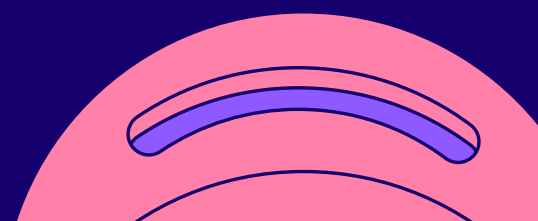
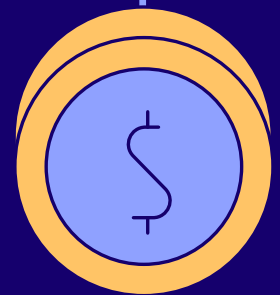
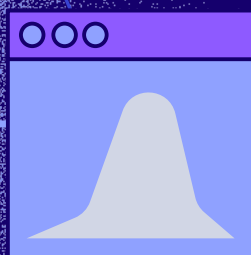
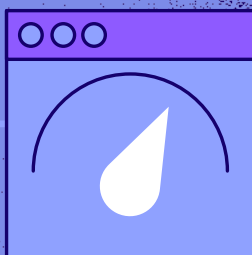


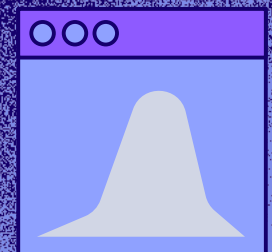
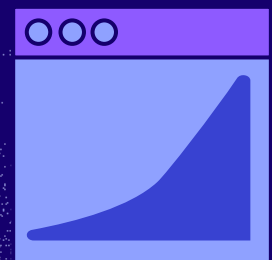
# Mastering AI Technology for Customer Operations in 2021

How AI and Machine Learning  
lowers operational costs  
and empowers customer  
support teams



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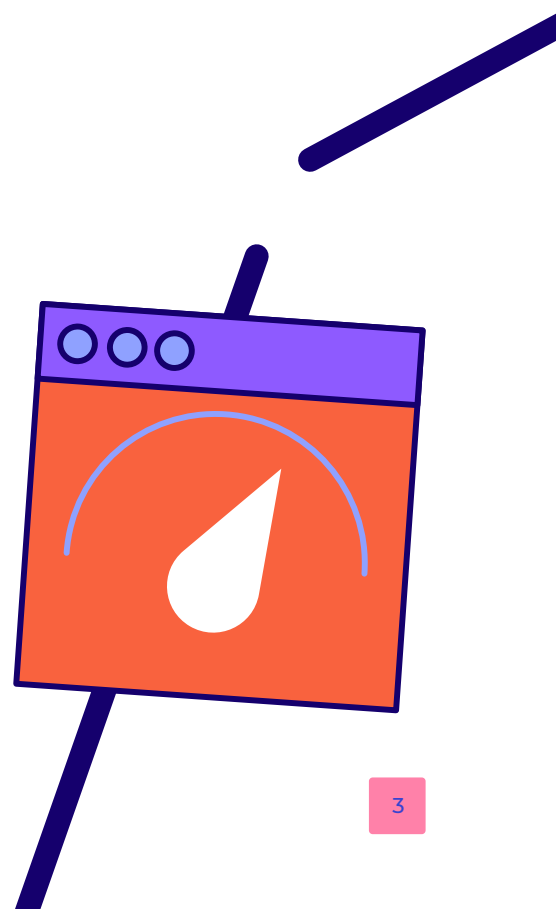
# Introduction

**Unpredictable** is the best word for 2020. Even though entire organizations were affected by the global pandemic, customer service operations often felt the pressure most directly. All the while, customer expectations remained sky-high. In fact, nearly [three-quarters](#) of customer experience stakeholders believed these expectations increased in 2020.

Customers in 2020 sought out empathy as they coped with the stress of uncertain health, caregiving, job circumstances and much more. These factors created surges in demand for sectors like global travel and [cross-border eCommerce](#), where lean teams faced an influx of global customer requests across multiple languages.

Through it all, customer service teams were still held to the same standards – expected to reduce first response times (FRTs), increase customer satisfaction (CSAT) scores and perform well on other common KPIs. The key difference: 2020 was a pressure test for doing more with less.

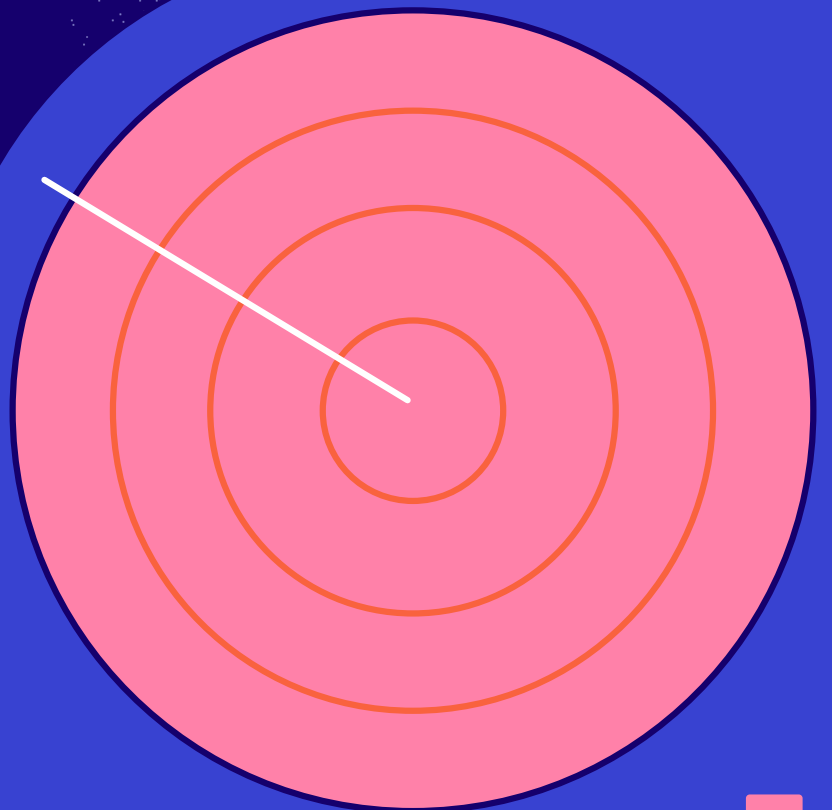
This e-book will focus on the practical ways that advancements in customer service technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) will help companies around the globe improve customer experience while lowering operational costs in 2021 and beyond.



# AI trends in customer service

The bright side of 2020's uncertainty is that customer service teams emerged more resilient and resourceful than ever before. Unique uses of AI technology have helped to write a new playbook for customer service operations in 2021. These solutions have paved the way for a more efficient experience for customers and agents alike.

Here are just a few of the key AI trends that aren't going anywhere.



# From outsourcing to AI adoption

In the past, higher customer service demand often meant hiring a larger staff. This is especially true of multilingual customer support. We've seen different approaches to making multilingual support work, from business process outsourcing (BPO) to hiring local agents in desirable markets. Often teams will combine a mixture of native speakers, outsourcing (whether offshore, nearshore, or onshore), and translation tools. As many teams have found, this approach requires the right level of attention to detail and fluency to master.

In 2020, however, many organizations dealt with office closures and many other unexpected human resource constraints. In these situations, AI and machine

translation (MT) have helped customer service teams expand their multilingual capabilities—and fast.

The biggest advantage of machine translation in customer service is the ability to maintain, and often lower, operational costs. Using AI, customer service teams can quickly scale their operations to more markets – even those with a low volume of customer inquiries. By offering automated, high-quality translations, organizations are free to hire agents who are qualified for the job without the native language skills. This opens doors to operation across more time zones and degrees of industry knowledge.



## CASE STUDY

# logitech

## Multilingual AI customer support in action

The surge in demand during a global pandemic for flexible remote and hybrid work solutions has skyrocketed **Logitech's** growth in 2020. To support a 300% increase in ticket volume, the Logitech team had to think fast about meeting its global customers' needs.

Luckily, that meant they had already created a scalable multilingual infrastructure with MT technology.

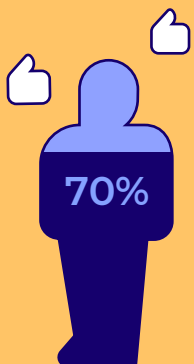
Logitech was able to quickly increase staffing by 45 percent, hiring experts rather than native-language agents. Using Unbabel, they strategically increased the existing team's efficiency in order to absorb the extra demand. As a result, they quickly handled the 300% increase in call volume, **raised NPS scores by 58 points, and cut ticket response times to 12 hours vs. 48 hours with native speakers.**

# Getting comfortable with self-service

Many types of AI and ML technologies also empower higher quality self-service opportunities, lowering the demand on customer service agents. Driven out of their routines, many customers that shifted from in-person shopping to online channels were more dependent upon digital self-service channels in 2020.

[Boston Consulting Group](#) found that the use of web and app self-service tools has increased by 20% during the pandemic. Retail banking is just one industry where first-time users surged: Nearly a quarter of U.S. consumers used their bank's digital self-service tools for the first time during the lockdown. [Gartner](#) reported that 82 percent of customer service leaders prioritized digital self-service in 2020 to handle increased service requests. When customer service agents are using the same tools that their customers access for self-service, the potential

grows even more. Rep-facing technology can **increase agent productivity by up to 20%** and increase **CSAT by 11%**, while decreasing customer effort.



## Did you know?

[Gartner predicts](#) that **70% of customer interactions** will involve emerging technologies including machine learning applications, chatbots and mobile messaging by 2022.

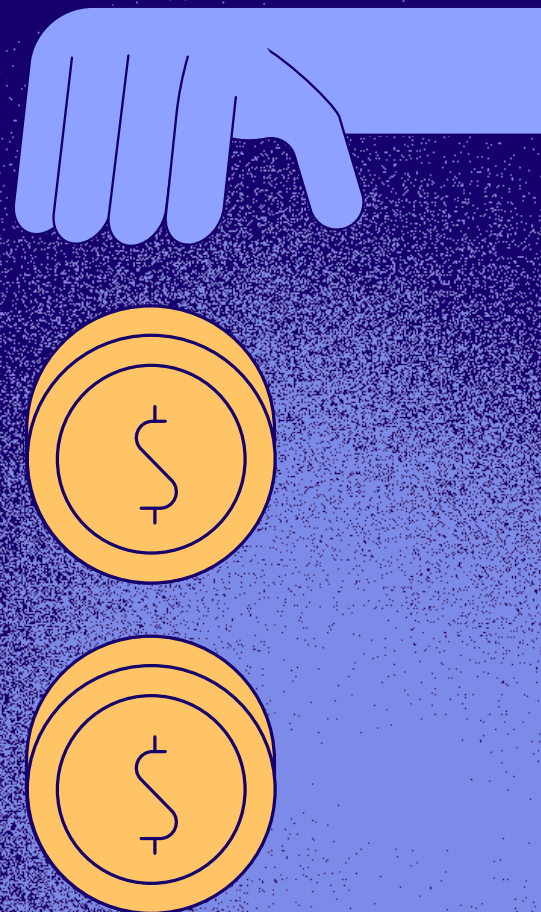
That's **up from just 15% of interactions in 2018.**

# A technology playbook for 2021 (and the next five years)

Now that we've looked at the trends that aren't going anywhere, it's time to get practical. Which tools should you invest in to make the customer support team's jobs easier and more efficient? What technologies will continue to pay off far into the future.

Many of these investments will focus on two key areas within customer operations: **lowering operational costs and empowering agents.**

Let's explore both.



# Lowering operational costs for customer experience centers

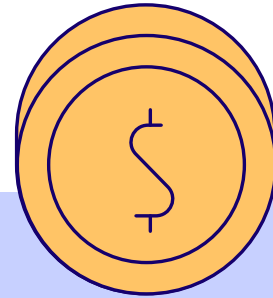
Technology is making customer service agents more efficient, bringing operational costs down while lifting CSAT scores. Here are two proven approaches to add to your strategy for 2021.

## Machine-human hybrid translation

Many global organizations are augmenting machine translation with human translators to improve the customer experience. This technology lays the groundwork for great multilingual customer support, arming specialized agents with high-quality, native language support capabilities. Integrating this AI-powered translation layer into existing customer experience tools, such as Zendesk, makes the experience seamless for agents—regardless of where in the world they're working.

These organizations will take this excellence in multilingual customer support a step further by establishing language operations practices. Think of language operations as a way to roll out and scale multilingual capabilities across every function in the business, while keeping in mind the cultural differences and nuances of each market.

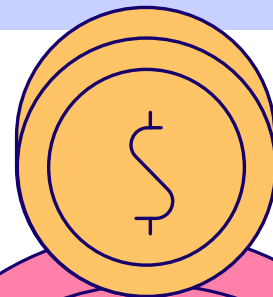
Despite the many promises of AI, it's still crucial that humans remain highly involved with language-based AI systems.



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

**What is machine-human hybrid translation?** AI technology that combines the efficiency of machine translation with human translator quality.

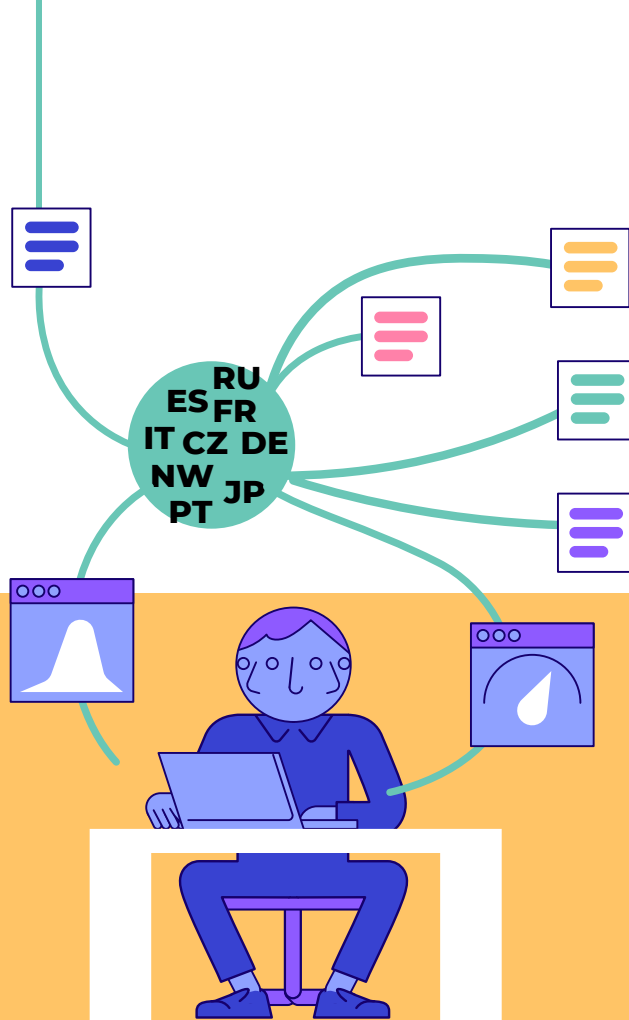
**How does it lower costs?** It allows teams to operate with fewer native-speaking agents while still providing high-quality service, even in low-volume markets.





The [human-in-the-loop](#) approach to AI-powered machine translation brings much-needed context to customer service conversations.

While AI can handle the translation element with [increasing accuracy](#), humans remain responsible for



## Language Operations (n):

A holistic approach to multilingual communication, giving organizations transparency and control over every aspect of language across their business.

picking up the nuances in language. Translators can identify small adjustments that make all of the difference to the customer, such as tone and formality. These changes, when fed back into the system, also fine-tune the machine's algorithm, so it becomes more accurate over time.

Any metrics-driven customer service team knows the value of analytics. Visibility into KPIs such as CSAT scores, FRTs, and more can help demonstrate the positive impact of machine translation on the overall customer experience. Beyond these KPIs



### CASE STUDIES



#### Scaling customer service without increasing overhead

Facing a surge of multilingual customer support inquiries, [Monese](#) turned to Unbabel to scale their service across borders without radically increasing their support staff. Incorporating Unbabel's machine translation layer allowed Monese to scale to 20 languages and increase CSAT by 10%.

alone, customer service teams should look to visualize translation data by country, service line and channel to make decisions about scaling service, entering new markets and broadening customer operations. Detailed metrics can also help teams analyze and improve machine translation accuracy over time.



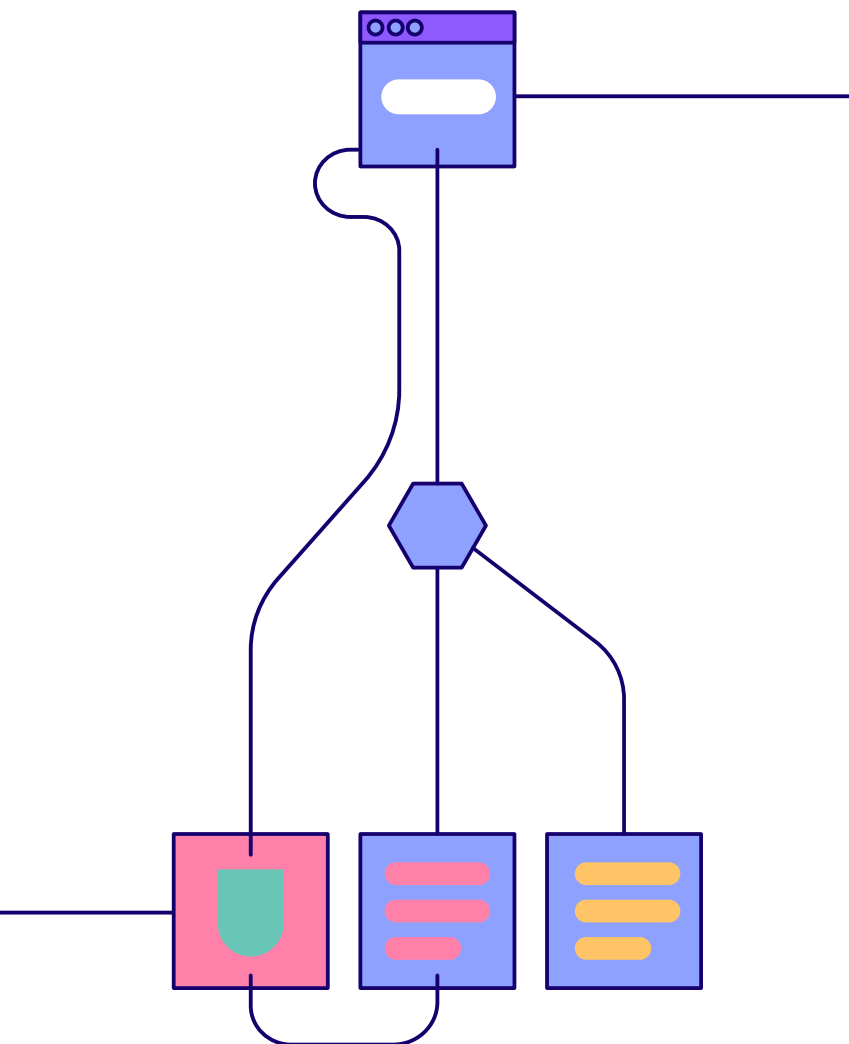
## CASE STUDIES



### Improving CSAT while lowering operational costs

As the #1 global search engine for travel, successful multilingual support is huge for [Skyscanner](#).

Incorporating Unbabel's machine translation layer into the company's customer experience initiative allowed Skyscanner to boost core KPIs while still lowering operational costs. And it took off fast, with **CSAT scores soaring by more than 22%**!



# Customer self-service

Intelligent self-service automation has helped many organizations remain agile during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When it comes to self-service, which methods are most effective today?

Help centers and knowledge centers are a mainstay within many companies because they help their customers answer their own questions. Forrester found 76% of customers prefer self-service to alternatives like email or phone support. These help centers can be [data-driven and agile](#).

Comprehensive, well-organized sections can be updated and improved based on customers' most frequently searched terms. Organizations can also collect data on which languages are most frequently searched on the site, and create [multilingual FAQs](#) based on the most popular languages. Hybrid machine-human translation, as covered above, can help teams translate their FAQs into more languages with ease and efficiency. Data-driven help centers use automation to serve up the most relevant articles to customers in their native languages.



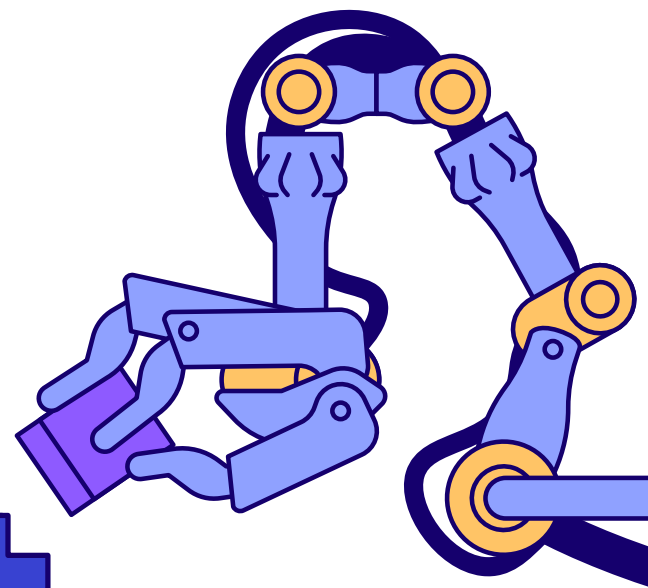
## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### What is customer self-service?

Enabling customers to help themselves resolve common or simple inquiries digitally, without getting an agent involved.

### How does it lower costs?

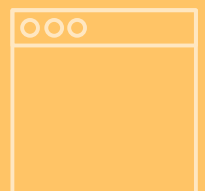
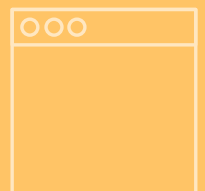
[Gartner estimates](#) that time-consuming live customer service calls cost **80 to 100 times more than a fully self-service fix**. When AI is used to improve the self-service experience, KPIs can remain high (and often improve).



## Best Practices

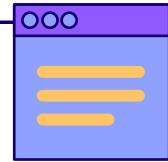
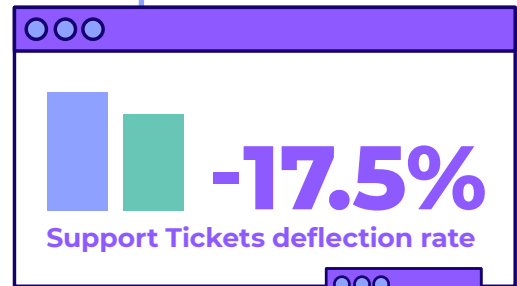
# How to lead customers to successful self-service

- 1** Remember that FAQs stands for “frequently asked questions.” Rather than trying to guess which questions are asked most frequently, take an inventory of recent inquiries or audit past support tickets
- 2** Choose the right name! From FAQs, to a Help Center or a Knowledge Base, ensure it works for your brand and your SEO.
- 3** Give honest, to-the-point answers. As [Content Marketing Institute](#) puts it, FAQs are not the place to upsell.
- 4** Be wary of jargon, industry terms and technical knowledge that will further confuse a wayward customer.
- 5** Speak your customers’ language—literally. Provide multilingual support that empowers self-service.
- 6** Don’t forget to keep the answers up-to-date.
- 7** Feature your FAQs prominently in your website’s navigation. You can even use FAQs as an opportunity to rank for SEO keywords, driving customers to other relevant parts of your website.



Many organizations have used their multilingual FAQs or knowledge bases to increase operational efficiency, while improving the customer experience. For example, the leading social map app [Zenly](#) found that they were able to **reduce their projected vs. actual support tickets, or deflection rate, by 17.5%**. The team used Unbabel for Zendesk Guide to create a multilingual support center, and relied on Unbabel's hybrid human-machine translation to reduce FRT by more than 60%.

.....



We have users pass through the help center before sending tickets. Once we had articles in all the languages, we noticed ticket numbers really went down.

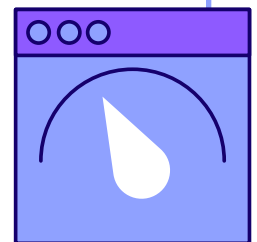
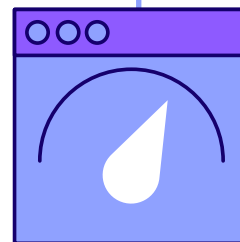
Users were finding their answer in the help center.

That was a big game changer for us.”

Bryan Feeney, Customer Support Manager, Zenly

## How can organizations get ahead of these trends?

Let's look at the technology available that's allowing customer experience leaders to provide an elite experience while lowering operational cost.



## Best Practices

# 6 customer service AI tools for the future

**1**

### Multilingual Machine Translation

AI powers the translations, while humans provide valuable context to the interaction.

**2**

### Smarter Ticket Sorting

AI is used to auto-triage customer cases to agents with the right skill set.

**3**

### Rapid Recommended Responses

Assistive AI can surface information and suggest responses that help agents resolve cases faster and with enhanced precision.

**4**

### AI Agent Assistants

Even when a human is managing the conversation, AI can step in as an assistant to streamline agent tasks and provide helpful context that boosts speed and efficiency.

**5**

### AI-Enabled Command Centers

AI and analytics-powered customer command centers use data to detect surges in demand and align agent supply and attention to critical areas.

**6**

### Proactive In-App Communications

AI tools can sense when a user is hitting a dead end or encountering a holdup and can send proactive, in-app guidance to resolve issues in-the-moment, cutting down on support tickets.

# Empowering customer experience agents

Incorporating AI technology and launching a language operations function is all about empowering customer service agents to do more with less.

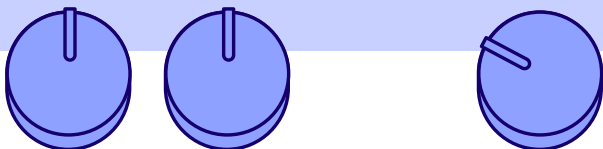
While successful customer experiences are a win, customer operations leaders also want to [reduce staff turnover](#) and improve overall efficiency within their teams.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### What do we mean by an “empowered” customer experience or customer service?

- Technology and tools like the ones mentioned below are improving agent efficiency
- Customer operations KPIs are improving: higher CSAT, quicker FRTs, reduced agent churn
- Agents feel connected to the team – whether or not they are remote
- Empathy and connection is prioritized within customer interactions



## Improving agent collaboration

In 2020, many customer operations centers learned that agent success tools can complement both in-person and remote workflows. Collaboration within the customer operations team is key. The collaborative nature of customer service workflows requires agent participation to be successful.

Service providers and similar organizations that require deep product knowledge rely heavily on agent collaboration. For example, [T-Mobile](#) found that enabling reps to tap into one another’s expertise led to 50% better team performance. To contrast, reps that stuck to the script and only sought out answers from management limited collaboration—to the team’s detriment.

Tools that enhance agent collaboration are popular among customer service managers. These platforms not only broaden each individual agent’s knowledge base, but they also provide opportunities for learning. Peer-to-peer chat can help correct any misinformation before it becomes a quality assurance (QA) or customer-facing issue.

## Creating empathetic connections

Another major lesson 2020 taught us is the need for empathetic connections with customers. In many ways, online channels were the singular point of interaction for customers, many of whom are experiencing financial and emotional distress. Agents were tasked with rising to the occasion by staying empathetic and personal in their interactions, and going above and beyond to demonstrate care for their customers.

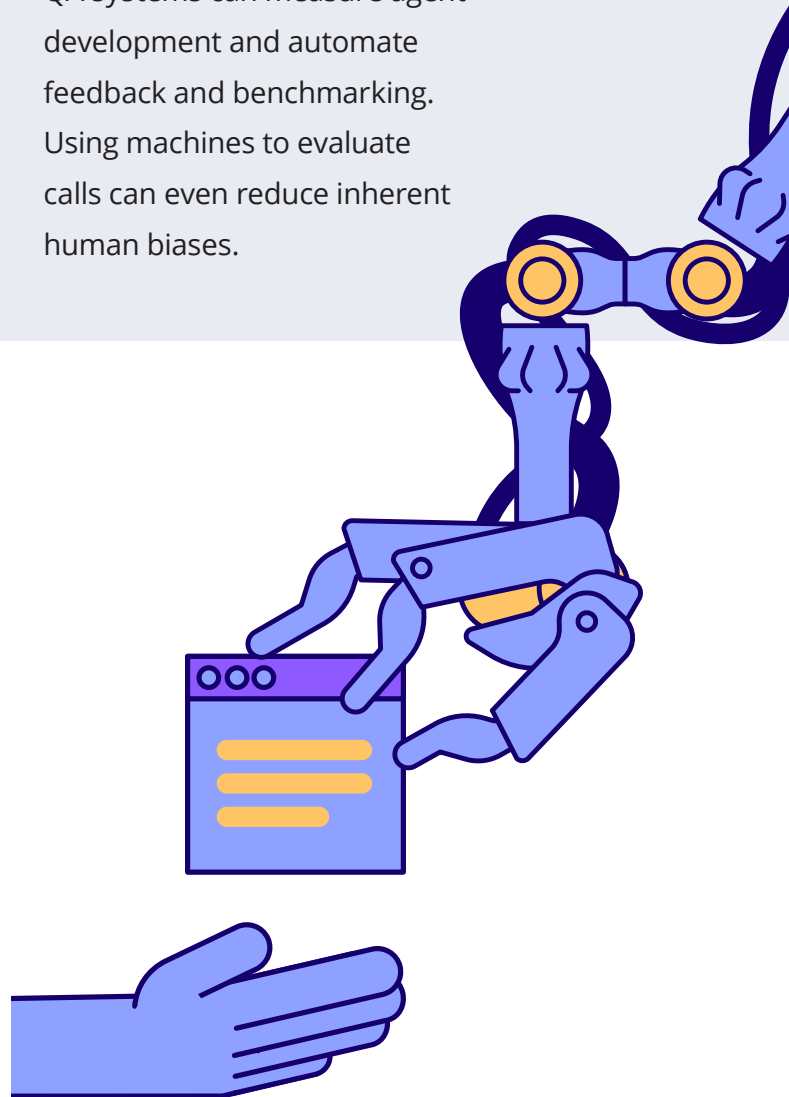
One simple, yet essential, way to show empathy is to speak to customers in their native language. Global businesses serve a diverse set of customers who speak different languages, come from different countries and regions, and have different cultural contexts. That's where hybrid human-machine translation, as discussed above, can help the most.

Every one of the more than [6,900 distinct languages](#) spoken around the world is unique, and cultural nuances can vary widely. Understanding these factors when providing customer service can lead to priceless loyalty from customers in new or underserved markets. Communicating in a customer's native language expresses your company's dedication to them, leading to an authentic customer experience and creating an opportunity to build and nurture trust.

## Amping up call center quality assurance with AI

### Customer experience excellence means putting quality ahead of cost. Right?

**Not necessarily.** AI helps customer operations teams pull ahead by improving quality while lowering operational costs. AI can offer agent or team-specific performance and QA insights that help decision-makers augment or optimize the team as needed. AI-powered QA systems can measure agent development and automate feedback and benchmarking. Using machines to evaluate calls can even reduce inherent human biases.





# Quick tips for investing in AI

1

## Get proactive

According to [Gartner, Inc.](#), by 2023, 30 percent of organizations will deliver proactive customer service using AI, process orchestration, and continuous intelligence. In other words, use AI and automation tools to get out ahead of potential problems, rather than responding only to inbound customer requests.

2

## Invest in partners with a future focus

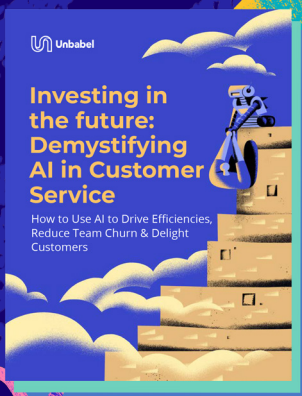
Many technology firms and service providers focus on immediate needs, and don't have an eye toward the future of customer service. Look for vendors and partners that

can direct you on which areas of AI and automation are most strategic for your business.

3

## Look to peers and industry leaders for guidance

What are your most successful peers doing? What do industry leaders and analyst firms recommend investing in? Case studies and industry reports in customer service are well-documented and could be valuable to your team to map your own AI strategy.



Learn more in our e-book

## Investing in the Future: Demystifying AI in Customer Service



[Read Now](#)

# Preparing your customer operations for what's next

The playbook for successful customer operations teams in 2021 can carry far into the future.

Although this year still holds some uncertainty, the right proactive strategies can help organizations weather further unpredictable events on the horizon.

A combination of AI and self-service technologies present big opportunities for customer operations teams to lower operational costs, while empowering their agents to be successful. AI-powered solutions offer the foundation for customer service leaders to establish a meaningful, multilingual support presence for their customers for years to come.



**Want to learn more about empowering your agents with Unbabel's scalable, AI-powered machine translation layer?**



**Talk to us**

Unbabel enables enterprises to offer seamless global support in any channel, and in any language.

The company's AI-powered language operations platform combines the speed of machine translation with the polish of native-speaking editors, enabling enterprises to grow and build customer trust in every corner of the world.



**Unbabel** Support, translated.

