



2026 Buyer's Guide for AI and CX

Evolve your customer experience with
the best AI-powered technologies



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Introduction

Your customers' expectations have never been higher. Today, your brand isn't compared to just your direct competitors. It's measured against the best experience your customers have had anywhere. A single broken interaction can cost loyalty you spent years building. And having the right technology to deliver seamless, personalized, end-to-end journeys has become the new foundation for market differentiation.

The companies that thrive in the years ahead will be those that stop optimizing touchpoints and start orchestrating overall experiences. That means bringing together artificial intelligence (AI), data, systems and people to pave streamlined pathways that support customers at every step of their journey with your brand.

Wherever your organization currently is on its own journey toward orchestrating a more intelligent, personalized customer experience (CX), this guide will help you understand all the tools you need to gain a competitive edge in 2026.

The best tech for CX in 2026

Orchestrating end-to-end experiences isn't something that stitched-together point solutions can easily do. Doing it well requires a unified AI platform — one that brings together automation, data, channels and people into a single flow. And the right foundation doesn't just enable better service. It actively optimizes each interaction in real time, adapting to customer behavior and evolving business needs.

That's why contact center leaders are investing in future-ready ecosystems that improve outcomes, scale globally and evolve at the pace of AI.

Choosing wisely means looking beyond feature checklists to assess how platforms actually perform: Can they personalize at scale? Integrate with your existing business systems? Predict and automate with ever-greater efficiency, yet without losing the human touch?

The pages ahead break down the six essential technology considerations that define a modern approach to CX. Use them to guide your evaluation and vendor selection process — and make sure your next investment sets you up for long-term success.



Four shifts shaping the future of customer experiences

Shift one: From applications to experiences

Start with the customer's goal and orchestrate across the enterprise in real time.

Shift two: From metrics to outcomes

Go beyond operational KPIs like average handle time and first-contact resolution. Measure success in terms of efficiency and loyalty.

Shift three: From tools to teammates

AI agents become trusted coworkers that retain context, propose next-best actions and never sleep.

Shift four: From point solutions to platforms

AI must automate, augment, personalize and optimize — together, across every channel.



1. AI and automation

In 2026, AI needs to do more than reduce customer effort. It's now capable of powering experience orchestration. That means building a platform where AI is deeply infused within channels, systems and workflows — enabling experiences that adapt, recommend and optimize in real time.

When implemented effectively, AI works as a dynamic, proactive, real-time assistant: proposing next-best actions, surfacing context across interactions and personalizing responses without manual intervention.

But achieving that requires more than standalone tools or scripts. You want capabilities that are wired into the architecture, not bolted on, and drawing from all the right datasets. Only then can AI move from reactive support to proactive, personalized customer and employee guidance.



33%

of CX budgets are expected to go toward AI-powered technology

"The State of Customer Experience"
Genesys, 2025

AI and automation buyer's checklist

What to look for in a platform that powers intelligent experiences:

- ✓ **Agentic AI that adapts in real time**
Supports dynamic decision-making, adjusting to customer behavior and business context as it changes.
- ✓ **AI workbench with low-code design tools**
Allows non-technical users to build, test and deploy AI — creating guided, compliant and adaptive self-service experiences without coding.
- ✓ **Predictive routing for best outcomes**
Matches customers with the best resource using data, behavior and real-time business goals.
- ✓ **Predictive engagement for timely offers**
Uses AI to anticipate needs and engage customers proactively with relevant help or offers.
- ✓ **AI copilots**
Provide intelligent assistance across every role to reduce effort and improve speed and accuracy.
- ✓ **AI-powered knowledge management**
Surfaces the right answers fast using unified, AI-curated knowledge for agents and bots alike.



Virgin Atlantic contained 20% of contacts with bots and cut handle times by 15% using predictive AI.

2. Cloud architecture and open platform

Your platform architecture doesn't just support customer experience — it defines its potential. In 2026, organizations need strategic cloud platforms that accelerate AI innovation, scale effortlessly and integrate securely across the business.

A unified, API-first cloud platform offers both turnkey capabilities and extensibility. It enables fast deployment out of the box, while giving developers the flexibility to build custom solutions that differentiate your brand over time.

The best platforms connect easily with third-party systems while offering a comprehensive suite of native tools — simplifying operations and reducing total cost of ownership. Cloud-native design also delivers security, resilience and scalability, ensuring reliable performance at scale while protecting customer data.



35%

of CX leaders say the ability to quickly add new features has been the biggest benefit of moving to the cloud

"The State of Customer Experience"
Genesys, 2025

Cloud architecture and open platform buyer's checklist

What to look for in a platform that's modern, scalable and secure:

- ✓ **Unified AI-powered platform with native suite of capabilities**
Avoids stitching tools together by offering pre-integrated features on a single codebase.
- ✓ **Open APIs and developer tools**
Supports low-code/no-code extensibility, allowing teams to build custom apps, integrations or workflows.
- ✓ **Cloud-native, microservices-based architecture**
Enables rapid feature deployment, autoscaling and resilience under heavy load.
- ✓ **Secure and compliant by default**
Includes built-in data safeguards, a shared security model and global compliance coverage.
- ✓ **Seamless integration with your ecosystem**
Connects easily to a CRM system, workforce engagement management, data lakes and third-party apps to unify your tech stack.
- ✓ **Transparent control of data usage**
Gives you visibility and control over how data is used – with explicit opt-in policies.



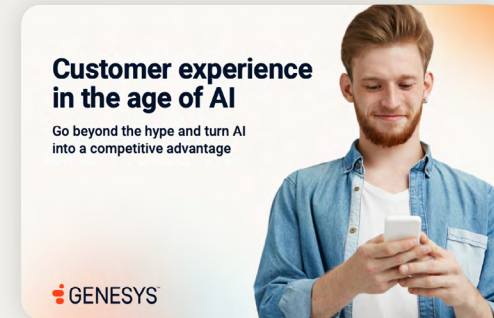
Unisys handles 20 million interactions annually on a unified platform.

3. Customer journey management

Today's customers expect seamless, personalized experiences across every touchpoint. But most brands struggle to see the full journey — or even know why someone is reaching out. Without connected data, problems go unresolved, self-service breaks down and outcomes suffer.

Journey management solves this by making behavior across channels visible and actionable. With the right tools, you can visualize key paths, detect where people drop off and uncover the root causes behind friction. These insights empower you to deliver smarter service, guide both agents and automation, and evolve faster.

Instead of stitching data together manually, modern AI-powered platforms unify real-time signals into journey maps and living profiles. You get a high-level view of patterns and a zoomed-in lens on individual goals. The result is proactive, orchestrated CX journeys that improve business performance and strengthen customer loyalty.



65%
of CX leaders say they use AI to
streamline the customer journey
across channels

"Customer experience in the age of AI"
Genesys, 2024

Customer journey management buyer's checklist

What to look for in a solution that turns insights into action:

✓ Real-time event data platform

Centralizes cross-channel interaction data from internal and third-party sources — in real time.

✓ Identity resolution and schema management

Creates a single view of each customer with flexible data structures for seamless integration.

✓ Journey Flows and Analyzer

Maps journeys across channels and flows, flags friction points and supports data-driven improvements.

✓ Funnel and progression analysis

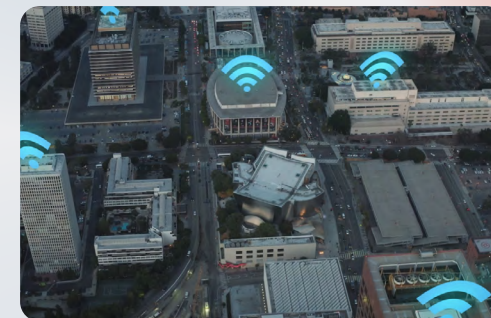
Tracks drop-offs and conversion gaps to optimize journey performance step by step.

✓ Customizable dashboards and charts

Surfaces trends, KPIs and anomalies in tailored views for different teams.

✓ Journey-based AI orchestration

Applies AI-driven insights to optimize journeys for better experiences and outcomes.



Arvig saved \$230,000 in contact center costs and, using journey management, reduced customer broadband installation lead times by 12 days.

4. Digital customer engagement

Customers now expect every digital interaction to feel like part of one seamless conversation — even when it spans multiple channels and touchpoints. That means brands must do more than “be available” across email, chat, messaging and social platforms. They must deliver personalized, connected experiences that carry context forward and adapt to each customer’s intent in real time.

With the right platform, digital engagement becomes more than just efficient — it becomes relational. AI helps identify the best next step, route the customer to the right resource and optimize outcomes on the fly. All of this depends on having deep visibility into behavior across channels, along with powerful orchestration and automation tools behind the scenes.

In 2026, companies that win on digital will be those that combine flexibility with intelligence — turning fragmented interactions into a single, satisfying customer experience.



97%

of consumers say it's important to move between channels without needing to reshare information

“The State of Customer Experience”
Genesys, 2025



Digital customer engagement buyer's checklist

What to look for in a platform that enables seamless, personalized digital experiences:

- ✓ **Omnichannel messaging and chat**
Supports email, web chat, SMS, WhatsApp, social and more — with context maintained across all channels.
- ✓ **AI-powered digital routing**
Directs customers to the best resource based on intent, behavior and real-time business goals.
- ✓ **Proactive engagement tools**
Uses predictive and contextual data to trigger timely help, offers or handoffs — before frustration builds.
- ✓ **Agent workspace with full context**
Equips agents with unified history, transcripts and customer data for faster, more informed resolutions.
- ✓ **Customer self-service and automation**
Delivers intuitive, conversational experiences using virtual agents, knowledge and guided flows.
- ✓ **Real-time digital performance insights**
Tracks engagement KPIs across channels to optimize CX and drive continuous improvements.



Rabobank answered 45% of questions via virtual assistants and achieved 90%-plus customer satisfaction in digital channels.

5. Workforce engagement management

In the experience economy, your employees are your most vital asset. Empowering them with the right tools, clarity and support is essential to improving service quality, reducing attrition and sustaining high performance.

Workforce engagement management (WEM) brings together the disciplines that help both individuals and teams thrive and grow — including workforce planning, quality assurance and employee development. With AI and automation embedded throughout, an effective WEM solution helps managers, supervisors and analysts plan more effectively, lead with confidence and build a culture of continuous improvement.

When WEM and CX data are unified, insights become actionable. Agents feel more supported. And your entire operation moves with greater intelligence, empathy and impact.



46%

of organizations are using workforce engagement management, with another 26% planning to implement it by mid-2026

“The State of Customer Experience”
Genesys, 2025

Workforce engagement management buyer's checklist

What to look for in a WEM solution that powers people and performance:

✓ **AI-powered forecasting and scheduling**

Uses predictive models and real-time insights to adjust staffing and stay ahead of shifting customer demands.

✓ **Speech and text analytics**

Uncovers trends, detects risks and identifies coaching needs by analyzing every customer interaction with AI.

✓ **Supervisor copilot for coaching and compliance**

Delivers real-time insights, alerts and recommendations to help leaders coach, manage and intervene proactively.

✓ **AI-driven quality management**

Evaluates interactions automatically, detects issues and prioritizes coaching to improve service and compliance.

✓ **Unified workspace with performance insights**

Equips every employee with real-time metrics, guidance and goals to act faster, stay aligned and improve outcomes.

✓ **Integrated WEM and CX intelligence**

Combines employee performance and CX data to drive continuous improvement and more human decision-making.



Aeromexico achieved a 20% reduction in agent turnover after implementing modern WEM solutions.

6. Sustainable and responsible solutions

True innovation today means building platforms that are not only intelligent and scalable, but also ethical and sustainable. For contact centers, that requires technology partners who embed responsibility into every layer of design — from how AI is trained to how data centers are powered.

A truly responsible provider embeds environmental, social and governance priorities across the entire business. That includes minimizing carbon emissions, promoting inclusive workplaces, sourcing responsibly and developing AI that is ethical, transparent and human-centered.

Achieving this requires investing strategically for business resilience and consumer trust. Ultimately, sustainability isn't just about reducing emissions — it's about ensuring that your platform can perform reliably, scale responsibly and comply with global standards. Responsible technology doesn't just support your business today; it helps future-proof it for tomorrow.



2040

is the year Genesys is set to reach net-zero emissions, with cloud operations already carbon-neutral

“FY25 Sustainability Report”
Genesys, 2025

Sustainable and responsible solutions buyer's checklist

What to look for in a technology partner that prioritizes people, the planet and long-term performance:

✓ Carbon-neutral cloud operations

Delivers current services with verified carbon neutrality and clear goals for reaching net-zero emissions by 2030.

✓ Energy-efficient AI and platform design

Uses intelligent autoscaling, efficient model training and optimization to reduce environmental impact.

✓ Ethical and transparent AI governance

Applies human-centered design, bias-aware testing and cross-functional governance for responsible AI outcomes.

✓ Sustainable sourcing and operations

Supports circular economy practices and environmental management across offices, vendors and data centers.

✓ Privacy, security and compliance by design

Meets global standards for data protection while ensuring availability, resilience and long-term trust.

✓ Community and workforce engagement

Promotes inclusive culture, skills development and technology access through employee-led and charitable programs.



Eesti Energia cut its IT footprint by consolidating five contact centers — reducing carbon impact while modernizing CX.

Start investing in the future

Today's CX leaders are shifting from isolated point solutions to strategic investments in full-scale orchestration. The “**Levels of Experience Orchestration**,” a maturity model by Genesys, provides a clear path for organizations to follow (see diagram on next page):

- **Levels 0–2** – Reactive and siloed: At this stage, your systems and teams respond to issues manually, without unified data or automation.
- **Level 3** – Generative AI and copilots: You begin leveraging AI to assist agents, automate common tasks and streamline workflows across channels.
- **Level 4** – Agentic AI with semiautonomous orchestration: Platforms gain reasoning, memory and planning capabilities, enabling semiautonomous orchestration of experiences while humans remain in control.
- **Level 5** – Fully autonomous orchestration across enterprises: AI-driven systems independently plan, coordinate and optimize interactions across front and back-office operations, virtually eliminating manual intervention.



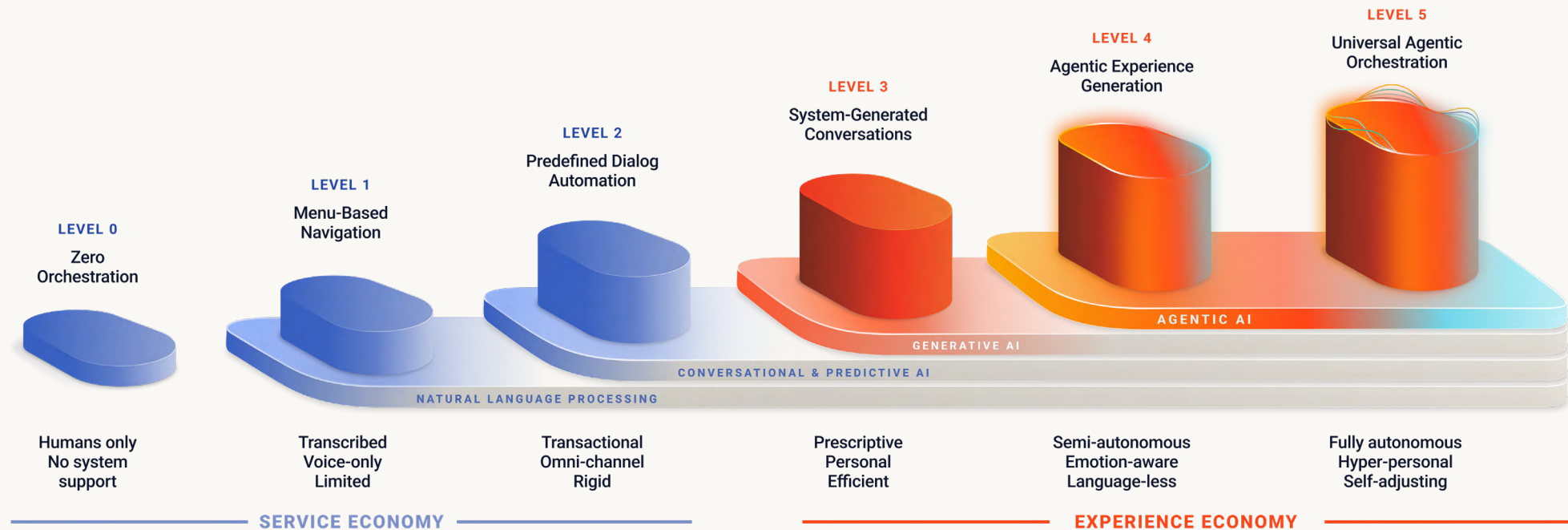
Know where you stand — and what comes next

Understanding where you currently stand — and where you want to go — can help you plot your CX investment strategy with greater focus. Is your organization ready to accelerate from Level 2 to Level 3 by deploying virtual agents? Or are you already aiming for Level 4 by skillfully incorporating **agentic AI**?

With a clear map in hand, you can align your technology, talent and process investments around the outcomes you care about most.

The Levels of Experience Orchestration

Plot your path to seamless, personalized experiences powered by AI



Conclusion

In today's experience economy, the success of your customer and employee experience strategy depends on more than just features — it depends on your platform's ability to grow with you. That's why choosing the right technology partner is about more than checking boxes. It's about investing in a holistic platform designed for long-term evolution.

The **Genesys Cloud™** platform isn't just built for where you are now. It's built for where you're going. Whether you're moving from siloed systems to orchestrated journeys, or exploring the possibilities of agentic AI, Genesys Cloud gives you the flexibility, scalability and intelligence to move at your own pace — and the confidence to lead.

Choose a platform built to evolve with you

Discover how Genesys Cloud can help you deliver the future of customer and employee experience with AI-Powered Experience Orchestration.



About Genesys

Genesys® empowers more than 8,000 organizations worldwide to create the best customer and employee experiences. With agentic AI at its core, Genesys Cloud™ is the AI-Powered Experience Orchestration platform that connects people, systems, data and AI across the enterprise. As a result, organizations can drive customer loyalty, growth and retention while increasing operational efficiency and teamwork across human and AI workforces.

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