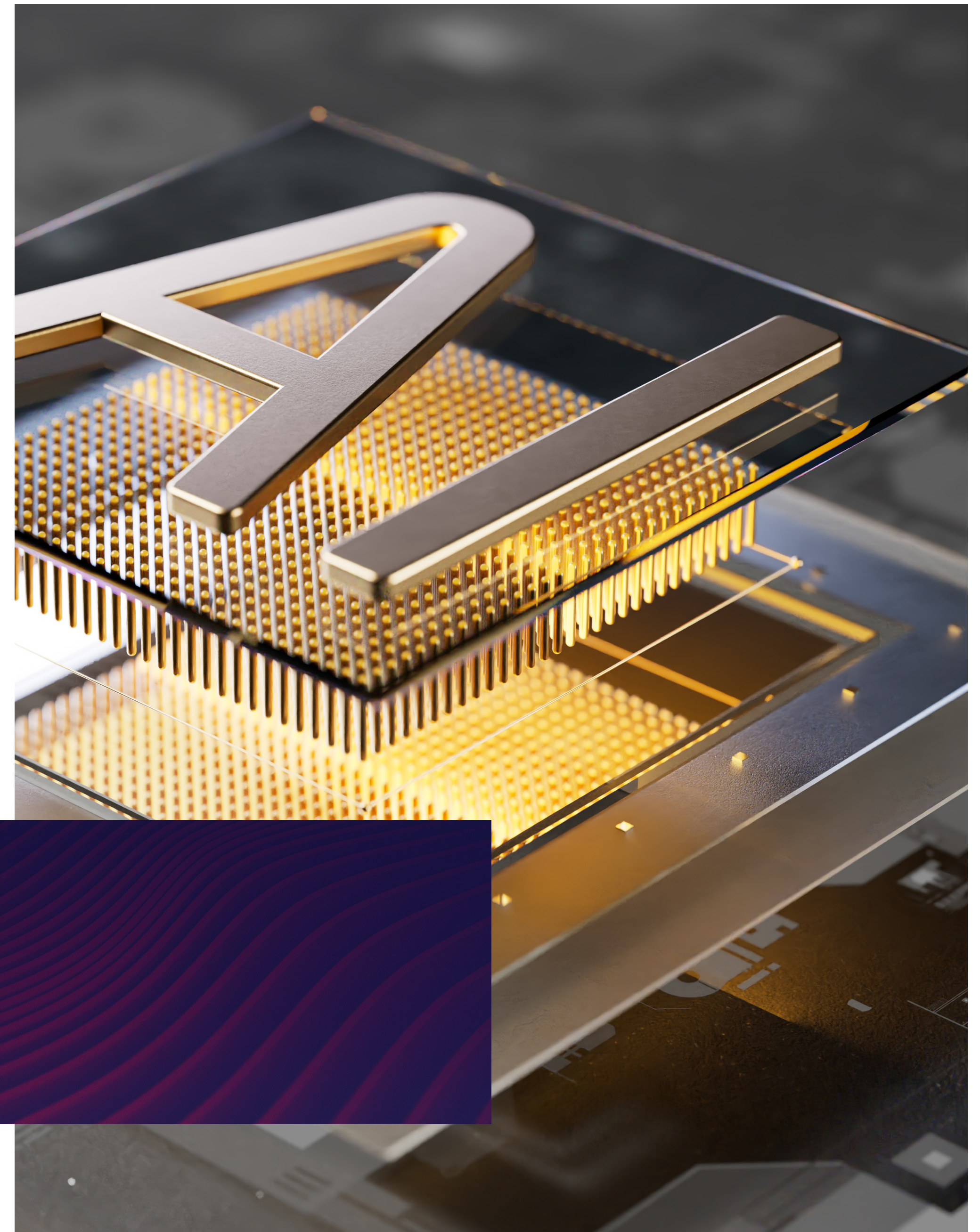




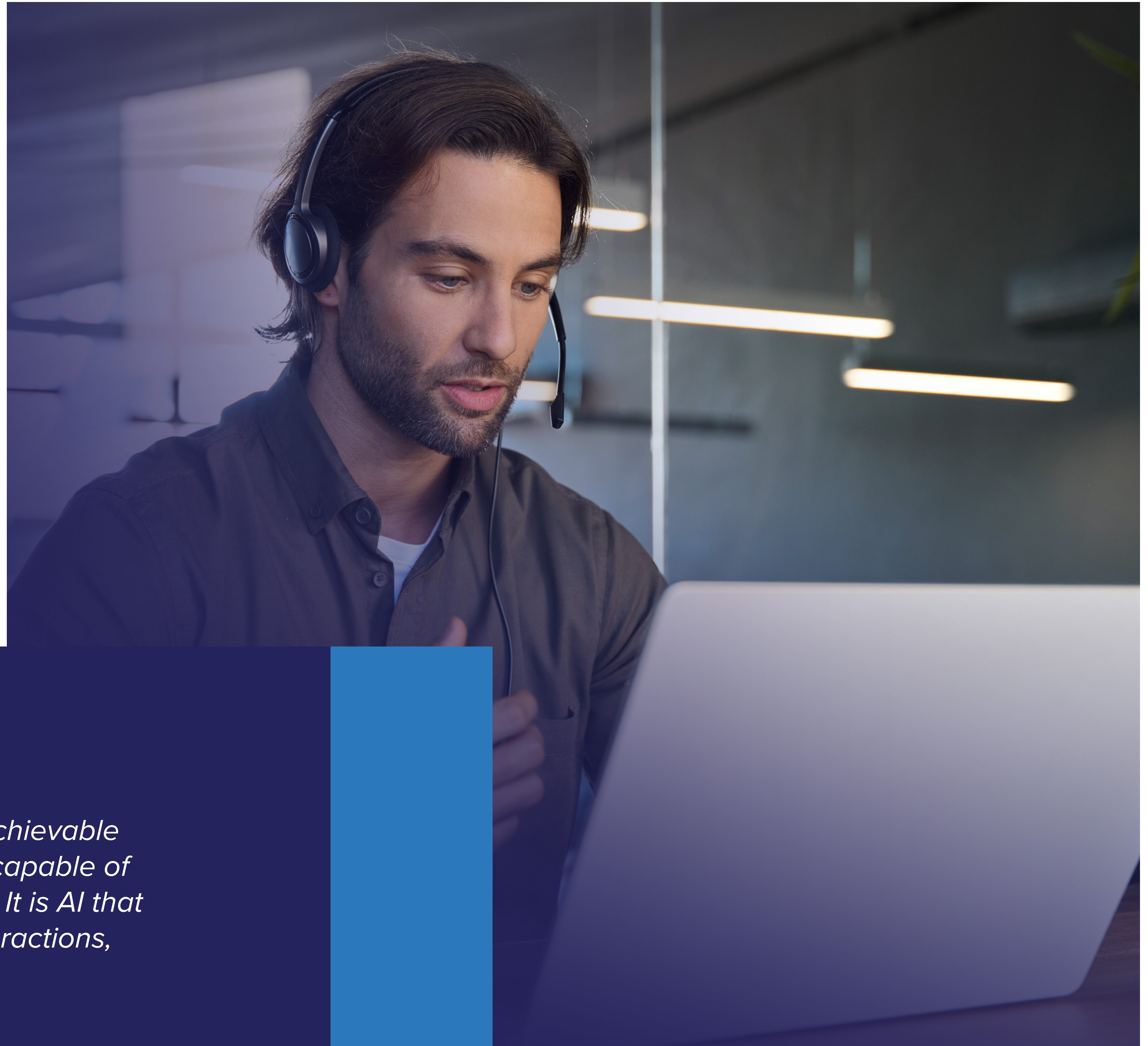
CXO Guide:

A Framework for Early Agentic AI Adoption in Contact Centers



AI has had a rapid and powerful impact on contact center operations across every industry. In fact, Gartner predicts that by the end of 2025, **80% of customer service and support organizations will be applying some form of Generative AI (GenAI)** technology to improve agent productivity and customer experience (CX) .

Despite the widespread adoption of AI across contact centers, there is still an opportunity to benefit from first-mover advantage through the early adoption of **agentic AI**.



What Is Agentic AI?

*Agentic AI goes beyond the insights and automation achievable with traditional AI. It instead uses artificial intelligence capable of **autonomous action and human-like decision making**. It is AI that can take initiative and adapt to deal with customer interactions, continuously learning and improving how it engages.*

Increased autonomy, reasoning, and interaction capabilities mean agentic AI is set to revolutionize the future of customer service, with the greatest rewards for those who act first. But, as a still maturing technology, how to integrate this latest wave of AI innovation needs careful consideration.

This guide provides a step-by-step approach for defining an agentic AI strategy that evolves with continuing technical advancements.

It highlights the potential risks and how to mitigate them, and outlines how to achieve the seamless integration of agentic AI within businesses through actionable recommendations, industry examples, and real-world case studies.



The framework looks at seven key areas that CXOs should focus on.

1 The Business Case:
Moving From Reactive to Proactive

2 Managing an Evolving Technology:
Planning for the Present and Future

3 Operational Foundation:
Is Your House in Order?

4 Short and Long-Term Impact:
A Phased Implementation

5 Risk Management:
Navigating Potential Pitfalls

6 Collaboration:
Working With Strategic Partners

7 Key Metrics:
Assessing Success

The Business Case: Moving From Reactive to Proactive

Making the business case for agentic AI requires two key questions to be answered:

- 1. Why Agentic AI?
- 2. Why Now?

Why Agentic AI?

Modern customers expect highly personalized and seamless service experiences, and agentic AI is at the forefront of delivering this at scale. To understand how it achieves this, we need to understand the specific advantages agentic AI brings to customer interactions.

Let’s start by taking a closer look at agentic AI and its potential in a contact center setting.

Agentic AI for Contact Centers

Goal-Oriented	Designed to pursue defined goals and works toward customer outcomes
Autonomous	Works proactively rather than reacting to prompts from customer or human customer support agents
Rational	Advanced reasoning algorithms allow it to make independent, informed, contextualized decisions
Advanced Language Capabilities	Nuanced understanding of speech and text for human-like interactions
Informed	Can draw on data from all previous interactions for a highly personalized interaction with each customer
Dynamic	Adapts to adjust plans and goals as situations change and evolve, imitating human resolution management
Efficient	Fast resolution of enquiries for increased customer satisfaction

Unlike rule-based automation, agentic AI’s goal-based approach adapts dynamically to customer needs, making real-time decisions based on context, sentiment, and previous interactions.

It brings about a fundamental shift in what we can expect from AI. Specifically, it shifts the use of AI capabilities from **reactive** to **proactive**. The qualities of agentic AI tailored for a contact center environment reflect those that you would look for in a Gold Star customer service agent. But reliably, and at scale.

Essentially, agentic AI allows enterprises to deliver a customer experience that is comparable, if not better, than dealing with a human agent for faster resolution and higher customer satisfaction.

These factors mean that for contact centers, agentic AI is not a question of **if** but **when**.



Why Now?

The growth of AI in a customer service setting is huge, but with 80% of customer service functions using at least some form of traditional AI approaches, it no longer sets customer service providers apart. For organizations wanting to stay at the forefront of customer engagement, embracing agentic AI is the key to staying ahead.

The technology is set to bring significant advantages to business operations, including enhanced customer satisfaction, operational efficiencies, and real-time data-driven insights, but what are the benefits of taking action on agentic AI now?

Early Advantage

Gartner predicts that it will be 2028 before even a third of interactions with generative AI will use action models and autonomous agents to complete tasks. Adopting agentic AI not only extends what is possible within an AI strategy, it is a key differentiator. Taking a tactical approach to agentic AI deployment now offers a significant opportunity for a competitive edge.

Business Continuity With Incremental Rollouts

Implementing any new technology is disruptive. However, the stage of evolution that agentic AI is currently in makes it the ideal time to integrate. Through the phased approach we will outline in section four, contact centers can begin to adopt agentic AI in a way that drives benefits now and that will evolve with the technology. This gives the agility to implement new use cases in the future with minimal impact on business operations.

Now that we have established the broad benefits, let's look at the specific use cases agentic AI enables in contact centers.

Managing an Evolving Technology: **Planning for the Present and Future**



As a maturing technology, some of the use cases possible with agentic AI are more tangible than others. Part of defining a strategy is establishing a pipeline of use cases to deliver short, medium, and long-term ROI.

Align Business Objectives

As with any technology implementation, the deployment must be designed to support a business's unique objectives and problem-solve for the specific challenges it faces. Part of the strategic process must, therefore, be to outline the challenges that could be addressed through an improved customer contact function and match this with the AI capability that best addresses the problem.

Build a Realistic Runway

Although an agentic AI strategy involves integrating more innovative AI features, the starting point should be to look to more established use cases to deliver short-term impact. From there, it is possible to build out longer-term goals that align with the anticipated maturation of particular use cases, with the groundwork in place to move quickly on new developments.

Agentic AI Capabilities

With the principles of building your AI strategy in mind, let's look at some of the possibilities of agentic AI. It is not exhaustive, but this list gives an indication of where each application would be positioned on an implementation timeline. It also critically shows how they can be molded to support an organization's strategic objectives, with the 'Case in Point' examples showing real-world applications.

Autonomous Customer Journeys

Availability:
Now




Self-service capabilities are enhanced by agentic AI, guiding customers through complex service requests without human intervention. These AI-driven experiences reduce call volumes and improve resolution times.

Case in Point:
Digital Support Transformation

Challenge:
A global tech manufacturer faced high call volumes, inconsistent support quality, and rising customer care costs.

Approach:
Implemented AI-based solutions, predictive analytics, and chatbots to reduce resolution wait times and improve quality of service.

Outcome:

-  25% reduction in call volumes
-  15% increase in CSAT
-  30% cost reduction in support operations

Intelligent Routing and Prioritization

Availability:
Now



Agentic AI optimizes contact center performance by dynamically matching customer queries with the best-suited agents based on real-time sentiment analysis, complexity, and historical data.

Case in Point:
Service Ticket Automation

Challenge:
A top-tier telecom operator needed to accelerate ticket resolution times and address manual inefficiencies.

Approach:
Deployed agentic AI-based intelligent ticket routing and automated workflows.

Outcome:

-  40% faster resolution times
-  95% SLA compliance increased from 80% to 95%.

Full Automation and AI-Managed Interactions

Availability:
Partially Now, Full Functionality in 2 – 3 years



As AI models become more sophisticated, agentic AI will enable fully autonomous customer interactions, agilely handling entire service requests with precision and no need for human intervention.

Case in Point:
Voice and Back-Office Automation

Challenge:
An insurance broker needed to reduce inefficiencies in claims processing and long cycle times.

Approach:
Implemented voice automation and process automation. This solved the immediate challenge, and the business has assurance that the capabilities of this function will increase and expand as the market matures.

Outcome:

-  20% faster claims processing
-  12% improved process accuracy

Predictive and Proactive Customer Service

Availability:
Partially Now, Extended Functionality in 2 – 3 years



Agentic AI not only reacts to customer inquiries but proactively predicts needs and provides solutions before customers realize they require assistance.

Case in Point:
Predictive Analytics for Customer Retention

Challenge:
A telecom provider was experiencing high churn rates due to limited customer sentiment visibility.

Approach:
Introduced sentiment analysis tools and predictive modeling. The functionality of these tools will continue to increase to drive even greater results for the telecom provider.

Outcome:

-  10% reduction in customer churn
-  8% increase in average revenue per user (ARPU)

Emotionally Intelligent AI

Availability:
3 – 5 years

Emotion-aware AI systems will detect customer emotions and adapt engagement strategies accordingly to improve customer satisfaction and long-term loyalty. This functionality can fit within the longer-term goals of businesses defining their agentic AI strategy.

Now, knowing as an organization the use cases you are looking to achieve in the short, medium and long-term, we can move on to analyzing your digital foundation.

Operational Foundation: Is Your House in Order?

We have established the principles for defining the AI roadmap for the future of your contact center— so what next?

Before any investment is made into AI technology, it is imperative to ensure that the digital infrastructure needed to underpin it is in place. The key areas to look at are:

1. Infrastructure and Processes
2. Data Quality
3. Team Expertise

Infrastructure and Processes: Does Your Tech Stack Stack Up?

Your existing technology is the foundation of any AI deployment. Any new tools need to integrate with existing infrastructure and need to work seamlessly to deliver maximum ROI. Identify any gaps, inefficiencies, and bottlenecks from the outset and look at how they can be addressed. This means when you add advanced AI capabilities, you minimize teething problems as a result of incompatibility.

Data Quality: The Beating Heart of AI

Without quality data in a format that integrates with your AI tools, it doesn't matter how sophisticated your AI setup is; it cannot function effectively. Ahead of investing in AI technologies, look at your data processes and understand if the data you have is adequate. If not, ask what steps are needed for organizational data to deliver what is needed to reap the full rewards of agentic AI.

Team Expertise: Keeping Humans-in-the-Loop

Educating employees is vital; they need to know they are not being replaced by AI, and they need to be able to conduct their role alongside and supported by new AI functionality. Identify where the knowledge gaps are and upskill ahead of time to minimize disruption and downtime during deployment.

Know Your Limits

Part of getting your house in order for AI is acknowledging what you don't know. It is invaluable to work with a specialist to ensure legacy systems do not become a pain point at the point of AI roll-out.

4

Short- and Long-Term Impact: **A Phased Implementation**

With strategy and digital foundations in place, the next step is implementation. A phased approach is the best way to minimize disruption and balance the investment required with the business benefit it drives.

Splitting implementation into three phased segments allows for a smoother integration with a team that fully understands how to make the most of the new technology.

Phase 1: **AI-Augmented Human Agents**

Phase 2: **Intelligent Automation for Routine Tasks**

Phase 3: **Full Agentic AI Integration**



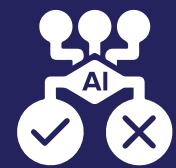
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PHASE 1: **AI-Augmented Human Agents**

The first step toward agentic AI implementation is to add AI-driven support tools to augment the capabilities of human agents. AI supercharges the expertise of customer support teams by providing real-time data, predictive insights, and automated recommendations.



What Does This Look Like?



AI-Powered Decision Support:

AI tools analyze historical customer interactions and provide suggested responses or next-best actions. This allows human agents to resolve issues faster and more accurately.



Sentiment Analysis and Context Awareness:

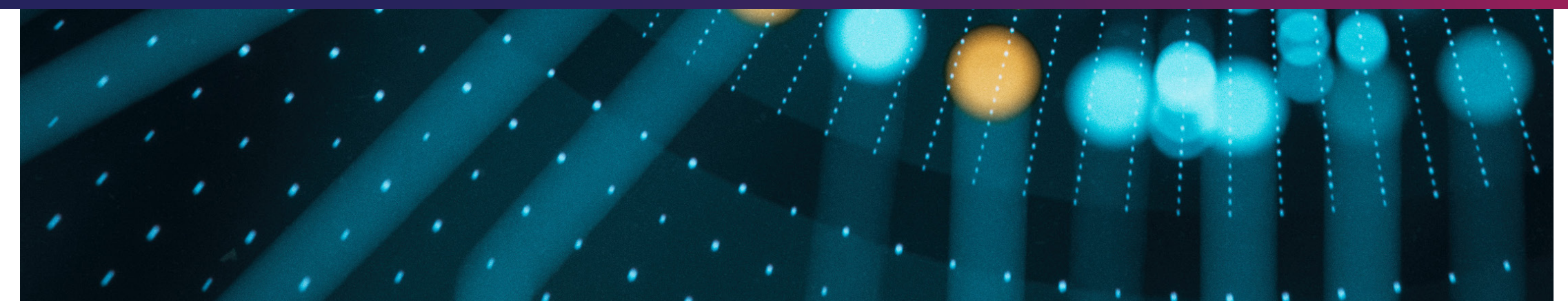
AI examines customer tone and past interactions to help agents better tailor responses and improve the overall customer experience.



Creating a Feedback Loop:

AI models are constantly learning from interactions; team members working with AI can help train models by providing feedback for better long-term output.

By taking this step, you can ensure that the human touch does not get lost among any onboarding challenges and that there is no risk to existing customer relationships.





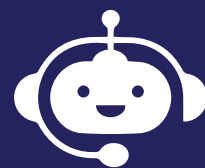
PHASE 2:

Intelligent Automation for Routine Tasks

As AI matures within the organization, the next step is automating high-volume, low-complexity enquiries using AI-powered chatbots and self-service solutions. Repetitive tasks are no longer the responsibility of human agents, allowing them to address more complex interactions.



What Does This Look Like?



Deploying AI Chatbots:

AI chatbots can handle many straightforward enquiries to deliver faster response times to customers.



Enhancing Self-Service Capabilities:

Self-service portals that leverage AI allow customers to resolve issues quickly without the need for human intervention.



Seamless Human Handoff:

Where AI systems reach their limits, develop workflows to pass over information to human agents for the best possible customer experience.



AI-Driven Process Automation:

Automate back-office tasks such as form processing and ticket routing for operational efficiency.

In this phase, AI takes on a more active role in customer service, significantly improving response times and reducing costs while maintaining quality interactions.





PHASE 3: **Full Agentic AI Integration**

The final phase deploys AI-driven systems capable of managing end-to-end customer interactions autonomously in a way that doesn't feel like a compromise on quality of service.



What Does This Look Like?



Advanced Conversational AI:

Agentic AI can handle nuanced conversations covering multiple points with contextual awareness and personalized engagement.



Autonomous Decision-Making:

AI models use deep learning and reinforcement learning to make instantaneous decisions, resolving issues without human intervention.



Continuous Improvement:

AI continuously refines its responses based on real-time feedback, ensuring ongoing improvements in accuracy and quality of service.



Human-in-the-Loop Monitoring:

Although AI does not need human intervention here, human supervisors can step in as necessary to ensure anything that needs a human agent can be addressed efficiently and effectively.

By phase three, businesses will have a fully functional agentic AI system capable of delivering high-quality, personalized, and efficient customer interactions without risk to operations during the implementation process.



Risk Management: Navigating AI Challenges

While we have limited the risk of disruption during the roll-out of agentic AI through a phased approach, there are further challenges to bear in mind when defining an implementation strategy.

Organizations need to be proactive in taking steps to mitigate hurdles that could cause AI roll-outs to have any unwanted impact.





Maintaining Human Empathy

One of the biggest worries surrounding AI-driven automation is the potential loss of human empathy in customer interactions. AI can efficiently handle high-volume inquiries, but it may struggle with emotionally complex situations that require human sensitivity.

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Regular Model Audits:** Regularly assess AI outputs to identify and correct inaccuracies.
- **Continuous Learning:** Implement machine learning pipelines that refine AI models based on user feedback and real-world interactions.
- **Fallback Mechanisms:** Add a human-in-the-loop for the most critical interactions to reduce the likelihood of errors.



2

AI Reliability and Accuracy

AI models are not infallible; they can generate incorrect or misleading responses or “hallucinations”. If unaddressed, this risks unsatisfactory interactions with customers.

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Regular Model Audits:** Regularly assess AI outputs to identify and correct inaccuracies.
- **Continuous Learning:** Implement machine learning pipelines that refine AI models based on user feedback and real-world interactions.
- **Fallback Mechanisms:** Add a human-in-the-loop for the most critical interactions to reduce the likelihood of errors.



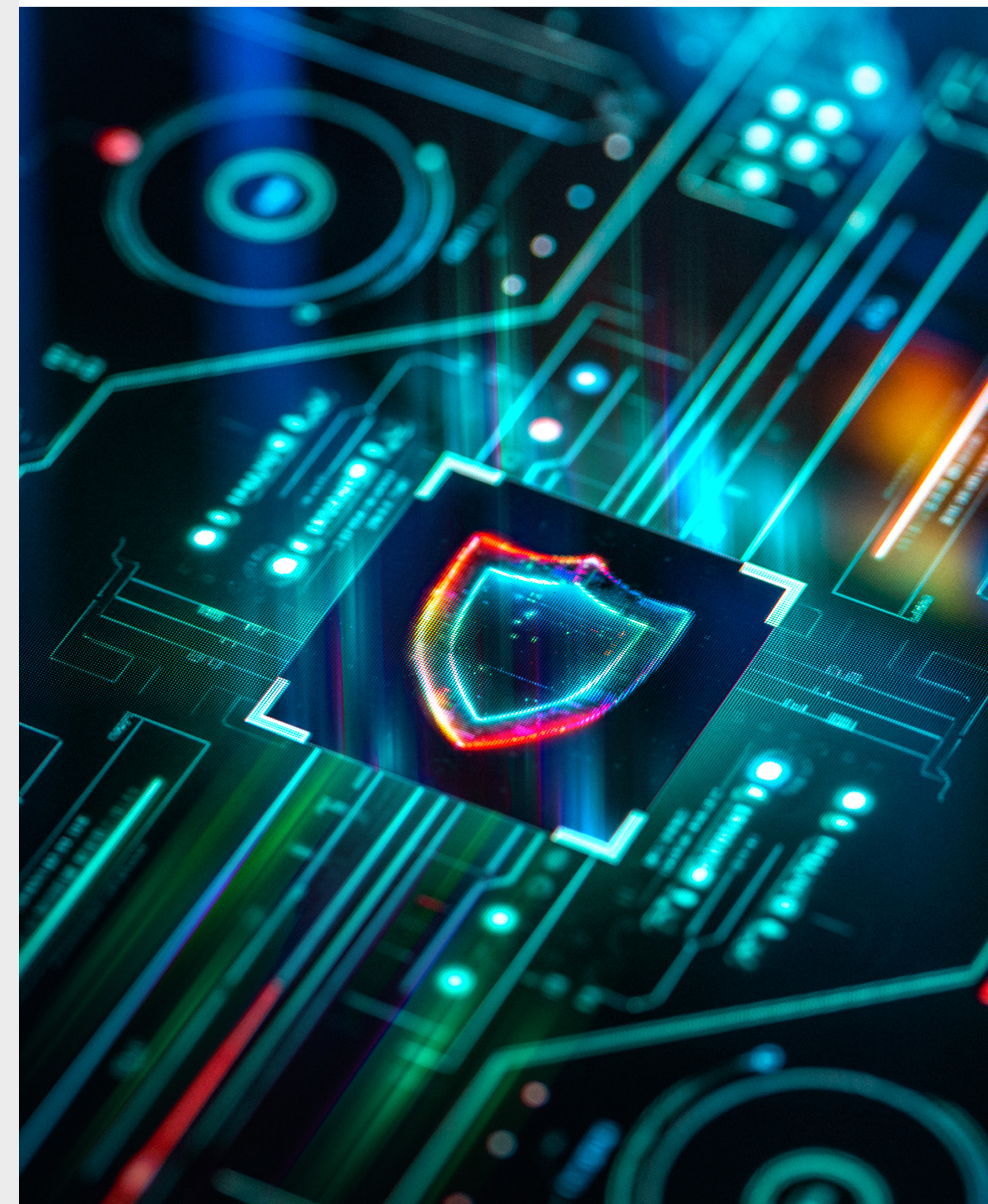
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Data Privacy and Regulatory Compliance

AI processes often rely on vast amounts of customer data, so ensuring there is no threat to data security and regulatory compliance is essential.

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Data Minimization:** Balance the need for data quality with assurance that AI only processes essential customer information.
- **Regulatory Compliance Checks:** Conduct periodic reviews to ensure AI systems align with evolving legal requirements, like GDPR.



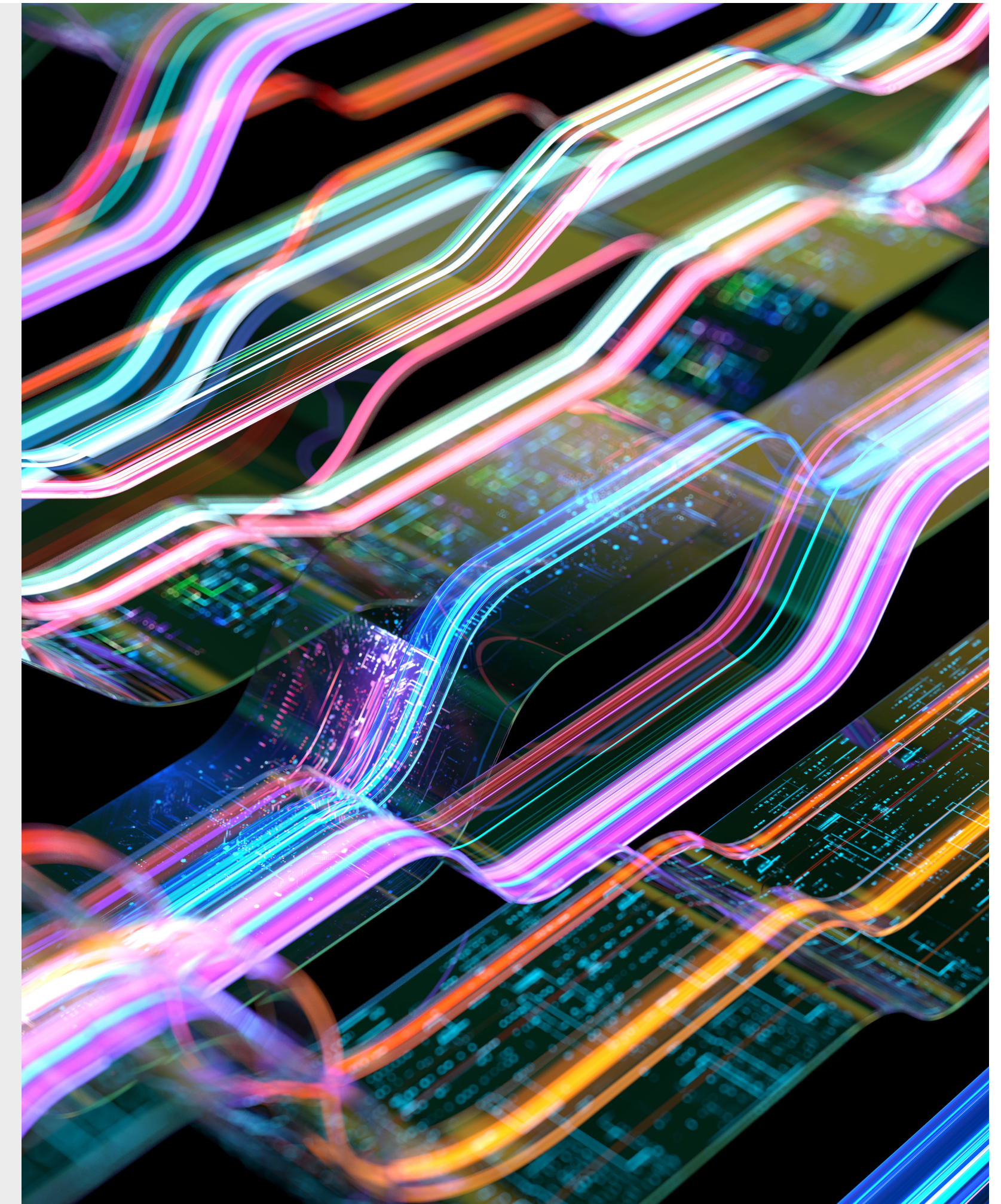
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Over-Reliance on AI Technology

Organizations need to balance AI automation and human oversight to ensure there doesn't become an over-reliance on AI.

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Hybrid AI Models:** Combine AI with human expertise, ensuring that complex issues receive human intervention.
- **Fail-Safe Protocols:** Put in place and test back-up procedures in case an AI system fails or produces anomalies.
- **Ongoing Human Training:** Train employees to oversee and complement AI-driven operations, emphasizing that its role is to enhance human agent capabilities and not completely replace them.



By addressing these risks with strategic mitigation measures, businesses can harness the full potential of agentic AI while maintaining reliability, compliance, and customer trust.

Strategic Partner Collaboration

Delivering AI across an organization in a way that makes a tangible impact is rarely something an organization can achieve alone. Typically, it works best when collaborating with expert technology providers, consulting firms, and cloud service vendors, to minimize trial and error and move from POC to ROI as soon as possible.

What To Look for in a Partner?

Strategic partnerships provide expertise, access to the latest innovations, and accelerate deployment to deliver tangible and measurable outcomes.

When working towards agentic AI goals, it is critical to find specialist partners that have experience delivering a niche and emerging technology. If you have an agentic AI focus, you are looking to sit at the cutting edge of customer service, and you need a partner that aligns with this and understands how to help you achieve your goals from the outset.

Check that they deeply understand your industry and have references and case studies to back that up. You put a huge amount of trust in the collaboration partners you select for a major infrastructure project, so make sure they have the credentials that give you the confidence that you are all working towards a common aim.

A step-by-step checklist for engaging a strategic partner:

- ✓ Define business needs
- ✓ Evaluate expertise and track record
- ✓ Assess customization and integration capabilities
- ✓ Identify compliance and security capabilities
- ✓ Identify the right partner engagement model for your needs
- ✓ Define measurable outcomes

Key Metrics: Assessing Success

It may be the final stage, but it is one of the most important of any AI journey: setting benchmarks and metrics for what success looks like to your organization.

Any AI investment has a high upfront cost with a longer timeline to ROI realization, but it is key that you and your strategic partners define success from the outset and track progress. Measurement is the difference between AI success and an investment rabbit hole.

It doesn't need to be complicated. But just as you defined your short and long-term goals at the road mapping stage, find ways to quantify the value you are deriving from AI in a way that allows you to fine-tune processes and squeeze full value from the tools and processes you have implemented.

What Does Success Look Like?

This is an example of the type of metrics that can be helpful as a way of monitoring the success of your organization's AI journey.



Short-Term Value Metrics

Customer Satisfaction:

Benchmark customer satisfaction ahead of launching a project and see how this changes following implementation.

Cost Reduction:

Lower cost of customer interactions without compromising on the quality of service.

Resolution efficiency:

Reduce the time it takes to fully resolve a customer request.



Long-Term Strategic Value

Streamlined Operations:

A fully agentic AI system should hugely streamline operations and increase capacity.

Better Decision-Making:

With your human agents free to deal with more complicated work supported by AI, you can achieve better overall service measured by long-term customer satisfaction.

The metrics will be unique to your business, but it is vital that they are set out at the beginning and used to keep the project on course.

Beginning Your Agentic AI Journey

For contact centers looking to remain at the forefront of customer service innovation, agentic AI is not optional.

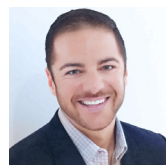
The prize for early adopters is to reap the transformative outcomes of pioneering what is possible with AI in the customer service sphere for both their business and their customers.

If you would like to hear more on how Sutherland’s award-winning AI credentials and experience deploying AI across contact centers in a range of sectors can help your end-to-end journey, [get in touch](#).

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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.

