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2026-2027 CUSTOMER

CONTACT EXECUTIVE

BENCHMARKING REPORT

BY CMP RESEARCH TEAM

5-minute read

SUMMARY

- **Improving customer analytics and insights** is the number one most urgent priority for customer contact and CX executives in the next two years.
- **Increasing customer adoption of self-service is the second most urgent priority.** Better analytics and visibility into customer journeys allows executives to design self-service experiences that are more personalized and lower effort.
- **Improving agentic and generative AI capabilities are also high urgency priorities,** which reinforces that executives are choosing these solutions to upgrade automated experiences so that consumers are more likely to adopt them and augment employee experiences such that employees can better handle complex contact.
- **Cost reduction is also an urgent priority,** which indicates that increased self-service is at least partly a cost efficiency strategy.
- **Managing the change of an AI-augmented workforce** was identified as nearly the hardest strategic initiative for CX and customer contact teams to get right.



A survey of 137 global customer contact enterprise leaders identified top challenges and priorities in 2026 and ahead to 2027. As strategic plans, budgets, and technology & AI roadmaps take shape, it is critical for leaders to compare their priority list with peers. Importance and difficulty of strategic initiatives dictate where customer contact and CX leaders will invest time, resources, and capital.

From a list of 20 customer contact priorities, **improving customer analytics and insights, increasing customer adoption of self-service, and improving agentic AI capability** were identified as the top three priorities, with the highest average importance and difficulty scores (see Figure 1).

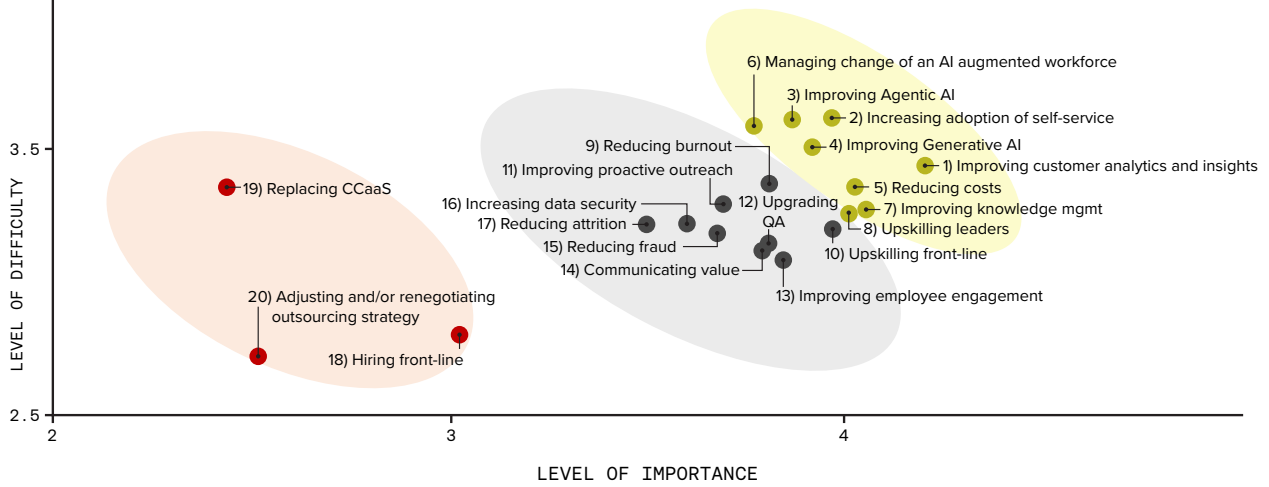
Improving generative AI capability, reducing costs, and managing the change of an AI-augmented workforce were the next three most urgent priorities. **Rounding out the “high urgency zone” are improving knowledge management and upskilling leaders,** though these are relatively more on the cusp of high urgency.

The high concentration of priorities in the “high urgency zone,” as noted by yellow shading, shows that customer contact and CX executives are contending with full plates and high pressure to deliver on multiple levels across their teams.

Hiring into the front-line, replacing CCaaS, and adjusting or renegotiating the outsourcing strategy were least critical priorities.

FIGURE 1: Customer Contact Executive Leadership Priorities in 2026-2027 — Average Score

Level of Importance vs Difficulty to Solve
Average Scores



Source: CMP Research, 2026 Priorities in Customer Contact Survey (n = 118-137 leaders)

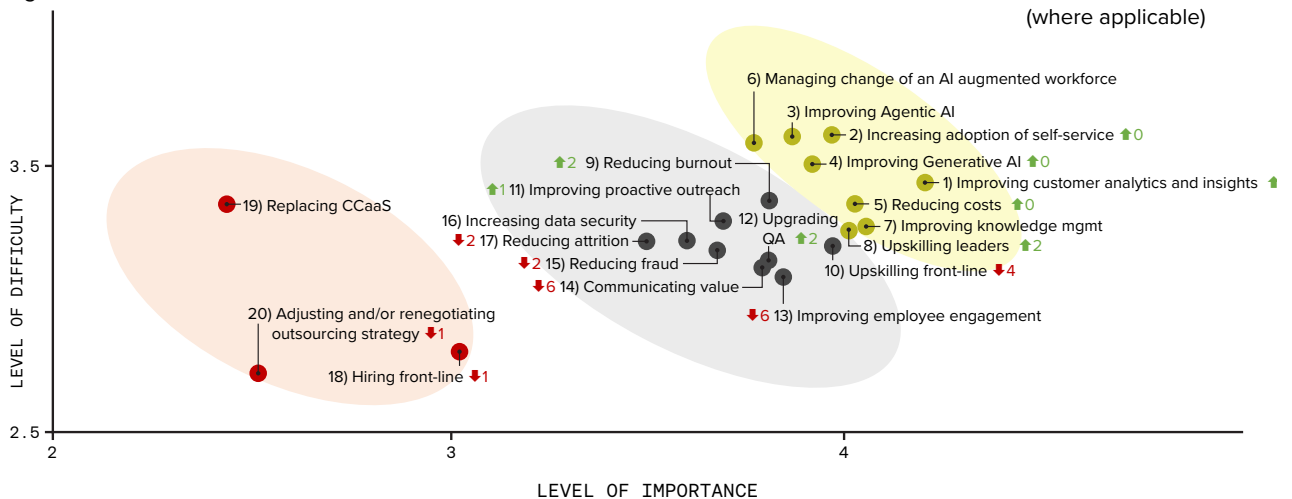
In comparison to last year, leaders' top priorities remain relatively similar; however, improving customer analytics and insights moved up two spots to become the top priority overall. Upskilling leaders, reducing burnout and upgrading quality assurance (QA) also moved up two spots by urgency. This is likely driven by the challenges associated with increasingly complex workloads for the front-line due to automation of simpler contacts.

Communicating functional value and improving employee engagement fell farthest down the priority list year-on-year, dropping down six spots respectively.

Overall, this year's analysis showed a continued commitment to technology as a means of improving customer adoption of self-service and cost reduction. It also introduced the reality that executives are faced with challenges in introducing AI-enabled processes and tools into the customer contact workforce.

FIGURE 2: Customer Contact Executive Leadership Priorities in 2026-2027 — Average Score, YOY Change

Level of Importance vs Difficulty to Solve
Average Scores



WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS MANAGED

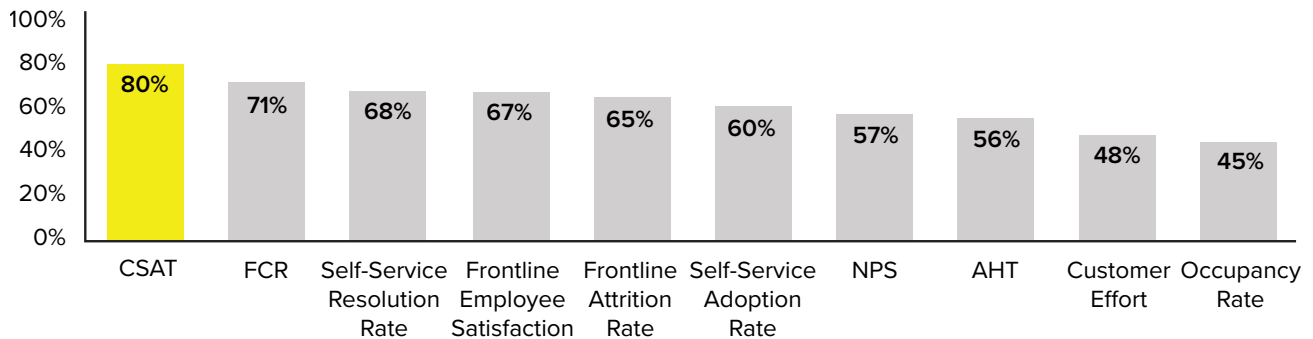
To understand how well the contact center is functioning, it is critical to consistently gather customer data throughout the customer journey. However, many executives are unsure if they are capturing the right metrics and what is best in class in today's contact center. Leaders are split between what they find most important to driving customer loyalty with Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) being the most important among 80% of leaders, followed by First Contact Resolution (FCR) at 71% and Self-Service Resolution Rate at 68% (see Figure 3).

In years prior, Net Promoter Score (NPS) was cited by more executives as a top metric for customer loyalty. The pivot instead toward FCR and Self-Service Resolution Rate reflects customer contact's commitment to

driving more contacts through automated, self-service channels. Historically, few organizations were able to successfully parse resolution rate by live-service versus self-service contacts. With improvements in customer analytics and insights tools as well as automated QA/QM platforms, this is becoming more possible. Moreover, the increasing volume of contacts in self-service channels and significant investment in generative and agentic AI solutions requires executives to quantify impact on resolution rates specific to self-service channels.

Only 48% of executives said Customer Effort Score is a primary indicator of customer loyalty and 45% cited Occupancy Rate.

FIGURE 3: Please rate the importance of the following metrics in relation to your strategic goals for 2026–2027: *Percentage of Customer Contact Leaders Indicating Importance or High Importance*



n=100
Source: CMP Research analysis, 2026 Executive Priorities Survey

TECHNOLOGY'S IMPACT ON THE FUTURE OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The technology suite is the biggest obstacle for leaders when increasing customer adoption of self-service. The wrong technology can create friction and poor experiences that prompt customers to opt for live service instead. Many executives report that the number of tools available in today's marketplace is confusing and overwhelming. Even with the influx of new tools and technology, only 40% of executives agree that the current marketplace meets the needs of their customer contact function².

Leaders have limited investment resources but also know they need to improve the quality of self-service experiences to increase adoption. Executives also view technology solutions as a means to augment worker productivity and close skills gaps in an environment

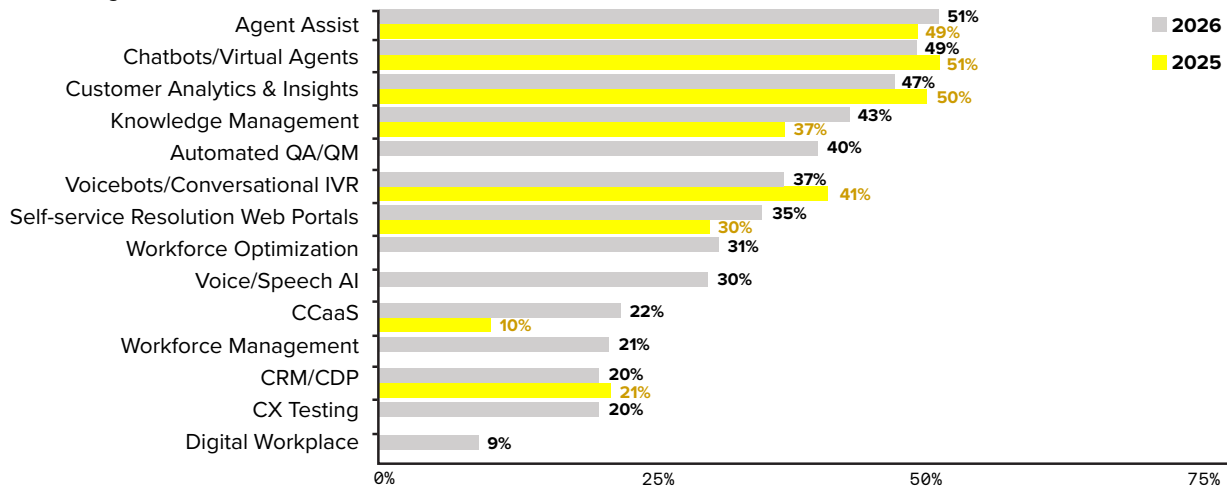
where their average contacts are more complex. Rather than hire front-line representatives with a different skill profile, which is more expensive, executives are opting for tools that can close or mitigate skill gaps. As a result, more than half of executives indicated that they plan to increase their investment in real-time assist/copilot tools in the next two years. This is a slight increase from 2025.

Chatbots/virtual agents and customer analytics and insights tools are the second and third most cited technology categories for future investment.

Digital workplace applications, CX testing tools, and CRMs/CDPs are the three technology categories where the smallest percentage of executives plan to invest by 2027.

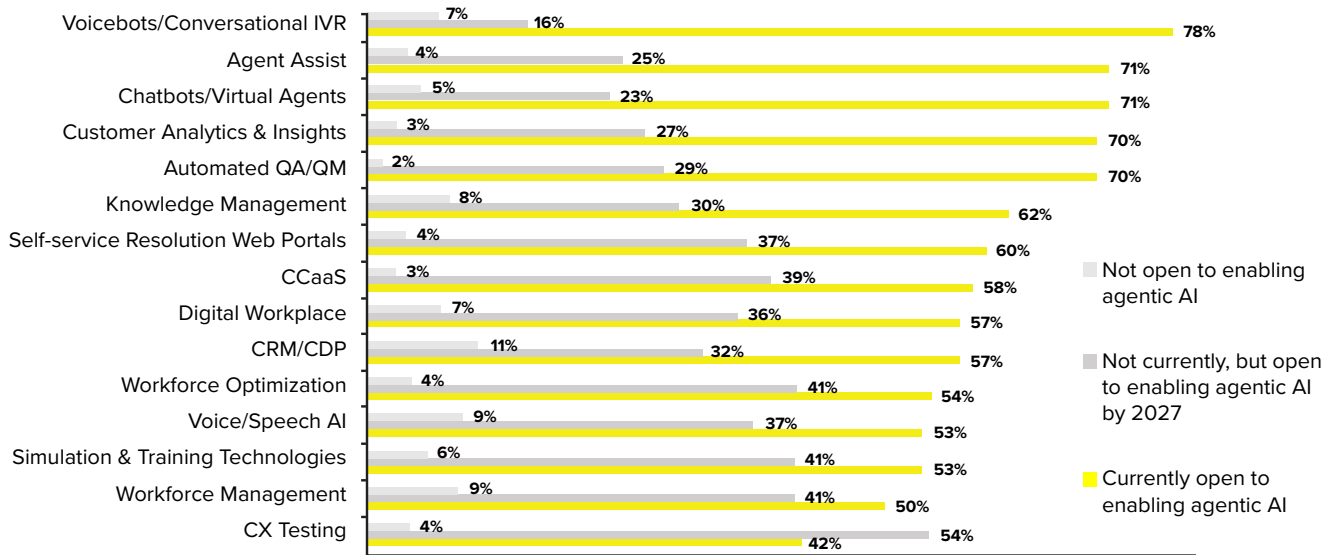
FIGURE 4: Which technology categories are your top investment priorities in the next two years? — *Percentage of Leaders, YOY comparison*

Top Investment Priorities for Technology in 2026-2027 *Percentage of Leaders*



Source: CMP Research, 2026 Priorities in Customer Contact Survey (n=136 leaders), 2025 (n=70 leaders)

FIGURE 5: In which technology categories are you open to deploying agentic AI capability? — Percentage of Leaders



n = 136 companies
Source: CMP Research analysis

Given that improving agentic AI capabilities is the third most urgent priority for CX and customer contact executives, CMP Research asked executives to indicate where they are most likely to deploy agentic

solutions. Voicebot, agent assist and chatbot are the three technologies where executives are most open to deploying agentic solutions (see Figure 5).

ENDNOTES

¹2026-2027 Customer Contact Executive Priorities, CMP Research

²Technology and Tools Roadmap: Improving Efficiency in Flexible & Remote Contact Centers, CMP Research