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4 objections every AI project needs to overcome

A guide to ensuring a successful AI deployment in the contact centre

🕐 10 minute read

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The potential of AI

The rise of contact centre AI

The rapid rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has had an undeniable impact on the way business leaders of all sorts are thinking about how they can benefit from this technology – especially in customer engagement.

What is generative AI?

Generative AI refers to artificial intelligence platforms which can generate content – whether that's text, audio, or visual – following a given prompt.

These solutions are often built on top of a large language model (LLM) – an algorithm trained on vast amounts of natural language text, giving them the ability to effectively communicate information in the same way as a human

As AI continues to reach further and further into the mainstream, customers are increasingly expecting the businesses they interact with to use its power to make their lives easier.

The use of different types of AI is nothing new. Previously, this interest was primarily focused on chatbots, but with the ever-widening capabilities of generative AI platforms such as ChatGPT, new use cases are emerging – especially in the contact centre. The opportunities for AI implementation have grown exponentially – and with them, the potential to deliver best-in-class customer engagement.

Twilio, a leading customer engagement platform, predicts that well-architected, effectively implemented AI solutions will deliver a tenfold improvement in the service offered to customers, at a tenth of the cost of traditional solutions.[1]

10x at 1/10

improvement in service   **of the cost**

Why turn to AI?

It's become increasingly clear that businesses who are willing to get ahead of the curve and implement AI solutions as part of their customer engagement strategy now will reap the greatest rewards. As customer expectations shift towards preferring immediate, AI-facilitated engagement, businesses that stick with the status quo, relying solely on human agents will have to play catch-up later.

92%

With 92% of businesses already looking to use AI to drive more personalised customer journeys within their businesses,[2] the time is now to harness AI across the contact centre to drive the best possible customer experience.

Implementing AI in the contact centre can drive a number of positive outcomes:

Improving organisational efficiency

AI not only helps agents extend their capabilities to help more customers, more effectively, more of the time, but it also allows for greater self-service options. This frees up agent time to focus on more complex customer queries, and improve on delivering desirable business outcomes – whether that's resolving support tickets or increasing sales.

Bolstering customer satisfaction

While 82% of customers are willing to use self-service rather than reaching out to a contact centre agent, 75% see room for improvement in these solutions.[3] AI helps businesses bridge the gap, enhancing self-service and making it more accessible, user-friendly, and effective than ever before.

Enabling agent excellence

With more customer enquiries resolved through self-service, agents have more time available to focus on the quality of customer engagement. These agents can also be assisted with AI co-pilots to ensure they always have the best information ready to hand, helping them make the right decisions and deliver the best customer experience possible.

With this in mind, finding the ideal AI deployment to deliver on key business goals is crucial. This guide is designed to help you find the perfect opportunities for AI deployment in your organisation, combat common objections, and lay the important groundwork for building your business case.

What does AI in the contact centre look like?

The prospect of generative AI promises solutions to assist in the operation of the contact centre before, during, and after engagement with the customer – all of which will help your organisation sell more and service better.

Before　　　**During**　　　**After**

These 'virtual agent' solutions help customers more effectively self-serve, resolving simple queries without the need for an agent. They also gather potentially relevant information to better route enquiries that require an agent's expertise.

Handling simple enquiries

The ability for AI to receive input from and generate responses in a variety of media types will increasingly allow organisations to route enquiries through AI platforms, helping customers reach the answers they're looking for sooner, and freeing up valuable agent time.

Chatbots

Using the power of generative AI, chatbots can more naturally respond to users in a conversation, offering a much smoother self-service process.

Interactive voice response (IVR)

AI-enabled IVR enhances self-service over the phone and, if needed, helps route customers to agents who are best able to answer their questions. IVR can also collect valuable information about the enquiry, analyse sentiment, and automate identity and verification processes.

During

These offerings act as a copilot to your contact centre agents, giving them the ability to easily deliver frictionless engagements that leave customers feeling satisfied. Rather than replacing the human element of customer engagement, they augment the capabilities of your agents.

Transcription & notes

AI solutions are already widely used in some businesses due to their ability to transcribe and take notes for human agents. Solutions dedicated to this purpose excel at distinguishing accents and ensuring accurate notetaking, so agents don't end up off-course.
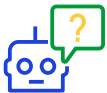
Agent prompting

Rather than requiring your agents to endlessly swap between different windows to track down important customer data and company information, AI can serve relevant information, bring up FAQ pages, and prompt agents on potential opportunities to cross- and up-sell.

Real-time translation

Translation for text-based channels like webchat and email is already widespread in customer engagement but evolving AI capabilities mean that real-time translation is now possible even in live contexts like phone and video chat.

After

An agent's work doesn't end after a contact with a customer ends – wrap-up actions like creating call summaries, updating customer data platforms and CRM systems, and delivering insights to other business functions are all critical. In this arena, AI solutions make these 'wrap-up' tasks easier for agents, if not automating them entirely, allowing agents to spend more time engaging with the next customers in the queue.

Post-call summary

Following on from call transcription, AI can look back over the entire call, create call summaries and add them to a customer's record in a CRM so agents can quickly recall conversations and actions taken.

Outcome recording

Solutions that offer post-call summarisation can also use AI to automate the creation of follow-up task lists and record key outcomes for business reporting and analysis. This also helps to accelerate post-call workflows.

Customer insight

Customer data platforms (CDPs) as well as CRM systems and data warehouses all offer immense business value – provided they're kept up to date with customer information. AI can automatically update these platforms with call outcomes and summaries, creating richer customer profiles to help the business make predictions, and better tailor products and services

02

Common objections to AI in the contact centre

The four objections every AI project needs to overcome

The first step in building your AI deployment plan is to identify and manoeuvre past common objections to implementing AI into the contact centre. These typically fall into one of four categories. While the precise framing of the objection will be specific to your business and your customer interactions, we've summarised each, and have shared the essential know-how to navigate past it.

01 Data security and legal compliance

Objection: Generative AI solutions have a track record of storing and leaking private information

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02 Brand protection and untested technology

Objection: Generative AI solutions are known to 'hallucinate' and deliver information which sounds correct but is false, or even potentially dangerous.

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03 Minimising costs and ensuring return on investment

Objection: AI is too expensive for our business, especially without a demonstrable return on investment.

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04 Guaranteeing the human touch

Objection: A human-first approach to sales and customer experience lies at the core of our value proposition – AI undermines what we stand for.

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Identifying key stakeholders

In order to answer these objections, you also need to understand the personas typically raising them. Different decision-makers exhibit their own motivations and will pinpoint specific objections as relevant to their role and responsibilities. We've identified the likely stakeholders in an AI deployment in the contact centre, and what may be driving them.

Customer Services

Drivers: Reducing cost to serve, delivering better experiences, and enhancing agent satisfaction.

Finance

Drivers: Keeping transaction costs low, prioritising investments which can deliver business value, and protecting cash flow.

Human Resources

Drivers: Building a rewarding and positive place to work, attracting and retaining talent, and minimising burnout.

IT

Drivers: Creating business value using innovative technologies and streamlining the IT solutions used.

Legal

Drivers: Ensuring changes to the business do not create risk or potential legal exposure, and that the organisation satisfies compliance with all applicable regulations.

Sales

Drivers: Increasing customer value, conversion, and retention. Streamlining transactions for a smooth sales process.

The C-Suite

Drivers: Creating business growth and stakeholder value.

Data security and legal compliance

Objection

Generative AI solutions have a track record of storing and leaking private information.

Because AI models are developed and trained based on input from users, potentially sensitive data could be leaked or surfaced in responses to other users. This creates a significant risk of a data breach for our business.

Similarly, how do we ensure data sovereignty for AI platforms? Data - and the AI model itself - may be stored out-of-country, creating compliance issues and provoking questions concerning who has access to the data our AI model needs to function.

Response

High-profile generative AI solutions such as ChatGPT use publicly available data and can cross-pollinate information from one user into a response for another. However, AI solutions can be architected to use private data and not store information from user prompts after a response is generated. In the same way a company can deploy an intranet to operate in a similar way to the internet, but without public accessibility, businesses can deploy private AI solutions which are strictly limited to internal use.

Since these private AI platforms are hosted within an organisation's own environment, data sovereignty can be ensured, and access to the underlying LLM and the data that trains it can be limited.
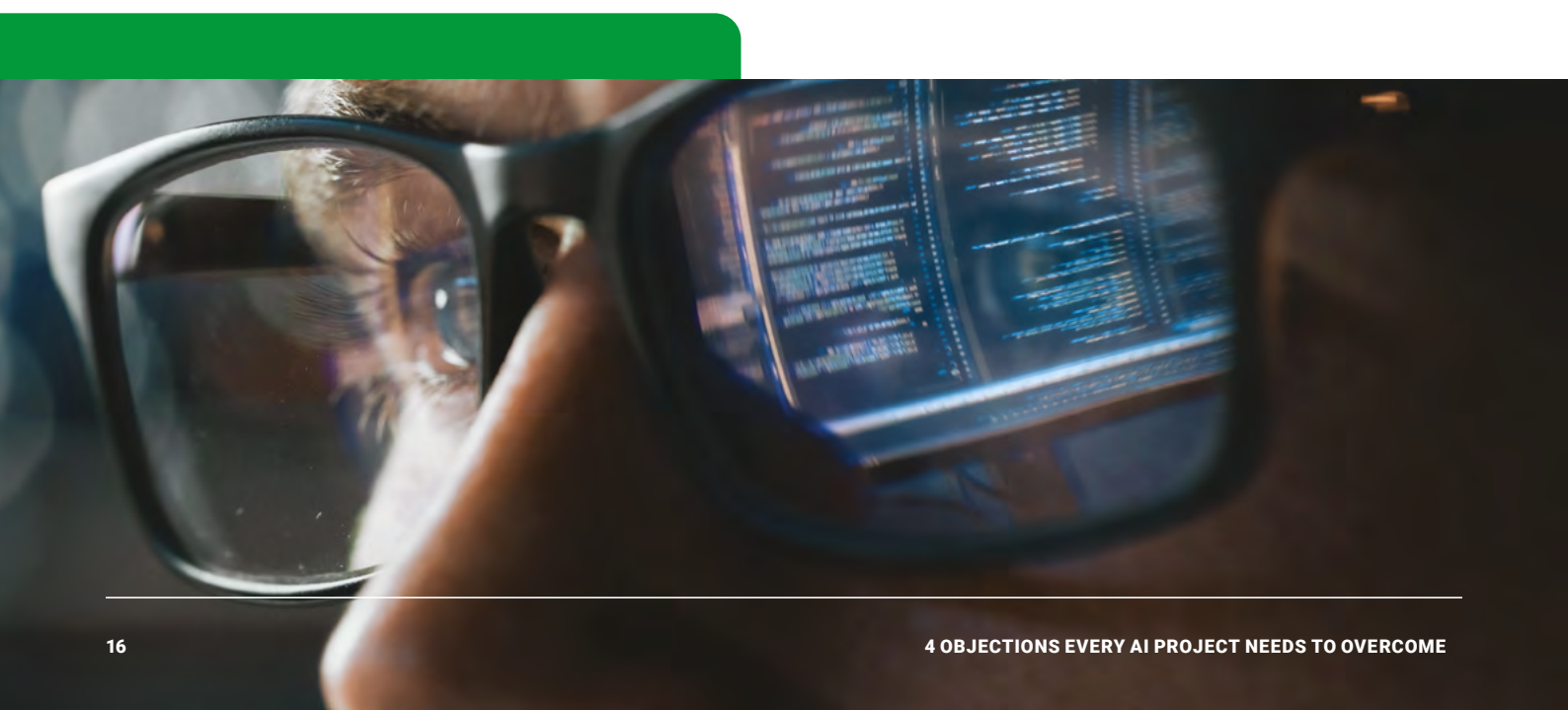
Brand protection and avoiding untested technology

Stakeholders

Legal   **HR**   **Sales**

Objection

Generative AI solutions have a track record of storing and leaking private information.

Using this technology at its current stage of development – particularly in customer-facing applications – presents a risk to our brand, as we can't be certain that customers who engage with AI will walk away with the correct information, and may receive information that makes them less likely to continue their relationship with us.

Since this technology is largely untested, we can't be sure an AI deployment will work as intended – especially as there aren't currently many case studies demonstrating the potential of AI in the contact centre.

Response

Hallucinations stem from two causes: the AI model used, and the data it accesses. By putting guardrails in place to limit the data available to the AI model at any given time, tailored to the precise needs of the model, the risk of hallucinations can be significantly decreased.

This risk is also mitigated by using AI to empower agents, rather than interfacing with customers directly. Agents can check information to ensure that responses are accurate before passing information back to the customer.

While any AI deployments in the contact centre may be untested for customer-facing roles as soon as they're deployed, continued optimisation and development of guardrails ensure that it does not pose a risk to the business. Most importantly, this testing can be conducted without putting AI directly within the customer journey, therefore minimising brand risk.

Minimising costs and ensuring return on investment

Objection

AI is too expensive for our business, especially without a demonstratable return on investment.

The perceived costs for AI are significant – not just licensing the platform itself, but also the infrastructure needed to support it, and the services needed to facilitate its use.

Hiring AI expertise into the business will undoubtedly be costly – and that's before considering other costs such as hosting and further development, which will all eat into our customer experience budget.

At the same time, there are very few case studies to demonstrate the return on investment for deploying AI in the contact centre, making it difficult to ensure that the project will deliver meaningful business value, rather than just becoming an expensive misstep.

Response

While AI solutions have previously been cost-prohibitive for many businesses, recent developments have made AI far more accessible, and rapid evolution of the technology will only continue this trend. Rather than trying to attract and retain cutting-edge AI talent, working with an expert AI partner to deliver solutions can be a quick way to unlock the innovation potential while minimising lead times and optimising investment.

By helping agents streamline their workflows, and assisting in customer self-service, AI frees up valuable agent time to be spent on activities which offer greater value to the business. This can often be correlated with a clear return on investment – whether that's cost optimisation from agent hours saved, or revenue uplift created from upsell opportunity. As mentioned previously, Twilio estimates that AI-powered customer engagement can offer ten times better results, at a tenth of the cost of other solutions.[1]

Guaranteeing the human touch

Objection

A human-first approach to sales and customer experience lies at the core of our value proposition – AI undermines what we stand for.

The human touch of professional contact centre agents and salespeople lies at the core of our customer experience strategy. AI can't build relationships with customers in the same way our support and sales teams can. Meanwhile, rolling out AI could create the impression amongst customers that their enquiries are being offloaded to an automated system, risking dissatisfaction and potentially tarnishing our brand. This is especially true for high-value customers who are accustomed to receiving a bespoke service from us, and who need capable human agents to guide them through the sales process.

Even if customer experience wasn't one of our core differentiators, AI would still be unsuitable – we often work with vulnerable customers in tightly regulated interactions, and our product portfolio requires expert salespeople to find the ideal solution for any given customer. Our customer experience offering should be focused on the unique abilities of human agents, rather than AI solutions.

Response

While AI can take on some customer-facing roles, it can also easily add value to businesses by acting as an assistant for contact centre agents; from helping them sell more and service better by putting information at their fingertips, to answering customer enquiries or acting as a first port of call to facilitate self-service. In this sense, AI doesn't act as a replacement for human interaction – instead, it enhances it, allowing businesses to further harness great customer experiences as a differentiator.

This also applies to organisations that work with vulnerable people. Rather than excluding a business from harnessing AI, this instead provides an excellent use case, empowering agents with the ability to better understand the situation of their customer, serving useful information, and giving prompts to ensure the agent's actions remain compliant with legal obligations of the business. This allows agents to continue to deliver excellent customer experience and drive sales, with the expertise of the AI present to help them.

03

Ensuring a safe journey to AI adoption

Starting the process

No two organisations are identical. Much like any other deployment of a new technology, rolling out an AI platform for your contact centre requires the right stakeholders to be on board, and a bulletproof business case for use in your business.

There are three main things to consider when building this business case: people, processes, and technology – each of which will govern what your business can achieve.

People

Finding the right champions for an AI project is fundamental to its success. Look for supporters at board level, or on senior leadership teams, to help advance the project. These champions don't need to be based in IT – support can come from sales, customer operations, or marketing; all of which stand to gain massively from AI deployment.

With this senior team assembled, look for subject matter experts who can help influence success – these can come from within your business, or via external AI specialists you can bring to the table.
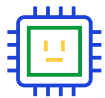
Processes

AI will have a profound impact on business processes, from how customer enquiries are handled, and data is processed, to the ways success is tracked, such as cost per interaction. Spend time with the project's major stakeholders to identify key performance indicators that can be used to both track success and identify areas for improvement across the AI deployment.

Once you've started the project and can see its impact, begin planning your next steps to generate further value from your investment in AI and continually improve business processes.

Technology

Even if they're not directly interfacing with the AI platform, technology teams need to be engaged to ensure vital considerations like compliance monitoring, security, and data processing are covered.

The data used to drive an AI platform will often be distributed across a wide range of sources. Valuable information on website traffic, customer transaction history, and product lead times may be spread across different teams in the organisation but should nonetheless be delivered in a unified format to ensure the AI model has reliable access to all the data it needs.

Building your business case

With the groundwork laid, it's time to build your business case for AI deployment in the contact centre. Depending on the nature of your deployment, and how your business operates, the next steps will look different for everyone. That being said, the list below covers common steps that can help any organisation achieve the best success possible.

Customer journey analysis

Pull together a complete view of key customer journeys – from acquisition to ongoing support – in order to identify where AI can be deployed to generate the most impact and produce the best outcomes for your business.

Select a use case

Select a process or step in the customer journey to enhance, such as a particularly common type of enquiry, or a regular challenge faced by contact centre agents. Break this step down into its constituent parts to best identify where AI can help. It's also important to consider what data will be readily available to the AI at this point in the customer journey, to better understand how it can be used.

Decide on key success metrics

Different AI deployments will be successful in different ways. Are you looking to help agents close calls faster, improve customer satisfaction, reduce the number of customers seeking support from your contact centre, or something else? Determining clear and easily measurable success metrics now can help guide you through deploying and configuring your AI.

Determine how the AI will receive information from your environment

An AI's output is only as good as the data it's given. Take a look at how data exists in your environment and consider how this can be most effectively fed into an AI program. If you have a unified CDP, this can be incredibly valuable to give an AI all the information it needs on a customer, aggregated from all the different data siloes that may be important.

Experiment and train the AI

Starting with small, low-risk, pilot deployments, slowly roll AI out into your environment, continually feeding it data to fine-tune its outputs. Once you're happy with how the AI is operating, start to phase it into the customer journey for a small cohort of customers or agents to see how it performs in the field.

Review results

Once you've tested the AI in the field, constantly evaluate its performance against the key success metrics you've already established. For example, is it delivering as originally intended? If not, consider whether there are changes that can be made across the customer journey to better facilitate the AI's success, or indeed if AI would yield better value operating within a different part of the customer journey.

Release, deploy, monitor, and optimise

Once you've thoroughly tested your AI, fully deploy it to all agents, or allow access from all customers, and begin to monitor how it performs in the wild. This monitoring will open new avenues for improvement – whether that be how prompts are composed, how agents interact with the platform, or how data is organised.

Expand to new use cases

Once you've fully deployed and optimised AI for one part of your customer journey, the next step is to repeat the process, looking for other processes that AI can help facilitate and continue to build on the business value.

04

Who are we?

Ciptex and Twilio

At Ciptex, our goal is to help you (and your agents) sell more and service better – whether that's by deploying AI into your contact centre environment, helping you introduce new customer communication channels, or reinvigorating your contact centre solution with new capabilities.

We help our customers integrate data into key workflows, informing better decision-making and empowering agents to succeed. Since the launch of ChatGPT, our labs have been creating, testing, and deploying new AI platforms built on the power of LLMs.

As a Twilio Gold Consulting Partner, we've always worked closely with Twilio's innovative Flex contact centre solution and powerful Segment CDP. Paired together, these two solutions build a perfect foundation upon which AI platforms can be built – and with the launch of Twilio's Customer AI, doing so is easier than ever for our customers.

What's next?

If you're interested in discovering more about how AI can help enhance your agents' workflows and deliver meaningful customer experiences - and business value - our contact centre co-pilot is now available for live demonstrations.

Looking to get a jump-start on your AI journey? Reach out to our experts today to discover what's possible for your business and get expert help in formulating the best strategy for your AI deployment.

Want to know more about how we can help?

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