



Artificial Intelligence & the **new frontier** for CX

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AI innovation has evolved the possibilities of CX. New technology presents new opportunities, as well as new challenges.

AI has the potential to revolutionize what it means to provide premium-quality CX. Along virtually every dimension—speed, accuracy, continuity, and availability of service—investments in AI technology promise to deliver strong returns for customer experience. It's more important than ever for tech-forward CX teams to think strategically about how these developments can be harnessed at the organization level. Likewise, tech-forward businesses will need to address how new AI technology will be perceived by their customers, so that it can achieve its full potential as a CX game-changer.



Revolutionizing CX: The impact of AI

The steady pace of AI progress has made it possible for many businesses to entirely reevaluate their strategies for interacting with customers. Among the most visible changes has been the introduction of customer service chatbots. The newfound ability to offer consumers unprecedented access to adaptive, always-on support at minimal cost has made a strong case early on for the revolutionary potential of AI within the CX domain.



74% of executives say AI will fundamentally change their approach to CX.

[Source: IBM, 2018]

Less outwardly visible (but equally impressive), machine learning algorithms have empowered high-volume businesses to offer unique, personalized experiences to their customers and clients. Tracking and analyzing dozens, even hundreds, of cross-platform interactions with individual contacts would be an impossible task for even the most talented human-led CX outfit. And yet, AI-powered analytics have made it possible to autonomously sift through data across any number of touchpoints, identifying gaps in service quality and suggesting organizational improvements on the fly.



Enterprise CX through artificial intelligence

Zoho has placed AI at the center of its CX-forward approach to SaaS products. All throughout the process of improving its closely integrated sales, support, and marketing solutions, Zoho has prioritized the use of AI to mediate the complex web of data and communication from team to team, and from agent to

customer. AI-powered predictions, recommendations, and automation enable Zoho's clients to remain competitive in the crowded online marketplace.

Investing in AI preparedness

With 87% of businesses currently evaluating AI for use in their CX initiatives¹, it's clear that an AI arms race is already well underway across a multitude of industries. However, success in this field likely won't be determined by ambition alone.



[1] IBM, 2018



3 out of 5 businesses say that their teams lack necessary AI skills.

[Source: IBM, 2018]

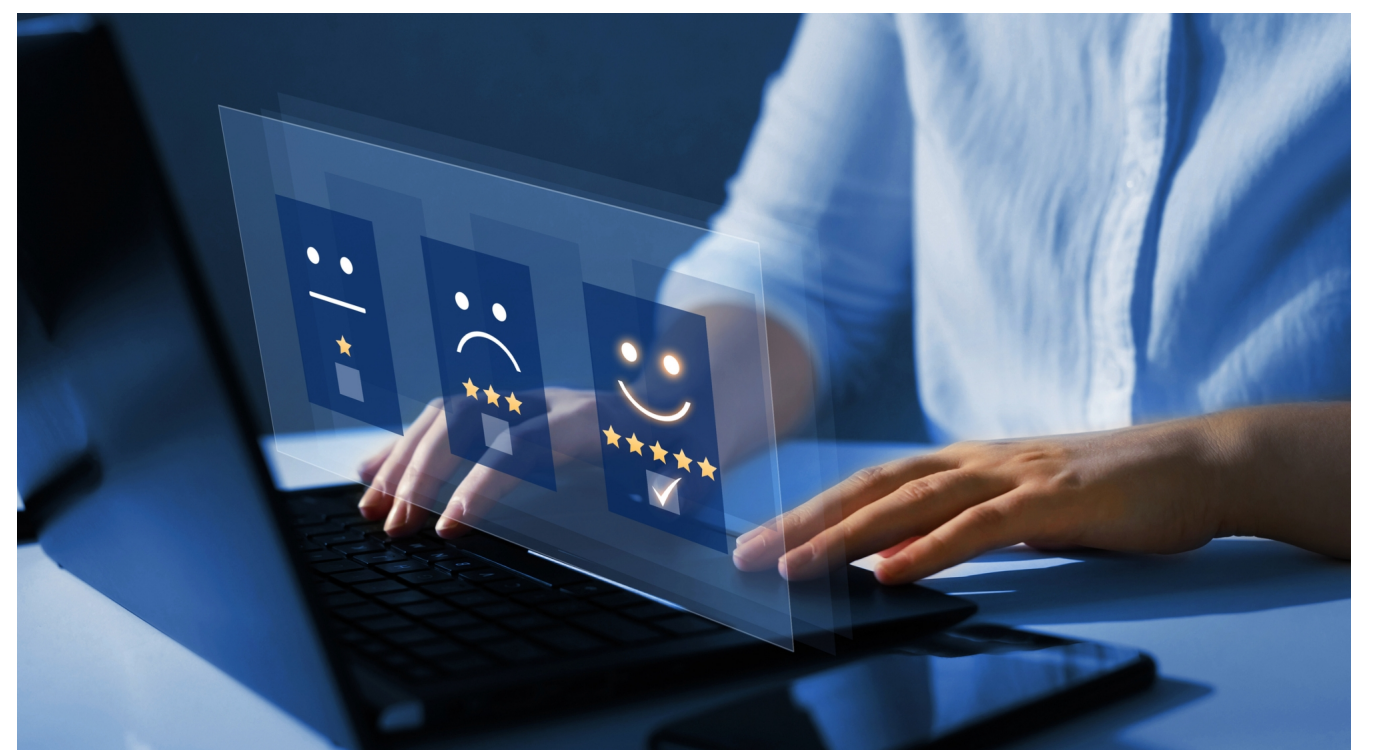
As AI continues to influence all aspects of CX thinking, a new set of strategies will need to be brought forward for organizations to utilize these tools to their full advantage. Over the next few years, organizations that fail to invest in AI readiness will run the risk of falling behind their AI-ready peers.

Proactive organizational strategies for maximizing CX success include:

- Training CX teams on AI-related skills like database hygiene
- Identifying the right metrics to measure success and track growth
- Establishing open channels of communication between IT and customer-facing teams
- Establishing organization-wide AI protocols that prevent siloing

Looking forward: Evaluating the customer voice

As AI gains further ground within the CX space, businesses will have to be proactive to address the gap in understanding between how consumers feel about the abstract concept of “Artificial Intelligence” and the material benefits already brought forth by AI in their lives. Currently, only 35% of consumers say that they would be comfortable interacting with a business AI.² At the same time, 43% of consumers say they don’t know what AI even is.³



Taken together, these facts present a massive opportunity for organizations looking to overhaul their CX operations with the latest AI technology. Businesses that master the ability to move AI from an unknown to a value-add in the mind of their customers have the potential to run away with a massive share of the market.

[2] Pega Systems, 2019 | [3] Blue Fountain Media, 2020



When we think about the big-picture effects of technology on CX, it's important not to lose sight of the customers themselves. If we truly want to push tech forward, then we need to make an appeal that goes beyond "this is newer and faster." Businesses need to make it their goal to have customers feel cared for as individuals, with unique wants and needs. And they need to show them how technology actually empowers that level of care and respect.

-Vijay Sundaram,
Chief Strategy Officer at Zoho

The fact that such a sizable portion of the population isn't familiar with AI explains the relative lack of support for the technology—a very natural fear of the unknown—with over 70% of consumers claiming to have some level of fear of AI. Foregrounding the benefits of AI, while working to build familiarity with it among the general public, will likely be key to transforming the consumer-AI dynamic.



Making AI approachable with digital assistants

A few AI-forward businesses have made popular entries into the consumer market with friendly, anthropomorphic AI assistants, featuring human-sounding voices and human-sounding names—like Siri or Cortana. Zoho's AI assistant, Zia, was designed to apply this type of approachable interface to their enterprise software users. Zia has been a success, and Zoho has since expanded its scope beyond a simple voice interface, to a sophisticated AI platform, providing assistance to its entire CX suite and beyond.

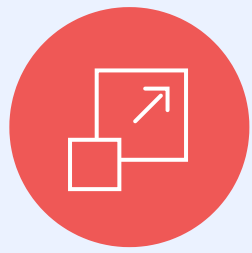
A new future for CX

The arrival of AI marks a tidal shift in the way businesses are able to engage with their customers. What remains to be seen is which organizations are able to successfully adapt. Substantial investments in AI preparedness and a customer-first approach will be crucial for anyone looking to ride the new wave, rather than being left behind.



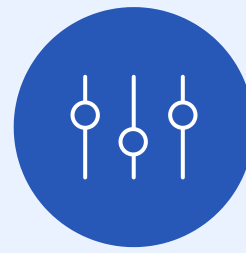
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