



Business

**Artificial Intelligence.
Real Wisdom.**

Laila's Customer Services team is struggling to maintain quality as budgets are cut. But Laila knows how AI can increase customer satisfaction while lowering costs.

Right time, right place, right now:

How organizations can unleash the transformational power of AI and overcome their most critical CX orchestration challenges





In a marketplace defined by rapid change and rising customer expectations, delivering seamless, personalized experiences across every touchpoint is more vital than ever. A new global survey of CX leaders carried out by GlobalData and Orange Business lays bare the challenges facing organizations as they try to utilize the transformational potential of AI to address their orchestration challenges. By integrating advanced AI capabilities into the customer journey, organizations can break down silos, foster agility, and create truly unified experiences that drive satisfaction and loyalty.

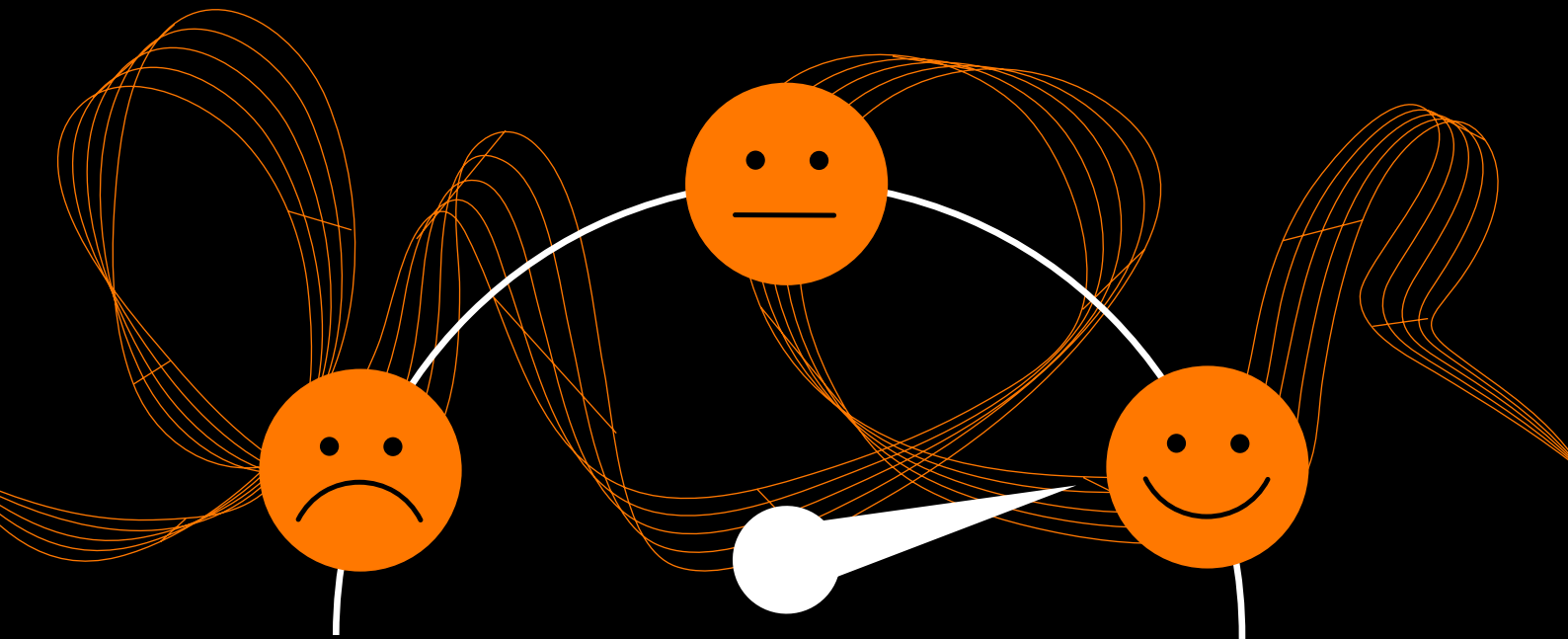
Customers don't get in touch with a brand because they are seeking a great experience – they do so because they have unresolved needs that need addressing. Their view of the experience they receive is simply a function of how easily – and how quickly – they perceive that their need is met. The responsibility of the brand they are dealing with is therefore to connect the customer – or the contact center agent that is helping them – to the information they need as seamlessly as possible.

This has been a perennial problem for CX leaders, and one that has only grown as data stores have proliferated. Today, there may be 20 or more different applications open on an agent's desktop: CRM, sales, marketing, and invoicing systems, to mention just a few. And a customer encountering an issue with a promotional offer they saw in a social media post will probably have interacted with a website chatbot before speaking with a call center agent. The interplay of each of these systems (and the data sources that underpin them) is a critical determinant of the quality of the customer journey, and any disharmony between them has the potential to ruin that experience. This is why each step in the customer journey must be carefully orchestrated – in real time – if the issue is to be successfully addressed.

Increasingly, organizations are turning to artificial intelligence (AI) to solve their orchestration challenges. The focus today is on generative AI (GenAI), which has clearly moved into mainstream use in the CX environment. The GlobalData survey of CX leaders found that **85%** saw themselves as “**advanced**” or “**somewhat advanced**” in their use of the technology, with

80% believing that the technology is having a positive impact. The same survey also found that almost one-third (**29%**) of respondents are already using agentic AI, with their clear focus being on the development of autonomous virtual agents and enhancing the ability of agents to solve customer challenges.

The GlobalData survey also revealed organizations are grappling not just with technological hurdles of AI but with the need to align people, processes, and technology. Over two-thirds (**68%**) of respondents said that siloed data was the biggest roadblock to improving the quality of the customer experience. However, over **40%** of respondents indicated that decision-making around AI for CX involves a broad coalition: data/AI teams, CX and customer service teams, digital and IT teams, and CRM teams. This highlights that orchestration is about far more than simply implementing new tools: **decision-making needs to be orchestrated every bit as much as the execution of an AI strategy. This requires cross-functional collaboration from the outset to ensure alignment on objectives, accountability, and success metrics.**

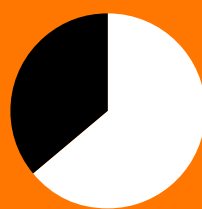


Human interaction at the right time

We are, of course, aware of some negative sentiment about the use of AI in contact centers (for instance, a Gartner study found that 64% of customers would prefer that companies didn't use AI for customer service¹).



To balance that out, Zendesk's CX Trends report² found that **51% of consumers say they prefer interacting with AI bots over humans when they want immediate service,**



and 64% said that they trust bots more when they sound "human-like". So, it may well be that these objections will decline as the quality of the bots improves.

Overall, Orange Business is very optimistic about the use of this technology in CX environments because, perhaps ironically, AI can serve to bring back the humanity to customer interactions by enabling call center agents to intervene in the customer journey at the right time.

One of customers' biggest bugbears is long wait times to get through to a call center agent. In fact, the GlobalData survey found that slow or inadequate customer service (cited by **46%** of respondents) was considered the most significant point of friction for customers; and we know that many companies struggle to answer 80% of incoming phone calls in **20 seconds** (which is generally considered to be the best-practice figure³).

By handling routine but time-consuming functions such as gathering basic information (e.g., the customer's name, account details, or order history) and then routing the inquiry to the right department, AI can lift much of the burden from call center agents. Orange Business recommends the use of AI-powered chatbots and voice bots that use GenAI, machine learning (ML), and natural language processing (NLP) to provide instant, natural-sounding responses. This then frees up agents to focus on those interactions in the customer journey where a human being can really make a difference to the overall experience.



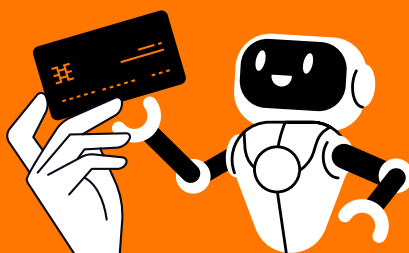
The human touch

Typically, there are three categories where the intervention of an agent will make a significant difference to the quality of the customer experience:



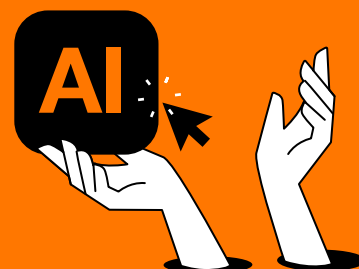
High value:

Situations such as upselling opportunities where there is a considerable return on the investment of the agent's time in helping the customer complete a task.



High stress:

Occasions (such as dealing with card fraud) where emotions are running high and the empathy of a human being will provide comfort to the customer.



High friction:

Those parts of the customer journey where (despite the best efforts of the CX team) customers regularly experience difficulties.

AI can also act as a “decision layer” across the entire technology stack to orchestrate the journey dynamically. For example, it could analyze customer sentiment and escalate an angry interaction with a bot to a human agent. As with most AI use cases in CX, this must be done in real time if it is to have a real impact.

Of course, AI is not only a benefit to the customer but to the organization and the agents, too. Staff salaries account for the overwhelming majority of contact center costs, and anything that makes better use of agents' time will deliver results straight to the bottom line. We are also seeing articles about Call Center

Stress Syndrome (CCSS), resulting from intense pressure, high call volumes, and difficult customers. Again, if AI can help to reduce agents' workloads, this will result in improved performance, enhanced morale, and greater staff retention.



The “where”, but not the “how”

Our experience of AI in CX – in our own contact centers and in our work with customers – suggests that there is little point in using GenAI to achieve marginal gains: organizations should identify and focus on a small number of use cases that have a strong connection to their overall customer strategy and will generate outcomes with impact and value.

The GlobalData survey suggests that organizations are quite clear on **where** AI can add the most value: improving the customer journey was cited by **94%** of respondents as the most significant priority for AI in CX. However, this is evidently easier said than done: almost two-thirds (**65%**) of respondents cited an inability to track the end-to-end customer journey as a challenge to closing the gap between customer expectations and their organization's ability to deliver against these.

As for **how** AI can enhance the customer journey, the GlobalData survey found that the two key drivers cited by respondents for its use in CX environments were automation (**93%**) and bot and agent AI orchestration (**84%**). The survey

suggests that, as organizations' level of sophistication with GenAI/agent AI grows over the next three years, investments in orchestration will be overtaken by those in areas such as agent assist.

The anticipated outcomes of these efforts were boosting productivity, cited by **37%** of respondents, personalizing customer interactions (**32%**), and improving loyalty and NPS (**29%**). However, almost half (**48%**) of those surveyed said that advice on use cases to prioritize was an area where partners can help them with the implementation of AI in CX environments.



This lack of certainty is most likely a result of the hype that CX vendors are generating for their AI capabilities. Caught between claim and counterclaim, customers are naturally unsure about what their priorities should be. This confusion will only deepen as organizations start to adopt agent AI.



Overcoming the orchestration gap

One of the most significant barriers to realizing true business value from AI initiatives is the orchestration gap – when AI solutions, enterprise platforms like CRM and knowledge bases, and human agents are not fully integrated. Without this coordination, AI-driven processes will operate in silos rather than as part of an integrated solution, resulting in fragmented processes and inconsistent customer experiences. Ultimately, this disconnect prevents organizations from achieving the returns on investment that effective orchestration can provide.

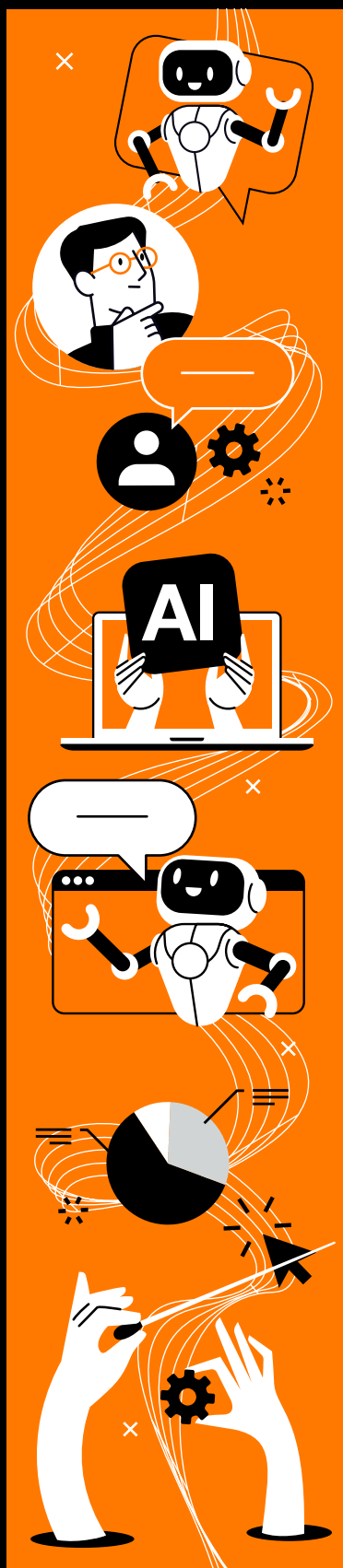
The GlobalData survey underscores the fact that poor orchestration is often the root cause of slow customer support –inadequate chat assistants (46%), inefficient ordering processes (38%), limited self-service options (36%), and disconnected support channels (31%) were listed as the biggest points of friction for customers. One of the key AI use cases is therefore the creation of “Agent Assist” tools that consolidate relevant information from different data stores: this enables agents to have more informed and efficient interactions with customers. Crucially, this needs to be done in real time – if not, this only compounds the problems of slow service rather than solving them.

Interestingly, the survey found that budget constraints are not the leading obstacle – real-time data access and integration are the true pain points. GenAI can help by acting as an intelligent integrator, aggregating and reconciling fragmented

customer data across sales, marketing, and support systems. Working in tandem with technologies such as a Customer Data Platform (CDP) and Customer Journey Analytics (CJA), AI can help to build a comprehensive, 360° view of customers that empowers businesses to deliver consistent and contextually relevant interactions at every touchpoint. (You can learn more about the role of data management in fueling AI success in CX environments in our companion eBook – “From silos to satisfaction”.)

Despite the hype emanating from the vendor community, relying solely on “out-of-the-box” vendor solutions may lead to missing functionality (and inadequate security). It is therefore important to identify any misalignment between your unique workflows and the solutions of your chosen vendor – and invest in the necessary customization.

However, effective CX orchestration isn't just about deploying the latest AI features: GenAI/agent AI features must not be developed in isolation from traditional contact center channels and tools, as this will not only limit the impact of the GenAI solution but will also worsen customers' perceived experience of those traditional channels.



Action points for business leaders

C-suite involvement is critical to the success of AI-driven CX projects: this ensures the right strategic vision and resource allocation is in place and will drive cross-functional alignment. All the relevant teams – not only the CX and customer service teams but also IT and data functions – should be brought together early in the GenAI journey to clarify objectives and ensure buy-in.

Build your use cases on trusted foundations

If customers and employees can't trust the outputs of AI systems, your projects will deliver little in the way of value. The GlobalData survey shows that governance increases in importance as AI use cases are scaled. So, far better to build this in at the start, rather than bolt it on as use cases are operationalized.

Prioritize data integration

Over two-thirds (**68%**) of respondents said siloed data was the most significant hurdle in improving the quality of the customer experience. So, invest in technology and processes that aggregate customer data across systems for a unified, real-time view.

Emphasize training and collaboration to facilitate adoption

Adoption of AI is critical to delivering value, so, as McKinsey noted recently, "Companies should invest in clear communication, targeted training, and incentive mechanisms to ensure employees understand and effectively use AI tools."

Foster a spirit of grassroots innovation

The real value of GenAI is realized when it is embedded within workflows that span the entire organization, not just individual departments. Encourage frontline staff to identify value-adding use cases by sponsoring hackathons or competitions.

Partner for success

MIT's "The State of AI in Business 2025" report found that despite \$30–40 billion in enterprise investment into GenAI, **95%** of organizations are getting zero return. Its advice? "Start partnering with vendors who offer custom systems, and focus on workflow integration over flashy demos."



Conclusion

In any customer interaction, time is not just money (the financial cost arising from agent inefficiencies) but also reputation, with slow interactions increasing customers' frustrations and degrading their experience. The survey results make clear that organizations face complex orchestration challenges as they seek to harness GenAI for superior customer experiences.

AI is a powerful tool used in CX orchestration to analyze customer data, personalize interactions and predict future needs, a tool that can automate journeys across all channels to deliver frictionless, relevant, and proactive customer experiences. However, this is not about orchestrating AI but about orchestrating AI-driven customer experiences – in real time. To successfully implement this disruptive technology, it is necessary to rethink how CX is delivered.

This requires CX leaders to break down the customer journey, identify those points of friction where AI can and cannot make a difference, and use these insights to drive human interaction at the right time. Those organizations that do this will be the exceptions to the current rule concerning poor AI value realization. By acting now – at the right time, in the right place, with the right strategy – businesses can unleash the transformational power of GenAI and deliver the unified, personalized experiences that customers demand.



Why Orange Business

Orange Business can provide the platform, people, and tools to support customers on this journey. We have AI consultants available on a worldwide basis who are skilled in data management and architecture.

We also have a unique pedigree in the CX space with unrivalled experience of COaaS and CRM systems. This collective know-how allows us to help our customers to identify where AI can add the most value to their CX organizations. Our experience has been gained not only by working with customers but through the deployment of AI inside our own contact centers at Orange Group, supporting tens of thousands of contact center agents worldwide.

Sources

- ¹ <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2024-07-09-gartner-survey-finds-64-percent-of-customers-would-prefer-that-companies-didnt-use-ai-for-customer-service#:~:text=Customers%20Top%20Concerns%20Include%20Difficulty,a%20person%2C%E2%80%9D%20said%20McIntosh>
- ² <https://cxtrends.zendesk.com/>
- ³ <https://www.callcentrehelper.com/acceptable-waiting-time-133760.htm>