabling teams to achieve the speed and quality of next-generation service. Among service professionals at organisations investing in AI, 93% say the technology saves them time on the job.



Linda Saunders - Director Solutions Engineering Africa, Salesforce

## Service as a source for revenue generation

Whereas service has historically been perceived as a cost centre, more and more service decision makers are reporting that their teams are expected to contribute a larger slice of revenue over the coming year through upselling, cross-selling, and customer retention.



### As retailers embrace generative AI, lack of data strategy presents challenges

19 Mar 2024



The share of service organisations tracking revenue driven by service agents jumped from 51% in 2018 to 91% in 2024. Likewise, the share of service organisations tracking customer retention jumped from 57% in 2018 to 86% in 2024.

On top of increasingly sophisticated demands from customers, higher case volumes mean a rising workload and more time spent on internal meetings, manually logging case notes and other mundane tasks, and less time on servicing customers.

Currently, agents spend just 39% of their time servicing customers amid competing demands like internal meetings, administrative tasks, and manually logging case notes.

A connected experience is a huge differentiator for companies. High-performing service organisations are more connected to other departments, sharing goals and technologies with sales and marketing. Fragmented workflows, on the other hand, not only slow agents down but also increase the risk of error and can be costly for an organisation's bottom line.

Boosting customer experiences, and helping agents become more strategic

For years, companies have used predictive AI for tasks like providing next best actions and analysing trends. Today's generative AI can create original content like text, imagery, and video using large language models. This may be why, despite being fairly new, generative AI is quickly gaining traction, giving employees the time and tools to do their best work.

Among service professionals at organisations investing in AI, 93% say the technology saves them time on the job.

AI-powered generation of comprehensive summaries and status reports, deployment of customer-facing AI intelligent assistants to respond to queries in real-time and crafting of self-help knowledge articles all clear the way for employees to focus on more fulfilling and higher value work, such as building customer relationships and resolving complex cases.

Analysing customer behavioral trends by tapping into historical data to provide next best actions also keeps customers satisfied, and most importantly, coming back.



## Retail 2024: Technology driving change, but leadership is the navigator

Mariette Frazer 5 Jan 2024



According to the State of Service Report, 83% of decision makers plan to increase investments in automation over the next year.

Empowering customers to solve their own issues with AI-powered self-service tools can be a win-win for customers and organisations, too, catering to customer preferences while saving resources.

According to our research, 75% of service organisations provide a self-service solution]

From knowledge-powered help centres, to customer portals, to AI-powered chatbots, self service tools are transforming the operational efficiency of high-performing service organisations.

### AI Drives demand for trusted data

AI and automation can help agents deliver enhanced customer experiences to balance new demands in ways that benefit the organisation, their customers, and employees. But the AI revolution is really a data revolution. Instilling trust in AI means instilling trust in the data that powers it.

Currently, only 37% of customers trust AI to be as accurate as a human.

While this technology excels at optimising processes and resolving simple cases, frontline employees are the real experts who engage with customers in uniquely human ways, building trusted relationships that AI could not on its own.

According to the State of Service Report, 92% of service professionals say nurturing customer relationships is increasingly important.

Trust will become even more critical, requiring organisations to ground their AI on a foundation of trusted customer data, knowledge, and service policies.

## ABOUT LINDA SAUNDERS

head of Solution Engineering, Salesforce South Africa

■ Widespread adoption of AI is shaping next-gen customer service - 26 Apr 2024

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>