2026

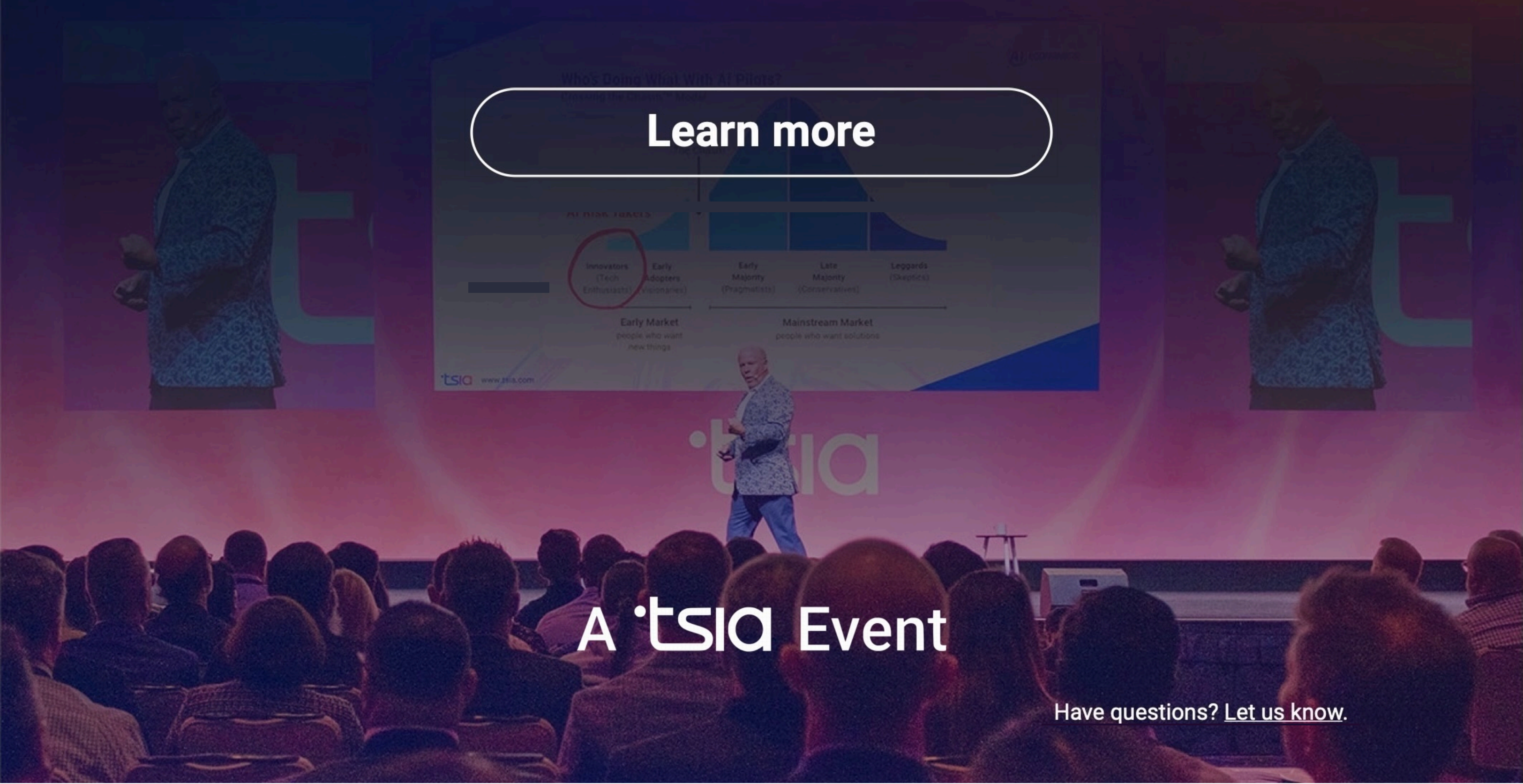
State of Customer Success

Mastering the Economics of AI-Driven Success

Technology & Services World

The Future of the AI Customer Lifecycle

Las Vegas • Oct. 19–21, 2026



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Introduction

Customer Success Is Entering a New Era

Customer success is at a turning point. For years, customer success teams focused primarily on relationships, adoption, and renewal protection. But the economic environment surrounding technology companies has changed. Customer acquisition costs continue to rise, while executive teams demand clearer proof that investments in technology and AI are generating measurable business outcomes.

At the same time, artificial intelligence is changing how organizations operate. AI is no longer just a tool that automates workflows; it is becoming embedded into the operating fabric of technology companies. These shifts are forcing a fundamental transformation in customer success.

In *The State of Customer Success 2026*, we see a clear evolution emerging:

- Customer success managers are becoming value managers.
- AI is becoming a collaborative teammate.
- Data integration is becoming the foundation of proactive customer engagement.

Organizations that adapt to this shift will position customer success as a central driver of retention and growth. Those that do not will struggle to prove the value of their customer success investments.

AI. For Technology Services.

What it is

TSIA Intelligence is TSIA's new AI-powered assistant. It delivers instant, actionable insights from TSIA's exclusive, industry-validated research. Built only for Technology Services, it helps you make smarter decisions.

Why it matters

Trusted Answers, Not Generic AI: Based on TSIA's proprietary data—not the open web.

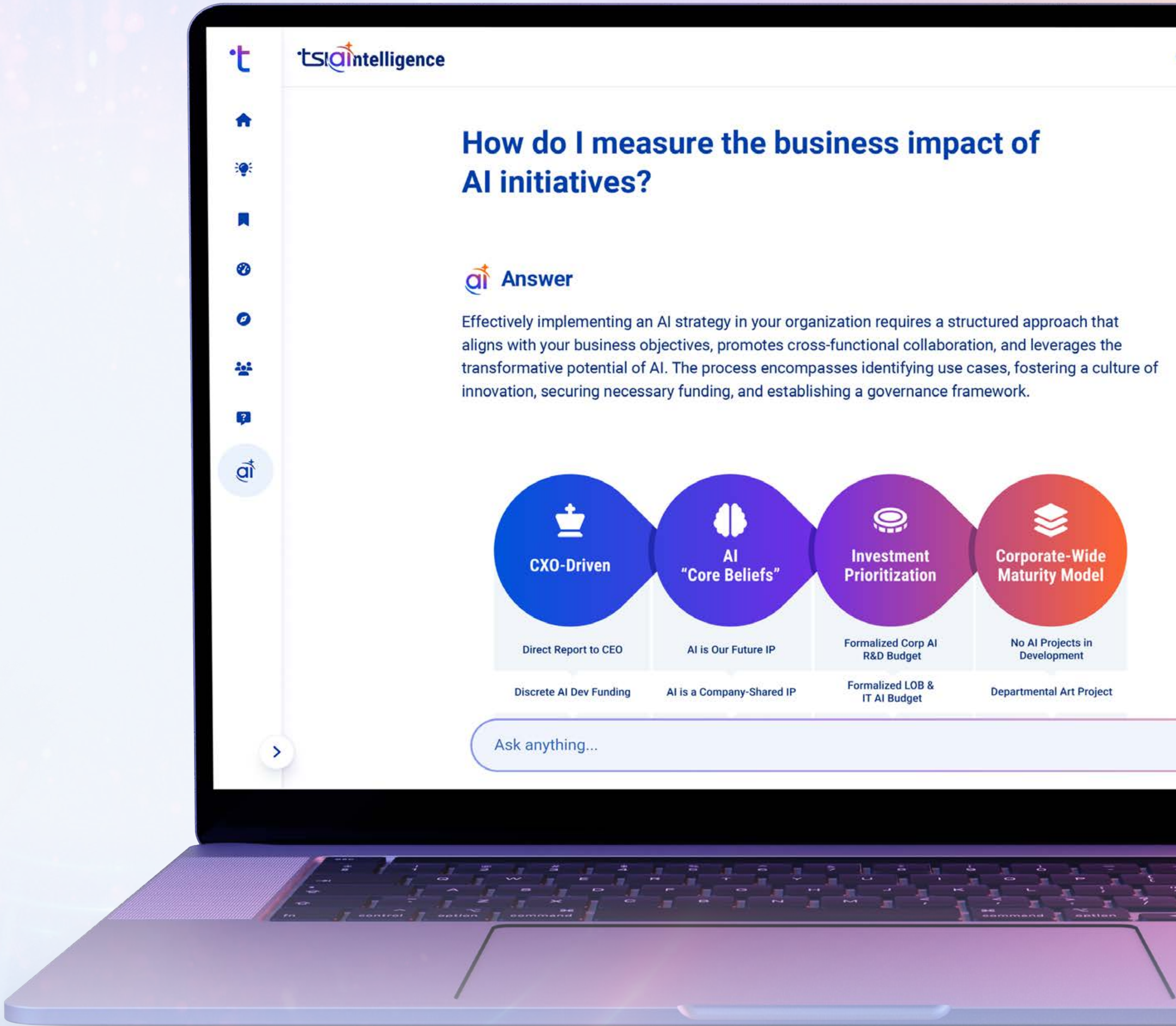
Instant Value: Summarizes reports, answers questions, and visualizes data in seconds.

Built for Tech Services: Specialized insights tailored to your industry challenges.

Experience TSIA Intelligence today—for free—in the TSIA Portal.

Generic AI gives general answers. TSIA's AI gives the right ones.

Ask a question



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The Tech Stack Reckoning

From Buying Tools to Proving Value

Over the past several years, many organizations invested heavily in customer success technology. Platforms promising automation, predictive health scoring, and digital engagement were rapidly adopted. But by 2025, many companies began to question whether those investments were delivering measurable value.

Organizations discovered that while they had accumulated tools, they could not quantify the return those tools generated. In many cases, customer success teams found themselves stuck in what could be described as "pilot purgatory," where technology experiments continued, but value remained difficult to measure.

This growing pressure to justify investments is one of the defining dynamics shaping customer success in 2026.

The AI Economics™ Shift

Why Customer Success Is Becoming a Strategic Function

AI is reshaping the economics of enterprise software. Historically, SaaS growth depended on seat expansion, as companies generated more revenue by selling licenses for each employee using the product. AI disrupts that model.

As automation increases and AI systems perform more work, organizations need fewer human users. If pricing models remain tied to user seats, revenue declines as customers become more efficient. This creates a fundamental challenge for technology providers.

Customer success teams are increasingly responsible for ensuring that AI-enabled offerings deliver measurable outcomes that justify new pricing approaches based on consumption or business impact.

The Data Problem

The Real Barrier to AI Success

Many organizations assume their data is too messy for AI. In reality, modern AI models are far more tolerant of imperfect data than traditional analytics. The real obstacle is not data cleanliness; it is data fragmentation.

Customer insight is often distributed across disconnected systems:

- CRM systems managed by sales teams.
- Support ticketing platforms owned by service teams.
- Customer success plans maintained by CS teams.
- Product usage data captured by product teams.

When these systems remain disconnected, AI lacks the full context needed to generate reliable predictions. Without unified data, organizations remain stuck reacting to problems instead of preventing them.

Solving the Scale Paradox

Personalization vs. Efficiency

Customer success leaders are facing a difficult balancing act. Organizations want to support more customers while controlling costs. At the same time, customers expect personalized engagement that reflects their specific goals and challenges.

Historically, many companies attempted to solve this challenge through segmentation strategies that relied on digital engagement for smaller accounts and human support for larger customers. In 2026, that approach is no longer sufficient.

Digital engagement must now operate as a discipline embedded across the entire customer lifecycle, supported by real-time data signals and AI-driven orchestration. When digital systems can detect customer risks or opportunities early, automated engagement can occur at exactly the right moment, allowing human CSMs to focus on higher-value strategic work.

The Rise of the Value Manager

How the CSM Role Is Changing

The responsibilities of the customer success manager are evolving. The traditional trusted advisor model focused primarily on building relationships and supporting product adoption. While these skills remain important, organizations increasingly expect CSMs to demonstrate how their work contributes to revenue growth.

As a result, many companies are redefining the role of customer success. CSMs are becoming value managers responsible for helping customers achieve measurable business outcomes while identifying expansion opportunities.

This shift is also changing how customer success teams collaborate with sales organizations, creating a more integrated expansion loop that connects adoption, renewal, and growth.

The Skills Customer Success Teams Must Develop

AI, Data Literacy, and Strategic Advisory

Artificial intelligence can process massive volumes of customer information, from support tickets and emails to meeting transcripts and usage data. But technology alone cannot transform customer success. Organizations must also invest in developing the skills that allow teams to use AI effectively.

Customer success teams increasingly need capabilities in:

- Data literacy.
- AI-assisted workflows.
- Strategic advisory.
- Complex problem solving.

When these skills are developed alongside AI adoption, CSMs can move beyond administrative tasks and focus on delivering strategic value to customers.

The Future of Customer Success

From Cost Center to Value Engine

Customer success is entering a new phase of maturity. As AI transforms technology delivery models and pricing structures evolve, organizations must rethink how they measure customer success.

Teams that succeed in this new environment will focus on:

- Building unified customer data foundations.
- Training teams in AI-enabled workflows.
- Aligning pricing with measurable outcomes.
- Positioning customer success as a driver of retention and growth.

Organizations that make this shift will transform customer success from a defensive function into a strategic engine of value creation.

Customer Success at an Inflection Point in 2026

A clear inflection point defines customer success in 2026. AI has unlocked enormous potential, but legacy business models, fragmented data, and outdated metrics limit its impact. The organizations that succeed will be those that treat customer success as a strategic, value-capturing function rather than a defensive layer.

That means fixing foundational data issues, retooling your workforce for strategic advisory work, and aligning pricing and services to measurable outcomes. Customer success isn't disappearing in the AI era. It's becoming more critical than ever.

To succeed in 2026, focus efforts on three non-optional strategic customer success imperatives:

Fix your foundation:

Prioritize resolving data quality and integration issues to enable a best-of-breed technology stack.

Reskill for strategy:

Invest in formal training to shift CSMs toward high-value strategic advisory, data literacy, and complex problem-solving.

Disrupt pricing now:

Challenge per-user pricing and implement outcome or value-based monetization models.

Explore the Full Research

The transformation of customer success is only beginning. Explore the full findings, benchmarks, and strategic recommendations in *The State of Customer Success 2026* on the TSIA Portal.

For a broader view of how AI is reshaping technology business models, visit the AI Economics Resource Center to see how leading organizations are redefining pricing, services, and customer value in the AI era.

TSIA's Complete Ecosystem

Benchmarking

Proprietary, data-driven comparisons against peer companies.

- **Performance Optimizer (self-serve or researcher-led)**: Measures maturity, identifies gaps, and compares against industry averages.
- **DataViews & Key Metrics**: Bite-sized benchmarks (e.g., renewal rates, adoption ratios) available in the TSIA Portal.

Expert Inquiry

An Expert Inquiry is a direct engagement with a TSIA Research Executive to answer a specific business question or validate a strategy. Inquiries are addressed via a curated email response or a 30-minute call, depending on the complexity of the issue.

TSIA Intelligence (AI)

The first AI built exclusively for technology services. Provides trusted answers in seconds, complementing the expertise of human researchers.

Advisory Services

Advisory Blocks:
1–4 hour hyper-focused, virtual sessions solving a specific challenge.

Interactive Strategy Reviews (ISRs):
Researcher reviews strategy docs and hosts a 2-hour interactive session with recommendations.

Workshops:
Half to full-day engagements for team enablement and transformation planning.

Speaking Engagements:
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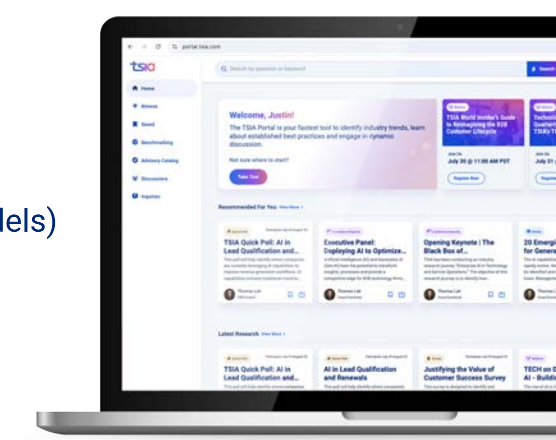
TSIA Portal: Research & Insights

A rich library of proprietary research and tools.

Formats include:

- Research Reports (deep analysis)
- State of the Industry Reports (annual, free)
- Framework Papers (visual best-practice models)
- Articles (thought leadership)
- DataViews (benchmark stats, always paid)
- Webinars & Podcasts (free, expert-led)
- Industry Stories (real-world applications)



Membership Plans

Free

Explore TSIA's ecosystem with limited access to research and AI tools—ideal for getting familiar before you commit.

- **Limited** TSIA Intelligence
- **7 AI Inquiries:** Specialized AI Q&A for technology services.
- **7 AI Content Assistant Uses:** Instant summaries and deep dives into reports, videos, and more.

Individual

Best for you

Get full, self-serve access to all research areas, TSIA Intelligence, and benchmarking—built for SMB leaders and solo professionals ready to level up.

- **Single User**
- **Unlimited** TSIA Intelligence
- **AI Inquiry:** Specialized AI Q&A for technology services.
- **AI Content Assistant:** Instant summaries and deep dives into reports, videos, and more.

Enterprise

Best for your company

Access organization-wide research, expert advice, and advanced benchmarking to drive large-scale service transformation.

- **Unlimited Users**
- **Unlimited** TSIA Intelligence
- **AI Inquiry:** Specialized AI Q&A for technology services.
- **AI Content Assistant:** Instant summaries and deep dives into reports, videos, and more.

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Advisory Boards:
Peer councils by Research Area.

tsw Technology Services World

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STAR Awards:
Recognition of member success stories.

tsia BOARD SUMMIT

Executive-Hosted Forum:
An invite-only experience for TSIA Advisory Board executives to think deeply, connect meaningfully, and act decisively on the future of technology services.

Contact us

Questions? Our team is here to guide you toward the right TSIA solution for your needs.

Get in touch

Make smart decisions.®

TSIA (Technology & Services Industry Association) is dedicated to helping technology and services organizations large and small grow and advance in the technology industry. Find out how you can achieve success, too.

Have questions? Let us know.

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