

# AI FOR BUSINESS

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## The digital loyalty loop: how AI can transform customer experience

How can companies harness the power of AI to truly transform the customer experience, ensuring personalisation and empathy while businesses grow?

The difference between a happy customer and a disgruntled one is often how quickly and effectively their queries are answered.

If they end up stuck on hold or waiting for an agent to respond on live chat, they may decide to take their business elsewhere. Considering that most customer questions have a simple answer, this is an unfortunate – and entirely avoidable – loss for the company. Indeed, that simple answer is probably part of the company's knowledge base. But today's busy consumers rarely have the time or inclination to trawl through FAQ sections or other brand documents.

They are, however, increasingly happy to interact with an AI chatbot, which can draw upon a company's knowledge base and provide instant answers to their queries. According to research by Servicenow, 66% of UK consumers would use chatbots for an element of customer service.

"AI's current capabilities are focused on digital deflection, and for self-service and providing customers quick answers it's an effective tool," says Dan O'Connell, CEO of the customer service platform Front. "But there are

limits to this experience. The ability of AI to solve complex workflows is challenging due to the lack of reasoning, the need for integrated systems, and the understanding of training data needed to automate complex workflows."

This means that businesses can't solely rely on AI to handle their full customer support queue. "Those limitations lead to escalations – in the form of emails, SMS, DMs on social media, or calls – all of which require the human touch of your support team," says O'Connell.

Despite their limitations, modern AI chatbots can be smart enough to mimic brand identity, values and voice, ensuring a consistent customer experience across multiple channels and touchpoints. They can even tailor chats by drawing upon a customer's CRM data, language, location or other conversation data, creating a unique and personalised experience. Front, for instance, uses "dynamic variables" which branch chatbot flows based on chat visitor attributes, and personalise chatbot message content.

"For example, if the chatbot senses the visitor's browser language is French, you can route them to French-speaking

agents," says O'Connell. "Or if your chat visitor URL ends in '/pricing', then you can direct visitors to a sales-oriented chatbot path. Similarly, if the chat visitor URL ends in '/troubleshooting', then you can direct visitors to a support-oriented chatbot path".

### How to design a seamless customer experience

A seamless experience can make all the difference to customer satisfaction. The less effort and energy a customer has to put into getting answers, the more likely they are to stay loyal to the company.

Building visitor data into the chatbot flow means that the chatbot only needs

“For AI to provide your customers accurate answers, knowledge management needs to be a top priority

to request essential information. When a hand-off occurs due to a complex query, teams have instant access to all the details and context already gathered from the AI's interaction with the customer, helping to minimise repetition and ensure a speedy resolution.

Automatically tagging messages by topic or sentiment can give agents quick context on the customer's query, ensuring it reaches the right person as fast as possible. "Establishing seamless handoffs for issue escalation will deliver a consistent experience for customers, regardless of the team member they interact with," says O'Connell.

"Proactive service measures, like auto-assigning queries to available team members when someone is out, utilising snooze functions for when the teammate returns, and leveraging AI summarisation to quickly bring team members up to speed can also help to improve a common pain point in the customer journey."

AI can provide accurate, automated summaries of a customer's past conversations and relationship with the organisation to date, for example, so agents don't have to trawl through endless back-and-forth threads and can reclaim their time.

If a question is particularly tricky, AI can show how a similar question was successfully resolved for another customer, allowing organisations to make real-time improvements to service and responses. AI can even draw on the organisation's knowledge base to serve up draft replies to customer emails and messages. All of these capabilities help to free up agents' time so they can focus on more complex issues, and deliver exceptional service with a high degree of empathy.

But to fully unlock AI's potential, customer conversations must be accessible from one platform, rather than siloed away in separate tools. This not only enables the collaborative ways of working that

go hand-in-hand with exceptional customer service; it's essential for accessing insights and analytics that span the entire customer experience.

Another important thing to note is that the customer experiences powered by AI will only be as good as the data sources it learns from. "A help centre has long been a support team's number-one source of truth, but its importance is only growing in the age of AI," says O'Connell. "For AI to provide your customers accurate answers, knowledge management needs to be a top priority."

### Creating a customer-first support model

AI-powered customer experiences are ultimately part of a broader shift toward more customer-centric business models. "Leading businesses are transitioning from a model where the frontline team is solely responsible for customer experience to one where the entire company collaborates based on insights gained directly from customers," O'Connell explains.

Through detailed analysis of resolution rates and unresolved questions, for instance, businesses can identify areas for improvement. Monitoring response times and resolution speed at scale can also help to improve performance over time.

By identifying patterns in historical data, AI can even help to identify emerging trends and predict future outcomes, such as customer churn risk. "All of the answers to your most critical business decisions lie within the conversations your support and sales orgs have with customers," says O'Connell.

Front keeps these customers at the centre of every interaction by aggregating all conversations in a single view. "Teams work together, sharing context and understanding, so they can address customer challenges swiftly and at scale," says O'Connell. "And every conversation sparks insights that create clarity and focus, and help teams better meet and anticipate customer needs."

He adds: "So much of the work that service teams do, such as escalations and handoffs, are moments of collaboration, and moments that – if done well – also address your customers' expectations around speed and quality of service."

Despite the obvious benefits that AI and collaboration can bring to customer service, the most important thing is that customers can always access clear and accurate support, with minimal effort, whenever they need it. "It's that reliability, the end result, that builds trust," says O'Connell.

And while AI is undoubtedly changing the industry, there's one thing it won't change: "Businesses that obsess over their customers and put the customer experience above all else, are the ones that will win."

For more information please visit [front.com](https://front.com)



## WORKPLACE

# Is AI the key to the four-day work week?

AI-driven business efficiencies could soon make the four-day work week a reality. How can companies use the technology to maintain productivity while reducing employee hours and costs?

Natasha Khullar Relph

Artificial intelligence promises to unlock a new era of business efficiency, bringing obvious productivity gains for employers. However, there are signs the technology could also benefit employees – and even lay the foundations for a four-day working week.

Already, AI has boosted performance in sectors such as software development, marketing and legal services, among others. Recent studies suggest that AI could enable businesses to maintain productivity while reducing employee hours from 40 to 32 hours per week.

For companies, this means doing more with less – less time, fewer resources and potentially lower operational costs. Could the productivity gains also make the heralded four-day week a workplace reality?

"The issue is complex because not all jobs or sectors are created equal," says Geoffrey Hamlyn, chief operating officer (COO) of Trepwise, whose four-day week benefit has contributed to the firm's 'Best Places to Work' designation for the past seven years. "A manual labourer working on an hourly basis is much less able to adapt to a shorter work week than an

accountant or a marketing director, for instance. Similarly, a law firm that bills on an hourly basis has very little incentive to reduce expectations for its team members."

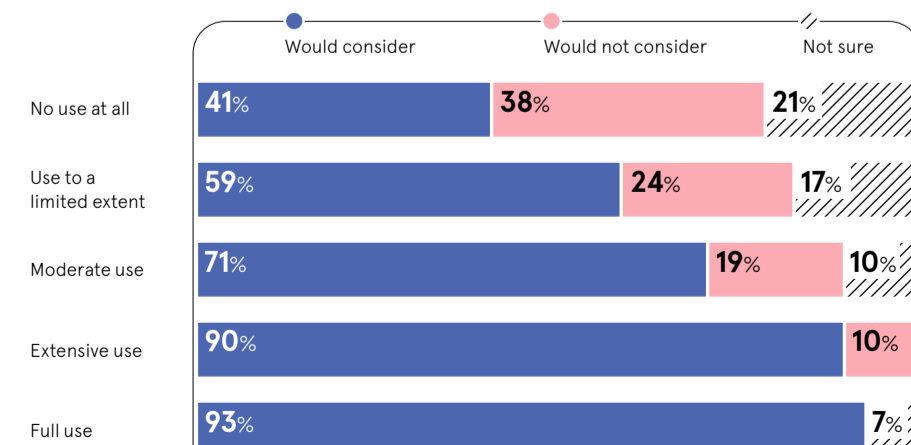
For many companies, however, the downsides of a shortened work week are considerably less daunting – and there are tangible upsides. Numerous studies have shown that employee morale, retention and productivity are positively correlated with the four-day work week. Of the businesses that have adopted a four-day week, 29% cite AI as a key factor in the transition.

AI is increasingly seen as a way to enable a four-day work week without sacrificing productivity. AI can improve worker output by an average of 14% according to a 2023 study by MIT and Stanford, while research from Goldman Sachs suggests that AI could automate up to 25% of tasks currently performed by employees. These gains allow businesses to rethink traditional work structures.

Rosi Bremec, COO of Game Lounge, an affiliate marketing company in the iGaming industry, successfully implemented a four-day work week this summer and says AI

### AI USE IS DIRECTLY CORRELATED WITH WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER A FOUR-DAY WORK WEEK

Companies' willingness to consider a four-day work week, by the current use of AI tools in the organisation



“The inevitable march toward automation will require laws and regulations to ensure fairness

was the key to being able to automate certain tasks. "The goal is not to replace people with AI, but to work smarter," she says. "We're being cautious about using AI for content creation, especially because we're focused on organic SEO. However, we're looking into automating other tasks like taking meeting minutes and creating reports. AI is also used for learning and development, backlog grooming and prioritising tasks for the week."

AI's potential to transform the workplace extends beyond productivity. It can also enhance collaboration and information sharing. AI tools enable employees to find relevant documents quickly, cutting down on time spent searching for information. They can also optimise team formation by pairing individuals with complementary skills, ensuring that remote teams work together more efficiently.

A 2023 report by think tank Autonomy underscores the transformative potential of AI. According to its findings, AI could reduce working hours by at least 10% for nearly nine in 10 UK workers over the next decade. The study also suggests that up to 28% of employees could transition to a 32-hour work week by 2033,

Tech.co, 2024

without losing pay. This shift, experts argue, presents an opportunity for policymakers and businesses to rethink how AI can be harnessed for the benefit of workers, not just employers.

AI holds great potential to streamline tasks, but there is still concern that the financial gains may benefit shareholders more than workers. According to Goldman Sachs, AI could disrupt 300 million jobs worldwide. Meanwhile, Harvard Law School highlights the need for protections to prevent worker exploitation in an AI-driven economy. The Harvard report's recommendations include AI monitoring in workplaces, establishing safety standards and ensuring transparency around the technologies in use.

"Just as Hippocrates implores physicians to 'first, do no harm', so too must employers carefully mitigate risks when implementing significant changes to technology or workflow," says Hamlyn. In the future, AI will reduce the need for human resources, he notes. This reality is already playing out on factory floors, in call centres and in software companies worldwide. As the power of AI grows, so will the risks to human capital.

"The inevitable march toward automation will require laws and regulations to ensure fairness," Hamlyn says. "However, in the absence of policies that dictate how businesses must operate, employers will be required to make difficult decisions that balance the wellbeing of their workforce with the potential for profits."

The right approach could boost productivity without reducing the

need for human employees. As employers gain from AI-driven efficiencies, they face a choice: share those gains with workers or focus solely on cutting costs.

For Game Lounge's staff, the challenge was how to fit five days of work into four. "Some employees were initially worried about how they could manage everything in just four days, especially since their schedules were already packed," Bremec says. "I even got pushback from some directors. But once we adjusted, they managed well."

The trick for Bremec was better planning. "One of the first changes I made was cutting meeting times from an hour to 25 minutes, leaving time for preparation and a buffer if needed," she explains. And by integrating AI into task-tracking systems to monitor workload trends, the company enabled better management of seasonal fluctuations and workflow shifts.

Still, there are limitations to how AI can be implemented in the workplace. Not every role offers eight hours of work that can be easily automated. For AI to reduce work hours, tasks need to be routine and repetitive, which is not the case for many senior or creative roles.

In an ideal world, an AI application that removes an hour of mindless work enables employees to focus on higher-level tasks, boosting their efficiency and effectiveness, says Hamlyn. You don't need to automate a full eight hours to save eight hours of work. "Mindless tasks drain productivity," he says. "Automate those, assign more meaningful work and you'll see employees thrive while saving time overall." ●