

The Generative AI Era

**In the Generative AI Era, CX Leaders
Prepare to Empower People with AI**

Customer experience insights from business leaders





In today's dynamic world, the best experience you have anywhere becomes your expectation everywhere.

Customer experience (CX) is vital to long-term growth, helping organizations win new business, build customer loyalty and transform their product offering.

“Expectations are through the roof: speed, responsiveness, correctness—all of those things. It's hard to recover from somebody feeling like they had a bad experience with your site or store.”

David Oberst, Group Creative Director

We recently conducted a global customer experience survey of 1,000 executives across 10 different sectors and industries. And 58 percent of surveyed C-suite leaders—CEOs, CFOs, COOs, CIOs, CMOs, CTOs, CXOs and CDOs—placed **customer experience and satisfaction in their top three priorities for growth** through customer experience today.

And in the midst of the artificial intelligence (AI) revolution, organizations have even more paths to enhance the customer experience. Since the explosion of large language models (LLMs) with the launch of ChatGPT less than two years ago, generative AI has enhanced the delivery of customer experience by accelerating customer service, simplifying logistics and empowering personalization.

Generative AI tools are already fundamental to growth. Three-quarters of respondents thought both generative AI for chatbots and customer service and generative AI for marketing transformation were either important or extremely important to their growth transformation. From software development to content creation, this new technology has reshaped the CX tool kit, even though the full scale of the transformation has yet to unfold.



Key Findings

For today's C-suite, the real disruptor isn't the competition—it's the customer.

Corporate leaders are paying more attention than ever to what their customers want—and how to deliver it. Some have learned this the hard way: Though competition remains a concern, it isn't the only issue on C-suite leaders' minds. In our report, more than a third of them found that rapidly changing customer expectations have been a significant challenge to their growth transformation.

But the C-suite was much more focused on the customer-facing elements of generative AI than on behind-the-scenes applications like logistics and software development.



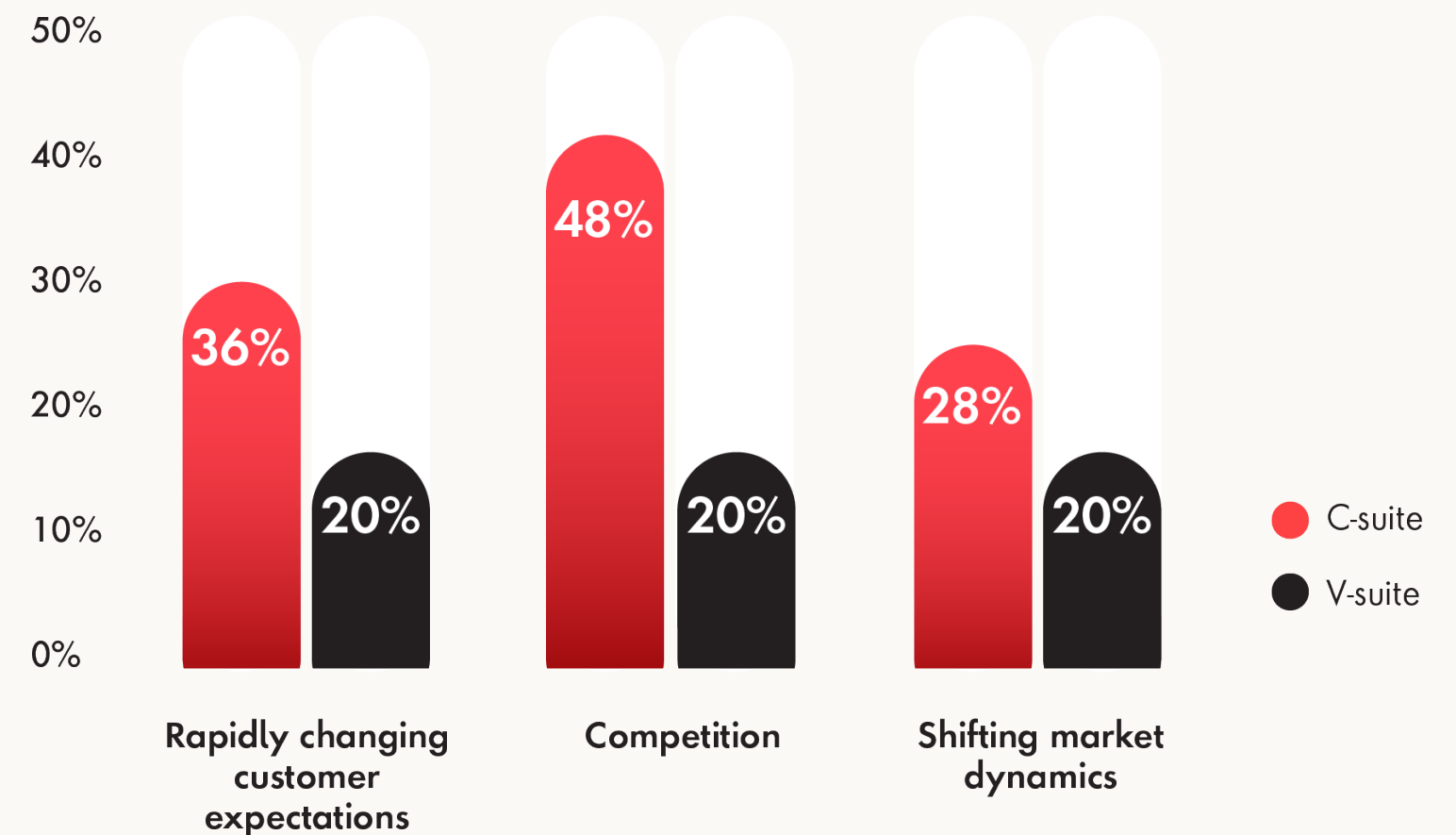
C-suite leaders were more concerned with customer expectations than their VPs and below

In all instances, C-suite roles believed the customer challenge would significantly impact business growth more than their V-suite counterparts did.

Respondents reported that **customer challenges had a significant impact on their growth transformation** in the past year.

Figure 1

Impact of customer challenges on growth



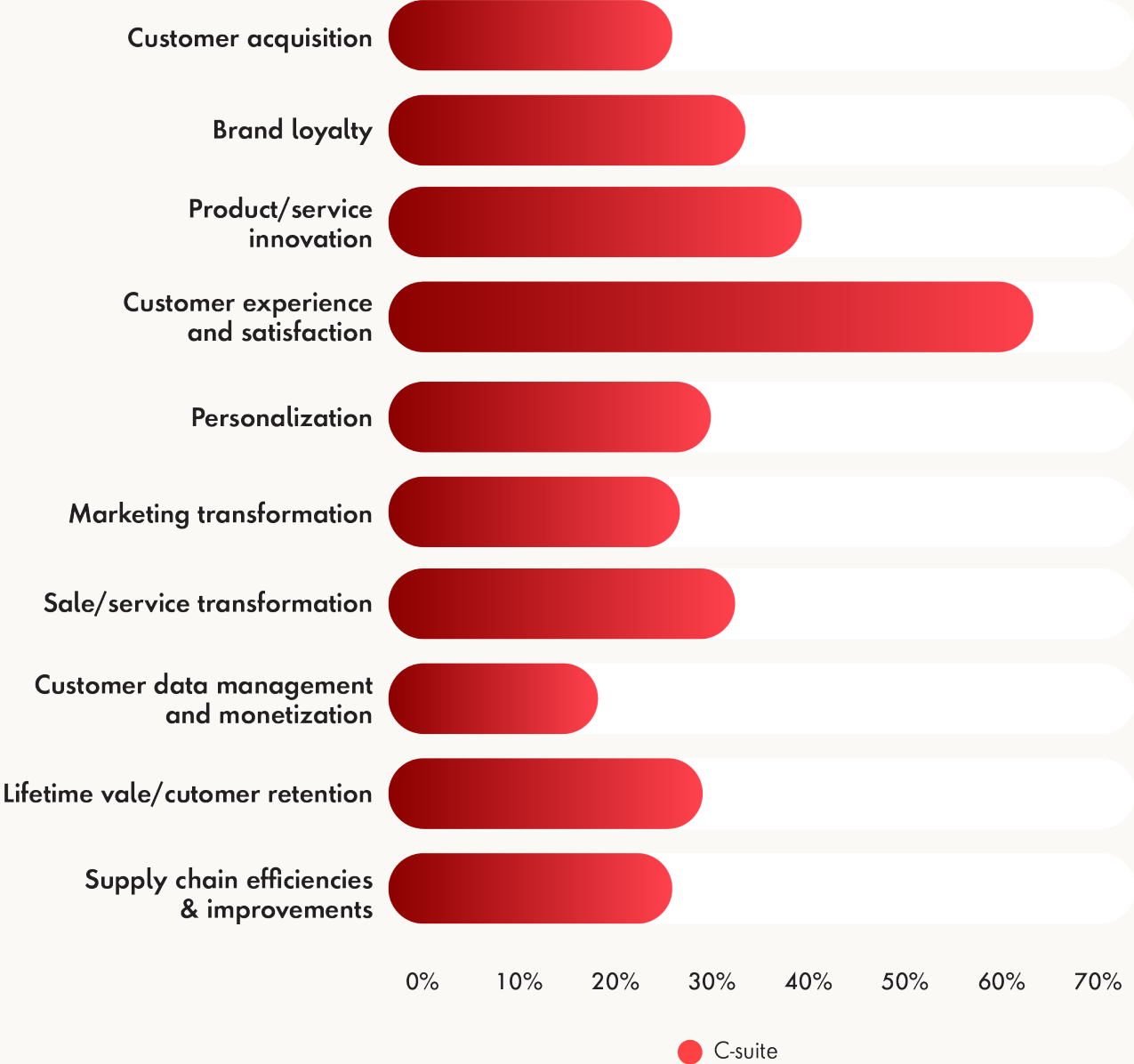
Q. What impact, if any, have the following challenges had on your organization's growth transformation efforts in the past 12 months? N=C-suite (250), V-suite (750).

Customer experience was a top priority for the C-suite

Other priorities seem to be evenly distributed, with the exception of customer data management and monetization. Since much of the C-suite indicated that customer experience is a top priority, it suggests that there is room for improvement in their current strategies for enhancing customer experience and satisfaction.

Fift-eight percent of the C-suite leaders placed **customer experience and satisfaction** in their top three priorities for growth through customer engegment, twice as many as prioritized personalization.

Figure 2
C-suite’s top three priorities for growth



Q. Which of the following reflects your organization’s priorities when thinking of long-term growth through customer engagement, today and over the next three years? N=C-suite (250).

V-suite Embraces AI Broadly, C-suite Focuses on Customers & Sales

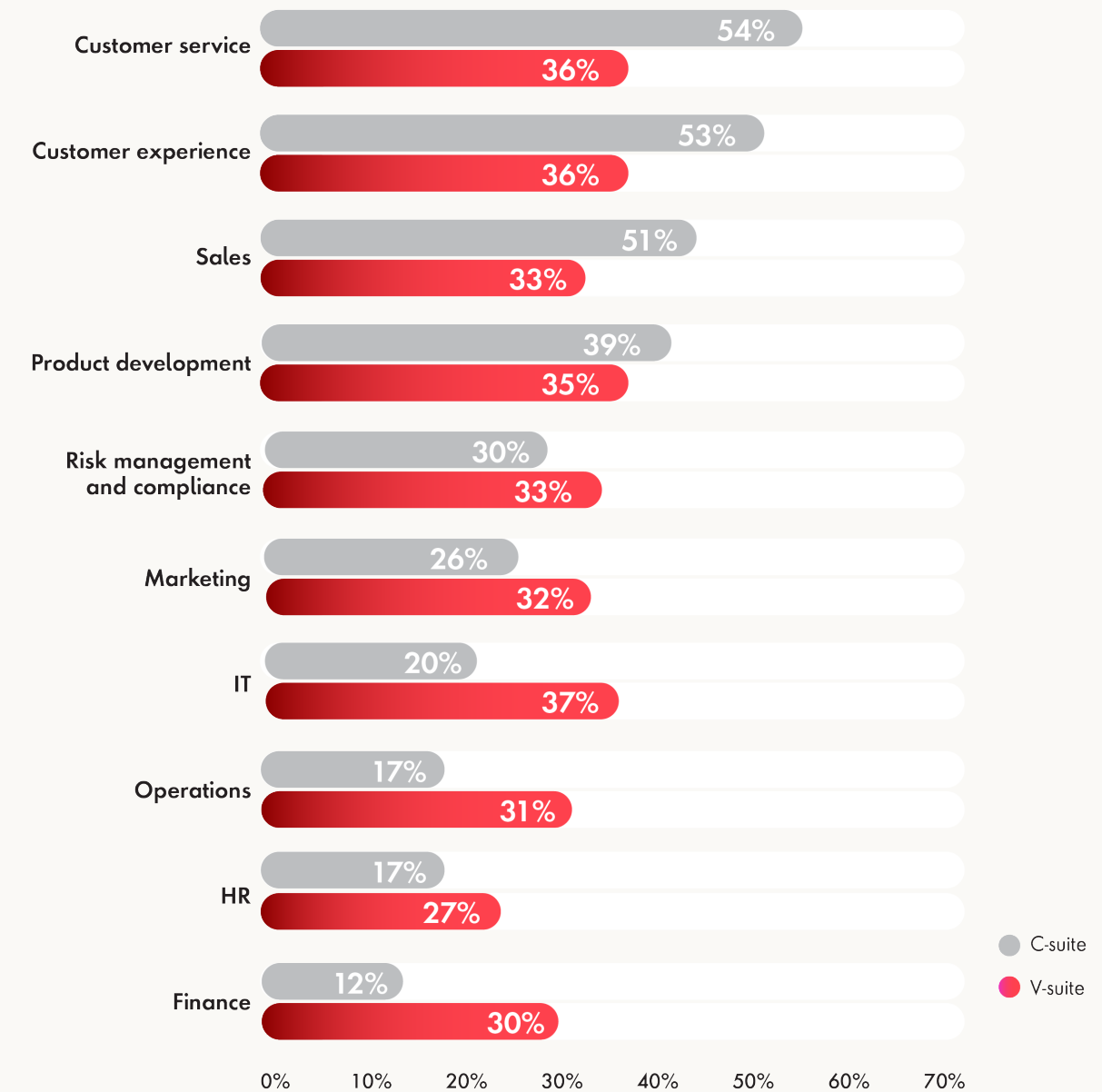
The V-suite saw opportunities for generative AI across the board; the C-suite were focused on customer service, customer experience and sales.

The C-suite's focus on customer service, experience and sales over all other functional areas suggests that they may prioritize generative AI investment here.

Generative AI was ranked as "extremely important" to various functional areas over the next three years.

Figure 3

Importance of generative-AI over the next 3 years % of respondents rating "extremely important"



Q. Over the next three years, how important will generative AI be in the following functional areas of your organization?
N=C-suite (250), V-suite (750).

Levels of enthusiasm for AI in customer service varied widely.

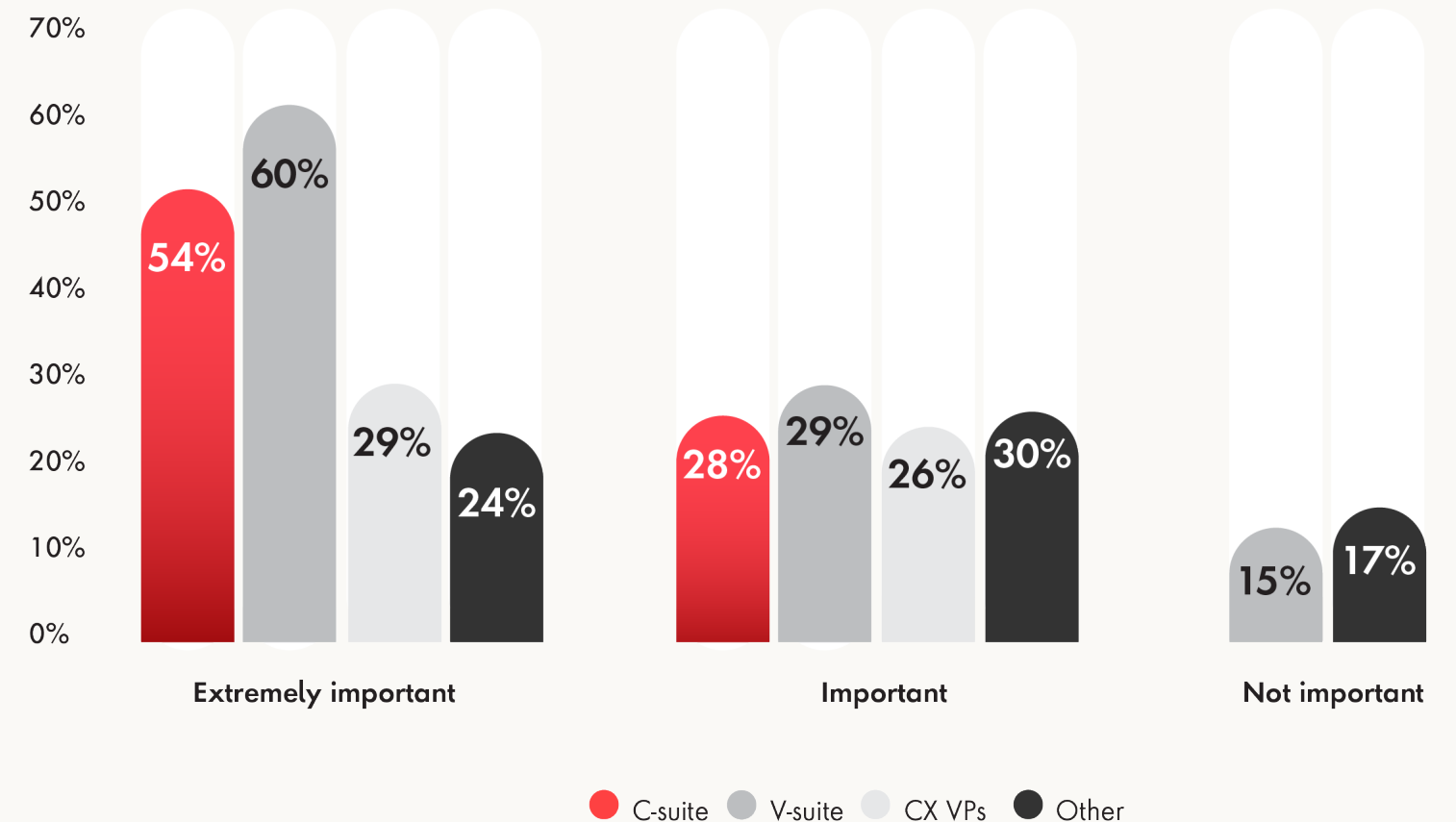
This may highlight a gap between big-picture strategic initiatives that are starting to prioritize automation and actionable tactics, tools and capabilities in CX practitioners' everyday work. **The C-suite will have to find ways to help practitioners see and realize the value of generative AI.**

How important will chatbots and other generative AI be for customer service over the next three years?

CEOs were significantly more enthusiastic than CX practitioners about the importance of these technologies.

Figure 4

Importance of chatbots and other generative AI for customer service over the next three years



Q: Thinking about your organization's current approach to generative AI, how important will the following applications be over the next three years? N=C-suite (250), CEOs (30), V-suite (750), CX VPs (or similar title) (30).



Insights

A new world of data

In a world of sky-high customer expectations, **data is the key that unlocks success.** Deep, enriched and real-time customer data helps companies get to know their customers so that they can deliver personalized experiences that meet and exceed expectations. Most executives appreciate that data enables practitioners to work better and faster by helping them identify and target customer segments and tailor offerings to them.

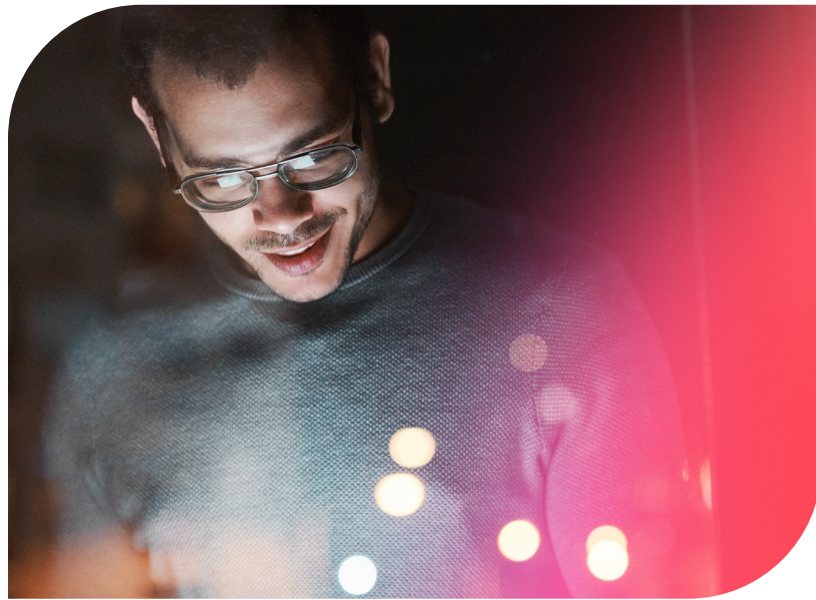
“**Strategically, AI unlocks data in new ways—enabling broader scenario planning, connecting previously siloed assets, and transforming both our approach and the final solution.**”

Zach Paradis, Global Vice President of
Customer Experience and Innovation



More than half of survey respondents (53 percent) identified data management and predictive analytics as a top-three priority for system modernization—making it a more important driver than either security and compliance or legacy systems issues. Their priorities are certainly valid: As the world moves toward automation, data is the fuel that will power the AI revolution. **Companies need to have their data houses in order to get the most out of AI.**

Behind the scenes, generative AI is already reshaping the customer data platform. Tools can deliver near-instant, natural language access to large, diverse datasets. This doesn't just democratize data within organizations; it yields richer insights into past and predicted customer behavior, enabling segmentation and consistent hyper-personalization across channels.



AI assistants for productivity

67%

Two-thirds of survey respondents (67 percent) thought that AI assistants for productivity enhancement would be extremely important or very important over the next three years. Customers crave personalization, which creates a demand for individualized content, meaning teams will need to be more productive.

Content teams may already have to design, write and size as many as 1,000 different online banners to cater to different geographies, devices, apps and market segments. **With the help of generative AI tools, creating the content required for personalization at scale becomes simpler, automatic and in real time** based on performance.

“People talk about how great it would be to personalize, but the first roadblock is that clients don’t have the content to sustain personalization. Custom tools can help them create all those pieces.”

Jackie Walker, Retail Experience Strategy Lead, North America

Custom generative AI tools can streamline image generation, enabling practitioners to create visuals that follow their brand guidelines, using the appropriate colors and correctly deploying the logo. Teams could potentially produce countless creative assets using these tools—and perform quality control on the output.

Automation can also save teams time and energy by completing routine tasks for them. By automating certain tedious tasks, such as segmenting emails by geography or crunching performance numbers, generative AI tools let teams devote more of their day to strategizing, campaign planning and getting to know their customers better so that they can elevate their experiences.

Already, **there are millions of dollars in cost savings to be won.** But in the future, generative AI may bring personalization to its ultimate endpoint: a one-to-one relationship. An AI may create bespoke content tailored to each consumer, in real time, transforming the customer experience into something that’s truly unique and individual.



About the Research

iResearch conducted an online survey among 1,000 business decision-makers between June and July of 2024 to create this customer experience benchmarking report. Respondents were drawn evenly from consumer products, energy & commodities, financial services, healthcare, retail, telecommunications, media & technology (TMT), transportation & mobility and travel & hospitality. They worked for companies with an annual revenue between \$1 billion and \$10 billion, either at the C-suite level or at the VP level in strategy and innovation, customer experience or data and analytics.

Contributors



Zach Paradis

Global Vice President of Customer
Experience and Innovation



Jackie Walker

Retail Experience Strategy Lead, North
America Experience and Innovation



David Oberst

Group Creative Director



To compete, businesses must translate a customer-first strategy into practice. We enable this through long-term profitable growth anchored in customer acquisition, loyalty and value. We create innovative, data-informed moments that drive new customers to your brand and enhance the employee experience. From monetizing customer data to building innovative customer journeys, we nurture value-based relationships that power loyalty and profitability alike, reducing friction points and turning customer support into a value center.

Contact us for more information publicissapient.com