



FORRESTER®

# Redefine Speed In Your Customer Service Strategy

Exploring The Strategic Building Blocks Of Enabling Fast Customer Service For Your Organization

[Get started →](#)

FORRESTER OPPORTUNITY SNAPSHOT: A CUSTOM STUDY COMMISSIONED BY FRESHWORKS | MAY 2021

## Customer Service Must Take Center Stage For Effective Speed And Engagement

The digital-only channels of engagement since the pandemic have redefined the expectations of good customer experience (CX).

Customers require brand experiences to be further personalized, interactive, and fast, especially as they move between digital and agent-assisted interactions. This requires organizations to focus on strategically transforming their customer service experience, with speed as a front-and-center capability to address customer needs.

To understand the changing state of customer service, Freshworks commissioned Forrester Consulting to conduct a custom study with 325 customer service decision-makers. Our key finding is that organizations still have work to do to meet customer expectations for speed and experience.

### Key Findings



83% of decision-makers agree or strongly agree their organizations view customer service as a strategically important function.



41% of decision-makers who consider CX a critical priority want to specifically improve speed of customer service.



40% of customer service decision-makers consider customer satisfaction (CSAT) scores as their most commonly used customer service metric with a further 23% considering it their beacon metric of CX measurement.

## Customer Service Speed And Experience Impact The Top Line

Forrester's research shows customer service is among the most important levers of great CX.<sup>1</sup> When customers have a good experience with a firm, their intentions to stay with a brand longer, buy more from that brand, and recommend that brand all increase, directly impacting an organization's revenue.<sup>2</sup>

Speed of customer service is a key driver of effective CX. Most (66%) customers agree that valuing their time is the most important factor in good customer service.<sup>3</sup> Customers want accurate, relevant, and complete answers to their questions upon first contact with a company, and if they can't find a quick answer, 47% of US online adults say they will abandon their online purchases.<sup>4</sup>



# 66%

US consumers agree that valuing their time is the most important thing a company can do to provide them with good online customer service.<sup>5</sup>

# 47%

US online adults say they will abandon their online purchase if they can't find a quick answer to their question.<sup>6</sup>



## Customers Expect Fast And Contextualized Customer Service

Customer service decision-makers acknowledge that customer service strategy requires a focus on enhancing digital capabilities and enabling faster service. A significant 43% of respondents consider improving digital CX a top priority while 67% want to improve their overall CX. Within CX-focused decision-makers, 41% are specifically looking to increase the speed of customer service. This is very much defined by their understanding of the customer, as 42% agree customers now expect faster customer service and 40% expect brands to solve their problems in their channels of choice. To address these customer expectations, business leaders intend to prioritize speed and technology and build omnichannel capabilities that ensure positive, context-rich, and personalized customer service.

### “In what ways have your customer service expectations changed over the last 12 months?”



## Despite Its Strategic Importance, Firms See Customer Service As A Cost Center

The strategic importance of customer service is clear, but decision-makers must evolve their perceptions of the function more holistically. Most (83%) customer service decision-makers say their organizations view customer service as a strategically important function, and 84% agree their organizations' executive leadership regularly meets with customer service leadership. Despite this, 66% say their firms view customer service as a cost center.

Customer service leaders must prove they're more than a cost center — that they add to their organizations' growth and profit through increased customer loyalty, retention, and support for prospective customers with presales requests. Over the last 12 months, 31% of customer service decision-makers have seen an increase in service requests related to presales support, presenting a strategic opportunity for customer service leaders.

**“Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your organization.”**

Showing “Agree” + “Strongly agree”

My organization's executives regularly meet with customer service leadership

**84%**

My organization views customer service as a strategically important function

**83%**

My organization views customer service as a cost center

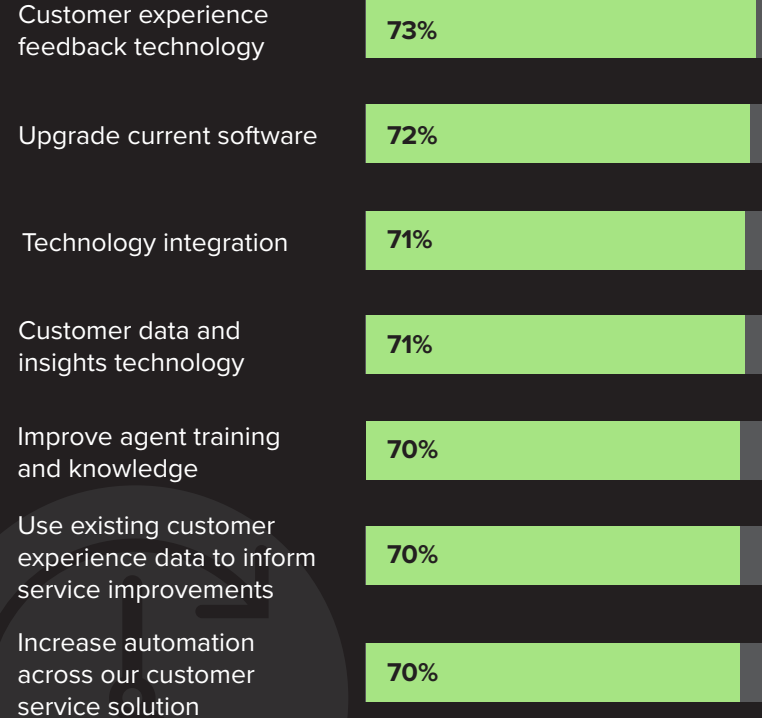
**66%**

## Strategic Investments Should Focus On Speed And Experience For Customer Service Impact

Customer service decision-makers are focused on improving digital CX and increasing the speed of customer service, but they face issues in achieving these goals. Customer service teams are burdened by a lack of appropriate technology for the job and a lack of strategic direction in customer service efforts and initiatives.

The lack of strategic direction is clear. When discussing investments over the next 12 months, customer service decision-makers cite numerous investments that are broad and unfocused. Customer service professionals should focus investments on areas that will help achieve their customer service goals and meet customer expectations of increased speed of service and response.

**“To what extent is your organization planning to invest in the following to address your customer service needs in the near term?”**



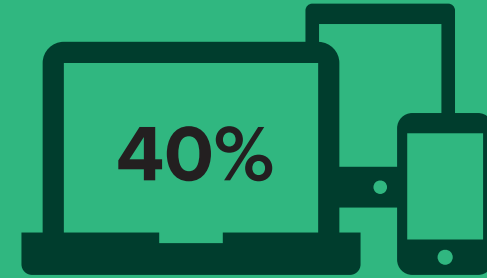
## Organizations Need To Build Contextual Cross-Channel Engagement

When identifying top priorities, customer service decision-makers rank creating a seamless omnichannel experience the lowest. Companies simply can't support customers across channels with the right context and touchpoints: 23% of customer service decision-makers can't see a customer's past interaction with their service channels, and 40% say customers expect them to be able to solve their problems within their channels of choice.

An omnichannel approach to customer service enables a consistent CX across channels and requires visibility into customers' complete history regardless of the channel they're requesting service through. The ability to solve a problem in a customer's channel of choice means they don't need to switch channels and take more time to reach an outcome. If they must switch, having visibility of past interactions across channels can aid the speed of resolution.

### “How have your customer service expectations changed in the last 12 months?”

Customers expect my company to solve problems in their channel of choice



Customers expect my agents to know who they are and the context of their query immediately

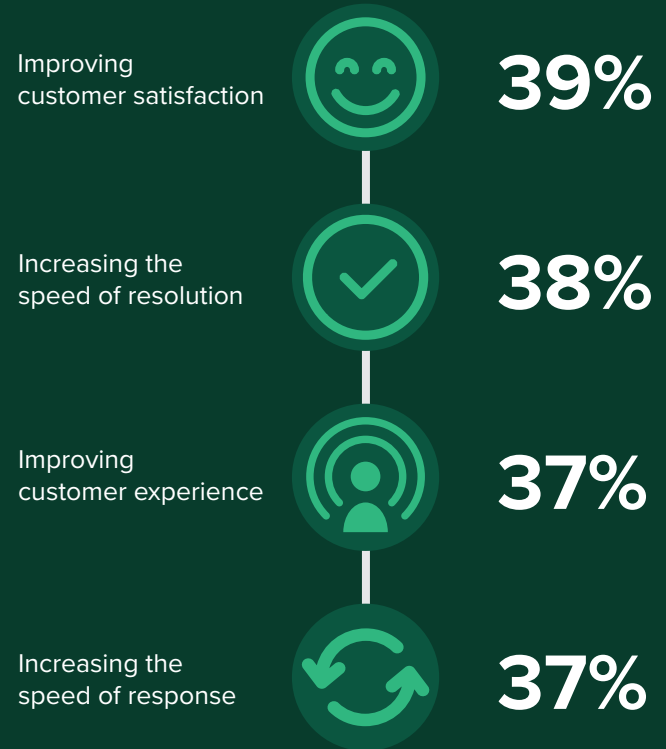
38%

## Some Organizations Will Focus On Speed And Experience Of Customer Service In The Near Term, But More Need To Follow

The top near-terms goals for customer service decision-makers are improving customer satisfaction (39%), improving CX (37%), and increasing the speed of resolution (38%) and response (37%), but more organizations must shift their focus to better meet customer expectations.

Near-term investments reflect this and gravitate toward improving speed and customer service quality. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of customer service decision-makers plan to invest in CX feedback technology, 70% in increasing automation, and 65% in chatbots. Successful deployments of automation and AI technologies such as chatbots can drive benefits for customers and organizations including operational efficiencies, time savings, better CX, and cost savings.

### “Which of the following describe the customer service goals you plan to achieve in the near term?”



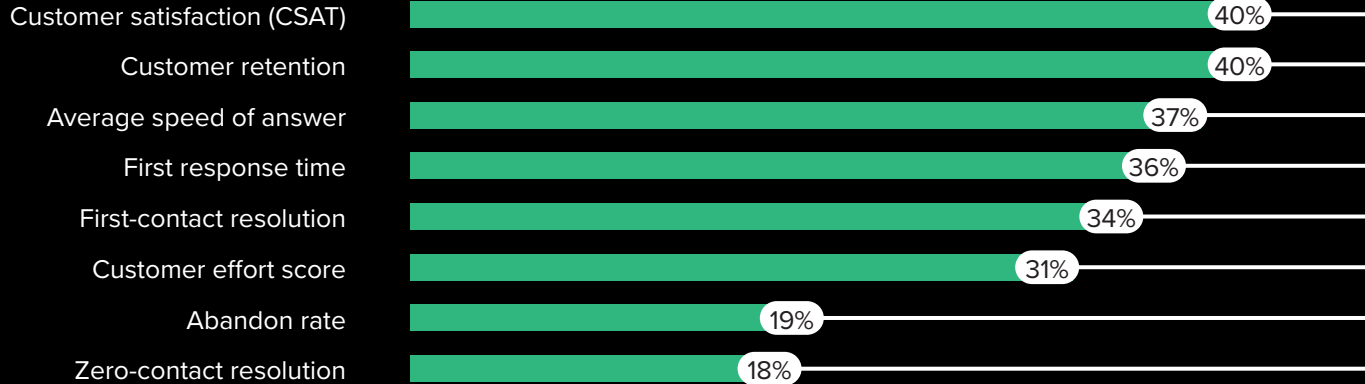


## Organizations Need To Align Metrics To Customer Expectations For Speed And Channel Resolution

The metrics deployed by customer service firms are broad given the need to balance operational and strategic outcomes. Forty percent of customer service decision-makers say customer satisfaction (CSAT) scores are their most commonly used customer service metric; 23% consider it their beacon metric of CX measurement. While the use of CSAT indicates firms are becoming more customer-centric, CSAT doesn't always provide actionable insights into the drivers of customer satisfaction.

To stay ahead of customer expectations on speed and effective service, firms must prioritize more actionable metrics such as first-contact resolution and zero-contact resolution. In fact, 35% of decision-makers who prioritize speedy customer service are expanding their metrics beyond customer satisfaction to consider average handling time as well.

**“What metrics does your organization currently use to define customer service performance?”**



## Conclusion

As customers expectations for speed and omnichannel service increase, customer service leaders must identify what's holding them back and invest strategically in the areas that will drive the most impact for their customers and their organization.

A comprehensive channel strategy is key to customer satisfaction and speed — and means effectively solving problems in customers' preferred channels. If switching channels is required, ensure the right data is captured to ensure agents can move to resolution at speed.

To stay ahead of customer expectations on speed and effective service, firms must prioritize more actionable metrics such as first-contact and zero-contact resolution. Enabling solutions such as live chat, knowledge base, and chatbots that ease and speed up customer service will help in addressing these metrics and outcomes.

### Project Director:

Sruti Pegatraju,  
Senior Market Impact Consultant

Dylan McKendry,  
Market Impact Consultant

### Contributing Research:

Forrester's Application  
Development & Delivery  
research group

## Methodology

This Opportunity Snapshot was commissioned by Freshworks. To create this profile, Forrester Consulting supplemented this research with custom survey questions asked of customer service decision-makers. The custom survey began and was completed in March 2021.

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Source: “Customer Service Shines Through The Crisis,” Forrester Research, Inc., January 19, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>Source: “Why And How To Lead A CX Transformation,” Forrester Research, Inc., January 27, 2021.

<sup>3</sup>Source: “2018 Customer Service Trends: How Operations Become Faster, Cheaper — And Yet, More Human,” Forrester Research, Inc., January 2018.

<sup>4</sup>Source: “How To Modernize Digital Customer Self-Service,” Forrester Research, Inc., May 23, 2019.

<sup>5</sup>Source: “2018 Customer Service Trends: How Operations Become Faster, Cheaper — And Yet, More Human,” Forrester Research, Inc., January 24, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>Source: “How To Modernize Digital Customer Self-Service,” Forrester Research, Inc., May 23, 2019.

### ABOUT FORRESTER CONSULTING

Forrester Consulting provides independent and objective research-based consulting to help leaders succeed in their organizations. Ranging in scope from a short strategy session to custom projects, Forrester’s Consulting services connect you directly with research analysts who apply expert insight to your specific business challenges. For more information, visit [forrester.com/consulting](https://forrester.com/consulting).

© Forrester Research, Inc. All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction is strictly prohibited. Information is based on best available resources. Opinions reflect judgment at the time and are subject to change. Forrester®, Technographics®, Forrester Wave, RoleView, TechRadar, and Total Economic Impact are trademarks of Forrester Research, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective companies. For additional information, go to [forrester.com](https://forrester.com). [E-51249]

## Demographics

### GEOGRAPHY

50% United States

17% Germany

17% France

16% United Kingdom

### COMPANY SIZE

23% 250 to 499 employees

29% 500 to 999 employees

31% 1,000 to 4,999 employees

17% 5,000 to 9,999 employees

### RESPONDENT DEPARTMENT

74% IT/digital

16% Customer service

8% Customer experience

3% Customer success

### RESPONSIBLE FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

63% Final decision-maker

29% Part of the decision-making team

8% Influence decisions



FORRESTER®