hiver

Mastering AI in Customer Support

Lessons from 20+ Industry Leaders

Inside the Report

What AI Is and Isn’t!

The very fact that companies are able to automate entire workflows, and assist customers at the click of a button is a testament to how much technology has advanced in recent years.

When discussing technology, you can’t ignore how AI is changing customer support. To get to the bottom of this, we spoke to over 20 customer support leaders. They’re not just highlighting trends; they’re testing, implementing, and learning from AI in real-world customer support operations.

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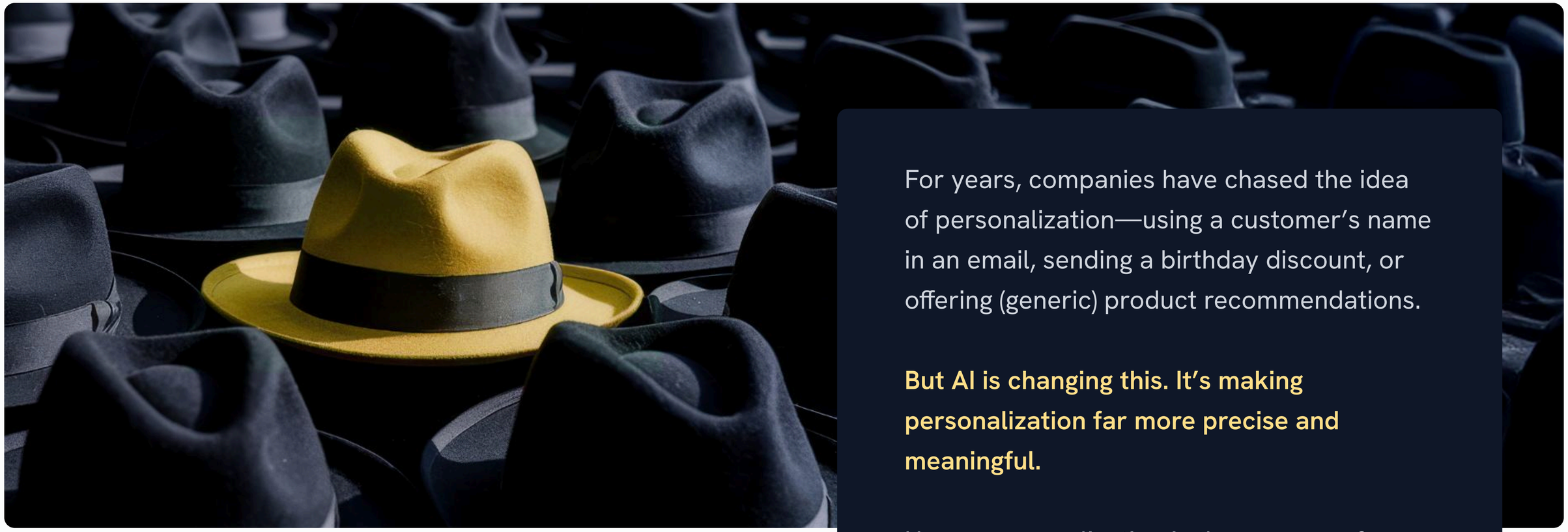


Hyper-Personalization: How AI Makes Every Customer Feel Like a VIP

For years, companies have chased the idea of personalization—using a customer's name in an email, sending a birthday discount, or offering (generic) product recommendations.

But AI is changing this. It's making personalization far more precise and meaningful.

Hyper-personalization is the process of displaying highly curated content and product recommendations to customers. It involves understanding the customer journey at a deep level, beyond name and email.

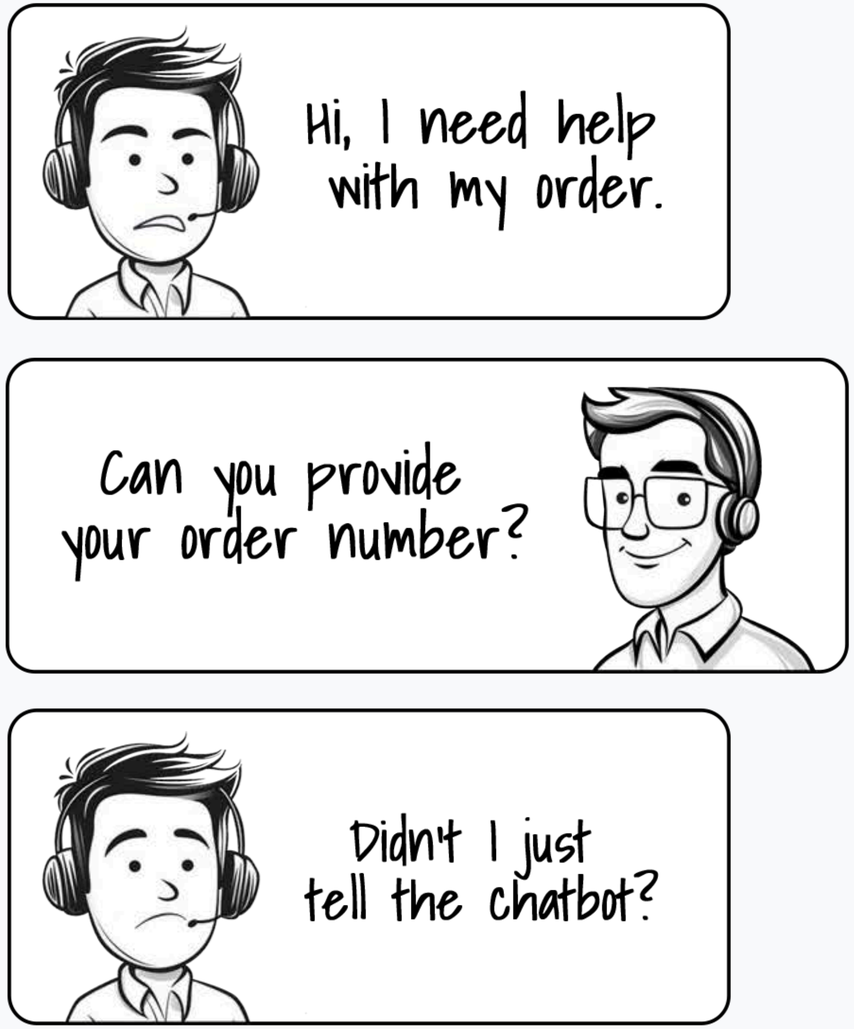
AI will look at a customer’s history, including buying patterns, past support calls, how they compare to other customers, and more. This will allow the company to make “hyper-personalized” suggestions through automation or during human-to-human interactions with sales and support people.

Support agents will have this information at their fingertips (on their screens), allowing them to improve relationships by making customers feel known and appreciated.

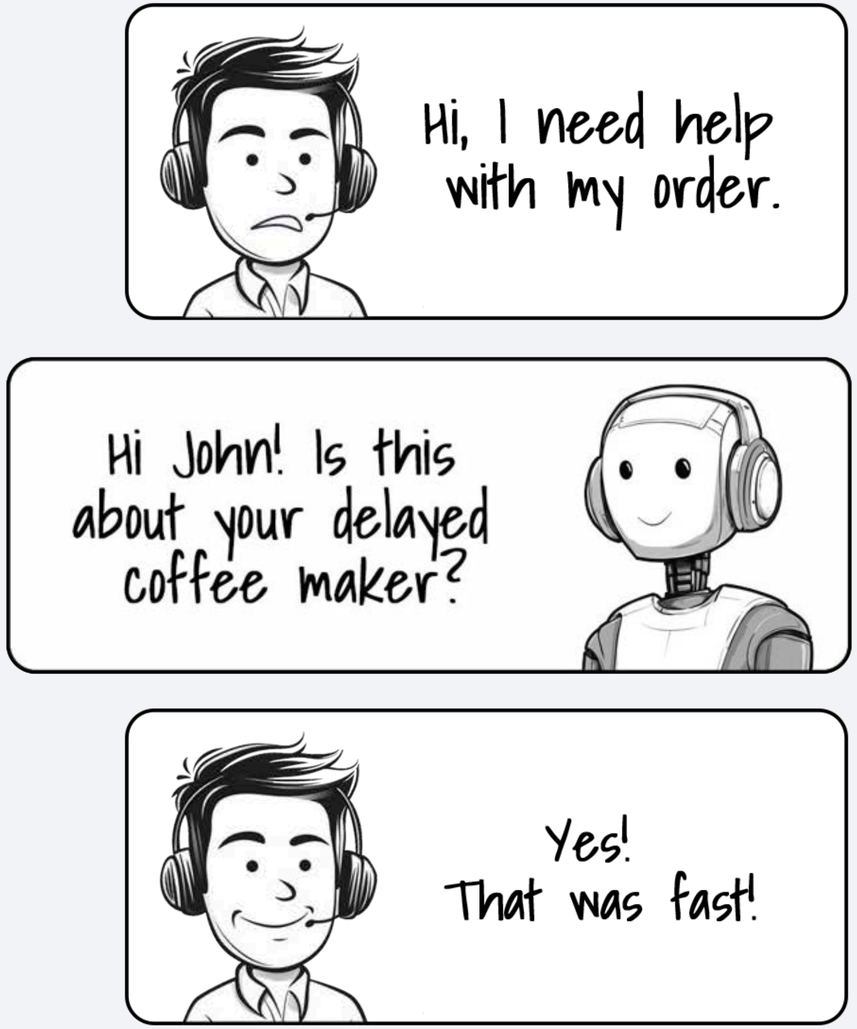
Shep Hyken

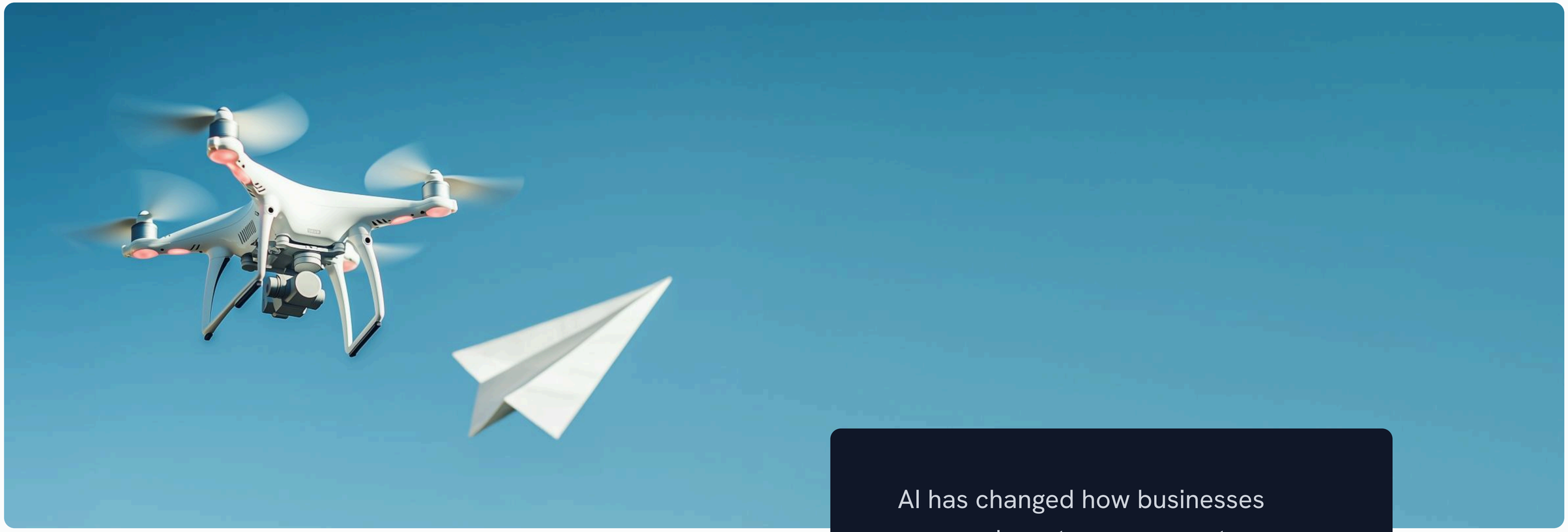
Customer Service and Customer Experience Expert

Without AI



With AI





Empowered, Not Replaced: AI Co-Pilots in Customer Support

AI has changed how businesses approach customer support.

But there’s a fine line between using AI to help teams work smarter and using AI for anything and everything.

Too many companies will try to apply AI where it does not belong. It will be painful and expensive. If we focus on AI as an assistant—helping customers self-serve, guiding agents with workflows, and detecting issues proactively—AI becomes a powerful tool. But just because we have a drawer full of hammers does not mean all of our problems are nails.

AI should never replace actual live agents. It lacks knowledge, compassion, nuance, and critical thinking skills. It can do repetitive tasks, scan for known answers, and summarize them, but it should not be used for generating new content.

Miles Goldstein

Global Product & Technical Support Executive

Where AI works best

- Smart Self-Service – Chatbots and knowledge bases help customers find answers instantly when set up correctly.
- Proactive Problem Detection – AI spots one-off issues before they become larger problems.
- Example: In fintech, AI can detect unusual transactions and auto-lock an account, reducing support calls.

Where AI falls short

- Can't Replace Humans – AI lacks empathy and struggles with complex, emotional situations.
- Limited Creativity – AI can summarize but needs humans for nuanced conversations.
- Example: A chatbot might flag a frustrated customer, but only a human can truly turn the experience around.

50% customer support professionals believe AI and humans will collaborate together over the next five years.

AI is most powerful in tasks that involve language and prediction. We're seeing a shift from full automation and cost-cutting toward co-pilot functionality. These tools help categorize and route requests, reduce onboarding time, and assist with sentiment analysis—while ensuring customers still receive a personalized experience.

Co-pilot or agent assist will reduce onboarding time and allow companies to focus more on other AI features, such as sentiment analysis which require further personalized outreach.

Karen Lam

Director of Customer Support at Top Hat

“I am confident that co-pilots for agents will transform the lives of those in customer support roles. By offering access to extensive knowledge and providing tangible assistance in crafting content, it will significantly elevate the quality of customer experiences delivered by agents.”

Giulio Castiglioni

Customer Care Director at Playtomic

AI is best at speed, consistency, and efficiency. But there are things AI simply can’t do—show empathy, think critically in complex situations, or build trust with customers in ways only humans can.

A key customer support trend is the integration of human talent with AI tools to enhance, rather than simply replace human interactions. AI will handle routine queries through automation, allowing for faster responses and efficiency, but human agents will be needed to step in for more complex issues requiring empathy, critical thinking, and personalized problem-solving.

This approach augments the human impact by using AI to streamline tasks, freeing up human agents to focus on high-value interactions where emotional intelligence and creativity are essential. The goal is to create seamless collaboration between AI and human agents.

Chloe Shill

Director of Operations at Flight CX

I think more and more businesses are becoming comfortable with fully automating a portion of their customer support. Copilot tools are still really popular, but more and more companies we speak to are ready to let AI handle a portion (50%+) of their customer support without any human intervention or oversight.

There are lots of use cases in business today where AI isn't quite ready, and we might need to wait 6-12 months. But for 1st line customer support, it's production-ready. Looking at what we're seeing, like 70%+ of support tickets resolved by AI with My AskAI, or the results shown by Intercom Fin AI or Ada, it's all showing how AI is delivering real value for businesses today, and not just hype or promises for tomorrow.

Alex Rainey

Founder of MyAskAI.com

One big AI trend I am seeing in customer service is the use of generative AI for conversational agents. These LLMs are really changing the game when it comes to how we interact with customers. Their ability to engage in multi-turn conversations, ask clarifying questions, and guide users through a step-by-step resolution process has been a huge help to us—boosting efficiency, cutting costs, and improving customer satisfaction.

With AI handling the initial triage of queries, our support team can now focus on delivering an even better customer experience. We've noticed a big boost in customer satisfaction.

Christian Sokolowski

Vice President of Customer Support at Rebuy Engine

When speaking of trends, everyone's mind goes straight to AI—and while that's an important element of optimizing your team's operations, I really think the major opportunity for brands is connection and community.

Consumers want to spend their (limited) $$$ on brands they relate to and feel emotionally connected with. What I've seen in my experience working at Earth Rated is if you speak to your customers on a personal level, they will become your biggest ambassadors.

Stephanie Ouellet

Consultant - Customer Experience

AI as Your Training Partner, Not Just a Tool

AI in customer support is often seen as a frontline agent — routing tickets, and automating responses.

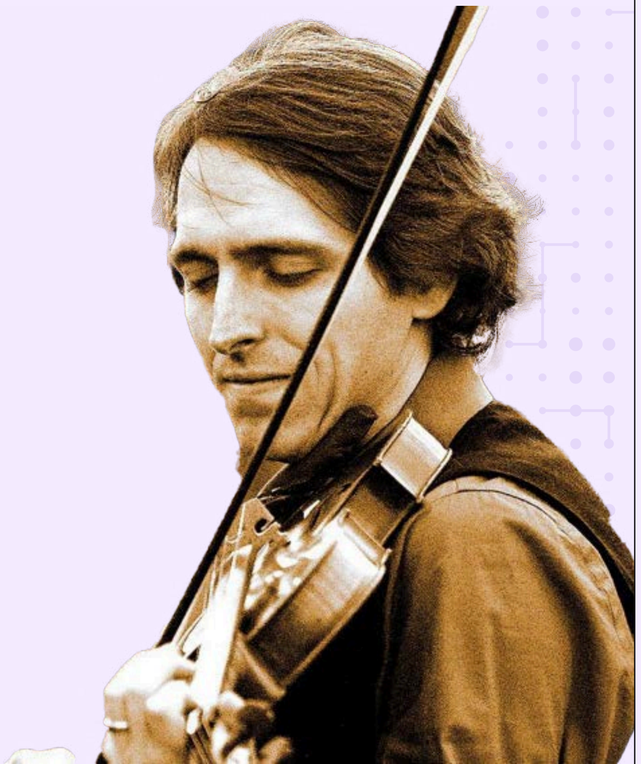
But its most valuable impact might actually be behind the scenes. Beyond assisting customers, AI is proving to be a powerful training tool for support teams. It's helping them learn from previous customer interactions and upskill on the go.

The biggest trend I'm seeing is a push to use AI more, but I've yet to see it provide significant benefits in customer-facing interactions or on the backend—at least, not relative to the current cost. That said, I think AI has an opportunity to assist in a critical area: training support teams.

I've recently been testing out an AI training bot (created by Power to the Brand) that helps train support technicians to handle difficult customer conversations. The bot simulates chat interactions in a controlled environment, where technician morale and brand loyalty aren't at stake. The level of frustration or cooperation of the AI 'customer' can be adjusted to fit different training needs.

Justin Bonar-Bridges

Customer Support Technician at Verisk Property Estimating Solutions (Xactware)

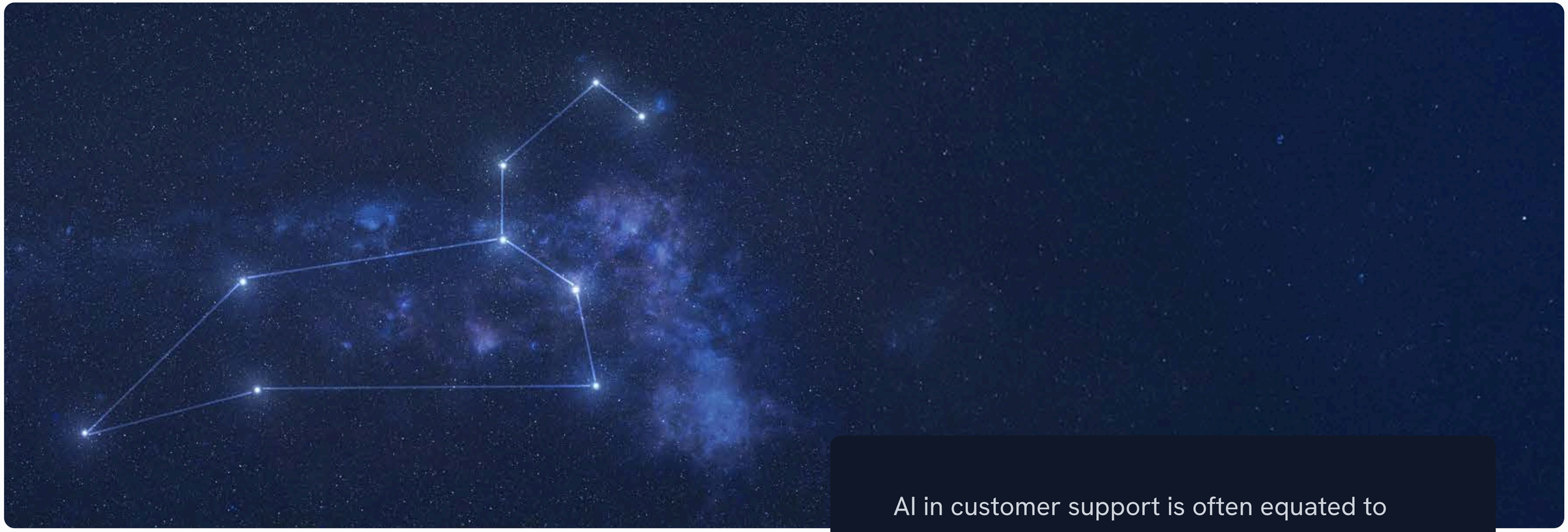


Real-time transcription of customer service calls is gaining traction. AI transcribes the conversation, allowing for multiple key functionalities. It applies sentiment analysis, detecting frustration or dissatisfaction and advising agents on how to respond. It also performs keyword spotting, surfacing relevant information instantly, which reduces resolution time.

AI even provides real-time suggestions—if a customer mentions booking travel, the system can pull up relevant options. Finally, post-call analysis ensures compliance, generates summaries, and helps supervisors identify coaching opportunities. One company that is leading the way with real-time transcription is American Express.

Dan Gingiss

Customer Experience Expert & Keynote Speaker



AI That Thinks in the Background, So You Don’t Have To

AI in customer support is often equated to chatbots and automation.

But one benefit which isn't talked about enough is how AI helps CX teams analyze data and make better decisions.

The AI trend that I think is gaining traction is analytical backend AI. There are some great companies out there acknowledging how impactful AI can be when it's working with us—not instead of us. AI needs to be molded, shaped, and corrected constantly to be effective. Pretending it can think, speak, or behave like a person is an insult to both customers and the teams that work so hard to serve them.

You can't put the customer first when you're firing the staff that serve them, and replace them with a bot that no one is monitoring effectively. On the other hand, refusing to test AI at all is just telling your teams you don't trust them enough to use the tools they need to succeed.

Sarah Caminiti

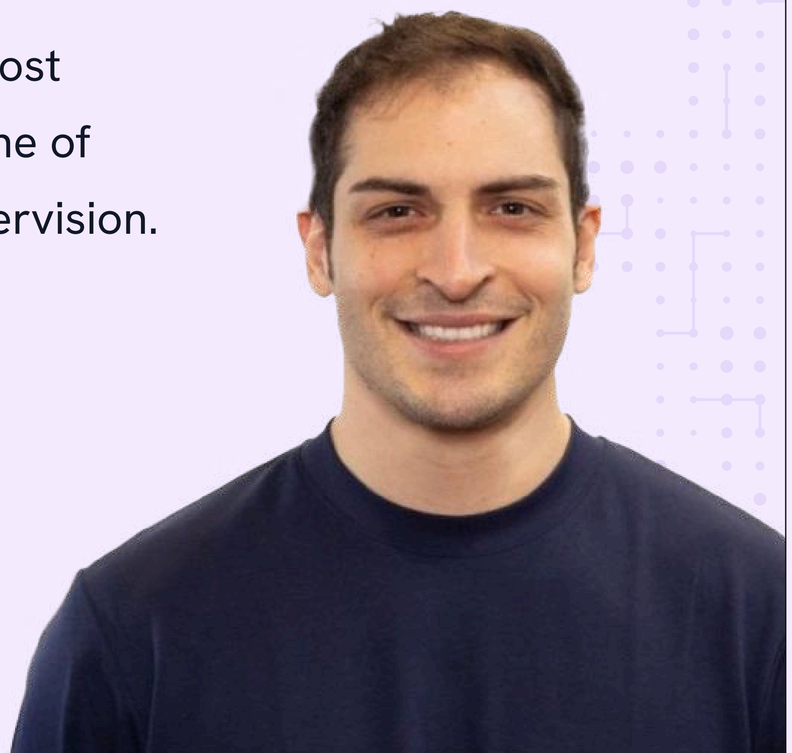
Customer Support Manager, Tailscale I Host of Epochal Growth

More and more repetitive workflows are being either augmented by AI to help humans perform at higher capacity and speed or replaced entirely—freeing up valuable time for work that requires higher cognitive functions. QA for customer support is a great example where AI can pattern match and analyze large volumes of multi-channel data with high accuracy.

Support and QA teams can now offload and fully automate the most basic checks and controls i.e. compliance, language used, and tone of voice, to focus on more complex cases which require human supervision.

Alex Marantelos

Co-Founder and CEO of Intryc

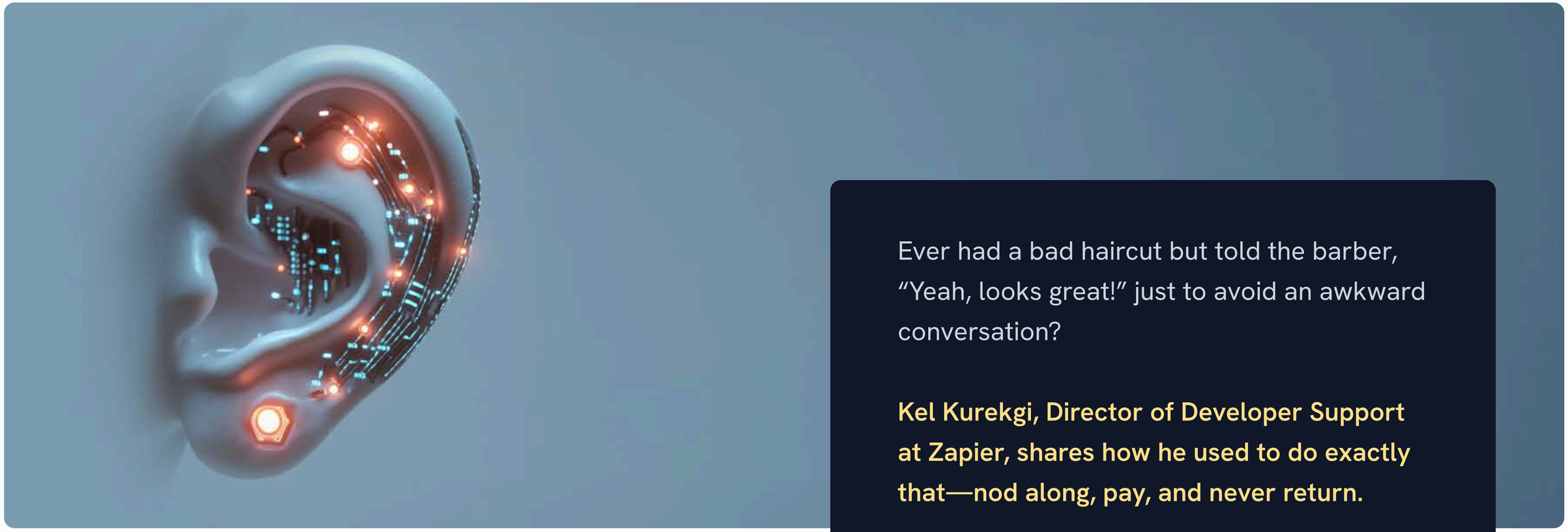


With AI-powered predictive analytics, companies can step in early and spot patterns that indicate potential problems. Features like real-time monitoring and automated alerts in customer service software make this proactive approach possible and impactful.

It's however important to note that AI is only as good as the data it learns from—great training data, clear documentation, and examples of human intervention are essential. The 'garbage-in, garbage-out' rule applies here as much as anywhere. It’s not about hype; it’s about using AI thoughtfully to create balance.

Louise Baldwin

Louise Baldwin, Co-founder of Archways AI



AI That Listens Between the Lines

Ever had a bad haircut but told the barber, “Yeah, looks great!” just to avoid an awkward conversation?

Kel Kurekgi, Director of Developer Support at Zapier, shares how he used to do exactly that—nod along, pay, and never return.

The barber never knew if he nailed the cut or completely botched it. That’s exactly what happens in customer support every day.

Most companies rely on CSAT surveys, NPS scores, and post-call ratings to gauge customer sentiment. But the problem? These methods only capture feedback from people who actively choose to respond. The silent majority—those who had an average or even terrible experience—often just move on to another company, without a word.

"Right now, we only track the customers who actually give us feedback. But what about the ones who just leave? In today's world, where customers have endless choices, ignoring the silent ones is a dangerous game."

Kel Kurekgi

Director of Developer Support at Zapier

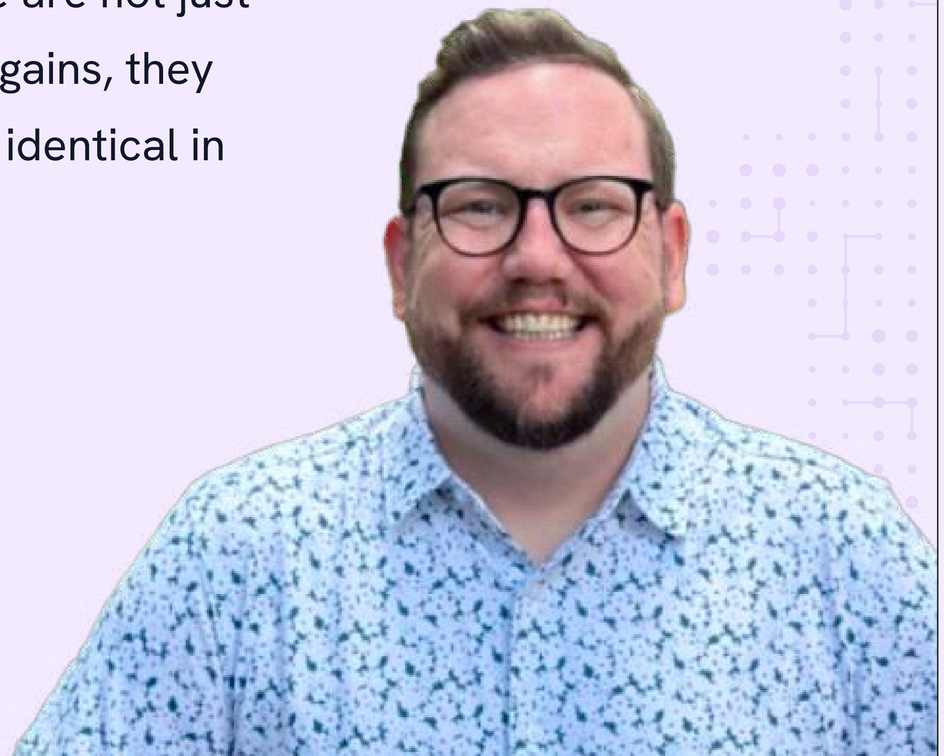
Kel highlights UltimateGPT as one of the tools making real progress in this space. It tracks sentiment across the entire customer journey, helping companies identify patterns, spot dissatisfaction early, and take action before a customer silently walks away.

Sentiment Analysis provides an entirely new set of eyes with which teams view customer interactions. But as I talk to support leaders, I hear a mix of feelings about AI in CX (and I feel those myself!). On one hand, the gains we can see from well-implemented AI are enormous, but we've all been burned by a poorly designed and implemented AI solution.

Companies that truly care about the customer experience are not just looking for the ability to deflect tickets or drive efficiency gains, they want to do this in a way that the customer's experience is identical in quality whether they are dealing with AI or a human.

Jordan Hooker

Manager of Customer Support at Axuall



AI That Knows Your Customers (and Their History)

For years, traditional chatbots have been more frustrating than helpful. They answered simple questions but fell apart the moment a conversation required any real context. That’s changing fast.

AI-powered chatbots are becoming more conversational, more contextual, and finally more useful. Instead of treating every interaction as a fresh start, these next-gen bots remember customer history, personalize responses, and ensure smoother, more human-like interactions.

Contextual conversational AI is unlocking new capabilities that bring continuity and enhanced personalization to customer conversations. The days of customers needing to repeat their issues across different channels are fading, as chatbots begin to utilize a customer's full history to contextualize conversations.

I'm excited about the accessibility of tools like ChatGPT and how they can foster creative problem-solving for teams that traditionally don't have access to a lot of resources. However, one challenge I've noticed is the need to communicate more effectively with leadership teams about how we've been using AI and how we plan to use it in the future.

Siobhán James

Director of Client Operations at Fullscript

I see AI for efficiency being the biggest trend. Conversational AI and chatbots are improving, but they still have a long way to go to really provide top-tier customer experience.

I predict we will see more support organizations focusing on augmenting their human talent to be faster, more contextual, and reduce their manual steps through workflow identification and automation.

Craig Stoss

VP of Partner Success and Solutions at Kodif

Why this trend matters?

Traditional Chatbots

You

I want to return a product I bought last week.

Bot

Please provide your order number.

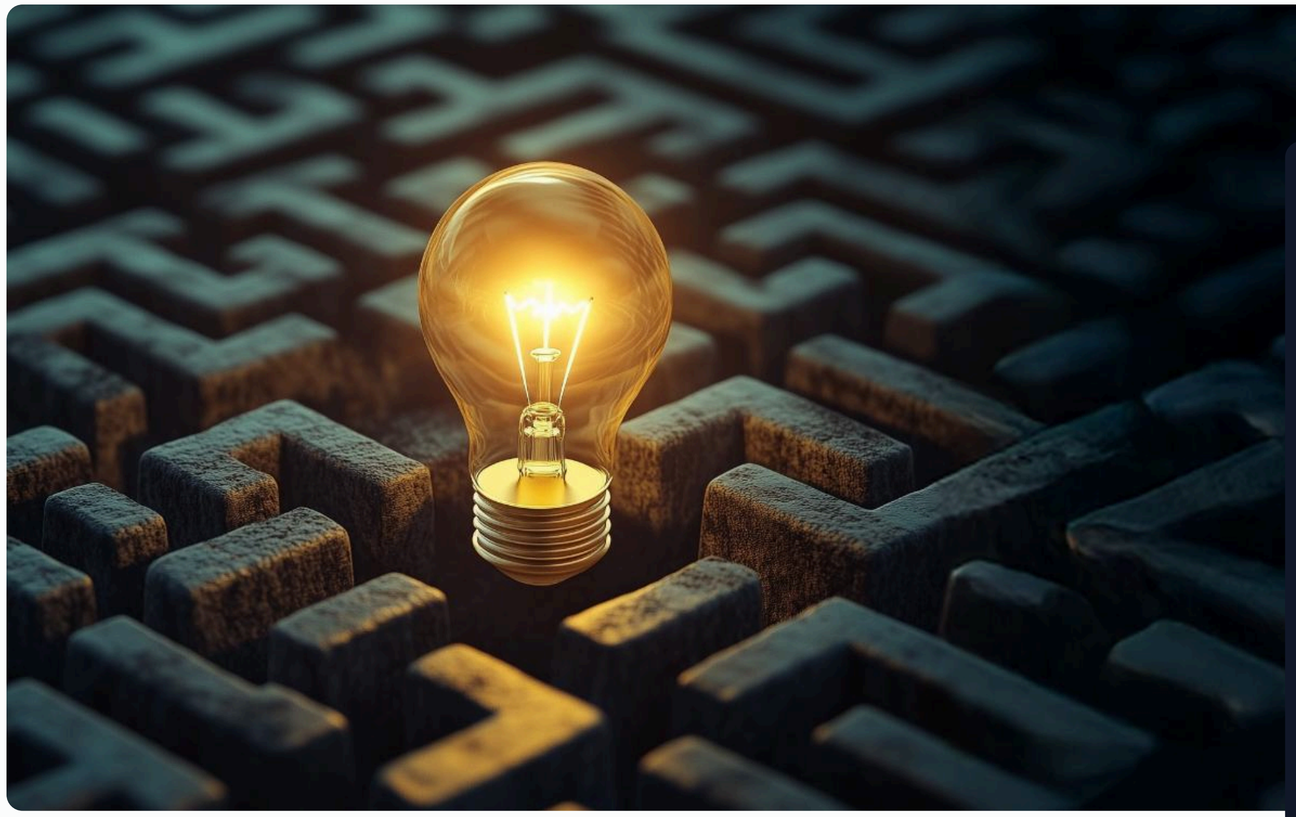
Modern Contextual Conversational AI

You

I want to return a product I bought last week.

Bot

Hi Alex! I see you purchased a laptop on Feb 10th. Would you like to start a return for this item?



From Searching to Solving: AI-Powered Knowledge Management & Self-Service

Previously, companies struggled with knowledge management—outdated FAQs, scattered internal documentation, and self-service portals that don’t actually help customers. Support teams often spend too much time manually searching for answers in cluttered knowledge bases, leading to delays and inefficiencies. AI is finally changing that.

With AI-powered knowledge management, companies can organize, update, and deliver information more efficiently, making it easier for both customers and support agents to find answers.

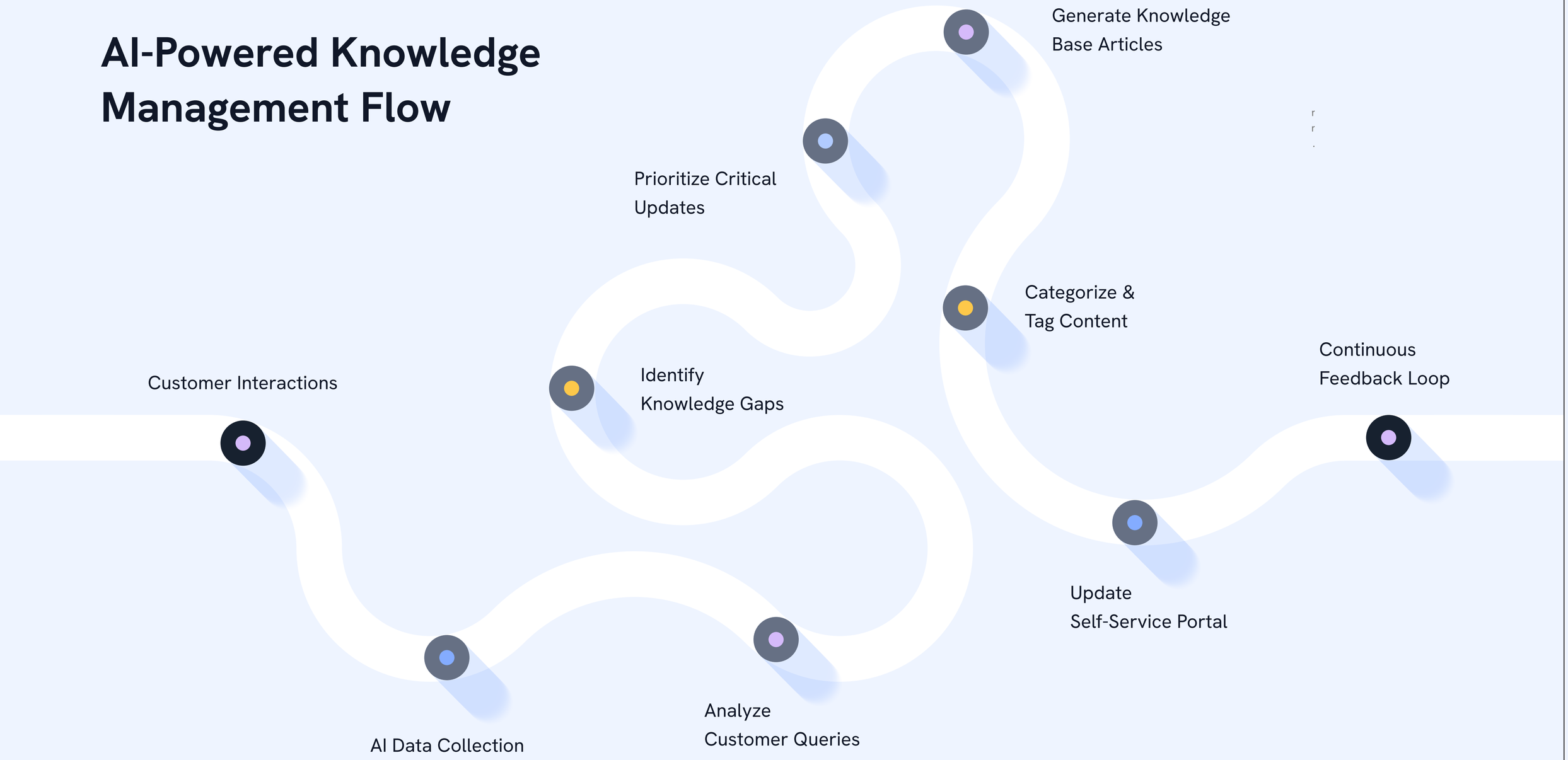
One AI trend that's rapidly gaining traction in customer service and support is AI-enhanced knowledge management systems for more efficient self-service. These systems are revolutionizing how companies organize, update, and deliver information to both customers and support agents.

This trend is critically important for several reasons. First, it directly addresses the growing customer demand for quick, accurate, and convenient support. Secondly, it significantly improves operational efficiency. Lastly, the data gathered from these interactions provide valuable insights into customer needs, preferences, and pain points.

Peter Harrison

Senior Technical Support Specialist at Zapier

AI-Powered Knowledge Management Flow



Without a doubt, tools that enable 24/7 customer self-service are on the up. Businesses are now able to scale their support teams without increasing headcount. AI bots are fast approaching a level where it's hard to tell if you're talking to a human or a bot! But what makes these tools so incredible is that they don't just chat—they complete actions like refunds, cancellations, and account updates that used to require a support agent.

I know of companies that no longer have a customer service team at all because AI is handling all of their volume. But I also see entirely new roles coming out of this—Conversation Designers, AI Auditors, Content Auditors, and more.

Daniel Allen

Customer Experience Manager at Airportr Technologies

Aspect	Human-Only Workflows	Fully Automated Support
Speed	Slower response times due to manual ticket handling and resolution	Instantaneous responses for common queries and actions (e.g., refunds, account updates)
Scalability	Limited by team size; requires more agents as ticket volume increases	Scales effortlessly to handle high ticket volume without increasing headcount
Consistency	Varies by agent; dependent on training, experience, and workload	Consistent responses based on predefined rules and input data
Empathy & Personalization	High empathy and nuanced understanding of customer emotions	Limited empathy but capable of using sentiment analysis for tone adjustment
Cost Efficiency	High operational costs due to salaries, training, and turnover	Lower operational costs after initial setup; reduces repetitive workload for human agents
Complex Problem Solving	Excels at handling complex, multi-layered issues requiring judgement and nuance	Struggles with complex queries; escalates cases requiring human intervention
Type of support	Reactive approach; relies on customers reaching out with problems	Proactively identifies and resolves issues using predictive analytics

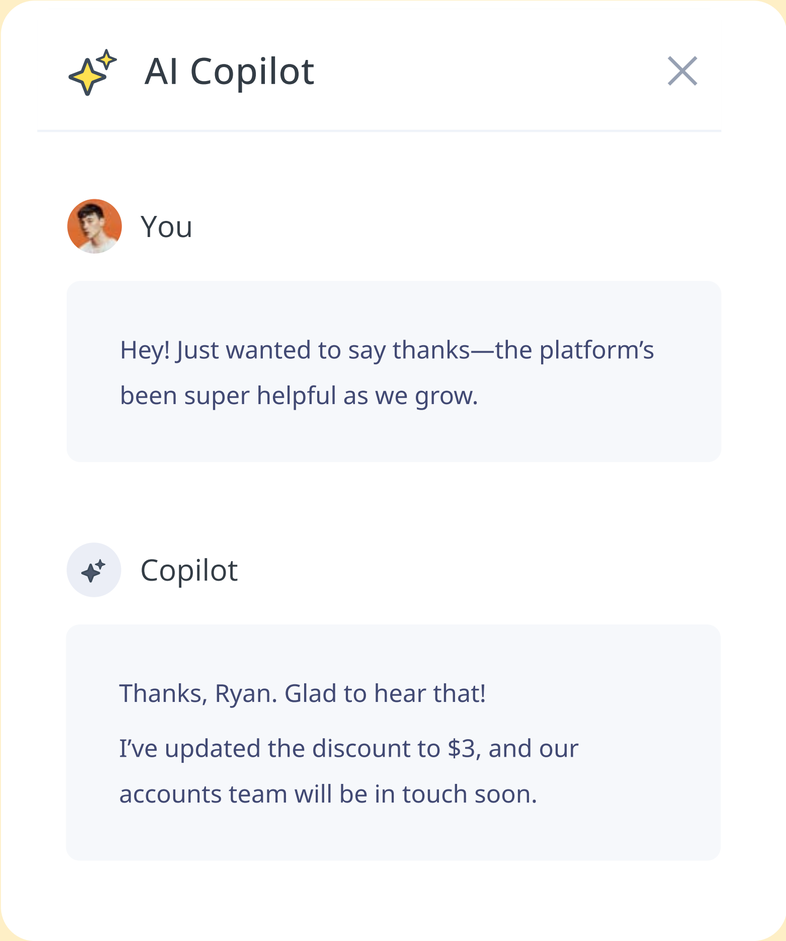
Final Thoughts

A big thank you to all the CX leaders, founders, and experts who took the time to share their stories with us. These conversations were a powerful reminder of what really matters: making customer support better, kinder, and more human. And yes, with the right use of AI too.

We, at Hiver, are exploring how AI can remove friction and help support teams do their best work. Our AI Copilot is a step in that direction: drafting replies, summarizing emails, and suggesting next steps so agents can respond faster and stay organized.

We're also actively building more AI capabilities to support teams behind the scenes—so they can show up stronger on the frontlines.

We hope this guide gave you a few ideas on how to use AI meaningfully, or how to design support that feels less robotic and more real. The journey's still unfolding, and we're all learning along the way.



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