ttec®

CX TRENDS 2026
FAST FORWARD

5 approaches that will win this year – because **old-school thinking** won't cut it

THROWBACK FASHION WORKS. THROWBACK CX DOESN'T.

The world isn't slowing down. Technology is evolving, customer expectations are rising, and economic uncertainty is rewriting the rules. Brands are confused about where to invest, don't understand the economics of AI, and are afraid to act. You probably know you are wasting money but don't know how to fix it.
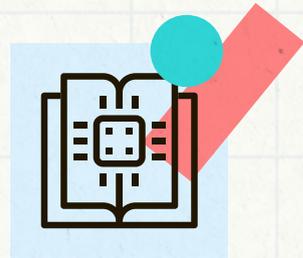
If CX stays stuck in the past, you're not just behind — you're losing customer satisfaction, revenue, and loyalty by the day.

Yesterday's roadblocks and outdated thinking won't take you into 2026. It's time to cut through the confusion.

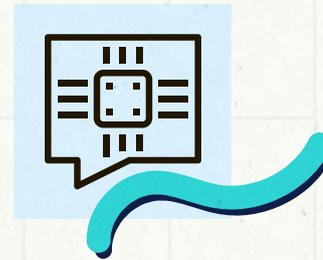Some things age well. CX that hasn't evolved doesn't.
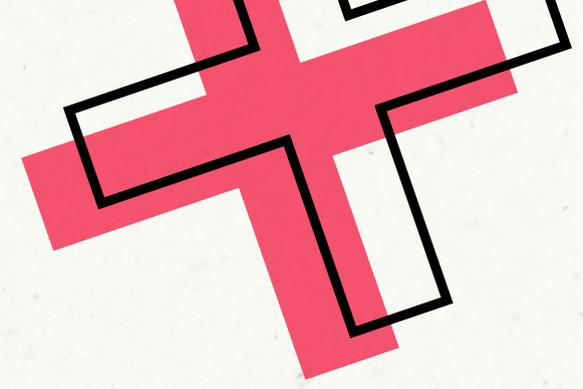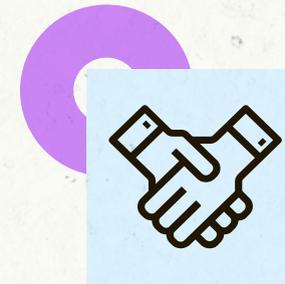
HIT FAST-FORWARD ON CX: 5 TRENDS LEADING THE CHARGE

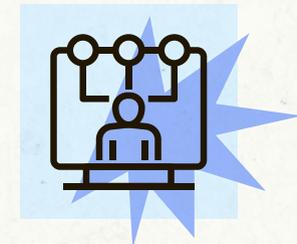Agentic AI becomes standard — but strong data and trust will decide its fate

Personalization evolves into precision

Tech stack clarity becomes mission-critical

Empathy gets reimaged

Resiliency defines the future of CX

OLD WAYS OF THINKING HAVE CX AT A STANDSTILL

42%
of organizations still rely heavily on manual processes to analyze CX data

U.S. overall **customer satisfaction dropped for 3 straight quarters** this year and sits at the same level as 12 years ago

21%
of brands in Forrester's global Customer Experience Index saw rankings decline in 2025 and 73% remained unchanged

95%
of generative AI pilots are generating no measurable return for businesses

62%
of CX and contact center leaders say they often don't use CX data to their best advantage

Sources: Forrester, ACSI, MIT, CallMiner

THE NEXT ERA OF CX STARTS HERE

You don't have to stay stuck in outdated CX — there's a smarter, smoother way forward. **Lead the charge into 2026 and beyond with 5 trends built to future-proof your CX.**

STUCK IN THE PAST:

Caught between curiosity and confusion, brands are unsure about AI and watching opportunities slip by.

THE FUTURE, UNLOCKED

Agentic AI becomes standard — but strong data and trust will decide its fate

AI that acts on its own will play a key role in the next era of CX, but it must be rooted in strong data if it's going to succeed.

In customer-facing efforts, agentic AI must be rooted in trust and security. Otherwise, customers won't buy in to it.

Trend 1

Agentic AI becomes standard —
but strong data and trust will decide its fate

Agentic AI made the trends list last year, but this year will evolve to the next level. It's moving beyond, "answer this question," to "accomplish this objective," and autonomously deciding steps, using tools, and iterating based on results.

We're already seeing widespread experimentation with agentic AI, but in 2026 brands will embrace widespread adoption as pilots move into production.

For most industries, initial use cases will start in the back office. As brands' AI-readiness matures, agentic AI will become more customer-facing with the ability to act on customers' behalf. And that's why trust will be essential.

To earn customer trust in agentic AI, brands need to show it works and is safe. That starts with clean, curated, and continuously updated data to ensure the AI is accurate. And it means applying agentic AI to the appropriate tasks – not edge cases – to ensure it is reliable.

Brands are also demonstrating security and transparency – protecting sensitive data, logging every action, and making sure the AI can clearly explain how it reached its conclusions.

80%

of common customer service issues will be solved autonomously by agentic AI by 2029

Source: Gartner

BLOG

Is agentic AI ready to take over the contact center?

Trend 2

STUCK IN THE PAST:

Technology is disjointed and siloed. AI has flooded the market in a way that's too confusing, so brands are too overwhelmed to make decisions.
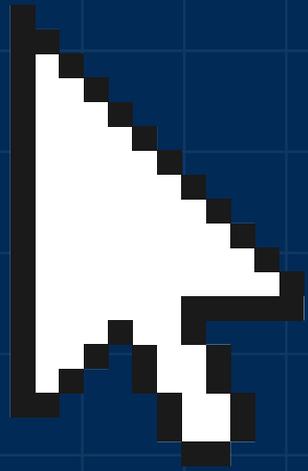
THE FUTURE, UNLOCKED

Tech stack clarity becomes mission-critical

Leaders must cut through the noise, align their tools, and make sharper business decisions.

The winners will turn complexity into clarity.

Trend 2

Tech stack clarity becomes mission-critical

Tech stack clarity isn't just about knowing what tools you use, it's about having a forward-looking technology strategy. This means:

- Choosing vendors and platforms that can grow with you, understand your needs, and help you keep up with the pace of innovation

- Ensuring that your tech investments are intentional, not reactive

- Addressing duplicative capabilities across platforms and understanding best-fit consumption models

What tech stack clarity doesn't mean is adopting AI tools simply because they're new and exciting. Always start with business goals, then choose the tech that can help achieve those goals.

Brands that are thriving in today's AI-saturated environment are optimizing their existing technology; prioritizing clean, accessible data; and fostering a culture of thoughtful experimentation. They're aligning AI tools with clear business goals, avoiding siloed deployments, and empowering teams to explore and advocate for scalable solutions.

86%

of IT leaders say today's patchwork tech stacks are driving both financial strain and new security risks.

Source: IT Pro

REPORT

The case for a unified CX cloud: Why best-of-breed CCaaS and CRM technology isn't enough

Trend 3

STUCK IN THE PAST:

Brands know personalization is a CX differentiator, but fragmented data, legacy systems, and misused AI tools often stand in the way.

THE FUTURE, UNLOCKED

Personalization evolves into precision

Data and technology take personalization, a longtime CX cornerstone, to new heights.

Brands with clean, connected data will shift personalization from promise to practice — delivering relevance customers welcome, not resist.

Trend 3

Personalization evolves into precision

Personalization is evolving into something much more predictive and precise.

Precise personalization means understanding the customer's context and tailoring interactions accordingly. Brands are going beyond marketing into real-time customer service, where agents (human or AI) must surface only the most pertinent information to guide conversations effectively.

A strong data foundation is essential. Without unified, validated data, personalization efforts can backfire. Fortunately, AI is making data unification and validation easier than ever.

Brands are making clearer connections between data platforms and frontline systems to ensure that insights are actionable at the moment of engagement. As brands progress along the data maturity curve, they're leveraging AI-driven insights for even more tailored personalization.

Ultimately, precise personalization is about using the right data at the right time — creating experiences that feel intuitive, respectful, and valuable to customers.

73%
of customers expect better personalization as technology advances.

Source: Salesforce

BLOG
Balancing personalization with privacy in the age of AI

Trend 4

STUCK IN THE PAST:

Empathy is a top priority in contact centers, but **it doesn't lead to fast resolutions** – so customers are still frustrated.

THE FUTURE, UNLOCKED

Empathy gets re-imagined

In the AI age, over-scripted or forced empathy risks slowing resolution and frustrating customers. Real care is measured in outcomes, not apologies.

It's time to rethink your approach to empathy.

Trend 4

Empathy gets re-imagined

Conventional wisdom says customers want associates to acknowledge their frustration, apologize for inconveniences or mistakes, and understand how they're feeling.

But that's not necessarily true.

Emerging research shows customers' main objective when they contact brands is getting their issues resolved. If associate empathy or apologies delay that resolution, they're hurting CX more than helping it. And it doesn't take long: an apology that lasts longer than a few seconds can damage satisfaction.

As a result, companies may be better off focusing less on associates' personalities and more on their problem-solving abilities.

No two customer interactions are exactly alike, and not all need the same infusion of empathy. The type of business, type of inquiry, level of urgency, and even the customer's country of origin can all affect how much (or little) empathy is needed during a conversation. And in certain instances, AI is filling that gap.

24%
higher CSAT when associates apologize at the start of a conversation (4.54 out of 5), compared to when they apologize at the end (3.67).

29%
higher CSAT when associates use action- or resolution-related language during a conversation (4.52 vs 3.5).

37%
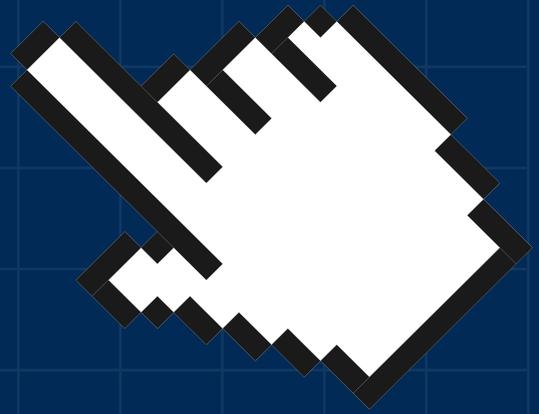of associates feel neutral or disagree with the idea that customers want empathy over a quick solution.

Source: TTEC research

REPORT

Is empathy overrated? Rethinking empathy's ROI in the contact center in the AI age

Trend 5

STUCK IN THE PAST:

Economic swings, fraud threats, and workforce volatility are so unpredictable that brands are reactive instead of proactive.

THE FUTURE,
UNLOCKED

Resilience defines the future of CX

The world isn't becoming less complicated anytime soon.

Tomorrow's CX leaders are building adaptable systems and empowered teams that thrive under pressure.

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Trend 5

Brands that thrive aren't reactive – they're agile. Reacting costs time, money, and headaches. The solution? Invest in technology and processes that let you act quickly, anticipate challenges, and pivot seamlessly, all without sacrificing CX.

The CX landscape is expanding, and global opportunities abound. Overcome limited internal bandwidth by tapping into offshore hubs like South Africa, Colombia, the Philippines, and India that offer onshore-level CX quality at up to 60% cost savings. The work-at-home revolution also opens access to a global labor pool, letting you scale faster and smarter.

Set your teams up for success with AI-powered insights. Understand customer habits, spot patterns, and identify roadblocks in real time.

Leverage intelligent automation to cut costs and elevate experiences. From fraud prevention to operational efficiency, proactive automation solves problems before they happen – instead of cleaning up after them.

87%

of executives believe resiliency helps prepare for unforeseen challenges, but only 47% consider their company very resilient

Source: SAS

CASE STUDY

Fraud-fighting combination of AI + experts reduce chargebacks by 90%

LEAD THE
NEW ERA OF CX

Winning CX will look different in 2026 and beyond. Agile, future-focused brands will set the pace while those stuck in the past will be left behind.

TTEC can help you move confidently into what's next, with the technology, talent, and strategy to deliver CX that exceeds modern expectations.

Let's embrace the future of CX together.

ABOUT TTEC

We are TTEC (NASDAQ: TTEC). The architects and builders of next-generation customer experiences. For over four decades, we've been shaping and redefining what it means to connect brands with their customers: Seamlessly, intelligently, and with lasting impact. We partner with the world's most iconic and disruptive companies to design and deliver AI-powered, digital-first experiences that don't just serve customers, but exceed their expectations. Every interaction. Every touchpoint. Every time.

TTEC Engage is our front-line engine delivering AI-enabled services that include customer engagement, acquisition, tech support, fraud prevention, back-office and more. Our TTEC Digital division builds the future of CX, crafting omnichannel platforms, CRM solutions, AI-driven insights and analytics that power smarter, more personal engagements. Operating across six continents, we fuse technology and human empathy to turn challenges into opportunities, interactions into relationships, and brands into legends. Bringing humanity to business is our purpose. Excellence is our standard. And the results? Happy customers. Stronger businesses. Unstoppable growth.

Join us. Experience the bold CX revolution at TTEC.com