SUTHERLAND®

Delivering Personalized, AI-powered Digital Experiences (CX) in The Evolving Retail Landscape

Fierce competition and rising expectations demand more from retailers. Discover how to go beyond transactions to create personalized, memorable customer experiences.

Introduction

The retail landscape is in a state of perpetual transformation. Today, retailers are uniquely challenged by fierce competition, rising customer expectations, and a definitive shift to digital-first engagement. Simply processing transactions is no longer enough. The new benchmark for success is creating seamless, personalized, and memorable experiences that build lasting loyalty and drive sustainable growth.

With the digital transformation market projected to hit **$3.6 trillion this year**, the pressure to invest has never been higher. A recent **PwC** survey found that 30% of global CEOs are already seeing revenue gains from generative AI, with 45% expecting profitability to improve even more this year. The real question is no longer if you should invest, but how quickly you can scale your strategy to capture this growth.

However, achieving this is a complex challenge. Retailers must manage diverse customer segments—from individual consumers to small businesses and large enterprises—each with unique needs. That said, retailers are required to drive customer engagement with enhanced customer experience (CX). There is a significant shift happening among retailers globally as they are investing significantly in new age digital technologies to deliver great CX. According to **Gartner**, nearly 65% retail CIOs are investing in digital transformation to excel in customer experience. They must also navigate multiple channels, sophisticated technologies, and global operational demands.

This whitepaper presents Sutherland's proven framework for transforming retail customer experience (CX). We move beyond traditional outsourcing to become a true transformation partner, embedding intelligent technology and specialized human talent directly into the fabric of our clients' operations. Outlining a strategic approach built on three core pillars: **Operate, Innovate, and Grow.**

Sutherland's Philosophy:
A Human-Centric, Tech-Powered Approach

For over 38 years, Sutherland has been the catalyst for accelerating digital performance for the world's most iconic brands. Our philosophy is rooted in a simple but powerful idea: the best customer experiences are delivered by combining the empathy and expertise of talented people with the power and efficiency of intelligent technology.

Our approach is built upon a flexible framework designed to deliver tangible outcomes:

- **OPERATE:** We build tailored, resilient, and efficient operational models that serve as a rock-solid foundation for service delivery. This involves optimizing processes, deploying locations and in strategic global locations, and ensuring flawless execution every day.
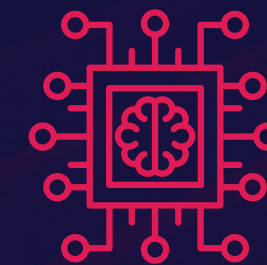
- **INNOVATE:** We embed a culture of continuous improvement, leveraging our global innovation labs and a robust suite of proprietary AI and automation platforms. We co-create next-generation solutions with our clients, moving from insight to journey design to implementation at pace.
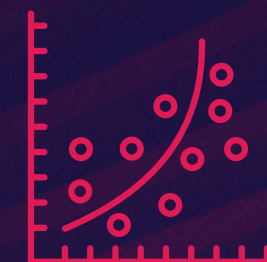
- **GROW:** We act as a dedicated partner for growth, focusing on outcomes that directly impact the bottom line. Our solutions are designed not just to save costs, but to increase customer lifetime value, drive incremental revenue, and enhance brand loyalty.

The Cornerstone of Modern CX:
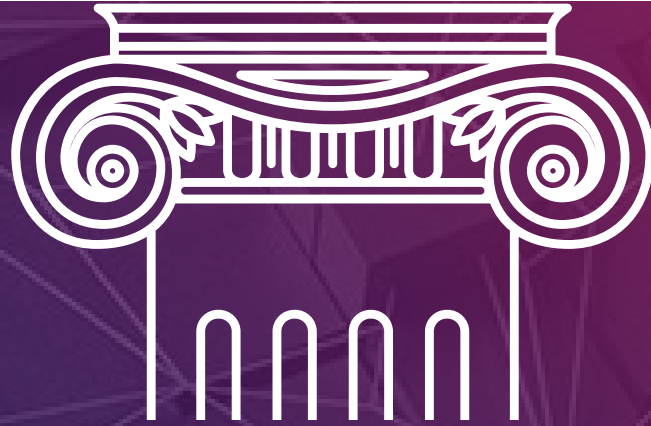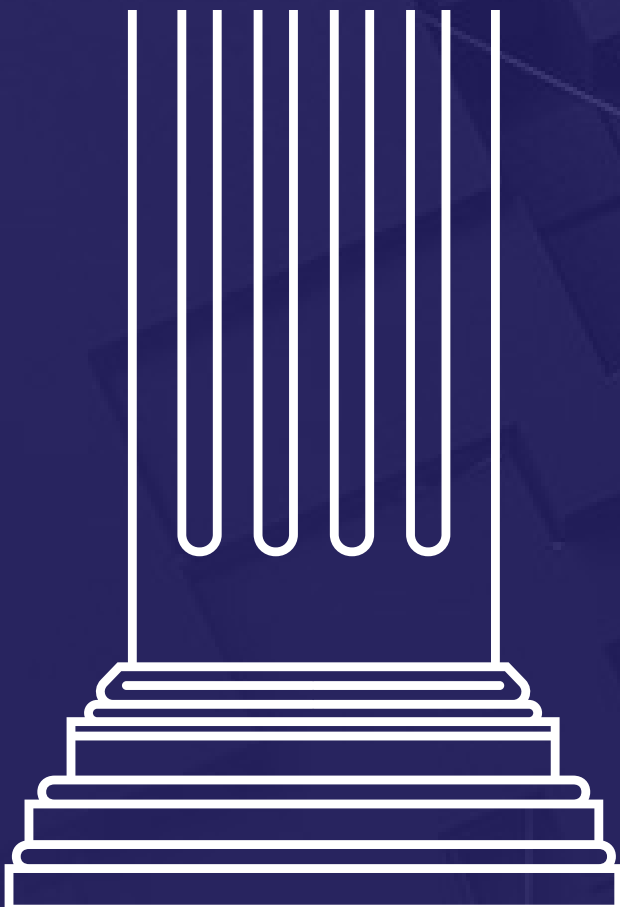## A Unified "Phygital" Experience

A one-size-fits-all approach to customer service is destined to fail. True CX excellence begins with a deep, nuanced understanding of the end customer, recognizing that today's consumers don't see separate channels; they see a single brand. As PwC puts it, the retail's growth lies in the seamless convergence of both physical and digital experiences. That said, the future of retail is "phygital"—a deeply integrated ecosystem where the digital and physical worlds converge to create a single, unified customer journey. What was once a delighter—searching on a phone, adding to a cart on a laptop, and picking up in-store—is now a fundamental expectation.

From Sutherland's perspective, enabling this phygital strategy requires more than just technology; it demands a strategic framework that places the customer at the center. Our approach is built on three pillars:
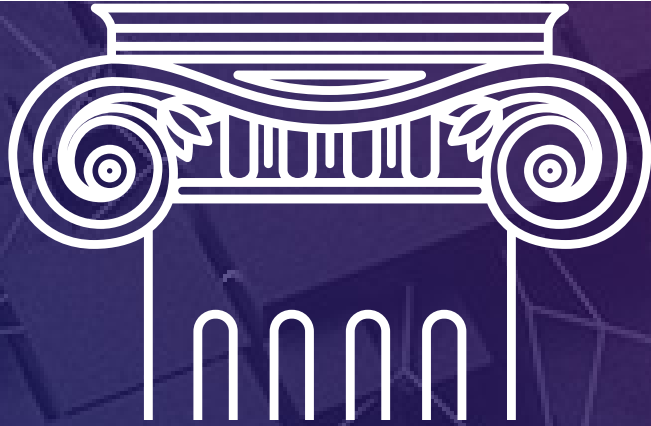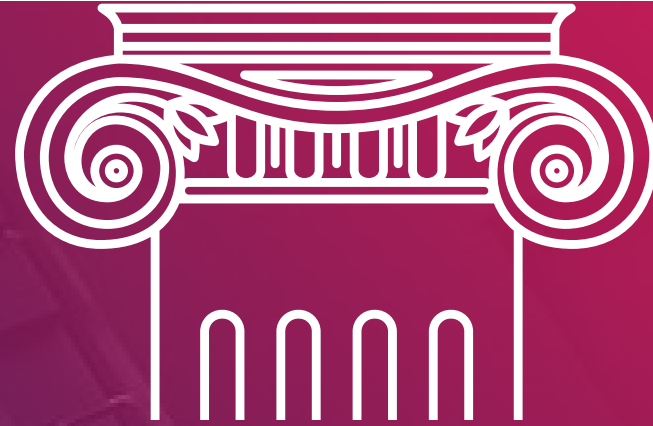
1. THE FOUNDATION:
Unified Data and Empowered People. Before crafting a seamless experience, we focus on aligning underlying data and personnel. The most critical element is creating a Unified Customer Profile, giving both contact center agents and in-store associates the same view of purchase history, loyalty status, and web activity. This data-centric approach, combined with Real-Time Inventory Visibility, forms the bedrock of personalization and reliable fulfillment.

2. THE CONNECTORS:
Bridging the Digital and Physical Worlds. We bring the unified experience to life through practical applications. This means perfecting seamless fulfillment options like BOPIS (Buy Online, Pickup In-Store) and BORIS (Buy Online, Return In-Store), which are now necessities. Our role is to ensure the contact center acts as a central hub, providing crucial "Human-in-the-Loop" support for both customers and in-store staff, ensuring smooth resolutions for delayed orders or complex returns.

3. PERSONALIZATION:
Making Every Interaction Matter. With a unified foundation, we can deliver the "white-glove" service that drives loyalty. We design our services around the unique DNA of each client's customer base, tailoring interactions based on distinct personas. For an uber-luxury beauty brand, this means differentiating between a "Modern, Informed Beauty Enthusiast" and a "Value-Conscious Consumer". For a luxury automotive brand, this elevates to a concierge-style service for "The Enthusiast," "The Connoisseur," and "The Loyalist," who may be served by trusted staff through intelligent routing. By designing services around specific personas, we ensure every customer feels understood, valued, and respected.

# The Framework in Action: Engineering the Customer Journey

With a deep understanding of the customer, we deploy a suite of digital accelerators and operational strategies to optimize every stage of their journey.
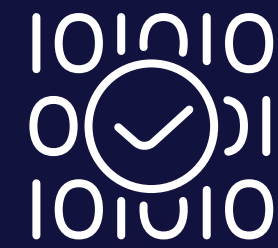
Discovery and Purchase

The modern customer journey begins with search. To make this seamless, we leverage advanced technology like:

- **Vector-Search Engines:** An AI-powered search that allows customers to use natural language queries (e.g., "eco-friendly toner with 2-day shipping") to find relevant products from a catalog of over 100,000 items

- **Smart Carts & AI Bundles:** A "Complete-the-basket" recommender AI can suggest complementary items based on historical data, increasing the average order value (AOV). For B2B clients, a GPT copilot can flag contract-price mismatches in real-time to ensure compliance
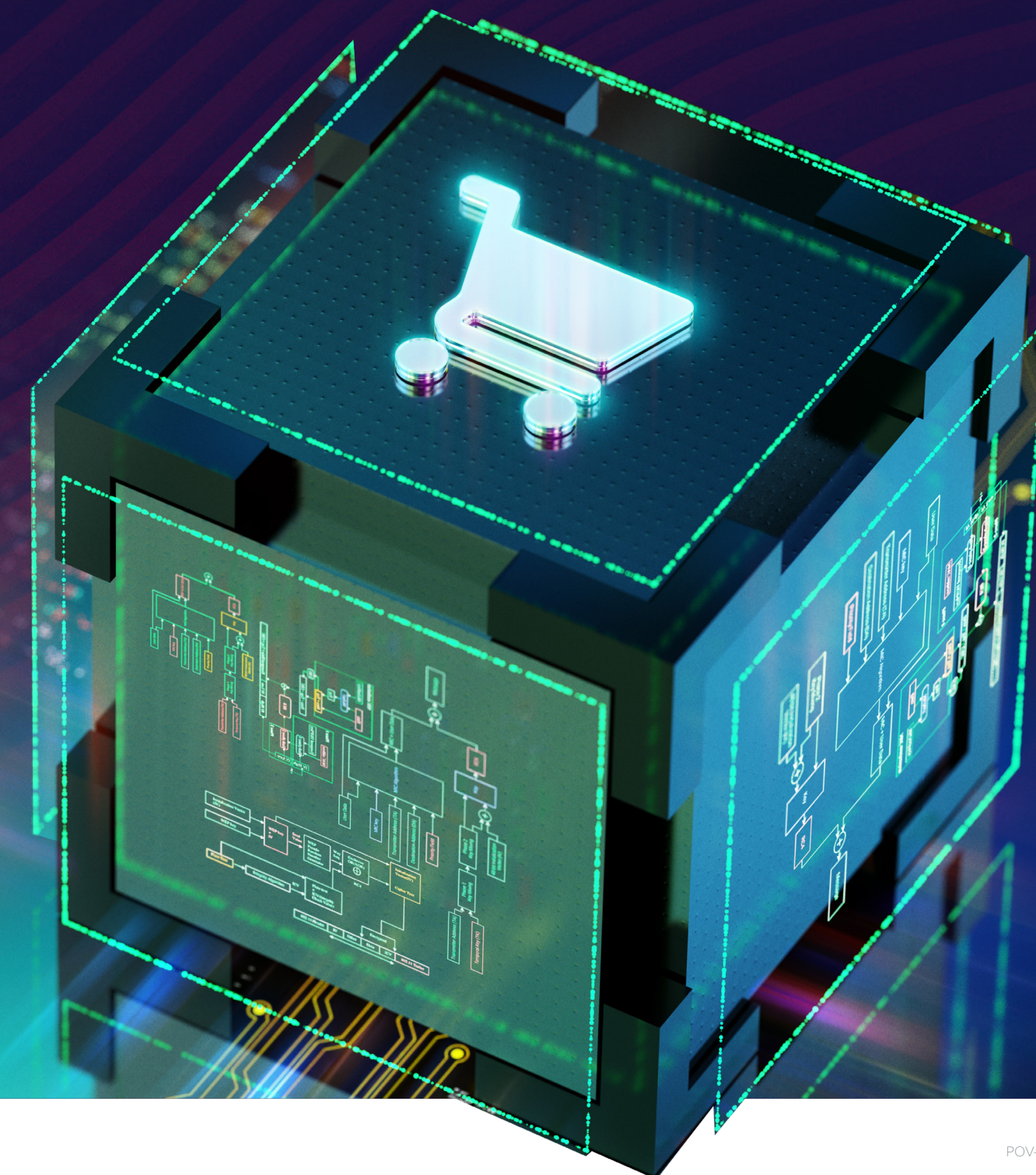
Fulfilment and Post-Purchase

The experience doesn't end at checkout. We enhance post-purchase visibility and convenience through:

- **Proactive WISMO (Where Is My Order?) Bots:** Graph-based ETA predictors blend warehouse data, carrier scans, and even traffic to provide accurate delivery estimates. This system can proactively push delay alerts via SMS or app, dramatically reducing inbound "Where is my order?" calls by up to 30%.

- **Optimized BOPIS (Buy Online, Pickup In-Store):** We use computer-vision and simulation models to optimize staffing and ensure curbside or in-store pickup wait times are kept to a minimum.
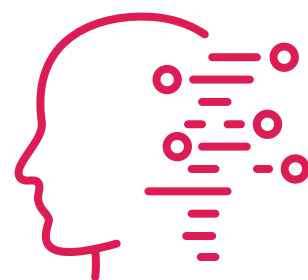
Support and Service

When customers need help, the interaction must be efficient and empathetic. Our solutions are designed to empower agents and resolve issues on the first contact.

- **A Multi-Tiered, Omnichannel Model:** We structure our teams to handle inquiries of varying complexity, from Tier 1 frontline support for order status to Tier 3 expert teams for advanced technical or product-specific issues.

- **AI-Powered Language Solutions:** With Sutherland Translate.AI™, we can provide support in over 40 languages from any global location. This allows clients like to offer 24/7 multilingual support, achieving a 90% CSAT score even with non-native speaking agents.

- **Intelligent Agent Tools:** We equip our agents with an AI-powered suite including HelpTree, a knowledge management platform that provides step-by-step resolution guides, and

- **Agent Assist**, which offers real-time guidance and sentiment analysis during live calls. This has proven to reduce after-call work by up to 40% for our food brand client.

The Engine Room:
Empowering Agents for Excellence

World-class CX is delivered by world-class agents. We have built a sophisticated ecosystem to attract, train, and retain top talent specifically matching the unique needs of each retail brand.

Specialized Talent Acquisition

We create customized agent personas for each role, ensuring we hire not just for skill, but for mindset. For a B2B client, this means sourcing professionals with experience in account management and complex procurement[20]. For a consumer brand, it means finding individuals with a passion for the product and a strong service orientation[21].
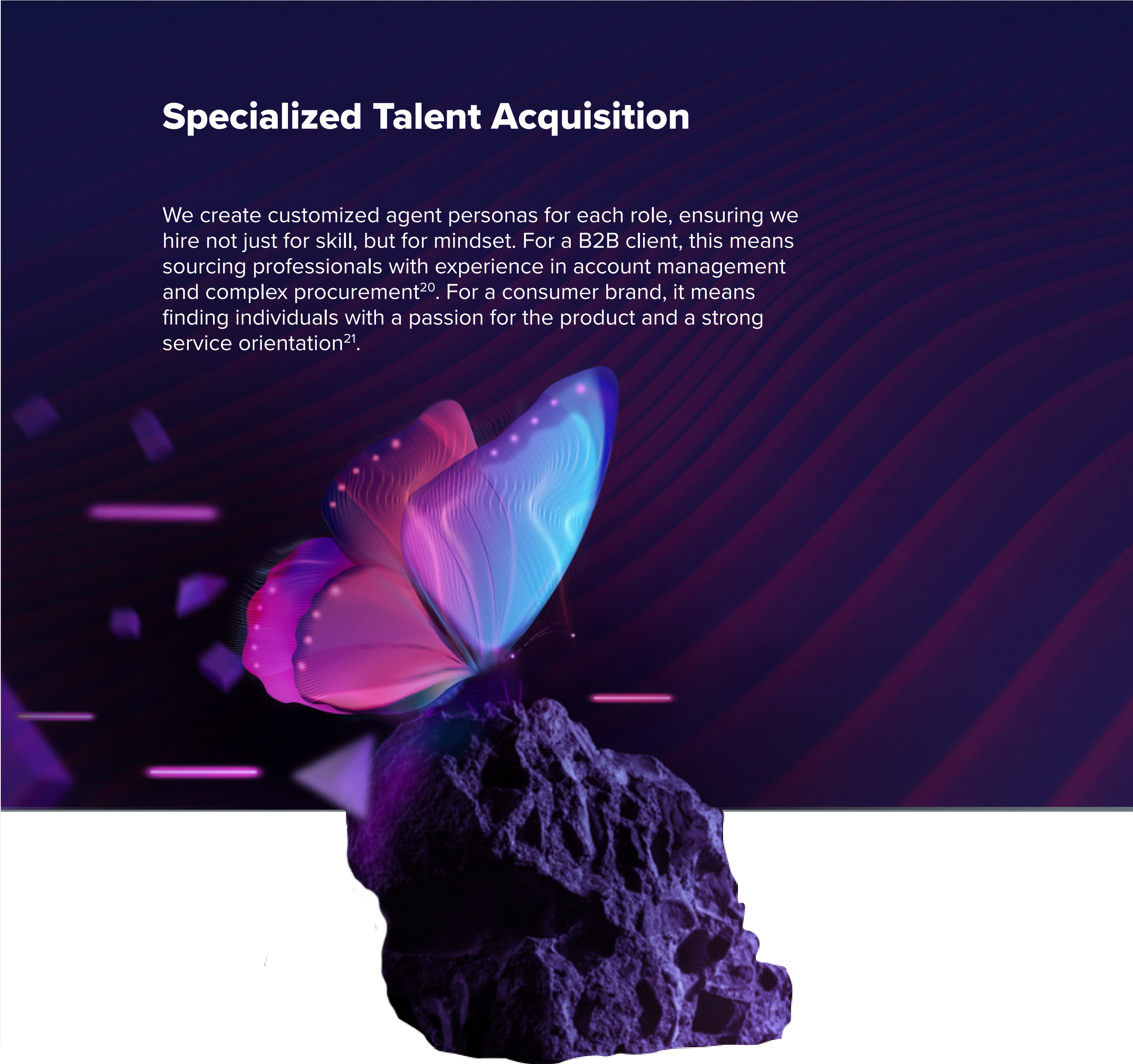
Next-Generation Training

We move beyond traditional classroom learning to immerse agents in their roles from day one. Our training is powered by:

- **Scenario-Based Learning:** A methodology that uses data-driven analysis of real-world events to create immersive simulations.

- **AI Training Bots: T**ools like Aiden and AlfaGenAI allow new hires to practice in a simulated environment, handling chat and voice interactions with an AI-powered "customer.". This provides a safe space to build skills and confidence before engaging with live customers.

AI-Powered Quality and Performance

To ensure the highest standards, we have evolved quality assurance from manual spot-checks to a comprehensive, AI-driven process. By analyzing 100% of interactions, we can identify coaching opportunities, ensure compliance, and provide agents with targeted feedback to drive continuous improvement.

This is coupled with a Gamified Operations Management approach, where persona-based dashboards give agents and managers real-time visibility into performance, turning work into an engaging and motivating experience.

The Sutherland Partnership: A Journey of Continuous Innovation

We believe in building true partnerships, not vendor relationships. Our engagement model is designed for collaboration and long-term value creation. This is exemplified by our commitment to host annual **"Innovation Days"** at our global labs, where we collaborate with clients to design, test, and launch groundbreaking new ideas.

The results of this approach speak for themselves. Across our retail partnerships, we have delivered:

$20M+
in revenue growth
for a major rent-to-own company by optimizing sales through service.

60%
improvement in time-to-insights
for a luxury retailer through data modernization.

4x
chat concurrency
for a global marketplace, enabling them to manage huge volume variations while maintaining an 88% CSAT score.

22-25%
improvement in FTE productivity
through an optimized operating model and AI-powered tools for a supplier retail client.

Conclusion

The future of retail will be defined by the quality of the customer experience. Winning brands will be those that can seamlessly blend the human touch with digital efficiency, creating personalized journeys that feel effortless and intuitive. Sutherland's framework provides a clear path to achieving this vision. By focusing on deep customer understanding, engineering the journey with intelligent technology, empowering agents to become brand experts, and committing to a partnership of continuous innovation, we turn customer service from a cost center into a powerful engine for growth and a sustainable competitive advantage.

Artificial Intelligence. Automation. Cloud Engineering. Advanced Analytics. For Enterprises, these are key factors of success. For us, they're our core expertise.

We work with global iconic brands. We bring them a unique value proposition through market-leading technologies and business process excellence. At the heart of it all is Digital Engineering – the foundation that powers rapid innovation and scalable business transformation.

We've created over 200 unique inventions under several patents across AI and other emerging technologies. Leveraging our advanced products and platforms, we drive digital transformation at scale, optimize critical business operations, reinvent experiences and pioneer new solutions, all provided through a seamless "as-a-service" model.

For each company, we provide new keys for their businesses, the people they work with, and the customers they serve. With proven strategies and agile execution, we don't just enable change – we engineer digital outcomes.

SUTHERLAND®
digital outcomes.

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