zendesk
CX TRENDS 2023

The Rise of Immersive Experiences

The immersive CX paradigm shift begins

To say that the past three years have been transformative would be an exercise in understatement. From the initial shock waves of the pandemic to persistent economic uncertainty, businesses around the world have been forced to radically change nearly every facet of their operations—and no area has seen more turbulence than customer service, a trend driven by a dramatic shift in customer expectations.

This seachange in customer expectations might have caught some companies flat-footed, but those who have been paying attention understand all too well that the events of the past few years have simply accelerated trend lines that have been developing for the better part of two decades.

But now, as we move into 2023, new perspectives are emerging, and now is the time for businesses to take stock and make significant changes.

There's no doubt now that customers are firmly in control, and they've made it clear: they want immersive customer experiences, and they're not willing to wait for companies to gradually figure this out. And as we've seen, businesses that recognized this massive and exciting shift—and made significant investments in response—have experienced tangible results: higher CSAT scores and demonstrable ROI.
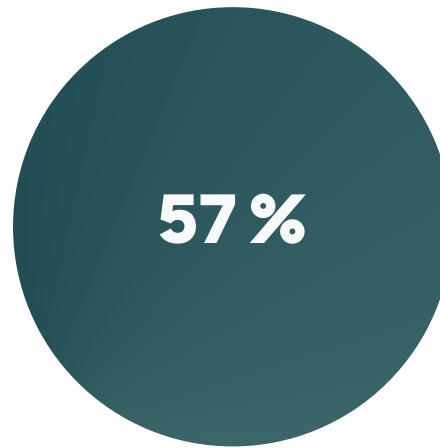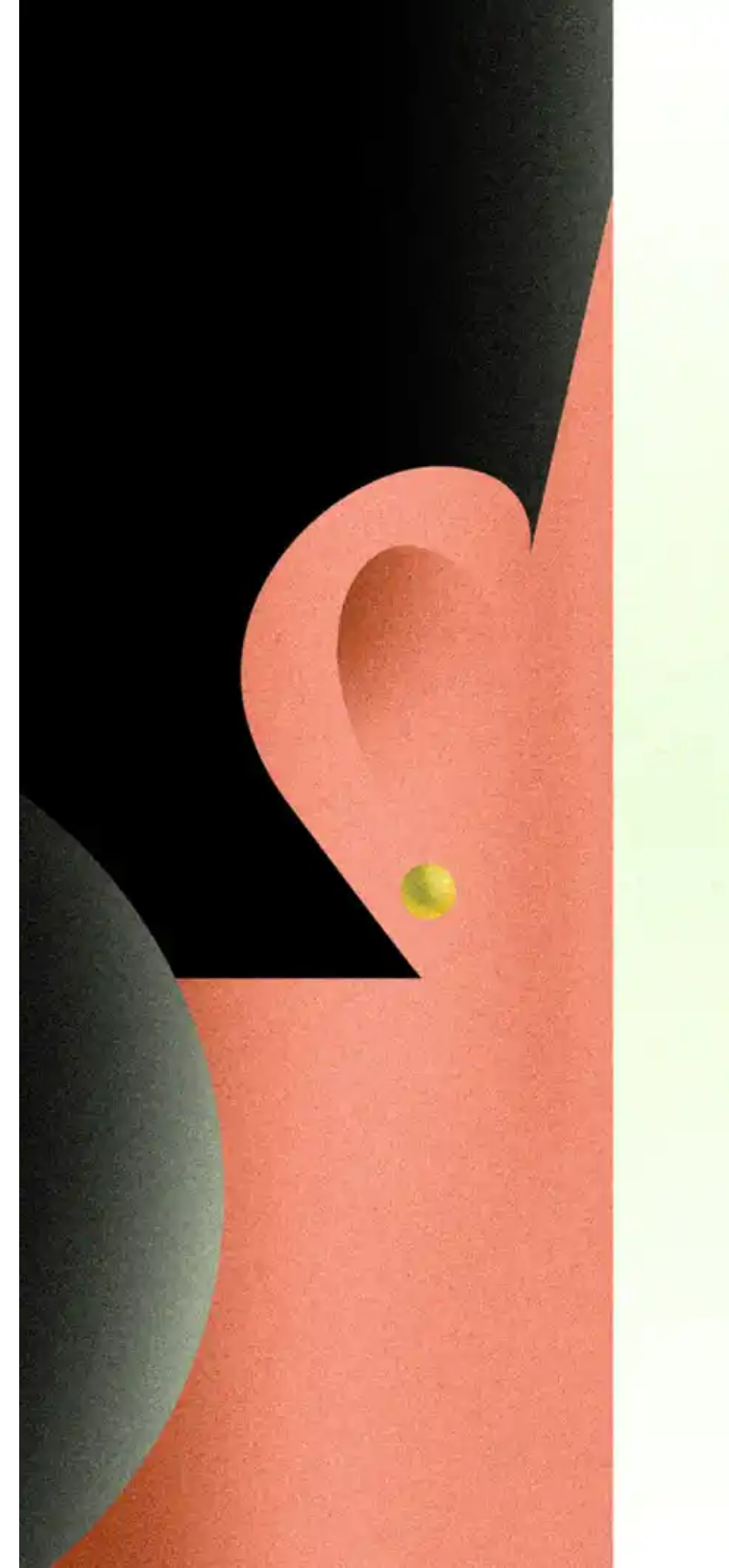
According to Zendesk's research, 77 percent of business leaders have seen those investments pay off, and consumers concur:

76 %
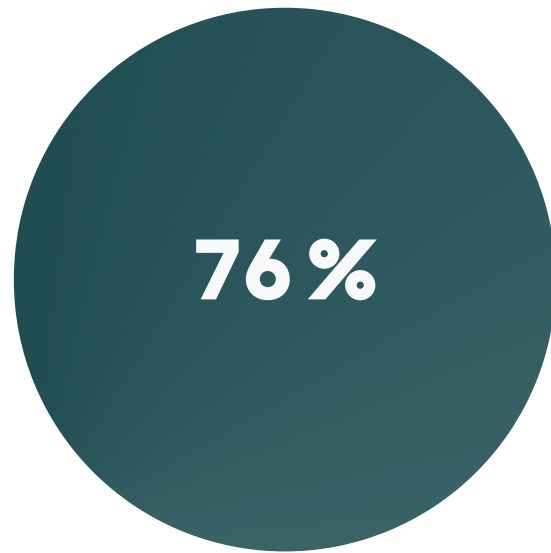
express satisfaction with the service they've received over the past year

57 %

noticed a marked improvement in their support experiences

So what do we mean when we talk about immersive experiences?

This compelling new territory stems from what customers demand: natural, fluid interactions with companies. From chatbots that closely mimic real human beings to conversational experiences where customers can start an interaction on one channel and then seamlessly switch to another, immersive CX boils down to one simple idea: people want to be seen and heard, to be treated not as a transaction or a ticket but as the highly valued customers they are. By doing so, businesses stand to greatly strengthen customer relationships, a benefit whose value cannot be overstated.

With that in mind, research has shown that business leaders clearly understand how providing an excellent customer experience drives revenue, and many feel optimistic about their company's future. Zendesk's research found that 81 percent of these leaders see customer experience and support as growing priorities over the next year.

And those priorities don't come as guesswork—73 percent of those leaders can point toward measurable increases in customer service requests over the past year, and three quarters predict volume increases over the next 12 months. Combined with overall first reply times ballooning 11 percent, those increases in support requests point toward significant challenges that will require steady investments if businesses want to remain competitive (and 79 percent of business leaders agree).

Yet economic uncertainty remains, especially in Europe and for small- and mid-size businesses everywhere. More than three quarters of business leaders understand that investing in customer service can help a company weather tough economic times, and their plans to boost their support operations have resulted in some cautious optimism. Half believe that their businesses will do better in 2023, and a whopping 81 percent expect at minimum a steady state or measurable improvements. (Interestingly, consumers are a little less bullish about the economy's prospects, with those numbers dipping to 43 percent and 65 percent, respectively.)
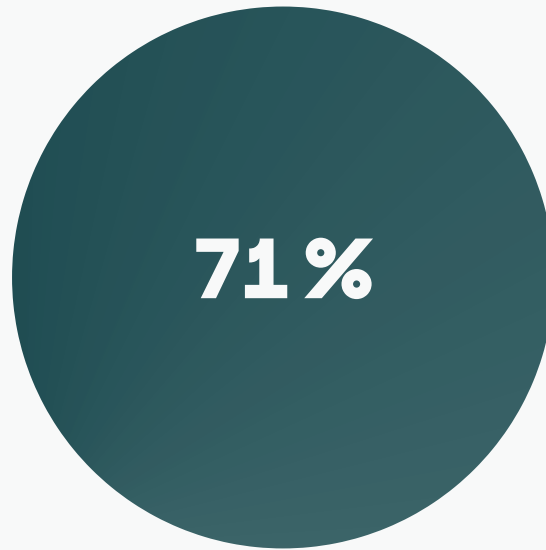
81 %

of these leaders see customer experience and support as growing priorities over the next year.
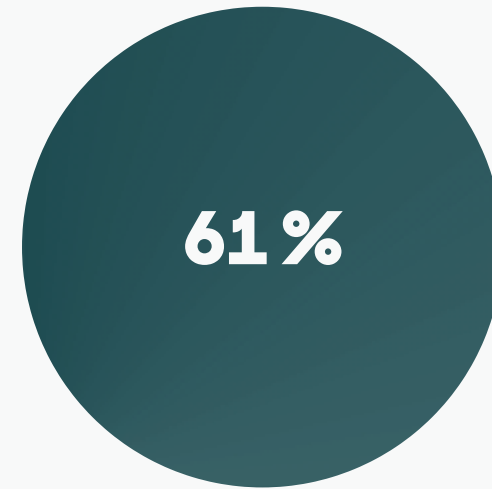
But overall the trends are clear: businesses are feeling good about the future, and that optimism is grounded in plans to invest in immersive customer experiences.

80 %
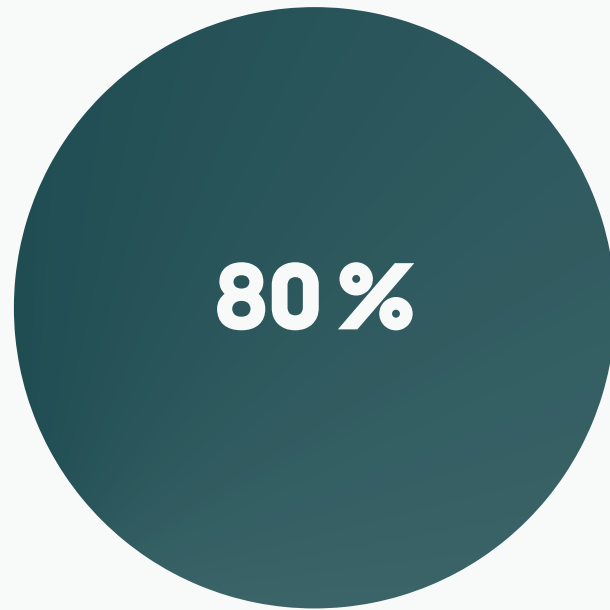
of leaders plan to increase their customer service budgets over the next year

71 %

plan to revamp the customer journey

61 %

eagerly await immersive CX

What's driving the move toward immersive CX?

As Zendesk has discovered, there are five distinct trends behind these new standards:

1	AI experiences are becoming more evolved and seamless
2	Conversational experiences are empowering consumers
3	Customers are eager for deeper personalization
4	Consumer well-being and sentiment are reshaping CX
5	CX teams are breaking down silos as they become more integrated

To help you prepare for the dawn of immersive CX, Zendesk surveyed thousands of consumers and business leaders while analyzing extensive data culled from our Benchmark program to get a better understanding of these trends. In this report, we'll delve into each trend and explain how your business can meet these critical expectations by offering insight, real-world recommendations, and highlighting what best-in-class companies are doing.

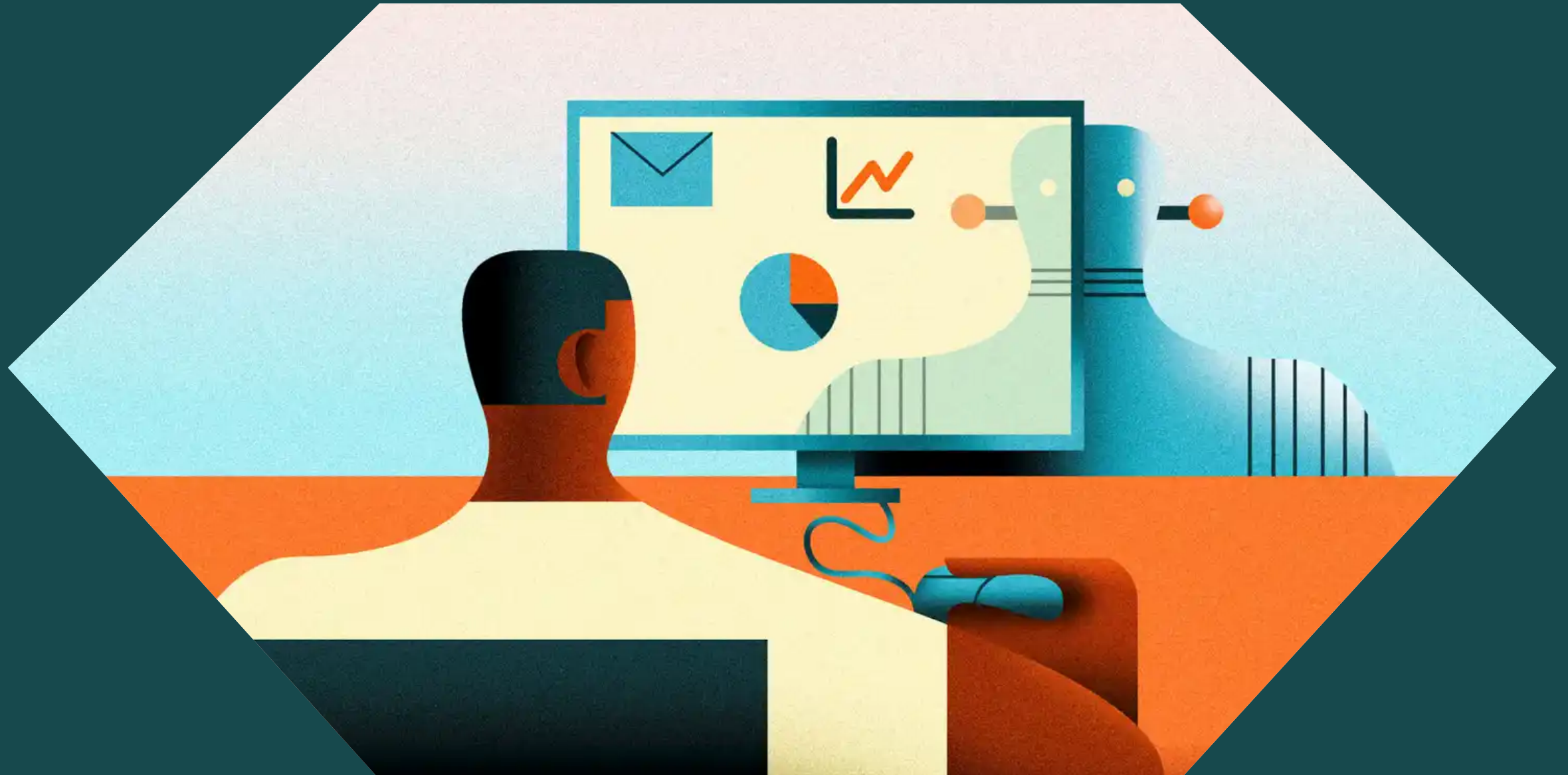METHODOLOGY

How we ran the research

Data in this report comes from three sources. Those sources include: one global survey of nearly 3,700 consumers, another global survey of nearly 4,800 business respondents, and Zendesk Benchmark product usage data from more than 99,000 companies.

Go behind the scenes →

AI is becoming more evolved and seamless

The world may be years away from AI being able to pass the Turing test—in which a machine exhibits intelligent behaviors that are indistinguishable from those of a real human—but the advances of the past year have shown that in the realm of customer service, artificial intelligence has made huge strides.

That's a testament to investments made in customer service AI, with nearly two-thirds of business leaders saying those outlays have resulted in significant performance improvements. And while 59 percent of those leaders attest to measurable ROI as a result of investments in AI, it's clear that the evolution of artificial intelligence in customer service is far from complete—in fact, companies have only begun to tap its vast potential.
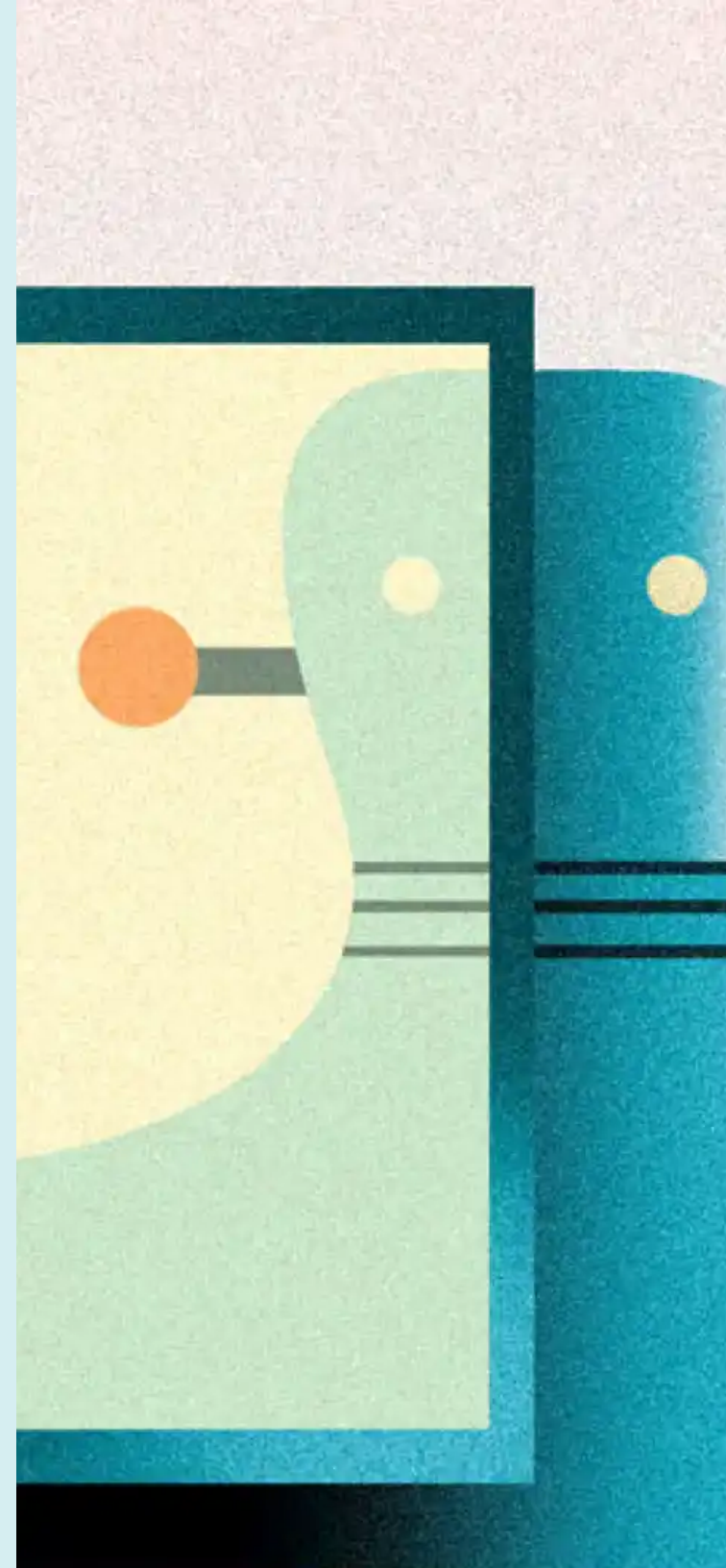
65 %

of leaders believe the AI/bots they use are becoming more natural and human-like
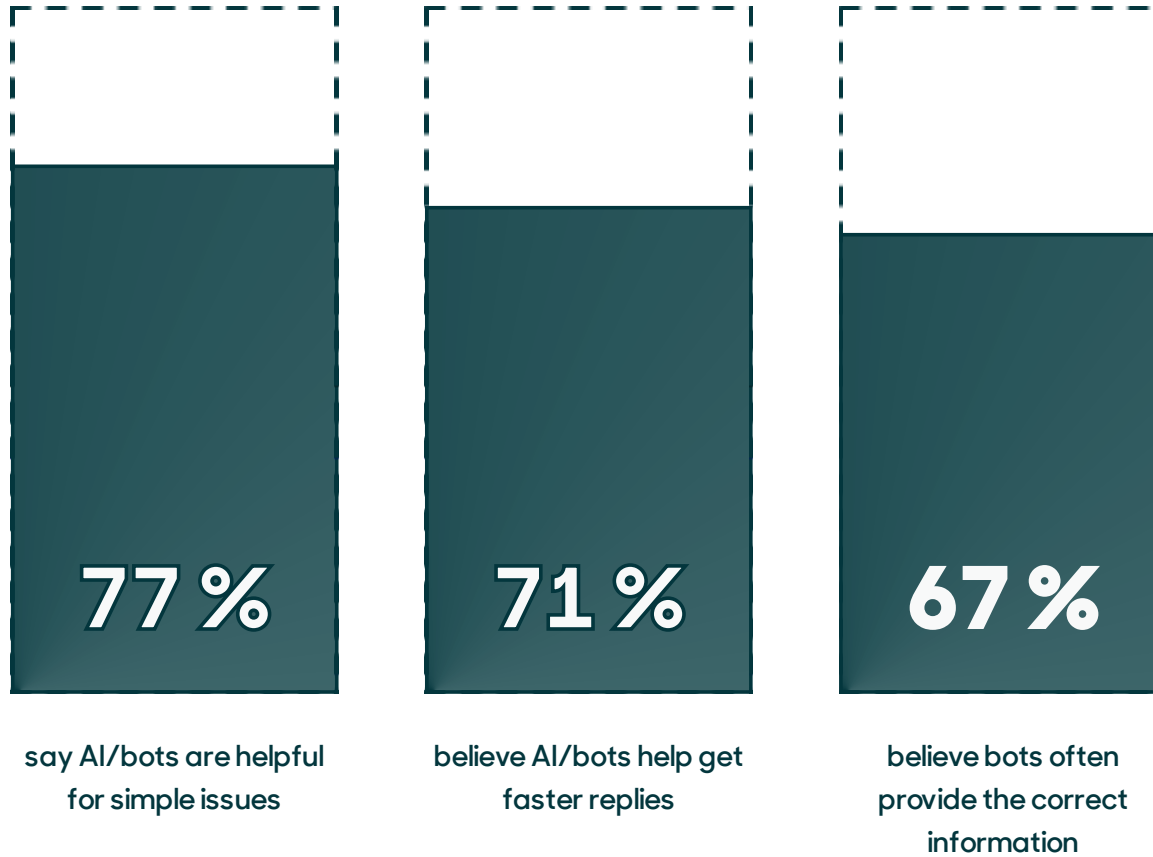
The promise of AI has yet to be fully realized

For now. But the increased investments haven't gone unnoticed by consumers, who have become increasingly comfortable with its presence. Of those who interact with customer service bots on a regular basis, 72 percent point toward noticeable improvements in quality, and dissatisfaction levels continue to drop.

Digging a little deeper, those same consumers overwhelmingly state that bots perform well when answering simple inquiries, respond faster than human agents, and can be relied upon to surface accurate, helpful information.

Consumers who often interact with support:

77 %
say AI/bots are helpful for simple issues

71 %
believe AI/bots help get faster replies

67 %
believe bots often provide the correct information

Not surprisingly, as consumers enjoy richer experiences with bots, their expectations have risen. Sixty-nine percent of consumers who seek support find themselves asking bots a wider range of questions, though tellingly, a large percentage—78 percent—end up needing to connect with a human agent anyway. That points to a growing comfort level with customer support provided by a bot, a trend that holds both enormous potential for businesses, as well as real danger.

Consumers want and expect AI to evolve

Recent advances in AI used for customer service have not surprisingly led consumers to ask, "What's next?" Having glimpsed the vast potential for AI, here's what customers are thinking:

|	
73 %	**Expect more interactions with AI in their daily life/AI will improve customer service quality**
74 %	**AI will improve customer service efficiency**
74 %	**AI will be able to access and use data about consumers quickly**
75 %	**AI should be able to provide the same level of service as human agents**
75 %	**AI interactions will become more natural and human-like over time**

AI will shape richer, more rewarding experiences

Consumers harbor big dreams for AI in customer service, and those expectations provide a clear roadmap for businesses—one that calls for significant investment and a cohesive vision for how this key element in immersive CX will come to pass. When these consumers look to the future, they see a radically different customer service world, one marked by synthetic agents and voice-based AI that will resolve their issues in ways that are nearly indistinguishable from conventional human support.

What would that look like?

For consumers, the ideal evolution of AI will enable them to ask increasingly complex questions of bots, and they want those interactions to feel like natural, fluid experiences. And as we'll explore in the next chapter, conversational experiences are one of the key drivers shaping the rise of immersive CX.
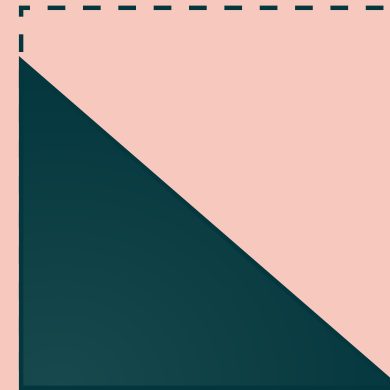
41 %

of consumers say synthetic agents will change how they purchase from brands in the future; that number rises to 43% for voice-based AI

Meanwhile, consumers envision these synthetic agents being able to not only handle multiple questions at once but also provide personalized responses. And when those consumers imagine what this will look like by the end of the decade:

46 %	**expect synthetic agents to markedly change how they receive support from the brands they patronize**
48 %	**think voice-based AI will play a significant role in how service is provided**

Yet while consumers have a clear vision of what the future of AI customer service will look like, business leaders—as we'll see in the next section—are struggling to chart a clear path forward.
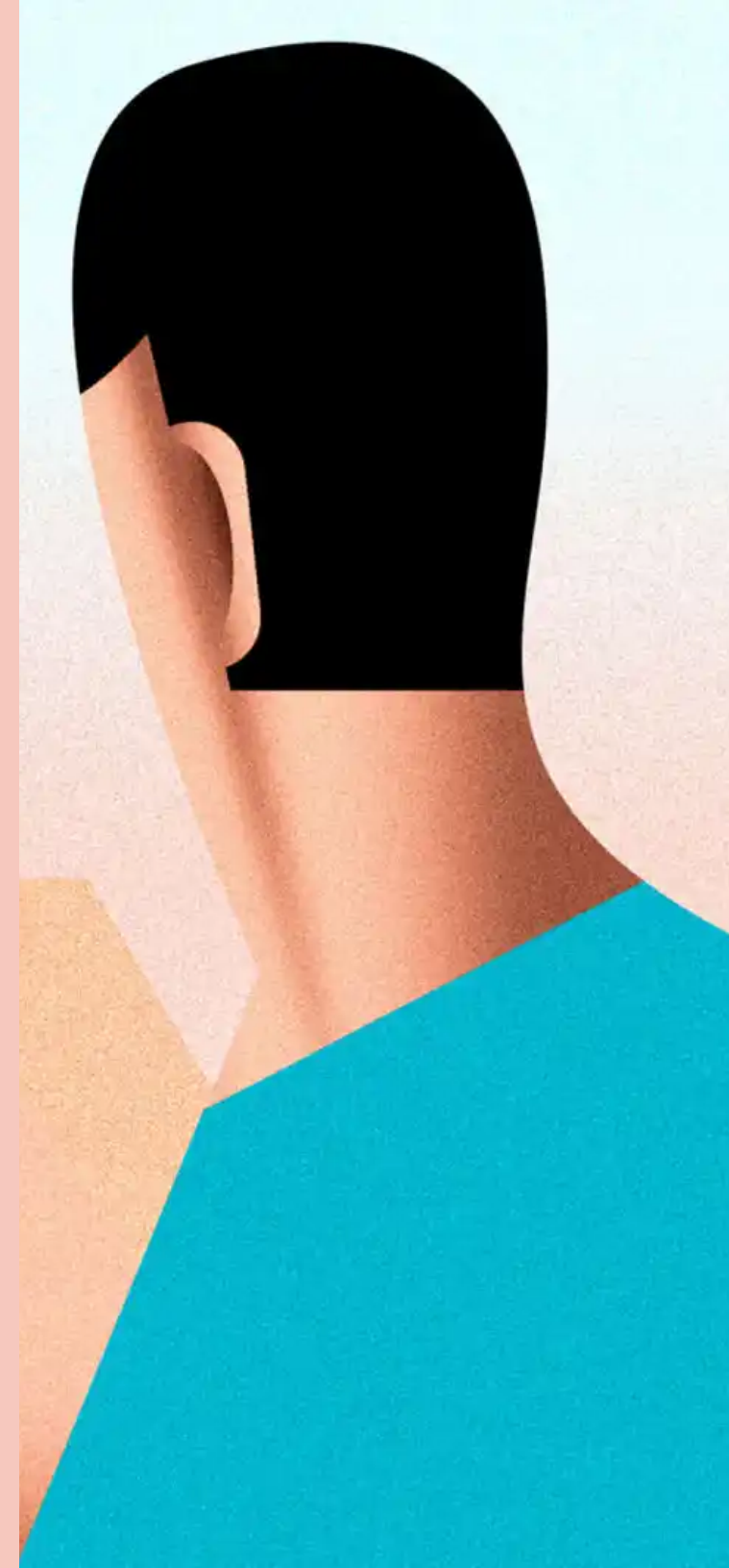
Realizing the next evolution of AI will require focus and prioritization

While recent investments might hearten both business leaders and consumers alike, decision-makers at the corporate level understand that the long-term outlook for AI remains murky.
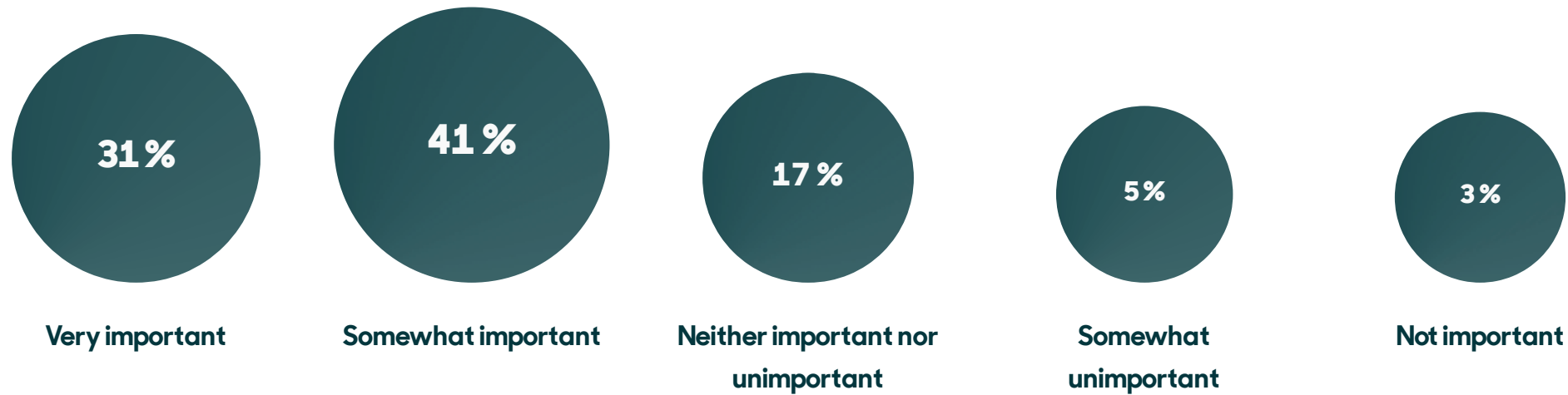
62 %	**of these leaders are telling Zendesk that their companies have been lagging behind in the use of AI**
60 %	**describe their organization's plans as being ad hoc rather than strategic**

There's a growing realization that meeting the expectations of consumers will require a more concerted effort.

Predictably, some of the trouble lies in logistics. Fifty-nine percent point to the bane of every organization: siloed data. Combined with a lack of tools and expertise, many companies find that their vision for immersive CX that's powered by AI remains elusive. That said, business leaders aren't throwing up their hands in frustration—instead, a solid 72 percent say that expanding AI across the customer experience will be a main priority over the coming year.

How important is expanding the use of AI/bots across the customer experience over the next 12 months?

31 %

41 %

17 %

5 %

3 %

Very important

Somewhat important

Neither important nor unimportant

Somewhat unimportant

Not important

That emphasis on AI in the customer experience will most likely be centered on three main advances: measuring sentiment analysis for routing, improving agent workflows (routing, prioritizing, and solving requests), and intercepting requests that would go to sales or customer service representatives.

To get there, 67 percent of leaders expect to boost AI/bots spending over the next year, with nearly half of respondents committing to as much as a 25 percent increase in budget. A fifth of leaders expect to increase these investments by more than 25 percent (with roughly a similar number maintaining budgets at previous levels).
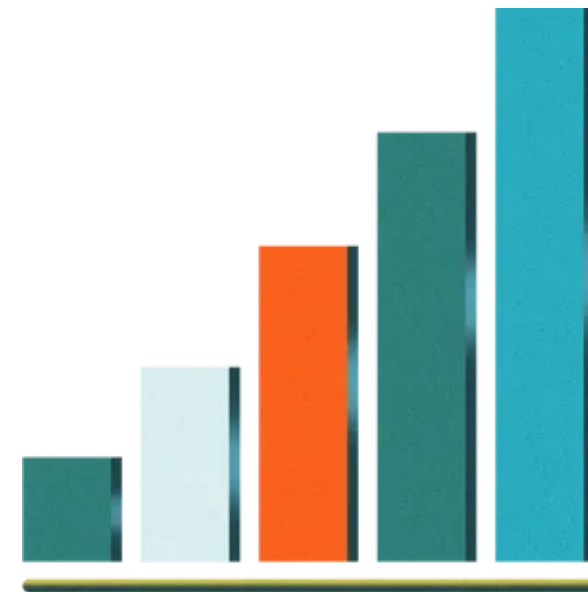
Get ready for disruption

If this sounds like a recipe for massive change, you're spot on. While businesses work out the kinks in AI—a main pillar in the effort to bring about immersive CX—eventually the world consumers long for will become a reality.

That will result in the majority of frontline customer interactions being handled by more advanced AI that is almost indistinguishable from human beings. Will that development lead to widespread elimination of jobs in customer service? While 64 percent of business leaders predict that AI will replace *some* jobs—and 69 percent expect large savings—Zendesk foresees an evolving workforce in which agents refocus their attention on the kinds of interactions that require a human touch.

CUSTOMER STORY

How Sezzle empowers customers with AI

To keep up with rapid growth, Sezzle—a public benefit B corporation that offers an alternative payment platform for interest-free installment plans at online stores—partnered with Zendesk to create an AI-driven chatbot that delivers personalized experiences to its customers. That led to a significant reduction in tickets while providing agents with richer information, helping Sezzle keep its customers satisfied.

sezzle

Zendesk can help bots provide meaningful conversations at scale

One of the biggest challenges businesses face is creating more meaningful, useful conversations between customers and bots at scale. Bots built with Zendesk can help you solve this problem by enabling the creation of customizable conversation bots that deliver the right information quickly to customers across messaging channels.
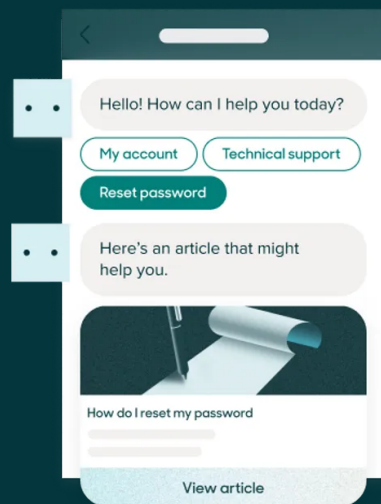
A bot can be configured to always answer any number of complex questions a customer may have and to gather additional information about the inquiry. That helps your bot deliver the correct information quickly, an essential part of providing good customer service.

Bots can also be tailored so they're aligned with your brand's overall tone and image. Importantly, you can also use it to train your bot so it understands customer intent and matches incoming questions to the right answer. The end result? Bots that deliver consistent, personalized experiences.

The proof, however, is in the pudding. Zendesk's bot capabilities include Flow Builder, and customers who use it see improvements in customer satisfaction and agent efficiency, with resolution times improving by 21 percent on average, and CSAT scores typically improve by two percentage points.

2 Conversational experiences are empowering consumers
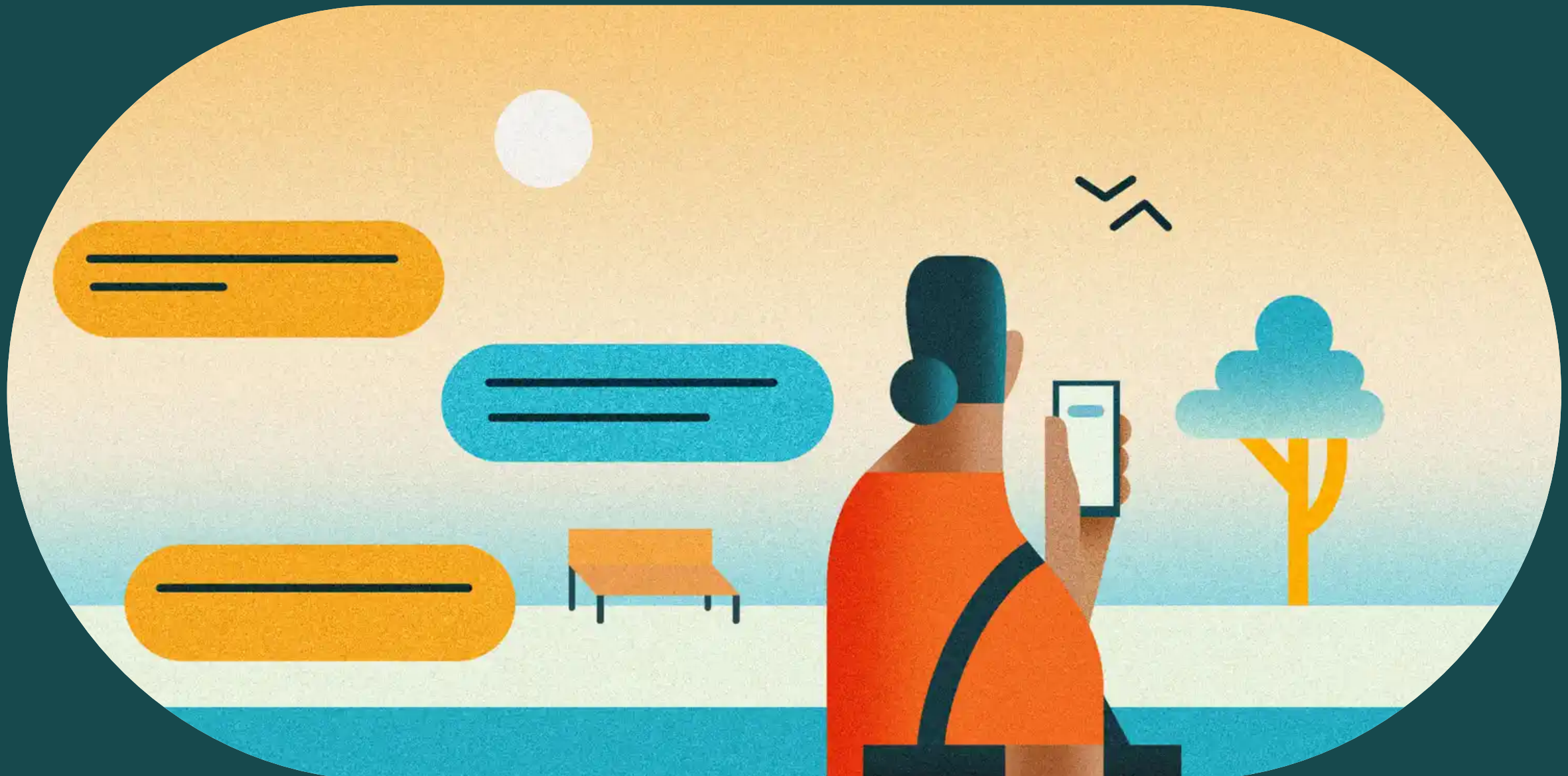
As we saw with our first trend, AI experiences in customer service are becoming increasingly evolved and seamless. The second trend that points to a future of immersive CX—the rise of conversational experiences—also hinges on the concept of fluid, seamless service.

What do we mean by conversational experiences? When consumers reach out to a business, they want an interaction that is fluid and natural, an exchange in which they're in the driver's seat. That can take many forms, such as being able to move a conversation to a new channel—say, from messaging to a phone call—or having a discussion stop and then resume with a different agent seamlessly. Importantly, customers want help that doesn't interrupt their current task.

As Zendesk discovered, business leaders have begun to recognize how conversational experiences will become the new normal in customer service. And for these forward-thinking leaders, there's a measurable payoff that will come with providing conversational experiences: stronger relationships with customers. Given how a single unsatisfactory interaction with a business will often drive consumers into the competition's arms—and the cost of acquiring customers can also harm the bottom line—developing conversational experiences will become paramount.
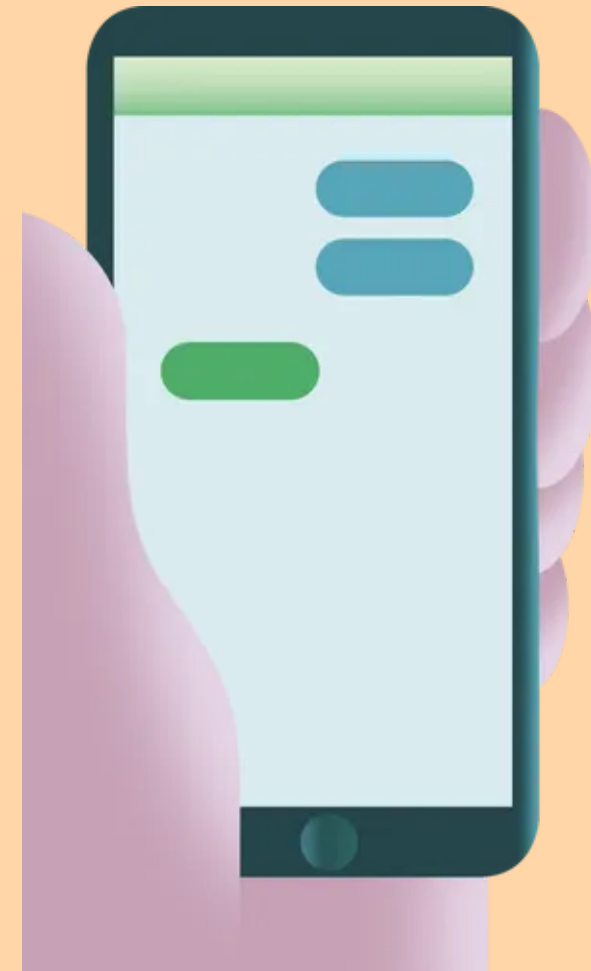
What customers want from conversational experiences

When customers say they want conversational experiences, they're not talking in generalities. They know exactly what those experiences should look like, and it all starts with one of the most basic elements of good customer service: receiving assistance immediately. Whether that's via an AI-powered bot or a real human agent is of little importance, and here's where we get to the *conversational* part: those interactions must feel natural, friendly, and personal.

And as those conversations unfold, consumers expect anyone they interact with at the company to have full context of their purchase history, previous interactions, and so on. So if a customer decides to stop an interaction and resume it later, they want a new support rep to be able to pick up the conversation seamlessly.

If there's a theme connecting these consumer demands, it's convenience. For example, let's say a customer has an issue with a company's online cart. Consumers want assistance *on that page*—in other words, they expect businesses to resolve their issues where they are. Intriguingly, consumers have also begun to ignore the separation between physical and digital experiences, which will pose a challenge to businesses that operate brick-and-mortar locations as well as online portals.

Customer expectations for conversational service

72 %	of customers want immediate service
71 %	demand natural, conversational experiences
70 %	expect anyone they interact with to have full context
66 %	want interactions to not interrupt their current action
62 %	think experiences should flow naturally between both physical and digital spaces
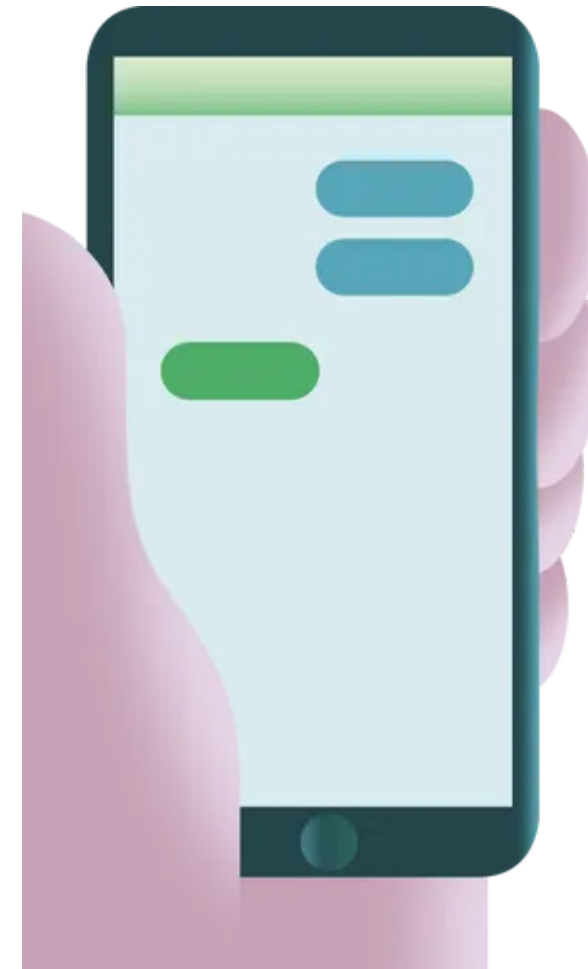
While consumer expectations for conversational experiences couldn't be clearer, businesses have yet to catch up. According to Zendesk benchmark data, just 42 percent of businesses offer two or more support channels. Meanwhile, 60 percent of consumers report interacting with agents who have little or no context, which leads to customers having to repeat themselves—a sure recipe for dissatisfaction.

Customers also complain about support experiences derailing their current task and the inability to stop a conversation and pick it up later with an informed agent. These unmet expectations mean missed opportunities for businesses:

70 %

of consumers purchase more from companies that offer seamless conversational experiences. Similarly, 64% spend more when issues get resolved where they already are.

Businesses are building more fluid experiences

So while businesses have yet to provide the conversational experiences consumers demand, there's a glimmer of hope. Decision-makers recognize the need and have begun the arduous process of redesigning the customer journey so their businesses can meet this essential pillar of immersive CX.

According to Zendesk's research:

71 %	of these leaders have committed to this reimagining of customer service
60 %	want (or are actively planning) to implement conversational customer service experiences

Those leaders have a clear idea of what their organizations will need to accomplish to meet consumer expectations for conversational experiences. Automation will play a key role in driving efficiency and surfacing the right data to agents, and those reps will in turn need to adopt new ways of working that will enable true conversational experiences to happen.

As those customer service teams pivot, their leaders will have to create new metrics to measure the quality of service and agent performance.

Finally, customer service reps will need training that will refine their soft skills so conversations with customers will feel warm, personal, and satisfying.
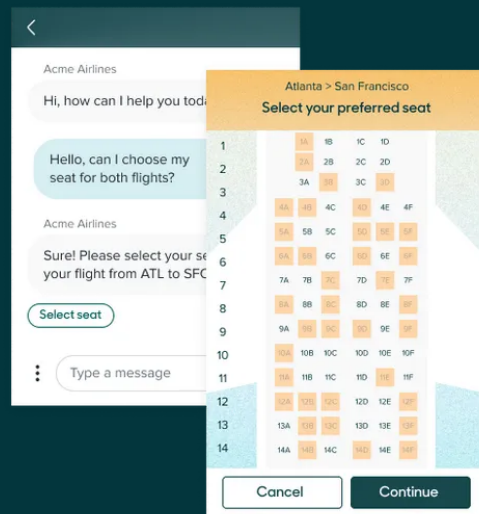
75 %

of leaders say their goal is to make customer service feel more conversational and less transactional

Use Zendesk to give customers fluid, natural conversations across their journey

Conversational experiences must be fluid and natural, no matter where the customer is in their journey. This is where Zendesk's Sunshine Conversations enters the picture.

Sunshine Conversations enables businesses to connect to any messaging service across any channel, which lets customers reach out anytime and anywhere—and its unified customer view provides invaluable context in the event customers need to stop a conversation and pick it up later.

And when those conversations need to expand to more than one agent and consumer, it provides group messaging functionality. That ensures that the right people are involved in the conversation, which means faster problem resolution and richer customer experiences.

Sunshine Conversations also expands the level of service businesses offer via messaging. That can include embedding advanced mini-apps within the messaging window (such as a flight seat selector, an add-to-cart function, or payment options) so customers can take immediate action from within the message. That helps businesses meet one of the most important elements of true conversational experiences: being able to resolve a customer issue where they are.

Meanwhile, every business encounters issues that require proactive messaging, whether its service outages or problems with a product. Sunshine Conversations makes sending outbound notifications easy.

Customers are eager for deeper personalization

It can be deceptively easy to assume your business has done enough to deliver personalized experiences—you've set up mass emails so that individual customer names appear at the top, and you've done some segmentation exercises that have put customers in broad buckets (but little else). What else is there to do?

A lot, as it turns out. And as with the evolution of AI in customer service and the call for offering conversational experiences, consumers are driving this third pillar of immersive CX. Their expectations can be boiled down to one simple concept: they want companies to use the large amount of data they possess to provide truly personalized experiences that transcend typical marketing efforts. Let's take a closer look at what that means.

Expectations of personalization are more advanced than businesses realize

Here's what Zendesk's research illuminated: most companies hold a rather narrow view of what personalization means, which is at odds with the 62 percent of consumers who think these businesses could be doing more. These customers don't want to be lumped into some demographic bucket—they crave experiences in which they're a segment of one, not thousands.

Think of it like the barista who greets you by your name, starts whipping up your normal order, and then asks a follow up question about something you talked about during your last visit. Consumers want that experience writ large, whether it's in a brick-and-mortar store or on an e-commerce site.

59 %

of consumers believe businesses should use the data they collect about them to personalize their experiences

If that sounds especially challenging—and make no mistake, it is—the payoff for businesses will be profound. By offering personalized support experiences, companies will reap the benefits of deeper, more lasting relationships with the lifeblood of their endeavors: customers.

And as 77 percent of business leaders recognize, deeper personalization leads to increased customer retention (and 66 percent believe it lowers acquisition costs). These are factors that can't be ignored.

62 %

of consumers agree that personalized recommendations are better than general ones; 60% say they can tell when they receive personalized recommendations and find them valuable

Going beyond marketing

Companies have reams of customer data at their disposal, but so far most have yet to leverage that data to even a fraction of its potential.

Sure, mining customer data for marketing-focused personalization is worthwhile, but the larger picture reveals that businesses have mostly been at a loss for how to put that data to use.

As 67 percent of leaders told Zendesk, they're seeing disorganized, reactive efforts to use customer data, a trend that's compounded by organizational silos that prevent that information from being shared widely. What's troubling is that 72 percent of business leaders continue to move forward with personalization plans that are wildly at odds with what customers actually want.

Those plans—all marketing-based—lean into customer segmentation, previous engagement with marketing campaigns, and demographic data.

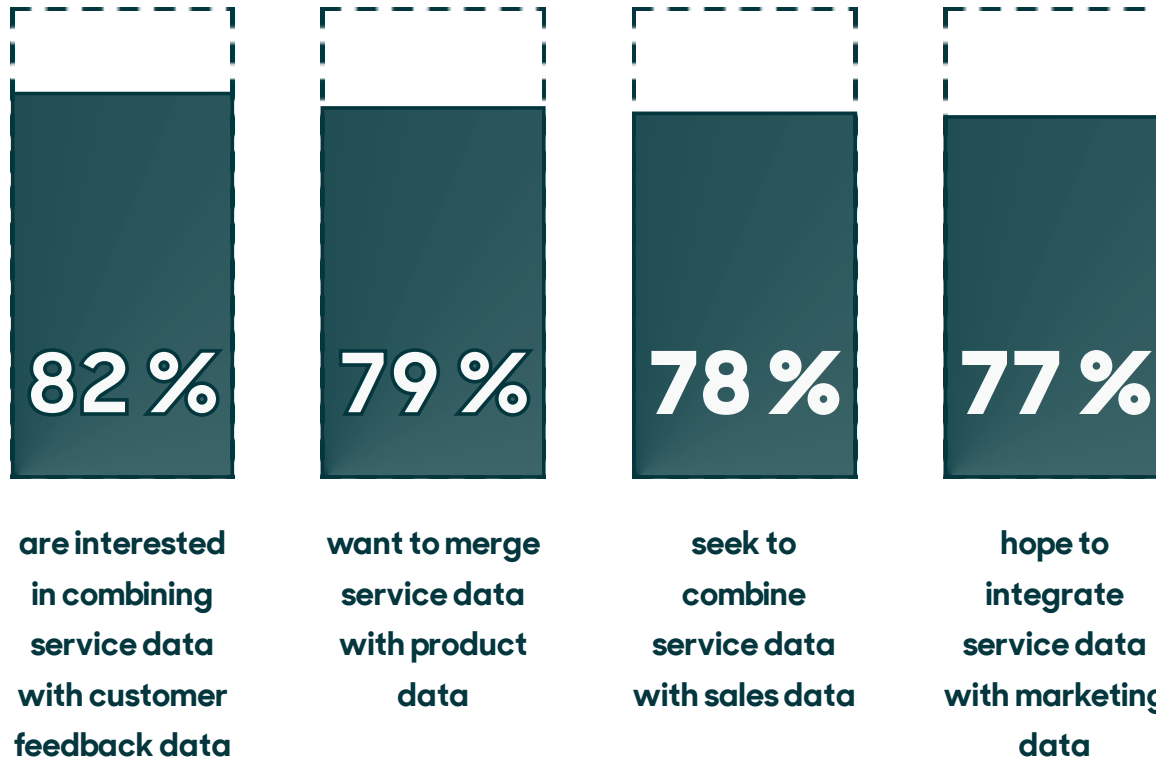# How can businesses accomplish deeper personalization?

By connecting data and leveraging untapped service data, businesses can achieve deeper personalization, thus moving their organization closer toward immersive CX. To get there, however, business leaders must enact plans that will connect data on the back end— breaking down silos—and create systems in which the right data is surfaced when agents need it most.

That said, just 22 percent of business leaders say that their organizations share data well, and 57 percent think they're also not collecting enough data. So while a significant number of respondents—79 percent—believe that service data is invaluable and should be used to drive personalization efforts, stubborn roadblocks remain.

Leaders want to combine customer service data with the other types of data to use across their organizations

82%	79%	78%	77%
are interested in combining service data with customer feedback data	want to merge service data with product data	seek to combine service data with sales data	hope to integrate service data with marketing data

If businesses can dismantle those roadblocks—the aforementioned silos and inability to surface the right data at the right time—and also leverage service information, deeper personalization begins to come into focus.

For example, service data can provide a host of insights: ticket volume, ticket time, sentiment, CSAT, channel used to contact, length of time to complete a ticket, interaction histories and transcripts, help center article views, FAQs, as well as interaction reasons.

That valuable service data—directly into their customer relationship management (CRM) platforms. These leaders also envision unifying customer feedback and service data across channels to create real-time customer insights, which could help decision-makers form more effective business plans.

76%

of business leaders want to create more robust customer records by auto-populating customer information

Yet while companies are beginning to glimpse a path toward deeper personalization for consumers, here's a reality check: just 31 percent of agents report being able to effectively see and use customer data to improve and personalize experiences.

If meeting customer expectations for immersive CX is going to happen, business leaders must understand just how vital personalization will be to that effort—and then plan and invest accordingly.
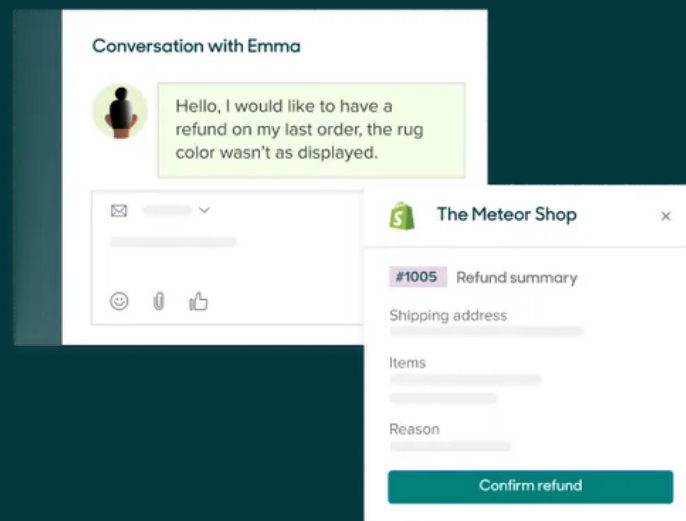
Provide deeper personalization with Zendesk

As we've seen, most business leaders admit that their organizations don't collect enough customer data, share it well across teams, or act upon it. Those are major roadblocks to providing the deep personalization customers expect.

In Zendesk's Support Suite, conversational data organization is a feature set that enables businesses to create custom automations and integrations with external systems such as Slack or Shopify. That means rich service data becomes readily available to agents in a unified workspace. Those customer service representatives can then use that information to offer the personalized experience consumers want.

By leveraging conversational data orchestration's automation features, companies can handle routine tasks such as customer refunds and membership renewals—that removes time-consuming work off agents' plates so they can focus on making real connections with consumers.

With Zendesk, your business can act on harmonized data and then effortlessly personalize experiences across systems by automating agent workflows and customer interactions.

Consumer well-being and sentiment are reshaping CX

We've all had one of those customer experiences that can only be described as infuriating—the kind that sticks with a person long after an interaction has ended. It's no joke—a negative experience with a company can cause real, lasting emotional damage, not to mention create fierce critics who won't hesitate to spread the word.

Customers are distressed— and businesses pay the price

How consumers feel about their support interactions over the past year:

56%

25%

19%

Positive

Neutral

Negative
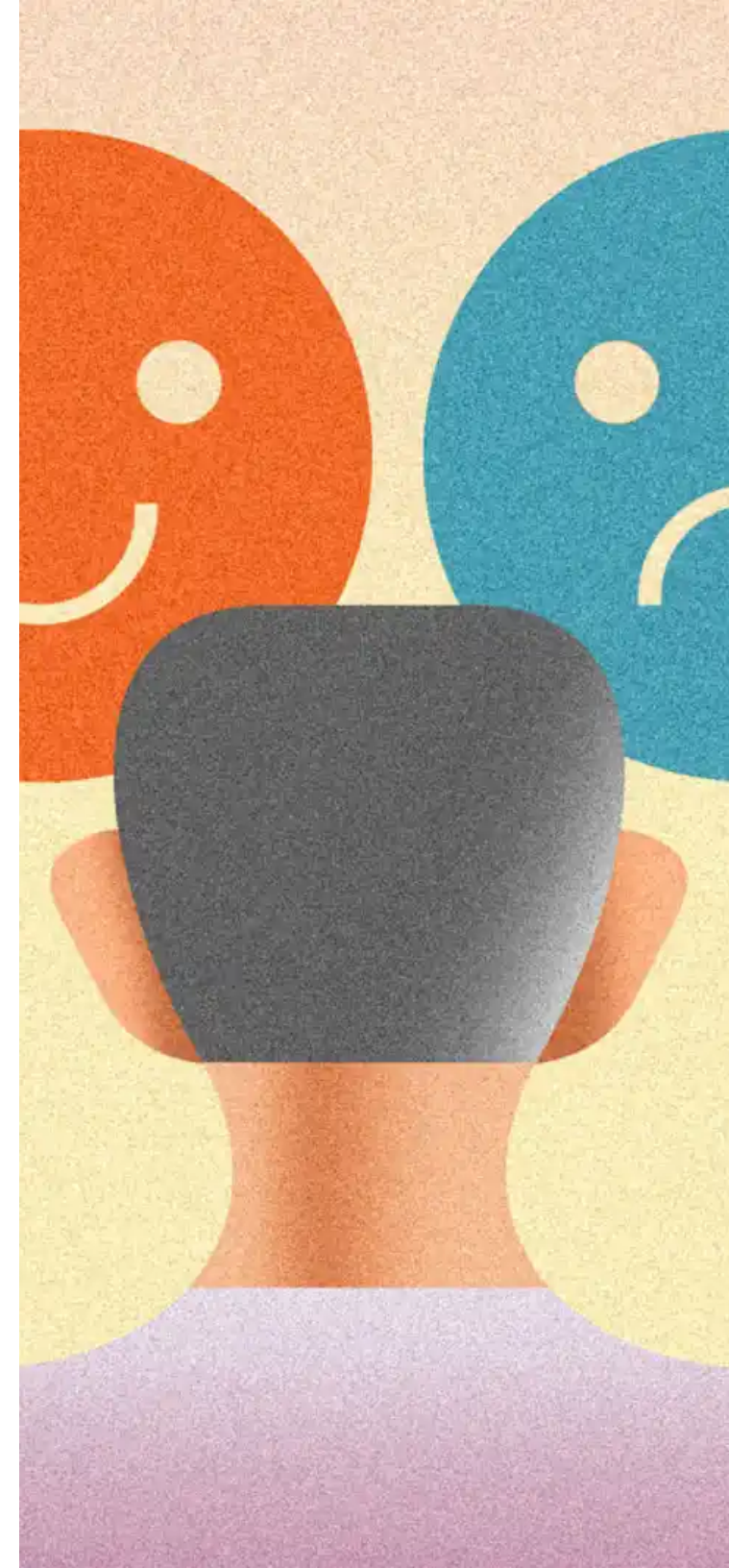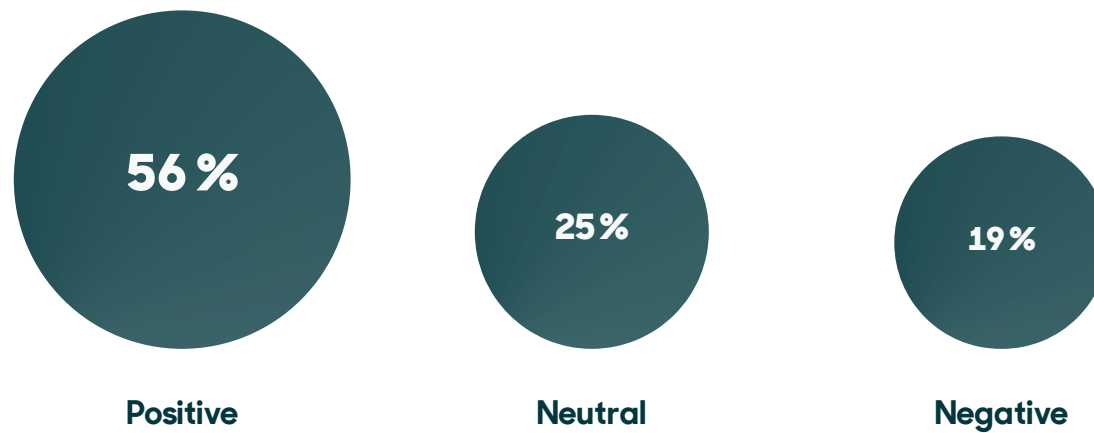
When Zendesk asked consumers who often interact with support about their experiences, the results proved troubling —and eye-opening. Nearly half say that their frustration levels have grown over the past year, 55 percent feel increasingly stressed, and 52 percent state that support interactions leave them exhausted.

66 %

of consumers who often interact with support said a bad interaction with a business can ruin their day

Perceptive business leaders know to pay attention to the proverbial canary in the coalmine. And for good reason: two-thirds of consumers who feel that a company cares about their emotional state will be more likely to be repeat customers.

If that's not incentive enough to focus on alleviating customer stress, consider that 73 percent of those consumers will switch to a competitor after multiple bad experiences—and more than half will head for the exits after a single unsatisfactory interaction.

60 %
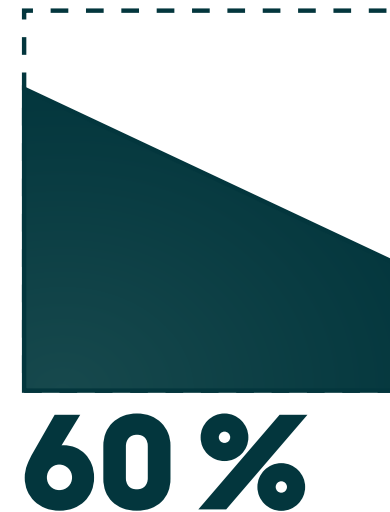
of consumers have purchased something from one brand over another based on the service they expect to receive

Unforced errors: current CX fuels negative consumer emotions

On the frontlines of support, agents know all too well how their company's customer experience affects consumers—53 percent of agents say that how their organization approaches service leads directly to negative customer behavior. And because leaders aren't formally tracking sentiment, their organizations fail to remedy these persistent issues —what's out of sight ends up being out of mind. That manifests in a host of ways:

37 %	of agents say when a customer cannot complete simple tasks on their own, they often become noticeably angry, frustrated, or stressed
29 %	of agents point to a lack of basic information online, a self-service gap that also plays a role in angering customers
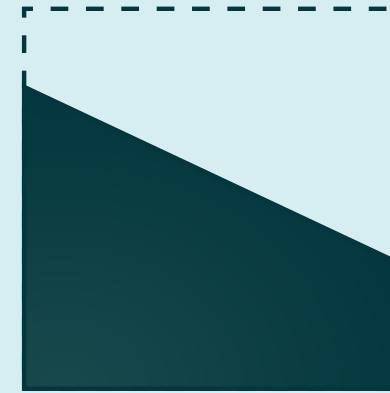
58 %

of agents say lack of consumer data often causes negative experience for customers

Meanwhile, agents frequently struggle with accessing relevant customer information, which also leads to irritated consumers.

As business leaders attempt to lead their companies toward immersive CX, they won't have the luxury of ignoring customer sentiment and well being.

The larger challenge, then, is to formalize ways to both capture and understand consumer emotions. Doing so will create new opportunities to tailor the customer experience to prevent and ameliorate the frustration so many consumers struggle with.

14 %	of respondents indicate that the common NPS™ metric is being used to personalize the customer experience
34 %	say customer sentiment is being used to personalize the experience a customer receives

So how will companies harness customer emotions so they can build the strong, personalized relationships that underpin immersive CX?

One underutilized tactic is to use AI-driven technology that enables support organizations to predict intent and sentiment, which can greatly boost customer understanding. If knowledge is power, then gaining a solid understanding of where customers are emotionally will translate into satisfied customers, less harried agents, and that true measure of good customer service: increased revenue.

Predict intent and sentiment with Zendesk automation and AI

Gauging customer sentiment might be a tough nut to crack, but here's where AI can help. For instance, Zendesk's intelligent triage feature leverages AI to automatically enrich support tickets with highly valuable information: customer intent, sentiment, even language predictions.
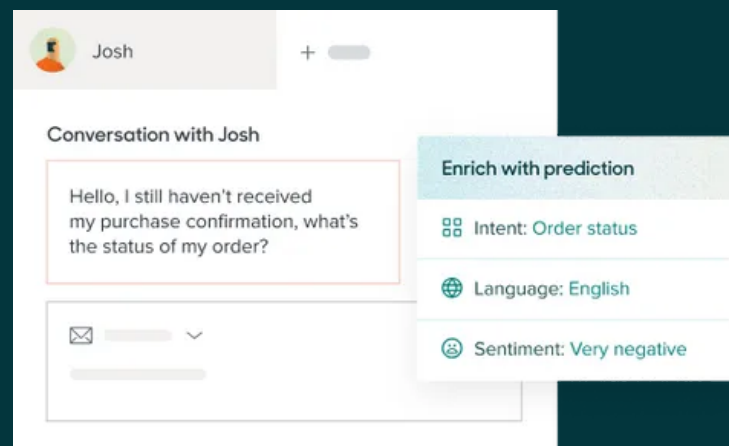
That gives agents key information so they can route, prioritize, and finally go into an interaction knowing whether a customer is steaming mad, hopelessly frustrated, or just about to break up with the company for good.

Because intelligent triage is industry-specific and data-driven, companies can take advantage of it out-of-the box. And here's where it gets really interesting: as the AI handles interactions, it learns as it goes, becoming increasingly effective over time.

Meanwhile, Smart Assist serves as an AI-powered mentor for agents: it guides them toward successful outcomes by providing context, provides recommendations of next steps, and even trains support reps so they level up their skills as they're helping customers.

CX teams are breaking down silos as they become more integrated

Increasingly, business leaders are becoming aware of the benefits of creating immersive experiences for their internal CX organizations. For too long, these leaders have viewed their customer service organizations as cost centers, not drivers of revenue.

As a result, that mindset has created siloed teams with little connection to their wider organizations, leading to disastrous side effects: agents lack relevant customer data, which then hampers efforts to provide exceptional (or even satisfactory) experiences.

But as business leaders have begun to discover, customers expect data to be widely shared so their experiences can be personalized and immersive. And as those leaders wrestle with the challenge of transforming their support organizations so they offer truly immersive CX experiences, reality has begun to sink in: service *can* be a key revenue driver.

Getting there, however, is another story. As we saw earlier in this report, just 22 percent of business leaders say their teams share data well. That's problematic, given that there's a strong correlation between agents having a single detailed view of customer data and their teams' ability to contribute to the bottom line.

So the challenges facing companies have come into focus: silos must be broken down, with true integration between customer service, sales, and marketing. Doing so promises great returns: increased efficiency, better customer experiences, and finally, more revenue.

Transforming service into true revenue centers

Here's where things get a bit murky: while a growing percentage of business leaders see customer support as a revenue driver (40 percent), a little more than a third still see service as a cost center. That said, there's widespread desire (80 percent) for customer service organizations to become recognized (and proven) revenue drivers.

What would it take to transform support into revenue generators?
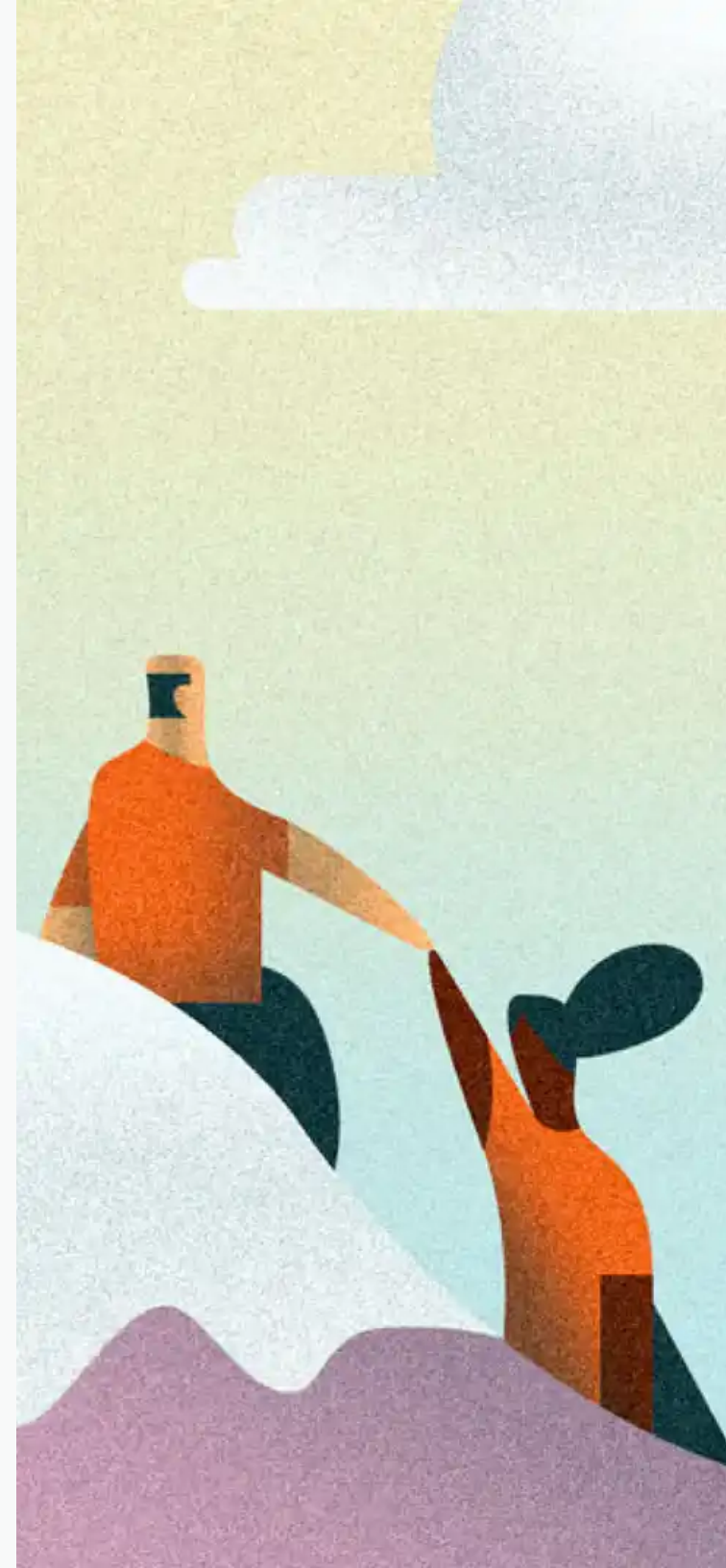
Business leaders who see customer support as a cost center would change their minds if:
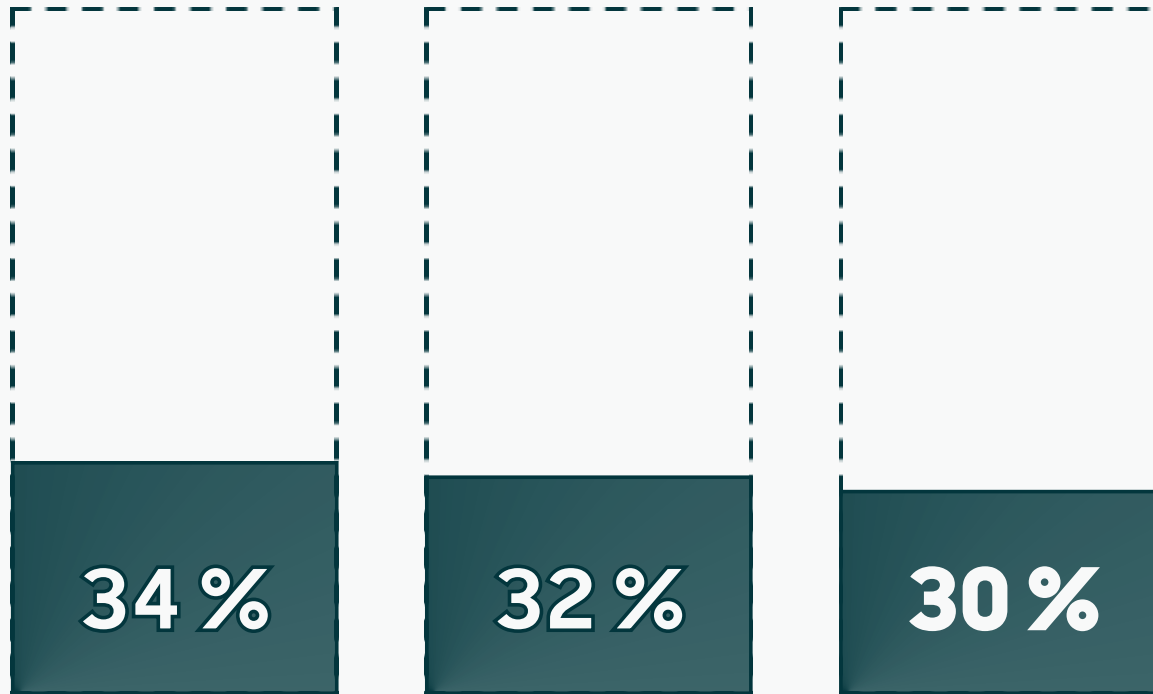
| **34 %**	**32 %**	**30 %**
They could share customer insights across teams	Their agents received more relevant data	They could train agents to sell effectively to customers

Those leaders who do recognize support as a revenue driver, however, have taken decisive action. More than half reported training agents how to identify expansion and sales opportunities, and 47 percent ensured that their agents had access to the type of customer data that makes revenue generation easier. A significant number—38 percent—also developed workflows and processes geared toward revenue generation.
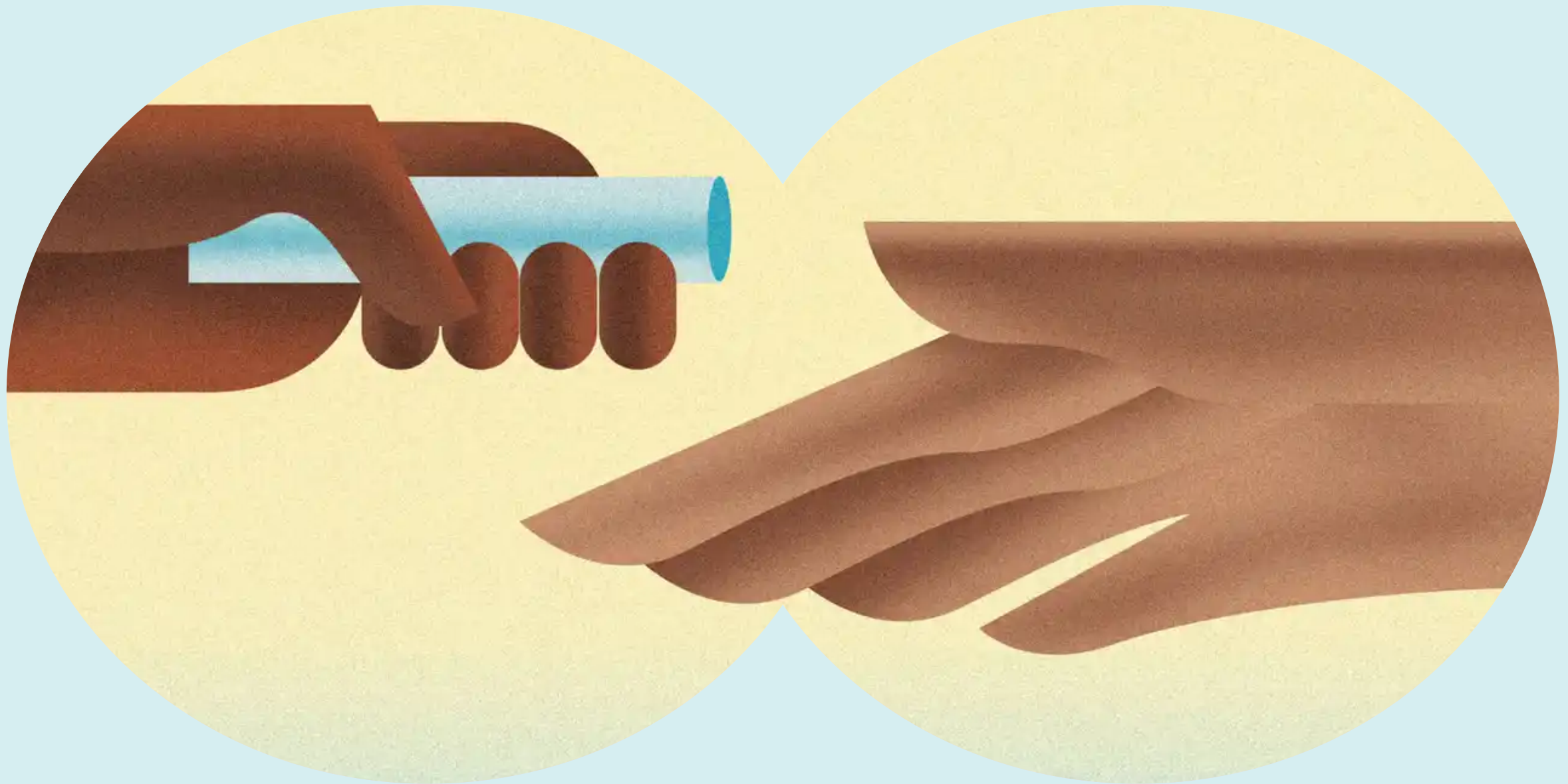
Leaders are considering merging teams and sharing responsibilities

Increasingly, business leaders are contemplating making big changes to how their teams are structured, ones that would blur the lines between organizations. In other words, the expectation that a dedicated support team will be narrowly focused has begun to weaken—and a growing number of companies see *all* teams as being responsible for the customer experience.

There's widespread recognition that customers expect their experiences to be unified across channels, and that to be successful, companies must be ready to help those consumers with whatever they need, whether that's from service or sales. And that changing mindset is having real effects on the ground: 70 percent of business leaders expect their agents to expand their roles and responsibilities over the next year.

Meanwhile, 72 percent believe that merging teams and responsibilities around the customer experience will increase operational efficiencies, and 64 percent already have plans in place to do so. And as these decision-makers slowly move toward a reimagining of customer support—breaking down silos, merging teams, redefining responsibilities—they'll have to leverage technology solutions that enable cross-functional collaboration.
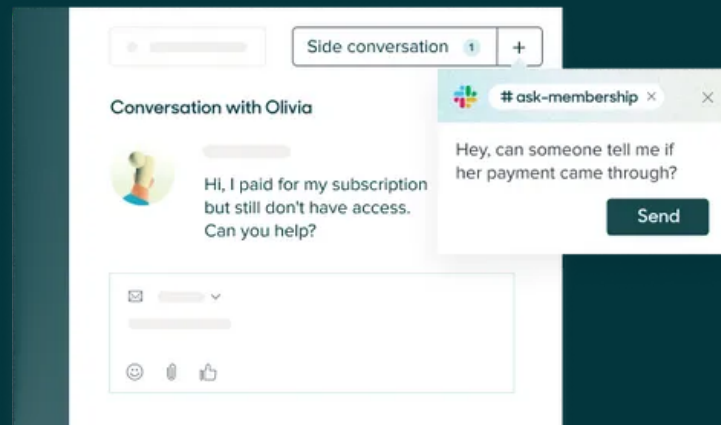
Zendesk makes it easy for teams to work together using their existing tools

Breaking down silos and encouraging the free flow of information between teams play a critical role in immersive CX. But if it were so easy to remove barriers between teams, everybody would have done it already, right?

One of the most common roadblocks to creating real cross-team collaboration is technology—the disparate tools that some teams depend on and others never use. But collaboration can be achieved without upsetting the status quo by forcing every team to adopt identical tools.

For example, Zendesk's Support Suite provides robust collaboration functionality in its Agent Workspace. There, agents—in a single view—can collaborate on tickets with other agents and members of other teams (such as engineering, marketing, and sales). The Side Conversations feature unifies these conversations while documenting them for future reference—for example, when an agent resolves a rare and tricky problem by reaching out to the team that built the product.

That collaboration would include real-time notifications as stakeholders discuss the issue, no matter their preferred platform— whether that's Slack, Microsoft Teams, or another communication channel. It goes even deeper than that: support tickets can be linked and created on other platforms, such as Jira, Trello, or Asana.