

Build A Strong GenAI Foundation To Maximize AI Agent Potential

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Executive Summary

Generative AI (genAI) is rapidly evolving from a set of technologies and techniques, like large language models that generate new content, into AI agents or AI systems that are trained to act *on behalf of* an enterprise or individual. These genAI-powered conversational AI agents (“AI agents”) leverage genAI to communicate directly with end customers and interact with data or other systems autonomously as a human would. GenAI-powered conversational agents also have an action component: They combine contextual understanding with execution.

In this rapidly evolving ecosystem, it’s critical for organizations to build their AI agents on strong genAI foundations: They must first walk by establishing genAI basics before their AI agents can run. However, more than two years after the dawn of genAI, many still struggle to solidify their strategy and approaches for external client-facing use cases, leading to future AI agent implementation struggles.

In March 2025, Meta commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate genAI use in two-way customer communication and the current state of AI agent implementation. Forrester conducted two global online surveys across North America, APAC, and Latin America to explore this topic: one targeting 721 consumers 18 years or older who have made an online purchase and the other targeting 1,191 director-level or above decision-makers who are involved in their organization’s communication strategy and have implemented genAI.



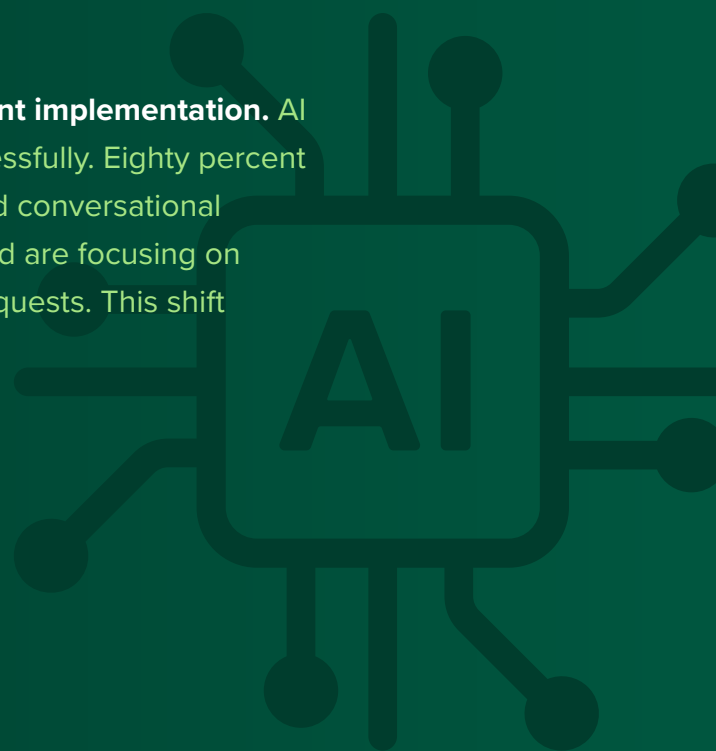
Key Findings

Consumers and brands are increasing their interest and investment in genAI-powered communication. Organizations are scaling genAI programs across multiple channels, focusing primarily on social media, webchat, and messaging apps, which are often consumers' preferred communication channels.

However, current genAI experiences fall short of expectations. Although 74% of surveyed consumers are comfortable interacting with genAI chatbots, most rate these interactions as below average. Brands also struggle to optimize genAI implementations due to security, data quality, and privacy concerns.

Despite challenges, there is excitement for genAI's promise. More than 70% of surveyed decision-makers said that maximizing genAI for two-way customer communications is a differentiator that will help drive improved customer understanding. Consumers who use genAI daily are more likely to rate their experiences more favorably, suggesting that increased exposure may eventually lead to increased satisfaction with business genAI experiences.

A strong genAI foundation is imperative for AI agent implementation. AI agents need genAI to augment human agents successfully. Eighty percent of surveyed decision-makers believe genAI-powered conversational AI agents will revolutionize customer interactions and are focusing on implementing AI agents to help automate routine requests. This shift allows human agents to focus on higher-order tasks.



Brands Are Investing In GenAI To Redefine Customer Engagement

Every year, consumers expect faster answers, easier updates, and simpler processes. To keep up, brands are continuously expanding their means of consumer interaction and offering more ways to connect. However, despite this increasing focus on two-way communication, many brands still fall short of meeting expectations.

- **Four main channels are holding steady for brands.** Today, most brands use an average of four key channels to communicate with customers: email, messaging apps, social media, and voice. Brands plan to continue using these channels over the next 12 months and leverage them to scale genAI programs (see Figure 1).
- **To meet genAI objectives, most organizations are customizing existing models.** Instead of building their own models, most respondents noted that their organization has adopted and customized an in-market model using internal resources. This allows them to test new use cases for their genAI models quickly and include their own parameters and guardrails.

64%

of respondents noted their organization is fine-tuning an existing genAI model in-house.

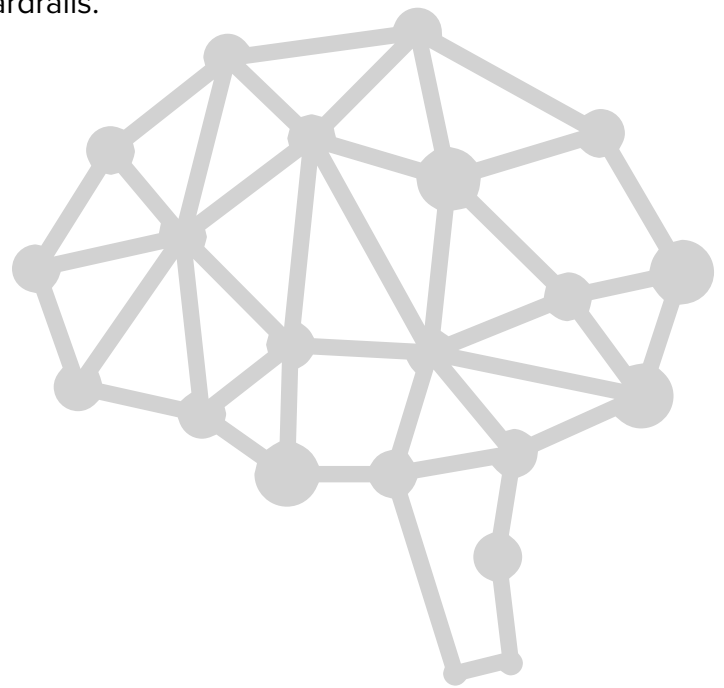
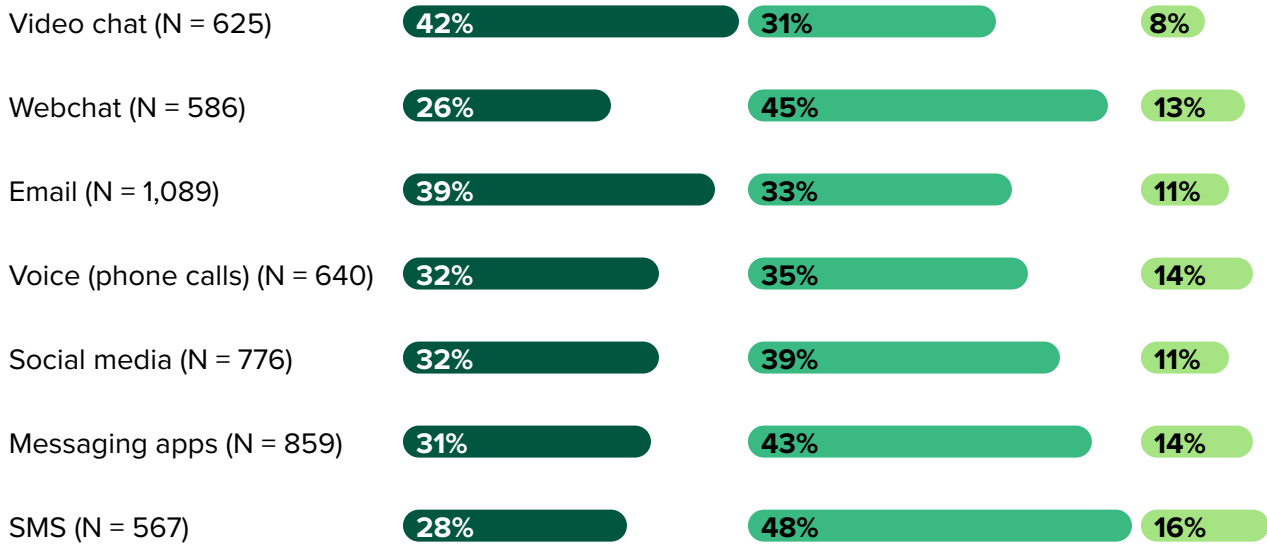


FIGURE 1

“Thinking of all of the channels you use to interact with your customers today, how integrated is genAI into each channel?”

- **Piloting:** Using genAI for a few discrete use cases or for a limited number of users
- **Scaling:** Finding new use cases for existing genAI programs
- **Enterprisewide:** Operationalizing genAI across the entire enterprise



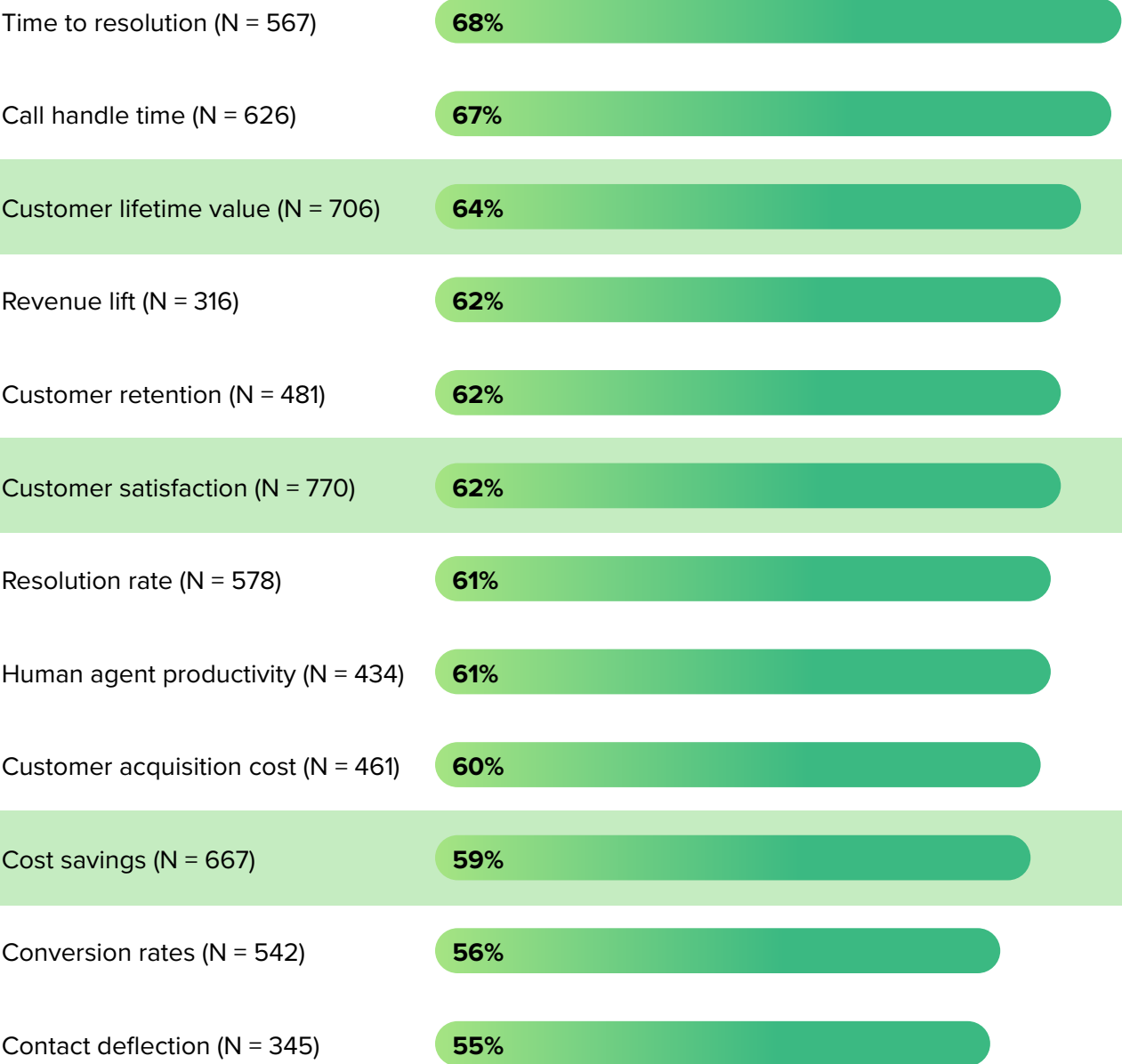
Base: Variable directors and above from North America, Latin America, EMEA, and APAC who understand their organization’s business communication strategy and how they are using AI within their marketing and sales use cases
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Meta, March 2025

- **Many current genAI efforts fail to meet established benchmarks.**
Firms have established an average of five different KPIs or benchmarks to evaluate the success of their genAI approaches for two-way customer communications. The five most common KPIs are customer satisfaction, customer lifetime value, cost savings, call handle time, and resolution rate, which highlights that most organizations approach genAI through the lens of customer service rather than customer acquisition. However, survey respondents said their organizations achieved their top KPI of customer satisfaction only about 62% of the time. They met customer lifetime value benchmarks 64% of the time and cost savings 59% of the time, indicating a need for significant improvements to genAI foundations (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2

“Of the benchmarks/KPIs that you use to evaluate genAI for two-way customer communications today, how well are you able to meet those benchmarks?”

(Showing the average percentage of time able to meet benchmarks on a scale from 0% [never] to 100% [always])



Base: Variable directors and above from North America, Latin America, EMEA, and APAC who understand their organization’s business communication strategy and how they are using AI within their marketing and sales use cases
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Meta, March 2025

Despite Enthusiasm, Current GenAI Applications Still Fall Short

Today's genAI experiences often fail to meet expectations: Surveyed consumers rated their most recent genAI chatbot experience as below average. Among US online adults who have heard of or have used genAI, only 27% agree that they trust the provided information.¹ While brands have been very bullish on genAI and are seemingly already moving on to “the next thing” (AI agents), most consumers need improved genAI experiences before more fully committing to using them.

- **Consumers' top challenges with genAI are receiving incomplete answers and an inability to answer their questions.** Nearly half of the consumer survey respondents who have interacted with a genAI chatbot or automated chat complained that it was unable to complete their request fully, and one-third noted that it couldn't answer their question and they had to be rerouted to a human. Despite these frustrations, there is hope. Those who use genAI at least daily rate their genAI-powered chatbot experiences more favorably than those who use genAI at least monthly. As consumers increase their exposure, they are more likely to have higher satisfaction when interacting with brands that use genAI.
- **Brands and consumers cite the same shortcomings.** Surveyed decision-makers acknowledged the same top challenge as consumers: Being unable to get answers to questions from genAI-powered two-way customer communications approaches and needing to be rerouted to human representatives.
- **Inaccuracy, security, and data quality concerns are the top technical challenges for brands.** More than half of respondents noted that their top technical challenges when optimizing genAI for two-way customer communications strategy were the risk of genAI output inaccuracy, security concerns, and data governance/data quality concerns (see Figure 3). Notably, too, is what they're unconcerned about: Only 15% noted that they are challenged by an inability to scale their proof of concept, which bodes well for expanding genAI use cases.

“The accuracy and relevancy of what you're talking to [customers] about in a genAI chat experience is critically important because that does frustrate them and could cause customers to opt out pretty quickly.”

PRESIDENT, RETAIL/E-COMMERCE

FIGURE 3

“What technical challenges do you have with optimizing your genAI for two-way customer communications strategy today?”



Base: 1,191 directors and above from North America, Latin America, EMEA, and APAC who understand their organization’s business communication strategy and how they are using AI within their marketing and sales use cases
Note: Multiple responses accepted

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Meta, March 2025

- **Privacy concerns top the list of challenges.** More than two-thirds of surveyed decision-makers noted that their top business challenge is their customers' ethical and privacy concerns. Opacity about large language model training data coupled with the perceived danger of leaking private and sensitive information to public models gives companies pause.
- **ROI uncertainties, cost concerns, and integration issues are also top business challenges.** Sixty-two percent of decision-makers noted that uncertain ROI is hampering their genAI strategy, and 55% noted the difficulty of integrating the new technology into their existing workflows. Businesses are investing in genAI to keep up with their competitors but have been unable to fully prove its value, leaving decision-makers worried about justifying their investment impact to executives.

“The challenges have always centered around cost when it comes to managing these two-way conversations. The staffing costs, the software costs, and the cost to resolve issues. We track and trend these metrics across several different key performance criteria. It’s becoming more costly to service customers. It takes us longer to do so. We'd like to do more automation, but it has historically been a challenge to do that reliably, so we wind up getting to this game of contact deflection. How do we avoid a conversation as opposed to encouraging one? I think those are battles of managing costs and deflecting conversation when we'd like to be in a position where we don't have to be as concerned about cost, and we can welcome more conversations with our customers in a way that is more efficient and in line with our brand identity and doesn't alienate customers.”

HEAD OF PRODUCT MANAGEMENT (MARKETING AND LOYALTY),
RETAIL/E-COMMERCE

Organizations Are Embracing GenAI To Meet Consumer Expectations And Drive Brand Growth

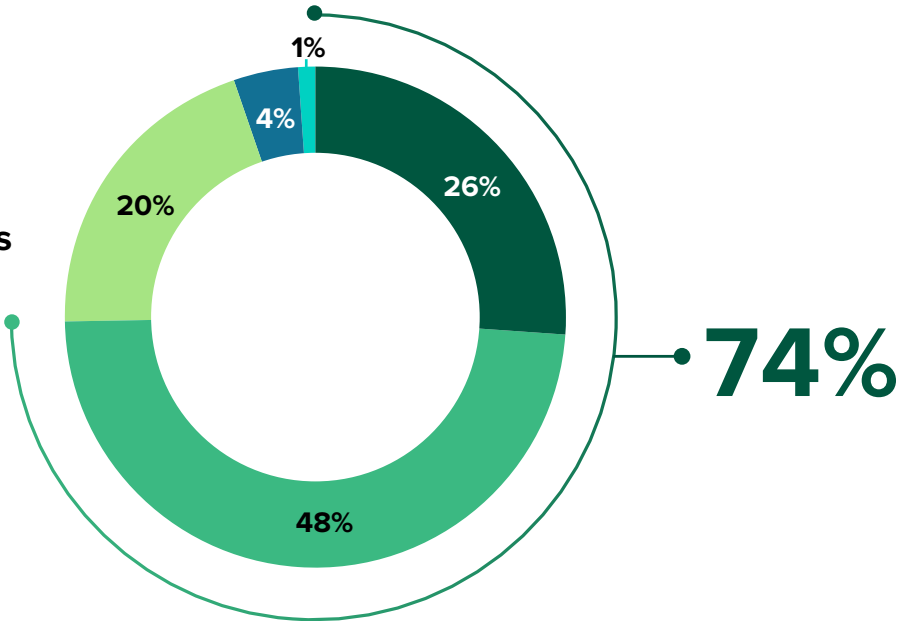
Despite the challenges, there is still enthusiasm for genAI’s potential moving forward. Consumers have high expectations for how genAI will help them, and brands have high expectations for how genAI can improve their communication with consumers. However, to realize this potential — and build upon it with AI agents — it’s critical that organizations build strong genAI foundations.

- **Consumers want genAI-powered experiences.** Sixty-two percent of surveyed consumers said they were likely or very likely to use a genAI-powered chatbot first for their next interaction with a business. Seventy-four percent feel comfortable or very comfortable interacting with genAI-powered brand experiences in general, more than one-quarter of whom noted it’s their preferred way to interact (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4

“Thinking more broadly, how comfortable are you interacting with genAI-powered brand experiences in general?”

- Very comfortable – it is my preference
- Comfortable
- Somewhat comfortable
- Not very comfortable
- Not at all comfortable



Base: 721 consumers from North America, Latin America, EMEA, and APAC who buy things online and are aware of or use third-party messaging platforms
Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Meta, March 2025

- **With increasing comfort comes rising expectations.** More than half of surveyed consumers expect their genAI brand experiences to exist across channels, easily understand what they say, and maintain a history of their interactions.
- **Brands recognize that genAI can improve customer understanding and consistency of experiences.** Nearly 70% of surveyed decision-makers noted genAI has the greatest potential to help with their two-way customer communication challenges by improving customer understanding. Sixty-five percent said it can improve the consistency of their customer experiences, and 60% expected better customer acquisition rates, highlighting the promising expansion of genAI into sales and marketing use cases.

71%

of decision-makers agree that maximizing genAI for two-way customer communications will set their organization apart.



From Assistants To Advisers: The Evolution Of AI Agents In Business

AI agents have evolved from genAI systems, but only recently have brands started to reap the benefits. AI agents are AI systems trained to act on behalf of an enterprise or individual. They leverage genAI to communicate directly with end customers and interact with data or other systems autonomously as a human would. GenAI-powered conversational agents also have an action component: They combine contextual understanding with execution. Critically, for AI agents to have an impact, they must be built on strong genAI foundations — brands cannot run before they can walk. Many established genAI implementation practices fall short of AI agent needs, and the complexity of implementing AI agents will require new and thoughtful approaches to process transformation.²

- **Today, the top use cases for AI agents still involve a human.** Most surveyed decision-makers who have implemented genAI-powered conversational AI agents or are planning to do so in the next 12 months use AI agents to assist human customer service employees via chat (47%). This aligns with capabilities today — over the next 12 months, decision-makers plan to evolve their AI agents into their “first line of defense,” providing autonomous customer service and freeing up their customer service agents for higher-level tasks.
- **Benchmarks for AI agent success align with those for human assistance.** Customer satisfaction and cost savings are top AI agent KPIs. Like genAI KPIs (notably time to resolution), AI agent productivity and human agent productivity are also top benchmarks (see Figure 5). This underscores the fact that AI agents are working to augment humans rather than simply replace them.

“We’re mostly saying, ‘Did it handle it quicker and resolve it without having to get a human involved?’ That’s how we measure the performance.”

HEAD OF PRODUCT MANAGEMENT (MARKETING AND LOYALTY),
RETAIL/E-COMMERCE

FIGURE 5

“What benchmarks have you established/do you plan to establish to rate the success of your genAI-powered conversational AI agents?”



Base: 1,191 directors and above from North America, Latin America, EMEA, and APAC who understand their organization’s business communication strategy and how they are using AI within their marketing and sales use cases
Note: Multiple responses accepted
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Meta, March 2025

However, despite the investment and excitement around AI agents, decision-makers recognize they need help with implementation. Three-quarters of respondents agreed that their organization needs help understanding how to start the implementation process for genAI-powered conversational AI agents, 72% noted their organization needs help understanding how to use AI agents, and 69% noted that they struggle to implement AI agents.

75%

of decision-makers say their organization needs help understanding how to start the process of implementing genAI-powered conversational AI agents.

- **Skills, security concerns, and data readiness are top technical challenges.** Among the decision-makers who have already implemented AI agents, nearly two-thirds noted lacking internal skills to integrate AI agents. Additionally, half are worried about security concerns and nearly half are challenged by data readiness. This underscores the need to get genAI right first before moving on to implementing AI agents. Without a strong genAI model foundation, brands will be hampered consistently when investing in AI agents. Critically, nearly 40% noted that their deterministic processes are not compatible with the flexibility of AI agents, pointing to a need to think differently when it comes to AI agents. AI agents are not just another AI layer; they have their own implementation complexities that brands must contend with.
- **Measuring ROI and data security are top business challenges.** Decision-makers who have implemented AI agents know the process isn't cheap. As with genAI implementation, it's critical to establish the right measurement parameters to prove the value of the investment to executives

“If a genAI agent makes a mistake, it's much trickier to understand how we evolve our specific agent to make sure that doesn't happen.”

DATA SCIENCE MANAGER
(MACHINE LEARNING),
TRAVEL

and expand the use cases for AI agents. However, executives are willing to provide some wiggle room: Only 18% of decision-makers noted that they are challenged by a lack of executive support for their AI agents.

AI agents will fundamentally change how businesses operate in the not-too-distant future. To recognize these future benefits, it's critical that businesses position themselves for success with well-thought-out approaches to genAI, which is the basis for AI agents. Eighty percent of respondents noted that genAI-powered conversational AI agents will revolutionize how they interact with their customers.

- **Decision-makers expect AI agents to provide support for employees and customers in the future.** Today, AI agents are largely working in rule-based environments. The most common use cases are checking if customers are eligible for discounts, initiating returns, canceling orders, or following up with customers (see Figure 6). However, over the next 12 to 24 months, decision-makers expect AI agents to assist in higher-order work such as answering questions about policies, helping customers choose the best product/service, and providing end-to-end order management. And this is further underscored by the top benefit respondents noted in using AI agents: improved consistency across employee support. By aiding employees, AI agents help ensure that each customer gets the same top-notch experience and allows employees to focus on other customer issues.

“[AI agents are] not going to replace us but are going to make us more flexible with what else we can introduce for a better customer experience with this set of humans available in the organization. It is going to be a game-changer for all of us.”

ASSISTANT VP OF OPERATIONS, BANKING

80%
of decision-makers believe genAI-powered conversational AI agents will revolutionize how they interact with their customers.

FIGURE 6

“Which of the following customer inquiries can your genAI-powered conversational AI agents currently answer?”

● Implementing AI agents today

Check if a customer is eligible for any discounts

32%

Initiate a return or cancel an order for a customer

31%

Follow up with customers proactively

29%

Provide technical support

27%

Manage appointments

25%

“Which of the following customer inquiries do you anticipate genAI-powered conversational AI agents being able to answer in the next 12 to 24 months?”

● Planning to implement AI agents in the next 12 to 24 months

Answer questions about policies

73%

Help a customer choose the best product/service for them

67%

Update a customer's account information

67%

Provide end-to-end order management

66%

Modify an order for a customer

66%

Base: 982 directors and above from North America, Latin America, EMEA, and Asia Pacific who understand their organization's business communication strategy and how they are using AI within their marketing and sales use cases and are planning or implementing genAI-powered conversational AI agents

Note: Multiple responses accepted

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Meta, March 2025

- **Top considerations for AI agent vendor selection are ease, accuracy, and channel availability.** As the president of a retail/e-commerce brand said, “First and foremost, I want to make sure that AI agents can integrate into our current systems easily and seamlessly.” The top criteria for AI agent vendors is ease of use and operation — decision-makers do not want to spend more time than necessary preparing their organization to experiment with AI agent use cases. Other critical

considerations for decision-makers include AI agent response accuracy and ensuring that vendors have responsible AI guardrails and monitoring since many organizations need vendor guidance to maximize AI agent implementation impact (see Figure 7). Surprisingly, having a preexisting vendor relationship is one of the least important considerations for decision-makers, suggesting a lack of vendor lock in.

FIGURE 7

“What are the considerations for your company when selecting a genAI-powered conversational AI agent (‘AI agent’) vendor?”



Base: 1,191 directors and above from North America, Latin America, EMEA, and APAC who understand their organization's business communication strategy and how they are using AI within their marketing and sales use cases
 Note: Multiple responses accepted
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Meta, March 2025

Key Recommendations

Regardless of where brands are on their AI journeys, they can embrace best practices to accelerate time to value and increase ROI. A strong data foundation, disciplined approach to measurement, and holistic approach that leverages AI across the customer lifecycle are critical to success.

Invest in a strong data foundation. While genAI models are pretrained, they know nothing about your customers, business processes, or brand. To deploy genAI in two-way customer communications successfully, you must point it to a trusted, up-to-date, accurate knowledge base consisting of structured and unstructured data. Some companies are building these knowledge bases organically by integrating CRM data with customer service and digital data sources while others are investing in customer data platforms to harmonize data at the customer level.

Embrace AI across all customer lifecycle stages. The study revealed that most companies are prioritizing genAI in customer service, but sales, marketing, and commerce use cases can all benefit from generative and agentic AI. While customer service use cases will likely realize cost benefits, applying generative AI to earlier phases of the customer lifecycle can produce topline growth in the form of additional revenue and acquisition.

Identify KPIs now to measure ROI later. At the outset of genAI projects, it is essential to determine how you will measure success. Balance operational metrics with experiential ones, and above all, prioritize financial metrics. For example, in a customer service scenario, simply measuring first contact resolution is inadequate — you should also show the impact on the customer experience by measuring customer satisfaction. And, to prove ROI, conduct a controlled experiment to calculate the true cost savings of the new capability.

Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted two global online surveys across North America, APAC, Latin America, and EMEA. The first targeted 721 consumers who are 18 years and older, buy things online, and are aware of or use third-party messaging platforms. The second targeted 1,191 directors and above who understand their organization’s business communication strategy and how they are using AI within their marketing and sales use cases. Forrester also conducted six qualitative interviews from travel, consumer and packaged goods, retail/e-commerce, professional services, and banking industries. Respondents were offered a small incentive as a thank-you for time spent on the survey. The study began in March 2025 and was completed in April 2025.

Appendix B: Consumer Demographics

REGIONS	
APAC	36%
Latin America	29%
North America	21%
EMEA	14%

CHANNELS USED TO MAKE PURCHASE	
Online sales/e-commerce	100%
Over the phone/voice	58%
Brick-and-mortar retail locations	56%
Webchat and/or messaging apps	36%

FREQUENCY OF INTERACTING WITH A BRAND VIA IM, CHAT, OR DM (AT LEAST WEEKLY)	
Make an appointment	29%
Research products/services to purchase	29%
Get help from a brand, company, or service provider	29%
Make purchases from a brand, company, or service provider	26%
Get help from a brand, company, or service provider to resolve a problem	25%
Communicate with my healthcare provider	18%

AGE	
18 to 24 years old	20%
25 to 34 years old	34%
35 to 44 years old	28%
45 to 54 years old	13%
55 to 64 years old	3%
65 years and older	1%

GENERATIVE AI AWARENESS	
I have heard of genAI, use it regularly (at least once a week)	25%
I have heard of genAI, use it occasionally	22%
I have heard of genAI, have tried it	16%
I have heard of genAI, but never used it	31%
I have never heard of genAI	7%

ONLINE SPEND OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS	
\$2,500 to \$4,999	2%
\$1,000 to \$2,499	4%
\$500 to \$999	14%
\$250 to \$499	43%
\$50 to \$249	27%
Less than \$50	7%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Appendix C: Decision-Makers Firmographics/Demographics

REGIONS	
APAC	44%
Latin America	29%
EMEA	17%
North America	9%

COMPANY SIZE	
20,000 or more employees	4%
5,000 to 19,999 employees	13%
1,000 to 4,999 employees	33%
500 to 999 employees	25%
100 to 499 employees	18%
50 to 99 employees	6%
10 to 49 employees	1%

INDUSTRY	
Banking and credit cards	15%
Retail/e-commerce	15%
Services	14%
Consumer packaged goods	14%
Travel	13%
Healthcare, pharmaceuticals, and biotech	8%
Education	5%
Restaurants	5%
Gaming	5%
Publishing	4%
Automotive	4%

BUSINESS MODEL	
B2C	100%

GENERATIVE AI IMPLEMENTATION	
Decreasing or removing	7%
Expanding or upgrading implementation	53%
Implemented, not expanding/upgrading	40%

CHANNELS PROVIDED (TODAY)	
Email	91%
Messaging apps	72%
Social media	65%
Voice	54%
Video chat	52%
Webchat	49%
SMS	48%

DEPARTMENT	
Operations	25%
Information technology	23%
General company management	16%
Marketing	13%
Sales	12%
Customer service	11%

LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT WITH SELECTING CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION TOOLS/SOFTWARE

Final decision-maker	63%
Part of the decision-making team	37%

SENIORITY

Business owner	20%
Executive (C-level)	38%
Senior management (director and VP)	42%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

GENAI-POWERED CONVERSATIONAL AI AGENTS IMPLEMENTATION

Decreasing or removing	7%
Expanding or upgrading implementation	29%
Implemented, not expanding/upgrading	19%
Planning to implement in the next 12 months	34%
Interested but no plans to implement	10%

Appendix D: Endnotes

¹ Source: [The State Of AI Agents, 2024](#), Forrester Research, Inc, October 3, 2024.

² Ibid.



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