

INNOVATION CASE STUDY

**Follow the Hiscox–  
Sutherland playbook  
to turn AI into a lasting  
competitive moat**

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Hiscox, a global specialist insurer with a significant presence in London, built an early lead in the small and medium business (SMB) insurance sector in the US by offering tailored products through a direct-to-customer model, something rare in a broker-dominated market and a genuine edge for the carrier.

To deepen that moat, Hiscox leveraged its 15-year partnership with Sutherland to run a two-front, AI-powered channel optimization strategy. First, it repositioned the direct consumer channel as a live customer intelligence engine. With high interaction volumes flowing through the channel, the company saw an opportunity to convert that activity into structured customer insights to drive product innovation and targeted marketing. Second, it modernized the broker front-to-back journey, redesigning a largely manual workflow that, while established, had limited capacity to scale with rising broker expectations, into an agentic AI-enabled quote-to-bind flow built for speed, growth, and relevance.

For COOs at commercial carriers building AI-enabled operations, this case is a blueprint for execution. When enterprise carrier differentiation shifts to experience, growth is fundamentally achieved by redesigning workflows and decisioning across distribution channels, with AI as the engine of optimization.

In our conversation with Laura McCamile, Hiscox's SVP of Operations Delivery and Strategy, she described both initiatives as being anchored in two North Stars: capturing the true voice of the customer to evolve Hiscox's service model and driving faster, more consistent, higher-quality quote-to-bind performance in the broker channel.

“Too often, people start with the technology and then try to find the business problem. Our strength is starting with the business problem and the outcomes we want to deliver and then working through people, process, and lastly technology.”

— Laura McCamile, SVP of Operations Delivery and Strategy, Hiscox

# Turn your direct consumer channel into a growth engine by transforming customer interaction into actionable intelligence

Many commercial insurers are designing products without even looking meaningfully five years ahead, let alone annually or semi-annually (see Exhibit 1). For decades, carriers have relied on one-size-fits-all product structures, prioritizing stability over adaptability. The result is predictable: limited differentiation, with many offerings converging into near-identical coverage. As business risk accelerates, commercial insurers that can't keep pace with their customers' needs will lose ground to specialist providers that can.

This product-innovation gap, combined with limited frontline insight, left Hiscox without a clear voice of the customer. In response, the company transformed its direct consumer channel into a customer intelligence engine. With over a million voice interactions annually, the channel represented a significant opportunity. By strengthening intent-based segmentation and introducing more effective triage, Hiscox unlocked the ability to route calls with greater precision and gain clearer visibility into routing efficiency and cancellation drivers.

"The biggest thing that was missing at Hiscox was the true voice of the customer: what they need, what they value, what they're asking for from a product perspective, and what they're telling us about service and pricing. If you ruthlessly focus on your customer, the dollars and the results will come."

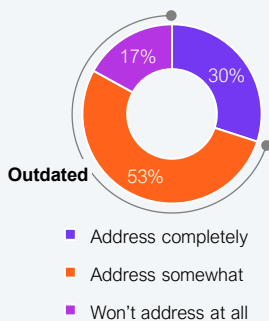
— Laura McCamile, SVP of Operations Delivery and Strategy, Hiscox

Working with Sutherland, Hiscox implemented an AI-enabled service model in the direct consumer channel. This involved combining intelligent routing, virtual voice and chat assistants, and human support into a coordinated, end-to-end experience where AI and humans work together to generate collective customer intelligence, drive growth, and structurally reduce cost-to-serve.

## Exhibit 1: Outdated products, limited flexibility, and infrequent reviews are leaving commercial carriers exposed to disruption

**70%** of commercial insurance products are outdated

**How well will commercial insurance products, as they are designed today, address evolving risks five years from now?**



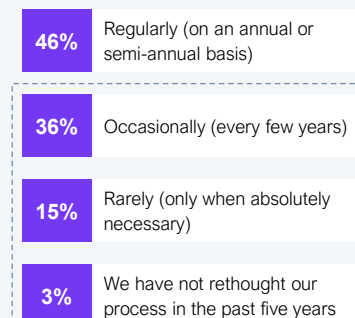
**82%** of commercial products are standard with limited differentiation

**How would you rate your organization's ability to offer flexible, customizable products for commercial P&C clients?**



**Only 46%** of commercial insurers regularly review their product portfolio

**How often does your organization revisit its product development process to adapt to new market realities?**



Sample: 350 commercial insurers  
Source: HFS Research, 2026

# Make AI and humans work together as one to achieve intelligence, growth, and leaner cost to serve







A coordinated sequence of moves across customer touchpoints followed:

- Intent-based routing leveraging Sutherland Connect:** Leveraging Sutherland Connect, an AI-powered customer engagement platform, Sutherland and Hiscox reworked the direct consumer channel's IVR prompts and routing logic. This allowed each customer's intent to reach the right capability at the point of contact: sales versus service, claims versus complex billing, new product inquiries, and cancellation requests routed directly to retention handling.
- Optimized digital journeys and handoffs:** Sutherland and Hiscox redesigned virtual assistant journeys around how customers naturally seek resolution by improving bot containment for the right reasons and enabling cleaner handoffs to human advisors when escalation is required.
- AI-driven interaction intelligence:** Beyond IVR enhancements, Sutherland layered its CX360 AI platform onto the telephony stack, turning calls into measurable insights and coaching levers by analyzing sentiment and automatically categorizing call drivers and topics.

- Standardized call handling through decision-tree-enabled knowledge:** Sutherland and Hiscox implemented HelpTree.AI within the channel, a structured knowledge platform that ingests existing call-handling documentation and standard procedures into an AI-enabled search and decision-tree framework, guiding advisors toward more consistent resolution.
- Sutherland Voice AI in bounded use cases:** Sutherland and Hiscox embedded Voice AI, a GenAI voice agent, directly into the direct consumer channel's telephony platform. Triggered by IVR intent, it completes defined interactions or transfers to an advisor by design or on request, with an initial focus on sales appetite, coverage inquiries, and first notice of loss (FNOL).

Early results from the direct consumer channel transformation are already showing across metrics that matter: customer experience, growth, and cost-to-serve. They also surfaced the product innovation signals and targeted marketing intelligence that compounded the gains (see Exhibit 2).

## Exhibit 2: AI-driven outcomes across growth, cost to serve, and customer experience

	Results	Enterprise consequences
<b>Quote to bind</b> (conversation rate) 	+3%	7% increase in gross written premium (GWP)
<b>Policy per sale</b> (customer lifetime value [LTV]) 	+5%	2% increase in GWP
<b>Retention rates</b> (customer retention) 	+6%	3% increase in GWP
<b>Channel deflection</b> (effectiveness) 	+15% in chat volumes	3% decrease in cost to serve
<b>Average handle time (AHT)</b> (productivity) 	-10%	5% decrease in cost to serve
<b>Customer satisfaction score</b> (CSAT) (experience) 	+4%	Drives quote to bind, customer LTV, and retention

Source: Sutherland and HFS Research, 2026

# Build a broker channel that fits the broker's role as a risk–advisor, driving speed, efficiency, and sustained carrier relevance

The broker's role is evolving. No longer just a link in the supply chain between insurers and customers, brokers are shedding the label of "insurance intermediary" and stepping into a true risk advisory role. In this model, speed and accuracy define broker value, yet both are becoming harder to sustain as the volume and variety of data are continuing to explode. The real challenge is not access to information, but the ability to convert it into timely, precise insights. According to an HFS Research survey of 100 brokers across North America and Bermuda, 94% agreed that real-time data and automation are critical to sustaining their long-term competitive advantage. This shift in

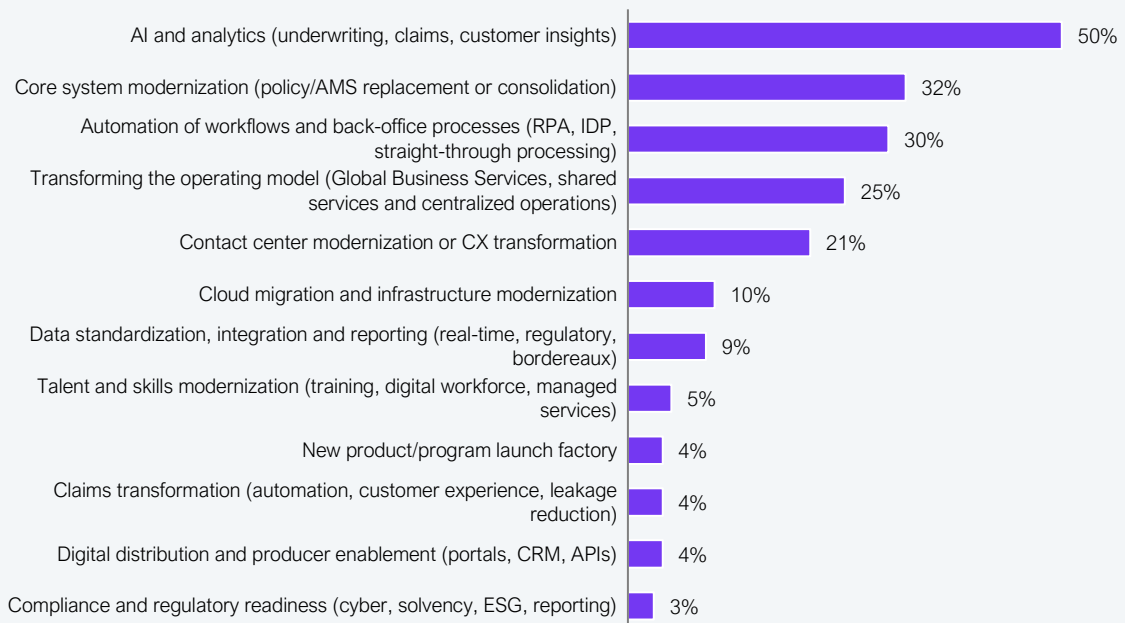
broker initiatives closely aligns with the steps Hiscox is taking to support and enable brokers in their expanding advisory role (see Exhibit 3).

The expectation that brokers act as risk advisors plays directly into Hiscox's second channel front: modernizing the broker front-to-back workflow. The broker channel workflow had room to evolve, with submission handling, underwriter data processing, spreadsheet-driven rating logic, and post-quote administration all presenting meaningful potential for greater speed and scale. As broker expectations continued to rise, so did the case for a more structured, agentic AI-enabled approach.

## Exhibit 3: Meet brokers where their ambitions are; Hiscox already has by delivering an AI-enabled risk advisory experience

### What is the primary focus of your organization's current or planned transformation initiatives (IT + operations)?

(Percentage of respondents)







Sample: 100 Brokers across NA and Bermuda  
Source: HFS Research, 2026

# Eliminate speed-to-quote friction in the broker channel through agentic AI underwriter transformation

Brokers submit the same risk to multiple carriers, and underwriters must validate, price, and respond fast. The winner isn't the carrier with just the best price, but the one that delivers fastest with the least friction. To meet this demand, Sutherland and Hiscox are modernizing with an agentic underwriting fabric across the broker's front-to-back flow, with Google as a product partner. Gemini-based extraction pulls key submission data, runs checks, and supports enrichment so risks reach underwriters pre-validated and decision-ready. This keeps underwriters in the loop for judgment while shifting the heavy lifting from manual preparation to faster decisioning and automated system updates back into policy administration.

The second lever is value, not just velocity. It includes a multi-quote capability that returns the requested quote (e.g., professional liability) and proactively proposes adjacent coverage (e.g., cyber, general liability) with bundled pricing, turning a transactional quote into a guided offer that reduces follow-up cycles and improves bind odds. For now, Hiscox is deliberately scaling this functionality, starting with one or two lines of business, keeping the core flow consistent, and then layering in line-of-business (LOB)-specific nuances. While it is still early to demonstrate realized impact, the projected value targets for the broker channel have been outlined (see Exhibit 4).

**Exhibit 4: Delivering on broker priorities such as speed to quote, scale to grow, and relevance to win**

	Results	Enterprise consequences
<b>Submission to quote</b> (speed) 	+45% quote speed; rising to +70% post full rollout across all LOBs	2.5% GWP increase now, scaling to an 8%–10% increase at full rollout
<b>Bind hit rate</b> (conversation to bound policy) 	+22%	More quotes converting to bound policies, driving GWP growth
<b>Multi-quote</b> (single submission, multiple options) 	+ LTV	One submission generates multiple quotes, driving a 5% GWP increase
<b>First-time quote quality</b> (accuracy) 	+60% first-time right	Fewer rework cycles and faster underwriting decisions, delivering a 10% decrease in cost to serve

Source: Sutherland and HFS Research, 2026

# Lessons from Hiscox on achieving value realization through a disciplined AI approach to channel optimization

These are practical lessons for commercial carrier COOs looking to transform channel experience through AI enablement.

## Lead transformation with realism

Hiscox led the transformation with realism, ensuring that ambition did not outpace operational capacity. Leadership aligned the change to what the organization could realistically absorb, starting with customer and broker workshops that asked fundamental questions: why would a customer engage, and what does a broker need to accomplish? Only after clarifying real outcomes did they optimize roles, simplify workflows, and layer in technology, deliberately following a people, process, technology sequence to avoid hard-coding existing friction into the future operating model.

**The takeaway:** Disciplined sequencing starts with outcomes and capacity, not technology.

“Senior leaders often hesitate because the tools still feel ‘taboo,’ they don’t fully grasp what’s practical now, and they don’t want to be the first mover (pioneers) who get it wrong. That hesitation creates an artificial gap between an approved idea and real execution.”

— Laura McCamile, SVP of Operations Delivery and Strategy, Hiscox

## Prioritize digital where you can and human where it matters

Digital was applied where it created efficiency, but human judgment remained central where empathy and nuance mattered, especially in claims. In high-value or emotionally charged moments, the right answer was sometimes less automation, not more.

**The takeaway:** Knowing where to automate and where to elevate human judgment is the mark of mature operations. Don't replace empathy.

## Scale through controlled experimentation and embedded governance

Hiscox avoided big-bang launches in favor of tightly scoped use cases. High-frequency, low-complexity transactions were tested through bounded minimum viable products (MVPs), pausing to analyze and refine before scaling them. Trust was earned through disciplined iteration, not headline moments. From day one, legal, compliance, business operations, data, and technology acted as co-architects, with AI integrity and ethics governance running in parallel.

**The takeaway:** Sustainable AI scale comes from controlled iteration with governance embedded from the start.

**The Bottom Line: Anyone can buy AI tooling and squeeze out baseline gains. Hiscox, with Sutherland, shows what it takes to get it right through a disciplined path to value realization where AI and humans work together.**

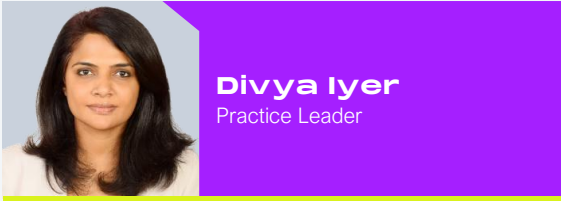
Anchored on capturing the true voice of the customer and driving more consistent, higher-quality quote-to-bind performance, the difference was not the technology but how Hiscox pursued value realization within its own operational reality. The organization identified the behaviors behind outcomes, tested what changes them, and scaled only what works. The proof is in the results: experience, growth, and a leaner cost-to-serve in the direct consumer channel; speed, scale, and sustained carrier relevance in the broker channel.

For carrier COOs looking to move AI from the lab into the channels that drive growth, this is the blueprint not only for what to build, but for how to build it right.

“If you ruthlessly chase and focus on your customer, the dollars and the results will come.”

— Laura McCamile, SVP of Operations Delivery and Strategy, Hiscox

## HFS Research authors



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