

Take a modern approach to customer experience: empowering frontline employees and agents

Report summary for North America

bold360
by LogMeIn

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Contents



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Summary	03
In brief	03
Key messages	03
Agents face increasing complexity on multiple fronts	04
AI training in North America is ahead of most but still below expectations	04
Agents must be better equipped to attain success	05
Even when knowledge bases exist, they are difficult to access and search and often provide out-of-date information	05
Knowledge database tools require improvement.	06
AI can transform customer engagement, but impact is still early stage ...	07
North America shows relatively early progress in move to AI	07
Recommendations	08
Appendix	09

Summary

IN BRIEF

Ovum conducted a dual survey on behalf of LogMeIn among 341 customer experience managers and 484 customer-facing employees across seven countries around the world. This condensed version of the corresponding report is focused on key take outs for the North American (US and Canada) market from the survey. The full report examines the role of support

teams and how it is changing, the biggest pain points and frustrations faced by customer support teams, how they handle customer engagement, and their use of technology. The report also drills down into the state of artificial intelligence (AI) strategy and deployments in the customer engagement environment and into future implementation plans.

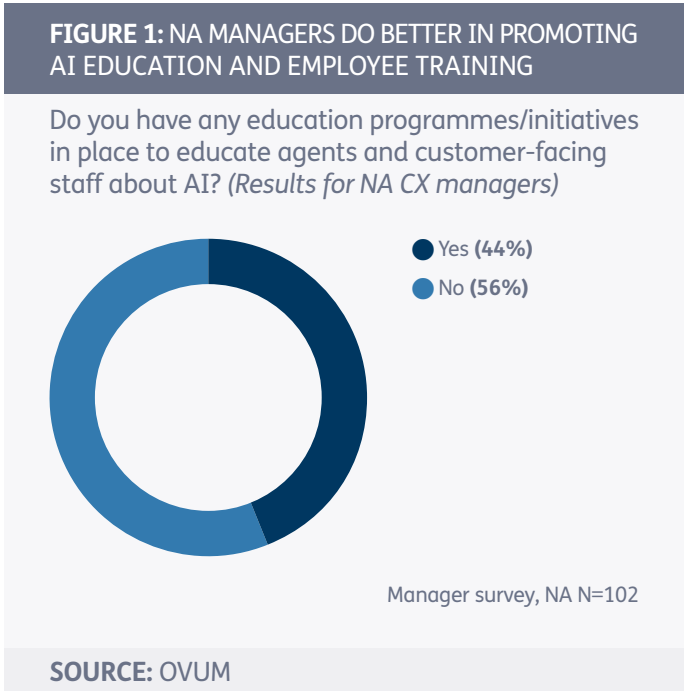
KEY MESSAGES

- **North America is an AI leader in terms of training, preparation, and implementation.** While many customer experience (CX) managers consider AI to have high potential for improving customer service operations in the future, progress in adopting AI is mixed across regions of the world. The Ovum survey reveals North America (NA) as a leader in AI planning, training, and implementation compared to regions in the rest of the survey. Two particularly interesting findings show that while 12% of NA companies have not yet developed plans for AI implementation, 27% of the enterprises in the rest of the survey report they currently have “no specific AI strategy.”
- **NA customer-facing employees require more tools and support to promote knowledge-base usage.** Overall knowledge-base usage among all customer-facing employees in the survey stands at 47%. This percentage is slightly lower at 45% for NA employees. This is somewhat surprising given the variety of technologies available to manage data today. This is even more striking given the fact that the vast majority of those using knowledge bases in their daily customer-serving activities report being satisfied with the results. Users and non-users offer several changes that they believe will increase the usage of knowledge bases in the future.

Agents face increasing complexity on multiple fronts

AI TRAINING IN NORTH AMERICA IS AHEAD OF MOST BUT STILL BELOW EXPECTATIONS

As customer engagement technology evolves, agents are called upon to maintain their skill levels regarding new and enhanced applications. The NA marketplace survey results reveal that 44% of CX manager respondents say their company currently has AI educational programs and initiatives in place to educate agents and other customer-facing employees on the benefits and opportunities afforded by AI implementations and operations, as shown in Figure 1. This compares to 25% of enterprises in the rest of the full survey, which represents the aggregate of Australia, France, Germany, New Zealand, and the UK. Clearly NA companies are ahead in the preparation phase for the introduction and implementation of AI. Although NA is ahead of other countries in employee AI education and training, still more is required to meet the upcoming changes.



Agents must be better equipped to achieve success

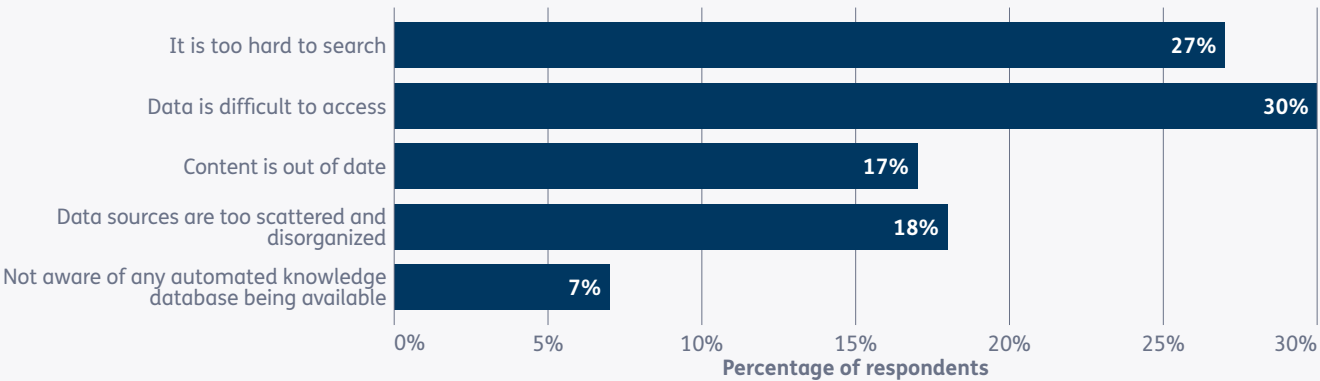
EVEN WHEN KNOWLEDGE BASES EXIST, THEY ARE DIFFICULT TO ACCESS AND SEARCH AND OFTEN PROVIDE OUT-OF-DATE INFORMATION

Across all surveyed countries, only 47% of customer-facing employees report that they refer to a knowledge base during customer interactions. However, when those using knowledge bases in responding to customer requests were asked how satisfied they are with the results, 84% said they are satisfied, very satisfied, or extremely satisfied (28%, 37%, and 19%, respectively). This begs the question of why less than half the respondents do refer to a knowledge base during

customer interactions. The reasons NA customer-facing employees gave for not using a knowledge base are depicted in Figure 2. The responses, in descending order, ranged from data is difficult to access (30%), knowledge bases are too hard to search (27%), data is too scattered or disorganized (18%), or the content is out of date (17%). Somewhat surprisingly, 7% of NA respondents said they were not aware that an automated knowledge base was available for their use.

FIGURE 2: MOST NA EMPLOYEES FIND KNOWLEDGE BASES TOO DIFFICULT TO ACCESS AND USE

What is the primary reason you do not refer to a knowledge database in responding to customer requests?
(Results for NA customer-facing employees)



Employee survey, NA N=82

SOURCE: OVUM

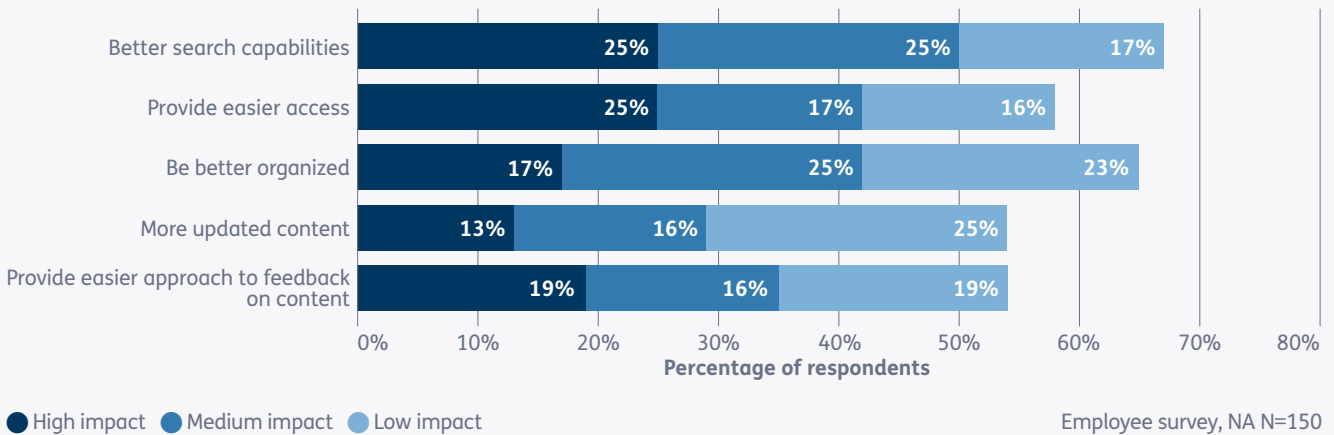
KNOWLEDGE DATABASE TOOLS REQUIRE IMPROVEMENT

For knowledge bases to receive a broader base of usage in NA, customer-facing employees cite several recommended changes that should be considered in order of potential impact. Figure 3 identifies these suggested improvements. The improvements identified as having high impact, in ranked order, include the

improvement of search capabilities (25%), making knowledge-base access easier for the users (25%), easier user feedback regarding content (19%), better knowledge-base organization (17%), and a more effective method of updating the information (13%).

FIGURE 3: NA EMPLOYEES SUGGEST SEVERAL POSSIBLE KNOWLEDGE-BASE IMPROVEMENTS

Based on your experience of using a knowledge database, how can it be improved?
(Results for NA customer-facing employees)



SOURCE: OVUM

AI can transform customer engagement, but impact is still early stage

NORTH AMERICA SHOWS RELATIVELY EARLY PROGRESS IN MOVE TO AI

AI planning is not yet widespread on a global basis, but North America is in a relatively strong position versus the rest of the surveyed countries according to CX managers. However, there is still a long way to go if AI is to become as effective a customer engagement aid as many predict. As can be seen in Figure 4, 40% of NA CX managers say they have begun the early implementation phase of their AI planning process. This compares with 22% in other

regions included in the survey. Most surprisingly, while just 10% of NA companies reported having “no specific AI strategy,” a much higher 27% of the enterprises in the rest of the survey report they have “no specific AI strategy.” The percentage of enterprises reporting that they are still in the assessment phase of AI planning was an identical 38% of enterprises in both the NA group and the remaining surveyed countries. Likewise, NA enterprises are closely aligned with the percentage of the enterprises in the rest of the survey saying they are well into implementing their AI strategies, which amount to 12% and 13% respectively.

FIGURE 4: NA FIRMS SHOW GOOD PROGRESS ON AI IMPLEMENTATION CURVE

How would you describe the stages of your AI strategy? (Results for NA CX managers)



10%

We have no specific AI strategy



38%

We are in an assessment phase – still formulating our AI strategy



40%

We have started the early implementation phase of our AI strategy



12%

We are well into implementing our AI strategy with well-established applications and processes in place

Manager survey, N NA=102

SOURCE: OVUM

Recommendations

AI has the potential to change customer engagement and service in many meaningful ways. The perception of AI in the eyes of CX managers and customer-facing employees is generally very positive. It is a collection of technologies that can result in a win-win scenario to benefit customers and employees as well as the corporate bottom line. The initial fear of employee replacement is superseded by the anticipated benefits provided when the technologies are properly introduced. Enterprises should be developing corporate-wide plans for AI education and training, putting together implementation strategies, and running trials as soon as possible to stay ahead of the curve and avoid being caught short by competitive advancements already in motion. Although the NA region appears to have a lead in planning for the advent of the AI introduction to the enterprise, there is still time for those regions that have not yet put plans in place to jump into AI via technology partners and supplier support, and this should take priority in strategic planning efforts.

Knowledge-base support in customer engagement appears to be underutilized at best, but there are indications that it can be better received if improved. Customer-facing employees that have access to knowledge-base support appear to be satisfied with its ability to improve their jobs and enable them to better service their customers. The problem is that not enough of these employees have access to the technology, and those that do are expressing interest in making it easier to use and more effective. Today, many contact center agents seeking “next best action” support depend on their more experienced colleagues and supervisors for guidance in handling customer issues. If an enterprise has not yet automated the process by using knowledge-base support and other available technologies, that should be the next step in improving the employees’ workday processes and improving first contact resolution percentages for customers.

This extract is a taster of the full report, which contains a wealth of detailed information and insights including additional best practice recommendations:

[To see the full report, click here.](#)

Appendix

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BOLD360 BY LOGMEIN

Bold360 is the ultimate AI-powered engagement platform helping companies of all sizes build and nurture customer relationships while delivering a fundamentally better experience for both customers and the employees serving them. Blending the best of AI and agent-based technology, Bold360's suite of solutions is purpose-built to give organizations everything they need to create impactful and continuous conversations from the very first engagement through the entire customer lifecycle. Built with cutting-edge Natural Language Processing

technology, Bold360 delivers groundbreaking intelligence with out of the box simplicity that helps companies meet soaring customer expectations while allowing agents do what they do best – be human. For more information, visit www.bold360.com.

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