

THE AGILITY PLAYBOOK

# How manufacturers can score a competitive advantage in CX



Staying at the top of the game as a manufacturer is no easy task. It takes constant vigilance, a willingness to discard outdated tactics, and becoming comfortable with change. In other words, it means developing an agility mindset—the ability to spot changing trends and then pivot on the fly to remain one step ahead of competitors.

History is replete with once-successful manufacturers that were unable to keep up with the rapid pace of innovation or who were blindsided by unanticipated market challenges, from swiftly changing consumer preferences to disruptive global pandemics and shifting supply chains.

**Business agility for manufacturers requires three key elements:**

**1. Making it easier to hear from your customers**

**2. Building teams that can stay productive during times of change**

**3. Investing in flexible technology that supports the company's customer experience goals**

To better understand how organizations are building business agility into their company strategy, Zendesk surveyed 3,900 customers and 3,900 customer experience and customer service leaders, managers, and agents. We also analyzed top agility capability data from more than 90,000 companies using Zendesk across 175 countries.

### **Train for agility, deliver better CX**

Whether a manufacturer has just vaulted into the mid-market segment, expects to cross the threshold into the enterprise space, or has been a market leader for many years, it's challenging to build on previous wins from past customer experience strategies.

Manufacturers need to understand what customers want and they must have a plan for responding to emerging customer experience and service trends.

# D1 Understand the end-consumer to improve the bottom line

Manufacturers already know how important customer service is to the business, and how critical it is to understand the needs of the end-consumer: the customer's customers.

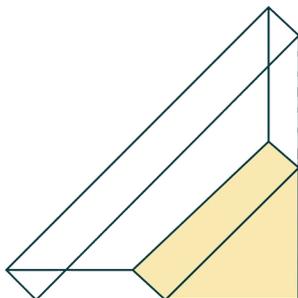
Truly listening to what customers are saying is the only way to understand whether or not the business is providing gold-medal service. Customer feedback is one of the most important barometers, signaling shifting preferences and even product opportunities. The rest of this playbook outlines some ways manufacturers can help ensure the voice of the customer is being heard throughout the organization.

## Create reliable methods for hearing what customers want you to know—and offer choices throughout the customer journey

Leading manufacturers have known for years that customers want options when it comes to customer service. Giving customers choices may mean offering customers the ability to switch channels without having to repeat information or may imply providing multiple ways to contact the brand. In fact, approximately 89 percent of agents at manufacturing companies say they use more than one channel to communicate with customers during a given day.

**32%**

Only 32% of enterprise companies offer three or more channels to their customers.



Still, just 34 percent of mid-market companies offer three or more channels to their customers, and that number drops to 32 percent for enterprise businesses. The majority of companies are missing valuable opportunities to hear from customers on their preferred channels, likely frustrating customers before they even connect with a support agent.

Customer service channels aren't the only ways to hear from customers. Surveys and self-service can also be valuable tools. Integrating online surveys into the entire customer journey, via partners like [Qualtrics](#), [Stella Connect](#) by Medallia, or [SurveyMonkey](#), for instance, can help manufacturers collect feedback throughout the customer experience. Self-service is also an important window into the customer and distributor worlds. Keeping your help center up-to-date is a simple way to identify and address pain points within your CX.

## Make sense of it all with comprehensive analytics

For manufacturers with tens of thousands of customers—or millions—opening the information floodgates isn't enough. Without the right tools, customer interactions are disconnected snapshots in time, resulting in only a partial view of the customer journey. Without insight into real-time trends, it's next to impossible to get a sense of where the long-term business strategy needs to go.

Beyond identifying trends in tickets, manufacturers should examine how distributors engage with end-customers, as well as how the end-consumers use the products. Would a concerted push toward self-service make sense for the business? Do you need to shift agents to different channels or hire more employees? Answers to these questions will send the business along very different paths, and leaders want to be thoughtful about choosing the strategies that make the most sense for the business and its goals.

## Boost customer acquisition and profitability by integrating CX data across the business

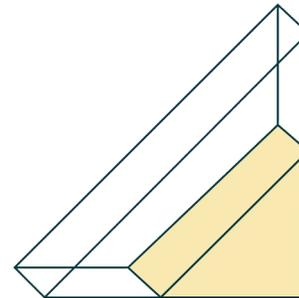
Data collected from customer experience touchpoints can help your support team provide better service; however, keeping CX data siloed is a lost opportunity. Customer feedback and related data should be shared across your organization, from the product engineering team to the marketing organization. CX data can fuel informed, [data-driven decision-making](#) that can boost customer acquisition and loyalty, as well as profitability.

## Focus on the entire experience with a complete picture of the customer

Manufacturers may have reams of customer experience data, but fragmented or incomplete data cannot inform business decisions. Manufacturers should ensure agents have a complete view of the customer, including the customer profile as well as every interaction, resulting in better outcomes not only for customers but for the company.

**37%**

37% of agents at mid-market companies say they need more customer context to provide better customer experiences.



### CX data is more than just surveys

Here are some examples of the CX data that can help agents, admins, and business leaders drive the best customer experiences for manufacturers:

- **Customer data:** purchase history, customer service history, billing information, warranty status, service-level agreements, third-party behavioral data
- **Business data:** inventory management, supply chain, and delivery data

# 02

## Lower costs by working better— and smarter

It's also important to focus on improving how the support operation works, even if incremental change proves to be difficult. It is not surprising that 91 percent of manufacturing leaders report that making changes to customer service is challenging.

Although challenging, helping support teams work smarter is worth the effort. Improvements to support operations result in increased customer satisfaction, improved employee engagement, reduced costs, and even increased revenue.

### Improve your team's productivity with standards and processes that drive collaboration and knowledge sharing

While CX integrations with partners like [Zoom](#), [Atlassian](#), and [Slack](#) saved the day when businesses suddenly shifted to remote work, collaboration remains a trouble spot for all organizations. Consider this: 90 percent of leaders report that their solution makes it easy for agents to contribute to their knowledge base, yet agents tell a different story.

Only 57 percent say they can conveniently discover knowledge base articles. Giving agents all of these tools in one, easy-to-use dashboard makes collaboration and knowledge sharing much simpler to achieve.

High-performing mid-market companies are 1.5 times more likely to adopt digital improvements that make these changes a reality. Creating an environment that facilitates open collaboration and knowledge sharing is a powerful way to improve team efficiency.

For example, if an agent solves a tough problem for a customer, documenting and sharing the steps they took can save other agents a lot of from jumping through hoops and get customers the answers they need faster.

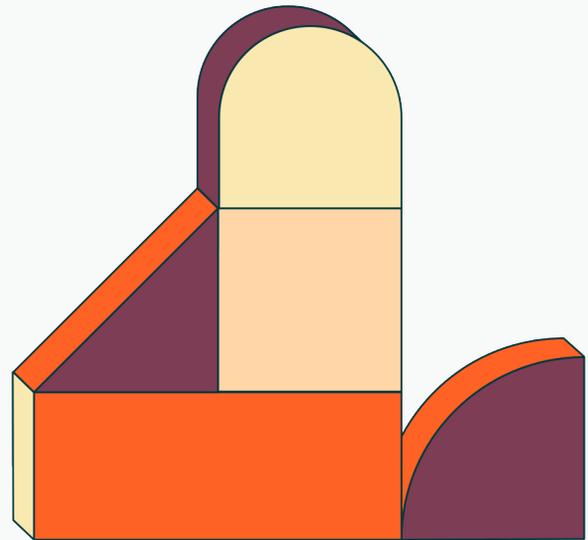
**Change is hard, but high-performing mid-market businesses are 1.5x more likely to adopt digital improvements and set themselves up to scale.**

## Use automation to help eliminate redundant tasks and lower change management costs

Nothing kills team efficiency and morale like using valuable people power for work that could be automated. Every routine task that can be taken off an agent's plate means more time can be devoted to solving complex customer issues. For example, manufacturers can integrate automation through intelligent ticket routing or automated email responses to commonly asked questions.

## Build out workflows to increase quality, transparency, and control

Put the flow into workflow: with simple business rules, companies can standardize processes and help the entire organization move in lockstep. Workflows can help ensure consistent execution—and, likely, faster, better customer experiences. They also make it much easier to make large-scale changes without having to retrain the customer service team—a key feature of any company with truly agile CX.

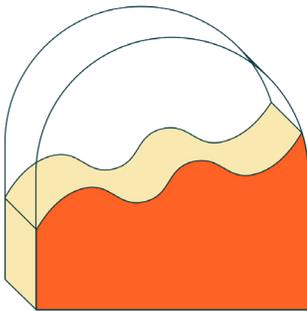


## Constantly learn and adapt by powering smarter business with AI and machine learning tools

These tools can extend automation across the entire customer journey, making agents more productive and self-service more accessible. With AI-powered chatbots, for example, manufacturers can take advantage of always-on support and respond to customer questions even when agents aren't in the office. If a handoff is needed, bots can get their human counterparts quickly up to speed with key context to make problem solving faster and more efficient. Bots are more widely accepted among customers, too; 42 percent of customers say they're open to working with a bot, with bots becoming increasingly popular among customers under 40.

**44%**

Only 44% of enterprise companies report using bots in their day-to-day work, compared to 51% of mid-market businesses.



# 03

## Choosing the right technology

Prioritizing agile CX can improve the bottom line; 22 percent of business leaders report that being highly agile reduced their costs by 25 percent or more; another 38 percent of business leaders report cost savings between 11 and 25 percent.

**Leading companies are 5.8x more likely to say they give agents a single view of important customer context.**



**Nearly a quarter of business leaders report that having high agility reduced their costs by 25% or more.**

When business leaders are looking to invest in their customer experience, technology is a good place to start. As mentioned, providing a single unified workspace for agents plays a significant role in improving team productivity by giving agents a more complete view of the customers they're trying to serve. Leading companies are 5.8 times more likely to say they give agents a single view of important customer context.

Agile companies prioritize technology that is open, flexible, and integrates seamlessly with other platforms.

## Empower the team to move quickly and adopt low-code tools

The days of on-premise software, which requires significant onsite support, are on the decline. More agile, flexible CX teams lean on low-code tools that don't require significant upkeep or complicated onboarding. Setting up workflows, conditions, and triggers within a CX platform shouldn't require IT or a developer's assistance. Manufacturers can integrate with solutions like [Workato](#) or [Domo](#) to add to the seamless agent experience.

## Open technology is a manufacturer's friend

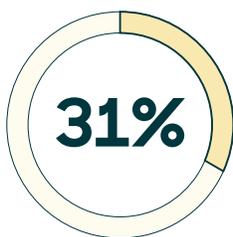
Flexible technology is more likely to be customized, to suit the company's needs. If you're lucky to have in-house developers, any new technologies should play nicely with their preferred tools and development languages.

## Integrate frequently-used apps and key partners

No company or team relies on just one piece of technology or one solution to support the entire customer experience. Whether it's enterprise resource planning, warranty management software, or a CRM, manufacturers need customer support software that integrates easily with whichever technology their team requires.

## Consider speed to market, usability, and scalability for your tech investments

When ticket volumes increase, the top performers in the mid-market space typically adopt three sets of features compared to low-performing competitors: help center articles, macros, and groups and automations. Always consider whether the technology stack is designed to grow with the business, support added functionality easily, and ultimately, whether the platform will help your team provide better customer service.



Manufacturers saw a 31% increase in ticket volume vs. Q1 2020

# Conclusion

Stay consistent and deliberate about listening to customers, streamlining teams and processes, and taking a disciplined approach to technology decisions, to make CX agility a way of life.

Ready to take your agility training to the next level?

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Zendesk partnered with Dynata, a first-party data and insights platform, to conduct the market research cited in this playbook.