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Shaping the Smarter, More Automated CX of the Future

*How leading companies differentiate on AI adoption,
proactive outreach, and operational excellence*

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Modeling the Way to CX Success

Whether artificial intelligence (AI)-powered agent assistants, digital communications channels, self-service interactive voice response, or any other contact center platform capability, technology is not only a starting point for customer experience (CX) success but also mission critical. But not just any technology will do. Picking the wrong technology can lead to problems such as fragmented omnichannel experiences, misrouted calls, and an inability to personalize a customer engagement or provide necessary context to the agent handling the interaction. Rather than create CX success, poor technology choices can doom a company to failure. Employees will become less efficient, customer ratings drop, and new revenue opportunities disappear. On the other hand, Metrigy's research shows that successful use of CX technologies leads to measurable improvements in business metrics, including employee efficiency, customer satisfaction, and revenue growth.

Determining the right mix of technologies for CX excellence can be easier said than done. In a global study of 1,000 CX leaders conducted on behalf of Cisco, Metrigy found that only half of participating companies feel their contact center technology fully allows them to deliver ideal CX. AI is making a difference: In the study, 72.0% of companies rolling out AI as extensively as they can say their contact center technology fully enables them to deliver an ideal customer experience, vs. 53.8% of those not expanding AI rollout at all.

With an eye on AI for CX in particular, this report will explore three trends shaping CX: increasing AI adoption and automation, shifting reliance from manual to proactive outreach, and deploying advanced CX technologies, such as auto CSAT, interaction analytics, and hyper automation, among others, for operational excellence. Additionally, it will highlight which AI technologies and strategies can move the needle on CX success based on analysis of leading companies.

The AI Maturity Model

To determine companies leading with AI, Metrigy scored participating companies using a zero-to-five scale, with zero the lowest score and five the highest, on five baseline metrics:

- Use or planned use of AI for CX
- AI as an enabler for delivering ideal CX
- Measured customer satisfaction ratings
- Measured agent efficiency
- Measured revenue growth

AI Maturity Model Grouping	
	Point range
Laggards	0-8
Followers	9-12
Pacesetters	13-18
Leaders	19-22

Figure 1: AI Maturity Model Grouping

We then segmented the companies into four groupings, as shown in the table above. Companies looking to improve their AI strategies can model decisions based on what Leaders are doing.

Shaping CX for 2025 & Beyond

As CX leaders work toward a future in which contact centers are more intelligent and automated, we see increased focus on AI adoption, a shift to proactive outreach, and technologies that help companies achieve operational excellence. Let's explore each of these.

Trend 1: AI Adoption & Automation on the Rise

Nearly 60% of companies studied are rolling out AI as extensively as they can. Comparatively, 38.0% are taking a more moderate approach, expanding their AI use, but slowly. (Of course, each research participant's definition of "as extensively" and "slowly" are relative.)

Fewer than 5% either aren't planning to expand their use whatsoever or aren't certain how their rollout will change. Which type of AI or automation companies are rolling out varies widely, based on use case. Although generative AI would be most apt for companies looking to enable auto-summaries of customer interactions, for example, customer-facing AI virtual agents may be the go-to for companies prioritizing customer self-service.

Generative AI, translation, and agent assist are the top AI technologies in use or planned for adoption by the end of 2024, with AI-powered, proactive communications and voice-based AI virtual agents for customers being the top growth areas for 2025 or later (see Figure 2, below).

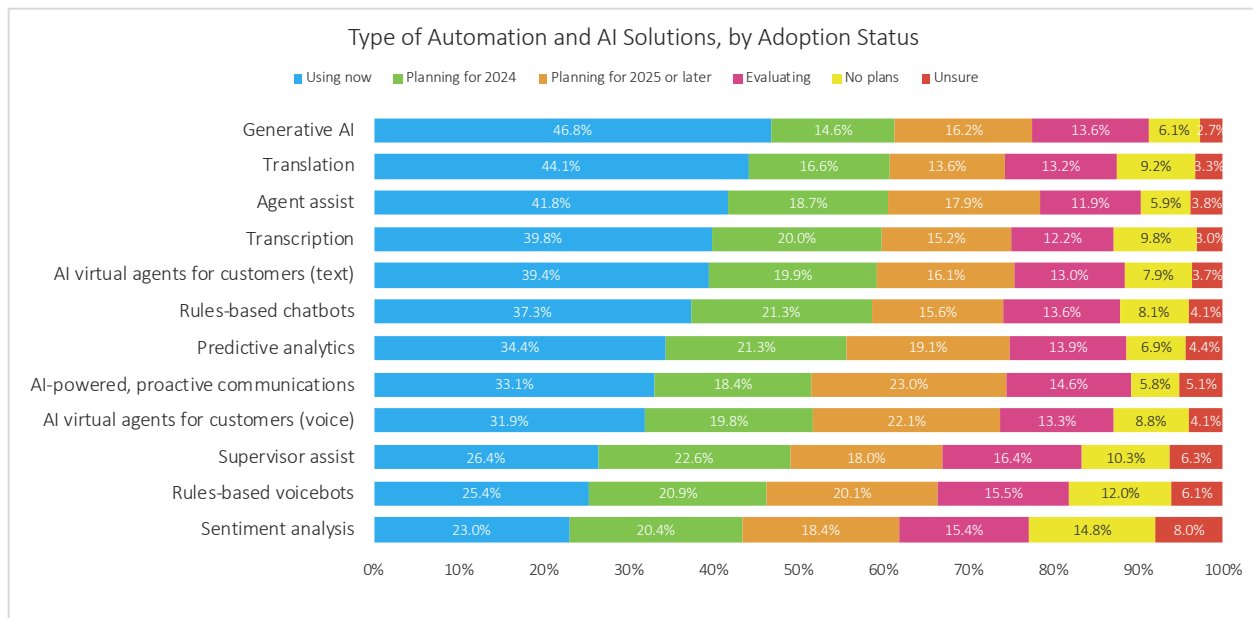


Figure 2: Type of Automation and AI Solutions, by Adoption Status

Success Correlations

As noted in the introduction, this study shows a correlation between extensive AI rollout and the ability to deliver ideal CX, with most of the companies rolling out AI as extensively as they can saying their contact center technology fully enables them to deliver an ideal customer experience. The proof is in measured results, such as:

- **Churn** – A decision not to expand AI use can have dramatic effect on churn. Companies in this study reported an average customer churn in calendar year 2023 of 21.5%. That average rises more than 2.3x, to 50.3%, for companies not expanding AI.
- **Agent turnover** – Lack of AI expansion leads to similar results on agent turnover, raising the average agent turnover in 2023 from 24.0% for all companies to 42.3% for companies that have stalled on AI.

What Leaders Are Doing

Based on Metrigy's AI Maturity Model, as shown below, Leaders are:

- **Rolling out AI far more extensively than others** – 1.7x more Leaders than Pacesetters are deploying AI widely, and 3.3x more than Followers
- **Have three types of AI technologies most in use** – agent assist, AI virtual agents for customers (text), and generative AI-powered self-service
- **Showing the highest improvement across five critical contact center KPIs** – after call work, first contact resolution, call containment, customer hold time, average handle time

Metrigy AI Maturity Model - AI Adoption				
	Laggards	Followers	Pacesetters	Leaders
	Strategy			
Rolling out AI extensively	0%	23%	45%	76%
KPI directional change improved with AI use				
After call work	0%	15%	49%	78%
First contact resolution (FCR)	N/A	31%	67%	82%
Call containment	0%	15%	53%	78%
Customer hold time	0%	23%	65%	84%
Average handle time (AHT)	0%	38%	69%	87%
KPI actual % change				
After call work	0%	-8%	-14%	-30%
FCR	N/A	6%	18%	28%
Call containment	0%	1%	15%	29%
Customer hold time	0%	1%	17%	31%
AHT	0%	2%	17%	33%
Technology adoption - using now				
Agent assist	10%	28%	60%	73%
AI virtual agent for customers (text)	7%	20%	58%	79%
Generative AI-powered self-service	13%	37%	50%	73%
N/A = very small data set				

Figure 3: Metrigy AI Maturity Model - AI Adoption

Trend 2: Shift from Manual to Proactive Outreach

Proactive communications is a staple of modern CX; in this study, the majority of companies (86.0%) are reaching out to their customers proactively. And the more proactivity, the better, as Metrigy has seen in other research. In our *Customer Experience Optimization (CXO): 2024-25* research, 56.3% of 544 companies studied globally attribute a boost in CX to more proactive

outreach to customers. Common use cases include sending reminders to order or renew products and services, upselling/cross-selling in alignment with customer preferences, alerting customers about upcoming appointments, or notifying them about shipments.

With promises such as improved CSAT, greater customer loyalty, and more revenue (through upselling/cross-selling), companies are relying more and more on proactive outreach. Within three years, the majority of companies in the CXO study see customers shifting to mostly proactive (see Figure 4, below).

Outlook for Proactive Outreach	
<i>In general, do you see customer service shifting from mostly inbound (customers to companies) to mostly proactive outreach (from companies to customers)?</i>	
Yes, within a year	31.9%
Yes, within 1-3 years	37.3%
Yes, sometime after 3 years	10.1%
No, never	8.2%
Unsure	10.1%
No, and proactive outreach will become less prevalent	2.5%

Figure 4: Outlook for Proactive Outreach

However, much of this outreach today is handled via manual processes or rules-based automation, with fewer than one-third of the companies in the study commissioned by Cisco using AI-driven communications. As companies look to achieve their goal of shifting to mostly proactive outreach, they should explore how to supplement their manual and rules-based mechanisms with the greater automation and dynamism afforded by AI-triggered communications. This is the difference, say, between a subscription renewal date triggering a renewal notice and using AI algorithms to analyze customer data—browsing history, purchase patterns, etc.—for likely churn and proactively sending personalized offers to encourage renewal. With AI-based proactive outreach comes the ability to empower customers, as well—allowing them to reroute shipping to a new address upon receiving a notice, for example. Fortunately, the move to AI-powered outreach is a top growth area for 2025, as noted in the previous section.

Success Metrics

Success metrics for companies already using AI-powered proactive communications are positive. Among a dozen AI and automation technologies studied, the use of AI-powered proactive outreach nets below average customer churn and the highest Net Promoter Score rating of all, at 61.3 (compared to the average of 57.0).

What Leaders Are Doing

Metrigy's AI Maturity Model shows Leaders ahead on proactive outreach, with a sizable gap between them and all others in the use of AI-powered proactive communications.

Metrigy AI Maturity Model - Proactive Outreach				
	Laggards	Followers	Pacesetters	Leaders
Proactive outreach	80%	91%	90%	96%
Proactive outreach using AI	6%	20%	36%	61%

Figure 5: Metrigy AI Maturity Model - Proactive Outreach

Trend 3: Setting the Bar on Operational Excellence

As CX leaders undertake AI initiatives and shift to mostly proactive outreach, they do so with a mission of achieving operational excellence—a continuation of the evolution most companies have gone through from thinking of their contact center in terms of cost to the business to understanding it as a value driver. For a contact center, operational excellence is about delivering high-quality service on a consistent basis while maximizing efficiency.

Achieving operational excellence requires scrutiny across the contact center, from call handling to customer feedback, integration with key applications and platforms, knowledge management, workforce management, and more. Among participating companies in this study, 60.2% see customer relationship management tools and integration as tops for driving operational excellence, followed by quality management tools, knowledge base, real-time analytics and reporting (non-AI), in the 55%-to-56% range. Around one-third also rely on manual performance tracking and historical insights.

Beyond traditional contact center applications and integrations, AI's introduction has ramped up a company's ability to achieve operational excellence. Here are five trending AI technologies that companies are starting to rely on for meeting their service and efficiency goals:

- **Auto CSAT** – Sentiment analysis and natural language processing evaluate an interaction and assign a CSAT score based on real-time comparisons to similar interactions with others
- **Hyper automation** – AI and machine learning (ML) rely on dynamic data and analytics to automate processes, actions, and recommendations in real-time
- **Hyper personalization** – AI and ML rely on dynamic data, vs. only historical or static data, to personalize an interaction

- **Interaction analytics** – Analysis of data gathered from each customer interaction (length, resolution, hold time, demographics, etc.) to help companies evaluate areas for improvement and successful practices
- **Sentiment analysis** – AI and ML track voice tone, word choice, typing nuances (all capital letters, for example), and more to determine a customer’s emotion or sentiment during an interaction

Among this study’s participants, interaction analytics is most in use, by 63.8% of all companies and 65.2% of those rolling out AI extensively. For all companies, auto CSAT and hyper automation follow with around 46% adoption each. Further behind, but not inconsequential, are hyper personalization, at 43.2%, and sentiment analysis, at 39.0%. Figure 6 below shows adoption of these technologies by AI rollout plans.

Type of AI for Business Optimization, by AI Rollout Status			
	Rolling out as extensively as we can	Expanding rollouts slowly	Not expanding rollout at all
Interaction analytics	65.2%	65.1%	46.2%
Hyper automation	53.8%	33.7%	61.5%
Auto CSAT	51.5%	40.0%	38.5%
Hyper personalization	48.5%	33.7%	76.9%
Sentiment analysis	46.2%	30.3%	30.8%
None of the above	3.4%	4.0%	.0%
Unsure	1.9%	5.1%	7.7%

Figure 6: Type of AI for Business Optimization, by AI Rollout Status

Success Metrics

That AI, in general, is helping companies with their operational excellence goals is evidenced in key performance indicators (KPIs). Sixty percent of companies studied report positive AI impact on their key contact center metrics (see Figure 7, next page). Across the board, the KPIs have improved by 31%, or more, on average.

	Gotten better	Gotten worse	Stayed the same
Average handle time	75.7%	3.7%	16.5%
First-call resolution	72.0%	5.0%	18.0%
Customer hold time	71.7%	6.1%	18.9%
Call containment rate	62.7%	3.7%	23.3%
After-call work time	60.2%	3.0%	25.4%

Figure 7: AI Impact on Contact Center KPIs

What Leaders Are Doing

Looking at the five AI technologies for operational excellence, Leaders are ahead on adoption of auto CSAT, hyper automation, hyper personalization, and sentiment analysis. Note that while a significant portion also are using interaction analytics, Leaders are slightly behind Pacesetters on this technology's use (46% vs. 52%), as they focus on other operational differentiators.

Metrigy AI Maturity Model - AI Technologies in Use for Operational Excellence				
	Laggards	Followers	Pacesetters	Leaders
Auto CSAT	0%	2%	46%	52%
Hyper automation	0%	0%	47%	52%
Hyper personalization	1%	1%	47%	52%
Interaction analytics	0%	2%	52%	46%
Sentiment analysis	0%	1%	47%	52%

Figure 8: Metrigy AI Maturity Model - AI Technologies in Use for Operational Excellence

Conclusion & Recommendations

CX leaders looking to deliver second-to-none customer experiences can use Metrigy's AI Maturity Model as a guidepost for strategic decision making and technology prioritization. Doing so will help drive operational excellence while improving competitive positioning, not to mention making them champions with their customers. Based on characteristics of Leaders discussed in this report, CX leaders should:

- **Use AI extensively** – Starting with a small proof-of-concept deployment not only is OK, but advisable. But don't let AI initiatives stall out from there. Continuously explore how AI, of all sorts, might positively impact employee tasks and customer interactions, and keep testing and rolling out.
- If not started with AI already, or have limited usage, **begin with or add in one or all of three technologies**: agent assist, AI virtual agents for customers (text), and generative AI-powered self-service. These are the technologies most in use by Leaders.
- **Measure and monitor AI's impact on contact center KPIs** – Leaders show improvements across after call work, first contact resolution, call containment, customer hold time, and average handle time. CX leaders that don't correlate a change

in metric resulting from AI's use will have difficulty showing a return on investment, and assuring continuous budget for AI advances.

- **Formulate a plan for AI-powered proactive outreach** – Dynamic, AI-triggered communications with customers is replacing inbound communications. Relying on manual or rules-based automations won't be effective enough for this future.
- **Use the latest in AI and automation to optimize CX** – Consider the use of auto CSAT, hyper automation, hyper personalization, and sentiment analysis, all technologies that Leaders have implemented to streamline processes and elevate CX.

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