The State of CX Maturity Among SMBs

Research Shows Advancing CX Maturity Is a Mission-critical Mandate

Learnings from North American-based Respondents in the Small Business Market Segment

PREPARED BY ESG FOR Zendesk
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Research Objective and Methodology

OBJECTIVES:
This eBook discusses how, and to what degree, an organization’s adoption of customer service best practices improves its ability to deliver superior customer experience (CX) and better support its service teams. It also explores how improved capabilities are correlated with dramatically better business outcomes. Finally, it covers observed year-over-year CX trends.

METHODOLOGY:
In the second quarter of 2021, ESG conducted a double-blind survey\(^1\) of 3,250 line-of-business decision makers who were responsible for ensuring and enhancing the customer service at their organization. Organizations represented spanned all market segments, from small businesses to large enterprises, and multiple industry verticals like retail, consumer and corporate services, financial services, healthcare, education, and technology companies, among others.

Unless otherwise noted, data in this eBook represents the findings from the N=306 respondents based in the US and Canada and employed at small businesses (SMBs) with less than 100 employees (Canada[N=66], United States [N=240]).

\(^1\) Respondents were anonymous and not informed ESG was conducting the survey.
Highlighted Findings

An organization’s CX maturity is an assessment of the people, processes, data, and technology in place to service customers. Organizations in North America have significantly improved their CX maturity in the past year.¹

- The proportion of SMBs in North America that are Champions and Risers (higher-maturity organizations) in the market segment has increased by 39% year over year (from 23% to 32%).

### BUSINESS OUTCOMES

Champions achieve greater business success. Relative to their peers, North American SMB Champions are:

- **9.8x more likely** to exceed customer satisfaction goals.
- **1.7x more likely** to have grown their customer base.
- **3.7x more likely** to have increased per-customer spending significantly in the past 6 months.

### SERVICE EXCELLENCE

High CX maturity is correlated with improved service metrics. Relative to their peers, North American SMB Champions:

- Respond to customers **46% faster.**
- Resolve problems **48% faster.**
- Make getting service easy, according to **89% of their customers.**

### THE AGENT EXPERIENCE

High CX maturity organizations optimize the agent experience. Relative to their peers, North American SMB Champions:

- **Are 5.2x more likely** to have excellent customer visibility.
- **Have agents that are 72% more productive.**
- **Are 2.5x more likely** to rate their agent retention as excellent.

### BUSINESS OPERATIONS

North American SMB Champions:

- **Are 2.3x more likely** to have accelerated major CX projects throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Are in a better position to compete and succeed** as macroeconomic conditions recover.
Research Overview and Maturity Framework
Seven characteristics of a Champion

**PEOPLE**
- Service teams get the appropriate amount of training to do their jobs.
- The organization maintains staffing levels to ensure teams are rarely or never overwhelmed.

**PROCESS**
- The organization effectively uses learnings from service interactions to evolve business processes.
- The organization is able to quickly evolve business processes based on learnings from service interactions.

**DATA AND TECHNOLOGY**
- The organization has visibility into all the service data needed to run the business.
- The organization can report on service data in real time or near-real time.
- Service tools provide agents with an excellent experience.

ESG created a data-driven model that segments respondents’ organizations into four levels of service maturity: Champions, Risers, Emerging, and Starters. The model uses seven questions from the survey as inputs to determine an organization’s service maturity. Each of these seven questions represents a characteristic of a CX Champion (i.e., the adoption of a customer service best practice) in terms of the organization’s team, processes, or the data and technology they have at their fingertips to serve customers. The more characteristics that are in place, the more mature the organization is.

**Segmenting organizations in terms of customer service maturity**

ESG created a data-driven model that segments respondents’ organizations into four levels of service maturity: Champions, Risers, Emerging, and Starters. The model uses seven questions from the survey as inputs to determine an organization’s service maturity. Each of these seven questions represents a characteristic of a CX Champion (i.e., the adoption of a customer service best practice) in terms of the organization’s team, processes, or the data and technology they have at their fingertips to serve customers. The more characteristics that are in place, the more mature the organization is.

**Maturity distribution of midsize and enterprise organizations in the UK & Europe today versus a year ago.**

**Country Maturity Ranking:**
- United States (16% Champions, up from 9%)
- Canada (12% Champions, up from 10%)

**Regional differences:**
SMBs in North American are keeping pace with their peers in the rest of the world, where 14% achieve Champion status. However, the data also shows that Canadian organizations trail their US counterparts, perhaps due to a healthier macroeconomic environment in the US and/or greater investments in CX in the past. Canadian organizations would benefit from driving adoption of the characteristics of CX Champions.
The existential importance of improving CX

Improving customer experience matters. Nearly all respondents surveyed agreed that without continuous CX innovation their business will lose customers to more customer-centric competitors.

While organizations are clearly maturing their CX capabilities, every organization must evaluate whether it is transforming its customer service teams fast enough to keep pace with customer expectations. For those organizations stuck in either the Starter or Emerging segment of the market, this data is a clear warning that CX stagnation will lead to customer loss and competitive displacement.

AGREE OR DISAGREE: CONTINUOUS CX INNOVATION IS NEEDED TO PREVENT LOSING CUSTOMERS TO COMPETITORS.

- Strongly agree, 42%
- Agree, 44%
- Neither agree nor disagree/disagree, 13%

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES:
SMBs in the US appear to place more emphasis on CX innovation as a way to protect their business: 89% agree versus 77% of respondents in Canada.

87% of respondents agree CX innovation is required to protect their business from competitors.
Service Excellence: Champions deliver superior customer experiences
Laying the groundwork for service excellence

Three actions Champions take that every CX leader should implement at their organization in order to achieve market-leading service performance:

- **Change how service teams communicate with customers:**
  98% of Champions are focused on a transition away from transactional interactions and toward relationship-building conversational experiences.

- **Meet your customers where they are:**
  Champions engage customers in 1.4 more channels, on average.

- **Anticipate how customers’ preferences related to service are changing and prepare:**
  62% of organizations anticipate chat and social channels will be heavily used by customers in the future, up from 50% today.

What Champions achieve:

- **46% faster** average first response time.

- **48% shorter** total resolution times.

- **87%** of all their customer issues are resolved in a **single interaction**.

- **89%** of their customers agree Champions make getting service easy.
The imperative to transition away from transactional interactions

Service, when done right, lets your customers know they are heard and valued. A conversational experience conveys empathy, builds rapport, and helps the service team have a productive interaction with the customer. Organizations recognize this and have made transitioning away from traditional transactional experiences a key goal for their teams.

However, while 89% of all respondents agree they have this goal, those at Champions are much more likely than Starters to strongly agree (70% vs. 37%). Said another way, Champions are 1.9x more likely to prioritize delivering conversational customer experiences.

98% of Champions agree that pivoting to a more conversational experience with customers is a key goal for their teams.
Meet your customers where they are and prepare for their changing preferences

How a customer wants to engage with your brand varies wildly on a number of factors. This means organizations need to provide a variety of ways for customers to engage them, and Champions outstrip their peers in this respect. **Champions offer an average of 1.4 more channels than Starters to customers.**

While providing flexibility in how customers engage with your business is important, customer preferences change over time. It is important to anticipate these changes so service teams are best positioned to deliver service in the future.

While 65% report email or phone are among the channels where they see the highest conversational volume today, 47% of organizations expect those channels to still be among customers’ most used channels three years from now. Conversely, **chat and social are expected to rise as dominant customer conversation channels.**

### THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHANNELS ORGANIZATIONS USE TO DELIVER SERVICE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Champions offer 1.4 more channels to customers to interact with their brands.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Starters (N=104)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
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</table>

**YEAR-OVER-YEAR DIFFERENCES:**

In the aggregate, SMBs in North America have added about one channel in the past year, on average (6.4 channels offered versus 5.1 a year ago, on average).
Champions respond to and resolve customer issues faster

Agility is a core tenet of customer service. When a customer has a question or a problem, one of the worst mistakes a business can make is making them wait for an answer.

Our research shows that Champions in the SMB market segment in North America are outperforming their peers: Champions’ average first response time is 46% (1.3 hours) faster than Starters’.

While providing customers with a fast response is critical, reaching a satisfactory resolution quickly is an even more important capability.

Once again, our research shows that Champions in the SMB market segment in North America are outperforming their peers in this area: Champions’ average total resolution time is nearly half that of Starters’ (and about 3 hours faster in absolute terms).

With better trained staff, using effective service tools, and with the data at their fingertips needed to assess customer outcomes, Champions deliver results.

### AVERAGE FIRST RESPONSE TIME (HOURS) BY CUSTOMER SERVICE MATURITY.

Champions’ average first response time is 46% faster than Starters’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Champions (N=46)</th>
<th>Starters (N=101)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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</table>

### AVERAGE TOTAL RESOLUTION TIME (HOURS) BY CUSTOMER SERVICE MATURITY.

Champions’ average total resolution time is 48% faster than Starters’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Champions (N=46)</th>
<th>Starters (N=99)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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</table>
Champions are not only faster, but more effective at resolving customer issues

While speed matters, another critical component of delivering optimal CX is efficacy. Our research includes two proxies for the service team’s efficacy.

First, one-touch resolutions. If solving a customer’s issue requires multiple escalations, that is a clear indication that the service team does not have the tools needed to maximize efficacy. **Champions are able to resolve 87% of their call volume with a single customer interaction, an improvement of 8 percentage points relative to Starters.**

Another measure of efficacy is the volume of customer issues that are unresolvable. **Champions see 12% fewer customer issues go unresolved.** Given that just one bad customer experience can result in losing a customer, this impact cannot be overlooked, especially for SMBs, which generally have smaller customer bases.

### Average Percent of One-Touch Resolutions, by Maturity

- **Starters (N=100):** 79%
- **Emerging (N=100):** 80%
- **Risers (N=53):** 83%
- **Champions (N=45):** 87%

#### Regional Differences:

SMBs in Canada suffer from fewer unresolvable customer issues (2.6% of all customer inquiries) compared to their counterparts in the US (3.9% of all customer inquiries).

1. **Champions resolve 8% more inquiries in a single customer interaction.**

2. **Champions also see a 12% reduction in unresolvable customer issues relative to Starters.**
Champions reduce customer effort

Customer effort score (CES) is a metric to assess how well an organization is servicing its customers, and this research included a proxy to measure customer effort.

We asked respondents what percentage of their customers would agree that the organization has "made it easy" to resolve their issue. On average, Champions believe 89% of their customers would agree their company is making the service experience easy. Starters believe 79% of their customers would agree with that sentiment. Said another way, customers of Champions are 13% more likely than those of Starters to say the company is minimizing customer effort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF CUSTOMERS THAT AGREE THE COMPANY IS MAKING SERVICE AN EASY EXPERIENCE FOR THEM.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Champions (N=46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risers (N=53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging (N=91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starters (N=69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Champions’ customers are 13% more likely to agree the service experience requires little customer effort.
The Agent Experience:
Champions put their teams in the best position to succeed
Giving your team the tools to be successful

**Three actions** Champions take that every CX leader should implement at their organization to optimize the agent experience:

- **Gain 360-degree visibility over your customers:** Customers interact with your brand numerous times, through many channels (phone, email, chat, etc.), over what could be many years. Champions are 5.2x more likely to be able to stitch these brand interactions together across silos to best position agents to deliver exceptional service.

- **Give agents the agility and intelligence they need to provide omnichannel service:** Agents are increasingly expected to use many service channels. Champions are more than twice as likely to provide a seamless channel-switching experience to agents.

- **Prepare for remote work scenarios to continue.** On average, organizations expect a 21% increase in the number of remote agents after the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer an issue. Organizations will need to maintain tools and technologies needed for remote productivity and performance management in the coming years.

**What Champions achieve:**

- **8% more efficient** customer interactions and chat sessions.
- **72% higher** agent throughput.
- **They are 2.5x more likely** to have excellent agent retention.
- **Superior team agility:** Champions estimated it would take 9% less time to expand and ramp their team and 29% less time to add a brand-new service channel to their mix.
Champions deliver a 360-degree view of customers to their agents

To deliver the best CX, agents need to be informed about the brand-customer relationship. This information helps an agent do their job better, and Champions are far better at delivering it. In fact, 62% of Champions report their organization provides customer profiles, combining interactions in any channel with CRM and database records, which can be viewed as a “single source of truth.” More simply, Champions are 5.2x more likely than Starters to provide agents with excellent customer visibility.

WHAT IS YOUR ORGANIZATION’S ABILITY TO BUILD 360-DEGREE VIEWS OF YOUR CUSTOMERS?

Champions are 5.2x more likely to deliver excellent customer visibility to agents.

YEAR-OVER-YEAR DIFFERENCES:
North American SMBs in the aggregate have increased customer visibility, with 37% saying they have achieved a “single source of truth” when it comes to customer profiles versus 24% a year ago.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES:
SMBs in the US achieve greater customer visibility, with 41% rating their capabilities as very strong compared with 24% of Canadian respondents.
Champions empower agent agility

95% of midsize and enterprise organizations in Europe employ agents across multiple channels. This creates two key requirements:

1. The organization must be able to assess demand across channels to determine the right level of staffing in each channel at any point in time.

2. Agents must be able to quickly and easily switch channels to meet demand.

Champions are 7.3x more likely than Starters to have excellent cross-channel visibility in terms of customer inquiry volume. Similarly, Champions are 2.2x more likely than Starters to provide their agents with a seamless service channel switching experience.

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**HOW GOOD IS YOUR ORGANIZATION’S VISIBILITY WHEN IT COMES TO ASSESSING THE NEED TO REFOCUS AGENTS FROM ONE CHANNEL TO ANOTHER TO MEET DEMAND?**

![Graph showing visibility differences between categories]

**REGIONAL DIFFERENCES:**
In the aggregate, SMBs in North America rate cross-channel visibility as very strong 37% of the time, a significantly higher percentage than their peers across the globe (21%).

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**CAN AGENTS EASILY SWITCH BETWEEN THE CHANNELS ON WHICH THEY ARE INTERACTING WITH CUSTOMERS?**

![Graph showing channel switching ability]

**YEAR-OVER-YEAR DIFFERENCES:**
SMBs in North America are improving their ability to assess channel demand and volume: In the aggregate, 37% rate their visibility as very strong, up from 13% a year ago.
Organizations expect remote work scenarios to continue

Many respondents we surveyed anticipate the COVID-19 pandemic will have a long-term impact on where service teams work. Respondents at SMBs in North America reported, on average, 28% of their staff were remote workers prior to the outbreak. As we emerge from the pandemic, respondents anticipate the percent of remote service staff will increase to 34%.

The implications for organizations are clear: With 21% more of their staff working remotely, investments in collaboration technologies, employee monitoring solutions, cloud-based applications, and other technologies to enable remote work will need to persist.

REMOTE SERVICE AGENTS BEFORE AND AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of customer service and support agents or representatives who worked from home prior to the COVID-19 outbreak</th>
<th>Percentage of customer service and support agents or representatives who will primarily work from home once the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer an issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES:
SMBs in Canada expect more agents to work remotely in a post-COVID world relative to their peers in the US: 40% of agents on average versus 32%.
Champions have more efficient customer interactions

Efficiency is an important benchmark, both for customers and agents. It is a proxy for the ease with which an agent can get a customer to a solution and as the time taken is reduced, both customer and agent satisfaction increases.

The research shows Champions are having more efficient customer interactions. **Agents at Champions are 8% more efficient in chat sessions (relative to Starters).**

While this equates to just a minute or so per engagement, as those engagements scale, the cumulative savings add up.

Champions are **8% more efficient in chat sessions.**
Champions achieve greater agent throughput

Efficiency breeds productivity, which comes across clearly in the research data. We asked respondents how many full-time customer service agents are in place (both in-sourced and out-sourced) at their organization and the total customer issues resolved per month.*

Dividing the average call volume by the average number of agents, we derive throughput (resolutions per-agent, per-month). **Champions achieve 72% higher agent throughput than Starters.**

*Both questions were optional write-in questions, which not all respondents answered. Aggregate data is presented.

**Champions have 72% higher agent throughput than Starters.**

YEAR-OVER-YEAR DIFFERENCES:
A year ago, the gap between cohorts was 50%, meaning that Champions are widening the advantage over their peers.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES:
SMB agent throughput by country:
1. Canada (36 inquiries per agent)
2. United States (41 inquiries per agent)
Champions see less agent churn

Giving agents the best tools, customer visibility, and information to do their jobs not only helps them be more effective, but it is correlated with higher satisfaction, less burnout, and ultimately improved retention.

When asked to describe the turnover within their service teams, **Champions were 2.5x more likely than Starters to report having excellent agent retention.**

### AGENT TURNOVER, BY MATURITY.

| Champions are 2.5x more likely to have excellent agent retention. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Champions (N=46) | Risers (N=53) | Emerging (N=103) | Starters (N=104) |
| Not a challenge – we have excellent service and support staff retention | 48% | 28% | 19% |
| Neutral/challenging | 45% | 27% | 27% |
| Not very challenging | 32% | 20% | 26% |
Efficiency and effectiveness within the service team provide the organization the opportunity to spend more time planning and thinking strategically. The research attempted to quantify the advantage Champions have in this area, and the results were noteworthy.

We asked respondents how quickly they could grow their service teams by 50% and fully onboard the new hires. Measuring the average calendar time, **Champions estimated it would take 9% less time to ramp their team (29 days versus 32 days for Starters).**

We also asked how long it would take to add a brand-new service channel and skill up the team in its use. Measuring the average calendar time, **Champions estimated it would take 29% less time to add a brand-new service channel to their mix (17 days versus 24 days for Starters).**
Business Operations:
Three ways Champions treat CX differently
A different CX mindset

In both approach and perception, Champions have a dramatically different approach to CX than less mature organizations. Most organizations would benefit from a cultural shift when it comes to CX.

**Accelerating CX innovation despite macroeconomic uncertainty:** In the face of a global pandemic, Champions were 2.3x more likely than Starters to have accelerated major CX projects. As a result, Champions are 3.8x more likely to believe they made the right decisions during the pandemic to maximize their resiliency.

**What isn’t measured and monitored can’t be effectively improved:** Business leaders at Champions are 6x more likely to review CX metrics and key performance indicators daily.

**Recognizing an opportunity to create and widen a competitive edge:** Business leaders at Champions are 1.8x more likely than Starters to view the service team as a competitive differentiator, not a cost center.
**CX investment acceleration in the face of uncertainty**

The research makes it clear that Champions view CX in a fundamentally different way than their peers.

One element of that is their propensity to have accelerated CX investment in the past 12 months, despite the high degree of macroeconomic uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Champions were 2.3x as likely as Starters to have accelerated major CX projects over the past 12 months.**

The implication is clear: Champions believe CX investment should increase, not remain flat or decrease, when organizations face economic headwinds.

### HOW HAS YOUR ORGANIZATION TREATED MAJOR CX PROJECTS OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Starters (N=104)</th>
<th>Emerging (N=103)</th>
<th>Risers (N=53)</th>
<th>Champions (N=46)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have accelerated these projects</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have not changed our project plans</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have delayed these projects</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29% of Starters, 59% of Emerging, 30% of Risers, and 13% of Champions accelerated these projects over the past 12 months.
In addition to leaning into CX investments, there are several other ways Champions reacted to COVID-19 differently than their peers. When asked if the organization adopted policy changes in response to the pandemic, over a third of Champions said they deployed new collaboration tools, increased utilization of public cloud services, and increased mobile device usage early in the pandemic. Champions exhibited market-leading agility to the shifting macroeconomic and societal landscape.

The payoff? Between accelerating CX investments and adapting service policy changes earlier in the pandemic, Champions are 3.8x more likely to believe they made the right investment and policy decisions during the pandemic to maximize their resiliency.

**Spotlight: What can be learned about how organizations reacted to COVID-19?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Change</th>
<th>Starters (N=104)</th>
<th>Champions (N=46)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deployed new collaboration tools to help teams communicate better</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased utilization of public cloud services</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased usage of mobile devices by agents to interact with customers</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed default employee device form factors</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased usage of performance monitoring solutions</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased mental health/employee wellbeing initiatives</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DID YOUR ORGANIZATION MAKE THE RIGHT CX INVESTMENT DECISIONS AND POLICY ADJUSTMENTS TO MAXIMIZE ITS RESILIENCY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Starters (N=104)</th>
<th>Emerging (N=103)</th>
<th>Risers (N=53)</th>
<th>Champions (N=46)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, in all cases</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, in most cases</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral/No</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Investment and executive engagement

Moving past COVID-19 specific data, it is clear that in absolute terms, organizations expect greater investment in CX over time. Respondents representing SMBs in North America expect to increase their CX-related spending by 19% from this fiscal year to next.

Beyond capital investments, Champions invest more executive attention on optimizing CX. C-suite executives at Champions are 6x more likely than Starters to review CX performance metrics daily, and a nearly two-thirds majority of Starters report leadership only reviews these metrics monthly or less often.

Organizations plan to increase spending by 19%.
Finally, the perception of the service team is markedly different when comparing organizations with a high level of maturity to those that are less mature. **Business leaders at Champions are 1.8x more likely to view the service team as a competitive differentiator.**

The data backs this view, as Champions’ service teams consistently help their organizations stand out from the crowd in terms of CX.

**Recognition that service is a differentiator**

**YEAR-OVER-YEAR DIFFERENCES:**
North American SMBs in the aggregate see their service teams in a better light than one year ago: 50% are seen as competitive differentiators today compared to 32% in last year’s research.

**HOW DO SENIOR BUSINESS LEADERS VIEW YOUR SERVICE ORGANIZATION?**

- **3 - Neutral or below**
  - Starters (N=104): 23%
  - Emerging (N=103): 19%
  - Risers (N=53): 15%
  - Champions (N=46): 15%

- **4**
  - Starters (N=104): 38%
  - Emerging (N=103): 39%
  - Risers (N=53): 28%
  - Champions (N=46): 39%

- **5 - Customer service is viewed as a competitive differentiator**
  - Starters (N=104): 23%
  - Emerging (N=103): 41%
  - Risers (N=53): 57%
  - Champions (N=46): 72%

Business leaders at Champions are **1.8x more likely to view the service team as a competitive differentiator.**
Business Outcomes:
Why becoming a Champion should matter to your business
Champions outperform their customer satisfaction goals

The goal of the service team is to delight customers. All else being equal, we would expect organizations with the most mature service practices to perform better in terms of customer satisfaction, and that is exactly what the data shows. **Champions are 9.8x more likely than Starters to generally exceed their customer satisfaction goals.**

ESG believes Champions’ ability to deliver faster, more effective, and more conversational service experiences is one of the key reasons they outperform their peers in terms of customer satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION GENERALLY PERFORM RELATIVE TO ITS CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TARGETS?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Champions are 9.8x more likely to exceed satisfaction goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champions (N=46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scores generally exceed our goals/expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Champions broaden their customer base while increasing customer spending

Customer satisfaction should serve as a leading indicator to business results. Happy customers help the brand grow its customer base with recommendations and positive word of mouth. This is a trend we observe in the data: Champions are 1.7x more likely than Starters to report having grown their customer base in the last 6 months.

Similarly, happy customers tend to show their appreciation with their wallets, buying additional products and services from brands that have delighted them. Again, the data backs this up: Champions are 3.7x more likely to report their per-customer spending has increased significantly in the past 6 months.
For Champions, service teams are profit drivers

The traditional view of the service organization is that of a cost center, a department where operational costs exceed contributions to the bottom line. Our research shows this perception is changing, particularly for Champions.

Nearly three-quarters of Champions say their service team is a profit center from which direct revenues exceed costs. But not all organizations see this benefit: Champions are 1.8x more likely than Starters to operate a profitable service team.

**HOW DOES THE SERVICE TEAM IMPACT THE COMPANY’S FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE?**

- It is a profit center – i.e., it directly drives more revenue than it costs to operate
  - Starters (N=104): 41%
  - Emerging (N=103): 51%
  - Risers (N=53): 60%
  - Champions (N=46): 72%

- It is cost neutral – i.e., direct costs and revenues driven are comparable
  - Starters (N=104): 50%
  - Emerging (N=103): 44%
  - Risers (N=53): 36%
  - Champions (N=46): 26%

- It is a cost center – i.e., direct costs exceed revenues
  - Starters (N=104): 3%
  - Emerging (N=103): 2%
  - Risers (N=53): 2%
  - Champions (N=46): 2%
Conclusion

Whether in terms of their ability to serve customers efficiently and effectively, their ability to deliver an agent experience that empowers and engages staff, or the impact of customer service to the business, the case that all organizations should strive to reach CX Champion status is clearly and consistently made by the data. Depending on where your organization is today, this journey may seem daunting, but the first step is understanding where you stand:

- Are your service teams adequately trained and staffed to meet demand?
- Does your organization have processes in place to continuously and quickly evolve how you serve customers based on an ongoing feedback loop from the service team?
- Is the data created and captured by the service team operationalized or is your organization blind to those insights?
- And do your teams have the best-in-class tools to help your customers and build advocacy?

If your answer to any of these questions is “no,” Zendesk wants to help. From customer case studies, to a dynamic self assessment to help you better understand where you are today, to an ROI calculator, Zendesk has created a host of assets to help your organization take its first step down the path to becoming a CX Champion.
Demographics

The data in this report was derived from a survey fielded between April 27 and May 22, 2021. The figures that follow detail the demographics of respondents to the survey located in US and Canada and employed at SMBs (N=306).

Totals in figures and tables throughout this report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

The margin of error for a sample size of 306 at the 95% confidence level is + or - 6 percentage points.

**Respondents by Job Function**

- Customer experience, 4%
- Field service & support, 1%
- eCommerce, 4%
- Marketing, 10%
- Sales, 15%
- C-level executive responsible for multiple functional groups, 43%
- Customer service, 22%

**Respondents by Seniority**

- Management, 10%
- Executive management, 61%
- Senior management, 29%

**Respondents by Company Size**

- Less than 10, 19%
- 50 to 99, 36%
- 10 to 24, 19%
- 25 to 49, 27%

**Respondents by Industry**

- Retail, wholesale, and distribution: 23%
- Construction and building materials: 10%
- Consumer services: 10%
- Financial services: 7%
- Healthcare equipment and services: 7%
- Corporate services: 6%
- Consumer products: 5%
- Automotive: 4%
- Computer hardware: 4%
- Education: 4%
- Industrial manufacturing and services: 4%
- Computer software and services: 3%
- Transportation: 3%
- Aerospace and defense: 2%
- Government and non-profit: 2%
- Media and entertainment: 2%
- Telecommunications: 2%
- Chemicals, metals, and mining: 1%
- Energy and environmental: 1%
- Other: 3%
ABOUT ZENDESK

Zendesk started the customer experience revolution in 2007 by enabling any business around the world to take their customer service online. Today, Zendesk is the champion of great service everywhere for everyone, and powers billions of conversations, connecting more than 100,000 brands with hundreds of millions of customers over telephony, chat, email, messaging, social channels, communities, review sites and help centers. Zendesk products are built with love to be loved.

The company was conceived in Copenhagen, Denmark, built and grown in California, taken public in New York City, and today employs more than 5,000 people across the world. Learn more at www.zendesk.com.

ABOUT ESG

Enterprise Strategy Group is an integrated technology analysis, research, and strategy firm providing market intelligence, actionable insight, and go-to-market content services to the global technology community.

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